

"Jewish Survivalism" as Communal Ideology: An Empirical Assessment

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The ideology of "Jewish survivalism" does lead the Jewish community to "turn inward." That turning inward need not, however, be an exercise either in self-centeredness or narcissism if the full dimensions of the challenges of survival in the contemporary world are understood and embraced.

In recent years, observers of American Jewish communal life have noted with increasing frequency what some have called a "turning inward" on the part of the community and its leadership.¹ This "inward turn" has found expression in a greater attentiveness on the part of communal organizations and agencies specifically to Jewish needs and concerns, and in a diminution in communal activism in the areas of non-sectarian services and programming and promotion of general civic welfare. The rationale for this reorientation has been provided by a heightened concern for "Jewish survival" in the face of the demonstrably corrosive effects of assimilation on Jewish identity and communal affiliation in the United States and the persistent threats to Jewish communities in other parts of the world. Unquestionably, the historical experience of the Jewish people in the 20th century—the Holocaust and the apparently unending and even increasing isolation of Israel in the world community—has conditioned American Jews to see Jewish survival as perpetually endangered, and has also provided the core vocabulary for any analysis of the Jewish condition. What might be called "Jewish survivalism"

appears, indeed, to be the reigning ideology in Jewish communal life, the frame of values, perceptions, emotions, and normative prescriptions within which the communal enterprise is conducted and legitimated. Within this frame, Jewish survival is defined as the community's *raison d'être*, and those activities and institutions which can most forcefully and directly assert a claim to be promoting Jewish survival are placed at the forefront of the Jewish communal agenda.²

The ascendancy of "Jewish survivalism" as the operative ideology of Jewish organizational life has been hailed as the beginning of a new era in American Jewish life, but it has also not been without its critics. Before attempting to assess the merits of "survivalism" as an ideology, however, it might be useful to address some empirical questions about its scope and actual implications for communal functioning and Jewish self-definition. Assuming that "Jewish survivalism" has become the ideology of American Jewish leadership, how is it expressed concretely in that leadership's perceptions of communal problems, its priorities for the allocation of communal resources and energies, and its definitions of what it means to be a Jew on a personal behavioral level? Does "survivalism" have clear and constant implica-

¹ See, e.g., Earl Rabb, "The End of Jewish Community Relations?" *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. 54 (Winter 1977), pp 107-15; Gerald B. Bubis, "Confronting Some Issues in Jewish Continuity: The Response of the Profession," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. 55 (Sept. 1978), pp. 10-22.

² Cf. Daniel Elazar, *Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976, pp. 287ff.

tions in these areas which will enable us to speak not only in broad terms of a "turning inward," but to define the specific patterns of concern likely to shape the communal agenda and of Jewish identity likely to be reflected among community leaders?

The empirical data which I wish to use in examining the dimensions and implications of "Jewish survivalism" as the operative ideology of contemporary communal leaders are drawn from a survey of approximately 230 participants in leadership development programs sponsored by local Jewish Federations or by the Council of Jewish Federations and United Jewish Appeal.³ Although few in this group (median age = mid-thirties) could be regarded as communal leaders of influence today, they constitute an important focus of study for two reasons, 1) the likelihood that a substantial number *will* be important community (if not national) leaders in the future, and 2) the fact that they have been selected and formally socialized by the established communal system, thereby providing insight into its translation of the "survivalist" ideology into specific values and norms. The respondents in the survey do not constitute a scientific sample of the total population of young Jewish leaders but they do appear to be broadly representative demographically and sociologically of the moderately to very active segment of that population. The instrument used in the survey was a closed-ended questionnaire filled out by the participants covering a number of aspects of Jewish background, attitudes, and behavior. Included in the questionnaire were three sections dealing specifically with perceptions of communal problems, priorities for communal activity, and characterizations

³ Further discussion about the survey, its administration, the groups polled, and additional results can be found in my article "Emerging Leadership in the American Jewish Community," in the *American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 81. New York: American Jewish Committee, forthcoming.

of a "good Jew."

