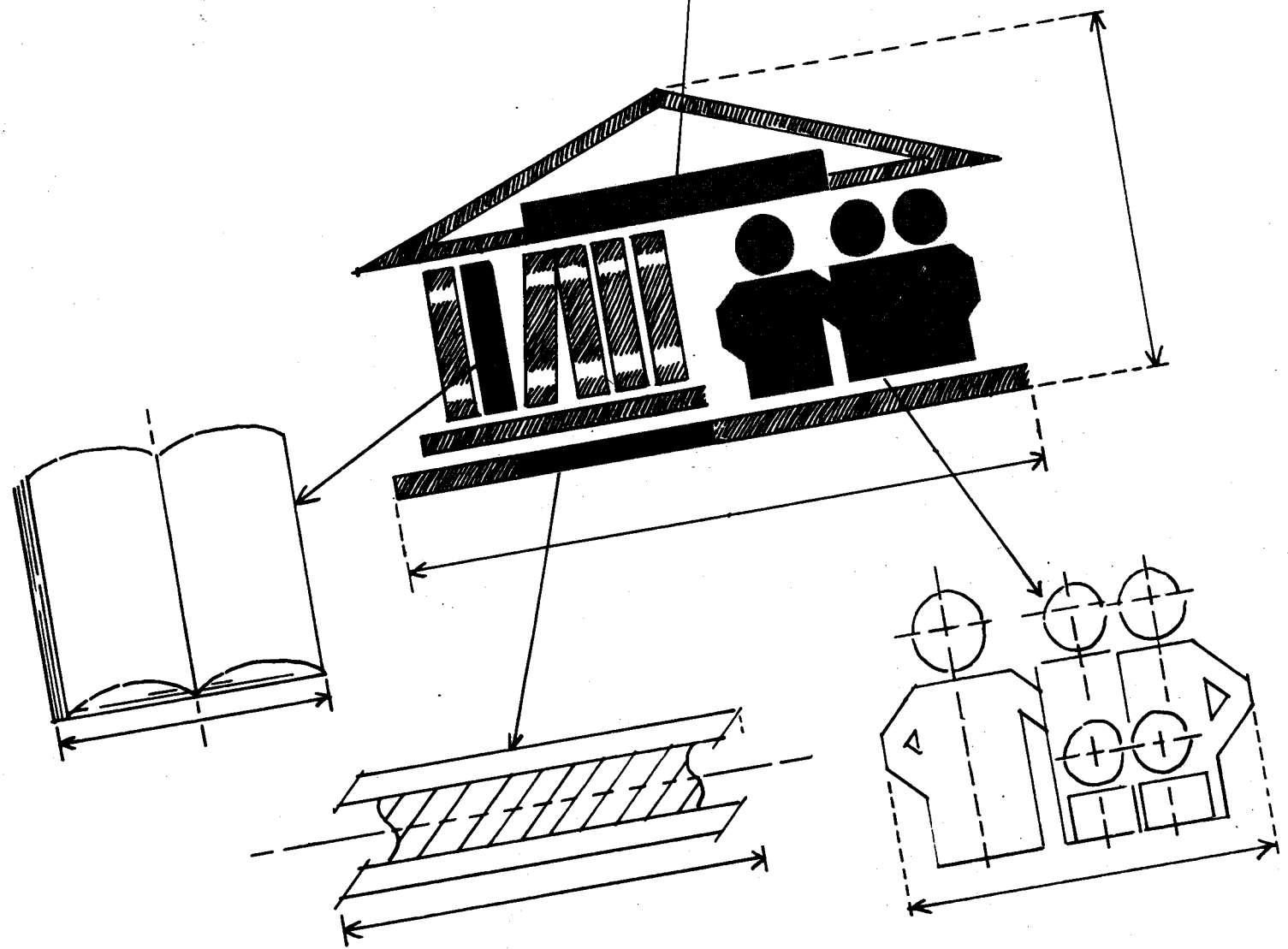


UNITED  
SYNAGOGUE  
REVIEW

A TIME FOR CHANGE



STANLEY KALMS  
CHAIRMAN

*“Join with me in creating a decade of Jewish renewal. Let us cease to be a community whose institutions and attitudes are growing old. Let us work together to plan and to create a decade of renewal of Jewish leadership, education and spirituality. Let us start this day, and for the next ten years, a process of working together to build a community”.*

*Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks  
Installation Address September 1991*

*“Our congregations will require more autonomy, greater rights to use the fruits of their extra exertions for their own expansion, if we are to provide incentives for local initiative, rewards for harder efforts, and opportunities for more dynamic leaders and members. The prescription for a modern vibrant community is mass participation, some decentralisation and healthy diversity, apart from an imaginative programme of constant improvement and growth”.*

*Lord Jakobovits  
United Synagogue Centenary Address July 1970*

# A TIME FOR CHANGE

UNITED SYNAGOGUE REVIEW

Stanley Kalms  
Chairman

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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When I was first asked to review the United Synagogue I knew that there was only one man with the qualifications to co-ordinate a project of such complexity - Simon Caplan. However, there was a problem.

Simon and I have worked together in close harmony for many years leading the development of Jews' College and the Jewish Educational Development Trust. But last year Simon left for Israel for two years with his wife Nadine and their three children, to take up a study fellowship on the Jerusalem Fellows programme.

I had the difficult and unfair task of persuading him to take a leave of absence from his studies to commute for a year between his family in Jerusalem and this important task in London. But the challenge was so important that he did, albeit at considerable sacrifice to himself and his family, take up the appointment as Secretary to the Review.

A major part of this Review is a tribute to his skills and enthusiasm, and our community will forever be in his debt.

To facilitate the Review I created three major task forces in the areas of community, education and the rabbinate.

The community task force was headed by Anthony Ansell, who, despite his busy legal practice and leadership role in the Hendon Synagogue, managed to devote very considerable time and energy to this assignment. The multi-faceted working papers on community, contained in the Appendix, provide the backbone for many of our principal recommendations.

Seymour Saideman, with his long-standing experience of communal leadership, particularly in the field of education, was a natural choice to head the educational task force investigations. He has produced a masterful plan which is based on real experience and awareness of the issues.

Leslie Wagner, Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive of the University of North London, headed the rabbinical task force. His blend of understanding of the academic and communal world made him uniquely qualified to deal with the complex issues in this area, and he has produced a sensitive analysis of the problems, leading to a creative set of solutions.

Never has a chairman been better served than I have been in drawing on the outstanding talents of these three valued colleagues.

To back up these task forces I received almost unlimited support from so many people, and whilst they cannot all be named, I would particularly like to acknowledge Peter Angell, Karen Ansell, Keith Barnett, Reverend Stanley Brickman, Joy Conway, Charles Corman, Mark Dembovsky, Gil Graff, Daniel Greenberg, Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, Michael Harris, Jeremy Jacobs, Gerry Kurzon, Benjamin Kaye, John Martin, Harold Pasha, Rabbi Alan Plancey, Charles Rogers, Eric Shapiro, Seymour Soloway, Garry Stock and Adrian Wallace.

As the process incorporated significant attitudinal research, a research advisory panel of noted academics was established to review the work as it progressed. I would like to thank the members of the panel for their many helpful comments and suggestions.

I had several useful discussions with the Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks, who offered some penetrating insights into the condition of contemporary Anglo-Jewry. I would particularly acknowledge Dayan Ehrentreu and Dayan Berger, together with their colleague, registrar Dr Jeremy Phillips, for the open way we discussed difficult issues.



Sidney Frosh, the President of the United Synagogue, who instigated the Review, was in constant contact and could not have been more constructive, and frank discussions were held with United Synagogue honorary officers, although, of the treasurers, only Mr Jayson was able to meet us.

I much appreciated discussing aspects of the Review with Lord Jakobovits, especially as we had mulled over a great number of the issues over many years. Two former presidents - Victor Lucas and George Gee - were, as always, helpful and we benefited greatly from their experience and guidance. I should also give a personal thank-you to Ronnie Metzger for being a late night listener and advisor when I hit difficulties and to my own rabbi, Jeffrey Cohen for his usual incisive thoughts.

Support from the public at all levels has been very much appreciated. I would particularly like to acknowledge the input of many individuals who took the time to submit written contributions. I hope that they will be satisfied that I have dealt with the major issues that were raised. We met many committees and groups along the way and, almost without exception, were courteously and openly received. Indeed we were welcomed and encouraged at virtually every meeting we had.

As for the staff at Woburn House, we had full access at all times and I would particularly like to thank Jonathan Lew and Barry Lyons. Barry, especially, was under constant pressure from us and yet he responded in a supportive manner.

From my own personal staff I would like to thank Ian Livingston who, despite his many other career pressures, provided the necessary co-ordination on the financial side.

We had many professional advisors and I would especially like to acknowledge David Epstein and Neville Levy of Levy Gee for their detailed research into the financial background of the United Synagogue, David Ruback for his investigation into the management of community life, Geoffrey Paul for his incisive analysis of American community life, and Dr Stephen Miller, Dr Judith Citron, and Marlena Schmol for their magnificent research work.

As always, my team at Traditional Alternatives responded to a tight schedule and high demands with commitment and professionalism and it is my pleasure to acknowledge the outstanding work of Sherry Begner, Lisa Bronzite and Rhoda Goodman. Many of the working papers contained in the appendix were put together by the staff at Traditional Alternatives and their quality is concrete testimony to the talents of a dedicated team.

The review process has been a collaborative one in the fullest sense of the word. Over the past nine months, and throughout innumerable meetings, an atmosphere of total harmony, collegiality, and enthusiasm for the task in hand has prevailed. If the same measure of goodwill can be applied to the process of implementation, then the future of the United Synagogue will be assured. To all those who have made a contribution, from the professional staff to the members of the public who took the time to attend focus groups or to complete questionnaires as part of our research, I would like to extend my most grateful appreciation. I hope that the effort will be seen to have been worthwhile.

Finally, to my wife Pamela, for her unique insight, advice and support during a long and concentrated task, my deepest thanks.

The report is written in the first person plural. Ultimately, all responsibility for the views expressed in this report lies with myself alone, but I have used the collective pronoun because each view is one that has emerged from substantial consensus out of the advice I have sought.

Stanley Kalms

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# INTRODUCTION

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## FINDINGS

The United Synagogue has a great and venerable history. More than any other organisation, it has fashioned the character of Anglo-Jewry. It still commands the loyalty of a large percentage of our community and for many it is the social glue that binds Anglo-Jewry together.

But today the United Synagogue stands at the crossroads. Sweeping changes have transformed the Jewish landscape over the past fifty years. The impact of the Holocaust and the rise of the State of Israel, as well as the march of technology, the breakdown of the family, and the competing tensions of secularisation and new religious fervour have affected the very fabric of Jewish life. The nature of Jewish identity has changed, as the range of Jewish choices has expanded radically. Traditional ties no longer exercise a hold over the individual. New expressions of Jewishness are being heard. The repercussions of all this on the United Synagogue have been profound, but not always understood.

In October 1991 the President of the United Synagogue established a review of the organisation to present recommendations regarding its role in the years ahead. The review was set up against a background of crisis and opportunity - crisis in the form of declining membership and severe financial difficulties accentuated by the current recession, and opportunity represented by growing interest and participation in Jewish life, as well as the challenge of a new Chief Rabbi. The terms of reference for the review were broad and it was assumed from the outset that the task would be to transcend immediate concerns - the 'symptoms' - and to uncover the deeper roots - the 'causes' of the crisis.

During the nine-month enquiry that has led to the publication of this report, a team of professional and lay colleagues has sought to come to terms with the problems facing the United Synagogue today. Many possibilities were considered, including the notion that this once vital lynchpin in Anglo-Jewry was no longer relevant or needed, but research convinced us that it had a critical role to play. The team conducted a thorough investigation, starting with problem analysis through interviews with a wide range of individuals and groups, market research of a qualitative and quantitative nature, professional consultancy, reading and group discussion. As first thoughts were formulated regarding the definition of the problem and the outline of possible responses, further consultation was held prior to setting up a number of detailed investigations in specific areas. This report was eventually constructed following the outcome of those investigations.

Our most serious finding is that the United Synagogue is an institution in a state of acute financial decline. It is at the top of its borrowing facility, locked into illiquid assets, earning relatively less each year from a declining membership and yet spending more each year on a constantly expanding programme. The recession has merely brought to a head a situation that has been developing for some time. Many individuals laid the blame on bad management, and undoubtedly this has been a factor. However, it soon became clear that, whereas some symptoms might be financial, the causes lay much deeper.

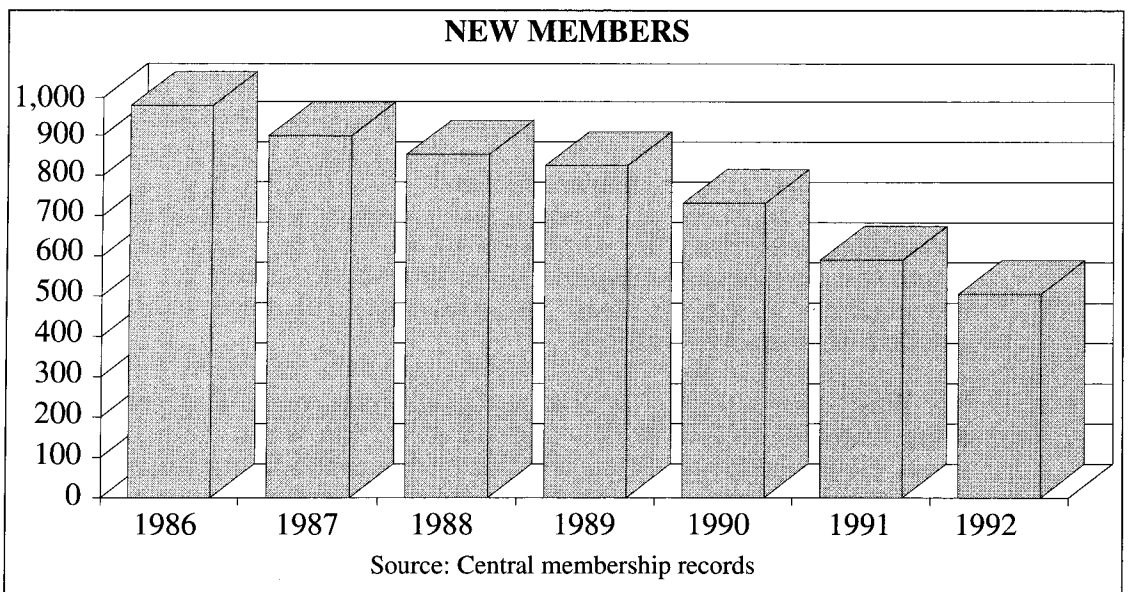
Along with the financial malaise, other symptoms were manifest. These included a loss of morale at every tier within the organisation, confused and conflicting approaches to the United Synagogue's objectives, lack of role definition at both a lay and a professional level and, above all, a deep dissatisfaction with the centre. These factors may have been aggravated by the pressure of a financial crisis, but they exist independently of it. The search for a more fundamental cause continued.

The conclusion to which we were driven was that the root cause of the United Synagogue's crisis was a drift away from the fundamental goals or 'mission' of the organisation. This was the single factor common to all the symptoms.

The original mission of the United Synagogue was to include Jews within an Orthodox community framework. This was a task that had to be carried out at the local level, using the intimacy and caring of the neighbourhood synagogue to bring people in and to service their Jewish needs. The centre was established simply to create a structure for carrying out the mission - to assist in the creation of new communities where needed, to guarantee the support of the weak by the strong, to offer those services, such as burial, which could best be organised at a cross-community level, and to provide spiritual and religious direction for the community as a whole.

What has happened over the past few years has been that the centre has taken on a life of its own. It has grown out of proportion to the aim of the organisation. As Jewish needs have diversified enormously, local communities should have been retaining more and more of their resources to cope. Instead, an ever-expanding centre has taken on more and more and has become the main generator of expenditure, in a misplaced centralised effort to respond to trends, particularly in education, that should have been dealt with at the local level.

This approach has drained the resources and energies of the whole organisation. The income base of the United Synagogue is declining, because membership is declining. Membership is declining in part because younger people are not being attracted to join. Younger people are not joining because they perceive that the community has little to offer them. The expanded range of services offered by the centre is paid for by the membership but benefits are not fully felt at a local level. This explains the financial difficulties, because it is a policy that extracts without replenishing. It explains the loss of morale, because it creates a 'them and us' environment within a single organisation. It explains the lack of role definition, because the leadership have lost critical insight into their real purpose, and it may explain the dissatisfaction with a centre that appears to be obstructing rather than assisting in what is perceived at a local level as the most important task - the development of the communities themselves.



What follows is an attempt to address the problems facing the United Synagogue and to establish for it a viable role for the years ahead. What is needed is to restore the underlying health of the organisation, and that cannot be achieved by reference to the financial issues in isolation. First, the aims of the United Synagogue must be clearly understood. That having been achieved, policies and programmes can be constructed for the organisation which reflect those aims. Leadership - lay and professional - must then be empowered to execute those policies and programmes with the goodwill and understanding of the membership.

But one further step is required, and that is the belief that revival is achievable. There are those who read the negative signs in communal life - declining numbers, assimilation and so on - and draw from them some depressing conclusions. They see the current state of the United Synagogue as a natural product of decline: tragic but irreversible. That view is not shared by those who participated in this review.

As the enquiry proceeded, puzzling paradoxes were observed. On the one hand we encountered a deep sense of frustration and disillusionment with the United Synagogue. On the other hand, market research revealed an equally deep and pervasive loyalty to the moderate, contemporary Orthodoxy with which the organisation was identified. Alongside the perception of a centre that had lost its way we encountered example after example of success, buoyancy and enthusiasm at the local level. Negative images of the rabbinical impact on communal life were contrasted with equally powerful rabbinical success stories, epitomised by the appointment of a dynamic and forceful new Chief Rabbi. Statistics on declining synagogue membership were more than matched by growing participation in various educational enterprises, often sponsored by the United Synagogue. Is this a community in decline or in renaissance?

The answer to that question lies in the hands of the leadership of the community, and particularly of the United Synagogue. It is clear that renaissance is a possibility. What might prevent it would be a determination on the part of the lay leadership to cling to patterns of control that no longer serve the greater cause. Releasing that control, releasing energies as well as resources to thrive in a productive environment, should turn the isolated examples of success into a general pattern of communal regeneration.

Our report advances the following six simple propositions, each of which is explained in a separate chapter. They are :

**\* THAT SYSTEMATIC, COMPREHENSIVE CHANGE IS ESSENTIAL TO THE SURVIVAL OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE THROUGH THE MOST SEVERE FINANCIAL CRISIS IN ITS HISTORY, AND THAT THE TIME FOR CHANGE IS NOW.**

**\* THAT THE MISSION OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE COMMUNITIES IS TO INCLUDE JEWS WITHIN A TRADITIONAL FRAMEWORK AND THAT THE TASK OF THE CENTRE IS TO ASSIST THE COMMUNITIES IN THE FULFILMENT OF THIS MISSION.**

**\* THAT THE POTENTIAL OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE CAN BEST BE REALISED BY EMPOWERING AND ENERGISING JEWISH COMMUNITY LIFE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.**

**\* THAT A NEW LEADERSHIP ROLE MUST BE DEFINED FOR THE CENTRE TO REFLECT THE PRIMACY OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.**

**\* THAT JEWISH EDUCATION HOLDS THE KEY TO JEWISH CONTINUITY, AND MUST BE STRENGTHENED BY PROMOTING BROAD PARTICIPATION, AND LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INITIATIVE.**

**\* THAT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE FOR COMMUNITIES IS THE RABBINATE, AND THAT ITS LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL MUST BE NURTURED AND MAXIMISED.**

In the pages that follow, we explain how we arrived at these conclusions, and set out the detailed practical recommendations that flow from them. Some of these recommendations can be implemented immediately and with little disruption to the existing work of the organisation. Others will take time and will mean a radical revision in thinking and in action. The time is short and the labour long, but the prize will be a revitalised community, more diverse, more exciting, more attuned to contemporary possibilities, and a more challenging environment in which to secure the identity and commitment of the next generation of Anglo-Jews. **Now is indeed a time for change.**

## SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are in summary form the recommendations of the Review.

### MISSION

- R1** | The historic responsibility of the United Synagogue is to provide for the broad majority of Anglo-Jews, offering a place for every Jew who wants to identify with the community within a traditional framework. The United Synagogue should pursue this fundamental goal by adopting, as its mission, the need to expand its membership under the banner 'including Jews within tradition'. This should be the basis of future policy development and strategic planning. 37

### COMMUNITIES

- R2** | Local synagogues should become Independent Trust Communities, managing their own administration and finances, whose relationship with the centre would be based on a formal 'community agreement'. 45
- R3** | A new system should be instituted for calculating the local communities' contributions to the central organisation. This should be based on the principle of site value. 48
- R4** | Local community management should be increased, and central control in the affairs of local communities should be decreased. 45
- R5** | Local community life should be expanded to respond to the needs of the contemporary Orthodox Jewish community. 50/54
- R6** | The functions of administration and finance should be split from those of ritual in the organisational structures of local communities. 45
- R7** | Communities should be encouraged to establish broad-based education committees to develop an overall strategy for Jewish education at a local community level. 55
- R8** | Communities should be encouraged to set up policy committees to construct a strategy for their development, to plan facilities for youth and retired members, and to examine possibilities for inter-community co-operation. 56
- R9** | A permanent chazzanut/nussach committee should be established to examine ways to preserve the tradition of nussach in light of the decline of the full-time chazzan. 53

### THE CENTRE

- R10** | The United Synagogue Council should be reconstituted as a representative body for a group of equal communities, with representatives from each participating community. 61
- R11** | A Council of Elders should be set up comprising the elders, past presidents and life members of the United Synagogue. 62
- R12** | A new, elected, position of chairman of the Council of the United Synagogue should be established, although not necessarily immediately instituted. 63

- R13** | The central executive structure of the United Synagogue should be reconstituted on the basis of an elected president and vice-president with powers to appoint their own executive team. 62
- R14** | The central organisation of the United Synagogue should streamline its executive and committee structure. 62
- R15** | There should be a re-examination of women members' access to United Synagogue management positions. 61
- R16** | A permanent advisory policy review board/think-tank should be established as part of the central organisational structure. 64
- R17** | A community development committee of the executive of the United Synagogue should be established. 60
- R18** | Independent trustees should be appointed forthwith for the pension fund. In addition, the debt to the pension fund should be given the highest priority for repayment and the United Synagogue should, in future, forgo its technical rights to borrow from the fund. 70
- R19** | The central organisation of the United Synagogue should be relocated, eventually, to premises appropriate to its revised size and role, physically separating, if necessary, the Chief Rabbinate, the new Bureau of Education, and the administrative centre. 70

## **EDUCATION**

- R20** | The existing United Synagogue Board of Education should be abolished and a Bureau of Jewish Education, supported by the United Synagogue, should be established, to offer guidance, inspection, and training to communities and schools on a supplier/purchaser basis. 77
- R21** | Responsibility for education should be placed at the local community level and in the hands of the users. 73
- R22** | Central subsidies to chadarim and the central employment of teaching staff should be abolished and guidelines established for local employment of teachers. 74
- R23** | The teenage centres should be reconstituted as a single entity or College for Secondary Jewish Education. This would be a charitable trust operating on several campuses under one leadership structure. 76
- R24** | All day schools currently under the aegis of the United Synagogue should become independent charitable trusts. 74
- R25** | Central subsidies to Jewish day schools should be abolished, within a limited transitional period. 73

## **RABBINATE**

- R26** | A separate organisational structure for the Chief Rabbinate should be developed to encompass the full range of its responsibilities and to reflect the relationship of the Chief Rabbi with the constituent organisations who recognise and support his office. 85



<b>R27</b>	An effective organisational structure for the Beth Din should be established to determine general policy regarding areas of involvement and financial management. The Chief Rabbi should ensure that regular consultations are conducted with the rabbinate and lay representatives.	87
<b>R28</b>	Procedures should be established for Chief Rabbinical authorisation of any rabbi to be appointed to a community within the United Synagogue.	85
<b>R29</b>	Procedures for continuous personal and career development for rabbis should be instituted by means of a system of annual professional review.	81
<b>R30</b>	A full programme for in-service training/practical rabbinics should be re-established under the aegis of the Chief Rabbinate.	82
<b>R31</b>	The rank of senior rabbi should be established to create a broader career structure within the rabbinate, and to facilitate professional review/development.	84
<b>R32</b>	The Placements Committee of the United Synagogue should be abolished and a new Placements Bureau established within the Chief Rabbinate organisation.	84
<b>R33</b>	A support structure should be established within the Chief Rabbinate to assist rabbis and communities in the work of adult education and community initiatives.	88
<b>R34</b>	Guidelines for communities regarding the rabbi's terms and conditions of employment, salary scales and models for best practice should be developed under the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate and reviewed on a regular basis.	84
<b>R35</b>	A new contract of employment for the rabbi should be drawn up and established as a model for all new rabbinical appointments, under the terms of the community agreement between each local community and the centre, to include a procedure for mandatory, non-binding arbitration in cases of dispute between a communal rabbi and his community.	91/93

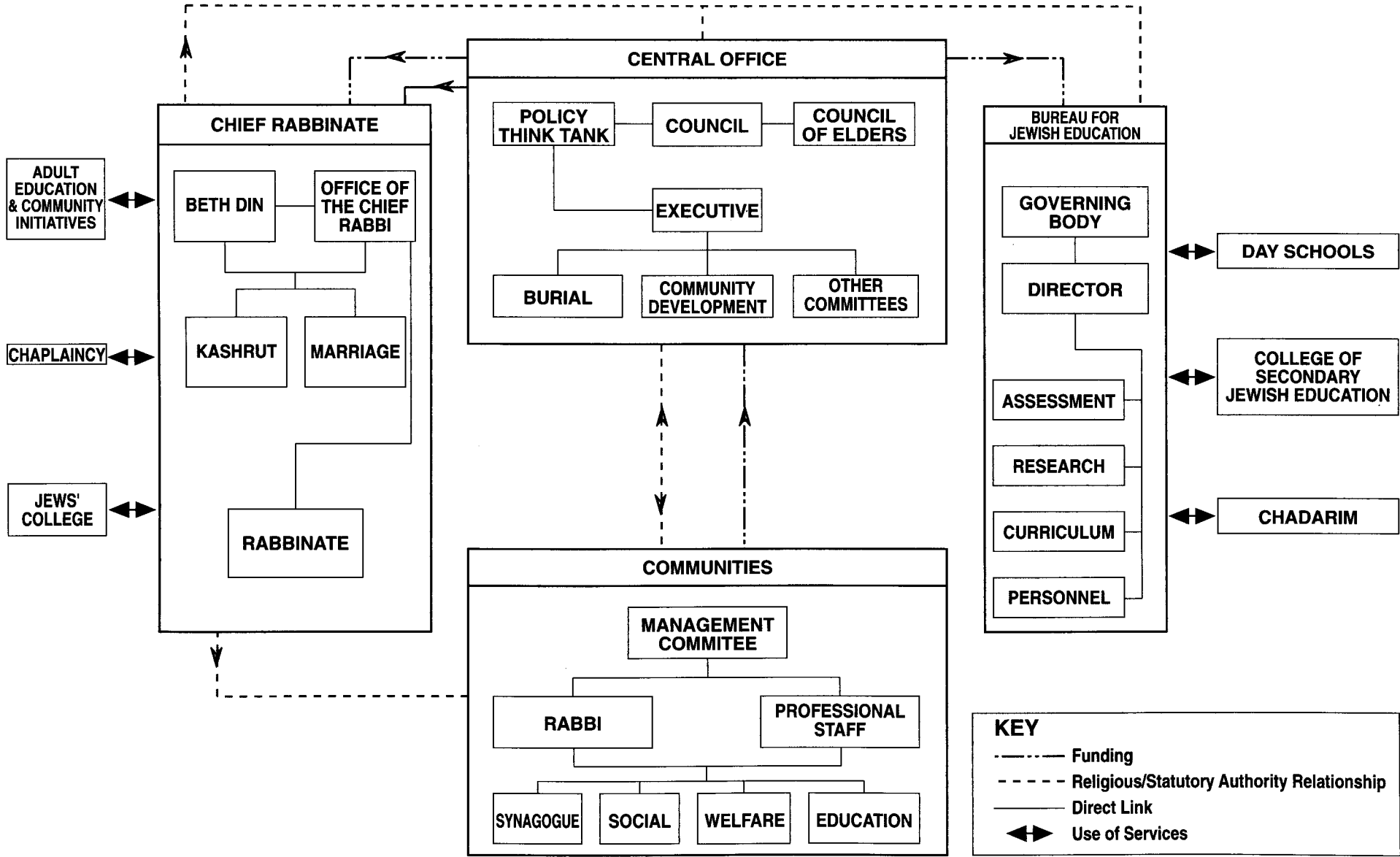
## TRANSITION

<b>R36</b>	The United Synagogue should initiate a programme to substantially reduce the organisation's debt over a five-year period, based on a cross-community levy and the disposal of surplus assets.	95
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These are the principal recommendations of the United Synagogue Review. Additional recommendations and suggestions are contained within the report itself. Principal recommendations are highlighted where they appear in the text by the **R1** symbol in the margin.

# THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE

## SUGGESTED ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



## **TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROCESS**

In October 1991, the honorary officers of the United Synagogue invited Stanley Kalms to review the role of the organisation in the years ahead.

Mr Kalms was asked to investigate all aspects of the United Synagogue, with the full co-operation of the organisation, using appropriate research methodology and taking evidence and advice from a broad spectrum within the community. On completion, a written report was to be submitted to the honorary officers and to the council for their consideration, and immediately made public.

It was agreed that the review would include, but not be limited to, consideration of the following issues :

- \* All United Synagogue activities
- \* The membership profile
- \* The political and organisational structure
- \* The financial situation
- \* The best use of assets
- \* The role of the rabbinate
- \* The role of the organisation in the context of Anglo-Jewry
- \* The relationship of the organisation with outside bodies

The report has been compiled over nine months of intensive research, investigation, consultation and analysis.

## **THE REVIEW PROCESS**

The nine months available for the conduct of the review were divided into three equal if overlapping stages as follows:

### **STAGE 1 PROBLEM DEFINITION AND CONSULTATION**

### **STAGE 2 RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION**

### **STAGE 3 ANALYSIS AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE REPORT**

#### **STAGE 1 PROBLEM DEFINITION AND CONSULTATION**

During the first three months, issues and problems were identified. Having consulted relevant existing documentation, over 100 informal interviews were held to solicit the community's views on the problems facing the United Synagogue. The wide spectrum of interviewees included senior lay and professional leaders at a national and local level, in addition to ordinary United Synagogue members and non-members. The public were invited to contribute to the review process, and more than 100 letters and articles were received covering every aspect of the work of the organisation.

A series of group consultations took place involving key sections of the community. These included representatives of the rabbinate, dayanim, chazzanim, women, young adults, and individual synagogues.

A research design was constructed on the basis of the information supplied from the interview process. A research advisory panel was established to provide an objective, external, professional observer body in relation to the conduct of the research. This group of noted academics in relevant disciplines was asked to comment, at each stage of development, on the research and on the review process as a whole.

## **STAGE 2 RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION**

During the second three months, research was carried out to deepen understanding of the problems facing the organisation and to test potential solutions.

Market research was conducted in two phases: in focus groups, spanning the full extent of age, religious identity, and diversity of communities, as well as separate and comparative focus groups for non-affiliated individuals and for teenagers, and subsequently through a questionnaire which was circulated to 1500 members of the United Synagogue and 300 former-members.

Three principal task forces were established in the areas of communities, education and the rabbinate, to investigate specific proposals for change and to stage appropriate consultations.

Detailed investigations were commissioned in key areas. These included a complete financial survey, a survey of existing arrangements in synagogue management at local and national level, investigation into appraisal systems in professions other than the rabbinate, a review of the constitution and by-laws of the organisation, and a review of the organisational structure of other UK synagogal bodies, in addition to examination of models of Jewish community life in other Diaspora countries.

## **STAGE 3 ANALYSIS AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE REPORT**

The final three months of the Review were used for analysis and construction of the report.

The results of earlier research, investigation, consultation and analysis produced a number of significant but theoretical propositions designed to resolve the problems of the organisation. Detailed working papers were commissioned to establish the feasibility of these propositions.

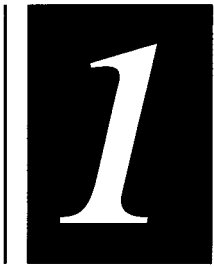
A number of final consultations were held to test out ideas and proposals. These included sessions with the lay leadership of a number of synagogues, and with the lay and professional representatives of a regional group of communities within the United Synagogue.

The market research findings were analysed together with the results of other investigations and a report was constructed with the advice and assistance of the task force chairmen.

The report is presented in two sections. The first contains an analysis of the United Synagogue in crisis as it stands today, followed by a vision of what it might become. The formal language normally associated with a report of this nature has been put aside in favour of an essay style which lends itself more easily to painting a picture of problems, together with potential solutions, in their full complexity. Specific recommendations are highlighted in the text, to assist in the decision-making process, without sacrificing the advantages of adopting a narrative approach.

The second section should be considered in tandem with the recommendations. Material in this appendix aims to back up the principal recommendations of the Review, and includes a financial critique, the first published analysis of extensive qualitative and quantitative research, a number of challenging articles on community life drawn from other Diaspora Jewish communities, and detailed working papers in respect of the key proposals.

**Simon Caplan**  
Secretary to the United Synagogue Review



## A TIME FOR CHANGE

*THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT CONCLUSION TO EMERGE FROM OUR RESEARCH IS THAT THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE MUST CHANGE IF IT IS TO SURVIVE.*

We know that great institutions never change voluntarily without a crisis. We now have a financial crisis of such dimensions that it calls for an urgent response to reverse a rapidly deteriorating position.

There is a natural resistance to change because it is unsettling, painful and often threatening. Those who accept that the United Synagogue faces serious problems still have to be convinced that real change is essential. In this chapter we describe the financial situation facing the United Synagogue today and conclude that without systematic and comprehensive change, the organisation has little chance of recovering from its current difficulties.

The imperative need for change coincides with two positive opportunities. The first is a renaissance in Jewish consciousness among Anglo-Jewry. The second is the installation of a new Chief Rabbi committed to a programme of Jewish renewal. These opportunities lead us to believe that change is worthwhile as well as essential at this time.

In this chapter we describe both the crisis and the opportunity facing the United Synagogue and outline a basic strategy for the future.

## THE FINANCIAL SITUATION

The United Synagogue is now facing the most serious financial crisis of its 122-year history. Our financial review, arising from a thorough investigation by a leading firm of accountants, reveals that:

- \* The presentation of financial information fails to give any meaningful warning as to the seriousness of the current financial situation.
- \* The net underlying deficit for 1992 is likely to be in the region of £1.5 million - the equivalent of almost £80 for every male member of the United Synagogue.
- \* The organisation has moved from the position of a cash surplus throughout most of the 1980s to the point where it is in danger of exceeding its bank-borrowing facilities of £7.75 million by the end of this year.
- \* The United Synagogue has borrowed from its pension fund and the Funeral Expenses Scheme (FES) and does not have the financial resources to fully repay these loans.
- \* The assets shown in the balance sheet are over-valued and, at a realistic valuation, do not cover liabilities.

What emerges is that, at the very top of its borrowing facility, locked into illiquid and over-valued assets, borrowing in addition from its pensioners, and devoid of a strategy for increasing membership or for local fund-raising, the organisation has responded by minimising the appearance of the problem through a series of superficial accounting procedures, applying a moderate brake on expenditure and increasing the tax burden on a declining membership base.

**This is a completely inadequate response to the severity of the problem.**

To obtain an objective professional analysis of the financial situation of the United Synagogue, we retained the services of a leading firm of accountants, Levy Gee. A summary of their full report is on page 183. The following brief survey, prepared by the Review's financial team, highlights the main findings of this report.

The survey sets out the situation as we encountered it. It leads us to one simple conclusion - that systematic and comprehensive change is essential to the survival of the United Synagogue.

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

### 1. Review of financial statements

The 1991 accounts of the United Synagogue fail to meet the basic criteria of transparency and accountability (see page 34).

Whilst, as one would expect from audited (albeit qualified) accounts, they are technically correct, they fail to reflect the imminent financial crisis facing the United Synagogue.

Indeed, as the following report will show, the 1991 financial statements continue an inconsistent pattern of financial reporting. They obscure the underlying income and expenditure and net asset position of the United Synagogue as an operational body; they fail to make sufficient provision for likely substantial bad debts; they fail to realistically value the major assets; most importantly, they fail to give any meaningful warning to the members of the scale of the United Synagogue's problems.

Over the past decade the accounts of the United Synagogue have changed in form and substance. They now contain substantially more information and better represent the level of financial detail that should be expected of an organisation with turnover in excess of £7 million. Much of the improved level of reporting reflects increased regulatory requirements placed upon charities.

However, the history of the financial statements of the United Synagogue is one of restatement, reclassification and, for external readers, confusion. In three of the past six years the previous year's figures have been restated in the following year's set of accounts, making it near impossible to determine trends. These changes relate mainly to reclassification of the treatment of investments and separate funds. The inclusion of the funds of the Funeral Expenses Scheme has, for example, added almost £1 million to the level of investments in the 1991 balance sheet. Like the Burial Society, it was not deemed to be a fund of the United Synagogue before 1990.

Although the financial crisis is at the core the United Synagogue's problems, the deficit of £1.5 million in the 1991 accounts is not referred to in either the report of the President or of the Chief Executive. Whilst 'a shortfall in operational activities' is mentioned in the treasurers' report, there is little explanation of its causes, or why it was substantially in excess of budget. There is only an inference that the excess over budget was due to a shortfall in income. In fact the payover from the constituent synagogues was only marginally below budget. There is no mention of the fact that only education among the cost centres remained within budget, indicating that the budgetary inaccuracy was at least partly due to cost-control problems. The failure to meet budget is also hidden by the fact that the management accounts show only **revised** 1991 projections as a comparison, which are naturally closer to actual, rather than showing the comparison with the original budget. Whilst it is acceptable to show revised forecasts, it is standard practice to retain the original budget for comparative purposes. This allows for better understanding, accountability and control. It is also interesting to note that in 1990 the United Synagogue departed from its practice of showing the estimates for the following year in the accounts of the year just ended. The 1992 estimates contained in the separate management accounts are in fact, only for the General and Charitable Purposes Fund and will be therefore difficult to compare against the full results of the United Synagogue as shown in the financial statements.

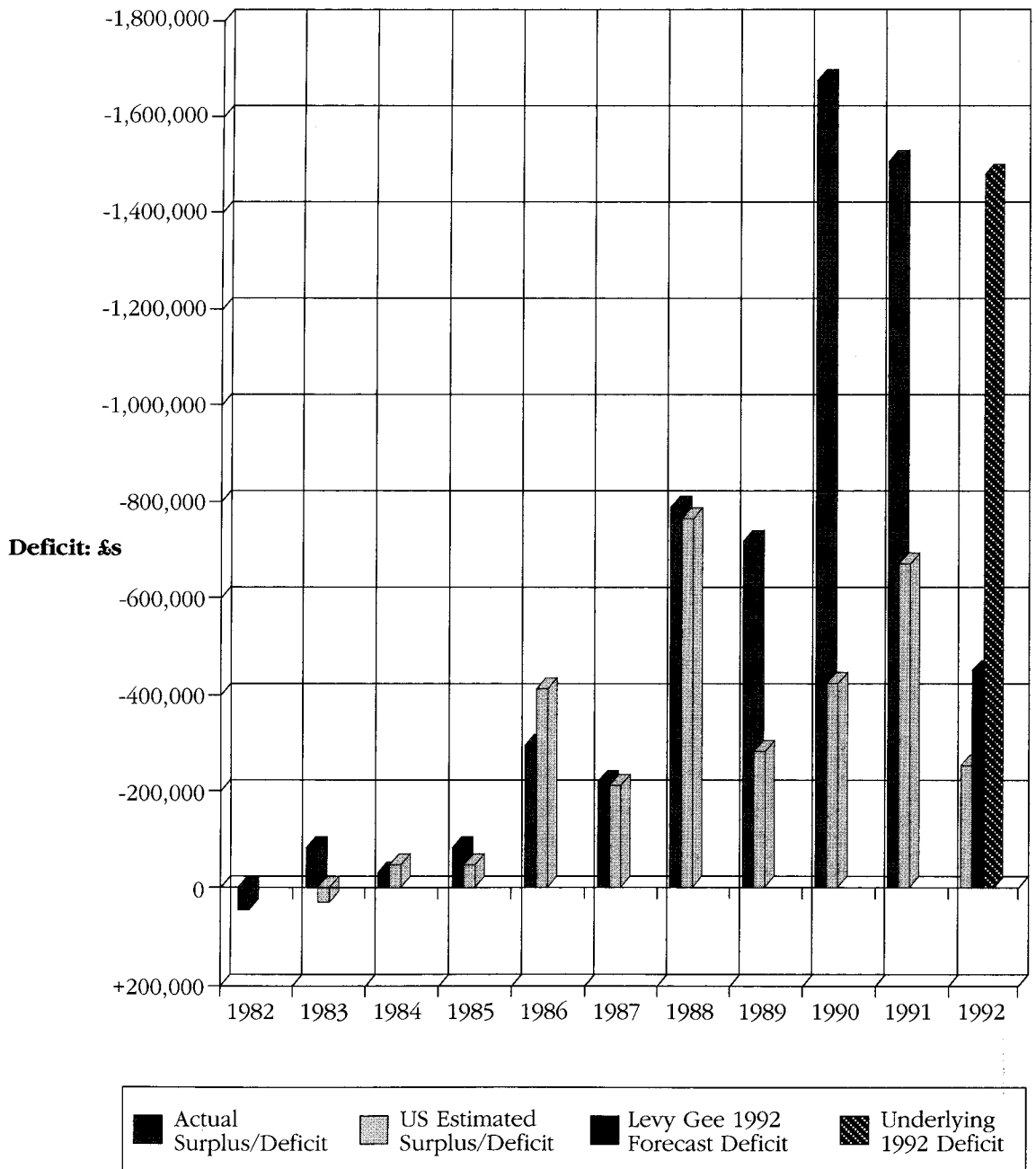
There are also a number of technical and valuation issues with regard to the accounts. These are dealt with later in this report.

## 2. Income and expenditure

The financial problems at the United Synagogue have been brought about by a number of years in which expenditure has exceeded income. Until the mid 1980s the United Synagogue's expenditure was broadly in line with income. As Graph 1 shows, a substantial change took place after 1985. Deficits became the norm and their size grew rapidly. In 1991, the deficit of £1.5 million was equivalent to over 20% of total constituent synagogue income.

*The graph below shows the actual surplus/deficit of the United Synagogue since 1982 compared with the United Synagogue's original budgets. Due to the problems of restatement of prior-year figures in the following year's accounts, the figures used are extracted from the original year's accounts and ignore any restatement of comparatives.*

**GRAPH 1. NET SURPLUS/DEFICIT COMPARED TO ESTIMATES**



Source: United Synagogue Financial and Management Accounts 1982-1991 plus Levy Gee forecast for 1992



These deficits have arisen as a result of expenditure growth outstripping income. Below are illustrative examples of the rise in certain categories of income and expenditure over the last decade.

	<u>1991</u>	<u>£000s</u> <u>1981</u>	<u>% Growth</u>
Constituent synagogue income	6,891	2,704	155
Synagogue expenditure	(5,063)	(1,778)	185
Education (net cost)	(1,214)	(406)	199
Central administration	(970)	(362)	168
Shechitah (net deficit)	(228)	-	n/a

*The Chief Rabbi/Beth Din comparisons have been excluded due to the distortion in the 1991 figure caused by the overlap between the appointment of the current Chief Rabbi and the retirement of his predecessor.*

It may be noted that central administration costs have risen broadly in line with constituent synagogue income, with other areas of expenditure having risen more rapidly.

Whilst the deficits became a significant problem from 1985 onwards, until the late 1980s the United Synagogue had a reasonable record of forecasting the deficits and thereby giving the membership some forewarning of the levels of expenditure. As Graph 1 above shows, from 1989 onwards the United Synagogue seriously underestimated the size of the future year's deficit. This may have reduced not only the ability of the honorary officers to control the level of expenditure, but also general confidence in the financial management of the United Synagogue.

It is within the context of misforecasting future deficits that the current year's forecast of a deficit of £254,000 should be examined. This forecast represents only the deficit on the General and Charitable Purposes Fund. Our investigating accountants estimated, at the time of their review, that the **reported** deficit of the United Synagogue (including the Burial Society and FES) is likely to be in excess of £400,000. This estimate does not reflect any adjustments for controversial accounting policies or for one-off items. The following table shows what we believe to be the underlying deficit by adjusting for such items:

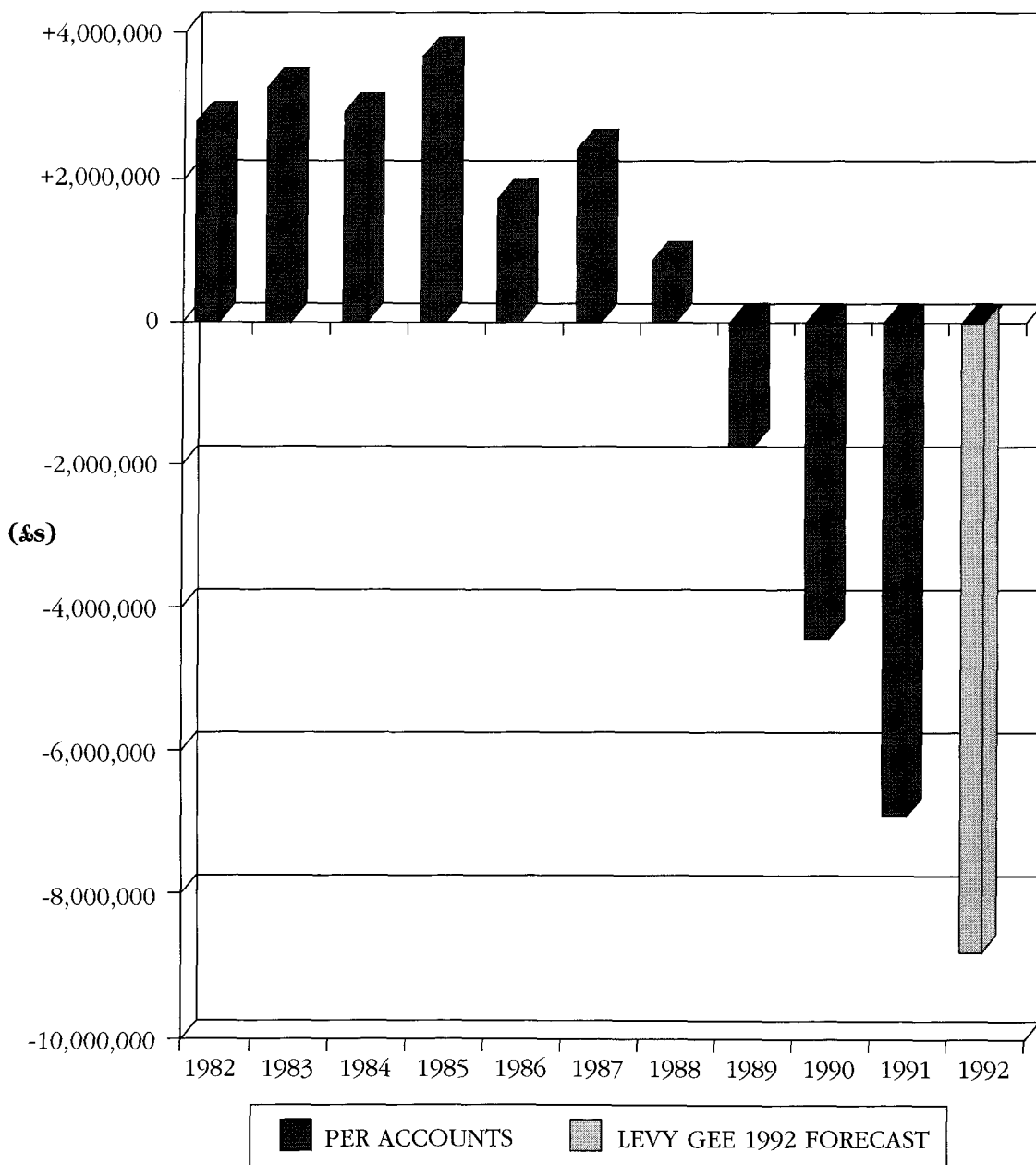
	(£000's)
<b>Estimated 'reported' 1992 deficit</b>	<b>(425)</b>
Less:	
i <b>Sale of assets</b>	
Levy Gee estimate that these sales will reduce the reported deficit by £505,000. Whilst technically correctly accounted for, these are one-off in nature and therefore distort the underlying deficit.	(505)
ii <b>Burial Society grants</b>	
The Burial Society is forecast to contribute a large part of its surplus to other United Synagogue activities. This surplus has been generated largely at the expense of an actuarial deficit in the FES. The issue is dealt with in detail in section 6. It should be noted that the Burial Society has been included in the United Synagogue consolidated accounts only since 1990.	(372)
iii <b>Synagogue interest receivable</b>	
The current practice is to credit the Income and Expenditure Account with the full interest due from a synagogue on the outstanding advance owed to the United Synagogue without regard to either its recoverability or to the interest actually paid. We believe that where any synagogue is unable to meet its interest charge in full, only the interest actually paid should be recognised as income. Levy Gee estimate that this treatment would add £184,000 to the 1992 deficit.	(184)
<b>Net 'underlying' deficit (£000s)</b>	<b>(1,486)</b>

In order to eliminate this underlying deficit for 1992 alone, there would have to be either substantial cuts in expenditure or an additional levy in excess of almost £80 per male member. This levy, in practice, would have to be set at a higher level to reflect those members who would be unable or unwilling to meet this additional sum.

### 3. Debt

As can be seen from Graph 2 below, the United Synagogue maintained a healthy balance of cash and investments up to the late 1980s. The balances peaked at over £3 million in 1985. From 1989 onwards the United Synagogue moved into a net debt position, which has continued to worsen. Whilst part of this rise in borrowings can be attributed to increased advances to constituent synagogues, more fundamentally it reflects the deficits occurring from the mid 1980s onwards.

**GRAPH 2. BANK BALANCES AND SHORT-TERM INVESTMENTS  
(EXCLUDING FES)**



Source: United Synagogue Financial Accounts plus Levy Gee 1992 Forecast

This growth in debt is despite asset sales and borrowing from both the United Synagogue's pension fund and the Funeral Expenses Scheme. Our investigating accountants forecast that the net borrowings of the United Synagogue (excluding the FES) **after full repayment of loans from the FES and pension fund** will be almost £9 million by the end of 1992. This is significantly above the United Synagogue's bank facility limit. In practice, the United Synagogue may be able to temporarily delay the necessity for additional borrowings by not fully repaying the monies owed to the pension fund and FES. We consider repayment of both of these loans to be of the highest priority.

As stated above, in addition to using all cash reserves and borrowing from the pension fund and FES, the United Synagogue has become heavily indebted to the bank. The debt is due for repayment in September 1996. It is difficult to envisage how this money will be repaid.

**The possibilities are:**

**i Sale of assets**

The single most valuable asset shown in the United Synagogue's accounts is Woburn House. We believe its value to be no greater than £1.6 million (see section 4). In the submission to the Charity Commission to seek their approval for the bank borrowing, the United Synagogue stated that it is relying on proceeds from the sale of Woburn House of £4 million and additional sums from the sale of 3 small synagogues to repay the bank debt. A sale at an acceptable price in current market conditions is highly unlikely. The other assets, synagogues and related buildings, are generally illiquid and the timing of any sale or potential proceeds is uncertain.

**ii Repayment of synagogue advances**

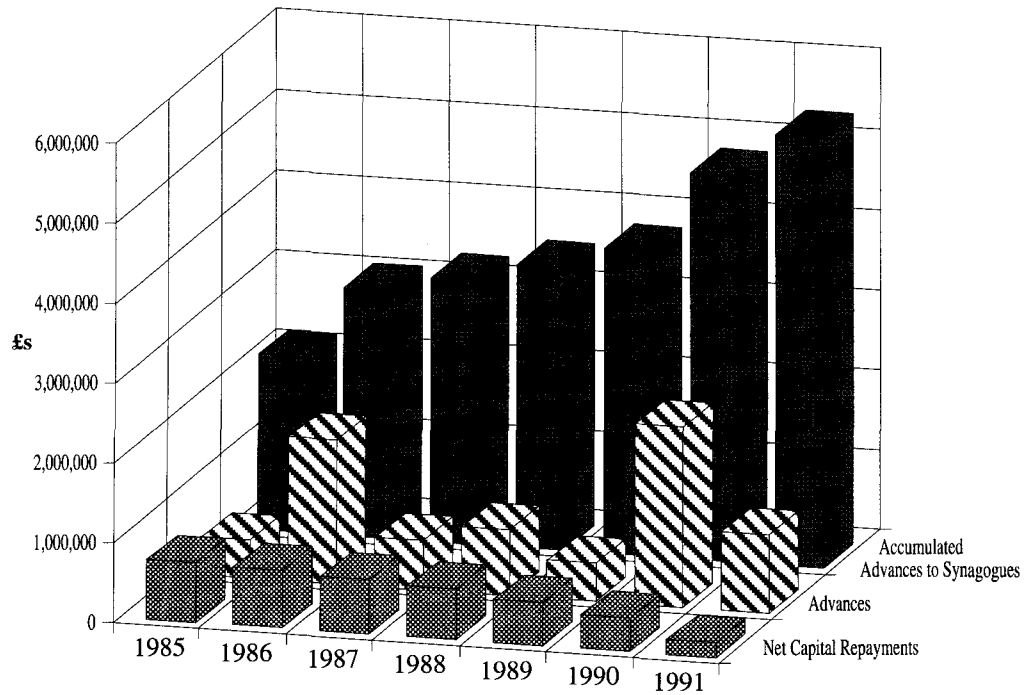
Whilst some repayment of synagogue advances can be expected, the problems of irrecoverability are dealt with in section 4. As Graph 3 over page shows, the United Synagogue has for many years lent more money to synagogues than it has received in capital repayments. Even if all new lending to synagogues is stopped, the ability of the communities to repay their advances is limited. As an example, in 1991 even if no further capital had been advanced, total outstanding debt due from the synagogues after the addition of interest would, in aggregate, have been reduced by less than £500,000. To date, constituent synagogues' repayments have not been used to reduce the term bank loan, either by establishing a sinking fund or reducing the actual debt balance.

*Graph 4 over page, shows the level of accumulated advances to synagogues, actual advances in each year and net aggregate capital repayments after the addition of interest to the capital balances.*

**iii Membership**

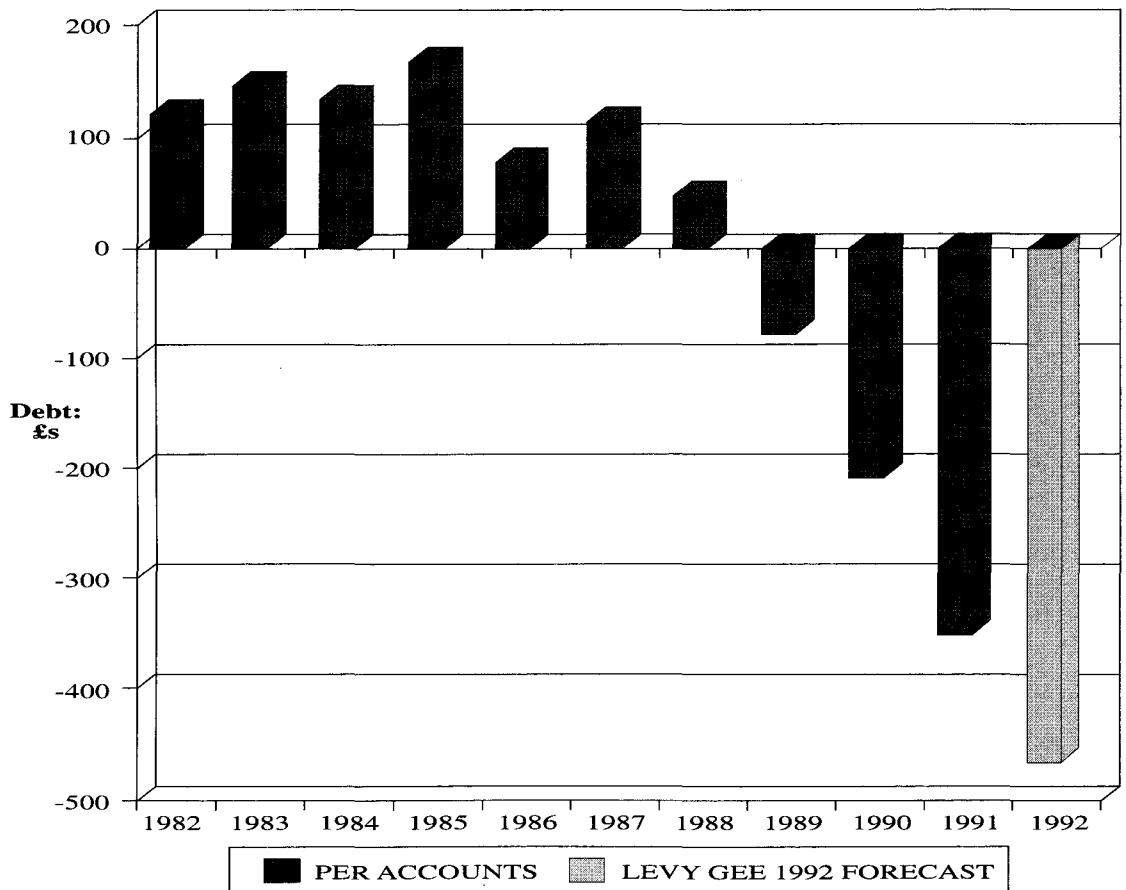
It appears that the only way in which the debt can be paid off as scheduled would be a levy on individual members. Our reporting accountants estimate that total debt as shown in Graph 4 is expected to be in excess of £450 per full male member by the end of 1992. This figure represents the amount that would have to be raised from each member, but in reality a much higher levy would be required, as a number of members would be unable or unwilling to make such a payment.

**GRAPH 3. ADVANCES TO SYNAGOGUES AND ANNUAL REPAYMENTS**



Source: United Synagogue Financial Accounts

**GRAPH 4. UNITED SYNAGOGUE BANK DEBT PER MALE MEMBER.**



Source: United Synagogue Financial Accounts plus Levy Gee 1992 Forecast

The auditors have, this year, indicated some degree of concurrence with our view by qualifying the audit report on the grounds of uncertainty over the value of Woburn House. At the £1.6 million value, the cash received after moving costs is unlikely to provide sufficient income to cover rentals on an alternative site. Woburn House, in its current condition, may therefore represent as much of a liability as an asset.

A similar overvaluation relates to the short leasehold property at Hamilton Terrace. Its value in the accounts is shown at £1.1 million, yet an external valuation in July 1991 has valued the leasehold interest at £400,000. It is difficult to fully understand why the treasurers consider it appropriate to value Woburn House at an historic market value, yet Hamilton Terrace continues to be shown at cost less accumulated depreciation. Whilst there may be an arguable justification for this inconsistency, the net effect is to over-value both properties relative to their true worth.

#### **Advances to constituents**

After fixed assets, the largest asset of the United Synagogue is the advances it makes to its constituent members. However, these advances can be truly recognised as assets only if there is a likelihood of repayment. In 1991, of the balance of £5.2 million due from constituent synagogues, those representing 57% of the total balances were unable to meet even their interest burden, let alone repay capital.

Some synagogues also received additional capital advances to cover operational deficits or repairs. These synagogues appear to have cashflow problems already and repayment of these advances must also be considered uncertain. On an optimistic assumption that only those unable to meet current interest payments represent doubtful debts, a 50% provision on those balances would still represent a £1.5 million reduction in net assets.

#### **Debtors**

The other major area of concern over value is in the section of the accounts headed Debtors and Prepayments. These are shown at £1.685 million, which in itself is a large sum for a synagogal body. This total consists of rental income due, tax repayable, loans to employees or others connected to the United Synagogue and sundry other items. Our investigating accountants estimate that the full recovery of balances totalling £548,000 may be doubtful. These doubtful debtors include sums owed by companies in receivership and loans to former-employees or their spouses. Not included in the above doubtful balance are certain loans to current employees which are intentionally or unintentionally interest-free. Again, providing at the rate of 50% for these doubtful debts suggests a write-off of £274,000.

#### **Summary**

In summary, a more realistic valuation of the net realisable worth of the United Synagogue would be as follows:

	£000s	£000s
<b>Reserves, per accounts</b>		<b>4,889</b>
Less: FES reserves	(1,332)	
Bushey Road	(447)	
Woburn House overvaluation	(2,400)	
Hamilton Terrace overvaluation	(738)	
Provision for synagogue debtors	(1,500)	
Provision for other debtors	(274)	
		(6,691)
<b>Net deficiency</b>		<b>£(1,802)</b>

The net deficiency of £1.8 million represents a more realistic view of the United Synagogue's financial position without resort to the sales of synagogues and related assets.

## 5. Constituent Synagogues

The financial problems of the United Synagogue are not purely a matter of a central organisation spending beyond its means. The constituent synagogues have not achieved an aggregate surplus since 1987. The position is actually substantially worse than shown by the figures in individual synagogues' accounts, which do not deduct interest payable on advances owed to the United Synagogue. Whilst some of the interest payments would have been met from 'building funds', a significant amount of the £647,000 interest charged to constituent synagogues in 1991 would, under normal accounting principles, have gone to increase their 1991 deficits. Therefore the individual synagogue accounts often do not show the true underlying financial performance of those synagogues.

The position regarding repairs and renewals is similar. Whilst some synagogues make a provision out of annual income and expenditure, a number make either no provision or insufficient provision. This may show itself in additional 'capital' advances having to be made to these synagogues in respect of items that are in reality repairs because there are insufficient reserves within the synagogue to meet ongoing maintenance costs.

One of the major functions of the United Synagogue is to be a bank to the new and growing communities to ensure communal regeneration. The ability to meet this need has now been compromised as a result of past deficits and loans that have not been repaid. Loans have been made to synagogues apparently in excess of their capacity to meet these commitments. In one case the debt per member is now in excess of £2,000 (and growing). As discussed in section 4, it is likely that over 50% of current balances will never be repaid in full unless the synagogue or associated properties are sold.

## 6. Funeral Expenses Scheme (FES)

The FES is most easily likened to a life assurance scheme operating within the United Synagogue, collecting yearly subscriptions from the members of the United Synagogue and in return providing free burial for the member and his dependents. This is done by using the funds of the FES to meet the costs of the burial charged by the Burial Society.

The diagram opposite shows the flow of funds from the FES to the Burial Society and onwards to United Synagogue general funds. It also shows that part of the payments by members to the FES have been withheld by the United Synagogue to meet its cash requirements. This loan amounted to £533,000 at 31 December 1991. It should be noted that the loaning of money by the FES to the United Synagogue is contrary to the by-laws of the Burial Society. A Stoy Hayward report dated February 1991 recommended the immediate repayment of the loan or an amendment to the by-laws.

Like any life assurance scheme or pension fund the FES has a duty to invest its policyholders' contributions, and through careful stewardship ensure that there are sufficient funds to meet future calls against its policies. Any yearly surplus of income over expenditure is misleading, as this purely reflects that in a particular year less was paid out in funeral costs than was received in contributions.

The important factor is to ensure that the FES has sufficient funds and reserves to meet the future liabilities of an ageing community with a shrinking base of contributors. Already almost half of the full male members of the United Synagogue are over sixty. This future liability is measured by an actuarial valuation, which was last carried out at the end of 1989. **This showed an actuarial deficit of £2 million.** A further actuarial review will take place at the end of 1992. As the FES incurred its first annual deficit since the early 1980s in 1991 (when it might have been expected to be building up reserves, given the demographic profile of the community), it is likely that this actuarial shortfall will have increased. Unless this shortfall is reversed, in the future there may be insufficient funds to provide burials as members die. This is clearly an unacceptable situation.

The bank debt is currently secured on a number of United Synagogue properties, including synagogues, which were valued in total at £10.25 million in July/August 1991. As detailed in section 4, we believe the value of Woburn House to be no greater than £1.6 million (compared with the original valuation prepared for the bank of £4.5 million). Even if the other properties have maintained their value despite a declining property market, the bank is no longer fully secured on its loans of £7.75 million. Further security may therefore have to be granted to the bank, particularly if any additional loans are required.

We believe that whilst it is acceptable to incur borrowings in order to finance capital projects, the routine financing of revenue deficits through bank debt is imprudent. The interest on this debt will be approaching £1 million in 1992 and it represents a major burden to the future and scope of activities of the United Synagogue.

#### 4. Reserves/valuation of assets

The 1991 balance sheet of the United Synagogue shows net assets of £4.9 million. This apparently relatively healthy position actually masks a serious deficiency in net realisable assets.

##### Reserves

Only £939,000 of the reserves are deemed to be **general reserves** for general usage. The balance of the reserves are for specified or restricted purposes. It is arguable that some of these are properly credited to the United Synagogue. However, even on a wide definition, it is our belief that the Funeral Expenses Scheme reserves of £1.3 million should not be included within the United Synagogue's balance sheet. This issue is discussed in more detail in section 6.

##### Fixed assets

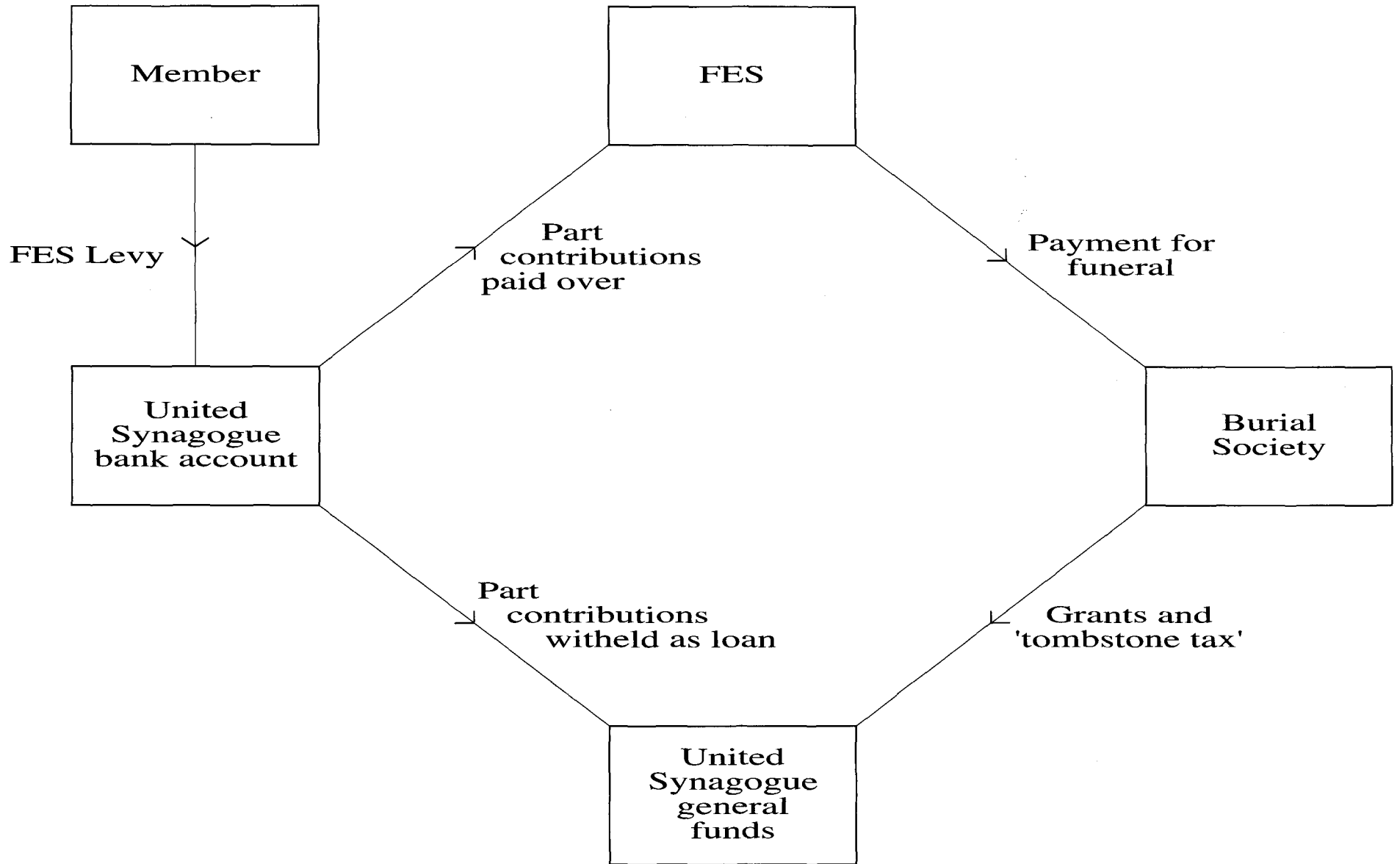
The valuations of a number of assets within the United Synagogue's accounts are in question. On the positive side, synagogues are not shown as assets. We fully concur with this view, as an asset has no real worth if there is no possibility of disposing of it and in many cases the synagogues are held under restrictive covenants. However, we also consider that for the purposes of consistency it is inappropriate to include the road at Bushey Cemetery at £447,000 in the accounts, when it similarly has little alternative use or realisable value and the cemetery itself has been excluded from fixed assets.

The major asset shown in the accounts is Woburn House. It is currently valued in the accounts at £4 million. Whilst this valuation might have been realisable at the height of the property boom, it now appears to be unrealistic. A simple calculation based on figures provided by the Review's professional advisors shows the extent of the overvaluation:

<b>Assumptions</b>	
Net square footage	36,354 sq ft
Rent per square foot	£ 15
Annual rental	<b>£ 545,310</b>
<b>Valuation</b>	
Valuation at 10% yield	£ 5.45 million
Less costs of refurbishment and sale	£(3.25) million
Cost of deed of variation	£(0.50) million
Payment to Board of Deputies	£(0.10) million
<b>Net value to United Synagogue</b>	<b>£ 1.60 million</b>

In today's market, even the above figures would represent an extremely satisfactory outcome. On the basis of these figures, a rent in excess of £20 per square foot would have to be achieved to realise a £4 million net price. The treasurers' report does state that a £500,000 provision has been made for the diminution in value of Woburn House (to £4 million), but that they 'anticipate (that this) will be written back in due course, on the sale of the property'. We consider this comment to be inappropriate and unjustified.

# FES - FLOW OF FUNDS





The actuarial deficit reflects future income and costs projections. Whilst any deficit can be recouped by charging members more, this does not address the real issue. A major cause of the deficit is related to the cost of the funerals provided by the Burial Society. These costs are artificially inflated because the Burial Society has to make grants to fund other parts of the United Synagogue. In 1992 it is proposed to transfer £400,000 of 'surplus' to other parts of the organisation. This level of surplus is created largely at the expense of FES members, who provide 80% of the total income received by the Burial Society in respect of funerals. The balance of the Burial Society funds mainly derives from the burial of non-members of the FES, tombstone fees, investment income and the income from the reservation of plots. Most of this other income also effectively derives directly or indirectly from United Synagogue members.

Whilst it is traditional to use funds raised from the Burial Society for education, we recommend that the Burial Society and FES should clearly specify the destination of such funds. In any instance, priority should be given to eliminating the actuarial deficit before any Burial Society or FES funds are, directly or indirectly, transferred to other causes.

## 7. Pension fund

The prudent management of a pension fund is the prime responsibility of its trustees. That responsibility is clearly defined as enhancing and protecting the value of the pension fund for the sole benefit of its contributors. It is regrettable that the United Synagogue pension fund trustees have, over recent years, failed in these objectives. It is universally recognised by trustees that the sensible course is for pension funds to be placed in the hands of professional managers whose record in this area is generally good. In fact most professionally managed pension funds, taking advantage of good investment returns of the last decades, have succeeded in enhancing the benefits payable to their pensioners.

For reasons which we have been unable to ascertain, the United Synagogue trustees felt it was better to handle the pension fund management in-house, albeit taking City advice. This was a most unwise decision as not only were the benefits of the general economic boom wasted but investments were made in shares which can only be described as highly speculative. We understand that belatedly the pension fund investments have been transferred to an external fund manager.

*The table, below, shows the performance of the United Synagogue pension fund over the past 5 years compared with an index of other funds, based on information provided by the actuary to the United Synagogue pension fund:*

	% p.a. Return
<b>United Synagogue Portfolio</b>	<b>7.5</b>
<b>Mixed Discretionary Funds Index</b>	
Best Performance	20.2
Median Performance	11.4
Worst Performance	7.9
<b>Indices</b>	
FTA All Share	14.7
FTA Gilts - All Stocks	11.2
FTA Index Linked	8.5
FTA World Index (former-UK)	10.2
JLW Property Index	11.1
Cash	11.8

As can be seen from the table, the United Synagogue pension fund's investment performance is poorer than the worst-performing fund among a survey of mixed discretionary funds. If the funds had just been invested in cash they would have achieved a return significantly in excess of that achieved, with a much lower level of risk. To put this lower return into context, £100 invested in the United Synagogue pension fund in 1986 would now be worth £144 compared to £172 if invested in the median-performing discretionary fund.

In addition to self-management of the fund, the trustees also allowed funds to be borrowed from the pension fund for use by the United Synagogue. Again we do not have access to the reasoning at the time, but we have to say that there can be no reason - virtually under any circumstances - to justify this course, although it was at the time technically legal.

Further, we are disturbed that the loan was made on terms which seem to be ignoring both the risk factor and strict terms of repayment. The interest charge made by the trustees to the United Synagogue should have been substantially in excess of normal rates paid to reflect what by any standards was a high-risk investment. The repayment terms should also have been strictly laid down and firmly enforced. At the present time we can find no evidence of the ability of the United Synagogue to fully repay this money, as its financial position is extremely stretched.

As a cumulative result of these actions, the members of the pension fund were recently advised that there would be no enhancement of their pension for the first time in 10 years. Despite this freeze on benefits, which may have been a prudent decision, the 1991 actuarial valuation of the pension fund when completed may still show a deficit. This is at a time when many occupational pension funds are in substantial surplus due to a positive real rate of return on their investments and often notwithstanding the upgrading of benefits to beneficiaries.

We strongly recommend that the pension fund should appoint independent trustees to protect its members' interests. This would provide safeguards against perceived or real conflicts of interest and would help add professional expertise to the operation and management of these funds.

## **8. Audit Review Committee**

In July, Council members received two reports from head office. The first, presented by the Audit Review Committee - a new independent body established by the Council to monitor financial performance in relation to budget - gave a list of seven adverse variances to budget in comparison to two minor favourable variances. Of these, the position regarding synagogue income caused the committee to comment '*that the cash resources of the United Synagogue are being eroded constantly*', while the state of repayments on borrowing by synagogues prompted reference to '*a massive haemorrhaging cash flow*'.

The second report from the treasurers of the United Synagogue, commenting on the same set of management accounts to the end of May 1992, concluded that '*the only material variation from estimates presented on 19th December 1991 is in respect of the shechitah operation*', and, having assured the reader that the end of year figures would not exceed budget projections in this department went on to add that '*we are still of the opinion that the revised excess of expenditure over income for 1992 will be £316,000*'. Only a month later the treasurers had to admit that they were '*no longer confident that the total cost of this operation (shechitah) will be within the amount estimated*' and increased their forecast deficit from £316,000 to £367,000.

This belated response to the Audit Review Committee's report highlights the unwillingness of the honorary officers to face and respond to the financial crisis in the United Synagogue.

An Audit Review Committee should be a major discipline of corporate governance. We strongly recommend that the committee should have greater powers to obtain direct responses to questions from the honorary officers and employees of the United Synagogue. It should have independent access to the auditors and be responsible for monitoring the adequacy of internal controls, budgeting and financial reporting. Such a body would enhance the accountability of the United Synagogue to its members and help ensure that financial problems are addressed rather than obscured and ignored.

## **SUMMARY: THE FINANCIAL SITUATION FACING THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE**

The financial history of the United Synagogue over the last five years has been one of precipitous decline. No amount of window dressing, financial engineering or soothing explanations can hide the stark fact - the United Synagogue is plunging deeper into debt and moving remorselessly towards insolvency. Our cash flow projection on page 200 shows that its bank facilities are likely to be breached later this year if the known commitments are honoured.

In 1996 the United Synagogue faces a major debt repayment of £5.25 million. There does not appear to be any sinking fund or contingency arrangement for the repayment of this debt. The intention to sell assets, particularly Woburn House, to meet the scheduled repayment is in our opinion over-optimistic. The other major asset supporting this debt is the advances to the constituent synagogues. In several cases there is no repayment of capital or scheduling of repayments to be concurrent with the United Synagogue's own repayment to the bank. Indeed, we doubt if substantial amounts of this debt will ever be collected.

**All the historical pools of cash have been siphoned to meet urgent current commitments.** Several have still to be met - the pension fund, for example, should be repaid immediately. The physical fabric of many synagogues is deteriorating, and, according to the internal estimates of the property department, major expenditure needs have been identified. Further capital demands from synagogues and the Burial Society are imminent and inexplicably continue to be promised.

**The soothing words have to cease.** Unwillingness to face the truth must be reversed. The facade of normality has to stop. By sharing the real facts with the membership the United Synagogue can be saved. It will be painful, but our recommendations are an attempt to address the core issues and to provide a realistic response.

## CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY

### LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN LEADERSHIP

The proceedings of the United Synagogue Council over the past year have been a depressing spectacle. They have illustrated only too well Abraham Lincoln's famous phrase 'A house divided against itself cannot stand'. Them and Us. Aggressive attacks rebuffed by equally impulsive and ill-directed responses. An embattled lay leadership warding off wave after wave of verbal assault, whilst the real issues remain untouched and the crisis deepens.

Perhaps the most significant shortcoming was the failure to see it coming. Anticipating problems and being prepared with solutions is the responsibility of good leadership.

There have been mistakes, miscalculations, poor management and financial errors. One cannot ignore these, and it would be wrong to deny that they have aggravated and accelerated a decline in circumstances that might even have brought growth. But we do not intend to dwell on the past except where it is necessary to do so in order to illustrate the possible future. Our purpose is constructive - in the spirit in which the task was given to us - and we acknowledge the foresight of the lay leadership in commissioning such a review at this critical moment.

We believe that the crisis in confidence directed towards the current lay leadership is in part a criticism, not of the individuals, but rather of the whole system which determines who the lay leadership will be. The current organisational structure produces lay leadership that is far from reflecting the full range of talent available. It is weighted in practice, for example, against the participation of younger members. We also believe that the continued non-involvement of women in the Council of the United Synagogue deprives the organisation of an invaluable leadership resource, denies a large proportion of the membership a say in the affairs of the organisation, and is an issue that must be addressed with all due urgency by the Chief Rabbi and the Beth Din.

The corporate tree opposite lies at the heart of the United Synagogue's problems. It represents a philosophy of centralisation that has become increasingly obsolete over the past decades, both in business and in government. In practice, what starts as a descriptive family tree becomes an organisational plan. It embodies a central core through which every decision must pass, and at the centre of that a president who has wide powers and even wider influence.

The President heads a complex chain of command. There are few checks and balances, the essential ingredients of voluntary and communal life. Technically the Council of the United Synagogue is the guardian of that role, but perhaps for reasons of communal harmony, it has allowed itself to lose control of the ambitions of the honorary officers.

The plans of the honorary officers were praiseworthy in concept but unsound in practice. They were to expand the horizons of the United Synagogue as a central body to include every Jewish activity. Everything would be controlled from the central organisation. This would include not only the multifaceted range of activities indicated on the corporate tree but also a constant stream of new projects such as a house magazine and an Israel office. Ambitions were high.

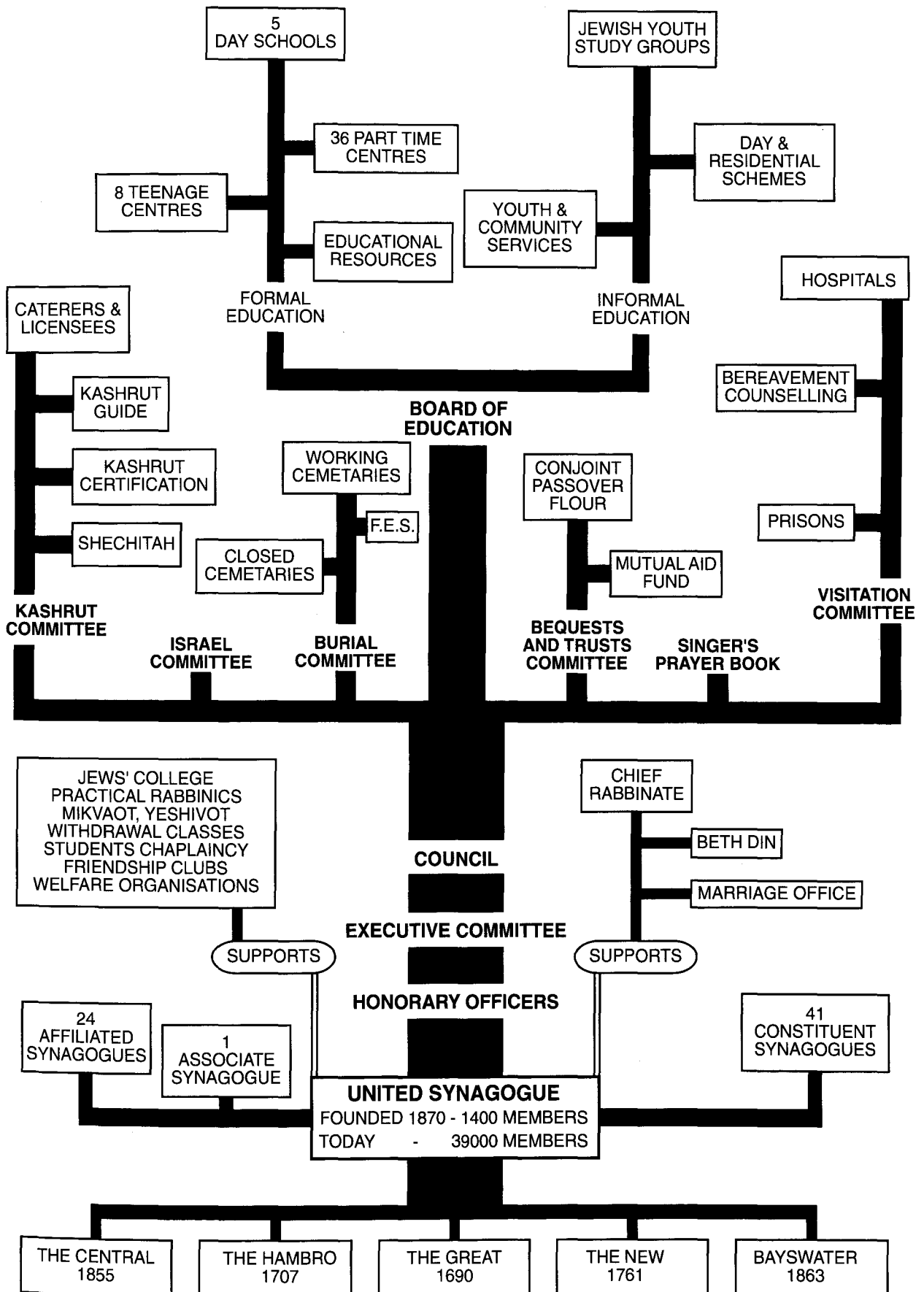
There were three flaws in this approach, each, in itself, likely to be fatal.

**Firstly, the funds were never available. The United Synagogue has high taxing abilities which it exploited, but these were insufficient. The centre had virtually no ability to collect voluntary funds, usually the main source of finance for communal activities.**

**Secondly, the controllers, the bureaucracy, lacked the organisational resources and skills to develop and monitor every expansionist policy that it was asked to oversee. And the working environment of Woburn House was not conducive to the recruitment of staff of calibre.**

**Thirdly, there is no evidence of serious research, cash flow analysis or consideration of the long-term consequences of each immediate action.**

# The United Synagogue Family Tree



The outcome of these policies has been a massive deficit, the abandonment of many projects, the elimination of the financial reserves, and an unsustainable overdraft. This has led to internal dissent and a reduction in the influence of the honorary officers.

This analysis is only one way of looking at the decline. It is intended merely as a backdrop and need not be put under the microscope. The reality is the situation we face today.

The consequences have been keenly felt at a local level. In brief it is the story of a losing battle against the centre. With communities' main funds being transferred to the central pool, the resource for local decision-making is minimised. The responsibility for local initiatives is delegated to the centre. Not only the Office of the Chief Rabbi and the Beth Din, education and visitation, but even financial administration and property management are remote departments of head office.

The most consistent theme of the considerable number of discussions we have attended during the past few months has been criticism of the highly centralised nature of the United Synagogue. Throughout the whole review we found hardly a voice raised in support of the system.

It will take more than mere rule changes to create an organisation that can take advantage of the rich vein of human resources available to it. The crisis of confidence in the leadership will not be fully resolved until a major reconstruction of attitudes and practices has taken place.

## **SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENTS: THE CHANGED POSITION OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE WITHIN ANGLO-JEWRY**

The recent Board of Deputies investigation into the state of synagogue membership (see page 269) makes fascinating and disturbing reading. Synagogue affiliation is, in general, declining. The centrist Orthodox element, largely the United Synagogue, is worst hit of all.

It was in the days when the United Synagogue **was** Anglo-Jewry that much of our current communal infrastructure was developed. From the Office of the Chief Rabbi and the London Beth Din to the Board of Education and chaplaincy, it was assumed by the community and by the leadership that it was the responsibility of the United Synagogue to provide and that it could provide out of the taxation of its members who were, after all, the vast majority of the community.

