Makom's 4HQ at Moishe House:
Opening the Door for Thicker Conversations about Israel

March 2021

Executive Summary

Background

In Spring 2018, Makom and Moishe House—with the support of the Jim Joseph Foundation—embarked on an unprecedented partnership, introducing Makom's signature "4HQ" program within Moishe House communities. "4HQ at Moishe House" is an 18-month cohort-based program, including a six-day trip to Israel, webinars about Israeli history and contemporary issues, mentoring sessions to provide guidance for program facilitation, and an in-person retreat/reunion several months after the trip. Participants commit to facilitating five Israel programs during their 4HQ tenure, and they're eligible for microgrants to support this activity. Participants have included Moishe House residents, participants in the Moishe House Without Walls framework, and a small number of Moishe House professionals. To date, two cohorts have run, consisting of 28 participants in the first cohort and 44 in the second, with a third cohort being planned.

To explore the outcomes created by 4HQ at Moishe House—for cohort members, their peers, and the overall organizational culture—Makom engaged Rosov Consulting to evaluate the program's first two cohorts. A summary of the evaluation's main findings are provided below.

Understanding Israel Differently

New Perspectives and Broader Horizons

The 4HQ program—particularly the trip to Israel—expanded participants' horizons, broadening their exposure to and engagement with a wide array of social and political narratives in and about Israel, many of which they were not familiar with previously. The participants were invited to explore "the liberating possibility of changing their minds." Participants noted several aspects of the trip that contributed to developing more nuanced perspectives. These included hearing a multiplicity of narratives; encountering different groups of people who, however painfully, must find ways to coexist; and discussing (controversial) governmental policies.

Shifts in their Relationships to Israel

Participants were able to move beyond reductive or monolithic conceptions of Israel and leave with more appreciation for the depth of social experience and cultural expression in the country. As a result, they came away with more informed perspectives on Israel as a real country and not just as an "issue" or "concept." It made their own relationships with Israel both thicker and increasingly complex.

Beyond Complexity to Multidimensionality

4HQ's contribution to broadening participants' perspectives about Israel is demonstrated by the different ways in which participants described Israel at the start and end of their time in the 4HQ program. In particular, those who described Israel as "complex" or "complicated" *before* going on the trip developed a richer, deeper view of the complexity and what Israel means to them. The newfound breadth and depth of thought demonstrated on their return suggests how the program provides a way to get beyond a glib tag line about Israel's complexity and to approach it within a framing that incorporates relevant political, historical, cultural, and social considerations. It makes Israel multidimensional.

4HQ Stands Apart from Other Programs

Participants shared that the honest, far-reaching, and often challenging conversations on the trip set the 4HQ program apart from all other Israel experiences in which they had previously participated. Their 4HQ experience felt different because of the range of perspectives they encountered through the program and because of the trip's focus on a variety of issues with which Israeli society struggles. Additionally, the 4HQ program differed from previous Israel experiences because, this time, they were being taught *how* to take their newfound knowledge back to the United States, share it with their peers, develop resonant educational and programmatic goals, and ultimately figure out how to implement them.

Newfound Confidence as Facilitators of Israel Programming

Before embarking on 4HQ, many participants expressed concerns and apprehensions about facilitating Israel programming. By the program's end, these individuals felt a great deal more confident in their ability to facilitate conversations and programs about Israel, crediting both the content and technique provided by the program. This confidence came, first, from feeling more knowledgeable and being better aware of a range of perspectives, and second from focused training on techniques for facilitating challenging discussions. Learning such techniques was no less important in seeing themselves as better prepared to facilitate Israel programming in their Moishe House communities.

Program Staff as Role Models for Facilitation

Participants observed that the Israel trip was ripe with thoughtful—yet challenging—questions posed by the program staff. They noted how these questions assisted with pushing the conversation toward richer exploration of ideas, highlighting different points of view without escalating or transitioning to a more tense encounter. In addition, the staff articulated and modeled rules for safe and fair discussion. This modeling provided participants with valuable and replicable examples for their own facilitation.

Staff made a conscious effort to stay as politically neutral as possible in their facilitation. This educational decision is one of the most powerful elements of the 4HQ experience; the program models a method for unpacking and engaging with any and all political points of view. Mentors received high praise for their knowledge about Israel, abilities to communicate their knowledge in resonant ways, and ongoing accessibility to participants. These traits galvanized the relationships between many participants and their mentors, both during and after the trip, forging ongoing relationships that continued to enhance the quality of Israel programs being offered at Moishe House.

Increased Self-Awareness Impacts Facilitation

The experience of developing greater facilitative abilities has a metacognitive dimension whereby participants developed greater awareness of what they know and what they do not know. With this awareness came a loss of paralysis, a feeling of no longer being limited by a lack of knowledge. This awareness, and the realization that they don't need to be expert on all matters (or even any matter), further enhanced participants' confidence to facilitate.

