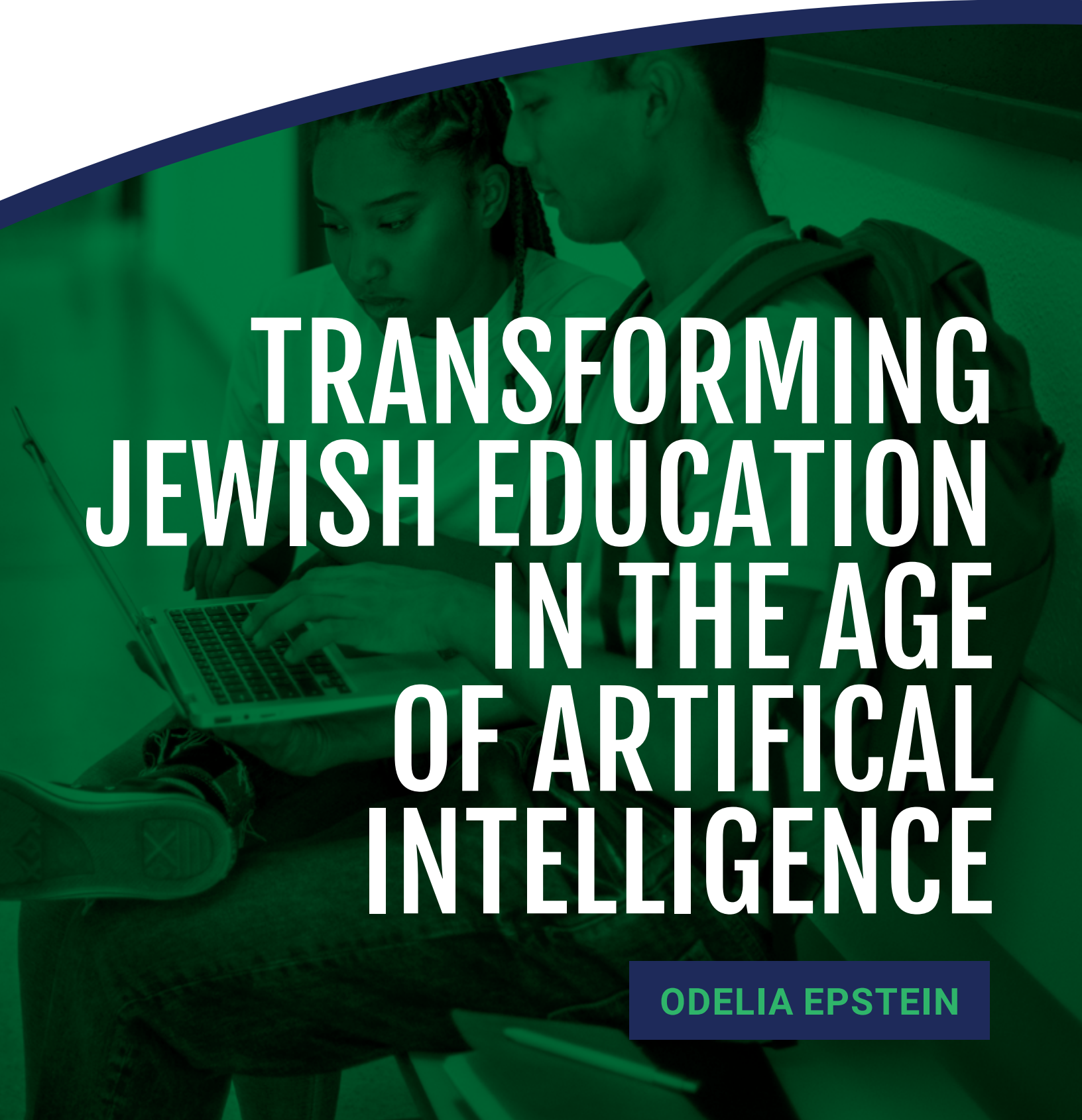




THE JEWISH
EDUCATION PROJECT

REIMAGINING ISRAEL EDUCATION



TRANSFORMING JEWISH EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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This essay is part of a larger collection of research commissioned for Reimagining Israel Education, an initiative of The Jewish Education Project. In the wake of the attacks on October 7, Reimagining Israel Education sought to anchor the growth of Israel education in a strategic approach to Jewish education, reimagined for this era of Jewish life and for today's learners. More information can be found at jewishedproject.org and educator.jewishedproject.org.



