

the Jewish community including the possibility of some services which are traditionally rendered by the synagogue. The final form is yet to be defined. The final form will not be necessarily similar for every community and will probably not ever be final. We must, however, open our heads to explore new modes of delivering service, new auspices for the delivery of service and different ways of distributing funds so that those services might be rendered most effectively, most economically and most efficiently, and reach the largest portion of that population for which that service is designed.

On the one hand I am not advocating *Kehilla*. On the other hand, I submit that we can no longer afford to have everyone making *Shabbat* for himself. There is a long agenda of concerns common to all Jewish institutions and organizations, to the synagogue, to the Federation, to membership organizations. These concerns include: (1) Expanding Jewish participation in every form of Jewish life. (2) Improving qualitatively and quantitatively the impact of Jewish education at every age level including the adult. (3) Recruiting, training, educating, and placing leadership, both lay and professional, on every level and in every setting. (4) Raising maximum amounts of dollars and making most efficient use of those dollars. (5) Putting Israel and its support uppermost in our consciousness. (6) Understanding the challenges and opportunities presented by the mass exodus of Soviet Jews to Israel or to our own local community: a chance to redeem Jewish lives; a chance to increase our own numbers — we are improving

on ZPG; and a chance to be infused and affected by the problems presented by immigrants.

(7) The need to foster and support those conditions to make possible not only survival, but the creative continuity of our American Jewish community.

We have entered into a new state of relationship between the American Jewish community and Israel, what happens to one affects the other. We are both part of the same oneness. We need to develop that kind of Jewish community that will encourage at the same time concerns and ideologies that are differentiated, but also a series of concerns that are shared by the whole community. We need to learn how to come together on those items which should be of common concern and interest, while we enhance our own specific institutional and organizational strength and skills, but no longer at the expense of others. We need to find those areas where resources can be pooled, to wit, physical facilities, youth services, adult Jewish education, administrative practices and services, Jewish education and health and welfare services for all ages.

What's the meaning of all this? Our choices are limited. We need not integrate, but we must communicate and coordinate. We must give up that tradition which has a base only in form. We must develop a strong sense of one Jewish community, while we strengthen each of our capacities to do that job which we are best equipped to do. We have a long way to go. There are many problems and issues, but we must begin. We have, in my judgment, reached that state where, in fact, we have no choice.

The Changing Jewish Community*

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IN reviewing the subject, "The Changing Jewish Community," I recall the remark of Oliver Wendell Holmes that "The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving." Being aware that modern society is characterized by change — inevitable, universal, and accelerating change — I address those aspects of our changing condition which bear most directly upon work in the Jewish community center: changes in the characteristics of our American Jewish community, changes occurring in the community center movement itself, and the changing nature of Jewish Federations. I would like, also, to highlight some of the issues which I believe now confront us as American Jews.

Characteristics of the American Jewish Community

A fact of Jewish life, during the entire Jewish experience in the United States, has been the small proportion Jews comprise of American population. With all the references made to the participation by Jews in the discovery of America, it should be recalled that, on the eve of the American Revolution, less than 2,000 Jews resided in all thirteen colonies. Following the establishment of the Republic — in its first three decades — the Jewish population increased from fewer than 2,000 to fewer than 3,000. But in the next three decades, 1820 to 1850, the Jewish population soared to some 50,000. The increase was due to immigration, largely from Germany and Central Europe. It was a result of

the oppression reimposed upon Jews, following the relative liberality in Europe which in turn was the outgrowth of the French Revolution.¹ Following the Revolution of 1848, anti-Jewish sentiment in all of Central Europe accelerated Jewish emigration, and the Jewish population of the United States increased from some 50,000 in 1850 to approximately 150,000 in 1860. Jewish immigration diminished during the Civil War and in the first years of Reconstruction, but by 1877, Abraham Karp reports, "The first attempt at a Jewish population survey, undertaken by the Board of Delegates of American Israelites in 1877, placed the number of Jews in the United States at 230,257."² This compares to a total population in the United States of some 50 million at the time; thus, the Jews represented less than one-half of one percent of the total.³

In the next ten years the Jewish population almost doubled. By 1900, it had grown to just over 1 million persons, and Jews then constituted 1.4 percent of the American population. By 1910, the number approached 2 million and, by the mid-1920's when immigration quotas went into effect, Jews in the United States numbered approximately

¹ Abraham J. Karp, *The Jewish Experience in America*, Vol. II: *The Early Republic* (Massachusetts: American Jewish Historical Society and New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1969), pp. VII-IX.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, *The Emerging Community*, pp. VII and VIII.

³ Sidney Goldstein, "American Jewry 1970: A Demographic Profile," *American Jewish Yearbook*, Vol. 72 (New York: The American Jewish Committee and Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971), p. 10.

* Presented to JWB Metropolitan Jewish Community Centers Executive Directors Seminar, Palm Springs, California, January 13, 1976.

