

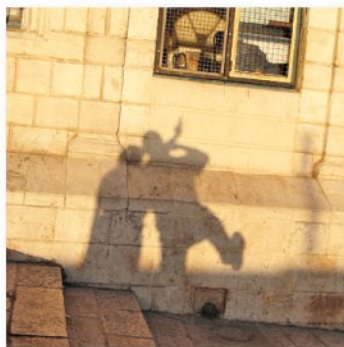
Peoplehood Now

What? Why? How?

H A A R E T Z
English Edition
Commercial Department



Beth Hatefutsoth 
THE SAMUEL GOLDSMAN MUSEUM OF THE JEWISH DIASPORA
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FOR JEWISH PEOPLEHOOD STUDIES
Founded by WIZO Fund



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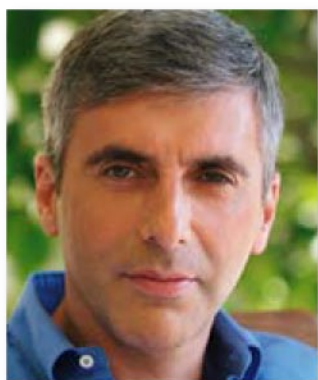
Photographs The pictures which grace this publication are part of a photography exhibition by participants in the Kivunim project. Kivunim is a one-year program for post high-school / pre college students which combines an Israel experience with international study and travel. The program, which is based in Jerusalem, is built around field trips every five to six weeks to countries such as Morocco, India, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Spain, Hungary and the Czech Republic, with a focus on understanding the history and contemporary life of international Jewish communities. Kivunim is committed to promoting "world-consciousness" - an appreciation and understanding of the broader multi-cultural world in which we live.

Peoplehood Now Sponsored by the NADAV Fund **Editors** Dr. Shlomi Ravid, Shelley Kedar **Research** Ari Engelberg, Elana Sztokman, Varda Rafaeli

The International School for Jewish Peoplehood Studies at Beth Hatefutsoth, founded by the NADAV Fund, is the only institution in the world solely dedicated to Peoplehood Studies. For additional information, please visit www.bh.org.il, or contact P.O. Box 39359, Tel Aviv 61392, Israel; Tel: 972-3-7457901; email: bhschool@post.tau.ac.il.

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Dear Readers,

We Jews have a complex identity. We are one people, but we live all over the world and in many ways. We want to live as Jews - whatever that may mean to us - but also to play an active role in our broader cultures and communities. These realities present us with a major challenge: how to create a sense of being one people when we are so diverse, so dispersed and so integrated into the non-Jewish world.

For Jewish life and culture to thrive in the long run, Jews - wherever and however they live - need a sense of shared identity. Recognizing our global “we” brings a depth to Jewish life that is missing when individuals and communities focus solely on personal identity or parochial concerns. This Jewish “we” has a very practical value too: when members of our people face hard times - political, economic or otherwise - they can rely on their brothers and sisters around the globe for partnership and support. Jewish Peoplehood is a term used to name this sense of the Jewish “we.”

As a philanthropist, I invest in Jewish Peoplehood through the NADAV Fund that I established because I believe it directly serves the Jewish future both spiritually and practically. I would even say that there won't be a Jewish future - at least as we have known Judaism - if this sense of shared identity is not widely developed among the younger generation. The question is how to develop it.

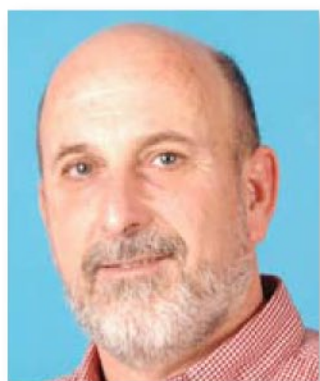
My answer is to support teaching, learning and experiences focused on the unique history and varied cultures of our people in the context of the values and principles that unite us as one people.

Beth Hatefutsoth, the Museum of the Jewish People, does this work through its exhibitions, programs and the International School for Jewish Peoplehood Studies. In fact, the school is a place where young Israelis and Jews from abroad can learn about the Jewish people and connect with one another. This kind of relationship building is very important.

On the pages that follow, you will find other people's reflections on the topic of Peoplehood. We hope they will get you thinking and that you bring these ideas back to your home communities and the important work you do there.

With best wishes,

Leonid Nevzlin
Founder, NADAV Fund
for the Advancement
of Jewish Heritage;
Chair, Beth Hatefutsoth
International Board of Governors



Dear Readers,

After the creation of the State of Israel, Amir Gilboa wrote: “All of a sudden a man gets up in the morning and he feels he is a people, and he begins to walk.” Gilboa, I believe, captured what the event of the creation of the State meant for individual Jews. Our challenge is to figure out what will make Jews today get up, feel like a people and begin to walk.

In the last decade, Jewish Peoplehood has emerged as a core concept in our attempt to reinterpret our identity as Jews in this day and age (some may say the post-modern age). Concepts do not just appear out of nowhere. Their emergence usually signifies a certain need or gap that existing organizing concepts fail to address.

This is definitely the case with Peoplehood, which seems to address the neglected area of our complex identity as a collective in the days of a relatively free Jewish world with its own established Jewish sovereign entity - the State of Israel.

However, the concept of Peoplehood and its many uses seem to create more confusion than clarity. This is partly because there are different ways to understand the concept, but also because people, legitimately, bring their own biases and ideologies into the process. This publication is an attempt to both clarify some of the confusion and also to jumpstart a global Peoplehood conversation. It is our firm belief that the only way to provide a meaningful and relevant interpretation to Peoplehood is through a global dialogue.

Our attempt to further clarify the issue of Peoplehood led to addressing the next three questions which are the core chapters of this booklet:

What is Peoplehood?

Why is it important today?

How do we build Peoplehood “*Halachah Le’Maa’sseh*”?

We believe in exploring these dimensions of Peoplehood simultaneously as they are all gateways to Peoplehood interpretations.

We addressed these three questions through quotations from two dozen articles about Peoplehood, and added to them short responses (commentaries) from thirty Jews of various ages, backgrounds and geographical locations. Professor Arnie Eisen was kind enough to provide an opening. In the chapter that relates to Peoplehood *Halachah Le’maaseh* (How is Peoplehood done?), we focused on four institutional initiatives dedicated to advancing Jewish Peoplehood.

Finally, we provided a visual dimension to this booklet through the prism of the young participants of the Kivunim program who photographed Jewish life throughout the world. This is the place to thank them all.

We at the International School for Jewish Peoplehood Studies of Beth Hatefutsoth and the NADAV Fund hope that this model of a virtual global Jewish Town Hall meeting, to which more than sixty Jews contributed, will energize the Peoplehood conversation.

With best wishes for inspiring reading,

Dr. Shlomi Ravid

Director
The International School for
Jewish Peoplehood Studies,
Beth Hatefutsoth



United as One People

Professor Arnold Eisen

I have read hundreds of books and articles on the subject of Jewish Peoplehood - the most useful, I think, being those by Rabbis Mordecai M. Kaplan and Joseph D. Soloveitchik. I have even written a few pieces on the subject myself. Like most Jews, I know, however, that I have learned far more about the meaning of Peoplehood from personal experience. Here are just a few examples.

I'd be riding Egged busses during my student years in Israel in the mid-1970's, listening to the many accents in which Hebrew was spoken, looking at the incredibly varied set of faces, all so different from what I was used to, and it would hit me forcibly that these people somehow belonged to me. I was connected to them, even responsible for them. A common history and a common dream had brought us together in this Land. The feeling of connection was reinforced by our shared relief at having soldiers sitting beside us with guns on their laps. For we shared enemies who did not want us there, and perhaps wanted us dead, simply because of who we were: Jews.

I remember seeing the Isaiah Scroll on exhibit in the Shrine of the Book for the first time and realizing that I could read it, though it had been written and buried by Jews two thousand years ago. Gazing out at the desert hills from the Old City, caught as Isaiah had been between unforgiving sun and implacable rock, I could also better understand why he had written about God as he did. Holy, holy, holy. Jews had always known and taught that the earth is full of God's glory. I was heir to this tradition.

Years later, I saw a film in the Jerusalem Cinematheque about two rock musicians, children of Holocaust survivors, whose music bore witness to their family history. I knew at once that it was my story as well, even though my parents had been born in America. When the lights went on, debate about the unique centrality of Israel seemed academic. The last major chapter in our people's collective history had ended in the death camps. The current chapter was centered in Israel.

Two final memories. The day a few years ago when I discovered excitedly that one of the Argentinian relatives for whom my cousins and I had long been searching had an email address that ended with 'huji.ac.il'. We met at his apartment in Jerusalem, spoke rapidly in our common language, and learned that our academic fields were very close, that we knew many of the same colleagues. Our lives were on parallel tracks.

Last: the day I sat at lunch in Uruguay with forty young Jewish leaders from twenty-five countries. Most did not know Hebrew. We managed to communicate haltingly in English and Spanish. But we knew our connection was real and deep. History and faith, common stories and shared hopes, had made it so.

The need for a tangible community

It strikes me, reflecting on Jewish Peoplehood in this year of Israel's 60th anniversary, that our fates as Jews are perhaps more united than at any time in recent memory. Terrorism and globalization know no borders. Israel is threatened, and Jews everywhere lose sleep. Many of our fondest Jewish traits and imaginings are shared as well. They emerge from age-old stories that we not only tell our children and grandchildren, but feel responsible for carrying on. These stories are far more than stories. We live them and try to live by them. We do

so despite the fact that we are barely on speaking terms with some members of the family and disagree with others on almost everything.

