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*Of Blessed Memory

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Harry Hauser

Table of Contents

B'reishit - The Beginning: A Message from the Editors

Henry S. Feller, FSA, Tzachi Litov, Susan Goldstein 1

A Message From the Executive Director

Harry Hauser 2

A Lesson at Passover

Eric S. Levine 3

The Importance of Endowments

Eric S. Levine 5

When They Come, What Will They Find?

Robert Hill, FSA 7

"If Not Me, Then Whom" - A Light Unto the Nations

Steven Hecht 12

The Integrative Synagogue

Malcolm Katz, FSA 16

The Synagogue as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Harvey M. Brenner, FTA 20

The Role of Executive Director in a Crisis

Rachel Gross 23

Budgeting: An Ongoing Year-Round Process

Neal Price, FSA, ATz Found at <http://tinyurl.com/cv2pep4>



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The NAASE Journal welcomes submission for consideration manuscripts and articles that may be of value to synagogue executive directors and others interested in synagogue management and leadership. All material to be considered for future issues should be sent to NAASE via office@naase.org, or sent to [The NAASE Journal](#), c/o NAASE at Rapaport House, 820 Second Avenue, New York, New York 10017.

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A Message from the President of NAASE

Marcia K. Newfeld, FSA

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to invite everyone to read this issue of the NAASE Journal. I wish to thank Henry Feller, Tzachi Litov and Susan Goldstein, as well as their editorial board for overseeing the production of this issue. We certainly appreciate all of the time, effort and skill put into creating this publication together, from which we may all benefit. I would also like to thank the contributors for sharing their expertise and taking the time to document it for us. Being a member of NAASE, as with any professional organization, comes with many different opportunities that members may take advantage of, not the least of which is our ability to network with each other and to learn from each other.

Whether you take part in the ExecNet, or attend the Week of Study at JTS, the West Coast Institute, or our annual conference, we are there to help each other and to learn from each other, and our Journal is another avenue to share our experiences. I hope that this issue will encourage and inspire you to write an article for the next issue of the NAASE Journal. We are always looking for good material and new ways of accomplishing the tasks that each of us tackle every day. Need help formulating an idea? Henry, Tzachi and Susan are happy to speak with you and guide you on your path to being published.

NAASE - we will do, and we will do it together, helping each other along the way. ■

Marcia K. Newfeld, FSA
NAASE President



Marcia K. Newfeld

B'reishit: The Beginning A Message from the Editors



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We learn more and more about ourselves through our peers. NAASE is made up of many wonderful individuals with whom we are proud to share our experiences. Much of our professional lives has become intertwined with our private lives as we are invested in serving the Jewish community through our responsibilities in the synagogue workplace.

One of the beautiful aspects of NAASE is that we share ideas and thoughts in a manner that assists and aids our peers; wherever possible, we strive to avoid re-inventing the wheel. Whether we represent small, medium, or large size congregations, we share our knowledge willingly --unlike many of the industries in which we may have worked previously.

In this light, six of our peers are published in this Journal. Each of them has shared personal experience, business experience, and life experience with us. We are richer for this and we suggest that you express your appreciation to them when you have the opportunity. The full versions of Ettinger lectures delivered by Bob Hill, FSA, and Malcolm Katz, FSA, may be read in the ARC; they both worked diligently to reduce their Ettinger presentations to Journal length. We also suggest that you review the article by Neal Price, FSA, ATz, *Budgeting: An Ongoing Year-Round Process* article, in the ARC. Neal submitted it for the Journal, but it has many pages of exhibits so we felt it was best viewed on-line.

Many thanks to Marcia Newfeld, FSA, President of NAASE, as well as the indefatigable Harry Hauser, our Executive Director, for their pushing and prodding to move this process along. Thanks as well to David Rothenberg for ensuring that "we get to press."

Best Wishes to ALL.... for together we move from strength to strength.... ■

Henry S. Feller, FSA Tzachi Litov Susan Goldstein
Editors - NAASE Journal – Fall 2012



Henry Feller



Tzachi Litov



Susan Goldstein

A Message from the Executive Director

Harry Hauser

Areivut . . . Responsibility, Caring and Sharing



Harry Hauser

The principle of *areivut* teaches us that all Jews are bound together in a covenant of mutual responsibility. *Arevin zeh ba'zeh* . . . each responsible, one for the other. And nowhere is this principle given freer reign and more compelling nurturing, than in the valued professional *raison d'être* of the Association in individual service to its 300 skilled practitioner-members and in turn, to the thousands of congregational beneficiaries of their shared professional generosity.

So it is with the many members of the professional arm of the Conservative Movement that links the congregational executives, the North American Association of Synagogue Executives (NAASE) as it moves through its 64th year of programmatic leadership. Each year, some two dozen new members come to the Association from the ranks of newly hired synagogue executives, some representing expansion of the field, others replacements for retiring colleagues, or those moving within the broad range of Jewish communal leadership endeavors. And their aggregate profile defies simple description. They come from diverse educational and professional training grounds, offer a smorgasbord of skill-sets, experiences and networking, are crafted from a wide variety of tenures and ages, and come face-to-face with a mirror image of diversity among the synagogue settings that look to their executives for guidance, organization, energization and assurity.

While sharing many similar professional goals and committing to similar congregational aspirations, the Executive Directors truly reflect the diversity of the congregational settings in which they find themselves across the North American continent. As much as the members of the Conservative rabbinate labor lovingly and continually, instilling and fostering core principles in their respective congregations, so too are there the notable core values shared by the Conservative executives serving in the synagogues of all sizes and settings. Among them are the unassailable goals of long-term fiscal and resource stability, nurtured growth of membership commitment and practice in a secure and non-judgmental environment, assurance of sustainable viability and visible community presence, and anchored inter-generational stability of the bastion of Jewish continuity that is the modern synagogue.

Yet under the magnifying glass of individual involvement in local Jewish life, one sees the richness of the diversity from community to community, the variability of the local culture that defines how matters are dealt with and how growth is nurtured one congregation at a time . . . and therein lies the greatest strength of the network of professional executive colleagues that is NAASE . . . the day-to-day grounded, dynamic and consistent sharing by willing, skilled and respected colleagues that nurtures the growth of common purpose and sustained professional commitment. The overarching goal of enlightened synagogue leadership - that of the development, cultivation and preservation of the many resources that assure progress toward fulfillment of the synagogue's mission and meeting the long-term goals of the congregation - is enhanced by the very diversity of NAASE's members.

Your differences ARE your strength, your variability IS your profile, your sharing and committed nurturing assures the mosaic that is the North American Association of Synagogue Executives.

The NAASE leadership joins me in extending to each of you a hearty *yasher koach* for the lasting impact of your sustained and visible commitments to the finest standards of professionalism, and for your gracious and generous willingness to share your acquired skills with those of us who continue to be your students and beneficiaries. ■

A Lesson at Passover

Eric S. Levine, FSA

3

During the holiday of Pesach we are commanded to retell the story of our ancestors' journey out of bondage and to recognize and honor their bravery so that we, thousands of years later, can live in freedom. It took the leadership of one person, Moses, to stand up to our oppressor and, with God's strong hand and mighty arm, to win the liberation of the Jewish people. That freedom has been taken from Jews many times in modern history, and there are still Jewish communities in the world in fear of being annihilated or enslaved. Freedom must be continually defended.

This past year I had the opportunity to celebrate and observe Pesach in a unique way. My friend and next door neighbor is a Commander in the United States Navy. Recently he was given the honor of commanding the USS Sterett, a guided missile destroyer (a very large warship). During its most recent deployment, the sailors aboard the Sterett participated in many high-profile missions. In February 2011 a US yacht was boarded at sea by modern

Eric S. Levine has served as Executive Director of Congregation Beth El in La Jolla, CA since 2007. Prior to joining Beth El, he had eight years of experience working for the Jewish Federation system as the Operations Director of the Jewish Federation of the Greater Sacramento Region and as the Associate Director then Director of Planning and Allocations for the Jewish Federation of San Diego.



Eric S. Levine

Eric attended the American Jewish University in Los Angeles where he participated in their specialized joint degree five-year program earning a bachelor in Business Administration and an MBA in Non-Profit Management.

Eric is married to Shauna Levine and they have two daughters.

day Somali pirates, and four Americans were taken hostage. The USS Sterett was one of four warships which responded to attempt to free the hostages from their captors. Hostage negotiations took place aboard the Sterett.



The US Navy Public Relations Department has a program called Operation Tiger Cruise to increase community awareness of the Navy and what it does. Friends and relatives of sailors are called "Tigers," and Tiger Cruises are scheduled to permit those friends and relatives to ride home aboard a ship as that ship ends its deployment. The primary purpose of a Tiger Cruise is for service members to acquaint their family members with their ship and their shipboard duties while underway for two or more consecutive days.

When my friend invited me to participate in his ship's Tiger Cruise I immediately jumped at the chance without even knowing the dates (as I quickly learned, schedules in the Navy are very fluid)! When I learned that the cruise was going to be over Pesach, I asked if there were any Jewish sailors aboard and if they would like to participate in a Seder. I was surprised and excited to learn that there were two Jewish sailors aboard (out of approximately 270) and they were interested. So the planning began, but it wasn't as difficult as one might think!

Luckily my synagogue is in San Diego, and one of my congregants is a US Navy Chaplain, a Rabbi. He assisted me by explaining what I was likely to come across on board in the way of ship policies and by helping me order Seder kits from the Navy Supply Department. The US Navy does all it can to ensure its sailors have what they need for their spiritual beliefs. They provided us with Seder kits which included everything a person needs to conduct two Seders including kosher for Passover "meals ready to eat" (MRE's). Now, there wasn't matzah ball soup, but there were sardines for the gefilte fish and Israeli Bazooka gum for finding the afikoman!