The basic commitment of these young leaders to Jewish survival and continuity is vigorous and virtually unanimous. More than 96 percent strongly agree that it is important that there always be a Jewish people (fewer than 1 percent disagree).⁴ 90 percent of the young leaders also assert that without Jewish *religion* the Jewish *people* could not survive. We can, therefore, anticipate that the survival agenda of these young leaders will reflect in some way a concern for cultural and spiritual as well as physical continuity (though to what extent and how, are questions of interest). At the same time, the commitment to Jewish survival among the respondents is accompanied by a widely shared perception that such survival is threatened today. Nearly 85 percent of the young leaders surveyed believe that the world is still not ready to let Jews live in peace, and a similar percentage regard assimilation as the greatest current threat to Jewish survival. How strongly their commitment to survival and this perception of its endangerment from without and within affects the outlook of these leaders on Jewish problems, priorities, and norms can be seen by looking at their responses in these areas in greater detail.

Problems Facing the Jewish Community

As part of the survey, the respondents were given a list of eighteen suggested problems facing the American Jewish community, and were asked to rate each as "very serious," "moderately serious," "a

⁴ By way of comparison, 70.2 percent of the respondents in the National Jewish Population Study, the survey of a representative sample of all American Jews conducted in 1970, strongly agreed with a virtually identical statement; approximately 11 percent of that sample expressed either disagreement with the statement or were not sure of their attitude. Fred Massarik, *Jewish Identity: Facts for Planning*. New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1974, p. 18. Whether these figures would be different for a comparable sample a decade later is, of course, a matter for speculation.

problem, but not a particularly serious one," or "not a problem" (a box for "don't know" was also provided). Table I shows the ratings given for each of the problems

(in percentages of the total number responding), ranked from that regarded collectively as "most serious" to "least serious."

**TABLE I —
SERIOUSNESS OF PROBLEMS
FACING THE AMERICAN
JEWISH COMMUNITY**

Rank*	Problem	Percent Rating the Problem as				
		VS	MS	P	N	U
1.	the conflict between Israel and its neighbors	97	3			
2.	the treatment of Jews in the Soviet Union	88	12			
3.	high rate of inter-marriage	72	21	4	2	2
4.	alienation of youth from Jewish life	72	18	7	2	1
5.	anti-Semitism in the U.S.	54	32	12	1	
6.	low levels of participation in Jewish communal activities	53	32	12	1	1
7.	low Jewish birth-rate	43	27	22	6	2
8.	assimilation of Jews to American lifestyles and values	39	29	21	10	1
9.	low levels of Jewish knowledge among lay leaders of the Jewish community	34	34	30	9	3
10.	inadequate Jewish schools	35	23	17	15	9

VS = very serious problem
MS = moderately serious problem
N = not a problem
U = uncertain
P = a problem, but not a particularly serious one

Rank*	Problem	Percent Rating the Problem as				
		VS	MS	P	N	U
11.	decline in the importance of religious institutions in American Jewish life	29	38	24	4	4
12.	declining levels of religious observance by Jews	24	44	26	5	1
13.	inadequate services for the Jewish elderly	20	30	29	11	9
14.	insufficient Jewish content in programs sponsored by Jewish organizations	19	33	19	21	8
15.	inadequate rabbis	21	22	23	22	12
16.	lack of unity among Jewish religious denominations	17	26	31	20	6
17.	discrimination against women in Jewish life	11	24	34	24	6
18.	lack of democracy in Jewish communal life	11	12	28	32	16

*Rank was determined by assigning point values to each of the responses (VS = 3, MS = 2, P = 1, N and U = 0) and totalling the points for each problem. The problem with the highest number of total points is ranked #1 and so on.

Several features of the responses stand out. The most notable of these is the consistently serious rating given to those problems which do relate most immediately and directly to the survival of Jews and Jewry. That these young leaders are most united in regarding as "very serious"

problems the Arab-Israeli conflict and the treatment of Soviet Jews indicates that their commitment to Jewish survival is global and attuned to what appear to be the most imminent threats to Jewish security and continuity. Beyond this, Israel's security and, more recently, the fate of

Soviet Jewry, have become symbols of Jewish survival *as such* which are invested with tremendous emotional import. Thus, even though they could hardly be regarded as problems of the American Jewish community, the fate of Israel and Soviet Jewry is the symbolic touchstone of contemporary Jewish survival anxiety, and is, therefore, considered a most serious problem for an American Jewish community whose *raison d'être* is Jewish survival. Significantly, among the roster of problems afflicting American Jewry itself, it is again those which touch directly on the issue of basic demographic and institutional survival which are most often selected as the most serious. Intermarriage, alienation of Jewish youth, anti-Semitism, low levels of participation in communal activities, low birthrate—all of these are apparently regarded with greatest concern because they so obviously threaten the continued existence *per se* of the American Jewish community.

