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“Beyond Continuity”- Taking the Next Steps: A Handbook for Jewish Renaissance and Renewal is based on presentations and workshops held at the January 1999 Jewish Continuity Conference. This is the fifth in a series of “continuity” handbooks published by JESNA. Like its predecessors it offers a theoretical framework and practical suggestions to guide and inform the work of Jewish communal leaders.

BEYOND "CONTINUITY"
 TAKING THE NEXT STEPS
 A HANDBOOK FOR:
 Jewish Renaissance &

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I. FOREWORD

This is the fifth in a series of “continuity” handbooks published by JESNA.¹ Like its predecessors, it offers a theoretical framework and practical suggestions to guide and inform the work of Jewish communal leaders.

This handbook is a follow-up to the January 1999 conference on *Jewish Continuity: Taking the Next Steps* which was sponsored by the AVI CHAI Foundation and the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF) in association with the Jewish Education Service of North America, Inc. (JESNA). The two-day conference brought together nearly 100 professional and volunteer leaders, representing 40 communities and ten national agencies, to enable communities to take the Jewish Continuity agenda to the next level of planning and programming. As a “think tank” environment, the conference was designed to provide the opportunity to analyze, engineer and identify new directions and more comprehensive approaches toward evaluating success.

The conference marked an important transition in the evolution of the Jewish community from a concentration on simple continuity to an emphasis on renaissance and renewal. As Rabbi Saul Berman observed in his keynote address:

The continuity effort has demonstrated that we have the capacity to draw people into the Jewish community, albeit with enormous effort and financial commitment. The next step, beyond continuity, is meeting the challenge of preserving and maximizing Jewish identity within the framework of modernity...

Conference planners never intended to limit the target audience for the conference to the actual attendees. It was anticipated that the participants would carry the ideas, knowledge and skills back to their home communities so that the conference would serve as a catalyst for the next steps in these pace setting communities. Furthermore, the conference planners intended for the broad dissemination and utilization of the insights, materials and activities from the conference sessions, especially to those communities at earlier stages in the continuity and renaissance process. This handbook is a means to address those goals. Rather than disseminating traditional “proceedings,” which typically receive only modest attention, the key elements of the conference were adapted and reformatted in this handbook format to be used by communities to stimulate new thinking and action about how communities of Jews can be compelling centers for Jewish life in the coming century.

¹Other handbooks in the series include: *Planning for Jewish Continuity: A Handbook* (1995); *Planning for Jewish Continuity: Synagogue-Federation Collaboration* (1996); *Targilon: A Workbook for Charting the Course of Jewish Family Education* (1996); *Pathways: A Guide for Evaluating Programs in Jewish Settings* (1997).

II. HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

Some communities may use the handbook as a model for planning a local conference or retreat to launch the next stage of their Jewish continuity, renaissance and renewal efforts. They may convene volunteer and professional leaders from local organizations and agencies, as well as funders and other key stakeholders. Like the original gathering upon which the handbook is based, the conferences can afford an opportunity to share experiences and lessons learned, and to recognize, celebrate and analyze efforts to date. Participants will glean new insights from current research on Jewish identity and begin to develop a common conceptual framework for the next steps in the process. Conferences can often re-energize and refocus lengthy complicated processes, such as continuity and renaissance, which demand time, patience and long-term commitment.

Others may use the handbook as a resource for the on-going work of a Jewish continuity/renaissance commission or planning body. The major presentations by Dr. Saul Berman, Dr. Bethamie Horowitz and Karen Barth can serve as background papers for discussions on goals and conceptual frameworks. The exercises can be adapted or used as practical tools in the planning process. The Jewish source text can serve as a model for incorporating Jewish learning in all communal deliberations.

Needless to say, communities and institutions will also use individual components of the handbook as resources for discussions, programs and courses on institutional change, Jewish identity, and the future of the Jewish community.

III. JEWISH SOURCE TEXTS ON CHANGE²

Studying traditional Jewish texts has become a hallmark of continuity and renaissance planning processes in many communities for several reasons. Learning together is a powerful means for building community, and models the behaviors that continuity initiatives seek to encourage. Jewish texts offer timeless wisdom that can inform all aspects of the continuity planning process. Continuity, renaissance and renewal efforts are about change - changing individuals, changing organizations, changing the Jewish community. In the book of Deuteronomy (32:7) we read *זכר ימות עולם, בינו שנות דר-ודר*, *Zechor y'mot olam, binu shenot dor vador*.

Traditional interpretations focusing on the importance of the lessons of history translate the verse as, “Remember the days of old; consider the years of every generation.” In other words, it counsels, “Don’t forget your past. Remember the olden days because they have something to teach you. Study the years of generation to generation.”

At first glance, the two phrases comprising the verse may seem repetitive. However, traditional commentaries suggest that this is unlikely, given Biblical syntax. The question then arises, what differentiates the two phrases? For example, what if *שנות* does not mean years, but rather “changes” (from *שנוי*)? This may be the origin of the word *year*, which marks the change in the cycle of time. The Izbitcher Rebbe was one who translated *שנות* as “the changes of every generation.” He wrote that “we have a profound sense of tradition, but even as a nation we must never get stuck. Just as the Torah is dynamic, Jews must also adjust to every new format.”

Thus, the injunction becomes: “Remember the olden days; but also consider how times change and how things differ from one generation to the next.”

²Arna Poupko taught a rich variety of Jewish texts at the conference on Next Steps in Jewish Continuity. However, this particular text study focusing on “change” was prepared by Dr. Leora Isaacs for sessions in a variety of North American communities.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How might this text inform our work during the current period of Jewish renaissance and renewal?
2. During the historical Renaissance, people drew on classical texts and passages to create new forms. How might this apply to the current period of Jewish renaissance and renewal?
3. The opening lines of the Amidah prayer refer to the God of Abraham (and Sarah), God of Isaac (and Rebekkah), God of Jacob (and Rachel and Leah). Commentators note that this is because each ancestor had a different relationship and understanding of God. What implications does this have today?
4. In *ואהבת* (*Ve'ahavta*), the first paragraph of the *Shema*, we read *ושננתם לבניך* - you shall teach them (the *mitzvot*) to your children. Applying the theme of “change” to this verse, how might this lead to a different understanding of Jewish education — and of lifelong Jewish education?

IV. MAKING MEANING

The conference program was designed to build incrementally, beginning with two complementary keynote presentations.

Rabbi Saul Berman's presentation, *Beyond Continuity: A Vision for the Future*, provides a conceptual framework for the next steps in the evolution of the North American Jewish community. He shows how Jewish behaviors and activities were always intended as vehicles for transforming the mundane to the spiritual, and imbuing daily life with unique Jewish values and meaning. He posits that the next step is not only to draw people closer to the Jewish community, but also to help all Jews find ways to infuse their lives with Judaism and meaning.

Dr. Bethamie Horowitz's presentation reports results of her recent research about how Jewish New Yorkers understand and explain their Jewish identities and connections. By utilizing innovative methodologies and going beyond traditionally defined expressions of Jewishness, Dr. Horowitz reveals how her respondents see themselves relative to the greater Jewish community and how they view the role of their Jewishness in their daily lives and self-identities. This presentation casts new light on how the community must understand and respond to the diverse needs of the Jews whom it wishes to engage.

These two presentations can serve as foundation for local conferences or community planning processes. They challenge readers to create a comprehensive vision of meaningful Jewish life for individuals and communities.

BEYOND CONTINUITY: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Rabbi Saul Berman³

For the past two hundred years, the entire Jewish community has been engaged in a life and death struggle with modernity. The real challenge facing the Jewish community is whether it can succeed in preserving an intense sense of Jewish identity while integrating into a world that operates on a totally foreign value system. The confrontation with modernity challenges the fundamental commitments of Judaism. During the last 200 years there has been a shift in societal values. Material values have replaced spiritual values. There has been a shift from a communally centered world to an individually self-centered world.

The struggle with modernity is apparent within each of the religious communities. The Reform movement wrestles with the question of how much it has ceded to modernity. Has it lost the critical elements necessary to transmit a significant understanding of Jewish life? Similarly, the Conservative movement grapples with how much Jewish identity is necessary to preserve Jews. This is apparent in the discrepancy that has evolved between those who are more intensively involved, *i.e.*, the rabbinate, the graduates of Ramah and USY leadership, and the rest of the Conservative community. Modern Orthodoxy, which argues that it is possible to benefit from modernity while maximally preserving the fullness of Jewish identity, is also engaged in the clash of values. Even the Charedi right wing Orthodox community is drawn into the fray. However, they believe that the only way to sustain Jewish identity within modernity is by isolating the Jewish community from modernity. They even refrain from using public transportation and watching television to avoid being exposed to shocking modern images. Even those with more secular affiliations, through JCCs

and Federations, are drawn into the struggle. The underlying issues are the same for all religious movements regardless of form.

The continuity effort has demonstrated that we have the capacity to draw people into the Jewish community, albeit with enormous effort and financial commitment. The next step, beyond continuity is meeting the challenge of preserving and maximizing Jewish identity within the framework of modernity. To do this, we must first recognize the counter-cultural nature of Judaism and Torah.

Students of Near Eastern cultures and legal systems know that when the Torah entered the world it represented an extraordinary critique of the culture of the time. The Torah attempted to overturn fundamental elements of the existing cultures. Before Torah, no culture attributed absolute value to every human life. Although killing another human was considered a crime by all ancient cultures, this only applied to certain humans. It was only a crime if the victim was a citizen, or if he was a free citizen. No other ancient legal system deemed killing *any* human being, regardless of status, a crime. The Torah introduced the concept that taking the life of *any* human being is a fundamental evil. The Torah says *lo tirtzach* for Jews, *lo tirtzach* for free people, *lo tirtzach* for slaves, *lo tirtzach* for every human being. It is forbidden to take the life of any human being because *every* human life has absolute value.

The Torah's insistence on individual responsibility also contrasted with virtually all ancient legal systems which operated according to principles of vicarious liability. In Hammurabi's code, if a contractor built a building with faulty materials

³Rabbi Saul Berman is a leading Orthodox teacher and thinker. Rabbi Berman has been the spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Israel in Berkeley, California, Young Israel of Brookline, Massachusetts and Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York. In each of these settings he has been responsible for establishing innovative adult education, social action and outreach programs. Rabbi Berman is associate professor of Jewish Studies at Stern College and adjunct professor at Columbia University School of Law. From 1995 to 1997, he served as a scholar-in-residence to the JCC in Palisades, New Jersey. In 1997 Rabbi Berman became the director of ADAH, a new organization devoted to the integration of modern Orthodox ideology in religious life. Rabbi Berman was ordained at Yeshiva University where he also received his BA and MHL. He holds the degree of Jewish law from New York University and an MA in Political Science from UC Berkeley. He spent two years studying *Mishpat Ivri* in Israel at Hebrew University and at Tel Aviv University.

which resulted in the death of a child, the contractor's own child would be killed. Ancient Near Eastern codes of law stipulated that the punishment for raping a married woman should be having one's wife raped by the victim's husband. Ancient law assumed that human beings were property. Therefore, when one's property was violated, justice was achieved by reciprocal actions directed against the property of the perpetrator. The Torah states that all relationships between people are not about property rights, but rather about the achievement of mutual holiness.

Ancient society operated by the principle of *transitive* responsibility. In contrast, the Torah introduced the principle of *absolute* individual responsibility. The Torah states that each individual is entirely liable for his own actions. Parents shall not be killed for the crimes of their children, nor children for the crimes of their parents. The rabbis were so adamant about this principle that they even prohibited criminal liability for conspiracy because they felt it undermined individual responsibility for criminal action.

The Torah inverted ancient values. Hammurabi's Code stipulated that a slave who escaped his master but was recaptured was to be brought before a court of law. If the master was able to prove that the person was his slave, the slave was remanded to the master and was punished by having his ear cut off. Even though the Torah permitted indentured servitude of Jews who had become bankrupt or who had stolen and then were unable to repay, the Torah maintained that the indentured servant was no different from an employee; he ate the food of the household, he was supported with the same clothing and bedding, and he and his family were treated like members of the household. Furthermore, the indenture was limited to six years. If, at the end of six years, the servant said, "I love my master, it's great here; My annual income is guaranteed; It's the perfect job," the master was required to bring the servant before the court that sat at the gate of the city. The court was required to ascertain that there was no duress and that the servant wished to remain a servant. Only then was the servant permitted to remain in servitude —

but only until the Jubilee Year, when everyone went free. However, as a sign of having chosen servitude over freedom, the servant's earlobe was pierced. The rabbis asked, "Why pierce the earlobe?" In *Midrash Rashi* it is explained: "*Ozen she-shamah behar Sinai, avady hem, v'lo avdei avadim.*" "The ear[s] that heard God declare at Mount Sinai [are to be] my servants, and not [to be] servants unto servants." Thus, the person who chose to be a servant unto others was to be punished by piercing his earlobe. The inversion of Hammurabi's Code is fascinating. In this instance, as in others, the Torah uses and transforms ancient practices to express its own moral values and to subtly contrast them with the prevailing culture. In this way, Torah transforms the value system of Jewish society and thereby the value system of the entire world.

