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## **Chapter 10: Individual Needs and Public Distribution in the Kibbutz**

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The kibbutz combines in one socioeconomic system two (usually separate) major social domains: the production domain (expressed in the contribution members make to society) and the consumption domain (expressed in what society offers to its members). Combining these two domains differentiates the kibbutz from other forms of cooperative organization, which generally relate only to the one or to the other. In short, a kibbutz represents a *total*, or a *whole*, society.

This uniqueness of the kibbutz is illuminated by the Marxist dictum “to each according to his or her needs; from each according to his or her ability,” which serves as a central guide for the relationship between kibbutz members and their community (“needs” relate to the consumption domain in kibbutz life, and “ability” relates to the production domain). Although the phrasing of this dictum means that no relationship is expected between the contribution of individuals to their kibbutz and the satisfaction of their needs as offered by their kibbutz, the two are united to emphasize the *wholeness* or *totality* of the kibbutz phenomenon.

This chapter focuses upon the consumption domain of the kibbutz and its changes over the years. Yet it is important to locate these changes within the full framework of kibbutz life, including contribution — because, as will be described and analyzed later, recent developments in the kibbutzim have led the two previously separate domains to form a closer relationship.

The kibbutz commitment to satisfy its members' needs embraces their whole lifespan — including all those needs which, in other societies, are provided by the family, the community, or the welfare state. (Even state services are provided to kibbutz institutions, and individual members obtain their services through them.)

During the eight decades of kibbutz history since 1910, the organizational concepts of the consumption system have undergone a dynamic process of institutional crystallization; this process is still going on — and, from the mid-1980s, at an accelerated pace. An interesting feature of this system is that there has never existed an ideological code or a blueprint from which all norms stem. The absence of such a code has enabled the kibbutz to develop a normative system of needs provision that is free from dogmatism, is based on a dialectical relation between ideology and practice, and is constantly evolving through adaptation to changing economic, structural, and environmental situations. Recently, however, due to the worsening economy in most kibbutzim on the one hand, and the demand to introduce new value concepts on the other, the delicate balance between members' wants and institutional constraints has been upset.

As mentioned, a basic tenet of kibbutz ideology is the struggle to realize the Marxist utopian principle that commits the community to satisfying all needs of all members and to ensuring that all members contribute all their abilities to the community. This principle, despite its simplicity and apparent clarity, has resulted in endless discussions and arguments about the problems of its practical implementation and about contradictions between fundamental kibbutz values and operative norms of kibbutz conduct.

Both parts of the Marxist principle offer an optimistic view of human nature. It assumes people can create a world where every need is provided by the society (which must

be very affluent to achieve that objective). It also assumes people will contribute to their society to the best of their ability, and this will be done because of their identification with their society and not because of their wish to have their personal needs satisfied as reward for their contribution.

Faced by the constraints of reality, the kibbutz, in its early days, adopted an additional principle: that society may dictate what human needs are normatively legitimate and may socialize its members to seek gratification only within a restricted range of personal needs.

The kibbutz value system demanded a dissociation between contribution and remuneration as expressed in the form of need satisfaction. Kibbutzim assumed that as their economic status improved, they would get nearer to the goal of full free provision of goods and services to meet new needs of their members. However, through a long part of its history the kibbutz has faced economic hardship and sometimes lacked even the most basic provisions. Therefore, only through the surrender of individual needs to the communal good could the society survive.

### **IDEOLOGY AND PRACTICE: CONFRONTATION OF CHANGE AND BALANCE**

The first systematic research of the kibbutz was conducted by the late Yonina Talmon-Garber in the mid-1950s. At that time, thanks to the improvement of the kibbutz economy, the collective consumption standard had shown some improvement over ideologically supported frugality. Talmon described the early kibbutz ideology as “voluntary-secular asceticism,” which enabled collective implementation of the ideal “to each according to his needs.”

However, collective satisfaction of needs has its social cost because it demands

members' compliance with restricted, humble, and standardized provision of basic needs. Talmon described the dangers that would threaten collective consumption if the value of voluntary asceticism were replaced by demands for a higher living standard: “As consumer demands increase, they also tend to become more diversified, and threaten to throw the collective consumption pattern out of gear, since a wide and varied range of consumer demands obviously makes it more difficult for the community to enforce a standard distribution pattern” (Talmon, 1972, 207).

