

How Come Campus Is The 'Graveyard' Of Jewish Youth?

By ALBERT W. BLOOM Executive Editor of The Chronicle

If the college campus is the "graveyard" of the Jewishness of Jewish youth--that's not too surprising.

"A graveyard is a place where you're taken when you are already dead," says Dr. Daniel Elazar, who happens to be a Jewishly Jewish professor.

"For those who are already dead when they get there, it (the campus) is a graveyard," added Dr. Elazar, professor of political science and Director of the Center for the Study of Federalism at Temple University, Philadelphia.

The suggestive evidence is, Dr. Elazar indicated, that in all too many cases, the Jewishness of Jewish youth was dead before they were brought to the campus "graveyard"

Dr. Elazar spoke twice in Pittsburgh last week--first on Wednesday before the first Jewish Community Forum of 1972, dealing with Jewish education, and sponsored by the United Jewish Federation at Shaare Torah Congregation. On Sunday, Dr. Elazar addressed "Identicom II", the Second Annual Conference on Jewish Identity at the Squirrel Hill Y-IKC, sponsored jointly by the Pittsburgh Chapter, American Jewish Committee and the Y-IKC.

Wryly, Dr. Elazar, a soft-spoken sharp minded fellow, remarked:

"I believe it is possible to get a good Jewish education in the United States -- but it is not very likely."

He made a careful distinction between "Jewish education" and the "mitzvah" of Jewish study.

"Jewish education" is what we give "them" (children) to make and keep them Jewish in the future.

"Study" is a Jewish mitzvah, or duty, which is enjoined upon all Jews, regardless of age.

He noted that any community, or country, that wants "to maintain its integrity" must follow two basic policies.

• Defense--as in the defense of Israel, or the "social



DR. DANIEL ELAZAR

Stirs "rhythm of life,"
defense" agencies of
America.

• Education--imparting the "mores, values, and the ways of life" of a people or community or country.

"Because Jewish education is what it is, we must present a comprehensive educational program--from pre-school 'head start' through college level.

"Jewish education," he noted, "is principally designed to produce Jews. Ideology is important, but is secondary to the overriding purpose of Jewish education." Same for all the other tangential and social niceties.

Since World War II, he said, about "one third to one half of Jewish children of school age receive some kind of Jewish education."

He defined as "functional illiterates" those who operate with five years or less of Jewish schooling.

Dr. Elazar urged that "nothing be allowed to interfere with the independence" of Jewish education, nor should it be allowed to be linked as a secondary institution--in the sense that a synagogue or temple consider its school as a secondary service. Education must be primary and it must be independent, says Dr. Elazar.

Further, he noted, "Jewish education" is far more encompassing" than classroom schooling. But, rather, includes the home environment, formal and informal schooling, Jewish summer camping.
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educational tours to Israel, and "new packages" of Jewish education.

No longer, he said, can we afford the divisive cleavages among different types of Jewish education.

Dr. Elazar, who serves on the board on a Jewish Day School in Philadelphia, remarked that the professional Jewish educator is "second, third, or fourth man on the totem pole".

Modern Jewish life is beginning to recognize that "Jewish institutional life shapes both the public and the private domain."

People realize that they must act with a community consciousness when they function publicly. Further, public life can shape private lives.

American Jewry has a particular responsibility, representing as it does some 40 percent of the 13½-million Jewish in the whole world.

He cautioned against a dispersed Jewish population, with a near-Zero population growth, and a Jewish "disconnected" suburbia.

Dr. Elazar sees Jewish life as "series of concentric circles" with the inner circle's strength and toughness drawing like a magnet against the "outer circles drift away" from the Jewish "rhythm of life."