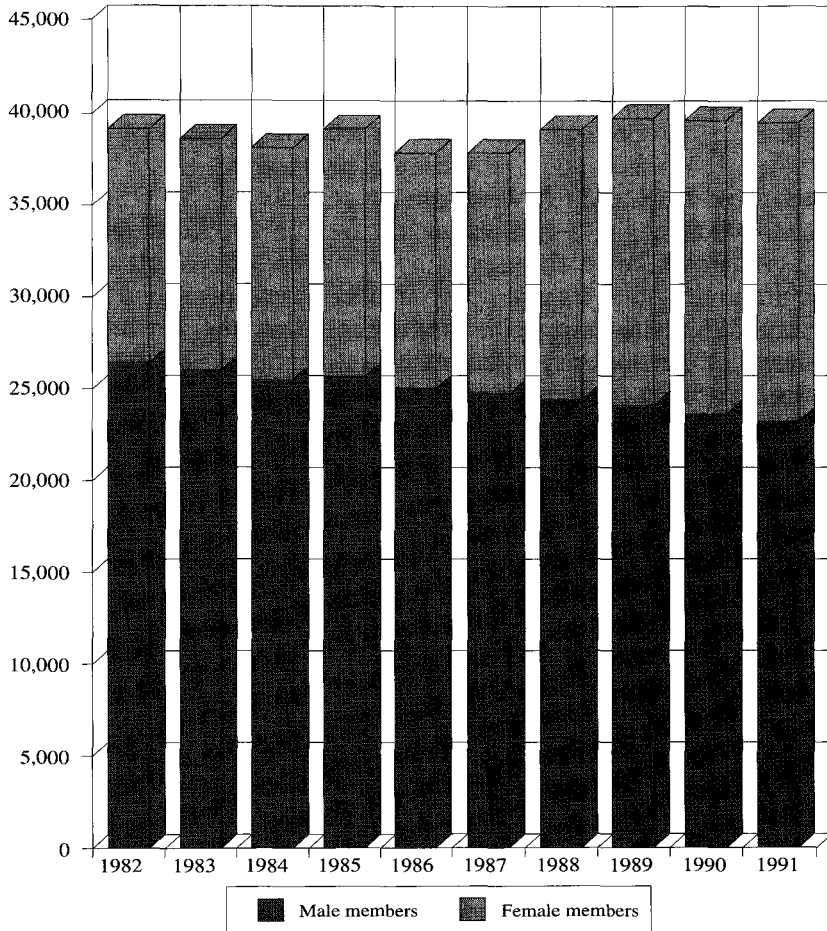
This reasoning no longer applies. The United Synagogue no longer represents a vast majority within the community, and although membership statistics have been boosted slightly over the past few years with the increase in women taking out membership in their own right, the adult male membership (the main source of synagogue income) has declined steadily for the past ten years. This ominous trend accentuates concern about the current financial crisis.

Under the present arrangements, there is little prospect of a reversal. The community is ageing, and it is assimilating. We can safely say that, given contemporary demographic trends, the size of the market will continue to decline. Therefore, to support the current level of communal activity, the market share of the United Synagogue would have to increase. We believe that the United Synagogue as it is currently constituted has little, if any, hope of competing on those terms.

### **Renaissance in Jewishness within Anglo-Jewry**

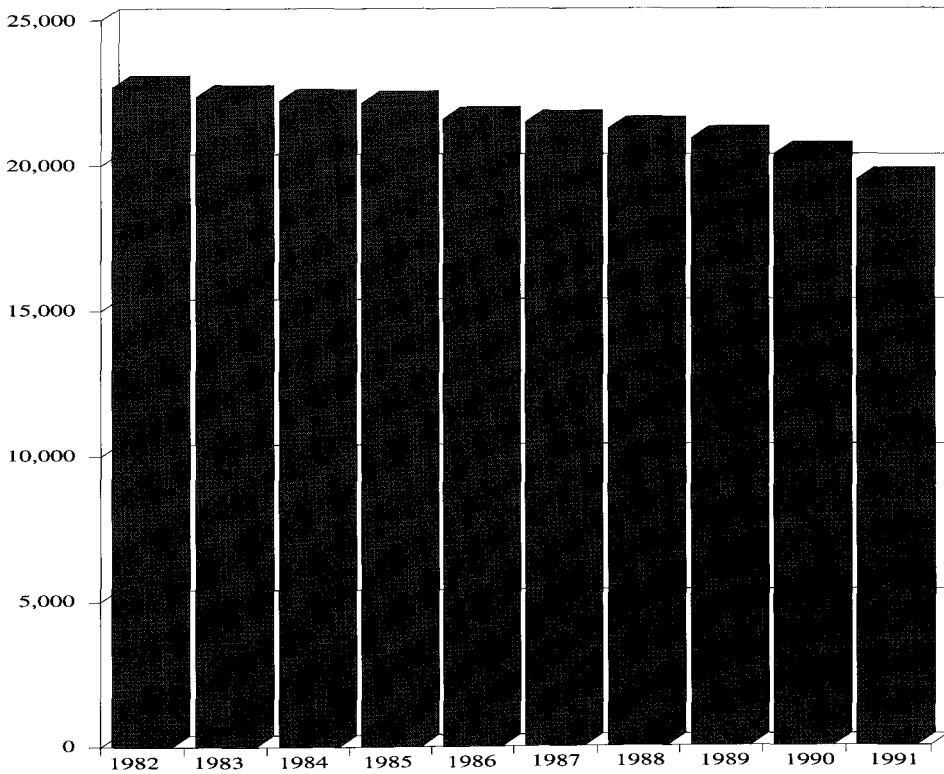
The decline in the fortunes of the United Synagogue has come at a time when many good things are happening in Anglo-Jewry. There is a sense of renaissance in certain areas. Increased participation in Jewish life at all levels (though not necessarily under the aegis of the United Synagogue) is transforming the Jewish landscape in this country every day. Kosher shops, kosher restaurants, videos, adult education, Jewish publications, new schools - the list is lengthy and growing.

**TOTAL MEMBERSHIP INCLUDING AFFILIATES AND ASSOCIATES**



Source: United Synagogue Financial Accounts

**CONSTITUENT MALE MEMBERS**



Source: United Synagogue Financial Accounts

The evidence is that belonging to the Jewish people is something that is becoming more, not less, attractive in the 1990s. Jews are seeking more diversity, more choice, more social, ethnic and educational opportunities to be Jewish. Twenty years ago, to be Jewish you went to the synagogue. Today, with an ever-increasing range of facilities and activities available, the synagogue no longer naturally maintains its 'market' position.

### **The United Synagogue's response**

The United Synagogue has reacted instinctively to keep pace with developments. It has enlarged its stake in the day school market, the adult education market, even the shechitah market, in its attempt to maintain pole position in an increasingly fragmented society. What has happened however, is that the United Synagogue has drawn its finances for this expansion from the synagogues, in the form of taxation, and neglected the fact that it is the synagogues themselves that are the heartland of the organisation. The leadership rightly understood that Jewish identity and participation in Jewish life is becoming ever more diverse, but it did not apply that understanding in its policy towards local community life.

Some synagogues have as limited a range of provision today as they had 40 years ago. Others have broadened their range, but usually in spite of, rather than with the assistance of, the centre. And so it is not unnatural that many potential members have turned elsewhere - to the shtieblach, to the Progressive movement, or to social, educational and ethnic venues.

In many ways the United Synagogue has been responsible for the unique cohesiveness of Judaism in the United Kingdom. A comparison with the USA is striking, in that there is, in this country, a broad consensus about what it is to be Jewish. Inter-marriage and assimilation rates, growing as they are, are still noticeably lower here than in America.

Nevertheless, the community senses that we are now at a crossroads, and that without a radical change within the United Synagogue the cohesion can no longer be maintained. Now is a time for change, precisely because it is still possible to change for the better. The United Synagogue can no longer stand as the bastion against the growing pluralisation of the Jewish people, but must rather harness the phenomenon by diversifying, and using its not inconsiderable influence to respond and lead in a rapidly changing Jewish world.

If the United Synagogue is to have a future, then it must recognise the demographic and social trends, as well as the opportunities for renewal, for what they are, and act now.



## OPPORTUNITY AND CHALLENGE: A NEW CHIEF RABBI

It was the Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks who, in a seminal speech in 1989, quoted the late John F Kennedy's observation that the Chinese word for crisis is composed of two characters. One represents danger, the other represents opportunity. There is a danger of the total collapse of our organised community. There is also a great opportunity, represented by some of the sociological patterns we have observed, and embodied in the person of a brilliant, forceful, modern rabbi who now stands at the helm of Anglo-Jewry.

One cannot help but be drawn along by the confidence and enthusiasm of Chief Rabbi Sacks as he discerns some critical and positive contemporary trends. We see the immediate symptoms of the dangerous face of crisis - financial decline, lack of direction, intra-organisational disputes. The Chief Rabbi, in the Jakobovits Chair lecture of 1989, entitled *Building the Jewish Future*, perceives the opportunity:

*Far from being in a state of crisis, the Anglo-Jewish community is undergoing a renaissance. Old patterns of Jewish allegiance are giving way to new configurations. There is a decline in traditional indices of Jewish identity, but others are emerging to take their place.*

The joint measure of danger and opportunity for the United Synagogue is apparent. Again Dr Sacks:

*The Anglo-Jewish community in recent years has become significantly less integrated. The centre of attention has shifted from the centre to the periphery. Independence of the establishment has come to be seen as a precondition of doing something innovative and doing it quickly, flexibly, and well. There is nothing wrong with this development. To the contrary, it has led to some of the most creative projects in Anglo-Jewry in the last twenty years, but it creates a structural crisis as far as the governance of the community is concerned. The community can no longer be considered a coherent organism.*

The United Synagogue, as the "centre" or the "establishment" is losing out. At the same time, an increasingly small taxation base is being called upon to fund an increasingly large and diverse set of communal needs. It takes no great stretch of the imagination to perceive what must ultimately happen to the United Synagogue under these circumstances without a fundamental redirection of the organisation. The Chief Rabbi gives us a clue as to the basis for survival and renewal:

*The question is, is it possible to create new communal structures that are not instruments of representation and control, but instead, forums for discussion, ideas and institutional co-operation. The United Synagogue should, in other words, distinguish leadership from control.*

We believe that this touches on the heart of the answer. The United Synagogue, as a central organisation, should respond to recent trends, not by expanding at the centre, but by allowing the communities within the United Synagogue to expand at a local level.

The will to change, represented by the readiness to review from within, and a new Chief Rabbi who is determined to renew Anglo-Jewry are two of the greatest assets of the United Synagogue today.

## **A STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE**

Where do we go from here? We believe that there is a way forward. We propose a return to the original purpose for which the United Synagogue was founded in the nineteenth century and which has been obscured over the past few years as the centre has taken on a life of its own. We have five principal recommendations to make, each of which directly responds to the problems outlined above. They are:

### **To clarify the mission of the organisation**

The historic responsibility of the United Synagogue is to shape the religious direction of the broad majority of the community. We recommend a restatement of the fundamental aims or 'mission' of the organisation, centred on the principle of 'including Jews within tradition'.

Survival for the United Synagogue depends on its ability to develop a clear sense of purpose - a 'mission' which is credible and relevant. The traditional strength of the United Synagogue lies in its 'inclusivist' approach. This needs to be refocused to meet contemporary circumstances and to help retain and increase membership. Coherence and consistency are important. All facets of the organisation must be responsive to the basic purpose of the United Synagogue, namely, to include as many Jews as possible under the umbrella of traditional Judaism.

This definition of the United Synagogue's aims dictates that the local community and not the centre must be seen as the heart of the enterprise. The role of the centre is limited to supporting the communities in their work. This recommendation particularly addresses the problem of loss of confidence, because it restores a sense of purpose and direction within the organisation.

### **To concentrate resources at the local community level**

The strength of the United Synagogue lies in the strength of its communities. At present synagogues are branches of a centralised bureaucracy. We recommend that synagogues become Independent Trust Communities, administering their own finances, governed by a precise and non-negotiable 'community agreement' with the central organisation under the religious authority of the Chief Rabbi.

The heart of the United Synagogue is local community life. It is in the organisation's own interest to ensure that the bulk of its resources should be retained at a local level. Communities should be given the power and the responsibility to control their own destinies, within the halakhic parameters of Orthodoxy as defined by the Chief Rabbi. Communities are currently being drained to make the centre work, whereas it should be the centre that is harnessed to make communities work.

Diversity has more to offer than uniformity, and local creativity more to contribute than centralised control. The key to financial survival lies not merely in reducing expenditure, but in increasing income. The income of the United Synagogue is its membership. The organisation must develop a viable strategy for reversing the decline in membership. Our recommendations are geared towards reversing the decline by energising and strengthening the local communities who are in the front line of the membership battle.

This recommendation directly addresses the problem of the current financial crisis by reorienting the priorities away from a spending centre and towards local communities, which have the capacity to 'earn' by increasing their membership. It also responds to social trends which suggest the need for more caring and diverse forms of organised Jewish life in the UK.

### **To redefine the leadership role of the centre**

The role of the centre is to serve and not to control local community life. We recommend the restructuring of the central organisation to reflect its role as an enabling body for local communities and as a provider of those religious and other facilities that are best arranged nationally rather than locally.

A new centre needs to be created to respond to the needs of individuals and communities. The centre is too large to be borne by current membership levels. It reflects a philosophy of centralised control which is inappropriate to contemporary circumstances and incapable of realising the true strength and potential of the organisation. The centre is over managed in terms of control and undermanaged in terms of vision.

The centre has lost the trust and confidence of the communities of the United Synagogue. Our recommendations are designed to effect a radical transfer of activity, power and responsibility from the centre to the local community. The central organisation would offer only those functions which could not be provided locally.

This recommendation most immediately addresses the financial issues by reducing the central funding requirement. In the longer term it should also improve morale within the organisation by introducing 'service' as opposed to 'control' attitudes at the centre.

### **To redefine roles and responsibilities in Jewish Education**

Jewish education holds the key to the continuity of our community. We recommend a fundamental change in the roles and responsibilities of the centre, the local community, and educational institutions. We believe that increased responsibility for education must devolve to the primary users of the system - the parents, schools and communities of the United Synagogue. The role of the centre should be limited to supporting training, innovation, curriculum, quality control, and the search for excellence.

A quiet but significant change has been taking place over the last decade, transforming the position of Jewish education in the hierarchy of communal priorities. This is reflected in the growth of the day schools and other indices. The community now recognises that it needs excellence in Jewish education.

To date it has been the centre, 'the establishment', that has taken the lead in providing schools, curricula, teacher training and supply. It is now time for the responsibility for the upkeep of Jewish schools, chadarim and teachers to be left in the hands of the user, leaving the centre the freedom and the resources to help them to strive for excellence and quality.

In part this recommendation addresses the financial crisis, in that it aims to establish more user involvement and to create a more favourable environment for fund-raising. It also responds to the challenge of social change by establishing a diverse educational network capable of supporting future expansion.

### **To nurture the resource of Religious Leadership**

Our rabbis are our senior professionals and the principal instruments with which to reshape the future of the community. We recommend the introduction of an enhanced professional structure within the rabbinate to encourage challenge and personal development. This is set in the context of the autonomy of local communities and the spiritual leadership of the Chief Rabbi.

The most significant professional resource available to the United Synagogue with which to achieve its aims is its rabbinate. Our recommendations are geared towards extracting the maximum benefit from the religious leadership of the organisation. We are recommending a composite set of proposals designed to energise, empower and challenge the rabbinical profession. Training, personal review and development, authorisation, contractual review, and career structure are among the instruments that can be used to effect immediate and systematic change. It will also be necessary to clarify the role and the organisational structure of the Chief Rabbinate as the vehicle for this renewal.

This recommendation most directly responds to the opportunity created by the appointment of a new Chief Rabbi by rationalising a number of disparate elements into a single professional body. It also relates to the current loss of morale by releasing the productive energies of the single most important group of professionals within the organisation.

## **FIVE CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE**

We subjected our recommendations to two trials. The first litmus test was the extent to which they successfully addressed the basic problems facing the organisation. The second was to check them against a set of reasonable standards.

We identified, and embodied into all our thinking and planning, five basic criteria against which each fresh concept was tested. These criteria reflect the world as it is today: the standards with which our members are in daily contact in their professional or business lives. The simple assumption is that management must be contemporary even if the product is spiritual. The criteria are:

### **Choice**

Living in the world of the market economy, our communities and our members expect to have the maximum flexibility to choose what is appropriate for their particular circumstances. This principle should extend to all parts of the organisation. Decisions such as how much should be raised locally and on what services and programmes it should be spent should be, as far as possible, left in the hands of local leaders. Choice should replace standardisation in responding to the diverse needs of the communities and their membership.

### **Social responsibility**

The market economy is restrained from becoming a 'free for all' by a commitment to standards of social responsibility. This 'social market' ensures consideration for the needs of the aged and the ailing, the unemployed and the low income groups. Whilst we must broaden the base of support for our membership and potential members, finance is only a single aspect of that support and should not limit the services that are provided to include as many Jews as possible within the United Synagogue.

### **Subsidiarity**

Subsidiarity - that is, delegating authority and decision-making to the lowest most effective level of management - is born of decentralisation, the sworn enemy of bureaucracy. It is a contemporary term with its roots in history. It first appears in Exodus, 18:21, where Jethro advises Moses to delegate responsibility to small effective groups. Jethro understood the danger of removing power from the individual and the positive benefits of securing involvement across the broadest spectrum.

Our community has an abundance of talent. It can, when stimulated, burst with enthusiasm, yet it withers when ignored or treated, as at Council meetings, with scant respect.

### **Transparency and accountability**

Little about the United Synagogue is transparent, whether it be the Board of Education, the Beth Din, or the accounts. Even the professional eye has difficulty at times in piecing together an accurate picture from the material presented.

Today this is unacceptable. Every aspect of our organisation must be spelled out clearly and without ambivalence. Every demand must clearly state how it is to be funded. Every report must give precise information on which an evaluation can be made.

Each department must be open to scrutiny. If there is a problem it has to be shared, and shared quickly, not hidden away. If there is a windfall it has to be announced. Transparency will bring bad news as well as good news quickly - that is its role.

### **Correct use of subsidy**

Reference to "subsidy" will appear often throughout this review, and it is a respected philosophy of the United Synagogue. The transfer of surplus communal funds to needy causes is a foundation of our tradition. Unfortunately, for many years the word has been a euphemism for increasing the bank overdraft. Subsidy can exist only from surplus. The application of funds on any other formulae is irresponsible and financially damaging.

Each of these five requirements has been found to be lacking in aspects of the work of the United Synagogue, contributing to many of the problems that have now been inherited. We have tried to comply with them all in our recommendations for change as a platform on which to build a new organisation.

## **A TIME FOR CHANGE: SUMMARY**

The United Synagogue is in a state of crisis. Crisis represents danger and opportunity. Danger lies in the financial situation. It makes change essential. Opportunity lies in the social trends which give the United Synagogue a unique chance to lead Jewish renewal in this generation. They make change worthwhile.

The report is presented with the conviction that the United Synagogue has a continuing and important role to play, and that its restoration will create a new and rich spiritual home for Anglo-Jewry. However, the strongest possible consensus developed amongst those who participated in the construction of this report that, without systematic and comprehensive change, now, the United Synagogue will not survive.

**The next 5 chapters map out, in detail, our considered strategy for the survival of the United Synagogue.**

# 2

## INCLUDING JEWS

### THE MISSION OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE

*THE HISTORIC RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE IS TO SHAPE THE RELIGIOUS DIRECTION OF THE BROAD MAJORITY OF THE COMMUNITY. WE RECOMMEND A RESTATEMENT OF THE FUNDAMENTAL AIMS OR 'MISSION' OF THE ORGANISATION CENTRED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF 'INCLUDING JEWS WITHIN TRADITION'. THIS SHOULD BE THE BASIS OF FUTURE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING.*

The main focus of this report is on organisational structure and good management. But, right at the outset, it has to be said that structures are only the means to an end. The end is the purpose or 'mission' of the organisation. We believe that much of the structural weakness of the United Synagogue is the product of its failure to relate to its mission.

#### THE NEED FOR A MISSION

Every good organisation is driven by a clear sense of what it is trying to achieve. Only then can it establish priorities, make effective decisions and evaluate successes and failures. Only then can it communicate a sense of purpose to those who work for it and loyalty to those who use its services. Without an understanding of one's goals, one can attempt everything and achieve nothing.

The concept of mission has been taken up by management theory, in particular as it applies to non-profit organisations. The leading expert in the field, Peter Drucker in *Managing the Non-Profit Organisation*, has powerful things to say on the subject. We summarise them here because they have a direct bearing on the current organisational weaknesses of the United Synagogue.

Non-profit organisations, such as hospitals, schools and synagogues, are prone to a particular hazard precisely because of what they are. They exist not to make a profit but to serve a need. But needs are difficult to define and even more difficult to limit. It is all too easy for an organisation to take on more and more tasks because each, in its own right, is a worthwhile venture. In Drucker's words:

*Non-profit institutions generally find it almost impossible to abandon anything. Everything they do is 'the Lord's work' or 'a good cause'.*

The result is that organisations take on more than they can effectively handle. They become diffuse and lose a sense of what they were originally trying to achieve. Budgets grow and departments multiply. A failure to secure results is taken to mean that more must be spent on the problem. The organisation loses touch with its constituency. Non-profit organisations, writes Drucker, are prone to become inward-looking. People are so convinced that they are doing the right thing and are so committed to their cause, that they see the institution as an end to itself. Once this happens the organisation is on its way to becoming a bureaucracy. *'Soon people in the organisation no longer ask: Does it service our mission? They ask: Does it fit our rules? And that not only inhibits performance, it destroys vision and dedication'.*

Everything we have discovered in the process of this review leads us to the conclusion that the United Synagogue is a classic case of an organisation that has lost sight of its mission. Its mounting budgets and rising overdraft, loss of members, the low morale of its employees and the frustration expressed by congregants all suggest an organisation that has failed to have and communicate a clear sense of direction. Our market research, consultation and responses we received from the general public repeatedly returned to

the same themes: overcentralisation, inefficiency, wastage of resources, autocratic attitudes, a lack of awareness of local concerns and the feeling that the United Synagogue had moved 'to the right' of its membership. It is seen as an organisation that is trying to do too much and failing to do what it once did well.

It has been thought that the very strength of the United Synagogue lay in its historic lack of ideology. It was an 'umbrella' organisation. But lack of ideology is not the same as lack of mission. The traditional United Synagogue had a clear message, affectionately summed up in the phrase *minhag Anglia*, a celebration of the twofold blessing of being Jewish and British.

There was in *minhag Anglia* much to be admired. Tolerance and moderation - treasured values that deserve a home in contemporary society. Also integration - the challenge and the tension of living with at least one foot in the modern, secular, western world. This was part of the social glue that bound and still binds most of the membership of the United Synagogue together.

At the same time, *minhag Anglia* stood for ways whose time has long past, and whose continued hold on the organisation alienates thousands of bystanders - irregular members and potential members - who want something different. Many do not want the pomp and ceremony, the imitation of the Church, the habits and customs that lead to the atmosphere of the 'club'. The non-participative services, the proliferation of by-laws, the rule of dominating personalities, the cold reserved English environment, the narrow focus on the politics of the synagogue as distinct from the development of community - these are aspects of the United Synagogue that no longer win it friends or members.

It is true that the community is ageing and that Anglo-Jewry is in a demographic decline. But there are still many thousands of unaffiliated Jews and the number is growing each year. Moreover, the United Synagogue's share of the affiliated market is ever decreasing, in absolute as well as in percentage terms. Loss of members has been far more rapid than in other synagogue bodies. In 1970 the United Synagogue's share of male members was 72.3%. By 1990 this had fallen to 58.2%. By the year 2000 the United Synagogue may no longer represent the majority of London Jewry.

## THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE'S MISSION

**R1** Arresting the decline in membership and reasserting the vitality of Jewish community life within the context of the United Synagogue has to be the clarion call for the organisation and its goal for the next ten years. To do it, we recommend that the United Synagogue looks to what was traditionally its greatest strength - not the negative quality of being non-ideological, but rather its positive face as an inclusivist organisation. As Chief Rabbi Dr Sacks defined it in his Jakobovits Chair lecture of 1989:

*What then is the task of the United Synagogue? The answer consists of two words 'including Jews'. The task of the United Synagogue is to make as many Jews as possible feel included not excluded by Judaism.*

*Let me propose one simple image which defines the role of the United Synagogue. It is not the middle of the road. It is a moving escalator. The United Synagogue should not think in terms of static commitments. 'He who does not increase his learning diminishes it', said Hillel. The United Synagogue's task is to move Jews from one level of commitment to another and higher level. Some people get on the escalator at the bottom, others will get off at the top. The escalator will always be crowded so long as rabbis and lay leaders make sure that at least as many are taking the first step on as are taking the last step off. The theme of the United Synagogue should be 'shir hamaalot', a song of rising steps. The historic responsibility of the United Synagogue is to shape the religious direction of 'rov hatzibbur' - the majority of Anglo-Jewry. For the foreseeable future there will be a small but growing minority who will seek greater Jewish intensity than the United Synagogue can provide and a similar number in the opposite direction who cannot be accommodated within Orthodoxy. We may view the former with admiration, the latter with regret, but neither is the United Synagogue's primary concern. Its concern, instead, is with the majority of the community.*

## THE MISSION IN PRACTICE

### Including Jews within tradition

Including a wide variety of Jews within a traditional framework was what the United Synagogue did so well in its early decades, and that is what it should return to doing now. The great strength of the United Synagogue, and because of it Anglo-Jewry as a whole, was that it was a home in which the majority felt at ease. That is what the United Synagogue should aim, once again, to become. Sixty-seven per cent of the total membership can be defined as 'traditional' as opposed to 'secular' or 'strictly Orthodox' Jews (see page 240), and yet qualitative studies suggest that the majority of the membership feel excluded from today's United Synagogue. As the Chief Rabbi puts it:

*In Anglo-Jewry the people at the margins are the members of our own synagogues.*

Including Jews within tradition is about opening doors for the unaffiliated. The club atmosphere that typified *minhag Anglia* worked in its day, but it is no longer appropriate for contemporary circumstances. A new approach has to be applied to achieve old goals.

### RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE: PROFILE OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE MEMBERSHIP

Source: United Synagogue Review market research

Respondents were asked to describe their own level of religious observance by selecting one of five categories to represent 'the way you live in Jewish terms'.

The percentage selecting each category was:

Non-religious (secular) Jew	4%
Just Jewish	16%
Progressive Jew (e.g. Reform)	3%
'Traditional' (not strictly Orthodox)	67%
Strictly Orthodox Jew (shomrei Shabbat)	10%

As expected, the great majority of the respondents identified themselves as 'traditional' Jews. This represents the central block of nominally Orthodox members who, in their responses to open-ended questions, frequently describe themselves as 'middle of the road' Jews.

### Increasing membership

We believe that every community should concentrate its resources and energies on those things that increase its capacity to include more Jews. In the heyday of the United Synagogue of *minhag Anglia*, it was a very particular formula that brought Jews into the synagogue. Today there is no single formula that will bring people back. That is why we are promoting the transformation of the local unit from 'synagogue' into 'community'. Behind the rhetoric lies a serious change. It is a change that has been adopted by a few of the communities, but by no means by all. It demands a much broader remit for the local community, a remit that prioritises education, not just for young children, but from the cradle to the grave. It takes welfare, social and even leisure activities into the definition of community life. To include Jews we have to expand radically the range of what we have on offer as communities. We must open doors.

Our recommendation for a new system of payover from the community to the centre, which removes the link between the number of members and the amount of the levy, is put forward for sound financial reasons. This is, however, an instance of self-interest walking hand in hand with aims and ideals. We are convinced that an organisation dedicated to including Jews within tradition should be aggressively concerned with increasing its membership. It should be inconceivable, for example, in an organisation that seeks to include, that members are written off quickly for non-payment of fees. And yet that is the impact of the current payover system.



Moreover we are confident that it can work. Sixty-four per cent of respondents to our survey cited supporting the synagogue and keeping the Jewish tradition alive as important reasons for their belonging to the United Synagogue, as compared with a comparatively modest twenty per cent citing a desire to satisfy parents' wishes and expectations in the same category. The deep underlying trend, revealed by our market research, of continued support for moderate Orthodoxy as something worth preserving, confirms that the United Synagogue can still compete for the hearts and minds of the unaffiliated if it is determined and professional in its approach.

### **Expanding local community life**

This statement of the goals of the United Synagogue reinforces our basic premise that the key to its revival must lie within the local community, because it is local communities that can develop practical ways to include the young and the old, the more religious and the less religious, men and women, rich and poor. Resources should be extracted from the local community only for those central functions which will enhance the capacity of the community to expand. This is the first and most radical implication of an inclusivist approach.

### **Religious attitudes - Lubavitch and others**

The United Synagogue's aim to include Jews within tradition has policy and behavioural ramifications for everyone who works for the organisation, whether in a professional or a voluntary capacity.

If the goal is to include Jews, then the performance of employees as well as of communities should be judged in that light. We have encountered, for example, considerable debate about the involvement of Lubavitch in the affairs of the United Synagogue. Much of the correspondence, in our view, misses the point. Any question as to the credentials of Lubavitch as a legitimate Orthodox expression of Jewishness must surely be addressed to the religious authorities. It is understood that the authenticity of Lubavitch on these grounds is not currently under serious challenge.

Therefore the real issue is one of loyalty to the United Synagogue's aims. The rabbi, Lubavitch or otherwise, has to be judged on his willingness to be inclusive. The rabbi whose impact on his community is to exclude, or to fail to live up to the realistic potential to include, is a poor leader within the context of the aims of this organisation. On this basis, there may be Lubavitch rabbis who fall on both sides of the fence. It should be noted that we encountered much enthusiastic support for the role played by United Synagogue Lubavitch rabbis in many quarters and from all segments of the religious spectrum.

What is apparent, however, is that the rabbinate in general scores badly in terms of a direct contribution to fulfilling the mission of the organisation. Asked to rank a list of rabbinical responsibilities within the life of the community, respondents to our survey placed 'creating a strong sense of community' and 'bringing the less involved into the community' in third and eighth positions respectively. When asked to rank the rabbi's performance in these areas the scores were tenth and sixteenth (last) respectively. If the United Synagogue's mission was clearly agreed, these results would be seen as unacceptable, and improved performance demanded.

### **Religious policy**

If the principle of including Jews within tradition is accepted as the goal of the United Synagogue, it should apply at all levels within the organisation. This means that inclusivist attitudes should have at least a vote, if not a veto, in the development of policy, including religious policy.

At a local level the rabbi should of course take on a more pro-active role in community policy development, which will constantly touch on issues that have a halakhic dimension. We need to develop rabbinic leadership confident enough in its learning to find the way to help the lay leadership to include and not exclude Jews. At a national level, the principle of including Jews should inform decisions relating to key rabbinical

and other appointments. There must be a critical relationship between the organisation and its mission and the religious leadership. The mission should also influence policy in halakhic matters - within the boundaries of Orthodox halakhic Judaism. It should, for example, be inconceivable for an organisation such as the United Synagogue, dedicated to including Jews, to espouse positions on halakhic matters which are exclusivist, if viable inclusivist halakhic options are available. The mission would figure as a serious policy-making factor in areas such as kashrut, *eruv* and conversions, amongst others.

A United Synagogue that seeks to include Jews within tradition is not placing itself on the right, left or in the centre. Including Jews is not the property of any one wing of Judaism. Indeed the concepts of ideological labelling and including Jews are mutually exclusive. The genuine inclusivist will not seek to label. As Chief Rabbi Sacks puts it:

*We have argued against a conception of Orthodoxy that sees it as a sort of conflict of ideologies. Tradition then speaks in a series of strident forces, each of which denies the legitimacy of others, instead of in its classic mode as an open ended argument between different perspectives. This de-legitimation of alternatives within the same tradition is what is sometimes called fundamentalism and it is important to note that there can be a fundamentalism of the left and centre, no less than of the right. In its place, we have argued for the recovery of a non-ideological approach to Jewish thought. One that sees its role as the application of a single Torah to a specific time, place, and constituency. (Tradition in an Untraditional Age)*

This is the kind of tolerant integrity that must inform the development and interpretation of religious policy within the United Synagogue.

### **The image of the United Synagogue**

One point that is universally agreed upon is that the image of the United Synagogue could be better. It is argued by some that, had more resources been put into public relations, support for the organisation today might be stronger, because, for all the faults of the organisation, there are things it does well. We believe, however, that it is very difficult to sustain a marketing effort in the absence of clearly defined goals. It emerges from our research, for example, that amongst those respondents who claimed to have considered discontinuing their synagogue membership, the lack of a welcoming atmosphere and the lack of intimacy and warmth in the service are cited as the most frequent causes of dissatisfaction (see page 254). With a commitment to an inclusivist mission, this issue could be addressed in marketing as well as in policy terms.

We hope that the mission statement we have put forward will be seen as the basis, at least, for constructive debate within the United Synagogue. If we understand what we are trying to achieve, then that will emerge, whether through pro-active or passive marketing, as the message of the United Synagogue to the many thousands of unaffiliated Jews to whom we must now reach out.

### **The mission of the centre: creating communities**

We are convinced that including Jews within tradition should be seen as the basic organisational aim of the United Synagogue. It is equally clear to us that this aim can only be achieved through the medium of local community life. A centre that tries to bypass local communities and to provide large-scale national panaceas, be they in education or welfare, will struggle to be effective, where a dynamic local initiative will succeed with ease. Recent events in community life have proved this time and time again, for example in the contrast between the string of costly and yet transient educational ventures emanating from Woburn House and the vibrant ongoing programmes in local communities such as South Hampstead, Borehamwood, Hendon, Pinner and elsewhere.

Including Jews within tradition is essentially a mission for United Synagogue communities rather than for the United Synagogue as a whole. The mission of the central organisation should be to assist local communities to achieve their inclusivist aims. The centre should not seek directly to 'include Jews' but rather to 'create communities' - that is, to nurture the transformation of the synagogue into a community. This should be the centre's singular contribution to the organisation's mission.

## INCLUDING JEWS: SUMMARY

What would happen if the United Synagogue and the Judaism it represents did not exist? Our research suggests that something like 10% of its members - those who identify themselves as 'strictly Orthodox' - would join synagogues to the right of the United Synagogue. The remaining 90%, the 'traditional' and 'non-Orthodox' - would either join the Masorti, Reform or Liberal movements or would not join a synagogue at all. Anglo-Jewry as a traditional and relatively Orthodox community would disintegrate. Many Jews would be lost to Judaism and many more would be lost to Orthodoxy.

Our research shows that the single most powerful motive force for the majority of Anglo-Jews is the desire to belong. The United Synagogue, by creating communities, is capable of taking that slender thread of identity and turning it into a commitment that can be passed on through the generations. For a synagogue is not simply a place where services are held. It is a community and hence answers the need for belonging. It is a place where children are educated and families celebrate, and hence helps to pass on identity to the next generation. In entire history of the diaspora, no other institution has remotely rivalled the synagogue as a vehicle of Jewish continuity. Anglo-Jewry needs synagogue communities if it is to survive. And it needs tolerant, welcoming non-exclusivist Orthodox communities if traditional Judaism is to be made meaningful to more than a minority of Jews.

Today the 'right wing' Orthodox community is strong. Between 1970 and 1990 it has more than trebled its numbers (from 2.6% to 8.8% of male synagogue membership in London). The fundamental difference between 'right wing' and 'central' Orthodoxy is that the former is exclusive while the latter is inclusive. Both subscribe to the same halakhah. But a 'right wing' synagogue is generally open only to those who are strictly observant. A 'central Orthodox' synagogue is open to less - or non-observant Jews also. Each approach has its strengths. The 'right wing' approach has the strength of consistency. The 'central' approach has the strength of openness. We believe that 'right wing' Orthodoxy has successfully played to its strength. Our mission statement challenges the United Synagogue to return to its strength by focusing on those only it can speak to, the 90% of its members who, were it not for the United Synagogue, would be lost to Orthodoxy altogether.

Clarifying goals and matching structures to those goals is a major missing ingredient within the United Synagogue. We have an extraordinary base on which to build - some outstanding rabbis, some fine properties and majority support within the community. If the United Synagogue cannot translate that into real success, then it will be and will deserve to be consigned to the footnotes of Anglo-Jewish history.

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## THE MISSION OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATION

R1

The historic responsibility of the United Synagogue is to provide for the broad majority of Anglo-Jews, offering a place for every Jew who wants to identify with the community within a traditional framework. The United Synagogue should pursue this fundamental goal by adopting, as its mission, the need to expand its membership under the banner of 'including Jews within tradition'. This should be the basis for future policy development and strategy planning.

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# 3

## CREATING COMMUNITIES

*THE STRENGTH OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE LIES IN THE STRENGTH OF THE COMMUNITIES. AT PRESENT SYNAGOGUES ARE BRANCHES OF A CENTRALISED BUREAUCRACY. WE RECOMMEND THAT SYNAGOGUES BECOME INDEPENDENT TRUST COMMUNITIES, GOVERNED BY A PRECISE AND NON-NEGOTIABLE 'COMMUNITY AGREEMENT' WITH THE CENTRAL ORGANISATION, UNDER THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY OF THE CHIEF RABBI.*

### WHAT IS COMMUNITY?

We have argued that the United Synagogue must clarify its basic objective or 'mission' and must reorganise itself so that this is evident throughout the organisation. We have no doubt what this mission is. It is creating communities to include Jews.

As long as the United Synagogue was the spiritual home for the vast majority of London's Jews, it was fulfilling its objective. But this is no longer the case. In 20 years, its membership has fallen from some three-quarters to little over half of affiliated Jews. The high age profile of its members - almost fifty per cent over the age of sixty - means that the decline is set to continue, and even accelerate. Taken together with the overall reduction in the Jewish population, this represents a massive loss of members.

The significance of this development cannot be overestimated. If allowed to continue, it will mean that the United Synagogue will be progressively unable to fund its facilities. It will lose its position of leadership in Anglo-Jewry, and even within Orthodoxy itself. A previous president defined the United Synagogue as the '*great central umbrella under which all who believe in our traditional Orthodoxy can find spiritual comfort*' and concluded that '*only the United Synagogue can, and consequently must, try to hold or bring back to the fold those who are drifting or have drifted away*'. We believe this must be reaffirmed as the United Synagogue's task, to which all other concerns are subsidiary.

This chapter is concerned with two implications of this proposition. The first is that resources must be handed back to local congregations. Members are made locally, not centrally. Therefore the centre exists to serve the localities. The localities do not exist to serve the centre.

The second is that local congregations must themselves evolve from synagogues into communities. What does this mean?

Our research, spread over a wide variety of congregations, areas and age groups, and covering both members and former-members of the United Synagogue, revealed one fact above all others: that people want communities. The synagogue as a house of prayer was only one of their concerns. They wanted to feel welcome. They wanted to be part of a social entity. They looked for social, welfare and educational provision. Their ideal community was a hive of activity, with a library, a crèche, a play group, a nursery school, a range of classes (not all religiously oriented), formal and informal programmes for youth, and a 'cradle to grave' network of caring and support.

## WHAT MEMBERS WANT OF THEIR SYNAGOGUES

Source: United Synagogue Review market research

We asked respondents to rate the importance of eight different aspects of synagogal life. After life-cycle events, education, youth activities and social life rated highly.

	% of respondents giving a 'very high' rating
Arrangements for births, deaths and marriages (NB includes burial)	49
Jewish education (children and adults)	45
The synagogue service and related events	30
Youth activities - social, religious, sporting, etc.	28
Social life of the community (social events, warmth)	21
Spiritual and moral development of the community	21
Welfare services (advice, counselling for members)	20
Charitable efforts for Israel and other causes	15

It is clear from our research that some communities - the more adventurous and creative - are meeting these needs. It is equally clear that others are not. We encountered widespread dissatisfaction with unwelcoming congregations, cold and alienating services, poor Hebrew classes, lack of youth clubs, autocratic wardens and unrepresentative synagogue boards focusing narrowly on the synagogue service rather than on the diverse needs of the community. The result is a loss of members to other synagogues to the right and to the left of the United Synagogue, and in some cases to non-affiliation.

We believe that the United Synagogue as a whole has failed to respond to the changing sociology of Anglo-Jewry. A generation ago, when Jewish identity was sustained by habit and instinctive loyalty, it was enough for synagogues to provide services and a basic Hebrew education for children. The rest was supplied by home, memory and tradition. Today the Jewish home is more fragile. Jewish memories are weaker. Tradition carries less authority. People therefore look to the synagogue for more. It has become the place where Jewish identity is created and sustained. Its role is now to become the framework for belonging as a Jew.

This development will take time to achieve. But it is more than just a response to what many Jews want. It marks a return to the traditional role of the synagogue in Jewish life as a *bet haknesset* - a "house of meeting". If we may draw from *Ethics of the Fathers*, the synagogue should become again the home of the three pillars of Jewish life: *Torah*, signifying Jewish education of all kinds for all ages; *avodah*, worship; and *gemilut chassadim*, the full range of welfare and social facilities. This is what we mean by turning synagogues into communities.

It will be achieved only by significant restructuring and a change of attitudes on the part of lay and rabbinic leadership. It has implications for the way synagogues are managed, the mechanisms they have for constructing policy and the personnel they employ. This chapter addresses the question of how to turn these broad principles into concrete proposals.

community and, in general, would combat the problem that emerged clearly from our market research - that the vast majority of United Synagogue members feel excluded by both the rules and the atmosphere of the 'club'.

Each community would be expected to ask itself these basic questions. Who are our members and potential members? What services are we providing for them? What are our short, medium, and long-term goals as a community? The answers to these questions will be different if viewed from a local rather than a national perspective. Whereas from a national perspective we are a maturing community, steadily reducing in numbers, the picture in many outer suburban synagogues is one of youth and renewal. If the planning is done only at a central level, it will not fully reflect local differences and needs.

### **Financial impact of local management**

It has always been assumed that the United Synagogue's centralised administration resulted in economies of scale. We have examined the cost issue in detail and the results - that is to say, the impact of complete local management on a variety of communities of differing sizes - are published in the Appendix (page 114). They reveal that most of the functions currently provided by the centre are substantially duplicated in the local synagogue. They show that devolved administration is achievable in most synagogues. They illustrate the fact that the sums paid over to the centre for services such as central billing can be deployed effectively in most local settings to create the administrative infrastructure required to do the job.

The aim of our recommendations is to ensure that, for most synagogues, a greater percentage of their income will remain at a local level with a smaller percentage remitted to the centre than is presently the case.

In the short term this would be achieved by radical reductions in the administrative departments at the centre, to proportions appropriate to the centre's new and more limited role (page 59), and in the budget of the new Bureau of Jewish Education which would no longer be subsidising the chadarim (page 74). On the other side of the equation, allowance will have to be made in the early years for a surcharge to reduce the organisation's considerable debt (page 95).

In the medium term, further reductions in central needs would accrue from the ending of subsidies to the Jewish day schools, which would be phased out over a limited transitional period (page 73). We also envisage savings as the Beth Din and the Office of the Chief Rabbi respond to the need to maximise funding from other sources.

Clearly the changes will affect each community differently. For example, the centre would not employ cheder teachers, as the community would be responsible for education at a local level. Some more mature communities with smaller memberships may therefore be relieved of their share of the burden of responsibility for education. But they may have a more valuable site, and so have to remit a proportionately higher payover, based on site value.

This is a basket of changes designed to result in an equitable arrangement, with some gains and some losses for all communities. The motive is only partly financial. What the changes will achieve is vastly increased choice at the local level. Every community will be free to establish its own fee structure, and will benefit from increasing its membership on a marginal costing basis. Each community can decide how to balance membership fees with parental charges for education, and each community, as an independent charitable trust, will be able to raise funds for local causes, unencumbered by central control. Resources will be available to foster community growth, rather than to maintain a bureaucratic service at the centre.

We have begun the work of financial modelling to illustrate the possible impact of the changes on a range of 'typical' community profiles. Those models can be found in the

Appendix to the review (page 133). The aim is not to reduce instantly the burden on the individual member at the expense of the community infrastructure, but to redistribute resources and responsibilities according to principles of management that will restore the underlying health of the organisation.

### **A longer-term view**

Of course, it is clearly understood that the Council of the United Synagogue will decide from year to year, on the basis of budget submissions, how much will be needed at the centre. As the precarious finances of the organisation are restored to a more stable condition, the communities, through their representatives, may call on the centre to spend more - perhaps in the development of new communities and rabbinical training and support, both areas that deserve greater attention. If the communities respond to the challenge to increase membership with the added resources at their disposal, then there will be more resources available in the long term.

## **DIFFERENT BASIS FOR PAYOVER TO STIMULATE COMMUNITY GROWTH**

In promoting the growth of local communities, the first and most basic step is to ensure that these communities are rewarded for success. It is rational to concentrate resources in growth areas, as long as those in need of support are not abandoned.

### **The problems with alternative systems**

The current system of payover, based on a standardised 'poll tax', does not encourage community growth and it must be changed. Poll taxes are destructive taxes wherever they are devised. There is no equity in a poll tax, in that it takes no account of income differentials. But we do not base our recommendation for change merely on abstract principle. In practice, the current system of payover is detrimental to the future growth of the United Synagogue.

Communities with expanding memberships are penalised for their success, because for every new member recruited - and often it is the new recruits who will begin on a discretionary rate - a standard charge is levied by the centre. The expanding communities are often the newer, younger, growing centres of Jewish life. These outer suburban communities may have limited premises, but they are bursting at the seams with activity and have dynamic lay leadership who seek to expand and develop community life by broadening the range of activities on offer.

In some cases it is actually against the community's best interests to sign up a member. In at least one instance, a substantial number of new recruits have been deliberately kept off the membership register to surmount this problem, thus depriving the organisation as a whole of numbers and revenue. We have a system in which it is better for a synagogue to discourage younger adults from joining, and better to write off members going through hard times sooner rather than later. This is problematic for an organisation whose mission is to include Jews, and whose income base is its membership.

Before the per capita payover system was introduced, the charge payable to the centre was based on a percentage of the income of the local synagogue. In addition to the financial and administrative difficulties involved in collecting this tax, a simple percentage charge on income is also, to an extent, weighted away from the notion of encouraging communities to expand membership. It also encouraged financial engineering. Neither the present nor the past system of payover grapples with the fundamental problem facing the organisation.

We need a system which is equitable, and which produces the income required by the centre but which also supports the mission of the organisation - to include Jews within tradition and thus to increase the membership of the United Synagogue.

### **A recommended new basis : alternative site value**

We recommend a new basis for calculating the contribution each community will be asked to make to the centre. This would be linked to site value rather than synagogue membership or income. The value of the synagogue site, were it to be offered for alternative use, would be calculated using an agreed formula, and the contribution to be made to central funds would be levied indexed to that value.

There is a need for a continued, although reduced role for the United Synagogue as a central organisation, and so some system of payover has to be operated. There is a traditional understanding within the United Synagogue that the rich should help to support the poor; that the established communities should help those starting out on their development. We contend that a property-based estimate of 'wealth' will be more equitable than one based on membership statistics, since individual wealth, generally speaking, can be traced to factors such as area of residence. The theory is that as synagogues occupy sites, sites are a major financial asset of the community, and it is reasonable to reflect this in the payover to the centre.

The 'alternative site value' principle is at the heart of an outline plan laid out on page 130 of the Appendix. In theory, every synagogue would be assessed and regularly reassessed for its individual alternative site value. In practice it may be necessary, at least as a first step, to produce a schedule of 'bands' within which each individual synagogue would be placed. This would be used to establish an index, on the basis of which the contribution to the centre would be calculated. Financial models illustrating how this would be applied in practice in a number of cases can be found on page 133 of the Appendix.

### **The impact of the new system on community growth**

The proposed new system will put more resources into potential growth areas, and will encourage expansion throughout the organisation. Those communities which most heavily utilise their premises will benefit the most. The larger, less occupied premises will have to be put to better use. Most importantly, all communities will reap the full reward for success measured by the simplest criterion - attracting new members. Unlike the per capita charge, this system would not penalise success. On the basis of marginal costing, every new member would bring in additional income to the local community. Those communities which succeed in attracting new members will be able to retain the resources to enhance their chances of further gains.

### **Declining communities**

But what of the community that is experiencing a natural decline as the result of demographic trends, a community that has no market to chase? First, it is only a healthy United Synagogue that can look after the ailing, and 'healthy' means an organisation whose membership is growing so that any increased communal burden may be borne by more shoulders. Secondly, we no longer have the luxury of being able to preserve both buildings and people. It is a straight choice, buildings or Jews. Declining communities will have to plan for their old age. Just as we move from a house to a flat when our children leave us, so, too, declining communities must plan their move from a large and expensive building into a more compact site, as the membership falls. Jews have never in their history had the privilege of permanent settlement. Of course, the occasional classic monument to an era, an outstanding piece of architecture, must be preserved, but not buildings for the sake of buildings.

We accept that one must take into account the particular difficulties of communities in a truly advanced state of decline, or those with tiny membership numbers. In such cases it might be possible to introduce independent trust status on a group basis, by establishing a central facility for small communities. However, for the vast majority of synagogues - even small ones - the advantages of the new status will outweigh the disadvantages.

The 'alternative site value' principle, set in the context of independent trust status, challenges stagnation and rewards growth. But to regenerate community life, it must be accompanied by other factors - not least, the relocation of responsibility and initiative from the centre to the local community.



## ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF PUTTING COMMUNITIES FIRST

In order to refocus the United Synagogue, a certain degree of legislation will be necessary - to revise the payover, to devise the terms of a community agreement to implement local management of synagogues, and to restructure the centre in political as well as management terms. The really substantial change, however, is that which will flow from the new situation, not by legislation but by the dynamic that the changes are designed to set in motion.

The following are some of the issues that will arise during the early period of restructuring.

### **The expanded role of the community**

In the United Synagogue as it stands there is very little incentive for an individual community to take a close hard look at itself and to develop a strategy for the future.

One or two communities have undertaken serious forward planning in spite of, rather than with the assistance of, the centre, but on the whole one finds a dormant pragmatic approach in many synagogues. Heavily tied up in constitutions and by-laws, and with relatively little incentive to expand, most communities confine their attention to immediate and rather narrow concerns. The number and allocation of *aliyot* or honours in the synagogue service is seen as a legitimate and regular subject for discussion, whereas long-term strategy, on the whole, is not. The study of the minutes of Board of Management meetings suggests to us that the intellectual capacity of our community is hardly being stretched at present! As Lord Jakobovits put it as far back as 1970:

*What is urgently needed in the first place is to loosen the rigidity of our system. Our trouble is that we have today little room for people fresh with ideas and none for rebels. On the whole we welcome neither new questions nor new answers in an age teeming with questions and crying out for answers.*

This phenomenon is damaging to the health of the United Synagogue. Our research (page 245) revealed a significant increase in synagogue attendance, in percentage terms, from that recorded in previous studies in 1969 and 1983 - an indication of the interest in participation that exists - and yet qualitative research suggests that the average member of the United Synagogue feels excluded by the present scope of community life, cheated by the narrow and limited return on his investment in membership, and frustrated by what is perceived as wastage within the organisation. If this is the feeling of the paying membership, then it is certainly a barrier to membership recruitment among the unaffiliated.

### **SECULAR EDUCATION IN THE SYNAGOGUE**

Source: United Synagogue Review market research

One element of the 'total community' concept that emerged from group discussions was the desirability of making the synagogue a base for a wide range of social, sporting and educational activities, including secular studies. To test the reaction to this idea, respondents were asked whether they 'would be interested in taking classes in subjects such as keep fit, foreign languages or art, if they were offered in your synagogue (assuming there was something of interest)'.

Of the 624 responses to this question, a substantial majority were positive:

Yes, I would study in the synagogue	49%
No, I would prefer a local centre	18%
Neither	33%

## CARING AND PROVIDING FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

**R5** | Our research (see page 244) confirms that what characterises the United Synagogue's population, in contrast to moderate levels of ritual observance and belief, is a strong degree of ethnic identity and group belonging. For example, eighty-four per cent of respondents stated that all or more than half their close friends were Jewish. A community, in this environment, that seeks to respond to the needs of its members would clearly have to offer a wide range of activities beyond the confines of the synagogue service. To some extent, the expansion of community life has begun to happen naturally, but there is still much to be done to reach out to all sectors of the population and to make the community once again the real heart of Jewish life in this country. By way of illustration, we would like to comment on three of the many target populations that should be given closer attention within the context of a community in the full sense of the term.

### **Singles/young adults**

Singles and young adults are a forgotten, or at least only recently remembered, population. Over the last five years, various initiatives have been taken, of which the most significant have been the growth of 'alternative *minyanim*' and the '*shabbaton*' supper gatherings at a number of synagogues. These initiatives, which we applaud, have brought a large number of young adults from the full spectrum of religious identity into the fold of the United Synagogue. They have begun to reverse the polarising losses of the previous decade, which saw the more committed moving beyond the United Synagogue to the independent Orthodox communities and the more assimilated moving away from the organised Jewish community altogether.

However, these initiatives, successful as they are, are still the exception and not the rule. Moreover they address only one aspect of the problem. Some strange membership anomalies remain which illustrate that the concern to open up the community to young adults has not yet fully taken hold. In one community, for example, encouragement is given to the members of the alternative *minyan* to join the community by payment of a small 'associate membership' fee. But this does not bring with it the right to membership privileges to stand for election, and so the lay leadership of this young *minyan*, representing over a hundred individuals within the community, cannot take up a seat on the Board of Management!

The whole issue of membership subscriptions has not been thought through, partly as a result of monolithic centralised control. A much more flexible and community-based system is essential if the United Synagogue is to attract young adults. On the one hand, local communities need the flexibility that autonomy would bring to charge discretionary rates without being penalised in terms of the payover. On the other hand, with the age at which young people are marrying going up, and the age at which financial success in a capitalist society can be achieved coming down, we have many young single adults in their late twenties who are well able to make a full financial contribution to the community.

In one sense, the thoughtful United Synagogue policy which gives a year's free membership to newly married couples has created a false impression that it is necessary and appropriate to join only when one marries. The United Synagogue communities ought to be convincing young people that they have something to offer that is worth paying for, married or not. And to do that they must first convince themselves that they have a community worthy of the support of young people.

### **Youth activities**

Our research indicates that one of the most serious discrepancies between what the synagogue currently provides and what is required by the membership relates to activities for youth. Youth activities were ranked by respondents fourth in order of importance and only seventh in order of quality, in a list of the services provided by the synagogue (see page 248).

Parental concern regarding the leisure pursuits and venues available to young people is high, with worrying images of the Edgware and Hampstead tube stations confronting many members who have early teenage children. It is felt that the synagogue has a responsibility to open its doors to young people as an alternative to other less secure options.

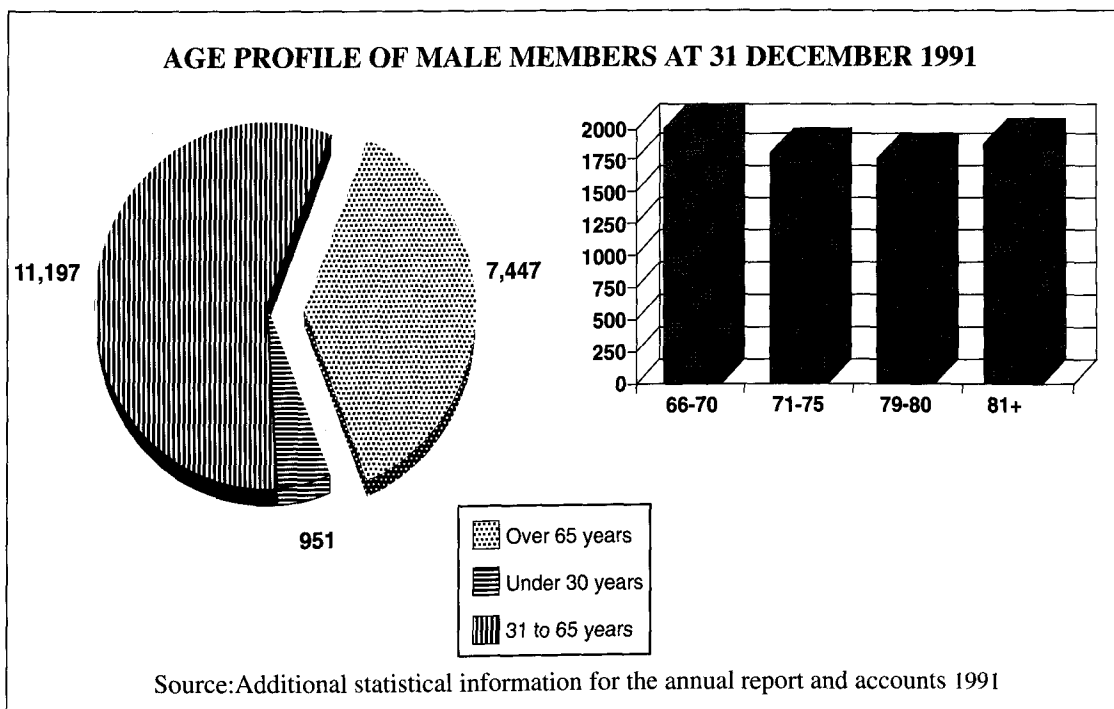
Whilst there is no single solution to this complex problem, insufficient emphasis and attention has been given to it within the United Synagogue. We believe that with added resources and responsibility allocated at the local level, the issue will surface in the specific communities where the needs are greatest, and local solutions will be found.

The centre is quite unable to respond to a challenge of this nature. What the centre can do is to provide the expertise in informal education to assist local communities with their programming. In this respect our proposals for a college of secondary Jewish education (see page 157) should construct a more appropriate framework than is currently available for this.

### The aged

Another important population is the aged. Although some communities do utilise their facilities to service the older members, much more could be done. A caring local community can do very specific and practical things to embrace the older person who does not have immediate family support and to include him or her within the Orthodox Jewish community.

We also need to look at the financial burden imposed on the older age bracket. Both with regard to burial fees and membership subscriptions, detailed investigation is needed to establish a fairer system. Since the age profile of the membership is continually increasing, it is not easy to see how that burden can be lightened in the short term, since this would mean a continually increasing burden of taxation on a continually decreasing population of adults. Although the present financial difficulties prevent serious discussion of the situation, once the underlying health of the United Synagogue has been restored, a full review of the treatment of the aged should be a priority. One of the possible benefits of more local flexibility emerging from the revised payover system might be the development, at a local level, of inventive schemes to tackle the membership contribution problem. One such scheme was suggested to us, proposing a small additional premium to the annual membership subscription which would act as an insurance payment to relieve the subscriber from membership dues after retirement.



## PERSONNEL AND LOCAL COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

### The Rabbi

The role of the rabbi will change and grow as these proposals take root at community level. As the most important professional resource available to the community, the rabbinate will occupy centre stage over the next few years. We have devoted a separate chapter (page 80) to the issues, ranging from contracts and terms of employment to professional development and role definitions, that need to be addressed in this regard.

### The Chazzan

The implementation of our proposals would naturally set communities thinking about staffing levels. The chazzan already represents something of an endangered species. Would he become extinct as the range of community activities and hence the staffing needs developed?

The number of full time chazzanim in the United Synagogue has declined from 36 to 12 over a period of 20 years. And a further 25% decline is imminent because of retirements. This means that the vast majority of United Synagogue members no longer have access to chazzanut for synagogue services - even on an occasional basis. Some members clearly prefer a shorter, more participative style of service and find 'the presence of a choir and chazzan a distancing factor' (page 218). But quantitative research suggests that the chazzan still has a role to play, and there is widespread disappointment that the opportunity is no longer available for the occasional full-scale choral service, especially on the high holy days.

### ATTITUDES TO THE CHAZZAN

Source: United Synagogue Review market research

Precisely two-thirds of the sample attended synagogues that employ a chazzan and these respondents were asked whether 'he makes the service more enjoyable'. The response was unambiguous:

A great deal	47%
Somewhat	43%
Not at all	7%
Actually detracts	3%

These findings appear to contradict the outcome of the qualitative research, which identified a trend among some members towards disenchantment with the 'cold style of the United Synagogue with chazzan and choir'. However, this more negative attitude may well be prevalent among those whose synagogues do not employ a chazzan.

Disagreement over the future of the chazzan is accentuated by internal flaws and inconsistencies within the profession. There is resentment amongst chazzanim of the '*prima donna*' cantor. On the other hand, our research suggested that, '*for those liking a formal service, today's chazzan is not considered to provide a performance of professional quality*'. The profession has not moved with the times to expand its skill base as the general needs of communities have expanded. For example, we found that the majority of chazzanim were of little assistance in meeting the pressing educational staffing needs of their communities - an unwillingness to adapt which has cost the profession dearly in terms of its perceived value.

Another development that has further endangered the species has been the growth of a cadre of laymen - particularly young adults - who are capable of leading the service, and reading from the Torah. Many communities today simply cannot contemplate employing both a rabbi and a chazzan. The remit of the rabbi, consequently, has

extended quite naturally into the traditional spheres of the chazzan, and lay people have been drafted in to assist in the basic synagogue tasks, including leading services and reading from the Torah.

This development is laudable in principle. The kind of extended, participative community we want to encourage is one in which the formal barriers come down. Just as we are anxious to stimulate increased lay involvement in community life in general, so too we applaud a high level of participation within the synagogue itself. The feeling of exclusivity about the conduct of the synagogue service that emerges from our market research (page 213) should be reduced somewhat by removing the distinction between the 'officiant' and the member of the congregation.

We have a number of suggestions and recommendations to accompany what will be a natural evolutionary change in staffing policies within local communities. We regret the fact that rabbinical in-service training has not been made available to chazzanim, and we anticipate that re-activation of the Practical Rabbinics programme will address this issue. We note the exclusivist policy of the Chazzanut Association, which does not allow for the membership of a part-time chazzan, and respectfully suggest that the time has long passed when restrictive guild practices can in any way protect the profession. We would encourage chazzanim to expand their skill base, particularly in the field of education and we recognise that communities will have to confront the problem of a clash of priorities between pastoral and educational duties which regularly manifests itself in the question of Sunday morning stone settings.

**R9** | In organisational terms, the home for the professional community of chazzanim is within the Chief Rabbinate structure. We recommend a permanent committee within the Chief Rabbinate to ensure that chazzanut and *nussach* are perpetuated by training, choral services and concerts. There should be no problem in raising the modest sums needed to secure the survival of this important aspect of our communal life.

### **Community directors and other personnel**

For a few of the larger, younger, growing communities, the appointment of a 'community director' may be the way to secure future development. This new position, modelled on community life in the United States, has been recently established in two United Synagogues, and it is far too early to pass judgement on its potential. However, one understands the logic which brought these communities to their experiment, and it is a logic that might apply to more communities as the pace of local community life quickens.

The position, as it has been established in these two communities, combines higher-level administrative functions with organisational, and particularly educational organisation, skills. Higher-level administrative appointments are sometimes suspected to be expensive luxuries created by lay leaders who are not prepared to devote the necessary time to onerous voluntary responsibilities. Not so in the case of the two experimenting communities. Both have dedicated and highly active lay leaders. Both communities are settings in which the scope of communal activity has extended well beyond the synagogue to incorporate educational, youth, social and welfare functions. The role of the community director is seen not as a replacement for lay involvement but as a mechanism to encourage and to co-ordinate the larger lay leadership contingent that is required to provide a more diverse community life.

The point is not insignificant in the context of our recommendations. One of the most inhibiting factors within communities is the narrow base of lay leadership. There is only so much that a small group of individuals can do, and the more there is to do, the less time there is to work on delegating. And so, increasingly hardworking and dedicated honorary officers are left to bear the lion's share of the burden, with little or no time to think about innovative schemes that would only add to that burden.

Very often the young married professional might be prepared to do something specific for the synagogue, but the mechanisms simply are not available to take advantage of this type of help. Communities have to find the way to allow a far higher percentage of the members to take some 'bite-size chunk' of involvement, and, for the larger communities, a community director, far from taking work away from the volunteers, can actually make a large volunteer force workable.

Of course, the initial expense of making such an appointment would be prohibitive to all but the larger communities, even within the proposed new structure that would leave a greater percentage of the communities' income at a local level. However, communities in other countries that operate the community director system have found that the appointment ultimately pays for itself, because a community that is providing more for its members tends to increase its membership.

## **THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE MANAGEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

This review would not be complete without reference to the role of women within the structure of the United Synagogue, both at local and at national level. Although the halakhic ramifications of this issue are themselves currently under the review of the Chief Rabbi and the Beth Din, we have to state our view - that the United Synagogue cannot maintain a position in which women are denied a leading role in the management of United Synagogue communities.

Research reveals widespread concern amongst men and women at the limited role accorded to women in the decision-making process. We believe that the level of concern expressed by the membership is significant for two reasons - first because it may be the cause of a drift of membership away from the United Synagogue towards forms of non-orthodox affiliation, and secondly because it deprives the organisation of half its potential leadership pool.

We are aware of orthodox communities in the USA and Israel where women are accepted as fully fledged partners in the management process. This gives us some reason to believe that where there is a will there is a halakhic way to overcome what would otherwise be a crippling handicap for the United Synagogue in the years ahead.

One of the reasons, in our view, for the continued exclusion of women from synagogue management is an outdated concept of the role of the community. If the synagogue is viewed mainly as a provider of religious services to its members, then management is predominantly concerned with matters of halakhah.

We believe that this definition of the United Synagogue community is no longer the prevailing one and that the trend towards broadening the remit of the synagogue and its transformation into 'community' is set to continue. The executive body of a synagogue today has to grapple with the management of a property and an organisation that embraces educational, youth, welfare and social activities, none of which relates directly to the provision of religious services. Only a minority of its concerns are religious, not because such needs have declined, but because of the growth in other areas of community life.

**R5** | In these circumstances women ought not to be denied an equal opportunity to manage communal affairs. We accept the need to 'ring fence' the rabbinic/halakhic areas. This having been said, it is essential to authorise communities to take full advantage of the talents of all their members. Whilst applauding the recent Chief Rabbinical initiative to establish a task force to examine the role of women in detail, we see some danger of delay in subsuming this issue within a broader review. We would add our voice to the growing concern that time is not on the side of caution and urge the Chief Rabbi to take active steps to resolve this problem at the early stages of the decade of Jewish renewal.

## LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION

Despite the high priority that most synagogues allocate, in principle, to Jewish education, we did not find a single community with a genuine education committee. Every community with a cheder has a cheder, or 'education' committee. But in many ways this just obscures the real needs and potential of the community. Education is a serious community issue in its own right. 'Cheder' is merely one aspect of that issue. Alongside the cheder, communities have to think about a youth policy, adult education, the kindergarten, informal and family education, and about the need for links between the community and Jewish day schools in situations where perhaps even a majority of the children of members are enrolled in full-time Jewish education.

Many of these issues are linked. The Board of Education of Greater New York has carried out comprehensive research on supplementary schooling and concluded that family education programmes are critical to the future success of the part-time system. Can such programmes be left to the cheder? Clearly not. How is adult education to be funded at a local level, who is in charge, and what links might there be between formal, informal and continuing education?

Our recommendations will help communities to take the first steps towards a serious and co-ordinated education policy, by retaining financial resources and choice at the local level. Some communities may decide that the whole community should subsidise formal Jewish education through higher membership fees, whilst others may wish to push the whole cost of education on to the user. Such a choice is not available in the current centralised system, but it is one which may be made differently in different communities in pursuance of what they see as their own best interests.

**R7** We further recommend that each community within the United Synagogue establish an education committee - not a cheder committee but a broad-based group including parents and professionals, where available, with a comprehensive brief to look at the community as an educational unit, and to devise a strategy for the development of Jewish education at a local level.

## CO-OPERATION BETWEEN COMMUNITIES

It has been argued that one of the negative effects of a more autonomous community structure will be a reduction in co-operation between communities, and a reduction in the number of shared or regional projects where one congregation is not large enough to support its own programme (for example, cheder or adult education).

**We think that the opposite will happen.** Under the present set-up there is little inter-community co-operation. This, we believe, is at least partly due to centralisation itself, since the centre gives the local synagogue a prop which allows it to avoid taking decisions that would be forced on it in a different structure.

This is true particularly in the field of education and the cheder. We simulated the impact of a more devolved system with a number of communities. On each occasion the local leaders themselves arrived at conclusions that would save costs and entail greater inter-community co-operation. The exercise led to discussions regarding classes that would be rationalised, centres that would merge, new and more productive community initiatives that would develop as soon as the local community was given the opportunity to consider what its priorities should be, using the sum of its resources.

The process of co-operation between communities is a natural one and it will thrive as soon as the centre is removed as a controlling force. What the centre can do is to lead by lending expertise and guidance to communities who want to work together. We applaud the existence of synagogue regional councils, whose existence in South and North London owes everything to local rather than central initiative, and we recommend that this process be taken further. Appropriate forms of co-operation will vary with local circumstances. However, every community will have something to gain in some area by co-operative partnerships with neighbouring synagogues.

We recommend that every community establish a task force to consider inter-community co-operation with its neighbours in areas such as education and welfare.

## **FUND-RAISING AT LOCAL COMMUNITY LEVEL**

Under the proposed new system, every community would be established as an independent charitable trust. This would mean that local fund-raising would be acceptable and encouraged as one of the legitimate methods to support innovation and development.

The basic principles of marketing suggest that this focusing on local concerns will enhance the fund-raising potential of the community as a whole. Whilst few will commit charitable donations to a taxing central body, even for worthy innovative schemes, many will feel disposed towards helping their own local community to do something specific.

Some communities may choose to establish fund-raising targets as an integral part of their budgeting, rather than passing the full annual expenditure requirement on to the fee-paying member. Communities may consider using their facilities for social or broader educational programmes that are profitable. The point is that the community would not be restricted from making such choices, unless they contravened the limited community agreement with the centre which is outlined elsewhere in this document (page 112).

## **AFFILIATED SYNAGOGUES**

The concept of an affiliated synagogue was that of a small community, taking its first steps towards maturity by joining the national umbrella organisation and making a financial contribution, albeit a minor one, towards the provision of the national community infrastructure. It was assumed that as the community grew, so would it require the borrowing power of the centre in order to expand its premises. At this point the community would take its full place as a constituent synagogue, enjoying the full privileges and accepting the full responsibilities of a member of the club.

The concept has already become confused, as several affiliates have grown up, and in some cases even outgrown their constituent neighbours, without applying for full membership of the United Synagogue. This is a source of some resentment amongst constituents, whose payover burden is considerably higher than that of the affiliates. Within the context of our recommendations, the distinction between constituent and affiliate becomes meaningless and we hope that a constructive dialogue would commence immediately with a view to a full merger of the two groupings.

Until the two groups do merge, there would continue to remain an inequality in political/representational status. Affiliates would be entitled to fewer representatives on the Council, and no direct access to central executive positions.

This would be a sad loss of talent. We have encountered enthusiastic, dedicated and experienced lay leaders in many affiliated synagogues. They are needed on the Council and the Executive and it would be a shame for the organisation to be denied their contribution for the sake of a historical status issue whose financial basis had disappeared.

In one respect, the changes we are proposing have the effect of making the constituents into affiliates. The type of local management currently being proposed is not dissimilar to the current management portfolio of the affiliate. In another respect we are asking the affiliates to become constituents by accepting that they are equal and not merely limited partners in the enterprise that is the United Synagogue. In principle the affiliated synagogues, at least certainly the larger ones, should become equally responsible for important central services such as the Office of the Chief Rabbi and the Beth Din.



We believe that this is the correct approach on both sides of the equation. In all of our many meetings with the lay leadership of the affiliates, we encountered an air of confidence and enthusiasm about the prospects for the community that is sometimes lacking in their counterparts in constituent synagogues. Every lay leader we spoke to supported the concept of local management and displayed no regret at the lack of central administrative back-up. Some were quite evangelical in their desire to convince constituents that local control and freedom of choice would bring “a breath of fresh air” into the management of the community.

By reducing the size of the centre, placing the responsibility for the management of the community at a local level, and removing the direct link between membership size and payover, we believe that all tangible reasons for the continued existence of an affiliate status have been removed. Constructive dialogue is all that is now required to prepare the ground for a unified organisation at a political and constitutional level.

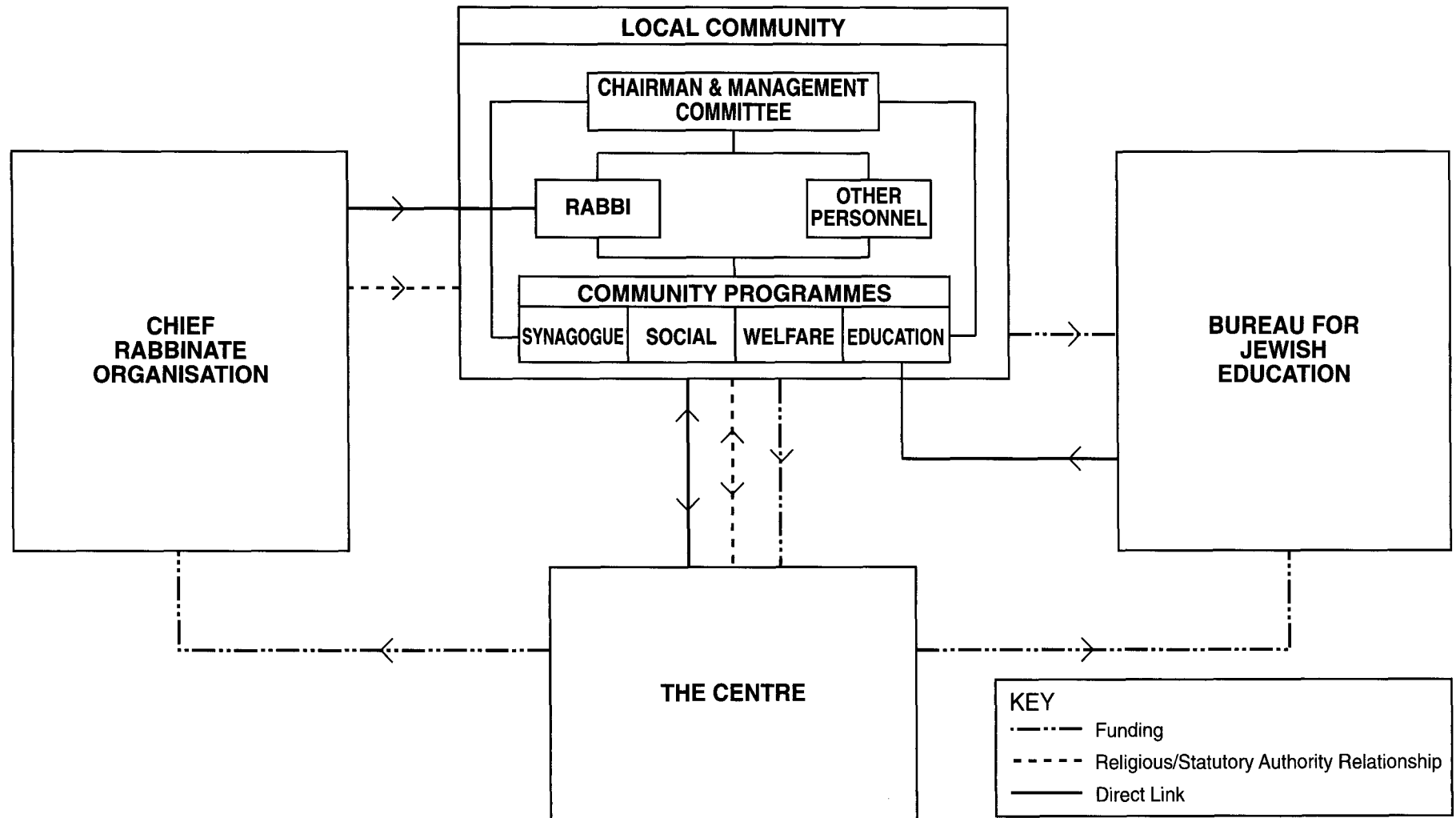
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## CREATING COMMUNITIES: PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- | R2 | Local synagogues should become Independent Trust Communities, managing their own administration and finances, whose relationship with the centre would be based on a formal “community agreement”.
  - | R3 | A new system should be instituted for calculating the local communities’ contributions to the central organisation. This should be based on the principle of site value.
  - | R4 | Local community management should be increased, and central control in the affairs of local communities should be decreased.
  - | R5 | Local community life should be expanded to respond to the needs of the contemporary Orthodox Jewish community.
  - | R6 | The functions of administration and finance should be split from those of ritual in the organisational structures of local communities.
  - | R7 | Communities should be encouraged to establish broad-based education committees to develop an overall strategy for Jewish education at a local community level.
  - | R8 | Communities should be encouraged to set up policy committees to construct a strategy for their development, to plan facilities for youth and retired members, and to examine possibilities for inter-community co-operation.
  - | R9 | A permanent chazzanut/*nussach* committee should be established to examine ways to preserve the tradition of *nussach* in light of the decline of the full-time chazzan.
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# LOCAL COMMUNITIES

## ORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE



# 4

## A NEW ROLE FOR THE CENTRE

*THE ROLE OF THE CENTRE IS TO SERVE AND NOT TO CONTROL LOCAL COMMUNITY LIFE. WE RECOMMEND THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE CENTRAL ORGANISATION TO REFLECT ITS ROLE AS AN ENABLING BODY FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND AS A PROVIDER OF THOSE RELIGIOUS AND OTHER FACILITIES THAT ARE BEST ORGANISED NATIONALLY RATHER THAN LOCALLY.*

### MINIMALISM AT THE CENTRE

The role of head office should be purely and solely to serve its communities. It does the communities no service in the long run if the centre takes on responsibilities that can be met at a local level.

The members complain that the tax burden is too great. They point to expensive manpower-intensive administration as the target for cost-cutting. However, we have identified a number of areas in which the manpower at the centre is stretched to the limit to provide a barely adequate service. To make centralisation really work would require a much greater investment, particularly in computerisation and property management. Thus, even if centralisation were desirable, the truth is that it is not affordable.

### Legitimate areas for central involvement

There are only two areas in which we feel it would be desirable for the centre to maintain a role that is not strictly limited to serving the local communities. They are first the continued provision of a limited number of national facilities, and secondly a continued and even enhanced role in community development.

There are times when individuals will need the centre for services that local communities cannot possibly provide. Clearly burial falls into this category, as do some of the functions of the Beth Din.

We do not want the United Synagogue to slide into the trap of being the mainstay of Anglo-Jewry's communal infrastructure, paid for by the minority. It should be quite clear, for example, that wherever possible a clear differential should be established between charges for members and non-members for the use of services provided by the organisation. However, in attempting to be realistic about the capacity of the United Synagogue to maintain an elaborate communal infrastructure, we do not want to throw out the baby with the bath water. Shechitah and kashrut may be optional extras for the United Synagogue, depending on their ability to operate as profit centres. However, the Chief Rabbi, the Beth Din, an enabling educational body and burial are not.

### MEMBERSHIP SATISFACTION WITH FUNCTIONS PROVIDED CENTRALLY

Source: United Synagogue Review market research

Department	% finding service good or satisfactory
Burial	84
Kashrut	66
Chief Rabbinate	50
Education	45
Beth Din	43

The other area where central involvement can be allowed to break our strict rule is 'community development' itself. This is, as we intend it, a new departure for the United Synagogue which needs explanation.

Historically the United Synagogue has participated in the growth of new communities and the development of existing ones in a reactive way. As Jews moved into a new area and felt the need for an organised community, including a synagogue, some approached the United Synagogue. The United Synagogue always tried to act positively on these occasions, supplying capital loans and advice. Sadly, the current financial position means that it would be difficult to continue to extend such facilities to communities in the short term. It is our hope and expectation that the reforms we are suggesting will, in the medium term, help the United Synagogue back into a healthy financial state in which bank-borrowing facilities may once again become available to assist the most pressing cases for community development.

However, that is not all there is to the community development portfolio and it is the wider task that now needs to be attempted in the long-term interests of the whole community.

**R17** | We believe that the United Synagogue should become pro-active in the identification of growth areas and the progress of developing communities and should create a permanent committee as part of the executive structure in this area. If it does not, then there are competitors at hand who will happily step in to provide non-Orthodox alternatives for Jews who, ideally, would like to retain their traditional roots and affiliations. The task requires much more than simple financial support - in fact sometimes it is not really financial support that is needed at all. The centre should be the expert on the demographic and social trends that underpin changes in our community, and should build a knowledge and expertise base in the area of community development.

Apart from these two exceptions, we firmly recommend a minimalist centre. It is all too easy for the centre to expand by creeping development. There are so many worthy causes. They must be resisted, because the membership of the United Synagogue can no longer be expected to pick up the tax bill on behalf of the community at large.

## **THE CREATION OF A LAY MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE REFLECTING THE NEW ROLE OF THE CENTRE**

Head office should cease to be a controlling and become an enabling body. It follows that a revised lay management structure will be necessary to reflect and to carry out that new role. We have not undertaken an exhaustive investigation into the management of head office, as it currently operates, for that reason. The recommendations that follow are designed to construct a new and more appropriate structure within the context of a radically revised role for the centre.

### **Problems with the current structure**

There are a number of things widely considered to be wrong with the current system that would be corrected within the new role we are proposing.

There is general dissatisfaction within the Council of the United Synagogue at its own position, size and role. There is almost universal concern at the under-representation of women and younger members. There is criticism of the current relationship between the Council and the honorary officers which stems, in part, from lack of clarity about their respective roles in the hierarchy of decision-making, in part from frustration about the flow of communication within the organisation, and in part from fundamental differences as to the aims and objectives of the United Synagogue as a whole. Many of our recommendations, and not just in the specific area of management and political control, do in fact address the deeper issues that tend to surface in the form of policy disputes at Council level.

## **Restructuring the United Synagogue Council**

The centre will have less to do, and that should be reflected in its lay structure. It will receive its mandate from a family of independent communities, so it is those communities as units, rather than the individual members of the United Synagogue that should be represented at national level.

The Council of the United Synagogue should be reconstituted to reflect these principles. Representation on the Council should be on the basis of synagogues rather than individual members. The Council should be as small as is possible to allow for representation of every community. The role of the Council should be clearly defined in relation to the communities it represents and the executive it controls.

**R10** For these reasons we would recommend a senate model for the United Synagogue Council, consisting of two representatives from each constituent United synagogue, chosen by the local community. Affiliated synagogues would be entitled to one representative per synagogue on the Council. Council members ought not to be serving honorary officers at a local level, but should be participants on the community's board of management. They would be appointed for a three-year term to represent the community, be mandated by the local community on issues of importance and would report back to the board of management on a regular basis. This would ensure that the Council reflects the needs of the communities and is of a size that can give serious consideration to the major policy issues. The Council would meet bi-monthly.

A case has been made for allowing some flexibility in council representation, to benefit communities with a larger membership. It is suggested that these communities are mainly younger expanding congregations and that extra Council representation will give younger members a greater chance of being appointed. We do not advocate this, since it would open the way to further expansion in the size of the Council. However, we accept that a variation on our recommendation, whereby communities with membership above a given figure would be granted an additional representative, could be considered.

At present there is provision for the honorary officers of the synagogues to meet as the 'Executive Committee' of the United Synagogue. There is no reason, under the proposed new structure, to maintain this as a regular feature since the Council itself will be the representative of the communities as units. However, there is equally no reason to rule out the possibility of ad hoc meetings of the main officials of the communities, should matters arise for which this would prove a useful consultative forum.

In order to ensure some continuity in personnel, it may be sensible to operate a rotating system for election to the Council under which one-third of the representatives would be elected each year.

We envisage that a smaller Council would find it easier to focus on major issues, that elections to the Council would assume a more serious aspect at local community level, and that communication between the Council and the local board of management would be strengthened.

The principles of transparency and accountability demand that Council meetings should be open in the fullest sense. The public should be welcome to take an interest in the affairs of the United Synagogue and a visitors' gallery should be open to all - including the media, whose exclusion at times over the past years has done little to help build a positive image of the organisation.

**R15** We have already outlined the principles we would like to see operating regarding the involvement of women in local community management and those principles apply equally at the national level. The need to secure the full participation of women in the work of the Council will become more pressing as women filter through to senior positions within local communities.

### **Elders, past presidents and life members**

The role of honorary positions for senior members, former-honorary officers and so on has to be carefully considered. We are concerned with a number of factors. First, it is important to keep the Council to a reasonable size. Secondly, the essential unit of representation is that of the community. This concept would be confused by the inclusion of individual, non-constituency-based members. Thirdly, it is of great importance to us to create a structure that will encourage participation from a younger element. Only a Council fully in touch with contemporary trends will be flexible enough to provide the United Synagogue with the dynamic leadership it needs. The image of the Council is a major factor in the decisions of younger local lay leaders to become representatives of their communities.

The present system, whereby former honorary officers, presidents and elders become a permanent part of the Council of the United Synagogue, lends itself to the above problems. Yet, unquestionably, the experience of those participants is an invaluable asset to the United Synagogue, representing a solid body of opinion and tradition. That asset should not be wasted, but at the same time it is not reasonable to expect it to continue unchallenged in its present role.

We feel strongly that the Council of the United Synagogue should be restricted to the elected members of local communities.

- R11** | The individual elders, past presidents and life members (including former honorary officers) of the United Synagogue should become a Council of Elders, who would appoint their own chairman, perhaps on an annual or biennial basis. Whilst this Council would not have voting rights, it would have a formal role in discussing contemporary matters before the Council of the United Synagogue and would have the right of access to all Council papers and to present its views formally to the president and Council of the United Synagogue for consideration. In other words, the opinions of these distinguished advisors could be separately and formally expressed and the Council would be bound to take note of them without being bound to act upon them. Such a system of checks and balances would be more appropriate to the new streamlined United Synagogue.

### **The executive structure**

- R13** | We recommend a different type of executive structure which would be more presidential in nature, in the American sense of the term. Under this system, the Council would elect a president and vice president who would stand together as a team and who would, in turn, appoint an executive committee, subject only, perhaps, to the formal endorsement of the Council. We make this recommendation because it is imperative to allow for coherent strategy development. Although the present system appears to be more democratic, it tends towards the election of a disparate set of individuals, chosen often on grounds of personality or seniority rather than policy, who cannot necessarily be harnessed into a coherent executive body.

- R14** | It follows from our other proposals that we envisage a much more service-oriented, smaller, enabling centre, constituted so as to reflect the needs of the communities. In these circumstances the need for safeguards against abuse of power is reduced and replaced by a concern to effect good management. In fact the difference is between the creation of good 'government' and of good 'management'. The executive cease to be the rulers exercising control and begin to function as voluntary management.

### **Elections to the executive**

Elections would take place on a triennial basis, with two terms in office being the maximum permitted for a president, as at present. The Executive Committee would be compact - perhaps six in total, since its portfolio would be much reduced.

### **The role of the president**

The combination of a revised centre and a restructured executive would leave the president of the United Synagogue with a different but still critical role in the organisation. Some of the pomp and circumstance, and the appearance of power, will disappear, but the creative potential of the position should be enhanced. The president

will no longer stand at the head of a large bureaucratic machine, but he will be *primus inter pares* within a leadership team of his own choosing. He will no longer be able to invoke substantial by-laws to control local honorary officers but he will be able to influence the future of Anglo-Jewry through community development and forward planning.

### **Appointment of a chairman**

**R12** Having streamlined the centre at every level, and having empowered a coherent executive, it will be necessary to ensure that the Council can maintain its critical role. To guarantee this, we recommend that at the beginning of each triennial session, the members of the Council should elect a chairman who would be responsible for the good orderly management of its affairs. This would include establishing disciplines such as the regular flow of information from the executive, and procedures to secure the maximum time for constructive debate within the constraints of time-tied council meetings. The chairman would function as an impartial 'Speaker' at Council meetings, thus releasing the president and his team to play a more active role in debate.

