

VOLUNTARY AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP: PARTNERS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE JEWISH EDUCATION

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If Jewish education is to be strengthened it must give an equal vote and an equal voice to both dimensions [tradition and the contemporary community]. We must build partnerships . . . between tradition and community; the vertical and the horizontal, the professional and the voluntary leaders . . . Jean Paul Sartre was right . . . "In love, one and one are one."

I begin with the cautionary words of the poet, Yehuda Amichai: "The air over Jerusalem is saturated with prayers and dreams/like the air over industrial cities/It's hard to breathe."

To find the courage to give voice to yet another vision of Jewish education in the dream-saturated air of Jerusalem is not easy. But the determined convenors of this Consultation have left us with no choice.

There are many who believe as I do that the June 1984 World Leadership Conference for Jewish Education marked a turning point in the struggle for the centrality of concern for Jewish education on the international agenda of the Jewish people. The Jewish leadership cadre is increasingly aware that Jewish education is neither frill nor fringe but absolutely central to creative, un-fractured Jewish survival.

We live in an era when we see, on the one hand, the left hand, if you will, the baneful results of an education devoid of a sensitivity to the historic sancta of the Jewish people, an education that sees tradition as superstition and the past as burden and on the other hand, the right hand, we see the equally baneful results of an education that defines its task largely as the mastery of a select number of classical texts, an education which has pro-

duced a generation of fiercely parochial, even xenophobic Jews, who are willing, even eager, to turn their backs on *Ahavat Yisrael*, democratic values, minority rights and even elementary civility.

Without hyperbole or exaggeration, it is evident that the very future and the fate of the Jewish people will be decided not on the playing fields of Eton but in the classrooms and study halls of Jewish schools.

Given this elemental role, Jewish education, writ large, which is obviously much more than schooling or the simple transmission of tradition, is simply too crucial, too significant in its consequences and reverberations to be left to rabbis and professional educators alone.

My reading of the history of American Jewish education shows that for the most part genuine innovations, structural breakthroughs, rarely come from the ranks of the professionals. Professionals are trained to mastery of a body of knowledge; they are inheritors of a skill or a style. Professionals by-and-large may be *mayvens* but they are not mavericks. They are guardians of the as-is, not the goads to the should-be. The fabled Benderlys and Dushkins of Jewish education deplored day schools. Educational camps such as Ramah initially flourished in spite of the leadership of their movements. The Hebrew-centered Masad Camps were born and died as orphans of the American Jewish establishment.

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If we are ever to succeed in translating the new vision of the possible that was the rhetoric of the Jerusalem Leadership Conference into the real world of community priorities and school programs, we must fashion a partnership between skilled and dedicated professionals and concerned and committed voluntary (lay) leadership. In the words of what I call with due immodesty "Schaffer's Law": teachers can change classrooms, principals can change schools, but only voluntary leaders can change communities.

But this requires a special kind of voluntary leadership, a cadre of lay leaders who are committed to the priority of Jewish education, skilled in the arts of leadership, sagacious in the seeding and management of change, knowledgeable in the issues that propel the passions of Jewish life, alert to the dynamics of Jewish communal life, sensitive to the issues of authority and professionalism, impatient with neat nostrums and pious panaceas, and suspicious of *rebbe*s and gurus with messianic styles and pretensions.

Such leadership is always in demand and always in short supply. Candidly, Jewish education has long been handicapped by the quality of its voluntary leadership. Jewish educational leadership has been characterized by a persistent anemia of clout. Even the most dedicated of lay leaders who does not know which lever to push or players to influence cannot succeed in the arduous process of translating Jewish educational needs into communal priorities.

On a local school level, voluntary leadership has suffered from parochialism and myopic parentism. There is an inadequate understanding of the role of voluntary leadership and its limits, which too often results in tension and conflict between voluntary and professional leadership, instead of the partnership that the needs of Jewish education require.

Tension between Federation leadership and educational agency leadership is not

infrequent. Federation leadership often sees professional Jewish educational leadership as clamorous and demanding of communal funds without communal accountability while agency leadership sees funding for Jewish education as an entitlement that should not be subject to the judgment of a self-appointed elite that is neither sufficiently educated Jewishly nor even strong consumers of Jewish educational services.

In addition, there is a stylistic dissonance between the leadership style of most Jewish educators who have adopted the rhetorical, judgmental rabbinic model of leadership rather than the social work process model of leadership, characteristic of Federation. I have little doubt that many Federation leaders would apply to rabbis and Jewish educational leadership Martin Gardner's witty characterization of cosmologists: "Cosmologists are often wrong but seldom uncertain."

Tensions and lack of successful communication exist on all levels of Jewish education.

Many Jewish education professionals would like to see voluntary leadership as primarily providers of support-systems for professionals, not as genuine partners in planning, priority-setting and decision-making.

The tasks and the challenge that voluntary Jewish educational leadership faces are major indeed. There is more to successful voluntary leadership than assuming an office or taking on a title. Successful voluntary leadership does not require charisma; successful voluntary leadership is made, not born. There is, I submit, an urgent need to develop instruments that will not simply alert voluntary leadership to educational issues and their complexities—which is the model that is now followed in programs designed for voluntary leadership—but will train voluntary leadership in the arts and skills of effective leadership. We can no longer leave community leadership to chance or *mazel*.