In some ways we are the victims of our own success. So many Jewish values have become universal. As a result, the uniqueness of the Jewish value system has been forgotten. We deceive ourselves into believing that the differences between Jewish and non-Jewish values are minor and meaningless. We mistakenly assume that when it comes to fundamental values, everybody is the same. We falsely deduce that all value systems are common and that this is how we integrate with the rest of the world. We rationalize that any apparent differences are only manifested in ritual or behaviors. The challenge of modernity for the Jewish people is to rediscover distinctive Jewish meaning in the context of modern culture.

I would like to focus on three areas in which Jewish values and meaning can transform modern culture. The other night, a group of friends and I were commiserating about how technology seems to have increased the amount of time that everybody is working. In the '60s people were concerned about how to deal with all of the leisure-time that technology promised. Even within the religious community, Rabbi Norman Lamm wrote about how to infuse leisure time with meaning. Ironically, nowadays, I meet lawyers who work from 7:00 AM until 2:00 AM, grab a nap and *daven* with their *tefillin* in their offices. They may think

that they are earning fantastic wages – but closer analysis reveals that they are just working the equivalent of three jobs. When some of these newly-minted lawyers, doctors and financiers tell their rabbis that something is missing in their lives, their rabbis often tell them that their lives lack meaning. They advise them to join study groups, if not in person than by phone. So these young professionals squeeze in telephone *chavrusas* at 6 AM or they study *Daf Yomi* at 5 AM. Jewish learning and finding Jewish meaning are confined to a single hour of study or prayer. It is unfortunate that Jews who devote so much time to the productive realm must compartmentalize their lives in this way.

In contrast, the Torah envisioned a life in which the productive endeavor is infused with meaning. The most common form of economic endeavor in antiquity was agriculture. The Torah altered the agricultural process of antiquity to combine a sense of Jewish meaning with the act of earning a living. For example, the Torah divides the agricultural process into eleven stages, beginning with plowing, sowing, reaping, making sheaves, threshing and winnowing, selecting and sifting, grinding and kneading, and ending with the agricultural product, or cooked food. That division into separate acts was not random because the Torah infuses each stage of the agricultural process with meaning. The Torah reminds the farmer that before he starts plowing he must think about the labor that will be involved in the plowing process. Before he starts sowing, he must think about mixing the seeds to put them into the ground. He must think about the integrity of nature as God created it. He will have an enormous control over nature, but there will always be some symbolic act that he will not be permitted to perform to remind him that nature is not his, but God's. Thus, by commanding the farmer to set aside a corner of his field for the poor, the Torah instills an awareness of the poor in every agricultural endeavor; as the farmer binds his sheaves, accumulates and gathers his product. These Torah laws link every single element of the productive process to some act, some thought, some con-

sciousness that portrays the fundamental values of Jewish life. By doing so, the Torah attempts to fill every aspect of the productive endeavor with meaning. Through every element of his life, rather than merely through the one hour per day devoted to study, the farmer was conscious of God's mastery of the world, of his responsibility for the well-being of animals, and of his obligations for the needs of the poor. Every single element of the productive process was linked to some act, some thoughts, some consciousness that portrayed the fundamental values of Jewish life.

The Torah's injunctions, which refer specifically to agricultural productivity, must be applied to all realms of human endeavor. They apply equally to lawyers, doctors and nurturers of children. Each productive realm must be infused with meaning by breaking down its elements and defining the values that can be expressed within the context of its component activities. This is an endeavor that the entire Jewish community can undertake together. Nowadays, the basic framework exists within most Federations. They have created units of lawyers, doctors, fabric makers and *shmata* sellers. Now, the community must provide the vehicles through which individuals can discover Jewish meaning in their productive lives. The time, energy and "soul" that people invest in their productive work should be channeled to enhance their Jewish identities, rather than diminish them.

Secondly, Judaism offers a very distinctive interpersonal ethic. Let us assume that a man is sitting at the side of a swimming pool reading the newspaper. Suddenly, he hears a cry of distress from someone who clearly is having trouble staying afloat. The man looks at the person, then at his *Wall Street Journal*, and decides in favor of the paper. The man does not respond and the swimmer drowns. There are only two states in the United States where the man could be prosecuted for his failure to act. In all other states, American law operates on the assumption that criminality only exists when there is action. A person cannot be prosecuted for *not* acting. But thirty-five hundred years ago the Torah taught us "*Lo ta'amod al dam*

re-echa. You may not stand idly by when the blood of your neighbor is shed.” The whole framework of Jewish ethics is based on the assumption that every individual is responsible for every other person. This translates into the requirement to act and not simply to stand by passively and allow somebody else to die or suffer. From the perspective of the Torah, this also extends to property. If one is walking in the street and comes upon a wallet, Jewish law says that he is duty bound to pick it up and turn it over to an authority who can publicize it, and make it possible for the one who lost it to reclaim it. Civil law makes no such demand, but from the perspective of Torah, one is not only duty bound to rescue people, but also their property. The whole framework of Jewish ethics assumes that our fundamental responsibility is to prevent injury to others through our words and actions. In fact, according to the *Mishna* it is a criminal act to ask a merchant the price of products that you intend to buy from another. If you only need the model number and price for comparison because you plan to get it wholesale from someone else, you are not only stealing his time, but you are also injuring his ego. Through this, and hundreds of other laws, the Torah seeks to shape our ethical awareness and heighten our sensitivity to the distinctiveness of our ethical responsibility to other individuals.

Thus we see that *tikkun olam* does not just mean “repairing the world” on its terms. It does not mean simply determining what the world thinks it needs and then going out to help the world achieve its goals. For the Jewish community, *tikkun olam* must mean determining what needs to be repaired in the world from a Jewish perspective, and then going out as Jews to make those repairs. We have the opportunity to shape a distinctive Jewish vision, which grows out of consciousness of the fact that there really are distinctive Jewish values. We are the purveyors of those values that can reshape the external world.

The process of recapturing our distinctively Jewish values must begin in the home. Symbolic acts and rituals are the most effective ways of transmitting Jewish values from generation to

generation. Moses Maimonides, the great jurist and philosopher, known as *Rambam*, argued that the laws of the Torah do not simply exist as means to demonstrate obedience to God. Rather, every law of the Torah, including all the ritual laws, is designed to impact on society and personal consciousness and to teach fundamental Jewish values. Perhaps, one of the most critical challenges that lies before the Jewish community is to rediscover the connection between Jewish rituals and Jewish values. For example, on Friday night and *Shabbat* morning, the *Kiddush* over the wine is recited before the *motzi* over the *challot*. The *challot* are to be covered when the *kiddush* is recited. One early medieval Jewish scholar suggested that the *challot* should be covered so that they are not embarrassed when priority is given to the wine. Rabbeinu Asher knew that *challot* could not actually be embarrassed, but he understood the meaning of embarrassing people publicly. He also understood that sometimes the most effective way of transmitting a teaching is through a symbolic act. If we and our children are aware that we even have to be worried about the embarrassment of the *challah*, how much more will we be sensitive to the need to avoid embarrassing people.

We now have the opportunity to move into a new era in Jewish history. The whole Jewish people can be united in a common endeavor to infuse Jewish meaning in the lives of Jews in the workplace, in interpersonal relationships, and through the conscious use of ritual to transmit values to the next generation. If we do this, the Jewish people will succeed in maximizing Jewish identity within the context of modernity.

CONNECTIONS AND JOURNEYS: NEW FINDINGS ON JEWISH IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT⁴

Dr. Bethamie Horowitz⁵

We live in a *neuer welt* (a new world), at least as far as our ideas about Jewish identity go. Jewish identity suddenly matters. When I was in graduate school, I don't think anyone would have been interested in a study of Jewish identity. Previous generations assumed that Jewishness mattered, and that if it didn't it should. Lately, there is a growing need to explore how people understand the meaning or lack of meaning of Jewishness in their own lives.

The assumptions that were made about Jewishness were incorporated into the way we conducted research, and even in the way we asked our questions in demographic studies. For example, researchers would call people up, say "Hello, are you Jewish?" ask a few questions to determine that they actually were Jewish and then ask, "What do you *do* that is Jewish?" We know that Jewish identity can no longer be accurately analyzed using these conventional methods and models of research. This particular approach no longer works because it does not ask about the whole person beyond the Jewish part. It neglects the people that experience altered and limited versions of Judaism.

The subliminal message of this approach, "Are you Jewish?" and "Tell me what you do that's Jewish," implies that there are just two possibilities for how to be Jewish in America today, the Jews who are really involved and those who are assimilated.

My father used to tell a joke about Hymie, the intensely fervent observant Jew who prayed three times a day, and the terrifically successful, but negligibly Jewish, Thorndike III. The joke, por-

traying only two star characters, the involved Jew and the assimilated Jew, illustrated the forced choice of modernity. However, in order to understand the needs and concerns of today's Jews, we must ask broader questions about what being Jewish means to people, how religion fits into their lives, and how a person's Jewishness evolves over the course of a lifetime.

I believe the concept of Jewish identity has changed with time. Statistics on intermarriage illustrate this evolution. Forty or fifty years ago, the typical Jew who would marry out of his faith was a man who was escaping the Jewish ghetto to join the American mainstream. Then, the Jew was cloistered from American mainstream. Wearing the proverbial *goldena shiksa* on his arm was a way to overcome the isolation and segregation and to "join America." Today, this is no longer the case. High intermarriage rates today reflect how America has changed. Today's rise in intermarriage represents the integration of Jews into the American mainstream. The old social barriers have collapsed and people can choose whether they want to join the mainstream. In the past people intermarried by choice; today they intermarry by chance. Today's high intermarriage rates are not due to a great rise in desire to marry out, but rather because people are freely interacting with other people. The chances of even sneezing on somebody who is not Jewish are greater than before, and so it is no surprise that there has been an increase in the number of Jews who happen to end up with non-Jewish spouses. Nowadays, Haredim exemplify those Jews who choose to abide by the social barriers of earlier generations,

⁴ This paper presents preliminary findings from the study entitled "Connections and Journeys," which was commissioned and largely funded by the Jewish Continuity Commission of the UJA-Federation of Greater New York (1999). The AVI CHAI Foundation supported the qualitative phase in the first year of the project. The Chazen Family Fund and the Lucius Littauer Foundation provided additional funding.

⁵ Dr. Bethamie Horowitz, Senior Scholar at the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University, is a social psychologist who has used social science skills to address some of the important issues facing the Jewish world. For the past ten years she has studied both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of Jewish continuity. She recently completed the "Connections and Journeys" study, which she describes in this article. At UJA-Federation of New York she authored the 1991 New York Jewish Population Study, a social survey about the largest urban Jewish population in the world. Her monograph about the Jews of New York was published in 1993. She served as Director of Planning and Research from 1992-96. A graduate of Harvard University, she received her doctorate in social psychology from The Graduate School of The City University of New York.

segregating themselves from the rest of America, but they are not *forced* to make that choice.

In distinction to previous generations, being Jewish today is to be part of a much higher status, or advantaged group, that is part of the mainstream. An old joke illustrates how America-at-large once perceived the Jew. Chauncey Fauntleroy III, formerly Shimon Fogelberg, was determined to join the elite restricted New York Athletic Club. He worked ten years to rid himself of all identifying markers of being a Jew. He worked on his manners, his accent, and his clothing to create the whole persona who had gone to all the right schools and who had all the right connections. Finally, the day of the interview arrived. He met with the committee, and he was doing terrifically well. They were very impressed with him. At the end of the interview the chairman said, "I hope you won't mind, but it is our policy to ask you about your religion." "Religion?" said Chauncey, "I am of the goyish persuasion." So we see, at that time, Chauncey was unable to escape disadvantaged minority status.

In contrast, being Jewish today is to be part of an advantaged group. It is so much accepted that if a person doesn't care about being Jewish, no one else will force him. The fact that intermarriage rose so dramatically from 1965 to our time is more a reflection of indifference about Jewishness than an explicit desire to escape the Jewish group. Changes in American society and accomplishments in America have broken down many external barriers that existed previously, such as prejudice and anti-Semitism. Jewish people are no longer forced to be Jewish or compelled to escape from it. Rather, a person can simply not think about it at all. A person can be Jewish by birth or by background, but unless it is part of his psychological identity, his Jewish background is considered an inconsequential feature of his life. Without all the external barriers that enforce segregation, individual identity matters more than ever before and thus continuity has come to depend on the strength of individual identity.

