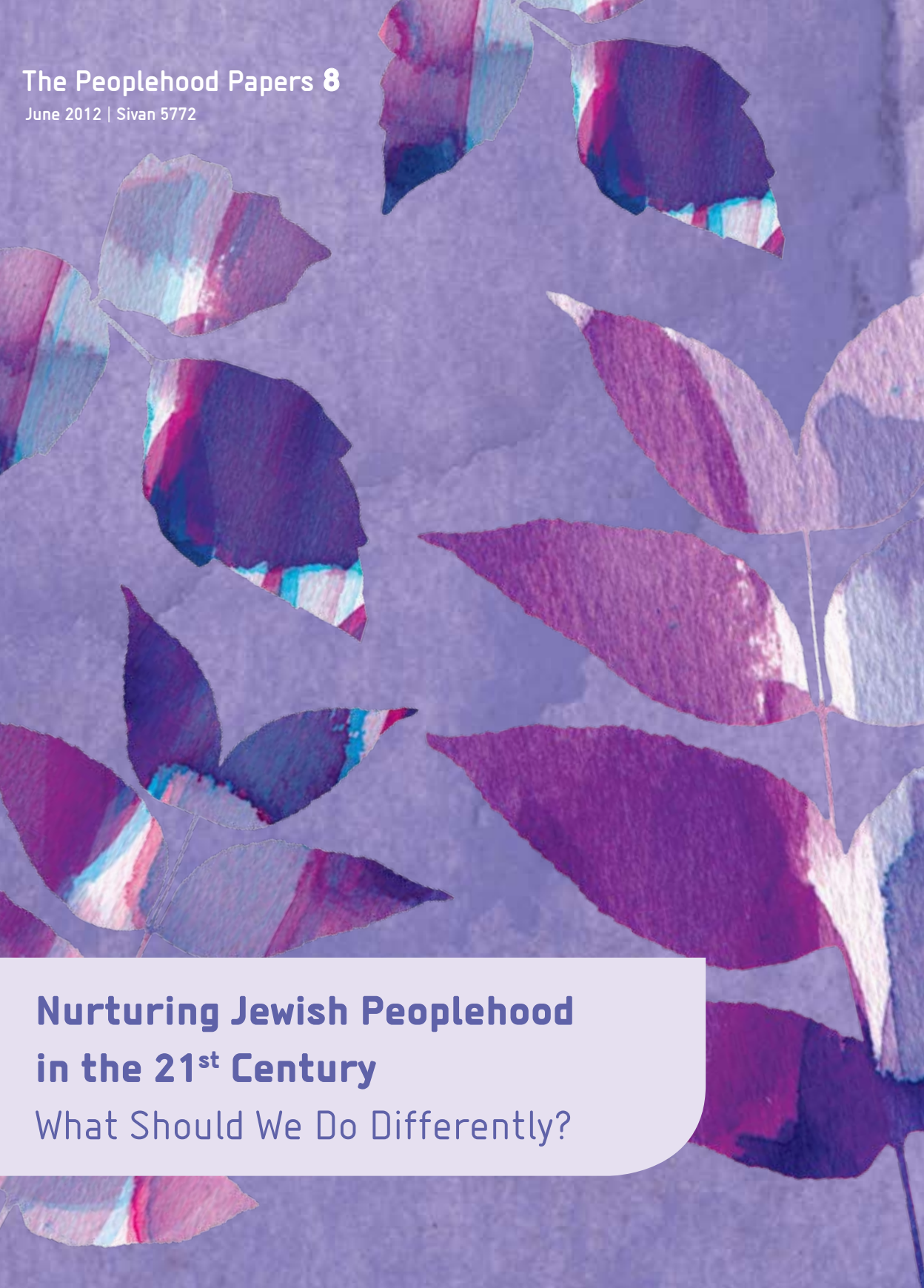
The Peoplehood Papers 8
June 2012 | Sivan 5772



Nurturing Jewish Peoplehood in the 21st Century

What Should We Do Differently?

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From the Editor

By Shlomi Ravid

This issue of the Peoplehood papers follows in the footsteps of the previous one dedicated to **Reinvigorating Jewish Peoplehood - the Philanthropic Perspective**[1] by addressing the challenge of **Nurturing Jewish Peoplehood in the 21st Century - What Should We Do Differently?** The underlying assumption of this conversation is that at the beginning of the 21st century, the Jewish People is facing a situation which is, in many respects, unprecedented in Jewish history. Being part of a free world and having a State of its own presents unique challenges to the notion of collective Jewish identity. It raises substantial questions regarding the meaning of Jewish Peoplehood and the role it can and should play in Jewish life. Those challenges, as well as modern developments in our overall approach to social belonging, dramatically affect the ways one can nurture and instill a sense of Peoplehood in the 21st century.

We asked our articles' contributors what changes Peoplehood nurturing needs to undergo in order to be inspiring and impactful in today's world. Their answers represent an array of creative responses to the changes in life patterns, the shifting of priorities and the emerging mindsets of young Jews today. Some of the articles focus on organizational strategies, while others on refining the Peoplehood message and pedagogic approach. All of them seem to share the view that a lot can be done in order to address the challenge of nurturing Peoplehood today and going forward.

The articles will be presented in the alphabetical order of their writers' names, as is our custom, but we would like to point out the key areas and constituencies they focus on:

Teens, College Students and Birthright Alumni

Liat Cohen Raviv and **Tal Gale**, the directors of the International Diller Teen Fellows program, focus on nurturing Peoplehood in teenagers and on the challenges of building a Peoplehood oriented leadership in that age group. **Abi Dauber Stern**, Hillel's VP of Global Jewish Experience writes about college students and

1 www.jpeoplehood.org/publication

the challenge of turning engagement and values into personal sustainable habits. For **Morlie Levin**, the Birthright Next CEO, who defines her challenge as turning the spark created by the Birthright Israel trip into a fire, the focus is to "enables young Jews to create authentic Jewish experiences on their own terms".

Young Adults

David Cygelman, founding director of the Moishe House discusses the new opportunities that emerge with the postponement of marriage, to develop frameworks within the young adult community with substantial Peoplehood nurturing potential. **Justin Korda,** the Executive Director of the ROI Community, calls for taking risks with today's young adults, learning to listen to them and allowing them to push the envelope on developing the future Jewish community and Peoplehood.

Jewish Service learning

Ilana Eisen, *Vice President at Repair the World* points to the Peoplehood nurturing opportunities that the interest in service creates. **Dyonna Ginsberg** *the Director of Jewish Service Learning at the Jewish Agency for Israel and one of the co-founders of Siach* describes the Peoplehood effect of the global conversation between Jewish social and environmental activists. **Yonatan Glaser** the director of B'etzedek points to the need to integrate "focus on Identity AND Jewish life, education AND social innovation" with "moral purpose and holiness", as the way of the future in nurturing Jewish Peoplehood. He proposes to build that future through Jewish social service-learning programs.

Peoplehood in the community and globally

On the communal global level **Ted Sokolsky**, the CEO of the Toronto Federation calls for "five essential changes that must take place if we are to nurture and foster a true and modern sense of Jewish Peoplehood" with Israel as its leader. **Andrea Arbel**, the Director of JAFI's Partnership2Gether, describes the shift from being a partnership framework to becoming a platform for Jewish Peoplehood. **Erica Brown** warns us against the Jewish communal tendency to cater to every sub–group in it, sometimes at the price of the communal whole.

Pedagogic and Strategic perspectives on Peoplehood nurturing

Jon Levisohn from Brandeis University offers a new comprehensive approach to Peoplehood pedagogy, which will "cultivate an emotional connection to specific objects

of shared attention – story, language, and love". **Bill Robinson** the Chief Strategy Officer of the Jewish Education Project, claims that the "challenge of Jewish Peoplehood is to (re)discover our shared bonds and common purpose as Jews in this emerging 3rd era of Jewish history". He proposes focusing on "embracing sacred rituals". **Elan Ezrachi** and **Varda Rafaeli** from the Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education analyze the state of Jewish Peoplehood education in Israel and propose that the era of "post-negation of the Diaspora" offers a new opportunity for engaging Israelis with Peoplehood. Finally **Lisa Grant** and **Shlomi Ravid**, also from CJPE, suggest that the current state of Peoplehood education and the challenges it faces require approaching it as a new educational field in its own right.

As we recently celebrated Shavuot one should note this harvest of the first fruits of Peoplehood nurturing initiatives. Not less impressive are the first Peoplehood pedagogic insights. They both represent a new phase in addressing the Peoplehood challenge. From asking "what is Peoplehood?" we have progressed to asking "how do we nurture Jewish Peoplehood?" While work still remains on the first question the second one holds the promise of actually sustaining the People so they can grapple with these questions for days to come.

This issue of the Peoplehood Papers, beyond our usual distribution, will be disseminated at the ROI, Siach and WCJCS conferences as well as the Partnership2Gether Committee at the Jewish Agency Board of Governor's meetings. We hope it will enrich their conversations and wish them fruitful discussions.

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Service as a Medium and a Message

Ilana Aisen

Over the last 25 years, leaders of immersive Jewish service-learning programs have made a discovery: these programs—designed first and foremost to offer authentic service to those in need—also powerfully catalyze diverse, purpose-driven Jewish communities. Through Jewish service programs, Jews from very different backgrounds come together, often far from their homes, with a shared purpose of serving others. As the volunteers spend time in a host community, learning about underlying challenges, lending a hand, and being inspired by the ability of those facing great challenges to craft their own solutions, they experience about the power of community and set about building it for themselves.

Repair the World partners with a wide range of service programs. As our work to build and inspire a movement to make service an integral part of North American Jewish life continues, we are excited about the many important outcomes of Jewish service-learning programs, including the strengthening of Jewish Peoplehood.

What is immersive Jewish service-learning?

Immersive Jewish service-learning (IJSL) blends the best of serving others with the best of experiential Jewish education. Lasting between a week and a year in duration, IJSL programs weave full-time service with learning and reflection. Each year, through IJSL programs, thousands of Jews from North America, Israel and around the world provide tens of thousands of days of service to Jews and non-Jews. Volunteers learn about the context in which they are service and explore Jewish content (texts, values, ritual, history, etc.) that speaks to and deepens the service experience.[1]

1 For more about Jewish learning in Jewish service-learning programs, please see: Lisa Exler and Jill Jacobs, "A Judaism That Matters: Creating Integrated Service Learning Communities" Journal of Jewish Communal Service, Volume 87, Nos. 1/2, Winter/Spring 2012. (All resources cited are available at RepairLabs.org.)

Na'aseh v'nishmah[2] Marshall McLuhan famously wrote, "The medium is the message." We learn something similar from Torah: *Na'aseh v'nishmah*: we will do and we will hear/understand (Exodus 24:7). While these teachings are not identical, they offer a helpful framework: What I do and how I do it (the action and its form) significantly determine what I will learn and who I will become (the content/message and outcome). This is true for individuals, groups and communities.

Taking McLuhan's insight into account is critical for the project of strengthening Jewish Peoplehood. **How** we go about building the attitudes and behaviors of belonging to the Jewish people, both through local and global engagement, will directly impact the quality and nature of the Peoplehood that emerges as well as its strength and staying power.

Coming together to serve, to perform acts of acts of *chesed* and *tzedek,* is a powerful medium for building connections and commitment to the Jewish collective because service enacts a form of Jewish communal life that is firmly rooted in Jewish values, history, and *mitzvot*. At the same time, service cannot be treated as a means to other ends or its inherent value will be undermined.[3]

Jewish service programs attract young people who are looking for meaning and purpose and want to make a contribution. This shared commitment develops strong bonds within and across diverse groups including those who host the volunteers and the volunteers themselves. Repair the World partners with many programs that are doing this exciting work. Here are just two examples:

> *This past March, a group of students from University of Virginia Hillel volunteered for a week in the Jewish community of Kiev, Ukraine during a JDC Short-Term Service Program. In only a few days, they refurbished and repaired a Jewish kindergarten and the home of an elderly member of the community. Accomplishing these projects in themselves would have made for a meaningful service program, but what made the experience transformational was that the group was joined every step of the way by Ukrainian Jewish peers. They painted, wallpapered, ate, lived, laughed, and celebrated Shabbat and Purim together, bridging cultural and language barriers while building a shared sense of Jewish identity. Whether they had been raised Jewish or had just discovered their Jewish heritage recently, the participants—both American and Ukrainian—felt a shared*

2 A very helpful conversation with Dr. Shaul Kelner helped me to arrive at these ideas.

3 See, for example, Ellen Irie Et. Al., "The Worth of What They Do: The Impact of Short-term Immersive Jewish Service-Learning on Host Communities: An Exploratory Study," 2010.

sense of connection and responsibility toward one another, as members of a global Jewish people.

