For example, they can enrich Jewish life in local communities outside of Israel by helping bridge cultural gaps with Israeli society, by providing a live example of modern Hebrew language usage, by bringing unique Israeli social dynamics to the wider Jewish community, by contributing the Israeli creative energy and spirit of innovation, and by providing a deeper connection to Israel through national holidays like Yom Ha'zikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut.

They can also serve as bridges for Jews living in Israel by showcasing a wide array of diverse methods for practicing Judaism, by demonstrating the value of a rich community life, by embodying pluralism, and by communicating the nuances of living a Jewish life outside of Israel.

As such, these individuals can be some of the most powerful local role models, peer counselors, and educators we have out there today. The problem is that they are not on our communal radar, and there is little effort being made to support, nurture, and enhance these individuals and to create these localized *mifgashim*, right in our back yards.

This is not to say that cross-border physical mifgashim are not important. Naturally, there is no substitute for a young Australian Jew spending a six-week internship in Israel or for an Israeli to spend a semester studying at an American university and going to Shabbat dinner at a local Hillel. But those encounters are difficult and expensive and don't happen often enough. Imagine that in addition to the above, we created Shabbat dinner *mifgashim* with local Israeli-American families in their own communities. Imagine that instead of merely sending Israel Fellows to campuses we had a local Israeli-American or Israeli-British student who can speak both 'languages' doing some of the engagement. Or imagine that part of the Tzofim youth movement's curriculum in Israel is intentionally administered by an *Ole* who recently moved to Israel.

The opportunities are endless, and coupled with the traditional trans-border mifgashim, they can be a game changer in the process of cultivating a feeling of global Jewish peoplehood among the younger generation. This is one of our biggest untapped resources, and our goal should be to look for, embrace, and nurture our Jewish living bridges, wherever they are.

Netaly Ophir Flint is the incoming CEO of the Reut Institute

The Future of Peoplehood: From Nationhood to Neighborhood

Noam Pianko

Does a secular Jew in Berkeley have a shared future and common values with a Haredi Jew in Bnei Brak? As long as concepts of peoplehood make the case for the unity of such diverse Jewish populations, the future of this key word has little potential to inspire Jewish collectivity.

In order to justify this axiomatic assumption, descriptions of peoplehood must find the lowest common denominator unifying criteria. Thus the rationale for Jewish peoplehood rests on abstract and water-down claims about shared "values," "history," and "mission." As the internal forces of fragmentation overtake the external forces unifying the collective, the efficacy of a peoplehood discourse grounded in abstract commonalities that conflict with personal convictions and communal values will dissipate.

Fortunately, peoplehood's history as a key word in Jewish life illuminates the ways in which today's primary associations of peoplehood with unity, solidarity, and shared values represents a new innovation shaped by modern nationalism. A better understanding of the term's relatively recent evolution provides a crucial opportunity to reconsider its future.

The intertwined nature of peoplehood, theories of nationalism, and Zionism is evident in the very construction of what was less than 100 years ago a new term. The suffix "-hood" in both peoplehood and nationhood is not coincidental. In the 1930's, the use of nationhood as the defining basis for Jewish collectivity became more problematic in the American Jewish context because of its statist associations with the future Jewish state and its accompanying perception that Jews might have dual loyalties. Early adopters of "peoplehood" (a term with almost no precedent in the English language) came to the term as Zionist influenced thinkers seeking a replacement for "nationhood." Peoplehood provided a blank slate, or even a code word, that could softly preserve Jewish nationalist assumptions about the centrality of the land, language, national history, and culture, without invoking the contentious language (inside and outside of the Jewish community) of Jews as a nation.

Yet, the current discourse about peoplehood and definitions of Jewish collectivity has not fully acknowledged its roots in modern notions of nationhood--and specifically in American Zionists' innovations and conversations in the 1930s and 1940s. The strong, but rarely acknowledged, historical relationship between peoplehood and Jewish nationhood, with the State and Land of Israel at the center of the story of peoplehood, remains the elephant in the room in plotting a course for how peoplehood will be conceptualized and practiced in the future. This is not to suggest that Israel should not be an integral part of the Jewish collectivity conversation. However, peoplehood's long association with nationalism has limited the possibilities for thinking differently about what it means to be part of a people.

