Aims & Scope

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Part One

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Jewish Peoplehood Education

David Mittelberg

Introduction

Recent studies sponsored by the American Jewish Committee (Ukeles, Miller, & Beck, 2006; Shimon & Shaltiel, 2006) and Cohen et al. (2008), indicate that the next generation of American and Israeli youth are relatively ignorant of, uneducated about, and unaffected by each other, suggesting that the goal of global solidarity of the Jewish people is constantly challenged. Increasingly, the paradigm of Jewish peoplehood is being offered as a framework to address this problem. Before reviewing some of the educational models that currently exist and addressing the question of what a useful paradigm of Jewish peoplehood might look like, it is important to consider the larger question of the very need for peoplehood education. Is there even such a need and why? This chapter will argue that (1) in both Israel and the Diaspora, Jewish youth seem to feel little existential need to belong to a Jewish collective (local or global), (2) The Jewish people has an existential and urgent need to instill a sense of belonging in its next generation if it wishes to survive, (3) the paradigm of Jewish peoplehood and the practice of Jewish peoplehood education, can respond effectively to the task of instilling a need to belong that can be shared by both Israeli and Diaspora young Jews.

The need shared by Israeli and Diaspora Jewry as collectives, is their common incapacity to awaken in their youth a sense of strong belonging to their Jewish community. While in the Diaspora the tension between the non-Jewish universal and the Jewish particular is emphasized by, and reflected in part by increasing rates of out-marriage, in Israel the tension between being universal and being Jewish manifests itself quite differently, specifically between being Jewish and being democratic. Sometimes, it is also reflected between being Jewish and being Israeli, or between staying in Israel and leaving the nation. All of these are serious tensions and pose in fact a threat not only to the connections and commonalities between Israeli Jews and Jews in the Diaspora, but perhaps even to the Jewish continuity of each community.

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One of the universal but non-ideological factors that differentiates between being Jewish in Israel and being Jewish in the Diaspora, is that in the Diaspora no one can take being Jewish for granted. One has to make the effort to be Jewish. One must create Jewish space in the non-Jewish world within which we live. Thus, in the modern world where personal identity is a matter of a choice among multiple choices, the challenge is to promote the choice to be Jewish where the prevailing majority status quo is non-Jewish.

In Israel, the reverse side of the same problem is prevalent. In Israel, everyone takes being Jewish for granted. Since Jewishness is ubiquitous in the public domain, Israeli Jews are not compelled to affirm it. Indeed, it is precisely because being Jewish is taken for granted that it becomes the problem. Because Israeli Jews take their Jewishness for granted, Israeli Jewish adolescents have to go to European sites; for example, the death camp of Majdanek, in State-sponsored visits, in order to begin to understand Jewish tradition and pre-State history. Of course, there is an additional problem in that the Israeli educational system does not teach contemporary Jewish history to its pupils, certainly not about Jewish life in the Diaspora today, or the last 60 years for that matter.

Despite the wide-ranging plurality of its forms (albeit without an ideology of pluralism), Israeli Jewishness lacks its flexibility and portability. One cannot take Israeli Judaism when leaving Israel, unless one is a practicing religious Jew. So while Diaspora Judaism has the fundamental weakness of not being situated within a sovereign Jewish state, it has the powerful advantage of being portable and adaptable through multiple mutations and permutations of external society. These are very fundamental, existential differences between Israeli and Diaspora Judaism that I do not think can be transformed by any ideology. Moreover, they both represent critical flaws to a thriving Jewish existence. It is possible that Jewish peoplehood might offer a reasonable, responsible response to these existential challenges facing both Israeli and Diaspora Judaism.

**Philosophical Underpinnings of the Discourse**

Michael Rosenak (2008) suggests that the discourse of peoplehood provides a constructive answer. He claims that the search for commonalities offered by the paradigm of Jewish peoplehood is both useful and meaningful, for it offers "... Jewish self-identification without shared religiosity, or a cultivation of a national culture... . . . . . it does not even require a common language: and it does not insist that all Jews come on Aliya... . . . . ." (Ibid., 13). By neither mandating a common language nor insisting on normative immigration to Israel, and, moreover, by blurring the differences between Jews, rather than accentuating antagonistic differences, Jewish peoplehood fuels the continuing search for shared meaning within the current ambiguity and ambivalence that face Jews in both Israel and abroad.

