

Best practices of Peoplehood organizations

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THE PEOPLEHOOD CONCEPT

THE CHALLENGE - AN OPEN SOCIETY

- Jewish belonging is no longer obvious or self-evident
 - In a free world where most Jews are full citizens of their countries the sense of belonging to a global people is no longer bred by dint of circumstance.
- Jewish belonging requires justification before it can be taught
 - The reasons to opt-in are not obvious
 - Opting-in occurs when Jewish experiences are meaningful and relevant to the lives of contemporary Jews.
- This presentation focuses on organizations who are meeting the challenge.

WHY FOCUS ON JEWISH PEOPLEHOOD?

- The concept of “Jewish Peoplehood” is a window into the larger story of Jewish organizations adapting to an open society in which pluralism is a norm
 - Each individual opts-in, in a somewhat different way.
- While the idea of “the Jewish People” is ancient.
“Jewish Peoplehood” is a new term
 - Mordechai Kaplan – mid 20th century
 - Since 2000 comes into intensive use.
- For this reason the Peoplehood concept is important as it signals a new response to the open society

THE RESEARCH

- Our research focuses on practices of organizations, which consciously evoke the Peoplehood concept or operate in a manner similar to these organizations.
- Interviews were conducted from September through December 2009 with 35 contacts at 20 organizations working in six countries
- Ten working in the United States, four in Israel, two in England, two operating in the Former Soviet Union, two which are international and one in Canada.
- In addition, use was made of other research to build a number of additional case studies.

FOUR CORE BEST PRACTICES

I. THE EXPLICIT DEVELOPMENT OF BROAD CONCEPTIONS OF JEWISH COMMUNITY

- Peoplehood organizations view their mission as enabling constituents to have multiple, continuous and overlapping interactions with other Jews in different places and with different organizations.
- A Peoplehood organization pursues collaboration with other organizations, locally and globally in order to encourage an expanded conception of Jewish community.

II. EMBRACE OF PLURALISM

- The development of intentionally pluralistic or inclusive approach to Jewish belonging
- Active embrace and welcome of Jews with different Jewish backgrounds and different ideological approaches to Jewish life
- The organizing logic : “If the global Jewish collective includes Jews of many types, then the experience we offer our constituents must model this pluralism for Jewish collectivity.”

TWO TYPES OF PLURALISM

- Organizations, particularly religious organizations, which have a clear world view and whose programs are not internally pluralistic, but which embrace collaboration and cooperation with organizations who are different from themselves; hence, contributing to an inclusive Jewish public sphere.
- Organizations whose programs are pluralistic, in that they are designed to accommodate different Jewish worldviews and life-styles.

III. AN INDIVIDUAL'S JEWISH JOURNEY, NOT SOCIALIZATION INTO A PARTICULAR IDEOLOGY

Peoplehood organizations provide the social context, knowledge, ideology, skills and motivation to enable an individual to successfully pursue a Jewish life.

- They are less concerned if Jewish life is lived according to a particular Jewish ideological creed.
- The goal is for participants to leave the program with the Jewish People in their *kishkes*. They are compelled to continue their Jewish journey and have been given the tools to do so in the company of other Jews.

IV. CONCRETE COMMITMENT AND ACTION

A Peoplehood organization perceives meaningful engagement with the Jewish collective as a core activity.

- The organization enables concrete commitment to action within a collective Jewish context.
- Peoplehood defines the organization in terms of:
 - All areas of activity, branding, marketing, communications, programming and revenue sources support
 - Constituents , staff, board and funders perceive engagement with Jewish collective as a core activity of the organization and not as an extra-curricular activity.

THE IDEAL OUTCOME

IDEAL OUTCOME: PEOPLEHOOD CONSCIOUSNESS

- Peoplehood consciousness is a generalized sense of commitment to the Jewish people and its civilization, which extends over and above the immediate social encounter with other Jews.
- We propose that the generation of Peoplehood consciousness requires a combination of all four of the core practices described above.
 - A successful Peoplehood program will create a powerful social experience of Jewish Peoplehood;
 - However, only the more sophisticated organizations go beyond the social experience and offer an educational program designed to generate Peoplehood consciousness.

