

The Peoplehood Papers **30**

August 2021 | Elul 5780

Peoplehood Education – Goals, Pedagogy, and Outcomes

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From the Editor

Shlomi Ravid

In recent decades, the term Peoplehood has become both common and central in the Jewish conversation. Unfortunately, the development of a theory of Peoplehood Education that could engage Jews with their collective consciousness and nurture that consciousness, has been lagging far behind. The challenge of developing an educational field with shared goals, pedagogic principles, and articulated outcomes is still ahead of us.

We, at the **Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education** in collaboration with the **Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership**, decided to dedicate the **30th** issue of the Peoplehood Papers to address the challenge, and explore Peoplehood Education – Goals, Pedagogy, and Outcomes. Through an applied academic approach, we aspire to lay the foundations for a Peoplehood educational conversation that we hope will lead the way towards a Peoplehood Education theory of change.

Some of the questions we posed to our 14 article contributors were:

1. In consideration of what appears to be the weakening of the Jewish collective spirit among young Jews what values can make Peoplehood relevant, meaningful, and inspiring for them and how can those be taught?
2. Does the current diversity of Peoplehood perspectives require a more pluralistic approach? If so, what would it look like and how would it impact the overall Peoplehood Educational approach?
3. What kind of pedagogy or pedagogies can effectively nurture collective consciousness in today's reality? And how can Peoplehood discussions and perspectives enrich and advance education?
4. What is the distinct focus in nurturing collective consciousness, and how does it differ from the general nurturing of Jewish consciousness? How might different pedagogies diverge from and at the same time complement each other?
5. What does successful Peoplehood Education look like? What are its possible goals, methods, assumptions, and outcomes?
6. Can the outcomes of Peoplehood Education be framed in normative terms (i.e., Mitzvot of Peoplehood, concrete expressions of commitment, etc.)?
7. What does the ideal graduate of Peoplehood Education look like?

8. What is, has been, or could be the role of Jewish organizations and communal professionals in the Peoplehood educational process?
9. What is the added value of Peoplehood educational practices for Jewish organizations? Are there aspects of the vision and mission of Jewish organizations that cannot be effectively accomplished without an educational focus on Jewish collective consciousness?
10. How do Peoplehood pedagogies change in different social and historical contexts, and in addressing different constituencies (diverse age groups, different national backgrounds or religious affiliation, etc.)?
11. Are there opportunities to develop new approaches to Peoplehood Education by studying classical and emerging educational theories and pedagogies (such as game theory, case studies, simulation, etc.) in other educational settings?
12. What are some of the obstacles in developing a collective consciousness from an educational standpoint? Are there issues, ideas, or perspectives that feel challenging to reconcile in a collective framework?

The responses we received from the articles' contributors were diverse, thoughtful, and creative. We believe that they can be a first step towards the development of a more systemic approach to Peoplehood Education—a clearer framing of the goals, a more developed pedagogic approach and a methodological articulation of impact and outcomes. In short, we hope that the thought pieces presented in this volume will help in the development of a comprehensive approach towards the nurturing of Jewish collective identity in the 21st century.

There is also a bonus to Jewish Peoplehood conversation itself, hidden in the educational exploration. Grappling with a more nuanced educational approach that incorporates current sociological and ideological perspectives will have to go through a process of revisiting Jewish Peoplehood's core assumptions and values. Looking at Peoplehood through the educational prism can, in that context, advance our Peoplehood interpretation process more generally.

I want to personally thank Dr. Dean Bell, the President of **Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership**, for co-editing this publication with me. Special thanks to the **Spertus Institute** and to the **Jim Joseph Foundation** for supporting this publication. Finally, many thanks to all our thoughtful article contributors. Now it is time for you, the reader, to respond to and expand the conversation.

It is also the time to wish all our readers a **Shana Tova**. A healthy, happy, and sweet year.

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Introduction

Dean P. Bell

Education and Peoplehood are concepts that have been closely related throughout Jewish history. In many ways they are mutually enriching and, in some ways Peoplehood cannot really exist without education. At the same time, thinking about Peoplehood offers a remarkably robust path to more innovative and impactful education. The thoughtful essays in this volume simultaneously explore the very notion of Peoplehood even as they build on the best practices and cutting-edge thinking about education—through research and experiences in a diverse range of educational settings and programs. The resulting Peoplehood Education that is outlined and examined in different ways in this volume contributes significantly to a deeper and clearer understanding of Peoplehood and it offers new approaches to Jewish and general education beyond the immediate issues of Peoplehood itself. Surprisingly, Peoplehood is not often taught at Jewish educational institutions and Jewish educators are rarely trained to address it in deep and meaningful ways. It is our hope that this collection of essays will help to establish a field of Peoplehood Education that will simultaneously advance discussions of Peoplehood and lead to a greater focus on and use of Peoplehood in both Jewish communal life and education.

Of course, what we mean by Peoplehood and education could be quite different in different historical periods and geographical settings. Explicating the connection in the rabbinic period, for example, Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein, in *The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70-1492*,¹ leverage an economic model to argue that the transformations related to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE “shifted the religious leadership within the Jewish community and transformed Judaism from a cult based on ritual sacrifices in the temple to a religion whose main norm required every Jewish man to read and to study the Torah in Hebrew and to send his sons from the age of six or seven to primary school or synagogue to learn to do so.”² The

1 Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein, *The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70-1492* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

2 Ibid., 2.

authors assert that the growth and spread of literacy among an initially predominantly rural Jewry (along with other developments such as a unified code of Jewish law in the form of the Talmud and rabbinic courts and responsa) led to a number of important religious, social, and communal developments, including connections across the Diaspora.

To take a later historical example, even in the Modern period when education might be seen as a tool for assimilation and connection with broader universal values, it could also help to create a sense of collective identity that drew from and nurtured a deep religious or spiritual sensibility among Jews. As the 19th-century *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholar Immanuel Wolf characterized it, the “science of Judaism” sought to comprehend Judaism in its fullest scope, unfolding it in accordance with its essence and describing it systematically, relating individual features back to the fundamental principles of the whole. That is, Wolf expressed that there was a living spirit underneath the accretion of ceremonies and rituals that could bind Jews together.

These two historical vignettes surface a number of key issues that emerge in the essays in this volume, including the complexity of Judaism and Jewish life and their changeability over time and in different contexts. They also point to the important role of education in Jewish cohesion and connection and the need to balance diversity and norms, and particularism and universalism, in fashioning Jewish Peoplehood.

In addition to these general observations, there are several significant issues that emerge in the essays that follow and that are important for the fields of Peoplehood and Peoplehood Education, but that are also relevant and valuable in many other fields, disciplines, and practices as well. The essays examine questions of structures (including formal and informal communal and educational institutions), processes (e.g., pedagogical methods, educational programs, and experiences), and ideas (such as values, learning theory, and theories of change). Across the essays it is clear that Peoplehood Education requires a knowledge base (and there is some debate about what the critical or essential knowledge bases are), skills, and experiences. Key to developing a sense of collective belonging and connection (what some contributors refer to as transformation) are integration of knowledge, skills, and experience—especially through intentionality (especially in crafting educational experiences, building upon them, and connecting them), reflection, articulation of core values, mutuality, relevance, curiosity, creativity, and commitment rooted in practice and action (particularly in the act of problem solving). These ideas are described through the lens of educational theory as well as a diverse range of educational programs in different settings—such as encounters, museum education, young adult engagement, educator narrative writing, travel programs, and professional studies.

Underpinning the discussions in the pages that follow are complex notions of collective identity and consciousness that stress connection across geography, chronology, and practice. Foundational as well are values that emphasize development of shared concepts and morals on one hand and openness to diversity, dialogue, and questioning on the other. This is a rather post-structural and postmodern stance, emphasizing the role of micro narratives (as opposed to a grand metanarrative), the subjective and changeable nature of meaning, the role of narrative and interpretation in meaning making, and the pluralities and complexities of modern Jewish life. Peoplehood Education, therefore, grapples with balancing the universal and essential on one hand and particular on the other (concepts that some have come to reject as being impossible theoretical constructs). With these perspectives, Peoplehood Education succeeds when individuals can see and hold both diversity and divergence; that is they can find themselves, regardless of their differences from others, as part of the collectivity and can see difference and hybridity as a legitimate form of collective belonging. Peoplehood Education, therefore, reflects some of the most significant aspects of traditional Jewish sensibilities and postmodern identities and it can itself serve as a catalyst to strengthen and redefine Jewish institutions, communities, and identities for today and the future.

Many of our contributors examine the topic of Israel and Israel-Diaspora relations in different ways. Israel is in some ways a short-hand demarcation for Jewish Peoplehood itself and, at the same time, a barrier to a larger concept of Peoplehood that may eschew particular political or spatial boundaries. The notion that Israelis can benefit from understanding other manifestations and expressions of Judaism and Jewish life in the Diaspora and that Diaspora Jews can galvanize around core aspects of Israel and the Israel experience, are additional manifestations of the challenges and opportunities of the concept of Peoplehood and the focus, work, and goals of Peoplehood Education. This leads to one final observation, namely the difficulty, but importance, of assessing various Peoplehood Education projects and programs and their impact.

The essays in this volume cover a great deal of ground in engaging and sophisticated ways, balancing theory and practice and providing important insights that we believe will help to fashion and advance the concept of Peoplehood, especially in a contemporary context, and the field of Peoplehood Studies more generally.

As Shlomi Ravid, Editor of the *Peoplehood Papers* and a pioneer in Peoplehood Education, notes in his opening piece, "From the Editor," which frames this volume, the term Peoplehood is used both frequently and imprecisely. What is more, as Ravid points out, we are still in need of a theory of Peoplehood Education that will engage with and nurture collective consciousness and the development of a theory of change. This requires a revisiting and clarification of the core assumptions and values of Peoplehood and the

systematic shaping of a Peoplehood Educational field with shared goals, pedagogical principles, and clearly articulated outcomes. As Ravid develops in his own contribution to this volume (“Peoplehood Education – A Work in Progress”), the concept of Peoplehood involves more than belonging; it is in fact also about embracing values, ethos, visions, and aspirations. Ravid suggests a three-fold and holistic approach that integrates the heart (engagement with the Jewish People), the mind (developing a commitment through knowledge), and the hands (motivating action-oriented expressions of belonging). Ravid recognizes the complexity and diversity of interpretations of the meaning of Jewish Peoplehood today and therefore calls for a pedagogy that leverages education towards the goal of instilling in people curiosity, engagement, knowledge, and commitment.

Tracing notions of Peoplehood across history, in “Peoplehood Education and Institutions” Scott Aaron notes the changing nature of Jewish communal and educational institutions—between more fluid and organic models and, particularly in the modern period, models that have been more focused on inculcating and assuring compliance of behavior and belief. In a postmodern key, Aaron observes that it is necessary today to reimagine Jewish institutions, recognizing that Jews have multi-dimensional experiences, that strong ideological “red lines” impede affiliation, and that a focus on connections between Jews can be more constructive in developing collective identity than a focus on individual Jews’ personal identities. He highlights these points by referencing shifts in how American Jews engage with Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In “Peoplehood Requires a Full Life – Thoughts on Educating for Peoplehood,” Shraga Bar-On explores life experiences that create Peoplehood, through four critical stages of knowing, acknowledging, feeling part, and building partnership. Bar-On specifically examines the pedagogy of personal encounter in this regard, noting that such encounter must involve a conscious pedagogy of gradual, constructive encounter. In a certain sense, Bar-On explains, all Jewish education is Peoplehood Education, for effective Jewish education both invites the learner on a personal identity journey and helps them to see themselves as part of a broader Jewish story and to value others with whom they might not completely identify.

Similarly, Noga Cohavi, in “Move the Goalposts: A Proposal for a Didactic Discussion on Jewish Peoplehood,” emphasizes that the Jewish reality stretches across diverse environments and perceptions. Jewish literacy is necessary to bridge education and indoctrination. Jewish Peoplehood has content, even if it is not a separate academic discipline, and it extends beyond behavior and emotion. For Cohavi, Jewish Peoplehood enables intellectual and moral cultivation as it provides a framework for Jewish identity. As such, and as stressed in other essays as well, the values undergirding Jewish Peoplehood include reciprocity, respect, responsibility, collaboration, unity, and inclusion.

In “Peoplehood Education – Three Rules of Thumb,” Osnat Fox elaborates further that the concept of Peoplehood is both common and multivalent in Jewish education and educational discourse. Rather than a hard and fast definition, Fox asserts that the concept of Peoplehood should be harnessed to allow individuals and communities to create and re-create their own interpretations in an ongoing process. As other contributors also note, Fox identifies several core foundations for Peoplehood Education: real, in-depth, and personal understanding; building commitment; and facilitating genuine understanding through the conversation between local Jewish culture and global Jewry. Fox concludes that diversity is both a means and an ends for integrating voices within the collective, that Peoplehood Education must recognize the complexity of modern Jewish life (fostering empathy and relationships even amidst disagreement), and that an action-focused approach helps to build responsibility for and commitment to Jewish communities in other places.

Keren Fraiman and Dean Bell, in “A New Approach to Education and Peoplehood: Diversity as a Key to a Sustainable Model of Peoplehood,” pick up on some core themes highlighted already, reflecting that diversity can be a path towards collective identification—that is, that open dialogue that exposes and explores diverse Jewish narratives and experiences is effective in deepening and enriching learners’ connections to the Jewish People. Engaging diverse narratives signals to individuals both the richness of the collective and the realization that they can have a place within that collective and its narratives. What is more, complex and diverse narratives are much stronger, unlike monolithic stories that can be fragile and unwind under changed circumstances or new information. By recognizing the diversity within Judaism across time and space, learners find their own questions, debates, and concerns played out in different ways and they see Jewish experiences and collective identities as relevant to and inclusive of them.

In her contribution, “Re-envisioning Peoplehood Education for Generation Z,” Jodie Goldberg writes that many pedagogies seek to create intentional links with the past in order to foster collective Jewish identity, especially since the past can be useful in how we understand as a people today. However, she notes that Generation Z Jews are motivated by a certain universalism through which they want to change the world for the better, equally if not more so than they are motivated by an assumed connection to a Jewish past or present. Within Generation Z’s universalism, Goldberg finds a penchant among Generation Z Jews for controlling their own learning—through co-creation and the act of advocating for causes in which they believe and thereby solving real-world problems. In order to convince Generation Z Jews to feel a part of both a global and Jewish collective, they must be able to have and use their own voice, their hearts and passions must be engaged, and they should be encouraged to reflect on their experiences—all critical

aspects in more general Jewish Peoplehood Education that are discussed throughout this volume.

Daniel Goldman and Shira Sherez-Zik consider questions of Jewish Peoplehood within a specifically Israeli context. In their contribution, “Jewish Peoplehood – A Bridge in Time and Space,” they observe that Jewish Peoplehood is an elusive term that has not really taken hold within the State of Israel. Arguing that Peoplehood transcends space (within and beyond Israel) and time (past, present, and future), they believe that adherence to a notion of Jewish Peoplehood cannot reject some parts of the Jewish people. They feature the pedagogy of their program, which is based on mutuality and partnership in Israeli-Diaspora relations. The program focuses on core educational tenets, such as knowledge and experience, measurement and assessment, and the linking of experience and action. The encounter of Israeli Jews with Diaspora Jewry allows program participants to be exposed to the rich and diverse Jewish cultures they do not experience in Israel, helping to forge a sense of shared destiny and purpose.

Framing the discussion of Peoplehood in theoretical and educational discussions, Clare Goldwater and Shuki Taylor begin their essay “Signifying Meanings: What Semiotics Can Teach Us About Peoplehood and Peoplehood Education” by underscoring the urgent need to help young Jews develop a sense of belonging and commitment to the Jewish People. They note that Jewish Peoplehood is signified by multiple signifiers, reflecting deep diversity and plurality; such diversity does, however, raise the question of what are the primary—some might say essential—signifiers of Jewish Peoplehood? Similarly, what signifies Jewish Peoplehood consciousness? Goldwater and Taylor argue for a more intentional approach to articulating goals and making decisions about which signifiers to employ and in what ways.

Adding to the discussion of Peoplehood in an Israeli context, in “Education and Global Jewish Identity: An Examination of Peoplehood in Israeli Educators’ Creative Writing” Anat Infeld-Goodman considers the relationship of Jewish educators in Israel with the concept of Peoplehood. Examining components of Israeli educators’ Jewish identity as reflected in stories they authored as part of a master’s degree program in Jewish education, Infeld-Goodman isolates major themes within these works, revolving around the Jewish calendar, lifecycle, and the representation of past and present time and associated space. She notes the inherent tension in most of these writings in the encounter between specific experiences and larger questions of identity. That is, the educators belong to two cultures at once—a tradition and heritage of the past on one hand and a temporary (changing) culture of which the educator is always a part. Still, Infeld-Goodman notes that the educators rarely display an association with a global Jewish identity. She asks how we can expect Israeli educators to educate the next

generation with values and perspectives they themselves do not have, making the call for intention and systematic Peoplehood Education for educators in Israel a top priority.

As noted in several essays, a key component of Peoplehood Education—indeed of education generally—is evaluation. In “A Framework for Evaluating Success in Jewish and Peoplehood Education” Ezra Kopelowitz asserts that successful Peoplehood Education nurtures “Jewish consciousness.” He argues that such consciousness is deepened through educational experiences along six dimensions: establishing relevance, provoking curiosity, making Jewish normal, encouraging leadership, becoming a master, and nurturing Peoplehood consciousness. Kopelowitz traces the contribution of these six dimensions to the individual student while pointing out the importance of intentionally planned educational experiences and a supportive educational environment. Noting the importance of meaning-making in Jewish consciousness, he explores the work of Israel education as a field within Jewish education as a case study.

In “Jewish Peoplehood Education – Does It Exist?” Itamar Kremer continues some of these themes, while returning to some other key issues. He notes that Peoplehood Education must integrate knowledge, skills, and transformative experiences. He also asserts that there must be a fundamental change in how Israeli students are helped to form stringer connections with Jewish Peoplehood by developing their feeling of belonging to the Jewish People as a whole and to Jews themselves as individuals. At the same time, students must be educated to accept the different sources and ways in which other Jews express their own belonging to the Jewish People. Drawing from the work of different young adult identity programs, Kremer concludes that the effectiveness of Jewish Peoplehood Education in this setting can be measured and assessed through questionnaires, observation, and long-term Israeli public behavior.

In “Jews Must Go: A Jewish Grand Tour – Travel as a Peoplehood Practice” Jeremy Leigh writes that Peoplehood consciousness unleashes a range of questions, including what are the justifications for the importance of Peoplehood and what are the membership criteria for it. For some, Leigh notes, Peoplehood can seem at odds with rampant individualism; for others, it may be perceived as too particularistic and undermining of progressive values. In responding to these concerns, Kremer advances a pedagogy of Peoplehood practice, advocating the elevation of Jewish travel as a key space for such practice. Jewish educational travel relies on journeys to places that witnessed the unfolding story of the Jewish People. Such outward journeys also stir the inward journeys of participants, and as is true in experiential education more generally, can generate emotional responses from participants that are key to deep engagement and transformation. Jewish educational travel raises important points for consideration—what places and sites to visit, how such visits are contextualized and experienced, and

how such experiences are connected to other educational experiences and individual identity. Connecting space and time, as was noted in other essays as well, however, can serve as a powerful means to connect to a broader Jewish People.

Finally, rounding out the volume, Miriam Heller Stern, in “Sustaining a Creative People: Learning the Habits of Creative Thinking,” observes that throughout history Jews have had to learn to adapt and disrupt. They have done so through problem-solving, which has as its core creative thinking. Asking if such creative thinking can be taught, Heller Stern notes that creative thinking is not teacher- or test-centered, but rather process-oriented and collaborative—aspects that are key in developing a sense of Peoplehood. Creative thinking emphasizes engaging with and applying wisdom with an eye toward discovery and it is also built upon and builds relationships, especially a sense of community and collective responsibility between and among teachers and learners. But, she cautions, creative thinking cannot be taught prescriptively; it is, instead, a sensibility that is habituated and Heller Stern outlines the key elements that are nurtured in such work. She concludes that crisis (historically as well as today) has forced a need for creative thinking, which she argues leads us to invent new vehicles for joy and hope and provides mechanisms for processing pain and fear, allowing us to leverage collective Jewish sensibilities to connect and define ourselves in community.

The thoughtful and powerful essays in this volume began with several conversations with my colleagues Ezra Kopelowitz, Keren Fraiman, and especially (and guided by) Shlomi Ravid, as we discussed a range of issues related to Peoplehood in our own teaching and in our different academic disciplines. Along the way we noted the need for a more intentional and developed pedagogical outline for Peoplehood and Peoplehood Education. We hope that the wonderful essays that follow—all of which grapple with deep ideas and bring theory and practice into conversation—will help create a space for and advance the work of Peoplehood Education and the application of Peoplehood discussions across Jewish life today and for the future.

Dean P. Bell is President and CEO, as well as Professor of Jewish History, at the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership and co-editor of this volume.



Peoplehood Education and Institutions

Scott Aaron

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word “institution” as follows:

a: an established organization or corporation (such as a bank or university) especially of a public character.

b: a facility or establishment in which people (such as the sick or needy) live and receive care typically in a confined setting and often without individual consent.

c: a significant practice, relationship, or organization in a society or culture.

also: something or someone firmly associated with a place or thing.

Jews love institutions. They embody who we are or at least who we aspire to be. For example, we have held on to the idea of the institution of the Temple millennia after its destruction, and even today we debate amongst ourselves whether it is still a necessary institution in Judaism. The idea of the Temple as an embodiment of our monotheism permeates our collective historical understanding of our collective relationship with G-d, and the institution of the synagogue is its contemporary successor. Schools are another example of the institutional embodiment of our collective ideals. As People of The Book, intellectual pursuit has always reflected how we as a people access the larger world. Whether that pursuit was through Jewish texts or secular studies, the value of education and the quality of the institutions that provide it has remained a shared value across the Jewish community. Without Jewish institutions, there indeed would not be a Jewish people.

The Talmud tells us that true Jewish cities cannot exist without institutions as defined by Merriam-Webster:

“A Torah scholar is not permitted to reside in any city that does not have these ten things: A court that has the authority to flog and punish transgressors; and a charity fund for which monies are collected by two people and distributed by three, as required by (Jewish law). This leads to a requirement for another three people in the city. And a synagogue; and a bathhouse; and a public bathroom;

a doctor; and a bloodletter; and a scribe to write sacred scrolls and necessary documents; and a ritual slaughterer; and a teacher of young children.”¹

This centrality of institutions throughout our diaspora existence comes from two historical realities which made them critical to the Jewish concept of community. First, wherever we wandered over the centuries we were usually not permitted to access the communal institutions of our hosts. Those institutional benefits were usually restricted to those who met a criterion of theology e.g., Christian or Muslim. So, Jews learned to establish their own institutions to care for themselves because they could not rely on others to care about them much less for them. This in turn led to a second reality though that Jews learned from their hosts; institutional benefits could be used to exert communal compliance in behavior, participation and beliefs. For one to have access to kosher food, charitable funds, places of prayer, or even schooling for children, one had to comply with set definitions of ideology and expectations of public behavior and accept the enforcement of them as established by the institutions. Failure to comply or adhere within limited bounds meant being denied services and support in a time where there was no other institutional resource that would assist a Jew. The hardening of institutions in the early modern and into the modern period created a certain sense of Peoplehood and shared collective identity, but one different from the more organic, flowing, and often localized one of pre- and most-modernity.