Unlike Soloveitchik, for Rosenak, the choice is not between 'mere' fate and essential destiny, but rather a question of whether there can be found a new foundation for Jewish peoplehood that all Jews can share. Rosenak is searching for...
While Mordecai Kaplan offered us a groundbreaking formula to resist the reduction of contemporary Judaism to a religion or State alone, Simon Rawidowicz pioneered a language of dialogue that was ahead of its time and rejected by his peers. In his "Ever Dying People," Rawidowicz writes that as early as in 1948 he called in Hebrew for a partnership relation between Israel and the Diaspora. "Twenty years ago, I began to speak about a "partnership" between the Land of Israel and the Diaspora of Israel. Instead of Ahad Ha-Am's prevailing conception of a center and circumference, of a circle with one focus, I attempted to develop a conception of the people of Israel as a whole, as an ellipse with two foci, the Land of Israel and the Diaspora of Israel. Later, I tried to develop this system further under the symbolic title of "Israel is One": the Land of Israel and the Diaspora of Israel, two that are one." (Rawidowicz, 1986, p. 151)

Thus, Rawidowicz referred directly to the transnational component of Jewish collective life, prefiguring current Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) terminology by calling for a partnership between Israel and the Diaspora.

Rawidowicz's call was unheeded because it was framed or perceived in normative contested language; when understood as sociological imperative of partnership, however, as in Eisen's terms, it may be that what was rejected 60 years ago can now become a center piece of global Jewish life.

The Jewish Peoplehood Discourse

A wide-ranging discussion on Jewish peoplehood exists, as reported in part by Kopelowitz and Engelberg (2007). It seems, however, that for the most part, this is an internal discourse between Israelis, mostly of Anglo origin, with primarily, North American Diaspora Jews. This lack of symmetry belies the attractive inclusiveness of the term 'peoplehood' and undermines its capacity to serve as a shared paradigm for Jews both in Israel and the Diaspora.

Fishman (2007) succinctly defines 'peoplehood as an ethnic group sharing a common descent, language, culture and homeland' (2007, p. 44). These four components may become subjective, compelling constructs of individual life, through the engagement of Jews with each other, through value-driven local and transnational, reciprocal, social networks, generating the individual and group resource of ethnic social capital. They too must be emphasized and nurtured in order to achieve a more mutual, shared discourse than currently exists.

Thus, Jewish peoplehood may be conceived as the dimension of Jewishness that 'thickens' the lines of engagement between Jews. Jewish peoplehood, furthermore, crosses the divides that exist between religious - secular and Israel - Diaspora. In this regard, Jewish peoplehood cannot be reduced to a particular constituent of either of these two antinomies, but rather contains them both—and maybe even others. We adopt Shulman's conviction (2009) that a multiple identity is a virtue for the modern person, and add that the Jewish peoplehood paradigm provides the quintessential framework within which may be situated the multiple identity of the global Jewish modern. In actuality, neither Israeli Jewry nor Diaspora Jewry can, on its own, generate global Jewish peoplehood, both are dependent on each other to utilize the transnational platform for transnational goals.

The goal for Jewish peoplehood education, therefore, is to build interdependence, reciprocity and mutuality while accepting multiplicity of identity. In the emerging field of Jewish peoplehood education, there is a range of different educational programs (see Kopelowitz and Engelberg, 2007). This chapter will review only those programs that include core practices engaging both Israeli and Diaspora Jews with the goal of enhancing the Jewishness of each other, through the connectivity with each other (see below).

This discourse on Jewish peoplehood has been propelled by a number of recent initiatives and institutions. Kopelowitz and Ravivi (2008) report on a conference convened by the UJA-Federation of New York and JAFI in 2005, where the Jewish peoplehood discourse received an important, intellectual contemporary articulation.

In the following years, Oranim Academic College of Education, the Department of Jewish Peoplehood—Oren convened two conferences on Jewish peoplehood. In June 2006, with the support of the Department of Education at JAFI, a conference summarizing the work of a year-long think-tank on the subject of Jewish peoplehood education for Israeli Jews, was convened. Two years later in June 2008, Oranim hosted a second conference dealing with Global Jewish peoplehood education.

Philanthropic foundations have also exercised initiative in building institutions to address this issue. Efforts by the Yad b'Yad and the establishment of the International School for Jewish Peoplehood Studies at Ben-Gurion University (since November 2006). This school has pursued critical strategic initiatives with UJA-Federation of NY and JAFI, as well as with important practitioner educational institutions in Israel and the Diaspora (see below). In the second half of 2009, the School has shifted to developing programs for the renewed Museum of the Jewish People, and in response in November 2009, the Partnership of NADAV, UJA Federation of NY and JAFI will launch the Jewish Peoplehood Hub. This new entity will function as a strategic catalyst and incubator in the Jewish world, aspiring to nurture Jewish Peoplehood globally (including the continuation of projects originally launched by the SIPS).

The field of research on Jewish peoplehood was advanced with the establishment of the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute in 2002, and most recently, Cohen and Yaar (forthcoming) reported at the Herzliya Conference in April 2009 on their work developing a Jewish peoplehood index, based on a first-ever, bi-national survey conducted in Israel and in North America.

At the time of writing this chapter, the Israeli government had launched a global "consultative process" designed by JPPPI, to generate policy recommendations for the Israeli government on how to strengthen Jewish identity and connection to Israel. The questions still to be addressed are whose identity needs to be strengthened and the purposes of the connections.

