

Shared Role and Rule: Models for Community Centers In Israel*

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The Matnassim are committed to a decentralized approach in delivering services while developing accountability and responsibility on the local level. They become living examples of "independent interdependence."

TODAY in Israel the University and the field of communal service have a responsibility to anticipate the most vexing systemic problems facing human services in general, and community centers in Israel specifically. In this article I focus on an issue which strikes me, as a long time observer of the Israeli scene, as one of those concerns: in a word, governance. My premise is a simple one. The *Matnassim**** represent in microcosm a break with the past. In a country where even the evening menu can be analyzed in political and politicized terms, the *Matnassim* have emerged as an institution which somehow attempts to be, if you will, transpolitical.

By transpolitical I do not suggest that the leaders of *Matnassim*, employed and otherwise, do not engage in political processes. Rather it is that so far, the processes have not been grounded in the party machinations and labels which so commonly are the key to understanding who, when and why people gain and lose power in Israel.

The *Matnassim* admittedly could not exist by being aloof from, or unaffected by, political realities. Indeed if I have correctly observed the attitudes and be-

havior of certain mayors and other elected officials toward some *Matnas* directors, I note that they are grounded in a healthy respect (fear?) of the political prowess of those particular directors.

With all that, the stakeholders in *Matnassim* are in a strange and—some would say, at times a straining—alliance of individuals and institutions. For, to the best of my knowledge, the *Matnassim* have few counterparts in Western society. They are "sanctioned" by a Ministry (Education), by a private international non-profit organization (Joint Distribution Committee), by municipal governments, and, in theory, by their constituencies. In addition the sometimes faint shadow of party members can be seen hovering, as they attempt to ascertain the role, power, importance, and perhaps, even use of the *Matnassim*. This latter may be an unfair judgment, but it is more than a strong impression. The university also has no small interest in all of this, given the historic connection between field, Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), government and the university itself *vis a vis* field placement, practice concerns, settings for employment, and so forth.

The *Matnassim* can thus be seen as a kind of metaphor for Israel itself. Questions of governance abound. Here I acknowledge my debt to the writings of Daniel Elazar and his colleagues who in another context deal with issues of governance.¹ Elazar's life-long work

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*** *Matnas* (plural, *Matnassim*) is an acronym for *Mercaz (ai) Tarbut Noar V'sport*, translated, Center(s) for culture, youth and sport.

¹ Elazar's work and that of his colleagues are not reviewed here in any comprehensive way. His

has been devoted to theories of governance—who rules, when and how, circumstances and instances when new forms of governance are evolved to respond to changing needs, aspirations, sources and control of power, and the like.

The concept of shared rule is a major issue world wide today. In a highly centralized system strains are constant. In contemporary political and organizational theory, de-centralization is considered desirable and is a needed direction for large systems. Historically, organizations, like governments, can only be structured following a limited number of models. Granting possible permutations, they can be run hierarchically, with all decisions made at the top; they can be decentralized with clear understandings of the limits of their activities; there can be mutually arrived at understandings of the circumstances under which decisions are best made centrally or locally; and there can be combinations of the three.

What is striking is that in Matnassim, the members seem to be the least empowered of all the players in the power game and in turn have become dependent on the process. I appreciate cultural differences and reality, and am not attempting here to foist a "foreign" model upon Israeli institutions. Arnulf Pins taught the fields of Jewish communal service and social services to expand their horizons and look at new areas of knowledge. Once he wrote, "Need makes action urgent, and yet (one must) think and plan carefully when issues are complex and conse-

book on American Jewish life, *Community and Polity*, has become a classic. His writings on federalism are extensive. Those that are focused especially on issues of Jewish governance can be found in the catalogue of the Jerusalem Center for Jewish Public Affairs, the non-profit center which Elazar established. It brings together two other institutions of his creation, the Institute on Federalism and the Center for the Study of Jewish Communities.

quences serious."² The statement is still a relevant one, and I share its message.

