

**Congregation Beth Am  
Adult Learning Task Force  
Report to Board of Directors  
January, 1999**

*Submitted by:*

Barbara August  
Cantor Kay Greenwald  
Sam Kheifets  
Mel Kronick  
Jill Kulick  
Linda Kurz  
Lisa Langer  
Lori Luft  
Micki Miller  
Marian Sagan  
Ellen Stromberg  
Rabbi Laura Novak Winer  
Bob Wolfe  
Joe Ziony  
Rabbi Josh Zweiback

©1999 Congregation Beth Am  
Los Altos Hills, CA

# Table of Contents

<b>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. RATIONALE—WHY WE SHOULD ENGAGE IN LIFELONG JEWISH LEARNING.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. CONTENT—WHAT DOES LIFELONG JEWISH LEARNING ENCOMPASS? .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. MOTIVATION—THE KEY TO VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6. STRUCTURAL SUPPORT: A LAY-PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP PARTNERSHIP.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>7. RESOURCES: SPACE, FINANCIAL.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>8. WHO TEACHES .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>9. DRAWING PEOPLE NEAR—KEIRUV.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>10. TARGET GROUPS .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>11. EVALUATION—HOW DO WE MEASURE OUR “IMPACT”? .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>APPENDIX I—TIMELINE OF ALTF .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>APPENDIX II— CONTENT AREAS OF OUR LIFELONG JEWISH LEARNING MAP .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>APPENDIX III—TASK FORCE AND BOARD BRAINSTORMING .....</b>	<b>25</b>

## 1. Executive Summary

This report represents the research and thinking of the Adult Learning Task Force that was convened by the Beth Am Education Steering Committee in October of 1997.

The full report is herein summarized:

### Key Findings

- **Rationale—why we learn:** Lifelong Jewish learning is an essential part of what it means to be a knowledgeable, participating, Reform Jew.
- **Content—what we learn:** Our Lifelong Jewish Learning Map lays out learning objectives and content areas for our lifelong learning program.
- **Motivation:** A review of adult learning literature suggests that lifelong learning programs should be scheduled and structured with extreme sensitivity to the needs of busy adults. Its content should be obviously relevant to the lives of its intended participants.
- **Structural Support:** The Board should establish an Adult Learning Council that will support our lifelong learning program.
- **Resources: Space, Financial :** Our programs should be scheduled in spaces that are conducive to adult study. The Adult Learning Council should work with the Board to ensure that our growing program can be adequately funded.
- **Who Teaches:** As our program grows, we will need to recruit capable teachers from the professional and lay worlds.
- **Drawing People Near (Keiruv):** Attracting participants for our programs is one of our biggest challenges. The Adult Learning Council will work to create innovative approaches to *keiruv*. We also recommend the creation of a coordinated, congregation-wide communication and publicity plan.
- **Target Groups:** By targeting particular groups of likely participants (newlyweds, “empty nesters,” etc.), we hope to bring more people into our programs.
- **Evaluation:** Both individual classes and the program as a whole should be evaluated regularly in an attempt to measure the impact of our learning.

### Action Items:

The Task Force requests that the Board take the following actions:

- Endorse the report of the Adult Learning Task Force.
- Establish an Adult Learning Council.
- Appoint chair(s) of the Adult Learning Council.
- Affirm adult Jewish learning as a high priority for congregational planning, programming, and budgeting.

## 2. Introduction

Beth Am is blessed with professional and lay leadership who work together to provide a diverse and extensive program of meaningful lifelong adult Jewish learning for our congregants and other members of our community. Our commitment to being a learning congregation compels us constantly to re-examine our program by asking ourselves the following questions:

1. Are we doing all we can to provide opportunities for any and all congregants who want to learn?
2. Are we being sensitive to the different needs and learning styles of all of our congregants?
3. Are we identifying and overcoming obstacles to engaging in study that inhibit lifelong learning?
4. Have some of our programs outlived their usefulness?
5. How should we experiment with new learning paradigms (e.g., individualized study and online learning) that may offer unique opportunities to expand and enrich our programs?
6. What is the best possible way to utilize our new Adult Learning Coordinator to improve and extend our program?
7. How can we finance our growing program in a responsible fashion?
8. Ultimately, are we as a congregation enabling our congregants to become knowledgeable, participating, Reform Jews?

The Adult Learning Task Force (ALTF) was created to explore these and related issues. As we shared our hopes, experiences and questions over the past year, we began to develop a somewhat clearer (but by no means perfectly clear) vision of what lifelong adult Jewish learning should look like at Congregation Beth Am. This process included a substantial amount of research, study, and brainstorming. [NOTE: A timeline of the work of the ALTF can be found in appendix I, page 20.]

Our program is already extensive and consists of many opportunities for learning. Among our diverse programs that include adult learning are:

- Ongoing classes in Torah/Bible/Talmud/Midrash/Jewish mysticism/liturgy
- Chai School lecture series
- Study sessions on Yom Kippur and other Holy Days
- Adult education as part of our family education programs (Shabbaton<sup>1</sup>/Toledot<sup>2</sup>/Morasha<sup>3</sup>/Machaneh Shabbat<sup>4</sup>)
- Mini-courses
- Scholar-in-Residence weekends

---

<sup>1</sup> **Shabbaton** is an alternative to the Sunday Program for families with children in grades pre-K through 6. Families meet three Saturday afternoons each month from 3:45-6:00 PM. Parents attend these sessions with their children.

<sup>2</sup> **Toledot** provides the opportunity for parents to continue their own Jewish education in parallel with what their children are learning. Parents study the same topics as their children on a meaningful adult level. In addition to learning for its own sake, these courses allow parents to socialize with parents of children in the same grade, to serve as role models for their children in their active participation in Jewish education, and to reinforce the classroom experience at home by continuing the discussions and learning that began in class. This year, Toledot courses are being offered to parents of students in grades 2, 3, and 8. A section of Toledot is currently being offered for parents of Havura High students (grades 9-12) as well.

<sup>3</sup> **Morasha** is a series of six workshops that brings families together in the months preceding Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies to explore the significance of becoming a Jewish adult. The nine to ten week series enables families to exchange ideas and to participate in Jewish activities together.

<sup>4</sup> **Machaneh Shabbat** is a Camp Swig family experience: an entire day of Shabbat activities for adults and children ages three and older. The program includes singing, creating, praying, socializing, dancing, relaxing, exploring, and studying. Members of our professional staff and an invited scholar or artist lead the program.

