Jewish Spiritual Startups and Participants

Research by
Tobin Belzer PhD & Dr. Ari Y. Kelman
May 2020

Conducted on behalf of
Open Dor Project
Inspired & powered by Moishe House in partnership with the One8 Foundation
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Jewish Spiritual Startups and Participants: Executive Summary

Research by
Tobin Belzer PhD & Dr. Ari Y. Kelman
May 2020

Conducted on behalf of
Open Dor Project
Inspired & powered by Moishe House

Background
Founded in 2016, The Open Dor Project was designed to offer entrepreneurial rabbis the financial, strategic, and spiritual support they need to build inspiring Jewish communities. By investing in exceptional spiritual startup leaders, the Open Dor Project aims to support the development of independent, welcoming, and sustainable spiritual communities to provide potential entry points for “less connected” American Jews. The grantees are part of a growing movement of spiritual leaders who are experimenting with new forms of Jewish expression and community that are deeply rooted in religious values and traditions.

The Open Dor Project has provided two cohorts of grantees with a multi-faceted, three-year cohort experience structured to support the growth of spiritual communities by offering grantees: 1) significant multi-year funding, 2) mentorship and training, 3) spiritual support, and 4) a learning community.

Support from the Open Dor Project came at a critical moment in the development of the seven communities. The funding enabled leaders to invest in infrastructure and strategy development. It gave the rabbis additional capacity to hire staff and to attract additional funds from local and national sources. The support enabled most of the grantees to develop from earlier-stage start-ups to more established, vibrant communities.

This report presents findings drawn from a mixed methods study of the seven Open Dor Project communities and their participants. Drawing on interviews and survey data, these findings uncover respondents’ perspectives on the various ways they connected to and found meaning in their communities.

Communities
In 2019, more than 15,000 participants collectively attended events offered by the Open Dor Project communities. The communities engaged more than 5300 unique participants. Through emails and social media, the communities regularly communicate with thousands of people. Opportunities for involvement are most often related to reflection, ritual, and learning.

In 2019-2020, the communities’ annual budgets ranged from $180,000 to $654,744, totaling $2,427,759. Each community’s revenue model was developed based on leaders’ assessment of local and national funding sources, along with their understanding of their participants’ willingness and ability to contribute. Communities are funded by participant fees and contributions along with support from foundations, congregations, and organizations.

Findings
Respondents articulated four key dimensions of their experiences: connection to the rabbis, to Judaism, to others, and to place. They provide opportunities for personal growth in a local Jewish context, enhance respondents’ networks of Jewish involvement, and coalesce through relationships with the rabbis. These findings also shed light on participants’ backgrounds and motivations for participating.

For most respondents, their relationship with the rabbi is a prominent aspect of their communal participation. Respondents’ initial motivation to participate, along with their decision to continue their involvement, is related to their strong sense of connection with the rabbi. The rabbis’ accessibility was an important factor in respondents’ decision to get involved; they credited the rabbis’ warm and welcoming affect more frequently than any other reason – including their desire for community or connection to other participants. Almost half of participants (46%) said one of the ways they engage with their communities is through meetings with the rabbi. Most feel connected to the rabbi and indicated their participation is linked to that relationship.

Respondents described the rabbis as available, personable, and engaging. They were drawn to the rabbis’ openness and interest in them. Respondents...
The communities provide diverse and accessible opportunities for participants to connect with Judaism and with themselves.

Participants are supported to explore and experience the parts of Jewish life they find meaningful and valuable, and to do so relatively free of conventional institutional expectations. The rabbis described their communities using terms that illustrate their intention to create a sense of openness and accessibility to Jewish life.

The communities promote a sense of warmth and emotional intimacy through their choice of venues. Home-based events are the most common among the communities. Almost every rabbi hosts events in their homes. Every community typically meets in at least two locations.

While communal involvement was a given for some, other respondents described their participation as a return to Jewish community. Respondents said they distanced themselves from Jewish life for a variety of reasons: some pursued other interests and affiliations while others had more purposefully stepped away because of negative experiences or associations.

Some did not see Jewish organizations as viable places to explore and express themselves. Others were looking for ways to engage despite their previous experiences.

Respondents described their desire for communities that support them to bring their full selves to their Jewish experiences. They want to engage both affectively and intellectually. Respondents sought Jewish communities that reflect their values and feel congruous with their perceptions of themselves as tolerant and open to difference. The majority of respondents agreed that any Jewish community they are part of should: 1) welcome non-Jewish participants and 2) honor a diversity of opinions about Israel.

Respondents have been emotionally and intellectually enriched by their participation. The majority strongly agreed or agreed that their experience of their community has affected them in a variety of ways.

Respondents were actively looking for Jewish communities that would enable them to connect deeply with others. Many were invited or encouraged to participate by a friend. They were interested in building relationships and connecting with like-minded people. Several respondents (many of whom self-identified as ‘interfaith’) said they were seeking a welcoming place to engage Jewishly as a family.

Most respondents have remained connected to their communities over time; they have been involved for two or more years. The most common way that participants engage in their communities are through small group gatherings: 72% of respondents engage this way.

The majority of respondents (71%) agreed that they feel connected to people in their community. Some respondents mentioned how they have connected with people in their communities around shared interests. Others appreciated the opportunity to engage with people they would not have otherwise met. For many, that sense of connection reaches beyond their communal involvement.
Many respondents see their participation as a continuation of their prior Jewish involvement. Most respondents (85%) engaged a broad array of Jewish experiences growing up (such as youth group, camp, travel to Israel, supplemental Jewish education and organizational involvement during college). The majority (80%) have taken part in three or more such activities. Just 15% received no formal or informal Jewish education as children.

Respondents tend to have active Jewish lives: their behaviors demonstrate a wide range of engagement and involvement. Almost every respondent (98%) has close Jewish friendships. Most respondents (93%) said that getting together with family and friends is a way they connect Jewishly. Another 84% said they connect Jewishly by being part of a community.

Respondents are selective and peripatetic in their Jewish lives. They are not necessarily seeking a single Jewish community that will fulfill all of their needs and they do not expect to find a permanent destination that will sustain them throughout their entire lives. They engage with different organizations at different times in their lives to serve different purposes.

The Open Dor communities provided respondents with places to extend or expand the range of their Jewish expression. No single mode of engagement dominated, and most respondents participated in more than one community. They expressed diverse Jewish interests, and availed themselves of their city’s opportunities to engage with Jewish life through a variety of modalities.

Engaging in multiple ways is normative for about two-thirds of respondents. When asked about their Jewish involvement prior to participating in the communities, most respondents (77%) said they were (and some remain) connected with organizations, communities, and congregations across the Jewish communal spectrum. More than one-third of those who were connected to organizations prior to their involvement with Open Dor communities (123 respondents) listed two or more organizations. Still, one-third of respondents (34%) reported that participating in their Open Dor community is the primary expression of Jewishness in their life.

Respondents said they would continue to engage Jewishly in the absence of Open Dor Project communities, but predicted their Jewish lives would be significantly diminished. They reported that they would likely feel less spiritually fulfilled, less socially connected and less inspired. They predicted their participation in Jewish life would be less frequent. Engaging with their Open Dor Project communities motivated 199 respondents to pursue additional Jewish involvement.

