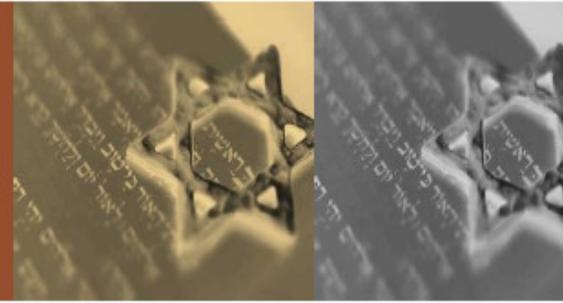


## PART THREE:

### WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO DO HERE? INTRODUCING THE COMMUNITY SECTION



We have looked at the Jewish world in general and have attempted to show the significance and the dynamics both of the individual Jewish community and of the larger area centres that grew up in different periods in various places throughout the Jewish world. We have tried to sketch the developments from the earliest times to the modern period, emphasizing especially the developments and changes in the modern period. We have also tried to explain how the Jewish world came to be geographically and demographically what it is today.

Now we come to the next part of the booklet in which we examine the dynamics of some of the more significant national Jewish communities in the world today. By a national community we mean the Jewish community that lives inside a sovereign state (we are not talking about Israel here) as a minority within that country.

In this section we will bring ten Jewish communities in the contemporary Jewish world. They include seven of the largest communities according to the demographic estimates currently accepted in the Jewish world (in order of size, the United States, France, Canada, Great Britain, Argentina, Germany and Australia) and two others, Hungary and South Africa that we think are particularly interesting in the context of the Jewish world today. The expectation is not that anyone will study all of these communities but rather that a presentation of so many different communities will make it possible to focus on those elements of the modern Jewish world which are particularly interesting and significant to you. We also want to facilitate cross-community comparisons, so that it is possible to take specific aspects of Jewish community life and compare those aspects across a number of different places.

In order to make comparison between the communities relatively easy, we have decided to use the identical mechanism to analyse and describe each of the communities. We have compiled a list of twelve questions which we pose for each of the communities. These questions have been chosen since they provide twelve searchlights into different aspects of the life of a contemporary community and provide a good initial picture into the make up and the dynamics of each community. Collectively, they cover all major aspects of community life. We will ask the same twelve questions for each of the communities and in addition, we will bring two (fictional) voices to represent each community, one from the present and one from the past, in order to personalise the experience of the community for the reader.

The exception is the community of Great Britain where we have added an extra element. We wished to bring one community where we gave an organic picture of its development in the pre-modern and modern world, stressing continuity and gradual development rather than examining it only from the spotlight of the



community today. Thus here we have added to the twelve question model an extra chapter bringing a longer chronological description of the community.

Let us now briefly attempt to "organize" the ten communities, giving a very initial categorization to allow you to find your way to those communities that you wish to focus on.

## 1. The Americas: The United States, Canada and Argentina.

We start with three communities from North and South America, the United States, the largest of the diaspora communities, Canada, the third largest and Argentina, the sixth largest. We start with the U.S. not just because it is indeed far and away the largest Jewish community but because it is the community that is most often thought about when Jews the world over think about Diaspora Jewry. However, it should be noted that the concentration on the United States often masks the importance of Canada, which is a large community, with an important existence of its own, far too often underestimated in terms of its significance in the Jewish world today. As an examination of the Canadian community will show, there are considerable differences between the situation of the Jewish communities in the two centres. For example, almost double the percentage of Jews that have visited Israel from the United States, have come there from Canada. The reason is connected with some major differences in the structures and dynamics of the two communities. We suggest that there are important lessons that can be learnt from comparing the two "sister" states.

In the south, we meet Argentina. Argentina is home to over 50% of the half a million Jews in Latin America. In addition it is a community that has been in the news in recent years over the last few years, both because of some major terrorist outrages and because of the very difficult social and economic situation of large parts of the community (reflecting difficulties in Argentina as a whole). It is important to understand the community story there.

## 2. South Africa and Australia

We bring these two communities for different reasons, but the fact is that they are in many ways complementary communities. Both are large and important English speaking communities, which developed to importance at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Both developed vibrant and interesting community lives and thriving educational systems. However, for reasons which will become clear when you examine the community stories, South Africa is shrinking while Australia is growing. Moreover, the growth in Australia has come about largely because of the move of Jews from South Africa. The processes in both communities are interesting, and show certain parallel lines, despite the different directions in which the communities are developing.



### 3. East Central and Eastern Europe. Hungary.

This area is perhaps the most fascinating area of the Diaspora Jewish world today. Here we see communities that were basically destroyed by the combination of Nazism and Communism, beginning to come back to some kind of existence since the fall of Communism at the beginning of the 1990's. Our example here is Hungary, the only non-Soviet Union state in Eastern (or East Central) Europe, which survived the Holocaust with a large number of Jews intact. A fascinating Jewish story is developing there in front of our eyes and it is that story that we bring here.

### 4. Western Europe. Germany, France and Great Britain.

There are three large communities in Western Europe, Germany, France and Britain and we bring them all. We open with Germany which about thirty years ago, had no more than 30,000 Jews and now today has well over a hundred thousand. The reason for this enormous rise (it is the fastest growing Jewish community in the world) is almost completely the influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union, who have decided to move to Germany, which welcomes Jewish immigrants, in an effort to compensate for its recent terrible history. The dynamic developing there is particularly interesting.

France is the second largest Diaspora community in the world with around 500,000 Jews there. The community, which was largely built up in the 1950's and 60's by a huge immigration of Jews from North Africa, has gone through some very difficult times recently, as a tide of rising anti-Semitism has kept them in the news, both nationally and internationally.

Britain is also undergoing some very significant internal changes in recent decades. Like several other communities, it is developing a stronger and more vibrant centre to the community even while many drop out of meaningful contact with the community from around the edges of the Jewish population. A generation ago, even while it had well over 350,000 members, there were many inside the community itself who believed that it had no future. Today, however, despite the smaller size of the community (a little under 300,000), there would be many who predict a long and healthy future. To find out why, you'll have to read the story. As mentioned before, we have treated this community story differently from all of the others, to give a different picture of the slow and gradual development of a Jewish community until its present situation today.

Welcome to the community section. Go out and explore!

