

TOWARDS A RECONSTRUCTED 2023 VISION OF LIVING IN TWO CIVILIZATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This position paper explores the well-known Kaplanian notion that Jews live in two civilizations, one Jewish and one North American. The methodology is by design eclectic, and non-linear. The paper switches between various philosophical, sociological, and linguistic frameworks to underscore the challenge of living in two civilizations in 2023 from multiple perspectives. It embodies then the famous rabbinic urging of Rabbi Ben Bag Bag in Pirke Avot *hafuch bah, hafuch bah d'cula ba...* turn it and turn it, you will always see something different as your perspective shifts.

Ironically, a more linear 20th century rational deliberation might have produced a "cleaner" set of conclusions. Yet, the exploratory nature of the goal seems to fit companionably post-modern sensibilities regarding truth and pluralism. These perspectives include critical comments from colleagues Rabbis Hillel Cohn, Arnie Rachlis, James Greene, Sid Schwarz, and Dr. Herb Levine. Jane Susswein made further editorial and substantive comments after the document was edited by Rabbi Reena Spicehandler.

The most salient points made in the paper are:

- 1) The notion of living in two civilizations is rapidly being eclipsed in the 21st century by the notion of living in multiple civilizations, including digital, global, multi-cultural, and multi-gender orientations;
- 2) An appreciation that the Kaplanian search for an identity for American Jews that was "not 50% Jewish and 50% American but 100% American Jewish" remains aspirational even as challenged by many new sociological factors;

- 3) The potential value of re-examining the foundational philosophies of Deweyan and Jamesian philosophy that undergird Mordecai Kaplan's thinking about living in two civilizations.
- 4) In sum, those who consider themselves Bnai Kaplan, interpreters of Kaplanian insights for the 21st century, have an obligation to engage in the ongoing reconstruction of the idea of living in two civilizations.

THE FULL PAPER

This position paper aims to address the challenge of simultaneously affirming and critiquing the Kaplanian concept of Living in Two Civilizations from the vantage point of 2022-23. It has been at least a hundred years since Kaplan began developing this idea. The challenge of constantly contributing to the evolution of Kaplanian thought calls.

Some of the ideas discussed in this position paper emerged from the first two Kaplan Center webinars of 5783: "[In the Heichal of the Voting Booth](#)" with Elliot Dorff, Sid Schwarz, and Sarah Hurvitz (October 30, 2022) and "[Hanukkah and a Friendly Critique of Living in Two Civilizations](#)" with Rabbis James Greene and Jessica Lott and Dr. Eric Caplan (December 11, 2022). The author has also drawn on his experiences, reflections, and writings over the last 30 years.

The paper unfolds in the following way:

First, I explore texts by Mordecai Kaplan and Milton Steinberg that seem to capture the heart of what it means to live in two civilizations and that were focal points of dialogue during the webinars.

Then I consider several themes emerging from that webinar by:

1. *Examining the notion of circles of Jewish and American Living*

2. *Comparing and contrasting the Kaplanian formulation of living in two civilizations with two notions drawn from machshevet yisrael (world of Jewish thought) embodied in the thinking of Franz Rosenzweig and Emile Fackenheim*
3. *Considering some specific comments offered by Rabbi James Greene and Jessica Lott about Gen Z and Millennials in a December 11, 2022 webinar [A Friendly Critique of the Notion of Living in Two Civilizations](#) that raise questions about what it means to live in multiple civilizations (not just two)*
4. *Applying the way of thinking suggested by Rabbis Greene and Lott to the reevaluation of the Values of Spiritual Peoplehood construct that has guided many of the efforts of Jewish education in the Reconstructionist movement*
5. *Finally, attending to the shema mina, some concluding guidelines that we might bear in mind as we move forward in reconstructing the notion of living in two civilizations*

One further note about methodology. I am embracing here a Deweyan notion of what it means to evaluate an educational or philosophical idea. For Dewey, evaluation is a double-edged phenomenon reflecting two different Latin derivations of evaluation (1938). On the one hand, when we evaluate, we prize and appreciate. On the other hand, we hold the idea to higher critical standards of excellence, leading us to question the concept's present level of functioning. The end of this process is to more deeply and fully value the idea (i.e. we had no idea how relevant and important it really was!) and at the same time to suggest a possible reconstruction of the same idea in the future. This is consonant with Dewey's view that what we too quickly consider a philosophical "end" is better understood as a constantly unfolding, changing "end in view". Whether the present analysis is functional (in the sense understood by philosophical pragmatism and embraced by Kaplan) depends on how it may lead to fresh, new perspectives and plans for educational reconstruction.