Indeed, some Jews are unable or unwilling to count others as Jews or their rabbis as rabbis or their Judaism as the real thing. These disputes will not go away any time soon. For this reason and others, the sense of shared Peoplehood is weakening among Jews in Israel and the Diaspora alike. In North America the problem is acute. Clearly, we need to talk to each other - honestly and at length - about what unites us despite all that divides.

We need to find things to do together that demonstrate the unity we talk about. Peoplehood seems to me the only viable candidate for a concept that can bring us together - Israelis with Diaspora Jews, "religious" with "secular" Jews, Orthodox with Conservative and Reform. It is the only organizing principle that reminds us that, despite real differences, the great bulk of Jews are united by history, narrative, obligation, family, common dreams and common enemies. Peoplehood, in my view, also unites us in shared responsibility.

It imposes today a common two-fold task. First, Jews in the Diaspora and Jews in Israel, Jews who call themselves religious and Jews who do not, need to work on building just and caring Jewish communities. Ethnic neighborhoods are rare in America and are no longer sufficient to sustain Peoplehood. Synagogues and JCC's are not enough. Israelis too require more than a sovereign State with a Jewish majority. Tangible community is needed: real connections, shared obligations, common

Peoplehood seems to me the only viable candidate for a concept that can bring us all together

projects, the hard work of realizing our people's age-old dreams of social justice, the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

Second: We Jews have always been committed to living and teaching Torah. Right now this means making our tradition speak in radically new ways in the totally unprecedented conditions in which ALL of us live, wherever and however we are Jews. These teachings will be diverse. We can and must make sure that, whatever our differences, Torah remains the eternal and central story of our people and the source of the truths we offer to the world.

I believe that we will find common ground - or, better, overlap - among our various commitments if we look for it with honest commitment to the task. The obstacles are obvious. This is a time of great anxiety for Jews everywhere. But those active in Jewish life know that this is also a time of tremendous opportunity and achievement. That is certainly the case in Israel and North America.

The sixty essays collected here bear witness to the shared desire to accomplish still more together - united as one people, stronger in our differences, determined that the Jewish people live and its story live too, in and through every one of us.

Prof. Arnold Eisen, a Jewish Studies scholar, is the Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

What

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Peoplehood

The challenge of interpreting and explaining Peoplehood today is no simple task. The following is an attempt by key thinkers to explain it as well as be perplexed by it.



Einat Wilf

Dr. Einat Wilf is a Fellow with the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute and a member of the President's Conference Steering Committee, Jerusalem.

Peoplehood - the instinctive feeling that one is a member of one Jewish People present around the world - is emerging as the new Jewish identity for the global age. It is a new space that offers us the promise of living and belonging as Jews freed from the stifling divisions between Orthodox and secular, Reform and Conservative.

But if Peoplehood is to become the Jewish 'Holy Grail' of identity for our age, it must emerge as an effective source of meaning and guidance in our lives. It must have content and depth. It must go beyond who we are, to become what we must do. It must say something about how to lead a good life in this world at this time. We all need guidance and structure in our lives. It is our human need. But when traditional guidance is no longer relevant and old structures fail, we search for new ones. If we're truly blessed, we not only find them, we create them. What are the *mitzvot* of Peoplehood? What should we do as members of the Jewish People when we wake up in the morning? What does it mean to be a good Jew in our time? Answer this question and you square the circle of our generation.

We are a restless nation of innovators. Several generations ago, Jews in Europe asked themselves: how do we confront modernity? How do we answer the challenges of Enlightenment? In their frantic search for an answer, these Jews unleashed a wave of innovation and invention. They gave birth to new ideas, movements and practices that sustain the lives of Jews around the world to this day. Several generations later, Jews asked themselves how to confront the questions of Jewish statehood, sovereignty and nationhood. They too - Zionist thinkers and leaders - pioneered new institutions, practices and ideas that govern the lives of Jews in Israel and around the world to this day. It is a remarkable thing: Jewish innovators trying to confront the challenges of their age by creating new ways of being Jewish, without which we would not know how to be Jewish today. Will future generations say the same about us? The time calls upon us again to invent and innovate, to give form and function to Jewish Peoplehood and to answer the challenge of a global age. So here it is, the question before us: what are the *mitzvot* of Peoplehood? What should we all do as Jews, no matter where we live and how religiously observant we are?

If Peoplehood is to become the Jewish 'Holy Grail' of identity for our age, it must emerge as an effective source of meaning and guidance



Jonathan Woocher

Chief Ideas Officer and Director, JESNA

Because the values that are integral to our Peoplehood are values that we need, and that the world needs, today. Living out the purpose of our Peoplehood can give meaning to both our individual lives and our collective life - and help to change the world.



Yehezkel Dror

Professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University and Founding President of the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute

It is especially important today because the Jewish People is going through a historic metamorphosis which started with the Haskala and continued with the Shoah, the establishment of the State of Israel and the emergence of a radically new type of community in the USA. Jewish Peoplehood is facing unprecedented challenges of preserving continuity while adjusting to a new epoch of humanity. Therefore, Jewish Peoplehood has to be restructured, making the term into an important conceptual tool.



Brian Lurie

Rabbi and past director of UJC and current chair of the task force on Israeli Arabs

Jewish Peoplehood is not just about Jewish people. As the Jewish Agency has become the Agency for all citizens of Israel, we must broaden our horizons as well. Jews only worrying about Jews in this global world is too narrow to sustain us as a moral and vibrant people. Non-Jews in Israel and all around us are suffering and we must respond to their needs as if they were our own.



Tova Serkin

Executive Director, KolDor

Facing an increasingly individualistic society, people, particularly younger people, seek ways to connect and be a part of a meaningful but non-coercive collective. Peoplehood provides a renewed Jewish framework that reflects the global, open nature of today's world and allows for a variety of interpretations regarding Jewish identity to coexist. The Jewish People has much potential not yet unleashed and Peoplehood has the potential to release tremendous collective energy.



Israel, Adina Menashe

Only the physical encounter between Diaspora Jews and Israel will be able to forge a Jewish Peoplehood

David Ellenson

Rabbi Dr. David Ellenson is the President of Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion. Following is an excerpt from his speech at the Herzliya Conference in January 2007:

Jewish identity as a component of national strength is not only an academic issue. This issue is of existential importance for our people in the 21st century. This is a time of serious threats. Challenges in Israel are different than those in the Diaspora. In my opinion, the destiny of our people depends on its ability to face these challenges. One central condition to our unity and strength is the concept of Jewish Peoplehood within our people in Israel and in the Diaspora. We have to define this concept. American Jews define themselves as individuals. In the United States, the hardest challenge today is to create among Jews a collective identification with the Jewish people and with the State of Israel. In my opinion, no US rabbi should be ordained without spending at least a year in Israel. Only the physical encounter between Diaspora Jews and Israel will be able to forge a Jewish Peoplehood.

In Israel, identity is defined collectively. In 1948 Ben-Gurion declared the independence of the State, not of the individual. In Israel, identity is defined collectively, while in America it is defined individually. I don't want to sound like I'm telling you what to do. But there's something I want to tell you. Jews in Israel see in Zionism and in the fact that they live here as the central element of their identity. They define their identity in secular terms. But the religious divide in Israel did not contribute to the definition of Jewish identity in the world. Diaspora Jews have to develop some kind of identification with the Jewish collective. Secular Jews need to widen the definition of their Jewish identity. The fact that many of them look for spirituality in the Far East points to a problem.

I'm optimistic. The Hebrew language is our link to our land and to our fellow Jews. In order to build bridges between Jews, we need to include individual and collective elements. Otherwise, future generations of Jews in Israel and the Diaspora will not have a common language and this will hurt our ability to face the challenges of the modern world. I'm not trying to promote any trend in Judaism, but Judaism will strive only if it includes all its different traditions.

Diaspora Jews support you, and you should accept their support. It is not enough for Israeli Jews to just live in Israel, and it is not enough for Diaspora Jews to just practice Judaism.

The quality of one's life is immeasurably enhanced and assumes significance and value through specifically Jewish expression and purpose



Morocco, Adina Menashe

Terry Newman

Terry Newman is a member of Koldor and former Political Aide to Lord Janner of Braunstone in the British Parliament

Jewish identity in the 20th century was built on three pillars; religion, nationalism and responses to Antisemitism. When we look at the state of the current Jewish world, nearly all of our major organisations are built around one of these pillars.

These three pillars do not address the needs of the non-religious, post-nationalist Jew who is three generations removed from the Shoah and has seldom experienced Antisemitism. Yet, crucially, this Jew wants to *remain* Jewish.

These people are a new phenomenon in Jewish history and there needs to be an ideological structure in place to offer these people Jewish identity. Contemporary Jewish organisations do not fully answer this need for a fourth pillar because their current leadership is from a generation that grew up in the shadow of the Holocaust and the rebirth of Israel. It is too strapped into the rollercoaster of the 20th century Jewish experience to understand the need for a new ideological pillar.

Jewish Peoplehood offers the non-religious, post-nationalist, optimistic Jew an ideological platform through which to identify as a Jew. It offers a means of bridging the gap between Jewish citizens of different nations and different religious streams. And, it maintains the centrality of the State of Israel as part of the equation without disregarding World Jewry.

Yosef Israel Abramowitz

Yosef Israel Abramowitz is a writer and social entrepreneur in the fields of Jewish and social justice, Kibbutz Ketura, Israel.

