

# The Peoplehood Papers 20

October 2017 | Tishrei 5778

## The JCCs as Gateways to Jewish Peoplehood



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# From the Editor

## Shlomi Ravid

In many respects JCCs are the embodiment of Jewish Peoplehood. By design they represent Jewish spaces that provided, for generations of Jews, a gateway to Jewish civilization and the Jewish people. As communal agents and engines of Jewish civilization they are also confronted by the current challenges facing the Jewish community and the need to operate in a changing environment and context.

In this collection of essays, we set out to explore how JCCs approach and implement the role of being the gateway to Jewish Peoplehood. Some of the questions we asked our article contributors were:

What approach/es to Jewish Peoplehood resonate with your constituency and how can they be translated to programming?

How can joining a JCC turn into a journey for connecting to the Jewish People, identity and civilization?

How do you embrace diversity throughout the classic Jewish spectrum and beyond (i.e. including interfaith families and non-Jewish members) without compromising a focus on Jewish identity?

What is the added value of Jewish Peoplehood education to the JCC?

How do you introduce, in practice and in concrete terms, the global dimension of Peoplehood and how do you engage with Israel?

Do current challenges require a shift in content and educational focus and should these be reflected in JCC staffing, professional development and lay-professional structure and relations?

The responses we received are diverse and covered a range of dimensions and issues related to the topic. **Tad Taube and Shana Penn** from the Taube Foundation offer an excellent framing of the JCCs history as a background for policy making. **David Ackerman** from JCC Association of North America presents an integrated micro and macro level approach to addressing today's challenges. **Zack Bodner** from the Palo Alto JCC offers the lens of "doing Jewish" rather than "being Jewish" as the necessary approach for

being the "architects of the Jewish future". **Jill Blair** from the Peninsula JCC in Northern California wrestles with how to honor and express our Jewish heritage while maintaining relevance in an ever changing, diverse and complex society.

**Smadar Bar-Akiva** from JCC Global writes about weaving the connections between Jewish communities the world over, and creating the meaningful encounter with "the other" that helps defy stereotypes and builds bridges of understanding and support. **Ezra Kopelowitz**, through the analysis of the evaluation of cohort one of JCC Global's *Amitim* Fellows program, provides insights into the nature of global Jewish culture at a JCC and what is involved in nurturing such a culture.

**Jeanne Ruckert Lovy** from the Greater Boston JCC shares the vision and impact of their JCC Family Initiative focusing on families with young children and its influence on the overall JCC thinking. **Sam Cohen & Beth Bernstein** from the Merage JCC in Orange County describe their Jewish global connection programs focusing on teens, the Maccabi games, as well as a professional development program as way to engage their community in Jewish Peoplehood. **Neil Taylor** from London's Jewish Care highlights social care as the mission for the JCC and proposes making it the core mission of the Global JCC movement as a way of giving meaning to the concept of Jewish Peoplehood.

**Agata Rakowiecka** from the Warsaw JCC, the youngest institution in this conversation, speaks on the unique role the JCC has in building the Warsaw Jewish community. She emphasizes an inclusive, open and diverse approach as the way to make the difference. **Jonathan Orenstein** from the Krakow JCC, tells the story of the "miracle" of rebirth and return to Jewish life in Krakow and what it takes to make it happen.

**Raquel Markus-Finckler and Anabella Jaroslavsky** from Hebraica, Venezuela shares the difficult situation the community is facing and at the same time the insistence on sustaining the Jewish spirit of the JCC. Their *Mekorot* program enriches and engages the community through the use of a common Jewish theme that drives their yearly programmatic content.

**Masha Aryeva** from the St. Petersburg, Russia JCC writes about the power of offering a welcoming, open and caring space as a way to engage Russian Jews with their heritage and Peoplehood.

On the Israeli side, **Yaacov Maoz** from The Israeli Association of Community Centers begins by painting a grim picture of the state of Peoplehood at the Israeli JCCs. He then proceeds to detail seven reasons for the advancement of engagement with this important topic in Israeli JCCs. **Elan Ezrachi and Shaikhe El-Ami** from Ginot Ha'ir in Jerusalem share the unique perspective of a Jerusalem JCC, aspiring to serve its local

community but also be the JCC of the Jewish people. Their goal is to serve as a connector between the Jewish people and the real Jerusalem.

The articles in this collection tell the story of a diverse movement with a global spread, wrestling with new challenges. Each JCC brings its local story and particular challenges as part of the overall challenge of keeping Judaism and Jewish Peoplehood current, engaging and meaningful. Figuring out the nature and appeal of Jewish communal institutions in the current paradigm, and their connection to the larger Jewish story, is anything but simple. It requires creativity and innovation as well as persistence. The good news is that the above are all manifested in the stories shared here, including a realistic sense of the complexity of the challenges, the courage and stamina required for addressing them and a deep belief in the cause. There is definite room for cautious optimism.

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## JCCs as Gateways to Jewish Peoplehood

**David Ackerman**

One hundred years ago, Chaim Weizmann led a vigorous diplomatic initiative to convince the British government the Jews were a nation and therefore entitled to a state. Today, we are engaged in an equally vigorous initiative to convince the Jews they are a people whose connection and relationship to one another transcend the specific boundaries of place.

Throughout the course of that century JCCs have proven loyal to four principles: inclusiveness, comprehensiveness, multi-dimensionality, and responsiveness (Cohen and Chazan, 1999). Inclusiveness refers to the JCC ethos of welcoming all Jews without judgement and assuring them the JCC is a place “where everybody knows your name.” This constant is the historical foundation for the 21st century JCC’s peoplehood orientation.

Jewish peoplehood means different things to different people, but generally, refers to a sense of belonging to a group with a shared history and mission. This is an act of faith in imagination, since the Jewish people in its entirety last gathered on the plains of Moab three millennia ago. So it wasn’t necessarily the mindset for the successive waves of Jewish immigrants to the US in the late 19th and early 20th Century who continued to identify primarily with their communities of origin. JCCs approached peoplehood from a local perspective and worked to bridge the overlapping economic, ethnic, and denominational divides in the fragmented Jewish community, and to create a coherent balance between secular and religious Jewish life (Kaufman, 1999). At the same time, JCCs worked tirelessly to link individual communities together in a national movement. The JCCs’ circles of peoplehood rippled outward: local to national to global.

In 2014, the JCC Movement released its Statement of Vision and Principles for the 21st Century, affirming its commitment to this peoplehood-oriented/inclusive heritage:

We believe the JCC is a primary destination for Jewish engagement, a locus of learning and celebration and a connector to Jewish life: a place where individuals and families can encounter Jewish ideas, principles, practices, and values; where they encounter Israel and explore the ideal of Jewish peoplehood in their lives; and a public square for convening important conversations both within the Jewish and among the broader community.

21st Century JCCs work toward this vision by identifying the diversity of the Jewish people as a primary asset. JCCs aspire to be not only the Jewish public square, but to act on a more intimate level as the Jewish community's kitchen table, where Jews of radically different backgrounds can meet one another "up close and personal", argue with one another, learn about themselves from one another, and in so doing, become more tightly woven together. These individual relationships are the inner circle of Jewish peoplehood.

21st Century JCCs build community not by focusing on the relationship between the member and the JCC as an institution, but rather, by functioning as a platform for the development of individual relationships between members. The strength of the community is a function of the density of the web of relationships. Thus, the community is the next circle of Jewish peoplehood. By targeting individual relationships and weaving them into a community, JCCs model peoplehood on two levels, simultaneously: the connections established between Jews locally represent the connections between all Jews globally even as the JCC community as a whole takes its place within the network of Jewish communities worldwide.

The JCC vision imagines a welcoming environment dedicated to Jewish living and learning. Its central purpose is to encourage individuals to explore the fundamental question, "Why bother being Jewish?" Its goal is not to prescribe a specific way of living Jewishly, but rather to help individuals identify what being Jewish means to them and to act upon that meaning in their daily lives. The JCC's primary tool for achieving this goal is Jewish conversation.

The metaphor of conversation is a powerful one. Jewish life can be likened to a conversation which began when God called out to Abraham and continues to this day with each generation adding its voices. Jewish thought has evolved as a function of intergenerational conversations (arguments, even!) about what being Jewish means. The classic texts provide documentation of this conversation over time and engagement with those texts has always been a primary way of accessing the historical dimension of Jewish Peoplehood.

But participating in this never-ending conversation can be daunting: many are hesitant to try because they feel they do not possess sufficient fluency in the language of discourse, in the vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics of Jewish life, and are not familiar enough with the ideas, events, and personalities comprising Jewish history. 21st Century JCCs serve as language incubators, places where Jews of all backgrounds, beliefs, practices, and knowledge levels increase their level of fluency in the Jewish people's shared language.

21st Century JCCs differ from many institutions in Jewish life in their open-ended approach to the Jewish conversations they support. Maintaining the conversation is the goal; determining its outcome is not. As long as Jews are talking with one another about what being Jewish means to them, they are participating in the Jewish interpretive tradition and are contributing to Jewish peoplehood.

While the classic texts were a primary source of peoplehood, both across time and across space, they no longer hold the same authority in Jewish life. The State of Israel has served that purpose for the last three generations, at least. More recently, though, Israel's place in the American Jewish psyche is threatened. 21st Century JCCs understand engagement with Israel means engagement with the Jewish past as well as with the Jewish present, as all Jews are connected not only to Israel, but through Israel. JCCs recognize the importance of maintain Israel's role as as an essential thread of Jewish peoplehood, while also viewing the larger global web of Jewish relationships as its fullest expression.

21st Century JCCs recognize while they structure many activities and programs, it is always the participant who determines the meaning. JCCs model Jewish peoplehood locally to inspire the individual's imagination of Jewish peoplehood globally.

*Kein y'hi ratzon.* So may it be.

**Dr. David Ackerman** is Director of the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Center for Jewish Education at JCC Association

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## How Can Joining the JCC Turn into a Journey of Connecting to the Jewish People, Identity and Civilization?