During an alternative break run by Yahel Israel Service Learning, University of Maryland students lived with Ethiopian Israeli host families in Rishon Lezion. During such programs, students often refer to having gone through many years of Jewish schooling without knowing about the history and culture of the Ethiopian Jewish community. Upon return from Israel, the students weaved their learning into a range of activities on campus. The volunteers became ambassadors for this segment of the larger Jewish community and are celebrating Jewish diversity.

Placing service at the center of any immersive service program or other volunteer undertaking can prevent the unintended harms that arise from treating service as a means to other ends. In a recent article, Max Klau and Dana Talmi illustrated that **how** the service is undertaken has everything to do with its message and impacts.

Well-meaning volunteers were brought in to paint buildings in housing projects, but residents of the projects were never asked if this would be a helpful form of service. The volunteers were unaware of the fact that community workers were in the midst of a process of engaging residents to take care of their own environment. Important initial work had been done, but the well-intentioned effort by outside volunteers brought an end to these efforts. "Why should I work hard if others will do it for me?" become the attitude of some residents. … Participants surely left the project feeling virtuous, but the impact on the community was negative in some very important ways. The service project actively undermined an existing community empowerment initiative and left the residents less motivated to take responsibility for their own community than if the project had never happened. Despite the best of intentions, the program weakened the community it sought to serve.[4]

In this way, the medium is also the message: By taking care to plan the service (and all aspects of the visit) in true partnership with those served, carry out the program with cultural sensitivity, and ensure that service outcomes are valued by those served, the message to the volunteers and those who they are serving will be most consistent with the program's intentions. When a service program consistently communicates that we all have needs and can learn from and strengthen one another, positive effects can reverberate very far. For example:

4 Max Klau and Dana Talmi, "Integrating Community Impact and Participant Development" Journal of Jewish Communal Service, Volume 87, Nos. 1/2, Winter/Spring 2012, p. 58.

Tevel B'Tzedek's service-learning program in Nepal brings Israelis and Jews from around the world together for four intensive months of service. During a seminar for the organization's Nepali staff, the founder Micha Odenheimer led a conversation about the organization's dual purpose: to help marginalized people in the developing world and to strengthen Israel and the Jewish people. The conversation was very moving for the Nepali staff members, who resonated deeply with the notion of particularistic values inspiring universalistic actions. As Micha said, this message of "we are a people, seeking to connect with other peoples for just that purpose davka resonates" across communities, cultures and religions.

Through Repair the World's work in partnership with over 35 immersive Jewish service-learning programs, we seek to support and champion high-impact service that also draws Jews together around a common purpose of giving our time to help others. Jewish service-learning programs accomplish this across religious lines, geographical barriers and political differences. Working together to help address pressing needs in communities close to home and far away, we are also overcoming barriers and stigmas and advancing relationships among Jews in Israel, North America and around the world.

Ilana Aisen serves as a Vice President at Repair the World (www.weRepair.org) and can be reached at ilana@weRepair.org.

Partnership2Gether: The Jewish Agency's Peoplehood Platform

Andrea S. Arbel

The relationship between the State of Israel and world Jewry has taken many forms over its relatively short history. Traditionally, organized world Jewry has provided Israel with financial, political, and moral support. The State of Israel has provided Diaspora communities with a homeland and an increased sense of security. What has changed is that in recent years, it is increasingly recognized that Israel has a primary role in the continuity of world Jewry, and that there is mutual responsibility among both Israelis and overseas Jewry to ensure a strong and vibrant future for the Jewish people.

Partnership2Gether. P2G. (formerly Partnership 2000 and P2K). What is it and how has it evolved to be a platform for nurturing Jewish peoplehood in the 21st Century? P2G was created 15 years ago by the Jewish Agency for Israel with our partners in the Jewish Federations of North America and Keren Hayesod. In the simplest terms, its main goal is to connect a specific Jewish community abroad with a city and region in Israel in what is akin to a sister city relationship.

Partnership was designed to make what is frequently an amorphous relationship with Israel into something tangible. Instead of seeing Israel through the cliché tour bus window, P2G gives the members of the Jewish community an opportunity to develop ongoing relations with a specific region in Israel – getting to know first hand its strengths, weaknesses, culture and above all its people. Today, there are 45 Partnerships in Israel with 550 Jewish communities overseas, 450 programs and 350,000 participants annually.

P2G's unique added value is its "People-to-People" (P2P) activity. "P2P" includes a long list of programs that directly engage youth, adults and professionals, for example, doctors or artists who meet in Israel, the overseas community and/or cyberspace to learn from each other's professional expertise, but also to simply get to know one another as people. For many overseas Jews, even if they have been to Israel, this often offers the first opportunity not only to actually collaborate with a colleague from Israel but to actually meet an Israeli. For Israelis, even if they have traveled abroad, this is often their first time visiting a Jewish

community and having the opportunity to see its strength and beauty as a "community" as well as the very real challenges being faced. "We went as Israelis, we came back as Jews," is the response heard over and over from participating Israelis.

Growing the Partnership Platform: P2G Part II

Within the Jewish Agency for Israel's new strategic plan, which identifies as a core mission the strengthening of Jewish identity through meaningful Israel experiences and "*mifgashim" (*shared encounters), Partnership2Gether re-emerged as one of the organization's flagship programs and was reaffirmed as the only international platform solely dedicated to creating relationships between Israel and Jewish communities on an individual, organizational and community level. The challenge for P2G then became how to take this international Jewish peoplehood network to the next level and develop new venues for engagement.

Within the existing 45 partnerships, understanding themselves as a local platform for Jewish communal engagement is not trivial – it was and still is a change in mindset. In this context, P2G was defined as a platform for Jewish communal engagement -- one which strategically engages Jewish communal organizations such as JCCs, Hillel, Birthright, schools, synagogue and/or summer camps. *Indeed, the Jewish polity is neither defined by the number of individuals living in a defined geographic region nor the number of communal organizations. A healthy community is defined by the glue that brings together the various organizations and thus individuals into a synergetic relationship. We believe that P2G can be the nexus of this development.*

To strategically advance partnership as a platform, we developed methodology for partnerships and conducted a mapping of the Jewish communal organizations across P2G. We discovered that we are actively engaging some 200 Jewish formal and informal schools overseas, more than 100 synagogues, close to 100 JCCs – a very serious scope with untapped Jewish peoplehood potential.

This resulted in the development of strategic relationships with JCCA, WCJCC, Hillel, and MASA which led to increased joint programming on the local partnership level as well as on the international level. For example, this past year P2G undertook joint Jewish peoplehood leadership programs with MASA involving more than 200 young people from the Partnership family and MASA participants. This has deepened their Jewish peoplehood experience beyond their respective programs. This past summer, P2G hosted close to 1000 JCCA Macabi Game participants in their partnership regions for home hospitality – no less than an army operation.

In Chanukah 2011, P2G launched the "International School Twinning Network". The network currently connects more than 200 schools in Israel with more than 200 schools (pre-school-12th grade) and informal educational institutions.

School twinning has proven to create cultural change in the schools – impacting how the Diaspora school relates to and understands Israel and how the Israeli schools relate to Judaism and the Jewish people. For young students (and even many of the educators who have never been to Israel) for the first time Israel becomes real, tangible. Likewise Israelis become acquainted with the complexities of overseas Jewish communities and develop a greater understanding of their role and responsibility to the Jewish people. The network is now expanding to schools in France, the FSU, Latin America and Australia and provides educators with a pedagogical and professional exchange of ideas. Our goal is to expand this educational network across the globe.

The heart of this Israel educational engagement network will be a "knowledge center" based on educational standards and student outcomes. The network will also feature a portal including a growing list of successfully implemented educational twinning programs, teacher training programs, how to prepare missions and more. It will enable educators and students to see what their counterparts in other partnerships are doing, and also take pride in the fact that they are part of something beyond than their own specific program.

Lastly, the P2G Platform recently launched the "Partnership@Home" initiative. One of the most significant elements of partnership is its ethos of home hospitality. Thousands of young people and adults from the Diaspora have spent time in the homes of Israelis and vice versa, on exchanges, missions and programs. They may forget some of places they visited, not always be able to pronounce the names of others, but they will never forget their hosts, what they ate, and how they felt. In a recent survey home hospitality and Shabbat dinner with an Israeli family was voted the number one factor for making their P2G experience " exceptional" and the main reason why they not only keep in touch but actually return. They come back to be with their friends.

Through Partnership@Home, P2G wants to bring this very personal home hospitality experience to as many Birthright, Onward Israel and MASA participants by working hand-in-hand and systematically with communities. Our vision is to begin to change the culture of these programs and make home hospitality (and when relevant having Israeli adoptive families) an integral part and ultimately the culture of these Israel experience programs thereby making their Israel experience even more meaningful and long-lasting.

In conclusion, through the Partnership Platform, Israelis and overseas Jewry are working together to strengthen the Jewish people as a whole. The beauty of the P2G platform is that it is not a program but an evolving platform responding to the changes of the Jewish polity. The second 10 years is different from our first decade of activity – and it will surely be fascinating to see what the future holds.

Andrea S. Arbel is the Director of the Partnership Unit at the Jewish Agency for Israel – responsible for the "Partnership2Gether" program.

Peoplehood and Fragmentation

Erica Brown

Walk into most synagogues in North America today and you will find services for everyone: a tot Shabbat, a junior congregation, senior lunches, and latke and vodka programs for men in mid-life. They may not always be advertised within age brackets, but we all know who the target audience is. Sisterhoods have even been divided in some synagogues to cater to both young professionals/young mothers and older empty-nesters.

This is not only true for synagogues. Federations and JCCs create happy hours for their hip twenty-year-olds and gallery showings for those over 50. It's true that we've always had to market to specific populations to attract participants, but now we hardly have any programming meant to bring the entire community together. And this is not only true for institutional programming. I have found it to be true in the socializing that takes place out of buildings. We often have people around our Shabbat table who are 10-20 years younger or older, but are rarely invited to join families outside of our age range and if we are, it will be to those who are older than we are, not younger.

For a long time, one of the persistent stumbling blocks to peoplehood was denominational affiliation. Now that obstruction is slipping in a more post-denominational milieu. It's not that our synagogues have dropped their affiliations, but the ideological rigidity among congregants is largely gone. In its place is a much more insidious division: ageism. It's insidious not only because it divides us but because we don't even realize how *much* it divides us and what we lose when we don't "do Jewish" across the lifespan within the same room.

And here is what we lose when we don't bring millennials and baby-boomers together to talk, to debate and to socialize:

- A chance to hear the voice and the concerns of those tackling different life issues and enjoying different life stages
- The chance to mentor or be mentored

- The sharing of powerful life experiences that are not our own
- The guidance of those who have already been there and done that
- The wonder and curiosity of what Jewish life looks at from someone older or younger than yourself
- The institutional understanding that we ultimately serve community as a collective, and can never be exclusively singular in our focus
- Intimate knowledge of the anxieties and challenges of those facing today's challenges at a different age than our own

We are reading lots of books about millennials in the workplace and how to manage expectations and harness talent. We are not reading enough about how to break down the age barriers within the Jewish community and create genuine understanding that comes through friendship.

And if we are seeking practical ways to nurture peoplehood, there can be few easier solutions than bringing people together regardless of age to identify universal issues that impact us all. Congregations must be places where we pray for those who are not ourselves. Jewish prayer is traditionally always written in the plural to reflect our capacity to go outside the self and encounter the needs of the other. Lately, we have been betraying this legacy in what sounds like an appeal to self-love, and we've been doing it with the "*hekhsher*" or stamp of approval of Jewish institutional life. Rather than instruct and expand our thinking, Jewish professionals often cater to this trend in creating events and programs.

I believe we can begin to reverse this process with a few introductory measures:

1) All boards should have at least two representatives from every major age bracket: 20s, 30s, 40s, etc. Having single, token board representation is usually not robust enough. If boards exist to represent the community at large then they need to factor in age as well.

2) Large scale community-wide events need to focus on programming that brings shared voices into the *same* room. This means that panel discussions, for example, should include not only religious, gender and geographic diversity but age diversity as well.

3) Even when we segment age as a factor in programming, we need to make sure that we inform our constituents about activities, trends and events taking place for those in other age brackets. Otherwise, we begin to look lopsided in our concerns.

4) We need to vary ages when it comes to taking leadership and chair roles. There was a time when we only saw men's portraits hanging in boardrooms. Today, those are thankfully joined by a sprinkling of photos or paintings of women presidents, but most reflect only one age bracket and that is not servicing our community broadly enough.