4,225,000 persons, or 3.6 percent of the total population.⁴

This number grew gradually in the years thereafter. In 1937, the Jewish population was estimated at 4,771,000, or 3.7 percent of the United States population — the largest proportion of the total population ever attained. By 1950, when the Jewish population had grown to 5 million, the proportion to the whole had begun to shrink. *The American Jewish Yearbook* reported a Jewish population in 1968 of 5,869,000, or 2.9 percent of the population of the United States.⁵

Interestingly, Sidney Goldstein observed, ". . . if the rate of growth characterizing the 1950's and 1960's . . . persisted, the Jewish population will have reached 6 million by 1970."⁶ However, Alvin Chenkin, reporting on the initial estimates of population resulting from the *National Jewish Population Study*, indicated that the final estimate was not likely to exceed 5,900,000.⁷ And the latest issue of *The American Jewish Yearbook* estimates the Jewish population of the United States in 1974 at 5,732,000.⁸ (This does not represent a diminution in the Jewish population but a correction of prior estimates which over-estimated Jewish population in the New York City area.)

So much for numbers. Let us now look at characteristics.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁷ Alvin Chenkin, "Some Findings from the National Jewish Population Study and Their Implications for Federations," paper presented at Boston Jewish Community Leadership Conference, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts (Boston: Combined Jewish Philanthropies, 1974), p. 4.

⁸ Alvin Chenkin, "Jewish Population in the United States, 1974," *American Jewish Yearbook*, Vol. 76 (New York: The American Jewish Committee and Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976), p. 229.

First, distribution. The American Jewish community is largely an urban community. More than 4 million Jews reside in the fourteen largest Federation areas. Add to this the communities of 15,000-40,000, take account of smaller Federation areas in the same metropolitan communities in which many of our larger Federations are located, and you will find the overwhelming majority of Jews in the United States reside in a relatively small number of metropolitan areas.

The Jewish population is largely concentrated in the northeast United States. According to the 1971 Jewish Population Study, close to two-thirds of the Jewish population of the United States resided in the East; about one-sixth lived in the central United States; roughly one-twelfth lived in the south; and roughly one-tenth lived in the west. However, the population of the south and west represented the most rapid growth areas during the decade immediately prior to the Population Study.⁹

Analyzing the age distribution of the Jewish population, in 1971, those in the age range, 0-4, represented under 6 percent of the Jewish population; 17 percent were in the age range, 5-14; 24 percent were in the age range 15-29; 42 percent were in the age range 30-64; and 11 percent were in the age range 65 and over. By 1991, Alvin Chenkin projects a 20 percent increase in the population, 0-4; reductions of 14 percent and 24 percent, respectively in the age ranges 5-14 and 15-29; and increases, respectively, of 13 percent and 40 percent in the age ranges, 30-64 and 65 and over. Thus, we find a sharply diminish-

⁹ Fred Massarik, Ph.D., "National Jewish Population Study: A New United States Estimate," *American Jewish Yearbook*, Vol. 75 (New York: The American Jewish Committee and Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974-75), pp. 301 and 302.

ing population of youth and young adults, a small increase in middle age, a larger increase in the very young, and the largest increase of all among our elderly.¹⁰

The trend of Jewish population increase by immigration continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the middle 1920's, when immigration ground to a virtual halt. In the years from 1925 to 1965, changes in Jewish population were largely a reflection of natural factors. What has developed since then, however, has been a simultaneous diminution in the Jewish birthrate, and an increase in the rate of intermarriage. Whereas, during the 1960's, reports of intermarriage rates in excess of 10-12 percent were regarded as frightening, the *National Jewish Population Study* found that the proportion of Jewish persons intermarrying in the period, 1966-1972, amounted to over thirty percent.¹¹ The long term implications of this development upon Jewish population in the future remains unknown. Indications at this time are that this may not result in a diminution of Jewish population, but these indications have not been tested over any substantial period of time.

Jews tend to get married and to form families. The *National Jewish Population Study* found that, by age twenty-nine, all but 11 percent of Jews had been married, and 74 percent remained married. However, fifteen percent of those in the 25-29 age range were already separated or divorced. While the separation-divorce rates of those in the 30-59 age ranges are much lower — between 4 and 5½ percent — it is reasonable to expect that the rate of divorce among

¹⁰ Alvin Chenkin, "Demographic Highlights," *National Jewish Population Study* (New York: Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds), pp. 2 and 3.

¹¹ Fred Massarik, Ph.D., "Intermarriage," *idem Study*, p. 1.

middle-age Jewish couples will increase considerably in the years ahead. This will have important implications for Jewish communal services.

During our lifetime, there has been a significant change in the social and professional status of the Jewish community. Increasingly, we are a native-born population. Goldstein reported, from a 1963 study in Providence, that 73 percent of the population age 65 and over was foreign born. Eighty-seven percent of those under the age of fifteen were third generation or higher.¹² These data generally are supported by the national Population Study in 1971.

