



GUIDE TO REFORM JUDAISM 30 STORIES

X. FACING THE FUTURE

RJ: Looking to the future, what are the most significant challenges we face, as a Movement and as North American Jews?

Joan Pines: I believe our most serious challenge as American Jews is Jewish survival. While the Reform Movement has done well in making Judaism relevant in a climate that could very easily lead to complete assimilation, we must continue to be innovative in our camping programs and our synagogues, and continue the spiritual seeking and creativity that has led to the creation of our new prayer book and our new women's Torah commentary. Above all, we need to continue to make our synagogues warm, inclusive Jewish homes that respond to our deepest needs for meaningful community.

Barbara K. Shuman: In thinking of the Jewish future, I worry that my adult children are not tied to any Jewish institutions. Both of them are sensitive, caring people who are bound by a strong sense of ethical behavior and feel a bond with the Jewish people—but they are just not interested in the inherited institutions of their parents. The Reform Movement has much to offer those who find the existing institutional structure relevant and comfortable. But for every one of us who fits this category, there is another for whom the status quo is alienating. How can we support these Jews' spiritual journeys? Perhaps we

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need to experiment with different models, such as alternative *minyanim* that meet in people's homes or Jewish learning gatherings in public spaces.



NFTY in Israel participants look out onto the world from a house in the mystical city of Safed, Summer 2007.

Ellen Morrow: In my own extended family, more and more members are only nominally Jewish. Most of my cousins have married non-Jews and observe Christmas in their homes. Even my 20-something sons who were raised in an active and observant Reform Jewish household, went to Jewish camps, and attended religious school through Confirmation now observe Judaism only when they spend time with us. We need to do a better job of keeping the next generation involved in Jewish life.

Dawn Mollenkopf: The most important challenge today is to build a stronger sense of community among the diverse group of people that identify as Jews, and to solidify that sense of belonging in a way that makes all Jews

feel that being Jewish is meaningful. I think that the Reform Movement, like other religious movements, is moving in a more conservative direction, redefining what it means to be a modern Jew in light of *halachah*. Personally I am pleased with this development, which I believe maintains Reform Judaism's respect for individual choice while creating new modes of observance that are meaningful for our generation.

Martin Shapiro: I would love to see our temples devote more time to study and social action and less to rituals such as bending our knees and bowing during services, dressing and undressing Torahs, parading them around our temple, and discussing fixed Torah portions that are

overly difficult to relate to today. Prayer shawls, too, are an unnecessary distraction to the practice of modern Judaism. Instead, let's devote more time to the *oneg* after services, when congregants can get to know each other, which is as important as participating in worship.

Reform Judaism will change in various ways, some that I will endorse and some that I won't like. But the one thing I hope will not change is the freedom of choice to engage in those practices that each of us finds personally meaningful.

Dana Jennings: I ache to see all Jews, worldwide, set aside their petty grievances over styles of observance, over who is and isn't a legitimate Jew, and simply embrace their brothers and sis-