

A Message from the Chairman of the Orthodox Union Publications Commission

As this issue of *Jewish Action* is the last one published under my chairmanship, I thought it fitting to comment on these last twenty years, which have been so interesting and fruitful.

In 1984, then-OU President Shimon Kwestel requested that I chair the Publications Commission of the Orthodox Union. I had the good fortune of being introduced to Rabbi Matis Greenblatt, and at a meeting in my home, we decided to launch *Jewish Action*, a magazine that would project the interests, concerns and values of the Orthodox Union and, indeed, the Orthodox world. Slowly, we began the arduous process of turning a four-page newsletter into, what is now, a widely read and highly acclaimed eighty-page Jewish-interest magazine. Not meant to be a house organ, the magazine was to offer in-depth, meaningful articles on Jewish thought, culture, history and contemporary Jewish issues as well as profiles of outstanding individuals and book reviews.

From the outset, I viewed the magazine's mission as based on two spectrums, one vertical and one horizontal. The vertical spectrum, representing the magazine's intellectual content, would range from human-interest articles for the broader public to more intellectually challenging pieces, appealing to a smaller but important segment of our readership, including prominent Jewish leaders and thinkers.

The horizontal spectrum, representing the magazine's readership, would span from Left to Right, reflecting the publication's dedication to presenting diverse points of view within the Orthodox world.

As the magazine evolved, under the capable editorship of Heidi (Tenzer) Pekarsky and, subsequently, Charlotte Friedland, we introduced thought-provoking debates and symposia as well as provocative opinion pieces and regular columns on *kashrut*, Israel and Jewish law, all of which furthered the publication's mission and goals. In 1996, the OU published *The Jewish Action Reader*, a collection of exceptional articles that had appeared in the magazine up until that time.

Today, *Jewish Action* is found on Ivy League cam-

pus as well as in libraries, *yeshivot* and thousands of Jewish homes throughout Israel and the United States. Many of our articles are authored by well-respected thinkers from all segments of the Orthodox world. Our articles have served as the basis of OU activities, and have been reprinted in books and referred to in scholarly journals. *Jewish Action* has earned a reputation as a magazine that presents more than one point of view and even invites conflicting opinions.

I don't think that in twenty years there has been a week in which members of the editorial board have not been involved with the magazine—reading articles, discussing topics or searching for new ideas. It has been a rather intense labor of love for all those involved.

My heartfelt thanks and gratitude to our founding literary editor, Rabbi Greenblatt, a *talmid chacham* as well as an eclectic scholar—be it history, music, Jewish thought and so much more. I have enjoyed working with him immensely and cherish our friendship.

To our outstanding editor, Nechama Carmel, who has lived up to, and surpassed, every hope I had when we met on our first interview, I give my thanks, deep appreciation and respect—she is a remarkable, highly talented person, who has brought *Jewish Action* to new heights with every issue.

My thanks to Morton Landowne, vice chairman of the Publications Commission, for his insight, honest opinions and dedication to cause.

Last but not least, my thanks to Debbie Lieber, our advertising manager, who has managed a very difficult job with expertise.

I wish the incoming chairman great success. He will have an opportunity to create and to build upon what has been accomplished to date.

As for myself, when I cease having all those articles clogging my desk and briefcase, I'll have the satisfaction of saying, "Twenty years was not a bad run!"

Joel M. Schreiber
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