Jewish peoplehood - and its universalistic, noble purpose - must replace the eroding definition of Jews as essentially a faith community. The historic choice made by the French Sanhedrin in answering Napoleon's challenge - to define themselves as "Frenchmen of the Mosaic Faith" rather than as part of the Jewish people - ushered in a new era for humanity and for the Jewish people. Eviscerating our national characteristics paved the way for Jewish individuals as well as for Judaism to be both in law and in the public imagination equal to Christians and to Christianity.

The culture of individualism that is so defining of America accelerated the equality of Jews and of Judaism. The greatest public relations coup of the 20th century for American Jewry was the mainstreaming of the term 'Judaic-Christian', which means that 2% of the population had not only equality with the super majority of Americans, but even top billing. This served our community's public policy interests and assimilationist yearnings, but this remarkable achievement must now be undone. While there are indeed values that are shared by Judaism and Christianity, Christians have been far more aggressive in defining them in the public square and for everyday use. This blurring between Jewish and Christian values has eroded the unique purpose and identity of the Jews not only in the public's eye, but among Jews themselves.

Peoplehood 1.0: The first promise made to Abraham was that we were to become a "great nation" or, more accurately, "a large nation." At Sinai, God commanded the Jewish people to be a "holy nation." And in the days leading up to the destruction of the first Temple, nation, faith and land were fused together to create a special spiritual DNA that kept the premise of Peoplehood alive in later years without necessarily having the land as a living center.

Peoplehood 2.0: Then the nexus of faith and nationhood was challenged 200 years ago and those who subsequently carried the flag of Peoplehood ended up carrying - or at least rooting for - the flag of Zion. The growth of the Zionist movement as a nationalistic movement 100 years ago further accentuated the Napoleonic split of the Jewish people between faith and nation, thus accepting artificial, non-Jewish frameworks for our own self-definition and organization. The growth of Zionism was not only an historic imperative to secure a haven but also often a backlash against the characterization of the Jewish people as a faith community and often an old-world and legalistic one.

Peoplehood 3.0 belongs to Ahad Ha'am - and to us. All movements need its heroes, ideological founding parent and source texts. Unmarked by world Jewry, Ahad Ha'am's 150th birthday year began August 18, 2006 according to the non-Jewish calendar, and on 17 Av in the Hebrew calendar. An on-going celebration of his life and writings by world Jewry is a place to start. Faith or nationalism can no longer be the grand unifying field theory of world Jewry. Only Peoplehood can because it is inherently inclusive and encompasses religion, nationalism and culture.

The greatest public relations coup of the 20th century for American Jewry was the mainstreaming of the term 'Judaic-Christian'. This served our community's public policy interests and assimilationist yearnings but this



Steven M. Cohen

Research Professor of Jewish Social Policy, HUC/JIR

Peoplehood is important today for three reasons: 1) It is a core Jewish value, central to the Jewish past and heritage; 2) It provides meaning and purpose to our lives as Jews; and 3) It is in decline.



David Gedzelman

Rabbi and Executive Vice President of The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life

Young people in North America today want both belonging and meaning, but they eschew the parochial that closes in on itself as well as the idea without body. Judaism limited to religion has no legs; Judaism as tribe, exclusive, does not inspire. But Peoplehood that is both open and exceptional, of ideas and belonging, is the formula for identity that this age is seeking.



Howard M. Rieger

President and CEO, United Jewish Communities

From a humanitarian perspective, Judaism has more to offer the world today than can even be contemplated by the human mind. Our values and our ethics stand as a standard which can raise up the level of human discourse, and have a profound impact upon the destiny of the world today. From a purely internal perspective, Peoplehood is important because it serves as a counterbalance to the individualistic and egotistical nature of our being. The sense that many of us have is that our success is due to our own capabilities, and not the sum total of what we have been able to achieve over the generations as a people. We ignore that strength at our own peril.



Helena Miller

Director of Research and Evaluation, UJIA

If we want to secure a future of committed, passionate young Jewish adults, we must create a sense of belonging that goes beyond the structures of schools, synagogues and youth movements that have been created for them.



Yonatan Ariel

Executive Director of MAKOM-Israel Engagement Network, a Jewish communities/JAFI partnership

Movements emerge to provide a corrective to trends in Jewish life. Hassidut sought pious joy to balance the excessive legalism of the Lithuanian yeshivot. Zionism sought to reestablish Jewish political power. Jewish Peoplehood seeks to be counter-cultural to the rampant individualism of western society and to protect the interlinked futures of diverse Jewish groups.



Ryan Hass

Director of Professional Education and Training - The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

Peoplehood has always been important but today even more so, as we have the technical ability to become more aware and tap into the wisdom of the dynamic whole. Through this awareness, Peoplehood allows us to understand our sense of self and sense of belonging to the Jewish People.



Elana Maryles Sztokman

Educator, writer, researcher and activist

Peoplehood is our Divine imperative. Peoplehood has at its core Tikkun Olam in the sense that we connect with others in order to alleviate suffering and bring joy. Peoplehood is thus also a profoundly spiritual way of life. We bring God into the universe by connecting to another tzelem *elokim* and thus bringing peace.



Danny Paller

Educational director of the Jewish World Explorium

For all of us, being part of the Jewish people is to be on a journey of individual potential and shared purpose. Yet there are more Jews than ever before for whom that experience lacks sufficient substance and vitality, or for whom the Jewish collective feels too tribal for our global age or too splintered to constitute a safe haven.



Meir Azari

Senior Rabbi and Executive Director of the Daniel Center for Progressive Judaism, Tel Aviv

In today's world, unlike decades before, a young Jewish Tel Avivian, New Yorker and Moscovite have a lot in common. They would probably be able to discuss and share their thoughts about film, culinary experiences, lifestyle choices, ambitions, desires and dreams. Global trends are to thank for this. But where is the Jewish connection?



Ittay Flescher

Coordinator of Jewish Studies at The King David School in Melbourne, Australia

How we answer the question "Why be Jewish?" is essential to our survival as a people. Peoplehood may be defined in a manner that is religious, historical, cultural, Zionist, humanist and/or ethical.



Israel, Brian Blumenthal

Riv-Ellen Prell

Prof. Riv-Ellen Prell is a Professor and Chair of the Department of American Studies at the University of Minnesota.

I suggest that there has never been a more pressing moment to return to a Jewish idea that seemed to fade in the face of nationalism and fundamentalism. In today's world, the project of Jewish Peoplehood can offer new ideas about membership and belonging that neither erase the boundaries of Jewish distinctiveness, nor make that distinctiveness an end in itself. Peoplehood can serve Jews well because they are a transnational, Diaspora people, as well as people within a nation.

Peoplehood simultaneously and paradoxically asserts that Judaism and/or Jewishness is the irreducible core of one's life and that it takes forms that differ from one's own practice or world view. I therefore propose two key dimensions to the current project of Peoplehood that are essential to building both depth and breadth in identification. The project of Peoplehood requires first and foremost a commitment to pluralism and, secondly, a context in which Jews who define their Judaism or Jewishness differently from one another can find a common vocabulary and symbols to articulate a shared past, in service of the future.

One of the most compelling recent examples of a plural, vibrant Jewish Peoplehood is embodied in Jewish feminism of the last three decades. What might be most interesting about Jewish feminism as a model of peoplehood is that it offers a vision of Judaism for people who do not agree but nevertheless find a common cause. It was and remains built upon a serious engagement with Jewish law and Jewish texts, for people who have different relationships to those texts and their authority. Hence, it shares the library of the Jewish People, their forms of observance and their institutions. Jewish feminism, in all of its manifestations, acknowledges that Western ideas have a relationship to Judaism and continue to shape its practices and traditions. However, Jewish feminists disagree about the extent of that influence or how it is to be understood. Not all Jewish feminists can pray together, nor can they all eat together. However, they can and do study together, talk to one another and act together as Jews for themselves and for the Jewish People.

From Riv-Ellen Prell's article titled 'Against the Cultural Grain: Jewish Peoplehood for the 21st Century', which appeared in the recently published book Jewish Peoplehood - Change and Challenge, editors: Menachem Revivi and Ezra Kopelowitz.

Peoplehood requires a commitment to pluralism and a context in which Jews who define their Jewishness differently can find a common vocabulary

Alisa Kurshan

Dr. Alisa Rubin Kurshan is the Senior Vice President for Strategic Planning and Organizational Resources at the UJA-Federation of New York.

If one of the successes of the Jewish continuity movement was the reawakening of creativity within the North American Jewish community, it is also important to note that one of the unintended consequences of this movement was reinforcing broader social individualistic, perhaps narcissistic, trends. A key question of the continuity movement was: "Does my Judaism provide a sense of meaning and purpose to me?" It did not address our responsibility to the collective. The line of questioning needed to look beyond the individual to include others, so that one might ask: "How does my sense of belonging connect me through time and space to the Israelites in Egypt, to Jews in the early days of the Haskalah, to Jews in the former Soviet Union today, or to grooms who have broken the glass under the chupah for centuries?"

Forging a strong sense of Jewish identity without a full appreciation of the power of Judaism as a collectivist religion is insufficient to create the vibrant, dynamic communities needed to bring about the renaissance of Jewish life. The question of "Why be Jewish?" has been met with a set of responses that basically argues that Judaism can provide a source of meaning, belonging and community, as well as a sense of the holy in one's life. Only now is an understanding beginning to develop that once personally engaged, Jews are more likely to also seek to connect to the history and destiny of the Jewish people. As a community, we want Jews in North America to not only ask "Why should I be Jewish?" but also "Why should I care about other Jews? What is my connection to Jews across the globe? How do I take all of my new understandings of Jewish values and put them into action? How do I become part of a Jewish community so that I can actualize my appreciation for the value of 'kol Yisrael arevim zeh lazeh'?"



