

CONTACT

SPRING 2002/NISAN 5762 VOLUME 4, NUMBER 3

THE JOURNAL OF JEWISH LIFE NETWORK / חברים כל ישראל

**Young Adults On
Their Own Terms**



Eli Valley
Editor

Erica Coleman
Copy Editor

Edith Fenyvesi
Photo Coordinator

David Winter
Administration

Janet Mann
Administration

Yakov Wisniewski
Design Director

JEWISH LIFE NETWORK

Michael H. Steinhardt
Chairman

Rabbi Irving Greenberg
President

Jonathan J. Greenberg
Executive Director

CONTACT is produced and distributed by Jewish Life Network, a Judy and Michael Steinhardt Foundation, 6 East 39th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10016.

Phone: (212) 279-2288

Fax: (212) 279-1155

Email: info@jewishlife.org

Copyright © 2002 by Jewish Life Network.



Jewish Life Network is dedicated to strengthening and transforming American Jewry to ensure a flourishing, sustainable community in a fully integrated free society. We seek to revitalize Jewish identity through educational, religious and cultural initiatives that are designed to reach out to all Jews, with an emphasis on those who are on the margins of Jewish life.

On the cover: Cast and band from the Storahtelling Purim Show 2001. Photograph by Max Frankston. Photographs in this issue appear courtesy of Art Today, COEJL, David Karp, Jane Grossenbacher, Yigal Nizri, Hazon, Suzanne Schachter, Sinai Temple and Juliana Thomas.

Young Adults On Their Own Terms

In recent years, the American Jewish community has expressed growing alarm over the lack of involvement among young adult Jews. There have been many explanations. Parents haven't given their children a sufficient Jewish education. We are experiencing a generational shift away from the roots of Yiddishkeit. The infrastructure of Jewish life doesn't speak the language of young adults. Judaism isn't "cool."

What is rarely discussed is the possibility that young adults seek Jewish involvement, but feel disenfranchised from the American Jewish community. On a range of issues, there exists enormous dissonance between the policies of the Jewish community and the needs and views of its young adult population. Young Jewish adults in America generally do not live in fear of anti-Semitism — yet major institutions of the Jewish community continue to be structured around a culture of victimization. Young Jewish adults are supportive of Israel but often critical of Israeli policies — yet the American Jewish leadership offers almost no latitude for criticism of Israel. Young Jews are more tolerant of interfaith relationships — yet the American Jewish community sends a message that if one marries outside the faith, he or she will be cut off from the Jewish people. Young Jewish adults are more receptive to life in today's multi-ethnic American society — yet Jewish programs are often geared towards tribalism and ethnic isolation. Young Jews are known to be concerned about the environment — yet environmental activism is so far from the agenda of the mainstream Jewish community that one of its leaders recently offered tacit support for oil drilling in the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge. Is it any wonder that young Jewish adults feel they have no voice in their own community?

Given the current state of community affairs, it is possible that if young adults are to find a gateway into increased Jewish involvement, it will have to be through initiatives launched on their own terms. Several programs have recently emerged to tap into the unique needs and independent spirit of young adults. Some programs have arisen from the grass roots, among visionary young adults disillusioned by the status quo. Other programs have been initiated and supported by major Jewish organizations that were willing to think outside the box and listen to the needs of young adults. This issue of Contact will examine several new programs that tap into the creative potential of the next generation. Whether cultural, spiritual or environmental in content, they offer exciting new opportunities for young Jews to participate in Jewish life. What the programs share is a willingness to dispense with preconceptions and to cater programming to young adults themselves.

By now it is clear that today's generation of young adults is brimming with creative potential. In various pursuits, from social activism to philanthropy to the arts, a new generation is already leaving its mark on the Jewish and secular worlds. If the Jewish community opens itself more fully to this generation, the benefits will be enormous. Jewish life will be enriched by new voices; more young adult Jews will feel compelled to live Jewish lives; and the community will be reoriented more effectively towards the Jewish future.

Eli Valley
Eli Valley



Authenticity Versus Outreach: **The Case of Jewish Environmentalism**

by **MARK X. JACOBS**

Like many North American Jews, after my Bar Mitzvah I became an increasingly reluctant participant in Jewish life. And like many North American young adults, I also became deeply committed to environmental causes.

It was not until college that I discovered rather accidentally that environmentalism and Judaism are profoundly complimentary. Intrigued by the connection, I embarked on what has become a rewarding journey into Jewish thought and life.

A few years later, when the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) was established, I learned that there were hundreds, and maybe thousands, of other young Jews like me across North America: people building our lives around the values and commitments we understood to be at the center

of both Judaism and environmentalism. We sought to live according to a Jewish environmental ethic that we were both discovering and defining ourselves, and to integrate this ethic into our Jewish communities.

Now, a little more than ten years later, I have had the privilege of serving as the executive director of COEJL for the past seven years. COEJL was founded in 1993 by, among others, then-Senator Al Gore, the late cosmologist Carl Sagan, Dr. Ismar Schorsch, Rabbi David Saperstein, Dr. John Ruskay and Paul Gorman (now the executive director of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment). The primary impetus of COEJL was to create a Jewishly-rooted culture of environmental responsibility within the Jewish community and to mobilize Jewish institutions and individuals to take practical and political action to address mounting environmental challenges.

COEJL's founders recognized at the outset that this endeavor would likely

attract young Jews who might not otherwise be involved in the Jewish community. And they intuited that Judaism's encounter with the historical reality of a global environmental crisis would help to provoke a renewal of Jewish thought and life.

COEJL's mission is environmental protection, not outreach. Perhaps this is why it has been so successful in creating models for engaging young adults.

The reason for this is authenticity. COEJL seeks to accomplish a purpose with which young adults identify: to protect the environment. We pursue this mission not to attract young adults but because we believe it is good and right. COEJL articulates a vital universal mission for the Jewish community and the Jewish people — to protect and preserve all of creation and all of humankind — in a manner that is distinctively Jewish. As a result, young adults who otherwise feel left out of the Jewish community are drawn to our commitment to the environment and to Jewish ethics.

Another dimension of authenticity is

Mark X. Jacobs has served as executive director of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) since 1995. For more information on COEJL, please go to www.coejl.org.



The more deeply their values, vision and leadership are affirmed, the deeper their Jewish roots will grow.

the depth and breadth of the connections between Judaism and ecology. Both focus on the interconnectedness of all life and the relationships between people and the planet. Even more so, we at COEJL understand ourselves anew as a people of covenant, responsible for the Earth across generations. We are inspired by the Biblical vision that social justice and the fruition of the land go hand in hand. We nourish spirituality (an often neglected dimension of Jewish experience), and we celebrate the agricultural roots of our ancient festivals. We observe Shabbat, which mandates rest and replenishment for all creation, and we find the Divine Presence in nature.

