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The Rabbi As Visionary

And Initiator of Educational

Change in the Synagogue

by Heidi Barron

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995.

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Digest

This thesis examines the rabbi's role in Jewish education in the context of the synagogue of the United States. Our findings suggest that it is vital that rabbis exercise strong leadership in this area, in particular, acting as a visionary and initiator of educational change in the synagogue.

For centuries, the synagogue, the family and the community shared responsibility for an individual's Jewish learning. Jewish life revolved around the observance of holidays and life cycle events celebrated in both the home and the synagogue. However, the synagogue remained the center of formal Jewish learning.

Today, we are faced with a crisis in Jewish education. Although American Jewry has reached the highest levels of secular education, far too many remain Jewishly illiterate. With such lack of knowledge comes disinterest in Judaism and diminishing affiliation with the synagogue.

The voluntary nature of religious involvement in the United States today is manifested by more limited commitment to Jewish education and practice. The supplemental school model, a viable construct when used to augment the informal Jewish education received in the home and community, is no longer functioning adequately. The synagogue has often failed to address the changing dynamics of the Jewish community particularly with

regard to the educational needs of its membership.

In order to reverse this trend toward Jewish illiteracy, communities must invest in Jewish education. Synagogues must again address learning as a priority. Rabbis are the leaders who can make this a reality by committing to a vision of a compelling, comprehensive life long Jewish education for all and acting as the initiator of this vision. The rabbi together with all of the stakeholders: the educator, cantor, administrator, support staff, parents, and teachers, must develop a plan for educational change in the synagogue and work so that all feel compelled by the vision and support the change. Finally, the changes must be instituted, formally evaluated and appropriately adapted to produce the best results.

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Introduction

Religious education has always been of primary importance in the Jewish community. We are reminded of this daily through prayer and deed. When we recite the words of the **V'ahavta**, we pray that we can transmit a comprehensive Jewish education to future generations, that we and our children will remain ever mindful of our Jewish heritage.

> You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your might. Set these words that I command you this day upon your heart. Teach them to your children. Speak of them in your home and on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand. Let them be a symbol before your eyes. Inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Here, we learn that we and our children are to engage in Jewish learning inside and outside of our homes and throughout the day. Judaism must be a living symbol that we wear upon our body, that we encounter during all of our waking time. Finally, we are taught that our homes must be visibly Jewish.

Serious, lifelong Jewish living and education was the norm for centuries when Jews lived in isolated communities. Jewish life revolved around the celebration of holidays, Shabbat, and community simchas.

People were guided by formal and informal Jewish education in the synagogue or Bet Midrash, as well as the home and community.

As we look at the reality of Reform Jewish education in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century, we see a vastly different picture from the situation of the past. Today, supplemental schools, after school or Sunday school programs, have become the norm for formal Jewish education. This model of schooling was designed to augment the learning in which Jews engaged in the home and by attending services in the synagogue. Although an adequate model if used as it was intended, as a supplement, it is not, at present, adequately serving the Reform Jewish community of the United States.

The Jewish Education Society of North America (JESNA), in its study A Time To Act, states that Jewish education is in crisis. The commission identifies a series of problems, among them: sporadic attendance, competing demands for funds and attention, deficiencies in content, and inadequate community support.[1] Statistics cited in A Time To Act demonstrate that the number of participating students declines after each life cycle event, often reflecting a limited commitment by parents to ongoing Jewish study for their

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[1] Commission on Jewish Education in North America, A Time To Act (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1991) 15f.

children or themselves.[2] These results are echoed by the National Association of Temple Educators (NATE) in its study entitled Challenges and Solutions.[3]

Since one goal of the Reform synagogue is to bring people into and keep them involved with Judaism throughout their lifetime, this problem of limited commitment to lifelong Jewish education must be addressed. If, in fact, Reform Judaism is based upon the principle of informed choice, and if we accept the premise that individuals move through various stages of growth and development throughout their lives, then the synagogue must reformulate the model it uses for serving its constituency.

In our society, where participation in Jewish life involves conscious choice, Jewish education must be both formative and informative, engaging larger numbers of Jews and giving them the resources to answer their questions and lead a Jewish life. It is incumbent upon the synagogue to formulate an agenda which both acknowledges and fulfills the various needs not only of its members, but also of the unaffiliated.

In order to accomplish such a goal, synagogues must be led by rabbis

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[2] Commission on Jewish Education in North America 37f.

[3] National Association of Temple Educators, Challenges and Solutions (National Association of Temple Educators, 1991).

who can be visionaries and initiators of educational change. The rabbi must be able to redefine the educational mission of the synagogue to accommodate its diverse population in light of modern circumstances. Because the synagogue is both a spiritual community and an organization responding to the forces and demands that shape any enterprise, the rabbi as an initiator of change must balance those pressures which shape its spiritual and secular elements. Nanus states that, "human behavior in organizations is very much shaped by a shared vision of a better tomorrow. Developing and promulgating such a vision is the highest calling and truest purpose of leadership."[4] Aside from being a visionary, a rabbi should ideally be an initiator because "...initiators have clear, decisive long range policies and goals that transcend but include implementation of current innovations."[5]

The following chapters will examine the synagogue as traditional center of Jewish education, the current state of Jewish education in the United States, the role of the rabbi as professional leader of the synagogue, the rabbi as visionary and initiator of educational change, and the

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[4] Burt Nanus, Visionary Leadership (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992) 19.

[5] Gene Hall et al, Educational Leadership "Effects of Three Principle Styles on School Improvement" (February, 1984) 23.

implementation of such change. Research from both secular and religious settings will be used to better understand the leadership styles which a rabbi might ideally use to promote comprehensive Jewish education for all members of the congregation and local Jewish community.

Chapter 1

The Synagogue As the Center of Jewish Learning

Throughout the centuries, the synagogue, a name deriving from the Greek word "sunagoge" meaning assembly, has served as a house of prayer and instruction, and as an institution devoted to the needs of the Jewish community. From its inception, the synagogue has also functioned as the center of Jewish education, evolving to fit the educational demands of the Jewish community. "...[I]t has always been the dynamo from which the Jewish people has drawn its power...Judaism would be unthinkable without the synagogue..."[6]

Today, there are other important organizations within the Jewish community of the United States: philanthropic organizations, organizations devoted to helping Israel, Jewish community centers, and Jewish Federations. However, the synagogue should remain the center of Jewish learning and Jewish life. Gutmann states, "No one, I believe, will argue that the synagogue has been anything but the central institution of Judaism for the

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[6] Uri Kaploun, The Synagogue (Jerusalem, Israel: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., 1973) introduction.

last 2000 years..."[7] According to Levine, "The emergence of the synagogue constitutes one of the most revolutionary developments in the history of ancient Judaism...with prayer and study replacing sacrifice as the means of serving God."[8] Because a synagogue could be established anywhere in the world, it made Judaism viable wherever Jews moved.

There are many conflicting opinions and theories regarding the origin of the synagogue as a Jewish institution. According to Gutmann, "[m]ost scholars have advocated a Babylonian origin for the synagogue - a theory first propounded by the sixteenth century Italian humanist Carlo Sigonio."[9] This argument is supported by the fact that the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed and thus, performing the proper sacrifices there was impossible. This left a religious void that could be filled through the synagogue. G.F. Moore states, "...it may be reasonably surmised that its antecedents [exist] in spontaneous gatherings of Jews in Babylonia and other lands of their exile on the sabbaths and at the time of the old seasonal feasts

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[7] Joseph Gutmann, Ancient Synagogues: The State of Research (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981) ix.

[8] Lee Levine ed., Ancient Synagogues Revealed (Jerusalem, Israel: Academic Press, 1981) 1.

[9] Harry Orlinsky, ed., The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archeology and Architecture (New York, NY: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1975) 72.

or on fast days..."[10]

Some scholars suggest that the synagogue developed immediately after the first Jewish exile from the land of Israel, during the second Hebrew commonwealth lasting from approximately 515 B.C.E. until the destruction of the second Temple in 70 C.E. It is indeed possible that the synagogue developed into one of the centers of Jewish life during this time. Katz and Schoen write that by the fifth century B.C.E., the synagogue leadership possessed great local influence, having "...great authority, not only over the functioning of the local synagogue center itself, but also over the social welfare and even military affairs of the community."[11] The leaders of the local synagogue were responsible for arranging for the proper sacrifices and tithes from the community to be sent to support the Temple in Jerusalem.[12] These scholars assert that during this period of the second commonwealth, the synagogue functioned as the local center of prayer, study and Jewish assembly.

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[10] Orlinsky 18.

[11] Irving Katz and Myron Schoen, Successful Synagogue Administration: A Practical Guide For Synagogue Leaders (New York, NY: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1977) 4.

[12] Katz and Schoen 3.

Another school of thought posits that the synagogue did not develop as an institution until the third or second century B.C.E., during the early Hellenistic period.[13] Gutmann understands the creation of the synagogue as a Pharisaic reaction to the Hasmonean revolution in Judea. He writes, "The synagogue, one of the unique Pharisaic institutions, became an important meeting place where, through prayers and ceremonial practices, the individual Jew could affirm his loyalty to the two-fold Pharisaic law [oral and written], with the guarantee that its observance would bring about salvation of his soul and resurrection."[14] According to Goldman, it also became an institution of universal public learning.[15] There is evidence that by the second century before the common era, Jewish education was frequently taking place in the synagogue. After witnessing the Macabean revolt against the Hellenization of the Jewish people, Jewish education became vital to the Pharisees who represented the popular masses. For the Pharisees, the study of Torah became primary and the synagogue seemed the

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[13] Orlinsky 74.

[14] Gutmann 4.

[15] Israel Goldman, Lifelong Learning Among Jews: Adult Education in Judaism From Biblical Times to the Twentieth Century (New York, NY: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1975) 12.

appropriate venue for such an undertaking as it combined prayer and formal Jewish study.[16]

Finally, some scholars believe that the synagogue did not exist as a significant institution until the middle of the first century. Actual physical or written evidence of this fact, as recorded in the writings of Josephus and the New Testament, exists from this period onward.[17] It is clear that "[w]hen the Temple was destroyed in 70 [C.E.], the synagogue emerged fully triumphant and took the place of the Temple as the official religious institution of Pharisaic-Rabbinic Judaism."[18]

The synagogue now became the center of Jewish life for all Jews. It continued developing into the principal place where Jews prayed and studied.[19] Kaploun states that according to the archeological evidence found from the first century, the synagogue was a well established institution by this point in time. "It is the unrivalled hub of the social and religious life of each community."[20] The synagogue was also the center of Jewish

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[16] Goldman 12.

[17] Gutmann 3.

[18] Orlinsky 75, 76.

[19] Katz and Schoen 4.

[20] Kaploun 3.

learning. Torah was publicly read and studied. According to Levine, study might take one of a number of forms: "schools for children, reading and expounding scriptures at prayer services, regular study sessions for adults generally, or for local sages."[21]

By the year 200 C.E., Judah HaNasi had compiled and edited the Mishnah. It was then that Jewish scholars in the Galilee and Babylonia began the serious study of this work. It is their commentary on the Mishnah that combines with it to form the Talmud. We can readily see how important learning was for the Jews of this time by looking at the words they wrote as recorded in the Talmud.

> ---Sanhedrin 17 - It is prohibited to live in a city in which there is no teacher of children.
>
> ---Shabbat 119b - Schooling was not to be interrupted, even for the rebuilding of the Temple.
>
> ---Avodah Zarah 119b - Each day God spends several hours studying and instructing school children.
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> ---Peah 1 - The study of Torah outweighs all other personal deeds of piety because knowledge leads to the practice of righteous acts.[22]

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[21] Levine 3.

[22] Alvin Schiff, Contemporary Jewish Education (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House Books, 1988) 3.