PEOPLEHOOD CONSCIOUSNESS INCLUDES AN ...

1. Emotional connection

An emotional sense of being part of the Jewish People

2. Intellectual connection and know-how for connecting

Knowledge which contextualizes Peoplehood as meaningful for the individual and skills which enables a continuing Jewish journey in the company of other Jews.

3. Commitment for ongoing action

Practical contexts which enable individuals to act as a Jew on behalf of the Jewish collective.

A CASE STUDY

**THE “MIFGASH” AS A CORE PRACTICE
OF THE INTER-COMMUNAL ARENA**

MIFGASH AS A CORE PRACTICE

- Mifgashim came into use at same time as the Peoplehood concept
- Prior to the 1990s few trips by Diaspora Jews to Israel included educationally informed interactions with Israeli Jews; and, planned travel of Israelis to Jewish communities abroad for this purpose did not exist.
- Mifgash as an educational tool is now a basic component in many of the educational venues that include Israeli and Diaspora Jews.

EXAMPLES

- Mifgashim as meetings/encounters between:
 - Diaspora visitors and Israelis during Israel trips
 - Israeli visitors and local Jews in Diaspora communities
- Twinning programs – “the extended mifgash”
 - Examples:
 - Federation partnership programs
 - Partnerships between particular organizations – community centers, youth movements, schools etc.
 - On-going, mutually beneficial interaction, between communities involving many populations.

A SUCCESSFUL MIFGASH BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS

1. Social experience of Peoplehood

An intense and enjoyable social interaction with Jews who are different from oneself

2. Facilitation of a continued Jewish journey

The program encourages and enables continued social contact

3. Builds Peoplehood consciousness

- The program facilitates an intellectual understanding and emotional consciousness among participants that the benefit of the Mifgash is not only to them as an individual, but as a Jew who is a member of a broader Jewish collective.
- With the moment of realization also comes an initial commitment both to one's personal Jewish journey and to contributing to the community (local and global) within which that journey unfolds.

In most Mifgashim only the first of three conditions are met.

A SUCCESSFUL MIFGASH BETWEEN COMMUNITIES

Builds Peoplehood consciousness in the broader community

An example – The sophisticated twinning program

- Boston-Haifa twinning program which is organized by Dept. of Jewish Peoplehood–Oren, of the Shdemot Center for Community Leadership at the Oranim Academic College.
- The twinning program rests on creating concentric circles of engagement between communities. It begins by matching communities and schools. It expands outward to encompass interaction and dialogues between leadership, administrators and educators, and then to the students, parents and others involved in the educational life of the communities.

Problem is that we have no long term impact research to confirm what we think is happening.

A KEY MIFGASH INGREDIENT IS COLLABORATION

- Close collaboration between sponsoring organizations is vital, in order to produce an experience among mifgash participants of fully integration. Participants become part of a single group of Jews during the encounter and don't remain divided along national lines.
- For this to happen
 - Principal of mutual benefit
 - All sides benefit, not patron/client relationship
 - Content of the mifgash caters to the interests all participants and is mutually selected – not one side educating and the other being educated.
 - Participating organizations have a broad understanding of benefit of the mifgash and will invest in it. For example, staff will receive enough hours to plan and coordinate.

In Summary

Peoplehood consciousness

- **Emotion**
An emotional sense of being part of the Jewish People
- **Intellect and know-how**
Knowledge and skills which enable participants to continue on their Jewish journeys in the company of other Jews
- **Action**
Practical contexts which enable individuals to act as a Jew on behalf of the Jewish collective.

Four core practices

- The explicit development of broad conceptions of Jewish community
- Intentional use of pluralistic strategies for enabling group belonging
- Emphasis on individual's Jewish journey in a collective context, rather than socialization into a particular Jewish life-style
- Concrete commitment to action within a collective Jewish context.