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Outreach [Facilitators/Special meetings], 1979-1983.

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American Jewish Archives website.

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# MEMORANDUM

From PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL  
Rabbi Daniel B. Syme Date 4/6/83  
To Rabbi Schindler, Al Vorspan, Rabbi Seltzer,  
Copies Lydia Kukoff, Rabbi Schoolman  
Subject

*file*

I enclose very rough notes on the Outreach meeting of April 5.

*[Handwritten signature]*  
Dan

DBS:am  
Encl.



Union of American Hebrew Congregations  
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אחדות  
ליהדות  
מתקדמת  
באמריקה



## OUTREACH MEETING

### I. STRUCTURE

#### A. Decisions:

1. Make this biennial the place for the final task force report.
2. Dissolve the task force.
3. Establish Commission.

#### B. Follow-up:

1. Alex to consult with Glaser, Plaut regarding Commission.
2. Lydia and Sandy to recommend Task Force members to be retained on Commission.

### II. OUTREACH EMPHASIS

#### A. Change from theory to program.

#### B. Belin to continue as chairman, Zimmerman as co-chairman.

### III. PROGRAM

#### A. Conversion Programs

##### 1. Curriculum

- a. Introduction to Judaism course.
- b. Targets
  1. UAHC programs
  2. Communal programs
  3. General adult education

##### 2. Follow-up and Materials for Curriculum

- a. Book
- b. Teacher training videotape
- c. Teacher training workshops

3. To Be Considered

- a. Jewish Family Service link
- b. Conversion Archives
- c. Registry of Intro students

4. Intake Process

- a. Form
- b. Interview
- c. Computerized form
- d. Policy statement  
(Seltzer and Kukoff to circulate Boston and  
Los Angeles forms)

5. Conversion Follow-Up

- A. Certificate

B. Post Conversion Groups

1. Basically congregational program

2. Priorities

- a. Host families
- b. Newsletter to be considered

3. Update of Outreach Kits

4. Semi-annual mailing of Outreach materials to chairpersons

5. Some space in R.J. for Outreach

C. Parent Groups

- 1. With kids marrying a non-Jew.
- 2. With kids marrying someone who converted.
- 3. Lydia to ask Harry Danziger to do pilot.

D. Videotapes on Life Cycle, Holidays, Beliefs and Values

E. CCAR Links

1. Cooperation with UAHC Conversion Committee
2. Rabbis Kit
  - a. Responsa
  - b. Outreach minutes
  - c. Theory
  - d. Programs
3. HUC-JIR Outreach Day

F. Manual for Post-Conversion Groups

G. National Outreach Conference

1. May 18-20, 1984
2. New York
3. Goals
  - a. Assertion of Pre-eminence
  - b. Extend program to community agencies
  - c. Alter perceptions in larger community
  - d. Message that Judaism is open
  - e. Get answers to problems
  - f. Research findings  
(Seltzer to draft program)

IV. NEW AGENDAS:

MIXED MARRIEDS: AFFILIATED

- A. Some congregations have groups
  - a. Semi-social
  - b. Amorphous

- B. CCAR being prodded by Alex for guidelines on issues relating to non-Jews and temples
- C. Programs for Mixed Marrieds
  - 1. Seltzer - Philadelphia
  - 2. Chicago Weekend
  - 3. L.A. Pilot Project
- D. Saperstein - Pre-Marital Legal Committee  
(Sandy Katz)
- E. Rabbis Materials
  - 1. Legal Issues
  - 2. How do you say no  
(Lydia to get Foster way of saying no.)

MIXED MARRIEDS: UNAFFILIATED

- 1. Boston
  - a. Newspaper ad
  - b. 4 weeks
- 2. Los Angeles
  - a. 8 weeks
  - b. No ads
  - c. 57/60 expressed interest
  - d. In temple
  - e. Rabbi and educator teachers
  - f. Host families
  - g. 12 couples

h. Evaluation

1. Positive
2. Some anger gave way to appreciation
3. Not long enough
4. Interested in affiliation
5. Wanted more from instructors

i. Follow-up

1. Participants have requested camp weekend
2. Several signed up for Intro program
3. People now know they can join temples

j. Changes

1. Want more synagogue things
2. Want more preparation

B. Needs

1. Mixed married video tape
2. Teacher/Educator workshops
3. Commission policy
4. Keeping Posted or Reform Judaism article  
on the changing composition of our congregations.
5. Parent programs

C. Patrilineal Issue

BIENNIAL

- A. President's Speech
- B. Patrilineal Resolution
- C. Task Force Report
- D. Rabbinic Officiation
- E. Possible Workshop on Introduction to Judaism Archives

CHILDREN OF MIXED

MARRIAGES

- A. Seltzer - preliminary paper on issues
- B. Possible weekend for college-age children of mixed marrieds

NEW STRUCTURES

- 1. Regional Coordinators
  - a. Current nominal people in each region
  - b. Currently 2 people are being paid:
    - 1. Chicago
    - 2. Boston
  - c. Decision
    - 1. Take profits of Intro courses and engage Outreach Supervisor.

Capital Gifts

- I. Introduction to Judaism courses
- II. Research Studies
- III. Curriculum
- IV. TV
- V. Texts
- VI. Coordinators
- VII. Archives
  - 1. Tisch - Intro
  - 2. Rapoport - Research Institute



SUMMARY

- I. INTRO TO JUDAISM
  - A. Make Curriculum Normative Course
    - 1. UAHC courses
    - 2. Communal courses
  - B. Teacher Training
  - C. Intake Procedures
- II. POST CONVERSION
  - A. Kits - updated
  - B. Host Families
  - C. Committees
  - D. Pilot parent program - Memphis
  - E. Reform Judaism article
- III. CCAR
  - A. Kit
  - B. HUC-JIR Day
- IV. MIXED MARRIAGE
  - A. Conferences
    - 1. Philadelphia
    - 2. Los Angeles
  - B. Policy push with CCAR
  - C. Saperstein Legal Committee
  - D. Mixed Married Project - L.A.

V. CHILDREN OF MIXED MARRIAGES

A. Commission discussions

B. College programs in Boston and L.A.

VI. May, 1984 Conference

MINUTES  
Outreach Meeting  
January 25-26  
Tarrytown, New York

In attendance: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, Edith J. Miller,  
Al Vorspan, Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman,  
Rabbi Daniel B. Syme, Rabbi Sanford Seltzer,  
Rabbi Lennard Thal, Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman,  
David Belin, Lydia Kukoff, Richard Cohen, Mark Cohen

## INTRODUCTION:

There was a terrific impact, and major media coverage, after the 1978 Houston address. But this impact must be translated into deeds and action. Congregations were greatly stimulated, and asked for Outreach kits, but none exist. There is no concerted, coordinated programming on a scale that is warranted.

The impact with congregations has been felt in many areas. Some rabbis who were previously opposed to mixed marriages, for example, are opening up to officiating at such ceremonies. But because there is no national, coordinated program, rabbis and congregations both are going off in their own directions.

There are but a few publications available for Outreach programming. Adult education materials are lacking. There is not a single text today addressing the issue for non-Jews. The publications that we do have, such as Lydia's Choosing Judaism and an edition of "Keeping Posted," are excellent, but sparse. Current materials need to be fleshed out. A preliminary list can be assembled from existing materials.

We need a publication series. An Outreach Library must be designed and created, to include, among many other topics, a basic book, or series of books, on "This Is Judaism." No current publications or series suffice for a concerted Outreach effort. A video library should also be created, and mixed media generally should be utilized to the fullest extent possible.

Weekend programs have proven to be tremendously successful. New leadership comes out of these weekend meetings. However, the resources do not exist to run them on a sustained basis.

Research programs are required. There is no useful statistical data.

Major funding is required for the design and implementation of a national, coordinated Outreach Program, and for the development of materials. This programming should be geared to national, regional, and local efforts.

Involving our affiliates, and the CCAR, HUC, the Federation, and others whom we might stimulate and who share our goals, such as educators and other professionals, programs must be created to alter the attitudes of Reform Jews, Rabbis, Jews generally, and non-Jews.

Action: (Throughout these minutes, action refers to activity that is presently possible, or desirable in the future, as resources permit. Where there is an assignment, it is indicated in parentheses)

Prepare kits for congregations, using existing materials, and expanding as new materials become available.

Develop Outreach "beginner's kits."

Shore up follow-through programs for Jews By Choice.

Define and create a basic bibliography for an Outreach Library.

Develop adult education materials.

Begin preparation of a manual for the Houston biennial.

Create Outreach sales packages.

#### AREAS OF CONCENTRATION:

The areas of concentration for deliberation are:

- I. Introduction To Judaism
- II. Naturalization of Jews By Choice
- III. Mixed Marriages -- integration of non-Jewish partner
- IV. Children of Mixed Marriages
- V. Religiously non-preferenced
- VI. Overarching programs
- VII. Parents of Mixed Marriages and Intermarried Couples

#### INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM:

Current programming lacks standards. In terms of time, Introduction to Judaism classes can range from 9 to 18 weeks, from one to two hours per evening. There are no standard publications in use.

The CCAR is coming out with a booklet on conversion classes. Also re academic/study standards, the issue will be taken up by the appropriate committee of the Task Force, of the CCAR, and through them to the UAHC for consideration at the next biennial.

The dissemination of a curriculum would have a great impact. It would include publications, video components, and would cover areas such as Holidays and Life Cycle events, Hebrew instruction, history, etc.



Procedures and programs can be extended to cooperative and Reform community schools not run by UAHC. This will be possible by virtue of the availability of programs and materials and their distribution through the Publications Department.

Regional adult retreats would be ideal. They could be used for, in addition to Introduction To Judaism classes and follow-through programs, teacher training, rabbinic Outreach training, and weekend programming for other areas of our Outreach efforts.

Extensive records and statistical data are required, better enabling us to program, to plan, and to answer such questions as who comes to us, how many convert, how many will come to us in the future, how many inquire, how many proceed, how many drop out, who does, etc. Why do people convert, why do some spouses in mixed marriages convert and some not? While some research exists, it is not centralized. There is no readily citable study.

Action: Set standards in consultation with CCAR.  
Suggest an 18 week program, one evening/week for 2 hours.  
Get a list of communities that currently have Outreach programming. (Lydia)  
Publish the Los Angeles curriculum with the understanding that the curriculum will be added to. (Lydia)  
Have this curriculum applied to those communities that now have programs and courses run by us. (Lenny Schoolman)  
Prepare a packet with materials currently available, for students, and with a teacher's edition. (Sandy and Lydia)  
Prepare an Outreach Jewish calendar, a Shabbat Manual, and tapes. (Danny)  
Begin preparation of a rabbi's manual. (Shelly and Sandy, in consultation with Lydia)

Future Action: Establish Scholarship Fund.  
Create regularly scheduled weekend programs and seek to have subsidized.  
Create an Adopt-a-Family program.  
Create teaching workshops.  
Hire more teachers and create a standardized teacher-training program.  
Acquire adult regional retreat sites.  
Acquire buildings in cities in every region for the purpose of having regional Houses of Living Judaism.  
Have written a Basic Judaism for Reform Jews.  
Have written a text about Judaism from the perspective of the non-Jew.  
Have written a series of booklets explaining Judaism from the perspective of different religious backgrounds.  
Create a Department of Outreach. (Lenny Schoolman to coordinate)



(Lenny will also coordinate the use of scholarship funds, and the integration of the Commentary and other publications into a fully assembled product)  
Create a new welcome letter and a new certificate for those who have completed the course of study. This certificate should be made in duplicate, with a copy sent back to the UAHC for statistical and research purposes.  
Create a Research Institute.

#### NATURALIZATION OF JEWS BY CHOICE:

How can the new convert be welcomed into the community? How can congregations be made aware of the special needs of Jews By Choice just entering the congregation?

Should the conversion ceremony be public or private? There have been both successful and unsuccessful public ceremonies. Should there be a standardized ceremony?

Rabbis, congregational committees, and members should be used for input and to help in the development of programs and standards. They should be invited to communicate with us through the Department of Outreach, or, until that is formed, a congregational liaison committee. They can inform us of their problems. We can inform them of what to expect.

Regional offices should have Outreach committees made up of lay and rabbinic members, to coordinate activities. Rabbis should be sensitized to the needs and problems of potential converts, and those who are in the process of or have recently become Jews By Choice.

An individual or a committee should be appointed in each congregation, for liaison purposes, and to act as a support group to potential converts, for those currently enrolled in classes, and for new Jews By Choice. Those individuals and/or committees can also provide us with mailing lists and additional information.

A pamphlet should be prepared for congregations, making them aware of problems, needs, and what to expect. The pamphlet should suggest "ideal situations," such as groupings, ceremonies, support systems, etc. The dues question should be addressed: should there be a complementary first year membership for Jews By Choice?

Each region should have trained personnel to deal with new and potential Jews By Choice.

Our newspaper Reform Judaism should be utilized to make members aware of these issues, problems and needs relating to Outreach. It is a resource that might currently be used to sensitize the community.

A historical study should be prepared for congregations and schools providing a historical perspective on Outreach. A pamphlet with personal testimonies would also be helpful.

A clearing mechanism should be created for all new publications. It should come from the Task Force. Nothing should go out without this group's approval.

Tapes and TV programs could be used for sensitizing the congregation. They could also be distributed to camps where children and young adults may be made aware of matters relating to Outreach. Each of these materials should have a guide with questions for discussion, similar to teacher's manuals.

While we are not yet ready for self-syndication of our video materials, the mechanism exists in the form of the Jewish Chautauqua Society.

The acceptance, or non-acceptance, by Israel, of Jews By Choice, was discussed. The problem was clear. We wish to inculcate among Jews By Choice a strong tie with Israel. Israel does not, however, recognize new Jews who were converted by Reform rabbis. They do not recognize as Jewish their children, nor the children of mixed married couples where the father is Jewish but the mother is not, even where the children were raised as Jews. This is an issue among potential converts. The best approach on this matter is to be totally up front about it, and to work for change over time. This matter should be addressed by the Task Force. Funding in this area would facilitate informational programming here and in Israel.

Action: Request the CCAR to prepare a standardized conversion ceremony, public and private. (Shelly)  
Maintain CCAR interface, keeping them informed of our activities. (Shelly)  
Ask regional offices to form an Outreach committee consisting of lay and rabbinic members. (Lenny Schoolman)  
Hold weekend programs specifically for rabbis. (Schoolman)  
Hold workshops in regional settings for the training of personnel (lay and rabbinic). (Lenny Schoolman and Lydia)  
Prepare a letter to congregations suggesting the creation of Outreach liaison committees. (Sandy coordinate and draft letter, with Shelly and David Belin)  
Prepare a pamphlet for congregations addressing: what congregations could do vis-a-vis potential and new Jews By Choice. Suggest "ideal situations" such as groupings, support systems, possible complementary first year membership. (Sandy)

Prepare a packet offering suggestions and possibilities for congregations. (Sandy)  
Prepare Biennial workshops. (Lenny Schoolman)  
Generate articles for bulletins, camps, and Reform Judaism.  
Prepare pamphlet on personal testimonies. (Sandy)  
Prepare discussion guides for tapes. (Danny)  
Prepare historical study for congregations and schools. (Sandy)  
Promote use of available videotapes. (Danny)  
Establish through the Task Force a reading and review committee.  
Prepare guide for publications. (Danny and Lenny Schoolman)

Future

Action:

Create videotapes to sensitize congregations.  
Develop publications - books, pamphlets, etc.  
Establish adult education classes.  
Create courses utilizing existing and new publications.  
Structure video courses.  
Research various areas and create a yardstick for measurement, plans and projections based on research.  
Create strong follow-through programs to encourage continuation of study after Introduction To Judaism classes end.  
Use Jewish Museums as a means of strengthening links to the past.  
Explore possibility of a "Travelling Exhibit of Judaism."  
This could include such areas as The Realm of Torah, This Is Judaism, etc.

MIXED MARRIAGES -- INTEGRATION OF NON JEWISH PARTNER:

(A question was raised about the term "mixed married." Should it be changed to interfaith marriages?)

Reports are coming from congregations around the country, indicating the dimensions of the problem.

In the Boston area, three groups have been run with mixed married couples who came in response to advertizing. They were informative sessions. The Jewish Community Center in Boston also runs programs.

Current programming is erratic. One congregation advertizes their acceptance of "mixed married couples."

Lenny Thal chaired a group during the last year and a half in Los Angeles that was successful and informative.

The Council on Jewish Life established a commission to examine this issue. It included 8 or 9 rabbis (including orthodox and conservative rabbis), 16 lay people, and 4 or 5 Jewish professionals. One phase of the commission's work addressed the desirability of mixed marriages, and included a presentation by Maurice Lamb (an orthodox rabbi). A conclusion drawn was that only an Outreach program leads to conversion. He did not say he would block such an Outreach program.

A report emanated from the Task Force: yes, there is a desirability to reach out; no, it is not necessary to aim for conversion. The conversion process is generally initiated by the reaching out. The potential convert takes it from there.

When working with mixed married couples it is important to sit down with them in non-threatening situations. They should be drawn out: what is on their minds, why have they stayed away, etc.

An evening meeting was held in Los Angeles with 3 or 4 couples. There was general discussion: what did they feel about Jewish life? There was a fair amount of hostility expressed (but not toward the idea of having an evening of discussion). There was tremendous ignorance re Jewish life and the Jewish community. Often, it was found, the Jewish partner held the non-Jewish partner back. There was an expression by those who participated that they would like to continue.

A general area of interest, and a good jumping off point for instruction, is holidays.

Synagogue affiliation is important. Couples who are members of congregations are ipso facto more comfortable in the community and are more likely to bring their children up as Jews. Should we work only with couples inside the congregation, or outside, with non-affiliated couples, as well? Because of the scope of the problem, it was decided to initially limit ourselves to couples who are members of congregations, and over time to expand programming to non-members. Over time, opening programming to non-members will also work to draw them to synagogue membership.

Methods of reaching out to these couples include adult education programs, and educational programs for children which would serve to involve the parents.

Studies are required in this area as well. Why do some affiliate and some not? Why do some convert and some not? Other areas of research should include previous marriages, children, occupation, education, etc.



There are no resources currently available to conduct useful research. Resources available would permit a small study of program involvement of non-Jews in the synagogues, two weekend programs, and limited development of pilot programs.

Applications for congregational membership should be reformulated in order to elicit information on the couple and family. It often happens that the rabbi does not learn of a mixed interfaith marriage until there is a bar or bat mitzvah, or some other life cycle event. A revised application would be an initial source of information for research studies.

Pilot programs should be developed, to be approved by the Task Force.

A general question to be addressed is how do we accept mixed married interfaith couples without indicating our acceptance of mixed marriages. The rabbinate should be included in discussions on mixed marriages. A liaison committee could funnel information between the UAHC, the CCAR, and HUC.

Materials are lacking for programs oriented specifically to mixed married/interfaith couples. Educational materials must be developed.

The process of ordering our priorities and organizing our programs will be channeled through the Task Force.

There was general agreement that it is of the utmost importance that we communicate our recognition of the children of mixed marriages as Jews.

Current  
and  
Future

Action:

Establish Regional Information Centers.

Establish a network for communicating information to and from congregations. Make congregational leadership aware of our activities and our interest in addressing these problems. (Lenny Schoolman)

Request CCAR issue an edict affirming that children of mixed married couples are recognized as Jews. (Shelly)  
(A Conference committee should be established to respond to groups within and outside of congregations.)

Initiate research project: why, who, when, etc. re conversion and non-conversion in mixed interfaith marriages. (Sandy)

Begin developing educational materials. (Danny)

Develop a series of pilot programs, and monitor carefully over the next 2-3 years. (Lydia)

Develop a mixed married weekend program. (Set up meeting with Maslin) (Lydia)

Initially, plan two weekend programs, one in New York and one in the south. (Lydia)  
 Conduct a small study of proper involvement of non-Jews in the synagogue. (Shelly)  
 Review process of joining congregations with an eye toward revising applications to elicit useful information. (Lenny in consultation with committee on Synagogue Administration)  
 Establish a Pilot Program Committee.  
 Contact rabbis who perform mixed marriages. Get information from them, learn from them.  
 Get rabbis of congregations to share their records with us for purposes of study and research.  
 Study what is going on around the country in this area.  
 Study the effects of non-Jewish partner on marriage and on children.  
 Meet with and involve in programming the Boards of Trustees of congregations.  
 Seek out volunteers among therapists and professionals in the congregation, and form groups with couples and individuals.  
 Establish a National Information Center in Boston.

#### CHILDREN OF MIXED MARRIAGES:

Children of mixed married interfaith couples have special problems. This is true at all ages, but especially for college youth and young adults, some of whom, depending on their upbringing, are not sure of what they are. Children and parents both have many questions: if my mother is not Jewish but my father is, am I Jewish? Am I recognized as such? By whom?

Problems have also arisen because of the rising rate of divorce. How are children of mixed married interfaith couples affected by divorce? This also gives rise to the problems of single-parent homes with no support groups to turn (or return) to.

A legal conference should be held on the matter of children. Should, and how should, pre-nuptial agreements, and/or Ketubahs, be drawn up with the child's religious rearing taken into account. The goal of the conference should be the issuance of guidelines to the rabbinate and to congregations in cases of custodial hearings.



There was general recognition of the problems for children of religious school age of mixed married couples. Do we want to do a rethinking of the rule that you can't have children belong to a religious school if the parents don't belong to the congregation? Who should be addressing this matter? It was agreed that a meeting should be scheduled with the committee on Synagogue Administration to discuss a full examination of this matter, along with a reexamination of policy regarding program availability. Should programs be available to all children who seek them, or only to children whose parents belong to a congregation? The goal of this meeting should be a redefinition of policy toward children of mixed married couples. The strong feeling of the group was that everything be made available to children. Scholarship funds should be established, and, over the long run, programs should be developed for camp committees, youth groups, etc., addressing the issue of children of mixed married/interfaith couples. Special programs should be developed, as well, for life cycle times for the children of mixed married/interfaith couples.

The CCAR should address the matter of education as well. It is now left to the individual rabbi and family. There should be rabbinic and educator's workshops. They should be sensitized to and made aware of this problem.

A packet of materials should be prepared for rabbis and educators.

College level programming is both lacking and required. A machinery should be set up to generate comprehensive and multifaceted programs, utilizing mixed media - video, records, books, pamphlets, etc. Cooperative ventures should be explored with existing bodies, such as Hillel, JCS, etc. There is need for a staff to develop these programs. Program development and staffing should be under the jurisdiction of the Department of Outreach.

For now, a small committee should be formed addressing itself specifically to college level programming, in coordination with the Task Force. A special college-level subcommittee of the Task Force should be formed. Included on the subcommittee should be rabbis who teach on campuses. A Task Force subcommittee should also be formed to decide how to utilize existing arms in order to present a cohesive form for these programs. One subcommittee might suffice for these areas.

If funding were available the idea of campus reading rooms, or multi-media rooms for Jewish programs, was suggested. If funding were available the establishment of "Bayits" on or off campuses, in which social and educational programs could be promulgated, would be desirable.

Publications targeted to this audience, to the children of mixed/interfaith marriages, need to be developed. Publications should be created for each age group: children, college age, and young adults. A potential bibliography should be drawn up by the Education Committee, and should include a series of books and pamphlets which will ultimately comprise a part of a basic Library for the Outreach program.

The importance of a new Basic Judaism book was reaffirmed.

Advertizing is a viable method of reaching college age and young adults. Tasteful, informational advertizing could be introduced around the time of the High Holy Days and Passover, offering information, consultation, publications, etc. A logical extension of this kind of program would be to attract respondees to Introduction to Judaism classes. As such, this type of advertizing should be structured around Introduction to Judaism courses.