Jewish education today requires serious and sustained efforts to enable us to upgrade the skills and sensitivities of current leadership and attract and train new leadership. We need Leadership Effectiveness Training (LET).

I therefore propose that a number of regional Institutes for Leadership Development be developed in the different regions of the Jewish educational world. Such regional Institutes would adapt the Leadership Effectiveness Training Programs to the varying styles and roles of community leadership in different communities.

These Institutes for Leadership Development should have an academic base. Front-line Jewish educational agencies do not have ready access to the latest and best thinking in a variety of fields that impinge upon Jewish education, including management, public policy analysis, sociology, ethnography and educational research, in addition to the usual Jewish disciplines that comprise the field of Jewish education. And frankly I doubt that existing Jewish educational agencies would be able to resist the temptation to use such leadership development programs to "show-and-tell" about their own projects and programs.

The core of these regional Institutes for Leadership Development should be a central institute based in Israel which would serve voluntary leaders from various Diaspora communities and would also prepare materials and programs for the regional Institutes.

The Leadership Effectiveness Training (LET) program designed by the institute should in my judgment encompass the following areas:

1. The changing Jewish community: social and demographic trends.
2. Leadership in the Jewish tradition: models and modes of Jewish leadership in Jewish life and Jewish tradition.
3. Leadership skills for Jewish communal leaders.
4. The professional and the volunteer:

roles and relationships.

5. Strategic planning for Jewish education.
6. Contemporary philosophies of Jewish education and their educational implications.
7. What can we learn from research?
8. Jewish education and Jewish public policy.
9. Market strategies for Jewish education.
10. Educational accountability: to whom, for what, how?

Such institutes would train a new generation of voluntary leaders who would fuse their sense of partnership in the Jewish educational enterprise with the institute-acquired smarts and strategies that enable dreams to become deeds. As Professor Leon Jick of Brandeis put it "Those who respond become responsible."

You will note that I have deliberately emphasized the concept of partnership and refrained from using the term "ownership" when describing the optimal relationship between voluntary and professional leadership in Jewish education. This is not simply a stylistic quibble. It reflects a genuine difference in perspective.

There is no "ownership" in Jewish education. The Jewish educational enterprise is not "owned" by the rabbis and the professional educators any more than it is owned by the voluntary leadership of the schools, the synagogue or the community. Jewish education is not "owned" by the parents and not even by the students. All are partners and shareholders in an enterprise that has both horizontal and vertical dimensions. The horizontal dimension in Jewish life and Jewish education is the community, today's Jewish communities.

The vertical dimension in Jewish life and Jewish education is Jewish history and the millennial traditions of Judaism.

Neither dimension in and of itself is sufficient. The horizontal dimension without the vertical dimension ignores the deep roots of Jewish life and Jewish

loyalties. The vertical dimension alone is equally insufficient because it is focused on the roots and forgets about today's fruits, the contemporary Jewish community.

To speak of the ownership of the Jewish educational enterprise by the contemporary community is to ignore the vertical dimension.

There are historic grooves along which Jewish life has travelled for centuries. Today's community cannot simply ignore those historic grooves at will. Mordecai Kaplan once said: "the past has a vote, not a veto." That is equally true of today's community: the present has a vote, but not a veto.

Social workers tend to see the contemporary community, the horizontal dimension, as *the* source of authority in Jewish life. Rabbis and Jewish educators tend to see the vertical dimension, tradition and history, as *the* source of authority in Jewish life. There is, in this way, a dissonance of disciplines between the two great professional streams which together largely comprise the field of Jewish education, formal and informal.

We dare not ignore this dissonance which often functions as the hidden agenda of Jewish educational conferences, the "dirty little secret" to use Podhoretz' phrase, which has profound effects on Jewish decision-making. In truth we need both dimensions.

If Jewish education is to be strengthened it must give an equal vote and an equal voice to both dimensions. We must build partnerships—partnerships between tradition and the voluntary leaders. I am convinced that Jean Paul Sartre was right. One and one are not always two, he said. "In love, one and one are one."

That the launching of a series of In-

stitutes for Leadership Development is a critical need of the hour I have said in a number of forums in the last two years: at a faculty seminar of the Melton Centre for Jewish Education of the Hebrew University in the Summer of 1984, at the CAJE Conference in August 1985 and at the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations in Washington in November 1985.

My call has been greeted with interest but little action. Why?

Obviously it is easier to quibble about details rather than to respond to a concept. So I have endless comments and questions about details such as: where should the central institute be based, why Israel, what issues should the institutes address, which should come first, the central institute or the regional institutes and so on; a vivid illustration of the truism that the best is often the enemy of the good. Almost everyone seems to agree that an Institute for Leadership Development to develop and train a continuing cadre of effective voluntary leadership for Jewish education is an idea whose time has come. But how do we get the Jewish world to know what time it is?

We need to go beyond endorsing a concept to crafting a design for a pilot leadership institute that will begin its work while it is carefully monitored and its ripples traced.

I conclude with a Mark Twain story which I would like to believe is only a story and that certainly does not apply to us.

This is how Mark Twain described the fate of a missionary among cannibals: "They listened with the greatest of interest to everything he had to say. And then they ate him."