It has been suggested that with a substantially reduced Council, the need for an independent chairman may become less paramount, and that this recommendation might be deferred for a period to evaluate the operation of the new structure. We have an open mind on this issue and feel that the new Council will be in the best position to judge the situation as it develops.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHIEF RABBINATE AND EDUCATION AND THE CENTRE**

We recommend that both the Chief Rabbinate and the new Bureau for Jewish Education have their own separate organisational identity, with a greater degree of separation and independence from the central organisation than is presently the case. The proposed new structures are outlined in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively. In the context of the revised role of the centre, we would like to explain the reasons for the changes that are being proposed.

One reason for the proposed revised structure is to bring out the separate potential of both the Chief Rabbinate and a new Bureau for Jewish Education in a focused manner. The current management structure, where everything is a department of the centre, creates problems in both directions. On the one hand, accountability and transparency are reduced since, in the end, the buck always stops with the honorary officers. On the other hand, the independence and initiative of the departments is often stifled because they are merely cogs in a large wheel. In the proposed new structure, both the Chief Rabbinate and the Bureau will be given leeway to develop. The Council will give an annual grant based on accountability and clear budgetary requests, and the Chief Rabbinate and Bureau, with their own lay leadership, will be free to arrange their own affairs, to attract external funding for new projects, and to establish priorities.

### **Spreading the leadership task**

This proposition is also aimed at developing a broader base for the lay leadership of the United Synagogue. Throughout the system we have to get more people to share the burden and the challenge of running this community. One way to expand the lay leadership is to break down the degree of control that runs from the very centre and to establish more specific projects to which talented lay people can make their singular contribution. The Chief Rabbinate and the Bureau for Jewish Education, at least as we envisage them, are both outstanding challenges. Their success or failure could determine the future of the community and the nature of the work involved in both is fascinating. We believe that many individuals will be willing to contribute to these new and separate entities who would remain cold to the notion of becoming involved in the current bureaucratic hierarchy.

The argument against splitting up the centre in this way stems from fears about control. Would we be unleashing unfettered forces, unco-ordinated, unconnected, and failing to be responsive to the needs of the communities who would still be responsible for providing at least the majority of the funds? We strongly believe that the answer is no. We believe that these problems are inherent in the system we have now. Put the user and the supplier into a direct relationship with each other and the results will be greater co-ordination and responsiveness - because those concerned will demand no less.

### **Serving the national community**

The final thought behind the proposal - and it is a thought that goes to the very heart of the problems currently facing the United Synagogue - is that with a clearly identified independent role and management structure, both the Chief Rabbinate and the Bureau for Jewish Education will be in a position to involve and to serve a wider constituency within Anglo-Jewry beyond the United Synagogue. Once an expertise-based Bureau for Jewish Education is in place it will be able to offer its facilities to the wider community, either, in the case of specific schools or projects, on a consultancy basis, or in the case of other educational bodies by extending the management partnership beyond the United Synagogue. The Chief Rabbinate, similarly, will be in a position to work with other partners and to become a broadly based national entity.

## **LEARNING FROM RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICE**

In order to review the United Synagogue, we turned to the evidence available to us. We found no shortage of policy documents and no shortage of opinions, but we also found little evidence of research, or of any attempt to learn from the experiences of others. With the exception of the recent Board of Deputies study on synagogue membership (a summary of which is printed in the Appendix to this report on page 269) there was very little to give us even an entry point to a serious analysis of our market. Indeed an Anglo-Jewish social anthropologist told us for the record, *'we know more about most Amazonian tribes than we do about the lives of Anglo-Jews'*.

In commissioning our own market research we found ourselves treading on virgin ground. Almost every question we asked was a question to which no answer was readily available. What do members like and dislike about community life? Why do they join? Why do they leave? What are their hopes and aspirations? All this made our task easy, because almost any research would give us knowledge in the midst of ignorance, but at the same time hard because the limited time and resources available left us unable to do all the research necessary to make up for decades of neglect. The analysis of the research undertaken as part of this project is published in the Appendix. It makes compelling reading, but it is no more than a beginning. We suggest that the United Synagogue commits itself to building a knowledge base which will inform future strategic planning.

We also publish in the Appendix to this review a number of articles on models of community life both in this country and in the USA. One of the results of the reforms we are proposing is that communities should become more diverse and more responsive to needs and opportunities at a local level. But how does the local lay leader, or the rabbi, know what should be done and what can be achieved?

We found almost no mechanisms operating within the current system for building a knowledge base, sharing expertise and experience, or learning from the successes of others. Neither are comparisons drawn between what we do and what is done in other countries.

### **Continuous review - a permanent policy advisory board/think - tank**

**R16** We recommend the setting up of a permanent policy advisory board/think-tank as an integral and essential element of the restructured United Synagogue.

The board would be established under the chairmanship of an independent lay leader appointed jointly by the Chief Rabbi and the president of the United Synagogue, for a period of, say, three years. The chairman would then recruit a team to consider all



aspects of the work of the United Synagogue, to produce 'green papers' on ideas for development, and to keep a watching brief on the relationship between the mission of the organisation and its performance.

The think-tank would respond to two pressing concerns that are most appropriately addressed at the centre. The first is the need to build a knowledge base on the strength of ongoing research as suggested above. The second reason for the creation of such a policy think-tank is expressed by Peter Drucker:

*Don't wait. Organise yourself for systematic innovation. Build the search for opportunities inside and outside into your organisation.*

### **The role of the think-tank**

Such a board would help to bridge the gap between leadership and control. Looking always at the parts of an organisation, one does not necessarily get an accurate picture of the whole.

The think-tank will turn forward planning from a good intention into an integral feature of the United Synagogue. We are well aware that our recommendations will take several years to implement and that dynamics will be established that could not be foreseen from the outset. Relationships between professionals and laymen, between the constituent parts of the organisation, and between the United Synagogue and the wider Anglo-Jewish community will alter and reshape as implementation proceeds.

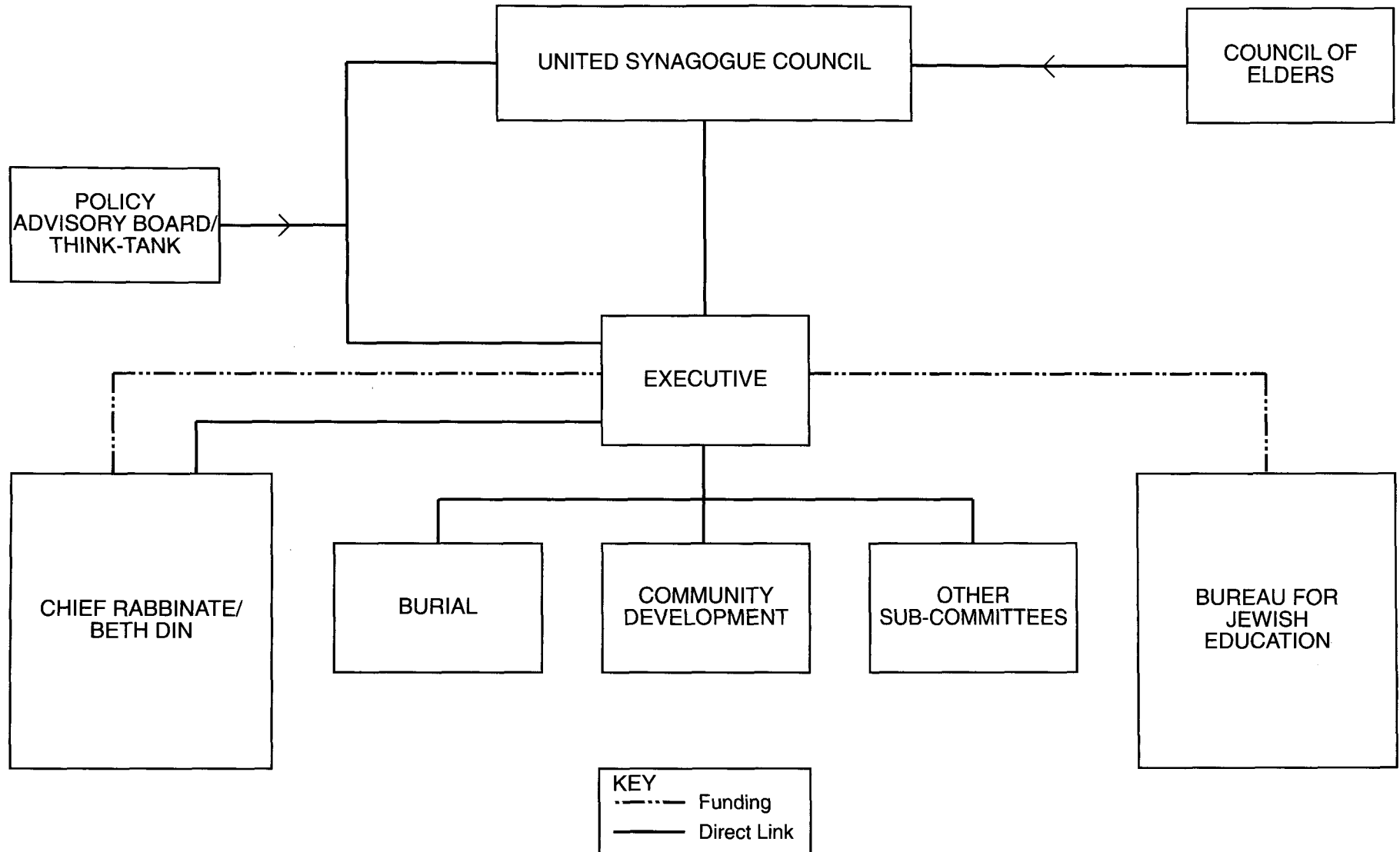
All this cannot be left to chance. The closest possible monitoring and the highest level of serious reflection is called for at every step along the way. It will take a body that is at once both fully informed within the United Synagogue, and yet free from the distorting responsibility for the day-to-day needs of the organisation, to accomplish these goals. We therefore see the establishment of such a policy think-tank as absolutely central to our overall vision of the United Synagogue of the future.

Without wishing to pre-empt the advisory board, we can already see several areas of concern that could occupy its agenda over the next few years. Amongst our immediate concerns are:

- \* To define future membership potential and to develop a recruitment strategy for the organisation.
- \* To examine the relationship between local communities and the centre and to advise as to future development.
- \* To examine attitudes towards kashrut provision in the UK and to suggest improvements for the benefit of the consumer.
- \* To consider the possibilities for establishing a broader constituent and financial base for the Chief Rabbinate.
- \* To examine the possibilities for the establishment of a national Beth Din as well as other opportunities for inter-organisational co-operation on religious matters.
- \* To examine issues related to the aged within the United Synagogue, to include membership contributions, FES contributions and community programming.

These are all examples of areas which would require broad investigation linked to research as a preliminary step towards the formation of sensible policy initiatives. A think-tank would have the capacity to broaden the scope of investigation and analysis in a way that an executive could not, thus expanding the potential for continuous creative change.

# THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE SUGGESTED STRUCTURE FOR 'THE CENTRE'



## BURIAL

The service provided by the Burial Society is one of the natural functions of a central synagogal organisation. Forty-nine per cent of respondents to our survey, when asked to rate the functions of the United Synagogue, gave a 'very high' importance to the provision of facilities for life cycle events - the highest rating for any aspect of the work of the organisation, and, interestingly, a large proportion of the respondents gave a good quality rating for the manner in which the service is provided (see page 59).

This having been said, a number of recurrent criticisms did emerge from correspondence received as well as from meetings held during the review process. The most regular complaint with regard to the Burial Society concerned the insistence that relatives of a departed one present themselves in person at Woburn House with the relevant certificates before a burial service would be cleared. This causes anguish and suffering in some cases and is one of the most regular criticisms used to illustrate members' sense of dissatisfaction with the centre. Some suggested the use of faxes to alleviate the problem. Others raised the possibility of using an official at each local synagogue to act as an intermediary so that bereaved relatives would merely have to present themselves and the certificates locally and the burial could be cleared and arranged by telephone. One synagogue administrator pointed out that she is trusted by the civil authorities to act as a marriage secretary and that it would not be unreasonable to expect a similar status in relation to the United Synagogue's burial arrangements. Whilst there are reasons for the current regulations, this is one of the most frequent instances of contact between the individual member and the central organisation - and it comes at a fragile and delicate time. It is regrettable that the regulations can cause lasting anger and recriminations which may colour the attitudes, not only of the immediate sufferers, but of a much wider circle of listeners, to the organisation as a whole.

With regard to the Funeral Expenses Scheme (FES), it is the nature of any insurance scheme that some individuals, in this case those who are blessed with long life, will pay more over the period than the cost of the service ultimately provided. The scheme appears to be well administered and the size of contributions levied causes little comment or resentment amongst the membership. At present, payments to the FES are made on a lifetime basis, although discretion can be applied in the case of the over 85s and in other instances of extreme hardship. One would prefer a system that was more generous to the older population, many of whom, beyond retirement and without a regular income, struggle to meet their commitments. However, given the ageing profile of the United Synagogue's membership, there seems little prospect of revising the scheme in this respect in the short term.

Concern is also expressed at the strict application of the rules of the scheme which allow for a defaulter to lose the benefit of all previous payments. In a period of high unemployment amongst the middle-aged middle classes, many feel uncomfortable at the idea of a system that effectively holds the participant to ransom to continue making payments in this way. This is yet another example of the psychology of centralised power and control leading to policies that give a harsh authoritarian image, whereas the preferred model ought to be one of a service to a paying clientele.

The other issue of principle that gives rise to comment amongst the membership is the use of money raised through the FES/Burial Society for other causes, and particularly for education. Apparent surpluses from the FES/Burial Society are transferred to general funds and hence used for other areas of activity. This discussion extends to the 'tombstone tax' - a complex series of fees levied by the United Synagogue on memorial stones - which raises substantial sums, a large proportion of which (£178,000 in 1991) is made over to education. We have no objection in principle to this use of funds. It is common practice in Jewish community life throughout the world to use surpluses from kashrut and from burial to subsidise the educational system. What is wrong is to disguise the fact. Transparency and accountability are essential in this situation, and every effort should be made to ensure that those who pay are made aware of the destination of their contributions.

## UNITED SYNAGOGUE INVOLVEMENT IN KASHRUT / SHECHITAH

The direct involvement of the United Synagogue in kashrut activities can be viewed as another departure of the centre from its basic operational task as a support structure for the communities. Two features, however, create a distinction between kashrut and, for example, education. The first is that kashrut, unlike education, is a service that would not be made available at a local level following a withdrawal on the part of the centre. This makes some form of combined national infrastructure necessary. The second feature, almost unique to kashrut within the range of United Synagogue central functions, is that the department carries a small annual surplus. The degree of public scrutiny to which the department is subjected is affected by this favourable consideration.

Attitudes have changed over the past few years following the establishment of the United Synagogue's own separate shechitah operation. The considerable losses incurred by this department have prompted more adverse public comment than, perhaps, any other single issue facing the United Synagogue today. The average member of the public is exasperated by what appears to him to be a display of disharmony amongst the religious leadership, cannot grasp the import of what are perceived as complicated and peripheral issues of disagreement and fears that the impact of the dispute will serve only to raise the communal financial burden - whether through price increases, or taxation, or both. Public perceptions can be understood against the background of an organisation that is internally split on this issue, with opposition to the continued involvement of the United Synagogue in shechitah coming from the central lay and professional leadership itself.

The various leadership initiatives to resolve differences between communal organisations are to be welcomed and it is hoped that the wasteful, antagonistic and competitive approach that currently characterises the management of shechitah will soon be put aside in favour of inter-organisational co-operation. Certainly the morale-sapping impact of the dispute should not be underestimated. Many synagogue honorary officers have conveyed privately to us their sense of futility, as they struggle to improve the membership/income profile of the synagogue while substantial sums are subsidising what is seen as an unnecessary involvement in a loss-making venture.

Within the kashrut department itself a buoyant atmosphere prevails, as a committed staff at head office pursues a focused set of departmental goals with the aim of increasing the availability and popularity of kashrut in the UK. The publication of *The Really Jewish Food Guide*, the introduction of the LBD logo on an increasing range of products generally available, and the services offered by specialist food technologists are cited as part of a programme of constructive and self-financing expansion of kosher facilities in this country made possible by the work of the United Synagogue at a central level.

This enthusiasm for the role of the centre contrasts with a more downbeat assessment on the part of some practitioners - caterers, delicatessen owners and butchers included - of the achievements of recent years. Here, attention is drawn to the declining take-up rate for kosher food, most noticeably in relation to supervised functions.

Concern has been expressed regarding the tendency, in recent years, to impose more and more stringent halakhic conditions on the caterers at a time when it is necessary to offer as much to the customer as possible to offset the threat of losing business to the unsupervised market. The trend of the past decade, from the insistence on the restriction to serve only kosher wines at a supervised function, to the recent ruling applying the same principle to supervised milk, to the introduction of more rigorous procedures for the examination of vegetables for infestation, have all served to add to the cost of a kosher function at a time when increasing numbers are tempted to provide "kosher style" rather than kosher fare for guests at a family celebration.

The issues involved here are complex, but our interest is with the process by which decisions are reached. Whilst it is taken for granted that the appropriate rabbinical authorities should maintain the power to uphold halakhic principles, we are nevertheless concerned that the process prior to the final stage of a rabbinical ruling should incorporate the provision of full and informed background data.

The role of the kashrut committee needs to be more clearly defined. We were surprised to find no formal representation of the various sectors of the kashrut industry on this or indeed any committee through which the voice of an interested party could be heard. The public are similarly under-represented, and the view has been expressed that, in this area in particular, the views of women - mothers and home organisers - who most acutely feel the changes in the marketplace - ought to be heard in an organised way. The committee structure exists but it has not established for itself a clear role as an access point for the opinions of the public or of the trade to be heard. The fact that there are aspects which must ultimately come under the aegis of religious authority should not preclude an open, intense, ongoing, consultative process accompanied by continual market research. This is an issue of transparency and accountability: principles which apply to each and every aspect of the work of the United Synagogue irrespective of the religious dimension.

## **CHAPLAINCY AND VISITATION**

Whilst we have not attempted comprehensive coverage of the activities of the United Synagogue in this report, a brief word on chaplaincy and visitation might be appropriate. These are services which, for different reasons, have been taken on by the central organisation.

In principle we would expect the centre to maintain a lean profile, disentangling itself from central involvement in specific projects wherever possible. As with many of the other good causes with which the United Synagogue has become identified, potential for broader communal support in financial terms may not be tapped to the full when a central body can be seen to be taking the overall responsibility. University chaplaincy cost the membership £85,000 and the Visitation Committee cost £51,000 in 1991, sums that might have been raised through sponsorship rather than placing yet another charge on a declining membership for a national service that benefits United Synagogue member and non-member alike.

As the United Synagogue accepts that it can no longer afford to think of itself as the community, it may be appropriate to relocate necessary national services such as chaplaincy and visitation within a genuinely national umbrella organisation such as the Board of Deputies. Alternatively, such projects could be established as independent charities.

We understand that there are special features which make the connection of these two concerns to the United Synagogue important. In the case of chaplaincy it is a desire to ensure that specifically Orthodox religious facilities are on offer in sometimes isolated university and college environments. Visitation services to hospitals and prisons require the specialist skills of the rabbinate and hence conveniently draw on the manpower available within the United Synagogue. We nevertheless feel that the precedent is problematic, as there are many worthy causes of this type that would have a claim to central community support on the same basis.

Efforts should be made to find more suitable organisational homes for both chaplaincy and visitation within a 12 month period whilst ensuring, in the meantime, that the valuable services they provide to the wider community are continued. The hard truth is that the United Synagogue no longer has the funds available to underwrite such a wide range of cross-community services.

## **THE PENSION FUND**

Our views on the management of the pension fund in recent years have been expressed in full in the financial review at the beginning of this report. Put simply, the pension fund must in future remain sacrosanct.

- R18** | We strongly recommend that independent trustees are appointed forthwith for the pension fund. The highest priority must be given to the repayment of the debt to the pension fund and the United Synagogue should, in future, forgo its technical rights to borrow from the fund.

## **THE LOCATION OF HEAD OFFICE**

- R19** | There is a firm policy commitment on the part of the Council to sell Woburn House and to move the head office of the United Synagogue to more suitable premises. We support this policy both because of the financial considerations that motivated the decision and because the current central office is a debilitating and depressing environment by any standards. It is questionable whether, in the short term, and given the current property climate, the financial potential of a sale of Woburn House can be realised, but there is a compelling case in favour of realising this once valuable but fast declining asset as soon as possible.

What is less clear are the principles which would determine the best location for such a move. Assuming financial gain as one clear index, there is little agreement on the others. Should head office remain in Central London, accessible to all communities though convenient to almost none? Should it move to the outer suburbs of North-West London where the price of property is more reasonable, and what is the balance between cost factors and accessibility? Should head office be relocated in existing United Synagogue property, or should it seek out office accommodation? Should the entire central operation be retained as one unit, or is there a case for separating the various departments, which may give the United Synagogue more options for the move?

The principles underpinning our recommendations could help to resolve a number of these issues.

First, it should be manifest that the office requirement for the central organisation we envisage would be much smaller than that currently needed. This should be fully taken into account before any decision is made.

Secondly, we see little to be gained by the retention of head office as a single unit, unless there is sound financial logic in so doing. In fact we believe that a physical separation of the executive offices, the Bureau of Education and the Chief Rabbinate into three different locations would serve to build their corporate identity. In the age of the modem and the fax machine, physical separation should present little, if any problem.

Thirdly, the use of existing United Synagogue premises would be ideal in terms of the image of the Chief Rabbinate and the Bureau of Education, at least. It is particularly important for the Chief Rabbi's office to be in close proximity to a synagogue/bet midrash. This option should be fully explored before alternative commercial propositions are considered.

Finally, whilst one recognises the dilemma which motivates towards a central location, this can only be a determining factor if it is also financially viable. We understand that options are available that would satisfy these criteria, and these should be fully explored. But if it is necessary, in the end, to take all or part of the operation to the North-West suburbs, it should also be pointed out that the need for members to actually visit head office, given its new and more limited role, would be minimal. Council meetings could be held regularly in different communities rather than within the head office building in recognition of the difficulties imposed on the South and on Redbridge of a North-West London location.

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## A NEW ROLE FOR THE CENTRE : PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- | R10 | The United Synagogue Council should be reconstituted as a representative body for a group of equal communities, with two representatives from each participating community.
  - | R11 | A Council of Elders should be set up comprising the elders, past presidents and life members of the United Synagogue.
  - | R12 | A new, elected, position of chairman of the Council of the United Synagogue should be established, although not necessarily immediately instituted.
  - | R13 | The central executive structure of the United Synagogue should be reconstituted on the basis of an elected president and vice-president with powers to appoint their own executive team.
  - | R14 | The central organisation of the United Synagogue should streamline its executive and committee structure.
  - | R15 | There should be a re-examination of women members' access to United Synagogue management positions.
  - | R16 | A permanent advisory policy review board/think-tank should be established as part of the central organisational structure.
  - | R17 | A community development committee of the executive of the United Synagogue should be established.
  - | R18 | Independent trustees should be appointed forthwith for the pension fund. In addition, the debt to the pension fund should be given the highest priority for repayment and the United Synagogue should, in future, forgo its technical rights to borrow from the fund.
  - | R19 | The central organisation of the United Synagogue should be relocated, eventually, to premises appropriate to its revised size and role, physically separating, if necessary, the Chief Rabbinate, the new Bureau of Jewish Education and the administrative centre.
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# JEWISH EDUCATION

## A NEW DEAL

*JEWISH EDUCATION HOLDS THE KEY TO THE CONTINUITY OF OUR COMMUNITY. WE RECOMMEND A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THE RESPECTIVE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CENTRE, THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. WE BELIEVE THAT INCREASED RESPONSIBILITY FOR EDUCATION MUST DEVOLVE TO THE PRIMARY USERS OF THE SYSTEM - THE PARENTS, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE. THE ROLE OF THE CENTRE SHOULD BE LIMITED TO SUPPORTING TRAINING, INNOVATION, CURRICULUM, QUALITY CONTROL AND THE SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE.*

### THE IMPORTANCE OF JEWISH EDUCATION

Jewish education is the key to Jewish continuity. If this was true during the many centuries in which Jews had limited involvement in their wider societies, it is all the more true now that they are an integral part of an open, secular culture. Without instruction there can be no transmission of Judaism across the generations. Without learning there can be no vitality and depth to Jewish life.

We believe that in the coming years it will become increasingly clear that education is essential to Diaspora survival, as Jewish identity becomes less a matter of habit than of conscious choice. Not only will there be a continued demand for places at Jewish day schools, there will also be a growing realisation that informal education, family education and adult education all have their part to play in reinforcing the work done by schools and chadarim.

In recent years the United Synagogue has made a massive commitment to Jewish education. We applaud that fact, although, as we make clear in this chapter, we believe that the financial burden must now be allocated differently if the commitment is to be sustained into the future. Not only do we believe education to be central to the mission of the United Synagogue, we believe it to be integral to our wider concept of the synagogue as community. The question to which we have sought an answer, however, is how best to ensure that Jewish education flourishes in a community of limited resources.

### CURRENT PROBLEMS

In the turmoil that has marked the United Synagogue Council over the past 18 months, it has been the Board of Education that has been the focus of much of the debate. As the financial crisis deepened this year, it was education that bore the brunt of emergency cutbacks. Despite a public outcry, and contrary to the stated priorities of both Council and honorary officers, when cuts had to be made, they were directed at the education portfolio.

In one respect we were as concerned as the public at large to see education suffering a setback. It should be apparent from the tenor of this report that we cannot project any kind of future for the United Synagogue that is not based on continually enhanced educational provision. But equally we understand how it happened that a lay leadership dedicated to Jewish education felt it necessary to deal such a blow.

The income of the United Synagogue is effectively a tax upon its membership. That membership base is dwindling. Meanwhile, in an effort to respond to positive demands for increased Jewishness, the expenditure of the United Synagogue has been rising consistently - with more schools and other educational projects, and expansion of other



central services. Between 1982 and 1990, the education budget rose from 14% to 22.5% of the United Synagogue's total expenditure, whilst, in absolute terms, net central expenditure on education rose from just over £300,000 to almost £1,400,000. Moreover, whilst in 1982 income, in the form of parental contributions and sponsorship, represented more than half of the total cost of educational provision from the centre, by 1990 this had dropped to just over 40%. Clearly this level of expansion, underwritten largely through central subsidy, was unsustainable.

The current policy of the United Synagogue assumes that Jewish education cannot survive without massive injections of central funding. We are convinced that the community is undergoing a change in attitudes that opens up new possibilities for the educational system.

Jewish education no longer needs to perceive itself as the fragile invalid, preserved only through the saline drip of central funding. There is every indication that the community is adopting Jewish education as a top, if not the top, priority for securing Jewish continuity. The percentage of children enrolled in full-time Jewish education has doubled over the past thirty years from 15% of the total Jewish child population in 1962 to 30% in 1990, and the figure will rise again as the impact of intake into three new day schools opening between 1990 and 1993 is felt (J.E.D.T. Think Tank Report 1992). Our research confirms a pattern of growing support for Jewish schooling (see page 256) in comparison to previous studies. Jewish day schools are successful, oversubscribed, and growing all the time.

Even more notable changes have taken place in other sectors of Jewish education. Today almost 40% of the pre-school age group attend Jewish kindergartens, special educational needs are being addressed coherently within the Jewish community and there has been a spectacular, if as yet unquantified, increase in participation in adult education programmes over the past decade. Although major hurdles have yet to be surmounted in translating emotional into tangible support - problems that are addressed in the recently published Jewish Educational Development Trust Think Tank Report - there is sufficient data to conclude that a fundamental change is taking place in our community's perceptions of Jewish education. Significantly, when asked to rank the relative importance of various functions provided by the synagogue, respondents to our survey placed Jewish education second only to arrangements for births, marriages and deaths - with even the synagogue service relegated to third place (see page 248).

**R21** | It is against this background of changing attitudes that we are proposing a revision of roles and responsibilities, following which the infrastructure of education - the schools, the chadarim, and so on - will be in the hands of the parents and local communities, with the centre providing the back-up necessary to maintain standards and to strive for excellence.

## **ENDING CENTRAL SUBSIDIES TO THE DAY SCHOOLS**

**R25** | Subsidising the Jewish education of children in day schools, irrespective of whether the parents hold United Synagogue membership, is neither healthy for Jewish education, nor productive for the United Synagogue.

The taxation of United Synagogue members can no longer be employed to subsidise Jewish studies in day schools when it is so desperately needed to revitalise the fabric of community life itself. In the future, if we can bring more people into the community fold, we will generate more income, and hence the realistic possibility of more educational provision. It is increasingly apparent that we are doing no favour to the cause of Jewish education in the long run if we simply prolong its dependency on the centre. Moreover, this is unsustainable.

We are aware of the pressure this process will place on the schools as they adjust to a less cushioned environment and there is little doubt that head teachers will make their views well known. However, we can no longer accept an indefinite dependency as an alternative to a long-term strategy for development.

The Jewish day school system in Australia illustrates that self-governing, self-financing community schools can survive and thrive. In the Appendix we have highlighted the model of Mount Scopus School in Melbourne (page 287), because both the cultural and the socio-economic background of the parents is broadly similar to that of London Jewry. The difference, of course, is that Melbourne's schools do not benefit from the high level of government support for the secular education to which most of our schools are entitled. And yet they succeed. Outstandingly so.

One of the features of the situation in Melbourne is the strong sense of loyalty amongst graduates of Mount Scopus for their former school. This has proved fertile ground for fund-raising in recent years. Our research indicates that the same phenomenon is beginning to appear in the UK, with markedly higher support for day schools amongst parents who were themselves educated at Jewish schools. This inbuilt body of support for the system could be more fully exploited in this country once responsibility shifts from an amorphous centre to the individual school.

**R24** Careful transition arrangements will have to be made to guarantee security for each school as it progresses towards full independence, which will include charitable status. Some thought has been given to transitional relief payments as the schools move, over a period of years, towards accepting the full financial burden, and one possible fiscal model can be found in the Appendix to the Review (page 156). It should remain mandatory for former United Synagogue schools to accept the religious authority of the Chief Rabbi, under a simple formula that would be written into their constitutions.

The problem of full independence is most acute at the secondary level, where the costs of providing Jewish studies are higher and the co-operation of the parents lower than at primary level. This problem could be addressed in a number of ways, for example by establishing a bursary fund, privately sponsored, and targeted towards assistance for children whose parents are unable to pay the full voluntary contribution. The cost should not, in the long run, be one that falls directly on the taxation system.

#### **THE GROWING POPULARITY OF JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS**

Source: United Synagogue Review market research

We sought to establish the attitudes of the 380 respondents in our sample who had children below the age of 25. The starting point was their view on whether it is better to send a child of primary school age to a Jewish or to a non-Jewish school, ignoring the question of cost. A similar question was asked in relation to Jewish secondary schooling and the results are given below, listing also the responses to similar questions included in the 1978 Redbridge survey:

	United Synagogue	Redbridge
% supporting Jewish primary schooling	41	24
% supporting Jewish secondary schooling	26	19

Although the two samples are only loosely comparable, there can be little doubt that parental enthusiasm for Jewish schooling has increased substantially since the Redbridge data was collected.

#### **LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF CHADARIM**

**R22** Current administrative and financial arrangements for the chadarim are equally problematic. The benefits of centralised control and subsidy are not apparent. One might have expected the system to be perceived as good value for money, and that it would attract young parents to join the United Synagogue. In practice the perception of the public, as we found in our market research, is very different. The current system of central subsidy goes unnoticed and unappreciated and 32% of respondents to our survey stated that "they would have been prepared to pay more to get high quality education" (47% amongst respondents expressing dissatisfaction with the system).

Reform Hebrew classes were thought to be more imaginative and professional - the attraction to Orthodox rather than Reform education being based on religious and not educational criteria. (page 226). The cheder system is generally held in low regard (although our research suggests that once teenage and adult education are included, the public's perception of Jewish educational provision becomes more favourable), despite some impressive attempts to improve curricula and materials at the younger age range.

In some ways centralisation is wasteful as a natural consequence of bureaucracy - rules and regulations about class sizes, for example, when determined centrally, do not challenge the local cheder to rationalise where possible. Centralisation supposedly safeguards against competition in the employment market, but in practice different rates of pay at different centres have been recognised and condoned by the Board of Education. Choice is taken away from the local community - expensive arrangements are made to bus in often-inexperienced young seminary graduates whose cultural as well as religious background is far removed from that of the children, when the local community may well prefer to employ more experienced local teachers. The cheder system is rarely integrated into the community as part of an overall educational strategy. These are examples of the weaknesses of the current system.

We question the validity of subsidising the cheder system from the central taxation of United Synagogue members. The main argument advanced in favour of the current approach is that it spreads the financial burden for education more evenly between the younger communities with large child populations and the older, more established communities who do not need to maintain their own education programmes. 'Devolution' has always been rejected at Council level for this reason. However, we are now calling for the issue to be re-evaluated in the light of our proposals relating to the system of payover, local management of synagogues and the reduced size of the centre. The combination of all these factors, as illustrated in the financial models that can be found on page 133 of the Appendix to the Review, ensure a retained equity in the system, whereby those communities that would carry the heaviest education burden would acquire the means to carry that burden from a compensatory lighter financial responsibility in other respects. We believe that the case for devolution at the primary stage is overwhelming once the financial objection has been removed.

The effect of our recommendations would be to leave each community responsible for cheder provision at the primary level. Some communities may view this as a service that should be subsidised through membership fees. Others may wish to place the full burden on the parents. The point is that each community can take control of its own destiny.

However, we recognise that a devolved system would not produce the best results for the over-elevens, and so a separate proposal has been prepared for them.

## **A COLLEGE FOR SECONDARY JEWISH EDUCATION**

The principles which dictate local control of the cheder cannot be applied to secondary Jewish education. In terms of pupil numbers the local community is unlikely to be able to justify a community based system beyond the primary stage. Whereas almost 70% of all Jewish children receive some form of Jewish education at age 11, by age 14 the figure has slumped to less than 30% and by age 17 to a mere 10% of the total population - and these figures include pupils enrolled at Jewish day schools (J.E.D.T. Think-Tank Report 1992). In terms of teaching staff, the comparative popularity and success of the current teenage centres is due, in the main, to the contribution of a few outstandingly talented young youth-movement leaders who exist in insufficient numbers to supply a community-based teenage centre system.

The declining number of teenagers who are retained within the system once the Jewish day schools on the one hand, and assimilatory influences on the other, have taken their toll, are to be found in regionalised teenage centres. Since it makes sense in educational

terms to make the divide between cheder and the next stage at eleven plus, following state education, some centres already cater for the full secondary range. The sixth form centre at Jews' College serves the whole system for those who remain within to the age of sixteen and beyond.

In some ways the development of the teenage centres represents a revival in secondary Jewish education. Our research indicates that the centres are popular with the students, who themselves contrast these positive attitudes with their low regard for their experiences at cheder (see page 239), and this represents a considerable achievement in the prevailing social climate. Numbers are expanding, or at least not declining, in this sector.

**R23** Our recommendation, which is the subject of a detailed working paper (Appendix, page 157), is to rationalise the teenage centres into a single administrative and educational structure, operating across several campuses and established as an independent charitable trust.

This proposal follows from our general principles. It will give focus and appropriate structure to this important segment of the Jewish educational system. It will provide another forum for intelligent, younger lay leadership. It will place the responsibility for direct hands on educational provision with the user and away from the centre, in line with other recommendations in this field. Perhaps most importantly it will create a framework for the development of community-based informal education, currently the cinderella of the Jewish educational system.

## **YOUTH AND INFORMAL EDUCATION**

The success of the teenage centres is due largely to the use of informal educational techniques. Whilst examination courses are, and should continue to be, on offer for the interested student, the heart of the teenage centre is the discussion group, the activity-based approach and the social element. This curriculum is delivered, in the main, by highly committed and outstandingly talented youth-movement leaders rather than teachers.

In this sense the United Synagogue Board of Education, with its emphasis on formal, structured education, has little to offer the teenage centres other than a purely administrative base. By forming the teenage centre movement into a separate entity, albeit based initially within the Bureau of Education offices, we would be creating, for the first time, a location for the development of community-based informal education.

The professional leadership of the new College for Secondary Jewish Education would naturally become involved in informal education. There is also an obvious synergy between this structure and the needs of Jewish Youth Study Groups, whose organisation, under our proposals, would be based within the college's headquarters.

This simple but exciting plan is mapped out in greater detail in the Appendix to the Review.

## **ADULT EDUCATION**

The most immediate impact of the recent cutback in the United Synagogue's central education budget was the dismantling of the adult education department of the Board of Education. Subsequently, an initiative on the part of the Chief Rabbi established a revised support structure for adult education within the Chief Rabbinate organisation.

What was forced upon the United Synagogue by a financial crisis, produced, in our view, a much more rational approach to the whole issue of adult education. We believe that what limited support there should be for adult education at a central level should be provided through the rabbinical rather than the educational structure, since it is the rabbi who, in this instance, is the general in the field. Our views on central provision in adult education can be found on page 88 in the context of the role of the Chief Rabbinate.

## A NEW SUPPORT ROLE FOR THE CENTRE IN EDUCATION

**R20** With the day schools and the College for Secondary Jewish Education established as independent charitable trusts, the communities taking responsibility for their own educational provision, adult education relocated within the Chief Rabbinate, and the teenage centres serviced by a revised organisational structure, the existing United Synagogue Board of Education becomes redundant, and we recommend its abolition.

It would however, be wrong to assume that there is no future for a central role in education. The need remains for a responsive enabling body, dedicated to assisting local communities in maximising their own potential and realising the educational goals they have set themselves. The resource at the centre should be a slender expert infrastructure requiring a fraction of the current budget. It should be supported, initially at least, by the membership of the United Synagogue, but its services could be marketed on a responsible financial basis to the wider community, and its ultimate aim should be to operate on a supplier/purchaser basis for schools, chadarim and other educational projects.

We recommend the creation of a new Bureau for Jewish Education that would share some of the features of an American Board. For that reason we have included in the Appendix to the Review a symposium on the Board of Education issue which sets out our own preliminary vision as to what might be established here, compared with models drawn from the United States (see pages 149 and 282).

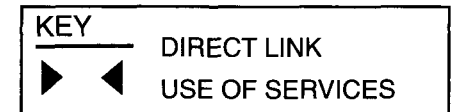
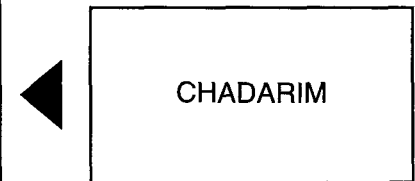
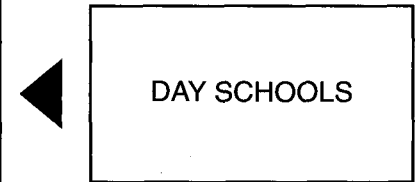
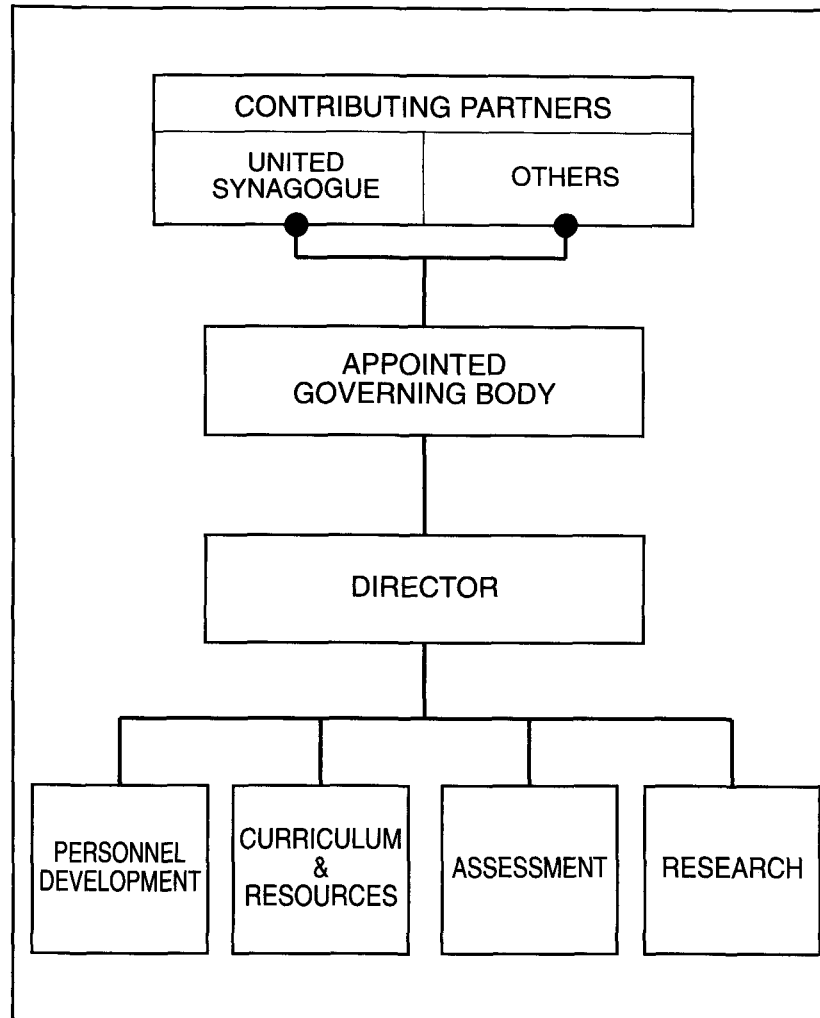
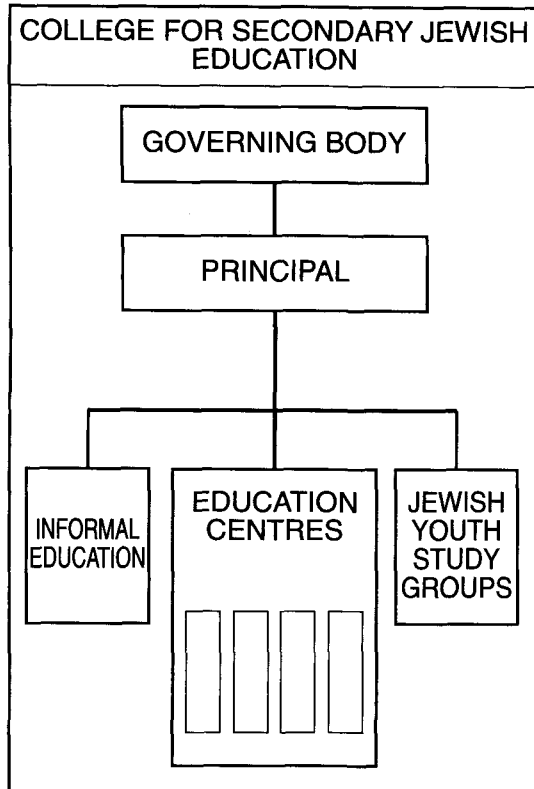
The bureau would be an independent body, supplying expertise to schools and chadarim on a client basis. In terms of organisational structure the new bureau would, in some respects, resemble the old London Board of Jewish Religious Education, but it would differ from the London Board in being an appointed rather than an elected body. We have to say that the integration of the London Board into the United Synagogue in 1987 fuelled expansion without reference to the market or to economic conditions, reflected all the dangers of taking a free-standing organisation and incorporating it into a centralised bureaucracy, and led inexorably to the cutbacks forced upon the education department earlier this year.

Some form of regular funding would be required to maintain the new bureau, although the staffing would be substantially reduced from the current high level. In the first instance, the central charge on communities would include a grant to the Bureau of Education, and the interests of the United Synagogue would be safeguarded by appropriate representation at management level. This situation would be reviewed annually, and it is anticipated that the grant would be pegged or even reduced as the bureau found its feet, established its own fund-raising profile, and attracted a degree of project funding.

It is not within our remit to make recommendations affecting other Anglo-Jewish bodies, but the proposed new structure for a Bureau for Jewish Education does suggest a high degree of synergy with organisations such as the Jewish Educational Development Trust, possibly the Zionist Federation Education Trust, and certainly the Institute of Jewish Education. We strongly recommend constructive discussions between these bodies with a view to exploiting the obvious advantages of co-operation. As a founding partner and major contributor to the Institute of Jewish Education, we should add that we see no reason, at this stage, for the United Synagogue to maintain both a bureau and a stake in an institute in the field of Jewish education. Many, if not most, of the tasks that would fall within the competence and remit of a new bureau (and which are outlined in the Appendix, page 149) are those for which the present Institute of Jewish Education is geared. Ideally agreement should be reached between a number of communal organisations to create one body that would undertake both the new role of the proposed Bureau for Jewish Education and the work currently carried out by the Institute of Jewish Education.

# THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE

## SUGGESTED INITIAL STRUCTURE FOR A BUREAU OF JEWISH EDUCATION



## SUMMARY

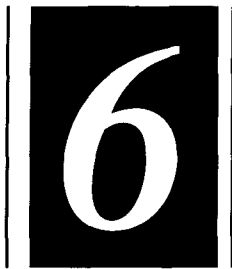
The recent government white paper on education (July 1992) highlighted five great themes that must underpin educational provision: quality, diversity, choice, autonomy and accountability. These themes demand an educational system that is both responsive to needs and challenging. The centre has a role to play, but it must not overwhelm the primary responsibility of the local school and community to construct the educational programmes that are best suited to their circumstances.

We apply the same principles to our vision of a sound educational structure as to the general relationship of community to the centre: flexibility, freedom of choice, getting the centre of responsibility as close as possible to the user and putting resources where they can work most effectively. All this, once fear itself has been overcome, will, according to all the investigations we have carried out, unleash a wave of involvement, participation, enthusiasm and commitment to securing the vibrant development of education within our United Synagogue communities.

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## JEWISH EDUCATION: PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- | R20 | The existing United Synagogue Board of Education should be abolished and a Bureau for Jewish Education, supported by the United Synagogue, should be established, to offer guidance, inspection, and training to communities and schools on a supplier/purchaser basis.
  - | R21 | Responsibility for education should be placed at the local community level and in the hands of the users.
  - | R22 | Central subsidies to chadarim and the central employment of teaching staff should be abolished and guidelines established for local employment of teachers.
  - | R23 | The teenage centres should be reconstituted as a single entity or College for Secondary Jewish Education. This would be a charitable trust operating on several campuses under one leadership structure.
  - | R24 | All day schools currently under the aegis of the United Synagogue should become independent charitable trusts.
  - | R25 | Central subsidies to Jewish day schools should be abolished, within a limited transitional period.
-



## RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

### THE RABBINATE

*OUR RABBIS ARE OUR SENIOR PROFESSIONALS AND THE PRINCIPAL INSTRUMENTS FOR RESHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY. WE RECOMMEND THE INTRODUCTION OF AN ENHANCED PROFESSIONAL STRUCTURE WITHIN THE RABBINATE TO ENCOURAGE CHALLENGE AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT. THIS IS SET IN THE CONTEXT OF AUTONOMY FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND THE SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP OF THE CHIEF RABBI.*

The quality of leadership, and particularly of religious leadership, has always been the single biggest indicator of the health of the community. Bearing in mind that geographical considerations are by far the most important single determinant of which community to join, it is significant that thirty per cent of respondents to our survey stated that the quality of the rabbi was a critical factor in their choice of a synagogue.

Clearly the fundamental shift in the relationship between communities and the centre, proposed by this report, will affect the relationship between the rabbi and his community and between the rabbi and the United Synagogue as a whole. What follows is an attempt to identify the sensitive issues and to make some recommendations in line with the broader principles of the review.

#### **THE ROLE OF THE CENTRE IN RELATION TO THE RABBI**

We have said that the centre should occupy an enabling, not controlling, role in relation to communities. Exactly the same principles apply to the rabbinate. We recommend that one fundamental control be retained at the centre: that every United Synagogue rabbi must be authorised to serve his community by the Chief Rabbi. This minimum condition should be written into the agreement between each United Synagogue community and the centre, to protect its orthodox foundations. With this exception, the role of the centre in relation to the rabbinate is intended to be an enabling one.

If this is to be the role of the centre, then we are convinced that the Chief Rabbinate is the right home for putting it into effect. It is not a lay head office that can bring about improvement, but rather the professional community of the rabbinate itself, operating under tight disciplines within a focused structure.

What follows is a description of the ways in which the new minimalist centre can help to improve a community by enhancing the capacities of the rabbi to function as its spiritual leader and senior professional.

#### **PROFESSIONAL REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT**

The rabbinical profession in this country suffers from a number of deficiencies. Most serious is the lack of continuous challenge within the rabbinate. In addition, there is a lack of mobility, lack of clear role definitions, lack of coherence and consistency between training and performance goals, professional loneliness, lack of recognised professional standards and sheer pressure to function well in an enormously varied range of duties. These problems all contribute to an environment in which the best that a rabbi can hope to do is not to fail. Definitions of success are unquantified and ephemeral and therefore rarely applied.



The cornerstone of our proposals to improve the rabbinate is the idea of creating a professional community with standards and support systems. To do this requires a mixture of challenge and accountability. We believe that the catalyst will be the introduction of annual professional review linked to personal development.

**R 29** We strongly recommend that a system of professional review and development for the rabbinate should be established under the aegis of the Chief Rabbinate. It would be mandatory for United Synagogue rabbis to participate in an annual review according to a formula laid out in the Appendix to this report. The review process would be the construction of a report, based on a meeting between the rabbi, the Chief Rabbi (or his representative - see the section below on 'senior rabbis'), and a layman drawn from a panel of senior professionals (and unconnected to the rabbi's community). The content of the review would relate to goals established between the rabbi and his community following his appointment. The outcome of the review would be the defining of professional targets and, if necessary, an in-service training programme for the following year.

The purpose of the professional review, implicit in the formula we are recommending, is to assist personal growth and challenge within the rabbinate. Whilst the results of the review would be confidential within the Chief Rabbinate, the system could nevertheless be used in exceptional cases to influence contractual discussions within the local community.

Professional review, together with the re-establishment of in-service training, will strengthen and deepen the sense of challenge within the rabbinate which is critical to our thinking. Funds must be made available to allow rabbis to develop their skills in areas such as counselling, management, and education. It is vital that communities appreciate the added value that they will get out of a challenged, developing professional, who does not feel trapped at a stationary level. The malaise that now exists has been apparent for some time. Lord Jakobovits, in an address to the United Synagogue Council made in 1970, described the situation we encountered this year in our investigations :

*Stifled by pressures to conform to a rigid system, deprived of incentives to be creative, and frequently driven to stagnation by serving the same single congregation for several decades, many ministers find the refusal to show enterprise and initiative the better part of professional valour. Opportunities for promotion scarcely exist, participation in policy-making deliberations is discouraged and the pursuit of literary, academic and organisational interest outside the narrow orbit of their congregational activity is neither expected nor rewarded, with the result that few ministers really develop their full potential, or look forward to anything more exciting than their eventual retirement.*

The results of a system in which the rabbi is not constantly challenged as well as encouraged to develop are apparent. We are struck by the poor publications track record of our rabbinate, for example, and we want to foster a supportive but challenged rabbinical community, setting high professional standards for itself, which will win the respect of the community by its deeds and not merely by its formal status.

Whilst the breadth of the role of rabbi has expanded enormously over the 20 years since the Emeritus Chief Rabbi's speech, the motivational issues have not changed at all. The main aim of the plan for regular professional review and development is to act as a catalyst to create a challenged and challenging environment within the structure of the United Synagogue.

## SETTING STANDARDS WITHIN THE RABBINATE

### In-service training

R30

It is essential that a full programme for in-service training be re-established under the aegis of the Chief Rabbinate. Training is the heart and soul of a successful organisation today. The role of the rabbi within the United Synagogue is as complex and as multi-faceted as any professional position could be. It demands a diversity of skills that exceeds that required in many other highly paid professions. And the demands will change and grow as the mission of the communities to include Jews within tradition constantly adds new dimensions to the role. Members' perceptions of the personal and professional qualities required of the rabbi (Market research page 224) highlight the imperative to re-establish regular professional development opportunities for the rabbinate as soon as possible.

#### WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE RABBI?

Source: United Synagogue Review market research

Respondents were presented with a list of 16 separate functions derived mainly from the qualitative phase of the research. They were asked to rate how important they felt it was for the rabbi to perform each task and then how well they thought their own rabbi did that task.

Significant discrepancies between importance and quality ratings are **highlighted**.

	Importance Rating	Quality Rating
Set the religious and moral tone of the congregation	1	3
Listen when his congregants come with personal problems	2	5
<b>Create a strong sense of community</b>	3	10
Officiate at weddings, funerals ,etc.	4	1
Visit the sick and elderly	5	6
Raise the level of Jewish knowledge in his community	6	8
<b>Be receptive to new ideas</b>	7	14
<b>Bring the less involved into the community</b>	8	16
Organise cheder/synagogue classes	9	11
Maintain contact with the non-Jewish world	10	12
<b>Promote the cause of Israel</b>	11	4
<b>Read from the Torah each week</b>	12	2
Give regular sermons	13	9
Recruit new members	14	15
<b>Lead synagogue services every day</b>	15	7
Fund-raise for the community	16	13

We were deeply disturbed that the existing programme for practical rabbinics was shelved as the first response to financial difficulties, and equally disturbed that the programme did not receive the support it should have done from some elements within the rabbinate. We believe that within a comprehensive system, operating under the aegis of the Chief Rabbinate, the true potential and value of in-service training for the rabbinate will be fully recognised.

Rabbinical in-service training has made a considerable impact on the profession over the past seven years. When the Jews' College programme, sponsored by the United Synagogue, was launched, there was, it is fair to say, a high degree of cynicism about it on the part of the rabbi and the general community alike. The use of management training videos, for example, brought out amusing human interest coverage in the *Jewish Chronicle* at the time. Today the concept of the programme is understood to be completely relevant.

However, the programme was introduced in isolation rather than as part of a coherent strategy for rabbinic development and, as such, was never fully supported, either within the rabbinate or by local lay leadership, who saw it as an interference rather than as a benefit.

In the context of our recommendations, professional in-service training would be re-introduced as the mechanism to implement a number of more basic goals. The demands made by the certificate of practice required from the Chief Rabbi as a precondition for serving as a rabbi in a United Synagogue community (see below, page 85) will create an initial need for a structured programme. The system of professional review will also lead naturally to training requirements. We believe that the link with the Chief Rabbinate is a critical one. Whilst, in practice, training would be conducted in a suitable educational environment, it is nevertheless vital to ensure that what is provided is part of a total programme for the rabbinate. The link with the Chief Rabbinate will forge such a connection.

Finally, we are confident that the redefinition and the expansion of community life at a local level that our proposals would stimulate will create an environment in which continuous retraining, upgrading and acquisition of new skills on the part of the rabbi will be seen as essential to the survival of the community.

### **Initial training**

Under the current arrangements the United Synagogue has no direct involvement in rabbinical training. It is not envisaged that this situation will change in the short term, partly because the organisation cannot afford such an involvement, and partly because there is no single training programme that will answer all its needs. The closest possible liaison should be maintained with Jews' College, and the United Synagogue must also be prepared to absorb and develop graduates of the yeshivah world.

At present many of the most talented young rabbis are able to complete their studies only with the help of a private foundation. While these scholarships are available, the United Synagogue is not forced to examine its sources of rabbinical supply. Nevertheless, we believe that the Office of the Chief Rabbi should take an active interest in the recruitment of excellent young rabbis, and should seek to broaden the funding base to make this possible.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE WITH JEWS' COLLEGE**

It is also necessary to address the relationship between the United Synagogue and Jews' College.

There is an understandable public perception that the United Synagogue pays for Jews' College and that the two organisations are integrally connected. Nothing could be further from the truth. Until the advent of the practical rabbinics programme in 1985, no financial contribution was made by the United Synagogue towards rabbinical training. Other United Synagogue grants to Jews' College over the years have been insignificant in comparison with the college's overall budget.

Despite this, the United Synagogue has maintained a level of representation on the Council of Jews' College which suggests almost proprietorial rights. This is 'representation without taxation'.

The most meaningful relationship between Jews' College and the United Synagogue occurred during the period of the practical rabbinics programme when, on a client basis, the United Synagogue commissioned the College to provide a service. This is the type of arrangement which is common in the competitive market.

Despite the temporary curtailment of the particular programme in question, and bearing in mind the urgent need for the United Synagogue, through the Chief Rabbinate, to address itself anew to the question of its involvement in rabbinical training, we

commend the type of purchaser/supplier agreement that practical rabbinics created as the way forward for the United Synagogue in its relationship with Jews' College. As the Chief Rabbinate comes to grips with the needs and opportunities in rabbinical training, so Jews' College should be commissioned as the training base.

It may be appropriate to maintain a formal connection between the College and the United Synagogue, perhaps in the form of one or two reserved seats on the College Council. However, the current high level of United Synagogue representation is not justified by the real level of involvement, and is misleading.

## **CAREER STRUCTURE WITHIN THE RABBINATE**

### **Placements**

**R32** We recommend that a Placements Bureau should be established within the Chief Rabbinate. There is considerable frustration within local communities at the poor performance of the centre in providing rabbinical candidates and at many of the details of the procedure. Moreover potential rabbinical candidates, particularly those living abroad, are often perplexed by the lack of a helping hand at the centre.

We want to make absolutely clear the distinction between this recommendation and the current Placements Committee. The existing Placements Committee plays a role in vetting potential candidates, and in offering them to local communities. Until recently the rules of the committee actually prevented communities from interviewing a range of candidates at once and instead insisted on a yes or no response to each applicant before the details of the next one would be released. The Placements Committee, acting in this kind of authoritarian role, should be abolished forthwith.

The need to vet prospective rabbinical candidates would be more effectively and appropriately taken care of by the professional certificate of practice we recommend below. Beyond this, all that is necessary is to offer the communities assistance as they seek a new spiritual leader. We envisage the new Placements Bureau acting as a registry and a matchmaker between rabbi and community. The lay leadership of the employing community would conduct their own investigation and appointment procedure. The lay leadership at the centre would have no future role to play in this regard.

### **Senior Rabbis**

**R31** We recommend that a new category of 'Senior Rabbi' be established under the aegis of the Chief Rabbi.

The status of senior rabbi would be conferred by the Chief Rabbi on a purely discretionary basis, taking into account length of service and quality of performance. The title Senior Rabbi might carry with it additional salary, but that would be for the local community to decide. Senior rabbis would participate in the professional review of rabbis and, themselves, be reviewed by the Chief Rabbi. We believe that this recommendation will be one step towards broadening the career structure of the rabbinate. Some communities may choose to advertise specifically for a senior rabbi when a vacancy occurs.

## **CENTRAL GUIDELINES - BEST PRACTICE**

**R34** The United Synagogue rabbinate should be regarded as a professional body led by the Chief Rabbi. In this context, the Chief Rabbinate would make itself responsible for the production, evaluation and updating of guidelines and models of best practice on a regular basis. These would include sample job specifications to assist communities and rabbis in negotiating appointments, a model contract illustrating terms and conditions of employment, guidelines for contract renewal, and guidelines for best practice within the rabbinate.

Pay guidelines would be agreed between the United Synagogue centrally and the Rabbinical Council, in consultation with the Chief Rabbi, but each community would be free to determine its own levels of remuneration.

## **AUTHORISING THE RABBI**

**R28** We recommend that every new rabbi be required to obtain a professional certificate of practice from the Chief Rabbi as a condition of his being appointed by a local community. The conditions for receiving such authorisation would include religious suitability, minimum rabbinical qualifications and a range of practical rabbinical skills gained by completion of a diploma course under the aegis of the Chief Rabbi, or agreement to complete such a course within a limited period, and/or prior experience to justify complete or partial exemption from the diploma.

The reasons for this recommendation are to ensure a basic minimum level of professional competence and to guarantee the continued Orthodox basis for the conduct of local community life within the United Synagogue. The certificate would be granted in respect of a particular appointment rather than as a one-off award, and so would have to be renewed as the rabbi moved to a different congregation. We could envisage the revoking of authorisation in extreme circumstances of a professional as well as of a religious or ethical nature.

## **ORGANISATIONAL/MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE FOR THE CHIEF RABBINATE**

There is broad support for the idea of trying to bring greater clarity and coherence to the Chief Rabbi's role within the United Synagogue, within the wider Jewish community, and within the wider UK community. For historical reasons, there is an ambiguity, in practice, in terms of the "ownership" of the Chief Rabbinate. This stems from the role of the Chief Rabbi as the spiritual head of the United Synagogue and of the United Hebrew Congregations.

Recent changes have created a viable organisational structure for a national Chief Rabbinate, and indeed, three of the seven lay members of the Chief Rabbinate committee are provincial representatives.

Despite this, the ambiguity remains for two reasons. The senior lay leader in the Chief Rabbinate structure is the president of the United Synagogue. This is not unreasonable in a situation in which the vast majority of the funding comes from the United Synagogue, but it does blur the sense of independent identity that might come from a separation of roles. The United Synagogue is also ultimately responsible for the Office of the Chief Rabbi, including salaries. Whilst every effort is made to collect contributions due from the provinces, in practice the United Synagogue is forced to pay, whereas other communities have a choice. The level of contribution actually collected from the provinces is painfully low - £8,000 in 1991 in the context of the Chief Rabbinate's total expenditure of £451,000 in that year.

**R26** The way forward must be to develop the existing organisational structure towards a more national concept of the Chief Rabbinate. The United Synagogue, in any scenario, will remain the majority shareholder in terms of power and financial responsibility. However, the services of the Chief Rabbi and his staff are relevant to the independent Orthodox communities in London and the provincial Orthodox communities beyond and they will become increasingly relevant as the Chief Rabbinate develops procedures for authorising rabbis, professional review, and in-service training, as well as a support structure for adult education - all functions that should be in demand from any forward looking community. The Chief Rabbinate, along with other departments, will be asked to take a more commercial view of its operations and to ensure that those who are not contributing directly to the organisation pay for the specific services they require.

Another benefit that should accrue from a higher degree of independent identity for the Chief Rabbinate should be its increased capacity to create projects and to fund them through sponsorship. Recent initiatives in adult education and the projects division present a good model for future development.

## THE BETH DIN: THE NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Amongst our community, the reaction to the Beth Din would best be described as mixed. No-one doubted that we needed a Beth Din, but most queried both its activities and its high cost. Those few who had met the dayanim spoke favourably, but a range of criticisms became common themes throughout the process of interviews and research.

The most regular causes for comment, in addition to the high cost of the Beth Din, were fears of 'a move to the right', and annoyance that the dayanim were not active participants in and leaders of United Synagogue communities. This latter point was often linked to financial concerns, in terms of support for the idea that the dayanim should be drawn from within the existing United Synagogue rabbinate.

There is something to be said in favour of these observations, and it might be responsible, both in fiscal and religious terms, to plan for a future in which the dayan is either drawn from the community, or integrated within the community as one of the conditions of his appointment. However, we sensed these related criticisms to be the superficial expression of deeper unhappiness with the nature of the judicial process and the perceived divergence of the Beth Din from the United Synagogue.

Any judicial system is a delicate matter of checks and balances. In many western societies the judiciary is independent, but subject to the will of an elected government's legislative programme. It is appointed by the legislature, and transparent in its rulings, allowing broad opportunity to debate the process and the development of law.

The Orthodox Jewish tradition differs in that the halakhah, as it were, replaces legislation as the permanent basis for the rule of law. In the society in which we are integrated we express our views at the polls and, as such, influence legislation. Jewish law does not present the ordinary individual, the interested party, or even the expert, with this opportunity. When a western legislature appoints its judiciary, it relinquishes only a proportion of its autonomy. When a communal organisation appoints a Beth Din it places relatively more powers into its hands.

**Our system, to be successful, needs alternative checks and balances - processes that are very much a part of the inherited tradition of our legal system but which are not apparent in the current arrangements within the United Synagogue. We believe that a number of vital approaches have been ignored in the mistaken belief that, once appointed, the religious authorities have an absolute right to dictate, unchallenged, the way the halakhah is applied to the circumstances facing the United Synagogue.**

The first missing ingredient is a critical relationship between the Beth Din and the rabbinate. It is difficult to understand the absence of a formally constituted dialogue with the rabbinate, who, after all, find themselves in the front line in relation to their community once a ruling has been made. We found almost no evidence of this first level of transparency in which the rabbinate are involved in discussions and consultations. These are necessary in order to reassure the community that rulings reflect contemporary circumstances, the mission of the organisation and the needs of the community within the range of halakhically acceptable options (see Lord Jakobovits' comments page 90).

The second missing ingredient is a critical relationship with those who are most immediately affected by rulings of the Beth Din. We received strong representations from the catering fraternity regarding what they perceive as a policy of increasing stringency which is, in their opinion, leading to a more expensive and less complete kosher catering trade, and ultimately to a declining take-up rate for kosher functions. We make no comment on the religious issue. Our concern is that there is no forum for discussion, no informed advocacy, no critical relationship with the trade and a lack of transparency in disclosing the reasoning behind rulings and not merely the rulings themselves.

### **The need for a fiscal policy**

The need to establish a fiscal policy and to create an environment of accountability and transparency within the Beth Din is of paramount importance. This is one of the most costly departments of the centre, claiming a subsidy from the taxation of the membership in the region of £350,000 each year, and yet we could discern almost no evidence of accountability or management. The recent appointment of a registrar should go some way towards grappling with the inevitable outcome of lack of administration and management, but it does not solve the problem.

At present the Beth Din reports directly to the president of the United Synagogue, and through him to a Beth Hamidrash Committee which meets infrequently. A proper management structure, including lay involvement, is needed to examine a number of key policy issues.

One of the main issues relates to income. Currently the Beth Din covers a minute proportion of its expenditure by way of court fees. The services of the Beth Din are available to United Synagogue members and non-members alike. Several arbitration cases last year involved provincial communities and even individual litigants from abroad. The administrative issue is to establish a proper scale of fees and to apply it. We regret that this has not been achieved at an earlier stage.

### **Managing policy development**

The policy issues are more complex. What discretionary powers, for example, should be applied in the case of payments? What rules should govern the financial relationship between the Beth Din and litigants who are members/non-members of the United Synagogue? Perhaps most significantly of all, to what extent should the Beth Din actively encourage the expansion of its arbitration services, as distinct from divorce, conversion and so on, in view of the fact that arbitration is potentially the most income-producing area?

The answers should determine the staffing policy of the Beth Din, promote focused discussion about the balance between financial and religious requirements, and help to define the broader role of the Beth Din and its priorities. We note, for example, the intention to appoint an additional dayan to the Beth Din in the near future. In the context of a small and declining membership, every expansion of central needs must be tightly justified. In the absence of more than the most modest outflow of data on the current work of the dayanim, of administrative arrangements to ensure that the maximum use is made of all the time available to the dayanim, and of clear strategic decisions regarding the development of Beth Din activities, we are simply unable to judge the correctness of this major decision.

In our view it is essential that, within the parameters set by halakhah, the Beth Din represents the religious ethos of the United Synagogue as a whole. It is answerable in this respect to the Chief Rabbi as Av Beth Din, and the Chief Rabbi himself is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the religious policy of the United Synagogue continues to be one of Orthodox inclusivism.

**R27** We recommend the establishment of a clear organisational structure for the Beth Din within the context of the Chief Rabbinate organisation. There should be checks and balances in order to maintain fiscal responsibility and to ensure that the decision-making process reflects the mission of the United Synagogue. The Chief Rabbi should ensure that regular and meaningful consultations are held between the Beth Din and the rabbinate, as well as between the Beth Din and lay representatives, to ensure that there is continual communication regarding the reasoning behind individual matters of religious policy and so that the Beth Din is informed of the reactions and sentiments of the United Synagogue membership as a whole.

We further believe that the widest possible participation of the dayanim in the congregational life of the United Synagogue should be encouraged. To achieve this, we believe that at least one full-time member of the Beth Din should be a serving congregational rabbi of the United Synagogue.

## **THE ROLE OF THE RABBINICAL COUNCIL**

We are assuming that the current Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue would continue to function, essentially as the professional representative body of rabbis, particularly in central negotiations on pay guidelines. The Rabbinical Council fulfils a serious role as the rabbis' own elected body which can defend their rights, in addition to providing a social, experience-sharing outlet in what is at most times a lonely and isolated profession.

## **A SUPPORT STRUCTURE FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES**

**R33** We believe that any future support structure which is established for adult education and community initiatives should be under the umbrella of the Chief Rabbinate. We applaud the Chief Rabbi's recent initiative to establish such a structure, not merely because of the principle involved but also because of the form in which the project has been constructed, as a group of concerned lay leaders, attached to the Chief Rabbinate but not financially dependent on the United Synagogue as a funding body.

The strength of the outcry at the recent reduction in the Board of Education staff which stifled fledgling developments in adult education bears testimony to the strong feeling amongst members of the United Synagogue that adult education is necessary, wanted and attractive. Our market research bears out this finding.

But in our view, adult education cannot be provided from the centre. In financial terms adult education is not an appropriate recipient of funds from the central taxation system. The fact that the Redbridge Family Education project, dropped by the United Synagogue, was so quickly picked up by local people illustrates the point.

Community initiatives is a new and experimental concept in which the rabbi's broader community role as a catalyst for change will be developed. The Chief Rabbinate's role is to stimulate ideas and to provide a knowledge and expertise base on which the local rabbi may draw rather than to intervene directly in the process at a local level

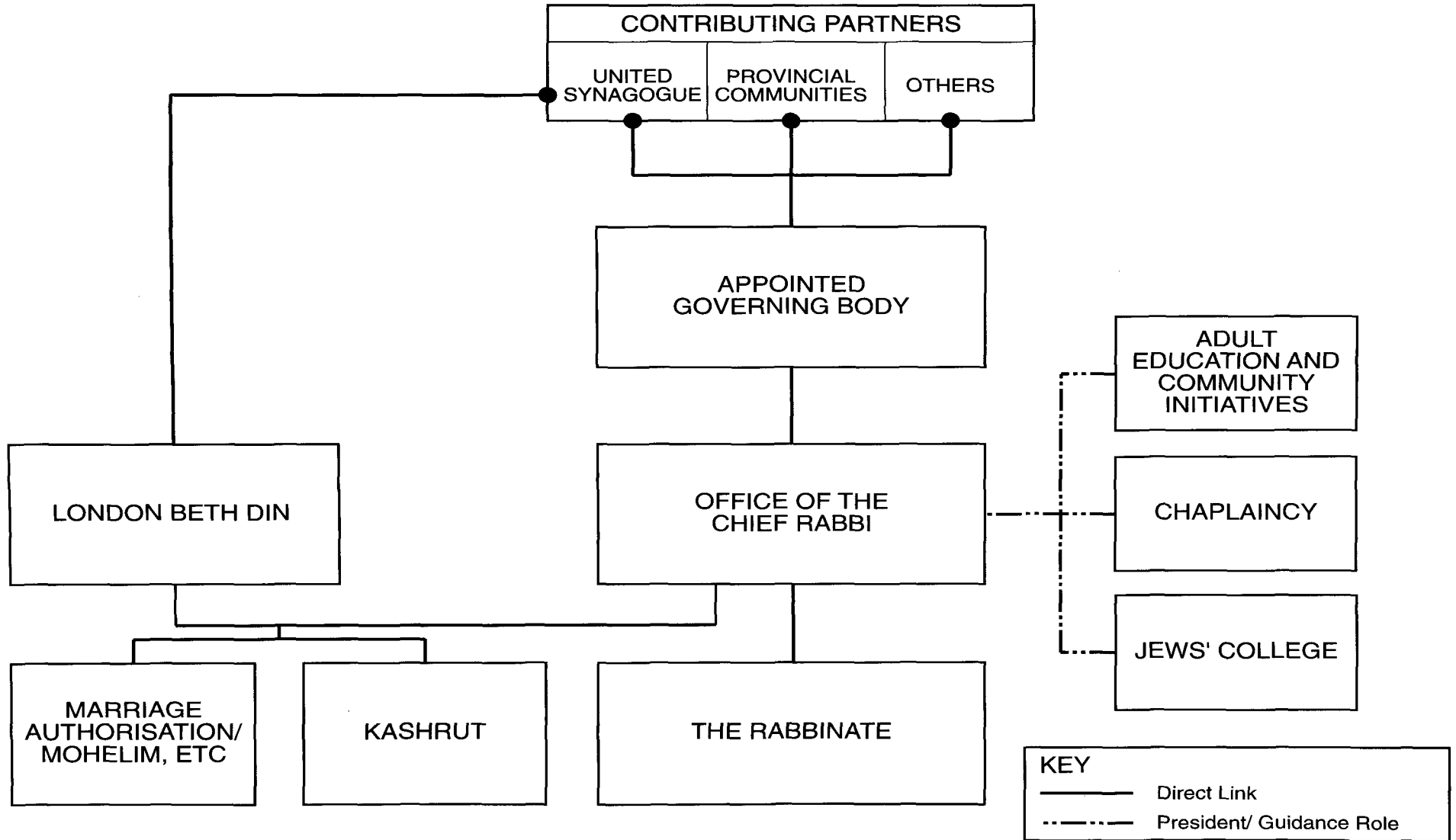
The impetus for adult education and community initiatives must come from the local community and the key figure must be the rabbi. That is why we feel that the limited support structure that might be required to link programmes with communities, to provide in-service training and so on, should be located specifically within the rabbinical environment. Such a facility would help the rabbi to develop his own competence in the field, whilst directing him towards resources, programmes and research which might assist him in his task at a local level.



# THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE

## SUGGESTED STRUCTURE FOR THE CHIEF RABBINATE ORGANISATION

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## **THE RABBI AND HIS COMMUNITY**

In our view it is critical to foster a substantially more empowered and influential rabbi at a local level. The rabbi is the senior professional within each community. This entails rights and responsibilities. Both intellectually and professionally, central control is an emasculating rather than an enabling force. The rabbi should be free from central control to function in direct relationship to his community under the following two binding principles:

1. That the spiritual ethos of the United Synagogue is set and maintained by the authority of the Chief Rabbi. Halakhic ramifications of this are determined by the Chief Rabbi and his Beth Din. Every minister appointed to serve a United Synagogue community would be obliged to recognise this spiritual and halakhic authority.
2. That the freedom and independence that we are encouraging at a local level must be balanced by a tightening up of professional standards, an increased level of accountability and challenge, and a more structured professional community within the rabbinate.

## **THE STATUS OF THE RABBI WITHIN HIS COMMUNITY**

The above having been said, it follows that the rabbi should be the religious leader of his community, employed by his local community and not by the United Synagogue as a central organisation. As Lord Jakobovits said as far back as 1967 in a speech to the Council:

*I believe that the Chief Rabbinate, for good reasons that applied a hundred or fifty years ago, but that no longer apply in our society, inevitably helped to stunt the growth of the dynamic and enterprising ministry that could assume a real leadership of the communities in their charge. If a man is told he can never make any religious decisions, he cannot participate in formulating religious policies, that he must refer every major problem he faces to some office in Adler House, then you cannot expect him to develop initiative, to have a broad vision, to arise and assume the responsibilities of leadership.*

The local community must have the maximum flexibility in every area to develop its own role, together with its senior professional, the rabbi. Any confusion in this position (and the current situation is confused since the rabbi is contractually employed by the United Synagogue but practically employed by the local community) will be to the detriment of local communities.

We have heard a wide range of concerns expressed which relate to the employment, status, and role of the rabbi within his community. Central employment of the rabbi offers the mirage of protection and maintenance of standards. However, closer investigation has convinced us that current arrangements are seriously flawed at a number of levels and across a wide spectrum of issues. The result is that we have a system that serves neither the rabbi nor his community as effectively as it might. Our recommendations are designed to put into the system the correct blend of protection and challenge, and of autonomy and maintenance of standards.

### **The employment of the rabbi**

Currently the rabbi is formally employed by head office, which issues the contract of employment. It has been said that the special role of the rabbi makes it inappropriate that he should be, in the normal sense of the term, 'employed' by his constituents. We understand the argument, but feel that it is important for the protection of the rabbi and his community to establish a proper contractual arrangement between them.

The weakness of the current system is apparent. Whilst technically the rabbi is employed by head office, he is not employed as a United Synagogue rabbi but by the United Synagogue on behalf of a particular synagogue. He enjoys no special protection and cannot necessarily rely on mobility within the organisation. As we have seen in

recent months, the dignity of the rabbi can easily be assaulted under the present system, and the recent disconcerting sight of the President of the United Synagogue, sometimes together with the Vice-president and/or Chief Executive commuting from synagogue to synagogue to adjudicate problems between rabbis and their communities, and singularly failing to do so, is sufficient illustration of the weakness of the current situation.

We strongly believe that many of the unfortunate employment disputes between rabbi and community occur because the relationship was not properly agreed in the first place. Professional review should overcome this difficulty. We suggest that every rabbinical appointment ought to be accompanied by a statement of objectives for the development of the community, agreed between the rabbi and lay leaders of his community, to be discussed at an initial meeting between the rabbi and the professional review body. This will force the parties to define objectives at the outset and to measure the rabbi's future performance against a clear set of standards.

It emerged clearly from qualitative research that the same rabbi could be seen as an inspiration to some members and inadequate in the eyes of others page 224. The career of a rabbi can be easily jeopardised without clear initial definitions of his role and constant objective re-evaluation.

Continuous review and greater accountability should also bring early warning signals in a constructive way before it is too late for a change of direction. Monitoring by the Chief Rabbinate will give the rabbi professional backing and, at least, an ombudsman in cases of dispute. Our scheme for authorisation of the rabbi will stimulate clearly defined standards of qualifications and skills, which should promote a higher sense of worth, including self-worth and professionalism within the rabbinate.

**R35** We recognise that all the above measures will not prevent the occasional complete breakdown of relations between a rabbi and his management committee, when the atmosphere of mutual respect and trust that is needed in any serious relationship has been broken. In these circumstances a procedure for mandatory arbitration should be put into effect to allow the Chief Rabbi and the senior lay leadership of the United Synagogue to act as independent mediators. The procedure should be mandatory as one of the terms of the community agreement between the local community and the centre, but its findings would not be considered binding on the parties to the dispute, without their prior consent, since ultimately the responsibility must remain at a local level.

### **Rabbinical salaries**

Whilst there is a fear that a free market in rabbinical salaries will push up costs and lead to undue competition between communities, it has to be said that, even under the current system of central control, salary differentials operate in practice. Market forces will always operate to some extent in employment and, in our view, making this clandestine rather than acknowledged produces abuses and irregularities whilst failing to secure the psychological advantages of incentives and rewards.

We support the concept of a free market in pay, bearing in mind that pay guidelines would be produced under the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate to serve as an indicator for communities and rabbis negotiating contracts. Higher pay will bring in its wake greater accountability, as it does in many professions. Community needs are so diverse that there is no standard definition of the perfect rabbi. What is right for one community can be disastrous for another. Whereas there will always be the occasional brilliant individual who is in demand by all, in general the market will not be so competitive as to deprive less well-off communities of the opportunity of obtaining a suitable candidate. We should also point out that a 'rich' community, if our recommendations are implemented, will be a community which is maximising its potential for membership in relation to facilities. Such successful communities - not necessarily the largest or most affluent - need and deserve to have the best rabbis.

### **Extra payments**

It is part of the tradition within the Anglo-Jewish ministry for rabbis to accept gifts and contributions from congregants after performing one of the life-cycle ceremonies in

which families are involved. This custom was understandable in the era of the low-paid public servant, but is clearly out of keeping with the image of a rabbi as a senior professional running a major communal institution.

The practice of extra payments is also out of keeping with a community that wants to make those on the periphery feel welcome. Attitudes to extra payments were made very clear to us in the course of research - rabbis who appear *'to have their hands forever in other people's pockets'* are criticised. *'Respondents did not know what is expected of them after a funeral, shivah, wedding, berit, or pidyon haben and the uncertainty can lead to bad feelings...The rabbi who, when offered extra money, responds by rejecting the payment...gains respect as a professional'* (page 225).

We recommend the phasing out of such payments over the next few years. Many of the younger rabbis already find the custom repugnant and have refused to be drawn into it. Some rabbis have established charitable trusts so that such contributions can be channelled into worthy causes. It should be possible, at least under the proposed trust status of local communities, to establish a fund into which personal contributions can be placed so that congregants can fulfil their personal wishes to recognise the individual attention paid to them by the rabbi in a tangible way without reducing the system to one of overt patronage. In due course we would expect this procedure to be the norm.

### **Mobility within the rabbinate**

We are concerned about career structure within the rabbinate, including mobility and placement. The current system is static in the extreme. Jaded performance is an occupational hazard, opportunity for development and advancement rare. This is a critical weakness of the United Synagogue. A good organisation develops people. If it does not help its people to grow then it stunts them.

Mobility within the rabbinate is a neglected area. In theory a more centralised system should facilitate mobility but in practice movement from community to community within the United Synagogue is rare. We believe that, as communities become more diverse in what they offer, horizontal as well as vertical movement will take off. Some communities will develop a strong welfare function, others a greater concern for education, and rabbis will want to serve in the setting that is most suitable for them, rather than being exclusively concerned with promotion to a community that is larger in numbers. We need to create a culture in which regular movement within the rabbinate is seen as the norm. This will be a healthy phenomenon in keeping both rabbis and communities fresh and alert to new challenges.

### **The rabbi's broader role in Anglo-Jewry**

Communities can be insular and begrudge the rabbi his role as a media personality, patron of a national society, writer, advisor to students, etc. There is some small measure of protection against this in the current system, where every rabbi's contract obliges him to make some central contribution (in the area of visitation), and the model contract we have prepared (page 180) retains this concept. We envisage, however, a situation in which rabbis will be encouraged to play a much more prominent role in communal life: in intellectual terms through writing and lecturing and in communal affairs generally.

The safeguard to ensure that communities do not take a purely narrow parochial view will be the professional review under the aegis of the Chief Rabbinate. By this means the rabbi will be able to talk through, justify and develop his broader interests with an understanding and independent colleague who will discuss the issue in the context of the rabbi's full range of responsibilities, his priorities, his relationship with his community and so on. Early warning signals will emerge if there is a problem, which can then be dealt with in a constructive manner.

## **RABBINICAL CONTRACTS**

We have prepared a model contract (page 180), which is intended to be standard for all rabbinical appointments. Since the thrust of our recommendations is towards local

autonomy, flexibility and freedom of choice, the items listed in the contract are those minimum criteria which we believe must be applied to every rabbinical appointment. This would be seen as part of the community agreement between the local community and the United Synagogue.

### **Role definitions**

What is not included in the contract is the role definition of the rabbi within his local community. Communities must decide what it is that they want to achieve, and, in that context, determine together with the rabbi what contribution he, as a senior professional, should make in pursuit of the community's goals. We have prepared a survey of rabbinical roles (page 177), to illustrate that the total list of possible demands on a rabbi far exceeds what it would be reasonable to expect any one individual to accomplish - and so conscious choices have to be made. It is assumed that once these choices have been made, they will be formalised in each individual case in an addendum to the main contract.

There is only one exception to the above. We have included in the basic standardised contract the responsibility of the rabbi to care for the expansion of his community, particularly in terms of maximising the potential for membership in his area. We do so because within this one specific responsibility is encapsulated both the fundamental mission of the organisation which is to include Jewish people within tradition, and the basic operational need of the United Synagogue today, which is to transform the narrow concept of the synagogue into the broader concept of community. Every rabbi should take this one task seriously to heart, irrespective of local factors and considerations.

### **The significant changes in the proposed new contract**

**R36** We are recommending a number of items for inclusion in the contract as a direct outcome of our detailed proposals for the rabbinate. Every appointment made after the implementation of the recommendations in this report should be on the basis of the proposed new contract. The situation with regard to existing contracts is discussed below.

One of the most fundamental changes relates to the term of the contract. The present arrangement allows all new appointees a five-year initial term, and subsequent renewal for periods of ten years. Rabbis in post prior to 1984 still have what is technically a lifetime contract or tenure. Whilst there is almost universal disapproval of the tenured arrangement, the five-year initial contract has proved to have its own problems. A better system can be found which will give the community a chance to review its situation but which will protect the employment and dignity of the rabbi.

We recommend what is known as a rolling contract. Every new appointee would be guaranteed two years of complete protection, at the end of which the community would be entitled to review the situation. Should the community wish at this stage to terminate the rabbi's contract, a two-year notice period would be activated. If the community wants to keep its rabbi, the contract would be rolled forward for a further year, at which point the procedure would begin again. This gives the new appointee four years' guaranteed employment. It also provides two years' notice of termination.

The advantage of the rolling contract is that, whereas the community does have a regular mechanism for reviewing the rabbi's contract, the matter can be dealt with without the pressure and tension of a fixed-period term. Most of the rabbinical contracts that have so far come up for review under the five-year arrangement have not been renewed. Forced, at a certain point, to discuss the matter, and faced with the choice between termination and a ten-year renewal, most communities decided to seek a new rabbi. Moreover, termination of the contract has the stigma of failure about it. Under our system the community does not have to raise the issue of the contract at any given point, but it has the opportunity to do so on an annual basis. A two-year notice period gives ample opportunity for the relationship to be mended if both sides are willing, and it reduces the sense of finality of the decision. In principle we want to encourage a change in the whole employment climate and to make it more acceptable for communities and rabbis to agree to part company without this implying failure on either side and thus jeopardising future career/employment prospects.

Amongst the other important elements written into the basic contract would be:

- \* Recognition of the spiritual and halakhic authority of the Chief Rabbi.
- \* Acceptance of the procedure for obtaining a professional certificate of practice from the Chief Rabbi.
- \* Commitment to participate in annual professional review.

A minimal number of other contractual matters would also form part of the standard contract on to which local communities would add their specific requirements (see page 180). These would include, for example, the right of the rabbi to a day off each week, during which he would not be expected to be available to the community except in case of emergency.

### **Existing contracts**

The creation of a new and healthier environment within the rabbinate will rest on the implementation of our recommendations as a package. Until the majority of rabbis are functioning on the basis of the new arrangements, the full benefits will not be felt.

Clearly it would be preferable to start afresh in a new era, and we urge communities and their rabbis to begin a dialogue that will include reopening the contractual issue. This having been said, it will be incumbent on the community leadership to honour existing contracts with their rabbis in the absence of mutual agreement to effect changes.

However, we strongly recommend that the issue of professional review be addressed immediately, and that all United Synagogue rabbis participate in the annual review procedure, since this will be one of the community agreement commitments between the local congregation and the central organisation.