Since its creation, the synagogue housed the scholars of the local community. During this time from the first through the fifth century in Babylonia, synagogues offered formal Jewish education to males of all ages in the form of the Bet Sefer for boys and the Bet Talmud for men.[23] By the time of the Middle Ages, formal Jewish study became part of the synagogue ritual in that such learning immediately followed the morning and evening minyan.[24]

During the Middle Ages, Jewish life revolved entirely around the synagogue. Jewish law allowed for members of the community to be compelled to contribute money in order to build a synagogue.[25] The synagogue was a democratic institution in many ways. In the Jewish community, separate classes did not exist with regard to wealth, social position or heredity. There was one standard by which prestige was measured by Jews - knowledge. The scholar was the most valued person in the population.[26]

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[23] Kaploun 9.

[24] Kaploun 9.

[25] Kaploun 13.

[26] Katz and Schoen 6.

Traditional Jewish study was obviously extremely important at this time. In small communities, the synagogue was the only place to receive a formal Jewish education. The goal of the synagogue was to make the individual Jewishly literate in traditional text and liturgy. "[A]mong Ashkenazic Jews the synagogue is often called a shul, a Yiddish word for school..."[27]

As a result of the Jewish emancipation which granted civil rights to the Jews of France and Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the role of Judaism and the synagogue changed for many. Jewish life became increasingly secular based on the new "rational" thinking of the time. Since Jews were now full citizens, affiliation with the synagogue became voluntary.[28] Secular education became open to Jews during this period as well. "The modern synagogue...had to walk a tightrope between change toward assimilation and retention of tradition..."[29]

In the United States, "[t]he whole 'kehilla' idea collapsed in the

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[27] Martin Cohen, Encyclopedia of Religion "Synagogue: History and Tradition" 212.

[28] Cohen 213.

[29] Cohen 213.

individualistic air of the nineteenth century...American Jewry became an organized anarchy."[30] Due to the voluntary nature of religious life in the United States, the synagogue now represented only its members rather than all of the Jews of the community. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the synagogue ceased to be the center of the Jewish community as it was historically understood. "Over a period of several decades, the synagogue gave up almost all its traditional functions with the exception of conducting worship services and educating of young children."[31]

Today, the synagogue is struggling for meaning in a modern, liberal world. Great numbers of Jews in the United States are currently unaffiliated with any synagogue. Abbell states that "[b]efore the synagogue can make a real contribution to American spiritual life it must develop greater strength through a higher standard of leadership."[32] Abbell stresses that the goal of the synagogue must be to improve Jewish education and religious life if it is to survive as a healthy organization.

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[30] Katz and Schoen 9.

[31] Katz and Schoen 9.

[32] Milton Berger et al, Roads to Jewish Survival (New York, NY: Block Publishing Company, 1967) 148.

Perhaps equally important is the economic viability of the synagogue. The tension between the synagogue as a Jewish spiritual and educational center and as a corporate entity is significant. Reality demands that the synagogue keep a balanced budget, collect fees and raise funds in order to maintain its building, pay its employees and provide the necessary programs. "The central role which the synagogue is destined to play in the continuing emergence of Jewish life demands that its security be ensured..."[33]

There is a growing perception that the cost of Jewish communal involvement is excluding poorer Jews from full participation in Judaism. According to the 1990 Council of Jewish Federations National Population Survey, there are about 130,000 Jewish households with incomes under $20,000 in the United States.[34] Although significant, this number of households still represents a minority of the total Jewish community. Evidence suggests that per capita, Jews have the highest median household income in the United States. Yet many in this middle to upper middle class

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[33] Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Forming Your Congregation's Future Planning Committee (New York, NY: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1974) 11.

[34] Barry Kosmin, Reform Judaism "How Affordable is Jewish Living - Two Views" (Spring, 1994) 46.

level believe that Jewish communal membership is too expensive to afford. The 1990 Population Survey found that in families earning less than $40,000 a year, the synagogue affiliation rate was only 35%. In households with incomes over $80,000, synagogue membership was found to be 49%.[35]

According to Kosmin, part of the problem is in the belief that the price of synagogue membership is too costly and not a necessary expense. Many Jews are under the impression that membership represents a luxury or is just an option for them. "The Jewish public has to be convinced that the intangible psychic and spiritual benefits that result from affiliation are worth the material costs involved. Moreover, American Jews must be convinced to abandon their consumerist outlook in favor of a citizenship approach that stresses obligation and responsibility to other Jews."[36]

It is vital for synagogues to recruit Jews of every age and status, singles, married, single parents, etc. for membership. There should be different fee categories to encourage all Jews to maintain a membership throughout their adult lives. At present, many synagogues have begun to offer memberships to young Jews (under 30) who have just graduated from

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[35] Kosmin 46.

[36] Kosmin 50.

college at reduced expense. This is an example of a positive way to bring in Jews who might not yet be able to pay the full fee and would otherwise not be able to join. A sliding scale or fair share style dues system allows individuals and families of all means to support the Jewish community and feel fully a part of it.

In order to better understand the present and future state of the synagogue in the United States, it is necessary to study its historical development. As this chapter demonstrates, the synagogue has been the center of Jewish life and learning for centuries. It is only in recent years that synagogue and Jewish communal affiliation has been an option, thus weakening the power and influence of the institution.

It is the task of Jewish leaders to return the synagogue to the central role it has played in the lives of Jews. Living in late twentieth century North America, we have discovered many strengths and weaknesses in our community which can both enable and inhibit our growth and survival. Now we need strong leadership, both at the volunteer and professional level to confront our challenges as a people. We must diligently work together to increase commitment to a vibrant Jewish tomorrow.

As the following chapter will demonstrate, the state of Jewish

education in the United States is one of the greatest problems facing our community. Many Jews in this country have little or no formal Jewish education, nor do they feel a strong commitment in this area for themselves or their children. Not only is this a problem for our contemporary Jewish community, but even more of an issue for future generations. Rabbis, as professional Jewish leaders, must confront this situation and create ways to change it. Just as the centrality of Jewish education in our history has enabled our religion to thrive, so must it continue to be our most serious endeavor, now and in the future.

Chapter 2

The State of Jewish Education in the United States

Education has been central to Judaism throughout its history. As Jews began to move to communities in Colonial America in greater numbers, they were faced with the need to create all of the Jewish institutions necessary for their religious, educational and cultural survival. These new citizens, trying to continue their traditions in the United States, concerned themselves with the important task of finding ways to provide their children with a proper Jewish education appropriate to their new surroundings.

During this time, the responsibility for Jewish education rested on both the parents and the religious institutions. Jewish children received their formal schooling in a variety of ways including private hederim, tutors, and community Talmudai Torah.[37] The Heder and the Yeshiva or Talmud Torah, the traditional modes of formal Jewish education, enhanced the child's knowledge of Judaism and traditional Jewish texts. The goals of these institutions were to provide the student with a formal Jewish education. As Aharon Kessler writes, "The Heder was to train the child for Jewish literacy so he could participate in his society. Torah was the heart of the

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[37] Schiff 78.

curriculum...The Heder was not intended to make the child Jewish - this was done by the home and the community."[38] In fact, much of the child's education was informal and centered around the home environment and the Jewish community of which they were a part. It was the obligation of the family and neighborhood to make the child Jewish by giving him or her a sense of Jewish community.

The first supplemental Sunday School program in America was pioneered by Rebecca Gratz of Philadelphia in 1838. This supplemental model was adapted from its Christian counterpart. Supplemental schools allowed Jewish children to more fully integrate into life in the United States by attending public school, while receiving some formal Jewish schooling that sought to augment the informal learning the child gained from participation in Jewish family and community life. Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the founder of the Reform Movement in the United States, was a strong supporter of this system. As a liberal, American Reform Rabbi, he believed in the importance of full participation in the secular society and of adapting Judaism to fit within such a modern context. As such, he favored a secular,

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[38] Aharon Kessler, Challenges and Confrontations in Jewish Education (Pittsburgh, PA: School of Advanced Jewish Studies, 1979) 4-5.

public school education and a synagogue based Sabbath school.[39]

As Jewish immigration to the United States rose considerably following 1880, many new synagogues formed. As a result of this sudden increase, supplemental schools were created in larger numbers. Each school was organized individually through its synagogue. The curriculum of synagogue schools was designed specifically to meet the needs of their membership rather than to address the concerns of the community as a whole. Although, they most often had similar goals, synagogue schools did not work together to set standards or policy. According to Alvin Schiff, it was not until 1910 that the New York Bureau of Jewish Education was established, finally providing a community organized effort on behalf of Jewish schooling in the United States.[40] Since these early years of Jewish education in the United States, we have been witness to a great many changes in this area. We have seen the establishment of Bureaus of Jewish Education in most major cities, an increase and later the decrease in enrollment in communal Talmudai Torah and congregational schools and the

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[39] Stuart L. Kelman, What We Know About Jewish Education: A Handbook of Today's Research For Tomorrow's Jewish Education (Los Angeles, CA: Torah Aura Productions, 1992) 25.

[40] Schiff 78.

expansion of the Jewish day school. There have been greater opportunities for informal Jewish learning such as summer camps and youth groups. Most recently, we have seen increasing professionalization of the job of Jewish educator.[41]

As the local Jewish community adapted to the American culture and daily life in the United States, changes in its makeup occurred. American society began to open up to Jews. They found themselves able to move in greater numbers from their predominantly Jewish neighborhoods to communities which were more heterogeneous. As a result, their lives revolved less and less around the Jewish calendar and communal celebration and more around secular activities, organizations and social groups. The congregational school which was developed as a supplement to the informal education of the home and community, now became the primary instrument of Jewish education and thus, Jewish survival.[42]

By 1940, approximately eighty percent of formal Jewish education was provided within the context of the supplemental school model. The 1940's and 1950's witnessed the growth of this type of schooling which

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[41] Kelman 25.

[42] Kelman 23.

consisted of one to three day a week programs. At the same time, the Talmudai Torah programs drastically declined.[43] Schiff states that with the growth of the supplemental school, we saw the growth of the synagogues, and, "...the interdependence between school enrollment and synagogue membership became a reality."[44] It was to the synagogue's advantage to work to increase enrollment in its supplemental school, thereby increasing its membership and overall revenues.

When the traditional Jewish schools such as the Heder and Yeshiva declined and were replaced by the modern supplemental school, the necessary modifications in goals, curriculum, and teaching methodology needed to accommodate the change in format either did not occur or came too late. Those running the schools tended to behave reactively rather than proactively with respect to these issues. Vision was not part of the equation. There were seldom long term plans for dealing with increased enrollment, demographic changes, or changes in the religious and educational makeup of the community.

Rather than planning and implementing a comprehensive curriculum to

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[43] Schiff 96.

[44] Schiff 99.

fit with modern circumstances, the supplemental school often offered its classes only in individual subject areas. "The idea of 'peoplehood' was overlooked as was 'Torah'. Peoplehood became religion and Torah was replaced with religious education."[45] Here, Kessler points out that the goal seemed to be to educate the child to participate in the ritual of the synagogue rather than as a member of the Jewish community. The reality of Jews living in primarily heterogeneous communities combined with the fact that supplemental schools did little to stress the importance of Jewish community, resulted in Jews missing out on a very important aspect of religious participation, namely Jewish communal life.

David Schoem reports that the first study of the effectiveness of the supplemental school was done in 1959 by Dushkin and Engelman. It found that the schools were plagued with the serious problems of poor instruction and little learning. Schoem continues by stating that ten years later, "...the next major review of Jewish education lambasted the supplementary school, charging that students came out knowing virtually no Hebrew, Bible, history or anything else the school purported to be teaching."[46] So, as Schoem

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[45] Kessler 5.

[46] Kelman 164.

writes, these supplemental schools which were introduced in the spirit of cultural pluralism, with the intention of providing a balance of Jewish education and culture equal to that of the dominant American culture, generally failed in their task.

