



PEDAGOGY:

How Do I Do This?

Introduction:

HOW do I Teach Towards Jewish Peoplehood?

Jewish Peoplehood education can be defined as the educational intervention required to nurture a “Peoplehood Consciousness” and an active commitment to the Jewish collective enterprise.

Because Jewish Peoplehood is by definition a complex concept, which we hope the students will embrace and integrate as part of their personal identity, it is necessary to develop both an emotional and an intellectual connection to it. By means of the emotional connection, the intellectual becomes personally relevant and more meaningful.

Furthermore, for that connection to endure and become significant, a knowledge base must be accompanied by a process of reflection and integration into the individual’s value system, and expressed in concrete behaviors.

Thus, a central goal of Peoplehood education is the development of Peoplehood Consciousness, a

synthesis of the emotional and intellectual connections to the idea and reality of the Jewish People.

Through intellectual and emotional development, the Peoplehood Consciousness provides the rationale, skills and motivation to become actively involved with the Jewish People in concrete ways. As a result, there is a pedagogic balance between three components:

1. **Engagement** with the Jewish People – Connecting with the heart
2. Developing Peoplehood **Commitment** through knowledge – Connecting with the mind
3. Motivating **Action-Oriented** expressions of belonging to the Jewish collective enterprise – Connecting with the hands

Each of these goals requires distinct methods for achievement and yet, they are interconnected and interdependent with one another. One cannot build commitment without engagement. Similarly, one cannot reach serious engagement without some level of cognitive knowledge. And action has

an impact that is both cognitive and emotional.

We will give a brief overview of each of these elements, and then suggest pedagogic strategies related to them.

Engagement with Peoplehood: Connecting With the Heart

Engaging with Peoplehood is often the first step in the Peoplehood journey. It is the affective process of developing an interest and making an emotional connection with other Jews. Most centrally, it implies making one's membership in the Jewish People personally relevant, meaningful and important. The results of engagement include: an interest in learning more about the Jewish People; a sense of solidarity with other Jews; pride in the achievements of the Jewish People; and an emotional connection to the collective past.

Developing Peoplehood Commitment: Connecting To The Mind

If engagement is sparked by emotions and thrives on spiritual energies, then the process of commitment-building complements the affective input with knowledge and reflection. This knowledge is meant to substantiate one's commitment to the Jewish enterprise by providing both the content base and the ideological foundations for making Peoplehood rich, meaningful and relevant for young Jews who are in the process of creating their identities in the 21st century.

The cognitive component of Peoplehood education includes: cognitive understandings and

knowledge of what Jewish Peoplehood is, its meaning, purpose, history, culture, languages etc. (See the discussion below on strategies.)

When integrated with the affective sense of engagement and identification this knowledge provides the ingredients for a sustained lifelong consciousness, which in turn yields commitment to the Jewish enterprise. This can be achieved through a reflective process that integrates the new consciousness into the learner's existing value system.

Integrating Engagement and Commitment: A Peoplehood Consciousness

Borrowing from the notion of Karl Marx who called on the proletariat to develop "class consciousness", in which one integrates a sense of identification or engagement with an intellectual commitment, Peoplehood Consciousness is the integration of the emotional and the cognitive educational processes.

Educational philosopher Lee Shulman¹ offers a learning taxonomy that connects engagement and commitment. Commitments are developed through a process of knowledge acquisition, compelling experiences, critical reflection and emotional connection that ultimately lead to new forms of engagement. Shulman counsels us to avoid the trap of treating the elements as a hierarchy, and instead, to think about them as a series of interdependent and cyclical steps which can repeat again and again over time.

So, if engagement is the initial connection to an idea or a social phenomenon that exists outside

of the participant, ongoing commitment requires learning and reflecting on how this fits into one's existing belief system and one's "life routine."

Focusing on developing a Peoplehood consciousness entails deeper and ongoing forms of teaching that demand exploration of multiple and overlapping dimensions of meaning. It also requires creating ongoing resources and opportunities to allow for Peoplehood to become a lived experience.

Thus, for Jewish Peoplehood education, learners identify and reflect upon the emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of Jewish Peoplehood and its place in their own lives. They articulate their beliefs and assumptions about what Jewish Peoplehood means to them and participate in reflective conversations with others around these beliefs and assumptions.

