

Temple Micah Roadmap

**A Living Framework to Guide Future Choices
and Decisions**

May 2020



The Temple Micah Roadmap is a project of Temple Micah in collaboration with The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Temple Micah community found itself engaged in a highly animated discussion about whether to purchase the house next door. The discussion unexpectedly raised a whole host of underlying questions. Among these were:

- Why would Micah even want to own the house next door, and how would it serve the community?
- How would the house fit into some larger idea of who Micah is and who Micah seeks to be?
- What are the trade-offs of using our limited resources to expand our physical home when we are currently working so hard to engage Jews outside of our building?

It soon became apparent from this discussion that Micah needed a clearer picture of how we want to build on our promising history and where we seek to go in the future—and why.

Since early 2019, Temple Micah has partnered with The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation to create a Roadmap for Micah's Future (see page 47 for complete background). The Roadmap is a living, forward-looking framework, intended to guide the temple's future choices and decisions. It enables Micah to serve the evolving needs of the Micah community, the broader Jewish community in the region, and American Judaism.

The Roadmap is rooted in the voices and vision of the Temple Micah community. In-depth small group and one-on-one conversations were held with a cross-section of Micah members, as well as with young families and individuals, many associated with Micah's Storefront initiative. In addition, questions were posted in the temple's lobby for people to post their reflections. In keeping with the temple's culture, these conversations were open to all Micah

members, and every effort was made to engage the temple's members in the Roadmap conversations.

A Core Team, made up of the temple's clergy, board leadership and members, and the broader Temple Micah community, was formed to guide the initiative, sort through and make meaning of what was being learned from the engagement conversations, and build the Roadmap. The overall process was designed and guided by Rich Harwood, president of The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation and a Micah member.

On the following pages, the Roadmap will discuss:

- **The challenges facing Micah, American Judaism, and U.S. society** – everything that follows grows out of this larger context, because it is within this context that we live our lives and that Micah operates.
- **The way forward** – this includes key drivers for Micah's future, the importance of Micah as a "home" for people, and five critical levers for Micah to become an even stronger home moving forward.
- **The ability to take action** – the need for Micah to strengthen its own internal ability to act effectively on this Roadmap.

THE ROADMAP'S USE

Organizations of all kinds create plans to guide their futures. Many of these plans tend to be highly inward-looking, focusing primarily on the organization itself, its programs and activities, and financial forecasts. They often lock organizations into a specific set of activities. They can turn into static documents. Such plans have a time and a place.

This Micah Roadmap is different. Rather than create yet another program guide, it creates a frame for understanding the larger Jewish and American context in which we live our lives and in which Micah operates. It lays out a clear purpose to support people in seeking answers to fundamental questions about their whole lives—as individuals and as part of something larger than themselves. It articulates Micah's beliefs and approach to engaging American Jews, their partners, and their families in the modern era.

The Roadmap is a North Star for Temple Micah's clergy, board, volunteers, and community as a whole on the direction that the temple seeks to go in and the approach it seeks to take.

Its practical uses are many. For instance, it can guide us in:

- Weighing how annual budget decisions fit with this North Star;
- Determining whether Micah is cogently and consistently articulating a narrative about a new American Judaism;
- Evaluating and aligning Micah's programs with the Roadmap's critical levers;
- Knowing how the community can productively engage in the tough conversations that will inevitably emerge—on Israel, race and racism, economic inequalities, the health of American democracy, anti-Semitism, and other topics; and

- Examining whether Micah is truly engaging its members in being co-creators of their Jewish lives.

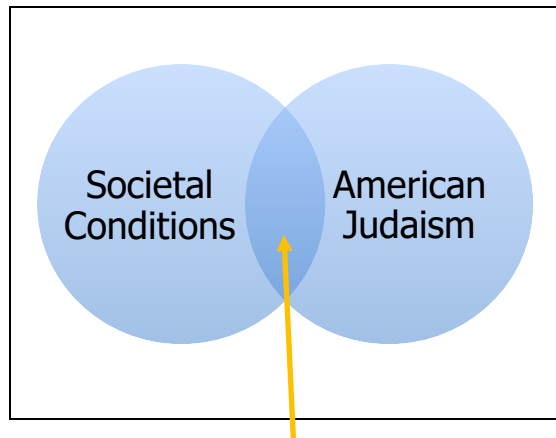
Jewish texts have always been thought of as living documents—to be engaged with, interpreted, weighed, and argued over. This Roadmap is created in that tradition. It doesn't provide "the answer." The Roadmap helps us, together, to find the right path at any given time. It does not replace the need to work through important judgments and weigh possible benefits and trade-offs. In keeping with Jewish tradition, it is an invitation for conversation and co-creating our shared lives.

Because it is a living document, future Micah groups will want to work together to evolve the Roadmap as the context around us changes.

THE CHALLENGES FACING MICAH, AMERICAN JUDAISM, AND U.S. SOCIETY

THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH WE OPERATE

Micah operates within a larger environment that dynamically shapes our context.



Temple Micah

- **Societal Conditions** – including the recent coronavirus pandemic, political polarization, more diverse consumer and lifestyle choices, a lack of trust in many governmental, civic, and other institutions, and a growing desire for belonging
- **American Judaism** – including diminishing membership in synagogues, greater experimentation with alternative forms of religious engagement and practices, more mixed marriages, changes in American Jewish identity, and struggles around Israel
- **Temple Micah** – seeking to be proactive within this changing dynamic; relevant, significant and impactful in people’s lives and faith; focused on helping people search for answers to fundamental questions about their whole lives; actively working to address changes and challenges around us

THE NARRATIVE THAT SHAPES US

Communities tend to have dominant narratives that shape mindsets, attitudes, actions and behaviors. Today, there is the need to shift the Jewish narrative about what it means to be a Jew and how to be a Jew in today’s world. This is an essential building block for Temple Micah’s future, its concern about American Judaism, and the implementation of the Roadmap.