Authenticity awakens the soul and deepens commitment. And so COEJL has been able to draw upon a network of individuals, who are mostly but not exclusively young, who carry this mission in their hearts and souls. They organize and participate in “eco-Shabbat” dinners, *Tu B'Shvat* seders, “Shabbat in the Woods,” hikes and outings, as well as community clean-ups and public policy activities — many of these organized through COEJL’s thirteen regional affiliates. They serve as educators in summer camps, religious schools and outdoor education programs. They also serve as student leaders at Hillel, young leaders in Jewish organizations and public policy activists bringing their passion for environmentalism to Jewish

institutions. In the process, they remind those who have deep connections to Jewish life what Judaism can mean as it progresses into the future.

One of our most effective programs in this regard is our annual conference, the Mark & Sharon Bloome Jewish Environmental Leadership Institute. For five years, hundreds of attendees have discovered the extraordinarily diverse ways in which Jewish environmentalism is being lived out.

For example, Catherine Greener, a Detroit businesswoman in her 30s, got turned on to COEJL and within months was actively participating in a synagogue and helping to create a COEJL affiliate in the Detroit area. Now she’s moved to Colorado to work for a leading environmental institute and is creating a COEJL affiliate there.

Another example is Stephen Sylvan, an environmental program manager for the Environmental Protection Agency. Looking for a deeper connection, he found it in COEJL. After attending the Bloome Institute in March, 2000, he remarked:

“This movement makes Judaism alive for me. I thank COEJL for providing me with a Jewish home. Before, it was just a bunch of strange words, rituals, and buildings. Now, it’s something so deep I can’t even describe it. It moves me right to the core of my being. The

more I get involved with this part of Judaism, the more I think that this is going to save both Judaism and the environment at the same time. What could be better than that?”

We believe there are thousands upon thousands of Catherines and Stephens who have not yet been exposed to Jewish environmentalism and would find it a compelling gateway into Jewish involvement.

Once connected to COEJL, young adults have opportunities to provide leadership, exercise creativity and feel a sense of ownership within Jewish life that is all too rare. The overwhelming majority of staff and lay leadership of COEJL affiliates are younger than 40, and their leadership is valued for the energy, expertise and ideas they bring to their communities. The more deeply their values, vision and leadership are affirmed, the deeper their Jewish roots will grow.

Far more than outreach for its own sake, authentic Jewish experiences have the potential to bind young adults to Jewish living: to spirituality and celebration, to creativity and leadership. These are the features of Jewish environmentalism that have helped COEJL strike a chord among young Jewish adults, nurturing their Jewish identities and connecting them with the Jewish community as we work to protect creation from generation to generation. 🌱

A collage of images on a pink background. A large, curved wooden shofar (ram's horn) is the central focus, extending from the top left towards the bottom right. To its left are several Israeli coins (10, 20, 50, 100) and a 100 NIS banknote. Below the shofar is a photograph of a rocky, desert landscape with people and a motorcycle. At the bottom, there is a glowing blue and yellow light effect.

birthright israel and the Creation of Ritual

by SHAUL KELNER

Sometimes, young people are truly creative. Rather than replicate what already exists, they innovate. Rather than do politely as they are told, they surprise people with the curious and unexpected. This is a “problem” all identity-building programs should have. Consider birthright israel, a ten-day peer educational encounter with the Jewish state. The program does not so much *tap* the creative resources of the young generation as *unleash* them. Between the two is the difference between co-optation and empowerment, between a mechanistic view of identity-development and a humanist view.

This is a story about what some men on birthright israel did when the program gave them the resources and freedom to create for themselves. It does not follow the standard paradigm of Jewish identity stories that tries to fit things into established categories of “Jewishness.” Instead, it demonstrates just how creative creativity can be.

It took me several days to realize that the *shofar* belonged to Evan.* I rarely saw him with it. It was always being used by other men in the group. Nor had I pegged Evan as the type who would shell out cash for a religious artifact. I should have known that his street tough look was just a look. But, then again, the Judaica souvenir he decided to purchase was no do-gooder’s *tzedakah* box. It was a two-and-a-half-foot horn hewn from the head of a ram. Streaked charcoal gray and curved in a single-helix like a strand of DNA that had been ripped apart, it exuded something raw and animalesque, especially if you nosed around inside.

The *shofar* often came down from its storage space in the overhead rack when people were waiting outside the tour bus. On the curb beside the rear door, a group of men would gather, usually about a half-dozen at least, each taking turns trying to coax a sound out of the horn. A man’s status in the group was reflected in control of the *shofar*, and skill with the *shofar* was reflected in status in the group, though the two were not identical. The more one could elicit a resonant blast, the less hands grabbed for the next try. Likewise, some who could hardly eke out a squeak might claim extended time on the *shofar* if they were seen as leaders in the group.

* Confidentiality was promised to all participants in the birthright israel evaluation research. In this article, all names have been changed and no photos depict members of the group being described.

Shaul Kelner is a Research Associate with Brandeis University’s Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies. He led teams of participant observers to research the Winter 1999-2000 and Winter 2000-2001 birthright israel trips. Full evaluation reports on the trips are available at www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/cmjs_pastresearch.cfm.

MASADA

At one point, most of the men stood in that circle, and each one who asked had the opportunity to demonstrate his prowess with the *shofar*. In fact, the demonstration was the point. The call of this *shofar* was no penitent cry to the Merciful Judge. It was a primal yell by which men asserted their masculinity to one another in an act of competition and camaraderie.

A woman's place in this fellowship was about the same as a man's place in a women's *Rosh Hodesh* group. There would be other opportunities for men and women to come together as one and for women's voices to take center stage. Caryn's performance of her original songs on the hotel piano was one. The horn-blowing contest over who was the "alpha male" was not. Once the *shofar* became a tool for boys to be boys, it left women with little stake in it. The *shofar* was eventually redefined as a communal possession of men and women alike, but this happened in a way that ironically reinforced rather than subverted the dynamics that had earlier emerged.

