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TITLE Engaging a Generation: The Challenges of Young Adult Affiliation in the Jewish Community

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**Engaging A Generation**  
*The Challenges of Young Adult Affiliation in the Jewish Community*

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

2001-5761

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Gary Tobin, in his article, "Will the Synagogue Survive," stated, "As it is structured today, the synagogue is designed to appeal to the traditional Jewish family – a married couple (both for the first time) with kids." If this is so, then what are the implications for those Jews who are not part of this age group? Tobin's statement implies that there is a problem of synagogue (and communal) affiliation in the American Jewish community with regards to the 18-35 year old age cohort.

With this increasing problem, the question arises regarding what should the Jewish community be doing? Is the community prepared to handle the situation of younger adults' affiliation?

This thesis examines the challenges that the Jewish community faces with regard to young adult affiliation. How do we successfully program for this age cohort? What are the issues surrounding this age cohort? Specifically, what is the Jewish view of who is an adult? What does it mean to be an adult, psychologically? What is the transition stage that young adult goes through, emotionally and developmentally, between the late teen years and the early adult years? How has the American Jewish community met this challenge in the past?

It also seeks to answer the questions that have been asked by Jewish professionals and lay leaders alike: Why are our young Jews not affiliating? What can we do to get them in our doors? How can we interest them in staying active in the Jewish community? Should there be separate congregations for young Jews, single and married without children? Do young Jews want to be a part of the Jewish community or is their attitude to wait until they have children?

Finally, this thesis offers some ideas for Jewish communities to utilize when considering the type of programming that can be done in order to bring in young Jews.

This thesis is divided into five sections. The first section examines what it means to be an adult, both developmentally and according to Jewish tradition. The second section presents the sociological and demographic statistics and information regarding this age cohort. The third section offers an historical look at various Jewish communal organizations that specifically functioned for the young adult. The fourth section reviews reasons why this age cohort is not affiliating with the Jewish community. The fifth section discusses ways in which Jewish communal organizations can attempt to meet the needs of Jewish young adults, so that ultimately they will choose to affiliate with the Jewish community.

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Section One:  
Who Is An Adult?

## Jewish View of an Adult

*"He used to say, 'At five [one begins the study of] Bible. At ten the Mishnah. At thirteen [one takes on] the [responsibility for] the mitzvah. At fifteen [one begins the study of] the Talmud. At eighteen [one is ready for] marriage. At twenty to pursue [a livelihood]. At thirty [one attains full] strength.'"* Pirke Avot 5:21

Most of us learned as young children that the age of adulthood in Judaism is thirteen. We prepare for and experience our Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies and then suddenly we are considered adults. But what does that really mean?

For the rabbis the notion of who is an adult seems to be a multifaceted one. Adulthood does not simply begin with becoming a bar/bat mitzvah and taking on certain mitzvah. Rather, the attainment of adulthood is seen as a process, similar to the processes of psychologists like Piaget and Erikson. For the rabbis, each stage in the process seems to build on the other.

At the age of thirteen (for boys) and the age of twelve (for girls), one is ready to take on the responsibility of mitzvah and the penalties that go along with the non-observance of those mitzvah. The use of *איש* in this Mishnah refers to the thirteen year old being responsible for himself, as a man, and the choices that he makes rather than his parents taking responsibility for him.<sup>1</sup> At Bar/Bat Mitzvah one's

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. I. Epstein, ed. The Babylonian Talmud, Seder Nizikin. London: The Soncino Press, 1935.

parents technically are no longer responsible for him, religiously, as stated in the traditional parent's blessing at the Bar Mitzvah ceremony.

However, even though a thirteen year old is responsible for taking on the mitzvah, it seems that the rabbis do not completely accept this teen as an adult. Much of the rabbinic literature surrounding the discussion of punishment focuses on who is an adult. For the rabbis, the age of thirteen is sufficient to take on the responsibility of certain mitzvah, but not sufficient enough to punish for not fulfilling other mitzvah. It was instituted by the Sanhedrin that a minor, who has not shown physical signs of maturity (puberty), should not be legally responsible for all of the mitzvah. Some go even further to suggest that the age of twenty be the minimum age for certain public responsibilities.<sup>2</sup>

The age of eighteen is the recommended age of marriage. This is based on the precept in Deuteronomy 24:5 that when a man takes his bride he is exempt from the army for one year for the sake of his household.<sup>3</sup> For some commentators, eighteen is seen as the age where one ends the preparation stage for one's life.<sup>4</sup> At the age of twenty, a man begins the period in his life where he applies all that he has learned to the activities that he pursues.<sup>5</sup> He is ready for military service, which the rabbis base on Numbers 1:3, "... from the age of twenty years and up, all in Israel

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<sup>2</sup> גילת, יצחק ד'. פרקים בהשתלשלות ההלכה. הוצאת אוניברסיטת בר-אילן:רמת-גן, 1992

<sup>3</sup> Dr. I. Epstein, ed. The Babylonian Talmud. Seder Nizikin. London: The Soncino Press, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.—

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



who are able to bear arms."<sup>6</sup> The age of twenty has also been considered a minimum for adult responsibilities, as noted in the Bible. Most notably in Leviticus 27:1-8, when one reaches the age of twenty, he is worth the most, as he is at the most able point in his life. He is able to do the most work and is able to take on most religious responsibilities.<sup>7</sup>

Some argue further that the age of thirty is when a man has reached his full adult potential, as he has reached his full physical potential.<sup>8</sup> This is based on the notion that a Levite enters his full duties at the age of thirty, as it states in Numbers 4:46-47, "all the Levites . . . from the age of thirty years . . . who were subject to duties of service and portage relating to the Tent of Meeting."<sup>9</sup>

While the rabbis do not give us a specific answer as to when adulthood begins, we can see from their discussions that it is a process of stages. It is a process that includes study and gradual responsibility. Each of the stages in the process build on one another, so that one has been prepared for and eased into adulthood.

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<sup>6</sup> The translation is taken from Gunther Plaut's Torah: A Modern Commentary. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981.

<sup>7</sup> "By telling us that the twenty-six year old commands the highest monetary value in the (erchin) legislation, the Torah informs us that there are years in a person's life when God can expect more from him or her than when he is younger or older." The Midrash of Rabbi Moshe Alshich on the Torah. Volume II. Translated and edited by Eliyahu Munk. (Jerusalem, Israel 2000) pg. 787

<sup>8</sup> Dr. I. Epstein, ed. The Babylonian Talmud, Seder Nizikin. London: The Soncino Press, 1935.

<sup>9</sup> The translation is taken from Gunther Plaut's Torah: A Modern Commentary. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981.

In today's society the question of who is considered an adult can be a difficult one to answer. The clearly defined roles that we once attached to an adult are not as clear as they were a generation ago. Upon graduation from high school, more and more of our youth are leaving home and heading for college. We still see our children as children, as they are focused on college and all that goes with it, as opposed to those things that we associate with adulthood; marriage, employment, the establishment of a household, and children. With the ever increasing rates of adult singles, delayed marriage, and a postponement of the taking on of those roles that we see as adult ones, there is a need for society to redefine what is an adult.

One source states, "In our society, an adult is generally perceived as a person who has reached the age of 20 or 21."<sup>10</sup> This may seem a simple statement, but what of those between the ages of eighteen and twenty? Legally, an eighteen year-old can vote and be drafted into the military, and for the majority of states in our country, eighteen is the earliest age that one can marry without parental consent. Eighteen is also seen as the predominant age when the break is made between "adolescent" high school and "adult" college.

However, even though one reaches the age of eighteen, we also know that there are people who at eighteen are not quite ready or mature enough to take on adult roles and responsibilities. Of course development is both physical and

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<sup>10</sup> Lewis R. Aiken Human Development in Adulthood. New York: Plenum Press, 1998.

psychological and continues on into adulthood.<sup>11</sup> With this in mind it is important to consider the developmental stages that exist within the broad age range that begins and ends with adulthood. Those stages are the end of adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood, and later adulthood. The early adulthood stage can also be divided into two stages, emerging adulthood and young adulthood.

### Adolescence

Sigmund Freud calls this stage the Genital stage. It is Freud's belief that sexual impulses that were repressed in the latency stage reappear in full force due to the physiological changes of puberty.<sup>12</sup> The goal of this stage is mature, adult sexuality, with the biological aim of reproduction. Freud believes that love becomes more altruistic, with less concern for self-pleasure, as in the earlier stages. However, the choice of a partner is not independent of a person's earlier development. The partner may reflect the attitudes and social patterns that were developed in the early years.<sup>13</sup>

While internal struggle may exist within this stage, and throughout life, according to Freud most young people achieve a relatively stable state by the end of the genital stage. The young adult's ego structure is strengthened which makes coping with the reality of the adult world possible.<sup>14</sup>

Erik Erikson believes that the main theme of life is a person's quest for

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Patricia Miller. Theories of Developmental Psychology. New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1989. p. 156.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

identity.<sup>15</sup> By this, he is referring to a "conscious sense of individual identity . . . and unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character . . . a maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group's ideals and identity."<sup>16</sup> Erikson expresses, "each stage (of life) adds something specific to all later ones, and makes a new ensemble out of all the earlier ones,"<sup>17</sup> thus each stage builds on the other. Throughout our lives we are on an exploration for answers to "who am I," and the development of our identity reaches a crisis point during adolescence.<sup>18</sup>

According to Erikson the adolescent stage is a period of struggle in which the young person struggles to develop his ego Identity, which is important for his psychosocial transition to adulthood.<sup>19</sup> The young person is focused on those whom he thinks are great role models and is struggling to formulate his own ideology with regard to things happening in the greater society around him. In essence the adolescent is trying to integrate all of his specific roles (child, student, sibling, athlete, etc. . .) into a self-image.<sup>20</sup> Along with this struggle for an identity, many adolescents explore and struggle with their own religious and political beliefs.<sup>21</sup> This

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> "Identity is the understanding and acceptance of both the self and one's society." Patricia Miller. Theories of Developmental Psychology. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1989. p. 156.

<sup>16</sup> Erik Erikson. Adulthood, 1959, p. 102.

<sup>17</sup> Patricia Miller. Theories of Developmental Psychology. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1989. p. 180.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Herant A. Katchadourian "Medical Perspectives on Adulthood" Adulthood ed. Erik Erikson

<sup>20</sup> The process of forming the Ego-identity is a re-evaluation of roles and skills learned in childhood so that the adolescent can create new conceptions of himself. Laura G. DeHaan and John Schulenberg, "The Covariation of Religion and Politics during the Transition to Young Adulthood: Challenging Global Identity Assumptions." *Journal of Adolescence*, 1997.

<sup>21</sup> The adolescent is attempting to assess his own beliefs while synthesizing those things he learned in early childhood from his family and his surroundings. Ibid.

exploration of religion and politics allows the adolescent to perceive society and feel connected to it, as well as helping the adolescent formulate his own "worldview."<sup>22</sup>

The stage of adolescence is often viewed as a period when an individual begins to question and consider his affiliations and beliefs.<sup>23</sup> During this period the adolescent becomes less reliant on ritual and visual observance and is more concerned with internal process. An adolescent goes through a process of re-evaluating roles and skills learned in childhood and creates new conceptions of himself. It is important to note, however that adolescence is not necessarily the end of childhood or the beginning of adulthood.<sup>24 25</sup>

## Transition

The transitions between the stages of life are gradual, and they do not occur at the same age for all individuals.<sup>26</sup> Thus a young woman at the age of nineteen may be transitioning from adolescence to early adulthood, while a woman who is the same age, may still be struggling in the adolescent stage. During the transition, from adolescence to young adulthood, there is a decline of active exploration and an increase in integrative belief systems, especially in the areas of religion and politics.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Laura G. DeHaan and John Schulenberg, "The Covariation of Religion and Politics during the Transition to Young Adulthood: Challenging Global Identity Assumptions." *Journal of Adolescence*, 1997.

<sup>24</sup> Important to note that Erikson's theory is that the adult is anticipated in the child and the child persists in the adult. Herant A. Katchadourian "Medical Perspectives on Adulthood" *Adulthood*

<sup>25</sup> Important physical development also takes place during adolescence, "by the time both sexes have completed adolescence, females have substantially more body fat (70%) more than males but are shorter (5 inches), less muscular (40% less), and have less facial hair. Lewis R. Aiken *Human Development in Adulthood*. New York: Plenum Press, 1998.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis R. Aiken *Human Development in Adulthood*. New York: Plenum Press, 1998, p. 23-23.

<sup>27</sup> Laura G. DeHaan and John Schulenberg, "The Covariation of Religion and Politics during the Transition

A young person may be solidifying his ideology, however he is not necessarily committing himself to it for life. Though an adolescent or young adult may make certain commitments in some parts of his life, this does not mean that he has completed the process of transition in other areas of his life.<sup>28</sup> During the transition phase to adulthood, it is likely that the adolescent will begin to question his future. Such questions arise surrounding what the individual wants to and will do such as, setting up a household, finding a partner, marriage, parenthood, education, and occupation. This questioning period is crucial and thus it makes the transition to adulthood one of the most complex of the life stages.

The questions that get asked and answered by a young person in this transitional phase are such that they will shape a person's family life and occupational choice, immediately and in the future. The answers to the questions end up producing varied transitions. Thus a young person experiences such transitions as, "from being a child to a spouse and parent, from being a student to a worker, from being someone whose major household responsibility is mowing the lawn or washing the dishes to being the person who is paying the rent or mortgage."<sup>29</sup> The social and economic nature of the environment, in which the young adult resides, takes on a special importance during this stage when family and career decisions are

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to Young Adulthood: Challenging Global Identity Assumptions." *Journal of Adolescence*, 1997.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Martha S. Hill and W. Jean Yeung. "How Has the Changing Structure of Opportunities Affected Transitions to Adulthood?" in Transitions to Adulthood in a Changing Economy. Edited by Alan Booth, Ann C. Crouter, and Michael J. Shanahan. (Westport, Connecticut, 1999)

at the forefront.<sup>30</sup>

## Reaching Adulthood

Shmuel Eisenstadt, in 1956, defined the adult role entry as a well-defined status passage characterized by social indetermination.<sup>31</sup> A child is totally integrated into and dependant on his family, while an adolescent works to gradually overcome family dependence while not yet fully possessing the autonomy that comes with adulthood. Thus, "young people are located in social positions virtually outside the 'social universe.'" In a metaphor given by Phillipe Aries, "they are in training and waiting rooms, preparing for their future in the professional world."<sup>32</sup>

## Emerging Adulthood

This stage of adulthood has been proposed by Dr. Jeffrey Arnett, as a "new conception of development for the period from the late teens through the twenties, with a focus on ages 18-25."<sup>33</sup> Dr. Arnett believes that the changes in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in delayed marriage and child-bearing until the mid to late twenties, means that it is no longer necessary for those in the late teens to early twenties to enter into and settle into long-term adult roles. Dr. Arnett's concept of emerging adulthood is consistent with the Erikson's stages of life development. He

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Marlis Buchman. The Script of Life in Modern Society: Entry into Adulthood in a Changing World. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 83.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Jeffrey Jensen Arnett. "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no.5. (May 2000)

explains that Erikson, though he does not name it, does distinguish a period of time between adolescence and young adulthood, in which the role experimentation of adolescence intensifies while adult commitments and responsibilities are delayed.<sup>34</sup> He says that Erikson mentions this phase of development as taking place in industrialized societies.<sup>35</sup>

Arnett also utilizes the work of Daniel Levinson, which includes a novice phase of development. The task of this phase for the 17-33 year old is to "move into the adult world and build a stable life structure."<sup>36</sup> According to Levinson, the young person in this phase experiences a lot of change and instability while he is figuring out the possibilities of his future and the establishing himself. He acknowledges that this is similar to Erikson's ideas of the role experimentation that takes place during the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

It is important to realize that emerging adults do not see themselves as adolescents, nor do many of them see themselves as adults. This seems to reflect the idea that many young people feel that they have clearly left adolescence while also feeling that they have not yet entered into adulthood. For many young people, "the subjective sense of attaining adulthood is not age, rather it is the individualistic qualities of character." More specifically, it is the accepting responsibility for one's

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<sup>34</sup> Some insert a life stage referred to as Postadolescence (Keniston, Gillis, and Jugendwerk der Deutschen Shell). Postadolescence also represents a type of transition to adulthood. It is characterized by the "discrepancy between full psychological, social, and political autonomy of young persons and their simultaneous economic dependence." The extension of schooling is what contributes to this stage. Marlis Buchman. The Script of Life in Modern Society: Entry into Adulthood in a Changing World. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 83.



self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent.<sup>37</sup>

According to Arnett, it is only after these things are obtained by the young person that he moves from an emerging adult to a young adult.

Arnett believes that in today's society, identity formation really takes place in the emerging adult phase as opposed to the adolescent phase, as described by Erikson. The emerging adult works through the same identity formation questioning as described in the transition process between the adolescent and young adult stage. It is important to note that Arnett is not ignoring the adolescent stage and the processes that take place, rather he feels that the emerging adult phase is a more intense continuation of the exploration process begun in the adolescent stage.

For the emerging adult there are three main areas of identity exploration: love, work, and worldviews. These may seem similar to those mentioned in the adolescent stage, but for the emerging adult the exploration is different and more intense. With regard to love, in adolescence relationships it is short term and dating itself tends to occur in groups. The focus for the adolescent is, "who do I enjoy being with right at this point?" For the emerging adult, the relationship is more intense. More often than not sexual relations are involved as well as cohabitation. The emerging adult begins to focus on, "is this the kind of person that I could see having as a life partner?"

Establishing a financial base is important to the emerging adult. He is not

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

working to merely earn money to have cash for his personal expenses, such as in adolescence. Rather, the emerging adult is preoccupied with establishing himself financially. He wants to ensure that he can financially take care of himself, i.e. one of the things that he wants to be able to do is establish a household of some sort. The emerging adult is also focused on work as a means to figuring out what he wants to do in the future. Thus, he does not choose the best paying job with the least amount of work, as an adolescent might do. He is more interested in exploring what he is good at and finding out what type(s) of work it is that he is good at, that is satisfying, and that suits him best.

Education can also be a means for exploration for the emerging adult. An emerging adult can try out numerous majors in college, as he "tries" on possible occupations, discards them, and pursues others.<sup>38</sup> Graduate School also becomes a further means of exploration, as the emerging adult can continue his exploration and even switch his direction, from the one chosen as an undergraduate.

