

The Crisis in Jewish Life — the Aftermath of the Yom Kippur War*

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IT is already nine months since October 6, 1973, but in some respects it feels like yesterday, and in other ways it seems like ages ago! So much has changed since the Yom Kippur War. Israel, the Jewish People, the whole world, will never again be the same!

Many Israelis —too many—are personally hurting from the death of a husband, father or son, and are helping wounded relatives recover from wounds or learn to live with handicaps. All Israelis are symbolically saying Kaddish, and are trying physically to comfort one another.

Jews around the world also feel the hurt and the pain. We suffer from what in medical terms is called "shock wave injury." When a bomb explodes next to a person but not close enough to blow him up or injure him, it creates a tremendous intensification of air pressure. The organs inside the body are scrambled, though the skin may be untouched. Jews in the Diaspora were not close enough to the War to lose their lives or limbs, but, for many, their innermost parts were scrambled by the terrible explosion. The pain is still there and the recovery is slow.

It is obvious to all who read what is written, who listen to what Jews say, and who look into the eyes of Jews anywhere, that the Yom Kippur War shook up World Jewry, destroyed many of their assumptions and illusions and caused worry and even depression. It is not pos-

sible for us to think, feel and act as before. Yet what one can or should believe and what one can or should do is not at all clear. What seems to me to be possible, necessary and, hopefully useful, is to look at the present, in the context of what has happened, to identify the positive accomplishments and potentials, as well as the failures and uncertainties, and to consider what we — as Jewish communal workers — can and should do. This stock-taking is as necessary and urgent as it is difficult and painful.

It is our privilege, as well as misfortune, to live in a time of rapid change for everyone and especially for the Jewish people. This century has witnessed more major events affecting the Jewish people than any other period in our long history.

The Holocaust, the physical destruction of one-third of our people — including many of our most able and creative leaders and scholars — and the creation of the State of Israel, after two thousand years of exile, are events in Jewish history equal in significance to the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, to the giving of the Ten Commandments, and to the Destruction of the Second Temple and Commonwealth. There has never been, for any people, an ordeal like the Holocaust, nor a deliverance like the establishment of the State of Israel.

These two events have changed the Jewish world and have affected us more than many of us realize. Before Hitler, 60 percent of World Jewry lived in Europe and the Yishuv in Palestine was very small. Today, less than 30 percent

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of the Jewish population lives in Europe (most of whom live in Russia and other Communist countries), over 40 percent are in the United States, and almost 20 percent of World Jewry live in Israel. The destruction of six million Jews and the reestablishment of the Jewish state have influenced our perspective and our emotions. They have changed the role of American Jewry and have influenced how Jews everywhere respond to crises, and how they relate to non-Jews and react to their actions—and inaction—on Israeli and Jewish concerns. They explain, in part, the amazing response of World Jewry to the Yom Kippur War.

How Did World Jewry Respond to the Yom Kippur War?

Jewish communities throughout the world were worried about and identified with Israel during the Yom Kippur War. Their immediate responses were public declarations of solidarity and financial support.

I was able to get a picture of the reaction of World Jewry from a special seminar called in December 1973 by President Katzir of Israel on the Impact of the Yom Kippur War¹ in which I participated, and from visits I made since the war to Jewish communities in Eastern and Western Europe and Latin America.

Response of Jews in Western Europe and Latin America

Jewish communities in Western Europe and Latin America immediately initiated major fund-raising efforts, rallies and demonstrations, lobbied with government leaders and public opinion molders, and conducted information ac-

¹ Proceedings to be published soon by Arno Press in a book entitled *The Yom Kippur War: Israel and the Jewish People*, edited by Professor Moshe Davis.

tivities and programs for volunteers. Many raised more money than the United States and sent greater numbers of volunteers on a per capita basis. Their activities and accomplishments are even more significant when one sees them in the context of their local situations. Jews in Western Europe, in openly supporting Israel, were, in most cases, taking a position in opposition to the policy of their government, and which generally did not have strong public support. Jews in Latin America live in countries experiencing major political upheavals and economic crises and where the influence of Arabs is growing in terms of propaganda, financial investment and oil supply. This did not stop Latin American Jewry from speaking out or raising money. The latter was more difficult than we can imagine, since many affluent Jews in Latin America do not have liquid assets available and in many countries it is complicated or even impossible to send funds abroad.

