Joel Abramovitz

When I was a congregational educator, I was struck by how thirsty the parents were – not just for their own Jewish learning, but to create a rich Jewish life for their children. Yet many felt they didn't know how. Over time I came to see that as professional Jewish educators, our primary learner is not the child – but the parents. Creating meaningful, engaging learning experiences for children is the icing; the cake is providing tools and confidence to the parents to be full Jews themselves, so they can create a meaningful and robust Jewish home life. Only through that can our students fashion a lasting and strong Jewish identity, a deep love of the Jewish people, an abiding curiosity to learn Jewish ideas, and a lifelong desire to be a part of a Jewish community. *Read more...*

Karen Morris

The goal of Kaplan over 90 years ago to emphasize Jewish practice and worship in the home remains worthy and applicable. I do not think the shift is for the home to take over, but to align in cooperation with communal practice. In the modern era, especially post Covid, people are engaging, in-person, hybrid and by streaming religious worship. This way the family is experiencing Shabbat in their personal space and also connecting to the larger community. *Read more...*

The "Mishnah" for *Oneg Shabbat: A Sabbath Evening Table Companion* is...

"Perhaps the time has come when we must think of shifting the center of gravity of worship from the public gathering to the home. If the family were to become the main unit in religious services, or the home the principal place for divine communion, the practice of worship might be given a new lease on life. In general, it seems to be that if we want Jewish life to survive within the present political and economic framework, it will be necessary to decentralize it in certain of its aspects and well as to centralize it in others." (*Judaism as a Civilization)*

Questions:

1. **Written over ninety years ago is this goal still worthy and compelling?**
2. **Why has it proved so elusive? Kaplan suggests in the same chapter that educators must become "pastors" to Jewish families. Is it possible to achieve the focus on home without educators transforming their own roles?**
3. **What progress has been made? Why has progress proved so elusive?**
4. **Is there some critical key element that either facilitates or impedes that transformation that has escaped our attention?**

Alex Malaynch

At times we invoke Judaism through the lens of family without unpacking the connotations of blood, heredity, and ethnicity that float beneath. "Home" can evoke a particularism and independence — a boundedness that means exclusion as much as it means safety or meaningful tradition. This is to say nothing of the social exchange, the friction and familiarity we attach to home-life. Using "home" and "family" too casually brings the liability of forgetting the most vulnerable — the widow, the sojourner, the convert — for whom public gathering and institutional life are not the antithesis of home or family but where these values are found, cultivated and sustained. Shifting spiritual communion to the home and family comes with great opportunity but it does not solve the deeper issue of bridging and gathering. Perhaps then "kinship" with its complexities and difficulties and its connection to our sacred history is a tool for both families and institutions to make themselves more productively vulnerable.
Read more...

Rabbi Len Zukrow

Legacy and heritage also meet within the home, imbuing it with holiness. In this sense, the Jewish home is truly a mikdash me'at—a small sanctuary—whose sanctity may equal, and perhaps even surpass, the sacred structures of our past. In this way, the home becomes a place where Jewish identity is both inherited and actively created. It teaches through memory, practice, conversation, song, food, learning, and love. Each generation receives a tradition, adds its own voice, and passes forward a living Judaism rooted in holiness and belonging. Home is where the heart of Jewish life resides. *Read more...*