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## **THE RABBINATE: PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

- R26** | A separate organisational structure for the Chief Rabbinate should be developed to encompass the full range of its responsibilities and to reflect the relationship of the Chief Rabbi with the constituent organisations who recognise and support his office.
- R27** | An effective organisational structure for the Beth Din should be established to determine general policy regarding areas of involvement and financial management. The Chief Rabbi should ensure that regular consultations are conducted with the rabbinate and lay representatives.
- R28** | Procedures should be established for Chief Rabbinical authorisation of any rabbi to be appointed to a community within the United Synagogue.
- R29** | Procedures for continuous personal and career development for rabbis should be instituted by means of a system of annual professional review.
- R30** | A full programme for in-service training/practical rabbinics should be re-established under the aegis of the Chief Rabbinate.
- R31** | The rank of Senior Rabbi should be established to create a broader career structure within the rabbinate, and to facilitate professional review/development.
- R32** | The Placements Committee of the United Synagogue should be abolished and a new Placements Bureau established within the Chief Rabbinate organisation.
- R33** | A support structure should be established within the Chief Rabbinate to assist rabbis and communities in the work of adult education and community initiatives.
- R34** | Guidelines for communities regarding the rabbi's terms and conditions of employment, salary scales and models for best practice should be developed under the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate and reviewed on a regular basis.
- R35** | A new contract of employment for the rabbi should be drawn up and established as a model for all new rabbinical appointments, under the terms of the community agreement between each local community and the centre, to include a procedure for mandatory, non-binding arbitration in cases of dispute between a communal rabbi and his community.

# 7

## TRANSITION

### RESTRUCTURING THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE

*EVERYTHING THAT WE HAVE RECOMMENDED IN THIS REPORT IS ACHIEVABLE. WHILST OUR THINKING IS BASED ON FIRST PRINCIPLES AND OUR APPROACH HAS BEEN TO PRESENT A VISION RATHER THAN A TECHNICAL BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE, WE HAVE, NEVERTHELESS, COMMISSIONED SUFFICIENT DETAILED ANALYSIS TO ASSURE OURSELVES THAT VISION CAN BE TRANSLATED INTO REALITY.*

*IT CAN BE DONE, BUT IT CANNOT BE DONE INSTANTLY. CHANGES OF THIS MAGNITUDE REQUIRE NOT ONLY WIDE -SCALE UNDERSTANDING, SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT, BUT ALSO A STRICT PHASED MANAGEMENT PLAN IF THEY ARE TO BE IMPLEMENTED SUCCESSFULLY. THE CORE CHANGES CAN BE MADE WITHIN A 12-18 MONTH PERIOD. SOME PROPOSALS MAY TAKE LONGER TO IMPLEMENT. WITHIN FIVE YEARS THE FULL BENEFIT WILL BE FELT AT A LOCAL COMMUNITY LEVEL.*

#### **ELIMINATING THE CURRENT DEBT**

The next five years will be difficult and even painful for the United Synagogue. This is so not least because the organisation today has a bank facility of £7.75 million (excluding the Bushey cemetery road loan of £380,000). This facility is now substantially utilised and will shortly be exceeded, if, as we believe they should be, the loans from the FES and the pension fund are repaid. The facility can be broken down into an overdraft of £2.5 million and a five-year term loan of £5.25 million due to be repaid in 1996. It is anticipated that the loan will be repaid with the assistance of asset sales. However, given current market conditions, there is little, if any, prospect of removing the £5.25 million debt solely by the sale of Woburn House within the term of the loan.

**R36** That debt has to be substantially reduced within five years and fully repaid within a limited period thereafter if the United Synagogue is to survive. We recommend a programme for the elimination of the debt which takes into account repayments realistically achievable from communities that have borrowed (based on historical and current trends), and realistic expectations for the sale of major assets within the term. The burden of the remaining debt would then be spread across the communities of the United Synagogue according to the banding system devised for the general payover.

It is absolutely essential to see this through, however painful, if the United Synagogue is to survive at all into the next century. The financial models on page 133 of the Appendix and the table on page 137 incorporate the envisaged levy and illustrate the impact it will have on community finance in a range of typical circumstances.

#### **TOWARDS THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PHASED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

We thought long and hard about the need to map out an implementation plan as part of the Review. The inclusion of such a step-by-step strategy would close down many viable options for future leadership. The omission of a plan would bring the inevitable criticism that our recommendations are unworkable in practice.

On balance we felt that it would be irresponsible to lay down a strict management plan. The options for a strategy are so varied, and they all rest on the degree of will and commitment on the part of the United Synagogue to change. There is, for example, a case to be made out for a year of plenipotentiary powers under the guidance of a

planning team. Equally, one could argue that new council and executive elections need to be held both as a referendum on these proposals and to reinvigorate the lay leadership to clear the path to implementation. And these alternatives relate only to the very first step towards change.

What we have done over the past few months, as the vision clarified, is to establish that everything we wanted to achieve is achievable. The justification for our confidence is contained in the many detailed appendices that now follow. We hope that the reader will take the trouble to consult our research, investigation and working papers, which are designed to test out the theories that have been propounded above

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### **TRANSITION : PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATION**

**R 36** | The United Synagogue should initiate a programme to substantially reduce its debt over a five-year period, based on a cross-community levy.

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## HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

*There is nothing more difficult to execute, nor more dubious of success, nor more dangerous to administer than to introduce a new system of things: for he who introduces it has all those who profit from the old system as his enemies, and he has only lukewarm allies in all those who might profit from the new system.*

*Machiavelli*

The United Synagogue was once a great institution. It shaped the religious character of Anglo-Jewry. It provided a spiritual home for the vast majority of London's Jews. It fostered the growth of new congregations. It supported the institutions - most obviously, the Chief Rabbinate - which guided the development of provincial and Commonwealth Jewry as well. It represented a Jewish ethos that combined loyalty to halakhah with tolerance, inclusivism and an openness to the challenges of the modern world. Such an ethos, and such an organisation, is badly needed in today's Jewish world. The United Synagogue was once a great institution. Our belief is that it can be one again.

We cannot hide the seriousness of our findings. They are based on a process of consultation, professional investigation, research and academic scrutiny quite possibly unprecedented in Anglo-Jewry. They reveal an organisation in financial crisis. This fact alone, we believe, is sufficient to precipitate rapid and radical change. For if the financial predicament is not addressed with utmost urgency, the very survival of the institution will be in doubt.

But the financial problem is a symptom, not a cause. As long ago as 1976, concluding his history of the United Synagogue, Professor Aubrey Newman wrote:

*Emerging features would seem to indicate that the organisation was in danger of losing its way and failing to respond to the developing needs of the wider community.*

We believe that diagnosis to be correct, even more so now than then.

The United Synagogue is losing members, far more rapidly than any other synagogue organisation. Twenty-five years ago it represented three-quarters of affiliated Jews, today little more than half. The high age profile of its members indicates that it is failing to attract the young. Our market research has uncovered widespread dissatisfaction with what is seen as a remote and profligate head office, cold and unwelcoming communities and a drift away from the United Synagogue's traditional tolerant religious ethos.

These are signals of an organisation that has lost its way.

It is our belief that the United Synagogue lost its way with the best of intentions. As the leading religious organisation in Anglo-Jewry, it has undertaken responsibilities on behalf of the whole community - responsibilities which, it is now clear, it could not afford, not least because the United Synagogue is no longer the whole community.

We believe that many of these responsibilities must now be handed back to the community, either locally to congregations, or centrally in the form of new trusts or

coalitions. Difficult though this process will initially be, we believe that it will release new funds, energies and leadership and will, in the fullness of time, reinvigorate the whole of our communal life.

But over the past few years something else, critical to our diagnosis, has occurred. As centrally-funded projects grew in scope and scale, a shift took place in the balance of the organisation. Financially, administratively and professionally its centre of gravity moved from the individual congregation to Woburn House. Instead of the centre existing to serve local communities, it began to seem as if the local communities existed to serve the centre. Once this took place, it was inevitable that the fundamental purpose or mission of the United Synagogue would be obscured.

Its mission, we believe, is to create communities to include Jews. If individual congregations are failing to attract or involve members; if they are failing to create dynamic, welcoming and multi-faceted communities; if they are not reaching out to the unaffiliated - then the United Synagogue is failing in its task. Once the United Synagogue fails to be and to be seen as the natural home for the majority of Jews, its mission, authority and place in Anglo-Jewry will be lost. On this single issue all else depends.

Every proposal we have recommended has been designed to refocus the organisation to this one overriding priority. It will require significant changes in the structure of the United Synagogue. It will require no less significant changes in attitude on the part of lay and rabbinic leadership at all levels. All these changes flow, however, from one fundamental proposition: that membership and involvement are created locally, not centrally. It is in on the strength of its individual communities that the strength of the United Synagogue depends.

Machiavelli, in the quotation with which this chapter begins, reminds us how difficult it is to secure a consensus for change. What is old is familiar. What is new is untried, unsettling and uncertain. All the more so does this apply to the United Synagogue, whose stability seems to depend on its changelessness and whose very image has been of an unshakeable rock in a world of change.

Consensus for change will not be easy to achieve, but, given the seriousness of the present situation, achieve it we must. Institutions either change or die. Rarely do they die suddenly. Rather, they drift into a slow decline marked by a failure to attract the young, to recruit the best available talents as leaders, or to seem relevant to the problems of the age. These are all early warning signs of an establishment in danger, and if not responded to in time they become progressively harder to reverse. The single most critical test of whether an institution has the will to live is whether it has the will to change.

Three things have convinced us that in the case of the United Synagogue change is not only necessary but also possible.

The first is the remarkable creativity individual communities have shown in recent years wherever local energies have been allowed to flourish. We have encountered one example after another of dormant congregations that have been revived, of outer suburban communities full of activity and youth, and of more established congregations creating the internal diversity needed to attract and involve a wider membership. These facts have persuaded us that once resources and responsibility are handed back from the centre to the local congregation, the United Synagogue can recover its leading position in Anglo-Jewry.

The second is the equally remarkable loyalty we have discovered to the fundamental aims of the United Synagogue. Underlying the dissatisfaction, our research reveals a widespread commitment to the organisation and to what it once represented. The strongest consensus to have emerged is that there is a belief that the United Synagogue must change, that it has lost its way and must recover it again.

The strength of that consensus will be tested to the full in the months ahead. We can foresee some of the responses to this report. There will be those who damn it with faint praise. There will be others who promise to examine it with enthusiasm, with an eventual pigeon-hole in mind. Some will declare it to be unworkable. Others will try to sentence it to the slow death of further committees and working parties. It will meet with overt or covert resistance from those whose reputations and positions are at stake. All this is predictable.

But neither sentiment nor vested interest can be allowed to stand in the way of change, because this time the stakes are too high. It will be in the hands of the ordinary members of the Council and of the management and membership of the congregations themselves, as much as of the present leadership of the United Synagogue, to see to it that this moment of opportunity is grasped and translated into action before it is too late.

This report has been concerned with structures: with management, governance and finance. But it has been a report about a religious institution, and in the end it has been driven by a religious faith. Our final reason for confidence in the possibility of change is an item of faith. It is simply this: that the true strength of the Jewish people throughout the ages has been its unique will to survive and its adaptability to change in pursuit of timeless values. The United Synagogue, we believe, will not allow itself to be an exception to this rule.

The first words of this Review were those of Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks, so it is fitting to leave him the last thought as well:

*The miracle of almost 4,000 years of Jewish continuity has depended on a stunning ability to create renewal in the midst of crisis.*

May the United Synagogue continue in that tradition.

Stanley Kalms  
Ellul 5752 / September 1992

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*APPENDICES  
TO THE REVIEW*

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# 9

## COMMUNITIES TASK FORCE REPORT

### INTRODUCTION

Following the setting up of the United Synagogue Review, a communities 'task force' was established. Its brief was to investigate the initial proposal that each community would benefit by being responsible for its own administration and financial affairs, thereby removing the necessity for a large, costly and bureaucratic authority and allowing more funds to remain locally.

Over several months, discussions took place with many people - from head office, large and small United Synagogue communities, independent Orthodox synagogues and overseas communities as well as individuals involved in the administration of Reform communities.

Thereafter a draft discussion paper was produced and that paper itself has been subject to close scrutiny and has been modified on a number of occasions as a result of further discussions.

It also became apparent that more detailed investigation was needed into a number of specific areas linked to our proposals. Specialists were brought in to consider how each synagogue would maintain its own administration and membership records, and to examine the future payover arrangements to the centre, constitutional and legal implications in transforming each community into its own charity and the inter-relationship between the local synagogue administration and head office. Those specialists have produced separate papers, a number of which are included in this report.

### AIMS:

1. To make every synagogue within the United Synagogue an independent charitable trust administering its own financial affairs and running its own cheder (if necessary in conjunction with other local communities) whilst acknowledging the religious authority of Orthodoxy as defined by the Chief Rabbi.
2. To encourage the creation of local community centres serving the diverse needs of the community in both religious and other areas.
3. To attract new membership for each synagogue, particularly in the under-30s group and also to win back the 'non-committed', who have been lost to progressive synagogues, whilst maintaining modern Orthodox principles.
4. To achieve better use of often under-utilised and outdated synagogue premises.
5. To improve facilities at a local level, particularly for youth and the elderly.
6. To give members better value for their membership fees, particularly by retaining at a local level a far higher proportion of income collected.
7. To provide a variety of religious services covering all age groups and different abilities.
8. To offer imaginative and interesting education programmes for all age groups.
9. To make greater use of technology, in particular so as to provide complete membership information to achieve better communication with all members.
10. To foster more dynamic religious and lay leadership locally, and to encourage every synagogue to create committees to plan for the growth of membership and the better use of synagogue premises.

## SYNAGOGUE MANAGEMENT:

1. *Splitting the functions of administration/finance from running the services.* We believe that as synagogues become multi-function communities, the administrative and financial head of the community should not necessarily be the warden. The role of the wardens would be to look after the ritual side of the community. It may therefore be possible for women to fulfil the administrative/financial roles.
2. *Electing honorary officers/a management committee for a term of three years.* To provide better continuity, we recommend that the honorary officers and the management committee be elected for three years, subject possibly to a proportion of the committee (say one third) being elected on a rotation basis every year. The honorary officers may comprise a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer. The management committee, we believe, should be no larger than a further 15 people. Subject to any halakhic constraints, we see no reason why women could not fulfil the roles of Chairman/Vice-Chairman/Treasurer. We are anxious to encourage the full participation of both women and the under-30s in the running of synagogues and to that end, and possibly for the first election only under the new system, a proportion of the seats on the management committee should be restricted to women/young people. Honorary officers should not serve for more than six years.
3. *The role of the wardens.* Subject to the overall supervision of the management committee, the wardens, in conjunction with the spiritual leaders, should be responsible for running the services and all religious aspects of the synagogue. Wardens would serve ex-officio on the management committee. Whether they are elected or appointed by the management committee can be left to each synagogue. Synagogues may choose to rotate the wardens so that there could be an appointment/election every year to replace the retiring warden and so that the next in line could move up to the position of senior warden.
4. *Representative bodies.* It is envisaged by the Review that the United Synagogue Council will be a much smaller body, consisting of two elected representatives from each constituent synagogue and one from each affiliated synagogue. Community representation on other bodies, such as the Board of Deputies, would also be on an elected basis.
5. *Administrative structure.* In order to cope with a broader range of responsibilities at local level, it may be necessary for communities to enhance their existing administrative infrastructure. A separate paper sets out proposals for computerisation of all synagogues to deal with their accounts and membership records as well as to provide a more effective database. Larger communities may also wish to consider senior managerial appointments such as a community director. Pilot projects are about to commence in Borehamwood and Hendon.
6. *Sub-committee structure.* An effective sub-committee structure involving many synagogue members is vital to the running and development of any synagogue. As many members as possible should be encouraged to participate in sub-committees so as to provide a continual source of new lay leaders. The variety of sub-committees must obviously depend upon the size and needs of each community. In smaller communities the following suggestions may well be regarded as heads of responsibility for the management committee. Among the sub-committees that we recommend are the following:
  - (a) *Services/ritual committee.* To include three wardens, the rabbi, the chazzan and representatives from all services. This vital committee must continually appraise the range and quality of services provided, so as to cater for all ages, tastes and abilities and in particular to make sure that there are effective services for children, teenagers, young adults and beginners. Special attention must be paid to the content of each service, to overcome the frequent complaints that services are boring or 'lacking variety'.

- (b) *Education committee.* This must be a broadly based committee which includes the rabbi. It should be responsible not only for running the local cheder (either on its own or on a regional basis) but also for servicing all the educational needs of the whole community, including family/adult education.
- (c) *Welfare committee.* This could act as the coordinating body for visitation as well as a clearing house for local initiatives where talents are available, for example, in the areas of employment, bereavement counselling and day programmes for the retired.
- (d) *Planning committee.* Every synagogue should be able to step back from its day-to-day running and to plan ahead for at least three to five years in terms of its building facilities, its personnel, its programmes and inter-community co-operation.
- (e) *Children/youth committee.* As well as the formal Shabbat services this committee must also concentrate on social activities and try to re-introduce into the United Synagogue the concept of a 'youth club' atmosphere.
- (f) *House committee.* To look after the fabric of not only the synagogue premises but also other properties owned by the synagogue. Whilst the main synagogue premises will remain centrally owned (as far as constituent synagogues are concerned) it is envisaged that all other community properties, such as the rabbi's and caretaker's houses, will be handed back to each community. The ownership of these properties may assist synagogues in the future in raising funds to develop their properties.
- (g) *Finance committee.* To look after the finances and administration of the community.
- (h) *Public relations/fund-raising committee.* In order to keep all members fully aware of synagogue activities, and also to attract new members, there must be effective communication and public relations in each synagogue. As synagogues become self-sufficient and self-running, fund-raising activities will be vital to enable synagogues to develop their properties and to provide extra facilities for their members.
- (i) *Hospitality/new members committee.* A complaint that is often received is that not enough attention is given to new members joining the community. New members' evenings could be held regularly, to be followed up by frequent contact with members of this committee.

## **PAYOVER TO THE CENTRE:**

1. There are three possible ways of dealing with the payover:
  - (a) percentage of gross revenue. This in the past has been criticised and was changed some years ago to:
  - (b) per capita. This again has its critics, particularly as it does not encourage communities to attract young members who may not be able to afford higher membership rates.
  - (c) some form of community contribution to the centre which would take into account the locality of the synagogue and the size of the premises.

Option (c) has been preferred for the reasons set out in the Review. A separate paper will deal with the more detailed aspects of calculating that payover.



2. *The proportion of the synagogue bill to be paid over to the centre.* It is difficult at this stage to accurately state the percentage to be paid over to the centre, since this will vary from community to community, but we are obviously aware that under these plans a greater administrative burden will fall at a local level. This will manifest itself in terms of pure administration, running the Hebrew classes and financing new staff such as a community director, as well as in capital projects. It is therefore envisaged that the payover will be in percentage terms much less than it is at the present time
3. *What the centre will fund with its income.*
  - (a) The Chief Rabbinate - to include the Beth Din, rabbinical development, marriage licensing and issues of status.
  - (b) Grants to the Bureau of Jewish Education.
  - (c) Developing and protecting small communities and, subject to available funds, possible large capital projects for synagogues.
  - (d) Statistical monitoring/planning for growth.
4. *Monitoring central expenditure.* The money that comes in from the synagogues must be properly audited and budgeted, with strict controls on the centre, and with defined amounts going to the Chief Rabbinate, education and central functions, each with its own stringent budget control and treasury functions.
5. *The Board of Deputies levy.* Contributions to the Board of Deputies would remain on a per-member basis and it would be the responsibility of the local community to collect and remit such contributions. This would bring the Board into a more direct and active relationship with the United Synagogue communities.

#### **LOCAL FUNCTIONS:**

1. *Computerised administration.* Fully computerised local administration would be necessary to deal with the collection of all membership fees, invoicing, banking and paying the suppliers.
2. *Local pay-rolling.* All staff would be paid locally, either through a PAYE system on the synagogue computer or, in smaller communities, by a volunteer local accountant member.
3. *Charitable status.* Each synagogue will have to be set up as a charity in order to maximise covenant income.
4. *Pensions.* Existing pension arrangements at the centre would probably continue, subject to the feasibility of splitting up the existing pension scheme (and subject to its being properly funded at present).
5. *Community property.* As previously stated, all non-synagogue premises, such as rabbis' houses should be handed back to the local community. Where money is still outstanding in connection with the acquisition of these premises, suitable arrangements would have to be made for each community to take over the debt and to arrange borrowing facilities with its own bank. The synagogue premises would be leased from the centre on a full repairing covenant. The 'lease' would require observance of a 'community agreement' with the centre, which would state that each community should recognise the authority of the Chief Rabbi, and the Council of the United Synagogue.

If synagogues did not accept this authority and/or failed to make an appropriate payover to the centre, the centre might then be empowered to take over the running of any particular community. It would be the responsibility of the local communities in the first instance to raise funds to look after their buildings.

6. *Jewish education.* For children up to the age of 11, the cheder would be run locally, either by the synagogue itself or possibly in conjunction with other nearby synagogues. The cheder would be funded from a mixture of general synagogue funds, fund-raising and parental contributions. From 11 years, the children would be encouraged to attend the nearest secondary branch under the auspices of the College of Secondary Jewish education. The funding for each pupil would be a mixture of parental contributions and grants from each local community. The local communities may also wish to support local needy families to cover the costs of Jewish studies at Jewish day schools.
7. *Local education committee.* The local education committee would be responsible for the appointment of a head teacher and other teachers for the cheder and would work closely with the Bureau of Education, which would have the expertise to assist in curriculum, inspectorate, and the setting of teachers' standards and regular assessment.

## **RABBI / CHAZZAN:**

The role of community professionals is dealt with in detail in other parts of the Review. However, it is recommended that both the rabbi and the chazzan play a much greater role in education and social and welfare activities, for example by supervising the cheder and preparing education courses. It would also be very important for them to be involved in the welfare committee, which would co-ordinate support services in the areas of:

- (a) Visitation
- (b) Bereavement counselling
- (c) Marital problems
- (d) Child problems
- (e) Loneliness of the elderly

The rabbi and chazzan should not charge for extra involvement in local education.

## **ACCOUNTING**

One of the fears that has been expressed is that if synagogues are left to run their own financial affairs, standards will drop. However, affiliated and provincial synagogues have been running their own affairs apparently without any problems. In each community there are likely to be professionals available to monitor the financial and other business affairs of the synagogue and each synagogue would have to deal with both the Charity Commissioners and the Inland Revenue. The payover to the centre would be made on a regular basis, either monthly or quarterly, and it is envisaged that each synagogue would deposit at least three months' payment in advance with the United Synagogue as well as keeping sufficient reserves locally.

## **AFFILIATED SYNAGOGUES**

Under these new proposals, the distinctions between affiliated and constituent synagogues will fast disappear. Whilst there may have to be transitional provisions, it is hoped that eventually the affiliated synagogues will be paying to the centre on the alternative site value basis.

## **FUNERAL EXPENSES SCHEME**

From a local perspective, it is not intended to alter the current system, since this appears to be one aspect of the United Synagogue that works well.

Issues of principle regarding the use of funds raised through the Funeral Expenses Scheme for purposes other than burial, and the question of the maximum age limit for contributions - matters that do cause concern - are addressed elsewhere in the Review.

## **FUND-RAISING**

It follows from what has been said above that fund-raising would become an important local issue as the communities become self-financing. As well as local appeals and functions, consideration will have to be given as to the future use of the Kol Nidrei appeal, part of which already is used towards educational needs.

## **LEGAL CHANGES**

1. The proposed changes require a detailed look at the present United Synagogue Act, its scheme and the by-laws, which would need considerable alteration.
2. Each synagogue would require a set of by-laws. A core group of by-laws would have to be uniform throughout the United Synagogue.
3. All men and women would be members and it is hoped that women would hold senior positions in each synagogue, subject to halakhic rulings.
4. Central input would be required to instigate proper checks on the Jewish status of new members of a United Synagogue community, as well as to ensure that they did not owe debts to other synagogues.
5. Proper reservation of powers would have to be granted to the Chief Rabbi and his Beth Din in certain matters.
6. The creation of each synagogue as an independent charitable trust would involve placing a comprehensive scheme before the Charity Commissioners regarding the transfer of non-synagogue properties from the centre to a local level. Each synagogue would have to set up a trust so that the trustees could hold the properties. Advice from the United Synagogue's lawyers suggests that there should be no problem with the Charity Commissioners accepting an organised and comprehensive scheme.
7. There would have to be proper checks on taxation of possible non-charitable activities, for example the ladies guild providing regular catering facilities.
8. Regulations with regard to local data protection registration would have to be observed.
9. The implications, for the local community, of becoming an employer would have to be considered.
10. Within the new relationship between the centre and the local community concerning synagogue premises, the centre must reserve the power to take over the running of communities who fail to pay their contributions to the organisation.

## SUGGESTED PRINCIPAL TERMS OF SYNAGOGUE LEASE

1. **Landlord** United Synagogue
2. **Tenants** Trust company of individual synagogue
3. **Term** 125 years, possibly with option to renew for further term of 50 years.
4. **Rent** The proposed community contribution as set from time to time by the United Synagogue.
5. **User** Use would be limited specifically to use as a synagogue practising the form of worship and religious observances of the Polish or German ritual laid down from time to time by the Chief Rabbi which practice shall be in accordance with the community agreement and which shall also permit ancillary use as a communal hall, kitchens, classrooms, offices, meeting rooms, etc.
6. **Repair** The tenant to be responsible for putting and keeping premises into a state of good and substantial repair, including an obligation to decorate at least once every ten years or more often as may be necessary. In default, the landlord shall have the right, upon reasonable notice, itself to effect repairs and to recover cost from the tenant.
7. **Insurance** The landlord will continue to insure the buildings as at present and to reclaim the premium from the tenant.
8. **Outgoings** The tenant will be responsible for all rates, taxes, assessments, duties or other outgoings payable in respect of the building.
9. **Alterations** The tenant will be permitted to make alterations subject to obtaining the landlord's prior approval, which may not be unreasonably withheld or delayed.
10. **Alienation** Assignment, underletting or sharing of occupation of the whole or part of the building will be absolutely prohibited, provided that nothing shall prevent the tenant from allowing organisations to use the building in accordance with the terms of the community agreement and upon the proviso that no relationship of landlord and tenant shall be created thereby. [See footnote.]
11. **Legal Obligations** The tenant will be obliged to comply with all statutory and other restrictions including planning, by-laws, etc.
12. **Landlord's Rights** The tenant will covenant to allow the landlord from time to time to inspect the premises in order to ascertain that the covenants in the lease are being observed.
13. **Forfeiture** The landlord will have the ultimate remedy of forfeiture in the event of a breach of any of the terms of the lease or of the community agreement or in the event of the community concerned ceasing to exist or renouncing the authority of the Chief Rabbi.

### Footnote

It is accepted that as a self-contained legal document, the lease will make it impossible for synagogues to dispose of parts of their sites or to dispose of the entirety of those sites and to move to new premises. These legal safeguards are necessary to ensure the integrity of the United Synagogue, but as it is envisaged that the objects of landlord and tenant would be identical at such stage, then any such matters must be dealt with by negotiation between the synagogue concerned and the United Synagogue. It is not feasible for the lease document to contain predictions of those circumstances which might pertain to such situations.

## SUGGESTED PRINCIPAL TERMS OF SYNAGOGUE TRUST

1. **Trustee** A trust company limited by guarantee of which the directors would normally be three officers of the constituent synagogue and one honorary officer of the United Synagogue.
2. **Trust Property** All property under the control of the synagogue including the lease of the synagogue building and the freeholds of other synagogue property are to be held by the trustee on trust for the members of the synagogue and all synagogue funds are similarly to be held on trust.
3. **Terms of Trust** The purpose of the trust will be for the maintenance and running of the synagogue practising the form of worship and religious observances of the Polish or German ritual laid down from time to time by the Chief Rabbi, which such practice shall be conducted in accordance with the community agreement together with the provision of communal facilities for the members of the synagogue.
4. **Appointment of Trustees** New directors of the trust company may be appointed by the committee of management who shall also be empowered to remove a director with or without his or her consent and to appoint replacement trustees.
5. **Trustee Powers** The trust company shall be vested with full Trustee Act powers including the power to sell and convert property but limited to purposes which do not infringe the community agreement.
6. **Dissolution of Community** If the community votes to dissolve or ceases to exist or votes no longer to recognise the authority of the Chief Rabbi, then, subject to the requirements of the Charity Commission, the trustee shall transfer all assets of the tenant to the United Synagogue.
7. **Personal Liability** The trustee shall be empowered to employ professionals and shall not be liable for the default of those professionals.
8. **Management Agreement** The trustee shall be bound by the terms of the community agreement and shall be obliged to administer the community in accordance with the terms of the by-laws contained therein as varied from time to time.

## SUGGESTED PRINCIPAL TERMS OF COMMUNITY AGREEMENT

1. **Grantor** United Synagogue
2. **Grantee** Trustee company of individual synagogue
3. **Principal Obligations of Grantee**
  - 3.1 *Aims* To administer the synagogue as a member synagogue of the United Synagogue practising the form of worship and religious observances of the Polish or German ritual laid down from time to time by the Chief Rabbi.

<i>Authority</i>	3.2	The grantee shall recognise the Chief Rabbi as its ultimate religious authority.
<i>Payover</i>	3.3	To pay to the United Synagogue the set payover in accordance with the terms of the synagogue lease at such level as may be set from time to time by the Council of the United Synagogue. Such payments to be made on a regular basis with the United Synagogue holding a three-month deposit from the grantee.
<i>Membership</i>	3.4.1	To ensure that membership is open to all Jewish adults aged 18 and over.
	3.4.2	Not to accept for membership any person who is not Jewish to the satisfaction of the Chief Rabbinate.
	3.4.3	Not to accept for membership any person who at the time of application is in debt by more than twelve months to another United synagogue.
<i>Ministers</i>	3.5	Not to appoint as a rabbi, chazzan or other religious functionary any person without first obtaining the prior written approval of the Chief Rabbi, and following the appointment of any such person to employ those persons upon such terms and conditions as may be laid down by the Chief Rabbi from time to time.
<i>Kashrut</i>	3.6	Not to allow non-kosher food to be brought upon the synagogue premises nor to allow any professional caterer to provide food on United Synagogue premises unless that caterer has a kashrut license recognised by the Chief Rabbi.
<i>Education</i>	3.7	To ensure the adequate provision of religious education for children of all members up to 11 years of age.
<i>Accounts</i>	3.8	To maintain regular accounts, to produce these to the members of the synagogue for approval not less regularly than once a year, and to commission an annual audit of the community's accounts by a firm registered to audit charitable institutions.
<i>Membership Information</i>	3.9	To produce to the honorary officers of the United Synagogue as often as may reasonably be required a full list of the members of the synagogue
<b>4. Grantor's Obligations</b>	4.1	To permit the synagogue to hold itself out as a United synagogue and to use such facilities as may be organised centrally by the United Synagogue from time to time.
	4.2	To permit any member of the synagogue and any member's juvenile child to be buried in a United Synagogue cemetery.
	4.3	To admit two duly elected members of the synagogue to the United Synagogue Council.
	4.4	To apply the synagogue's payover contribution towards the employment, cost and maintenance of the Chief Rabbinate and for such other reasonable purposes as may from time to time be decided by the United Synagogue Council.

5. **Membership Fees**                      Membership contributions may be decided at the discretion of the officers of the synagogue, who shall endeavour to maximise the potential for increasing membership.
  
6. **Elections**                              Each officer and member of the management board shall be required to present themselves for election not less often than once every three years to an annual general meeting of the synagogue. Annual general meetings to elect all or some of the officers and management committee shall be held at least once a year, at which all members shall be eligible to vote. The synagogue itself will be able to draw up its own set of by-laws according to circumstances, but it is recommended that officers should not serve for more than six consecutive years and that, during a transition period, membership of the management board should have a guaranteed number of places for women and members under 30.
  
7. **Breach of Community Agreement**                      Where the local synagogue fails materially to comply with the terms of the community agreement, the United Synagogue shall have the right to appoint officers to administer the synagogue in place of the elected officers and ultimately may exercise the forfeiture provisions contained in the synagogue lease.

## **DEVOLVED ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITIES: A FEASIBILITY STUDY**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 We were asked to consider the feasibility of introducing systems for local management of synagogues in which individual communities could take a greater responsibility for the running of their own affairs.
  
- 1.2 Currently, the running of synagogue administration and accounting is split between the head office and the individual synagogues. The way in which work is divided up is shown in Appendix 1 and an outline of the present administration and computer systems is included in Appendix 2.
  
- 1.3 A wide variety of administration and accounting tasks are carried out in the running of a synagogue. Records, lists and labels are needed for members, children, cheder classes, yahrzeits, seats and other data. Accounting systems are required for functions such as subscriptions, purchases and expenses, cash book, nominal ledger and accounts, and payroll.

### **2. Analysis of current problems**

- 2.1 Several difficulties are experienced by both synagogues and head office and improvements are desired. An outline of the problems that came to light during our discussions is included in Appendix 3.
  
- 2.2 Splitting administrative and accounting responsibilities between the synagogue and head office creates a requirement for an additional level of administration, communication and control. Documentation, such as changes to the membership and subscription records, can go astray or be inaccurately processed and need careful checking by the synagogue staff. The physical separation of head office systems from the synagogue means that administrators are not able to be in touch with the current position on a number of matters, such as members' outstanding balances and whether or not bills have been paid.

- 2.3 One of the principal deficiencies resulting from these systems is duplication, which arises in a number of areas. Lack of ready access to membership records has meant that several synagogues have created their own local database on a personal computer. This duplicates the membership records but enables the synagogue to run off lists, labels and analyses quickly and easily and provides additional facilities to those offered by the head office computer system. Where synagogues do not have a computer, duplicated manual records are often kept.
- 2.4 Some synagogues record cash receipts on the pink copy bill, which in effect duplicates the head office subscription ledger. This duplication causes further additional work when the pink sheets are reconciled to the subscription ledger printouts.
- 2.5 Lack of direct control over the synagogue's main funds creates its own problems. Sending bills to head office for payment means that the financial representative or administrator does not know when a bill has been paid. Payment of some bills, such as telephone charges, are thought to be held up by head office for administrative reasons, and synagogues only know about delayed payment when 'red reminders' are received from suppliers. This results in an unnecessary level of telephone queries with head office so that creditors can be placated and essential services maintained.
- 2.6 Delay in obtaining cheques from head office has meant that some synagogues maintain additional bank accounts for urgent payments.
- 2.7 The present system is not regarded by the head office personnel as ideal. Some documents, such as 'Receipts Journal' sheets, can be difficult to complete, and the accuracy of information received at head office is sometimes in doubt. The full nominal ledger print was cited as being difficult to follow.
- 2.8 The need to provide local computer facilities with a link to head office is being considered by the head office computer manager. New software is also being considered.

### **3. Approach adopted in affiliated and non-United Synagogue communities**

- 3.1 We considered the methods employed by affiliated and non-United Synagogue communities. From our discussions, it is clear that local administration and accounting presents no particular problems. Most communities tend to employ some paid book-keepers or secretaries on a part or full-time basis according to the amount of work involved. Often these are members of the synagogue, who therefore tend to put in hours in excess of those covered by their contract.
- 3.2 Actual time spent on administration and accounting tasks is difficult to assess accurately. One of the smallest affiliated synagogues with about 180 members manages with one warden/financial representative who handles all tasks. A shortage of other help has resulted in expedients such as sending out yahrzeit notices once a year, and this seems to work satisfactorily. Larger synagogues, who employ paid staff, also rely on voluntary help although this tends to be from a restricted number of honorary officers.
- 3.3 Payroll preparation, control of expenditure and year-end accounting tends to be handled by financial representatives or honorary treasurers who are often accountants or members with some book-keeping knowledge. Assistant honorary treasurers are sometimes recruited to help.



- 3.4 Computers are used predominantly by large and medium-sized synagogues but even some of the smaller synagogues have access to information technology. Often this is achieved using members' own computers. Typically, the systems cover membership records with labels, lists, *yahrzeits* and some assistance with subscriptions, although manual methods tend to be used for recording receipts, following up arrears and reclaiming tax on covenants. Only in larger synagogues is any software used for other applications, such as accounting and payroll.
- 3.5 Membership programmes are often designed by a computer-literate member of the congregation using one of the well-known database products such as DataEase or DBase. Programming and support standards are variable and these systems are often not resilient enough to be shared with other communities. Commercially produced programmes are considered to be expensive and tend to be used only by the largest communities.
- 3.6 Office space is in short supply in many synagogues. In small to medium sized synagogues, these rooms double up for other purposes such as the synagogue library, bride's room or youth room. Functions carried out by honorary officers in their spare time tend to be done at home. In general, however, office space has not been cited as a particular problem.

#### 4. System changes needed to implement local management of synagogues

- 4.1 The move to local management will require functions currently performed at head office to be implemented locally. Although some smaller communities will cope adequately with manual records, many synagogues will benefit from the use of a micro-computer with the following programmes:

*(i) Purchases, nominal ledger and accounting*

We recommend the use of simple standard packaged programmes, such as the widely used 'Sage Sterling Accountant', as this will be sufficient for the needs of most synagogues. The principal benefit of using this software will be the ability to record budgets for income and expenditure and to produce monthly management accounts quickly and easily.

*(ii) Payroll*

Small synagogues with few employees will be able to cope easily using manual systems as the work involved will not be great. Larger communities could install payroll software, such as offered by Sage, or use a payroll 'bureau' service typically offered by local firms of accountants. Whichever method is chosen, confidentiality will need to be preserved, and we recommend that this be achieved by restricting sensitive payroll information to only one or two senior honorary officers.

*(iii) Membership and subscriptions*

Local computerised records for membership and subscriptions will provide significant benefits. Apart from the opportunity to reduce duplication, the ready access to information and flexible searching and sorting facilities that can be achieved will enable synagogue administration teams to communicate more effectively with members. Facilities such as searching members' interests and occupations could enable administrators to draw on specialist voluntary help, often available in the community but difficult to keep track of manually.

There are a number of systems on the market for membership record-keeping, although the particular requirements of synagogues (including seats, *yahrzeits*, Hebrew dates, etc.) will restrict the choice. One of the principal constraints lies in the provision of a suitable subscription system with a facility for handling covenants and tax claims.

- 4.2 The equipment requirements would need to be assessed in relation to each synagogue situation, as some synagogues already have computer systems which may be suitable. In general, we suggest that a reasonably current model, IBM-compatible personal computer is used with an ink-jet or low-cost laser printer. We believe that this could be a basic machine with slight variations between the smaller and larger communities. Where synagogues opt to run their systems on a machine owned by a member, the initial costs will be reduced. However, the systems will be less accessible to other members and difficulties may occur when responsibilities change or members move on. We suggest that this approach be avoided if at all possible.

## 5. Personnel requirements

- 5.1 We have assessed the impact of local management on staff requirements by considering the extra workload and compensating savings, and by comparison with other synagogues. Clearly a number of functions at head office would no longer be needed if membership, subscription record-keeping and accounting were carried out locally. In addition to potential staff savings, there would be some reduction in postage and telephone costs.
- 5.2 The effect on the local workload is illustrated in Appendix 5, which assumes that a synagogue has no local computer system. Whilst extra work will be needed in some areas, such as tax reclaims, payroll and nominal ledger accounting, there will be significant savings and benefits. These will be principally:
- \* reduced duplication, showing savings to individual synagogues and the United Synagogue as a whole;
  - \* reduced clerical work filling in forms;
  - \* less telephone time liaising and clearing queries with head office;
  - \* direct access to the synagogue's own funds;
  - \* better access to information about members and children;
  - \* flexibility to provide lists, labels and other reports with minimal effort and no delay.
- 5.3 No technical personnel will be required to run the proposed computer systems, but some previous experience as a 'user' would be advantageous. Assistance from a computer-literate member of the community may be needed to help set up systems in the first instance.
- 5.4 We have also considered the staffing requirements by comparing current levels with those in non-United Synagogue communities. Appendix 6 summarises the position in a number of different synagogues. There is no clear evidence that less staff are required by synagogues using the head office systems. In some cases, the opposite seems to be true. A constituent synagogue with 186 members, for example, uses a part-time paid secretary whilst an affiliated synagogue with 182 members relies entirely on voluntary help.
- 5.5 Some synagogues rely on large voluntary teams whilst others seem able and willing to pay professional staff. One central London independent synagogue with about 2,500 members tends to use paid staff, whilst an outer London suburban United Synagogue with about the same number of members uses a large team of volunteers.

- 5.6 Direct comparisons between different synagogues are therefore difficult to make with any accuracy and a number of factors must be taken into account:
- membership numbers are sometimes assessed on different bases;
  - growing active communities may require more personnel than those declining;
  - different synagogues use a different balance between paid and voluntary staff;
  - members' estimates of voluntary time tend to be rough approximations;
  - it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between time spent on membership-related administration/accounting and other tasks.
- 5.7 On balance we believe that the introduction of local synagogue management is likely to require few, if any, additional paid staff once new systems have been set up and existing personnel have become familiar with new methods of working.

## **6. Premises required**

- 6.1 Some synagogue premises have little space for administrative offices and we have considered this possible concern. Devolved management will principally affect space requirements if more staff are needed during existing office hours. However, synagogue offices are not always used on a full-time basis and additional working time, where needed, may be achieved by offering extra hours to existing staff.
- 6.2 Several of the additional tasks, such as payroll preparation and nominal ledger accounting, may well be performed by honorary officers or volunteers and these may be carried out in members' own homes or places of work.
- 6.3 Although the installation of a computer in itself is unlikely to affect space requirements, improved security may be needed such as a lockable area or room, when the equipment is not in use. Each synagogue will need to be considered individually.

## **7. Time required to set up new systems**

- 7.1 An overview of the tasks required to set up new systems in each synagogue is included in Appendix 7, which has been prepared on the assumption that suitable membership and subscription software has been selected or developed. We recommend that in each case, a brief feasibility review be carried out to assess the existing local facilities and computer experience and to establish what needs to be done.
- 7.2 Although many of the steps we have suggested could be dealt with by a computer-literate local administrator, we recommend that the project be steered by a person experienced in computer systems implementation. This could be achieved by recruiting a suitably qualified volunteer from the membership or a paid outside consultant.
- 7.3 The time required to carry out the feasibility review will vary according to the size of the synagogue and range of activities being considered. It could range from 2-3 days for a small synagogue to 2-3 weeks for one of the largest.

7.4 Whilst purchasing and commissioning the system will not take long in either case (1-2 days should be sufficient), implementation may need to be phased over several months in order to minimise the extra workload on the existing secretarial/administration staff. Programmes could be written to transfer data from the existing head office computer to the local system to reduce the time needed to enter membership and subscription records.

## 8. Central functions remaining

8.1 We have assumed that all administration and accounting will be transferred to individual synagogues. Consideration should therefore be given to the central functions and controls that need to be in place to enable the United Synagogue to achieve its overall objectives.

8.2 Issues with an implication for synagogue accounting or administration might include:

- approval for membership (halakhic, financial and inter-synagogue competition)
- compilation and consolidation of statistics from individual synagogues;
- arranging group schemes (pensions, insurance, etc.)
- cheder organisation

## 9. Cost implications of devolved administration

9.1 The cost of a computer, accounting software and related training can be estimated fairly easily and has been summarised in Appendix 4 for three different-sized synagogues. These figures cover initial costs and maintenance. No provision has been made for membership and subscription accounting software, pending agreement on the approach and selection of suitable programmes. However, an allowance has been included for the purchase of a 'database' programme, which is likely to be required. It is also assumed that no equipment is currently available in each synagogue. In summary, the initial costs are:

small: £1,945                  medium: £2,844                  large: £3,807

9.2 If these amounts are spread over the anticipated 5-year life of the equipment and the maintenance costs are added in, then the annual cost (excluding interest charges) would be approximately:

small: £700 p.a.                  medium: £1,000 p.a                  large: £1,200 p.a.

9.3 These figures assume that a small synagogue would operate a manual payroll whilst medium and large communities would use Sage software. We have also considered the cost of using a local firm of accountants to provide a payroll 'bureau' service, and their normal commercial costs (per annum) are:

community size	estimated staff	approximate cost
small	10	£200
medium	25	£450
large	50	£850

If these figures were to be used, then the price of Sage payroll software would need to be removed from the initial costs for medium and large synagogues above and the annual cost recalculated. It is likely to be more expensive, however, to use a 'bureau' service than the synagogue's own voluntary or paid personnel and local systems.

- 9.4 The cost of synagogue membership and subscription accounting programmes will depend on the approach taken and the choice of software. If each community chose its own systems, then we might expect a varied pattern of use similar to that in affiliated and independent synagogues (see section 3). The costs would range from £200 to £2,000 with software maintenance costing up to £500 p.a.
- 9.5 It has been proposed, however, that the same system be installed throughout the United Synagogue, and this necessitates a more formal approach to selecting and, if necessary, developing programmes. Professional help would be needed to establish and agree a set of requirements suitable for all sizes of synagogues and to select appropriate software. Further discussion and confirmation would be required before costs could be estimated.
- 9.6 Other tasks might have cost implications:
- (i) Feasibility review at each synagogue - this could be achieved using voluntary help from synagogue members.
  - (ii) Programmes to convert data in the existing head office system for input to local computers - the head office computer team may be able to provide data in a suitable format.
  - (iii) Overall project management and implementation - whilst some aspects could be handled locally by suitably experienced volunteers, the development and distribution of a common system would benefit from central co-ordination. This might be handled by the software supplier, the existing head office computer manager or an independent consultant.
  - (iv) Head office staff reduction.

## 10. Implementation

- 10.1 A draft action plan for implementing local systems has been included in Appendix 8. These tasks will, however, need to be co-ordinated with other issues such as constitutional, legal and organisational matters. A larger team of honorary officers may need to be appointed in some communities before local systems can be installed.

### Appendix 1

#### Typical synagogue administration and accounting functions

The following is an extended list of possible functions. Where these are not carried out universally across the system, or where the base for carrying out the function is unknown, a blank has been recorded in the right-hand column.

<b>Administration</b>	<b>Carried out by HO/SYN</b> (Where known)
Membership	
maintain members records	HO/SYN
prepare lists	HO/SYN
prepare labels	HO/SYN
analyses and returns	
demographic	
US, BOD, JJBS	
standard letters	
Cheder and youth	
maintain child records	HO/SYN
classes records	SYN
youth records	
lists and labels	
standard letters	

Yahrzeits		
	maintain records	HO/SYN
	list	
	letters	
Seats		
	records	SYN
	administration of changes	
Activities support		
	committee records and lists	
	neighbourhood records and lists	
	anniversaries, birthdays, keeping in touch	
	finding volunteers/skills	
	security records and rotas	
	liaison with other bodies: non-member records and labels	
	magazine	
	word processing and desktop publishing	
	labels	
	general typing and word processing	SYN
Births, marriages and deaths		
	Beth Din records and returns	
	legal records and reports	
	general analyses and returns	
<b>FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING</b>		
Subscriptions		
	set charge rates	SYN
	negotiate reductions	SYN
	preparing bills	HO
	dispatching bills	HO/SYN
	cash receipts recording	HO/SYN
	banking	SYN
	preparing debtor lists	HO
	debt follow-up letters and calls	SYN
	arranging covenants	SYN
	preparing tax returns	
	reclaiming tax	HO
Purchases and expenses		
	approving requests for expenditure, orders	SYN
	recording invoices and payments	HO
	issuing cheques	HO/SYN
	recording petty cash payments	HO/SYN
Payroll		
	monthly payroll	
	changes to gross, tax coding	SYN/HO
	payslips and cheque payments	HO
	tax and NIC	HO
	cheder payroll	as monthly
	annual returns	
	pensions	
Nominal ledger and accounts		
	forecasts and budgets	
	preparing data	SYN
	posting to ledger	HO
	maintaining bank account(s)	HO/SYN
	controlling cash flow and bank balance	
	bank reconciliations	
	preparing trial balance	HO
	monthly and annual accounts	HO
	other accounting	
	functions	
	Judaica shop	
	hall hire	

## Appendix 2

### Head office administration and accounting services for synagogues

#### 1 Computer equipment and programmes

- 1.1 The head office owns and operates several computers. The main machine is a Data General MV7800 computer running under the AOS operating system. It was purchased about 7 years ago as a CS200 and upgraded to the present machine about 4 years ago.
- 1.2 This computer includes a 350 MB disk (approximately 350 million characters) for storage and magnetic tapes. The processor size is 4MB and about 8-9 screens are attached.
- 1.3 Software for the Data General computer is written in Business Basic. The main membership and billing package was bought in 1985. It was specified by HO and written bespoke by Minerva.
- 1.4 Other software for the Data General machine includes standard packages for nominal ledger, purchase ledger and cash book, also supplied by Minerva.
- 1.5 The head office also operates about 50 micro-computers for a variety of functions such as kashrut, Bushey Cemetery, education. Programmes were written in-house.
- 1.6 The payroll service is run for individual synagogue staff using one of these micro-computers and standard software called 'Essence'. There about 4-5 different payrolls.

#### 2 Administration and accounting carried out for individual synagogues

##### 2.1 Method of operation

This involves each synagogue in summarising information on specially designed input forms which are sent in to head office for typing into the computer and processing. The main records are kept on the head office computer and information is sent to individual synagogues in the form of computer printouts.

##### 2.2 Membership and subscriptions

- (i) A basic membership record is held with provision for recording the member and spouses name, address, telephone, occupation, marriage details, children and yearzeits.
- (ii) A subscription ledger links in with the membership records. Covenants are dealt with using a Lotus spreadsheet to produce a list.
- (iii) Bills are issued before Pesach and a second bill/reminder is sent out for the second half year. Head office send batches of bills to the individual synagogues who send them out to the members.
- (iv) Cash receipts are entered into the system from the 25-column Kalamazoo style 'Receipts Journal', prepared by the synagogue.
- (v) Various debtors lists are printed during the year and sent to the synagogues.
- (vi) Lists and labels can be printed in alphabetic, folio number and mail sort sequences, but not all synagogues request them.

##### 2.3 Other applications

- (i) Payment request slips and purchase invoices are sent in to head office for bills to be recorded and paid.
- (ii) Petty cash return sheets prepared by the synagogues are entered into the computer and posted to the nominal ledger.
- (iii) Payrolls are processed from payroll hours sent in by the synagogues. Some cheder teachers work for more than one community and this is shown on the payslip.
- (iv) Trial balance reports and full nominal ledger prints are produced from time to time. Final accounts are prepared by head office for individual communities and overall. The trial balance produced from the nominal ledger is manually typed into a Lotus spreadsheet.

- 3 Staff involved with synagogue administration and accounting
- 3.1 The computer systems are run by a full-time computer manager and assistant. They are responsible for maintaining both the synagogue systems and a number of micro-computer systems used at head office for other purposes.
- 3.2 The following other staff are involved either part- or full-time:
  - synagogue accountant
  - bought ledger staff
  - payroll (1.5 people)
  - covenant team (2 people)
  - membership (4 people)
  - accounts office manager
  - personnel secretary
  - constitutional (2 people)
- 3.3 The chief executive, finance director and property director all spend a proportion of their time on synagogue matters.

### Appendix 3

#### **Current problems**

#### **SYNAGOGUES**

##### **1 Duplication**

- 1.1 Several synagogues have set up their own membership databases on local micro-computers. Where they do not have their own computer, duplicated membership records are kept in books or on cards to provide easy access to information.
- 1.2 Yahrzeit records are kept at head office but individual synagogues keep their own duplicated records and do not rely on head office. Sometimes two sets of local manual records are kept so that information can be accessed both by surname and by yahrzeit date.
- 1.3 Some synagogues feel that the requirements of head office cause a significant doubling up on work, requesting information that has to be kept locally such as Hebrew names and yahrzeits.
- 1.4 Pink copy bills are used as ledger sheets and cash receipts are recorded on them so that the synagogue knows the current arrears position for each member.
- 1.5 Keeping a copy subscription ledger results in further duplication when the computer-produced 'Transaction Analysis' from head office has to be reconciled to the pink sheets.

##### **2 Time-consuming procedures**

- 2.1 In order to correct errors on the Transaction Analysis, adjustments must be made to individual funds. Head office needs to know the original receipts journal sheet number to make the correction and this process is time-consuming.

##### **3 Many queries and errors**

- 3.1 Changes in charge rates are not always reliably processed by head office and result in many phone calls and exchanges of correspondence. Some synagogues feel it necessary to check all bills to ensure that the correct charge rate has been used.
- 3.2 One community complained that errors with the payroll system occur every month. Errors have resulted in some employees being significantly overpaid and others underpaid.

##### **4 Delays**

- 4.1 It can take as long as 3-4 weeks to get a cheque from head office, and an additional bank account has to be maintained by the synagogue for urgent payments.

##### **5 Lack of feedback**

- 5.1 Synagogues are not notified by head office when bills have been paid. This creates difficulties for the individual synagogue when debts are chased by suppliers and necessitates phone calls to head office to clarify the position.

##### **6 Extra work on covenants**

- 6.1 Covenant amendments are needed when fees rise and this causes a lot of extra work.



- 6.2 Synagogues are required to notify head office when the half-year's subscription has been received so that tax can be reclaimed. This time-consuming task should be unnecessary as the information should already be available at head office.

## **7 Inadequate membership systems**

- 7.1 The head office records do not easily enable synagogues to extract such information as children coming up for Bar Mitzvah/Bat Chayil or to check which venue members attend for Rosh Hashanah.
- 7.2 In spite of the head office's records, yahrzeits are often kept manually by the synagogues or on their own micro-computers.
- 7.3 One synagogue was unable to obtain a list of members who have been members for 50 years. This is needed because members' FES charge is fixed after 50 years.
- 7.4 Subscription Transaction Analysis lists are required by some synagogues on a monthly basis but they are only sent out a few times a year. This is understood to be done for reasons of economy.
- 7.5 The Transaction Analysis produced by head office shows the amount outstanding for each member for each year. To find the total debt outstanding, the synagogue administrator has to add up several lines on the computer printout for many members. This is time-consuming and felt to be avoidable if programme changes were made.

## **8 Inflexible payroll**

- 8.1 The head office system is considered to be inflexible by some synagogues where a local system would be preferred.

## **HEAD OFFICE**

### **1 Inadequate computer system for present needs**

- 1.1 The existing computer system was originally designed about 7 years ago and is not felt to be ideal for present requirements.
- 1.2 Consideration is being given to providing PCs in synagogues and linking them into the head office machine. This could have a significant capital expenditure implication and could add to the complexity of the head office installation.
- 1.3 Replacement software is being considered and specialist charity software has been identified.

### **2 Lack of accuracy**

- 2.1 It is felt by head office personnel that the receipts journal is a complicated document and may not always be completed accurately by the synagogues.

### **3 Backlog**

- 3.1 A 'ready cash' control account is used to assist in allocating receipts to members records but this process can be as much as 3 weeks behind.

### **4 Accounting software lacks useful features**

- 4.1 The full nominal ledger print (sent out in October) is considered to be difficult to follow as it uses numeric rather than descriptive references.
- 4.2 The nominal ledger system produces a trial balance but does not automatically produce full accounts. These are prepared by typing the figures into a Lotus spreadsheet.
- 4.3 Although the arrears system produces debtor lists, it does not produce reminder letters.

## Appendix 4.1

### System and costing based on a small community

#### 1 Basic facts:

size of community:	men: 125; women: 94; total: 219
paid staff:	1 full-time; 2 part-time
teacher and others:	4 teachers
annual income:	£53,714
expenditure:	£52,352

#### 2 Cost estimate:

	Initial costs £	Maint. 3yr cost £
Hardware:		
Elonex PC325XM mono, MS DOS 5, 50MB disk, 2MB RAM	630	105
HP Deskjet 500 printer say	300	60
Cables, etc. say	25	
Software:		
Membership & subscription system	*	*
Database (if needed) say	200	150
Sage Sterling Accountant (DOS)	300	300
Payroll	-	-
HO statistics and other reports	*	*
Training:		
Membership and subscription system	*	N/A
Sage Sterling Accountant	200	N/A
Total excluding VAT	1,655	615
VAT @ 17.5%	290	108
Total including VAT	£1,945	£723

#### 3 Notes and assumptions:

Prices are based on lists at 8 June 1992.

Only 7 employees, therefore assume manual payroll.

Existing computer/wp is assumed unsuitable for new systems.

Use of Sage for accounting may be unnecessary.

Community size and annual income and expenditure taken from 1990 Annual Report.

\* The precise costs were not ascertained, but these are not anticipated to be material.

## Appendix 4.2

### System and costing based on a medium-sized community

#### 1 Basic facts:

size of community:	men: 686; women: 387; total: 1,073
paid staff:	4 full-time; 1 part-time
teacher and others:	29 teachers
annual income:	£188,386
expenditure:	£229,350

## 2 Cost estimate:

	Initial costs £	Maint. 3yr. cost £
Hardware:		
Elonex PC325XM Colour, MS DOS 5, 50MB disk, 2MB RAM	795	125
HP Laserjet IIIP printer say	700	130
Cables, etc. say	25	
Software:		
Membership and subscription system	*	*
Database (if needed) say	200	150
Sage Sterling Accountant (DOS)	300	300
Payroll	200	300
HO statistics and other reports	*	*
Training:		
Membership and subscription system	*	N/A
Sage Sterling Accountant	200	N/A
Total excluding VAT	2,420	1,005
VAT @ 17.5%	424	176
Total including VAT	£2,844	£1,181

## 3 Notes and assumptions:

Prices are based on lists at 8 June 1992.

WordPerfect or a similar package could be purchased to help with publications and correspondence (extra cost of about £400 + VAT).

Use of Sage for accounting may be unnecessary.

No existing computer assumed.

Community size and annual income and expenditure taken from 1990 Annual Report.

\* The precise costs were not ascertained, but these are not anticipated to be material.

## Appendix 4.3

### System and costing based on a large community

#### 1 Basic facts:

size of community:	men: 1,205; women: 1,250; total: 2,455
paid staff:	7 full-time; 2 part-time
teacher and others:	15 teachers
annual income:	£398,375
expenditure:	£395,808

## 2 Cost estimate:

	Initial costs £	Maint 3yr cost £
Hardware:		
Elonex PC340M Colour, MS DOS 5 100MB disk, 4MB RAM, tape drive	1,465	210
HP Laserjet IIIP (incl. lower cassette)	850	130
Cables, etc. say	25	
Software:		
Membership and subscription system	*	*
Database (if needed)	200	150
Sage Sterling Accountant (DOS)	300	300
Payroll	200	300
HO statistics and other reports	*	*
Training:		
Membership and subscription system	*	N/A
Sage Sterling Accountant	200	N/A
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total excluding VAT	3,240	1,090
	<hr/>	<hr/>
VAT @ 17.5%	567	191
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total including VAT	£3,807	£1,281

## 3 Notes and assumptions:

Prices are based on lists at 8 June 1992.

Part or all of existing computer may be sufficient to run new local systems.

Although this costing has been based on a larger computer, the equipment quoted for a medium-sized community may suffice. The choice should be finalised when the membership and subscription software has been chosen.

A word processing package (e.g. WordPerfect) could be added for an extra £400 + VAT.

Community size and annual income and expenditure taken from 1990 Annual Report.

\*The precise costs were not ascertained, but these are not anticipated to be material.

## Appendix 5

### Effect of devolved administration on synagogue workload

Possible extra work	Potential savings and benefits
<b>1. Member/child records</b>	
-enter into computer	-no need to fill in input -no need to keep duplicate manual/computer records -instant access to records and information
<b>2. Prepare lists and labels</b>	
-negligible extra time required to run own reports and label lists -maintain own stationery stock	-rapid response to requests for information -more flexible lists and labels available
<b>3. Yahrzeit records</b>	
-enter into the computer	-some synagogues already entering into own computer or maintaining manual records -more rapid access to information -automatic reminder letters

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>4. Preparing/dispatching bills</b>   | -need to enter details of subsidies and reductions  | -no need to prepare details for head office<br>-no delay in sending out bills<br>-reduced postage costs at head office  |
| <b>5. Cash receipts recording</b>   | -type cash receipts straight into computer from bank statements or remittance advice slips                  | -no need to complete Receipts Journal sheets; analysis done by computer<br>-no need to keep duplicate records of receipts on pink copy of member's bill<br>-paying-in schedule could be printed by computer |
| <b>6. Preparing debtors lists</b>   | -run computer report  | -printed by own computer when needed with no delay  |
| <b>7. Tax returns/reclaims</b>  | -completing tax return details<br>-negotiating with the Inland Revenue                                      | -more rapid access to cash received   |
| <b>8. Recording purchase invoices/ petty cash, making payments/ issuing cheques</b> | -entering invoices and payments into the computer<br>-making out cheques                                    | -no need to complete cheque requisitions<br>-direct access to and better control of funds<br>-no need for repeated telephone liaison with head office to get bills paid                                     |
| <b>9. Payroll</b>   | -payslip calculations to be prepared  | -better control and flexibility over payments made  |
| <b>10. Nominal ledger, banking/accounts</b>   | -need to post transactions and journals to the ledger<br>-need to prepare trial balance and annual accounts | -better, more regular profit-and-loss accounts and management information<br>-fewer bank accounts required  |

Appendix 6

**Approximate staffing comparisons for membership record-keeping / accounting**

SYNAGOGUE	PAID STAFF	PT/FT	VOLUNTEERS
<b>UNITED SYNAGOGUE</b>			
<b>Constituent</b> 186 members	Secretary	PT	FR membership officer
<b>Constituent</b> 600 members	Secretary/Admin	FT	FR Asst. FR covenants+ 3 others
<b>Constituent</b> 930 members	Secretary/Admin	FT	FR membership + others?
<b>Constituent</b> 2,561 members	Admin.Secretary Asst. Secretary	FT FT	FR 3 wardens 8 finance team 8 general admin

<b>Affiliate</b> 182 members	none		FR/warden
<b>Affiliate</b> 300 members	Secretary	PT	FR
<b>Affiliate</b> 460 members	Secretary Book-keeper	PT PT	FR Covenants Covenants member
<hr/>			
<b>Outer London reform</b> 800 members	Secretary/Admin. Administrator	FT PT	Treasurer Asst.Treas. (subscriptions) Asst.Treas.(payroll)
<b>Provincial Orthodox</b> 1,000 members	Secretary Assist. Secretary	FT FT	Treasurer Vice President
<b>Inner London reform</b> 2,500 members	Accountant Members.Admin Cashier	FT FT PT	Treasurer

## Appendix 7

### List of steps involved at each synagogue in transferring membership and subscription records and accounting functions from head office

#### 1 Synagogue feasibility review

- \*consider existing facilities (hardware, software, admin. staff time availability and computer literacy, space availability)
- \*decide what additional resources/facilities are required to implement new systems: hardware, software, admin. staff, training, space
- \*identify person/s to be involved/take responsibility for implementation and day-to-day running of system
- \*prepare schedule of tasks, responsibilities and timetable for implementation

#### 2 Purchase / commission system

- \*acquire computer/software and load programmes
- \*arrange maintenance contracts for hardware and software
- \*arrange purchase of consumables and printing of stationery as necessary
- \*register for Data Protection Act

#### 3 Implementation

- \*hardware and software training for admin. staff and relevant honorary officers
- \*plan control procedures to ensure that all data set up accurately on new system
- \*conversion of computer-held data from head office system to new system
- \*loading other data into new system from manual records
- \*pilot/parallel running of old and new systems

## Appendix 8

### Draft action plan for implementing local systems

- 1 Agree extent of local and residual central functions.
- 2 Appoint a person to co-ordinate the overall project.
- 3 Meet synagogue representatives to explain approach, timetable and responsibilities.
- 4 Establish and agree the systems requirements for synagogue membership and subscription accounting. Consider variations in requirements between small synagogues with few volunteers and no accounting knowledge and larger communities with paid professional accounting staff. Consider central requirements for statistics and other information and Burial Society.
- 5 Survey existing systems on the market and short list those which could form the basis for a standard system.
- 6 Select/develop a system for synagogues.
- 7 Choose 3 interested synagogues (small, medium, large) to act as pilot sites and implement systems.
- 8 Review outcome of pilots and change systems or procedures as a result.
- 9 Plan and organise implementation programme with individual synagogues.
- 10 Review experience of full implementation and consider what, if any, further action is required.

# **WORKING PAPER ON THE PROPOSED NEW BASIS FOR CALCULATING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION TO THE CENTRE**

## **Theoretical basis**

The general wealth of a community (and therefore its ability to pay tax) is thought to be reflected in the value of housing in its neighbourhood. Thus, for example, it is commonly accepted that the general wealth of the St John's Wood community is greater than the general wealth of the Borehamwood community and this is reflected in average house/flat prices in the vicinity of the St John's Wood Synagogue when compared with average price of house/flat prices in the vicinity of Borehamwood Synagogue.

Whilst the above is a general proposition and not applicable to all the members of the communities - not all house/flat prices in St John's Wood being higher than all house/flat prices in Borehamwood - these exceptions do not undermine that general proposition.

A system of taxation based on the value of the synagogue buildings themselves acts as a disincentive to a community's improving its facilities; it would consider that every pound raised by the community for improvements would result in higher taxation.

A system of taxation based on the site value only of the synagogue complex would provide an approximate guide to the underlying wealth of the community without the disincentive effect mentioned above. The site would be taken as being the land occupied by the synagogue buildings, including any community centre and any residential accommodation which was an integral part of them. Ministers' houses and other ancillary properties would be ignored, if not an integral part of the complex.

Some synagogues operate from sites which are significantly larger than actually required. A system of taxation based on the full site area would force communities to consider their use of space and to dispose of any surplus land - possibly for other community needs. Until a disposal was made, the community would be taxed on the basis of the size of the site occupied.

## **The scheme in detail - alternative site value**

As in any system of rating, it is necessary to have a hypothetical basis of valuation which may depart from the facts relating to the actual site. Some sites may be leasehold or subject to restrictive covenants; in other cases, alternative development potential would be other than residential. In a number of cases the buildings themselves may be listed as being of architectural or historic interest.

For the purposes of this valuation, the following assumptions are made:

- 1) That the site in every case is freehold.
- 2) That the site in every case is free from restrictive covenants.
- 3) That the site is cleared of buildings and ready for immediate development.
- 4) That planning consent exists for the development of the site by the construction of self-contained flats at a density of 78 habitable rooms per acre or the density permitted by the local planning authority, whichever is higher.
- 5) That the flats would be developed to a standard consistent with the neighbourhood in which the synagogue is located.

### **Rationale behind development assumption**

The assumptions must allow the site to be valued without there being significant argument on the form of the potential development.

The title is assumed to be freehold as this will give the best valuation for the site. It is not necessary for the purposes of a system of taxation that the valuation ascribed represents the open market value of the property itself. The purpose of the valuation is to allow comparisons between communities on an equal basis.

The buildings are assumed not to be listed or protected in any way as this would inhibit a potential development and prevent communities being compared with each other on a single simple basis.

The assumption as to planning density is a practical one. The minimum density of 78 habitable rooms per acre enables convenient and safe play space for children to be provided, either in private gardens or in more generally accessible public open spaces, without disturbance to others nearby. In inner areas higher density is permitted because of the greater heights of development which are allowed in those areas.

Flats have been chosen as the basis of valuation rather than houses, because these have a more uniform value in a given area and comparables are easier to locate and identify.

### **Sample variations**

To demonstrate the valuation approach, 6 communities were designated for consideration. They were:

- A) A synagogue in one of the most prosperous inner London suburbs, which represents an established wealthy community.
- B) A synagogue in a North-West metropolitan area with a young and growing community.
- C) A synagogue in a prosperous outer North-West London suburb with a static but ageing community.
- D) A synagogue in a North-East metropolitan area with a large established community but with a younger age profile and less affluent than that of community C.
- E) A small, relatively prosperous community in an outer metropolitan area in one of the satellite towns around London.
- F) A community in an inner London suburb with a comparatively small, ageing and declining membership.

### **The system of taxation**

There are three possibilities for creating a system of taxation:

- 1) A valuation of each individual synagogue site, with an appropriate appeals procedure to contest the valuation.
- 2) A fixed valuation prepared in respect of the above sample communities, with all other communities to be related to one of the sample communities and to be allocated the value which has been calculated for the comparable community.
- 3) A system of banding based on site values.



If the individual site values are accepted as a basis (system 1) then the site values for all the communities will be totalled and a rate per pound of value established by taking the annual estimated costs of the central administration divided by the total of the valuation.

If the system of valuation according to demographic similarities is adopted (system 2) then the total value will be calculated on the basis of the following fixed valuations and a tax per pound of value will be applied to each community.

The valuations to apply to each type of community are as follows:

- A) £3,600,000
- B) £ 450,000
- C) £1,600,000
- D) £ 505,000
- E) £ 430,000
- F) £ 105,000

If the valuation banding system is adopted (system 3) each community will be categorised according to the band in which its site value falls. The bands of value will be as follows:

- A) £ 0 - £ 249,999
- B) £ 250,000 - £ 499,999
- C) £ 500,000 - £ 999,999
- D) £1,000,000 - £1,499,999
- E) £1,500,000 - £2,499,999
- F) £2,500,000 or more

### **The choice of system**

System 1 will be expensive to set up and will lead to arguments between communities as each valuation is disputed. The final result may be fair on pure valuation criteria but has no regard to some of the other problems which might arise.

System 2 has the disadvantage that there will be no incentive for communities to sell off surplus land for buildings. Implementation of the system would be comparatively easy, with arguments relating only to the relevant category and not to the valuation figure itself.

System 3, taxation based on the site valuation bands, would avoid much argument from the communities but would require decisions regarding the relative weighting between different communities. This may lead to disputes from the communities who are being more heavily taxed, but would best reflect the general principle of requiring the more prosperous communities to support the less prosperous.

Taxation based on the creation of a simple valuation banding system (System 3) is recommended as the most practical method of assessing the relative weight of responsibility between the various communities. This system has been taken as the basis for the development of the financial models which follow.

# **FIVE-YEAR FINANCIAL MODELS TO ILLUSTRATE THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SIX LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The following models have been prepared to illustrate the possible financial impact of the recommendations contained in the Review of the United Synagogue on a range of typical United Synagogue communities. These communities are presented by descriptive type rather than by name, although they are based on real communities, because the model is for the most part projective rather than actual and because they have been chosen as a roughly representative selection of the different membership and financial profiles of the range of communities within the United Synagogue.

## **THE THREE MODELS**

### **Model 1. The present situation**

In the first model it is assumed that there are no fundamental changes either in the functions provided by the centre which form the basis for the calculation of community contributions to central funds, or in the per-capita pay-over system by which the levy on each community is calculated. It is also assumed that the policy of anticipating an annual deficit on operational income and expenditure to be supported by bank borrowings is continued. It is further assumed that the repayment of the organisation's five-year term loan in 1996 will be made without recourse to additional contributions from the communities (that is to say that the debt would be met from asset sales). In other words, model one represents a simple projection of the United Synagogue of today through a further five years, as viewed from the perspective of the finances of six individual United Synagogue communities.

### **Model 2. A break-even strategy**

In the second model it is assumed, as in the first model, that there are no fundamental changes in the functions provided by the centre which form the basis for the calculation of community contributions to central funds, or in the per-capita pay-over system by which the levy on each community is calculated. However, it is now assumed that the policy of anticipating an annual deficit is abandoned since it is problematic in principle and in practice, with bank borrowings already at their peak. The projected community contributions have, therefore, been raised to ensure that the organisation 'breaks even' on an annual basis. It is also assumed that a moderate programme of debt repayment is initiated based on a cross-community levy, since the value of the major assets currently allocated to pay off the five-year term loan are unlikely to realise sufficient capital to make full repayment possible.

### **Model 3. The new proposals**

In the third model a major restructuring of the functions of the centre is assumed in line with the recommendations of the United Synagogue Review. This would substantially reduce central costs both immediately and progressively as, for example, the various education subsidies are phased out. It is further assumed that community contributions to central funds are to be calculated on the 'alternative site value' as opposed to the per-capita basis, and also, as in model two, that the central organisation's annual budget is predicated on a 'break even' policy, with a moderate programme of debt repayment included, based on a cross-community levy.

**The third model is an attempt to simulate the impact of the recommendations in this report.**

## **COMPARING THE THREE MODELS**

The first two models are presented by way of comparison with model three.

In comparing models one and three, the reader should take into account, in the context of model one, that the central debt of the organisation would grow annually as a result of a substantial annual deficit for each of the five projected years, and that repayment of

the existing term loan in 1996 would have to be made through the sale of assets whose current valuation does not suggest that their sale within four years could realise the full sum required. These elements are not visible in the model since the model is presented purely from the perspective of the local communities.

In comparing both models one and two with model three, the reader should take into account that in model three the community contributions to the centre would no longer cover subsidies to the chadarim and that subsidies to the day schools would be phased out over a limited period. Communities with educational programmes would be expected to meet expenses from within their overall budgets. These costs have not been allowed for the figures as shown since they vary between each individual community.

One final minor point. In each set of models the actual synagogue communal contribution paid in 1991 and the net surplus / deficit for 1991 is shown at the bottom. Whilst the former can validly be compared with figures for later years, the latter cannot because the actual income figure shown in the accounts is **after** making provision for repairs, and repayment of advances (in some cases).

## **HOW THE VARIABLES WERE CALCULATED**

For the purposes of constructing these projective models a number of assumptions had to be made. These are the assumptions and the reasoning behind them.

### **1. Central costs**

Working from 1991 actuals, and taking into consideration budget forecasts, past track record in forecasting, and estimates prepared by investigating accountants Levy Gee, and allowing for inflation at 5%, budget estimates for the period 1993-1997 were prepared. These were used to calculate the 'central costs' element, as shown in Tables 1 and 2, in order to estimate the required payover from the six communities according to models one and two.

Central costs in the case of model three were calculated, as shown in Table 3, by a departmental breakdown prepared by adjusting existing departmental budgets to reflect the recommendations of the United Synagogue Review. A total figure for affiliate/associate synagogue contributions was subtracted from central costs in order to remove these communities from the sample. A programme for debt repayment was added to the central costs and these amounts were also added to the central costs figure used in model two.

### **2. Synagogue payover**

In models one and two the projected total levy required by the centre was allocated between the communities on the basis of the existing payover system and with the assumption that membership numbers and proportions as between synagogue and synagogue would remain stable over the five-year period.

In model three a 'banding' system was devised on the basis of recommendations contained in the review (page 130), every synagogue placed within one of the six bands, based on an informed estimate of its 'alternative site value', and a 'weighting' system devised to establish an equitable proportional relationship between synagogue and synagogue. The total levy required by the centre under the new arrangements was then allocated between the constituent synagogues and the figures for each of the six representative communities added to their expenditure. The banding system in outline is shown in Table 4.

### **3. Local income and expenditure**

In models one two and three known figures for the six communities were projected forward over a period of five years.

In model three, based on the recommendations of the United Synagogue Review, allowance should be made for a number of variables which it was not possible to calculate in real terms. Community growth in terms of recruitment of new members would, under the new pay-over system, be completely credited to the income of the local community. In terms of expenditure, local communities may put more resources into administration and education, depending on strategic planning at the local level.

## WHAT THE MODELS ARE AND WHAT THEY ARE NOT

This kind of modelling is useful in comparing one scenario with another because the basic facts are consistent between model and model. In other words, what one can see by comparing the progress of each individual community over a five-year period between the various models is the development of basic trends. The band 5 synagogue, for example, begins with a higher central contribution in the first year under the new arrangements as expressed by model three, but emerges with healthier financial prospects at the end of the five-year period in comparison with either of the other two models.

However, these models are not intended as an accurate forecast in any specific detail, since there are a considerable number of variables, each of which is based on estimates extrapolated from existing data.

### SUMMARY

Tables 5-10 below illustrate what will happen to 6 typical United Synagogue communities over the next 5 years according to each of the three possible scenarios

On the current basis (model 1) some of the communities will be able to meet payments to the centre. However the centre will not be able to meet its debts.

On the break even basis (model 2) the cost of maintaining central facilities at their current level will cripple all but the wealthiest communities.

On the basis of the new proposals (model 3) the underlying health of all communities can be maintained whilst supporting a streamlined centre and making substantial provision for future debt repayments.

### PRESENTATION OF THE MODELS

1. Table 1. Central Costs : Model 1. The present situation
2. Table 2. Central Costs : Model 2. A break-even strategy
3. Table 3. Central Costs : Model 3. The new proposals
4. Table 4. The Banding System
5. Table 5. **Ageing community** - A five-year projection according to all 3 models, illustrating the Synagogue communal contribution and the net annual surplus/deficit for a community located in a London suburb with a comparatively small, ageing and declining membership.
6. Table 6. **Small satellite** - A five-year projection according to all 3 models, for a small, relatively prosperous community, located in an outer metropolitan area in one of the satellite towns around London.
7. Table 7. **Suburban** - A five-year projection according to all 3 models, for a community located in an outer North-West metropolitan area with a young and growing membership.
8. Table 8. **Large non-affluent** - A five-year projection according to all 3 models, for a community located in a North-East metropolitan area with a large established membership but with a less affluent profile than that represented in Table 9.
9. Table 9. **Large affluent** - A five-year projection according to all 3 models, for a community located in a prosperous outer North-West suburb having a basically stable but ageing membership.
10. Table 10. **Inner London wealthy** - A five-year projection according to all 3 models, for a community located in one of the prosperous inner London suburbs which

TABLE 1: CENTRAL COSTS 1993-1997

MODEL 1: THE PRESENT SITUATION

	Total Synagogue Communal Contribution (SCC) (£ 000's)
SCC 1991	1,920
Projected SCC 1992 per synagogue estimates	1,916
Estimated SCC 1993 (increase by 5%)	2,012
Estimated SCC 1994 (increase by 5%)	2,112
Estimated SCC 1995 (increase by 5%)	2,218
Estimated SCC 1996 (increase by 5%)	2,329
Estimated SCC 1997 (increase by 5%)	2,445

TABLE 2: CENTRAL COSTS 1993-1997

MODEL 2: A BREAK-EVEN STRATEGY

Deficit Covered By Increased SCC	Estimated Adjusted Deficit	Debt Sinking Fund	Standard SCC	Revised SCC (£000s)
1993	917	250	2,012	3,178
1994	881	300	2,112	3,293
1995	865	350	2,218	3,433
1996	757	400	2,329	3,486
1997	757	450	2,445	3,652

Our investigating accountants estimate that before profit from asset sales, the US will show a deficit (excluding asset sales) of £930k in 1992. We have assumed that this increases by 5% p.a. subject to an adjustment for the reduction in shechitah costs as shown in table 3.

See page 137 for Table 3.

TABLE 4  
THE BANDING SYSTEM FOR SYNAGOGUE COMMUNAL  
CONTRIBUTIONS ON THE BASIS OF ALTERNATIVE SITE USE

	Number of Synagogues	Points	Total Points	% Allocation per Synagogue
Band 1	8	25	200	0.529%
Band 2	10	50	500	1.058%
Band 3	12	100	1,200	2.116%
Band 4	3	150	450	3.175%
Band 5	5	250	1,250	5.291%
Band 6	3	375	1,125	7.937%
TOTALS	41		4,725	

TABLE 3: CENTRAL COSTS 1993-1997

MODEL 3: THE NEW PROPOSALS

	1991 Acc,s £	1992 LG Ests £	1993 £	1994 £	1995 £	1996 £	1997 £
(i)Central Functions/Executive	970,000	879,000	550,000	472,500	315,000	275,625	289,406
(ii)Office of Chief Rabbi & Beth Din	845,000	653,000	750,000	787,500	826,875	868,219	911,630
(iii)Shechitah	228,000	200,000	150,000	131,250	110,250		
(iv)Bureau of Education	1,214,000	1,093,000	400,000	420,000	441,000	463,050	486,202
Kashrut	(17,000)	(28,000)	(50,000)	(52,500)	(55,125)	(57,881)	(60,775)
Grants etc.	312,000	305,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000
(v)Central Interest	332,000	377,000	350,000	295,000	260,000	220,000	175,000
Affiliate/Associate Income	(92,000)	(90,000)	(150,000)	(157,500)	(165,375)	(173,644)	(182,326)
(vi)Other US Income	(702,000)	(791,000)	(650,000)	(682,500)	(716,625)	(752,456)	(790,079)
<b>NET CENTRAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>3,090,000</b>	<b>2,598,000</b>	<b>1,550,000</b>	<b>1,413,750</b>	<b>1,216,000</b>	<b>1,042,913</b>	<b>1,029,058</b>
(vii)Debt Sinking Fund			250,000	300,000	350,000	400,000	450,000
(viii)TRANSITIONAL RELIEF RE DAY SCHOOLS			281,000	211,000	140,000	70,000	
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL REQUIREMENT</b>			<b>2,081,000</b>	<b>1,924,750</b>	<b>1,706,000</b>	<b>1,512,913</b>	<b>1,479,058</b>

(i) Reductions from 1993 onwards reflect the lower central administration burden, with appropriate allowances for redundancy.

(ii) The increase in 1993 onwards reflects the added responsibilities to be sustained under the Chief Rabbinate.

(iii) 1993 figures reflect positive effects of rationalisation taking place in current year. It is assumed that the United Synagogue will cease to bear a net cost for Shechitah by 1996.

(iv) Figures from 1993 reflect the proposed new roles and responsibilities of the Bureau.

(v) Interest on the medium term loan is assumed to be fully covered by the repayment of advances and interest from constituent synagogues. Interest on the overdraft (shown as central interest) reduces, reflecting interest generated on Sinking Fund deposits.

(vi) Derives from a number of sources including Kol Nidrei appeal, Burial Society, rents, commutation of membership.

(vii) See Review page 95.

(viii) See page 156.

## TABLES 5-10

## 5-YEAR PROJECTIONS OF SYNAGOGUE COMMUNAL CONTRIBUTION AND NET ANNUAL SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) (£'s)

TABLE 5: AN AGEING COMMUNITY

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>Current Basis (Model 1)</b>					
SCC	43,050	45,203	47,463	49,836	52,328
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	5,950	398	(5,433)	(11,554)	(17,982)
<b>Break Even (Model 2)</b>					
SCC	68,012	70,476	73,469	74,601	78,149
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	(19,012)	(24,876)	(31,439)	(36,319)	(43,804)
<b>New Proposals (Model 3)</b>					
SCC	11,011	10,184	9,026	8,005	7,826
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	37,989	35,416	33,004	30,277	26,520

Actual SCC paid in 1991 was £41,000 and the net income was £0

TABLE 6: A SMALL SATELLITE COMMUNITY

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>Current Basis (Model 1)</b>					
SCC	14,700	15,435	16,207	17,017	17,868
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	4,300	1,765	(897)	(3,692)	(6,626)
<b>Break Even (Model 2)</b>					
SCC	23,223	24,065	25,087	25,473	26,685
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	(4,223)	(6,865)	(9,777)	(12,148)	(15,443)
<b>New Proposals (Model 3)</b>					
SCC	11,011	10,184	9,026	8,005	7,826
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	7,989	7,016	6,284	5,321	3,416

Actual SCC paid in 1991 was £14,000 and the net income was £0

TABLE 7: A SUBURBAN COMMUNITY

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>Current Basis (Model 1)</b>					
SCC	68,250	71,663	75,246	79,008	82,958
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	14,750	25,838	38,514	52,964	69,388
<b>Break Even (Model 2)</b>					
SCC	107,823	111,730	116,475	118,270	123,895
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	(24,823)	(14,230)	(2,715)	13,702	28,451
<b>New Proposals (Model 3)</b>					
SCC	22,021	20,368	18,053	16,010	15,651
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	60,979	77,132	95,707	115,962	136,695

Actual SCC paid in 1991 was £61,000 and the net income was £54

TABLE 8: A LARGE NON-AFFLUENT COMMUNITY

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>Current Basis (Model 1)</b>					
SCC	127,050	133,403	140,073	147,076	154,430
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	(6,050)	(6,353)	(6,670)	(7,004)	(7,354)
<b>Break Even (Model 2)</b>					
SCC	200,717	207,990	216,823	220,164	230,635
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	(79,717)	(80,940)	(83,420)	(80,091)	(83,559)
<b>New Proposals (Model 3)</b>					
SCC	44,042	40,735	36,106	32,019	31,303
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	76,958	86,315	97,297	108,053	115,773

Actual SCC paid in 1991 was £128,000 and the net income was £133

TABLE 9: A LARGE AFFLUENT COMMUNITY

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>Current Basis (Model 1)</b>					
SCC	93,450	98,123	103,029	108,180	113,589
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	(1,450)	11,477	26,351	43,399	62,872
<b>Break Even (Model 2)</b>					
SCC	147,635	152,985	159,481	161,939	169,641
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	(55,635)	(43,385)	(30,101)	(10,360)	6,820
<b>New Proposals (Model 3)</b>					
SCC	110,106	101,839	90,265	80,048	78,257
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	(18,106)	7,761	39,115	71,531	98,204

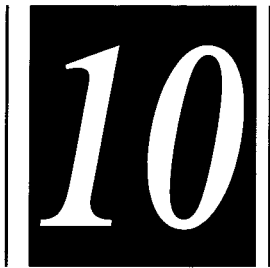
Actual SCC paid in 1991 was £89,000 and the net income was £4,967

TABLE 10: A WEALTHY INNER LONDON COMMUNITY

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>Current Basis (Model 1)</b>					
SCC	108,150	113,558	119,235	125,197	131,457
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	24,850	26,092	27,397	28,767	30,205
<b>Break Even (Model 2)</b>					
SCC	170,859	177,050	184,568	187,412	196,326
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	(37,859)	(37,400)	(37,936)	(33,448)	(34,663)
<b>New Proposals (Model 3)</b>					
SCC	165,159	152,758	135,397	120,072	117,386
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after SCC	(32,159)	(13,108)	11,236	33,892	44,277

Actual SCC paid in 1991 was £104,000 and the net income was £0





# **EDUCATION TASK FORCE REPORT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

For over two thousand years the Jewish people have maintained a system of yeshivot and schools of learning, and even for the small child formal education has been available since early Talmudic times. The high priority given to education throughout our history is one of the most convincing explanations for the survival of the Jewish people into the late twentieth century.

It is clear to us that this priority must be maintained if there is to be Jewish continuity into the twenty-first century. This sense of priority is not one that can be artificially manufactured by the leadership of the community against a backdrop of indifference. It is only with the widespread understanding, co-operation and involvement of the whole community that meaningful Jewish education can be provided.

That is why the emphasis in our recommendations is on the users - local communities and parents - who must take responsibility for the infrastructure of Jewish education, with the centre acting as a responsive enabling body, working towards excellence.

## **THE LEARNING PROCESS**

In the course of this educational review, we have sought advice and information both at home and overseas. We have interviewed a wide range of laymen, including members of the United Synagogue's Board of Education, education committees from a variety of communities, parents and other members of the public. We have spoken to professional experts associated with the Board of Education, head teachers and independent consultants in education. We have consulted some of the contemporary literature on the subject of Jewish educational provision, both internal United Synagogue documentation and research material from the USA and the Commonwealth. Ultimately we have made judgements and comparisons in an effort to forge a new direction for the next 20 years.