Both in Western Europe and Latin America, efforts on behalf of Israel were more united than previously, fund-raising achievements were greater, and commitment, identification and concern were stronger. There were also reports, however, about the existence of cool and even hostile attitudes toward Israel by some groups, especially Jewish university students and intellectuals, which surprised and troubled local Jewish communal leaders.

Response of Jews in Eastern Europe

The reaction of Jews in the Communist countries of Europe to the Yom Kippur War was interesting and not what one would generally expect. The news media most often provided incomplete and one-sided reports of the war and expressed the official anti-Israel

government policy. Despite this, Jews seemed to know what was going on. Jews telephoned each other with information on the war, and spoke among themselves in a special way so that non-Jews would not understand. The Yom Kippur War raised considerable fear among East European Jewry about the State of Israel, their friends and relatives in Israel, and the ultimate fate of their own Jewish life and the possibility of emigration at a future date.

In Russia, the reaction of Jews to the Yom Kippur War is a moving story. Jews in Russia sent telegrams, wrote letters and made phone calls to Israel to express their identification and their hope for victory. Russian Jews, at considerable personal risk, made appeals to the Russian government, publicly protested the government policy of supporting and supplying the Arabs, attempted to give blood, and went on hunger strikes. Even though Russian Jews thought that the military situation was worse than what was the reality, nevertheless most continued to press for the right to go to Israel. Few, if any, renounced exit visas they already had, despite efforts by the authorities to get them to do so by frightening them about the war. In fact, more Russian Jews arrived in Israel in October 1973 than in most previous months! The unique courage of Russian Jews and the degree of their identification with Israel is clearly seen in the wording of a telegram sent by the Jews of Kishinev to the President of the USSR. It read: "As citizens of Israel, we cannot remain at a moment when the blood of our fathers and brothers is flowing. We demand immediate permission to go to Israel, our homeland, to be with our people at this moment."²

Response of U.S. Jewry

What about the reaction of U.S. Jewry, the largest Jewish community in the

² *Jerusalem Post*, October 15, 1973, p. 1

world, which we as Jewish communal workers know best, carry some responsibility for, and have opportunities to influence?

Leaders of American Jewry take pride in the quick response of American Jews to the needs of Israel when war broke out. Israelis heap praise and thanks upon the solidarity and support shown by American Jewry in an hour of crisis. Both point to the rallies and political activity, to the UJA and Israel Bond drive achievements, and to the many young people who volunteered and went to Israel to help in civilian tasks. All these are real and important accomplishments. We must be careful, however, not to allow the glow of these successes to blind us to other, less positive, responses of American Jewry to the Yom Kippur War.

An informal survey done right after the war³ found that the reaction of American Jewry as a whole to the Yom Kippur War was mixed. One segment of American Jewry was amazingly identified, very involved, and totally committed—in thought and action. This group was larger than during the Six-Day War. Another part of American Jewry, relatively numerous and also larger than in 1967, was surprisingly ambivalent, not involved, and at times even hostile.

Factors Affecting Varying Response

The immediate, emotional and practical response of World Jewry to the Yom Kippur War gives evidence of the vitality of Jewish communal life and the degree of the Jewish identification of individual Jews, despite our concerns about both.

³ For details see: Arnulf M. Pins, "Impact of Yom Kippur War on American Jewry," *Dispersion and Unity*, Volume 21, December 1973, pp. 67-74; and "The Yom Kippur War's Impact on American Jewry," (Part I), *Jewish Digest*, Vol. XIX, No. 5, February 1974, pp. 1-5; and (Part II), Vol. XIX, No. 6, March 1974, pp. 9-13.