Today, we are faced with a crisis in Jewish education. With skyrocketing rates of Jewish illiteracy, we are being forced to examine the problems facing our educational system. An important work which addresses the crisis of Jewish education in North America, A Time To Act, reports that at present, there are roughly one million Jewish children of school age in North America. Approximately eighty percent will attend some form of formal Jewish schooling for at least a period of time. Currently, about forty percent are enrolled in some type of Jewish educational program. Unfortunately, after Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation, the rates of participation drop off another sixty percent. This is due in part to the competing secular demands of studies and after school activities. It is up to the Jewish leadership to articulate compelling reasons for parents to continue to send their children to formal religious education during this teenage period. Another alarming statistic reported is that in the twenty years from 1962 until 1982, total enrollment in Jewish schools

dropped thirty-five percent, only half of which can be attributed to the drop in population caused by the end of the "baby boom".[47]

On a more positive note, Jewish Day school enrollment rose eighty percent, but even this high number falls off considerably after elementary school.[48] The number of Jewish day schools is growing primarily as a result of the decline in the effectiveness of the public school system. We are faced with an opportunity to capitalize on this situation by convincing parents to send their children to Jewish Day Schools.

Several studies seek to answer the question of what plagues the current system of Jewish education. According to one such study, A Time To Act, we are facing a crisis of major proportions. The executive summary of this study identifies several specific concerns:

> Large numbers of Jews have lost interest in Jewish values, ideals, and behavior, and there are many who no longer believe that Judaism has a role to play in their search for personal fulfillment and communality...Over the last several decades, intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews has risen dramatically, and a major proportion of children of

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[47] Schiff reports that the rapid decline in enrollment went from 520,000 in 1962 to 280,000 in 1977 due to decline in birthrate, intermarriage, increase in unaffiliated Jews, and apathy among young families (p. 99).

[48] Commission on Jewish Education in North America 37f.

> such marriages no longer identify themselves as Jews...The responsibility for developing Jewish identity and instilling commitment to Judaism for this population now rests primarily with education.[49]

As stated above, we know that only half of all Jewish school aged children are presently enrolled in any type of formal religious education. However, even for those participating, we find a lack of qualified teachers and administrators, unproductive curricula, mismanaged schools, and antiquated teaching methods.[50] This study further lists sporadic participation, the undeveloped profession of Jewish education, inadequate community support, and the absence of research to monitor results, allocate resources, and plan improvements as some of the problems contributing to the crisis.[51]

In order to encourage individuals to provide themselves and their children with an appropriate Jewish education, they must feel a compelling reason to participate in and commit to such an experience. For this to happen, those providing the education - rabbis, educators, boards of synagogues, Jewish communal organizations and their leaders - must strive

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[49] Commission on Jewish Education in North America, 15.

[50] Kessler 1.

[51] Commission on Jewish Education in North America 16.

toward the development of challenging goals for improvement of the system of Jewish education.

In A Time To Act, Professor Isadore Twersky writes eloquently on the goals for Jewish education:

> Our goal should be to make it possible for every Jewish person, child or adult, to be exposed to the mystery and romance of Jewish history, to the enthralling insights and special sensitivities of Jewish thought, to the sanctity and symbolism of Jewish existence, and to the power and profundity of Jewish faith...Education, in its broadest sense, will enable young people to confront the secret of Jewish tenacity and existence, the quality of Torah teaching which attracts irresistibly. They will then be able, even eager, to find their place in a creative and constructive Jewish community. (p. 19)

This statement by Professor Twersky is an ideal goal and does not elaborate the problems that currently exist in Jewish education, nor offer suggested solutions to any such problems.

Defining substantial, yet reasonable behavioral objectives based on this goal is an important step and the Commission on Jewish Education in North America which produced A Time To Act certainly recognized the value of this stage. Based on their careful study of the state of Jewish education in North America, their committee was able to formulate a set of goals and an

initial plan for implementing them.

In order to establish realistic ideals or goals for Jewish education in our synagogues, we must first understand the situation. We should begin to ask ourselves a variety of questions that will make clarifying our goals easier. Do we really need to make changes to the present system? Are we actually in a crisis situation and, if so, what are its implications? What are the problems with the current system of Jewish education? Has our situation dramatically changed from years past and, if so, how and why? Within what constraints must we work to improve Jewish education? What is the responsibility of the individual, synagogue and community? What does our target population want and expect from Jewish education? These questions must be shaped and examined in order to better understand the problems inherent in the present situation. Only by determining how we outgrew the existing system and analyzing why this once successful model no longer works as it was intended, can we hope to change the direction of Jewish education and thus, establish ideals and goals best suited to improve it.

Do we really need to make changes to the present system? Are we actually in a crisis situation? The answer to the first question may seem obvious. If we accept the premise of the preponderance of contemporary

research that supplemental schooling is not achieving its goals, then surely we need change. However we choose to label the current situation, crisis or not, it is obvious that supplemental religious education is not altogether healthy or functioning at its full potential. Alvin Schiff describes several significant reasons underlying the problems. First, the North American setting in which we live encourages the increasing diffusion of Jewish intellectuals to other areas such as the arts and sciences and academic and professional careers. Therefore, these great minds are removed from the area of professional Jewish education. Moreover, the field of Jewish education is far from lucrative. The vast majority of positions are only part time and do not offer benefits or decent wages.

Second, due to the voluntary nature of Jewish life in North America, we lack a sound basis for continual support causing local communities to have a difficult time providing strong, ongoing educational programming. Monetary support needed for proper educational programs is often unavailable. Schiff further states that additional problems result from the fact that "...the leadership of the Jewish community does not feel a sense of urgency about the failure and problems [of adequate Jewish education]...".[52]

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[52] Schiff 31-32.

This leads us to the next question. Has our situation dramatically changed, and, if so, why? In the past, both the home and the school shared the task of educating the child. Today, schools are often given the sole responsibility in this matter. "Many of the tensions that exist...[for] Jewish youth...may be attributed to the home's refusal to join with the school in determining the character, aims, and administration of the educative process."[53] This change alone, the parents' abandonment of direct responsibility for their child's Jewish education, is so serious that it has caused a dramatic change in our circumstances.

There are other factors as well, including the problems resulting from intermarriage. The findings of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey of the Council of Jewish Federations confirm "the assumption that the more exposure to Jewish learning, the more likely the recipients are to be involved in the community, and to pass the commitment onto their children."[54] As expected, the survey reports that the children of Jewish parents are much more likely to receive a formal Jewish education than the children of the

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[53] Kessler 16.

[54] Seymour Martin Lipset, Educational Findings from the Jewish Population Study: Executive Summary 1.

intermarried. In fact, Lipset reports that when children are raised by two Jewish parents, the likelihood is eighty percent that they will be enrolled in formal Jewish education compared with only twenty-nine percent of those in intermarried families.

The problem of increasing numbers of unaffiliated Jews limits our ability to reach all potential students and results in a significantly decreased enrollment in formal Jewish education. It is incumbent upon us to work within certain unavoidable constraints. We may someday hope to reverse this trend, but for now we must work with the situation as it exists. Lack of family commitment to Judaism is a reality for many, but the individual Jew is not the only responsible party. The synagogue and community have an equally significant role to play in Jewish education. According to Kessler, "Whether it is the community that has abdicated its responsibility to Jewish education, or the educational institutions [synagogue schools and day schools] who have separated themselves from the community, the results of lack of community interest, concern, and leadership responsibility have brought us to this current chaotic situation."[55]

Cost of Jewish education, both formal and informal, is a serious

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[55] Kessler 47.

concern as well. Overall, the system is badly in need of funds. The previously discussed decline in enrollment also results in decreased funds for our schools. The study by Barack and Goldstein concludes that almost one and a half billion dollars are spent on Jewish education annually in the United States. "Jewish institutions, agencies, synagogues, and communities make hard choices about what types of Jewish education...should be offered, to whom, and at what price...[c]ommunities are limited by the size and density of their Jewish populations..."[56] Money is often a sincere consideration for parents when deciding how to provide their children with a Jewish education. While synagogue supplemental schools are usually open to any family regardless of their ability to pay tuition in full, Jewish day schools, summer camps, and Israel trips are financially out of reach for many Jewish families of North America.

Finally, we must consider what the members of the synagogue want and expect from the formal Jewish education offered. In many cases, individuals may not be able to identify what they want because they have never engaged in considering the possibilities. If an individual's Jewish

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[56] Sylvia Fishman and Alice Goldstein, When They Are Grown They Will Not Depart: Jewish Education and the Jewish Behavior of America (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, March, 1993) 2.

education is so inadequate that one is unable to comprehend what Judaism can offer and what one would need to know to be an active member of the community, then one cannot begin to adequately articulate goals and expectations. In other instances, our constituency knows what it expects from its Jewish institutions with regard to education. It is up to the Jewish leadership to meet the people where they are and then to work together to develop goals for Jewish education.

We should not forget that some aspects of the system work well and should remain as they are. Many modern innovations such as the informal, experiential settings Jewish summer camps, youth groups, and Israel experiences where Judaism is taught and celebrated are quite successful. Family education, a relatively new innovation in Jewish education, seems to have shown positive outcomes. Many believe that this is the best direction for the comprehensive education of parents and children. Synagogue leadership should strongly encourage and promote these forms of learning when appropriate. Similarly, we must evaluate the success of all aspects of our Jewish educational program in order to change or eliminate only those parts of the current configuration that are no longer functional or productive.

As Jews who have flourished in many ways as a result of such an

open, free society, we recognize that, as a whole, our commitment to and involvement in Judaism has weakened. We must rethink our goals and methods for teaching. As Alvin Schiff writes, "As Jewish education goes, so will Jewish life. If Jewish education looses its vitality, the very survival of the American Jewish community will be endangered."[57]

The only way to gain back the strength we once possessed as a community, while at the same time living in this society that we so value, is through education. In order to guarantee the strong survival of Jewish life in North America, a comprehensive education is vitally important for Jews of all ages. A Time To Act further reports that since being Jewish in North America involves conscious choice:

> Jewish education must be compelling - emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually - so that Jews, young and old, will say to themselves: 'I have decided to remain engaged, to continue to investigate and grapple with these ideas, and to choose an appropriate Jewish way of life.' Jewish education must be sustained, expanded, and vastly improved if it is to achieve this objective. It must become an experience that inspires greater numbers of Jews to learn, feel, and act in a way that reflects a deep understanding of Jewish values.[58]

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[57] Schiff 31.

[58] Commission on Jewish Education in North America 26.

Fishman and Goldman conclude from their study that the more Jewish education a person has, the more likely it is that he or she will be affiliated as an adult with the Jewish community.[59] In the study, they report that religious education is correlated to all areas of adult Jewish participation such as greater ritual observance, an increased likelihood of belonging to and attending a synagogue, higher levels of volunteerism for Jewish causes, and increased chances of marrying a Jew and opposing intermarriage for one's children.

Possibly the most important question to ask at this point is how to reach out to all members of the Jewish community and empower them to become involved in this most important endeavor. Great changes in attitude will surely be needed to accomplish this task. David Schoem writes:

> Dramatic changes are needed...What must change is the 'part-time' attitude toward Jewish life and the 'part-time' support of Jewish education. Jewish learning must become an activity of the adult Jewish community...Key questions must be how to develop a vibrant personal and meaningful Jewish community, how to effectively provide Jewish education for adults and teenagers as well as children, how to provide enculturating experiences for young Jews and, finally, how to make sense of Judaism for modern American

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[59] Fishman and Goldstein 12.

> Jews so that people see themselves as a living part of Jewish history, not merely students of an ancient culture...[60]

Schoem adds that "meaning" is central to developing the commitment needed to reinvigorate Jewish life for American Jews. "When the meaning and value of Jewish life for contemporary living becomes clearer to the 'supplementary' Jewish community, the supplementary school will automatically improve..."[61]

In order for an individual to find meaning and feel dedicated to Judaism, he or she must first be Jewishly literate, that is, comfortable within and knowledgeable about the Jewish religion, culture, and history. Therefore, as A Time To Act suggests, Jewish education must be both formative and informative in its structure. Then it will enable one "...to pass on a strong Jewish identity with and commitment to Judaism for future generations."[62]

In order to improve our educational endeavors, several sets of solutions have been suggested. Many involve creating some type of

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[60] Kelman 165.