Furthermore, as consumption becomes more central in members' lives, the rigid pattern of curbing expenditure breaks down, giving rise to ever new demands. In Talmon's words: “The sense of inequality becomes more acute: kibbutz institutions are subjected to pressure and can no longer perform their function properly” (1972, 208). Thus, the ideology of asceticism — the voluntary acceptance of restrictions on living standards — helps achieve congruence between individual desires and collective policy imperatives.

The years which have passed from the time of Talmon's research have, on the one hand, been years of reinterpretation of values and, on the other, seen the introduction of new needs accompanied by the constant struggle to keep a balance between individual desires and collective demands. The years that followed the mid-1950s were characterized by a constant effort to put into practice the vague ideological imperatives contained in the Marxist dictum.

Initially, there was the reality of deficiency — because the kibbutzim were formed as poor communes. This required the “first amendment” to the dictum, a clause of restriction: “To each according to his or her needs, but within the limits set by the capability of the collective.” But then, after economic conditions in the kibbutzim had improved, three new questions emerged:

1. The first question touched the very basics of kibbutz responsibility for satisfying its members' needs: What should be the definition of human needs based on “to each according to her or his needs”? Should the kibbutz meet all the needs of its members or should it restrict needs to a standard set recognized and legitimated by the community?
2. The second question related to limits of collective capability: What should determine allocation of resources between immediate consumption and investment in the production system? Should it be according to collective preference or to some average calculation across individual demands?
3. The third question was that of practice: What method of distribution of collectively approved needs would meet value dictums of equality and social justice on the one hand and the satisfaction of members on the other?

Constant struggle with these questions has generated changing methods for distributing consumer goods to satisfy individual needs.

The answer to the first question — what should be considered a legitimate need? — led initially to a definition of needs either by local institutions (committees or the general assembly) or by experts at the federation level. After ratification by federation decision-making bodies, the suggested consumer-goods basket of each federation became the yardstick to which each of their kibbutzim fitted its local consumer-goods basket. Thus, as Table 10.1 illustrates, the standardized basket suggested by the federation generated a substantially equal standard of living across all kibbutzim irrespective of their economic performance or accumulated wealth.

Table 10.1: A Summary of the Consumption Budget Proposal for a Single Adult Member —  
TAKAM, 1993

Total expenditure (1993) for one adult in NIS (New Israeli Shekel) - 12,150

Total expenditure for one child (63.3% of an adult budget): 7,691

Suggested allocation to different domains of consumption expressed as a percentage of the total:

Food services	18.0
Health budget	7.3
Water and energy	4.0
Committees (social, culture, education, etc.)	9.8
Taxes	12.6
Personal (comprehensive) budget	48.3
Total per member	100.0

Research in a sample of twenty kibbutzim (Rosner, Gluck, and Ovnat 1979; Gluck, Goldemberg, and Helman, 1988) showed that nineteen of the twenty kibbutzim accepted, within 17 percent, their federation's consumption proposal. This was despite the fact that income level differences between the kibbutzim in the study exceeded 450 percent.

This homogeneity brought with it an unintended result: The consumption level of each kibbutz became dissociated from its level of economic functioning — since consumption level was more or less constant across kibbutzim but economic performance was not. Some kibbutzim were consuming below their economic potential, some above it, thereby upsetting

their income expenditure balance (see Helman, 1994). Until the mid-1980s, the number of kibbutzim consuming above their potential was small. Most kibbutzim consumed below their potential and this contributed to the creation of surpluses. Federations counterbalanced the inequities by making transfers from the wealthier kibbutzim to the kibbutzim consuming above their potential resources. (These transfers were an expression of mutual help among kibbutzim as expressed through a progressive intrafederation taxing mechanism.) However, the economic crisis of the last decade forced many kibbutzim to lower their living standards, and at the same time, it curtailed the ability of federations to help the needy. As a result, budget proposals by the federations ceased to have much influence on local consumption policy, and diversity in standard of living among kibbutzim replaced the former homogeneity.

### **REDEFINITION OF NEEDS: THE PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION**

More recently the policy on needs has been modified. Collective provisioning of needs was divided into functional subunits: the kitchen and the dining hall, the laundry and the clothing department, the health clinic, kindergarten, and so on. Growth and maturation demanded the formalization of the guiding principles of need provision too.