SHIFT THE AMERICAN JEWISH DYNAMIC		
FROM	FACTOR	TO
Jewishness is rooted in a nostalgic, rigid, guilt-ridden idea	What is a Jew?	Jewishness is a new hybrid of what and who is a Jew that fits the current and emerging context
Judaism feels like a foreign language to many people that they cannot fully relate to	Personal Connection to Judaism	Judaism is a source of inspiration for your life and helps direct your heart
Many people feel that an imaginary rabbi sits on their shoulder, holding the Talmud, telling them that they don’t know enough	How Can I Tell if I am a Good Jew?	People evaluate whether they are good Jews by how they live their lives, and they recognize that they are already doing good things
Many people believe that they lack the skills and knowledge to be a good Jew (e.g., Hebrew, rituals, history), and look to rabbis to teach them	Jewish Knowledge & Skills	People see that they have the innate capabilities to develop much of what they need to know, while rabbis and others can provide the theological structure and guidance for more learning

<p>The next generation is going off in fundamentally different directions, which frays Jewish connections</p>	<p>The Next Generation Of Jews</p>	<p>People are finding new ways to connect across generations that fit the context of our times</p>
<p>Jewish identity is singular in its definition, even insular at times</p>	<p>Identity</p>	<p>People hold multiple identities, not just one, and these are actively acknowledged and integrated while speaking to the inner soul of each Jew</p>
<p>People hold strong and unified support for Israel</p>	<p>Israel</p>	<p>People have room to sort out what and how they think and feel about Israel</p>
<p>Jewish history in America is heavily identified with the Holocaust</p>	<p>The Holocaust</p>	<p>Jewish history in America includes the Holocaust and much more</p>
<p>People don't know what to do</p>	<p>Ability to Create the Future</p>	<p>People are co-creating their future and meaning</p>

THE WAY FORWARD

KEY DRIVERS FOR MICAH'S FUTURE

Moving forward, three key forces will drive Temple Micah:

1. Our understanding of Judaism and being in the world
2. Our belief that Judaism is fundamentally about doing things in the world
3. Our desire to engage and support others outside of Micah who seek to explore the meaning of Judaism with us

MICAH IS A HOME FOR EVERYONE

Home provides a sense of belonging, connection, identity, and safety—both when we are in our building and when we are away from it. When it comes to Temple Micah, our posture is one of Abraham and Sarah's tent:

- Our doors are wide open, with permeable boundaries between the inside and the outside of our tent.
- We welcome a diversity of people and the stranger: Jews, non-Jews.
- We meet people where they are and where they live.
- We hold an obligation to the wider Jewish world, not just to ourselves.
- We seek Jews who take their Judaism seriously and who serve as positive models for all people.

OUR HOME SUPPORTS PEOPLE'S SACRED AND SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

While each person is on their own journey, we focus on supporting people in seeking answers to fundamental questions about their whole lives—as individuals and as part of something larger than themselves

- What do you want?
- What are you trying to create?
- How can we help you find what you care about?

BECOMING AN EVEN STRONGER HOME: FIVE LEVERS

There are five critical levers Micah must embrace, become much more intentional about, and integrate in order to become an even stronger home.

1. **Double down on a new Jewish narrative** – give people a greater sense of coherence, meaning, and possibility about where we've come from as Jews and the journey that we're on together.
2. **Be explicit about The Human Project** – ground people with a sense of what we hold to be valuable as we make our journey.
3. **Support people in co-creating their Jewish lives** – enable people to have a greater sense of agency, ownership, and capability to shape their faith and lives.
4. **Tackle the tough conversations before us** – provide the spaces and conditions that people need to sort out what they think and believe on difficult issues, especially regarding Israel.
5. **Engage people beyond Micah** – engage with and learn from others about Micah's practice and understanding of Judaism.

1. DOUBLE DOWN ON A NEW JEWISH NARRATIVE

A critical need exists for a new Jewish narrative that counters the dominant narrative.

- This new narrative must offer a hopeful, inclusive alternative that is rooted in co-creating our shared future
- The new narrative must work to actively shift the American Jewish dynamic (see chart: Shifting the American Jewish Dynamic)
- The Human Project sits at the heart of this new narrative

