

simply Hillel's needs; Hillel's function as a bridge between university and community for faculty as well as for students; the director continuing to be what he has always been -- a model exemplifying at least one authentic Jewish lifestyle; and that community in which Jews, no matter how diverse, live with each other affirmatively and, I hope, creatively as Jews.

To fulfill these functions is, to me, the enormously valuable role that Hillel has, a role which, I believe, should define its direction in the future.

II. HILLEL'S FUTURE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE HILLEL DIRECTOR

Richard N. Levy

The Jubilee -- the Biblical yovel -- seems a strange metaphor for us who have come to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations. The yovel, after all, was a time for the return of land in Israel to its original owner, symbolizing that the true ownership of land resided with God. The original owner who bought back his land was a "redeemer," a goel, and he brought redemption, geulah, to his land:

The land shall not be sold into perpetual ownership,
For the land (says God) is Mine,
For you are but sojourners and squatters with Me,
And to every bit of land you have acquired
You shall make geulah, redemption, to that land.

We have not come here -- though sometimes our financial situation suggests we should -- to sell all our Hillel property. But we know, we directors, that our aging H-shaped buildings, our modern free-form edifices, our leaky, rebuilt houses, are all temporary dwelling-places, Nachtasyle, shelters for the duration, different from synagogues in that they are places where people can make things happen, not institutions in themselves. As Hillel directors who dwell on the edge of campus, we do not need to be reminded that we are but sojourners and squatters in territory that really belongs -- seemingly in perpetuity -- to the university, the Board of Trustees, or the state. Our Christian colleagues on campus have become used to calling themselves "marginal men -- and women," and sometimes we think of ourselves that way too. Or, at least, we used to.

In the beginning, fifty years ago, the university was strong and vital, but the Jewish community was weak and frightened. Would we be able to survive the seductive onslaught of American culture, we wondered? Would there be some of us left after our names had been changed, our noses trimmed, our Sabbaths forgotten, our learning swallowed up in the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture of the public schools? We had to build a Nachtasyl, a shelter from the

sweet and killing forces of the cultural night, lest like the snow falling on Hillel the sage as he lay on the roof of the academy listening in, we too would be buried by the norms and practices of American culture. The disappearing Jewish student had to be redeemed.

Hillel took Hillel's warning -- but the universities did not. They believed they could withstand the drifts of popular culture, of political influence, of economic motivations which fell on them from their first founding. But in this year of our yovel we look upon the remains of a shaken university, accused by blacks on the one hand of aggressive evangelism for WASP culture, and by war protestors on the other of complicity through its personnel and its research in the evil, tragic wars in Indochina. Our yovel finds the university, which fifty years ago was the shining pinnacle of American culture, with its roof falling in and its faculty and students enslaved to many of the very faults and weaknesses which are tearing all America apart.

The crisis in American society has not left the university's Jewish community unaffected. But Hillel, refuge from the snowstorm, has reminded the community that the majority culture -- in disarray on all sides -- was not our culture, that within us was a language, a history, a culture, and a faith that had survived storms much more ferocious, and these remained as alternatives to those American values which once most Jews desired, but which now seem filled with dross. With the temple that is the academy falling down, Hillel points the way to a new Yavneh, in which the American Jew can help to reconstruct not only American Jewry, but the American university, and through it, contribute to the reconstruction of American culture and morality itself.

How in this year of Redemption shall we begin to carry out this destiny? There are some who will say that we must direct our attention only to the Jewish community, and not to the general society in which we live. But we know that as American culture was threatening to wipe us out fifty years ago, so it may again, when it has found its way once more. It is our job to help reconstruct that culture in its current state of disarray in such a manner that it can nurture us, and all its groups and faiths, and not swallow us up again.

What a large order, you may say with suspicion. We cannot even reconstruct all our uninvolved Jewish students! But I believe that if Hillel can be faulted through these fifty years, it is for not

raising its sights high enough, for not realizing that we cannot significantly alter the pattern of Jewish disaffiliation on campus until we begin to alter the patterns of the university itself, and of the culture which it reflects.

How shall we do this? I believe Hillel must foster the creation of different models from those existing in American society. As universities find fewer financial resources to teach creatively, to integrate the philosophy of the classroom with the moral practices of life, and to help students and faculty break down the anonymity of the campus into smaller, human, non-competitive communities, someone else has to take over that responsibility. It is Hillel's job to do that for our Jewish students and faculty, and by setting the pace, encourage our Christian colleagues and the university itself to follow suit. Hillel Foundations across the country have developed Free Jewish universities, Batey Midrash, and the like, which experiment with study lishma, for its own sake, in which teachers do not lecture to students, but students and teachers find ways to teach each other, concerned not with performance or "right answers," but with the fostering of insight and independent judgment. Hillel Foundations across the country try to encourage students not only to study about Judaism in the classroom, but to put their texts into practice through the doing of mitzvot -- internalizing Jewish study as a discipline of love, developing an intense, uplifting discipline of prayer, or mixing food with the presence of God through the practice of kashrut. While we rejoice at the spread of Jewish studies throughout American universities, we must be very careful that they do not become the same, too-often weary ritual of lectures, papers, and examinations that have debased too many other disciplines on American campuses. If the Jewish studies faculty believes its classes must stop at the brink of practice, then it is our responsibility to assist students in Jewish studies to internalize their learning through practice, that for them Judaism can become what we always say it is: a way of living. And finally from the long anomic hallways and widely-separated houses and apartments of our student and faculty population, Hillel must help create communities of people -- a Bayit here, a co-op, Hebrew house, or Moshavah there -- communities of people who by living together or in close proximity to each other can worship, study, and celebrate together, learn how to share together, and understand the inner exultation of living in a true Jewish community.