**Masha Aryeva**

It is always difficult for me to speak for other people, as I question myself - who am I to read other people minds: Therefore, I can only speak for myself or for those, whom I know closely. My personal experience tells me that if it wasn't for my local JCC - I would have never associated myself with Judaism.

My family and I represent quite an average massive portion of modern Jews who live in the diaspora: we all acknowledge that we are Jewish, and that is the end of the story. Being a Jew in a modern world and a civilized country means that you might never, really never, observe any Jewish tradition in your life! As awful as it sounds - it is true. Because it is not needed in everyday life; Because modern diaspora is not a *shtetl*; Because no one explained to you what is so great about Jewish tradition, history, knowledge and what is in it for you. We live our "normal" lives, we go to school, work, give birth to children, raise them - and all of that can be done with no Jewish sparkle at all! I think that it is exactly the moment when the JCC steps in - it shows you that there is much more to Judaism than you ordinarily think.

First - there is an amazing sense of belonging to those, who share the same set of coordinates, the same values, the same general philosophy. And you don't have to search for them all over the world - you come to a place where right there and right now most people will be "of the same species". The JCC is a home with open doors, always and for everyone. You don't have to be special (by any means) to feel comfortable here. You don't have to prove anything, ask for anything, need anything - you just need to want to explore something new. And even that need - is up to you. You simply can BE - and discover a whole new wonderful world around.

I always view the JCC as a "third place" concept. There is home, there is work - and there is a third place you can think of in any situation, any circumstances, and any moment of your life that will always be there for you. From cradle to your last days - it is almost like your mother who is ALWAYS there for you. JCC can offer any kind of programs, for any age and any wallet. It mostly thinks from the participants' point of view, not from that

of the organization - what are the participants' needs, wishes, challenges, questions – the JCC will try to adopt and accompany.

This is what turns the JCC into a true gateway to Jewish Peoplehood. People join the warm, caring and welcoming “home away from home” and there they are introduced to our rich civilization and heritage and a more meaningful belonging to the Jewish people. Through empathy and a welcoming pluralistic approach to all, we open not only the JCC gates but also the doors to the Jewish people. Through a learner focused approach, we can help Jews advance along their Jewish journey towards a meaningful and richer horizon.

I certainly hope that my family, who became affiliated with our JCC, will be able to be "happily Jewish" in Russia - although far from Israel, but close to Jewishness through the JCC.

**Masha Aryeva** is the Executive Director of Yesod JCC, St. Petersburg, Russia



## Looking beyond the Looking Glass

**Smadar Bar-Akiva**

*“Who in the world am I? Ah, that’s the great puzzle”*

*Lewis Carrol, Alice in Wonderland*

It is Sunday morning or evening (depending on geographic location,) several dozen teens from the Merage JCC in Orange County, California, Kfar Yona, Israel and CDI Mexico City are gathering in their respective Jewish Community Centers. They are studying their family roots and constructing family trees as part of the JCC Global Family Tree program\*. In a few months, they will all meet together in Israel, California or Mexico and explore their own Jewish identity and that of their fellow peers. They will be able to ask each other some poignant questions:

What does it mean to be Jewish?

What are the narratives of my community's identity?

What makes me feel committed to a group or community?

What is the meaning of belonging to the Jewish People?

Does the notion of *Kol Yisrael Areivim Ze Lazeh*- all the people of Israel are responsible for each other- resonate with me and my peers? Why?

The answers may surprise them. They may find close similarities and great differences. They may debate forcefully or embrace kindred spirits. For certain, these conversations will open their minds to new forms of defining Jewish identity and living Jewish lives. Many of them will later testify that they came back from these encounters transformed. The exposure, first hand, to different forms of Jewish life often initiates questions and observations about their own identity and their belonging to the local Jewish community.

“I began to see the JCC as a center of Jewish Peoplehood” says David Black, Executive Director of the Sid Jacobson JCC in New York, who led the L’Alliance Teen Project together with JCCs in France, Ukraine and Israel. “Even when looking at our own Jewish community, there are different Jews. We began reaching out to the Persian and Israeli communities. There are a lot of things that we already do regarding Jewish values, culture, food, films and more. This project helped us connect the dots.”

Programs such as the one described above (and additional ones involving various age cohorts and exploring different themes) enable an encounter and dialogue with what the French Philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas calls: “the Other.” And thus, he writes: “To approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant overflows the idea, a thought would carry away from it. It is therefore to receive from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity. But this also means: to be taught. The relation with the Other, or Conversation, is a non-allergic relation, an ethical relation; but inasmuch as it is welcomed, this conversation is a teaching. It comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain. In its non-violent transitivity, the very epiphany of the face is produced.” (Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*)

In today’s world, where fear and mistrust often segregate and isolate, the Jewish Community Centers are the big tent under which a wide range of people congregate. JCCs, often at the heart of the Jewish community, provide services and programs that build and strengthen Jewish communal life and provide Jewish educational experiences to and for Jews and non-Jews of all ages and orientations. Therefore, JCCs are the ideal venue to educate for Jewish Peoplehood.

From my vantage point, weaving the connections between Jewish communities the world over, this meaningful encounter with “the other” is a source of hope. The possibility of seeing life through the lenses of different people in different countries helps defy stereotypes and builds bridges of understanding and support.

These encounters not only widen the prism of Jewish possibilities, but also empowers the local communities: “In our special situation in Ukraine life is not easy” says Inessa Nosenko, Executive Director, Mazal Tov JCC, Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine. “Participating in the JCC Global *Amitim* -Fellows program I had the feeling that I’m not alone. That I’m part of a big Jewish people. I take all the experiences that we shared and I’m bringing it back to my community. You all gave me an opportunity to learn useful things that will help the future of my community. The future is in our hands. We will make things happen.”

Perhaps it is now time to revive the writings of a Jewish thinker long forgotten, Simon Dubnov, who believed in spiritual Zionism and in the value of each and every Jewish community anywhere in the world: “Every generation in Israel carries within itself the remnants of worlds created and destroyed during the course of the previous history of the Jewish people. The generation, in turn, builds and destroys worlds in its form and image, but in the long run continues to weave the thread that binds all the links of the nation into the chain of generations (The Survival of the Jewish People” in *Heatid IV*.)

Looking beyond the looking glass enables us to integrate a multitude of voices into the fascinating tapestry called: humanity.

**Smadar Bar-Akiva** is the Executive Director of JCC Global

\*Funding for the *Amitim*- Fellows- A Global Leadership Network program that connects JCCs in global long-term projects comes from JCC Global and from a generous grant allocated by UJA Federation of New York. In addition, JDC and participating JCCs are also supporting the program.





## Why Are We Still Here?

**Jill Blair**

I have been a kind of Maestro of Mayhem at the Peninsula Jewish Community Center (PJCC) in Foster City, CA. for the last six months. I was invited in to this nearly 70-year old Jewish Community Center in northern California for one year to be a disruptive force – to challenge assumptions; question practices; and create some discomfort – all in service of cultivating curiosity and courageous creativity as we find our way forward at a time of uncertainty. Like other Jewish legacy institutions across the nation, we are in a process of deep consideration about how to honor and express our Jewish heritage while maintaining relevance in an ever changing, diverse and complex society.

I treasure this assignment because it gives me an opportunity to see from the inside what can hold legacy institutions in place; the practices, beliefs, fears and commitments that can stand between the present and a promising future. I treasure this assignment because it matters to me deeply whether our Jewish communal institutions in general, and JCC's in particular, survive and even more importantly, whether they produce the great social value that is needed to help heal this very broken world.

I love THIS particular place because somewhere on the order of 70% of our 10,000-membership roster define themselves as "other than Jewish;" many come from places 'other than the United States' and speak languages in addition to English. All of these people – from all different perspectives, religious beliefs, experiences and identities, are standing with us – in a tent we have been able to create precisely because of who we are – because of our Jewish history, our values, our obligations.

As I walk the halls of our magnificent Center and see the great and colorful mosaic that is OUR community, I sense our Jewish self in how we treat those who come to us; in what we offer by way of education, culture, conversation and caring. I know our Jewishness by how we show up and what inspires our efforts. I know we are made better by and because of the encounters we foster; the opportunities we enable to share ourselves with others and to have others share with us. We can be a bridge for understanding and sharing between the Jewish community and the broader community – a home for one and, also, a home for all. This is unique to Jewish Community Centers because we are

not institutions of belief; we are institutions of belonging. Our challenge is existential – to retain our roots AND extend our reach.

I have had the good fortune of participating in the Jewish Peoplehood Conversations convened by Dr. Shlomi Ravid, director of the Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education. These discussions have helped me begin to visualize a through-line between our past and our future as American Jewish communal institutions – as essential elements of Jewish civilization. These discussions have brought to light some beliefs that inform my efforts...

Legacy institutions must affirmatively confront the need to reconcile our past with our futures – first by defining our future and then by mapping a path to get there.

Sometimes I think we are afraid to define ourselves in Jewish terms because we think that by definition we limit our value; I believe it is by self-knowledge that we are able to truly add value to the whole world.

Judaism is a boundless and evolving civilization that has fixed and fluid elements, subject to the influence of those who identify as part of it (stand with it).

Some of us are ready to refashion Judaism to find new ways to connect to it; in our refashioning we are also preserving.

JCCs are both an agent and a member of Jewish civilization. We are platforms that hold elements of Jewish civilization – not all but some. Our challenge is to continue to shift the elements we hold to respond to the nature and needs of those we serve.

The preservation of Jewish civilization requires that those of us who are agents of it must accommodate the search for understanding the need for and nature of a Jewish state. We don't have to take a position but we must commit ourselves to the quest of understanding

In the end, my sense is that to sustain ourselves is to embrace the evolution – to understand that our institutions will only endure if we manifest our lineage and our deepest identity not by who we serve but by why we serve all we do.