2. BE EXPLICIT ABOUT THE HUMAN PROJECT

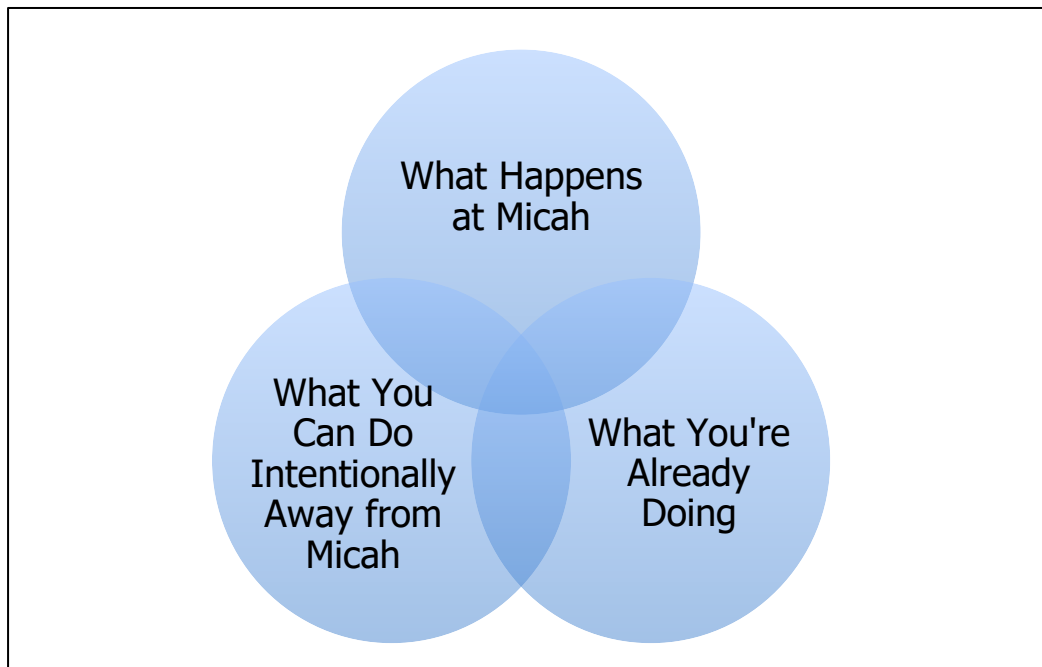
The Human Project is a set of ideas that Rabbi Daniel Zemel has been evolving during his time at Temple Micah, and which he has increasingly used to guide his leadership of the Micah community (see page 40 for more background). Given the importance of these ideas to his rabbinate, they should be made more explicit for the Micah community. The Human Project is defined by:

- Being a good person and what Judaism has to say to us about that
- Forming the self and our relationship to the larger community and world around us
- Affirming and ensuring dignity, love, respect, and a passion for truth
- Acting on the belief that we are here not simply to take up space—life is a journey and exploration to grow into, mature into, and give back to
- Teaching us about our shared humanity
- Expecting us to act on our responsibilities to each other and the larger community—both within Micah and beyond

3. SUPPORT PEOPLE IN CO-CREATING THEIR JEWISH LIVES

Our opportunity is to enable people to have a greater sense of agency, ownership, and ability to shape their faith and lives.

- There are three realms (see below) in which we must work proactively and simultaneously. Each contributes to supporting people in creating their own lives and enriching what they care about.
- These three realms are highly interdependent—one without the other is not sufficient.
- Together, these three realms create the foundation for Micah to become a stronger home for people—wherever they are



What Happens at Micah	What You Can Do Intentionally Away from Micah	What You're Already Doing
Provide services, education, programs, music, social justice and other endeavors	Offer ideas and guidance for "do it yourself" engagement that creates Jewish meaning in people's lives (e.g. make their own blessings, do music, garden)	Develop ways for people to identify, name, and celebrate how they are already living a Jewish life

4. TACKLE THE HARD CONVERSATIONS BEFORE US

People are wrestling with complex, knotty questions in their individual and shared lives.

- One key issue is Israel; others include race and racism, economic inequalities, the health of American democracy, and anti-Semitism.
- Micah must help create the right spaces and conditions for these hard conversations.

5. ENGAGE PEOPLE BEYOND MICAH

Temple Micah wants to engage with and learn from others about its practice and understanding of Judaism. We do this, for example, by:

- Supporting initiatives such as Storefront and Micah House
- Engaging new and often unaffiliated Jews
- Growing new talent—such as Tisch Fellows, aspiring and young rabbis, and others
- Providing a powerful Jewish voice through publicly sharing our panels, sermons and events
- Creating a shared language and direction for American Judaism

TEMPLE MICAH WILL CONTINUE TO GROW AND EVOLVE OVER TIME

As Judaism and our country evolve, we seek to creatively evolve and grow with them.

- We welcome a diversity of individuals and thought, new ideas, more learning, and additional resources.
- We seek to maintain our core aspirations as a community, which will require that we pay attention to our intimacy, resource constraints, potential dilution of purpose and identity, and the need to be explicit about who we are and our norms.
- We want to continually learn how to think and innovate in creative ways about how we make American Judaism open to all, relevant, and vibrant. We want to keep pushing the boundaries of Reform Judaism and Micah.

THE ABILITY TO TAKE ACTION

BECOMING AN EVEN STRONGER MICAH

Temple Micah is already an innovative, vibrant community. But it must strengthen its efforts in an intentional way to achieve the Roadmap, always focused on these three foundational building blocks:

- 1. Live Micah's shared aspirations** – keep Micah's aspirations front and center as a touchstone for moving forward
- 2. Focus on people's lives** – deepen an internal discipline of helping members create the lives they are searching for
- 3. Make shifts in how Micah operates** – more fully embrace a mindset and set of practices that undergird the implementation of the Roadmap

1. LIVE MICAH'S SHARED ASPIRATIONS

Temple Micah's aspirations should guide all of its efforts in implementing the Roadmap:

- To be here in 100 years
- To be a crossroads for people—a place of striving, ideas, questioning, exploration; a cross between the conventional and the unconventional
- To be a community made up of different people, experiences, and perspectives
- To innovate and be a role model for Judaism and a Jewish community
- To do our work with excellence
- To continue to have a reputation that draws top community members and staff/talent
- To ask, even challenge, people to embrace their responsibilities for making Micah work, and for making the world work as well

2. FOCUS ON PEOPLE'S LIVES

Micah must vigilantly focus on the temple's members when implementing the Roadmap:

- What do you want?
- What are you trying to create?
- How can we help you find what you care about?