To be a post-October 7 Jew is to accept the responsibility of living at a pivotal moment in Jewish history. It is to know that our generation's turn has come to confront Jewish vulnerability and reaffirm Jewish purpose... It is to be multidimensional Jews, embracing complexity and contradiction.

—Yossi Klein Halevi, "Choosing Between October 6 and October 8"

Building Peoplehood into the Core of Jewish Education

We are in the midst of an artificial intelligence (AI) revolution¹ that is changing the way people learn (Aguilar et al., 2025). The goals of education in the near future may differ from today's, as new technologies make all the world's information easily accessible. AI is forcing us to confront what makes us human. In part, that answer lies in our relationships with other humans. Almost simultaneously with these shifts, the Jewish community has been shaken by October 7 and its aftermath in the diaspora. These technological and historical disruptions invite us to ask what forms of connection, meaning, and belonging the field of Jewish education should be responsible for cultivating. This essay argues that Jewish education should respond to the modern technological revolution and the age of artificial intelligence by leaning into technology to intentionally cultivate individuals' relationships with and knowledge of world Jewry.

Our moment presents an opportunity to shape a comprehensive vision for Jewish education that fosters global Jewish peoplehood, leveraging technologies designed for social connection. This essay explores why Jewish peoplehood education is a response to our changing world, what a vision for building peoplehood education into the core of Jewish education could look like, and how technology can enable that vision.



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¹ Throughout this article when I refer to the current technological revolution, I am specifically focused on the fourth industrial revolution. Building on the digital revolution, the fourth industrial revolution "is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between physical, digital and biological spheres" (Schwab, 2016). More than half the world is "connected by mobile devices, with unprecedented processing power, storage capacity, and access to knowledge" spurring new "breakthroughs in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics, the Internet of Things, autonomous vehicles, 3-D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage, and quantum computing" (Schwab, 2016).

Peoplehood as a Response to Our Changing World

In response to these societal disruptions, Jewish education requires a framework that addresses technological change and cultivates meaningful human connection. Jewish peoplehood is a sociological concept that posits the Jewish people are more than a religious group. Ours is a distinct civilization. **The Jewish people are connected by a “cohesive force” described as the “will to maintain and perpetuate Jewish life as something desirable in and for itself.”** This will is the result of centuries of “living, thinking, and suffering together,” which in turn developed a “mutual attachment” among Jews (Kaplan, 1957). Joseph Schwab (as cited in Chazan, 2016) describes peoplehood as the “linkage and lineage” of the Jewish people that links “Jews ‘vertically’—past, present, and future—through narratives of a shared past and awareness of a shared fate; and ‘horizontally’ in communities around the globe in our time”.

Jewish peoplehood education is an educational framework that can connect Jews worldwide with one another and with Israel, and help them learn about contemporary Judaism through relationships with contemporary Jews. It offers awareness of the multicultural tapestry of the Jewish people as we exist today. **The concept of Jewish peoplehood encompasses collective belonging, mutual responsibility, the tension between the universal and the particular, Israel as an expression of peoplehood, and Jews as a distinct civilization** (M2: The Institute for Experiential Jewish Education, 2024). Together, these components tie Jews together as a people.

Leaning into this moment in history, when there is increased antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and feelings of Jewish isolation in this post-October 7 milieu (Center for Antisemitism Research, 2025; Maizels, 2024; Voice of the People, 2025), combined with our expanding digital society, critical questions arise about the field of Jewish education:

- How might we intentionally cultivate global Jewish relationships in the digital age?
- How might this new technological epoch reshape Israel and Jewish education?