When making the film "The Prince of Egypt," Disney chairman Jeffrey Katzenberg decided to call upon clergy from the three major faiths for guidance. One of the questions raised was who would play the voice of God. Would it be a traditional James Earl Jones voice, appealing to a conservative audience, or might it be the voice of a woman, a real radical shift for Disney?

The person responsible for God's voice in the film wanted to try something new: "The challenge with that voice was to try to evolve it into something that had not been heard before." In the end, they used the actor Val Kilmer's voice for both Moses *and* God, "to suggest the kind of voice we hear inside our own heads in our everyday lives." In other words, God's voice was a reflection of a human voice or perhaps even our own voices. The ultimate in narcissism is to make God into a shadow of ourselves.

I preferred an option discussed along the way; God's voice would be a synthesis of voices: children and seniors, young women, old men and everything in-between. In other words, if God's voice has to be, by virtue of our limitations, a voice that sounds human, let it reflect the voice of us all. If that is true for God's voice, should it not be true for the voice of our community?

The bonds of peoplehood are strongest when they represent the voice of us all. In our stretch for membership and recruitment, we forget this at our peril. We can and should segment some programming, but we must be careful that it does not lead to age fracturing and fragmentation. To be a real community and an extended family we need everyone around the table.

Dr. Erica Brown is the scholar-in-residence for the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington. Her forthcoming book is *Happier Endings: Overcoming the Fear of Death* (Simon and Schuster).

The Journey of the Jewish People; How to Connect Tomorrow's Leaders!

Liat Cohen Raviv and Tal Gale

In 1272 BCE the Jewish people were united on the same land for the last time. After a forty year journey through the desert and thirty eight years after standing together at Mt. Sinai, where the national identity of the Jewish people was formed, the Jewish people were facing separation. This was the first division in the young, unified nation. It set the foundation of a dispersed existence.

More than 3200 years ago, the Tribes of *Gad* and *Reuben* requested Moses allow them to not cross the Jordan River with the rest of the Tribes of Israel. This contradicted Moses' mission to bring the entire Jewish nation to live out a shared destiny in the Promised Land. After a short, boisterous debate, Moses acceded to *Gad's* and *Reuben's* requests. But why would Moses allow this?

> *"Moses gave to them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land, according to its cities and borders, even the cities of the surrounding land." (Numbers 32:33). Not only does Moses agree to the requests but surprises us again by dividing the Tribe of Manasseh.*

Numerous Midrashim and other commentaries offer different interpretations of Moses' decision. Some suggests that Moses wanted to punish the Tribes for separating themselves from their brothers or for having preferred their livestock and acquisitions over their children. Others indicate that he did want anyone who did not harbor a "true" love for Israel to enter the Promised Land.

As part of the Diller Teen Fellows Program, we study this narrative in mixed groups of Israeli and North American teens without revealing Moses' decision. We ask them to think as of themselves as leaders, to put themselves in Moses' shoes: how would they respond to this request? After about an hour of study, discussion and internalization of the text, about 95 percent confidently answer that they would not grant the request of

the Tribes of *Gad* and *Reuben* to stay outside the Promised Land. They argue these tribes had a moral obligation to stay with the Jewish Nation. Through guided discussion, they echo the suggestions noted above, engage in critical thinking and explore the notion of being part of a Jewish people dispersed worldwide.

From our perspective as educators, this conversation serves as an invitation for the Diller teens to engage in and join the journey of the Jewish people that continues today and in which they can take a meaningful and tangible role. Through this dialogue we offer our interpretation of Moses' decision. This interpretation maintains that Moses, who was a great leader, educator, judge and prophet, knew something that no one else knew. He knew then that the Jewish people were destined to separation and dispersion in the future. Therefore, Moses allows for this separation under his leadership to ensure everlasting longing for Israel and establish the concept of Jewish Peoplehood. Moses secures a connection and sense of belonging to Israel within the Jewish continuum and creates a reality of reciprocal responsibility for Jews residing in and outside Israel.

Through the division of Israel into the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles and many more travails, the narrative of the Jewish people carries many dispersions. These repeated exiles are a unique phenomenon of the Jewish people who have lived 3300 years, 98 percent of their existence, as a dispersed people. This is the Jewish experience, an integral part of the Nation's identity.

In response to this reality, we as educators operating in the reality of the 21st century have a responsibility to generate and reinvigorate relationships between Jewish communities worldwide and create a Jewish identity emphasizing our commonalities (Jewish values, tradition, culture, literature, etc.). Our responsibility is to create fitting platforms for promoting meaningful relationships between individuals and between Jewish communities each of which plays a prominent role in the national Jewish identity with Israel as a strong national home and spiritual center.

But how do we truly engage youth in this narrative? This is not simple. In addition to study and understanding of the concept of Jewish Peoplehood, we choose to have the teens and staff engage in Jewish Peoplehood in practice; to experience it, react to it, reflect on it and ultimately learn from it. Diller Teen Fellows is an international program comprised of 18 communities from America, Canada and Israel. Throughout the 15-month program participants are challenged to engage with Jewish Peoplehood individually and with their peers. The program includes a 10-12 day seminar in North America during which the Israeli teens visit their partner communities and a 21 day seminar in Israel. In Israel, the Peoplehood experience reaches its peak during the "Diller Teen Fellows International Congress," a 5-day annual seminar for participants

from our partnering communities, simulating a general assembly (*assefa klalit*) of Jewish people worldwide. This makes the context of Peoplehood more tangible and real for the participants. Through this social and educational Jewish Peoplehood experience/ experiment, with 360 teen Fellows and 65 Junior Staff and alumni, we encourage and assist these teens in identifying and solidifying their personal connection to the Jewish Nation. We encourage them to translate this feeling into a conscious choice to take an active role.

This authentic Jewish Peoplehood experience reflects the world in which teens live. It celebrates commonalities and addresses differences and challenges. There are many challenges in connecting American, Canadian and Israeli teens. The meeting of teens from diverse Jewish communities is often marked by clashes of identity and culture. It is at these points of intersection where Jewish Peoplehood is experienced. Through engagement in "real-life" leadership experiences, through true empowerment processes, these young leaders become involved in and aware of their own development and that of their peers. They start to recognize their potential and to envision themselves as leaders.

Challenging teens in this very direct way, allowing them to succeed and fail, while common in Israel, is uncommon in North America. Today's teens are international; their reality transcends geography and easily provides them with all of the information they might possibly want (or not want). Our challenge is to let them experiment within their reality, to help them navigate their complex world, to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to empower them with knowledge and experience. At Diller we break from the norm of content-centered leadership training to participant-centered leader development. We do not shy away from giving teenagers opportunities to experiment with leadership. They study, discuss and experience leadership with its successes and failures and reflect on lessons that can be applied to their future.

In the Diller Teen Fellows Program exploration of Jewish Peoplehood is intentional and pervasive. As a people of a dispersed existence we must ensure that current and future leaders of the Jewish People choose and have the capability to make decisions and affect change in a global context. Through the acquisition of knowledge and skills, Peoplehood experiences and personal connection to the Jewish narrative, teens become active leaders within and beyond this experiment in Jewish Peoplehood, providing us insight into our collective future, our future identity.

Liat Cohen Raviv and Tal Gale are Co-Directors of Diller Teen Fellows, North America / Israel.

A Continued Evolution in Jewish Peoplehood

David Cygelman

In thinking about Jewish peoplehood in the 21st Century and comparing it to our past, there are several trends that clearly present themselves as major shifts in our community. Globalization, and the shrinking distance between cultures and countries along with the changing demographic trends of lifespan and stages, has deeply impacted the Jewish community. Although the core values and traditions of the Jewish people have stayed fairly consistent over the past few decades, the way that we connect and relate with one another has decidedly changed. As a result of this continual global evolution, the Jewish community must also adjust its approach to serving its constituents around the world. Despite a growing global population, the world is becoming a much smaller place. Whether considering online communication or increased travel, there is a permeating interconnectedness that is rapidly increasing, not just in person but also over the web. Further, demographic trends are shifting as people live longer and marry later than in previous generations, creating entirely new phases of life that provide a rich opportunity for promoting a deep and meaningful Jewish impact.

As we grow and change globally, there are three major components to nurturing Jewish peoplehood that we should all take into consideration when examining the current state of the Jewish community and its potential future directions: (1) recognizing that new methods for community building, learning and engagement must continually be developed; (2) acknowledging the influence that globalization and interconnectedness are having on our communal landscape; (3) finding ways to address the lack of true leadership development for young adults. Analyzing these issues will help us adapt to the changing times and serve our community as effectively as possible.

Revisiting Jewish Communal Engagement

The future of the global Jewish community depends upon engaging and empowering young adults who will become the leaders of tomorrow.

The way that young adults connect with Jewish community in the 21st Century is proving to be notably different from in the past. With the average age of marriage sharply raising from the early 20's to, now, the mid 30's, the large community infrastructure that dominated the landscape twenty years ago can work for families but by in large, is not reaching young adults. There is a dramatic shift happening across the board as people yearn for micro communities that fit their lifestyle rather than large, macro communities. Smaller groups are often able to cater more effectively to the needs of their members, making Judaism, Jewish community and culture more accessible and appealing to those who would otherwise be unengaged or unaffiliated. This approach of building many tents instead of one massive tent positions the Jewish community to become considerably more approachable, relatable and desirable to Jewish young adults. Even twenty years ago, without the social networking that exists in the 21st century, this simply would not have been a reality. The fact that word of mouth can spread without ever actually talking to someone, allows for these more micro communities to grow and flourish.

Envisioning the Future on a Global, Jewish Scale

We have seen that with the increasing permeation of globalization, the needs of Jewish young adults have become more universally uniform across borders. Non-Orthodox Jews are marrying later, and focusing more on their careers or travel than on starting a family. Significant cultural shifts can be felt all over the global Jewish community. For example, in Latin America, the insular Jewish communities of the past are expanding. Like in other parts of the world, young adults are moving from their parents' home before they are married and are looking for a Jewish community to call their own. Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe and the FSU, we have seen the largest growth of young adult Jewish life and many residents of these countries have discovered their connection to their Jewish heritage in just the past ten or so years. There is a significant yearning for learning and training and the largest demand for new Moishe Houses comes from this region. In other places of the world, such as China, the growing ex-pat community of young Jews moving for business opportunities is growing and the requisition for meaningful Jewish experiences is becoming increasingly acute.

It is clear that the needs of the young adults of today are very different from those of prior generations, and we are seeing the convergence of these needs from young adults around the world. Therefore, it is no surprise that new models are flourishing that speak directly to the new demographic characteristics of this population.

Envisioning a Strong Global Jewish Community

As Jews enter adulthood, they are faced with the choice of connecting with Judaism and Jewish community or drifting to the periphery of engagement. If we want young adults to find their place in a Jewish community that works for them, we must be able to develop hand-in-hand leadership models that actually work. This includes going beyond the traditional staff member/participant model of engagement for young adults in the Jewish community, and seeking more innovative ways to grow and strengthen networks and relationships.

The peer-to-peer engagement model is key for building Jewish community. Given this need, we now must focus on training young leaders to be effective in their roles. Moishe House, for example, is leading a series of immersive learning retreats to give young adults the knowledge and resources to be comfortable and knowledgeable in their peer-to-peer engagement. Since August 2011, we have hosted four Jewish Learning Retreats that have helped more than 125 Jewish young adults create personal connections to Jewish rituals and traditions. In the coming year, we will hold at least eight. The demand is here, the question is: are we ready to fill it?

How Do We Move Forward?

Given the changing demographics and growing interconnectedness, we now have the opportunity to create a variety of approaches to community that are accessible to Jews from different backgrounds and varying levels of religiosity. We have the chance to empower the future Jewish leaders through innovative programs and ideas that allow young adults to explore their own personal Jewish identity and cultural connection while facilitating this same opportunity for their peers and not losing the immense tradition of our people.

Jewish peoplehood is staring us in the face: just look at Facebook or the ROI community built by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation. We are at a unique juncture where we can embrace and grow our global Jewish community by giving young adults the opportunity to create and build rather than just accept and follow. Good ideas spread fast and have no borders. The current demand, for example, of young adults wanting to open Moishe Houses still outweighs our ability to support the program. I hope our institutions and community will be able to react fast enough while listening to the young adults' needs rather than suggesting what they should be doing. This will be critical to the continuation of a strong, international, Jewish peoplehood.

David Cygelman is the co-founding director of Moishe House.