Along with an advertizing concept, an informational, public relations splash would be appropriate to attract young Jews generally, and children of mixed/interfaith marriages specifically, who may not have read themselves into the initial media coverage on Outreach.

To study advertizing potential and possibilities, a discreet test program might be developed and tried, addressed to young adults. The idea of having a major event, at Carnegie Hall or the Felt Forum in New York, with major entertainment figures, was introduced. This would generate heavy media coverage and attract many young people. Before either of these programs could proceed, the importance of having materials and publications ready for distribution was stressed, so that if and when information was requested materials would be available.

Successful programming generates further interest and a wider audience. In Los Angeles, after the completion of an Introduction to Judaism course a Talmud class was begun. Not only did many of the people who attended the Introduction to Judaism classes come to the Talmud class, but they brought new people with them.

Current  
and Future

Action:

Arrange a conference to address the legal issue concerning the children of mixed/interfaith marriages.  
(David Saperstein)

Review the process of joining a congregation.

(Lenny Schoolman, with the committee on Synagogue Administration)

Elicit suggestions and recommendations from rabbis.

Form a Committee for College Programming. (Paul Menitoff)

Create a Scholarship Fund for children to participate in schools, camps, trips to Israel, etc.

Publications targeted to this audience, to the children of mixed/interfaith marriages, need to be developed. Publications should be created for each age group: children, college age, and young adults. A potential bibliography should be drawn up by the Education Committee, and should include a series of books and pamphlets which will ultimately comprise a part of a basic Library for the Outreach program.

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Current  
and Future  
Action:

- Arrange a conference to address the legal issue concerning the children of mixed/interfaith marriages. (David Saperstein)
- Review the process of joining a congregation. (Lenny Schoolman, with the committee on Synagogue Administration)
- Elicit suggestions and recommendations from rabbis.
- Form a Committee for College Programming. (Paul Menitoff)
- Create a Scholarship Fund for children to participate in schools, camps, trips to Israel, etc.

Create a bibliography for a Library for Outreach.  
(Education Commission, with approval of Task Force)  
Create a total, multilevel, mixed media Outreach Library.

At some future time, arrange a conference with top media people (David Sarnoff, Sherry Lansing, for example). The purpose: we have called the American public's attention to Israel, to the Holocaust -- now we would like to focus attention on the worth of Judaism, to its grandeur and uniqueness.  
(Dick Cohen to begin assembling names for such a committee)

#### THE RELIGIOUSLY NON-PREFERENCED:

The importance of educating and sensitizing the future rabbinate was discussed. This would involve the introduction of courses at HUC, a cumbersome process. New rabbis are generally coming out of school more traditional. Attitudes should be addressed in the second and third years. Meetings should be arranged between faculties and student bodies, and a committee of the Task Force.

The CCAR has a meeting scheduled for June in New York. They could be asked to come out with a unifying resolution in this area, recognizing the problem, but declaring the freedom of the rabbi in addressing this issue. The rabbinate should understand that just as they react to being told what to do by the laity, the converse is also true. A common ground should be reached.

Shelly Zimmerman, David Belin, and Joe Herman should meet to evolve a common goal, and to determine what should be determined by whom.

The need for a good data base was reemphasized, with the importance of a Research Institute affirmed. As part of this Institute should be a Records Department, appropriately funded. Good records would be useful for a variety of purposes, including research, political and demographic. A computerized system should be brought into play. Studies should be conducted: how can this system be set up, who can devise such a system.

For research purposes, a good questionnaire should be created for those who become Jews By Choice. To be sent back to the UAHC, one part should be filled out by the convert, another by the rabbi.



After discussion of possible programming, the conclusion drawn was that, as this was the one area of the Task Force report that received some strenuous objections from the floor in Boston, and as there is so much to be done in the other areas of our Outreach efforts, areas in which there is general agreement and a consensus, programming for the religiously non-preferenced should be put on a back burner for now.

Future

Action: Shelly Zimmerman and David Belin approach Gene Mahalic and make recommendations for a full course, or short of that for sensitization through other means (discussions, meetings, etc.) in the HUC curriculum.  
Have a Task Force meeting on a HUC campus.  
Devise a conversion form and questionnaire that will elicit information from the convert and rabbi.  
Have Harry Fruehoff work on this.  
Create a Research Institute.

PARENTS OF INTERMARRIED AND MIXED MARRIED/INTERFAITH COUPLES:

There is pain and anguish on both sides. Many parents responded to an experimental group run in Boston.

Publications - books and pamphlets - should be prepared. Weekend meetings and programs should be planned. Counselors should be trained and made aware of the special needs of parents of intermarried and mixed married/interfaith couples.

These programs should be planned and executed through the Department of Outreach. Initially, this Department would require an executive and a secretary. There should be a regional coordinator for every region. Funding for the department should include travel and program expenses. Half-time regional coordinators may suffice. A figure of \$100,000 was suggested for the Department, including a salary allowance of \$12,000 + \$3,000 for travel.

The Research Institute would be functional in this area as well. Ultimately, Sandy will run and/or monitor this Institute.

There will be overarching areas between the Department of Outreach and the Research Institute, and between the publications and video materials that will be produced for the different areas of the Outreach programming efforts. Video materials, for example, may have more general uses, in addition to specific Outreach purposes.

As part of the strengthening of this process, through specific proposals and packaging for the purpose of raising funds which would allow for the design and implementation of the programs enunciated in our deliberations, the following areas were defined and assigned:

Publications: An Outreach/Basic Judaism Library  
An Introduction to Judaism Book. (Danny)

TV and Film: A Living Judaism series on videotape.  
A Holidays series. (Danny)

Research and Records: Sandy and Lenny with Fruehoff

Programs and Program Development: Mark

Facilities: Retreat Centers, regional Houses of Living Judaism,  
College "Bayits," etc. (Mark)

Pilot college projects and facilities: Mark

Conference of Inquiry and Communications: Dick Cohen

A brochure will be prepared as soon as possible incorporating the above areas. Mark will coordinate.

Bernie Rapoport will be apprised of our deliberations.



M I N U T E S

Outreach Meeting

January 25-26, 1982

Tarrytown, New York

In attendance: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, Edith J. Miller,  
Al Vorspan, Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman,  
Rabbi Daniel B. Syme, Rabbi Sanford Seltzer,  
Rabbi Lennard Thal, Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman,  
David Belin, Lydia Kukoff, Richard Cohen, Mark Cohen

## INTRODUCTION:

There was a terrific impact after the 1978 Houston address. But this impact must be translated into deeds and action. Congregations were greatly stimulated, and asked for Outreach kits, but none exist. There is no concerted, coordinated programming on a scale that is warranted.

There was also major media coverage of the portion of Rabbi Schindler's address dealing with Jewish outreach to the religiously non-preferenced. Unfortunately, the media did not generally disclose the other aspects of the Outreach Program.

The impact with congregations has been felt in many areas. But because there is no national, coordinated program, rabbis and congregations both are going off in their own directions.

There are but a few publications available for Outreach programming. Adult education materials are lacking. There is not a single text today addressing the issue for non-Jews. The publications that we do have, such as Lydia's Choosing Judaism and an edition of "Keeping Posted," are excellent, but sparse. Current materials need to be fleshed out. A preliminary list can be assembled from existing materials.

We need a publication series. An Outreach Library must be designed and created, to include, among many other topics, a basic book, or series of books, on "This is Judaism." No current publications or series suffice for a concerted Outreach effort. A video library should also be created, and mixed media generally should be utilized to the fullest extent possible.

Weekend programs have proven to be tremendously successful. New leadership comes out of these weekend meetings. However, the resources do not exist to run them on a sustained basis.

Research programs are required. There is no useful statistical data.

Major funding is required for the design and implementation of a national, coordinated Outreach Program, and for the development of materials. This programming should be geared to national, regional, and local efforts.

Programs must be created to alter the attitudes of Reform Jews, Rabbis, Jews generally, and non-Jews.

Action: (Throughout these minutes, action refers to activity that is presently possible, or desirable in the future, as resources permit. Where there is an assignment, it is indicated in parentheses)

Prepare kits for congregations, using existing materials,  
and expanding as new materials become available.  
Develop Outreach "beginner's kits."  
Shore up follow-through programs for Jews By Choice.  
Define and create a basic bibliography for an  
Outreach Library.  
Develop adult education materials.  
Begin preparation of a manual for the Houston biennial.  
Create Outreach sales packages.

#### AREAS OF CONCENTRATION:

The areas of concentration for deliberation are:

- I. Introduction to Judaism and conversion courses.
- II. Follow-through programs for people who have recently become Jews By Choice.
- III. Outreach to the non-Jewish partner in an interfaith marriage.
- IV. Outreach to the children of mixed marriages, including pre-college age and also college students and young adults.
- V. Jewish outreach to the religiously non-preferenced.
- VI. Overarching programs.
- VII. Parents of mixed marriages and intermarried couples.

#### INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM:

Current programming lacks standards. In terms of time, Introduction to Judaism classes can range from 9 to 18 weeks, from one to two hours per week. There are no standard publications in use.

The Task Force is reviewing this whole area as a part of its work on the implementation of the resolution adopted at the Boston Biennial.

The dissemination of a curriculum would have a great impact. It would include publications, video components, and would cover areas such as Holidays and Life Cycle events, Hebrew instruction, history, etc.

Procedures and programs can be extended to cooperative and Reform community schools not run by UAHC. This will be possible by virtue of the availability of programs and materials and their distribution through the Publications Department.

Regional adult retreats would be ideal. They could be used for, in addition to Introduction To Judaism classes and follow-through programs, teacher training, rabbinic Outreach training, and weekend programming for other areas of our Outreach efforts.

Extensive records and statistical data are required, better enabling us to program, to plan, and to answer such questions as who comes to

us, how many convert, how many will come to us in the future, how many inquire, how many proceed, how many drop out, who does, etc. Why do people convert, why do some spouses in mixed marriages convert and some not? While some research exists, it is not centralized. There is no readily citable study.

Action: Set standards in consultation with CCAR. One possibility: an 18 week program, one evening/week for 2 hours.  
Get a list of communities that currently have Outreach programming. (Lydia)  
Publish the Los Angeles curriculum with the understanding that the curriculum will be added to, including the Boston curriculum and Jewish Family Service. (Lydia)  
Have this curriculum applied to those communities that now have programs and courses run by us. (Lenny Schoolman)  
Prepare a packet with materials currently available, for students, and with a teacher's edition. (Sandy and Lydia)  
Prepare an Outreach Jewish calendar, a Shabbat Manual, and tapes. (Danny)  
Begin preparation of a manual including guidelines for rabbis. (Shelly and Sandy in consultation with Lydia)  
Create series of video tapes--adult education. These can have multi-uses, including various aspects of Outreach, as well as religious school and adult education.

Future Action: Establish Scholarship Fund.  
Create regularly scheduled weekend programs and seek to have subsidized.  
Create an Adopt-a-Family program.  
Create teaching workshops.  
Hire more teachers and create a standardized teacher-training program.  
Acquire adult regional retreat sites.  
Have written a Basic Judaism for Reform Jews.  
Have written a text about Judaism from the perspective of the non-Jew.  
Have written a series of booklets explaining Judaism from the perspective of different religious backgrounds.  
Create a Department of Outreach. (Lenny Schoolman to initially coordinate with Task Force involvement.)  
(Lenny will also coordinate the use of scholarship funds, and the integration of the Commentary and other publications into a fully assembled product.)  
Create a new welcome letter and a new certificate for those who have completed the course of study. This certificate should be made in duplicate, with a copy sent back to the UAHC for statistical and research purposes.  
Create a Research Institute.



#### FOLLOW-THROUGH PROGRAMS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE RECENTLY BECOME JEWS BY CHOICE:

How can the new convert be welcomed into the community? How can congregations be made aware of the special needs of Jews By Choice just entering the congregation?

Should the conversion ceremony be public or private? There have been both successful and unsuccessful public ceremonies. Should there be one or more suggested standard ceremonies?

Rabbis, congregational committees, and members should be used for input and to help in the development of programs and standards. They should be invited to communicate with us through the Department of Outreach, or, until that is formed, a congregational liaison committee. They can inform us of their problems. We can inform them of what to expect.

Regional offices should have Outreach committees made up of lay and rabbinic members, to coordinate activities. Rabbis should be sensitized to the needs and problems of potential converts, and those who are in the process of or have recently become Jews By Choice.

An individual or a committee should be appointed in each congregation, for liaison purposes, and to act as a support group to potential converts, for those currently enrolled in classes, and for new Jews By Choice. Those individuals and/or committees can also provide us with mailing lists and additional information.

A pamphlet should be prepared for congregations, making them aware of problems, needs, and what to expect. The pamphlet should suggest "ideal situations," such as groupings, ceremonies, support systems, etc. The dues question should be addressed: should there be a complementary first year membership for Jews By Choice?

Each region should have trained personnel to deal with new and potential Jews By Choice. In congregations, Outreach committees should primarily concentrate in Introduction to Judaism classes and Follow-Through. The other areas of Outreach are too sensitive at this time to be left in the hands of untrained people.

Our newspaper Reform Judaism should be utilized to make members aware of these issues, problems and needs relating to Outreach. It is a resource that might currently be used to sensitize the community.

A historical study should be prepared for congregations and schools providing a historical perspective on Outreach. A pamphlet with personal testimonies would also be helpful.

A clearing mechanism should be created for all new publications. It should come from the Task Force. Nothing should go out without this group's approval.

Tapes and TV programs could be used for sensitizing the congregation. They could also be distributed to camps where children and young adults may be made aware of matters relating to Outreach. Each of these materials should have a guide with questions for discussion, similar to teacher's manuals.

While we are not yet ready for self-syndication of our video materials, the mechanism exists in the form of the Jewish Chautauqua Society.

The acceptance, or non-acceptance, by Israel, of Jews By Choice, was discussed. The problem was clear. We wish to inculcate among Jews By Choice a strong tie with Israel. Israel does not, however, recognize new Jews who were converted by Reform rabbis. They do not recognize as Jewish their children, nor the children of mixed married couples where the father is Jewish but the mother is not, even where the children were raised as Jews. This is an issue among potential converts. The best approach on this matter is to be totally up front about it, and to work for change over time. This matter should be addressed by the Task Force. Funding in this area would facilitate informational programming here and in Israel.

Action: (All printed, audio and video materials and programs should be coordinated with the Task Force.)  
Request the CCAR to prepare one or more suggested standardized conversion ceremonies, public and private. (Shelly)  
Maintain CCAR interface, keeping them informed of our activities. (Shelly)  
Ask regional offices to form an Outreach committee consisting of lay and rabbinic members. (Lenny Schoolman coordinate with Task Force)  
Hold weekend programs specifically for rabbis. (Lenny Schoolman)  
Hold workshops in regional settings for the training of personnel (lay and rabbinic). (Lenny Schoolman and Lydia)  
Prepare a letter to congregations suggesting the creation of Outreach liaison committees. (Sandy coordinate and draft letter, with Shelly and David Belin)  
Prepare a pamphlet for congregations addressing: what congregations could do vis-a-vis potential and new Jews by Choice. Suggest "ideal situations" such as groupings, support systems, possible complimentary first year membership. (Sandy coordinate with Task Force)  
Prepare a packet offering suggestions and possibilities for congregations. (Sandy)  
Prepare Biennial workshops. (Lenny Schoolman)  
Generate articles for bulletins, camps, and Reform Judaism.

Prepare pamphlet on personal testimonies. (Sandy)  
Prepare discussion guides for tapes. (Danny)  
Prepare historical study for congregations and schools. (Sandy)  
Promote use of available videotapes. (Danny)  
Establish through the Task Force a reading and review committee.  
Prepare guide for publications. (Danny and Lenny Schoolman)

Future

Action:

Create videotapes to sensitize congregations.  
Develop publications - books, pamphlets, etc.  
Establish adult education classes.  
Create courses utilizing existing and new publications.  
Structure video courses.  
Research various areas and create a yardstick for measurement, plans and projections based on research.  
Create strong follow-through programs to encourage continuation of study after Introduction to Judaism classes end.  
Use Jewish Museums as a means of strengthening links to the past.  
Explore possibility of a "Travelling Exhibit of Judaism."  
This could include such areas as The Realm of Torah, This is Judaism, etc.

MIXED MARRIAGES -- INTEGRATION OF NON JEWISH PARTNER:

(A question was raised about the term "mixed married." Should it be changed to interfaith marriages?)

Reports are coming from congregations around the country, indicating the dimensions of the problem.

In the Boston area, three groups have been run with mixed married couples who came in response to advertizing. They were informative sessions. The Jewish Community Center in Boston also runs programs.

Current programming is erratic. One congregation advertizes their acceptance of "mixed married couples."

Lenny Thal chaired a group during the last year and a half in Los Angeles that was successful and informative.



The Council on Jewish Life established a commission to examine this issue. It included 8 or 9 rabbis (including orthodox and conservative rabbis), 16 lay people, and 4 or 5 Jewish professionals. One phase of the commission's work addressed the desirability of mixed marriages, and included a presentation by Maurice Lamm (an orthodox rabbi). A conclusion drawn was that only an Outreach program leads to conversion. He did not say he would block such an Outreach program.

The report of the Task Force believes there is a desirability to reach out. It is not necessary to aim for conversion where the non-Jewish spouse identifies with another religion. The conversion process is generally initiated by the reaching out. The potential convert takes it from there.

When working with mixed married couples it is important to sit down with them in non-threatening situations. They should be drawn out: what is on their minds, why have they stayed away, etc.

An evening meeting was held in Los Angeles with 3 or 4 couples. There was general discussion: what did they feel about Jewish life? There was a fair amount of hostility expressed (but not toward the idea of having an evening of discussion). There was tremendous ignorance re Jewish life and the Jewish community. Often, it was found, the Jewish partner held the non-Jewish partner back. There was an expression by those who participated that they would like to continue.

A general area of interest, and a good jumping off point for instruction, is holidays.

Synagogue affiliation is important. Couples who are members of congregations are ipso facto more comfortable in the community and are more likely to bring their children up as Jews. Should we work only with couples inside the congregation, or outside, with non-affiliated couples, as well? Because of the scope of the problem, it was decided to initially limit ourselves to couples who are members of congregations, and over time to expand programming to non-members. Over time, opening programming to non-members will also work to draw them to synagogue membership.

Methods of reaching out to these couples include adult education programs, and educational programs for children which would serve to involve the parents.

Studies are required in this area, as well. Why do some affiliate and some not? Why do some convert and some not? Other areas of research should include previous marriages, children, occupation, education, etc.

There are no resources currently available to conduct useful research. Resources available would permit a small study of program involvement of non-Jews in the synagogues, two weekend programs, and limited development of pilot programs.

Applications for congregational membership should be reformulated in order to elicit information on the couple and family. It often happens that the rabbi does not learn of a mixed interfaith marriage until there is a bar or bat mitzvah, or some other life cycle event. A revised application would be an initial source of information for research studies.

Pilot programs should be developed, to be approved by the Task Force.

A general question to be addressed is how do we accept mixed married interfaith couples without indicating our encouragement of mixed marriages? The rabbinate should be included in discussions on mixed marriages. A liaison committee could funnel information between the UAHC, the CCAR, and HUC.

Materials are lacking for programs oriented specifically to mixed married/interfaith couples. Educational materials must be developed, to be coordinated with the Task Force.

The process of ordering our priorities and organizing our programs will be channeled through the Task Force.

There was general agreement that it is of the utmost importance that we communicate our recognition of the children of mixed marriages as Jews.

There needs to be suggested guidelines for participation of the non-Jewish partner in the congregation.

Current  
and  
Future  
Action:

(All printed, audio and video materials and programs to be coordinated with the Task Force.)  
Establish Regional Information Centers.  
Establish a network for communicating information to and from congregations. Make congregational leadership aware of our activities and our interest in addressing these problems. (Lenny Schoolman)  
Request CCAR issue a statement affirming that children of mixed married couples are recognized as Jews, regardless of whether the Jewish parent is male or female. (Shelly)  
(A Conference committee should be established to respond to groups within and outside of congregations.)  
Initiate research project: why, who, when, etc. re conversion and non-conversion in mixed interfaith marriages.  
(Sandy coordinated with Task Force)  
Begin developing educational materials. (Danny)

Develop a series of pilot programs, and monitor carefully over the next 2-3 years. (Lydia)  
 Develop a mixed married weekend program. (Lydia)  
 Initially, plan two weekend programs, one in New York and one in the south. (Lydia)  
 Conduct a small study of proper involvement of non-Jews in the synagogue. (Shelly)  
 Review process of joining congregations with an eye toward revising applications to elicit useful information. (Lenny in consulting with committee on Synagogue Administration and coordinated with Sandy)  
 Establish a Pilot Program Committee.  
 Contact rabbis who perform mixed marriages. Get information from them, learn from them.  
 Get rabbis of congregations to share their records with us for purposes of study and research.  
 Study what is going on around the country in this area.  
 Study the effects of non-Jewish partner on marriage and on children.  
 Meet with and involve in programming the Boards of Trustees of congregations.  
 Seek out volunteers among therapists and professionals in the congregation, and form groups with couples and individuals.  
 Establish a National Information Center in Boston.  
 Consider guidelines for synagogue participation of the non-Jewish partner.

#### CHILDREN OF MIXED MARRIAGES:

Children of mixed married interfaith couples have special problems. This is true at all ages, but especially for college youth and young adults, some of whom, depending on their upbringing, are not sure of what they are. Children and parents both have many questions: if my mother is not Jewish but my father is, am I Jewish? Am I recognized as such? By whom?

Problems have also arisen because of the rising rate of divorce. How are children of mixed married interfaith couples affected by divorce? This also gives rise to the problems of single-parent homes with no support groups to turn (or return) to.

A legal conference should be held on the matter of children. Should, and how should, pre-nuptial agreements, and/or Ketubahs, be drawn up with the child's religious rearing taken into account. The goal of the conference should be the issuance of guidelines to the rabbinate and to congregations. It may also have some bearing



in divorce situations where there may be hearings involving custody of children.

There was general recognition of the problems for children of religious school age of mixed married couples. Do we want to do a rethinking of the rule that you can't have children belong to a religious school if the parents don't belong to the congregation? Who should be addressing this matter? It was agreed that a meeting should be scheduled with the committee on Synagogue Administration to discuss a full examination of this matter, along with a reexamination of policy regarding program availability. Should programs be available to all children who seek them or only to children whose parents belong to a congregation? The goal of this meeting should be a redefinition of policy toward children of mixed married couples. The strong feeling of the group was that everything be made available to children. Scholarship funds should be established, and, over the long run, programs should be developed for camp committees, youth groups, etc., addressing the issue of children of mixed married/interfaith couples. Special programs should be developed, as well, for life cycle times for the children of mixed married/interfaith couples.

The CCAR should address the matter of education, as well. It is now left to the individual rabbi and family. There should be rabbinic and educator's workshops. They should be sensitized to and made aware of this problem.

A packet of materials should be prepared for rabbis and educators.

College level programming is both lacking and required. A machinery should be set up to generate comprehensive and multifaceted programs, utilizing mixed media -- video, records, books, pamphlets, etc. Cooperative ventures should be explored with existing bodies, such as Hillel, JCS, etc. There is need for a staff to develop these programs. Program development and staffing should be under the jurisdiction of the Department of Outreach. We need a comprehensive multi-faceted program of Outreach to the children of mixed marriages who are at college or young adults of post-college age.