A famous example of the harsh penalties communal institutions could inflict for defying specific norms was Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677). Spinoza was from a prominent Dutch Jewish family, but he was an early adherent of rational views of the Bible and perspectives of G-d which conflicted with classic Jewish theology. Holding these views was problematic enough in the 17th century, but his true transgression appears to have been publicly expressing them even when directed not to by the *me'amad* which was the governing institution in Sephardic communities and often connected to a prominent congregation. From the *me'amad's* perspective, not only would Spinoza's actions undermine their authority, but it would also undermine the philosophical assumptions that the schools, commercial practices, religious organizations, and other communal institutions were built upon. For this refusal to adhere to the ruling of the *me'amad*, Spinoza was expelled from the community and all community members, including his own family, were forbidden from interacting with him in any personal or professional way. Spinoza never retracted his views though and spent the remainder of his life living amongst the Gentiles of Amsterdam. He died alone and away from his family and friends in the Jewish community.

1 *Talmud Bavli*, Sanhedrin, 17b.

The world has evolved though and Jewish institutions, especially in the West, have evolved with it. America and other Western nations that embrace democracy and equality as fundamental rights for their citizens presented the conditions necessary to shift our institutions from being particularistic ideological enforcers to inclusive communal resources. Those Western values of democracy and equality have given us an accessible context to educate communal leaders and professionals on the aspects of Jewish Peoplehood that give them a philosophical basis for dismantling the ideological vice grips for institutional affiliation. Today a person can self-define and self-determine their Jewish identity through the lens of Jewish Peoplehood without the assumption that their doing so will put them out of reach of every aspect of Jewish community. They can even create their own institution if they wish with other like-minded Jews and find some aspect of place within the Jewish community writ large.

Jewish Peoplehood can be boiled down to three principles for the purposes of educating lay and professional leadership as to why they can make pragmatic change to who and why is considered eligible for institutional affiliation and benefits. It also allows them to set meta-objectives for sustaining community and bypass more particularistic barriers to meeting those meta-objectives and it suggests ways of reimagining institutions and education to address ever changing circumstances, while engaging with questions of what is essential in the context of Jewish communities and identities.

- Recognition that Jews have multi-dimensional experiences that mold their beliefs and practices.
- Rejection of strong ideological “red lines” that impede rather than propel affiliation.
- Emphasis on the connections between Jews rather than on an individual Jew’s personal identity.

Multi-dimensional experiences recognize the reality that people encounter the world differently and can draw different but justifiably valid conclusions from those conclusions that could impact their views and behaviors. Once upon a time, our Talmudic ancestors legislated a Jewish social order that presumed a uniformity of life experiences and built a legal and institutional structure predicated on that uniformity. Shabbat was understood as a day that prohibited specific kinds of behaviors that were defined as work under Jewish law. It was also understood that attendance at synagogue was a communal objective and institutions open on Saturdays would draw Jews away from prayer. So, for example, not so long ago a JCC whose fitness center was open on Shabbat could lose federation funding

that subsidized the center's operating costs so it was common to close it on Saturdays. The logic here was that by enforcing the institution to comply with a unidimensional definition of what constituted work e.g., lifting heavy weights, or that saw communal prayer as a primary objective of Shabbat, the community would adhere more tightly to itself. The Western world uses a different fulcrum to balance the interests of the individual with the interests of the community though and recognizes that unique individuals may have unique definitions of common concepts like the Sabbath. Someone could find the concept of Sabbath rest to include exercise that they cannot enjoy during the work week and find it more meaningful than the communal prayer that may enrich a different person on the same day. Recognition that each perspective comes from a place of embracing Shabbat as understood through different experiences allows the community to include more members' interests in connecting to Shabbat without having to decide whose understanding of Shabbat is more valid. After all, if the meta-objective is building community, then making Shabbat accessible to more people based on their own experiences and interests meets that objective more effectively.

Ideological boundaries historically kept the community bound together, and often served to distinguish "us" from "them." Again, this stemmed from the external world as much as internal need. Who was a Jew, what was Jewish, and how much interaction this afforded us with the larger population was as often as not set by the larger Gentile community around us. When a group of adherents to a divergent ideological view of Jewish community seemed to challenge the majority or attempted to change the status quo between Jews and non-Jews, our institutions became the front lines for these disagreements. For example, Western European Jews who leaned into modernity settled and prospered in America in the early and mid-19th century by seeking to assimilate to some degree with the Gentile population in terms of dress, social habits, even forms of observance as embodied by Reform Judaism. However, when Eastern European Jews who had no prior exposure to modernity began to arrive on these shores, the Western European Jewish establishment set up institutions to help them become more American through assimilation. Eastern European Jewish immigrants did not share the same ideological acceptance of assimilation though and pushed back against the institutions that were thrusting it upon them as a condition for social services and other assistance. This led to the development of institutions from both groups that would preference their own adherents towards or away from assimilation and were redundant in their social service objectives. Only time and historical events that Americanized both Jewish groups allowed for a common recognition of the inefficiency of duplication based on these ideological lines and accepted merger for the common good. Many of today's federations are the result of mergers between Eastern and Western Jewish European

philanthropic organizations that recognized that such ideological issues were costing the community more than benefitting it.

Finally, the emphasis of Jewish Peoplehood on what communal needs link Jews rather than the litmus test of one's personal Jewish identity has been a critical component in modernizing and increasing Jewish institutional relevancy in the 21st century. Two cases in point are intermarriage and homosexuality. Long ideological red lines for Jewish institutions stemming from religious positions, either could be used to deny someone membership or participation in a congregation, burial in a cemetery, Jewish education for their offspring and access to communal programs built around the Jewish family unit. It was long a policy in many federations to not provide communal support to programs that served intermarried without promoting conversion of the Gentile spouse to Judaism, or to those that openly accepted homosexual couples. Couples often would not receive subsidies to participate on Israel missions for their Gentile and/or Gay partner and intermarried and/or Gay lay leaders and professionals might not be deemed eligible for leadership positions. Time and some hard introspection through the peoplehood lens has shown that the community at large gains more from inclusion over shared concerns like social justice, health and human services, education and other commonalities than exclusion over someone's choice of whom they love. Communal institutions have stronger support bases, volunteer sources and leadership cadres when they have welcomed Jews based on what draws them to affiliate rather than distancing them based on their personal identity. Simply put, emphasis on why people give, volunteer, and commit has advanced the work of communal institutions much farther than emphasizing the compliance to ideological norms of who shows up to give, volunteer and commit.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been proof-positive of the value of Peoplehood Education. When the community writ large was faced with a common health crisis, its institutions largely acted for the greater good and not just their particular concerns. Federations raised COVID relief dollars for organizational support across the spectrum. Support for resources like Personal Protective Equipment and social distancing modifications were distributed to organizations that had historically not received communal dollars. Money was given to non-Orthodox congregations to subsidize their need to become virtual houses of worship without questioning the theological decision about whether this was religiously appropriate by anyone's particular ideology, and money was equally given to those Orthodox organizations for modifications that supported their decision to maintain in-person gatherings on Shabbat and holidays. The pandemic was the great leveling agent in communities hampered by ideology during normal times and more Peoplehood Education can help communal institutions understand that the successes that came from that experience were not random or isolated but advantageous to continue

going forward. It also meets the trend amongst today's youth and young adults to move away from partisan affiliations and labels and towards more common connectors.

As we move beyond the pandemic, the next opportunity for Jewish Peoplehood evolution in communal institutions will be around Israel. American Jews are struggling through how to love Israel when it is hard to like it sometimes because of the lack of substantive movement towards a resolution to the Palestinian occupation question. There are a variety of perspectives but for most of the 20th century the default position based on ideology was that Israel was at least 51% in the right in most cases and viewpoints to the contrary were excluded from recognition, validation or participation in communal forums or programs. The shift among American Jews towards challenging how Israel is dealing with the Palestinian issue has caused internal rifts within institutions between younger and older, right and left, and a demand for more debate and inclusion. Jewish Peoplehood Education provides a framework for dialogue and decisions that includes and respects all perspectives by shifting the emphasis away from hard ideological entrenchment on any side and towards a greater realization of the common good for both Israel and the American Jewish community. It also means a stronger future for our institutions—or perhaps reconceptualizing our ideas of institution, community, and identity—and the community's continuing to thrive.

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Peoplehood Requires a Full Life – Thoughts on Educating for Peoplehood

Shraga Bar-On

“It takes a village to raise a child,” says the African proverb—and educating for peoplehood takes a full life. In *The Kuzari*, R. Yehuda Halevi defines prayer as “the seed of time and its fruit.” Prayer is both the potential and the final product. Similarly, I would define “Peoplehood Consciousness” both as what we are doing when we are involved with Peoplehood and as the final product we are trying to create. The sort of life experience that creates Peoplehood contains four critical stages: 1) knowing, 2) acknowledging, 3) feeling part, and 4) building partnership, each of which may contain a variety of elements and layers. In this article, I will lay out the pedagogical thinking underlying each stage, using examples from my own experience in the field of Jewish Peoplehood.

Knowing

The first stage of Peoplehood Education is knowing. Knowing can take two different forms: interpersonal and informational. Interpersonal knowing emerges from an *inductive* process, wherein interpersonal connections (individual or collective) expand to create a much broader sense of the importance of Peoplehood. In contrast, informational knowing emerges from a *deductive* process wherein knowledge about Peoplehood provides a framework for understanding subsequent interpersonal encounters. While each is a form of knowing, each requires an entirely different pedagogical strategy.

Pedagogy of interpersonal knowing begins by creating shared frameworks. Three years ago, the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem began its [Rabbinic Leadership Initiative](#)'s seventh cohort, composed of an elite cadre of 25 North American rabbis in the highest levels of Jewish learning. This cohort was unique among its predecessors in two ways: First, it was the first cohort to include three Israeli rabbis, graduates of the [Beit Midrash for Israeli Rabbis](#). Second, it was the first cohort of American rabbis to collaborate on

a variety of levels with 19 members of the Beit Midrash for Israeli Rabbis' third cohort. For three years, Beit Midrash for Israeli Rabbis students have had the fortune of joining shared learning sessions, field trips, and informal programming with the North American rabbis.

Rabbi Matan Hayyat of Israel shared with me an exciting story about the meaningful relationship he created with Rabbi Barry Dov Katz who leads the Bronx community at the Conservative Synagogue Adath Israel of Riverdale (CSAIR):

"I met Rabbi Barry during one of the conversation circles and we had a very tense conversation about the sense of connection between us. I confessed that I don't feel any particular connection to Jews in the Diaspora, nor do I think that we have very much in common. My only connection to American Judaism is the apartment of 18 high school graduates who come to Israel for two months, live in my building, and make noise. I said that I feel more connected to Arabs living in Jerusalem than I do to Jews living in America, even just in terms of shared language. After the session, Barry came up to me and we began talking. The things I had said had pained him greatly (two years later he would still remember every bit of the conversation). When the conversation ended, Barry invited me and my family to come for a Shabbat meal in the apartment he was renting nearby, where we had a lovely evening. Since then—including throughout Corona—we have been in contact via Facebook. Any time a tragedy or military campaign shows up in the news, we send each other words of encouragement. We had a long talk over Zoom one night during the first lockdown, and this week—two years after we first met—we came full circle as he came to my house for a meal."

Everyone who has taken part in encounter-based Jewish Peoplehood programming—like Diller, Bronfman, Hevruta, Taglit, Masa, Gvanim, and more—has examples like this, wherein the transformative potential of interpersonal interactions and familiarity becomes clear. A pedagogy of personal encounter provides names and faces, creating a multidimensional experience enabling the participants to truly get to know one another. The very fact of the shared value underlying the encounter—Peoplehood as an ideal—creates a covenantal solidarity. This covenant of Peoplehood translates the interpersonal encounter into internalization and identification, turning the participants into ambassadors for Peoplehood and agents of change within their communities.

Despite the effectiveness of many encounter programs, they have clear limitations. They often lack scalability in both size and depth. These programs require massive investments of resources for each participant, typically limiting these programs to small groups. They are also limited in terms of their length, ranging from a few days to a year. Thus, the tradeoff: the longer a program is, the less participants it can have, while the shorter a

program is, the less depth can be provided to the participants. These encounter groups also depend on a shared language (generally this is English, though in the example above, Rabbi Barry's Hebrew was the enabling factor), which not only narrows the field of potential participants for these programs, but also excludes a whole host of communities from the Peoplehood discourse itself.

An additional problem plagues these programs, one familiar to anyone involved in encounter programming. Sometimes, the encounters can actually deepen feelings of alienation, rather than building bridges. When cultural divides are experienced with particular intensity, the encounter leads not to opening up to the new and different but to walling oneself off within the familiar. Thus, these programs must involve a conscious pedagogy of gradual, constructive encounter—guiding the participants in getting to know one another.

The second form of knowing—informational knowing—involves providing historical and sociological information on topics relevant to Jewish Peoplehood. This is where the diachronic element of Peoplehood Education comes in. This approach has a clear advantage: it places Jewish Peoplehood within the larger context of the story of the Jewish People. We often identify peoplehood with specific knowledge of the history of Jewish communities around the world, of generally unknown historical Jewish individuals, etc. This is a mistake. *All Jewish education, anywhere in the world, is Peoplehood Education.* Knowledge about Jewish texts, about prayer and ritual, about Jewish values and the Hebrew language, constitutes the foundation of Jewish collective awareness. We often do not see it as such. Our education is often narrowly disciplinary, modeled on “academic” standards of sufficient, correct comprehension. The job of Peoplehood educators is to break down disciplinary boundaries, reflecting on the meaning the material bears on issues of identity. We do not teach just so that our students can pass tests, nor even so that they learn the material. Our unique literature and history—as with other peoples and their unique literatures and histories—engage us on five distinct levels: 1) the informative, 2) the formative, 3) the normative, 4) the reflective, and 5) the transformative. The most basic level is knowledge, but this knowledge plays a role in creating a shared field of meaning among those who know it. Some of this knowledge will independently move us toward similar activities—we should not be surprised by the amazing fact that both ancient and modern synagogues sported *tzedakah* boxes. A Jew need not ever think about “Peoplehood” in order to feel at home if he finds himself in a foreign Jewish community over the holidays.

Jewish education's next goal—the reflective—is to enable us to find ourselves within the material, to become active interpreters of the text, so that it corresponds to who we are. The final level enables us to emerge changed from our encounter with the material.

This is where Peoplehood Education really has something unique to contribute. We must expand our curricula so that students can encounter more forms of Judaism than ever before. Broadening our gaze will also enable more varied personal journeys, giving our students more options for personally identifying with the material, as well as helping them see a broader range of options as legitimate.

Acknowledging

Knowing alone is not enough, however. Even reflexive knowing cannot create transformative peoplehood experiences. This aim requires an additional, critical element: recognition. Theories of recognition, such as those of Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth, emphasize the dialogical development of identity. Practically speaking, educating for recognition is a central element in Peoplehood Education.

Peoplehood requires us to transcend the specific traits that characterize our own Jewish identities (as well as those of our communities) and recognize that there are other Jews whose Jewish identity rests on different aspects of the Jewish tradition than mine does, and that their Jewish identity is just as legitimate as mine is. Axel Honneth claims that recognition derives from mutually validating of our identities in three stages: First, we attain self-confidence. Second, we attain self-respect. Third, we reach self-esteem. We attain self-confidence through interpersonal love and relationships (Honneth focuses on mother-child relationships, but I would include also relationships of friendship). We attain self-respect through equality before the law, which grants equal rights to each of us. Lastly, we gain self-esteem by recognizing that our unique identity contributes to the larger fabric of society.

Peoplehood Education must make sure to firmly establish these three dimensions, a task which requires significant educational effort. Creating friendship requires a degree of openness and vulnerability that can perhaps be achieved through the interpersonal familiarity I described above. Personal dignity derives from legal equality, which is less relevant to World-Jewry, but which is quite critical to Jews living in the State of Israel. We must therefore see the political struggle for equal rights for different Jewish identities in Israel as part of the project of Peoplehood. Lastly, self-esteem begins with Jews with different Jewish identities valuing each other's contributions to Jewish life in the present (this is achieved primarily through education). We thus must develop educational curricula that will not just give over information but will also blaze new paths toward freshly reevaluating Judaism's the world over. World Jewry education must emphasize the contributions of the State of Israeli and Israeli society to the construction of meaningful

Jewish life today. Israeli education must emphasize Diaspora Jewry's broad contributions to Jewish life, particularly those of the immense, thriving Jewish community of North America. In Israel, this curriculum will have to break down the ideology of "Negating the Exile" and replace it with a Zionist peoplehood sensibility.¹

Belonging

Peoplehood Education, if it is to succeed in everything I have laid out thus far, must invite the student to come on a journey of personal identity. This is perhaps the most important thing for the educator to keep in mind when constructing curricula, lessons, and pedagogical strategies—with the latter emphasizing internalization and personal contemplation. The student must be spurred onto a journey where they will build connections between their personal history, their family history, their community, their favorite Jewish philosophy and theology, and the locale in which they live—creating a unified, multi-dimensional Jewish identity. This identity will necessarily be connected with the identities of other Jews through a shared network of meanings. This includes Jews they see on a daily basis, Jews with whom they spend Shabbat, others with whom they share a sense of local-patriotism, others with whom they share a language, and still more groups of Jews with whom they simply share Judaism.

The student will live simultaneously within various forms of life, which overlap in a way that helps the student see themselves as part of a broad, expansive Jewish story, enabling them to value groups with which they do not entirely identify. They won't be bothered by the fact that Judaism comes in a variety of forms—in fact, they will celebrate its plurality. Peoplehood Education often comes across as something older educators impose upon their younger students, but this need not be the case. Recognizing that Judaism—both historically and today—is a colorful mosaic composed of different voices could lead students to see peoplehood as an authentic expression of their personal autonomy, rather than as a heteronomous imposition. We must therefore grant this journey a tenor of self-discovery and recontextualization.

When this experience happens organically, it can initiate a lifelong journey of individuals young and old, of families, and of communities. The best pedagogy for advancing this stage of Peoplehood—as with all education—is personally modeling what it means to live this journey, engaging with the Jewish past, present, and future.

1 See <https://heb.hartman.org.il/topic/peoplehood-shraga-bar-on/>.

Building Partnership

The final stage is building partnership—closing the circuit of knowing, recognizing, and belonging by drafting them into active service of the development of Jewish Peoplehood. This partnership comes in many forms and must express the unique individuality of both the students and the educators. On the most fundamental level, this can take place even without interactions between Jews from different communities. For example, if the people who generate and pass on culture—teachers, rabbis, writers, politicians, etc.—act locally, but with a Peoplehood mindset, they would create an international ethos of Jewish peoplehood. This ethos will then transfer to the audiences of that culture.

This partnership can also be expressed throughout the joint development of businesses and hobbies. Commercial collaboration builds networks which contribute invaluable to Jewish Peoplehood, as do professional groups and shared recreational activities.

However, on a more value-driven level, Jewish Peoplehood constitutes the next stage of working together to realize Jewish values. This could then generate collaboration between different Jewish communities around the world, engaging them in mutual support, particularly in the form of human resources and financial aid. It would also manifest in joint activism for the cause of global justice—Jewish Peoplehood can serve as a bases for universal action.

This unique partnership must take shape also in the context of the State of Israel. Israel is the national home of the whole Jewish People, and as such it represents a shared project. Jews all over the world must contribute to and influence the Jewish identity of the State of Israel. The State of Israel, for its part, must recognize this and anchor the different elements necessary for this recognition in law. On the basis of all Jews' shared responsibility for the State of the Jews, the State of Israel can serve Jewish communities around the world, together with local Jewish organizations. In partnership with community-level organizations, the State of Israel could even be a leader in the cause of global justice.

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Move the Goalposts: A Proposal for a Didactic Discussion on Jewish Peoplehood

Noga Cohavi

...Stone by stone, a tower of precious cornerstones
(Isaiah 28:16).

The Jewish reality stretches across distant environments and numerous perceptions.

This fact grants Jewish Peoplehood (JP) studies a wide range of research tools, different terminologies, and an abundance of perspectives. Out of this complexity which is soaked with intense sentiments arises the need for a toolbox of universal scientific validity in the context of a distinctive identity. Hence the suggestion to reconsider JP teaching-learning frameworks. This is the suggestion that encouraged a long-term discourse and the writing of an article purposed to open a discussion on JP didactics.

The Goals of Jewish Peoplehood Studies

1. While the volume of JP learning materials is steadily growing, Israeli attempts to formulate a comprehensive framework to educationally discuss JP, are quite few. Noticeable among them are three sources that include explicit reference to the goals of JP education: the "layout" of Naama Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, Gideon Shimoni and Nurit Chamo (2009);¹ the work of Shlomi Ravid and Verda Refaeli (2012);² and Moshe Shner's book.³ The "layout" which was published in the spirit of Beit Hatfutsot, was motivated by the need "to strengthen the individual's identification with the collective foundations

1 נעמה צבר בן-יהושע, גדעון שמעוני ונורית חמו, עמיות יהודית: מתווה עיוני ומעשי להוראה ולמידה, תל אביב: בית (תשס"ט) = The Layout

2 Shlomi Ravid and Varda Rafaeli, Jewish Peoplehood Education: Framing the Field, TLV: The Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education (2011).

3 משה שנר, להיות יהודי באלף השלישי: הצעה ל"סדר יום" לימודי במערכת החינוך בישראל ובתפוצות, מכון מופ"ת. (2008). = Moshe Shner

of the Jewish people”.⁴ The general goal derived from it was “to develop and deepen in a rational, emotional and behavioral way the affinity and sense of belonging and commitment to the Jewish people.”⁵ The dimensions of knowledge, emotion, and behavior also appeared in Ravid and Refaeli’s publication which presented the following goals: engaging with the Jewish People; developing peoplehood consciousness; and nurturing an action-oriented commitment to the Jewish collective enterprise.”⁶ The picture portrayed by these works was enriched with Moshe Shner’s invitation to dilemmas-based learning. Shner did not offer any teaching recipes. Instead, he delegated responsibility to the teachers and announced that “there is no substitute for pedagogical discretion.”⁷ Evidently, the Jewish world did not stand still in the past few decades. Considering cross-continental dynamics, it seems logical to revisit these Israeli pioneering publications and offer a contemporary scholarly discussion **aiming at Jewish literacy**.

