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Notes on a response to Samuel Norich's "What Will Bind Us  
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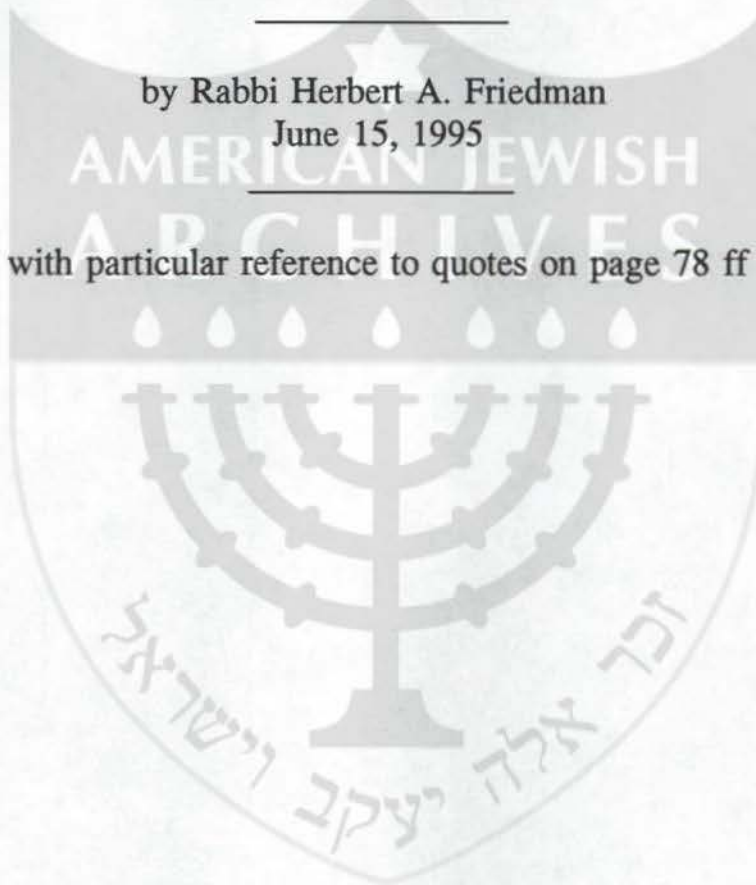
Notes in Response to Samuel Norich's Report  
"What Will Bind Us Now?"

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by Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman  
June 15, 1995

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with particular reference to quotes on page 78 ff



P. 78 ff

"Link our best and brightest to some group or other of Israelis, find ways to give them a real feel for the language and the place, or we face not only a chasm that will widen, we face a loss of our own vitality."

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The following are some suggestions that are quite practical, given the will

1. Kids 13 - 18  
Israel Experience - various programs; massively financed by UJA; giving responsibility to local federations to select kids through a community-wide process.
2. Boarding high schools in Israel and Diaspora - ages 14 - 19; large network of schools, mingling the young people - sharing life and language.
3. Universities in Israel - ages 18 - 25; in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian.
4. Adults
  - a. villages in Israel - rotating occupants from Diaspora and locals
  - b. villages in Diaspora - rotating occupants from Diaspora and locals
  - c. Hebrew lessons throughout Diaspora - Israel to export 5000 teachers
  - d. Business men from Diaspora live in Israel and actually manage their business
  - e. Communal leaders from Diaspora live in Israel for long periods, to teach voluntary citizen action to improve society and life
5. Develop Wexner Heritage Foundation program in Israel - ages 35 - 45. In ten years this program would create cadre of one thousand who would be links with Diaspora.
6. Various other ideas
  - a. Academic exchanges, on large scale
  - b. Technical conferences, on large scale - several thousand
  - c. Exchanges of performers and performances in arts, music, dance, theater, film, etc.