For now, a small committee should be formed addressing itself specifically to college level programming, in coordination with the Task Force. A special college-level subcommittee of the Task Force should be formed. Included on the subcommittee should be rabbis who teach on campuses. A Task Force subcommittee should also be formed to decide how to utilize existing arms in order to present a cohesive form for these programs. One subcommittee might suffice for these areas.

If funding were available the idea of campus reading rooms, or multi-media rooms for Jewish programs, was suggested. If funding were available the establishment of "Bayits" on or off campuses, in which social and educational programs could be promulgated, would be desirable.

Publications targeted to this audience, to the children of mixed/interfaith marriages, need to be developed. Publications should be created for each age group: children, college age, and young adults. A potential bibliography should be drawn up by the Education Committee, and should include a series of books and pamphlets which will ultimately comprise a part of a basic Library for the Outreach program.

The importance of a new Basic Judaism book was reaffirmed.

Advertizing is a viable method of reaching college age and young adults. Tasteful, informational advertizing could be introduced around the time of the High Holy Days and Passover, offering information, consultation, publications, etc. A logical extension of this kind of program would be to attract respondees to Introduction to Judaism classes. As such, this type of advertizing should be structured around Introduction to Judaism courses.

Along with an advertizing concept, an informational, public relations splash would be appropriate to attract young Jews generally, and children of mixed/interfaith marriages specifically, who may not have read themselves into the initial media coverage on Outreach.

To study advertizing potential and possibilities, a discreet test program might be developed and tried, addressed to young adults. The idea of having a major event, at Carnegie Hall or the Felt Forum in New York, with major entertainment figures, was introduced. This would generate heavy media coverage and attract many young people. Before either of these programs could proceed, the importance of having materials and publications ready for distribution was stressed, so that if and when information was requested materials would be available.

Successful programming generates further interest and a wider audience. In Los Angeles, after the completion of an Introduction to Judaism course a Talmud class was begun. Not only did many of the people who attended the Introduction to Judaism classes come to the Talmud class, but they brought new people with them.

Current  
and Future

Action: (All printed, audio and visual material to be coordinated with the Task Force.)  
Create a total, multi-level, mixed media Outreach Library.  
Arrange a conference to address the legal issue concerning the children of mixed/interfaith marriages.  
(Sandy)  
Review the process of joining a congregation.  
(Lenny Schoolman, with the committee on Synagogue Administration)  
Elicit suggestions and recommendations from rabbis.



Form a Committee for College Programming. (Paul Menitoff)  
Create a Scholarship Fund for children to participate in schools, camps, trips to Israel, etc.  
Bring in the Jewish Chataqua Society to help with Outreach on college campuses. Also discuss possible cooperation with Hillel.  
Create a bibliography for a Library for Outreach.  
(Education Commission, with approval of Task Force)

At some future time, arrange a conference with top media people (David Sarnoff, Sherry Lansing, for example). The purpose: we have called the American public's attention to Israel, to the Holocaust -- now we would like to focus attention on the worth of Judaism, to its grandeur and uniqueness.  
(Dick Cohen to begin assembling names for such a committee)

#### THE RELIGIOUSLY NON-PREFERENCED:

The importance of educating and sensitizing the future rabbinate was discussed. This would involve the introduction of courses at HUC, a cumbersome process. New rabbis are generally coming out of school more traditional. Attitudes should be addressed in the second and third years. Meetings should be arranged between faculties and student bodies, and a committee of the Task Force.

Shelly Zimmerman, David Belin, and Joe Glaser should meet to evolve a common goal, and to determine what should be determined by whom.

The need for a good data base was reemphasized, with the importance of a Research Institute affirmed. As part of this Institute should be a Records Department, appropriately funded. Good records would be useful for a variety of purposes, including research, political and demographic. A computerized system should be brought into play. Studies should be conducted: how can this system be set up, who can devise such a system.

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Future

Action: Shelly Zimmerman and David Belin approach Gene Mahaly and make recommendations for a full course, or short of that for sensitization through other means (discussions, meetings, etc.) in the HUC curriculum.  
Have another Task Force meeting on a HUC campus.  
Devise a conversion form and questionnaire that will elicit information from the convert and rabbi.  
Have Harry Fruehoff work on this.  
Create a Research Institute.  
Assemble names for the development of possible information programs in the future for the non-preferenced as outlined in The Task Force Report.  
The planning group should include some of the most outstanding experts in the field of communications.

#### PARENTS OF INTERMARRIED AND MIXED MARRIED/INTERFAITH COUPLES:

There is pain and anguish on both sides. Many parents responded to an experimental group run in Boston.

Publications -- books and pamphlets -- should be prepared. Weekend meetings and programs should be planned. Counselors should be trained and made aware of the special needs of parents of intermarried and mixed married/interfaith couples.

These programs should be planned and executed through the Department of Outreach. Initially, this Department would require an executive and a secretary. There should be a regional coordinator for every region. Funding for the department should include travel and program expenses. Half-time regional coordinators may suffice. A figure of \$100,000 was suggested for the Department, including a salary allowance of \$12,000 + \$3,000 for travel.

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A Holidays series. (Danny)

Research and Records: Sandy and Lenny with Fruehoff

Programs and Program Development: Mark

Facilities: Retreat Centers, regional Houses of Living Judaism,  
College "Bayits", etc. (Mark)

Pilot college projects and facilities: Mark

Conference of Inquiry and Communications: Dick Cohen

A brochure will be prepared as soon as possible incorporating  
the above areas. Mark will coordinate.

Bernie Rapoport will be apprised of our deliberations.





# Union of American Hebrew Congregations

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION  
838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100 CABLES: UNIONUAHC

## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

### SECOND OUTREACH WEEKEND

TO BE HELD JUNE 6-8 IN NEW ORLEANS

Dear Rabbi and Congregational President:

As a result of the extraordinary success of our April 25-27 weekend in New York, entitled "Meeting the Needs of Jews by Choice" the UAHC-CCAR Task Force on Reform Jewish Outreach will sponsor a second Outreach Weekend June 6-8 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The weekend, to be based at New Orleans' St. Charles Hotel, 2203 St. Charles Avenue, constitutes a unique opportunity for Jews by Choice, their spouses, those in the process of conversion and their prospective mates to share common concerns and articulate shared aspirations, all in a highly experiential setting.

The conference is open to Jews by Choice or conversion students in any UAHC congregation, as well as their spouses or prospective spouses. We will be pleased to accept Jews by Choice from your congregation whose applications and registration checks are received by June 1, 1980. As we can accommodate a maximum of fifty participants, applications will be accepted on a first come, first served basis.

We anticipate that the program participants will return to their temples prepared to initiate and coordinate new programs of outreach which will benefit the entire congregation. A copy of the tentative program is enclosed for your information.

If there are those in your congregation whom you wish to recommend for this weekend, please:

1. Have the individual fill out the application.
2. Sign the application in the space provided.
3. Have the individual return the application and a check for the \$40.00 registration fee at once.

**"MEETING THE NEEDS OF JEWS BY CHOICE"**

**June 6-8, 1980**

**St. Charles Hotel**

**2203 St. Charles Ave.**

**New Orleans, Louisiana 70140**

**FRIDAY, JUNE 6**

**4:30 - 5:00 P.M. REGISTRATION (AT ST. CHARLES HOTEL)**

**5:00 P.M. WELCOME**

**5:30 P.M. SHABBAT SERVICE**

**6:00 P.M. KABBALAT SHABBAT**

**6:30 P.M. DINNER AND ZEMIROT**

**8:00 P.M. "WHY I CHOSE JUDAISM": GROUP SHARING OF  
PERSONAL REASONS FOR CHOOSING JUDAISM**

**10:00 P.M. ONEG SHABBAT AND BROW\$ING IN THE JEWISH  
RESOURCE CENTER**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 7**

**8:30 A.M. BREAKFAST**

**9:30 A.M. SHABBAT SERVICE**

**11:00 A.M. "BEGINNING THE JOURNEY"**

**THE RABBI AND HIS/HER INFLUENCE**

**12:30 P.M. KIDDUSH AND SHABBAT LUNCH**

**Continued**



SATURDAY, JUNE 7, continued

2:00 P.M. "THE PROCESS OF LEARNING"  
THE INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM CLASS

4:00 P.M. FREE TIME

6:00 P.M. HAVDALAH AND DINNER

7:30 P.M. "BEING JEWISH. HOW IT AFFECTED..."

A. MY SPOUSE

B. MY PARENTS AND FAMILY

C. MY IN-LAWS

D. FRIENDS, OLD AND NEW"

SUNDAY, JUNE 8

8:30 A.M. BREAKFAST

9:30 A.M. "TAKING RESPONSIBILITY"  
PROGRAMS FOR JEWS BY CHOICE TO IMPLEMENT IN  
THEIR CONGREGATIONS

12:00 P.M. ADJOURN

APPLICATION FORM

"MEETING THE NEEDS OF JEWS BY CHOICE"

June 6-8, 1980

St. Charles Hotel

2203 St. Charles Ave.

New Orleans, Louisiana 70140

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
(City) (State) (Zip)

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
(Area Code) (Number)

CONGREGATION \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

RABBI \_\_\_\_\_

RABBI'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

Enclose your application and check for \$40.00, made out to "Task Force-Reform Jewish Outreach" and send to:

"Task Force-Reform Jewish Outreach"

838 Fifth Avenue

New York, NY 10021

All applications are accepted on a first come, first served basis.

We can accommodate a maximum of 50 participants, so please act at once!

PROGRAM

FRIDAY, MARCH 14

3:30 - 5:30 P.M.

Registration, Stouffer's Cincinnati Towers,  
141 West 6th Street, Cincinnati

All Friday evening activities at the hotel.

6:00 P.M.

Kabalat Shabbat  
Shabbat Evening Dinner  
Zmirot

Welcome: David Belin, Chairman  
Task Force On Reform Jewish Outreach  
Temple B'nai Jeshurun  
Des Moines, Iowa

Keynote Address:

"Judaism's View of the Convert: An  
Historic Perspective"

Dr. Eugene Mihaly  
Executive Dean for Academic Affairs and  
Professor Rabbinic Literature and Homi-  
letics, HUC-JIR

Discussion

SATURDAY, MARCH 15

10:00 A.M.

Chartered bus transportation to Hebrew Union College  
(all morning and afternoon activities will be held  
at Hebrew Union College)

10:30 A.M.

Shabbat Morning Service - Hebrew Union College Chapel

11:45 A.M.

Tour Hebrew Union College Campus

12:30 P.M.

Shabbat Luncheon

2:00 P.M.

"When Non-Jews Become Jewish: Assessing the Reactions  
of Born Jews"

Dr. Robert L. Katz  
Joseph and Helen Regenstein Professor of Religion,  
Ethics and Human Relations, HUC-JIR

Discussion

Program, continued

4:00 P.M.

Return to Stouffer's by chartered bus

6:00 P.M.

Havdalah and Dinner

8:00 P.M.

Presentation: "The Challenge, Joy and Pain of  
Becoming A Jew"

Susanne Cromwell

Temple Isaiah, Detroit, Michigan

Panel Discussion: Dr. Robert L. Katz, Moderator

"A Jewish Spouse Responds"

Ira Lipman

Temple Israel, Memphis, Tennessee

"A Jew By Choice Responds"

Ellen Sher

Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio

"A Congregational Rabbi Responds"

Rabbi Robert Schur

Beth El Congregation, Fort Worth, Texas

SUNDAY, MARCH 16

9:30 A.M.

At Stouffer's Cincinnati Towers

"Welcoming and Integrating Jews By Choice  
Into the Congregation and Community" -  
Program clinic - Sharing of ideas

Chairperson - Lydia Kukoff

Coordinator, Introduction to Judaism

Program, Pacific Southwest Council,

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Los Angeles, California

11:30 A.M.

Adjournment



"MEETING THE NEEDS OF JEWS BY CHOICE"

April 25-27, 1980

UAHC HOUSE OF LIVING JUDAISM

838 Fifth Avenue

New York, New York 10021

FRIDAY, APRIL 25

4:30 - 5:00 P.M.	REGISTRATION (AT UAHC BUILDING)
5:00 P.M.	WELCOME
5:30 P.M.	SHABBAT SERVICE
6:00 P.M.	KABBALAT SHABBAT
6:30 P.M.	DINNER AND ZEMIROT
8:00 P.M.	"WHY I CHOSE JUDAISM": GROUP SHARING OF PERSONAL REASONS FOR CHOOSING JUDAISM
10:30 P.M.	ONEG SHABBAT AND BROWSING IN THE JEWISH RESOURCE CENTER

SATURDAY, APRIL 26

9:30 A.M.	SHABBAT SERVICE
11:00 A.M.	"BEGINNING THE JOURNEY" THE RABBI AND HIS/HER INFLUENCE
12:30 P.M.	KIDDUSH AND SHABBAT LUNCH

Continued



SATURDAY, APRIL 26, continued

2:00 P.M.

"THE PROCESS OF LEARNING"

THE INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM CLASS

3:30 P.M.

"BEING JEWISH: HOW IT AFFECTED..."

A. MY SPOUSE

B. MY PARENTS AND FAMILY

C. MY IN-LAWS

D. FRIENDS, OLD AND NEW"

6:30 P.M.

HAVDALAH AND DINNER

8:00 P.M.

"IF ONLY..."

A SHARING OF SUGGESTIONS TO SENSITIZE THE  
JEWISH COMMUNITY TO THE NEEDS OF JEWS BY CHOICE

9:30 P.M.

SNACK AND SINGING

SUNDAY, APRIL 27

9:30 A.M.

"TAKING RESPONSIBILITY"

PROGRAMS FOR JEWS BY CHOICE TO IMPLEMENT IN  
THEIR CONGREGATIONS

11:00 A.M.

ADJOURN

"MEETING THE NEEDS OF JEWS BY CHOICE"

April 25-27, 1980

UAHC HOUSE OF LIVING JUDAISM

838 Fifth Avenue

New York, New York 10021

FRIDAY, APRIL 25

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Continued

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, continued

2:00 P.M.	"THE PROCESS OF LEARNING" THE INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM CLASS
3:30 P.M.	"BEING JEWISH: HOW IT AFFECTED..." A. MY SPOUSE B. MY PARENTS AND FAMILY C. MY IN-LAWS D. FRIENDS, OLD AND NEW"
6:30 P.M.	HAVDALAH AND DINNER
8:00 P.M.	"IF ONLY..." A SHARING OF SUGGESTIONS TO SENSITIZE THE JEWISH COMMUNITY TO THE NEEDS OF JEWS BY CHOICE
9:30 P.M.	SNACK AND SINGING

SUNDAY, APRIL 27

9:30 A.M.	"TAKING RESPONSIBILITY" PROGRAMS FOR JEWS BY CHOICE TO IMPLEMENT IN THEIR CONGREGATIONS
11:00 A.M.	ADJOURN

*Outreach Letterhead*  
**Union of American Hebrew Congregations**

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE — JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION  
838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100 CABLES: UNIONUAHC

איחוד  
ליהדות  
מתקדמת  
באמריקה

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Dear Rabbi and Congregational President:

During the weekend of April 25-27, 1980, the UAHC-CCAR Task Force, on Reform Jewish Outreach will sponsor an historic event, the first national conference for Jews by Choice in our Movement's 107 years. The program will be held at the House of Living Judaism, 838 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York.

The weekend, entitled "Meeting the Needs of Jews by Choice," constitutes a unique opportunity for Jews by choice to share common concerns and articulate shared aspirations, all in a highly experiential setting.

The conference is open to Jews by Choice in any UAHC congregation. We will be pleased to accept up to three Jews by Choice from your congregation whose applications and registration checks are received by April 15, 1980. As we can accommodate a maximum of one hundred participants, applications will be accepted on a first come, first served basis.

We anticipate that the program participants will return to their temples prepared to initiate and coordinate new programs of outreach which will benefit the entire congregation. A copy of the tentative program is enclosed for your information.

If there are those in your congregation whom you wish to recommend for this weekend, please:

1. Have the individual fill out the application.
2. Sign the application in the space provided.
3. Have the individual return the application and a check for the \$40.00 registration fee at once.

The registration fee covers all sessions, meals and materials. Transportation, housing and incidental expenses are the responsibility of the participant.

Please let us hear from you at once. It promises to be a most exciting experience.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Sanford Seltzer  
Director, UAHC-CCAR Task Force on  
Reform Jewish Outreach

Encl.





איחוד  
ליהדות  
מתקדמת  
באמריקה

# Union of American Hebrew Congregations

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE—JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

1300 BOYLSTON STREET, ROOM 207, CHESTNUT HILL, MASS. 02167 (617) 277-1655

NORTHEAST COUNCIL

Rabbi Sanford Seltzer  
Director

*Handwritten signature: H. Seltzer*

October 18, 1979

Dear Task Force Member:

I trust you have received the announcement of our October 28-29 meeting and the accompanying agenda. Enclosed is a packet of materials in anticipation of our sessions. It includes:

1. Copies of the revised outline prepared by Mr. Belin.
2. A somewhat more detailed exposition of section I of the outline.
3. Demographic data regarding the future of the American Jewish Community.
4. A number of articles responding to Rabbi Schindler's call for Outreach to the religiously non-preferenced.
5. Examples of a program sponsored by the local Boston Federation which you might want to replicate in your own community.

I look forward to seeing you.

Sincerely,

*Handwritten signature: Sandy*

Rabbi Sanford Seltzer  
Director, UAHC Task Force  
On Outreach

Chairman  
Matthew H. Ross

President  
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

Regional President  
Melvin Kutchin

Vice Presidents  
Charles Ehrlich  
Carl Feldman  
Harold Perkins  
Robert Summit

Secretary  
Myrna Jacobs

Treasurer  
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Vice Chairman  
Alan V. Iselin

Dr. David BenDaniel  
Harold Cotton  
Dr. Harold M. Faigenbaum  
Tracy H. Ferguson  
Bertram Frankenger, Jr.  
Cantor Ramon Gilbert  
Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn  
Robert Green  
Melvin Kutchin  
Sol Levites  
Rabbi Jerome R. Malino  
Morton Narva  
Sydney Pomer  
Rabbi Harold Silver  
Robert Summit  
Howard Wilkoff



## TASK FORCE ON OUTREACH

### Section I

#### A Selective Critical Survey & Resource Bibliography

by Rabbi Sanford Seltzer

#### The Biblical And Rabbinic Traditions

It is clear from even a cursory reading of both the Biblical and Rabbinic record that from its earliest inceptions Judaism was conceived of as a universal faith with a message of love, truth and justice intended for all of human kind. The people of Israel were bound to their God by a unique, immutable covenant under whose terms it became their destiny to bring the ethical imperatives of this faith to the four corners of the earth. This was to be achieved both by personal and collective examples which might well encourage others to voluntarily link their lot to that of the chosen people. Abraham's "call" in Genesis 12, culminates in the clarion declaration of Isaiah 56.

Genesis 12: "And the Lord said to Abram, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and him who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

Isaiah 56: 6-7: "And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord to minister unto him, to love the name of the Lord and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the sabbath and does not profane it and holds fast my

covenant - these I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar. For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."

Some Additional Biblical References:

Leviticus 19: 33-34 "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, and you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."

Deuteronomy 7: 6 "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth."

Isaiah 2: 1-3 "The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Isaiah 49: 6 "he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Isaiah 51: 4: "Listen to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go forth from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples."

Judaism's world view is further exemplified in the Book of Jonah and made emphatic by the subsequent inclusion of that work in the liturgy of Yom Kippur. Thus the holiest day of the Jewish year becomes the setting in which the Jewish people are again reminded of their mission. Jonah is punished by God for his refusal to preach the Lord's message to the people of Nineveh. God's displeasure over his parochialism is expressed most poignantly in Jonah 4: 9-11: "The Lord said to Jonah, you pity the plant for which you did not labor nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh that great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also much cattle?"

George Foot Moore's observation: "The conviction that Judaism as the one true religion was destined to become the universal religion was a singularity of the Jews,"<sup>1</sup> is consistent with the wealth of positive rabbinic references about proselytes and proselytizing antecedent to the victorious emergence of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire.

The evidence retarding Judaism's affirmative attitude toward converts during the Intertestamental period of Jewish history is so overwhelming that even the most adamant opponents of current attempts to actively seek converts concede this point and base their opposition upon other arguments including the assertion that the specific historical circumstances of the

Graeco-Roman world cannot be used as precedent for contemporary movements in this direction.

The most comprehensive collection of rabbinic statements regarding proselytes is to be found in "A Rabbinic Anthology" by Montefiore and Lowe.<sup>2</sup>

As previously indicated, Rabbi Alexander Schindler's call for the development of a program of outreach to the religiously non-preferenced has resulted in a continuing polemic over the advisability of such an endeavor. Articles reflecting a diversity of points of view relative to this idea are enclosed.

Although there is disagreement as to the nature and extend of conversion to Judaism subsequent to the Edict of Constantine and the official promulgation of Christianity as the State religion, it is indisputable that the most intensive efforts seeking proselytes were characteristic of the Biblical and Rabbinic periods of Jewish history. Discrimination, persecution forced participation in religious disputations intended to embarrass Jews and foment hatred among the Christian masses occupied much of Jewish life from the time of the fall of the Roman Empire to the first stirrings of emancipation prior to the French Revolution. Such circumstances were hardly conducive to the seeking of proselytes and with notable exceptions<sup>3</sup> the practice among Jews was ended.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the conventional wisdom regarding Jewish attitudes towards proselytes is open to a good deal of debate. Time does not permit an examination of the data regarding the descendants of the Marranos who embraced Judaism often at the cost of their lives both in Europe and in the New World



subsequent to the Spanish Inquisition and the expulsion from Spain in 1492. Nor is it possible here to do more than allude to a series of works which address the reaction of Jews to Christianity and ensuing efforts to reclaim the person of Jesus for Judaism.<sup>5</sup>

#### Current Jewish Demographic Trends

Jewish demographers and sociologists are generally agreed that statistically speaking, the future of the American Jewish community is in jeopardy. Estimates differ as to the precise population figures of the next century as well as to possible solutions for the problem. What appears to be consensually accepted is that within the next 100 years the American Jewish population will range anywhere from 1 - 3 million men, women and children. This is a consequence of a declining Jewish birthrate, already below the replacement level, an aging Jewish population, which has resulted in 31% of all Jewish households headed by persons 60 years of age and older, and an intermarriage rate of over 30% which shows no indication of abating and which instead may continue to rise.<sup>6</sup>

Spokespersons for the American Jewish community have generally ignored the issue of larger Jewish families and have focused on the rising rate of intermarriage among Jews as their primary concern in dealing with Jewish survival. Their responses have often been negative, strident and rejecting with little or no thought given to the potentially affirmative aspects of

this phenomenon. Thus, the largely positive attitudes towards Jews and Judaism as evidenced by the choice of Jewish mates by non-Jews bespeaking the powerful impact of Judaism upon American life, the tendency of converts to actively embrace synagogue life and become practicing observant Jews rather than joiners of secular Jewish organizations or totally non-affiliated members of the Jewish community and the proclivity of even those who have chosen to retain their original non-Jewish identities after marriage to a Jew, to forge social and cultural ties with the Jewish community are overlooked and devalued. Milton Himmelfarb and Eugene Mihaly have taken a far more balanced view of the matter. Himmelfarb writes:

"The increasing numbers of Jews who marry non-Jews are sometimes cited as evidence of a decline in Judaism. This would be valid evidence if the lower rate of intermarriage in earlier generations could be taken as an index of fidelity then, but it cannot.....If anything, the intermarriage of Jews seems less ideological today, less rebellious than it did in the 1920's.<sup>7</sup>

During the historic debate over the resolution on intermarriage passed at the 1973 Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in Atlanta, Rabbi Eugene Mihaly offered this observation: "If we are to speak to our own children, if we would address the boys and girls whom we consecrated and whom we confirmed we must be prepared to say.....your pain is my pain. I am with you in your struggle, in your travail, open, accepting, loving, understanding.....This tendency to impose and coerce especially within the institutions of Reform Judaism will result only in widening the rift that already exists between the rabbinic leadership and the reform laity. We will legislate ourselves into total irrelevance.<sup>8</sup>

Insufficient data exist to determine what, if any, the impact of the Holocaust may have had upon the willingness of Jewish couples to have large families as well as whether lingering suspicions of non-Jews as the enemy continue to be a deterrent against seeking converts. It has yet to be known if the professed fears of Christian evangelical retaliation against renewed Jewish outreach programs are not in reality unconscious distortions of feelings of self-abnegation and low esteem which when brought to the surface translate into the belief that one has to be crazy to voluntarily become a Jew.