Each of the seven communities was built around a vision of Jewish life that is fundamentally local. The rabbis described how their participants’ lives (and in turn, their communities), are influenced by factors like geography, work, affordability, and transportation. They spoke with an insider’s knowledge about the differences between various local neighborhoods.

Respondents’ sense of Jewish connection is place-based. They tend to be strongly rooted in their local communities: 72% have lived in their area for four or more years and more than half have lived there seven years or more. The majority of respondents from every community feel most deeply connected to Jews in their city and to people in their community.

Every community collaborates with other Jewish organizations in their area, and some also work with local non-Jewish organizations. Each community partners with between two and eight types of organizations. In some cases, leaders expend significant effort navigating entrenched communal dynamics and quelling concerns about scarcity of resources and competition for participants.
Concluding Thoughts

These findings illustrate how Open Dor Project communities foster connections to place, to Judaism, to others, and to clergy. Grantees have created communities that provide multiple and overlapping avenues of connection for people from diverse backgrounds. Participants of these communities are developing relationships, pursuing learning, enacting rituals, and reflecting in a Jewish context.

The communities reflect the particular needs and concerns of those in the cities and neighborhoods they serve. The rabbis are responsive to the specific parameters born of the geography, history, and socio-economic circumstances of their locales. They are part of their local Jewish organizational ecosystems and are beginning to influence those cultures.

Open Dor communities offer space for ritual and learning that, for some, provides a welcome departure from the Judaism of their youth. The rabbis cultivate settings that respect participants’ diverse histories and interests. They are enabling participants to come as they are to explore, learn, and experiment with Jewish life as they wish.

Open Dor communities provide opportunities for people to connect in person at homes, over meals, or through ritual and study. By privileging relationships over memberships, Open Dor communities have become sites for enriching and enlivening people’s connections to Judaism and to one another.

Respondents’ interpersonal relationships with the rabbis are central to these communities. The rabbis strive to foster meaningful relationships with and among participants. They are modeling and promoting accessibility, authenticity, and vulnerability. For many respondents, this is their first meaningful relationship with a rabbi. Many respondents’ initial and continued involvement is driven by their relationship with the rabbi. The rabbis’ ongoing commitment to developing one-on-one relationships is part of the engine driving the growth of these communities.

The research contributes to a broader understanding of who is participating in spiritual startups and why. It sheds light on a population of American Jewry that is eager for connection and enrichment. They are seeking new Jewish experiences to both complement and remedy past encounters.

This exploration of the communities and their participants has also provided insights into the evolving nature and culture of American Jewish community. In doing so, this research provides guideposts for leaders interested in contributing to this vibrant facet of the American Jewish future.
Background

Over the past 70 years, the American Jewish community has dedicated substantial energy and resources to ensuring the perpetuation of Jewish life in the US and around the world. In the wake of the Holocaust, American Jews built a rich landscape of institutional, philanthropic, educational, religious, and cultural institutions dedicated to sustaining Jewish life, while also working to combat structural anti-Semitism across multiple sectors from business and education to politics.

The relative success of these dual endeavors has given rise to several notable unforeseen consequences. First, Jews’ successful integration into numerous sectors of American life has had deeply personal results: the pool of marriageable partners significantly expanded for many Jews. The widespread result was documented with the publication of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, which identified the phenomenon of increasing rates of intermarriage.1 Those findings prompted Jewish organizations to direct substantial resources toward “Jewish continuity,” which had the effect of expanding the range and depth of Jewish life across almost every sector, including: education, arts and culture, and religion, to name a few.

Second, younger American Jews have been opting out of denominational affiliation at a significant rate: nearly one-third (32%) of Jewish Millennial respondents to the Pew study identified as “Jews of no religion”, while just 7% of respondents in their grandparents’ generation fell into that category.2 This follows a much broader trend, which finds that institutions in almost every American religious community have been steadily losing their appeal to younger generations of Americans.3 About one-third of adults under 30 have no religious affiliation (32%), compared with 9% of those 65 and older.4 More broadly, young adults tend to distrust corporate, political, and religious institutions, which they perceive to be unethical and self-interested.5 These attitudes strongly inform the types of organizations and institutions with which they choose to engage (or not).6

Jewish Identity After the Baby Boom

These phenomena have transformed the culture and composition of the Jewish communal sector and affected the experiences and identities of American Jews across generations. They reflect the needs and interests of a more diverse population of American Jews. According to sociologist Richard Alba, “the significant blurring of boundaries between Jews and other Americans” has emerged as the “most significant feature of the contemporary situation of American Jews.”7

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6 Flory and Miller, 8.
Jewish Millennials are more likely than those in any previous generation to have one Jewish parent. They are also the most racially diverse generation of American Jews. In 2006, the Steinhardt Social Research Institute reported that 14% of Jews ages 25-34 and 19% of those 18-24 do not identify as white. Unlike those in previous generations, Millennials who are children of intermarriage are more likely to identify as Jewish. However, they are much less likely than those raised by two Jewish parents to participate in Jewish communal life.

The communal impact of these changes has been amplified by the acknowledgement of a relatively new life cycle phase: “emerging adulthood.” People between the ages of 18-34 are increasingly postponing major life transitions such as leaving home, completing their education, achieving financial independence, finding a partner and having a child. These demographic changes are having a significant impact across American religious communities, since religious involvement is highly influenced by whether people are married, when they get married, whether they have children, and how many children they have. Jewish institutions founded before and during the 20th Century were not equipped to serve this increasingly heterogeneous population. However, the Jewish institutional landscape has begun to adjust to the diversity of Post-Boomer Jews’ identities and interests.

**New Jewish Communities**

Over the past two decades, Jewish foundations have directed millions of dollars toward research, policy making, programming, and field-building to address these changes. With the understanding that Post-Boomers are less likely to join conventional Jewish institutions like synagogues, Federations, and Jewish Community Centers, many of these efforts were designed to reinvent and revitalize Jewish religious and communal life beyond the mainstream. Some legacy institutions have adapted, developing new programs and efforts to accommodate and address the needs and interests of this population, while others have been less successful.

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The diverse and widespread growth of new initiatives intended to engage younger American Jews has ultimately transformed the Jewish organizational landscape. The development of these new communal forms represents the single largest growth of new Jewish institutions since the late 19th century and early decades of the 20th century. The authors of the 2007 report, “Emergent Jewish Communities and their Participants” created a typology of contemporary communal forms based on 1354 survey respondents who participated in: independent minyanim (59%); “rabbi-led emergent communities” (24%); and “alternative emergent communities” (17%).

These new communal forms have parallels outside of the Jewish milieu. Funded by the John Templeton Foundation, social scientists at the University of Southern California’s Center for Religion and Civic Culture conducted a large-scale study of innovative forms of religious belief, practice and organization. In their report, “Something More,” Harvard Divinity School Ministry Innovation Fellows, Casper ter Kuile and Angie Thurston, profiled ten “imaginative religious communities” that are “leading the way” toward appealing to young adults.