Apparently, asking about the goals of JP Studies is better than asking the same question about the goals of JP Education. The former focuses on freedom of thought and learning, whereas the latter focuses on behavior modification.

Education for self-development and moral navigation in society should be integrated into all areas while allowing ethical assessment from different perspectives. Inevitably, prioritizing literacy creates a buffer between education and indoctrination. Determining literacy as a preliminary condition in educational systems prevents populism and makes it difficult to lower expectations from the learners.

Hence it is advised to avoid reducing JP Studies to behavioral or emotional issues. Accordingly, concepts like “repair the world,” “belong,” or “mutual responsibility” (*Arvut Hadadit*) must serve as significant items in chosen categories and not as the main gates. A more comprehensive approach would be to explore Peoplehood through three sets of interactions: The Jewish People and the world; The Jewish People and Israel; The Jewish People and spiritual-cultural assets.

2. The question “What should be the goals of JP Studies?” resulted from a fundamental assumption: JP is an identity-based framework enabling intellectual and moral cultivation. To answer this question, I conducted a qualitative research based on nearly 500 participants in Israel and the Diaspora. The information was gathered from

4 The Layout, 14.

5 Ibid.

6 Ravid and Refaeli, “Jewish Peoplehood Education: Framing the Field,” 29.

7 Shner, 353.

students, teachers, lecturers, and fellow practitioners in dozens of groups. Most of the conversations included Israelis and non-Israelis (mainly from Europe, Latin America, and the United States).

In addition to the face-to-face discussion circles, the question was also presented at numerous professional-individual meetings with educators in Israel and abroad. The talks spanned an extended period, from July 2017 to March 2021; a fact that raised concerns about relevancy. Therefore, in the first months of 2021, I sent a request for a focused and concise written reply to the same question. The 23 emails I received (out of 50 I requested) are not enough. The only thing I can say is that these written responses did not show a deviation from the general impression of the hundreds of oral responses. It is important to emphasize that this is neither a statistical nor sociological study, but rather an aspiration to reveal authentic thoughts and ideas to be used in a didactic debate. The following paragraphs will reflect the spirit of the respondents through three starting points.

Respondents from Category A—an Educational Starting Point in Israel

The emotional-moral-social approach that prevailed among Israeli educators manifested itself in the expectation to cultivate a “sense of belonging,” “sense of unity,” “empathy,” and “caring.” Most teachers talked about the importance of “mutual respect between Israel and the Diaspora; the need to “define our responsibility to Diaspora Jewry;” “to strengthen mutual responsibility;” “to deepen the bond with our brothers and sisters overseas;” “to teach that we are one big family;” and so on. Occasionally Israeli educators referred to “local peoplehood” and suggested to “provide tools to bridge the secular-religious divide.” A significant part of the discussion was dedicated to Jewish knowledge. Teachers of the humanities frequently spoke about teaching how to “use the Jewish bookcase as a connecting link to the Jewish world;” or “design a joint project in Jewish history / literature / art / music.” Israeli educators reiterated the desire to collaborate with colleagues overseas and often complained about the hardships in finding a peer in the Diaspora. In this category, compared to categories B and C, there was a general sense of goodwill on the one hand and naivety on the other hand. The intensive use of the word “mission” (*shlichut*) could not hide the educator’s limited knowledge regarding the complexity of Israel-Diaspora relations and the forces operating the field of Jewish Peoplehood.

Respondents from Category B—an Educational Starting Point in the Diaspora

This category, like category A, also revealed a mixed conception. Both Latin American and European educators showed an emotional-national approach: “unite the people of Israel with love and care;” “strengthen a sense of belonging through connections with Israel;” etc. At the same time, Jewish educators in the U.S. identified more easily with a socio-emotional approach: “educate to reduce alienation;” “grow leadership that one can be proud of;” and “prepare a common collection of texts that would help us deal with controversial issues.” In general, educators in the Diaspora recommended behavioral intervention within the context of Jewish texts and values. Activist educators, mostly Americans, pointed out “social justice;” “commitment to social activism;” and “teaching *Tikkun Olam* regarding women / LGBT / refugees / and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” During 2020-2021, more educators in Europe and the United States referred to the expansion of anti-Semitism. Most of the statements on this subject included Israel: “We need to discuss the impact of Israel’s security on personal security of Jewish citizens in America;” “there is almost no difference between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism;” and “If you want to fight anti-Semitism and hate crimes, start teaching about global and local Jewish security.”

Consistent with certain parts in Pew report (2020),⁸ Jewish-American educators showed increasing influence of the Critical Race Theory.⁹ That is to say, placing anti-Semitism under the umbrella of multiculturalism and endorsement of neo-Marxist language.¹⁰ Typical examples were: “Explain the connection between *Tikkun Olam* and racial equity/ racial humility;” “Do not present denominations without trans-denominational/inter-sectoral Jews;” “Show Israel-Diaspora common social challenges, for instance Jews of Color.” A young teacher from Maryland even argued that my original question should be replaced with: “Are your peers reflecting universal-human diversity?” The discussions

8 About Jewish diversity, the Pew report presented an increase in the percentage of Jews identifying as non-white, to 8%, compared with 6% in 2013.

9 One example out of many reflecting CRT in the context of the Jewish world: Daniel Ian Rubin, *The Jewish Struggle in the 21st Century: Conflict, Positionality, and Multiculturalism* (The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2021), 26, 32, 40, 59, 63.

10 It is evident, among other things, in the compulsive division of society into “oppressors” and “oppressed”. One example out of many: Sean Walton, “Why the critical race theory concept of ‘White supremacy’ should not be dismissed by neo-Marxists: Lessons from contemporary Black radicalism”, *Power and Education*,” Vol. 12:1 (2020): 78-94.

Walton describes the notion of “White Supremacy” as a crucial part of the neo-Marxist approach to racism. On the one it excludes the white working class. On the other hand, it appeals a broader black audience.

in this category included both earlier paradigms—universalism, activism, and Jewish renewal—and the new paradigm: wokeness.

Respondents from Categories A and B

In both categories, most teachers believed that JP should not be a separate academic discipline. Almost all educators, presented objectives of literacy: “define a list of joint sources for learning;” “provide tools for the study of Jewish texts in various cultural contexts;” “educate for pluralism through the Jewish Bookcase;” “prepare texts that will help us to deal with controversial issues;” and so on. Another goal that emerged in the two categories expressed various aspects of cross-continental frameworks: “learn about the organizations and associations” or “learn to use bodies in the civil society.” Another aspect of the same goal was reflected in the aspiration “to build a joint framework for teachers from Israel and the Diaspora;” and “to form cross-continental communities of Jewish educators in different countries.” A concluding look at the broad picture reveals that both categories considered pedagogical needs, ethics, friendly interactions, and a clear tendency towards Jewish creativity.

Respondents from Category C—an Academic Starting Point

This category yielded the most direct and purposeful answers. The list of goals revolved around research skills, trends, views, basic concepts, and challenges. In doing so, they proposed a comparative study such as “a contemporary analysis of the meaning of peoplehood vis-à-vis common perceptions in Israeli Society” and examining “similarities and differences in the use of the term “Peoplehood” among different cultures.” Some of the ideas were based on the need to formulate an effective pedagogical method and assessment. Other ideas referred to specific content and advised with topics like “instrumental peoplehood;” “Jewish literacy and Zionist awareness.” All respondents in this category came from higher education institutions. Nevertheless, here too the rational approach did not stand on its own and was bound up with an emotional-socio-cultural perception. In many cases, the wording of generic academic goals articulated a need to “strengthen a pluralistic Jewish identity;” “understand that the Jewish dispersion is a soft force;” and “cultivate solidarity.” Interestingly, these proposals included practical training through volunteer work in communities and nonprofit organizations. The words of an Israeli professor, an expert on USSR Judaism, summed it up: “Jewish brotherhood cannot be practiced only on the students’ bench.”

The Main Values in Categories A, B, and C

The question about the goals of JP Studies opened the door to a rich set of ethics. The values that stood out were reciprocity, respect, responsibility, collaboration,

unity, and inclusion. Ethically, the main difference was not between educators and academics or even between Israelis and non-Israelis, but primarily between two types of respondents: progressive and conservative. The year 2020 brought a certain change as more American Jews reiterated lexical items expressing vigilance. The most common were “Jewish fairness;” “Jewish equity;” and “wokeness.” The conservative-traditional participants, by contrast, either religious or secular, focused on *Arvut Hadadit* and the “threefold cord” (*Kohelet*, 4:12) of *Torah, Am Israel and Eretz Israel*. In both cases, Judaic studies had a crucial place in the discussion about Jewish continuity. Noticeably, for progressive-oriented participants (who constituted a majority in category C) Judaic studies meant liberal study in the spirit of the Jewish Renewal Movement. Furthermore, Jewish “denominations” were still discussed, but with more complexities such as “trans-denominational;” “inter-sectoral \ multi-sectoral;” “multiracial” and other cross-identities items. The use of language revealed another difference: educators tended to support their views with traditional idioms like “*Kol Israel Arevim Ze Laze*;” “*Veahavta Lereacha Kamokha*” (love the other) etc. Whereas academics preferred more professional and meta-cognitive \ meta-analysis terminology. “Analyze the questions asked by JP practitioners” is one example. In conclusion, the wide spectrum of responses presented values in both social and scholarly spheres.

The Goals of JP Studies

This part of the article reflects a refined result of the question “What should be the goals of JP Studies”?

The answers collected, summarized, and edited were formulated in two main divisions. Such separation that imposes a somewhat artificial dichotomy, was done for practical reasons to initiate a didactic discussion.

A. Objectives of Study and Research

- Introduction to the contemporary Jewish world
 - Demography and differential characteristics
 - Identify and research trends, changes, and challenges.
 - Identify and research expressions of Jewish literacy.
- Exposure to peer research
 - Conceptual perspective (in social, Zionist, or cosmopolitan perception)
 - Comparative perspective (e.g., prevailing JP attitudes in Israel and the Diaspora)

- Disciplinary perspective (History, Education, Demography, Literature, Art, Law, Economics, and Politics)
- Practicing research tools in the context of JP.
 - Generic skills (e.g., fertile question, research map, academic writing)
 - Content-based skills (e.g., *Shakla Vetaria*—conflict-based learning, deciphering linguistic codes in the Jewish world)
- Clarification of basic concepts
 - By accepting their uniqueness and specific contribution
 - By comparing and contrasting them in different languages and contexts (e.g., Peoplehood and *Klal Israel*, Peoplehood and Zionism)
- Learning about the formation of JP as an idea
 - Sources, motives, accelerating and inhibiting factors.
 - Key chapters and key figures
- Assessment and evaluation in different areas
 - Academic: school and academia
 - Pedagogic context: formal and informal education
 - In the civil society: activities and influence of nonprofit organizations

B. Moral Objectives

- Formulation of Jewish-historical interactions as test cases of topical value.
- Ethical and Critical Examination of
 - JP approaches
 - Key JP paradigms:
 - Universalism
 - Jewish renewal
 - Activism
 - Wokeness
 - JP critics

- Cultivating a dynamic channel between academia and the educational field
- Experience live encounters with Jews of different backgrounds
- Endorsing moral thought through
 - Knowledge of various Jewish homes around the globe
 - Learning the sources of ancient and modern Jewish wisdom
 - Texting the uses of: JP education, JP economy, political JP

Key Assumptions in the JP Teaching-Learning Process

The following complicated assumptions must be taken into consideration prior to any JP teaching-Learning process.

1. Paradoxically, Judaism is an infinite reality, yet it has limits. Its boundaries stretch to the farthest place where the echoes of the “great lights” of Israel can be heard and seen. Thus, Jewish literacy is a key condition to robust Jewish consciousness.
2. The skill of *Shakla Vetaria*¹¹ is essential in preserving Jewish identity while fortifying the idea of *Klal-Israel*. Therefore, every JP teaching-learning program must facilitate significant dialogues between Jews from different backgrounds. In such encounters, one should strive for harmony on the one hand, and embrace the dissonance, on the other hand.

Morally, applying these assumptions in the context of a distinct identity endorses the freedom of choice. From the practical perspective, it requires frameworks that merge studying with connecting diverse Jewish spaces. The purpose of the following matrix is to visualize these ideas and provide scaffolds to designers of JP curriculum:

11 Originally a Jewish learning skill used in scholarly disputes. Aramaic: “give and take.”

	Networking while 1. testing boundaries 2. finding Tangents and collaboration	Jewish Literacy Through learning and researching
choice areas of life involved in the process, learning materials, exercises, and assignments.		
Professionality discretions, generic and Jewish didactics, rationale, goals/objectives, values, skills, knowledge, learning models, assessment.		

Conclusion

This article is mirroring a continuing discourse with Jewish educators, lecturers, and JP seekers at various scenes. Its main mission is to offer didactic ground lines for a discussion on JP scholarly frameworks.

Indeed, writing pedagogical programs and academic syllabi are two different things. Nevertheless, they belong to the same big picture and are interdependent. It is argued that the call for JP Education should be replaced with a call for JP Studies and research. The main reason is a threat of both indoctrination and populism that pertain to conflicting forces and divisive social-political trends in the Jewish world. One impressive result among others is the platform of JP. The name of a counter-revolution that stemmed from a Jewish-American life in the 20th century and is influenced by the neo-Marxist Woke Movement of the 21st century. While viewing Jewish reality in a broader perspective, it is advisable to restrain the desire to dictate JP perception of one school, even if it is the well-known "Kaplan School."¹² Can JP Studies support an alternative school to scale up JP outlook? And by doing so, will it elevate JP to the stage of *Klal Israel*? Time will tell.

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12 Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life* (NY: The Macmillan Company, 1934); Eugene Kohn, "The Reconstructionist Summer Conference," *The Reconstructionist* 8:11 (October 2, 1942): 16-20; Noam Pianko, *Jewish Peoplehood: An American Innovation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015).



Peoplehood Education – Three Rules of Thumb

Osnat Fox

“Every Jew is a letter in the Scroll. Each Jewish family is a word, every community a sentence, and the Jewish people at any one time are a paragraph. The Jewish people through time constitute a story, the strangest and most moving story in the annals of mankind.”

Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks, ‘Radical Then, Radical Now’

Jewish Peoplehood is a powerful word, it is potent in the opportunity it presents to us, in the essence of the centrality of people and as, Rabbi Sacks z”l so beautifully phrased, the opportunity for voice, agency and ownership of each of us to a communal, ever-continuing story. Yet, as the term peoplehood becomes common and, in some cases, even central in Jewish educational discourse, it is also very clear that it has come to mean so many different things to so many different people.

I am an educator, I believe in the power of education to connect, offer opportunities for identity exploration, create new ways of thinking and plainly, make our societies better. I also believe that while definitions are important, it is not up to us, educators, to provide the best, most focused definition but rather to encourage the use of tools that allow communities and individuals to create and re-create, imagine, give voice and engage with their own interpretations and those of others in an ever-growing process.

For the last seven years, through working in Israel and Colorado at Makom, AmiUnity, and Shlichut for the Jewish Agency for Israel, I have been fortunate to be involved with Jewish education across the global world. Through our work, I watched educators wrestle with concepts, find new meanings in ancient tradition and in decades long disputes and offer purpose that holds truth and inspiration to their constituencies.

Working with teachers, heads of schools, youth movements and organizational leadership, I am constantly blown away by the creativity, commitment, values, and insights of our Jewish and Israel educators. Gradually, some foundations have emerged

of what I believe can be “rules of thumb” of robust Jewish Peoplehood Education. In this piece I will try to illustrate the components I believe we need to thoughtfully engage with when planning and implementing Jewish Peoplehood Education. I will also illustrate the role and responsibility they hold for those of us engaged in fostering, organizing and building this field.

Let me start with a disclaimer, as hinted above, I am purposefully not committing to a specific definition of Jewish peoplehood. While I appreciate and enjoy engaging in conversations and deep reading in the wealth of knowledge about what is and what should be Jewish Peoplehood, as an educator, I am interested in exploring the normative aspects of the practice of education as it connects to these. Much like appreciating multiple ways to view Jewish life or diverse and conflicting notions of Zionism and engagement with Israel, so do solid foundations for Peoplehood Education depend on our ability to present normative, behavior-based foundations of how to do Jewish Peoplehood Education in disparate ways.

For our communal story to thrive, we need a wealth of knowledge and lived experience about what Jewish People means to different ideological perspectives, Jewish ways of life, political persuasions, and cultures. Coming together demands space for different and sometimes conflicting narratives to exist. To use Rabbi Sack’s metaphor quoted at the beginning, as educators, we are not the authors of the story, but it is our responsibility to guard that each letter, word and paragraph receives the opportunity to be created, voiced and receive the attention of our communal world so that our story, is formed in the most meaningful way possible.

In the following section I will point to three foundations we have come to base our education upon and explore some of their impact: creating real, in depth and personal understanding; building commitment; and fostering local Jewish culture enriched by global Jewry.

Understanding

In-depth understanding of, and familiarity with, the voices of world Jewry with all their variety, richness and complexities is critical. It is also hard. We are rooted in local perspectives that make it hard to understand each other’s stories and our wonderfully rich interpretations of how to “be” and “do” Jewish make different Jewish experiences and thoughts sometimes less accessible to us.

The component of creating understanding demands of us a few practices, I will name three that seem most critical. (1) **“Not About Us, Without Us:”** world Jewry are not only an object of study, but are, in fact, incredibly important subjects. That is, in order to

facilitate genuine understanding, there must be deep encounters and partnerships with Jews globally. *Mifgashim* of all sorts must be created and a working pedagogy of how to create authentic, meaningful and even transformative *mifgashim* is needed. (2) **Diversity both as a means and goal:** we need to integrate voices from various ethnic backgrounds, genders, affiliations, and views in order to offer a robust point of view and allow for authentic agency. I would argue that to best understand our situation and underlying Jewish structures of our time, for various reasons, efforts should be specifically allocated to a deepening familiarity with American and Israeli Jewry, and to the American-Israeli relationship in current years. At the same time, we should not be satisfied with examination that does not reach in meaningful ways beyond these two communities nor one that does not actively engage with the diversity of emerging voices from these large centers. (3) **Engaging with education that acknowledges the complexity of modern Jewish life:** at Makom, we believe in the importance of challenging educators with some of the most complex and painful problems facing the Jewish people today, while offering tools and models to engage with the range of emotional, cognitive, and practical aspects of them. Through our work with Israel educators, we create conversations about issues that we know to be difficult for Israelis to grasp and find empathy for. Using different methods and reflective sessions, we discuss lived experiences as a minority, multi-faith marriages, political issues, experiences of progressive Jews, Jews of color, intersection with Black Lives Matter and the influence of different attachments to Israel on relationships, Jewish identity, and community structure. Deepening the understanding and creating meaningful emotional openness to issues other communities are facing without judgment is core to our ability to form our story across diverse communities.

To achieve understanding, clarity and ideological honesty are key. We need educators to recognize points of personal struggle, recognize which voices are hard to accept as equal and why they appear threatening. We also need to better understand what allows us and our communities to push through, listen and engage specifically with these complex painful conversations to create a habit of discussion and listening- "for the sake of heaven," לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם.

Grasping our ever-changing human tapestry, having a handle on contemporary issues and a deepening familiarity with emerging themes over time requires constant learning. All of us in this field benefit from seeking out and maintaining relationships, reading, listening, and engaging deeply in conversations about issues other communities are dealing with. As an evolving field of practice, we must work to create platforms that will enable and encourage educators to meet, discuss, share wisdom, and maintain relationships.

Building Commitment

Understanding of the other is not enough, we need to foster a sense of connection and commitment to the Jewish People wherever they may be and a sense of responsibility that Israel will always be the national home for all Jews.

Our commitment to each other relies heavily on Jewish identity and a sense of Jewish belonging. **Speaking Jewish** in the way we educate requires encouraging literacy in Jewish thought, familiarity with formative texts as well as a nurturing a feeling of ownership and comfort in personal and communal Jewish identities. Education too often suffers from silos, yet today more and more of us are invested in creating bridges that connect Jewish learning, Israel and Zionist education to each other and to other core subject matters. We are invested in building bridges that foster local cultures and honor heritage and ethnicity while connecting to global Jewish peoplehood. These are at the core of understanding what commitment is and how it should be carried out. It is not an easy process, rather one that requires research, learning and educational creativity but with an impact that can be truly transformative for our societies.

To take this one step further, I also want to submit that Peoplehood Education should be oriented towards action. An **action-focused approach** pushes our constituencies to ask what is the responsibility of Israeli Jews to other Jewish communities, what is the responsibility of global communities to Israelis and to each other, and what shape this commitment must take in our organizations. It is not up to us to determine what form this commitment ought to take, only that it is done hand-in-hand with the first component- understanding. In simpler terms: we can help foster a commitment to People and to Peoplehood anchored in divergent ideological commitments, political persuasions and ways of Jewish lives if based on true understanding and appreciation of the other.

We need an education that fosters empathy and relationships even in times of harsh disagreements. Commitment to Israelis and all people of this land even when we find the state policy disturbing, commitment to hold space for differing forms of prayer even when they conflict with how we interpret the Jewish religion, and commitment to respect, while disagreeing, with people who are politically active in ways we feel are wrong or even potentially harmful. I believe that investing in an action orientated approach will not only enhance but also, significantly deepen the educational work we do and our ability to advance a vibrant and united Jewish future.

Fostering Local Jewish Culture that is Enriched through World Jewry

Being part of a global people invites opportunities for growth, inspiration, and learning through dialog that have transformative power. It is up to us to make sure our

constituencies realize this potential and can access it through multiple practices. The first being **creating opportunities to learn** about that with which educators are dealing with at a given point. For educators and leaders, we are finding that coming together to think, analyze and learn from solutions created for similar issues is priceless. Whether it is dealing with the emotional toll of pandemic, learning new ways of education through online platforms or creating an engaging Jewish education fit for non-religious organizations—there is so much we can, and should learn from one another.

Let me take this a step further, into the way we shape our Jewish lives and societies. Through engaging with the **Jewish trove of text and practice, spirituality, and knowledge** from diverse backgrounds, we allow for multiple points of entry into the Jewish People. Engaging in different Jewish spiritual experiences, listening to multiple rabbis, and engaging Jewishly with peers allows individuals to find a voice and agency in being a part of the Jewish collective in the most robust and personal ways. Examples for how local Jewish cultures benefitted from world Jewry are abundant—the incredible influence Jewish American feminists have had on multiple ways of understanding women’s place in prayer and ritual; inspiration from commitment of prominent Moroccan rabbinical leaders to inclusive and moderate Jewish thought; or even, recently in ways communities are approaching issues of diversity equality and inclusivity.