3. MAKE SHIFTS IN HOW MICAH OPERATES

Micah must make important shifts in how it operates on a daily and strategic basis to achieve the Roadmap.

SHIFT HOW TEMPLE MICAH OPERATES		
FROM	FACTOR	TO
Done well with targeted groups (e.g. Wise Aging)	Do It Yourself Approaches	Infuse into the community as a new norm for how Micah members can engage in learning and doing
Implemented episodically, and tends to be top-down driven	Co-Creating	Make a consistent approach to how Micah works that is inclusive of more diverse voices, perspectives, and needs
Built into some efforts, depending on the individuals involved	Feedback Loops for Learning and Recalibration	Apply to all relevant efforts and executed with rigor and consistency
Provide strong but fragmented messages across a variety of communications vehicles, including The Vine, regular emails, sermons	Communications	Ensure clear, integrated messages that are consistent across all communications vehicles
Exhibited in certain areas, that include Micah House and Machon Micah	Stick-to-it-iveness	Create discipline throughout both overall strategy and individual efforts over time

SUBSTANTIVE ROADMAP NOTES

This section highlights key topics of the Roadmap, providing further background and clarity. It also includes a special piece written by Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel on the origin and meaning of The Human Project, along with selected background data on trends about Micah.

THE CENTRALITY OF MICAH AS HOME

The idea of Temple Micah as a “home” emerged as a strong theme in virtually every conversation with Micah members; the desire for a Jewish home was strong for non-members, too.

When Micah members talked about Micah as home, they often said that Micah is a place where they feel a sense of belonging, safety and security, and familiarity both with others and with Judaism. For some Micah members, it is the one place where they do not feel self-conscious about being a Jew. It is also a place where they do not face any anti-Semitism.

For many of us, the feelings we associate with “home” exist not only when we are in our physical home. Many, if not all of us, have deep memories that have stayed with us from our childhood home or other homes that were important to us. Jews, of course, have always yearned for home, especially given our history of exile.

Here are some of the discussed characteristics of home that are important to the Roadmap:

TEMPLE MICAH AS HOME	
When physically at home, it provides:	When physically away from home, it provides:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Roof/shelter ● Safety ● Comfort ● People ● Familiarity ● Permanence ● Your own created space ● A place to be alone ● God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People ● Love ● Memory ● God ● A need to tend to it ● Identity ● A story to tell yourself and others ● Where you're from ● Belonging and shared experience ● Source of greatest pain ● Nostalgia ● Traditions (touchstones)

The Roadmap calls for Micah to be more intentional about helping Micah members create a sense of Jewish home, both when they are in the temple and when they are outside it. A sense of a Jewish home—a sense of belonging, identity, and connection—should permeate our whole lives. This is why the Roadmap places such emphasis on helping Micah members co-create their Jewish lives while at Micah and while away from Micah.

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR HARD CONVERSATIONS

Holding hard conversations can be challenging. Different people come to the conversations with different expectations, views, values, lived experiences, and desires for certain outcomes. It's essential to create the right spaces with the right ground rules to foster productive conversations.

Here are some Do's and Don'ts to guide Micah on handling hard conversations:

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR ENGAGING ON HARD ISSUES	
DON'T	DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ignore the topic ● Tell people what to think* ● Look necessarily for a conclusion or consensus ● Shut people down and close off conversation ● Assume certain words mean the same things to different people ● Make people feel that they must hold a certain view to be a "good Jew" ● Assume all people have the same level of knowledge, experience and history on a topic ● Forsake core Jewish or Micah beliefs to ensure a courteous conversation ● Pretend it is an easy topic or conversation to have 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acknowledge that it's a hard issue ● Establish the "purpose" of the conversation and related parameters ● Set ground rules for engagement, including people listening openly, not making judgments, assuming good intentions, asking for clarification, and so forth ● Explore the complexity of an issue ● Provide context ● Look to Jewish texts for how to have hard conversations ● Make space for hard conversations and for people to struggle ● Hold the conversation over time – make room for learning and evolution ● Publicly wrestle with ambiguity, tensions, ambivalence ● Share different points of view, analysis and historical interpretations ● Create structure for the conversation

*There will be times, for instance, when we bring speakers in to articulate their positions.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ISRAEL

The topic of Israel was often raised in conversations with members; many believe it is a topic that deserves particular attention at Temple Micah.

Many members feel conflicted on their views about Israel, and there are divergent opinions about the subject within the Micah community. Members want a space to sort through what they believe, think, and feel without fear of discussions collapsing into heated, divisive arguments.

Micah members also do not want to be told or pressured to adopt a certain position on Israel, though they do welcome when the rabbis, speakers, and others help to illuminate the struggles, ambivalence, and tensions embedded in the Israel issue.

Here are additional Do's and Don'ts for conversations about Israel that supplement those noted in the previous section:

ADDITIONAL DO'S AND DON'TS FOR HARD CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ISRAEL	
DON'T	DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concede the Jewish high ground to Israel• Focus on Israel only as a nation-state	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore the conversation in context of our American identity• Find other areas to discuss about Israel

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL ACTION

The Roadmap does not have a separate section on “social justice” and “social action.” This is neither an oversight nor a mistake.

The commitment to co-creating the world around us runs throughout every facet of the Roadmap. Rather than separate out social justice and action—as if they are thought of as isolated programs or activities—the choice was made to embed them throughout Micah’s DNA.