This period of life however is not limited simply to preparation for adult roles and responsibilities. For more young people in America, especially, this stage of life has become one of experimentation and exploration. The young person wants to take advantage of what is out there and do those things that he will not be able to do when he is an adult.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>My assessment is that this is why many choose to take on short term volunteer jobs that will take them

All of these experiences, love, work, education, and experimentation lead to the emerging adult's examination and consideration of a possibility of worldviews. This is also a time where the emerging adult reexamines his religious beliefs. He reexamines those beliefs learned in his family and forms a set of beliefs that is based on his own independent reflections.<sup>40</sup> However, these worldviews may not always be positive. In fact, many emerging adults spend much of this exploration time alone, and thus come to see the world as grim and are pessimistic about the future of society.<sup>41</sup> Yet, for the most part they end up becoming highly optimistic about ultimately achieving their goals.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, it is important to note that in regard to family relationships, for emerging adults in the United States, "physical proximity to parents has been found to be inversely related to the quality of relationships with them."<sup>43</sup> Those with the most parental contact are those who tend to be the least close to their parents and to have the poorest psychological adjustment.<sup>44</sup>

## Leaving Home

For most young people today, there is no reason to leave home. Marriage was a traditional reason for leaving home. There was the expectation that one would

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places, such as Americorps and the Peace Corps. One might compare this to young Israelis who upon departure from their military duty, tend to take a prolonged trip abroad. (This comparison is based on my interactions and conversations with young Israelis.)

<sup>40</sup>Jeffrey Jensen Arnett. "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no.5 (May 2000).

<sup>41</sup> Their pessimism is due to their feeling alone and isolated. Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>National Poll of 18 to 24 year olds in the United States (Hornblower, 1997), shows that 96% agreed with the following statement, "I am very sure that someday I will get to where I want to be in life."

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

leave home and go straight into a new house to begin a family.<sup>45</sup> Unless one is going off to college or university, there is no reason, today, to leave home.<sup>46</sup> Today there is not even the draw of the military. When young people do leave home, many are leaving for the following reasons: job related (it is in another place), independence (need to leave the parental home), cohabitation, and other varied reasons, such as the death of a parent.<sup>47</sup>

For purposes of this thesis, it is important to note that "Jews appear to leave home slowly. However, Jews have experienced the greatest change in nest-leaving over the period. The overall pattern reflects conditions prior to the 1970's when the predominantly urban Jewish population was pursuing a higher education strategy built on commuting. Currently, there is little difference between young Jews and young adults of other religious groups in the timing of leaving home."<sup>48</sup>

### Establishing a household

As mentioned above, many young people are leaving home before marriage, and many then return for a brief time after living independently.<sup>49</sup> In the United States the establishment of a household is considered an important marker of

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Husband's house or the house of one's parent's-in-law.

<sup>46</sup> Children of college educated parents leave home earlier than others. Most of them leave home because they are going off to college. There is relatively little difference in the statistics of those who leave homes in which the parent has completed high school and those who parents had even less education.

<sup>47</sup> It is interesting to note that once the child does leave home, young men are more likely to return than young women. Goldscheider and Goldscheider. "Leaving and Returning Home in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America."

<sup>48</sup> Goldscheider and Goldscheider. "Leaving and Returning Home in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America," *Population Bulletin* 28, no. 4 (March 1994).

<sup>49</sup> Frances Goldscheider and Calvin Goldscheider. "Leaving and Returning Home in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America," *Population Bulletin* 28, no. 4 (March 1994).

adulthood. When does a household occur? "Household formation occurs when the youth becomes a head, wife, or cohabiter<sup>50</sup> of a household head in a household that either contains no other family units or contains only family units that are of secondary status."<sup>51</sup> The establishment of a household enhances a young person's feelings of independence and freedom from parental control. Though there has been a shift toward delaying the time one leaves home and forms a household, most young adults have at some point established a household by the age of thirty. It is important to note that, "households headed by young adults represent 28% of all American households, but they have only 8% of all assets (Calculated from the U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990.)."<sup>52</sup>

### Young Adulthood – 26 to 35

The term young adulthood implies that one has reached adulthood. This means that not only physically has one reached adulthood, but emotionally, as well. This is important, as one does not simply reach young adulthood by turning a certain age. In fact, one may not reach young adulthood until well into the thirties. Most people who have reached this stage in life are more settled. They have formed their identities, thus many have concluded or are concluding their education; many have settled into their long-term occupation; and many have settled into a more stable

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<sup>50</sup> "An estimated 50% of all couples living together in heterosexual relationships today are nonmarried cohabitants. Lewis R. Aiken Human Development in Adulthood. New York: Plenum Press, 1998.

<sup>51</sup> Hill and Yeung "How Has the Changing Structure of Opportunities Affected Transitions to Adulthood?" Transitions to Adulthood in a Changing Economy

<sup>52</sup> It is also important to note that as a result of heading a household, the average young adult is likely to have experienced a substantial loss of economic resources during the transition to adulthood—a loss that

path of life.

This stage of life concentrates on career entry and advancement, as well as family planning. At this stage, a young adult will seek opportunity and economic stability outside of his home community. "The highest mobility rates are found in adults in their twenties and early thirties, and their young children."<sup>53</sup> On average young adults move at least once every two years.

For many young adults there is more of an emphasis on self and family rather than the company when it comes to work relationships.<sup>54</sup> Thus, for the young adult there is no "corporate loyalty" as there once was a generation ago. Due to this, a large percentage of young adults will switch jobs because they want to move where they can get the best deal in terms of pay, benefits, and hours.<sup>55</sup> The young adult with a higher education level and higher social status is more likely to view moving as an opportunity and will adjust to it.<sup>56</sup> However the young adult is decidedly picky about where he will go. There has to be a strong social support and a high proportion of same age peers in the new place. Thus, a large number are moving from towns to cities.<sup>57</sup>

Most young adults have set up a household by the age of thirty, however because of their mobility, many have set up more than one household. As well, many

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probably will not be recouped until middle age. Ronald Rindfuss, "The Young Adult Years: Diversity, Structural Change, and Fertility," *Demography* 28, no. 4 (November 1991), pp. 493-512.

<sup>53</sup> US Bureau of the Census, 1995

<sup>54</sup> Lewis R. Aiken *Human Development in Adulthood*. New York: Plenum Press, 1998.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

young adults may have shared that household with more than one primary person. However, at this stage in adult development, many young adults are beginning to seriously consider their future life partner. By this stage, most young adults have decided what it is they are looking for in a life partner, but may not have found that person yet. Many young adults have spent a lot of time focusing on their life-careers and financial independence that they are only ready at this point to find a life partner.

Erikson sees this stage in development as one in which there is a focus on intimacy and isolation. The young adult is learning to make personal commitments to others, such as a life partner and/or a child. However the young adult at the same time is seeking to keep his own identity in tact, thus there is some need for self isolation. The young adult wants to identify himself with his commitments, but his does not solely want to be identified by them.

With regard to religious thought and practice, much takes place within the stages of development. It has been noted that, "... practices of prayer change qualitatively between the high school and college years, with increasing focus on help in coping with and understanding life circumstances rather than changing the circumstances themselves."<sup>58</sup> As well, it has been shown that "more advanced students were significantly less likely to express high levels of religious moratorium, confirming the notion that identity exploration often declines as students prepare to

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Laura G. DeHaan and John Schulenberg, "The Covariation of Religion and Politics during the Transition to Young Adulthood: Challenging Global Identity Assumptions." *Journal of Adolescence*, 1997.

leave the university setting."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.



Section Two:  
Sociological and Demographic Statistics and Data of this Age Cohort

Higher education's population is on the rise in the United States. According to the United States Bureau of the Census, in 1993 60% of those eligible are attending college.<sup>60</sup> The college experience for young adults is full of excitement and experimentation. Many are away from home, living with friends, and for the first time making some decisions for themselves. This period of experimentation is a little easier for many, as there is still the security of parental financial support.<sup>61</sup> When the time comes to graduate from college, the world of a young adult can be thrown into chaos. The college years offered a full time support system comprised of roommates and friends. In the months and weeks just before one graduates, there is time of uncertainty and questioning. One might begin asking such things as, "Should I return home?"; "Should I stay in the town where I went to school?"; "What do I really need to have a good life?"; "Should I move near friends?"; "Should I move in with my significant other?"; "Do I have enough money to live on my own?"

Following graduation there seems to be in today's society a normative period<sup>62</sup> of time in which young adults are not disposed to entering into and settling into long-term adult roles. During this period in life a young adult may change jobs frequently in hopes of finding something satisfying. Others find that they need to move around, as they hope to find a comfortable place to settle, one that meets their career needs as well as their social needs. For some, there is the realization that a college degree does not guarantee finding a satisfying and fulfilling job. Most of all, the young adult is trying to put all of the necessary pieces together in order to make it

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<sup>60</sup>Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "High Hopes in a Grim World: Emerging Adults' Views of Their Future and "Generation X"," *Youth and Society* 31, no. 3 (March 2000): 267

<sup>61</sup> For some the support may come from the government in the form of grants and loans. Most likely students in college are not thinking about the time when those loans will have to be paid back.

on his own. This can mean establishing and maintaining a household, taking responsibility for educational loan repayment, and just making the necessary ends meet.

In today's society young adults utilize this time period, between college and family formation, to become financially independent and to figure out exactly what it is that they want their lives to be like. For example, a young woman may be besieged with feelings of wanting to be a mother and stay home, while struggling with the idea of having a fulfilling and fast paced career. She feels that until she can make her decision, she simply cannot settle down. Ultimately this extended period of experimentation may stem from ambivalence and fear. Many young adults are simply afraid of the future and the complexity of it all, and they do not know how to make the transition to "mature" adulthood. While this time period may seem grim, most young adults ultimately feel a sense of optimism regarding what is to come in their lives. It is this sense of optimism that drives the young adult and carries him through his pursuits. It is this optimism that allows him to believe that personal success is possible.

While this time period can be both frustrating and fulfilling for the individual going through it, it also has profound effects on our society. While large numbers of men have always entered and been in the work force, the numbers for women have been increasing over the past thirty years. According to the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, 43% of Jewish women in the 18-24 age group were a part of the work force, as well as 76% of those women in the 25-34 age group. Further, 90% of

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<sup>62</sup> Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no 5 (May 2005).

Jewish women in the workforce participate in white-collar jobs.<sup>63</sup> This awesome figure, however, has implications for marriage and fertility, income, and participation in community activities. Most women in these age groups put off marriage and childbearing so that they can pursue their careers.

Beyond large numbers of men and women entering the workforce, the number of single individuals is on the rise. The classification of those who are considered single, for the purposes of this thesis, are those who have never been married. In the general male Caucasian population, eighty-three percent of those between the ages of 18-24 have never been married, as well as thirty-four percent of those between the ages of 25-34.<sup>64</sup> Within the Jewish community the numbers are slightly higher, as ninety-six percent of those between the ages of 18-24 have never been married, as well as forty-nine percent of those between the ages of 25-34.<sup>65</sup> For females within the general Caucasian population, sixty-eight percent between the ages of 18-24 have never been married, as well as twenty percent of those 25-34. Within the Jewish community, just as with the males, the numbers are higher, as eighty-five percent of those between the ages of 18-24 have never been married, and thirty-one percent of those between 25 and 34 have never been married.

Besides the focus on career and future, many young adults may be avoiding marriage for the time being as cohabitation is on the rise. Since society's acceptance of cohabitation is a relatively new phenomenon, there are no hard statistics on how many young adults are actually living together. In one analysis of the National Jewish

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<sup>63</sup> Sidney Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry: Insights from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey," in American Jewish Year Book, (New York and Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Publication Society, 1992), 115

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Population Survey it was stated that five percent of singles reported living with roommates, and according to the author, "with anecdotal impressions," only one percent said that they were living with "partners" or "lovers."<sup>66</sup> It is the opinion of this author that cohabitation is underreported. For many young adults cohabitation allows them the opportunity to "try out" married life without the full commitment. It is the belief of many that if one can survive living together then one can survive marriage.

This extended period of singledom has drastically changed the marriage statistics over the past thirty years. Postponed marriage and childbirth exist in almost all aspects of American culture. In 1970 the median age of marriage for females was twenty-one and for males it was twenty-three.<sup>67</sup> The U.S. Bureau of the Census reported in 1996 that the median age of marriage had risen to twenty-five for females and twenty-seven for males.<sup>68</sup> The 1990 National Jewish Population Survey indicates that the median age of marriage for Jewish men and women tends to match that of the U.S. Census statistics.<sup>69</sup> What is interesting is that the data of the NJPS points to the fact that even those in more religious communities, especially males, are remaining single longer.<sup>70</sup>

Besides affecting the age of marriage, this lengthened period of singledom has affected fertility rates. Most researchers have figured out that today's women are having children during the fifteen-year period between the ages of 27-42,

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<sup>66</sup> Sylvia Barak Fishman, Jewish Life and American Culture (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 104

<sup>67</sup> Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "High Hopes in a Grim World: Emerging Adults' Views of Their Future and "Generation X", *Youth and Society* 31, no. 3 (March 2000):

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Sidney Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry: Insights from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey," in American Jewish Year Book, (New York and Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Publication Society, 1992),

whereas a generation ago, their mothers were having children between the fifteen-year period of 20-35.<sup>71</sup> The Jewish community is experiencing drastically low fertility rates, as we are now below replacement levels of reproduction. We are even behind the general white population of the United States with regard to fertility rates.

Demographers have estimated that the completed size of the contemporary Jewish family will be well under two children per household.<sup>72</sup> The statistics of the NJPS indicate the estimates of the demographers in fact correct. The total number of children per Jewish woman does not go over one until the age range of 30-34 when it only reaches 1.1 children born to each woman.

While singledom, late marriage, and declining birth rates seriously affect Jewish continuity, they also affect affiliation rates. If one assumes that synagogue affiliation happens when children enter the home, then we cannot expect to see young adults affiliate with synagogue until they are well into their thirties. It then becomes necessary for other Jewish communal organizations, as well as synagogues to figure out how to meet the needs of the already large number of Jewish singles and young marrieds without children.

While it was not my intention to focus on the young Jewish single specifically, there is much to say regarding this cohort within Judaism. In our tradition there is a midrash that says: "Until the age of 20, the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and waits [asking], When will he take a wife? As soon as one attains 20 and has not married, He exclaims: Blasted be his bones!"

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<sup>70</sup> This refers to those who are studying in yeshivot, as well as those pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees.

<sup>71</sup> Sylvia Barak Fishman, *Jewish Life and American Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999),

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 98.

It is clear that the notion of finding a mate has been important throughout the history of Judaism. We are told in Genesis that Adam is in need of an עֵצֶר כְּנָגְדּוֹ, a helpmate. The Talmud even tells us that anyone who is unmarried is incomplete.

In today's Jewish world being single is a normal part of the life cycle. According to the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, one in five Jews is single. This rising statistic is affecting and causing much commotion among all denominations of Judaism, as we watch the fertility rate of Judaism quickly decline.

While the community is concerned with the growing Jewish singles population, it has yet to figure out how to effectively involve singles into community life. It is unfortunate that even in the twenty-first century Jewish singles still feel the pain, anxiety, and social stigma that is deeply rooted in our tradition. Judaism is a communal religion, which seeks to provide a network of protective relationships that protect the individual and community to ensure continuity. One can see this play out by the fact that we pray in a minyan, a community, and not as individuals.

Judaism emphasizes marriage and pro-creation, as Samson Raphael Hirsch writes, "The founding of a home is the highest task of life. The welfare of the people and of humanity flowers only in and through the home. That task can be performed only by man and woman together, neither by man alone nor woman alone."<sup>73</sup> It is unfortunate that we as a community have isolated and alienated a whole group of people within the Jewish community, due to this emphasis. We have made the assumption that the single Jew is not yet complete, that he or she is simply a person in need of a mate. Thus, we do not look at the person for self; rather we are caught up with the fact that he or she is single. We also do not invite the single person to

participate in our communities as a viable member. Instead we create and invite them to participate in singles events, with the primary focus of matchmaking. Our hope is that the single will meet a mate, cease being single, and join the rest of the community. It is this type of ideology that keeps singles away from our communities.

Singles often times do not feel comfortable with the larger Jewish community. They feel as if they are being told they are unacceptable and incomplete. They feel lonely and estranged. One single described how he feels out of place at shul because everyone else is wearing a tallit.<sup>74</sup> A young woman had a similar feeling, when, during one of the worship services on Rosh Hashanah, the rabbi invited everyone to wrap their tallitot around their families. She did not have a family and immediately felt like a stranger.

Beyond making singles feel uncomfortable, we tend to stereotype them. We assume that they are single for one reason or another. We are not compassionate and tend to blame them for their "predicament." Finally, some feel that they are belittled and treated as if they are not adults, assuming that they are "young" or immature because they are single.

While delayed marriage was not the norm, there was a need to welcome into the community those young adults who had not yet gotten married. One need only to look at the organizations highlighted in the following chapter of this thesis. We need only look to the past to see that the Jewish community once embraced young singles. Twenty and thirty years ago there were more clubs and social organizations available to the young adult, which were meeting grounds for singles. The Jewish Greek letter

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<sup>73</sup> Marlene Adler Marks, "A Sense of Self: Who Knows One?" *Hadassah*, (June/July 2000)

<sup>74</sup> This man is from an Orthodox community where it is the tradition that men do not wear tallit until they get married. Joseph A. Grunblatt "A 'Singular' Problem". *Jewish Action* 50, no. 3 (Summer 1990)



organizations and the Young Men's Hebrew Associations programmed for its members, the majority of whom were young singles. They provided opportunities for young Jewish singles to socialize and interact. Yes, these organizations encouraged social interaction which they hoped would lead to marriage, but what is most important is that their programming was specifically aimed at young Jewish singles. Fraternal organizations made sure that all members felt comfortable, as they arranged dates for their young, single members. Communities embraced these young social clubs and saw them as healthy outlets for young Jewish adults.

Yet today, it seems as if we have lost interest in sustaining those organizations that programmed specifically for young Jewish singles. As a community we have worked on assimilating, fitting in, with the rest of mainstream America. We have encouraged our young people to excel outside of the Jewish world, to join non-Jewish societies, to be a part of those elite things<sup>75</sup> that were once denied to American Jews. This push to be a part of every aspect of American culture and to excel is precisely what has led to the phenomenon of delayed marriage. Young adults want to figure it all out before they settle down and establish permanent adult roles.

This delay in marriage has also complicated the dating and mating process while enlarging the pool of potential mates. It used to be easier, when a father or matchmaker controlled the selection process. The young person would sit, wait, and pray that he would be matched up with someone with whom he could live. Today, with arranged marriages a thing of the past, young adults worry about their potential mate's income, maturity, his intellect, and his looks.