Nurturing Peoplehood in Practice – from Engagement to Internalized Habits

Abi Dauber Sterne

In a recent US-wide survey of college students, administered and analyzed by Penn, Schoen and Berland Associates, Jewish students report that the three most important messages that attract the more marginal Jewish students to Jewish life are commitments to:

1) bringing a diversity of Jews together
2) social justice
3) being part of a larger global network

Interestingly, all three of these messages are embedded in the notion of Jewish peoplehood. The question is how can organized Jewish life both live and send these messages through a medium to which today's college students can relate?

While programs such as Taglit-Birthright Israel and Alternative Breaks certainly project the messages above, they are both lacking the medium for truly engraining the feeling of connectedness to the Jewish people: *habit*. To create a sustained interest and commitment to Israel and the Jewish people, 10 days is not enough. We need a before and after. We need to build habits. We need to provide participants in any program with a clear sense of what it has to do with their day-to-day lives.

Furthermore, as we all know, social media plays a key role for many of us, but particularly for college students. For this generation of digital natives (as author, Mark Prensky calls them in his book *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*), their first point of connection is Facebook or Twitter. According to Prensky, today's average college graduates have spent less than 5,000 hours of their lives reading, but over 10,000 hours playing video games (not to mention 20,000 hours watching TV).

Why have digital social media become so popular? One theory, according to Charles Duhigg in his book *Power of Habit*, is that seeing an email message, Facebook or Twitter post is habit forming. That is, every time I receive an email message or other digital message (particularly on my hand-held device), it is like a reward. The feeling of "I

am connected," or "I have a friend or colleague thinking about me," acts as a reward, which creates a positive feedback loop, which creates the habit of constantly checking my device.

At the same time, common sense tells us that human beings also crave real human contact and connection. While digital media is students' modus operandi, good old fashioned conversations are what truly inspire them to explore and grow Jewishly.

What are the implications of all of this for facilitating students' true connection to the broader Jewish people? One answer is that we need to figure out how to make seeking human contact and conversations – particularly Jewish conversations – habitual. Today, many of the "successful" Jewish educational projects and programs are able to inspire a feeling of connectedness to the greater Jewish whole. What we, as a community, have not figured out is how to make this feeling into a regular one; we haven't figured out how to make Jewish conversations (and by implication, a feeling of connectedness) habitual. In particular, for college students, we must help create particular habits that motivate them not only to check their iPhones for messages, but also to seek out Jewish experiences and actions regularly.

At Hillel, we've begun to do some work in bridging the digital-personal divide. For the past five years, Hillel has been working with students to build their Jewish social networks actively. With funding from the Jim Joseph Foundation, Hillel has designed a model that builds "live" or human social networks to connect Jewish students to each other and to Jewish life.

Over the past four years, through Hillel's peer-to-peer engagement strategy, 900 student interns have built vast networks. Through mostly one-on-one meetings, these interns have logged 35,000 relationships with uninvolved Jewish peers on more than 70 campuses, helping these students explore and connect to Jewish life on their own terms. And on 10 campuses we placed experienced Jewish educators or rabbis, not to perform religious services, but rather to build networks or communities of learning, to engage in conversations with students to inspire their Jewish growth and infuse Jewish content into the activities of the campus Hillel.

One of the tasks that these educators are responsible for is meeting individually with Birthright returnees. Not surprisingly, our research shows that these one-on-one conversations multiply the "Birthright effect," and as a result these Birthright alumni show increased levels of Jewish learning. The more meetings or conversations the students and educators have, the greater the effect.

To paraphrase a recent NYU graduate, "my weekly chevruta meetings with Rabbi Dan, motivated me to be involved in Jewish life." I believe that this student's motivation came not only from the content of what she studied with Rabbi Dan, but from its regularity. Ongoing motivation and engagement comes from habit -- the habit of being in Jewish environments and in Jewish conversations weekly or even daily.

In parallel to this very human and personal strategy, Hillel has built a robust online database system that enables these interns and educators to keep track of their relationships by simply linking to their Facebook pages.

Perhaps what's most interesting about this methodology of creating connection to Jewish life is that it supports students' strong preference for social media, while affirming the basic human need for relationships. Or, in other words, it reinforces the habitual response of checking digital media, while using it to leverage Jewish human contact.

As the organized Jewish world strives to cultivate the next generation of peoplehood-conscious Jewish leaders and learners, we must design opportunities for students to engage in Jewish values, ideas, and actions daily and habitually. To paraphrase Maimonides, positive characteristics are not acquired by doing a one-time positive act, but rather through the repetition of numerous positive acts. He shares the example that it is better to give a thousand coins one thousand times, rather than giving all thousand coins at once. If we give one coin every day, we become accustomed to giving charity. Whereas, if it's a once-a-year pinnacle moment, it's just that -- something that happens once a year.

As we develop methods, tools, and programs for Jewish engagement let's help people get into the habit of thinking, acting, and feeling Jewish daily, integrating the human touch with the digital one.

Abi Dauber Sterne, is the VP of Global Jewish Experience at the Hillel Schusterman International Center.

Klal Israel – Are we in it Together? Israelis and Jewish Peoplehood

Elan Ezrachi and Varda Rafaeli

Zionism has succeeded in establishing Jewish sovereignty, transforming Jewish life and creating a rich Jewish public space for its physical existence as well as for its cultural, spiritual and creative dimensions. Furthermore, the State of Israel is becoming the largest and fastest growing Jewish community in the world.

Nevertheless the newly created Israeli-Jewish identity was based on a distinction between the Israeli narrative and the global Jewish scene. By the same token, expression of Israeli identity often transmitted a negative message to Diaspora Jewish identity, by portraying Israeli identity as a more complete and fulfilling expression of Jewish life.[1] James Clifford, from the Center for Cultural Studies in the University of California stated that "Diasporas have rarely founded nation-states: Israel is the prime example. And such 'homecomings' are, by definition, the negation of diaspora."[2] It seems that the need to negate and judge the Diaspora was an inevitable phase in Israel's nation building.

We suggest that there are three core factors that have driven the way Israelis perceive Diaspora Jewish life:

- **The classical Zionist narrative** shaped the perspective in which Jewish life throughout the world was portrayed. According to this interpretation, world Jewry was primarily a reservoir for Aliyah or, alternatively, Jewish communities around the world were presented as essential resources for supporting the Zionist project through philanthropy and political activism. Israel was assumed to be the only place where Jews could live a fulfilling and meaningful life, while the Diaspora was perceived inferior in terms of Jewish expression and sustainability.

1 Israeli novelist A. B., Yehoshua is one of the leading voices in this area, describing Diaspora Jews as partial Jews.

2 Clifford, J. "Diasporas", Cultural Anthropology, volume 9, issue 3, august 1994, pp. 302-338, see p. 307.

- **Politics and religion** in Israel has a strong influence on shaping Israeli attitudes toward the Jewish people. The prominence of Orthodoxy in Israeli society as well as Orthodoxy being the official State religion sends a negative message toward world Jewry who is mostly associated with liberal denominations that are not recognized in Israel.
- **The philanthropic dimension**. For many decades Israelis have been exposed to the generosity of world Jewry as well as to the power of world Jewish philanthropy. In the early days of the State the financial support was a significant factor in the Israeli national budget. Today, it is still an important factor in the livelihood of the nonprofit sector. Philanthropy plays a substantial role in shaping the image of Diaspora Jews in the eyes of Israelis.

The Israeli education system, from its very early stages, focused on nation-building, the Hebrew language, strengthening the attachment to the land of Israel and fostering commitment to the security and sustainability of the new country. In this paradigm, young Israelis were ideologically and psychologically cut off from the broader global Jewish collective.

The main matter that concerned the educational leadership was the Jewishness of young Israelis from secular backgrounds. Israeli educational leaders were more troubled with the growing distance between young Israelis and Jewish culture and heritage than with their declining sense of belonging to the Jewish collective. Their concern can be seen through the work of several national initiatives that looked at the Jewishness of young Israelis.

In the late 1950s the government announced the national program for strengthening Jewish awareness (Toda'a Yehudit). **The Jewish Awareness** initiative included three components:

1) Deepening knowledge of Jewish history
2) Increasing the ties to Jews in the Diaspora, "people knowledge" (Yeda Ha'am), as it was called.
3) Strengthening the ties to the spiritual heritage of the Jewish People.

In regard to the second goal that mentions the ties to the Jewish Diaspora, it should be seen in the context of a decades old process in which Zionist education was struggling with the tension between the centrality of Zionism and the concern for the Jewish collective.

The Jewish Awareness initiative inspired several curricular projects that had little effect on the basic approach of the Israeli school system to the Jewishness of Israelis.

Thirty years later, the **Shenhar Commission** was formed to examine the state of Jewish studies in the public (secular) school system. The Commission addressed the broader

issue of Jewish identity of young Israelis. Their extended and impressive report referred to the question of world Jewry in one sentence in which they recommended to create a curriculum about Jewish life in the Diaspora.

Only in the 1990s, the Ministry of Education established a small division that focused on building educational ties between Israel and the Jewish communities in the Diaspora. This division developed curricula on world Jewry and nurtured a variety of school activities and educational programs, pre-service and in-service training. Sadly, the unit was shut down after a few years.

In the religious (Orthodox) school system the issue of world Jewry was not even raised. It was taken for granted that religious education assures collective identity. While this might have been true in pre-modern periods, in post-modern societies, religion and religious education is one of the causes for segregation and isolation rather than unity.

In short, the Israeli educational system neglected the issue of nurturing identification with the Jewish collective around the world and essentially paid lip service to the notion of global Jewish solidarity.

Another initiative that needs mentioning in this context is the establishment of Beit Hatfutsot (The Diaspora Museum) in the late 1970s, in Tel Aviv. Here again, the emphasis was on the history and legacy of Jews around the world - in the past - that led to the ultimate conclusion: the State of Israel. Contemporary Jewry, and particularly the American Jewish experience, was grossly underrepresented.

Outside the educational scene, there have been some more positive signs. From the 1980's, increasing numbers of Israelis have shown interest in global Jewish affairs. This interest was stimulated and served by a variety of institutional interventions, both in Israel and the Diaspora.

In the early 1980's the American Jewish Committee, launched a pioneering educational program called "Get to know American Jewry". Every year, for over twenty years, influential Israelis were chosen to take part in an intensive seminar that included a visit to the US. The visit encompassed different aspects of American Jewish life such as the political arena, the religious movements, Jewish education, culture, federation activities and communal life. The participants typically visited NY, Washington and one additional community where they met with community leaders, educators, and academics in related fields, members of congress, journalists and lay leaders.[3]

3 Varda Rafaeli was the Assistant-Director for American-Jewish Israel Affairs in the Israel Middle-East Office of the American Jewish Committee and in that capacity the Israeli director of this initiative in the 1990's.

Another notable development was the establishment of the "Israeli Forum", a lay-driven group of Israeli social and cultural activists who were committed to a direct dialogue with world Jewry. The Israeli Forum convened several conferences in the 1980's and 90's and established a yearlong service program for North Americans in Israel called "Otzma".

In the 1990's two institutional initiatives significantly increased the interaction between Israelis and Diaspora Jews. The first was Partnership 2000, established by the Jewish Agency. This is a system of twinning between Diaspora Jewish communities and regions in Israel. Partnership 2000 provided a platform for a strong community to community driven relation as well as focusing on development of personal ties.[4]

The second initiative was the establishment of the Charles Bronfman Mifgashim Center, an agency that developed methodologies and initiatives for direct encounters between visiting Diaspora Jews and Israeli peers.[5] The "mifgash" (encounter) has become a standard feature in many travel programs, including in Taglit birthright Israel that went as far as placing Israeli soldiers on the Taglit buses as full participants.

Today, there is a great deal more fluidity between Israel and Diaspora with hundreds of thousands of Israelis traveling to, studying in, and living in communities around the world. Looking back at more than thirty five years of accumulated experience we can make several assessments. First, the narrow pyramid that characterized Israel-diaspora relation has widened in a dramatic way to include a wide range of age groups, social sectors and geographical areas in multifaceted interactions. Second, an unprecedented number of opportunities now exist for Israelis to engage with Jews from around the world in educational and communal settings. This is good news for Jewish peoplehood education and it is bound to have an impact on Israelis' identities.

Still, with all these developments, Israelis' attitude toward world Jewry varies from holding on to classical Zionist beliefs, to mere indifference, or at best, confusion. The question of Jewish Peoplehood is usually answered with the obvious – expecting Jews around the world to support Israel or simply make aliya.