One of the central goals for a national movement is to justify collective bonds by emphasizing a unified political body with a shared history, mission, and values. The nationalist paradigm of peoplehood prioritizes the ideal of Jewish unity organized around the centripetal force of attachment to Israel and to a collective essence (usually referred to as a "shared mission"). The elevation of these criteria of cohesion marginalizes a significant proportion of the Jewish people whose attachment to the collective does not resonate with themes shaped by modern nationalism.

The sense of a declining interest in peoplehood is not a problem that can be solved by repackaging ideas calibrated to rally American Jews in response to the unprecedented events of the mid twentieth century: the Holocaust and the emergence of the State of Israel. Instead, peoplehood's limited currency today reflects a concept largely stuck in an outdated paradigm of identity construction. The modern (and novel) focus on the singular unifying concept of peoplehood made sense for a specific historical moment. However, its endurance severely limits the future theoretical possibilities for articulating communal definitions, politics, and practices of peoplehood.

My vision for peoplehood reflects another –hood paradigm—not nationhood, but "neighborhood." The move from nationhood to neighborhood shifts the programmatic agenda of peoplehood from building unity to promoting diverse and potentially highly disconnected communities. A neighborhood model focuses on local engagement and individual experiences as the building blocks of Jewish peoplehood (where "local", in the global/digital age, does not necessarily mean geographically close, but particular, specific, and contextual). Peoplehood based on a neighborhood, rather than nationhood, model promotes understanding Jewish collectivity as the sum of divergent processes of Jewish exploration and community building. As the sites of Jewish engagement, local communities should focus their energies on affirming their particular interpretations of Judaism and Jewish life.

"Neighborhoods" broadly construed, either in-person or via focused global networks, create a platform for engagement, meaning creation, and innovation, with Jewish

communities looking to develop what the software community calls open-source standards. Open-source software is non-proprietary, open to customization, and readily interchangeable. This paradigm meets the demands of Jews who no longer find specific identity packages (such as denominational logic or the binary distinction between particularist and Universalist) relevant. An open-source model promotes multiple entry-points, recognizes diverse interests, and allows creative self-expression.

A neighborhood paradigm deemphasizes the ideal of unity and promotes disaggregation of Jewish institutions and communities. The breakdown of centralized states and non-state institutions is a reality that, if ignored, will simply offer models of community and collectivity based on outdated assumptions, privileging numbers and power over individual meaning making and grass-roots organization. A neighborhood approach instead promotes local, informal expressions of collectivity, rather than overarching institutional centers. Micro-communities emerge as the creators and perpetuators of the ongoing project of Jewish peoplehood. Divergent and grassroots expressions of Jewish involvement are not signs of the end of Jewish peoplehood, but the basis for its future. Vibrant collective life cannot rely on one center to disseminate the meaning of identity. The legacy of Achad Ha-am's vision of a cultural center is a vestige of cultural nationalism that has little relevance for either local or global models of collectivity. As Simon Rawidowicz pointed out decades ago, the meaning of Jewish engagement and membership is a highly localized phenomenon that cannot be exported from one context to another.

A sense of connection to a larger entity will be generated most authentically—and thus enduringly--from the bottom-up. Grassroots communities provide open spaces to raise questions about Jewish identity and what, if anything, binds Jews to one another. It is the very act of engaging with these local and personal issues that engages individuals in the meaning of peoplehood. Smaller communities whose mission does not necessarily include promoting peoplehood are not a threat to peoplehood; instead, the emergence of group differentiation around interest, location, or age cohort creates the building blocks of the Jewish people. A foreign center and the abstract claims of shared set of values will only continue to lose their efficacy as rhetoric of unity. Only Judaism itself--and by that I mean the exploration of Jewish tradition and Jewish life in its manifold expressions--can inspire a global sense of interconnectedness.

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