Evan may have owned the *shofar*, but Sam was its master. As the only person able to sound strong blasts with any consistency, he took control of Evan's horn. It was his decision to carry it up the Roman ramp to Masada, where we had gone to watch the sunrise. When the mountaintops of Moab to the East had become a black pencil line against a radiant band of gold, and the sun finally burst out of its hiding place, a piercing *tekiah* shattered the silence. Heads snapped left to see Sam standing on a stone wall with the two-and-a-half-foot ram's horn to his lips. He struck another single note, then a string of medium-length *shevarim* blasts. When the sun had

risen fully, Sam let out one final *tekiah g'dolah*.

Isabelle, one of my key informants, pulled me aside and said, "That was definitely a *moment!*" Days later, she confessed over a plate of hummus, "When I heard the *shofar*, I cried." Josh made a similar comment in a group discussion, echoing Lauren, who described it as one of the most spiritual moments of their birthright israel trip.

No longer a primal yell from man to man, the *shofar* call became the call of tradition informing experience and experience refiguring tradition. If the act of blowing the *shofar* had brought the men together, the act of listening helped unify the entire group. The blasts were not only moving, they seemed 'appropriate,' as if all sunrises in biblical days had been so marked. By wrenching the *shofar* out of the synagogue ritual to which it had been narrowly confined for centuries, the men of birthright israel had restored the *shofar* to functional use. Unconventional uses, to be sure, but, at first to the men and then also to the women, ultimately meaningful ones.

When birthright israel was conceived, few imagined that one of the ways it would influence identity would be by enabling men to express masculinity through Jewish artifacts, or that the gender dynamics that would emerge around a *shofar* would heighten the spiritual experience on Masada. But the creative resources the program unleashed led to precisely this. The implications are profound. It encourages us not to treat Jewish identity as a separate box in a person's head, but to explore the ways that an integrated holistic identity might be informed and infused Jewishly. It reminds that, in spite of the pressures to plan, plan, plan, the success of programs to empower young adults depends as much on a willingness to relinquish control. And finally, the creativity of the program participants breaks down any hard and fast distinction between the programmers and the subjects. People shape their own experiences. The best identity-building programs help them to do so. ✿



It is 1996. Four women in their thirties are sitting in a room together eating sushi. One woman is a rabbi, one dropped out of rabbinical school, one was accepted to rabbinical school but never enrolled, and one is married to a rabbi and teaches at rabbinical school. They are deeply engaged in conversation concerning women's studies, gender studies and Jewish studies. The women argue that women's studies and gender studies in their broadest senses — in areas such as history, sociology, psychology, economics and theology — have yet to fully engage the Judaism that is taught in rabbinical schools or, even more so, the Jewish study and practice of 'the person on the street.'

They imagine a different world. One where the insights of gender studies and the insights of Judaism are taught together to children in Hebrew schools and day schools, to rabbinical students, to adults pursuing their own Jewish education. And they decide to create an organization.

Kolot: The Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies is the organization they create. They are three thirty-something philanthropists, one thirty-something professor/partner and one philanthropist over 40 who helps to fund the organization but does not attend meetings. Thus, unlike so

many other noteworthy efforts designed for the "next generation" to connect to the Jewish community, this one was designed by young women for themselves, their community and their children.

I was one of the women seated in that room (I was 34 then). I was part of a rare, but not unheard of, phenomenon — young people starting and funding organizations that survive and impact the Jewish community. How did this come to pass? How were we sitting in a room together, and how did we decide to use our money to create what we wanted to see?

Part of the credit must go to Rabbi David Teutsch, who imagined centers for

Sally Gottesman is a consultant to non-profit organizations and Chair of Kolot: The Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies. Sally may be reached at sally.gottesman@aya.yale.edu.

Young Women Changing the World

by SALLY GOTTESMAN

the Jewish community housed at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. He was, in essence, the convener of the project. Part of the credit must go to a group called Achayot Or, which the three young philanthropists all belonged to. Achayot Or, another "organization" founded and funded largely by people who were then in their 20's and 30's, is now a 14-year-old annual Memorial Day weekend gathering at which a group of women come together to explore Judaism and feminism. Achayot Or employs a process called "cost sharing" to pay for the costs of the meeting. In essence, recognizing the inequalities in our financial resources, we resolve for this weekend to "share the costs according to ability." But in order to do so, we divulge to one another how we earn money, how we spend money, what our assets are, whom we support, etc. Thus, through Achayot Or I came face-to-face with the fact that due to my family's circumstances I was in an unusual position: I had the financial resources to significantly contribute to an effort that many people wanted but most people could not afford.

So what did we decide to do? In the first year we funded a faculty position, we ate a lot of sushi, and, as I said, we imagined. We also committed ourselves to the long haul of

is still under construction, but worth checking out) called RitualWell.Org, a site for contemporary Jewish ritual and liturgy for lifecycle and holiday events.

Three women in their 30's and one in her 50's invested money in our dream, a dream we knew was far from the radar of the traditional major Jewish funder — male and in his 60's. Indeed, on reflection, it isn't surprising that no older women nor any men were at our original table. We women in our 30's were attuned to a world of new scholarship on the positive side and a form of sexism on the negative side that was unique to our generation. Yes, women could become rabbis — but how had the curriculum changed? Yes, we know that baby-namings exist for girls and that they have influenced the ritual of *brit milah*, but how is this material being made available — or not being made available — to the public to use? Yes, we know you don't think God is a man when you pray in Hebrew, but why don't you try using female God language in Hebrew? Yes, we know you care that every study has shown that adolescent girls of all religions and classes lose tremendous self-esteem when they hit adolescence, but what is the Jewish community doing about it? These questions were second-nature to us. And they are the

So yes, it can be done. Young philanthropists can change the landscape of our Jewish community.

building a national organization dedicated to providing new visions of gender roles in Jewish life by illuminating the traditions and texts of Judaism. Slowly, we became more specific. First we would fund a Chair in Gender Studies at a rabbinical school. We liked this idea because it would not marginalize gender studies to "women only" but would be incorporated into the core curriculum for male and female rabbinical students. We hoped a few years down the line to evaluate the impact of the Chair and the gender studies program on students, faculty and the Jewish communities served by the rabbinical school graduates. If it achieved certain goals, we would export this idea to other rabbinical schools. Concurrently, we would start two national projects. *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* would strengthen the self-esteem and Jewish identity of adolescent girls through monthly celebrations of *Rosh Hodesh*. And, together with Ma'yan: The Jewish Women's Project at the JCC of Manhattan, we would develop a website (which

ones we began to create answers for.

So in terms of giving, what did it take? Close to \$75,000 the first year — and this year our annual operating budget will be closer to \$400,000. (We now raise money from sources other than ourselves, by the way.) In addition, we have raised more than \$1.8 million to fund a Chair of Gender Studies and to provide for ongoing operations. And although I have never noted this before, five of our eight major endowment funders are women who pledged their support, and often gave their money, when they were in their thirties.