Those problems which tend to affect the quality of American Jewish life, but not the actual physical survival and security of American Jewry and the continuity of communal activity, are collectively viewed as somewhat less serious than the seven listed above. This does not mean that they are not seen as real problems by a large majority of the young leaders. Even the supposed lack of democracy in Jewish communal life, the least seriously regarded, is considered a problem by more than half of the respondents. And, in keeping with their professed belief that religion is a key factor in insuring Jewish survival and that assimilation is a significant threat to it, sizable majorities of those surveyed do consider the adoption of American lifestyles and values, low levels of Jewish knowledge among Jewish leaders, inadequate schools, a decline in the importance of religious institutions, and declining levels of religious observance to be at least moderately serious problems. On the

whole, however, the problems which are generally regarded as least serious seem to be those which have the least apparent immediate connection to Jewish physical and spiritual survival. (In some instances, of course, the responses to those items may also represent a rejection of the implication that the purported condition in fact exists, e.g., that Jewish content in programming is insufficient, that rabbis are inadequate, or that women are discriminated against). In sum, the survey results indicate that the commitment of these young leaders to Jewish survival is reflected in especially acute concern about those problems of Jewish life which pose basic physical, demographic, and identity-related threats to Jewish continuity, here and abroad. Given this depth and focus of concern, it is logical to ask how the survey respondents feel the endangered community should direct its energies, i.e., what the priorities should be for communal action.

Priorities for Communal Action

The survey data on communal priorities were compiled by asking the respondents to select from a list of fourteen suggested goals for communal action the four to which they would give the highest and the four to which they would give the lowest priority (leaving six in the "middle" category). The results on this question are summarized in Table 2, with the priorities listed in rank order.

An examination of these results reveals that the survival concerns which dominated the respondents' perceptions of communal problems are also evident in their choices of priorities. As might be anticipated, based on their assessment of problems facing the community, financial support of Israel wins overwhelming endorsement from these young leaders as a high priority for communal action (first overall) with political support for Israel also rated among the four highest by more than 40 percent of those surveyed (ranked

**TABLE 2 —
COMMUNAL PRIORITIES**

H = High Priority
L = Low Priority

Rank*	Proposed Goal	Percent Ranking the Goal as	
		H	L
1.	to provide financial support for Israel	72	1
2.	to support Jewish education and culture	64	3
3.	to provide social and welfare services for Jews in need	51	2
4.	to defend Jews against anti-Semitism and discrimination	41	3
5.	to provide political support for Israel	42	13
6.	to support Jewish religious activities and institutions	25	10
7.	to help Jewish communities in other countries	24	9
8.	to increase participation in Jewish community activities	19	18
9.	to promote harmonious relations between Jews and non-Jews	14	23
10.	to promote unity among American Jews	17	31
11.	to promote Jewish interests in American society	6	41
12.	to promote the extension of civil rights and social justice in American society	11	47
13.	to provide social and welfare services for anyone in need	4	70
14.	to support leisure and recreational activities for Jews	2	80

*Rank was determined by subtracting the percentage rating the goal as a "Low" priority from the percentage rating it as a "High" priority, and ranking the item scores obtained.

fifth overall). Support for Jewish education and culture is selected as a high priority by more than three-fifths of the respondents, again a choice which is consistent with the fact that 90 percent of the young leaders agree with the proposition that "Jewish education is the best means of insuring Jewish survival." The relatively high rankings given to defense against anti-Semitism (fourth), support for religious activities and institutions (sixth), help for other Jewish communities abroad (seventh), and increasing participation in Jewish communal activities (eighth) are all intelligible in terms of the survival value of these goals.

In one respect, however, the results of this section of the survey do suggest that something more than survival value itself enters into the calculus of these young leaders in determining priorities. More than 50 percent of the respondents view the provision of social and welfare services to Jews in need as among the four highest priorities for the community (ranked 3rd overall). This high ranking reflects the persistence of the philanthropic thrust which has been part of the Federation movement's self-definition from its inception. Likewise, the emphasis on *financial* support of Israel represents an endorsement of the long-established UJA and Jewish Welfare Fund emphasis.) There is reason to suspect, however, that more than philanthropic motivation or acceptance of traditional institutional priorities is involved in the high priority given to social and welfare services for Jews in need. Over 95 percent of these young leaders accept the proposition that "every Jew is responsible in some measure for the well-being of every other Jew." Thus, the concern for helping other Jews—in the United States, Israel, or other countries—reflects a sense of Jewish solidarity and mutual responsibility which complements the conviction that Jewish survival must be assured. Both commit-

ments, in a sense, bespeak a basic identification with the collective fate of the Jewish people, an identification which is experienced by these young leaders as mandating action to insure both the continuity of the collective and the security and welfare of its individual members.