Our task as a community is to accommodate young adults in the Jewish community. We need to reach out to young Jewish singles, invite them into our communities, and make them feel welcome and wanted. We need to consider them as viable adults who can give to the community, even if they are not married. We need to include them in all aspects of Jewish life. We need to invite them to serve on the boards of our organizations and get involved in the heart of our communities. Young singles are looking for the same things as "older" adults; they want to study, to pray, to lead, and to find community. According to one author, "a truly adult singles program allows participants to contribute one's energies without first having to find their beshert."<sup>76</sup>

The task of finding a mate is not always easy for young Jews. It is not that there are not enough Jewish males and females to go around.<sup>77</sup> Rather, there are built in pressures of finding a "Jewish" mate. However, young Jews often want to turn away from other Jews, as stereotypes about the opposite sex are rampant. Young Jewish males tend to think that Jewish women are loud and obnoxious, while young Jewish females assume that their male counterparts are only looking for women who are of the "Baywatch" caliber.<sup>78</sup> Many in the Orthodox world believe that these ideas are silly and only happen in the secular world. They feel that in the secular world physical attraction displaces other compatibility issues, which often get overlooked, such as when or whether or not to have children, where to live, and what are each

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<sup>75</sup> This would include country club membership and membership into such community organizations as the Junior League.

<sup>76</sup> Marlene Adler Marks, "A Sense of Self: Who Knows One?" *Hadassah*, (June/July 2000)

<sup>77</sup> In the American Jewish population there is a near balance in terms of gender composition. There are 98.8 males for every 100 females. In the total white population there are 95.8 males per 100 females. Sidney Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry: Insights from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey," in American Jewish Year Book, (New York and Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Publication Society, 1992)

person's career goals. They feel that secular singles are not concerned with marriage. The Orthodox community feels that its use of matchmaking has the best of both worlds. "Before two young people meet, they and their families check each other out thoroughly – their background, education, and aspirations. When they both meet they both know that logically they fit together; and the opportunity is given to let the emotions grow. It's an arranged date, not an arranged marriage."<sup>79</sup> The process concentrates on character, personality, and compatibility before meeting; the couple knows that they look good on paper.

What is surprisingly interesting is that many young Jews are beginning to feel that perhaps the Orthodox or "traditional" way of finding a mate might be more appealing.<sup>80</sup> Young Jews are tired of the singles scene, of going to bars and handing out their phone numbers. Many get too involved in their work to even make the effort to attend singles functions. Matchmaking services are a rapidly growing industry in the Jewish community. Jewish Federations, worried about continuity, are spending a lot of money to fund matchmaking services in their cities. Personalized matchmaking, shadchanim, services are becoming extremely popular.<sup>81</sup> Beyond personal matchmaking services, virtual, on-line dating services have become increasingly popular.<sup>82</sup> Young Jews can post addresses, photos, and personal messages without a commitment to commit.

Beyond the world of matchmaking there are numerous programs in various communities that are reaching out to singles, both intentionally and unintentionally.

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<sup>78</sup> Sylvia Barak Fishman, *Jewish Life and American Culture*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999)

<sup>79</sup> Quote by a Lubavitcher rebbetzin in New Jersey, in David Eliezrie, "When Chava met Solly: Are Shidduchs A Better Way?" *Moment* 22, no.3 (June 1997): 44.

<sup>80</sup>David Eliezrie, "When Chava met Solly : Are Shidduchs A Better Way?" *Moment* 22, no.3 (June 1997)

<sup>81</sup> They are especially popular among high-powered singles that say they have no time to date extensively. Netty C. Gross, "Sick of Being Single," *The Jerusalem Report* VIII, no. 13 (October 1997)

As mentioned earlier, B'nai Jeshurun, a "Conservative" congregation on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, has over a thousand singles flocking to its standing room only Friday evening services. "Actually its the highlight of my week. I think single Jews are anxious for a community, for a connection with something, maybe each other. I find the whole atmosphere here very poignant. Touching in this weird way," comments one 34-year-old Jewish male regarding B'nai Jeshurun.<sup>83</sup> On the West Coast, Rabbi David Wolpe with the help of Jewish musician Craig Taubman created "Friday Night Live," a Friday evening worship experience modeled on that of B'nai Jeshurun. It too attracts large crowds of Jewish singles. As stated in one magazine article on this worship phenomenon, "non-orthodox singles, who otherwise would not be regular synagogue goers, are increasingly flocking to Shabbat services and Torah lectures, which they say are optimal places to meet."<sup>84</sup>

Outside of worship, many young Jewish singles are turning to study as a way to meet other single Jews. Orthodox rebbetzin Esther Jungreis founded the Hineini Heritage Center, an organization dedicated to enhancing Jewish knowledge of Judaism, in Manhattan. Her Tuesday evening Torah lectures attract over a thousand, up scale single men and women - most of them non-orthodox.<sup>85</sup> They come to study and to meet other Jews. "I've tried everything, from summer in the Hamptons to an AIPAC fundraiser and trips to Israel with the UJA," says a 32-year-old non-Orthodox woman named Tina, who attends the classes. Now I'm trying Torah."<sup>86</sup> In addition to its Torah studies and singles events, Hineini now offers a group for young couples, as

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<sup>82</sup> See the appendix for lists of personal and on-line matchmaking services.

<sup>83</sup> Netty C. Gross, "Sick of Being Single," *The Jerusalem Report* VIII, no. 13 (October 1997)

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

well as parenting classes. Rebbetzin Jungreis believes that marriage can be difficult, especially the longer one waits. She feels that it is important to offer a group for young couples and parents, as many need the support. "It gets harder to acclimate and compromise," she says. "Getting married is like learning to swim; the older you are, the scarier it becomes."<sup>87</sup>

With the majority of our youth attending college and the years following in which our young adults continue their quest toward full independence, we have to decide as a community how we will respond to the ever increasing number of singles. While there is a need to worry about delayed marriage and its affects on the Jewish birthrate, we can ultimately do more harm than good if this becomes our sole focus. It becomes the job of the whole community to welcome our young singles into the community. The hope is that young Jews will feel secure in their Jewish identity, feel at home and welcome in the Jewish community, and perhaps find a Jewish mate.

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<sup>87</sup> Netty C. Gross, "Sick of Being Single," *The Jerusalem Report* VIII, no. 13 (October 1997)

Section Three:  
Meeting the Needs of Young Adults: An Historical Overview

During the past hundred years the Jewish community of the United States sought to meet the needs of its "young adults" in numerous ways. Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jewish societies and organizations sprang up to answer this need. Due to anti-Semitism, Jews were banned from becoming members of many "secular" societies and clubs. Many in the Jewish community felt the need to combat this problem by forming Jewish societies of their own. Frequently these societies were purely academic, specifically focused on Jewish scholarship and the revitalization of Jewish culture, while others focused on the social needs of Jewish young adults. These social groups, such as the Young Men's Hebrew Association and the Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity, sought to give the young Jewish man a place where he could not only be social, but also learn to appreciate his Jewish culture. He could participate in those pursuits enjoyed by young men, such as athletics and opportunities to meet the opposite sex. Whether or not the founders of these organizations worried about the Jewish future, the survival of the Jewish community in the United States, their organizations were popular and young Jews were becoming members. These organizations gave many young people the opportunity to appreciate and develop their Jewish identity when it was not easy to be Jewish in this country. These organizations also allowed for young people to learn about and participate in basic Jewish culture, something that perhaps some of them might not have done otherwise.

The following chapter offers an historical glimpse of some the organizations that young Jews have historically been a part of. Some of these organizations are no longer in existence today, while others still exist, but perhaps have drastically changed since their initial inception. Some organizations have gone through such

radical changes that they no longer meet the needs of the particular age cohort which is central to this thesis. The organizations that have been chosen represent a broad range of the academic, social, and religious organizations that have been available to young Jews.

### Menorah Association

The Menorah Association began in 1906 at Harvard University by several Jewish students who agreed that there was a need for the revitalization of the study of Jewish history and culture.<sup>88</sup> Their aim was to raise the morale of Jewish students by providing them with the opportunity to become better acquainted with Jewish life and thought.<sup>89</sup> Jewish student organizations were formed at other universities most notably Minnesota and Illinois. When these societies became aware of each other, they set up sporadic communications, and thus, the Menorah ideal was gradually spread throughout the country.<sup>90</sup>

In 1911, the president of the Harvard Menorah Society undertook as part of his duties to build the intercollegiate Menorah organizations. In 1912, several conventions were held around the country in order to discuss the formation of a national Menorah organization. In 1913, during a convention at the University of Chicago, the Intercollegiate Menorah Association (IMA) was formally established. Henry Hurwitz, one of the founders of the Harvard Menorah Society and active in the

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<sup>88</sup> M. Carolyn Dellenbach and Kevin Proffitt, An Inventory to the Henry Hurwitz/Menorah Association Memorial Collection. American Jewish Archives MS Collection #2, 1911-1963.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.



formation of the IMA, was elected as its first president, and for the rest of his career devoted himself entirely to the promotion of the Menorah movement.<sup>91</sup>

The main function of the IMA was the "promotion in American colleges and universities of the study of Jewish history, culture, and problems, and the advancement of Jewish ideals."<sup>92</sup> The major functions of the "parent" organization were to regulate the nature and purpose of every constituent Menorah Society and to stimulate and assist the Menorah Societies in carrying out their purposes.

The formation of the Intercollegiate Association in 1913 was welcomed by the Jewish communities in American colleges and universities, and also seemed to be well-accepted by college and university authorities who saw it as fitting into the scholarly objectives of their institutions.<sup>93</sup> By 1913, there were 30 societies affiliated with the IMA, and, within four years this number had more than doubled. Graduate Menorah Societies also had been organized in various cities for those who had graduated but were still interested in maintaining their Menorah ties.<sup>94</sup>

While the Menorah Society held many different types of activities, such as study circles, plays, and debates, its basic element was a program of lectures. In 1913 a list was made available to all member societies of available lecturers and funds were provided to pay for the traveling expenses of the lecturers to the particular campuses.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> M. Carolyn Dellenbach and Kevin Proffitt, An Inventory to the Henry Hurwitz/Menorah Association Memorial Collection. American Jewish Archives MS Collection #2,1911-1963.

<sup>92</sup> AJA Manuscript Collection No 2, Box 67/Folder 1.

<sup>92</sup> AJA Manuscript Collection No 2, Box 67/Folder 1.

<sup>93</sup> M. Carolyn Dellenbach and Kevin Proffitt, An Inventory to the Henry Hurwitz/Menorah Association Memorial Collection. American Jewish Archives MS Collection #2,1911-1963.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> The following is a list of the lecturers and their topics from the Report of Menorah Societies for December 1919. Henry Madolski (student) "The Jew and the Theater," Brown University; Rabbi H.

Study circles were another common element of the Menorah Society. The IMA provided bibliographies, syllabi, and pamphlets to help aid individual circles in their academic pursuits. There were also intercollegiate debates, plays, concerts, and musicals with the intent of adding to the Jewish students' awareness and appreciation of their heritage. In 1919, at the University of Texas one such debate topic was "Reform Judaism Strengthens the Jewish Consciousness of Today."<sup>96</sup> . The IMA held contests and offered prizes for the best undergraduate essays on the subjects of Jewish history and Jewish achievement. There was even an annual trophy awarded to help motivate campus activities.<sup>97</sup> The trophy was awarded to the society judged to have done the best work for the year.

The IMA held regular conventions and conferences. Debates and symposia between the represented societies took place at the IMA gatherings. Addresses by IMA officials and others, concerning Jewish history and culture, were major highlights of these events. The annual conventions and conferences were held in December, through the year 1919.<sup>98</sup>

In 1915 the Menorah Society began publishing a journal called The Menorah Journal. The journal was of an academic nature, transmitting scholarly writings regarding Jewish culture and ideals and serving as the official source of communication for the association. The first issue premiered in January, 1915 with

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Raphael Gold, "The Greek and Hebrew Viewpoint Regarding Women," Simmons College; Rabbi Alexander B. Lyons, "A Militant Judaism," Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute; and Professor Martin Spregling, "Poetry of the Arabic Desert, and the Jewish Exponents Thereof," Chicago University. AJA Manuscript Collection No 2, Box 67/Folder 1.

<sup>96</sup> AJA Manuscript Collection No 2, Box 67/Folder 1.

<sup>97</sup> Irving Lehman Trophy, which was a seven-branched candelabrum.

<sup>98</sup> At the 1919 convention, they decided to hold future IMA conventions biennially and to hold district conference during the alternate years.

Louis Brandeis contributing the leading article, "A Call to the Educated Jew," and with greetings from such notables as David Philipson, Stephen S. Wise, Cyrus Adler and Kaufmann Kohler.<sup>99</sup> The editorial statement of the premiere issue described the aims and aspirations of the Journal: "Scholarly when scholarship will be in order, but always endeavoring to be timely, vivacious, readable; keen in the pursuit of truth wherever its source and whatever the consequences; a Jewish forum open to all sides, devoted first and last to bringing out the values of Jewish culture and ideals, of Hebraism and of Judaism and striving for their advancement..."<sup>100</sup>

Due to the large number of things needed to be put into the Journal, since it served a dual function, the Journal was split into two separate components. In 1917 the IMA established The Menorah Bulletin, to assume the communication role and The Menorah Journal continued as an academic exponent of Judaism.

During the summer of 1922, the Menorah Society introduced another program. The Menorah Summer School began. This included six weeks of courses, seminars, and discussions between students and teachers concerning such things as Jewish history and literature. There was a three fold purpose to the summer school program: to train members to participate in and head study circles and debates; to teach them to pursue Jewish studies in the Menorah spirit of free inquiry; and to provide a public "intelligently appreciative" of the efforts of scholars, teachers, and others working in Jewish fields. The Menorah School held two sessions in 1922 and 1923.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> *The Menorah Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January, 1915), p.3-12.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>101</sup> AJA Manuscript Collection No 2, Box 67/Folder 1.

<sup>101</sup> AJA Manuscript Collection No 2, Box 67/Folder 1.

With the rise of the Hillel Foundation in the 1920's, the popularity of the Menorah Societies began to fade sole dedication to the development of an intellectual elite. The Hillel Foundation's encouragement of social, as well as scholarly programming, seemed to be the reason. By 1926 there were only fifty-one member societies remaining in the IMA. Finally, by the late 1920's the intercollegiate phase of the Menorah movement ended.<sup>102</sup>

A desire to organize primarily for social needs was a problem for the IMA. In 1921 there was a faction of the Menorah Society at Clark College who wanted to re-organize the group and hold only social functions.<sup>103</sup> The need for students to affiliate socially in a Jewish setting, was strong. With the growing number of Jewish student organizations forming on college campuses, the Menorah Societies now had to face the fact that they were no longer the only Jewish student organization on campus. They now had to compete with Jewish fraternities, sororities, student congregations, Zionist and Hebrew societies, and hosts of other independent social groups.

The Menorah Society's leadership blamed their lack of membership on the low intellectual level of the students of the 1920's<sup>104</sup>, however times were changing and students wanted more than just academic and intellectual engagement with

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<sup>102</sup> AJA Manuscript Collection No 2, Box 67/Folder 1.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> "Aside from the multiple interests of the Jewish students on the campus, the plain fact remains that the intellectual level of students in 1922 is considerably under that of 1906, or even 1913. There are many reasons for this, the increased number of college students, the removal of barriers for entrance requirements, the trend among the people of the 'middle classes' to send their children to college, and especially among our Jewish immigrants, the almost inevitable desire for a college education among the 'second generation.' This has led to the decline of the Menorah Society." From an analysis and a recommendation by Julietta Kahn

their Judaism. Some students were interested in religious outlets, while many others were extremely interested in engaging in social interaction with the opposite sex, in hopes of finding their spouse.

Though the IMA and its societies no longer existed, the Menorah Journal itself continued to be published until 1963.

### Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity

In 1898, Dr. Richard James Horatio Gottheil, a professor at Columbia University, became president of the Federation of American Zionists (later the ZOA).<sup>105</sup> In his efforts to recruit new members, he realized that he could not overlook well educated, American born or raised, fluent English speaking Jewish students, as these were exactly the type of young men the Zionist movement needed. It was his belief that the Zionist ideals might be just the thing that was needed to help revive the young men's waning enthusiasm for their heritage and instill in them renewed feelings of pride and self-worth.

Too often he saw the Jewish students at Columbia University being excluded from social and extracurricular activities. The Jewish students experienced hostility from the non-Jewish students, and this was dangerous as many of the Jewish students then chose to opt out of Judaism and reject the Jewish people at the first possible opportunity.

Dr. Gottheil felt that the best way to combat this rejection of Judaism was to help the students form a group of their own. So, with the need for a Jewish group,

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<sup>105</sup> Dr. Gottheil was a professor in the Department of Semitic Languages at Columbia University for forty-nine years. Sanua, Marianne R. "Here's to Our Fraternity" One Hundred Years of Zeta Beta Tau 1898-1998. Hanover, New Hampshire: Zeta Beta Tau Foundation, Inc., 1998.

and the need for interest in the Zionist cause, a new organization was formed. Dr. Gottheil and his students modeled their new organization on Vienna's Kadima and named their group Zion Be-mishpat Tipadeh, ZBT, (Zion shall be redeemed with justice)<sup>106,107</sup>.

ZBT, in 1898, was a "highly idealistic, religiously and intellectually oriented Zionist debating and discussion society."<sup>108</sup> Its membership consisted of upper classmen and graduate students from several colleges, around the area of Columbia University, into a collegiate social fraternity modeled on its non-Jewish counterparts<sup>109</sup>. Thus making Zeta Beta Tau the oldest of the historically Jewish college fraternities in the United States.

ZBT was not unique in its religious origins and symbols.<sup>110</sup> Higher education, until the mid nineteenth century, consistently prepared educated candidates for the ministry. There were also older and larger fraternities that were founded by Christian men studying to enter the clergy, and their Christian symbols and symbolism remained an important part of their ritual and paraphernalia.

Membership in ZBT was open to all Jewish men at least eighteen years of age who were enrolled at a college, university, or professional school and were of

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<sup>106</sup> (The first Jewish nationalist dueling fraternity 1883) organization was to fight anti-Semitism, raise Jewish national consciousness, resist assimilation, and work for the Jewish colonization of Palestine. Later they sought to defend Jewish honor by dueling with the anti-Semites who insulted the Jewish name. Later the anti-Semites declared that it was even beneath their dignity to duel with them. In 1886 they were among the first follower of Herzl after The Jewish State was published.

<sup>107</sup> Quote from Isaiah

<sup>108</sup> Sanua, Marianne R. "Here's to Our Fraternity" One Hundred Years of Zeta Beta Tau 1898-1998. Hanover, New Hampshire: Zeta Beta Tau Foundation, Inc., 1998.

<sup>109</sup> At the turn of twentieth century student fraternities were popular in both Europe and the United States. On some campuses they dominated student life. In choosing Greek letters and mottos, students would identify with the glories of the ancient Greek civilization, the athleticism, art, literature, philosophy, and democratic values. The Central European fraternity included beer drinking, good fellowship, heated discussion, and physical recreation as well as political activities.

<sup>110</sup> In the beginning, its symbol was the Star of David, and its colors were blue and white.