Occupationally and socially, our status is reflected by the fact that a significant majority of our employed people are managers, administrators, or professional-technical workers; a majority have had some college education, and most of these are graduates and post-graduates; and our median income is much higher than that of the population at-large.¹³

Finally, our community is a mobile one. In this respect, our condition has not changed. For whatever the reason, Jews have always been prepared to move from one location to another. The *National Jewish Population Study* has found that well over half of those aged 30-39 were in a different city in 1970 from where they were in 1965. Younger people, of course, tend to move more frequently than older people, and mobility is associated with educational achievement and professional occupational categories. But even older people move from colder to warmer climates, and, for those of us involved in the operation of communal services, the notion that many people will be with us from cradle to grave — given the char-

¹² Goldstein, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

¹³ Chenkin, "Demographic Highlights," *op. cit.*, pp. 5-10.

acteristics of today's Jewish community — is highly unlikely.

The Changing Nature of Jewish Community Centers

When Oscar Janowsky did his survey of the work, function, and role of the National Jewish Welfare Board, he observed that "... the Jewish Center field almost defies classification."¹⁴ He recalled that when the JWB merged with the National Council of YMH and KA in 1921, some of its member agencies "... were practically nonsectarian settlements hovering on the brink of Jewishness. Others were YMHA's and YWHA's wavering between philanthropic concern with the underprivileged immigrant and service to its older membership. Still others were adjuncts to temples or synagogues."¹⁵

During the early years of the JWB's existence, a different type of institution came into being. "This was the Jewish Center or Jewish community center, which sought to embrace all Jewish elements in the community — old and young, rich and poor, immigrants and natives — and to serve all their needs as Jews, religious, cultural, social and recreational."¹⁶ Interestingly, Janowsky characterizes Mordecai M. Kaplan as "... the most active protagonist of this novel institution, ..." ¹⁷ But he comments that, while the JWB was greatly influenced by Kaplan's thinking, "... it neither accepted formally as theory nor pursued in practice his concept of the centrality of religion in Jewish life."¹⁸ This observation is a fascinating omen of an issue which is becoming increasingly evident today and which undoubt-

¹⁴ Oscar I. Janowsky, *The National Jewish Welfare Board Survey*, (New York: The Dial Press, 1948), p. 159.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79-80.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

edly will occupy much of our thought and energy in the years ahead.

At the time Janowsky conducted his field visits in 1946, he still classified the members of JWB into three categories — Jewish community centers, synagogue centers, and neighborhood centers (the descendents of settlement houses) which style themselves "non-sectarian." But he found it "... proper to conclude that a majority of the agencies affiliated with the JWB aspire to serve the total Jewish populations of their communities or neighborhoods." Janowsky reported that 130 of the centers visited could be classified as Y's or Jewish community centers; 112 were synagogue centers, including ten Hebrew educational centers; and only 27 were settlements or neighborhood centers.¹⁹

By the time of the most recent JWB national study, the trend away from settlement houses appears to have become complete. Witness this statement of the plan of the study, adopted in October 1966:

The study should be carried out within the framework of certain assumptions: first, that JWB is the national association and service body for Jewish community centers and Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Associations ...²⁰

The thrust of this statement would suggest that the synagogue center had ceased to exist as a factor in Jewish communal life. And it may be true that, insofar as the JWB was concerned, this had become the fact. However, over the past three decades, the structure and function of the synagogue in the United States has undergone considerable change, and the separation of the synagogue and Center movements may have implications which warrant serious consideration on our part.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-2.

²⁰ *Report of the JWB Study Committee* (New York: National Jewish Welfare Board, 1969), p. 7.

Reflecting the changing nature of the center movement and the nature of Jewish life at that time, Janowsky drew this inference:

The most important conclusion of the Survey is that the Jewish center should have a Jewish purpose — that it should be an agency with which the Jew might identify himself in order to satisfy his specialized Jewish needs. From this premise, it follows logically that the program of the Jewish center should devote primary attention to Jewish content, without, of course, excluding or ignoring the general activities which are essential for a well-rounded center program.²¹

He observed that some Board members and the rank and file of Jewish centers "... feel insecure about Jewish emphasis, because they fear that it might be regarded as a segregating influence." While he found little overt opposition to a Jewish emphasis, he felt "... forced to the conclusion that it is apathy and not hostility which must be overcome."²² Janowsky did find one particularly interesting source of opposition to Jewish content:

Several centers in various parts of the country report opposition from rabbis, either because they feel that Jewish programs 'belong to the synagogue,' or because they regard such programs as duplicating the work of synagogues and temples.²³

He quotes one respondent as remarking "the rabbis urge emphasis upon Jewish content, but hinder its implementation."²⁴

Janowsky recognized the difficulty of encompassing all of Jewish life within the "rigid confines of a definition," but he described the Jewish community center as "... an institution developed and maintained by American Jews for the satisfaction of certain needs which they experience as Jews." Asserting that

