



## INTERVIEW WITH HAL M. LEWIS

Spertus Institute President and CEO

### What is the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership?

Spertus is a 92-year-old startup. We have been in Chicago (originally named the College of Jewish Studies) since 1924. We were founded to provide Jewish educational opportunities to the generation that taught the children and grandchildren of the Eastern European immigrants who came to this country at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. For most of our recent history, Spertus has been an institution of higher learning. In the past four or five years, we have finely tuned our offerings to include a particular focus on the training and development of Jewish communal leaders. Because we understand that the stakes in Jewish communal life are so significant, we know we darn well better prepare first-rate, competitive, talented, productive, passionate leaders to do the work of building Jewish community.

### What are the stakes?

I would refer you to the Pew study (October 2014–May 2015) or almost any other recent demographic or sociological analysis. American Jews by all accounts are affiliating and connecting with the organizations and institutions of the Jewish world at much lower rates than was once the case. This is a rapidly changing Jewish world, where the people who head organizations and institutions need to understand these trends and had best be thinking about the impact they have on leadership styles and on the structures of our organizations.

### What are the guiding principles of the Spertus Institute?

The two overarching pillars of Spertus are:

- We believe that a learning Jewish community is a vibrant Jewish community. It's very simple. Learning can't stop with the bar and bat mitzvah. Judaism is an adult religion. It's too important to infantilize the experience or to turn the study of Jewish experiences into a pediatric endeavor.
- Second, we believe that great Jewish communities need great Jewish leaders.

For millennia, Jewish arts and cul-

ture have been part of the Jewish experience. That's why we're not just a religion. In the late '70s, the College of Jewish Studies received major contributions from the Spertus family of their own Judaica collections. We now have the inauguration of a new arts lab. Jewish arts and culture are a part of who we are as an institution because Jewish arts and culture are part of the larger Jewish experience.

### How has your work at the Spertus Institute changed you?

I have a greater understanding of the value of humility and leadership. Anybody who thinks they can do the kind of work that we've done here as a solo actor or as a lone cowboy is completely mistaken. I have learned the value of putting the right people around the table, of listening more than telling, of learning from people and of never losing sight of the fact that the goal of effective leadership is to be a conveyor of experts, and not necessarily to be the expert yourself. Often the job of a leader is to swim against the tide and to always listen, but at the same time to have the tenacity to articulate a vision. These have been part of how I have grown and changed. Hopefully I continue to do that and can pass on some of those lessons.

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### **SPERTUS INSTITUTE**

The Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership offers dynamic learning opportunities, rooted in Jewish wisdom and culture and open to all. Based on the belief that a learning Jewish community is a vibrant Jewish community, these opportunities are designed to enable personal growth, train future leaders and engage individuals in exploration of Jewish life. Graduate programs, professional workshops and mentorships are offered in the Chicago area, in select locations across North America and through distance learning. The Spertus Institute's leadership programs for Jewish professionals

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YOU'RE  
GOOD AT



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### JEWISH AND ISRAEL STUDIES AT UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Together, the Center for Jewish Studies, The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life and the Berkeley Institute for Jewish Law and Israel Studies, all housed on the UC Berkeley campus, create a rich tapestry of Jewish and Israel related teaching, scholarship and programming. Through their respective and shared missions, they:

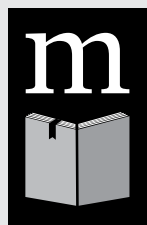
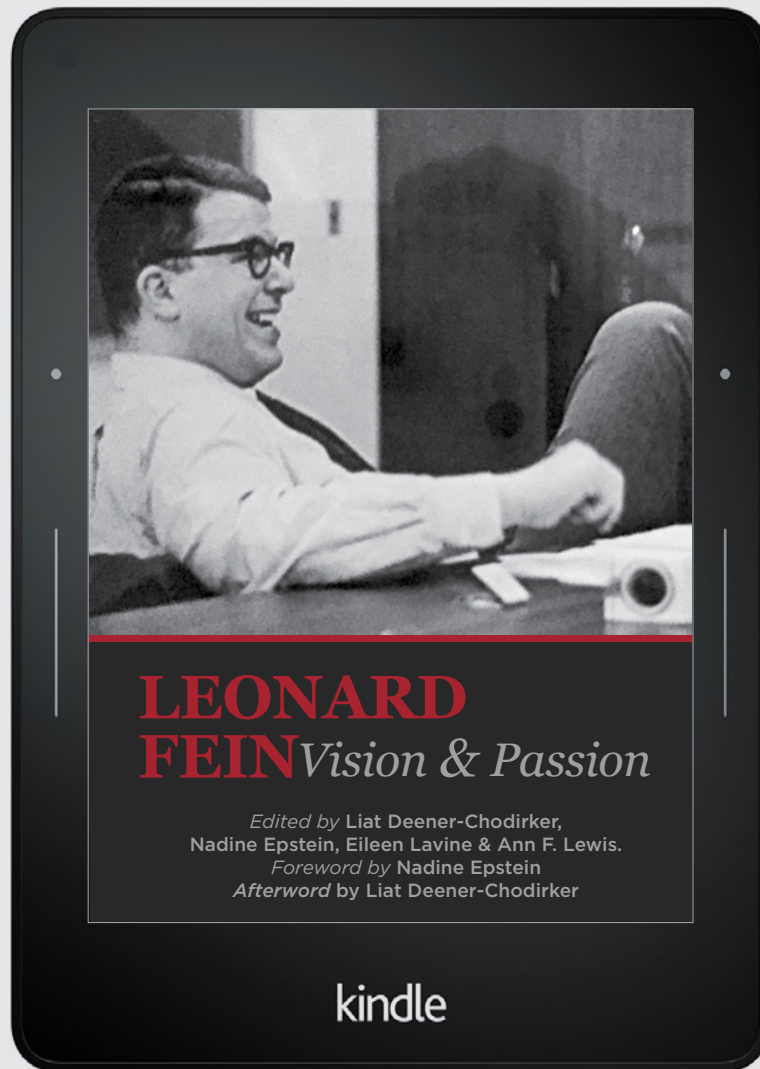
- Offer courses and programs that academically enrich, intellectually challenge and socially support Berkeley students and faculty within a vibrant community.
- Produce the next generation of Jewish and Israel Studies scholars and leaders, including future faculty and community leaders.
- Provide opportunities for intensive study and degrees in Jewish studies as well as opportunities for engagement with students and scholars from other disciplines who are interested in the field of Jewish and Israel studies.
- Present engaging events and programs for campus and for the Bay Area community.
- House and exhibit a rich collection of art, objects, texts, music and historical documents about the Jews in the global Diaspora.
- Provide student scholarships and foster student leadership through intensive support for student programming and teaching.
- Bring visiting Israeli faculty and artists to campus for extensive periods of teaching, research and engagement with students and faculty.

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A man of letters and a true activist, Leonard “Leibel” Fein never lost his abiding passion for serving the Jewish people.

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“As *Moment’s* co-founder and editor from 1975 to 1987, Leibel used the editor’s column regularly to write about his passions—social justice and ending racism and poverty, Judaism, Israel and the American Jewish community. The columns and essays collected here exemplify the intellect, the humor and the values that characterized his life.” —**Nadine Epstein**

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Includes photographs and an afterword by his granddaughter Liat Deener-Chodirker