"Connections and Journeys" confirmed that today American Jews can be divided between those who find Jewishness meaningful and central

in their lives and those who feel indifferent. The dichotomy is not between acceptance and rejection of Jewish identity, but rather between meaningfulness and indifference. The indifferent Jews do not actively reject the faith, they simply feel indifferent.

"Connections and Journeys" took a new approach to studying American Jewishness and identity. In previous studies, the dominant mode of monitoring Jews has been to document behavior. Most research about Jews has assumed that actions, such as lighting candles, attending synagogue and being part of the community were the prime indicators of Jewish identity. Traditionally, religious and communal life has placed a very high value on outwardly observable actions. Monitoring Jewish behavior is a good indicator of the extremes, the Jews who practice and the Jews who do not. However, it neglects to cite those people who have a sense of Jewish identity but observe limited ritual practices. For instance, a person who fasts on *Ta'anit Esther*, the Fast of Esther, probably performs a whole host of other practices and is pretty deeply involved in Jewish life. On the other hand, a person who doesn't fast at all, even on *Yom Kippur*, may also be very involved. Similarly, we also need to understand those who do some things, but not others.

Tracking Jewish behavior is important, but isn't really sufficient for examining the meaning of identity or commitment to Jewishness. For example, a few years ago my husband and I were taking a stroll on a Friday evening during Passover when we bumped into some friends who told us that they were on their way to a Seder. We considered this odd because it was the fourth night of Passover. But we soon learned that these people hold their Seder on the closest Friday night to the beginning of Passover. Behaviorally, these people celebrate Passover, but we do not know how they observe it. For example, they may or may not use a Haggadah. I don't know whether they serve *matzah* or pita and *chumus*. Behavior monitoring does not distinguish the Seder with the Haggadah from the Seder without, and the one without the Haggadah might be just as meaningful for its par-

ticipants. Behavior monitoring does not inform us about the subject's personal experience, or whether a sense of meaning is transferred. Leaving out the subjective interpretation can lead to underestimating the persistence of identity.

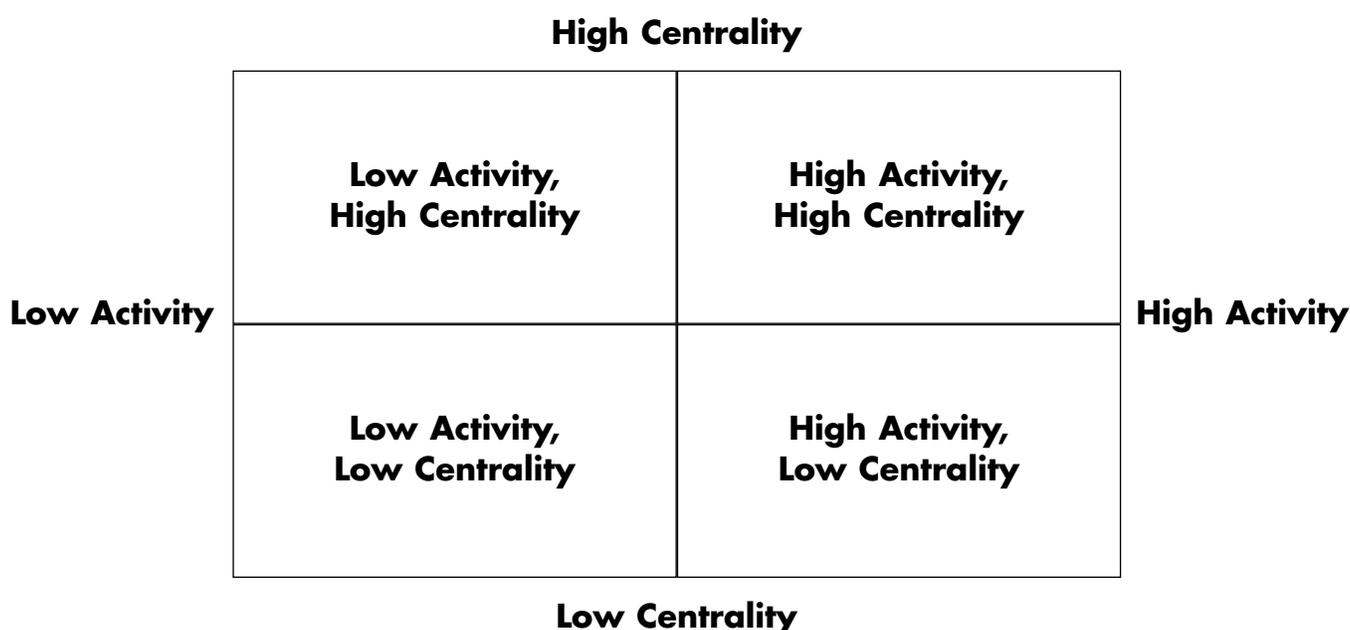
In addition to collecting data on people's Jewish behaviors, we must gain greater insight into their internal Jewish commitments. We must come to understand what being Jewish means to the person. Some members of the Jewish community demonstrate how meaningful their Judaism is by unconventional means. For example, I interviewed a female New York City Police Lieutenant. Although her conventional Jewish practices are limited, her subjective commitments are quite profound. She graphically described how her Bronx police precinct asked her to decorate the Christmas tree, even though they knew she was Jewish. She delighted in describing their surprise when they discovered she had decorated the tree with blue and white cookies in the shapes of menorahs

and stars of David. Decorating the tree in this manner was her unconventional way of demonstrating the importance of her Jewish identity.

These examples demonstrate that in addition to looking at the outwardly observable actions that people undertake, it is important to examine the subjective internal aspect of what being Jewish means to them. Is being Jewish a motivating force in their lives or is it a background factor that they do not act on? By conceptualizing Jewishness along two dimensions it is possible to explore the relationship between people's internal commitments on one hand and their outwardly observable actions on the other.

"Connections and Journeys" graphically mapped these aspects of people's Jewishness. Internal dimensions were plotted along the vertical axis and behavioral aspects were plotted along the horizontal axis (see Diagram A).⁶

DIAGRAM A:



⁶Reprinted from *Connections and Journeys: Assessing Critical Opportunities for Enhancing Jewish Identity*

People can be located in one of four quadrants. The upper-right quadrant contains people who experience intense feeling and are very involved. The lower-right quadrant contains the people who feel little and do little. These two quadrants represent the typical way of dividing Jews into highly affiliated and highly assimilated groups. The current analysis presents the possibility that there are people in other quadrants who feel deeply and do very little (high disposition/low activity) or who do a lot and feel nothing. For instance, someone who marries into a community that is more observant than they were in the past may demonstrate high activity and low disposition. It is important to keep the distinction between the dimensions in mind in order to avoid the tendency to confuse or fail to distinguish people's subjective states from their objectively apparent actions. This tendency is problematic for those creating Jewish programs and policies because the people who do the least are most likely to be written off. Yet, this group is likely to include many who feel positive toward their Jewishness and may therefore be open to various initiatives or programs, and eventually, to doing more things.

“Connections and Journeys” also explored the “content” of Jewish identity. In contrast to the older model of research, which was rather normative, our research has taken a self-anchored approach to defining the content of Jewishness. Rather than defining Jewishness according to the prescriptive norms set out by policy makers, communal leaders, rabbis or educators, we asked respondents to speak about themselves and to define Jewishness, however it is for them. Rather than asking, “what is a good Jew?” the emphasis in this study has been, “for you, personally, what does being Jewish involve?”

“Connections and Journeys” starts to explore Jewish identity with a different set of assumptions and an openness to different ways of seeing and understanding today's American Jews. Up until now studies have found just two kinds of American Jews – the involved and the unin-

involved. This finding has overshadowed what our study now reveals – a sector of the American Jewish community with “mixed” Jewish engagement. For these people, Jewishness is like a salad bar. They choose whatever ingredients they find particularly meaningful for their imaginary “Jewish identity salad.” These may range from halacha, Holocaust and challah to a person's Uncle Harry, spirituality, Seinfeld, and being afraid of dogs. Every plate and every salad represents a different vision of what being Jewish means.

The fact that today's Jewish identity is characterized by such tremendous diversity makes research difficult. On the one hand, just because Jewish identity is not always consistent does not mean that it is not personally meaningful. On the other hand, the uniqueness of every individual is more difficult to track than the conventional person who defines Judaism according to “normative” rituals. For instance, an item about fear of dogs can not be included in a survey just because an individual judges it to be an important part of his or her Jewishness. Therefore, it is easy for researchers to lose sight of what is happening in the “non-normative” part of the Jewish community.

There are many people who discover inventive ways to act Jewishly. Sharon was a participant in the “Connections and Journeys” study. At the time of the interviews, Sharon was in her mid-40s. Raised in an Orthodox home, she followed certain religious practices, like keeping kosher, out of habit. She described her lifestyle as being “some-what by rote.” At the time of the interviews she had been reevaluating her practices and the reasons she continued them. She had come to regard meaningfulness as a criterion for her Jewish identity and had begun to make a number of choices. For instance, she used to keep kosher until she had a car accident. While in the hospital, her friends brought her food that she could not eat. At that moment, she realized that being with her friends and eating the food that they brought her was important to her. She stopped keeping

kosher. According to conventional research models, Sharon's behavior would appear to be lapsing. However, at the same time she joined a synagogue for the first time in her life because that became meaningful to her. Although Sharon's behaviors may appear inconsistent to the outside observer, she perceived herself as developing a clearer sense of her own Jewishness. She saw herself as figuring out something that worked for her and fit in with her life. In this example, inventiveness is apparent, without integrated or corresponding behaviors.

Daniel offered another example of identity formation as a process of deciding what fits into one's life and what can be discarded. Daniel, a musician in his mid-40s, was raised in a minimally practicing Jewish home in Manhattan. He spoke of lighting Chanukah candles and attending a Passover Seder that was lacking, according to conventional *Halachic* norms. Daniel recently started to feel guilty about teaching on Yom Kippur. Daniel described himself as always feeling like "a fish out of water" because he was not African American, but a Jew who wanted to play jazz. Daniel's Jewish identity became more meaningful after discovering *Klezmer* music, almost by accident. Daniel was always drawn to the playful and improvisational nature of jazz, but when he encountered *Klezmer*, "it felt like it was his music and his grandmother's music." *Klezmer* music became an authentic means for him to express his Jewish identity and drove him into Jewish settings. With more contact with Jews, he began to gradually do more Jewish things. Daniel utilized his past experiences and the raw materials he inherited to formulate new meaning that would work for him in the present and future. At the time of the interview he had begun to reevaluate and to think differently about his family experiences while growing up. He talked about childhood visits to his Uncle Louis' in Brooklyn:

"When I was a little kid, we did Seders at a very religious uncle of my mother's, a great uncle of mine, and it was practically all in Hebrew. The Seder was very strict, and I think I relate more to that kind of expres-

sion of Jewishness than the synagogues on Long Island which I considered physically ugly and spiritually bare. There was something about my great uncle doing the Seder in a very tense way that I connected to a lot... It was very authentic, he would go off on *Chad Gadya*. He would chant the *Dayanu*, more than sing it. I think that was a good thing for me to see. His house was out in Brooklyn, in Grand Army Plaza, so I always felt that was where the Jews lived. Since I grew up in Manhattan, visiting Grand Army Plaza seemed like visiting a new world."

Daniel expressed that Brooklyn seemed like a "new world" to him. In his forties, Daniel related the childhood image of his Uncle Louis to the music and chanting of Judaism. As a musician, Daniel could retrieve the memory of his uncle and incorporate it in his lifestyle through his music.

Researchers do not know when Judaism will start making sense for people. Identity is almost like psychoanalytic dream-work. We do not know where things are coming from, but people incorporate them into their own inventive systems to find meaning. Active invention and discovery itself energizes people. Finding personal Jewish meaning is about rediscovering the Jewish foundation that was there all along and incorporating it into a lifestyle in a way that fits.

Findings from "Connections and Journeys" dispute conventional research models by showing that identity is fluid. Because identity is not static, but ever changing, conventional research methods can not capture its essence. All people have a journey to tell about. Sometimes, giving people a chance to tell their stories provides them with a mechanism to create their identities. The study's interview process offered people a chance to tell their personal stories, which often generated considerable excitement. Perhaps the research should not be reviewed as simply research, but as an intervention that creates a context in which people give voice to their own stories both to themselves and to listeners.

