



Can Synagogues Engage and Attract More Young Jews?

The cycle is a well-known one; a Jewish child attends Jewish day school and lives an essentially Jewish life. They celebrate their Bar-mitzvah (or Bat Mitzvah) with family and friends, hopefully followed by a great party. Soon after, they begin to distance themselves (to some extent) from the Synagogue and its activities. Eventually, they get married, have children, join a synagogue and the cycle begins again. It's well known, synagogues lose young adults routinely during this period; but, do we ever wonder why? Do we try to engage and understand these youths, or do we simply chalk it off as part of the cycle or worse, rationalize it as another example of how the influence of the secular world is devastating Jewish life? While there's no



question, the secular world wields influence over Jewish youths, scapegoating the secular world for our failure in engaging Jewish youths is not only a poor form of denial; but, one that ignores the problem allowing, it to fester, and slams the door on possibly finding solutions.

A recent Study, GenZ Now: Understanding and Connecting with Jewish Teens Today, commissioned by the Jim Joseph Foundation, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, Lippman Kanfer Foundation for Living Torah, and The Marcus Foundation, and conducted by researchers at The Jewish Education Project and a team of evaluators from American Institutes for Research and Rosov Consulting, have endeavored to do just that – give us a snapshot of today's young Jewish adult.

The survey, compiled the responses of 17,576 Jewish teens, regarding their beliefs, hopes, and fears, as well as their political and religious views. The new survey is an outgrowth of the 2013, Jim Joseph Foundation commissioned report entitled, 'Effective Strategies for Educating and Engaging Jewish Teens.

The Survey was designed in collaboration with 14 Jewish youth-serving organizations (YSOs) in North America. The questions we asked were crafted to understand how YSOs can help today's teens thrive. Each of the participating YSOs helped us contact their teens and encouraged them to participate in the survey. By design, most of our respondents were teens who participated, at least a little, in one of these YSOs.

While the survey didn't provide any specific information on how individual synagogues can attract younger members, it provided numerous nuggets of information about how they view the world and what is important to them. Including:

1. Young adults care about their Jewish identity and want to be part of synagogue life, but not necessarily in the same way as their parents or grandparents were.
2. They do give to tzedakah and care deeply about the impact of their charitable dollars. However, they want to have some say into where their money goes and want to know who it benefits.
3. Younger Jews are much more likely to embrace a more politically active social justice form of Tikkun Olam than older generations.
4. Younger Jews worry about the divisive political posturing and lack of civility that permeates American politics today.
5. Fewer Jewish teens today than before identify with Jewish religious practice, rituals, prayer, and synagogues.
6. Younger Jews view synagogue services and ritual as being dreary, old-school, antiquated, and irrelevant to teenage life today.
7. Younger Jews see themselves as more spiritual than religious, and do not define their spirituality in a traditionally Jewish way.
8. Younger Jews feel a kinship with other Jews even when they disagree with their views. They hold that an attack on one of us is an attack on us all.

9. Younger Jews like to spend time with people they're comfortable with; but, not necessarily other Jews.

10. Younger Jews are worried about anti-Semitism; but, also worried about gun violence in general. They are just as concerned about the tragedies at Parkland, Columbine, and Newtown, as they are about the massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue.

11. Younger Jews expressed a greater affinity for Jewish culture than traditional religious practice and mandate.

The survey noted little generational conflict between parents and their children. Noting this generation is embracing and holding to their parent's value system, David Bryfman, CEO of the Jewish Education Project said, "It's a liberal generation of parents, and it's an even more liberal generation of young kids." While there might be an undeniable bond between young Jewish adults and their parents, there may be a wider gap between them and older generations. Younger Jews see themselves as spiritual humanists and older Jews see themselves first and foremost as Jews. They also have different views on anti-Semitism and the State of Israel; not necessarily conflicting; but notably different. Older generations are very concerned with the recent spike in anti-Semitic attacks, younger Jews share their concerns; but, expand their concerns to include many more forms of intolerance. An overwhelming percentage of respondents (71%) signaled support for Israel; but, noted discomfort discussing the thorny Palestinian, one-state/two-state issues and the unfairness and illegitimacy of the BDS movement.

14 key indicators of Jewish Youth

Jewish teens have a strong sense of self.

Jewish teens feel a sense of pride about being Jewish.

Jewish teens have learning experiences that are both challenging and valuable.

Jewish teens engage in learning that enables them to be more active participants in various Jewish communities.