THE TWO WORKING TEXTS

The New Jew will achieve self-integration. His emancipation from prejudice and authoritarian dogma will enable him to combine, without any sense of conflict, the best traditions of his People with the best that he can find in the cultures of the Peoples among whom he lives. The American Jew will not be fifty percent Jew and fifty percent American, but 100 percent of each, for he will have achieved a synthesis in his own personality of whatever is valid in both the Jewish and American civilizations. His quest for truth and right and his identification of them with the law of God will enable him to use both the Jewish and American civilizations as resource material for improving himself as a human being.

Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Questions Jews Ask*, 1956, p.452

If I may judge from my own life – and that of many Jews who share my viewpoint – the enterprise is amazingly undifficult. Let it be recalled that I acknowledge only one political allegiance – to America; just as I profess only one religion – the Jewish. Here there is no cause for conflict. Beyond that, I have two heritages – the American and the Hebraic. English is my language and that of my children. I was educated in the public schools of my community. The history of America is my history. But Hebrew is my tongue too, and Jewish history is my background also. Lincoln and Jefferson are my heroes together with Moses, Akiva and Maimonides. They all get along in my imagination most companionably. When I read Van Wyck Brooks on New England and its flowering and autumn, it is of my own literary past that I am being instructed. I have studied Spiegel's Hebrew Reborn with the same sense of identification. I sing Negro spirituals, American ballads and Hasidic or Palestinian folk songs with equal ardor. On the Fourth of July, I set off fireworks and attempt to transmit to my children an appreciation of the significance of the occasion. With equal earnestness I kindle Hanukkah lights and discuss with them the meaning of that festival. At no time am I conscious of

strain between the two worlds. I move from one to the other with such mindfulness that I am scarcely aware of the change of spiritual locale.

Milton Steinberg, *A Partisan Guide to the Jewish Problem*, 1945

We begin by focusing on some key phrases in the Steinberg text, laying them out in a Talmudic fashion with the Steinberg text providing the *peticha* (opening) and my comments following the tradition of *shakla* and *tarya*, weighing the matter more carefully, while encouraging engagement in sacred argument.

At no time am I conscious of strain between the two worlds. (Steinberg)

Schein: Steinberg wrote this before the great suburbanization of American Jewish life gave rise to the “shabbas and soccer dilemma”. How can my child attend shul and participate in Saturday morning soccer? The physical (and perhaps spiritual) locales are in tension. One can hardly be at both places at once.

Clearly, most of us experience tensions between our two civilizations. Creative reconstruction of those tensions can lead to such things as the *shomer shabbos* soccer league which makes shabbas and soccer compatible again by shifting temporal locales, moving soccer to weekdays or Sunday. Surely, new tensions will continue to arise, requiring thoughtful, creative, reconstruction.

When I read Van Wyck Brooks on New England and its flowering and autumn it is of my own literary past that I am being instructed. I have studied Spiegel's Hebrew Reborn with the same sense of identification. (Steinberg)

Schein: But what of Superman, Jaylo, and LeBron James or Franco Harris as the embodiment of American civilization and idealized heroes? In a conversation at Camp

Tel Yehuda, in 1992, Rabbi Ira Eisenstein suggested that we need to distinguish between a “higher Americanism” and “lower Americanism”. A cadre of Jewish educators who were Kaplan’s students in the 1920s and 1930s made a similar distinction when Jewish education was forced to come to terms with the Boy Scouts and the character education movement in general education. We might debate whether Jared Kushner and Ruth Messinger don’t equally fulfill the Kaplanian criteria of engagement in both civilizations. Perhaps to most fully engage in forming this judgment, we need to entertain the possibility that there is a “higher” and “lower Judaism” as well as a “higher and lower” Americanism.

Finally, as noted in our 12/11/2022 webinar, claiming that two cultures or civilizations are compatible or in conflict with one another may beg the very question of what constitutes a culture/civilization.

