

FUND RAISING FOR TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ISRAEL

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Twentieth-century Zionism, characterized by a donor-recipient relationship between American Jews and a struggling Israel, is being replaced by a new form of partnership with a thriving Israel. Fund raising for twenty-first century Israel is donor-intensive and project-oriented; it is energized by vision, not by crisis.

Perhaps the strongest article of faith underlying the careers that many of us have pursued in Jewish communal service has been the centrality of Israel in Jewish life. Does that belief still prevail? Is Israel, a half-century removed from the global Jewish euphoria that greeted its emergence as an independent state, losing its centrality?

The short answer to that question is *no*. The Zionism we knew and practiced in this century in our advocacy and fund raising for Israel is not dead or dying but in transition. A new Zionism is blowing in the wind, one that is fresh, exciting, broadly appealing, and available to all American Jews. It is a twenty-first century Zionism.

This new form of Zionism is emerging despite what seem to be well-documented misgivings voiced by caring and concerned members of the American Jewish community. For example, in an article entitled "Distant Relatives: Bridging the Gap between American Jews & Israel," which appeared in *Moment* magazine, Leonard Fein stated, "We are going through a period in which people actively want not to hear or think about Israel. What's going on in Israel is either too complex or people simply have refocused on domestic issues." In that same article, Dr. Sidney Schwartz, president of the Washington Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values, said "The annual campaigns are being supported by older Jews for whom Israel holds a special place, but not by the next generation of givers."

A standard explanation for the apparent sea-change also appeared in that article. "Is-

rael is of course important," observed Boston federation chairman Michael Rukin, "but we have shifted gears to give Jewish continuity a higher place on our community and budgetary agenda."

In the federation fund-raising area, the facts and figures would seem to bear out this assessment. In the annual campaigns just preceding the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Israel received substantially more than half the total funds raised. Most of the all-time record \$685 million 1974 campaign response to the Yom Kippur War was allocated to Israel. By 1995, a single generation later, some \$250 million was going to Israel, representing only about 40 percent of campaign receipts (and the percentage has since dipped below that level).

Why did so wide a gap develop in so short a time? What has changed in the relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community? A prevailing view is that, while Israel has turned outward to the world, the American Jewish community has turned inward. They are pulling apart and the process, some feel, is irreversible. Viewing the changing relationship historically, however, provides a different perspective.

ISRAEL THEN, ISRAEL NOW

There are dramatic differences between the Israel for which American Jewry raised vast sums of money from the years before its inception through the Yom Kippur War and the Israel that has been emerging in the two decades since. The difference is between surviving and thriving, between the Third

World and the First, and between a nation under siege and a nation on the move.

When Israel gained its political independence in 1948, the UJA/federation lifeline was ready to meet its every crisis. And for decades, that was what our fund raising for Israel was all about—meeting one crisis after another. This twentieth-century Zionism saw Israel as a surrounded and embattled people, fighting for survival and forced to sacrifice precious young lives—and a land with few natural resources, struggling to absorb overwhelming numbers of immigrants fleeing the ghettoes and tyrannies of the world.

With constant war and the threat of war, with exodus and forced expulsion of hundreds of thousands, with terrorist murders and anti-Zionist resolutions, there was more than enough bad news to go around. And the perceived wisdom of those fund-raising decades was that bad news most strongly motivated giving to Israel, reaching its historic peak in that epic Yom Kippur War campaign. That was our most powerful expression of twentieth-century Zionism—giving passionately, zealously, even sacrificially to sustain the politically sovereign Jewish homeland born of the Zionist dream.

ISRAEL ON THE VERGE

Today's Israel is vastly different and requires a newly focused fund raising and a freshly directed Zionism.

The International Monetary Fund recently added Israel to its list of industrialized nations, a First World roster. And prominent businessmen and the business press reflect the changed Israel:

- "Israel," declares Takura Isoda, chairman of the Nippon Investment and Finance Company, "is a treasurehouse of technology" ("Out of the Desert," 1995).
- The subhead on an article in the April 8, 1996 issue of *Newsweek* entitled "A Land of Tech and Money" reads: "Silicon Valley really has only one rival outside the United States—Israel."
- And the lead article in the Finance section

of the February 3, 1997 *Business Week* headlines Israel as "Land of Milk and Venture Capital," noting in a subhead that "U.S. firms are lining up to fund Israel's high-tech startups." The number of venture capital funds in Israel has grown from just two in 1990 to more than 70 today, and 40 of them are solely devoted to high technology, according to the article.

Key economic facts and indicators confirm this transformation. There are 1,800 high-tech companies in Israel today. More Israeli companies are listed on New York stock exchanges than those of any other country except Canada. Annual growth in all Israeli high-tech production is more than 20 percent; in information and communication technologies, that figure jumps to 50 percent. The high-tech boom has helped cut the jobless rate to under 7 percent and pushed Israel's annual growth in gross domestic product to around 6 percent, rivalling the rate of growth in booming Southeast Asia.

The Israel that gained political independence in 1948—a tiny, materials-poor equivalent of a Third World country—is now making a place for itself in the global marketplace, moving swiftly toward the economic independence that will solidify its hard-earned First World status.

IMPASSE OR OPPORTUNITY?