So yes, it can be done. Young philanthropists can change the landscape of our Jewish community. And now that we have begun to pave the path for Kolot, others are joining in our efforts. Slowly we are garnering support from women and men, foundations, and people of all denominations. It isn't easy. But we know that our vision is a "next generation vision" and that no matter how much money you have, it feels great to "walk your talk." 🌱

JEWISH INNOVATORS WANTED

Joshua Venture Launches the Next Generation of Jewish Leaders

by BRIAN GAINES



Now more than ever, we are asking ourselves, “What is the future of the United States Jewish community? What will it look like? Who will be included in it? How can we celebrate our heritage, yet engage in a multicultural society? How can we make Judaism relevant to the next generation?”

Our answers to these questions are vital to our survival in the 21st century, and we are aware that we must engage young adult Jews. We target them with singles events, trips to Israel, young donor groups, and leadership training. But are we really reaching them?

Brian Gaines is the Executive Director of Joshua Venture: A Fellowship for Jewish Social Entrepreneurs. Previously, he started and ran several business and not-for-profit ventures. For more information on Joshua Venture, please go to www.joshuaventure.org.

History Lessons

Jewish history shows us that Jews in their 20's and 30's are the drivers of social change. Institutions and ideas such as the Jewish Theological Seminary, the *havurah* movement, and free public school lunch programs were all products of Jews in this age group. Today's young Jews are no exception. Many are envisioning and creating projects that hold promise for a more vibrant and enriched Jewish community. However, these innovators often work outside of mainstream Jewish life, below the traditional Jewish community's radar. Many are unsure how to access the resources offered by established organizations. Many others do not even try.

Who Are They?

Eighteen months ago, Jennifer Bleyer,

26, a freelance writer covering Green Party Presidential candidate Ralph Nader's campaign, decided to put her budding writing career on hold to take a shot at a dream. She had a vision of publishing a magazine that would host “a dynamic, inclusive conversation about the nature of politics, art, culture and spirituality in our evolving community” and that would encapsulate the perspectives of Jews in her generation. Although Ms. Bleyer possessed natural leadership skills and had published several underground ‘zines (small press magazines) during her years as a student, she required the experience, resources and skills needed to manifest her idea.

In late 2000, Ms. Bleyer, along with nearly one hundred other aspiring Jewish social entrepreneurs, replied to a call for Jewish innovators. The request came

from San Francisco-based Joshua Venture: A Fellowship for Jewish Social Entrepreneurs, a newly formed fellowship program in search of a first cohort of fellows. The program offered Bleyer and others like her a chance to obtain the training and resources critical to launching her initiative. In February 2001, Ms. Bleyer and seven other emerging innovators under 35 years of age were selected as Joshua Venture fellows. These young entrepreneurs' projects serve a variety of sectors within the Jewish community, and range from working with Jewish children with learning disabilities, to establishing houses of study for women and Jews of Latin American descent, to encouraging secular teens to explore their Jewish identity through filmmaking.

Expanding the Landscape

We must acknowledge that this generation grew up in an age of identity politics, mixed marriages and multiculturalism, and that young Jews often choose "Jewish" as only one adjective with which to describe themselves. The Jewish community faces the crisis of losing its best and brightest if we do not create venues for younger Jews to express their own manifestations of Judaism.

Joshua Venture believes that in order to accept the mantle of leadership, future leaders must be steeped both in their own experience and in a deep understanding of Jewish history and values. The organization encourages emerging social entrepreneurs to bring Jewish values to their work. Joshua Venture promotes excellence by assuring that Jews in their 20's and 30's have the business, nonprofit management and leadership skills they require in order to succeed.

The two-year-old organization is based upon a model that invites entrepreneurs to explore innovative solutions to social concerns. Joshua Venture is creating a network of emerging social entrepreneurs, and hopes to inspire young Jews to drive the community forward in this and future generations. The more we encourage the next generation to dedicate its talents and creativity to the Jewish community and to participate in programs like Joshua Venture, the greater the opportunity for Judaism to flourish in the 21st century. ✿

THE HUB: *Building Community Through Arts*

by AMY TOBIN

We have always come together through story and music. This is one of the guiding principles of The Hub, a new arts program designed to build community among Jews in their 20's and 30's through the performing arts. With the support of Joshua Venture, I established The Hub to present theater, music and spoken word events that reflect, explore and represent the diversity of Jewish life. These arts events spark honest dialogue about being Jewish today. Rather than creating programs that isolate Jewish identity, The Hub appeals to young Jews in their totality, as people who are multi-layered and have a universal perspective. We present artists from Jewish and other ethnic backgrounds to help foster intercultural dialogue. We also help develop new works by Jewish artists that interpret Jewish stories and tradition through personal experiences and contemporary perspectives.

Most recently, The Hub presented *Home for Sukkot*, an evening of solo performance, music and spoken word by Jewish, African-American, Sicilian, Sri Lankan, and Cantonese artists. Each performer explored themes of home, displacement and wandering from their unique cultural perspectives. Over 80 people attended the show. The audience response was overwhelmingly positive. Upcoming programs include a new cabaret show that interprets the Book of Esther, a world-music band that features both Sufi and Israeli musicians, and a one-man show that uses traditional Hassidic storytelling and experimental hip-hop flute techniques.

The Hub is housed at the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, whose support and infrastructure has enabled the program to hit the ground running. As the JCC builds a new facility, The Hub is cultivating audiences of Jews in their 20's and 30's, producing shows at venues throughout the city to appeal to those who might not ordinarily attend an event at a Jewish organization. While Joshua Venture has provided seed money and the JCC has helped subsidize its first year, The Hub is seeking program support so that it can grow, hopefully to become a model program that can be replicated in communities throughout America. ✿



Amy Tobin is a performer and Artistic Director of The Hub at the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco.



Bikkurim: A Hothouse For The First Fruits Of A Burgeoning Judaism

by AMY AMIEL and
MARTIN KAMINER

The inspiration for Bikkurim: An Incubator for New Jewish Ideas was very simple and not particularly revolutionary — a big empty space in the middle of the new United Jewish Communities office in the Chelsea section of Manhattan. That empty space, and two oft-heard mandates: we must narrow the gap between the older generation of great Jewish institutions and the emerging wave of new Jewish organizations, and we must inject vitality and innovation into the Jewish community. The goal of Bikkurim is succinct, inexpensive and modest in its aims — to give the most promising young Jewish not-for-profit organizations access to the accumulated expertise and resources that fill the halls of UJC and its Renais-

Amy Amiel is Director of Project Development at JESNA, which operates Bikkurim. Martin Kaminer represents the Kaminer Family Foundation, which funds Bikkurim.

sance and Renewal partner, JESNA.