Power sharing and shared rule are concepts drawn from the theories of federalism. Models grow out of an appreciation that some issues, by their nature, are best handled by a centralized authority, while others are best left to people at a local level of decision-making. The concepts have their origins in an evolving American theory of political governance but some have come to broad application throughout the world. Daniel Elazar, especially, has applied these theories to develop alternate models of governance for and in the West Bank.³ He has identified over 100 examples of varied forms of shared rule in countries throughout the world. They range from relationships and powers of governance in such diverse examples as Northern Ireland to England, Swiss cantons to their national government, Puerto Rico to United States as well as local governments to the national government in Israel. They obviously take many forms, both formal and informal, sometimes by design and sometimes by accident.⁴ There is a dynamic set of interactions among people, governments, geography and often the very interaction explains the forms evolved rather than "design or inclinations."⁵

² Arnulf Pins, "Changes in Social Work Education," *Social Work*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1971), p. 15.

³ D. J. Elazar, *American Federalism: A View from the States*. Third edition. N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1979.

———, *Self Rule/Shared Rule: Federal solutions to the Middle East Conflict*. Ramat Gan, Israel: Turtle Dove Press, 1979.

———, ed., *From Autonomy to Share Rule: Options for Judea, Samaria and Gaza* JCPA, Jerusalem, 1983.

———, chairman *Shared Rule: The Only Realistic Option for Peace*. JCPA, Jerusalem, 1983.

⁴ E. Torgovnik and E. Katziz, "New Forms of Power Sharing in the Local Arena" p. i. mimeo. Annual Conference, Association of Centers for Federal Studies, Jerusalem, October, 1984.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2.

In some instances inter- and intra-ethnic considerations help explain the forms of governance which evolve. Federalism, a kind of division or separation of powers, results. Some of the outcomes are affected by the consequences of interdependence and mutual penetration of roles and functions. Thus, in understanding the particular way that power of governance has come to be shared or distributed, one would have to understand the history of prior relationships and use of power.⁶

Sometimes a combination of the powers of government and non-government results—private and public, local, national and international—not necessarily in equal power and resources but with all interested in outcomes and delineation of respective roles.⁷

Matnassim can be seen as a kind of permutation of what Elazar calls a federal municipal entity. Matnassim will thus face the same kind of questions faced by governments, i.e., simultaneous, multiple loyalties of the participant in more than one form of government. (Think of possible dilemmas of a Matnas director in this regard: hired nationally, responsible on one level to a local board, answerable to a supervisor in a centralized chain of command, having wide latitude in operating within the chain of command, and simultaneously reflecting expectations of a Center, while remaining mindful of local political realities, sources of income, and the like throughout these dizzying realities). Elazar coined the phrase "independent interdependence"⁸ which might be aptly applied to such a situation.

On the larger scene, beyond Matnassim and Centers, the world-wide trend has seen the assertions of autonomy and self-rule on the part of peoples, nations, organizations and individuals, coupled with a simultaneous deepening of inter-dependence.⁹

Opinion makers evolve sets of beliefs, values, assumptions and plans for action, both within and between governmental entities, territories and combinations with a great deal of emotional and pragmatic emphasis on various sovereignties involved.¹⁰ As one reviews the uprisings and national struggles throughout the world the result of not accommodating to this reality becomes apparent. Countless examples in Jewish life can be cited; the changing nature of Israel—Diaspora relations and the Jewish Agency and the Israel government are but two.

While in theory power is shared by all people, in reality there is never an absolute division of powers, and attempts are constantly made to separate and shift powers. What evolves is a concept of self rule and shared rule,¹¹ where trade-offs and agreements are struck to achieve the balances necessary to govern. The result is "a share of power and a share in power."¹²

The goal then becomes to move a given government or system "to compel cooperation and coalition building among constituencies in order for any particular constituency to achieve its ends."¹³

In understanding the concept of

⁶ I. D. Duchacek, "Comparative Federalism: An Agenda for Additional Research", p. 3, mimeo. Annual Conference, Association of Centers for Federal Studies, Jerusalem, October, 1984.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹ J. Kincaid, "Sharing Power in the Federal System: The American States in World Affairs," mimeo, 30 pp. Annual Conference 1984 Association of Centers for Federal Studies, Jerusalem.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹¹ D. J. Elazar, *Self Rule/Shared Rule*, *op. cit.*

¹² Kincaid, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹³ C. E. Lindblom, *The Policy Making Process*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968, quoted by J. Kincaid, p. 20 *ibid.*

shared rule and self rule, Elazar underscores the need to develop shared arrangements for governance by consent¹⁴ which includes the need at times to engage in "political inventions," that is, to create new forms and functions, if need be, albeit by consent of those involved.