Opening the Door at Moishe House to a Deeper, More Nuanced Israel

Culture More than Competencies

For the staff at Moishe House, the most important outcome of their relationship with Makom has been that it signals a readiness to change how they relate to and engage with Israel; it was less about upskilling a small number of individuals. As they see it, the very fact that Moishe House chose to introduce 4HQ to its constituents was an unprecedented step toward engaging with Israel more seriously. Nevertheless, at the leadership level, the organization's stance toward Israel shifted over the course of their engagement with Makom and 4HQ. For example, the organization's leadership strongly considered opening Makom-led 4HQ programming about Israel's proposed annexation plans to the wider Moishe House community—beyond cohort members. They had planned to dedicate a significant portion of their annual staff training to 4HQ (which was canceled due to the pandemic). In addition, it seems that new hires to the organization have more diverse views about Israel compared to those who had previously joined the Moishe House team. Staff members feel that the doors to having deeper, more nuanced conversations about Israel at Moishe House have been opened.

Next Steps

Having opened the doors to more authentic programming about Israel, Moishe House staff know they must now ensure that this programming is meaningful and relevant to residents and their peers. They recognize this will require continued work. At

the same time, several staff members suggest a different—even unexpected—way forward. They see value in having more conversations and programs specifically about Israel—that's a point of consensus. However, they wonder if 4HQ's greatest contribution—and potential—is in creating space to have "stretching" conversations about other topics that may feel loaded or uncomfortable, such as race, gun control, or immigration.

Summary

Overall, participants in 4HQ at Moishe House shared that the program challenged them to think differently. It exposed them to new information and different narratives about Israel, encouraged them to consider a multitude of perspectives, engaged them in meaningful conversations, provided them with a network of like-minded young adults to turn for support around Israel, and opened them to exploring even more questions. Specifically, these outcomes can be analyzed in terms of shifts in knowledge, attitude, and behavior.

Knowledge: Program alumni are better informed about the multidimensional nature of Israel today. They are better able to situate the conflict or the politics of Israel within a broader context and within a broader range of perspectives.

Attitude: Program alumni are emotionally ready to facilitate charged and challenging conversations; we identified this as a particular payoff that comes from the metacognitive shift they experienced.

Behavior: Program alumni have gained and are employing skills that enable them to facilitate challenging conversations about Israel, and perhaps other topics too.

At the organizational level, Moishe House has more fully opened the door to Israel. There has been a shift in the appetite of senior leadership to encourage serious conversation and learning about Israel and about other charged social, political, and cultural issues.

Introduction

In Spring 2018, Makom and Moishe House—with the support of the Jim Joseph Foundation—embarked on an unprecedented partnership, introducing Makom's signature "4HQ" program within Moishe House communities. 4HQ (shorthand for "Four Hatikvah Questions") is an approach to Israel education anchored in the four foci of the final verse of Israel's national anthem: "To be … a people … free … in our land"—security, identity, democracy, and territory. 4HQ draws on these concepts to inspire a nuanced, multifaceted understanding of issues in Israeli society, history, politics, and culture, characterized by a mix of "hugging and wrestling" with Israel. This partnership seeks to train Moishe House residents and hosts in the 4HQ methodology, in order to enrich and diversify their perceptions of Israel, and to strengthen their confidence and capacity to facilitate conversations and programs about Israel. The ultimate goal of the initiative has been to shift the culture at Moishe House from largely avoiding discussion about Israel to one that is radically open and inclusive.

"4HQ at Moishe House" is an 18-month cohort-based program, including a six-day trip to Israel early on in the program, webinars about Israeli history and contemporary issues, mentoring sessions to provide guidance for program facilitation, and an in-person retreat/reunion several months after the trip. Participants commit to facilitating five Israel programs during their 4HQ tenure, and they're eligible for microgrants to support this activity. Participants have included Moishe House residents, participants in the Moishe House Without Walls framework, and a small number of Moishe House professionals. Participants must have spent time in Israel previously; the program cannot be the first time they visit Israel. Those who participated in the second cohort were required first to complete a "test" by which they demonstrated sufficient familiarity with the issues to be addressed by the program. To date, two cohorts have run, consisting of 28 participants in the first cohort and 44 in the second, with a third cohort being planned.

To explore the outcomes created by 4HQ at Moishe House—for cohort members, their peers, and the overall organizational culture—Makom has engaged Rosov Consulting to evaluate the program's first two cohorts, focusing on the following key research questions:

1. As a result of their 4HQ experience, to what extent do cohort members experience a shift in how they relate to Israel, and what specific elements of their 4HQ training (Israel trip, webinars, mentoring, retreat, etc.) contribute to their learning?

2. To what extent do cohort members feel confident and equipped to facilitate conversations about Israel and create Israel programming?

3. To what extent is there a shift in the overall culture at Moishe House to be open to having deeper conversations or programs about Israel, or about complex and potentially divisive subjects in general?