Just as the above process has unfolded top-down, so educational practitioners working on the transnational interface between Jewish communities in Israel and the Diaspora, have pioneered bottom-up initiatives in Jewish peoplehood
education. Here, too, support of private foundations, major Jewish Federations such as New York, Boston, and San Francisco as well as JAFI, have been critical in this process. Inductively and at first, perhaps somewhat intuitively, over the last decade, as Kopelowitz and Engelberg report, select institutions such as Oranim Academic College of Education, have developed a structure and content of Jewish peoplehood education. Oranim, in fact, has maintained uninterrupted, in-house evaluation of this process over the entire decade. When taken together, all of these processes present us with an opportunity to review both the intellectual discourse and the practice of Jewish peoplehood education and to seek the possible sources of synergy between them. Finally, an attempt will be made to develop an agenda of the many research questions that remain unasked and/or unanswered despite the intensive activity reported above.

The Jewish Peoplehood Discourse and Educational Practice

Kopelowitz and Engelberg (2007) review the renaissance of the discourse on Jewish peoplehood since Kaplan and the degree to which this intellectual discourse guides Jewish educators today. They point out how the very term is contested by Jewish scholars worldwide who are divided into two broad schools, with at least one Israeli institution in denial over the very term (Amim = peoplehood in Hebrew), (See also Kopelowitz & Ravivi, 2008).

The two schools of thought, 'communitarian' on the one hand and 'liberal' on the other, bear some correlation to Rosenak's understanding of Soloveitchik's distinction between the "covenant of destiny" and "covenant of fate," respectively. (Rosenak, 2008, p. 15). The communitarian scholars emphasize normative prescriptions of peoplehood including: Covenant, Tikun Olim/repairing the world, mutual responsibility, commandments/obligations; the liberal notion of peoplehood, recognizing the power of individual choice, is characterized as seeking a pluralistic content within a shared framework or common public. This latter notion is envisaged as a cross-cultural conversation transcending Jewish cultural and religious diversity while building the social capital required for the networks and institutional structure of Jewish community.

Kopelowitz and Engelberg offer three core principles common to both schools, which define Jewish peoplehood as:

1. A multi-dimensional experience
2. Rejection of a strong ideology
3. Connections between Jews, not Jewish identity
   To their three categories, I would offer a fourth:
4. Connections between communities and their local institutions

My fourth category refers of course, to the platform on which Jewish peoplehood must stand if it is not to be reduced to an idea or an image, namely the "glocal." I define glocal as "the global and the local simultaneously and contend that glocal relationships must exist between Jewish communities qua communities. The transnational School-to-School Connections Program (see below) is one example of this dimension.

Further developing these ideas, Kopelowitz and Engelberg (2009) articulate three levels of [an individual]'s (my emphasis) connection to the Jewish people. These are (1) the emotional (2) the intellectual and (3) holding a consciousness of belonging to the Jewish people (ibid., 14).

While these are critical elements required to evaluate change in a participant's sense of belonging to the Jewish people following Jewish peoplehood programming, this subjective domain of the participant does not exhaust the theoretical field of Jewish peoplehood, and hence, the addition of my fourth objective element above.

In both papers, Kopelowitz and Engelberg explain the post-2000 peoplehood renaissance as a consequence of an ideological vacuum that derives from the loss of a centrist ideology that is compelling for a majority of Jews worldwide. While this absence may explain the openness of Jewish leadership to an alternative framework, it does nothing to sustain Jewish peoplehood in the long term. What might add to this analysis by Kopelowitz and Engelberg? Scholarship in the areas of Jewish philosophy and sociology, for all its historical breadth and depth, begins its analysis understandably from within, moving outward from there. Strengths and weaknesses are sought and found within the Jewish sphere. Peoplehood has developed vitality not just because of what has changed within the Jews, but rather due to what has changed in the world at large.

Just as Zionism arose within the larger project of European and then global nation building, so too peoplehood will thrive in the global world of transnational peoples. It is not, as some post-modernists might claim, that the nation-state has declined, but rather that we are witnessing the demise of the culturally homogeneous nation-state, everywhere. That type of nation-state is being replaced by multicultural societies; they will be followed by multicultural regimes. Hundreds of millions of human beings today live outside the country in which they themselves were born. The phenomenon of transnational peoples is growing and expanding. While the Jews may well have been the FIRST transnational people with homeland and diasporas, today they are only one among a growing number of peoples in this situation.

The time has come for mainstream global Jewish scholarship to take these changes seriously and to look beyond the often self-serving, dyadic, quasi mutually-exclusive relationships that have characterized the Israel --- Diaspora discourse and existence. The historical possibilities and opportunities exist now for the Jewish people to continue to thrive and actually to develop a transnational civilization not very different from that imagined by Kaplan and Rawickowicz. Through the reconstruction of innovative multilateral global Jewish scholarship can be generated a new discourse on Jewish peoplehood that can recommend policy changes for Jewish leadership.

