

# **Campus Options**

## **A Workbook for Jewish High School Seniors**

**Francis Nataf, Alan Stadtmauer**

This guide is the result of the authors' extensive experience on the Jewish college scene. Rabbi Francis Nataf and Rabbi Alan Stadtmauer were among the leaders of KIRUV, the college outreach arm of Yeshiva University, between the years 1984 and 1989. (R. Nataf was the organization's director from 1987 to 1989.) KIRUV's goal is to develop more exciting and substantive Jewish life at North American colleges and universities. In their five years of work, the authors have visited and been involved with campuses in fourteen states all across the country, and in Canada. Their resulting observations and insights were the inspiration and background for this guide.

The authors would like to thank Deena Nataf and David J. Kay for all their assistance.

Copyright 1990, by the authors. All rights reserved.  
Updated 2003, reprinted here with permission.

## Table of Contents

Table of contents	2
Introduction	4
Instructions	6
Campus Issues: Using the Student Questionnaire	7
How to use this section	7
Jewish Identity	7
Amount of Jewish life (Questions 1-2)	7
Types of Jewish activities desired (3)	7
Presence of sub-groups (4)	8
Social	8
Size of social pool desired (5)	8
Attraction to Jewish community (5-7 )	8
Diversity (8-9)	9
Type (open vs. insular) of community (10-11)	9
Supportiveness of atmosphere (12-14)	10
Size of compatible dating pool (15)	11
Available Housing Options (16)	12
Political	12
Confrontational Campus (17-18)	12
Jewish political activities (19)	13
Religious	14
Religious needs (20)	14
Religious levels of Jewish community (20-21)	15
Availability of religious consultation (22)	15
Sense of religious community (23)	16
Campus conduciveness for Jewish exploration (24)	17
Community approach to “Women and Judaism” (25)	17
Quantity of learning options (26)	18
Forms of learning options (27-28)	18
Content of learning options (29)	19
College Visitation Aid	20
Using Campus Checklist	20
Hints and Tips	20
Amount of Jewish Life	20
Types of Jewish Activities	21
Size of Social Pool	21
Attraction to Jewish Community	21
Diversity	21
Type of Community	21
Supportiveness of Atmosphere	21
Size of Compatible Dating Pool	22
Available Housing Options	22
Confrontational Campus	22

Jewish Political Activities	22
Religious Needs	23
Religious Levels	23
Availability of Religious Counseling	23
Sense of Religious Community	23
Availability of Family Hospitality	23
Campus Conduciveness for Exploration	23
Community's Approach to "Women and Judaism"	24
Quantity of Learning Options	24

## Introduction

The year you start college will bring many changes in your life. You will certainly encounter many challenges: intellectual, social and religious. For the first time in your life, you will be making nearly all of your own decisions and choices. In order to prepare you to make the choices you feel are right for you, we have designed this guide to cater to your unique situation, based on our extensive experience on the college scene. The guide offers you an opportunity to start thinking about what you want Jewishly, so that you will be prepared for those inevitable choices that you will have to make.

Whatever your vision of Judaism and your level of observance, we assume that it is something important to you. In college, there will be demands on your time, energy and feelings that may sometimes push your Judaism aside. If you are not prepared for this, you may find yourself losing your commitment and ties to Judaism by accident. The solution is to know yourself and find out what college atmosphere will best suit your needs as a Jew. Since every person is unique, there is no such thing as any one set of criteria that, if met, make a campus "kosher." The object is to find out what you should be looking for. Doing so can turn a potentially dangerous experience into a time of Jewish growth, excitement and integration of new ideas.

While of course you already know yourself, we have developed a questionnaire meant to further your self-understanding in areas that will be relevant to your college experience. The questionnaire forms a basis of a college visitation and selection strategy based upon your preferences and personality indicated in the questionnaire.

While you will not be involved in warfare, you need to develop a strategy in college to make it a positive Jewish experience. The challenges are real ones that you may never even thought about in the relatively sheltered Yeshiva high school atmosphere you are about to leave. Along with the challenges will come new questions you will ask yourself about what you want. You will be answering these questions while surrounded by peers, who do not necessarily understand "where you're coming from". If your lifestyle or attitudes do not meet with the generally accepted values, you will often be put on the spot to explain yourself.

Consider the following scenario as an example:

You choose to go to a university where you must live in a regular dormitory during freshman year. You are delighted to find out that you get along with your assigned roommate. You feel you're on your way to a learning experience based on mutual tolerance and respect. Very soon, however, your roommate acquires a boyfriend or girlfriend and feels they have the right to sleep with him or her in your room. If you feel uncomfortable, you may be asked to leave, since you are the one with the "problem". Are you ready to deal with this not uncommon dilemma? What if the relationship going on across your room were homosexual? Remember that this is also considered acceptable by many college students today and that you will be the one that is viewed as intolerant if you object.

The above scenario may be extreme and usually avoidable but it is by no means unusual. It is part of everyday campus life. Similarly, whatever Jewish values you now cherish will be challenged within the next four years and you will be prompted to reexamine them. Being prepared for this makes all the difference!

We urge you to enjoy the guide as you learn more about your priorities and how they translate into college selection. Have fun with it, but think seriously about it as well. The college community that you choose will be more important than how easy your next four years will be. The type of Jewish life you will ultimately lead often has much to do with these important formative years of early adulthood. With the right preparation, you can strive for growth in every part of your life; we hope that this will include an exciting and fulfilling life as a Jew.

## Instructions

Now that you see how important it is to prepare for college from a Jewish perspective, you can proceed to the various sections of this guide. The following instructions are most easily understood with the help of a counselor trained in the use of this booklet.