In “Connections and Journeys” we discovered the existence of a diverse range of Jewish identities. There are so many different influences and ways of being Jewish that have psychological power for people. But, the research also found that Jewishness changes over time. In the past we have only taken snapshots every ten years, at best (by conducting a National Jewish Population survey every ten years). In relying on these snapshots, we have assumed that everything remains constant. In fact, when we talked to people about their lives over time we discovered that the process is much more fluid.

At the same time, certain influences seemed to make a greater difference for people, no matter what their journey. Significant relationships have a profound impact on Jewishness. To paraphrase *Pirke Avot, Sayings of the Fathers*, which says, “*K’ne l’cha chaver.*” “*Find yourself a friend when you want to study*” — find yourself a partner when you want to become a Jew. You need someone to bring you along. People need guidance and connection. Focusing more on family climates can also facilitate the transmission of a sense of Jewishness.

What has the study taught us? First, we have learned that people’s ways of identifying Jewishly are more complex than we have thought, and if we limit ourselves to the conventional measures we miss a significant group of people – those for whom being Jewish is important even if they do not express their Jewishness, at least through lighting candles or studying Jewish things or other recognizably Jewish actions. We do not know what it would take to exploit this fact in order to get these people involved, but they are typically missed in socio-demographic studies.

Second, we have learned that Jewish identification is much more fluid than we had formerly thought. Although we may take a snapshot of where people are at a point in time, we now know that Jewish identity is dynamic and Jewishness changes in relation to other aspects in individuals’ lives.

Finally, we have learned that there are forces, some of which we have not thought about much in the past, that are powerful influences on people’s Jewishness. These include early family life. Although Jewish Family Education has received a lot of attention in the past fifteen years, the focus has primarily been on how to celebrate holidays together as families. The findings from “Connections and Journeys” broaden the concept of Jewish Family Education to include the dynamics of how parents and children relate to each other, or how parents relate to their own Jewishness and convey that to their children, and how they bring it all into their lives.

“Connections and Journeys” offers many lessons and thought provoking questions. Jewish identity is complicated and diverse. We are not talking about a cookie cutter situation here; we cannot simply manufacture Jewish identity and transmit it. The fact that people are inventive nowadays sparks a new concept of how transmittable Judaism will be in the future. There are people who are internally committed who may move to being more outwardly committed regardless of conventional standards. Our research teaches that we cannot judge people by where they are today, and you should not write them off, because who knows where their journeys will take them.

V. PUTTING A FACE ON CONTINUITY: THREE SCENARIOS

*Patricia Cipora Harte*⁷

Social workers are taught “conscious use of self” as a way of understanding particular situations. The technique involves placing or imagining oneself in the situation, and analyzing one’s own response. For example, consider how it feels to enter a room filled with people who are visibly different from you and who have a recognizably different affiliation and orientation. Now think about how people feel when they walk into agencies and organizations in the Jewish community. Is it comfortable or intimidating – or do we even consciously think about it? What must we understand about the needs and feelings of those who stand at the entryway, or outside the doors of the Jewish community? How must the Jewish community and its organizations make itself more open and welcoming? Is there a point at which institutions and organizations feel that they are losing their integrity or compromising themselves in the effort to be inclusive?

The following exercise is designed to translate theory into practice. Three cases draw on the current research which emphasizes that there is no single path, no single direction, no single way to live a Jewish life and to be Jewish. The exercise challenges the reader to first take the place of the protagonist in each case study in order to understand the issues from each of their perspectives. The goal is to identify their issues and needs, as well as the impetuses and disincentives to involvement with the Jewish community as they perceive them. Then, using this awareness, the reader is asked to analyze the barriers and welcoming factors that exist in the Jewish community, its institutions and organizations. Finally, what are the expectations of the Jewish community and its institutions? Are they realistic? Are they flexible? How might institutions change in order to better meet the diverse needs of American Jews?

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EXERCISE I: THREE SCENARIOS AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

This exercise challenges planners and policy makers to look at the Jewish community and its institutions from the vantages of the individuals and families they hope to engage. Seeing the Jewish community “from the outside” may lead to new perspectives about how the community and its institutions can be more responsive and compelling.

Depending on group dynamics and time limitations, facilitators of this exercise may choose to divide participants into three groups, assigning one scenario to each group, or may have all participants analyze all three scenarios. (*The scenarios that have been provided may be adapted or additional scenarios may be created to reflect current local circumstances.*)

Ask participants to assume the role of the protagonist(s) in each scenario in order to understand the issues from each of their perspectives. After reading each scenario, use the following questions to guide the group’s discussions.

Reconvene the full group to synthesize insights from all of the discussions. Based on their understanding of the varying issues and needs of Jews in the community, how might local institutions and agencies change in order to better meet their needs?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1). What issues and needs relating to Jewish identification and involvement does each protagonist express? What does each perceive as the impetuses and disincentives to their involvement with the Jewish community?
- 2). What challenges do these needs and issues present to the community?
- 3). To what extent are the Jewish institutions in your community prepared to deal with these people?
- 4). How might the Jewish community’s institutions change in order to become more accessible to them?
- 5). What are some institutional barriers that might present challenges to these individuals and to the institutions themselves?

SCENARIO 1 - SANDY⁸

Sandy is a 25 year old clothing designer who lives in Manhattan. She is very comfortable with her Jewishness and has unambivalent good Jewish feelings and memories. Being Jewish for her is about family - past, present and future.

She grew up in Connecticut in a family that made efforts to observe some Jewish traditions and to be members of a Jewish community. She grew up associating Jewishness with warm family feelings. While she was growing up, her parents kept kosher at home and celebrated Shabbat by lighting candles, eating challah and having a nice dinner. Sandy and her two siblings were sent to Hebrew School and she had a *bat mitzvah* in Israel as part of a family tour. She continued to attend supplemental school once a week through her junior year in high school, an experience she recalls as “more of a social thing.” After college, Sandy moved to Manhattan to avoid a commute and to meet “Jewish guys.”

Sandy has retained strong Jewish ties to her family. Family ties are essential to her sense of Jewishness, which is expressed in family gatherings and holiday celebrations. Sandy goes to a Conservative synagogue on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. When she goes to synagogue, she feels a sense of being part of the community. Her celebration of the holidays is more about tradition, not about God.

Sandy says she would only marry someone Jewish. Until recently, her boyfriends were not Jewish. This was not “on purpose.” She was not looking for a long-term relationship, so it all depended on whom she met. Since breaking up with her last non-Jewish boyfriend, she has only dated Jewish men.

Sandy’s brother married a Catholic woman who did not convert. They have one child who is almost a year old. They have no religion in the household and Sandy finds it disturbing that the child has no religious identity.

Sandy’s decision not to date non-Jews took into account her parents feelings, but it also expressed her own desires. She knows that if she married out of the religion it would strain her own life, her children’s lives and her family life.

⁸ Adapted from the “Connections and Journeys” study conducted by the UJA-Federation of Greater NY. Not for distribution or citation without permission.

SCENARIO 2 - THE EPSTEINS

Carolyn and David Epstein have been married for six years. They have two children - Josh, 3, and Allison, 2 months. Carolyn worked as a Market Researcher for a computer software company. She left her job shortly before Allison's birth. David works for a large consulting company. He has just gotten a promotion, which will necessitate their moving to another city. They are happy about the promotion and about the prospect of buying their first house, but a bit anxious about moving to a new community far from family and friends. For Carolyn, this is the first time in her adult life that she will not be going to an office each day.

Carolyn and David have a good marriage. They have a great deal in common and they communicate well with each other. Religion is one major area that remains unresolved between them. Carolyn was raised a Methodist in a small town in which there were virtually no Jews. David's family joined a Reform congregation where he had his *bar mitzvah*. The family went to services on the High Holidays, and had seders with his maternal grandparents. After his brother's *bar mitzvah*, the family left the temple.

Before their marriage, both Carolyn and David would have characterized themselves as "not religious." Now that they have children, each feels a need to connect. David, in particular, is very sensitive to Carolyn's feelings and does not want to seem to be imposing Judaism. Carolyn is open but, for her, Judaism is an unknown country.

SCENARIO 3 - THE KAHNS

Cynthia and Ed Kahn have been married for 23 years. Cynthia, 46, a former teacher, started a business tutoring students for the SAT and working with children with learning differences. Ed is an architect. They are active, engaged people who enjoy cultural activities, sports and travel. They have two sons, Jonathan, 19, a college sophomore, and Michael, 16, a high school junior.

Cynthia and Ed joined a Conservative congregation in their suburban community when the boys were young, and the boys celebrated their *bar mitzvahs* there. Jonathan was very involved Jewishly. He participated in the synagogue camps, youth groups, and summer camps. During the summer between his junior and senior year in high school he traveled to Israel.

As a result of Jonathan's involvement, Cynthia and Ed also became involved. They sat on the synagogue youth commission and on the Federation teen task force. Ed coached basketball at the JCC.

With Michael, they are having a whole different experience. He is totally uninterested in Jewish life after *bar mitzvah*. He thinks that kids in the Jewish youth groups are "geeks."

Cynthia and Ed enjoyed their years of involvement but, quite frankly, they also acknowledge that they experienced a bit of burnout. Still, they look back fondly at what already feels like "the good old days" at their synagogue. They are in a different place in their lives now. They are beginning to imagine the next stage of their lives - the "empty nest" and beyond.

VI. UNDERSTANDING CHANGE

ZOOMING IN, ZOOMING OUT: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON CHANGE

Karen Barth⁹

Whether large or small, Jewish communities must now think about change in new ways. An apocryphal anecdote is currently circulating on the Internet. Bill Gates allegedly compared the computer industry with the auto industry at a recent computer expo. He posited that if General Motors had advanced technologically in the same manner as the computer industry, we would all be driving \$25 cars that get a thousand miles per gallon. The CEO of GM countered with a press release stating that if GM had developed technology like Microsoft, we would all be driving cars with the following characteristics: cars would crash twice a day, for no apparent reason. Owners would have to purchase new models every time lines were re-painted on the roads. Occasionally, cars would die inexplicably on the freeways, and drivers would have to accept it, restart, and go on. Executing a common maneuver such as a left turn would cause the car to shut down and refuse to restart. In those cases, it would be necessary to reinstall the engine. A single general warning light would replace the oil, water and temperature gauges. Every time GM introduced a new car model, buyers would have to learn how to drive all over again because none of the controls would operate in the same manner as the old car. Although it is somewhat humorous, this anecdote reminds us that undertaking change is not easy.

The Jewish community currently faces very complex challenges related to change. We cannot afford to change as slowly as GM, but neither can we afford to wreak havoc like Microsoft. Many previous challenges in our history have been more straightforward. Rescuing Jews from places like the former Soviet Union required vast resources and enormous amounts of energy, but the challenge was much clearer. We knew where they were, that planes were needed to transport them, that homes were needed to resettle them. We knew that they would need jobs, social services and acculturation. We simply had to muster the will and resources to tackle these problems. The problems we face today are not as clear cut, requiring a more complex level of thinking.

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ZOOMING IN AND ZOOMING OUT: A WAY TO CHALLENGE OUR ASSUMPTIONS

In thinking about this complex challenge, I draw on some findings from an interesting study on innovation in the corporate world that I was part of at the consulting firm of Mackenzie and Company. Basic research on innovation suggests that discovering analogies or links outside of a particular field of endeavor often results in some very creative solutions. A series of photographs from the book *Powers of Ten*¹⁰ illustrates, through a different field of endeavor, how perspective can dramatically change the appearance of a picture. Applied as an analogy, the book illustrates how the Jewish community can develop new solutions to its problems if it learns to look at and think about “the big picture.”

The first photograph in the book depicts a man asleep on a warm October day. Food and books, necessities for mind and body, surround him. This is the scale on which individuals tend to think – the human scale. Backing up from this photograph, viewing it from a more distant vantage point, viewers begin to see the “big picture.” The next photograph does just this, depicting the scene from a more distant standpoint, backing out by a power of ten. It becomes apparent that a woman lies beside the man on a blanket. It is clear that they are having a picnic in the park. Zooming out by another power of ten reveals that the park is not far from a highway and from a boat dock. Readers notice that the boat and the dock are located in a city. With each zoom out, we can see a little bit more of the “big picture”: the city of Chicago, the Lake Shore Drive, Soldiers Field, an air strip, a boat dock and some museums. The city takes on the appearance of the home and workplace of a million people. As the powers of ten increase, one can see the earth, our solar system, and the Milky Way galaxy.

Looking at the same photograph, it is also possible to see meticulous details. Zooming in on the

slide reveals the skin on the man’s hand, an individual skin cell, DNA molecules, electrons of the carbon atom, so on and so forth.