The normative call for a glocal (both global and local) relationship of all Jews with each other, implied by the fourth domain I referred to above, has already been made by Deborah Dash Moore (2005), who critiques the current model of Jewish citizenship, particularly of Israeli and American Jews, as being essentially binary: Israel versus the Diaspora (ibid., 38).
Moore argues that transnationalism is a state encompassing both the identity and practices of individuals and groups that "assumes multiple social relationships—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that link together" (ibid.) different societies. Moore believes that a transnational Jewish citizenship characterized by "cultural exchange, mutual support, political engagement, religious dialogue, social interchange, economic cooperation, [and] educational fellowship" (ibid.) is the "best way to support and sustain Israel" (ibid.). The transnationalism Moore envisions involves several important elements: the active participation of both the Diaspora and Israeli Jews in Jewish societies, the expression of a variety of different (Jewish) perspectives in Jewish societies (ibid., 37), the encouragement of "multiplicity rather than uniformity" (ibid., 38), and finally, the encouragement of "cooperation rather than competition [in response to] changing circumstances" (ibid.).

Moore believes that increasing interaction and transcending binary roles—and thereby "moving to a new type of transnationalism that could reconfigure what is implied in the term 'Jewish State'" (ibid., 37)—is the best strategy for sustaining Israel. A first step for Israel might be to "redefine its understanding of a 'Jewish state' [by] re-examining the Zionist belief in the negation of the Diaspora" (ibid., 38), while increasing interaction with Israel "would allow American Jews to identify with sectors of the Israeli population rather than with the state... help[ing] to move American Jews away from an idealized understanding of Israel!" (ibid., 37).

In addition, by sharing in a transnational Jewish citizenship, Israelis would forge "multiple ties of involvement that would broaden and deepen their understanding of Jewish peoplehood" (ibid., 38), invigorating the Israeli experience of Judaism. Through the above-described transnationalism, Jews would develop a form of "ethical peoplehood" that would "re-imagine the possibilities of religious community and responsibility" (ibid.).

Measures of Jewish Peoplehood

Can one offer any social scientific basis that such a transnational strategy would have any popular support? In order to explore the potential for this re-imagination of Jewish peoplehood among Diaspora Jews, I report below briefly part of my own analysis of the American NIPSS2001 data, followed by a brief contrast with data from British and Australian Jewry.

(A) Collective Definition of American Jews

The 2001–2002 National Jewish Population Study explored several different definitions of what Jews in America consider themselves to be, i.e., a religious group, an ethnic group, a cultural group, a nationality, a part of a worldwide people. While variations exist across denominations and between respondents who have or have not visited Israel, 70–80% of Jews in America see themselves as a religious, cultural, and ethnic group (Mittelberg, 2007). The percentage of Jews in America who agree that Jews are a nationality drops significantly;

Orthodox Jews are the only denomination with a majority (around 60%) agreeing with this statement. Despite the widespread rejection of the collective identity of nationality, we find across-the-board acceptance (again, 70–80%) of the collective identity of American Jews as being part of a worldwide Jewish People (see Fig. 1).

(B) How American Jews Define Themselves as Jews

The 2001–2002 NJPS also asked respondents whether they themselves have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish People (see Fig. 2). While these personal rates were far lower than the group definitions, generally, respondents under 30, in all denominations, who had visited Israel, expressed a stronger sense of belonging to the Jewish people than their age and denomination peers and often the adult denominational peers who had not visited Israel (see also Mittelberg, 2007).
3. Both communities score far lower on indices of reciprocal knowledge or sharing relationships. In our terms, they lack transnational social capital.

4. Reciprocal visits are associated with higher scores on Jewish peoplehood measures; however, few Israelis or American Jews actually engage in activities that might foster these relationships. The researchers did not find any sort of ideological abyss, reciprocal negation, or age-related distancing. However, intimate knowledge and familiarity with the other, or any activity designed to create transnational relationships, is decidedly missing. What is lacking is an organizational infrastructure for global Jewish peoplehood.

Over a decade ago, I posited that a way to ensure the Jewish future was through purposeful and programmatic Jewish Peoplehood Building built on engagement and interaction through reciprocal relationships.

"Thus the Jewish communities in the Diaspora today could assume a new historic role of partner with Israel, to ensure the Jewish future of Israel in the Diaspora and the Diaspora in Israel — the Jewish future of the Jewish people. It would pursue this goal by engaging intentionally, purposefully, and programmatically in Jewish Peoplehood through lateral Israel-Diaspora Jewish programming, of social engagement and interaction between different Jews from different communities who mean something personal to each other and who live out existential commonalities in partially shared communities, even if only for segments of their daily lives, or at important stages in their biographies." (Mittelberg, 1999, p. 135)

Since then, the research mentioned above has shed light on such possibilities and has fueled the hypothesis. Indeed, now we would claim that initiated, educational, reciprocal visits sought to enhance the sense of belonging to the Jewish people. We would argue that this would be true for all ideologies and ages, and, moreover, that it would work for Jews both from Israel and from the Diaspora. Through the lens of this hypothesis, we will now examine several practical interventions.

