

# A letter from the publisher

Americans are climbing out of the melting pot. They seek a sense of identity, of continuity, of a link with the past and the future. Some, in their search for meaning, have turned to pop psychology and spiritual fads: est, the Moonies, TM. Today many more are turning—returning—to more familiar territory: their own ethnic and cultural roots. And Jews are no exception.

The society we live in no longer sustains us. The question "Who am I?" gnaws at our unconscious. And no matter how assimilated we seem, no matter how thoroughly "American," we find within ourselves an unspoken but undeniable concern when faced with the subtle anti-Semitism generated by the oil crisis. Tears well in our eyes and anger in our hearts when we see "Holocaust" on TV. When Israel is attacked, we feel personally threatened. When we read of the frustrations of Soviet Jews, we feel as though a close cousin were suffering. Why? Why do we react, almost instinctively, *as Jews*? Is it because that *pintele yid*, that spark of Jewishness that tradition tells us lies in the heart of every Jew, simply refuses to die?

In the last several decades, we have allowed our uniqueness, our Jewish values and traditions, our collective soul—*neshamah*—to drown in the mainstream of American society. Our children knew about matzah balls, but not about Moses; about bar and bat mitzvah, but not about "doing a mitzvah." We began to realize that to our grandchildren even matzah balls would be alien—unidentified floating objects. And now, suddenly, there has come a change. The tide has turned.

The signs of Jewish identity that only a few years ago made many of us feel uncomfortably different now represent a uniqueness that we cherish. The Sabbath candles, the Passover seder, the solidarity with Israel, the Jewish ethical tradition, are part of the heritage we are reclaiming for ourselves—and trying to pass on to our children.

It isn't going to be easy. We're digging for our roots in the middle of the great American forest of wildly varying values. The mass media, particularly, bombard us with lifestyles, holidays, traditions, and ideals which, however attractive, are not always the ones we want for ourselves and our children. And that is where JEWISH LIVING comes in. As the first quality magazine for the Jewish family, it can provide ideas, information, and incentive for those who want to feel more at home with Jewish tradition—and support for those already at home.

Not long ago, a couple told me that JEWISH LIVING magazine lying on their coffee table, in place of the usual magazines, had made a big difference in their household. Their children no longer feel as though all the pretty magazines are for other people—with other people's holidays, other people's foods, and other people's lifestyles. That's a prime goal of JEWISH LIVING—to provide a vivid expression of their Jewishness to every member of the family. With its beautiful graphics, fine writing, candid sense of humor, insightful reporting, unique food, crafts, and travel stories, JEWISH LIVING says that Jewish living is important and exciting. It says that our Jewishness is a very special form of self-expression, that we feel comfortable in devoting enthusiasm, artistic energy, and intellectual curiosity to our Jewishness—to the extra dimension that Jewish living adds to our lives.

For the Jewish community, JEWISH LIVING offers a magazine that can openly examine any issue, free of obligation to any organization or group; a magazine that is not a public-relations vehicle for any federation or coalition; a magazine that transcends the ideological differences and political competition that splinter today's Jewish establishment; a magazine that recognizes the differences among Jews to be less important than what we have—and cherish—in common.

JEWISH LIVING is *your* magazine. We want it to reflect your aspirations, your interests, your needs. We hope that you'll let us know, by mail, the kind of stories you want more of, the issues you feel we should deal with, the people and places you want to read about. We hope, too, that you'll support with your subscription our effort to give the Jewish community—in the U.S. and around the world—an unfettered vehicle for cultural expression and communication.

Together we can move toward a richer life—made richer by Jewish living.

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