**Jill Blair** is a Senior Fellow for Strategy & Organizational Effectiveness at the Peninsula Jewish Community Center, in Foster City, California



## JCCs as Architects of the Jewish Future™

**By Zack Bodner**

At the Oshman Family JCC in Palo Alto, California, our vision is to be “the architects of the Jewish future™.” We know that this a bold, almost audacious, statement. However, we are convinced that the Jews of tomorrow will not “do Jewish” the same way the Jews of yesterday did. And we fear that if we don’t help them do Jewish another way, we risk them abandoning Jewish life altogether. That’s why we believe it’s our core responsibility to architect compelling Jewish experiences and programs that will make Jews *want* to embrace more “doing Jewish” in their lives.

Perhaps I should back up. You may have noticed that I talk about “doing Jewish” and not “being Jewish.” That’s because I believe our challenge is not so much about nurturing “Jewish identity,” as it is about “inspiring Jewish journeys.” It’s about creating a life of meaning and connection through Jewish values and rituals, Jewish learning and tradition, the Jewish past and the Jewish future.

If you were Jewish at the turn of the 20th century, it defined everything about your identity. It defined what you ate, where you lived, what you wore, who you interacted with, what you did for a living, how you spoke, who you married, etc.

If you are Jewish today, you may consider it to be just one small piece of your multi-faceted identity... and maybe not even an important one. You could be Jewish and it wouldn’t tell me one thing about where you live or where you’re from; who your friends are and what your job is; what you look like or sound like; what you eat or what you believe; how you feel about Israel or how you spend your Saturdays.

At a time when thought-leaders like Yehuda Kurtzer say, “We are all Jews by choice,” the quintessential question we must answer is: why should Jews make this choice today? And if they do bother to make that choice, then what exactly does it mean to “be Jewish” today?

By and large, JCCs around the world are already more inclusive in their acceptance of “who’s in,” than simply utilizing the Biblical definition, e.g. having a Jewish mother, as our barometer. In many of our JCCs, we embrace those who take on aspects of Jewish life whether or not they undergo a rabbinic conversion. If parents are willing to schlep

their kids to Jewish summer camp, if they light Shabbat candles, if they sing Hanukkah songs, if they make a Passover seder, etc., then they are one of us. We count them as members of our Jewish family.

And even if they *don't* do those basic things, guess what? They are still welcome to be members of our community. Their children can still attend our preschools, camps and afterschool programs.

And beyond being a fitness center for our diverse communities, *everyone* is welcome to join us at our Jewish holiday celebrations, participate in our Tikkun Olam volunteer projects, and enroll in our Hebrew classes. They can join our trips to Israel, watch our cultural arts performances, hear thought provoking lectures, participate in multi-faith events and even help build our *sukkahs*.

So what exactly is a Jew today? We believe turning Jewish into a verb is more appropriate – in which case, how do we “do” Jewish? Or more pointedly, how do we make “doing Jewish” more meaningful, relevant and joyous today?

At a time when Jews and non-Jews today can find meaning and connection in a yoga group, a Soul Cycle class, a book club or even at Burning Man, we need to show people that they can also find meaning and connection through an organized Jewish community.

So what does “being an architect” look like? Well for us, it means truly living our four core values:

**Welcoming** – To be a place where people of all ages, faiths, backgrounds and religions feel comfortable. At a time when there is more and more polarization, JCCs can be a safe space for people with a variety of opinions. We can stand for pluralism and diversity, as we do with our multi-faith Shabbat dinners, multi-faith Passover seders and multi-faith potluck dinners. In fact, in the aftermath of Charlottesville, 200 people of diverse religions joined us for a “Potluck for Peace.”

**Jewish** – To be a place where people can experiment with their Jewishness and not be judged the way they might in some other Jewish institutions. That may be an alternative Yom Kippur experience for Israelis or a new Lag B’Omer celebration that we’ve named “Burning Mensch” or a Yom HaShoah commemoration in people’s living rooms – all innovations we are designing at the OFJCC.

**Collaborative** – To be a place that amplifies the exciting work that other groups and individuals are doing. We can provide a space for those budding organizations that don’t have a home; we can provide micro-grants to people trying out their own DIY

rituals; we can partner with others to be a laboratory where our members are exposed to new ideas.

Pioneering – To be a place willing to take risks. Maybe it’s because we are in the heart of Silicon Valley, but we have an ethos of “moving fast and breaking things.” So we are willing to experiment with new models of Diaspora-Israel relations like our annual Zionism 3.0 Conference. We are willing to experiment with new ways of reaching those who don’t come to us, by bringing the mountain to Mohammed with our JCC Without Walls programming. And we are willing to be a fiscal sponsor to cutting-edge organizations that need a kick start.

Jewish Community Centers may just be the best gateways for Jewish peoplehood because no other institution in the world reaches as many Jews on an annual basis as our JCCs. And, if you also recognize that no other institution in the world brings as many Jews and non-Jews together in an *intentional Jewish setting* as JCCs, then we have an absolute imperative to embrace every opportunity to encourage others to do Jewish.

As architects of the Jewish future™, we are creating the framework of innovation for Jews and non-Jews to live more meaningful lives through doing Jewish at home, at our JCCs and as an inclusive community.

**Zack Bodner** is the CEO of the Oshman Family JCC in Palo Alto, California. Before taking the helm there, he worked for AIPAC for 14 years. He has a graduate degree in philosophy of religion and theology, and writes a regular blog for the Times of Israel.



## It Takes a Village

**Sam Cohen & Beth Bernstein**

*“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Helen Keller*

Jewish Peoplehood was a new concept to the Jews of Orange County when the Merage JCC opened more than a decade ago, yet it was the very foundation upon which this now strong, substantial, and deeply devoted JCC community was built. Bringing together diverse individuals and small pockets of Jews scattered across our catchment area to create one unified community at the JCC was a complex endeavor, requiring us to demonstrate the power of the Jewish collective, and the value of belonging to the larger Jewish community; it required us to celebrate our individual differences, while making connections through our similarities; and it necessitated a careful balance between being inclusive of the diversity of our community, yet remaining distinctly Jewish.

The Merage JCC’s success and expertise in building community has allowed for us to continually push the boundaries of how we define Jewish Peoplehood for our constituents. Our approach to promoting peoplehood is as inclusive as our definition of it: our efforts span across all ages, stages, and programs. At its core is our global JCC partnerships, including that with the Matnas (JCC) of Kfar Yona, which we established in 2008 as a way for our community to develop personal connections to the Land of Israel and its people. We have more recently extended our partnerships globally to include Mexico City and will add another global partner in the year to come.

We have implemented numerous initiatives at our JCC that provide for meaningful connections between our local community and Jewish communities from around the world. The following are several of the Merage JCC’s premier programs that underscore our emphasis on Jewish Peoplehood:

### **JCC Maccabi Games and ArtsFest Host**

The JCC Maccabi Games and ArtsFest (“Games”) is the largest Jewish youth event in the world, bringing together several thousand international teens, as well as thousands of

families, volunteers, and spectators to strengthen their connection to each other, their communities, and Jewish communities across the world. Each year the Merage JCC brings a delegation of over 100 teen athletes and artists to the week-long Games in JCCs around the nation. In 2011, 40 of our JCC teens traveled to Israel to compete in the Games and were hosted in the homes of Kfar Yona families. In 2013, when the JCC Maccabi Games and ArtsFest were hosted here in Orange County, Kfar Yona brought 30 teen athletes, artists, and chaperones to join Team OC for this historical community event.

The Games are an extremely effective peoplehood building experience for our teens, and we have successfully extended this experience and its impact to our entire community by hosting the Games, which we have done in 2007, 2009, and 2013, and will do so again in 2018. Hosting the Games unites our community in an experience that transcends the Games and ArtsFest, leading to deeper and lasting engagement and leadership at the JCC, and greater pride in our community. Enduring relationships born from the host family experience are an integral part of the JCC Maccabi experience. The host family offers the athlete a “home away from home” and a personal connection to the local community. In turn, host families experience the Games on an intimate level by connecting with their friends and neighbors, and building a bond with their visiting participants.

The host families, as well as the thousands of local volunteers, sponsors, and other participants represent the widespread collaboration among all sectors of the Orange County Jewish population – all ages, levels of religious observance, and geographic location – that occurs when the JCC hosts the Games. It is this combined effort that provides our entire community with a renewed sense of unity and Peoplehood that lasts well beyond the close of the Games.

### **JCC Global Teen Fellows**

In 2014 the Merage JCC partnered with Jewish Community Centers in Mexico City, Mexico and Kfar Yona, Israel for the JCC Global Teen Fellows program. The three-year fellowship grew out of a global initiative, *Amitim*, to strengthen international ties and Jewish peoplehood. The Merage JCC was selected as one of 10 North American JCCs alongside 10 from Israel and 10 from the rest of the world to be part of the *Amitim* program of JCC Global.

This program offers teens in Orange County an opportunity to explore their family tree, engage in community service, enrich their Jewish identities, and discover their connections to Israel.

Each summer of the program we gather 100 teens from our communities to play sports and participate in cultural activities, alternating host communities each year. The social interactions between the teens are key to promoting friendship and community among participants, and the exploration of individual family trees reveals unexpected common geographical roots and connections that further enhance the group's understanding of and relationship to one another.

### **Professional & Leadership Development**

We could not effectively promote peoplehood at our JCC without the full commitment of our leadership, and have devoted considerable resources to professional development and board training to build Jewish Peoplehood consciousness among these key influencers. Almost every year we send delegations of staff and board members to Israel for professional and leadership development, where they also work closely with the Kfar Yona JCC. These trips and experiences have helped solidify the JCC's partnership with Kfar Yona, and expanded our work together.

It is with great intention that 14 of our key staff, along with board representation will travel to Poland and Israel in February 2018 for two weeks of organizational and program planning attendant to the JCC's upcoming 5-year strategic plan. Several months later, our board and executive staff will travel to Israel and Europe for further planning and development in the context of several compelling international Jewish communities.

As a result of these efforts, our JCC is the place for our local community to connect with the global Jewish community, as we continue to offer an increased number of informed and diverse programs that promote Jewish Peoplehood.