When coming aboard the ship, I was expecting to lead a Seder for three people (my friend and the two Jewish sailors). After announcing the Seder over the main speaker system we had a dozen participants, including other "Tigers" and a Senior Chief Petty Officer whom no one knew was Jewish! We didn't eat the MRE's as the Seder was scheduled after dinner, and we didn't clear the galley of *hametz*, but everyone participated in reading parts of the Haggadah and eating Hillel's sandwich.



It wasn't until we recited *L'Shana Ha'Ba'ah B'Yerushalayim* that it occurred to me that the USS Sterett and the entire armed forces of the United States are to our country like Moses is to the Jewish people. The personnel that serve our country are there to protect us Americans from having our freedom taken away and to help those that are still wearing the chains of bondage. Now some may believe the various weapons of the Sterett are comparable to the ten plagues, but I think that it is because of the plagues the Egyptians endured that now simply the prospect of force is sometimes enough to cause people to see the error of their ways.

One of the many things I enjoy about Pesach is that by retelling the story every year we are honoring the leadership of Moses and those that came before us by teaching that our freedom today as Jews required the bravery and suffering of others. Having lived aboard the USS Sterett for a week, learning about the various jobs and tasks of all the sailors, and experiencing the sacrifice they make on our behalf, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and the Fourth of July will no longer just be days of shopping and barbecues for me. To Moses, and his faith in God, thank you for our Jewish freedom. To the sailors aboard the USS Sterett, "Forever Dauntless," thank you for your service! ■

The Importance of Endowments

Eric S. Levine

5

We have all heard the phrase “dues alone will not support a synagogue.” The insufficiency of dues to cover operating expenses has been true for a very long time. Our predecessors over time have added High Holy Day tickets/ reserved seats, appeals, gala dinners, tribute cards, scrip sales, and other fundraisers, but those only took us so far. Now we are looking for even more ways to diversify our revenue streams: event rentals, long-term tenants, cell phone towers, and, and, and....

Synagogues are meant to be places of spirituality, learning, and family. Boards should be focusing on how we can do more for more people, not worrying about what we are going to do when a tenant leaves early and the synagogue loses that rental revenue.

Plus there is another issue synagogues and the entire Jewish Community are facing: the cost of being Jewish is getting so high people are no longer affiliating and becoming members of synagogues. This has resulted in dues going up as the number of paying members goes

down. With smaller memberships and higher dues there are fewer families that are participating in fundraisers. But studies like the one Sasha Littman from Measuring Success conducted¹ show that the cost of membership is not the deterrent to membership; it is the perceived lack of value for the dollars. So I go back to what boards (and staffs, for that matter) should be focusing on: providing more of what our congregants, and just as important our prospective members, want, so as to improve the sense of value for the cost.

So what is the solution? How do we free up our boards and staff to focus on our true mission? For me that is simple -- take money out of the equation. To do this we need to follow the examples set by hospitals and universities for the past hundred years, and create endowments.

Even with a troubled economy, an enormous transfer of wealth is occurring right in front of us. In 1999 Paul Schervish and John Havens estimated² that there would be a \$41 trillion transfer of wealth, with a minimum of \$1.7



trillion in charitable bequests, in the next 20 years. While Jewish communities across North America, including synagogues, should be proud of our annual giving successes, we are far behind the secular world when it comes to planned giving.

“For those who think the generational transfer will automatically flood their organization with resources, it’s time to think again. Without putting in the hard work of generating these planned gifts, ninety per cent of donor mortality will simply result in lost current giving.”³ While embarking on this new adventure does take time and hard work, we are all already doing the most time

“For those who think the generational transfer will automatically flood their organization with resources, it’s time to think again.”

consuming but most vital part, having conversations and developing relationships with our congregants. The easiest solicitations are always made to the donors you have a great relationship with. When it comes time to ask them about leaving their legacy by including your synagogue in their estate plan, the response is usually an easy and very meaningful yes!

One of the most gratifying examples of this is from one of my congregants. This person is that man or woman we all have in our synagogues—the one who is not wealthy and may be on dues assistance, but who always gives of his or her time and is always around. My congregant always participates in our fundraisers at a modest level, but when he was asked to consider including the synagogue in his estate plan he felt like the wealthiest person in the world. As he frequently says now to people when encouraging them to participate, “I don’t have the spare income to give much now, but to be able to give back to my synagogue by adding them as a beneficiary to my retirement account is the least I can do.”

The San Diego Jewish Community Foundation implemented the Endowment Leadership Institute (ELI)

in 2004. The purpose of this program was to educate the Jewish organizations of San Diego about the importance of achieving long term financial stability and how easy it was to begin that process. Since then almost 800 families in the San Diego Jewish Community have made bequests and other planned gifts benefiting at least one Jewish organization and totaling approximately \$200 million in future gifts. More specifically, my congregation, since joining ELI in 2007, has received confirmation of 52 bequests naming our congregation as a beneficiary. We estimate that these future gifts total at least \$7 million. While we hope and pray that everyone has a long life, we were fortunate to have a couple of families included in the 52 bequests who did not want the synagogue to wait and gave outright contributions to our existing \$4 million endowment, in addition to their future gifts. Without establishing the relationships and actually asking, we would never have been in the situation we are in at this moment.

Our goal is to build an endowment large enough to annually cover a sizable portion of our budget, so that we can focus on providing maximum service and value to our members without worrying about whether this year’s fundraiser will bring in enough donations. We will continuously work on building up our endowment so ultimately we can significantly reduce our membership dues and attract more people to affiliate with the Jewish Community. All it takes is asking a question: “Have you considered leaving your legacy?” ■

NOTES:

- 1 Sacha Litman, *Sustaining Vibrant Congregations* (New York: Synergy, 2010), p. 7
- 2 Paul Schervish and John Havens, *Millionaires and the Millenium: New Estimates of the Forthcoming Wealth Transfer and the Prospects for a Golden Age of Philanthropy* (Boston, MA: Social Welfare Research Institute of Boston College, 1999). Schervish and Havens also published a more recent report entitled “Why the \$41 Trillion Wealth Transfer is Still Valid: A Review of Challenges and Questions” (Indianapolis: The Journal of Gift Planning Vol. 7, no. 1, 1st Quarter 2003) pp. 11-15, 47-50.
- 3 Paula Wasley, “Fund Raiser Urged to Pursue Childless Donor for Bequests” *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, online article, April 9, 2009.

When They Come, What Will They Find?

Abridged from the Ettinger Lecture delivered at the Annual Conference of the North American Association of Synagogue Executives, March 8, 2010

Robert Hill, FSA

I want to use this occasion to talk with you today about certain trends in our organized synagogue world, and where we stand today.

We have been, and still are, in a period of rapid change. Some of it has been going on for some time, and some of it is relatively new. Major sociological and religious trends that we have all noted before continue to evolve, and new phenomena that may *become* trends appear. But overall, the social forces and restlessness we have been grappling with for decades are revealed in

- dissatisfaction for many reasons with the large and rigid synagogues of the post-war generation;
- a sense of exclusion felt by those living in non-traditional family units, or who are feminist, or intermarried, or gay, or even single;
- growing interest in spirituality as opposed to traditional religious forms;
- and openness to wisdom-experiences from non-western traditions.¹

Synagogues have been widely seen as resistant to these issues, and as a result Jews in large numbers have become disaffected. It has taken a while in the intervening years for shul insiders to begin to “hear” these concerns and respond to them, and though there has been progress, there are still very significant numbers of disaffected or uninterested Jews who are not drawn to find a place for themselves in the organized Jewish world. Studies consistently show that while approximately 80% of Jews will be affiliated with a synagogue at some point in their lives, less than 50% of Jews are members at any one time. And of those who are members at any one time, recent surveys point to somewhere between 16% and 27% who actually attend.²

Against that backdrop, it is interesting to look at one of the new phenomena which the established synagogue community is trying to understand, because in some ways it is like previous renewal efforts, in some ways it is different. But in any case we are right in the middle of it, so this is a perfect opportunity to see how good we are at forecasting the future, if not shaping it. It is the huge success of the so-called independent minyanim.

Robert Hill, FSA delivered the eleventh annual Irma Lee Ettinger Lecture at the fifty-ninth annual conference of NAASE in Houston in March, 2010.

After a first career in higher education, Bob served as an executive director of synagogues for thirty years until retiring in 2011. He is a Past President of NAASE. He served the association in many other capacities as well, including ten years as the chairman of its Week of Study Program at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Bob represented NAASE on the Leadership Council of Conservative Judaism and on the Board of the United Synagogue. Drawing on his experience in education, synagogue management, community-building, construction issues, and fundraising, he has presented workshops at regional and national conventions of the United Synagogue and at NAASE conferences, and has been a consultant for congregations. He received certification from NAASE as a Fellow in Synagogue Administration in 1993.



Robert E. Hill

Nine years ago in New York a small group of young adults decided to try to create the prayer community they yearned for, but felt they could not find anywhere. There were a few minyanim already in existence on the Upper West Side, but they were Friday night minyanim. This new group of friends wanted to see if there was interest in a Shabbat morning minyan. They picked a date, chose who had the largest apartment, borrowed a privately-owned Torah, and sent out an email to their circle of acquaintances. On that first Shabbat sixty people showed up, and they knew they were onto something.

Over the following months and years the number of people on that email list grew from 100 to 2,800. The minyan held Shabbat services every other week, then three weeks each month, then every week. They grew to hundreds of attendees on any given Shabbat, with major numbers on the holidays.