[61] Kelman 166.

[62] Commission on Jewish Education in North America 27.

community alliance for Jewish educational change. Schiff argues that we need to establish a coalition of top community leaders in order to improve all of our schools. This alliance would accept the individual needs of each school, while working together to establish communal structures and resources.[63] In A Time To Act, the Commission on Jewish Education of North America also supports community cooperation. It suggests two areas in which this collaboration would be especially effective. First, in the field of personnel, the Jewish community must develop a profession of Jewish education. The second goal toward which a community must work involves establishing support to meet the needs and goals of Jewish education. This would require recruiting leadership, securing funding, and developing appropriate structures. The Commission considers these two endeavors to be the "building blocks" of Jewish education.[64] Another recommendation by Samuel Joseph is in accord with the Commission's suggestions. Joseph proposes the creation of educational councils in order to build a culture of Jewish education. He defines this "culture of Jewish education" to mean "common norms, core values, and the thinking needed for education to be

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[63] Schiff 32.

[64] Commission on Jewish Education in North America 16, 50.

an essential part of the fabric of the entire congregation."[65]

These studies mentioned above and others examine specific ways to enrich and enhance the educational structures of our synagogues. Goldstein and Fishman, as well as Kessler stress the need to involve all Jewish children in a proper religious education.[66] Kessler recommends exerting pressure on parents to provide formal Jewish education for their children. This type of community pressure has worked well for centuries and could be effectively utilized today. Kessler and Goldstein and Fishman believe that the community should demonstrate that education is a top priority by providing a budget that will enable wider participation in both formal and informal Jewish learning. This might be accomplished "...by offering subsidies and assisting with marketing techniques".[67]

Another important step in this area is fiscal responsibility. Perhaps we will never have the funds we desire, but it is important to use what we

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[65] Samuel Joseph, Compass "Educational Leadership and the Role of the Education Council", (Vol. 15, number 3) 4-5.

[66] Alice Goldstein and Sylvia Barack Fishman, Teach Your Children When They Are Young: Contemporary Jewish Education in the United States (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, December, 1993) 5 and Kessler 19.

[67] Goldstein and Fishman 5.

have carefully. "Thoughtful planning and coordination of educational programs is essential to conserve scarce resources and avoid unnecessary duplication and conflict".[68]

Another worthy suggestion made by Cohen, Kessler, and Goldstein and Fishman is to provide Jewish educational support for all parents of children enrolled in religious school.[69] This may take the form of concurrent classes or regular family education programs. This does not overlook the importance of lifelong Jewish education for the entire congregation, but specifically targets those who are already a part of the system. As well, it has a positive impact on the children's education because through their increased level of knowledge, parents are more apt to express a greater level of religious observance in the home and their overall dedication to Judaism is likely to increase.

These studies are also concerned with the curriculum that the schools offer. Kessler believes that Jewish education must be rooted in the concepts of "God, Torah and Israel" which, in modern times he believes, is

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[68] Burton I. Cohen, Case Studies In Jewish School Management (West Orange, New Jersey: Behrman House, Inc., 1992) 3.

[69] Cohen 162, Kessler 19, and Goldstein and Fishman 5.

best characterized by Mordecai Kaplan's thinking. "[The] components of Jewish civilization must not be viewed as separate blocks of knowledge to be taught independently of each other...[t]hey are to be understood as the basic ingredients in the history, culture and religion of the Jewish people."[70] On this subject, Kessler further suggests that a new curriculum should integrate knowledge and identity. He also reminds us that total attendance time involved in the program must fit the curricular objectives.

Another important suggestion is made by Goldstein and Fishman. This objective is to "[b]uild specialized informal educational experiences, [such as the ones which take place in youth group and camp settings], into supplementary school programs and synagogue calendars."[71] Since such models have been so successful outside of the classroom, it is vital that we bring this type of learning format into formal education.

There are recent programs that are quite successful in some synagogues. In fact, we often know of better ways to educate Jews, but do not incorporate them into our synagogues because of the difficulty and cost of implementation. The question is, what will be the cost of maintaining

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[70] Kessler 7.

[71] Goldstein and Fishman 5.

the status quo for the future of Judaism?

Developing and instituting new methods of transmitting a basic Jewish literacy to all members of our community will indeed be difficult, but there is no viable alternative. It is clear that as the makeup of our community has changed over the years, the existing educational system is not successfully producing an educated group of people. There will always be a core group of people who do possess a serious Jewish level of knowledge, but this can not be our only goal. We must aim for a reasonable level of Jewish competency for the entire people.

In order to accomplish such a task, it will require the efforts of all the members of the synagogue leadership, both lay and professional. It is the rabbi who must lead this group in partnership with the professional educator of the Temple. The rabbi must work to understand the culture of the environment in which he or she works in order to craft a creative vision of a better tomorrow based upon this evidence. It is vital for the rabbi to take a strong leadership role in this area if true, long term educational improvement is to be made. The following chapter discusses the role of the rabbi as a visionary leader and initiator of educational change in the synagogue.

Chapter 3

The Rabbi As Leader

All groups, whether they be social, cultural, or ethnic, or a business or civic organization, have leaders and participants or followers. These two roles are not mutually exclusive; one who is a leader to some might also be a follower of another in the organization. Moreover, varying circumstances can change an individual's role within the organization depending upon the specific situation.

In the synagogue, the rabbi is hired as the professional, religious leader. The Temple Board and the professional staff work in partnership in many ways with the rabbi. In the end, however, it is the rabbi who is expected to provide the Jewish leadership of the temple, in a manner similar to the CEO of an organization who is hired by a board of directors. The CEO is charged with the responsibility of being the professional leader of the organization. In the case of both the rabbi and the CEO, if the goals of the leaders do not fit with the goals of the board, it is the board's right to find a new leader who is better able to express their intentions.

With respect to the issue of rabbi as leader of educational change in the synagogue, it is necessary to better understand the phenomena of

leadership. Among the issues and questions relating to the topic of leaders and leadership that deserve consideration are the following:

1. What constitutes leadership?
2. What do leaders do?
3. What are leadership paradigms?
4. What are different leadership styles?
5. Are there certain requirements for successful leadership?
6. Why is vision so vitally important to leadership?
7. How does understanding the process of change influence leadership?
8. How might a leader create change and implement it?
9. How is it possible to judge the effectiveness of visionary leadership?

Much has been written on the subject of leadership. For our purposes, an area of concentration that is most important is organizational leadership and, more specifically, educational leadership. Political leadership, another important subject, will not be separately addressed in this chapter.

It is important to clearly understand both what leadership is, and also what it is not. According to Patterson, leadership is often confused with either bossing or managing. Bossing merely involves power and control

while managing primarily consists of coordinating people and resources. True leadership is more than each of these.[72] Nanus contends that visionary leadership is not: a prophecy, a mission, factual, true or false, static, or a constraint on actions unless they are inconsistent with the ideals of the visionary leadership.[73]

Leadership cannot exist in a vacuum and requires an obvious relation between the one doing the leading and those being led. The task of the leader is to convince others to follow and thus, comply with a prescribed set of actions. This requires influencing others through various means: legitimate authority (where one is in the position of power, the boss), modeling (where one has personal power and sets an example), goal-setting, rewarding and punishing, organizational restructuring, team building, and communicating a vision.[74]

Researchers who have written in this area discuss various models of leadership. According to the sociologist Max Weber, there are three kinds

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[72] Jerry L. Patterson, Leadership For Tomorrow's Schools (Alexandria, VA: Association For Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1993) 2.

[73] Nanus 31.

[74] Edwin A. Locke et al. The Essence of Leadership: The Four Keys to Leading Successfully (New York, NY: Lexington Books, 1991) 3.

of leadership: charismatic leadership, traditional domination, and legal domination. With a charismatic leader, one follows out of respect for the individual. With traditional domination, the leader holds inherited power whereas one who has legal domination, has power due to the right of law.[75]

James MacGregor Burns suggests another two models of leadership - transactional and transformational. In transactional leadership, one works to maintain the status quo. Here the follower is rewarded for complying with a prescribed set of instructions and for completing the task.[76] This style is similar to that of the manager. Thomas Sergiovanni terms this style of leadership - "leadership by bartering".[77]

Burns' theory of transformational leadership describes one who works to change an organization by motivating others to work for a common goal or purpose which transcends himself or herself. Sergiovanni

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[75] Spencer J. Maxcy, Educational Leadership: A Critical Pragmatic Perspective (New York, NY: Bergin and Garvey, 1991) 28.

[76] James MacGregor Burns, Leadership (New York: NY, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1978) 4.

[77] Thomas J. Sergiovanni, Educational Leadership, "Adding Value to Leadership Gets Extraordinary Results" (vol. 47(8) May, 1990) 23-27.

describes a similar style which he terms - "leadership by bonding".[78] By sharing a set of values, both the leader and follower have a bond between them formed by a connection to a mutual goal or purpose.

Bennis and Nanus take the transformational model suggested by Burns and extend it. They posit that leadership is not a one time event, but rather a process. "Leadership seems to be the marshalling of skills possessed by a majority, but used by a minority. But it's something that can be learned by anyone, taught to everyone, denied to no one."[79] Nanus states that leaders are people who take charge and make things happen. They take a dream and make it real. They influence others into voluntarily committing to a vision. Leaders excite and energize their followers. In the end, they are able to change their organization into a novel creation which is better equipped for survival, growth, and excellence. In this way, leaders are the "architects of the organization's future".[80]

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[78] Sergiovanni 23.

[79] Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, Leaders: The Strategies For Taking Charge (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1985) 27.

[80] Nanus 10.

All forms of leadership, are linked to power which involves both motive and resource.[81] One must be motivated to exercise power and, at the same time, have the ability to command compliance. However, a more effective form of leadership involves empowerment, the removal of hierarchical domination structures. Leadership demands empowering others in order to translate one's vision into reality. Bennis and Nanus suggest that good leadership style should pull rather than push. By being pulled by a leader's vision for a greater future, followers become energized and excited and by extension, more likely to commit to change.[82]

Jerry L. Patterson, in his book, Leadership For Tomorrow's Schools, identifies new values for educational leadership which demonstrate the need for empowerment of workers in the school. Instead of valuing employees who simply follow the directions, the modern educational leader must value the active participation of his or her employees. This active participation is intended to produce a greater wisdom for the group than any individual could alone produce. Thus, an organization should encourage its workers to participate in the discussion and decision making process in

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[81] Burns 12.

[82] Bennis and Nanus 80.

order to effect positive change.[83] In addition, today's leaders should recognize the importance of diversity of opinion and perspective. By hearing and understanding differing beliefs, the entire group is able to gain a deeper level of knowledge of the situation. When making a decision, the group is able to do so based on the greatest amount of information.[84]

Patterson continues by suggesting that the old value of harmony and agreement within an organization is outdated and should be replaced with a new value for members: the ability of the group to resolve their differences in a healthy way allowing various opinions to be heard, and the best to be incorporated into the most viable solution. He writes, "Tomorrow's leaders...embrace conflict...honest conflict in a safe environment providing the seeds for rich solutions to organizational issues."[85]

Patterson reports that in earlier styles of leadership, firm decisions were made and no thoughts of changing them were considered. The new value is to have leaders and employees discuss options in order to create

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[83] Patterson 5,6.

[84] Patterson 7.

