



Leading in the Jewish World
**Conceptual Framework for Hillel's Future
Strategic Direction**

Final Draft
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Introduction and Caveat

The point of departure for this report is the belief that Hillel has the potential – and therefore, possibly also the responsibility – to play a central leadership role in the Jewish world in the coming decades.

This statement is based on a comprehensive analysis of the trends that are shaping the Jewish World in general, and Israel's relations with the Jewish World and the Israeli Diaspora, in particular. This analysis, completed by the Reut Institute during 2008-9, concludes that the organizing logic of the Jewish world in the coming decades will be Jewish Peoplehood, and will focus on six major topics: Tikkun Olam, Hebrew, community building, Israel, Jewish heritage, and the fight against anti-Semitism and Israel's de-legitimization.

These trends present Hillel with both a challenge and an opportunity to become **a global network of interconnected, yet independent, institutions that not only provide a spiritual, emotional and intellectual home-away-from-home to a growing cohort of Jewish students and young adults, but also allows their activism and leadership to be realized within the Jewish community and at the frontiers of their society and humanity; not only locally, but also nationally and globally.** In a globalized world, the danger is that unless Hillel taps into this opportunity, someone else will – ultimately draining Hillel's appeal, financial resources and talent.

This report is an outcome of a courageous invitation by Hillel's senior leadership and by its President, Wayne Firestone, extended to the Reut Institute to explore these ideas. Reut was invited to meet and converse with people from all walks of Hillel: its senior staff, board, Hillel directors and activists, from the USA, Israel and the rest of the world, as well as people that are no longer part of Hillel or never were. Although this report is based on these conversations, it reflects the analysis and conclusions of the Reut team alone.

The objective of this report is to offer the Hillel community food for thought and possible directions for strategic development. It was written by an Israeli team based in Tel-Aviv, led by Ms. Netaly Ophir-Flint, within an unusually short period of time of less than two months, with very limited resources. Therefore, it does not claim to have mastered the inner workings of Hillel, nor could it be appropriately sensitive to the range of nuances of culture and politics in the Jewish world or in North America that affect Hillel and the eco-system it functions within.

Hillel is an organization that developed over eighty years to become a leader in its field. Perhaps its most valuable asset is its field leadership that is unmistakably talented, committed, and well-educated. In addition, Hillel has many other unique assets that well position it towards leadership in the Jewish world.

Like any organization in the fast-moving 21st century flat world, Hillel faces a growing pressure to constantly adapt in order to seize opportunities and avoid threats. Yet, the one conclusion that stands out from our work and which cannot be overemphasized is that **the most powerful pressure on Hillel to adapt stems from the expectations of its field leadership that is tuned to the needs and preferences of today's university students.** And so, while Hillel faces several challenges, these are minimized by the great potential

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it has to play a global leadership role. Accordingly, failure to address those challenges may lead to a regrettable loss of talent and resources.

Seizing this opportunity requires Hillel to transform certain aspects of its organizational DNA, which may touch upon its vision, mission, strategy, structure, strategic relationships or conduct in order to give room for new patterns to emerge. This will inevitably be a painful process.

Fortunately, Hillel is a flexible and open organization with a legacy of successful transformations and remarkable assets, some of which are unique. In short, Hillel has the strength to perform this leap.

It has been not only a pleasure for Reut's team to work with Hillel, but also an inspiring experience. We are deeply grateful for the invitation that was extended to us to partner with this great organization and with the people we met during the course of this project, and we look forward to continuing this relationship.

Shana Tova!

Executive Summary

Background and Introduction

1. **The goal of this report is to offer a conceptual framework for Hillel's strategic thinking in the coming years seeking to answer the question: "What is Hillel's potential leadership role in the Jewish World of the 21st century?"** Translating this report into a strategic plan and concrete programs would require internal deliberations and potentially further research.
2. This report is primarily a product of over 50 conversations the Reut Institute conducted with Hillel senior management, professionals, and lay-leaders over the past months, as well as with people not affiliated with it.

Hillel Faces a Need for Strategic Re-visioning

3. **In the rapidly changing reality of the 21st century, every organization faces the challenge of adaptation.** Institutions that fail to adapt run the risk of being rendered irrelevant, thus becoming unattractive to the younger cohorts or to philanthropic investments. Meanwhile, organizations that successfully adapt are likely to grow their base of support and have an abundance of resources.
4. Against this backdrop, Hillel's need for strategic re-visioning is twofold:
 - **The Jewish world is changing with the new organizing idea being Jewish Peoplehood.** This powerful trend presents Hillel with **both an opportunity and a challenge.** While it is uniquely positioned to play a leadership role in the upcoming decades, a failure to do so may result in Hillel being gradually pushed out by other organizations;
 - **There is a strong internal thirst and ripeness within Hillel for change. Failure to address this readiness may lead to a loss of talent, resources and constituencies.**
5. **Thus, Hillel currently has a window of opportunity to make the adaptive changes necessary to play a leading role in the evolving global Jewish community.** This will require changing certain aspects of the organization, as well as people's mindset, values, or models of behavior.

Hillel's Playing Field: Not Merely University Campuses; Also the Jewish world

6. **The historical mindset of Hillel has been that its 'playing field', so to speak, is primarily college campuses.** Its vision, mission, strategy, structure and many of its programs are shaped by this mindset.
7. **Whereas this mindset remains fundamentally relevant, its manifestation and application are increasingly affected not only by trends taking place on campuses, but also by powerful trends that are transforming the Jewish world in general.** This is not only changing the context of Hillel's work, but also creating new opportunities and challenges.