- Asilomar study retreat weekends
- Hebrew language study
- D'verei Torah at the beginning of committee and Board meetings
- Adult learning as part of the programming of Beth Am Women, Yachad, Outreach, etc.
- Experiential learning (e.g., attending worship services, Holy Day celebrations, and participating in the *mitzvot* of *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim*)

These activities are an important part of our environment. **Nevertheless, we believe that we could be doing more or should be doing some things differently.** There is within the task force a shared perception that a core group of congregants comprises the majority of those who take advantage of our programming. Such a group certainly represents only a minority of our membership. Thus, there are a great number of people whose needs and interests we must understand and address. But in addition to evaluating our programs and formulating strategies that will bring new learners into our community, we have also spent considerable time reflecting upon *what* adult Jewish learning is, *who* adult Jewish learners are, *why* learners choose to participate, and *how* we can best create learning experiences that are meaningful and authentically Jewish.

What follows is our current thinking on adult Jewish learning at Congregation Beth Am. We begin with a RATIONALE for lifelong Jewish study. Having offered a congregational answer for *why* we study, we articulate our learning CONTENT, *what* we propose to dedicate ourselves to learning. Finally, we offer various guidelines and ways of thinking about HOW we should, as a learning community, transmit this precious content, these sacred teachings, to our congregation.

### ***3. Rationale—Why we should engage in lifelong Jewish Learning***

There are as many reasons to engage in Jewish learning as there are Jews who engage in learning—each of us studies and grows as a Jew in different ways and for different reasons. What follows is a congregational rationale for adult learning. Each individual congregant will resonate differently with the various answers given. In its totality, though, it is a rationale that reflects the shared values of our Beth Am community.

***Jewish learning is a quest for knowledge and ultimate meaning that leads to self-discovery and righteous action...***

- Jewish learning opens us to the collected wisdom of our people, guiding us through life and life's transitions. Through the millennia, our sages have pondered many of the same questions that we ask today. Within this chain of tradition, stretching from Abraham and Sarah through the generations to us and to our children, we find answers to many of our questions. As one sage puts it, "Turn the Torah and turn it again for everything you want to know is found within it." (Pirke Avot 5:26) In her memoirs, Glückel of Hameln (1645–1724) writes that in "...our holy Torah...we may find and learn all that we need for our journey through this world..."<sup>5</sup>
- Jewish learning is a process of self-discovery that leads us, as Rabbi Richard Block writes, towards "self-realization as human beings, as Jews, and as partners with God in the ongoing work of creation."

---

<sup>5</sup> *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality*, Ellen Umansky & Dianne Ashton, editors, Beacon Press, Boston, 1992, p. 48

- Jewish learning helps us translate the eternal values of our people into righteous action. It is through learning Torah that we as a people and as individuals are able to live Torah.

***Jewish learning is what Jews do—it is an essential part of our Jewish identity...***

- In its broadest sense, Torah includes study of the Bible, the Mishnah, the Talmud, the Midrash, liturgy, Jewish philosophy, Hebrew language, culture, poetry, literature, and history. *Talmud Torah* encompasses all of these disciplines.

*The Hebrew word (Torah) literally means “teaching.” It is related to (moreh) which means “teacher” and to (horim) which means “parents.”*

- Studying, explaining, and attempting to “live” Torah have long been central occupations of the Jewish people. Beth Am strives to be a congregation of learners and encourages every member to engage in continuing Jewish education for the sake of the community, as well as for our individual benefit—Jewish learning is an essential part of what we do *here*.
- Jewish learning helps us to develop a strong Jewish identity and to feel good about ourselves as Jews. As Elie Wiesel writes, “A good Jew is any Jew who is trying to be a better Jew.”

***Jewish Learning (Talmud Torah) is the responsibility of every Jew...***

What ultimately obligates us to engage in Jewish learning (*Talmud Torah*)?

- The Reform movement is founded on the notion of informed choice. Thus, to exercise our autonomy in a way that is authentically Reform, we must educate ourselves thoroughly so that we can in fact make informed choices.<sup>6</sup>
- At Beth Am, we strive to be a congregation of learners. Thus, continuing Jewish education is part of what it means to be a member of the Beth Am community.
- We begin our learning at Beth Am by reciting the traditional blessing for the *mitzvah* of Torah study:

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha’olam, asher kideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu la’asok bedivrei Torah.*

“Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us to engage in Torah study.”

Endeavoring to understand the degree to which God wants us to engage in Jewish education is part of what it means to be a Reform Jew.

***Jewish Learning (Talmud Torah) builds sacred community through space and time, connecting us to each other and to God, insuring the continuity of our people...***

---

<sup>6</sup> The Reform movement affirms that “the *mitzvah* of *Talmud Torah* is incumbent upon every Jew throughout life, whether or not one acquired a Jewish education during childhood.” (*Gates of Mitzvah*, Simeon J. Maslin, ed., CCAR Press, NY, 1979, p. 22)

- Torah study helps us to strengthen our own synagogue community, connect ourselves to other Jews near and far, and ultimately, to link our learning community to the *yeshivah shel ma'alah*, “the learning community in Heaven” in which, according to folklore, our ancestors from the time of Abraham and Sarah sit and study Torah together with God. Through times of joy and sorrow, we have always continued to learn. Thus, Torah study helps to insure Jewish continuity.
- Learning Torah helps us to encounter God, as Rabbi Chananya ben Teradyon teaches: “When two sit together and exchange words of Torah, the Divine Presence dwells with them...” (Pirke Avot, 3:2)

***Jewish Learning (Talmud Torah) is enjoyable***

Jewish learning is fun and intrinsically motivating. We engage in it because we find it gratifying.

For all of these reasons, we as a synagogue community should strive to enable all of our members to engage in meaningful Torah study, with the richness of learning and doing that this implies, throughout their lives.
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## ***4. Content—What Does Lifelong Jewish Learning Encompass?***

Through a process involving both professional and lay leaders, our congregation has created a “Lifelong Jewish Learning Map.”

The map consists of learning goals in the following subject matter areas: Culture, Ethical Mitzvot, God, Hebrew, History, Holidays, Israel, Jewish Community Involvement, Life Cycle, Non-Jewish World, Tefillah. While each subject matter area appears to exist independently of the others on the map, in fact, there is considerable overlap across areas. The map assumes the interconnectedness of the goals across subject matter areas.