I move from one to the other with such mindfulness that I am scarcely aware of the change of spiritual locale. (Steinberg)

Schein: Moving with ease and lack of strain is a primary value of the enterprise of philosophical pragmatism which sees the project of problem-solving as responding to a sense of “dis-ease” in our life situations (Rosenak, *Commandments and Concerns*, 1987). Eric Caplan and Catherine Madsen both refer to this in evaluating the possible functions of Kaplan’s intent in endorsing liturgical change (see Talmud pages of the Kaplan Center website, www.Kaplancenter.org)

But for the sake of argument, we ought to consider an opposite point of view. What if tensions between American and Jewish civilization provide the very engine for growth and changes of creative Jewish living in America and creative American living by Jews? Should we not then be welcoming these tensions rather than seeking homogenization of our worldview and values? What if the encounters between Jewish and American value systems were to be viewed as Emile Fackenheim might have it as “mutually critical” as noted below.

Caplan and Schein speak to this point in a 2014 article in the *Journal of Jewish Education*:

Fackenheim suggested that it is equally important for modern philosophy to be viewed from the perspective of Jewish thought as it is for Jewish thought to be viewed from the perspective of modern philosophy. Beyond the obvious corrective in the name of intellectual fairness (Judaism had most often sat at the throne of the judgment of philosophers like Kant and Hegel), such an approach allows for a mutually critical encounter between any two substantive philosophies or methodologies of education where the virtues and blind-spots of each approach are highlighted by its encounter with the other. Concretely, this means public-general education may benefit from exploring forms of Jewish pedagogy as much as Jewish education once benefitted from deep encounters with Deweyan, Progressive education.

The history of America is my history. But Hebrew is my tongue too, and Jewish history is my background also. Lincoln and Jefferson are my heroes together with Moses, Akiva and Maimonides. (Steinberg)

Schein: Of course, Steinberg cannot be held accountable for not understanding how contested, and multiple the narratives of American history have become in 2022. I have often observed that it is much easier for American Jews to embrace both the letter and spirit of Steinberg's comments as Thanksgiving approaches when we seem to fall into the sweet center of the affirmation of harmony between our civilizations than to participate in the Christmas spirit, when American preparations embody strong non-Jewish cultural and religious elements.

Yet, even in regard to Thanksgiving, things have changed greatly for me. For many years I was a happy champion of the great living in two civilizations symphony around Thanksgiving. We read Emma Lazarus's poem *The Great Colossus*, sang Woody Guthrie's *This Land is Your Land*, and analyzed selections from Barbara Cohen's

children's book *Molly's Pilgrim* as part of the symphonic sweep of seamlessly living in two civilizations.

Now, however, the recognition of a third civilizational motif embodied in the history of indigenous tribes in America has now complicated my view. I initially tried to minimize the conflicts by avoiding the extremes. Now I have moved beyond not romanticizing Squanto and Pocohantas and other "good" Native Americans. Now, a fuller appreciation of that third civilization is required, as noted below.

Mah nishtana, what makes this year different? Now living in "multiple" rather than "two civilizations" (add world-Jewish and digital just to begin to grasp the complexity of our situation) has an ethical demand as well. Lost voices need to be recovered, and the narrative expanded. My Thanksgiving Seder will be emanating from Lakota land in Minneapolis. The multiple voices that inform our Thanksgiving Seder need to include the people who were left out of our Thanksgiving, or perhaps trivialized as "good Indians", Squanto and Pocohantas to name names.

So while moving on to what I hope will be a rich mix of American and Jewish texts, poems, and folksongs this year I allow the core element of thanksgiving to be channeled through this Lakota prayer. The text and accompanying music are below.

Jeffrey Schein's *Kaplan, Heschel, Thanksgiving, and Living in Two Civilizations*,
Kaplan Center Webpage

A Prayer of Gratitude from the Lakota Sioux Nation

NICOLE 26TH NOV 2012 [NEWS](#), [QUOTES](#)

Aho Mitakuye Oyasin....All my relations. I honor you in this circle of life with me today. I am grateful for this opportunity to acknowledge you in this prayer....

To the Creator, for the ultimate gift of life, I thank you.

To the mineral nation that has built and maintained my bones and all foundations of life experience, I thank you.

To the plant nation that sustains my organs and body and gives me healing herbs for sickness, I thank you.

To the animal nation that feeds me from your own flesh and offers your loyal companionship in this walk of life, I thank you.

To the human nation that shares my path as a soul upon the sacred wheel of Earthly life, I thank you.

To the Spirit nation that guides me invisibly through the ups and downs of life and for carrying the torch of light through the Ages, I thank you.

To the Four Winds of Change and Growth, I thank you.