"unimpeachable character." The formal objectives in ZBT's first charter were: "to promote the cause of Zionism and the welfare of Jews in general; and to unite fraternally all collegiate Zionists of the United States and Canada."<sup>111</sup>

Around the year 1900, Zeta Beta Tau began to evolve into the fraternity that it is known as today. At that time, the members decided not to limit themselves solely to the issue of Zionism, as they did not want to shut out those Jewish college men who had not yet decided where they stood on the Zionist question. Their new objective was to simply promote Judaism. This also began their move from an organization of graduate and rabbinical students toward a college fraternity for Jewish men. They were now meeting the needs of young Jewish college students who were deprived of fraternity affiliation simply because they were Jewish.

ZBT issued a new constitution, October 21, 1906, to meet its new goals.<sup>112</sup> The constitution now read that its missions was to "promulgate, foster, encourage, strengthen and continue the friendship gained at college"; to "inculcate in the lives of its members a love and respect for all things Jewish, and to help them exemplify their lives the highest ideals of the Jewish people."<sup>113</sup>

The 1920's were the golden age of the American college fraternity. With post war prosperity college attendance increased. Due to this increase in students, colleges found it difficult to meet all of the students' needs. Fraternities were able to help, as they could house and feed the students who were their members, as well as regulate their behavior. Only an expanding Jewish Greek system could accommodate the tens of thousand of young American Jews getting an educating for the first time.

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<sup>111</sup> Sanua, Marianne R. "Here's to Our Fraternity" One Hundred Years of Zeta Beta Tau 1898-1998. Hanover, New Hampshire: Zeta Beta Tau Foundation, Inc., 1998, 12.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

While every chapter's numbers were increasing, ZBT remained the largest (and oldest) Jewish fraternal organization.

It is important to understand that at that time, a college education was desirable. The university setting was seen as an essential place for one to make social and career contacts, polish social skills, participate in extracurricular activities and most importantly find one's mate. In those days, what happened outside of classroom soon became as important as what happened inside. Such that, on many campuses it was those who participated in Greek life who dominated student life and politics. Those were the students who set the standards of fashion, speech, and behavior.

Fraternities imparted values and taught life skills that were considered essential for truly educated persons. They gave students a more focused campus life, especially as the campus populations were exploding. There was also an emphasis on leadership and alumni loyalty, which encouraged success in business as well as financial contributions to the fraternity. The Jewish fraternities also made "good" behavior a concern. There was a fear that the Gentile college administrators would hold the Jewish students to a higher standard and punish them more harshly if they did misbehave.

The 1920's were also the time when the largest number of Jewish students joined Jewish fraternities and sororities. Jewish Greek life offered protection from the potentially hostile world, as it gave the student room, board, friendship, a great social life, including the necessary connections with young Jewish women, and an extensive program of business and social training.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid



Social contacts with young Jewish women were a very important part of ZBT. Matchmaking seemed to be key at ZBT's social gatherings. It was important for a young man to find his mate and within ZBT there was pressure on each and every brother to do so.<sup>114</sup> At each social gathering, the social chairman<sup>115</sup> had a "date list." This list was made up of young, eligible Jewish women who could be set up with the single brothers. This was emphasized at the ZBT conventions, as applicants who wished to have dates were asked to fill in forms that included such information as the age, height and hair color of the lady with whom they were to be matched. The women who were chosen had been carefully selected to meet certain minimum requirements, especially those of family background and membership in a congenial branch of Judaism. Finding a mate was of such importance that the ZBT newsletter always proudly announced the weddings that were taking place. It is also important to note that if a bride's name was not listed in an announcement, one typically assumed that she was not Jewish.

The years following World War II also saw an influx of students into the universities, as the GI bill had a major impact on one's decision to go to college. The fraternities were now faced with how to deal with teenagers and adults co-existing. There was a real sense of what to do, as there were teenagers who were into the stereotypical fraternity hazing and antics, and the young GI's who felt far removed from the hazing and antics, as well as the rules of no drinking, gambling, or unchaperoned women in the houses. The fraternity also had to deal with the fact that many of the GIs were married.

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<sup>114</sup> The young men felt pressured religiously, socially, and professionally.

<sup>115</sup> Person appointed or elected who organized and oversaw all aspects of the fraternity's social life.

In the post college arena, alumni clubs provided outlets for those members who had completed their college years. There were regularly scheduled activities, which allowed the young men to continue to socialize. They also continued to be a part of the collegiate chapters, serving as advisors.

Being limited solely to Jewish males was one of ZBT's strongest traditions. It was the first national college fraternity to openly and officially limit its membership strictly to Jewish men.<sup>116</sup> Beginning in the 1940's and 1950's the Greek system came under attack for the way it discriminated and kept people out. Many were worried that young students were being taught to not associate with people who were "different." ZBT struggled with this notion, as they themselves were often shunned for being Jewish. They did not want to be seen as doing the same thing from which they were trying to get away.

In 1954 Zeta Beta Tau officially changed their policy and became a non-sectarian fraternity. The resolution that was voted on stated, " Be it resolved, that the Supreme Council be requested to adjust the ritual of the fraternity in such a way as to remove all actual and implied religious restrictions for membership into our fraternity."<sup>117</sup> The adoption of this resolution made ZBT the last of the eleven historically Jewish fraternities<sup>118</sup> to get rid of its discriminatory clause.

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<sup>116</sup> It is important to note that it is estimated that among the sixty fraternities in the National Interfraternity Conference (NIC) two-thirds had some sort of clause in their constitution and ritual that kept the fraternity ethnically, racially, and a religiously homogeneous group.

<sup>117</sup> Pp. 197

<sup>118</sup> The historically Jewish fraternities are Zeta Beta Tau, Pi Lambda Phi, Phi Epsilon Pi, Phi Sigma Delta, Sigma Alpha Mu, Kappa Nu, Phi Alpha, Beta Sigma Rho, Alpha Epsilon Pi, Tau Delta Phi, and Tau Epsilon Phi. Of these fraternities, Pi Lambda Phi was the only one that began and remained a non-sectarian chapter.

The push for social transformation<sup>119</sup> on college campuses in the late 1950's and 1960's affected the Jewish community. All Jewish organizations from Hillel to the fraternities were feeling it, as there was no longer a self-segregation along religious lines. All students, males and females included, were living in relatively close proximity. Even though there had been antagonism between the rabbis of the respective Hillel foundations and the fraternities<sup>120</sup>, both still understood the need for one another, as they ensured that the Jewish students were socializing Jewishly. The problem with being non-sectarian was that ZBT could no longer participate in truly Jewish activities.

Fraternity life in general began to decline from the late sixties to the late seventies. Students were not interested in joining Greek organizations. With this decline in interest, ZBT fought to remain alive on many campuses around the country. In order to truly survive it merged with five other Jewish fraternities. First, ZBT merged with Phi Sigma Delta and Phi Alpha. Later they merged with Phi Epsilon Pi, which had merged with Kappa Nu. By 1970 the official name of ZBT had changed to: Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity: a Brotherhood of Kappa Nu, Phi Alpha, Phi Epsilon Pi, Phi Sigma Delta, Zeta Beta Tau."

Today ZBT struggles with how to retain its Jewish tradition while still remaining non-sectarian. Jewish college students no longer have to join a Jewish fraternity, as they are not kept out of "gentile" fraternities or clubs due to their Jewishness. However, ZBT in some ways still remains a "Jewish" fraternity, as its membership make up is primarily Jewish.

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<sup>119</sup> There was a push to move away from organizations with membership restrictions based on race, color, or creed. There was a need to unite rather than separate according to particular communities.

## Young Men's Hebrew Association-YMHA

The YMHA is the precursor to the Jewish Community Center movement.<sup>120</sup> In this section I will focus on the establishment and growth of the Philadelphia YMHA, as it is a good example of the impact that the YMHA had on one major Jewish community.

The Philadelphia YMHA was founded for the purpose of "the establishment of a reading room and library; lectures on historical, scientific, literary and social topics, and Jewish history and literature, entertainments of a social, artistic literary and musical nature."<sup>122</sup> Initially the YMHA was established to serve "male Israelites" in two age groups, 16-21 and 21 and up. These two age groups divided into two member units, actives and associates. The associates (16-21) had the all the same privileges of actives with the exception of voting rights.

The goal of the Philadelphia YMHA was to foster and maintain Jewish tradition, Jewish learning and Jewish ideals and to bring them to those who lacked either the opportunity or desire to pursue them scholastic fields. Thus it gave the Jews of Philadelphia the opportunity to learn about Judaism and express themselves Jewishly. It brought general knowledge of Jewish concepts, in a popular form, to the general public. It also provided a place for young men to socialize, as there was no general organization for personal social contact where all might mingle.

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<sup>120</sup> This antagonism had to do with member recruitment and emphasis placed on which organization a student should be involved in.

<sup>121</sup> The first YMHA was founded in Baltimore in 1854.

<sup>122</sup> William R. Langfeld. The Young Men's Hebrew Association of Philadelphia: A Fifty-Year Chronicle. Philadelphia, 1928, p. 8.

The entire community supported the Philadelphia YMHA. As such, it was used as a communal center by other community organizations, both Jewish and non-Jewish. It became an outlet for youthful energy and enthusiasm.

There were informal social events which included readings and recitations, music, and dramatic presentations. Debate was also an extremely popular activity. Athletics were later added, in 1888, as they became popular with young Jewish men. Beyond the informal social activities, the YMHA also hosted formal ones, which allowed young Jewish men and women to come together. Events such as the Purim Ball were popular and brought in revenue for the YMHA as well.

The women's branch of the Philadelphia YMHA began in the 1890's. It too offered many different activities for young Jewish women. Popular activities included classes in French, German, art, needlework, dramatics, gymnastics, dancing, and mandolin, glee and choral clubs.<sup>123</sup>

In 1917 the YMHA focused its yearly symposium on "The Young Man in Judaism." This event was the catalyst that brought the YMHA into more involvement with local synagogues. It also made the leadership of the YMHA more aware of the religious needs of its constituents and so the first public community Seder was held in 1917.

The role of the YMHA began to change with World War I, as it became engulfed in patriotic work. At this time, the YMHA was working with the Jewish Welfare Board and was actively involved in social justice pursuits. The Philadelphia YMHA also became an authorized Red Cross Agency. Throughout the war it was a

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

center of social entertainment for the enlisted men, as well as being a popular place for young people to socialize.

In 1924 the YMHA officially became the YM and YWHA, formally establishing it as an organization for both Jewish men and women. The membership was also expanded to allow for a junior membership, which included those who were age twelve to sixteen.

Around this time the organization began to once again pay attention to the religious interests of its constituents. The public Seder had continued and they added Friday Evening services for adults, as well as High Holy Day services. The board felt that it needed to make "efforts to reach persons who had or were in danger of drifting away from tradition, to bring Jewish atmosphere to Jewish youth and to afford an opportunity of religious observance to any who for one reason or another had not affiliated or could not affiliate with any established body."<sup>124</sup> This attempt at offering religious services was not a huge success as interest and attendance were small.

The Council of Young Mens Hebrew & Kindred Associations was founded in 1913 to coordinate and promote the efforts of the independent Centers. It was the first permanent body to which the individual centers could turn for networking, guidance, and support. Responding to the First World War, YMH&KA secured funds to enlist rabbis for service at military posts. They called a conference of several Jewish bodies, giving birth to the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) in 1917, which developed a comprehensive infrastructure for attending to the welfare of Jewish military personnel. JWB took over the responsibilities of YMH&KA when the two

organizations merged shortly after the war. The new JWB became the national association of JCCs and YM-YWHAs.<sup>125</sup>

In the 1950's and 1960's, due to prosperity, many Jews moved out to the suburbs. JCCs built large, modern facilities to serve the suburban populations. They offered new programs including day camps, teen travel camps, fine art and performing arts, nursery schools, athletics and sports, services to the aged, and informal education.<sup>126</sup>

The YMHA/JCC remained a haven for young people who lacked companionship and needed a place to socialize. However, like many other organizations, once Jews were allowed membership into other organizations, membership in the YMHA declined.

### B'nai Brith

B'nai Brith was founded as a Jewish brotherhood, October 13, 1843.<sup>127</sup> Its goal was to create a modern brotherhood that was secular, existing outside of the synagogue, for the purpose of "uniting and elevating the Sons of Abraham."<sup>128</sup> This new brotherhood was founded by twelve men<sup>129</sup> in their twenties and thirties who

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid

<sup>125</sup> <http://www.jcca.org/History.html>

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Edward E. Grusd. *B'nai Brith: The Story of a Covenant*. New York: Appleton-Century, 1966, p. 12. The first lodge grew quickly, and in 1844 a group of five men petitioned the Grand Lodge for a charter, thus Zion Lodge No. 2 was formed. Within the next few years more lodges formed around the United States.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Reuben Rodacher, Henry Kling, Isaac Dittenhoefer, Jonas Hecht, Henry Jones, Valentine Koon, William Renau, Isaac Rosenbourg, Hirsch Heineman, Michael Schwab, Samuel Schaefer, and Henry Anspacher are the founders of B'nai Brith.

were German born but had immigrated to the United States in the late 1820's or 30's.<sup>130</sup>

The Jewish community of New York City was in chaos. There was much disunity and animosity spilling over into the community as a result of the warring congregations and organizations.<sup>131</sup> The twelve founders often met and discussed, "the deplorable condition of the Jewish in this, our newly adopted country."<sup>132</sup> Its founders believed that Judaism was failing in the "new world." They sought to establish an alternative mode of affiliating with the Jewish community. Their goal was to synthesize the components of Jewishness and Americanism that assumed the benefits of emancipation and affirmed the value of being Jewish. B'nai Brith was formed in order that Jews of all opinions, and of whatever origin, would join and work together for a common goal.<sup>133</sup>

The founders set up B'nai Brith like other fraternal organizations. Its symbol, the menorah and its full title, Independent Order of B'nai Brith. Their motto was: *Wohlthätigkeit, Bruderliebe, und Eintracht* – Benevolence, Brotherly Love, and Harmony.<sup>134</sup> Just as other fraternal bodies of the time, B'nai Brith was a "secret" body. New members were admonished "to hear, to see, and to keep silent." This mystery intrigued the men and made them a more solemn closer knit brotherhood.<sup>135</sup> The preamble of the B'nai Brith constitution said the following:

"B'nai Brith has taken upon itself the mission of uniting Israelites in the work of promoting their highest interests and those of humanity; of developing and elevating the mental and moral character of the people

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, p. 20.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.



of our faith; of inculcating the purest principles of philanthropy, honor, and patriotism; of supporting science and art; alleviating the wants of the victims of persecution; providing for, protecting, and assisting the widow and orphan on the broadest principle of humanity."<sup>136</sup>

B'nai Brith developed as a service organization which had moral, social, philanthropic and educational objectives. Between 1880 and 1920, the height of Jewish immigration to the United States, the B'nai B'rith helped Jewish immigrants by establishing numerous welfare institutions. The Anti-Defamation League was started in 1913 and the Hillel Foundation was established in 1923.

B'nai Brith, even in its secular Jewishness, was still concerned with its moral commitments. Thus it became concerned with how to engage young Jewish adults.

#### Hillel

There was a need for a foundation to bring the "richness of the Jewish heritage to Jewish college students, who seems headed toward the exits of Judaism, instead of toward its future leadership."<sup>137</sup> Young Jewish college students were eager for acceptance as they struggled to deal with anti-Jewish hostility on campus. Unfortunately for many, the way they dealt with the hostility was to flat out deny their Judaism. Rabbi Benjamin Frankel<sup>138</sup>, sensing the need for a major Jewish influence on campus, established the first "Hillel", at the University of Illinois, in 1923.

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<sup>136</sup> This preamble is still in use today. Edward E. Grusd. B'nai Brith: The Story of a Covenant. New York: Appleton-Century, 1966, p. 20.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, p. 176.

<sup>138</sup> Rabbi Benjamin Frankel was ordained at the Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, in 1923. His student pulpit was in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. During his time in Champaign-Urbana he also served the student population. Upon his ordination he decided to assume the rabbinic responsibilities of his student pulpit and set up a type of rabbinate that would serve the needs of young Jews in college.

Rabbi Frankel held Reform services on Friday night, Orthodox services on Saturday, taught classes in Hebrew and Bible and sponsored social events, such as dances for the students at the local synagogue.<sup>139</sup> Rabbi Frankel also ensured that the Rabbi's office was open at all times for the students. He set up the Hillel so that the students governed themselves, including an elected student board and student committees to plan activities. Rabbi Frankel's intent was that Hillel be non-denominational, so as to attract all Jews.

At this time B'nai Brith was concerned with the problems of Jewish college students and was deciding whether or not to establish some sort of group on college campuses. Rabbi Frankel approached B'nai Brith for sponsorship<sup>140</sup> and in 1925 B'nai Brith voted to adopt Hillel into their central organization. However, B'nai Brith made one stipulation that if it were to sponsor Hillel it would do it exclusively or not at all.<sup>141</sup>

The leaders of B'nai Brith saw Hillel as the place to train new leaders, thus ensuring the continuity of B'nai Brith across the generations. Hillel was to fill the educational gap between adolescence and maturity.

With the onslaught of the depression, Hillel faced financial troubles, as B'nai Brith had to cut back its funding. In 1932, Hillel, with B'nai Brith's support, sought funding from the communities which it served. The support from the Jewish community was remarkable and within seven years Hillel grew from seven foundations to twenty-five.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Rabbi Frankel first approached the Union of American Hebrew Congregations however they refused to offer sponsorship.

<sup>141</sup> This idea is quoted in both Debra Dash Moore's book and Edward Grusd, however there is no information that explains why B'nai Brith made this stipulation.

By 1938 Hillel was ready to further expand its program. It put part-time advisors in schools where there were too few Jewish students to justify a full time Hillel. B'nai Brith also gave Hillel funding so that it could build houses at the universities with large Jewish student populations. In 1944 Hillel became international, with three foundations in Canada and one in Cuba.

In the 1950's and 60's Hillel became a major force on college campuses, as it met the changing needs of the Jewish students on campus. It was able to render its services to students as a separate extra-curricular activity that was at the university rather than one funded by the university. Hillel however brought religious influence to the campuses that it served. Some universities even granted credit for the courses which Hillel offered. The purpose of the courses at Hillel was to offer objective studies in Jewish history, ethics, religion, and literature, which the university might not otherwise have offered. The hope was that these courses would not only strengthen the Jewish identity of the campus' Jews, but also enhance the respect for Jewish studies on campus at a time when few universities offered any courses on the history of Jewish people or Judaism.

Hillel was the secular synagogue on campus. It acted on behalf of the Jewish college students, speaking to their needs, just as the early B'nai Brith lodges did its members. Its main goal was to offer a positive view of Judaism so that the students would not see Judaism as burdensome. It also focused on bringing Jews together to feel a sense of community. As well, by 1947, Hillel added leadership training as a major focus. To the existing program it added conventions and summer camping so that the students could get additional Jewish experience with other young Jews, outside of their particular campus setting.