1. Fill out the **student questionnaire** (bound separately) to the best of your ability. Take your time in deciding upon your answers. If you can't choose, just make a note of your dilemma in the margins.
2. Turn to the section entitled **Campus Issues** (p.6) to analyze your answers and to see what sort of campus is right for you.

The discussion is organized by headings covering one or more questions on your **student questionnaire**. These headings correspond to categories on the **wish list** (bound together with the questionnaire). As you go through each subject, determine whether each of the categories is not important, important, or very important to you and mark the appropriate column on the **wish list**. Where a choice is required, indicate the choice (for example, the first category is Jewish Life, and you are asked to write what is a minimal level for you -- limited, moderate or extensive and then proceed to indicate whether it is important, etc.).

3. Turn to the **college visitation checklist** (a sample is bound with the questionnaire). Use a new one for each college visit. Cross out the items that were "not important" to you on the **wish list**. Fill out the remaining categories on your college visits, indicating your impressions of each college you consider. Use the **College Visitation Aid** (p. 17) to help you plan your visit and better evaluate what exists at each campus.
4. Speak with your counselors, using the checklists to assist you in making a final choice.

# Campus Issues

## Using the Student Questionnaire

### HOW TO USE THIS SECTION

This discussion is grouped together by campus topic or issue. (The numbers after the topic name are the relevant questionnaire questions.) Each issue is explained and the different options described. After discussing the issue, we present guidelines for analyzing your questionnaire. If you are reading this booklet just for information purposes, you may skip the guideline sections.

You should fill out your wish list while you read this discussion. As you will notice, the wish list corresponds to the section titles. For each topic, circle the option that is right for you, and check off how important it is.

The wish list is not a grading sheet. Don't automatically write your preferences based upon any formula. Always read the entire analysis of a topic, consider the options, think carefully, and **go with your gut feelings**.

## JEWISH IDENTITY

### Amount of Jewish life (Questions 1-2)

How much does Jewish life matter to you? Is it just one of the many items you look for on a campus, or is it important enough to give up other desired aspects of campus life? In choosing a college you will quickly find that you can't have everything, and that compromises must be made. These two questions will help you decide how important campus Jewish life is to you. At the very least, it should help you decide to what extent you need to research a campus' Jewish life carefully.

#### *Guidelines*

*On question 1 the higher your answer, the more important it is that you consider Jewish life carefully. If you feel that your Jewishness, no matter how you define it, matters to you at level 4 or 5, but everyone else on the campus barely cares about being Jewish, it is unlikely that you will feel comfortable on that campus—no matter what else that college can offer you.*

*Of course, if you desperately want to study a certain subject, it might be worth being on such a campus; question 2 helps you set priorities. For the most part, the weight you place on the first three values will not effect college decisions. Even "having fun" can be found in abundance on most campuses (though if you sincerely want to be a "party animal" this will have an effect on your college choices). It is the second column that you should examine carefully. The higher Judaism is on this list, the more important strong campus Jewish life becomes relative when evaluating a "good college."*

### Types of Jewish activities desired (3)

Even if being Jewish matters very much, this does not imply that you need a campus with three Shabbat minyanim. If being Jewish means supporting Israel and you find that all the campus provides is great Shabbat atmosphere, you'll quickly discover that the two are not interchangeable. Look for a campus that fits your idea of Jewishness—to be sure that it can satisfy all of those components you consider central

and as many as possible of those you consider important.

### **Presence of sub-groups (4)**

You should try to find a campus that has groups that correspond to each of the terms you circled. If you circled two different denominations because you feel drawn to both, look for a school with both groups so that you will be able to explore these options during your college years. On the wish list, list all the groups you will be looking for.

In addition, if you plan to study in Israel for a year, also list “Israel returnees.” You will be much more comfortable on the campus if you have other people around who can relate to your experiences and offer guidance as you adjust to campus life.

## **SOCIAL**

In the long run, finding a campus that is socially appropriate for you is perhaps the most important factor you can look at. The more deeply your sphere of friends is rooted in the organized Jewish community, the closer your ties to it will be and ultimately the more comfortable you’ll be with maintaining a meaningful level of Jewish identity. Look, therefore, for a group which you feel comfortable with: people whom you feel you’d like to get to know and hopefully become friends with.

### **Size of social pool desired (5)**

Are you looking for a campus with 400 identifying Jews or will 30 suffice? This depends a lot on how large a group of friends you’ll want. If you are to be firmly rooted in the Jewish community, you’ll want most of your friends to come from that group.

#### ***Guidelines***

*By looking at the size of social you wrote down for 5a and 5b, decide which group you fall into. Keeping in mind that you won’t become good friends with everyone you meet, look for a social pool that is significantly larger than the numbers you wrote.*

### **Attraction to Jewish community (5-7)**

It is always important that the Jews you meet when you visit the campus be the kind of people you’d feel comfortable with. However, if you spend a lot of your time with friends (question 6), it is very important that you can find these friends from among the Jews on the campus. Similarly, if intimate friends are the main part of your social circle (questions 5a and 7b) you’ll want to find these people within the Jewish group. Spend extra time getting a feel for the people who participate in the community: are they the kind of people you’d like to spend much of your time with? Are there enough people you’d like that you’ll make intimate friends? Needless to say, you won’t be able to answer these questions with certainty—making friends is hardly a predictable game – but the more educated a guess you make now, the easier things will be for you later.



## Diversity (8-9)

Diversity within the Jewish group may be a welcome change for some students comfortable with their own identity and curious about new perspectives that may sometimes strongly differ with their own. Others may feel more secure with students that have similar backgrounds and viewpoints and prefer to avoid or minimize challenges in their college experience. While the common wisdom is that college diversity makes one well-rounded, it is entirely legitimate for you to put limits on it. You may feel that you will be exposed to enough ideas in class and in general campus life and would rather have the calm security of similar friends when it comes to Jewish activities.