Recently, several initiatives have emerged to support the development of alternative Jewish spiritual communities as a particularly rich site of innovation and reinvention. In 2013, the Union for Reform Judaism Emerging Young Adult Initiatives Community of Practice brought together congregations “interested in starting or significantly enhancing their efforts with this cohort.” In 2014, the rabbis of seven unaffiliated Jewish communities created the Jewish Emergent Network to enable them “to share ideas and spread their vision of a dynamic 21st century Judaism.” In the same year, New Paradigm Spiritual Communities Initiative (which was later renamed Kenissa: Communities of Meaning Network) was founded to “connect individuals who are leading contemporary efforts to re-imagine Jewish life and community.” In 2016, Moishe House launched The Open Dor Project (ODP) to “further the creation and development of emerging Jewish spiritual communities across the country.”

22 Casper ter Kuile and Angie Thurston “Something More” (Fetzer Institute, 2016) 8.
23 “Emerging Young Adult Initiatives” https://urj.org/emerging-young-adult-initiatives-0. See also Union for Reform Judaism. 2014. “Strengthening Congregations, Paving the Road to Meaningful Young Adult Engagement: A Report from the 2013–2014 Young Adult Engagement Community of Practice.”
25 Kenissa.org
The Open Dor Project

The Open Dor Project was designed to offer entrepreneurial rabbis the financial, strategic, and spiritual support they need to build inspiring Jewish communities. By investing in exceptional spiritual startup leaders, the Open Dor Project aims to support the development of independent, welcoming, and sustainable spiritual communities to provide potential entry points for “less connected” American Jews. The grantees are part of a growing movement of spiritual leaders who are experimenting with new forms of Jewish expression and community while deeply rooted in the religious values and traditions.

The Open Dor Project has provided two cohorts of grantees with a multi-faceted, three-year cohort experience structured to support the growth of spiritual communities by offering grantees: 1) significant multi-year funding, 2) mentorship and training, 3) spiritual support, and 4) a learning community. Each community received up to $225,000 in unrestricted funding over the course of three years, including: $100,000 the first year and $75,000 in the second year. In the third year, communities had the opportunity earn matching funds of $50,000 based on their independent fundraising efforts. The resources provided by the Open Dor Project enabled community leaders to expand their programmatic offerings, articulate their visions for their communities, and draw on the collective wisdom of leaders in the sector (including mentors, colleagues, consultants and philanthropists). Along with the funding, grantees had access to individualized professional development and strategic planning consultation.

For more information or to learn more about the Open Dor Project, reach out to Rabbi Ana Bonnheim at rabbiana@opendorproject.org.
Methods

The findings presented here are drawn from a mixed methods study of the seven Open Dor Project communities and participants. Findings are drawn from interviews with participants (N=19) and key stakeholders (N=20) from each community (including lay leaders, and clergy). To gather quantitative data, the leaders of each community completed a questionnaire. Internal documents from each community were analyzed and a scan was conducted of each community’s online presence. Additionally, an online survey was administered to community participants. Data analysis focused on identifying the qualities and characteristics that are shared across respondents and communities. (See Appendix A for more information about research methods.)

The report draws upon findings from the survey responses of 486 people who have participated in one of the Open Dor Project communities. Notably, the largest number of respondents is from The Well (143), and the smallest is from CoHere (18). This variation is reflective of the actual communal size: The Well and CoHere have the largest and smallest number of active participants respectively. These differences, however, did not meaningfully influence trends that emerged from the data. Analyses revealed that differences in response rate did not impact the overall findings.

Throughout the report, we have indicated when responses from single communities substantially differ from the aggregated responses. Only statistically significant differences are included among the findings. Statistical significance was reported based on a standard 95% confidence level (when the differences between groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone).

Every respondent did not answer every question. The number of responses to particular questions is indicated as (N=#). Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. The quotes included throughout the report are reflective of the sentiments of several respondents. Quotes were selected to represent a range of voices across the communities. They were edited for ease of readability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of responses by community</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Well (143 responses)</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Den (80)</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malkhut (73)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beloved (68)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Studio Project (67)</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open Temple (37)</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoHere (18)</td>
<td>4%</td>
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N=486
Findings

Drawing on interviews and survey data, these findings uncover respondents’ perspectives on the various ways they connected to and found meaning in their communities. Respondents articulated four key dimensions of their experiences: connection to clergy, to Judaism, to others, and to place. Each of the communities reflect their local cultures. They provide opportunities for personal growth in a Jewish context, enhance respondents’ networks of Jewish involvement, and coalesce through relationships with the rabbis. These findings also shed light on participants’ backgrounds and motivations for participating.

This report presents the findings in two sections. The first section introduces the seven Open Dor communities and presents a broad statistical portrait of the respondents. The second section delineates the four key qualities that drive participants’ motivation and continued engagement with their communities.
Support from the Open Dor Project came at a critical moment in the development of the seven communities. The funding enabled leaders to invest in infrastructure and strategy development, It gave the rabbis additional capacity to hire staff, and to attract additional funds from local and national sources. The support enabled most of the grantees were able to develop from earlier-stage start-ups to more established, vibrant communities.

Every leader acknowledged the critical role the Open Dor Project has played in enabling them to develop and grow their communities. For example:

“Open Dor’s financial support and stamp of approval for Beloved at this early stage in our development had a transformational impact on our capacity to bring our vision of an open-hearted home-based community to life.”

“Thanks in large part to Open Dor’s investment in the organization, Jewish Studio Project has established itself as a leading resource for spiritual and creative engagement both in our local community in the Bay Area and in communities across North America.”

“The Well continues to use the Open Dor Project funding to help us ‘staff up’ …which has dramatically enhanced our ability to expand our impact. Human power drives this work, and it’s why having the ability to utilize these dollars in the way we deem best is a godsend!”

“With funding from Open Dor, I hired a part-time communications and part-time coordinator who took a bunch of stuff off my plate. I’ve been able to focus more of my time developing relationships and leadership for Malkhut.”

*Profiles of each community can be found in Appendix B*
Communities

The communities are located in:

- Chicago, IL
- Detroit, MI
- Queens, NY
- Brooklyn, NY
- Greater DC
- Berkeley, CA
- Venice, CA
- The Jewish Studio Project
- Cohere
- The Well
- Malkhut
- The Open Temple
- Beloved

The communities were founded in:

- **2015**
  - The Jewish Studio Project
  - The Well
  - The Open Temple

- **2016**
  - Malkhut
  - The Den Collective

- **2017**
  - Beloved
In 2019, more than 15,000 participants collectively attended events offered by the Open Dor Project communities. The communities engaged more than 5300 unique participants. Through emails and social media, the communities regularly communicate with thousands of people.

**Communities**

- **Total participants**: 15,931
- **Unique participants**: 5,367
- **Email subscribers**: 10,619
- **Facebook followers**: 8,302
- **Instagram followers**: 3,829

The communities’ engagement opportunities are most often related to reflection, ritual, and learning.

