



The Jewish Federations
OF NORTH AMERICA
Israel Office

Soul Searching and Soul Building:

**The Jewish Identity Field
In Israel**

**Prepared for Tarrytown Group
January 2011 Meeting**

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Background

Jewish Identity in Israel was identified by Tarrytown Group members as one of the major areas of shared interest. This paper's purpose is to serve as a platform for discussion on the field for the Group's upcoming January 2011 gathering.

The two primary goals of the paper are to examine how Tarrytown members and other key stakeholders and experts view the many dimensions of the Jewish Identity in Israel field and to identify emerging strategies in this field that foundations and federations might be interested in leveraging their collective power to move forward.

The questions this paper will be addressing are: the rationale for engaging in this field ('why?'), the nature and/or substance of these activities ('what?'), and the structural aspects and methods employed ('how?'). The underlying assumption of the paper is that a coherent presentation of these questions will give Tarrytown members a basis for understanding strategies and specific initiatives in their relevant contexts.

The Jewish Identity field in Israel is dynamic. Philanthropic involvement in developing and shaping this field, including many of the institutions led by Tarrytown members, is concomitantly extensive and sophisticated. Over the past few years, a number of research efforts, mappings and other studies have been conducted about this field from varying entry points and there is a relatively cohesive network of Israeli and North American based philanthropic professionals who have developed various areas of expertise.

The paper intentionally does not include a mapping of the many individuals and institutional actors involved in the field or a compilation of current activities. It doesn't constitute an exhaustive depiction or analysis of all of the trends and developments in the field and their complex social, political and psychological underpinnings or related social policy challenges like the status of the Israeli ultra-orthodox Jewish population and its integration within Israeli society. Rather, it is intended as a preliminary stocktaking, albeit a nuanced one, of this complex and important field.

This paper is based on the analysis of three primary sources of information: a) a survey distributed to all Tarrytown members which was completed by **seventeen** members (See Appendix A: Survey Response List, Appendix C: Survey Questions); b) **Fifteen** semi-structured interviews conducted from September to November 2010 with organizational, academic, and institutional leaders and experts (See Appendix B: Interviewees), and c) written sources including: academic studies, articles from relevant journals, evaluations of specific initiatives, previous reports on this or related fields, internal and external documents and websites of a number of Tarrytown Group members.

The full document will be divided into the following sections

- Current context
- The major findings and general themes that emerge regarding the significance of the field and its complexities
- Questions for discussion at the Tarrytown meeting in January 2011
- Appendices and Bibliography

A summary and analysis of the Tarrytown Group members' survey appear in this document and in 'Tarrytown Group Member Survey Findings: Involvement in the Jewish Identity in Israel Field.'

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Jewish Identity in Israeli Society – Ma Nishtana? Facts on the Ground and Facts in the Head

The expressions of Jewish identity in Israel over the past decade, what one might coin, the facts on the ground, alongside the perceptions and discourse about Jewish Identity in Israel, the facts in the head, are multi-faceted and evolving.

It has become conventional wisdom that Prime Minister Rabin's assassination in 1995 served as a watershed event for raising far reaching existential questions among Jewish Israelis. It was also a major factor in the development and growth of the Jewish Identity field based on, but also to a large extent departing from, the field's foundations from the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's.

While in the years immediately following the assassination, much of Israeli society and education appeared disconnected from the search for Jewish meaning, the trauma brought about a moral reckoning and prompted a desire for many Israeli Jews, as Esteban Gottfried recalls, "...to reclaim Jewish tradition, study Jewish sources... and prompted...an eagerness to understand and interpret them and bring them closer to their lives...with a desire to shape our lifestyle around a heritage that belongs to us and that many of us are discovering anew only now."¹

Elan Ezrachi in his 2001 study on this topic, describes the largely secular Israelis gathered in Rabin Square in Tel Aviv in 2000 at the commemoration of Rabin's fifth *yahrzeit* "feeling the lack of any spiritual guidance in this overwhelmingly confusing and frightening situation...many are turning to their teachers and spiritual leaders...looking for the comfort of community."² Yet fundamental questions of Jewish identity have compelled many Jewish Israelis, including observant Jews, to ask themselves both intra-communally and inter-communally probing questions about their identities and their boundaries, the dichotomy between the secular and orthodox spheres. What also remains is the broader question of what in fact serves as the glue of the many different groups comprising Israeli Jewish society?

This question was, and to a large extent still is, understood by many as strategic for Israel and presupposes that the security and success of Israel is dependent on the Jewish population's connection to Jewish values and Jewish peoplehood. Bambi Sheleg underscores this daunting challenge, "...Israeli society embodies the steadfastly held dreams of its citizens; many of these dreams are ancient. Existing alongside them is an equal number of fantasies and broken dreams. What is a nation to do, whose children carry within them these ancient visions? Whoever journeys into the consciousness of Israelis, and Jews, will soon learn that our greatest challenges stem from how we define ourselves..."³

As Moti Zeira has observed, during the first decades of the State of Israel, "... the Israeli Jew fully identified with the state, and the state system which provided individuals with the basic needs that any community provides for its members: a sense of belonging on one hand and a meaningful existence on the other." Zeira claims that over the past three decades, the provision of those basic needs by the state has been rapidly deteriorating, such that today "most Jews in Israel do not find strength and

¹ Gottfried, Esteban. "Jewish Renaissance in Israel through Ritual." *Sh'ma*. May 2006: 6-7.

² Ezrachi, Elan. "Jewish Renaissance and Renewal in Israel." *A report of the Dorot and Nathan Cummings Foundation*. Jan 2001.