²¹ Janowsky, *op cit.*, p. xxiii.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 193.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Jewish life includes more than religion in the doctrinal sense, Janowsky added:

If the Jews were exclusively a denominational group, characterized by ritual and theology, the synagogue would absorb all of their interests. The rise and vitality of the Jewish community center afford conclusive proof that American Jewish group life encompasses a great deal more than theology and ritual. The additional elements plus the religious, that is the sum total of distinctive Jewish interests, may be identified broadly as religious or spiritual, cultural and social; and American Jewry may be defined as an 'ethnic' or ancestral or cultural group whose chief characteristics are common religious experiences, a common history, and a sense of kinship with Jews in other parts of the world.²⁵

In these comments, Janowsky faces head-on the issue of the synagogue and the center. "There is a tendency in Jewish Center Circles," Janowsky observes, "to distinguish their work from that of the synagogue by defining it as 'secular.' This is as unwarranted as it is confusing."²⁶

Proposing a statement of purpose for the Jewish center, Janowsky called for "the primacy of Jewish content in the center programs," and called attention to "the paradox of non-sectarian Jewish agencies." He enumerated functions of the Jewish Center as: "... an agency for Jewish identification; an agency of Jewish integration; an agency of personality development; a means of advancing the democratic way of life; an instrumentality for service; a means for relating to the total American community; and a means of relating to controversial public issues."²⁷

With respect to the Center as an agency of Jewish integration, having observed that there are many diverse elements of Jewish life, Janowsky remarked:

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 278-284.

The Jewish center is one of the few agencies which can contribute markedly to the development of a 'sense of community,' through the integration of the diverse elements in the local Jewish community. It is of the 'grassroots' of American Jewish life, concerned with the immediate needs of the local population. The area of its functioning is beyond the direct range of factional differences, and leaders as well as participants in its work are encouraged to think in community rather than in organizational terms. The center, therefore, can and should encompass the Jewish community as a whole, drawing together divergent elements and uniting them for a common purpose.²⁸

Janowsky's observations and recommendations, at the time of their publication, were considered highly controversial and provocative. That he accurately indicated the direction which centers were to take, is reflected in this remark by Herbert Millman:

In the twenty-five years which followed, however, this thesis was so fully accepted in the field that in the JWB Study of 1966-69, it could be taken for granted and was identified as a basic assumption.²⁹

Janowsky, himself, recognized the extent to which his principle — that the Jewish community center should be predominantly Jewish in purpose and in character — was accepted. Commenting on the JWB Survey, he noted:

The Survey Report turned the tables on the non-sectarians. It argued that sectarian agencies dedicated to sectarian purposes were sanctioned by American democracy, while, on the contrary, Jewish centers without Jewish emphasis constituted indefensible segregation. It challenged the non-sectarian Jewish center as a contradiction in terms. It could not be both Jewish and non-sectarian . . .³⁰

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 279 and 280.

²⁹ Herbert Millman, "Foreword," in Oscar I. Janowsky, *The Jewish Community Center — Two Essays on Basic Purpose* (New York: National Jewish Welfare Board, 1974), pp. 1-3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Janowsky characterized the 1969 study report as:

. . . the culmination and climax of a process of reappraisal and reorientation at work for nearly a quarter of a century. The Study Committee did not even find it necessary to review the arguments for Jewish emphasis or to reaffirm the Jewish purposes of the Center. That was assumed as established, because the responsibility of the Center for the promotion of Jewish values had ceased to be an issue. This constitutes a landmark in the evolution of the Jewish community center movement."³¹

Changes in the Jewish Federation

Back in 1938, Maurice J. Karpf, then director of the Graduate School for Jewish Social Work, wrote:

The manifold activities of the Jewish communities . . . brought a realization to the leaders of these communities that better organization and coordination are necessary for the most effective work. Toward the close of the Nineteenth Century the Jewish Federation came into existence, first in Boston in 1895, and in Cincinnati in the following year. At first, these federations and the others which followed, aimed primarily at a more effective collection of funds. Later, especially since the war, and more especially during the third decade of the present century, federations became communal agencies whose functions it is not only to provide financial support for their constituent societies but to plan for the community needs along constructive lines. Today, with a few exceptions, the federations aim to support, coordinate, and control the needed social service agencies and activities in their respective communities. Some federations are beginning to shoulder also the burden of raising funds in the local communities for the support of nationwide as well as overseas Jewish activities.³²

An interesting historical contrast is provided by Karpf's next paragraph:

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³² Maurice J. Karpf, Ph.D., *Jewish Community Organization in the United States* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1938), p. 103.