You are all my relations, my relatives, without whom I would not live. We are in the circle of life together, co-existing, co-dependent, and co-creating our destiny.

One, not more important than the other. One nation evolving from the other and yet each dependent upon the one above and the one below.

All of us a part of the Great Mystery.

Thank you for this Life.

PERSPECTIVE # 2: DIAGRAMS OF LIVING IN TWO CIVILIZATIONS

On December 11th we were invited to imagine which of the three drawings below captured Steinberg's intent.

Our webinar participants polled the following way

40% diagram A

14% diagram B

39% diagram C



Diagram A

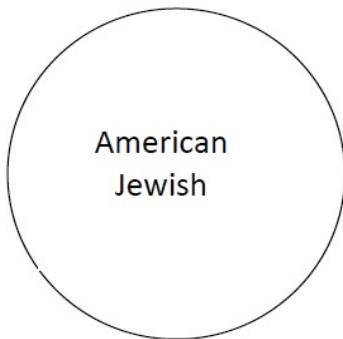


Diagram B

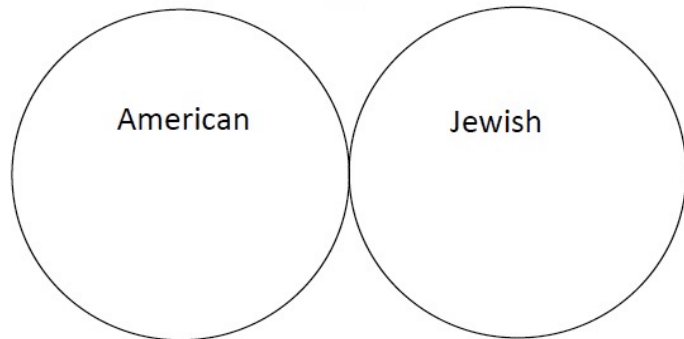
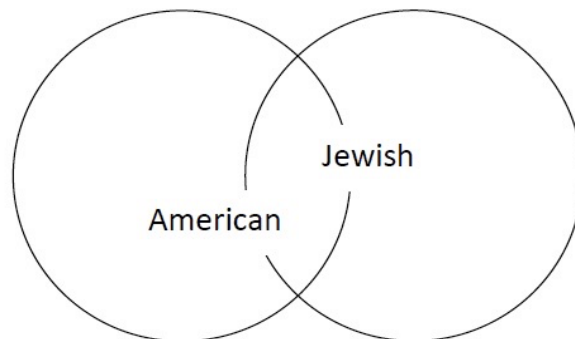


Diagram C

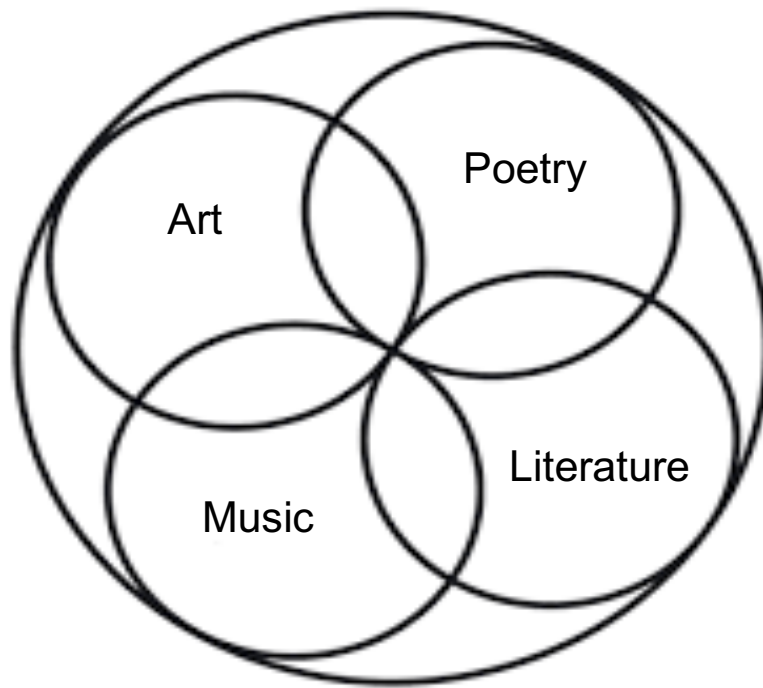


More nuanced and sophisticated ideas can emanate from our pictographic intelligence. Here are a few possibilities:

- 1) Both circles in diagram B could be left open to indicate the porousness of each civilization and its openness to influences of the second civilization entering the other circle;

- 2) Following the lead of Judith Plaskow in her 1987 *Standing Again at Sinai* we can acknowledge the presence of other circles of multiple membership in various arts, social action, and identity groups. The question of whether or how these intersect with our two primary civilizations will be dealt with in the next section.

