
fundes: those who give to a Jewish institution as well as those who give based on Jewish values. Younger generations are often interested in funding different issues and organizations than those supported by their parents and feel that their choices are just as "Jewish" as their parents' choices.

Jewish federations need to be mindful of the unintended negative message that is delivered to the next generation of Jews when the older generation is encouraged to leave its wealth to the Federation Endowment to "ensure" that the Jewish community is taken care of in perpetuity. This message could suggest that the next generation can not be trusted to care about the Jewish community, and might just be a self-fulfilling prophecy!

Foundations, Federations And The Future

New and creative responses will be necessary to meet the challenge of the trends listed above. The growing number of small independent foundations decreases the centralized communal fund that sustains the American Jewish communal infrastructure. Without a communal infrastructure, Judaism as a civilization cannot exist. The mix of essential organizations might change, but the need for stable funding of Jewish institutions is fundamental to the transmission of Jewish values and traditions. Overlap, duplication and wasted dollars can result from foundations acting without communicating with each other and the central communal planning structure. Independent funders should evaluate their funding patterns systematically and focus their funding more strategically if they want to increase their impact. They need to learn or be reminded of the importance and effectiveness of a communal pool of funding that sustains the Jewish infrastructure.

On the other hand, federations must change their language and processes in order to address the fundamental problem of a decreasing annual campaign. Most donors are not interested in "giving to the Federation," but rather in supporting the Jewish communal enterprise.

As the number of new foundations increases over the next few years, there is a need for new models of support to nurture and serve Jewish philanthropists. The Jewish Funders Network is a new national resource organization for individual philanthropists, foundation trustees and staff that provides educational and networking opportunities and a framework for discussion of philanthropic issues without a set agenda.

Many funders are looking to "purchase" administrative and staff support in order to save on the high cost of establishing a private foundation. Jewish federations,

community foundations and some nonprofits now offer some of these services.

Meeting The Donor's Needs

The success of this model for connecting independent funders to the Jewish community, however, depends on whether the support organization is perceived as providing the service that the client wants. As Jewish funders' choices expand, they seek grantmaking assistance in areas with which Jewish federation staff might be unfamiliar or judge as not serving the interests of the organized Jewish community. If Jewish organizations want to develop or retain relationships with independent Jewish funders, they will have to prove to them that they truly represent the client's interests, not what they perceive as the community's interests.

As we begin to reshape the American Jewish community, private foundations will play a central role in supporting the experimentation that can lead to institutionalized change. They represent a uniquely American form of the philanthropic imperative. Those of us who are involved in the re-visioning and re-engineering of the American Jewish communal system must recognize and build on that reality. †

Jewish retreats

■ **Rachel Brodie**

Magic. The number one word, used indiscriminately, by participants and providers alike, to describe the transformative power of retreats. And who isn't in need of a little magic when it comes to drawing people into Jewish communal life and practice? If the recent boom in the retreat business is any indication, a large cross-section of the Jewish community is, indeed, looking to retreats as a magic formula. But are retreats magical? And if so, what impact will they have on the American Jewish community in the 21st century?

The Jewish Retreat Center (JRC), a project of UJA-Federation of New York's Jewish Continuity Commission, is billed not as a place, but as a concept. It does not represent a single site. It provides a network of sites in the Northeast, as well as access to significant programmatic and human resources for Jewish groups seeking to "retreat." These retreats take many forms: synagogue

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RACHEL BRODIE was the Founding Director of the Jewish Retreat Center and is currently a Melton Senior Educators' Fellow in Israel.

shabbatonim for families, adult education seminars, school trips and Israel program training institutes.

Advertising for the Jewish Retreat Center has never gone beyond a modest brochure, a handful of ads in the Jewish press and some direct mailings. Yet, now completing its second year, the JRC has served more than 70 Jewish groups directly, on-site, and more than 1,000 individuals and groups indirectly through its referral service.

The Secret To Successful Retreats

How can we account for the overwhelming response? It is the perception that retreats are catalysts for change. Rabbis, educators, and Jewish communal professionals searching to jump-start the acculturation of a group of unaffiliated Jews or energize an apathetic congregation are turning to retreats to work magic on their community.

But are retreats inherently magical? No. Retreats sometimes fail and those that do are usually founded on fundamental misunderstandings of the purpose of retreating. One of the most common mistakes is motivation by what I call "None of us have country homes or the money for Club Med so let's hold a retreat" thinking. Essentially, these retreats are created as vacations—and that's all they become, relaxing but never transformative. And then there are retreats founded on the "forty-eight hour business meeting" plan. These marathon sessions are held in direct violation of the number one retreat rule: don't do unto participants at a retreat what could be done at home. Remember: Retreats are only as good as the planning that goes into them.

Retreats that work well result from attention to detail, clear goals, and a change of setting. The power of retreat settings lies in the intensity of concentrated, uninterrupted time in a special environment, and the intimacies of communal living. But the possibility of affecting individual and/or institutional change through a retreat experience rests directly in the hands of those who create the program and even more, in the hands of those who do the

follow-up. Indeed, the significance of mountaintop revelations or bunkbed bonding is often lost when they occur in a vacuum. Retreat experiences and revelations must be contextualized; relationships formed require further opportunities to be solidified; lessons learned need to be reviewed, and the learning must continue. Remember: the impact of a retreat is only the first step. Follow-up is key.