The lack of concern of some Jews and their complete absence in activities on behalf of Israel highlight the extent of assimilation and alienation despite all our increased efforts of formal and informal Jewish education activities. We should be both pleased and troubled by the reaction of World Jewry in the recent crisis of the Jewish State and the Jewish People.

There are several possible explanations for the growth of the committed group and their response, and for the existence and increase in an ambivalent and negative group. Since 1967, many more young and adult Jews were personally involved with Israel than was true before the Six-Day War. Many adult Jews have been to Israel as tourists or on UJA missions. They have gotten to know relatives and have met and formed friendships with Israelis. Many high school and college students have been to Israel during summers, or were on one-year programs; many were in Israel during the war, and some had gone on Aliyah. In the past few years, communal leaders and young people of many local communities have had intensive contact with Israelis serving as shlichim. As a result, for many people, their relationship to Israel had become personal. This group, which has grown since 1967, responded to the Yom Kippur War with great intensity and identification.

The existence and growth of segments of World Jewry who were ambivalent or antagonistic to Israel during the recent struggle is perhaps due to the fact that the Six-Day War, and events leading up to it and following it, were dramatically different than those in 1973. In 1967, there were several weeks of threats by Egypt and other Arab countries, causing great concern and worry on the part of World Jewry for the survival of Israel. Then came the war and a quick and complete victory. The conflict ended

with optimism and hope on the part of Israel and Jews around the world. In 1973, the war was a sudden shock and the conflict ended for Israelis and World Jewry alike with concern and pessimism. The Six-Day War was a clear-cut issue. There were the "good guys" and the "bad guys." The victory was swift and total, and most of the people and the press of the world cheered. The Yom Kippur War was more complex. Israel was not the "underdog." The struggle was not seen as a fight for survival. The world press was less supportive and even critical of Israel. The views and policies of governments, as well as public opinion, ranged from ambivalent to negative. Even the military outcome was less decisive. This can perhaps explain why in 1973 few new people were "turned on" to their Jewishness or to Israel. In 1967 many rediscovered their Jewishness as a result of the threat and the victory. This time, both were absent.

The Jewish world, and especially the situation for Israel, have changed radically since October 1973. Consequently the reactions of Jews everywhere to the situation and their relationship to Israel will also be different than before the War. As Jewish communal workers we need to review and explore "What has really changed?" and "What are the implications of this change for World Jewry and the American Jewish community?"

What Has Changed Since the Yom Kippur War?

Much has changed in the Jewish world since the Yom Kippur War. Many old and even post-1967 myths and assumptions — often based on wishful thinking — have been shattered. New problems and challenges are with us. Jewish leaders have gained new perspectives on important issues and see old existing problems more clearly. The sudden and

dramatic events and their many consequences have resulted in a feeling of pessimism and concern, a new sense of urgency about the problems of Israel and the Jewish people, and an awareness that all Jews are responsible for doing something about them.

1. After the establishment of the State in 1948 and certainly following the Six-Day War in 1967, many Jews believed that the long Jewish history of persecution and anti-Semitism, of powerlessness and individual and group insecurity, had come to an end. We believed that Israel was in total control of its own destiny and had not only assured its future existence but had also changed the image of Jews through its victory in 1967. We believed that this would guarantee our acceptance and security throughout the world. Many believed that the "normalization" of the Jewish people had begun. We felt secure, confident and proud. All this is gone. Despite the amazing success of the Israeli armed forces in defending the State even after a surprise attack, our exaggerated views of Israel's military preparedness, superiority and invincibility and our assessments of Arab military incompetence and political ineptness have undergone a change. We learned — we should have known it before — that Israel, despite its military strength and victories, is not fully the master of its own fate. The world's great, and even not so great, powers make or at least influence key decisions which affect Israel's future.