There are approximately seventy federations of Jewish charities in the United States today. Practically every community of any significant size has a federation. They spend about \$10 million annually. In many cities they are the one central organization which represents all shades of opinion in the Jewish community. While they are not yet and may never be the communal organization that one finds in some communities in Europe, they usually have the support, and good will of the entire Jewish population.³³

Updating the picture given us by Karpf, William Avrunin comments:

The early Federations, organized at the turn of the century, financed programs for the immigrant population. They were the most primary of services — relief for families whose husbands had deserted and assistance in locating those husbands, medical services, free loans to assist the impoverished newcomer to buy a store or a horse and wagon. The various organizations, sisterhoods, fraternal bodies and so forth, which joined together to form federations, delegated to the new central body little more than the responsibility of raising the money centrally.

From those early days we moved forward along with a large part of the American community from services to the needy to preventive services and from preventive services to the present emphasis on enrichment programs. We never fully sloughed off the responsibility for the historic purposes — like serving the poor — for which we were founded. Their implementation was made possible by an increasingly middle-class Jewish population with increasingly affluent resources to meet its changing needs.

The same instrument which brought together social services is now appropriately invited to address itself to a grab bag of cultural services — formal and informal Jewish education, campus programs, camp and center programs intended to strengthen the identity of our young people as Jews and to reinforce that identity with a foundation of knowledge.

At the very same time, the public image of federations has changed from a simple association of agencies to something called

euphemistically 'the organized Jewish community.'³⁴

Avrunin stresses that federation is a voluntary association and that it has obvious limitations.

Any Jewish resident can join by becoming a contributor or he can leave by becoming what the campaign calls a 'turnback.' That relieves him of any obligation toward federation; it does not relieve federation of responsibility for him.

Any agency can apply for membership in the association or it can threaten to leave the association if it does not like the way federation treats it.³⁵

This consciousness of its voluntary nature intrudes significantly upon the federation decision-making process. Federations are aware of their limitations, recognizing that their sanctions derive only from the substantial material and philosophical support accorded them by large numbers of individuals and organizations in the Jewish community. In the words of Avrunin:

These limitations are both a strength and a weakness just as they are in our broader democracy. The success of the Federation experience is in dealing with what is, rather than with what ought to be; with crass reality rather than with the idealized image.³⁶

Speaking in 1971 about his own organization, the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, the late Benjamin B. Rosenberg observed:

CJP . . . is a central Jewish community agency, or 'community address' which over the years has assumed ever broadening functions in fund raising, in community planning and coordination, and in central community services in the domestic as well as in the overseas arena. What has taken place is not just an accumulation of programs and responsibilities, but rather a growing identification with the Jewish

³⁴ William Avrunin, "The Developing Federation Idea," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. LI, No. 3 (1975), p. 230.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-4.

community — its needs, its problems, its continuity and the quality of its survival.³⁷

The Federation today reflects an historical transplantation of Jewish culture — begun in the Babylonian exile, and carried through the Diaspora to our Central and East European forebears. It represents a new communal form, firmly rooted in Jewish tradition and history. It has evolved from its earlier limitation of support and interest only in programs of health, welfare, and education under communal auspices, to a role of involvement in the growing diversity of Jewish life. Its perspective has changed to encompass concern for creative Jewish continuity. With this change, it is propelled toward an increasingly central role in Jewish life.

Jacob Neusner characterizes the Jewish Federation as “. . . the sole corporate body in Jewry which fairly claims to stand for Jewry as a whole.”³⁸ But in considering this claim, it is well to recall the limitations of the Federation: that it is a voluntary association; that it has no sanction — neither governmental nor Jewishly — to function as a central authority; that it has no means of compelling the production of resources — financial as well as human — to fulfill such a role. Federations now find themselves torn between their obligations to new and developing factors in Jewish life and their continuing responsibility for systems with which they have been associated for many years. They find themselves in a position where resources are lacking, not only for the support of new programs, but for maintenance and growth of existing programs.

³⁷ Benjamin B. Rosenberg, “CJP’s Changing Roles and Responsibilities,” paper presented at Combined Jewish Philanthropies Executive Board Conference, Plymouth, Massachusetts (Boston: Combined Jewish Philanthropies, 1971), p. II-1.

³⁸ Jacob Neusner, “A House Is Not A Home,” *Moment*, Vol. I, No. 5 (December 1975), p. 78.