### **Guidelines**

*Question 8 deals with both diversity of personality and diversity of outlook. By looking at your current group of friends, try to project what you'd like on campus. Use your answers to choose an option for "social diversity."*

**8a and d:** *You probably prefer to avoid diversity.*

**8c and f:** *Look for diversity.*

*Other combinations: These show varying amounts of comfort with diversity. If you mixed letters, such as 8a and f, you may like one type of diversity, but not another. (In this case, religious diversity, but not diverse personalities.)*

*Question 9 shows how you feel about diversity in viewpoints. Begin by looking at your interest in "overall" diversity. Many a's and b's show general comfort with diversity (if you have many a's diversity may be very important to you.) On the other hand, many b's and c's indicate general discomfort.*

*Since we sometimes like diversity only in certain aspects of our ideas, you can narrow down your choices. How you felt about the last two topics will indicate your preferences on diversity of "religious" ideas. In addition, the three topics before that should tell you your interest in having diverse views of "Jewish political" issues within the Jewish community itself.*

## Type (open vs. insular) of community (10-11)

One of the biggest differences between campus Jewish organizations is their approach to outsiders.

### **Open**

Some groups constantly seek to attract new members and make others feel comfortable. In addition to whatever activities are provided for the established members, they also run programs which are geared to the outsider. Such a group will seek out the Jews on campus and invite them in, usually in a friendly and warm way. There are two main reasons why you might want such a campus. First, if you are not comfortable breaking into new groups, an "open" campus group will help. Once you let them know you exist, they will begin to welcome you.

Secondly, if you're very outgoing and thrive on meeting new people, you might become one of the people who help make the group so open. Once you've been in college for some time and are comfortable yourself, you'll probably enjoy expressing yourself in a Jewish way by helping bring new members into the group. An "open" group would be an exciting and fulfilling place for you to be.

### **Insular**

Other groups focus their energies inward to provide for the members they

already have; most of their activities are geared to the needs of current group. Usually, new members will be made comfortable—but only if the newcomer takes the first step. Thus, it takes more of an effort to get into the group, but once you are "in" the atmosphere will usually be warm and supportive. "Insular" should not be confused with "closed" or "narrow."

If you are comfortable in new situations, and are prepared to make an effort to become part of the existing group then an "insular" campus would be perfectly acceptable. Furthermore, if you are looking for a supportive atmosphere (see questions 12-16), then an "insular" community may be preferable—assuming that the existing community will be able to provide for your needs.

### **Guidelines**

*The scenarios of questions 10 and 11 deal with how comfortable you are meeting new people.*

***10d and 11a:*** You should consider an "open" campus very important (although an "insular" campus in which you feel very attracted to the current community would also be a reasonable situation).

***10a and 11e:*** You will almost definitely find an "open" campus most fulfilling.

***Any of 10a,b or 11d, e:*** You should consider an "open" campus.

***10c and 11b or c:*** consider the possibility that an "insular" campus may be more comfortable in the long run.

*Finally, take a look at the next section and decide if the supportiveness of some "insular" campuses may be for you.*

## **Supportiveness of atmosphere (12-14)**

This section deals with one of the hardest topics for us to face about ourselves -- how much we are affected by the influence of others.

Campus life presents many opportunities for Jewish growth and also many challenges. Some of these challenges are over; others, subtle. The best way to protect yourself is by choosing a Jewish group that helps you reinforce your Jewish commitments. We call this the **supportiveness of the atmosphere**. An **extensively** supportive campus feels warm and caring; students look out for one another, the programs help reinforce one's commitments and resources exist for dealing with your questions and doubts. Most important, however, is that in a supportive Jewish group others share the same commitments and views as you. The more challenged you will be, the more extensive the support you'll want, and the more subtle those challenges, the more extensive support you'll need. For many, **moderate** supportiveness is sufficient, and for some who can truly stand on their own a much more **limited** supportiveness will be enough.

### **Guidelines**

*The two most important factors going into your choices are the extent to which your peers influence your decisions and how well you can stand up against the pressure to conform. Neither of these can be determined by a few questions on a questionnaire. You'll have to decide these things for yourself, but questions 12-14 and a heavy dose of honest introspection should help. Read the discussion below, think hard, then decide for yourself how supportive a campus you want.*

### Peer Influence (12)

*The more of your life you share with friends, the more they will affect you (both positively and negatively), and the more important it will be for your close friends to be within the Jewish group and be supportive of your commitments.*

*Question 12 will help you rate the extent of your peer involvement. Needless to say, if you answered 'a', you have strong peer ties and should consider "supportiveness" a very important issue. If you did not answer 'a', rate each answer circles according to the following point scale:*

*school, social, ideas: 1 point each*

*family problems: 2*

*feelings: 3*

*If the sum of your answers is 4 or more, you should consider the issue as "very important."*

### Conformity vs. Individualism(13-14)

*Standing out in a group is never easy, yet if you plan to maintain Jewish commitment, campus life will demand that you do this often. Most of us tend to go along with the group most of the time and therefore need at least a "moderately" supportive atmosphere. Examine your answers to questions 13-14 to help you decide how good you are at standing up against the group.*

*In college, most of the daily decisions are not about big principles but about being able to live as you prefer. If you tend to go along with the group, find a campus where the group will tend to do what you want. If you chose 13c, meaning you didn't take a public stand on the issue, you'll need at least a "moderately" supportive campus. If you chose 13a, a "limited" atmosphere may be sufficient – especially if you answered "yes" to question 15.*

*Question 15 presents a conflict with authority. In college this will sometimes take the form of a professor who is against Judaism or religion in general. The more you are able to assert your own values against an authority figure, the more you can stand on your own.*

## **Size of compatible dating pool (15)**

Regardless of how you feel about dating now, we believe that you should consider this issue very important. By the junior and senior years of college many people date extensively, so you should be planning now for the future.