**Samantha Cohen** is Associate Executive Director & Vice President of Program Services at the Merage JCC in Orange County, and Director 2018 JCC Maccabi Games; Sam oversees growth at our Center for Jewish Life, as well as in our Cultural Arts, Adults, JCC Cares, and Maccabi programming. She holds a Master's degree in Human Rights from the London School of Economics.

**Beth Bernstein**, Institutional Giving Manager. Beth manages all grants from foundations, corporations, and government funders and has worked for the organized Jewish community for over a decade. She holds a Master's Degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary and an MSW from Columbia University.





## Our Mission as a Jewish Peoplehood-Focused Community Organization

### Elan Ezrachi & Shaike El-Ami

The two of us began our leadership of Ginot Ha'ir Community Council in 2001. Shaike was a recent appointment as the CEO of the Council<sup>1</sup> and Elan was on Sabbatical in New York. We met while dancing together at the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service at Bnei Jeshurun, a vibrant synagogue on the Upper West Side of Manhattan that draws many Israeli visitors. Shaike asked Elan if he would join the Board upon his return from the Sabbatical. Several years later Elan assumed the role of Board chair.

This was a beginning of our journey. Together, as a lay chair and a professional leader, we imagined and actualized our dreams and values regarding the Community Council. On the one hand, we were and still are leading a local community organization. We are accountable to our residents. We provide services in the areas of early childhood, culture, sports and leisure, arts and crafts, after-school enrichment programs, day camps, seniors' activities and many more. We are a thriving community organization in the heart of Jerusalem.

But here comes the other part. We ARE based in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is not another location. It is the heart and soul of the Jewish people. Moreover, Jerusalem is the hub of global Jewish activities: pilgrimage tourism, Jewish organizations headquarters, leadership programs, global Jewish gatherings, etc. And within Jerusalem, Ginot Ha'ir is a community organization that is located right in the center of all this. We contain the iconic neighborhoods of Rehavia, German Colony, Talbia, Katamon, Yemin Moshe and more. This is a responsibility.

When we started our work together we coined a slogan: we are the JCC of the Jewish people. Yes, our first priority is our residents. But our residents are unique. Many of the people who reside among us are heavily invested in Jewish life and Jewish peoplehood.

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<sup>1</sup> The city of Jerusalem has a unique community organization system: the city is divided into 28 councils, each one with an elected board. The councils provide services to the residents of their geographic areas, as well as representing the interests of the residents in front of the municipality. Ginot Ha'ir is a council that serves 50,000 residents in the heart of Jerusalem.

We are hosts to multiple pluralistic Jewish organizations and synagogues, many of our residents are immigrants from western countries. So as a community organization we are positioned to imbed the idea of Jewish peoplehood into our daily practices.

One of our signature activities is the pluralistic Kabbalat Shabbat (welcoming the Sabbath) at the First Train Station (the old Station that was converted into an attractive cultural and culinary center). Since 2012, in the summer months, between May and September, we conduct an inclusive cultural and musical event that is open to the public. And the public is a mixture of locals who come from all our neighborhoods and a lively assortment of Jewish visitors from all over the world. There, under the open tent, they all meet, sing, dance, hug each other and welcome the common Jewish feature: Shabbat. They don't know one another, nor do they speak the same language. But the shared experience transcends all those differences.

This is only one example of our mission. Our commitment to Jewish peoplehood runs across many of our programs. As we build our multiyear plans as well as the yearly calendar, we see the Jewish people in our prism. We have been involved in multiple partnership programs with Jewish community centers around the world, exchange programs, hosting interns, and providing networking for visiting individuals from around the Jewish world. Many of our programs are in English and French as we try our best that our publications will be translated.

Being a community center in the heart of Jerusalem is a responsibility. This is a message we also have to convey to our constituency. Not every single resident of our neighborhoods understands the importance and the significance of our Peoplehood mission. We need to educate our people that part of being a "Jerusalemite" is the readiness to make Jerusalem a welcoming and embracing place. We don't want Jewish people around the world to relate to Jerusalem as a spiritual Disneyland. We want them to engage with our communities and our multiple social innovations. We believe that as a community organization we can serve as a connector between the Jewish people and the real Jerusalem, the city that manifests the return of the Jewish people to its ancestral land and the creation of a modern democratic entity.

**Elan Ezrachi**, PhD, is the Chair of Ginot Ha'ir Community Council and the recent author of "Awakened Dream – 50 Year of Complex Unification of Jerusalem" (in Hebrew)

**Shaikha El-Ami** is the CEO of Ginot Ha'ir Community Council and a professional leader in the network of Israeli community centers



## Building Global Jewish Culture at JCCs

**Ezra Kopelowitz**

How do you introduce, in practice and in concrete terms, the global dimension of Peoplehood to a Jewish Community Center? This article describes the approach taken by JCC Global to answer this question. JCC Global was established in 1977 in Jerusalem, as the umbrella organization of all the continental and regional networks of JCCs. The networks include over 1,000 JCCs worldwide. A primary goal of JCC Global is to increase the role of the global Jewish dimension at participating JCCs and to bring each JCC to actively contribute to the JCC Global network.

We report here on the evaluation of JCC Global's *Amitim-Fellows- A Global Leadership Network*. Cohort one of the *Amitim Fellows* was an experimental program designed to train change agents in Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) to advance "global Jewish culture" at their JCCs. The three-year program involved 54 senior professionals and lay leaders from 25 JCCs in 11 countries working on 7 global partnership projects. The global partnerships projects developed programs that focused on youth, special needs, the arts and environmentalism.<sup>2</sup> Cohort one concluded in the summer of 2016. Cohort two begins in Fall 2017.

The evaluation showed that the most successful JCCs, those who developed a global Jewish orientation in the culture of their JCCs advanced along a three-stage pyramid, shown below.

**All the Amitim-Fellows advanced through stage one of the pyramid – "a global Jewish orientation"** - Reinforced feelings of belonging to a global community of JCC professionals and volunteers; an appreciation of the importance of learning from Jewish Community Professionals who work in other countries, and the benefits that accrue for the Amitim-Fellows' personal and professional sense of Jewish identity.

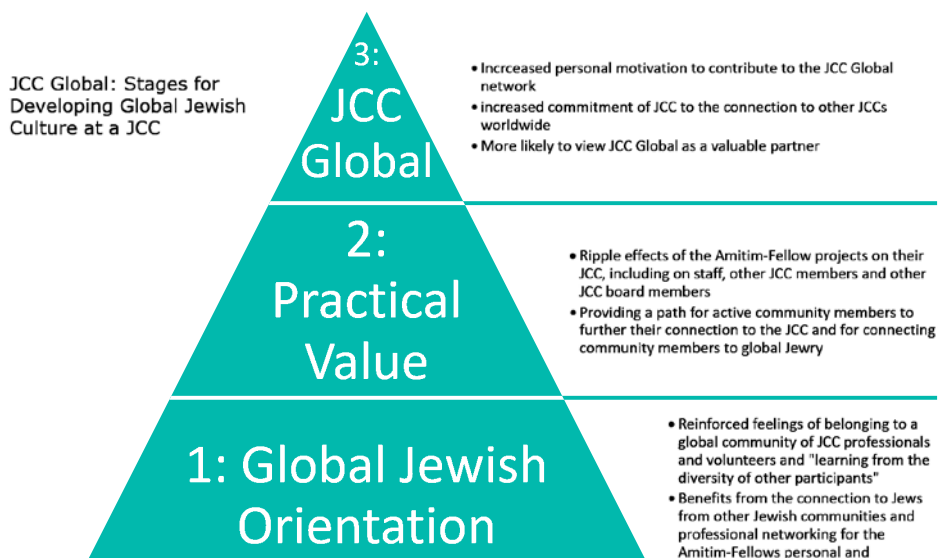
For example, one *Amitim-Fellow* wrote in the final evaluation survey: "*The contribution of working together with other communities and JCCs connects us to a global vision that we are part of a People and not just a local community. We leave the isolation.*" Another wrote: "*But for our participation in JCC Global's Amitim program, global awareness and*

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2 A description of the projects is found at: <http://jccglobal.org/what-do-we-do/develop-global-jewish-leadership/about-amitim-fellows/joint-projects/>

*partnerships would not be on our agenda.*" These individuals, like many of the other *Amitim-Fellows* experienced an expanded sense of professional community and deeper understanding of how being part of broader Jewish people has professional relevance.

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At the second stage of the pyramid, the cognitive and emotional expansion of a JCC staff person or lay leader's frame of reference includes the actualization of practical benefit for the way in which a JCC functions at the level of strategic planning and programming; especially, providing opportunities for lay leaders and staff to engage in a values driven discussion about the role of the global Jewish community at their JCC and opportunities for involvement by JCC members that did not previously exist.

The following are quotes from *Amitim-Fellows* who reached stage two.

*"JCC Global's Amitim program created the foundation for a new awareness of global peoplehood for our board and staff and has led to ongoing connections [to create programs] with one of our partners."*

*"Not only did we directly benefit from the program; we were able to connect to an entire community. Participants, staff members, and lay leaders had the opportunity to learn from each other."*

*"The program increased prestige of our JCC amongst our members and the creation of a quality program connecting our youth to Jewish youth in other countries."*

At stage three the *Amitim-Fellows* bring their JCC into active participation in the JCC Global Network. For example, one *Amitim-Fellow* wrote: *"Our JCC members learned more about the JCC Global network and tightened their connections with other JCCs and their members, exchanged experiences, were inspired and motivated to be more active."*

Twelve of the 25 participating JCCs in cohort one reached stage three of the JCC Global Jewish Culture Pyramid. Lessons learned, which are now being applied to cohort two include:

**Maximizing the benefits of the Amitim-Fellows program for the personal and professional growth of the participants.**

Personal and professional benefits include advanced learning and/or mentoring opportunities for those who enter the *Amitim*-Fellows with a sophisticated understanding of global Jewish culture at their JCCs. For those who enter the program without a sufficient understanding, effective mentoring to enable them to channel their new-found enthusiasm effectively.