To answer these questions, we conducted video interviews at the start and end of the program with five participants from Cohort 1 and eight participants from Cohort 2. Interviewees were selected with Makom and Moishe House's guidance to construct a representative sample with regards to gender and geography. We also conducted interviews with seven Moishe House staff members in Spring 2020 (toward the end of Cohort 2) to explore their perceptions of the program's impact on the organization more broadly. Finally, we reviewed 71 logs from mentors' meetings with Cohort 2 participants, to get a sense of how cohort members' facilitation skills, confidence, and program foci evolved over time.[1] We then analyzed the data and identified key findings about the contribution of the 4HQ trip to participants' perspectives, their confidence as facilitators, and the place of Israel and Israel education at Moishe House. These findings are discussed below.

Understanding Israel Differently

New Perspectives and Broader Horizons

The 4HQ program—particularly the trip to Israel—expanded participants' horizons, broadening their exposure to and engagement with a wide array of social and political narratives in and about Israel, many of which they were not familiar with previously. Through facilitated meetings with Israelis from across the political spectrum and a wide variety of social sectors, and thanks to carefully scaffolded time to discuss and process their experiences with peers and program staff, participants had an opportunity to interrogate previously held views and make space for new opinions and experiences. As Makom staff put it, the participants were invited to explore the liberating possibility of changing their minds.

Participants noted several aspects of the trip that contributed to developing more nuanced perspectives. These included hearing a multiplicity of narratives; encountering different groups of people who, however painfully, must find ways to coexist; and discussing (controversial) governmental policies. These moments—and the opportunities for learning they provided—seem to have helped participants recognize and appreciate a range of challenges within Israeli society. One participant highlighted this phenomenon by describing how, for the first time, he came to see that Israel's complexity extended some way beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to matters which had been quite unknown to him previously:

> *I tended to believe that, you know, the security issue was the most important issue about dealing with Israelis. ... [The trip] exposed me to how diverse the views are within Israeli society and how it's way more complicated than it can be painted out to be occasionally in the US media ... there's so much going on in Israeli society besides the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that I can't just make up one opinion about Israel and paint the entire country in that light. It definitely made me step back and realize I need to do a lot more digging and explore how society has formed in Israel. What other issues are important to Israelis, not just important to Americans looking at Israel?* —Cohort 2 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

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[1] We also distributed a survey to the housemates of Cohort 1 participants to probe the extent to which they perceived a change in the culture of their Moishe Houses as a result of their housemate's participation in the program. Unfortunately, there were not enough responses to yield reliable data.

This individual came to recognize that holding a singular, all-encompassing position on Israel and viewing every issue through the lens of "the conflict" was no longer a reasonable approach to engaging in Israeli political and cultural conversations. Exposure to a much greater array of sociocultural dimensions of contemporary Israel, to sociopolitical complexities that underly them, and to the diversity of views they inspire, helped him see the need to approach Israel with greater nuance and to find new ways of talking about it.

Shifts in their Own Relationships to Israel

In a similar vein, other participants shared how they developed a more detailed, deeper understanding of issues in Israeli society concerning minority groups and refugees, religious diversity, borders and settlements, and voting rights. They were able to move beyond reductive or monolithic conceptions of Israel and leave with more appreciation for the depth of social experience and cultural expression in the country. As a result, they came away with more informed perspectives on Israel as a real country and not just as an "issue" or "concept." It made their own relationships with Israel both thicker and increasingly complex.

> *I think [my relationship with Israel has] become more complicated than my relationship was previously, but like I mentioned before, it feels more real. I feel like I grapple with it in a more legitimate way now than I did when I was kind of just, like, "This is the land of my forefathers, this is where the Bible happened."... So it feels more like a real relationship, now.* —Cohort 2 Participant, at the end of 4HQ
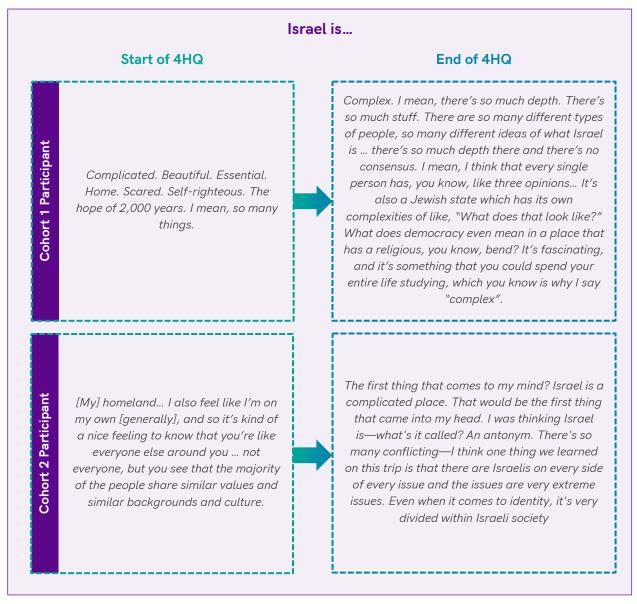
> *[Before 4HQ] I had kind of distanced myself and didn't really want to get too into the weeds, because it was uncomfortable, and I didn't have a good answer to a lot of things. I also think some people expect Jews to be able to explain Israeli politics. And so this program has allowed me to accept the fact that it is actually not the role of American Jews or Israeli Jews to speak about every Israeli policy and that that's okay and that you can still be an engaged person and citizen of the world and talk about Israel and be able to criticize it while also loving it.* —Cohort 1 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