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8. **Powerful drivers of these changes are young people** that look for not only a spiritual, intellectual and emotional home-away-from-home, but also for an effective and attractive platform for their activism and leadership.
9. Reut's research has identified that **the organizing logic of the Jewish world has been re-anchored around the idea of Peoplehood and is gravitating in the direction of partnerships around issues and away from relationships among institutions.** In other words, people will increasingly join together to directly collaborate on issues and projects, thereby bypassing established formal relationships.
10. In this context, **six major issues are likely to capture the bulk of attention, energy and resources in the Jewish world in the coming decades: community building, Tikkun Olam, Israel, Hebrew, Jewish heritage and tradition, and fighting anti-Semitism and the de-legitimization of Israel** (hereinafter, 'the six issues').
11. There is no agreed definition to the concept of Peoplehood, yet its essence may be expressed in the following terms: **The idea of Peoplehood emphasizes the sense of the Jewish people as a 'large family' that shares history, stories, memories, fate or destiny, and the desire to promote its well-being.** It cherishes and seeks to preserve the great geographic, ethnic, ritual or cultural diversity of our people through collaborations, acquaintances, relationships while playing down differences in faith or nationality. Its constituency includes all those who want to be or feel a part of the Jewish people and are committed to living in Jewish households and raising Jewish children.

Examples of Peoplehood projects include: a traveling exhibition of photographs of Sukkoth from all over the Jewish world and discussion about the rituals of this holiday in different times and places; a trip to Morocco or Hungary to explore Jewish history there; students of Hillel from the USA, Israel and Latin America collaborating to protest against the Durban Conference; Initiatives aimed at taking care of elderly Jewish people in the FSU, rebuilding New Orleans, or working with orphan children in India.

12. Based on this analysis, **Hillel stands out as uniquely positioned to play a leadership role in a Jewish world that is organized around the idea of Peoplehood, and in each of the emerging six issues, and by implication, throughout the entire Jewish world.**

Hillel's Opportunity and Unique Assets

13. **Hillel can become a global network of interconnected, yet independent, institutions that not only provide a spiritual, emotional and intellectual home-away-from-home to a growing cohort of Jewish students and young adults, but also allows their activism and leadership to be realized within the Jewish community and at the frontiers of their societies and humanity, i.e. locally, regionally, nationally and globally.**
14. **Hillel has unique assets it can leverage in order to fulfill its potential:**

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- **The most extensive presence** among colleges in North America and communities of young Jews around the world;
- **A unique cohort of field leadership** of a high caliber, representing most factions and voices in the Jewish world;
- **A global spread with over 500 units**, primarily in North America, but also in Latin America, FSU, Israel, Australia and potentially Western Europe;
- **The collection of Hillel centers can be relatively easily organized into a global network** where each Hillel has direct, extensive and intensive relationships with other Hillels around the world;
- **Community building is in Hillel's DNA**, which is a central theme for the entire Jewish world, including in Israel;
- **A track record and expertise in each of the six emerging issues**;
- It has **already embraced the idea of 'peoplehood' and globalization** even if these are not fully embedded yet into its culture;
- **Authentic presence in Israel** (which most Peoplehood organizations do not);
- **Strategic partnership with Taglit-Birthright**, the fastest growing platform in the Jewish world, **whose potential is yet to be fully realized**.

Hillel's Challenges in Light of the Changing Reality

15. In light of the above assets, this project highlights three overarching challenges and dilemmas Hillel faces:
 - **Hillel's mindset, structure and operations do not reflect Jewish Peoplehood**, despite the fact that peoplehood is becoming the organizing principle of the Jewish world and is within Hillel's strategic plan and lingo;
 - **Hillel is largely a North American organization with branches overseas. Becoming a leading global organization in the entire Jewish world requires its internationalization and internal transformation on all levels: board, management, and individual Hillels**;
 - **Hillel is structured as a *union* of Hillels and not as a *network* of communities**. It should rethink the balance among the flexibility, independence and uniqueness of individual Hillels, on the one hand, and the shared vision, mission, strategy, unique values and projects of the entire network, on the other hand.
16. **Structural reforms to support strategy** – Naturally, new strategic directions require changes in the structure of the institution: definition of roles, incentives, patterns of conduct, etc. For example:
 - **Hillel's internationalization may require clearer boundaries between the international board and management**, which is the governing body of the entire organization (The Schusterman International Center), **and the North American board and its management team**, which focuses exclusively on

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North America. The national background of the teams should therefore reflect their respective roles;

- **Embedding the idea of Jewish Peoplehood requires extensive research and development** of educational programs, budgeting, documentation of best practices and new initiatives;
- **Turning Hillel into a network requires adapting Hillel's 'franchise' model** including revisiting the common denominator among individual Hillel centers and updating the standards to the new reality, as well as establishing direct relationships between the central body and the local Hillel center, where appropriate;
- **Local Hillel centers would have to adapt as well**, developing their local application of the concept of Jewish Peoplehood, and becoming a part of the global Hillel network.

17. **The role of the international headquarters and regional headquarters (North America, Latin America, FSU, Israel, etc.) could be to serve as an engine for mobilizing adaptive work through:** (1) Branding and communicating the vision, and developing strategies for its implementation; (2) Generating a sense of urgency; (3) Conducting focused research where there is clear advantage of scale; (4) Developing the Hillel network and encouraging collaborations around the six major issues, such as the work of the Israel Coalition on Campus on the issue of Israel advocacy; (5) Fundraising according to the international and regional priorities respectively, and establishing a code-of-conduct for the individual Hillels; (6) Identifying, documenting and disseminating local success stories; (7) Creating shared and transparent sources of information; (8) Advocating on behalf of the organization; (9) Building strategic relationships with other Jewish 'platforms' such as of JCCs, Partnership 2000 or Taglit.