Since the Jews with whom we work will not be living out their entire Jewish life around a campus, these communities must also serve as models for Jewish practice when our students return to the city or small town. While synagogues around the country are developing havurot -- small groups of members who meet to pray and study with greater intimacy and involvement than the programs in the "great sanctuaries" permit -- it is for us to continue to create havurot, free minyans, and the like which can enable our students and faculty to "Jew" creatively, in Zalman Schachter's words; give them a model around which to form their own Jewish communities when they leave us; and to continue to inspire the synagogues to incorporate the best of these communal forms of worship into their own practice.

But it is not enough for us to provide redemptive models of study, practice, and communal celebration. For the past few years, the campus has turned its face away from social activism, overwhelmed, it would seem, by the futility of changing any policies but one's own. As often as we quote the sage Hillel's great maxim, so do we fail to put it into practice. We must be for ourselves, but we must also be for others, and the stalling question "when" deserves no answer. When a crisis comes upon us, like the travail of the Yom Kippur War, our students and faculty give magnificent testimony of the depth of their Jewish devotion. But our hardest job lies not at such times, but in the quiet valleys when there is no crisis, when it is our task to stir up concern, to translate knowledge not only into mitzvot relating humanity to God but mitzvot relating human beings to each other. Be it action for Soviet Jews, assistance to farm workers, programs for the Jewish poor and elderly, or support of universal causes, ours is the task to fight off the heaving snows of withdrawal that have affected us all. Ours is the task to enlist in the fight for social change, at the risk of displeasing those who think we are doing too much, or alienating those who think we are doing too little. It is appropriate at this yovel to rededicate ourselves to the principle of the autonomy of Hillel foundations and their directors, a principle protected with great devotion these past fifty years by this Commission and the national Hillel staff, but which must be affirmed anew to each new generation of national and community Jewish leaders.

Sometimes we wonder -- particularly in the heat of crisis in Israel -- whether it is right to spend so much effort building up the quality of Jewish life in the Diaspora. Should not Israel be the prime focus of our activity? But this crisis should have shown us how

greatly Israel and the Diaspora are interdependent, how much we need each other, and how important it is for each to build up its own institutions, its own ways of being Jewish. To lessen support for Jewish life in America will not help Israel, it will weaken her; even in years of crisis in the Middle East we cannot diminish support for American Jewish life, we must increase it, doublefold. There are still many, far too many, young American Jews drifting off to oblivion beneath the snows of a culture to whose weakness they have as yet found no alternative. We in Hillel must strengthen the way-stations that are our foundations and the creative Jewish models that grow from them, that Hillel who is 50 may redeem young Hillel not yet 20 for the heritage that is his.

To strengthen our foundations, we have also to strengthen our directors. Not alone by protecting their autonomy, though that is vital; not alone by erasing the salary gap that separates us from our colleagues in pulpits of Jewish centers, though that is only just; but as much by developing the wherewithal to become in practice what we are in fact: a unique Jewish movement on the American scene. We are not just a "service agency"; not merely a random collection of Orthodox, Hasidic, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist rabbis, social workers of various disciplines, M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s in Jewish studies. We are colleagues committed to a Jewish people to whom no ideas, no practices, no ideologies which stem from Jewish experience are foreign, and our greatest dream -- short of a reunified human race -- is of a reunified Jewish people. The rabbis among us work within our own movements to broaden the outlooks of our colleagues; the M.S.W.'s among us work to bridge the gulf between rabbi and social worker. As more and more of our students look outside the pulpit for their careers, as congregational rabbis find fewer pulpits for their choice, Hillel's responsibility will increase to lead the way to a more open embrace of the total Jewish experience. The training in none of the seminaries or social work schools prepares Hillel directors sufficiently to pursue this vision. We have to begin formulating our own training programs using the knowledge and skills of our own colleagues, to educate present and future directors for the task of reunification which the great majority of us hold dear. Be it summer sessions, internships, or whatever, we must seriously begin to lay out a program for committed Jews of many disciplines to prepare for the work that is ours.

The redeemer in the fiftieth year brings together lands far apart, properties unrelated, people who do not know each other, in a

grand, unprecedented reunion of the Jewish people and of God. The original yovel gave the American nation a motto for the Liberty Bell -- "Proclaim liberty in the land to all who live upon it"; at our yovel, we must help redeem not only our own people, but the university in which they live, and a nation which on the eve of its fourth yovel is once more searching for its way.

Part Two