This last comment emphasizes that the growth experienced by participants can be two-fold. In this case, the participant notes a development not only in her familiarity with the nuances of Israeli politics and society, but also in how she conceives her own role as an American Jew in explaining Israel to others. Through the 4HQ program, the way she sees herself and her relationship—or the nature of her responsibility—to Israel has shifted. She recognizes that she can shed the burden of explaining (and perhaps justifying) Israel to others, and instead she can explore Israel for herself, engage with it, and not have to hold a fully formed, convincing position. This acknowledgment is an important step in her developing an understanding of her relationship to Israel, her role at Moishe House or wherever she finds herself in conversations about Israel, and, most fundamentally, her identity as a young Jew.

New Language: Beyond Complexity to Multidimensionality

4HQ's contribution to broadening participants' perspectives about Israel is demonstrated by the different ways in which participants described Israel at the start and end of their time in the 4HQ program. We asked them to engage in a sentence completion exercise beginning with the words "Israel is…". While some

participants' responses remained consistent with time, others responded in ways that indicated how they came to see or understand Israel in a new light following their time on the program. In particular, those who described Israel as "complex" or "complicated" *before* going on the trip developed a richer, deeper view of the complexity and what Israel means to them. The following examples showcase this change, which we consistently observed across both cohorts. While these comments are not representative of *every* participant's experience, they help highlight the thickening effect the 4HQ program had on individuals' understanding of Israel and how they spoke about what matters in the country.

Israel is…

	Start of 4HQ	End of 4HQ
Cohort 1 Participant	*Complicated. Beautiful. Essential. Home. Scared. Self-righteous. The hope of 2,000 years. I mean, so many things.*	*Complex. I mean, there's so much depth. There's so much stuff. There are so many different types of people, so many different ideas of what Israel is … there's so much depth there and there's no consensus. I mean, I think that every single person has, you know, like three opinions… It's also a Jewish state which has its own complexities of like, "What does that look like?" What does democracy even mean in a place that has a religious, you know, bend? It's fascinating, and it's something that you could spend your entire life studying, which you know is why I say "complex".*
Cohort 2 Participant	*[My] homeland… I also feel like I'm on my own [generally], and so it's kind of a nice feeling to know that you're like everyone else around you … not everyone, but you see that the majority of the people share similar values and similar backgrounds and culture.*	*The first thing that comes to my mind? Israel is a complicated place. That would be the first thing that came into my head. I was thinking Israel is—what's it called? An antonym. There's so many conflicting—I think one thing we learned on this trip is that there are Israelis on every side of every issue and the issues are very extreme issues. Even when it comes to identity, it's very divided within Israeli society*

The newfound breadth and depth of thought suggested by those comments from the end of the program underscore the special contribution of 4HQ at Moishe House. The program provides a way to get beyond a glib tag line about Israel's complexity and to approach it within a framing that incorporates relevant political,

historical, cultural, and social considerations. It makes Israel multidimensional. And, as described below, it also equips program participants with newfound confidence in their own abilities to lead Israel programs. This is not just about coming to know Israel differently; it is about coming to know oneself.

4HQ Stands Apart from Other Programs

Participants shared that the honest, far-reaching, and often challenging conversations on the trip—with diverse Israelis, with 4HQ staff, and with fellow participants—set the 4HQ program apart from all other Israel experiences in which they had previously participated. Though participants had engaged in extensive Israel programming and personal travel to Israel prior to 4HQ, their 4HQ experience felt different because of the range of perspectives they encountered through the program, and because of the trip's focus on a variety of issues with which Israeli society struggles. Virtually all the participants affirmed the notion that the trip "was interested in investigating Israel's problems" while acknowledging "you can still be [proudly] Jewish and have concerns about Israel," as one participant put it. Expressing the same distinction, they recognized a shared commitment from the cohort, staff, and mentors to be willing to examine uncomfortable topics:

> *What made the trip very different was that there was a willingness to take a hard look at things that make you uncomfortable and to ask, "Why does that make me uncomfortable? What information can I learn about this to try and contextualize it? Does the context change how I feel? Does it deepen how I feel already?"* —Cohort 2 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

Pointing to a further distinction, participants shared that the 4HQ program differed from previous Israel experiences because, this time, they were being taught *how* to take their newfound knowledge back to the United States, share it with their peers, develop resonant educational and programmatic goals, and ultimately figure out how to implement them. This is a second significant dimension of the program experience.

Newfound Confidence as Facilitators of Israel Programming

Before embarking on 4HQ, multiple participants expressed their concerns and apprehensions about facilitating Israel programming. By the end of the program, these individuals felt a great deal more comfortable and confident in their ability to facilitate conversations and programs about Israel, crediting both the content and technique provided by the program. This confidence came, first and foremost, from feeling more knowledgeable and from being better aware of a range of perspectives, as noted in the previous section. In short, they felt both more qualified and, at the same time, more comfortable with what they came to realize they did not know.