That is an Israel with as much good news to spare as there used to be bad news. And yet, some in the American Jewish community—disturbed by what they are experiencing as an erosion in Jewish identity among their children and fearful that they will disappear irretrievably—do not yet perceive the new Israel as a force for renewed Jewish pride and identity. Some, in fact, are arguing, "If Israel is doing so well, Israelis can fend for themselves; they don't need us." And they have their counterparts in Israel, vividly exemplified by the noted Israeli author, A. B. Yehoshua, who told a group of long-time American Jewish supporters, "We don't need you!"

Will American Jewish Zionism end in total impasse, with the gap widening between Israel and American Jews? Not at all. The seemingly extreme withdrawal of American Jewish funds for Israel may be, in contemporary terms, more virtual than real. The fact is that gifts to American Jewish philanthropies supporting causes in Israel are not substantially ebbing. They are shifting to those institutions that offer donors the opportunity to help sustain the good news emanating out of Israel today. "Charities that support specific non-profit institutions in Israel have grown so fast in the past decade that they helped to raise \$690 million from outside the country in 1994, compared with \$180 million in 1985," reported the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* (June 13, 1996).

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GOOD NEWS CAMPAIGNS

Some American Jewish organizations that support Israeli universities and other specific institutions, for example, have been registering highly successful results while allocations from other sources have been declining. Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, American Associates of Ben Gurion University of the Negev, and American Friends of Tel Aviv University, are among the thriving groups. Over the past 10-year period, the American Society for Technion-Israel Institute of Technology (ATS) has led the way, with campaigns registering a cumulative growth of more than 400 percent.

The ATS campaign is a good news campaign, bearing the message that "the future of Israel is in high technology, and the future of high technology in Israel is at the Technion." With that message, the ATS has reached into the upper echelons of American philanthropy. Of the 25 people on *Fortune's* 1997 list of "America's Most Generous," 10 are identifiable Jews and 4 have responded to that mes-

sage with substantial commitments to ATS.

The success of fund raising for Israel's universities is hardly surprising. Those institutions of higher learning are among the best in the world, and their excellence is widely acknowledged. Excellence in world-class universities has always had an international appeal, with lines of support crossing oceans and spanning continents.

And American Jews have a special motivation for directing more and more of their philanthropic dollars toward higher education in Israel. Keenly aware that Israel has only one significant resource—its brainpower—some of the most perceptive among them have come to recognize the fact that Israeli universities are developing that resource most strongly and effectively for the century ahead.

Donor-Intensive, Project-Oriented

Twenty-first century Zionism involves fund raising for Israel geared to growth, beyond survival; to education, beyond absorption; to productivity, beyond security; and to a healthy, independent economy and a vibrant, creative society, beyond political sovereignty. It is far more donor-intensive and much more project-oriented than traditional fund raising. For example, the ATS campaign of the past dozen years has increasingly offered donors tangible opportunities to make a difference in the level of scientific achievement in Israel and in the world.

Large scale by nature, ATS technology-driven projects confirmed a core major gifts fund-raising focus and led to the establishment of a productive system for tracking prospective donors. In addition, the necessarily patient, often slow-developing process of nurturing and closing major gifts has made traditional fiscal year campaign tallying irrelevant; multiyear campaigning has been the ATS mode of operation ever since the early 1990s.

At the same time, the major gifts strategy underlying prospect-centered fund raising clearly called for enhancement of a planned giving program and for expanded contacts

with family and corporate foundations. Leadership training programs were developed for honing solicitation skills appropriate to seeking major gifts. And "project campaigns" in which chapters and regions raised funds collectively for top-priority Technion projects, such as a space satellite and enhancing water resources, had the effect of focusing and galvanizing the substance and the spirit of local operations.

One of the elements that strongly attracts donors to all Israeli universities is the opportunity to see and touch the projects they fund and to see and be touched by the people whose careers they are helping shape. Project-driven, people-intensive fund raising allows them to be very precise in advancing interests that are important to them.

An Expansive Movement

Yet, university fund raising is not the only possible form of twenty-first century Zionism. The new Zionism is an expansive movement capable of embracing a wide range of organizational patterns and approaches.

Indeed, the American Jewish federation world is moving in the direction of project-driven fund raising. Federations are building on the "twinning" approach of Project Renewal to promote social and economic gains in their linked towns, cities, and neighborhoods. In addition, at a time when so many young American Jews are reportedly so indifferent to Israel, a significant number continue to visit the country through student exchange programs and a wide range of missions. Many are going on to become active advocates, donors, and leaders in a number of Israel-

oriented fund-raising organizations.

Mutual Enrichment

Fund raising for Israel is no longer a matter of one community of Jews reaching out in a desperate holding action to save and sustain poor and needy fellow Jews. It is a matter, instead, of people reaching out to people in an exciting family partnership adventure, creating a future for Israel founded in excellence, assured by education, and shaped by high technology. A matter, in brief, of fund raising energized not by crisis but by vision. Yet, the ongoing work of *tikkun olam* will always incorporate fund raising to defend, preserve, and sustain Jewish life and dignity everywhere on earth.

As Zionism evolves from a fear-driven warning that Israel's survival means sacrificial philanthropy to a prideful call for active, hands-on partnership, the new, thriving Israel can be as much of a magnet drawing support from American Jews as was a beleaguered Israel struggling to survive in times gone by.

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