In addition, the following value-threads weave throughout our map helping to set the stage and context for reaching our goals: Torah & Jewish Texts, Jewish Home, Synagogue Community, Lifelong Learning, and Making Jewish Choices. The value threads are not subjects of study as much as settings and places of Jewish living and learning. Every subject matter area involves aspects of these five value threads. [NOTE: See appendix II, page 22, for a fuller description of these content areas.]

Using the Lifelong Jewish Learning Map as a guide, the content of adult Jewish learning at Beth Am should nurture the knowledge, skills, values and behaviors necessary to become a community of knowledgeable, participating Reform Jews.

The map represents our communal ideal of what a knowledgeable Reform Jew could know, do, and value at various stages in her/his life. In the spirit of Reform Judaism, we hope this map will serve as a guide, helping individuals make choices from among the many learning opportunities that will emerge. We hope to enable every adult learner to establish and achieve personal education goals within the context of a learning congregation.

### **Critical Issues:**

1. There are a variety of levels of Jewish knowledge, experience, background, and language in our community.
2. The learning goals articulated in the Lifelong Jewish Learning Map have not yet been implemented throughout our congregation. Many adult learners are unsure of where to begin or how to continue their learning.
3. Adult learning research suggests that the relevance of a particular class, teaching, or program to daily life is especially important for adult learners.
4. Adult learning research suggests that adults are particularly open to learning at transitional points in their lives.

### **Recommendations: How Can We Implement the Lifelong Jewish Learning Map?**

1. **Develop an “educational intake” form** that will help us to assess the learner’s current level of Jewish knowledge, preferred learning style, and educational interests. This will help us recommend appropriate forums for the congregant’s ongoing lifelong learning.
2. **Offer adult learning opportunities at various levels**, introductory through advanced. Articulate clear expectations regarding both the learners’ incoming knowledge and the hoped for

outcome at the conclusion of the course of study. This will help beginners feel less intimidated and assure advanced learners that their continuing Jewish growth is important to the community.

3. **Offer both independent and group study opportunities in a variety of forms**—with professional guidance—that address a spectrum of previous knowledge, background and interests, for example:
  - Recommend different books for each subject area of the map. Publish these book lists in the “Builder” and make sure they are available in the library
  - Build Jewish book groups focusing on UAHC recommended books and other books of Jewish interest
4. **Build our *Chavruta*—Study Partnerships program** that allows learners to explore any subject area of the map at any time on any level
5. **Experiment!** Offer a variety of levels and types of learning opportunities that reflect the content of the Lifelong Jewish Learning Map.
6. **Each year, focus on 2-3 content areas of the Lifelong Jewish Learning Map.** Connect the focus to the congregation's education theme for the year.
7. **Create opportunities for participants to put their learning into action** (e.g., learning about and creating *tzedakah* collectives; baking *challah* while studying about Shabbat, etc.).

## ***5. Motivation—The Key to Voluntary Participation***

In many ways, the key to truly becoming a learning congregation lies in increasing communal motivation for lifelong Jewish learning. Educational research makes this clear—when a learner wants to learn, most every obstacle is surmountable. When a learner does not want to learn, most every trick or gimmick designed to bring her/him in is destined to fail. Thus, we begin our discussion with an analysis of why congregants might choose to allocate some of their precious discretionary time to Jewish learning.

Why do adults choose to learn? According to studies we reviewed, adult behavior is driven chiefly by three kinds of needs: the need to seek activity and social interaction, the need to learn and understand something new (our innate human curiosity), and the need to accomplish a specific goal. Our decisions to participate are usually based on one or more of these factors. As a group, we discussed a variety of specific motivating factors for our own learning (e.g., providing spiritual focus, adding meaning to our lives, a desire to be a part of a meaningful community) but all really fall into one of these three major categories. As we plan changes and additions to our learning program, we need to ask ourselves whether particular programs or efforts address one or more of these primary motivations for adult learning. If the answer is “yes,” our chances for success are greatly increased.

A recent article by Diane Schuster and Isa Aron in the Summer 1998 issue of *Reform Judaism* (page 43ff) nicely summarizes many of the unique needs of adult learners. The article emphasizes that different “individuals learn in different ways, according to their needs, interests and experiences.” It also makes the important point that adult learners are very concerned about their time commitments

and, as such, "expect efficiency, convenience, flexibility and physical comfort in their learning settings." We can help increase congregational motivation by creatively working to minimize the many obstacles to adult learning (lack of time, energy, resources). Our programs should incorporate these features to attract and maintain interest.

One unifying theme we uncovered in our motivation research was that we frequently seek out learning to help guide us through personal transitions. We seek out companionship or meaning, for example, when we find ourselves suddenly alone after a loss or when we become "empty nesters." As we grow older and contemplate our mortality, we seek the wisdom and experience of those who have come before us, challenged by these same fears and questions. In building our adult learning program, we should be aware of this research and find new, creative ways of opening doors of learning at those precise moments when members of our community are most likely to be ready to enter. People experiencing life-transitions might include: the recently engaged, newlyweds, new parents, parents of *b'nai mitzvah*, the recently divorced, "empty nesters," people who have experienced a loss, émigrés, and Jews by choice.

Finally, we ask ourselves what we as a synagogue community are uniquely able to give our congregants. We do not aspire to build a mini-university—rather, we wish to build a *Beit Midrash*, a House of Learning, a comfortable, spiritual home where we can find meaning together. Ultimately, a search for meaning within a loving Jewish community is the profoundly motivating force that brought many of us to this congregation in the first place. **Our challenge now is to fan the flames of that core motivation by creating experiences that, to return to a previous metaphor, open doors to Jewish learning at just the right time in just the right way, so that all can enter.**

#### Recommendations:

**1. Learning opportunities should be scheduled at times of maximum convenience for our various learning communities.** Our experience with Toledot and now with Bagels, Lattes, and Learning has taught us, for example, that it is far more likely that parents of children in our Sunday program will participate in adult learning if it is offered at the same time that their children are learning at Beth Am. The large number of attendees at our High Holy Day workshops has taught us that location, relevant subject matter, and scheduling convenience increase the likelihood of participation. Our challenge is to expand this programming principle to other aspects of our congregational learning. How can we attract other parents when they're picking up and dropping off children for Hebrew program classes? How can we make learning more convenient for congregants who are frequently at Beth Am for committee meetings? The overwhelmingly positive feedback we received about Cantor Greenwald's tapes, as well as the Tikkun Olam Day tape, suggests to us that we consider other opportunities for meeting people where they are. Why did these recordings work so well? In addition to being entertaining and aesthetically and spiritually pleasing, part of the answer is that they did not require participants to sacrifice any of their discretionary time—they were already in their cars. We simply asked them to listen to us rather than the radio.