This leads to a broader understanding of the issue and its meaning and significance for their own value systems. At the same time, learners enrich their knowledge base, and equipped with deeper knowledge and new understandings, they develop a greater consciousness and appreciation of the value of Jewish Peoplehood in their own lives and for the Jewish collective as a whole.

Once integrated into their value systems, learners can then act and seek out further opportunities to express and reaffirm their worldviews.

Motivating Action-Oriented Commitment: Connecting to the Hands

In educational terms, creating a Peoplehood Consciousness could arguably suffice as a measure of success of the educational endeavor. However, the

work of Peoplehood education cannot be declared truly successful without achieving commitment to the idea of Peoplehood as well as to action. In other words, the goal of Peoplehood education is to raise Jews whose commitment is active in their efforts to leave their mark on the world.

As Lee Shulman tells us, "Learning begins with student engagement, which in turn leads to knowledge and understanding. Once someone understands, he or she becomes capable of performance or action. Critical reflection on one's practice and understanding leads to higher-order thinking in the form of a capacity to exercise judgment in the face of uncertainty and to create designs in the presence of constraints and unpredictability. Ultimately, the exercise of judgment makes possible the development of commitment"².

However, the importance of motivation for action goes far beyond its significance for the individual actor. In a sense, it provides the key to the continuity of the Jewish collective enterprise. Jewish civilization, through its communal and organizational settings, depends on the actions and commitments of its individual members.

Without that active commitment, which (consciously or not) is based on a sense of Peoplehood, Jewish civilization is at an existential risk. In other words, the role of Peoplehood education is to raise the next generation of leaders and activists who will ensure the continuity of the Jewish People and its revitalized mission in the world.

Add a diagram in this section, to visually represent the components described above.

From Goalst to Implementation: Strategies for Educators

We have argued that the pedagogic strategy for Peoplehood education includes the affective, cognitive and behavioral faculties of the learner. What then are concrete strategies for implementing this Peoplehood pedagogy?

Strategies for Developing Engagement

As we have said, the focus of efforts to engage with the Jewish collective is primarily affective, focused on feelings and emotions. And engaging with the collective begins with the personal. That is, the journey towards making the notion of the collective relevant starts with the individual –whether through one’s personal family story, through a search for commonalities between stories or through discovering moments or events that connect the individuals with a sense of joint fate.

Engagement takes effect when the individual’s story begins to connect to the larger story – a stone in the Jewish mosaic creation. It is where the “I” becomes “We;” narratives converge and engaging with the collective holds not only the promise of belonging but also of discovering a richer more intriguing self.

Pedagogically, then, engagement can begin through: exploration of family stories; Mifgashim (encounters) or dialogues with other Jews; exploration of Jewish texts and cultural material that explore the collective dimensions; travel experiences (such as Taglit-Birthright Israel and March of the Living) that highlight the Jewish shared fate; and more.

The Mifgash (encounter) is perhaps the most intense form of engagement with the greatest potential impact among Peoplehood educational interventions. Its magic may lie in the fact that through the “other” we actually interpret or reinterpret ourselves. The impact of such encounters may come from the power of being part of a group forming process which touches a deep chord within people’s souls.

Its power may draw from the fact that it is a semi-realistic simulation of a People which, in the case of the Jews, is a rather amorphous global entity. (Thus participants of Taglit are faced, usually for the first time in their lives, with something that looks like a concrete representative sample of the Jewish People). Perhaps the secret of the Mifgash is the interplay between all these factors. In any case, the Mifgash is unquestionably a powerful platform for creating engagement, energy, passion and dialogue. (For more information about how to implement a successful mifgash, see the Peoplehood Practices: Mifgash section in the Toolkit site).

Strategies for Developing Commitment

Because commitment is the phase of developing commitment that relies on a strong cognitive foundation (although it also includes reflection), in order to give students a reservoir of knowledge about the Jewish People in all their manifestations, the main strategy for this component of the pedagogy is to focus on content areas.

Peoplehood education provides opportunities for learners to acquire knowledge within contexts that enable them to view that knowledge as

relevant and important to them personally. The following are central knowledge areas (in no particular order): (For more on the Core Content of Jewish Peoplehood, see the Core Content category in the Toolkit site.)

