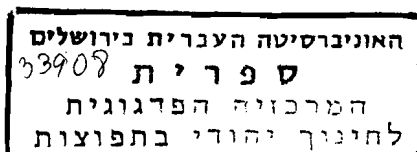


What is Jewish Education in the JCC ?

by
Barry Chazan

1996



6
לא אהמלה
JE 37H2
CHA

JE 1172855

COMJEE II

Task Force on Reinforcing the Effectiveness of Jewish Education in JCCs

Honorary Chair - Morton L. Mandel
Cleveland

Chair - Ann P. Kaufman
Houston

Vice Chair - Michael D. Kaplan
Memphis

Vice Chair - Linda Cornell Weinstein
Rochester

Mark Charendoff, Toronto
Andrew L. Eisenberg, Boston
Jane Gellman, Milwaukee
Dr. Sandra Gold, Palisades
Lionel Goldman, Montreal
Rabbi Irving Greenberg, New York
Lynn Korda Kroll, New York
Ronald L. Leibow, Los Angeles
Laurie Lieberman, Chicago
Judith Lieberman, MetroWest, NJ
Jerome B. Makowsky, Memphis

Philip N. Margolius, Greater Wash. DC
Betty S. Melaver, Savannah
David M. Perlmutter, Toronto
Marvin J. Pertzik, St. Paul
Lester Pollack, New York
Stephen R. Reiner, New York
Barbara Rosen, No. Jersey
Leonard Rubin, Tenaflly
Dr. John Ruskay, New York
Donald Schaffer, Dallas
Jerome Witkovsky, Chicago
Dr. Jonathan Woocher, New York



Staff

Solomon Greenfield
Dr. Barry Chazan
Jay Levenberg
Arthur Rotman
Leonard Rubin

PREFACE

This monograph is intended to help people both within and outside the Jewish Community Center field understand the vision and the practice of Jewish education in JCCs. Its objective is to describe the Jewish Community Center's approach to Jewish education, and to discuss the connection between Jewish education in the JCC and the community at large.

This is not a statistical survey, but rather a study about a vision and ideology for the center movement in the coming years and decades. It is a document born in a dream, tempered by reality, and aimed at even bigger and better dreams and visions.

The document was commissioned by the Task Force on Reinforcing the Effectiveness of Jewish Education in JCCs: COMJEE II which was appointed in 1993 by the then President of the JCC Association Lester Pollack, and was chaired by the current President Ann Kaufman. I would like to thank the members of the COMJEE II Task Force and the staff of the JCC Association for their helpful comments on earlier drafts on this study. The lay leaders and professional staff of JCCA are living exemplars of the message of Jewish education. I would particularly like to thank Sol Greenfield and Len Rubin who guided this project from its inception, and Don Scher who brought it to fruition. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the ongoing support of the Executive Vice President of JCCA, Allan Finklestein; he is a true friend and champion of Jewish education.

Barry Chazan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE: A LATE DECEMBER DAY	7
I. AN ERA OF ACHIEVEMENT	9
A. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	9
B. DEFINING SOME TERMS	9
II. THE JCC APPROACH TO JEWISH EDUCATION	13
A. ASSOCIATIONALISM	13
B. PLURALISM	14
C. THE INTER-GENERATIONAL	15
D. PERSONAL FOCUS	15
E. THE INTERPERSONAL	16
F. THE EXPERIENTIAL	17
G. JEWISH LEARNING	18
H. AMBIANCE	18
I. JEWISH VALUES	19
III. THE SHARED LEGACY	20
IV. CONCLUSION	21
POSTSCRIPT: THE END OF THE DAY	22

PROLOGUE: A LATE DECEMBER DAY

It is a late December day. The parking lot is full. As you enter the building you see an imposing *menorah* in front of you. The lobby is decorated with holiday streamers and the gift shop is doing a brisk business in candles and candelabra. Parents of pre-school children are picking up their youngsters, who clutch jelly-smudged pictures of Jerusalem, the Holy Temple, and Judah Maccabee. There is a constant stream of people dressed in sweats and carrying gym bags headed toward the workout room. Smells of potato pancakes drift from the snack bar. The message board announces tonight events:

1. Aerobics Class 2. Parents Workshop on "The December Dilemma" 3. Lecture on "Solutions to the Middle East Conflict" by a visiting Professor from the Hebrew University 4. Discussion on "How to Age Gracefully" 5. Preparatory Program for Board Seminar in Israel 6. Senior Adults Hanukkah Program

As you walk down the halls, you are surrounded by pictures of holiday observances in Jewish communities around the world. The Jewish education specialist dashes by on her way to a meeting with the Physical Education director to discuss ways of introducing Jewish themes into the world of the gym. There are *mezuzot* and Hebrew signs on the doors of the rooms. The people wandering around are wearing a rainbow assortment of jeans, running outfits, business suits, and Nikes, Reeboks, and Converse All Stars.