**Maximizing the institutional benefits of the Amitim-Fellows program for community development and staff and board development.**

Institutional benefits include encouraging the *Amitim*-Fellows to develop partnership projects focused on engaging connected community members; and, to actively develop a strategy by which empowering active JCC members will have ripple effects through the JCC professional staff, lay leadership, and the larger community. Other benefits include the documentation of best practices for programming and strategic development from JCC Global network partners that will enable motivated JCCs to more easily implement a global Jewish agenda.

**Recruiting for the Amitim-Fellows**

The presence of JCCs with moderate to high levels of global Jewish culture and staff who are already committed at the start of the program was essential for the success of the *Amitim*-Fellows Cohort One. These JCCs and their staff serve as the growth engine for the JCC Global network and bring energy, experience, and commitment to the *Amitim*-Fellows. The *Amitim*-Fellows serves as a vehicle for tapping into their motivation and desire to contribute to their JCCs and the Jewish People. When JCCs with moderate to high levels of global Jewish culture take leadership positions in partnerships with JCCs with lower levels of global Jewish culture, all will benefit. Given their importance, it is critical for the *Amitim*-Fellows or similar JCC to JCC programming to prioritize the recruitment of a critical number of "strong JCCs".

In conclusion, the evaluation of cohort one of JCC Global's *Amitim* Fellows provides insights into the nature of global Jewish culture at a JCC and what is involved in nurturing such a culture. Two ingredients are vital: (1) motivated professionals and lay leaders who understand the benefits of a connection to JCCs in other countries; and, (2) the ability to channel such motivation into concrete benefits for their JCCs.

**Ezra Kopelowitz, Ph.d, Research Success Technologies Ltd. & Senior Fellow, Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education**



## Mending the Issue of Peoplehood in Community Centers

**Dr. Yaacov Maoz**

The term "Jewish Peoplehood" is still foreign and strange to most of the communities which Community Centers serve. You might even say this term is foreign to a great part of the professionals in the Association of Community Centers. This is not because there is an objection to the very idea, but because it is usually not a part of the very busy schedule of the people working at the Centers. Can Community Centers exist without addressing the question of the Jewish People? Perhaps. Are they missing out on a fundamental social value in their professional work? Yes, big time. There could be no community work without addressing the cultural identity of the community, and therefore there could be no community work in Jewish communities in Israel without addressing the issue of the Jewish People. Thus, the work on the subject of Jewish identity and renaissance, as it is done in the Association of Community Centers today is partial, fragmented, and unsatisfactory. Bad news? Yes! Could it be mended? Sure thing!

The first barrier we must cross when we want to bring the issue of the Jewish People to the agenda of the Community Center Director, is the recognition of the importance of the issue, and the understanding of the subject's relevance to the community work. Next, I will number seven components which are important as a whole, but also have value as single components. They all stem from one great purpose which is not limited to the situation of the Jewish People, but also and mainly the situation of individuals and groups in the Israeli communities. In a sense, the issue of the Jewish People is a kind of tool for the enrichment of the mind and the enhancement of the community resilience.

**To see beyond** – the individual in the community is busy with the everyday war of survival, education, livelihood and family. In the little free time he has, he is preoccupied by security, economic and social issues. The events taking place in Israel are very intensive and disrupt the individuals' peace of mind in that same intensity. This creates the illusion that Israel is the entire world of the Israeli. Therefore, he can be indifferent to natural disasters, plagues and wars of other, faraway nations. The development of the thinking through the prism of a "global people" (Am-Olam - **עם-עולם**) will encourage the Israeli to see beyond his narrow point of view and will increase his involvement in the global agenda.

**Know who I am** – we assume that the building blocks of the community are the different identities which compose it. A deep and meaningful understanding of my identity or the identity of the group to which I belong requires a serious exploration of the legacy of my culture. There is no other way to understand my culture without knowing the people who developed it. A significant part of this culture developed in the Diaspora under the influence of the various other nations within which the various Jewish community had settled. In order to know who I am, I must turn to the members of the Diaspora, learn their identities and consequentially examine and form my identity.

**Regenerate my culture** – for many years we have been talking in terms of Jewish Israeli renaissance. A substantial part of this idea of renaissance comes from the Diaspora; especially from the Diaspora of the liberal US. The encounter between the Israeli version of the Jewish renaissance and the American one repeatedly inspires new initiatives which make Israeli Jewishness more updated, innovative, creative and vital. In order to rekindle the hearts, we need a Chavruta, a companionship, which has common values with different expressions.

**To be responsible for each other** – building a community is first and foremost for the strengthening the community resilience. Community resilience is obtained, among other things, through the increase of the social cohesion and the mutual responsibility. Each one of us knows that should anything happens to us, whether happy or sad, the entire community would rush in to help. The idea suits not only the single community but the entire Israeli society and even the entire Jewish People. Communities are responsible for each other even if they are spread across the globe. The development of such an awareness within the Israeli communities will noticeably contribute to the community resilience.

**Developing professionalism** – Haim Tzipory z"l, who established the Association for Community Centers, brought the idea of Community Centers to Israel from North America. Ever since the end of the seventies, an impressive empire of community centers has been established. The Jewish Community Centers all over the world deal with similar challenges in different ways. A meeting between professionals from all over the world will enrich their professional approach and will create a community of more skillful professionals. And thus, the Jewish People, wherever it may reside, will have access to a community of professionals who are experts on communal issues. The development of a human capital is most definitely one of the expected benefits to every organization which chooses to be involved with the values of Jewish Peoplehood.

**Bring Israel to Jewish communities** – the establishment of the state is an extraordinary phenomenon in light of the history of the Jewish People. Ever since the establishment

of the state of Israel and until this day, the society in Israel has reached impressive achievements in the fields of agriculture, medicine and hi-tech. To no lesser degree, the country has reached impressive achievements in the fields of humanities, literature and art. Despite the quarrels between the different sections, the Israeli society has developed a new and up-to-date narrative of Jewish life. The Jews of the world are invited to enjoy this as well, to recognize the uniqueness of Israel and its importance to the Jewish identity of each and every individual or community wherever they are.

**Mending the world (Tikkun Olam)** – many Jewish sages saw the existence of the Jewish People as a part of divine plan to mend the world. The meaning of the idea of Tikkun Olam is the mending of the human society. Therefore, there is another sublime purpose for the Jewish People, to which it must contribute its part to the mending of social injustice and the mending of the security, economical and medical situation of individuals and groups from the nations of the world. In order to properly fulfil this purpose, the Jews of the world must go hand in hand to this noble mission as one. The poor of the next town are as important as the poor of our own. Education toward global missions will strengthen the social resilience of each of the communities and will significantly contribute to the links of Jewish communities across the globe.

These seven sections do not exhaust all the good arguments for the advancement of Jewish Peoplehood in general and Jewish Peoplehood in the Community Centers. But it seems these are enough to inspire a serious discussion in the Association of Community Centers about its responsibility for this global purpose. The authorities in Israel have a great responsibility for this as well. It took a long time for the state of Israel to acknowledge the importance of the subject and to provide resources for it. In the last decade, the ministry of diaspora affairs, is initiating some projects. As of today, it seems that very little is being done, and part of what is done is being incorrectly done. Therefore, we must significantly increase our investments in: time, money, tools and professional personnel. To no lesser extent, we must significantly improve our modes of operation regarding such a substantial issue. It is time to act.

**Dr. Yaacov Maoz** is the director of the department of Jewish life and common life in the Israeli Association of Community Centers, a lecturer for Midrash and philosophy in the Schechter Institute for Jewish studies, a member of the board in the Tikun movement for the renewing of the Israeli society, and has a column for Israeli Jewishness in Galei Zahal (The Israeli Radio station)





## Hebraica, Venezuela – A Multi-Purpose Home Away from Home

**By Raquel Markus-Finckler & Anabella Jaroslavsky**

Currently Venezuela is witnessing one of the biggest economic and social crises in Latin America in the last century. The country is evidencing shortages in important items related to food, medicines and supplies of all kinds. The statistics of murders, kidnappings, robberies, drug trafficking among other social evils does not stop growing month after month and the numbers are quite staggering. Unfortunately, it is also true that due to the country's situation, the Jewish community has been shrinking continually throughout the last 15 years.

In this context, the Hebraica Jewish Community Center has increasingly become the heart of everyday life for the vast majority of Jewish families living in Caracas. Within its space the Community Educational System is located – with a preschool, primary school and a high school. Hebraica JCC-Campus is a little country in its own right, where children spend their entire day, circulate freely and become acquainted with a way of living in a society of its own. Most families with school-age children attend Hebraica from Monday through Friday, and many of its members develop in this institution their extracurricular activities: sports, culture, dance, fitness, recreation for all ages and from all backgrounds and complementary education such as belonging to a youth movement and all kinds of leadership endeavors. In Hebraica our members find security and tranquility for themselves and their loved ones notwithstanding the turbulence of the world outside its gates. The vast majority of the Jewish population of Venezuela, both children and adults, is making Hebraica their multi-purpose home away from home.

It was important for us, that even during these troubling times, **Hebraica JCC will not only to be a membership club for acquiring services but a place where everyone will be immersed in a Jewish world, an institution with a Jewish soul.**

In 2014 we joined JCC Global's Amitim- Fellows program and created the **Global MekoRock** program together with Emek Hefer, Israel and Kishinev, Moldova. It was a program where teens studied Jewish texts and then created music with professional mentors based on their study. At the culmination of the process local concerts in each city took place and then the participants travelled to Israel for a joint seminar, where they

performed in front of 500 JCC leaders at JCC Global's World Conference. This program integrated Jewish values with music and cultural arts and had a profound effect on the participants and on the community.

But this wasn't enough; we wanted to create a project that allows us to convey Jewish values in all our departments and activities. For that purpose, in 2015, with the help of the Pincus Fund for Jewish Education, we created the **Mekorot- Sources Project**.