Top-Down Programming, Jewish Peoplehood

Formal Education: Beth Hatefutsoth—International School for Jewish Peoplehood Studies

Beth Hatefutsoth, the Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, is an institution dedicated to telling the story of the Jewish People and describing the special bond between the Jewish People and Israel. Education is central to the work of Beth Hatefutsoth, which in November 2006 (through the support of the Nadav Fund), established the International School for Jewish Peoplehood Studies (SIPS) (http://www.bhh.org.il/about-us.aspx).

Often working in cooperation with other institutions, SIPS functioned as a "headquarters" producing learning and teaching guides, as well as educational curricula and activities for distribution. In addition, SIPS invited diverse audiences to events it hosted including enrichment programs, conferences, think-tanks, etc.; the following are descriptions of some of the main projects launched by the SIPS.
My Family Story

This curriculum encourages students to investigate their personal family histories, stimulating and reinforcing family ties. It is designed to strengthen students' identity, convey an appreciation and understanding of the connection between different individual histories, Jewish people's history and global events. Those who use this curriculum are eligible to enter for the "My Family Story" International Competition. SJPS has created an accompanying curricular unit to support teachers and students preparing projects for the competition.

The Educational Kit: Israel—the Vision and the Venture of the Jewish People. Developed in partnership with the Center for Educational Technology (CET), this curriculum includes an assortment of classroom resources: materials, sources, disk, facilitator's guide book, project cards, video, access to the interactive website (www.israventure.com), and ideas for engaging students in the account of international Jewish complex partnership and cooperation in establishing the State of Israel.

Peoplehood Papers

This collection of essays deals with philosophical aspects of Jewish peoplehood, covering subjects of thinking about and creating new understandings and action plans around Jewish peoplehood. Created in collaboration with KolDor and The United Jewish Communities, The Peoplehood Papers feature articles from a diverse group of Jewish leaders and thinkers.

Global Task Force of Jewish Peoplehood Education

With the support of UJA-Federation of New York, SJPS established The Global Task Force of Jewish Peoplehood Education. Over 30 leading practitioners in formal, informal, and adult Jewish education from around the world were invited by SJPS to construct a platform for conceptualizing, strategizing, and educating for Jewish peoplehood. The Task Force projects are presently being collated into a book on Jewish peoplehood education.

Top-Down Programming, Jewish Peoplehood Informal Education: The Taglit-Birthright Israel Mifgash

A quarter of a century of extensive research on the Israel Experience focused almost exclusively on the Jewish visitors from the Diaspora, showing unequivocally the significant and long-lasting impact that a visit to Israel can have on the Jewish identity and behavior of participants (Mittelberg, 1994, 1999, Chazan and Koriantsky, 1997, Cohen, E.H. 2008; Saxe & Chazan, 2008). Increasingly, however, Israel Experience trips—and Taglit-Birthright Israel trips in particular—include a mifgash—an "encounter" between the Diaspora Jewish visitors and Israeli peers. Recently, there has been some research dedicated specifically to this element of mifgash. On a typical Taglit trip, six to eight Israelis, usually soldiers, join the tour group for half or more of the 10-day experience. For a comprehensive account of the Taglit-Birthright experience, see Saxe and Chazan (2008), who highlight not only the dynamics of the mifgash, but also the meanings attached to the experience by Diaspora and Israeli participants. Sasson, Mittelberg, Saxe and Hecht (2008) conducted research on the mifgash itself. The study conducted in 2007 consisted of qualitative research on 20 tour groups and post-trip surveys of more than 400 Israeli participants, and approximately 6,300 North American participants. The data indicate not only that individuals who participate in Taglit-Birthright, experience significant post-trip impact on a personal level, but also that the cross-cultural, transnational encounter provided by the mifgash serves to promote in them a hybrid sense of belonging to the same Jewish people.

The mifgash is a structured encounter between individuals; it is at the same time, an encounter between Jewish worlds. The mifgash challenges the cultural identity of all its participants, enhancing their sense of collective belonging to the global Jewish people. Both groups recognize commonalities in Jewish background and practice, and this recognition serves as a basis of their sense of common belonging to the Jewish people. During the encounters, participants examine previously taken-for-granted assumptions regarding religion, nationality, and peoplehood. In so doing, they reject antagonistic dualisms of either/or religious or non-religious, Israeli Jew and Diaspora Jew. By creating a common framework of identification, participants come to better understand not only their counterparts—but themselves as well. Thus, the mifgash promotes not only Jewish identity, but also builds a sense of belonging to the Jewish people in participants.