You have entered the world of the end-of-the-century suburban North American JCC. It is a new neighborhood of Jewish life. It does not look like the Lower East Side at the turn of the century, Jewish Warsaw between the two world wars or contemporary Tel Aviv. Parts of it resemble the typical modern North American recreational landscape of the 1990's; other parts of it retain a uniquely Jewish flavor.

It is a new kind of Jewish neighborhood. All sorts of Jews pass through its halls: religious, assimilated, observant, liberal, inter-married, searching. Its doors are open to Jews of all persuasions and all inclinations. It is one of the few places where Jews of all kinds meet together.

It is a center of many diverse kinds of Jewish activities. You can find there intensive courses in Jewish study; lecture series on contemporary Israel; pre-school teachers singing Hebrew songs and teaching about Jewish values; staff members studying Jewish history and philosophy; public ceremonies marking Jewish holidays; Jewish artifacts and works of art

The story of Jewish
education in the JCC is
the saga of pumping
Jewish oxygen into that
neighborhood.

prominently displayed. Jewish experiences happen in this neighborhood.

It is also a place where Jews of the 1990s participate in recreational and cultural activities which characterize contemporary life. People work out in spacious health clubs; senior citizens meet together for meals and discussion groups; youngsters meet together in the youth lounge; teens play basketball in huge gyms; people of all ages swim in Olympic-size pools. Teens and adults meet over a cup of coffee or a Coke in the snack bar; parents buy Jewish gifts in the gift shop; families observe *Yom Hashoa* and Israel Independence Day together in the lobby or on the lawn. Jewish people fill this neighborhood.

Jewish oxygen flows in this place. It is breathed by over one million Jews of all ages who enter the doors of JCCs across North America. The story of Jewish education in the JCC is the saga of pumping Jewish oxygen into that neighborhood.

This is the story of that neighborhood.

The last two decades of the twentieth century will be recorded as the era of the blossoming of Jewish education in the Jewish Community Center movement. Early in the 1980's (over a decade before the 1990 CJF National Jewish Population Study) the Jewish Community Center movement focused on the state of American Jewish continuity and identity, and decided to make Jewish education, continuity, and identity the central concerns of the Center world.

Beginning with the Commission on Maximizing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness of JCCs (COMJEE) in 1982 and extending until our day, the Center movement has engaged in a host of activities aimed at strengthening Jewish education: staff development in Jewish studies; Israel seminars; full-time professional Jewish educators on JCC staffs; adult Jewish education; lay leadership development; Jewish programming. Centers still have a long way to go Jewishly; they by no means claim that they have become totally transformed nor that they have transformed all their members. At the same time, the JCC world has clearly aligned itself with the other agencies of Jewish life that are centrally concerned with Jewish education and identity.

A. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

People within and outside the Center field have often been confused by the use of the term "Jewish education" in the JCC context. It is usually assumed that Jewish education is something done in homes, schools or synagogues, but not in Centers. Therefore, there are those who have questioned the very role and legitimacy of JCCs in the sphere of Jewish education. Others have wondered what it means exactly to do Jewish education in JCCs. How do JCCs do Jewish education - and is this different from what happens in day or supplementary schools? Still others have wondered whether the Jewish education done in JCCs could really be serious, and they have suggested that such a Jewish education is destined to be superficial and casual.

It is time to answer these questions.

B. DEFINING SOME TERMS

There are three important terms that are commonly used when talking about Jewish education in JCCs - and all three are usually the source of much confusion: "**Jewish education**"; "**informal Jewish education**", and "**Jewish identity**".

Jewish Education

The phrase “Jewish education” is popularly understood as Jewish learning which takes place in homes, schools or classrooms; and, as such, it is usually seen as the responsibility of families, synagogues, day schools, or supplementary schools (with the possible exception of pre-school programs which are generally regarded as a legitimate aspect of JCCs).