Today Hillel struggles with many of the same issues with which the previous institutions have dealt. Jewish students can now choose whether or not they want to associate with Jewish life on campus, as there is no longer the sense of alienation from activities because students are Jewish. In my opinion, Hillel has sometimes struggled with its identity. Many students across the country see it as solely a religious institution, rather than one that can also offer them academic and social opportunities. Today however the renaissance of Hillel and its theme of *maximizing the number of Jews doing Jewish with other Jews*, has ultimately made it into the campus Jewish community center. On many campuses today, one can certainly still find religious services, yet Hillel has gone beyond that and many offer kosher dining, a fitness center, enrichment courses, and most importantly a place for Jewish students to hang out together, schmooz, and often times watch television.

Finally, while Hillel maintains that it is non-denominational, the make up of its student population can sway it toward a specific denominational bent. Thus, there are Hillels across the country that are labeled as Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform. For many students on college campuses this can be reason enough to not affiliate with Hillel.

#### Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Reverend Dr. Henry Berkowitz became the rabbi of Rodef Shalom in Philadelphia, PA, in September of 1892.<sup>142</sup> Together with the congregation, he built an association that was composed of the sons and daughters of members of the congregation. This association was to serve as a "junior congregation" of sorts, with

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<sup>142</sup> Richard J. Goldman, "The History of the Reform Jewish Youth Movements in America and Europe Since 1880" (Rabbinical Thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1968), 4.

representational voting rights in the congregation.<sup>143</sup> By 1912 this particular group was holding its own holiday services, and a year later was offering a series of evening classes.

Similarly, years earlier, in 1893, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, CCAR, discussed this movement toward congregations establishing junior congregations. A resolution was brought to the floor by Rabbis Silverman, Harris, and Grossman stating the following:

*"Resolved: That the Executive Committee can be requested to prepare for the next conference papers giving plans for the organization and conduct of congregational societies for young people."*<sup>144</sup>

There is not much else said with regard to this topic, but it is important to note that establishing societies for young adults in congregations was on the minds of rabbis in the late 1800's.

Following in the footsteps of Rodef Shalom, many congregations established "Young Folk's Temple Leagues." These groups received support from their congregational sisterhoods. The sisterhood members recognized the value in supporting the future leaders of the congregation. They encouraged the young adults to participate in ushering or hosting kiddush on Shabbat. They insisted that the young adults be invited to serve on Temple committees, invited to congregational meetings, and allowed to work in the religious school.<sup>145</sup>

In April of 1925, Congregation Emanuel in New York City, held the first meeting of the New York Federation of Young Folk's Temple Leagues. There were

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<sup>143</sup> One male representative, per every twenty-five members enrolled in this group, could attend and vote at meetings of the congregation and could annually elect a member to the Temple Board.

<sup>144</sup> CCAR Yearbook, Vol. 3, 48.

<sup>145</sup> Leon Morris, "The Founding of the Reform Jewish Youth Organization in America." (University of Pittsburgh, 1987).

eleven charter groups. The purpose was "to promote knowledge of Judaism and Jewish values; to promote the welfare of the Jewish people; to stimulate cooperation between the groups; to encourage sociability; and to cooperate with NFTS and the UAHC."<sup>146</sup> Two years later an Illinois Federation followed. These groups also encompassed an athletic unit that managed and directed inter-temple contests in all areas of sports. There were also annual dramatic, debating, and oratorical contests.

In 1927, Mrs. Albert Wise May (the daughter of Isaac Mayer Wise), the Youth Chair of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, NFTS, urged NFTS to appoint a special committee to "organize and foster" a youth federation to meet the needs of "boys and girls of post confirmation years" and to "federate and organize into city, district, state, and national organizations, the Young Folk's Temple Leagues already existing."<sup>147</sup> The hope was that these groups would hold inner-club debates, forums, study groups, and offer congregations "solutions to the problems that confront our youth, in relation to their religious life."<sup>148</sup> The women of NFTS felt that a national federation of youth leagues would help to solve the problem of assimilation and disinterest in Jewish things, among the youth. It was also important that the youth leagues be co-ed, as one report stated, "co-ed groups are by far the most successful. This, of course, is natural and happily so. Nothing could be of more significance than that young Jews and Jewesses enjoy meeting, studying, and playing together."<sup>149</sup>

At the UAHC Biennial in 1931, NFTS approached the UAHC leadership about a national federation of youth leagues. The National Leadership advised that all the work concerning youth would be carried out by the existing Department of Synagogue

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, NFTS Committee Report, November 1927.

and School Extension. The CCAR, once again, began urging its members to support the same type of federation that NFTS approached the UAHC Leadership about.

The UAHC established a Department of Youth Work in 1931, which was headed by Dr. Harry Commins. He was responsible for developing programs for individual youth leagues and for assisting them in their work. Programs developed in the Department of Youth Work focused on war and peace, social justice, unemployment, and international relations. As well, a magazine was established by NFTS in 1932, "The Youth Leader."<sup>150</sup>

By 1934 there were six regional youth league federations. NFTS once again approached the UAHC Leadership saying that "the time is not ripe, and the stage is set, for a National organization of Young Folk's Temple Leagues."<sup>151</sup> January 1939, five years later, the NFTY was established. There were 350 groups in existence when it was established. Like its precursors and existent leagues, it was founded for the 18-28 year old, thus not exclusively for the high school student.<sup>152</sup>

NFTY had an elected National board which consisted of young adults and recent college graduates. They promoted NFTY projects, assisted in publications, and helped to plan and oversee the national conventions. The purpose of NFTY was "to direct assimilated Americanized youth to help them see the relevance of Judaism to their lives, in a setting which was both social and which used as its model existing youth organizations within the Jewish world as well as outside of it."<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid, NFTS Committee Report, May 1934.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, p. 21.

In 1944, with American involvement in World War II, the young men in NFTY, aged eighteen and older were serving in the military, so the congregations lowered the required age for Temple Youth Group to fourteen.<sup>154</sup> Eventually, fifty percent of NFTY was serving in the military. Younger leaders were appointed at this time to take the place of the older leaders who were off at war. Finally, in 1948, NFTY imposed on itself an age range encompassing only high school students.

The UAHC no longer had an organized federation that encompassed the young adult. Today there is a college education department that helps to promote Reform Jewish activities on college campuses, however there still does not exist a National organized group for young adults.

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid, NYFRS Annual Report, 1944.



Section Four:  
Why are They Not Affiliating?  
A Look at Today's Jewish Community

Jews are a part of the mainstream culture of the United States. One need only to look at the 2000 presidential campaign, and Senator Joseph Lieberman's candidacy, to see how true this is. Similarly, in many western, predominantly Christian countries, Jews today find themselves easily fitting into the non-Jewish mainstream culture. The decline in rampant anti-Semitism and outright discrimination has allowed Jews to rise through the ranks in politics, social organizations, as well as to succeed in educational and professional endeavors. However, when the anti-Jewish boundaries came down, and this new found freedom was felt, a world of choice opened up for the Jewish community. This freedom has given many Jews the opportunity to choose whether or not they want to be "in" or "out" of the Jewish community, as their sense of obligation to the Jewish community has diminished. For many, their identity is no longer community bound, and they can simply move in and out of the Jewish community depending on their life circumstance. Thus, being Jewish is an option.

Judaism as an option means that affiliation with the Jewish community may or may not take place. In today's world, with so many other things going on in their lives, many believe that it is enough to feel Jewish rather than "be" Jewish. Yet, these Jews are missing the point of identifying as Jews. According to Maimonides<sup>156</sup>, identifying as Jewish means that one must have an active involvement with the goings on of other Jews, and this can only happen if one is a member or actively contributes to a Jewish organization. Accordingly, it is the act of identifying with the Jewish community that gives validation to one's Jewish identity rather than feelings alone.

So what does it mean to affiliate with the Jewish community? Affiliation in its simplest definition is the public joining or support of a Jewish organization.<sup>157</sup>

According to Jonathan Woocher, affiliation becomes the bridge between the individual Jew and the Jewish community. Without individual affiliation, the Jewish community and ultimately Judaism could not survive, as both exist because of the support of individuals.

Recent studies have indicated that individual affiliation is down in the United States. Dr. Steven Bayme reports that only 40% of the American Jewish community is currently affiliated with synagogues.<sup>158</sup> However, Steven Cohen argues that the rates are not as low as we believe they are. It seems that he looks at the community as a whole, at different points, and realizes that though community affiliation may be low at some points, Jews for the most part do affiliate with the community at one time or another in their lives. He cites the following points:

1. "The vast majority of American Jews send their children at one time or another to some form of Jewish school"
2. "The vast majority of adult Jews say they contribute to Jewish philanthropic campaigns."
3. "While only about half of all American Jews belong to a synagogue' at any given time, such membership increases dramatically when parents have school-age children"

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<sup>156</sup> Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Hilkhote Teshuvah 3:11

<sup>157</sup> Woocher, Jonathan, "Jewish Affiliation: An Agenda for Research" (The American Jewish Committee, 1990), 1.

<sup>158</sup> Dr. Steven Bayme, telephone interview by author, November 2000, Cincinnati, OH.

4. "In a number of communities with sizable Jewish populations (though not the very largest like New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago), 'the vast majority of the Jews belong to a Jewish organization and read a Jewish newspaper.'"<sup>159</sup>

While these arguments may indicate that, yes, people are eventually affiliating, they also inform us that depending on life circumstances Jews in fact are opting in and out of Judaism. The 1990 National Jewish Population Study, NJPS, found that affiliation rates with synagogues and Jewish organizations were much lower for younger adults. Perhaps we can just leave them alone and assume that they will eventually affiliate. Yet, it is extremely easy to continue a pattern that has been established, such that if one is comfortable enough with his Judaism, while he is not affiliated, why should his attitude and practice change because he is a few years older. An older adult may join for the sake of his children being able to be bar/bat mitzvah, but what message does he send his family when they discontinue their synagogue and/or organizational memberships upon the completion of the final family bar/bat mitzvah? Thus, it becomes important for us to ensure that all Jews, regardless of age, are affiliated with Jewish organizations.

I want to specifically focus on the factors of non-affiliation among young adults. This would be the 18-35 year old age cohort. This group can be broken down into a few different segments, 1.) The college years, 18-22; 2.) Singles, 22-35; and 3.) Young marrieds, without children, 22-35; and perhaps 4.) Young marrieds, 22-35, with infants and toddlers.

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<sup>159</sup> Woocher, Jonathan, "Jewish Affiliation: An Agenda for Research" (The American Jewish Committee, 1990), 1.

Each of these groups, while of similar age, have very different needs. They also differ from those in the community, who are older, who may fall into their same life circumstance, i.e. single or married with infants or toddlers.

What are the factors that lead to non-affiliation among this age cohort? Let us first focus on the college student. Approximately 92% of all Jewish students attend college, which is numerically equivalent to about 400,000 students nationwide,<sup>160</sup> thus making the college experience normative for almost all Jewish teenagers.<sup>161</sup> This means that influencing our youth during college is extremely important, as college seems to be the time when one makes lifelong friendships, envisions his life's path, and perhaps even finds his future partner. Unfortunately, we are going wrong somewhere, as many believe that the problems of adult affiliation within the Jewish community begin with our young people in college.

In most cases young Jews do go off to college acknowledging their Jewish identity, but somewhere along the way they are either losing that identity or ignoring it. Rabbi Gerald Serotta, the Director of the Hillel at George Washington University, states that, "Most kids on campus have no formal Jewish education. They may have pride in their Jewish identity, but little background. There is also an intimidation factor. They're afraid the people in Hillel and organized Jewish life will find them deficient."<sup>162</sup> However, fear and intimidation may not be the only factors that cause young Jews to lose or ignore their Jewish identity.

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<sup>160</sup> "Sustaining Our Future: Report of the Task Force on the Israel Experience and Jewish Residential Camping," (Jewish Foundation: October, 1994), 15.

Also important to note that the National Jewish teen population is expected to increase dramatically over the next ten years from 325,000 to 450,000 by the year 2007.

<sup>161</sup> Recent CJF study shows that 50% of all Jewish students are concentrated in forty major institutions and 80% are at 109 universities with Jewish populations greater than 1000 (pg. 7)

<sup>162</sup> Kogan, Marcella, "The Young and the Faithless: College Kids Who Don't Do Jewish," *Moment* 21, no. 5 (October 1996): 43.

College is a time for experimentation. It gives young people the opportunity to explore new ideas, new values, lifestyles, and meet new kinds of people. This experience is crucial to the intellectual and social development of individuals and their self-identity. The college experience allows them to move in and out of concentrations of study, groups, and opportunities as they seek to define who they are and what they will become. Thus, young Jews assimilate a lot more in college while they are searching. It is also important to understand that these young students, while identifying themselves as Jews, often envision their being Jewish as separate from being a part of the Jewish community. This means that there is not a sense of needing to belong to the Jewish community in order to be or feel Jewish. The Jewish Task Force on Jewish Youth Initiatives, JESNA, has realized this and emphasizes that "unless the Jewish community acts quickly and decisively, there is a distinct possibility that the current cohort of Jewish adolescents will be far less connected to Jewish life as adults than any previous cohort."<sup>163</sup>

It becomes our task, as the community, to make Judaism a vital, relevant, and exciting part of the college experience, as a student's Jewish identity may be firmly established for a lifetime based on his experience in college. According to Dr. Steven Bayme, Hillel is the last service area for us to reach out to young adults before they go off on their own. If we do not reach them in college then there is the chance that they may fall out of touch with the Jewish community and never affiliate.<sup>164</sup>

Following the college experience, whether single or married, the 22-35 year old often becomes a migrant. About one in five Americans change their residence

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<sup>163</sup> "Sustaining Our Future: Report of the Task Force on the Israel Experience and Jewish Residential Camping," (Jewish Foundation: October, 1994), 8-9

annually.<sup>165</sup> The 1990 National Jewish Population Study, NJPS, indicates that of the 25-34 year old age group, only 54% remained in same place from 1985-1990.<sup>166</sup> For many college graduates this time of migration is due to the pursuit of graduate studies, the beginning of a career, and for some, marriage. As a result of the advancement of Jews in educational and occupational life, studies also indicate that Jews are considerably more mobile than the general populations.<sup>167</sup> It is also important to note that most of the Jewish, young adult population considers itself secular, making them more willing to leave places of concentrated Jewish settlement.

It is true that a person who is a migrant can still affiliate with his new community however; studies show that one is less likely to affiliate with a new Jewish community. Sociological research has suggested that recent migrants to a community are much less active in its formal organizational structure than are long-term residents.<sup>168</sup> Participation will eventually increase but adjustment takes anywhere from three to five years. With this in mind, if someone anticipates that he or she will only be in the community for a few years then he might not affiliate. This choice not to affiliate is usually due to the financial and psychological costs involved. These include one not wanting to financially support an organization that he will not have a permanent membership in, as well as not wanting to form social relationships and then have to leave them.

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<sup>164</sup> Dr. Steven Bayme, phone interview by author, 15 November 2000, Cincinnati, Ohio.

<sup>165</sup> Sidney Goldstein and Alice Goldstein, *Jews on the Move: Implications for Jewish Identity* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), 3

<sup>166</sup> Sidney Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry: Insights from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey," in *American Jewish Year Book*, (New York and Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Publication Society, 1992), 102.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Sidney Goldstein and Alice Goldstein, *Jews on the Move: Implications for Jewish Identity* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), 7

While I mentioned that many do not want to financially support an organization that they will not permanently be a part of, this does not mean that young adults are not willing to spend money to affiliate. Many young adults do have less money than older adults, but that does not mean that they will not spend it on a worthwhile endeavor. Affiliation can be cost prohibitive for many, but for others there is not a desire to spend money on something that will not give them satisfaction and gratification. If a young adult feels that Jewish organizational life has nothing to offer him, then he simply will not join.

Outside of migration and financial reasons, there are other mitigating circumstances that keep young adults from affiliating. Many are disappointed with the spiritual opportunities that are present in their communities, while others are afraid of feeling incompetent in a Jewish setting. Some are afraid of not measuring up to the standards of the community, while others fear rejection. Many are afraid that they will not fit in, as their political beliefs do not mesh with the community. And finally, some have had previous negative experiences with the Jewish community that they wish to not repeat.

Just like older adults, young Jews are motivated to join organizations for the same reasons. They are looking for social contact, leadership opportunities, as well as for study, prayer, and social action opportunities. However, as an organized Jewish community we tend to overlook their motivations and assume that they only want the social contact. With this reaction from the community young adults ask themselves why affiliate if my needs cannot be met.

The fears of young adults with regard to non-affiliation are very real, as many feel that it is precisely the organization that are driving away young adults and not the



other way around. In a report from the Commission on Jewish Identity and Continuity it was stated that, "Many observers have noted that in subtle and not-so-subtle ways Jewish institutions often send the message that they are a 'private club' for those who meet certain criteria of commitment, life circumstances (i.e. being a family with two Jewish spouses and children), or ability to pay. If the community wishes to be taken seriously by those who may not meet these "entry requirements", it must actively seek to indicate to those not currently visibly connected to Jewish life that they are valued as Jews and that their needs and concerns are of importance to these institutions."<sup>169</sup> The editor of a major Jewish newspaper also commented that, "It takes only one punch to knock out countless Jews from Jewish life! They are the people who, in recent years, have scorned things Jewish. Then, one day, they have an urge to connect. They make a call, show up at an event or sign up for a program. Some even start to get involved. Then, Boom! A rude receptionist, an insensitive letter, an unreturned phone call, or just a lousy experience. They feel betrayed, or worse, become indifferent."<sup>170</sup>

Ultimately Jewish organizations need to focus on the needs of the young adult, learn what it is they are seeking, and assist them in their endeavor to build their Jewish identity, through affiliation. As Dr. Gary Tobin suggests, "unaffiliated Jews should not be treated as a block because factors may be different for each individual."<sup>171</sup> His suggestion is that a universal approach to attracting young people

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<sup>169</sup> Jack Wertheimer, Charles S. Liebman, and Steven M. Cohen, "How to Save American Jews," *Commentary* 101, no. 1 (January 1996): 48.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.* The editor is commenting on the way the community treats its fringe Jews, for which I include young adults.

<sup>171</sup> "Sustaining Our Future: Report of the Task Force on the Israel Experience and Jewish Residential Camping," (Jewish Foundation: October, 1994), 14.

will not promote success, it is only when we approach it at many different levels, to meet the many different needs of young adults that we will have success.

There are many organizations within the Jewish community who have been questioning the needs of our young adults and have begun to provide opportunities for them to re-enter or remain within the fold of the Jewish community. These organizations range from organized congregations, to groups within community Federations; from Dating services, to summer institutes, and while some of these organizations may not be those we traditionally think of when we consider affiliation, it is important that we realize that each organization is part of the Jewish community. We should not discount any interaction that a young Jewish adult has with Judaism, as one good affiliation can lead to many more.