For many years the negation of Diaspora was a necessary Israeli approach in order to secure the Zionist Israel-focused identity. It was practically the official stance of Israeli policies and attitudes toward world Jewry. This need was ideological, psychological and political. Times have changed and Israel has changed. We believe that there is a greater readiness among Israelis for a post-negation approach. This approach cannot stand alone.

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4 Today, this initiative is called Partnership2gether.

5 Elan Ezrachi was the director of the Bronfman Mifgashim Center.

It needs to be nurtured by a new and relevant appreciation of Jewish Peoplehood that will provide a new and compelling framework for young Israelis.

Globalization has had a significant impact on Israel. Israel joined the world economy, signs of western culture can be seen in every corner and Israelis travel extensively around the globe. Globalization is also an opportunity for discovery of the Jewish people. Though the new spirit of the 21st century is extremely individualistic it does open up opportunities for new explorations. Advanced technology, social networking and intensive traveling enhance connection between people, and open possibilities for developing complex identities and new communities.

It is our hope that with the advent of globalization, the relative confidence that Israelis have regarding their identities, and meaningful educational initiatives, Israelis will develop a genuine sense of commitment to the Jewish collective.

We imagine that the next generation of Israelis will say: we are Israelis and as such, it is our privilege and obligation to connect to Jews wherever they are, to advance the mission of the Jewish people world-wide and make a contribution to the world at large.

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Siach: Lessons from a Lived Experiment in Jewish Peoplehood

Dyonna Ginsburg

For the past few years, I have been privileged to be part of an exciting experiment in lived Jewish Peoplehood. Along with colleagues in Israel, Europe and North America, I co-founded Siach, a global network of Jewish social justice and environment professionals.

Launched at a conference in the United States in May 2011, Siach emerged out of a growing recognition that even though the world is getting smaller through the forces of globalization and the internet, the miles – geographical, religious, cultural, political, and otherwise – separating Jewish social justice and environment activists from different places around the world aren't getting shorter. With rare exception, Jewish activists from Jerusalem aren't speaking to their counterparts in New York and London, at least not in an ongoing and meaningful way – this, despite the fact that they share many common values, passions and commitments.

Siach was created to foster 3 "C"s: 1) Conversation, 2) Connection and 3) Collaboration. "Conversation" refers to open and honest dialogue about points of similarity and difference among Jewish activists from around the world. "Connection"is the creation of meaningful, long-term, one-on-one relationships among Jewish activists. Finally, "cooperation" is the development of year-long, transnational partnerships among Jewish social justice and environment organizations.

In the two years prior to the first Siach conference and in the year since, we learned a tremendous amount about the "ins and outs" of lived Jewish Peoplehood, such as:

- **Jewish Peoplehood may not always be an effective marketing hook; nonetheless, a profound experience of Jewish Peoplehood has people coming back for more.**

Siach's founding partners had several, overlapping motivations for launching a network of Jewish social justice and environment activists. Our funder, the UJA Federation of NY, was interested primarily in fostering a sense of Jewish Peoplehood and Israel engagement

among people for whom the pursuit of social and environmental justice is a defining characteristic of their identities. Our primary organizational partners – Bema'aglei Tzedek and the Heschel Center in Israel, the Jewish Social Action Forum in Europe and Hazon in North America – were motivated both by a desire to promote Jewish Peoplehood and Israel engagement, as well as to create a more just and sustainable planet.

Before the first conference, we quickly learned that, for many potential participants, the promise of a Jewish Peoplehood experience was not enticing enough to get them in the door. They weren't particularly interested in having theoretical discussions about the meaning of Jewish Peoplehood or even about the meta-issues facing the Jewish People today. They wanted to know: Would they learn new skills? Would they see old friends and colleagues? Would they learn best practices that would help them become better professionals?

Wanting to go beyond the "usual suspects" and attract participants who had never before sat around a shared table with Jewish colleagues from other parts of the world, we adjusted our marketing pitch, and some parts of the conference content, to better align with the interests of our target audience. Our strategy was successful. Over 120 leading activists – approximately 40% from North America, 40% from Israel and 20% from Europe – attended the first conference, the overwhelming majority of whom did not know a lot of participants from geographic regions other than their own.

Yet, in the weeks and months after the conference, it wasn't the skills-building sessions that left the most lasting impression. By and large, participants found the experience of meeting and interacting with Jews from other parts of the world to be the most meaningful and enduring aspect of the conference. In fact, in anticipation of the second conference, which is scheduled to take place in Israel in June 2012, participants urged us to once again shift our marketing pitch – this time, giving Jewish Peoplehood far more prominence – to better reflect what they now see as Siach's added value vis-à-vis other professional development opportunities.

- **Jewish Peoplehood and Israel engagement are intricately linked; to be most effective, Jewish Peoplehood initiatives should make sure that participants can engage with Israel head-on.**

In attempting to understand why many European and North American Jewish activists have few connections with Israeli colleagues, we discovered that Israel is a "third rail" in many Jewish social justice and environment organizations, which are afraid of broaching the subject of Israel for fear of alienating constituents and/or suffering serious financial repercussions for voicing an opinion on Israel, one way the other. Because Israel is taboo,

there are few opportunities to learn about, from or with Israeli social justice activists. In turn, because there are few opportunities to meet inspirational Israeli colleagues, Israel's taboo status is heightened.

Cognizant of this vicious cycle, we dedicated 4 full hours at the first Siach conference to the topic, "Israel in the Jewish Social Justice Community outside Israel."Initially, some participants didn't understand why this topic deserved such a prominent position at a conference, which they perceived as being primarily about professional development. By the plenary itself, however, many of the initial skeptics clamored for the opportunity to discuss their feelings about Israel, having drawn the conclusion that it isn't mere happenstance that Jewish activists from around the world rarely interact, rather there are deep-seated reasons why this is the case.

In retrospect, we found that the timing of the "Israel" session – ¾ of the way through the conference – was key to its success. Participants needed a day or two to get to know each other and explore common interests before grappling directly with "hot-button" issues. Had we scheduled this session earlier, many participants would have found it to be premature. Only after gaining a certain degree of comfort with and respect for one another could participants enter an intense and emotionally-charged conversation with honesty and an open-mind.

- **More than the Jewish People have kept Shabbat; Shabbat has kept the Jewish People.**

Initially, we debated whether or not the conference should include a Shabbat. On the one hand, if the conference was to have a professional feel, it should be during the week, so that participants could take notes, use PowerPoint presentations, etc. On the other hand, we knew that Shabbat presents a unique opportunity to reflect and it embodies many social justice and environmental values.

The Israeli and European organizers – myself included – expressed concern; our communities simply didn't "do" Jewish pluralism as well as the North Americans did. We feared it would be difficult to get certain Israeli and European Orthodox organizations to send representatives to a conference with Jewish organizations from other denominations. Why rock the boat by having Shabbat as part of the deal?

In the end, we decided to run the conference over Shabbat, primarily because Hazon – the North American organizer – was confident in its ability to model a meaningful, inclusive Shabbat, especially on its "home turf" in the United States.

At the time, some of us assumed that, when the second conference would take place in Israel, we would opt for a weekday. Otherwise, things would just get too complicated. Were we wrong!

Shabbat proved to be an amazing opportunity for participants to showcase their own rich and diverse Jewish traditions, with Americans and Europeans hearing Israeli-accented, Sephardi kiddush and Israelis attending an American-style, havurah minyan – many for the very first time. After the havdallah ceremony at the conclusion of Shabbat, one European remarked that he had never before seen Reform and Orthodox Jews from his own community participate in a Jewish ritual together.

Several months later, when it came time to plan the second conference, it was obvious to us that the conference would include Shabbat, which had succeeded in bringing together our participants, who span the religious and geographic spectrum, around shared celebration and practice.

These are but a few of the examples of things we have learned about Jewish Peoplehood in the process of building and implementing Siach. As the Siach network expands through our global conferences, regional gatherings, and webinars, we hope to continue to benefit from the literature about Jewish Peoplehood and, in turn, to contribute to this growing body of knowledge by drawing upon our own, lived experience.

Dyonna Ginsburg is the Director of Jewish Service Learning at the Jewish Agency for Israel and is one of the co-founders of Siach (www.siachconversation.org).

Jewish Peoplehood: A Shared and Worthy Past, Present and Future

Yonatan Glaser

Prologue Recently, I took a group of students to a remarkable exhibit in an Israeli Museum. The exhibition recounts the trials and tribulations of Jews, in all our ethnic diversity and cultural commonality. Halfway through, we came to the centerpiece, the 'campfire' around which I wanted to explore with them the concept of Jewish Peoplehood. The exhibit recounts an episode in which pirates capture a ship and the people on it, including some Jews. Turning to the Mediterranean Jewish community those Jews are from, the pirates demand a ransom. Not having enough money, the community puts out an appeal to other Jewish communities in their region. These communities rush to raise the ransom, even though the Jews in question are strangers. Through this act of Jewish solidarity, the captured Jews are saved. This seems like a quintessential story of Jewish Peoplehood. Before I asked my opening question, someone shot up his hand. "That's so racist", he raged, "Why should they prioritize helping the Jews on the boat?" A chorus arose in support of his principled position.

This vignette brings the question posed for this paper "What should we do differently to nurture Jewish Peoplehood?" into sharp relief. It invites us to look at the past, present and future of Jewish Peoplehood education.

Past: Early efforts at Jewish Peoplehood education focused on teaching about the Jewish people around the world – communities, foods, ethnic influences (e.g. in synagogue architecture) - showing shared and divergent threads.

Present: Current efforts focus on several innovative additions:

a) Getting Jews from diverse Jewish communities together in the same program/ camp/webinar. This cultivates actual relationships amongst Jews and invokes an international Jewish network.

b) Learning about and reflecting on the meaning of Peoplehood, typically through the study of classic texts.

c) Carrying out a shared activity to demonstrate that we have shared interests – our humanity or our Jewishness (or both…)

d) Bringing in the diverse voices of the Jewish experience - including those of program participants, and respecting their diversity.

Future In addition to the important innovations in Jewish education above, two further critical steps need to be taken to 'nurture Jewish Peoplehood':

1. Focus on Identity AND Jewish life, Education AND Social Innovation

We should focus on impacting Jewish identity and Jewish living. We have to be simultaneously educators and social innovators, re-engineering Jewish living/life (individually and institutionally/programmatically) to embody and BE a Jewish people. If we only educate, there will never be the 'plausibility structures', to use Peter Berger's term, that give traction to what we educate towards or about. Promoting Hebrew names for new-born Jewish children, for example, could lead to their increased use in Jewish communities around the world. We (and they) would experience more intense belonging and closeness to our 'indigenous' culture on a daily level. We need to distinguish between educating towards/promoting innovation and actually creating and embodying the change we want. The establishment of international Jewish working groups on the world's most seemingly intractable problems, that included people from NGOs, businesses, academic institutions, and the Israeli government might be an outcome of thinking about how we want the Jewish people to live. People's lives would embody (and be enriched by) Jewish Peoplehood.

This holistic approach requires us to:

a) Recognize that our current conceptions about and ways of doing 'Jewish business' are deeply dysfunctional and unsustainable. Conversely, it requires us to recognize that the contemporary era offers opportunities for the realization of Jewish Peoplehood in a deeper and grander manner than previously imaginable. Peoplehood was once limited to a form of what Anderson termed 'Imagined Communities.' Today, with travel and communications, we can truly be and act as an international community/family/tribe. That need not be exclusionary, parochial or triumphalist, any more than a real family needs to be. It is an option, to be opposed, but not a requirement.

b) Create forums and modalities for an ideological deliberation about education and community through which we are able to imagine, describe, name and shape a

different future based on a compelling vision of and for the Jewish people.

c) Work across the boundaries of existing disciplines, programs, organizational boundaries and professional practices.

d) Depart from learning and interpreting texts which are historically and socially decontextualized (which often happens in Beit Midrash-style settings) to look at broad movements and intellectual history so we can see how Jews and Jewish communities grappled with, embodied, and took responsibility for their lives.

e) Examine in an ongoing manner, closely, the multiple structures and practices we live by and with.

f) Locate and harness the unique potential of the Jewish polity; the State of Israel. If the discourse on Jewish Peoplehood diminishes the Zionist project, we diminish ourselves and our single most potent resource, for all its blemishes and warts.

g) We must engage Israel and Israelis in this entire undertaking. That won't be easy.

h) Nurture visionary Jewish leadership that can 'mobilize people to tackle tough challenges and thrive', in the words of Prof. Marty Linsky, co-creator of Harvard University's Adaptive Leadership approach. Such leaders not only innovate professionally, but are Heschel's 'text people', role models who not only share their insight, and argue compellingly for their vision, but live both.