What is a young Jewish organization? An organization started by young adults? Intended to serve young people? Simply a new idea that wasn't around in the hoary days of yore? We don't really define it, but for our groups the answer seems to be all three. Although none of the current resident groups serve young adults exclusively, all were created by young adults and their programs are aimed at areas of Jewish life important to young adults.

Through a competitive application process, Bikkurim finds the brightest people with the best ideas; puts them in a confined space under pressure; mixes in heaping quantities of office supplies, telecommunications services and computer equipment; sprinkles in some consultation, advice and networking; adds a pinch of money; turns up the heat; stirs regularly and simmers for two years. Bikkurim residents receive office space, computers, phone and fax, access to printing and mail-

ing facilities, and technical assistance in such areas as how to create a website, how to develop a board, how to write a grant proposal and how to find out who's who in the Jewish world. There is little organized programming. Those who seek, find. There's no spoon-feeding.

Will every project turn out right? Will the entire batch be perfect? Certainly not. If even one project from the first cohort succeeds, it will be well worth the investment. If two go on to have a positive impact on their communities, we will have seen the investment returned many times over.

Is it working? Too soon to tell. On cooking shows, no sooner does the chef put the dish in the oven than he pulls out another one and declares the recipe a success. At this point, a little more than halfway through the first two-year residency, there are positive indications from initial evaluations, but no guarantees. Several of the groups have succeeded in attracting funding during their residency, guaranteeing that they can continue to grow and advance their vision. Would they have won these grants had they not been Bikkurim residents? They might very well have. But

we know from experience that at their stage, every bit of assistance is precious.

We would be remiss not to name those groups that are toiling away on the UJC floor to make their dream a reality. Currently resident at Bikkurim are:

Storahtelling – Jewish Ritual Theater Revived @ www.storahtelling.org

Matan – The Gift Of Jewish Learning For Every Child @ www.matankids.org

Heeb – A Sweaty Prizefight Between Hip-Hop And Sushi In This Corner And Klezmer And Kugel In The Other @ www.heebmagazine.com

Keren Mach'ar – The Fund For Tomorrow @ www.macharfund.org

The New Shul Of Lower Manhattan @ www.newshul.org

If Bikkurim is successful, each partner will benefit — the UJC will be rejuvenated by the best ideas of young Jewish activists, and new Jewish organizations will be mentored and nurtured by the rich resources of the organized Jewish community. We all are already benefitting from the steady stream of vibrant new ways of being Jewish that insures that our traditions, though ever-changing, will endure. ✿



If even one project from the first cohort succeeds, it will be well worth the investment.

CALLING ALL JEWISH BIKERS

by **NIGEL SAVAGE**

Hazon means vision. It was founded to be a catalyst for a new Jewish vision, defined fairly broadly: projects rooted in Jewish tradition, lived in the present, focused on the future and spanning denominational and other differences within the Jewish community.

Hazon's first major project was the summer 2000 Cross-USA Jewish Environmental Bike Ride. As Hazon's founder, I led a pluralistic Jewish group in cycling 3000 miles from Seattle to Washington DC to raise environmental awareness in the Jewish community, to raise money for Jewish environmental causes and, in a broader sense, to be a paradigm of a new Jewish vision.

There were 12 riders, ranging in age from 20 to 47, of every Jewish back-

ground and denomination, straight and gay, married and single, American and Israeli. They taught in 47 Jewish communities along the way, were featured in the press, on TV and on the radio, and ended at the White House, where they received a national award from the EPA.

The Ride spawned a New York Ride, held in October 2001, which is now to be an annual event, and a second Cross-USA Ride is being planned for summer 2003. Ride alumni staffed this winter's first-ever birthright Israel "Israel By Bike" tour.

Why have these Rides struck a chord? Perhaps because they so deeply respond to the contemporary fragmentation of Jewish life and of postmodern life generally. They are proudly Jewish, yet their focus is global and universal. They require planning and thought, yet



they're ultimately physical rather than intellectual. They are rooted in Jewish teaching — about the planet, about community, about giving thanks and about *tikkun olam* — yet they are decisively new. This is not our grandparents' Judaism. Most important, they inherently bring people together, across considerable differences, in a spirit of shared endeavor and ultimately of achievement and celebration.

Nigel Savage is Executive Director of Hazon. For information on future rides, please go to www.hazon.org or email Julie Sissman at Julie@hazon.org.

Jconnect:

Giving Young Adults What They Want

by RHODA A. WEISMAN

Every age group within the American Jewish community poses unique challenges and opportunities, but few are more complex than those facing today's newest adult generation. Where do these recent college graduates and assorted twenty-somethings live, whom do they look up to, how do they socialize and what matters to them? We know that they are technologically and politically savvy, environmentally conscious and extremely mobile. For the most part, the Jewish community plays little or no role in the decisions they make concerning lifestyle, work, romance or volunteer activities. If this critical age group is to connect with the Jewish community, we must demonstrate that Judaism adds value to their lives.

This challenge — and, indeed, this population — is not unfamiliar to Hillel. Over the last few years, Hillel has pioneered its Engagement Methodology, a results-oriented approach to working with young adults that is catered to their needs and tastes. Engagement techniques change every year as the campus population changes. The twenty-somethings of today were the engagement students of yesterday.

Recognizing our expertise with this group, the Belfer Family Foundation offered to support a new Hillel initiative to engage twenty-somethings. The pilot project, located in Seattle, Miami and Chicago, is called Jconnect.

Jconnect's engagement approach makes a number of assumptions: First, that Jewish and secular institutions must form partnerships to address the diverse interests of this generation. Second, that the Jewish community must meet twenty-something Jews on their own cultural turf and that we must listen openly to their passions, interests, hopes and fears. Third, that authentic Jewish experiences must be created to address their interests. And fourth, that the subsequent programs must be evaluated and changed as we continue to experiment and learn.

Currently in its second year, Jconnect is housed at the University of Washington Hillel Foundation in Seattle, the Florida Hillel

Council in Miami and the Hillels of Illinois based in Chicago. Professionals were hired to serve as Jconnect directors in each respective city. The local Jewish Federations have been strong supporters and partners as Jconnect has introduced new models and projects.