At the same time one can only conjecture that the secularization and normalization of the American Jewish community as an outgrowth of the birth of the state of Israel may have unwittingly resulted in an increasing rate of intermarriage among Jews who no longer  
9  
deem themselves to be different or marginal.

#### The American Jewish Future

##### Two Views of Why Jews Should Remain Jews

Jews have made outstanding contributions to American society in every period of American history and in all walks of life, culturally, politically, scientifically, in the business world, etc. They continue to be a significant factor on the American scene. Yet periodically Jews may ask themselves why the need to maintain ones' Jewish identity and to be active in the transmission of the Jewish tradition to future generations. Certainly for those preparing to welcome non-Jews into the ranks of the Jewish people the question is of significant import.

The American Jewish Historian, Jacob R. Marcus, has addressed himself to the question of why this Jewish community should strive so hard to not only retain its separate identity, but disseminate its message as well. "I would like to believe that if we retain group identity within a larger context, then that separatism must be inspired by moral considerations. I would like to believe that if I walk my own way it is because I have a purpose, because I have something to give.....We are living in a world that seems increasingly indifferent to kindness, to love, to human decencies. It is this situation that rises to challenge the Jews to survive purposefully, to justify his separatism.

10

The late Harry Slonimsky, viewed Judaism as the blueprint for the religion of the future. On the occasion of the 300th anniversary of Jewish settlement in New York City, he too posed the why of Jewish survival. His comments are most instructive: "1) The type of man who produced the Bible, the homo religious or religious man par excellence must be revived; he stands in a relation of polarity to God and is the chief factor in all religious life and growth. 2) Religion cannot recognize any one person as the sole way to God and Judaism is the permanent opposition to any religion which deifies a man. 3) The ethic and idealism sanctioned by the religion of the future must be a life ethic, a life idealism as opposed to the romantic instinctivistic and other wordly idealism which have dominated Europe and which cut at



the roots of life. 4) Our universe is a growing universe and a continuing creation. There must be therefore a growth in some aspects of the Godhead as well. In that process, man<sup>11</sup> is a crucial and decisive factor."

Footnotes

1. See George Foot Moore: *Judaism In The First Centuries of the Christian Era. The Age Of The Tannaim*, Volume I. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1954, pp. 323-353. See also Bernard Bamberger: *Proselytism In The Talmudic Period*, Ktav Publishers, New York 1968.
2. "A Rabbinic Anthology" by Montefiore and Lowe. Meridian Books, New York, pp. 566-579. Additional material is available in Joseph Rosenbloom's: "Conversion To Judaism From The Biblical Period To The Present", Hebrew Union College Press, Cincinnati, 1978.
3. "Studies by Professor Ben Zion Wacholder in the Jewish Quarterly Review indicate that as late as the 14th and 15th centuries Jews were still actively engaged in seeking converts despite the proscriptions of the Church. According to Wacholder the noted medieval rabbi, Simeon Ben Tzemach Duran, wished to include this endeavor as one of the 613 Mitzvot incumbent upon Jews to perform daily.
4. For further references see: Edward H. Flannery, "The Anguish Of The Jews," The Macmillan Co., New York, 1965, Hans Joachim Schoeps, "The Jewish-Christian Argument," Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1963, A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversos Judaeos*, Cambridge University Press, 1935.
5. See Walter Jacob, "Christianity Through Jewish Eyes," Hebrew Union College Press, Cincinnati, 1974, Joseph Krauskipf, "A Rabbis Impressions Of The Oberammergau Passion Play," Rayner Publishers, Philadelphia, 1904. Also, Sanford Seltzer's "Reaction To Jesus In The Reform Rabbinate," Unpublished Thesis, Cincinnati, 1959.
6. See Elihu Bergman: "The American Jewish Population Erosion," *Midstream*, October 1977, pp. 9-19. "Zero Population Growth And The Jewish Community: A Symposium Analysis, November-December 1976: Synagogue Council of America, New York. Lieberman and Weinfeld, "Jewish Demographic Trends," *Midstream*, November 1978, pp. 9-19. Steve Huberman, *New Jews, The Dynamics of Religious Conversion*, Unpublished Dissertation, Brandeis University, 1979. (The Union of American Hebrew Congregations will shortly publish a summary digest of Dr. Huberman's work.)
7. Milton Himmelfarb: *Secular Society. A Jewish Perspective*, as found in *Religion In American* edited by McLoughlin and Bellah, Beacon Press, Boston, 1968., pp. 282.

8. C.C.A.R. Yearbook, Volume LXXXIII 1973, pp. 85-86.
9. See Sanford Seltzer: Olam Hadash, A New Jewish World, Published Address delivered before the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, Assembly of Delegates, May 6, 1979.
10. Jacob R. Marcus, "Studies In American Jewish History," Hebrew Union Press, Cincinnati, 1969, p. 229.
11. Harry Slonimsky, "Essays," Hebrew Union College Press, Cincinnati, 1967, pp. 132-133.

# Demographic Trends and Jewish Survival

SAMUEL S. LIEBERMAN  
MORTON WEINFELD

**N**orth American Jews are disappearing. This is the stark proposition which has begun to reverberate in Jewish community circles. In a recent article, Elihu Bergman<sup>1</sup> reports projections of the American Jewish population for the year 2076 ranging from a maximum of 944,000 to a minimum of 10,420 assuming certain fertility, mortality, and intermarriage rates. Hillel Halkin's<sup>2</sup> provocative restatement of Zionist principles rests largely on predictions of a marked decrease in the size and viability of the American Jewish population. The well publicized finding of the National Jewish Population Study (N.J.P.S.) that nearly one third of American Jews marrying between 1966 and 1972 had intermarried, has reinforced the expectation of a diminution in the size of the Jewish community, and by extension, in the quality and security of American Jewish life.

In the context of this growing Jewish communal concern, two points might be made. First, while a decrease in the size of the American Jewish community may be expected, it is not clear how large a role intermarriage rates play in this reduction. Indeed, the pattern of American Jewish intermarriage is complex, with the estimate of any attrition rate (the proportional loss to the Jewish community of offspring of in-

termarriages) depending largely on particular definitions of Jewish identification and criteria for communal membership. The traditional conception of intermarriage as a one-way passage into non-Jewish society no longer applies. As a community, American Jewry has not yet faced the challenges of the changing pattern.

More generally, when thinking about the "optimum" Jewish population, it is proper to take account of various quantitative and qualitative considerations and to recognize that trade-offs may well be necessary between the two for the community to meet successfully the variety of tasks on its collective agenda. Jewish population size and composition might then be evaluated as representing more than the aggregation of individual private decisions and may indicate an organismic, adaptive response to a number of needs and conditions. Accordingly, hypothetical efforts to reduce intermarriage or to stimulate Jewish fertility would not only be difficult but would entail costs along with benefits for the Jewish community. In the following article, we first examine the impact of current age structure, fertility, mortality, and intermarriage rates on Jewish population trends, and then develop an alternate, survivalist perspective on the Jewish future.

SAMUEL S. LIEBERMAN is a Staff Associate of the Center for Policy Studies of the Population Council in New York.

MORTON WEINFELD is a faculty member of the Department of Sociology at McGill University.

**W**hat is the demographic background to changing intermarriage and conversion patterns? Here it is instructive to consider the recent history of the



Jewish population in relation to that of the American population as a whole, and to introduce some alternative projections of the future American Jewish population. In this discussion we exclude all matters of intermarriage and conversion and focus on the types of changes expected as a result of present age structure, fertility, and mortality characteristics.

In broad terms the American Jewish population has evolved in a pattern similar to that of the American population as a whole. Thus, the period of rapid growth, 1880–1925, was a reflection primarily of rapid in-migration rather than high fertility levels. Migration decreased in the mid-1920s and the rate of growth of the Jewish community was further affected by a decline in fertility that began during or before the Depression. Calvin Goldscheider<sup>3</sup> and others have suggested that this decline in Jewish fertility was sharper and more lasting than that for the population as a whole. This is evident in the belated and restrained participation of American Jews in the post-World War II baby boom. Reporting on a community study of Providence, Rhode Island, Goldscheider finds that Jewish women who married between 1945 and 1954 averaged 2.2 children ever born compared to an average of 2.0 children ever born to Jewish women who married between 1930 and 1944. Moreover, the early downturn of Jewish fertility in the 1960s preceded the decline in North American fertility of the last ten years.

According to most recent U.S. Census Bureau projections, the American population is headed towards zero growth and eventual decline. If current low fertility rates hold and mortality improves marginally, the U.S. population of 217 million will grow to 252 million in the year 2020 before declining to 226 million in the year 2050. What are the demographic prospects of Ameri-

ca's Jews? Here we turn to a set of projections which have the virtue of allowing us to draw together various pieces of information into a single framework.

Of course, projections are in the realm of hypotheses, resting on assumptions that are more or less arbitrary. Yet our results are striking. Our work builds on U.S. Census Bureau projections which extend current fertility rates and incorporate assumptions of improving mortality. We apply these vital rates to the total population and age group totals published in the N.J.P.S.

Our initial population total is an estimated 5.37 million Jews, in 1970.<sup>4</sup> This estimate is somewhat controversial. It differs from other estimates of 5.8 to 6 million individuals, Jewish and non-Jewish, living in Jewish households.<sup>5</sup> Such estimates may have been on the high side as these typically included a significant number of persons living in Jewish households but not considered to be Jewish by birth or by conversion. Our aim here is to provide baseline estimates of future population change, excluding complications of intermarriage and conversion, so it is appropriate that we begin with the figure of 5.37 million.

In making our projections we assume no net immigration of Jews to America over the next 100 years.<sup>6</sup> We apply those mortality rates predicted by the Census Bureau to hold over the next 100 years, and rely on the current age structure of the American Jewish population. This latter factor is a critical determinant of future population totals. Like the American population the Jewish population, even at below-replacement fertility, has "momentum" to further growth because of the baby boom cohorts who are now becoming parents. A unique aspect of the Jewish age structure, however, is the high proportion that is above age 65. (For example, reliable Canadian census data

for 1971 show the Jewish group with 11.3 percent over age 65, compared to the national average of 8.1 percent).

Our basic projection applies current U.S. fertility rates which have fallen *below* replacement levels. But we might first mention a possible scenario which has Jewish fertility recovering gradually to replacement level, say by the year 2000, and remaining at this level in the years thereafter. Jewish population would then rise slowly to 5.8 million in the next 20-30 years and would stabilize at 5.7 million by the year 2070. However, because of the chronically low fertility levels of the American Jewish population our attention now focuses on projections which apply current U.S. fertility rates to the Jewish population.

Of critical concern in these projections is where Jewish fertility stands in relation to the fertility of Americans as a whole. Results of major surveys in the U.S. as well as Canadian census data consistently place Jewish fertility 20-30 percent below that of the total population. However, with the drastic general decline of crude birth rates it may be doubted whether the 20-30 percent differential has been maintained. A total fertility rate 30 percent below the rate 1.7, which is the rate used in the Census Bureau population projection, would put Jewish fertility at 1.2 children ever born per woman, an exceedingly low rate by any standard. On the other hand, recent American community surveys as well as Canadian data suggest that Jewish fertility continues to stand below that of the population as a whole. Thus, we apply a set of initial fertility rates ranging from 1.2-1.7 children ever born per woman.

Using the rate of 1.7, projections point to gradual growth which will cease by the year 2000 when the Jewish population will number approximately 5.7 million. Thereafter, the population declines, until in the 2070 Jewish popu-

lation stands at 3.9 million. On the other hand, if Jewish fertility is projected at less than current rates less growth occurs and the eventual decline is more rapid and more severe. Applying the unlikely rate of 1.2, which assumes a 30 percent differential, the population stands at 5 million in the year 2000, falls to 4 million in 2025, 3 million in 2040, and numbers only 1.6 million in 2070.

In summary, we anticipate slow growth for the Jewish population until early in the next century, when a sustained decline is likely to set in. Because it is more aged and has smaller baby boom cohorts, the Jewish population grows by less and begins to decline earlier than the American. The projections suggest further that the aging of the Jewish population is likely to increase in severity as the baby boom cohorts move along in age. The prospects for a Jewish community that is aging and growing smaller—with attendant difficulties, stresses, responsibilities, and obligations—are addressed below. Next we discuss issues raised by intermarriage and conversion in the light of this general demographic background.

**W**hat is likely to be the effect of intermarriage on Jewish population size? The evidence of a steady increase in intermarriage rates is clear. From N.J.P.S. data we know that 31.7 percent of Jews marrying between 1966 and 1972 married someone who had been born non-Jewish. Similarly, Canadian intermarriage rates reveal a steady if less dramatic increase, with 17.8 percent of Canadian Jews marrying in 1973 wedding non-Jews—representing an average increase of 1 percent per year from the lower rates of the early 1960s.

Little quantitative research has been done on the children of intermarried couples. However, it is known that



Not for  
attrition  
families

many intermarried Jews, with or without conversion of spouse, continue to affiliate with the community, identify as Jews, and make some effort to pass on Jewish commitment to their offspring. Others, of course, do not. But consider the following proposition: as long as 50 percent of the children of intermarriages remain Jews there is no net effect on the size of the Jewish population, *regardless of the intermarriage rate!* Assume all Jews intermarry, and there are two children per family. If 50 percent of the families remain "Jewish," so that 50 percent of the offspring are "Jewish," we have no increase or decrease. If more than 50 percent become Jews, the Jewish population in the next generation would increase! This points to the importance of the attrition rate in assessing the demographic impact of intermarriage, and in the centrality of competing definitions of Jewishness in the calculation of generational gains or losses.

In estimating attrition rates, a number of complications emerge. The N.J.P.S. reveals that conversions to Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform) take place in 27 percent of husband-Jewish intermarriages and 3 percent of the wife-Jewish intermarriages; conversions out of Judaism are far rarer. When enumerating Jews we might begin by including offspring of in-married families along with offspring of intermarriages where a conversion has occurred. In addition, Orthodox Jewish law would permit us to include children of wife-Jewish intermarriages without conversion. But such criteria, with their legalistic basis, are out of step with complex sociological reality. Thus, the N.J.P.S. found that in 46 percent of husband-Jewish and 44 percent of wife-Jewish intermarriages, the non-Jewish spouse "identifies" as Jewish; that 98 percent of wife-Jewish and 63 percent of husband-Jewish intermarriages intend

to provide a "Jewish" religious upbringing for their children; that 71 percent of all intermarried couples (compared to 85 percent of in-married couples) intend to give their children some Jewish education. What these figures suggest is that intermarriage by itself is not necessarily synonymous with a complete break with the Jewish community. Using these survey results and assuming that all adult Jews marry and produce two children per marriage, we can compute estimates of the number of Jews who will descend from the Jews who married between 1966 and 1972.

Counting only offspring of intermarriages, of all wife-Jewish intermarriages, and husband-Jewish intermarriages with female conversion, we find a generational loss of roughly 6 percent. At the other extreme, counting up all Halachically Jewish children as well as all those offspring for whom parents indicate an intention to provide "some Jewish education," we find a gain of roughly 14 percent! Skeptics will argue, rightly, that many of these children of intermarriages who receive some minimal Jewish education or Jewish upbringing will become adults with few ties and little commitment to the Jewish community. Moreover, future behavior may differ widely from the expectations declared in the form of survey responses. Yet using this criterion no doubt many of the "bona fide" Jews will also match in assimilationist behavior these recruited Jews. In short, among various definitions of who is to be counted in the Jewish community, we obtain predictions of generational change ranging from a loss of 6 percent to a gain of 14 percent. We would tentatively conclude that the independent net impact of intermarriage rates (or more precisely attrition rates) on the size of the American Jewish population is minimal.

It is not clear to what extent intermarriage rates will continue to rise, if at

all. As the number of Jews decreases both absolutely and in relation to the larger population the chances of intermarriage may well increase with more frequent interaction with non-Jews. However, it can also be hypothesized that intermarriage rates may level off on the assumption that as the more "assimilated" marry out those who remain will be more committed to the Jewish community. Yet even if intermarriage rates rise we cannot predict the future path of attrition rates however these are defined. Impressionistic evidence based on increases in the status and confidence of American Jews suggests that attrition rates may not rise: Jews no longer intermarry to escape their community of origin; conversions out of Judaism are rare; and Jewishness is no longer an impediment to occupational mobility or economic success. In the movie *Pete 'n Tillie*, Walter Matthau explains why he insists on calling himself Jewish though he is three-quarters Lutheran and only one-quarter Jewish: "I'm a social climber."

Though the net effect of intermarriage and attrition rates on Jewish population remains minimal, intermarriage remains perhaps the most emotional domestic issue in American Jewish life. This is hardly surprising. First, there seems to be a residue of discomfort, even distrust, in the posture of Jews towards converts to Judaism. This attitude exists predominantly in immigrant, older, or traditional segments of the community. Though we all know of cases of "successful" non-Jewish conversion to Judaism, latent antagonism towards converts is readily uncovered in the Jewish community. There is often a tendency to ascribe intermarriages which end in divorce to irreconcilable differences involved in any Jewish-Gentile marriage. Some segments of the community see anti-Semitism as the inescapable inheritance of the non-Jew. These fears are

often grounded in recollections of the Holocaust, in stories of betrayal of Jews by their non-Jewish spouses in the face of Nazi threats.

Secondly, increasing numbers of unconverted non-Jews manifest positive attitudes toward the Judaism of their spouses, and acquiesce or actively participate in creating an identifiably Jewish home. Recent Jewish experience has not equipped the community for the absorption of such large numbers of voluntary members. At issue here is the moral and legal monopoly of the Orthodox definition of Jewishness in America and Israel, to the exclusion of voluntaristic or subjective interpretations. There is a kind of subterranean uncertainty about the "legal" status of these quasi-Jews and their offspring as members of the community. The mainstream Jewish community behaves in a schizophrenic manner towards these individuals, proudly claiming them as members when they achieve distinction in their fields, or contribute to community charities, while withholding complete acceptance to avoid antagonizing the Orthodox.

An excessive focus on the question of intermarriage diverts attention from general patterns of Jewish behavior. While intermarried Jews are less likely to be active in synagogues or community organizations, perhaps more significant are the large numbers (nearly 60 percent) of inmarried Jews who are not at all active in the organized Jewish community. There seems to be little point in differentiating between inmarried and intermarried Jews, when the norm for both is non-involvement.

**T**he point of view we espouse treats community size, composition, and rate of growth as closely conditioned by the activities, opportunities, responsibilities, and obligations of the group in question. Thus, we evaluate the size

Thinking  
in Jewish  
Jews



and composition of the Jewish population, like any other group, in terms of community needs and functional requirements. Of course, this is not to postulate that demographic decisions and actions such as decisions about whom to marry or how many children to have are initially anything but personal, private events. Nor are we suggesting that "community" decisions are taken in some sort of organized conscious and collective sense. Yet because of the numerous and extensive links between community members, because of systematic socialization to community norms and standards, it may be profitable to think of group fertility or intermarriage rates *as if* they reflect rational strategies plotted by communities in an effort to create an "optimal" population given a specific set of membership needs and obligations.

For example, compare Jewish population characteristics with those of another North American minority group, the Hutterites. The Hutterites are a small Anabaptist religious sect (numbering around 20,000 in 1970) best known to biologists and demographers for their unusually high and apparently uncontrolled marital fertility rates. Not appreciated is the extent to which Hutterite demographic characteristics represent a functional adaptation to the conditions and possibilities of the local environment and a chosen form of social organization.

The Hutterites have adopted a communal form of living and working in which austerity, self sufficiency, and avoidance of worldly involvement are important organizing principles. Life takes place within nucleated settlements, called colonies, of up to 150 members which are located mainly in Montana, the Dakotas, Manitoba, and Alberta. Hutterite agriculture is diversified, relying on careful management, continuing innovation, and most of all,

the ability to mass and apply the colony's labor force to different tasks. The Hutterite world is demarcated clearly, where colony members acknowledge ties and relations to other Hutterite colonies and to other Christian groups following a communal way of life. All others are considered "gentiles," representatives of a corrupt outside world that Hutterites seek to avoid.

Hutterite colonies grow, split, and establish daughter colonies once lands have been acquired and sufficient initial capital made available. What dominates Hutterite life is the rhythm of colony establishment, growth, and fission in the course of 1 to 2 generations. Colonies are inward looking but take time to deal with gentile neighbors and local authorities. Here Hutterites follow a strategy of maintaining correct but distant relations to diffuse apprehension about Hutterite land purchases and to create a climate of opinion that will allow Hutterite communal life and the cycle of colony establishment, growth, and fission to go on.

The demographic characteristics of the Hutterites—rapid growth, high fertility, negligible population "loss" in the form of intermarriage or out-migration—set this group apart from other ethnic and religious minorities and from other agricultural populations in North America. Yet these characteristics respond to and are consistent with other aspects of Hutterite society and economy, and thus constitute an appropriate socio-demographic strategy.

In the first place, Hutterite colonies are organized as egalitarian interdependent societies, but the basic organizing principles and values are not extended to outsiders. Hutterites distinguish rigorously between members and non-members and exercise tight control over membership. The Hutterites may accept innovation in agricultural and medical technology but the society

itself is closed, lacking gradations or differing interpretations of membership. Thus, there is no possibility of intermarriage, of dual membership in Hutterite and gentile society. Out-marriage and extra-colony migration, taking up residence nearby or far away, are "losses" to community population. That such losses occur only rarely is an indication of Hutterite success, over many generations, in inculcating basic values.

The high fertility and rate of population growth of the Hutterites are directly linked to the possibilities of expanding the community economy. The economy has achieved a kind of dynamic stability where all depends on continuous growth of capital, labor, and output, which depend finally on rapid growth. High fertility, in the context of colony division and relocation is beneficial, yielding a continuous flow of labor, especially child labor which is used extensively. In any case, parents are not expected to support and raise their offspring; the community does this. In this way, as long as new lands can be acquired, the Hutterite society continues to grow, following its own internal dynamic while coming into contact with the external world only on occasion.

In contrast to the Hutterite model of community, we hypothesize a Jewish model comprised of concentric circles with an intensely committed Jewish core and decreasing Jewish commitment moving outward toward a relatively assimilated outer layer and a non-Jewish periphery.<sup>7</sup> Picturing the Jewish community in this way highlights the basic differences in the evolution of the Jewish population, compared with that of the Hutterite. The boundaries separating the various degrees of Jewish identification are poorly defined and highly permeable to friendships and associations. Indeed, the fuzziest boundary of all may well be

that separating the last outer ring from the periphery, raising the possibility that even the most marginal individuals retain standing in the community and links of family, friendship, or professional interest with other Jews closer to the core. Short of outright conversion to another faith (and even there the process is not always complete), it is difficult to break all ties to the community.