We began with choosing a yearly theme based on the 10 Commandments given by Moses to the Jewish people. "Honor thy father and thy mother..." for example, was chosen as a theme for the first year. By choosing a unifying theme, that value of respect to parents, to society, was integrated in all the departments. Through the *Mekorot* Project a training process took place for all the staff members working in the JCC who serve all ages and all programs, and especially in the Cultural Arts departments. We also created community wide events to disseminate these values.

In 2016, we worked on the value of respect and empathy, and in 2017 we are focusing on justice, social justice and commitment. Every year, all members of the staff are exposed to in-depth textual study and discussion on the yearly theme. They then design how to make the theme visible and meaningful within their specific sphere of activity such as: art, culture, music, theater, films, lectures, conferences, study programs, dance festivals, recreational camps and more.

Today Mekorot is a project that cuts across all the activities and services of our Jewish community center, with a population of about 6,000 people of which 3,000 are under 18.

We are now expanding the reach of the project to engage the formal day school in the training process. We expect, in the long run, a major transformation of attitudes whereby individuals will use the values of their heritage as critical information needed in every decision-making process.

A JCC like Hebraica is a kind of a communal experiment in the Jewish community, and through *Mekorot* we are making Jewish life better and full of significance.

**Raquel Markus** is the professional coordinator of Mekorot Project in Hebraica

**Anabella Jaroslavsky** is the Executive Director of Hebraica JCC and creator of the Mekorot Project



## JCC Krakow: An Entry Point into a Unique Jewish World

### Jonathan Ornstein

Anna\* was born in Krakow in 1934 and survived the war with her mother assuming a non-Jewish identity. After the war she desired to make Aliyah but was refused by the Communist Polish government. For the next 40 years she moved away from Jewish life, assimilated into Polish life and would have left Judaism entirely if not for her connection to the JCC over the past ten years. Today she is one of the most active members of the JCC, editing the journal, giving the weekly Dvar Torah at dinner and singing in the choir.

Jerzy\* was born in Krakow in the 60's but emigrated to the US, when in March 68 Jews were kicked out of Poland. He spent his adult years growing up in Brooklyn, New York, but due to his mother not being Jewish, he never felt accepted. He recently returned to Krakow and joined the JCC and suddenly it all clicked—the language, the community, and most of all the Jewish identity without judgment.

Magda\* found out she was Jewish when she was 12 years old but didn't know what it meant to be Jewish until she arrived in Krakow and started university and at the same time became very involved in JCC Jewish life, participating in the student's club, joining for holidays and coming for classes. Through her own initiative she has taken steps to become more observant and is very proud of her Polish, Jewish lifestyle.

All three people represent the more than 600 Jews who today comprise the JCC membership and more importantly the Jewish community of Krakow. Each one comes from a different religious affiliation, worldview and life experience—but they all have some things in common—their connection to the JCC and their feelings that this place is home.

What makes the JCC unique in being able to attract all types of Jews, making them feel so connected? The answer relates to the sad and then miraculous history of the Jews of Krakow over the last 80 years as well as a strategic plan as to how best to unite all these disparate personalities and make them feel at home.

## **Background**

Poland is home to a very old Jewish community, with a continuous Jewish presence for almost 1,000 years. The community numbered approximately 3.5 million Jews by 1939, on the eve of World War 2, and major cities like Warsaw and Krakow were respectively 1/3 and 1/4 Jewish. By the end of World War 2 over 90% of Polish Jewry had been killed in the Holocaust. In the chaos following the end of the war and the beginning of communist rule in Poland, a large number of the survivors left Poland but many stayed. Jewish life limped on during the communist period until the 1968 period when the remaining Jews were encouraged by the communist authorities to leave Poland. Once again, many of the Jews left but some stayed and those who remained largely went underground.

Communist rule ended in 1989 and Poles, free for the first time in 50 years, began to explore and take great interest in what happened to their Jewish neighbors during the war and after. This tremendous interest by non-Jews in all things Jewish has led to the situation we have today: a Jewish community emerging from underground into an environment conducive to being Jewish.

## **The JCC Plan**

Thanks to a chance visit of Prince Charles, who was taken with the notion that there were still Jewish survivors in Krakow 60 years after the Holocaust and promised to help build a center for them, JCC Krakow was founded in 2008. We realized that there were two communities emerging from the vacuum of dormant Jewish life during communism—seniors who survived and now were slowly finding their way back, and students who were learning the truth of their families' hidden past—and making their way to the JCC to find out what it means to live as a Jew (The middle-aged Jews did not and for the most part still have not reconciled with their Communist Polish and often Catholic upbringings).

We understood that for most our potential membership joining JCC Krakow was, in essence, joining the Jewish world. The act of becoming a member was not only joining a Jewish institution but something much deeper and more profound- accepting and embracing Jewish identity.

We realized that we had to create an environment and programming that would attract, embrace, and integrate these "new Jews" into the community while being mindful of the horrors Polish Jewry and in almost all cases, their own families had gone through.

The building had to be open and inviting, colorful and non-threatening, optimistic and somehow “light.”

Our plan was both in form and substance—we built a beautiful structure with much color, open and inviting, with branding being an important way to convey to anyone who walks into the door that this place was completely welcoming, open and non-judgmental. We delved into social media, constantly portraying the smiles and excitement of JCC life and that spilled over to all who visited.

At the same time, it was important to deliver a message: plurality in Jewish life. We provide classes for old and young, men and women, religious and secular, Jew and non-Jew. Classes in Judaism and languages; Friday night Shabbat dinners, and Yoga and Dance; special programming for seniors as well as planting the seeds for a kindergarten (which we opened in September 2017). All are welcome here, Jew and non-Jew and our small JCC boasts over 50 non-Jewish volunteers, young Poles who feel Poland lost something when it lost its Jews and now have an opportunity to help rebuild.

The success of the Jewish revival lays in the constant reminder of the delicate and unique situation of Krakow as a once-entrenched Jewish town 60,000 strong, 70 years later, awakening from the horrible dream and finding a way to rebuild, illuminate, open doors very wide, and continue to smile as we witness a true miracle of rebirth and a return to Jewish life.

**Jonathan Ornstein**, has served as the Executive Director of JCC Krakow since it's opening in 2008

\*Names have been changed to protect identity.



## Jewish Community Building in Warsaw of 5778

**Agata Rakowiecka**

Jews and Poland – the two words connect in various contexts, but usually carry the complexity of history and today’s historical narratives. These two words in one sentence still bring the associations of the past, heritage, antisemitism, antipolonism, Holocaust or difficult dialogue.

There is, however, Jewish life reemerging from this body after decades of being in a coma. Without denying the complex past or the problems of contradicting historical narratives. Without forgetting but also without pretending we can continue what was lost. We, the Jews of Poland are redefining what it means to be Jewish in our homeland, which used to be diverse for centuries and now has an unnaturally small number of minorities. We are rethinking ourselves in the new reality, in a country, where Jews decide to consciously join the J club. After being deprived from our right to be Jewish, not because of the assimilation, but because of fear and terror, today’s Jews of Poland are reclaiming their right to express Jewishly and to be part of the Jewish peoplehood. Without family continuity, often without the basic knowledge of Jewish traditions taken from home, there is a growing Jewish community.

Warsaw, which has the biggest Jewish population in the country, had to wait until 2013 for its JCC to be open, as an initiative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Taube Family Foundation. The Jewish Community Center of Warsaw, which first operated “without walls” and later moved to its premises in the city center. This was a long-awaited platform of dialogue for different groups in Jewish Warsaw, most of which emerged and started forming during the two decades since the fall of Communism in 1989. It also became a place for those who are looking for a Jewish space, which would not require a particularly defined way of being Jewish. It is an open, diverse and friendly institution, in which the journey of looking for one’s identity and relevant connections to the wider Jewish world are respected and not imposed. The JCC operates in a reality of different synagogues and religious congregations, and formal Jewish education institutions. Included are also communal organizations that legally and politically represent the Community as well as multiple organizations that deal

with commemorations, history and Jewish heritage. This reality allows our JCC to fill the blank spaces, to deal with the everyday life and interests of the local Jews, to attract the unaffiliated and to experiment. This rich context gives us the luxury of informality and flexibility. It allows the openness to the voices of the community, to its changing needs and its specific character.

Diversity is the beauty of the Jewish world. Instead of a common narrative, there is a constant disagreement. In Warsaw, very much a part of this divided world, the JCC has taken a role of finding the common ground, of building bridges, of connecting. To show the variety of options and always leave the pages to be filled by those whom are not yet taken into consideration or represented. The mission of each JCC in the world should be reflecting the needs of the community it serves. As each community has its own specifics, there are certain differences among different JCCs, which brings us back to the diversity as a value in the Jewish world as a whole.

As Jewish educators, Jewish professionals and Jewish leaders sometimes we see our role as shapers of the reality. We think that we have a power over our students and communities and should use this power to fulfill a bigger mission of including them into a wider, defined system. I like to think about my own and my staff's role from a different angle. We are serving the Community. We create and provide channels for the community to speak. This is the only way we can truly belong to the community and strengthen it. Instead of building concepts for the reality we focus on examining it.

Interfaith families are a big part of our community. Instead of thinking whether interfaith is a threat or a chance – let's just accept it as the reality. As long as there are Jews who want to cultivate their Jewish identity and include their family regardless of their roots – it strengthens Jewish communities. Let's focus on today – on what we can influence. We can choose whether to include those who are willing to give themselves to the community and discuss the implications of that decision. The alternative is to be stuck in a utopian illusion that there is a magic solution and one way to define and "save" the Jewish genes.

In the age of a global crisis of Jewish identity, when the young Jewish generation in America is losing its ties to the community, when the question of being Jewish as an Israeli is challenging more than ever - building Jewish identity based on authentic, positive, genuine grounds is the only survival strategy. The diverse ideas for community building, which reflect the differences between Jews, are in fact all nurturing the general Jewish peoplehood. "Jewish peoplehood" is as difficult to define as a "Jew". But it definitely is not a monolith, but rather all of us feeling that we are part of it in different ways and through different approaches. Not necessarily agreeing with each

other. Having different concepts on what and who we are. But even without the “one voice” we are on the move. We change, which is synonymous to being alive, and this way we promise a future for the next generations.