In the summer of 2001, Jconnect sought a one-year experimental national partnership with Geshercity, an organization committed to building bridges for post-college members of the Jewish community. We believed that the Internet would play a critical role in con-



If this critical age group is to connect with the Jewish community, we must demonstrate that Judaism adds value to their lives.

necting twenty-somethings to one another within each city and across the country. Geshercity, founded by twenty-somethings, provided a cutting-edge site and was a perfect partner in experimenting with the vast potential of the Internet.

In keeping with our Engagement Methodology, we conducted numerous focus groups and interviews with twenty-somethings. In city after city, people expressed a desire to meet one another in small, welcoming settings where conversation and meaningful connections could take place. They were interested in career guidance, in volunteer work and in romance.

Events with a Jewish theme were generally not appealing to this group because they seek events they can experience with their friends of diverse backgrounds and cultures. However, after September 11 many expressed an interest in exploring serious questions of personal meaning and the answers that Jewish tradition might offer. A significant number were not opposed to experiences with Jewish content but insisted that they be active participants and that the discussions be relevant to their concerns. The twenty-somethings we interviewed said that it did not matter who provided services as long as they were easily accessible and did not require a long-term commitment.

With these findings to guide us, Geshercity/Jconnect was launched. In Chicago, hundreds of twenty-somethings, the majority of them new to town, have met in homes and apartments all over the city for dinner and conversation on Friday evenings. Partnering with the Makor program of Los Angeles, volunteer facilitators are trained to lead informal discussions on pressing current issues through a Jewish lens. These programs are filled to capacity, and they have spawned new social networks. Participants attend "parties of eight" at trendy local restaurants. "After-parties" are forming all over town. Some of these participants attended the first Geshercity/Jconnect birthright Israel trip and recruited friends who were not connected with Jewish life to apply.

Building on these successes, Seattle and Miami Geshercity/Jconnect are taking the lead in planning Jcafes, places in the city where twenty-somethings can meet and converse. The groups will utilize scholars and artists as facilitators in cafes, bookstores and restaurants to create programs targeted for twenty-somethings new to Jewish life.

Geshercity/Jconnect's next steps include plans to transition young adults from campus to community; to engage them as city hosts to welcome newcomers and the newly interested; to access new funding for twenty-something grant programs to create Jewish art, cultural, spiritual and social initiatives; and to create additional birthright Israel experiences where Jewish young adults can travel and experience Israel together.

Throughout our planning, we constantly revisit our assumptions surrounding the next generation. The Jewish Renaissance on college campuses has taught us that the key to success is not in finding a single, all-embracing answer. There is no single answer to developing Jewish identity. Jewish identity is complex; we need to create a variety of experiences utilizing the best of secular and Jewish cultures to engage twenty-somethings in Jewish journeys that will last a lifetime. 🌱

Rhoda Weisman is Chief Creative Officer and Director of the Center for Jewish Engagement at Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

Who Comes to the Source?

The People who Visit Makor

by STEVEN M. COHEN

The Autumn of 1999 marked the opening of Makor (“The Source”), a multi-purpose Jewish facility housed in a five-story townhouse on Manhattan’s Upper West Side. In February 2001, Makor became a part of New York’s 92nd Street Y through a gift from Makor founder Michael Steinhardt and a subsequent merger of the two organizations. Makor continues to offer programming geared towards young adult Jews. Its diverse spaces include a street-level café offering food, beer and wine, and trendy live music. The upper floors contain a state-of-the-art screening room, areas designed for public discussions, seminar rooms, an art gallery and more.

According to its website, Makor sees itself as “a place of expression where Jewish New Yorkers of all backgrounds can feel comfortable. . . . Makor . . . promises to be the most desirable place for New Yorkers in their 20s and 30s.” In particular, Makor seeks to facilitate exposure to Jewish educational experiences in ways that are inviting, non-threatening, non-demanding and befitting a culturally sophisticated and upscale clientele. In large measure, its mission is to enhance young people’s relationships with each other and, by extension, with being Jewish.

In part to examine how well it is performing that mission, Makor — with the support of The Nathan Cummings Foundation — asked me to undertake a random sample study of Makor attendees. By intercepting 789 visitors in the building over a three-month period from January 25 to April 24, 2001, interviewers collected information on Makor constituents’ socio-demographic characteristics, their Jewish involvement (among the large majority who are Jewish), their use of Makor facilities and their perceptions of the institution. Following are some of the main results and conclusions of the survey. They might prove suggestive for those seeking to replicate Makor’s success in catalyzing Jewish involvement among young adults.

Jews and some non-Jews

We learned that the vast majority (78%), but not all visitors to Makor are Jewish. While non-Jews make up more than one-fifth of the young, upscale clientele, they tend overwhelmingly to utilize the downstairs bar and café areas. The more culturally oriented programs appeal almost exclusively to Jews, or to those undergoing or contemplating conversion to Judaism. This last group, for example,

makes up 10% of the people taking Makor’s classes in Jewish life.

The ability of Makor to attract non-Jews is actually a positive feature for the sorts of Jews who are attracted to Makor. In focus groups prior to the establishment of Makor, many young adult Jews said, “I don’t hang out with only Jewish people.” The researcher concluded, “A significant segment felt uncomfortable about frequenting a place that, by its very nature, would exclude their non-Jewish friends.”

Jewishly Diverse

In terms of Jewish identity, the Makor population doesn’t quite fit preconceived categories of involvement. Moreover, it is a Jewishly diverse group with a broad range of backgrounds and current involvements.

As many as 28% reported that day schools constituted their main form of Jewish schooling as a youngster. Somewhat more (36%) reported “part-time” or more than once-a-week schools as their main form, as contrasted with just 21% who went primarily to Sunday school or other once-a-week formats. Only 15% of the respondents reported no Jewish schooling. Against general population studies, Makor visitors display somewhat more intensive forms of Jewish schooling than the Jewish population at large, though, undoubtedly, at lower levels than those who populate synagogues and other Jewish organizations.

The number who have visited Israel is also indicative. Only about a third of all American Jews have been to Israel, as have about 42% of New York area Jews in their 30s and 40s. In sharp contrast with these levels, we found that 73% of the Makor Jewish respondents have been to Israel.