18. **Numerous initiatives among Hillel centers embody the ideas of global Jewish Peoplehood and could serve as best practices.** Some examples are:

- **Leadership and Professional International Development Initiative (LAPID)** that connects Tikkun Olam, young leadership, and Jewish Peoplehood;
- **The Kiev–Herzliya-NYC (Baruch College) partnership;**
- **'Russian Hillel' established in Chicago that reaches out to and leverages non-North American Jewish students on campus;**
- **Latin American representatives integrated into the board of directors.**

Hillel Israel and Taglit-Birthright / Birthright

19. **Hillel Israel has a unique leadership role to play within the Hillel network, beyond its work on Israeli campuses,** such as serving as a Jewish home for overseas students on campus; partnering with Hillels around the world in establishing a Jewishly-committed Israeli presence; creating a unique model of

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Israeli-Jewish spiritual leadership on campus; offering innovation around the six issues; and bringing the unique Israeli perspective and knowledge.

20. **Taglit-Birthright: A strategic opportunity for Hillel.** Hillel is uniquely positioned to benefit from Taglit-Birthright and the documented effects on its participants in terms of all aspects of Jewish identity. Hillel should strive that **50% of freshmen Jewish undergraduate students on every campus that meet the Birthright criteria travel to Israel on a Taglit-Birthright trip**, and 70% travel by their sophomore year.

Leading in the Jewish World Conceptual Framework for Hillel's Future Strategic Direction

Guidelines for Quick Reading

This document can be skimmed by reading the bolded phrases. Each paragraph contains only one idea, captured in the bolded sentences. Footnotes do *not* contain new ideas, but examples, sources, and references.

Background and Introduction

21. **The goal of this report is to offer a conceptual framework for Hillel's strategic thinking in the coming years, seeking to answer the question: "What is Hillel's potential leadership role in the Jewish World of the 21st century?"**
22. This project emerged as a result of collaboration between the Reut Institute¹ and Hillel's senior management over the past months:

- The Reut Institute deploys a policy team, which studies the future of Israel's relations with the Jewish world and the major trends affecting Jewish communities.² Through this work, Reut has identified Hillel as one of the primary organizations who can take a major leadership role in the Jewish World.
- Hillel, for its part, is currently approaching the end of its five year strategic plan, and is assessing the strategic direction of the organization.

Hence, this effort materialized in order to mutually assess Hillel's needs as an organization, and to examine its potential role in today's rapidly changing reality.

23. This report is an outcome of an outstandingly courageous invitation by Hillel's senior leadership and by its President, Wayne Firestone, to the Reut Institute to explore these ideas and to present our findings in this report and in a presentation to the Management and Board. **This document is the product of extensive research, interviews, and brainstorming sessions based on the following:**
 - **Preparatory meetings with senior staff of the organization** regarding the challenges and opportunities facing Hillel;
 - **Interviews with dozens of professionals and lay-leaders from various positions within the organization** including: members of the Board of Directors and Board of Governors, senior management representatives, and

¹ The Reut Institute – www.reut-institute.org – is a not-for-profit and non-partisan strategy group with the mission of sustaining significant and substantive impact on the security and well-being of the State of Israel and the Jewish People.

² To read the original document, see: A New Covenant between Israel and the Jewish World: A Conceptual Framework ([click here](#)).

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Hillel directors, as well as former members of the Hillel community and others.³ The bulk of these meetings took place in August 2010, during the Hillel Institute's professional staff conference in St. Louis, MO.

- **Review of Hillel's key documents and reports** such as 'Hillel's Five Year Strategic Plan for the USA', the 'Guide to the Schusterman International Center', and 'Hillel's Journey'.

Although this report is based on these conversations and documents, it reflects the analysis and conclusions of the Reut team alone.

24. **This report is conceptual.** Its translation into a strategic plan and concrete programs would require internal deliberations by Hillel and potentially further research as well. The Reut Institute is looking forward to partner with Hillel on this future effort as well.
25. **The structure of the report is as follows:**
 - **Chapter 1 discusses Hillel's need for strategic re-visioning.** It maps the major trends affecting the Jewish World today and outlines Hillel's unique assets, which can be leveraged in this changing reality.
 - **Chapter 2 focuses on the challenges Hillel faces within the changing reality.**
 - **Chapter 3 sets forth recommendations for realizing Hillel's potential leadership role in the 21st century.** It includes recommendations regarding Hillel's vision, mission, and strategy, as well as structure.
 - **Chapter 4 highlights best practices taking place at Hillel today.**

Chapter 1: Hillel Faces a Need for Strategic Re-visioning:

Hillel's Need for Adaptive Leadership

26. **In the rapidly changing reality of the 21st century, every organization, like businesses, states or individuals, faces the challenge of adaptation:**
 - **Institutions that fail to adapt run the risk of being rendered irrelevant,** and, consequently, experiencing shrinking financial resources, an aging constituency and a narrowing base of support. As Thomas Friedman says: In the flat world, if you don't do it, someone else will;⁴
 - **Organizations that successfully adapt are likely to have an abundance of resources** and will be able to attract new membership and partners, particularly among the younger cohorts.
27. **Adaptation – a change in people's mindset, values, priorities or modes of behavior – requires 'adaptive leadership', i.e. actions that are taken in order**

³ For a full list of the people interviewed, see acknowledgments section of this report.