[85] Patterson 9.

better organizational decisions.[86] If mistakes have been made or a better alternative is discovered, rather than resisting change, today's new leaders should themselves acknowledge mistakes and allow employees the same privilege. This way, employees "...will be free to receive authentic feedback about their performance, even if the feedback points to mistakes made."[87]

Many characteristics or qualities help individuals to function as leaders. One trait important for educational leadership is to be an initiator rather than simply a manager or responder. Such a leader has a long-range outlook toward overall improvements. He or she is able to make changes in the present, while keeping in mind the broad picture and long range goals. This faith in a better future enables the educational leader to initiate change. These leaders are determined and persistent in accomplishing their goals. "They tend to have strong beliefs about what a 'good' school should be and work intensely to attain this vision."[88] Such a leader is interested in close communications with the teachers, seeking opinions from them

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[86] Patterson 10.

[87] Patterson 12,13.

[88] Hall 23.

before taking the responsibility for the final decision. In the synagogue, it is the rabbi, in consultation with the educator, who should solicit opinions from those who work within the synagogue and from those who benefit from its programs in order to initiate educational change that will improve the services which the Temple is able to provide. The rabbi should always be approachable, while working not to undermine the authority of the educator. This type of leader can be quite successful in implementing change.

Blumberg and Greenfield believe that the qualities of an initiator are required for successful educational leadership. A rabbi must be enthusiastic about restructuring and reshaping the school to fit his or her goals. In doing this, the leader must be resourceful and proactive in order to have his or her dreams become reality.[89]

Another important quality necessary for successful leadership is intelligence and a high level of knowledge.[90] According to Burt Nanus in his book, Visionary Leadership, intelligence enables the leader to be

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[89] Arther Blumberg and William Greenfield, The Effective Principal: Perspectives on School Leadership (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1980) 201.

[90] see Nanus 111 and Locke 7, 39-47.

flexible, take advantage of fortuitous circumstances, make sense of unclear or contradictory messages, understand the important facts in a situation, compare or contrast similar situations, put together new ideas by rearranging old ideas, and create new ideas.[91]

As mentioned above, in order to command a following, one must be intelligent, have a high level of knowledge and be willing to be an initiator. However if a person possessed these qualities and was unable to communicate ideas to those being led, true leadership would not take place. "People skills" such as listening, oral communication, network building, conflict management, and the ability to assess self and others are especially useful methods of communication for anyone in a position of leadership.[92] In addition, the ability to communicate using models, slogans, and metaphors which are easily understood is a helpful skill.[93]

Just as good communication skills are essential for sound leadership, so too is the creativity of the leader. A creative, resourceful leader finds ways to clearly communicate his or her ideas to many different types of

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[91] Nanus 111.

[92] Locke 7.

[93] Locke 47.

people. More importantly, he or she is able to devise original, innovative solutions to the various challenges that continually face an organization. These leaders are not bound by the way things have traditionally been done. It is also vital that creative leaders possess the important trait of flexibility. They feel free to design and invent altogether unique ways of dealing with a situation. Such leaders are well equipped to balance the demands on their time between what they must do and the creative tasks that they would like to do.[94] For rabbis, this trait is very important in order to devise and incorporate unique and creative solutions to the problems facing Jewish education. In addition, it is important to be flexible with new innovations, pushing forward the ideas that seem to be working and terminating changes that prove to be ineffective.

Successful leadership requires a great amount of energy and drive. Leadership at any level can be extremely demanding both physically and emotionally. Good leadership almost always involves the investment of long hours with many demands on one's personal time. Because a leader's decisions usually affect many people's lives, and in the case of the rabbi,

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[94] Blumberg and Greenfield 201.

might also impact upon the Jewish future, the task can also be emotionally exhausting. Mistakes at this level have significant results requiring high levels of energy and drive in order to be best equipped to deal with such stress.

A strong sense of confidence in one's skills and belief in one's mission is another critical area for successful leadership. Without a strong sense of self-confidence in one's abilities to lead, a leader would be unable to undertake the difficult duties demanded by the position. Self-confidence enables one to be assertive, decisive, admit failure, and to maintain emotional stability.[95] In order to feel fully confident in one's position, it is important to be respected by those in your organization for being honest and having integrity. If one is known for these qualities, others will believe that they can depend and rely upon the leader. In addition, the leader who is trusted, is better able to trust those being led, because his or her integrity inspires the same standards of honesty in other members of the organization.

In addition to those qualities needed by any leader, there are specific

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[95] Locke 23.

skills that an educational leader should ideally possess. Here, the rabbi must depend on the professional educator, if there is one, to have such skills. If there is no trained educator, the rabbi must acquire specific educational abilities needed to administer a school. With respect to educational leadership, Sheive and Schoenheit state that in addition to a sense of vision, one must be talented in and able to work on the areas of organizational development, instructional support, monitoring instruction, and allocating resources.[96] Similarly, Blumberg and Greenfield believe that educational leaders should attach "importance to the need for maintaining and stabilizing the organization, [while holding] personal educational visions which go beyond the bureaucratic dimensions of their job."[97]

Sheila Rosenblum, who has written in the area of Jewish educational leadership, suggests ten guiding principles. She writes that one must work with a vision for achieving the mission of the organization as well as

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[96] Linda Sheive and Marian Schoenheit ed., Leadership: Examining the Elusive (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1987) v.

[97] Blumberg and Greenfield 205.

demonstrate skills in planning. Just as is the case with all leaders, the Jewish leader must be willing to be held accountable. He or she must thoroughly understand the organization and how each person functions within it. Moreover, an effective educational leader must respect the organization and its members, be flexible and maintain a professional demeanor. Such a leader should care about the physical environment and be fiscally responsible. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a Jewish educational leader must adhere to and espouse Jewish values.[98]

Each of these qualities mentioned above are extremely important for leadership. Many today suggest that the key quality which a successful leader must have is the ability to communicate a vision that commands the loyalty of the members of the organization.[99] In so doing, the visionary leader is able to build an organization in which the members or employees feel strongly identified with the ideology or goals of the system. By striving toward these ends, the workers or members achieve personal satisfaction from their actions.

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[98] Sheila Rosenblum ed., Leadership Skills for Jewish Education - A Casebook (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc., 1993) 15-17.

[99] see Bennis and Nanus, Nanus, Locke, and Sheive and Schoenheit.

There are many answers to the question of what comprises an organizational vision. Sheive and Schoenheit write, "A vision is a blueprint of a desired state. It's an image of a preferred condition that we work to achieve in the future."[100] Nanus writes, "...a vision is a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization...[an] articulation of a destination toward which your organization should aim..."[101] It proposes a future which is better than the current state. This vision is, in Nanus' view, a mental model of the future state of a process, group or organization based upon sound reasoning of what one already knows to be presently true and what can assumed to be true in the future.[102] According to Nanus, "Vision is composed of one part foresight, one part insight, plenty of imagination and judgement, and often, a healthy dose of chutzpa."[103]

A vision is critical for an organization such as a synagogue because it is just such a vision that brings the institution's purpose alive to its members and employees. It becomes something to which people can

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[100] Sheive and Schoenheit 94.

[101] Nanus 8.

[102] Nanus 25-26.

[103] Nanus 34.

happily and willingly commit because they are convinced of its importance. The vision should be presented in a way that people feel that they are choosing to make this commitment and cannot help but want to work toward achieving such a goal. A worker who believes in the higher purpose expressed by an organization's vision of a better future, becomes a part of the vision itself. This shared purpose creates an empowered group of workers. Thus, successful leadership, together with healthy organizational change and strategic thinking, results in a more successful organization.[104] Nanus suggests that vision combined with the proper communication will result in both the leadership and the work force or membership feeling a sense of shared purpose.

Nanus suggests some guidelines for formulating an appropriate vision. A vision must be ambitious, but fit with the organization and the times. It must express high standards and ideals and offer an understanding of the uniqueness and significance of the organization and its goals. A vision should be easily understood and make the purpose and direction of the organization clear. It must inspire the commitment of those who are

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[104] Nanus 135, 156.

members of or who work in the organization.[105] "There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared."[106]

It is vital to have a plan for the development of a statement of vision. Patterson writes that we cannot create a vision unless we clearly articulate what it is that we stand for. He suggests that we must have a value driven approach to the process of developing a vision. "The core organizational values become the pull to the future, leading the organization toward a vision."[107] By core values, Patterson means the fundamental principles for which an organization stands or the values that define the organization and give it meaning. Burns writes, "Mobilized and shaped by gifted leadership, sharpened and strengthened by conflict, values can be the source of vital change."[108]

A vision statement should ideally possess certain characteristics. It

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[105] Nanus 27-30.

[106] Nanus 3.

[107] Patterson 39.

[108] Burns 41.

should be brief, clear, abstract, challenging, future oriented, stable (over time), and attainable.[109] In order to formulate such a vision, one must first gather all of the facts, circumstances, and statistics from within the organization as well as from the outside and then process this knowledge. One has to decide which issues are important enough to be addressed by the statement of vision and what the vision would ideally accomplish.[110] One must consider the outside circumstances that will affect the organization over time. For example, how will changes in the, economy, technology, or overall culture impact the way your organization services society? Will the makeup of the people in the group change dramatically in the future?[111] It is necessary also to consider the constraints on your vision such as those involving time, geography, or social issues.[112]

These same issues are relevant to the creation of a vision for the synagogue. It is necessary to consider the manner in which outside circumstances will effect the synagogue and the religious school. For

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[109] Locke 51.

[110] Nanus 71.

[111] Nanus 82f.

[112] Nanus 71.

example, changes in membership and enrollment, both in size and makeup of the population, may profoundly effect the institution. In addition, the economy may limit contributions and members' ability to pay fees, perhaps limiting the implementation of the vision.

In the process of developing a vision for any organization including the synagogue or the synagogue school, all of the major constituencies in the organization should be consulted. These individuals are the stakeholders in the vision. It is important to understand who they are, what are their interests and expectations, and what threats or opportunities they can offer. The rabbi must ask what to create, always keeping the stakeholders in mind.[113]

It is the leader's responsibility to assimilate all of the facts and the opinions of those involved in a creative way in order to develop a new vision for the organization. Synthesizing the above mentioned factors into a unique goal for the future is the job of the visionary leader. It requires foresight, hindsight, world view, depth perception (in order to see the complete picture), peripheral vision (in order to foresee a response), and a

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[113] Nanus 62.

process of revision (to reflect outside changes that may impact the vision).[114] Finally, any vision statement must include an evaluation component.[115]

Once formulated, how do leaders encourage others to work on behalf of achieving their vision? First, a leader must serve as a coach for his or her vision.[116] When workers understand the significance of their contribution toward the overall vision, they will be empowered to commit to work on its behalf. "Followers armed by moral inspiration, mobilized and purposeful, become zealots and leaders in their own right."[117] Bennis and Nanus suggest several ways for a leader to command the necessary loyalty and respect. First, the leader must accept people as they are and under their terms, ideally be non-judgmental, leaving past incidents in the past and living in the present. It is very important for leaders to show appreciation for and trust in those with whom they work closely. Finally, since a leader is often forced to make difficult decisions, one must be able

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[114] Locke 55.

[115] Locke 53.

[116] Nanus 149.

[117] Burns 34.

to achieve personal satisfaction without receiving generous amounts of praise or approval.[118]

Nanus offers several tips in order to avoid failures. He warns the leader not to work alone or become isolated from the workers. Never command a vision, rather enlist support for it. Do not create a vision which is either too ambitious or too idealistic. Reorganize and establish new patterns when the old ones are not working. Do not allow budgetary considerations and profits to be the only factors considered. Finally, the leader must be flexible and patient in achieving the vision, but never become complacent.[119]

Terrence Deal writes that an educational leader must confront dilemmas and turn them into opportunities. "Educational leaders must create artful ways to reweave organizational tapestries from old traditions, current realities, and future visions."[120] The initiator is most likely to propose major change for a group and to plan the best way to implement this new vision for an organization.

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[118] Bennis and Nanus 66.

[119] Nanus 167.

[120] Sheive and Schoenheit 12.