As mentioned earlier, Hillel is working hard on college campuses across North America. However, it is important to realize that there are those college students who are just not going to be a part of an organized Jewish group.<sup>172</sup> While it is unfortunate that we are unable to entice them to just one program, it is fortunate that there is a way for them to remain connected to the Jewish community without having to show up anywhere. Lights In Action<sup>173</sup> is a national Jewish student organization whose mission is to help college students discover and maintain their Jewish heritage. Lights in Action provides Jewish and Zionist educational materials, from a pluralistic point of view, to college students throughout North American. They

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<sup>172</sup> As mentioned earlier, college students are spending a lot of time experiencing and experimenting with different things in their lives. College often becomes a time when young Jews spend more time exploring the world outside of Judaism than the world within. We can refer back to Erik Erikson and his idea regarding the adolescent and his struggle for ego identity. Many college students are in the midst of or at the end of this developmental stage. For many there is a need to struggle with (which sometimes includes breaking away from) religious identity, as it is often associated with childhood and one's parents.

mail out entertaining, upbeat, creative educational materials that examine various aspects of Judaism to about 74,000 students on more than 300 campuses.<sup>174</sup> They provide other services such as "Boot Camps," which are designed to get students together from all different campuses, to study a topic that has not sufficiently been answered by the Jewish community. They also have a "Do it in your dorm room" Shabbat on campus program,<sup>175</sup> which encourages students to celebrate Shabbat in a setting that is most comfortable for them.

If you visit the congregation's web site, they tell you that they are "a congregation of communities." B'nai Jeshurun, on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, is one of the country's oldest congregations. Today it is at the forefront of synagogue transformation in the United States.

B'nai Jeshurun, while today not formally part of the Conservative movement, is the oldest "Conservative" congregation in the United States. Today it bills itself as the "bridge between the liberal movements" as it seeks to incorporate "the best of all movements into our spiritual expression."<sup>176</sup> This self-definition is what makes B'nai Jeshurun so attractive to thousands of Jews who might otherwise not affiliate with a synagogue community.

What draws thousands of young Jews to B'nai Jeshurun are its "spiritual" and packed (with approximately 1,200 single Jews<sup>177</sup>) Friday evening services. The

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<sup>173</sup> The Bronfman, Avi Chai, and Steinhardt Foundations as well as the Schusterman Family of Tulsa fund Lights in Action.

<sup>174</sup> Salem Global Internet. Lights In Action. The Ultimate Jewish Resource for College Students. 1999-2000 <<http://www.lia.org>>.

<sup>175</sup> This program allows students to contact LIA and receive a Shabbat-in-a-box kit. This kit comes with grape juice, candles, and a how to guide, which can be adapted or used as is. LIA asks that students inform them ahead of time of their hosting a Shabbat and to let them know afterward how it went.

<sup>176</sup> Sidney Schwarz, *Finding a Spiritual Home: How a New Generation of Jews Can Transform the American Synagogue* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2000), 203

<sup>177</sup> Netty C. Gross, "Sick of Being Single," *The Jerusalem Report*, 30 October 1997, 33.

services have been described as seeming to have almost no formal prayer, rather the cantors lead the congregation in "beautifully sung Shabbat hymns<sup>178</sup>," accompanied by electric pianos. Most of the singing is done in Hebrew, people get up and dance hora style in large circles, while others remain in their seats clapping euphorically. For many young adults, this worship experience is different from what they grew up with. The experience at B'nai Jeshurun allows the young adult to explore and perhaps view the worship service in a different light, as compared to childhood.

Besides worship services, B'nai Jeshurun offers countless numbers of programs. If you are looking for social action opportunities, they run a soup kitchen and are involved in other community outreach organizations. They have special groups for singles, for gays and lesbians, for young families, as well as the elderly. The congregation also has a job bank in which congregants can list jobs or utilize it to search for jobs.

In setting out to be a congregation of communities, B'nai Jeshurun is attractive to Jews of all ages. Led by a charismatic team of clergy, which is made up of graduates from the Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College<sup>179</sup>, it is a community that is warm and inviting and does not seek to turn away those who show some interest. It is clear from its programming that there is something for all age groups, no matter what your interest.

Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple in Cleveland, Ohio offers a different type of entry into synagogue life for the young adult. The Young People's Congregation (YPC)

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Sidney Schwarz, *Finding a Spiritual Home: How a New Generation of Jews Can Transform the American Synagogue* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2000), 203

was established fifty years ago to bring young Jews and their families into the temple. YPC allows young adults the full benefits of membership while offering pro-rated dues<sup>180</sup> to those under the age of 35. After 35, it is expected that the young adults (now fully into adulthood) will pay full temple dues according to the fair share system.

YPC is inclusive of all young adults; single and married with or without children. It has its own board and committees, as well as its own constitution and by-laws. By having its own leadership model, young adults are given the opportunity to develop their leadership skills for later service to Fairmount Temple, once they move into the mainstream congregation.

YPC offers alternative Shabbat worship services, as well as High Holy Day services. There are social events, educational events, social action events, and even children's events. The overall mission of YPC is to "facilitate the study, understanding, and practice of Reform Judaism in an atmosphere of friendship and fellowship so that young Jews can develop the desire and have the ability to lead a meaningful Jewish life."<sup>181</sup>

Beyond congregational life, many secular Jewish communal organizations are offering programs for young adults. One such program is the Renaissance Group of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia.<sup>182</sup> The Renaissance Group is open to Jewish men and women ages 25 to 45. It is for singles, couples, professionals, and

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<sup>180</sup> Dues for membership are \$90 for those 25 years old and under, \$135 for ages 26 to 30, and \$180 for ages 31 to 35. Commission on Synagogue Affiliation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *Engaging Generation Aleph: A Resource for Young Adults in the Synagogue* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1997), 89.

<sup>181</sup> Commission on Synagogue Affiliation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *Engaging Generation Aleph: A Resource for Young Adults in the Synagogue* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1997), 89.

<sup>182</sup> This particular group seems to have taken the place of their Young Leadership Division, which is known in Federations throughout the country.

families. They offer educational, cultural, fundraising, social, and volunteer programming geared toward the young adult. They sponsor gender specific groups as well as egalitarian groups. The different groups within the Renaissance umbrella sponsor events at all times of the day. For professionals they have evening events, as well as "power breakfasts," events that happen in the early morning before the workday begins.

One intriguing program that they offer is the Ben-Gurion Society. For the fundraising minded young adult, one can become involved in the fundraising efforts for Israel. This society is for those young adults who donate \$1,000 or more to the UJA Federation Annual Campaign. While this may seem like a lot of money to a young adult, this amount of money does not usually gain recognition for older donors. The Federation of Philadelphia, in its effort to include young adults, offers membership into this society for those donors.<sup>183</sup>

While dating services are not your typical organization that one might think of with which to affiliate, many young Jews today are turning to them as their sole means of connection to the Jewish community. In 1993, Rabbi Lewis Kamrass, of Wise Temple in Cincinnati, Ohio, began talking with congregants about Jewish singles and the importance of their participation in Jewish life. The Jewish Community Center of Cincinnati had a fabulous singles program, however there was no singles date line. A committee was appointed to establish whether or not there was a need for one in Cincinnati. They studied the established Jewish date lines in Baltimore and Denver, held discussions in focus groups, and decided that there was indeed a need

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<sup>183</sup> Membership includes a Ben Gurion Society (BGS) pin, invitations to BGS-members only networking events, locally, regionally, and nationally, opportunity to participate in the UJA Jewish Leaders Institute, and special subsidies on national BGS missions.

for a Jewish date line. However, those in the focus groups felt that the date line should extend beyond Cincinnati. A proposal was then submitted to the Federation of Cincinnati requesting funds to establish a much-needed Jewish dating service for the tri-state area.<sup>184</sup>

In December of 1994, the Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Center gave the green light, and the Wise Date Line was established. Under the direction of Sandey Fields, the date line began with one hundred people. The date line provides an opportunity for young Jews to very privately and safely exchange first names and phone numbers with the hopes of meeting members of the opposite sex.

In order to become a member of the date line, one must fill out a profile, indicating if he is interested in steady dating, marriage, or just a casual relationship. Once the profile is submitted, members can make appointments to view the profile books. The profile books contain individual profiles and pictures, but no names. In order to view the books, an appointment must be made at any one of the sites through the tri-state area.<sup>185</sup> When one views the book, he can choose up to four profiles and Sandey Fields, the Director of the Date Line, will facilitate the mutual agreement process that has to take place in order for first names and phone numbers to be exchanged.

While the Wise Date Line may not get young adults physically involved in the Jewish community, Mrs. Fields sees its mission as doing Jewish outreach. Those in their late 20's to 35 years of age are the largest group that utilize the date line. Mrs.

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Jewish Federation of Philadelphia, <<http://www.phljinet.org/renaissancgroup/Ben-Gurion.html>>

<sup>184</sup> The tri-state area includes Indiana, Southern Ohio, and Northern Kentucky.

<sup>185</sup> There are satellite sites in Indianapolis, Indiana; Lexington, Kentucky; Louisville, Kentucky; Dayton, Ohio; and Columbus, Ohio. All sites are located in a "Jewish" building. This is so that young Jews will

Fields is not sure how many matches have come about since the establishment of the Date Line, however she does estimate that eight to twelve babies have been born, due to the matches that were made through the Date Line.<sup>186</sup>

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have the opportunity to physically visit congregations, Jewish Community Centers, and Jewish Federations and be reminded that they are a part of the Jewish community.

<sup>186</sup> Sandey Fields, interview by author, 8 November 2000, Cincinnati, Ohio.



Section Five:  
Meeting the Needs of Young Adults

In the United States today, we Jews live in two civilizations<sup>186</sup>, that of the Jewish community and the other as citizens of the United States. Our everyday lives are impacted by those things that affect us as U.S. citizens, while being Jewish is something that we can choose to ignore or embrace, as being Jewish does not automatically exclude one from general society anymore.

This phenomenon of Jewish identity and living versus the general society is not a new one. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungary, Rabbi Moses Sofer, argued that Jewish heritage and modern values were incompatible. He declared that Jews must reject modern culture except as a means for earning a living.<sup>187</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, philosopher and theologian Baruch Spinoza argued that there is no reason to remain Jewish in an enlightened world, especially in the absence of a sovereign Jewish community.<sup>188</sup>

Today within the Jewish community this struggle continues. One need only to look at the statistics of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey to see this struggle spelled out. Too many young Jews are not actively participating in the Jewish community. Even with the countless numbers of varied activities offered by the Jewish community, young Jews today are not identifying with the larger Jewish community.

Unfortunately there is not an easy answer or way to solve this problem or ensure that young Jews have a strong sense of their own Jewish identity and

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<sup>186</sup> This was the belief of Mordecai Kaplan; we live as part of the Jewish community and as citizens of a larger state.

<sup>187</sup> Steven Bayme and Barry Holtz, *Why Be Jewish?* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1993),

want to affiliate with the Jewish community. Our task however, is to have them commit themselves to having a Jewish life, to keep them interested and connected to the Jewish community. This commitment does not necessarily have to be a monetary one or one that requires weekly attendance at Shabbat services. Rather this commitment might be regular participation at a Jewish dating service or even regular attendance at a yoga class sponsored by a local Jewish Community Center. What is most important is that young Jews find ways to participate in a multitude of activities within a Jewish setting thus in some way they are identifying with the Jewish community. We must ensure that such programs are available to young Jews, as well as make sure that we offer programming that will keep them involved. According to Dr. Steven Bayme, the idea is that, "those most committed to leading a Jewish life are those least vulnerable to erosion and assimilation."<sup>189</sup>

If I had to offer a plan of action for a community with regard to young adult affiliation, I would offer a multi-pronged approach. This approach would include community involvement with college students, followed by community and congregational opportunities for those who are single, married, and married with children.

When programming for this age cohort, we hold many assumptions. It is important to consider these assumptions and then re-evaluate them after a program has been completed. I encourage any group taking on this type of

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

programming and planning to begin with an assumptions exercise, as it can help when thinking about the type of programming that your community will want to offer. The following are the assumptions that I had with regard to this age group:<sup>190</sup> No one will pay for Jewish learning, young adults are too busy to make time for Jewish life, free meals are not a big draw for young adults post college, a young adult will not cross (Jewish) denominations, singles are only interested in singles events, married couples with children are only interested in doing things without their children, and marrieds are only interested in doing things with other marrieds, and young adults do not want to be involved in the leadership and facilitation of programs, rather, they want to be serviced.

I also believe that young adults have their own assumptions about the Jewish community. Many believe that they can drop in and out when need be. There is an expectation that when a rabbi is needed, one can just call a local congregation and gain access to synagogue services, even if not a member. It is because of this assumption that many young adults are being turned off from organized Jewish life. When they need or want to be serviced and find that they get turned away because they are not members they become angry and believe that the Jewish community is not interested in them.

These assumptions, both those of the community and those of the young adult, can vary according to the size of a community and its geography.

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid

<sup>190</sup> I fall into this age cohort, however I assume that I am not in the norm, as I am a rabbinical student and have chosen to actively affiliate with the Jewish community.

There are obvious differences in the expectations of a young adult in New York City and those of a young adult in Boise, Idaho. In New York City there are numerous opportunities for young Jews to be involved; if religious life is not of interest then one can participate in a rich and varied culturally Jewish life. However, Boise does not offer the same opportunities. The assumption is that congregational life is the only option for a young Jew in Boise, as well; the young adult make up of that congregation may be incredibly small and/or non-existent.

While I realize that both of these examples are the extreme, it is important to recognize that the existing community, no matter the size, does play a role in the affiliation of young adults to the Jewish community. I am not advocating that one must live in a major metropolitan area to have a meaningful Jewish life. However, if one wants a varied experience, such that he only wants involvement culturally as opposed to religiously, then a small community is not the place to settle.<sup>191</sup>

Community size and geography come into question from the minute Jewish adolescents (or emerging adults) consider where there are going to attend college. Much time is spent weighing all of the different opportunities that individual schools have to offer. Often, one of the opportunities that gets overlooked or pushed to the bottom of the list is that of the community's

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<sup>191</sup> I do not want to come across as negative toward small Jewish communities. I have had some wonderful experiences in the small communities that I served as a student rabbi. However I am not sure that small communities offer young Jews, especially singles, a rich and varied Jewish life. This is not to say that one cannot experience a meaningful Jewish life in a small community.

Jewish life. Unfortunately, many of our young students are not making Jewish life a priority when considering what school they would like to attend. One of the easiest things that we can do is to begin the college discussion with our students as early as possible. Through religious school and youth group we have the opportunity to begin this discussion at the beginning of high school instead of during their senior year when their mind is set on particular schools, which may or may not have Jewish communities. It is important that we make available the resources that will help them to explore the different campuses and their Jewish communities. Just as there are college and university guides, there is a published guide to Jewish campus life.<sup>192</sup> This guide lets students know what Jewish opportunities exist on particular campuses, is there a Hillel, are there kosher food facilities, is there a "bayit" a place for Jewish communal living, etc . . . There are college connection programs offered by some of the movements. Our movement offers a connection program through Keshet, the UAHC's College Department. Students in high school can get this list and contact Jewish students already attending the college or university that they are interested in. This allows them access to a Jewish student during the search process as well as access to them once they arrive on campus.

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<sup>192</sup> Ruth Fredman Cernea, J. Rubin, and R. W. Fredman, ed. Hillel Guide to Jewish Life on Campus, 14<sup>th</sup> edition. Princeton Review, December 1999.

I agree with the experts, that college is the most important time in the development of a young Jewish adult's identity.<sup>193</sup> These years are crucial and often become the time when a young adult decides what his or her later affiliation may be. This is where positive Jewish experiences can be extremely helpful.

Hillel is doing fantastic things for most Jews on college campuses around North America, as its mission is to *maximize the number of Jews doing Jewish with other Jews*.<sup>194</sup> It is important that we continue to support the efforts of the Hillel organizations. However, this is not to say that Hillel is the only program that should be servicing our college students. While the Jewish Greek system may not be as exclusively Jewish as it once was, the chapters that do remain offer Jewish college students a chance to affiliate with other young Jews in a setting that provides a rich and varied set of "Jewish" ritual and history. For a young Jew who would prefer cultural affiliation rather than religious, Jewish fraternities and sororities can be an important link to the greater Jewish community.

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<sup>193</sup> Jeffery Jensen Arnett. "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no 5. (May 2000) and Dr. Steven Bayme, phone interview with author, 15 November 2000.

<sup>194</sup> Hillel actively seeks to *engage* uninvolved Jewish students on their own terms: to provide them with opportunities to *do Jewish* that are meaningful and appealing to them. Students are *empowered* to take responsibility for their Jewish identity, whether they wish to participate in a community service project, express themselves artistically, participate in a social event, engage in informal Jewish learning or attend religious services. Any student may participate in Hillel – no membership is required. Hillel is committed to a pluralistic vision of Judaism that embraces all movements. This mission statement was accessed on 22 February 2001; available from <http://www.hillel.org/hillel/newhillel.nsf>; Internet.

Students can also join political action groups such as the American Israel Political Action Committee, AIPAC. These organizations offer students the opportunity to get involved in an organization on a local and national level.

While these are only a few examples of the numerous Jewish opportunities that can exist on campuses, it is important that I stress the congregational involvement in college life. Whether or not a congregation is in a city or town with a college or university campus, one can still be involved in the lives of Jewish college students. This is as simple as sending congregational bulletins<sup>195</sup>, care packages at the holidays, and perhaps even giving them an occasional phone call. Many students attend their state university, if it is not too far from the congregation, its clergy should be encouraged to visit the campus(es) to visit with the students from his/her congregation. Many already do this and find that college students love to visit with their rabbi, especially when dinner is involved.

If one lives in a community where there is a university, the congregation should be involved in Jewish campus life. If there is a Hillel<sup>196</sup>, find out how the congregation can become involved. Perhaps congregants can host students in their homes for Shabbat and holiday meals. A congregation may also offer employment opportunities for young students, as well. If there is not a Hillel or Jewish student organization on campus, one should make sure that

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<sup>195</sup> While one may assume that students would not care about the congregation's bulletin, this can be a great link, as students are interested in what is going on. They are able to find out what is happening and often get to see who is doing what, i.e. getting married, etc.



the congregation gets the word out on campus that the congregation exists. Open the doors to these students for Shabbat and the holidays. Make students feel welcome. Their comfort level with Jewish communal life in college is what will determine their affiliation in the future.

The most important thing is that we, as a community, work together on the college campus. No one Jewish organization has the right to these students over another. We should not worry so much about where they are affiliating Jewishly;<sup>197</sup> rather we need to make sure that they are affiliating. Students should not be made to feel awkward or bad if they are participating in one aspect of Jewish life but not in another. Jewish organizations on campus and in the community need to work together and not against one another. Often times we become so worried about actual membership numbers that we spend our time recruiting members for our own organization when it might be detrimental to the membership of other organizations. It is important that the existing Jewish organizations realize the different needs of students on campuses and work together. Hillel can do joint activities with the "Jewish" fraternities and sororities. The Jewish Greek system can work with the various Jewish lobby and political groups that might be on campus. And, if

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<sup>196</sup> I encourage community rabbis and lay leaders to be involved and get on Hillel boards. Make sure that your congregation is involved if there is a college or university in your town.