Though you may not marry someone you meet in college, whom you date impacts on your Jewish commitments, because we grow through our intimate relationships and because college-age dating often shapes what we will later look for in a prospective spouse.

The "dating pool" are those people whom you would consider potential dates.

### **Guidelines**

**15a:** Only count the observant community.

**15b:** Look at the size of the organized Jewish community.

**15c:** You may consider the number of Jews on the campus.

**15d:** You won't have any problems.

*Write in the definition of the compatible group onto your wish list.*

*Obviously, the larger the dating pool the better, but if you are limiting yourself by 15a or b, a large group may be harder to find and you should decide on the minimum size of your desirable dating pool. To make this decision, you'll have to take a guess based upon your current habits and how important you currently feel dating is to you.*

## Available Housing Options (16)

Many factors go into "how Jewish" you want your living atmosphere to be. Need for diversity may lead you away from it, while supportiveness and need for community may lead you towards it. Use question 16 as your guide to what is objectionable and what is preferable. Here are the possible options and why they may or may not be right for you:

**Dormitory** - Be ready for many situations that may be difficult on your religious commitment (see Introduction). If you can preselect your roommate, this will take some bite out of the shock. If you answered 'd' to any of the first three blanks of question 16, then this is a necessity (i.e., very important).

**Single-Sex Dorms** - This may moderate the amount of challenging situations. Many non-Jews who have chosen such dorms follow a more conservative lifestyle that will be more compatible with traditional Judaism. The dorm, however, could include students who were just placed there or those who want a quieter dorm for weekdays but go crazy on weekends. Visit first. This could still be problematic for the 'd's if there is no roommate selection.

**Off-Campus Housing** - This option allows you to preselect your room/housemates. It can be a growth experience by thrusting many new responsibilities upon you such as paying the bills and participating in upkeep of the house. For some, this would be an unwelcome hassle and thus to be avoided. Another disadvantage is that it is harder for a freshman living off-campus to break in socially. This can somewhat be compensated for by regular membership in the kosher kitchen. The big advantage is that you feel less assimilatory pressures than in the dorm. You will live with people you choose and your friends will also be of choice, not just the students on your floor, as is common in dorm life.

**Organized Jewish Housing** - This can be a Young Israel House, Chabad House, a "Bayit" or anywhere else Jewish students have organized a housing option aimed at encouraging Jewish life and providing a support base for its inhabitants. This option is half way between dorm and off-campus options. If such a possibility exists, check it out to make sure you know all about it, as such houses differ widely in religiosity, composition and residents' responsibilities.

## POLITICAL

### Confrontational campus (17-18)

While most of us are prepared to defend our political views, we find frequent attacks on our most basic assumptions to be very unpleasant. For others, however, such attacks are opportunities to strengthen beliefs and to convince others as well.

On some campuses, political arguments are frequent occurrences. We call such a campus a **confrontational campus**—one where confrontation with radically opposing viewpoints is likely and maybe even unavoidable. Most of your school career has probably been spent in an atmosphere where everyone assumes that Israel is the "good guy." Debates may take place over specific issues (e.g., giving back the West Bank), but everyone agrees that Israel has a right to exist. On a campus with much political activity, especially if there is a Palestinian presence, this assumption

itself is a problem. On a confrontational campus you will come into contact with intelligent, rational people who view Israel as an aggressor. They will run discussions (much like yours), hang up signs (the Jews do this too), and write for the school newspaper (just as you do). In such a situation, you cannot avoid the need to defend your most basic beliefs. This differs from the diversity issue (see above) because the discussion has moved from dinner conversation with friends to far more passionate argument with serious opposition. Some people will thrive and grow in such a situation; for others it is most uncomfortable.

If you don't like confrontation you should avoid such a campus. It is unlikely that a non-confrontational person on a confrontational campus will find their Jewish commitments destroyed (although it is possible), yet it can be a distinctly unpleasant experience.

### **Guidelines**

*Question 17 deals with how you feel in a confrontational setting, while 18 discusses how you would react. In order to feel comfortable on a confrontational campus, you must both feel good about the situation and be able to handle it with sophistication.*

**17a:** *If you feel very tense in such a situation, you will probably not want this to be a daily occurrence, even if you are well prepared to debate the issues. You are best off avoiding a highly confrontational campus.*

**17b:** *This gives you a little more leeway, but may still indicate a need to avoid high levels of confrontation.*

**17c or d:** *These answers suggest that you may be comfortable at a confrontational campus.*

*You will not find it taxing emotionally and it may help you grow intellectually. Even with such an attitude, however, you may still feel drained or exhausted if you always come up on the short side of the argument. To determine this use the guidelines for question 18.*

**18b or c:** *These are both good arguments that can be made and defended. Whether you "win" or not, you will have made an intelligent answer and have earned the respect of those students at the scene.*

**18a:** *This answer will not be considered appropriate on most college campuses. You will be viewed as overly militant and bordering on the paranoid (even though the student who came up to you may well be an anti-Semite). Since your approach will, in general, not be appreciated, you may end up with a lot of frustration and anger. This could also be a reason to avoid high levels of confrontation.*

**18d:** *This answer requires further thought as to why you avoided the confrontation. If it is because you don't like confrontation (check your answer to question 17), then simply try to avoid a confrontational campus. If it is because you honestly felt that an argument would distract attention from the cause at hand (meaning Soviet Jewry), then you may still manage well at a confrontational campus.*

*One final issue: As a general rule, confrontational campuses tend to have more political activity. Thus, if you want such activities (see next question), a confrontational campus might be desirable.*

## **Jewish political activities (19)**

Among the many types of activities Jewish groups run are political programs dealing with Soviet Jewry, Israel, etc. Not all campuses have organized activities, so if you want to be involved in such matters, you should look for a campus that already has these activities. While it is true that you can organize them yourself, a campus that isn't already involved in the political scene probably doesn't have enough interest to get it rolling either.