2. Moral Purpose and Holiness

The Biblical narrative itself, the Prophets, the Kabbalah (especially its Lurianic version), towering modern Jewish thinkers (Ahad HaAm, Buber, Krochmal, various labor Zionists, Rav Kook, Hartman, Borowitz, and more), and much of contemporary Israeli music, literature, poetry and film, suggest that the moral and spiritual realms are at the core of the Jewish tradition, the Zionist project and Jewish purpose. They must be central to the contemporary Jewish experience. We must recover, interpret, co-opt and mainstream the concepts of covenant and Holy People as essential elements of Jewish Peoplehood. New, authentic 'readings' of their profound possible meaning has been done; for the secularist, the culturist, the progressive and modern orthodox Jew, yet this is mostly unknown. Without recovering these core conceptions, Jewish Peoplehood will remain a sociological category central only to a self-serving survivalist mentality. That is inauthentically Jewish, morally inadequate, and will have no purchase with a younger generation, thirsting for meaning.

In the Lurianic Kabbalah - the source we draw on when we use the term 'Tikkun Olam' to denote social justice work – there is a crucial difference between the world God creates initially and the one that we are commanded to create by collecting the holy sparks. The first world, created by God alone, was not sustainable. The radical meaning is that while God can create a seemingly perfect world, it is not one that lasts. The tantalizing implication is that human beings, if they partner in repairing God's handiwork wisely, can do better. Given that we ourselves are part of creation, we need in fact to also – most challengingly – repair ourselves. This is a powerful metaphor for our potential.

Building the Future The Jewish Agency's Project T.E.N. and the Israeli organization B'Tzedek are jointly launching a new center of Jewish service-learning programs for young Jewish adults in India. Participants will volunteer in a range of social change projects in conjunction with top Indian NGO's, create an intense, short-term Jewish community, and engage in multi-faceted Jewish and civics/social change learning. This initiative is the extension of B'Tzedek's LIFE program (see www.LIFEprogram.org), and one of four pilot sites for what will be a dozen T.E.N. (Tikkun Empowerment Network) centers around the world.

A lead dimension of the center will be Jewish Peoplehood. Young Jews from Israel and around the world will participate in programs, mainly but not only three-months long, with three interacting dimensions:

- **Community**: a thriving Jewish community of young people, living Jewish Peoplehood as described here, including a first-hand engagement with global belonging and obligation.
- **Social Justice**: participants will participate in, learn from, and contribute to local social-change/development projects.
- **Learning:** ongoing engagement with their own experience, central strands of Jewish history/pasts, ideas/texts, and deepen their capacity to envisage and shape the future.

We expect graduates to take their place as citizens of and leaders in a reimagined, reengineered, and rededicated Jewish people. Full details will be available soon on the Project T.E.N. website.

Epilogue

And now, back to the museum. Taking a moment to regroup from my discomfort at the suggestion that I was parading and supporting a racist action, I started to address the question. Why, indeed, might Jews see saving another Jew as not merely defensible, but obligatory? Moving from family to Peoplehood and back again, we explored questions of belonging, loyalty and commitment. I suggested that they grew up in an individualist culture, and that the notions of culture, history and purpose underlying Jewish Peoplehood might be counter-cultural, and tremendously potent and important. By offering a metaphor through which to reflect on the connection between Peoplehood and their own experience, and a social/cultural critique though which to access an additional, alternative way of seeing the world, I steered towards a dialogue with transformative potential.

Social entrepreneurship is like taking off in an airplane, as its pilot, while you build it. This paradoxical image incorporates Social entrepreneurship's requirements; the boundary-breaking imagination, the tremendous creative power, the force of will, and the need to learn from experience as well as 'dry' speculation and planning. It tells us of both the risks and the untold potential of social innovation.

Let's fly.

Yonatan Glaser is the Director of B'Tzedek, an Israeli organization whose mission is to deliver powerful Jewish leadership development programs for social justice and Jewish-Zionist innovation. See www.LIFEprogram.org.

No Pain No Gain

Justin Korda

They are the 'golden' demographic. The generation eagerly sought after – but not always reached – by the organized Jewish world. So how do we engage the young leaders of this generation?

We do it by taking risks

In the 1950's a good Jewish boy named Harry Markowitz began to use mathematics to analyze the stock market. Markowitz was motivated by his realization that current understanding of stock pricing models did not account for the impact of the risk factor. What emerged from this effort is what is known in the financial world as Modern Portfolio Theory, and for it, Markowitz was recognized with a Nobel Prize. Modern Portfolio Theory was innovative in that it was the first successful attempt at quantifying and mathematically analyzing the seemingly vague notion of risk. This led to a new era in which investors could begin to correlate their expected returns with their appetite for risk taking. Many people talk about calculated risks. Markowitz actually did it.

From a social science perspective, what is more powerful than Markowitz's mathematical model is how human behavior is affected when risk taking can be calculated. The expression "no pain, no gain" is no longer arbitrary. According to the theory, one should be able to determine just how much pain will be required in order to achieve a certain gain, and vice-versa – how much can be gained for a certain amount of pain.

Jewish Peoplehood enthusiasts who understand that the emergence of a vibrant global Jewish community is in the hands of today's young people ought to take a note from Markowitz and embrace risk with a sense of purpose.

Risk Our Comfort Zones. According to Steven Johnson, the author of Where Good Ideas Come From, the key to fostering innovation is openness and connectivity. "We can think more creatively if we open our minds to the many connected environments that make creativity possible," he writes. In other words, innovation is nurtured by bringing together what on the surface doesn't go together – like the poet and the engineer.

Creating safe spaces for these kinds of encounters and gatherings requires a readiness to accept unintended consequences. It's almost impossible to predict the outcome of putting a bunch of passionate Jews from diverse geographies, career paths, and levels of observance in a room together. But rest assured, the more variety, the more creativity. By exposing these different people to new perspectives we will reap the rewards of the synergy and ideas generated. It sounds simple, but most organizations invite only a narrow network of people to be part of something with a narrow scope.

Risk Listening. Albert Einstein once said "I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn." Today's young Jewish leaders are operating in unprecedented times of freedom and opportunity made possible by the break-neck speed at which technology is advancing. While there is much merit in our oral tradition of passing down knowledge from one generation to the next, there is also reason to trust that today's young leaders know best about what skills and competencies they need to acquire in order to improve their impact and success. Whether it is deeper Jewish education, better management skills, or raw technical know-how, trust that today's young leaders have the ability to identify what's missing from their tool-kit. By creating frameworks for these agents of change to learn, to teach and to support one another, we will make it possible for them to make it happen.

Risk Widening the Circle. Mark Twain once advised to "keep away from people who belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great." The notion that a small group of power brokers will develop solutions that will engage young Jews en masse in a sustainable way has failed. For every programmatic one-hit wonder, along comes the challenge of "follow-up". Instead of continuing to rack our collective brain about how to best excite the highest number of young Jews about Judaism, we ought to make more room for a growing number of committed young leaders who are creating community in their own image. Let's do more to make it possible for young leaders to engage their peers in new ways that only they could ever imagine.

Risk Failure. Jim McMahon remarked that "risk taking is inherently failure-prone. Otherwise, it would be called sure-thing-taking." In the Jewish world we have been quick to label any initiative that ceases to exist as a failure. In many ways, the risk takers behind such initiatives are our frontline action researchers, helping the community learn in real time. Consider the volume of lessons that can be discerned from so called failures in which entrepreneurs faced challenges in unchartered territory. Certain kinds of failure are the best building blocks for ensuring success down the road if lessons are learned and acted upon. By quickly dismissing those who try and don't succeed right away, our community is tossing aside its investment in their professional development

and education. We would be well-served to think like long term investors when it comes to the promising young leaders among us.

If we want to harness the creativity and passion of young people that want to build our community in their own image, we must take risks. We need to develop a balanced communal appetite for risk, and we need better tools to understand and analyze it. Most attempts probably won't succeed exactly as we hope. Markowitz taught us about diversifying our investment portfolio in order to manage these risks, and the principle applies to our Jewish peoplehood portfolio as well. Embracing unintended consequences, investing in individuals as lifelong community builders, and reframing our perceptions of failure are the kinds of measured risks that will yield a long-term positive return on investment for the Jewish people. Hockey legend Wayne Gretzky said it best, "you'll always miss 100% of the shots you don't take."

Justin Korda is the Executive Director of the ROI Community, a global network of Jewish innovators created by Lynn Schusterman.

They're Shown It But Can They Own It: Peoplehood In The 21st Century

Morlie Levin

In the past 13 years, more than 300,000 young Jews -- almost 200,000 from the United States alone -- have experienced a Taglit-Birthright Israel trip. As the website says, "The trip aims to…build an understanding, friendship and lasting bond with the land and people of Israel; and to reinforce the solidarity of the Jewish people worldwide." It is an apt "operational" definition of Jewish peoplehood.

The words signal the issues of concern that motivated the project in the first place: a lack of knowledge about Jewish history, religion, and tradition; a dearth of personal Jewish experiences, and little (or more often no) exposure to the land and people of Israel and Jews worldwide. These issues are byproducts of longstanding social and cultural trends that have been the fodder for numerous articles about Jewish identity and connection to the Jewish people. The 10-day stint in Israel is meant to address those issues by providing a personal encounter with the land and the lore, and perhaps most profoundly, the Jewish people.

The awareness that one is part of something larger, something global and timeless, is what marks the beginning of what we might call peoplehood. But for one to feel a part of a people, one must first recognize themselves within a people. Trip-goers are *shown* it, but can they *own* it?

One thing that happens on a Birthright trip--and often for the first time --is the realization that Judaism is more than a religion. Time and again we have seen that realization slowly to sink in. We can almost read the internal dialog:

> *"I've never seen so many Jews in one place before. It makes me feel proud, but I'm also confused. Here, being Jewish seems to mean something different for everyone. How come I feel so comfortable (or uncomfortable)? I want to know more…"*

Those on the trip and those they encounter may define their Jewish identity in ethnic or nationalistic terms, or in different terms altogether. This can be a difficult thing for young Diaspora Jews to grasp, but it can also be a fascinating thing to explore. Judaism is revealed as the complex, living, evolving entity that it is. And in the process of exploring, Birthright participants emerge with more questions than ever about what the Jewish part of them is and how it ultimately will -- or should -- guide their actions and choices.

Our challenge, then, is not to assign or assume Jewishness, or a sense of peoplehood. Our job is to help these young Jews make sense of their new questions, and understand their Jewishness in the context of all of their other identities. In that process, peoplehood becomes something larger – the result of connecting to something that is at the same time common across people and deeply profound personally.

What can we do to ignite the process of personal discovery? How can we interest young Jewish adults to explore Judaism's depths and meaning in their own lives? We believe the answer lies in providing opportunities for ownership of Jewish living and learning experiences. This is what peoplehood-building looks like in the 21st century.

At NEXT, we take the spark ignited on a Birthright Israel trip and work with partners to fan it into a fire. We use choice and ownership as our guide, connecting young Jews to myriad events and opportunities that appeal to their individual interests and inclinations. But we are also cognizant of the fact that organized Jewish activities are not for everyone. For some, finding meaning and making community is not a function of attending organized activities run by others but happens rather within a circle of friends, at home.

That insight galvanized NEXT to develop a do-it-yourself approach to holidays, Shabbat, and community-building that enables young Jews to create authentic Jewish experiences on their own terms. We also provide all of the resources and funding necessary to help them along the way. More than 20 young Jews have received support to fund their own community projects through Natan/NEXT Grants for Social Entrepreneurs. Over 6,400 Birthright alumni have hosted 16,000 Shabbat and holiday meals through NEXT Shabbat and Holiday grant programs. With an average of 10 people at the typical Shabbat meal or seder powered by NEXT micro-grants and educational material, we now know that this approach truly resonates with Birthright alums and their peers.

In looking at the words of young Jews who hosted Passover seders this year through our holiday grant program, we begin to see the true impact of owning a Jewish experience:

> *"Inclusivity and education are two of the most important values that I associate with Passover and the seder tradition. I wanted to host a seder to share these values with many friends of mine who had never attended a seder and had very little knowledge of Passover. For my Jewish friends, it was a great opportunity to discuss the different traditions we had grown up with and reconnect with our roots." - Sam, New Orleans, LA*

For others, owning these experiences allows them to create Jewish experiences in places where they cannot be found:

> *"Hosting a seder is a great way for me to connect with my heritage and celebrate the traditions that I grew up with. Going to school and living in Hawaii, I am physically isolated from my relatives back on the mainland. In Hawaii, my close friends are my family and I am more than happy to share my traditions with them." -Matthew, Honolulu, HI*

In these words, we start to see the things that connect one to a people--seeing one's values reflected in a holiday, reconnecting with roots, and finding psychic comfort in sharing traditions despite physical separation.