³ Sheleg, Bambi. "Dynamic Dreams in Israel." *Sh'ma*. Mar 2006: 4-5.

inspiration from knowing that they live in the only Jewish state in the world, that their spoken language is Hebrew, and that they live in the Land of Israel.”⁴ Hagit Wolf Hacothen notes, "Zionism had replaced the religious component of Judaism for a time. Even today it is less so. An identity crisis has been taking place because young people are asking themselves 'why live here?'"⁵

What hasn't fundamentally changed from the early days of the state, (and preceding it with the historical status quo letter in 1947 from David Ben Gurion to leaders of the Orthodox Agudat Yisrael Party) is the political battle over the different dimensions of the Jewishness of the state, including in Israeli society's various public spheres. This hegemonic battle, as many sociologists are wont to coin it, which is largely played out in the public policy realm, has at least three sets of interrelated ramifications: **material**, with regard to economic power and influence, **political** with regard to recognition and public legitimacy, and **practical**, as it impacts upon many Jewish Israelis' motivation and often their ability to engage in and access Jewish living and learning. This last ramification has centrally informed the strategies in the Jewish Identity field in Israel, which are primarily focusing on how to empower Israeli Jews to consciously and intentionally choose how to celebrate and embrace Judaism through what can be described as "positive Jewish modes of activity."⁶ This approach reflects a strong desire to have Israeli Jews interface with Jewish Identity not restricted or defined by the vagaries and complexities of the political battles.

The perceptions or facts in the head shaped around these battles in the public Israeli discourse, whether in the mass media, political or other arenas are juxtaposed by a growing phenomenon of the creation of contemporary popular Israeli culture inspired by and in dialogue with Jewish culture. All of these facts in the head reflect back on Israeli Jews, as well as on Jewish communities in North America, and around the world, on how they experience and connect with Israelis and Israeli society and subsequently form their sense of belonging to their communities and to the Jewish people.

Clearly, other social forces and approaches are at play. Various subcultures of Jewish Israelis, perhaps most prominently among first and second generation immigrants from the Former Soviet Union, as Ariel Borshevsky notes, develop a strong sense that they are Jewish enough by living in the country and having their children serve in the army.⁷ This illustrates a certain early Zionist mindset that life in Israel is inherently meaningful by virtue of the fact that it is being created by and with other Jews in Israel, regardless of its interconnectedness with Jewish heritage or tradition, which is deemed secondary, if important at all.

During the last decade in Israel we have witnessed a growth of soul-searching AND soul-building. Not only are more and more Jewish Israelis asking themselves, and each other, why is my family's, community's (geographic, ethnically based, educational or other), state's Jewish identity meaningful to me, but also what can I do about it, in one or more of these realms? Those asking are often now part of creating a growing number of options that provide answers to these questions. As it will be described below, soul-building is taking on more and more diverse and sophisticated forms, informed not only by educational thinking, but by community organizing and other social change approaches.

⁴ Zeira, Moti. "Recreating Jewish Community." *Sh'ma*. May 2006: 7.

⁵ Hacothen Wolf, Hagit. Personal Interview. Jerusalem, Israel. 1 Nov 2010.

⁶ Joffe, Meir. Personal Interview. Ramat Efal, Israel. 31 Oct 2010. (Translation of *Prakitkot Yehudiot Hiyuviot*)

⁷ Borshevsky, Ariel (Nicholai). Personal Interview. Tel Aviv, Israel. 3 Nov 2010.

The Jewish Identity Field

The use of the term *field* in the title is intentionally chosen to characterize the phenomenon under discussion. Field is an inclusive term, which has broader associations than community, movement, coalition, network or others. Field connotes a greater free-market reality where expertise, services, strategies, ideas and ideologies, meet and often compete and connect and build upon one another. This can also be called co-opetition, a term more commonly used in the business world. It also implies a professional dimension with regard to the role of management, resource development, the identity of its practitioners and other elements like specialization, standards, evaluation and best practices. Evaluation in the Jewish Identity in Israel field has developed significantly in the last decade, informed by social-psychological and anthropological methodologies, alongside logic-model frameworks seeking outcomes measurement. Their focus span from continuous evaluation of specific programs to efforts comparing various operating models in the field, attempts to develop standardized evaluation and the current development of a model for improving efficiency and effectiveness in Jewish Renewal programs. Specific evaluations have also contributed to gaining deeper understanding of the motivations and perspectives of the leaders/organizers in the field and the participants of programs. Meir Joffe observes that Jewish Identity in Israel “is a living, breathing field. It’s not a project.”⁸

The field has seen a process of specialization around distinct target populations and change agents, institutional frameworks in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, and educational and other services. No less significantly, a professional vocabulary is beginning to emerge, which enables leaders, philanthropic bodies and other stakeholders alike to converse about strategic questions and the challenges of practice on the ground.

The term *Jewish Identity* was chosen as part of the title, as it is the unifying focus of all of the groups under question, transcending motivations, strategies and programs. It is more so than the terms: Jewish pluralism, renewal, renaissance, education, peoplehood and activism, each of which emphasize a different dimension of the field.

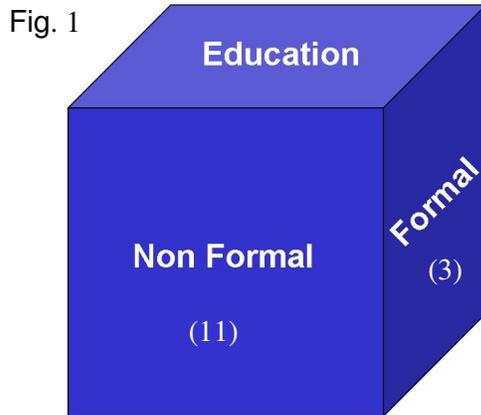
The organizational environment of this field is diverse. The field is composed of at least one social movement (Jewish Renewal – to be discussed later in the paper), an attempt to create a broader Jewish pluralistic social movement, and a number of religious and other 'streams' of Jewish self-expression. It also includes many subsets of organizations which can be characterized on the basis of the services they develop and provide, the populations they are targeting, as well as their ideological orientations. There are a number of networks, some more formal (and funded) and others semi or very loosely structured, as well as ad-hoc, mid and long term coalitions and alliances.