In the Roadmap, social justice and action are envisioned as part and parcel of our whole lives. They come in many forms and manifest themselves in many ways. For instance:

- Many Micah members talked about how their jobs, vocations, parenting, and other facets of their lives are expressions of social justice and action. The Roadmap calls for helping people to identify, name, and celebrate those things that they are already doing.
- Embedded in the very meaning of The Human Project is an expression of social justice and action. We seek to encourage people to live this out.
- Temple Micah has a well-formed tradition of social justice and action through such efforts as Micah House and the annual fall Underwear Drive.
- Through new “do it yourself” efforts outlined in the Roadmap, we will encourage individual members, families, and groups to take action that reflects and promotes social justice.
- There are ad hoc and ongoing efforts at Micah, such as the gun violence prevention initiative, the recent Sukkat Shalom journey to the U.S./Mexico border (after which the group identified self-

directed steps it could take together), and the hard conversations that Micah engages in.

For Micah, social justice and action are not programs (though striving for them often involves programs), but, rather, ways to live out our aspirations, faith, and whole lives. They are central to everything we believe and do.

THE ROLE OF JEWISH EDUCATION

Jewish education was discussed in all of the conversations with Micah members and other participants. People often focused on how they see Jewish education as a vital anchor to keep the Jewish faith and tradition alive, as well as a source of the knowledge and skills to be a good Jew.

Topics of particular interest to people included: Jewish history (especially beyond the Holocaust); Jewish values (“how to be a good person”); Hebrew; liturgy; ritual; and Israel (history and evolution).

Jewish knowledge and skills are no doubt important to people, but simply transmitting more of these will not lead to animating the Roadmap, and in particular bring about the shift in the Jewish dynamic that is noted on page ten. A different approach to Jewish education—already reflected in some of Micah’s efforts, like Machon Micah and virtual Seders during COVID-19—needs to be greatly expanded and enhanced.

The Core Team’s conversation on education focused on addressing the following points:

- What animates Jewish life for people that gives rise to a *feeling* within them when they are being and/or doing something Jewish
- What people need to know in order to have a greater sense of agency, ownership, and capability to spread their Jewish experiences and beliefs
- What pathways people need to make their Jewish lived experiences, feelings, and beliefs more explicit in their lives

The Roadmap calls for much more co-creation of Jewish education at Micah, in recognition that shared responsibility is critical to reaching and engaging more people and engendering a greater sense of

ownership and agency among Micah members. This co-creation is based on the following key elements, which the Core Team believes Micah must work harder to achieve:

- Articulate an alternative Jewish narrative that gives people a greater sense of coherence, meaning, and possibility about where we've come from as Jews and the journey that we're on
- Provide the proper theological structure (sacred canopy) so people can see that what they're already doing *is* Jewish
- Develop "do it yourself" materials that enable people to create their journey, which is a kind of Jewish apprenticeship

THE CHALLENGE OF JEWISH IDENTITY

Jewish identity is a concern for many Jewish faith leaders, scholars, and organizations. It was a concern expressed by house meeting participants and others engaged in conversations for the Roadmap.

The Core Team discussed Jewish identity at great length and depth.

The reality confronting American Judaism is that with each passing generation, Jewish identity comes into contact with an increasingly multiethnic world. Individuals and families now hold multiple identities; the experience of being Jewish is not as singular, uniform, or rooted in geography as it once was (even political polarization and the rise of tribalism in America involves people holding multiple identities). And, for many Jews, there is no one “right” way to be a Jew.

Indeed, people’s sense of Judaism—their very Jewish identity—is at play with many other identities. Judaism’s task, then, is to figure out how to exist in a multi-identity world. How do we productively engage Jews, and, increasingly, their non-Jewish partners, when they have multiple, sometimes competing identities? How do we enable, even encourage, people to be a Jew while simultaneously holding their other identities? How do we make room for people to express their Jewishness in different ways and through different lived experiences?

The Core Team chose not to create a single program or activity or initiative to “win over” people’s Jewish identity. Nor did the Core Team choose to ask people to embrace their Jewish identity at the expense of their other identities.

Instead, Jewish identity is addressed throughout the Roadmap. It is embedded in virtually every aspect of the document. It is the various actions outlined in the Roadmap—for instance, doubling down on a

new Jewish narrative or supporting people in co-creating their Jewish lives—that will lead to a greater sense of attachment to being a Jew.

But let's be clear: amid people's multiple, even competing, identities, Temple Micah seeks to pierce through and touch people's inner souls, and to speak to their Jewish identity.

INTERGENERATIONAL CONCERNS

Many Micah members and others engaged for the Roadmap expressed deep concern about maintaining the Jewish connection across generations. People hold profound fears of younger generations losing the faith.

Some Micah members spoke openly about feeling that they had failed to give their children the education, foundation, and faith they need to sustain Judaism.

One challenge in addressing this concern is that Judaism is, for most people we talked with, a lived experience—expressed daily through their values, family engagement, vocation, public service, conversations, and activism. At the same time, people seem to have inadequate (or nonexistent) language to talk about the meaning of Judaism; this can make it especially difficult to address the intergenerational concern.

Much like the issues of Jewish education and Jewish identity, the Roadmap addressed intergenerational concerns through a collection of actions. There is no single strategy or initiative. This concern needs to be addressed from a variety of angles.

For instance, there are many steps that people are already taking to help fortify generational bonds (e.g., regular Shabbat conference calls with their kids). People may not even recognize these as significant steps, which is why the Roadmap calls for helping people to identify, name, and celebrate such steps.

There are “Do It Yourself” actions for which Temple Micah can provide ideas and guidance to enable families to come together in their Jewishness.