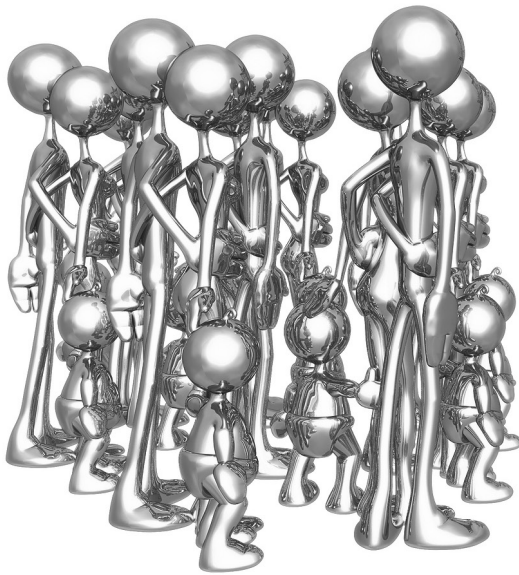
In the early months they homed in on what they felt were the key characteristics of the minyan that was emerging, and those have been the defining characteristics since then. These were: a full, traditional liturgy and Torah reading; full gender egalitarianism; a short (five-minute) d’var Torah; an entirely lay-led service, with all roles universally available

but with high standards of excellence; a commitment to engaging participants through music, always welcoming new tunes to broaden everyone's repertoire; openness to everyone – that is, anyone could be on the mailing list and a participant, without "membership"; and overall a commitment to joyful, unapologetic prayer. After five months they named their minyan Kehilat Hadar.³

Over the next few years the "independent minyan" phenomenon spread to many cities in the United States and Israel. Its adherents see themselves as "grassroots religious communities," offering an authentic traditional religious

of "membership" or record-keeping, the number may be far higher. The minyanim are not identical in their self-definition by any means, but overall they are highly correlated. Most are not rabbi-led; some are rabbi-led, but none are rabbi-driven.

In 2007 Synagogue 3000 and Mechon Hadar conducted a study called the National Spiritual Communities Study, out of which came a report entitled "Emergent Jewish Communities and Their Participants." The lead investigator was well-known sociologist Steven M. Cohen. The study found over eighty of these minyanim active at the time of



experience, operating without the burden of buildings or staff, flexible, responsive, educated, welcoming, anxious to teach anyone who wanted to learn. They sprang up first in other major cities, like Washington, Boston, and Los Angeles, but can now be found in San Francisco, Denver, Atlanta, Providence, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Kansas City, Seattle, and many other places. Researchers estimate that more than 20,000 people participate in independent minyanim each year, and because of the mobility of the interested demographic group and the absence of any formal system

the study – and there are certainly more now, three years later. You can download the report from the Synagogue 3000 website, and I encourage you to do so – it's very interesting reading.⁴

From our point of view we have to note several things. First of all, the minyan phenomenon proves the success of all the intensification efforts of the last thirty or forty years. The premise was that creating opportunities for our youth to have richer, more intense Jewish experiences

would directly increase the likelihood that they would retain strong, proud Jewish identities to counterbalance their American or secular selves. The expansion of the Jewish camping movement, the significant increase in the day school system, the transformation of the Hillel system, and the dramatic increase in opportunities to experience Israel, all of which have been priorities of the organized Jewish world, have all paid significant dividends. The study shows that the participants in the emergent minyanim are overwhelmingly veterans of day schools, camps, Hillels, and Israel experiences. An amazing eighty-five percent of them consider themselves comfortable or fluent in Hebrew. They are knowledgeable and committed Jewishly. In other words, they are exactly the demographic we want in our synagogues as energetic and invigorating influences, the demographic we set out to create. So far, however, we aren't seeing them -- they aren't finding what they want in our synagogues. Yet.

We all are familiar with certain social trends of recent years, like the women's movement and changes in the work world, trends that have pushed back marriage and child-bearing very significantly. As we know, forty is the new thirty, thirty is the new twenty. One of the resultant effects is the development of a new "stage of life," what has been called the "odyssey years," covering the years between 22 and 35 or 40.⁵ It used to be that three-fourths of Americans under age 30 had children, but things are far different now. And since there are no institutions in Jewish life that fill the gap between college (Hillel) and marriage/children (synagogue), the minyanim are a response to that 15-year void.

Interestingly, from a research point of view we are watching the minyan phenomenon in real time. This minyan explosion is less than ten years old. So an important question is, what will the minyan-goers do when they age out of the "odyssey" years, when they eventually marry and have children? They are not drawn to our shuls now, but will they be drawn to them later? Or will they invent another alternative, some sort of post-minyan minyan? Will they find in our synagogues the intensity and learning and community and critical mass of like-minded people that are central to the minyan experience? If not, will they put in the time to create them, and thus pull the synagogues in a new direction? Or will they say that that kind of change is not possible in our synagogues, and put their energy into developing new communities, communities on their

own terms -- perhaps not using the label "synagogues," just as they now steer away from calling the independent minyanim "synagogues"?

We can't know yet. But we can do something to steer the outcome. And we should not panic -- there is in fact a convergence of interest. The initiatives that will reinvigorate our synagogues for existing members should also make them attractive to those now in the "odyssey years" when they eventually fit the marriage-children profile that is the typical profile of synagogue members. There are certainly synagogues out there which are exciting, creative communities, not phoning it in, not running on autopilot. But there are many more which are not. It is not as though the general formula of the family-centered synagogue is so incredibly successful that it should not be tampered with. Virtually all of us feel the need for renewal within the present profile. Renewal is a sign of health -- if you are not looking to renew, you probably are closer to needing life-support than you think. The initiatives which will re-energize our existing communities will also make them appealing to the children of our vision -- our day-school-attending, summer-camp-loving, Israel-visiting, Hebrew-speaking children.

Changing the world is a tall order for anyone. But there's a lot we in the synagogue world can do. Here are five critical action steps we can take to begin changing our synagogues in the healthiest way for life and continuity.

1. The first sounds obvious, but it apparently is not. We need to help our communities to have clear vision statements -- statements of the kind of community they are striving to be, of what the values are which drive them, and of what the methods are through which they are realizing their vision. You would be surprised at the number of congregations which do not have statements of vision and values that get below pure generality or which lend themselves to use as real reference points or tests or benchmarks. And yet, if you don't know where you want to go, how will you know when you get there?
2. Second, remember that a congregation is called to be a *kehillah kadoshah*. If they want it, people can find *kehillah* in lots of places -- country clubs, book groups, athletic leagues, PTAs. But if their deeper hunger is for a *kehillah kadoshah*, we need to be ready to fill that need -- and not assume that *kadoshah* is defined only by *tefilah*. We should always be looking for what makes our *kehillah* different, set apart,

distinct – *kadoshah* – and be unafraid and unashamed to talk that language.

3. Third. There aren't many more well-known phrases in literature than the epigraph to E.M. Forster's novel of pre-World-War-I, *Howard's End*. It is two words -- "Only connect." These two words voice both the urgent imperative that all people feel to bond, to link, to join with others -- and yet at the same time that simple epigraph implies the difficulty of doing so, hobbled as we are by all kinds of psychological and societal constraints. Only connect -- it is the great challenge of our time, the time of Bowling Alone and the seduction of computer-mediated

clergy leading services -- we should have congregations full of capable prayer leaders leading services routinely. For those seeking spiritual direction, we must find mentors. We have to find ways to make our supplementary schools powerful experiences. The Wertheimer Report of 2008⁶ confirmed yet again that Conservative supplementary schools are shrinking in size, though they have the highest standards for hours of instruction. We need to retain our students by compelling teaching, and not by coercion or guilt. And in all the rest of the community's activity in the synagogue, we need always to strive to be meaningful. Nothing is worse than form without content, programs continuing on autopilot though their ability to attract creative participation is long past. Our members will get involved only if what we offer them is real and meaningful, and they are empowered to have an effect.

Purpose, Connection, and Empowerment are the keys. I think a lot these days about what community organizers call The Iron Rule: "Never do for people what they can do for themselves."⁷ Applying that, ironically, we could say that as professionals in the Jewish world we ought to be trying to put ourselves out of a job. But I am confident that if we filled our congregations with qualified daveners, qualified teachers, thriving havurot, and committed congregants working not just on social action but on social justice -- we would not eliminate our jobs but would be busier than ever.

Fifth. The final challenge I want to put before us is -- solving the Money question. We, you and I, deal with this question all the time. And you know that I'm not talking about making cost-effective decisions or stretching a dollar as far as it will go -- we do that all the time. I'm talking about three things. One is the complaint we hear frequently from the marginally connected, that their dues are an exorbitant amount for three days' attendance a year. We are wearily familiar with that so-called "value" or "consumerist" argument, and we know the daily challenge we engage in to re-frame that conversation, to change its terms from the language of shopping to the language of assets, trying to convince the marginal member to see his/her check as an investment in a more secure Jewish future from which he/she benefits even without personally attending.

A second part of the Money question is the "extra" cost of being Jewish, the cost of all the superb opportunities that we know contribute to a strong Jewish identity, an ownership of our tradition, and the emergence of real

"Renewal is a sign of health -- if you are not looking to renew, you probably are closer to needing life-support than you think... Changing the world is a tall order for anyone. But there's a lot we in the synagogue world can do... Purpose, Connection, and Empowerment are the keys."

community, the fake community of the Internet. But what could be a clearer goal for our synagogues than to help Jews connect? We aren't all alike, we Jews. And yet our tradition's teachings are very clear. We were all at Sinai, the believers, the doubters, the leaders, the kvetches, the teachers, the students, the lamedvavniks, the morally challenged. That's where we have to start. Not everybody is a pray-er. I suggest that one of the most important goals we can set for our synagogues is to find ways for everyone to come home. Everyone should be able to find at least one door that draws him or her in.

4. Fourth. Once inside, then what? Our task, at once simple and huge, is empowerment. We need to set out to equip every person with the tools appropriate for wherever she is on her Jewish journey, or for whatever activity is appropriate for the door of his entry. We need to look past the knowledge (perhaps not deep) to the intelligence of our members. We need to teach them what their inheritance is, the magnificent inheritance of Torah and Talmud and community and social justice, and then empower them to use it creatively. Ideally we should not have performing-

leadership qualities in our young people, but yet in many cases require truly sacrificial financial commitment on the part of our members. I'm talking about day schools, summer camps, and Israel experiences particularly.