**2. Offer variety and creativity in scheduling.**

While ideally lifelong learning would include ongoing learning experiences that build upon one another, we also must be practical and flexible when scheduling. Examples of creative scheduling include:

- **Structure classes so that occasional absences will not be obstacles to learning.** Many congregants look at the dates for a particular course, realize that they will be out of town for a few of the sessions, and then choose not to participate. Better they should come to half of the sessions than no sessions at all.
  - **Offer double sessions of some of our classes on different nights of the week or times of the day.** Participants would be welcomed to come to any of the available times. In this way, fewer participants would be forced to miss sessions due to schedule conflicts.
  - **Vary the time-frame of courses:** weekly, monthly, year-long, six month, three sessions, weekend, day-long intensive, brief and extended travel courses etc.
  - **Provide on-line learning opportunities** so that congregants have the option to 'plug-in' whenever and wherever they may be.
3. As a desire for more time with our families is often in conflict with our desire to engage in lifelong Jewish learning, **we should continue to explore ways in which the entire family can participate together in aspects of our educational program.** The success of Toledot, Morasha, Machaneh Shabbat, and Shabbaton suggests that we should examine how we can foster family time in other venues. Since lifelong learning includes experiential learning, Shabbat evening dinners, Shabbat morning “family friendly” services, and Havdallah get-togethers can serve as opportunities for both family time and Jewish learning. Although father/son and mother/daughter programs have been attempted in the past, perhaps we should revisit this type of programming. Couples’ learning and programming should be encouraged as well.
  4. **At the same time, care must be taken not to over-program.** We have limited resources that must be wisely allocated.

## ***6. Structural Support: A Lay-Professional Leadership Partnership***

Process, as we at Beth Am well know, is the secret of our success. A healthy lay-professional leadership partnership will be the cornerstone of our *Beit Midrash*, of our House of Learning. The structure we suggest below is intended to be flexible enough to adapt to the evolving needs of our community and to attract the participation of many different kinds of leaders and learners. Moreover, this structure is similar in form to other lay-professional structures that we have developed at Beth Am to support our other lifelong learning initiatives (i.e., Beth Am Education Council, Education Steering Committee).

### *Critical Issues:*

1. Our current Adult Education Committee includes a small number of dedicated congregants who have been responsible for Chai School, Scholar-in-Residence weekend, Adult Hebrew, Asilomar, the development of our mini-courses, and the publication of our catalogue and fliers. It is not, however, currently responsible for recent family learning initiatives with adult components including Shabbaton, Morasha, Toledot, or Bagels, Lattes, and Learning. Though it has helped publicize our on-going Torah study classes, it has not been involved in their development. Finally, it does not currently address the many adult learning opportunities that present

themselves in assorted congregational activities including congregational worship, Tikkun Olam Day, Yachad programming, Beth Am Women programming, etc.

2. We need to create structures that will support our current needs and be flexible enough to adapt to the evolving needs of our congregation.
3. We need to clarify the roles of lay leaders in the planning and implementation of adult learning.
4. We need to develop clear mission statements for the resulting leadership body including a clarification of what types of activities we consider to be examples of adult Jewish learning.
5. We need to consider carefully how to make the transition from existing structures to new ones.

*Recommendations: An Adult Learning Council*

- **We propose the creation of an Adult Learning Council (ALC).** The ALC would include members of the professional team and would be co-chaired by the Adult Learning Coordinator and a lay leader. Representatives of other congregational committees that include adult learning components would be invited to sit on the council (e.g., Social Action, Yachad, Beth Am Women, Outreach, etc.). Council meetings would include opportunities for ongoing study, envisioning and goal setting, trouble-shooting, and evaluating current programs. The ALC would also be responsible for overseeing the adult learning program budget.
- **The ALC should establish ad hoc and standing subcommittees that would work with professional team members to plan annual events like Scholar-in-Residence, Asilomar, and Chai School.** Members of the current Adult Education Committee would, of course, be encouraged to join this team—their leadership and wisdom will be crucial to the success of our lifelong learning programs.
- **The ALC should include congregants who fill specific functions that are essential to the realization of our vision.** Because our educational task is so complex, it is essential that the ALC include congregants with expertise and experience in the following areas: envisioning, problem solving, motivation, and evaluation. These functions are so important that ALC members should be charged with the responsibility to serve as advocates on their behalf. For example, ALC members should be asked to serve as “keepers of the vision,” who would be responsible for continuing to develop and implement our congregational vision of adult Jewish learning. Likewise, members should serve as “fixers” who are responsible for identifying and overcoming obstacles to learning in our various programs. Members will be “drawers near” responsible for bringing people into our learning community, as well as “evaluators” responsible for measuring the impact of our programs.

Of course, ALC members will also participate in “*takhlaitic*” work—taking care of the nuts and bolts of running a lifelong learning program.

- **The professional team should continue its process of clarifying the adult learning responsibilities of each team member.** Since each member serves as a teacher to adults, a well coordinated, fully integrated lifelong learning program will require the professional team to function in collaboration. This process will also help the new senior rabbi to quickly integrate

into the existing team. Lifelong learning issues will be regularly addressed at professional team meetings and in ALC meetings.

## ***7. Resources: Space, Financial***

### **Space**

As our facilities expansion nears completion, we need to consider how space will be allocated. Our monthly programming calendar is filled with congregational events. Our challenge is to construct mechanisms for space allocation that will take into consideration the special needs of adult learners. Consideration must also be given to the relationship between learning settings and building community.

#### Recommendations:

- a) **Dedicate the multi-purpose room and adjacent classrooms primarily to adult learning.** Special care should be taken when making space assignments throughout our campus so that appropriate learning facilities are available for lifelong learning at times when such learning is most convenient. These and other facilities must be appropriately furnished for adult Jewish learning (with chairs and tables that are conducive to adult study, with necessary audio-visual resources, etc.).
- b) **Consider when and how off-site spaces can be used effectively.** Lifelong learning can take place at home, at a camp setting, on the internet, while traveling, in conference centers, community service sites, gardens, carpools, bike paths, hiking trails, tennis courts, golf courses, movie theaters, museums, etc. Plan adult learning opportunities that creatively utilize these spaces.