And there are educational efforts, such as Machon Micah, or social action engagements, that people can and are doing to bring different generations together. Nonetheless, Micah can do more here.

What this requires is being attuned to the intergenerational concern and being disciplined in working on it.

THE ORIGIN AND ROLE OF THE HUMAN PROJECT

By Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel

I was sitting at a conference table at the Hebrew Union College well over ten years ago the first time I heard the expression “Human Project.” I was waiting for a study session to begin with my alumni group. The two words came out of Larry Hoffman’s mouth (who else?) as he was speaking with a colleague in the corner of the room. I did a kind of double take then and there. These two simple words, when put together, were the nub of the answer to THE Jewish question of our time: Why be Jewish when you don’t have to be?

Rabbis everywhere, myself included, were writing lengthy sermons and essays grappling with this question, and here Larry had the answer in two words. After all, isn’t the Jewish story one of human history’s longest-running, most powerfully dramatic and wisest explorations about what it means to be a human being? What else, really, is being Jewish about? What else, really, has it been about since the very beginning?

The Human Project offers a vista both wide and deep. It offers a response to the five anemic Judaisms of our time:

1. *“The Orthodox have it”* and *“I’m really not very religious.”* This view reduces Judaism to keeping kosher, davenning, and not driving on Shabbat. Some call it pots and pan-theism. This is a Judaism of guilt.
2. *My great-grandparents were immigrants who came to America with beautiful traditions. Hitler destroyed Europe’s Jews. We are the lucky ones. We need to preserve what we can.* This is a nostalgia-driven Judaism.

3. *Israel is the great miracle of our time. We need to always support Israel from its many foreign threats.* This is American Jewish Israelism.
4. *Jewish life is essentially about social justice. We need to be activists.* This is *tikkun olam* Judaism.
5. *Forget it. I am a good person.* This is American Jewish secularism triumphant.

The Judaism of The Human Project takes seriously the rabbinic teaching that the world stands on three legs: Torah, prayer and good deeds. The Human Project interprets these pillars expansively in keeping with the world of interpretation offered by our vast library of Jewish literature.

Torah is the life of the mind. To be a human being is to engage in a thoughtful approach to life. It is to love the world of science and learning, literature and the arts. God blessed human beings alone with the gift of speech and intellect. To be Jewish is to embrace this gift.

Prayer is the interior life of the spirit. It is to acknowledge that we are not only conscious beings but also self-conscious beings and that to be human is to struggle to understand the self, others, and the relationship between.

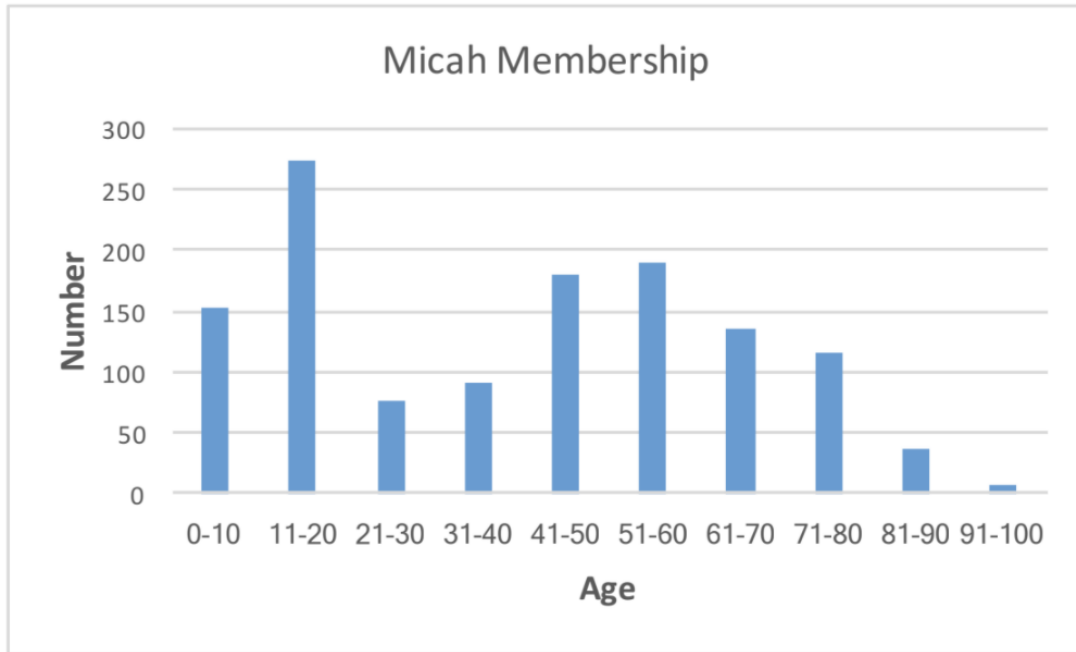
Good Deeds is our commitment to Hillel's teaching, "What is hateful to you, do not do to others." It is our Jewish mandate from Sinai. Our literature and our human experience demand that we be morally scrupulous, ethically demanding, passionate for justice, and a voice for those with none.