⁴ Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty First Century* ([Farrar, Straus and Giroux](#), 2005).

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to accelerate the process of organizational learning as existing routine procedures are insufficient to meet the organizational challenges.⁵

28. **Against this backdrop, Hillel's need for strategic re-visioning stems from two powerful reasons:**

- **The Jewish world is changing and powerful trends are affecting Hillel's ecosystem, with the new buzz-word and organizing concept being Jewish Peoplehood;**
- **During our meetings we have met internal thirst and ripeness for change that stems from an understanding that Hillel is at a crossroads. There is hunger for an overarching, compelling narrative for the organization.”**

29. **These trends present Hillel with both opportunities and threats. As we will show hereinafter, while Hillel is uniquely positioned to play a leading role in the globalized 21st century Jewish world, failure to do so may lead to loss of talent, resources and constituencies.**

30. **In 1994, Hillel transformed from a ‘shtetl on campus’ to a renaissance of Jewish life** – In its eighty-year history, Hillel has undergone major organizational transformations that demonstrated adaptive capabilities. The most remarkable one was the historical break from B’nai Brith, in 1994 under the leadership of Richard Joel, which transformed Hillel from an organization that caters to a religious group to an organization that promotes a Jewish renaissance through an open tent approach and values of pluralism, diversity and openness.

31. **The conclusion of this report is that the magnitude of transformation Hillel may undergo may be as significant for the organization's future as the decision to break away from B'nai Brith.**

Hillel’s Playing Field: Not Just Campuses; Also the Jewish World

32. The backdrop for this report are the **major changes affecting the Jewish world that are drastically transforming Hillel's playing field.** We believe that it is critical for Hillel to recognize these trends and think about their implications for the organization. Some of them include:

- **The ‘flattening’ of the Jewish world has cut out the need for intermediaries,** usually institutions, in favor of direct peer-to-peer and community-to-community relationships that are increasing in number and growing in intensity;

⁵ As Heifetz argues, adaptive work consists of the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face. Adaptive work therefore requires a change in values, beliefs or behavior.

Ronald A. Heifetz, **Leadership without Easy Answers** (Harvard University Press 1994), p. 22

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- **Younger generation feels alienated from the veteran Jewish institutions** that are often viewed as anachronistic and irrelevant to their reality;
- **Many young Jews are ‘making their own Judaism’** – Many, particularly among the young cohorts, disassociate from organized community structures such as synagogues or other communal institutions to experience Judaism on an individual basis, or through ad-hoc self-organizing groups;⁶
- **Many young Jews are mobilized around Tikkun Olam** – In recent years the value and mission of *Tikkun Olam* (literally: repairing the world) has become increasingly central to Jewish identity;
- **Community affiliation is on the rise** – For a growing number of Jews, the primary avenue for Jewish involvement and affiliation is the local and personal community: the synagogue, study group, or volunteer group;
- **Aliyah is no longer central on the agenda** – A strong call for 'aliyah' has morphed into encouraging lifecycles of commitment to Israel and two-way movement between Israel and the Jewish world, for those that even grapple with the idea of Israel;
- **Taglit-Birthright has become the flagship project of the Jewish world and the Government of Israel**, aiming to bring 50% of every cohort to Israel by 2012, with evident success in positively affecting Jewish identity among its participants;
- **Identifying with Israel is increasingly difficult for many.** Its governance, politics, policies, identity or continued control over the Palestinian population not only fail to inspire factions of world Jewry, but are a source of concern, embarrassment and even alienation for some;⁷
- **Campuses have become a front in the fight against Israel's de-legitimacy** – It is evident that the BDS movement, which promotes de-legitimacy of Israel, is active on campuses, turning college campuses into a major theater for the fight against BDS.

33. **The concept and discourse of Jewish Peoplehood is taking center-stage in the Jewish World**, marginalizing religion or nationalism as anchors of Jewish identity, as was common in the past decades and centuries.
34. There is no agreed definition on the concept of Peoplehood, yet the following may capture its essence: **The idea of Peoplehood emphasizes the sense of the Jewish people as a 'large family' that shares history, stories, memories, fate or destiny, and the desire to promote its well-being.** It cherishes and seeks to preserve the great geographic, ethnic, ritual or cultural diversity of our people through collaborations, acquaintances, and relationships while ignoring playing down

⁶ Shneer, D., **New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora**, (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

⁷ Cohen, S. and A. Kelman, **Beyond Distancing: Young Adult American Jews and their Alienation from Israel**, 2007.

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differences of faith, observance or nationality. Its constituency includes all those who want to be or feel a part of the Jewish people and are committed to living in Jewish households and raising Jewish children.

35. **These major changes require a new agenda for the Jewish people that would capture the interest and imagination of the younger generation** and are based on mutuality and synergetic partnership between Jewish communities around the world, and Israel.
36. Reut's research has identified the following **six major issues, which represent the main challenges and opportunities facing the Jewish people and will galvanize Jewish communities and individuals:**
 - **Global network of prosperous and resilient communities:** Rebuilding or strengthening Jewish communities around the world and in Israel, and intensifying the interconnections among them;
 - **Tikkun Olam:** Offering a unique Jewish contribution at the frontiers of humanity's challenges;
 - **Israel:** Continuing to build a secure, prosperous and democratic Israel that offers a unique Jewish experience;
 - **Hebrew:** Teaching and speaking Hebrew not only as a tool for global communication among Jews but also for engaging the richness of our history and culture;
 - **Heritage:** Preserving, developing, renewing and teaching Jewish culture, rituals and traditions to Jews and non-Jews;
 - **Fighting Anti-Semitism and the de-legitimization of Israel.**