Like the photographer of *The Power of Ten*, Jewish communities must begin to think about future challenges from different perspectives. “Zooming in” and “zooming out” reveals a vision of the world from a “big picture” approach and from a detailed approach. Communities have much to learn from looking closely at the details of what is happening as well as from stepping back to evaluate the “big picture.”

Applying this to Jewish continuity today, many communities focus on funding and creating programs. It is natural to begin at the program level; the human scale. However, it may be advantageous to view the issues from a more distant vantage point to think in a more systematic way. Today, many successful business empires have emerged as a result of rethinking boundaries, restructuring relationships and revamping how they conduct themselves. The birth of Microsoft restructured the entire computer industry. Microsoft took over the market without necessarily offering superior features. Similarly, years ago, a tension existed between wholesalers and retailers in the *shmata* business. My father used to manufacture men’s wear. He remarked on the ill feelings that often existed between retailers and manufacturers. Recently, companies like Ralph Lauren came along and wiped out the wholesaler/retailer relationship, rethinking the boundaries between the two institutions. Ralph Lauren did not accept the notion that there would always be manufacturers and retailers. He and others like him assumed full responsibility for bringing their products to the customer. Similarly, years ago many small, quaint bookstores existed; corner stores with funny-smelling dust on the books. Nowadays, mega-retailers like Barnes and Noble

¹⁰Eames, Charles and Ray. *Powers of Ten: A Flipbook*. W.H. Freeman Company, 1998.

have acquired market power by developing a new way of working with the book publishers. They developed a new pricing structure, retailing format and a whole new way of conducting business. Books became cheaper, causing small bookstores to lose business. Then, *Amazon.com* entered the picture, using technology to alter the book industry even more, changing the way we buy books entirely. In the 1970s, the venture capital industry offered capital to bright entrepreneurs for the first time. Without those people who provided sophisticated funding in the 1970s, we wouldn't have many of the technologies, such as computer- and biotechnology, that we have come to accept as part of our daily lives. Technology, partnerships, venture funding – they are all strategies that can go beyond the programmatic to address systematic problems.

In addition to evaluating the system as a whole, Jewish communities must also study the components, such as the people who work in the system, the people who are served by the system, the needs of whole communities, and the institutional landscape. A successful Disney World experience can be analogous to that of a synagogue experience. Disney was the originator of the American theme park. This major innovation introduced a new way of thinking about family entertainment and family vacationing, and the interface between every single person and every single activity that they encounter there. Synagogues, like Disney, must think about how to make the experience work for the individual. Disney has managed to create positive experiences for people of enormously diverse ages, income and educational backgrounds. Much can be learned by evaluating Disney's success.

The Jewish community must examine the different components that challenge Jewish continuity; the people who work in our system, the evolving needs of whole groups of people, and the strengths and weaknesses of our institutions. Additionally, we must reevaluate our institutional landscape as businesses, educational systems and government agencies currently do. We must

explore what historical factors led to the emergence of those structures, and whether those factors are still applicable today. For example, linking formal and informal education can create a strong foundation on which to build successful institutions that cross territorial barriers.

We must examine *all* of the influences that affect Jewish continuity. Funding sources, such as Continuity Commissions, can stimulate change, but we must look at the various funding methods and strategies which, in turn, will lead to the most effective changes. What kind of grants and what time frames are most effective? Recently, the Danforth Foundation contributed \$15,000 grants to thirty different universities. By imbuing the grants with a great deal of status and by providing significant technical assistance, the Foundation stimulated change far beyond what funds alone could achieve. In similar ways, the Jewish community must identify a variety of leverage points and strategies for changing the system.

SOME SPECIFIC IDEAS

So what are some of the areas that we need to “zoom out” on? One strategy might be to encourage the start-up of new entities in the Jewish educational system. Unfortunately, unlike the for-profit sector, the Jewish system does not have a good history of closing down programs and entities that have out-lived their usefulness and opening new ones. Another necessary strategy is providing life-long professional development for Jewish communal workers. The Jewish community does little for its professionals once they leave school. We need to focus in on this in order to succeed at positive change.

There are big picture strategies that go well beyond programmatic fixes. Jewish continuity supporters must closely examine the interface between the Jew and the traditional community institutions. Professionals in the Jewish community have the power to create positive growing experiences, stimulating Jewish continuity. Nine times out of ten, a person who experiences a positive journey into Judaism or into his Jewish identity has been influenced in some way by another

person. Creating “transformable moments” in the classroom, or moments when Jewish life crystallizes for people, will contribute to a development of Jewish identity and Jewish connection. These moments allow children and adults to develop positive interests in Judaism and Jewish life. We need to focus on helping professionals in the Jewish community create places, times and events when these moments can occur. In addition, as other religions have discovered, we must start with people’s basic human needs and where they are, rather than starting with the product which we have in mind for them.

The Jewish community must recognize the myriad of ways to measure the effectiveness of its programs. There is a saying, “when you are holding a hammer the whole world looks like a nail.” Jewish educators have to alter the focus of the question they ask to assess events. They must look beyond how many people showed up to programs, if they keep coming back or whether they enjoyed themselves. They must develop a means to understand what people need and how to help them feel a sense of real meaning and connection to the Jewish community, to their Jewish identity, to the Jewish tradition. This is what we mean by “zooming in.”

TO SUM UP

As we “zoom in” and “zoom out” of the system, we see that there are many missing pieces. In order to revitalize our system we must:

- **Train professionals.**

One of the most critical priorities is the training of professional and lay leaders who have the requisite skills to think in new ways and to do the work. Ongoing mentoring and networking (as opposed to episodic, sporadic workshops) are needed to create a cadre of skilled leaders for the endeavor. The community must demand that the training institutions, that are often resistant to change, change the way they prepare professionals for the field. It must encourage life long learning for Jewish professionals.

- **Recruit more people to assist in the endeavor.**

There are not enough people to do the work. Recruiting more people to the endeavor will aid the development of the continuity vision. The community must demand and support a much more substantial and energetic recruiting department.

- **Network institutions and institutional leaders.**

Most of our institutions and institutional leaders operate independently. Communities, movements and organizations must join together to think about possible solutions that are “outside the box,” but which may only be able to be implemented collaboratively.

- **Rethink institutional structures and boundaries.**

We have an extraordinarily fragmented system for dealing with many issues, such as youth. This results in ineffective use of resources. We must ask, “where are the missing pieces? What should be built from scratch?” Existing institutions may not be sufficient to solve all the challenges facing us and, at the same time, partnerships and mergers may be desirable.

- **Examine funding issues.**

We need to examine both the amounts and types of funding that are going to our institutions. With guidance the money can be used wisely and go a lot further. Longer time frames are needed if we are serious about transforming institutions and not just offering programs.

- **Offer technical assistance.**

Technical assistance and consultation is sorely missing from the Jewish institutional landscape. In order for institutions to change, they must be able to access outside help. Institutional mentoring has been a particularly successful strategy for linking some of the more forward thinking institutions with those that are striving to move forward.

- **Create a supportive culture.**

In our endeavor to change the cultural attitudes towards the endeavor of Jewish continu-

ity, we must communicate, market and transmit our ideas. A sophisticated community, such as our own, should take advantage of and utilize the tools of modern marketing.

The Jewish educational system has suffered from many years, perhaps even generations, of neglect. As a result, basic elements of infrastructure are missing. For the first time, we as a people are converging to share ideas. We are embarking on the first stages of building the infrastructure. We are slowly beginning to “zoom out” from the program level to the institutional level, to work with entire institutions on institutional transformation and to “zoom out” farther to address broader systematic questions. We are slowly beginning to focus on the interface between the individual and the Jewish community. Only by doing more of this will we succeed in our endeavors for Jewish continuity.

EXERCISE II: A GUIDE TO ZOOMING IN AND ZOOMING OUT

Using Karen Barth's metaphor, choose one focal area that your community or institution has selected as part of its continuity/renaissance initiative. It might be youth, young families, elders, unaffiliated Jews, young adults, or any other group or area of activity.

ZOOM IN:

- 1) Clarify your understanding of your target population, and of your community and its institutions.

You may have already focused closely on the issues and needs of your target population by using *Putting a Face on Continuity*, which is in the previous section or this handbook, or by other means. Briefly review what you have learned at this time.

If you have not already done so, take time to create a picture of the people whom you wish to engage. To the extent possible, try not to succumb to stereotypes. Communities that are serious about this endeavor should conduct interviews with these target group members to gain a clear and valid understanding of their perspectives. Or better yet, involve members of the target population in the planning process.

- a) What are the salient issues and needs of members of the target group?
 - b) What do target group members see as the existing obstacles and encouragements to connection with the Jewish community or the institution?
 - c) Does your program or service meet their needs and fully engage them? How do you know this? Does it attract the people for whom it was designed? In the numbers anticipated? Why/why not?
 - d) What would be needed to make your program more successful (e.g., human resources, better marketing, a different focus)?
- 2) Create a 'picture' of your community/institution, as it relates to the target population.
 - a) What aspects of your institutional/community culture and philosophy are compatible with the issues and needs of members of the target population? Which are in conflict?
 - b) How does the program created for the target group relate to your communal and/or institutional goals?
 - c) How does the program or service mesh with other programs and services you offer?
 - d) Do you have the right staff and infrastructure to support this program?

ZOOM OUT:

- 1) How can your community create an environment that encourages innovation and “new thinking?”
- 2) What resources are needed, or could be used more effectively?
- 3) How can the community provide for ongoing professional development for Jewish communal workers? How should Jewish communal professionals be trained to be responsive to the changing needs of their constituencies *and* to be change agents in their institutions?
- 4) Ideally, how should the agencies and institutions in your community relate to each other to create an engaging and compelling Jewish community?
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current system?
 - What changes could be made to improve the current system?
- 5) How will you measure the impact and effectiveness of your efforts in this area?

VII. LOOKING BACK-
LOOKING FORWARD:
PLANNING THE NEXT STEPS FOR
THE JEWISH RENAISSANCE

THINKING SYSTEMATICALLY AND SYSTEMICALLY: SOME COMMUNAL CONUNDRUMS

Carolyn Keller¹²

I recall a story that I often used to introduce my presentations on continuity and change when I started my position, about six years ago. You may be familiar with the story from Reb Hayyim of Zans. Here is the parable we used to use on our presentations on Jewish continuity:

“A man had been wandering about in a forest for several days, unable to find the way out. Finally, he saw a man approaching him in the distance and his heart was filled with joy. He thought to himself, “Now I shall surely find which is the right way out of the forest.” When they neared each other he asked the man, “Brother will you please tell me the way out of the forest? I have been wandering out here for several days and am unable to find my way out.” Said the other to him, “Brother I do not know the way out either, for I too have been wandering about in here for many days. But this much I can tell you. Do not go the way I have gone for I know it is not the way. Now come let us search for the way out together.”

Given where we are today, we cannot use this story any more. We have reached the point in the continuity effort when we can look back at a wonderful continuity “journey” filled with experimentation, innovation, new program ideas and more people engaged in Jewish life. The AVI CHAI Foundation envisioned today’s conference on “Next Steps” as an opportunity for communities to share their successes and attempt to build together on what we have been learning. The fact is that the North American Jewish community *has* come a long way since the “early” days of continuity. As recently as five years ago, only four people attended a session on continuity at the GA in

Boston. Today at the AVI CHAI conference we are more than eighty strong, including heads of federations, teams of lay and professionals, movement leaders and national agency representatives who are here to rightfully celebrate our accomplishments.

It is time to review our evolution and progress on the journey that has been Jewish continuity and its successes. By looking at some of the landmarks we may be able to better understand our path and progress.

Jewish continuity has emerged from a vision of the future, the processes of change to achieve that future, and the interplay between that vision and those processes of change. Let’s start with the vision. Our earliest vision of continuity was a reaction, born out of the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), more negative than driven by hope. The results of the 1990 study scared us. We did not know what to do about the seemingly overwhelming rates of intermarriage and assimilation. In Boston, like many other communities, we focused on family education. We sought ways to bring people in through the doors, and to engage them in Jewish life. We began to add programs and to determine what would attract people to the community.

In the beginning we were satisfied if we succeeded simply in engaging people in an activity-directed dialogue or program. During the past five years, our Jewish continuity efforts have come a long way. We are now concerned not just with youth and family, but with adult and life long education, supporting a model of learning that encompasses cradle to grave education.