However, there is a much broader notion of “Jewish education” which understands the phrase as referring to “a lifelong process of acquiring Jewish knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. Its goals are to help individuals develop and reinforce positive Jewish identity and

J

ewish education is a

lifelong process of

acquiring Jewish

knowledge, skills,

attitudes and values.

participate intelligently in Jewish life. Jewish education takes place in the home, synagogue, classroom, Center, and wherever efforts are made to awaken and deepen the sense of Jewish belonging, to motivate the pursuit of Jewish knowledge, and to give expression to Jewish beliefs, practices, and values.” (*Maximizing Jewish Educational Effectiveness of Jewish Community Centers*, page 2)

This approach believes that being Jewish is a wonderful, valuable world-view and style of life, and that Jewishness can be affected, shaped, and influenced throughout a person’s life.

According to the narrow definition of “Jewish education” as Jewish learning in schools or synagogues, there is no role for JCCs to do Jewish education. However, the broader definition of “Jewish education” as transmitting values and shaping identity clearly means that JCCs are important partners in the educational process.

Informal Jewish Education

The phrase “informal education” (or “informal Jewish education”) is another popular phrase which is often misunderstood. In popular usage, “informal education” frequently implies worthwhile learning activities which take place outside of schools and classrooms. Some of the places which are regarded as informal Jewish educational settings are: camps, youth groups and youth movements, clubs, and Centers. When used to refer to these kinds of contexts, the term “informal education” suggests a kind of education which is less rigorous than schooling. Therefore, “informal education” is frequently linked with play, whereas

formal education is regarded as true or serious learning.

Over the past thirty years, an alternative notion of “informal education” has emerged, regarding it as a very serious, very important, and very powerful kind of education. According to this alternative notion, “informal education” refers to an educational approach which is aimed at enabling people to participate in a diverse series of experiences which reflect values and behaviors that are considered worthwhile. Such experiences are not limited to any special place or time, but may happen in a variety of settings and venues. They are most effective when they are interactive and allow full participation by the learner. Such education requires skillful planning and foresight, and invites educators and educational skills which are engaging rather than frontal in nature. Such education emphasizes affective and behavioral goals as much as intellectual ones, and extensively uses experiential methods as opposed to purely cognitive methods. Adherents of this approach regard informal Jewish education as a significant route for affecting Jewish identity and strengthening Jewish continuity.

Consequently, rather than regarding Centers, camps, and youth groups as beyond the educational pale - or as extra curricular and of lesser importance - these informal frameworks should be seen as valuable partners in the overall effort to enhance Jewish identity. The broader definition of “informal Jewish education” has been one of the underlying justifications in the past two decades for the emergence of the JCC as a Jewish educational force.

Informal Jewish
education is a significant
route for affecting Jewish
identity and strengthening
Jewish continuity.

Jewish Identity

The origins of the term “Jewish identity” are in the general field of psychology where identity has emerged as an important twentieth century psychological concept. In Jewish life, “Jewish identity” has come to have two very different and even contradictory meanings. The popular usage and meaning of the term refers to the extent to which Jews are linked with and supportive of the Jewish people (in more scientific language, this term is actually about “identification”). According to this usage, identity is about support for the Jewish people and

contribution to its struggle to survive. Most of the population studies measure Jewish identity as attachment to the Jewish people, and they lament its weakening in contemporary life.

The second, more scientific notion of identity, refers to the nature and extent to which Jewishness affects and shapes a person's inherent being. According to this notion, identity is about the role Jewishness plays in the life of individual Jews. This notion of Jewish identity focuses on psychological and educational dimensions of affecting individual growth, and on making Jewishness more of a force.

These two notions are clearly connected; however, they are not the same. The first is a communal slogan which has become a banner and flag for the Jewish people. The second is an educational term which should be a credo and cornerstone for educators and communal workers. Both notions suggest that JCCs can play an important role in the development of identity. Under the right conditions, JCCs can strengthen individual identity, and in so doing can affect the communal and collective consciousness of our people as a whole.

Now that we have discussed some basic terms, we can proceed to our major question: What is Jewish education in JCCs? What are those qualities inherent in the very nature of JCCs which enable them to be potentially powerful agents of education for Jewish continuity and identity? In this section, we shall look at nine qualities of JCCs which make them positive Jewish educational forces. Each of these qualities are basic aspects of the structures of JCCs. At the same time, each of these qualities suggest educational principles and values which, when taken together, constitute a JCC philosophy of Jewish education.