In terms of religious involvement, Makor’s Jewish visitors are also diverse, albeit with a substantial number of unconnected Jews, as befits their youthful (and single) character. Just 12% of the respondents answered Orthodox (surprisingly low for a Jewish institution on Manhattan’s Upper West Side), 29% Conservative, 14% Reform, 2% Reconstructionist and 43% “Just Jewish.” The large numbers who are “Just Jewish” is indicative of the large extent to which Makor Jews have yet to make clear decisions about the nature of their Jewish identity. These signs, speculatively, suggest further that the Jewish identities of Makor’s Jews are more



tipped in the direction of culture or ethnicity, and less in the direction of a classically religious conception of being Jewish.

Many Gateways, Diverse Destinations

Repeat visitors experience the wide variety of Makor programs, and move from one program to another with relative ease. Their first visits to Makor more heavily entail more entertainment-oriented programs, such as music in the Café and films. Their subsequent visits lean more in the direction of programs with explicit Jewish cultural content. In fact, most participants in Jewish education classes, to take a key example, first came to Makor for the entertainment programs.

The results suggest a certain institutional integrity to Makor. It is not merely a building housing a series of stand-alone, appealing programs. Rather, it constitutes an organic system, with programmatic by-ways and pathways that crisscross and intersect one another, leading visitors from one point to another.

In sum, given its philosophy and objectives, Makor seems to be reaching the right clientele. To be sure, these are not predominantly totally “unaffiliated” Jews. Some are certainly unaffiliated. The Jewish users of Makor are largely under 40 years of age and unmarried; correlatively, they lack institutional ties to organized Jewry. However, they are, in many ways, ethnically connected — maintaining and seeking Jewish friends and future marriage partners.

Few Jewish institutions currently serve this population, which is not particularly attracted to synagogues or prayer services. As Makor demonstrates, its audience is attracted to cultural events, socializing, intellectual challenge, service opportunities and Jewish educational experiences that are suitable to an upscale population. In these and many other ways, Makor draws Jews under 40 to an explicitly Jewish environment that is distinctive in its appeal and unique in its design, program and execution. ✿

Steven M. Cohen is a Professor at The Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Director of the Florence G. Heller/JCCA Research Center in New York.



Engaging Tomorrow's Congregants Today

by NATALIE GOLDFEIN

On a stormy night in January, we sat in the main sanctuary of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, wondering whether it would fill. We were happily surprised — not only did it fill, but over 2,300 people came to “Friday Night Live” services. Rabbi David Wolpe and musician Craig Taubman have transformed that monthly event into a remarkable “singing-dancing-praying-eating-meeting-thinking-talking-and-checking-everyone-out” experience, an environment that twenty- and thirty-somethings say they enjoy and feel comfortable in.

In Chicago, the Sidney N. Shure City North Kehilla program has worked tirelessly to attract young Jews by combining the talents of four synagogues and a JCC in a young and hip neighborhood. Programs geared to the interests of young adults are popular and include creative Jewish holiday programming and bi-monthly “Biblically Incorrect” forums with area rabbis. For many, though, the draw is reduced rates for people joining the community, including services from any of the area synagogues and the JCC, for up to two years. Currently there is no system in place to maintain this community as a group beyond the two-year point. We will have to stay tuned to see whether participants actually join synagogues later in life.

In New York City, B'nai Jeshurun has been successful in reaching out to a diverse community, including young adults. The Upper West Side location provides the perfect backdrop for involving young Jews. Early Shabbat services, lectures, retreats, social action/justice projects and volunteer work make this a most dynamic and engaging destination for young adults. B'nai Jeshurun has had a full-time staff member who is dedicated to working specifically

with this demographic, whereas other congregations working with this group make it only a part of the rabbi's or program staff's portfolio.

All of these programs have been successful among less-affiliated young adults precisely because the programming has been catered to the needs of that demographic. It appears that Jews in their 20's and 30's will come to synagogue if the services, religious and social, speak to them. Such a view is in stark contrast to the prevalent Jewish community view that synagogues need not orient themselves in a significantly different way to this generation. Indeed, at a recent conference a leading American Rabbi remarked, “Synagogues should stop wasting their time trying to cater to the young. It isn't until you wake up at 43 and realize you need meaning in your life that you want to be part of a synagogue.”

The problem is, why would tomorrow's forty-somethings choose to enter a synagogue if they have had few positive Jewish spiritual, cultural or social experiences in their 20's and 30's? The challenge is to create dynamic, meaningful and creative Jewish experiences for young adults that will form the basis of lifelong Jewish affiliation.

Unfortunately, there are so many issues to consider in a congregation that young adults are often indiscriminately lumped into the rest of the “congregational world” without regard to their unique needs and interests. In recent years, Jews in their 20's and 30's have become something of a cause celebre in the Jewish community, with a great deal of discussion and study on the topic of Jewish involvement among Gen X, Y and (in a few years) Z. It is rare, however, that we take the time to ask young adults what they want in the Jewish world. Why aren't they joining synagogues? What are these Jews looking for? What energizes them? Most important to the issue of synagogue renewal, can synagogues successfully meet the needs of our critical twenty- to thirty-something adults?

During the study phase for STAR: Synagogue Transformation and Renewal, we gathered rabbis and Jewish communal leaders to address the topic of what could be done to impact the future of the synagogue. We also brought together a group of “unaffiliated” young Jews to find out what they were thinking. From the unaffiliated and marginally affiliated group, we learned that some young adults feel:

- That synagogue dues are too high and that they are turned off by what they perceive as endless congregational fundraising;
- That since they are often geographically

transient, they are less motivated to invest in community building beyond establishing relationships with age, wage and career peers;

- That synagogues are primarily places to join after they have children.

Such perceptions lead one to believe that for marginally affiliated Jews, the synagogue is less of a central social structure than it was for previous generations of American Jews. Perhaps what we need to do is think completely differently about how our communal institutions can engage and service the differing demographics and generations in our community.

Many believe that it is easier to build something new than to change something that exists. With young adults, we have the possibility of experimenting with original models and learning from a few outstanding programs. YAD in Atlanta, Makor in NYC, Steppin' Out in Chicago, New Generations of the New Israel Fund — each of these programs actively engages young adults and excites them about Jewish living. While these examples are not synagogues, perhaps they succeed because they are community-building and relationship-enhancing programs that speak to people in their 20's and 30's. It is possible that if the Jewish community expands such cultural, political, social justice and educational programming, young adults will join dynamic congregations to experience Jewish living before they turn 43.

Popular congregations such as L.A.'s Sinai Temple or New York's B'nai Jeshurun are successful because they have incorporated the needs of young adults into synagogue offerings. Notably, they have often used similar programming techniques as popular non-synagogal initiatives in the community. Is it possible to reorient synagogues across the country to incorporate the successes of non-congregational programming without diminishing the historical essence of Jewish communal worship?