The British historian Simon Schama claims that the secret of Jewish life is that we cling to our ancient story. Our story has both shaped and defined us. The mysterious beauty of Jewish life is that when we allow it, our story calls to us unceasingly—echoing across the

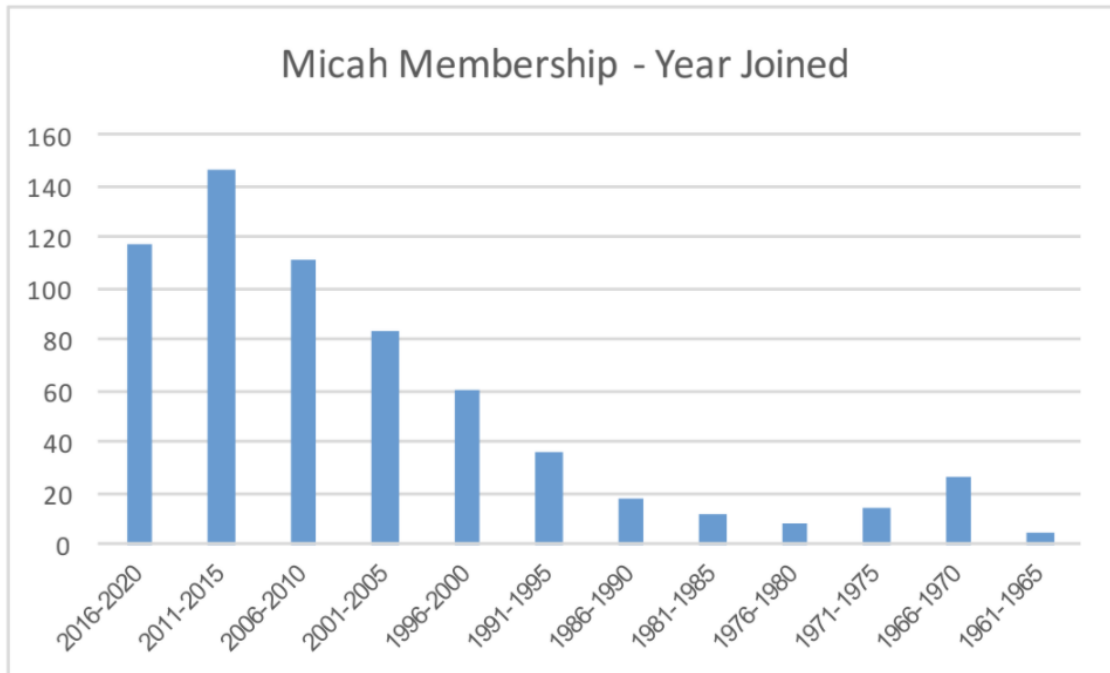
centuries. As we place ourselves in the story, we engage in the Human Project. Among my deepest disappointments as a rabbi is that we, in America, have not yet discovered how to tell the story in a way that inspires passion. This is part of the work of Jewish life in our time—to reanimate the Jewish story that gives life to the Human Project as the defining soul of Judaism.