**Reflection**
- Opportunities for self-reflection/personal growth: 6
- Meditative/mindfulness: 5
- Chanting/singing: 5
- Pastoral care: 5

**Ritual**
- Holiday gatherings: 6
- Shabbat services: 6
- Experimental/new rituals: 4
- Shabbat dinners: 4
- Holiday services: 4

**Learning**
- Education/activities for children/teens: 5
- Text study groups: 4
- Other adult education: 4
In 2019-2020, the communities’ annual budgets ranged from $180,000 to $654,744, totaling $2,427,759.* In this third and final year as the Cohort 1 Open Door Project grantees, The Well and Jewish Studio Project each received a $50,000 matching grant. In their second year as the Open Door Project grantees, Cohort 2 communities received $75,000.

Each community’s revenue model was developed based on leaders’ assessment of local and national funding sources, along with their understanding of their participants’ willingness and ability to contribute. In addition, founding their communities required most rabbis to take a significant personal financial risks.

Young adults contributed between 6% - 64% of the communities’ annual budgets in 2019-2020. In addition, communities received foundation support through formal applications, informal networking, and matching grants. Non-profit organizations like Federations, accelerators (e.g. Upstart), and umbrella organizations (e.g. United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism) also provided support.

The communities are supported by 41 philanthropic foundations, organizations, and congregations.

2019-2020 Income Sources

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<th>Cohort 1</th>
<th>Cohort 2</th>
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<td><strong>(Received $50,000 from ODP)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(Received $75,000 from ODP)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jewish Studio Project</strong></td>
<td><strong>Beloved</strong></td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Circle chart for Beloved" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Well</strong></td>
<td><strong>Malkhut</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Circle chart for The Well" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Circle chart for Malkhut" /></td>
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* Budgetary information was not available from CoHere.
Of the respondents:

- Most respondents identify as white (88%)
- Most identify as straight/heterosexual (80%) and the other 20% identify across the LGBTQ spectrum.
- They tend to be highly educated: 65% have a graduate level education
- Almost all respondents (93%) identify as Jewish
- Most (83%) were raised Jewish by parents who were also raised Jewish. Just 14% of respondents have a parent who is not Jewish
- Most (83%) identify as Ashkenazi and another 13% identify as Ashkenazi and something else.

The majority of respondents identify as cisgender women. Almost all (17 out of 18) respondents from CoHere identify as a woman.

The communities attract participants ages 21 to 60+. The majority of respondents from across communities (61%) are between the ages of 30-39. The Well is the only community that includes language on their website explicitly indicating they are a community for “young adults.”

Open Temple participants skewed older: there was a significantly larger percentage of respondents in their 50s.
Respondents have a broad range of household incomes. The income of respondents from The Den skewed lower and Open Temple respondents’ income skewed higher than respondents from other communities. 
(N=408)

Most respondents (75%) are in committed relationships. The majority of respondents who are partnered (60%) have spouses/partners who were raised Jewish. The other 40% have partners that are not Jewish (27%), converted to Judaism (6%), or were raised Jewish and something else (6%).

A higher percentage of respondents from Beloved and The Den indicated they are “single (never married)”. All but one of the respondents from CoHere is married.
For most respondents, their relationship with the rabbi is a prominent aspect of their communal participation. Respondents’ initial motivation to participate, along with their decision to continue their involvement, is related to their strong sense of connection with the rabbi. The rabbis’ accessibility was an important factor in respondents’ decision to get involved: they credited the rabbis’ warm and welcoming affect more than any other reason – including their desire for community or connection to other participants. Almost half of participants (46%) said one of the ways they engage with their communities is through meetings with the rabbi. Most feel connected to the rabbi and indicated their participation is linked to that relationship.

The majority of respondents AGREED:

- They feel connected to the rabbi: 88% (N=425)
- The rabbi is much of the reason they participate: 79% (N=425)

When deciding to get involved in their communities, the rabbi’s affect was important to the highest percentage of respondents.

- The rabbi(s) is/are warm and welcoming: 84% (N=463)
- People are warm and welcoming: 79% (N=463)
- To be part of a Jewish community: 72% (N=463)
- For personal reflection or transformation: 53% (N=463)
- To learn with/from the rabbi(s): 52% (N=463)
- To deepen Jewish knowledge: 51% (N=463)
- Convenience (timing or location): 50% (N=463)
Respondents described the rabbis as available, personable, and engaging. They were drawn to the rabbis’ openness and interest in them. Respondents were attracted to the rabbis’ emotional intelligence, their ability to make Jewish wisdom relevant, and their capacity to listen. Several respondents described their current relationships with the rabbis in sharp contrast to childhood experiences of rabbis who seemed distant and unapproachable.

The rabbis articulated how connecting personally with individual participants was a key aspect of their community-building approach. This work is extremely time intensive and requires significant emotional labor from clergy and staff, but the benefits are clear. Respondents from every community mentioned their appreciation for this aspect of the experience. They benefited from the rabbis’ ability to create opportunities for them to bring their full selves to the community. This, in turn, fostered respondents’ desires to participate and to help shape the culture. By getting to know participants personally, rabbis were able to effectively support them find opportunities to contribute and to deepen their connections to the community.

Ari is an amazing human being. She’s phenomenal at building relationships. She’s one of my favorite people in the world. She brings that excitement to everything that she does. She’s creative about tying lessons in with fun things, which helps my kids remember the lessons and themes. She got my kids really excited about learning about Judaism and Hebrew. She’s much beloved in our house.

- A woman in her 40s from CoHere

Rabbi Dan meets you on your level. He’s a very smart guy, very religious and knowledgeable about religion, but he has a personality that can engage you and connect. Either he remembers everything about your life or he takes very detailed notes after you leave. He remembers stuff I can’t even believe.

- A woman in her 30s from The Well

I like that she’s consistently approachable. She remembers me. Growing up, the rabbi was unapproachable.

- A man in his 40s from Beloved
Respondents described how the rabbis’ emotional availability and authentic interest positively shaped their experiences.

She knew my name and my kids’ names right away. She focused on the personal connections, and that’s enough for me honestly. She’s demonstrated that she will show up for things and that she will listen. She will allow space to be a little messy or to figure things out. She’s set up that culture.

- A woman in her 40s from Malkhut

She really creates an atmosphere where people can be real and share and be honest and she does the same.

- A woman in her 40s from Open Temple

The Jewish Studio Project is a gift. It is so well thought out, professional, organized, and meaningful. The leadership is outstanding and they go the extra mile to make sure that everyone is cared for, inspired, and energized to participate in a spiritual experience that makes Judaism relevant.

- A man in his 50s from the Jewish Studio Project

If they were not rabbis, I would still want them to be my friends. They’re the kind of people that you could have a conversation with about baseball or cooking or gardening or kids without any religious component to it. It’s their personalities and the way they welcome people in. We’ve been with other rabbis who did not make us feel that comfortable or warm. There’s something to their approach - having it take place at home, in a more intimate setting, with smaller groups – the structure also contributes.

- A man in his 40s from The Den
The communities provide diverse and accessible opportunities for participants to connect with Judaism and with themselves. Participants are supported to explore and experience the parts of Jewish life they find meaningful and valuable, and to do so relatively free of conventional institutional expectations. The rabbis described their communities using terms that illustrate their intention to create a sense of openness and accessibility to Jewish life.