## Comments

1. Beilin - Beit Yisrael is nonsense - will never amount to anything, regardless of size of membership, unless it has something concrete to do. Beilin has offered no ideas of a functioning program.
2. Jewish Agency is dinosaur - and should be dissolved. Government can assume its few functions.
3. UJA-CJF - Commission on National Structure is useless - like kids moving blocks around to build a different looking tower. Juggling the alphabet isn't the way to make change.
  - a. UJA should re-assert its historic responsibility for assisting the growth of Israel and improving the quality of life (i.e. education, health, social welfare, job creation, housing, etc.) of new immigrants. The Agency and Government have both failed in this regard. UJA doesn't need agents to help it do that work in Israel. It should set up operating foundations and do its own work directly, as the JDC does.
  - b. UJA should be 1000% more vigorous than it now is, raise more money, fight for a higher share, and separate from Federations if necessary. Run a straightforward campaign for Israel alone.
  - c. Eliminate the UIA. It is useless.
  - d. Co-opt talent inside the communities for carrying out its function in Israel. This will strengthen pro-Israel sentiment locally.
  - e. UJA should think of tasks which Israelis can perform for it in the Diaspora. (My idea of saturating U.S. communities with Russians, carefully chosen) (Bring scientists over, to give talks on desalination; cancer research; drought-resistant crops; new electronics; natural gas from Oman, etc.)

### Basic plan

UJA raise the money and spend it, in Israel. UJA raise "second-line" money for Israel Experience for youngsters, age 13 - 25.

CJF service the local communities. Help them raise money and manage a huge new educational apparatus - hundreds of elementary day schools and high schools. Communities now possess about 2.5 billion endowment funds. Start spending.

These two friendly enemies should never merge and always cooperate.





## Diaspora in Crisis

The following is the second in a series of essays excerpted from "What Will Bind Us Now? A Report on the Institutional Ties Between Israel and American Jewry," published recently by the Center for Middle East Peace and Economic Cooperation.

By SAMUEL NORICH  
Signs of Crisis

The institutions that link Israel and the Diaspora are no longer able to deliver the goods. The signs are obvious to anyone who is prepared to look:

1. The central institutions of American Jewry have seen the real value of their income drop over the last 20 years. The United Jewish Appeal and the federations are, first and foremost, fundraising organizations. The fact that their campaign results have failed to keep up even with the rate of inflation, to say nothing of the rate of increase of the number of wealthy American Jews with large amounts of disposable income, is the most glaring indication that something has been going wrong for some time. ...

2. The share of federation income going to Israel has declined over the last four decades, from about 75 percent during the 1950's, to less than 40 percent now. This trend need not necessarily be regarded as a sign of trouble for the system as a whole: on the contrary, increasing the share of their income that federations utilize locally and domestically could be read as an indication of a growing social and cultural vitality in American Jewish life. But it definitely demonstrates the diminishing symbolic significance for the central American Jewish organizations of the financial support they are able to mobilize for Israel. ...

3. In the larger Diaspora communities, the central fundraising institutions receive contributions from only about a third of Jewish households. In the U.S., the CJF [Council of Jewish Federations] 1990 National Jewish Population Survey showed that about one million Jewish households, or about one in three, contributed to UJA-Federation in 1989. The same finding emerged from a study of New York Jews. In Canada, about half of Jewish households contribute to these campaigns, and in Australia and South Africa the proportions are even higher. But in Great Britain fewer than one third of Jewish households participate, and in France a far smaller proportion do so. ...

4. Central fundraising campaigns have accounted for a declining proportion of the total gifts received by Israeli institutions from Diaspora donors during the past decade. While the amounts that UJA and Keren HaYesod have raised for Israel have grown only slightly, the funds collected abroad by the so-called "private" campaigns of Israeli universities, museums, major hospitals, yeshivot and city foundations have grown much faster. ...

These trends point to the inescapable conclusion that the central fundraising institutions of Diaspora Jewry are losing their centrality, particularly as the main links between Israel and Diaspora communities. ... Clearly, whatever the critiques Israelis might level against the current structure and modus operandi of the central fundraising institutions, it is the Diaspora communities themselves, and their future ties to Israel, that are really at risk.

### Proposals for Change

From the welter of diagnoses, indictments, conferences, books, proclamations, op-ed pieces and memoranda that have recently focused on the institutions that link Israel and the Diaspora, I have chosen to analyze the five proposals for fundamental change that seem to offer the clearest alternatives. ...

