

4:45 - 5:00 Next Steps - Rabbi Jerry Weider, Co-chair

This has been an amazing day because of all of you who took the time and made the effort to be here today. Every one of you is busy with the needs of your respective institutions and constituencies and as such, you truly represent a cross section of the American Jewish community. So for you to gather to discuss the issue of Continuing Rabbinic Education is quite a statement in, and of, itself.

So where do we go from here? What are the next steps for consideration given the discussions of today? Well, that is not so easy to discern because the answer to that question rests in your hands and in your hearts.

We have heard about what our fellow clergy are doing in other religious traditions with regard to continuing clergy education.

We have heard about some of the early research on continuing clergy and rabbinic education.

We have discussed what could be accomplished if we joined together as a total rabbinic community which fosters continuing rabbinic education in an organized, supervised, and rationalized way. Indeed, based on what we have heard today, we can imagine the outline of an alliance that would benefit all the rabbis of the American Jewish community

-one in which there would be an opportunity to learn from rabbis and teachers of all the streams within Judaism,

-one in which rabbis in the field would be kept educationally current and as such be validated within their own synagogue or communal settings,

-one in which rabbis in the field would keep their connection to old and new faculty within the Jewish academic world, and

- one in which rabbis would be encouraged to interact with the evolving educational opportunities of life long learning so that they can continually enrich their own inner life as well as the life of their synagogues and communal institutions.

But how will these fine words be realized? After all, today is but a first step in the direction of modeling how rabbis and institutions from all the streams and interpretations of Judaism can learn together, share thoughts together and work together to imagine the creation of an alliance for continuing rabbinic education. From my vantage point, this can come about if we can continue to maintain a positive view for the outcome of this conference.....one that takes the initial research into consideration, one that uses the suggestions of today and one that empowers a continuation of the work of the design team and the steering committee that organized today's conference. I believe this can

happen if we hold on to the momentum of today and perhaps reconvene these smaller groups in a few months to create something that will move us on to an attainable next step. This smaller group will have to grapple with some of the fundamental questions raised today.....those being..... What are the components for rabbinic life long learning through CRE? What kinds of new learning and skills are important for rabbis to develop over the course of a career? What is the role of foundations, supporters, rabbinic organizations and federations in this process of creating an alliance for CRE? These are but a few of the many other questions to be confronted as we move on to a next step.

But even with the questions and the uncertainties, I think moving on to a next step in creating an alliance for CRE is doable because of the support we have received from those who made this conference possible today. First we are thankful for our foundation supporters: the Lasko Foundation & Dr. Maury Hoberman, the Jim Joseph Foundation, The Shusterman Foundation, and the Marcus Foundation. On the practical side we want to thank Star and Hayim Herring and Elana Centor for hosting and populating our convention blog. We are grateful to Jesna for planning and facilitating this conference especially in the persons of Steve Kraus Leora Isaacs, Jonathan Woocher, Monica Rosenfeld and the rest of the Jesna staff. We would also like to acknowledge UJA/Federation of New York for their kind hosting of the conference in these beautiful facilities, Dr. Larry Goleman from the Alban Institute, and our own CRE Design Team.....my co-chair Rachel Cowan, Kenneth Brander, David Gordis, Hayim Herring, Richard Hirsh, Marisa Yammer, Marc Wolf, and ex officio; Maury Hoberman & David Glazberg Krainin.

We are taught in Pirke Avote: Lo Alecha ham lach ligmor, v'lo ata ben chorim l'hibatel mimenah. The question of CRE has been raised and put on the table for further discussion. We do not have to have all the answers and a full blown implementation of CRE at this time. However, we are no longer free from confronting this matter, nor are we free from finding a collective and satisfying answer to the issue at hand.

We have much work to do.....so let us simply move ahead.

Thank you for coming today and I look forward to sharing more on this matter with you in the near future.

Rabbi Gerald I. Weider
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