The final part of the Money question is the overall revenue/expense framework of our synagogues. So many of them, particularly the small ones, operate totally on a hand-to-mouth basis, dues-fees-and-fundraisers, without the liberating and cushioning effect of an endowment, even a small one. One of the great gifts our national movements, the United Synagogue and the URJ, could give our smaller synagogues is real, practical, cost-free, help in starting and building endowments. Endowments are critical to our future.

Looking back at our framing question – what will our best and brightest, our golden children, those in their “odyssey years,” do when they eventually reach the stage of marriage and parenthood? Will they come to our synagogues, or will they create new alternatives that more closely resemble the independent minyanim, the lean, spare, high-quality, low-cost, free-flowing groups they favor now? When they try us out, will they find rigid old-style synagogues, or will they find changing, adaptive, bridging communities that they can recognize and find attractive? Our challenge is to make sure that it is the latter, not only for them but for ourselves. Focus, clarity of identity and values, radical openness, and radical empowerment, are the keys. They are incredibly energizing. And of course we can do this.

These are challenging times for synagogues, for all the reasons we've already looked at earlier, and probably others as well. But we should look at them as opportunities for great creativity. Fifty years ago Simon Rawidowicz, a great historian and founding chairman of the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University, wrote a brilliant essay entitled “Israel – the Ever-Dying People.”⁸ Ever-dying — and yet here we are. How can that be? Rawidowicz and others say that it is because of our skill at “creative survival,” our being instinctively willing and able, in the end, to accept constant re-invention, not as the price of continuity but as its means.

Look just at what has happened in the last 15 years: the legitimization of women rabbis and cantors and then of gay and lesbian rabbis and cantors, the growing exploration of

instrumental music on Shabbat, and the attention being paid to *keruv*, to name just three changes. We cannot predict what our Jewish communities will look like in 2060. But we can be confident that they will be here, and they will have continued to engage in creative renewal, keeping the precious core and adapting the outer frame. In terms of the illustrative situation we looked at earlier, namely the future role of all our “best and brightest” now in the independent minyans, they are one of our present challenges. Our goal is to make sure they come back to the synagogues that nurtured them, finding there re-invigorated, adaptive, radically inclusive, radically empowering, learning-loving, *brit*-honoring synagogues. I know that some, perhaps many, of your shuls are on their way to that kind of redefinition, and we all hope that the rest of our congregations will join in in their own way to create our new future. And that future will be all the more exciting for us as executive directors because of the role we will surely play in its genesis. Seize the day. Help create the vision, and therefore the future.

Thank you once again. I am deeply appreciative of this great honor. You are wonderful colleagues, and I learn from you every day. ■

NOTES:

1 Sidney Schwartz, “Finding a Spiritual Home” (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2000), pp. 11-29.

2 Zachary I. Heller, editor, “Re-envisioning The Synagogue” (Hollis, NH: Hollis Publishing Company, 2005), a joint publication of NCJPS and STAR; prologue, p. xi.

3 Elie Kaunfer, “Empowered Judaism” (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing Company, 2010), pp 15-20. Kaunfer’s account of the evolution and effect of Kehilat Hadar is very helpful for understanding the minyan phenomenon.

4 Steven M. Cohen., J. Shawn Landres, Elie Kaunfer, and Michelle Shain. “Emergent Jewish Communities and their participants: Preliminary Findings from the 2007 National Spiritual Communities Study.” (New York and Los Angeles: S3K Synagogue Studies and Mechon Hadar, 2007).

5 The name seems to have been first applied by columnist David Brooks, in his op-ed column called “The Odyssey Years” in The New York Times on October 9, 2007. Brooks’s column comments on the “odyssey years” extending through one’s 20s. As we know now, in the Jewish world at least, the odyssey years often extend well into one’s 30s.

6 Jack Wertheimer, “A Census of Jewish Supplementary Schools in the United States,” New York: The AviChai Foundation, 2008.

7 Michael Jacoby Brown, “Building Powerful Community Organizations.” (Arlington, Massachusetts, Long Haul Press, 2006), p. 217.

8 Benjamin Ravid, ed., “Israel: The Ever-Dying People and Other Essays” by Simon Rawidowicz. (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh-Dickinson University Press, 1986).

"If Not Me, Then Whom" - A Light Unto the Nations

by Steven Hecht



Steven Hecht

Steve Hecht has been the Executive Director of Beth El Congregation in Pittsburgh, PA for the past 13 years. Previously he had an extensive retail career and also was the past Director of Operations for the Jewish Community Center. He is a Past President of the Squirrel Hill Business and Professional Association, Past Executive Vice President of Beth Shalom Congregation, current chair of membership for NAASE, a past instructor for NAASE University, and currently the marketing chair for the Jewish Assistance Fund which gifts monies to Jews in need. Steve is married to Lynn for the past 34 years and has a married son, Adam, daughter-in-law, Jessie and daughter, Dana.

Admittedly, I wish I could tell you that I set out one day with the forethought of moving mountains or shifting paradigms, or even bringing the world closer together. But, I didn't. Sure, I had previously thought about why there continues to be hatred and misunderstanding between people who are different from each other and what it may take to bring them closer together, but never came up with anything tangible. And, at the end of the day, I'm not sure what really did occur, but just for a short while in a small / large eastern city, barriers were broken, walls came down and the world became a better place in which to live.

Purely by coincidence, or some might say it was "*besheret*," I reached out to my wife's former supervisor, whom I always enjoyed speaking with and who had left the organization recently. I was merely calling because I thought it would be nice for his wife, Leslie, and my wife, Lynn, and Mark and me to go out to dinner, now that he wasn't her manager. In doing so, I asked Mark what his responsibilities as Chief Financial Officer for the Central Blood Bank of Pittsburgh, entailed. Mark explained that as part of his position, he purchased tens of thousands of blood products yearly, mostly from the mid-west, where there was overage, to meet the demands from our 40 medical centers. Pittsburgh does not produce enough blood supply to meet our yearly demand. Because we have University Medical Centers, (teaching hospitals), people come from all over the world to be treated at our medical centers.

I'm not sure even to this day what possessed me to immediately react by saying, "Do you think the Blood Bank would be interested in a drive that brought the Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Hindu communities together to help meet the needs of our city?" Mark's response was, "How soon can you put it together?"

The next steps were actually executing something I wasn't even sure I had just offered to do. I didn't have any interfaith connections. I couldn't even really speak for the Jewish Community. I decided to bounce the idea off my local group, the Pittsburgh Association of Synagogue and Temple Executives (PASTE). As luck would have it, they offered the name of Pastor Don G., Executive Director of Southwest Christian Associates (represents 1 million Christians in 10 counties), Father Ron L., Director of Publicity/Marketing for the Catholic Diocese, Karen H., President of the Islamic Interfaith Network (represents 8 Mosques) and also a connection to the Hindu Community, Dr. S., in which there are 3 Temples. I did not know any of these individuals personally, nor did I know Rabbi Ron S., President of the Greater Pittsburgh Rabbinical Association.

The first step was to meet with the leadership of the Blood Bank to try and formulate a plan for achieving what I felt was truly achievable. Little did I know about the realities of this monumental endeavor. They couldn't have been more supportive, but they were very clear. They would coordinate the actual extractions the day of the event, add support in the planning stages by supplying appropriate personnel, and offering their marketing department, but they did not have the ability to bring together people of different faiths or the capability of funding the project as it wasn't a budgeted program for 2010. They said even it were budgeted, it would have exceeded their typical events. It may have seemed daunting at the time, but the funny thing is, when you're truly motivated, your attitude becomes whatever needs to be done, just needs to get done.

My first meeting was with the CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, where I was hoping that he would say, sure we will partner, possibly fund and then run with the project. They, I believed, had the ability to bring together

the entire Jewish Community and already had ties to the Inter-faith Community. For me, it would have been one stop shopping. The response was, "Sounds intriguing, keep me in the loop. But, this isn't something we can fund at this time. I will have Jeff C. (Director of Community Affairs) call you to discuss."

The next outreach was to someone in the Jewish community who was personally connected to a very large Foundation, had an expertise in fundraising and funding programs, and I had hoped would say that this is exactly their mission, and would fund it at a \$50,000 level and co-partner with the Blood Bank. I was clearly delusional. Her response was, "You'll never raise the amount of money it will take to pull this event off in the time you wish. Our foundation does not fund these kinds of projects. Why don't you wait a year and plan something on a smaller scale."

You see, what I laid out for the Blood Bank when I met with them was, an Interfaith Blood Drive at Heinz Field in 9 months. What's the big deal? I thought Heinz Field and the Steeler organization would "comp" us the space, involve some of their players for good will, throw in maintenance for the day and give tours, free parking, food concessions, kids activities.....yeah right!

It would take a space a lot larger than I was allotted to describe what took place over the next 9 months. What I wish to get across is, it may not be easy being a "Light Unto Other Nations," but it surely is rewarding.

I reached out to Pastor Don G., Karen H. Dr. S and Rabbi Ron S. They all encompassed the idea as if it were their own. I called a meeting at the Central Blood Bank (CBB) in November and presented a power point presentation, laying out the mission—bringing people of diverse faiths together for the purpose of saving lives through blood donation, thus building a larger base of donors for future donation.

From that point, there were meetings every other Friday for months to work out details such as; finding an agreed upon date that we could hold an event that either the 4 faiths didn't have a holiday or the city wasn't competing with another event simultaneously, finding a compatible day of the week that didn't involve a faith's Sabbath and if it was someone's Sabbath what time of day would be permissible, what kind of event, entertainment, spokesperson, children's

activities, food and marketing and an entire litany of subjects that seemed to be lost in a multitude of details.