Where the overseas organisations, particularly in North America, appear to have been so successful, is in their ability to sink religious differences by forming fund-raising federations and boards of education across a wide spectrum of religious persuasion. This has not led to any religious compromise, but has ensured substantial funding for Jewish education. Sadly, in spite of the establishment of the Jewish Educational Development Trust, such arrangements in the UK still remain elusive. Underpinning our recommendations, particularly with respect to the role of the centre in Jewish education, is a belief that greater inter-organisational co-operation is essential, and a desire that the United Synagogue should lead the way to the kind of dialogue necessary to effect serious change.

## **(A) CURRENT PROVISION FOR JEWISH EDUCATION WITHIN THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE**

### **HOW THE CURRENT SYSTEM CAME ABOUT**

The London Board of Jewish Religious Education was founded in November 1945 to provide religious education for the Jewish communities of Greater London affiliated with

the United Synagogue and/or the Federation of Synagogues and, by arrangement, for congregations outside Greater London. The Board was given power to raise funds by various means but, in particular, to levy participating synagogues with a direct tax on its members. Costs were not excessive, the system worked well and standards of education were improved, and it was during this era that the first Jewish day schools and teenage centres were established under the Board's auspices.

Inevitably, as parents became more enlightened, with improvements in the field of secular education, they clamoured for changes in both the supplementary (cheder or part-time) and day school systems. Modern methods and teaching aids and an overhaul of the curriculum became essential.

To meet this demand, further Jewish day schools were established, teachers' salaries increased, pre- and in-service teacher-training programmes initiated and work on a new infant and preparatory curriculum commenced.

By the mid 1980s, the Board's expenditure had risen to over £1 million for the first time. By then, the Board was servicing only United Synagogue schools and chadarim and the levy had been replaced by a direct grant from the United Synagogue General and Charitable Purposes Account.

In June 1987 the Board became an integral part of the United Synagogue establishment with the creation of the current United Synagogue Board of Education. At the time, with no independent funding, the London Board was left with very little choice. Many voices were raised against this change but, ultimately, the arrangement was approved and it is now reasonable to reflect upon its successes and failures.

The United Synagogue Board of Education consists of the Chief Rabbi, a representative of the London Beth Din, a chairman elected by the Council of the United Synagogue (who upon election becomes one of the United Synagogue's honorary officers), a treasurer of the United Synagogue, 12 representatives elected by the Council of the United Synagogue, 3 representatives nominated by the rabbinical council, the chief executive of the United Synagogue and the director of education. This makes a total of 21, people compared with the six honorary officers of the former London Board, and an executive committee of a further six.

From the outset, whilst the new board's professional staff were principally the same, there was a material change in the make-up of the lay leadership. This lack of continuity delayed the effective working of the Board for several years, until it had firmly established its objectives. During this period, the professional staff and the expenditure were not subject to the full disciplines of supervision.

It had been anticipated that as an honorary officer of the United Synagogue, the chairman of the Board would be able to exercise considerable influence in promoting education. In fact, he found that expenditure was sanctioned for policies dictated by the United Synagogue leadership, in many instances contrary to the wishes of the Board of Education.

At the same time that the Board was being asked to economise and prune expenditure, it was being unduly forced to revise its priorities in light of the wishes of the honorary officers. The Board had some difficulty in isolating its own expenditure and budgets from those of the United Synagogue and was forced into budget cuts for 1992 against its wishes. Certainly, its lack of independence as far as educational decision-making was concerned must be regarded as a substantial failure.

The make-up of the Board was also too diverse. It was unable to take direct control of its destiny, as the different factions within it could not proceed with a coherent policy.

These weaknesses are addressed in our recommendations.

## **THE SCOPE OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM**

The Board of Education is currently responsible for the Jewish education of some 2,400 pupils attending its three Jewish day schools, namely - JFS Comprehensive School, the Michael Sobell Sinai School, Kenton and the Ilford Jewish Primary School. It will also be in charge of up to a further 1,200 pupils at the new Hillel Primary School in Southgate and Ilford Jewish Secondary School when these open. The Board also runs withdrawal classes reaching some 290 pupils at the Haberdashers Aske Boys' School and at the City of London School for Girls. These are non-Jewish public schools, where Jewish education is given by arrangement with the governors. Three teachers are employed for this purpose.

The Board is responsible for some 3,600 pupils in the cheder system, where it employed 348 part-time teaching staff in 1991. In some cases, centres have separate senior and junior departments, whilst others combine the two.

There are 36 different establishments, with most United Synagogue communities having their own centres or joining with others in the locality. Additionally, there are seven teenage centres, employing 48 staff for approximately 400 pupils. In general, the supplementary classes meet once a week, normally on a Sunday morning for three hours, for approximately 40 weeks in each year. Some of the better centres meet twice and, in some cases, three times a week, but even for these, the maximum number of hours per week is six.

The inherent weakness of the part-time educational structure is apparent. It leaves little time for a proper Jewish education, even though, following the introduction of the infant and preparatory curriculum, good use is made of the time available. There has been no appreciable improvement, and perhaps even a decline, in reading standards. The percentage of children regularly attending synagogue services is quite low compared with the numbers attending cheder on Sunday mornings, and this also reduces the ability of many children to understand the services or read well. Precise objectives for the cheder classes have yet to be established. There is still a considerable fall-out rate after bar and bat mitzvah.

Education in the cheder system is controlled by the Board through its head teachers and staff. It sets the syllabus and meets all the salary costs and most of the costs of producing materials for use in the classroom. Each local centre has an education committee headed by a chairman, but in almost every case the role of the chairman and committee is confined to administrative matters and fund-raising for local extras. There is usually a parents' association to which the chairman can turn for assistance with organising parties and outings. There is rarely a link with the synagogue pre-school or nursery groups.

The Board of Education is responsible for teacher training, selection and appointments, inspectorate and examination. It organises youth programmes, in particular, Jewish youth study groups, tours, summer and winter schools. It has, until recently, had responsibility for adult education programmes and community services.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM**

In spite of some fundamental difficulties facing Jewish education, there have been successes. The infant and preparatory curriculum has been completed and is now fully in use in all the supplementary centres. The Board has assisted with curriculum development in the three existing Jewish day schools and is taking a prominent role in the establishment of the two new Jewish day schools, which are due to open in September 1992 (Southgate) and 1993 (Ilford) respectively. It has embarked on the development of a curriculum for the junior and intermediate levels in the cheder classes and has opened special centres of learning. More pupils than ever are now attending the teenage centres. The Board had assembled a fine team of professional educators, although some have now been made redundant due to budgetary pressures. The director of the Board recently left, in July 1992.

Currently the Board's gross expenditure exceeds £2 million, of which it is estimated that just under half will be a direct charge on the General and Charitable Purposes Account of the United Synagogue and, by extension, on the members of the United Synagogue.

According to the latest estimates, parents are due to provide approximately £750,000 towards these costs. Grants and receipts from the Burial Society, the Kol Nidrei appeal and sundry items should produce another £500,000. These figures exclude costs for the two new day schools, which, it has been stated, will be funded entirely outside of the United Synagogue by special fund-raising and parental contributions.

## **THE ROLE OF THE INSTITUTE OF JEWISH EDUCATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Some of the Board of Education's services are carried out on its behalf by the Institute of Jewish Education. The Institute is housed within Jews' College, has a director and seven full- and part-time staff and operates independently of the United Synagogue. Its founding fathers were the London Board of Jewish Religious Education (now the United Synagogue Board), Jews' College, the Department of Torah Education of the World Zionist Organisation and the Jewish Educational Development Trust. Each of these organisations has nominated a governor and there is an independent chairman and treasurer. This structure works well and compares favourably to the structure of the Board of Education. The Institute's independence enables it to offer its services beyond the confines of the United Synagogue family.

The Institute's expenditure budget for 1992 will be £225,000. The Jewish Educational Development Trust and the United Synagogue will be providing £80,000 and £60,000 respectively towards these costs. The balance will come from the Torah Department, special and general grants, students' fees and income generally. The special grants include receipts from overseas and further advances from the J.E.D.T.

The Institute acts an educational resource centre and publishes text books and learning materials. It conducts seminars and in-service teacher-training programmes for both the day schools and supplementary system. It is the only Jewish accredited training centre for the UK's NNEB course (for kindergarten teaching qualifications). It deals with special projects, works with communities in Europe (funded by a special overseas grant) and helps in developing teachers of Jewish studies.

Recently, it has become involved in curriculum work for the new Hillel primary school in Southgate and has created a Torah studies programme for the Zionist Federation Education Trust schools. Last, but not least, the Institute is renowned for its servicing of Jewish nursery schools and its Pre-school Playgroups Association foundation course. Many of these nurseries operate from United Synagogue premises, and the Institute can be proud of its involvement in the development of pre-school play groups and nursery education.

Bringing together the Jewish Educational Development Trust and the United Synagogue within this organisation augurs well for the future. Both have appreciated the benefit of working together on projects for the advancement of Jewish education, and the beneficiaries include provincial as well as the wider family of Orthodox communities.

A recent development has been the use made of the Institute's services by the Z.F.E.T. and it is to be hoped that they will be able to play a more involved role in any new structures that are created. This can happen only when the differences in the UK between the Z.F.E.T. and the Torah Department are resolved. The community is shrinking and there is no room for such differences to be perpetuated. A further encouraging development is the use now being made of the Institute's services by schools associated with the more Orthodox sections of the community.

## **(B) PRINCIPLES FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH EDUCATION WITHIN THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE**

The principles we have applied in analysing the United Synagogue's educational programme are those which underpin the Review as a whole. Accountability and transparency are minimum standards essential in a democracy and in contemporary life in general. They are absolutely critical in the context of the free and social markets.

It is perhaps the concept of 'subsidiarity' or 'people power', however, that has most coloured our thinking in the area of education. It is a challenging and difficult concept when values, and particularly religious values, are at stake.

There are three main reasons advanced by those who support centralised control in education. The first is the belief that people do not care sufficiently to manage education well or to plough sufficient resources into it to allow it to thrive. The second is the fear that religious authority and traditional values will be challenged if one takes away the powers of central guardians of the faith. The third is the feeling that professionalism will suffer if the 'amateur' is given authority.

We refute these arguments and propose that the natural benefits of putting power and responsibility as close to the user as possible outweigh any technical disadvantages.

We know that there was a time when Jewish educational provision would not have developed in this country had it been left in the hands of the users, but the evidence today suggests that that time has passed. Jewish education is continually cited as the topmost priority in Anglo-Jewry. Our day schools are bursting at the seams, a huge outcry was raised over the recent Board of Education redundancies and our market research confirms this trend in public thinking.

Complete freedom of choice could lead to unacceptable religious compromises in education and a threat to the value system of Orthodox Judaism. But what is on offer contains many checks and balances, including the continued religious authority of the Chief Rabbi and an enhanced role for the local rabbi in education.

The final argument against the withdrawal of central control and the placing of power and responsibility at a local level is that the centre will simply do it better. This carries us into the realm of the national educational debate. It is, at best, a hotly contested issue. *The Sunday Times*, on the 9th of February 1992, commissioned two American experts, Professors Chubb and Mow, to look at the British educational system in the aftermath of the recent Education Act. Some of their findings were fascinating.

*The problem of school performance requires a new kind of system, one that nurtures school autonomy and gives educators incentives to use it in the most productive ways. This is precisely what a choice system does and why we embrace choice as the most promising path to better schools.*

*All crucial decisions about organisation and governance must be placed in the hands of the schools. They must be truly autonomous. For this to be real and enduring, virtually all authority to control the schools from above must be eliminated.*

And perhaps most powerfully:

*Accountability helps to ensure that school performance can be measured, monitored and channelled towards desirable social goals. Within a choice system, the main form of accountability is bottom up. The school quality is in the hands of teachers, school heads and governing boards. Parents and pupils, free to choose, then pass judgement on how well the schools are doing.*

Our recommendations are founded on the belief that the community will vote for Jewish education once the centre steps back from its controlling role, and that the considerable benefits of subsidiarity in education far outweigh any technical objections to the substantial transfer of power and responsibility from the centre to the local unit and the user. The centre will continue to play a role, and a critical one, as the agent in the search for excellence in education once it is freed from the burden of administering a cumbersome bureaucratic system of control.

## **(C) PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE JEWISH EDUCATIONAL PROVISION WITHIN THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE**

### **INDEPENDENT MANAGEMENT FOR DAY SCHOOLS**

To all intents and purposes, the existing day schools are already self-administered by their individual boards of governors and head teachers. If the United Synagogue's two new schools in Southgate and Redbridge are going to be self-funding, there can no longer be any reason to prevent the existing three schools being turned into self-funding trusts. This may take time, and during the transitional period the community will have to find ways of funding the deficits. It is essential that the day school programme is maintained and developed, but parents who can do so must be willing to cover the costs of their children's Jewish education.

The responsibility of the community must be to continue to fund those who genuinely cannot afford to pay. Bursaries and fund-raising committees for each school must be established, but the time has long since passed when the declining membership of the United Synagogue can be expected to continue to fund, ad infinitum, the ever-growing costs of Jewish day school education. Having said that, a responsible United Synagogue community would find ways to make special grants for specific projects and for the continuing development of a programme of Jewish studies.

An expansion of these thoughts, together with a plan for the phasing out of subsidies to the day schools over a five-year period, is mapped out on page 156.

### **CONTINUED NEED FOR SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION**

There will be a requirement for supplementary education for some time to come. This situation differs considerably from overseas, where in the Orthodox groupings, parents predominantly send their children to Jewish day schools. It is the Reform and Conservative movements in these overseas countries which have the most supplementary systems in addition to their own day schools.

Some of the weaknesses of the part-time educational system have already been referred to above. The reasons for those weaknesses are complex. They include dissonance between attitudes and aspirations in the home and those of the 'school', inadequate hours of instruction, and the competing interests of the students - matters which cannot always be counteracted through intervention. Nevertheless, it was always assumed that central control would help, by ensuring a high level of professional input into the system. The public perception today is that the system remains mediocre despite all attempts to improve it.

The price that has been paid for a centralised system has been analysed in the Review. In educational terms, there is reason to believe that local control will bring benefits and not merely problems. A local community is likely to be more sensitive to its own needs and perhaps, more importantly, to consider the links between different aspects of its educational policy. Research into the supplementary system in Greater New York suggests that family education has to form an integral part of the cheder programme if cheder is to have any impact on the students. Such concerns are far more likely to be addressed in the context of an integrated local education policy.

The classic education debate within the United Synagogue over the past few years has been between 'devolution' and 'regionalisation'. The devolutionists constantly failed to prove their case because the impact of devolution, taken in isolation, would have been to penalise the younger growing communities, and the regionalisers constantly failed to prove their case because of the desire of local communities to hold on to the intimacy of local educational provision. Our recommendation in favour of devolution is made in the context of other financial changes which remove the single biggest argument against the proposal. We do, however, support regionalisation for eleven-plus education.

## **A COLLEGE FOR SECONDARY JEWISH EDUCATION**

After completing some form of primary Jewish education, a substantial minority of the United Synagogue members' children will be transferring to full-time Jewish day schools. But for those who do not, the supplementary system of teenage centres has provided a further level of education, both formal and informal. The time has now come to combine these into an independent college for secondary Jewish education, with its own principal and board of governors. The college would run independently and have various campuses in locations where they could best serve the United Synagogue community, but its funding would be a matter for the governors, drawing on donations, grants and parental contributions. Perhaps generous benefactors could be found to provide funds for such a college, thereby eliminating the drain on the United Synagogue's resources.

*An outline proposal for such a college is included below.*

## **INFORMAL EDUCATION AND YOUTH GROUPS**

Grave concern for Jewish youth, fuelled by unsavoury stories from the Edgware tube station, have kept demands for a central input at a high pitch. But searching questions must be asked about how the United Synagogue can make a serious contribution towards informal Jewish education.

The potential settings for informal education are diverse - from the youth movement and the teenage centre to the school and the family. No hard decisions as to priorities have, as yet, been taken, with the result that the central effort is perceived to be diffuse and unequal to the task in hand.

In common with adult education, the informal sphere has struggled to win its share of funding, set, as it is, in direct competition for funds with the giants of the cheder and the day school. Also in common with adult education, informal teaching has a different methodology from school or cheder, designed to reach different goals. Its association with the Board of Education is less satisfactory than might at first sight appear.

We recommend the removal of informal education from the direct control of the Board, and its adoption by the proposed new College for Secondary Jewish Education, which seems to us to be a more natural home for the successful development of a rational policy. The same principles have been applied to the future of Jewish Youth Study Groups, one the United Synagogue's oldest and most formative influences on the Jewish identity of generations of young Anglo-Jews.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT/LOCAL MANAGEMENT**

The growth of central control has tended to erode parents' responsibility for the education of their children. The 'experts' suggest that they know better, but these days, with the advent of people power, parents are again fighting for their right to choose what is best for their children. They seek places as school governors and voice their opinions more frequently. Slowly their rights are being enshrined in legislation and this must now be applied to all areas of Jewish education.

With the freeing of local communities to organise their own affairs, they must also be able to run their own supplementary education systems. If the new infant and preparatory curriculum is as good as it is held out to be, then local communities will vote with their money to continue its use in their classes. While some will choose to do this others may care to widen the curriculum or to restrict its scope and concentrate on other areas. This not only provides choice but must be good for the children's education. Local communities could ensure collaboration between the pre-school and nursery departments and infant and junior supplementary classes. They could develop an integrated local programme of Jewish education and combine this with an education programme for the entire family.

Overseas experience overwhelmingly concludes that the time to win over parents towards a greater involvement in their children's Jewish education is at the pre-school and early primary stage. This is when the parents of young children are at their most receptive and it will be up to local communities to develop suitable educational programmes to take full advantage. This is not a question of money but of the survival of the United Synagogue itself, in retaining young members and offering them something more than the drudgery of our existing services. The junior cheder is the life blood of a community and must be developed as such, according to local desires rather than in accordance with some central dogma.

The Chief Rabbi will provide overall religious safeguards, but surely the time has come for the local rabbi to play his part in developing the Jewishness of his community. With family education organised locally, this would be possible.

Those centres that are really quite small could by local arrangement join together where necessary and indeed, the newly formed Bureau would continue to nurture these developments. But each community must have the freedom to develop itself and to concentrate on attracting young and involved members. There must also be a sense of enjoyment, which will attract new members. A locally organised education programme is more likely to achieve this than one emanating from a remote head office, which is not even open for business during the times the classes are operating.

## **PARENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

Initially, there were no parental contributions on the principle that education would be provided free at the point of supply. They were then introduced as a small supplement in the part-time system. They have since grown substantially, but still do not fully meet the costs of running the day schools and classes. They are, however, becoming an increasing burden for many parents, in addition to their synagogue contributions. Many members, including parents, find themselves subsidising the education of other people's children.

Fortunately, the principal costs of the United Synagogue day schools are born by the State, but this does not cover Jewish studies. One would expect, therefore, that the State would allow a fair charge to be made for the costs of the Jewish studies department, but regrettably it does not. So we have to rely on a voluntary contribution, even though parents are clamouring for places for their children.

Many parents who can afford to do so, do not contribute and the recession has meant that more and more parents are simply unable to pay. The resultant shortfall has to be shouldered by the United Synagogue, and the snowball effect has placed too great a burden upon its funds. There is also no logical explanation as to why the rate set for termly parental contributions for the United Synagogue day schools is far less than that at comparable day schools run by other Jewish organisations. This shortfall will have to be phased out for those who can afford to meet their responsibilities in full.



## **THE FUTURE FOR WITHDRAWAL CLASSES**

According to the principles established in this Review, it is clear that the United Synagogue should cease to make a financial contribution towards withdrawal classes as soon as possible.

There is little logic in using communal taxation to support a partial service in a few schools for children who have opted out of full-time Jewish education. If parents are being asked to make a greater contribution within the Jewish day schools, one can hardly justify subsidies in the secular school system. There is a fear that a withdrawal of Orthodox control of the system would open the door to other influences. But Orthodoxy cannot buy its way to preservation.

What indications there are of the possible consequences of a removal of the United Synagogue subsidy suggest that the withdrawal classes would continue, with the parents accepting increased responsibility.

## **ADULT EDUCATION**

We are recommending that the remit for adult education is formally transferred from the educational to the rabbinical portfolio.

This has already happened in practice with the recent redundancies at the Board of Education which removed the adult education department, and the subsequent Chief Rabbinical initiative which established an adult education support structure under the aegis of the Chief Rabbinate.

What has occurred for financial reasons has a sound educational rationale behind it. Adult education is a different concept from school-age tuition, and the natural purveyor of adult education is the rabbi rather than the teacher. Despite some recent fledgling and successful initiatives in the field, adult education was always the poor relation at the Board of Education and it should fare better at the Chief Rabbinate.

Fundamental questions must be asked about the possibilities for central involvement in adult education. The fact that the issue is of central significance to the future of the United Synagogue does not automatically mean that it can best be organised from the centre. A support structure that encourages innovation and enhances the skills of adult educators in the field could make a genuine contribution. However, nothing can substitute for the will of the local community to provide for its own future in this respect.

## **THE NEED FOR A BUREAU FOR JEWISH EDUCATION**

The impact of the recommendations contained in this report will be to remove the bulk of the current work of the United Synagogue Board of Education from central control. The administration of the cheder network will be in the hands of local communities. A College for Secondary Jewish Education, incorporating the teenage centres and dealing with informal/youth education, with several branches, will be established as an independent charitable trust. Adult education, which will become more directly the responsibility of the rabbi within his community, will have a limited support structure under the aegis of the Chief Rabbinate. Community development will receive special attention directly from the central executive. Given these sweeping changes, the Board of Education in its current form is clearly obsolete.

We recommend the abolition of the United Synagogue Board of Education and the creation of a Bureau for Jewish Education, preferably in partnership with other Anglo-Jewish educational bodies, with a radically revised role within the community. We will argue that the new Bureau would not only serve a necessary function but that it would have the potential to be the agent of an educational renaissance in the UK.

The concepts underlying the new structure are identical to those which inform the rest of this report - that the role of the centre should be minimalist, that the centre is there to enable and not to control, and that direct power and responsibility must lie as close to the user as possible. With these thoughts in mind, and having looked at the concrete operation of two bureaux of education in America which function in a similar environment, we will be presenting one view of the goals, staffing and management structure for a new central educational body to replace the current Board of Education.

*An outline proposal for a new Bureau for Jewish Education is mapped out below.*

## **(D) SUMMARY**

Our vision for the future is one of vibrant independent Jewish day schools, both primary and secondary, managing their own affairs and finances, an independently established College for Secondary Jewish Education with numerous campuses, locally organised community education programmes, incorporating pre-school, kindergarten, primary supplementary classes and family education, and a lean, focused and highly professional Bureau for Jewish Education, ideally in partnership with other Jewish educational organisations.

In the following pages we give some of our detailed recommendations, blueprints and models for the new structures and for the application of transitional relief for the day schools.

## **SUGGESTED STRUCTURE FOR A BUREAU FOR JEWISH EDUCATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The abolition of the existing United Synagogue Board of Education has been recommended. In its place it has been proposed to establish a Bureau for Jewish Education in a different format and with a radically revised role within the community.

The concepts underlying the new structure are identical to those which inform the rest of the Review. These are that the role of the centre should be minimalist, that the centre is there to enable and not to control, and that direct power and responsibility must lie as close to the user as possible. With these thoughts in mind, the roles of two bureaux of education in North America have been examined. A paper indicating the findings of this research can be found below.

The American bureau of education is under some scrutiny at the present time. In some cases the American bureau is in the awkward position of having responsibility for maintaining standards without having the powers to exercise that responsibility. It has to be recognised that, in relinquishing a controlling in favour of a supporting role, a British bureau could not be held directly responsible for standards unless the educational establishments which it serviced required it to be so. This having been said, the American bureau is sufficiently similar in concept to what is being proposed by the Review, to be an enlightening model. Having examined the model, and having considered the need within the United Synagogue for central educational support, there follows a possible outline for an Anglo Jewish Bureau for Jewish Education.

### **AIMS**

The Bureau would not play a direct role in the running of educational institutions. Its role would be to provide professional back-up to the schools, chadarim and other

projects whose task is to intervene directly in the educational process. The Bureau should be involved only in the enrichment of the teaching and of the learning process via the development of curricula and so on. Substantially the role of the Bureau would be and ought to be defined by the expressed needs of the users. However, the following list should give some indication of the potential scope of the Bureau for Jewish Education's work.

### **1. To build a professional framework for Jewish education**

The Bureau would oversee the creation of an infrastructure for recruiting and training formal Jewish educators, using existing projects and institutions wherever possible. Taking advantage of its central position, the Bureau would assess the need for initiatives in pre- and in-service training and would develop practical responses. These might include, for example, establishing a teachers' registry/placement bureau with executive search capacity, and other moves designed to assist in teachers' career development. Accreditation of teachers within United Synagogue communities would become a local responsibility, but the Bureau would develop appropriate training courses and assessment measures for new teachers.

### **2. To provide an inspectorate and advisory service**

The Bureau would recruit, train and offer to the field, inspectors and advisors for kindergartens, day schools, and part-time centres. The service would provide guidance for educators and would act as an external monitor for communities and institutions at the request of their governing bodies or management committees.

### **3. To encourage and co-ordinate curricular initiatives**

The Bureau would gather and catalogue existing Jewish studies curricula as a primary resource for educators. Curricular initiatives would be encouraged where these would improve educational provision across a range of schools. A register of school-based experts would be developed to encourage sharing of knowledge and expertise.

### **4. To nurture qualitative improvement in educational provision**

The Bureau would commission qualitative reports in areas relevant to the direct providers of services, evaluating successful models and bringing fresh ideas to the field. The Bureau could also function as the community's watchdog, by publishing comparative figures and helping to maintain standards without seeking to control.

### **5. To serve as an instrument for examination and assessment**

The Bureau would operate a service for schools and particularly for communities in the preparation and design of evaluation systems for teachers, pupils and curricula. These would include standard examinations as well as a consultancy for devising and carrying out assessment at a local level.

### **6. To develop a research capability**

The Bureau would draw up a comprehensive research agenda for Anglo-Jewish education, creating the theoretical and practical knowledge base needed to monitor results and make informed decisions, conducting ongoing studies and publishing findings. The Bureau would also build up its database of existing published research and research projects, in order to co-ordinate existing activity to the benefit of the whole community. The Bureau would also act as an information bank for Anglo-Jewish education.

### **7. To represent Anglo-Jewish education**

The Bureau would work with secular authorities, including governmental bodies, in the interests of Jewish educational development, and would assist other organisations in their separate dealings at this level. It would also maintain links with Jewish educational bodies abroad, particularly in Israel, and would have contacts with national and international funding bodies.

These are some of the areas in which a central body would be essential to the health of a Jewish educational enterprise, the responsibility for which falls largely on local communities and schools.

The central aim has to be to provide the service that is required by the user and so it is not altogether possible to determine in advance what the role of the Bureau should be. The above initial list has been provided as an illustration of the type of activities that are needed to enrich Jewish educational provision which could not reasonably be provided at a local level.

Where the above suggestions for involvement are already being undertaken by an existing organisation, it is not the intention to duplicate, but rather to co-ordinate to get the best out of the system. The structure proposed for the Bureau for Jewish Education would be appropriate for the needs of several bodies outside the United Synagogue, and the way is open for the Bureau to develop into a cross-community entity, with additional partners to the enterprise welcome, either as clients who would 'buy into' the services on offer and/or as fully fledged governing partners.

It would not be appropriate for the new bureau to take on all the functions of the old board. Some areas of responsibility should be removed. This restructuring is suggested, not because the areas in question are unimportant, but because it is felt that placing so many disparate concerns within the remit of just one body whose primary concern was always formal education produced a raw deal for other areas.

The professional underpinnings of formal education and those of, for example, adult education are quite different - and so are the professionals for, in the field of adult education, it is primarily the rabbi and not teachers who are active in the field. By focusing the attention of the Bureau on the formal, 3-18 age range it is hoped that a truly excellent service can be provided. Provision has been made elsewhere in the structure for the crucial concern of adult education.

With regard to informal education and youth, any remaining centralised services should come under the roof of the proposed new College for Secondary Jewish education (see page 157). Despite the tremendous importance of informal education and the recognised formative influence of the youth group, it is felt that there is little to be gained by central involvement unless this is genuinely able to add to what can be provided at a local level.

It is recognised that Jewish Youth Study Groups is a vibrant organisation and a significant contributor to the development of Jewish identity amongst United Synagogue youth. It clearly requires a continued central organisational base. It is therefore suggested that J.Y.S.G. should become part of the College for Secondary Jewish Education, which, in turn, would come under the umbrella of the Bureau as a transitional arrangement leading to full independence.

As needs arose in the communities for central involvement in the field of informal education, say in training or in programme development, these would be channelled through the College for Secondary Jewish Education, which, by virtue of its own educational approach, would be best suited to develop expertise in this area.

## **PROBLEMS AND DILEMMAS**

The type of bureau described above, set in the context of a restructured educational network in which the onus for hands-on Jewish education is placed firmly at the local rather than central level, has its advantages and its disadvantages. It would be misleading to pretend that the proposed unit would be ideal from every point of view. It is rather a question of selecting educational priorities. The issue of power and responsibility has already been mentioned as one problem area. The community cannot enjoy at the same time the benefits of local control and of central setting of standards.

Another dilemma lies in the relationship between formal and informal education. Recent research (see the survey on supplementary education commissioned by the Board of Education of Greater New York) supports the notion that ever closing ties between formal education and more 'affective' forms, such as family education, retreats and so on, is essential to the success of the cheder and school systems. One impact of the current Review would be to separate informal, formal and adult education into different structures at the centre. However, at the level of the user - particularly within the local community - the result of the recommendations would be to break down the barriers and to encourage community-wide education strategies to flourish in an atmosphere of flexibility and local control. This, it is hoped, will achieve the right balance between local creativity in the provision of programmes and expertise and support at the centre.

## **DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The strategy for the development of the Bureau is flexible. It may be considered sensible to use the infrastructure of the existing Board of Education. Alternatively, and depending on the willingness of other communal organisations to engage in constructive dialogue at an early stage, it may be considered appropriate to reconstitute other organisations. The Institute for Jewish Education, for example, would be ideally suited, under certain conditions, to take on responsibilities that would satisfy the immediate needs of United Synagogue communities. It is certainly unlikely that the United Synagogue could continue to support both a Bureau for Jewish Education and the Institute when a high degree of overlap would be inevitable.

What is being proposed stands independently as being in the best interests of the United Synagogue alone. It is hoped that other communal organisations with a direct interest in education would share the same needs and the same concerns and would want to join together in a rational effort to meet them. However, the case for a Bureau for Jewish Education does not rest on the willingness of others to become partners.

## **STAFFING REQUIREMENT**

If the illustrations above were to become the objectives of the Bureau for Jewish Education, a full-time professional team of approximately five senior professionals would be appointed and they in turn would develop teams to cover the areas in question. The senior professionals would be:

1. An executive director to co-ordinate and to fulfil the representative and fund-raising briefs
2. A director/co-ordinator of training and the inspectorate
3. A director/co-ordinator for curriculum projects and resources
4. An examinations/assessment co-ordinator
5. An educational research officer

The support network of part-time appointees would vary in size depending on the scope of the work undertaken in each area.

## **MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

1. The chairman of the Bureau for Jewish Education would be appointed by the founders of the organisation. If the Bureau is opened by the United Synagogue alone, the president of the United Synagogue would make the appointment for a three-year

term. No long-term assumptions are made, because the Bureau would seek the participation of other appropriate Jewish educational bodies. If this was obtained, alternative management and representational structures would clearly have to be developed.

2. Whilst the chairman of the Bureau would have the power to appoint an executive, it is assumed that the management structure would take into account appropriate representation for participating partner organisations.

3. The chairman of the Bureau would co-opt individuals to join the executive, drawn from the lay and professional leadership of the organisations the Bureau is designed to serve, and such other individuals who are felt to have a singular contribution to make to its work.

The weakness in the structure of the present United Synagogue Board of Education has been referred to in the introductory article. Accordingly, the main principle informing the suggested simple structure for the new Bureau is that of 'selection' as opposed to 'election'. Whereas it is important to have some representative input from those bodies whom the Bureau is meant to serve, it is even more important to create a structure that allows the Bureau to take advantage of the best available talent. A chairman must be given the leeway to build his own team, to include, say, laymen with secular educational experience, who might not be members of the Council of the United Synagogue but who could bring invaluable expertise to bear on the development of the policy of the Bureau.

## **CONCLUSION**

What is being proposed is a minimalist, supportive and flexible arrangement, dedicated solely to the search for improvement and excellence in education, on behalf of the members and the communities of the United Synagogue. In terms of the overall plan to energise the educational system from the ground floor upwards, the Bureau for Jewish Education, as it has been defined above, would become the critical agent of renaissance without seeking to dominate or control the Jewish educational landscape in the UK.

## **THE IMPACT OF THE REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS ON JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS, INCLUDING A MODEL FOR TRANSITIONAL RELIEF**

### **INTRODUCTION**

There are three recommendations in this report which directly affect the Jewish day school movement in the UK. They are:

1. To establish responsibility for education at the local community level and in the hands of the users.
2. To encourage all day schools currently under the aegis of the United Synagogue to become independent charitable trusts with the possibility of achieving grant-maintained status.
3. To abolish centralised subsidies to Jewish day schools within a limited transitional period.

The aim of this paper is to examine, in brief, the likely impact of these recommendations from a religious, educational, administrative, financial and constitutional perspective.

## **RELIGIOUS CHANGES**

The above recommendations would have no direct effect on the religious character of the schools, provided that certain technical statutory provisions are made to cover the new situation.

Currently, as the denominational body, the United Synagogue exercises some authority over the religious character of the school, for example, through its right to appoint governors. Many of the independent Jewish schools similarly protect the Orthodox character of their schools by allocating to the Chief Rabbi the ultimate authority over religious matters. This would become the case with regard to erstwhile United Synagogue day schools.

The Orthodox character of the schools would be safeguarded by continuing to have the relevant religious clauses in the Articles of Association of the school as well as in their admissions policies.

Admissions policy at the United Synagogue's schools includes an overriding clause as to religious affiliation. Determination of personal status is vested in the 'Board of Religious Education which is under the jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbi'. Under the new situation, the intermediary would be removed and the Chief Rabbi's Office would be directly responsible for such issues. In practice this would entail no change from the current position.

It is interesting to note that current admissions policies make no preferential provision for the children of United Synagogue members. If it is decided that the costs of the day schools should continue to fall on the membership of the United Synagogue, there is little justification for this situation to continue.

## **EDUCATIONAL CHANGES**

As voluntary aided schools, the United Synagogue's day schools are governed by the regulations and standards of the State and the local education authority and would continue to be so under the new situation. Schools might decide to 'opt out' and apply for grant-maintained status, in which case new conditions would prevail. However, this would not directly affect the position of Hebrew/Jewish studies within the school.

Within the regulations governing voluntary aided schools, the head teacher has very substantial influence and authority (as delegated by the governing body) over educational provision at the school. There is no reason to assume that this situation would not be maintained in the new circumstances.

With the withdrawal of central subsidies from the United Synagogue to each school it will be necessary for the school authorities to raise the additional sums needed to supplement the allocated local education authority budget for the provision of Jewish education. This might be achieved either by raising the level of voluntary contribution requested from the parents and/or by fund-raising and sponsorship.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES**

The single direct and immediate change would be the transfer of the Jewish studies staff from the administrative supervision of the United Synagogue's Board of Education to that of the school itself. This might initially present minor technical difficulties, with regard to pay-rolling and other matters, which would be offset in the long run by the positive benefits of rationalisation.

## CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Such statutory or constitutional changes as would be needed to effect the new position would be practical and peripheral and would not alter the basic character of the school. Since the schools would need to maintain a relationship with a denominational body, there is no direct reason to remove the United Synagogue in some form from this role. Various formalities might need to be discussed - whether the relationship was to be with the United Synagogue or with the Chief Rabbinate, for example. The more significant issue of the ownership of the properties in which the schools are housed, which is currently vested in United Synagogue Trusts Ltd, may also be raised. This, however, is not fundamental to the changes, provided that the United Synagogue is left, after the transitional period, with no direct **financial responsibility** for the day schools.

## FINANCIAL CHANGES

The above three proposals will have a direct impact on the finances of the day schools. In particular, the decision to phase out United Synagogue subsidies and the proposal to establish each school as an independent charitable trust must be seen in tandem. The reliance of the schools on a central fund would be reduced and then eliminated, whilst the capacity of the schools to act as independent charitable concerns would be enhanced.

An illustrative model has been prepared (page 156) to demonstrate one possible outcome of the proposal to phase out the central United Synagogue subsidy to the day schools. The model assumes a reasonable indexing, a continuation of the current pattern of parental payment of the voluntary contribution, and a small increase in localised fund-raising. According to this model, parental contributions would have to double over the next five years to meet the additional costs, but even then they would be no more than those charged by comparable day schools run by other Jewish organisations.

There are number of alternative scenarios. The schools could use their independent charitable status to further their fund-raising profile, drawing on the sympathies of graduates of the school and other potential supporters who would not contribute to the United Synagogue, but who might be encouraged to support an independent educational project. Relationships might be forged between particular schools and local United Synagogue communities. The Anglo-Jewish environment has militated against what is common practice in the USA, that is to link day schools with communities. However, within the broader context of the proposed changes local communities will possess more resources, much greater freedom and flexibility in their financial management, and increased potential to boost their finances by attracting new members to the community. In this new situation, it may be in the interests of a local community to forge relationships with the day schools. For example, bursary funds might be established for the children of parents who could not afford the full contribution, and local community resources might be tapped on behalf of the children of community members.

It should be noted that the current situation, in which the members of the United Synagogue pay, through taxation, towards the costs of the day schools, brings no direct benefit to pupils whose parents are members. There are understandable practical reasons for the absence of differential rates for United Synagogue members in respect of the voluntary levy, but this is extremely hard to justify in principle.

Note: Some of the more detailed constitutional issues are addressed in a paper by Mr Nathan Rubin commissioned by the Review. This may be made available on request at the discretion of the Review.



## JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS: PHASING OUT OF SUBSIDY

£ 000's	ACTUAL BUDGET			PROJECTION			
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>							
Ilford	194	176	179	188	197	207	218
Sinai	272	277	289	303	319	335	351
JFS	414	423	437	459	482	526	531
	880	876	905	950	998	1,048	1,100
<b>INCOME</b>							
Parental Contribution:							
Ilford	91	101	108	117	136	154	172
Sinai	173	193	208	219	245	269	293
JFS	194	230	248	259	304	347	386
	458	525	563	595	684	770	851
<b>GRANTS/FUNDRAISING</b>							
Ilford			11	26	32	38	46
Sinai	4		14	34	40	49	58
JFS	51		35	84	101	121	145
	55	0	60	144	173	207	249
<b>PHASING OUT COST TO U.S.</b>							
Ilford	103	75	60	45	30	15	0
Sinai	95	84	67	50	34	17	0
JFS	169	193	154	116	77	39	0
<b>TOTAL NET COST</b>	367	351	281	211	140	70	0

<b>PARENTAL CONTRIBUTION (% CHANGE)</b>							
Ilford			7	8	16	14	12
Sinai			8	6	12	10	9
JFS			8	5	17	14	11

# **A PLAN FOR A COLLEGE OF SECONDARY JEWISH EDUCATION**

## **THE NEED**

It is evident that synagogues are unable, on the whole, to make adequate provision for part-time secondary Jewish education at a local level. In most communities there is not the critical mass of students to make educational provision viable beyond the age of thirteen due to the impact of the Jewish day schools on the one hand and of disinterest and assimilation on the other. Moreover, the rational stage at which to switch from 'cheder' to 'college' is at the age of eleven. Provision is therefore proposed for a college of secondary Jewish education to recognise this fact.

Some communities will wish to maintain their direct involvement in the educational process of the older students, either throughout the secondary years or merely up to the age of thirteen. It is proposed to establish eleven-plus and thirteen-plus entry to the college, to allow for this element of choice on the part of local communities, although enrolment at age eleven would be educationally preferable.

## **CLIENT BASE**

The college would be for pupils aged eleven to eighteen, and primarily for students not attending full-time Jewish secondary schools. The college would be a rationalisation of the existing six teenage centres, the Hendon Torah Centre and the sixth form centre which meets at Jews' College, into a single educational and administrative unit functioning on a range of different campuses. Currently 500 pupils are enrolled at these centres and a further 400 eleven-plus pupils attend local United Synagogue chadarim which continue to offer classes through to bar or bat mitzvah. Accordingly, the potential roll for the new college would range from 900 to 1,000 pupils.

## **ENDOWMENT**

The college would be established as a registered independent self-governing educational trust. At the outset, it will be necessary to turn to the community to endow a trust fund to include provision for bursaries and future development. We believe that the community has the will and the capacity to fund this important project.

## **CHARACTER OF THE COLLEGE**

The character of the college would be protected by the overriding jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbi.

## **ADMISSIONS POLICY**

All pupils aged eleven plus, recognised as Jewish by the Chief Rabbi, would be eligible for enrolment.

## **GOVERNING BODY**

It is recommended that no more than 10 governors be appointed, including a chairman and a vice-chairman. The founders of the college should appoint the first set of governors and establish articles for regulating their future conduct and reappointment. A governor should be responsible for overseeing the finances of the college and future fund-raising activities. As far as possible, the governors should be representative of the various geographical areas served by the college. A number of places should be reserved for parents. Thought should be given to rabbinical representation on the governing body.

## **LOCATION**

Campuses of the college would be established to serve the whole of the Greater London area. Initially, these might be situated at those premises currently used by the teenage, Torah and sixth form centres, but with the establishment of the new Jewish day schools, opportunities may arise for transfer to more suitable locations.

## **COLLEGE HOURS**

All campuses would be open on Sunday mornings for at least three hours. Additional classes would be held on other evenings as demand required.

## **STAFFING**

The governors would appoint a Principal and Clerk. The appointment of a principal would ideally suit applicants involved in full-time Jewish education with substantial educational experience. The principal would appoint heads for each campus, subject to ratification by the governors. The principal and heads of each campus would appoint staff. The role of clerk would be combined with that of bursar and secretary and would be based at the offices of the Bureau for Jewish Education, thereby minimising overheads.

## **CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUS**

The principal aim of the college, as the successor to the present system, is to create centres of excellence, by professionalising and co-ordinating part-time secondary Jewish education. Particular emphasis would be placed on improving standards between the ages of eleven and thirteen, whilst developing and expanding the existing structure for post bar and bat mitzvah pupils. The role of the principal, in conjunction with heads and staff, would be to develop a suitable curriculum and syllabus utilising all the resources at their disposal, including those of the new Bureau. Certain courses would be common throughout the college, but each campus would be encouraged to provide for its own divergent local tastes and requirements. Courses would be both textually and non-textually based, and with an intensive learning track, similar to courses presently provided at the Torah centre. Courses would be provided throughout the college for senior, bar and bat mitzvah, GCSE and A Level examinations. Equally, provision would be made for a varied programme of non-examination courses, thereby ensuring a comprehensive and appealing range of activities.

## **STAFF DEVELOPMENT, TRAINING, INSPECTORATE AND EXAMINATIONS**

These services could be provided by the Bureau for Jewish Education on the same basis as to the communities of the United Synagogue, should the governing body so wish.

## **INFORMAL AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES**

The natural environment of the current teenage centres is that of informal education. Their success in recent years has been due to the teaching capabilities and particular methods of young, idealistic youth group leaders. It is intended to retain and develop this approach to part-time secondary Jewish education, while making allowance for those students who wish to pursue more formal, examination-orientated courses.

The college would encourage sporting and cultural activities across the various campuses on a competitive basis. Additionally, the college would organise Jewish

drama and music festivals and sports days. The aim would be to bring a social dimension to the college and a feeling of togetherness. Social and cultural links with full-time Jewish day schools could be established.

The educational and administrative structure of the college would be utilised to service the United Synagogue's own youth movement - Jewish Youth Study Groups - a natural synergetic relationship. It is also anticipated that the educational expertise in the field of informal Jewish education that the college would need to develop for its own purposes could, ultimately, be called upon by communities as *they* develop their own youth and informal programmes.

## **FUND-RAISING**

The founders would establish a charitable trust to be known as the Friends of the College for Secondary Jewish Education Charitable Trust. This would have responsibility for ongoing fund-raising. The trust would be registered with the Charity Commission and the Inland Revenue.

Parents associations should be formed for each campus to provide a link between the parents and the college and to raise funds for local extras.

## **FINANCE**

It is envisaged that the college would pay rent for each campus. The full revenue costs (salaries, rent, materials and resources) would be shared by the parents, subject to any special grants obtainable. The governors would establish an annual budget in March of each year and set the termly fees for the ensuing academic year. Assuming that the college had 1,000 pupils, and based on extrapolations from current figures submitted to us, with allowance for differences contained in the above proposal, it is estimated that the annual revenue costs would amount to £180,000, that is £180 per pupil per annum - or less than £4 per week. This equates favourably with the current costs, which range from £200 per pupil per annum at the teenage centres to £300 plus per pupil per annum at the Torah centre. The existing direct subsidy from the United Synagogue of at least £50,000 per annum would cease or be phased out. Full fees would be paid by those parents who could afford to do so, with the endowment fund and local communities providing full and part bursaries for those in genuine need. Many communities would benefit financially from not having to run classes for the eleven-plus age group, and the savings could be partially used for this purpose.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

The governors would be responsible for presenting an annual written report to the parents and the community. This would include a report from the principal on the aims and achievements of the college, details of future plans and the state of the college's finances and trust funds.

## **SUMMARY**

Many of the elements for the creation of a College of Secondary Jewish education are already in place. What the above proposal adds is focus and structure. This, it is hoped, will give informal education the framework it requires to command its rightful proportion of the community's concern and commitment.



# RABBINATE TASK FORCE REPORT

## RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE NEW UNITED SYNAGOGUE STRUCTURE

### INTRODUCTION

A strong, confident and inspiring rabbinate is the key to the future success of the United Synagogue. The proposals in the report for the development of powers and responsibility, from the centre to local synagogues, is not only vital for the United Synagogue's financial viability but for its revitalisation also. Indeed, the two go hand in hand. Strong and effective religious leadership will be essential to regain, retain and motivate the membership, on which the future financial viability of the United Synagogue depends. The new relationship between the centre and the communities, which the report proposes, requires a fresh look both at the relationship between the rabbi and his local community and the role of the Chief Rabbinate.

Many of the issues covered in this paper are important in their own right and the time is, in any event, ripe for their reconsideration. The United Synagogue Review provides both an opportunity and a context for that reconsideration. The purpose of the proposals set out here is to establish the proper arrangements within the context of greater local autonomy which will:

- improve relationships between rabbis and their communities
- stimulate personal growth, career development, enhanced performance and greater accountability within the rabbinate
- clarify and strengthen the relationship between the Chief Rabbi and the rabbinate
- promote the professionalism of the rabbinate
- clarify and strengthen the role of the Chief Rabbi within the UK religious structure
- clarify the role of the Beth Din within a reorganised structure

The proposals set out in this report have emerged from discussion with a number of rabbinical and lay leaders, including the Chief Rabbi. On a surprisingly large number of issues, there is general agreement on the way forward. On others, inevitably, there are differences of view. The report is divided into two sections. The first deals with the relationship between a rabbi and his local community, where swift action, on the proposals made, is needed. The second section deals with the future organisation of the office of the Chief Rabbi, and will require further reflection, involving as it does consultation with communities outside London.

### 1. THE RABBI AND HIS COMMUNITY

Under current arrangements a rabbi is chosen by a local community and is responsible to the lay leadership of that community. However, his overall contractual responsibility is to the United Synagogue centrally, and his main spiritual advice and guidance comes from the Chief Rabbi (*de jure*) and often from the Beth Din (*de facto*). The current arrangements arise from the report '*Beginning Anew*' published in 1984, and there is evidence recently of increasing strain in these relationships. For example, salaries have fallen in real terms, in-service training has been curtailed and there are increasing contractual disputes.

## 1.1 THE CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIP

The logic of the Review proposals for greater development of power and responsibility to the local community is that in future the local community and not the United Synagogue should employ the rabbi. Local discretion in determining the nature of the rabbi's contract should be maximised, but some elements will need to be standard. To take each in turn:

- a) **Religious authority of the Chief Rabbi** - At present no rabbi can officiate in a United Synagogue without the authority of the Chief Rabbi. This principal needs to remain as the essential criterion for determining local synagogue membership of the United Synagogue. It would be a condition of accepting the community agreement between the local synagogue and the centre. Within this framework however, it is important to encourage more independence and autonomy among the local rabbinate. They must see themselves, and be seen by their communities, as local religious leaders with the authority to explore diversity and innovation to meet their own community's needs within whatever framework is set by the Chief Rabbi. It is important that the contract emphasises the local religious autonomy of the rabbi within the United Synagogue halakhic framework and that rabbis are given the scope to exercise it within their communities. Religious differences should, in the main, be sorted out between the rabbi and his community, and recourse to the Chief Rabbi made only where a local solution is not possible.
- b) **Duties** - This topic will be considered more fully in the next section, but here a large amount of discretion should be given to the local community to determine, in consultation with the rabbi being appointed, which of the many elements of a rabbi's responsibilities it wishes to emphasise in the contract. One area of duty which should be standard is that the local community must allow its rabbi to play a suitable role in the wider Jewish community. There is a danger with local contracts that a community will seek to prevent its rabbi operating outside its own area. This must be resisted. Where rabbis have strengths, be it in education, welfare or fund-raising, the community as a whole must have the opportunity of benefiting from them. Such involvement is important for the rabbi and brings honour and prestige to the local community and must be allowed for, within reason, in the contract.
- c) **Remuneration Package** - Three possibilities have been considered.

Centrally determined pay-scales through negotiation between representatives of the rabbanim and the central authority which are fixed annually. The local community can determine within certain limits where it places its rabbi on this scale, but has no other (official) discretion. This more or less represents the current situation. However, it limits unnecessarily local initiative and is not appropriate to the new circumstances of greater local autonomy set out in the report.

No national pay-scales. Each community determines what it wishes to pay when the rabbi is appointed and each local contract will set out its own approach to pay review. This is the logical outcome of local autonomy. It will clearly lead to greater diversity and a wider range of pay. The use of greater market forces in a situation where in the short to medium term there is a relative shortage of the highest calibre rabbis could lead to a significant up-rating of pay for these rabbis. In the longer term it might lead to a situation similar to that in the Football League, where the best players are concentrated in a small number of teams. In due course it may be the appropriate way forward but may be too sharp a change at this stage.

A middle route between the above two is a central negotiation which would set guidelines and particularly minimum levels. However, these would provide only a marker for local negotiations, and communities would be free to make their own arrangements. It is this third option which provides the most sensible balance between central and local needs and **which is recommended**.

- d) **Pension arrangements** - At present rabbis have the option of joining the United Synagogue pension scheme. It is suggested that even with local contracts this option should remain and the pension rights more generally be enshrined as a mandatory element of the contract. This should include the right to retire at 60. At present rabbis, in order to achieve their pensions, have to stay on to 65 whether they or their communities wish them to or not. A more generous and flexible pension policy would facilitate greater mobility throughout the United Synagogue as the senior posts became available more frequently.
- e) **Conditions of service** - A balance again needs to be struck between local autonomy and protecting rabbis' rights on such matters as hours of work and annual holidays. While it must be recognised that rabbis cannot work 'office hours', the wording of the present contract is badly formulated, stating, rather coldly, *'the seniority of your position precludes any restriction as to hours of work or normal working hours applying to your employment'*. There are many examples of professional contracts which also take account of the need for the person to make himself available whenever circumstances require, but which also enshrine certain safeguards against exploitation.

The present contract offered to rabbis is demeaning in its tone and misplaced. It needs to be replaced by a more user friendly tone and a more professional approach to the contract by the synagogue. Such a contract should, for example, include provision for a day a week free and annual holidays, while allowing for the rabbi to be available whenever required in exceptional circumstances. An example of what such a contract might look like is shown below.

- f) **Length of contract** - This is a difficult subject on which to achieve consensus, not least because the present arrangements, introduced in 1984, are seen to be not working effectively. These arrangements apply to rabbis entering the United Synagogue since 1984, and provide for a 5-year review. If the local community wishes to retain the services of the rabbi, then the contract is continued for a further 10 years before a further review takes place. If, at the end of the 5-year review, the contract is not renewed, there is no compensation or further employment guarantee. If, at the end of the further 10-year review (i.e. 15 years after initial employment), the contract is not renewed by the local synagogue, alternative employment within the United Synagogue is guaranteed.

The present arrangements are seen as unsatisfactory by both rabbis and local communities in a number of respects. On the one hand, it is argued that the compulsory 5-year review pushes some communities to attempt to end the contract at that time because they know that if they do not they cannot change the situation for a further 10 years. On the other hand, this inflexibility means that when dissatisfaction arises it can only be dealt with as a full-blown crisis with motions of no confidence. The present arrangements are, simultaneously, too flexible and inflexible.

How might the situation be improved? The task is to establish a set of arrangements which will:

- provide some measure of job security for the rabbinate
- protect them against the capricious behaviour of lay leaders
- allow for regular review in a seemly and dignified process
- enable change to take place where relationships break down irrevocably

The way forward is to establish the principle of a rolling contract for rabbis. When appointed to a new post, a rabbi would receive a 4-year contract. At the end of the second year the contract will be reviewed. If the community is unhappy with its

rabbi and wishes to terminate the contract, it must give 2 years notice to enable the contract to run out. If it is happy to renew the contract, it will move the rabbi onto a 3-year rolling contract, which will be renewed annually. Each year in which the contract is reviewed gives the rabbi a guarantee of 3 further years. If in any year the contract is not rolled forward, the rabbi is still guaranteed 2 further years before the contract runs out. This period can be dealt with in a number of ways. In positive vein, the community and its rabbi can seek to repair their relationship to enable a decision, to roll the contract forward again, to be made before the 2 years are up. Alternatively, if it is felt that a change is necessary, the rabbi has 2 years to seek another post. Finally, if it is thought that an immediate break is necessary, the rabbi is entitled to financial compensation in lieu of notice.

The above approach provides a fair balance between the need for some security on the part of rabbis and a community's need for flexibility and is **recommended**. However, local discretion should be allowed and communities must be free to negotiate, and agree with the rabbi they wish to appoint the length and nature of the contract.

One of the difficulties in establishing a new contractual relationship is the current perception that non-renewal of contract is a major disaster. The culture must be changed so that regular mobility should be seen as the norm rather than the exception.

- g) **Contractual Decisions** - A sensitive issue is the group responsible for making decisions on the appointment and renewal of contract. In a context of greater local autonomy a balance needs to be struck between empowering the local community and protecting the dignity of the rabbi. Appointments are currently made in formal terms by a meeting of members, although such a meeting will usually only occur when the selection committee and board of management have agreed on a suitable candidate. However, the decision not to roll forward a contract is likely to be made in more controversial circumstances and is best decided by the board of management.

In a situation of local autonomy the right of a community not to renew its rabbi's contract must be protected. The key issues are the process by which this occurs and, perhaps more importantly, the establishment of a system of conciliation involving the Chief Rabbinate to enable differences to be resolved before they develop into a contractual renewal question. This conciliation process must be private and informal. However, where conciliation fails and a contractual dispute ensues, it is **recommended** that either side should have the right to arbitration by a panel consisting of the Chief Rabbi, a dayan, and the president of the United Synagogue. While it would be mandatory on each side to go to arbitration, if the other requested it, the decision of the panel would be non-binding.

## 1.2 DUTIES AND PERSONAL QUALITIES

The duties expected of a rabbi and the skills he is expected to bring to the post are formidable and wide-ranging. For example, in the last year or two the following are some of the requirements which have been listed by communities seeking rabbis:-

Leading services, including alternative services, attending services, funerals, shivahs and stone-settings; dealing with religious questions; dealing with welfare needs of the elderly sick and the poor; seeking and visiting new members; involvement with children's and adult's education, including the giving of shiurim; youth work; reinforcing the community's involvement with Israel; requirements for rabbi's wife to teach the Bat Chayil class, give a weekday and evening shiur for women and entertain at home.



The personal qualities which communities seek in a rabbi are even more wide-ranging, and include: charismatic spiritual leader; maturity; experience in other synagogal posts; good organiser; good advisor and counsellor; good communication skills; experience of the world; easy to get on with; approachable; enthusiastic; energetic; adaptable; confident; diplomatic; innovative; loyal, professional and self-motivated.

If this is the range of duties and personal qualities which communities genuinely seek when appointing rabbis, it is not surprising that so many posts remain unfilled for such a long time. A community that wishes its rabbi to carry out all these duties successfully and exhibit all these personal qualities is likely to be disillusioned and disappointed, not because the rabbi has failed, but because it has unreal expectations.

The first thing a community must do when it seeks to appoint a rabbi is to clarify its own purpose and mission. What is it there for? What does it want to achieve? What services do its members expect? What are its priorities? When did any community last ask itself these questions of fundamental purpose and mission? When it has answered them it will be in a better position to evaluate what professional help it requires to achieve them. The rabbi will be the senior professional within the community, but, depending on its size, there will be others. Such a process, properly carried out, will enable a community not only to clarify its goals but to be more specific on what contribution it expects from the rabbi, and therefore what sort of rabbi it needs. In setting its priorities a community must distinguish between what the rabbi is expected to do, and what needs to be done, which may be much wider. It is important to clarify exactly which areas of activity are the rabbi's personal responsibility.

An associated question is the role of the rabbi's wife. This is a sensitive issue because the attitudes of the wives of rabbis and of their communities vary greatly. They range from a minimalist role, 'the rabbi's wife is entitled to her own career and must judge for herself what role, if any, she wishes to play in the community' to the more comprehensive role, 'the rabbi and his wife are a team and must work together and she must expect to take on a leadership role, particularly with the women of the community'.

While the wife of any professional seeks to help her husband's career (and vice versa), the extent to which this is done is entirely voluntary and must depend on her own family circumstances and career needs. A rabbi's wife should not be expected to make a contribution as part of the formal contract. **If such a contribution is expected, it must be separately contracted with additional remuneration.**

### 1.3 MAXIMISING POTENTIAL

This is perhaps the most important section of this report because it addresses the central question of how the individual rabbi can grow, develop his career, enhance his performance and promote his professionalism to enable him both to obtain greater job satisfaction and better serve his community. The key is to consider the United Synagogue rabbinate as a profession, and to identify its professional characteristics and needs and mechanisms by which these operate. Professional relationships are associated with, but separate from, employment relationships.

The concept established here is of the United Synagogue rabbinate as a profession with the Chief Rabbi as its head. The Chief Rabbi's role as head of the professional community of rabbis would include both a judicial role as now (although this would be less emphasised to allow local rabbis greater halakhic autonomy, as explained earlier), and also a professional development role. There are appropriate models in other professions, such as the operation of the General Medical Council, The Law Society and the Bar Council, on which to base such a role and relationship.

The Chief Rabbi would be the chief of the rabbis, both in authorising appointments and exercising professional leadership. The professional community of the rabbinate would coalesce around his office, which would have to set up appropriate structures to meet its

needs. The Rabbinical Council would remain if the rabbis so wished as a representative body of the rabbinate in employment matters. Its precise role here would depend on the central or local nature of employment negotiations. Clearly, the Chief Rabbi might need to be involved in employment matters where major problems arise, but the regular negotiations and relationships and representation of colleagues in discussions with their local synagogues would be undertaken by the Rabbinical Council. The Chief Rabbinat would be involved in conciliation and arbitration on contractual disputes.

### 1.3.1 Rabbinical Training

It is generally accepted that it requires more than the knowledge provided by *semikhah* to perform successfully the duties of a United Synagogue rabbi. What else is needed requires further discussion but it will include most of the following skills:

- *nussach*
- *layening*
- sermon-giving
- weddings
- funerals
- *shivahs* and stone-settings
- welfare work with the sick and needy
- counselling skills
- adult education skills.

Many of these skills will require knowledge of communal structures and agencies.

Jews' College has begun to incorporate these skills in its training of ministers and this needs to be developed to become a formal element of the training of rabbis and a condition of their authorisation from the Chief Rabbi. The exact form of the certification needs to be considered by the Chief Rabbi and other interested parties. It could be part of the *semikhah* programme and a condition for the award of *semikhah*, or it could be a separate Community Rabbi Certificate.

Rabbis from outside the United Synagogue would have to demonstrate that they had obtained the knowledge and skills covered by the certificate through their previous experience. If they were unable to do so they would be required to complete the course satisfactorily prior to appointment or on a part-time basis within the first 3 years of appointment. Failure to do so would result in the withdrawal of the Chief Rabbi's authorisation, and their employment would be on probationary terms until the certificate was awarded.

The certificate could be adapted for the circumstances of any rabbi coming into the United Synagogue. The content set out earlier could be organised as 4 courses as follows:

- a) synagogue services - *davening*, *layening* etc.
- b) education and communication - sermons, *shiurim*, adult education, etc.
- c) other religious activities - welfare and counselling
- d) Anglo-Jewish communal structures

A new appointee coming with only a yeshivah background might be required to take all 4 components, although he might be able to show sufficient competence in synagogue services to be exempt from the first course. A more experienced rabbi from the USA, South Africa or Australia might only need to take the final course on the Anglo-Jewish community, while such a person who had recently served in the UK might be exempt from all elements of the course and be awarded his certificate on the basis of his experience. Each new potential appointee would need to be assessed by the Chief Rabbi or his representative and a judgement made on what, if any, authorisation needed to be obtained.

The proposal is a major development in ensuring that rabbis appointed to United Synagogue communities, whether from Jews' College or elsewhere, will be suitably trained and prepared. It will require finance, not only to provide the course but to provide financial support to those rabbis studying it on a full-time basis. Those studying it on a part-time basis during the first probationary years of their appointment will have to be given the appropriate study time by their communities.

Initial training is only part of the process. The professional development of rabbis requires a regular up-dating and enhancement facility. The practical rabbinics programme, run by Jews' College, provided such an in-service programme, and it is highly regrettable that it no longer operates. The importance of our rabbis to the future development of the United Synagogue and the importance of training in their own development means that an in-service facility must be restored. Without such a facility the resources and effort required to establish the initial training programme will be wasted. It makes sense for the Chief Rabbinate to take responsibility for in-service as well as initial training in fulfilment of its role as the head of the professional body of the rabbinate.

### 1.3.2 Professional Review

The key to the improved professionalism of the rabbinate is not only appropriate training but a system of continuing professional review and development. This system and process is already recognised as best practice in many professions, corporations and public bodies.

It is important to emphasise that the purpose of annual professional review is the development of the rabbi. It is not linked (except in emergency as explained below) to the contractual relationship. It is concerned with the professionalism of the rabbinate, not its serfdom. The precise way in which it would operate would need to be discussed with the rabbinate. There are a number of models available in the professions, academic life and industry, **and the following is recommended:**

- (i) At the beginning of each 12-month period the rabbi would discuss and agree his professional objectives with the review panel. The panel would consist of the Chief Rabbi or his representative and one or two professional lay people, distinguished in their own professional life, who are skilled in exercising peer judgement. They would be people outside the rabbi's local community.
- (ii) At the end of the 12-month period the rabbi would prepare a report for the review panel setting out his critical appraisal of the extent to which he had achieved the objectives set a year earlier. It would also include an evaluation of the reasons where objectives had not been fully achieved. The senior honorary officer of the local synagogue, who would have received a copy of the objectives 12 months earlier, would also be invited to submit a written report on any issues which he thought should be brought to the panel's attention.
- (iii) The panel and the rabbi would meet and engage in a frank review of strengths and weaknesses, set revised objectives for the coming year and identify what help, for example in the form of training, might be recommended to assist the professional development of the rabbi. The panel would prepare a written report, a copy of which would go to the rabbi, the master being filed in the Office of the Chief Rabbi. The local community should not receive a copy of the report but the senior honorary officer should be given verbal feedback, with suitable recommendations.

It must be emphasised that the purpose of professional review is the professional development of the rabbi. Typically, it will cover areas where professional development would be beneficial and the views of the senior lay leader of the community are relevant. However, contractual review, discussed earlier, would be a separate exercise. Where a rabbi was facing contractual difficulties with his community, the annual reports on file in the Chief Rabbi's office might be used to settle the differences, but only in

exceptional cases. Professional Review is designed to give the local rabbi access to support, counselling and the means to professional improvement. The proposals set out here for training, professional development and authorisation provide a comprehensive, coherent and integrated system for improving the quality and the status of the rabbinate. Under these proposals, rabbis will only be appointed to a local United Synagogue with the Chief Rabbi's authorisation. That authorisation will only be given if the Community Rabbi's Certificate has been awarded which, in turn, depends on appropriate training. Once he is appointed, the system of annual professional review will identify areas of the rabbi's work which require further development and which will be supported by in-service training.

### **1.3.3 Senior Rabbi**

Consideration needs to be given to establishing a grade of 'Senior Rabbi'. Careful thought needs to be given to the criteria for designating a rabbi as a senior rabbi. For example, to qualify, someone would have had to have served as a communal rabbi for perhaps 15 to 20 years. However, length of service by itself is not sufficient and the rabbi's achievements over this period would also need to be taken into account. The title would be bestowed by the Chief Rabbi. The appointment of barristers as QCs might be a useful model.

Appointment as a senior rabbi would bestow increased status on the recipient. While there would be no automatic increased salary link, if there were central salary guidelines these could indicate a higher grade for senior rabbis. A synagogue could not make the decision that its rabbi was a senior rabbi, but in seeking to fill a vacancy it could, if it wished, indicate that it expected the post to be filled by someone who had received this designation. One practical benefit is that it could help the professional review process, in that senior rabbis could represent the Chief Rabbi on the panel reviewing rabbis. A senior rabbi would be reviewed by a panel including the Chief Rabbi.

### **1.3.4 Placement**

Lack of mobility is a major problem in the system at present and the manner in which the current placements committee operates severely restricts the role of the local community. What is needed is a process in which mobility is encouraged and facilitated in a dignified and discreet manner. To do this it is necessary to move away from the concept of a committee, with its powers of control, towards the notion of a genuine facilitator, in terms of a placement bureau under the aegis of the Chief Rabbinate.

The important change proposed here is that it is the rabbi and the community who are in control of the process. Both, in conditions of complete confidence, can place themselves on a register indicating their preferences. The bureau would act as a matchmaker in effecting introductions but would leave the parties themselves to carry on the discussions. Where a community is considering an appointment, the placement bureau might offer professional advice. More formally, it could set up an expert panel of senior rabbis from whom a community might choose a rabbinical advisor when seeking to make an appointment.

## **1.4 CONCLUSION**

The proposals set out here constitute a radical restructuring of the relationship between a rabbi and his community to parallel the restructuring of the relationship between a local community and the central organisation. With greater local autonomy must come greater local rabbinical autonomy. Both our rabbis and their communities need empowering. Our rabbis must have the authority, the confidence, the skills and the training to lead their communities. At the same time each community must have the right to choose its rabbi, to determine, in conjunction with him, its priorities and be able to decide when it believes it is time for a change.

All this can be achieved with the proposals set out here. Authorisation, training and professional review is one element of the change. Greater flexibility over pay, conditions and the rabbi's contract is the other. Together they will deliver an enhanced rabbinate, able to play its full part in the revitalisation of the United Synagogue. Clearly, these proposals can be applied immediately to newly appointed rabbis. But if they are going to make their mark they must also transform the rabbis currently serving the United Synagogue. It is essential that these rabbis accept the spirit of the proposals and enter into discussions as to how they can be assimilated into the new arrangements as soon as possible.

## **2. THE FUTURE ORGANISATION OF THE CHIEF RABBINATE AND THE LONDON BETH DIN**

Changes in the central role of the United Synagogue are bound to have an impact on the central religious authority which support that role, the Chief Rabbi and his Beth Din. The effect on the relationships between the Chief Rabbi and local rabbis was considered in the previous section. It is now time to address the wider question of the central religious organisations themselves. The issues raised here are for longer-term consideration, involving, as they do, communities outside London. While they have been stimulated by the Review of the United Synagogue, they stand, in many respects, outside that review, and the issues raised here are not essential for the implementation of the main proposals. Nevertheless, they merit careful reflection and consideration by the relevant parties.

### **2.1 THE CHIEF RABBINATE**

The present constitutional relationship between the Chief Rabbinate and the United Synagogue is complex and confusing. Officially, the holder of the office is 'Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth'. The constitutional arrangements reflect this, with the establishment of a Chief Rabbinate Council representing all the communities which accept the authority of the Chief Rabbi. This includes the United Synagogue, provincial UK Orthodox communities and overseas communities. The executive committee of the Council, for example, has 29 members, of whom 15 come from the United Synagogue, 12 from other communities in the UK, 1 from overseas, with the final member being the chairman of Jews' College. The president of the United Synagogue, however, is ex-officio the chairman of the Council and the executive committee; the budget of the Chief Rabbinate is approved annually as part of the United Synagogue budget process, and the property and assets of the office are owned by the United Synagogue.

Given that both the Chief Rabbinate and the United Synagogue developed from the Great Synagogue in London, there is bound to be a close relationship, but the present arrangements create confusion as to whether the office of the Chief Rabbi is a United Synagogue responsibility or a wider UK or even Commonwealth responsibility. This confusion has been a source of tension in recent years. The budget prepared each year assumes income contributions from the United Synagogue and the provincial communities. In reality, the provincial contributions are regarded as voluntary on their members and have not matched the budget. The shortfall has been picked up by the United Synagogue. In recent years, this shortfall has been in the region of £50,000 per annum and has been a factor in the growing United Synagogue deficit. In effect, contributions to the upkeep of the office of the Chief Rabbi are compulsory on United Synagogue members and voluntary for other communities.

The provincial communities have made great efforts to improve the position, but the 1991 accounts show that a large shortfall still persists. There would be benefit in terms both of organisational clarity and future financial accountability in reviewing the present arrangements. Indeed, it is possible to see a way forward that does not require fundamental restructuring.

The Chief Rabbinate Council should be established as a constitutionally independent UK organisation (the current Commonwealth links can also be maintained if desired). All synagogues which accept the religious authority of the Chief Rabbi would be members. The precise form of organisation needs to be considered, but it could, for example, be set up as a charitable trust. The synagogues would have voting powers and financial obligations in proportion to their membership.

This would not be radically different in practice from the present arrangements. The United Synagogue would be the dominant 'shareholder' and have the major financial responsibility. However, that responsibility for the budget of the office, and any shortfall of income over expenditure, would fall on the Council and not the United Synagogue. All members would have to accept the principle that there cannot be 'representation without taxation'.

There would be other advantages to such an arrangement. The authority of the office of the Chief Rabbi, as a UK-wide organisation, would be enhanced and, in due course, other Orthodox congregations in London might be encouraged to join. As a separate charitable trust, the office could seek funds outside its membership subscriptions from other sources, either for special projects or to meet deficits.

The Chief Rabbinate Council would elect its own chairman and other officers. The United Synagogue, through its majority voting power, would still be able to ensure that the chairman was one of its nominees if it thought fit, but the way would be open to much broader membership and participation. The relationship of the Chief Rabbi to the United Synagogue would not be diminished but would be clarified. The United Synagogue, by virtue of its size, would remain the dominant member and financial supporter of the Council. However, its financial obligations each year would be limited and known in advance. If there was a shortfall in the contribution from other member communities, the Chief Rabbinate Council, and not the United Synagogue, would have the responsibility of generating additional income, or reducing the budget.

The United Synagogue and the other communities making up the Chief Rabbinate Council are urged to consider these proposals in consultation with the Chief Rabbi, with a view to agreeing to place the office of the Chief Rabbi on a firm UK-wide footing with clearer financial and organisational responsibility.

## 2.2 THE LONDON BETH DIN

The Chief Rabbi is the *Av Beth Din* of the London Beth Din, which is also termed 'Court of the Chief Rabbi'. Unlike the Chief Rabbinate, however, responsibility for the Beth Din lies exclusively with the United Synagogue, and its formal jurisdiction extends only over the United Synagogue. In reality, given the calibre of its dayanim, their *de facto* jurisdiction is far wider, both in public and private issues. However, other *Batei Din* exist in Manchester, Glasgow and Leeds in communities which accept the religious authority of the Chief Rabbinate.

This situation could remain with a restructured Chief Rabbinate as set out in the previous section, but retaining separate *Batei Din* and kashrut authorities in London and the provinces. Alternatively, the logic of having a national Chief Rabbinate could be followed in having a national Beth Din. This would have branches in the different centres as well as London, and its budget and lay leadership would be nationally organised. This would bring benefits in terms of organisation, consistency and flexibility.

What lies behind these proposals is a belief that it no longer makes sense to think of the Orthodox synagogue community as divided between London and the provinces. Instead, the community has to be viewed as a national Jewish community of Great Britain. Because of its size, London will be the major partner in any national organisation (as it is in the Board of Deputies). However, a national approach will provide for greater clarity, consistency, co-operation and flexibility. For the Chief

Rabbinat, the move to a truly national organisation is relatively simple. For the Beth Din it is more problematical, given the existence and autonomy of existing provincial *Batei Din*. However, all parties are urged to consider seriously the possibility of creating a national organisation.

Urgent attention needs to be paid to the resourcing of the London Beth Din, particularly if it is to remain exclusively within the United Synagogue. Partly due to its reputation, and partly due to its filling gaps that exist, its service on religious halakhic matters extends far beyond the United Synagogue. As a result, United Synagogue members are paying for a service for the rest of the community. The London Beth Din has begun to review its charges for services, but a much more market-oriented approach is recommended so that the activities which are a charge on overheads are minimised.

### **2.3 SCOPE OF CHIEF RABBINATE ACTIVITIES**

Inevitably and rightly, the Chief Rabbinate exercises authority and influence, either through his own office or through the London Beth Din, over a wide variety of religious functions. This includes authorising of rabbis, chazzanim and mohelim, marriage authorisation, burial and tombstone rules, chaplaincy, kashrut and shechitah, and Jewish education. A distinction needs to be made between those activities where the Chief Rabbi exercises authority, such as authorising the rabbi, and those where he exercises influence. In the case of the former, little scope for change exists. In the case of the latter, there will need to be constant review on the scope and nature of the Chief Rabbi's contribution. Potentially, the Chief Rabbinate is involved in all aspects of Jewish communal life, and priorities will be decided as issues emerge. The proposals for the nationalisation of the Chief Rabbinate will provide greater scope and context for its intervention where gaps appear in communal provision and needs arise. The recent development in adult education provides perhaps a model of good practice for the future for the role of the Chief Rabbinate in our communal life.

# **PROFESSIONAL REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT: A SURVEY OF EXISTING MODELS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

We have looked at a number of professional development/staff appraisal schemes, ranging from those formulated and recommended by the Civil Service and the Industrial Society through to schemes used by public companies and academic institutions.

These schemes may be called by a variety of names, such as Active Staff Development, Performance Appraisal, Performance Review and Development, or, Staff Reporting and Appraisal: there are any number of permutations. Nevertheless, **all** appraisal systems aim to achieve some, if not all, of the following goals:

### **Aims of Professional Review**

1. To promote and encourage good management practice.
2. To improve training and development opportunities.
3. To improve morale and create greater identification with the organisation.
4. To improve individual performance, where necessary.
5. To analyse training and development needs for all staff covered by the scheme.
6. To improve organisational efficiency by enabling identification of weaknesses within the organisation and efficient deployment or redeployment of skills.
7. To disseminate organisational objectives by relating these directly to individual objectives.
8. To incorporate individual objectives, where necessary or appropriate, into organisational objectives.

The appraisal is an opportunity to take an overall view of work content, loads and volume, to look back on what has been achieved during the reporting period and agree objectives for the next.

### **Organisational objectives**

In order to achieve the goals set out above, an appraisal scheme must fit into and reinforce the culture of the organisation. It must be individually tailored to its needs. Thus, although looking at comparative organisations is useful, it is not enough.

The United Synagogue is a 'person' culture organisation, that is to say, it is an organisation where the structure is altered to accommodate people and personal capabilities. This calls for a scheme which is based on a joint problem-solving approach. Without clear objectives it is impossible to design an appraisal scheme. Objectives are mainly concerned with three areas:

- individual performance, linked to organisational performance
- communication and feedback
- appraisee's involvement in his own job



It is important to realise that any scheme must be reasonably simple to operate in order that it can be carried out in a positive way.

### **Techniques**

There are three categories of techniques for assessment and measurement of performance. These are:

- a) comparative assessment - performance of employees is evaluated as relative to each other;
- b) absolute - measures against a given standard of performance by means of a narrative approach; global rating scales; behavioural rating scales and critical incident techniques;
- c) outcome/result-oriented methods - these concentrate on specific accomplishments and outcomes achieved as a result of job performance. Evaluation is based on how objectives and tasks have been met in relation to pre-determined standards. Shared setting of objectives is more likely to have the commitment of everyone involved in the scheme.

By far the most popular schemes in use today are the results-oriented problem-solving schemes where an annual review interview is central to the scheme. This would indeed seem to be the method most suited to our requirements.

Central to most of the results-oriented schemes is the belief in the value of the shared development of objectives which are clearly and accurately perceived and communicated and which can be fairly measured against effective criteria.

Interviews are usually held annually, although, in the case of new employees, appraisal may take place more frequently. The interview provides an opportunity to 'take stock' periodically. It allows for evaluation of what has been achieved and for the giving of praise. Agreement of what next needs to be done can take place, and the best way of arriving at commitments can be decided.

It is essential that a review policy be consistently applied and that this is supported by a well-designed training programme.

### **Essential ingredients for success**

For an appraisal scheme to work effectively:

- 1) Senior people must be committed to the idea.
- 2) Consultation should be taken with all concerned and objectives and methods of appraisal agreed.
- 3) The scheme should be made as straightforward as possible.
- 4) A timetable should be fixed for its implementation. Everyone involved should be informed and new incumbents should be informed about the scheme as part of their training.
- 5) Training should be provided for those who will be involved in assessments.
- 6) The scheme should be monitored to check that appraisals are being carried out effectively and reactions to the scheme should be obtained from those involved with it.

## **Areas for organisations to consider**

As far as the structure and timing of the scheme is concerned, there are certain steps which need to be considered:

- 1) An appraisal co-ordinator should be appointed. This could be a personnel or training specialist.
- 2) The appraisers need to be identified.
- 3) The timing of the appraisal has to be agreed, for example:
  - is the scheme to be linked to a training plan or a salary review?
  - or is it to be linked to the anniversary of the employment date?
  - how often is the scheme to be implemented - annually perhaps with interim reviews on request?
- 4) Appraisal documents must be designed, for example:
  - the appraisal form
  - the self-appraisal form
  - guidance notes
- 5) How will the information be used and where will it be stored? Who will have access to it?
- 6) Both appraisers and staff must be trained.
- 7) What action will be taken following the review?
  - with regard to training
  - job enrichment
  - tougher targets
  - promotion or transfer
  - salary adjustment

## **APPENDIX 1 : MODELS OF PROFESSIONAL REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT**

As noted above, we have looked at a number of professional review/development schemes and a synopsis of some of these is given below, namely:

1. The University of North London
2. City University
3. The Diocese of London - Committee for Professional Ministry

### **1. THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH LONDON**

The performance review of the University of North London is intended to clarify the focus of professional activity and relate this to the developmental needs of both the individual and the institution.

#### **The aims of performance review**

Performance review assesses individual performance as it relates to both institutional and personal goals. It is the process by which objectives are agreed and performance is measured. It aims to develop its employees at all levels through a structured approach. The success of the process depends on giving and receiving feedback. Employees must be told what exactly is expected of them if they are to develop their skills and perform well in their jobs.

The review itself should be positive and encourage participation by both reviewer and reviewee. The reviewee should come away knowing how he/she is performing; strengths and weaknesses; obstacles that need to be overcome to be more effective.

### **The objectives of performance review**

- to ensure understanding of the job by employee and employer
- to ensure performance development
- to assess past performance
- to set performance objectives
- to identify needs that will facilitate achievement of full potential
- to assist in career planning

To achieve the above requires open discussion and feedback, two-way communication and self-assessment.

### **Process**

The review is conducted by a line manager or academic supervisor/leader. The employee is asked to draw up a list of his/her objectives for the next twelve-month period. This is discussed with the reviewer and agreed.

There should be regular exchange and feedback between the reviewer and reviewee. This is concluded at the end of the agreed period by a formal review of performance and discussion of the next year's objectives. The confidentiality of the process is important.

The 'Performance Review process is not part of, or a cause of, disciplinary action, nor is it directly considered in promotion issues ... Performance Review ... is an integral part of staff development but also aims to establish future work direction'.

## **2. CITY UNIVERSITY**

The main purpose of City's appraisal scheme is to improve the performance of the university through staff development. It encourages communication between reviewer and reviewee, thereby helping staff members to realise their full potential by agreeing on a programme of action.

### **The Aim**

The main aim of appraisal is 'to positively assess the progress of staff; to further develop careers; indicate strengths and weaknesses in both themselves and the university and identify the means for future development'. This is to be achieved through positive communication.

### **Process**

It is the intention of the university regularly to train appraisers/reviewers in techniques to make sure that promised follow-up action is taken. The University will also, whenever possible, support training and development programmes that arise as a consequence of appraisal.

A frame of reference for the review process is usually the aims and objectives of a specific department, considered together with individual objectives, contributions and achievements during the preceding year. Employees are encouraged to reflect on past performance and relate it to future development and potential.

It is recommended that a curriculum vitae be submitted which includes references to research, teaching, administration, external contributions, professional standing and consultancies. The views of others who are affected by the performance should also be taken into account.

The interview is a mixture of self-assessment, informal interviewing and counselling. Follow-up action must be taken on any agreed plans, targets, training and development.

City has one main interview, lasting between thirty minutes and one hour, that takes place with all documentation having been provided in advance by the employee. At this meeting goals are set for the year to come. It is less of a developmental process than that at the University of North London.

Probationary staff are dealt with on a more intensive basis. The primary consideration for the university is to determine whether the individual can sustain a long-term academic career within the framework of the departmental and institutional plans.

However, it is recognised that the university has a responsibility to assist members of staff in achieving the required standards and in the development of their own careers, both during the probationary period and beyond. This is achieved, in part, by providing a clear job description, opportunities for training and development, and giving feedback and advice. Performance assessment for probationary staff rests primarily with the department. Final decisions are taken centrally.

### **3. THE DIOCESE OF LONDON - COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL MINISTRY**

The Church began assessing its clergy in 1977. The format for such assessment varies from diocese to diocese but guidelines are issued by centralised offices around the country. This synopsis is based upon the Ministerial Review Model adopted in the Diocese of Ely in Cambridgeshire.

#### **Principles**

All ordained ministers in the Diocese are required to undertake a review of their ministry once every two years. Ministers working in hospitals, colleges and schools are encouraged to adopt their own form of ministerial review.

The reviewer is alternately the Archdeacon and one of the Bishops. Archdeacons and Bishops ask the Archbishop's Advisor for In-Service Training for help and training and for advice about the best ways of conducting such reviews.

A month before the review each minister receives a questionnaire appropriate to his/her Order, based on the Ordinal (job specification agreed at time of employment). He/she then completes the questionnaire and returns a copy to the reviewer at least one week before the review takes place. A brief parish profile is also sent to the reviewer with the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is divided into the following categories:

1. Vision and Spirituality
2. Mission
3. Public Worship
4. Pastoral Care
5. Teaching
6. Community Life
7. Teamwork
8. Ministry Development
9. Personal Lifestyle
10. Extra-Parochial Commitments
11. Colleagues

These documents are the agenda for the review interview, which may last about one and a half hours.

Towards the end of the interview, the reviewer and participant identify matters to be recorded in a report for the reviewer, along with any matters for action.

Within a fortnight the reviewer draws up a brief written report and recommendations for action and sends it to the participant for approval. The report goes into the file of the reviewee and any action agreed is initiated.

Appeals in situations of disagreement about this report can be made to the Diocesan Bishop. At subsequent reviews the report of the previous review is taken into account along with future questionnaires.

## **APPENDIX 2: PROFESSIONAL REVIEW: BIBLIOGRAPHY**

1. *Performance Appraisal: A Guide for Design and Implementation* by Jill D. Yeates. IMS Report No. 188. Institute of Manpower Studies (1990).
2. *Employee Appraisal*, Advisory Booklet No. 11, Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (1988).
3. *Performance Appraisal: Seven Steps to Success*, Alistair Munro. The Industrial Society (1991).
4. Performance Review and Development for Teaching Staff in the University of North London (1991).
5. The City University Performance Appraisal Scheme (1988).
6. University of Bradford Management Centre Appraisal Scheme.
7. Ministerial Review Programme. The Diocese of London. Committee for Professional Ministry.
8. C.M.E. Growing in Ministry Programme. Diocese of St. Albans (1990).
9. General Circular (GC)250 (1985) and Draft General Circular GC/. issued by the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (1991).

# THE ROLE OF THE RABBI: A SURVEY OF BEST PRACTICE

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to provide sample definitions of the role of the rabbi. It is envisaged that such a role definition would be incorporated as an appendix to the rabbinical employment contract which each community would draw up.

The paper does not provide *the* ideal definition. Communities differ in their requirements and the emphasis they may wish to place on any given role will also differ. The role definition set out below is included to assist communities and rabbis both to identify the priorities of the community and to help both parties negotiate the employment parameters of the rabbi.

It has to be clearly stated at this point that it is not expected that any rabbi will be able to fulfil all of the tasks required of him by the community. This would be impossible.

Each community needs to identify and priorities the functions it provides or seeks to provide for its members. In this role the rabbi must act as a catalyst, gathering and motivating a team of committed lay members of the community who are able to help him bring to fruition the goals which he has helped identify. The rabbi must be regarded as the community's senior professional and resource person and it cannot be stressed too highly that success in this area of his endeavour will inevitably result in the success of the entire community.

We have looked at a variety of documentation relating to the role of the rabbi, including some job specifications written by communities that are currently seeking to employ a new rabbi. Two of these specifications set forth a list of duties, principal accountabilities and personal qualities required.

One community concentrated primarily on presenting a community profile. This included a historical account of the growth of the community together with a discussion of its demography, membership breakdown by age and gender and a list of community activities. A list of aims relating to each section formed the basis of the job specification. However, contrary to the in-depth and helpful presentation of the community, only a short, generalised statement regarding the kind of rabbi the community wished to employ was included in the job specification.

It is relevant here to note that the job specifications were themselves reactive documents in as much as they reflected the experiences which each community had had with its previous rabbi. All the job specifications were thus constrained in some way.

It is our belief that a comprehensive community profile should form part of any job specification, along with a clearly understood and unequivocal role definition which reflects the needs of that individual community. These two documents should together help to provide both the rabbi and the community with a clearer idea of what is required from the envisaged partnership than has hitherto generally been the case.

Any job specification must also take into account the fact that the mission to include Jews within tradition will constantly add new dimensions to, and therefore new expectations of, the job of the rabbi. Recommendations regarding job appraisal and in-service training will thus have direct relevance to the role of the rabbi as perceived at community level.