At the same time, by providing ways for young Jews to own their journeys and experiences, we instinctively do something different that is profound in itself. We create spaces and opportunities where they aren't asked to check their complexity at the door. Within these spaces, they are able to explore who they are as a Jew and as a person, and make their own determinations about what constitutes a meaningful experience.

This has ramifications for the larger conversation. Emphasizing Jewish "peoplehood" is not enough. For a large and growing share of the young Jewish population in the Diaspora, a sense of being part of the Jewish people occurs among peers and in a community that values authenticity, learning and debate, and interaction with the outside world. That's when real ownership happens.

How such communities can be built, nurtured, and replicated is the question to which the peoplehood conversation must turn.

Morlie Levin is the CEO of NEXT, a division of Birthright Israel Foundation.

Pursuing the Pedagogy of Peoplehood: More than Mifgash

Jon A. Levisohn

"Whatever happened to the Jewish people?", asked Steve Cohen and Jack Wertheimer in *Commentary* in 2006. Their article emerged from a concern that Jews do not feel as connected to or responsible for *k'lal yisrael* (Jewish collectivity) as they once did. The peoplehood-related attitude or disposition called *ahavat yisrael* (love for other Jews and for the Jewish collectivity) is not as strong as it once was. Jewish institutions and communities may be fostering commitment to Jewish learning, to service, even to religious ritual, but they are not succeeding in cultivating a sense of peoplehood among individual Jews, especially younger American Jews. Is all this true? Let's assume that it is. How, then, does one pursue the pedagogy of Jewish peoplehood?

One obvious answer is to bring the individuals whom we want to influence into a face-to-face engagement with the collectivity to which we want them to feel connected. This is the paradigm of *mifgash,* encounter between Diaspora Jews and Israeli Jews that is intended to nurture connections and a recognition of shared purpose and destiny.

Yet, there's something mysterious about the mifgash paradigm. We bring people together, and we implicitly tell them, "These are long-lost members of your family, come, say hello, have a cup of coffee, talk with them – now love them forever!" These experiences might well foster interpersonal bonds, and the encounters with difference might well broaden horizons and stimulate self-reflection, all of which are surely good things. But how does these encounters accomplish the trick of establishing a connection between individuals in either group and the larger (and more abstract) collectivity that we call "the Jewish people"?

So we have to think more carefully and critically about this deceptively simple question, the question of how individuals actually develop a sense of abiding connection to and concern for a collectivity. They do that, I propose, in at least three ways.

First, and most obviously, individuals connect to something larger than themselves through *story.* As Alasdair Macintyre famously wrote, "I can only answer the question,

'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question, 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'" Our ethical lives, our decisions about who and how to be in the world, are products of the narrative that we tell about ourselves, which are inevitably bound up in larger narratives that give structure and meaning to our individual stories. The pedagogy of peoplehood, then, must help individual Jews tell those stories, understand those stories – their own and those of the Jewish people – and to articulate the inter-relationships between them.

A second way of doing so is through *language,* coming to understand and then speak a language other than our native tongue. I do not only mean literal languages, but also metaphorical languages that shape how we think and talk about particular subjects or ideas. When we master a new language, we can then produce literature in that language; we can contribute to the conversation. In terms of peoplehood, the suggestion is that becoming a speaker of a language is at the same time a process of becoming connected to other speakers of the same language, past and present and even future.

Third, individuals connect to a collectivity through *love,* that is, through an emotional connection to something – some object, some institution, some ideal – that is shared by others. Stanford Talmudist Charlotte Fonrobert, for example, has written compellingly about her relationship to the Talmud, which led her towards a relationship with others who share that text, which led in turn to her conversion to Judaism – coming to join the collectivity that shares her connection to the particular object.

This frequently happens in similar but less dramatic ways. We become connected to other Civil War buffs, or Red Sox Nation, or other fans of the Idan Raichel Project. The pedagogy of peoplehood, then, might seek out those potential objects of affection that would help individual Jews establish a connection to a larger Jewish collectivity. Most aspirationally, the pedagogy of peoplehood might cultivate a passion for a collective Jewish mission in the world. Coming to love that purpose, that ideal, and pursuing that purpose in the world, inevitably draws one into a relationship with others who share that purpose.

Now, if it is true that individuals develop a sense of connection to and concern for a larger collectivity in the ways that I've described – through the practices of story, language, and love – then we should notice that peoplehood education does not conflict with other substantive, content-rich Jewish educational efforts but rather comfortably co-exists with them. The pedagogy of peoplehood may require a certain focus and intentionality but it is not fundamentally distinct in any way, and it is certainly not limited to face-to-face social interactions. So peoplehood is not a way to buy Jewish continuity on the cheap. We

should not imagine that we can give students a quick injection of peoplehood through an encounter with other Jews, and then sit back and reap the benefits.

A second outcome of this way of thinking about the issue is more surprising. If it is correct that we connect with something larger than ourselves through the practices of story, language and love, then it may be the case that we are successful in promoting peoplehood without necessarily fostering a relationship to all Jews, and perhaps not even to that abstract entity called "the Jewish people." We might increase a sense of connection to and concern for Jewish collectivity without quite getting to the oft-cited ideal of responsibility for *k'lal yisrael* and its future.

This is most obvious in the third paradigm, where there will clearly be any number of overlapping Jewish interests. My own interest in (say) Jewish art, if nurtured, may well lead to an increase in some "peoplehood quotient" through my connection to others who share that interest – but it does not necessarily lead me to a connection to all Jews. Within the second paradigm, learning a Jewish language – the language of Talmud or of Tikkun Olam, or Hebrew – connects me to others, living or dead. But it does not connect me to Jews who do not speak that language, nor does it necessarily connect me to or make me feel responsible for "the Jewish people." And finally, even the idea of a Jewish narrative does not necessarily connect me to all Jews in the same way, because narratives are inevitably selective. The classical Zionist narrative negates the Diaspora. The American Jewish narrative focuses on the Ashkenazi immigrant experience of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The narrative that I choose will inevitably orient me towards some aspects of the Jewish experience rather than others, and towards some Jews rather than others.

So peoplehood, understood now not as the ideal sense of responsibility for the future of *k'lal yisrael* but rather as a sense of connection to and concern for the Jewish collectivities beyond oneself, is not an all-or-nothing kind of quality. It emerges as a product of specific practices in diverse ways. Should we be worried about this? I don't think so. Instead, we ought to accept that connections to larger collectivities are fluid and shifting, that they take surprising twists and turns. This is simply the nature of identity. The person who seems rather indifferent to the cultural vitality of Judaism may be motivated to act on behalf of the physical security of small communities in the FSU. The person apparently uninterested in the Jews of the FSU may be particularly captivated by the plight of seniors in her own community. And the person unresponsive to local projects for the under-served in her community may be energized by the promotion of a thriving Jewish cultural future. And those connections may well shift over time.

If I am right about (at least some of) the ways that a sense of peoplehood is cultivated, our efforts to promote that sense will benefit from greater nuance and sophistication. Bringing Jews together in mifgash, while valuable, is not sufficient. Nor will we get very far by preaching about the virtues of the Jewish people, or berating Jews for self-absorption or lack of attachment to Israel, or wondering why Jews don't naturally recognize that "we are one" or that all Jews are a family. In fact, even teaching about other Jews will not necessarily translate into the kind of commitment to and concern for the Jewish people that we seek. Instead, our peoplehood project will be well served by constructing educational programs that intentionally develop Jewish narratives, that target the learning of Jewish languages (metaphorical or literal), and that cultivate an emotional connection to specific objects of shared attention – story, language, and love.

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Nurturing Jewish Peoplehood in the 21st Century Calls for an Educational Revolution

Shlomi Ravid & Lisa Grant

Over the last two decades Jewish communal leadership has grown increasingly aware of the challenge of preserving and sustaining a commitment to Jewish peoplehood. This is both a contemporary and an historical challenge that in some ways dates back to the beginning of Jewish emancipation. However, conditions have ripened and converged to create a new Jewish collective paradigm that is simply impossible to further ignore. To put in a nutshell a world view that was a natural, almost organic, outcome of the unique Jewish "situation" in the world, is no longer a given reality in our contemporary world of multiple and fluid identities, and voluntary associations.

The current challenge of Jewish Peoplehood is both conceptual and pedagogic. Conceptually speaking for almost two thousand years Jewish Peoplehood was the only framework that defined Jews and in which they were allowed to express themselves as a collective. In the nineteenth century however, Jews began to gain access to equal citizenship in most of the countries where they resided. In the twentieth century, they created a state of their own. Most Jews in the 21st century are part of some national collective identity (Israeli, American, French, etc.), and the place and role of their collective *Jewish* identity is far less obvious and compelling. Young Jews are asking for the rationale for the Jewish collective enterprise and it seems that many of the answers they receive are rooted in their parents' and grandparents' paradigm, which they do not necessarily share. As just one example, what was perceived as a powerful expression of solidarity to an earlier generation is often interpreted as particularism by the next.

The pedagogic challenge in the case of Peoplehood is even greater than the conceptual. As Peoplehood was seen as a natural outcome of Jewish existence - so natural that it is actually perceived as a non-issue - there is no educational subject matter called "Jewish Peoplehood", nor a pedagogy or curriculum to address the issue. The Jewish educational world, broadly defined, from early childhood through adult education and from formal

to informal, is neither set nor organized to address the challenge of nurturing Jewish peoplehood.

What is the Jewish world to do then, if it seeks to address the challenge of nurturing Jewish Peoplehood against this background? The first step is to understand the nature and the scope of the challenge. This is neither about developing a supplementary curriculum nor designing a specific course of study for professional development. Rather, Jewish education needs to undergo a revolution that will place the nurturing of the Jewish collective identity as a core and integral component of the Jewish educational agenda.

In practical terms, the magnitude of the required change and the lack of infrastructure call for the development of a new educational field – the field of Peoplehood education[1]. The key pillars of this field would be:

Establishing a common language – In order for Peoplehood education to move forward a central effort needs to be launched in order to frame a common language for the field. The effort needs to focus on the conceptual challenges of Peoplehood in the 21st century, on the meanings it can assume and the values it can embrace in the current Jewish paradigm and on the pedagogic goals.

Developing a network – The creation of a Peoplehood education network calls for the development of change agents within Jewish education who can lead the field forward effectively. These educators will have the skills, capacities, and dispositions to develop approaches that model how Peoplehood education can become an integral part of Jewish educational experiences. The establishment of a network of such educators will shape and lead the development of the field.

Creating a professional learning infrastructure – The field of Peoplehood education will rise or fall over the question of its change agents – the educators. In order to jumpstart the educational intervention process learning opportunities either at existing institutions or through the creation of new designated options, need to be established, both for pre-service educators and those already in the field. Such professional learning opportunities will both empower educators to address the challenge and also enrich the educational conversation, grow the field, build the network and enhance the field building process.

1 For an extended treatment of the challenge of building the field of Jewish Peoplehood education please review **Jewish Peoplehood Education: Framing the Field** at: www.jpeoplehood.org/publications

Identifying core Peoplehood "practices" – One of the most frequent questions posed when learners are first introduced to the concept of Jewish Peoplehood is what does it look like in practice? In past generations, Peoplehood was most often expressed through actions related to relief and rescue of Jews in need. While this remains an essential expression of a core commitment to the Jewish collective, there are many other activities and experiences that exist and can be shaped to include a Peoplehood dimension including study of sacred texts, social action projects, and any activity or experience that involved encounters, and community building across denominational and ideological divides in one's local setting or throughout the Jewish world.

Incubating tools and programs – The current lack of curricula, programs and educational materials seems to limit considerably the ability of those conscious of the Peoplehood challenge, to respond to it. Practitioners in Jewish education are chronically under pressure and underequipped with the resources to perform their task. The development of a flexible and adaptable "tool kit" that includes educational resources and program ideas, combined with professional learning opportunities, will enhance the skills and empower educators to more successfully integrate Peoplehood education into all aspects of Jewish learning and experience.

To move the field forward in significant ways, a set of core curricula, programs and educational materials need to be incubated by the field builders. Such pilot projects should put into motion a more formalized process of field building. Furthermore they should begin a much-needed dialogue between the practitioners and the materials towards the development of rich and creative curricular offerings.

Conducting research – Without the generation of knowledge, a field cannot grow. Research fuels the content and technology that move fields forward.