We developed a budget that showed an event at Heinz Field on Sunday, June 13 (not a great date, competing with the city-wide 3 Rivers Arts Festival and a Gay/Lesbian Parade), beginning at 2:00 pm (this was the compromise so those who wanted to attend church would have an opportunity to do so), would cost approximately \$45,000 plus marketing dollars. That was the budget, but we had no funding. Sounds like the way a shul operates. I swear, I must have been possessed. I said, "I'll get the money."

It was now, March, no money, we were being pressured to book Heinz Field by their leasing representative, like they had 6 others lined up to use it that date, no sponsors and no spokesperson. We had to commit in weeks and we knew, if we had no cash there would be no inter-faith blood drive at Heinz Field.

I was on a mission. I researched what foundations would be open to funding something never attempted here before and may only have funded Jewish causes previously versus those who may fund an interfaith project. I literally contacted 25 potential funders of which approximately 15 ultimately committed. Unfortunately, the Blood Bank was not permitted to volunteer the names of potential funders or their clients. So, I contacted all the major local hospitals and told them they needed to be one of the names associated with this project as a supporter, they concurred. I am extremely proud to say that ultimately, most of the Jewish community was incredibly supportive. There were 4 individual Jewish Foundations, plus The Greater Pittsburgh Rabbinical Assoc., the Jewish Federation, Jewish Healthcare Foundation, and others such as the Lutheran Association, Catholic Diocese and numerous hospitals plus Highmark and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC).

There was one hurdle I was not able to overcome- others, yes, but this one, no. I outreached to the Rabbi who oversaw the Yeshiva and local Chabad, as well as personally speaking with 2 of the Orthodox shuls. The answer was the same, admirable project, not for us. When I pushed, the answer I heard was we are fearful of what it could lead to. I'm not real sure of what people getting together to save lives of different faiths could lead to, but it reminded me of the joke about an observant male and female who couldn't do something together because it might lead to dancing.

Anyway, to say at the very least, I was disappointed, not only because of a missed opportunity for them to connect with the rest of the Jewish community and others, but I am a product of the Orthodox community from my childhood.

At the end of the day, I did raise \$50,000 plus \$15,000 "in-kind publicity" for the event and quite frankly was relentless when it came down to chasing foundations for funding, but I never took my eye off of the mission, creating a larger base of blood donors from a community that was faith-based. I knew we all had our faith in common. I also knew that the premise was sound, all faiths utilize each other's blood and each pint donated has the ability to save 3 individual lives. It is hard to argue with. We had to be cognizant of each other's observances, even turf and frailties. What time is the event, is the day respectful of all the faiths holidays and religious customs, what are the laws of the Sabbath, food offerings, marketing in the specific faith-based regions, is the marketing offensive or the symbols permissible, quotes of the faiths appropriate and an entire litany of issues that all seemed to be small hurdles. Is there someone in the community that could represent all the faiths involved equally? Thankfully, Karen H. of the Islamic community made an outreach to Franco Harris of the Steelers who agreed to make an appearance. We even had blood drop t-shirts for the event.

Our core group was committed to making this work. The Blood Bank gave us executive leadership, the CFO, COO, Director of Marketing, Director of Regional Drives, the individual communities drive coordinators, hired a marketing company and separate event planner. We met bi-weekly to weekly and included Don G., Karen H., Rabbi Ron S., President of the Greater Pittsburgh Rabbinical Association, Jeff C., Director of Community Relations/Affairs for the Jewish Federation, and Deacon Alex representing the office of Bishop Zubick of the Catholic Diocese. I mention these people again because of the tireless commitment they made. People would come and go to our meetings depending on the agenda and the kind of support the blood bank felt was needed at the time. And all the time throughout these months, we shared religious stories about our observances, cultures and how we practiced our individual faiths. We were the same, yet very different - but ultimately the same.

We did have the event on June 13th 2010 at Heinz Field. Quite frankly, what might have been disappointing in

the amount of overall pints collected that day was not disappointing at all. We met and exceeded everyone's expectations by fulfilling the mission. Jews, Christians, Muslims and Hindus were side by side on cots hooked up to blood extrapolation equipment all for the purpose of saving lives. Since then, we have had 6 more drives at local malls and hotels all under the "Sharing Faith, Sharing Life" heading. That was the name of our drive. The CBB developed the name and logo and marketing pieces. On March 28, 2011, the CEO, COO, Director of Marketing, Director of Regional Drives and I went to the Ritz Carlton in Arlington, VA to accept the national honor of "Outstanding Humanitarian Service Award" which was presented to the Pittsburgh Blood Bank, Institute for Transfusion Medicine for "Sharing Faith, Sharing Life." This award, among others, was presented that evening by the American Blood Centers Association recognizing the outstanding work and achievements throughout the nation among all blood banks.

This is not an article about me or what we were able to accomplish, it's about you. My hope in writing this is that it inspires within you your tikkun olam. We are always so busy, caught up in our own jobs, families and obligations that we sometimes forget that God put us here for others, not for ourselves. Do something for yourself!

My shul's installation of new officer's dinner was scheduled for the evening of the event, June 13th. Normally, under no circumstances would the Executive Director of the shul miss this event. When I mentioned to the in-coming president that I wouldn't be able to attend because of the interfaith blood drive that day, he said, "I understand, it's nothing personal, you are off doing G-d's work." We quote Rabbi Hillel repeatedly, asking "if not now then when and if not me, then whom." But, who holds the answer to this question? If when isn't now, then when, and who will repair the world if not you? ■



SHARING FAITH. LIFE.

15

Many Religions - One Common Goal - Donate Blood.

Supported by: Catholic Charities; Central Blood Bank; Charles M. Morris Charitable Trust; Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC; Children's Museum of Pittsburgh; Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania; Donald and Sylvia Robinson Foundation; The Fine Foundation; Greater Pittsburgh Rabbinical Association; Highmark; Hot Matzohs; Jefferson Regional Medical Center; Jewish Healthcare Foundation; Lamar Advertising Company; SFH Islamic Interfaith Network; Thrivent Financial for Lutherans; Tribune-Review; United Jewish Federation; UPMC; West Penn Allegheny Health System Trust-Franklin Press

Heinz Field

Coca-Cola Great Hall

Sunday, June 13, 2010

2 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Free Parking-Gold Lot 1A

BLOOD DRIVE

East Club Lounge

HEINZ FIELD TOUR

Everyone who presents to donate blood will receive a free behind-the-scenes tour of Heinz Field.

CHICK-FIL-A COUPONS

The first 250 people who present to donate blood will also receive a coupon for a FREE chicken sandwich from Chick-fil-A.

You can schedule an appointment to donate at this drive by calling 412-209-7010. Or visit www.centralbloodbank.org to schedule through My Personal Donation History. You can search for the drive by date, group name (Sharing Faith Sharing Life), or sponsor code (G051).

Please bring ID with you on the day of the blood drive. Proper ID is required to donate blood. A Central Blood Bank or military ID, driver's license, or passport are all approved forms of ID. Birth certificate along with a picture ID that includes the donor's full name will also be accepted.

Join this historic, festive, and family-friendly celebration event at Heinz Field on June 13, 2010, sponsored by the Christian, Hindu, Islamic, and Jewish religious communities of Greater Pittsburgh.

EVENT ACTIVITIES

HOURLY SPEAKING PROGRAMS

Featuring: **David Johnson, Sally Wiggins, and Lynn Cullen**

Along with other media personalities, sports personalities, religious leaders, blood donors, and blood recipients

GREATER PITTSBURGH COMMUNITY FOOD BANK

Food Drive - Please bring canned goods to the event

WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY T-SHIRT

The first 3,000 guests at this event will receive a T-shirt in recognition of World Blood Donor Day, June 14. All will be invited to wear the T-shirt and join us at 4:30 p.m. to attempt to form the world's largest "human blood drop."

LIVE MUSICAL PERFORMANCES

Featuring: The Hot Matzohs

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Healthcare educational booths
Kids activities, including inflatable rides
Heinz Field behind-the-scenes tours
Interfaith scripture study station/food stations

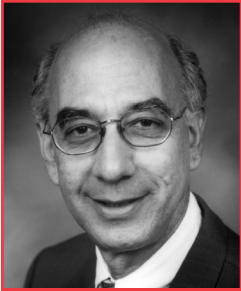


1-866-366-6771
www.centralbloodbank.org

SHARING FAITH.
LIFE.

The Integrative Synagogue

by Malcolm Katz, FSA



Malcolm Katz

Malcolm grew up in Detroit, Michigan and was involved in youth activities at a large conservative congregation; including serving as USY President. He graduated from Wayne State University with a Bachelor of Philosophy Degree. Malcolm worked for the IBM Corporation from 1967 to 1993 where he held number of positions including several senior staff positions.

He was a lay leader and Temple President at Temple Shearith Israel in Ridgefield Connecticut and served as Synagogue Administrator at Cong. Shaarey Zedek, Executive Director at Adath Jeshurun in Minnetonka Minnesota, and was the Executive Director at Valley Beth Shalom (VBS) in Encino California for the past 12 years. He earned his FSA from NAASE in 2001 and served as NAASE Secretary and Treasurer.

Malcolm is married to Sally Weber whom he met at VBS in 1999 and between them they have four adult children and five wonderful grandchildren.

I didn't know Irma Lee Ettinger, but my wife Sally did. In fact, Sally was the Program Director at Adat Ari El where Irma Lee was the Executive Director. She and Irma Lee worked closely together for 10 years. Irma Lee was Sally's mentor. I was told by others who were there at the time that Irma Lee actually preferred programming to finance, which only enhanced the working partnership that she and Sally had together.

As Sally tells it, Irma Lee's door was always open. Her office was a gathering place at Adat AriEl. She made coffee, tea and hot chocolate, and anyone who came to her office was offered something.