Leveraging Hillel's Unique Assets

37. **Hillel has unique assets establish its potential to be a leader in the Jewish world of the coming decades, helping it face the challenges that lay ahead. These assets include:**
 - **The most extensive presence** among colleges in North America and communities of young Jews around the world;
 - **A unique cohort of field leadership that is of the highest caliber and represents most factions and voices of the Jewish world;**
 - **A global spread with over 500 units**, primarily in North America, but also in Latin America, the Former Soviet Union, Israel and potentially Western Europe;
 - **The collection of Hillel centers can be relatively easily organized into a global network** where each Hillel has direct, extensive relationships with other Hillel centers around the world;

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Pluralist and inclusive organization – One of Hillel's core values is: "creating a pluralistic, welcoming, and inclusive environment," which in turn fosters the balance in "being distinctively Jewish and universally human;"⁸

- **Community building is in Hillel's DNA , which is a central theme for the entire Jewish world, including in Israel** - Since its inception, Hillel's vision was intimately linked to building and strengthening Jewish communities. As Wayne Firestone said at the recent Hillel Institute in St. Louis, "If you want to understand this generation, you have to understand that they get connections, that they actually get community..."⁹
- **Offers global perspective in a local context** – Hillel's internationalism empowers local Hillel centers by furnishing them with resources and access to a network much greater than their own immediate environment, while local Hillel's can translate those resources to the local reality;
- **Track record and expertise in each of the six emerging issues** (see hereinafter);
- **Authentic presence in Israel that is integral to its network** (as opposed to having an 'Israel representative' or an 'Israel office');
- **Potential to establish a close strategic partnership with Taglit-Birthright;**
- It has **already embraced the idea of 'peoplehood' and globalization** although it still needs to embed it into its culture;
- **Ability to engage young people who are the powerful drivers of these changes as they** look for not only a spiritual, intellectual and emotional home-away-from-home, but also for a platform for their activism and leadership.

38. As will be presented hereinafter, in the emerging world of global Jewish Peoplehood that was described above, **Hillel can become a leader if it evolves into a global network of interconnected, yet independent, institutions that not only provide a spiritual, emotional and intellectual home-away-from-home to a growing cohort of Jewish students and young adults, but also allow their activism and leadership to be realized within the Jewish world and at the frontiers of their society and humanity not only locally, but also nationally and globally.**

⁸ Staff writer, "[Hillel: Who, What, Where.](http://www.hillel.org/about/facts/who_what/default)" *Hillel.org*, http://www.hillel.org/about/facts/who_what/default.

⁹ David Baugher, "[Hillel Conference Focuses On Engaging Next Generation.](http://www.hillel.org/about/news/2010/aug/18aug10_Jewishlight.htm)" *Hillel.org*, August 18, 2010. http://www.hillel.org/about/news/2010/aug/18aug10_Jewishlight.htm.

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Chapter 2: Three Overarching Dilemmas and Challenges

39. In this context, **three overarching organizational dilemmas facing Hillel emerged**. These challenges are pertinent to its vision, mission, strategy, and structure. Each of these dilemmas could transform the organization, but compounding the three of them would place Hillel at the frontier of the Jewish world.

Embedding Jewish Peoplehood as a Working Concept

40. **The concept of Peoplehood is already embedded in Hillel's values: "Embracing Israel and global Jewish Peoplehood."**
41. **Yet, this notion does not seem to be broadly embodied in Hillel's mindset, organizational structure, activities, or operations of the different units.** For example, most Hillel programs are focused primarily on the individual student, and its focus on peer-to-peer networks usually remains on campus, or at the local level.
42. **Moreover, Hillel's brand is still associated by many with religion and religious organizations** that cater to a religious minority. A symbolic example of this is the fact that Hillel centers are registered with the campus ministry and not with the cultural center on campus.

43. **Taking Peoplehood to the next level: Hillel should develop a comprehensive strategy and a set of tools** that will help the organization have a deeper engagement with the concept of Jewish Peoplehood.

North American or International

44. **Hillel is largely a North American organization with branches overseas.** This is natural considering its origins and history, as well as the fact that the vast majority of its Hillels are in North America. Furthermore, it is reflected in multiple ways including, but not limited to, the makeup of its board and management team and their agendas; the mindset of many of its field leaders and lay leaders that we have met; or by its programs and projects. A striking manifestation is that **Hillel's international operations are run from the US headquarters.**
45. **Yet, expanding Hillel's international dimension can be central to its future identity** in a Jewish world is in line with the global trend of Jewish Peoplehood. It can offer local Hillel centers and their young adults exposure and access to knowledge and experiences from around the world that no other organization could.

46. **Hence, Hillel should grapple with the question of its internationalization and what it means for its vision, mission and strategy, as well as for its board, management, local Hillel centers, programs and projects.**

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From a Union to a Network of Hillels

47. One of Hillel's unique assets is its global spread of over 500 units. Connection between the different Hillel centers, however, tend to take place ad-hoc and very much depend on the personality and preferences of the Hillel director. In other words, **while the infrastructure of a network is in place, Hillel centers around the world are largely not perceived or activated as nodes of a network that has many direct intense Hillel-to-Hillel relationships.**

48. **Hence, Hillel is challenged to think about how to balance the flexibility, independence and uniqueness of local Hillels on the one hand, and the shared vision, mission, strategy, unique values and projects of the entire network and its internal interconnectedness, on the other hand.**

49. **A note on networks:** A network consists of individual 'nodes' (units) and 'protocols' (links) that connect the nodes and allow them to communicate and collaborate. 'Hubs' are units that have extraordinary number of connections with other nodes. Therefore they are the pillars of the network with the greatest influence on their environment and its overall performance. The status of each hub depends on the number of links it has and, collectively, the hubs will determine the overall performance of the network. Examples of hubs include Hillel regional centers, large or influential local Hillels, and of course, the Schusterman International Center.¹⁰

Chapter 3: Recommendations: From 'Hillel 2.0' to 'Hillel 3.0'

Rethinking Hillel's Vision-Mission-Strategy

50. As mentioned, seizing the opportunity at hand will require Hillel to transform certain aspects of its DNA, which may touch upon its vision, mission, strategy, structure or strategic relationships in order to allow new patterns to emerge.