### **Financial**

Financial constraints have been a limiting factor in the growth of the adult learning programs. There are congregants who do not participate in some of our programs because of their expense. Although scholarship monies are available, asking for such assistance can be embarrassing or humiliating.

Our adult learning budgetary needs can only be expected to increase over time. Moreover, the Koret and Taube Foundation grants that cover the compensation package of the adult learning coordinator are two year grants that we hope will be renewed for an additional three years. Furthermore, if renewed, the funding will decrease each year.

#### Recommendations:

1. **First, we strongly support the Board's commitment to the full-time position of adult learning coordinator.** We recommend that the Board make the institutionalization of this position a goal. While the impact of this position will need to be continually evaluated, a full-time adult learning coordinator will be essential to the success of the type of integrated, comprehensive lifelong learning program that we wish to build.
2. **We suggest the Board consider long-term strategies for financing our lifelong learning.** Many congregations have endowed learning programs. This gives congregants opportunities to

honor and memorialize loved ones as they ensure the very continuity of the Jewish people. Obviously, we have a very important capital campaign that we must first complete. When the time is right, however, we strongly recommend the creation of a lifelong learning endowment.

3. **The current adult learning budget must be expanded to cover expenses associated with our new and growing learning initiatives**—administrative assistance is needed for the adult learning coordinator, new programs require start-up monies and budget for program promotion and outreach (see section on *keiruv*, page 15), and we need funds to support the development of more teachers for our adult learners. Even with a professional staff that is large in relation to synagogues of similar size, our teachers can only teach so many classes. The recruitment and development of other lay and professional teachers is necessary.
4. To make matters more challenging, **our current practice of charging participants for certain adult learning programs is antithetical to some of our larger congregational goals**. As a congregation, we substantially subsidize our youth and family education programs because we greatly value lifelong learning. Although adult learning has been subsidized as well, we recommend that these congregational subsidies increase. We would prefer not to charge congregants to enjoy our scholar in residence. While a nominal fee for food might be appropriate, many other congregations make all of the lectures of the scholar-in-residence weekend available at no cost. Moreover, these fee-based learning programs do not follow our fair-share dues approach. Fair-share dues are predicated on the Jewish value that one should contribute according to one's means. Our fee-based programming makes no distinction between rich and poor. While scholarship monies are available, many congregants do not ask for assistance because they feel embarrassed or ashamed to do so. Judaism is not a product. As a community, we must find ways of creatively financing our program so that, as much as possible, one's dues entitle one to participation in all aspects of synagogue life. This will, we hope, both increase overall participation and help us build an ever more warm and caring community.

## 8. *Who Teaches*

Most of our adult learning offerings have been taught by our professional team. We expect our team to continue to focus much of its energy on teaching—this is the primary function of rabbis, cantors, and Jewish educators. However, as our program and congregation continue to grow, we recognize the need to recruit new teachers. We are a congregation committed to learning of the highest quality. However, we understand that our professional team is staffed by generalists who lack expertise in some aspects of Jewish thought. We will therefore want to bring specialists into our community who will augment and strengthen our existing team.

Finally, we have another goal and value to address. In building a learning congregation, it is important for congregants to begin to value one another as teachers and resources. Empowering our fellow congregants to be our teachers builds community, strengthens the Jewish identity of the “teacher,” and makes true Jewish communal learning possible—the Torah commands every parent to be a teacher (“you shall teach them diligently to your children,” Deut. 6:7).

### **Recommendations:**

1. **Professional team taught learning: The professional team will decide which professionals should teach which classes.** This decision should be based on their experience, their desires,

and on the wishes of the learners. In addition, the professional development of each member of the team should be taken into account. Professionals who have never had the opportunity to teach Talmud, for example, should be given that opportunity for their own development and growth. Team members who are teaching a course for the first time should be encouraged to take advantage of the various conferences and professional development opportunities that our movement and the larger Jewish world make possible (UAHC national and regional biennials, the CAJE conference, the NATE conference, etc.). The adult learning coordinator should coordinate all of the staff-led adult teaching.

2. **Outside teachers:** **Outside teachers should be recruited and hired by the adult learning coordinator with input from the Adult Learning Council and the professional team.** The adult learning coordinator will be responsible for evaluating, supervising, and training them (as needed). Over time, professional development opportunities should be made available to those teachers who have had long term adult education responsibilities with the congregation.
3. **Congregants:** Congregants are already actively serving as learning facilitators and teachers for Beth Am adults. This year's Yom Kippur afternoon study sessions should serve as a powerful reminder of how successful lay-facilitated learning can be for the congregation. The key to such success lies in the lay-professional partnership. Our congregants are extremely gifted and possess much expertise, wisdom, and knowledge that can augment that of our professional team. Our laity, with a little guidance from our professionals, has frequently proven itself capable of leading Jewish learning that is engaging, thoughtful, and meaningful for teacher and student alike. **We need to continue to create appropriate forums for congregant-led learning.** Potential teachers could be recruited from our Congregant Teacher Institute, developed by Rabbi Novak Winer, that is being launched this Spring. Our *Chavruta*—Study Partnerships program enables congregants to learn from one another as they explore our tradition together. Over the years, we hope that long time *Chavruta* participants will serve as resources to newcomers.

## 9. *Drawing People Near—Keiruv*

Adult Jewish learning aims to draw people nearer to Jewish texts, Jewish traditions, Jewish living, and Jewish community. Our understanding of *keiruv* suggests that it is both a **value** and a **technique**.

(*keiruv*) “bringing near”—The Torah tells us that its teaching is “very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart (Deut. 30:14).” The goal of *keiruv* is to bring people nearer to Torah and each other.

Embracing *keiruv* as a **value** furthers our congregational goal of becoming a warm, welcoming community of knowledgeable, participating Reform Jews. We believe that engaging in adult Jewish learning will bring members of our community closer to one another and to our Jewish heritage.

Recognizing *keiruv* as a **technique** suggests that increased attention and resources be given to address what is commonly known as “marketing.” How can we make our adult learning opportunities known, accessible, appealing, and attractive to our congregants and other members of our community? We must reach out to potential learners and get them in the door so they might taste the sweetness of Jewish learning.