Yet despite these limitations, the demand for greater involvement increases. Federations which always have been characterized by the ability to respond to changing conditions, now are being challenged to think in larger terms. William Avrunin suggests some aspirations of federations for the future:

1. To increasingly become the ‘organized Jewish community’ (without ever necessarily fully attaining this objective) by widening the circle of inclusiveness — people and programs.
2. To increase its impact as an instrument of Jewish identity — one with which increasing numbers of Jews are proud to associate.
3. To deepen both the quality of Jewish life and the quality of life of the Jewish population . . .
4. To develop a base of homogeneity in the sense of ‘K’lal Yisroel,’ Jewish identity of fundamental issues without erasing all differences to a level of indifferent unanimity . . .
5. To increasingly become the Jewish ‘address’ vis-à-vis the general body politic, other coalitions, ethnic groupings, etc.³⁹

Issues Confronting Our Jewish Communities

In considering the issues which confront our Jewish communities, we do so with an awareness that the Jewish people today probably is bound more closely together than in any previous time since the destruction of the first Temple and the Babylonian dispersion. This closeness is both physical and spiritual. In an age of instant communication, now more than ever before, Jewish communities are able to speak, touch, exchange ideas and materials; to express in a direct way their kinship and support. At a time in history when most living Jews recall, at first hand, the sear-

³⁹ William Avrunin, “Can the Future of Federation Be Shaped by the Community Organization Process in a Grand Design?,” unpublished paper, 1975, p. 7.

ing horror of the Holocaust, the emotional fervor of the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland in Israel, and the fulfillment of uniting Jews from all corners of the world, we find ourselves in a condition where challenges have assumed a cosmic significance which transcends our human limitations. Yet, we are after all mortal. Both our capacities and our perceptions are bounded by this reality. We must therefore address ourselves to the mundane, as well as to the profound. Even as we accept challenges which we perceive as ultimately within our means, we must acknowledge that much which will shape our future is outside of our control.

Out of a myriad of issues we can focus only on three which will help to define the larger universe with which the changing Jewish community must ultimately deal. Let us consider Israel-United States relations; the problems of insuring Jewish continuity in the United States; and issues in the relationships of synagogues with centers.

Israel-United States Relations

High in our consciousness is the matter of the relationship of the Jewish community of Israel with the American Jewish community, viewed both from the perspective of public policy and community relations and of communal life and interpersonal relationships between our communities.

From the perspective of public policy, Daniel Elazar has observed:

The Yom Kippur War has made it apparent that the Jewish community in the United States is dividing to some degree. The majority, perhaps the overwhelming majority of American Jews, identified with Israel at the time of the war and showed their concern in varying ways. On the other hand, a minority, and perhaps a growing minority, were unmoved by the war and Israel’s situation and did not indicate any particular interest in the Middle East conflict beyond that of any other Ameri-

cans. In no little respect, that crisis accelerated the separation of those who are willing to stand up and be counted as Jews from those who are not.⁴⁰

One may foresee from Elazar’s comments a situation where American Jews may be confronted with governmental policy directly in conflict with their interest in Israel. In these circumstances, it is possible to anticipate a growing segment of the Jewish community as antagonistic to the support which now is given to Israel by the “organized Jewish community” in the United States. As the number of such Jews increases, and as any antagonism which may develop between the American and Israel governments mounts, it is reasonable to expect a growing intensity of feeling among those Jews who perceive Israel’s survival as vital to their own. This raises interesting questions as to the nature of our input into the decision-making process in Israel.

There are Jews in positions of leadership today who believe that the role of the American Jewish community is to give unwavering and unquestioning support to the policies of the government of Israel, a freely elected, democratic government which may properly be expected to reflect the will of the people of Israel, who are now engaged in a struggle for their very survival. It is not for us, they assert, from the safety of our distance, to interject our views upon their decisions — whatever the nature of those decisions. Others in positions of Jewish leadership note that Israel has little in the way of a voluntary organizational system; that the only decisions made for the Jewish people in Israel are public decisions by governmental or

⁴⁰ Daniel J. Elazar, “Israel-United States Relations — Present and Future Trends,” paper presented at Boston Jewish Community Leadership Conference, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts (Boston: Combined Jewish Philanthropies, 1974), p. 3.

quasi-governmental authorities. Even religious decisions are sanctioned by the force of law. Under these circumstances, it is argued to the extent that decisions of public authorities may be at variance with the views of our own community with respect to the continuity of Jewish life, we have no alternative but to identify these differences and to express our views.

The implications of these issues in the political arena are obvious. Important community relations problems confront us in our efforts to support the Jewish community in Israel. We find ourselves, as organizations and individuals, explaining the necessity for economic and military assistance to Israel, mobilizing public opinion in her support, and defying the obscenity of international actions intending to separate her from the family of nations.

In the domestic sphere, we find ourselves with problems that are more readily accepted as within our realm of concern, but perhaps even more difficult to influence effectively. The problem of the two Israels, for instance, the social gap.