51. **Background: Hillel's vision, mission, and values today** - As stated in Hillel's 2006 Strategic Plan,¹¹ Hillel's vision, mission and values are:

- **Vision** – Hillel seeks to inspire every Jewish student to make an enduring commitment to Jewish life.
- **Mission** – Hillel's mission is to enrich the lives of Jewish undergraduate and graduate students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world.
- **Values** – Hillel pursues its mission by: creating a pluralistic, welcoming and inclusive environment; fostering student growth, and the balance in being distinctively Jewish and universally human; pursuing *tzedek* (social justice), Jewish learning, and spirituality; supporting Israel and global Jewish

¹⁰ Barbasi L., **Linked: The New Science of Networks**, Tel Aviv: Yediot-Aharonot, 2004 (in Hebrew).

¹¹ Hillel's Five Year Strategic Plan for the USA, *Hillel.org*, May 2006 ([click here](#)).

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Peoplehood; as well as a commitment to excellence, innovation, accountability and results.

52. **Based on the challenges described above, this report recommends Hillel consider adjusting its vision, mission and strategy with the following in mind:**

- The place of global Jewish Peoplehood in its vision, mission and values;
- Hillel's identity as an international organization;
- The opportunity for students' and young adults' activism and leadership to be realized within the Jewish world and at the frontiers of their societies and humanity;
- A call for action on the major issues facing the Jewish people (determined by Hillel's leadership).

Taking Action on the Six Major Issues of the Jewish People

53. As stated above, the Reut Institute's research has concluded that **the Jewish world is transitioning from relationships among institutions to relationships around issues or ideas**. There are **six major issues that will capture the bulk of attention, energy and resources in the Jewish world in the coming decades**. Each issue is essential for the security and prosperity of our people.

54. Hence, the following section offers guidelines on how Hillel can realize a vision of global Jewish peoplehood by taking action on each of the six issues.

55. As mentioned, **Hillel is uniquely positioned to make a lasting contribution in each of these areas. Yet, every such issue merits a taskforce that would develop organizational approach, strategy and relevant programming.**

Building a global network of prosperous and resilient communities

56. **Community building is a central theme in the entire Jewish world**. Whether in Israel, the USA or around the world Jewish organizations and individuals are grappling with what the concept of community means for them in this day and age, and how can people be inspired and attracted to a meaningful engagement that enriches their lives and strengthens the collective.

57. **Community building is in Hillel's 'DNA'**. Its field leadership comprises of community builders and activists that specialize in attracting young people to grapple with not only their Jewish identity, but also with their collective responsibilities to their community and the world (Tikkun Olam).¹² Only a handful of other organizations possess similar experience and knowledge.

¹² Spencer Patrons, "Building Community and Jewish Activity", July 1, 2010, *Hillel.org* ([click here](#)).

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Tikkun Olam

58. **Tikkun Olam is an organic part of Judaism, and, over recent years, has evolved into a central theme of Jewish activism, primarily among the younger cohorts** that view it as an inspiring way to express their Jewish identity. Furthermore, many view the issue of Tikkun Olam as central for the 'soft power' of the Jewish people and the State of Israel in the coming decades.
59. **Hillel has been a pioneer in Tikkun Olam initiatives.** Multiple initiatives involving thousands of young people make Hillel a base for significant activity in this area.
60. **Furthermore, Hillel is uniquely positioned to expand and increase these initiatives of global cooperation and cross-border Jewish social action** based on its network, its ability to establish strategic relationships with other organizations, and units in areas such as Latin America or FSU.

Israel

61. **Nuanced engagement with Israel** – Israel has been the central hub of the Jewish people for the past decades and is most likely to continue in this role for the foreseeable future. Yet, for many particularly among the younger non-orthodox cohorts, engagement with Israel has been evolving from outright support to nuanced engagement with Israel's identity: its security needs, economic development, Jewish identity and democracy.
62. **Hillel can offer a platform for such nuanced engagement better than any other group on campus** – Hillel's vision for Israel¹³ reflects the notion that Israel is a central hub in the global Jewish network, and Israel's survival and prosperity carry significant implications for the future of the Jewish people. This general statement overarches the challenge faced by its local staff of both Israel-ignorance, as well as hunger for nuanced and detailed insights.
63. **The Taglit-Birthright and Hillel Israel opportunities** – The place of Israel in Jewish life on campus and for the local Hillel must continuously evolve, as it has been, through programs and projects. Hillel has three unique assets in this context: its direct access and strategic partnership with the Taglit-Birthright program (see below), Hillel Israel (see section on Hillel Israel), and the abundance of Israeli students in many of the leading campuses, particularly in the West.