- 3) We can reconfigure entirely. A critique suggested by both Eugene Borowitz and Eliezer Schweid of Kaplan's work is that it easily loses the centrality of Jewish values as the compass in a process that invites Judaism to critique all other spheres of our contemporary life: political, social, economic, and cultural. Here Judaism can be seen as the largest circle encompassing all other spheres of our life. Functioning as an independent value system, it can critique what it encompasses. This aligns well with the notion of Protestant theologian Richard Niehbur that "radical monotheism" means inspecting all spheres of our life for remnants of idolatry, defined by Paul Tillich as anything other than God, however understood, which a person treats as having ultimate value. One's God could be money, status and other obvious forms of idolatry but also could be art and culture. Within this construct the very art, music, poetry and literature that Kaplanians so value as an expression of living in two values are of real but limited religious value and even a potential icon and form of idolatry. The Protestant Theologian Richard Neihbur saw this "radical monotheism" as viewing all these penultimate values through the magnifying glass of radical monotheism as the ultimate value.



Radical Monotheism

There are undoubtedly many other configurations that can help us picture complex identities. The purpose here is not to describe the options exhaustively but to open up the process of drawing such circles.

- 4) Finally, it certainly is the case that any “multi-circled” mapping of identity in the 21st century needs to give ample room for the circles of global and digital identities so prevalent in our lives.

TWO PHILOSOPHICAL CIRCLES: EMILE FACKENHEIM FRANZ ROSENZWEIG

I mentioned previously the insistence of the Jewish philosopher Emile Fackenheim that when two cultures or ideologies meet a dialectic is created. The circles engage in conversation with one another as it were; they are mutually critical. They expose the strengths and weaknesses of each idea system, the intentions of each, the items that are of great concern within one circle and much less concern in the other.

Writ large, this mutually critical dialectic can be seen in the relationship between our Jewish and North American identities. The goal is the same as Kaplan's 100% integration but the path to it is both rockier and more circuitous. If one incorporates a Fackenheimian sensibility into this Kaplanian construct a somewhat different process emerges.

We might call this a process of civilizational *heshbon ha-nefesh*, an inventorying of both shortcomings and strengths much as we do with our own lives during the High Holidays but through the eyes of the "other" civilization. Kaplan himself highlighted this self-critical moment in his treatment of the *avodah* service on Yom Kippur. The issue, says Kaplan, in *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, is to clean out the polluted places in our own houses of worship, study, and gathering. The goal remains the same. It is to awaken within each circle the deepest powers of civilizational self-realization, to create the best possible cultural versions of Judaism and Americanism. Here there are echoes of the famous statement of Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis that to be a truly good American, one must also be a good Jew (and even a Zionist one).

Let me offer a concrete example of the mutually critical dialectic at work. While there are democratic values embedded in some pre-modern Jewish life – the kehillot of 17th and 18th century Poland, for example – it is fair to characterize pre-modern Jewish life as largely authoritarian. If one values democracy in an integrated American Jewish life, it is the American aspect of our experience that must influence Judaism. The famous accounting of American volunteerism and the formation of voluntary associations by Alexis De Tocqueville in his mid-19th century *Democracy in America* provides many examples. As Jews, we need to turn to our American resources concerning democracy to expand the vitality of our Jewish civilization. Indeed, historians of Jewish life, such as Leon Jick (*The Americanization of the Synagogue*) believe this process has occurred.

What about the other side of the mutually critical dialectic? What does Judaism offer American democracy? Judaism has within it a built-in honoring of both sides of a dialectic known in Hebrew as *shamor* (celebration) and *zachor* (remembering the roots

of these celebrations through the reading of sacred texts). The element of *zachor* is, at least relatively speaking, weak in American culture. We do not typically add the reading of the Declaration of Independence to the setting off of fireworks on the fourth of July. Perhaps if we did, Steinberg could more elegantly “transmit its significance to his children”). Nor do we add the reading of Franklin D. Roosevelt's four freedoms speech around our Thanksgiving day table. The iconic public reading of the Declaration of Independence , famously divided into seven sections (aliyot as it were) by Arthur Waskow, provides a concrete expression of Jewish textual motif woven into American celebration when practiced on the Shabbat nearest to the Fourth of July. The broader spirit of such initiatives is embodied in *The Faith of America*, Mordecai Kaplan & J. Paul Williams & Eugene Kohn, 1963.