Areas of Activity

Much of the research to date on this field points to ever expanding areas of activity. The different classifications of these areas developed by academics (including commissioned research efforts), various organizations in the field and philanthropic bodies, invariably reflect specific points of departure and divergent strategic frameworks. This is borne out in the interviews with some of the Tarrytown Group members, where each described a clear and distinct delineation of their areas of activity in this field.

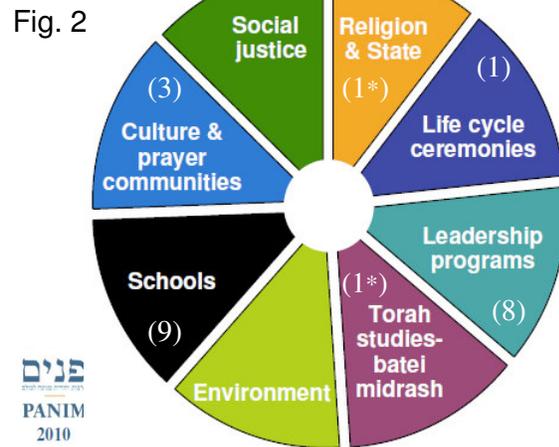
⁸ Joffe, Meir. Personal Interview. Ramat Efal, Israel. 31 Oct 2010.

Two such existing classifications will serve as frames of reference for our purposes: one by researcher, Yigal Rosen in 2008 (See Fig.1) who classifies the field through a broad education prism and another by the PANIM organization in 2010 (See Fig. 2), which classifies the field through a wider prism of Jewish Renewal and Pluralistic activity.



Dr. Yigal Rosen (Forum of Israeli Foundations: Education and Jewish Identity, 2008)

*Designed for this paper for illustrative purposes.



*Also falls into Schools classification.

Educational Areas of Activities

Broadly speaking, Jewish educational activities comprise a sub-set, albeit a large one, of the Jewish Identity field. For many of the Tarrytown Group members, a primary area of activity has and continues to be the Israeli Jewish educational milieu i.e. schools and school communities in the Israeli Jewish educational systems, alongside other non-formal educational frameworks.

Formal Education

Yigal Rosen's study was based on a survey of Israel based representatives of 15 foundations and federations that belong to the Education and Jewish Identity group in the Forum of Israeli Foundations.⁹ Rosen's classification distinguishes between formal and non formal educational activities. He discovered that in the formal educational realm these philanthropic bodies' attention was divided among several avenues: professional personnel who are directly relevant to targeted populations (through professional development for teachers and teacher-training); direct funding of teaching hours for specific educational interventions; development of curriculum units; programs in unique schools e.g. integrated or pluralistic schools; and holistic interventions in state schools. Rosen also cites advocacy activity aimed at increasing government support for Jewish education in state schools.

⁹ This August 2008 report (Rosen, Yigal. "Areas of Activity of Foundations Involved in Education and Jewish Identity in Israel") is based on data from 15 philanthropic bodies, including a number of Tarrytown Group Members, noted in bold: the Rothschild Foundation, the New Israel Fund, the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco—Israeli affiliate, the **Russell Berrie Foundation**, the Ted Arison Family Foundation, **AVI CHAI**, Natan, the Nadav Fund, MetroWest Israel, **UJA-Federation of New York**, the **Grinspoon Foundation**, the Yoreinu Foundation, the Chais Family Foundation, the **Genesis Philanthropy Group**, and the Pratt Foundation.

Non Formal Education

Rosen discovered that in the non-formal education realm, philanthropic efforts are geared to develop spiritual and cultural communities, study materials for non-formal education, content sites, personnel training, batei midrash (study houses), research, as well as general citywide initiatives, afternoon enrichment programs infused with Jewish content, post high school/pre-army preparatory programs, conversion programs, and a special program for soldiers.

Following Rosen's classification, these and additional areas of activity are borne out in the Tarrytown Group Member survey. Of the twenty-three initiatives listed in the Tarrytown survey results, eleven can be classified as Non Formal Education, and three can be classified as Formal Education. There are three Prayer Communities and one Batei Midrash included in the Non Formal Education distinction (Also see breakdown in Fig. 1). The remaining nine initiatives do not fall into Rosen's framework and are addressed by the classifications laid out by PANIM.

The pie-chart above was developed by the PANIM organization in 2010 (See Fig. 2) as an attempt to classify major areas of activity. As opposed to Rosen's effort, PANIM distinguishes between Schools, Culture and Prayer Communities and Batei Midrash. It also includes five additional segments of activity areas: Leadership Programs, Life Cycle Ceremonies, Environment, Social Justice and Religion and State.

The following are brief descriptions of the eight areas of activity, according to PANIM's classifications.¹⁰

Schools

Activities in and with schools, school networks and the Ministry of Education and their personnel, understanding their centrality in socializing and teaching young Jewish Israelis.

Torah Studies- Batei Midrash

Comprised of diverse study frameworks to enable Jewish Israelis to experience and discover the treasures of Jewish heritage and culture.

Culture and Prayer communities

Frameworks which aim to build and shape new relevant Jewish community life in the Israeli context among secular, traditional and liberal religious oriented populations, broaden their constituencies and reach out to new audiences. These frameworks include: mixed or integrated communities of observant and other Jews; communities affiliated with religious streams and non-affiliated spiritual and cultural communities.

Life Cycle Ceremonies

These activities focus on life cycle events such as brit mila, bar/bat mitzvah, marriage, burial, and conversion. The intent is to create meaningful events and experiences in response to the state monopoly of some of these activities.