¹² Carolyn Keller directs Boston’s Commission on Jewish Continuity. The Commission is a joint undertaking of Combined Jewish Philanthropies and affiliated agencies; the Council of Orthodox Synagogues; the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Northeast Council; the United Synagogue of America, Northeast Region; and Synagogue Council of Massachusetts. The Commission was established in 1989 to develop and implement strategies for strengthening Jewish identity, education and commitment within Boston’s Jewish community. Ms. Keller has been involved in the development of Boston’s award-winning Jewish educational initiatives for many years. She served as a family education consultant to the Bureau of Jewish Education and is currently a faculty member of Boston’s Hebrew College family education training program. Previously Carolyn served as the Director of Camp Ramah in New England and as the Education Director and Youth Director at various congregations throughout the Northeast. Ms. Keller is a graduate of the State University of New York at Buffalo and Brandeis University. In 1989-1990, she spent a year in Israel as a Jerusalem Fellow researching trends in Jewish family education.

In the beginning we spoke only in terms of incremental change as we added more programs to engage more Jews. Today, we speak in terms of transformed institutions and about creating “communities of meaning.” We now seek to create communities of learning, caring and committed Jews. We hope to help Jews explore spirituality and Torah. Not only have we broadened our definition of continuity, but we have revolutionized how we do the work. We have convened communal forums to discuss the best possible scenarios to create meaningful communities. Groups and individuals that never sat at the same table before are forging new partnerships and are building trust. Synagogue professionals and lay leaders from different denominations are working together for common goals and purposes. Federations are now developing new relationships with, and giving support to synagogues and agencies that had been virtual strangers before. That has been a major change in the landscape of our local communities. Although Boston was one of the few communities that *always* felt the religious movements had to be partners in any communal initiative, this was often an uphill battle in other communities. Today, the national religious movements are fully engaged with the communities in discussions of continuity.

Another important change has been the emergence of “teams” of lay and professional leaders. The impetus for continuity endeavors may have initially come from professional leadership, but the current energy and momentum is due to real lay-professional partnerships. In communities throughout North America lay leaders have paved the way for new programs by demonstrating new vision and providing new energy and financial resources for the efforts. In Boston, lay champions are setting the stage for a lot of what is happening in the arena of adult learning and congregational change. This is an exciting but challenging part of continuity work.

Networking and collaborative exchange of information have become major components of the continuity enterprise. We are learning together and from one another. Neighboring congregations

and institutions are now more often collaborators than competitors. Continuity has also brought about changes in fundraising and financing. Federations, private donors, endowments, and national private foundations are all involved in making a huge difference.

Evaluation must be considered the hallmark of the continuity effort. Despite the fact that we may not yet have set up adequate systems of evaluation, we are asking, “are continuity efforts working?” We are moving in the right direction, but we must continue to refine the questions and our methodologies for finding the answers. We should be very proud of our efforts in this area. This one area of Jewish communal life is where we confront our failures and mistakes directly and honestly, learn from them, and go forward.

Despite our tremendous strides, we are still only at the beginning of our journey. Our vision has helped nurture those Jews who are searching for meaning, but now we must ask ourselves “how we will create institutions to provide for their needs?” It is unclear whether “seeking Jews” will create new institutions on their own, or whether they will seek the support of existing institutions to continue their personal journeys. This is a crucial question for our future planning and our activities, one for which we must continue to explore the answers. As an example, Boston’s *Me’ah* program of adult Jewish literacy has 500 students enrolled in 20 classes and 20 community institutions and synagogues. We don’t have the capacity right now to help enable those institutions to support those people on their path after *Me’ah*, but we hope that those *Me’ah* graduates will help shape those institutions. That will be an area for continued development and research.

We have talked a lot, too, about entry points. We must learn how to support those who find themselves in different places in their journeys. Many continuity initiatives are available for the beginners, but we are less sure of how to help Jews with stronger backgrounds learn and grow. More advanced learners often struggle to find appropriate venues for their continued growth.

Another challenge for the continuity agenda is clarifying the relationship between communal change and personal growth. Although we have had some measure of success in changing programs in the communal sphere, we do not know whether these programs are making any difference in the homes or family lives of the participants. This improvement— in knowledge, in observance, in Jewish practice— was an impetus for continuity efforts. We must therefore face the challenge of determining how these efforts can have an impact on individual lives.

In Boston, we increasingly define ourselves as a learning community. However, in the past few weeks, it has become clear to me that rabbis and lay leaders are expressing real concerns about how the learning experiences of “continuity” affect the lives of the learners. The other day I spoke to a rabbi who has a *Me’ah* class that meets at 7 o’clock in the evening, immediately following the *minyan*. He wondered why his *Me’ah* students do not want to attend the *minyan* before they go to learn. Would they still come to learn if they were required to attend the *minyan*? Similarly, our JCRC Executive contends that *Me’ah* students who have learned for two years must be involved in acts of *tikkun olam*, social justice. She asks, “what is continuity asking people about their involvement in social justice issues?” Whatever our answers, we must address these very important questions about the impact of learning on ‘doing.’”

Recently, we have started talking about “Renaissance,” an even further leap forward. In Boston, we are now discussing the characteristics of a new “Renaissance” professional. We are seeking people who can employ new methodologies, who can work with multiple populations and who are comfortable in both formal and informal settings. We don’t have enough of those people right now. As a community, we need to attract more talented professionals including young college graduates into the field of Jewish communal service.

In addition, we are adding a new category of professional, the consultant, to our renaissance

team. In Boston, we have recognized that congregations need new skills. We can benefit from the assistance of a variety of consultants who can provide much-needed expertise. We must all ask, “who is out there in our communities, whose expertise has not been tapped, who can help with our continuity efforts in the areas of evaluation, marketing, synagogue change and developing programs?”

We must also strengthen the skills that our new leaders need to do this work effectively. Next year we are creating a Lay Leadership Institute in Boston, because our lay leaders are now saying that they want to know about visioning and strategic planning for congregational life. Our lay leaders really need to know how to work with the professional staff, how to work in teams and how to network. We must address the need to have well-trained lay leaders, and we can do it within the continuity-renaissance effort.

A great deal of money has already been spent tackling the continuity agenda. Bold new ventures are needed to access the additional financial resources required to engage even more individuals and to truly transform institutions. There is a lot more money that can be brought into this agenda.

We must be brave enough to ask the necessary evaluative questions to determine the effectiveness of our programs, our initiatives and our overall efforts. We must seriously consider whether we will succeed best in the area of continuity as individual communities, or whether it makes more sense to collaborate across community boundaries. New York and Boston have already expressed an interest in engaging other communities in these conversations.

We are all involved in holy work. We are in the business of making Jews one at a time. The dual task of transforming the community while we are transforming individual Jews is a wonderful challenge. We should be proud of the great deal of work we’ve done and continue to do in the area of continuity.

EXERCISE III:

CREATING SYSTEMATIC & SYSTEMIC CHANGE

1. Divide into groups of five to eight participants.
2. Ask each group to appoint a recorder.
3. Use the grid on the following pages to chart your community's or institution's progress to date in the area of Jewish continuity.
 - Describe what you have done.
 - Elicit "lessons learned" from your successes and failures.
 - Think about where to go from here.
4. Reconvene the full group. Record the groups' responses using an enlarged copy of the grid, large newsprint sheets, an overhead projector, or software such as *Inspiration*¹¹. Each group should initially report one or two unduplicated items from each category. After each group has had a turn reporting, the facilitator should ask for any obvious omissions.
5. Analyze the grid. Does it represent multiple perspectives? In what areas is there general consensus about accomplishments, challenges, or future steps?
6. How can you use this information and these multiple perspectives to plan next steps?
7. Begin planning!

¹¹ *Inspiration 6.0* [computer software]. (January 2000). Portland, Oregon: Inspiration Software, Inc.

**LOOKING BACK - LOOKING FORWARD:
PLANNING THE NEXT STEPS FOR JEWISH CONTINUITY**

	What Have We Done?	What Have We Learned From It?	What Else Needs To Be Done?
<p>THE VISION How has it changed over time?</p>			
<p>THE PROCESS How did we go about what we did?</p>			
<p>LAY AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP What are their roles and relationships to each other? What are the issues? What support do they need?</p>			

VIII. EVALUATION: AN INDISPENSABLE TOOL FOR SUCCESS

Increased awareness in the value of ongoing evaluation is one of the indirect outcomes of Jewish continuity efforts in the past decade. Funders, including foundations and community continuity commissions, have begun to require systematic evaluations as part of their grant-making processes. In leading communities, funders and grant recipients have come to recognize that evaluative techniques are useful tools for improving program planning and delivery, as well as for assessing their long- and short-term effects.

Systematic evaluation is new to many Jewish communities and institutions. Many communities and institutions lack internal capabilities to evaluate, and there are still too few trained program evaluators to meet the burgeoning demands of the Jewish community.

In response to the growing importance of evaluation, planners of the conference on Next Steps in Jewish Continuity therefore devoted a block of sessions to current approaches to evaluating continuity programs and activities. These sessions included a general overview and reports from two communities (New York and Boston) on their extensive experience in the area.

The following summaries of the conference sessions on evaluation can serve as a background for discussions of local evaluation processes, findings and needs.

SO HOW ARE WE DOING? EVALUATION OF CONTINUITY INITIATIVES

*Leora W. Isaacs, Ph.D.*¹³

The word “evaluation” generally evokes powerful, often disconcerting, visceral responses that are often associated with:

- a test or report card
- being held accountable
- being judged
- gotcha!

but it can also be regarded as:

- a tool for improvement
- a means for finding out what works (and why)

The way that the Jewish community thinks about evaluation has changed radically over the past five to ten years. Ten years ago, as communities began to fund and implement continuity programs, few were willing to allocate the necessary funds or human resources for ongoing evaluation. Most communal decision-makers felt that evaluation was a time- and money-consuming luxury. Facing staggering assimilation and intermarriage rates, Jewish communal leaders eschewed diverting any of the limited funds from programmatic allocations. Most did not recognize how evaluation results can enhance program development and delivery, or foresee that they would need evaluation results to inform their future decisions. Fortunately, this view has changed greatly over the past decade.

¹³Leora W. Isaacs, Ph.D. is the Director of Research and Evaluation at the Jewish Education Service of North America, Inc. (JESNA). As part of her work at JESNA, Dr. Isaacs consults with communities and organizations on strategic planning and evaluation issues. She has authored numerous publications, including articles and handbooks on Jewish continuity, Jewish family and inter-generational education, strategic planning and evaluation.

NEW THINKING ABOUT EVALUATION¹⁴

Attitudes about evaluation in the Jewish continuity arena mirror general societal views that have also undergone significant shifts in recent years.

In the past...	Currently...
evaluations were largely “imposed” by outsiders as accountability mechanisms.	increasing numbers of program providers value and incorporate systematic evaluation in their program planning and implementation because they recognize its utility.
many funders focused primarily on fiscal accountability and “the bottom line.”	there is increased emphasis on <i>process</i> as well as <i>product</i> .
evaluations were often “tacked on” at the end of grants, like final report cards.	increasing numbers of evaluations are initiated at the onset of program planning, inform decisions and mid-course corrections throughout the projects, and end with an assessment of the effectiveness of the programs.
results of evaluations were all too often seen as separate from the organization's regular functioning and not integrated into ongoing decision-making and planning.	evaluative findings are considered vital to organizational learning.
many program providers regarded evaluation in punitive terms, and engaged in adversarial relationships with funders.	more funders and grant recipients are more likely to establish trusting, problem-solving relationships.
there was consensus that evaluation takes away from organizations’ “real work.”	more funders and program providers realize that evaluation is <i>essential</i> to the “real work” of the program.
many believed that only statistical methodologies are valid.	evaluation procedures apply a variety of methods, and there is increased emphasis on ensuring that methods are appropriate to the questions being asked.
evaluation was generally assumed to be the exclusive domain of outside specialists who designed, conducted, analyzed and reported objectively on evaluative findings.	there is growing awareness that all stakeholders (including funders, decision-makers, program providers and participants) have roles in evaluating programs and organizations.

¹⁴ This section is excerpted from *Pathways: A Guide for Evaluating Programs in Jewish Settings* by Adrienne Bank. Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education and the Jewish Education Service of North America, Inc., 1997.

INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW...

Program evaluations are systematic ways to respond to questions that those interested in the programs want and need answered. These include:

	Type of Evaluation
■ Is this program worth doing?	■ <i>Summative</i>
■ How can we improve this program?	■ <i>Formative</i>
■ How well does this program deliver its services?	■ <i>Implementation</i>
■ What effect does the program have?	■ <i>Impact</i>
■ To what extent has the program achieved its goals?	■ <i>Goal-based</i>
■ What are <i>all</i> the consequences of this program?	■ <i>Goal-free</i>
■ What do we need to know for decision-making?	■ <i>Decision-oriented</i>
■ How do program costs compare with benefits?	■ <i>Cost-Benefit</i>
■ How does the program comply with particular standards?	■ <i>Accountability</i>
■ What is important to people about this program?	■ <i>Responsive</i>

Different stakeholders may focus on different questions, and specific questions are salient at particular stages in the program's life. The stakeholders' questions (i.e., what people need to know to make decisions about the program) should be the starting point for designing any evaluation, and will determine the methodologies employed and the data sources consulted.