**Agata Rakowiecka** is the CEO of the Warsaw JCC. She studied Polish Philology and Speech Language Therapy at the University of Warsaw and graduated from the Melton Program at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.





## Moving Through and Beyond the Gateway

**Jeanne Ruckert Lovy**

*“Judaism is not exclusively a matter of the “what” or “when” in the world of ritual and faith, but includes the deeper matters of the “how” and the “why” of the totality of our lives and our relationships to the world as a whole. It welcomes diversity, inclusion, reflection and innovation.<sup>3</sup>”*

JCC Greater Boston has been robustly involved in “beyond the walls” regional family engagement since 2007. We operate four early learning centers, serve as the implementing partner for PJ Library in Greater Boston, and involve about 10,000 individuals per year in our 0-5 programming alone. We have seen that in just ten years the realities and behaviors of families have changed. Fewer prioritize Jewish organizational affiliation, yet many still seek connection.

Our strategic focus on families with young children, an effort we call the **JCC Family Initiative**, combined with our values and expertise, uniquely positions us to help all families find and build a meaningful connection to each other and to the larger Jewish community. For the sake of those families, for the future of our community, and for the good of our JCC, we have wholeheartedly embraced the opportunity and responsibility to play a leadership role in the re-imagination of Jewish peoplehood.

**More than the sum of our parts.** JCCs are already in the sweet spot to provide what families say they need most. A way to meet people, to make friends. To find high quality child care and meaningful, fun camp experiences for their children while they go to work. A way to get healthy. To meet the Torah’s obligation to teach their child to swim. At our core, the JCC has always understood and been in the best position to address the “totality” of people’s lives as mentioned in the Sheva excerpt above. When we are at our best, we’re making life easier, more joyful, more meaningful, more connected, more spiritual and yes, more fun.

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<sup>3</sup> From *Sheva: Innovation in Early Childhood Jewish Education & Engagement*, JCC Association of North America

We have also doubled down on the idea of family connectors, part-time neighborhood-based staff who make connections with families and link them to each other and to information about Jewish resources. A family connector might host a Shabbat dinner, lead a playground meet-up, or welcome a new baby. Their insights are valuable on-the-ground research about how families are living and what they need most.

Within our reach is the opportunity for every family in Greater Boston has a way to connect Jewishly whether or not they happen to live near a Jewish organization. We sometimes say we are in the “construction” business i.e. supporting families and individuals to construct Jewish lives of meaning and purpose at a time when traditional indicators of Jewish identity are rapidly changing. We know we’re getting it right when people tell us, “this is just what I needed and I didn’t even know it.”

But even the open-ended idea of construction can seem a little frenzied. Reading recent articles about engagement you encounter a lot of talk about “unpacking” values, “solving the puzzle,” “capturing” new people, or overcoming “obstacles.” It can bring forth an image of beleaguered professionals leaning back on our tools to wipe our brows from the stress of uncovering the Jewish identity of a population often portrayed as drifting away. We would frame our work much more optimistically.

**Good news.** Echoing Tolstoy’s observation that all happy families are alike in the same way, we see the diverse and changing families in our community as also alike in important and positive ways. Every family strives for meaning and connection. Every family needs to make their life work. And every family cares deeply about doing the best for themselves and their children. The Pew study documented a great deal of pride in the Jewish population. A recent Harold Grinspoon Foundation study reported 79% of respondents were looking for more connection. A 2015 study from Combined Jewish Philanthropies found 90% of even engaged families are seeking more Jewish friends. For a JCC this is a time of great opportunity.

**More to learn.** At a recent staff retreat<sup>4</sup> called “Shema: a day for listening, learning and dialog about families, Jewish identity and the work we do.” we learned that staff across all departments had enormous empathy and insight about how contemporary families think and make decisions. We saw more clearly than ever that every staff member is on the engagement team and that we must continue to refine and grow our ability to listen, respond and adapt to what families are telling us rather than just keep doing what we have always done.

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4 Made possible with the generous support of the Covenant Foundation

**Putting the gateway at our backs.** Yes, the JCC is a gateway to Jewish peoplehood in that we offer a broad array of pluralistic programs and services in multiple locations from low-barrier to immersive. However, I think we should stop talking about the community needing to come through our gate at all. I view the gateway as an invitation, an imperative and a portal we must venture through ourselves. The image of us turning around and moving through and beyond it reminds us to be curious about new ways of understanding peoplehood. Like hitting “reverse” on an iPhone to take a selfie, we need switch our perspective and examine how to be more innovative within our traditional organization. The JCC Family Initiative helps us see families not just as customers defined by what they do but also as individuals who have much to share and whose perspective we need in order to grow.

As our President and CEO Mark Sokoll notes, *“The idea of the JCC Family Initiative has galvanized our thinking about our organization’s future, the way we engage with our customers and our significant role in the evolution of our community.”*

To ensure that JCCs will remain relevant and responsive to current demographic, sociographic and psychographic shifts, we must create a paradigm shift. Let’s take a new look at that gateway, and adjust our concept of a JCC as place that runs programs to the **JCC as a platform for connecting, mobilizing and empowering people** to choose appealing ways to engage in Jewish life now and in the future.

**Jeanne Ruckert Lovy** is Vice President and Director of the JCC Family Initiative, JCC Greater Boston. [jlovy@jccgb.org](mailto:jlovy@jccgb.org).



## A Century of JCCs

**Tad Taube and Shana Penn**

Three hundred and fifty Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) mark the landscape of Jewish America and this year is the 100th anniversary of their first national association. For Taube Philanthropies, which for decades has sponsored programs and supported campaigns for new buildings at JCCs throughout the Bay area, the anniversary offers a unique moment for reflection. It is an opportunity to explore the convergence of Jewish Peoplehood and the success of JCCs in American Jewish life. And, as rapid social change reshapes American Jewish life, it is also a time to reaffirm a commitment to the ideals and values embodied in the JCCs and articulated in the Jewish Peoplehood movement.

Multiple generations remember “hanging out” at the local JCC when they were teenagers. From summer camps to Israeli dance lessons, amateur theater productions, and communal Friday night dinners, these Jewish community-based institutions shaped the heartland of a Jewish experience in urban and suburban America. Although many of us remain engaged throughout adulthood and take for granted the JCCs’ ubiquitous activities that extend from infancy to old age, fewer ask how and why JCCs have come to occupy this extraordinary place.

The JCCs are a uniquely American story. In the 19th century their formation echoed the widely shared ideal of the self-educated citizen and reflected the American propensity to form societies of all kinds. With immigration and the spread of industrialism, the JCCs gained a focus on “Americanization” and skills education. During the two World Wars, they linked Jewish servicemen at far flung military installations with Jewish families living nearby, and after the war, when the baby boom began, the JCCs expanded their scope to include pre-school and teen programs that made them central for Jewish family life.

The antecedents of the JCCs go back more than 100 years to Baltimore in 1854 and the formation of the Hebrew Men’s Literary Society, followed in the middle 1880s with the organization of a similar women’s group. By World War I, Jewish community-based societies had proliferated in immigrant strongholds. With the US entrance into World War I in 1917, many of the individual groups united into the Jewish Welfare Board. The immediate impetus was to provide Jewish chaplains for the armed services, which, as a

consequence of Jewish immigration since the 1880s, had a greatly increased number of Jewish soldiers.

The birth of the Jewish Welfare Board marks the official beginnings of the national association of JCCs and the 100th anniversary celebrated by this year. After the war, the large Jewish immigrant populations that filled the cities found the Jewish Welfare centers ideally suited for learning English and American history, gaining employment skills, and finding a Jewish social life and culture outside the traditional synagogue. During World War II, the Jewish Welfare Board was part of the armed forces interreligious coalition and provided servicemen with Friday night dinners, Passover seders, and a home away from home. After the war, the Welfare Board changed its name as JCCs blossomed in the expanding the suburbs and became the community institutions we know today.

The JCCs are also a Jewish story that reaches to traditions far older than US history. Reading the Torah made literacy a Jewish value reaching deep into the past. Organizing to provide for the community's needs was a necessity, not a choice, for small populations of Jews living by their own laws amid larger and often hostile populations.

In the US, from the earliest Jewish settlers in Charleston and Newport, self-help was an established way of life. In contrast with the European experience, however, Jews in the US were never legally restricted to ghettos or denied the full rights of citizenship. As the 19th century progressed, and despite the reality of anti-Semitism, which was a part of the larger Christian culture, American Jews and Jewish communities thrived. Religiously, American Judaism blossomed as various kinds of reform congregations gave individual Jews greater choice of religious practice. By the middle of the 20th century, multiple branches of Judaism vied for personal commitment evidenced by synagogue membership in a society where religion was an increasingly social phenomenon.

Although the lure of the new state of Israel was felt throughout the community, even after the 1967 War it was evident that most American Jews were not about to emigrate. Instead, many, especially those in the cities and suburbs, confronted the searing after-effects of the Holocaust, the defense of Israel legitimacy, and anti-Semitism in personal and professional life by seeking a new balance between being American and being Jewish.

The JCCs were very attractive. They celebrated Jewish traditions and the Jewish family. At the JCC you could learn about the Torah, learn how to lead a seder and cook traditional foods. Lectures and political discussions about Israel, Europe, and the US, as well as organized trips to the far reaches of the world, provided a rich adult experience. At the same time, the children could learn to swim and imbibe Jewish history, ethics culture and

values. They could also find Jewish friends and lifelong mates in an otherwise Christian world.

As the 20th century drew to a close and a new generation of American Jews shaped by the social changes of the late 1960s and 1970s reached adulthood, living a publicly Jewish life increasingly became a choice, rather than the existential reality experienced by previous generations. Jewish Peoplehood gained a following. It captured the imagination of a people tied together by history, ethics and customs. It spread across the globe. It echoed the felt need to declare being Jewish in the context of the late 20th century.