The communities promote a sense of warmth and emotional intimacy through their choice of venues. Home-based events are the most common among the communities. Almost every rabbi hosts events in their homes. Every community typically meets in at least two locations. Only the Jewish Studio Project and Open Temple have dedicated gathering places.

- Rabbi’s home: 6
- Participants’ homes: 5
- Public park/in nature: 4
- Restaurant/coffee shops/bars: 4
- Meeting spaces: 3
- Rented space at a synagogue: 2
- Their own space: 2
- Camps/conference centers: 1
- Church: 1
Respondents described their desire for communities that support them to bring their full selves to their Jewish experiences. They want to engage affectively and intellectually. Respondents sought Jewish communities that reflect their values and feel congruous with their perceptions of themselves as tolerant and open to difference. The majority of respondents agreed that any Jewish community they are part of should: 1) welcome non-Jewish participants (44% strongly agreed & 40% agreed) and 2) honor a diversity of opinions about Israel (46% strongly agreed & 39% agreed).

Respondents have been emotionally and intellectually enriched by their participation. The majority strongly agreed or agreed that their experience of their community has positively affected them.

Respondents used a variety of adjectives to describe what they were looking for in a community:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFFECTIVE</th>
<th>INTELLECTUAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>Conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Non-traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocal</td>
<td>Thoughtful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Values-aligned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For respondents, participating in their community:

- **Has been spiritually meaningful.**
  - Strongly Agree: 38%
  - Agree: 45%
- **Increased their sense of connection to something bigger**
  - Strongly Agree: 25%
  - Agree: 50%
- **Deepened their understanding of Judaism**
  - Strongly Agree: 24%
  - Agree: 50%
- **Helped them articulate what is meaningful to them**
  - Strongly Agree: 22%
  - Agree: 48%
- **Deepened their connection to a holiday or ritual**
  - Strongly Agree: 22%
  - Agree: 44%
While communal involvement was a given for some respondents, others described their participation as a return to Jewish community. Respondents said they distanced themselves from Jewish life for a variety of reasons: some pursued other interests and affiliations while others had more purposefully stepped away because of negative experiences or associations. Some did not see Jewish organizations as viable places to explore and express themselves. Others were looking for ways to engage despite their previous experiences.

A lot of people have come to Malkhut who didn’t always feel welcome in other Jewish spaces for a bunch of different reasons. To me, Jewish religious engagement meant intolerance and misogyny. A lot of programming for ‘young professionals’ is really superficial. If it’s a synagogue, it’s basic and dumbed down. There’s a sense that spirituality or ritual is not part of the programming for young professional Jews. I want my Jewish life to be just as substantive as other aspects of my life.

- A woman in her 30s from Malkhut

I’ve never felt alive or comfortable or seen in Judaism before. I wasn’t interested in the idea of being involved in institutional Judaism: I already feel oppressed by work, so why would I do that? I had a desire for a rabbi: someone who is knowledgeable and I was looking for an avenue for an intimate connection with God. That’s what Beloved does. I realized there can be a Jewish context for my needs to get met. I’ve never had that experience before.

- A woman in her 30s from Beloved

My husband and I were raised ‘Jewish lite’: culturally Jewish but not religious. We spent a year at a traditional temple to get our kids an education. We were paying thousands of dollars to be part of a community that we didn’t really want to be part of. The people were not welcoming. It was our best option and it wasn’t a great option for us. …CoHere was exactly what we needed to get what we wanted for our kids that worked with our lifestyle.

- A woman in her 40s from CoHere

In other Jewish spaces, I can’t share my politics and analysis, because I’ll be marginalized. I have to silence myself because I’m not Zionist enough. I’m always worried about that in other Jewish spaces. I’m so grateful to JSP for that. I make a monthly contribution because I’m a part of the ongoing community. Its meaningful to belong.

- A woman in her 40s from Jewish Studio Project
Respondents were actively looking for Jewish communities that would enable them to connect deeply with others. Many were invited or encouraged to participate by a friend. They were interested in building relationships and connecting with like-minded people. Several respondents (many of whom self-identified as ‘interfaith’) said they were seeking a welcoming place to engage Jewishly as a family.

Most respondents have remained connected to their communities over time: they have been involved for two or more years. The most common way that participants engage in their communities are through small group gatherings: 72% of respondents engage this way. “Dinners with 400 people are becoming less popular and people are seeking smaller experiences,” one rabbi noted.

Most respondents have remained connected to their communities over time. The majority of respondents (61%) have been involved with their communities for two or more years.
The majority of respondents (71%) agreed that they feel connected to people in their community. Some respondents mentioned how they have connected with people in their communities based on shared interests. Others appreciated the opportunity to engage with people they would not have otherwise met.

For many, that sense of connection reaches beyond their communal involvement: 45% of respondents agreed that they get together with people socially outside of organized gatherings. A slightly smaller percentage of respondents (39%) agreed that they get together with people outside of organized gatherings to “do Jewish things.”

Some of us regular meditators have a tight camaraderie. But at services, there is an age split and the younger group isn’t my people.

- A woman in her 30s from Beloved

I’m 24, and the average age of most people is much older. I don’t really hang out with them outside of temple, but I’ve become friends with a lot of women there, and it’s great to see them there.

- A woman in her 20s from Open Temple

The Well helped me reflect on what I’m doing and why. We go to a Modern Orthodox shul that doesn’t speak to me socially. We need both parts of the community to fulfill our Jewish needs. I realized that the people are more important than the routine and mundane rituals. …My Shabbat group [through The Well] has people with very mixed backgrounds. They are our closest friends.

- A woman in her 30s from The Well

I don’t know if they are my people. It’s a very diverse group. There is a generational divide, people have different Jewish backgrounds and politically diverse perspectives… I feel comfortable with them, but they aren’t my people. That’s the enjoyment of it. It’s so nice to have the diversity.

- A man in his 40s from the Jewish Studio Project
Many respondents are participating in their communities as a continuation of their Jewish involvement. Most respondents (85%) engaged a broad array of Jewish experiences growing up (such as youth group, camp, travel to Israel, supplemental Jewish education and organizational involvement during college). The majority (80%) have taken part in three or more such activities. Just 15% received no formal or informal Jewish education as children. Prior to their participation in their community, 77% of respondents were involved with another Jewish group, organization, community or congregation. The other 23% were not previously involved.

Respondents tend to have active Jewish lives: their behaviors demonstrate a wide range of engagement and involvement. Almost every respondent (98%) has close Jewish friendships. Most respondents (93%) said that getting together with family and friends is a way they connect Jewishly. Another 84% said they connect Jewishly by being part of a community.

In the past year, respondents have engaged Jewishly in multiple and diverse ways. Almost every respondent engaged in three or more ways.

- Participated in a Shabbat meal: 91%
- Attended a program or activity: 91%
- Sought out online content: 83%
- Initiated a conversation on a Jewish-related topic: 81%
- Watched a movie/tv show: 78%
- Read a book: 71%
- Had a spiritual experience in a Jewish context: 68%
- Hosted a Shabbat meal: 60%
- Volunteered for a social justice or advocacy organization: 53%
- Attended a concert or musical performance: 53%
- Created a ritual: 52%

(N=486)
Respondents are selective and peripatetic in their Jewish lives. They are not necessarily seeking a single Jewish community that will fulfill all of their needs and they do not expect to find a permanent destination that will sustain them throughout their entire lives. They engage with different organizations at different times in their lives to serve different purposes. A man in his 40s who participates in Beloved explained:

We like the home based aspect of Beloved … We were in a havurah before we had our daughter, but it’s not child friendly. We were also members of a park slope synagogue: Kolot Chayinu. We went to Lab/Shul for the High Holidays. We’ve done different things at different points in our lives.

