

## Young Adult Programming a Priority for New BY President

As the largest synagogue in the Conservative movement, Beth Yeshurun is truly a leader. When you look around, you see a dynamic, lively, vibrant community thanks to our wonderful clergy, lay leaders, staff, and members.

However, I want to share with you my concern regarding the future of the Conservative movement and our synagogue. Nationwide, the Conservative movement is in a state of decline while Orthodox and Reform Judaism are growing. This decline is due to:

- 1) Greater acceptance of interfaith families by the reform movement.
- 2) Aging of our membership—less than 10% are young adults
- 3) Through our low key approach to young adult learning and outreach, we've, in effect, allowed other groups, especially Orthodox organizations like Chabad and Torch, to fill the void and create opportunities in which our young adults participate. Don't get me wrong, Chabad and Torch do a wonderful job, but their "brand of Judaism" is Orthodox, not conservative.

In terms of our children, the fact is, we, as parents can do everything—send our kids to Jewish Preschool, Day School, or Religious School, Jewish camps and Israel—and yet, when our children come back as 20-30 year olds, we fail to meet their needs. Young people often comment, “The synagogue doesn't have enough programming for people my age.”

Likewise, I've heard comments from parents and older members—“Don't worry, they will join when they have children and need a preschool or a religious school.” The fact is that young adults are marrying later and later. By the time they have children and find the need to join, they may be in their mid 30's or even 40's. Think about it—a period of 10 to 20 years may elapse after college before they find the need to affiliate. In the meantime, they may become uncomfortable with synagogue life or Judaism as a whole, and choose not to affiliate at all.

Another comment I've heard is that young people just aren't interested. Do you really believe that? The young people I've spoken with are looking for ways to make Jewish friends, are eager to expand their knowledge of Judaism, and they want to feel part of a Jewish Community.

We must accept the challenge of developing outreach and additional programming for these young adults to assure continuity of our movement. We must follow the example set by several model programs around the country, including Ron Wolfson's “Next Dor”. I am ASKING for your help, support, and input to accomplish this goal.