1. **The Beilin Proposal.** Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin has proposed the replacement of the WZO [World Zionist Organization] and the Jewish Agency with a new institution, to be called Beit Yisrael, or The House of Israel. Structured as "a mass membership organization, with a modest but not trivial annual membership fee," and comprised of Israeli and Diaspora Jews, Beit Yisrael would ... deliberate on all issues confronting the State of Israel and the Jewish people, but would have authority to decide only on questions falling within its sphere of responsibility: aliyah and Jewish and Zionist education in the Diaspora. Its "key program" would be "to bring most of each cohort of young Diaspora Jews to Israel," offering each person a "free, non-transferable and non-postponable voucher" to be exchanged for transportation to and lodging in Israel, and enrollment in one of a broad variety of programs during her or his stay. ...

2. **The CJF Proposal.** Leaders of the largest Jewish community fed-

erations in the U.S. and of the Council of Jewish Federations are now in the early stages of a two-year study, jointly sponsored by CJF and the United Jewish Appeal, to review the structure and operations of the national Jewish organizations that link American Jewry to Israel. No one can tell what the outcome of this review will be, but the terms under which the study was launched make it possible to discern a plan on the part of its initiators. If this study concludes under the same inspiration as it began, it will propose a consolidation of the control, if not an actual merger, of the United Israel Appeal, and eventually of the UJA, under CJF. In effect, the leaders of the federations, the most powerful force in American Jewry, would be asserting their autonomy from Israel. ...

3. **The Elazar Proposal.** Prof. Daniel J. Elazar, the preeminent scholar of the organizational structures of world Jewry and president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, has proposed that the Jewish Agency, as the institution that already holds "the critical position at the nexus" of what he calls the "world Jewish network," become the center for a reorganized world Jewish polity. ...

4. **The Hirsch Proposal.** Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch, a leader of Reform Zionism and a member of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, proposed, a year ago, that the WZO and the Jewish Agency be merged into a new body, which would be a partnership between Israel and the Diaspora, rather than between Zionists and fundraisers. ... [T]he proposal itself and Hirsch's selection to head the reorganization committee are important chiefly as a signal that the inner circle of WZO leaders recognize that that structure will have to change more than most of them would have wanted a few months ago.

5. **The Carmon Proposal.** Dr. Arye Carmon, director of the Israel Democracy Institute, has proposed a sweeping set of organizational changes, including the decentralization of links between Israel and the Diaspora by promoting direct, lasting pairing of local authorities in the former with local communities in the latter. ... At this stage, [the Carmon proposal is] interesting as an expression of a liberal Israeli view that seeks to strengthen the Jewish consciousness of the majority of Israelis who regard themselves as secular or traditional, but not Orthodox.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN

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~~What Can We Do?~~ The following are some suggestions that are quite practical, given the will

1. Kids 13-18

Israel Experience - <sup>various programs;</sup> massively financed by USA; giving responsibility to local <sup>faculties</sup> ~~fact.~~ to select kids through a community-wide process

2. Boarding <sup>high</sup> schools in Israel and Diaspora - <sup>ages 14-19;</sup> large network of schools, mingling the young people - sharing life + language.

3. Universities in Israel - <sup>ages 28-25</sup> in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian

4. Adults

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5. Develop Wexner Heritage Foundation program in Israel, <sup>ages 35-45. In ten years</sup> This <sup>program</sup> would create cadre of one thousand who would be links with Diaspora.

6. Various other ideas

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- Technical conferences, on large scale - several thousand
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3. VIA-CIF - Commission on National Structure is useless - like kids moving blocks around to build a different looking tower. Juggling the alphabet isn't the way to make ~~proper~~ change.
  - a. VIA should re-assess its historic responsibility for assisting the growth of Israel and improving the quality of life (i.e. education, health, social welfare, job creation, housing, etc.) of new immigrants. The Agency & Gov't have both failed in this regard. VIA doesn't need agents to help it do that work in Israel. It should set up operating ~~committees~~ <sup>foundations</sup> and do its own work directly, as the JDC does.
  - b. VIA should be 100% more vigorous than it now is, and raise more money, fight for a higher share, and separate from Federations if necessary. Run a straightforward campaign for Israel alone.
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