A series of principles thus evolve which can be used in applying the doctrine of shared rule. One such set follows:

1. Governance at the local level should have adequate power to undertake activities.
2. Shared rule should relate to the issues which concern everyone who is serving and/or being served.
3. The people being served should have the power to form, maintain or dissolve the service being offered.
4. Those being served should have the authority to raise needed revenues to pay for goods and services which *they* decide are needed.
5. They should have the authority to determine rules and conditions under which the service operates and makes staff accountable.¹⁵

A series of tensions are predictable and one author has developed a matrix of four intersecting dimensions which often come into play when trying to evolve the "rules of the game." (It is important to keep in mind that this literature deals almost entirely with political entities but I hope the analogues for Matnassim are clear). These are Politics, Promoters, Parties to Agreements and Public Opinion Forums.¹⁶

Politics

The issue here is to clarify or have clarified who really rules and what entity is being ruled.

Promoters

Who is acting on whose behalf and what are the circumstances? Motives vary and change and those who are allies in action at one moment can be in opposition at another time as their respective goals change.

Parties to Agreements

Who makes alliances, signs understandings, draws up contracts and sees that they are fulfilled? How can agreements be enforced? Who has the power to do so?

Public Opinion Forums

Who shapes the forums and opportunities for discussion and how is this done? What place and power do the people have in affecting what is being offered?

These forces affect and are affected in turn by each other. It is thus possible to chart each of the matrices in the governing processes.

In all systems there are both formal and informal structures and of course formal and informal leadership relations which are at work horizontally and hierarchically. Decision-making in systems which have both centralized and decentralized power and decision-making roles on both the local and national level must be understood and appreciated. Lanir discusses this with special reference to kibbutzim and has an approach which commends itself for use by Matnassim.¹⁷ (He diagrammed de-

¹⁴ D. Elazar, *Shared Rule: The Only Realistic Option for Peace*, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Adapted from R. Hawkins, "Power Sharing and Municipal Governance." 20 pp. Annual Conference, Association of Centers for Federal Studies, Jerusalem, 1984.

¹⁶ J. Kincaid, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-24.

¹⁷ Y. Lanir, "The Kibbutz as a Federative Socio-Political System," mimeo. Yad Tabenkin Institute, Givat Brenner, 1983.

———, "Is There in Kibbutz an Ideological and

cision-making in the kibbutz movement where both centralized and decentralized power exists together with decision-making roles of representatives on the local *and* national level.)

To this point I have attempted to review, albeit superficially and hastily, some definitions and principles from political theory which I think are useful for Matnassim: principles which define the components and levels of governance, issues regarding the rights of the governed and the governing, points of tension, reality and possibility.

Before turning to more specific connections that these political theories could have for Matnassim I feel that some mapping of relationships and interrelationships within Matnassim will be helpful. I have therefore chosen a number of arbitrary classifications in order to highlight how complex the Matnassim are as an organization.

Nationally and locally Matnassim have connections to, and are affected by the Joint Distribution Committee, the United Israel Appeal and the Keren Hayesod—all bodies from abroad.

Project Renewal introduced twinning of communities in Israel and abroad and often the Matnas is central to the local programming. The Hevrat (Corporation of Community Centers) and the local Matnas have connections to the national Ministry of Education and the local mayor's office, to say nothing of other ministries.

Interplay between twinned communities, national and local governments, Jewish Welfare Board, World Confederation of YMHA's and the Jewish Agency results in expectations and pressures which may at times be at cross purposes.

Adding further to an already complex

situation are the intersection of staffing patterns, personnel needs, and the power of the various institutions involved. The national director of the Corporation is named by the Minister of Education, not by the national board. Local directors are hired, with the consent of the local boards, through a national process which in turn involves representatives of the Ministry, J.D.C., the University and others. While the local board can refuse to work with a given director, the latter cannot be fired from the system by the local board. In at least one city served by Matnassim, the rules of the game allow a board to be fired upon recommendation of staff. Local boards can hire and fire staff below the level of directors. Regional consultants have no line authority, that is, they have no one responsible to them although they are responsible for giving advice and counsel to upgrade practice. At the local level, board members need not be members of the Matnas in order to serve on the board. In some instances they represent government units or political figures who in turn *may* see the *Matnas* as a potential source of political power or status.