2. Other myths, related but different from the major assumption of Israel's power and Arab weakness, were also shattered by the war. It has become clear that maintaining a "status quo" until the Arabs are really ready to make peace is not a viable option for Israel. This does not imply that everyone now believes that major compromise or territorial concessions by Israel will automatically lead to peace with its neighbors. It was

tried in 1948, when the Zionist movement accepted the UN partition, and it did not bring peace then. The war and the recent guerilla horrors also have undermined the belief that the problem of the so-called Palestinians will disappear in time. We seemed to have shared the hope and error of the early Zionists who assumed that all the Arabs would eventually accept the Jewish State and recognize how much Israel can contribute to their well being.

3. The cowardly and selfish reaction of the world to the recent crisis surprised and troubled us. Seeing most nations of the western world falling on their knees before the Arab oil threat and giving in to the threats of guerillas would be humorous were it not so tragic. We thought that after Chamberlain the world had learned the uselessness and danger of appeasement, and we assumed that after the Holocaust, the world's concern about Jewish survival would be greater and more sensitive. An example of our disappointment can be seen in recent comments by Rabbi David Polish who said, "most of the world judges us by norms not applied to any other people; most of the world has not let us live in dispersion and now tries to prevent us also from living in a sovereign state."⁴

4. In addition to shattering myths, the Yom Kippur War has given World Jewry and Israel some new perspectives. We now realize that Israel and Jews generally are more isolated than we thought they would ever be, at least in our day. Diaspora Jews, especially in countries whose policies were pro-Arab or even anti-Israel, felt themselves more alienated from the societies in which they lived than they believed possible or considered desirable. Whether this is a temporary situation or a more permanent new condition only time will tell. Israelis,

⁴ David Polish, "Israel and the Galut," *Jewish Frontier*, March 1974, p. 20.

as a result of the war and World Jewry's response, see Diaspora Jewry in a different light and feel more closely identified with the Jewish people than ever before. This is supported by recent public opinion polls in Israel.⁵

5. Another change which has greatly affected World Jewry is that the positive image of the Jew created by the Six-Day War has been damaged. The Yom Kippur War, despite Israel's military success in turning back a surprise attack by massive, well equipped forces on two fronts, not only did not reinforce the new image of the Jew — who, if necessary, can and will fight and win — and of a state, which while small is strong and master of its own fate, but instead brought back old images of the suffering victim and created new contradictory and untrue images of militarism and defeatism, of intransigence and subservience. For Jews around the world, not only their confidence in Israel's and their own security but also their image and their pride were damaged by the war.

6. The war and its aftermath have also brought new problems and challenges. The biggest and most important challenge deals with World Jewry's relation to Israel. No matter whether the Geneva Conference progresses and succeeds, whether wars of attrition or minor conflicts continue, or whether, God forbid, another major war breaks out, it is clear that Israel, for a long time to come, will need greater financial help from World Jewry, increased and better political action on its behalf from Jews in key countries, more meaningful and realistic relations with Jewish communities throughout the world and a greater Aliyah, especially by the young and skilled persons. The nature, size and duration of the support required make it a "new" challenge. It will obviously need to have top priority.

⁵ "Most Israelis are Zionists," *Jerusalem Post*, May 16, 1974, p. 6.

7. The new anti-Israel attitudes and manifestations, and the growing or potential anti-Semitism from different groups in different countries call for renewed attention and require approaches different from those used before. World Jewry, and Israel itself, will need to develop ways immediately to deal with the new Arab economic and propaganda power and activities. For the long run, we also need to attempt to develop more contact and dialogue with Arabs. The recent articles and TV conversations between Amos Elon and Sana Hassan are a beginning, although they clearly reflect the difficulties involved.⁶

8. The Yom Kippur War has also underscored the need for information and education programs to provide accurate knowledge and create better understanding of Jewish life and history and the creation and development of the State of Israel. Most of the population of the world has forgotten, or never knew, the meaning of the Holocaust, the establishment of the State, the War of Independence in 1948, the Sinai Campaign in 1956, or the Six-Day War in 1967. Without this basic background, they cannot understand Israel's concerns and actions, and they are vulnerable to the new and better Arab propaganda. Many Jews as well as non-Jews are in need of this education.