## **Recommendations:**

1. **Create a group of "drawers near" to focus on communication efforts around adult learning.** As introduced in the section on Structural Support (see page 11), this group would bring people into our learning community, help those learning sporadically to make learning a regular part of their lives, and retain current learners.
2. **Emphasize the intrinsic value of *keiruv* itself—the community building that learning fosters.**
  - e Help congregants build Jewish friendships and community for themselves and their families by forming learning Havurot and recruiting participants for our Chavruta Project.
  - e Appeal to various target groups, as described in the following section.
3. **Implement new and strengthen existing approaches to the technique of *keiruv*, the way in which we bring congregants to our programs and community.<sup>7</sup>**
  - Examine better and more consistent ways of utilizing the internet, including Menschlink.
  - Explore more personal approaches to *keiruv* including phone calls and hand written notes.
  - Increase awareness of Jewish web sites and learning possibilities that are available via the internet, e.g. UAHC Shabbat Table Talk.
  - Redesign the Beth Am Builder. Create a more appealing layout that is more exciting, attention getting and easy to read.
  - Explore the effectiveness and expense of advertising more frequently in *The Northern California Jewish Bulletin*, and other local papers.
  - Reformat the Adult Learning Opportunities resource guide:
    - Include a calendar / schedule of offerings by day, time, subject matter.
    - Consider more effective and efficient ways to distribute the guide.
  - Evaluate *keiruv* techniques. Inquire about how participants heard about programs and what encouraged them to participate.
  - Reach out to specific target groups, as described in the following section.

## ***10. Target Groups***

As the section on motivation describes, a key reason adults participate in educational experiences is to fulfill the need to seek activity and social interaction. Learning is a social experience that can be enhanced by targeting certain learning experiences to specific groups of people who share a common bond. We believe that the prospect of learning together within one of the groups designated below as well as in other generic groups, will encourage adults to participate in Jewish learning and will therefore increase both participation in and effectiveness of the learning experiences.

## **Recommendations:**

---

<sup>7</sup> In the course of our work as a task force, we repeatedly discussed the advisability of creating some type of mechanism or structure that would evaluate our current congregational communications and publicity. We feel that the implementation of an improved, coordinated congregation-wide publicity plan would help our *keiruv* efforts considerably. However, since such a global plan lies outside the purview of adult learning alone, it is our hope that the Board will address this issue in the near future.

➤ **Identify and keep current records of sub-groups within the congregation that may effectively learn together, including:**

- A. Groups that have shared an experience together and therefore “bonded” somewhat, e.g.:
  - People who have traveled to Israel on a Beth Am trip
  - Adult B'nai Mitzvah classes
  - Morasha classes
  - Shabbaton graduates
  - Post-Confirmation students
  - Havurot
- B. Teens (All members of the congregation who are post-b'nai mitzvah should, when appropriate, be encouraged to participate in our adult learning programs.)
- C. Recent college graduates
- D. Young adults
- E. Newlyweds, engaged couples and those contemplating marriage
- F. Young families
- G. Empty nesters
- H. Singles
- I. Seniors
- J. People who have been divorced
- K. People who have been widowed
- L. People living with chronic illness
- M. Shut-ins
- N. Gays and lesbians and their family and friends
- O. Émigrés
- P. The Beth Am Board and committee chairs
- Q. Former Board members
- R. Beth Am committee members
- S. Beth Am Women
- T. Yachad
- U. Book groups within Beth Am
- V. People who work in Chavruta (study partners)
- W. Choir members
- X. People making transitions in their lives
- Y. People in similar professional fields:
  - mental health; education; law; medicine; technology; business; social services

➤ **Create learning opportunities to meet specific needs of each group.**

➤ **Inform specific groups of learning opportunities which may be of special interest to them.** Emphasize the value of *keiruv*.

## ***11. Evaluation—How do we measure our “impact”?***

Evaluating our lifelong learning programs is more challenging than one might think. While it is fairly easy to solicit feedback from participants and thus learn whether or not they enjoyed the program or found it to be meaningful, it is difficult to measure to what degree we are achieving our overarching goal of building a learning congregation of knowledgeable, participating Reform Jews. It is difficult to measure the long-term impact that such a program hopes to have on a community. How do we measure, for example, how a particular program influenced a participant’s Jewish identity? Even if we do ascertain that a certain learning experience has had a desired effect, how can we isolate the particular aspect of the program or of the teacher’s style or of the class chemistry that was most responsible for this effect? What does it mean to say that a program has been

“successful” from a Jewish perspective? We measure time in centuries not semesters; our long-term success will ultimately be judged by our children and grandchildren.

With this said, we offer the following recommendations:

### **1. Evaluation of Specific Programs/Classes/Learning Opportunities:**

- A. **On-going classes** (Toledot, Shabbaton, Chai School) **should have pre and post assessments** (as appropriate). Learners should be given intake forms upon registering for the class that ask them what their expectations are for the class. These forms should also include the congregation’s expectations for the class—the goals and objectives for that particular learning experience as well as the overarching goals of our congregation. Post assessments will measure how well the learner thinks that the class met both the individual goals, as well as the stated course and congregational goals. The course facilitator will also be asked to write a post-assessment of the experience—in the opinion of the teacher, was the experience “successful”? How so? Should that particular course be repeated in subsequent years?
- B. **Scholar-in-Residence and Asilomar weekends should be subject to post-assessment by participants.** In addition, an ad-hoc committee of evaluators (see section on Structural Support, page 11) should be convened to “unpack” the experience together and critique it in a group setting.
- C. **Other, one-shot programs, can be evaluated more informally.** A few participants could be phoned after the experience to solicit their feedback.
- D. Our current professional team includes four graduates of the HUC-JIR Rhea Hirsch School of Education who are trained in clinical supervision and evaluation. **Members of our professional team should be encouraged to regularly ask their colleagues for feedback.**

### **2. Evaluation of our Lifelong Learning Program—the whole *megillah*:**

**Critical Issue:** An accurate assessment of the overall success of our learning program will require a great deal of work. In committing ourselves to such a task, we must be sure that we have the resources and congregational energy to make such an effort worthwhile.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. **Design a system for tracking the participation of all of our members.** If one of our goals is to build a learning congregation, we need to assess the degree to which the *congregation* as a community is learning. Are we a learning congregation of 50 households? 100 households? 500 households? This tracking will help us measure our quantitative “success.” It will help us make more informed decisions about allocation of resources. It will also help us recruit participants for our programs. If we learn, for example, that Mr. Cohen enjoys attending lectures, but dislikes lay-facilitated learning, we’ll make a special effort to encourage his participation in Chai School and not in Bagels, Lattes, and Learning. By tracking congregant participation, we will also be able to help learners explore areas of our Lifelong Jewish Learning Map that they have not yet frequented. When offering a new opportunity to learn about *tefillah*, for example, we could send special invitations to all congregants who have never signed up for a lecture or class

on prayer. In so doing, we can help ensure that ours is truly a learning *congregation* in which individual congregants are given the guidance and support to become knowledgeable, participating, Reform Jews.