Once a vision has been properly developed and written, it is the leader's job to convert the vision into a usable agenda, including short, medium and long range tasks. The agenda should be broad and able to progress as time passes. It should challenge those involved with projects and present goals and responsibilities which, if attained, will produce a feeling of success and accomplishment.[121] Here, the rabbi and the educator should work together to develop such an agenda.

The first changes to be implemented should be the easiest, least disruptive ones. After the success of the initial innovation, the culture of the organization is more likely to be able to embrace more dramatic variations.[122] When the members of the organization or work force realize that these changes not only do not threaten, but also better enable them to survive as a group, they will more readily become invested in them.

Once a vision has been implemented, it must be subject to evaluation in order to determine if it is functioning adequately. Nanus suggests asking several questions in order to monitor the vision. Is the organization

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[121] Locke 3.

[122] Nanus 145.

accomplishing the changes that the vision requires? Are the workers or members committed to the vision and do they perceive it as their own goal? Are appropriate awards and recognition available? Are people positive and proud? Are members working together cooperatively? Do those involved completely understand the vision and its purpose? How has the new vision succeeded in improving the output of the organization? How effective is the vision?[123] In the event that these questions cannot be answered in the affirmative, the leader must initiate the task of revising the vision statement.

In this chapter we have studied the various aspects of leadership and have demonstrated the need for a clear vision in leading any organization. The necessity for the rabbi to work in close partnership with the educator has become clear. Next, it is important to consider the best way to proceed once one has developed a vision for change. The following chapter discusses strategy for the implementation of educational change in the synagogue.

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[123] Nanus 160-161.

Chapter 4

Instituting Educational Change in the Synagogue

Change is a necessary part of any organization. As times progress and cultures shift, institutions can only maintain their competitive edge by adapting. Organizations which strongly resist the need to change will eventually become so outdated that they will no longer have the ability to survive. Technology is developing at a swift pace and research is more accessible now than ever before. These factors should be viewed as great opportunities for groups such as synagogues to grow as they strive toward a better tomorrow. Therefore, since progress and growth are a necessity, it is important to study and understand the process by which these occur in order to determine the best ways to implement change within organizations.

Before implementing change, it is important to understand the culture of a group. This is especially relevant in synagogues which are a product not only of the broader Jewish culture, but also of their own particular history. Moreover, every religious school has a specific culture which is inherent in its functioning. The school environment, like that of the outside community, is not static but always in a state of flux.

Values, norms, symbols, heroes, rituals, ceremonies, and sense of a

common history make up the culture of an organization. These common factors provide shared meaning for a community and establish a sense of structure for members of the organization.

Similar to the larger population, members of the secular school have a strong sense of culture and shared history.[124] The school, in itself, is a symbol. "Entering any school evokes a predictable script and reciprocal roles. These imprints serve as the basis for educational rituals, the foundation of educational practice."[125]

Today, this sense of a shared purpose or reality is not always present in Jewish supplemental schools. Lack of similar goals, backgrounds, and beliefs by the shareholders of the Jewish school, has indeed weakened the system. Strong leadership is now needed to reestablish a common culture for the members of the synagogue.

Given that elements of culture provide stability, change can come in and "...create existential havoc because it introduces disequilibrium,

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[124]Seymour Sarason, The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971) 1.

[125] Sheive and Schoenheit 4.

uncertainty, and makes day-to-day life chaotic and unpredictable."[126] It is this culture which furnishes the stability needed to survive major change. According to Michael Fullan, the schools best equipped to incorporate new ideas, are the ones in which the staff has a strong set of shared values and goals, a result of a common culture.[127] This strong culture allows innovations to be introduced which will improve the effectiveness of the school, while not threatening the shared values of those involved in the process. It is the "...interface between individuals and collective meaning and action in everyday situations...where change stands or falls."[128]

Vision is vital to the change process. Fullan, citing Miles (1987), stresses that educational change involves two aspects: the first is a shared vision of what the school could attain, the direction to be taken in the process, and the second is a shared vision of the process of instituting change.[129] However, while planned change is helpful, once the vision or

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[126] Sheive and Schoenheit 7,8.

[127]Michael Fullan, The Meaning of Educational Change (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1991) 34.

[128]Fullan 5.

[129]Fullan 82.

plan becomes rigid and cannot accommodate diversion, then such a goal is problematic. Therefore, a vision must adapt to new circumstances as they develop.

Fullan suggests three reasons why the need for educational policy changes may develop: (1) a natural disaster (2) external sources such as the development of new technology, new community values, or immigration, and (3) the result of a set of internal contradictions. Examples of such contradictions are advances in technology which bring about new social patterns and needs so that a particular group perceives a discrepancy between the educational values that they hold and the outcome of the current system.[130] Fullan also points out that educational change can be the result of political or personal agendas. However, this is not true change, but symbolic change.[131] Change that is not initiated or supported by those involved may initially be instituted, but has little chance of lasting success.

In the case of the synagogue educational system in the United States, policy changes are needed as the result of internal contradictions. As

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[130]Fullan 17.

[131]Fullan 28.

discussed in the previous chapter, conditions in the Jewish community have changed and our institutions have been unable or slow to respond to these new circumstances. There exists a discrepancy between the reality of our community and even the minimalist goal of Jewish survival which requires a Jewishly literate people.

At this point, it is necessary introduce some basic assumptions with regard to change. First, change is a process rather than an event. It occurs over an extended period of time, usually years.[132] Moreover, since the change will be implemented by individuals, it is vital to focus on the individual and make every attempt to understand the point of view of each participant. To change an organization or school, individuals, themselves must first change. Each person may react to change differently reflecting his or her unique experience. One questions what a given change will actually mean to him or her. It is important to allow for various responses to such new ideas. Therefore, the change agent or facilitator has to concentrate on the people involved because the meaning behind the change

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[132] Gene Hall and Shirley Hord, Change in Schools: Facilitating the Process (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987) 8 and Shirley Hord, Taking Charge of Change (Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1987) 5.

involves the human side to a greater degree than even its material component.[133]

Change involves developmental growth. Although not all outcomes can be accurately predicted, much of what one can expect from a change can and should be anticipated. Change will involve transforming the group's behaviors and beliefs, reflecting a commitment to a new way of working. This may require some pressure and will usually call for a great deal of support.[134]

Fullan identifies three broad phases in the change process. The first phase is the initiation, mobilization, or adoption of a plan for change. It includes the initial planning that led to the decision to proceed with the change. The second phase is the implementation or initial use of the new plan. The third phase is the continuation or institutionalization of the plan for change. Here it becomes apparent whether or not this change will be adopted as part of the ongoing system or be discarded.[135]

Planning, the first phase in the change process, requires the

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[133] Hall and Hord 8, Hord 5.

[134] Fullan 91, Hall and Hord 8, and Hord 5.

[135] Fullan 47.

consideration of several issues: (1) whether or not a change is really needed, (2) what conditions would have to be present to undertake this task, and (3) what steps one would take to initiate the change. Fullan contends that evolutionary planning is most successful. Louis and Mile's (1990) study supports this contention by demonstrating that those whose plans continued to evolve as the process progressed were able to maximize the opportunities made available by unexpected developments. They improved the fit between the change and the actual conditions that were present in the school.[136]

Sarason points out that sound ideas in combination with a great deal of enthusiasm are adequate means for making change among individuals, but not enough for effective change in the school environment. A school is too large an organization with too complicated a culture to embrace change without a serious plan.[137]

Without a clear plan with specific strategies for implementation, change is not likely to be successful. Therefore, one stumbling block to avoid at this stage is creating a plan which is overly simple. This false

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[136] Fullan 83, 111.

[137] Sarason 213.

sense of clarity is ultimately problematic. It may initially build enthusiasm because people will expect great results quickly, but will ultimately result in disappointment. Another potential difficulty is creating a plan which is too abstract and, therefore, impossible to implement. Those developing the plan for change in the school must thoroughly understand the school environment and its goals and purposes. They should either work in the setting or work closely with those who work in the school.[138] Only by thoroughly understanding the culture of the school, the needs of the teachers, students, and parents, and the constraints of the system can one propose change which is likely to proceed successfully and have lasting positive implications

The initiation phase includes all of the planning leading up to the decision to implement the change. A formal plan for initiation should be devised including these decisions made by a single person in charge and those made by the whole group involved.[139] Fullan suggests three characteristics that an initiation plan should include: relevance, readiness, and resources. The plan must show relevance by demonstrating need in

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[138] Fullan 22, 70.

[139] Fullan 50.

combination with a clear path toward the innovation. Readiness refers to the school's ability to initiate, develop, or adopt the plan. Finally, it is vital to consider what resources are required and how they will be provided.[140] This phase must also include strong advocacy, need, active initiation, and a clear model for proceeding.

Sarason's identification of aspects that should be included in any plan for the initiation of change in the school reflect and support Fullan's thesis. In Sarason's view, a plan should include the reasons behind the desire for change and should identify the groups of people associated with this desire for change who were responsible for formulating and initiating the action. It should state the set of actions suggested and the reason why such actions were chosen. It must include the potential problems the group has anticipated and their suggested plan for prevention or resolution of such difficulties. Fullan identifies several factors which can affect the initiation of change in the school. They are: the existence and quality of the innovations, access to innovations, advocacy from the central administration, teachers' advocacy, external change agents, community

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[140] Fullan 62, 63.

support/pressure/apathy, funding for new policies, and problem solving and bureaucratic orientations.[141]

The next phase in the change process, implementation, has two categories: first order changes and second order changes. First order changes work to improve the situation within the current set of structures, while second order changes aim to alter the fundamental assumptions of the organization, among them the goals, structures, and roles within the school. Fullan reports that since the early 1900's, schools have primarily implemented first order changes that added to and improved what already existed. This parallels the process of change in supplemental schools. Today, we are challenged to work on implementing more second order changes if we are to significantly improve our schools.[142] Similarly, the implementation of second order changes will be necessary if we are to make fundamental improvements to our Jewish educational system.

The process of implementation of change, putting the initiation plan into action, may either be imposed from the outside or generated from within the work force. Each step must either be clear and detailed from the

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[141] Fullan 50.

[142] Fullan 29.

beginning or must evolve as the change takes place. The process of implementation could extend over a long period of time: three to five years for moderately complex changes to five to ten years for major restructuring.[143]

Fullan offers some strategies for successful implementation of change. First, the change agent must realize that this step involves the continual development of the initial ideas. Moreover, it is important to remember that conflict and debate are a necessary part of change. Do not expect all people to change quickly; some require pressure. Finally, and most importantly, the changing of the culture of the school or organization is more significant than any single innovation.[144]

Within a school environment, several factors are important when implementing change. First, there must be a person or group of people, known as change agents, who are ultimately responsible for the implementation of the plan for change. Someone must take the responsibility of instituting and managing the change. Although many people should be involved in the initial work, once the implementation

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[143] Fullan 49, 65.

[144] Fullan 195.

process has begun, one person who is qualified and able to act, must take charge. A school principal or Temple administrator may be the change agent. Fullan, citing a study by Berman and Mc Laughlin (1977), suggests that change is only likely to take hold if supported by the principal.[145] In order for a principal to perform this task competently, he or she has to maintain a high degree of self-confidence and faith in the plan for change. The rabbi must feel confident in the ability of the person taking on the job of change facilitator. This change agent needs to be able to discuss any problems that arise with the rabbi without feeling insecure. He or she must clearly understand the rabbi's educational vision, and his or her own policies and goals in order to work adequately.[146]

John Champlin lists several critical skills for a change agent. First he or she must be able to establish expectations and to influence the community. It is important for the change facilitator to make sure that those involved are ready for the changes. Based on the innovations for the school, it is necessary for the change agent to reshape and restructure the

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[145] Fullan 76

[146] Roland Barth, Improving Schools From Within: Teachers, Parents, and Principals Can Make the Difference (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers, 1990) 74.

roles of the principal and the teachers. It is the facilitator's responsibility to properly express a vision to which people can commit, to continually renew the plan for change and to keep striving for organizational excellence along the way. It is important that he or she uses the successes gained by the new policies to boost the teacher's self-esteem.[147] Initial achievement should give the teachers and students a feeling of pride motivating them to continue to work toward the continued improvement of the system. Overall, the change facilitator is there to provide direction and support throughout the process. Sometimes this involves encouraging or persuading people to include new goals or methods in their role as teacher.[148]

It is vital to develop supportive organizational arrangements: providing the proper materials, supplies, and equipment, training teachers in the new materials or procedures, and following up with consultation and reinforcement at regular meetings with the staff. At all stages, it is important to solicit input from members of the community, especially parents, and to involve them in the ongoing process so that this group, as well as those working in the school, feel invested in the change. Finally,

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[147] Sheive and Schoenheit 52-61.