Fackenheim warned of the risk of superficiality inherent in the process of mutually critical encounters. Fackenheim worried about the difference between a “mish-mash”, as he characterized Philo’s mediation of the encounter between Greek culture and Judaism in the first-century BCE and a synthesis. Fackenheim saw Maimonides’s mediation of Aristotelian thought and Judaism as a successful example of the latter. We note with interest that Kaplan did not share the negative evaluation of Philo’s project. In 2023, we add a healthy regard for the dangers of cultural appropriation when we seek to borrow and homogenize various cultures into our own.

FRANZ ROSENZWEIG: THE PERIPHERY AND THE CENTER OF EACH CIRCLE

Like Kaplan, Franz Rosenzweig was a fierce opponent of divided selves. It will be interesting to compare and contrast the role of the non-Jewish side of a person’s life in each briefly: American for Kaplan and German for Rosenzweig. Though sharing some assumptions, they end up offering remarkably different remedies to the identity challenges of Jews living in two civilizations.

As is well known, in his opening of the Frankfurt Lehrhaus in 1920, Rosenzweig speaks in these terms about a person’s journey to richer Jewish living and learning.

We must move from the periphery, where nothing is Jewish to, the center with the faith that it will be a Jewish center.

The teachers and learners at the Lehrhaus must give up nothing of who they are. You see on the list all sorts of Jews from arenas other than Jewish scholarship: lawyers, psychiatrists, doctors...each is on his own Jewish journey.

For Rosenzweig, the periphery of the circle in which he moved was primarily secular or German. Like many adult learning venues today, there was an openness to exploring the ethical issues of his day lying in the non-Jewish areas – at the periphery as it were – through the perspective of Jewish texts and values.

When Dr. Alan Levenson and I co-authored an article for Jewish Education Magazine in 2013, *Rosenzweig's Lehrhaus Address and his Essay It is Time: Would the real Franz Rosenzweig Please Stand Up?*, we mused about what happens at the point in a journey when a Jew rediscovers her Jewish core, moves from the periphery to the center as it were. From a Kaplanian perspective, the full power of the circle is limited unless the individual Jews and Jewish communities journey back to the periphery and continue to explore the non-Jewish ethical issues of the day. This is Kaplan at work, a pragmatist, working as the architect of living in two civilizations. For a variety of reasons Rosenzweig, the existentialist, while never entirely denying the value of non-Jewish culture, is much more interested in the culmination of the journey, a deeper Judaism as a discovery of existential personal identity.

PERSPECTIVES FROM RABBIS GREENE AND LOTT'S COMMENTS AT DECEMBER 11, 2022 WEBINAR

Gen Z and Millennials may have very different worldviews from Gen Xers and Boomers with corresponding sets of life activities emanating from those worldviews. Since most participants in our Kaplan Center Kimberlé webinars are Gen Xers and boomers, it was particularly valuable to hear from Jewish leaders who served younger Jewish populations.

Rabbi Greene began by citing the scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw who coined the term “intersectionality” in the late 80s. Intersectionality is a complex notion. It posits that identities are often multiple: one could be straight or gay, black or white, male or female, wealthy or impoverished. Crenshaw was particularly sensitive to the phenomenon of these multiple identities colluding to create oppression for the underprivileged classes in our society.

Rabbi Greene cited the work of Judith Plaskow, who in her 1987 volume *Standing Again at Sinai* argued the single, distinctive feature of modernity was membership in multiple groups. A multiplicity of identities is no new challenge to the Jewish People who themselves were described as a “mixed multitude” as far back as the Exodus from Egypt.

Rabbi Greene tried to turn this diversity on its head, shifting the negative to a positive possibility. He considered what it might mean to the challenge of being neither 50% Jewish nor 50% American to be 100% American Jewish with an integrated identity. Perhaps the very additional identities that people carry with them could enter the constructs of Kaplan’s five goals for Jewish life – participation, Hebrew, ethics, arts, and visionary perspectives, enriching each domain. Each of these values might be imbued with greater meaning as we poured into the rubric the content of black, BIPOC, or female experiences and identities. This would be an expanded example of Kaplan’s quote of 100% in integration rather than identities that were 50/50 but this time encompassing more circles of identity. Far from being negative, these multiple identities could be a source of enrichment.