Bottom-Up Jewish Peoplehood Informal Education Within Schools: Israel—Diaspora Jewish School-to-School Connections Program

The school-to-school programs discussed below are designed not only to impact the participants involved and to build a sense of Jewish peoplehood, as in the Taglit mifgash, but also to impact the infrastructure culture of the participating school communities, through the creation of meaningful and mutual people-to-people connections between the administrators, teachers, parents, and students of the partner schools.

Methodology

The following is based on a secondary analysis of several interim evaluation reports for the School-to-School Connections Program, in two separate regional partnerships, that has been ongoing for a total of 7 years (2003–2009). In School Twinning
School Twinning Partnership B

Oren currently coordinates and supervises a major School-to-School Partnership, linking 19 schools in another region of the United States with their partner schools in one city in Israel (referred to here as ‘School Twinning Partnership B’). Oren provides the educational curriculum and teacher training, bridging the two communities, with positive impact on thousands of students. This large-scale effort demonstrates the ability, capacity, and efficacy of people-to-people programs, using existing school frameworks, matching communities, and leadership, thus reaching dozens of schools.

With respect to school change, in both partnerships, the impact on administrators, educators, students, parents, families, and entire communities grows each year. In addition to the participant-level questionnaire data to be reported below, participating faculty have formally reported the following impacts on school life:

1. Video conferences on topics determined by the educators, with prepared lesson plans. Parents often attend these video conferences as observers.
2. Beit Midrash via video conference, involving preparation of sacred texts for study with questions for discussion.
3. Award-winning Eighth Grade Science curriculum developed and implemented by both the Israeli and American partner schools. While not a Jewish content program, it is powerful in its basis of connections and indirect impact on families and parents, especially after shared success and recognition of successful enterprise, resulting from reciprocal visits and hosting.
4. Exchange of joint curriculum on Jewish subjects for high-school students, noticeably strengthened Jewish component of the curriculum in an Israeli school.
5. Exchange of maps with the partner class, indicating birthplaces and homes of students in each class. Exchange of "identity cards" between partner classes, indicating essential elements of students' personalities, identities, and lives.
6. Development of website accessible only to the members of the twinned classes and available for the purpose of sustaining formal and informal communications between the students. Establishment of other e-mail and Internet forums to facilitate communication between students.
7. Multilateral school partnerships with classes in various countries besides Israel and the United States. Such relationships exist with schools in Turkey, Germany, and England.

Basic Survey Findings

The following analysis will investigate the impact of Jewish peoplehood education, within four separate sub-groups: Israeli students, Israeli educators, American students, and American Educators. However, the central finding across all of the schools is related to the mifgash (facilitated encounter) between these four different sub-groups.
**Israeli Students**

In order to ascertain whether the goal of building Jewish peoplehood was met, the questionnaires included a variety of questions about the strength of the bond that participants feel toward Jews across the world and toward Israel. Figure 3a-c report pre- and post-mifgash student responses from the same Israeli school, which report a meaningful change in Israeli students' sense of belonging to Israel and the Jewish people. Following their hosting experience, the Israeli students recorded significant, positive changes in their strengthened bond with Jews of the United States and all over the world, their view of Israel as the homeland as well as a national, cultural, and religious center for the Jewish people, all together indicate a heightened subjective sense of Jewish peoplehood.

The Israeli students exhibit another equally important response to the mifgash. The data show that they were unequivocally proud to be Israeli both before and after their travel. In the United States, they encountered a strikingly different model for being Jewish and for relating to Israel and the Jewish people. The data suggest that they realized that Jews living in other lands hold alternative views both of Israel as the Jewish homeland and of the place of Israel in the Jewish world. Their previous ideas were challenged and re-examined, and the Israelis arrived at new, nuanced understandings, resulting in decreases in their view of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people and as a national, cultural, and religious center of the Jewish people.

(These decreases from Stage 1 to Stage 2 are illustrated in Fig. 3c.) At the same time, the Israeli students did express a heightened connection to Jews of the United States and to Jews around the world. Thus, despite their realization that Jewish life and attitudes outside of Israel are quite different from what they are accustomed to, the Israeli students did not feel alienated from the "other." Rather, they felt closer and more connected to American Jews after meeting them and learning first-hand about their different and new ways. Students were also asked to respond to the statement, "Israel is a national, cultural, and religious center of the Jewish world." Figure 4 reveals that over several years, both Israeli and American students generally agreed more with this statement following the mifgash.

Many students internalized the idea of Jewish peoplehood, and some were able to extrapolate from the personal to the global, and vice versa, from the global to the personal.

... before the trip I related to myself as a Jew without any questions. After the trip I understood that I am Jewish, and this is not self-evident. (Israeli student, November 2008)

Comments by two different groups of Israeli students following the mifgashim, also indicate that they grasped the importance of the Diaspora and the vitality of Jewish life outside of Israel.

