

DATE: September 10, 2008

RE: Memo to *Madrichim*

Much as your thoughtful essays and conversation in 2006 helped us formulate our initial strategy, we are confident that your conversation will again provide important insight and direction that will help us move forward.

For your information, we did a word search on the collection of madrichim essays. You might have guessed that “community” was the one word you used most often – 126 times. We found “Israel” mentioned 70 times in the ten proposals. Madrichim alluded to “day schools” 42 times; “Torah,” “camping” and “professional development” 11 times each; and “congregational education” 10 times.

The papers you submitted are diverse. They do not lend themselves to simple conclusions about points of agreement. However, the majority of you alluded to the critical nature of the Jewish educator for JJF’s work: “Transformative Jewish education does not happen by itself; it can only be enacted by qualified educators (Reinharz, p. 56).” You asked us to think seriously about funding capacity building of existing institutions: “...we must strengthen the ability of training institutions to teach and develop a generation of leadership, both lay and professional, and to impact local educational institutions (Joel, p.39).”

You wanted us to recognize that “creating permanent sheltered communities offer little long-term possibility of success” and that the Foundation should “focus...on creating institutions and ideas/values that can function as *integrated yet distinctively Jewish* (Greenberg, p.19).”

You implored the Foundation to support innovation and change, inviting JJF to “focus on supporting a range of projects that can seed change institutionally and deinstitutionally, with the Foundation acting as Pathfinder – a catalyst, a risk bearer, and a leading evaluator and communicator of what works, what does not, and what

could (Solomon, p. 66).” You added in this regard that JFF could help in the “...creation of an Incubator Fund to identify and support new approaches and change methodologies in broad areas of Jewish education – educational visioning, innovation in congregational education, day school education, leadership for Jewish education, and innovative teaching (Ellenson, p. 12).”

Madrichim urged us to recognize that the combination of personal choice and pervasive technology make for a dynamic contemporary environment, claiming “young Jews...experience religion as one of multiple factors in shaping identity” and advising us that, “media needs to be part of the JFF [grant making] strategy (Levin, p. 42).” You recommend that JFF’s philanthropy support efforts “to teach Jewish students what it means to stand as Americans in special relation to Israel (Eisen, p. 5),” believing that “Israel should be a component in building the fabric of a stronger Jewish life in America (Hoffman, p. 34).”

Ultimately, you set a high standard for JFF, appealing to us to conduct our philanthropy in supporting Jewish education that leads to Judaism experienced “as an organizing principle for life, not a set of institutional concerns (Messinger, p.52).” JFF should fund initiatives that “demonstrate community [and]...teach and hold to Torah (Eisen, p.5).” You challenged us to spark the ardor of JFF’s grantee beneficiaries, evoking from them a “...passionate ambition to advance the Jewish future [and] to enrich the Jewish nation and ultimately the world at large (Fried, p.17).”

We look forward to hearing your perspective on the future of Jewish philanthropy in support of education.