<sup>197</sup> This obviously does not include so called Messianic Judaism, which can confuse many Jewish students on campus.

I may be so bold, we might even try working with (and learning from)

Chabad.<sup>198</sup>

What makes the college years so important to the Jewish community is that it is easier to find the Jewish students. Yes, many may choose to ignore their Judaism. But for the most part, it is easy to be in touch with young Jews on college campuses. Unfortunately, upon graduation from college, many young adults disappear from Jewish community life and our task of keeping them involved becomes even more difficult. If Jewish life was not a priority in college, then most likely it is even less of a priority for a young adult out of college, as there is no impetus for him to affiliate. While the young adult continues to experience the world around him, we have to compete with the secular world for his attention. This means that we must provide programs and services that will be attractive to young adults so that they will want to affiliate with the Jewish community. What is most important is that we understand and realize that young adults are going to affiliate for different reasons and that no single type of program is going to appeal to all. Most importantly the programming that we do offer needs to emphasize the rewards of being Jewish and living an active Jewish life.

Steven Bayme and Barry Holtz, in their paper "Why Be Jewish?" offer several points, which I believe can be utilized as the focus topics for young adult programming in the Jewish community. No matter the size or geography

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<sup>198</sup> Many students enjoy Chabad because they feel that they are getting a feel for "authentic" Judaism

of a community, the marital and family status of the young adult, or whether or not it is a congregation or organization offering programs, these topics seem to be the ones that would reach out and attract most young adults. I have attempted to describe each topic and include a few program ideas.<sup>199</sup>

Faith Many young adults are searching for answers about Judaism. Unfortunately for many young Jews today there is a feeling of inadequacy concerning Judaism, as many feel that they were never taught what it means and how to be Jewish. Unfortunately these feelings of inadequacy lead to many questioning, "how can I be Jewish if I do not know how to be Jewish?" Faith based programming would be basic Jewish education programs that would help the young Jew to feel comfortable with Judaism and feel comfortable in a Jewish setting. Such programs might include an in depth look at daily liturgy, Shabbat morning Torah study classes, discussions on keeping a kosher home and how to do it, and perhaps adult Hebrew classes so that one might feel more comfortable during worship. Beyond the basics of Jewish education, there are those young adults who want to go beyond basic Jewish literacy classes, as many are ready to dive into the study of classical Jewish texts. It is important that we offer a wide range of Jewish faith based and literacy programs for young Jews to engage in

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with no pressure.

<sup>199</sup> In "Being Jewish," Barry W. Holtz again discusses some of these topics and includes some programming ideas as well as books that one can read that go along with each topic.

**Belonging** According to Mordecai Kaplan, belonging is "that intuitive sense of kinship that binds a Jew to every other Jew in history and in the contemporary world."<sup>200</sup> While there is not a specific type of programming that one can do for this basic idea is that all programming that takes places needs to make them young adults feel a part of the greater Jewish community. This is where organizational involvement within the greater Jewish community can do a great deal. JCC's, Hadassah, and other membership organizations can offer leadership opportunities to young adults. Congregations can invite young adults to participate in their leadership as well. When one is allowed to take an active role in the decision making of an organization they he has a greater sense of belonging and obligation to a particular community. Unfortunately we often overlook the young adult when it comes to communal leadership, as we readily assume that he is not interested in taking on a leadership position. We also too often make the decision that young adults are not yet capable of taking on positions of leadership for whatever reasons.

**Culture** Cultural programming can include a wide variety of opportunities. This type of programming can happen through faith based programming such as liturgy workshops, but can also happen through things such as dance, art, drama, and other modes of experiential education. This can be a great venue for offering a series on Jewish living. Many young adults are struggling to figure out how they can make their homes Jewish, or how they

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<sup>200</sup> Barry W. Holtz, "Why Be Jewish?" (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1993), 10.

can have a meaningful Jewish home life outside of their childhood homes. There is much that can be done within the realm of this type of programming. We can even look to the secular world and combine popular activities with a Jewish flavor.<sup>201</sup> One can offer Jewish book clubs, host Jewish film festivals, and visit Jewish cultural sites. This can even include our encouraging young Jews to subscribe to Jewish newspapers and magazines.

**History** Most often we think of Holocaust programming when we think of history. While this is important, it is also essential that we include other types of programs that allow for young adults to see themselves as a link in the chain of tradition. This type of programming may involve discussions on genealogy and how to search for one's family roots. This type of programming could include discussions and even tours of a community's own Jewish history.<sup>202</sup>

**Personal and Spiritual Meaning** Young adults are searching for ways to make Judaism more personal and more spiritual. There is a desire to know how to celebrate holidays, as an adult, and how to find meaning in Jewish worship experiences. Young adults are looking for new ways to express themselves, as they do not necessarily find meaning in the ways that they expressed their Judaism as kids. Many find themselves stuck in rigid images, such as gender language and roles that were learned in childhood that no

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<sup>201</sup> Barry Holtz suggests that we take the Golden Age of Spain as an example, as Jewish living and the greater culture were combined.

longer carry meaning for them. Such rigid images may turn the young adult off from Judaism, thus it becomes important that we offer a venue in which young adults can rediscover Judaism as an adult. This means that we need to offer programming that teaches and allows the young adult; single, married, and married with children, how to bring aspects of Jewish life into their homes for meaningful experiences. We may need to offer creative worship experiences such as meditation and healing services, so they will not seek it elsewhere.

Political and social meaning Judaism, for many, is bound up with justice. Just as Judaism seeks social justice and works toward Tikkun Olam, so too are many young adults interested in social justice causes. Thus we have the opportunity to bring Judaism and social justice together, as a means of affiliation for the young Jewish adult. However we need to be careful when planning these types of events, as we tend to assume that all Jews are liberal when it comes to social causes. It is necessary that we allow for both liberal and conservative expression. This type of programming is probably the easiest to plan. This programming can include taking on community projects, such as Habitat for Humanity and working at a local shelter or food kitchen. One can call it Jews doing "Jewish" things together (the Jewish thing being helping the community) or a component of study or worship could be added to the event to give it some Jewish content.

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<sup>202</sup> An example of this might be a trip to the Lower East Side of New York City or in the case of Cincinnati there is a whole tour of "Jewish Cincinnati," which includes sites that are currently Jewish and unexpected sites that once were Jewish.

Israel For many young adults this may be the connection that they have to Judaism. This may stem from a college semester spent in Israel or a trip that one took at some point to Israel. I think that there is a lot to be studied with regard to Israel as a connection, especially in light of the Birthright Trips and numerous grants being offered to adolescence and young adults to visit Israel. As more and more of our young adults have been to Israel, we need to do more programming that fosters the love they have for the Jewish homeland. We need to offer discussion forums on the hot button issues surrounding Israel, we need to encourage participation in fundraising efforts for Israel, as well as encouraging more visits to Israel. We can host evenings with our community shlichim, enjoy an evening of Israeli culture (perhaps including an Israeli film and Israeli food), and even have the young adults in our communities meet with those adolescents and their families who are considering visits to Israel. This not only allows the young adult to share his love for Israel, but also allows him to perhaps take on a positive influential role in the life of a Jewish teenager.

These are just a few of the innumerable programming ideas there are for young adults. Of course program ideas are the easy part. What remains is for us to figure out how to actually bring the young adults into our communities.

Go to them In many instances a young adult is not involved because he feels that he does not have the time to be involved or he simply does not know

how to be involved. It then becomes important for the community to reach out to the young adult and seek him out on his "playing field." This means that we need to go into the community and actively seek out and program for young Jewish adults.<sup>203</sup>

Advertising in the local paper or in the local entertainment newspaper can help. Hold programs in conjunction with community organizations that might attract young Jewish adults. Create programs where Judaism can be brought to them, rather than having them come to Judaism. A program such as this might include breakfast, lunch, or dinner, in a downtown location, near where many young adults work. If they do not have to travel out of their way, they might be more likely to try a program out.

**Finances** Many young adults do not have the finances to pay the very expensive dues that many organizations and congregations would like. While I realize that it is virtually impossible to program for free, there needs to be a reduced rate for young adults to pay. Many congregations offer special dues structures. This means that the young adult, based on his age, pays a certain amount in dues, and then is expected to pay full congregational dues (whatever they may be) when he reaches a certain age.<sup>204</sup>

Another thought is to allow young adults to pay per event. This means that there is not a full financial commitment to one congregation or

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<sup>203</sup> This may be very uncomfortable for many, as it seems to resonate with proselytizing, however this is another way in which we can learn from Chabad. They do the job well when it comes to seeking out Jews and getting them to at least try something out.



organization, but it does allow the young adult a little more freedom. This means that he can spend his money on those events that he really wants to attend.

And still another option is to work with other Jewish organizations in the community to offer joint dues and incentives. One such program, that is an incredible deal, is the Access program in St. Louis. For \$250.00, a young adult can get a year long membership to the Jewish Community Center and all it has to offer, as well as a year long membership to one of the participating St. Louis area congregations. It may benefit the Jewish community if one or more community organizations pool their resources and offer a joint membership for a set fee. Young adults are consumers without a lot of money. If it is important, a good bargain, and they feel they will get something from it, then they are willing to pay.

Personalize it Everyone wants to feel as if he is an individual and not just another face in the crowd. It is important that the relationships between the young adult and the community are personal. If the young adult feels that he is just another face in the crowd, then he may not be willing to spend the money and give the time. It is vitally important that the contact we make with young adults is personal. It is important that we send them personal invitations to community events. This does not mean that the invitations need to be formal, a simple personalized message on a flier can do wonders.

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<sup>204</sup> Thirty-five seems to be the standard age, among those congregations with a special young adult

Phone calls are also extremely important. Often times one can receive a flier in the mail and either overlook it or take a quick glance and then throw it away. A phone call allows one to actually speak to a person, perhaps answer questions about the event, and maybe even get a verbal commitment with regard to attending the event.

Offer specific programming for specific needs Young adults seek out Jewish organizations and congregations for different needs. Some are in search of their Jewish identity, others want to fulfill their spiritual needs. Many are looking for others, with common interests, with which to interact and spend time.

While the Jewish community seems to offer a lot of social singles programming, there seems to be a need for Jewish content programming. This type of programming can be as easy as the rabbi leading a text study, to someone else teaching a "how to" workshop for a holiday. What is important is that the programming be meaningful while being geared toward a particular group in the congregation.

Beyond programming for singles, the Jewish community often overlooks young married couples. There is an assumption that the couple will join the congregation because they are now a family, but many couples still do not join congregations, as there is no programming that is geared toward them. Similar to that of Jewish content programming for singles, a congregation can

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dues structure, in which one would begin paying full congregational dues.

offer "how to" holiday workshops and perhaps even relationship building classes for young marrieds, as well as young marrieds with children. Beyond providing programming for this group, these types of groups allow the couple to have an outlet for mingling with other Jewish couples, in both an educational and a social manner. The goal is to get these young adults into either a congregation or a Jewish organizational setting

**Dating services** Many communities have overlooked this type of service, however it has become a booming business in the Jewish community. This service can allow young Jewish adults a safe environment with which to meet and mingle with one another. Dating services also seem to give singles the opportunity to choose the different types of people with which they would want to go out . It is important that the community not overlook this type of service, as for many young adults this may be the very thing that brings them back into the Jewish community. It is important that even if a young Jewish adult chooses not to affiliate with any other Jewish organization we realize that participation in a Jewish dating service is a viable option for Jewish affiliation. When participating specifically in a Jewish dating service, a young Jew is saying that he is making the choice to date other Jews and it is important that we not overlook that statement of commitment to one's Jewish identity.

**Social events vs. educational events.**

**Start small build from ground up** This is probably the most important issue when it comes to programming for this age cohort. When one starts any

type of new programming in an organizational or congregational setting there is the desire to have as many people as possible involved. However due to the hesitation on the part of many young adults to participate in generally, I believe that it is better to begin with a small group, to establish this core group as a viable and exciting group, and then to invite others into the group to participate.

I would encourage a congregation or organization to begin with five<sup>205</sup> people (and or couples). Start out by personally inviting these people to join you for a dinner. The goal of this evening would be to offer the group a model of the type of programming or evening that they would have together if they were a regularly established group. This evening might include a study session of sorts, time to socialize, and of course time to eat. During the evening, explain to them that they were hand picked to be a special interest focus group and that this is offers great social, educational, and leadership opportunities. Let the group know how exciting it is and how great it is that they were handpicked to help bring the group into existence. If each person or couple buys into the pitch, then the congregation or organization has set the foundation for specific young adult group programming.

Bring the group together for similar types of dinners (social and educational) for about 6-8 months. Following this initial time period, do some

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<sup>205</sup> Five is a random number that I chose, however I think that it is not too large or too small a number of people. It allows for diversity and eventually, if need be, there is an odd number of people so that if the group ever needed to vote, there would not be a gridlock.

refocusing with the group. Some questions to consider might be, have they enjoyed this group atmosphere? Have they felt a connection with one another and the Jewish community? Do they feel that the experiences they have had would be interesting to other young adults in the Jewish community?

Each person or couple should then be invited to bring in one other person or couple. This group of ten would then continue, as they had before, for another 6 months. Finally, the group, with consultation of each other, the Jewish professional, etc. . . would be opened to the whole community. The goal would be to have the initial group take on the leadership of this group and bring others in.

While this process takes about a year until the group is opened to the whole community, I believe that it has a better chance of surviving as a viable group for young Jewish adults, as there is set in place a few people who are already committed to the group who have developed a sense of ownership toward the group.

**Resources** The internet truly is the “information super highway.” The internet is an incredible resource for Jewish young adults. There dating and matchmaking sites, sites on how to celebrate the holidays and establish a Jewish home, sites on how to survive as a single, etc. . . The internet also allows communities to readily access what is going on in other Jewish communities. This makes for a great wealth of programming ideas at your fingertips.

Beyond the internet there are numerous organizations out there who cater to the young adult. One can find political action organizations, volunteer organizations, graduate schools, enrichment education programs, etc. . . It is important that community leaders acquaint themselves with the numerous organizations that exist so that when a young adult approaches them regarding Jewish opportunities, the leaders then readily have access to a wealth of information.

The type of Jewish organization one joins is not what’s important. What is important is that one affiliates with a Jewish organization and this is ultimately the task of Jewish leaders. It is the goal of Jewish leaders to find outlets with which Jewish young adults can engage in activities that help promote their Jewish identity. It is up to the Jewish community to provide appropriate programming to encourage active participation among the young adult community, so that ultimately there is a realization that Judaism can be a meaningful part of their lives.

## Conclusion

*"I'm not alone. I'm part of a generation of fragmented Jews. We're in a kind of limbo. We're suspended between young adulthood and middle age, between Judaism and atheism, between the desire to believe in religion and a personal history of skepticism. Call us a bunch of searchers. Call us post-Holocaust Jews. Call us Generation J."*<sup>1</sup>

In her book, Generation J, Lisa Schiffman discusses her experiences as a young Jewish adult. She talks about the difficult tasks of searching for identity in this time of entering into the realm of adulthood. It can be a confusing time for this generation of emerging and young adults, as there are so many questions that have remained unanswered and experiences that were never had to help solidify a Jewish identity in this young generation. The task of the Jewish community is to engage them and help bring them back into the fold of Judaism. However, this task is not easy, as the community is not necessarily equipped to deal with this generation. Unfortunately it may be that there is not a clear understanding of this group developmentally or a sense of the types of activities that would engage them and encourage affiliation.

Ultimately there is no one set age in which one experiences the onset of adulthood. Rather, the transition to adulthood begins with the end phases of the adolescent stage. The transition process includes several different stages through which one must pass in order to attain adulthood. It seems as if this transition helps to physically and emotionally prepare a young person for the passage into adulthood.

With the end of adolescence comes more personal autonomy, as a young person begins to separate from his family. As this separation starts to take place, some psychologists believe that the young person moves into what is called the post-adolescent phase, during which he is all but financially independent of his parents.

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<sup>1</sup> Lisa Schiffman. Generation J. San Francisco: Harper, 1996



During this final phase of adolescence the young person is attempting to build his own identity, independent from that of his parents and community. The adolescent struggles to weave together those things he learned in his youth with those things he himself strongly believes.

As the adolescent becomes more independent, financially and emotionally, he enters into emerging adulthood. This stage in the transition to adulthood is one in which there is a lot of experimentation going on, as the young adult seeks to explore and enjoy life. During this stage the young person may be enrolled in higher education or entering into the work place in attempt to decide on his life's career path. The young person may also work to establish his own household, as he becomes financially independent of his parents.

Slowly, the young person begins to make commitments, such as his career choice and life partner. As the young person begins to make personal commitments, while still struggling to keep his individual identity, he enters into young adulthood. It is in the stage of the transition that the young person enters into adulthood. While no two people are alike, the thought is that one enters into the young adult stage between the ages of twenty-six and thirty-five. It is during this time that most young adults establish themselves in their careers and families.

The transition to adulthood seems to have become a longer process in today's world, as there are no longer clearly defined rules as to who is an adult. Over the past few decades we have lost the "defined" rules of adulthood as there has become a normative period of time in which young adults did not enter into and settle into adult roles. This period of time is usually spent searching and exploring, as one tries to figure out what he wants to do. This time may include traveling, as well as include

schooling and working. Due to this period in which one does not settle into "adult" roles, there is an ever increasing number of singles in our community. As young adults search and explore, they seem to do so unattached. Thus, the Jewish community has been experiencing more and more delayed marriage, as well as a declining birthrate.

As the identities of young people are developed during this transition to adulthood, it is important that their Jewish identities be developed, as well. It is vitally important that the Jewish community be a part of this developmental stage in a young person's life, as often during this period, the life course is set, and if Judaism does not find some place in the life of a young adult, the chances increase that the community will never see the person affiliate.

Historically the Jewish community was very involved in the lives of young adults. Many of the organizations that we know today, such as the JCC's and B'nai Brith, were founded by and for young adults. Perhaps the sense was that there was more of a need for Jewish organizations because of the anti-Jewish feelings that were so much a part of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Young Jews were kept out of social clubs and organizations so there was a need for Jewish communal organizations to foster a healthy Jewish identity.

Fortunately, and overtime, things have changed. As society began to open up to Jews and other minorities, the pendulum began to swing the other way. For many there was no longer a desire or need to be a part of Jewish organizations. With the rise of multiculturalism and acceptance many did not want to be seen as a member of an organization that segregates based on religious creed.

Today we are faced with the challenge of engaging the young adults in our community. We compete for their time and energy, as they actively explore the wealth of opportunities, that exist today with regard to their careers and social lives. It is important that we encourage them to explore their Jewish identities and incorporate even a little bit of Judaism into their lives. This task is not easy, as young adults often do not seek us out. It is important that we do "outreach" to them and welcome them back into the Jewish community. We need to make sure that when we invite them to participate, that we are non-judgmental and open to their Jewish identity explorations.