Even as the impact of a single retreat can be extended through significant follow-up, and the impetus for retreats is slowly extending throughout the American Jewish community, the long-term effect of retreat experiences on the ways and structures of American Jewry is little understood. The Jewish Continuity Commission of New York and a few individual philanthropists are beginning to show a healthy respect for retreat sites and programs, as evidenced by the availability of funds, but it is still too early to evaluate the long-term impact of these efforts.

However, the movement toward embracing retreats does reflect some other trends that are expected to influence the American Jewish community over the next century. These trends include: a more important role for quality informal Jewish education (the primary educational modality of retreats and camps), more cooperation between institutions (the model for a Jewish institution working with the Jewish Retreat Center), and more work being done in smaller groups (the ideal retreat size, depending on the specific agenda, is 30 to 100 people).

Also, retreats serve as safe spaces for Jews to work on identity issues outside their own homes and offer opportunities for Jews to live Jewishly, if only for two days, and not just talk about Jewish life and practice. The move toward the creation of more holistic experiences, through total immersion, is a useful tactic for engaging Jews in the post-*shtetl* era. Retreat participants cite the significance of a retreat Shabbat as being complete, not just Friday dinner and Saturday morning services but a safe and easy way to experience and experiment with a full day of rest.

A Virtual Community

Finally, if you ask adult participants what they are looking for in a retreat they inevitably mention their search for community. They lament the lack of extended family and Jewish support systems. Retreats offer people access to community, because they hold the same appeal as *havurot*; they are small, informal and *haimish*. If retreats will have a significant impact on American Jews in the next century, I believe it will be because communal leaders recognize the need for smaller, more intimate,

A HEARTY MAZEL TOV

to

Sh'ma Contributing Editor,

Rabbi Brad Hirschfield and his wife, Becky,

on the birth of their daughter.

sense of community among their members. But retreats are just one model, and we need to develop other creative, more normative responses to these challenges.

Miracles. Many groups who hold retreats need a miracle to motivate the true or lasting transformation they seek for their participants. What many fail to appreciate is that it is the work that goes into planning and programming a retreat that gives retreats a good name. Many people look at the American Jewish community as we approach the 21st century and say that in order to survive we need a miracle. Others look at us and recognize that the difference between miracles and magic is that magic can be made. †

🍷 Endthoughts 🍷

A liberal defense of judgmentalism

■ Steven M. Cohen

David R. Adler (*Sh'ma*, 26/511, "The wrong way to 'jewish continuity'") takes me to task on two occasions for an article on intermarriage and Jewish continuity I had published in *Moment* (December 1994). Adler claims that much Jewish continuity discourse would fall on the racist side of the equation. In this context, he objects to my phrase "diluted ethnicity," as indicated by the decline in intra-group friendships among American Jews. In the same article, he then proceeds to accuse me of adopting a judgmental stance toward the unaffiliated when I drew what he claims is an invidious distinction between 'weaker' (unaffiliated) and 'fitter' (affiliated) Jews.

I am particularly touched by Adler's comments, and not just because it shows he has been reading my work (or some of it). It so happens that we share something in common (not much, I'm afraid, but at least something): Adler is editor of *Response* magazine, a position I held for some time when I was his age, roughly 20 years ago.

Tribalism Is Not Racism

To make this reply to Adler perfectly clear at the outset, I find his critique important, wrong and dangerous.

STEVEN M. COHEN is Professor at The Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

His critique is important because it eloquently articulates widely held sentiments in American Jewry today, particularly, I gather, among his twenty-something generation. No doubt, many would agree with what I regard as his most startling statement: The Jewish community's strictures against intermarriage would, in contemporary American parlance, fall under the racist category.

He is wrong because the Jewish people's historical emphasis on group solidarity, as expressed through marrying Jews and making friends with Jews, is not racist. True, both racism and Jewish tribalism (I happen to like the word, tribalism) share two features in common: They both recognize group differences based primarily on ancestral origin; and they both advocate treating majority and minority groups differently. But beyond these surface similarities lie numerous critical distinctions.

Distinguishing Public Policy From Personal Choice

Racism applies primarily to the public sphere: issues related to jobs, housing, schooling, political office, equal treatment under the law, etc. Jewish tribalism, though, applies to the private sphere: to one's family, religious life, most intimate friendships. The whole thrust of anti-racist movements in the U.S. and elsewhere has been to assure fair and equal treatment in the public sphere, while allowing individuals to construct their private lives as they see fit. No one can seriously claim that the tendency of Americans to seek out spouses and friends of similar cultural background (whether defined by education, region, religion, or ethnicity) is racist. Moreover, religion—even more than the other classifications—is seen as an acceptable basis around which to build family, friendships, and community. Would anyone in their right mind call racist the plea by a committed American Christian (or Mormon or Moslem) leader for religious adherents to marry one another, to make friends within the religious group, to become involved in the religious community, or to live in areas with many co-religionists? If so, then what is racist about urging similar behavior among Jews?

From all of us at *Sh'ma*
to all of you, our family of
readers and friends:

May you enjoy a year of
peace, promise and eternal hope

SHANA TOVA.