> *I do feel a lot more educated coming back [from the trip]. ... I have a lot more questions, but I also feel like I can explain what the issues are. ... I think I'm more educated and more aware of the history and why there are the tensions that there are. I think I'm more able and confident to explain the issues and to teach about the issues.* —Cohort 1 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

> *I don't shy away with conversations about Israel as much. I try to steer them in different directions. ... And in some ways, I would say, I don't feel like I can make a difference in the outcomes of the situation in Israel and going in [to the program] I also didn't think that. But I do feel like I can make a difference*

in the rhetoric of my peers and making people feel supported in not needing to have a polarized opinion. And not needing to band up with the right or the left because there is nothing that's right or left. It's just more complicated than that. —Cohort 1 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

The maturity demonstrated in these quotations, particularly the newfound acceptance of the "gray area" that exists when debating political positions, highlights how changes in knowledge, perception, and attitudes about Israel contribute to a sense of self-efficacy in leading others in conversation. Beyond learning new information, participants also received focused training on techniques for facilitating challenging discussions. Learning such techniques was no less important in their seeing themselves as better prepared to facilitate Israel programming in their Moishe House communities.

Program Staff as Role Models for Facilitation

Participants observed that the Israel trip was ripe with thoughtful—yet challenging—questions posed by the program staff. They noted how these questions would assist with pushing the conversation toward richer exploration of ideas and highlight different points of view without escalating or transitioning to a more tense encounter.

[4HQ] allowed me to come up with pointed questions. To come up with a strategy to push people past that point of comfortability, but also keep it contained and uplifting. Which is hard to do when you talk about Israel. —Cohort 2 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

In addition, the staff articulated and modeled rules for safe and fair discussion, and thereby gave participants permission to do the same. It was this modeling from program staff that provided participants with valuable and replicable examples for their own facilitation.

I think it was a big confidence boost when we realized we could run these programs and we had all these facilitation tools. The facilitation tools especially were helpful, and I think during the trip there was a lot of modeling where they ran programs with us. ... You could see how these facilitation methods would function in a real context. —Cohort 2 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

I saw how those discussions were facilitated when we were on the trip and we spent an hour on the first day just talking about the ground rules and the idea of "take space, make space," not assuming people's backgrounds or what they know, things like that. ... [I'm more confident to host now] because I feel more equipped to have these discussions. Laying out ground rules and being willing, to a certain extent, to take charge of the conversation, if you see it kind of wandering off down a side path or wandering into a big argument where people are going to start pointing fingers. I feel like I have the tools to be able to defuse those situations or to redirect the focus. So I think those things still arise, and it still feels very tricky to navigate, but I think I have more of a sense of how to do that now. —Cohort 2 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

It is noteworthy that staff made a conscious effort to stay as politically neutral as possible in their facilitation of conversations. This educational decision may be one of the most powerful elements of the 4HQ experience, in that the program's educational goal is not connected to a specific political point of view but

rather is a method for unpacking and engaging with any and all political points of view. This feature was not lost on the participants, who generally found that the staff's neutral facilitation enhanced open discussion and exploration of ideas throughout the trip.

> *I felt very much like the mentors and the educators were very good at always saying, "Here's what this side says, and here's what that side says." I remember our mentor saying, "If I do this right, you're not going to have any idea what my personal opinion is." I think that usually things like Birthright, or other kinds of trips, are really pushing an agenda and it's pretty overt. I think what was great about this was that it truly was educational because it wasn't about PR or about trying to sway you one way or another. It was just about providing you with information and then saying, "Now you make up your own mind. Now that you have the facts at your fingertips, you can decide how you feel about those facts."*
> —Cohort 2 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

> *It wasn't just like, "This is my perspective, this is what I want you to hear." It was, "This is an Ethiopian's perspective. This is an Orthodox Jew's perspective. This is an Arab Jew's perspective. This is a community where they're all trying to get together. This is a community where they're pulling each other part." It wasn't just a beeline of, "Let me show you how great Israel is," or, "This is why we need to preserve Israel." It wasn't just like a single-focused idea. It was a wider perspective that you've got to decide what you wanted to believe, what you wanted to take from it. Instead of them just saying to you, "Well, this is what I want you to believe."* —Cohort 2 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

Mentors received high praise for their knowledge about Israel, their abilities to communicate their knowledge in resonant ways, and for their ongoing accessibility to participants. These traits galvanized the relationships between many participants and their mentors, both during and after the trip, forging ongoing relationships that continued to enhance the quality of Israel programs being planned and offered at Moishe House. Though not all participants formed close connections with their mentors, those who did described how their mentors modeled strong programming skills, which some participants drew on directly when planning and facilitating their own programs. One participant shared how she and her housemates wanted to understand more about how Israeli elections work. She contacted her mentor, studied the intricacies of Israel's election process with the mentor, and then taught the material to her housemates.