Lastly, for our educational practices, **cultural capital can and should be viewed as an asset**. Jewish culture from around the world allows us to dive deep into the experience and provides an important personal and emotional connection. Songs, storytelling, video clips, and live performance are critical tools in cultural enrichment should be used profoundly throughout our education.

In creating and re-creating our local stories we can and, I would argue, should lean on world Jewry as a source of dialogue and inspiration. Some elements we might want to adapt and translate into local understandings and some we will choose to stay away from, but the openness and search is nonetheless stimulating.

In conclusion, the ‘rules of thumb’ presented here are a beginning, an outline of a structure around which our Jewish Peoplehood Education is designed: promoting understanding, building commitment, and fostering local Jewish culture enriched by world Jewry have been helpful to us and I hope will help others. Referencing once again Rabbi Sacks, we are indeed a story with a People and for such, the role of educators is an especially critical and exciting one. I am sure that through continued educational dialog, such as found in these papers we can build and refine a field that will help meet the challenges of our time and create a connected, enriched, and dynamic Jewish world.

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A New Approach to Education and Peoplehood: Diversity as a Key to a Sustainable Model of Peoplehood

Keren E. Fraiman and Dean P. Bell

While Peoplehood and collective identity are often assumed to require and develop commonality and shared ideas, our teaching experiences have highlighted that within open dialogues that expose and explore diverse Jewish narratives and experiences, learners in fact deepen and enrich their connections to the Jewish People. We have found several benefits to an andragogy that emphasizes diversity as a path towards collective identification.

First, through engagement with diverse narratives, students can not only become familiar with the richness of the collective, but they come to learn that they can also have a place in that narrative, as they are, with their own perspectives and identities. The act of displacing the overarching “metanarrative,” which has often characterized Modernity, enables students to learn that a simple story is not representative of the authentic complexity of a people’s collective experience. Though useful in some ways, simple, monolithic stories can be fragile. They can become a foil for and a sanitized version of reality. This can have its dangers. Few collectivities (from families and schools to nations) are monolithic or uniform. Revealing complexity enables learners to sit with the discomfort of authentic imperfection and allows them to actively grapple with the diversity of history, life, and identity, and to find their place within it.

Second, by understanding that Judaism, Jewish society, and Jewish Peoplehood have always been complicated and multivalent, students come to embrace them and relate to them, especially given the postmodern emphasis on micro (as opposed to meta) and local (as opposed to global) narratives and the reality and possibilities of hybrid identities. Students also come to learn that many of the fundamental questions associated with discussions of Peoplehood transcend Modernity. The act of questioning itself becomes a profound form of belonging, especially as learners ask questions such as: What is our relationship to other religious or national communities? What are the boundaries of

communities? Who has authority within our communities? What is the relationship to other Jewish communities across geographic boundaries? What is our connection to Israel/the holy land? Students discover that these and many other questions have been debated over time. When learners contend with how past communities have framed, addressed, and responded to these questions, they can see themselves as a part of a long discussion that has been at the heart of the Jewish collective. What is more, they see that their own stories continue the essence of Peoplehood across time—hanging onto, learning from the relics of the past, while redefining them to incorporate them into new and ever-changing contexts. Though it may seem paradoxical, the realization that these are not new questions or debates can serve to inculcate a deep sense of belonging.

Finally, learners find that Jewish Peoplehood shorn of the diversity that has always been part of it is in fact not a sustainable endeavor. Instead, it is in the rich tradition of asking questions, and engaging with diverse narratives and ideas, that we can find and maintain connection. Perhaps such an inquiry-based approach to Peoplehood enables us to realize that it is not necessarily the content of our answers that connects us, but the approach of our questions. Questions, in Jewish tradition, represent the heart of what it means to belong, and questions create a space within the collectivity (not outside or at the boundaries) for this diversity. Creating the space for questions and diversity within our educational institutions actually means that the act of grappling is an essential component of belonging to the Jewish collectivity.

We both teach in an MA in Jewish Professional Studies (MAJPS) program, a program designed for working professionals in the Jewish community. In the MAJPS program Jewish communal professionals engage with a communal professional network while exploring the diversity of Jewish life. They combine theory and practice by developing a base of knowledge and a set of applicable professional skills. The program includes a range of Jewish Studies and Nonprofit Management/Leadership courses that engage with core themes and skills across these areas. The program also includes a specific course on Jewish Peoplehood that is focused on a serious discussion of Peoplehood as well as on how to apply Peoplehood concepts within the students' organizations and communities. That is, the program actively cultivates a sense of collective identity even as it complexifies the nature of that collectivity and the work that individuals do and the ways in which they participate in it.

Keren teaches a course on "The Role of Israel in Jewish Life" and Dean a course on "Jewish Studies for the Communal Professional." In both of our courses the concepts of Peoplehood and collective identity appear with regularity and in a wide range of ways. For example, among the sought learning outcomes in the course "The Role of Israel in Jewish Life," for example, are on one hand to interpret the relevance of Israel for Jewish

communal life today and on the other hand, to identify, engage, and interpret multiple narratives within Israeli society. These concepts impact the way that we think about and teach our subjects; our educational approaches and foci simultaneously offer new and exciting ways to think about Peoplehood and collective identity.

“The Role of Israel” is not a history course, however, and so the typical approaches regnant in some history teaching are different from the approach in this course. For example, Keith Barton and Linda Levstik articulate four “stances” in their work *Teaching History for the Common Good*.¹ The first stance in learning history, they argue, is to *identify*—“to embrace the connections between themselves and the people and events of the past.” The approach in the “Role of Israel” is different. “The Role of Israel,” in this case is not temporally bound. Collective identity is not only connected to past “tradition;” it is constantly reformulated and it engages with a wider range of constituents and narratives than are typically considered. The course also explores future collective identities, and so forces students to think about Peoplehood in ever shifting ways, a stance that is particularly helpful given the acceleration of globalization and the constant reformulations between Jews and non-Jews and Israel and the Diaspora.

The second stance presented by Barton and Levstik is *analysis*, which they describe as the process to “establish causal linkages in history.” “The Role of Israel,” however, problematizes the linkages of history, recognizing and asking students to encounter a diversity of narratives and perspectives—in ways that some of the New Historians in Israel have done, but also within a larger global context as well. That is, the course seeks for students to understand the concept and role of Israel in broader Jewish collectivity even as they are asked to dissect and interrogate that role and see multiple voices, perspectives, and considerations. In part, the goal is for students to be able to apply the skill of identifying and interpreting multiple narratives in other professional and academic contexts and develop critical reading and thinking skills, including evaluation, analysis, problem solving, contextualizing, perceiving and noting differentiation, and critique. Students leave the course knowing that there are multiple narratives about Israel, about Jewish history, and about Jewish collective identity. They develop the skills to understand how those narratives were formed, how they are maintained, and importantly how they must be taken together with other competing narratives.

On one hand, education of this sort seems to challenge the conventional notion of buttressing collective identity with shared narratives and values. And yet, on the other, we maintain that no one narrative is sufficient and that pretending that it is often

1 Keith Barton and Linda Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good* (London: Routledge, 2004).

works to alienate individuals rather than to engage and build collective identity. Like the proverbial rope with many strands, complex and diverse narratives help build stronger connections than single stranded narratives that come apart and break under pressure. We contend that grappling with and understanding conflict (including differences of experiences, assumptions, and perspectives) is far more powerful and helps to build collective identities that can survive over time. “The Role of Israel” therefore asks students to encounter other perspectives, narratives, and identities—through cultural artifacts such as poems, music, TV shows, and other media—and to ask critical questions of all traditions and assumptions. We have found that students leave the course with a stronger collective identity precisely because they have been taught how to question metanarratives and simple stories and that they are able to see both the value and the challenges in the identities that emerge from them. Through the investigation of multiple narratives offered in the course, learners can anchor their own narratives and experiences within a much more complex story of Israel, and its relationship to diaspora Jews and Jewish collectivity. This connection is often layered, contradictory, and challenging—but this exploration demands that students ask challenging questions and find themselves in the collective story. Being part of any long-lasting collective requires an opt-in that is based on the realities and complexities as they are and a commitment that extends beyond the challenges that may persist.

With Paulo Freire, who in his famous book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,² we decry the “banking” (mythologizing) method of education, in which teachers deposit knowledge into students (depositories), who they believe know nothing. Such an approach to knowledge (and education)—aside from being stultifying—creates manageable people who are less inclined to develop critical consciousness.³ For Freire, this is an education of “oppression.” A “liberating” education (demythologizing), by contrast, is related to acts of cognition, intentionality, and problem-posing.⁴ A liberating education understands that there is a two-way engagement between teacher and student and it seeks to unveil reality and emerge, not submerge consciousness.⁵ Jewish scholars who in the past rejected the idea that (Jewish) education could create (Jewish) identity, did so out of the belief that traditional education was about mastery of content and texts, but as

2 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (30th anniversary edition, New York: Continuum, 2000).

3 *Ibid.*, 72-3.

4 *Ibid.*, 79.

5 *Ibid.*, 81.

such did not help with identity formation.⁶ We agree. That is precisely why we believe that the approach we have outlined above holds out so much promise.

Shlomo Sand, in *The Invention of the Jewish People*, has noted that:

Over and above all these components is the fact that the historian, like other members of society, accumulates layers of collective memory well before becoming a researcher. Each of us has assimilated multiple narratives shaped by past ideological struggles. History lessons, civics classes, the educational system, national holidays, memorial days and anniversaries, state ceremonies—various spheres of memory coalesce into an imagined universe representing the past, and it coalesces well before a person has acquired the tools for thinking critically...⁷

As Sand provocatively unpacks it, national myths are constructed and selective, providing a narrative that serves certain purposes, regardless of the elements included or left behind. In the context of the people of Israel, he asserts that, “When occasional findings threatened the picture of an unbroken, linear Jewish history, they were rarely cited; when they did surface, they were quickly forgotten, buried in oblivion.”⁸

At the individual level, identity is formed through various phases of life, as the behavioral psychologists have taught us. But identity is also a collective endeavor, forged through larger communal and societal experiences, needs, and strategies. Peoplehood and collective identity are part of this story. The challenge of national myths, which are always in some ways fragile, is that upon discovery of their one-sidedness there can at times be a sense of betrayal, a skepticism towards the broader enterprise, and a difficulty in seeing oneself as a part of the broader collective. While not universal, these conditions threaten and create challenges in the collective.

Shorn of nationality and national myths, however, Peoplehood can have a range of other connection points, notably in religion, culture, and politics. The other course we teach in the MA in Jewish Professional Studies program, which engages with these issues, is “Jewish Studies for the Communal Professional.” This course is intended to provide a broad overview of Jewish history and give students a common language and academic foundation. But the course is hardly a straight-forward tour of the Jewish past.

6 See Ari Y. Kelman, “Identity and Crisis: The Origins of Identity as an Educational Outcome,” in *Beyond Jewish Identity; Rethinking Concepts and Imagining Alternatives*, ed. Jon A. Levisohn and Ari Y. Kelman (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2019), 65-83, here at 66.

7 Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People* (London: Verso, 2009), 14.

8 *Ibid.*, 18.

Each historical period is punctuated with case studies of contemporary issues that allow, indeed require, students to draw lessons from historical discussions and apply them to contemporary issues in order to contextualize the problems, analyze the concerns, and explore a range of possible approaches and solutions. Much as in “The Role of Israel” course, in the “Jewish Studies” course, students often begin with strong preconceived notions of Jewish connection and homogeneity (especially in the pre-modern period). Each session, however opens them to a range of diversity they hardly expected and a complex and nuanced set of Jewries and Judaisms that simultaneously challenge their inherited wisdom and knowledge and allow them to connect much more deeply to the ever shifting notion of Jewishness they encounter.

As a “history” course, “Jewish Studies examines both directly and obliquely how we remember and how we construct and analyze memories of the past, broadly defined. Memory has often been seen as central to Judaism and to creating a sense of Jewish connection and Jewish collective identity. Modern studies of memory and history have profitably explored the connections between the past (however understood) and contemporary identity. In what has become a classic study, first published in English in 1950, the French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (who died in Buchenwald in 1945), for example, argued that there is an important distinction between memory and history—and so, we might add between individual and collective memories and connections. “General history,” Halbwachs argued, “starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up. So long as a remembrance continues to exist, it is useless to set it down in writing or otherwise fix it in memory. Likewise the need to write the history of a period, a society, or even a person is only aroused when the subject is already too distant in the past to allow for the testimony of those who preserve some remembrance of it.”⁹ History, in this interpretation, is written at points of social disintegration, whereas memory is continuous and ongoing. According to Halbwachs, our memory of the past is comprised of two kinds of elements: those from a common domain (a social or external memory) and those remembrances that are ours alone (personal and internal memory).

This dichotomy is not so simple, however, for while individuals remember within a broader social context, their memories may also vary based on their own experiences and orientations. In this assessment, there is a common memory base that is tapped into, processed, and experienced differently by different individuals within unique and varying contexts. Individual and communal memory, therefore, exist in a complex and

9 Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York, 1980 (English orig., 1950)), 78-79.

multidirectional relationship, in which individual memory simultaneously is affected by and contributes to collective memory. The French scholar Pierre Nora explicates that, “Memory wells up from groups that it welds together, which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs observed, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple yet specific; collective and plural yet individual. By contrast, history belongs to everyone and to no one and therefore has a universal vocation.”¹⁰

Of course, recent historiography has noted that history is no more objective or innocent than memory, especially within the context of national and collective identity formation. Students in the “Jewish Studies” course, therefore, are confronted with the collective narratives of historical (sometimes revisionist historical) accounts but asked to place them into conversation with their own experiences and considerations. As such, we intentionally decrease the distance between memory and history, simultaneously challenging and enhancing the possibility of learners developing a collective identity, which is at once (and regardless) more nuanced and diverse and yet relevant and connected. Students learn that many of the key questions that they have and challenges that they face—such as the structure of community, the nature of authority, the relationship to other Jews and other non-Jews—have been present throughout Jewish history, even if the specific contexts have differed. How our communities are structured and bounded, for example, have been questions that Jews have confronted throughout history. They have responded based on internal Jewish discussions as well external influences and conditions. While we once believed that Modernity opened a previously and generally hermetically sealed Jewish society, Jewish history reveals complex, nuanced, and often quite substantial interactions between Jews and non-Jews. At the same time, the notion that pre-modern Jews were uniform in what they believed and how they behaved has given way to an emphasis on significant diversity within and across Jewish societies.

These courses on “The Role of Israel” and “Jewish Studies” are naturally part of a larger curriculum and should be situated in that context. At the same time, they engage with theories of adult learning in a deep way. Adults bring experiences and formed perspectives to bear on new learning and experiences. It can be difficult to get them to reconsider what they already believe or believe they know—which is precisely why education that is integrated, experiential (including with emotional components), relevant, and applicable can be the most transformative. In the context of adult Jewish learning, it has been argued that identity is formed in several ways. These

10 See *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, under the direction of Pierre Nora, 3 vols., trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York, 1996-98 (orig., 1984-1992), 3.

include ongoing experiences and reflection; conversation and engagement with others; construction of personal narratives; and engaging in a diversity of learning opportunities and experiences.¹¹

The kind of education that we have been describing challenges our adult students to rethink what they know and to examine other perspectives and data sources. On the surface, it may seem that such an approach runs the risk of challenging learners' notion of belonging, or their connection to the Jewish people. However, our experiences reveal the opposite. While it was once assumed that the best way to inculcate a sense of Peoplehood and collective identity was through consistent and monolithic metanarratives—the modern approach—we have come to learn that destabilizing assumptions, presenting multiple and diverse narratives, revealing complexity and hybridity, and introducing Others and Otherness—what we might term the postmodern approach—, lead to richer and deeper learning and, at the same time, hold the key for developing notions of Peoplehood that transcend the kind of changeable realities of identity reflected in things such as nationhood, religion, and even gastronomy. When we find, understand, and engage with diversity and diverse narratives and experiences across space and time, as we do in our courses, learners see their own debates (internal and communal) and questions and in the end they also see themselves as part of a long and connected history and collectivity. Education and Peoplehood, therefore, go together, and they are both most effective and enduring when they are allowed full reign to help people grow, question, explore, and through it all, connect.

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11 See Diane Tickton Schuster, *Jewish Lives, Jewish Learning: Adult Jewish Learning in Theory and Practice* (New York: UAH Press, 2003), 79.

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Re-envisioning Peoplehood Education for Generation Z

Jodie Goldberg

As Jews, the history, stories and traditions of our past serve as the foundation of our Jewish lives in the present. We eat two challot on Friday nights to remember the double portion of manna that fell from heaven when the Jews were wandering through the desert. We break a glass at Jewish Weddings to remember two destructive events in our history, the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. This frame of reference is also critical to how we traditionally teach a sense of peoplehood. Many of the methodologies and pedagogies we use are aimed at creating intentional links with the past in order to foster a sense of Jewish collective consciousness. Teen trips to Israel and Poland center around visiting and interacting with ancient sites in order to develop a connection with the Jewish people. Exploring ancient canonical texts puts learners in dialogue with Jewish authors of our past in order to foster a connection to the Jewish tradition. Even pedagogies like *mifgash*, which focus on encounters with other Jews who are from different countries, speak different languages, or represent different denominations of Judaism, are often simplified to examining a tradition, text or ritual to unpack how we understand it in the present. **While the past significantly aids to our understanding of ourselves as a people in the present, *what happens when the past doesn't align with how a new generation understands and connects with the world? If we want to create meaningful Jewish Peoplehood Education for Generation Z, we must create experiences that align with their universalist identities and give them a voice to articulate a vision for the Jewish future.***

Understanding Generation Z's Orientation Towards the World

Generation Z, born between 1997- 2012,¹ is a generation with a unique identity and orientation to the world. Generation Z is the first generation of digital natives; 95% of Generation Z have access to a smartphone.² It is the most racially and ethnically

1 <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>

2 <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/>

diverse generation; 48% identify as a racial or ethnic minority.³ However, Generation Z's most defining feature is their universalist identity. Members of Generation Z strive to support ideas, policies and causes that benefit all people throughout the world. This global orientation is the dominating lens through which they view the world. Some of today's most influential climate change activists like Greta Thurnburg, gun rights activists like Emma Gonzalez and students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, and women's right activists like Malala Yousafazi represent Generation Z. Examples are not limited to global figures. Jewish teens like Jamie Margolin dedicate time fighting for climate justice.⁴ Moreover, events of the last year amplified Generation Z's commitment to being a part of the global narrative as teens were on the front lines advocating for racial equality in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, global warming in the midst wildfires and deadly climate crises, and healthcare equality as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

While members of Generation Z change the world through their passion for global change and commitment to activism, their worldview contradicts with the normative identities held by prior generations, which defaulted to the orientation of Jewish communities first. One example was the Tree of Life shooting in Pittsburgh, in which 11 Jews were brutally murdered during Shabbat morning services. In my role as a Teen Engagement Consultant, aimed at providing professional development for teen professionals, a colleague and I held a session for teen professionals to process how they were coping with the shooting. One teen professional wasn't just processing the shooting, but was processing her teens' response as one teen asked her *"why are we only processing the Tree of Life shooting, when three days earlier two African American men were shot and killed at a Kroger? Why aren't we creating space to process what happened to these two men?"* On paper, this educator understood the ideological differences between herself as the educator and the teen in her youth program. However, she realized she was grappling with the complexities and tensions of these differences for the very first time. This processing session quickly shifted from a space to process a mass shooting to a place to process Generation Z's universalist identity and understanding of themselves.

What does it mean to be part of a unique people when a person sees themselves first and foremost as a citizen of the world? Is there place and space for teens to feel both part of the Jewish collective and the global collective? I believe there

3 <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/11/15/early-benchmarks-show-post-millennials-on-track-to-be-most-diverse-best-educated-generation-yet/>

4 <https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/10/11/20904791/young-climate-activists-of-color>

is room for both, but it means we must fundamentally re-envision Peoplehood Education for Generation Z to account for how Gen Z understands the world.

There are two defining characteristics that are embedded within Gen Z's universalism. First, members of Generation Z are used to controlling their learning. Not only do they have around the clock smartphone access, but they exhibit a deep desire to take control of their learning as they are on the front lines leading global change movements. How do we introduce a pedagogy for teaching Jewish peoplehood that gives teens voice and choice by co-creating the learning process?

Second, Generation Z is consumed with building a better future. They strive deeply to construct a better future for everyone through organizing, researching, and advocating for causes they believe in. *Peoplehood Education creates intentional pathways that link us to Jews' past, present, and future. We must structure Peoplehood Education for Generation Z in a way that doesn't just link them to Judaism of the past and Judaism of the present but gives them a voice to articulate what will become of Judaism in the future.*

The paradox might be that Jewish Generation Z, who are universalists by nature, are very proud of their Jewishness.⁵ The challenge for them is that we, as Jewish educators, might not have supplied them with enough tools to grapple with this paradox. Therefore, I propose a pedagogy that both honors their Jewish universalism and emboldens their Jewishness, while addressing the whole individual rather than sending Jewish teens the mixed message that Jewish education is just for their Jewish selves and not their whole being.

Pedagogy of Empowerment: Introducing Project Based Learning as a Pedagogy for Peoplehood Education for Generation Z

John Dewey was a 20th-century American educational theorist and philosopher, most known as the founder of progressive education. Dewey believed in a learner centered educational model where learners learn best by doing. Additionally, Dewey believed that all learning should not be limited to the classroom; it should have real world application.⁶

Project based learning (PBL) builds on Dewey's progressive educational model. PBL is a learner centered pedagogy that enables learners to gain knowledge and skills by

5 https://www.jewishedproject.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/TJEP%20GenZNow%20Jewish%20Teen%20Research%20Report%20%28single_pages%29.pdf

6 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20332263>

working to investigate and respond to a complex problem or challenge.⁷ A PBL approach invites learners to respond to a problem or challenge by framing the learning with a central question and provides learners with voice and choice to create meaning for themselves based on their understanding of the world. If we want Generation Z to have a stake in creating the Jewish future, we must implement a pedagogy in which they use their voice and perspective to solve real world problems.

Implementing PBL Pedagogy: Applying the Principles Behind PBL as a Pedagogy for Peoplehood Education for Generation Z

Generation Z wants the tools, skills and knowledge to re-imagine the future. How can we use the principles behind PBL as the vehicle for Generation Z to vision and articulate the Jewish future? Every PBL environment begins with a central question to be explored throughout the session. A central question could be, “how can we, as members of Generation Z, uncover different visions for the future of our world, and the Jewish future, by examining our past?”

Instead of having a singular learning experience, for example, with a group of Jewish teens from France and a group of Jewish teens from New York City, learners would engage in a multi-dimensional project “slice” that models the key aspects of a PBL experience within a shortened time frame.⁸ Each group would be composed of four people, two people from each country in order to experience, synthesize, unpack, and showcase the learning. The model would include a short, engaging activity to outline and grapple with the central question, opportunity for participants to create a real-world solution to the question based on their understanding of the material, reflect on the process, and present their projects in a final showcase.