¹⁰ Follow up phone conversation with Meir Joffe regarding Joffe, Meir. Personal Interview. Ramat Efal, Israel. 31 Oct 2010.

Social Justice

This area of activity addresses social and welfare needs and policies within Israel and beyond and operates under the understanding that justice and fairness are informed by, and intrinsic to, Jewish values and heritage. This area is often referred to as *tikun olam*.

Environment

This emerging area's focus is to connect and integrate environmental awareness and activism to Jewish heritage and sources.

Leadership Programs

This area focuses on developing and sustaining the Jewish Identity field itself through investing in people and groups who will be leaders and developers of the field. It also targets other Israeli society leaders, who are in positions of influence, to impact their awareness and mission of Jewish Identity activities in their spheres of influence.

Religion and State

This area of activity focuses on public opinion, public policy, legislation and allocations with regard to Jewish Identity and Jewish Education in the private and public spheres, focusing largely on advocacy and media initiatives.

Alongside the specialization and professionalization that exists in these various areas of activity, many organizations and initiatives integrate more than one area of activity.

Following PANIM's classification, the twenty-three initiatives listed in the Tarrytown survey results can be divided in the following way (Also see breakdown in Fig. 2): Eight can be classified as Leadership Programs, one as Life Cycle Ceremonies, nine as Schools, and three as Culture and Prayer Communities. One initiative reported in the survey straddles the School and Torah Studies (Batei Midrash) classifications; another initiative straddles the School and Religion and State classifications. Based on the information provided in the survey, none of the initiatives can be classified as Social Justice or Environment.

It is important to note that these initiatives do not constitute all of the activity of the Tarrytown Group members, rather a significant cross-section of one or more initiatives which members chose to describe for the purpose of the current survey.

Goals in the Jewish Identity Field in Israel

There appear to be five overarching goals in the Jewish Identity field in Israel. While a given organization or program might adopt one or more of these, they are distinct from one another.

1. **Identity Development** among Jewish Israelis.
2. Deepening and expansion of Jewish **Cultural Literacy** among Jewish Israelis.
3. Fostering of **Ideological Commitment** towards one or more approaches to Jewish Identity among Jewish Israelis.
4. **Building** and enhancing Jewish **Communities** among Jewish Israelis.
5. Enabling **Access** and promoting **Broader Legitimacy** of diverse Jewish living and learning options for all Jewish Israelis.

The first goal, **Identity Development**, relates to the various normative components of identity: behavior, belief and belonging. Personal-self-definition and the attitudes Israeli

Jews hold towards their identities play an important role alongside the behavioral dimensions. The creating and sustaining of positive interest and readiness among Israeli Jews to develop and celebrate their identities is viewed as imperative, and the basis from which cultural literacy and ideological commitment both can grow.

The second goal, **Cultural Literacy**, relates to the tools and skills required to decode the symbols of Jewish life and culture, most notably but not exclusively, the engagement between the learner and Jewish texts. Cultural competencies and knowledge based engagement are viewed as the basis from which identity development and ideological commitment both can grow. As Dani Elazar has observed "instead of educating a generation of defiant but knowledgeable Jews, we've educated a generation of indifferent Jews."¹¹

The third goal, **Ideological Commitment**, presumes that engagement in Jewish life grows out of a sense of purpose and commitment, which are a manifestation of ideology. Therefore, fostering ideological commitment to one or another vision of Jewish Israeli life is viewed as the key to engaging Jewish Israelis, regardless of the specific ideology, whether it be Pluralism, Zionism (or one of its branches), a specific religious, secular/cultural or an other ideological framework like social justice, 'tikun olam' or Jewish peoplehood. Brauner defines ideology in this context "as a notion, a coherent notion of a program and of a vision that drives people, which leads people to raise their children in certain ways because they know, somehow, that this is right and this is what counts."¹²

These first three goals reflect the previously described educational focus of a critical mass of the activities in the Jewish Identity Field.¹³ This is illustrated in the Tarrytown survey results where a majority of the initiatives listed address these first three goals.

The fourth goal, **Building Communities**, considers the current lack of opportunities for Jewish learning and celebration and the parallel need for social solidarity, mutual responsibility and giving as the comprehensive challenge of Israeli Jewish society. It sees renewal of community life among Israeli Jews on different scales and through eclectic approaches as an imperative and the first three goals as effective means to achieve this.

The fifth goal, **Access and Broader Legitimacy**, maintains that the four other goals are ultimately dependent on an alternative political reality made up of different 'rules of the game' for Israel as a body politic and society. This goal's raison d'être is to enable all Israeli Jews to have the ability to celebrate and interpret their Jewish identities, both in the private and public realms. The four above goals are often viewed as effective means to making the case for and promoting this approach.

These goals serve as a foundation in understanding activities in the Jewish Identity and their underlying motivations. They also serve as a key point of reference for grasping the other dimensions discussed below.

¹¹ Elazar, Dani. Personal Interview. Jerusalem, Israel. 14 Nov 2010.

¹² Brauner, Ronald A. Ideology Is the Basis of Commitment. Agenda: Jewish Education (1) Fall, 1992.

¹³ The articulation of these three first goals are informed by and adapted from the following three writings: "Jewish Identity Must Be Primary", Dr. Perry London z"l; " Learning to Read the Culture" Prof. Walter Ackerman z"l; and " Ideology is the Basis of Commitment", Dr. Ronald Brauner, Agenda: Jewish Education (1) Fall, 1992. These writings were originally developed in a North American context.

Spheres of Focus

The field encompasses a number of spheres of focus, each of which has unique dimensions and challenges. Any given organization or project in the Jewish Identity in Israel field tend to focus on more than one concurrent sphere. They include:

- **Individuals**
- **Families**
- **Communities**
- **Israeli Society**
- **World Jewry**

The efforts of many involved in this field, are primarily about enabling pockets of individuals and families to seek and fulfill their connection to their Jewish identities while also seeing these outgrowths as potential platforms for change in their communities or beyond.