[148] Hord 3.

change agents must be responsible for developing a plan to make public the improvements that have resulted from the new changes.[149]

It is important to monitor progress throughout the process of change implementation by engaging in consultation with those working within the school and those from the outside community. The evaluation procedures should be formal, offering the following features: simplicity of presentation, a clear assessment of resources, a summary of everyone's involvement, an undistorted collection of primary information, the measurement of what is important, and the degree to which there is achievement of an overall feel of urgency and perpetual improvement.[150]

In the process of educational change, teachers are initially effected the most by the implementation of new policies, curriculum materials, or a modification of overall beliefs about the curriculum and learning practices. Therefore, if the implementation is to succeed, it is important to take into consideration these professionals who are to accomplish the desired goals.[151] With respect to the synagogue school, it is necessary to

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[149] Hord 75-78, Sheive and Schoenheit 51.

[150] Fullan 86.

[151] Fullan 66.

recognize the needs and concerns of the teachers. Two way communication concerning the innovations is imperative. The sharing of power is crucial between the teachers and the administration. Teachers want to feel that the changes will have a significant positive effect on the children and the school and that they will be making an important contribution in this endeavor. When they begin to witness the difference their work is making, teachers will feel rewarded for their labor.[152]

Many challenges are likely to occur during the implementation process. Sarason points out that sometimes the more we try, the less we are able to bring about change. He offers three specific reasons for this. First, there may be resistance by teachers who lack the required skills and, therefore, do not want the change to occur. Second, it may be that interdependence and coordination between the two are not functioning adequately and, therefore, the new roles the teachers and administration are to serve are not made clear. Finally, change may be resisted for fear of creating conflict within the system such as the formation of an opposing coalition or a threat to the existing power structure.[153] Even when most

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[152] Fullan 69, 83-84, 199.

[153] Sheive and Schoenheit 6,7.

believe that the current system is not functioning adequately, not all will agree on how to best proceed in the given situation.

Change can also represent loss. It breaks the connection to the symbols of the past thus causing people to question meaning. Meaning, the mutual understanding of the goal of the change, is an important consideration that is sometimes lost in the process of change. Fullan writes that change succeeds or fails in response to individual and collective meaning.[154] Both individuals as well as the entire group must understand and accept the vision of a better future for the organization. New symbols and rituals, very appropriate in a synagogue setting, which reflect the changes are called for in this case. They serve to transform meaning.[155] People want a clear vision of what this education change will mean. Therefore, it is important to comprehend the large and small picture - change as a socio-political process and change for the individual.[156]

Thus far we have considered strategies for planning and implementing change as well as the nature and role of the change agent.

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[154] Fullan 46.

[155] Sheive and Schoenheit 78.

[156] Fullan 4.

Whoever takes on the responsibility for implementing and evaluating the plan for educational change in the synagogue must work closely with the rabbi and the Temple's entire professional staff. Clearly, all of these members of the leadership team must strongly support the changes to be made if they are to be effective.

Conclusion

Few could argue that, while members of our Reform congregations are amongst the most learned and successful in secular disciplines, far too many are Jewishly illiterate. Some speak of their negative experience in religious school as children, while others had little if any formal Jewish education. In the United States today, few Jewish children participate in long term Jewish education (kindergarten through confirmation) and the level of formal adult Jewish study is even lower. Research seems to demonstrate that the more formal Jewish education one has, the more likely that person is to remain an affiliated member of the Jewish community, and thus perpetuate Judaism. Unfortunately, many individuals contend that they do not currently find meaning in Jewish involvement or are intimidated by the system. Others were turned off by an educational program that did not function well for them and does not meet the needs of their children. As cited earlier, sporadic attendance, competing demands for funds and attention, deficiencies in content, and inadequate community support are just a few of the factors contributing to the crisis in Jewish education. Large numbers of Jews remain unaffiliated, and the current rate of intermarriage is very high. Even in those intermarried families where

Judaism has been chosen to be the religion of the home, future Jewish commitment remains tenuous.

Therefore, it is clear that providing a compelling, comprehensive Jewish education for all Jews must be our top priority as a Jewish community, both nationally and locally. Rabbis, Jewish educators, parents, and Jewish Federations, as well as lay leaders of the community must unite to change the direction of Jewish education. Rabbis must be leaders, and lifelong Jewish education must become a priority of the rabbi. A considerable body of research suggests that without a proper Jewish education, a person is less likely to affiliate later in life. With our numbers already low and decreasing with every generation, each and every Jewish soul is extremely important to our continued survival.

It is the rabbi who must accept the responsibility for strong leadership in facing these issues head on. The rabbi, committed to a strong Jewish future at least in part through Jewish education, must act as a visionary of educational change for the synagogue and the community.

This thesis has focused on four areas that are important in fully understanding the rabbi's role in bringing about educational improvement within the context of the synagogue: the synagogue as the traditional locus

of Jewish learning, the current state of Jewish education in the United States, the role of the rabbi as a visionary and initiator of educational change and a review of selected research regarding the most effective methods for instituting change.

Each rabbi will have a slightly different vision for Jewish education within his or her synagogue, reflecting his or her own personality and beliefs about Judaism. Whatever the specific details, most visions would incorporate the idea of communal Jewish literacy, providing instruction so that an individual attains a working knowledge of at least the basics of Jewish study, practice and prayer. In order for one to feel comfortable living, studying, and practicing as a Jew whether it be in the home or in the context of the synagogue, these skills are vital. Of course, rabbis, in consultation with the various stakeholders involved, must develop more complex educational visions for their own synagogues which reflect their unique populations and circumstances.

While synagogues may vary greatly with respect to their size, financial situation, or available staff, rabbis will face similar problems and leadership demands in their attempts to improve the overall educational program of the synagogue. There are specific areas of focus that will be

important for almost every rabbi in the realm of educational leadership.

First, it is important that rabbis serve as a role models for Jewish learning by pursuing their own ongoing Jewish study seriously. This may mean reserving part of each day for private study or becoming part of a weekly rabbinic study group. However it is possible, the rabbi must commit to ongoing study, both for personal fulfillment and growth and in order to demonstrate to the community the importance of such work. The rabbi's behavior should, not only model the importance of learning, but also of teaching. This demonstrates to parents, children, teachers, and other members of the congregation that the rabbi values the teaching of Judaism so highly that he or she makes time regularly to engage in this mitzvah.

Second, the rabbi should serve as a link between the various stakeholders including the professional staff (the educator, cantor, administrator, and support staff) and the lay people (the Temple board, educational board, and parents) involved in the process of improving Jewish education. Here the rabbi brings together the various parties to solicit their input with respect to their needs and concerns regarding educational change in the synagogue. The rabbi must work individually and cooperatively with

these stakeholders in order to develop a vision for educational change and later to implement it.

After consultation with the stakeholders, the rabbi must next develop an educational vision as described earlier. The vision will provide the immediate and long term direction for education within the synagogue. In this area, the rabbi has several strengths in developing and then soliciting support for the vision created: the wealth of Jewish knowledge garnered through years of study, the ascribed role of leader, and the ability to bring about consensus when working with groups of diverse people. This role can also bring about difficulties for the rabbi. He or she could be viewed as taking an adversarial stand with which others are not yet comfortable. It may seem as if his or her beliefs are being imposed upon the group. This is the challenge for the rabbi. Rabbis usually have strong convictions in many areas and the domain of Jewish education should not be any different. The values which the rabbi holds can not be compromised here. Sometimes difficult decisions must be made. By using skills of negotiation, compromise and consensus building, negative consequences might be avoided.

Bringing about comprehensive educational change in the synagogue

will likely be a struggle because such improvement requires tremendous commitment and will take significant financial and personal resources. While it may be difficult to convince members and boards that investing in Jewish education is the best way of guaranteeing a strong Jewish future for Judaism, it is vital.

As it currently operates, the educational system is usually markedly underfunded. Here, the rabbi has an important leadership role to exercise not only in the synagogue, but also in the community. One viable solution involves calling upon communities to work together to strengthen each of their synagogue schools by collaborating to train and fund a number of professional Jewish teachers. For example, Jewish Federations can pay educators or coordinate hiring those who split their teaching time or programmatic work between various synagogues. Such a profession demands a reasonable salary and benefits in order to recruit talented individuals. Communities must also work to better train the teachers who are currently employed in the schools. Jewish communities should help synagogues offer more teacher in service training and comprehensive supervision. The rabbi cannot wait for this to happen at someone else's initiative. He or she must take the first steps, make the first suggestions,

and perhaps arrange the first gatherings of individuals involved in such an endeavor.

But rabbis cannot only be involved on a communal level. Their primary responsibilities are to the members of their synagogues. Here, rabbis must make it clear to their members that education is a priority for them and that it must become the priority for the synagogue in order for it to thrive. This should optimally involve various methods of communication which will reach the greatest numbers of individuals such as High Holy Day sermons, bulletin articles, and letters to all members. It should also come in the form of addresses to the Temple board and each of the committees. Overall, rabbis must make every effort to connect with and convince as many of their members as possible of the need to invest in and commit to improved educational systems. The rabbi must convince the board to make it a priority to find ways to fund the vision of Jewish literacy for all Temple members.

After persuading others of the need for finding the money for such a commitment, there are several specific areas that a rabbi must concentrate upon next. Most synagogues currently rely on the model of the supplemental school for educating their children. Some congregations offer

the option of a synagogue based Jewish Day School. Rabbis should encourage Synagogue Day Schools whenever the circumstances permit such an endeavor. For most congregations, however, this will not become a reality. Therefore it is necessary to work toward changing and improving the current supplemental system.

There are many programmatic solutions toward which a rabbi must work in order to enhance the supplemental school of the synagogue. However, the rabbi must first work with the educator and other stakeholders to evaluate the current curriculum. Together they must find ways to invest it with more meaning and to make it more comprehensive and successful.

Rabbis should support the trend towards increased family education, one of many attempts at creatively enhancing the educational program of the synagogue. These programs facilitate parents and children learning together through participation in a cooperative educational experience. This has several benefits. Parents have the opportunity to spend meaningful time with their children. They are able to learn with their child which may enable them to incorporate more Judaism into their lives outside of the synagogue. It also empowers them to begin to learn more about Judaism as

adults. Moreover, in the case of intermarried families, this is a less threatening way for non-Jewish parents to learn how to become a partner in their child's religious life and culture.

Family education can take on many forms which can be incorporated into the supplemental school model. Some congregations are currently experimenting with separate grade level family education days which take place during the regular religious schools period. In this case, there might be one large program per grade per year. In other instances, a program can be school wide during an entire day of religious school, with separate age appropriate activities being run concurrently. Other forms of family education can take the form of weekend retreats or Shabbatonim revolving around a holiday or other theme. Services on Shabbat and holidays provide another excellent opportunity for family learning. Finally, family education programs can take place away from the synagogue, without a professional teacher. Rabbis and educators should create home based Jewish activities designed to have families spend time learning and working together on Jewish projects, thereby reinforcing the concept of Judaism as an integral part of family life. All of these programs seem to offer hope for the future of Jewish education.

