

## The Grand Pivot of Jewish education

### **A Series of Essays by Gidi Grinstein and Eran Shayshon**

The coronavirus is emerging to be a transformative event that is affecting many Jewish institutions, structures and patterns of conduct, and potentially affecting the entire Jewish People. It may become the shaping challenge of our time. At the same time, it also presents an unparalleled opportunity to bring a new vitality and energy into Jewish life worldwide.

In a matter of weeks, the Coronavirus has brought Jewish education around the world to go online. The amount, quality and diversity of content could have a profound, long-lasting positive impact on the menu of options for Jewish education, for all ages in all geographies. As distance learning becomes the norm, the 'cloud' becomes saturated with Jewish content and Jewish communities will need an alternative, or complementary educational model, to compensate for the changed financial reality. By harnessing the momentum of distance learning, the cost of Jewish education could be significantly lowered.

Israel can play a role in helping Jewish communities realize this opportunity from its years of experience in developing a model of remote learning in times of emergencies. Because of the unique context in which the Israeli model was developed, it includes not only an online learning component, but also a supportive social framework that aims to enable a familiar environment that meets the emotional needs of students. Despite the criticism in Israel towards the distance learning model during the Coronavirus outbreak, Israel still stands unique even in comparison to the world's most advanced educational systems. This is also a critical aspect for Jewish communities that are using their educational frameworks to strengthen Jewish identity.

Seizing this opportunity requires courageous and visionary leadership. As Jewish communities will tend to focus on domestic affairs and rehabilitation efforts, the limited resources that are available must be channeled to promote inclusive and affordable education.

Such leadership should focus on creating a “universal adaptor” for educational content, namely a platform where Jewish online content will be integrated and could serve Jewish educators and communities worldwide. With such a platform, an effective, inclusive and affordable educational framework will be created. An online Jewish content database will also help to standardize Jewish education.

Significant learning requires more integration of parents and family. The increased involvement of parents in their children’s educational lives during home isolation should be encouraged and enhanced by Jewish educators and nonprofits. A new educational approach should incorporate and enhance the family framework in shaping Jewish identity.



Finally, new technologies may upgrade possibilities to create formative personal educational experiences in distance learning. Virtual conferences, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and self-manufacturing based on 3D printing, are all technologies that are likely to blossom in the aftermath of the Coronavirus outbreak. Using these technologies through a combination of gaming-based education, collaborative creation, virtual communities and tours, and collaborative volunteering projects can provide a meaningful educational experience.

--

*Gidi Grinstein is the Founder and President of the Reut Group, and now also serves as the President of Tikkun Olam Makers (TOM). Eran Shayshon is the Executive Director of the Reut Group.*

*The Reut Group will be launching a collective learning seminar with representatives of educational leadership in Israel and the Jewish world and will be updated over the next few weeks based on a series of virtual meetings. These activities are a part of the Reut Group's "Seminar 2.0," inspired by the "seminar" led by David Ben-Gurion in 1947 in which he built the framework for Israel's national security concept. Seminar 2.0 aims to encourage the collective learning and adaptation of the State of Israel and the Jewish people in this new era.*