The Open Dor communities provided respondents with places to extend or expand the range of their Jewish expression. No single mode of engagement dominated, and most respondents participated in more than one community. They expressed diverse Jewish interests, and availed themselves of their city’s opportunities to engage with Jewish life through a variety of modalities.

Engaging in multiple ways is normative for about two-thirds of respondents. When asked about their Jewish involvement prior to participating in the communities, most respondents (77%) said they were (and some remain) connected to organizations, communities, and congregations across the Jewish communal spectrum. More than one-third of those organizations prior to their involvement with Open Dor communities (123 respondents) listed two or more organizations. A rabbi explained:

People come and move around and shop and meander and do things differently each week.

Still, one-third of respondents (34%) reported that participating in their Open Dor community is the primary expression of Jewishness in their life.

Respondents said they would continue to engage Jewishly in the absence of Open Dor Project communities, but predicted their Jewish lives would be significantly diminished. They reported that they would likely feel less spiritually fulfilled, less socially connected and less inspired. They predicted their participation in Jewish life would be less frequent. A man in his 30s who participates with The Well said that were it not for his community, “Judaism would feel more like something I did and less like who I am.” A woman in her 30s, who participates with The Den, said she would seek out connection elsewhere, but “would feel spiritually homeless.”

Engaging with their Open Dor Project communities motivated 199 respondents to pursue additional Jewish involvement.

45% of respondents participate in their communities with some regularity. They connect with other participants weekly or monthly. Slightly more than half of respondents participate infrequently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>1 to 4 times total</th>
<th>2-3 times per month</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>More than once a week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(N=486)
Each of the seven communities was built around a vision of Jewish life that is fundamentally local. The rabbis described how their participants’ lives (and in turn, their communities), are influenced by factors like geography, work, affordability, and transportation. They spoke with an insider’s knowledge about the differences between various local neighborhoods.

The Den’s Rabbi Rami Schwarzer and Rabbi Aderet Drucker described how they drew on their knowledge of the greater Washington DC area when selecting their locations in Virginia and Maryland. With two centers, they aim to make their offerings accessible to greater numbers of participants who live outside of “the District.” The Den, however, is geographically independent and moves frequently. Rabbi Drucker explained,

*Geography plays a big role in the lives of DC residents, period. Water is a huge barrier, travel is a hassle and traffic is terrible. But people are doing a lot of commuting. People live in Maryland and work in Virginia. The area is geographically limited and porous at the same time. People who work near my house will come to my house for dinner, but won’t schlep there otherwise.*

Each community’s offerings are shaped by the rabbi’s knowledge of the local culture. For example, The Well serves a population of young adults that includes some Detroit natives who returned after moving away for college. They have deep roots in the Jewish community and tend to celebrate holidays with their extended families. For these participants, The Well’s programming complements their familial connections.

The communities’ marketing materials project the character and tone of their local area. For example, Open Temple’s website includes language and images that nod to the quirky, new age hippie vibe of its location in Venice Beach, California.

Malkhut’s Rabbi Rachel Goldenberg also described how her community fits into the local Jewish landscape:

*If you’re a young adult living in Queens and you want to have a Jewish life, you have to go to Brooklyn or the Upper West Side. It’s about an hour-long commute and you won’t get home until midnight! That’s exhausting. We’re giving people a local option.*

Respondents tend to be strongly rooted in their local communities: 72% have lived in their area for four or more years and more than half have lived there seven or more years.

Most respondents have lived in their area for four or more years.

- 7+ years: 52%
- 4 to 6 years: 20%
- 2 to 3 years: 20%
- 6 months to 1 year: 7%
- Less than 6 months: 1%

N=415
Respondents’ sense of Jewish connection is place-based. The majority of respondents from every community feel most deeply connected to Jews in their city and to people in their community.

How much do you feel you have in common with each of the following groups of people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jews who live in their city</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people in their community</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents of their city</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents of their neighborhood</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews who are part of established synagogues</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews around the world</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every community collaborates with other Jewish organizations in their area, and some also work with local non-Jewish organizations. Each community partners with between two and eight types of organizations. In some cases, leaders expend significant effort navigating communal dynamics and addressing concerns or deflecting claims about scarce resources and competition for participants.
Respondents described how local context affects their ability and desire to participate.

“I was looking for liberal and progressive Jewish community in my neighborhood”
- A woman in her 30s from Malkhut

“There is a divide in the geography between downtown and the suburbs. ...When it’s on my side of town, I go because I’m hoping that will encourage them to do more programs near me.”
- A man in his 30s from The Well

“This was a way that we found our way into the vast Jewish community in Brooklyn.”
- A man in his 50s from Beloved

“I wanted to connect with other young Jews in my neighborhood, create Jewish life/community/routine when new to the area and newly married.”
- A woman in her 30s from The Den
Concluding Thoughts

These findings illustrate how Open Dor Project communities foster connections to clergy, to Judaism, to others, and to place. Grantees have created communities that provide multiple and overlapping avenues of connection for people from diverse backgrounds. Participants of these communities are developing relationships, pursuing learning, enacting rituals, and reflecting in a Jewish context.

The communities reflect the particular needs and concerns of those in cities and neighborhoods they serve. The rabbis are responsive to the specific parameters born of the geography, history, and socio-economic circumstances of their cities and neighborhoods. They are part of their local Jewish organizational ecosystems and are beginning to influence them.

Open Dor communities offer space for ritual and learning that, for some, provides a welcome departure from the Judaism of their youth. The rabbis cultivate settings that respect participants’ diverse histories and interests. They are enabling participants to come as they are to explore, learn, and experiment with Jewish life as they wish.

Open Dor communities provide opportunities for people to connect in person at homes, over meals, or through ritual and study. By privileging relationships over memberships, Open Dor communities have become sites for enriching and enlivening people’s connections to Judaism and to one another.

Respondents’ interpersonal relationships with the rabbis are central to these communities. The rabbis strive to foster meaningful relationships with and among participants. They are modeling and promoting accessibility, authenticity, and vulnerability. For many respondents, this is their first meaningful relationship with a rabbi. Many respondents’ initial and continued involvement is driven by their relationship with the rabbi. The rabbis’ ongoing commitment to developing one-on-one relationships is part of the engine driving the growth of these communities.

The research contributes to a broader understanding of who is participating in spiritual startups and why. It sheds light on a population of American Jewry that is eager for connection and enrichment. They are seeking new Jewish experiences to both complement and remedy past encounters.

This exploration of the communities and their participants has also provided insights into the evolving nature and culture of American Jewish community. In doing so, this research provides guideposts for leaders interested in contributing to this vibrant facet of the American Jewish future.
# Issues for Consideration

The following issues for consideration are drawn directly from research findings.