A. ASSOCIATIONALISM

One of the prominent dimensions of "being Jewish" is the **sense of belonging** which is engendered by being with other Jews; social scientists have denoted this quality as "associationalism" or "linkage". According to this conception, Jewishness includes a sense of being part of a family and a group of like-minded people, and a feeling of oneness and unity with others who are regarded as kin.

Jewish Community Centers have proven themselves to be important arenas for "associationalism". People come to centers for a diversity of reasons: to play basketball; to go to a concert; to participate in a meeting; to bring a child to camp; to spend time with other Jews of similar ages or interests for personal support and comradeship; to study Jewish subjects; to engage in diverse forms of education which are not necessarily Jewish. In almost all cases, even if the activity itself is not *per se* "Jewish," people choose to engage in that activity at the Jewish Center. For most of those who come to JCCs, the very act of coming to a Jewish Community Center - for whatever activity and for whatever reason - assumes important Jewish significance for them. The participation with other Jews often creates a sense of connection and unity that reflects a community or a *kehilla*. Generations of JCC members have looked back fondly on meetings, games, and time spent at the "J" or the "Y" as an experience of participation in a comfortable community of fellow Jews.

Jews come to Centers voluntarily because they want themselves and their children to spend time with and associate with other Jews. They want to participate in a host of activities - recreational, cultural, educational, social - with other Jews. They want to be in a Jewish setting because they somehow feel that Jewishness matters and, therefore, want to do things with other Jews. Centers provide a comfortable setting for Jews to be together.

Associationalism is a kind of Judaism that has been often criticized in our times as being without content and meaning. The JCC approach to Jewish education does not regard

associationalism as the only goal of JCCs, but it does believe that a sense of Jewish associationalism is one important dimension of positive identity. Centers believe that the existence of a framework in which Jews feel comfortable - and to which they would like to send their children - is a remarkable starting point and building block in the development of a comprehensive Jewish identity. Consequently, the Center movement proudly and aggressively affirms the central role of associationalism in its Jewish educational philosophy.

B. PLURALISM

The Jewish people at the end of the twentieth century is characterized by its pluralistic nature. The Jewish confrontation with the modern world has led to many diverse forms and

expressions of Jewish life, and (while each ideology may regard itself as definitive) there is no one ideology which can claim hegemony over all Jews. Whether we are pleased with this state or not, Jews need to learn to live with each other. The JCC philosophy holds that Jewish pluralism is both a reality and a value of contemporary Jewish life. This reality demands a tolerance of diverse perspectives and respect for different world-views. The nature of our Jewish life requires us to treat diverse perspectives with respect and dignity.

The JCC believes that

Jewish peoplehood

is a basic Jewish value.

The JCC believes that Jewish peoplehood (*Klal Yisrael*) is a basic Jewish value. Jewish peoplehood refers to a sense of connection with and pride in the Jewish people, as well as the performance of deeds which support Jews throughout the world. Jewish peoplehood encompasses a feeling of alignment with the Jewish people - past, present and future. Consequently, the Center movement is committed to being a comfortable and receptive meeting ground for a broad panorama of Jews and Jewish perspectives. JCCs are places for all Jews; their doors are open to Jews of all persuasions and they were created to meet the needs of all Jews. In that sense the JCC might well be regarded as a contemporary "Jewish neighborhood." There are not separate JCCs for Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Secular, Zionist, Non-Zionist Jews. There is one JCC which was created to serve all Jews. Indeed, the JCC is one of the few places in the community where Jews of different beliefs can meet together and learn about each other by being with each other. It is a place which focuses on what Jews have in common while respecting what differs between them.

C. INTER-GENERATIONAL

The inter-generational Jewish family has throughout the ages been one of the most important forces of Jewish continuity. In the inter-generational family, young and old spend time together within the context of Jewish settings and experiences. The young learn experientially from being with and doing things with their elders, and the elders are sustained and enriched by the young. While Jewish family life has been severely ruptured in recent decades, there continues to be great affirmation of the centrality of the intergenerational family in shaping identity.