Jewish teens learn about and positively experience Jewish holidays and Shabbat.

Jewish teens establish strong friendships.

Jewish teens develop strong and healthy relationships with their families.

Jewish teens develop significant relationships with mentors, role models, and educators.

Jewish teens are able to express their values and ethics in relation to Jewish principles and wisdom.

Jewish teens develop the capacity (skills and language) that allows them to grapple with and express their spiritual journeys.


Jewish teens feel connected to various communities.


Jewish teens develop the desire and commitment to be part of the Jewish people now and in the future.

Jewish teens develop a positive relationship to the land, people, and state of Israel.

Jewish teens are inspired and empowered to make a positive difference in the various communities and world in which they live.

Though the survey offered little on how synagogues could make themselves more appealing to young Jewish adults, it gave an insight to what moves and motivates them. Using their information synagogues can develop a blueprint for engaging them more effectively.

Synagogues can find a way to attract and engage younger congregants; but, they must do so without alienating older congregants. It's a challenging mission; but doable. This generation of Jews is young; however, they're not children and don't like being treated as such. Things don't always need to go their way; but, they need to know their input is appreciated and their opinions, respected. They need to know when they come to the synagogue they are accepted members of the congregation; not ornaments for show. Today's Synagogues need to develop and implement programing that will attract younger Jews and keep them coming back. 

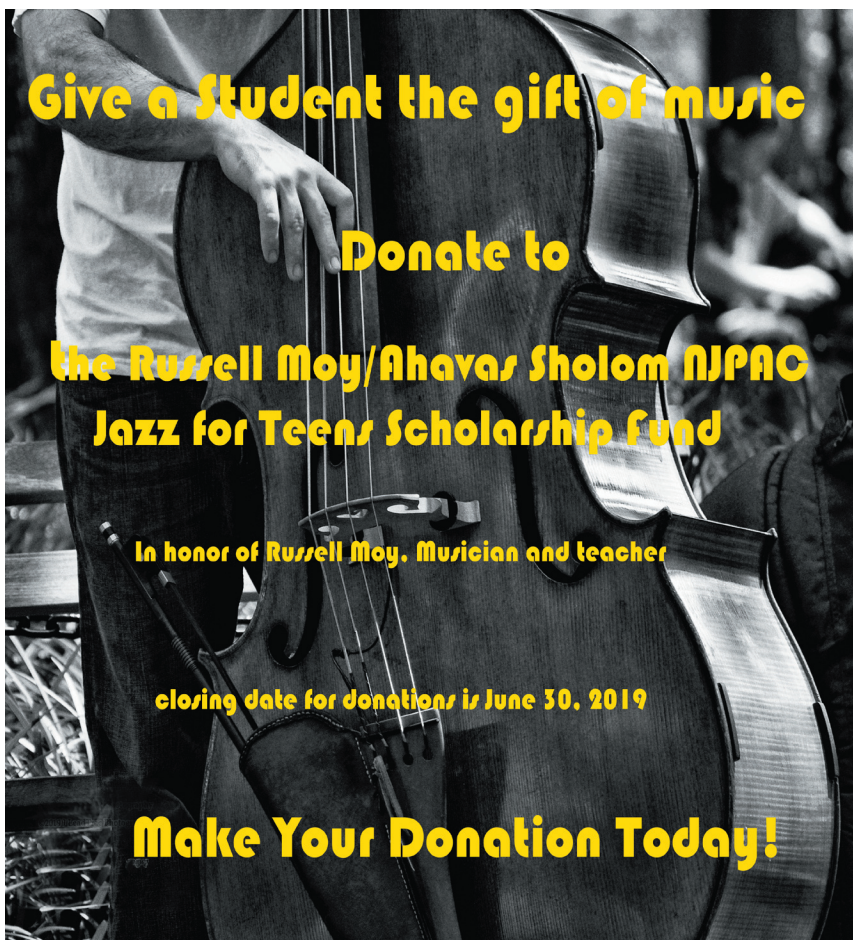


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Harriet Schleifer Becomes the First Woman President of the American Jewish Committee



On Tuesday, Harriet Schleifer made history, by being elected president of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the leading global Jewish advocacy organization. The first woman to head AJC since its founding in 1906, Schleifer was elected by AJC's Board of Governors during the just-concluded AJC Global Forum. She succeeds John Shapiro.