India, Anya Manning

How does my sense of belonging connect me through time and space to the Israelites in Egypt, to Jews in the early days of the Haskalah, to Jews in the former Soviet Union today?



David Mittelberg

Head of the Department of Sociology and the Head of the Center of the Study of the Jewish People at Oranim Academic College of Education

Both Diaspora Judaism and Israeli Judaism are structurally incomplete. In and of themselves neither can fulfill themselves completely. In the encounter, however, between Israeli and Diaspora Jewry, each becomes enriched by the other. Globalization is changing the nature of collective belonging world-wide. Thus many peoples are going to maintain their collective solidarity through transnational peoplehood paradigms. Jewish peoplehood is already a "glocal" (global and local) phenomenon, people simultaneously living both in their local surroundings and in their global environment.



Sanford Antignas

Chair of UJA Federation of New York's Cluster on Strengthening the Jewish Collective

Jewish Peoplehood has always been important. In the past it was in large part actualized as a result of Jews living in tighter-knit Jewish community and family structures; reinforced by external negative forces that kept Jews together. With globalization, individualism, acceptance of Jews within their broader communities and the maturing of the State of Israel, the apparent reasons for the Jewish collective have diminished. The collective thread of Jewish Peoplehood has not been nurtured. We must actively seek to strengthen the Jewish Peoplehood thread so that when an American Jew and an Israeli Jew meet they have, and most importantly feel, something positive, unique that binds them, which they do not find when they meet a non-Jew.



Naama Sabar

Educational Consultant to the International School of Jewish Peoplehood Studies

Since in most countries of the world, there is no longer persecution against Jews, and since an autonomous Jewish State has been established, there is no longer an existential need to ensure Jewish solidarity, with it the mandate of mutual responsibility, which was so central to Jewish Diaspora life. Reality indicates a decline in the numbers of Jews who possess a Jewish awareness and identity, for different reasons. Thus in order to ensure the continuity of the Jewish people, not just among the religious communities but also among the passive majority, the subject of peoplehood has to be made part of the public agenda, and dealt with in depth.

How is Peoplehood done

Jewish Peoplehood is not just a concept or an intellectual exercise; it should go hand in hand with concrete action. The following pages point towards possible directions for implementing Peoplehood.





Czech Republic, Eran Rosenberg

Ezra Kopelowitz

Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz serves as a research consultant to the Jewish Agency for Israel and Panim for Jewish Renaissance in Israel.

In order to respond to the next generation, our challenge is not to promote ideology, but rather to encourage sustainable Jewish lifestyles that accept and even celebrate the ability of individuals to mix and match identities. In order to promote the connection between the individual Jew and the Jewish people, we need to understand why it is that some Jews are drawn into a lifestyle that involves multiple contacts with other Jews in many different places.

The challenge is not to teach ideology, but rather to encourage Jews to spend time with other Jews, doing things that they enjoy. Research shows that when a person lives a rich Jewish life, he or she will feel part of the Jewish people. The more contacts a person has with other Jews in everyday life, the more likely he or she is to donate to Jewish causes, travel to Israel and raise kids who will remain Jewish. There is no need to define and market Peoplehood and expect Jews to carry out a certain set of *mitzvot*. Rather, we simply need to enable people to live rich Jewish lives. The lifestyle might be secular, humanist, religious, socialist, environmentalist, feminist, Conservative, Orthodox, Reform, or most likely a mix of several of them. What matters is that a person participates in Jewish life beyond the occasional event in a particular institution and searches out the company of other Jews. When that happens, we have Jewish Peoplehood.

The common challenge is to make the experience of gaining Jewish knowledge and skills - gained in a particular educational, cultural or religious setting - relevant to life after the program or event and when he or she leaves a particular institution. Provide the motivation to interact with other Jews on a regular basis in the community center, the synagogue, at home, on the street, in the kosher restaurant, on a trip to Israel etc., and most everything else just might fall into place.

What matters is that a person participates in Jewish life beyond the occasional event in a particular institution and searches out the company of other Jews.



Steven M. Cohen

Research Professor of Jewish Social Policy, HUC-JIR

We build Peoplehood by way of contact, communication and common endeavor around collective tasks.



David Gedzelman

Rabbi and Executive Vice President of The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life

One of the indispensable connectors for Jewish Peoplehood should be a revitalization of the Hebrew language for Jews everywhere. According to a recent study, over 60% of Taglit-Birthright Israel alumni have a strong interest in studying and learning how to speak modern Israeli Hebrew. In fact, what participants gain from the Birthright experience is a deep sense of being part of the Jewish People. They see learning and speaking Hebrew as one of the most concrete ways to build that connection into the future.



Helena Miller

Director of Research and Evaluation, UJIA

We have to promote and encourage initiatives which go beyond the parochial - Limmud is a good example of how Jewish peoplehood can be built, both in the way it transcends the artificial boundaries created by synagogue movements for example, and the growing international element which emphasizes Jewish identity and learning beyond national and religious boundaries.



Ezra Kopelowitz and Ari Engelberg

Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz is a research consultant for JAFI. Ari Engelberg is a doctoral candidate and editor of the 'Paths to Peoplehood' newsletter

A systematic attempt to develop Jewish Peoplehood involves the development of an applied theory of Peoplehood that enables three questions to be answered: Why?, How? and What? An organization needs to engage in an ongoing discussion of "why" it wants to pursue Jewish Peoplehood. Out of that discussion will come decisions about "how" the vision is implemented in terms of organizational planning, commitment of resources and content development and "what" results must occur in order to determine success.

When Jews come into contact with other Jews in contexts that encourage serious relationships to develop, the reality of Peoplehood is created

Jonathan Woocher

Dr. Jonathan S. Woocher is Chief Ideas Officer at JESNA and Director of its Lippman Kanfer Institute, New York.

The impact of Birthright Israel, not on every participant, but on many, and of other programs that bring Jews together in creative and purposeful ways, highlights the need to create many more such opportunities.

When Jews come into contact with other Jews in contexts that encourage serious relationships to develop, the reality of Peoplehood is created, regardless of the rhetoric that is used. Feelings of connection, mutual responsibility and shared destiny do not develop in the abstract, nor from slogans. They grow out of real experiences. We have the know-how and the financial capacity to create many such experiences for youth, for young adults and for families. The relative ease of travel and the revolution in technology make forging such concrete connections more feasible than ever before.

Connections can be built on much smaller scales as well. How much might it mean to a young family, perhaps one just starting out on its Jewish journey thanks to a program like PJ Library, to be connected to other young families at a similar stage in their lives and in their Jewish development? We have manifold opportunities to build community and peoplehood capital. We simply need to seize them.

This is what I propose: let's strengthen the human connections from which community and peoplehood are woven through experiences that bring Jews together across all sorts of boundaries. Let's continue the work of remaking our institutions and of supporting new ones that enable Jews to connect with one another and with larger purposes in their lives. And, let's live a vision of Jewish community and peoplehood that is not narrow and tribal, but that makes us a springboard for strengthening trust, generosity, and mutual responsibility among all humanity. If we can do this, then I believe that Jewish community and peoplehood will have a bright future indeed, and we will see fulfilled the blessing given to Abraham millennia ago: "I will make of you a great nation and through you will all the families of the earth be blessed."



Czech Republic, Yael Conti

Leonard Saxe

Prof. Leonard Saxe is Professor of Jewish Community Research and Social Policy at Brandeis University.

Is Jewish Peoplehood, a sense that all Jews are connected and responsible for one another, an archaic notion irrelevant to modern Jews? Are young Jewish adults in the vanguard of a shift away from Jewish values of communal connection and concern?

Although secular research underscores this concern, in the Jewish community recent developments suggest a different scenario. General survey data of American young adults indicates that they view fellow members of Generation Y as more concerned with becoming rich and famous than with being communal or spiritual. They are, these surveys suggest, a group of individualists who worry about money and possessions and are, seemingly, blasé about their relationships and about the needs of others. To the extent that young Jewish adults share the outlook of this generation, the prospects for fostering Jewish Peoplehood seem bleak. But how, then, do we explain the success of the American Jewish community's largest-ever social experiment, Taglit-Birthright Israel, a collective experience whose key reward is in the currency of Jewish Peoplehood?

Since its inception in late 1999, Birthright has provided educational trips for more than 125,000 North American young adults. Almost universally, participants report that their trips are extraordinary experiences. When they return, they talk about what they have learned about the land of Israel, but mostly they reflect on how it feels to share a connection with other Jews.

Contact Magazine

Almost universally, Taglit-Birthright participants report that their trips are extraordinary experiences

Alan Hoffman

Alan Hoffman is the director general of the Department for Jewish Zionist Education of the Jewish Agency for Israel, Jerusalem.

Being Jewish today is voluntary. Being Jewish is but one option among many. Nowadays, young Jews need motivation to be Jewish; no longer does society force it upon them and no longer is having Jewish parents enough to ensure that children will remain committed Jews. We know that the old model of Jewish communities, centered on synagogue affiliation, is not enough to attract the next generation.

