

Aviv's slums or treating patients in one of Haiti's tent cities.

By making this a Movement-wide initiative, we will proclaim to the world that congregations are not ends in themselves or clubs that cater to our members. More than anything else, synagogues are places where serious Jewish commitment is ignited. This shift in focus will be a magnet for Jews seeking purpose and meaning in their lives.

A recent survey found that only 60% of Jews under 35 believe that caring about Israel is a key part of their Jewish identity. What can we do to reverse this trend?

It is up to all of us to foster a deep love for and engagement with Israel among Reform Jews of North America, young and old.

This past summer I had the privilege of welcoming a few busloads of our NFTY teens to Jerusalem. Blindfolded, they stepped off their buses holding hands, moving slowly toward the edge of the Haas Promenade that overlooks the Temple Mount in the center of Jerusalem. They were about to have their first glimpse of the City of Gold. You cannot imagine the look of amazement and wonder on their faces as they opened their eyes to the setting sun over Jerusalem. Watching these Reform teens fall in love with Israel, I remembered my own love affair with Israel that was sparked during my junior year at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Ever since, I have spent much of my rabbinate working to strengthen Israel's security and well-being. I hope that every Jew can come to see Israel the way those teenagers did, with the sparkle of its promise searing our souls.

You were among the Rabbinic Vision Initiative (RVI), a group of 18 influential congregational rabbis who resolved to shake up the URJ. Now that you are URJ president, how do you propose to address RVI concerns?

Their concerns are mine as well, and I'm confident that they are widely shared within the Union's leadership and staff. For the past 40 years, Reform Judaism's religious ingenuity has made us the fastest-growing theologically liberal denomination in North America. And yet, we've become bogged down, trapped in fear about the future. This is not the time for staying the course. This moment in Jewish history demands bold thinking with big ideas.

A major restructuring of the URJ is required to meet these new realities of Jewish life.

What will this restructuring process entail?

I see five overarching imperatives. First, we need to create a URJ culture of excellence. There are many effective professionals and cutting-edge offerings within the present URJ, but we need to shape and commit to a culture of excellence throughout.

Second, we must think and act like a Movement, instead of functioning as separate silos. The very serious challenges

facing the URJ require partnering with our affiliates, such as HUC-JIR and the CCAR, and committing to shared Movement solutions.

Third, we need a covenantal partnership between the URJ's lay leaders and staff. A renewed sense of partnership between our lay and professional leaders will allow us to successfully navigate the inevitable disequilibrium that the transformation of the URJ will provoke, and ultimately serve as a leadership model for our congregations.

Fourth, the URJ needs to see itself and be seen in the context of a relational culture instead of an all-knowing big brother. A good example of this is Just Congregations, a congregation-based community organizing model in which leaders are trained to think strategically about how to engage significant numbers of others by conducting intentional relationship-building campaigns. Through house meetings and one-on-one conversations, issues of shared concern emerge, and leaders conduct significant actions that engage their members to shape a more just world. These same approaches can transform the URJ's work by reaching into and across congregations to develop leadership, build networks of relationships, identify and create platforms to share best practices, identify areas of shared concern, and call us to collective action. Sometimes those actions may relate to matters of public policy, such as marriage equality, support of Israel, or economic justice, but just as often they will enable synagogues to accomplish goals that require greater scale, such as coordinating collective Jewish learning or shared purchasing for common services.

When the URJ models a "relational culture" of shared purpose and effective collective action, the URJ will no longer be seen as a fee-for-service provider of expertise, and we will stop pretending that all the answers rest in our central office. Instead, everyone will become part of the Movement that we organize, facilitate, and nurture.

Fifth, we need to understand and harness the power of new technologies. This requires rethinking our current programs, not just "pushing" our established programs with social media tools. And we need to have a much stronger presence on search engines. Googling "Shabbat" currently brings you a slew of Orthodox websites but hardly any progressive ones, when we're what most Googlers truly seek.

What do you anticipate will be the most difficult part of your new job, and the most gratifying?

The most difficult part will be transformation. Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie advised me to do what his predecessor, Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, advised him: "Change everything." This doesn't mean we have to literally change everything, but most of us stop well before we change what needs changing. Tweaking is not transformation.

I anticipate the most exhilarating part of this job will be getting down that road with all of our Movement partners and feeling us moving together on our collective journey. This is going to be like climbing Mount Everest barefoot, but we'll get there. □