Hebrew

64. **Hebrew has two unique attributes in promoting Jewish peoplehood:**

¹³ [Hillel's Vision for Israel on Campus, Hillel.org, http://www.hillel.org/israel/campus_vision.htm](http://www.hillel.org/israel/campus_vision.htm)

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- **It is a cultural binder** for the Jewish people. Knowledge of Hebrew phrases can create immediate intimacy among Jews from different geographic regions, who may have very little in common;
 - **It is a tool for engaging the richness of our history and culture**, through texts, literature, art, music etc.
65. **Hillel, located in university campuses**, many of which enjoy a steady stream of Israelis among students, faculty and visitors, **can become a space for engagement with the richness of Hebrew not just on the linguistic side, but also on the cultural side.**

Jewish Heritage

66. **Meaningful engagement with Jewish heritage has reached out** beyond the circles of scholars and professionals to the public sphere and to the general public. There is growing interest with cultural and secular interpretation of Jewish texts and traditions. Furthermore, among other things **the concept of Jewish Peoplehood calls for, nuanced engagement with Jewish heritage that focuses on the history, culture and society of Jewish communities around the world.**
67. **Here too, Hillel is already an educational organization**, emphasizing Jewish learning of culture, rituals and traditions through text, art, literature and practice.

Fighting Anti-Semitism and the De-legitimization of Israel

68. University campuses around the world have become one of the central arenas for the de-legitimization of Israel, which is often rooted in anti-Semitism. As such, **Hillel is inescapably challenged to address this issue on local, regional and national levels, and perhaps even beyond that.**
69. **It seems that Hillel may have to continuously engage with this topic vis-à-vis a diverse constituency** that may range from staunch Israel supporters for whom Israel-can-do-no-wrong to people who are bitterly critical of Israeli policies and may even meet the softer criteria of 'de-legitimizers'.

In this context, **Hillel's role may be to create a space for nuanced engagement with Israel** that emphasizes the contexts that could justify its policies (as opposed to endorsing or supporting them) and granting Israel the minimum of the benefit of the doubt, thereby isolating those who promote the de-legitimacy of Israel. Also, in this context, **Hillel could play an important role in the efforts to rebrand Israel** by emphasizing its contribution to humanity and its creative spirit.

Adapting Hillel's Structure and Strategy

70. **New strategic directions require structural reforms in definition of roles, incentives, patterns of conduct, and priorities.** Transforming Hillel into an active and effective network that plays a leading role in a Jewish world that is anchored in the concept of global Jewish Peoplehood may require consideration of the following.

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71. **Hillel's internationalization: Building an international board and management at the Schusterman International Center (SIC) separate from the North American headquarters (which may, of course, both operate out of the D.C. Headquarters)** – Playing a global leadership role requires a truly international board and management, which are the governing bodies of the entire organization, and have the incentives to develop a global approach, vision, strategy and programs. This is true even if Americans continue to play a central and leading role in it.

The initial role of the International Headquarters would be to serve as the catalyst of 'adaptive work' among the hubs and nodes of the Hillel network, which may include the following:¹⁴

- **Branding alternative visions and strategies for globalizing Hillel.** This would mean systematically engaging the strategic level of the internationalization and globalization of the organization, developing the strategy and disseminating the ideas;
- **Generate a sense of urgency** by pointing to challenges and opportunities relating to the bigger vision. Local Hillels, as well as regional offices, may not have the capacity to deal with larger issues. The SIC can develop standards of excellence and innovation with regard to the globalization of local Hillels;
- **Conduct focused research / document best practices** – The SIC can function as an R&D resource to other hubs and nodes in the network on issues relating to global Jewish Peoplehood, with special emphasis on educational and cultural programs, on documenting best practices or on expanding the network;
- **Encourage collaborations around the six issues** within the Hillel network among local Hillels and regional offices. This may include not only joint projects and programs, but also coordinating systemic efforts. A relevant example here is the work of the Israel Coalition on Campus which takes a broad view on the challenge of Israel's legitimacy and standing in campuses;
- **Enlarge the pie of resources available to this community** – The SIC has a crucial role to play in fundraising and supporting local Hillels, regional offices and itself in activities relating to promoting global Jewish Peoplehood;
- **Create shared and transparent channels and forums of communications and information-sharing** – The SIC has an important role in providing the opportunities and the means for different nodes of the Hillel network to communicate with each other, as well as to develop platform for sharing information and collaborating including conventions or websites;

¹⁴ See Ronald A. Heifetz, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: tools and tactics for changing you organization and the world*, (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Leadership Associates, 2009), as well as "[Leaping](#)", *The Reut Institute's Annual Report 2009, 2020 Vision and 2010-2012 Development Plan*, p. 17 ([click here](#)).

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- **Advocate with local legislators and regulators** – Where applicable, the international HQs and regional offices may have to lobby local and federal governments on behalf of the organization;
 - **Building strategic relationships with other Jewish 'platforms'** - such as JCCs, Partnership 2000, Taglit-Birthright or Chabad (see section below):
72. **Meanwhile, the North American board and management should focus on North America.** In principle, the North American office should not be different from the 'regional offices' in Israel, FSU or Latin America, but in practice the history, legacy, American context and sheer size place it as 'first among peers' and grant it a leading role in the international headquarters. In other words, the existence of an International Division in what is already defined as an international organization should be pondered.
73. **Regional Offices (North America, Israel, FSU, Latin America, etc): to serve as catalysts of the Hillel network on local basis** – Evidently, there is a regional logic to Hillel that reflects the unique geographic, demographic and cultural aspects of different areas. Yet, not in every case there is demonstrated value to be added by another organizational layer that justifies its financial and other costs. This is a question that is beyond the scope of this report.

The primary role of the regional center is to adapt Hillel's international context to the local reality by taking a broad view of the entire region and its needs in the context of the international strategy, on the one hand, and its local Hillels, on the other hand.