Irma Lee was very involved at The Brandeis-Bardin Institute, just outside of Los Angeles, where she worked closely with Dr. Shlomo Bardin the Institute's founder. She was on staff one summer and participated in the annual staff vs. the Brandeis Collegiate Institute (BCI) students' baseball game. Irma Lee was the catcher for the staff team. Picture the scene. The BCIs were down by a run. It's the bottom of the ninth. They have a runner on second. There are two outs. The batter hit a single to left field. The runner from second base tried to score. The left fielder threw the ball to

the catcher. Irma Lee caught the ball and blocked the plate. The runner ran into Irma Lee who held her position as well as the ball. Conclusion: Irma Lee simply never dropped the ball.

Irma Lee was very special and unique. In the last couple of months, I had the opportunity to speak with Rabbi Moshe Rothblum and Irma Lee's dear friend Sandy Fine, two people in LA who knew and loved her. From them I learned that she was incredibly organized and the original planner. She kept lists of everything. She never flew alone- actually she seldom flew at all – and when she flew her friend Sandy flew with her. She had little Jewish background and didn't attend services. She was an avid sports fan and loved the LA Dodgers, UCLA, and the LA Lakers. She never wore a skirt; she wore pants suits and boots. She taught the rabbis how to do fundraising. She had fabulous relationships with the lay people. She created an Event Book for every event. And she was a "foodie."

There was a joint NATA/NASA conference in Los Angeles where the meals were served in different synagogues. The food was great. It was the talk of the conference. The following year the conference was in the East and the food was also served at different congregations and one shul set out to outdo the caterers in Los Angeles. When the people entered the social hall they saw an elaborate buffet in front of the stage. It was spectacular. Irma Lee and her friend Sandy approached the buffet. Sandy tells the story that Irma Lee pointed to something and asked Sandy what it was. Sandy said she didn't know. Irma Lee then asked Sandy to smell it. Sandy did and still didn't know what it was. Irma Lee decided she was not eating it. It turned out that the food was really bad and many people didn't eat. There was no question that the best food at conferences was served in LA.

In order to understand the topic "The Integrative Synagogue" I must tell you my personal story of the last 21 months. It is the prologue to my topic. I pray that you will never need to use this information personally but as we found out, it could happen to any one of us. There are lessons to be learned from our experience.

For me, it began with back pain that was uncomfortable and continuous but not really terrible. It was unlike other pains that I knew – muscle pains following long bike rides – because it simply didn't go away. After some time, I consulted my internist. He took x-rays that showed I had structural problem in my spine. He proscribed ibuprofen and physical therapy to strengthen my back. I followed his instructions.

My next step was an MRI on my back. I asked for the MRI. I wasn't getting better and I wanted more information.

Trust your instincts. Be your own advocate. He called with the results that there was a "cloud" in one of the vertebra.

During the next couple of weeks we focused on examining the "cloud." I had a CAT scan, had an initial visit with an oncologist and a biopsy. Fortunately we knew an oncologist who was a temple member, and who was also on our Healing Center Advisory Committee. When looking for a doctor or specialist or healthcare professional, **NETWORK with everyone you know.**

We were told on September 16, 2009 that I had multiple myeloma – cancer in the bone marrow in my spine where the cells in my bone marrow were multiplying out of control. So I now had cancer and a bad back and no plan for getting any relief. The CAT scan showed a compression fracture in one of the vertebrae in my back as well. During the meeting with the oncologist when we received the diagnosis, he called a myeloma specialist at Cedar Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles to review the drugs (chemo) I was to take and asked the specialist to meet with us.

Get a second opinion. The specialist met with us every three or four months, reviewed my case and my situation.

Never go to a significant appointment alone. From the start Sally and I were a team and we went to everything together. Going through this with a partner – a spouse, or a friend, or another family member – is critical and essential.

The next several months were difficult. My back pain got worse. The cancer medicine caused me serious fatigue. I became impatient and was determined to find something or someone that could help. I networked and got referrals for a spine surgeon at UCLA, an acupuncturist, and a chiropractor.

I started seeing an acupuncturist weekly, and a chiropractor. **Be persistent and don't give up.** About a year ago my back pain got significantly better. Although multiple myeloma never goes away, the word remission was actually used.

The Integrative Synagogue works to connect the separate specialties of the Specialist Synagogue – that the different committees and departments find ways to work with each other and our community.

We scheduled a consultation with the Medical Director of the Simm/Mann Center for Integrated Oncology at UCLA, which was recommended by a congregant. The center looks at the patient as a whole integrated person and considers diet, supplements, stress management, exercise, positive imaging, spirituality and even alternative therapies. We came away with a plan that we are now following to help my body work to heal itself even as the cancer medicine works to fight the disease.

The lesson I learned from all of the months of doctors and specialists is that I now know that I am responsible for the Integrative Treatment of Malcolm.

How can I relate my story to the work we do at the synagogue? I work in what I will call the Specialist Synagogue. At Valley Beth Shalom we have experts and specialists: a youth director; a caterer; a librarian; an ECC director; an Education Director; a Day School Principal; rabbis; cantors; a building superintendent; a Development Director; accounting and membership directors; an IT specialist, a communications specialist, a hesed specialist and a group of volunteer specialists; and the Executive Director.

All of these people are specialists in their own fields and areas of expertise.

We have gotten very good at what we do. But there may be another view – another perspective. Is there a way to see our synagogue as an integrative community? What would need to change?

Pearl Sass tried to teach me the first step towards creating an integrative synagogue. I wasn't at VBS very long when I met Pearl. She came to services regularly and came to events. I saw her frequently. Every time I saw her she said hi to me and asked me, "What's my name?" Try as I may, I couldn't remember her name when she asked me. Eventually I remembered and would greet her by name.

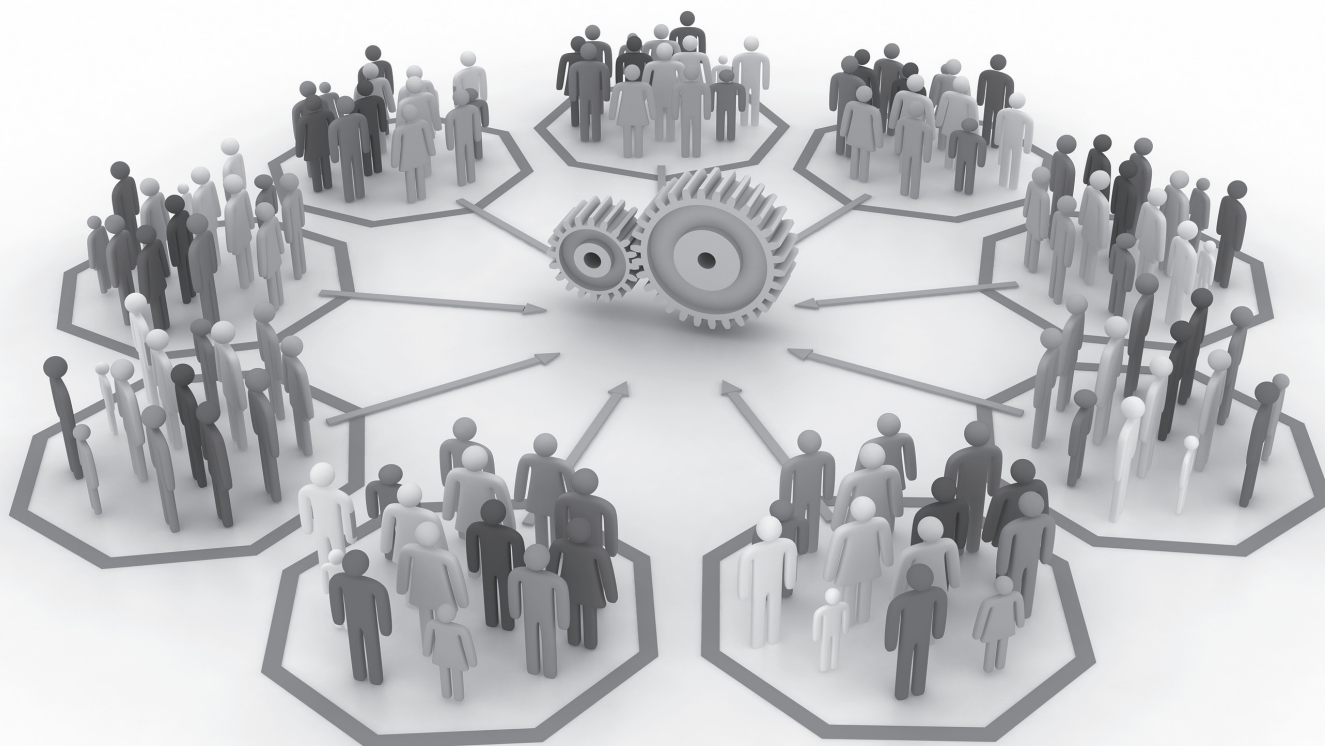
An integrative community is made up of people who have names. If we learn to see people as more than an "account" or a "regular" in the same seat each week or the grandma who picks up the child, or the person who vacuums the office than it will be easier to remember their name.

A bar or bat mitzvah child and family interact with a variety of the specialists in our Specialist Synagogue. What might

be different in the Integrative Synagogue if the emphasis were to be on the child and the entire family? Perhaps a family meeting with the Rabbi or the Head of the Hebrew School or both to explore how the family is involved in Judaism, and how to get to know them. They could discuss if the parent(s) had become bar and bat mitzvah what they remember and what they learned from their experience. If not what does this experience mean to them, their child and to the family. Explore what is unique or special about their situation and what happens Jewishly after the simcha.

We, as an integrated team, need to see the family as real people so that we can help them become more connected, more committed to the synagogue and to Judaism. We must learn their names.