**T**he other features of North American Jewish life are well known: a high standard of living and participation in a cultivated and intellectually enriched environment. In addition, Jews share a dedication to occupational achievement and competitive performance in terms of the highest possible standards, and at a more personal level, an adherence to a principle of universalism both in forming friendships and in the ideal of romantic love. It is unlikely that membership in the Jewish community for the majority could be maintained in the future should there be a significant weakening of prospects for fulfillment of personal and socio-economic values. If we apply this community model to the two great demographic "threats" to Jewish survival—intermarriage and below replacement fertility—we can discern benefits as well as costs deriving from both.

In the model just outlined, the Jewish community demonstrates the flexibility and diversity which make it possible for individuals to retain membership while seeking individual fulfillment. Through the porousness of its outer boundaries, the community inoculates itself against the possibility of large scale defection, while presenting Jews with choices which are more varied and more difficult than those facing the Hutterites. It is a strength of modern Jewish life that such a wide spectrum of alternatives is retained *within* the boundaries of the community.



The Book of the Week

Intermarriage is an inevitable outcome of such a community model, with its support for universalist principles. Yet evidence suggests that many who have intermarried no longer accept as insoluble the conflict between universalistic norms and those of continued community membership. Such an attempted synthesis may be, rather than a source of despair, an indication of persisting Jewish loyalties in the face of the powerful attractions, social and personal, of the non-Jewish world. The public posture of the Jewish community with regard to intermarriage becomes crucial. An "open door" policy, recognizing new realities, is one rational response to the impending population decline. Jewish parents have already made an accommodation: while most would prefer that their children not intermarry, no longer do they automatically break ties with those who do.

A

Ours is not the conventional view, that "intermarriage is the price modern Jewry must pay for freedom and equality in an open society." As seen in the evidence of shifting attitudes, that "price"—a reduction in community size and viability—may not be as high as once feared. Intermarriage can also be seen as contributing to the achievement of community objectives. Consider the array of political responsibilities facing American Jewry.

ambiguity

American Jewish political influence has been due in part to the concentration of Jewish voters in northern industrial states, Florida, and California. Given the eventual decline in the Jewish population and the geographic dispersion of American Jews into the South and West, this factor will decrease in importance. But numbers themselves have never been the sole basis of Jewish political strength: key elements have always been the degree and quality of participation in the political process.

The effective mobilization of political

support on behalf of central Jewish interests requires a sophisticated population led by trained professionals, utilizing as many contacts and points of entry with responsible authorities as possible. Groups like the Hutterites, it should be obvious, do not share such external concerns, and therefore do not need the development of these skills. The successful exercise of influence is best achieved in a community with a large subset of members interacting with politicians and opinion leaders. Through intermarried Jews themselves, and certainly through their social networks involving Jewish family and friends who may be closer to the core of the community, Jewish concerns, interests, and sensibilities can be articulated before a wider, more influential audience. In a recent interview Presidential aide Robert Lipshutz traced the origin of Jimmy Carter's concern for Israel to his close friendship with a first cousin, an Orthodox Jew. (Carter's aunt married a Jewish man, and their two children were raised as Jews.) Intermarrying Jews, while perhaps diluting the community in one sense, perform compensating strategic functions in another.

Week  
Jude +  
Highly  
Jude  
Blood  
Tough

In similar fashion, the fertility pattern of Jews—the exceptionally low rates over the last fifty years—can be linked to a number of individual objectives and community requirements. Social scientific research has demonstrated an inverse relationship between family size and prospects for individual educational attainment and high occupational status. For parents at any given income level, having fewer children permits greater allocation of parental resources, both material and emotional, for each child. Jewish parents have recognized, since the period of mass immigration, the importance of providing a supportive nurturant environment for children as a precondition for success. It is likely that limita-

tions on family size have contributed in no small measure to the present prosperity of American Jews.

Extending this utilitarian perspective, the small family norm has also benefited Jewish women. By every indicator of educational attainment, labor force participation, and occupational position, Jewish women, like Jewish men, display high patterns of achievement. Moreover, many Jewish women who are not in the labor force devote time and effort to volunteer community work and service. All of these endeavors are facilitated through curtailment of family size. The small nuclear family represents an attempted compromise between the traditional value of the family and the modern value of educational and professional participation for both men and women.

Furthermore, continuing low fertility has group-level advantages as well. Consider again the tasks facing the organized Jewish community, which require a sophisticated, competent population with essentially middle class characteristics: the community as it is. Jewish political influence, which seems in excess of community numbers, is based on the human and material resources which the Jewish community can mobilize. Some of these resources are channeled into the political process as direct inputs, in the form of contributions and participation of Jews in politics. Other inputs are indirect, and include activities of funded and professionally staffed organizations, (personal lobbying, letter writing, etc.), and what might be termed the attempted mobilization of the Jewish vote. Jews, as Jews and as members of the middle and upper-middle classes, are highly active in the political process. Low fertility helps perpetuate middle class status for Jews, with attendant high levels of education and political involvement; accordingly, Jewish interests are stated and defended more effectively.

The Jewish Middle Class  
Jewish Demographic Trends

Population size also affects the economic base of community services. The Jewish community uses voluntary taxation for providing services and redistributing income. Adding the receipts of *national* American Jewish organizations to the many contributions to local Jewish institutions, payments towards synagogues, Jewish schools, etc., Daniel Elazar estimates a total community budget of \$2 billion. Though much of this income is recirculated through the community (in payments to Jewish professionals), it originates essentially through contributions or the purchase of services by individual Jews. Who pays for this? Elazar has estimated a per capita figure of \$350 or \$1,400 for a hypothetical family of four.

This wealth of the Jewish community is created by the adult working population, with the aged and the young producing little while consuming much. Given available resources of the community, a larger dependent population implies a smaller per capita expenditure or a heavier tax burden. We would suggest that there is a limit, beyond which the Jewish community cannot or will not be taxed.

Any significant upswing in average family size would impair the ability of the Jewish community to maintain per capita funding at present levels of quality in the ranges of services provided, especially to the young. Looking ahead and anticipating larger numbers of aged Jews, the problem can only become more severe. A concurrent increase in the numbers of Jewish children would require an increase in services—schools, camps, youth organizations, etc. As it is, recent studies reveal declines in the overall numbers receiving any Jewish schooling. Moreover, despite some shift from supplementary to day school education, the outcomes for those receiving some



Jewish schooling are often less than adequate. With an increase in fertility, the community could not manage to increase both the quantity and quality of its educational services.

One alternative would be to demand more from the Jewish tax-paying family. This could be done through increased contributions to Combined Appeals, as well as increased payments for specific institutions like schools. While it is true that the bulk of contributions come from a small minority of wealthy givers the Appeal itself represents about one quarter of the total community budget. Most payments for Jewish community services, while graded according to ability to pay, add significantly to the burden of the average Jewish middle class family. Some would say that this burden is already excessive. If it is unreasonable to expect significant increases in Jewish institutional revenues, what alternatives remain? One option suggested by Bergman is a massive re-allocation of resources away from welfare needs into youth services and education. While there is clearly room for cutbacks in the area of health care (as government involvement increases), other welfare needs may not be as expendable. For example, a decision to cut back on care for the aged would meet with strenuous opposition, not only from the many Jewish leaders and professionals with direct vested interests in the perpetuation of these institutions, but from a large segment of the community—the aged and their relatives—who would argue for the maintenance of a particularistic network of such services to meet specific Jewish needs. While it may be argued that care of the aged is the proper responsibility of the government, this view ignores two important considerations. First, the government may fail to provide services at acceptable levels of cost and quality. The record to date offers little ground for

optimism. Second, care of the aged has traditionally been an important moral obligation of the Jewish community. In recent times Jews, for better or for worse, have shifted the locus of this responsibility from the family to specialized institutions, which now claim a large portion of Jewish expenditures. On what grounds do we invest resources in the young as opposed to the aged? From a pragmatic perspective, it is clear that investment in the young is preferable in relation to the goal of long term survival. But the abandonment of the aged would be a blow to community solidarity, and would do violence to a central aspect of the Jewish heritage.

Another policy option is to reduce drastically the proportion of community funds allocated annually to Israel. Such a reduction would have the potential of freeing up far more in the way of community resources than any efforts at redistribution of allocations, or increasing the tax rate. The counter arguments to such a proposal need not be detailed here. Apart from the material benefits which Israel derives from this infusion of foreign capital, there is the powerful sociological fact that for many North American Jews, the welfare of Israel is the central theme of their Jewish concern and interest. Thus, the survival of the Jewish state becomes a *sine qua non* for the survival of their own Jewish commitment, and cutbacks on allocations to Israel would alienate these segments of the community.

*What is wrong with this?*

### Conclusion

**I**t would seem that the prognosis for the American Jewish community while uncertain, is not entirely negative. Projections of an American Jewish population of less than a million one hundred years from now should be treated with the utmost skepticism. Leaving aside in-

intermarriage considerations the American Jewish population should remain roughly stable in numbers though changing in composition in the next 30 years, before beginning a sustained decline to between 3-4 million in the year 2070. This decline is due to an inherited age structure and continuing below replacement fertility rates. We have argued further that intermarriage has been overestimated as a purely demographic factor contributing to decreases in numbers and that its net impact may be minimal in this respect. Nevertheless, high intermarriage rates combined with indications of increasing voluntary affiliation with the community pose problems of definition and enumeration which must be resolved.

We are not advocating high intermarriage rates or low fertility rates. In any event, the health of the community and the strength of its institutions ought not be evaluated solely in terms of intermarriage and population trends.

Historically, Jews have survived as a "remnant community" rather than through the force of numbers. When a rapid increase in intermarriage rates coincides with the dramatic growth of Jewish studies programs in American colleges, excessive pessimism or op-

timism about the Jewish future ought to be avoided. We would do well to heed the words of Salo Baron who argued, some thirty years ago, that as long as American Jewry could boast of 500 first-rate Jewish scholars and 50,000 good Hebraists, the survival of the community was secure.

In the same vein, our position is one of cautious optimism. Though a decline in numbers is likely, this need not lead to a disappearance of the community or to a dilution of its Jewish character. As described earlier, decisions to intermarry (or to have few children) are not so much a repudiation of the community as inevitable results of particular community characteristics. In considering the effects of intermarriage and low fertility on the individual and the group we have suggested that these demographic outcomes can be related in a functional sense to specific community obligations and objectives. These considerations are ignored in the prevailing tendency to focus on numbers, and in the misplaced effort to apportion "blame" to either individuals or institutions for this state of affairs. American Jews are not lemmings rushing into the sea; rather the community is evolving, adapting to new times and circumstances.

#### Footnotes

1. Elihu Bergman, "The American Jewish Population Erosion," *Midstream*, October, 1977 pp. 9-19. These projections were developed by H. Leibenstein and S.S. Lieberman to organize discussion of trends in growth, fertility, and intermarriage in the Jewish population. With limited data sources the projections depended on strong assumptions and elementary techniques. For example, all children of intermarried couples were considered to be lost to the Jewish population. Recent data make possible and indeed necessitate a more refined and systematic approach. New projections appear below; of course, as more data become available, these too will have to be revised.
2. Hillel Halkin, *Letters to an American Jewish Friend: A Zionist's Polemic*, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1976.
3. Calvin Goldscheider, "Trends in Jewish Fertility," *Sociology and Social Research*, No. 50, 1966, pp. 173-186.
4. Fred Massarik, "National Jewish Population Study: A New United States Estimate," *American Jewish Year Book*, Volume 75, 1974.
5. For example see Chenkin in *American Jewish Year Book*, 1969, 1972, 1973, and Goldstein, *American Jewish Year Book*, 1971.
6. In fact, Jews continue to immigrate to North America, primarily from Israel, North Africa, and the Soviet Union. Moreover, we do not exclude the possibility of future immigration from areas such as South America or South Africa.
7. Daniel J. Elazar, *Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry*, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976.



# The American Jewish Population Erosion *File*

ELIHU BERGMAN

**W**hen the United States celebrates its Tricentennial in 2076, the American Jewish community is likely to number no more than 944,000 persons, and conceivably as few as 10,420.

This dramatic decline from a peak Jewish population in the United States of nearly 6 million was already in evidence during the Bicentennial. The erosion has two causes: an American Jewish birthrate below the replacement level, which is the level at which the population naturally replenishes itself; and an increasing rate of attrition among American Jews, which is the rate at which individuals born as Jews lose their Jewish identity.

If the size of the American Jewish population was exclusively reliant on natural causes—the balance between births and deaths—it most likely would maintain the steady state at which it leveled off in about 1970. But in the case of American Jewry, the birthrate-deathrate linkage that traditionally determines the growth and size of a population is overridden by another linkage which involves assimilation rates and retention rates.

Increasingly, the principal cause of Jewish assimilation is intermarriage. The National Jewish Population Study

directed by Fred Massarik reported a Jewish intermarriage rate in the United States of 31.7 percent for the 1966-72 period. This level was up from 5.9 percent in the 1955-60 interval, an increase of 500 percent in marriages involving a partner who was born non-Jewish.<sup>1</sup> (It is not within the scope of this article to discuss the methodological techniques employed in deriving and projecting data on intermarriage.)

On a national basis, the rate of retention in the Jewish community of offspring to mixed marriages is not definitively established. However, utilizing information acquired on the local level, Sidney Goldstein reported in 1971 that a significant proportion of children born to mixed marriages were being raised as non-Jews, ranging from 22 percent in Providence to 70 percent in Washington, D.C.<sup>2</sup>

By combining three different assumptions on the level of intermarriage with an average attrition rate (30 percent of the offspring to mixed marriages are lost as Jews) and the actual Jewish birthrate in 1970, Harvey Leibenstein and Samuel S. Lieberman at the Harvard Center for Population Studies projected three American Jewish population levels for 2076:<sup>3</sup>

1. If the intermarriage rate stabilizes at 15 percent, the Jewish population would decline to 944,000. (Massarik's analysis reporting an intermarriage rate increase to 31.7 percent by 1972 was not yet available when Leibenstein and Lieberman did their projections.)

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2. If the intermarriage rate rises in stages over the next 25 years from 15 to 50 percent, there would be 420,000 Jews in the United States in 2076.

3. If the intermarriage rate continues its rapid rise over the next 10 years and stabilizes at 50 percent in 1986, the American Jewish population would decline to 10,420.

Though the unmistakable symptoms have been identified, the shortage of research on some of its components, principally the intermarriage/assimilation syndrome, has apparently discouraged some experts from projecting the consequences of what already is known about the population decline. But despite the absence of comprehensive research, Leibenstein and Lieberman have been willing to project the stark numerical consequences of what already is known. Similarly, Roberto Bachi of the Hebrew University concluded from his recent demographic analysis of Diaspora Jewry that the survival of the American Jewish community is seriously threatened.

The numerical decline of an American Jewish community and its implications is a sobering phenomenon to contemplate. With the process of erosion already in motion, the obvious question is: is it reversible, and if so, what are the conditions for turning it around?

**A** turnaround as a result of natural causes is unlikely. Like the American population at large, the Jewish population grew on the basis of immigration and natural increase, and these conditions are not likely to recur.

Jewish birthrates already are below national averages, and except for an unlikely repetition of the temporary post World War II baby boom, it is unrealistic to expect their turnaround. As for immigration, the traditional European reservoir was wiped out. The

only significant source of potential Jewish immigration is the Soviet Union.

There are no definitive estimates of how many Jews would leave the Soviet Union if and when they were allowed to depart. An estimate frequently mentioned suggests that when and if conditions are right, approximately one million Soviet Jews out of a total population of three to five million (depending on how Jews are classified) would opt to emigrate. It is unlikely, however, that all of them would leave at once, and clearly not all Soviet Jews would emigrate to the United States. It is reasonable to assume that Jews would be released from the Soviet Union over a period of time, say a decade, and that their chosen destinations would parallel the flow of Soviet Jews during the past couple of years with roughly 50 percent going to Israel and the remainder distributed among Western Europe and the United States. Accordingly, any increments of Soviet Jews to the American Jewish population base would be gradual, and relatively small. Because birthrates among Soviet Jews, particularly those who would opt for the United States, correspond to those of American Jews—they are below the replacement level—it is unlikely that Soviet Jewish emigration would contribute more than marginally to a turnaround of the demographics of the American Jewish community.

Since neither natural increase nor migration will arrest its population decline, the American Jewish community is left with a non-demographic alternative, which is the maintenance and increase of retention rates. This means holding onto, or otherwise maintaining the Jewish identity and commitment of living Jews, and developing the means to achieve these objectives for their offspring. In pursuit of



this alternative, American Jewry clearly is left to its own devices, because help and support for its achievement is available neither from Jewish communities abroad, who certainly share an interest but lack the resources, nor from the American community at large, which hardly can be expected to share an interest in the goal.

**T**he objective for those interested in the maintenance of a Jewish identity in the United States should be to stem or at least slow the attrition rate of the existing population. This would involve the elimination or significant reduction of losses caused by the consequences of intermarriage and the associated defections, conscious or otherwise.

There are various measures of Jewish commitment including affiliations, e.g. synagogue membership; membership in one of the array of American Jewish organizations; participation in fund-raising for Jewish causes, including the all-embracing federations; solicitation and donation for autonomous institutions and programs in the United States and Israel; observance of Jewish law, ritual and custom; and acquisition, pursuit and provision of an education in particularistic Jewish subject matter. Though there are no definitive statistics on the quality of commitment of American Jews, available data suggest that less than 50 percent of the American Jewish population express a tangible commitment to Jewish identity in any one of these areas.<sup>4</sup> For example, various studies that have included the issue of identity disclose that less than 50 percent of American Jewish families are affiliated with synagogue/temples; 62 percent participate in no Jewish organizational activities; less than 50 percent contribute to their local federations (in Boston 63 percent

did not contribute in 1975); less than 40 percent practice any consistent pattern of Jewish ritual observance; and as of 1974-75 approximately 67 percent of eligible Jewish children were not enrolled in any sort of Jewish educational program.

However rough the data, they do indicate an indifference to a positive assertion of Jewish identity by a significant proportion of the American Jewish population. Many American Jews simply do not care about the future of American Jewry.

The uncommitted are the first candidates for attrition and judging from attrition trends over the past generation, the condition of non-commitment is contagious, approaching epidemic proportions. Under the circumstances, concerned Jews might be expected to react and behave as they have in other crisis situations, such as the post-War rescue of the remnants of European Jewry, the creation of Israel, and the major threats to Israel's existence in 1967 and 1973. In these crises, committed American Jewry rose to the occasion in demonstrations of singular purpose. In each, the activity associated with these responses involved, in the first instance, a recognition that there was a crisis, followed by a focus on the particular job at hand, which was tackled by the significant investments of ideas, time, energy and money. In dealing with these crises, there was even an inclination, and indeed a willingness, to discard existing methods, concepts, organizational structures, and even familiar leaders in the cause of effectiveness. The quality of activity was such that even many formerly non-committed Jews were swept into the response.

By contrast to the crisis environment that has on occasion permeated the American Jewish response to the survival of Jewish communities that are

more geographically remote, the issue of Jewish survival in the United States is experiencing no such priority treatment. Granted, the threats to Israel involve extinction by immediate brutalization and killing. But the threat of extinction is no less real in the case of American Jewry, and in terms of the interests of the Jewish people, the extinction of a significant Jewish community is a grave prospect indeed. The common stake is global Jewish survival.

**U**nder the circumstances, the quality of response to a demonstrated domestic threat is at the same time curious and discouraging. Even if the challenge of American Jewish survival is not treated as a crisis issue today or this year, it would not be unreasonable to expect that the issue, with its visible manifestations, be subjected to extensive scrutiny and intense dialogue within the community structure. And it is not unreasonable to expect that such a dialogue, even confined to committed Jews with a concern for the retention of an American Jewish identity, might yield a fresh series of options involving appropriate activities and revised allocations of resources addressed to the amelioration of a problem of some gravity.

Instead, the problem evokes fragmented discourses about the condition of the American Jewish identity and the various prescriptions for its maintenance and viability. By contrast to the occasional national leadership conferences on the State of Israel's security and economy, there are no counterparts on the survival of American Jewry. There are individual expressions of alarm, occasional research papers, and even sporadic calls to action, but at present these are more cries in the wilderness than a manifestation of total communal resolve.

In terms of military analogy, it would appear that in the matter of American Jewish survival, the established community structures are fighting the last war.

**T**he anachronistic nature of community response is reflected in the allocation of financial resources through Jewish federation structures. One classic example is the significant support enjoyed by Jewish-sponsored hospitals. These institutions are a remnant of bygone days, out of the world that Irving Howe describes. They were founded as a response to the special health care requirements of an immigrant Jewish community and to serve as a base for Jewish physicians who were not permitted to practice in other hospitals. But these conditions of origin no longer are relevant.

The rationale for the generous allocations to hospitals that now are Jewish in name only has become standard: they remain the favorite charity of affluent contributors to the federation who would withdraw their contributions if the hospitals were not favored; and the hospitals provide outpatient services for indigent Jews, Soviet immigrants and Israeli students. As for the provision of outpatient services, it is well known that a hospital is the least economical and efficient means of supplying them, and in any event the size of the beneficiary clientele hardly warrants a special health care facility.

The role of affluent donors in maintaining a linkage between hospitals and federations, of course, is the more serious issue, and suggests the prevalence of an unwarranted veto power over distribution of communal resources supposedly designed to serve the best interests of the Jewish community.

Another product of a bygone age is the array of "defense agencies" with

their seemingly overlapping functions. The agencies involved are the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League. Historically their function was to socialize a new and growing community to a strange and sometimes hostile environment, including laying claim to the related rights and obligations, and at the same time to fortify the community against encroachments from the outside. By now, with changes in both the quality of the community (it has reached maturation) and the environment (it no longer is overwhelmingly hostile), the original objectives are largely fulfilled. In their pursuit, the three institutions have distinguished themselves with significant accomplishments, valuable contributions and proud histories. But the historical context in which these distinctions were achieved no longer exists. By now, the defense priorities are reversed, and rather than fortification against external encroachment, the community is more in need of a sort of inner fortification against external absorption.

Likewise a response to a unique set of historical requirements, and now a historical artifact, is the fractionated structure of American Zionist organizations. Many American Jews understandably fail to comprehend why the Zionist structure in the United States must replicate the political party structure of Israel, and in addition, require superstructures to coordinate it. Perhaps this is why progressively fewer affiliate with Zionist organizations.

In common, the historical justification for the differentiation of the defense agencies and the Zionist organizations no longer is relevant. Yet they persist as separate entities, on the basis of structural, rather than functional differentiation. In terms of efficient and economical allocation of scarce commu-

nal resources, it would appear that this condition not only is one the community no longer can afford, but would no longer tolerate.

As for nostalgia about the past, despite its heroic deeds in its time, when the horse became obsolete to the requirements of modern warfare, the horse cavalry was discarded as a relevant military unit. Likewise the battleship was mothballed. Their personnel were reassigned to newly-designed units, and where necessary, retrained and retreaded for new functions. By contrast, the American Jewish community has not yet demonstrated a capability to mothball old battleships and put faithful horses out to pasture.

**T**he most obvious methodology to deal with the future condition of the American Jewish community would be an educational system that effectively socializes Jewish children to maintain their Jewish identity by equipping them with the appropriate norms, supporting knowledge and motivation. Obviously the American Jewish community so far has not produced such a system, with the result that as Jews, today's Jewish children are an endangered species.