That is the challenge. Our community needs to invest the thinking of our best and brightest young adults and seasoned veterans to consider the types of programs, organizations and institutions that will foster meaningful experiences for the new generations. It will require a change in our communal thinking, but we should concentrate on engaging young adults with programs geared to their desires and needs, as opposed to applying a one-size-fits-all synagogue mentality across the board. These are serious issues that our community must be ready to address. 🌱

Natalie Goldfein is National Program Director of STAR: Synagogue Transformation and Renewal. For more information about STAR, please see www.starsynagogue.org.

A Meaningful Young Jewish Adulthood: Looking Beyond the Singles Event

by SARA PAASCHE-ORLOW

The main message the Jewish Community broadcasts to young people is, “Get married and have children.” However, a new phenomenon has emerged that demands a response. The sociological shift of marriage to later in life has created a whole new period in peoples’ lives, a period the Rabbis never conceptualized. The result is that, for many people, the most physically and intellectually active years occur without compelling Jewish communal paths or events. At age 22, Bar or Bat Mitzvah is almost ten years in the past; most American Jews are no longer living in their parents’ domain; and there are no other traditional life moments for young adults to celebrate in community for perhaps another decade or more. Thus, the average American college graduate stands in the prime of her life without strong mooring in Jewish life or community. Many Jewish organizations have responded by creating interesting young adult programming. However, it is often still dominated by non-intellectual and non-spiritual marriage agenda. Outreach, without meaningful content, may succeed in increasing the numbers of Jews in the short run, but it does nothing to ensure Judaism’s vibrancy and ethical impact in the future.

Pirkei Avot teaches the classical Rabbinic view of a man’s life cycle: At five, a child learns scripture; at ten, Mishna; at fifteen, Talmud; at eighteen, marriage; at twenty, a vocation; at thirty, full strength; at forty, understanding; and so on. The implication is that a foundation of learning is instilled before age eighteen and then the focus shifts to the content of life. Whether or not a person has a solid basis in Jewish learning, the possibilities for opening up more sophisticated and relevant Jewish learning to people beyond their 18th year, when they are beginning to pursue their professional goals with full intellectual and physical strength, are enormous and are only just beginning to flourish.

Rabbi Sara Paasche-Orlow is National Program Director of spark: Partnership for Service.

The span of contemporary life — post-college, unmarried, and no kids (SINKs — single income no kids) — is often about proving oneself and seeking competence and success. Often people feel that they are still play-acting at adulthood until close to 35, when identity is often more established. For some, there is a feeling of being anchorless. These are the years of finding voice for a personal narrative. Judaism can serve as an anchor and a backdrop for identity.

Traditional texts and teachings can be illuminating during this time of questing — not as pedantic rule books, but as co-conspirators on the journey. The biblical books of Genesis and Exodus describe the journey of the Jewish people, and they include several stories of God conferring identity on individuals and on the entire people. Through the receiving of land, names and a destiny, the Jewish people grew into maturity. Biblical texts can serve as templates for finding meaning in one’s life and as conduits for connection with others. They introduce key questions for this age cohort, such as: What is the journey you have taken? Have you left much behind? Do you have a sense of calling in your life? The Jewish community needs to speak to the deeper questions if it is going to compete with other compelling spiritual traditions that are popular in America.

The covenant between God and Abraham establishes Abraham as the father of future kings and as a model of just behavior. We are challenged to ask ourselves, what spiritual or moral legacy will the next generation inherit from us? Do we deem our own behavior in the world to be just? The strength, ethical guidelines and individuality acquired by the Jewish people can serve as a framework for finding expression and clarity for 30-year-old Jewish men and women. Jewish texts can

serve as a compass for using one’s own strength to do good in the world.

Another venue for enriching Jewish life during this period is new and/or revitalized life cycle rituals that could, with the right marketing, become commonplace for this age cohort. For example, a Jewish housewarming party that involves attaching a mezuzah to a door and eating a communal meal. A 2002 mezuzah

might include a second scroll with supplemental, personalized texts. Other possibilities for infusing meaning at liminal moments in life might include rituals for beginning and ending jobs and a ceremony based on traditional sources to celebrate academic

completion. Jewish ritual can also celebrate such physical feats as running a marathon. Americans of all dominations are seeking spirituality. As Jewish professionals and, more important, as Jewish parents, siblings and friends who care about deepening Jewish life, we must thoughtfully make Jewish ideas and practice relevant to these charged moments.

The introduction of young adult (20’s to 30’s) programming in place of or in addition to “singles programming” has begun. However, our community can make a much greater effort to create Jewish culture, scholarship, opportunities for community service and other spiritual frameworks to sustain this group. To accomplish this, we must also bring Jews in their 20’s and 30’s into leadership positions throughout Jewish communal life. This group is a tremendously under-tapped resource with energy, intellect and power in their professional and personal capacities. They can lead us into a wonderful period of creative growth if we permit them to, and if we permit our traditional teachings to expand and embrace this new expanse of life. 🌱

Outreach, without meaningful content, may succeed in increasing the numbers of Jews in the short run, but it does nothing to ensure Judaism's vibrancy and ethical impact in the future.



חברים כל ישראל

Jewish Life Network

6 East 39th Street

10th floor

New York, NY 10016

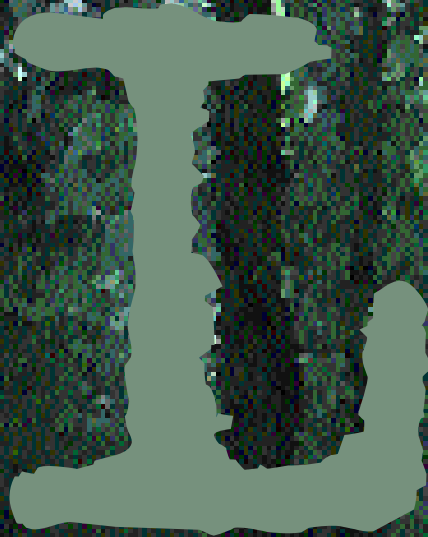
Non-Profit Org.

U.S. Postage

Paid

Rockville, MD

Permit No. 800



Like many North American Jews, after my Bar Mitzvah I became an increasingly reluctant participant in Jewish life. And like many North American young adults, I also became deeply committed to environmental causes.

It was not until college that I discovered rather accidentally that environmentalism and Judaism are profoundly complimentary. Intrigued by the connection, I embarked on what has become a rewarding journey into Jewish thought and life.

—MARK X. JACOBS