> *I think my mentor was excellent. She was very available to us, very knowledgeable. I think the mentors were really a significant part of what makes the program work well because you could always pull them aside and ask questions if you felt like someone in the group didn't have those questions, or you could message them privately. On planning calls, they could always provide context or information that you might not have. ... I saw how she would facilitate discussions when we were on the trip and also when we had our Shabbaton and I kind of just tried to pull from that.* —Cohort 2 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

> *One way to design the program is with the end in mind—that was something that we learned with my mentor. And I think I use it just by, you know, each time I had a program thinking about what I was hoping people would take away from it and then creating the questions or the focal point from that.*
> — Cohort 1 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

Cohort-Based Knowledge Sharing

The close connections made between participants on the trip, reinforced during the post-trip retreat/reunion, also created channels for idea sharing and program planning during the year. Even those who did not regularly rely on their 4HQ cohort for program ideas (because they preferred to program solo or had other pre-existing networks they leaned on) felt they could comfortably reach out to their peers, mentors, or program leaders and get a quick response. Though Cohort 2 participants were hindered in their ability to host programs by the COVID-19 pandemic, they felt they still had a network of peers to rely on for brainstorming, troubleshooting, and generally checking-in.[2]

> *The retreat in Baltimore was actually a huge highlight for me. It is so rare to go on a trip like this and that you actually have a chance to see all of those people again—it is almost unheard of.* —Cohort 1 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

> *And [the retreat] really reinforced the experience that we had, and that we hadn't had [enough] time to process towards the end of [the trip], and how the bonds were strong among the group. We were able to do a couple model programs or many snippets of programs. I thought that was really valuable.* —Cohort 1 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

Increased Self-Awareness Impacts Facilitation

The experience of developing greater facilitative abilities is not simply about knowing more or learning more. There is a metacognitive dimension at play whereby participants develop greater awareness of what they know and what they do not know. With this awareness comes a loss of paralysis, a feeling of no longer being limited by a lack of knowledge. This awareness, and the realization that they don't need to be expert on all matters (or even any matter), further enhances participants' confidence to facilitate. It gives them permission to say, "Here's what I know, and here's how I can help." This is a dynamic that's succinctly conveyed by the following interviewee:

> *I would say I am more confident about hosting, although less certain about the content. Just because it's— the more I've discovered, the more I'm, like, there's so much. There's so much to be talked about that it's confusing to know where to start; confusing to know how to present a topic in a way that's nuanced and balanced and not just your own personal beliefs get in the way. ... So, I think, more confident about hosting, but the more I've waded into it, the more I'm, like, it's so complex and hard to talk about.* — Cohort 2 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

As has long been known, knowledge does not exist discretely from emotion. Learning brings pleasure; struggling to master something can trigger a cycle of anxiety where mastery is still harder to achieve. The shifts in participants' understanding of Israel have carried with them a strong emotional dimension too. We heard participants explain how better understanding Israel, and better understanding what they do and do

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[2] It seems Makom's strategic decision to move the retreat/reunion earlier in the year for Cohort 2 paid off, since participants left with more ideas for programs they could run and stronger relationships to rely on for programming moving forward.

not know about it, has helped to lower their own emotional temperature when approaching conversations or debates about Israel. This phenomenon is aptly captured by one participant, who describes a shift in his approach to conversations about Israel, moving from a stance of "rebuttal" to one of "response:"

> *I came more at the conversations with a stronger perspective, and occasionally it wasn't conducive for conversation. I think I've been better after the trip. I was more open, I think, to hearing perspectives even if they conflicted with my own perspective. I was able to sit back and listen and hear through the whole thing before I kind of rebutted them—or not even rebutted, but responded. ... I think previously I saw it very much as a rebuttal. Now, I definitely see it more as a response.* —Cohort 2 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

In Summary: The Components of Growth

The growth that program participants experience includes a number of components. First, an element of being better informed about the multidimensional nature of Israel today and being able to situate the conflict or the politics of Israel within a broader context or within a broader range of perspectives. Next, there is the emotional payoff that comes from the metacognitive shift we have just described: the enhanced readiness to facilitate charged and challenging conversations. Last, participants have gained skills that enable them to facilitate challenging conversations about Israel, and perhaps other topics too; they not only *want* to do this, they also perceive themselves as being *more able* to do this. With the above quote, we have seen the kind of change these processes can induce. There is a decided difference between coming to conversations about Israel determined to rebut others' opinions and being willing to respond. It means being open to dialogue rather than being locked in to debate.

Educators, Facilitators, or Both?

Having identified the various ways in which 4HQ participants undoubtedly grow as a result of participating in this experience, a question remains about what roles these emergent adults are ready to perform within Moishe House and elsewhere. More pointedly, to what extent do the participants think of themselves as Israel educators, as facilitators of conversations about Israel, or as social conveners? Likewise, how do Makom and Moishe House think of participants in these respects, and what kind of training would be needed to achieve the organizations' desired educational outcomes?

Makom has taken Moishe House residents with varied knowledge of Israel and given them the tools to engage more meaningfully in a peer-to-peer framework for learning and conversation about Israel. Ultimately, this initiative was launched with an intent to shift the culture around Israel at Moshe House. More proximately, the hope was that the program would produce greater numbers of Moishe House constituents who are able and willing to convene their peers to discuss important concerns related to Israel. However, there is a meaningful difference between being a professional educator, a willing volunteer, and a convener of peers, both in terms of preparedness to teach and in terms of what this person can reasonably be expected to offer others.