INTEGRATION OF EVALUATION INTO CONTINUITY INITIATIVES

As noted previously, increasing numbers of communities and programs are overcoming their early resistance to building evaluation into their continuity initiatives. As communities and organizations have gained more experience in the field, evaluations have become more organic parts of their planning processes. For example, some communities and organizations began by contracting outside evaluators to conduct *post-hoc* evaluations at the end of their grant cycles. While these assessments provided some important information at the end of the grant, it was difficult, if not impossible, to assess change associated with the program because there had been no control groups or baseline measures taken for comparison. The evaluations were rarely collaborative processes, which did little to strengthen relationships between federations and the communal organizations receiving them. Furthermore, because so many of the grants focused on innovation, many of the funded programs were best conceptualized as pilot projects. The *post-hoc* evaluations provided too little information too late to benefit program development and success.

In the next continuity grants cycle, some communities and institutions responded by contracting outside evaluators to conduct ongoing evaluations, even beginning in the planning stages of the grants. Evaluators conducted environmental scans and needs assessments to guide goal-setting processes and helped articulate program goals in measurable terms. They gathered baseline information and built in periodic data gathering and analyses. Program providers and decision-makers used this formative data to guide mid-course corrections, and to assess progress toward their goals.

Currently, some communities and organizations have engaged evaluators as “coaches” to help them internalize evaluation as part of their organizational *modus operandi*. Rather than “tacking on” evaluation at the end of a project, or engaging a professional evaluator to conduct an

assessment from the outside, these groups are using self study techniques for at least part of their assessments. For example, JESNA is currently helping several communities increase local professionals’ and volunteers’ knowledge, skills and utilization of evaluation findings by providing ongoing consultations including on-site workshops, seminars and clinics supplemented with phone and on-line support. JESNA provides expertise, objective review, and a continental context for interpretation of findings. “Evaluation appreciation” garnered through experience with continuity grants is beginning to impact on other aspects of Jewish communal life. Some federations and foundations are seeking ways to apply ongoing evaluation processes in their general allocation and grant-making endeavors. The following sections describe how evaluations are improving continuity programs in two leading communities, New York and Boston.

CURRENT CHALLENGES / FUTURE STEPS

The Jewish community has only begun to incorporate evaluation in its functioning. More effective use of this indispensable tool will require:

➤ **Fostering “evaluation appreciation” among professionals and volunteer leadership in more communities.**

Too many communities and organizations still hold archaic views of evaluation and fail to understand its potential benefits.

➤ **Increasing the pool of qualified evaluators and evaluation coaches.**

The need for expertise has increased with the demand for evaluations. Qualified evaluators from the general world can be identified and enlightened about the unique characteristics and needs of Jewish communities and organizations. Training should be provided by institutions of higher learning in Jewish education to prepare new professionals. Continuing professional development seminars must be offered for those currently in the field, along

with commensurate training for volunteer leaders.

➤ **Providing sufficient financial, human and time resources.**

Evaluation *does* require human and financial resources, and time. Funders, decision makers and program providers must allocate sufficient resources for evaluation.

➤ **Improving evaluation methodologies and techniques to help answer the “real” questions.**

It is currently common practice to document what happens at programs, and to gather feedback from participants about their satisfaction level. Evaluation methodologies and techniques must be developed and utilized to assess program effectiveness, especially their long-term impact on the attitudes, knowledge and behavior of participants, as well as on the community.

➤ **Addressing ethical dilemmas and political realities.**

Evaluation is a complicated endeavor, replete with ethical dilemmas and political realities. Professionals and communal leaders must honestly address issues including:

- ◆ How institutional compliance can be built, if part of the goal of the continuity endeavor is to develop partnerships?
- ◆ Can there be true partnerships if one institution is accountable to another?
- ◆ What are the relationships between the funder, evaluator and the evaluated?
- ◆ Can there ever be true objectivity? Is it desirable?
- ◆ How can the intrusiveness of evaluation be reconciled with the outreach goals of many programs?

◆ What if the news isn't good? How do the respective parties deal with negative findings?

◆ How can “halo effects” (the impact of the reputation of the program provider) be avoided?

◆ How can “Hawthorne effects” (the salubrious effects of merely studying a program, independent impact of its content) be avoided? Should they be?

Clearly, evaluation will continue to be an area of great interest and concern as North American Jewry moves from *continuity to renaissance and renewal*. To ensure that the Jewish community's efforts are moving toward the achievement of *renaissance and renewal* goals, ongoing *cheshbon ha-nefesh* (self-evaluation) is crucial.

TALES OF TWO COMMUNITIES

Systematic evaluation processes have been integral to the continuity endeavors in both Boston and New York. Each community instituted ongoing evaluation from the onset of its initiative, and has used the findings to inform and guide its work.

The Jewish Continuity Commission in New York created its Grants Program to serve as a research and development project. Working together with Jewish institutions, the Commission is able to transform these community organizations into compelling and dynamic centers of Jewish life, which then empowers Jews of all backgrounds to learn, grow, and engage Jewishly. Throughout the Grant Program, the Commission has assisted over 100 institutions enrich the lives of hundreds of Jews. Their commitment to research and evaluation in grant making has allowed the UJA-Federation and the Jewish community at large to learn about Jewish living and learning. The information they have gleaned serves as the foundation for future grant making and policy decisions.

The Commission on Jewish Continuity in Boston (COJC) founded the *Sh'arim* Family Educator Initiative in an effort to create warm and inviting institutions which support the development of rich Jewish family experiences. As part of the initiative, the COJC set up a new field of professional family educators focused on engaging families in Jewish educational activities. *Sh'arim* provides training, professional support, funding, and evaluation. *Sh'arim* evaluation combines formative and qualitative research techniques. The knowledge acquired through evaluation influenced the COJC future funding allocations.

HOW DO WE MEASURE INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: THEORETICAL FRAMES AND PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

Hana Gruenberg¹⁵

Jewish communal institutions such as synagogues, schools, community centers, and college campuses create new entry points for individuals and families into the Jewish community. In some instances these institutions need to start by redefining their own missions. They have to explore creative new collaborations and integrate vibrant and relevant Jewish living and learning experiences into their daily operations.

The UJA-Federation established the Grants Program of the Jewish Continuity Commission to assist these communal institutions, while they transform themselves into compelling and dynamic centers of Jewish life, which empowers Jews of all backgrounds to learn, grow, and engage Jewishly. The grants initiative of the Continuity Commission is a research and development project that provided crucial insights about Jewish education. The program is an opportunity for Jewish communal establishments to develop needed resources, to define vision, to train leadership, and to build more vibrant communities.

1. Our original hypothesis when we first brought evaluation in-house after two years of grant making was that institutional change could be ascertained through four lenses:

A. CLARITY- clear vision and overarching direction, intent, scope and nature are clearly defined.

- Vision, goals, program design, concrete action plans, articulation of roles and responsibilities to professionals, volunteer leaders, participants and collaborating partners.
- Key stakeholders have a handle on the direction the institution is taking and the initiative that is being proposed.
- More clearly articulated initiatives have greater success integrating initiatives into existing institutions.
- A vision that binds but does not blind. Objectives change based on learning. We do not expect that an initiative is fully-formulated from day one. The exact shape of the initiative unfolds over time.
- The more aware and open about possible challenges and obstacles the more likely an institution seems to be to meet challenges head on and overcome them.

¹⁵Hana Gruenberg, Interim Director of Commission on Jewish Identity and Renewal at the UJA-Federation of Greater New York, received a BA in Political Science and Judaic Studies from the State University of New York at Binghamton in 1992. Gruenberg earned a Masters Degree in Social Work from Columbia University and a Masters Degree in Judaic Studies from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1995. Since then she has been working for UJA-Federation of New York. In 1997/98, she spent the year in Israel working for SHATIL (the Capacity Building Center for the New Israel Fund and for the Mandel Center for Jewish Continuity at Hebrew University). Hana has been with UJA-Federation of New York for five years; one year as a student and four years as a professional with the Jewish Continuity Commission and its current iteration, the Commission on Jewish Identity and Renewal (CoJIR). Currently Gruenberg holds the position of Interim Director of CoJIR and she oversees all of the ongoing initiatives of CoJIR as well as being involved in the CoJIR planning process.

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- As a general rule lack of clarity increases as the number of institutions involved in a particular initiative increase.
 - Needs assessment- be realistic about challenges and target populations. Clear solid collaboration.

B. COMMITMENT- An inherent assumption of Commission funding was that strategically targeted funding could catalyze a process resulting in widespread and lasting change within an institution.

- Key stakeholders associated with an institution (beyond front line program implementers) need to take ownership of, and demonstrate, commitment.
- Commitment of financial resources to the initiative is the most concrete indicator of support.
- Commitment of volunteer leadership is necessary (beyond financial commitment). Lack of support and even ambivalence can have a serious detrimental effect.
- Beyond finances there are other ways for volunteer leaders to demonstrate that an initiative is an institutional priority.
- Institutions use a variety of creative methods to involve volunteer leaders (committees, forming boards, evaluation, issue exploration).
- The extent to which volunteer leadership supports an initiative is often a critical factor determining how the initiative will fit into the organizational culture.
- When volunteer leaders commit the programs benefit from their expertise.
- Commitment of participants is indicated by attendance.
- Beyond attendance, a willingness to pay fees for services indicates commitment.
- Willingness to take leadership roles is necessary..

C. CAPACITY- an indicator of an institution's ability to undertake an initiative (versus their willingness).

- Realities of the broader institutional environment and context.
- Personnel issues.
- Direct relationship exists between the amount of personnel and personnel time allocated to an initiative and its success.
- When personnel are over-extended, the quality of an initiative suffers. Some initiatives had over ambitious implementation plans given the staff resources available.
- Institutions that involve other staff in the project beyond the project coordinator struggle less with staff turnover.
- Managing change-capacity, in large part, reflects the institution's ability to manage change, absorb it, cope with unanticipated demands for service, diversify approaches, serve new client groups, and change the character of the institution.

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- > Institutions that manage change effectively tend to use the evaluation process effectively to become self-reflective practitioners.
 - > Demonstrated flexibility to respond as needs evolve is necessary.

D. CONTENT- institutions invest in programs and projects with rich, quality programming and strategies.

- > Often a matrix of creative approaches aimed at meeting goals.
- > Staff have background to undertake project and hire appropriate people.
- > Appreciate the importance of high quality programs in a variety of institutional settings.

2. Practical Strategies- How we measure institutional change

A. Inductive Approach bubbles up, from the specific to the general. We learn from the specifics.

B. Four Mechanisms:

- > Quantitative reporting
- > Self-reflective reporting by grantees
 - Report formats that allow for quantitative and qualitative
 - Encouragement for making note of anecdotal data
- > Educational facilitation
 - Each initiative is assigned to an educational facilitator and grants to be renewed are assigned to Commission liaisons
- > We forego objectivity for access and honesty
- > Power of ethnography
- > Confidence of the facilitator's role
- > Trained observer's eye
- > Four staff-members assigned to conduct:
 - site visits
 - regular phone contact
 - mailings from grantees
 - site visit forms
 - e-mail contact

-
- weekly grants meetings to allow a forum to discuss interesting ideas, flesh out theories and hypotheses, share information, share stories, troubleshoot, discuss findings, and discuss unique and common obstacles
 - commission members conduct site visits and complete forms- another input lens
 - Comprehensive evaluation- this year of teen initiatives

C. Modeling for the grantees by the Continuity Commission

- Feedback surveys to get their assessment of the grant process.
- Commitment to learning from mistakes. The RFP is reviewed and revised each year.

3. What We've Learned

- The four theoretical constructs mentioned above each take on a life of their own with each of the 90 initiatives. Overall, the constructs are appropriate lenses for all projects.
- Successful initiatives take an honest approach to evaluation.
- Commitment to learning, being self-reflective and re-learning is useful.
- Practical undertaking of ongoing evaluation: staff is empowered as creative evaluators to collect statistics, take note of anecdotal data, use simple measures.
- Complementary collaboration, the effective utilization of resources that were not used prior to the grant, and recognizing how collaboration can best be facilitated.
- Jewish engagement requires overall alignment. Things must happen at the right time.
- Success often attracts money.
- Quality wins in Jewish life.