Eliezer Jaffe speaks of the "disadvantages" of early emigration to Israel. According to Jaffe, each wave of immigration to Israel gets better treatment, reflecting the nation's industrial growth, its economic development, and the availability of resources to attempt to meet immigrants' needs. He describes these disadvantages in compelling detail. Disproportionate numbers of youth poorly educated and underemployed; large families, treated not as a national asset but as a social liability; poor housing; dependence upon welfare.⁴¹ The budget of the Jewish Agency in the cur-

rent year approximates \$500 million. Ostensibly, the Jewish Agency is the instrumentality of the world Jewish communities for meeting social needs of immigrants in Israel. What is its relationship with the people of Israel? It is through the Federations that much of American Jewry relates to the Jewish Agency. What is their role in determining the Agency's priorities and programs? Are they satisfied that the activities which they support are adequately administered? However, offsetting this interest, is the recognition that whatever the American Jewish share of meeting Israel's fiscal needs, it represents only a portion of those needs. In the words of Elazar:

American Jews, or at least their leadership, have long since come to realize that — vital as their aid is — it is not supporting Israel in any unilateral fashion. This automatically means that American Jewry is not likely to be in a position where it can actively attempt to influence policy decisions in Israel in other than a marginal way.⁴²

Elazar sees a trend ". . . toward the greater intermeshing of Diaspora and Israeli concerns."⁴³ The method by which those concerns will be adjudicated and managed is yet to be determined.

One approach has been taken by the community center movement. Through its support of local community centers, reflective of indigenous populations, it is possible that the beginnings of a voluntary structure of organization is under way in Israel. Although Israel has long known voluntary organization, this has essentially been in the words of Jaffe, ". . . a strong tradition of volunteer women's organizations, philanthropically financed abroad." He notes that "there is no real overall strategy linking this voluntary system with ser-

⁴¹ Eliezer D. Jaffe, "Poverty in the Third Jewish Commonwealth; Sephardi-Ashkenazi Divisions," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. LII, No. 1 (1975), p. 92.

⁴² Elazar, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

vices provided by the Jewish Agency or the government."

The women's organizations work traditionally with the healthy, attractive kids — orphans, dependent children, immigrant children, but normal and saleable. The government and the Jewish Agency tackle the pathological, the delinquent, the prostituted, the retarded, the difficult cases:

The community center movement, in Jerusalem and in the development cities, insofar as they help create an indigenous system of community involvement, hopefully will interact more fully in planning for those activities which relate to the more pathological and perplexing elements of Israeli society.⁴⁴

Insuring Jewish Continuity

In conditions of freedom, such as that which we have enjoyed in the United States, opportunities for assimilation abound. During the early Nineteenth Century, when Jews represented just an infinitesimal proportion of the population at-large, they were confronted by an irresistible pressure to intermarry and assimilate into the general community. Only later, when the pace of immigration accelerated, was the Jewish community able to experience a dynamic growth. Throughout Jewish history, assimilation has been a fact of Jewish life. In some respects, the rate of assimilation, and its consequences, are immeasurable. In other respects, for example intermarriage, the phenomenon does lend itself to measurement.

The national Jewish Population Study reports that, of all Jews married in 1972, some 9.2 percent are intermarried. However, "the proportion of Jewish persons intermarrying in the period 1966-72 is much greater than corresponding proportions in earlier periods; 31.7 percent of Jewish persons marrying in this recent time span shows

a non-Jewish spouse." The contrast to earlier periods is shown by a rate of about 17.4 percent in 1965; roughly 6-7 percent in the years 1945-1960; 2-3 percent before World War II, and 2 percent in the first two decades of the Twentieth Century.⁴⁵

The report goes on: "In a very large majority of cases (98.4 percent), when the wife is Jewish though initially the husband is not Jewish, children are raised as Jewish. On the other hand, when the husband is Jewish and the wife initially not Jewish, about one third of the children are raised outside the Jewish religion."⁴⁶ Thus, while our numbers may not yet seem to be seriously affected by intermarriage, questions about the quality of involvement in Jewish life and commitment for the future might appropriately be asked. There has not yet been sufficient time to measure whether any erosion will take place as the impact of the majority culture makes itself felt upon the converted spouse and the children of such marriages. It is possible, too, that the nature of involvement in Jewish communal life may be significantly affected by the introduction of large numbers of families whose perception of Jewish life and tradition is affected by non-Jewish culture and experience.

Whatever the prospects for increase or decrease resulting from intermarriage, the fertility rates of Jews show a clearer — and even more discouraging — picture. The Jewish community today must face up to the dubious distinction of having attained ZJPG (Zero Jewish Population Growth). Wherever Jews live, they seem to have established a pattern of lower rates of reproduction than the population at-large. Here, in the United States, fertility research "has consistently found a lower birth rate for

⁴⁵ Fred Massarik, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Jews than for members of other religious groups."⁴⁷

Goldstein reports on studies of the Growth of American Families which "found that Jews had the smallest families, married later, expected and desired to have the smallest families, had the most favorable attitudes toward the use of contraception, were most successful in planning the number and the spacing of all their children, and were most likely to use the most effective methods of birth control."⁴⁸ Data cited by Goldstein, of studies throughout the 1950's and '60's demonstrate our success in limiting our growth. So successful have we been, that if present rates continue, we who now begin the observance of the United States Bicentennial year may well question whether a Jewish community will exist to participate in the United States Tricentennial Observance.