The concept of Jewish Peoplehood - the instinctive feeling that one is a member of one Jewish People present around the world - a concept which encompasses all aspects of Jewish culture, including history, homeland, religion, spirituality, etc. - offers a fresh and exciting entry point for many young people. It is a concept around which Jews globally can unify. Jewish education has the potential to revolutionize and reinvigorate Judaism in today's modern world and build this idea of Jewish Peoplehood.

Education, in all societies, has the unique ability to shape future developments. Lawrence Cremin, former president of Teachers College in New York, defines education as "the deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to transmit, evoke or acquire knowledge, values, skills or sensibilities." This transmission of culture across generations provides the broadest definition of education, expanding the borders beyond classrooms filled with children.

Adults touring old synagogues in Prague, teenagers creating a mock Knesset and children learning Zionist songs from the 1930s are all examples of "transmitting culture." The Jewish community's belief in education stems from this expanded understanding of the word. The transformative power of education lies in its ability to provide knowledge, but also in its ability to inspire, motivate and generate passion. Jewish education, especially, with Israel at its center, is about the transmission of substance but also the deep experiences of culture. Education can enhance the feeling of Jewish Peoplehood and allow a young person to develop her own personal passion for Judaism and answer to the question of why be Jewish.



India, Gabe Gorfinkle

Jewish education has the potential to revolutionize and reinvigorate Judaism in today's modern world and build this idea of Jewish Peoplehood



Tova Serkin

Executive Director, KolDor

Building Peoplehood involves concretely strengthening ties between Jews globally - in settings where all Jews are viewed equally no matter where they choose to make their home - and creative thought in redefining the key markers that indicate one acknowledges and chooses to be a part of the Jewish People.



Meir Azari

Senior Rabbi and Executive Director of the Daniel Centers for Progressive Judaism, Tel Aviv

The future of Jewish peoplehood is based on our age old capacity of change. Combining this capacity with our young generation's global experience of the world affords boundless possibilities. A strong Jewish peoplehood at the outset of the 21st century will have to celebrate pluralism and diversity while maintaining spiritual and emotional bonds with our history.



Yehezkel Dror

Professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University and Founding President of the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute

The only historic metaphor is the Yavne process of adjusting Jewish Peoplehood to the Exile. Maintaining and strengthening Jewish Peoplehood in the 21st century will require significant self-remaking combined with continuity. More of the same, such as present patterns of education, will not meet requirements. Instead, crafting radically new Jewish People grand-policies is required to prevent decline and assure pluralistic thriving. Recognition of this need, acceptance of involved creative-destruction, creative policy thinking and adequate action capacities are just beginning to emerge.



Lea C. Waismann

Expert in educational aspects of human behavior in South America, Europe and Israel

Facilitating the communication channels will help preserve the Jewish People by providing tools which strengthen one's knowledge of who he/she is, what part he/she plays in the world and of hi/her belonging to a supportive community. This can be done by searching through one's roots to discover where one's life is entangled within the Jewish People's web, or which part each family played in the making of Jewish history.

Redesign engagement among Jewish communities on a deeper mitgash level, and create multi-lateral relationships across multiple geographies



Israel, Daniel Golston

Eric Levine

Dr. Eric Levine is Senior Vice President, Jewish Peoplehood and Identity at United Jewish Communities.

We must redouble efforts to reinforce that Jews worldwide view one another as brothers and sisters. Deepening the consciousness of peoplehood must be a priority item on the international Jewish agenda. I envision these objectives for the promotion of peoplehood by organizations at all levels:

- * Provide ongoing, sustained peoplehood education and awareness
- * Review communications/marketing language, strategies and messaging to ensure they are promoting peoplehood awareness
- * Reframe development strategies, firstly about the relationship of Israel and world Jewish communities, and secondly to conceptualize fund raising around building the third Jewish commonwealth and the Jewish people worldwide.
- * Redesign engagement among Jewish communities on a deeper *mitgash* level, and create multi-lateral relationships across multiple geographies
- * Rededicate ourselves to develop a wide range of intercontinental and inter-organizational collaborations and coalitions to deliver programming and design new initiatives.

Yosef Israel Abramowitz

Yosef Israel Abramowitz is a writer and social entrepreneur in the fields of Jewish and social justice, Kibbutz Ketura, Israel.

By recognizing that Jewish values are the building blocks of vibrant Jewish Peoplehood, Jewish values must be the new DNA of our religion, nationalism and culture. It's always been there but we usually fail at crystallizing what they are, where they came from, how they can be expressed in everyday life and how they inform the actions of our people. Or link them to a larger mission for the Jewish people.

Shared values are a trademark of a people and can be equally relevant to those who consider themselves faith Jews as by those who are nationalists or cultural Jews. Jewish values are not "owned" by any denomination or political party or kind of Jew. We will need to define Jewish values in order to have them be shared.

Shared values can be equally relevant to faith Jews as to those who are nationalists or cultural Jews



India, Eran Rosenberg

Misha Galperin

Dr. Misha Galperin is the Executive Vice President and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington.

Mordechai Kaplan was the first person, to my knowledge, to coin the term “Jewish peoplehood” for use in the English language. His notion of peoplehood or Judaism as civilization was a combination of religion, culture, values, history, past and future. A definition this broad immediately tells us that peoplehood is not easy to define. In fact, every time I use it in a paper or a speech, my spell-check tells me that it’s not a real word. I don’t mind arguing with a computer; after all, it’s easier to argue with a machine than with American Jewry. But we do need to define our terms. Peoplehood is not about ethnicity, certainly not solely about ethnicity. The story of our people does not and should not come down to a well-spread bagel. Peoplehood is the combination of culture, religion, history and values under a Jewish umbrella that gives us a profound feeling of being connected to other Jews. I have tried to define the term in order to give us the foundation for an intelligent conversation about what Jewish Peoplehood is and what it distinctly is not. Jewish Peoplehood is:

- * One of the many “portals” that brings people to Judaism, including religion, social justice, charitable giving or community involvement.
 - * Common history, culture, values and future (we are a tribe with a mission).
 - * Extended family - *brit* symbolizes a personal covenant while *arevut* or responsibility signals a shared fate.
 - * Collective aspects of identity - our relationship to others vs. self.
 - * A means to unify diversity - “we are one” and that one is made up of different strains in relation to each other.
 - * Global community of purpose - caring, inspiring and connecting across geographic boundaries.
- Jewish Peoplehood is **not**:
- * Nationality alone - we are only deemed part of the Jewish people if we live in Israel.
 - * Anti-religious or non-religious - we carry Jewish sentiments that imply a meaningful Judaism without any connectivity to Judaism as a religion, either by rejecting Jewish ritual, Jewish history or entire segments of the Jewish community.
 - * A fundraising gimmick - we “use” Judaism to leverage charity even though our ties to Judaism are themselves weak.
 - * Ethnicity - bagels, brisket and any other Jewish food or other associations with race that are not in and of themselves meaningful although they may be pleasurable.

Peoplehood is the combination of culture, religion, history and values under a Jewish umbrella that gives us a profound feeling of being connected to other Jews



Helena Miller

Director of Research and Evaluation, UJIA

Peoplehood should be a central, unifying principle to which Jewish people can belong. It is an identification with the global Jewish world in a post-denomination era. It transcends religious, political and geographic boundaries, emphasizing what brings us together as people, and not what separates us.



Jonathan Woocher

Chief Ideas Officer and Director, JESNA

Peoplehood is the consciousness of being a collective that is defined by a shared history, i.e. a collection of stories about who we are and how we came to be what we are, a purpose (call it *tikkun olam* in brief) that is deeply rooted in that history, and a set of values that embody this purpose and apply it to every sphere of our lives.



Yehezkel Dror

Professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Founding President of the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute

Peoplehood is a newly used English term for the Jewish People, though used in some other languages. It refers to a social entity characterized by a shared history, civilization, sense of belonging and seeking of a shared future. When applied to the Jewish People, it expresses its nature as a civilizational society.



Steven M. Cohen

Research Professor of Jewish Social Policy, HUC-JIR

Jewish Peoplehood refers to the notion that Jews as a group share a sense of kinship with one another. As such, we share a collective myth of common origins and history; common values, culture, challenges and relationships; and common directions and destiny. As members of a people, we care for each other’s welfare and vitality, and we care for our collective endeavors and success.

John S. Ruskay

John S. Ruskay is the Executive Vice President and CEO of the UJA-Federation of New York.

The historic challenges that confronted world Jewry after World War II provided the context and the impetus for the emergence of the North American Jewish Federation system as an unparalleled philanthropic and communal enterprise. From the period of the creation of the State of Israel until the early 1990s, the tasks before us as Jews made constant demands on our attention and required massive resources.

The fall of the iron curtain in the former Soviet Union required mobilization and focus in order to help resettle millions of Jews. Jews from Ethiopia, Syria, Yemen and other countries needed help finding their way to successful lives in Israel. Once again, Jews felt a sense of unity through a shared mission. In the past decade, Jewish demographics have changed dramatically - 85% of all Jews reside in two centers of Jewish life (Israel and the United States). With most Jews living where they want to be, the age of rescue is coming to an end.

We had to redefine our mission: no longer are we as concerned about saving Jews from persecution; our mission is now about strengthening Jewish communities by promoting caring and deepening individual Jewish identity, as well as fostering a sense of collective responsibility and ensuring a safety net for acting in times of crisis through a network of agencies that span the globe.

This conceptual rethinking necessitated a structural reorganization. We created three mission-based commissions:

- 1) Hessed: the human service and caring agenda.
- 2) Hinuch: the Jewish identity and Jewish education agenda.
- 3) The Commission on the Jewish People.