**Extensive** activities means that a campus has both educational programs (e.g., "How to respond to Arab propaganda") and political action (e.g., a lobby trip to

Washington).

**Moderate** activities means some educational programs, but very little political activities. On the other hand, a **limited** campus indicates minimal programs of either type—usually because of limited interest.

### ***Guidelines***

*If you answered a 4 or 5 to question 19, a campus with extensive activities is for you, especially if you also want a "confrontational" campus (see previous section). If you answered 5, you should consider this issue "very important." If you answered 3, moderate activity levels are fine. If you answered 4 or 5 a moderately active campus may prove to be acceptable if it looks like more action is a possibility in the future. If you wrote 1 or 2, a campus with limited activities will suffice.*

*Note: If you answered that "nationalism" is a central component of your Jewish identity (question 3), you should choose moderate or extensive and check off "very important."*

## **RELIGIOUS**

### **Religious needs (20)**

Being observant on a college campus means that you will need certain institutions. Without them, being observant is almost impossible and having available kosher food isn't the whole picture. For each resource there are three options:

**Weak** - the resource barely exists or doesn't exist at all.

**Passable** - there are adequate resources available for you, as an individual, to observe Jewish law.

**Strong** - the resources are extensive and there is strong commitment to observance by others in the community.

### Additional details

#### **Social conduct:**

This euphemism deals with attitudes toward sexuality. If you consider Jewish sexual prohibitions to be important, make sure that others in the Jewish community share your views. Don't forget – these will be the people you'll be dating, and unshared assumptions about what will be okay can be very uncomfortable.

Furthermore, you must look at the general campus attitudes toward sexuality. If the campus is very open, and you have a more limited view of pre-marital sex, then you should look for the availability of single-sex dorms and other options to reduce your having to deal with awkward situations.

#### **Kippah / Skirt:**

Wearing a kippah or a skirt may seem like something you do on your own, but if no one else is wearing one, it'll be almost impossible to last four years going against the stream. Thus, if it's important to you, look to see how many others dress likewise.

Another "resource" for this issue is having a very accepting campus. If the general campus culture is very accepting of people doing things their own way, you will feel much more comfortable wearing a kippah or a skirt.

### **Guidelines**

*As a general rule, only choose "weak" for an item in question 24 to which you gave a 0 or 1. If you wrote 2-3, "passible" may be enough. 4: "passible" may suffice, but look for "strong." 5: you will need "strong" resources.*

*In addition, on question 28, if you answered 'a' to any of the situations, consider it "important" or "very important" to have "strong" resources in those areas.*

*If you wrote 4 or 5 for "spirit of Shabbat," consider "strong" resources to be "very important." (The campus visit discussion will explain what is meant by strong Shabbat resources.)*

## **Religious levels of Jewish community (20-21)**

The **religious level of the community** isn't an issue of how many observances people do, or even of whether they are Reform or Orthodox, it is a question of how committed people are to religious observances - however defined. Some campuses provide extensive resources, but the students are very **compromising** in their attitudes. If you are very committed to religious practices you'll probably feel very uncomfortable. Furthermore, over time, the odds are that you'll begin to share the same view as everyone around you.

Other communities are **committed** to religious ideals; these ideals are important to them, students observe rituals regularly, and there is some religious feeling.

All **intense** community is one in which religion is invested with feeling and clear commitment. These are outstanding communities where the chances of religious growth are excellent.

### **Guidelines**

*Needless to say, the more intense the community the better. The minimum you should be looking for, however, is a community that is just a bit more committed than you are. Four years is a long time, and you will probably increase or decrease your own commitment to match that of the religious group.*

*If you answered 5 to more than two of the topics in question 20, then look for an intense community.*

**21a:** *An intense community is very important.*

**21b:** *An intense community is desirable, but a committed community may suffice.*

**21c:** *A committed community is desirable but not essential. An exception to this would be if you indicated many strong religious needs in the previous question. If you answered 4-5 several times on question 20, you may still need a committed community.*

**21d-e:** *A compromising community is sufficient, particularly if it has any ritual resources you need (see above).*

## **Availability of religious consultation (22)**

Over your four years in college, you will probably have many questions. Some will be intellectual doubts: others, dilemmas on how to act. The best resource for confronting such problems is having an adult with more knowledge and experience to turn to for advice. This person may be the Hillel rabbi, a professor, or even a graduate student. Usually it's best to have different people to talk to about different issues.

Having such a resource is desirable for everyone, and it certainly can't hurt. You should look for people who are readily available and to whom it seems like you can relate well.

### **Guidelines**

*If you answered 22a or b, then you should check this issue as being "very important" (unless you will have easy access to your current advisor and he/she is familiar with campus issues).*

*If so, try to find people who are most like your current advisors.*

## **Sense of religious community (23)**

Some campuses provide for all of one's religious needs: kosher food, minyan, classes, etc., yet they do not have a religious community. Even if there are many religious Jews on the campus, it may be nothing more than a collection of individuals with similar needs. This is a campus with a **limited** sense of community feeling: people participate in group activities, but there is very little bond between them. The general attitude is that the kosher kitchen and minyanim are resources for those who want them, rather than the basis of a community. If you are the type of person who draws religious inspiration from communal experiences, then such a campus can never meet your religious needs.