The JCC is an inter-generational agency. JCCs serve people from cradle to grave, from early childhood to senior adults. Its halls are inhabited by infants, youngsters, teens, young adults, adults, the aged. The ethos of the community center reflects the belief that being Jewish is something for the entire family and that Jewish education is not only for school-aged children. At the heart of the JCC is the commitment to serve the diverse needs of the entire family and of all generations of Jews.

The JCC philosophy affirms that Jewish education is a life-long process aimed at people of all ages. Human beings develop and change throughout their lives; and they are not definitively shaped in their early years. Hence, the Jewish educational effort is not just for children, but should be concerned with people of all ages. Consequently, the JCC approach to Jewish education attempts to create a truly inter-generational agency whose halls echo the multi-age voices of the Jewish people. The unique nature of the JCC - both its structure and staff - enables it to educate many different age groups at the same time.

JCCs serve people

from cradle to grave, from

early childhood to senior

adults. Its halls are

inhabited by infants,

youngsters, teens, young

adults, adults, the aged...

D. PERSONAL FOCUS

The JCC is an agency which has been shaped over the decades by the professions of social work and education, and particularly by their commitment to the needs, dignity, and value of the individual. JCCs are rooted in meeting the needs and desires of people. Caring for people, helping them, and relating to them in their uniqueness and individuality is at the

heart of JCCs. The business of JCCs is people, and the life of the Center is very much defined by this belief in, and commitment to people as people.

Consequently, the JCC approach to Jewish education says that the educative process must relate to each person as a person. The JCC welcomes all Jews wherever and whoever they are, and does not establish barriers, prerequisites or conditions. The JCC is committed to beginning where the client "is at" and to helping him or her move at his or her own pace. Each and every Jew is welcome in the JCC.

E. THE INTERPERSONAL

The worlds of social work and education also emphasize the centrality of interpersonal relations in helping people. These professions believe that warm relationships between people can improve individual and collective life. The life of Jewish Community Centers is very much shaped by the interaction of people with each other; and the work of Centers very much happens through the interaction of people. This interaction expresses itself prominently in three areas: the relations between the executive leadership, staff, and the lay board; relationships between staff and clients; relationships between staff and staff.

Indeed, contemporary Jewish life is largely defined by the voluntaristic and co-operative principles. Jewish institutions are created and owned by groups of Jews who establish such agencies to meet needs they have or affirm principles they hold. JCCs are created and "owned" by the participants. The members and their representatives have significant influence in shaping the vision and practice of the agency, and JCCs ascribe great importance to members' control over their own lives. Centers are rooted in the individual's own desire and motivation for a Jewish context. Consequently, in the JCC approach to Jewish education the educative process lies in the interaction between people, with the focus on interrelating rather than on "telling" and "transmitting" what to do. It takes advantage of people coming together for mutual interests, needs, and support and utilizes these groups to facilitate Jewish concerns.

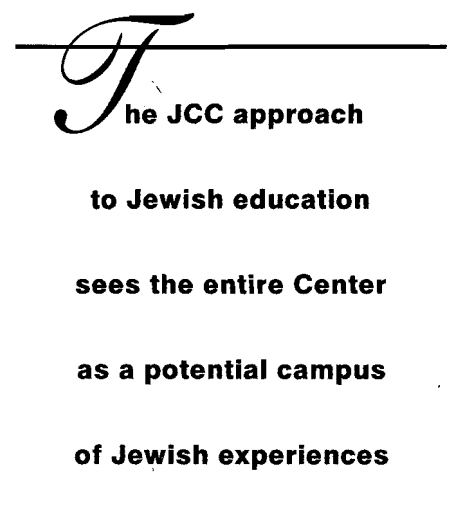
One of the most powerful ways of affecting the Jewishness of a person is by proximity to Jewish professionals who are positive Jewish role models i.e. who express positive feelings and understanding of their Jewishness. Such role models are important factors in influencing Jewish identity and continuity, and accessibility to them can be critical to identity development. Centers are arenas and settings in which Jews can meet and be influenced by positive Jewish role models.

F. THE EXPERIENTIAL

The experiential approach to education suggests that there are certain ideas, attitudes, and behaviors that are best learned through actually undergoing an event personally rather than talking about it abstractly. This type of education focuses on enabling individuals to actually participate in certain worthwhile experiences. It is important to provide contexts and settings in which both Jews who know much and those who know little can comfortably participate in Jewish experiences, some of which they may never encounter elsewhere.