For those participants with less firsthand experience of Israel and less general knowledge about the country, the learning curve to become a successful facilitator is especially steep:

> *I wish I would have come into it more educated, having read more texts on the past from both sides in order to make it a more educational trip. ... So all together it was very interesting, but it was a lot to take in not having known the exact facts of the history, and to take in both sides of the situation from the Arab side and the Jewish side, and then also within the group ... most people didn't seem like they had the knowledge, but they had an opinion. So it was really tough and exhausting to filter through what was valid and what wasn't valid and why people were saying things that they were saying.* —Cohort 1 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

Even those coming from a firmer starting point expressed apprehension about how far they might go and what role they were truly qualified to play:

> *The 4HQ framework that we were taught is really geared towards educators and I think fundamentally Moishe House people are not educators. We are facilitators, we are conveners. ... To be an educator, you have to have a very strong handle of content, which, if you've heard how I described people on the trip, you're already sort of at a disservice to do that kind of work because the people who you're asking to be educators aren't necessarily educated on the various, you know, subjects. So, people know how to hold space, people know how to bring people together, people know how to maybe even have like, interesting conversations, but they don't really know how to teach, and I don't think they should be asked to.*
> —Cohort 1 Participant, at the end of 4HQ

Irrespective of the conclusion reached, these comments helpfully delineate possible ways of imagining the outcomes of this program.

Opening the Door at Moishe House to a Deeper, More Nuanced Israel

Culture More than Competencies

Our conversations with Moishe House staff shed light on how they think about these matters. They're fully aware of the challenges involved in asking too much of individual 4HQ participants. As one staff member put it:

> *There is this big tension between wanting to do Israel programming or have a conversation about Israel at the houses, but then not feeling expert enough to do that. So then people wonder, "How can I show up as a 'facilitator'—do I have to do loads of pre-work to become more expert and gain a lot of confidence? Or is there a way for me to do it without getting myself in too deep with all of that?"* —Moishe House Staff Member

As some staff members see it, the answers to these questions are not, however, about ensuring that individual participants become more skilled or more expert about Israel. From their perspective, addressing this challenge is much more about engineering a broader cultural shift within the organization, in relation to Israel and in relation to other matters of import which have not been the focus of programs because of their potential divisiveness.

For the staff at Moishe House, the most important outcome of their relationship with Makom has been that it signaled a readiness to make a change in how they relate to and engage with Israel; it was less about upskilling a small number of individuals. As they see it, the very fact that Moishe House chose to introduce 4HQ to its constituents was an unprecedented step toward engaging with Israel more seriously. Cohort members affirmed this assessment when describing the culture at Moishe House prior to 4HQ – even though they were never explicitly told by Moishe House staff to avoid organizing Israel programming, cohort members sensed that it would be best to do so.

> *There was no Israel program available to Moishe House folks before 4HQ. 4HQ was the first Israel education initiative or Israel trip that Moishe House put out to its people. We figured, "Hey this is the kind of Israel education we can get behind." And in its absence, there was nothing—we didn't send cohorts to AIPAC, we didn't send people to JVP—neither to this end or the other end. The lack of everything says something. So when we did choose something—4HQ—that by itself said something about the importance of 4HQ to Moishe House as an organization. Of all the options Moishe House could have chosen, they chose the "nuanced" approach.* —Moishe House Staff Member

> *I'd say the number one reason we haven't done [Israel programming], at least in my mind, is that...[Israel can be] overly political and we're supposed to stay away from politics and things that could create an unwelcoming environment based on people arguing, because our mission is to be as welcoming as possible basically to as many people as we can. The second reason would be a fear of a tense atmosphere in the event if people argue, people don't see eye-to-eye, and then it kind of spoils the fun basically.* —Cohort 1 Participant, at the start of 4HQ

> *Whenever I tried to bring up Israel-related topics, it didn't get a huge support from the community and Moishe House wasn't extraordinarily enthusiastic about the idea of running a topic about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.* —Cohort 2 Participant, at the start of 4HQ

Moishe House staff shared several examples of how, at the leadership level, the organization's stance toward Israel shifted over the course of their engagement with Makom and 4HQ. Specifically, the organization's leadership had strongly considered opening Makom-led 4HQ programming about Israel's proposed annexation plans to the wider Moishe House community—beyond cohort members. They had planned to dedicate a significant portion of their annual staff training to 4HQ (which was unfortunately canceled due to the pandemic). In addition, one staff member mentioned that she had noticed over time that new hires had more diverse views about Israel compared to previous folks who had joined the Moishe House team. On the whole, staff members felt that the doors to having deeper, more nuanced conversations about Israel at Moishe House had been opened, whereas before it may have felt like a "Danger!" sign had stood at the doorway.