Two seemingly contradictory principles have been accepted as the bases of collective consumption:

1. Human needs — material or otherwise — are not equal; therefore, the provision of needs cannot be based on a principle of *mechanical equality*. Members and children have a host of individual needs. Examples are health care, cultural and educational preferences, assistance to family members, or old age care. To this group of needs, the application of the principle of to each according to her or his needs is the correct one; it also does not provoke

the envy of fellow members.

2. For other needs, the Marxist dictum has been replaced by the principle of *qualitative and quantitative equality*. Equality may contradict the original dictum because equal distribution is not always in accord with personal needs. However, where individual differences cannot be objectively justified, or where differentiated distribution would cause social stress or envy, equal distribution may be the only justifiable system. Within this distribution are housing and furniture, casual clothing, holiday expenditure, and cash allowance. (A good example of the application of the principle of need versus the principle of equal distribution is the provision of eyeglasses for members. There may be an equal budget for the frames while lenses are given according to need — as prescribed by the optometrist.)

Different methods of consumer-goods distribution evolved from the interpretation of these two principles. From time to time, the definition of needs has been revised to bring it in accord with changes in taste, economic conditions, individual wants, and technological innovations.

If, during the pioneering period of material hardship, it was easy to define needs (which, en passant, hardly exceeded survival necessity), economic affluence widely extended the list of needs and demands. Even so, there have always been needs requiring preferential treatment — for example, children's education and housing, health of community members, and the physical security of the collective. Children-houses were built of stone or concrete, while adults dwelt in tents. In border areas, security expenses have always demanded significant allocation of resources, even today.

The whole spectrum of consumption has been divided into such functional units as the communal kitchen and the dining hall, the clothing department, the general store, education,

health services, and the like. For most of these units, a coordinator is elected; some others are controlled by committees (elected by the kibbutz assembly) which have the authority to define needs. Usually, a long and often movement-wide dispute precedes the legitimization of a new need.

The introduction of previously unaccepted needs tended to follow a common pattern. When deviant members privately obtained items that until then were considered illegitimate, there would be protests from the community and from its social institutions; but when other members followed suit, the new items became legitimate, after which they were provided to all members by the kibbutz as an integral part of the consumption basket. Many such innovations were introduced because of members' demands and regardless of economic conditions.

Women's cosmetics and higher education are prime examples of this pattern. Both were once disregarded, yet today both are considered part of the basic needs of members. Previously, culture and values dictated indifference to clothing styles, cosmetics, and all other symbols of conspicuous consumption. Members of both sexes were proud of their distinct kibbutz-style appearance. Objection to higher education was part of this culture: The *ideal* member was to be the self-made person who gained knowledge by studying on his or her own. Changes of attitude came with an altered cultural climate; currently, for instance, kibbutzim even supply cosmetics to their women members and in such a high level of service that many customers for this service come from outside.

One expression of the dynamic processes in the consumption domain is the changing meaning of equality. In the early years, equality meant to be alike or to have the same; today equality is expressed in the equal right to be different. Members may equip their homes

according to their taste and use their free time for hobbies; many of them collect books, records, and stamps, and in some kibbutzim, these activities are financially supported by the community. Improved economic conditions have enhanced the ability of kibbutzim to cater to individual needs, and the list of socially legitimated needs is constantly expanding. Still, the overall size of the kibbutz budget restricts full implementation of the principle of “to each according to his or her needs.”

### **THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM: ECONOMY VERSUS VALUE STRUCTURE**

Scarcity of resources has always had a decisive impact on the extent to which needs can be provided for. Kibbutzim have had to find methods of distribution which regulate or limit individual wants by fitting them to the economic capability of the collective and to its order of priorities. While it was easy to satisfy the humble needs of members in the pioneering days, the growing affluence and the possible decline of the ascetic spirit have put great strain on the system. Two questions need to be answered:

1. How can the kibbutz combine all of the divergent consumption preferences of individual members into one satisfying policy? Is it possible to create a mutually agreed upon communal basket of needs?

2. How can the kibbutz respond institutionally to the widening spectrum of individual wants?

Diverse methods for goods and services distribution and for budget allocation have been suggested and experimented with in an attempt to answer these questions. These methods may be classified into four categories: (1) distribution according to needs; (2) distribution of free goods; (3) distribution according to ascribed criteria (e.g., seniority, age,

size of family, etc.); and (4) rationed or budgeted items. Table 10.2 illustrates how consumption budgets in a typical kibbutz are represented by each of these four methods.