In addition, **the regional offices can perform all roles of the international headquarters that are mentioned above.** Additional roles may include:

- **Regulate competition among local Hillels** – In Latin America, for example, facilitation of the regional office was able to overcome competition for resources among the Hillels of Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina;
 - **Adjust SIC tools and resources to local realities** – For example, much of the programming arriving from Washington is designed for students who live on campus, while in Israel or the FSU the majority of the young adult population does not reside on campus.
74. **Update Hillel's 'Franchise Model'** – Evolution into a global network of Hillels may require a revisiting of the current standards and division of labor and responsibilities among local Hillel centers, the regional offices and the North American / international headquarters.
75. **Strategic effort to embed the idea of Jewish peoplehood** through extensive research and development of educational programs and projects, budgeting, documentation of best practices and new initiatives;
76. **Local Hillels should evolve into nodes of the Hillel network that serve the idea of global Jewish Peoplehood.** This should be done primarily by establishing direct working relationships with other Hillels around the world and developing their

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programs and projects on the six issues. Many of their projects should stem from the concept of global Jewish Peoplehood.

77. **Leverage Hillel Israel for the entire Hillel network** – Hillel Israel can play a unique role in the Hillel network due to the centrality of Israel to the Hillel community. Hillel Israel’s core mission is to provide Israeli students with an opportunity for meaningful Jewish life and encourage them to engage with the Jewish people within the concept of Jewish Peoplehood. The scope of this report does not allow for an in-depth consideration of Hillel Israel’s role within the global Hillel network, but some of its key roles may include:
- **Provide unique service to non-Israeli Jewish students on Israeli campuses**, some of who may be members of Hillel communities overseas.
 - **Embody the ‘new relationship’ between Israel and the Jewish world** based on partnership and mutuality;
 - **Offer unique Israeli innovation and knowledge on the six issues;**
 - **Serve as a platform for Tikkun Olam work in Israel.**

Taglit-Birthright

78. **Taglit-Birthright has proven its ability to affect the Jewish identity of its participants, both non-Israeli and Israelis, and to inspire them for a more meaningful involvement in Jewish life.** The recent Israeli government decision to double the Birthright budget in order for 50% of every cohort to receive a free trip to Israel provides a strategic opportunity for Hillel.
79. **Hillel should therefore maximize the Birthright opportunity by maximizing the number of Jewish students that travel to Israel.** More specifically, Hillel should strive that 50% of freshmen Jewish undergraduate students that meet Birthright criteria travel to Israel, and at least 70% travel by the end of their sophomore year. This could provide them with a transformative experience, which would in turn nurture their level of involvement in the Hillel community, and increase their feeling of belonging to the Jewish people more broadly.
80. **Hillel could then serve as the platform that provides these students with the post-trip program** and benefits from their energy, enthusiasm and renewed sense of commitment.

Chapter 4: Best Practices

81. Through the dozens of interviews conducted in recent weeks, it became evident that **there are already numerous initiatives taking place on the ground that embody many of the recommendations detailed in this report. These practices could be studied, communicated, and leveraged to other parts of the organization.**
82. **This section outlines just a few of the best practices** that we identified through our conversations (it goes without saying, that there are many more):

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- **Leadership and Professional International Development Initiative (LAPID) connects Tikkun Olam, young leadership, and Jewish peoplehood** – LAPID is Hillel’s first professional development venture with a prominent global focus. Through in-person seminars, monthly conference calls, webinars and ongoing coaching, LAPID focuses on providing professionals with practical tools and initial funding to develop student-focused initiatives in their home communities, which must include both Tikkun Olam and leadership development. Director Nati Sperber said: “all these cultural barriers people like to mention when it comes to cross-border cooperation... you realize it’s really not that hard.”¹⁵
- **Tri-Partite Partnership among Kiev, Herzliya and Bruch College Hillels** – Baruch College Hillel Director Matthew Vogel utilized the Nadav Jewish Peoplehood Innovation grant, and developed a tri-partite partnership among Baruch College, The Interdisciplinary Center in Hertzliya (IDC) and Kiev University Hillels. These three schools have several things in common: none of them is a major university in their home country, they are all commuter schools, and the program participants are all business students. **The program is designed to not only get students to think global Jewish Peoplehood, but also to understand what it means for them in practice.** The various stages of the program combine Tzedek and global Jewish peoplehood in a local context.¹⁶
- **Reaching out to and leveraging Jewish students of different origins on campus: “Russian Hillel” is established in Chicago** – In 2003, the Russian Hillel of Chicago was established in order to serve the specific preferences of the large Russian immigrant population by offering activities such as Russian Shabbaton, ‘Skate with Israel’, and various social events.
- **Latin American representatives integrated into board of directors**, which represents an important step in Hillel’s internationalization.
- **More than a campus organization: Family club established in Moscow** – In an attempt to overcome parents’ suspicions about the newly founded Hillel center in downtown Moscow, a family-club was established as part of the Hillel center. The club is reported to have been very popular among Jewish families, but unfortunately had to close down due to lack of funding.

¹⁵ Interview with LAPID Director Ms. Nati Sperber, July 13th, 2010.

¹⁶ Phases of the program include: The first year is focused on social entrepreneurship (lead by Kiev), the second year is focused on the start-up phase of the project (lead by IDC), and the third year is focused on long term finance (lead by Baruch College).

When asked about the relative difficulty he had initiating this program, Director Matthew Vogel said: “Hillel is one of the few organizations that is structurally built like a worldwide network. **The network was there – I simply had to activate it.**”

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