Communities tend to be a primary focus. In the Jewish Identity in Israel context, communities can be grouped geographically as: urban or rural, neighborhoods, boroughs, cities, regions. They can also be categorized in functional terms e.g. school communities, synagogues, praying communities, learning communities, and professional communities. Ethnic or gender parameters like first, second or third generation immigrants, women etc. are also considered. According to a number of theories of change, community focused action has the ability in many contexts to directly impact the lives of individual and families, while also, informing or contributing to broader society or global forces of change.

Through the Israeli Society sphere, Israel is viewed as a larger community, a kind of mini-global village. Society-wide activities focused in the political, cultural, educational or mass communications arenas are seen to have a palpable impact on the individual, family and community spheres.

While it is not the primary purview of this paper, the World Jewry sphere bears many dimensions of significance. As part of this sphere, Jewish peoplehood is a central ideological framework for much of the activities in the field. As Israel's core identity is predicated on the notion that it was established to address the challenges of the Jewish people, the World Jewry sphere takes on a type of meta-presence. As Ariel Borschevsky notes "there is an interest in being part of the Jewish people...Peoplehood is a new approach for the 21st century."¹⁴ The dynamic nature of the notion of peoplehood enables it to be a focus among many institutions involved in this field

The World Jewry sphere is also a fertile operational framework and focus for many of the Jewish Identity in Israel strategies and programs. Israeli Jews are engaged in direct connections or parallel programs with Jews and Jewish communities throughout the world. Alongside the expanding Jewish Agency Partnership 2000 program and other North American Jewish community partnerships, there are a growing number of initiatives both within and outside of Israeli educational frameworks. This development is underscored by the Jewish Agency's emerging operationalizing of its strategic plan focusing on Jewish Identity throughout the Jewish world, including Israel.

¹⁴ Borschevsky, Ariel (Nicholai). Personal Interview. Tel Aviv, Israel. 3 Nov 2010.

From a sociological perspective, localized and national developments in North American Jewish life and specifically within the Jewish Identity field, inform the developments in Israel and visa versa. One interesting example centers on the exploration of social, cultural and political/organizational boundaries within the Orthodox Jewish communities both in Israel and North America. This is expressed in a number of ways, including the challenging of Halachic authorities and a dynamic feminist discourse and presence.

Tehila Nachalon notes that “there are thousands of Israeli observant Jews, whom on the basis of their existing solid Jewish identity, are seeking innovative public and social forms of expression. They want to express their Judaism beyond the community space into broader public spaces and even global arenas, for example through what are often called 'social justice' activities. Despite the different motivations, there are many links between activities focused on non-observant Jews in Israel and these trends among observant Jewish Israelis. For observant Jews, it is also a challenge to reframe their identities as Jews living in Israel and to develop a more coherent language of Jewish sovereignty.”¹⁵

The goals described in the previous section along with the spheres noted above inform different strategies in the Jewish Identity field.

Strategies of Change

Bottom-up, grass roots, strategies of change are invariably adopted to achieve the first four goals, usually cutting through most, if not all, of the spheres of focus defined above. The underlying assumption of these strategies is that change in an area as sensitive as identity necessitates a long-term, some argue, life-long approach of soul-building. There are no short cuts in engaging individuals, families or communities in Jewish life and culture. These strategies also reflect a perceived imperative to ‘seed the field’ of Jewish Identity in Israel with a growing number of communities, networks and other institutional frameworks infused by “positive Jewish modes of activity” to counter and transcend the often daunting political battles.

Top down strategies invariably focus on policy change and public opinion. They interface and often clash with national and local governmental bodies e.g. ministries, city councils and the Knesset, alongside a keen understanding of mass communications and social media in furthering their goals. Issues which they've addressed over the last decade have included allocations for synagogues and recognition of conversions of the liberal religious streams and governmental funding support for pluralistic Jewish educational institutions and projects as part of broader attempts to revamp governmental funding practices. Top down strategies also include efforts conducted in cooperation with ministries, like the recently launched nationwide Jewish Culture and Heritage Reform of the Ministry of Education.¹⁶

While the fifth goal is usually pursued with top-down strategies, more and more of those pursuing the first four goals are also considering, and in some cases, engaging in such strategies as complementary to their core grass roots strategies.

A significant alternative strategy has been the development of **networks of sub-sectors** or mini-professional communities within the field e.g. the network of batei

¹⁵ Nachalon, Tehila. Personal Interview. Jerusalem, Israel. 5 September 2010.

¹⁶ A summary of this initiative is available upon request.

midrash, the network of spiritual communities¹⁷ and a network of intentional mixed or integrated communities of observant and other Jews.¹⁸ There are also currently a number of roundtables including one focusing on holistic municipal-wide Jewish Identity activity and another focusing on activities within the Russian speaking community in Israel. These networks and roundtables build upon and respect the autonomous and diverse nature of the programs and the organizations which initiate them, while seeking ways to leverage the cumulative impact of their activities. They focus on sharing of information, professionalization and coordinated public events and media exposure.

This delineation of areas of activity, distinct goals, spheres of focus and strategies are key in understanding the Jewish Identity Israel field. While as Hagit Wolf Hachohen observes their "overarching goal is to make a change within the State of Israel," she also notes that "different organizations are disconnected and come with different goals. They are making change from both sides. Right now the status of each side does not align. They can't theoretically meet since they are dealing with different issues."¹⁹

This might seem counter-intuitive as it would appear that there is similarity, or what could be called a 'convergence' among projects and players in the field. Simply asked, 'why can't they all work together'? Yet, from a field-based and philanthropic perspective, one of the inherent difficulties in 'making a change within the State of Israel' stems from the challenge of reconciling these divergent goals and their ideological underpinnings. As noted above, there have been ongoing attempts, most notably through the auspices of the PANIM organization, to galvanize the disparate organizations (as PANIM has delineated: secular-cultural, traditional, including liberal streams and pluralistic orthodox²⁰) who adhere to all five goals under the joint banner of Jewish Pluralism. There are also ongoing efforts of the religious streams, The New Israel Fund and others around targeted causes.