**Table 10.2: A Sample of Consumption Fields and the Most Common Systems of Distribution Applied to Them**

<b>Area of Consumption</b>	<b>Institution in charge</b>	<b>System of distribution</b>
<b>Food</b>	Kitchen coordinator	Free quantity, choice of dishes
<b>Education</b>	Education committee	Free for every child
<b>Clothing</b>	Clothing store coordinator	Free work clothes, rationed after-work clothes
<b>Kibbutz store</b>	Store coordinator	Home maintenance, toilet articles, sweets and drinks, etc. Some free, others rationed
<b>Cultural needs</b>	Cultural committee	Festivities, cultural activities, newspapers free; theater and concert tickets rationed.
<b>Housing</b>	Housing committee	Allocation of new homes by seniority preferences or point scale system; rationed budget
<b>Furniture and appliances</b>	Housing or members' committee	Point scale system, rationed budget
<b>Health service</b>	Health committee, nurses	Free without restriction
<b>Tobacco</b>	Kibbutz store	Very different systems, from free to rationed.
<b>Vacations</b>	Members' committee	Usually fourteen days, six days in a holiday resort
<b>Travel abroad</b>	Members' committee	Seniority preference list
<b>Higher education</b>	Higher education committee	Free to everyone but on a waiting list
<b>Arts and hobbies</b>	Cultural committee	Public facilities, individual needs supported
<b>Special individual needs</b>	Members' committee	Each case dealt with individually

### ***Distribution According to Needs***

If the basic value to each according to his or her needs cannot be fully implemented, constant effort (within the constraints of reality and of policy) is made to approximate it. Expenditure for food, for example, is budgeted by the economic committee. Within this budget, the kitchen coordinator sets the standard, but once food has been prepared, there is no restriction as far as quantity is concerned; everyone can eat according to needs. Special dishes are prepared for those who suffer from ill health, for those on special diets, or for vegetarians. Self-service was introduced in the 1970s, offering a choice of dishes and catering even more to individual tastes.

One of the best illustrations of the transformation of needs from the communal domain to the family is the *four o'clock tea*. This was once served in the communal dining hall, but later it became a sort of family rite, and this change, in turn, introduced the kitchenette and (since the 1960s) the kitchen into the family home. Food items to be consumed at home are provided by the communal kitchen or become budgeted items which are at the discretion of the family. (A recent innovation in about a third of the kibbutzim is the transfer of all food costs to the budgeted system — see the Getz chapter. Members pay for meals consumed in the dining hall or purchase them elsewhere.)

Health and education needs are fully catered to: Health services are provided for all without restriction of budget; and if parents or educators so request, children may get additional tutoring in any academic subject. Other expressions of individual-need satisfaction lie in the personal domain. The members committee, for instance, has at its discretion a budget allocation to respond to exceptional and unforeseen needs of members — requests for

money to support relatives outside the kibbutz or expenses due to family festivities or to bereavements. Another expression is the care given to older members. With the number of aged or disabled members growing in most kibbutzim, attention to their special needs involves substantial investment and maintenance costs.

### ***Distribution of Free Goods***

The choice and quality of consumer goods which fall under this category are limited and are determined by the amount of budget allocated by the community. The range of articles varies from kibbutz to kibbutz. It may include food items for home consumption (e.g., sugar, tea, eggs, fruit, milk, etc.); home maintenance items; and toilet articles. Postage, telephone service, and bus tickets are also free in most kibbutzim. Generally, this category includes articles for which free distribution will not increase demand (for example, toothpaste or even the dentist's services — no one would want his or her teeth repaired more than needed just because it was free). However, since the onset of the economic crisis (mid-1980s), many kibbutzim have moved items of this kind to the budgeted list.

### ***Distribution According to Ascribed Criteria***

Distribution according to ascribed criteria was introduced only because of economic constraints: No kibbutz could afford to provide all its members at once with, for example, houses or apartments of equal standard nor to furnish them with all the modern appliances of an affluent society. Usually, when a new standard of apartment or a new appliance was approved, within a few years, the kibbutz made provision of it to all the members. Priority was based either on seniority of membership or on a priority scale in which such factors as

seniority, family size, health considerations, and age were weighted.