**Moderate or extensive** campuses have two factors. First, the members of the religious community are interested in each other as friends. There is warmth and a bond between individuals.

The second, more important, factor is a sense that the community exists to support its members intellectually, emotionally and spiritually, and they are committed to making sure it lives up to expectations. On such a campus, responsibilities (e.g., leading davening, preparing divrei Torah) are shared amongst community members.

The difference between moderate and extensive is more a matter of degree of feeling rather than anything concrete. You will have to choose, therefore, between the two options based upon how much of a desire and need you have for community.

### **Guidelines**

*If religion matters at all, then clearly it is always better to be on a campus with a sense of religious community. If you decided that you want a supportive community, and religion is of concern to you, then you probably also should look for a campus with a sense of religious community. In the long run, it is this community feeling which will provide much reinforcement of religious ideals.*

*Question 23 deals with what experiences help intensify and provide for religious enthusiasm.*

*If you felt positive (23b) about synagogue, Simchat Torah, dinner with friends or youth group, then look for a campus with at least a moderate sense of community. If you answered 'a' to any, you'll probably want to circle "extensive." If you answered 'a' to a number of these an extensive sense of community is very important. (If you answered 'a' for Simchat Torah and/or youth group, it may be that you are particularly inspired by the ruach at these events. If so, look for a campus which has such ruach (e.g., singing during davening or at Shabbat dinner), and write "ruach" onto your wish list.)*

*If, on the other hand, your a and b answers were found on the chesed or praying by oneself options, a campus that provides institutions but has limited sense of community may suffice.*



## **Campus conduciveness for Jewish exploration (24)**

You may have had trouble answering this question, as it may be something you haven't thought much about. The attitude you eventually take, however, could be of great significance. Let's take an example: A Lubavitch rabbi may often invite students on your campus to his home for Shabbat dinner. You know that your family and high school are uncomfortable with Lubavitch Chassidut, but you don't know why. It might be a growth experience to go to such a dinner and see for yourself whether there is something to gain from this family's approach to Judaism. Exploration in this case also means you have the option to totally reject their approach, but only after you have examined and openly compared it to your own.

### ***Guidelines***

*Regardless of your answer to this question, realize that most students do some serious exploration at some point in their college years. Therefore, it is a good idea to look for a campus that will be conducive to such exploration. Beyond this, make sure there is adequate and knowledgeable religious consultation available to help you defend your current positions, by answering questions you may have from a position of greater knowledge.*

*24a-b: While this is an important issue for you also, it may not be the most crucial issue on your campus search.*

*24c-d: This should be one of the major issues on your campus search. If you feel a potential need for exploration now, this will only grow in college. If other Jews are not interested in helping you or will even mock your exploration, you may feel a great deal of tension. This is a destructive situation that may, in some cases, pull you away from the Jewish community.*

## **Community approach to "Women and Judaism" (25)**

The role of women in Judaism (especially in the synagogue) has become a very touchy and emotional issue in the Orthodox community. Sentiments run deep, and most of us have trouble adapting to settings where the view is very different from our own. This is true for both men and women.

At the same time, college campuses are often havens for experimentation, and sometimes the synagogue arrangement is very liberal. Other campuses, however, may be very conservative in their outlook, and still others have many options. Look for a campus which roughly matches your own perspective, since this will save you much discomfort later on.

One side point: There are campuses that have very extensive feminist activities, but the Orthodox Jewish group is very conservative. If you are a religious feminist, avoid such a campus totally. The tension between your Jewish life and your general life will probably make you very unhappy and might even be sufficient to cause you to leave the Jewish community.

### ***Guidelines***

*The wish list doesn't provide the different options; therefore based on your answers to question 25 and your own thoughts, decide what you're looking for. On the wish list, indicate how important it is for you to have a campus that conforms to your view. If you found any of the situations very uncomfortable (d), consider this issue important. If you were outraged by any (e), then the issue is very important.*

## Quantity of learning options (26)

While you may or may not feel strongly about Jewish studies right now, our experience shows a very strong relationship between involvement in extracurricular learning and a positive Jewish college experience. The reason is simple: During your college years, you will be growing intellectually – new information, perspectives and maturity will assure changes in your general outlook. If there is no Jewish intellectual growth to match, you will leave college as a mature young adult with a sophisticated outlook on the world and a high school student's perspective on Judaism one which, needless to say, will not withstand much challenge. The more attractive learning options exist and the more students participate, the greater the chance that you will be able to join and enjoy one or more of these options.

Remember, this is not an issue of how religious you are. Even if you feel you don't want any religious commitment, you should still learn texts, or at least study Jewish History.

A campus with an **extensive** learning program is one that includes three or more weekly classes at different levels, at least eight students learning "bechevruta," and several lectures per semester. Furthermore, most of the seriously involved Jewish students participate in this program.

A **moderate** program includes at least one attractive weekly class and several lectures per year. A significant number of the seriously involved students participate.

Anything less would qualify as a **limited** program.