BACKGROUND DATA

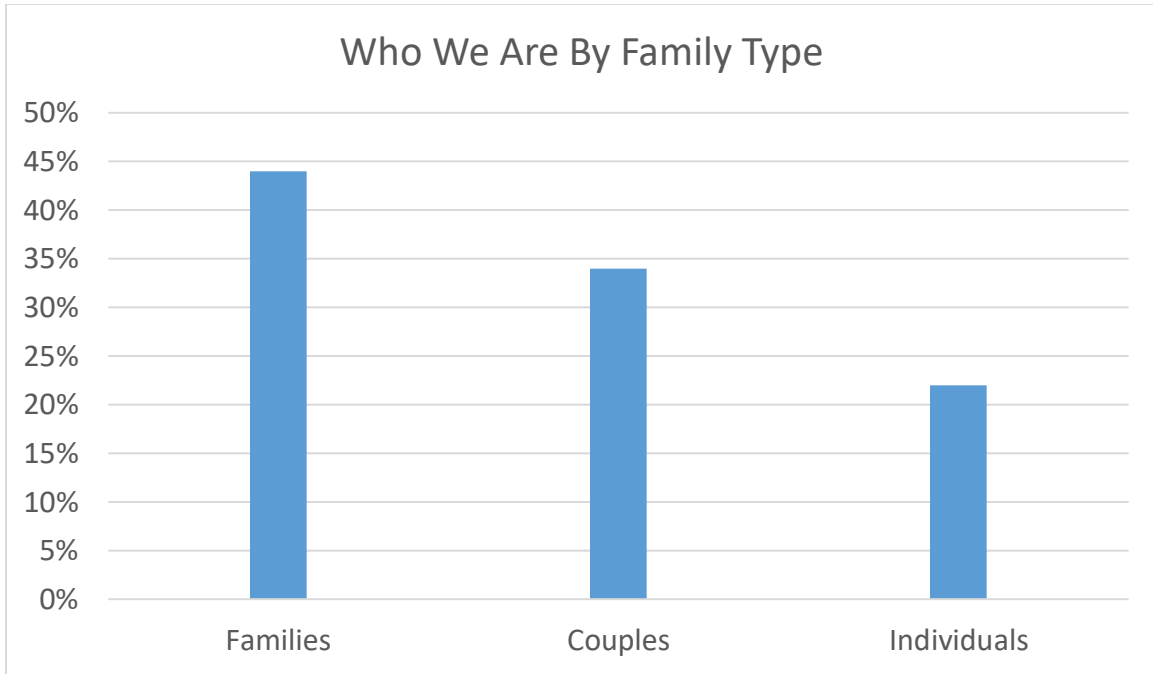
Micah Membership



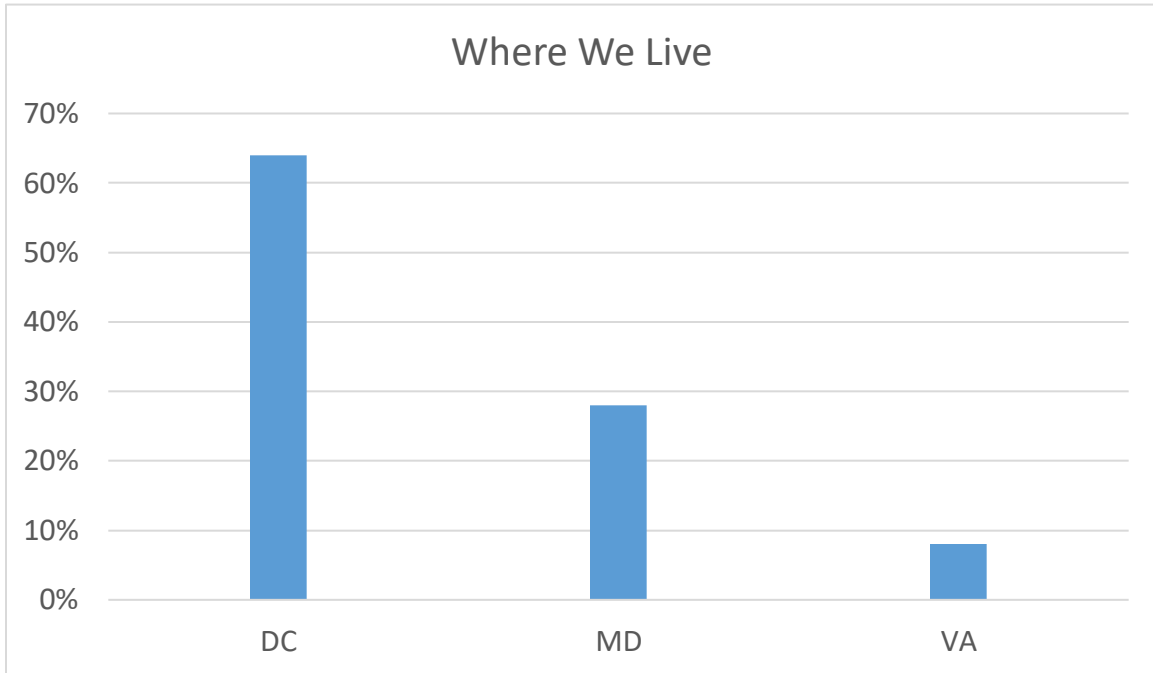
Year Joined



Who We Are



Where We Live



Additional Information:

- Members from 84 different zip codes
- 3 most common zip codes are from DC:
 - 20016 (Micah's zip code)
 - 20008
 - 20007
- Most common zip codes in Maryland:
 - 20815 (Chevy Chase)
 - 20816 (Bethesda)
- Most common zip code in Virginia:
 - 22207 (North Arlington)

ABOUT THE ROADMAP PROJECT

The Micah Roadmap Project started in February 2019. The goals of the project were to:

- Develop a practical roadmap for Micah's future. Importantly, this is not a detailed blueprint that locks Micah into a singular plan, but a living framework that sets a trajectory for the future, helps guide future choices and decisions, and is intended to evolve over time.
- Root the process in purpose and meaning. At the heart of this initiative sit basic questions about the purpose and meaning that Jews/partners seek in their lives, their connection to Judaism, and the implications for Temple Micah.
- Create a process that is authentic to Micah and reflects Micah's values. This means that activities are conversation-based, congregant-driven, and always open, transparent, and accessible to all.
- Engage both Micah members and Jews/partners outside Micah. As part of Micah's vision, this initiative seeks to learn from both Micah members and those Jews/partners outside of Micah in the broader metropolitan area.
- Produce a Roadmap that also builds community. This initiative will not only produce a Micah Roadmap, but will simultaneously further build the Micah community by actively engaging members, strengthening congregational leadership, and developing expanded congregational ownership over the future.

Over the course of the initiative, 11 group discussions were held with Micah members; each discussion had between five and twelve participants. Every effort was made to hear from a cross-section of members.

Two group discussions were also held with young professionals (both members and non-members), along with a small handful of in-depth individual interviews when people were unable to join a group discussion.

Efforts were made to engage individuals who are unaffiliated with Micah (focused on older individuals who have recently moved to the area and/or who were once affiliated with a synagogue). While a small number of individual interviews were conducted, this is an area where additional work should be done in the future.

Questions were also posted in the lobby of Micah, where individuals posted responses on sticky notes.

A Core Team was formed to guide the initiative, digest what was being learned from the engagement conversations, and deliberate together to help create the Roadmap. The Core Team held approximately 16 meetings over the course of the initiative.

Members of the Core Team included the following:

- Martha Adler, Board Member
- Josh Beraha, Associate Rabbi
- Joshua Berman, Board Vice President
- Stephanie Crawley, Assistant Rabbi
- Rachel Gross, Executive Director
- Jim Hamos, Board Member
- Leesa Klepper, Member
- Mary Beth Schiffman, Member (and past Board President)
- Marcia Silcox, Board President
- Maya Sungold, Special Events
- Daniel Zemel, Rabbi

Richard Harwood, president of The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, guided the Core Team and the development of the Roadmap. He is also a Temple Micah member.

In addition, The Harwood Institute met with the Micah Board twice and will also take part in the June Board Retreat.

THE HARWOOD INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC INNOVATION



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The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization that equips people, organizations, communities, and networks with the tools to bridge divides, build capacity, and tackle shared challenges. The Harwood Institute's work is rooted in a philosophy of Civic Faith and the practice of Turning Outward. Founded in 1988, the Institute partners with some of the world's largest nonprofits, and its approach has spread to all 50 states across the US and 40 countries around the world.