Direct and indirect funding can come from many sources. Capital funds can come through the Israel Education Fund of United Jewish Appeal, or Project Renewal funds from a given Diaspora community, as well as co-mingled funds from the above sources and/or an individual donor.

Programmatic and administrative funds come indirectly or directly in greater or lesser degree from the government, JDC, local municipalities, dues, fees for service and local fund raising.

There is a crafting of the roles and rules of the various stake holders—individual and group, public and private, local, national and international, professional and lay, within the Corporation of

Political Elite?" Yad Tabenkin Institute, Givat Brenner, 1983.

Centers, between it and the Centers and the complex constellation listed above.

At the heart of this truly complex organization is a tension, not unknown in America, but far more complex in Israel. The Center, as in America, is an amalgam of a service agency welded into an association. The Matnas "sells" its services—those it feels meet the goals of the Corporation of Community Centers—but it can ultimately only purvey what people *want*, which is not always what they *need*.

In the process of governing—deciding who has which powers—it appears the primary stakeholder, the member, may have the least formal power while in reality informally wielding the most power. At the board levels, local and national, the member representative can theoretically be outvoted by the representatives of the various forces referred to above. But the members can vote with their feet. They can ratify the decisions made by their attendance at those services which they desire and of course do the opposite through their absence.

There is, however, no structural legitimation of the member's power commensurate with the actuality of that power. It is my premise that the use of the political theories reviewed earlier could reinforce the community building premises of Centers in a more conceptual and functional way. Project Renewal has had success where citizen participation has been high. In turn their success stories have been grounded in human relationships which in turn were shaped by trust and need.¹⁸

A board of directors, then, is a balance of forces—representative and direct—which speak for *all* the communities of interest involved in the enterprise. I suggest, therefore, that Matnassim represent, in microcosm, the search for autonomy and self-direction which engages so much of the world today. However benevolent staff, organization, university or governmental representatives may be, they will undoubtedly find more pressure in the future from the primary stakeholders of Centers, the members.

Anticipating the growth of desire to share power and share rule seems to be the Centers' intentions. It is not clear, however, that the members are always clear about these intentions. The changing roles will grow from changing intentions and sometimes the intentions will clash. Recalling Pin again in another context, he once said, "Dealing with the imperatives of the future requires facing the present realities with imagination and boldness."¹⁹ I like to think he would use that remark in this context also. A careful reading of the trends suggests that shrinking resources will produce harder questioning and sharper measurements of accomplishment. Centers may be viewed as oases of "light refreshment" during serious and difficult times or they may be seen as places for more serious nourishment, appropriate to the toughness of the times. Hard times demand both. The quantities, degrees, time and place of activities increasingly must be decided by, and with, the consumer of the ser-

¹⁸ See particularly W. R. Conrad and W. E. Glenn, *The Effective Voluntary Board of Directors: What It Is and How It Works*. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1976, and J. Dauber & G. B. Bubis, *Board-Staff Relations* (in press). 1985 HUC Los Angeles: Hebrew Union College, 1985.

The rise and role of voluntary boards is in its infancy in Israel. No automatic transfer of models or principles is intended. However, there is much

to commend conscious attempts at least to test out the efficacy of the principles in Israel, assuming the universality of human traits and proclivities.

¹⁹ A. M. Pins, "The Number, Size and Programs of Social Work and the Need for Professional Manpower," E. Winston, M. Wittman, A. M. Pins and W. Cohen, in *Social Work Education and Social Welfare Manpower*. New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1965.

vice, in this instance the Center member. The dilemma is that the times call for innovation even as research demonstrates that those most active in leadership are more likely to conserve the status quo.²⁰

Caiden²¹ has wisely counseled that the application of any theory grounded in another culture is always problematic. He rightly points out that every country has its own administrative culture and Israel is no exception. Especially complicating cross cultural application of principles is the difficulty in introducing yet another subcultural strand to the intertwining ones he sees blended in Israel's institutions: ancient, Jewish, Ottoman, British, Eastern European and early 20th century Israeli.

There are problems in the calls for innovative strategies rather than inaction. Matnassim themselves are the result of a series of innovative strategies and it thus becomes easier to presume continued innovation as the hallmark of Matnassim. Certainly that seemed to be Pins' premise in his work in Israel: to be sensitive to Israel's realities but to attempt to introduce from elsewhere concepts which are appropriate.