While Jewish education is not the ultimate guarantor of a Jewish identity, it most likely is a major factor. In a recent study of the condition of Jewish education in the United States, Harold Himmelfarb reported agreement among researchers who have explored the issue, on the link between Jewish education and Jewish identity—the more education, the more likely a continuing Jewish identity.<sup>5</sup> Yet, he found that the proportion of Jewish children receiving some type of Jewish education is declining, and the quality of education even for those who are exposed to it is predominantly deficient. Himmelfarb estimates that in 1974-



75 only 33 percent of Jewish children in the 3-17 age bracket were enrolled in a Jewish school.<sup>6</sup> (Thus 67 percent of eligible American Jewish children are *not* receiving a Jewish education.)

In terms of its long-range value for the maintenance of Jewish identity, Himmelfarb observes that the Jewish educational exposure experienced by 80 percent of those who have received some type of Jewish education has been a waste of time. Thus, as matters stand, no more than 14 percent of the pre-college age American Jewish population is being exposed to an educational experience that would most likely contribute to the maintenance of a Jewish identity. As for the definition of an "effective Jewish education," one most likely to have an impact on the maintenance of Jewish identity, Himmelfarb found that a minimum of 3,000 hours of instruction was required. This level of education would require an average of 15, but no less than 12 years attendance at a supplementary afternoon school; or an average of 10, but no less than 6 years attendance at an all-day Jewish school. Since the required attendance span for supplementary schools clearly is unrealistic, the day school emerges as the only model capable of providing an effective educational experience within a realistic time span. In any event, since few Jewish children are enjoying a Jewish educational experience within these parameters, the level of education most receive is meaningless for creating the conditions that would sustain a Jewish commitment.

The level of effective Jewish education established by Himmelfarb's research would occur through the primary and secondary school years. For educational body-building, these are the critical years. What happens afterwards, during college and post college years, is marginal if not irrelevant.

Accordingly, on the assumption that effective Jewish education is potentially the most powerful deterrent to assimilation, how is the American Jewish community handling the equation? Perhaps the most visible available measure of community response is reflected in the allocation of funds to pre-college educational programs by Jewish federations.

**I**n applying this measure, the behavior of the Boston Jewish federation can be regarded as a better than prototypical example for the country at large. This is because of the strong educational norm in the Boston area, where higher education ranks as a major local industry, where Jewish educational opportunities span a spectrum ranging from Hebrew day school kindergartens through a nationally recognized Hebrew college, and where the Boston community historically has displayed a sensitivity to the value of Jewish education.

The response of the Boston federation reflects the response of Jewish federations on a nationwide basis, and, like them, fails the test of adequacy. On the national level, while federations doubled their actual dollar allocations during the 1966-73 period, the *percentage* of domestic allocations to education rose by only 4.3 percent during the seven year interval. (It is recalled that intermarriage rose by 500 percent during a similar time span.)

In Boston, the dollar allocations to pre-college education over the most recent 3 year period (1974-77) increased by 23 percent. But as a percentage of the total domestic budget, the allocations actually declined—down from 14.6 percent in 1974 to 12.6 percent in 1976.

Within the Boston allocations for pre-college education, support for day schools rose modestly—9 percent be-



tween 1974 and 1975; and 5 percent between 1975 and 1976. These increases, however, ran behind inflation rates for the intervals, and like the national experience, reflected declining support for total day school budgets.

As an indicator of federation priorities in Boston, the table below reflects federation allocations to the local hospital and the defense agencies, contrasted with allocations to day schools and total pre-college education (including day schools):

	1974-1975	1975-1976	1976-1977
1. Hospital	450.0	475.0	450.0
2. Defense Agencies	140.0	151.0	157.0
Subtotal:	590.0	626.0	607.0
3. Day Schools	144.7	158.0	167.5
4. Total Pre-College Education (including Day Schools)	612.4	667.2	753.4

To the extent hospitals and defense agencies represent past priorities, and pre-college education present and future requirements, the figures reflected here, e.g. hospital and defense continuing to receive nearly as much support as education, suggest an insensitivity to contemporary community needs, let alone survival, by those who make decisions about such matters.

**T**he record on remedial action in the face of an American Jewish population erosion suggests the presence of flaws in the American Jewish decision making structure that may be simultaneously disabling to the community and disqualifying of the existing structure for managing its affairs. The identification of these flaws, in itself, is frustrated by the lack of reliable information about the nature and dynamics of the decision making system, including organizational deployment, power relationships, procedures for agenda building, channels of communication, quality of leader-

ship, and other characteristics that are customarily analyzed in the assessment of any decision making structure. An acceptable political sociology of the American Jewish community still is not available. The existing material, though interesting and informative, is descriptive and impressionistic. While there are occasional critical reactions to what their respective authors perceive as the realities, these positions most often are framed in contexts that are theoretical, ideological, or histori-

cal. In this respect, there is a resemblance to Latin American social science, which generally expresses its analysis and criticism through theoretical and ideological channels because the empirical scrutiny of what really happens in society often is seen by prevailing regimes as threatening to them. As a result, not only is information on the political dynamics of decision making not available, but those who otherwise might seek it out are officially discouraged from the pursuit by the denial of access to relevant information, or other methods. Consequently they tend to monitor their own interests and activities so as to avoid the outer limits of official tolerance.

Until more sophisticated analysis is available, a portrayal of the American Jewish decision making structure is totally reliant on information that is both impressionistic and necessarily selective. Like any decision making structure, the principal ingredients of this one consist of an organizational matrix, individual participants and the

biases associated with both. To the extent that the structure does not appear to be adequate to community requirements, the obvious first questions to ask about its ingredients are: How did they happen? Why are they still there? What are the alternatives to them? And what are the prospects for change?

The framing of a comprehensive research agenda clearly is beyond the scope of this essay. What remains, then, is to address, admittedly on a selective and impressionistic basis, some of the issues as they appear to an interested citizen.

First there is the organizational matrix of the American Jewish decision making structure.

**T**he pattern that emerges here is one of an array of organizations, overlapping jurisdictions and geological layers of coordinating mechanisms. Many of the cells in this matrix can trace their origins to proud, and even heroic, functions, which, with the passage of time and events, have become obsolete in terms of contemporary needs. Thus a broad spectrum of Zionist groups continues to exist, reflecting the diverse colorations of pre-Israel Zionist politics and ideologies. All of these units raise budgets, maintain bureaucracies, develop constituencies, issue publications, activate programs and consume energies. Similarly there are the major defense agencies that were described earlier, whose separate status no longer is justified by the common, albeit useful, functions they perform.

It should not be surprising that out of this organizational obsolescence, the complex of fundraising federations together with their national superstructure have emerged as the most powerful organizational force in American Jewry. This is because fundraising in itself has become the most coherent objective of American Jewry, and thus

provides a singular norm that glues together an otherwise diverse and undisciplined community.

The preeminence of the fundraising function is, of course, largely a creature of American Jewry's commitment to the establishment and well-being of Israel. Financial resources have been desperately needed at regular intervals, and to assure their availability from the source most able to supply them, a unique system of voluntary taxation was required. For its original deployment, and later to assure its most effective functioning, the system required the highest measure of priority, which was, and continues to be, provided by its principal beneficiary, the Israeli regime. Thus the evolution of the system, which originally was intended as one to collect taxes, and its expansion to functions beyond tax collection, is in no small way a result of Israeli influence and legitimization. So long as the system functioned effectively in its primary role as a conduit of supplementary revenue to Israel, the Israeli regime was not, and perhaps could not have afforded to be, concerned about its impact on the health of the American Jewish community.

The increasing pervasiveness of the fundraising system is reflected, among other things, in its role in setting communal priorities for the funds it collects, not just for Israel, but for domestic purposes as well; the development of its discrete power base in the community; and its increasing engagement in programmatic activities not directly related to fundraising.

**O**f course skill in raising funds does not automatically equip a structure to make judgments on the utilization of those funds. Nobody would ask the U.S. Commissioner of Internal Revenue for counsel on budgetary allocations to the major federal departments, nor is

it likely that a prudent Commissioner would volunteer such inputs. Yet the impression is increasingly widespread that the reverse is happening in the American Jewish community in the utilization of community revenues, with the federation fundraising structure dominating decision making, imposing its own priorities, and creating the necessary constituencies in the community to legitimize this role. For example, has anybody ever heard of a Women's Division of the Internal Revenue Service?

Beyond unsystematic impressions, little is known about how the federation structure actually conducts its affairs because the inner dynamics have never enjoyed empirical scrutiny. Meanwhile, the notion is adrift that federation decision making is conducted in a cabalistic environment, dominated by a self-perpetuating leadership whose principal qualification is wealth, exempt from effective participation by the mass of its constituency, and that the whole process is carefully protected from public view, with information on it available only on a privileged need-to-know basis. An impression of how the federation structure allocates its revenues invites comparison to the behavior of congressional committees involved in authorizations and appropriations for public works—including characteristics such as logrolling; mutual backscratching; accommodation to favorite projects whatever their merit; resistance to significant change; and toleration only of incremental change.

The norm that has established skill in raising funds rather than skill in utilizing funds as the principal qualification for leadership roles has exerted a depressing influence on the quality of American Jewish leadership. Not alone in the federation structure, but across the organizational board, the im-

pression is prevalent that leadership is recruited by ascription, not by merit, and that the prime condition of ascription is wealth, not knowledge. And not only are democratic procedures irrelevant to leadership selection, but the leadership tends to be both self-perpetuating and interlocking through a variety of organizations.

As in the case of organizational behavior, there is no reliable empirical analysis either to validate or falsify the conventional wisdom about the quality of American Jewish leadership. But what is evident even without sophisticated analysis is that in terms of establishing goals and priorities that reflect the self-interest of American Jewry, and inspiring their mass acceptance, there is no evidence of effective leadership.

**T**he American Jewish community is confronted with some critical choices about its future, the handling of which will determine the conditions of its survival. Because the inexorable momentum of demography is exerting a profound influence on the American Jewish future, these choices cannot long be delayed.

First, there is an obvious requirement for a significant addition to the information base with which the choices are made. Substantive and programmatic issues need to be addressed critically and with great precision, more so than in the past. Himmelfarb's analysis of Jewish education, published under the auspices of the Synagogue Council's Institute for Jewish Policy Planning and Research, exemplifies the calibre of work that is required as a basis for informed choices.

In addition to research that suggests what needs to be done, there is a parallel requirement for research that indicates what no longer is needed.



New information is required from areas that hitherto have been exempted from analytical treatment, such as the composition, quality and dynamics of the communal decision making structure. Such an analysis would productively explore the existing organizational pattern to shed light on the usefulness and obsolescence of organizational missions, duplication of functions, opportunities for merger and the like. On the individual level, there is a need to know more about the cadre of decision makers, their particular qualifications for the roles they occupy, the methods for their recruitment, and the quality of their influence. It would be useful to know about the biases that pervade the decision making structure; for example, is it a universalistic social outlook that excludes more support for more particularistic educational alternatives?

Parallel to the probe for improved information, there is the need for a penetrating discourse that would consider alternatives to the existing management of communal affairs. On the organizational level, such a dialogue inevitably would include alternatives to the existing federation structure in the United States.

Perhaps more relevant priorities would fare better if the federation structure were disaggregated. Several models suggest themselves. One might involve centralized fundraising for overseas requirements, with a domestic role confined to traditional social service requirements—the particular needs of dependent children, adults and senior citizens. Other community interests, including education, recreation, social action, culture and defense, would be handled independently of the federation. Thus, beyond the traditional Jewish communal obligations, individual Jews would be enabled to vote, with individual contributions and

support, for priorities they consider important. Beyond any other advantages it might yield, such a system would introduce a greater measure of democracy into the conduct of American Jewish affairs. On occasion, more democracy has been known to yield more beneficial results for those who practice it.

Any discourse on the management of American Jewish affairs would consider the quality of communal leadership. While sole responsibility for the eroding condition of American Jewry cannot be placed on the doorstep of the established leadership, the leadership so far has not demonstrated a capacity to arrest the erosion. In a corporate situation, failure of this magnitude would result in replacement of the leadership.

American Jews have demonstrated a capacity to reject an established leadership structure in whom they no longer have confidence, and replace it with a better alternative. This happened most recently in 1973, when the established national leadership, responding to White House pressure, sought to sidetrack community support for the Jackson-Vanik Freedom of Emigration legislation. Immediately, a highly skilled and committed, though previously unknown, leadership emerged from the grassroots, leapfrogged the established structure, acquired community confidence, and provided the quality of direction that contributed to a successful legislative outcome in an issue of major community concern.

In considering leadership alternatives, American Jews might well place greater reliance on a traditional source, instantly available and eminently equipped for key decision making roles—the rabbinate. Since it originated as a significant institution in Jewish life, the rabbinate has served Jewry well, and has amassed an im-



pressive track record for effective leadership. Yet in contemporary America, except for token slots on the national and local levels, the rabbinate is excluded from key roles in establishing communal priorities. Instead, the rabbinate is expected to respond to the direction of others, for the most part less equipped to direct, and dutifully attend to the pastoral needs of an upper middle class suburbanized Jewish population, while conducting acceptable ambassadorial relationships with the non-Jewish community. Instead of the heroic leadership role rabbis assumed at critical junctures in Jewish history, American rabbis are discouraged from rocking the boat, from seizing the initiative, innovating remedies, and exploiting possible breakthroughs. Meanwhile, the community forfeits a most valuable leadership resource.

**D**uring the first three quarters of the 20th century the American Jewish community multiplied at a rapid rate, partially by being fruitful, staked

out an influential role in American society, and played a major role in creating the Third Jewish Commonwealth. In a short time, American Jewry has distinguished itself as one of the most powerful Diasporas in the long sweep of Jewish history. But the influential role and the historical distinction are destined to be short-lived, because during the final quarter of the 20th century the American Jewish community is in decline. The decline is in progress because in its meteoric rise to eminence, American Jewry has neglected to establish the sort of roots that would sustain it as a viable community. If present trends are not arrested, or reversed, the American Jewish community faces extinction as a significant entity, and by its own hand, during the first half of the 21st century. The consequences of this phenomenon are chilling to contemplate, not alone for American Jewry, for as the historian J.L. Talmon recently observed, "... a disaster befalling U.S. Jewry would sound the doom of Israel."

The disaster is in the making.

#### Footnotes

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6/28/79

TASK FORCE FOR THE JEWISH ALTERNATIVE  
FOR AMERICANS WITH NO RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

(TASK FORCE FOR THE PERPETUATION OF JUDAISM IN AMERICA)

(TASK FORCE FOR ENLIGHTENMENT ABOUT JUDAISM)

(OUTREACH TASK FORCE FOR AMERICANS WITH NO RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE)

OUTLINE -- REVISED DRAFT #2

I. WHY THE JEWISH ALTERNATIVE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY AMERICANS  
WITH NO RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

A. Religious Philosophical Importance

1. The ethical teachings of Judaism

2. The covenant

3. The message of Judaism

a. Is there a mission of Judaism to Jews?

If so, what is it?

b. Is there a mission of Judaism to non-Jews?

If so, what is it?

B. Importance to the American Jewish Community

1. Marriages where one partner has converted to Judaism

a. Summary of existing research data

2. Mixed marriages

a. Summary of existing research data

b. The needs of the non-Jewish partner

3. Current Demographic Trends and Prospects for Survival
  - a. Intermarriage
  - b. Birthrate
  - c. Impact of assimilation
  - d. Impact of cults, mysticism, astrology
  - e. Impact of Holocaust
  - f. Impact of lessening of social barriers
  - g. Impact of Israel
  - h. Other
4. Collateral benefits to Jews in teaching non-Jews about Judaism
5. Social and political consequences of continuing diminution of percentage of Americans who are Jews
6. Other
- C. Importance to the World Jewish Community
  1. Importance to Israel
  2. Impact of the losses of the Holocaust
  3. Impact of religious persecution in Russia
  4. Other

D. Importance to the United States

1. Pluralistic Society
2. Unique contributions of Jews to society as a whole
  - a. Arts
  - b. Charitable leadership
  - c. Education
  - d. Government and law
  - e. Human rights
  - f. Medicine
  - g. Science
  - h. Social justice
  - i. Other
3. The Jews as a "social barometer"
  - a. History - freedom for Jews
  - b. History - repression of Jews followed by economic adversity and/or political adversity of non-Jews
4. The influence of Jewish ethical values
  - a. Justice, love and mercy
  - b. Charity
  - c. Family
  - d. Other
5. Benefits to individuals and to society of encouraging on a non-governmental basis religious affiliation as compared with no religious affiliation at all
6. Other



E. The Uniqueness of Jewish Survival

1. Historical Uniqueness of Judaism

2. Reasons for Jewish Survival

II. SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR SYNAGOGUE AFFILIATED JEWS AND NON-SYNAGOGUE AFFILIATED JEWS, INCLUDING JEWS BY CHOICE AND MIXED MARRIED JEWS

A. Brief Summary of Existing UAHC Programs Having Impact

(No in-depth study by Task Force)

B. Brief Summary of Existing CCAR and HUC Programs Having Impact

(No in-depth study by Task Force)

C. Brief Summary of Existing AJC and Programs of Other Major Jewish Groups Having Impact

(No in-depth study by Task Force)

D. Discussion of Additions to or Modifications of Existing UAHC Programs

1. All programs should include key elements of I above

2. Integration with primary school Jewish education and camping programs

3. Integration with secondary school Jewish education and camping programs

4. College programs

- 5. Adult programs
  - a. Integration with current UAHC programs - Jews
  - b. Integration with congregational programs - Jews
    - (1) Survey of existing programs
    - (2) Recommendations
  - c. Mixed-married couples
    - (1) The non-Jewish partner with no religious preference - special programs
    - (2) The non-Jewish partner who is affiliated with a church (no attempt to convert)
  - d. Follow-through programs for the special problems of Jews by choice
  - e. Outreach to unaffiliated Jews - what does Reform Judaism offer (liaison with existing committee)
- E. Outreach Program to Children of Unaffiliated Jews
- F. Outreach Program to Children of Mixed Marriages
  - 1. Resolution - "Jewishness" no longer viewed as solely maternal
  - 2. More effective Reform approach - what is unique about Reform Judaism and what does Reform Judaism offer
  - 3. Involvement of Jews who are themselves children of mixed marriages or who are Jews by choice

G. Brief Summary and Discussion of Current Questions Affecting Mixed-Married Couples

1. Participation in ceremonial rights
2. Membership in congregations
3. Burial rights
4. Divorce - the non-Jewish partner and children
5. Other

H. Programs for Modification of Existing Negative Birthrate for Jews

1. Reasons for negative birthrate
2. Should there be any program:
  - a. Reasons against
  - b. Reasons for
    - (1) Religious
    - (2) Perpetuation of Judaism
    - (3) Reaffirmation of life after Holocaust
    - (4) Other

I. Other



### III. PROGRAMS FOR UNAFFILIATED NON-JEWS: THE JEWISH ALTERNATIVE

#### A. Historical Discussion - Jews and Conversion

1. Biblical traditions
2. Post-Biblical to year 1000
3. Year 1000 to 1900
4. Twentieth Century
  - a. Survey of current positions of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform thought
  - b. Survey of current activities of Jewish groups involved in conversion of non-Jews

#### B. Reasons For

1. Review of Division I above
2. Examination of present conversion programs for those already determined to become Jewish
  - a. Regional Union programs
  - b. Synagogue programs
  - c. Sufficiency of current programs
  - d. Possible additions to programs
  - e. Possible minimal standards

#### C. Reasons Against

1. Reaction from Christian groups
2. Reaction from some Orthodox and Conservative groups
3. Reaction from some Reform groups
4. Other



D. The Unchurched American - Americans with No Religious Preference

1. Definition of "Unchurched" and "No-Preferred"
2. Study of "Unchurched" and "No-Preferred"
  - a. Social-political patterns
  - b. Behavior patterns
  - c. Religious origins
  - d. Most likely to consider Judaism as an alternative to non-affiliation

E. Possible "Jewish Information Centers"

1. Precedent - i.e., Christian Science Reading Rooms
2. Location
3. Literature programs

F. Possible involvement of converts to Judaism

G. Literature (books, pamphlets, films, etc.)

1. Integration with Commission on Jewish Education
2. Emphasis and content
  - a. Jewish values - i.e., family, education, charity, justice, etc.
  - b. Financing of cost
  - c. Why be Jewish - what is unique about Judaism and what does Judaism offer
  - d. What is unique about Reform Judaism and what does Reform Judaism offer

#### H. Limits

##### 1. Only to non-affiliated

- a. No program to "re-convert" Christians who are born Jewish
- b. No program to convert persons who are affiliated with churches although married to Jews

##### 2. No "hardsell"

##### 3. Distinguish from Christian conversion efforts

#### I. Collateral Benefits to Jews

##### 1. Affiliated

- a. Children
- b. College
- c. Adults

##### 2. Non-affiliated

##### 3. Effect of non-Jews choosing Judaism on assimilation of Jews

#### J. Follow-Through Programs after Conversion

##### 1. Single persons

##### 2. Married Persons

#### K. Other

VI. ORGANIZATION OF TASK FORCE AND MISCELLANEOUS

- A. Meetings - Time and Place
- B. Time Goals for Interim Reports
- C. Time Goals for Completion (1981 Biennial)
- D. Informal Liaison and/or Dialogue with Conservative and Orthodox Jewish Thought
- E. Informal Liaison and/or Dialogue with Christian Thought
- F. Other Areas of Inquiry Related to Task Force
  - 1. Changes of name
    - a. Reform to Progressive Reform, Liberal Reform, or other
    - b. UAHC to UAPRC, UALRC, or other
  - 2. Other
- G. Areas of Inquiry which Will Not be Initially Studied by Task Force
  - 1. Rabbinic issues - i.e., should rabbis perform marriage ceremonies for mixed couples
  - 2. Other



# Jewish Proselyting— Another Opinion

*David Polish*

IN 1962, Leon Fram made the following statement in a paper to the Central Conference of American Rabbis, entitled "What is Judaism's Mission in the Contemporary World?" "In order to define our mission, we need not go far afield. We need not go exploring for some new cause to adopt. It is the same mission which the Prophets proclaimed and which the Pharisees sought to translate into the conduct of daily life . . . In the Free World Order which is ahead of us, and which Judaism will be effective in bringing about, we can be free to resume the active missionary work we carried on in the days of the Pharisees. There are already some stirrings in this direction." While this was a personal statement on the part of Rabbi Fram, it was not at all uncharacteristic of a significant segment of the Reform rabbinate, as the discussion which followed his paper appeared to indicate.

Most recently, this was spelled out in greater detail by Alexander Schindler at the Board meeting of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in December, 1978. Rabbi Schindler's presentation derives from his concern over the growing corrosive power of intermarriage and its consequent threat to American Judaism. The greater part of his address is devoted to this issue, on which he presents five points. First, "The conversion of the non-Jewish partner-to-be is clearly the first desideratum." Second, "Jews-by-choice have special needs and we need special guidance on how to meet them, . . . Newcomers to Judaism must embark, in effect, on a long term naturalization process and they require knowledgeable and sympathetic guides to help them along the way." Third, "Our Reform congregations must do everything possible to draw into Jewish life the non-Jewish spouse of a mixed marriage." Fourth, "There is a possibility of the harmonization of tradition with modern need" in recognizing the Jewish legitimacy of a child born to an intermarried

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non-Jewish mother. Our movement has adhered to these principles, although we have not pursued items two and three as vigorously as we should. Rabbi Schindler's call in these areas should be given fullest support.