During the years of economic scarcity, the priority allocation method (based mainly on membership seniority) was generally adopted for determining distribution of major consumer goods, but its use diminished in the 1970s due to the relative affluence experienced by the kibbutzim. Durable goods (television sets, refrigerators, airconditioners, furniture, etc.) became available without a need for gradual distribution; and new houses were built for younger families concurrently with the renovation of veterans' apartments to bring them up to new standards.

The introduction of a new need may be illustrated by the allocation of a budget for overseas tourism and visits abroad. At first, visiting or traveling abroad was an unrecognized consumer item; hence no budget was allocated for it. A special decision was needed when a member had to visit an overseas relative or travel to fulfill kibbutz duties. Starting in the late 1960s, however, mostly as a result of the intensive introduction of industry into kibbutzim and its dependence on markets and suppliers abroad, more and more members were required to make overseas business trips. This created a feeling of inequality among members who were not in a position to travel. To deal with this inequality, a new need was legitimated: the recognition of vacations and touring overseas. Due to economic constraints, this need was given a low budget by the federation, and waiting lists based on some criteria had to be introduced. The long (sometimes lifetime-long) lists caused dissatisfaction and social tension. New methods of budget allocation for overseas visits had to be found. The problem was considerably alleviated when the waiting list was replaced by a relatively small yearly allowance introduced into the family budget, enabling the family to decide upon its expense preferences within the limits of its budget. The family now has a substantial yearly budget at

its disposal.

### ***Rationed or Budgeted Items***

If equality is defined as sameness or similarity and the yardstick of needs is used, no distinctive treatment of an individual member or for goods considered a luxury can be justified. Examples of goods in this category are cash, casual clothing, cosmetics, home appliances, furniture, and the annual vacation budget. Despite the fact that all the needs included in this category accounted in the 1970s for no more than 20 to 25 percent of the overall consumption budget, most of the debates and ideological disputes have been focused here. The principle of rationed distribution for consumer goods has, over the years, been achieved through a variety of methods, reflecting changing views of what is equality and what are legitimate individual needs of members.

*Normative Distribution.* Historically, the first method of distribution within this category was called *normative*. As mentioned, the original method in this category was that everyone got the same. However, once conditions allowed a recognition of a diversity of needs among members, another method became dominant: A basket of alternative consumer goods of the same kind (e.g., clothing, shoes, soft furniture, etc.), but costing a similar amount of money, was worked out by the community. This “basket” was provided to every member, and individuals could consume at the same cost yet express their individual tastes and preferences. This system prevailed till the late 1960s (for some items and in some kibbutzim much longer). The yearly allocated list might be two sets of bedclothes, four towels, two casual dresses, four socks, and underwear. Two arguments have been raised against this method:

1. It is wasteful, because members are provided with items they may not need,

whereas they may be in need of other goods. If member A wanted books and member B wanted records, the principle of equality demanded that both members be given records as well as books.

2. It creates dependence on the judgment of the coordinator of the area and on his or her preferences; hence individual wants, tastes, and preferences are inadequately satisfied. A coordinator may purchase goods that satisfy his or her own taste and budget constraints but that do not appeal to the taste of another part of the membership.

Conversely, from the perspective of preserving kibbutz values of equality, this system has been considered as the best because it avoids the translation of needs into money; it also safeguards the collective nature of need provision. It is the duty of the collective to cater to members' needs; by replacing needs with money, the institution relieves itself of that responsibility.

*Personal Budget.* The next stage in the evolution of the category of budgeted goods was the *personal budget*. For items included in the normative distribution, an equal budget was allocated for the discretionary use of the family. Within that budget, family members were free to purchase goods — in the kibbutz or outside in the towns. The main feature of this system was its restriction: The budget allocated for a particular kind of goods could not be transferred to another kind (for example, vacation money could not be used for clothing, and everyone got vacation money). Only the cash allowance could be used in any way and for any item of consumption.

Most kibbutzim included the same four to six items in the *personal budget* allocated to the adult members of the family: casual clothing and shoes; home maintenance items; furnishings for the house; vacation expenses (this particular expense was included in only a

few kibbutzim); and a cash allowance to enable visits outside the kibbutz.

The personal budget method, which prevailed in a large part of the kibbutz movement till the 1970s introduced three ideologically important changes over the previous method of *normative distribution*:

1. For the first time, the family — and not the member — became the unit of budget, and thus the family gained some economic functions while before it had none.