Charged to forge an overarching vision and set of strategies to guide the Federation's global planning in several broad areas, this commission was created with a duality in its role and mission, on behalf of all our people, from today into the future. First, it was to provide oversight for UJA-Federation planning related to aliyah and klitah. Second, it called for UJA-Federation to enter the "glue" business, developing strategies and supporting initiatives that could reduce division and enhance integration between the prime divisions in Jewish life: geographic, religious (denominational) and ethnic. Finally, it also developed initiatives designed to strengthen identification with and responsibility for other Jews throughout the world, i.e. collective Jewish identity.

From Ruskay's preface to Revivi & Kopelowitz's recently published book 'Jewish Peoplehood Change and Challenge'.

We had to redefine our mission: no longer are we as concerned about saving Jews from persecution; our mission is now about strengthening Jewish communities by promoting caring



Ryan Hass

Director of Professional Education and Training - The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

The importance of rapid prototyping is essential. Prototyping avoids being stuck in plans - it is about being open-ended, exploratory and entering a dialogue between the particular and the whole and vice versa. Connectedness between the prototyping efforts is critical for building larger social networks and change.



Elana Maryles Sztokman

Educator, writer, researcher and activist

I do not connect to the Jewish people by merely reading a book, meditating alone on a mountain or emoting as a superior. I connect to the Jewish people by truly seeing another person, hearing his voice, echoing his history and internalizing his experience. It is done through cooperative, collaborative, inter-cultural efforts at improving the human condition.



Ariel Beery

Founder and co-director of the PresentTense Group

The Information Age has often been understood more for its economic implications than its social ones, but we should reflect on the radical impact access to data has on society - and how the Jews as a people might prepare for this new age so that we not only survive but thrive. We must recognize the importance of engaging individuals as co-producers and not only as consumers of content, and develop organizations that know how to operate in a "pull" environment of the here and now.



Claude Kandiyoti

Publisher of "Contact J," a monthly of the Belgian Jewish community

An example of a home-grown European concept originating in the margins of organized Jewish life is Limmud, initiated in the United Kingdom by maverick educator Clive Lawton 25 years ago. Limmud was a surprising idea that succeeded because it reinvented Jewish learning, attracted outsiders as well as insiders, and ignored the familiar boundaries between Jews. Today Limmud is being replicated across the world and is infusing organized communities with new members, new flexibility and a greater commitment to Jewish vitality.

Relying on education as a primary tool for sustaining Jewish civilization, but adapting both content and pedagogy to fit the current challenges, should provide the strategic road map

Shlomi Ravid

Dr. Shlomi Ravid is director of the International School for Jewish Peoplehood Studies at Beth Hatefutsoth.

Most people mistakenly view Peoplehood as a global, amorphous and abstract concept that presents an optional ideological approach towards the Jewish collective. The truth, however, couldn't be farther from this interpretation. In reality, Peoplehood provides the basic rationale for the whole Jewish communal system.

If it were not for the need and desire to do things with and for other Jews, how could one explain and justify Jewish Federations, JCCs, Hillels and Jewish summer camps, not to mention Jewishly focused political, philanthropic and advocacy organizations? My claim is that the notion of Peoplehood constitutes the communal and institutional framework of Jewish civilization. Making Peoplehood work is a challenge for local, national and global Jewish institutions.

The argument does not stop with the general communal institutions. Jewish congregations and schools too, while perhaps not stating Peoplehood as a goal, actually operate according to this model. On the surface, the role of congregations is simply to provide religious services, while schools are dedicated to teaching Judaism. However, a simple analysis of their mode of operation, structure and array of services provided reveals a significant focus on building and sustaining Jewish community and Peoplehood.

The challenge of creating a sense of Jewish solidarity in the 21st century, where the prevalent paradigm is that of free choice, is not simple. In a way, it is part of the larger question of why being Jewish is significant and important in this day and age. However, while most of our focus and resources have been invested in strengthening Jewish identity, the dimension of belonging to a people (also known as Peoplehood) has been neglected. If my assumption that Peoplehood provides the rationale for the Jewish institutional system is correct, then those institutions are bound to be impacted by its weakening. If Jewish institutions want to flourish and thrive, strengthening Jewish Peoplehood must become a priority for them.

There is no need to recreate the wheel. Jews have been extremely effective in sustaining a sense of joint responsibility towards their people and its members for over 2,000 years. While the current reality seems very different than any prior time in Jewish history, part of the Jewish legacy is that of adapting to changing circumstances. Relying on education as a primary tool for sustaining Jewish civilization, but adapting both content and pedagogy to fit the current challenges, should provide the strategic road map.



Morocco, Rachel Buonaïuto

Hasia Israeli

Hasia Israeli is the Director General of Beth Hatefutsoth

Beth Hatefutsoth, through telling the unique and ongoing story of the Jewish People, presents thousands of years of a flourishing multifaceted culture and then the unity that underlies the diversity of Jewish civilization comes to life. Strengthening a sense of belonging is driven through three stages – emotional, cognitive and behavioral. In Beth Hatefutsoth we use two major methods to enable first to feel through 'Peoplehood in action' - to experience your personal story through the presentation of exhibitions and unique databases and collections that touches your 'kishke'. The second method is 'Peoplehood education' to articulate and crystallize your personal identity through the vehicle of encounters, dialogues and the mutual, joint collective identity of belonging to the Jewish People.

Strengthening a sense of belonging is driven through three stages – emotional, cognitive and behavioral

Gabriel Sheffer

Professor Gabriel Sheffer teaches in the Political Science Department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Most Israelis lack deep knowledge, proper acquaintance and current information of the situation of the Diaspora. This is particularly the case among younger Israelis. Even those Israelis who have traveled abroad and visited Diaspora communities know very little about the general situation of world Jewry or the specific situation in the communities they have visited. Even worse, most of them are not interested in the Diaspora. This is not surprising since the Israeli school system, the press and the media do not invest much in teaching and reporting about the Diaspora's situation. Consequently, there is almost no public discussion and debate about Israeli attitude, position and policies concerning the Diaspora.

First and foremost, there is a need to adopt new patterns, some of which are known, to deepen and widen Israelis' knowledge and understanding of what is currently happening in the Diaspora in order to increase their awareness and solve some of the existing difficulties in the relationship. Thus, the number of classes and their programs in elementary and high schools and courses and seminars in the universities and colleges in Israel should be significantly expanded. The Israeli media should be encouraged to expand its continuous coverage of what is happening in the Diaspora. In this context, the Israeli organizations should change their current position and support research and development of nonconventional approaches to these issues, including the study of the vast literature on the general Diaspora phenomenon, which can shed new light on various questions facing Israel and the Diaspora.



Israel, Max Kinchen

The Israeli media should be encouraged to expand its continuous coverage of what is happening in the Diaspora



Tally Zingher

Attorney in New York, serves on the KolDor Global Executive

Volumes have been written by religious leaders, psychologists and sociologists about what creates a sense of belonging and mutual responsibility. I believe that we can build Peoplehood by creating tools and opportunities for individuals to express themselves Jewishly and to connect to the Jewish community and non-Jewish community in ways that are authentic to that individual's Jewish self.



David Mittelberg

Head of the Department of Sociology and Head of the Center of the Study of the Jewish People at the Oranim Academic College of Education

If both Israeli and Diaspora Judaism are indeed incomplete in and of themselves, then it follows that a first step is the transnational *mifgash*, the personal cross cultural encounter as takes place for example between Israeli and Diaspora Jews in the radical *Taglit-Birthright* program. Moreover, contemporary Jewish institutions, both local and global, need to be restructured to develop transnational Jewish global community networks generating lateral Jewish solidarity and Peoplehood. Neither Israeli Jewry nor American Jewry can, on its own, generate global Jewish Peoplehood; both are dependent on each other to utilize the transnational platform for transcendent goals.



Yonatan Ariel

Executive Director of MAKOM-Israel Engagement Network, a Jewish communities/Jewish Agency partnership

Nurturing Jewish Peoplehood is best done by diverse Jews sharing experiences of learning, celebration, commemoration, creativity and social and political activism. The themes of those experiences will be varied and ever-changing. Underlying them all should be a current of inquiry that explores: what should the Jewish People as a People do next? Even as we disagree over what is to be done, the encounters will nurture Jewish collective solidarity.



Naama Sabar

Educational Consultant to the International School of Jewish Peoplehood Studies

It seems to me that the School for Jewish Peoplehood Studies of Beth Hatefutsoth is a very good start, and from there we should hope that similar bodies will be set up around the world just as centers for Holocaust studies have cropped up.



Ittay Flescher

Coordinator of Jewish Studies at The King David School in Melbourne, Australia

Using peoplehood as a response to 'Why be Jewish?' and defining it in the manner above, one must embrace the type of Judaism that they feel best expresses themselves, be it religious, historical, cultural, Zionist, humanist, ethical, etc. and be active in that way of life. In a more practical manner, one must take ownership over Jewish texts by creating their own interpretations, by knowing and responding to the texts and their traditional interpretation. It is not by chance that we are called the 'People of the Book.'



Sanford Antignas

Chair of UJA Federation of New York's Cluster on Strengthening the Jewish Collective

Jewish Peoplehood needs to be strengthened in the context of the times that we live in, rather than based on the paradigms of the past. Jews need to connect with each other in contexts that enable Jews to know and learn about each other in a real way, going beyond the images, stereotypes and propaganda that dominated the last 60 years. We need to create new kinds of networks, community, bringing Jews together across the diverse divides around areas of common interest and concern, Jewish or non-Jewish, enabling relationships and mutual understanding. The effort needs to be both a "top-down" and "bottoms-up" effort, of both the organized Jewish world and those at the grass-roots.