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After October 7, Jews around the globe felt a deep interconnectivity, “whether or not they understood themselves as active or committed members of the Jewish People or not... This is an ongoing real-life moment of Jewish peoplehood in action, foisted on all Jews” (M2: The Institute for Experiential Jewish Education Jewish Pedagogies of Peoplehood Concept Paper, 2024). In a 2025 survey of world Jewry, respondents expressed “a strengthened sense of Jewish unity, with deepened communal ties, increased diaspora - Israel connections, and a renewed commitment to Jewish solidarity” (Voice of the People, 2025). **The events that unfolded after October 7 in the diaspora have reignited the Jewish community’s sense of peoplehood.**

This renewed sense of connection brings questions of diversity and inclusion into sharper focus. At its core, the concept of peoplehood emphasizes both inclusivity and diversity. It is inclusive in that one need not be religiously affiliated or Jewishly educated to be part of the Jewish people (Kaplan, 1957); one need only to

identify as Jewish. It promotes the diversity of Jewish life by highlighting the fact that Judaism is not a monolith. It is diverse, with many different traditions, beliefs, and practices. It comprises people of various nationalities, ethnicities, and races. Education that focuses on the commonalities and differences among Jews will teach students that Jews are a diverse, multicultural group.

The religious, ethnic, cultural, and political diversity of the Jewish people can, at times, leave the community feeling fractured and divided. Education that focuses on our commonalities and differences will teach students that Jews are diverse and multicultural. Peoplehood “directly confronts the crisis of conflict and dissonance in Jewish life, and helps in the search for unifying components rather than divisive ones that threaten Jewish life and education” (Chazan et al., 2013). **Jews are not a homogeneous people. We should consider how to remain united despite our differences.**

While peoplehood offers a conceptual framework for understanding Jewish connectedness, its contribution to Jewish education becomes clearer when we consider how twenty-first-century youth form relationships. Today’s societies are more connected than ever before. Yet people often prefer to send a text

or email rather than have a face-to-face interaction or a phone call, leading to a degradation of interpersonal communication and relationship skills, most acutely among digital natives (Turkle, 2015). Technological and digital changes in society are having a profound impact on children. Peoplehood education can be used to model and directly address healthy interpersonal communication and relationship skills.

In addition to addressing relational challenges created by digital life, peoplehood education also shapes how students understand their place in the broader world. Universalism is internalized through culture. When students make sense of the world they live in, where they come from, and the future they anticipate, understanding their own context gives them voice, meaning, and values. To engage with the universal, we must use a particularist lens: “Particularism has an impact beyond its own community, to the general and the universal. It is precisely in knowing the particular—one’s own histories, traditions, cultures, shared narratives—that allows the particular to see itself, to know itself and to engage with the collective, even with its differences” (Fish, 2023). **When our students have a deep understanding of their religious and cultural backgrounds, they will be better equipped to engage with our broader society and interact with the world through Jewish wisdom and values.**



If peoplehood education is to be meaningfully cultivated in education, it must be embedded intentionally within the structure of Jewish education, rather than approached as one-time experiences.

My proposal is to add a new subject to the core of Jewish education.



Pedagogy

The central components of Jewish peoplehood are the relationships between Israelis and diaspora Jews, as well as between diaspora and diaspora Jewish communities. Chazan (2016) introduced the “relational approach” to Israel education, which focuses on the individual’s personal connection to and relationship with Israel. Chazan’s relational approach to Israel education can also be used as a model to consider Jews’ relationship with other Jews.