2. **The Adult Learning Council will regularly reflect upon the health of the overall adult learning program.** Are we fulfilling our vision? Are we creating a balanced program in which our congregants can learn from all of the subject matter of our Lifelong Jewish Learning Map? Are we being sensitive enough to the needs of all of our learners (non-English speakers, Jews by choice, Jews who want purely intellectual experiences, participants who want affective experiences, etc.)?

## ***Appendix I—Timeline of ALTF***

- October 1997: Education Steering Committee calls for the establishment of an Adult Learning Task Force, to be co-chaired by Lori Luft & Lisa Langer.
- November 1997: Task Force members are invited to participate. Members include: Barbara August, Cantor Kay Greenwald, Sam Kheifets, Mel Kronick, Jill Kulick, Linda Kurz, Lisa Langer, Lori Luft, Micki Miller, Marian Sagan, Ellen Stromberg, Rabbi Laura Novak Winer, Bob Wolfe, Joe Ziony
- Task Force begins meeting every 3-4 weeks.  
Created lists of the following:
- Adult learning at Beth Am should be... (content, structure, community)
  - What exists at Beth Am for adult learners today?
  - Excuses, barriers, resistances we use, hear, observe for not engaging in adult Jewish learning.
- Dec '97-March '98 Each task force member researches and gives report on an existing adult Jewish learning program. Reports include:
- UAHC Biennial 1997
  - Lehrhaus Judaica
  - On-line resources
  - Melton adult mini-school
  - UAHC Jewish Education Development Proposal
  - Local resource & adult educator, Patti Moskowitz
  - Rabbi Janine Schloss -- St. Louis Jewish community & Congregation Shaare Emeth
- March 1998: Begin discussing motivations of adult learners and the role of 'marketing and recruitment' (now referred to as *keiruv*, drawing near.)
- April 1998: Meet and learn with rabbinic student, Josh Zweiback, candidate for adult learning coordinator position.
- Day-long retreat with Dr. Betsy Katz, North American Director of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School. Topics include: motivation, adult learning theory, 'marketing', reviewing model programs.
- June 1998: Begin creating a Strategic Plan to establish key directions for adult learning during the next five years that will offer specific recommendations in the following areas:
- Motivation
  - Content
  - Structure: Administrative management, lay structures
  - Structure: Learning settings, programs
  - Resources : space, human, time, financial...
  - Who Teaches
  - Target Groups
  - *Keiruv*
  - Evaluation

Assign sub-groups to write draft reports for each section.

July 1998: Rabbi Josh Zweiback joins our community and task force.

Aug-Oct, 1998 Continue writing and editing strategic plan. Study about and write a rationale for lifelong Jewish learning. Review and discuss Lifelong Learning Map subject matter areas.

Nov-Dec, 1998: Draft and edit a Strategic Plan for Adult Jewish Learning

Distribute report to the Adult Education Committee and Education Steering Committee for feedback

January 1999: Present Strategic Plan to the Board of Directors for approval

## ***Appendix II— Content Areas of Our Lifelong Jewish learning map***

Congregation Beth Am's education vision for the 1990's and beyond states that our community will have "an articulated, integrated, developmentally appropriate curriculum that addresses a set of core competencies deriving from a Beth Am model of a knowledgeable, participating, Reform Jew." As a congregation of learners we strive to build a community that exemplifies this vision.

Our Lifelong Jewish Learning Map represents the collective learning goals for our community. In the spirit of Reform Judaism, individuals may make choices from among the many learning opportunities that will emerge.

The following explanations will guide your understanding of the lay-out, structure and underlying assumptions of the map as it relates to this report.

### **Subject Matter Areas**

Each column of the map represents the learning goals within a subject matter area. The subject matter areas were determined by a sub-committee of BAEC charged with the task of sorting the list of values, skills, knowledge and behaviors gleaned from members of our congregation. Through consolidation and integration of ideas, the map consists of eleven subject matter areas. Each subject matter area begins with a defining statement to explain our vision of its meaning and import.

While each subject matter area appears to exist independently of the others on the map, there is considerable overlap across areas. The map assumes the interconnectedness of the goals across subject matter areas.

### **Value Threads**

From the subject matter areas originally conceived by BAEC, five areas emerged as distinct in their import. Recognizing the central connection that these areas have within all the other subject matter areas, the professional team came to identify the following as value-threads: Jewish Texts, Jewish Home, Lifelong Learning, Making Jewish Choices, Synagogue Community.

These value threads weave throughout our curriculum helping to set the stage and context for reaching our goals. The value threads are not subjects of study as much as settings and places of Jewish living and learning. Every subject matter area involves aspects of these five value threads.

### **Lifelong Jewish Learning**

Each row of the map represents a life stage: by age 5, by age 9, by b'nai mitzvah (13), by age 18, during young adulthood, during adulthood, during adulthood with parenting and grand-parenting. The life stages were determined by the same BAEC sub-committee described above.

Goals are placed in life stage categories according to the developmentally appropriate life stage in which the listed goals *could* be met. In other words, goals appear in life stages according to when a learner *could* first be enabled to learn or do those things.

Learners who are at later stages of life will have opportunities to learn or relearn material listed in earlier life stages. Based on the educational theory of a spiral curriculum, this map provides for entry into and continuation of learning at any age and any stage of life. In a spiral curriculum, it is

expected that as they mature, learners may be introduced to or return to any concept at the appropriate level. This allows learners the chance to foster and deepen their understanding of, engagement with, and interpretation of the information. In each life stage, the map assumes that prior goals will be reinforced. It will be our charge to provide developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for all learners.

### **Culture**

Expressions of Judaism and Jewish tradition through visual and performing arts, music, dance, food, language and dress have enriched Jewish life for generations. Culture is a means of transmitting elements of Jewish life within and beyond our community.