Jonathan Woocher

Chief Ideas Officer and Director, JESNA

By living it. If those who embrace a sense of Peoplehood live their lives in accordance with their understanding of what being part of the Jewish people entails - in all its diverse forms of expression, because there is no one way of living out our purpose and our values - others will get the point. We need to trust that a 3000-year old self-understanding has enduring power.



Howard M. Rieger

President and CEO, United Jewish Communities

Visiting the *mitzvot* and fully understanding the nature of which so many of these requirements underscore the principals of collective action provides the practical basis for building Peoplehood. At the same time, we live in a world which takes nothing for granted and assumes the individual does not have to take on obligations. The basics that will be required to create an infrastructure of Peoplehood will have to be the subject of instruction at all ages and grade levels, for youth and adults alike.

Jewish Peoplehood education should have two faces: it should place Jewish Peoplehood as an 'end' goal. At the same time, Jewish Peoplehood education should begin from an existing Jewish People



Israel, Daniel Golston

Shelley Kedar

Shelley Kedar is the Director of Informal Education at the International School for Jewish Peoplehood Studies at Beth Hatefutsoth.

In trying to achieve the goal of creating and enhancing an educational process of transformation from a s/State of individualism to different levels of 'peoplehood', I suggest using the prism of one of the key texts of Jewish Peoplehood: "You are all *nitzavim* today" (Deuteronomy 29:9).

The *midrash* in Koheleth Rabbah (I: 12a) reveals the following: "You are *nitzavim* on this day all of you - this should have been at the beginning of the book." Using this as a framework, we may derive that Jewish Peoplehood education should have two faces: on the one hand, it should place Jewish Peoplehood as an 'end' goal, a mission to be achieved, an ideal we aspire to. At the same time, Jewish Peoplehood education should be grounded at and begin from the axiom of an existing Jewish People, that it to say, it should be built upon a concrete reality and efforts to connect to this basic starting point. Hebrew grammar supports this interpretation of the *midrash*, as *nitzavim* is a present action; entailing the process of ascertaining a position as well as reaching the final outcome, namely: taking a stand. This *midrash* on *nitzavim* articulates the possibility of an educational framework for Jewish Peoplehood Education as the beginning and the 'end'.

To achieve this dichotomous *nitzavim* concept, one can derive a tripartite model based on Benjamin Bloom's three domains of educational activities: Cognitive - mental skills (Knowledge), Affective - growth in feelings or emotional areas (Attitude); and psychomotor - manual or physical skills (Skills), looking at:

- * What is the vital knowledge for being part of the Jewish People?
- * What are the emotional frameworks for maintaining a relationship with the Jewish People?
- * What are the necessary actions of a meaningful relationship with the Jewish People?

Shlomi Ravid

Dr. Shlomi Ravid is the Director of the International School of Jewish Peoplehood Studies at Beth Hatefutsoth in Tel Aviv.

In his poem "The Jews", the poet Yehuda Amichai addresses a beautiful woman whose grandfather performed Amichai's circumcision long before she was born: "You don't know me and I don't know you but we are the Jewish People, your dead grandfather and I the circumcised and you the beautiful granddaughter with golden hair: We are the Jewish People."

What is Amichai telling us? That being part of the Jewish People transcends time and personal acquaintance. We are connected whether we know each other or not, regardless of our knowledge of Judaism or degree of faith, and even without the consciousness of being part of the collective. But more than that, if we, a rather random sample (we do not even know each other), are "The People", we both represent it and are responsible for it. This is Amichai's Peoplehood definition.

The Random House dictionary defines Peoplehood as a "sense of belonging to a People." This definition captures what Peoplehood is, but fails to explain the rationale for that "sensation." Webster on the other hand offers the following definition: "The awareness of the underlying unity that makes the individual a part of a people." It presumes awareness by the individual that he is part of a unity constituting Peoplehood. This approach places the essence of Peoplehood in the cognitive sphere of "awareness." It fails to explain, however, the leap from the intellectual awareness to the sense of belonging and would not be able to explain what Amichai is describing.

Scholars are placing Peoplehood somewhere between an "ethnicity" and "nationality." Ethnicity, as it is commonly

understood, seems to fall short of explaining the importance Jews are giving to that membership and the norms of behavior they are exhibiting when expressing Peoplehood. Nationality, on the other hand, seems to express more than what we associate with Peoplehood, especially as we use it in a context that includes members of multiple nationalities.

Let us take a minute to examine the question of why defining Peoplehood is important. The obvious explanation is that Peoplehood is a complex and not fully understood phenomenon. Furthermore, those who feel a deep sense of responsibility to their people and are concerned with the weakening of the sense of belonging, believe that if we are to work at strengthening and teaching Peoplehood, we need to at least understand and define what it means. If we don't fully understand it, how are we to teach it? I would like to offer an alternative approach. My assumption is that while Peoplehood is a vague and complicated concept, deep down we actually understand it, and some simply feel it. While we may have issues articulating exactly what it means (how many of us can articulate the social contract that constitutes our social structures?), many of us are able to embrace a sense of belonging to a people that is meaningful, reasonably coherent and one that frames significant parts of our lives as members of the collective. Some of us do it because we feel that "we have gone a long way together" and Jews are responsible for each other. Others because they believe that the Jewish People has a unique role and capacity in making this world better. Some believe that 'Ahavat Israel' is a religious command and others see the People as their extended family. And the list goes on.

My assumption is that while Peoplehood is a vague and complicated concept, deep down we actually understand it, and some simply feel it



Morocco, Noah Stern



India, Naomi Levy

Dan Ehrenkrantz

Dan Ehrenkrantz is an American Reconstructionist rabbi currently serving as the fifth president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Wyncote, Pennsylvania.

“The Primacy of Peoplehood” (originally published by Contact Magazine) explores the peoplehood philosophies of the late Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan, who coined the term Jewish Peoplehood back in the 1950’s and saw it as important even in an age in which universalistic notions were popular on the one hand, and individualism was growing on the other. Kaplan’s purpose in developing the idea of Peoplehood was to create an understanding of Judaism broad enough to include everyone who identified themselves as a Jew regardless of one’s individual understanding of or approach to that identity. In the first half of the 20th century, Judaism was generally seen as either a system of behaviors (the Orthodox position) or one of beliefs (the Reform stance). Kaplan found both approaches lacking. He saw in the idea of Peoplehood a way to transcend these approaches by suggesting a sense of belonging as primary to the Jewish experience.

Kaplan was radical in proposing an organizing principle - Peoplehood - that ran counter to the American ethos of the day. The idea that there was value in a multi-faith, multicultural world was revolutionary. Kaplan understood that people are shaped by their cultures and civilizations, and that groups have greater power than individuals to help bring about a world of peace and wholeness. He also fervently believed that a revitalized Jewish people could use its wisdom and energy to serve all of humanity and, in the process, strengthen itself. The concept of Peoplehood continues to be radical today. It is a formidable counterpoint to the glib universalism that ignores the power of religions and cultures to attract and shape adherents, and it flies in the face of our society’s consumer-inspired individualism. Kaplan’s vision makes clear that if we are to act on our connections to others, we have to align ourselves with groups to which we feel naturally obligated. Most of us recognize the sense of obligation that comes from being part of a family; Peoplehood insists that our obligations go beyond our families to our people.

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Tova Serkin

Executive Director, KolDor

A simple definition of Peoplehood is merely the interconnectedness of the Jewish People based on shared history, culture, tradition and religion and yet there is something about being part of a People that goes beyond the dictionary definition. We are fascinated by this term and cannot agree on a definition precisely because it captures in essence the nearly invisible ties that have bound us together for thousands of years and still do today.



Eric Levine

Senior Vice President, Development - the Center for Jewish Philanthropy, UJC

At its most fundamental, Peoplehood means an unquenchable commitment to the unity and totality of the Jewish people, or ‘k’lal Yisrael,’ and a deep devotion to a responsibility to care for others, or ‘arevut.’ Indeed, the old annual UJA/UJC campaign slogan “We are One” gave testimony to that commitment. So for me, Peoplehood means the depth and quality of ties among Jews across time and geography.



David Gedzelman

Executive Vice President of The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life, New York

Jewish Peoplehood is a dialectic of birth and choice, of blood and wisdom. The Jewish People is an extended family which is meant to have an open adoption policy. In our foundational texts, being born into this extended family is of co-equal value with choosing to be a member of this family.



Howard M. Rieger

President and CEO, United Jewish Communities

The essence of Judaism is the nature of our having been chosen as a people to carry out a divine task. This is not something that is solely acted upon individually but, rather, draws upon the strength of this unifying nature of our origin and our destiny. In its simple sense, the essence of Peoplehood is the strength that we achieve by standing together, the power that is representative of generations upon generations acting upon the same mitzvot.



India, David Gluck

Moty Cristal

Dr. Avd. Moty Cristal is a co-leader of KolDor, Israel.

“Peoplehood” - the ever present word in Jewish communities, organizations and conferences - is a vague and undetermined buzzword. What is it actually? What does it represent? Who is “entitled” to be part of Jewish Peoplehood? How do you “do” Jewish Peoplehood?