The clear line of distinction here remains the essentially intra-communal focus of all of those priorities most frequently ranked high by the survey respondents. Several of the suggested goals for action which are among the lowest ranked also involved human welfare oriented activities, but implied a Jewish communal role within or in relationship to the larger society which was evidently not perceived widely to be equally mandated. It should be noted, however, that the "turn inward" endorsed by these leadership development participants is not purely or narrowly self-interested. By and large, the survey respondents regard the concept of promoting Jewish interests in American society as *at best* a goal worthy of modest priority. Likewise, they are substantially united in downgrading the importance of supporting leisure and recreational activities for Jews. Thus, what these young leaders appear to desire is an organized Jewish community which is genuinely devoted to promoting the security and welfare of all Jews and to the continuity of the Jewish tradition. They are little concerned not only about an activist communal role in the larger society, but also about those aspects of intra-communal activity which do not directly promote Jewish survival or welfare.⁵

⁵ This pattern of priorities appears to be by no means unique to the specific group of young leaders surveyed. Over the course of the past several years, a similar exercise in priority setting has been used with more than half a dozen other Federation related groups, including not only leadership development groups, but also board members and presidents of community Federations. The composite priorities rankings for these groups are remarkably consistent, and the overall order is virtually identical with that

The results of this survey would appear to confirm the suggestion that among communally active Jews today there *is* substantial consensus that Jewish group survival and welfare, rather than integration within or modification of American society, are the primary collective tasks of the hour. At the same time, however, there are limits to this "survivalist" orientation, revealed both in this leadership development study and in previous research. Despite their commitment to Jewish survival and solidarity, many leaders are not prepared to challenge elements of the modern Jewish condition—notably the ethos of individualism and voluntarism which permits choice of a Jewish lifestyle to be treated as a purely personal decision—that may in fact be in tension with their "survivalist" goal. "We are one" is a powerful "survivalist" slogan, but actively "promoting unity among American Jews" is consistently rated a rather *low* priority (tenth out of fourteen in the survey), largely because it appears to carry the implication that the freedom and diversity of American Jews might in some way be limited.

obtained from the survey.

It is also interesting to compare the priorities of these leadership development participants with those of professional Jewish communal workers as indicated in a 1973 survey commissioned by the Conference of Jewish Communal Service. In that survey, the listed goals (or activities) were somewhat different from those in the leadership development survey, but the pattern of responses was strikingly similar in many ways. In order, the Jewish communal workers surveyed ranked fundraising for Israel, Jewish education, fundraising for American Jewish agencies and causes, social services for Jews, and assisting the Jewish poor as their top five priorities. From the bottom up, their lowest priorities were social services on a non-sectarian basis, social action to improve U.S. society, health care, improving intergroup relations, and social action to improve the security of Jews.

Report of the Commission on Structure, Function, and Priorities of the Organized Jewish Community. New York: Conference of Jewish Communal Service, 1973.

**TABLE 3 —
IMAGE OF THE GOOD JEW**

E = Essential U = Undesirable
D = Desirable DK = Don't know
ND = Makes no difference

Rank*	Item	Percentage of Respondents Believing that to be a "good Jew" the item is					Rank*	Item	Percentage of Respondents Believing that to be a "good Jew" the item is				
		E	D	ND	U	DK			E	D	ND	U	DK
1.	Accept being a Jew and not try to hide it	90	10				13.	Promote civic betterment and improvement in the community	24	54	18	—	4
2.	Lead an ethical and moral life	77	22	1			14.	Gain the respect of Christian neighbors	26	47	23	1	3
3.	Marry within the Jewish faith	68	27	3		1	15.	Help the under-privileged improve their lot	15	65	15	1	1
4.	Support Israel	64	34	2			16.	Work for equality of Blacks and other minorities	11	56	27	3	3
5.	Contribute to Jewish philanthropies	56	42	2			17.	Attend weekly services	8	58	31		3
6.	Know the fundamentals of Judaism	48	50	2			18.	Observe the dietary laws	5	48	44	—	2
7.	Belong to a synagogue or temple	38	55	7		—	19.	Have mostly Jewish friends	4	33	54		
8.	Attend services on high holidays	36	51	13		—	20.	Be a liberal on political and economic issues	4	23	55	6	10
9.	Support Zionism	41	40	14	1	4	21.	Give Jewish candidates for political office preference	4	24	47	19	5
10.	Belong to Jewish organizations	26	64	10		—							
11.	Be well versed in Jewish history and culture	22	72	6		—							
12.	Support all humanitarian causes	24	58	15	1	2							