Contemporary Jewish life has been significantly weakened by the limited accessibility to primary Jewish experiences, and one of the great educational missions of the coming decades is to renew the accessibility to such moments. JCCs are settings in which Jews can learn about Jewishness by actually undergoing certain basic cultural, ritual, national and associational Jewish experiences. Consequently, Centers seek to maximize the opportunities for Jews of all ages to participate in such moments by offering a broad array of such experiences. The JCC approach to Jewish education encourages a wide range of worthwhile Jewish experiences which include: Jewish holidays, rituals, cultural events, *Yom Hashoa*, Jewish Book Month, Israel Independence day, adult study programs. It hopes to either introduce its members to new Jewish experiences (*havdalah*, *kashrut*, holiday observance,) which they might not otherwise ever see, or to reinforce experiences that have been learned elsewhere.

These Jewish educational experiences are not limited to specific places e.g., classrooms. The JCC philosophy suggests that Jewish education takes place throughout the agency - in the lobby, halls, activity rooms, pre-school, camp, executive's office, gym, gift shop, snack bar. Some of these arenas, such as the camp and the pre-school are particularly powerful settings for experiential education. The non-classroom nature of the JCC allows the entire Center to be a potential campus of Jewish education.



G. COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE JEWISH LEARNING

The Jewish way of life has traditionally been connected with a great literary civilization of ideas, texts, and bodies of knowledge, and the study of these texts and ideas has been a central Jewish value. JCCs see themselves linked to that tradition. While JCCs are not schools whose primary function is often regarded as the transmission of that literary heritage, Centers certainly do regard study and learning as part of their mission.

Hence, the JCC approach to Jewish education aims to develop a rich network of study opportunities for staff, board, adults and children. Its study dimensions are intended to be cooperative with the other communal agencies: synagogues, schools, and bureaus of Jewish education. While study programs in JCCs are not “required” and do not usually involve

examinations and grades, they do attempt to reflect the highest standards of intellectual rigor and accuracy concerning Jewish history, culture, and tradition.

enters offer

enormous possibilities for

creating Jewish ambiance

H. AMBIANCE

Education is not only defined by what we say; it is greatly influenced by the settings and contexts in which teaching takes place. Thus, the ambiance of a learning situation (or what is sometimes denoted as “the hidden curriculum”) can

sometimes be as influential and educational (or mis-educative) as the contents being transmitted. Centers are multi-dimensional physical settings which offer enormous possibilities for creating Jewish ambiance. The modern JCC is usually a large plant which reflects contemporary standards of aesthetics and architecture. Centers have spacious lobbies, libraries, auditoriums, halls, health and recreation facilities, all of which offer possibilities for introducing Jewish decor, atmosphere, symbols and ritual objects.

The Center approach to Jewish education attempts to maximize the environmental and aesthetic dimensions of the physical plant to create a Jewish ambiance. This includes a broad array of elements: Jewish art on the walls; Jewish music in the lobby and hallways; *mezuzot* on all doorways; Hebrew words on walls; Jewish calendar in the lobby; Jewish communal events in the lobby; Jewish content videos; a *tzedakah* box in public area; Jewish Discovery Places; sale of *challot* on Friday mornings; building of a *sukkah* on the JCC’s lawn. The breadth of the Center offers numerous possibilities for introducing Jewish holidays, life cycle, and cultural motifs into the Center environs.

I. JEWISH VALUES

There is no education without a vision of some overriding values or ideals that are regarded as worthwhile. Education is not simply about experiences; it is also rooted in the encouragement of certain experiences, values and ideals which are regarded as worthwhile. Similarly, there is no Judaism without a set of basic beliefs and contents. Judaism is not simply a feeling; it is a specific belief system and a practice.

Consequently, Jewish education in JCCs encompasses commitments to some basic Jewish values and beliefs. In that sense, JCCs are not valueless agencies; they reflect - and are committed to - a body of basic Jewish and human values. While it is true that centers are not like synagogues with specific religious ideologies or codes of practice, or like schools with rigidly defined curricula, there are basic Jewish values which underly everything the Center does, including:

1. *Klal Yisrael*

The Center Movement is committed to the unity and overall survival of the Jewish people

2. *Hesed, Tzedakah, Gemilut Hasadim*

The Center Movement is committed to the implementation and perpetuation of the great ethical values of Jewish tradition: grace (*hesed*); decency to others (*tzedakah*); acts of loving kindness (*gemilut hasadim*)

3. Jewish Life and Practice

The Center Movement is committed to the presentation and perpetuation of rituals and practices which have been central to Judaism and Jewish tradition throughout the ages, especially to the values of Shabbat, *hagim* (Jewish holidays) and Jewish life cycle.