After a short, engaging activity to launch the central question, learners would have their choice of three different zones to visit—visual, verbal or auditory mediums-- to grapple with the central question.

In zone one, teens would draw connections between Jews fighting for particular and universal causes in the past and link themselves as part of a shared Jewish narrative as they vision towards the future. Zone one would appeal to visual learners by exploring images of Jews throughout history who have used their voices to fight for the rights of other Jews. Some examples might include images of American Jews protesting for the rights of Soviet Refuseniks or Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel

7 <https://www.pblworks.org/what-is-pbl>

8 <https://www.pblworks.org/services/project-slice>

marching together in Selma, Alabama in 1965 to end segregation, etc. Each group would choose one image that resonates with them, research the event, and explore questions that interest them. Each group would create an artifact, in whichever medium they choose (mediums might include a Tik Tok⁹ video, a short “audio-only” podcast, or a physical poster), which explains the event they researched and outlines how they would use the methods of protest to fight for causes they believe in, in the present.

In zone two, learners would articulate issues that matter to them and use Jewish sources to help them vision towards a brighter future for all people. Zone two would appeal to verbal learners, as this zone would prompt group members to share their point of view on issues, whether on poverty, racial inequality, immigration reform, etc. Each group would be given a source sheet of ancient Jewish sources and be prompted to choose one source that can serve as the foundation toward tackling the issue at hand. The group would choose one example of the four outlined, and create an artifact (Tik Tok, audio-only Podcast, physical poster, etc.) that showcases how the text has helped them understand the issue they articulated and applies to their lives as teens today.

In zone three, learners would vision toward a global Jewish future for all people. This zone would appeal to auditory learners as each one would be given different versions of a Jewish song that articulates a vision for the future. An example might be the song *Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu*, a song which says that “peace will be upon us.” Each group would listen to different versions of the song and translation, and reflect on the idea of peace exploring questions like; How do I understand peace? What will it take for there to be “peace on earth?” What will it take for there to be peace within the Jewish community? How might I apply some of these principles to my life as a teen? Each group would create an artifact (Tik Tok, audio-only podcast, physical poster, etc.) to articulate the visions for peace which they outlined throughout the activity.

After engaging in each zone, learners would engage in a guided reflection to unpack their experiences together. Learners would then create a showcase for Jewish communal leaders that displays the TIK TOK videos, mini podcasts, posters, etc. that highlight their visions for a Jewish future. During the showcase, learners would stand by their project and articulate how it represents their vision for a Jewish future. This exercise would allow members of Generation Z from both countries to articulate their visions based on stories, histories and traditions of our past, and give those who attend the showcase an understanding of how Generation Z sees themselves as part of the Jewish people.

9 <https://slate.com/technology/2018/09/tiktok-app-musically-guide.html>

Conclusion

As a teenager, I experienced my first Jewish “Peoplehood” moment as my bat mitzvah took place the weekend after Hurricane Katrina decimated the city of New Orleans. In just three days, my entire family created a bat mitzvah for me near my extended family, in Cincinnati, ranging from a place to lead the service to a party with 300 of my closest family members. My understanding of Peoplehood was formed by a world event. I SAW and FELT what it meant to be part of the Jewish People by the actions directed toward me during an emergency. While this moment was powerful for me, as I understood that I was part of a larger narrative, canon, and community with shared traditions, we can no longer rely on external factors to deliver Peoplehood Education to our next generation. For generations, we relied on the idea that Peoplehood Education happened to us as opposed to proposing an educational orientation that helps connect this generation to a larger people. If we want to create successful Peoplehood Education for our next generation, we must engage teens’ hearts. We must craft a pedagogical approach to Peoplehood Education based on how they understand the world. We must take the histories, stories and traditions of our past, and use them as a foundation for Generation Z to help us re-envision and articulate a Jewish future. The project-based learning pedagogy outlined above offers space for Generation Z to have their voices heard. Success will only occur if the learner is inspired to create their own relationship with the experience. It’s up to us, as educators, to prioritize this method in order to build a brighter future for generations to come.

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Jewish Peoplehood – A Bridge in Time and Space

Daniel Goldman and Shira Sherez-Zik

Jewish Peoplehood is an elusive term that, to be honest, hasn't taken hold inside the borders of the State of Israel. The average person on the street probably cannot answer the question—"What is Jewish peoplehood?" Additionally, even those involved with Israel-Diaspora relations professionally don't always define the term the same way. Over the past few years, the Geshet Leadership Institute has made concentrated efforts to make the term "Jewish Peoplehood" known to Israelis in senior positions in various circles of influence and various communities.

Our perception of the term Peoplehood begins with the realization that being part of a People isn't merely a "club membership." We all participate in a range of activities and businesses and often hold many affiliations, but that is nothing like being part of your People. Being part of a People demands a profound sense of belonging to that People.

A critical consideration is that the sense of belonging refers to all parts of the Jewish People. Jewish Peoplehood cannot reject some parts of the People, and despite the many differences within the Jewish People, or different tribes as some might say, all of them belong to the People of Israel understood in its entirety. This issue is one of the fundamental disputes about Peoplehood in the Israeli public arena, especially in the context of relations with the liberal Jewish movements in the Diaspora – namely, recognition of them, their rights in Israel and other disputed subjects. The dispute itself raises doubts about the ability to promote the term Jewish Peoplehood, since this issue is highly controversial for various parts of Israeli society (mainly the more conservative and religious).

An additional consideration is that the term Peoplehood transcends the limits of space and time; the sense of belonging isn't to my fellow Jews who happen to live close to me, but the whole dispersion of Jews all over the globe. In a similar way, the sense of belonging is also to our historical patriarchs and matriarchs as well as to the Jews of future generations, our great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren.

One could ask: “How can such feelings of belonging to the People be nourished? How can we upgrade from ‘club membership’ to a profound sense of belonging? And how can we go beyond the limits of space and time strengthening the connection between Israelis and Jews all over the world? And in addition, why is dealing with Jewish Peoplehood important for Israeli society and how can we go about raising awareness of it and its benefits?”

The pedagogical process we propose and implement in our program is based on several principles:

- A. A diverse group: The medium is the message. If Peoplehood is the sense of belonging to all parts of the People, each of our groups will always include diverse communities (secular, religious and Haredi, male and female, center and periphery, etc.) in order to facilitate encounters that connect people of different backgrounds and to enrich the dialogue.
- B. High profile participants: The program’s target audience is Israeli decision makers and public opinion leaders in diverse fields (government, media, education, defense, academia, business, culture, etc.) The thought behind this is that opinion leaders at key nexuses of influence can become ambassadors of the subject of Peoplehood within Israeli society.
- C. Knowledge and experience: The program’s components combine knowledge, encounter experiences, and group dynamics; a body of knowledge is the foundation of the program, starting with data, through a historical overview that puts Peoplehood on a timeline, and ending with the definition of key terms. The experience and human encounter component is critical towards inculcating among Israelis an emotional effect of empathy and familiarity towards Jews of the Diaspora. For this reason, the program includes a delegation visit to a Jewish community in the Diaspora. The visit is an intense climax of the program and includes becoming deeply acquainted with community life and key and diverse figures in the community. The program is supported by professional facilitation that leverages group dynamics for profound discussions on the subjects learned.
- D. Measurement and assessment: All our programs are evaluated for outcomes. Several measurements relate directly to the subject of Peoplehood, for example the participants are asked before and after the program about their level of identification with the Jewish People, or their level of closeness and commitment to Jews in the Diaspora. There is a significant increase in responses to both of these questions after the program. For some of the participants, exposure to the topic is

a real revelation, or as one of the participants in the program's assessment reported that, *"For me, dealing with Peoplehood raised my awareness of a subject that was completely dormant for me."*

- E. Experience to action: The main pedagogy that guides us is the switch from "experience to action." We encourage the participants to translate the defining experience they had in the program to action in their immediate circles of influence. For this reason, the program includes practical tools for leading projects and brainstorming together about what each participant can do practically. One of the participants in the assessment summarized: *"It was riveting! Interesting. An experience. Intense. Revealing. Challenging and ... we've got to do something!"* A current example of alumni action is a senior figure in the State religious education system who created an educational program for 5th and 6th grade students nationwide that will deal with Peoplehood and Diaspora Jewry. This topic has had almost no presence in the State religious system until now, and for this reason, the initiative is a genuine innovation. Another example is of a television producer who produced a studio program about Peoplehood that aired on Channel 12—Keshet and was viewed by 350,000 people, in addition to numerous viewers on social media. These examples, and others, illustrate how Jewish Peoplehood Education can lead to broad and substantial action in the field, connecting more and more Israelis to the topic and developing into a real movement. We measure and assess the impact of the program and its impact and can report that in 2020, we managed to expose more than 2,000,000 people to the ideas of Jewish Peoplehood and the Jewish Diaspora through the work of our program alumni, who bring their knowledge and insights into many aspects of their professional lives.

The Gesher pedagogy is based on a paradigm founded on partnership and mutuality in Israeli-Diaspora relations.

In the past the paradigm of Israeli-Diaspora relations was based on their combined efforts to build the State of Israel. At the foundation of this partnership stood the Diaspora community and leadership, with their arms outstretched to their brothers in Israel, investing their money and political capital to help them build the nation. Their philanthropy was invested in capital and other foundational projects upon which the nascent State was based, and the diplomatic and political efforts were used to promote the new State in capitals all over the world. This situation predated Israeli independence and has remained the cornerstone of the relationship for much of the period of Israel's existence as an independent state. This partnership has weakened as the nation set roots and prospered. There are many reasons for this weakening, connected to trends in both Israel and the Diaspora.

The Jewish People is in need of a new paradigm, in which partnership and mutuality are leading values: The State of Israel will aid Diaspora Jewry in its challenges, and Diaspora Jewry will be involved in the affairs of Israel while advancing its interests. But not only “interests” are of importance; the principles of Jewish Peoplehood guide us to relations based on partnership and shared destiny, not simply practice or even mundane and common interests alone. These larger interests are not dependent upon specific place, time, or political realities. Of course, Jewish Peoplehood doesn’t do away with the need for sometimes difficult discussions of fundamental issues. But once the partnership is independent of merely current and pragmatic interests, the dialogue can be deeper and more honest, and maybe even raise the concept of shared destiny to a shared purpose.

The paradigm of mutuality will express the status of the two as strategic assets of one another. The mutuality is also expressed in mutual learning of models for Jewish education and building of Jewish communities. We can enrich one another. Jewish Peoplehood guides us to mutual aid and solidarity, and to the understanding that past and present challenges, successes and failures exist in Israel and the Diaspora and can serve as inspiration for the future in both.

The pedagogical process we have developed creates mutual learning between Israelis and Diaspora Jews and empowers the mutuality and partnership paradigm. The visit in the Diaspora Jewish community enables learning about existing models in the Diaspora and the embracing of them in Israel and vice-versa. For example, one of the delegations visited a Jewish-American Camp and was exposed to this unique educational model. As a result, we at the “Geshet” organization adopted the model and will be operating a religious-secular summer camp in Israel this year based on the educational model developed in the U.S.A.

Another fundamental point that should be emphasized is that the mutuality paradigm widens and deepens Israelis’ identity. Israeli identity is restricted today to the history of Zionism and the nation’s borders. With the deepening of Peoplehood, it will include the 3,000 years of history as well, and the experience of Jewish communities all over the world. It is interesting to see that for Israelis, the encounter with Diaspora Jewry creates a renewed connection to Judaism and widens their understanding of their own place in Jewish history and Jewish geographies. It deepens their Israeli identity, adding depth and color. The encounter with Diaspora Jewry actually opens a window for many participants to the rich Jewish culture that they aren’t always exposed to in Israel. Or as one of the secular participants put it, “I left Israeli, and returned Jewish.”

The encounter with other Jews, from another continent, automatically leads to looking at what is held in common, including: culture, history, language, religion, heritage. Any Jew who will take a close look at some of these things in common will probably find some connection to a different Jew whom they meet somewhere else in the world. This requires all of us to look at what we hold in common and educate about it—a life mission not limited by age.

At this point, we ask the question, “Can a ‘*Shulhan Aruch*’ of practical *Mitzvot* of Jewish Peoplehood be created?” We believe that every Jew should definitely take action in promoting Jewish Peoplehood, but we should not decide what these actions should be. Every individual will decide how they connect to the Jewish People and Diaspora Jewry. So, it could be said that we are describing an “Open *Shulhan Aruch*.” We can educate about the importance of doing *Mitzvot* or actions in this field but will never tell people what their *Mitzvot* should be. Our educational task is the “Call to Action” and inspiring others to write their own script.

Building and strengthening Jewish Peoplehood is critical for the Jewish People. It isn’t too late to rebuild the bridge between Israelis and Diaspora Jewry through the realization that we are one People, one family, with a diverse but common culture. This option is far better than the alternative of a collection of dispersed and colliding communities.

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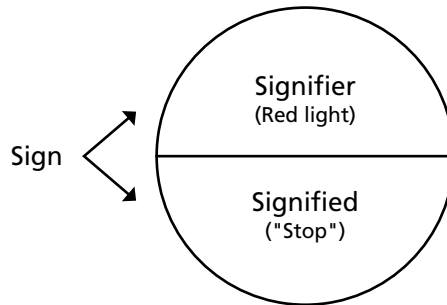


Signifying Meanings: What Semiotics Can Teach Us About Peoplehood and Peoplehood Education

Clare Goldwater and Shuki Taylor

The need for Peoplehood Education has never been greater. The urgency of helping young Jews develop their own sense of belonging and commitment to the Jewish People, thus building a collective consciousness, is real. It is apparent in the growing polarizations of identity and commitment identified in the Pew Study of 2020, the ongoing difficulty of engaging in meaningful debate about Israel, and the continuing alienation of young liberal Jews from traditional institutions. There is no doubt that strengthening feelings and behaviors based on shared fate and destiny as a People could temper, or even reverse, some of these disturbing trends. Nor is there a shortage of committed educators who would sign on to such an enterprise. Why, then, do we find that Peoplehood Education as a field is so underdeveloped and under-discussed? Why do we not see new and innovative curricula in this area? And what explains why “Peoplehood Education” has not become its own field — just as “Israel education” or “Tanach education” exist — with dedicated practitioners, theory and resources?

We would like to suggest some answers to these questions, drawn from a framework that has enriched our approach to experiential Jewish education. We believe this framework serves to problematize and challenge Peoplehood Education while also hopefully providing some directions for future growth. The framework that has inspired us is based on the semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure. Originating in the 1920s in the development of modern linguistics, de Saussure theorized about meaning — what it is and how it is made. His central claim, expanded and developed by critical theorists and many others since, is that signs convey meaning, and every sign consists of two inter-related components: the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the concrete form that the sign takes, and the signified is the meaning that is associated with that form or image.



The simplest example of this is a traffic light, a familiar sign that conveys meaning about when to stop and when to go. The red light is the signifier; the signified meaning is “Stop.” Another example of a sign is any written word. Thus, the word “cat” serves as a signifier for a small, four-legged feline animal that makes a “meow” sound. Signs, however, are often far more complex than these two examples, and this construct helps us to understand how they work, even when this is the case.

For example, in the context of Jewish education, we could point to a tzedakah box as a concrete sign; a signifier of meaning that can carry multiple meanings, or signifieds. At its most basic level, it signifies a repository for collecting charitable donations for the needy. More deeply, it signifies a Jewish expression of mutual responsibility and community caring. And the implicit meanings do not end there. The specific location of a tzedakah box — outside a synagogue, for instance, or inside a private home — also conveys meaning. Is the giving of donations a public communal act (located outside for anyone to contribute to) or a personal, family-focused commitment (located next to the Shabbat candlesticks, for instance)? In addition, we can dig deeper into specific meanings associated with the tzedakah box, depending on how it is decorated. A JNF “blue box” signifies a very specific kind of tzedakah associated with Jewish commitment to the Land of Israel. A homemade, child-decorated tzedakah box signifies a different meaning.

For de Saussure, meaning is never abstract, but rather always rests on something concrete (i.e., the signifier). This is important because it reminds us that meaning doesn’t just appear “out of nowhere;” it is always signified by a sign that carries the meaning. The sign can be a word, image, person, sound or any kind of physical artefact. In addition, meaning is subjective; the same signifier can have multiple meanings for different people and in different contexts. It can be held individually or by a collective and can shift over time.

In the context of an educational experience, this concept of what meaning is and how it is made can be very helpful for clarifying the signified meanings that we hope learners will arrive at — the learning outcomes — and for aligning them with the signs they will encounter in the educational experience — the activities, texts, images, objects and other elements of an educational intervention.

When we apply this semiotic framework to Peoplehood Education, we immediately encounter numerous questions that begin to explain some of the reasons why Peoplehood Education is so underdeveloped.

The immediate question that arises is, what are the signifiers of Jewish Peoplehood? What are the signs that are clearly identified with Peoplehood and that all (or even many) Jews would immediately identify as carrying meanings related to them? Shabbat candles? Matza? A photograph of Jewish immigrants arriving in Israel? This is not an easy question. On the one hand, there is an endless number of signs that could signify Jewish Peoplehood — texts, foods, music, languages, sites and more. Yet, this apparently positive fact becomes problematic almost immediately. In our efforts to apply the semiotic framework to Peoplehood Education, we have noticed that every time we identify a signifier of Peoplehood-related meaning, we see that that signifier can also carry many other meanings that are simpler to reach or more obvious. It is not that these signifiers don't signify Peoplehood; it is that they signify Peoplehood and many other things, and the other things are easier and simpler to access. The tzedakah box is a clear example. As we already mentioned, it signifies multiple things, including mutual responsibility and community caring. Does this make it a sign of Jewish Peoplehood? It certainly could be, but the Peoplehood-related meaning is secondary to the first simple meaning and is therefore not immediately accessible.

Similarly, at the Museum of Jewish Peoplehood in Tel Aviv, an institution completely dedicated to exhibiting the signifiers of Jewish Peoplehood, one of the installations focuses on Kabbalat Shabbat. Is Kabbalat Shabbat a signifier of Jewish Peoplehood? Again, it could be, but its first and most accessible meaning to most Jews is that it signifies the start of Shabbat. Still, when the museum presents it through a lens of Jewish diversity — in different languages, different settings and different communities — Kabbalat Shabbat is indeed a sign of Jewish Peoplehood.

In another example, we could say that a bagel by itself signifies a particular history of New York Jewish immigrants, but when combined with pita bread and jachnun, all these items together signify a certain plurality of the Jewish experience of bread that perhaps demonstrates something about Jewish Peoplehood.

These examples illustrate that often Jewish Peoplehood is signified by multiple signifiers being in contrast or relationship to each other. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. Indeed, it reflects, perhaps, a core component of Jewish Peoplehood: our diversity and plurality. However, for educational purposes it certainly makes the work harder. Educators are required to provide more framing, explanation and interpretation than they might have to do for other Jewish concepts. And multiple signifiers are required, making for a more complex educational process, if richer and more interesting.

This leads us to the question: are there, or could there be, a set of signifiers that are primarily and clearly markers of Jewish Peoplehood? Can we agree (with some level of consensus) that certain objects, texts and artefacts of Jewish civilization carry Peoplehood-related meanings that are particularly strong which Peoplehood Education can focus on? What would this require? If we could do this, we imagine that the field of Peoplehood Education would be able to develop new resources that would find wide use and value in the field. As it is, however, the lack of these signifiers, and the need for most signifiers of Peoplehood to be specifically distinguished as such by careful educators, explains why Peoplehood Education is hard to distinguish from other topics and requires more effort.

The second set of questions that the semiotic framework raises for Peoplehood Education relates to the difficulty of defining the signified meanings of Peoplehood. What are the signifieds (statements of meaning) that indicate a Peoplehood consciousness? And would it be helpful to define a (relatively) shared collection of these signifieds that could unite the field and provide a shared language and set of learning outcomes for Peoplehood Education? Having shared signified meanings across the field would provide a shared set of outcomes amongst educators, providing an opportunity to unite the field. On the other hand, unless signifieds are very specific to an educational situation, they tend to be overly generic and unhelpful in guiding robust educational processes. Too often, we see that educators express the targeted signified meanings regarding Peoplehood in generic and vague goals, such as their students "feeling a sense of connection to other Jews." An objective in this form does not contain enough clarity to propel an educational process forward. To combat this, in our work with educators, we have found that conceptualizing signified meanings in the language of "I" or "we," from the perspective of the learner, can be helpful in pushing towards more specific learning outcomes. So, for example, a more effective signified meaning would be "I feel connected to Jews I have never met and am prepared to exercise my responsibility for them in certain ways." Using this format forces educators to really articulate the meanings that are their intended outcomes.

At M² we are committed to helping educators do their work with maximum intentionality and clarity. We have found that the semiotic approach is helpful in this regard, as it prompts educators to articulate their goals and make intentional decisions about which signifiers to employ and how to maximize them. Peoplehood Education, however, remains a conundrum. Although Peoplehood as a concept seems to be so important and relevant, when translated into educational experiences, its all-encompassing and diffuse characteristics make it difficult to find discrete signifiers that only (or mostly) carry Peoplehood meaning. As a result, learners and educators are confused and have to work extra hard to focus only on the Peoplehood-related meanings of any given signifier. This, perhaps, explains some of the lingering ambiguity around what Peoplehood is, and why it is that Peoplehood Education hasn't broken away into its own field.

We don't have solutions to these questions, but we can suggest a few steps that Peoplehood-minded educators could take in order to address them and advance the field. Firstly, we would suggest discussing the signifiers of Jewish Peoplehood, in all their complexities and problematics, in order to create a set of signifiers around which there would be consensus as primary signifiers of Peoplehood. This would require and encourage the curation of signifiers (or, more accurately, groups of signifiers) that can be strengthened and employed across the field as a whole, in a wide range of educational applications and settings. Secondly, we believe that qualitative research into the signifieds of Jewish Peoplehood would be very beneficial. If we could hear statements of meaning from learners, we would strengthen our understandings of what it means to them to have a strong collective consciousness, and it would help guide educators to craft experiences with clear and specific learning outcomes in mind. Lastly, we would suggest developing (and recording) the pedagogies of Peoplehood using the language of this framework, providing educators with examples of how signifiers and signifieds interact in practice in Peoplehood-focused education. We invite conversation on these and other related topics and look forward to the development of the field.

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Education and Global Jewish Identity: An Examination of Peoplehood in Israeli Educators' Creative Writing

Anat Infeld-Goodman

The question of the identification of Israeli Jews with ideas of Jewish Peoplehood and their ties to the Jewish diaspora, have arisen time and again and have been discussed following current changes to Israeli government as of late. As Scott Lasensky and Alon Friedman recently noted in this context,

Over the long- term, educating the next generation of Israelis about contemporary Jewish life and diversity will be essential for nurturing solidarity and strengthening values like mutual responsibility.¹

Within this broader question, an important arena to consider is the identity of Jewish educators in Israel and their identification with the concept of Peoplehood.