It is the rabbi's role to work with and direct the educator in gathering information of successful family education programs currently working in other synagogues. They must either find such programs and then adapt them to fit their situation and/or create their own. The educator will be able to do much of this work alone, but the rabbi should consult with him or her and offer programming insights, support and advice based on the rabbi's unique understanding of the congregants' needs. During the actual programs, the educator should be encouraged to find ways to include the rabbi.

We can not hope for Jewish literacy unless we involve Jews of all ages in formal Jewish study. Feeling Jewish and celebrating Jewishly as an individual or a community is simply not enough. Rabbis must work with the stakeholders, especially educators to develop comprehensive programs of ongoing Jewish study for adults. Such learning is what will keep our people eternally engaged. The rabbi cannot teach every one of these classes, but it is important for the rabbi to teach when possible and be visibly involved in this area.

In response to this need, I created a twenty-two week Jewish literacy class (See Appendix) which offers a survey of the most important topics

necessary to achieve some level of basic Jewish literacy. The class involves an optional Hebrew component which attempts to teach reading and prayer book liturgy. This curriculum is an initial attempt at identifying the topics which I believe are essential for Jews to study and understand. From this list of adult education subjects, one can later adapt goals, objectives and curriculum strategies to suit any age level. Rabbis and educators should work together to develop a similar set of topics that they believe would be necessary for basic Jewish understanding. As my class has not yet concluded, I have not been able to formally evaluate it. However, from initial feedback and consistently high attendance, I believe that it is making a significant impact upon the participants.

In addition to the formal Jewish education offered in the synagogue, informal Jewish education must be encouraged whenever possible. Rabbis should strongly suggest that all of the children from the synagogue have the opportunity to attend Jewish summer camps and Israel programs, as well as local, regional and national youth group activities. Adults in our synagogues should be encouraged to attend regional and national conferences such as Biennials and Kallot. Each of these programs offers a strong social and cultural environment with serious Jewish learning as a

benefit. Encouragement from the rabbi to attend such programs may not be enough. Again, funds may be needed to offset the high costs involved in order to make them affordable to all members. Therefore, the rabbi must work to have money made available to supplement the cost of such activities for those unable to otherwise afford it.

Worship services should reflect an ongoing commitment to Jewish education. Rabbis must make this happen in various ways. Making services familiar increases participation, but, taken to the extreme, services become repetitive. Many individuals say that they do not regularly attend services because they are bored by and do not find meaning in them. New liturgy or music can be taught in a systematic manner. By teaching new prayers, music, and various Jewish texts and subjects, services can offer a unique learning experience. Formal study of the Torah portion is an option as is turning the sermon into a learning experience for those in attendance. It is also important that people are spiritually educated so that they feel connected to the worship experience.

Another crucial area for the rabbi concerns outreach to intermarried and unaffiliated families. The rabbi should be involved with the creation of a philosophy of outreach and in developing the strategy and goals involved

in this endeavor. Stepping Stones, developed in Denver, Colorado as the result of the vision of Rabbi Steven Foster, has been transferred to synagogues throughout the country. It is an excellent model of what outreach can do. Through this effort, unaffiliated families are welcomed into a program of Jewish education, free of charge, for a period of two years. At the end of two years, they are asked to join the synagogue and to continue with their formal Jewish education. Stepping Stones has been quite successful in drawing in families who would otherwise likely be lost from Judaism. Unfortunately, this particular program was limited to intermarried unaffiliated families. The next goal for the rabbi is to work to create such a model which would be opened to all unaffiliated families who were interested in learning more about Judaism. As in all of these specific areas, the rabbi must work personally on this challenge of outreach to the unaffiliated. He or she must devote personal time to helping to organize and develop the program, to securing the resources needed, and to welcoming in the families who are to participate.

Each of the areas mentioned above will require the strong devotion of the rabbi, the educator and other Temple professionals, as well as the members of the synagogue. Each rabbi and community will have a

different vision for educational change in the synagogue which reflects the unique circumstances of their Temple and community. Obviously, great sums of money should ideally be raised in order to provide for such new endeavors and this is likely to be one of the rabbi's greatest challenges.

One's educational vision must always be subject to change as conditions vary and new circumstances develop. The important step is to begin to formally develop a vision of a better tomorrow and to then create ways for it to be implemented. Process is important. As was discussed earlier, changes must be implemented slowly. The rabbi as leader of educational change must work with all of the stakeholders throughout the process and enlist their support.

Finally, there must be continual evaluation of the success of any of the changes and new programs. This can take the form of written surveys, personal interviews, or comprehensive testing to measure the impact of the educational change on the level of knowledge of the participants. This ongoing questioning will lead to strengthening the positive changes and redesigning what is not working effectively. Evaluation should take into account the feelings of those who both plan and participate in the programs. Such a constructive look at change must take place regularly and

continually in order to guarantee the highest quality program. Here, the rabbi must also evaluate the situation in reference to his or her vision as it currently exists. Changes will surely need to be made to parts of the overall program. This cannot be seen as failure, but rather as responsible action to further strengthen the services being provided.

Today, the rabbi spends many long hours working for the synagogue. There are many tasks for which he or she is responsible. It may seem that while education is very important, it is impossible to do more than one is already doing. Somehow though, rabbis must find more time to work on behalf of improving the educational programs of the synagogues. Indeed, the meaning of the word rabbi is teacher. Rabbis must maintain this sacred task and traditional role of teacher of Jews. This is our future. This is our hope for Jewish survival. As Rabbi Tarfon taught in Pirkei Avot - You are not required to complete the work, but neither are you liberty to abstain from it.

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Appendix

Jewish Literacy Class

Schedule of Classes

1. September 17 - Fall Holidays
2. September 24 - Shabbat, Rosh Hodesh
3. October 8 - Jewish Texts - Tanakh
4. October 22 (4:00pm) - Jewish Texts - Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, etc.
5. October 29 - Jewish beliefs - God
6. November 12 - Jewish beliefs - Mitzvot/Jewish Responsibility
7. November 19 - Chanukah, Tu B'Shvat
8. December 3 - Jewish beliefs - Death/Afterlife, Euthanasia
9. December 17 - Jewish beliefs - Abortion, Death Penalty, Sexual Ethics
10. January 7 - Jewish History - Biblical, First and Second Temple Period, Mishnah and Talmud
11. January 14 - Jewish History - Medieval, Late Medieval
12. January 28 - Jewish History - Enlightenment, Holocaust
13. February 4 - Zionist History
14. February 11 - The State of Israel
15. February 25 - Jews in America

16. March 4 - Jews of the World

17. March 11 - Purim, Passover, Lag B'Omer

18. March 18 - Life Cycle - Birth, Consecration, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation

19. April 1 (4:00pm) - Life Cycle - Marriage, Divorce, Death

20. April 8 - Yom Ha Shoah, Shavuot, Tisha B'Av

21. April 22 - Jewish Symbols

22. May 6 - Conclusion

List of Readings

Primary Texts:

1. Olitzky, Kerry and Isaacs, Ronald. The How-To Handbook For Jewish Living. $8.95
2. Telushkin, Joseph. Jewish Literacy. $24.95
3. Yedwab, Michael Paul. The Alef-Bet of Blessing. $6.00

I. **Jewish Holidays**

A. Fall Holidays JL 564-575, HTH 61-72
B. Chanukah, Tu B'Shvat, JL 575-577, HTH 73-78
C. Purim. Passover, Lag B'Omer JL 578-586, 590, HTH 79-91, 122 -123
D. Yom Ha Atzmaut, Yom Ha Shoah, Shavuot, Tisha B'Av JL 587-595
E. Shabbat, Rosh Hodesh JL 598-605, HTH 11-17, 29-60, 120, 145-146

Optional Reading

CCAR. Gates of Shabbat: A Guide For Observing Shabbat. New York: CCAR, 1991. $9.95

Knobel, Peter S. Gates of the Seasons: A Guide to the Jewish Year. New York: CCAR, 1983. $10.95

Strassfeld, Michael. The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary. New York: Harper and Row, 1985. $20.00

II. **Jewish Texts**

A. Tanakh JL 23-111, HTH 130-137, 147-148
B. Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, etc. JL 175-183, 200-204

Optional Reading

Blank, Sheldon H. Understanding the Prophets. New York: UAHC, 1969. $4.00

Fields, Harvey J. A Torah Commentary For Our Times. New York: UAHC Press, 1990. Vol. 1-3. each volume $12.00

Holtz, Barry W. ed. Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts. New York: Summit Books, 1984. $12.95

Kushner, Lawrence. Honey From the Rock - An Introduction to Jewish Mysticism. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1992. $14.95

Neusner, Jacob. Invitation to the Talmud: A Teaching Book. New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1973. $13.95.

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III. **Jewish Beliefs**

A. God - Handouts, HTH 149-151
B. Mitzvot/Jewish Responsibility JL 495-558, HTH 111-114, 152-153
C. Death/Afterlife, Euthanasia - Handouts
D. Abortion, Death Penalty, Sexual Ethics - Handouts

Optional Reading

Borowitz, Eugene. Liberal Judaism. New York: UAHC, 1984. $9.95

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Jacobs, Louis. A Jewish Theology. New York: Behrman House, 1973. $14.95

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Kushner, Harold. Who Needs God. New York: Summit Books, 1989. $5.99

Neusner, Jacob ed. Understanding Jewish Theology. New York: KTAV, 1973. $16.95

Sonsino, Rifat and Syme, Daniel B. Finding God: Ten Jewish Responses. New York, UAHC, 1986. $7.95

-----. What Happens After I Die? Jewish Views of Life After Death. New York, UAHC, 1990. $8.95

IV. **Jewish History**

A. Biblical, 1st and 2nd Temple Period, Mishnah and Talmud JL 68-91, 110-125, 131-158, handout - Israel Covenant People, Covenant Land 3-52.
B. Medieval, Late Medieval - JL 162-223
C. Enlightenment, Holocaust - JL 227-255, 345-388

Optional Reading

Ben-Sasson, H.H. A History of the Jewish People. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976. $19.95

Dimont, Max I. Jews, God and History. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962. $4.95

Goren, Arther A. The American Jews. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982. $9.00

Sachar, Howard M. The Course of Modern Jewish History. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. $21.00

Wiesel, Elie. Night. $4.99.

V. **Zionism and the State of Israel**

A. The History of Zionism JL 259-300
B. The Modern State of Israel JL 300-342, HTH 154-160

Optional Reading

Rossel, Seymour. Israel: Covenant People, Covenant Land. New York: UAHC, 1985. $8.95

Sachar, Howard M. A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time. New York: Alfred A Knoff, Inc., 1979. $14.95

Uris, Leon. Exodus. New York: Doubleday and Co., 1958.

VI. **Jews of the World**

A. Jews in America JL 391-444
B. Jews of the World JL 206-208, 339-341, 447-457

Optional Reading

Avraham, Shmuel. Treacherous Journey: My Escape From Ethiopia. New York: Shapolsky Publishing, Inc., 1986. $10.95

Stillman, Norman A. The Jews of Arab Lands. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1979. $17.95

VII. **Life Cycle**

A. Birth, Consecration, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation JL 609-613,
B. Marriage, Divorce, Death JL 613-632, HTH 97-103

Optional Reading

CCAR. Gates of Mitzvah: A Guide to the Jewish Life Cycle. New York: CCAR, 1979. $9.95

Diamant, Anita. The New Jewish Baby Book. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing Co., 1993. $15.95

-----. The New Jewish Wedding. New York: Fireside, 1985. $10.00

Lamm, Maurice. The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning. New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1969. $11.95

Salkin, Jeffrey. Putting God on the Guest List. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights, 1992. $14.95

VIII. **Jewish Symbols** JL 617-619, 633-637, 641-664, HTH 18-28, 104-105, 124-129

Optional Reading

Trepp, Leo. The Complete Book of Jewish Observance. New York: Behrman House,Inc., 1980. $19.95