

Dear JCC Members and Friends,

I've just returned from the JCCs of North America annual *Mifgash* ("Gathering") conference for JCC CEOs and senior executives. Joining me once again was Andy Katz, Campus Director for the Schenectady JCC, attending for the fourth consecutive year. Janet Andrade, who has participated for the past three years, was unable to join us this time but we hope to have her back with us next year.

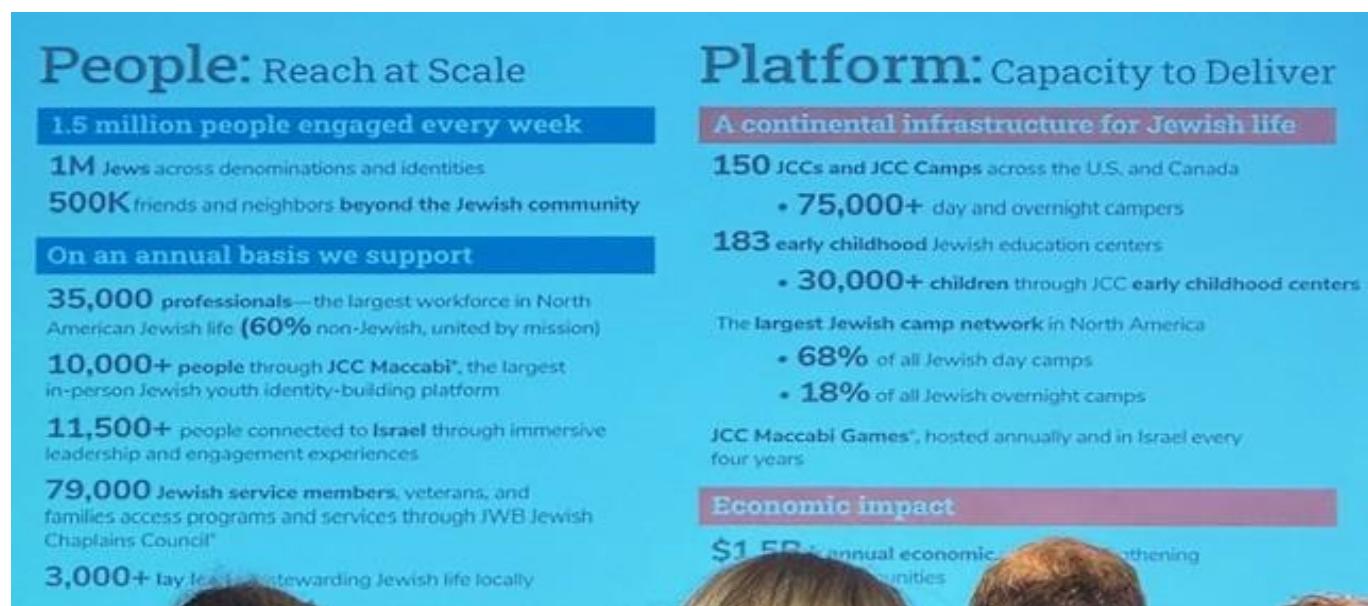
Conferences like these are designed to inspire and reenergize. You leave with renewed dedication to the work and, ideally, a few new ideas ready to take root at home. This year's *Mifgash* delivered all of that and more. It was the first conference led by Barak Hermann, the new President and CEO of JCC Association of North America.

Barak is both a colleague and a longtime friend. I've known him for more than two decades, and he has personal ties to the Albany area—his father served as a rabbi here many years ago. A product of both the Reform movement and the JCC field, Barak is uniquely suited to lead at this moment. Saying he is the right person for this role doesn't fully capture how essential his leadership feels right now. His conference-wide address on our final day was highly anticipated and perhaps accompanied by a bit of nervous energy. Would his vision meet the hopes and expectations of the field?

He introduced *Hazon* ("Vision") 2030—an ambitious roadmap for JCCs across the United States and Canada, with the potential to significantly strengthen Jewish life globally. The plan is grounded in current realities and trends, shaped by the many conversations Barak has already had in his first year with leaders and philanthropists at every level. It is bold and forward-looking, yet deeply rooted in who we are, where we are, and what we do. Most importantly, it reaffirms why we exist as a field, a network, and a movement: to connect and strengthen the Jewish people.



Since October 7, many individuals have doubled down on their commitment to Jewish identity, Jewish living, and Jewish community. JCCs have emerged as the preferred institutions for expressing and deepening that commitment. As the first chart shows, research from Jewish Federations of North America indicates that 77% of respondents view JCCs as destinations for renewal. That number is both extraordinary and challenging—we must be prepared to meet this moment with excellence. Both Albany and Schenectady are planning for this resurgence, with capital campaigns underway to enhance our physical spaces and reimagine the programs they will support.



Across the continent, as the second chart illustrates, we already stand on a remarkably strong foundation. More than one million Jews walk through JCC doors each week, along with another 500,000 neighbors. We are hubs of Jewish and general community engagement. We operate 183 early childhood centers serving 30,000 children daily. JCCs run 68% of all Jewish day camps and 18% of Jewish overnight camps, providing transformative summer experiences for 75,000 campers. And we employ 35,000 full-time professionals—the largest workforce in North American Jewish life, expanding dramatically each summer.

Hazon 2030 outlines several major areas of investment:

- **Talent Development:** Renewed training programs for executive directors and middle managers, along with new leadership development for volunteer presidents and board chairs.
- **Innovation and Impact:** Strategic use of technology to advance our mission. As Barak put it, we must be “architects of the future, not janitors of the present.” This includes reintroducing program consultants, beginning with wellness and fitness.
- **Jewish Joy and Diversity:** Intentional inclusion of programs for Jewish grandparents, intermarried families, interracial Jewish families, and LGBTQ+ families and individuals.
- **Jewish Family Engagement:** Strengthening our already significant role in early childhood education, camp, after-school programs, and family programming—positioning JCCs as the central address for major initiatives in this space.

Another important theme—one reflected in how this conference itself was planned—is a renewed commitment to a model of “by the movement, for the movement.” Planning will no longer be top-down but a shared responsibility between JCC Association and the field it serves.

As with any plan, Hazon 2030 will evolve. But the excitement in the room was unmistakable. After years in which things often felt misaligned, this vision feels right. We are living through an unprecedented moment in American Jewish history, and the JCC—one of the most quintessential institutions of the American Jewish experience—is poised to meet it.

David