— = less than one percent

*Rank was determined by assigning a point value for each response (E = +2, D = +1, ND and DK = 0, U = -1) and summing the points for each item.

(Indeed, when the concept of "developing standards" to guide the involvement of Jews in American social, economic, and political life was suggested as a possible communal goal to several groups of Federation activists, it was unanimously ranked last and usually repudiated altogether as undesirable and inappropriate.) The question is thus raised of whether the ideology of "Jewish survivalism" is perceived as carrying prescriptive norms on the individual as well as the communal level, and if so, what these norms in fact encompass.

Image of the "Good Jew"

In order to explore this question, the survey respondents were asked to complete a slightly modified version of the "Good Jew" exercise developed by Marshall Sklare and utilized in his Lakeville study⁶ and subsequently by several other researchers. In this exercise, respondents were asked to rate 21 characteristics as either "essential," "desirable," "making no difference," or "undesirable" in their portraits of the "good Jew." Table 3 summarizes the results of the leadership development participants study (with the behaviors/attitudes ranked from most to least strongly endorsed).

Based on these results, it would appear that the paramount element in defining a "good Jew" for these young leaders is active identification with the Jewish people, community, and religious tradition. There is substantial agreement that a "good Jew" must openly identify as a Jew and must lead an ethical life. Beyond these general characteristics, it is noteworthy that the primary requisites for "good Jewishness" are defined as endogamy, support for Israel, contributing to Jewish philanthropies, knowing the fundamentals of Judaism, supporting Zionism, belonging to a synagogue, and attending high holy

⁶ Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier*, 2nd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

day services, all of which are viewed as "essential" by more than a third of the survey respondents. Those behaviors which are oriented specifically toward the larger society—support for humanitarian causes, gaining the respect of Christian neighbors, promoting civic betterment, helping the underprivileged—are all ranked below the Jewish group-oriented behaviors listed as "essentials" for defining a "good Jew."

There is, therefore, considerable warrant for concluding that these leadership development participants define priorities for the individual Jew in much the same way as they define these for the community as a whole. What makes a "good Jew" are, first and foremost, those behaviors which promote Jewish group survival and welfare. Only secondarily is the "good Jew" defined by his relationships with and contributions to non-Jews. It might also be noted that, as we found with regard to perceptions of communal problems, the more immediate the survival orientation of the behavior, the higher it appears to be ranked. Thus, endogamy, support for Israel, and philanthropic contribution are considered "essential" by many more respondents than are "being well versed in Jewish history and culture," attending services weekly, or observing Kashrut. And again, there are some intra-Jewish behaviors—having mostly Jewish friends and giving preference to Jewish political candidates—which are widely viewed neither as essential nor especially desirable, possibly because they smack too much of purely chauvinistic, rather than survival- and welfare-oriented, Jewishness. The prime requisites of "good Jewishness" are largely those of active Jewish self-identification and communal support, not behaviors which reflect a particular system of Jewish living. Many of the elements of a more extensive, religiously-oriented, discipline are endorsed as desirable by large numbers of the respondents, but the "bottom line"

for these young leaders remains those attitudes and behaviors which meet the threats to Jewish physical and cultural survival which they perceive and which manifest the sense of Jewish solidarity which they espouse.

This leaves the question of whether "turning inward" in this context in fact implies a "turning away" from the larger society. It should be noted that many of the young leaders surveyed *do* regard active participation in and contribution to the larger society as "desirable" characteristics

of the "good Jew" even if not "essential" ones. There is no wholesale abandonment of the ideal of Jewish support for all humanitarian causes, for civic betterment, or for help for the under-privileged. Still, it is clear that a majority of these Jews do not equate "good Jewishness" explicitly with social activism, and especially not with political liberalism, and anywhere from 15-25 percent apparently feel that broadscale humanitarian or civic activity is irrelevant to the quality of one's "Jewishness."

