

# Charlotte Jewish Federation

## More Reports from the GA:

### Intermarriage Prompts Fear, Concern Among Jews

By Rita Mond

When a Group of active Jews discusses interfaith marriage, it is because they see it as a problem. And so it was on Friday, Nov. 20.

"To some people, it's no big deal. They'll throw the rice and drink champagne," said Sylvia Friedman, a New York psychologist. "But for many Jews, intermarriage is nothing to celebrate. It means the destruction of the Jewish people."

Prior to 1960, very few Jews married outside their faith. However, as American society became more integrated, the rate of intermarriage has soared. Today an estimated 30% of American Jews marry Christians...and the other Jews fret. Paul Cowan, a Jew, and Rachel Cowan, a Unitarian, who not only converted, but is now a rabbinical student, have written "Mixed Blessings: Marriage between Jews and Christians." Mr. Cowan stated that "Intermarriage, if it leads to widespread assimilation, really could bleach out 5,000 years of history." The Cowans, however, see potential for good in intermarriage. Paul Cowan said "The experience of intermarriage can strengthen Jewish identity."

Many of us are familiar with the Cowans as they have been



Paul Cowan

in Charlotte as guest speakers and to hold workshops. They hold workshops around the country to help interfaith couples understand their ethnic differences.

"When I married Paul," Rachel Cowan said, "he had a deep feeling of himself as a Jew but he didn't know when it was Yom Kippur. He didn't do Jewish things. It is hard to share that kind of Jewishness."

The tensions are resolved if a spouse converts, as did Rachel. If not, the tensions are often absorbed by the children. One of the children interviewed by the Cowans talked of "the star and the cross that are always at war in me."

It is these children, who are in limbo between two faiths, who worry the rest of us Jews. Unfortunately, the odds are that they will never be Jews.

### Is the Jewish Teen-Ager An Endangered Species?

By Rita Mond

Teen-agers said that adults should realize it's not the 1960s anymore. There's a lot of pressure on kids and they don't necessarily have time to be Jewish.

It is precisely in adolescence that most Jews drift away. Parents join a synagogue to give their children a Jewish identity. They send them to Hebrew school and fee their Bar/Bat Mitzvahs. And after that, the family's Jewishness withers.

Though many Jewish children attend religious school, they may only experience ethnic or gastronomic Judaism at home. Conversation may be sprinkled with Yiddish; Saturday morning breakfast may be bagels and lox; attendance at synagogue may be only on the High Holy Days.

"At 13 years of age, they finish their formal Jewish education with very minimal understanding of what it feels like to be a Jew," said Barry Shrage, executive president of the Boston Jewish Federation. According to Steven M. Cohen, a Queens College professor of sociology, it is only in adolescence that a child is old enough to put together the Hebrew songs and the holiday rituals and the memorized prayers in a deeper understanding of what it means to be Jewish. He estimates that 85% of Jewish teenagers are "unaffiliated" with any Jewish institution.

There is a solution: put money into and emphasis on the teen programs known to foster identification with Judaism...classes, camps, youth groups, religious retreats and travel to Israel. Experiences such as religious retreats "reconstitute the experience of Jewish life for teens who have never experienced it," Shrage said.

(Editor's note: In Charlotte we are fortunate to have the BBYO and Temple teen groups. The Federation also has scholarship money available to teens wishing to go to Israel during the summer.)

## Outreach '88:

### UJA Missions to Israel

You have an opportunity to reach out and touch your heritage. Taking part in United Jewish Appeal's Outreach '88 Mission will provide you with an exhilarating experience in Israel.

You will touch.....the Wall; archaeological artifacts; tomatoes in the Negev; the security fence along the northern border; the Holocaust memorial; a computer in a fourth grade classroom; soldiers defending their country; Hebrew textbooks for new immigrants in an absorption center; a cup of coffee in the home of an Israeli family very much like yours. And you will understand the significance of what you are touching.

We call it "Outreach" because we want as many people as possible to go to Israel on a UJA Mission this year, particularly those of you who have never been on one.

This is an exciting historic time for Israel. The country is celebrating 40 years of independence. There is no better time to visit. There is no better way.

During Outreach '88, you will encounter an Israel that or-

dinary tourists do not. You will see Israel's breathtaking beauty, awesome achievements and rich history.

The UJA Mission will include many of the following features:

- Home hospitality with an Israeli family.
- Conversations with new immigrants at an absorption center, with soldiers on the Golan Heights, with farmers in a pre-1967 border kibbutz, with teenagers in a youth aliyah village.
- Tours of social service facilities where Israelis are helped by programs funded by your contribution to our UJA/Federation campaign.

Our mission dates are March 13-23. The cost of the Mission is \$1,750 per person. This cost includes round-trip airfare from New York to Israel, hotels, all transfers, guides and most meals. Extension arrangements can be made.

Join us now on the OUTREACH '88 Mission to Israel. For further information on this mission and others contact Vicki Hopkins at the Federation office, 366-5007.

#### 1988 UJA MISSIONS

- Feb. 1-11 -- Winter Singles Mission
- Feb. 8-17 -- Region V Outreach Mission
- Feb. 28-Mar. 9 -- Region IV Outreach Mission
- Feb. 28-Mar. 11 -- UJA Allocations Mission
- Mar. 13-23 -- Region III & I Outreach Mission
- Mar. 13-23 -- Mature Singles Mission
- Apr. 17-27 -- Yom Ha'atzmaut Outreach Mission
- June 21-29 -- National Cash Mission
- June 26-July 6 -- Summer Family Mission
- July 10-20 -- Summer Family Mission
- July 17-27 -- Summer Singles Mission
- July 31-Aug. 10 -- Summer Singles Mission
- Oct. 9-19 -- Golden Jubilee Major Gifts, YL, WD
- Nov. 6-16 -- Fall Study Mission
- Dec. 22-Jan. 1 -- Winter Family Mission
- Dec. 25-Jan. 4 -- Winter Students Mission



Richard Klein addresses group at Shabbat dinner of the Region III UJA Conference in Memphis, TN.

### Thousands to Meet in Washington for UJA Young Leadership Conference

Three thousand young Jewish leaders will gather in Washington, DC to gain insight into American-Israel relations at the United Jewish Appeal Young Leadership Cabinet's Sixth Annual Young Leadership Conference, March 13-15. During three full days of stimulating programming, which will include visits to their respective congressmen and senators, participants will learn about many aspects of the social and political relations between the two coun-

tries, from such noted speakers as Israel's Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Israel's Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin, former Prisoner of Zion Natan Scharansky, and Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) With the added bonus of the Conference taking place during both the year of Israel's 40th anniversary and a U.S. presidential election year, the demand for space is great; early registration is encouraged. For more information call Vicki, 366-5007.

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