9. In view of the major and rapid political, economic and social changes in many countries of the world, which already affect Israel and Jews in many places, and which will do so increasingly in the future, World Jewry and Israel must begin to consider and develop new and varying approaches for dealing with governments and local Jewish communities of countries with right wing or

⁶ Amos Elon and Sana Hassan, "Let Us Begin: A Rigorous Dialogue Between An Egyptian and An Israeli," *The New York Times Magazine*, May 19, 1974, pp. 32-40.

military governments and with moderate or hard line Communist governments, as well as those with western-type democracies. If military disengagement and future negotiations between Israel and neighboring countries lead to normalization of relations (or something close to it), then we also need to learn how to relate to Arab states. We currently lack not only the experience but also the theoretical framework and the knowhow for this.

10. Another important and potentially dangerous development for Israel and the Jewish people is the change in the mood of Jews and Jewish leaders since the Yom Kippur War. The general confidence and optimism of Israelis following the Six-Day War seems to have given way to gloom and pessimism. Hanoeh Bartov in a recent newspaper article speaks of "group hysteria that shifts from irrational faith to irrational despair."⁷ There are also signs that just as Jews throughout the world overplayed Israel's security and achievements until now, many now tend to exaggerate the hopelessness of the situation and their and Israel's helplessness. The Jewish pessimism, developed over decades of persecution, has come to the fore again for many. An example of this are the comments by Irving Kristol, in an article in the general press, where he says, "I am one of those Jews who has never been able to take Jewish good fortune seriously, but rather suspect it as a deception. Only misfortune is real."⁸ This pervading gloom and fear, if they continue and grow, are more dangerous than our earlier exaggerated enthusiasm and confidence. This danger from within is greater than the threat from without.

11. More important than what actually is new is the fact that the war has put

⁷ *Maariv*, November 16, 1973, p. 5.

⁸ *The Wall Street Journal*, October 19, 1973, p. 4.

more light and greater urgency on old existing problems. Aspects of the current situation of Israel and World Jewry were present before the war. Israel since its establishment has been, in many ways, isolated politically and vulnerable economically and militarily. Jewish life for decades has been weakening, and the number of Jews alienated or uninvolved has been growing for some time. Real understanding and support of Jews and Israel by non-Jews and nations of the world were never very strong or pervasive. Today, most Jews see the problems clearer in all their awesome seriousness, and in their complexity and interrelationship. We realize that we have a real crisis and that we must deal with it quickly and with greater energy and ingenuity. To do so effectively will require a stronger Israel — socially and economically, as well as militarily — and a Diaspora Jewish community with greater Jewish knowledge and consciousness, deeper Jewish identity and commitment, better and more realistic relationships with Israel, greater Jewish unity, and stronger lay and professional manpower and leadership.

How Well is the Jewish World Prepared for the New Challenges?

It is important for us to study the readiness of World Jewry to deal effectively with the current and future challenges facing the Jewish people. We must look at the hard realities of Jewish identification and Jewish communal life and structure. The "realities" of Jewish life around the world vary. A few are positive and encouraging; many, unfortunately, are negative and worrisome.

A portion of the Jewish world lives in communities existing under relative freedom and security and another part lives under pressure and/or persecution. There are many small and isolated

Jewish communities and several countries with relatively large Jewish populations. The smaller communities in Western Europe and Latin America, and all Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, are involved in a struggle for their own physical and spiritual survival with very small resources — in numbers and finances — and with an inadequate number and quality of needed trained manpower and lay leadership. Obviously, we must look to the larger Jewish communities living under freedom and in relative security to assume the major responsibility, at least for the present, for the immediate concerns of World Jewry and current needs of Israel.