### **Ethical Mitzvot**

Ethical mitzvot are Jewish values that guide our behavior in daily life. By doing these mitzvot we strive to become holy, and become partners with God and each other in changing and repairing the world. Practicing these mitzvot reinforces the relevance of living as Jews and links Judaism to everyday issues.

### **God**

Recognizing and experiencing God's presence is a component of living a Jewish life. As Jews, our communal connection with God is distinguished by a covenantal relationship. Judaism encourages developing a personal theology by expressing questions about God, seeking answers, and exploring the role of God in Judaism and Jewish life.

### **Hebrew**

Hebrew is the language that binds Jews together throughout time and space. It is the language of our sacred texts, prayers and rituals, the State of Israel, and the shared vehicle for communication among all Jews. The study of Hebrew engenders connection with Jewish culture and the Jewish people everywhere.

### **History**

Jewish history reveals the story of our people. It includes notable events, personalities, and ideologies that have had an impact on our people. Through the study of Jewish history, we come to understand the chronology and significance of those Jewish events, personalities, and ideologies over time, and link our personal story to that of the Jewish people.

### **Holidays**

Jewish holidays define the cycle of each week and every year, enabling Jews to learn about, celebrate and sanctify the significant moments that have marked our people's history. Celebrating and observing Jewish holidays enriches Jewish life for individuals, families, and the community.

### **Israel**

Israel is the Jewish homeland. Though often challenging and complicated, the land, people, and culture of Israel have played and will continue to play significant roles in Jewish life. Our connection to, knowledge of, and support for Israel as the Jewish homeland ensures her continued existence, deepens our Jewish identity and enhances the security of all Jews, wherever they live.

**Jewish Community**

Being part of and supporting a Jewish community is central to living a Jewish life and to passing on Judaism to others. Developing meaningful relationships with local, national, and world Jewish communities enhances Jewish life. Participation in Jewish life at home, in the synagogue, and with other Jewish organizations provides avenues of involvement that often lead to positions of leadership.

**Life Cycle**

Jewish life cycle rituals mark the significant transitions of life. Learning about and celebrating and sanctifying these life cycle moments connect us to our ancestors and our Jewish traditions in ways that add meaning to our lives and allow us to participate in the Jewish people's covenant with God.

**Non-Jewish World**

Living Jewishly adds meaning and joy to life. Showing pride in being Jewish and standing up for Judaism can be challenging in a place where most people are non-Jews. Living a Jewish life in a non-Jewish world requires knowledge about and sensitivity to differences and similarities in beliefs and customs. Building tolerant and respectful relationships with non-Jews is our responsibility as Jews, just as is responding appropriately when Jews and Judaism are challenged or denigrated.

**Tefillah**

Jewish prayer is an expression of the ongoing relationship between God and the Jewish people and a means of spiritual fulfillment. Tefillah connects Jews to one another throughout time and space.

## *Appendix III—Task force and Board Brainstorming*

### ADULT LEARNING AT BETH AM SHOULD... ALTF Brainstorm, November, 1997

#### COMMUNITY

bring people together  
excite people to want to learn more  
use *chavruta* (pairs & small group) style learning -- learning *havurot*  
lead to a sense of accomplishment  
be fun  
allow learners to engage with clergy & professional  
be thought-provoking  
reach out to gays and lesbians in our community  
use experts in our community as teachers of sessions on their field of expertise

#### COMMUNITY

#### COMMUNITY

#### CONTENT

connect us with text - ancient and modern  
include: Hebrew, History, Diaspora, Israel, culture  
be basic & esoteric,  
practical & conceptual  
address the breadth of Jewish life and experience: spiritual, historical, philosophy  
encourage observance of *mitzvot*  
include Jewish meditation  
include discussions with Jews from every movement  
include popular culture subjects  
include study of Reform Responsa  
include information about home observance  
include classes on liturgy  
address education about gays and lesbians in our community  
meet people where they are  
be inspiring

#### CONTENT

#### CONTENT

#### STRUCTURE

use technology  
be available at different times of the day, days of the week and in different venues  
use *chavruta* (pairs & small group) style learning  
be offered in Russian  
encourage observance of *mitzvot*  
be optional  
be high quality  
include volunteer teachers  
be in small groups -- learning *havurot*  
be memorable  
be continuous / lifelong  
be affordable  
connect students to other resources to enhance follow-up learning

#### STRUCTURE

#### STRUCTURE

include Jewish book groups  
include weekly Torah study  
Provide information about Jewish plays, concerts, sports events & other cultural activities  
publish lists of art and other collections that connect with classes  
identify resources (including books in the Beth Am library) that are related to the subjects of classes  
offer travel opportunities (Israel, Europe) that connect with classes  
develop a 'resource guide' that connects each subject offered to a similar learning opportunity in the  
local community  
offer a list of publications with Jewish content, provide samples in the Beth Am library  
provide on-going classes for advanced study -- beyond the basics  
include 6-8 week (time limited) series' concentrated on one topic  
acknowledge and meet the different levels of learning and knowledge  
encourage learning at home  
be accessible to those who want to learn at home  
use telecommunication

**TO LEARN OR NOT TO LEARN...**  
**ALTF Brainstorm, November, 1997**

A list of the excuses, barriers, resistances we use, hear, observe for not engaging in adult Jewish learning:

---

*time restrictions / scheduling*

*have to work*

*physical needs (intimate & exercise)*

*no desire to learn*

*study is not spiritual*

*not interested*

*I don't (want to) take it literally*

*I don't know anyone*

*I don't know where to begin*

*not feeling 'Jewish enough'*

*inertia*

*too expensive / can't afford it*

*not fun enough*

*not relevant*

*don't know the value of Jewish learning*

*doesn't meet my Jewish needs*

*there is no value of history, ancient texts*

*I don't believe it literally*

*I don't know enough*

*potential embarrassment*

*not wanting to feel 'too Jewish'*

*exhaustion*

*too rational, intellectual -- not integrated with spiritual*

*don't know what they are missing (lack of experience)*

*too much is offered, the Beth Am schedule is too full, I can't do everything*

*no integration, follow-up, cohesiveness to the program*

*I need to spend time with my family = adult learning is self indulgent*

*not worth the effort (dress, traffic, energy, stress...)*

*I spend enough time driving the kids to Beth Am*

*Jewish learning as an adult is not 'required'*

*there are no negative consequences to not learning (it is voluntary)*