In his 2009 article, Mordecai Nisan argues that the work of educators expresses their personal perceptions and suggests that there is a significant influence of personal identity on their professional work. Building on Nisan's ideas, in this article, I assume that a study of Israeli educators' Jewish identity allows for a deeper understanding of their educational practices. In this context, this study seeks to uncover whether and to what extent the concept of Jewish peoplehood is present in the identity reflected in texts produced by a group of Israeli educators. This question has significant implications for the education of the younger generation in Israel and their relation and connection to the Jewish People.

In their 2014 study, Hagit Hacohen Wolf and Gabriel Horenczyk describe different levels of Jewish identity: personal Jewish identity, interpersonal and family-oriented Jewish identity, interpersonal and community-oriented Jewish identity, and collective-global

¹ <https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/338840/a-golden-opportunity-for-the-bennett-lapid-government/>. Accessed, Aug 4th, 2021.

Jewish identity—which, according to the article, is tied to the concept of ‘Peoplehood.’ Based on these ideas from Nissan, as well as from Hacohen Wolf and Horenczyk, this article examines the various components of Israeli educators’ Jewish identity, as they are reflected in stories they wrote as part of their master’s degree in Jewish education.

All of the texts analyzed in this paper were written (originally in Hebrew and translated for the purpose of this article) by participants of the “Rikma” program, a leadership program at *Hebrew Union College* that includes a master’s degree from the *Melton Center for Jewish Education* at Hebrew University. The program focuses on the anchoring of education in communities, as well as on the strengthening of ties between different sectors of Israeli society and within the Jewish People. The seventh year of the program, in which the texts studied in this article were produced, included educators from across Israeli society, among them, Hebrew teachers, Jewish and Bible studies teachers, directors of pre-military service programs (*mechinot*), Jewish Agency employees, and informal educators in various communities and youth movements.

As part of these studies, in the division dedicated to Jewish Peoplehood, the students participate in the course, “Jewish Monologues in the 21st Century,” led by Rabbi Talia Avnon Benveniste. This course offers theories of Jewish Peoplehood, addressing and relating to questions of identity through diverse texts and encourages participants to establish a personal Jewish narrative as part of a collective. During the course, the participants were asked to write a personal-Jewish text, describing, in the first person, their connection to the Jewish story. Although the stories written by the participants are not autobiographical, they may serve as a window into the world of Israeli educators in 2021. Since their writing was aimed at creating a personal-Jewish narrative, I examined themes of Jewish collective identity within it, while paying specific attention to elements which formed the stories foundations and often created conflict or tension within them.

I have based my analysis of these stories on the levels of Identity discussed by Horenczyk and HaCohen Wolf, as well as on conceptualizations offered by Sagi (2006). In his work on identity, Sagi suggests two aspects of identity, which he names the diachronic aspect and the synchronous aspect. The diachronic aspect refers to an identity shaped by its affinity to the history and culture which individuals belong to. The synchronous aspect refers to the Identity which shapes individuals’ dialogue with the cultures, groups and people they meet. Thus, according to Sagi, “The individual’s interpretation is created within a cultural context that combines synchronous and diachronic aspects simultaneously [...]

he/she belongs to at least two cultures at once: a tradition that carries the heritage of the past, and a temporary culture that he/she is always a part of.”²

In this article, I refer to the stories written by the course participants as first-hand testimony, which reflects the Jewish world of educators who live, were educated and work in education in Israel. The fragments of the stories analyzed here were interpreted using thematic coding to create various titles. These titles were then grouped under major categories which created three areas of interest: the Jewish calendar, the Jewish circle of life, and past and present time-space representation. All of the stories addressed here describe different levels of identity and most of them contain a tension that arises from the encounter between a specific occurrence and the wider questions of identity. This categorization allows for an examination of levels of identity and an understanding of the challenges which come with the encounter between the different values which Israeli educators see as relevant reference points for their identity.

The Jewish Calendar

The Jewish Holidays and days of rest described in the stories addressed here constitute a traditional background which includes the potential for value assessment within identity on a personal, family, community, or global level.

An interesting example of this is a description offered by the protagonist of M.’s story,

After my parents divorced, my father, who rediscovered his Jewish roots and started observing orthodox Judaism, moved to the “Mea Shearim” neighborhood in Jerusalem and my mother who decided to antagonize him, like she used to do when they were married, decided to move to the most secular place imaginable—Kibbutz Mizra, the only place in Israel with a pig farm.

This description clearly expresses a symbolic distance between the extremes of Israeli society. M. goes on to describe the dissonance existing in her protagonist’s life and her visits with each of her parents on Shabbat, which illustrates her double life and the tension she experienced in this context. While examining M.’s story through Sagi’s model (2006), it is apparent that the narrator experiences a clash between the synchronous and the diachronic aspects of this reality. While the synchronous identity is expressed in the desire to maintain contact with the parents, the diachronic aspect is expressed in the religious and secular choices that constitute different ways of commitment or rebellion to / against Jewish tradition.

² Sagi, 116.

N., another participant in the course, described a secular Purim celebration in Tel Aviv. In the story, the protagonist, Shani, returns to her apartment after attending a carnival on the city streets.

Another basket is waiting on the kitchen table, Shani is very tired but she decides that if Purim events are still taking place the holiday is yet not over and she can still give one more gift. It's late; the street is not as crowded but very dirty. She takes a basket to the Homeless man who always sits by the entrance to the Dizengoff Center parking lot, outside Bank Leumi, in front of the sycamore tree. Actually, this spot is right next to the monument for the victims of a terrorist attack, the one in which those children were killed, on Purim. Shani always feels anxious when she passes there, but it is still important to her that the holiday have meaning beyond partying and mind-numbing drunkenness.

Within the description provided by N., two of the holiday's "mitzvot," which reflect the narrator's need for social value tied to tradition, arise, "mishloach manot" and "mattanot la-evyonim." In this story the synchronous aspect in the protagonist's identity is actively expressed; her belonging to a community of young people living in Tel Aviv, the monument in memory of the victims of the terrorist attack and the description of the poverty and social injustice which surround her. The diachronic aspect is prominent as well; it is the setting for the whole story of Purim, from its modern expressions to its traditional roots: celebration, the holiday feast, "mishloach manot" and "mattanot la-evyonim." As opposed to the previous story, here, there seems to be no tension, but rather a coming together of the different aspects of identity in a rather harmonious way.

The Circle of Jewish Life

The Circle of Jewish life is also filled with potential tension related to questions of tradition versus change. These events are crucial moments in the lives of the narrators and protagonists in the texts discussed here, ones that relate to traditional ceremonies which have a broader Jewish significance.

A story told by E. takes place on the eve of her wedding and describes her desire to add another name to several names she was given in birth, one which does not carry the weight past memory. As A. describes it, "I just wanted to be me, not a living monument to my ancestors, or rather my grandmothers." That is to say, the bride to be does not want to give up her additional names despite their symbolic weight, but to add a personal expression to them.

T.'s story, on the other hand, contains a similar tension which is resolved in a different way. The story describes a young mother's decision to circumcise her son, although the act itself seems to conflict with her values. The tension in this case is presented when her father asks her to reconsider the decision not to go through with it. At the end of the story she decides to respect his request—"I want us to do it,' you hear yourself say. This sentence reassures you, and you understand that this is what you want and need to do."

The diachronic aspect apparent in these stories is very significant; in both, commitment to the past is expressed through the representation of parents and grandparents. This commitment to previous generations does not stem from a sense of obligation, but rather a conscious choice and identification with what family connections symbolize. The synchronous aspect is similar in the two stories, expressing contemporary values of independent thinking and expression of individuality, which are tied to the complexity of the weight of tradition. But the tension described in each of the stories is resolved differently. If the bride to be adds a name and thus finds her own unique solution, the new mother chooses the diachronic axis which ultimately prevails.

Time and Space

The third category is dedicated to stories that take place in different time-space arenas and refer to a specific place that has meaning in the present with a clear connection to the past. Among them, a familiar, present-day Jerusalem, Biblical times, or the early days of the State of Israel. This category describes a connection to ancient Jewish tradition and a Jewish identity with a connection to land, history, landscapes, and symbols.

A. describes two people loading their vehicles on their way to Jerusalem from Nahalat Binyamin.

One loads his vehicle with wine, bread and his beloved animal. The other loads his car with bedding, clothes, a small bottle of water and his mother's old pan. One man's journey to Jerusalem is going to be very long. He hitches his wagon to his old grey donkey. The second man's journey will be short. Thirty moments will pass until he reaches his new place in the Nachlaot neighborhood of Jerusalem.

Though thousands of years have passed between these two men's journey to Jerusalem, the connection between them is clear. The story describes their difficult journey towards this holy, complicated, city and ends with the two's "love for the Holy City," but at the same time, their "aversion, even alienation, towards it."

Another story, about a tour guide in Jerusalem, written in the first person, by T., also describes a complex attitude towards the city, which she describes as an “addiction to this difficult city that does not know how to love.” She continues to describe a holistic treatment, in which her therapist, wakes her up and “tells me as usual ‘now you are light and at ease, have a good and pleasant week.’” She looks into his eyes and really believes him, that is, she explains, “as light and easy as a woman who carries 3000 years with her wherever she goes can be... ”

In these stories, the synchronous and the diachronic aspects meet in Jerusalem, in both stories the past gives the present depth and meaning. The tension in both stories indicates a desire to be connected to Jerusalem on the one hand and to be freed of its burden on the other. The levels of identity described here are personal but include a deep connection, identification and commitment to Jewish history.

As we have seen, the levels of identity in all of the stories read in this article reflect personal, family and community ties. The meeting points between the synchronous and the diachronic reflect a tension between commitment to contemporary values and traditional values. But is a connection to the Jewish people on a collective-global level apparent in these texts? Are there any ties to the concept of Peoplehood in the personal narratives presented here? The answer, in my opinion, is no.

Examining the Jewish identity of the protagonists, and indirectly of their writers, in these stories, reflects levels of identity in which the Israeli component stands out and provides a local, communal and synchronous connection in relation to the diachronic components of Jewish identity. But even though the protagonists in these stories lead lives rich with elements of Jewish tradition, they include hardly any identification associated with the level of global Jewish identity.

This finding returns to the question of Israeli society and its relationship with Diaspora Jewry. In the narrative offered by the educators in question, Jewish identity seems limited to areas of family and society in Israel and far from global-collective belonging. As a result, we must ask why this level of identity is not part of the Jewish Israeli educator narrative. Is Israeli Jewish education lacking when it comes to developing an emotional and cognitive sense of belonging to the Jewish People? If so, can these educators which are a product of this system be expected to educate the next generation with values they don't themselves possess?

As many scholars have noted, formal and informal education is critical in creating peer-based solidarity within Israeli Jewish society and although changes in this regard are

already evident in the field of local education, there is still a long way to go.³ A deeper understanding of the identity of educators' working in Israel and of the way in which their identity affects future generations, are an important step on the path to change.

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3 As Gil Troy has written lately in "Isaac Herzog's Mission as President: Shaping Israel's Soul," "Education, formal and informal, is vital for building awareness of and empathy toward the Diaspora. Although organizations like Birthright, MASA and other immersive opportunities within Israel contribute to Jewish identity outside Israel, there are far fewer opportunities for Israeli Jews to gain a deeper understanding of Jewish life outside of Israel". <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/isaac-herzogs-mission-as-president-shaping-israels-soul-opinion-672394>. Accessed, Aug 4th, 2021.



A Framework for Evaluating Success in Jewish and Peoplehood Education

Ezra Kopelowitz

Abstract

Successful Jewish education nurtures “Jewish consciousness,” which is a holistic experience informing the way that students interact with the world—doing, thinking, and feeling. Educational experiences expand and deepen participants’ Jewish consciousness along six dimensions: 1) Establishing Relevance, 2) Provoking Curiosity, 3) Making Jewish Normal, 4) Encouraging Leadership, 5) Becoming a Master and 6) Nurturing Peoplehood Consciousness. An evaluation of a Jewish educational program will focus on 1) the contribution to the individual student of these six dimensions, 2) examine the degree to which the nurturing of Jewish consciousness is an intentionally planned educational process, 3) within a supportive educational environment.

Jewish education is one part of a broader complex of experience, learning, and growth that informs an individual’s understanding of him or herself in the world (Chazan, Chazan, and Jacobs 2017, 116). The questions before us are: How does Jewish education contribute to the way a person interacts with the world? And when does Jewish education become Peoplehood Education?

Race, ethnicity, and nation are not entities in the world but ways of seeing the world. They are ways of understanding and identifying oneself, making sense of one’s problems and predicaments, identifying one’s interests, and orientating one’s actions. They are ways of recognizing, identifying, and classifying other people, of constructing sameness and difference, and of “coding” and making sense of their actions. They are templates for representing and organizing social knowledge, frames for articulating social comparisons and explanations, and filters that shape what is noticed and unnoticed, relevant or irrelevant, remembered or forgotten. (Brubaker 2006, 81)

In the spirit of this expansive understanding of Jewish education, this article suggests that in evaluating the work of Jewish educators, we adopt Bethamie Horowitz's argument that Jewish education is about nurturing "Jewish consciousness."

The challenge for the Jewish community is to create or foster vibrant, compelling, communities, institutions, experiences, and relationships that inspire interest, a sense of Jewish connection, belonging, and loyalty. It all comes down to consciousness (the opposite of indifference) and how to encourage that consciousness as much as possible (Horowitz 2008, 77).

Jewish consciousness is holistic, informing doing, thinking, and feeling. "Meaning-making" is integral to Jewish consciousness, occurring as individuals interpret what is occurring in their lived-experience to understand how to act and the implications of their actions.

Success: Opting-into Jewish consciousness

Successful educational experiences expand and deepen participants' Jewish consciousness. From an evaluation perspective, we ask: Do participants in educational programs opt-in and embrace the elements of Jewish consciousness promoted by their educators? To what extent and depth does the educational experience contribute to the participant adopting Jewish ways of interacting with the world?

The precise formulation of the above questions depends on the manner participants in an educational program interact in Jewish ways with the world. Do the Jewish skills and knowledge taught become relevant to the participants' lives? We answer this question by delineating six dimensions of Jewish consciousness. The educational mission and corresponding evaluation questions change according to the Jewish consciousness dimensions an educator is addressing.

Six Dimensions of Jewish Consciousness

1. Establishing Relevance

As a result of an educational experience, do participants move from apathy to caring? Will we hear them state regarding the educational experience: "I am a Jew and that matters for my life?" If relevance is not established, nothing else matters, as knowledge and skills learned will simply be disregarded once the educational process ends. If relevance is established, how did the educational experience trigger the cognitive and emotional shift?

2. Provoking Curiosity

Once relevance is established, do participants express curiosity to learn more? Has the educational program succeeded in promoting a desire among participants to explore the implications of the subject matter for their lives?

3. Making Jewish Normal

Once curious, participants need pathways through which they can continue to acquire Jewish knowledge, seeking out social and intellectual relationships with other Jews as a normal and ongoing part of their lives. Effective educators provide those pathways as well as the knowledge and skills for starting along the way. When successful, participants opt-in and continue to make Jewish life experiences a normal part of their lives.

4. Encouraging Leadership

Once being Jewish is a normal part of one's life, a person might embrace leadership by providing opportunities for others to have similar consciousness expanding experiences. Among many different leadership opportunities educators provide, we can include a teen's choice to become a counselor at his or her summer camp, a college student's decision to join the board of a college Hillel or Chabad, or an adult's opting to pursue a degree in Jewish education, professional studies, or the clergy. Leadership might also involve micro-activities that are part of family and community life that require knowledge and skills, such as taking leadership roles in the prayer service, leading a Passover Seder or initiating a Jewishly informed itinerary for one's family vacation.

5. Becoming a Master

At the apex of the opting-in process are those whose depth of dedication, commitment and knowledge enables them to become masters in a particular area of Jewish civilization (Kaplan 1981). A Master is not only able to teach others, but also adapts Jewish civilization to contemporary times, enabling Jewish knowledge and lifeways to become relevant to a new generation living in a particular time and place.

6. Nurturing Peoplehood Consciousness

"Peoplehood Consciousness" (Ravid 2014) ideally informs the other five dimensions. The often-unstated assumption girding the work of Jewish educators is that we are part of a global Jewish People. The goal is for Jews to feel part of and committed to the historical and contemporary global Jewish experience. Yet, that goal is often not explicitly planned for and thus is not an intentional outcome of Jewish education. Enabling individuals to pursue their personal Jewish journeys, deepening their Jewish skills and knowledge along the way, does not necessary mean that they will embrace Jewish Peoplehood.

The following are examples of possible Peoplehood questions that Jewish educators can choose to make explicit in their work. Should Jews feel a commitment and responsibility to supporting one another? Is the welfare of Jews who live elsewhere a concern? Should the lessons of Jewish history inform the way Jews think about the world today? Is it necessary to support communal organizations such as a Federation or Jewish home for the elderly? Is the relationship of Jews living outside of Israel to Israel a priority, even if one might disagree with the policies of an Israeli government? Is *Tikkun Olam* a Jewish collective responsibility, and if so, how does the fact that we are part of a People enable us to do *Tikkun Olam* more effectively?

These Peoplehood questions touch on the deepest and most expansive dimensions of Jewish consciousness and are the greatest challenge for Jewish educators today. In an age in which individualism and the personal pursuit of meaning is the prevailing norm (Bellah et al. 1985; Cohen and Eisen 2000) the greatest educational challenge becomes the nurturing of Peoplehood consciousness.

It is important to note that Jewish educators will likely find participants in their educational programs on different dimensions of Jewish consciousness at any given time. For example, a Rabbi teaching an introduction to Judaism class might have a student who has dedicated him or herself to the study and teaching of Jewish history, seeing the lessons of history as essential for understanding the world around us. However, the same person might not have seen much relevance for the role of Jewish religious ritual, ceremony, and law in his or her life. Hence, the Professor of Jewish history becomes a student in the initial stages of opting-in to a Jewish religious education.

Evaluation—Learning from Israel Education as a Case Study

Israel Education is a field within Jewish education, which we use as a case study to show how Jewish consciousness is developed by Israel educators. The case study illustrates how Jewish educators through a focus on Israel, work to expand the Jewish consciousness of their students. Success depends not only on (1) the contribution to each student, but also on (2) educational planning, and (3) an educational environment that intentionally supports the nurturing of Jewish consciousness.

1. Individual Outcomes

Individual outcomes involve changes in doing, thinking, and feeling resulting from an educational experience that contributes to an expansion of Jewish consciousness. Using Israel education as a case study, the following table provides examples of possible individual level outcomes at each stage of the consciousness building process.

Dimensions of Jewish Consciousness	Examples of Individual Outcomes: Israel Education Case Study
1. Relevant	From indifference to the realization that “because I am Jewish, Israel is a special country for me.”
2. Curious	The desire to learn more about Israel, whether to learn Hebrew, learn about biblical or modern Israeli history, pursue connections with Israelis, learn popular Israel songs, take a <i>Krav Maga</i> course, learn about Israeli politics, etc.
3. Normal	Finding it meaningful to follow Israeli news on a regular basis, seeking out discussions about Israel with others, learning and speaking Hebrew, maintaining collegial or social relationships with Israelis, etc.
4. Leader	Seeing as valuable and encouraging others to engage with Israel through education, Israel advocacy, deepening the presence of Israel in one’s organization, etc.
5. Master	Committed and inspired to the point of becoming a master Israel educator. Working to devise educational and community building strategies and Israel-Diaspora partnerships that adapt and deepen the connection of Jews living inside and outside of Israel to one another (Kopelowitz 2013).
6. Peoplehood	Committed to promoting the welfare of Jews living in Israel and the state of Israel, and the responsibility of Israel and Israelis to the Jewish People.

Educational Planning

To what extent are the individual level outcomes described above the result of an intentionally designed educational process? Jeff Kress provides a useful framework, which can be applied to understanding how educators nurture Jewish consciousness. He argues that participants in educational experiences should be placed in novel situations, that they process through dialogue with their teachers and peers, with adequate opportunities for reflection. When successful, the cognitive schemas participants utilize to understand their worlds are challenged and expand to include Jewish reference points (Kress 2012, 69-102).

Staying with Israel education, an excellent example of Kress’ framework at work occurs in *Mifgashim*—organized educational encounters involving Israeli-Jews and Jews who live elsewhere. When done well, the *mifgash* challenges the cognitive schemas of all the participants. The *mifgash* might involve traveling, service work and/or learning together.

The common element is that when they are together participants engage in reflective conversations in which they need to explicate who they are as Jews, the similarities and differences between them, and the implications for some aspect of their lives. For many, the *mifgash* is the first time that they need to actively think about who they are Jewishly, their connection to and responsibility for other Jews, and reflect on the resulting realizations.

2. Educational environments that support Jewish consciousness

Successful Jewish education almost always occurs within educational environments in which the professional staff are aware of the larger consciousness-raising goals of their organization and coordinate with one another to implement them. The result is the creation of educational experiences that might range over many years, which occur in multiple contexts and reinforce each other over time. Thus, for example, Israel education at a synagogue school can provide many instances in which Israel serves as a reference point for the developing Jewish consciousness of a child coming of age from kindergarten through high school. These reference points occur through participation in ceremonies and celebrations, singing Israeli songs, learning in formal classes, participating in educational trips to Israel, interacting with counselors and teachers who are Israelis, and developing friendships with Israelis through twinning programs. At the most outstanding synagogue schools, many of these educational experiences reference common educational values and themes that further sharpen and deepen a young person's expansion of Jewish consciousness (Kopelowitz 2020).

In conclusion, this paper places the issue of meaning-making in Jewish education within the broader conceptual frame of Jewish consciousness. What it means to be Jewish, and the role of Jewish education unfolds along six distinct dimensions of Jewish consciousness. Each dimension offers different challenges and demands distinct educational strategies and measures for determining success. The sixth dimension—Peoplehood Consciousness—occurs when educators intentionally educate for their students to feel part of and committed to the historical and contemporary global Jewish experience. The case study of Israel Education illustrates how Jewish educators through a focus on Israel work to expand the Jewish consciousness of their students; and, how the contribution to the individual is the result of intentional educational planning and an educational environment that intentionally supports the nurturing of Jewish consciousness.

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Jewish Peoplehood Education – Does It Exist?