European Jewry

Eighty percent of the 1,200,000 Jews in Western Europe live in two countries — the United Kingdom and France. There is no doubt that most of them and those living in the other countries of Western Europe are socially and politically integrated in their society and are economically relatively well off. Most knowledgeable observers, however, agree with the conclusions voiced in the AJC Task Force Report that "there is reason to be concerned over the future of Jewish communal life in Western Europe."⁹

Assimilation and intermarriage are high. Affiliation with Jewish groups and attendance in synagogues and Jewish schools are low. Qualified rabbinical, educational and other professional Jewish communal manpower is scarce or non-existent in most places. Only a small number of local institutions exist in England, France and Italy for the training of rabbis and Jewish teachers. Most of these institutions have few students and none

⁹ *The World of the 1970's: A Jewish Perspective*. New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1972, p. 35.

come close to meeting current manpower needs even in their own country, much less serve other communities without training resources. The need for paid trained Jewish professional staff for youth work, informal education and community organization is just beginning to be recognized in a few countries. Training institutions for such Jewish communal workers do not exist anywhere in Europe. Generally, lay leadership is old and tired or young and inexperienced; leaders in their 40's and 50's, for various reasons, are few. The two large Jewish communities have special problems. French Jewry is preoccupied with the integration of Jews from Algeria and Morocco, the immigration of which in recent years more than doubled the Jewish population of France. British Jewry is still bending under economic problems of the United Kingdom.

On the more encouraging side, there is growing unity, cooperation and coordination among Jewish communities in Western Europe, developing new lay leadership and growing utilization of paid staff and attempts to train them. European Jewry is raising more money from more people for both local Jewish needs and Israel. There are also signs of Jewish renaissance among segments of European Jewry and Jewish youth, especially the Orthodox.

Latin American Jewry

About 80 percent of the 800,000 Jews in Latin America live in Argentina and Brazil. Both countries are in the midst of major political and economic changes. All other Jewish communities are very small, with none more than 36,000 Jews. A large proportion of the Jews in Latin America have done well economically. Unlike European Jewry, however, they are not as integrated in the society of their country and feel more insecure politically as well as economically.

In some countries, because of their middle-class status, Jews fear the leftward trend or threat. Because of earlier Jewish history and their experience in Europe, Jews in other countries are apprehensive about existing military governments or threat of right-wing dictatorships.

Assimilation and intermarriage, like elsewhere, are also on the increase. Even more troubling is the large number of Jewish university students involved with or attracted to the leftish movements and their subsequent rejection of identification with the Jewish community and with Israel. Most local Jewish communities are centrally organized but very divided; their leadership is democratically elected but there is a lack of unity and coordination, and the structure of the community makes it difficult to involve the younger and more affluent Jews or to respond to new and changing needs. There is as yet practically no recognition of the need for professionally trained and paid leadership, except for rabbis and teachers. A few countries have institutions to train rabbis and teachers, but the demand far outstrips the supply. A large percentage of teaching personnel in Jewish schools are Israeli Shlichim, who stay for relatively short periods. Jewish education, if any, is generally provided by all-day schools. These schools, especially in the larger communities, generally produce graduates with more Jewish knowledge (mainly in Hebrew and Yiddish) than most Jewish schools in the U.S. achieve. However, the percentage of youth getting any kind of Jewish education is much lower in Latin America than in the U.S. Informal youth and adult activities attract many but are usually not communally conducted or supported and generally concentrate on recreation. In addition, Jews in Latin America lack experience and indigenous resources with which to combat the rising anti-Israel,

pro-Arab and anti-Jewish attitudes and actions that they face.

There are also some more positive signs. There is growing continental and inter-community contact between the leaders of the Jewish communities in Latin America and attempts to work on common problems. Several Jewish programs of higher learning have been opened. There is a beginning recognition of the need for professional staff. There is also a growing support for new approaches to bringing Jewish knowledge and culture to youth in modern terms and in the Spanish and Portuguese languages.