The Jewish conversation still struggles with the inherent contradiction between the sense of inclusiveness associated with a global world and the need to define concepts in order to accept them as organizing principles. Therefore, rather than defining the concept of Jewish Peoplehood, and still one step sharper than just describing it, here are the five fundamental elements through which Jewish Peoplehood evolves:

Jewish Halacha. The religious dimension of Jewish Peoplehood is represented by the fascinating developments within *halacha* or Jewish legal codes. From struggling with medical ethics to the role of women in religious hierarchy, Rabbis and religious leaders from all forms of Judaism are meeting daily the challenges that modernity imposes on the traditional laws.

Jewish Culture. The amazingly eclectic composition of traditional and less traditional Jewish culture has undergone a renaissance in recent years. Artists, scholars, writers - one cannot afford ignoring the overwhelming richness of Jewish cultural creation. And yes, even in Israel. Jewish book fairs, film festival, painters, artists, music makers, websites, communities of interests and blogs have all played a key role throughout the last decade in boosting Jewish culture that is neither religious, nor national. It's simply Jewish.

Israel. Not only as a Jewish state, but rather as a conceptual homeland, Israel plays a new role today and many Jews are seeking ways to engage with Israel beyond the traditional ones of making Aliyah and sending money.

From real-estate and business investment, through Birthright Israel and MASA, obtaining higher education at Israel's leading universities, or just through participating in political conversations in their own communities, Jews are finding new avenues to engage with their “homeland.” At the same time, we hear more and more voices in Israel calling to institutionalize the role of Jewish communities worldwide in Israel's decision-making processes and to increase Israel's responsibility towards world Jewry.

Hebrew. If the dictionary definition of Peoplehood is “the awareness of the underlying unity that makes the individual a part of a people,” the spoken language has, or should have, a vital role in strengthening that awareness. Hebrew should become the spoken language of the Jewish people on two distinct levels, even for those Jews whose mother tongue is not Hebrew. The first is a basic communication-level Hebrew, which allows every Jew to communicate with each other, and conversational Hebrew that will allow Jews to engage in a simple conversation and feel that they are able to express themselves.

Tikkun Olam. This ancient Jewish value, and its adoption as a major element in the agenda of many Jewish organizations, reflects the current new phase in the life of the Jewish people. With a strong and secure (though always under threat) nation state, Jews are starting to ask themselves, as they should, what they can do for the non-Jews worldwide. Human rights emergencies, environmental challenges and ethical dilemmas associated with biological innovations, rightfully attract Jewish capital and human resources. We are on the verge of global Jewish moral leadership, which ought to be accompanied with engagement with the moderate Muslim world, supporting it in its fight against the fundamentalists.

The five fundamental elements through which Jewish Peoplehood evolves are: Halacha, Jewish Culture, Israel, Hebrew and Tikkun Olam

Laura Geller

Rabbi Laura Geller is the Senior Rabbi of Temple Emanuel in Beverly Hills, California.

For much of the second half of the 20th century, Jewish identity was shaped both in response to anti-Semitism and vicariously through identification with Israel. The shared experience of anti-Semitism was common ground for Jews who were quite different from each other, but in North America, particularly for non-Orthodox Jews born after the Six Day War who are already third- and fourth-generation Americans, this “covenant of fate” and the sense of responsibility that it engenders no longer seem to exist. Younger Jews have had no real experience of anti-Semitism. They feel completely comfortable and fully enfranchised as Americans.

The classic article by Robert Cover called “Nomos and Narrative” is helpful here, since for Cover obligation, or law, emerges out of stories. He suggests that there is a narrative common to all Jews that is compelling enough to create a sense of obligation. This insight enables us to reframe the concept of Peoplehood to mean a sense of connection and responsibility created by people who share a story, a powerful story that not only brings meaning and purpose to our individual lives, but also creates an obligation to the others who share the story. Peoplehood can be understood as the sense of connection and responsibility created by people who share a story or are part of the same ongoing conversation.

These are some of our challenges: to help Jews tell their stories within the larger Jewish narrative, so that they understand they are part of an ongoing Jewish conversation; to give Jews the skills to participate in those conversations; to support the artists and the intellectuals who are creating the Jewish culture that people want to talk about; to expand the circle of those in the conversation; and to find ways to deepen the conversations enough to create a sense of connection that leads to responsibility for one another. Then being part of the Jewish People will have real meaning.

From Laura Geller's article 'A New Understanding of Peoplehood: The Jewish Conversation' that appeared in the recently published book: Jewish Peoplehood Change And Challenge, Editors: Menachem Revivi, Ezra Kopelowitz.



India, Molly Marlit

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Shmuel Ben Dror

Chair of the Friends of LoChamei HaGetaot

Today's buzzword in the Jewish world is “Jewish Peoplehood”. It is everywhere and only rising in popularity internationally. Personally, I feel the term is motivated by innumerable internal and external threats facing the Jewish people which have created an urgent need to coordinate philanthropic efforts in order to maximize effectiveness of the Jewish philanthropic dollar.



Yonatan Ariel

Executive Director of MAKOM-Israel Engagement Network, a Jewish communities/JAFI partnership

Peoplehood is organic to Jewish life. Never just a faith group, nor a distinctive race, we are an ethnic, tribal, national collective - at least in part. Perhaps we are one of a kind. Peoplehood recognizes that to be a Jew is to be a participant in a shared enterprise that has deep roots and profound visions of how to live a human life of purpose.



Elana Maryles Sztokman

Educator, writer, researcher and activist

Jewish Peoplehood is distinct in that it is fundamentally about people. It is not philosophy, it is not religion, and it is not academic or ephemeral. It means that when I sit across from another Jewish person - whether across the table, across a screen or across the ocean - my spirit is intricately intertwined with hers. We are connected by human experience and personal narrative, by the sorrows, pains and passions that make us human.



Lea C. Waismann

Expert in educational aspects of human behavior in South America, Europe and Israel

As many have stated, individuals perceive themselves as belonging together, as sharing a deep root from which they recognize themselves as having developed, as having a connection to a specific group of people.



Naama Sabar

Educational Consultant to the International School of Jewish Peoplehood Studies

Peoplehood is that which strengthens Jewish belonging and identity, such as Jewish memory, common destiny, solidarity, Jewish audio-visual creativity, as well as values, tradition, Jewish life and more.

The openness of the Jewish people to converts makes plain that the familial bond is itself a function not solely of biology but of a shared history, a common fate and, for much of Jewish history, closely similar religious customs



Meir Azari

Senior Rabbi and Executive Director of the Daniel Center for Progressive Judaism, Tel Aviv

Jewish collective memory and spirituality require the creation of a shared language of values and ideals, a lexicon that is rooted in the past and in tune with the future. Throughout the Jewish existence, the continuity of Jewish peoplehood has been contingent on successful recasting of ancient traditions.



Tally Zingher

Attorney in New York, serves on the KolDor Global Executive

Peoplehood is a frame for discussing and exploring the sense of belonging and mutual responsibility to a community that is beyond one's immediate physical world. Peoplehood is that larger sense that translates a person's individual identity into a sentiment that connects them to others whom they have yet to meet and/or those with whom they consider their lot to be cast.



Seymour Epstein

Senior VP at UJA Federation of Greater Toronto

'Peoplehood' seems to be the best term available to describe Jewish 'glue' in the post-everything atmosphere of the 21st century. It permits the following: that Jews need not see themselves as only a religion after the enlightenment; that Jews can deeply respect most forms of Jewish expression after modernity; that such respect does not require negating one's own form of Jewishness; that Peoplehood demands a pluralism that tolerates even those Jews who are not tolerant; that a new bridge be built between Israeli Jews and Diaspora Jews; that such a bridge be two-way and wide enough to accommodate new forms of dialogue and devotion; that religion, nation, culture, and language are all acceptable components of Peoplehood.



Sanford Antignas

Chair of the UJA Federation of New York's Cluster on Strengthening the Jewish Collective

Jewish Peoplehood is about belonging to, feeling part of, and responsible for something greater than oneself - in spite of and strengthened by its diversity. It is an important part of what defines and enhances each of us. It is reflected in that collective common thread that has run through the Jewish People through the generations, binding the present to the past and the future.



Greece, Daniel Golston

Steven Cohen and Jack Wertheimer

Prof. Steven M. Cohen is a Research Professor of Jewish Social Policy at HUC-JIR. Dr. Jack Wertheimer is the Provost of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, in which capacity he acts as the Chief Academic Officer.

"Israel is a people like no other, for it is the only people in the world which, from its earliest beginning, has been both a nation and a religious community." Thus, some 65 years ago, the philosopher Martin Buber summed up an age-old peculiarity of the Jews. The classical formulation is in the biblical book of Exodus, where the children of Israel are commanded to serve at one and the same time as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

For the most part, Jews have always understood that the two sides of this dual identity - the religious and the ethnic/national - are inextricably intertwined. Between the two, indeed, there are striking examples of a precedence being given to the dimension of peoplehood. Rabbinic exegetes over the ages, for instance, found significance in the sequence of commitments undertaken by Ruth the Moabite to her mother-in-law Naomi: "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

For Ruth, the prototypical convert, first came an embrace of the Jewish nation, second came a declaration of faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Embedded in notions of Jewish peoplehood are strong familial or "tribal" associations, but the openness of the Jewish people to converts makes plain that the familial bond is itself a function not solely of biology but of a shared history, a common fate and, for much of Jewish history, closely similar religious customs and practices.

Commentary Magazine

Why is Peoplehood important?

As Jewish civilization tries to continue and thrive amid the challenges of the 21st century, why is Jewish Peoplehood a crucial concept?