## **ROLE DEFINITIONS**

The rabbi should act as:

### **1 SPIRITUAL LEADER AND HALAKHIC AUTHORITY**

- by representing and communicating Jewish law on a daily basis, thereby playing a full part in all religious services, which will include *layening*, where required
- by acting as the local religious authority in all matters requiring halakhic guidance under the authority of the Chief Rabbi and his Beth Din
- officiating at funerals and stone-settings
- preparing boys and girls, and their families, for their bar mitzvah or bat chayil and conducting such services
- preparing an engaged couple for a wedding and officiating

### **2 TEACHER**

- by acting as a director of adult education within the community, assessing the educational needs of the community, setting goals and initiating programmes to help achieve those goals
- by involvement with local schools, for example, taking Jewish assemblies and teaching about Judaism to the pupils generally, when requested
- by involvement with the youth, youth programmes and students of the community who are attending further educational programmes away from home, working with the committees concerned with youth and promoting the interests of the youth within the community at large
- by giving shiurim and lectures
- by involvement in cheder and informal educational activities, such as discussion groups
- by writing articles and editorials for the communal magazine to help disseminate the message of Judaism in a positive and accessible way

### **3 CAREGIVER AND COUNSELLOR**

- by visiting the sick and comforting the bereaved, providing on-going support where necessary, and liaising with the welfare representative/committee
- by providing preventative counselling and crisis intervention for those in need, knowing when and to whom to refer cases for specialised help

### **4. PREACHER AND PUBLIC SPEAKER**

- by giving sermons, lectures, speeches and shiurim where necessary
- by participating at regional and national organisational activities in the larger Jewish community

### **5. OUTREACH AND IN REACH PRACTITIONER**

- by reaching out to the less committed both outside and inside the community

### **6. RECRUITMENT RESOURCE**

- by seeking to attract and inspire new members by personal contact and by appropriately channelling their needs within the community

## 7. SENIOR PROFESSIONAL AND ADMINISTRATOR

- by assisting the community office and working with the community officers and personnel in all matters relating to the organisational structures of the community
- by involvement with communal strategic programming, taking into account the changing needs of the community

## 8. FUND-RAISER

- by officiating at fund-raising events and assisting charitable causes both within the community and beyond it

## 9. CATALYST

- by identifying the needs and areas of growth potential of the community and sharing with members the ideals and goals necessary for realising that potential.
- by translating ideals and goals into projects and enabling and empowering members to help achieve those goals.

## 10. AMBASSADOR FOR JUDAISM/HIS COMMUNITY WITHIN WIDER SOCIETY

This aspect of the rabbi's role is particularly relevant with the greater independence advocated and the increased need for communication and co-operation between communities. The rabbi should be empowered by his community to act as their representative in many instances and they should support his endeavours in this regard.

## 11. SCHOLAR

There needs to be an acknowledgement of the rabbi's need for continual study and inspiration in order that he may, in turn, be able to inspire members of his community. The rabbi should be encouraged to research and publish academic work, as his intellectual endeavour will enhance the intellectual development of the whole community.

The process of delineating the role definition in the manner set out above does have the disadvantage of tending to fragment the overall ethos of a community. Similarly, it appears to gloss over the individual strengths and weaknesses of a prospective candidate. This document must, therefore, be regarded primarily as a basis for frank and open discussion between a community and their prospective rabbi; a 'menu' from which to define goals and priorities.

### **Bibliography:**

1. Bulka, Reuven P. *Characteristics of Rabbinic Leaders - A Psychological View*. In *Tradition and Transition*; ed. Jonathan Sacks, Jews' College Publications 1986.
2. Herring, Basil, ed. *The Rabbinate as Calling and Vocation. Models of Rabbinic Leadership*. Jason Aronson 1991.
3. Mollica, Richard. 'On the Technology of Pastoral Counselling'. *Pastoral Psychology* 28 (1975), p. 108.
4. Teplitz, S., ed. *The Rabbis Speak*. New York: New York Board of Rabbis.
5. Three Job Specifications issued by United Synagogues currently looking to fill their rabbinical posts



## **THE RABBI'S CONTRACT: A MODEL TEXT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A number of recommendations have been made in the course of this report which have contractual ramifications for the rabbi. The following sample letter of appointment has been constructed for illustrative purposes. It incorporates matters arising from Review recommendations and it sets the tone and style which, it is felt, is appropriate in confirming the contractual relationship between a local community and its senior professional.

The letter of appointment must be read in conjunction with the above article concerning the role definitions and job specifications for a rabbi. It is proposed, and is written into the letter of appointment, that an appendix, stating the main roles and priorities of the rabbi, should be attached. In line with the thinking of the Review it is apparent that this appendix will vary considerably between community and community and would be based on agreement between the rabbi and his community in each individual case, whereas the main letter of appointment would be substantially uniform throughout the United Synagogue.

The one job specification that has been included as part of the standard letter of appointment is that of membership recruitment, because it is felt that this basic task, relating to the mission of the organisation as a whole, is not currently perceived as a priority for the rabbi as such.

### **DRAFT LETTER OF APPOINTMENT FOR A RABBI FROM THE APPOINTING COMMUNITY**

Dear

Further to our recent discussions, it gives me great pleasure to extend to you on behalf of my fellow honorary officers and members of (synagogue name) the offer of appointment as our rabbi.

Your appointment is conditional upon your obtaining/retaining (delete as appropriate) the Chief Rabbi's certificate of authorisation.

The primary duties and responsibilities of the position are set out in the attached appendix. In addition to these duties and responsibilities it is assumed that you will act within the halakhic framework set by the Chief Rabbi as the religious authority for our community, giving advice, guidance and decisions on religious matters. You will also be expected to play a prominent role in relation to the recruitment of new members to the community in line with the stated aims of the United Synagogue as a whole.

The duties and responsibilities as specified reflect a broad statement of the community's priorities at the present time, and I hope you will recognise them as being consistent with matters we discussed during the interview process. They do not, of course, cover many day-to-day activities which will be for you to organise within the community timetable and in the spirit of the duties and responsibilities as stated. Inevitably, in a dynamic community, priorities will change over time, and this may bring in its wake a change in your duties and responsibilities. Such changes will, however, only be introduced after appropriate consultation and discussion between you and the honorary officers.

There are no specified working hours in relation to your appointment. This recognises that whilst there are certain duties which are fixed in time (e.g. services/meetings as arranged), it would not be sensible to try and limit, within particular times, the performance of professional duties, especially when the need for your services may arise unpredictably. We nevertheless recognise the need for you to have some limits placed on what would otherwise be an open-ended commitment, and to this end we will work with you to plan that you should be free of all duties, save for availability in genuine emergencies, on one day per week.

It is recognised and accepted that in your role as a rabbi you may wish to spend some time on other and wider Jewish communal activities, not solely confined within this community. The synagogue sees this wider involvement as part of a rabbi's professional role, and, whilst we see no apparent conflict in this, it would be necessary for you to discuss in advance with the honorary officers the implications of any such activities and commitments, so that potential misunderstandings and difficulties can be avoided.

Recognising the high status of your position, your performance as rabbi will be subject to an annual professional review under arrangements to be established by the Chief Rabbi's Office. This review will not only focus on your performance as rabbi, but also look forward by examining aspects of personal and professional development which could assist you. The synagogue will provide all reasonable support to permit you to pursue in-service training and personal development activities recommended as a result of a professional review.

There are some specific terms and conditions of your appointment and these are numbered below for ease of reference:

1. Your appointment will commence on (date) and run for an initial period of four years. After two years in the post the position will be reviewed. At that stage you will be advised either that the appointment will continue for an additional two years and then terminate, or that you are to be moved onto a three-year rolling contract.
2. Should you wish to terminate the appointment at any stage you will be required to give a period of notice of not less than six months unless an alternative arrangement is agreed between yourself and the honorary officers.
3. Your salary on appointment will be (figure). Your salary will be reviewed annually, effective (date).
4. You will be entitled to 25 days of paid vacation per annum, to be taken by agreement with the honorary officers of the synagogue, such agreement not to be unreasonably withheld. In normal circumstances it would be expected that no one period of vacation would extend over more than two weekends or cover a period during which a major festival occurs.
5. You would have the right to join / remain as a member of (delete as appropriate) the United Synagogue pension scheme under the terms of the trust deed and rules of the scheme. You will be required to make a contribution as specified from time to time under the rules. The synagogue will pay the contribution required of the employer under the same rules.
6. If you have a grievance concerning any matter relating to employment, then you should, in the first instance, raise this with one of the honorary officers who will seek to resolve it with you. We very much hope, however, that formal reference to grievance procedures will not be necessary in an environment where we mutually strive for open communication and the development of high trust.

We hope you will accept this invitation to lead our community. To do so, would you please be good enough to sign the enclosed copy of this letter, date it, and return it to us. If you have any questions concerning the appointment, its terms, or any matter relating to the community on which you would require clarification prior to accepting this invitation, then please do not hesitate to call on us.

We look forward to hearing from you and to your decision to join us.

Yours sincerely,

HONORARY OFFICERS

# 12

## FINANCIAL REPORT

YOUR REF: W

OUR REF: V342/DE/jeb/pte

DATE: 14 August 1992

S Kalms Esq  
29 Farm Street  
London  
W1



**LEVY GEE**

CHARTERED  
ACCOUNTANTS

100 CHALK FARM ROAD  
LONDON NW1 8EH  
TELEPHONE: 071-267 4477  
FACSIMILE: 071-267 1028

Dear Mr Kalms

**"THE ROLE OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE IN THE YEARS AHEAD"**

I now have pleasure in enclosing a summary of my firm's detailed Report on the financial matters of the United Synagogue.

This has been prepared in accordance with our Engagement Letter of 5 March 1992 and as requested, we have endeavoured to avoid comments or conclusions except where absolutely necessary.

I understand that this summary will be published as part of your overall review.

Yours sincerely

DAVID EPSTEIN

Encl

MALCOLM J. GEE LEON R. NAHON DERRICK S. WOOLF JONATHAN H. HOFFMAN STEPHEN I. RAZNICK DAVID EPSTEIN  
PETER B. STONE DAVID H. GILBERT RUSSELL M. SELWYN CLIFFORD CROWN MARTIN LANDMAN M. ANTHONY FREEMAN  
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A MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF ACCOUNTING FIRMS. OFFICES WORLDWIDE.  
AUTHORISED BY THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS IN ENGLAND AND WALES TO CARRY ON INVESTMENT BUSINESS.

**SUMMARY OF REPORT TO THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE REVIEW**  
**ON THE FINANCIAL AFFAIRS OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE**

**Levy Gee**  
**100 Chalk Farm Road**  
**London**  
**NW1 8EH**

**14 August 1992**

## **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report is a summary of a more detailed report, the purpose of which is to provide information in connection with a review known as "The Role of the United Synagogue in the Years Ahead". This review has been authorised by the Honorary Officers of the United Synagogue under the chairmanship of Stanley Kalms. The report and this summary have been prepared in accordance with this firm's instructions, confirmed in a letter of engagement dated 5 March 1992. We would normally have commented on our findings, given our opinions, or arrived at conclusions, but we have been requested specifically in this case to report without such comment.**
- 1.2 The report considers the financial forecasts of the United Synagogue for the twelve months commencing 1 January 1992, both in relation to cashflow and the underlying income and expenditure. In addition, we have carried out a detailed review of the affairs of the United Synagogue as presented in its Annual Report and Financial Statements.**
- 1.3 The information included in this summary and our report has been derived from an examination of the United Synagogue records as set out in the full report, together with information from discussions with various parties and in particular Mr Barry Lyons, without whose assistance this report would not have been possible.**
- 1.4 The United Synagogue accounts are prepared by consolidating the results of the 41 constituent member synagogues, together with the results of the central functions of the United Synagogue. These include Education, Kashrut, Shechita, the Chief Rabbinate, the Beth Din, Publications, Visitations, Mikveh, etc. Additionally, in 1990 and 1991, the accounts of the United Synagogue include the accounts of the Burial Society, and within that, the accounts of the Funeral Expenses Scheme. We refer to the propriety of this treatment below.**
- 1.5 In compiling this summary, it has been assumed that the reader has a considerable amount of knowledge in respect of the workings of the United Synagogue and its current financial structure.**

## **2 REVIEW OF FINANCIAL FORECASTS**

This section deals with the projected cashflow of the United Synagogue for the year to 31 December 1992, together with the projected net deficit for that year.

2.1 We were provided, at the commencement of our assignment, with a cashflow forecast for the United Synagogue, and identified several shortcomings. In a subsequent cash flow forecast, some, but not all, of these shortcomings were corrected. The original shortcomings consisted inter-alia of the following:-

- (a) The inclusion of depreciation and amortisation of fixed assets as a cash outflow.
- (b) No provision for capital expenditure within the forecasts. We understand that some £1,155,000 is planned for the year.
- (c) The incorrect assumption that all interest charged to constituent synagogues in relation to advances made will be recovered.

2.2 In the light of these shortcomings, we have prepared a revised set of forecasts, primarily based on data extracted from the 1992 United Synagogue estimates, adjusted as appropriate. The summary of this revised forecast is attached as Appendix 1 to this summary, although full details of the individual figures are contained in our detailed report to the United Synagogue Review. This cashflow forecast represents our estimates of the full year and is based on information made available to 31 May 1992.

2.3 We have been advised that the total bank facility currently available to the United Synagogue is £7,750k. At 31 December 1991, this facility, save for one loan of £442k in respect of the Pinner development, was in the form of overdraft, but on 1 May 1992, after the Charity Commission had given its sanction to a formalisation of the bank debt, the overdraft was split into a term loan of £5,250k (repayment is due on 12 September 1996), and an overdraft facility of £2,500k.

- 2.4 In addition, the Burial Society has an outstanding loan from the bank to finance the building of a road at Bushey Cemetery. At 31 December 1991, this loan stood at £382k. We understand that this loan does not fall within the total facility outlined above, but is an addition thereto.
- 2.5 We have been provided with a copy of the audited accounts for the year ended 31 December 1991, which show overdrawn balances of £7,316k, and cash balances of £790k. Although the bulk of the cash is Burial Society Funds, we understand that the bank regards the facility in global terms, and therefore, offsets any credit balances against the overdraft. For this reason, we have shown in our cashflow forecasts, the net liability to the bank, as we believe this is the critical figure.
- 2.6 A report was prepared by Stoy Hayward, which considered whether the Burial Society or the Funeral Expenses Scheme was authorised to lend money to the United Synagogue. From this report, it would appear that the Burial Society is permitted to lend money to the United Synagogue, and therefore, the Burial Society's positive cash balance could legitimately be used to finance the funding requirements of the United Synagogue, hence the netting off referred to in the above section.
- 2.7 Our revised cashflow forecasts incorporate a number of fundamental changes correcting the shortcomings referred to above, including the following:-

- 2.7.1 We have provided for capital expenditure within the forecasts, and we reproduce below a schedule of capital expenditure as discussed with Mr Lyons.

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>£</b>
General major repairs to Synagogues	240,000
Roof for Wembley Synagogue	50,000
Watford Synagogue	175,000
Hall for Borehamwood Synagogue	270,000
House for employee	100,000
Southgate Jewish School	100,000
New Mortuary at Bushey	220,000
	-----
	<b>£1,155,000</b>
	=====



2.7.2 The Synagogues are charged interest on advances, but in certain cases, interest is deferred and not added to the total debt due from the Constituent Synagogue and is borne centrally. This is correct, and prudent insofar as interest is not being charged to Constituent Synagogues. However, the General and Charitable Purposes Fund Accounts do not readily disclose that this practice occurs.

2.7.3 As previously stated, the original forecasts assume that all interest charged to Constituent Synagogues will actually be paid, but as can be seen from page FS8 of the 1991 audited accounts, 10 out of 35 Synagogues with balances outstanding failed to repay sufficient monies to cover their interest charge. This resulted in an under recovery of the actual interest paid by the United Synagogue centrally. It is our belief that the same under recovery will apply in 1992.

In order to calculate the amount of interest expected to be recovered from constituent synagogues, we have taken the balance owing to the United Synagogue at 31 December 1991, and calculated a full year's interest charge on this amount, based on an annual interest rate of 12%. We have then assumed that the actual interest to be collected is limited to the lower of the interest calculated as above, or the total repayments made. In those cases where Synagogues did not cover interest, the outstanding balance was "rolled up" into their debt.

This represents a departure from the current practice, as applied in the 1991 accounts, where the interest due from Synagogues was credited to income and expenditure, irrespective as to whether a community was able to pay or not. Although the amended cashflow forecasts reflect recoveries on the reduced interest basis, the projected Income and Expenditure Account does not.

We believe that the current practice is not prudent, as it does not reflect the reality of the situation. Many Synagogues are unable to meet their commitments in full, and in cashflow terms, have to be subsidised by the United Synagogue General and Charitable Purposes Fund ("G&CP"). By crediting interest, due but unpaid, to the income and expenditure account, the G&CP deficit is correspondingly understated.

This change in policy would increase the interest charge borne by the United Synagogue by £184k from £377k to £561k.

We also note that interest charged to Synagogues is not shown on the face of individual Synagogue's income and expenditure accounts. We believe that this distorts the view to the members, of a Synagogue's financial wellbeing.

2.7.4 In the absence of any budgeted figure for repayments of capital advances from Constituent Synagogue building funds, we have reviewed the capital payments made in 1991, and have assumed that, where appropriate, a similar capital repayment will be made in 1992. Clearly, where the remaining balance due is less than the amount paid in 1991, payment is based on the balance outstanding. In cases where further advances were made to synagogues in 1991, an increased repayment profile has been assumed.

2.7.5 In considering advances to be made to Constituent Synagogues in 1992, we have assumed that £20k is advanced each month to various Synagogues for major repairs. It is also assumed that some £150k will be advanced to Watford Synagogue, prior to September 1992, with a final payment of £25k in December 1992. It is further anticipated that £50k will be advanced to Wembley Synagogue, and £270k to Borehamwood Synagogue.

- 2.7.6 The original Shechita estimate indicates that there will be a loss of £100k in the year to 31 December 1992. We understand that, to 31 May 1992, losses of almost £100k have already been incurred. We estimate that the loss will be £200k for the full year ending 31 December 1992. Although an increase in the loss is fairly certain, the Honorary Officers do not believe it will be as high as our estimate.
- 2.7.7 The original forecasts included cash transfers between different divisions of the United Synagogue, such as Synagogue Communal Contribution payments from the Synagogues to the Centre, or gifts to the Education Department from the Burial Society. In the amended forecasts, all these "inter-divisional transfers" have been omitted, and we believe that it is therefore easier to determine how much money is actually received by the United Synagogue as a whole, and how much is actually spent, ignoring double counting.
- 2.7.8 The 1992 estimates for education submitted by the United Synagogue estimated income of £1,154k. It is our belief, having regard to the current economic climate, and the fact that 1991 actual contributions to Education were £999k that the estimate is too high. The increase in estimated income is mainly due to an increase in parental contributions. No reasons have been advanced to us to support the premise that parental contributions will be able to be increased by some 20%, and we have therefore used as our estimate, figures approximately equal to those collected in 1991.
- 2.7.9 We have included in the revised estimate, capital receipts of £505k which represents monies expected to be received from the sale of assets. These include silver artifacts, Judaica, the sale of New Synagogue in Stamford Hill, and a payment from the Western Marble Arch Synagogue.

2.7.10 At the end of 1991, the FES was owed some £533k by the United Synagogue. As far as we are aware, this loan is not permitted within the Burial Society Articles, and as such, the United Synagogue is repaying the loan. Due to the loan being contrary to the Articles of the Burial Society, we have included the full amount of the loan to be repaid by the end of 1992. However, no provision has been made for any interest which may be due to the FES in respect of this loan.

2.7.11 As can be seen from the 1991 financial statements, the United Synagogue was indebted to its pension fund to the extent of £586k at the end of 1991. We are advised that by June 1992 this debt had been reduced to £450k with an interest payment having been made in February. As with the FES loan, we must stress that we do not consider that it is correct for the United Synagogue to borrow monies from the pension fund to fund its own deficit, and we have therefore provided in the revised cashflow forecasts for the whole of the loan to be repaid by the end of 1992.

In addition to advances to Constituent Synagogues, there are two further items of capital expenditure in 1992 which we have included in the amended cashflow forecasts and these relate to £100k paid towards the purchase of a house for an employee, and a further £100k contribution to a new Jewish school. We have not been advised whether the employee loan is actually a loan, or a part purchase of the house. Consequently, we can make no comment as to security, interest arrangements, capital repayments or realisability.

2.7.12 The original United Synagogue 1992 estimates and our revised income and expenditure projections may be reconciled as follows;-

	<b>Per Levy Gee Forecasts £000s</b>	<b>Per 1992 Estimates £000s</b>
Synagogue Payover	1,934	1,926
Education	(1,093)	(753)*
Kashrut	28	24
Shechita	(200)	(100)*
Chief Rabbinate	(321)	(370)
Beth Din	(332)	(345)
Net Other Income	519	247 *
Executive Offices	(879)	(879)
Depreciation	(266)	-
Interest	(377)	(204)*
Burial Society and FES	562	200
	-----	-----
Total Deficit	(425)	(254)
	==	==

Items marked \* are the only areas that have been adjusted to any material extent. The remaining items have compensating adjustments and are due to a more simplified disclosure method. The difference on Education includes a reduction of £200k transferable from the Burial Society.

As can be seen from the above table, the revised forecasts predict an increase in the deficit from £254k to £425k, and project an overdraft at December 1992 in excess of the current facility. This overdraft as can be seen from the cashflow forecasts, rises to £8,988k by 31 December 1992.

We are not aware of the level of Synagogue deficits which may arise, if any, for the year ending 31 December 1992, but with regard to capital asset disposals, some £505k is anticipated to be received. Clearly, if these amounts were not included as income, the deficit would increase from the figure of £425k above, to £930k.

Similarly, if an adjustment is made to reflect the suggested policy change on interest charges, the deficit would rise by a further £184k (See 2.7.3) to £1,114k.

### **3 BALANCE SHEET REVIEW AT 31 DECEMBER 1991**

In this section, we review the 1991 balance sheet of the United Synagogue. We have used as the principle source of information for our review, the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the United Synagogue, 1991.

- 3.1 Fixed assets comprise freehold properties, long leasehold properties and short leasehold properties. We are advised that all non property fixed assets such as office furniture, computers and motor vehicles are written off in the year of purchase. We assume that there must be some value in these assets, but without a full schedule we are unable to comment thereon.
- 3.2 No amount is included in respect of Synagogue properties, since in the opinion of the Treasurers, their inclusion at original cost would be misleading. However, the land and buildings used by four Synagogues have been charged as security for the bank facilities.
- 3.3 We believe that the freehold properties included in the total of £1,039k includes some five houses occupied by current and former United Synagogue employees to a value of £592k, together with the Bushey Cemetery Road, which is shown at cost plus interest less contributions of £447k.

It seems somewhat illogical to value a Cemetery perimeter road, but not value the Cemetery itself. As the Cemetery is not a saleable asset, we would suggest that consideration be given to writing the cost of the road off in full, as soon as possible.

- 3.4 Long leasehold property is included in the accounts at £4,000k. In order to obtain the necessary deed of variation, a promise to pay 10% of the sale proceeds or £500k, whichever is the higher, has been made. We are not aware whether the provision for diminution in value of £500k is a provision for this future liability, or some other provision for diminution. In the light of a report for the United Synagogue Review by independent surveyors, we believe that this asset is still overstated, the current realisable value may be only £1,600k.

- 3.5 We note that the accounting policy on long leasehold properties and short leasehold properties as stated in the accounts differs. The short leasehold property is shown at its original cost and amortisation is provided over the 15 years remaining on the lease. However, it is noted in the accounts that the approximate market value in July 1991 was £400k. If the short leasehold is to be valued on the basis of market value, as has the long leasehold, a further reduction in assets of £738k would be necessary.
- 3.6 The next major asset disclosed in the balance sheet is the amount of advances to Synagogue communities at a total of £5,329k. This represents capital advances and deficit advances. We understand that a number of these advances or the repayment terms thereof have not been approved by Council Resolutions, and also that a number of Synagogues are not in a position to repay the borrowed funds now, nor are they likely to be in a position to repay the monies in the foreseeable future, unless the Synagogue premises are sold. Clearly, the purpose of the United Synagogue is to develop and encourage the growth and existence of Orthodox Judaism within the United Kingdom, and it would be an anathema to sell a Synagogue in order to repay monies lent to that Synagogue, but consideration must be given to the terms of the bank loan, and the repayment date, some four years hence. However, if Synagogues have been lent money which is due for repayment, it is essential that careful consideration is given to how the repayment is going to be funded.
- 3.7 We have carefully considered those Synagogues that currently are not meeting their interest payments. The advances outstanding to these Synagogues totals £2,938k. In the light of this, there must be some doubt as to the short term ability of these Synagogues to repay to the United Synagogue anything in excess of 50% of these advances. This would mean that the advances to Synagogue communities, shown in the accounts at £5,329k might only realise in the foreseeable future £3,829k.
- 3.8 The investments shown in the balance sheet represent a value of £1,018k. Of these £934k represent investments held on behalf of the Funeral Expenses Scheme, and are held by external fund managers.

3.9 The debtors and prepayments figure shown in the accounts of £1,685k appears high for an organisation such as the United Synagogue. Other than trade debtors for Kashrut and Shechita, the main amount due to the United Synagogue is on the General and Charitable Purposes Fund. We have reviewed this amount which totals £1,258k, and there are included therein a large number of balances. We have not analysed the list of balances in detail, but have concentrated on those in excess of £10k. Of those, a total of £169k were not even debtors, but items of expenditure incurred in previous years. These have been carried forward rather than written off against the General and Charitable Purposes Fund, even though £111k relating to Woburn House development costs has been written off.

This treatment has had the effect of reducing the deficits in prior years from what they would have been were the items of expenditure written off when incurred. We have received no explanation for this treatment. The other large debtors comprise £107k for deferred interest not charged to Pinner, but charged in 1992, amounts due from a former tenant in receivership, service charges owed by tenants, taxation recoverable from the Inland Revenue, and various loans. Of the loans, £155k relates to six loans made to either existing or former employees of the United Synagogue. Most of these loans appear to be interest free, and with one exception, have no terms of repayment. From information given to us, recovery of these loans, in the short term, is unlikely.

3.10 Of the total debtors, including the sum of £169k referred to above, we believe £548k ought to be considered doubtful, and prudence might suggest that a provision should be made of 50% thereof.

3.11 The assets charged to the bank as security for the facilities referred to previously, consist of four Synagogues, Woburn House, Great Cumberland Place complex and certain residential properties. The total valuation of these properties in 1991 was £10,250k (including £4,500k for Woburn House), and in the light of the comments previously made, as to the current realisable value of Woburn House, £2,900k needs to be deducted from the value of this security. This would result in the value of the securities lodged falling below the facilities.



#### 4 **OVERSTATEMENT OF ASSETS IN EXCESS OF MARKET VALUE**

As referred to above, a number of assets are shown in the accounts at more than their current realisable value, these can be summarised as follows:-

	£
The Bushey Cemetery Road	447,000
Woburn House	2,400,000
Hamilton Terrace	738,000
Advances to Synagogue Communities (say)	1,500,000
Provision for other non-recoverable debtors (say)	274,000
	-----
Total	£5,359,000
	=====

If the values in the accounts of the above mentioned assets were reduced by these sums, this would completely extinguish all of the reserves of the United Synagogue which, excluding the Funeral Expenses Scheme, total only £3,557,000.

#### 5 **PENSION SCHEME**

5.1 The United Synagogue pension fund made a loan to the United Synagogue. We were not asked to comment as to whether the trustees of the pension fund were in a position to make this loan, and it is therefore not considered whether or not the loan is ultra vires. However, we have been assured that the swift repayment of this loan is regarded as a high priority, although no specific repayment profile has been suggested. Careful consideration should however be given to the issues of security, repayment profile, interest rate chargeable and the payment of interest.

5.2 We spoke with Mr Colin Berman FFA of Buck Paterson Consultants Ltd about the actuarial valuation of the pension fund. He indicated that he was some way off preparing a valuation for 1991, but the deficit in 1989 was some £385k. However, in the absence of the 1991 valuations, we cannot comment on the current actuarial deficit (if any).

## **6 FUNERAL EXPENSES SCHEME**

- 6.1 The financial affairs of the FES and the Burial Society have been incorporated within the United Synagogue accounts, and therefore, no separate disclosure is made in the United Synagogue accounts of amounts due to or from these entities, (although the accounts of the Burial Society and the FES make separate disclosure).
- 6.2 We have again spoken with Mr Colin Berman who has advised us that the actuarial deficit of the Funeral Expenses Scheme at 31 December 1989 was just under £2,000k. This was based on the assumption that payments into the fund and funeral costs continued at the same rate.
- 6.3 We are somewhat concerned that there is any deficit on the FES, especially bearing in mind that transfers to the Burial Society create sufficient surpluses for the Burial Society to make grants for the Education and G&CP accounts. If a deficit is to be covered by increased contributions levied on members, it could also be covered by transferring less to the Burial Society. Therefore, the increased collection of funds under the guise of the FES to finance a deficit arising from the high level of funeral costs, is misleading.

## **7 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE**

Our detailed report refers to the various items of income and expenditure detailed in the financial statements, and the vast majority of these are self explanatory. There are, however, certain items which do require further information as follows:-

- 7.1 In reviewing the income and expenditure account of the United Synagogue, as set out on page FS2 of the financial statement, we consider that the policy of crediting the disposal of fixed assets to income may be an appropriate treatment of assets not shown on the balance sheet, but we are concerned that the inclusion of these amounts distorts the operating deficit. Similarly, by deducting from the overall deficit the amount of deficit that is deemed recoverable from Synagogue communities, again reduces the true operating deficit of the United Synagogue by increasing the indebtedness from communities, which in many cases are unable to pay the deficit advance.

7.2 The net income shown in the United Synagogue accounts as being from the Burial Society activities represents the net surplus on the Burial Society's activities for the year. The sum of £178k would appear to be this surplus, but this is after making a grant to the United Synagogue Board of Religious Education in the same sum of £178k. The effect of this, is that the G&CP deficit has been reduced by £178k, and the Burial Society surplus reduced by £178k.

We believe that these grants distort the results and they artificially reduce the operating shortfall of some activities, while similarly reducing the surplus of others.

7.3 We have already discussed the question of the interest charge payable by the United Synagogue being reduced by amounts charged to Synagogues, rather than amounts actually repaid by Synagogues. This has the effect of reducing the true interest charge and reducing the deficit.

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14 August 1992

**SUMMARISED CASHFLOW FORECAST  
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 1992**

APPENDIX 1

UNITED SYNAGOGUE CASH FLOW FORECAST SUMMARY

	<u>Receipts</u>	<u>Payments</u>
	£'000	£'000
Synagogue Income/Expenditure	6,205	4,271
Education Income/Expenditure	904	2,107
Kashrut Income/Expenditure	600	572
Shechita Fees/Expenditure	1,600	1,800
Chief Rabbinate Income/Expenditure	40	361
Beth Din Income/Expenditure	33	365
Mikveh Income/Expenditure	5	20
Burial Society Income/Expenditure	1,493	2,225
FES Receipts from Members	1,078	
FES Other Income	216	
Affiliated Synagogues	90	
Commutation for membership	72	
Rental Income	157	
Capital Receipts	505	
Building Fund Repayments	781	
Communal Activities		145
Visitation and Chaplaincy		130
Publications		15
Executive Offices		879
Advances to Constituents		735
Burial Society loan repayments		114
Loan Interest		22
FES Loan repayments		533
Pension Fund loan repayments		635
Capital Expenditure		420
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	13,779	15,349
Opening bank balances	790	7,316
Bank Interest @ 12%		892
Closing bank balances	<hr/>	<hr/>
	8,988	
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
	£23,557	£23,557

# 13

## QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE MARKET RESEARCH COMMISSIONED ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE REVIEW

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## I. SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS: GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### *United Synagogue members*

The best way to summarise the views of United Synagogue members as expressed in group discussions is by focusing on their answers to the following three questions:

#### **1. Why do United Synagogue members join?**

For those respondents seeking a traditional synagogue service and living beyond the heart of North-West London, there were few alternatives to the United Synagogue.

The non-Orthodox respondents reasons for joining the United Synagogue were more complex. Many expressed the strong wish to perpetuate authentic Judaism and the Jewish people. Even though many of the respondents themselves admitted that in their daily lives they currently did little to demonstrate their active involvement with Judaism, they expressed a deep need to identify with someone who would do it for them to prevent its demise.

The United Synagogue was the obvious body, reflecting their view of what Judaism should be, and as the largest synagogal organisation, was seen as the one with the most chance of success. The same group expressed a love for Jewish tradition and, however strong their criticisms of United Synagogue services and their feelings of exclusion from it, they nevertheless expressed even more distaste for the perceived 'church-like' character of Reform and Liberal services.

The use of United Synagogue membership as a means to being buried in a Jewish cemetery is not to be underestimated. Most respondents genuinely see their United Synagogue membership as the only means of securing their plot.

Non-Orthodox respondents also gave their parents and their children as strong reasons for joining the United Synagogue. Young married couples chose to marry in the United Synagogue out of respect for their parents. In addition, they were strongly aware that by marrying in the United synagogue they were easing the way for their children to marry wherever they please in the future.

#### **2. What aspects of the United Synagogue may incline members to leave?**

For most of the respondents, a decision to leave the United Synagogue would be very traumatic and would be made with difficulty and reluctance. Nevertheless, for many of the respondents it was certainly a very real possibility.

For the non-Orthodox respondents, the Masorti and Reform communities were definite options. For the reasonably Orthodox, Masorti was a powerful magnet.

The key areas of dissatisfaction were poor Hebrew classes and lack of social provision for teenagers. For those whose main reason for joining the United Synagogue was to keep their children within the fold, they felt that they were receiving poor value for money indeed.

For respondents who consider themselves traditional, many are annoyed by the perceived new-found extremism of the United Synagogue. For this group, Masorti synagogues are a very real attraction, especially those that still retain separate seating for men and women.

A further area of annoyance is the continued ineffectual role that women are allowed to play within the United Synagogue management structure. For these respondents, both Reform and Masorti are options.

For some of the respondents who were regular synagogue attenders, the formal and cold style of the United Synagogue with chazzan and choir has lost its appeal. For other respondents, the distance they feel from inward-looking wardens and Board of Management may incline them to experiment elsewhere. Cold and non-welcoming communities were considered the norm.

United Synagogue head office also came under considerable criticism. Respondents criticised a perceived aggressive stance by head office staff over marriage and conversion. Dayanim were felt to be removed from grass-roots. Head office was considered disorganised, financially inept and wasteful of community resources. Respondents were upset by recent cuts in education, which they felt should be given the highest priority.

### **3. What plans could be put in place to provide satisfaction and maintain members, loyalty and involvement?**

A renewed United Synagogue structure was seen as the key to revitalisation. Respondents wanted local self-management with representation across the widest spectrum of membership. A team in each community, possibly consisting of the rabbi and a professional manager, would develop community services to cover religious, social, educational and welfare needs. Community members would contribute according to their skills. Particular attention would be paid to establish quality local Hebrew classes. Youth clubs would be established to appeal to today's teenagers that would be self-managed with professional adult supervision and support. Youth leaders would be professionally trained from within the community.

A variety of alternative synagogue services would need to be developed under one roof according to taste. These may be beginners' services, explanatory services, early services or singles' services. Attention would need to be paid to the main service to ensure that all are made welcome and that a feeling of unison is somehow engendered.

United Synagogue head office would be required to retain some functions while others would become superfluous. All collection of fees would be carried out locally. The United Synagogue central role in marriage and burial remain, but respondents hoped for a more humanitarian face. Central educational curriculum development could be maintained if of a very high quality.

The Chief Rabbi's new role was seen as pivotal in maintaining religious standards across a looser grouping of synagogues. His role in setting standards for rabbis and setting objectives and targets would become fundamental.

Respondents expressed enthusiasm and optimism for this scenario, but they showed concern for smaller communities and hoped that the United Synagogue would find a way forward for them without reverting to a crippling tax and top-heavy bureaucracy.

### ***Non-United Synagogue members***

It is, of course, most interesting and important to compare the results above with the results of the 2 'street recruited' group discussions held in Edgware and Ilford respectively for non-United Synagogue members. Whereas the main research findings, as discussed, were critical but constructive and generous in outlook towards the United Synagogue, the respondents in these group discussions felt differently.

The majority of the non-United synagogue members had very negative views of their childhood experiences both in synagogue services and in Hebrew classes. For most of the men, their bar mitzvah was remembered only as a strain and their formal Jewish education ended at that time. A further common factor was the groups' lack of support for the United Synagogue ethos and its position as the major representative of authentic Judaism in Britain. Both groups expressed a distaste for what they saw as hypocrisy within the United Synagogue.

There the similarities between the two groups of non-members ended. The groups responded, in the main, in different ways to their poor early experiences. The majority of the Edgware group had actively sought out a new community experience. They looked for an environment that would present them with intellectual challenge and where they would feel free to question Jewish concepts and practice. They sought a warm community feeling for the whole family in the same way as the United Synagogue members did. The Edgware Group had constructive ideas for Hebrew classes and teenage education and thought that positive outcomes were possible within their chosen community environments (Liberal and Masorti).



In contrast, Ilford respondents reacted to poor early experiences by expressing a lack of identification with synagogue groups altogether. Some sought temporary membership in order to celebrate their sons' bar mitzvahs. Its significance appeared to be more social than religious, and on completion they were likely to leave.

Many Ilford respondents themselves had positive memories of Jewish Youth Clubs, but they seemed to think it quite understandable that their teenage children would not be associated with such clubs today. They thought it not unlikely that their children would marry out and were not overly concerned.

It can be seen through this additional research that there are at least two different responses to synagogue discontent, both of which result in a loss of membership to the United Synagogue. The research emphasises the very essential nature of the United Synagogue Review process and the importance of taking action in response to the views expressed, if the United Synagogue is to retain its position of influence within the Jewish community in the future.

*Comparing and Contrasting the Groups:* The findings amongst the United Synagogue and non-United Synagogue members showed that, contrary to expectations, there were very many similar wants and needs among regular and non-regular United Synagogue attenders. The theme that ran consistently through every group was the desire for a total community that would involve both religious and non-religious members in a warm and welcoming environment. A further common theme was an acceptance that the United Synagogue rightfully represented authentic Judaism and the desire to support it in spirit even if not in practice.

The majority of the Ilford group had little interest in synagogue life and expressed little need for it in their lives. In contrast, the majority of the Edgware group were firmly committed to the synagogue of their choice, which included Masorti, Reform and Liberal. Their needs for a total community were similar to those expressed in the eight main groups but they did not see that the United Synagogue could fulfil those needs for them.

### ***United Synagogue teenagers***

As in the main research, although the participants in the teenage group discussions were critical of the United Synagogue, they were constructive and generous in their outlook towards it.

Some of them felt that they could make their views heard in their synagogue and they knew who to speak to, whereas others did not feel that their views would be heeded. Some respondents reported having good contact with the rabbi, whilst other reactions were mixed regarding approaching him. The youth leader served as their representative for those who had access. It was clear that some of the respondents understood the synagogue structure through their own parents' involvement as wardens or board members.

Most respondents felt the synagogue could be offering more, but they did not have specific suggestions.

Female respondents, in particular, saw their bat mitzvah as a very positive experience in terms of being together as a groups and as a way of getting to know and be known as participants in the synagogue. The male respondents saw their bar mitzvah as the gateway to inclusion into the community, but also as a lot of hard work.

All the respondents felt loyal to their own particular synagogue: they liked what was familiar. Reform and Liberal synagogues were experienced as strange. In addition, all of the respondents enjoyed and appreciated the different sorts of Jewish Youth Clubs available in their area.

The most severe criticism was reserved for Hebrew classes. Poor quality teaching and staff turnover were particularly mentioned, together with boring presentation. Experiences at teenage centres were much more positive. They enjoyed the social contact as well as the opportunity for discussion.

Jewish identity was important to the respondents if they were not religious. They were proud of being Jewish despite sometimes encountering anti-Semitism. It is important to note that these respondents were unusual and atypical as most teenagers leave Jewish part-time education after bar/bat mitzvah. This group must be seen as more interested in their Judaism than most young people.

All of the respondents imagined that they would be affiliated with the United Synagogue in the future. All expected to marry Jews. Assimilation rates, however, show that their loyalty could be short-lived and that many of them could be lost to the United Synagogue and maybe even to Judaism.

The challenge to the United Synagogue, regarding this age group, seems to be how to hold on to those children who are presently committed and show much good will towards the organisation. A way must be found to encourage them to become useful members of their communities so that as adults they will remain within the United Synagogue fold.

## **SUMMARY**

Until recently the United Synagogue did not have to take any notice of competition for membership. This research has shown that although the United Synagogue has a head start as the largest synagogal body to uphold authentic Judaism, without paying serious attention to the views of today's members, that position of undisputed authority is unlikely to be maintained.

On a superficial level, the above summary may make grim reading. Respondents were highly critical of many aspects of the United Synagogue as an organisation and many were very dissatisfied with their own synagogues. On a deeper level, the results indicate, however, that the United Synagogue can be optimistic for the future. Respondents criticised the United Synagogue only in order to clear the way for positive reconstruction. They expressed a profound need for everything that the United Synagogue represents, and here they have shown a readiness to participate in its rebuilding so that it will meet the needs of the whole Jewish community in the future

## **2. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS: QUESTIONNAIRES**

### *Analysis of questionnaire survey of members (816 respondents - 54%)*

#### **Jewish characteristics of United Synagogue members**

The core of the membership (67%) consists of a group of 'traditional' Jews who are very strongly identified in an ethnic sense, observe a common set of key, family-oriented practices (e.g. Friday night candles) and have moderate to low levels of religious belief. These respondents are not strictly Orthodox, and their religious practices are driven more by a desire to belong and to engage in Jewish family life than by a sense of religious conviction.

To their left religiously is a sizeable group (23%) of less observant respondents - 'weak observers'- whose identity is also grounded in Jewish social ties and whose religious conviction is also moderate, though in some cases it is completely absent. Weak observers are more individualistic in their religious practices than traditional Jews. They place greater emphasis on the idea of a global Jewish heritage than on the centrality of Jewish family life.

The remaining 10% of respondents are 'strictly Orthodox' (*shomrei Shabbat*), having consistently high ratings on measures of belief, practice and ethnicity. For these respondents, religious practice appears to be driven primarily by fundamental belief rather than social and ethnic factors. The proportion of strictly Orthodox is higher (13%) among the younger age groups; this probably reflects an increasing tendency for younger, non-Orthodox members to join Progressive synagogues.

### **Synagogue attendance**

Compared with earlier surveys (1969, 1978), there has been a marked increase in synagogue attendance. Almost 30% of members now attend weekly or more often, with the increased participation coming from younger age groups and from female members. Gender and age biases in attendance on Shabbat morning have now almost disappeared.

### **Reasons for joining a synagogue**

In all but the strictly Orthodox group, the prime reason for joining a synagogue was to satisfy practical needs (burial rights, marriage and children's education). This was underpinned by a general desire to preserve traditional Judaism, a factor which explains the general, but weakening, resistance to joining a Progressive synagogue.

When there was a local choice of Orthodox synagogues, selection was based primarily on proximity, religious fit, warmth, quality of the minister and family ties - in that order.

### **Expectations of the synagogue and levels of satisfaction**

In accordance with their motivations for joining a synagogue, respondents rate practical services (burial, marriage, Hebrew classes, weekly services) far ahead of spiritual, moral or welfare functions in terms of the importance that should be attached to them. In general, respondents perceive the quality of services to be good, with those judged to be most important receiving the highest ratings for quality. There is an exception in the case of youth activities, which are judged to be important, but not of high quality.

### **Attitudes to the synagogue service**

Within a generally positive view of the synagogue service, there was a wide difference of opinion about the desirability of change. Substantial numbers of respondents favoured - but similar numbers opposed - the introduction of: same-level seating for men and women; shorter services; more intimate services; explanatory services; and more effort to welcome congregants. In general, members of the traditional sub-group were most resistant to change, while the weak observers were the most enthusiastic. However, attitudes were so variable that there was no single package of changes likely to satisfy an identifiable sub-group of the membership. A variety of different kinds of service would be needed to attract non-attenders without distancing the current set of regular attenders.

### **Expectations of the rabbi and levels of satisfaction**

In contrast to the very practical goals laid down for the synagogue, rabbis were expected first and foremost to set the moral tone, to counsel and listen, to create a sense of community, to raise educational standards and to respond to new ideas. However, they were judged to be better at operational tasks (e.g. reading from the Torah) than at tasks requiring dynamic religious and communal leadership. Thus, for example, respondents rated the ability to create a strong sense of community as being very important (3rd in a set of 16 functions), but not well performed (10th out of 16).

### **The overall style and approach of the synagogue**

Although synagogues are seen as being relatively effective as providers of services, they are not well rated on more qualitative dimensions. Less than half the respondents give synagogues a 'high' rating on courtesy, and there is progressively weaker enthusiasm for their performance on the following scales (in order): openness and democracy; standard of communication; value for money; vibrancy and capacity to innovate. There is a tendency for those more involved in synagogue life to give higher ratings, but overall synagogues are clearly regarded as being rather unresponsive and lacking in vibrancy.

### **The characteristics of potential leavers**

About one-third of the respondents had considered leaving their synagogue at some stage. The most common reasons, in order of frequency, were: high fees; a feeling of being excluded for social or religious reasons; and a desire for a more relaxed religious style (e.g. mixed seating, equal treatment of women).

The most likely to have considered leaving were young, well-qualified people belonging to a larger synagogue and preferring a smaller, more intimate service. Among respondents with a postgraduate degree, 50% said they had considered leaving at some time.

About 60% of potential leavers would move to a non-Orthodox synagogue, mainly Reform, but a high proportion (17%) listed Masorti as their likely destination. The remainder would move to another Orthodox synagogue; there was no evidence of a significant desire to move to right-wing or chassidic communities.

### **Attitudes to Jewish education - full- versus part-time**

Parental enthusiasm for full-time Jewish education, particularly at primary level, has increased substantially since data was last collected in 1978. More than 40% of parents prefer Jewish to non-Jewish primary schools, although at secondary level the proportion is lower, at 26%. Parents who attended a Jewish primary had more positive attitudes towards Jewish primary schooling for their children, whereas attendance at a Jewish secondary school had only a limited impact. This suggests the possibility of a steadily increasing gap between the demand for Jewish primary and Jewish secondary schooling.

The main reason for rejecting Jewish schooling was the strongly perceived need for children to mix with all sections of society and avoid segregation. At secondary level this view was reinforced by concern about academic standards.

### **Attitudes to Hebrew classes**

Respondents saw the main purpose of Hebrew classes as meeting practical goals (learning to read, preparation for bar mitzvah) and encouraging children to mix with Jews. Within these terms, parents were relatively satisfied with the standards. However, the more Orthodox parents, and those more concerned with intrinsic development, gave lower ratings. There was also a general criticism of the emphasis placed on Jewish schooling at the expense of the part-time system.

About 30% of parents expressed willingness to pay an additional fee to secure high-quality Jewish education and there was strong support for a shift to local management of Hebrew classes.

### **Adult education for synagogue members**

Only 11% of the respondents participated in synagogue adult education programmes and these were mainly members of the Orthodox (38%) and traditional (10%) groups. Ratings of quality were generally high, but with a tendency for the Orthodox to be more appreciative than traditional respondents. The rating of 'intellectual standard of teaching' produced particularly large differences between the two groups, suggesting that this characteristic might be an obstacle to the greater involvement of non-Orthodox members.

There was a high level of support for the idea of making the synagogue a base for a wide range of secular educational activity in line with the concept of a 'total community'.

### **Perceptions of United Synagogue central services**

The respondents' opinions of a selection of key services (burial, kashrut, Chief Rabbinate, Beth Din and education) were generally favourable. The Beth Din and education received somewhat lower ratings, but even here less than a third of those with an opinion gave a 'poor' rating. Similarly, there was general satisfaction with the efficiency and courtesy experienced by respondents following direct dealings with central departments. This suggests that complaints are normally voiced more loudly than approval.

### **The United Synagogue as a changing institution**

Respondents do not have a clear impression of the current direction of change within the United Synagogue. In so far as there is a consensus, it is one that sees the organisation as becoming less well managed, less compassionate and more right wing at a time when the dissatisfied element of the membership is moving to the left. An unfortunate finding is that these negative perceptions are stronger among the more involved respondents than among the weak observers.

Respondents had a clear vision of how they would like the United Synagogue to change and a strong feeling that survival of the organisation would depend on it. The main desire of those who argued for change was for a more open, non-judgemental religious style: one that would preserve Orthodox Judaism while welcoming and valuing all members of the community, including the less observant, middle-of-the-road members. The key issue was seen as reversing the trend to the right and preventing the marginalisation of the non-Orthodox.

At an organisational level there was a strong plea for decentralisation of financial and educational functions, increasing accountability to the membership and a radical approach to financial management based on a market-driven philosophy. There was some evidence that a differential pricing policy based on the use of particular services and facilities could be sustained.

### ***Analysis of survey of former members***

The three hundred questionnaires distributed to individuals who were thought to have left the United Synagogue brought only forty-eight responses, of which only twenty-six regarded themselves as 'leavers'. Therefore the results of this survey cannot be regarded as statistically accurate. However, some trends are discernible.

Of the 26 genuine respondents, 13 could be classified as 'weak observers', 3 as 'strictly Orthodox' and 10 as 'traditional'. This contrasts with the overall make-up of the membership, of which 67% are in the 'traditional' category. The proportion of leavers with higher education credentials was also larger than the general figure.

The most commonly advanced reasons for leaving were inability to afford the fees, preference for Reform/Masorti and moving house. Others included right-wing establishment attitudes and an unwelcoming atmosphere. The predominant trend amongst leavers was to the left, with 9 respondents leaving to join Masorti or Progressive communities, 12 leaving affiliation completely and only 5 respondents leaving to join other Orthodox synagogues.

## II. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The market research was carried out in two phases - qualitative and quantitative. It was designed to allow United Synagogue members to contribute their views in a structured way, thus contributing to the future development of the organisation.

The purpose of the research was to explore attitudes towards:

1. Jewish identity, beliefs and practice
2. general ethos, perceived goals, activities and funding
3. the format and style of the synagogue service
4. the synagogue as house of prayer versus community centre
5. the skills/qualities of rabbis, professionals and lay leaders
6. the services provided by the synagogue such as adult and children's education (day and part-time), bar/bat mitzvah, marriage and burial
7. information available to members and methods of communication
8. social, cultural and welfare functions of the synagogue
9. the costs of synagogue membership and charitable activities
10. charging for individual activities
11. alternative synagogues or forms of religious affiliation

### **Methodology**

The research was divided into qualitative and quantitative phases. The qualitative phase entailed in-depth discussion with groups of United Synagogue members and some former members, to extract from the respondents those issues that were of key concern to them.

The quantitative research entailed a sample survey of current and recent members of the United Synagogue. The purpose of this phase of the research was to test the attitudes and ideas revealed by the qualitative research on a representative sample of the community, to examine how these attitudes vary among different sub-groups of the membership of the United Synagogue and to analyse patterns of religious practice and belief among members.

Some groups of non-United Synagogue members were questioned in order to understand the differences that exist between members and non-members. It was also decided to supplement the main research by reaching United Synagogue affiliated teenagers in order to ascertain their views as future 'consumers'.

### **Fieldwork Design**

The fieldwork was divided into five different sections as follows:

#### **Attitudes among United Synagogue members**

Eight group discussions were conducted covering a spread of United Synagogue communities, ages of participants and frequency of synagogue attendance.

*Community Types:* Eight geographical areas were suggested as representative of different community types: Barnet, Finchley, Hendon, Kenton, Kingston, Ilford, Pinner and West Hampstead.

*Stages in the Life Cycle:* For group discussion to be fruitful, respondents in each group needed to be homogeneous, with similar needs from their synagogue membership. Consequently, groups were selected according to their religious commitment and according to phases in the life cycle of the synagogue member.

Although each group covered those topics relevant to its particular stage in the life-cycle, many topics were discussed in every group with varying focuses. A discussion guide was prepared in order to cover the relevant issues, but questions were of a very open-ended and broad nature. The groups were mixed, but only in one group did couples attend. Groups for non-synagogue-attenders were held off synagogue premises. Whilst synagogue personnel were involved in identifying suitable participants, no group was observed and the discussions were held on the basis of confidentiality.

*Recruitment of respondents:* Synagogue rabbis and their offices and honorary officers co-operated by passing on the telephone numbers of respondents who matched the above criteria.

### **Attitudes among non-United Synagogue members**

Two discussion groups were planned for non-United Synagogue members to serve as an exploratory study, one in North and the other in North-West London. Local public libraries served as independent venues.

These groups were recruited through entirely independent channels, in contrast to the members groups, which had been enlisted through synagogue channels. This was achieved using a professional recruitment agency. Recruitment was carried out both in the street and through unofficial telephone leads. The criteria to merit an invitation to the groups were: that the respondents considered themselves Jewish; that the respondents were not members of the United Synagogue nor any synagogue to the right of it; that the respondents were approximately aged 25-50. Most participants had a Jewish partner and children.

### **Attitudes among United Synagogue teenagers**

Four discussion groups were planned for the children of United Synagogue members to serve as an exploratory study. Two groups took place in North London where 5 synagogues were represented, and in North-West London, where 5 different synagogues were represented. The interviews took place at teenage centres on a Sunday morning when groups of children were randomly selected by the head teachers. Young people who attend teenage centre are a more committed group of teenagers than most, since the majority of Hebrew class attenders leave after bar/bat mitzvah. It should be kept in mind therefore that the young people who opt to go to a teenage centre are not representative of all United Synagogue teenagers.

Respondents were both boys and girls, although each group contained a majority of boys. They were aged 13 and 14.

### **Postal survey of 1,500 United Synagogue members**

The postal survey was designed to assess the ethnic and religious characteristics of United Synagogue members and to examine their attitudes to local synagogues and to the United Synagogue as an organisation.

The survey was based on a fourteen-page self-completion questionnaire distributed to a random sample of 1,500 members and their spouses; the findings reflect the views of the 816 respondents (a 54% response rate).

A critical factor in postal surveys is the extent to which the respondents are representative of the population being sampled. Although the original sample was a random one and although a reasonable response rate was achieved, one cannot rule out the possibility of bias arising from differences between respondents and non-respondents. To some extent this can be assessed by looking at the trend in the pattern of responses as a function of the delay in replying to the survey. In the present case there were no significant trends apart from a tendency for late respondents (those replying after a reminder letter) to be marginally older and slightly less involved in synagogue life than those who replied more promptly. Such people are therefore under-represented in the sample and we have, as a result, drawn attention to any findings that are significantly related to age or level of involvement. The sample taken was judged to be sufficiently representative for the purposes of the review.

In general the differences that are described in the research report - for example between males and females or between young and old respondents - are statistically reliable: they are unlikely to have arisen by chance. In cases where a reported difference is *not* statistically significant, attention was drawn to that fact.

### **Postal survey of 300 ex-members**

Using the United Synagogue membership records, a modified questionnaire was sent to 300 individuals who were thought to have left the organisation. 48 responses were received, but, of these only 26 respondents regarded themselves as 'leavers'. The results, whilst indicating some general trends cannot be regarded in a statistical sense as significant.

### **III. RESEARCH REPORTS**

#### **PHASE 1: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH (GROUP DISCUSSIONS)**

The qualitative phase of the market research was designed and carried out by Dr Judith Citron. Dr Citron is Director of Dialog, a research agency specialising in in-depth customer feedback. Her clients include government and commercial organisations that are concerned to provide customer-led products and services. Dr Citron has published two books and is a member of the Association of Qualitative Research Practitioners and the Market Research Society.

#### **REPORT 1. ATTITUDES AMONG UNITED SYNAGOGUE MEMBERS**

##### **CONTENTS**

- 1. The organisation of the findings**
- 2. The desire for a total community**
- 3. The synagogue: problems, comparisons and alternatives**
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- 5. Jewish education: formal and informal**
- 6. The United Synagogue as an organisation**

#### **REPORT 2. ATTITUDES AMONG NON-UNITED SYNAGOGUE MEMBERS**

##### **CONTENTS**

- 1. The Ilford Respondents**
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#### **REPORT 3. ATTITUDES AMONG UNITED SYNAGOGUE TEENAGERS**

##### **CONTENTS**

- 1. The North London respondents**
- 2. The North-West London respondents**



# REPORT 1. ATTITUDES AMONG UNITED SYNAGOGUE MEMBERS

## 1 THE ORGANISATION OF THE FINDINGS

### Looking beyond individual communities

On reading this report it must be remembered that the purpose of the qualitative phase of the research was to create an environment that would enable United Synagogue members to raise the whole gamut of issues that are of concern to them. Respondents were asked not to become too deeply embroiled in local personalities or personal grievances but to extract the principles involved and to look creatively at needs and wants. Clearly, local issues formed the background in some measure for many of the groups but, in the main, respondents rose to the challenge. Respondents expressed varying degrees of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their own rabbi/Hebrew classes/facilities/boards of management, etc. but it was not the purpose of this project to highlight individual community issues. Instead, the report extracts a wide range of key concerns so that they may serve as a checklist for synagogues to carry out a process of self-analysis and assessment. The results should enable synagogues to hold similar discussion groups in their own communities to establish local priorities.

As was described earlier, considerable attention was paid to the constitution of the groups. The groups were designed to cover a cross-section of synagogues by size, character and geographical area. In addition, groups were arranged for respondents at similar stages in the life cycle as well as distinguishing between regular and non-regular synagogue attenders. This differentiation enabled some variation in focus according to needs and it ensured the widest coverage of issues and attitudes. It will be noted in the presentation of the results that the attitudes of individual discussion groups are not often reported. It is not the place of qualitative research to attach significance to any differences across the groups. Armed with the wide range of issues raised in this research, it is intended that the quantitative research that will follow will examine the significance of any differences.

Instead, the reporting of the results is more oriented towards the varying needs of segments of the community. For example, where the needs of regular versus non-regular synagogue attenders appear to present different challenges, these are highlighted.

Individual group attitudes are rarely reported; nevertheless, when one grand message emerges from eight discussion groups so strongly, it is worth highlighting. In this case it was the vision for a total community and this indeed is the content of the next chapter in which presentation of the detailed findings begins. The report will show in greater detail how neither age nor attendance patterns appeared to influence the common desire for a community for all: older members were as concerned that youth activities be given priority as parents of teenagers themselves and young parents viewed the community centre as ideally providing as much for themselves as for older members.

### All experiences matter: both first-hand and second-hand

It will be noted, when reading this report, that it is not always made clear whether respondents are reporting from first- or second-hand experience. Indeed it is not usually important. Opinions expressed represent current views, whether they are well-founded or not. Individuals adopt other people's opinions if they feel that there is a germ of truth in them. They may even become embellished and will be even harder to shift. Therefore all attitudes are an indication of the psychological barriers that exist, and whether based on real experience, or on views gleaned from friends or the media, all of them need to be faced.

## 2 THE DESIRE FOR A TOTAL COMMUNITY

### **The need to feel welcome is uppermost**

*Synagogues: social more than religious*

At the start of each group discussion, respondents were asked to tell their group about all the synagogues that they had had some contact with, to say which they had liked best and to highlight the main differences. The key differentiator for most respondents was whether they had felt welcome and 'at home'. There was a strong implication that the social interaction that takes place during or after synagogue is of key importance to both regular and non-regular synagogue attenders. It often appeared that the purpose of many synagogue visits was in order to meet fellow Jews rather than to pray. The often repeated praise for a service that is over quickly may confirm this suspicion. When it became clear that the respondents were persisting in judging synagogues according to the presence or absence of a warm and friendly feeling, respondents were expressly asked to consider which synagogues provided the best religious experience. Direct answers to this request were not forthcoming. Indirectly, respondents indicated that the religious dimension of any service was enhanced when they felt comfortable and accepted within the community.

Little mention was made of God in any of the eight discussion groups. It was a glaring omission. The notion that belief in God was a necessary pre-condition for going to synagogue was mentioned by only one respondent. Discussion on belief in Jewish law and tradition raised more interest. The United Synagogue certainly stood for tradition in the eyes of many respondents, and the desire for the continuity of that tradition appeared stronger than consideration of the place of God.

The closest that respondents came to discussion of religious aspects of synagogue attendance was the uplift experienced from rousing singing. This could have been an expression of spiritual uplift or, not unlikely, an expression of togetherness and belonging.

*Community means a feeling of belonging*

Three of the eight discussion groups consisted of regular synagogue attenders, four consisted of non-regular attenders and one was mixed. It would not be surprising (although inexcusable) if non-attenders feel like outsiders when they enter a synagogue. It is, however, certainly of concern that regular synagogue attenders express a very similar view. The following sections survey the perceived reasons for this feeling of the exclusiveness of an inner and inward-looking synagogue core.

### **Laying the blame: cliquy synagogue management**

*Wardens hard-working but autocratic*

Respondents were aware that many wardens were extremely hard-working and devoted to the synagogue cause. Nevertheless, they were considered to be inward looking, cliquy and autocratic. There was criticism of local synagogue management in all of the eight groups. However, the groups of non-attenders and of younger members were markedly more negative. The board of management was often considered to merely provide a 'rubber stamp' to the decisions of the wardens.

Respondents were fully aware that the system of appointing wardens and boards of management was democratic and were bemused by the fact that there appeared to be limited turnover among boards and wardens. A resistance from the majority of members to putting themselves forward is entirely consistent with the feeling of being an outsider. Several respondents also indicated that they had offered assistance over the years and their offers had met with rejection. Respondents expressed suspicion of the 'democratic' nature of the voting procedure, raising vote rigging and the 'Gentlemen's Club' as not uncommon occurrences. It is immaterial whether such occurrences are real

or merely perceived, as they are certainly powerful enough to deter any but the most determined.

### *Rotate wardens and board members, and widen trawl*

Solutions to these problems were put forward. Some respondents thought that United Synagogue by-laws had recently been changed to ensure that no warden held office for more than six years. Clarification of this by-law was later sought from Woburn House. Had the details been known during the discussion groups, they would have elicited many cynical responses. The clarification revealed that this by-law, enacted in 1989, is not retroactive, so that the earliest it can be put into effect is 1995. Respondents would certainly be most disappointed if they knew that there was a let-out clause for a long-standing warden to continue in office if no-one else puts himself forward. A similar ruling, effectively enforced, was felt to be desirable in order to rotate membership of the board of management.

Most respondents assumed that in order to be a warden or member of the board of management one has to be Orthodox. Accurate or otherwise, such a view will clearly exclude even very many regular synagogue attenders. The feeling was expressed that the trawl for suitable candidates was not wide enough and that representation from a wider cross-section of the community needs to be actively sought.

### **Laying the blame: lack of women office-holders**

The weak position of women in United Synagogue management was of concern to most of the respondents (not only to the women). The image of women as only competent for the ladies guild is unhelpful. Recent changes to enable women to serve on a Council of Management to 'advise' the Board of Management were felt to be weak and inadequate. The added complication that a woman on the Council of Management needs to pay extra fees if not a member in her own right was heavily criticised. These issues are raised again in section 5.3, but while discussing the need for community involvement here, it was considered very unhelpful to disenfranchise over half of the members. It must be stressed that whereas there is religious sympathy for separate seating, respondents could not accept that women needed to be excluded from management roles.

### **Laying the blame: synagogue size?**

There was general agreement that a smaller community is likely to be warmer and more friendly than a larger one. Kinloss Gardens epitomised a large community and Kingston a smaller one. Respondents, however, did not accept large size as a reasonable excuse for a cold atmosphere. Some respondents had experienced large but friendly communities. West London Reform Synagogue was cited. Formal structures such as a 'hospitality committee' were thought to be in place and would be necessary in a large community, whereas in a small community informal welcoming may work sufficiently well. Respondents were not aware of any formal welcoming procedures in their own communities and they felt there was certainly a need for such procedures.

Affiliation to the United Synagogue as such could not be blamed for unfriendliness, as there were copious examples brought of unfriendly independent communities. There was some indication that Londoners were inclined to be cold but many examples were given of warm London communities and cold provincial ones.

Clearly, the preoccupation with being made welcome is an indication that some guidelines based on examples of good practice should be circulated.

### **Laying the blame: the style of the service**

Attitudes towards the synagogue service are discussed further on in this report. However, synagogue services and community feeling are not always easy to disentangle. The attempt, in this section, to report respondents' desire for the synagogue

as a total community rather than just as a house of prayer would not be complete without mentioning that there are aspects of the United Synagogue service that make a community feeling more difficult to create. The presence of a choir and chazzan is a distancing factor for those who prefer communal singing. The separate seating of men and women is clearly another example. Other factors are mentioned later. The existence of these difficulties in the eyes of the respondents did not always imply that they expected them to be radically changed but there was an expectation that they be recognised as barriers to warmth and togetherness and confronted constructively.

### **Laying the blame: fuzzy direction**

The emphasis on community feeling that emerged so strongly from all eight discussion groups raised fundamental questions about the function of the synagogue. The respondents wanted far more than a house of prayer and even more than a provider of religious education. Is it possible that few synagogue boards of management together with their rabbi and chazzan meet to define their purpose? None of the respondents had ever been asked before to express their synagogue needs. Is it possible that wardens, boards of management and religious leaders are so weighed down with the day-to-day demands of running the synagogue that they have little time for discussion of purpose and direction? Mention will be made of job descriptions and measurable targets, but even before these can be established, a synagogue needs a clear statement of objectives ('mission statement' in any other context). It is very likely that establishing the synagogue as a centre for total community involvement will emerge for many as a key purpose.

The next sections describe the visions of the eight group discussions for a total community.

### **The synagogue complex as a hive of community activity**

Respondents envisaged a thriving community centre with a library, a crèche, a play group, a nursery school, and a range of classes from cookery to keep fit for all ages. The centre would provide a base for all local youth activities, whether synagogue-affiliated or not, whether religious or not. They felt it should provide a base for Brownies, for Hanoar Hatzioni as well as Bnei Akiva and Study Groups. The community centre could field a football team, chess teams and a bridge team. Welfare activities and charity groups would also be part of the scene. Everything short of a swimming pool - and that was wanted too if only the money could be found.

Respondents' vision for their ideal community was one of 'cradle to grave' caring, activity and involvement. Respondents considered very few United Synagogues as providing such a model. Reform communities were perceived to be more successful and Masorti communities were thought to be developing along similar lines. Women were known to have a significant management role in these communities, and this was considered to be a positive contributory factor.

#### *Criticism of current closed doors*

Some respondents were pessimistic about the potential for progress towards total community life among United Synagogues without a significant change in attitude and practice. Some United Synagogues were criticised for their closed-door policies. Examples were cited of Jewish groups that approached United Synagogues with requests to use their premises being turned down. Respondents assumed that they were turned down on two grounds: fear of damage to United Synagogue property and/or uncertainty as to the halakhic Jewishness of those who may attend. There was no sympathy at all with the former excuse.

#### *The need for an open-door policy*

The second excuse was indeed seen as a real problem, but one which had to be cast aside in the interests of the majority. It was felt to have been a brake on community development for many years, and the United Synagogue could no longer hide behind it.

This problem will be raised again in the chapter on youth issues, but suffice it to say here that respondents felt pessimistic about the future of the United Synagogue until it could open its doors wide, particularly to the youth, with no preconditions. Most respondents felt that they would prefer their teenagers to mix on synagogue premises even if only 90% attending are halakhically Jewish, than that their teenagers should go to the local pub where 90% would not be Jewish at all. It was felt that until the United Synagogue came face to face with this issue, the pub, street corner or local Reform youth group would be more likely venues for United Synagogue youth. This argument is only strengthened by adding that the respondents had a great respect for the role of the United Synagogue in clearly defining 'who is a Jew', but to take this issue to the doors of the Youth Club was considered to be self-defeating and short-sighted.

#### *Activities with Jewish content and without*

Not every United Synagogue was castigated for a closed-door policy. Models of good practice were cited: Hendon, Pinner and Stanmore were examples of communities that were buzzing with activities. Respondents' vision was for a mix of activities for all ages, including activities with Jewish content and activities without it. Respondents felt strongly that the synagogue should provide a social framework for members whose main concern was meeting fellow Jews and who had no interest in synagogue services or Jewish education. Within a social framework, members who feel no religious pulls may be drawn to fund-raising activities and/or welfare projects and may even eventually be drawn to Jewish education.

#### **Self-management as the key to broadening involvement**

Respondents, in creating their ideal community, were content for the rabbi or the board of management to act as catalysts. In fact they saw this as their key role. They wanted them to use their first-hand knowledge of community members to tap members' skills and interests and invite a wide spread of members to initiate activities. Where first-hand knowledge about the members of the community does not exist, there is a need to go to considerable lengths to gather it. Respondents saw the community at large as a repository of willingness and skills, themselves included. Where members feel 'different' in some way to the stereotypical 'macher', they are unlikely to offer their services but may succumb to persuasion that hits the right chord. Many respondents expressed an interest in initiating some special-interest activity but feared rejection.

Respondents who expressed a wish to initiate activities, however, had some preconditions. They wanted freedom to organise themselves without interference and without control by the Board of Management. For example, the discussion group which took place in Ilford among young marrieds who rarely attend synagogue, spoke responsibly of the idea of a 'Young Marrieds' group in the area meeting for social gatherings or for some other clearer purpose. However, they wished to run the group for themselves and by themselves and define their purpose and programme according to the tastes of those attending. There is no implication in these demands that such a group would want to dissociate itself from the synagogue. On the contrary, inviting the leaders of all such interest groups to meet to discuss common concerns such as use of the premises, security, etc. would be seen as desirable, but on the understanding that all interest groups are equal and independent.

There were respondents within the groups who had contributed in the past to synagogue activities: who had given time willingly or had opened their houses for a synagogue gathering. Such contributions were given wholeheartedly, but there were complaints that thanks were never received. It must be taken into account that we all need to be needed and, if communities are to develop as centres of activity, using a wider network of volunteers, a mechanism of recognition whether formal or informal may need to be in place.

## **Keeping in touch: a variety of approaches**

There are various means of keeping in touch with synagogue members. The minimum standard of communication is through some form of synagogue newsletter that will inform members of future programmes, describe recent events and provide a variety of contact names and telephone numbers for the various services, needs and activities. This minimal means of communication was certainly not in place in every synagogue represented among the respondents.

Ideally, a synagogue newsletter will look professional and attractive and should appeal to all members, including those who have little interest in the religious aspects of their synagogue. Unfortunately, perhaps because of limited budgets or lack of empathy or imagination, not all synagogue newsletters appeal to all members and some newsletters may in fact succeed in further distancing many members.

Alongside a quality newsletter, various other approaches were required. Letters of invitation to attend specific activities would be welcome, appealing to particular groups that do not look like 'boring' synagogue communications. Notification of special events was required. Members in Ilford had been most disappointed to hear after the event that the Chief Rabbi had addressed their community. Many members, especially young people, do not read the *Jewish Chronicle* and would therefore not be helped by the traditional *Jewish Chronicle* announcement.

The most powerful communication, however, is the telephone call. The recipient feels known and noted by a telephone request. Clearly, telephone approaches will not always be effective (especially if for fund-raising) but if the member can be made to feel that they have a contribution and that contribution is important, then a telephone call may be very effective. The comparative ease with which these discussion groups were recruited, even among those who have little contact with their community, was proof that members can be responsive and are searching for a place in the community.

## **3 THE SYNAGOGUE: PROBLEMS, COMPARISONS AND ALTERNATIVES**

### **Synagogue services: problems shared by attenders and non-attenders**

In the previous chapter, where the respondents' needs for a total community are aired, it is noted that there is surprisingly little distance between the views of regular synagogue attenders and irregular attenders. In this section, where attitudes to the synagogue service are reviewed, again it can be seen that many of the messages conveyed by the respondents are similar for all patterns of synagogue attendance. It is useful to divide the discussion into widely expressed views that did not depend on familiarity with the service and those views that are a result of a lack of familiarity with the service.

#### *Cold atmosphere*

The desire among the respondents for a warm, friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the synagogue was a recurrent theme. It would be too easy to blame the non-attenders by saying that if only they went to synagogue more often they would feel more 'at home'. This line of reasoning is inadequate to explain why so many regular synagogue attenders, even at their own synagogue, can feel the atmosphere to be cold and not welcoming. Even more stark were descriptions of cold services attended as visitors by those for whom the content of the service presents no barrier. It takes little imagination to understand the estrangement described by those respondents who cannot follow a service at all.

#### *Formal yet lacking in decorum*

According to taste, some respondents favour a more formal service and others indicate a preference for an informal service. Most respondents concluded that the standard

United Synagogue format was unlikely to provide either type of service satisfactorily. For those liking a formal service, today's chazzan is not considered to provide a performance of professional quality. Respondents complained of poor enunciation and poor acoustics, and for the few who still enjoy a semi-professional choir, those that once existed, as at Hampstead Synagogue, are now officially frowned upon and the change has become symbolic of the United Synagogue's move 'to the right'.

Belying all attempts at formality, the reading of the Law fails to keep respondents' attention. The distant activity of the bimah is not involving and a further demonstration of the exclusivity of the club. The establishment of smaller alternative services, as will be described, comes close to solving this problem.

But just as there is some misplaced attempt at a formal service, informal aspects equally fail to appeal. Informality manifests itself most strikingly in a lack of decorum, which is not appreciated. The acceptability of conversing during much of the service results in alienating those irregular attenders and visitors who do not have anyone to converse with. If conversation were between regular attender and newcomer, many respondents might welcome these overtures. But in general conversation is among friends.

#### *A taste for communal singing and more explanations*

Respondents who favour an informal service, seek rousing singing, removal of all elements of a performance (including canonicals) and a steady consistent speed. Most traditional United Synagogue services do not fulfil these criteria. Many of the alternative services described below do attempt to fulfil these requirements.

Surprisingly, as many regular synagogue attenders as irregular attenders among the respondents made requests for explanations to be interspersed in the service. Although some who want explanations would be enthusiastic about an alternative explanatory service, others were keen to retain the traditional structure within the main synagogue but to intersperse some explanations in English to provide a regular focus and points of interest.

#### **Synagogue services: problems specific to non-attenders**

##### *Hebrew, noisy and long*

Very predictably, a synagogue service that is predominantly in Hebrew makes it difficult for irregular attenders to follow and feel involved. An atmosphere of togetherness could compensate if it were uplifting, but the irregular attender sees only what looks like a lack of respect and an inner circle busy with their own activities. The sermon is considered important, in theory, as the only part of the service that is in English, but unfortunately the non-attenders among the respondents could not relate to the content of most sermons.

Although poor decorum bothers all synagogue attenders in theory, the problem is more real for the irregular attenders. First of all, they may not be able to join in with the general hubbub if they have come on their own. Secondly, they enter synagogue with a greater sense of awe, with expectations for order and decorum. They expressed distaste for what appears to them to be evidence of lack of respect for the service. Perhaps surprisingly, the more disciplined and formal style of Reform and Liberal service was not seen as the answer. Respondents considered those services too English and church-like.

A recurrent theme among respondents who attend synagogue irregularly was a feeling of claustrophobia in synagogue. They are impatient for the service to end to enable them to 'get out'. The service is described as long and boring.

The proliferation of different types of siddur was not considered helpful and the old Singer's translation was regarded as making the prayers appear irrelevant to the twentieth century. Requests were made for the Art Scroll Siddur to be widely available. It was considered to provide an excellent self-learning text.

Some irregular attenders among the respondents movingly described the traumas of coming to a weekday morning service to say kaddish if they have forgotten how to put on tephillin.

### **Women's issues: separate seating but greater management role**

There appeared to be few respondents who, given entirely free choice unshackled by halakhah, would choose separate seating for men and women in the synagogue. It is seen as a contributory factor to the non-welcoming atmosphere - husband or wife forced, perhaps, to sit on their own. It was thought to be strange, given the stress within Judaism on family cohesiveness. It is considered to cause distress among the growing numbers of single parents who may not be able to sit with their children. It is thought to exacerbate the often expressed notion that 'women are second-class citizens' by positioning them away from the action upstairs or behind a curtain. Looking to a future ageing community, forcing women to climb stairs was considered impractical.

#### *Need for mechitzah ruling: as low as possible*

All of the above factors were raised as serious problems. But, in all but one of the group discussions, overall, the respondents' affection for Jewish tradition led them to conclude that they appreciate that the United Synagogue could not and should not compromise on this issue. However, as in other areas of halakhah, respondents express deep-felt pleas to the authorities for the sensitive and creative development of halakhic interpretation. For example, respondents expressed confusion over the matter of the mechitzah. They cited inconsistencies. They are convinced that there must be lenient rulings on height. Respondents also expressed the wish that they be informed of the background and reasoning for halakhic decisions made. As mentioned below, the United Synagogue is considered always to choose the strictest rulings in keeping with a body of rabbis considered to be moving consistently to the right. Respondents felt that the United Synagogue of twenty years ago would take the approach of the Masorti movement today.

Although respondents were aware that the physical structure of most synagogues prevented much change in the positioning of the women's section, they nevertheless showed a preference for seating the women's and men's blocks next to each other rather than one behind the other or one above the other. Where attendance on Shabbat was poor in large buildings, bringing the whole community downstairs on separate sides was thought to be desirable. Ideally, any mechitzah in such circumstances would be as low as possible.

#### *Women into management but not necessarily prayer groups*

Although most respondents could accept separate seating as part of halakhah and part of a tradition that they respect, they nevertheless criticised any marginalising of women in other areas of synagogue management. There was some feeling that there was little will to allow women to enter the 'gentlemen's club', and this brought expressions of anger.

It is interesting to note that only a small minority among the women respondents were interested in women's prayer groups. There was more interest in allowing women to give shiurim, from within the synagogue at the end of the service, as is done in Yakar and in Masorti synagogues. The Masorti customs for bat mitzvah ceremonies were regarded as more equal to the boys' bar mitzvah ceremony and, as such, more acceptable than the United Synagogue's typical group ceremony, often held on a Sunday. Again, lenient halakhic rulings, explanations and sources were required.

The minority views expressed by the Ilford group of irregular synagogue attenders must be presented. Although this was not the only group of non-attenders, the participants were very much further away from Judaism and the community than the other groups of irregular attenders. Orthodox Judaism, in their eyes, marginalises women and considers women to be second-class citizens. All had recently married in the United Synagogue and had been insensitively introduced to the mikveh and the laws of family purity. This



confirmed for them Judaism's entrenched attitude towards women as 'unworthy and unclean'. These views were echoed in more extreme terms by the discussion group also held in Ilford among non-United Synagogue Jews, some of whom had married in United Synagogue and many of whose parents had been members of United Synagogue.

### **Comparisons with other synagogue groups**

#### *Federation of Synagogues*

The Federation of Synagogues was not raised frequently among respondents either to praise or fault it. Respondents expressed wonderment at the seemingly quiet way the Federation is currently proceeding, without the poor press received by the United Synagogue. The occasional small Federation community was praised for its warmth. Criticism was levelled at the duplication of services such as kashrut and the Beth Din, but such duplication was usually considered to be the fault of the United Synagogue not of the Federation. Federation synagogue fees were thought to be lower than United Synagogue fees.

#### *Masorti*

The growing Masorti movement was considered to be a very attractive alternative to the United Synagogue. The Masorti was thought to provide just the right combination of respect for halakhah with a modern outlook. Masorti was considered 'less bigoted, less reactionary and less hypocritical than United Synagogue'. United Synagogue rabbis, in comparison, it was felt, spent too much time 'looking over their shoulders' in fear of 'other rabbis' censure. Those respondents who favoured Masorti were not in favour of the move towards mixed seating that some of the newer Masorti communities have made.

The temptation to join the Masorti movement, with its traditional service, greater community feeling and equal place for women, provided some of the respondents with deep feelings of inner conflict. Those respondents would clearly remain with the United Synagogue if only it could provide that feeling of progress within tradition that Masorti appears to generate.

Masorti was known to be making progress with a network of youth clubs. If United Synagogue makes little visible progress with its youth work, the conflict of loyalties will be lessened and the decision to join forces with Masorti will be made easier. Respondents expressed anger at the United Synagogue's lack of action in this area.

#### *Reform synagogues*

There was considerable first-hand and second-hand experience of the Reform movement among the respondents. On the positive side, they like the orderly nature of the service, the togetherness that results from reciting in unison, the set and well-signposted text which makes the service easier to follow, the better decorum and the shorter length.

On the negative side, many felt that the atmosphere was too church-like and Anglicised. Overall, most respondents preferred a United Synagogue service for providing a familiar and traditional service. Those respondents who attend irregularly feel more comfortable with the traditions that they remember from their childhood even if they cannot understand the content and feel somewhat removed. Nevertheless, it was felt that there were lessons that could be learnt from Reform services that might improve aspects of United Synagogue services without detracting from tradition. For example, a straightforward text and guide to the text including the repetitions was suggested. More communal singing is often requested, as will be seen below when alternative services are described. These aspects, in addition to being worthwhile in themselves, would automatically improve decorum.

As has been discussed, although mixed seating is seen to have certain advantages, respondents had no desire for the United Synagogue to change its ruling. Women rabbis were not considered to have a place within Judaism.

Although respondents were critical of the church-like style of Reform synagogues, they had nothing but praise for their sense of community. Reform communities were described as 'hives of activity' providing activities for children, teenagers, young marrieds and older members. Activities included a wide range from adult Jewish education, fund-raising to bridge clubs. The Reform synagogues' network of youth clubs was the envy of many respondents. Not only did they succeed in providing programmes that appealed to today's youth but they also organised the training of youth workers from among their own members.

Reform children's Hebrew classes were perceived as more professional than United Synagogue Hebrew classes. Teachers were thought to be older and more likely to be professionally trained. The syllabuses were perceived as more appealing. The children were more likely to study Jewish history and modern Hebrew, which could be more involving and relevant than the United Synagogue focus on Hebrew reading, Hebrew texts and some of the strictures of halakhah.

### *Liberal synagogues*

Liberal synagogues did not feature strongly in any of the discussion groups. They were described as variously too Anglicised and church-like. There was little knowledge of, nor indeed interest in, their community structure or activities.

### **Alternative services inside United Synagogue and elsewhere**

Respondents in all of the discussion groups had direct or indirect contact with many experimental and alternative services. Some were independent and others had been established within the framework of the United Synagogue. The sections below draw out expressed positive and negative aspects of these services.

#### *Hendon New Service (18-30)*

This service was praised by those respondents who had been to it and by others who had heard about it. The service was fast but rousing and self-managed with little interference from the main synagogue. The atmosphere was felt to be warm and friendly and newcomers would probably be noticed and welcomed.

It was thought that most of the participants at the Hendon New Service had been culled from other synagogues and there were not thought to be many who would not otherwise have gone to synagogue. Nevertheless, many committed young people are now being very much better served by the United Synagogue, and both the United Synagogue and Hendon Synagogue were praised for this initiative.

#### *West Hampstead Alternative Minyan (WHAM)*

WHAM was established to appeal to a similar age group to the Hendon New Service. Several differences, however, were described. Although most of those who go to WHAM can probably follow an Orthodox service thanks to their childhood attendance, many might not otherwise have attended synagogue at all were it not for WHAM. They expressed dissatisfaction with the traditional United Synagogue service and would rather not go to synagogue at all. WHAM had now brought them back and was providing a rousing service and social focus.

Both WHAM and Hendon New Service have organised educational and social activities beyond the synagogue service. There have been football matches, keep fit, rallies etc.

Respondents raised some of the problems of establishing alternative minyanim. Of

concern is the issue of splitting the community and decimating the main service and removing the young people. In Hendon some young people may indeed have come from the main service, but others are likely to have come from elsewhere and to have brought more life and certainly fame and praise to Hendon Synagogue. In West Hampstead, where the main service is not well attended, an offshoot was reported to be a worry to some. However, very few WHAM members were thought to have come from the main service in fact. In the long run WHAM is described as likely to be the saviour of West Hampstead Synagogue, which would otherwise die of old age. It has now been put back on the map and is likely to serve as a model for other synagogues.

#### *Hendon hashkamah*

Hendon *hashkamah* (early morning) service is an answer for those among the respondents who dislike a service that is intended for a specific age group. Many preferred a service where young and old mix naturally. Indeed WHAM was already considered to have problems because of the many core members who were engaged or just married and no longer felt that the environment suited them. It becomes constantly necessary to recruit new singles as replacements in a service aimed at singles. Indeed this was not necessarily considered a bad thing: many a main service could do well to adopt a policy of continual recruitment in order to refresh attendance.

Management of Hendon *hashkamah* appeared to be very relaxed. A beadle makes necessary arrangements for a smooth service and a committee, open to all who wish to come, meets for forward planning. Such a structure is a far cry from the closed inner circle described earlier.

#### *Ner Yisrael*

Ner Yisrael must have been one of the earliest expressions of dissatisfaction among regular synagogue attenders. Respondents who had been involved with Ner Yisrael expressed feelings of satisfaction at having been there from the beginning and having been able to build a community from scratch. Respondents found pleasure in praying in an environment where everyone was committed to Orthodox Judaism. It was felt unlikely that non-practising Jews would find their way to Ner Yisrael. Better education for women was a key objective among Ner Yisrael members and the community has established a weekly learning day for women that includes a crèche. Their rabbi was praised for his outreach work beyond Ner Yisrael.

Ner Yisrael has already demonstrated the flexibility and responsiveness of a new venture: younger members have established a popular *hashkamah* service within the community.

#### *Yakar*

Yakar was praised more for its educational programmes than its synagogue service. It was considered the synagogue to which hippy Jews would gravitate and that, it was thought, may deter some people.

Yakar was praised for the comfortable way in which Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews were able to mix. Non-Orthodox felt accepted as they were, without the pretence that was considered to be rife within a United Synagogue framework. Yakar was highly commended for its open-minded attitude to social issues that other communities do not publicly face.

#### *South Hampstead Synagogue*

South Hampstead Synagogue was regarded as the ideal synagogue for young married couples and young families. It was known as a dying community that had been rejuvenated by a charismatic rabbi who had the ability to reach out beyond the synagogue, to bring people in to the synagogue and make them feel welcome. He was considered able to listen empathetically to Jews from all backgrounds whatever their

views. The rabbi was known to be from a Lubavitch background. Although many respondents were not enthusiastic about the growing numbers of rabbis recruited to the United Synagogue from the Lubavitch, here they saw an exception.

### *St Petersburg Place*

St Petersburg Place was cited as yet another synagogue that was in its death throes until a charismatic rabbi from Canada brought enthusiasm and a freshness of approach. The synagogue was known for its beginners service where, week by week, participants were introduced to more and more of the Shabbat service. Participants were invited to present a synopsis of the weekly portion and were offered help from the rabbi during the week if they wanted it.