Matnassim's role in education in governance will help shape the way Israel's government and citizens inter-relate. Moving and changing quickly, while thinking and planning carefully, must be their hallmark as they address themselves to the ever evolving issues. Pins advocated it years ago.²² It is just as relevant today.

²⁰ Y. Lanir, "Is there in Kibbutz . . .," p. 18.

²¹ G. E. Caiden, *Israel's Administrative Culture*, University of California Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies, 1970, 118 pp. This monograph should be required reading for anyone trying to penetrate the bureaucratic system in Israel. It provides an historical and cultural context for understanding the complexities, strengths, realities and weaknesses of the conventional bureaucracy in Israel.

²² Pins, *op. cit.*

The models for active citizenry involvement, which I suggest here, get to the heart of a dilemma in Israel. Few would question the vitality of Israel as a democracy. However, many question its forms, which lean so heavily upon the party key. This in turn results in "civil" understandings between groups to allow for convenient continuity of the status quo.

The ingenious board structure of Matnassim was a brilliant and bold stroke. It went beyond the conventional way boards are often constructed while simultaneously demonstrating an astute understanding of real politics. The models and principles so briefly reviewed here have the possibility for further evolving the structure within the constraints of political and bureaucratic reality.

The Matnassim are committed to a decentralized approach in delivering services while developing accountability and responsibility on the local level. They become living examples of "independent interdependence."

Given the resistance and ambivalence toward decentralization in Israeli society because of its administrative culture, the involvement of members in ever more important decisions leads to the cultivation of a new counter culture against *Zabashism* (*Zot Ha Baya Shelochem*, translated, that's their problem). The beginning efforts at fund raising in Matnassim are another approach to the same issue. If the sources quoted above are right, and I believe they are, then the ramifications of the world-wide trend to self rule and autonomy (granting the variety of meaning those words have politically) are manifest. Israel needs living laboratories to help prepare people for the outcomes and consequence of increased local self rule. Those consequences must include the twinning of words, responsibility and accountability. (A colleague and friend,

Uri Yanai, was the first to point out to me that there is no one word for accountability in Hebrew. Is that an accident?). But the words must move beyond rhetoric. The strains within are many. Contradictions abound. That is a restraint and a challenge.

With decentralization come issues related to shared power. Who has the right to make decision? When? Under what circumstances? Who hires, fires? Who trains? Evaluates? Sets goals? When does input begin at the "bottom"? How does it get to the "top"? Who decides that? What are the criteria for deciding the authority and responsibility of the members *vis a vis* "their" Center? Who "owns" the Center anyway? How is the balance to be found between a Center as a social service agency and a membership organization? What limits are there to the social action that members can engage in using the Center as a vehicle for change? Can or *should* staff use Saul Alinsky's model of confrontation to develop change in a Center or a community? What if the Ministry of Education or the JDC doesn't like the turn of events? How conditional is their support? How conditional should it be? Who decides the criteria? How much power can lay people *really* have in Centers? Which lay people?

I believe all these questions intertwine. At their heart there is an overriding one. What is to be the future of Matnassim as instruments for change and value education in Israel? Citizen participation and involvement, responsibility in and for Matnassim, seem to be at the heart of this value education as a frame for Israel's society. The role of citizen and government, the governed and the governing, must be re-delineated in the years ahead.

Careful consideration must be given to modes of governance and the optimum roles that are to be played by the stakeholders—all the stakeholders—in the process. No one mode of governance is automatically better or worse than the other. Goals must decide structure, not vice versa.

Obviously, I have shared *my* biases. Shared powers *do* enhance responsibility. All those involved in Matnassim have expectations which are legitimate but which may not be congruent. *The ways actions are decided upon thus at times may be more important than the actions themselves.*

Statements such as those I have made in this article often have a way of fading away. Reading fills time and the printed page can fill space. Arnulf Pins approached practice thus:

- * frame the questions which will lead to, and not hide, answers.
- * don't fear change, but don't change for change's sake.
- * draw upon new knowledge *and* upon past sources for sustenance and insight.
- * ask "why" all the time.
- * be open in the process.

These were Pins' ways. And they are his bequest to us and our inheritance from him. "Dealing with the imperatives of the future requires facing the present realities with imagination and boldness."²³ Those were his words. They live. May his memory be a blessing forever and his teaching an example to help us in our practice in the future as it has to this day.

²³ From E. Winston et al., *op. cit.*