Engaging Israelis

Within the Jewish Identity field, Israeli Jews of all backgrounds are targeted to varying degrees. One very significant subset in the field is the Jewish Renewal social movement. This social movement focuses almost exclusively on non-observant Jewish Israelis, "making Judaism more accessible and available to those seeking alternatives to the institutionalized options that do not satisfy the intellectual and spiritual needs of many Jews in Israel."²¹

Naama Azulay who recently completed her doctoral dissertation on this movement, identifies two simultaneous processes – "renewing the connection between Jews belonging to the Israeli secular sector and their heritage... and the ongoing processes of renewal, in which novelty and tradition are combined in order to be restructured so as to produce meaningful Jewish life for Israeli Jews living in a modern, egalitarian, and democratic society."²²

¹⁷ Called 'Reshet Kehilot Yisrael' in Hebrew ('Israel Communities Network'), this network is also sometimes called the 'Non-affiliated Communities Network'. It includes non-denominational, post-denominational and emerging communities.

¹⁸ Called 'Mirkam' in Hebrew ('Weave' or 'Tapestry')

¹⁹ Hachohen Wolf, Hagit. Personal Interview. Jerusalem, Israel. 1 Nov 2010.

²⁰ Joffe, Meir. "A Conceptual framework for understanding the map of pluralistic Jewish renewal in Israel." PowerPoint Presentation. No Date.

²¹ UJA-Federation of New York Working Paper. "Jewish Renewal Initiatives in Israel", June 2010.

²² Azulay, Naama. "Hebrew We Are and Our Hearts Will We Worship: The Jewish Renewal Movement in Israeli Secular Society". Ph.D. Thesis, Bar-Ilan University, 2010.

The Jewish Renewal Movement

While the Jewish Identity field and the Jewish Renewal social movement are not synonymous, the latter begs specific attention, in light of its extensive growth and its current alignment with diverse philanthropic interests.²³ The Jewish Renewal social movement encompasses the first (Identity Development), second (Cultural Literacy) and fourth (Building Communities) goals and is in dialogue with the third (Ideological Commitment) and fifth (Access and Broader Legitimacy) goals. Although it functions in all of the spheres, the movement fundamentally sees the individual, family and communities spheres as its primary foci and adopts various bottom-up grass roots strategies to achieve its goals.

Hagit Wolf Hacohen, who has studied the perspectives and motivations of both the leaders and the participants in Jewish Renewal programs, has observed that "many [Israelis] who join Renewal programs had experienced life as Jews outside of Israel. Some had children that they wanted to know what to tell them about being Jewish. The education of children is a very important motivation... as well as trying to prove that there are many ways to be Jewish and the ideological motivation to show there is a meaningful Jewish way to live outside of the Orthodox sphere."²⁴

Tens of mostly grass roots organizations have emerged in the last fifteen years within this movement. Naama Azulay describes the movement as "...an unofficial network that has created a web of connections and dependencies....they all share goals, relationships, systems, methods to achieving ultimate goals and want to reach the goals in the same way. Not all agree about being a part of the 'movement' but all agree on goals. There is something significant in this fact...the smaller organizations all have connections, partnerships on projects. Even on a personal level, relationships exist between many of these organizations."²⁵

Deborah Jocelow adds that "the notion of a social change movement is a very big term. Like the environmental movement...started as brooks and now they are streams, and we have a few bubbling streams on their way to becoming rivers, and they will become an ocean at a certain point. We try very hard to create efficiencies and to create overlaps where they don't exist but they are overlapping on their own. They find each other. It's still a relatively small phenomenon, Israel is a small country. They connect very easily and with the slightest nudging they connect even faster than that."²⁶

These brooks, streams and rivers include diverse and interrelated activity areas described earlier. There is growing Jewish Renewal activity among Israel's Young Adults and specifically in Young Adult communities throughout the country. There are roughly 1.5 million Young Adults between the ages of 18-30 living in Israel and two million people aged 18-35, including about 260,000 immigrants. Amongst the young adult population, there is a unique cadre of idealistic, well-educated, upwardly-mobile young people, who are choosing to make their lives in poor neighborhoods and towns

²³ See Elan Ezrachi's 2001 report "Jewish Renaissance and Renewal in Israel." This depiction characterizes the Jewish Renewal movement and describes and anticipates many of its emerging trends.

²⁴ Hacohen Wolf, Hagit. Personal Interview. Jerusalem, Israel. 1 Nov 2010.

²⁵ Azulay, Naama. Personal Interview. Jerusalem, Israel. 14 Nov 2010.