Setting communal priorities – A campaign needs to be established in order to put the Peoplehood challenge on the agenda of Jews all the way from the individual Jews, through local communal organizations to the global reaching institutions. At the end of the day Jewish Peoplehood will survive if the Jews will want it and care enough about it. The first step in making a change is putting the issue on their agenda.

Practitioners engaged in Peoplehood programming often note how the simple act of creating opportunities for Jews to develop close interpersonal relationships is at the heart of successful Peoplehood programming. We concur that Peoplehood experiences are the essential ingredient for engagement. However, internalizing Peoplehood as a value and fostering a deeper commitment to the Jewish collective requires the thoughtful and deliberate work of building the field as we have briefly outlined above. Giving

future generations the language and tools to include the collective dimension in Jewish conversations and experiences is the required step to enable them to develop their own interpretation of what Jewish peoplehood can and should mean to them. While their responsibility is to give it meaning on their terms, it is this generation's responsibility to engage them in the conversation, give them the tools to grapple with the issue and trust in their ability to take hold of the Jewish future.

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Finding the Sacred Rituals of Jewish Peoplehood

Bill Robinson

Simply stated, Jewish Peoplehood seeks to (re)establish a sense of identity that privileges my connection to other Jews over non-Jews, within the context of our post-modern world. I assert that our biggest challenge to succeeding is a mistaken focus on education instead of religion. In most writings and conversations on Jewish Peoplehood, we tend to avoid religion or allude to it (i.e., the covenant) without providing any serious content. In some cases, an aspirational desire even seems to exist to create a sense of common identity without religion. Yet, as any student of Emile Durkheim would know, people's identity cannot be sustained across the generations without sacred rituals that provide regular and spontaneous moments (separated from mundane time and space) that remind us and signify for us our membership in a people with a holy purpose.

Please note that in saying this I am not asserting that the Jewish people are different than other peoples. To the contrary, it is because we are like all peoples that we need communal rituals to signify and remind us of our membership in a group and the salience of obligations that come with that membership. Durkheim showed that the religious worship of a deity is really the worship of the community; through religious ritual we assure the continuity of our people. This understanding has been picked up by Jewish scholars, notably Mordecai Kaplan and Arnie Eisen. But, it seems to have been neglected in Jewish Peoplehood debates where it is assumed that religion is only one possible form of peoplehood.

If we look back to history, we recall that the Jewish people were first formed from the bringing together of the 12 tribes during the early times of the Kings. Yet, members of these tribes concretely discovered their sense of peoplehood through the pilgrimage rituals of the Temple and the priesthood. This is where – three times a year – the people came together to worship their God "who took them out of Egypt and made them into a nation." The Jewish People, like all nations, is an historically constructed entity (that of course claims eternal naturalness), which requires continual ritual maintenance over the generations.

When the Temple fell, Rabbinic Judaism offered in place of the pilgrimage festivals and the Temple, the primacy of the synagogue, prayer and Shabbat. While these rituals lacked the visceral power of the whole nation coming with their sacrifices to the Temple, it made some of this up in the frequency of repetition. Moreover, the concept of the Shechinah as God's presence in exile, created a new spiritual space for Jews to recognize and honor themselves as an exiled people through religious worship of their God – perfect Durkheim.

During this time, the sense of belonging to a Jewish people waxed and waned. It was kept alive, among other ways, by remembrance of common history and destiny through prayer, and restrictive religious laws detailing who is a Jew and how one can become a Jew. We also saw occasionally the rise of quasi-mystical notions of a Jewish soul that was different (and better) than the goyim.

Rabbi Yitz Greenberg describes this movement from Biblical to Rabbinic Judaism. During the Biblical period, the divine was concentrated in the Temple (and before that the traveling Ark). During the Rabbinic period, the divine presence was spread out as a greater number of spaces (the synagogues) and more frequent times (Shabbat) took on increased sacredness. This process, Greenberg refers to as secularization, and he argues that we are now transitioning to a third era in Jewish history, as this secularization process leaps forward.

As Jews are leaving the synagogue, they are not entirely leaving God. Our experience of the divine is potentially becoming even less intense, yet the divine is now being found everywhere. Jews are worshipping in nature and building homes from those in need is being seen as a sacred act. We may question the ultimate primacy of the ancient Jewish texts, yet we are finding sacredness in more and more places from Buddhist texts to contemporary Jewish writing.

Notably, much of this secular trend flows against a sense of Jewish Peoplehood, especially when Jewish rituals are mash-ups of the traditionally Jewish and non-Jewish and "doing Jewish" is done (preferentially) with non-Jews. Yet, 3rd era rituals of Jewish have already been emerging for decades.

We have seen the creation and observance of sacred rituals of Jewish Peoplehood that moves us every spring across a narrative plot in time from Yom Hashoah to Yom Hazikaron, Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. This same narrative arc is played out in Birthright Israel trips as the youth give obeisance to our recent time in captivity at Yad Vashem (and other places) and then experience our contemporary exodus into the wilderness of Israel that was a desert until we came and built a holy land through agriculture and science.

For a time in the 1970's, we experienced a resurgence of Jewish Peoplehood through the Soviet Jewry movement. And, this was accompanied by specific rituals. My parents were very involved through their synagogue and I remember wearing bracelets and necklaces with the names of Soviet Jewish refuseniks that signified for me my attachment to these unknown members of my People.

These sacred rituals of time and space are the building blocks of Jewish Peoplehood identity. Yet, we need more of them, and we need rituals that are both less Israel-centric and take place where Jews are doing Jewish everyday. As Jewish life moves beyond the synagogue to public space and even online, how will they discover their sense of being part of the Jewish People?

There is not one answer to this and intentionally crafting sacred ritual is usually doomed from the start. But, we can look to areas of emergence. Where might this organically be happening already? Here, I suggest we look toward the recent explosion of creativity that has launched innovative ways of being Jewish.

For instance, Hazon has been running a very popular Jewish bike ride open to everyone and several organizations have been bringing young Jews on service trips often to help non-Jews. What rituals are springing up among these groups? How are traditional prayers and rites being refashioned? Does the recent rise of families building their own sukkah and communal sukkah hops hold the seeds of a powerful ritual that affirms a sense of Jewish Peoplehood, which is literally and figuratively open to non-Jewish members of our families and community? Jews are connecting more and more with other Jews across geographic boundaries through the internet. When these young Jews gather online for "Jewish" discussions, in what ways may they be reflectively signifying these discussions as Jewish?

The challenge of Jewish Peoplehood is to (re)discover our shared bonds and common purpose as Jews in this emerging 3rd era of Jewish history. This has less to do with education (though it has an important role) and more to do with embracing sacred ritual. I am not suggesting a return to the religious rites of traditional Judaism, but rather to find and spread those more secularized sacred rituals that are already emerging organically outside the Rabbinic spaces and times of Jewish life.

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Nurturing Jewish Peoplehood in the 21st Century

Ted Sokolsky

We are indeed living at a time unprecedented in Jewish history. The narrative that defined us for nearly two thousand years, that of a people in exile from our homeland, has come to an end. Even the late 20th Century narrative of a Jewish world balanced by a great American Jewish community on one side and a growing Israeli community on the other is also fading rapidly. In its place is a vision for a new Jewish world, a world in which Israel not only is the spiritual centre of the Jewish people, it now *leads* the Jewish people.

While the impact of this shift has been recognized in demographic terms (Israel's Jewish population will soon pass that of the Diaspora's), the political and individual identity challenges that have come about from this shift have yet to be fully appreciated.

The last 60+ years of Diaspora-Israel relationships have been marked by great achievement and great cooperation. However, in the creation of those achievements stereotypes were constructed that now impede our ability to grow as a People together. Increasingly, we developed paternalistic attitudes towards each other, attitudes often based on ignorance.

Diaspora Jewry too often saw itself as the "great provider" of Israeli society, offering financial and moral support to a struggling nation. It was slow to acknowledge the growing economic and social strength of the country and too often fell back on stereotypes that bordered on providing relief to a third-world nation.

Israeli Jewry for its part often knew very little beyond stereotypes of Diaspora Jewry. At times Diaspora Jews were seen as the rich uncle and at times as the selfish half brother. Too often, Diaspora communities are regarded as those that will collapse under the burden of mixed marriage and assimilation or those that are characterized by fears of anti-Semitism. Israelis tend not to appreciate Diaspora communities for the strength of their Jewish institutions or their faith but rather for the size of their pocket books or their extravagant wealth.

Recognizing that the balance of power and influence in Jewish leadership has moved irreversibly to the Israeli people, their government and institutions, is a monumental shift. Communal institutions based on the old paradigm will soon become irrelevant. Curriculum in Jewish schools both here and in Israel that do not recognize this shift are irrelevant already. Clearly in a global Jewish world where Israeli leadership becomes more and more evident and necessary, our concepts of Jewish Peoplehood, for both sides of this partnership, must shift radically.

In this new reality, I believe there are at least five essential changes that must take place if we are to nurture and foster a true and modern sense of Jewish Peoplehood.

Authentic Jewish Peoplehood will depend on direct dialogue and encounters between both sides.
Instant electronic and social media make the old gatekeepers practically irrelevant. Direct links between communities and individuals will become more and more important. Jewish identity for Israelis and Diaspora Jews alike will flourish when we rediscover each other again. Soldiers who participate in Birthright's 'Mifgashim' programme understand that more than ever. 'Shinshinim' who work in our schools, synagogues and summer camps here in Toronto know that too. For those soldiers and the Shinshinim, as well as the North Americans they encounter, their Jewish identity finds deep roots in those experiences that they may have never known previously.

National and international institutions that previously controlled the relationship between Diaspora and Israeli Jewry can no longer stand in the way of authentic dialogue and collaboration.
It is an age of "disintermediation" and in this globalized world national boundaries, especially for Jews, will mean less and less. Diaspora Jewry will continue to be active participants in their respective nations but our ties to Israel will play an ever increasing larger role. Local communities that do not nurture and construct direct links with Israel within their infrastructures will not be sustained. Those communities, on the other hand, that deepen those bonds and build those direct links can flourish

Israelis living abroad must be embraced within local Diaspora communities.
Within this new paradigm of Jewish Peoplehood, it should be more evident than ever that Israelis living abroad are a vital and essential part of every Diaspora community. Jewish identity in an open society for these Israelis is more important than ever and their leadership and engagement can add to vitality and energy to our Israel-oriented agenda. In many ways, how successfully we embrace those members into our community will be a litmus test and a metaphor for true commitment to Jewish Peoplehood.

We must rapidly update the curriculum of "Jewish Civics" for both parts of the Jewish World.

Students studying in our Diaspora schools are working off a decades-old curriculum that doesn't recognize Israel as a modern 21st century nation. And students studying in the Israeli school system have little knowledge at all about the vibrancy of Diaspora Jewish life. New concepts of Zionism must extend beyond the borders of the State and must be integrated into a full understanding of Peoplehood.

In a world where Israel leads the Jewish People it must demonstrate that leadership more and more.

Birthright was just the beginning of that kind of leadership. Investing in the Jewish identity initiatives of Diaspora communities will become an increasing role for the Government and people of Israel. Diaspora affairs need to become an integral part of the strategic thinking of the government, not just a passing gesture without real substance.

The strength of Diaspora communities in the decades ahead will depend on how real and tangible our connections to Israel will be. And the strength of Israel will very much depend on the power it can gain and leverage from nurturing those Diaspora communities. In an inter-dependent and truly 'global' world, no people is better equipped, better experienced and better conditioned to adapt to this new world than the Jewish People. Now is the time to seize this historical opportunity together.

Ted Sokolsky is the President & CEO of the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto.

The Peoplehood Papers provide a platform for Jews to discuss their common agenda and key issues relating to their collective identity. Appearing three times a year addressing specific themes you are encouraged to share your perspective. Past issues can be accessed at **www.jpeoplehood.org/publications**

The UJA-Federation of New York cares for those in need, rescues those in harm's way and renews and strengthens the Jewish people in New York in Israel and around the world. **The Commission on the Jewish People** is dedicated to building connections among the diverse elements of the Jewish People and develops and supports efforts to forge linkages among Jews wherever they may live and support Israel as a vibrant, democratic and pluralistic Jewish state.

The Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education (CJPE) is a "one stop" resource center for institutions and individuals seeking to build collective Jewish life, with a focus on Jewish Peoplehood and Israel education. It provides professional and leadership training, content and programmatic development or general Peoplehood conceptual and educational consulting. **www.jpeoplehood.org**

UJA Federation of New York

המרכז לחינוך לעמיות יהודית
The Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education