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their social home.

The density and multiplexity of Orthodox communities is a major attraction for many non-Orthodox Jews, as I found in my research on *ba'alei teshuvah*, or newly Orthodox Jews. Many people I studied were drawn to a religious lifestyle because they wanted to be part of the supportive networks they found when they were invited to the homes of *frum* friends and teachers. Those who did not make the commitment to become observant were left looking longingly at Orthodox networks.

Although Orthodox Jews offer a model to emulate, they can also learn from the sparse, porous networks of non-Orthodox Jews, which tend to include Jews and non-Jews of diverse backgrounds. By their nature, these networks tend to foster innovation, as we see in the proliferation of organizational startups, attentiveness to current social justice issues, and the adoption of new technologies. They allow for individual variation and nonconformity more than dense networks. And, based on an individual's

regular interaction with people outside of the network, these networks foster a better reputation for Jews in the world at large. Of course, there are Orthodox Jews who maintain strong relations outside of their dense networks, especially representatives of Chabad and other *kiruv* (outreach) groups.

The organized Jewish community has a role to play in fostering dense networks among non-Orthodox Jews and openness within Orthodox networks. Synagogues and other organizations should nurture stronger relationships between staff and constituents and should engineer connections among people with similar interests. As Ron Wolfson convincingly writes in his book *Relational Judaism: Using the Power of Relationships to Transform the Jewish Community*, "It's all about relationships." We should be fostering stronger ties among groups and encouraging members of each group to be open to learning from the other in order to create a stronger and more interconnected Jewish community. 

Modern Israel: When Collectivism Runs its Course

ELAN EZRACHI AND SHLOMI RAVID

The founding ethos of modern Israel was beyond doubt a collective one. Israeli poet Amir Gilboa captured this sentiment in one of his famous poems: "Suddenly a man wakes up in the morning and feels he is a people and begins to walk..." The creation of the state united the individual and the collective. The new Israeli society was faced by the formidable challenges of building the state, settling the land, defending it, and absorbing mass immigration. Reality demanded a tightly knit mobilized society with little space for individualism — then considered a luxury. Furthermore, many of Israel's founders came from Europe, bringing with them a socialist vision that they aspired to implant in the Jewish *yishuv* (the prestate organized Jewish community in Palestine). The concrete expression of these aspirations was the creation of the kibbutz, the Histadrut (the labor union), and the development of an overall national economy that was oriented toward socialism. This was not the sole voice of early Israel — Tel Aviv was the site of a middle-class urban experience — but the collectivist-socialist oriented narrative was clearly dominant.

Considering that early ideology, the

dramatic shifts during the state's 65 years are remarkable. In the late 1960s and the early '70s, the pioneering discourse transitioned toward a language of normalcy. Coupled with the rise in the standard of living and the influence of American culture, the puritan ethos that had prevailed in the pioneering era was challenged; individualism began taking its place as a legitimate social value. It was not long until this social change translated into political currency, and in the 1977 national elections, the capitalistic-oriented Likud party replaced the socialist Labor hegemony.

The shift from a collective ethos to blatant individualism was extreme and dramatic. Many factors contributed to the sense that collectivism, while necessary in the initial years, had run its course. The collapse of Eastern European communism, which had greatly influenced early Zionism, was one factor; the protest against the Ashkenazic, secular, socialist hegemony was another. And the craving for "normalcy," diversity, and the prioritization of the middle class was yet another. These factors and others converged to bring about the change. The Histadrut and kibbutz movements have dwindled to mere shadows of their

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former selves. Few signs of the earlier socialistic orientation remain, and capitalism, consumerism, personal success, and individualism are perceived as core social values.

The success of Israel's high-tech industry exemplifies how effectively the country has embraced the values of a free market economy — both good and bad. On one hand, the environment enabled the industry to flourish in a global market and pull the Israeli economy forward. On the other hand, the new wealth is shared by a relatively small group. In addition to creating a country with one of the largest economic gaps between rich and poor, there is a growing sense of alienation and frustration

that eats away at Israel's basic social fabric.

And yet, Israelis — especially in times of national crisis — maintain many values and practices that mimic the intimacy and familiarity of a collective spirit. And in recent years a robust culture of young adults involved in creating alternative communal lifestyles and social structures has emerged.

Israelis, despite a focus on individualism, still stand out with their relatively high level of solidarity among peers. This can be a modern expression of what Rav Joseph Soloveitchik framed as a shared “covenant of fate” — stemming from a collective past as a persecuted minority or a present and ongoing struggle for existence. 



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Walking the Walk

LESLIE CARLIN AND SIMON COLEMAN

A century ago, the French scholar Emile Durkheim explored the power of rituals in creating social ties while at the same time voicing his fear that a “new” social and economic order was destroying the old solidarities. Durkheim was a Jew who rejected his Judaism, and yet he could not escape from religion in his working life. One of the things he taught us was that being modern citizens and supposedly enlightened thinkers does not free us from the constraints of abiding with others in moral, social, cultural, or ethical networks.

Just three summers ago, we — an Anglo-American couple, along with our three children and a cat — arrived in Canada from the United Kingdom. The two of us had met in a hilly cathedral city in the north of England and married several years later overlooking the sea in California. Now we were in flat, land-locked Toronto, wondering how our family would fit in the True North. We were a bit cocky, perhaps; we spoke the lingo, after all, and the American one of us (L.C.) could not help but think of Canada as the proverbial 51st state, while the British one (S.C.) tried hard to remember it was no longer a colony. How different could the place be from our native lands?

We learned it could be very different. The annual Terry Fox Run, which takes place in September, occurred only a few weeks after our arrival and was a clue that we had arrived in a place that we did not yet understand. The walk memorialized a brave but doomed soul who had lost first his leg and then his life to cancer. Before succumbing to the disease,

he attempted to run across Canada, an event called the Marathon of Hope (terryfox.org). His *failed* attempt, more than any success, made him an “everyman” figure, and cemented the notion that the nation must continue to work on his behalf, collectively completing his unfinished task year after year and conferring on him a sort of immortality through responsibility.

On the day of the Terry Fox Run, our children's school hosted a visitor who had survived cancer but lost her leg in the process. She shared with the assembled students X-rays of her tumorous leg and she described its removal and then demonstrated the use of her prosthesis. The schoolchildren, who had been collecting sponsorship promises from their families over the preceding weeks, then walked a three-mile circuit of the neighbourhood loudly chanting, “Our school walks for Terry Fox” while police officers halted traffic and drivers honked in support (not annoyance).

The schoolchildren by and large seemed injured to the reification of this man, his disease, and his demise. But our offspring, newly arrived, lacked their immunity, or perhaps their empathy. Our 7-year-old, in particular, was horrified, and her participation in the event left her anxious and upset. The night after the walk was Simchat Torah, and amidst the joyous dancing and singing, our daughter had a panic attack, the first of many. She developed a morbid fear of cancer and every day experienced a new pain in one leg or the other. It was many months before she could at-

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