4. Israel

The Center Movement is committed to the ongoing survival and enrichment of the contemporary State of Israel and to a personal connection with it.

The Center Movement's ideology is broad and inclusive rather than specific and exclusive; Centers do not legislate one specific way of Jewish life. However, JCCs are firmly rooted in ideological cornerstones and they are committed to the perpetuation of distinctive Jewish lifestyles and values. Underlying the JCC ethos is the belief that there are many expressions of Jewishness today, and Centers should help their members engage in and upgrade an authentic Jewish lifestyle.

T here are basic
Jewish values which
underly everything the
Center does



THE SHARED LEGACY

The JCC philosophy of Jewish education is not unique to Centers alone; many or all of its basic principles are shared by schools, synagogues, and bureaus of Jewish education throughout North America. Ideally, Centers, synagogues, and schools are brothers and sisters who are committed to the promulgation of Jewish values and continuity, while reaching out to and touching diverse populations. Indeed, JCCs believe that it is their Jewish responsibility and obligation to participate with the entire Jewish community in the holy mission of Jewish education.

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, we find a North American Jewish community with a diversity of needs and approaches, and a panorama of agencies - synagogues, schools, Centers and others - which has been established to meet those needs. Some of the functions of these various agencies may overlap, but many do not. Each of these agencies has unique functions and services which need not contradict those of the others. Each has unique roles; each has contributions; each reaches out to populations of Jews that should be touched.

None has exclusivity on Jewish education; and none should be disqualified from playing a role in the grander mission of Jewish education. It is entirely reasonable - indeed, even desirable - for all of these agencies to share some common principles about education and Jewishness, and to see themselves as involved in a common goal.

It has been a good decade for Jewish education in the JCC Movement, and the next decade promises to be even better. The JCC Movement has emerged as an important partner in the great challenge of the Jewish education and continuity of North American Jewry. It has firmly committed itself to this cause, it has developed professional training programs for the Judaic growth of staff and board; it has developed new Jewish programming and curricular materials for use in Centers; it has harnessed Israel as a central resource in this venture; and it has begun to develop ideological guidelines for its future.

The work is not done. Indeed, it has only begun. The Center Movement has clearly committed itself to Jewish education, but now it must develop the ongoing and comprehensive infrastructure, practice, and network of Jewish education as an inherent part of every Center in North America. The Center Movement realizes the scope of the challenge and would like to be a helpful and cooperative partner with all of those who "labor in the vineyards of the Lord" to advance Jewish education, contribute to Jewish continuity and insure Jewish survival.

POSTSCRIPT: THE END OF THE DAY

It's time to leave the JCC. The last few cars are pulling away from the parking lot. Another busy day has ended and the well-used and weary Center is readying itself for a good night's sleep. Many Jewish people have come through its doors; they have come voluntarily and for a diversity of activities. Most have not come for theological or ritual reasons, but they have chosen to come to a Jewish Center. There is something about driving up to, or bringing one's young child to a Jewish Center which has motivated them, even if the reason is unclear and vague. The voluntary choice of so many Jews to come to JCCs affords the Center the possibility of being an exciting arena of Jewish experience. As the JCC prepares to sleep, it reminisces about places and institutions that have been its forefathers and foremothers: the *kehilla* of Warsaw; the synagogue Center of North Africa; the Hebraica of Latin America. It dreams about what it might yet become. It reflects on the complicated path it has followed in the twentieth century, starting out as a settlement house in the early part of the century, growing into a broad network of sprawling suburban recreational agencies in the seventies and eighties, and emerging as a center of Jewish experience and activity in the 1990's. As it begins to settle in for the night, this tired giant wonders what yet lays ahead Jewishly. One thing is clear. This place has inextricably tied itself to the dream of Jewish continuity for the community and to the vision of Jewish identity for the individual.

Sleep well, my Center; for the day is short and the workers are tired, and the Master of the House awaits your efforts with great pleasure and expectation.