Israel

The situation in Israel, while not as good as we thought it was before the War, is not as bad as some now feel it is. Israel militarily is very strong and will never again be caught by surprise. The responsible Arab leaders seem to have realized that they cannot serve their own needs in the long-run by their continuous anti-Israel struggle, and that they cannot "push Israel into the sea" by military action. They seem to have begun to look for other means to help their own people and to come to an accommodation with Israel. Internally Israel — despite appearances to the contrary — is strong. The recent self-criticism and the resultant change in government, are signs of strength and not weakness. Israel wants to and can continue to serve Diaspora Jewry through shlichim, cultural contributions, and other ways. Even in the middle of the Yom Kippur War, scarce El Al planes were used to bring Russian Jews to Israel, and planning continued for projects and activities which serve World Jewry.

U.S. Jewry

For American Jewish communal workers, the strengths and weaknesses

of the American Jewish community are well known. Many of us — and rightly so — have at times felt and noted that Jewish education is poor and does not reach enough young people, that a proportion of the lay leadership lacks a rich Jewish background, that some professional staff of Jewish agencies are not adequately trained — professionally and Jewishly — for their role, and that the Jewish community — both nationally and locally — does not do well enough in coordinating existing activities and planning for new services. We worry about the rapidly rising rate of intermarriage and the alienation of large segments of Jewish college students and intellectuals. All these are real problems. But by comparison most Jewish communities elsewhere are in much more serious trouble. Because of this and the additional local problems faced by them, Jewish communities throughout the world and Israel look to U.S. Jewry for major leadership, service and support. American Jewry did not ask for this role, we may not be ready for this responsibility and we may not even want it, but history has placed it upon us.

At a moment when we are concerned about the quality of Jewish life in the American Jewish community and we see the need to help and strengthen Jewish communities throughout the world, we also face an urgent need to enlarge and give higher priority to support Israel and increase Aliyah. The fact is that a strong Diaspora is necessary for the survival and the development of Israel, a strong Israel is needed for Diaspora Jewry to survive and flourish, and a strong American Jewry is necessary for both!

No Need to Despair

The picture of Jewish life I have painted is not a happy one. Israel has gone through a serious crisis, and the

real permanent peace is not yet in sight, although we hope a beginning has been made. Jewish life around the world is in difficulty. Jewish communities are not as healthy and vibrant as they need to be. The American Jewish community, while larger and better organized than any other Diaspora Jewish community, also faces many problems. Yet I do not despair, and I hope that my observations do not depress or discourage the reader. Israel has come through other crises successfully. The Jewish people has overcome many critical problems in its long history. The Jewish people, in general, and the American Jewish community, in particular, has shown its strength and determination in the recent crisis. However, American Jewry must now seek to maintain, increase and deepen its commitment and energy for the long pull, even for the time — we hope soon — when there are no major crises. American Jewish communal workers can and must play a key role in this effort.

What Can and Must Jewish Communal Workers Do?

The challenges which the current crises in Jewish life present to American Jewry are many, and they are difficult and serious. Yet I personally have a deep down — perhaps overoptimistic or blind — belief that American Jewry will rise to the occasion. My optimism is based on the strength and wealth of our lay leadership and their emotional identification with Israel and the Jewish people and the availability and competence of professional staff and what they can do if motivated and committed.

If Jewish communal workers are to play a key role in dealing with the challenges several steps need to be taken.

1. We need to see the current situation as a real crisis for, and threat to, the future of the Jewish People, Israel and

Jewish communities throughout the world, requiring careful diagnoses and planning, and conscious and concentrated action. We need to deepen our sense of Jewish peoplehood and our responsibility for Jewish life everywhere. We must give up the blind faith and hope that "somehow it will work out all right." If the situation is allowed to drift, it will get worse.

