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***Romemu website:***

<https://www.romemu.org/>

**Facts:**

- The congregation is 11 years old (after two years of part-time services that began in 2006, the congregation came together for full-time services in 2008)
- Services are held on the Upper West Side of New York although Romemu does not have its own building

**How does the congregation describe itself?**

- Wanting to integrate body, mind and soul into Jewish practice
- Practicing a form of Judaism that will “ignite your soul”
- Progressive, egalitarian
- Committed to *tikkun olam*
- Services that seek to help people identify with the sacredness of life
- Attempts to foster compassion members
- Believe that Judaism is for soul seekers and skeptics (for everyone)
- Birthing a post-denominational, innovative and personal Judaism that transcends traditional ideologies and labels

***In my words:***

*A community that is committed to offering a meaningful/spiritual Jewish experiences that will engage the heart and mind, bringing social change, and adding sacredness into peoples' lives*

(See info on Rabbi David Ingber below)

***Forward.com source (2013):***

<http://forward.com/news/184218/romemus-popular-rabbi-and-new-age-prayer-brings-gr/>

Romemu is a typical congregation of the Jewish Emergent Movement:

- Emphasis on discovering spirituality within prayer. Ingber: this nondenominational community does not practice “Judaism light.” It brings universal humanistic values and deep textual knowledge to the Jewish experience
- Romemu is an “intentional spiritual community,” meaning members do not have a consumer relationship with the institution but are empowered spiritually by the do-it-yourself programming

- It has significantly gained popularity since its inception up to 500 member families and its staff has doubled)
- Diversity of members: members younger than 30 (with their new families), baby boomers, engaged Jews like JTS students, interfaith (or non-Jewish) participants, grandparents who come with their children, people with Modern Orthodox upbringing, people with Reform upbringing
- Live streaming of services online to fulfill value of inclusivity and posting Ingber's sermons on video/podcast platforms
- Yom Kippur/High Holiday services: Yoga, meditation, singing, silent contemplation, music (nine-person band with a variety of instruments and professional vocalists)
- The services generally transcend the traditional Conservative/Reform services

BUT there are challenges:

- Mostly financial stability as Romemu's members are mostly young (and often unaffiliated, Jews-of-no-religion) Jews who unaccustomed to financial contribution in exchange for a Jewish experience
- Diversity of members (wide spectrum of religious observance and Jewish knowledge) makes it difficult to create a meaningful Jewish experience for everyone. For example, Romemu offers educational programs that attempt to help connect members to Judaism, not necessarily teach how to sustain a traditionally Jewish life.
- How does Romemu balance "routine with innovation"? On one hand, the congregation wants to continuously have fresh/innovative services. On the other, it does not want these services to fall into routine, the very aspect of Jewish practice they are trying to combat.
- Some members worry that Romemu's success lies only in its charismatic leader. When he leaves, it could cripple Romemu's future.
  - o Although some Romemu members have faith that the devoted, meaningful community (members and staff members) that Ingber had built will be powerful enough to hold the congregation together, that Rabbi Ingber is only one pillar of many
- Romemu does not have a space of its own to conduct services or other programming. Although they have big plans to build a new space for all their programming, it will be costly.

What sets Romemu apart?

- "Rabbi David Ingber combines an unusual mix of talents. He's textually extraordinarily proficient; he brings a strong spiritual dimension, community skills, interpersonal talents, and is able to motivate and utilize his lay supporters and leaders to special effect," said Steven M. Cohen (sociologist and professor at Hebrew Union College)
- It is all about self-expression (through mind, spirit, heart, and body), a new and energizing form of Judaism.

### ***Rabbi David Ingber:***

Rabbi David Ingber's distinct approach to Torah and Jewish practice – an integration of mind, body, and soul – is informed by his own exploration of a variety of traditions and faiths (he studied/practiced Eastern traditions like Buddhism out of college).

VIDEO Ingber on mediation in Jewish practice:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vbUUVDHpTY>

VIDEO Ingber on *kabbalah*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUYQKdQCvAw>

***Participant:***

Non-Jewish member Eleanor Bregman (from forward.com):

- Rabbi Ingber makes it clear that being Jewish for Judaism's sake is not meaningful or fulfilling; rather, taking the humanistic lessons that Judaism has to teach can be meaningful for everyone (Jewish or non-Jewish).
- He talks about the *parasha* on a level that anyone can relate to because he connects to the human experience
- Romemu is an open place (can experience Judaism in a personal way)

***VIDEO of Yom Kippur 2014 service:***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRJAJSLaKYA>

***Further questions:***

For Rabbi David Ingber: **Why is renewal important?**