²⁶ Jocelow, Deborah. Personal Interview. New York, NY. 10 Nov 2010.

where they have initiated educational and employment projects and serve as role models and change agents in the community.²⁷

Based on the interviews she conducted, Azulay identified three primary motivations of the leaders of the Jewish Renewal groups - "they want to create public spaces in Israel which are neither orthodox nor secular; legitimize the discourse of hybrid identity and address the public policy challenges."²⁸

The dialogue, which many of these organizations are conducting regarding the pursuit of the fifth goal, Access and Broader Legitimacy, has not led the movement to a decisive strategy. In her analysis Naama Azulay found that the "organizations grew out of the late 80's and early 90's and grew out of secular population's need to define and clarify their Jewish identity; the leaders that grew with them came from that identity clarification movement. To this day many of the leaders of the big organizations are in the essence of working with Jews to develop this identity as opposed to the political change. If the leaders have this self concept, what happens is that the people that join aren't coming with this political social change agenda. It's in the air but not on the ground."²⁹

Wolf HaCohen claims that the field of Jewish renewal in Israel has reached maturity³⁰, evolving from its start-up and emerging growth phases. She sees the potential of this movement and notes that the change is happening very slowly. "It is an essential change.there is potential with the bottom up, grass roots approach, but there are black spots... The target population is an issue. There are plenty of people that don't participate. Only hardcore Modern Orthodox people are participating in Jewish Renewal activities. Sephardim (40% of Jewish population) do not participate in the field."³¹

The above observations underscore a number of built-in, possibly structural tensions in the Jewish Renewal movement, between their grass roots strategies which largely breed organic, on the ground localized 'results' with their declared motivations as described to Azulay. Their activities on the ground reflect the first, second and fourth goals (Identity Development, Cultural Literacy and Building Community), while their motivations ostensibly reflect the third and fifth goals (Fostering Ideological Commitment and Enabling Access and promoting Broader Legitimacy of diverse Jewish living and learning options for all Jewish Israelis). In addition, the discrepancy between Azulay's 'external' characterization of Jewish Renewal as a social movement and many of the leaders' current perceptions that it is not as such, is worthy of further investigation.

²⁷ More information on this and related developments is available upon request. A study has recently been undertaken by the UJA Federation of NY to examine the Jewish Renewal dimensions and potential among this population.

²⁸ Azulay, Dr. Naama. Personal Interview. Jerusalem, Israel. 14 Nov 2010.

²⁹ Azulay, Dr. Naama. Personal Interview. Jerusalem, Israel. 14 Nov 2010.

³⁰ HaCohen Wolf, Dr. Hagit. "Know Whence You Have Come and Where You are Going". Jewish Renewal in Israel – Mapping Central Issues and Expected Results." The Melton Center for Jewish Education, 2010.

³¹ Hacothen Wolf, Dr. Hagit. Personal Interview. Jerusalem, Israel. 1 Nov 2010.

Philanthropic Motivations and Perspectives

This section focuses on how Tarrytown members view the many dimensions of the Jewish Identity in Israel field and will share many direct responses from the Tarrytown Group members' survey, in their own words. The analysis of this data along with interviews with representatives of some of its members, point to two significant findings with regard to members' motivations and perspectives on the Jewish Identity field and their interaction with another.

- Involvement in the Jewish Identity field in Israel for both the Federation and Foundation members provides:

Meaning and Relevance for the relationship forged by North American Jews with Israel and Israelis. There is a motivation for engagement in this field as a way to connect North American Jewry in a meaningful and positive way to Israel and to preserve this connection—taking into consideration the complexities of such a dynamic, while still uniting over common traditions and heritage. For North American Jewish philanthropic bodies, their involvement in this field provides them with hope regarding Israel's future and sustainability.

- The Tarrytown Group members are **currently collaborating** among themselves and other philanthropic bodies in an organic fashion and display a **significant desire to develop and refine future collaborative efforts.**

It is significant to note the eclectic reasons for the members' involvement in this field. As borne out in the responses below, they reflect to varying degrees the five goals of the Jewish Identity field presented in this paper.

- Strengthening connections between US and Israel and a commitment to Jewish identity worldwide.
- Broadening the range of discourse in Israel around Judaism and identity centered on the idea that we share a common destiny, shaped by the enduring values that connect us to Jews around the world.
- Promoting Jewish education and identity.
- Desire to see a pluralistic Judaism part of the Israeli scene.
- A feeling that promoting Jewish peoplehood is important and actually necessary in Israel.
- Jewish identity is viewed as an "existential issue" that has implications for Israel's strength and survival.
- Enhancing Israel's public sector leadership.

This final list of responses to Question 8 of the survey reveals some of the big picture questions and concerns of the members moving forward.

- The Russian speaking population in Israel has had a different journey up to this moment. They can't be left behind when looking at these issues because they have too much to offer our Jewish spirit.
- There is a serious need to involve more native Israelis and the next generation of Russian-speakers into Jewish education activities.
- There is a need to widen the interface between Judaism and Israeli society-at-large through new and different Jewish gateways.

- As a broad field led by many organizations that are generally underfunded, it's worth exploring partnering with the government sector.

The survey (responses to Question #7 – see Appendix C: Survey Questions) revealed a number of different potential points of collaboration in which the members are keen to explore which address specific areas of activity in Israel alongside North American based efforts:

- Sharing of strategies for engaging families and broadening impact beyond students in Jewish Identity educational activities in Israel.
- Expanding financial resources available for Jewish Renewal in Israel.
- Creating an alumni network, and aspects within the context of P2K (JAFI'S Partnership 2000 program).
- Strengthening leadership and networking of students in North American communities.
- Developing communication tools which educate and engage broader North American Jewish audiences about the developments and opportunities in this field.

Conclusion

As a whole, the Jewish Identity in Israel field is diverse and growing professionally. As the Tarrytown Group member survey results indicate, the field is a focus of many leading North American Jewish philanthropic bodies and communal leaders who perceive it as imperative for Israel, the North American Jewish community and the connection between them. One clear motivation for interest in this field is fueled by the belief that Jewish Identity is important in strengthening Israel as well as World Jewry.

Defining the boundaries and demarcations within this field is not a simple undertaking, but an important one. This paper offers a conceptual framework of areas of activity, goals, spheres of activity and strategies. They are contextualized within dynamic and interrelated 'facts on the ground' and 'facts in the head' with regard to Jewish Identity in Israel. The framework identifies points of commonality and divergence within which it is possible to situate various initiatives and their underlying approaches.

