

Editorials

Outreach — Unaffiliateds Are A Major Concern

In last month's issue much was written about the results of a survey concerning unaffiliated Jews in Charlotte. Our results were far from unique...comparable findings have been found in many of the major cities in the United States.

Recently a poll was taken not only of the Jews in South Florida, but of Catholics and Protestants, by *The Miami Herald*. Various questions were asked of 673 persons, 18 years and older, in Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and Monroe counties. The interviews were conducted by telephone in a technique known as random-digit dialing.

When asked: "How important is religion to you?", the Jewish response was 24% 'very important' (64% for Protestants, 59% for Catholics); 24% answered not very important against 10% for Protestants and 10% for Catholics.

When asked about attending a church or synagogue in the last seven days, only 19% of the Jews answered YES, while the response from the Protestants was 34% and the Catholics, 46%.

When asked if they attend religious services more, less or about the same as they did five years ago, the response was only 8% of the Jews stating 'more', while the Protestants' reply was 21% and the Catholics' 23%. The Jews answered 'less' with 23%, Protestants numbered 21% and Catholics 19%.

When asked: "Is your faith stronger?", the Jews really fell...only 8% responded "more", while the Protestants came to 34% and Catholics to 29%.

Throughout the Poll, the Jewish responses indicated that religion plays a less central role in their lives than it does in the lives of Christians. And that there is no broad wave of new fervor among Jews as there is among Christians.

There are, however, dangers in comparing Christians and Jews. In the Hebrew language, Judaism is not even called a religion— it is called a "way of life." Jews define themselves not only as a religious group, but as a historical entity, a cultural heritage, a *people*. It is possible to be a committed and involved Jew and not be religious at all.

Less than 3 percent of the American population, Jews have had to cling fiercely to their traditions and heritage so as not to be swallowed up by the larger Christian culture. Between a third and a half of all American Jews are now marrying non-Jews. Many times the offspring are not raised as Jews, even if the spouse converts. Our birth rate is also seriously declining. A Harvard demographer says that by 2076 there may be only 10,000 identifiable Jews left in the United States.

Rabbi Max A. Lipschitz, Beth Torah Congregation, N. Miami Beach: "We may end up doing to ourselves what Hitler tried to do to Jews in Europe."

The message is clear...we know what has to be done....now it is up to all of us to see that we do it!

Statement On Ethiopian Jewry

"The more we succeed in removing the subject from the headlines, the greater the chances of rescuing the remnants." So stated Chaim Herzog, President of Israel, in response to the widespread media coverage on the rescue of Ethiopian Jews. We believe that this principle should guide the work of every newspaper and Jew in dealing with the issue of Ethiopian Jews. This principle will guide this newspaper and, except for straight news, which does not jeopardize the safety of the effort, we will not comment when the situation is so critical, so delicate and so fluid.

We agree with national and local Jewish leadership that further disclosures or comments about movement of Ethiopian Jews can affect Jewish lives, as was clearly evident by the tragic consequences of the recent media disclosures. When it is a choice between saving Jewish lives or publishing a good story, we have no problem at all about what to do. We will not comment.

As the Jewish Agency and the Prime Minister indicated, "This historic rescue has been carried out in accord with the purpose and role of Israel: to gather in all of the exiles of the Jewish people from all four corners of the earth." We pay tribute to the innovation and dedication of the people and government of Israel and World Jewry who are exercising every effort and resource to bring this historic segment of Judaism home to Israel and absorb them successfully into the fabric of modern Israeli society.

From the Desk of Marty Schneer —JCC Executive Director

Finally, after months of anticipation, we are ecstatic to find concrete evidence that our new Jewish Community Center is actually being built. Without any fanfare whatsoever, the walls of the Physical Education wing began to rise in mid-December. Lay leaders in our community, who have devoted countless hours over the years to make this project a reality, deserve "all the credit in the world." I, as a professional employed by the JCC, am often amazed and impressed by the willingness of certain individuals to spend their leisure time working for the good of community. Incredibly, we often find that the leaders in our community who assume the greatest respon-

sibility are often those who are the busiest both in terms of their work and other volunteer interests. We, as Jews, have a long and proud tradition of community service. An insight into the heavy burdens that were sometimes the fate of the communal leader is the letter of Maimonides (who, in addition to his scholarly activities and his work as a physician, was the leader of his community) to Samuel IBN Tibbon in 1199. IBN Tibbon had asked Maimonides if he could pay him a visit, but Maimonides replied that his work and communal business made it impossible for him to spare time to receive visitors. Maimonides was so busy that he wrote he only had time to partake of one meal a day. Obviously this



is an extreme example, though as a community we are fortunate to have in our midst some very worthy leadership models. It is my hope that we at the JCC can cultivate and develop new leaders who will significantly contribute to the process of community building.

The JCC has recently established a leadership development committee that will address a variety of issues from volunteer training and recognition to goal setting and lay/staff relations. This committee, chaired by Miles Levine, will begin our leadership development approach with a JCC Board Training Institute in May.

There has been some discussion in recent months about the JCC class cancellation policy. Our stated policy indicated that we need a minimum number of participants to hold all classes. Unfortunately we have had to cancel some classes because of lack of registration. When this happens, the staff informs those registered that the class will be cancelled at least one week prior to the first scheduled meeting. We have on occasion notified people who have registered that we are close to filling a class and would like to continue to try and recruit participants up to the date of the first session.

The JCC program staff devotes a great deal of time and energy recruiting the best instructors available, and when classes are forced to cancel it makes it that much more difficult to retain qualified people. We have lowered the number of participants required to hold classes in many cases, so that we start what we feel are valuable programs. Please look over our class offerings carefully and select at least one program that may be of interest to you. Remember we are very selective in choosing instructors to ensure a quality experience for all participants.



Letters to the Editor

"CJN" Helps Again

I just want to thank you again for the wonderful coverage you gave Ha Lailah BBW in the December issue of the "CJN." We really do appreciate your time and effort.
— Lizzann Taylor

THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS encourages its readers to submit articles and letters expressing their opinions on matters of interest to the Jewish community. Such submissions should be typed and double-spaced. They may be edited in order to fit the available space. Mail to CJN-P.O. Box 220188, Charlotte, N.C. 28222.

**The Jewish Calendar
Candlelighting**



Feb. 1 - 5:34 p.m.
Feb. 8 - 5:41 p.m.
Feb. 15 - 5:48 p.m.

Feb. 22 - 5:55 p.m.
Mar. 1 - 6:01 p.m.
Mar. 8 - 6:07 p.m.

Feb. 6 - Tu B'Shevat

THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS

Published monthly by:
Charlotte Jewish Federation
Foundation of Charlotte Jewish Community
Marvin Bienstock, Director

Jewish Community Center
Martin Schneer, Director

Charlotte Hebrew Academy
Eleanor Weinglass, Director

Editor.....Rita Mond
Advertising.....Blanche Yarus, mgr.
Barbara Zelickson

Copy deadline the 10th of each month
P.O. Box 220188, Charlotte, N.C. 28222

The appearance of advertising in The News does not constitute a Kosher endorsement.