Chazan (2016) argues that “Israel education is about initiating, igniting, and nurturing a personal and hopefully long-lasting connection with Israel as it focuses on value, place, historical theme, contemporary state, and people.” **Suppose we shift the focus from Israel to Jewish peoplehood. In that case, peoplehood education is about initiating, igniting, and nurturing a personal and lasting connection with the Jewish people, centered on values, history, and contemporary Jewish life.**

If peoplehood education is to be meaningfully cultivated in education, it must be embedded intentionally within the structure of Jewish education, rather than approached as one-time experiences. My proposal is to add a new subject to the core of Jewish education. In addition to Tanach (Bible), Talmud, holidays, and Hebrew, there is

Jewish peoplehood. This new subject would have an educational arc, with an integrated experiential curriculum for adolescents, employing a relational pedagogical model. The relational approach would proactively cultivate relationships among diaspora Jewish communities by, for example, connecting American and Argentinian Jewish communities and diaspora Jewry with Israeli Jewry, utilizing the latest technology. **Jewish peoplehood education is not a one-time experience or course. It is an approach that students encounter throughout their Jewish experiences in schools, camps, and youth groups.**

The goals of this vision of peoplehood education are as follows:

To create a system-wide vision of global Jewish peoplehood that fosters belonging across world Jewry and recenters Israel education.

To forge person-to-person connections facilitated by advances in technological platforms that shrink the continental divides that separate Jews around the world.

To “initiate, ignite and nurture a personal connection” (Chazan et al., 2017) with the Jewish people, focusing on values, history, and contemporary people.

To nurture peoplehood consciousness (Kopelowitz, 2021) by teaching students about the Jewish present and how Jews worldwide live as Jews today through relationships with contemporary Jews, cultivating a way of “doing, thinking, and feeling” (Kopelowitz, 2021) that anchors identity to a larger people beyond their local contexts.

To help students develop critical skills, such as relationship building, communication, empathy, and critical thinking.

Like traditional educational disciplines, this vision of peoplehood education has a core set of skills: textual literacy, cultural literacy, historical analysis, critical thinking, civic and communal skills, cross-cultural competence, and dialogical skills.

Jewish education already focuses on textual literacy and historical knowledge. Therefore, peoplehood education should focus on developing cultural literacy, knowledge of Jewish practices across communities, and cross-cultural competence, defined as the ability to engage with Jews from diverse backgrounds. It should also focus on teaching dialogical skills that enable students to listen, form relationships, ask questions, and communicate effectively with peers. Each of these skills is also complementary in teaching our students about the complexities of modern-day Israel.

How Technology Can Enable the Relational Model of Peoplehood Education

Advances now spurred by AI are projected to bring unprecedented innovation in communication, medicine, energy, food production, and housing (Kurzweil, 2024). New technological innovations are breaking down barriers and connecting people worldwide in ways previously unimaginable, reducing linguistic and geographic barriers. Technology will continue to transform the world around us, making communication across the planet seamless. It is now more feasible than ever to video chat with people worldwide and use technology that enables real-time, simultaneous translation into multiple languages.

These tools can be utilized in many ways and broadened and adapted for Jewish educational spaces to reach a larger audience. In many cases, elements of this relational, technology-enabled approach already exist, though they are fragmented and limited in scale. For example, Jewish communities across Africa celebrate Sukkot with an intercontinental Zoom sukkah party or a teacher who leads tefilah at a day school connects with synagogues worldwide to show his students what synagogues look like and how Jews in those communities pray. These technologies and relationship-building examples can be scaled to support students' knowledge of and relationships with Jews worldwide.

Looking ahead, more immersive technologies point to new possibilities for designing relational encounters at scale. An art exhibit called "The Portal" was recently held in New York City and Dublin, Ireland. The "portal" was a 24/7 life-sized screen where people on each side of the portal could communicate in real time.² This type of technology, used for educational purposes, could enhance and help develop a relational model of global Jewish peoplehood by having portal-like devices enabled in Jewish schools and camps.