The various parts of the synagogue need to work together and appear connected. Consider how the Integrative Synagogue might approach education. The schools – Preschool, Day School and Hebrew School – could all develop and incorporate the same theme for the year. The Rabbi would introduce the theme during the High Holy Days. Everyone would meet together to develop teaching ideas, both formal and informal, and projects. Older kids



might be paired with younger kids to do activities together to reinforce the theme. The theme could be tied to Mitzvah Day, Family retreats and Hesed projects. The theme would also be presented and taught and discussed at staff meetings, at havurah gatherings, at adult education classes, at parent association meetings, as well as Shabbat services and other functions.

The Integrative Synagogue works to connect the separate specialties of the Specialist Synagogue – that the different committees and departments find ways to work with each other and our community.

The Integrative Synagogue promotes the teaching of Jewish values. This is the unifying mission of synagogue life. We teach Jewish values every day by example. Religiously the Integrative Synagogue invokes the ancient and modern message of Echad – oneness. To quote Rabbi Harold Schulweis, “to recognize God as Echad is to believe that everything and everyone is connected, that we all belong to each other and in the deepest spiritual sense that we are, all of us, cosmically connected. To believe in Echad is to know that nothing is isolated.”¹

Who should be the champion for or steward of the Integrative Synagogue? The answer is YOU – the Executive Director. Since each specialist concentrates almost exclusively on her/his area of expertise I believe it is your task to help them see how it all comes together. Champion the Integrative Synagogue. This is no easy task. It is easy to spend all of our time on finance, facility, publicity and personnel. We must encourage all of the synagogue leaders – lay and professional - to draw the synagogue community together and to draw the specialists together to make the community healthier.

Professor Jerry Bubis, the founder of the School of Jewish Communal Service at Hebrew Union College, said that synagogues are the most complex organization in Jewish life. The Executive Director is the person who can promote the integration of all of the pieces, all of the players and all of the parts.

I believe that Irma Lee Ettinger understood her role as the champion of the Integrative Synagogue and that she took the time to talk to and listen to individuals. As busy as she was she always listened calmly to anyone who came to see her. As hard as it is at times, we must learn from her example

and work to remain relaxed and calm, to suppress our anxiety and not be pulled into the craziness that sometimes surrounds us. This is what Rabbi Edwin Friedman, author of “Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue”² teaches as a key lesson in leadership – the importance of being a non-anxious presence in order to not be triangulated into others’ crises or the false sense of urgency and crisis that can make us reactive rather than planful.

Irma Lee taught her craft to her peers and to her disciples – two of whom have served NAASE so well and have been role models and mentors to many of us over the years - Amir Pilch and Glenn Easton.

“It is easy to spend all of our time on finance, facility, publicity and personnel. We must encourage all of the synagogue leaders – lay and professional - to draw the synagogue community together and to draw the specialists together to make the community healthier.”

Take this message of the Integrative Synagogue back to your congregation. Challenge the Specialist Synagogue model. See and treat your congregants and colleagues as whole people and whole families and by seeing them that way help them to become healthier people, healthier families and more committed Jews. May each of you continue the sacred work that you do so well. ■

NOTES:

1 Rabbi Harold Schulweis, Echad, Rosh Hashana, 1997, <http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/echad.htm>

2 Friedman, Edwin H.; Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue, The Guilford Press, New York, NY, 1985

The Synagogue as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

by Harvey M. Brenner, FTA



Harvey Brenner

Harvey is a **Fellow in Temple Administration** ("FTA") and the author of the thesis *Merging Congregations: The Exploration, Facilitation and Execution of a Synagogue Merger and the Role of the Administrator/Executive Director*. He leads synagogue board and officer training workshops on the subjects of *Ethical Decision-making in the Synagogue Boardroom* and on *Merging Congregations: If Not Now, When?* and has been a featured presenter for METNY

District of USCJ and at NAASE and NATA national conferences.

He earned his Bachelor in Economics degree from Queens College of the City University of New York and his Master's in Education from St. John's University and holds certification in budgeting and forecasting from the SPAR Institute.

After a successful 30+ year career in general business management he transitioned into the not-for-profit world as a synagogue executive. Harvey joined Congregation Or Zarua in Manhattan in July 2009 after serving in the same capacity at Temple Har Shalom in Warren, New Jersey, for six years. He is an active member of both NAASE and NATA.

We Jews have been taught by our history to appreciate the real value of laying foundations for future developments. Our share, as a people, in the building up of the general culture of Humanity has been nothing else than the laying of its foundations long before the superstructures were built by others.

Ahad Ha-am from an August 12,
1898 letter to Chaim Weitzman

In his book, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press) Robert K. Merton is credited with authoring the term "self-fulfilling prophecy". *"The self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false definition of the situation evoking a new behaviour which makes the original false conception come 'true'. This specious validity of the self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates a reign of error. For the prophet will cite the actual course of events as proof that he was right from the very beginning."*

More simply stated, *"...(it is) a prediction that, in being made, actually causes itself to become true. For example, in the*

stock market, if it is widely believed that a crash is imminent, investors may lose confidence, sell most of their stock and actually cause the crash."

We've all seen this phenomenon in our own lifetime; pundits take to the air-waves and predict that a recession (or inflation) is coming, investors embrace the 'herd mentality' and buy or sell en masse, and that starts the snowball rolling down the slope. The result is exactly what investors feared most; debilitating recession or staggering inflation all caused by the investors' own actions.

Consider the Great Depression as an example. Based upon a untrue premise (that they were insolvent), thousands of Americans lined up at the doors of their banks and demanded to withdraw their savings in cash. The banks couldn't meet this unprecedented activity and many (if not most) collapsed due to the onslaught (thereby rendering the outcome everyone was hoping to avoid).

Merton goes on to explain, *"(This) parable tells us that public definitions of a situation (prophecies or predictions) become an integral part of the situation and thus affect subsequent developments. This is peculiar to human affairs. It is not found in the world of nature, untouched by human hands. Predictions of the return of Halley's Comet do not influence its orbit. But the rumored insolvency of (a) bank did affect the actual outcome. The prophecy of collapse led to its own fulfillment."*

So how does this apply to our synagogues? Synagogues are like other social networks: collections of people, banding together to share common interests and pursue common goals. They react the same way any other affinity group might react to peer, internal or external pressures. They develop a collective group psyche, and sometimes have selective institutional memories. Of course, they are also unique in that there is the religious, historical and theological component that frames the organization. As the repositories of our formal connection to organized Jewry, synagogues are just as susceptible to outside influences as any other institution.

Take for example the cases of two similar, albeit fictitious houses of worship: *Kehilla Anshe Mazel* and *Temple Shaarey Auf Tsuris*. Both congregations have enjoyed success over the 50+ years they have been in existence. Both have built sparkling edifices which adequately house their current memberships. Each has survived clergy changes, leadership transitions and professional staff turnover, as well as weathered the expansions and contractions of their local economies. They both offer rich and diverse programming and hold meaningful weekly worship services. In both cases membership levels have plateaued for the past few years. How did they react to this flattening of their growth curve? As their names indicate, very differently indeed.

Kehilla Anshe Mazel viewed the situation as a temporary interruption to their long term growth cycle. Its leaders were optimistic about the future, and all of their activity centered on improving and enhancing the membership experience. They established a 'strategic planning committee' to articulate a vision for the congregation for the next 10 years and to simultaneously develop an 'action plan' that would shepherd it toward those goals.

They began with a well thought out public relations campaign to promote its new vision statement to the unaffiliated in their community, as well as to their own membership. They recognized the need for a unified message and developed an 'elevator speech' for all to understand and embrace. They redesigned their website

and started a 'shul-blog' to reach cyberspace visitors who might not normally cross the building's threshold. The synagogue can be accessed on Twitter, MySpace and Facebook, all places their target prospects frequent. They made sure the facility was welcoming and assured that there was a confident, friendly feeling throughout the building.

To paraphrase one of my former colleagues from the corporate world, the leadership of *Kehilla Anshe Mazel* "planned their work and worked their plan!" They envisioned being successful, gathered all the proper tools and resources available to them so they would be successful. They created an example of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" of a decidedly positive nature.

Contrast that with *Temple Shaarey Auf Tsuris* who were justifiably proud of their past but wedded to it. Its leaders viewed the situation from a reactive (rather than a proactive) perspective. They had no real vision for the 10 years ahead and so had no plan in place for that period. Consequently, there were many 'splinter' groups and committees reacting to perceived or real problems in a disjointed, unconnected manner.

They lost sight of the long-term objective - continuing to provide a fulfilling and nurturing Jewish worship, study and social experience for current members, while developing and presenting programs which will attract new ones. Their



efforts were very much like the fable about the little Dutch boy and the leaky dike. The boy ran from hole to hole trying to plug the leaks, all to no avail.

Their 'buckshot' approach to problem solving was haphazard; it missed its mark as often as hit it. Simultaneously, the leadership attempted to reduce overhead (by eliminating some staff, offerings, programs and classes), to lower dues and fees for membership or, at worst, hold them stable, to place fewer demands on bar/bat mitzvah students, to embark on a major capital campaign to build a gymnasium addition to the school wing, to contemplate going from a two day a week religious school to one day, etc.

They were literally all over the map. There was no clear objective. Even their oft repeated lament, "all our problems would be cured if we only had 20 additional family unit," constitutes a classic "self-fulfilling prophecy." Their most significant and feared outcome, a continuous and significant loss of members, was virtually assured because they bought into the initial premise that something was radically wrong and could (should) be fixed immediately.

Today, synagogues in America face incredible obstacles. We live in a society where marriage and birth rates are down, intermarriages and divorces are up, organized Jewry is not as important to the '20 and 30-somethings' as it was to earlier generations. One does not need to join a congregation to participate in Judaism. Those wanting to study Jewish history can do so on-line. Want to learn about Torah? Sign up and receive an e-mail everyday that you can review at 2:00pm or 2:00am, as best suits your schedule. You can learn Hebrew, join discussion blogs even study comparative religions, whatever. One need not come into a synagogue building to pray since you can listen from home to a web or podcast and pray in your PJ's!