2. We need to recognize and accept the fact that the American Jewish community has a unique and major responsibility for the thinking, planning and action which is required. American Jewry is the largest, wealthiest, freest and most powerful Jewry outside of Israel. Despite its problems, American Jewry is less assimilated than most others and is certainly better organized and staffed than other Jewish communities. American Jewry must not only continue to raise funds but must also give leadership and serve as a model for strengthening existing instrumentalities and developing new approaches for Jews and Jewish communities to relate and identify with Israel and with each other.

3. We need to realize that American Jewry has a "three front" struggle on its hands. We need to support Israel, help Jewish communities and Jews throughout the world, and strengthen the quality of Jewish life and the effectiveness of Jewish community organization at home. We need to understand the interrelationship of these three efforts. It is no longer possible or real — if it ever was — to make a choice between local and overseas priorities, or to choose between placing emphasis on the needs of Israel and the strengthening of Diaspora Jewry. We need to give all three more priority.

4. We need to explore the special contributions professional staff can make in the current crisis and then accept responsibility for carrying out these roles. We need to work more effectively with

leaders in helping them get knowledge and perspective, with interested youth and adult Jews in aiding them to do something useful and meaningful. We also need to do more in reaching the disinterested and uninvolved Jews — both youth and adult. We cannot lose or ignore such a large group.

5. Each Jewish communal worker can find a role for himself and should assume personal responsibility for what he can do and is doing — or may not do — in this time of crisis for the Jewish People. Each Jewish communal worker — be he a Federation planner or fund-raiser, Jewish community center staff member, community relations worker, vocational guidance expert, caseworker, rabbi or teacher — has opportunities to play a special role and can do more to help Israel, World Jewry and the American Jewish community than most of us have been doing. We need to look at what we can do on our specific job as well as what we can help our agencies to do. We also should assume more volunteer roles in the Jewish community (i.e., raise money, give lectures, write letters, form groups). In addition, I hope that many of us will also want to explore special personal professional assignments outside of America. There is a need for qualified Jewish professionals who are willing to spend two or three years serving a Jewish community abroad — both as consultants and as front-line workers. "Shlichut" cannot and should not be only from Israel. Professionally trained American Jewish communal workers can play certain roles Israeli shlichim cannot do, or do as well. Also, Israel needs and wants more trained manpower — knowing Hebrew or ready to learn it — who are willing to come to Israel for two-three years or who are ready to come on Aliyah permanently.

6. If we as Jewish communal workers wish to use ourselves — professionally and personally — to the greatest possible

degree in this critical moment of Jewish history, we need to take steps to increase our knowledge, our experience and our skill. Jewish communal workers who have not been to Israel and visited Jewish communities outside of the U.S., who do not have personal contact with Israelis and Diaspora Jewish communal leaders will find it more difficult to understand the problems and what to do about them. Jewish communal workers who do not read Jewish periodicals, reports and books cannot have adequate insight into the issues faced by Israel and the Jewish people. Jewish communal workers who have not developed a high level of professional competence or had diversified successful experiences at home, cannot, and should not, serve abroad.

In Conclusion

The problems facing the Jewish people are serious and urgent; the responsibilities for Jewish communal workers are complicated and difficult, but the opportunities to make a difference are many and unprecedented.

I am clearly and unashamedly calling for greater effort and commitment and also for more professional skill and discipline. Commitment without competence is as ineffective and dangerous as technology without ideology.

I am directly and loudly calling for a stop to "business as usual" and am asking for special priority and efforts to deal with the problems of Israel but without stopping our work on behalf of World Jewry and the American Jewish community. To paraphrase the late Ben-Gurion — we need to work on behalf of Israel's current problems with all our energy as if there were no other ongoing needs in Jewish life; and we need to continue and increase our efforts on all other ongoing and long range problems in the Jewish world, as if there were no emergency in Israel.

This is the condition of the Jewish People in 1974. These are the challenges for Jewish communal workers.

Will we confront them honestly, willingly and effectively?

I feel we can, I hope we will, I know we must!