The significance of these figures can be

**TABLE 4 —
COMPARISON OF GROUPS
COMPLETING THE "GOOD JEW"
SCHEDULE**

L = Lakeville study sample				LD = Leadership development participants survey group			
R = Reform temple members study sample							
Item	Percentage of group surveyed rating the item as "essential" to being a "good Jew"			Item	Percentage of group surveyed rating the item as "essential" to being a "good Jew"		
	L	R	LD		L	R	LD
Accept being a Jew and not try to hide it	85	80	90	Gain the respect of Christian neighbors	59	23	26
Lead an ethical and moral life	93	79	77	Help the underprivileged improve their lot	58	32	15
Marry within the Jewish faith	23	24	68	Work for equality of blacks and other minorities**	44	20	11
Support Israel	21	37	64	Attend weekly services	4	6	8
Contribute to Jewish philanthropies	39	32	56	Observe the dietary laws	1	2	5
Know the fundamentals of Judaism	48	34	48	Have mostly Jewish friends	1	2	4
Belong to a synagogue or temple	31	31	38	Be a liberal on political and economic issues	31	13	4
Attend services on the high holidays	24	29	36	Give Jewish candidates for political office preference	1	3	4
Support Zionism	7	13	41	*not asked			
Belong to Jewish organizations	17	*	26	**in the Lakeville and Reform studies this was worded as "work for equality for Negroes"			
Be well versed in Jewish history and culture	17	15	22	Source for Lakeville and Reform study figures: <i>Reform Is a Verb</i> , pp. 34-35.			
Support all humanitarian causes	67	43	24				
Promote civic betterment and improvement in the community	67	40	24				

assessed somewhat more fully by comparing them with results obtained in administrations of the "Good Jew" schedule to other groups of Jews. Two major studies are available for this purpose: Professor Sklare's Lakeville study (for which data was gathered in 1957-58) and the study of Reform Temple members conducted in 1970 under the direction of Professor Leonard Fein which was published in *Reform is a Verb*.⁷ Unfortunately, neither of the groups of respondents polled for these studies is entirely appropriate for comparative purposes: Sklare's sample is probably not representative of the total American Jewish population (even in 1957) and the Reform sample obviously was not. Both studies, in addition, were conducted before the "survivalist" turn had become fully manifest. Thus, drawing conclusions about either longitudinal trends or "Federation/UJA" vs. general Jewish attitudes and values is risky at best. Still, the comparison is of interest. (See Table 4 for a summary comparison.) The contrast, for example, between the characterizations of a "good Jew" by the Lakeville sample and the present leadership development group is striking.

For the Lakeville Jews, the essentials of being a "good Jew" were indeed defined in terms of social and civic activism. The items considered most critical by the current young leaders—support for Israel, Jewish philanthropy, endogamy—were far less frequently regarded as such by the Lakeville Jews. The leadership development survey group also tended to rate other specifically Jewish behaviors—belonging to the synagogue, attending high holiday services, being well versed in Jewish history and culture—somewhat more highly than did the Lakeville group, but the major distinction lies in the almost total reevaluation of inward vs. outward directed

behaviors. The group of Reform temple members surveyed by Fein et al. generally falls somewhere in between the Lakeville and leadership development groups. A smaller percentage cite social and civic activism as essentials for being a "good Jew" than among the Lakeville sample, but they are not notably more inclined to rank endogamy, support for Israel, and Jewish philanthropic activity as requisites for "good Jewishness" than were the Lakeville Jews.

For our purposes it is not really necessary to speculate about the full range of factors accounting for the differences among the groups, or even about the representativeness of the various definitional patterns, either at the time of the surveys or presently. It is sufficient to recognize that the leadership development participants do, by and large, define the "essentials" of "good Jewishness" in terms which are far more oriented toward acts of Jewish identification and group welfare and far less oriented toward civic participation and social idealism than have (and quite possibly do) other groups of American Jews. Thus, "Jewish survivalism" as an ideological frame through which to view Jewish life is applied to normative definitions of personal as well as collective Jewish behavior. For these young leaders, the key problems and priorities of the Jewish community are those which promise to affect the basic survival, security, and welfare of the Jewish people and the continuity of its tradition; and the fundamental requisites of being a "good Jew" are those acts which are most likely to contribute to that survival, security, and welfare.

Discussion

At the outset of this paper, we raised the question of how deeply the ideology of "Jewish survivalism" had indeed penetrated and how it might be reflected in the self-definitions and perspectives of emerging leaders in the Jewish community.