(Joseph) Ernest Renan, a French essayist and theological historian (1823-1892) from his tome, "The Life of Jesus" (1863) noted, *"Even now in our own day synagogues are the strength of Judaism – a strength that others envy; the ground of many a jealous calumny, to which there is but one answer to be made: Go, and do thou likewise!"*

As synagogue leaders, professionals and members, it is our responsibility to develop a plan for the future; we need to know what the synagogue is, extrapolate from that what it

should become and then create a proactive plan to take us there. To forsake our rich institutional heritage makes us unworthy bearers of the flame passed on by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. When we seek to avoid inevitable change, we fall victim to the most negative self-fulfilling prophecies; ambivalence.

Synagogues are experiencing the effects of outside organizations and ideas competing for the time, minds and energies of our members and our prospective members. Through the internet, people can meet their religious and educational needs in different ways. Synagogue leadership and professionals must identify and understand the synagogue members of the future – what can the synagogue offer that is unique? What personal needs can the synagogue meet? How can the synagogue help develop community for people living in areas with no family, etc.? All synagogues, regardless of denomination, need to develop a coherent strategy to retain our members and reach out to the unaffiliated. Our message must be one of openness and welcome: there is room enough for everyone no matter where on the observance and tradition spectrum they reside.

Centered on *Torah, Avodah* and *Gemilut Hasadim* (Torah, Service to God and Acts of Kindness) our religion has withstood the test of time for almost 6000 years. We have the ability to re-engineer our synagogue institutions and, in so doing, create a new "self-fulfilling prophesy" uniquely our own. The question waiting to be answered is, "will it be a positive one?" ■

NOTES:

1 Merton, Robert K (1968). *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: Free Press. pp. 477

2 www.psychology.wikia.com/wiki/self-fulfilling-prophecy

3 Merton, Robert K (1968). *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: Free Press. pp. 477

The Role of the Executive Director in a Crisis

by Rachel Gross

23

"Like life itself, each disaster is unique."

Fire, flood, hurricane, tornado, earthquake. We are encouraged to prepare for any situation. We draw up safety plans, hold fire drills, stock emergency kits, back up our information. But the truth is when disaster comes to us, it rarely follows the playbook written in our safety plans. And our personal responses to crisis sometimes vary from the responses we had anticipated from ourselves.

Early on a snowy Friday morning in January, I was headed out of town for a long weekend when I received a call that there was a fire at the synagogue. There was no indication of scope, so I didn't know if I'd be a couple of hours late starting out on my weekend or forgoing weekends for the foreseeable future. I arrived a few minutes later to a street closed off, a half a dozen fire trucks, a few ambulances, a school bus, and a handful of police cars. Water poured out of the second story auditorium windows, black smoke billowed from the school bathrooms, and glass lay shattered on the grass. In the coming hours and days I learned that a fire had been set in a preschool room, and the fire which consumed that classroom and whose soot covered every surface in the building, was going to be investigated as an arson. A few months after the fire, our playground was vandalized when someone buried shards of broken glass throughout its sand. Only three months after that, our sanctuary and lobby were flooded by a broken pipe. We renamed the folder holding the insurance, restoration and investigation information to "GJC Plagues."

First Things First

Disaster scenes can be very chaotic and confusing. The emergency responders have a hierarchy of who is in charge of what. Your emergency procedures should also designate who your first tier of decision makers are. Usually it's the executive director, rabbi, and president. While you may be clear on this, the many possible people on the scene – parents, lay leaders, staff, neighbors – are unlikely to know. As executive director, you can be a partner with emergency personnel to help secure the site by making sure your congregants, lay leaders and professional staff stay safe and stay out of the way of the emergency responders.

Rachel Gross is the Executive Director at Temple Micah in Washington, DC. She has worked in the Jewish community for over 21 years, and in the capacity of Executive Director for the last 11. She has served on the NAASE board and is a past chair of the Week of Study. Rachel is a graduate of the University of Maryland where she earned Bachelor's degrees in English and Jewish Studies as well as a Masters in English.



Rachel Gross

Emergency plans tend to tell us what to do immediately – where to go, who is in charge, our basic data. The executive director has a slightly different checklist. In the immediate hours after the fire, I was asked by emergency responders for an array of documents. While our current emergency procedures manual includes all of that information in one manual, at the time of the fire, much of this was in separate documents and it took some time to track everything down. I also needed to quickly find an emergency restoration and security company to secure the building. If the fire alarm is down, you may be required by law to have a human fire watch in the building until the fire alarm system is back online. Unless you have had a disaster, you are not likely to have a relationship with a restoration crew or public adjuster. Solicit recommendations from colleagues now and add those numbers to your list.

Your emergency plan is probably in a binder in your office. At least once a year, you should update the information in the plan and email copies to the senior staff and president. Keep it in your email so you can access it from anywhere at any time.

Comprehending the Magnitude of the Loss

It's normal to be in some sort of shock, to not comprehend the magnitude of the loss, or even of the implications of the decisions you are asked to make. It was weeks before I understood the scope of the damage and months before I really comprehended that it would take a year and a half until the building and community were fully restored.

Disasters have a life cycle, and both the individuals and the community will go through the stages at different paces. While you may be in one stage, your rabbi, colleagues, board members and congregants may be in different stage. It helps to understand this and be gentle with yourself and others who are responding to the crisis at their own pace.

Document Everything

You should already have a video or photographic inventory of your synagogue that includes all furnishings, and the contents of closets and drawers. Take detailed pictures of the damage as well. Keep receipts for expenses incurred. Document calls you make and what people say to you. Negotiations with the insurance company can be complex, comprehensive and protracted, and the burden of proof will be on you.

In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, your restoration company may need to dispose of all kinds of things that are toxic. The insurance company will not only want to know what you had there, but how damaged it was.

Consider getting a public adjuster. A reputable public adjuster negotiates with the insurance company on the synagogue's behalf and helps



the synagogue claim what is due under the policy. They charge a percentage of the proceeds. For a large and complex claim, a public adjuster can help by assembling detailed inventories and price lists of what was damaged and destroyed, gather documents supporting the business interruption claim, walking the building with the estimator

from the insurance company, helping you understand the implications of some of the decisions you are making, and negotiating on your behalf with the insurance company.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Communicate with your congregation frequently, every day, if needed. Rumor and innuendo are the most toxic forms of communication. Whatever there is to find out, you want your congregants to hear it from you or a designated representative first. The best thing we did after our fire and flood, hands down, was to communicate quickly and regularly with our congregants. Our members have never felt as fully informed and connected to the synagogue as they did after these events. Regular and full communication with the congregation should be a central part of your disaster recovery plan. Don't forget to communicate with members who do not have email by a phone tree or a letter. Set the tone as clear, direct and honest. In the first weeks, we communicated



most days, then weekly for the next year. We set up the emails as FAQs. We asked and answered questions that we thought our closest friends would want to know: What's the extent of the damage? How long will it take to restore the building? How safe is the environment? How do we know that? Are we insured? What can I expect for programming? Services? Preschool? Religious school? What happened to my personal items? How can I help? It's OK to send out partial information letting the congregation know what you know at that point and that you'll be back in touch as soon as you have more information. Communication builds trust and connection.

Letting People Help

This is a moment when people will want to give generously – of their time, money, possessions. We did not anticipate that it would be a challenge to find appropriate ways in which congregants and community members could help out. Accepting monetary contributions was easy. But the cleanup was a job for professionals (not congregants with mops). We had no easy way to accept donations of items that would need to be sorted, inventoried and stored. It was, in fact, months before we knew what items we would need. To avoid amassing closets full of donated items that you don't need, create an online registry and be as specific as possible about your needs.

Caring for Your Staff

Remember that you are going through this crisis together, although you are likely to experience it differently. It is common for all staff members to be concerned with how the disaster affects them, their departments and their constituencies. Your job is to keep your eye on the larger picture and to help prioritize needs.

It's important that you meet with your professional staff and acknowledge how they might be feeling, what they are going through, what is expected of them, and that you are available to them. Communicate with all of your staff – including maintenance, religious school and preschool staff - regularly. The executive director needs to make sure that everyone is getting the information and support that they need.

Caring for Yourself

Caring for yourself in a time of crisis is a probably the

hardest part of all. In the beginning, everything may seem both urgent and important. Allow people to care for you – accept offers of meals, keep emails and notes of encouragement, consider accepting offers of support. In the beginning, mini-breaks may be the most you can manage. But take them. Enjoy a meal for a few minutes. Re-read emails of support rather than incoming emails of need.

This is the time to delegate. People want to feel needed. Help nurture this opportunity for them to connect. If you are not a good delegator, partner with someone who is, whose job it is to help you think through what tasks can be done by someone else. You may be surprised by what can be shared.

“Going through a crisis can be an isolating, difficult experience. But every interaction during a crisis is also an opportunity to bond more deeply with those around you...”

















Going through a crisis can be an isolating, difficult experience. But every interaction during a crisis is also an opportunity to bond more deeply with those around you – with your staff, colleagues, congregants, neighbors. Recovery is not just about restoring the building, but also about strengthening the connections between congregants to each other and to the institution. As executive director, you can set the tone for full recovery by keeping organized plans and records, engaging your staff, finding appropriate ways for people to be involved, and communicating fully and regularly. ■

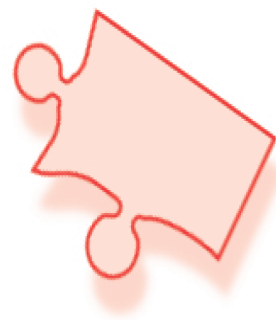
NOTES:

1 Disaster Spiritual Care, ed. Rabbi Stephen B. Roberts, BCJC and Rev. Willard W.C. Ashley, Sr. DMin, DH.



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find an answer . . .***

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