## 1. Plant trees to grow the forest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Klal Yisrael</strong> refers to the transnational sense of Jewish community that is greater than the sum of its individual parts. Trees need tending, nourishment, interconnection, and fortification in order to grow, together, into a forest. Klal Yisrael is the forest; the Open Dor communities are some of the trees that are contributing to the efflorescence of American Jewish life.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consider supporting the growth of multiple, specialized, interconnected micro-communities.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consider supporting leaders’ ongoing development through Communities of Practice and training and mentorship, along with opportunities for respite and self-care.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2. Think globally, act locally

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The strength of each Open Dor community stems, in part, from its rootedness in the local culture. The place-based focus has allowed the communities to leverage knowledge only visible to insiders. Communities are contributing to the vibrancy of the local Jewish communal ecosystems by responding directly to the needs of its inhabitants.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consider supporting leaders to navigate the complex dynamics of the local and national Jewish ecosystems.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consider deprioritizing replicability as a primary goal in favor of a user-centered approach to cultivating communities grounded in the needs of the local population.</strong></td>
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</table>

## 3. Communal thriving requires dynamism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Communities fulfill needs for connection, education, reflection, and support that differ based on the individuals’ backgrounds and life-cycle stages. Few people are seeking the same modes of expression at 50 than they sought at 25. As needs shift, so too should the structures that support participation in Jewish life.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consider embracing manifestations of community that are adaptable and account for impermanence.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consider redefining organizational longevity as a goal and measure of success.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Diversity contributes to ecosystem stability

Supporting diverse modes of Jewish expression will enable ecosystems to flourish, allowing individuals to access and support multiple modes of connection over time. To do so, communities will likely need ongoing, long term financial support from multiple sources.

- Consider deprioritizing membership models in favor of creating diverse ways for participants to engage and contribute.
- Consider acknowledging that self-sustainability is an unattainable goal for almost all spiritual communities and that philanthropic support may always be needed.

5. Growth requires tending

The Open Dor community rabbis spend most of their time in the weeds: attending to participants’ needs for pastoral care, educational enrichment and spiritual growth. Additionally, cultivating relationships over time is most effectively accomplished by multiple staff members. Significant attention to organizational management and development is also required.

- Consider prioritizing deep relationship development over broadening reach.
- Consider supporting communities to employ staffing models that complement rabbis’ strengths and support employee retention.

6. Risk-taking is a privilege

In most cases, building their communities required leaders to take substantial financial risks. As a result, leaders without a financial safety net may not have the same opportunities to share their talents and realize their vision for Jewish life. This has profound implications for who is able to enter the leadership pipeline and who not.

- Consider developing a leadership pipeline focused on promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Consider developing mechanisms to support risk reduction, such as providing infrastructure support (like front-end and back-end business support and health and liability insurance).
Appendix A: Methods

These findings are drawn from a mixed methods study of the seven Open Dor Project communities and their participants. Findings are drawn from interviews with participants (N=19) and key stakeholders (N=20) from each community (including lay leaders, and clergy). To gather quantitative data, the leaders of each community completed a questionnaire. Internal documents from each community were analyzed and a scan was conducted of each community’s online presence. Additionally, an online survey was administered to community participants. Data analysis focused on identifying the qualities and characteristics that are shared across respondents and communities. In total, the findings are drawn from the responses of 486 survey respondents who indicated they have participated in one of the Open Dor Project communities. (Respondents who indicated they have never participated were disqualified and exited from the survey.)

Each community submitted email lists to facilitate survey administration. In some cases, lists were culled to include only active participants. Other leaders chose to invite their entire mailing list to take the survey. As a result, the response rate is not a meaningful indication of the accuracy of the findings.

The use of a voluntary survey creates the possibility of attracting a biased, self-selecting sample. Survey respondents likely skew toward those with strong opinions about their communities, since issue salience typically has a significant impact on survey response rates. As such, findings could be exaggerated. However, the many strong trends that emerged from the data contribute to the level of confidence that can be placed in the results, since lack of response variability indicates a greater likelihood of accuracy.

Data analysis focused on identifying the qualities and characteristics that are shared across respondents and communities. Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey questions were analyzed using a grounded theory approach. In this method, findings are derived from themes that surfaced inductively from three or more respondents and with attention to outlying responses.
Beloved is a home-based experiment in Jewish life that aims to inspire Jews and fellow travelers (beloveds). Through Jewish learning and ritual, embodied spiritual practice, and food, the leaders of Beloved are building an open-hearted spiritual community for the 21st century. In the rabbi’s home in Brooklyn, they host a variety of opportunities for engagement like Shabbat meals, creative rituals based on the Jewish calendar, meditation circles, and learning for families with young children. Beloved aims to offer warm, creative, accessible Jewish experiences.

Additionally, Beloved aims to be a home-base for leaders. Beloved offers space, support, and training to clergy, activists, ritual leaders, artists, students, and educators. They provide nourishment for those who nourish others and support leaders on their spiritual journeys.

Beloved’s name hearkens back to the Song of Songs (Ani l’dodi v’dodi li; I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine). The name emphasizes the reality of human interconnectedness, and the authentic and urgent need that many people have to experience belonging, connection, and love.
CoHere was developed based on the understanding that Jewish practices, values, and holiday traditions can add sacred purpose, joy, and connectedness to participants’ everyday lives. With a personalized, high-touch, ultra-supportive approach, CoHere aims to help adults and children see their world through a Jewish lens and create meaningful, purpose-driven, and community-filled lives.

CoHere began in 2015 as a resource for unaffiliated families who want Jewish education for their children. For two years, Rabbi Moffic visited families at least monthly in their homes to bring them Judaism in their own spaces and on their own time. Each family co-created their experience with Rabbi Moffic, who provided individualized Jewish guidance and support.

After Fall 2019, CoHere modified the approach to provide a group experience for children in kindergarten through 7th grade. On Sunday evenings once a month, participants gather for dinner, education about major Jewish concepts, singing, and a hands-on project. They also gather several times a year for a monthly Shabbat service so that bar/bat (be) mitzvah-aged participants can practice engaging in and leading communal prayer. In addition, Rabbi Moffic continues to work with dozens of families to provide personalized and meaningful life cycle events like baby-namings, combined baby naming/baptisms, and be mitzvah ceremonies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Rabbi Ari Moffic, Founder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Audience</td>
<td>Families Raising Dual-Faith Children</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unique Participants:</th>
<th>Total Participants:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>150</td>
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| 2019 Community Gatherings | 17 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Modes of Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home-based Jewish educational &amp; spiritual experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Mitzvah Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life cycle officiation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Den is a network of sacred Jewish relationships among a diverse population of unaffiliated singles, couples, graduate students, and early-career professionals throughout the greater DC area. The Den strives to be collaborative, experimental, accessible, and rooted in tradition. Participants are invited to deepen their connection to Judaism, bolster their Jewish communal activity, and enrich their lives in a personal, pluralistic, innovative, and inviting way.

Rooted in the principles of community organizing and focused on person-centered, relational engagement, The Den utilizes the home environment of a pluralistic rabbi who engages people through pastoral care and life cycle support, Jewish study, and community service, as well as ritual gathering around Shabbat and holiday celebrations.