- I have a greater awareness of being Jewish, and I understood things about Judaism in the Diaspora that it’s not important where you’re Jewish; it’s important how much you feel Jewish. (Israeli student, November 2008)

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**Jewish Peoplehood Education**

**a**  I feel a strong bond with Jews all over the world

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**b**  I feel a strong bond with Jews in the United States

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**c**  Israeli Ninth Grade Students on Jewish Peoplehood

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<td>I feel that Israel is a national, cultural, and religious center for the Jewish people</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 3 Examples of impact of Mifgashim on Israeli Jewish students' sense of Jewish peoplehood (school twinning partnership A, ninth graders, percentage of responses for the two highest categories, "strongly agree" and "very strongly agree")
Israel serves as a national, cultural and religious center for the Jewish people.

![Graph showing student response rates to the statement, "Israel serves as a national, cultural, and religious center for the Jewish people." (school twinning partnership B, tenth graders, percentage of responses for the two highest categories, "strongly agree" and "very strongly agree")](image)

Fig. 4 Israeli and American student response rates to the statement, "Israel serves as a national, cultural, and religious center for the Jewish people." (school twinning partnership B, tenth graders, percentage of responses for the two highest categories, "strongly agree" and "very strongly agree")

- What changed is that I will think again about maybe going to a synagogue, lighting Shabbat candles, etc. I saw the Judaism of the Americans, and I was surprised that I wasn’t connected that way to Judaism. (Israeli student, November 2008)

**Israeli Educators**

When asked why they chose to participate in the School-to-School Connections Program, Israeli educators pointed to the importance which their school places on this program, as well as their own desire to contribute to the relationships.

- My participation in the group was for me a direct continuation of Jewish programming that exists at the school. It also came from an ability to contribute to strengthening the connection between teachers in Israel and in the Diaspora. (Israeli educator, June 2008)

Israeli educators, likewise, commented on changes in their sense of Jewish peoplehood following the mifgash, in response to questions about the impact of the mifgash on their lives.

- A huge influence! It opened a greater exposure in terms of being Jewish, in the State of Israel, being a principal, and what the role is regarding peoplehood, etc. (Israeli principal, December 2007)

 Israeli educators were asked how the mifgash affected them personally. Again, the transnational, mutual, Jewish connections figured prominently in these educators’ reflections.

- Personally, the experiences shaped within me a renewed and deep connection to the land. (Israeli educator, June 2008)

- Absolutely, I am already experiencing changes in my own level of acceptance and tolerance. (Israeli educator, June 2008)

Israeli educators foresaw that this experience would impact their entire school community through their relationship to Judaism and to each other:

- I will act to strengthen the connection between the [American] students and Israeli students with a focus on Judaism and Eretz Yisrael. (Israeli educator, June 2008)
- I believe that we are the pioneers and from here we can spread out to families, friends, the community, and more. (Israeli educator, June 2008)

**American Students**

The American students’ comments also reflect a heightened sense of Jewish peoplehood and connection to Israelis and Israel, following their hosting experience. Remarks about the highlights of their hosting experience included positive reflections on meeting Jews from around the world; on learning about the Israelis’ lives; about showing them their lives in the United States, and/or about similarities and differences with their own; on their mutual connection via Shabbat, being Jewish, or the Hebrew language; and on enjoying these “amazing” people and the process of becoming friends. Among students, a growing sense of Jewish peoplehood seems to begin with an appreciation of the different lives that each group leads and of the commonalities and connections between them.

- As a result of this program, I am more... attached to kids from the [Israeli] School. (American student, June 2008)
- As a result of this program, I am more... interested in visiting Israel and meeting Israeli kids. (American student, June 2008)

The American students also became more aware of their relationship with Israel and Israelis. When asked to complete this statement, “As a result of the Twinning Program you are more...,” they responded that they are more “informed about the situation in Israel,” “more connected with kids/people in Israel,” “understanding toward Israel,” “aware of how life is in Israel,” and “interested in visiting Israel and meeting Israeli kids.” Their sense of Jewish peoplehood was enhanced through their mutual relationship with their Israeli partners.

**American Educators**

American educators also experienced meaningful transformations as a result of their mifgash in Israel and their relationships with their Israeli counterparts. When asked if any of their attitudes or beliefs about Israel had been impacted by this visit to Israel, they responded as shown in Table 2. As can be seen from the data, following their Israel experience, 80% of the participants feel an increased sense of emotional attachment to Israel as well as an increased sense of attachment to Israeli
Table 2: Impact of the American Jewish educators' Mit'gash in Israel on their relationship to Israel, June 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Less than before (%)</th>
<th>Same as before (%)</th>
<th>More than before (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your sense of attachment to Israeli culture</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How emotionally attached are you to Israel?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your familiarity with Israel-related groups and organizations in your community</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do you think that Israel serves as a national, cultural, and religious center for the Jewish people?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your level of participation in Israel-related social activities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do you feel that your fate and future is bound up with the fate and future of the Jewish people?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do you see Israel as a source of pride and self-respect for Diaspora Jewry?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

culture. Sixty percent are more familiar with Israel-related groups and organizations in their community; and the same percentage feel more strongly that Israel serves as a national, cultural, and religious center for the Jewish people, as did their students (see Fig. 3c).