Itamar Kremer

Executive Summary:

- 1. Jewish Peoplehood Education is education towards identity and belonging**
- 2. The educational effort must be based on the integration of knowledge, skills, and ultimately transformative experiences.**
- 3. There is no point in expending resources on meetings with world Jewry, unless there is a sea change in the way we help Israeli students form stronger bonds with their people.**

In 1955, David Ben Gurion decided to come out of his first retirement to Kibbutz Sde Boker. He returned as Minister of Defense under Prime Minister Moshe Sharett, but he was a different man in a different country. After the elections in July that year, Ben Gurion took up the reins of power once again and established a new governing coalition. Clause 44 in the coalition agreement stated the following:

The government shall ensure that Israel's youth will receive greater emphasis on Jewish awareness in order to inculcate them with the Jewish people's past and historical heritage, and intensify their moral bond with world Jewry, based on recognition of their common destiny and the historical continuity, which has united Jews all over the world throughout the generations wherever they have lived.

A few days later, Ben Gurion wrote to Zalman Aran, his Minister of Education and Culture, asking him to be punctilious in the execution of that expressed in the clause. Ben Gurion was deeply worried that Israeli youth was far from where he wanted them to be. A little more than a year later, an education administration established within the ministry was focusing on Jewish awareness and that instigated the controversy about what to teach, how to teach it and who would teach Jewish awareness.

Sagacious readers must have begun to wonder—in an article on ‘Jewish Peoplehood,’ why have I chosen to discuss Jewish awareness? Well, at least in my opinion, the answer is obvious. They are the same. Almost.

At least in my opinion, as someone who has been involved in peoplehood and education throughout my adult life, Jewish peoplehood is divided into two parts:

1. The feeling of belonging to the Jewish **People** as a whole and to Jews themselves as individuals.
2. Acceptance of the **many sources and the different ways** in which other Jews, both men and women, choose to define and express their belonging to the Jewish people.

Therefore, the definition of Jewish awareness education stated so ably by Ben Gurion—deeper roots and close moral bonding with worldwide Jewry, also defines Jewish education, or education in belonging.

And there lies the problem. Jewish awareness education is a loaded, complex term. On one side of the fence, some will picture “that one wearing phylacteries.” On the other side of the fence, there are those wondering who granted approval to teach Jewish awareness in any other way than that they themselves received in the Yeshiva or their advanced Jewish studies program?

All reading this article must surely agree that this is the disease that Jewish peoplehood seeks to cure by insisting that Judaism belongs to no one; it belongs to all and the Jewish people comprises a range of individuals with different approaches, different needs and different ways of expressing their Judaism.

So, in my opinion and following Ben Gurion’s high road, Jewish awareness education emphasizing roots and bonds with worldwide Jewry is an integral part of the education system. It always was and always will be.

Now all we have to do is think how to do it properly, without falling into the trap of religionizing on the one hand, or “who are you to tell me what to do” on the other. There must be no apology, no skating around, no empty messages. It must be education aimed at acquaintance with the people, love of the people and recognition of the differences.

So How Do We Learn About Peoplehood?

My proposal is based on how the Ministry of Education defines significant learning in its document 'Young Adults' Identity'—through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values. In fact, that approach is also based on the three tenets promulgated by Ben Gurion—knowledge, understanding, and application.

The Ministry of Education followed in the footsteps of the OECD's theoretical and applicable research, which resulted in: 'Education 2030.' That document seeks to determine the education platform used to measure effectiveness and achieve change. It also discusses education through the acquisition of the component parts of knowledge and skills as the means to engender values and create opinions and actions:

The education system seeks to ensure that its graduates shall live and act as value based human beings functioning well in their families, they communities and in Israeli society. The aim of the Israeli education system is produce graduates with the knowledge, skills and values, which will enable them to integrate into adult life independently...

There are many who resist or have reservations about this approach, which usually does not fall into line with advanced educational approaches, more open minded than the progressive educational stream. Nevertheless, I choose to use it as a way to demonstrate that which in my opinion, is the correct educational process in today's world.

In my view, Jewish Peoplehood comprises awareness of the Jewish people along with an inclusive, enabling stance vis-à-vis different ways of identifying within the circle of belonging to this People. Therefore and in accordance with the dominant educational approach in the Ministry of Education, knowledge must be provided, skills must be practiced, willing and real impetus must be created to generate the emotional stimuli, which will result in the establishment of an approach, or understanding of the need for Peoplehood action based on belonging, identity, and tolerance.

I propose that the component parts of that study process including knowledge and skills, should be integrated into a transformative experience. I explain below:

Knowledge – Means knowledge accumulated by an entity with awareness. In educational terms, I rely specifically upon the definition given by John Dewy, the philosopher of progressive education:

To be a recipient of a communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience. One shares in what another has thought and felt and in so far, meagerly or amply, has his own attitude modified.¹

In practice, knowledge is mediated information and the way in which that information is understood by the recipient. Therefore, the critical element is how to mediate and how to create frameworks ensuring that the information becomes significant knowledge.

Skill – Once again, according to the ‘Young Adults’ Identity’ document mentioned above, this is an acquired general capability, which supports and accompanies learning, thought and development and enables action. Skills are divided up into a number of fields—cognitive, intra-personal, and inter-personal.

According to the structure put forward by the OECD and the Ministry of Education, we should make mention of the acquisition of values at this point. However, in my opinion, education must be based on a combination of knowledge, skills, and a **real, transformative experience** instigating deep introspection and in-depth questioning about intra-personal values.

Turning Point Experience – Professor Gad Yair investigates Israeliness and education in Israel. In his book *From Key Experiences to Turning Points*, he reviews interviews he conducted with Israelis and attempts to characterize how identity is formed and how the Israeli indoctrination pathway is in fact constructed.

He characterizes the transforming experiences undergone by Israeli young people and he defines the accumulated conditions for the transformation of a single experience into a real turning point, the consequences from which combine with the educational continuum and bring about the adoption of a value based world, opinions, and action.

- A. Cognitive discovery – The moment the penny drops; understanding of something new, different from the regular world of concepts.
- B. Powerful emotional experience – The “goosebumps” moment of joy, anger, compassion or another strong emotion.
- C. Self-discovery – Something I discovered about myself, by myself, in myself.

Professor Yair’s approach is applied practically in the ‘Israel Journey,’ which I currently direct and when visiting ANU – Museum of the Jewish People, where until recently I was the Director of Education. The ability to take the period of time in which a young person

¹ *Democracy and Education*, 6.

is within the experience and change it into a defining transformative experience is the educational objective for both those organizations.

What Do We Teach?

To present these ideas graphically: The Jewish Peoplehood Education process includes a matrix of content, skills, and transformative experiences, together with fields connected to feelings of belonging. Many have tried to classify these portals, or the fields serving as the basis for the peoplehood approach. The two most common classifications have been provided by Dr. Nurit Chemo and Avraham Infeld. They both seek to explain and clarify the "portals," or to put it another way, the keys to an individual's identification with their people; the invisible strings tying to Jewish identity.

In her article "From Identity Discussions to Jewish Peoplehood," Dr. Nurit Chemo defines the following six components of identity:

- A. Historical memory
- B. Ways of life
- C. Jewish values
- D. Language
- E. Bond with Israel
- F. Creativity and culture

In contrast, Avraham Infeld talks about five legs on our identity table:

- 1. Memory
- 2. Family
- 3. Mount Sinai
- 4. Israel
- 5. Hebrew

I cannot presume to disagree with either of these two giants and most certainly I cannot favor one over the other. From my point of view there is no need and when I try to characterize the components parts of knowledge, skills, and experiences, my *modus operandi* is non-taxonomic. It does not classify the actual components and instead, I offer a list of example components, which in my opinion are desirable whenever Jewish Peoplehood Education is in action.

A. Knowledge

The knowledge components required, at least in my opinion, are: the Jewish timeline; the Jewish thought axis and a selection of components found in the Jewish canon now undergoing renewal; broad and deep knowledge of the Old Testament and its interpretations; current Jewish demographics; understanding of the different approaches

to the principles of belief and Jewish practice in today's world; the Jewish calendar; written and spoken Hebrew with their connections to other Semitic languages and modern Hebrew sources; acquaintance with ancient customs, traditions, and laws; acquaintance with the differing opinions on the future of the People of Israel.

Once again, in my view, a broad majority of the knowledge components must be taught in an inter-disciplinary form—When studying the book of Samuel, reading Tchernichovsky's poetry in literature classes, studying the executive authority in civics, learning about Mount Gilboa in geography and about string instruments in music classes, all that in parallel.

B. Skills

Knowing how to use a prayer book and read a page in the Talmud; conduct a non-argumentative, complex conversation with another; knowing how to conceptualize when asked to explain "What does being Jewish mean to me?;" knowing how to behave in a multi-lingual environment; knowing how to conduct a discussion with others professing different religious identities. It also includes the ability to think and analyze articles and reports; the ability to give thought-out commentary on texts; and the ability to express a high level of textual and visual interpretation.

C. Transformative Experiences

Meetings of all types—between Jewish and non-Jewish groups, with or without representation from young people from the diaspora; long-term, multi-generational experiences creating strong connections between young people and their family histories; visits to ANU; an identity journey to Poland experience; a roots year in school with family and friends; ensuring that the entire school year goes to the Israel Journey every year, volunteering in the community, writing a Torah scroll, plantings; rehabilitation of a nature reserve; understanding of the circle of life; rite of passage ceremonies including standing before an audience.

In practice, the correct combination shall be the definition of the knowledge components and skills studied and practiced throughout the year and expressed as a single transformative experience, such as: In eighth grade at a state run, secular school, the prayer book will be explained together with Jewish demographics in Israel and seminars focusing on the ability to conduct a valuable discussion; the creation of education continuity in the definition of identity (Who am I? Which group do I belong to?); and the study of the history of different Zionist movements. Towards the end of the school year, all the students in the year will spend four days, including a Saturday, living within an orthodox or ultra-orthodox community, which will include experiences in the fields of culture, sport, food, learning together, discussions and processing.

Following all that, the following question arises:

So How Will We Know If We Have Succeeded, or Why Do We Learn?

Here lies the well-known secret in educational work. What is change theory? What is the logical model for inputs, activities, outputs, and results we can base things on? What are the yardsticks and indicators we need to judge Peoplehood Education a success?

I believe that both the immediate educational result and the effectiveness of the process can be measured and assessed using questionnaires, observation, a spiral process combining knowledge components and over the long term, by studying the behavior of the Israeli public, broad changes in Israeli society and changes in a range of social patterns.

And that is the key and the bottom line for this article.

In my view, educating towards connection with the Diaspora or to describe it properly, an equality based, respectful attitude to contacts with Jewish communities around the world, will not by itself herald or generate true social change in Israel and **on its own, does not have the value** justifying transformative change in the education system.

The moment Jewish Peoplehood Education shall be a field unto itself **on top** of other fields of study and used as the means to include all the various clusters; as a singular aim in the different Israeli education systems and supported by resources, regulations and a budget—that is, when change will come about and that includes links with Jewish communities around the world.

Educating towards Jewish identity and belonging to the Jewish People, including education towards dialogue and attentiveness, towards inclusion of differences to achieve strength through knowledge of the people and the world; education in the social, personal, and cognitive skills granting personal and group resilience, must include bonds with the entire range of Jewish People wherever they are. That is what we must invest in. In the entirety of each young girl and boy at the character molding stage, in educational and experiential continuity intertwined with each other.

Itamar Kremer is an Israeli educator and the Director of Masa Israeli – I belong Israel, which arranges identity and belonging journeys for tens of thousands of young people and adults. Itamar's previous posts include Head of a high school in the Arava region and until recently, he was Director of the Koret International School for Jewish Peoplehood at 'ANU - Museum of the Jewish People.'



Jews Must Go: A Jewish Grand Tour – Travel as a Peoplehood Practice

Jeremy Leigh

Of the myriad of challenges facing Peoplehood educators, among the clunkiest is how to create that elusive sense of connectedness that peoplehood consciousness craves—the recognition that there is a “we, the Jewish People.” But consciousness is only the start; what quickly follows are justifications of the importance of that consciousness, discussions around membership criteria (who is part of the Jewish People), and the demands that Peoplehood consciousness makes in terms of belief and practice. And all of that comes before rising to the particular challenges of the age that all carry political overtones: for some, this is how successful can proponents of group affiliation be in an age of heightened individualism; for others, it is the squeamishness expressed by sections of the Jewish liberal world who fear that over-identification with the Jewish group might be perceived as too particularistic and thereby undermine their progressive credentials as allies of others. And finally, there is just old-fashioned parochialism and small worldliness in which the boundaries of Jewishness are set locally, rendering them visible only from the privacy of one’s lifelong home synagogue, summer camp, home community, or country.

And so, it is on the back of this that the challenge is set to present an educational strategy to promote conscious insidership with accompanying pedagogy for what we might call “Peoplehood practice.” The idea discussed here advocates elevating Jewish travel and a deep and sustained connection with Jewish places as one such practice. In its larger and more systematized form, it is a proposal for a type of “Jewish Grand Tour.” It is a recommendation for a pedagogy and practice that widens the aperture on Jewishness, exposing a bigger, deeper, more diverse and yet interconnected Jewish world.

Travel is not chosen randomly; it is linked to three basic assumptions. First, Jewish educational travel relies on journeys to the places that bear witness to the story of the Jewish People. This means that the idea of “our” collective story is always centre stage and the focus of attention. Second, as whole libraries of travel literature attest, the physical journey is the setting throughout history for other more inward journeys,

amplified yet further when it is individuals participating in a group journey. Examples include the exodus from Egypt, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the Hajj to Mecca, and others. Third, travel operates within the category of experiential education and the generation of emotional response. This is important given the understanding that people rarely *think* their way to new identities, tending instead to first *feel* them as emotional experiences before rationalizing them intellectually later.

Jews, Travel, and Place: How Do Jews Relate to Places?

No less significant than valuing the potential of travel as a pedagogy, is considering Jewish relationship to the physical world across which travel takes place. In theory, travel and the significance of places should be difficult for Jews. There is no avoiding the sanctified role of the Land of Israel in earlier times and the specific act of Temple pilgrimage as one of the earliest expressions of Jewish travel. Yet, this all imploded once exile took over as the dominant expression of Jewish space and travel as a religious act was lost. Other cultures did not have this problem. Christianity, for example, sanctified space and place early on as the logical extension of a theology of God made flesh. The sanctity of Jesus lingered after he had gone, leaving potential for pilgrimage to the sites where that allegedly divine being had once been. It is perhaps for that very reason that Jews remained squeamish about post-Temple pilgrimage.

Broadly speaking, places in the exilic Jewish world never gained sanctified status as and the remembrance of past events was embedded in other markedly spiritual (not physical) practices such as fasting, reciting prayers, etc. There are, for example, scant records of Jews returning to massacre sites, such as has become the practice in contemporary Jewish tourism to Poland. Diaspora communities found ways to connect with each other through contact made by traders and by those seeking financial support to redeem captives, occasional explorers, and rabbinic delegations pursuing support in religious matters. While these types of travel are interesting in that they suggest Jewish interconnectedness, they were never systematized and no new idea of travel with inner Jewish purpose emerged.

There are, nonetheless, hints of what may later be recognized as a Jewish travel practice. In something of a gift for those looking for something different in attitudes to place or attempting to embed contemporary Jewish travel in ideas from earlier times, the following appears in the Babylonian Talmud (Berachot 57b):

Rav Hamnuna expounded. One who sees Babylon must recite five blessings:
One who sees Babylon itself says: "Blessed is He who has destroyed the wicked

Babylon.” ...One who sees the palace of Nebuchadnezzar says: “Blessed is he who destroyed the palace of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar.”

This was not advocacy for a deliberate journey to a symbolic Jewish site—in this case, the palace of an iconic enemy of the Jews—but it does contain elements of what today might be labelled as peoplehood tourism: recognition of the symbolic historicity of the site and the adding of meaning to the moment by offering a formula of words to recited.

In later times, a variety of travel practices evolved that sit within particular Jewish subcultures. These include visits to the graves of the righteous (*hiloula*) became integral in some communities, most notably Moroccan, Libyan, and, particularly, European Hasidim, roots or heritage tourism popularized largely although not exclusively by American Jewry, and, most recently, a type of secular pilgrimage to mass murder sites in Europe and Israel tourism.

But what is missing is something systematic and embedded—a regular practice of Jews that could be added to the life and practice of communities worldwide. I therefore ask the question: can travel be added to the canon of Jewish peoplehood practices? To answer this, I shift the focus sideways to the advent of modern tourism in general and the eighteenth-century creation of the European Grand Tour in particular. This new cultural practice saw younger men and women from America and Europe journey to sites recognized as the birthplaces of European and Western culture (e.g., the sites of ancient Greece and Rome). The Grand Tour is an interesting model since it recognized many of the elements being reviewed here: the significance of the journey and the elevation of symbolic locations as the building blocks of group identity. Given its time and place, many aspects of the Grand Tour might be regarded as politically problematic today, but the core idea of a canon of places reflecting, challenging, and strengthening group (in this case, Western) identity cannot be avoided. The concept of a Grand Tour invites Peoplehood educators to establish how one selects sites from across the globe and weaves them together to build a compelling story of Jewish Peoplehood—its culture, meaning, and purpose.

Canonical Practice: Is There a Canon of Jewish Places?

Canons as sanctified bodies of cultural artefacts are viewed with suspicion by some who fear their exclusivity and the power assumptions of those who define their contents. There is no intention to replicate such power structures here; confirmation of the contents of the canon is left deliberately open with just the idea of it being deployed. But the strength of the idea is overwhelming. In considering the Jewish text, for example, the practice of weekly Torah reading initiated by Ezra the Scribe in sixth century BCE

Babylon changed Jewish practice forever. Or the program initiated by R. Meir Shapiro in 1923 Poland, known as *Daf Yomi*, according to which all Jews study the same page of Talmud every day though a seven-year cycle. In both cases, codified bodies of texts encountered through regular practice became a sort of gold standard for peoplehood practice.

What would it look like if the current generation were to adopt regular travel to sites of Jewish significance as a recognized practice of Jewish Peoplehood? For one thing, the discussion would immediately focus on the thorny but tantalizing question of which sites demand visitation. If there is to be a canon of Jewish travel, what are the determining criteria? Are the sites of Jewish memory and culture defined by major events and turning points, be they positive or negative, or by quieter more introspective but nonetheless significant and insightful moments? Few would challenge the idea that Auschwitz-Birkenau must be included in the canon, but are there equivalent sites that tell the opposite story, namely, that of acceptance and recognition, such as the French National Assembly where in 1790 Jewish citizenship was first declared or the shores of the United States where the rules of citizenship were written differently from the outset? And even if for security reasons it might not be that feasible currently, it would be hard to deny that the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates, the so called “waters of Babylon,” should be included in the canon of Jewish travel.

Canon of Travel vs. Canon of Questions

While the existence of a canon of Jewish travel may remain under debate, a parallel and slightly more sophisticated version asks: what is the canon of questions that the Jewish People must confront? And, therefore, with all the benefits of travel as a practice, where would be the best places to confront these questions? A list of relevant questions might include: what is understood as God? what is the role of borders and boundaries in Jewish culture? what is the responsibility of Jews to non-Jews? why is hatred an ongoing and ever-present part of the Jewish story? and how do Jews look at the future and the role of the Messiah?

There is a rich and extensive series of locations and backdrops to sharpen the relevant discussion on these weighty matters, but where, for example, would be the best setting to discuss God? On the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, on a mountain top in the Himalayas, in an abandoned wooden synagogue in Gondar, Ethiopia, by the crematoria in Auschwitz-Birkenau, or Temple Emanu-El in Manhattan? All are powerful places with the potential to inspire or destroy belief.

Or, taking the question of the messiah (in religious terms) or human redemption and the pursuit of a perfected world (in broader terms), what are the historical moments and associated locations dealing with why Jews seek redemptions and how they cope when that redemptive dream is not fulfilled? Options for locations are many, but suggestions might include the Ahride Synagogue in the Balat district of Istanbul or the Portuguese Synagogue in Izmir where the seventeenth century Shabbatei Zvi presented himself as the messiah. What intrigues is the distinct need for a redeemer at that specific time and place—Jews in these epicentres of the Sephardi diaspora, still traumatized by expulsion and inquisition. Crucially, this chapter of the Grand Tour would also include the mosque in the Tesvikiye district of Istanbul where the *Donme* prayed—a sect which continued to believe in Shabbetei Zvi long after his messianic pretensions had been superseded by his conversion to Islam. The question of why the Jews cling to the idea of redemption (in either religious or secular terms) is now further complicated by considering how Jews cope with the crushing feeling when the messiah does not come or proves false. Do failed redemptions neutralize the messianic impulse of Jews alongside all hopes for a better world?

In connecting canonical questions to sites, other options are available. This might include Berlin, Paris, or other centres of the European Enlightenment, where the redemption of citizenship, equal rights, and acceptance must be weighed against their repudiation in the 1930s and 1940s. Alternatively, it may lead to Vilna, the one-time capital of Jewish socialism, or even Odessa or Basle, as foundational locations of Zionism.

A Final Word: Learning Humility, Appreciating Diversity

As mentioned at the start, Peoplehood educators face challenges that in different ways, inhibit the appetite or openness to a broad Peoplehood consciousness. Neither the pedagogic advantages of travel nor the programmatic idea of the Grand Tour is imagined as all-encompassing panaceas. Nevertheless, they do challenge any exaggerated belief in localism, parochialism and certainly seek to allay the fears of those worried that Peoplehood prohibits universalism and becomes exclusive. Quite the opposite, what any focused Jewish travel quickly illuminates is the inter connectedness not only to Jews to each other but their societies in which they live and the intellectual currents that run through them. Furthermore, the diversity and differences of Jews through history and in different places, is a strength to be embraced. By harnessing the emotional and intellectual potential of educational travel, there is exposure to that diversity, as well as an invitation to be in dialogue with it. The experience often leaves travellers humbled at seeing a world bigger than them, refreshed, energised, and enlivened at the invitation to navigate their own pathway within it. By walking the footpaths of Jewish time and

space, and sharing in its inner conversations, there is something about peoplehood consciousness that becomes irresistible.

Useful Reading:

Erik Cohen, "Travel as a Jewish Educational Tool," in *International Handbook of Jewish Education*, ed. Miller, Grant, and Pomson (Springer, 2011).

Scott Copeland, "Israel Travel Education," in *International Handbook of Jewish Education*, ed. Miller, Grant and Pomson (Springer 2011).

Shaul Kelner, *Tours That Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism* (NYU Press, 2010).

Jack Kugelmas, "Why we go to Poland: Holocaust Tourism as Secular Ritual," in *Holocaust Memorials in History: The Art of History*, ed. James Young (Te Neus, 1994).

Jeremy Leigh, *Jewish Journeys* (Haus, London 2007).

Jeremy Leigh is the director of Israel Studies at Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. For the last thirty years, he has worked extensively in the field of Jewish travel: as a writer, training educators in the field and guiding groups to sites of Jewish interest around the world. He runs an educational travel project, 'Jewish Journeys' and is the author of a book by the same name (*Jewish Journeys*, Haus Publ. 2007). Jeremy is an academic advisor to the 'European Routes of Jewish Heritage' project, under the auspices of the AEPJ and the Council of Europe.