Applied within an educational context, such technologies could enable relation-based learning across geographic boundaries. Imagine an American group of Jewish ninth graders meeting regularly online with a British group of Jewish ninth graders. They get to know each other and learn how they live Jewishly, and work together on a collaborative project based on their shared interests. For example, a group could be interested in music or a band, and write a Jewish song together. Another group may be interested in video games. They could play Minecraft together. Their task is to build a Jewish community in Minecraft, and they must consider which elements are necessary, what defines a Jewish community, and what is required for its existence.

² The Portal was closed shortly after opening because of inappropriate usage. However, in an educational setting with teacher guidance, it has great potential to bridge the geographic divide required between Jewish communities.



Using something like the Portal camera, Jews on different continents could also share their material cultures. Jewish teens in Uzbekistan can show teens in Berkeley, CA, how they set their Passover Seder table. They could present their seder plates and display what their matzah looks like. Students could learn that there is more than one type of matzah (Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 2014). This kind of learning and connection to Jewish peoplehood can occur between Jews worldwide. This could happen between Canadians and Ukrainians, or Azerbaijani Jews and French Jews. Isolated Jewish communities would greatly benefit from this model, as it would connect them to larger infrastructures and developed communal resources (Brettschneider & Sussman, 2023). The pairing should be intentional to maximize geographic diversity, with time-zone management in mind.

Currently, imagination in this area is limited to existing technologies. We do not yet know what future technologies will enable, but we do know that we are on the precipice of major technological and communication innovations. We should be at the forefront of thinking about how the newest social connection technologies can bring Jews worldwide closer together.



Operationalizing

To expand this vision, a centralized organization that oversees and coordinates communities is crucial. Structures, frameworks, curricula, and programs must be developed to scale the current offerings. To begin, we need a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of current child and teen Jewish peoplehood offerings, including which *mifgashim*, twinnings, and other related engagement opportunities are currently available. This will build a knowledge base of where the offerings are strong, where they overlap, and where they have room for growth. It will also help identify areas where no programming currently exists, allowing those gaps to be filled with new initiatives. Currently, programming and resources are heavily allocated to diaspora and Israeli communities rather than to connections within diaspora communities. This central body and its initiatives will require financial investment.



Where Israel Education Sits

Israel education is not separate from the peoplehood framework. It is integral to it. Where is Israel education situated in our current educational offerings? In Jewish day schools, Israeli history is often taught at the middle and high school levels. In schools and youth groups, Israeli national holidays are celebrated throughout the year. Many institutions have Israelis embedded in their educational experiences to develop relationships with students and teach about Israeli culture. In this Jewish peoplehood vision, Israel would be one of the components that make up the Jewish peoplehood educational arc, giving Israeli education a formal and secure seat around the educational table.

Israel education fits into this framework as a nested component of peoplehood education. It should include the history of the state of Israel and education about Israel's national holidays. It could include units on critical thinking and the analysis of primary sources, which are essential for navigating today's Israel education landscape. However, the core of peoplehood education is the connection to and knowledge of the Jewish present.



Final Thoughts

Taken together, these proposals outline a reorientation of Jewish education to the Jewish present. In a moment of rapid technological change and renewed questions about belonging and connection, what the field of Jewish education offers will shape how students understand their place within the Jewish people. The aftermath of October 7, alongside advances in communication technologies, has made clear that the ways of connecting and belonging are shifting. Jewish educational leaders have the opportunity to rethink our entrenched notions of what Jewish education could or should be. Jewish education could be at the forefront of adapting its educational approaches in the age of AI, embracing technology to advance Jewish peoplehood. By incorporating a relational model of peoplehood education into the core of our Jewish educational experiences, we can equip our students with the knowledge and relationships to feel anchored in the Jewish present and invested in the Jewish future. Within this framework, Israel education finds its natural place as a vital component of the peoplehood arc.

We can raise a generation of students who see themselves as part of a global, diverse community. If we want a different Jewish future, one where students understand the Jewish present and are connected to Jews outside of their national contexts and to Jews from other continents, we must embed peoplehood education within our institutions. The question is not whether it can be scaled, but if we have the vision and will to do so.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of my employer or any affiliated organization.



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