Our task can be as simple as fliers and phone calls and as difficult as attempting to organize a dating service that will, perhaps, ensure Jewish marital unions. Ultimately our task is to engage them today, so that they are not a generation of searchers, as described by Lisa Schiffman, but they become the leaders of tomorrow, and the parents of the next generation of active, affiliated Jews.

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## Appendix

## Internet Resources

### College and Graduate Students

#### Hillel International

<http://www.hillel.org/hillel>

The largest Jewish campus organization in the world, Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life provides opportunities for Jewish students to explore and celebrate their Jewish identity through its global network of over 500 regional centers, campus Foundations and Hillel student organizations. Hillel is working to provoke a renaissance of Jewish life. Hillel's mission is to *maximize the number of Jews doing Jewish with other Jews*.

#### Kesher, UAHC College Department

<http://www.keshemet.com/>

KESHER is the College Education Department of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC). It is one branch of the UAHC Youth Division, which also includes camping, Junior & Senior High School youth programs, and Israel tours. KESHER serves several different constituencies, including Reform college students, UAHC Congregations and their College/Youth Committees, campus Hillel Foundations, and high school students exploring the possibilities of Jewish life on campus. The Hebrew word "kesher" translates as "connection." KESHER's goal is to connect Jews in college with their Judaism, both on campus and in their home congregations, and to one another. KESHER also promotes Jewish continuity, by aiding high school students in making choices which will allow them to grow Jewishly while in college.

#### Atlanta YAD

<http://www.atlantayad.org/>

Atlanta YAD is the first Jewish agency in the United States whose express purpose is to create the bridges for young Jewish adults (both in and out of college) and connect them to the Jewish community. Whatever you're looking for, you'll find it here. If you can't find it, then contact us and we'll help you find it.

#### Hillel of Greater Washington/GAP, Jewish Graduates and Professionals

<http://www.hillelwash.org/gap/>

Non-profit organization under the auspices of Hillel of Greater Washington serving Jewish young adults, 22-28 years old. GAP's mission is to provide social, cultural, educational and religious programs for both graduate students and young professionals at a minimal cost. The group's primary function is to serve as the bridge between the college campus and the broader Jewish community. GAP approaches this goal through a unique strategy; we understand that 20-Somethings have limited funds and even less time however, they are looked for social, networking and cultural opportunities. We are able to provide such opportunities without demanding a time or monetary commitment (*NO membership fees!*)

#### Hillel of Metro Detroit

<http://www.hillel-detroit.org/start.html>

The Hillel of Metro Detroit (HMD) is an organization of Jewish college students and young adults, 18-30 years old, in the metropolitan Detroit area.

### Young Professionals

#### Young Professionals Kesher

<http://uahc.org/congs/dc/dc001/>

The Young Professionals' Kesher (YPK) is a group for singles and couples in their 20's and 30's who want to meet other Jews their age, and build a sense of Jewish community. We are affiliated with Beth El Hebrew Congregation in Alexandria, VA, but you need not be a member of Beth El or YPK to

participate in our events. YPK offers a wide variety of activities, including religious education, community service, and social events.

#### **Network**

<http://www.network.org.au>

Network is the coordinating body for all Jewish young adult groups and activities in NSW. We assist Jewish young adults to find programs and activities in the community which are of interest to them. Network provides support to young adult groups to host dynamic and quality programs. We publish a monthly calendar of events that is sent to thousands of Jewish young adults across NSW. Network creates new groups to meet a demand in the young adult community. (Australian)

#### **Nexus**

<http://www.jewishnexus.com>

Nexus is a free, not-for-profit organization for Jewish young adults. Nexus is not just a singles group, but is open to singles and couples. Nexus's mission is to bring young Jewish singles and couples and their non-Jewish partners, if they should have them, together to foster networking, life-long friendships, and Jewish continuity. Nexus wants to enable you to participate in social, charitable, religious, athletic, networking, and educational activities in a friendly, non-threatening environment.

#### **Nashville Jewish Organization of Young Adults**

<http://members.home.net/njoyweb/>

Mission: NJOY has been formed to meet the needs of all Jews between school and family life, generally in the 21-35 year old age range, though age restrictions are not strictly enforced. The group is open to Jewish singles and couples. Interfaith couples are welcome. The group seeks to create a strong, active, vibrant community of Jewish young adults through a diverse variety of philanthropic, religious, social, athletic, professional, and educational activities.

#### **Kosher Meet Market**

<http://www.koshermeetmarket.org/>

Kosher Meet Market was founded by Alicia Kohn in August, 1998 for Jewish people, (married, single, etc), of all practices, between the ages of 21 and 35, (cutting off at 40), to meet and greet. We are the proud creators of the Kosher Softball League, the Kosher Basketball League and More! We also hold social events every month on various days, at various times, so keep checking back for updates, or email us to join our notification list and we'll tell you!

#### **Jewish Communal Organizations**

<http://members.aol.com/sbjco/welcome.htm>

The Jewish Connection is a place for the young professionals in the Jewish community to kindle Jewish friendships, share in the rich customs and traditions of Judaism, and provide opportunities for social action and education. Get involved. We assemble an active calendar every quarter that includes a variety of spiritual, social, and educational events. Santa Barbara federation

#### **Jewish Entertainment Network**

<http://www.sjcc.org/sjcc/byachad/jen/jen.htm>

JEN (Jewish Entertainment Network), 20s/30, provides the opportunity to meet and network with the Jewish community while enjoying a wide range of social, cultural and recreational activities. Seattle jcc

#### **Gesher City**

<http://www.gesher.net/>

This organization works solely through the internet. They seek to bridge young adults to the local Jewish scene. There is currently a site for Boston. They are working on sites for Baltimore, Detroit, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, Seattle, St. Louis, and Washington DC.

## **Avodah**

<http://www.avodah.net/>

AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps is a year long program for young Jews who want to work on America's pressing social problems.

## **Shabbos for a Novice**

<http://www.shabbatdinners.org/>

Whether your single or married, new to South Florida or have been here for years join Shabbos for a Novice – 20 and 30 something Jewish professionals for friendly, low pressure Shabbat dinners.

## **Traveling Shabbat Singles**

<http://members.aol.com/tshabbats/TSS.html>

Jewish singles group in the age range of 20s and 30s, which attends Friday night services at different synagogues all around the Los Angeles area and socializes after services. Our group attends Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Shabbat services.

## **Virtual Jerusalem Singles**

<http://www.virtualjerusalem.com/singles/>

## **L'Chaim of Portland Oregon**

<http://lchaim.inetarena.com/>

What's a "L'Chaim"? "L'Chaim" is a Hebrew word that means "To Life!" in English. It is also the name for an informal group of young Jewish people living in and around Portland, Oregon in the USA. We are mainly comprised of Jews in their early twenties to mid-thirties, and our main goal is to have a great time! We organize a variety of different events, ranging from hikes, Shabbat dinner get-togethers and community service.

## **Travel Services**

### **Jewish Singles Vacations**

<http://www.thinkjewish.com/jsv/>

### **Premiere Jewish Singles**

<http://www.premr-jewish-singles.com>

PREMIER JEWISH SINGLES, for a number of years, has been organizing International Group Travel for Jewish Singles. Our clients join the programs from cities across the USA and Canada - sometimes from Mexico, Europe and Israel too. For those who are Members (everyone who travels with us automatically receives Membership), we do several mailings a year and offer various discounts and prior information about our tours. To become a Member, please forward \$20 and complete the attached information.

### **A Different Path**

<http://www.distinctivecruises.com/JewishTravelGroups/index.html>

A Different Path offers cruises and other trips for various groups within the Jewish community. Perhaps most important are our Jewish Singles and Jewish Young Professionals programs. These programs sponsor cruises for single individuals in various demographic groups, whether they are hoping to meet a romantic partner or simply looking for a compatible social group with whom to vacation and share cabin costs. In addition, we arrange cruises and group vacation packages for congregations and other Jewish groups who are looking for fund-raising opportunities with the added plus of community-building experiences and social flair.

<http://www.j-walking.com/>

Exotic adventures for Jewish singles

## Singles

<http://www.jewishmatch.com>, <http://www.neshami-jewish-singles.com>, <http://www.jsingles.com>,  
<http://www.jpostpersonals.com>

MatchFinder is an internet site that helps singles find mates. Using the criteria that you've filled out about what you're looking for in a match, they scan the database to see who might be good for you. Then they send you information about those people so you can check them out yourself. According to their web site, on average, our members: are college graduates, have managerial or professional careers, earn anywhere from \$40,000 to over \$100,000 annually, are between the ages of 25 to 70, and are looking for long-term relationships

<http://www.geocities.com/Paris/Bistro/8765/>

This site offers a frum singles database. It also offers shidduch advice, as well as a frum singles chat room.

### **MitMazel**

<http://www.mitmazel.com/>

Mit Mazel is Chabad's new matchmaking site for Jewish singles of all affiliations who are interested in marriage. We use state of the art technology to do traditional Jewish matchmaking. Mit Mazel is *unique* because the initial contact between singles is arranged through their sponsors. Privacy, security, tznius and objectivity are ensured.

### **Jewish Matchmaker**

<http://www.jewishmatchmaker.com>

Jewish Matchmaker seeks to join members together by offering a comfortable and safe forum for people to mingle in. JM Membership Privileges: enjoy unlimited access to the "Eligibles" Chat Room, instant messaging with all JM members who fit your specifications, you can upload photographs, you'll receive a personal, private login name and password

### **Yenta Matchmaker/Matchmaker.com**

<http://www.yenta.email.net>

The goal of this site is to unite compatible Jews with common interests, YENTA has been serving the Jewish community since 1996.

### **Jewish Deaf Singles Registry**

<http://www.jdsr.org/>

### **The Jewish Love Connection**

<http://jewishloveconnection.com/>

The Jewish Love Connection is dedicated to sincere jewish singles seeking other sincere Jewish Singles. A member of the Jewish Love Connection can at the same time, be a member of the Singles Love Connection Site which allows you to browse or be browsed by those outside of the Jewish faith. Membership is free to both sites.

### **Basherte.com**

<http://www.basherte.com/home.html>

Basherte events primarily attract Jewish Singles in their 30's, 40's, and 50's, though some workshops are for a more specific age range. Memberships cost \$36 and last 365 days. (There are currently 213 members.) This provides you with unlimited contacts. The Basherte Workshop offers a unique, comfortable, and joyous place for Jewish Singles to meet in a meaningful way.

### **Big Beautiful Jewish Women**

<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/bigbeautifuljewishwomen>

Full figured/plus size SINGLE JEWISH men and women looking for their beshert. Members are SINGLE, JEWISH and either full figured/plus size themselves or interested in meeting someone who is.



#### J-Date

<http://www.jdate.com>, <http://www.jewishsingles.net/>

JDate is the world's leading web site for Jewish singles, a place to meet and mingle, mix and match.

#### Jewish Singles Club.Com

<http://www.jsclub.com>

JSclub.com is a free service to assist Jews of all religious affiliations in matchmaking.

#### Jewish Singles in Science

<http://www.isn.org/Singles/home.html>

This site is interested in serving the community of Jewish singles who are professionals or just plain interested in the "sciences." Science may be defined as broadly as you wish to include science, technology, computers, engineering, medicine, social sciences, science and technical journalism, education, and general intellectual curiosity. By focusing in on similar interests, we are hoping a certain level of compatibility will already be inherent. All levels of "scientific" interest are welcome.

#### Jewish Singles Love Center

<http://www.lovelink.co.il/>

#### Jewish Singles Social Club

<http://www.jssc.com>

The Jewish Singles Social Club (JSSC) is the premier Web site for Jewish members who are looking to meet other Jewish singles. Our singles service is offered to Jewish members over the age of 18 all around the world.

#### Jewish Vegan.com

<http://jewishvegan.com/singlejvveg.html>

Has an on-line dating service where members can post pictures and personal information.

#### Nice Jewish Singles

<http://www.nice-jewish.com>

#### Orthodox Connection

<http://home.the-wire.com/shadchan/>

Orthodox Connection is a confidential and discreet computer-aided matchmaking service for clients who are Shomer Shabbos and keep a Kosher home.

#### Shidduchim

<http://www.geocities.com/SouthBeach/Port/9410/>

This site was set up by Meir Weiner, a shadchan, to help more people meet their basherts.

#### 4JewishSingles.com

<http://www.4jewishsingles.com/>

This site is run by The Jewish Heritage Center, which is a Jewish Outreach Organization. It enables one to place and search for love interests, study partners, pen pals, etc. . .

#### Achdus

<http://www.singleyid.com>

Database of Jewish singles.

#### Jewish Visual Profile

<http://www.bridge.net/jewish-p/personal/>

#### Jmatch.com

<http://www.jmatch.com/>

Canadian on-line interactive dating site.

#### Jmates

<http://www.jmates.com>

JMates is a privately held company whose goal is to help Jewish singles all over the world come together and find love and happiness

#### Newflame.com

<http://www.newflame.com>

European and international Jewish singles web dating service.

#### SingleJew.com

<http://www.singlejew.com>

SingleJew.com is dedicated to bringing a *valuable* and *rewarding* service to Jewish Singles World Wide. We are a company dedicated to bringing single people together using the latest computer technology at reasonable prices.

#### Bitachon.com

<http://www.bitachon.com/>

BITACHON.com is the global resource site for Orthodox Jewish Singles, who are seeking T'achlis. Our Date-A-Base is exclusively for SHOMER SHABBATH singles only. We expect all registrants to be free to marry, and seriously engaged seeking a partner with whom to build a Jewish home; a B'ayis N'eemon B'Yisroel.

#### Ark Electronic Shadchenter

<http://www.arkline.com/>

Jewish young peoples database on the internet. It can be used for matchmaking purposes, but it can also be used as an e-mail address like yahoo or hotmail.

#### Jewish Quality Singles

<http://www.jqs.com/>

#### Jewish Quality Soulmates

<http://jewish.qualitysoulmates.com>

Canadian on-line dating site.

#### Speed Dating

<http://aish.com/speeddating/>

SpeedDating.com is open to Jews of all ages and affiliations. Each round is 7 minutes, and you must stay in the chat room for the entire 7 minutes. There are a total of 7 rounds in each event, and you can stay for as few or as many rounds as you'd like.

#### The Jewish Singles Connection

<http://www.thejewishpeople.org/>

The Jewish Community used to be just that, physically centered in a few major cities in defined ethnic areas. At the end of the Twentieth Century, that model has broken down as a result of reduced anti-semitism and increased personal mobility. The result is an increased scattering of Jews within cities and across countries, and the world. Jewish Singles Connection is an attempt to help reconnect young single Jews across the U.S. and the world to each other and recreate in a new dimension the community of yester year. To deal with the "new community paradigm" we see an opportunity to utilize the new communications paradigm...the Internet. This is not to say that there is no roll for the many Jewish organizations...but this is a new "non-organizational way" to directly connect people with a shared common interest. We hope that "our paradigm" and our use of the latest technology, and your interaction with it, will bring personal rewards both for you and indirectly the Jewish people.

**Jewish Singles News**

<http://www.jsnnet.com>

The largest newspaper for Jewish singles ages 21-88, in the country, combines the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut singles communities. Jewish Singles News offers its readers and subscribers the most comprehensive monthly calendar of events, nationally awarded singles travel calendar, personal ads from throughout the country and beyond, tips on dating, articles from nationally recognized columnists and more. Advertisers have the opportunity to reach the largest Jewish populous in the country.

**10 Minute Match**

<http://www.10minutematch.com/>

This is not on-line as is the seven minute match, rather this is an information site about the 10 minute match program in Washington D.C.

## Matchmakers

### **Judy Friedman and Irene Nathan**

They have been around for 18 years and are the only all Jewish dating service in the Chicago area.

Chicago, IL

773-743-8421

[match@thematchmakers.com](mailto:match@thematchmakers.com)

### **Harriet Young**

Jewish Connection's Inc.

NJ/PA/DE, a non-profit service has been matching Jewish singles in the Delaware Valley (the tri-state area of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware) for more than 14 years.

Cherry Hill, NJ

856-489-4015

[harriet@jewishconnections.com](mailto:harriet@jewishconnections.com)

### **Mrs. Renee Kohn**

Wife of Sephardic Rabbi in North Miami Beach. She has been making shidduchim in the Sephardic community for about 7 years.

North Miami Beach, FL

305-770-1616

[kohn@ix.netcom.com](mailto:kohn@ix.netcom.com)

### **Mrs. Doris Jaffe**

Primarily interested in making matches for people with physical disabilities. People who have physical or emotional problems are often overlooked by mainstream matchmakers and the public at large.

San Diego, CA

619-265-0451

[wilonwww@home.com](mailto:wilonwww@home.com)

### **Mrs. Rivka Prigal**

She is a member of the Baltimore Shidduch.

Baltimore, MD

410-358-5742

[mprigal@erols.com](mailto:mprigal@erols.com)

### **Mrs. Laya Malka Bitman**

Matchmaker since 1998. Based in Baltimore, MD. Represent singles in over 12 states and 7 countries. Work with all backgrounds and levels of Yiddishkeit. She has a degree in psychology/social work, training in crisis and couples counseling.

Baltimore, MD

410-764-0567

[bbitman@aol.com](mailto:bbitman@aol.com)

### **Rabbi Hillel Scop**

Shliach, Chabad of Marin, Northern California

San Rafael, CA

415-492-1666

[thescops@juno.com](mailto:thescops@juno.com)

### **Mrs. Chana Finman**

Chabad representative, Detroit. Friend to many singles. Active matchmaker for Lubavitch Youth Org.

Oak Park, MI

248-546-3332

[hfinman@juno.com](mailto:hfinman@juno.com)

**Rabbi Eliezer Sneiderman**

He has an MSW and is a proficient relationship counselor.

Newark, DE

302-455-1800

[rabbi@udel.edu](mailto:rabbi@udel.edu)

**Mrs. Feiga Batt**

Creator of Bashert Global Tele-Video Matchmaking.

Harbour, Florida.

Miami, FL

305-866-3033

[info@mybashert.com](mailto:info@mybashert.com)

**Mrs. Miriam Norton**

Successful with matchmaking for Chabad affiliated individuals. She primarily works with shomer shabbat individuals from smaller communities.

Los Angeles, CA

323-934-8121

[Michael@hiper.net](mailto:Michael@hiper.net)

**Rosalie and Efraim Eisen**

BASHERTE™ brings a new model to Jewish singles and matchmaking. Rosalie and Efraim have a special way of assisting people to help bring the right match to them. BASHERTE™ attracts Jewish singles from diverse Jewish backgrounds, creating an expanded and pluralistic network.

413-739-4715 x116

[match@basherte.com](mailto:match@basherte.com)