American Educators relate how this will in turn affect their educational practice:

- Deeper connections to Israel through our friendships and classroom partnerships, and a chance to use the window and mirror of our relationship with the Israeli schools to peer into their lives and re-examine our own. (American educator, June 2007)

American educators were asked why they were interested in participating in this program. The highest rated responses were (a) strengthening ties between Israel and the Diaspora, (b) developing a joint project with a Jewish-Israeli colleague, and (c) being a part of a community of professionals. In their comments regarding their own motivation, they focus on the partnership and on the Jewish and Israeli connections.

- My colleagues and I are embarking on a remarkable partnership with an established Israeli school to deepen and expand our students' connections with and love for Israel. (American educator, June 2008)

Framing the motivation in this way gives structure to future work, both in terms of the content of future programming and also in terms of research.

- I have gained colleagues abroad but more than this, I have close friends, family with the [Israeli] teachers whom, I feel, can work with me on a common goal. (American educator, June 2008)

Jewish Peoplehood Education

- I definitely feel more connected to [the Israeli partner school] and have a clearer understanding of the complex situation in Israel. Personally, I can now say that I have friends in Israel. (American educator, June 2008)

In reflecting on how this experience will affect them personally, the American educators commented as follows:

- I have a deeper sense of Israel, culture, people... as an educator in this time of my life... and will bring this back with me on a personal level. (American educator, June 2008)

Professionally, the impact of this experience on the American educators and potentially on their school appears to be profound:

- It will indeed help me in my work. It has given me the passion to continue my studies in both Hebrew language and “Jewish studies.” (American educator, June 2007)

- This program... will strengthen the connection between youth in US and in Israel, hopefully laying the foundation for a lifetime of connection and community involvement. (American educator, June 2008)

Echoing the findings of Pomson and Grant (2004, p. 67), these educators report that their encounter in Israel allowed them to build powerful personal connections to Israel and with fellow teachers, though we add here, that the teachers involved are not only those from their home school but also their partnered Israeli teachers. This experience also served to impact their educational vision and practice, perhaps even to structure the way they now know Israel and its educational promise.

This research, methodologically pairing Israeli and American students as well as Israeli and American educators, all from the very same schools, demonstrates that there is tremendous opportunity in an educational encounter between Jews from different parts of the world. This central element of the program, the Mit'gash is a powerful tool for impacting participants' Jewish identity and sense of Jewish peoplehood. This finding holds regardless of the locale of the particular Mit'gash, whether in Israel or North America. Participants in the Mit'gash discover common beliefs and ideas regarding important aspects of Jewish history and life. In the process of beginning to understand "the other" comes the realization that both American and Israeli Jews essentially share a common Jewish cultural language. Particularly powerful are the opportunities to glimpse into others' lives through home hospitality and sustained contact. The outcome is an enhanced Jewish identity and sense of Jewish peoplehood, i.e., sense of belonging to the Jewish community.

Oren's baseline expectations were that the schools and their communities in North America would be the primary beneficiaries of the connection to Israel. That was, in fact, the case. Nonetheless, we have offered here concrete evidence of impacts on students, educators, schools, and parents in Israel as well, so that the impact on the Israeli side is as significant as it is on the North American participants. Connecting Israelis to their Jewish counterparts overseas (a global connection)
Future Research Questions

Some of the research questions that need to be answered in order to develop further the emerging field of Jewish peoplehood education would include the following:

- How can we articulate a clear vision of Jewish peoplehood education, shared by Israeli and Diaspora Jewish communities and their educators, which will drive the field forward?
- What are the educational processes, both top-down and bottom-up, that might transform a local, segmented, sectarian provincial Jewish identity of any intensity, into a global transcendent sense of belonging to a worldwide Jewish people?
- How does Jewish identity located within the paradigm of the Jewish State (without a synagogue) become connected to a Jewish identity located within the paradigm of the synagogue (without the Jewish State), and what binds the adherents of each with the other?
- What can we learn from the best practices of the mifgash and its pedagogy in developing the conversation and dialogue necessary to build a common Jewish cultural language for Jews worldwide?
- What is required to systematically and consistently translate the demonstrated impact of peoplehood programming on individuals, into sustained change in the school culture of Israeli and Diaspora schools, so that we may say that the schools are infused with Jewish peoplehood education?
- How are we to reconstitute institutions of Jewish education that will facilitate and sustain long-term transnational institutional relationships between Israeli and Diaspora educational institutions, both high schools and Institutions of Higher education?
- What would then be required to translate the impact of the emerging transnational relationships on schools into impact on their wider host communities?
- How can we develop a methodology and practice of transnational Jewish research teams, building common core research instruments in multicultural environment based on the partnership model of EU research?

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