The fifth and the most controversial proposal is far more specific. "It is time for our movement to launch a carefully conceived outreach program aimed at all Americans who are unchurched and who are seeking roots in religion . . . I call on our members to resume their time-honored vocation and to become champions for Judaism . . . These words imply not just passive acceptance but affirmative action."

This was quickly ratified by the Union Board which resolved "to plan a special program to bring the message of Judaism to any and all who wish to examine or embrace it. (Note that the limitation to the unchurched is no longer in evidence, that instead "any and all" are invoked.) Judaism is not an exclusive club of born Jews: (This is gratuitous. What responsible Jew ever said it was an exclusive club?) It is a universal faith with an ancient tradition which has deep resonance for people alive today." (Note again that the unchurched have been replaced by "people alive today," and that universalism without any particularistic mitigation is dominant.)

Rabbi Schindler's call emerges from the midst of our present condition, intermarriage, and it seeks validation in our "time-honored vocation." Leaving aside momentarily the merits of his program, his appeal to the past is authentic. The seminal scholarly works by our own colleagues, William Braude and Bernard Bamberger, give sound validation to the fact that in Talmudic and early Christian times, converts were not only welcomed by our tradition but were sought and encouraged. "Both in Palestine and Babylonia—despite the fall of the state, despite persecution, despite the rise of Christianity, the Rabbis wanted converts and got them—and held them. Their success in the face of such discouraging odds is the best proof of their missionary ardor." (Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period*, page 291.)

It is of considerable significance that in his *Hazal-Pirke Emunot V' Deot* Ephraim Urbach cites Braude and Bamberger in a manner indicating that they have said all that can be said on the subject. I hypothesize that, much later, Judah Ha-Levi's *Kuzari* might have been more than an apologetic work and could have been a subtly disguised missionary document, intended not so much to defend Judaism as to persuade seekers. The narrative background in which Christian, Moslem, Philosopher and Jew compete for the Khazar's

allegiance seems to support this. The passage in Part I (Hirschfeld edition, page 79) describing the method of conversion in Judaism is suggestive. In such a context the historical record of the Khazars and their conversion gives implicit support to Ha-Levi's argument. Nor should we overlook the fact that Ha-Levi wrote his book in Arabic and in a milieu in which Jews partook "of the fullness of intellectual and economic opportunity" (Salo Baron). In such a milieu, Ha-Levi's discreet overtures could have been possible. I cite the documented rabbinic record and the tantalizing possibility concerning the *Kuzari* to stress that the appeal to the past is sound and convincing. But having said that, I must differ with Rabbi Schindler's fifth conclusion and the concurrent action by the UAHC Board on the ground that for this time and for this issue, appeal to the past is irrelevant.

Before spelling out my argument, it should be pointed out that the tradition of Jewish proselyting is by no means to be equated with its critical importance in Christianity and also that it does not stand in the upper levels of the Jewish hierarchy of values. In New Testament and in apostolic Christianity, proselyting is the central *mitzvah*. Faith in Jesus is the central doctrine and, derivatively, the call to spread the gospel about him is the essential, indispensable act which must be performed. The New Testament abounds with calls to "come after me and I will make you become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17); "the gospel must first be published among all nations" (Mark 13:10); "by whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name" (Romans 1:5).

Most compelling of all is "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). These are among the last words of Jesus to his disciples, to whom he appeared after his resurrection. This is his final and most urgent mandate, his last will and testament reinforced by the threat of damnation for those who do not believe, and here the dogma of "no salvation outside the church" originates. The Gospel according to Mark then concludes by telling that "they went forth and preached everywhere" (16:20). This cardinal *mitzvah* was fulfilled with alacrity. Before the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr tells, "There exists not a people, whether Greek or Barbarian, or any other race . . . however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell under tents or wander in covered wagons, among whom prayers are not offered in the name of a crucified Jesus to the Father of all things" (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 117).

Jewish proselyting, however, commands neither such urgency

nor centrality. It is an important task, not a mandate. It was a high enterprise, not a compelling *mitzvah*. It was practiced zealously, but in a dimension other than those *mitzvot* for which Jews were required to make sacrifices, sometimes even unto death—*Shabbat*, *shofar*, *lulav*, teaching and learning Torah. There is no such principle as “no salvation outside the Synagogue.” To the contrary, the doctrine that “*hasidei umot ha’olam* have a share in the world to come” presented an option to those outside the faith that was absent in Christianity. Isaiah 42:6 (*I’or goyim*) which is regarded as paradigmatic, at least in Reform, is not consensually treated as a call to proselyting. It has none of the compulsion of the resurrected Jesus’ last words. Rashi interprets *I’or goyim*, “Every tribe (in Israel) is called *goy*.” Radak states that the passage has two connotations, the first being that the nations will enjoy peace because of Israel; the second, that the nations “will keep the seven laws (of Noah) and will go in a good way.” *Metzudat David* states, “To light up the eyes of all the nations so that they will know that *Adonai* is God.” This is hardly a fervent call to mission.

At issue in this discussion is not the prevalence or legitimacy of proselyting in Judaism during Talmudic times but rather its position in the Jewish scale of values. We do not need to make gratuitous comparisons with such values as *Shabbat* and *milah* which are not only paramount but occupy altogether different categories which we might call theocentric-covenantal. There is, however, an act of humanistic *hesed*, clearly defined as a *mitzvah*, which is analogous to proselyting inasmuch as it, too, is concerned with human redemption and restoration to the fold of Jewish life—*pidyon shvuyim*. This *mitzvah* has been both continuous and imperative in our history and clearly occupies a dominant place. In *Baba Batra* (8a-b), there is a discussion on whether even orphans are required to contribute to charity. R. Shmuel ben Yehudah determines that they are not required to do so, *even* for ransoming captives. The discussion continues: “Ifra Hormizd, the mother of King Shapur, sent a purse of dinars to R. Yoseph, with the request that it should be used for carrying out a great *mitzvah*. R. Yoseph considered what such a *mitzvah* could be, when Abaye said to him, ‘Since R. Shmuel ben Yehudah has taught that money for charity is not to be raised from orphans even for the redemption of captives, we conclude that *pidyon shvuyim* is a very great *mitzvah*.’” The *Tosefta* adds that if a *Sefer Torah* may be sold so that one might teach Torah or marry a wife, it goes without saying that this also applies to *pidyon shvuyim*.

The urgency, imperativeness, and unabating continuity of this

*mitzvah* which has truly commanded us down to this day, is set forth with utmost clarity in these passages. Matthew could have said with even greater appropriateness, “Ye compass sea and land to rescue a single captive.” The vocation of proselyting is thus not comparable with the intensity of the *mitzvah* of ransoming captives. It should finally be noted that, halachically, proselyting is not one of the *Taryag Mitzvot*, nor is it referred to as a *mitzvah* in Talmudic literature, in the Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah* or *Sefer Hamitzvot*.

We return to the issue of relevance. The impressive record of and commitment to Jewish proselyting had little bearing on the medieval Jewish strategy of desisting from the practice. No one in a Christian land would have insisted that, since this was our vocation, we should actively pursue it. Thousands were willing to die and be killed *al kiddush ha’ shem*, but no one was willing to die in order to bring a Christian under the wings of the *Shechinah*. Hence, the suspension of Jewish proselyting was prompted not only for reasons of prudence and security, which Jews disregarded in other cases, but because it was not a supreme requirement.

I would now argue that for a different set of reasons, contemporary realities make the case for Jewish proselyting equally irrelevant. The first set of reasons pertains to our relationship with the non-Jewish world. (I will not consider the admonition that we proceed with sophistication and consideration for the sensitivity of Christians, and that we limit ourselves to the unchurched. These are matters of tactical policy which can easily be breached, as the Union Board resolution, coming quick on the heels of Rabbi Schindler’s address, would seem to indicate.) The Union Board ratified a call to proselyting precisely at a time in religious affairs when a significant part of the Christian world has begun to withdraw if not retreat, and certainly to reassess its mission to the Jews. The magnitude of this event, for it is truly an historic event, can best be understood against the centrality of this commitment in New Testament Christianity. This could constitute virtually a revised exegesis of, if not an excision from, the very heart of Christian scripture. It would be somewhat similar to an expurgation from our *T’nach*, or at least an attenuation, of the concept of *Shivat Zion*. What a far cry from early Christianity, which was openly fighting Judaism for the souls of men. What a far cry from the first gathering of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam only three years after World War II when the declaration went forth to Christendom: “We cannot forget that we meet in a land from which 110,000 Jews were taken to be murdered . . . All of our churches stand under the commission of our common Lord, ‘Go ye into all the



world and preach the Gospel to every creature.' The fulfillment of this commission requires that we include the Jewish people in our evangelistic task" (*Official Report, The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, page 180).

The reassessment by various sectors in Christianity is not coming about primarily out of theological or intellectual considerations, but because of the Shoah. If the World Council of Churches was not abashed by its brazen and contemptible insensitivity, others may have been. In April, 1958, Reinhold Niebuhr, writing in our own *Journal*, abjured the principle of carrying the gospel to the Jews. He wrote:

"The problem of the Christian majority, particularly in America, is therefore to come to terms with the stubborn will to live of the Jews as a peculiar people, both religiously and ethnically. The problem can be solved only if the Christian and Gentile majority accepts this fact and ceases to practice tolerance provisionally in the hope that it will encourage assimilation ethnically and conversion religiously . . .

"The Christian majority can achieve a more genuine tolerance only if it assumes the continued refusal of the Jew to be assimilated, either ethnically or religiously. That recognition involves an appreciation of the resources of Jewish life, morally and religiously, which make Judaism something other than an inferior form of religion such as must ultimately recognize the superiority of the Christian faith; and end its long resistance by capitulation and conversion."

The Vatican Council under Pope John XXIII withdrew by considerable lengths from its traditional *mitzvah*. It may not yet have foresworn its mandate, but it has gone far to inhibit it. "In company with the Prophets and the Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and 'serve him shoulder to shoulder'" (Vatican II, *On the Jews*, October 1965). . . . "Relations between Christians and Jews have for the most part been no more than a monologue. A true dialogue must now be established. The dialogue, in effect, comprises a favored means for promoting better mutual understanding and a deepening of one's own tradition. The condition of dialogue is respect for the other as he is, for his faith and religious convictions. All intent of proselytizing and conversion is excluded" (Introduction to the discussions of the plenary session of bishop members of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 1969).

The same applies to a segment of the evangelical world where there is, at least, a measure of inhibition about missionizing Jews. Even those evangelicals who anticipate that Jews will ultimately

accept Jesus, though without Christian intervention, are thus revising their sacred writ. I believe that not modernity, but, to the contrary, the incursion of the Dark Ages as embodied in the Shoah, has brought this about. In a de facto sense, a theological "SALT" arrangement has been effected between Judaism and much of Christendom. Each will restrain its missals. A Jewish call to mission, however delicately couched, would represent a renunciation of the unwritten understanding. It could be considered a provocation by Jews for the resumption of Christian evangelism in our midst. There could be no more inopportune time than now to jeopardize a truce that could perhaps become a peace. Some would seize the pretext of lifting a reluctant suspension of their mission, perhaps blaming Jews for rejecting a profound Christian concession.

There are equally severe implications for intramural Jewish relations. Once more, the appeal to our traditional vocation holds little relevance. In very early Christian days, as well as later, Jewish proselyting was predicated on the principle of one *halachah*, binding on all Jews. Whatever differences may have existed within the halachic system, the indispensability of *milah* and *mikveh* for conversion was unassailable. Except, of course, for Paul. Whatever the theological and political reason for the rupture with Christianity, halachically it was *milah* that forced the break. This must say something very monitory to Reform. There no longer is a *halachah* acceptable to all Jews. Our position on non-halachic conversion is well-known, and it is a source of tension, especially with Israeli Orthodoxy, but it is a kind of controlled tension. As long as neither side presses the issue, we can manage to live under the formula of uneasy non-belligerency. But should we proclaim activism in the realm of proselyting, one of two results must ensue. Either we accept halachic conversion, which some Reform rabbis advocate, with the probability that Reform will become increasingly negligible as a concept, if not as an institution, or we will generate a struggle which could stir accusations of Paulinism against us. Reform has come too far to invite charges of schismatic heresy. Most Reform rabbis are not susceptible to submitting to the demands of halachic conversion and to do so would be to trade possible peace with Orthodoxy for certain conflict within Reform. While certainly prompted by the most earnest of motivations, a call for denominational proselyting, if implemented, could awaken vicious confrontations. A non-halachic, activist Reform mission, going beyond our more restrained present practice, would outrage others who would accuse us of blatant defiance of a sanctum. Were this outrage to take the form, however

unlikely, of halachic counter-mission, there would be open conflict and scandal.

Are there authentic Jewish alternatives to active proselyting? I believe that there are and that, joined to Rabbi Schindler's first four points, they could meet our common concern over threats to Jewish survival and could bring greater numbers into Judaism than could outreach to the unchurched. It is a commonplace to point to the obvious fifty percent in Jewish life who are unsynagogued, who belong to no Jewish organizations, who contribute nothing to Jewish causes, who give their children no, or virtually no, Jewish education. Yet should the prospect of attempting to win over even a portion of them be less challenging and less rewarding than seeking the unchurched? Are we ready to write them off? A program of renewal, perhaps shared by as many branches in Jewish life as care to participate, could arouse greater interest and contribute more to Jewish unity than approaches to non-Jews. We may now be giving the impression that our institutions are renouncing the estranged fifty percent of American Jewry. If one of our enemies is intermarriage, another more virulent, is Zero Population Growth which Jews have embraced with characteristically excessive zeal. Should we not engage in a united effort with other Jewish bodies, to restore the *mitzvah* of *p'ru u'r'vu*? To bring the obvious message that a mutilated and depleted people has the task, as well as the moral right, to replenish itself, just as dangerously teeming societies have the task to limit their populations? Let the adherents of situational ethics ponder that. It is not coincidental that Orthodoxy, which has so far been least affected by intermarriage, is also contributing most to the numerical restoration of our people. This proposal should not be evaluated in terms of its apparent difficulties. It is every bit as feasible as proselyting. It certainly commands priority and greater gravity in the scale of *mitzvot*.

A second objective should be the tragic plight of those unmarried Jewish women who encounter the severest difficulty in finding Jewish mates. Contemporary "pop" literature and conventional wisdom are full of stereotypes about the materialistic "Jewish princess" and the arrogant "Jewish prince" whom no sensitive person would have for a partner. This presents us with a dual challenge. In the first place, there may be enough validity to the perceptions to warrant an appraisal of how we are doing as a "kingdom of priests and a holy people." But this gargantuan task must be left for other instruments in Jewish life. The second challenge, however, is more manageable. Does the synagogue, does the Jewish community, have a responsibility,

however costly, to take another look at the feasibility of sophisticated *shadchanut* under communal auspices? This would require the efforts of social scientists, psychologists, and rabbis who would attempt to reconcile young people's individualism and sense of independence with the need of many, clearly articulated, for finding mates. How earnestly are we pursuing alternatives to singles' bars?

A third objective should be an assessment of our educational systems. Are they working? Is Jewish commitment appreciably affected by Jewish education or non-education? Do our communal leaders come out of Jewish school systems, or rather out of other environments more conducive to Jewish commitment? How effective are our outreach activities on campuses? Can we learn from the less conventional methods of other Jewish groups? What of the quality of Jewish life? Does it contribute to disaffection and alienation?

Finally, there are large numbers of Jews who for sociological as well as economic reasons will not join congregations or give their children Jewish educations. They are the poor and the socially insecure, the left-out. It is not that they lack the desire but rather that they are inhibited. Should we not be thinking how to offer their children free schooling without putting the parents through the humiliation of pleading poverty or social dislocation?

There should be no illusions about the magnitude of the task, but can any task be more life-giving and more in the spirit of our people's time-honored vocation?



# Issues in Historical Perspective

## Jewish Proselytism: A New Look

*Theodore Friedman*

Within recent years, Jewish sociologists and demographers have filled our journals with articles, laced with graphs and statistics, on the rapidly dwindling numerical strength of the Jewish people. After a spectacular spurt in population in the nineteenth century, reckoned by some as high as a five-fold increase, the remaining decades of the twentieth century portend a radical decline, unless, of course, present trends are reversed. In a word, Jews are an endangered species. The causes are too well known to require elaboration: a zooming rate of inter-marriage in the Diaspora and a Jewish birth rate insufficient to maintain the present numerical status-quo. Both factors are deeply rooted in sociological realities that give no sign of any impending change. If one considers the long range effects of these trends, one cannot resist the conclusion that vastly reduced numbers will drastically impair the position of the Jewish people in regard to all its vital interests including Israel.

To date, all that has been proposed in the face of this situation is an intensification of Jewish education. Without in any way

minimizing its importance, one may well entertain serious doubts as to whether Jewish education per se is the only possible answer. A tidal wave is not held at bay by a dike that has been aptly described as a mile wide and an inch deep. Something more radical and far-reaching is required. We propose that what is indicated is a new attitude and practice toward receiving converts into the fold of the Jewish people and faith. While what is proposed here is certainly new compared with the current attitude and practice, actually, seen in historic perspective, it is a return to the classic Jewish posture on the subject, that which informed the opinions of the Sages of the early centuries of the common era as found in Talmud and Midrash.

But before engaging in historical retrospect, a quick glance at the current attitude toward conversion to Judaism is in order. Candor requires that we frankly admit that there is a widespread sense of hesitation—to use the mildest possible term—among large segments toward a total social acceptance of converts. Any Rabbi can attest to that out of personal experience. Among the Rabbis themselves, there are those, notably Orthodox Rabbis, who look askance at the “sincerity” of present-day conversions since the preponderant majority of converts are motivated by the desire to marry a Jew or

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Jewess. Indeed, in the Jewish world today, wherever there is an organized Kehillah whose rabbinate is Orthodox, conversion to Judaism is either simply not practiced or is turned into a kind of obstacle course meant to discourage all but the undiscourageable. In Argentina, for example, the official rabbinate of the Kehillah performs no conversions in accordance with an agreement entered into over forty years ago with the then Chief Rabbinate of Israel. (The agreement arose out of a particular set of circumstances prevailing in Argentina in the twenties.) In England, as Jewish men in the armed forces of the U.S. stationed in that country during World War II discovered, conversion to Judaism was virtually impossible, if not absolutely so. In Israel today, while conversions are performed by the Rabbinate—according to reliable sources, between three and five hundred per year—the candidate is expected to commit himself or herself to lead a fully Orthodox regimen of religious observance. In the United States, the number of converts to Judaism is estimated to average about three thousand per year. Unfortunately, no statistics are available. With the exception of some Orthodox Rabbis of both the old and new schools, all Rabbis in the United States perform conversions.

With the exception of the latter, the picture described above is another illustration of an attitude long outliving the particular historical situation in which it was engendered, a not infrequent phenomenon in the history of social attitudes. Recent statistics indicate that in Israel only 500 conversions to Judaism take place annually whereas the number seeking to convert each year is 6000. It is one of the unnoticed ironies of Jewish history that a people whose religion created the very institution of conversion should in the long run

develop a marked ambivalence toward it. This shift calls for explanation.

### In Antiquity

The Biblical term *Ger* (in post-biblical Hebrew a convert to Judaism) simply denotes a resident alien within the land of Israel. That no ritual or ceremony of conversion existed in the fifth century B.C.E. is evidenced by the following circumstance. The only solution that Ezra the stalwart leader of the returnees from the Babylonian exile knew for the problem of intermarriage that confronted him was to have the Jewish men who had married non-Jewish wives divorce them. A latter-day Ezra would have had them converted as is the practice today in Israel in the case of the fairly large number of Russian Jews who arrive with non-Jewish wives. Sometime in the fourth century B.C.E. a ritual of conversion was established, a first in the history of religion. Thus we read in the Book of Esther (8:17) "And many from among the peoples of the land became Jews." (Scholarly opinion tends to date the book toward the end of the Persian period).

For once, the Greeks, who had a term for almost everything, had no word for a person who foreswore his former religious allegiance since conversion was unknown in the pagan world. Hence, when the authors of the Septuagint came to translate the Biblical word *Ger*—a word which by the third century B.C.E. had taken on a new connotation, they had to *invent* a new Greek word—*proselyte*: literally, one who has come over. That the institution was already well established by the middle of the second century B.C.E. is evident from John Hyrcanus' forced conversion of the Idumeans, the only episode on record of a forced conversion to Judaism. This singular event is to be seen against a background of

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what must have been a consistent, conscious effort on the part of Jews to win adherents to Judaism in the pagan world. Had not the prophet of the Babylonian exile foretold a time when "you shall call foreign folk, and strangers shall come hurrying to you"? (Isaiah 55:5). Had not the same prophet given Israel the promise and mandate: "I now appoint you to bring light to the nations, that My salvation may reach the ends of the world" (49:6). A confluence of contemporary sources clearly indicates that Jews in Second Temple times were not slow in exercising the mandate.

### In the Hellenistic World

In the Hellenistic world, dotted throughout by extensive Jewish communities, effective propaganda was carried out by both the written and the spoken word. A few quotations from contemporary historians will indicate both the extent and the effectiveness of the Jewish effort to win converts. Thus, James Parkes informs us that: "They (the Jews of Rome) were enthusiastic missionaries of their religion and this fact was the final and in some ways the most important cause of the destruction of their security. For this, they were expelled from Rome in 139 B.C.E. Even in the middle of the wars at the end of the first century, the Flavians had to take measures to make the circumcision of Gentiles a capital offence."<sup>1</sup> A generation ago, Nahum Slousch advanced the theory that masses of Phoenician colonists in North Africa were absorbed by local Jews owing to the racial and linguistic affinities between the two groups. His theory has been significantly substantiated by more recent anthropological investigation. North of Palestine, too, at about the same time, Judaism had made deep inroads among the inhabitants of Damascus. This Josephus

reveals to us almost *en passant*. In that city, it seems, Jew-baiters were preparing a general massacre of the local Jewish population but "they were afraid of their own wives, almost all of whom had gone over to the Jewish religion."<sup>2</sup> Of the Laws of Moses, Philo writes: "They attract and win the attention of all, of barbarians, of Greeks, of dwellers on the mainland and islands, of nations of the east and west, of Europe and Asia, of the whole inhabited world from end to end."<sup>3</sup> Professor Salo Baron has made the statement that "every tenth Roman (member of the Roman Empire) was a Jew." This estimate is based, among other factors, on a widespread movement of conversion to Judaism. How this affected those in the early Christian era intent on spreading Christianity can be seen from the words ascribed to Jesus: "Woe, unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte." (*Matthew 23:15*)

What light do somewhat later Rabbinic sources than those cited above throw on the subject? Were the Sages favorably disposed toward accepting converts? The question can readily be answered since it has been exhaustively investigated by a number of scholars. Professor E. E. Urbach comes to the following conclusion: "The anticipation of the conversion of the Gentiles to Judaism did not cease as long as the faith in the chosenness of Israel and the power of its Torah continued to be a living, dynamic faith... This faith was the common possession of the Amoraim both in the early and later period in Palestine, as well as in Babylonia."<sup>4</sup> Writing a generation ago, the eminent Rabbinic scholar Gedalya Allon<sup>5</sup> renders an identical judgment: "It goes without saying that the predominant attitude toward accepting converts in both the Talmudic and extra-Talmudic sources is positive." In the whole range of



Talmudic literature there are only four statements that reflect antipathy toward receiving converts into the fold. But even some of these, as we shall presently see, were stood on their head, so to speak, by subsequent Talmudic commentators in order to yield a favorable attitude toward conversion.