"I am deeply honored, and thankful, to be entrusted with leading over the next three years, in partnership with AJC staff and lay leaders, the most dynamic, pioneering and effective organization in American Jewish life," said Schleifer. "I am a great believer in the value of Jewish advocacy. AJC is helping transform and ensure the Jewish future."

AJC CEO David Harris said, "Harriet Schleifer's passion for the Jewish people, for core American democratic values, for Israel, for Yiddishkeit, combined with her unbounded energy are distinctive attributes that, under her leadership, will propel AJC's pioneering work in confronting the many challenges facing Jews in the U.S., Israel and around the world."



A resident of Chappaqua, New York, Schleifer has been involved with AJC since 2004, first as

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a member and then president of the AJC Westchester/Fairfield Regional Office. She joined AJC's national Board of Governors (BOG) in 2007 and has served on the AJC Executive Council since 2013. From 2014 to 2016, Schleifer served as chair of Project Interchange, AJC's educational program that has brought to Israel more than 6,000 leaders from across the U.S. and other countries around the world, and as Chair of AJC's Board of Governors from 2016 to 2019.

"As a child of Holocaust survivors from Poland, Jewish continuity is so much a part of my being. I want to be sure we are always in a position of strength, creating our own destiny," said Schleifer, who has also served as president of her Conservative synagogue in Westchester County, New York. "Knowing our history, our tradition is vital to understanding and honoring the past, confronting the challenges we face as Jews today and readying for future tasks." ✡

Simon Says

Weekly insights from Rabbi Simon Rosebach



Rabbi Simon Rosenbach

census: are you a citizen? The administration says that precise information about citizenship would be helpful in enforcing the Voting Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination against any citizen's voting rights on account of race, color, or membership in a language minority group. More specifically, the administration that a more accurate count would protect minority communities, because if a district that has a majority of minority class, the voters who comprise the minority class may not be able to elect their preferred representatives if the district is made up of non-citizens and thus, ineligible voters.

People opposed to the inclusion of the question on the census form argue that the question is specifically designed to scare undocumented aliens, because if they answer the question truthfully, they will expose themselves to deportation. The opponents of the question say the result of the question will be to undercount people in states that have a large undocumented alien population. The number of representatives in Congress is based on a state's population, and therefore undercounting in states that have a large undocumented alien population will favor states that have a small undocumented alien population. The opponents of the question say the ultimate goal of the question is to value blue states (which have a large undocumented alien population) is favor of red states (which generally have a small



e are starting a new Book of the Torah this week, the Book of B'midbar. In Hebrew the title of the Book is "Is in the wilderness," but in English the Book is known as "Numbers."

"Numbers" is an appropriate name for the Book, because God commands Moses to take a census of all the men who could bear arms, the men 20 years of age or older. God named census takers, one from each tribe, and they and Moses and Aaron took a census.

The United States census is in the news nowadays, because the Trump administration wants to add a question to the census questionnaire that would determine the 2020

undocumented alien population). The question was asked on census forms from the 1860s until 1950, but the question hasn't been asked since 1950.

What does the Constitution say? Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution mandates a census every ten years to determine the number of representatives that each state has in Congress. The count must include "the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, [and] three fifths of all other Persons [meaning slaves]." The Constitution doesn't say anything about citizenship.

Now, the census data is used for many other things than apportioning the number of representatives to Congress. Block grants, for example, are based on the number of people living in a specific area, whether it be a city, county, or state. In particular, from 1980 to 2001, the number of federal block grant programs went from 450 to 700. The grants were aimed at a wide range of activities from education to healthcare, transportation, housing and counterterrorism.


Governments need to know how many people are living within the borders that the government administers. Two hundred people require fewer police officers than 200,000 people. A million people require more roads than 200 people. A bed for every 2000 people in a health-care facility is not the same as a bed for every 200,000 people.

And not everybody who is entitled to be here is a citizen. New York City, for example, is home to a whole slew of diplomats. A city that has a college or university located within the city has a whole slew for foreign students. The city (or the state) needs to account for those people, so that the city (or the state) can allocate the right number of police officers, the right number of health-care facilities, the amount of food stamps, the number of seats in schools, and so forth.

Some people say, "Let the question scare away the undocumented aliens, they don't deserve government largesse anyway." That is a proposition where reasonable people can differ. You know my position: when my maternal and paternal grandparents came to this country if you set foot on American soil, you could stay. (If you came on a boat that made port in a major American city, like New York or Baltimore, non-citizens were inspected for disease and mental disabilities, and if a prospective immigrant displayed signs of disease or mental disabilities he or she was quarantined or sent back.) You didn't need a passport. You didn't need a visa. Limitations on immigration (except for the Chinese Exclusionary Act of 1888) were not set in place until the early 1920s, and they were a product of bigotry.