### *Lincoln Centre (New York)*

One respondent described the Lincoln Centre in glowing terms. It was described as a true community centre providing for the needs of every type of Jew in the area. About half a dozen Shabbat morning services were thought to take place, including a beginners service and a women's prayer group. Many social and educational activities were provided throughout the week. Although Rabbi Riskin was known to have been the charismatic leader who developed the concept, it was clearly still thriving even in his absence.

## **The development of alternative services within United Synagogue**

Only one of the above services, South Hampstead, was flourishing as the main Shabbat service in the community. All the others were in some sense 'alternatives'. It is important to examine what respondents felt was particularly enticing about these services. Much of the formality is removed with an alternative service, particularly the trappings such as top hats and canonicals. Many of the alternative services are warm and welcoming. There is no element of a performance in most of the alternative services. There is more spirit and rousing singing and this is pleasurable even for those who have forgotten the words and the tunes. More young people are able to get closer to the action within an alternative service and therefore feel like participants as opposed to onlookers. Gone is the feeling that the service is run 'by the elderly for the elderly'. Self-management is considered very important and motivating. Although the idea of splitting the community was feared by some, holding several services within one building was thought to be appealing by others. It engendered a feel of activity and health. Joint committees and some joint activities (e.g. a kiddush) can prevent any negative effects of the split.

An alternative service does not necessarily help those who cannot follow a traditional Hebrew service. But the chances are greater that their needs will be recognised. Regular members reported being attuned to looking out for those who cannot follow the service and may befriend them and follow the service with them. Additionally, since the structure of an alternative service is so much more fluid and responsive to change and needs, educational opportunities or beginners services are more likely to develop. One respondent reported that he was about to learn to layen (read) from the Torah.

Where the focus is more social, alternative services were not always less noisy than mainstream services. This was the only down side mentioned.

Where respondents who were irregular synagogue attenders were introduced to the idea of a beginners service or an explanatory service, they expressed considerable enthusiasm. They thought of it as an adults' 'children's service' and were enthusiastic about the idea of not having to go through the whole service, of learning to understand key prayers, of understanding and reading together the weekly portion and of some singing of tunes long forgotten.

Many respondents who could follow a service with ease were keen on adding some explanations within the main service.

Clearly the fact that alternative services are smaller, both in terms of numbers and physical space, in itself solves many of the problems of the traditional service. As they grow, however, they risk taking on some of the characteristics of their parent community and may have to work hard to prevent the development of a core clique. It was recognised that some new developments may have a short life. This was not considered a problem since it would indicate a responsiveness to changing needs - a trait that it was felt the United Synagogue sorely needed to develop.

#### **4 THE ROLE OF THE RABBI**

The respondents conveyed the following theme on the position of the rabbi in a community.

A rabbi is in a position to either make or break a community. In other words, an inspiring rabbi can turn a community around from decline to growth; on the down side, a poor rabbi is able to put off all but the most committed. Between these two extremes, with help, a rabbi should be able to recognise those areas in which he is most skilled and put them to most effective use. He should also recognise those areas where he is lacking in skill and attempt to facilitate others in the community who will be more effective. In addition, it clearly emerged that one rabbi may be an inspiration for some members but considered inadequate by others.

##### **Characteristics of the inspiring rabbi**

It would be most useful if respondents had been able to define clearly the characteristics of the inspiring rabbi. Unfortunately, they found it easier to describe actions that were not acceptable than those that are. Respondents debated whether a rabbi has either 'got what it takes' or not. But the consensus was that through a combination of maturity, experience, example and formal training progress could be made. For this reason anger was expressed at the closing of the practical rabbinics course at Jews' College.

The following list was provided by the respondents during discussions, of the characteristics needed by a good rabbi. They are not in order of priority.

An inspired and inspiring rabbi will, they concluded, always:

- be able to empathise with his congregants' world
- make congregants feel that they are acceptable as they are, without explicit or implicit criticism
- seek out all his members, not just the Orthodox
- present the humane face of Judaism and seek lenient interpretations of halakhah
- should not adopt a 'do as you're told' attitude
- try to say 'Yes' to new ideas
- understand that by his actions and manner he may be more effective than through his words
- treat all questions seriously and seek the answers
- bring warmth and friendship with religious leadership
- be hospitable
- have a wife who is fully involved with the community
- bring a freshness of approach
- have a sense of humour

## **The undesirable habits: the issue of extra payments**

Rabbis who appear to *'have their hands forever in other people's pockets'* are criticised. Respondents described annoyance at the rabbi who appears to be demanding money for services that are considered part of their job.

The whole issue of extra payments is unclear. Respondents did not know what is expected of them after a funeral, shivah, wedding, bar mitzvah, brit or pidyon haben, and the uncertainty can lead to bad feelings. It should be entirely possible to provide clear guidelines. The rabbi who, when offered extra money, responds by rejecting the payment, saying that the task is part of his job, gains respect as a professional.

### **A rabbi's key tasks**

#### *A religious leader and educator bringing warmth and encouragement*

In spite of the fact that respondents appear to put spiritual matters lower on their list of priorities than community ones, they nevertheless see their rabbi first and foremost as a religious leader and educator. Sermons, shiurim and lectures are important, as is the active presence of the rabbi at Hebrew classes. A United Synagogue rabbi should be a halakhic authority or certainly have the means to seek answers to all questions asked.

The question of officiating at religious ceremonies was a contentious one. Currently it is considered that a rabbi with a large community could spend a large proportion of his time involved with bar mitzvahs, wedding, funerals, shivahs and stone-settings to the detriment of other equally important tasks. Some rabbis were bringing a freshness to wedding ceremonies by introducing explanations into the service while others appeared to demonstrate a lack of flexibility that was off-putting. Respondents reported, however, that a good rabbi will be able to take advantage of these occasions to bring warmth and encouragement to the members involved and thus inspire them to take a more active role in the synagogue.

#### *A good listener but others could share visiting*

At times of crisis the rabbi will need to use his very necessary skills as counsellor. Respondents felt it important that a rabbi should be able to provide a listening ear. He should also be able to recognise when a problem is beyond him and be able to refer the member elsewhere for more professional guidance. Confidentiality and discretion were considered essential.

There was no consensus on whose task it is to visit the sick. Some respondents had memories of uncomfortable experiences of being visited by a rabbi in hospital although others were annoyed when a vicar would appear more frequently than the rabbi. On balance it was felt that the rabbi should co-operate with a synagogue welfare committee to ensure that the sick are visited by the most suitable person, not necessarily the rabbi. Similarly, a welfare committee should be involved in visiting elderly members who live on their own or in local homes for the elderly or for the mentally ill.

#### *Go out to the uninvolved*

Although some respondents felt that a rabbi should not approach members uninvited, most disagreed. Most felt that it was part of a rabbi's task to invite uninvolved members to his house in order to get to know them and their community needs. Certainly the rabbi should get to know young married couples and ensure that there is a network of young couples in touch with each other in the community.

The rabbi should consider recruiting new members as part of his task and he should also try to encourage current members to recruit others. It was certainly considered the rabbi's task to visit any member who has not renewed his membership at the synagogue and listen sympathetically to their case. No grievances should be left to fester.

*Need not do fund-raising or youth work but must facilitate both*

Some tasks were not considered to be part of a rabbi's job. Fund-raising was not thought to be his domain. Some even felt that the Kol Nidrei appeal could be done better by a lay specialist.

The rabbi was not expected to be a youth worker but he was certainly expected to be able to relate to his young members and listen to their views and to ensure that well-trained volunteers or professional youth workers provide appealing youth activities. He is expected to visit and take an interest in the children's service and any other alternative services that are taking place on the synagogue premises.

### **Rabbi as facilitator**

The term 'facilitator' is specifically chosen in place of the term 'delegator'. The delegator asks others to carry out tasks for him, whereas the facilitator is able to motivate and activate others to use their skills to create a community for all. A rabbi will be considered skilled if he can create an environment in which members' ideas can be implemented and flourish.

In summary the consensus can be summarised in the words of one respondent who said that a good rabbi will '*serve all members, will have a religious mission, will develop a social and community spirit. He will create diversity - something exciting and busy.*'

## **5 JEWISH EDUCATION: FORMAL AND INFORMAL**

### **Hebrew Classes**

*Boredom and poor teaching*

Not a lot of praise could be mustered from the respondents for United Synagogue Hebrew classes. There were instances of the younger children having a good time, but respondents reported that by the ages of nine or ten, enthusiasm was waning and their children were beginning to complain. The children complain of boredom and repetitive work and also of teachers who cannot control their classes. Depressingly, parents could not report that their children were any more enthusiastic about Hebrew classes than they themselves had been at United Synagogue Hebrew classes in their own childhood.

Respondents laid the blame on the teaching staff and the curriculum. They reported that many Hebrew classes were staffed by teenagers whose only qualification was that they are religious. Many, they said, were brought in from Stamford Hill and had nothing in common with the local children.

Respondents recognised the difficulties of teaching children a subject where customs and laws taught at Hebrew classes were not practiced at home and would certainly cause confusion if not conflict. It was felt that more mature teachers would be able to handle this problem more sensitively and positively than a teenager.

*Reform Hebrew classes curriculum considered better*

Reform Hebrew classes were thought to be more appealing to children. Respondents thought that their teachers were older and were more likely to be trained teachers. Respondents suggested that day school teachers (from Jewish and other schools) should be encouraged to teach on Sunday mornings and should be paid sufficiently to attract them in.

### *Hebrew classes neglected in favour of Jewish day schools*

Some parents feared that United Synagogue neglects the education in the Hebrew classes in favour of investment in full-time Jewish day schools. They resented the attitude that parents who did not send their children to a Jewish day school were depriving them of their rights to a proper Jewish education. They felt entitled to choose part-time Jewish education and to receive a good quality service at Hebrew classes. They objected, for example, to direct pressures being applied to sign their children up for the new school in Southgate. Strong views were expressed criticising the United Synagogue for allowing Immanuel College to starve mainstream Jewish education of funds\*. They felt that part-time Jewish education, and JFS in particular, would suffer for the limited gain of a privileged few.

### *Praise for teenage centres and for parallel education for parents*

Respondents repeatedly expressed their dismay at a perceived lack of youth policy within the United Synagogue but praised the concept of a teenage centre. They were unsure whether the merger policy of forming a few central centres was a good one.

One further development which was considered positive was the encouragement given to parents to attend classes at the same time as their children. A few respondents reported on special programmes running in parallel to the Hebrew classes from which they had derived considerable pleasure and benefit.

### *Higher fees only if better quality*

The cost of Hebrew classes raised strong feelings. Respondents with children at Hebrew classes had all recently been informed that the parental contribution was going up because of the inability of United Synagogue to continue to subsidise it. Some parents were concerned about the actual cost, but more were annoyed at having to pay extra money for a product which they saw as poor quality. They indicated that they would willingly pay more if they could see that their children were receiving a first-class Jewish education.

### *Local management would lower costs*

Many respondents were annoyed at the perceived level of waste and mismanagement at Woburn House and were convinced that if they could manage their own finances locally they could provide an excellent education at a lower cost.

### **JFS: confusion over who is paying and who should pay**

Attitudes to covering the cost of JFS Jewish education were confused. Some thought that since it was a state school, even Jewish education was free; others thought that the parental contribution covered the cost. Few realised that the United Synagogue subsidised the Jewish education of all children at JFS, whether their parents were members of the United Synagogue or not.

Once this point was understood, attitudes still diverged. Some respondents thought that the United Synagogue should continue to have a subsidy for their children at JFS to the extent that part-time Hebrew class pupils are also subsidised while non-United Synagogue parents should pay the full cost. Other respondents thought that gradually all parents were going to have to be asked to pay the full cost and that they would accept it. There was concern for families who genuinely could not afford to pay the full cost and grants for these families were expected. Throughout the discussions on JFS there was stress on quality: that if parents felt they were receiving a quality Jewish education then they would be willing to pay. Paying for poor quality was considered unacceptable. Respondents did not currently see the Jewish education at JFS as good quality.

\* This perception was left in the text although the United Synagogue was not in fact involved in the establishment of Immanuel College.



## **Youth policy**

### *Open United Synagogue doors*

As has been raised several times in this report, respondents were angry at the short-sightedness in what they perceived as an absence of any youth policy or direction for youth work. Respondents felt pessimistic about the future of the United Synagogue until it could open its doors wide, particularly to the youth, with no pre-conditions. Interestingly, a lack of provision for youth raised as much anger among older members in Finchley as among parents of teenagers in Pinner and Kingston. At the very least, it was felt that United Synagogues should agree to their premises being used for a variety of non-affiliated groups, whether religious or not and whether educational or not. Respondents cited examples where groups from Brownies to Hanoar Hatzioni had not been given permission to use United Synagogue premises. They thought that the reason for refusal was either an over-protectiveness for the synagogue's property or a fear that youngsters who were not halakhically Jewish may attend.

### *Seek out good models: essential for the future*

Positive models were cited of successful Jewish youth centres. Sinclair House in Redbridge was often raised as the closest Britain comes to an American-style Jewish Community Centre. Although providing activities for a wide range of ages, youth activities are the focus, as indeed they are at the Oxford and St George's club. Most parents recognise that the youth club does not have the same attraction today as it did perhaps thirty years ago, but nevertheless models can be found of popular self-managed youth activities, particularly special interest groups that can appeal to today's youth.

In the chapter which discusses the reasons why members have joined the United Synagogue, it will be seen that one of the key reasons given is 'for the children and the future of the Jewish community'. Respondents wanted to feel that, through perpetuating the United Synagogue through their membership, their children would receive a grounding in authentic Judaism, would mix with Jewish children, would feel at home on synagogue premises and would therefore feel some identification with the United Synagogue and Judaism. On most of these counts, respondents reported disappointment. The quality of Jewish education provided by United Synagogue was questionable; they were not mixing with Jewish children because the synagogue was not providing attractive programmes and their children were unlikely to have any allegiance to the United Synagogue because they would consider that it has failed them. In summary, the many United Synagogue members among the respondents who had joined for the sake of their children feel that they are definitely not getting value for money from their membership.

### **Adult education: informal and broad-minded**

Adult education did not appear to be an issue of immediate personal concern to respondents. Respondents did not describe many projects. Anger was expressed at budget cuts in adult education in Ilford. A few parents described classes provided for them in parallel to their children's Hebrew classes. The most dominant request was for adult education on a Shabbat morning in the form of an explanatory or beginners service.

Some respondents mentioned the motivating effect that a trip to Israel had had on them to resuscitate latent Jewish feelings and to stimulate the desire to learn more about Judaism, and the idea of synagogue trips was raised.

The Spiro Institute and Yakar were known to provide appealing adult education because of their freshness of approach and openness to Jews of all persuasions. They were also seen as having developed through the charismatic leadership and vision of individuals.

Individuals of such calibre were considered to be lacking in the United Synagogue, given its size.

### **Children's services**

Respondents reported various children's service experiences. A few, hailing from respondents' own childhoods, were very positive. Some more recent reports were less positive. Visions of children 'running wild' were described, with leaders struggling to maintain order. It was clear that respondents felt that a children's service was potentially very valuable but that it was not a task to be taken lightly. Proper training and support were needed. Suggestions were made to establish an association of children's service leaders to provide support and a forum for the exchange of ideas.

### **Education and youth seen as top priorities**

Respondents expressed their amazement at the reported cuts in the United Synagogue's youth and education budgets. Respondents unanimously placed these two very areas as top priority and without real progress in these areas their membership in the future is not assured.

## **6 THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE AS AN ORGANISATION**

### **Why join the United Synagogue?**

In order to answer this question accurately, respondents must be divided into two main groups: those that who want to participate in an Orthodox service and those who rarely attend services at all.

#### *No other traditional services in many areas*

For some of those who seek to participate in an Orthodox service, there may be little choice available. Unless they live in the heart of North-West London, the United Synagogue is likely to provide the only traditional synagogue service. The Federation of Synagogues is an option in some areas but is not considered to differ substantially from United Synagogue. It was thought to be slightly cheaper and their communities were seen as slightly smaller and therefore perhaps more friendly. It was thought, in the past, to be more Orthodox than the United Synagogue but, with the perceived move of the United Synagogue to the right, this is no longer considered accurate.

#### *To perpetuate authentic Judaism*

The reasons why non-Orthodox respondents joined the United Synagogue were more complex. The wish to perpetuate authentic Judaism and the Jewish people was expressed strongly by many. Even though many of the respondents themselves admitted that in their daily lives they currently did little to demonstrate their active involvement with Judaism, they expressed a deep need to identify with someone else who would do it for them to prevent its demise. The United Synagogue was the obvious body, reflecting their view of what Judaism should be, and as the largest synagogal organisation, was seen as the one with the most chance of success.

#### *Attachment to tradition*

The same group who wished to see Judaism perpetuated by proxy expressed a love of Jewish tradition. However strong the criticisms expressed of synagogue services and their feeling of exclusion from it (chapter 4), they nevertheless wanted the pattern of the traditional synagogue service to be perpetuated (although they would not object to some minor improvements). These respondents expressed a distaste for a Reform or Liberal service which was too Anglicised and mirrored church services. Attachment to the United Synagogue by these respondents was very emotional. They saw it as entirely illogical: they recognised that Reform and Liberal communities would provide a very

much more sensible environment for them. Nevertheless the United Synagogue remained, for the moment, their positive choice.

The use of United Synagogue membership as a means to being buried in a Jewish cemetery is not to be underestimated. Most respondents genuinely see their United Synagogue membership as the only means of securing their plot. There is little knowledge of burial societies outside the United Synagogue.

#### *Out of respect for parents and for the future of the children*

Some respondents said that they joined the United Synagogue out of respect for their parents. This was certainly given as the reason for marrying in the United Synagogue in Ilford among young married respondents.

A more powerful reason given by many respondents for joining the United Synagogue was for the sake of their children. Many wanted to give their children the chance to see authentic Judaism so that in the future they could choose for themselves. The United Synagogue presented Judaism as they were used to it and as they felt it should be. These respondents expressed the view that if they join the Reform movement, and particularly if they marry in a Reform synagogue, they may cause difficulties for their children in the future should they wish to marry in a United Synagogue. (Some respondents were angry at the United Synagogue for what they saw as inaccurate scaremongering.) The notion that the synagogue is a place for the family was forcefully demonstrated in Ilford among the young marrieds, most of whom had had little contact with their synagogue since their marriage but who were very sure that they would return as soon as their children were the right age for Hebrew classes and for children's service. Some even saw that occasion as the right time for themselves to take up their Jewish education again.

#### **Why leave the United Synagogue?**

For most of the respondents, a decision to leave the United Synagogue would be very traumatic and would be made with difficulty and reluctance. Nevertheless, for many of the respondents it was certainly a very real possibility.

For the non-Orthodox respondents, the Masorti and Reform communities were real options. For the reasonably Orthodox Masorti was a powerful magnet. Many of the areas of dissatisfaction have already been outlined in previous sections but they will be summarised here.

#### *Too little attention to youth*

The key area of dissatisfaction was poor Hebrew classes education and lack of social provision for teenagers. For those whose main reason for joining the United Synagogue was to keep their children within the fold, they felt that they were receiving poor value for money indeed.

#### *Move to the right*

For respondents who consider themselves traditional, many are annoyed by the perceived new-found extremism of the United Synagogue and its unwillingness to develop halakhah in the ways that they believe it has been developed over the centuries. For this group Masorti synagogues are a very real attraction, especially those that still retain separate seating for men and women.

#### *No place for women in management*

A further area of annoyance is the continued ineffectual role that women are allowed to play within the United Synagogue management structure. For these respondents, both Reform and Masorti are options.

### *Synagogue services too cold*

For some of the respondents who were regular synagogue attenders, the formal and cold style of the United Synagogue with chazzan and choir has lost its appeal and makes communities like Ner Yisrael attractive unless the United Synagogue can encourage alternative services to flourish. For other Orthodox respondents, the distance they feel from many a closed team of wardens and board of management may incline them to experiment elsewhere.

### **Attitudes to Woburn House**

At the start of every group discussion respondents were asked to write down the first three words or phrases that came to mind when they think of the United Synagogue as an organisation. Most of the phrases unfortunately were derogatory. The level of knowledge of the functions carried out at Woburn House was generally low. It must be said that views of United Synagogue head office activities were grim: an inefficient organisation with little financial control.

### *Nothing 'under the table'*

The two functions at Woburn House that were the first to come to mind for most respondents were burial and marriage. Both were considered functions that it was important to have centralised. Neither was considered to be entirely well handled by Woburn House. First and second-hand stories were told of payments made 'under the table' to obtain faster burials or specific plots, and of 'having to know the right people'.

### *More humanitarian approach*

When considering the United Synagogue's task of issuing marriage certificates, their role in protecting Jewish lineage was generally appreciated. In the same way that many of the non-Orthodox respondents chose the United Synagogue because it protected authentic Judaism, so they expected the United Synagogue to admit only authentic Jews. However, officials at Woburn House whose task it is to meet with engaged couples when they present their 'credentials' were severely criticised for their aggressive stance. Respondents pleaded for a more 'humanitarian' face. The attitude of the Beth Din to conversion was similarly considered to be too strict, inconsistent, unsympathetic and likely to drive couples to consider a Reform wedding prematurely. The Beth Din was thought to be much more strict than other Batei Din in other parts of Europe. Few respondents knew how many dayanim there were in Woburn House or what issues they dealt with other than conversion, but they thought dayanim were generally removed from grass-roots United Synagogue members and should all be community rabbis to keep them in closer touch.

### *Duplication of services*

Shechitah and kashrut were known to be United Synagogue head office functions. Heavy criticism was levelled at the United Synagogue for becoming involved in shechitah when the community was already being well served. It was thought that too little effort was made to lower the cost of kosher meat.

### *Please don't cut education*

Attitudes to the United Synagogue's centralised educational function were somewhat coloured by recent Jewish Chronicle publicity of cuts in its education budget. Predictably, considerable anger was expressed at these cuts. Respondents wanted any other head office functions to be cut before education. It was considered to be a very short-sighted policy. Disappointment was expressed that the Chief Rabbi who had inaugurated an 'age of renewal' could allow such a decision to be made.

### *Chief Rabbi as halakhic leader and rabbis' rabbi*

The office of the Chief Rabbi was felt to be important and the Chief Rabbi was considered to represent the Jewish Community to the non-Jewish world. There was annoyance that provincial communities that recognise the Chief Rabbi, do not contribute to the funding of his office. Some respondents were disappointed that the Chief Rabbi appeared unwilling to debate with Reform rabbis and found it strange that he allowed himself to go to Westminster Abbey but not to a Reform synagogue. Respondents nevertheless expressed the hope that the new Chief Rabbi would provide strong halakhic leadership over the coming years to counteract the recent perceived move of many United Synagogue rabbis to a much more extreme stance.

### *Need to sell redundant properties*

The United Synagogue was known to have centralised control and ownership of synagogue properties. Respondents felt that decisions to merge dying communities and sell off redundant properties needed to be made more quickly, although it was recognised that such decisions were difficult. The overall feeling was that the needs of smaller and growing outlying communities must be put before dying communities and funds thereby released to support such important developments.

### **A new decentralised model for the United Synagogue**

A recurring theme in all eight discussion groups was the strong desire for community independence. Respondents wanted to be able to collect their own fees and spend them according to local needs and wants. Respondents saw in such a development less financial wastage, greater efficiency and far more local involvement and motivation. They envisaged employing a professional community manager/worker together with a rabbi. They saw management spreading beyond the normal religious core and therefore reaching out to a wider cross-section of the membership.

Respondents nevertheless worried about two implications of such a scheme. Their first concern was the upholding of religious standards across all communities when each is independent. Here they envisaged an essential role for the Chief Rabbi to act as guide and mentor to all the community rabbis, providing consistent religious leadership and guidelines. The second concern was for smaller communities that may not be financially viable. Respondents were aware that one of the chief roles of the United Synagogue was to enable larger communities to support smaller communities. Respondents reiterated the advice that the dying communities sitting on valuable properties must be persuaded to give them up. Respondents described examples of services in a regular house instead of in a purpose-built synagogue as a possible alternative for such communities. Examples of such services on Friday nights were described. In addition to releasing funds in this way, respondents felt that running synagogues independently would be so much cheaper that even small communities may manage.

A scheme was put to the group of Orthodox young marrieds in Hendon to test their response. They were asked whether they could envisage living for a few years in an outlying community acting as one of a group of part-time lay religious leaders, in return, perhaps, for a mortgage on favourable terms. The response was not entirely enthusiastic. Many had made a positive choice to live in North-West London so that they could be among a community of like-minded people. They felt that Lubavitch families who did go to live in outlying areas made considerable sacrifices. Nevertheless, the response was not totally negative, and such an option could be worth exploring.

Some notion of 'twinning' large and small communities may be worth exploring in a similar way that local authorities twin with towns abroad and Jewish communities twin with communities in Russia. The twinning of a North-West London community with a South London community, for example, whether purely social or financial as well, could make a worthwhile project. In particular, South Londoners feel somewhat

isolated and neglected, both officially by United Synagogue and socially by communities in North-West London.

Although respondents were enthusiastic about the idea of independent communities, they still saw some central role for the United Synagogue head office (moved ideally from the centre of London to release further resources). As was mentioned above, the Chief Rabbi is wanted to have a central leadership and halakhic role. The Chief Rabbi was seen as being involved in establishing a framework for rabbis' job descriptions and for setting targets and assessing achievement of those targets together with local management.

Respondents saw some curriculum development and teacher training emerging from head office. Head office could provide youth training and advice and consultancy. It could also collect and then disseminate models of good practice.

There is little doubt that even within the discussion groups, interest was aroused in participating in a fresh start in communities. But one condition underlined all discussion of independent communities: that synagogues would build an entirely new management team representing a much broader cross-section of synagogue membership than is currently felt to be the case.

## **REPORT 2. ATTITUDES AMONG NON-UNITED SYNAGOGUE MEMBERS**

### **1 The Ilford Respondents**

#### **What being Jewish means to them**

The Ilford respondents could report little in the way of traditional Jewish practice. They were aware that Yom Kippur was meant to be a significant day and some said that if at all possible they would not go to work on Yom Kippur, but most appeared to have forgotten that the day is associated with fasting. For some Rosh Hashanah and Seder night were occasions for a family gathering. One respondent reflected the views of the group when he said that his mother would be upset if he did not visit for the New Year in the same way as she would be upset if he did not come for Christmas. The most frequent reason for attendance at a synagogue was to celebrate friends' bar mitzvahs and weddings.

The Ilford respondents found it difficult to define what being Jewish meant to them and how it manifests itself. Some expressed their anger at anti-Semitism and described feeling very Jewish and proud when under attack. For a few Israel was significant. Some read the Jewish Chronicle. There were jokes about Jewish food: smoked salmon and bagels. They saw being Jewish as being a member of a large 'club'. They joked about Jews gravitating towards each other in a crowd. Some had mainly Jewish friends.

#### **The significance of the bar mitzvah**

For many in the Ilford group a bar mitzvah was clearly a milestone and a time of decision-making. The men in the group unanimously had negative memories of their own bar mitzvah. They talked of the build-up of tension and pressure, of the difficulty of learning a passage that they did not understand and of the release when it was over. It marked the end of synagogue attendance and formal Jewish learning for them. There appeared to be no parental pressure to continue with Jewish practice or education. They could not recollect any more positive feelings about their bar mitzvah than being the centre of attention and receiving presents.

Nevertheless, most of the respondents who had teenage sons and those with sons approaching 13 appeared far from rejecting a bar mitzvah for their sons, but the decision was a difficult one. They were reluctant to put their sons, through the pressure, and some sons had expressed reluctance to proceed. But the respondent's friends' sons generally had had a bar mitzvah and there was social pressure, to do the same. At this point, it appeared, the shopping around began. Respondents would visit local synagogues and chose on the basis of price and taste. Some parents had become more involved themselves when their son had joined a bar mitzvah class, but it was clear that, as in their own childhood, the bar mitzvah would be the end of their synagogue involvement and formal Jewish education. Interestingly, there was little consideration of a bat mitzvah for their daughters.

#### **The place of Jewish youth clubs**

Although the bar mitzvah marked the end of formal Jewish education for the Ilford respondents, many of the group spoke fondly of the Jewish youth clubs that they had attended as teenagers. They talked of Sinclair House, JLGB and Maccabi. Some indicated that their circle of friends was today based on those that they met at their Jewish youth club.

But when asked whether their teenage children go to these clubs, the answer was a resounding 'No'. It did not appear to be a bone of contention; the parents did not expect their children to be interested. They saw their teenagers' friends as being both Jewish and non-Jewish, based usually on their school friends. They felt that the simple

pleasures of a Jewish Youth Club that they had appreciated would not appeal to today's youth, who demanded something more sophisticated. They expressed the view that there was more choice available today than in their youth, and that teenagers now have more money and are more mobile.

### **A very minimal need for a synagogue**

The Ilford respondents naturally gravitated towards Reform and Liberal synagogues for their sons' bar mitzvahs. They felt more attuned to English in the service and to family seating. But nevertheless they were seeking out only temporary synagogue membership for an almost social event: in effect they were seeking a venue. Even though they had chosen Reform and Liberal synagogues, they did not feel at home. They saw the regular attenders as an inner clique in exactly the same way as the eight discussions among United Synagogue members had. But unlike the United Synagogue members, who could see a definite place for the synagogue in their lives, and except for one minority view among the Ilford group, there was nothing that would draw the majority to the synagogue during their leisure time. One woman would welcome perhaps a keep-fit class followed by coffee and a talk or a chat under synagogue auspices.

Most of the Ilford respondents had married in the United Synagogue. They had similar negative recollections of Woburn House as did the United Synagogue members themselves. But otherwise they did not have strong views on the subject of wedding ceremonies. Given that most of their parents were United Synagogue members, it was fairly natural for them to marry in the United Synagogue. There did not appear to be a great deal of pressure from their parents for them to continue their membership within the United Synagogue. The majority of their parents were not involved with their synagogues and did not attend regularly.

### **The Ilford respondents: the future**

Most of the respondents were not at all sure that their children would marry other Jews. They saw their children's circle of friends as too mixed and their outlook too secular. It appeared that whereas the parents had many Jewish friends, their children did not. The parents did not appear too bothered by this view of the future and were concerned only that their children should be happy. There were some reservations expressed about mixed marriages and the tensions that could arise, but they would not know how to prevent such a marriage, given their children's life-style.

Burial was hardly a significant issue for the future. Unlike the discussion groups among United Synagogue members, the Ilford respondents did not worry themselves a great deal about burial. Some had negative stories to report about requests for large sums of money before Jewish burials, but in general burial did not appear to be a concern.

## **2 The Edgware Respondents**

### **A chip on their shoulders**

About half of the Edgware group of non-United Synagogue members were actively involved in Jewish synagogue and community life. Others expressed positive attitudes towards membership and the desire for involvement. In this respect there was more in common between this group and the eight United Synagogue members' discussion groups. However, in contrast to the United Synagogue members, the Edgware respondents felt some resentment that their chosen communities were somehow considered second best by the community at large. Given their very positive views of the communities that they had chosen, they felt aggrieved. The United Synagogue, they felt, was bigger than Masorti, Reform or Liberal because it was an easy option for people who were apathetic. It was seen as a 'point of reference', respectability and a passport to lifelong entry to Jewish schools, Orthodox marriage and burial. The United Synagogue did not deserve this position in their view, and, through its very unappealing approach to the community at large, would eventually lose to communities that appear to care more about their members.



## **Similar childhood experiences**

As was mentioned above, when comparing and contrasting the Edgware and the Ilford groups with each other and against the eight main discussion groups, childhood experiences appear very similar among all those who were not brought up as regular synagogue attenders. Memories abound of sitting through long synagogue services under pressure. Respondents shared recollections of negative Hebrew classes experiences (not only United Synagogue). Edgware respondents had no more positive views of their bar mitzvah tribulations than other respondents. The main difference between these Ilford and Edgware groups, however, was the action taken in response to negative experiences. The Ilford respondents dropped out, whereas many of the Edgware respondents were determined to seek religious and community fulfilment beyond the environment in which they had been brought up, whether that had been Reform or United Synagogue. Unlike the United Synagogue members' groups, the Edgware respondents did not accept the notion that the United Synagogue should be allowed to be the sole custodian of authentic Judaism when, in their view, they were failing on so many counts. They felt obliged to seek alternatives.

## **Seeking involvement**

The desire among the Edgware respondents for a total community was similar to that expressed by the United Synagogue members' discussion groups. The vocabulary used was comparable. There was talk of the satisfaction of being involved with something new and something smaller. They sought, and had found, communities that would pay equal attention to men, women, children and teenagers.

## **Seeking intellectual challenge**

Those among the Edgware respondents who had joined Masorti communities found satisfaction in a new-found intellectual challenge. They had previously felt unable to question Jewish religious practice and belief, whereas now they could do so and find answers. They expressed the view that the United Synagogue had moved to the right.

Those respondents who had made a positive choice to change allegiance felt that they were more practising now than they had been previously. Two Masorti members were observing kashrut and Shabbat to a greater degree than previously. One woman who had moved to a Liberal synagogue said that she now lights candles on Friday night whereas she hadn't previously, and her level of Jewish knowledge had been considerably enhanced with adult education classes.

## **Stress on informal Jewish education for youth**

The Ilford respondents had no views on how Judaism could be presented to young people, as they themselves had little interest. This was not so among the Edgware respondents. Some Edgware respondents had very definite ideas on how their negative childhood Hebrew classes experiences could be transformed for today's children and youth. They felt that teaching methods today were far more imaginative than a few years back and interesting resource materials had been developed. They definitely saw the need to concentrate on modern Jewish history and modern Hebrew as being meaningful to children. Through that they hoped that the children would eventually appreciate the siddur, but textual study at an early age, they felt, would bore most of the children.

They described weekend programmes and summer schemes as ways of inculcating a love of Judaism. They hoped that through a combination of leisure and learning, teenagers would feel enthusiastic enough to retain an interest that they could develop later. They admitted that in the short term, the teenagers' knowledge base may be limited but at least the door would be kept open.

## **REPORT 3. ATTITUDES AMONG UNITED SYNAGOGUE TEENAGERS**

### **1 The North London respondents**

#### **Were they heard in their synagogues?**

Most of the Ilford respondents felt that their voices would be heard in their synagogues, particularly if they spoke loudly enough! In one synagogue the young people had been allowed to take over the main synagogue services. These respondents knew who to speak to, be it the rabbi, chazzan or honorary officers, should they have a point to raise. Some would ask their parents to represent them, particularly the respondents whose parents were either wardens or on the board of management.

#### **Contact with the rabbi**

The majority of the respondents had contact with their rabbi; some were happy to approach and speak to him, especially the respondents who were taught by the rabbi or his wife. Other respondents who felt they had good contact with the rabbi had parents who were involved in synagogue business. A few respondents reported that they were too shy to have contact.

#### **Could the synagogue do more to interest them?**

The respondents did not have innovative ideas about what would draw them in. Children's services were considered to be important, and one respondent suggested a teenage discussion group for a Shabbat morning. One female respondent suggested a change in the lay-out of the synagogue and mechitzah. The respondents knew about many of the other activities available at their own synagogues. Some respondents mentioned the social aspect of synagogue attendance.

#### **The significance of bar/bat mitzvah**

The boys all reported enjoying their bar mitzvahs, despite the fact that some of them were nervous before and on the day. Most spent a long time preparing in advance. The girls group who were bat mitzvah saw the event as enjoyable particularly, the year of preparation before the ceremony. They mentioned, in particular, weekends away with their teachers as being the highlight of the year. None of the respondents could report on the significance of the occasion in any way other than it being an enjoyable experience.

#### **Knowledge of other synagogues**

All the respondents preferred their own synagogues. They only visited other synagogues for special occasions and not through choice. Kiddush was seen as a good opportunity of keeping in touch with other congregants. It was seen as important to be in familiar surroundings. Reform synagogue services felt alien and church-like. One respondent felt a little more English was useful by way of explanation.

#### **The place of Jewish youth club**

All the respondents enjoyed the large variety of Jewish clubs available to them. Some respondents saw the teenage centre as a sort of youth club. A number of respondents were members of more than one Jewish youth club and they were very selective about which club they chose to attend.

## **Jewish identity**

The respondents reported that their Jewishness was important to them, even if they were not observant. They were proud of being Jewish, although sometimes it was seen as being difficult. They felt special despite the fact that sometimes they were victimised as a result of their religious affiliation. Some respondents reported feeling more comfortable being amongst Jewish people.

## **Future affiliation**

Almost without exception the respondents imagined that they would be attending synagogue in ten years time. One respondent felt he would be attending with his own family by then. They all intended to marry under the auspices of the United Synagogue. When it was pointed out that their partners had, therefore, to be Jewish, they agreed that they would not consider marrying outside the faith.

## **Hebrew classes and teenage centres**

The respondents were very critical of their past experiences at their Hebrew classes. They were particularly unhappy about the huge turnover of teachers perceived as incompetent. The teachers were considered to be too inexperienced and too young to control the classes. The work was repetitive and too exam-orientated and the adjective most commonly used was 'boring'. The buildings used for Hebrew classes were not considered to be conducive to learning and the respondents felt trapped by the rigid structure.

Teenage centre, which these young people attend at present, was not seen as part of the Hebrew classes system. Because very few children go on to a teenage centre from Hebrew classes, each teenage centre draws young people from a number of synagogues. The respondents appreciated the social opportunity that teenage centre offered them. They liked the greater emphasis on informal learning and discussion.

## **2 The North-West London respondents**

### **Were they heard in their synagogues?**

The North-West London respondents felt, in general, that they were not heard in their synagogues and that the views of the children were not taken into consideration by those who ran their synagogues. One reason was because they felt they would only be able to speak up as a group. They thought they would ask their parents to represent them if they needed a voice or they would possibly go to the rabbi. One group referred to a youth leader as being an appropriate person to represent their views.

### **Contact with the Rabbi**

Both North-West London groups of teenage respondents reported that they appreciated their rabbi and that they knew him well. What they admired about the rabbi was the way in which he talked to everyone and mixed with the congregation.

Respondents who had good relations with their rabbi had often been taught by him. They commented on his pastoral work and how it was appreciated by their older relatives.

### **Could the synagogue do more to interest them?**

One group felt there was enough going on to interest them; they mentioned the youth service in particular. The other group felt the synagogue could do more, but they could not be very specific. Suggestions were made regarding older teenagers, girls in particular. The respondents were cynical about being able to draw new members in by increasing the range of synagogue activities.

## **Significance of bar/bat mitzvah**

The boys felt their bar mitzvah was a way of being included into the community; they could now participate as full members. They saw it as a lot of work and quite nerve-racking but they also saw it as a way of becoming familiar with the synagogue service. Being included was particularly important for the girls when they talked about their bat mitzvahs. Taking part in a bat mitzvah was particularly important for girls as it was the way of becoming known by the rabbi and synagogue officials.

## **Knowledge of other synagogues**

The North-West London respondents had attended other synagogue services but all reported preferring their own, even if other synagogues had advantages their synagogue did not have. They had been to Reform or Liberal synagogues which had not impressed them and they all liked their own familiar services better. One female respondent reported feeling uncomfortable being called up at a friend's bar mitzvah, and found the notion of a female rabbi strange.

## **The place of Jewish youth clubs**

These respondents attended a smaller variety of youth clubs than the North London respondents, but they still felt there was a place for youth clubs and enjoyed the clubs they went to. Some groups were considered to be too religious.

## **Jewish identity**

The respondents felt their Judaism was important to them, even if they were not religious. It gave them a sense of belonging, of community, and a universal language. They described the religion as one big family. These respondents also reported being victimised as a result of their religion.

## **Future affiliation**

Most of the respondents thought they would still be attending synagogue in their early 20s. They would only change synagogues if they moved. In their opinion, children who were taken by their parents to synagogue regularly would become regular attenders as adults. Some considered it to be important to be a member of a synagogue. Other respondents said they wanted to continue to be Orthodox. A few respondents thought their attendance may diminish around examination time and when they go away to university.

In general they felt they would want to attend synagogue as adults. With one exception all the teenagers wanted to marry under the auspices of the United Synagogue. One saw it as a duty and others reported on the problems of intermarriage in their own families. Once again the respondents were quite clear that this meant they would be marrying other Jews.

## **Teenage centre better than Hebrew classes**

These respondents also viewed teenage centre as something other than Hebrew classes. Again this teenage centre drew children from a number of synagogues because very few children opt to continue Jewish education after bar/bat mitzvah. So these young people were more committed than most. They preferred the teenage centre's less formal structure and emphasis on choice and discussion. One of the reasons mentioned for coming was to see their friends. The respondents felt there was too much rote learning at Hebrew classes. Lessons were too exam-orientated and boring. They were also critical about the turnover of teachers, reporting that they had numerous teachers in one year.

## PHASE 2. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH (QUESTIONNAIRES)

The quantitative phase of the market research was designed and carried out by Dr Stephen Miller and Mrs Marlena Schmool.

Dr Miller is Head of the Department of Social Sciences at City University. He also directs a research unit undertaking social research on the Anglo-Jewish community. He is a member of the Research Committee of the Board of Deputies and of the Institute for Jewish Affairs. He has published work in the fields of research methodology, visual perception and Jewish social research.

Marlena Schmool is the Executive Director of the Community Research Unit of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. She has also served as Editorial Assistant for the Jewish Journal of Sociology and as Secretary to the Wolkind Committee. She is a member of the international steering committee of the Association for Demographic Policy of the Jewish People and has published a number of articles of demographic interest.

### REPORT 4. ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY OF UNITED SYNAGOGUE MEMBERS

#### CONTENTS

1. The Jewish characteristics of United Synagogue members
2. Belonging to a synagogue
3. Expectations and evaluation of the synagogue
4. Attitudes to Jewish education
5. The United Synagogue as an organisation
6. Demographic characteristics of the sample

#### 1 THE JEWISH CHARACTERISTICS OF UNITED SYNAGOGUE MEMBERS

This section examines the patterns of belief, practice and ethnicity of our respondents. These characteristics are reported at the outset because they provide an important key to understanding the respondents' attitudes towards more specific issues - synagogue membership, Jewish education and the United Synagogue - to be discussed in later sections.

The beliefs and practices of members are clearly of interest in their own right and have a bearing on the scope for change in the religious orientation or approach of the United Synagogue and its communities.

##### Religious observance

###### *Three categories of observance*

Respondents were asked to characterise their own level of religious observance by selecting one of five categories to represent 'the way you live in Jewish terms'. The percentage selecting each category was:

Non-religious (secular) Jew	4%
Just Jewish	16%
Progressive Jew (e.g. Reform)	3%
Traditional (not strictly Orthodox)	67%
Strictly Orthodox Jew (Shomrei Shabbat)	10%

As expected, the great majority of the respondents identified themselves as 'traditional' Jews. This represents the central block of nominally Orthodox members who, in their responses to open-ended questions, frequently describe themselves as 'middle of the road' Jews.

To their left religiously is a sizeable group of less observant respondents who identified themselves as 'just Jewish', 'progressive' or 'non-religious'. These three sub-groups cannot be distinguished from one another in terms of their responses to items concerned with religious practice and belief, and they have therefore been treated as a single group of 'weak observers'.

The remaining 10% of respondents identified themselves as strictly Orthodox giving an overall breakdown as follows:

Weak observers	23%
Traditional	67%
Strictly Orthodox	10%

### Age and observance

The above percentages vary somewhat with age. Older respondents (61+ years) were more likely to be traditional (69%) or weak observers (25%) and less likely to be strictly Orthodox (5%). The corollary is that the middle-aged and younger respondents are more likely to be Orthodox (13%).

This trend may reflect an increasing tendency among younger Jews to select a synagogue that is seen as being consistent with a family's Jewish lifestyle. Non-observant Jews may now be more inclined to join a progressive synagogue than were their parents, and this would explain the higher proportion of strictly Orthodox members in the younger age group. Alternatively, the trend may be due to differential rates of response, to increased religiosity in the younger age groups or even to developmental changes in religious practice with age.

### *Patterns of observance: traditional Jews*

The pattern of religious practice among the central group of traditional Jews is remarkably consistent. The great majority observe the following personal mitzvot and family rituals:

	%Observance
Fast on Yom Kippur (or exempt on health grounds)	97
Attend a seder every year	93
Prefer to stay at home on Friday night	92
Avoid work on Rosh Hashanah	92
Light candles every Friday evening	83
Have a mezuzah on all doors	75
Separate milk and meat dishes at home	69

Traditional respondents are equally consistent in their neglect of other 'more demanding' practices. Thus a high proportion:

Travel by car on the Sabbath	88%
Turn on lights on the Sabbath	95%

The only significant source of variation in this group relates to (i) the eating of non-kosher meat outside the home and (ii) attendance at synagogue. Willingness to eat non-kosher meat divides traditional Jews into two almost equal sub-groups (48% do, 52% do not). Similarly, attendance at synagogue is an occasional event for 59% of respondents, but a regular practice (once a month or more often) for the remaining 41%. These practices, together with the items listed above, form the basis of a scale of religious observance which is examined in later sections.

### *Weak observers*

Respondents who classified themselves as either progressive, secular or just Jewish (the 'weak observers') had distinctly lower levels of ritual practice than traditional Jews. Like the traditional group, the weak observers fail to keep the more demanding rituals associated with Shabbat, but in addition, the percentage who keep the other key practices is 20-40% lower than in the traditional group. For example:

	% Observance
Attend a seder every year	69
Avoid work on Rosh Hashanah	69
Light candles every Friday evening	42
Have a mezuzah on all doors	47
Separate milk and meat dishes at home	23

Further, a weak observer may keep a more demanding ritual (e.g. separate dishes) while neglecting a more commonly observed one (e.g. staying home on Friday night). This is in contrast to the traditional respondents, whose practices tend to lie on a Guttman Scale, i.e. anybody accepting a demanding mitzvah will tend to observe all those less demanding (more frequently observed) mitzvot as well.

Hence the traditional respondents are relatively consistent and individually ordered in their patterns of ritual practice, while the weak observers are more variable and idiosyncratic.

### *The Orthodox*

Members of the third, strictly Orthodox group, are by definition reliable and consistent in their religious observance. All the respondents who placed themselves in this category claimed to subscribe to the practices expected of religiously observant Jews (avoiding work on Shabbat, etc.) and therefore appear to have used the self-classification scale accurately. No attempt was made to distinguish degrees of Orthodoxy within this group.

### **Religious beliefs**

#### *Measuring religious beliefs*

The questionnaire incorporated a number of items related to belief in God and other aspects of Jewish faith which have been used and validated in previous studies. In most cases respondents were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement using a five-point Likert scale, the mid-point representing 'not certain'. The table below indicates the percentage agreeing (or strongly agreeing) with a positive item or the percentage disagreeing (or strongly disagreeing) with a negative item:

Attitude statement	% affirming Jewish view
The Jewish people have a special relationship with God	52
Praying to God can help to overcome personal problems	52
The Torah is the actual (or inspired) word of God	56
The universe came about by chance	42 (disag)
Belief in God is not central to being a good Jew	41 (disag)
Judaism has many laws and customs, but they do not help you to become a better person	33 (disag)

In common with previous studies, these responses reveal moderate levels of religious conviction. Broadly speaking, about 50% of the respondents appear to have some degree of faith in God, although the first three items might be seen as reflections of the way individuals respond subjectively to the concept of God, rather than judgements of a more existential kind. The fourth item, which calls directly for a view of God's role in human history, elicits weaker support, and the last two statements, linking Jewish belief and practice to morality, are still less commonly supported.

#### *Relationship between belief and ritual observance*

The levels of belief reported above represent aggregate figures for the entire sample. Given that the items reflect quite fundamental elements of Jewish faith, one might expect the more observant respondents to display substantially stronger levels of belief than the less observant. To some extent this is what happens, but there are some interesting deviations.

Comparing the strictly Orthodox with the rest of the sample, there is, as expected, a clear relationship between ritual observance and religious belief. Thus, while less than 40% of traditional and weak observers see belief in God as 'central to being a good Jew', more than 70% of the strictly Orthodox see a connection. Similarly, only 38% of the non-Orthodox reject the idea that 'the universe came about by chance', but among the strictly Orthodox 84% reject it.

However, if the 10% who are strictly Orthodox are excluded from the analysis, the relationship between belief and practice becomes very much weaker, even though there is still a very substantial variation in ritual practice. The range extends from the most observant wing of the traditional group (strict kashrut, partial observance of Shabbat and frequent attendance at synagogue) through to the minimal practices of some weak observers (occasional seder attendance, a mezuzah on the front door and festive decorations at Christmas time - the latter reported by 22% of weak observers).

But despite this wide variation, the correlation coefficient between observance and belief among the non-Orthodox is 0.34 - i.e. differences in religious belief explain only about 11% of the variation in peoples' ritual observance. In other words, the large gulf between the practising, traditional Jew and the non-observant, secular Jew is not clearly related to fundamental differences in belief. This is in contrast to other religious groups, such as Catholics and Moslems, where variations in observance seem to be driven to a large extent by differences in faith or belief. For our respondents, outside of the Orthodox fringe, belief and observance seem to be decoupled.

## Ethnic identity

### *Indicators of ethnicity*

In contrast to their moderate levels of religious belief, the respondents express very strong feelings of identity with fellow Jews. This encompasses a sense of personal Jewish identity, of belonging to a people, and a desire for group continuity. The key indicators produce uniformly high levels of agreement:

	% agree or strongly agree
An unbreakable bond unites Jews all over the world	88
A Jew should marry someone who is also Jewish	94
It is important that Jews survive as a people	98

Jewish friendship patterns also reflect high levels of in-group preference with 84% of respondents having 'all' or 'more than half' their close friends Jewish. And even when Jewishness is pitted against Englishness - as in 'I think of myself more as English than as Jewish' - only 19% give precedence to nationality over ethnicity. Only when there is a hint of distrust of non-Jews does the solid support for Jewish fellowship break down; thus only 43% of the sample subscribe to the view that 'when it comes to a crisis, Jews can only depend on other Jews'.

### *Relationships between ethnicity, belief and practice*

With response rates to most of the identity items approaching 100%, there is a limited opportunity, statistically speaking, to examine variations in ethnic identity. Nonetheless, there is some evidence of a (predictable) relationship between level of observance and strength of identity. For example, the statement that 'a Jew should marry someone who is also Jewish' elicits 96% support among traditional Jews, but only 83% among the weak observers. Similarly, 68% of traditional Jews reject the notion that they are more English than Jewish, while only 48% of the weak observers follow suit.

The interesting finding is not so much that there should be a relationship between ethnicity and religious observance, as that it should be stronger than the correlation between belief and observance (0.4 v 0.34) - even though the measures of ethnicity are relatively insensitive. This shows that variations in religious observance have more to do with the intensity of a person's Jewish identity than with his/her beliefs - at least this is so among the non-Orthodox. It is also consistent with the findings of the qualitative research that a feeling of belonging, rather than belief in God, is the driving force behind synagogue attendance and other forms of involvement.



## Summary

### *Main features of Jewishness*

In addition to the specific items relating to Jewish practice and belief, respondents were asked to make a forced choice of 'the two most important aspects of being Jewish' from the following list:

- Sense of attachment to Israel
- Jewish home life (food, customs, etc.)
- Links with fellow Jews, Jewish friends
- Jewish culture (art, music, etc.)
- Jewish practices and religion
- Loyalty to your Jewish heritage

The responses to this question can be used to summarise the simple typology of Jewishness described above:

The **strictly Orthodox** have consistent and high ratings on all three dimensions - belief, practice and ethnicity. The pattern of responses suggests that fundamental beliefs drive religious practice, rather than their sense of Jewish identity. If forced to select the two most important features of their Jewishness, Orthodox respondents select, predictably, 'Jewish practices and religion' (77%) followed by 'Jewish home life' (46%). The social, cultural and Israel-oriented dimensions feature less prominently.

The **traditional** group are very strongly identified in an ethnic sense, observe a common set of key, family-oriented practices (with little variation), but have moderate to low levels of religious belief. In their case it is the sense of identity, the desire to belong and to support Jewish family life, that seems to influence religious practice. Hence, for traditional Jews, the two most important aspects of being Jewish are 'Jewish home life' (selected by 61%) and 'Loyalty to the Jewish heritage' (55%). 'Links with fellow Jews' comes third, with religious, Israel-oriented and cultural aspects being less salient.

The **weak observers** resemble traditional Jews in having relatively low levels of belief and in being strongly identified in an ethnic sense - though not quite as strongly as the traditional group. They are, however, far less observant and far more individualistic in their religious practices. For weak observers, as for traditional Jews, observance is more closely related to strength of identity than to belief, but that identity is less family-oriented and more global in nature. Hence weak observers cite the more diffuse category 'Loyalty to the Jewish heritage' as the prime aspect of their Jewishness (70%) and 'Links with fellow Jews' as the second most salient feature (55%). 'Jewish home life', which is the most important factor for traditional Jews, receives only 31% support, equal to that accorded to a 'sense of attachment to Israel'.

Weak observers are a substantial sub-group (23%) of the United Synagogue membership, who define themselves as non-Orthodox, or even as secular, but still choose to belong to an Orthodox synagogue and to observe selected mitzvot. In terms of their membership of the United Synagogue, they are perhaps the most interesting and certainly the least satisfied of the membership (see chapter 3).

## Synagogue attendance

Synagogue attendance is included in the above analysis as one aspect of religious practice. However, it is of interest in its own right. The table below summarises attendance rates in percentages, broken down by sex and religious grouping:

	All %	Males %	Females %	Weak % Observers	Trad %	Orthodox %
Not at all	7	6	8	18	4	1
Yom Kippur only (or a few occasions)	53	47	59	67	55	9
About once a month	12	13	11	8	14	4
Most Sabbaths am only	20	20	20	5	21	44
More often	9	15	2	2	6	41

In broad terms, this table shows the familiar pattern - the majority of respondents are 'three times a year' attenders (or thereabouts) and only 29% attend once a week or more often. However, these data show significantly higher levels of attendance than has been recorded in previous surveys. In Kosmin's study of Redbridge Jews (1983), only 10% of those belonging to Orthodox synagogues were regular weekly attenders, and Krausz (1969) found only 13.6% of Edgware Jews came into this category. Even allowing for some response bias and for geographical variations, it appears that there has been a substantial revival in synagogue attendance rates since these earlier studies.

Further, and possibly by way of explanation, the gender bias reported in earlier studies is significantly reduced. Excluding those who attend several times per week, the proportion of weekly attenders who are female is 50% compared to a 40-60 split in earlier studies.

The variations in attendance across the religious sub-groups are not unexpected. But the degree of polarisation is worthy of note. In particular, the rate of attendance of the 19% of respondents who classified themselves as just Jewish or progressive (a subset of the weak observers) is substantially lower than that of affiliated members of progressive synagogues in the Redbridge survey. Since the sample is slightly under-representative of the less involved, the percentage of rare synagogue attenders is probably higher than that suggested in the table above.

Looking specifically at regular attenders (those who attend almost every Shabbat or more often), the following table reports the number of attenders as a proportion of each age group and compares the proportions with those obtained in the Redbridge survey:

Age group		20 - 40	41 - 60	61 +
% who regularly attend	US	25	34	23
	RBG	7	9	19

We have already noted that rates of attendance have increased substantially relative to those reported in earlier studies, but this table locates the increase among the younger age groups. Again, one has to allow for geographical variations and possible response bias, but there can be little doubt that higher proportions of young people are attending United synagogues than in the past.

To summarise, these data point to a growing rate of participation in synagogue services and increased interest among younger and among female members - the trend has been so marked that gender and age biases in attendance have almost disappeared. Polarisation seems to have increased, however, since the proportion of non-attenders is similar to that reported in the Edgware and Redbridge studies even though regular attendance has increased.

## 2. BELONGING TO A SYNAGOGUE

### Reasons for belonging - in general

Respondents were given a list of ten possible reasons for belonging to a synagogue and asked to rate their importance on a three-point scale - low, moderate, high. The factors most frequently cited as being highly important are listed below:

	% giving 'high' rating
(i) To ensure a Jewish burial	79
(ii) To be able to call on the synagogue at times of birth, marriage, bereavement etc	71
(iii) To provide a Jewish education for my children (where appropriate)	70
(iv) To encourage my children to mix with Jews (where appropriate)	68
(v) To help support the synagogue and keep Jewish tradition alive	64

The final item reflects a strong desire, noted in the qualitative research, to perpetuate authentic Judaism despite the failure of many members to express this kind of Judaism in their personal lives. The quantitative findings confirm the importance of this emotional attachment to tradition as a motivating factor in joining the United Synagogue.

The remaining items bring home the respondents' highly instrumental approach to synagogue membership, with the provision of burial rights, support for family events and the supply of children's Jewish education being the prime factors. Items related to more intrinsic factors such as religious development or the expression of affiliation (with Israel or fellow Jews) were cited far less frequently:

	% giving 'high' rating
(vi) To have somewhere to pray and express my religious feelings	46
(vii) To keep in touch socially with Jews like myself	41
(viii) To express my affiliation with Israel	30
(ix) To extend my Jewish knowledge and education	22
(x) To satisfy my parents' wishes and expectations	20

Some of these factors may, of course, be seen as extremely important in other contexts, but not as reasons for belonging to a synagogue. The emphasis placed on pragmatic motives is common to all three religious sub-groups, but it is somewhat muted among the strictly Orthodox respondents. This group rates the religious function of the synagogue (item vi) more highly than any other item, but otherwise resembles the other groups.

## Reasons for choosing a particular synagogue

In addition to providing general reasons for belonging to a synagogue, respondents were asked to identify the factors that led them to select their particular synagogue. This section describes these factors.

To some extent individual synagogues have a monopoly position in the local market. 27% of respondents said that there was no other synagogue (of any type) within a reasonable distance of their home, and a further 34% indicated that they had chosen their synagogue because it was the nearest local synagogue. By far the most important factor was therefore geography.

The other main reasons for selecting a particular synagogue, in descending order of frequency, were:

	% citing reason
It suited my level of religious practice	47
It had a warm and welcoming atmosphere	32
The rabbi (or chazzan) created a good impression	30
Parents or parents-in-law already belonged	25
The only alternative was a Reform/Liberal synagogue and I would not belong to that	22
It had the best facilities for my children	21
Encouragement from friends	16

Taking the previous two sections together leads to the conclusion that the choice processes involved in joining a synagogue are rather straightforward. The main reasons for joining are pragmatic (burial, marriage, children's Jewish education, etc.) supported by a general desire to preserve traditional Judaism. The main factors involved in choosing a particular synagogue are proximity and, if there is a local choice, religious fit and then qualitative factors (warmth, impact of minister) come into operation. In about a fifth of cases, friends or relatives may influence choice, although this is the sole factor in only 6% of cases. Efforts made by synagogues to market themselves were mentioned by only 8% of respondents, and these were never the sole determinant of synagogue choice.

## 3. EXPECTATIONS AND EVALUATION OF THE SYNAGOGUE

### Perceived importance of services provided by synagogues

Having joined a synagogue for certain reasons - say to ensure a Jewish burial or to organise a bar mitzvah - it does not necessarily follow that respondents will wish to see these matters given priority in the agenda of synagogue activities and services. We therefore asked the respondents to rate the importance of eight different aspects of synagogal life without linking the question to the process of joining or choosing a synagogue. As indicated below, the respondents did not deviate from their staunchly pragmatic approach when asked to rate various functions on a four-point scale of importance:

	% of respondents giving a 'very high' rating
Arrangements for births, deaths and marriages (includes burial)	49
Jewish education (children and adults)	45
The synagogue service and related events	30
Youth activities - social, religious sporting etc	28
Social life of the community (social events, warmth)	21
Spiritual and moral development of the community	21
Welfare services (advice, counselling for members)	20
Charitable efforts for Israel and other causes	15

Comparing this ordering to the list of reasons for belonging to a synagogue confirms the pre-eminence of specific, practical services over social, spiritual or expressive functions. At least this is the case with traditional or weak observers. Orthodox respondents, once again, resist the trend, raising 'spiritual and moral development' from the sixth to the third most important goal and demoting practical 'arrangements for births, deaths and marriages' to fifth place. This highlights the potential difficulty of developing the ethos of a synagogue to meet the needs of a relatively disparate religious constituency.

### Perceived quality of services provided by synagogues

Immediately following the ratings of importance, respondents were asked to rate the 'quality of work being done in each of these areas' using a three-point scale (low, medium, high) plus a 'not certain' option. The target should clearly be to obtain high ratings in all eight areas, but with limited resources a more realistic goal might be to achieve high ratings in the more important areas.

In the event the overall ratings of quality were good. Only 13% of them fell in the 'low quality' category and the typical assessment was almost mid-way between medium and high quality. The most important areas (as defined by respondents above) were also the areas attracting the highest ratings of quality:

	% 'High' Quality	Rank Quality	Rank Importance
Arrangements for births etc.	67	1	1
Jewish education	53	2	2
Synagogue service	51	3	3
Social life of community	42	4	5
Charitable efforts etc.	38	5	8
Spiritual development etc.	29	6	5
Youth activities	28	7	4
Welfare services, advice etc	27	8	7

In accordance with the qualitative research findings, youth activity was not highly rated and was the only area ranked significantly higher in importance than it was in quality. Conversely, charitable work was rated as being of somewhat higher quality, but of more limited importance. Using charitable efforts to improve the quality of youth activities would rectify both these anomalies!

Welfare services and opportunities for spiritual and moral development also received moderate ratings. That they are not considered particularly important may be part of the explanation for the judgement of limited quality.

In view of the negative comments revealed in the qualitative research, Jewish education was surprisingly well rated. Apart from the 53% giving a 'high quality' rating, a further 35% gave a 'medium' rating and only 12% felt that the quality was 'low'. Part of the explanation may be that the phrase 'Jewish education' was defined to encompass adult education as well as the cheder system, but given the low rate of involvement in adult education (see chapter 4), this is not a likely explanation for the results. Further, the proportion assigning a high quality rating to education was not affected by limiting the analysis to respondents whose children were currently attending cheder (it remained at 53%), nor was support significantly reduced by focusing specifically on Orthodox

respondents (small drop to 49%). The conclusion may be that most respondents are genuinely satisfied with the quality of Jewish education or, more cynically, that they appreciate the limited impact it has on their family's Jewish lifestyle. We return to this issue in chapter 4.

The ratings of Jewish education, like those achieved in other areas, are essentially subjective. By definition they reflect the range of expectations and experience of the respondents rather than any absolute standards of quality. Nonetheless the results reported in this section show that levels of satisfaction with the services members judge to be important are not a serious cause for concern, with the clear exception of youth activities.

### Reactions to the synagogue service

Although ratings of the quality of the synagogue service were generally positive, the group discussions revealed a number of specific criticisms and possible variations in the style and conduct of the service. Respondents were asked to give their views on six main issues arising from the qualitative research, indicating whether they agreed, disagreed or had no opinion on each one. The following results were obtained:-

	Agree %	No opinion %	Disagree %
It would be better if men and women could be seated on the same level in the synagogue	48	19	33
It is hard to sit through the long Shabbat morning service	40	16	45
I would rather go to a smaller, more intimate service (members of large synagogues)	33 (38)	24 (22)	44 (39)
The synagogue discourages open and critical discussion of the current position in Israel	15	58	27
I wish there could be more explanation during the service	60	16	24
The congregation is not sufficiently welcoming to visitors	34	23	43

With the exception of the item on freedom to discuss Israel, it is clear that there is a good deal of support for the various changes implied by these questions; i.e. same level seating, shorter and more intimate services, explanatory services and a more welcoming attitude to visitors. But it is equally the case that a large proportion of respondents are content with the existing arrangements. Compared with other attitudinal questions, these items reveal a remarkable degree of polarisation.

Separating out the three religious sub-groups helps to reduce the variation, but not in a consistent way. Thus weak observers are generally more enthusiastic about the changes,

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but sometimes the traditionals, rather than the Orthodox are the champions of the status quo. And in relation to more intimate services, the Orthodox are the main supporters of change:

	Keenest supporters	Most resistant
Same level seating	Weak observers	Orthodox
Shorter service	Weak observers	Traditional
Smaller, intimate service	Orthodox	Traditional
Explanatory service	Weak observers	Orthodox
More welcoming attitude	No significant variation	

Similarly, a breakdown by age reveals less enthusiasm among older respondents for some changes (more intimate, shorter services), but more enthusiasm for others (same level seating, explanatory services).

A further complication is that regular attenders are generally less supportive of change, and particularly in relation to same level seating (only 29% agree), shorter service (27%) and more explanation (43%).

An analysis of the relationship between each variable and every other variable fails to reveal a sub-set or cluster of changes that seem to elicit similar attitudes among the respondents.

All this suggests that although each of the changes has considerable support individually, there is no way of combining them to satisfy an identifiable sub-group of respondents. This means that in most synagogues a variety of different kinds of service would have to be established to meet the varied interests of the members and to attract non-attenders without distancing the current set of regular attenders.

### Attitudes to change among potential leavers

Another approach to the question of how respondents view such changes is to relate them to decisions about leaving a synagogue. A potentially important change is one that is closely related to consideration of leaving, whereas a less important change should have a weaker relationship with the desire or inclination to leave. A later question asks respondents - *'Since joining your present synagogue, have you ever considered leaving?'* and the table below shows how the answer to this question is related to respondents' attitudes to change:

	% supporting the change among	
	Potential leavers	Non-leavers
Same level seating	58	43
Shorter service	48	36
Smaller, intimate service	47	26
Explanatory service	68	57
More welcoming attitude	49	26

Predictably, those who have considered leaving have higher levels of agreement with each of the possible changes. What this table shows, however, is which of the changes are most closely associated with an inclination to leave. The conclusion is that a welcoming atmosphere and a more intimate service are the key goals of respondents who have considered leaving (see also chapter 3.)

## The rabbi and the chazzan

### *Attitudes to the chazzan*

Precisely two-thirds of the sample attended synagogues that employ a chazzan and these respondents were asked whether 'he makes the service more enjoyable'. The response was unambiguous:

A great deal	47%
Somewhat	43%
Not at all	7%
Actually detracts	3%

These findings appear to contradict the outcome of the qualitative research, which identified a trend among some members towards disenchantment with the 'cold style of the United Synagogue with chazzan and choir'. However this more negative attitude may well be prevalent among those whose synagogues do not employ a chazzan.

Respondents belonging to such synagogues were asked whether they thought their synagogue should have a chazzan, and opinions were more or less evenly divided between the options 'yes, definitely' (32%), 'perhaps' (36%) and 'no' (32%). Assuming that respondents did not choose their synagogues on the basis of their attitudes to chazzanut, these findings would seem to imply that the reality is somewhat better than the expectation.

### *What is expected of the rabbi and how is it perceived ?*

Respondents were presented with a list of sixteen separate functions derived mainly from the qualitative phase of the research. They were asked to rate how important they felt it was for the Rabbi to perform each task and then how well they thought their own Rabbi did that task. In both cases a four-point scale was employed:

1 = unimportant	1 = badly
2 = important	2 = adequately
3 = very important	3 = well
4 = essential	4 = very well

The tasks are listed in order of judged importance with mean ratings and ranks on the scales of importance and quality:

	Rating Importance Of Task		Rating Quality of Performance	
Set the religious and moral tone of the congregation	1	3.5	3	3.0
Listen when his congregants come with personal problems	2	3.5	5	2.9
Create a strong sense of community	3	3.4	10	2.6
Officiate at weddings, funerals etc	4	3.3	1	3.1
Visit the sick and elderly	5	3.3	6	2.8
Raise the level of Jewish knowledge in his community	6	3.2	8	2.7
Be receptive to new ideas	7	3.1	14	2.2
Bring the less involved into the community	8	3.0	16	2.0
Organise cheder/synagogue classes	9	2.8	11	2.5
Maintain contact with the non-Jewish world	10	2.7	12	2.3
Promote the cause of Israel	11	2.6	4	2.9
Read from the Torah each week	12	2.5	2	3.1
Give regular sermons	13	2.5	9	2.7
Recruit new members	14	2.4	15	2.1
Lead synagogue services every day	15	2.2	7	2.8
Fundraise for the community	16	2.0	13	2.3

There is a clear contrast between the perceived order of importance of rabbinic tasks in the above list and the earlier findings that respondents join synagogues for very practical reasons. Here we find that rabbis are expected first and foremost to set the moral tone, to counsel and listen, to create a sense of community, raise educational standards and to respond to new ideas. Most, but not all, of the more practical tasks are relegated to lower positions on the list. Above, commenting on the relative importance of synagogue services, respondents placed the operational tasks well above the spiritual and inspirational.

Presumably this change of priorities has something to do with the symbolic role of the rabbi as a religious leader who can be used vicariously to express the spiritual goals of his congregants. This takes precedence over the pragmatic functions which are seen as being fulfilled by the synagogue as a whole, rather than by its rabbi per se.

However ambitious the goals for rabbinic performance, the right hand-column indicates that, on balance, rabbis are judged to be better at practical tasks than at the more delicate interpersonal or spiritual roles. The tasks achieving the highest quality ratings are 'officiating at weddings' and 'reading from the Torah each week', while the more ethereal roles tend in many cases to receive lower ratings. Although the scales are not strictly comparable, there is a relatively large gap between perceived importance and quality in the following areas:

- Creating a strong sense of community
- Being receptive to new ideas
- Bringing the less involved into the community

To summarise, these findings illustrate a strong desire for rabbis to demonstrate dynamic religious leadership based on openness, innovation, interpersonal skills, educational vision, commitment to the less involved and support for the sick and elderly. However, rabbis are perceived to be less competent in some of these areas than in the performance of more practical tasks.

### Overall perception of synagogue attributes

The previous sections examine respondents' views of operational aspects of synagogue activities. However, as the qualitative research shows, members also judge synagogues in more holistic terms - that is, in relation to their general style and approach. Two questions (one closed and one open) allowed respondents to rate their synagogues on these dimensions.

The closed question invited ratings of quality of five general characteristics of the synagogue using a three-point scale (high/good, moderate/satisfactory, low/poor). These findings are summarised below in descending order of judged quality:

	% rating 'high' or 'good'
Courtesy to members	40
Open and democratic approach	26
Communication with members	26
Value for money	26
Vibrancy and innovation	19

In absolute terms none of these attributes is seen as being strongly characteristic of United Synagogue communities. With typical ratings falling in the 'moderate' or 'moderate/low' categories - on openness, communication, value and innovation - it is clear that synagogues are not generally seen as being particularly responsive places. However, they are, at least, reasonably courteous (only 9% 'low' ratings).

For some of these attributes there is a variation across the religious groupings. Thus 'value for money' is judged more positively by the strictly Orthodox (35% give a 'good' rating) than by the other groups - presumably reflecting the greater use made of synagogue services by this section of the membership. This gives some support to the

idea of increased differentiation in pricing policy, with the possibility of relating fees more closely to the uptake of particular facilities and services.

There is also quite marked variation in the perception of synagogal 'vibrancy and innovation': only 11% of weak observers gave this attribute a high rating, compared to 19% of the traditional respondents and 29% of the strictly Orthodox. Here again it seems that more positive attitudes are associated with greater involvement in synagogue life, although the general view is unequivocal - synagogues are not seen as vibrant places; the mean rating falls about mid-way between moderate and low. This is, perhaps, to be expected of an organisation with strong central control of religious and financial functions. It is nonetheless a concern that the United Synagogue should be seen as lacking in vibrancy and innovative capacity at the same time that the community is actively seeking change.

### Overall ratings of the synagogue among potential leavers

The relevance of these general perceptions to decisions about continued membership can be assessed in another way. Following the approach adopted in the section on changes to the synagogue service, the table below relates judgments on each of the five dimensions to the question of whether a respondent has ever considered leaving his or her synagogue. For all five attributes, as one might predict, low ratings are strongly associated with an inclination to leave. However, the most salient factors have to do with 'value' and 'courtesy' - arguably the two most immediate and personally relevant dimensions.

	% rating 'high' or 'good'	
	Potential Leavers	Non-Leavers
Courtesy to members	26	47
Open and democratic approach	15	30
Communication with members	15	30
Value for money	13	32
Vibrancy and innovation	12	22

Given that attitudes and behaviour are often very loosely connected, it does not, of course, follow that any of these factors would necessarily drive members to leave their synagogues.

### The anatomy of potential leavers

The previous sections identify a wide range of factors that might, in principle, incline members to leave. These extend from relatively practical issues (value for money, impersonal synagogue services) through to more abstract concerns (poor sense of community, lack of innovation). To get a more direct measure of the relative importance of these and other factors, respondents were asked whether they had ever considered leaving their present synagogue, and if so, to give their reasons.

Just over 32% of respondents had considered leaving at some time. The proportion was slightly higher among women than men (35% v 30%) and inversely related to age:

Age group (years)	20 - 40	41 - 60	61+
% considered leaving	40	35	24

The age effect is interesting. Given that older members have had a greater opportunity to experience difficulties and frustrations in their interaction with the synagogue, one might have expected them to be more likely to have considered leaving. The fact that the young are more frequently dissatisfied points to a failure to adapt to changing demands and therefore to a growing, rather than diminishing, risk of defection.

It might also be expected that the proportion considering leaving would vary with religious grouping, but this was not the case. The traditional group appear to be marginally less prone to leave (31%) than the weak observers (34%) or the Orthodox (34%), but these differences are not statistically reliable. Excluding those who considered leaving for 'neutral' reasons (moving house or similar) does not change the picture. It would seem that the three religious sub-groups experience similar levels of dissatisfaction, although clearly for different reasons.

An earlier section showed that a desire for smaller and more intimate services was strongly associated with thoughts of leaving. This suggests that respondents belonging to larger synagogues are more likely to be 'at risk' and this is clearly supported by the data:-

	Size of synagogue membership		
	less than 400	400 - 900	900+
% of respondents who have considered leaving-	28	27	37

The final table examines the relationship between the respondents' levels of academic qualification and their tendency to consider leaving. This too shows a clear-cut trend, with the most highly qualified respondents almost twice as likely to have contemplated leaving as those without formal qualifications.

	Level of qualification				
	None	O level, etc.	A level HNC	1st Degree	Post-grad
% considered leaving	26	30	34	34	50

Summarising, these data lead to a fairly clear picture of the stereotypical leaver or potential leaver:- he, or she, is someone who is young, well qualified, belonging to one of the larger synagogues, concerned about value for money and courteous treatment, and preferring a smaller, more intimate service. Arguably, this is precisely the kind of member the United Synagogue most needs to retain.

### Reasons for leaving

The previous items lead, indirectly, to inferences about the motivation for leaving. However one question was included which asked respondents to explain directly their reasons for considering leaving and this produced the following list of generalised reasons in descending order of frequency:-

Reason for leaving	% of potential leavers citing this reason
High level of fees	32
Unfriendly, cliquey, impersonal	25
Moved house, distance, etc	23
Atmosphere too Orthodox, outdated	15
Treatment of women, no family seating	13
Uncaring, unfriendly, poor rabbi	11
Poor religious atmosphere/decorum	10
Declining or old community	10
No (or inadequate) Hebrew classes	8
Difficulty understanding service	8
Synagogue too big	5
Not religious/Orthodox enough	5
Honorary officers undemocratic/poor	4
Poor facilities for youth	2

These findings reinforce the earlier conclusions. The most potent factors in this list - fee levels and the social treatment of members - correspond closely to the areas identified as predisposing members to leave, i.e. value for money and courtesy. But the open-ended question also provides an indication of the intensity of feeling: explanations of the desire to leave were not simply listed in a dispassionate way; they were frequently described in the most emotive terms. High fee levels were seen as uncaring and iniquitous by a substantial group of elderly and retired respondents on low fixed incomes. Similarly, many of the less-involved respondents were incensed by what they perceived to be an exclusive and non-welcoming attitude on the part of the 'machers' and other regular attenders. This was described as a 'them and us' mentality and frequently contrasted with the warm and open atmosphere that was expected of (or had been experienced in) Reform and Masorti synagogues. In essence, about 16% of all respondents (48% of potential leavers) felt that they were being squeezed out of their synagogues, either financially or in terms of the social and religious conformity needed to gain full acceptance within the community.

The third major factor inclining respondents to leave might be defined as a 'progressive' drift. It consists of a cluster of responses reflecting a general desire for a less traditional and more flexible approach. These responses include preferences for family seating; equal treatment of women; less 'outdated' and more progressive services; greater emphasis on decorum, religious sensitivity and understanding (use of English) in the organisation of services. Respondents citing at least two of these reasons for considering leaving comprise about 20% of the potential leavers' sub-group.

With the exception of moving house, which is treated as a neutral factor, the remaining reasons for leaving (declining community, poor Hebrew classes, etc.) tend to occur in isolation and relatively infrequently. The negative role of the rabbi, for example, reflects the view of 11% of those who answered this question, but this represents less than 3% of the entire sample.

The factors listed above do not correspond perfectly to those identified in the group discussions as predisposing members to leave. That is probably because the group discussions focused more generally on the dissatisfactions of a cross-section of members, whereas this question looks specifically at the motivations of the subset of respondents who have actually considered leaving. Thus, for example, we noted earlier that lack of social provision for teenagers is an area of general concern, but does not seem likely to trigger decisions to leave. Similarly, criticism of synagogue politics and of inward-looking wardens may be widespread, but seems rarely to be implicated in respondents' descriptions of their reasons for leaving. As we have seen, the three main factors are more immediate - fee levels, social reinforcement and somewhat less tangibly, a progressive approach to families and religious services.

### **Destination of would-be leavers**

About a quarter of those who had considered leaving had done so because of geographical considerations, and the majority of these would move to another United Synagogue or Orthodox synagogue. If such cases are removed from the analysis, the majority of potential (dissatisfied) leavers would move to the left, i.e. to Reform (35%), Masorti (17%) or Liberal (3%) synagogues, or to no synagogue at all (4%), with the remaining 41% moving to another Orthodox synagogue.

Allowing for the proportion of respondents who have probably never heard of the Masorti movement, the percentage selecting this type of synagogue is surprisingly high. Combined with the Progressive sector, it would seem that the main threat to United Synagogue membership comes from the left; the dramatic growth in the right-wing sector appears to be fuelled mainly by the natural growth of chassidic communities themselves, and by the attraction of previously unaffiliated Jews, rather than by any sizable defection from the central Orthodox community.

Loose support for this hypothesis comes from a question that assessed attitudes to the Lubavitch movement. Whilst approximately 30% of all respondents approved of Lubavitch religious attitudes and of their approach to unaffiliated Jews, only 26% of those considering leaving did so. This suggests that potential leavers are not generally prone to move to the right.

The conclusion remains that the tendency to leave, or at least to consider leaving, is triggered by the relatively mundane factors listed above - poor value for money, social unease and the preference for a more relaxed religious style. The natural drift is therefore leftwards. Religious mobility, should it take off, is also likely to have a 'Jewish yuppie' element - young, well-qualified members belonging to large communities may be among the first to seek a more user-friendly religious environment.

#### 4. JEWISH EDUCATION

##### Attitudes to full- and part-time Jewish education

The growing rate of participation in full-time Jewish education is an important feature of communal change. It has already had an impact on the demand for Hebrew classes in local synagogues and it has implications for the educational strategy of the United Synagogue as a whole.

In this section of the questionnaire we sought to establish the attitudes of the 380 respondents in our sample who had children below the age of 25 years. The starting point was their view on whether 'it is better to send a child of primary school age to a Jewish or to a non-Jewish school', ignoring the question of cost. A similar question was asked in relation to Jewish secondary schooling and the results are given below, listing also the responses to similar questions included in the 1978 Redbridge survey:

	US	Redbridge
% supporting Jewish primary schooling	41	24
% supporting Jewish secondary schooling	26	19

Although the two samples are only loosely comparable, there can be little doubt that parental enthusiasm for Jewish schooling has increased substantially since the Redbridge data were collected. However, the significant preference for primary over secondary schooling persists, if anything, in a more striking form.

The same pattern emerges in the following table, which compares the attitudes of weak observers, traditional and Orthodox respondents. The sharply rising trend in support across these three sub-groups is not surprising, but the stark difference between the levels of primary and secondary support, even in the strictly Orthodox category, needs to be explained:-

	Weak observers	Traditional	Strictly Orthodox
% supporting Jewish primary schooling	21	39	86
% supporting Jewish secondary schooling	14	22	66

The final table examines the relationship between the educational history of the parents and their attitudes towards the Jewish education of their children. This might be thought of as a crude performance indicator for Jewish education, albeit one generation out of date:-

	Parental history of Jewish education		
	Jewish primary	Jewish prim. and sec.	Neither
% supporting Jewish primary schooling	65	63	38
% supporting Jewish secondary schooling	35	44	23

These data suggest that full-time Jewish education works - at least in the sense of increasing the enthusiasm of parents for the Jewish schooling of their own children. Its impact on attitudes to Jewish primary schooling is very strong and could lead to a progressive increase in demand as successive generations of children attending Jewish schools themselves become parents. However, at secondary level, support is only marginally increased by the parent's own experience of Jewish education, and one cannot predict a significant growth in demand on purely statistical grounds. This opens up the possibility of a steadily increasing gap between the demand for Jewish primary and secondary schooling, assuming of course that other factors remain constant.

In any event, the trends outlined above make it clear that the demand for Jewish education at primary level is likely to continue to shift from cheder to day school, while at secondary level the part-time system is likely to remain the dominant approach for some time to come.

### Why most parents prefer non-Jewish schools

The reasons why individual parents prefer Jewish or non-Jewish schooling were investigated in two open-ended questions, one relating to primary and one to secondary choices. Of the 380 respondents who had expressed a preference, 323 gave reasons in support of their choices.

Wide variations in the sophistication and language of the respondents were revealed in these responses, but there was stunning consistency in the underlying arguments.

**Those preferring non-Jewish schooling** invariably cited the need for children to mix with all sections of society (89% of sub-group), sometimes backed up with the argument that Jewish education and identity should come from the home or synagogue (17%). In many cases this principle reflected a generally liberal stance - 'we live in a plural society', 'our young people need to be at home with others', 'it's important to contribute to the wider community'. But for many respondents there appeared to be a remarkably intense, if not malicious, element to the argument. Thus there were frequent references to avoiding 'a narrow Jewish ghetto', preventing 'bigotry', 'minds in blinkers' and even a statement that 'Jews will never be accepted until we stop trying to be different and superior'.

The only other identifiable theme in these responses was concern about academic standards and about the impact of Jewish studies on the time available for secular work. But these reasons were advanced by only 14% of the sub-group, generally in combination with the previous arguments.

**Those preferring Jewish schooling** also gave a very limited range of arguments. In most cases (65% of the sub-group) reference was made to the 'importance of Jewish education in the early years' or simply 'the need to have a good Jewish education'. Statements of this kind seem to reflect a desire to socialise the child Jewishly or to develop his or her religious awareness.



The second main reason (38%) concerned the 'need for children to mix with other Jews' and 'to make Jewish friends for the future'. The underlying themes here were preserving Jewish identity and preventing out-marriage. A few respondents also mentioned the avoidance of anti-Semitism (5%) and the unsatisfactory nature of cheder education (6%).

The reasons outlined above did not vary significantly between primary and secondary schooling. But there were, of course, a substantial number of respondents who supported the Jewish primary and rejected the Jewish secondary. The two factors underlying this change of loyalty were the views that (i) mixing in the wider community becomes important at secondary level (85% of switching group) and (ii) that educational standards would be compromised in a Jewish secondary school (26%). In the latter category were remarks like 'once the child reaches secondary level *education* really matters'.

Overall, these findings reflect a fairly simplistic, but deeply held set of opinions and beliefs. It is conceivable that attitudes to the academic standards in Jewish schools, or even to the limited scope of Jewish school life, might be amenable to change; but the imagery and intensity of the views of those opposed to segregation, suggest that these attitudes are far less likely to change. Such parents constitute about a half of those who are opposed to Jewish schooling (22% of the total sample). Outside of this group, there are perhaps possibilities for the United Synagogue to market and promote full-time Jewish schooling on a local or central basis.

### Hebrew classes - parental objectives

Some 277 respondents (37% of the sample) had made use of United Synagogue Hebrew classes within the past few years. These parents were asked to rate the importance of nine different objectives for part-time classes, ranging from practical skills to spiritual development. The proportion of respondents who rated each goal as 'very high' in importance is given below:

	% rating goal 'very high'
To teach children to read Hebrew and follow the service	51
To prepare children for Bar mitzvah or Bat Chayil	50
To help children to develop a strong sense of Jewish identity	50
To encourage children to mix with Jewish friends	36
To teach children how to observe Jewish festival and rituals	34
To develop an appreciation of Jewish history and the Jewish heritage	32
To provide experience of the joy of Jewish life and customs	28
To help children to develop moral awareness	21
To learn to speak Hebrew as a living language	15

This ordering shows the now familiar dominance of instrumental and pragmatic goals, interleaved with items related to Jewish identity and socialisation. The three items of conceptual, affective and ethical significance are clearly the least valued, with the exception of the item on the teaching of Ivrit.

This set of priorities corresponds closely to those applied to synagogues as a whole and provides a yardstick for the evaluation of quality in the following section.

## Judgements of Quality

Overall, opinions on the quality of Hebrew classes were broadly spread. Some 45% of our respondents agreed that the quality was good, while 33% disagreed and 22% were uncertain. This is not a glowing assessment, but neither is it the very negative view expressed by respondents in the qualitative phase of the research. The explanation for this difference appears to lie in the expectations and values of the individual respondent.

Using the list of priorities developed in the previous section, we compared levels of satisfaction with Hebrew classes across two groups of respondents - those concerned mainly with ethnic goals and those more interested in Jewish skills or moral development. The respondents who saw Hebrew classes mainly as a place for mixing with other Jews (ethnic) were relatively satisfied with the standards (53% good), whereas the other group were less satisfied (41% good).

Similar findings were obtained if ratings of satisfaction were correlated with levels of observance: Orthodox respondents gave significantly lower ratings (21% good) than either of the other groups (49% good). (Note: the Orthodox rating is based on a very small sub-sample).

In these circumstances an overall judgement of quality is probably not a useful measure. Rather, one should conclude that Hebrew classes work reasonably well for those whose primary concern is Jewish socialisation and less well for those with serious educational or religious priorities.

However, even those who agree that the quality of Hebrew classes is good appear not to be entirely satisfied with the standards. Thus, 32% of them stated that they 'would have been prepared to pay more to get high quality education' in Hebrew classes. Of those who did not rate the quality as good, about half (47%) would have been prepared to pay more. Hence there would appear to be scope for marketing higher quality educational provision to about 40% of parents.