Nowhere was Jewish Peoplehood more at home than in the JCCs. Freed from the restrictions of religious practices, the JCCs could embrace a Judaism that emphasized inclusivity. As young Jews increasingly found mates born into other traditions, the JCCs welcomed the mixed families and offered ways for families to celebrate their Jewishness. As anti-Semitism in everyday life declined, the celebration of Jewish Peoplehood within a Jewish environment was an affirmation of a proud heritage. Membership in a JCC was a statement of pride that joined all different kinds of Jews together in a worldwide community with traditions reaching back millennia and ties that would bind them as a people long into the future.

The first decades of the 21st century have made many of the radical ideas of the late 1960s and 1970s more a part of the mainstream. Women work and children routinely attend day care, school and after-school programs. Family life runs a gamut that includes interracial and multi-ethnic families, gay marriage partners with straight children and gay children with straight parents. Divorce, remarriage, and single living have all become acceptable adult choices. In the wider range of adult life choices, more than ever people also choose their religious practices within a tradition and many even choose their religion, reaching across previously rarely crossed societal barriers and taboos.

The JCCs have responded. Working parents need a family oriented environment, singles need a social life, and everyone needs to keep on learning. Well educated in secular schooling, even adults born of Jewish parents often have little sophisticated understanding of their heritage. Newcomers to the Jewish tradition are curious and interested in the history and culture they see around them. Increasingly, JCCs are providing intellectually challenging courses that bridge the divide between secular and traditional religious education.

The Taube Philanthropies has a vision of the JCCs as the optimal 21st century learning center, open to every age, from infancy onward, and available to everyone who wants

to learn. Rooted in the JCC's oldest historic tradition, and informed by the expansive inclusivity of a Jewish peoplehood, Taube has been supporting programs that represent the finest of their kind. From chamber music to rock, from the Torah to the Internet, and from Israeli diversity to American diversity, the JCCs are a Jewish based home-away-from-home.

Taube Philanthropies is proud of its decades' long contributions to the growth of the JCCs in the Bay Area and is especially proud of its support for two new JCCs in Poland. It has supported building programs that reflect the expanding reach of JCCs into the community and it has supported programs that answer the yearning for knowledge and understanding that is a core value of Jewish life. Taube Philanthropies remains committed to a rich Jewish future of Jewish Peoplehood that continually stretches the bonds of inclusiveness, strengthens the ties of Jews around the world, and promotes learning and mutual understanding.

**Tad Taube** is Chairman of Taube Philanthropies, Chairman of Woodmont Companies, Honorary Consul for the Republic of Poland, and President Emeritus of the Koret Foundation.

**Shana Penn** is the Executive Director of Taube Philanthropies and a visiting scholar at the Graduate Theological Union's Center for Jewish Studies.



# Social Care – a Means by Which to Re-energise Our Community?

## The challenge of peoplehood

**Neil Taylor**

I often wonder what gives meaning to my being a Jew in the Diaspora. I am a Zionist and I have tried to live in Israel and subsequently returned to my home country. I am not religious, but have spent all my life working for the Jewish community. Currently as the Director of Care and Community Services for Jewish Care, I see myself as part of and contributing to the Jewish people, however without the sense of purpose that comes from the role, I continuously reflect upon what would otherwise justify being associated with being a member of the Jewish people and what would give meaning to being a Jew.

Much of the communal resources we have, is quite rightly devoted to the education of our young people, connecting them to their Jewish identity through social, recreational and educative activity in order that we can inspire young and not so young to engage with their Jewish community and to feel 'good' about being Jewish. However, the essence and limits of what we do appears to be to ensure that as many Jewish people as possible, stay connected for the sake of Jewish continuity. That more knowledge, insight and understanding of what it means to be Jewish is somehow sufficient to sustain a sense of peoplehood because we share a common history, heritage and obligation that we simply have to pass this from generation to generation. In the meantime, this is not sufficient to disguise the deep conflicts between us, whether they be religious, political and values led, which go a long way to undermine the sense of cohesion and common interest that one would aspire to in order to create a sense of community.

With 'Zionism's purpose to uphold peoplehood in the neutral binding ground of Jewishness' [Yossi Klein Halevi – The Tragedy of the Wall] being compromised, what is going to be sufficiently compelling for Jews in the Diaspora to have a purposeful identify with Jewish peoplehood. Without a new mission, that will circumvent our differences, what endeavour will unify the Jewish people with a renewed sense of purpose?



Education for education's sake does not provide enough meaning to sustain the connections. Despite the great number of young people in full time education, I contend there isn't the evidence to suggest that this is having a material impact on the number of Jewish people contributing to their communities. Surely the measure of success of Jewish peoplehood is that a sense of common identity gives rise to the positive sense of how we as a community demonstrate the added value we bring to society, by virtue of the shared values that we have developed over the millennia.

### **The value(s) of social care**

While international relief has become a means by which young people can give meaning to their identity and their social conscience by combining their Jewish and humanitarian values, social care is not normally associated with Jewish peoplehood or a means by which to promote Jewish identity. Over the years, as a Jewish professional, I have made several attempts to nurture programmes that would connect returning Israel campers with their community through volunteer activities with those who need support e.g. older people, people living with physical and learning disabilities and mental health conditions, all to no avail because others do not see the connection.

The evidence suggests that to the contrary, social care is as good a means by which to build community, as any other vehicle. It is the single most successful area of activity within our community at mobilising the largest number of people to give of their time and their money to support others to live as meaningful, purposeful lives as themselves. In of itself, gives purpose to those thousands of people who volunteer who otherwise may never have reason to be part of their community.

### **Social care as a mission for JCCs**

JCC's, neutral on the political and religious spectrum, have a unique role to play, to harness the resources of the community, and to provide the necessary leadership to identify and to respond to the challenges we face. JCC programming that is entirely focused on strengthening individual Jewish identity, will not do justice to the potential that exists to develop our communities as people increasingly do not see the importance of their collective responsibilities. A JCC, as is the case with the Redbridge Jewish Community Centre in London, that integrates its educational effort with its social care agenda, where young people share the same facilities as the old, where people with disabilities and older people with dementia, are given the same opportunity to participate in communal life, demonstrates the power of what can be attained genuinely positions it at the heart and soul of a community, not to mention the economies of scale that it can achieve.

As a JCC Global/JDC mentor for FSU communities the separate development of family/ social services and JCC development was successful and did not hinder the renewal of specific Jewish communities in the FSU. However, in many situations the separation of education and social care only fostered a sense of disintegration and divide within a community, that discourages people from taking active responsibility for the people less vulnerable than themselves and does nothing to promote the sense of collective identity that is necessary to sustain Jewish peoplehood.

It was always difficult to understand what the difference was between programming for older people in a social services setting (Hesed) and programming for older people in a JCC setting until it became apparent that the JCC's target audience was the 'middle class'. Once we understand that our work in 'social services' is to restore people's independence, connect them to their communities and provide the opportunities to live meaningful (Jewish) lives and is not only to 'care' for them, we will then realise that this is no different to the JCC agenda. We also need our young people to grow up with a deep appreciation of these social care challenges, not least because it can be an excellent recruiting ground for future volunteers, staff and donors.

#### **A call to action for the JCC movement**

Zionism no longer represents the single goal around which Jews will coalesce and while all efforts to focus on promoting Jewish identity activities are worthy, neither of these represent a 21st century solution for those who seek an identity and a collective purpose to combat the challenges we face today. Perhaps the Global JCC movement should adopt the mantra 'Kol Israel Arevim Ze le Ze' – all Jews (or all the people of Israel) are responsible for one another as its core mission as a means by which to give meaning to the concept of Jewish peoplehood.

**Neil Taylor** has been the Director of Jewish Care since 2004, responsible for Jewish Care's community based and residential service provision and the volunteer department, which supports 3,000 volunteers working across the organisation. Neil has 25 years of managerial experience in social care, starting as a youth worker and subsequently managing the Redbridge Jewish Community Centre for several years. Neil has mentored the management team of Jewish Community Centres in Kharkov and Dnepreprotrovsk, Ukraine.



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

Past issues can be accessed at [www.jpeoplehood.org/library](http://www.jpeoplehood.org/library)

**The Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education (CJPE)** is a "one stop" resource center for institutions and individuals seeking to build collective Jewish life, with a focus on Jewish Peoplehood and Israel education. It provides professional and leadership training, content and programmatic development or general Peoplehood conceptual and educational consulting. [www.jpeoplehood.org](http://www.jpeoplehood.org)

**Taube Philanthropies** was established in 1981 by its founder and chairman, Tad Taube. Based in the San Francisco Bay Area, the foundation makes philanthropic investments in civic, and cultural life in both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities in the Bay Area, Poland, and Israel. Its grant making programs support institution-building, heritage preservation, arts, culture, and education, and promotion of Jewish Peoplehood. Taube Philanthropies is committed to collaborative grant making for greater charitable impact and actively partners with numerous philanthropic organizations and individuals. [taubephilanthropies.org](http://taubephilanthropies.org)

**JCC Association of North America** strengthens and leads JCCs, YM-YWHAs and camps throughout North America. As the convening organization, JCC Association partners with JCCs to bring together the collective power and knowledge of the JCC Movement. JCC Association offers services and resources to increase the effectiveness of JCCs as they provide community engagement and educational, cultural, social, recreational, and Jewish identity building programs to enhance Jewish life throughout North America. By supporting the 25,000 Jewish communal professionals who connect with two million JCC participants each year—JCC Association encourages engaged lives of purpose and meaning. *Learn more at [jcca.org](http://jcca.org), on Facebook and on Twitter at @JCCA*

**JCC Global** connects over 1,000 Jewish Community Centers worldwide and is a preeminent organization in Jewish Peoplehood education and leadership. Building on the uniqueness of each JCC, JCC Global creates relationships that inspire Jews and Jewish communities the world over. By sharing ideas and resources and by learning, collaborating and partnering, Jewish communities benefit locally and join hands globally in order to ensure a thriving Jewish People.



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