

Jewish Goals for Youth

BY MAX F. BAER
National Director, B'nai B'rith
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While continuing educational programs for adults will become increasingly abundant, the focus of the Jewish community will always be on the education of the children. However we may appraise our elementary Jewish education, the really great tragedy in American Jewish life is

the abrupt termination of Jewish learning at age of 13 or 15. What a mockery of our long and honored tradition of learning when we set a youngster's sight on Bar Mitzvah or Confirmation as a terminal point, beyond which he is assured of emancipation from further religious instruction!

Among middle - class Jewish families a secular college education is now considered as com-



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monplace. But a Jewish education on a high school level is seldom considered. In 1954 only about eighteen thousand students of high school age were enrolled in Jewish Sunday Schools and all types of Jewish weekday schools throughout the United States. This explains the sad spectacle of interfaith gatherings in which Jewish youth are unable to answer the most elemental questions about their own faith. That is why so many Jewish college youth seek to escape from any kind of meaningful Jewish affiliation. That is why we see so many artists who create art by Jews rather than Jewish art. That is why among our people there are so many intellectuals who turn all of their interests and talents into secular pursuits and contribute so little to the strengthening of Jewish life or to the strengthening of their own inner spiritual resources.

Those of us who are truly concerned with Jewish education will always plead for adequate support of both formal and informal Jewish learning activities at the college level. We shall always encourage a continuation of Jewish studies throughout the years of adulthood; for there are no learned Jews today—only learning Jews. However, we are irresistibly impelled to the conclusion that much of this effort is futile unless and until we forge the link of Jewish education at the secondary school level.

Ethel Merman tells us there was a time in this country when a young woman had to go to her doctor to find out if she could have children. Now she has to ask her landlord.

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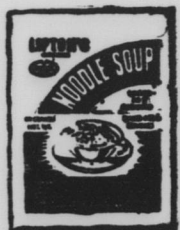
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