

Jewish Identity, Education, and Commitment - 1983

Issue

- 1) To ensure a program of Jewish education that will provide effective, knowledgeable, Jewishly committed individuals and leaders for Reform Judaism.
- 2) Emphasis on the family and the home as the center for learning to build a Jewish tomorrow.
- 3) Recognition of the importance of an on-going commitment to the highest ideals, teachings and practices of Reform Judaism.

Background

The study of Torah is central for the understanding and practice of Judaism and the perpetuation of the Jewish people. Study leads to action; understanding leads to commitment. Jewish identity and Jewish education begins in the home. It is achieved through family experiences. The child learns from parents and grandparents. The synagogue can most effectively provide additional learning and socializing experiences in the communal setting when parents provide a child with a background whereby Jewish identity is established. Families teach not only their children but each other and their peers by demonstrating the value of continuing education, visible Jewish practices and a commitment to living one's life in accordance with Jewish values.

Recognizing all the unusual circumstances which confront families today, Sisterhood and the synagogue have special responsibilities to motivate individual responses to these Jewish imperatives and provide the atmosphere and particulars of providing for educational needs.

Continuing adult Jewish education and education for parents of young children has always been a major program of NFTS and Sisterhood, whether such programs are done primarily within Sisterhood for women or in cooperation with local congregational programs and with the UAHC departments and commissions of Jewish Education. We support through endorsement and active participation, the "lifelong integrated road map" for Jewish study, a goal of the Joint UAHC-CCAR Commission on Education. NFTS believes that Jewish education is essential for deepening Jewish experience and knowledge in order to strengthen faith in God, love of Torah and identification with the Jewish people, and that this leads to participation in the synagogue and in Jewish life.

We recognize that throughout the history of the Jewish people, those who have chosen Judaism as an expression of spiritual meaning and commitment and thus become part of the Jewish community have strengthened Judaism. Sisterhood has a special opportunity to enrich the passageway to the Jewish community for Jews-by-choice. We also recognize the increasing number of family units where a partner or parent remains outside of the Jewish community. Fully committed to the integrity of the Jewish family, we acknowledge the sensitive conditions of families with pluralistic religious identification and the obligation of Sisterhood and congregations to provide enriching and enforcing opportunities for Jewish education and Jewish observances.

Resolution

To grow Jewishly education must be a life-long process through which our young people grow into young men and women who have a strong sense of Jewish history and a strong identity with Jews in their own country, Israel and throughout the world, who love the Hebrew language and who observe the Sabbath, holidays, and festivals as an important part of their lives. Therefore the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods urges that:

To provide effective leadership for Sisterhoods and congregations, important criteria for selecting leaders should include knowledge of Judaism, participation in Jewish life and commitment to Reform Judaism.

- 1) Sisterhoods assume the responsibility for sponsoring and implementing, alone or in cooperation with or on behalf of the congregation, programs to educate Jewish parents, such as the NFTS PATT (Parents are Teachers, Too) program, and to integrate children into the congregation from birth through programs such as the NFTS Cradle Roll; sponsor Jewish day care centers, nursery schools and after-school centers.
- 2) Sisterhood programs and projects which symbolize and enhance the values of the Jewish family, marriage and respect for parents and grandparents are vital.
- 3) Sisterhoods should assume a responsibility for, and cooperate with congregations in passageway programs and processes that will ease transition into fully participatory roles for women and families who are Jews-by-choice. Similarly, Sisterhoods should undertake and participate in programs that will motivate understanding of and commitment to Jewish living for families with pluralistic religious identities.
- 4) Sisterhoods study and discuss the implications and opportunities for strengthening Judaism and the Jewish community in relation to the legitimacy of patrilineal descent.
- 5) To be a Reform Jew requires a basic Jewish education in order to make legitimate and disciplined decisions and choices.