### *Guidelines*

*While the decision to learn is one you will have to make for yourself in college, you should consider this issue "very important." If you go to a school with limited learning options you will have made an irrevocable choice not to learn even before you start college.*

*The real issue is how extensive a program you should look for. Interestingly, the general rule is that the less committed you now are, the more extensive the program you should look for. That way the attractiveness and availability will make it easier for you to learn.*

*Question 26 indicates how committed to learning you are. If you answered 26a or b, you are very committed to learning and will be able to handle a campus with only moderate options. If, on the other hand, you responded with c or d, you should look for an extra push to help make learning easier for you a campus with an extensive learning program.*

## Forms of learning options (27-28)

Everyone differs in what form of Jewish learning suits them best. Given the above-mentioned importance of your involvement in much programs, it is necessary that you find out which situation is most beneficial and attractive to you. An important issue here is to determine how much structure you need. Some people have trouble following through with self-selected goals if they are without structure, as structure creates outside pressure that will encourage them to continue in their own goals. If you are such a person, you may want to look to classes as your best option.

In general there are three forms of learning on campuses:

**Chevruta** - This is when people get together to study a text. Sometimes two people learn together, yet other times larger groups are formed. Usually there is no particular leader to the group. Some campuses have a set time when all chevrotot learn in the same place, thus creating a very exciting atmosphere.

**Classes** - These are the informal classes and lectures arranged by the Jewish student group. Some classes are single lectures on a topic of interest, while others are ongoing.

**Courses** - These are the official college courses in Judaic Studies. Bear in mind that these courses are not always geared to you or your religious growth. Some courses may even be taught with hostility towards your perspective on Judaism. Thus, be careful regarding which courses and professors you consider positive options.

***Guidelines***

**'a' to both 27 and 28:** *You most likely need structure (classes).*

**'b' to 'c' to both:** *Chances are that you are independently motivated; you may want to look at the chevrita situation, even if you do not currently feel interested in such an option.*

**'a' in one case and 'b' or 'c' in the other:** *follow your answer in 28, since the enjoyment is crucial.*

**Content of learning options (29)**

The sages have said that a person will not learn anything except for what his heart desires. This is especially true for college students. It is likely that you will want to continue studying the topics you find interesting right now. A campus with an extensive Talmud program will do you little good if you really aren't interested in Talmud. You should, therefore, write on your wish list any topics you circled in question 29 (and any others you might be interested in).

# **College Visitation Aid**

## **USING THE CAMPUS CHECKLIST**

Now that you have a better idea of what will be important to you on a college campus, the question becomes how do you find out about the colleges that interest you. We have provided you with another checklist very similar to the one you have just filled out. Take a copy of it while making the crucial visits to any college you are considering, and use it to record your impressions. While some criteria are easy to find out (e.g., number of kosher restaurants), others are more require more detective work. We have, therefore, offered a few hints below to help you figure out the campus scene.

Before we continue, here are some brief suggestions about orchestrating the Jewish part of your campus visit.

A good place to start is with the local Hillel. Arrange for an appointment with the Hillel director and try to speak with students there. When you're at the Hillel office/house, look around: What is going on? Are there many students hanging out? Are there attractive programs advertised?

Next seek out the religious group, which is often loosely connected with the Hillel. Try to eat at least one meal with them and see if you fit in. If possible, spend a Shabbat there to really see what it's like, but avoid special Shabbatons since they are too artificial. Speak to as many people as possible on your visit to get many perspectives, and remember to keep your eyes and ears open at all times.

The longer your visit, the more accurate your evaluation. If, however, you only have two hours for your Jewish investigation: 1) Try to make it during a time when students are not in class and 2) only investigate those categories you checked off as "very important" on your wish list.

## **HINTS AND TIPS**

### **Amount of Jewish Life**

Ask about the number of Jews affiliated with the campus Jewish group(s). Get an idea about the number of activities going on by asking for a schedule of activities and looking at bulletin boards. Look into attendance at past activities. Ask students you meet how often they attend. Find out how many Jewish groups exist. Is there any sort of Jewish publication (e.g., newspaper)? If it is a campus where there is interaction with the local Jewish community or other colleges in the area, try to ask and get literature about it. (If no one on the campus knows anything about what's going on off-campus, it is a sure sign that no one goes off-campus for Jewish activities.) You should not designate a campus as "moderate" unless it has more than one Jewish organization and has at least two programs of Jewish interest per week. "Extensive" is a campus with many Jewish organizations and a packed schedule.

Ask non-Jewish campus tour guides about the Jewish or pro-Israel presence: is it active enough to make an impression on the general student body?

## **Types of Jewish Activities**

In addition to the above, try to speak with people who are involved in groups that would interest you. Again, go beyond talk and look for tangible evidence of activity.

## **Size of Social Pool**

Whom will you be looking to for your close friendships? Be honest; if it will be predominantly students with Jewish interests, use the number you used for "amount of Jewish life" (i.e., affiliated Jews). If it is more specific, such as yeshiva high school graduates, etc., don't be afraid to ask how many such students there are.

## **Attraction to Jewish Community**

Over lunch, collect facts about the other students such as their religious and geographic backgrounds, their interests and viewpoints and whatever is important to you, to see how compatible you are with other Jewish students. Talk to people and ask yourself how excited you feel about joining this group.

## **Diversity**

This is a good question to ask the Hillel director, who may have a "bird's eye" view. Once again, the number of different organizations will be useful. Are there groups that oppose each other (for example, Tagar vs. Progressive Zionist Alliance)? A good sign of religious diversity is to ask about the various groups that hold services on Friday nights and their attendance (you may find out about groups you never knew existed).

## **Type of Community**

How open and welcoming are they about recruiting you and other prospective freshmen? Are you being approached by the students and do they show an interest in you? These are signs of an open, outgoing group and the opposite often means an insular group. Beware of the Orthodox group that is open to you because you are wearing a kippah, but is insular and unwelcoming to the next Jewish student who is not wearing one.