The Den’s model of engagement positions rabbis primarily as spiritual case managers, closely following and supporting the spiritual growth and trajectory of each participant they serve. It is a collaborative effort by local synagogues and other legacy institutions to provide an alternative and stage-appropriate opportunity for Jewish engagement among unaffiliated Millennials.

### Leadership
- Rabbi Rami Schwartzer
  - Outgoing Founding Director & Community Rabbi
- Rabbi Aderet Drucker
  - Executive Director & Community Rabbi

### Target Audience
- Married and Single Young Adults without Children

### Appendix B: Community Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Married and Single Young Adults without Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rabbi Rami Schwartzer</td>
<td>Rabbi Aderet Drucker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgoing Founding Director &amp; Community Rabbi</td>
<td>Executive Director &amp; Community Rabbi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational &amp; Logistics Maven</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board members: 7</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unique Participants:</th>
<th>Total Participants:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>580</td>
<td>1829</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019 Community Gatherings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Primary Modes of Engagement
- Shabbat & holiday meals
- Meditation & prayer
- Life cycle events
- Advocacy & community service
- Jewish learning
- Life cycle officiation
- Counseling & guidance
- Rabbinic mentorship
Jewish Studio Project (JSP) was created to make life more meaningful, Judaism more vibrant, and the world more just. JSP is a new model of learning and connection - at once an urban art studio, house of Jewish learning, and spiritual community. JSP’s work aims to foster the creative potential in each person, utilizing practices from the fields of art therapy and Jewish learning to build tools for expanding empathy and deepening Jewish belonging. Through immersive experiences, trainings, professional development, and thought leadership, JSP provides opportunities for creative learning and spiritual engagement across the country.

At the foundation of this work is the Jewish Studio Process, a unique methodology that combines Jewish text learning and creative process to investigate relevant life questions through the lenses of Jewish wisdom and artistic self-expression. The approach was designed to foster creative empowerment and ownership of Jewish tradition. It was developed to provide an accessible entryway into deep Jewish exploration, a democratized approach to creativity, and tools to increase capacity for empathy, curiosity, and connection.

Studio Immersives are JSP’s flagship program. These five-day convenings are designed to increase the impact of JSP’s work by supporting participants to engage more fully with the Process. In 2019, JSP launched the Creative Facilitator Training (CFT), which was developed to broaden JSP’s reach by supporting alumni of Studio Immersives to deepen their individual practice and learn to facilitate the experience for others.

Appendix B: Community Profiles

Leadership
Rabbi Adina Allen
Co-founder & Creative Director
Jeff Kasowitz
Co-founder & Executive Director

Senior Educator
Program Manager
Studio and Operations Manager
Senior Advisor
Consulting Faculty
Various Guest Facilitators

Board members: 7

Target Audience
People of all ages

2019
Unique Participants: 1500
Total Participants: 2127

2019
Community Gatherings
65

Primary Modes of Engagement
Studio Immersives
Creative Facilitator Training
Professional development
Open Studios
Public programs
High Holiday services
Malkhut was developed to expand Jewish collaboration and engagement in Western Queens. The community offers ecstatic, musical, and contemplative prayer, mindfulness meditation through a Jewish lens, study of Jewish sources, and social justice work.

They are striving to build an open, inclusive community of spiritual seekers, especially for those who may not have found a home in more conventional religious settings. This includes Jewish individuals of all ages, fellow travelers, families with kids, interfaith couples, Jews of color, LGBTQ folks, and curious seekers. Malkhut is open to those from other faith traditions who find meaning in Judaism.

Malkhut aims to increase activism within the community, and serve as spiritual home and source of sustenance for activists to refuel, reflect, and connect their work to Jewish values and teachings. They partner with groups that work to fight racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. They also collaborate with organizations – like Jews for Racial and Economic Justice and Hate Free Zones – that work on racial and economic justice, immigration issues, and other justice issues that affect the community in Queens.

### Leadership

**Rabbi Rachel Goldenberg**

Program & Community Coordinator

### Target Audience

People of all ages

### Unique Participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1664</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Community Gatherings

54

### Primary Modes of Engagement

- Shabbat services
- Holidays services & celebrations
- Study
- Children’s learning programs
- Social justice activism

Appendix B: Community Profiles
The Open Temple is an experimental spiritual community that aims to inspire individuals and families toward lives of Jewish curiosity, creativity, and critical thought while re-enchanting and reinvigorating them to live more meaningful, connected, and purposeful lives. Open Temple is spearheading ways for people to reimagine familiar traditions as they explore Judaism through the playful landscape of its Venice Beach artistic and cultural center. “Co-creators” are committed participants of all ages who are artists, lawyers, industry professionals, actors, graduate students, and professors.

To revitalize Jewish practice in surprising and creative ways for the 21st-century seeker, Open Temple offers experimental opportunities to engage in Jewish life, including “ritual happenings,” “creative classes” and “multimedia portals.” They use Jewish ritual moments, spiritual assembly, and learning to inspire curiosity, creativity and critical thought.

**Leadership**

Rabbi Lori Schneide Shapiro  
Founding Rabbi & Artistic Director

**Cantorial Soloist**

**Accountant / Bookkeeper**

**Jubilee Fellow**

**Teacher**

**Musicians**

**Resident Spiritual Director**

Board members: 9

**Target Audience**

People of all ages

**2019**

Unique Participants: 836  
Total Participants: 2850

**2019**

Community Gatherings: 201

**Primary Modes of Engagement**

Shabbat  
Rosh Hodesh  
Study  
Men’s club  
Conversion class  
Creative Torah Academy  
Life cycle officiation  
Parenting groups & workshops
The Well creates and fosters an accessible, inclusive, relationship-driven community for young adults and young families. Through relationship building and participant-driven programming, The Well provides opportunities for spiritual growth, character development, and community involvement in order to increase the number of young adults who are empowered to actively participate in inspiring and relevant community-centric Jewish life. The Well is a project of the Lori Talsky Zekelman Fund at Temple Israel. The synagogue provides in-kind support and fiscal sponsorship. The Well otherwise operates autonomously.

Using one-on-one coffee dates has enabled The Well to make substantive connections based on young adults’ shared interests. The staff works closely with a team of volunteer leaders called “The Bucket List” that meets monthly. The professional and lay leaders collaboratively facilitate network weaving and support grassroots community building. Through its empowerment-centric co-creation model, The Well supports hundreds of gatherings each year. Organizational partnerships are the norm for The Well, which has collaborated with more than 35 local organizations.

### Leadership
- **Rabbi Dan Horwitz**
  Outgoing Founding Director
- **Rabbi Jeff Strombaugh**
  Incoming Executive Director
- **Operations Manager**
- **Intern**
- **Board members: 14**

### Target Audience
- **Young Adults and Young families**

### 2019
- **Unique Participants:** 1152
- **Total Participants:** 4911
- **Community Gatherings:** 336

### Primary Modes of Engagement
- Coffee dates
- Service opportunities
- Friday night services
- Innovative holiday gatherings
- Study
- Tot Shabbat
- Weekend retreats
- Shared interest groups
- Shabbat dinners