TWELVE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE JEWISH CONTINUITY COMMISSION GRANTS PROGRAM

Dr. Alisa Rubin Kurshan¹⁶

- 1. We help 4.5 million people, one at a time**
 - Building dynamic communities is decidedly local.
 - Impact is often one person at a time.
- 2. Revolution through evolution**
 - Change is best achieved in settings that are dynamic centers for Jewish life.
 - Progress is incremental in the quest for a renaissance of Jewish life.
- 3. The intangible is measurable**
 - Learning about success is critical for community building.
 - Evaluation teaches and helps improve practice.
 - Successful initiatives take an honest approach to evaluation.
- 4. Eclipses can brighten the future**
 - Jewish engagement within Jewish institutions requires institutional capacity, commitment, coherence, and alignment of vision of the key lay and professional leaders.
- 5. The Age of Constructivist Judaism is dawning**
 - Jewishness is continually being redefined.
 - “What being Jewish means to me” is open-ended.
- 6. There is no silver bullet**
 - A tight weave of programming and strategies meets a variety of needs.
- 7. Change is paradoxical**
 - Change is hard and it takes time.
 - Change can be iterative and counter-intuitive.
 - Full enrollment: the greatest impediment to change.
- 8. Success often attracts money**
 - Initiatives that are successful do not usually end because of a lack of funding.

¹⁶Dr. Alisa Rubin Kurshan currently serves as Vice President for Strategic Planning and Organizational Resources at UJA-Federation of Greater New York. She has served as Managing Director of the Commission on Jewish Identity and Renewal of UJA-Federation of New York and prior to that, she was the director of the Jewish Continuity Commission from 1996-1999. She received her Ph.D. in Jewish Education from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1996 and was a recipient of the Wexner Graduate Fellowship 1992-96. Alisa lives in Huntington, New York with her husband, Rabbi Neil Kurshan and their four children, Ilana, Naamit, Ariella and Eytan.

9. Lefties should marry righties

- Partnership is best when it is complementary.
- Collaboration for its own sake does not work.

10. Replication is a myth

- Each institution has its unique culture.
- We learn from best practices, modeling, and the creation of magnet settings.

11. Synagogues are key communal players

- Synagogues are a primary local address of the Jewish community and a good point of entry to engage marginally affiliated Jews.
- Multiple institutions create multiple points of connection- the more the better.

12. If you build it they will come

- When an institution forges serious vision and mobilizes itself, serious staff is attracted.
- Quality wins in Jewish life.

HOW TO BUILD EVALUATION INTO OUR WORK: THE SH'ARIM STORY

*Dr. Annette Koren*¹⁷

What is Sh'arim?

Sh'arim / Gateway to Jewish Living – The Jewish Family Educator Initiative aims to transform the Jewish lives of families who enter the major gateways to the Jewish community. The objective of the initiative is to transform the Jewish lives of those families, whether they enter through JCCs, day schools, or congregations through family education.

The initiative works through two vehicles. First, a Jewish family educator joins the educational team of institutions in the community. The family educator is involved in a process of addressing the educational needs of the families in that institution, working closely with the rabbi, educator, lay leaders and other staff of the team. Each participating institution benefits from outside consultation, which assists in preparing for the changes that this new professional stimulates. Second, individuals who are interested in Jewish family education commit to a course of study leading to a certificate in the field of Jewish family education.

Ultimately, the initiative involves family members in their children's Jewish education; establishes contexts for family members' Jewish learning; establishes programs for joint family involvement in Jewish learning; builds community among families; and adapts Jewish learning to the home.

What are the goals for evaluating Sh'arim?

- To understand where participating families are, what journeys they are on and to what extent and how Sh'arim is stimulating and assisting those journeys.
- To help the sites reflect on their own goals and progress.
- To help family educators and their teams build more Jewish families through understanding and addressing the needs of their members and institutions.
- To disseminate useful information about what we have learned in Boston to the wider Jewish community.

How have these evaluation goals changed over the past years?

- More focus on attitudes and changes in attitudes.
- Less emphasis on program outputs.

What is the Sh'arim evaluation process?

- Formative (programmatic, evidence of institutional change, development of the family educator as a Jewish professional)
- Longitudinal and qualitative studies of outcomes focusing on:

¹⁷ Dr. Annette Koren is the Research and Evaluation Consultant for Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE) of Greater Boston, where she conducts studies of Boston's family education programs. Dr. Koren earned her Ph.D. in History at Indiana University in 1976. She was a faculty member at Fordham University in New York where she taught social and economic history. As a faculty member at Lesley College School of Management in Cambridge, MA, Dr. Koren taught Economics, Marketing and Business Research Methods. She was a research consultant and project manager for PIMS Associates of the Strategic Planning Institute in Cambridge, MA and independent contract researcher for Abt Associates in Cambridge.

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- programmatic
 - evidence of institutional change
 - development of the family educator as a Jewish professional
 - descriptive background about the target population (Jewish behavioral and attitudinal data)

How much does it cost?

- Approximately 5-8% of the total program budget. The original Task Force spent about 8% of its budget on evaluation. Sh'arim has spent a bit more than 5% over the past six years.

What have been the major challenges to the evaluation effort?

- Professional resistance. Family education is a new field and profession. There was significant insecurity on the part of practitioners. The first baseline survey (1995-96) was viewed by many as a “report card.” When the analysis was presented in Spring 1997, the Director of Evaluation and BJE consultants succeeded in getting most family educators and lay team members to see and be enthusiastic about the benefits of using the findings for future planning and growth. Only two of the twelve family educators in the current cohort express similar insecurity.
- Insufficient time. The written mid- and end-of-year reports, although recognized by most as valuable, are seen as redundant, time-consuming and onerous responsibilities.
- Agreeing on goals of evaluation. Reaching consensus about content of the longitudinal study among the partners in the Commission on Jewish Continuity was complicated.

How was the resistance overcome?

- The value of ongoing consultations with Jewish Family Educators is clear. If this technique had been in place from the beginning in its current form, it is possible that the family educators together with their teams would have seen the value of evaluation much sooner. Getting educators around the “report card” vision of evaluation takes some doing.
- Making evaluation integral to the effort came about through the efforts of key players who strongly advocated for a major evaluation component. Persuasiveness of the key players was enhanced by their tremendous status based on their knowledge and skills, communication skills and trust within the community. They were:
 - Dr. Sherry Israel, demographer and planner staffing the Task Force on Supplemental Education
 - Dr. Susan Shevitz, director of evaluation effort, faculty member at Brandeis University and research consultant to the BJE
 - Research Advisory Council
- Prior successful experience with evaluation laid the foundation. The community benefited from Dr. Shevitz's cogent and useful evaluation of the projects of CJP's Supplemental School Task Force (1987-1992).

What have you done right?

- Building in the evaluation component from the beginning.
- Getting the right, respected professionals on board.
- Assuring data security and anonymity to the sites.
- Sharing information through the team events, Network and the BJE consultation staff.

What will you do differently next time?

- Go more directly to lay leadership to participate in the research effort.
- Design shorter reporting forms.
- Build in more qualitative research on the families from the beginning
- Explore ways to empower sites to do their own overall program evaluation

What has been learned from the Sh'arim evaluation?

- Our institutions offer a tremendous diversity of approaches to family education.
- Family education involves much more than programming.
- The professional status and remuneration of family educator has been enhanced by Sh'arim.
- The effectiveness of governance structures and lay support has varied.
- Institutions have been slow to adopt a curricular approach.
- Sites need to develop their own internal evaluation process.
- Half of our Jewish families are not satisfied with their current level of Jewish practice.
- While most families feel at home in their institutions, fewer feel part of the communities that created them.

How is information from the evaluation shared?

- On-going reports to institutions and to the community. The Commission on Jewish Continuity and the individual sites receive annual reports on the formative data. The reporting process allows sites to analyze their progress, express their needs and frustrations, and reflect about new directions.
- Professional consultations.
- Publication of *Sh'arim at Five*, to disseminate findings to the broader community, to contribute to the growth and development of the field family education, to publicize results, and to help funders understand how their monies are being spent.
- Future longitudinal and qualitative studies will help teams better understand who their Sh'arim families are, what their needs are, how they feel about their current knowledge and practice of Judaism, and what those practices were or are at the beginning of their exposure to the Sh'arim initiative and after three or more years.

How do participating institutions use the information from the analyses?

Jewish Family Educators at each site continuously use the information to inform their practice and to better address the individual Jewish journeys of their members. In consultation with BJE staff and through participation in the Jewish Family Educators Network they explore and revise their vision and methods for family education in their institutions.

What is needed to ingrain evaluation (i.e. to make evaluation part of the way we do business)?

- Money, people skills, time and human resources to develop commitment on the part of lay leaders and professionals.
- Methods:
 - 1) Identify key community leaders – lay and professional to champion.
 - 2) Develop individual institutions' capacities for in-depth program analysis; take advantage of lay interest; seminars in methods.
 - 3) Interest and fund academics in Jewish educational research questions.
 - 4) Link research and evaluation to consultation process.
 - 5) Link research and evaluation to dissemination/public information endeavors.

How can communities work together so that each community doesn't have to reinvent the wheel?

Sharing research plans, commitment-building experiences, benchmarks, surveys, and results.

Are there/ Is it feasible to draft "national" benchmarks for programs?

Program benchmarks should be tailored to the specific goals and profile of the community. (For example, compare Joe Reimer's goals for family education to the more ambitious goals articulated in Sh'arim. Is a benchmark providing opportunities to learn together and how well attended those programs are, or is it assessing the extent to which parents have become empowered to be Jewish educators for their children? What is the starting point, based on descriptive information about families? What are the program's goals? Does the program envision raising the potential to effectively transmit Judaism for those already committed or does it hope to reach the uninvolved and draw them in? Where does the program stand on the "content vs comfort" spectrum? Furthermore, benchmarks change as programs and vision evolve. Goals are moving targets.

Are there universal questions that can be disseminated through a national database (and to collect national data)?

Yes. Many are included in Boston's Sh'arim and Me'ah surveys. Others lend themselves more to focus group exploration. There are probably no universal focus group scripts, but there are questions. We should create a national on-line database of questions focusing on demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral characteristics. Boston has been fortunate in having the CJP Demographic studies from 1975, 1985 and 1995 as a reference and a source of good questions. Findings are compared to results of the National Population Study, and the CJP study is used as a reference for comparison of Sh'arim families or individual institutions.

Would it be possible to coordinate a national research effort or compare regions and cities?

Boston has already shared its findings with communities including Detroit, West Hartford, and San Francisco, and regularly takes advantage of resources at JESNA, BJE's and the Cohen Center Brandeis University, among others.

IX. APPENDIX

Conference on Jewish Continuity: Taking the Next Steps
Sunday, January 31- February 1, 1999
Sponsored by The AVI CHAI Foundation,
The United Jewish Communities, in association with JESNA

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Agency for Jewish Education (Detroit, MI)	Jewish Education Center of Cleveland (Cleveland, OH)	Minneapolis Jewish Federation (Minneapolis, MN)
Atlanta Jewish Federation, Inc. (Atlanta, GA)	Jewish Federation of Baltimore (Baltimore, MD)	Synagogue and Community Relations Council (New York, NY)
Center for Jewish Living and Learning (Oakland, CA)	Jewish Federation of the Berkshires (Berkshires, MA)	Traditions on Wheels (New Canaan, CT)
The Coalition for Jewish Education (Milwaukee, WI)	Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA)	UJA-Federation of Bergen County and North Hudson (Bergen County, NJ)
Commission for Jewish Education of the Palm Beaches (West Palm Beach, FL)	Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas (Dallas, TX)	UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York (New York, NY)
Commission on Jewish Education (Columbus, OH)	Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City (Kansas City, MO)	United Jewish Appeal Federation of Greater Washington, Inc. (Washington, DC)
Commission on Jewish Education (West Hartford, CT)	Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia (Philadelphia, PA)	The United Jewish Federation of MetroWest (New Jersey)
Community Hebrew Schools (Philadelphia, PA)	Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle (Seattle, WA)	United Jewish Federation of San Diego County (San Diego, CA)
Council on Jewish Life (Los Angeles, CA)	Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago (Chicago, IL)	Vision Council on Raising our Children Jewish (Columbus, OH)
Federation CJA (Montreal, Quebec)	Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit (Detroit, MI)	
Greater Miami Jewish Federation, Inc. (Miami, FL)	Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County, Inc. (Palm Beach County, FL)	
Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland (Cleveland, OH)		

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The AVI CHAI Foundation	Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life	Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
CLAL	JCC Association	Jewish Resource Network Initiative
Council of Jewish Federations (CJF)/ United Jewish Communi- ties (UJC)	Jewish Education Service of North America	National Foundation for Jewish Culture
EDAH	Jewish Outreach Institute	Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

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