Rabbi Lott agreed with the spirit of Rabbi Greene’s comments, but questioned the notion of “seamlessness” from Steinberg’s construct and integration from Kaplan’s in the quote from *Questions Jews Ask*. While one might imagine a welcoming Jewish community embracing all the multiple identities, Rabbi Lott was not certain this was something her Jewish students at Northwestern desired. They are not only comfortable with multiple identities but in many instances most comfortable when they bracket aspects of their identity and leave them at the door of a particular space they enter. They are comfortable with bracketing other aspects of their identity when they

are in a particularly Jewish venue and then leaving behind their Jewishness when they move into a different cultural space and time. “That is my gay time not my Jewish time!”

Eugene Borowitz once coined the term “inverse Marranoism” to describe Jews who had moved beyond anti-semitism and had comfortable Jewish identities that they could wear proudly in public (along with the Magen David hanging from their neck) but had little Jewish content in their homes. This was the opposite of historical Marranoism, where Jews would not dare to demonstrate their Jewishness in public but were comfortable surreptitiously celebrating it in their homes. Perhaps modern Kaplanian reveries about a complete and integrated American Jewish identity (diagram one) are now challenged by a post-modernity sensibility where a multiplicity of meanings and identities creates a partitioned set of selves that Gen Z and millennials view as inevitable and even desirable.

Bethamie Horowitz, a well-respected demographer and researcher of Jewish identity once characterized Kaplan’s work in the 20’s and 30’s as being therapeutic in character. He wanted to give people permission to experience their Jewish identity as a positive facet of their personality rather than a negative one, being well aware of the inhibiting factors at work in his culture at the time. Of course, this raises the question of the value of the Kaplanian message once the bulk of North American Jewry has become, psychologically speaking, comfortable and well adapted.

Both our Rabbis alluded to the Talmudic discussion (Masechet Shabbat) of where one places a Hanukiah in order to *pirsum ha-nes*, and proclaim the miracle. The three options for placement of the Hanukkah Menorah – the entranceway to one’s home, on a window peering out, or on a table within the home – reflected degrees of safety from external forces of tyranny and anti-semitism. In regard to Gen Z and Millennials, one might think of this in a “psychologized” fashion. The complexity of the shaping of identity in 2022 might mean that the Hanukiah is displayed in these three strategic places in response to internal forces affecting identity revealing how much of a display of Jewishness is wanted rather than a perceived external threat.

Presumably, this leaves a new generation free to create the kind of hybrid, customized identities they desire. Identity for Gen Z and Millennials is a personal project and discovery. It might be counterproductive for the Jewish community to push too hard for integration at either a psychic or communal level.

Rabbi Greene in tracing the arc of our dialogue notes a pattern. Kaplan projected an integrated American Jewish life. Crenshaw, the early architect of the now pervasive notion of intersectionality, anticipated overlaps between multiple identities and no such easy synthesis. For reasons worthy of further analysis, among a significant group of Millennials and Gen Z Rabbi Lott hints the segmentation of identities is itself a virtue. Perhaps in an age of eclecticism, we can challenge ourselves to create a “remix” that incorporates the virtues of all three forms of Jewish identity.

It is also useful here to bring in a construct from the educational toolbox of Kaplanian work and see how such a Gen Z or Millennial perspective reshapes the work at the cutting edge of this concept. The educational construct is the values of spiritual peoplehood. The deepest application of the notion has occurred in two venues: Congregation Bnai Keshet in Montclair New Jersey and the Reconstructionist Camp Havaya. The values of spiritual peoplehood were drawn from Kaplan’s chapter on Jewish Education in *Judaism as a Civilization* and implemented as family-intergenerational programs and experiential learning activities at Bnai Keshet and Camp Havaya by Rabbis Jeff Eisenstat and Jeffrey Schein.

In both instances, students and families were immersed in educational programs that embody these values: experiential learning at Camp Havaya and family dialogue at Bnai Keshet. We hoped that after these initial learning experiences, each person or family would continue to explore, teach, and learn about the value which was most compelling to them. It was as if Jewish ethics, Hebrew language, participation in Jewish life, and role-modeling creatively living in two civilizations were spiritual magnets, what David Teutsch has called “radiant centers.” In being exposed to these programs, the students and families would learn which value touched their souls most profoundly. They would become “magnetized” by them.