Jewish continuity does not depend only on physical survival. The spiritual and cultural aspects of Jewish life are of at least equal importance. The National Jewish Population Study found that the chance of intermarriage is likely to be greatest "for those who cannot clearly describe their upbringing, but also very high for those who describe their own upbringing as marginally Jewish." It observes that "active participation in temples and synagogues is the exception, not the rule."⁴⁹ Other aspects of Jewish life, similarly, have relevance in insuring Jewish continuity: the transmission of Jewish knowledge and values through education; interaction with other Jews through activity in the communal sphere; interaction with other Jewish communities — in Israel and elsewhere.

The provision of opportunities for Jews to experience Jewish life is a func-

tion which, by purpose and through practice, the Jewish community center is equipped to perform. It is here it confronts another central institution of Jewish life — the synagogue.

The Synagogue

Milton Steinberg portrays the synagogue, simply and directly, as follows:

Whatever spot Jews set aside for their religious exercises, wherever they put up an Arc containing the Torah — scroll, source and symbol of the Tradition, there is a synagogue. No dedicatory rights or sacramental procedures are required to hallow the place. The Tradition insists that the synagogue be clean; it urges that it be beautiful. Yet many a synagogue is little more than a bare room and is not a wit diminished in holiness on that account. For, it is the Jewish teaching concerning God that, since He is present everywhere, He may everywhere be invoked.⁵⁰

Steinberg ascribes three functions to the synagogue: it is a "house of prayer," a "house of study," and a "house of the people."⁵¹ Steinberg acknowledges the existence of "conflicting theories of Judaism and clashing theological doctrines. Yet large and consequential as the dissimilarities may be their extent and significance should not be exaggerated."⁵²

In our own lifetime, we have witnessed the transfiguration of the synagogue. As recently as the early 1940's, our Jewish communities were familiar with two predominant models of synagogue. Many of our contemporaries were familiar with the Orthodox *shitibl*, a small building or a flat in a multiple dwelling. Its primary function was prayer. While study was conducted within its walls, this was usually the study of a small group of elderly

⁵⁰ Milton Steinberg, *Basic Judaism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), p. 150.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 153-4.

men, discussing Talmud. Sometimes, there was education of children; most frequently, lessons in prayer and ritual, generally associated with preparation for Bar Mitzvah. Such lessons began relatively late and finished with the Bar Mitzvah ceremony, sometimes only months — or even weeks — in total duration. The functionary in charge was sometimes a rabbi. More often, a devoted shammos fulfilled the functions not only of sexton, but also of rabbi, teacher, and janitor.

Some of us were familiar with a grander model. The *shul* or temple — depending on the religious coloration of its congregants — was not only more impressive in form, it usually was better staffed and maintained. Much more frequently, a rabbi and a shammos could devote themselves to religious functions. The maintenance and operation of the physical plant was in the hands of people hired for this purpose. Frequently, additional functions were performed, and the congregation could enjoy the services of a cantor, a religious school principal, teachers, and others.

While many such congregations could maintain Hebrew schools, the bulk of Jewish education was performed either in communal schools or in highly informal settings, including private instruction, often of low standard and characterized by weak resolve. Education was essentially part-time and at the elementary level. For this, the synagogue could hardly be held accountable; relatively few such institutions were in a position to relate themselves to meeting this communal need. The function of house of study, therefore, was only imperfectly fulfilled. The function, house of the people or place of assembly, was hardly one with which our contemporaries and seniors were familiar.

In the years following World War II, however, significant changes occurred.

Jews made large leaps in their educational, economic, and social standing. They left the ghettos and joined the surge toward the suburbs. And in this suburban explosion, they sought institutional connections in the same way as their newly-found neighbors, the non-Jewish suburbanite. Before it became unpopular in the late 1960's to be associated with organized institutional forms in the United States, every good American citizen belonged to the church of his choice. The Jewish "church" was the synagogue, which burgeoned in suburbia. In their new suburban environment, Jews found a new relationship with their synagogue, one which was considerably different from that of their parents and grandparents. The function of the synagogue as house of prayer was not necessarily expanded. But its functions as house of study and place of assembly became increasingly prominent. Particularly in our largest metropolitan communities, certainly in those which were most dispersed, the synagogue often was the only institutional location for Jewish communal activity. That it was not fully prepared to assume this role, that it lacked the resources to satisfactorily maintain it, was a difficult but incidental problem. There was no alternative.

But after the membership boom of the '50's and '60's, recent years have witnessed a shrinking synagogue membership. Apart from the fact that belonging to a "church" became less of a magnet, the arrival of ZJPG affected a primary reason for associating with synagogues. As Jewish families produced fewer babies, there were fewer children to enroll in religious schools. Therefore, fewer years of membership in synagogues were needed for those Jews whose primary motivation for such membership was the requirement that membership be assumed before a child could be enrolled in the congregational

⁴⁷ Goldstein, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁹ Massarik, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