⁷ Leonard J. Fein, et al., *Reform Is a Verb*. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1972.

The survey results we have examined leave little doubt that the penetration has been almost complete, and that it is indeed reflected in a "turning inward" which in terms of both personal and communal priorities leads away from concern with Jewish participation in the broader society toward a focus on those areas of Jewish activity which have an immediate link to group survival. Relating this ideological turn to social experience—Israel's wars, the failures of the promise of 1960's liberalism or to a deeper renewal of Jewish consciousness on other levels—is a task which deserves extended discussion, but cannot be attempted here. It must be remembered as well that we are not speaking for the most part about absolute judgments—respondents were asked for a *relative* ordering of priorities, and do by and large see social and civic activism as at least *desirable* behaviors for the "good Jew."⁸ But the data seem clear in indicating that "survivalism" is the dominant operative ideology of these young leaders, and that it has concrete implications in evaluating problems, choosing priorities, and establishing norms of Jewishness. Thus it is appropriate to ask what implications these facts have for the American Jewish community and for its future.

In most respects, the consolidation of "Jewish survivalism" as the ideology of the future (and, in many instances, present) leadership of American Jewish community Federations and associated organizations

⁸ The conviction that these survey responses do not constitute a wholesale repudiation of the values of social justice and of a Jewish role in their pursuit is strengthened by the fact that over three quarters of the young leaders surveyed express agreement with the proposition that "Jews have a special responsibility to work for justice in the world." One may speculate, indeed, that it is the sense of a historical mission which makes Jewish ethnic and religious survival so important to these young leaders. (See Woocher, *op.cit.*) Nevertheless, when it comes to concrete problems and priorities, survival itself is the primary focus of concern.

must surely be accounted a good thing. The shift from what might be termed a "philanthropic" to a "Jewish self-expressive" motivation for communal leadership has made possible both a much broader and much more "Jewish" definition of the intra-communal responsibilities of Federations and their constituent agencies. Although there may well still be a gap between the high priority given verbally by Federation leaders to Jewish education and the realities of dollar allocations, there is no question that the young leaders surveyed are committed not only to Jewish survival in physical terms, but to the proposition that Jewish culture and tradition must survive as well, and that both education and religion are requisites for total Jewish continuity. It is difficult as well to fault the evidently strong underlying sense of Jewish mutual responsibility which underlies their priorities for communal action. On the personal level, the importance which most of these young leaders attach to overt behaviors manifesting identification with and commitment to the perpetuation of the Jewish people, community, and tradition leads to a definition of "good Jewishness" which is decidedly *Jewish* in substance rather than a mere translation of universalist ethics.

Despite this generally positive evaluation some caveats about "Jewish survivalism" may be in order as well, and in three areas especially:

1. Some of the strongest reservations which have been expressed about the recent "turn inward" in Jewish communal life focus on the possible negative impacts which it may have for relations between the Jewish community and other groups in American society. The historical pattern of Jewish adjustment to the American environment has incorporated a significant dimension of "positive" assimilation: the assumption by individual Jews and by communal organizations of an active role in the political, economic, and cultural life

of the larger society. Few would contest the claim that both Jews and American society as a whole have benefited from this activism. While it is readily understandable that anxiety over the corrosive effects of "negative" assimilation on Jewish identity and continuity (not to mention the threats to Jewry on a worldwide basis) justify intensive concern for Jewish survival, we may question whether abandonment of a sense of Jewish communal responsibility vis-a-vis the welfare of society as a whole and of concern for the quality of relationships between Jews and non-Jews would be salutary for either American Jewry or society. We must reiterate that neither the reality of communal activity nor the relative prioritizing reflected in the leadership development survey indicates that a wholesale retreat from these areas of concern is under way. But with the focus now so clearly on "Jewish survival" issues, maintaining the historically creative role of the organized Jewish community within American society may demand greater attention from those segments of communal leadership who believe in the significance of that role. In particular, professionals and lay leaders in the area of community relations need to define the place, purposes, and priorities of community relations and social activism within the context of a survivalist ideological framework.