The grassroots nature of its work is in alignment with various philanthropic interests and approaches in the field. There is also a recognition that the field is not disconnected from broader socio-political contexts in Israel and is in fact trying to impact upon them. There are though question marks and dilemmas among practitioners and philanthropic bodies alike, around attempts to address Jewish Identity in Israel through the prisms of public policy and public opinion. These questions are also informed by the fifth goal of enabling access and promoting broader legitimacy of diverse Jewish living and learning options for all Jewish Israelis.

Primarily grass roots strategies have been adopted and supported to create alternative sets of facts on the ground of positive Jewish modes of activity for and between individuals, communities and networks of Israeli Jews, often within and in close cooperation with the wider sphere of Jewish communities around the world. There is a growing understanding that the piecemeal, bottom up strategies are crucial and effective but not necessarily sufficient in creating broader social change, a goal

apparently shared by the leaders in the field. With an acute awareness of the internal and external obstacles to galvanizing the disparate forces in the field, it is unclear whether the cumulative efforts to enact and implement pluralistic public policy can create a sea change. Networks and roundtables are playing a growing role in shaping and informing the future of this field, a phenomenon which begs a more in depth inquiry.

Jewish Education is dominant as a focus of the field in addition to the emergence of the Jewish Renewal movement. Based on the interviews, survey responses and research conducted; there are differing understandings about who is inside and outside of the movement. While this paper and other research efforts place most of the field's organizations, projects and participants within the boundaries of the Jewish Renewal movement, this is sometimes in contradistinction to the leaders' self-definitions.

For Tarrytown Group members, the three sets of questions below are worthy of further investigation and will hopefully enrich collaborative thinking and action:

The Field

1. Is this field and all that it is offering, moving from a quaint alternative to the natural, and even default lifestyle choice of the Jewish Israeli mainstream?
2. Where do Jewish Renewal and Jewish Pluralism meet, conceptually and operationally? Are they complementing each other? Are they in competition or essentially one in the same – Renewal, the movement, and Pluralism, the ideological engine of the movement?

Tarrytown Group Members' Perspectives and Motivations

3. Do we view Jewish Identity in Israel as a domestic Israeli issue alone? Are we investing in Jewish Identity because we have concern about the Jewish character of Israel in the future?
4. Is our Jewish Identity investing also an investment in Jewish Pluralism which has as a further implicit goal the democratic future of Israel without losing the Jewish character of the state?
5. To what extent do we view Jewish Identity in Israel in a bilateral way, Israel – North America, and what are our expectations of the value, benefit, impact for both in making these investments?³²
6. How do we currently connect to challenges presented in the public policy and public opinion realms and the largely top-down strategies which address them? How do we see our roles in this realm moving forward?
7. How do we understand the broader challenges and roles of leadership within the Israeli Jewish Identity field and the place of North American Jewish philanthropic bodies?

Tarrytown Group Members' Future Action

8. Which areas of activity and initiatives in the Jewish Identity in Israeli field appear to be conducive to exploring more coordinated or collaborative activity among Tarrytown Group members? How do we want to put this in action?
9. What are the ways to augment and maintain interest of this agenda in North America? What can be done to better demonstrate impact and relevance?

³² Questions #'s 3,4 &5 were articulated by Ruth Salzman, Email correspondence December 23, 2010.

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Response List

The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies
AVI CHAI Israel
Combined Jewish Philanthropies
Genesis Philanthropy Group
Greater Miami Jewish Federation
Harold Grinspoon Foundation
Jewish Federation of Cleveland
Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles
Jewish Funders Network
Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago
Jim Joseph Foundation
PLC Philanthropic Services
Russell Berrie Foundation
The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life
UJA Federation of Greater Toronto
UJA Federation of New York
The Wexner Foundation

Appendix B: Interviewees

Dr. Naama Azulay, KIAH (Kol Yisrael Haverim) and Hebrew University
Dr. Nicholai Borshevsky, Nadav Foundation, Israel
Dr. Sana Britavsky, Genesis Philanthropy Group, Israel
Dani Elazar, Be'eri Program, Hartman Institute, Israel
Dr. Elan Ezrachi, Jerusalem
Eli Gur, UJA Federation of New York, Israel
Professor Benni Ish Shalom, Ministry of Education
Deborah Jocelow, UJA Federation of New York
Meir Joffe, PANIM, Israel
Orly Kennet, Director of the ZIKA program in Gan Yavne
Tehila Nachalon, Jewish Federation of Central New Jersey, Israel.
Jay Shofet, New Israel Fund, Israel
Vered Yisraeli, Boston-Haifa Partnership (CJP), Israel
Karyn Weiss, Avihai Foundation, Israel
Dr. Hagit Hacohen Wolf, The Melton Centre for Jewish Education, Hebrew University

Appendix C: Survey Questions

1. Please enter contact information:
 - a. Name
 - b. Federation/Foundation/Organization
 - c. City
 - d. State/Province
 - e. Country
 - f. Email Address
2. Is your federation/foundation/organization currently involved in the Jewish Identity in Israel field?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. If 'Yes', what is the motivation for interest this field?
3. Within the field of Jewish Identity in Israel, does your federation/foundation/organization have a particular target or focus? (Please name two or more).
4. What is your primary strategy and/or delivery system in the field of Jewish Identity in Israel?
5. Please list and describe up to three initiatives/projects you are involved in that best reflect your strategy in the Jewish Identity in Israel field.
 - a. Initiative/Project
 - b. Name
 - c. Funding partners
 - d. Programmatic implementer(s)
 - e. Location(s)
 - f. Description
 - g. Years involved
 - h. How the initiative reflects your strategy.
6. What is the likelihood that your federation/foundation/organization will fund new initiatives? Please elaborate.
7. If your federation/foundation/organization interested in opportunities to collaborate programmatically?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Where could you use the help?
8. Please share any other relevant information about the field of Jewish Identity in Israel. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions about this survey, please note them as well.

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