Another good indication of an open group is a positive attitude towards Jewish outreach. Ask if they are involved with KIRUV (see preface) or other outreach groups; check if any classes or programs exist that attempt to introduce Jewish ideas to less educated, less affiliated Jewish students. Here also, the perception of the Jewish group by the other students is important, so ask non-Jews or non-affiliated Jews. Look at publicity posters and pamphlets for indications. The more attractive the posters the more they care about what other people think of it, and the more open the group.

## **Supportiveness of Atmosphere**

How warm and tight-knit a group is it? While you may not feel comfortable

bringing it up on a two-hour visit, if you stay over a weekend ask one of the students with whom become friendly if he/she has gone through a crisis or a difficult time and if the community was helpful and in what ways. Try to notice if serious concern is displayed by the members of the group for each other. Find out how much time the group spends together. Ask about the relationship with the Jewish Studies faculty. Ask students with beliefs similar to yours if they feel they have to defend their views because of faculty members who are aggressive in opposing views. If you are on the more observant side of the religious needs category, find out how many other students are like you ("how many kippot") and how well they are accepted by others. Ask such students if they feel pressure to compromise their standards (see also [Availability of Religious Consultation](#)). Extensive supportiveness is something you should pick up right away, since students feel very comfortable being Jewish on campus; limited supportiveness will be the opposite. Moderate supportiveness means that a struggle to be Jewish exists but can usually be won thanks to the Jewish community.

## **Size of Compatible Dating Pool**

See [Size of Social Pool](#)

## **Available Housing Options**

Find out about the attractiveness and feasibility of private or Jewish communal housing. Speak to people who have chosen such options don't forget about the convenience or inconvenience of location. If Jewish communal housing is available, make sure that you can "live with" the students there by spending time in the house and sleeping over if possible.

## **Confrontational Campus**

Ask if there is an area where groups put out information tables (if there is no such area or the only groups out there are fraternities selling raffle tickets to hot-tub marathons, stop right there; this is not a confrontational campus). Look at what sorts of groups are out there and if they are vocal. The more varied the groups, the more likely the confrontation.

Be particularly attentive to the existence of Arab-student, far-leftist, far-rightist or Christian fundamentalist groups that would likely be in confrontation with Jews. Again, extensive and limited confrontation is easy to figure out. A moderate amount of confrontation means there should probably have been at least one major controversial event (i.e., Farrakhan speech) in the previous year.

## **Jewish Political Activities**

Find out how politically active and interested the students are when you talk to them. If they don't raise issues, bring them up yourself. What are the political events organized by Jewish groups and how well-attended are they? Find out when was the last time they had any sort of political rally. Is there much pro-Israel information on the campus? You can ask non-Jews about that. Look back to the Campus Issues section to define extensive, moderate and limited levels of activity.

## **Religious Needs**

For each of the categories outlined, ask how many students are observant and whether the necessary institutions exist (kosher kitchen, minyan, etc.). Ask questions about the institutions: how fast/slow is davening, what sort of kashrut supervision exists at the kosher kitchen, etc. Spirit of Shabbat can be tricky; one good indication is the Shabbat afternoon schedule. If students go back to their rooms and study, Shabbat afternoon will not be very "Shabbosdik. " At some schools, students use this time for walks, socializing and/or Torah study. Another indication is what goes on during the Shabbat meal. A strong Shabbat spirit means a Dvar Torah and/or zmirot and an activity (formal or informal) after dinner. Also find out about the Yom Tov atmosphere and whether the school lets out for the High Holidays and Pesach.

## **Religious Levels**

This is a difficult aspect to determine. Listen to inflection and mood when you talk about religious issues with students. Do students sound enthusiastic about their religious priorities or are they religious out of habit? A good litmus test is the amount of extracurricular learning and enthusiasm about it.

## **Availability of Religious Counseling**

Ask students about the people who might give religious counseling, and whether anyone makes use of it. Make sure there are people whose level of knowledge inspires your confidence. If you consider the Hillel rabbi as a possible counselor, speak to your local rabbi about him (or her). Make sure you find out his or her denomination. Find out how accessible he or she is with other students.

## **Sense of Religious Community**

Do you notice a sense of religious community - is there any sense of being an extended family? Attend a communal (e.g., Shabbat) dinner or activity and observe whether people linger afterwards because they feel very comfortable.

## **Availability of Family Hospitality**

Ask if there is a family hospitality program for Shabbatot and holidays, if it is frequently used and what sort of families are involved (i.e., what are their reputations).

## **Campus Conduciveness for Exploration**

Try to notice whether the tone and content of serious discussions indicate that people are open to change. Another indicator might be how tolerant people with different political and religious views are towards one another. Tolerance assures greater security in exploration. The Jewish group will sometimes take its cue from the general atmosphere on campus. If many ideas are discussed and tolerated, chances are that there is a sense of exploration on campus. Check this out by looking at the type of cultural levels, etc., advertised on campus. Look also at the student newspaper

for diversity and tolerance.

### **Community's Approach to "Women and Judaism"**

Ask about particular issues that concern you. Find out if there is a vocal feminist group on campus, and if so, how it is viewed by the Jewish students. See to what extent women participate in and lead Jewish activities. A serious representation of women in leadership positions can, but need not necessarily be, a sign of sensitivity to women's issues.

### **Quantity of Learning Options**

Find out how many people participate in Judaic Studies courses: either in regular classes given by the college, in extracurricular classes or by chevrita. Ask students about the reputation of each of these options. How many teachers give formal/informal classes? What is their ideology and reputation? The more frequent and well-attended the informal classes and lectures, the more extensive the learning program and reinforcing the atmosphere towards the Jewish learning (refer back to Campus Issues for concrete guidelines).