Next, they would be given opportunities to move beyond the generalist Jewish values education provided and explore a particular value more deeply. They could then become teachers and ambassadors for this value of spiritual peoplehood to their whole community. These Jewish values would serve as magnetizing orbits of Jewish life and activity drawing, in the case of Bnai Keshet, congregation members from beyond the school.

Nothing in this conceptualization suggested that these values would work any differently depending on gender, race, or sexual orientation. In retrospect, we might call the construct naive or tone-deaf to today's identity issues, but one must also recognize how nascent these notions were in the 1990s.

Still, what is striking about this conceptualization is that it attributes to a Jewish value the raw power to engage individual Jews according to their basic dispositions rather than their multiple identities. So Jewish poets and painters would move around the magnetic orbit of the arts, Jewish activists around ethics and tikkun olam, and Jewish visionaries around reshaping Jewish life. Still others, having fallen in love with the Hebrew language, would engage Hebrew language and literature.

One issue we must address is whether gay and straight Jews will be drawn in the same way to the attractions of contemporary Hebrew poetry or any other value construct? Must a poem resist even a hint of implicit homophobia? Do some require a "safe space" composed of those who have also fully embraced a particular identity of color or sexual orientation? What if this "magnetization" process only works when people feel safe and secure in more particular identities? What if hyphenated Judaism becomes so prevalent in the organizational world of denominational Judaism and when subjected to Kaplanian critique turns out to be not only a necessary but a valuable part of post-modernity, as in gay Jewish identity or Jews of color Judaism?

Spun in one other direction, these tensions become an interesting test case of style and substance. Both the content of Judaism and the lifestyles and personal identities of Jews give us natural entry points into Jewish life. Both are important and both count. Yet, we might ask which weighs most heavily. Clearly, the older construct had greater confidence in the substance of Jewish values to lead the way.

We also need to address questions relating to the tension between overall communal identities and micro-communities that sociologists such as Robert Bellah and the other authors of the seminal 1985 *Habits of the Heart* have raised. Instead of forming broader, diverse communities, we have a penchant for gathering together in what Bellah called “life-style” enclaves. Twenty-five years later the volume *The Big Sort* shows how zip codes now often reflect segregated cultural and political styles. The older model of a single zip code embodying great cultural and economic diversity is fast disappearing. This haunting development is all the more problematic in an era of angry partisan polarization where residence also correlates with voting preference. Of course, in such circumstances, one wonders how the Jewish value of Lador V’dor, generational continuity plays out.

CONCLUSION: MOVING FORWARD WITH THE PROJECT OF LIVING IN MULTIPLE CIVILIZATIONS

In Talmudic argumentation, one often encounters a *shema mina...* a call to identify what we should ultimately take away from our exploration of cascading arguments moving in multiple directions. Similarly, we are challenged to put forth some guidelines for moving forward into the future with the notion of living in two civilizations.

Here are my personal *shema mina* principles:

1. Though it may be possible to retain the language of living in two civilizations by conceiving of all these multiple civilizations as being encompassed in a more general understanding of American life, I think it is helpful to integrate into our Jewish vocabulary an affirmation that Jews live in multiple rather than only two civilizations.
2. The cutting edge of Judaism as a living laboratory lies in the continued exploration of points of integration between these multiple civilizations. *Ritual Well* of Reconstructing Judaism provides an outstanding example of honoring everyday parts of our secular living by expressions of Jewish poetry and prose.

Tikkun Olam service groups such as *Avoda* also bring Jewish values to bear as they wrestle with the challenges of American life.

3. The generational gaps between understanding core Kaplanian concepts such as peoplehood, living in two civilizations, and alternative approaches to Jewish prayer and theology should be explored through further dialogue among these generations.
4. An understanding of why integration as a Kaplanian ideal is not necessarily a shared aspiration of different demographics today is critical to the work of the Kaplan Center.
5. We should embrace a Deweyan understanding of evaluation in regard to core Kaplanian concepts. As we critique a concept near and dear to our Kaplanian selves we ought to be open to discovering new, unanticipated uses of the concept and also to the revision of the concept itself.
6. The philosophical pragmatism that guided Kaplan's thinking remains one of the great engines of the evolving nature of Jewish civilization. However, the pragmatic distaste of fruitful and inevitable paradox is questionable. Perhaps these tensions are equally a force of growth in our Jewish spirituality.