Peoplehood Education – A Work in Progress

Shlomi Ravid

Role and Purpose

A decade ago, when we launched the Center for Peoplehood Education, we published a paper called [Jewish Peoplehood Education - Framing the Field](#) (Ravid and Rafaeli, 2011).¹ It is fascinating to note that while most of the challenges articulated in the paper are very similar to today's, our understanding of Peoplehood and Peoplehood Education has developed significantly.

This paper will present some of the insights developed over the last decade regarding Jewish Peoplehood Education. It will show how a richer and more nuanced understanding of the concept can and should influence our educational goals and help us to better and more effectively address today's challenges.

The paper published a decade ago framed the following as the core goals of the field:

1. Engagement with the Jewish People.
2. Development of a Peoplehood consciousness.
3. Nurturing an action-oriented commitment to the Jewish collective.

This three stages approach perceived Peoplehood consciousness as a higher level of integration of the engagement with the people, into the individuals' world views. It assumed an instrumental pedagogic process designed to solidify the engagement and commitment to the Jewish People.

Ten years later our understanding of Peoplehood and Peoplehood consciousness has come a long way. We understand today that Peoplehood, in its diverse expressions, is at the base of our collective consciousness and enterprise. What is more, the sense of belonging and connection is an outcome of that consciousness (rather than the other

1 <https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsecureservercdn.net%2F160.153.138.53%2F3hq.1d3.myftpupload.com%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2012%2F10%2FTaskForceReport.pdf>

way around). As I will try to show in this paper, Peoplehood is much more than just belonging to a group. It is also about embracing values, ethos, visions, and aspirations. This understanding, in turn, influences the role of educators in the process.

What is Peoplehood?

Jewish Peoplehood, as any other Peoplehood, is first and foremost a consciousness. Rogers Brubaker in his definition of groups such as peoples speaks of them as "... a mutually interacting, mutually recognizing, mutually oriented, effectively communicating, bounded collectivity with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity and capacity for concerted action."² Very much in the spirit of his work in **Ethnicity Without Groups** (Brubaker 2006) we propose that in the case of peoples, national and ethnic groups and other "imagined communities" as Benedict Anderson frames them (Anderson 2006), the collective consciousness is what constitutes the group, frames its identity and interests as well as its values and ethos.

Rogers Smith offers a fresh analysis of the concept of peoplehood in his book **Political Peoplehood** (Smith 2015): "I define these 'political' peoples broadly, as any and all human associations, groups, and communities that are commonly understood to assert that their members owe them a measure of allegiance against the demands of other associations, communities, and groups."³ What is very interesting in Smith's approach is that even though he recognizes both the coercive force associated with the creation of peoples and the joint interests being served, he emphasizes the role of constitutive ethical values. "I have contended that though political peoples are generally created and maintained in part by coercive force, they cannot be sustained without narratives that persuade a critical mass of supporters to give willing allegiance to those associations and their leaders."⁴

According to Smith, "no societies can long endure without foundations comprised of varied constitutive themes that overlap in giving support to their predominant senses of peoplehood and basic values and institutions."⁵ What role do those themes play according to Smith? "An ethically constitutive story presents membership as profoundly expressive of something very basic to the members' identities – their heritage and

2 Brubaker (2006), 12.

3 Smith (2015), 2.

4 Ibid., 3.

5 Ibid., 211.

place in a meaningful larger order, whether divine, natural, historical, or cultural.”⁶

According to Smith those constitutive themes expressed through stories of Peoplehood (Smith 2003) provide the cornerstone and foundations of Peoplehoods:

They provide sturdy anchors of morally compelling identity and worth amidst the roiling seas of competitive community construction. They give us a sense of belonging, a sense of place in the world, a sense of partnership in a larger, meaningful collective existence and its shared endeavors. They help us make sense of our lives, intellectually and morally. And in so doing, they help to cement and sustain the communities that sustain us. Many people are in fact so deeply invested in the ethically constitutive stories that have given definition and meaning to their communal and personal lives that the very notion of conceiving of themselves or their affiliations very differently seems alien, unnatural, immoral.⁷

Peoplehood is then a consciousness expressing a holistic world view composed of the interests and values of the group. It is based on heritage, history, memory, ethos, and vision. In the Jewish case Rav Soloveitchik captured it beautifully through the covenants of Fate and Destiny (Soloveitchik 2006) and Mordechai Kaplan (Kaplan 1981), anchored it in the Jewish civilizational enterprise. These framings challenge us to define and redefine our educational goals in the dynamic context of our times.

The Educational Goals

In analyzing role of peoplehood stories in constituting the identity of the members of peoples, Smith highlights the interface between the collective and its individuals:

... all persons' senses of their personhood—of their identities, interests, values, and aspirations—are constituted in large part by their absorption of and reflection on the stories of their peoplehood that form part of their socialization. We think and feel ourselves to be formed by religions, nations, kinship groups, ethnicities, cultures, political movements, social classes, regions, and other identities whose significance we have had narrated to us in many ways from early in life. We define our goals and decide on our actions in light of the identities we find most compelling. Since this is true of all persons, the institutions, practices, and policies that people go on to create, sustain, or modify are also constituted in part by

⁶ Smith (2003), 98.

⁷ Ibid., 100.

ideas expressed in the stories of peoplehood they have embraced. It is in fact impossible to make much sense of how and why people act, or their collective institutions and practices, without understanding the themes of those stories.⁸

Peoplehood Education in this context is about transmitting the essence of our Peoplehood to students, engaging them with the collective values, ethos and identities for the purpose of impacting their socialization process. In our specific case, it is about the development and nurturing of Jewish collective consciousness.

In the Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education's [Toolkit](#)⁹ we framed the central goal of Peoplehood Education as the development of Jewish Peoplehood Consciousness—"a synthesis of the emotional and intellectual connections to the idea and reality of the Jewish People." Our holistic approach was based on the integration of three components:

4. **Engagement** with the Jewish People – Connecting with the **heart**
5. Developing Peoplehood **Commitment** through knowledge – Connecting with the **mind**
6. Motivating **Action-Oriented** expressions of belonging to the Jewish collective enterprise—Connecting with the **hands**

In the five years that have passed since the Toolkit has been launched and following multiple workshops and courses, we believe the general pedagogic approach is indeed useful. However, some new insights need to be taken into consideration:

1. The above frames Peoplehood Education in terms of educational processes and outcomes. But, as discussed above, there is more to collective consciousness than to inspire engagement and commitment to a group. Peoplehood consciousness, as detailed above, is a holistic worldview that integrates a relationship with a group with the collective ethos, values, and aspirations. In that respect the pedagogy should aim beyond the development of a sense of belonging to wrestling with and the nurturing of collective values and ethos. Those are not only inseparable from the collective consciousness, but also provide the unique meaning and purpose of Jewish Peoplehood.
2. **Peoplehood constitutes the Jewish social and communal enterprise. It gives both local and global Jewish organizations and institutions their rationale,**

⁸ Smith (2015), 8-9.

⁹ <https://jpeoplehood.org/toolkit/what-why-how/pedagogy/>

purpose, mission, and meaning. Organizations such as Federations, JCCs, congregations, schools, and for that matter most local communal organizations, are expressions of Jewish Peoplehood. This is also true of national and global organizations such as JDC, JFNA, JAFI, Hillel, the Religious Movements, Moishe House, ROI, and many more.

Understanding things in such terms emphasizes the fact that we do not teach or study Peoplehood *Leshem Shamayim*, but in order to understand, envision, and implement Jewish communal and institutional life. We need to align our pedagogy accordingly.

3. There are diverse interpretations as to the meaning of Jewish Peoplehood today. Coming to terms with this reality requires that we adopt a pluralistic approach to Peoplehood. That we respect different perspectives based on localities, Jewish practice, political views, and more. While entitled to disagree with them, we need to remain committed to the dialogue and the Jewish people itself. This approach has to become central to Peoplehood Education.

Revisiting Peoplehood Educational Goals

How does one integrate the above insights into a holistic educational approach? First a word of caution and humility. Collective consciousness is a product of broad historical and sociological processes. Most of the socialization process takes place in the family, community, media, etc. Educators can contribute modestly by engaging, creating curiosity, enabling meaningful conversations, and advancing reflections. If those are pursued effectively, they can help the students advance in their engagement, understanding and Peoplehood activism.

I propose an integrated approach that addresses the affective and cognitive levels of education simultaneously and can lead to a high level of personal commitment to the Jewish future.

1. **The affective level** – integrating Peoplehood into the individual world view needs to engage the learner affectively. We need to nurture a sense of identification with the “extended family” and its history, achievements and challenges, yielding a sense of pride, empathy and solidarity. We need to highlight simultaneously our collective passion to making the world a better and a more just place, as a source of pride, meaning and inspiration. Feeling part of the people who wrote the Bible, who gave birth to the Jewish prophets and who built and sustained a flourishing Jewish civilization is unique, special and meaningful.

2. **The cognitive level** – At the cognitive level we need to highlight and emphasize some of the following points:
 - a. Judaism is not an individual's enterprise and has always been a collective one.
 - b. Peoplehood is the consciousness that constitutes the collective dimension of Judaism. It is the spirit behind Jewish civilization as a social enterprise.
 - c. Peoplehood constitutes the local Jewish community as well as the global one, including their organizations and institutions.
 - d. Jewish Peoplehood is an expression of what Rav Soloveitchk has framed as both a covenant of fate and a covenant of destiny, as well as the tensions between them.
 - e. At its core are both the notions of *Kol Yisrael Areivim Ze Laze* and our commitment to pursuing justice and *Tikkun Olam*.
 - f. The State of Israel is indeed a Peoplehood project, yet its policies are open to discussion and criticism.
 - g. Peoplehood is dynamic and is shaped by every generation according to its beliefs.
 - h. Furthermore, it is pluralistic and is perceived differently, for example, by Israeli and American Jews. This is a natural progression that we should welcome as long as we do not lose sight of keeping our global collective identity as a People.
3. **Reflection** – If our goal is to nurture Jewish collective consciousness in the minds of our students, reflection plays a crucial role. Students need to go through the process of reflecting on how Peoplehood relates to them personally. What does it imply for them, for their perception of the local community as well as the Jewish people globally? What are the benefits and the rights of being a member of the Jewish People and what are the commitments? How do the values of the Jewish People integrate with their personal value system, and how are tensions and disagreements dealt with? What does being a citizen of the Jewish people entail? How do all these impact their lives' commitments and what can, and should it look like practically?

Outcomes

Peoplehood Education presupposes the added value of the Jewish collective ethos and enterprise. It seeks to engage Jews in their collective wellbeing, the continuing work to

sustain and develop the Jewish civilizational enterprise, and the efforts in making this world better and more just. The outcome of the educational process should be people who are curious, engaged, knowledgeable and committed. People who integrate their hearts' passion with a deep consciousness that translates to a life-long action-oriented commitment to the Jewish people and its enterprise.

In the 21st century that means passionate people who care and are committed but at the same time have nuanced perspectives and are open minded. Those are required in order to successfully address today's challenges, and the need to re-envision current and future Peoplehood. Much of it hangs on the outcomes of Peoplehood Education. For as Mordechai Kaplan says: "Whether the Jewish people is alive, moribund, or dead, depends upon the extent to which individual Jews, not only wish but act upon the wish, to perpetuate Jewish life, Jewish association, and Jewish co-operation for common objectives."¹⁰

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10 Kaplan (1955), 37.

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Sustaining a Creative People: Learning the Habits of Creative Thinking

By Miriam Heller Stern

Throughout history, to survive and thrive, Jews have had to learn to adapt and disrupt. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (2014) has described the Jewish people as “a creative minority.” We are “history’s great problem-solvers.” Ours is the project of “maintaining strong links with the outside world while staying true to your faith, seeking not merely to keep the sacred flame burning but also to transform the larger society of which you are a part.”¹ Every generation faces new challenges that demand creative responses. How do we learn the sensibilities and skills required for the task?

The work of sustaining the Jewish people is both internal and external, Sacks explains. Historically, we have devised educational strategies to strengthen the Jewish People from within and experimenting with ideas and practices within host cultures. This history of problem-solving, creating and overcoming runs deep. When the second *beit hamikdash*, the holy Temple in Jerusalem, was under attack from without, and the Jews of Israel were attacking each other from within, a new future of distributed worship was imagined, as was the future of learning, in Yavneh and in the thriving learning centers of Babylonia. Bible commentary flourished surrounded by Christian culture; and Jewish philosophy developed surrounded by Islam.

Our creative work spans the intellectual and spiritual to the cultural and familial. Here I am applying Sir Ken Robinson’s definition of creativity, “having original ideas of value.” Like artists, in every host society we have borrowed and sampled, and yet preserved and persevered, by creating new Jewish languages, music, art, culture and food traditions. Recipes expressed Jewish tradition with local available ingredients even when resources were scant. Art, music, and poetry expressed prophetic hopes. Grandparents and parents shared stories, jokes and advice that future generations would retell and revise in their

¹ Jonathan Sacks, “On Creative Minorities.” <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2014/01/on-creative-minorities> (2014).

own voice. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the boundaries between public and private, institution and home blurred; again, we needed new strategies to express our Jewish connections and commitments.

In every age, we have figured out how to be resourceful and resilient to survive and thrive. We adjusted how we communicate and connect; we remixed our rituals and customs in new ways that bind us together locally and globally and yet preserve ethnic and regional distinctions. Be it adapting or disrupting, an abiding Jewish consciousness has operated across a spectrum of Jewish thought and practice, divergent in ideologies and strategies, but convergent in the shared aspiration that Judaism will continue to inspire generations and societies of the future.

Jewish creativity has been a catalyst of Jewish Peoplehood throughout history, and will no doubt need to be a key sensibility in charting our collective future. How do we learn this sensibility? Can creative thinking be taught? While certainly intellectual creativity grew out of scholarly and educational spaces, Jewish creativity flourished across lived experience in homes, communal institutions and the public square. In contemporary Jewish life, a very broad spectrum of institutions define their mission as educational and assume the mantle that once lived in the Jewish home and lived experience. Both formal schools and the wide variety of informal programs could embark on a project to cultivate the habits of creative thinking as a thruline of Jewish Peoplehood.

The Jewish People have long been identified as the People of the Book. But in a knowledge society, where “the book” is now a democratized, open access endless web of information and commentary, we might reframe our collective identity around *the ingenious things we do with that knowledge* beyond holding and transmitting it. I propose that we move beyond the shared knowledge itself to the creative thinking that animates, applies and fuels further Jewish thinking, and thus, binds together the Jewish People in an enduring legacy. To do so, we must plan intentionally to create the conditions where creative thinking can happen.

Modern industrial education was not designed with this purpose in mind and might even hinder the success of the project of pursuing creative thinking as an aspiration of Jewish Peoplehood Education. A pedagogy designed to cultivate a creative People will need to defy many of the trappings of modern industrial education where order, hierarchy, standardized assessment and linear success govern the experience. Teaching for creativity is not teacher-centered or test-centered. It is authentic (e.g., reflects real-life experience with real impact), process-oriented, and collaborative. That being said, creative thinking is not a bunch of made-up ideas, fluffy, artsy, or a break from learning. It is problem-

solving, imagination, and invention. The learning experience must be grounded in substance, building in rigor and challenge, to succeed.

At the same time, “informal” education should engage participants in thinking in active, structured ways. It is essential to avoid the trap of treating knowledge and experience or knowledge and belonging as false binaries. To accomplish both, proponents of creative education argue for a shift in the teacher’s stance. In his book *Creative Schools: The Grassroots Revolution That’s Transforming Education*, Sir Ken Robinson (2016) proposed four E’s to center the learner as an actor, operating with high standards as well as agency: “engage, enable, expect, empower.” Mitchel Resnick (2018) suggests four C’s in his book on the MIT Media Lab, *Lifelong Kindergarten*: “catalyze, consult, connect, collaborate.” He emphasizes thinking and experimenting with others while consulting with experts. These approaches do not abandon knowledge; rather they emphasize engaging with and applying wisdom with an eye toward discovery. Moreover, each of these teaching stances emphasize relationship: a sense of community and collective responsibility emerges between and among teachers and learners. Teachers interested in cultivating creative thinkers might choose these or similar verbs to live by in their daily practice.

Creative thinking is not taught prescriptively. Rather it is a sensibility that is habituated. What I mean by habituated is that we learn it by living it routinely so that it becomes intuitive, thickening and deepening as we study and grow. Vanessa Ochs, in a now classic essay in *Sh’ma*, proposed that there is a “code of Jewish sensibilities,” which she calls the “particularly Jewish ways of thinking about what it means to be human, ways that guide and orient a person’s actions and choices.” With 21st century technology and unlimited access to knowledge in our grasp, we also have thousands of years of Jewish wisdom to guide the way. Our “code” of Jewish sensibilities can be among the primary tools we teach our children to shape healthy curiosity, creative ideas, constructive debate, and community commitments. Inspired by Ochs, I propose that there are Jewish creative sensibilities which ground and guide our creative thinking as Jews. Here are just a few examples:²

- *Lech lecha*/be bold: follow the courageous move of our ancestors Abraham and Sarah to respond to a calling, take a risk and embrace uncertainty to do what is right, even if it is not the typical, popular path.

² For a full discussion of Jewish creative sensibilities a framework for designing Jewish education, see Miriam Heller Stern, “Jewish Creative Sensibilities: Framing a New Aspiration for Jewish Education,” *Journal of Jewish Education* 85:4 (2019): 429-446, DOI: [10.1080/15244113.2019.1686336](https://doi.org/10.1080/15244113.2019.1686336)

- *Shabbat/sacred pause*: We create for six days; and on the 7th, we pause for sacred connection. Whether we practice a traditional halachic Shabbat or create new contemporary Shabbat practices, the pause is when we reflect and renew, so that we can restart creative activity with new perspective and energy.
- *Teshuva/repair*: We embrace our imperfection. We can and we must revise and refine as we go. Knowing that teshuva is possible, opens more possibility for trying, and when we fail, learning, repairing, and improving. The teshuva process also forces us to face those who have suffered at the expense of our failed behavior; learning through teshuva is a reminder that we have a responsibility to deepen our empathy and our humanity when it comes to our care for others.
- *Elu v'elu divrei Elohim chayim/difference is divinely inspired*: This mantra was the conclusion to a famous impasse between the houses of Hillel and Shammai in the Talmud; it reminds us that multiple perspectives have value and release us from cognitive tunnels. Multiple solutions are worthy of consideration. Healthy debate produces new ideas.

The beauty of these “Jewish sensibilities” is that they are not simply bumper stickers or slogans. Each one has a deep well of source material: classical texts, commentaries, literature, art, music, personal stories, oral histories, ritual, and more. Just recently, browsing Sefaria, I discovered a commentary on Genesis 12:1 that I had not learned previously. It added a whole new dimension to my understanding of Abraham’s risk in Lech Lecha, which I used to frame professional learning about bold leadership. At the same time, my learners’ stories of risk-taking brought the ancient story into contemporary focus. The discussion readied us as a cohort for bold action in leading change.

Our cherished sources, ancient and modern, can be studied, discussed, adapted, personalized and applied. They model for us many ways to express and enact core Jewish beliefs and practices. These sensibilities are meant to be realized through lived experience. They are a compass to keep our “why” in focus as we develop ways to achieve that collective purpose. It’s essential in a fast-changing world that constantly challenges us to clarify who we are and for what we stand.

How can our learning and living spaces become laboratories for developing these sensibilities? Creative companies and schools achieve a creative culture when these elements are nurtured:

- investment in shared purpose
- psychological safety for risk-taking

- shared high standards
- articulated norms of engagement (an expectation of generosity of spirit)
- candid and constructive feedback to improve and refine ideas and products
- diverse perspectives and contributions are valued
- joy/playfulness
- collaboration

Collaboration is an important element of generating and refining ideas. Contrary to the idea that only lone geniuses are creative, creative thinking can be participatory and distributed, especially if the surrounding culture promotes it and the needs or tasks benefit from versatile strengths. I'll risk sharing a half-baked idea if I know I can count on my peers to help me refine it; if we pool our brainpower, we will inspire each other, and something new and valuable will be born. Think of the best creative teams in theater companies and film studios; that collaboration can be a lever for strengthening Jewish Peoplehood in its pluralism and diversity.

I have explored who, what and how we engage in creative thinking. When are we most creative? **Crisis has historically forced the need for creative thinking, such as extreme pressures like anti-Semitic oppression or discrimination, forced migration, political upheaval, or dire lack of opportunity. "Golden ages" of privilege and prosperity have also produced surges in creativity. Our present moment in history may be a dance between both, making Jewish creativity a strategy for leadership and change, an outlet for coping and a means of spiritual and moral expression. We face a unique combination of opportunity and challenge as a Jewish People. Creative thinking leads us to invent new vehicles for expanding joy and hope as well as processing pain and fear. As social experiences, expressions of our creative Jewish sensibilities connect and define us in community.**

Jewish Peoplehood should not be confined to an inward-looking, narcissistic project of self-preservation. A thriving Jewish People nourishes themselves and the society around them. This is the task of the creative minority. A culture of creative thinking can engage Jews in contributing each in their own way to the project of looking both inward and outward, as:

- interpreters of the Jewish tradition
- inventors of new technologies
- composers of new musical genres
- authors of great literary works

- creators of new Jewish languages and constructive norms of communication
- healers with new Jewish and medical strategies for spiritual, mental and physical health
- weavers of authentic relationships and communities, using new technologies
- advocates who debate with dignity in the public square
- leaders who pursue justice, fairness, and righteousness
- strategists who can imagine and identify multiple solutions to difficult challenges

I offer creative thinking here as a broad vision, a set of outcomes, a pedagogy and a learning culture to strengthen Jewish Peoplehood. In an age of opportunity and uncertainty, not just who and what we know, but *how we think and act* will define who we can become.

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The Peoplehood Papers provide a platform for Jews to discuss their common agenda and key issues related to their collective identity. The journal appears three times a year, with each issue addressing a specific theme. The editors invite you to share your thoughts on the ideas and discussions in the Papers, as well as all matters pertinent to Jewish Peoplehood: publications@jpeoplehood.org.

Past issues can be accessed at www.jpeoplehood.org/library

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

Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership is an institution of higher Jewish education, founded in 1924. With core values focused on academic excellence, openness and connection, and convening and community building, Spertus develops and offers programs and initiatives that apply Jewish thought, texts, and experiences to address the most pressing issues of today and tomorrow, within and beyond the Jewish communities. Through this work, Spertus seeks to build adaptive capacity for a rapidly changing and accelerating world by empowering Jewish communal professionals, educators, leaders, and learners to make significant Jewish impact.



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