The sums suggested by respondents as being reasonable were not large, however. On the basis of 221 responses, the following distribution of annual fees 'to ensure high quality, part-time education for your child' was obtained:

	% of respondents suggesting fee as reasonable
up to £100	25
£100 to 200	27
£200 to 300	20
£300 to 400	10
£400 to 500	12
more than £500	6

## Specific comments on Hebrew classes

The qualitative research revealed a number of problems and opinions relating to Hebrew classes on which there was a high degree of consensus. These points were put to our respondents in the form of attitude statements which could be rated on a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree with an 'uncertain' midpoint. The table below shows the percentage who actively disagreed or strongly disagreed:

	% rejecting view
Too much emphasis is placed on Jewish schools while Hebrew classes are being neglected	11
Many of the teachers have difficulty controlling the class	16
Hebrew classes work well with younger children	8
Hebrew classes should be organised by local people, not by the central office	27
More time should be given to Ivrit and	

As can be seen, there is little disagreement with the views that emerged from group discussions. Some respondents were, of course, uncertain, but in all cases the majority of respondents agreed with the statements.

Taking this evidence together with the previous sections, the overall view of Hebrew classes is that they are reasonably good at providing a Jewish social environment, particularly for younger children, but not well placed to deliver high quality, serious education to the older students. A shift to local management, increased parental contributions and the diversion of resources from Jewish schools are all strategies with a fair degree of support among our respondents.

### **Adult education for synagogue members**

Respondents were asked whether they took part in any adult education classes or study groups, other than shiurim, which were held in their synagogue. In all, 79 persons (45 men and 34 women - 11% of all respondents) had attended such courses. A further 58 (8%) stated that courses were not available in their synagogue.

As might have been expected, there were significant differences in the rate of participation of the three 'religious types'. For the Orthodox group 38% attended, with the proportion falling sharply to 10% of the traditional group and yet further to 3% of weak observers. There is a substantial challenge here to increase the involvement of the less observant groups.

### **Quality of provision in adult education**

The 79 members who had attended adult education classes were asked to evaluate the standard of the courses in terms of three characteristics:

the range of topic choice  
the social atmosphere in the group  
the intellectual standard of the teaching

On a four-point scale (poor, adequate, good, very good) only 7-9% of the group rated the classes to be poor on any particular dimension. On the other hand, 64% of all attenders found the range of topic choice to be good or very good, and 65% were similarly approving of the teaching standard and the social atmosphere in the group.

These are high ratings, but they reflect the opinions of a small sub-group which itself contains a good deal of variation. Thus on all three dimensions, the Orthodox group were more satisfied (80%+ gave good or very good ratings) than the other groups (under 60%). This difference was particularly marked in relation to the measure of intellectual standard which attracted the top ratings from 88% of the Orthodox respondents but only from 52% of the traditional group.

These differences in satisfaction may reflect higher expectations among traditional respondents than among the Orthodox, or perhaps differences in preferred pedagogic style. They could become an issue if an attempt was made to increase substantially the level of participation in adult education since this would require greater involvement of the non-Orthodox sector.

### **Secular education in the synagogue**

One element of the 'total community' concept that emerged from the group discussions was the desirability of making the synagogue a base for a wide range of social, sporting and educational activities, including secular studies. To test the response to this idea respondents were asked whether they *'would be interested in taking classes in subjects such as keep fit, foreign languages or art, if they were offered in your synagogue (assuming there was something of interest).'*

Of the 624 responses to this question, a substantial majority were positive:

Yes, I would study in the synagogue	49%
No, I would prefer a local centre	18%
Neither	33%

There were again clear differences between the religious sub-groups. About one-third of respondents in all the groups were not interested in such an initiative. Of the remaining two-thirds, 86% of the Orthodox respondents preferred a synagogue base compared to just over 70% in the other two groups. Overall, however, it is clear that those who are interested in secular studies would generally prefer to locate them in their synagogues.

Furthermore, even if those who currently attend Jewish adult education are excluded from the statistics, the proportion wishing to participate in synagogue-based studies reduces only slightly from 49% to 47%. This supports the suggestion made in the group discussions that general activities of this kind might provide a means of bringing the less involved into the community.

The high level of support among traditional and weak observers presumably echoes the high ratings given to 'social atmosphere' in adult education classes and is perhaps a manifestation of the feeling of peoplehood, or social Judaism, which these groups exhibit.

### **Explanatory Services**

A second approach identified in the group discussions as finding favour with members was the provision of explanatory services. The idea of more explanation during the service was also supported by 60% of our respondents in an earlier section, but in the context of changing the style of the main service.

In this section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they would be likely to attend a separate explanatory service designed for those '*who would like to know more about the content and meaning of the service*'. The response was slightly less enthusiastic than that relating to the idea of more explanation within the main service; 60% expressed some degree of approval, but only 23% said they would definitely or probably attend such services, the remaining 37% falling in the 'perhaps yes' category.

The responses to this question also varied with religious observance, but in an unexpected way: a higher proportion of Orthodox respondents said they would 'definitely attend' an explanatory service (16% v 5%); but also a higher proportion stated that they would not attend (50% v 40%). In other words the Orthodox are more polarised than the traditional and weak observers on this issue, perhaps because newly-Orthodox members wish to learn more about the service, while others are already familiar with it.

As noted earlier, there is a complex pattern of responses to initiatives of this kind and it is difficult to define an optimal scheme of provision without more detailed study, ideally at the level of individual synagogues.

## **5 THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE AS AN ORGANISATION**

### **Communal services provided by the United Synagogue**

In the final section of the questionnaire the emphasis was placed on the central services of the United Synagogue and its corporate image. Respondents were asked to judge the quality of five communal services - burial, kashrut, Chief Rabbinate, Beth Din and part-time education. In the first instance, no attempt was made to discover whether respondents had experience of these services. There was, however, an opportunity for

respondents to record that they had 'no opinion' for each service. The fact that only 11% did not give an opinion of the burial services while 44% and 42% respectively did not comment on the Beth Din and the Chief Rabbi's office indicates a not-unexpected variation in the use members make of the various services.

Respondents used a three-point scale (very good, satisfactory, poor) to rate each service. The table below gives the percentage of very good and satisfactory ratings after excluding respondents with no opinion:

	% very good	% satisfactory
Burial services	42	53
Supervision of kosher food	28	61
Chief Rabbi's office	25	65
Beth Din	21	58
PT Jewish education (cheder)	15	52

On the whole respondents were satisfied with all the services which the United synagogue as a central organisation provides for the community. They were somewhat less sanguine about the Beth Din and part-time education than the other services, although even here less than a third of those with an opinion said the standards were poor.

The highest level of dissatisfaction was reserved for the education services. If the 'no opinion' category is included, the exact breakdown of ratings becomes:-

Poor	No opinion	Satisfactory (or better)
23%	33%	45%

This distribution is very similar to that reported by parents commenting on their local chadarim, and this suggests that the central role of the United Synagogue in respect of education is not easily discriminated from the local one. Similarly, the higher levels of dissatisfaction with education reported by Orthodox respondents (chapter 4) are replicated here. Presumably this reflects a tendency for the Orthodox to demand more of the system.

### **Interaction with head office**

Over the past years much has been heard of the over-centralisation of services, and there have been complaints about the way in which those departments dealing directly with members do so. In order to indicate how widespread these feelings are, respondents were asked if they had had dealings with any departments at Woburn House and, if so, how they had been treated.

Within the past three years some 39% of respondents dealt with a head office department, mainly with burial (22%), marriage (9%) and education (4%) sections. The levels of satisfaction recorded suggest that complaints are normally voiced more loudly than is approval: 85% of those with experience of head office felt they were treated courteously and 78% felt the department acted efficiently. There were no significant differences between departments, although the percentage ratings for education (based on a very small sample of 29) were somewhat lower than average.

### **A changing institution?**

Respondents were asked to say whether, from what they had heard or seen recently, they felt that the United Synagogue was changing as an institution. For the group as a whole, over two-thirds (69%) sensed some change, but they were generally uncertain about the direction of change. Asked to judge whether change was taking place on the

following dimensions, about half of those sensing change were unsure how they should respond in each case:-

	YES %	NO %	UNSURE %
Becoming too big	25	25	51
Becoming better managed	16	35	50
Becoming more compassionate	8	36	56
Becoming more innovative	19	29	51
Becoming more right-wing	41	14	45

This clouded picture of undefined change may simply result from our having failed to identify the ways in which the organisation is actually perceived to be changing. Alternatively, it may be the result of opinions being formed through hearsay or from impressions provided by the media rather than by first-hand experience; i.e. there is a generalised sense of change without a specific set of referents.

In so far as this question has detected the direction of perceived change, the results are not encouraging: on balance the United Synagogue is seen as becoming less well managed, less compassionate and less innovative. It is also seen as becoming significantly more right-wing at a time when the dissatisfied membership is wishing to move to the left (see section on reasons for leaving).

Furthermore, with the exception of judgements about the drift to the right, there is an increasing trend towards negative attitudes as one moves across the religious groups - from weak observers to traditional and to strictly Orthodox. This contrasts with the earlier findings in which increased involvement led generally to more positive attitudes - but that was in relation to the provision of particular services. It would seem that the general image of the organisation as a positively changing organisation is not improved by direct experience.

### **How should the United Synagogue change?**

A final open-ended question invited respondents to describe how they thought the United Synagogue should change, if indeed there was a need for change. Just under one-third of the respondents (261 people) answered this question, in some cases at great length and with considerable passion.

Only one respondent was complacent, accusing the organisation of 'becoming neurotic' and citing this survey as evidence that the United Synagogue had an unhealthy and unwarranted concern about its own performance. All other respondents expressed varying degrees of desperation about the viability of the United Synagogue and a clear vision of how it should change. There was remarkable consistency about the desired direction of change, centred around three dominant themes:

#### **(i) Principled but pluralist**

By far the most frequent idea - more accurately a plea - was for the United Synagogue to reject religious exclusivism and welcome the non-observant, less observant or middle-of-the-road Jew. This idea was frequently paired with the perception that the organisation was moving inexorably to the right or that it was already under the control of the extreme right and that it had better 'come to its senses before it was too late'. A third element of this theme was the stress on adopting a 'more modern' approach, which many equated with the style of the Masorti movement, and a more encouraging approach to the young. The subtext of these remarks was generally not that the United Synagogue should compromise its Orthodox principles, but rather that it should adopt a more open, non-judgemental style in which the notion of a traditional Jewish community replaced the idea of an exclusively Orthodox community.

Interestingly, this particular theme was the only substantive vision to emerge, the other two themes relating to organisational matters, rather than religious ethos.

(ii) Decentralised and accountable

Not unrelated to the first theme, perhaps a methodology for achieving it, is the idea that United Synagogue needs to 'listen to its members' and remain accountable to them. This was seen mainly in a local context, with a great deal of support for the decentralisation of financial and educational functions and the provision of a range of attractive, locally inspired services. This idea was also linked to a plea for the organisation to divest itself of 'whole community' functions and work exclusively for its own members.

(iii) Financially efficient and professional

The third theme to emerge emphasised the urgency of solving the problems of overspending, reducing fees and becoming more cost-effective. Underpinning these remarks was a clear perception that the current structures are bureaucratic and wasteful and the belief that the organisation could easily achieve financial balance if it were properly managed and its services were market-driven. These views were often paired with the argument that the United Synagogue lacks professionalism and needs to thoroughly review its administrative systems.

In addition to these general themes, respondents made a number of more specific suggestions, the most common being: the need to encourage women to participate in synagogue life on equal terms; the importance of developing a more caring and humane community; and the desire for improved educational services and youth facilities.

## **6. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE**

### **The responses**

Of the 1,500 persons contacted (one in 22 of all synagogue members) 816 returned questionnaires. As is to be expected in surveys, some respondents did not answer all questions, but most of the general questions attracted responses from at least 700 and usually about 760 individuals. The sample gave proportional representation to members of large, small and medium-sized synagogues, and these proportions were almost exactly mirrored by respondents. Members of synagogues with up to 400 members constituted 22% of respondents. Those from synagogues with between 400 and 900 members accounted for 35%; the remaining 43% were from the largest synagogues. Members of some of this last group seemed less inclined to respond than members generally. While 48% of all those contacted answered the questions two very large synagogues had response rates of only 35% and 32%.

When we look at where synagogues are sited, response rates from synagogues east of Stamford Hill were found to be low, with only 39% of members of synagogues in the area replying. In comparison, from the smaller group of members of synagogues in South London, 61% participated.

### **Geographical distribution**

The majority of respondents belonged to synagogues sited in the North-West (27%) and Outer-North-West (28%) London. The pattern of residence is broadly similar to that of synagogue location, but there are 85 respondents (12%) who live in an area other than that in which their synagogue is located.

### **Sex and marital status**

The sample was drawn to provide equal numbers of male and female respondents. However, although questionnaires were addressed to named individuals who were asked to ensure that they replied personally, the returns suggest that some addressees had

passed the questionnaire to somebody else. Consequently, although 53% of replies were to questionnaires addressed to men, 55% of questionnaires were completed by males and 45% by females. In all, 10% of respondents were not those to whom the questionnaire was addressed. The preponderant male response would appear to run counter to survey experience, which perceives filling in questionnaires as a female activity. Here those who did not follow the instruction to the letter may deem synagogue matters a male province. However, there are many other possible explanations (e.g. elderly mothers asking sons to reply) and the numbers involved are small.

As the women in the sample were for the most part wives of members or women who had membership in their own right (and would by definition be married), a high representation of married persons was expected. Indeed 87% of all those replying were married (91% of men and 83% of women). A further 4% were divorced or separated and 5% (9% of women) were widowed. This pattern probably takes in a view that the organised synagogal community is interested in families to the relative exclusion of other patterns of household formation. Unsolicited comments both from older and from younger single respondents suggest that they were unsure about the relevance of their replies to a study which appeared to them to be directed to children and to education.

### Ages

The table below sets out the percentage distribution of ages of our respondents against figures for male United Synagogue members, as provided by current membership records. From this it can be seen that the survey respondents were spread fairly evenly through all ages over 40. When the ages of male respondents are compared with the total membership, it is clear that the respondents overestimate youngest and under-represent the oldest age groups. No doubt many older members felt, as did one elderly lady who wrote particularly, that they wished the study well but as it looked to the future their views were perhaps not appropriate. The age-differential resulting from a group made up mainly of married couples is reflected in the younger age-structure of female respondents.

Age	Total %	Respondents		Male membership %
		Men %	Women %	
Up to 30	7.0	5.4	8.7	4.9
31-40	15.6	11.8	20.2	13.6
41-50	22.5	20.0	25.5	19.2
51-60	19.1	21.3	16.5	15.3
61-70	19.0	20.0	17.4	19.3
71+	16.8	21.3	11.5	27.9
<b>Total response</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>19,594</b>

### Education and Income

Given the age-profile of respondents, it is pertinent to record that over 29% of them reported they had a first degree or higher. When it is considered that some 55% of the sample were aged over 50 and would mainly have been educated at a time before the explosion of British higher education, when only 4% of the general population experienced higher education, the fact that 18% of this older group had this level of education is remarkable. It may be seen as underlining the high value Jews as individuals and as a community place on education. For those under 40, 43% were educated to first degree or beyond. This would suggest that the respondents had as a group taken the opportunities afforded by the expansion of the 1960s.

The high educational levels recorded may, however, also indicate that people with experience of higher education see the value of, and consequently are more willing to respond to studies, particularly if directed to a specific outcome.



The high educational level is reflected in household income: 39% of respondents reported a gross household income of over £30,000 per annum - 21% reported over £50,000. Strictly comparable national figures are not available, but the Central Statistical Office figures for total household income (Source: Family Spending 1990) show just under 10% of households with income in excess of £32,000. At the other end of the scale 6% of respondents, compared with 19% nationally, reported incomes of less than £5000 per annum.

There are indications that high levels of female employment contribute to this joint income. Only 11% (24% of women) were occupied solely looking after the home but 16% (28% of women) had part-time occupation. There was a generally high level of employment with 61% of men and 22% of women (44% of the total) reporting full-time jobs. Just over one-quarter of those replying (26%) were retired, which corresponds to estimates that 25 percent of British Jewry are aged 65 and over.

### **Jewish education and religious upbringing**

Whereas the respondents are, in secular terms, well-educated, with over 45% having studied to A-level or beyond, their experience of full-time Jewish education is low. Only 14% had been to Jewish primary school and even fewer (10%) to Jewish secondary school. This no doubt reflects the availability of day-school places at the time respondents were being educated. It is possible that those who had full-time education did so because their parents' level of religious practice was above average. This is suggested by the fact that 15% of respondents characterised their upbringing as 'strictly Orthodox', while the vast majority considered they had been reared 'traditionally' (70% ) or 'just Jewish' (12%). Those brought up strictly Orthodox would seem likely to have had full time Jewish education, and cross-tabulations show that of this group 25% were educated in this way.

### **Community trends and patterns**

In an attempt to gauge levels of assimilation, questions were asked about respondents' children. They reported 1,238 children in total, an average of 1.87 children each. The age-range of these children was from newborn to elderly adults. Of the total, 479 were reported married and 393 were married to Jews. Thus 18 percent of the offspring of this group of United Synagogue members were married out of the community. However, it cannot be stressed too greatly that this is a snapshot of the current situation, incorporating a very wide age-range and cannot be interpreted as a rate of outmarriage.

Some idea of movement in and out of the United Synagogue may be gained from examining how many people have belonged to other synagogues. More than half (60%) recorded that they had been and 8% still have dual membership. Some of this is membership of more than one United Synagogue, perhaps through sentimental and family links: 64% of those with second membership indicated this was indeed in another United Synagogue congregation. In the main, of those who have been members elsewhere, second membership was of an Orthodox synagogue, but 11% had belonged to a Reform, Liberal or Masorti synagogue.

## **REPORT 5. ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY OF FORMER UNITED SYNAGOGUE MEMBERS**

### **The sample**

As an adjunct to the main survey, a modified questionnaire was distributed to 300 individuals who were thought to have left the United Synagogue. The sample was selected at random from a computer print-out of former members.

Many of these questionnaires were returned as 'not known at this address'. The number of completed questionnaires was 48, but of these, only 26 respondents regarded themselves as having left the United Synagogue. The remainder were apparently people who had fallen into arrears and still deemed themselves to be members.

### **General characteristics of leavers**

The sample is too small to support detailed statistical analysis. Broadly speaking, the respondents resembled current members of the United Synagogue. Thus:-

Their reasons for belonging to a synagogue were mainly practical: burial, children's education, synagogue services and youth activities were the most frequently cited reasons.

Their Jewish identity was predominantly based on Jewish home life, social ties and loyalty to 'the Jewish heritage'.

Their age distribution was relatively even between 30 and 70 years. Most respondents were married (21) and either employed or looking after a family.

*The respects in which the leavers differed from other respondents were as follows:*

A high proportion of leavers were well qualified (13/26 had degrees).

There were relatively fewer traditional observers (10/26) and a higher proportion of weak observers (13/26) and strictly Orthodox (3/26).

Although levels of observance of key mitzvot were similar for leavers and members, the frequency of synagogue attendance and levels of religious belief were lower among the leavers.

Predictably, leavers gave substantially lower ratings of the quality of synagogue and central services, but the rank order of perceived quality (practical best, spiritual and developmental worse) was similar for leavers as for members.

A higher proportion of leavers than members wanted same-level seating (17/26) and more welcoming services (17/26). However, the level of support for shorter services, more intimate services and more explanation was not dissimilar to that reported by members.

A higher proportion of leavers had attended Jewish schools (9/26) than members.

Overall, leavers were therefore more polarised religiously, though less observant on average. They were well qualified, less involved in synagogue life and concerned about the warmth of their reception. Their identity as Jews is largely rooted in ethnicity, as is the case with the main sample. Bearing in mind the very small sample size, these characteristics are not dissimilar to those reported in the section 'anatomy of potential leavers' in the main report.

## Reasons for leaving the United Synagogue

The respondents gave a combined total of 38 reasons for leaving the United Synagogue. In order of frequency these were:

	No. of cases
Could not afford the fees	10
Moved house (or too far)	6
Prefer Reform/Masorti	6
US too blinkered/right-wing	4
Synagogue unwelcoming, etc.	3
Synagogue not religious enough	3
Poor religious/spiritual atmosphere	2
Poor Hebrew classes	1
Women not fairly treated	1
Rabbi unacceptable (too right-wing)	1
Don't understand service	1

Again, these reasons are a close approximation to those reported by current members who had considered leaving. Even in this small sample, the three main reasons (after discounting distance) are the same as those described in the main report: as fee levels, 'progressive' drift and courteous treatment.

The new factor here is the defection of 3 Orthodox families, based on concerns about the religious environment provided for children in the United Synagogue setting.

### Destination of leavers

The predominant move was to the left (6 Reform, 2 Masorti, 1 Liberal). Five respondents moved to other Orthodox synagogues and 12 did not join any.

### Conclusion

Given the small size of the sample, there is no evidence here that members leaving the United Synagogue are significantly different from those who stay but express an interest in leaving. The results tend to confirm the predominance of financial motives for leaving combined with a preference for more flexible religious norms.

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## SUMMARY OF BOARD OF DEPUTIES RESEARCH ON SYNAGOGUE MEMBERSHIP

### BRITISH SYNAGOGUE MEMBERSHIP IN 1990 \*

#### Introduction

The study summarised below was co-ordinated by Marlena Schmool and Frances Cohen for the Community Research Unit of the Board of Deputies. This unit was established in 1965 to compile statistical data on a variety of aspects of British Jewish life, to prepare studies of both demographic and social trends within the community and to act as a resource centre for communal organisations, community planners, and scholars.

This particular study is the third of its type to be prepared by the Unit. The figures presented are based upon data that was collected between November 1989 and the end of 1990. All existing congregations/synagogues have (to the knowledge of those conducting the study) been included in the research. The data was collected over a period of a year by taking information directly from the records of the major London synagogal organisations and by sending out a questionnaire from individual synagogues in the Provinces. The report 'covers the whole religious spectrum of British Jewry each section of which has its own criterion for membership...A problem arises in categorising the community according to its religious nature...While it is distasteful to distinguish between degrees of observance within Orthodoxy...in popular parlance synagogues where all members are halakhically observant have become known in Britain as 'Right-Wing'. The remaining majority of Ashkenazi Orthodox synagogues are grouped as 'Central Orthodox'.'

The synagogues were divided into four main categories:

Right-Wing Orthodox:	all members halakhically observant
Central Orthodox:	Federation, US, Independent Orthodox, some provincial
Reform:	RSGB, Westminster Synagogue
Liberal:	ULPS, Belsize Square

Membership figures were compiled for households, individual males and individual females. Husbands and wives were counted as one household membership even though synagogues sometimes count them as two individual members. This accounts for the difference between the membership figures published in this study and those published by synagogal bodies.

For the most part household membership covers married partners; it may represent a single-parent family with children. Male membership was calculated from the data as individual males plus male heads of household or family memberships.

\* We are grateful to the Community Research Unit of the Board of Deputies for allowing us to publish this precis of their study: Frances Cohen, Marlena Schmool, *British Synagogue Membership in 1990*, Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1991.

## **Synagogue numbers**

In 1990 there were 356 congregations in the UK with a total membership of 101,239. (There were 9,150 married women with membership in their own right in addition to their husband's membership. They have been omitted).

In the Greater London area in 1990, there were 183 synagogues with an average household membership of 370. In 1983 (the time when the last compilations were made and thus a good point of comparison) there were 162 synagogues in Greater London with an average household membership of 454. Between the years of 1983 to 1990, 11 synagogues in Greater London closed and 32 opened.

## **Regions**

Although there has been an increase in the number of synagogues in Greater London since 1983, it is important to note that the total household membership has fallen by 8%. Membership has, however, increased in South-East England. The London boroughs of Barnet, Harrow and Hillingdon account for 14% of London and 9% of national synagogue household memberships. Hackney accounts for 12% of London synagogue household memberships.

Whereas in 1970, 67% of all male synagogue members belonged to a London synagogue, the figure for 1990 has fallen to 63%. The decrease in inner London is connected to the ageing communities. The same applies to the northern provincial communities. One barometer of that is the fact that 15% of all provincial members are individual females, many of whom are likely to be widows. Again, this points to the relative agedness of synagogue members in the provinces. In London the figure is 6.3%.

Most regions had a decline in membership. There was a slight increase in those areas with general population growth. As mentioned above, increased membership was noted in South-East England. There were also increases in South-West England and East Anglia. The most marked decline was in Scotland.

## **Synagogue groupings**

1. Because of a difference in character it was found that male membership is more pronounced in Right-Wing congregations - 6.9% are male members compared to a figure of 5.7% for households. The Right Wing male membership in London has increased by 56% since 1983.
2. Central Orthodox and Sephardi have a higher proportion of households than of male members.
3. Throughout the UK the decrease in membership has been confined to the Central Orthodox. Nationally it has fallen by 7.4% since 1983. In Greater London it has fallen by 17% - more than double the national average.

## **Changing patterns**

1. Central Orthodoxy's male membership is now at 2/3 the level of two decades ago. The only other group to have declined thus is Sephardi and that by 32%. All other groups in Greater London have shown an increased male membership. The largest proportional increase is amongst the Right Wing. They have increased by nearly three times since 1970, although from an originally small community.
2. There are 28 more synagogues since 1983, due mainly to the increase in Right-Wing communities in Manchester and North London and to the Reform and Liberal communities.

3. While two thirds of synagogue-affiliated families are in London, more than half the congregations are situated there. Thus, the average congregational size is 370 in London but 194 in the Provinces.

4. In 1970, Central Orthodoxy had 91% of the total Orthodox male members in London, while in 1990 that figure dropped to 82%.

These falls are matched by proportional rises for the Right-Wing communities. It is also important to note that the Right-Wing numbers are made up of a younger age structure.

## Conclusions

1. There has been a move away from mainstream British Jewish Orthodoxy. Progressive movements continue to increase, as do the Right-Wing communities.

2. The old established Central Orthodox communities in the provinces and inner London are ageing and reducing in size.

3. Membership in Central Orthodox congregations still predominates, accounting for just over two thirds of all synagogally affiliated households. This trend will continue but it should be noted that between 1983 and 1990 Central Orthodox male synagogue membership declined by 1% annually whilst the Right Wing increased annually by 9.7%. It seems clear that balances within the Orthodox group are shifting rapidly. While British Jewry continues to be predominantly Central Orthodox, British Orthodoxy is becoming increasingly Right-Wing.

## Notes

1. Copies of the entire paper are available from the Community Research Unit of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

2. Synagogue membership numbers do not equal population counts even though the majority of identifying British Jews belong to a synagogue.

3. The total household numbers may be inflated because of dual memberships. This is caused by people belonging to more than one synagogue; more than one person having an individual membership; husband and wife being considered as individuals. People in residential homes are included as households.

	Males				Numerical Change	H/holds
	1970	1977	1983	1990	1983-1990	
	%	%	%	%		%
Right-Wing Orthodox	2.6	4.2	5.3	8.8	+1599	7.0
Central Orthodox	72.3	69.7	66.0	58.2	-5939	64.4
Sephardi	4.5	3.3	3.3	3.7	+100	4.0
Reform	11.9	13.7	16.5	18.0	+251	17.3
Liberal	8.7	9.1	8.9	11.3	+935	17.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0		100.0
Number	60066	55494	53359	50305	-3054	67630

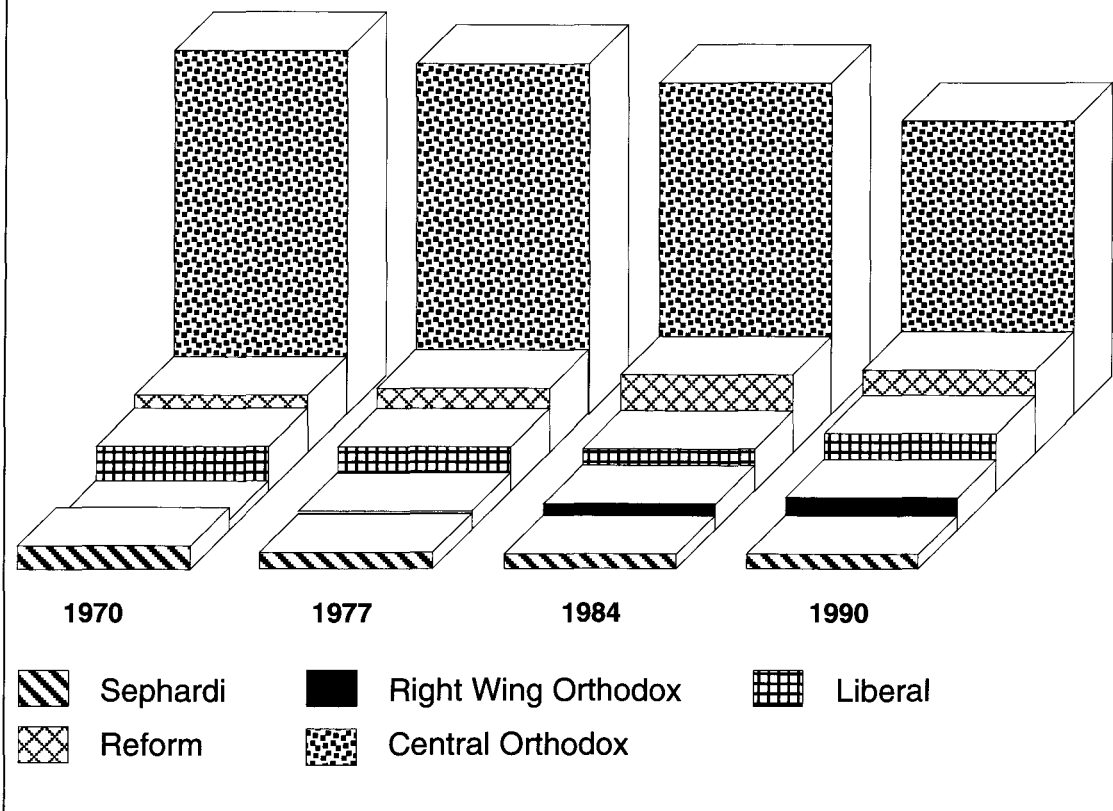
Source: Board of Deputies Research on Synagogue Membership 1990

### Distribution of UK Synagogue Membership by Synagogue Grouping

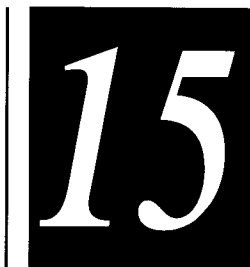
	Males		Numerical Change 1983-1990	H/holds 1990
	1983	1990		
	%	%		%
Right Wing Orthodox	4.4	6.9	+2015	5.7
Central Orthodox	70.5	64.9	-4128	67.9
Sephardi	2.7	2.8	+97	3.2
Reform	15.2	17.0	+1526	16.9
Liberal	7.2	8.4	+999	6.3
Total	100.0	100.0		100.0
Number	78899	79388	+489	101239

Source as per above.

### The Changing Pattern of Male Membership by Synagogue Grouping in Greater London, 1970-1990



Source as per above.



## RESEARCH PAPERS COMMISSIONED BY THE REVIEW

### **LOOKING AT THE ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY LIFE**

#### **Introduction**

The following two thought-provoking researches were prepared for the Review by the former editor of the Jewish Chronicle, Mr Geoffrey Paul, who now lives in the United States. We asked Mr Paul to contribute an analysis of the environment of Jewish community life in the USA because we believed that, in the structures established across the Atlantic, lay a contrast, and at times, a model for the future of Anglo-Jewry.

The cultural divide between the UK and the USA, together with the differing sociological and historical background of the two communities, makes it difficult to propose any blanket comparisons. Many of the approaches that are accepted as commonplace in American Jewish life would be clearly inappropriate in the context of Anglo-Jewry. Nevertheless, we maintain that much can be learnt from an environment that has developed without the controlling hand of central authority.

One of the most striking differences between organised Jewish life in the USA and the UK is the Jewish Community Centre (JCC). The JCC has been responsible for broadening the definition of what is included within the concept of 'community'. But it has done so outside the traditional framework of the synagogue. Anglo-Jewry is the poorer for not having Jewish Community Centres. On the other hand, this presents a tremendous opportunity and challenge for the local community. In the UK it is the synagogue alone that has the property and the physical facilities and it is the local community that holds the loyalty of the public who want to participate in some form of organised Jewish life.

The market research commissioned by the review clearly indicates that the average member of the United Synagogue is (a) loyal to moderate Orthodox Judaism, and (b) searching for an expanded provision of services at a local level. It is in that light that the picture painted by Geoffrey Paul of a different kind of Jewish society has to be considered, notwithstanding the very real and irreconcilable differences between American and Anglo-Jewry.

### **ENGLEWOOD - AN AMERICAN ORTHODOX COMMUNITY**

BY GEOFFREY PAUL

Englewood is a town in New Jersey of 24,000 inhabitants. It takes about the same time to travel from Times Square to Englewood as it does from Piccadilly Circus to Hampstead Garden Suburb and there are physical similarities between the two places.

Both are pleasant residential areas and both have distinctive Jewish communities, that of Englewood totalling a probable 3,500 (it is blessed with an abundance of children). There are two Orthodox synagogues, one historically a split-off from the other, but both now working in close association, and a Conservative 'temple'.



Ahavath Torah, the 'mother' congregation, will celebrate its centenary in 1995. It began when the eight Jews living in the town met to establish a minyan to celebrate the then approaching high holidays. Today's synagogue, reminiscent in style but much larger in size than the original Carmel College synagogue, together with ancillary buildings, covers an area of several acres.

The site was bought in 1957 for \$50,000 cash, with no mortgage. It was then quite a distance from the heart of the community. Today, it is the heart of the community, a large proportion of its 512 contribution-paying members living within easy walking distance of it. The eruv which runs around the town encloses virtually all the preferred areas of Jewish residence.

Ahavath Torah, and its sister community of Shomrei Emunah, are what would be termed 'modern Orthodox' congregations. Ahavath Torah is almost indistinguishable in its religious ethic from any member synagogue of the United Synagogue family.

Within its physical fold, it sustains six separate Shabbat prayer services: that in the main synagogue; an early morning minyan, which prays in the small prayer hall; an auxiliary minyan and a Sephardic one, both of which have their own accommodation; a youth minyan and a junior congregation. Despite these divisions and the independence of the various minyanim - even to holding their own kiddushim - their totality makes up the Ahavath Torah family and the rabbi is the rabbi of them all.

Where the congregation is markedly different from Hampstead Garden Suburb is that the largest proportion of its membership is the product of Orthodox Jewish day schools in the area (the elementary school having started on the synagogues premises and now having 850 pupils). Most of the members are successful professionals (primarily doctors and surgeons) - and the community, as with many Orthodox congregations in the USA, is entirely independent.

Independent in this sense means that its direction is totally in its own hands: the members elect the officers and trustees, they approve the appointment of the rabbi and chazzan and they vote on the terms of the contracts negotiated by the board with the clergy. They can set what terms they wish without recourse to any outside body and can 'shop' for their rabbi anywhere in the world. Once appointed, the rabbi is the repository of all halakhic responsibility, free to consult as he wishes with other rabbinic authorities or with none. He is answerable for his conduct (in this world) only to his congregation.

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, who is in his mid-40s and has been spiritual leader of Ahavath Torah for five years, sees many positive elements in this independence of congregation and rabbi: *'Every community has the ability to develop its own character and a fair amount of independence is given to the rabbi to move with his community in developing that character.'*

*It means that I don't have to look over my shoulder when I decide, for example, that it is appropriate for a barmitzvah to stand up before the congregation after the service is concluded on a Shabbat and say a few words. It was a major issue when I first came to Ahavath Torah.*

But was it not precisely in such circumstances, involving either possibly halakhic decisions or matters of custom, that the existence of a Chief Rabbinate would help the rabbi?

*A Chief Rabbi would be useful for so long as you were not bound by his advice. I enjoy the ability to say 'this is what I feel deep down is halakhically appropriate in this situation'. If I was bound by a particular authority, I could not say that.*

*Of course, I am not totally independent. I can't wake up tomorrow morning and feel that something is halakhically appropriate and, off the wall, institute it and expect no ramifications. If I decided that, halakhically, it was appropriate to take down the mechitzah, I would be drummed out of the organisation of Orthodox rabbis, out of the Orthodox Union.*

*There is some standard somewhere, but within that standard there is a great deal of latitude.'*

Martin Teicher is the former president of Ahavath Torah. He arrived in Englewood 12 years ago, after looking for a modern Orthodox community and an appropriate Jewish day school. He saw the community almost double in size during the 1980s under the late Rabbi Isaac Swift.

*How central was the rabbi to the decision-making process? A community picks the kind of rabbi it wants. This is a particularly intelligent community. If any rabbi went off in a direction which was inconsistent with the tenor of the community, I think he would be in serious trouble.*

*The community leads in the general direction it wants to travel. If a rabbi wanted his community to spend a year looking into this tractate or that portion, it would accept his leadership in that regard. But if a rabbi suddenly decided the barrier separating men and women had to be higher or that one had to wear one's tsitsit out, when he turned around to look over his shoulder, he wouldn't find anyone standing there.*

*This community, in effect, is leading its rabbi and that was true, too, when Rabbi Swift was around. In the early days, he nudged in the right direction. But with all due respect to him, and he was a great, great man, if this congregation's consensus was to become Conservative in 1965, even Rabbi Swift couldn't have saved it.*

Ahavath Torah has an annual budget of \$700,000, with an income from membership fees of \$300,000. Of its 512 members, 390 are paying the full rate of \$850 per year. New members pay an additional \$750 per annum for three years into the building fund. There are various other rates based upon a mixture of age and marital status which range from \$125 to \$375.

The Yom Kippur appeal is traditionally for synagogue funds. About 60 per cent of members respond, with the highest donation being \$3,600. There are also appeals for funds at yizkor during the festivals. These receive a smaller response.

There is the familiar fund-raising vehicle of an annual dinner with a brochure in which advertising space is bought by congregants and local merchants. When the eruv was first established some years ago, there was a per capita assessment on every member of the congregation.

The synagogue spends \$52,000 a year on its youth programme, \$9,000 on adult education and \$5,000 on eruv maintenance. Cheder is almost non-existent, the tiny tots having specific programmes at the Jewish Community Centre and the older ones, for the largest part, attending Jewish day schools.

The rabbi's package this year is being increased by \$33,500, with his three-year contract providing for base salary of \$85,000 in the first year (up from \$66,000), \$89,250 in the second and \$93,700 in the third. The 'parsonage' is owned by the community and the congregation is responsible for internal and external maintenance and the gardening.

The congregation pays the rabbi's life insurance, health insurance and pension contributions and, this time for the first time, provides a car. There is also a contribution towards the education costs of his children.

The chazzan's salary of \$60,000 will increase at a rate of five per cent a year and his package, without the house and car, resembles that of the rabbi.

The independent nature of synagogues like Ahavath Torah means that the details of such financial agreements have to be disclosed. A number of rabbis confess that the process of negotiation and public disclosure is painful and embarrassing. In some instances, rather than arguing their worth before their boards, rabbis engage a negotiator who speaks for them.

Most younger rabbis appear to prefer three-year contracts, which enable them to re-negotiate their packages in the light of prevailing conditions.

Englewood is a reasonably wealthy congregation, having raised \$1.6 million for Israel Bonds and a similar amount for Operation Exodus. The community holds an Israel Bond for \$250,000 which it has bought with money borrowed from the bank. There is now a one per cent shortfall between the return on the bond and the interest paid to the bank. Twenty-five congregants have issued personal indemnities of \$1,000 to cover the deficit.

A significant part of Ahavath Torah's income arises from the letting of its halls for celebrations. Any catering company can provide meals, provided it is licensed by the Rabbinical Council of Bergen County, which is a rabbinical body embracing almost all the Orthodox rabbinate of the area (certainly all those who received their ordination from Yeshiva University). It is noteworthy that some non-Orthodox synagogues have accepted the supervision of the Rabbinical Council, and Orthodox individuals and groups can be found dining in Reform synagogue halls.

But kashrut supervision without a national supervisory authority or a supreme national rabbinical body is complex and shot through with anomalies, with some rabbis being strict about certifying caterers who have married non-Jews and others, not fussy about this, who will not certify caterers who also have non-kosher outlets.

*'That's what happens when you don't have a centralised authority,' says Rabbi Goldin. 'Our rule is to accept the kashrut of any bona fide religious authority even if we don't agree with their policy. On the other hand, we know their policy is bad. The lack of centrality makes this possible.'*

Burial is not a central communal issue. For historic reasons, Englewood owns its own burial ground, which is unusual. But synagogue members do not benefit from a burial scheme. When they die, their families have to buy their burial plots in either the synagogue's ground or that of some other cemetery and, in either case, to engage the expensive services of commercial undertakers. What the synagogue does offer, for a very nominal fee, is the washing and watching provided by communal burial society.

Ahavath Torah grew in an orderly manner from a nucleus of families who knew each other, cared for each other and were anxious not to see this special quality set aside. They were aided and abetted by local by-laws which are very much akin to those in Hampstead Garden Suburb, which do not allow for unbridled land development and which are directed at retaining the special nature of the area (no high-rise apartments, for example).

The late Rabbi Swift cited this as the safeguard against Englewood becoming one of the communal battlegrounds well known in other parts of the New York area where one man will say, 'Your eruv is possul'; another will say 'Your mikveh is not kosher'.

Generations of honorary officers made every effort to ensure the membership retained full and unchallenged control, with committees overseeing everything from finances to ritual.

*Mr Teicher: Financial oversight is meticulous. The finance committee goes over everything, what's being spent and why and what it's being spent on. The president of the congregation - actually it was a pain in the neck but very important - can't spend more than \$500 on any one item on his own authority. Any expenditure over that has to go to the finance committee and then the board, anything over \$20,000 to the membership.*

The ritual services committee was set up by Rabbi Swift. His successor is doubtful of its usefulness. *'Many congregations have it now but it's something of an anachronism. What point is a religious services committee if the rabbi makes the halakhic decisions?'*

He instanced an occasion when he sought to bring together the beth hamedrash minyan and the main congregation for Friday evening prayer and, after a struggle, succeeded in convincing the beth hamedrash to accept his ruling. However, the ritual service committee and the board overruled him, *'because the board bends over backwards to accommodate, voted to allow for the continuation of the separate Friday night minyan...'*

Reflectively now, the rabbi feels *'the existence of a variety of minyanim is a central feature of a growing Orthodox community. The beauty of this congregation is that we are diverse and yet we are all under one roof.'*

*The benefit of independence is that we are free to respond to the needs of the community, that I do not have someone handing down standardised decisions that do not necessarily reflect the nature of the community. A congregation like this could not exist without its independence.*

## **THE SYNAGOGUE CENTRE - A NEW DIRECTION IN COMMUNITY SERVICE**

BY GEOFFREY PAUL

To step into a quite typical Jewish Community Centre in the United States is for the British Jew rather like coming upon some social, cultural and recreational wonderland.

A brief encounter is sufficient for the faint-hearted to summon the arguments why nothing like it could ever happen in Britain, from the multi-acred prime sites occupied by most JCCs to the abundance of professional staff serving them, from the stiff membership fees to the inclusiveness of that membership.

In a United Synagogue context, it could well be precisely that last attribute which presented most difficulties. The central declaration of principles of the Jewish Community Centre movement in the United States contains the statement:

*The Jewish Community Centre is a place where all Jews are welcome no matter where or whether they worship or whatever their age or life style.*

In many localities where JCCs now flourish, there are memories of battles between established congregations and the proponents of the community centre idea. Congregations - and not only the Orthodox - regarded the centres as a threat to their role as the Jewish centre for their adherents. The centre movement leadership saw the JCCs as the best, perhaps the last, resort for safeguarding Jewish identity, any Jewish identity.

Orthodox communities, especially, looked upon the centres as a Trojan Horse from which the forces of pluralism would emerge to subdue the traditional yiddishkeit of their children. There are some, in the strict right wing particularly, who still have their suspicions.

But things have not quite worked out as they had feared. The founders of the centre movement had the good sense to decree that the volunteer board of directors of each institution should, so far as possible, reflect the community from which it was drawn. And Orthodox experience in the lay leadership of the united, or community chest, fund-raising organisations had already taught those open-minded enough to learn that there was more to be gained by joining in than staying out.

Nowhere has that been better demonstrated than in the management and direction of the Jewish Community Centre of the Palisades, in northern New Jersey. It stands at the hub of a number of established and growing communities, of all Jewish 'denominations'. Its 11,000 members are drawn from every type of synagogue community and from none.

The range of services offered to the communities within its purpose-build, and ever-expanding, clutch of 'campus' buildings is typical of the fare available at most of the JCCs in the United States and Canada. Nothing provides a better overall view than this particular JCC's welcome message to new members:

*First and foremost, the JCC is people, people of all ages. We are the young embarking on a first pre-school experience and the elderly exploring new interests, ideas and friendships. We are children augmenting a day school by participation in a wealth of after school hobby classes and recreational activities. We are adults pursuing a love of music and art - or the study of our rich Jewish heritage. We are people who want to stay fit and well or people who simply seek to relax among good friends. In short, we are everyone who wants to be a part of a vibrant and diverse Jewish community.*

What is notable and striking about the JCC on the Palisades is the prevalence of kippot everywhere, on tots attending one of the many programmes designed to help parents play intelligently with their children, on many of the kids attending one of the four day camps on offer during school holidays, the young men at 'The Melton Adult Mini-School for Jewish Learning' or the retirees come in for their daily meal or to attend a session of the support group for the recently widowed.

There is not an aspect of life - from pre-school to the oldest of ages - which is not catered for or its problems not taken into consideration, from youngsters with learning difficulties to senior citizens adapting to retirement.

Apart from the permanent 'Rabbi-in-Residence', local and visiting rabbis and Jewish scholars teach a whole curriculum of Jewish studies, from a 'Jewish literacy for leadership' course, through workshops for converts, introductions to chassidism and kabbalah and a lecture series on the separation of religion and state. There are classes for those who never learned Hebrew and for those who want to advance their knowledge of the classic texts.

There is Jewish study of one sort or another going on all the time somewhere within the walls of the centre.

But if all you want is recreation, there are the immaculate tennis courts or the six indoor and outdoor pools. In season, if you can make the grade, there is a travelling basketball team and, the all-the-year-round, 'Wellness Centre' with a fully-equipped, state-of-the-art exercise room and fitness experts to attend to your 'cardiac maintenance' programme or help you deal with stress reduction. In addition, there is a first-class executive health club, located in a completely self-contained wing of the centre.

It is written into the policy of the JCC on the Palisades that the centre should not only be kosher, but under the supervision of the local va'ad ha'kashrut. Similarly, it is policy to keep closed on Shabbat. That is not true for all of the centres, although every one of the 150 or so JCCs does close on Friday night. The fact is that to keep open on Shabbat would have been so offensive to a considerable proportion of the people living within the catchment area that the JCC would have become a storm centre, the opposite of its purpose.

Standing back from this agenda and rotating the prism so as to try and clarify the view, what we have in the JCC on the Palisades is, in effect, an amalgam of Swiss Cottage baths and an up-market health and fitness centre, the Jewish Care facility at Finchley Road, the Spiro Institute and some of those less specifically rabbinic courses offered by Jews' College, all within a complex of handsome and welcoming buildings.

The United Synagogue is not in the business of building swimming pool complexes, to be sure, but, in looking to the future of the middle-road Orthodox community, there would seem to be in the concept of the JCC some less ambitious but nevertheless innovative ideas of the community service which might be developed, possibly in association with Jewish Care, something which would make the United Synagogue more relevant to those of its members, of all ages, who today look upon it as ancillary but not a part of their everyday lives.

David Dubin is the Executive Director of the JCC on the Palisades. He is himself an Orthodox Jew. *'If you walk in here on a Sunday,'* he remarked with obvious pleasure, *'the place looks more like a yeshiva than a community centre. We have a lot of yarmulkes here.'* An unofficial estimate suggests that members of Orthodox congregations make up between ten and twelve per cent of the membership. Looking at it the other way somewhere between fifty and seventy per cent of members of Orthodox synagogues are also members of the JCC. There are also Conservative and Reform synagogues in the neighbourhood but, since there is no religious 'means test', it is impossible to say with certainty how many JCC members are observant.

Would it be possible to graft a JCC onto an Orthodox synagogue, or create an entirely new sort of entity in which the synagogue became a sort of JCC? Dubin's answer was a traditional 'yes and no'.

It has been tried in various areas by the Conservative movement, where a synagogue is designated 'The Jewish Community Centre of ———', whatever the community name may be. What the Conservatives have attempted has been to combine a whole gamut of social, cultural and athletic activities around the synagogue. Dubin says that 'it works in the sense that it is a more active synagogue, but it is never a community centre, a central meeting place for people who are different'.

Having watched the development of synagogue-based centres around him, Dubin concludes that they do offer enhanced educational, social and recreational facilities, but they do not move on to provide senior citizen programmes, widow and widower support groups, singles programmes, help for adults with Alzheimers or for the neurologically impaired, or whatever the pressing social needs in any given community might be. And to him 'community centre' implied the provision of all these, especially the sports and leisure activities which synagogues, especially Orthodox synagogues, would be inhibited in providing.

Over 500 senior citizens attend the JCC on the Palisades every day. Many come for the meals (referred to as 'the nutritional programme'), others for the art and music therapy, to read stories to nursery school children or to lead current affairs programmes for their peers.

The various singles programmes produced 160 marriages in ten years. There are support groups for single parents, for people re-entering the social scene after divorce or facing re-marriage.

It is with the teenagers that the JCC faces the same problems as every other organisation which has tried to enlist their interest and participation, although there has been some success with athletics programmes, a drama company under expert direction which stages near-professional productions of hit shows, and a course teaching young men and women how to start a business. This was taught by retirees who had successfully created their own enterprises and were now happy to pass on their expertise to a younger generation. Interest had also been generated by a class demonstrating how to prepare for school examinations.

On the specifically Jewish side, there had been some friction with the local rabbinate. Dubin explained, *'We started a programme for people who didn't belong to a synagogue called the Jewish Heritage Club, especially to give the children an opportunity to learn a little about their yiddishkeit. Some of the rabbis thought we were offering an alternative to the synagogue. They seemed to feel better if these people didn't have anything. Then we read the megillah during the day for senior citizens who could not get out at night. One rabbi was uneasy with it.'*

There are some areas where there might have been real conflict with Orthodox members or communities. But, with swimming, for example, fixed times on Sundays have been allocated to observant women and, separately, to observant men.

There is a first-class informal kosher cafeteria/restaurant, under rabbinical supervision, which has a reputation for its food and whose licensed operator is catering semachot in Orthodox synagogues and homes in the vicinity, enabling the provision of reasonably priced meals to JCC members.

And, on the dating front, a separate programme was provided on request for Orthodox men and women who did not wish to risk meeting unsuitable partners.

For the greater part, rabbis in the vicinity of the JCC on the Palisades are glad for the young, and not so young, Jews to be doing things together, even if this goes no further than playing on a basketball team together or a game of tennis. The fact that Jews are meeting together under one roof, where the laws of kashrut and Shabbat and yomtov are honoured, is regarded as a major plus.

The question of this or that particular Jew's religious identification is not an issue. This becomes relevant only when marriage becomes a possibility and, by that point, it is rare for the two families concerned not to be aware of each other's religious preferences, or lack of them.

The further right, the greater the hesitation, if not the opposition of the rabbinate to so 'open' an institution as the JCC. But even those considered strict in the ranks of modern Orthodoxy have welcomed opportunities to teach beyond their own confines when the JCC has provided the platform.

The centre is unique in having an Orthodox rabbi on hand as the 'Judaic Scholar-in-Residence'. Rabbi Donniel Hartman, working in conjunction with the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, offers seminars for lay leadership, enrichment seminars for professionals and a range of special lectures for the community at large.

What happened in the area of the JCC on the Palisades is that the synagogue and the social institution grew side by side in isolation from each other and believing they catered for very different audiences. One day, in this instance, they discovered their prospective clientele were basically the same people and, under enlightened leadership, sought a complementary and not a competitive role.

None of the abundance of services the JCC provides comes cheap. There is an annual operating budget of \$6.2 million. There is a sum of \$4 million outstanding on a \$25 million mortgage. The centre is financed 30% through membership dues, 50% through additional fees charged for participation in programmes, and the rest through allocations from community chests, interest on endowment funds and fund-raising events.

Yearly membership runs from \$575 for a family (plus a contribution of \$2,300 over three years to the building fund) to \$75 and no building fund contribution for a single senior adult. David Dubin insists that *'anybody who cannot afford to join the centre, joins the centre. There are thousands over the years who have not had to pay a cent'*.

For all except the most basic Hebrew courses (reading, lessons in Jewish tradition and so forth) there is a scale of fees in addition to membership. These can be as much as \$200 for something very specialised, such as a course for a child with physical or emotional problems, to \$3 a session for singles' 'communication workshops'.

One major income producer is the executive health club, which features a fully equipped exercise room, plush locker rooms with first-class amenities, ongoing fitness consultations and programmes and access to all the other JCC health and recreation services. Families pay \$675 per member per year for prime-time usage of the facilities plus a minimum building fund contribution of between \$4,000 and \$7,500 over two years, the amount depending on the age of the parents and the educational status of the children.

There is also a very successful music school at the centre, for both children and adults, which provides a well-grounded musical education in theory and practice. This, too, has

been financially successful. But none of these endeavours can be considered profitable in the commercial sense since they are recipients of the services of the director and the administrative staff and an apportionment of these costs would reduce their apparent profitability.

A family of four, assuming they have paid their building fund contributions and the children are beyond school age, will be paying in the region of \$3550 (£1900) per year, for their synagogue and JCC memberships, without executive health club membership and not taking into account the individual services for which they will pay a fee.

Setting aside the financial commitment which American Jews at all levels of income are prepared to make for the communal services they enjoy, it does require an enormous leap of the imagination to apply the centre experience to the Anglo-Jewish scene, especially in terms of United Synagogue patronage. But the growing evidence of alienation from the synagogue per se demands that those in leadership positions look to new ways to maintain the central community's links with some centrepiece of Jewish experience.

Orthodox synagogues in the area of the JCC on the Palisades have not had to develop social and recreational programmes for their membership because they are available at the centre and in conditions usually conducive to Orthodox participation. Nor have they had to consider, as they might otherwise have had to do, daytime social and cultural programmes for their senior citizen members.

But, in Britain, this engagement with its members around the clock would seem to be the most vital way in which the United Synagogue might interact with them and with those who might potentially be attracted as members by its forward-looking and caring attitude. A non-synagogue based Jewish community centre may well be something to be contemplated for the future. A synagogue centre is a realistic proposition now.

It will mean breaking through centuries of inhibition, a re-direction of mind-sets among honorary officers, an investment in rebuilding and refurbishment of existing structures and an engagement with the professional social work world in which rabbi and administrator will become partners in strengthening the sense of community.

In truth, it requires no major revolution of thought to envisage a major synagogue site re-adapted to provide a dual purpose hall to be used for prayer but also for lectures, performances, public meetings; a series of warm, welcoming and non-institutional classrooms and lounges used simultaneously by age and interest groups following their own programmes; a well-equipped and professionally directed exercise centre, with - at least - racquets and squash courts and table tennis facilities; and a morning-to-evening cafeteria offering simple but excellent meals.

It is not really difficult, after immersion in the positive ferment of the American community centre, to summon up the reverie of a 'synagogue centre' whose central purpose is prayer but which is busy day and night with a bustle of activities bringing tots, teens and the later generations through its doors in an endless stream, seeking learning, counselling, health improvement or just a game of table tennis and a light supper. A lending library of Jewish books and discs would complement these services. Concerts, lectures and debates would provide the weekly highlights.

Both centres and synagogues in the United States have had a huge response to such regular events as 'luncheon with the rabbi' in which well-known rabbis join members or congregants for an informal chat about any topics the participants care to raise. The innovative possibilities are only as limited as required by the religious ethic of the United Synagogue and the imagination of the administrators.

There is already strong evidence in the UK of a responsive audience for new initiatives in synagogue management, such as the alternative minyanim and the wider-based and more imaginative adult education programmes. It would not be difficult to envisage the



addition of practical Judaica courses - how to build a succah and the sale of components with which to build one; pre-festival teach-ins on preparing the traditional foods associated with the festival.

There is already strong movement within some United Synagogue congregations in the direction of more intense and innovative involvement in the life of their communities. Borehamwood and Belmont, with their ever-open doors and ready welcome for all the community's children, are showing the way that a concerned Jewry must go to keep in touch with its children.

The appointment by both Borehamwood and Hendon of Community Directors also signals a change of gear as the synagogue travels on. Fortunately, there are the experiences of others, especially in the USA, upon which to draw in mapping the new directions in which the United Synagogue and its constituents must move.

The envisaged 'synagogue centre' discussed here would have one major advantage over the secularised community centre: it would be open not six days a week, but seven - the fact that its premises were used on one day exclusively for prayer and worship making a point that no JCC declaration of purpose could ever equal. The synagogue also has the strength of not having to establish or sustain its Jewish bona fides. It is a guarantee of continuity within a context of change.

## **EDUCATIONAL MODELS FROM OTHER JEWISH COMMUNITIES**

### **Introduction**

The following two researches were prepared for the Review by members of the professional staff, based on material provided by local experts.

The American Bureau of Jewish Education was analysed by comparing the work of two successful Bureaus in Los Angeles and Toronto respectively. Dr Gil Graff - currently the Associate Director of the Los Angeles Bureau - prepared a special article for the Review, addressing specific questions that were put to him. This was compared with existing documentation on the Toronto Bureau supplied by its Director Rabbi Irwin Witty. The research paper was written by Sherry Begner, who grew up in the United States in a family closely connected with the field of Jewish education, prior to raising her own family in the UK and taking up the position of co-ordinator of Traditional Alternatives.

Mount Scopus College in Melbourne was analysed as a Jewish day school model for comparison with our schools, based on an article written especially for the Review by the college's lay leader Garry Stock. The paper was written by Simon Caplan who, as a former director of the Jewish Educational Development Trust, spent an extended visit at Mount Scopus in 1990.

## **THE AMERICAN BUREAU OF JEWISH EDUCATION**

**BY SHERRY BEGNER**

The Review recommends the creation of a newly constituted Bureau for Jewish Education as basic and necessary to educational growth and development within our community in the decades to come. Bureaus of Jewish Education have existed and operated successfully throughout North America for over 80 years. The first was established in New York in 1910. They are non-authoritarian and are responsive to communal needs from the bottom up, so to speak. It will become clear that the basic structure and role of these bureaus corresponds in great measure to our own ideas and visions for such an institution in Britain.

There are some major differences that must be taken into account. The American bureau often caters for much larger communities than ours and it services educational needs across the ideological spectrum. It tends to receive substantial funding from their local Federation of Jewish Philanthropies/United Jewish Appeal. In some instances it helps to subsidise pupils in Jewish schools although schools are responsible for raising the majority of their funds - usually through tuition revenue.

Despite the differences and because of the many similarities, we decided to commission a special piece on the Los Angeles Board of Jewish Education, written by Dr Gil Graff the Board's Associate Director. We were also fortunate enough to receive extensive information from Rabbi Irwin E. Witty, Executive Director of the Toronto Board of Jewish Education. The documents are available for inspection and are summarised below.

## **Background**

A Board of Jewish Education is an umbrella resource agency that is 'pan-denominational'. It is known variously (and interchangeable) as a Bureau of Jewish Education, a Board of Jewish Education or a Central Agency for Jewish Education. Its purpose is to service the entire range of school types in a given community, to organise and oversee other community educational programmes, to provide in-service training for teachers and to offer a variety of administrative help and guidance. Because the American Jewish educational system is decentralised there are numerous institutions - schools, synagogues, community centres to name but a few - that are providers of Jewish education. But what is important is that there tends to be a set of networks, of inter-institutional linkages, that bind at least some of the education providers together.

More than one billion dollars is spent annually on Jewish education in North America. Chadarim, once the norm, are now primarily sponsored by individual synagogues, as are many day schools. But despite this decentralisation, links between schools and other educational institutions are encouraged, fostered and facilitated.

It is the BJE in over 50 communities that:

- \* creates a significant network of local educational institutions
- \* provides ongoing in-service training programmes for educators
- \* serves as an advocate and lobby support for Jewish education
- \* helps to identify the community's educational needs and develop strategies for addressing them.

Both Los Angeles and Toronto have outstandingly successful Boards of Jewish Education. LA's board, in fact, was the recipient of the World Zionist Organisation's 1992 Shazar Prize. It is interesting to look at the ways in which these boards work and operate as models of what can be achieved through such an organisation and how it benefits the community.

## **The Los Angeles Board of Jewish Education**

Los Angeles is a city where there is *'independence amidst linkage of educational institutions.'* There are 600,000 Jews in LA. There are 70 chadarim with 12,000 students meeting 2-7 hours per week. There are 30 day schools with 8,000 students and 75 pre-schools with 7,500 students. All but 4 of these chadarim are sponsored by synagogues. The majority of day schools are independent although denominationally identified. *'Whether maintained by a synagogue or by an independent Board, each school is an autonomous unit, in its choice of curricula, admission standards, tuition, educator selection etc...On an ongoing, practical basis, schools are very much left to their own devices.'*

The LA board divides the schools that it services into four clusters: early childhood, supplementary schools, Orthodox yeshivot; non-Orthodox day schools. Each cluster has

at least one full-time co-ordinator who meets monthly with all school principals within their domain. They also conduct on-site visits, develop ideas for conferences and seminars for teachers, serve as the BJE liaison to the different religious movements represented by the schools, access curricula and work to develop networking and collaboration amongst all the schools, at least within the cluster group. There is stress on curriculum initiatives, inter-school activities and cluster-wide pupil assessment in agreed-upon areas.

Another major area of concern is that of personnel. The BJE's personnel director is the accreditation officer for teachers of Hebrew and Judaica in all BJE-affiliated schools in Los Angeles. Credentials are evaluated on the basis of nationally established standards and a salary schedule is administered by the BJE.

The personnel director is also responsible for a code of practice to regulate employer/employee relations in schools. Additionally, the personnel office is involved in referral, maintains data on conditions in the field, and works with allied agencies to plan professional growth opportunities for teachers. The BJE does offer its own in-service training for teachers.

There is a full-time staff member at the board to oversee special education. This includes networking amongst all schools regarding special education; providing in-service training in the field; administering grant programmes and psychological testing and referral of students to the appropriate service providers. The Department of Social Services deals with curriculum and instruction, testing and evaluations, arts, early childhood development, and they maintain a teacher resource library.

*'Sometimes', according to Dr Gil Graff, 'system-wide projects are initiated by the Bureau as an outgrowth of its consultants' close contact with the field.' One example that Dr Graff cites is the curriculum for teaching Israel. 'At the end of the 1980s many of the teachers in both day schools and supplementary schools were uncertain about the most effective way to teach Israel to their children. The BJE stepped in and organised a two-day retreat for 20 principals and Judaica coordinators, 2 professors of education and a shaliach, together with Bureau staff. They had the opportunity to think and talk about teaching Israel. They were able to clarify their approach and agree upon the best set of curricular materials to use in their teaching and adapt them accordingly. Because 20 schools were involved in the project, the Bureau was able to send someone to the Melton Centre in Jerusalem to learn how best to use the curricular materials. 'Upon her return, this staff member conducted workshops for teachers from the 20 schools which were ready to implement the programme. Workshops and on-site visits continued throughout the year, followed by evaluation and modification. This example illustrates the role of the Bureau as curriculum consultant, networking agent and professional growth provider.'*

Although the BJE is essentially not a hands-on organisation, bureaus have nonetheless become involved in providing and running programmes in certain specific areas and circumstances. These programmes are mostly aimed at teenagers, new immigrants and families, and they are community-wide. They are usually run with the aid of special grants or on a fee-for-service basis.

Programmes run on a fee-for-service basis for the teenage group include a two-month summer ulpan in Israel for 150 students, a performing arts programme and a series of weekend retreats held throughout the year.

The LA Board of Jewish Education also services families and new immigrants. An example of programming for families is the holiday workshop series. In-service workshops are offered for people interested in family education, and the Board serves as a consultant to schools and agencies in this area.

*'A recent survey of BJE-affiliated schools in Los Angeles conducted by a prominent researcher indicates that Bureau programmes and services are highly valued by those served. This, combined with the 'leverage' of direct dollar support of schools, and the relationship between local school leaders,*

*both lay and professional, with the lay and professional leadership of the Bureau, creates a healthy nexus between the individual schools and the 'central agency.'*

### **The Toronto Board of Jewish Education**

The Toronto Board of Jewish Education was established in 1949. Like the BJE in Los Angeles, it too is *'a central community agency for Jewish education which provides co-ordinated community-wide services to some 70 different school units, including a diversity of educational programmes reflecting the many facets of Jewish life in Toronto.'*

The Toronto board *'aims to improve instruction in its affiliated schools by setting standards for teacher certification; coordinating the efforts of many autonomous school bodies; developing meaningful programmes for the intensification of Jewish learning; and upgrading the professional quality of those institutions and individuals who look to the Board for leadership.'*

As in Los Angeles, one of the Toronto Board's most important functions is in the area of personnel. They recruit, evaluate and place qualified teachers in their affiliated schools. Additionally, as in LA, they help establish salary categories, deal with referrals, employer/employee relations, etc.

Whereas the LA Board divides its schools into four cluster groups and provides a co-ordinator for each cluster, in Toronto *'a consultant who is ideologically compatible with the religious and educational philosophy of the school'* is provided for each institution. These consultants visit the school, meet with teachers, present model lessons, report to the principal and lay leadership, prepare written assessments for the BJE, make recommendations for improving teaching and help plan programmes which result from those recommendations, organise workshops for teachers on a school-wide basis, participate in curriculum development and attend staff/education committee meetings to discuss their findings.

In Toronto, like Los Angeles, in-service training for teachers is a high priority. This means that *'a variety of programmes are sponsored by the Board in an effort to provide school personnel with the means by which to obtain in-service training.'*

The Toronto board has a number of functional responsibilities. Their senior staff are responsible for administering the Midrashah L'Morim - the Toronto Jewish Teachers' Seminary. The Board is also directly involved in the Jewish teacher-training programme at York University. The Board is also involved in a programme which gives secondary students studying Hebrew at supplementary schools credits for those studies, and they were involved with the establishment and continue to govern and operate the Orah School for Jewish Children from Russia.

The Board operates a Department of School Finances. They, through the Toronto Jewish Congress, provide subsidies and grants to various schools in the community. *'The Board fulfils a major role as a screening and monitoring agent charged with the responsibility of supervising fiscal management of the subsidised schools, and examining various financial operations of those schools which receive Toronto Jewish Congress grants.'*

Other areas in which the BJE has direct involvement are liaison with schools staffs through regular principals' meetings at which all affiliated schools are represented; consultation with schools' principals and lay boards; co-ordination of inter-school activities ranging from Bible contests to music festivals to a day-school parents' association, each staffed by board personnel who help in the planning and implementation of the various activities.

The Board also runs a central pedagogic library full of materials for teachers and they maintain a teacher centre which provides opportunities for staffs of affiliated schools to develop new classroom materials. As many agencies turn to the BJE with queries about

Jewish education, they keep an up-to-date information bank so they can deal effectively with questions about all aspects of Jewish education. The Bureau liaises with government agencies, the department of education and local school boards; engages in ongoing publicity and public relations work regarding Jewish education; administers a scholarship award to try and attract young people into careers in Jewish education; serves as a source of personnel for adult education programmes and promotes Jewish education at both primary and secondary school levels.

Similar to Los Angeles's system of 'fees for services', the staff of the Toronto Bureau have a 'delivery on service' concept. They work with the staffs of the Jewish Community Centres, day camps, the Jewish Family and Child Service and other agencies on content for Jewish programming. They also keep in contact with shlichim to the Zionist and synagogue youth movements. They occasionally take part in helping to plan weekends and retreats for teachers and students.

### **Inter-agency responsibility**

Both the Los Angeles and Toronto Boards, in their role as a community resource agency, interact with other agencies and share expertise and responsibility for certain areas and programmes. In Los Angeles, for example, the BJE runs workshops and conferences to help stimulate the professional growth of pre-school educators. The BJE, with the acknowledgement of the LA Jewish Federation Council, plays a major leadership role in developing an overall community plan for Jewish education.

### **PROBLEMS**

Dr Graff, in the concluding section of his article, discusses some of the problems that can and do face Bureaus of Jewish Education. He points out that *'while the Bureau functions as an effective service provider and can influence movement in particular directions, it is far from being a central planner.'*

The fact that bureaus service educational needs across denominational lines has its advantages and disadvantages. It can certainly be a unifying force and emphasise the commitment to Jewish education in all sectors of the community. On the other hand, it often means that bureaus function as a group of differentiated units rather than as a whole. Chicago is a city that has operated two separate bureaus since the 1920s. This was done in order to avoid the problems caused by working under a single cross-denominational body. The Orthodox agency is known as the Associated Talmud Torah and its effectiveness is recognised. The BJE that serves the more 'liberal' elements of the community is now under review by the local federation.

Because of the funding structure, bureaus tend to be highly dependent upon the success of the annual Jewish federation fund-raising campaign. *'In recent years the campaigns of North American Jewish federations have been 'flat'. In response, the bureaus have both streamlined their operations and sought additional sources of revenue through foundations and direct contributions.'*

Bureaus of Jewish Education are not without their opponents and critics. There is a certain amount of 'bureau bashing' going on in North America today. The effectiveness of bureaus has been questioned and the result is that federations are less inclined to provide the necessary funding. In the final analysis, however, most communities still decide that some type of BJE is necessary.

One explanation for the perceived failure is that while bureaus often have responsibility, they do not have power. This is due to the fact that the schools under the BJE umbrella are completely independent. If the bureaus were converted into institutes, it would then be more easily understood that their role is to innovate, carry out research, and develop curricula. Converting bureaus into foundations (linked in North America to the federations) is an interesting and perhaps useful option.

In the context of the proposed new Anglo Jewish Bureau it would be important to ensure that the Bureau was not invested with huge expectations on the part of the community to set and monitor standards within educational institutions when it would not have the powers necessary to enforce those standards.

## Conclusions

In the concluding pages of his paper, Dr Graff discusses the rationale for maintaining Boards of Jewish Education, particularly in these difficult financial times. In addition to serving as umbrella organisations and providing consultative services, he feels that boards must take on four key roles in the 90s. They must be the '*Communal guarantor of accountability in Jewish school-based education; provider of professional development opportunities for educators; operator of Jewish educational programs for target populations and convener of diverse groups vital to the success of Jewish education.*'

Dr Graff adds that:

*'By providing vision and leadership as catalysts, networkers, facilitators, service resources, innovators and advocates for the enhancement of Jewish education, Bureaus can make a significant impact on the level of educational activity in a community. National and international initiatives in Jewish education also require a capable, local 'umbrella' mechanism such as a BJE to work with educators and educational institutions to implement far-reaching objectives. A well-staffed, properly funded Bureau of Jewish Education can play a vital role in strengthening a community's educational system and, indeed, in building the Jewish future.'*

## THE ORGANISATION OF AN INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY SCHOOL : MOUNT SCOPUS COLLEGE - MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

BY SIMON CAPLAN

The Review of the United Synagogue recommends changes for the Jewish day schools presently linked to its Board of Education that would effectively remove their financial and administrative relationship with the centre. The changes would affect three existing schools, the J.F.S., the Michael Sobell Sinai School and the Ilford Jewish Primary School, as well as the two new schools about to open in Southgate and Redbridge respectively.

In order to understand the impact of the proposed changes, and to broaden perspectives beyond the specifically Anglo-Jewish arena, Mount Scopus College in Melbourne, Australia was chosen as a comparative model. The writer, having visited the school recently, asked Garry Stock - currently President of Mount Scopus College - to prepare an article analysing the reasons for its acknowledged success and relating to the challenges faced by a self-financing community school. His comments are the source of all quotations, and form the basis for this paper.

Why did we choose Mount Scopus College as a model? In some ways, one might argue, Scopus is quite unlike any of the schools under the umbrella of the United Synagogue. In size alone, for example, the college - a multi-campus kindergarten through secondary school network for over 2,300 students - dwarves anything available in this country.

The first reason for relating to the school as a model was that Mount Scopus College is acknowledged to be a 'successful Jewish day school'. There is no simple accurate measure of success, but Scopus impresses on a number of fronts. First, as Garry Stock points out, '*This school...is not an elitist school. It is not a rich school. It is not the best equipped and most modern school in Melbourne. It is not without its problems*', and yet it is a school with one of the highest achievement profiles in the State of Victoria, it

sends more graduates to Israel speaking the Hebrew language than possibly any other school in the world and if you run through a list of the senior lay and professional leadership of Melbourne Jewry you will be hard pressed to find a name that is not a Scopus graduate.

Secondly, set in Australia, the school shares a similar environmental background to those of the United Synagogue. The cultural underpinnings of Australian Jewry and the backdrop of the Australian educational system share much in common with their British counterparts. Moreover, the school was established as a community institution, serving the whole spectrum and not merely those seeking private fee-paying education. The socio-economic profile of the Melbourne community and the parents of Mount Scopus is not dissimilar to that of London Jewry and of schools such as those under the aegis of the United Synagogue. The Melbourne Jewish community has its wealthy element, but, as a school catering for a wide cross section of the community, Scopus carries a considerable scholarship and bursary burden. The religious background of the students is also mixed, as it is in the United Synagogue's schools.

Thirdly, the most significant difference between Mount Scopus College and the United Synagogue's State Aided schools is good reason for looking at the Melbourne school as a model. The difference is that Scopus receives only twenty per cent of its annual running costs from a basket of state subsidies, whereas a British Voluntary Aided school is entitled to an equivalent eighty-five per cent. And Scopus, unlike our schools, has no subsidising central educational body such as the Board of Education to fall back on. These factors made Mount Scopus, in our view, an ideal study.

### **The history and background of Mount Scopus College**

Mount Scopus College opened its doors in 1949. It is one of seven Jewish day schools in Melbourne - a community in which over seventy per cent of primary school students and approximately fifty-five per cent of secondary school students attend a Jewish day school. Mount Scopus accounts for sixty per cent of the secondary enrolment and forty per cent of the primary enrolment of these students.

Melbourne has no Board of Jewish Education. A co-ordinating committee looks after the Jewish day schools with respect to government funding requirements, but this committee has no authority over the educational policies and practices of the schools.

Mount Scopus is itself answerable to the Jewish Community Council (JCCV) of Victoria, which is the equivalent to our Board of Deputies and reports annually, in depth, to them.

*'Mount Scopus cannot acquire major assets nor appoint a principal without the ratification of the JCCV. The president of the JCCV, the chairman of its education committee and two of its representatives are members of the 30-person Board of Governors of the College. The office-bearers of the college - the president, the vice president and the treasurer - are appointed by the JCCV, though traditionally as a result of a recommendation by the Board of Governors'.*

### **The success of Mount Scopus**

Why do so many Jewish children attend a Jewish day school in Melbourne and why has Mount Scopus been able to maintain its pre-eminent position within that scenario? Some of the reasons are given as follows:

- 1) *'The board of the college has always been aware that most parents send their children to Mount Scopus principally because it provides the best academic results ... The board recognises that should the outstanding pass rates (consistently in excess of ninety-five per cent over the last 25 years) diminish, enrolments will suffer. Consequently, the college has placed top priority on maintaining excellence in this area'.*

- 2) *'The college leadership has never departed from a commitment to excellence and a pursuit of improving standards. The Board of Governors has been the college's sternest critic.'*
- 3) *'A commitment to raise the Jewish studies standard of the college to the highest international levels'. Mount Scopus has been linked to the Melton Centre of the Hebrew University since 1981 and world-class Jewish educators have thus been attracted to the College because of its commitment to promote Jewish education. A bilingual programme for one class of 25 students, in each of Years 7 and 8 (in which all subjects except English are studied in Ivrit) has not only been successful in its own right but has lifted the Hebrew standard throughout the secondary school'.*
- 4) *There has been a commitment to instill a Jewish character and tone in the college. 'Given that the vast majority of students do not come from homes that are 'Shomrei Mitzvot', the development of the 'Jewishness' of the students has not principally been reflected in practice and observance, but more by the development within the students of a sense of Jewish identity and pride'. This is represented in the celebration of the Chagim, Yom Yashoah, Yom Ha'atzmaut, Yom Hazikaron and in response to such contemporary problems as that of Ethiopian and Soviet Jewry. In addition, Mount Scopus runs many seminars and programmes (including the 'counterpoint' programme) in conjunction with outside communal organisations and with Yeshiva University. It also runs a three-and-half-month ulpan in Israel.*
- 5) *The leadership of the college has been creative and progressive but has kept its feet fully on the ground. Dollars have been carefully managed so that the debt of the institution has not got out of control. There has been a price to pay, in that the school is no longer at the absolute cutting edge of building, facilities and technology. On the other hand, it lives within its means... It is not answerable to its banks although very dependent upon its supporters'.*
- 6) *'The leadership of the college ... has seen itself answerable to more than the Jewish Community Council of Victoria. Its commitment is to the maintenance of high standards and to the continuity of an institution of excellence. Involvement by lay leaders with the day-to-day management of the school (which is the responsibility of the principal), is considerable, however, interference is minimal. For a Jewish organisation the board is rare - in that it focuses on policy matters and whilst raising operating issues does not try to resolve them. That is the role of the principal and his team, to which the board offers full support'.*

### **The financial facts of Mount Scopus College**

We are told that:

*'The college has an annual budget of fifteen million Australian dollars (the equivalent of six and a half million pounds) of which over eighty per cent is deployed to cover staff salaries and staff-related costs including superannuation... Of the recurrent income of fifteen million Australian dollars twenty per cent is provided by per capita Australian and Victoria State government grants and the remainder by fee income... fees are in line with those charged by the leading private/independent schools'.*

The college serves the whole community and, as such, cannot discriminate on financial grounds.

*'All Jewish students 'regardless of means' are admitted subject to providing in-depth financial data to justify the level of discount concession or fee deferment they are granted. The college has a debt of three million Australian dollars and generates approximately five hundred to seven hundred thousand dollars per annum (net of expenses) through a combination of an annual appeal, parent association activities and a wills and bequests programme. In addition there is the Mount Scopus College Foundation which was established*



*in 1987 and which has generated pledges of six million Australian dollars... Effectively the college operates between a breakeven and a small loss after interest and operating requirements. Fundraising is directed at debt reduction, major capital projects and covering major increases in debtors/working capital requirements during periods of economic difficulty'.*

Faced with a large and ongoing fund-raising need, the college went professional in 1987, appointing a Development Director (recruited from the United States) at the highest executive level to oversee this aspect of the college's requirements. This move was not intended to replace direct lay involvement but to stimulate and focus it around a clear set of strategic objectives, as well as to co-ordinate the public relations aspects of a large institution and the intricate administrative side of a successful fund-raising machine.

The present financial position is summarised as *'stretched, but not over-stretched - in other words, in financial difficulty but not in a state of 'intensive care'*. Bearing in mind the considerable ongoing pressures and the state of the current recession this, one imagines, is about as healthy an estimate as one could expect to hear from the lay leader of a diaspora Jewish day school at present.

### **The involvement of the lay leadership**

What is not written in the paper we received but which is most apparent nevertheless, is the quality, the commitment and the high level of involvement of the lay leadership of Mount Scopus College in its affairs. Indeed one wonders how many laymen could have constructed the kind of detailed analysis prepared for us by Garry Stock. The independence of Mount Scopus has forced it to develop lay leadership from within. Many of the Board members are Scopus graduates, and the sense of passionate commitment to the school is as obvious in the article we received as it is in the degree of participation required of a Board member on behalf of the institution.

### **Ownership of the school**

One of most revealing statements in the paper is the summary:

*'The school is owned by the community. It is owned by the children and their parents and by the community at large. It is answerable directly to the students, their staff and their parents and indirectly to the entire community and to a maintenance of high standards'.*

This commitment to shared ownership is overwhelming, and it results directly from the independence of the school. The provider and the client are placed in a direct relationship and the result is a product which responds to real community needs. It is interesting to note that the phrase 'and to a maintenance of high standards' is added, sensing, correctly, that there is a tension between being responsive to the market and maintaining absolute standards. However, in the case of Mount Scopus it is a creative tension. The results of the school bear witness to the fact that Jewishness does not appear to have suffered as a result.

### **Summary**

Mount Scopus College is not underwritten by a central communal organisation. Its financial burden outweighs that of a typical Anglo-Jewish day school in that government and local authority support is comparatively less generous in Australia. The school presents itself as a community school, available to all irrespective of means, and consequently carries a heavy burden in terms of scholarship and bursary support. The parent and pupil population is as mixed in its socio-economic and its religious orientation as any such population could be. And yet Mount Scopus succeeds: in achieving high academic standards, producing high levels of Jewish identity in its students, surmounting financial difficulties and in creating and utilising a large pool of human resource at the lay leadership level.

There is no guarantee that greater independence and autonomy will per se bring such rewards. However it is possible to claim that it will create the climate and the conditions to encourage this. Our schools must stretch their imagination in terms of the cultivation of support within the community at all levels. Centralisation has, until now, provided them with a cushion that lessens the imperative to do this. Along the way schools will be forced to broaden their lay leadership base. This too has, until now, been unnecessary.

Schools such as Mount Scopus have not been cushioned in this way. Instead, they have '*generated the passionate commitment and self-help to raise the funds and resources to achieve...results*'. That is the task now facing our Jewish day schools.

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## **A LIST OF OTHER RESEARCH PAPERS COMMISSIONED BY THE REVIEW**

A number of research papers were commissioned by or prepared for the Review which we were unable to publish, but which may be made available on request at the discretion of the Review. They were as follows :

- \* United Synagogue Financial Review - full report and appendices  
David Epstein / Neville Levy: Levy Gee
  - \* Notes on the constitution and by-laws of the United Synagogue.  
Mr Daniel Greenberg
  - \* A survey of the functions of the Board of Jewish Education of Los Angeles  
Dr Gil Graff
  - \* A survey of the functions of the Toronto Board of Jewish Education  
Rabbi Irwin Witty
  - \* Notes on the status of Jewish day schools  
Nathan Rubin
  - \* Mount Scopus College - The independent yet community school  
Garry Stock
  - \* Outline of a marketing campaign for the United Synagogue  
David Abraham: Chiat Day
  - \* Market research design - attitudes to/within the United Synagogue  
Dr Judith Citron / Dr Stephen Miller
  - \* Market research - discussion guide for focus groups and questionnaire for survey  
Dr Judith Citron / Dr Stephen Miller
-

# 16

## REVIEW DATA

### **A SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CRITICISMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS SUBMITTED TO THE REVIEW BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

A good response was received to the published request for views and comments about the United Synagogue both from its members and others, and the large number of letters which were sent were carefully studied. In addition, details of locally based community initiatives from individual communities were received. Some of these predated whilst others were in response to the Review.

Contributions to the Review came in a variety of forms: as reports and analyses of the present and proposed future of particular communities, strategic plans and collective communal responses to the questions that had been asked by the Review.

A synopsis of the many observations, suggestions, criticisms and recommendations which were received, in the form of correspondence from members of the public, is given below. Many of these are reflected in the findings and recommendations of the Review.

#### **Organisation**

The need for reorganisation and restructuring was a recurrent theme in the correspondence. As one writer put it, 'The United Synagogue has become like one of the large commercial conglomerates which is now ripe for de-merging'. Another felt that the organisation had become a somewhat remote, impersonal and over-centralised body.

Many correspondents felt that the United Synagogue should only involve itself in specific areas of endeavour such as synagogues, the Chief Rabbinate, the Beth Din, and with burial, and that other areas, such as kashrut and education, should be managed separately.

It was suggested that a community should have a rabbi and a director of community services and that the whole concept of synagogue should change to that of 'community centre'.

United Synagogue management personnel, it was said, should be subject to regular appraisal. Concern was also voiced about the organisation's wastage of human resources, inefficiency, unawareness of local concerns, autocratic attitude, failure to provide needed services and, on the religious side, a movement to the right of the traditions of most of the membership.

#### **Ethos**

The position of the United Synagogue in relation to other denominational groups was raised in many instances. One correspondent wrote opposing the employment of rabbis associated with the Lubavitch movement, and others felt that the United Synagogue had become 'too frum', thereby alienating its membership. A far closer relationship with the Federation of Synagogues was advocated by some and, conversely, one writer proposed a closer working relationship with Masorti.

## **Rabbis**

Many writers expressed the view that the rabbi's role is crucial to the success of the United Synagogue. However, doubts were expressed about the 'standards' of rabbis. It was felt that the community lacks leadership, that rabbis lack direction and motivation and that there is a need for inspired spiritual guidance. One correspondent asked why full-time rabbis need to teach in schools for additional remuneration.

Suggestions for improving the situation ranged from proposals to use one rabbi to take care of four synagogues, and replacing the term 'Minister' with 'Community Director', to the introduction of a two-year rabbinical contract with a built-in bi-annual review.

## **Dayanim**

It was widely felt that all dayanim should be actively and directly involved in United Synagogue community life in some capacity and/or should have served for five years in a constituent synagogue prior to appointment.

## **Lay leadership**

Long service was regarded as having a negative effect, stifling new ideas. A lack of willingness to learn on the part of lay leaders was also mentioned.

## **Services**

Some writers felt that the service was too long and, indeed, that the main service was of a low standard. The alternative minyan, it was said, was not given sufficient importance and priority in some communities.

## **Education**

The consensus amongst those who commented was that education should be a top priority and that more community resources should be allocated to it. One dissenting voice felt that education received too large a budget. It was suggested that the United Synagogue should enable schools and part-time classes by helping to provide programmes rather than by subsidising schools directly.

## **Chadarim**

Some expressed the opinion that chadarim were of a low standard and that they suffered from too much central administration. The question of compulsory attendance at synagogue services for cheder pupils was raised in one case. Others stressed that the emphasis should be on children enjoying their time at cheder. It was generally agreed that more resources should be spent on educating children.

## **Shechitah/kashrut**

It was widely felt that the present situation is untenable and that kashrut has itself become less important than the question of who is licensing kashrut. The existence of two parallel organisations is considered a disaster.

## **Women**

The lack of opportunity for women was heavily criticised. It was felt that their position ought to be safeguarded within a central, constitutional framework, thus avoiding manipulation of the issue by local honorary officers. Some commented that a move towards greater religious participation in the services would be possible if a higher ruling body chose to sanction this.

## **Youth**

It was felt that there was lack of encouragement for youth participation and activities. Some suggested the creation of a bat mitzvah ceremony devised by the Chief Rabbi's office.

## **Social**

It was agreed that a feeling of belonging to a synagogue is important but that one reason for not getting involved is the sense of cliquism which prevails. It was suggested that clubs for young people, aged between 20 and 30, should be established within the framework of the synagogue, with the emphasis on the social rather than on the religious side.

## **Finance**

Concern was expressed at the high level of synagogue fees, especially given the present economic climate. It was suggested that reductions in fees should be automatically granted for the unemployed, the sick and the elderly.

It was felt that the high level of fees discourages young people, and that an excessive amount of funding is taken from each congregation by the centre. It was proposed that all central functions be self-funding through fees charged to local communities.

## **Property**

Along with the suggestion that a property audit be taken, the view of those who addressed the issue was that redundant assets should be disposed of and that synagogues which are no longer viable should be converted into community centres.

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