2. A second potential problem—or, perhaps better, challenge—implicit in the crystallization of a Jewish survivalist ideology among communal leaders is the possibility of a gap developing between these leaders and the Jewish population at large. There is good reason to believe that communal leaders, even in the so-called "secular" sphere, constitute an elite within the community in terms of their sense of Jewish solidarity and their commitment to Jewish group continuity and to the continuity of the Jewish tradition. On the whole, this can only be accounted a boon

for Jewish life. But it does pose the ironic danger that the intensity and focus of that leadership commitment may cause Jews whose level of group identification is lower and whose aims in maintaining that identification at all may be more personalized to feel alienated from community institutions. While national and community surveys indicate that most American Jews are happy to be Jewish and willing to identify with other Jews, there can be little doubt that many are not motivated to invest the resources and energies necessary to sustain the survivalist commitments of the leadership cadre. Will a community which de-emphasizes Jewish-supported leisure and recreation activities, which seems to be drifting away from concern for the image of the Jew in gentile society, which focuses so much attention on non-American Jews, which is redefining the meaning of "good Jewishness" in more particularist terms, be perceived by such individuals as a community in which they have a real place? Will survivalism ultimately mean *fewer* identified Jews?

Certainly, the answer to this potential problem is not to reduce the levels of leadership commitment or modify their conviction that Jewish continuity must be the number one priority for the organized Jewish community. It is important, however, for leadership in the community, both lay and professional, to recognize that cultivating its own garden is not sufficient to insure that the rhetoric of Jewish survivalism will be matched by the reality of communal support for these aims. The experience of Jewish growth and Jewish activism is often powerful and seductive (thankfully), but it can also be deceptive when those who undergo it forget that the bulk of American Jewry has not yet shared it. Thus, leadership must be attentive to the need to bring the community with it, and in some measure, to stay with the community, as it seeks to develop and to implement a program faithful to the mandates of its

Jewish survivalist ideology.

3. The third concern which the emplacement of "Jewish survivalism" as the operative ideology of the organized Jewish community should raise for Jewish leadership relates to the limitations of that ideology itself. Again, there is no question that survivalism represents a positive and welcome level of Jewish commitment; indeed, it might be seen as the base without which any other form of Jewish commitment or ideology is valueless. But, as it has been defined in the American context, "Jewish survivalism" is largely an ideology of defense, attempting to forestall and withstand the forces domestically and in the world which threaten Jewish continuity. As such, the question of "what for?," of defining the *purposes* (not the justification, for we do not need to "justify" our desire to survive) of Jewish continuity, has still not received the sustained attention which eventually it must and deserves to receive. As a community, we do have some traditional, often unarticulated, answers to that question of "what for?" which are by no means to be rejected as starting points and which are often reflected in the programs and activities of our institutions. The Jewish people and Judaism survive in order to stand for the values of *Tzedakah, Hesed, Shalom, Kedushah*; in order to enrich the lives of individuals, families, groups; in order to witness for an image of man and of community embodied in our tradition; in order to preserve the lessons of a rich, often painful and often glorious history. The challenge for a leadership committed to Jewish survival is to raise both the question of purpose and these and other answers to that question to a level of consciousness which will permit us to move *beyond* survival, and *beyond* identification, toward a new/old understanding of the meaning of our endeavor and of the disciplines we may

wish to impose upon ourselves in order to fulfill that meaning. The ideology of Jewish survivalism remains largely a container which must be filled with content. Much of that content, I would reiterate, is already implicit in the commitments and responsibilities which have been assumed by the leaders of the survival-oriented community. But this content needs to be drawn out, to be shaped, to be critiqued, and to be supplemented, and "survivalism" alone will not do that. To convince others, and possibly in the long run themselves, that the struggle for survival is worthwhile, the leaders who have embraced the ideology of "Jewish survivalism" must recognize the need to transcend it. There will be a price in pushing farther, a price paid perhaps in a rebirth of controversy about goals and means, and in the need for leaders to confront basic assumptions about the compatibility of Jewish survival and accustomed patterns of personal and collective behavior. This process, however, is central to the full maturation of the American Jewish community and to the validation of its leadership's devotion.

The ideology of "Jewish survivalism" does lead the Jewish community to "turn inward." That turning inward need not, however, be an exercise either in self-centeredness or narcissism if the full dimensions of the challenge of survival in the contemporary world are understood and embraced. American Jewish communal leaders have now reached the point where we may no longer justifiably doubt the reality of intensity of their commitment to Jewish continuity. Now, they must assume the task of defining the purposes and conditions of that continuity in a way which will strengthen the Jewish community and the place of that community in a world which we must believe also has a stake in Jewish survival.