One such passage is the oft-quoted statement by Rabbi Chelbo, a third century Palestinian Amora: "Proselytes are as burdensome to Israel as a scabrous itch," (*Yevamot* 47b). *Tosaphot ad loc.* offer two interpretations that make the statement reflect adversely on Israel rather than on proselytes. One of these, incidentally, is cited in the name of Rabbi Abraham the Proselyte to the effect that since proselytes observe the commandments more scrupulously than do Jews, they highlight the failure of Jews in this regard.<sup>7</sup>

### Historic Sources of Jewish Defensiveness

If then, both historical and Talmudic evidence points unequivocally toward a very positive attitude, what is the source of the current ambivalence and worse on the subject among large segments of Jewry? The answer lies in the tragic history of the Jewish people in its relationships with the Gentile world. First pagan and then Christian hostility toward Judaism made any effort to proselytize a very risky affair. Omitting the innumerable details, it may be simply stated that long before Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, even conversion of pagans entailed severe penalty. Thus, the Roman emperors, Severus and Caracala (second century C.E.), otherwise tolerant of Judaism, imposed the penalty of death in such instances. The codes of the Christian

emperors, beginning with Constantine, repeated the interdiction of conversion proclaimed by their pagan predecessors and extended it to include the conversion of Christians to Judaism. Early Church Councils added a number of refinements but in no instance relaxed any of the prohibitions. According to the law enacted by the Church Council of Orleans (early fifth century), a pagan slave converted to Judaism was to be declared a freeman and forfeited by his Jewish master. A Christian slave, on the other hand, who converted to Judaism was to be sold in perpetual slavery to a Christian master. Such legislation, frequently repeated, only testifies to the fact that for all the legal prohibitions and grave risks involved for both Jew and convert, such conversions were indeed taking place. Even during the darkest days of the Middle Ages, one hears of an occasional convert to Judaism. The *Book of the Pious* (*Sepher Hassidim*), that twelfth century repository of medieval Jewish values, attitudes, and mores, offers us an interesting sidelight on the Jewish attitude toward converts. Its author, Rabbi Judah Hehassid writes: "He who has a good heart and marries a proselyte who has a good heart and conducts herself with modesty and does deeds of loving kindness; it is better to marry into such stock than to marry a Jew who does not possess such qualities."<sup>8</sup> But in the end, Professor Baron's judgment is undoubtedly correct when he writes: "On principle, too, Judaism had long ceased to be a missionary religion. It realized that the few conquests it might make would be very dearly compensated by increased animosity, perhaps even by violent retribution."<sup>9</sup>

The foregoing should suffice to establish the long historical experience out of which the present-day ambivalence and hesitation toward accepting converts arose. Yet another factor was also at work. From the

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Jewish side, it was inevitable that centuries of pagan and then Christian hostility toward Jews and Judaism should make a serious impact on Jewish attitudes toward non-Jews. To the best of my knowledge, it was Judah Halevi in his *Kuzari* who first put forth the notion that there is an irreducible difference between the native-born-Jew and the proselyte. "Even after the proselyte has taken upon himself all these (the fulfillment of the commandments), he is not equal to the native-born-Jew for only the latter can be potentially worthy of the gift of prophecy."<sup>10</sup> The *Zohar* goes a step further and makes a metaphysical distinction between the soul of a Jew and that of a Gentile.<sup>11</sup> From the *Zohar*, the fountainhead of Kabbalistic and Hassidic teaching, the Hassidim pick up the notion and make it a staple in their doctrines. Suffice it here to point to the writings of the sixteenth century Maharal of Prague<sup>12</sup> and to the *Tanya*,<sup>13</sup> the latter the basic text of Habad Hassidism. The enormous influence of such teaching, repeated and popularized by innumerable preachers in the course of centuries can hardly be overestimated; particularly when such concepts appeared to receive substantiation from the everyday experience of anti-Jewish hostility and repression. These two factors, then, historical circumstances and the Jewish conceptual response to them, effected a drastic shift in the original Jewish attitude toward the acceptance of proselytes.

It might be argued (indeed is in some quarters) that the attitude of a very grudging acceptance of converts is dictated by traditional *Halakhah*. We shall presently see that such is far from the actual case. But before doing so, a more general consideration ought to engage us. Generally speaking, *Halakhah* is a partial and often belated concretization of Jewish values and attitudes, just as any law and it often lags

behind the operative values of a society. In essence, if not in these terms, the point was made long ago by a French Jewish scholar, M. Israel Levi, the one-time Chief Rabbi of France.<sup>14</sup> "It is also probable that the missionary volunteers in the Diaspora were not recruited from among the rabbis. It is therefore not surprising that in rabbinic literature there are unquestionable traces of a tendency hostile to such conversions. What is surprising is to find so much evidence of the opposite view. Was the favorable tendency then the stronger of the two? Yes, unquestionably. But in a particular milieu, that of the *Aggadists* or preachers. One note alone dominates in the Palestinian *Midrashim*...It is the attitude of those who proclaim the example of Abraham, the father of proselytes. Now, where does one find the ideal of a religious body—in its *corpus juris*, in its canon law, or in its literature? Is the spirit of Christianity to be found in the Gospels or in the *Leges Visigothorum*?"<sup>15</sup>

However, it is not alone to the *Aggadists* of Talmud and *Midrash* that one must repair to find unstinting praise and willing acceptance of newcomers to Judaism and the Jewish people. Several Talmudic anecdotes, the kernel of whose historical veracity need not be doubted, reveal that in practice at least two Talmudic Sages accepted converts quite oblivious of some of the more stringent requirements of the *Halakhah*. The two episodes are noteworthy.

### What Is an Ulterior Motive?

The first is the classic story of the Gentile who came to Hillel, the first century Palestinian Sage, with the request that the latter convert him on condition that he become a High Priest.<sup>16</sup> The *Halakhah* clearly states<sup>17</sup> and is codified as such by Maimonides<sup>18</sup>



that if it is apparent upon investigation—in Hillel's case it was explicit—that the motive for conversion is an ulterior one, such a candidate is to be disqualified. The story of Hillel's conversion of the Gentile who aspired to become a High Priest troubled the medieval commentators since it patently violated the *Halakhah*. Never short of solutions for apparent inconsistencies in the Talmud, the *Tosaphists*<sup>19</sup> solve this one by asserting that Hillel was convinced that in this instance the convert would come to embrace Judaism for its own sake.

They apply the same reasoning to an even more piquant Talmudic anecdote,<sup>20</sup> the details of which need not detain us here. The upshot of the story is that a Gentile prostitute fell in love with one of the disciples of Rabbi Hiyyah, a noted second century Palestinian Sage through a bizarre set of circumstances. She applied to the latter for conversion in order that she might marry the young man. Though correctly surmising her motive, he ordered her to undergo the required ritual thus making it possible for her to marry the man of her heart's desire.

Both episodes would indicate that in practice, even in the Talmudic age, the disqualification of a candidate for conversion on the grounds of ulterior motive was hardly rigidly observed. In any event, even the early Talmudic *Halakhah* clearly states that once the ritual has been performed, an ulterior motive does not *ex post facto* invalidate the conversion. Even subsequent nonobservance of the commandments does not invalidate the conversion. Beginning with the sixteenth century down to our own day, the overwhelming majority of the leading *Halakhists*, with rare exceptions, held that the desire to marry a Jew or Jewess is no bar to conversion.

In this context, one must reckon with a number of Talmudic statements that

ascribe a non-Jewish origin to various Talmudic Sages, including such worthies as Shemaiah and Avtalion, the teachers of Hillel and Rabbi Meir. According to the Talmud, the descendants of such notorious anti-Jewish figures as Sisera, Haman, Nebuchadnezzar and Nero either studied or taught Torah in Bnei Berak or Jerusalem—a neat moral victory for Jews and Judaism.<sup>21</sup> How much, if any, historical veracity is involved in such statements is difficult to say. One thing, however, is certain. Such statements could hardly have arisen in a milieu which looked askance at converts. Moreover, there are a few instances in the Talmud in which certain Sages are specifically designated as proselytes. Such is the case of a certain Benjamin the proselyte of Egyptian origin, a pupil of Rabbi Akiba.<sup>22</sup> The noted Babylonian *Amora* Samuel bar Yehudah had no hesitation in reminding his colleagues that he was a proselyte.<sup>23</sup> These facts certainly bespeak a definitely favorable posture on the part of the Sages toward proselytes.

In the light of the foregoing, the ambivalence and in some instances the outright refusal to accept converts can only be explained as a kind of religio-cultural lag, the persistence of an attitude quite foreign to both the teaching and practice of classic Judaism. This attitude, as we have sought to make clear, grew out of a set of external circumstances imposed by Gentile-Christian legislation and the Jewish response to anti-Jewish hostility. Incidentally, such legislation forbidding conversion persisted in some parts of Europe, especially in Eastern Europe through the better part of the nineteenth century.

### New Options

In this regard, the Jewish people today obviously faces a totally new situation, one

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<sup>20</sup> *The Jewis*

<sup>21</sup> Quoted fr  
*History of*  
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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 1

<sup>23</sup> *The Sage*  
491, Jerusa

<sup>24</sup> *Studies in*  
281, Jerusa



in which there are no legal bars to conversion except in Islamic countries where at least technically a Moslem who converts to another faith is subject to death. Clearly, a new situation calls for a new response; in this instance, a return actually to the native stance of Judaism on the subject. This writer does not advocate launching Jewish missionary activities. It is much too late in the day for imperialism, religious or otherwise. But between religious imperialism in the form of missionizing and the present attitude of passivity or negativism there remains a wide range of possibilities, none of which is currently being exploited.

At least one example of such a possibility within the framework of present-day Israeli reality may be suggested. Currently, a few thousand non-Jewish young men and women come to Israel for fairly long stays, attracted largely by the mystique of the kibbutz movement. Here, in the kibbutzim, they work as volunteers for periods from six months to a year. In the course of their stay, they get to know Jews and Israel fairly well. In the occasional lectures and seminars provided for them, they have sessions on almost every aspect of contemporary Israel in its reality and

problematics. On one subject alone, they return whence they came as uninformed as they were on their arrival—Judaism. Here is a golden opportunity not for missionary preachment but for straightforward presentation of the Jewish ethos and religion by informed, articulate committed Jewish teachers. Such sessions would surely prompt some to inquire further and eventually bring them to throw in their lot with Israel and its people, provided, of course, that the process of conversion became something less than an obstacle course involving the acceptance of total Orthodox observance. Other possibilities suggest themselves. But first there must be a change in attitude. That is the essential point.

Even if authentic Jewish tradition as outlined above, did not validate a new openness toward conversion, then certainly the present alarming erosion of Jewish numbers in the Diaspora through intermarriage and assimilation requires a new receptivity and awareness of the possibilities of conversion as one means of setting off numerical attrition. Did not Rabbi Elazar b. Pedat, a third century Palestinian Sage, once declare: "The Holy One blessed be He exiled Israel among the nations only that proselytes be added to it."<sup>24</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The Conflict of Church and Synagogue*, p. 24, London 1934.

<sup>2</sup> *The Jewish War*, Penguin edition, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Salo Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 1, p. 178, New York 1951.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 171.

<sup>5</sup> *The Sages: Opinions and Beliefs* (Hebrew), p. 491, Jerusalem 1970 (my translation).

<sup>6</sup> *Studies in Jewish History* (Hebrew), vol. 1, p. 281, Jerusalem 1958.

<sup>7</sup> Tosaphot to Kiddushin, beginning *Kashim Gerim*.

<sup>8</sup> *Sepher Chassidim*, par. 377.

<sup>9</sup> Baron, *op. cit.* vol. 5, p. 314. In view of the swift retribution invariably visited on Jews involved in converting Christians in the pre-modern period, one wonders what led the author to phrase his judgment in such qualified terms.

<sup>10</sup> *Kuzari* pt. 1, par. 115. Curiously, the entire paragraph from which this sentence is quoted is

## Conviction and Conversion

RABBI Alexander M. Schindler's recent statement on the desirability of actively seeking converts to Judaism is not original. Twenty years ago, in 1959, The Jewish Information Society for the Propagation of Judaism was launched by a group of prominent rabbis and Jewish community leaders who issued this statement:

The purposes of *The Jewish Information Society* are the propagation and dissemination—by means of lectures, pamphlets, books and by such other means as may be deemed suitable—of the views of God, Man and the World as set forth in the basic tenets of Judaism and expounded and explained in the Hebrew Bible and in the Jewish Tradition, and to unite all the people of the world in a commitment to the One Universal God and the Brotherhood of Man.

The moving spirit and unsalaried executive director of The Jewish Information Society was Ben Maccabee, an engineer by profession, who for several years devoted much of his time and means to publishing material on Judaism. He placed boxes filled with these pamphlets in airport, bus and railroad waiting rooms, emulating the practice of Christian churches and denominations.

Although The Jewish Information Society was endorsed by prominent rabbinic and lay leaders of the Conservative and Reform movements, Mr. Maccabee and the small group of active workers for the "Propagation of Judaism" did not succeed in getting support, besides words of praise. After keeping the society alive as a one-man-financed operation for several years, Mr. Maccabee closed it down. He saw that the Jewish community lacks the zeal for seeking converts.

The deficiency of what might be termed "missionary zeal" is also responsible for our neglect of the channels available for communicating Jewish teachings and ideas to Jews through public and college and university libraries.

All public libraries have funds for "minority cultures" reading material. Librarians welcome suggestions for acquisitions. *Without exception*, all libraries who received readers' requests for *The Jewish Spectator* subscribed. I have been pleading for the "moral support" of our readers, pleading that they write a few lines to their local libraries suggesting that *The Jewish Spectator* be included in the library's periodicals subscription list. I regret to have to report that this plea has been largely ignored.

Our experience with college and university libraries proves that on campuses where a faculty member or a student requests that *The Jewish*

*Spectator* be made available in the Periodicals Reading Room, the requests are followed up with subscriptions (frequently with orders of a complete file of back issues now only available in microfilm).

Chaplains in the U.S. Armed Forces have funds for magazine subscriptions. A few Jewish chaplains have standing orders for multiple copies of *The Jewish Spectator*. But several hundred full-time and part-time Jewish chaplains (also chaplains in Veterans and other by public-funds-supported hospitals) do not claim their share of funds for magazine subscriptions and books.

This lethargy is proof that we are devoid of the zeal to propagate and disseminate Jewish information and knowledge, not only among Gentiles but among our own people.

I would like Rabbi Schindler to point ways and means of how to cope with this lethargy. It is the bane and doom of informal Jewish education aimed at Jews and Gentiles.

CONVICTION and the urge to convert are inseparable—and the firmer the conviction the stronger is the desire to share it and have it acknowledged by others as true. In the case of religious conviction with salvational beliefs, the urge to share the blessings of the knowledge of God is especially intense. When God commanded Abram, "Get out of your country, and from your kinfolk, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation," He climaxed the promise with the pledge: "And in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The knowledge of God is to be shared with "all the families of the earth."

The hope and confidence that eventually all mankind will know and worship the One God recurs in many forms throughout the Hebrew Bible. Isaiah "saw" that "in the end of the days, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established at the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say: 'Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.'"

In the same spirit the Psalmist proclaimed:

"O sing unto the Lord a new song;  
Sing unto the Lord, all the earth . . .  
Declare His glory among the nations,  
His marvellous works among all the  
peoples . . .

Say among the nations: 'The Lord reigns.'"



The call to *all the earth* to know that the Lord is God is *the message* of the Hebrew Bible.

We do not know whether the author of the scroll of "Ruth" intended it to be a missionary tract. However this concise book of four chapters, read as part of the Synagogue service on Shevuoth, makes the point that a Moabite woman is not only fully qualified to enter the household of Israel but is worthy of becoming an ancestress of David and his dynasty and, thus, of the Messiah of the house of David.

The notion that it is not in the nature of Judaism to seek converts is not borne out by Talmudic evidence. It can be vindicated by only one isolated statement of Rabbi Helbo that "proselytes are as burdensome to Israel as leprosy." But this opinion of one Sage is as unrepresentative of the views held by the Sages as is the assertion of a Babylonian Rabbi that Israel should not look forward to the Messiah as he had already come in the reign of King Hezekiah. Two excellent studies of the Talmudic attitude to seeking converts, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period*, by Bernard J. Bamberger, and *Jewish Proselyting in the First Five Centuries of the Common Era*, by William G. Braude, present ample proof that the Rabbis of the Mishna and the Talmud were eager to win converts to Judaism. Hillel's condensation of the teachings of Judaism into "do not unto your neighbor what you would not want him to do unto you," for the benefit of a would-be convert, and the Rabbis' attempts to facilitate conversion even for those whom Biblical law excludes from entering the assembly of the Lord, prove that the Sages were not averse to proselyting. Arguing that Sennacherib's military campaigns and deportations of the conquered populations "mixed up all nations," Rabbi Joshua convinced his colleagues that an Ammonite convert to Judaism should be permitted to marry a Jewish girl. Earlier generations of Rabbis had already relaxed the Biblical ruling as applying to women converts because, they pointed out, the Bible excludes Ammonite and Moabite men—but not Ammonite and Moabite women.

The Sages held that no one was by birth disqualified from becoming a Jew. They had the tradition that Jeremiah and Ezekiel were descended from Rahab, the prostitute of Jericho who after helping Joshua to conquer the city became his wife. Even the descendants of Haman, the personification of evil, were not excluded from the assembly of the Lord. According to the Talmud, Haman's descendants were studying and teaching at Bnei Berak. And Rabbi Akiba was said to be a descendant of Haman.

The Talmud is eloquent in praise of proselytes

and of the pious merit that accrues to those who bring non-Jews under the wings of the *Shekhinah*—the Divine Presence. According to Rabbi Eleazar Ben Pedat (3rd century), God exiled Israel and scattered them over the face of the earth, so that they should win converts. Jesus denounced the Rabbis: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel over sea and land to make a single proselyte."

While this description of the Tannaites' missionary zeal is surely exaggerated, it is equally wrong to deny that the teachers of the Mishna and their successors of the Babylonian and Palestinian *Gemara* were favorably disposed toward proselytism and acted accordingly.

Those who maintain that it is not in the nature of Judaism to seek converts argue that the Sages discouraged would-be converts. They inquired carefully about motives for conversion and reminded them that the people whom they wanted to join were "troubled, oppressed, despised and subject to endless tribulations." They stressed the difficulties of living as a Jew and of observing the laws of the Torah and the penalties for violating the commandments. All this, however, does not prove that the Sages were averse to accepting sincere converts. Conversion was made difficult and discouraged because of political reasons during the Hadrianic persecutions, in the second century, and in the Middle Ages because of the Christian legislations which made conversion to Judaism a capital crime.

Judaism is a this-worldly religion, firmly anchored in the here-and-now. Its goal is to make *this* world the kingdom of God with the universal rule of justice, equality and felicity for all. "Paradise" and "hell" are essentially alien to the cluster of Jewish ideas and ideals. Judaism does not hold out the promise of "salvation" and "life eternal" to its believers. Unlike Christianity, with its "romantic approach," as Leo Baeck characterized it, Judaism is primarily concerned with *this* world. In contradistinction to Jesus who said that his "kingdom is not of this world," Judaism is first of all concerned with *this* world.

Judaism's "unromantic" character and the exacting discipline of the Law lack mass appeal. Judaism is no rival to Christianity as a proselyting faith. It demands much and proclaims no certainties about the hereafter. It has no magic cure for the existential tragedy of man. It knows that, as the Sages after long deliberation decided, "it would be better for man not to be born." Yet it insists that being in life obligates one "to examine one's deeds," that is, to strive for ethical perfection.

The God of Judaism is not only One and Invisible—he is Unique. He is without analogy and



comparison—and thus unknowable. No mortal can see God and live. He has no associate and He has never become flesh. He is Space (*Makom*)—endless, limitless, ever-present and yet elusive. He has no form. He is outside the range of the perception of the senses. There is no mediator and mediation to span the abyss between man and God, except the bridge of good deeds and prayer.

ALTHOUGH Judaism has not carried its message abroad with the missionary zeal of its daughter religions, Christianity and Islam, it has eclipsed them in proselyting force. The Jewish God idea, the Jewish ethics epitomized in the Ten Commandments are the core of Christian teachings and of the foundation of the democratic idea. Spiritually, ideationally and religiously, the Christian world lives, prays, and hopes according to concepts and ideas grown in Jewish soil.

Judaism knows that deed is more important than creed: "The righteous of all nations will share in the world to come." Jewish efforts to win converts will not aim at "saving souls" but strive to recruit co-workers for the Jewish program-and-task of perfecting this world according to the blue-print of God's kingdom. Judaism neither abets nor provides room for the vainglorious boast that one religion holds the keys to salvation. There are many ways leading to God, although we hold that the Jewish way is the best way. Possibly this is a form of chauvinism and improper self-pride, but it is not a claim to exclusive possession of the truth.

Jews who are convinced that their way is right have the obligation to invite others to join them. Conviction and the urge to convert are inseparable. Exile and persecution which resulted in many unnatural dichotomies and splits of what cannot be separated also led to the separation of Jewish conviction and the urge to convert.

With the restoration of Jewish statehood, the organic connection between Jewish conviction and the urge to convert others to this conviction has been restored. The time has come to work at the task apportioned to Abram.

### Publicity for Neo-Nazis

JEWISH DEFENSE organizations, besides wasting millions of dollars of communal funds by *triplicating* projects which even *singly* are without merit and serve no good purpose, also help promote anti-Semitism. They lavish national and international exposure and publicity on *local* anti-Semitic groups which, if not for the spotlight trained upon them by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the

American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Jewish periodicals would not be heard of by most people of their *own* communities.

In my "Editor's Quarter" of Winter 1974, I referred to the folly of publicizing anti-Semitic statements which reach only a very small audience as "Chelmer Wisdom." I pointed to such "Chelmer Follies" as Arnold Forster's and Benjamin R. Epstein's book *The New Anti-Semitism*, an annotated anthology of anti-Semitic slurs which, if not for the exposure provided by the ADL and other Jewish defense agencies, would never have seen print in large newspapers and in a widely distributed book.

The most recent "Chelmer Folly" of the American Jewish community's reaction to an *insignificant local anti-Semitic* incident was the storm unleashed because a handful of Neo-Nazis wanted to stage a rally-and-march in Skokie. If these cranks had been *ignored*, they probably would not have mustered even *twenty-nine* "Nazis" for their Chicago Rally on June 24, 1978. They would not have been featured on the *front-pages* of *all* American newspapers—to say nothing of TV and radio publicity—and their case would never have come before the Supreme Court which, as could have been predicted, upheld their right of assembly and free speech.

It is good that *at least one Jewish leader*, Albert Vorspan, Executive Vice President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, registers dissent from what he terms "our corporate behavior." In his "High Holiday Reflections" (*Reform Judaism*, September 1978), Vorspan (in "private life" the author of several books of *incisive-critical* wit I consider wittier and more intelligent than the Buchwald and Kishon varieties) wrote:

The opposite of silence can be noise rather than wisdom. Speaking out is not always the same as making sense. . . . Now that Skokie is only a bitter memory and Nazis have marched in Marquette Park, what is it that we Jews have achieved in our highly emotional campaign? We made ourselves feel better, perhaps, but at the cost of giving a small band of psychopaths a fortune in free publicity for a year. . . . We whipped up a frenzy of passion as if we were indeed poised on the edge of apocalypse . . . and as if America 1978 were truly Berlin 1932.

Ten years earlier, in December 1968, the Jewish defense organizations "whipped up a frenzy of passion" no less intense when a fifteen-year-old girl recited a childish anti-Semitic poem over an obscure New York radio station with a miniscule following.