The citizenship was argued before the United States Supreme Court on April 25, 2019, and commentators opine the Court will split 5-4 to uphold the administration's inclusion of the question. But in movie fashion, the plot thickened.

Recently (in the last ten days or so), material has surfaced that disputes the administration's position on the citizenship question. Thomas Hofeller, who was the architect of the Republican Party's effort to Gerrymander congressional districts, died in August, 2018. His daughter Stephanie, who had been estranged from him for years, returned home to see her mother, seeking some things that she had told Thomas to save for her. She discovered about 75,000 computer files, and one of the files linked the citizenship question to the Republican Party's efforts to Gerrymander districts. (You can read about it in the New York Times.) Lawyers who represent groups that are opposed to the citizenship question have filed court documents alleging the administration was falsifying its reasons for the inclusion of the citizenship question. That contest has not been resolved.

In B'midbar, the goal of the census was put forth front and center. The goal was to be able to muster an army. There was no subtlety, there was no subterfuge, there was no beating around the bush. As the Spanish say, ojala que si, would that it would be so. 



Help Us Remodel Our Kitchen

It's been estimated it will take \$60,000 to properly renovate our kitchen.

April Modlinger, who has always been a pillar at Congregation Ahavas Sholom, has generously pledged \$10,000 to making this happen.

We have recently received another pledge for \$2,200, bringing the total to 12,200.

With your help Congregation Ahavas Sholom will soon have a kitchen we all deserve.

Make your pledge today!



Join us on June 2nd
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Opening Reception
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Sunday - June 2nd
at 11 am

Gaalen Gallery East
Tepper Room

Slide Show Presentation with
Phil Yourish and Mark Gordon

Refreshments will be served
Free parking

For More Information Call

Lisa Suss, JCC curator, (973) 530-3413

Phil Yourish, JMNJ, (973)- 280-3097

Request for Father' Day Tributes

While we always remember mom; let's not forget about dad. Fellow congregants and friends, Father's day is quickly approaching. We are reaching out for tributes, comments and memories of your dad. You can share a short memory, an antidote, a poem, or a simple, fleeting moment that encapsulates who your father means (or meant) to you. Photos will be appreciated greatly. Please email your tribute to us at leadtracphotography@gmail.com ASAP.

CAS Tzedakah Honor Roll

We would like to thank and recognize those who gave
so generously to support Congregation Ahavas

Sholom in its various efforts to foster Tikun Olam

Elissa Sananman

Steven Yoselevich

Linda Bloom

Dr. Martin Holzman

Linda and Fred Grabiner

Blanche Lerner

Dr. Jack Weinstein

Marianne Moy-to inform her
of donations to the
scholarship fund

Rabbi Simon and Gayle

Rosenbach

Philip Yourish

Harriet Kaufman in memory of
Arthur Kaufman

Susan and Alan Zweibel

**Russell Moy Scholarship
Fund**

Harold Kravis

Flora B. Sonners

Kiddush Sponsorship

Kiddush Is being sponsored this week by Harold Kravis for in honor of the yahrzeit of his mother Arlene Kravis, this past memorial day and for yahrzeit of his father in law Saul Terry. Kiddush is \$150, which barely covers the cost of the lunch. Our goal is to have every Kiddush sponsored. To sponsor a Kiddush, email Rabbi Rosenbach or contact Alla Eicheldinger at Alla7815@yahoo.com. You can also help us by shopping, which doesn't cost any money, just a little time. We'll give you a list of items, you shop and we'll reimburse you.



Donna Walker-Kuhne with Eric Freedman

This week we celebrate the Birthday of Donna Walker-Kuhne. While not a member of the congregation, Donna is a good friend to and supporter of the synagogue and JMNJ. Happy Birthday Donna, all the best to you and the entire family.

Shabbat Services

Join us this Saturday for Shabbat services. Strangers, visitors, friends, old and new; our doors are open to you. Looking for a new home? New members are always welcome at Congregation Ahavas Sholom services starts at 9:00AM. Our congregation is open and welcoming, so feel free to pay us a visit.



**Please Help
Us Make
Minyan
First Day of Shavuot,
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