2. For the first time, needs were translated into money terms; thus — from a normative point of view — a mechanical equality replaced the previous principle of qualitative equality.

3. Money could be saved by families, enabling the purchase of consumer goods not included in the legitimate consumption basket.

At the same time, the personal budget granted much more freedom of choice (within the limitations of the budget), and unlike earlier methods, it freed members from dependence on kibbutz institutions and officeholders.

*The Inclusive Budget.* A new method of consumer-goods distribution — called the *inclusive budget* — was introduced in the late 1960s by one kibbutz federation (Ichud), and it penetrated into some kibbutzim of other federations as well. In this method the boundaries of the different areas of consumption were removed, and the family was credited with an annual budget covering clothing, purchases in kibbutz shops, cash, furniture, other housing items, and, in some kibbutzim, annual vacation expenses as well. Given the credit, the family might use it for any legitimate need — for example, lowering its clothing expenses and increasing its consumption of durable goods. About 20 to 25 percent of the overall consumption expenditure was thus transferred to the sole discretion of the family, while the rest of the

consumption budget was still spent under the other categories of consumption distribution.

Long and harsh ideological disputes preceded and followed the introduction of the *inclusive budget*. Supporters of this method argued that it brought the family nearer to the original concept of according to needs by offering the family freedom of decision. They also claimed that the method helped improve relationships between members and formal kibbutz institutions. Opponents argued that the method (1) removed collective responsibility by replacing it with a semisalary system; (2) led to inequalities between members by granting advantages to those better able to manage their resources; and (3) replaced kibbutz responsibility for satisfying the “true needs” of members with the responsibility for satisfying their exchange value needs (to borrow another Marxist concept), thereby eradicating the unique consumption pattern of the kibbutz.

In the debates over the merits and drawbacks of the various distribution methods, it was felt that research might come up with answers. However, research conducted in 1978 found no difference in the level of member satisfaction between kibbutzim which utilized the *personal budget* method and kibbutzim which utilized the *inclusive budget* method (Rosner et al., 1979). But whatever the argument, the *inclusive budget* became an expression of the growing emphasis on individualization of needsatisfaction and on orientation to the family over the community in matters of consumption.

As the debate intensified, alternatives were sought. The Artzi federation, which had previously passed a resolution against the adoption of the *inclusive budget* method in its kibbutzim, chose to counter the trend of the enlarged budget by increasing dramatically the part of the consumption budget distributed under the category of *free distribution*. This

alternative (free distribution rather than the comprehensive family budget) advocated gradual extension of freely distributed items by lifting restrictions on quality and quantity. Although during the 1970s and early 1980s, this was the alternative chiefly adopted by kibbutzim of the Artzi federation, the economic crisis of the late 1980s and the increasing individualistic trends among members worked decisively against it, and most kibbutzim abandoned it.

### **NEW TRENDS AND PRACTICES: THE COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY BUDGET**

As discussed above, the introduction of new needs on the one hand and the greater amount of money that the family had at its disposal on the other raised the question: Is the kibbutz not moving in the direction of a salary system? It seems that, partly as a result of the economic crisis of the 1980s and partly as a result of the move toward the family, a new method — called the comprehensive budget — is being adopted by more and more kibbutzim. The comprehensive budget (*Takziv Makif*) permits about 50 percent of the annual consumption expense to be allocated to the family, and even more in some kibbutzim. Today, 75 percent of kibbutzim practice the new method; in another 13 percent of kibbutzim, proposals in this direction are being tabled in the general assembly.

The direction of change in consumption is toward privatization, the transferring of budgets to the family. By this transfer, the community relinquishes public responsibility for need satisfaction and instead grants the family increased spending freedom. At the same time, welfare remains within the domain of the collective. Child education, health services and expenses, care for the disabled and veteran members, municipal services, and cultural and festive activities are still public — that is, outside of the family budget.

Is the kibbutz collective consumption achieving now a new and more individualistic

balance? Will the trend to privatization bring about the erosion of the kibbutz's uniqueness? Recent research (Getz, 1994) shows some slowing down in the introduction of changes. At present, collective consumption is in a state of flux, and there is no apparent agreement in ideology. Time will tell whether changes result in the crystallization of a new, more balanced consumption system or in the erosion of the kibbutz's basic principle: "To each according to his or her needs; from each according to his or her ability."