- **Community:** Communal structures and leadership, models of Jewish communities in the past and present.
- **Covenant:** The purpose of the Jewish People as a collective, the glue that binds the people together. Visions and challenges of the Jewish collective going forward.
- **Values:** The core values of the Jewish People, including: truth and justice, charity (tzedakah), mutual responsibility, lovingkindness (hesed) and more.
- **Contemporary Jewish Life:** The Jews today, geographical dispersion, demography, migration and contemporary issues.
- **Jewish Religion:** Calendar, Jewish practices and customs, basic beliefs as expressions of the Jewish People's shared values
- **Jewish history:** Development of Jewish life and creativity around the world, including the mutual impact of Jews and their surrounding cultures on each other. Up to and including anti-Semitism and the impact of the Holocaust.
- **Traditional texts:** Foundations and development of the collective Jewish conversation, as found in Biblical, Rabbinic, and later texts.
- **Cultural Expression:** Folklore, literature, music and the arts.
- **Hebrew Language:** Hebrew as the cultural glue that binds the dispersed people, the lan-

guage of texts and religious expression and today, as the spoken language of over half of the people.

- **Israel as the vision and venture of the Jewish People:** The role of the State of the People, and its contributions to the Jewish narrative.

It is important to note that all these topics can be taught in various ways, but for Jewish Peoplehood education, the emphasis is on the people who are the actors in these narratives, and the broad sweep of a global collective that formed the civilization, passed it on from generation to generation, constantly contributed to it and kept it as a live entity that continues to leave its marks on the world.

The goal of imparting this knowledge is to highlight for students the importance and relevance of the Jewish enterprise and to develop personal pride and identification in being part of the people that created this legacy. Equally important is planting the seed for understanding the role individual Jews play in carrying and shaping Jewish civilization into the future.

For educators looking at these content areas, the key is to choose concepts at a developmentally appropriate age level, and to present them using creative pedagogies, such as project-based learning, experiential education, etc., within compelling educational contexts that learners find meaningful and stimulating.

Strategies for Motivating Action

Encouraging the motivation and skills for action should not be seen as a post-program outcome

but as an integral part of the educational process. Balanced and effective Peoplehood education programs contain a component of concrete actual expression of the commitment, which can take the form of an internship, structured volunteering or some kind of a community service option.

Obviously, the actual strategy for concrete action depends on the educational context and the age of the students.

For younger students, the possibilities for meaningful action are certainly less, but nevertheless, there are options for students to meet and communicate with Jews of their own age in different communities and to be involved in joint projects.

For older learners, high-school and above, concrete actions include campaigns to strengthen Jewish organizations, shared philanthropy, social action, entrepreneurship and more. Mifgashim also provide opportunities to incorporate active projects with Jews from other places, whether virtually or face-to-face.

There are growing numbers of opportunities for students to participate in a service project in Israel or in other parts of the world, both with and for Jewish or non-Jewish communities. As long as these actions are initiated, perceived and evaluated through a Peoplehood prism, they can all serve as potential building blocks for the future Jewish People, and they will contribute to its sustainability and growth.

Just as in the fields of medicine, law, social work and education, components of practice (e.g., field work, clinical experience, internship) are integral to a successful Jewish Peoplehood education process.

The creation of space for action provides the learner the opportunity to connect practice to the emotion and cognitive experience, which in turn creates a powerful learning experience. The process includes action, reflection and opportunity to evaluate those actions and their implications for the individual's personal responsibility to their People and the world – the ultimate Jewish command.

In Summary

We propose addressing the Peoplehood pedagogic challenge using three components:

1. Engaging with the Jewish people through the building of a sense of pride and solidarity by focusing on the emotional realm;
2. Building a peoplehood commitment through the development of a Peoplehood consciousness which integrates knowledge, values and content with a sense of engagement;
3. Motivating action through the exploration of what obligates members of the Jewish collective by virtue of its mission in the world and their role in shaping its future.

1 Shulman, Lee (2007). "A Table of Learning: Making Differences." The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/elibrary/making-differences-table-learning>.

2 Lee Shulman, (Shulman, pp.2-3, 2007)