> *I think the doors to talk about Israel have become more open. For a very long time, people felt that they couldn't program about Israel because they couldn't take a stance, they didn't know how to talk about it without taking a stance, and yet they wanted to have more deeper programming. Moishe House wasn't clear on what you were or weren't able to talk about and do programs about. Staff like myself, who*

oversee hosts and residents, feel more capable to support residents and hosts about that now—being able to be clearer about what is okay or not okay to talk about. —Moishe House Staff Member

Next Steps

For all that has been accomplished until now, some staff members feel that Moishe House could make greater strides as an organization to better integrate the 4HQ content and framework into its day-to-day practices. Having opened the doors to more nuanced, authentic programming about Israel, they know they must now ensure that this programming is meaningful and relevant to residents and their peers. Given the general feel and form of Jewish education at Moishe House, they recognize this will require continued work. Some staff members articulate what this will take, what it would mean to lean in, building piece by piece, a different way of programming and talking about Israel:

> *If we really want 4HQ to become embedded, it has to be integrated. We need to emphasize how programs can go well beyond the hummus. We need to train our staff and go over what these Four Hatikvah Questions are—we need to hang them on residents' walls. So that we explicitly say, "When we're engaging with Israeli programming, we're going to keep these programs in mind." There could be a section on our website—an Israel section—that says that we do Israel programs and that this is the framework that our residents have been trained in. That way 4HQ becomes more normalized—the residents and staff know about it, the development team is able to bring it up with donors or potential donors, that we can really showcase it.* —Moishe House Staff Member

> *To integrate Israel more fully into "what we do" at Moishe House would require a rethinking and reimagining of what Jewish education looks like for us. Our Jewish education content is all about learning for the sake of doing. For example, how do you celebrate Rosh Hashanah, how do you make a Passover Seder, how do you make a Shabbat practice? With Israel, I don't know what we would learn for the sake of doing. Most young people might think about the "doing" piece when it comes to Israel as it relates to activism and Aliyah—and that's not what Moishe House wants to preach. So we need to think about it some more.* —Moishe House Staff Member

At the same time, several staff members suggest a different—even unexpected—way forward, one that would involve a shift beyond Israel to other charged issues. They see value in having more conversations and programs specifically about Israel—that's a point of consensus. However, they wonder if 4HQ's greatest contribution—and potential—is in creating space to have "stretching" conversations about other topics that may feel loaded or uncomfortable, such as race, gun control, or immigration.

Until now, it seems that very few cohort members have employed the 4HQ framework in this extended way, but participants did immediately see the value in doing so when presented with this idea. For several Moishe House staff members, this is the place where the work with 4HQ could have its greatest impact. It could be good for Israel education, and it could be good for the broader civic culture of Moishe House.

> *I see that the highest impact of this program will not be about having deep and stretching conversations about Israel specifically, but rather about other divisive topics. I've seen people start to develop programs using the 4HQ program (land, people, etc.) about Black Lives Matter, race, etc. Folks in the Southwest are*

using the 4HQ framework to talk about the US's relationship with Mexico. I think if we can figure out a way to detach it from Israel, use will go up and the impact will be maximized. ... Our constituency feels

that no matter how much they learn about it, they will never feel expert about it. So the Israel piece is a little stuck. It feels like it would be more impactful for us to use the framework in other ways.
—Moishe House Staff Member

For now Israel has been the content piece, but all of us educators at Moishe House know that Israel is not the goal. Israel is a subtopic. What's important is the methodology of having stretching conversations—that we can swap out "Israel" and put in "race," "gun violence," etc. —Moishe House Staff Member

Summary and Questions for Consideration

Overall, participants in 4HQ at Moishe House shared that the program challenged them to think differently. It exposed them to new information and different narratives about Israel, encouraged them to consider a multitude of perspectives, engaged them in meaningful conversations, provided them with a network of like-minded young adults to turn for support around Israel, and opened them to exploring even more questions. Specifically, these outcomes can be analyzed in terms of shifts in knowledge, attitude, and behavior.

1. **Knowledge**: Program alumni are better informed about the multidimensional nature of Israel today. They are better able to situate the conflict or the politics of Israel within a broader context and within a broader range of perspectives.

2. **Attitude**: Program alumni are emotionally ready to facilitate charged and challenging conversations; we identified this as a particular payoff that comes from the metacognitive shift they experienced.

3. **Behavior**: Program alumni have gained and are employing skills that enable them to facilitate challenging conversations about Israel, and perhaps other topics too.

At the organizational level, Moishe House has more fully opened the door to Israel. There has been a shift in the appetite of senior leadership to encourage serious conversation and learning about Israel and about other charged social, political, and cultural issues.

Our conversations with participants and with staff raise further important questions for consideration:

1. What is reasonable to expect of participants and alumni of 4HQ at Moishe House? They have grown in multiple ways as a result of this experience. They attest to delivering programming of a different depth and variety from what they could provide before they participated in the program. How should they be regarded now: as Israel educators, facilitators of conversations about Israel, or as well-informed conversation conveners? And what contribution might these young people make to the flourishing of Jewish life in North America once they move beyond the orbit of Moishe House?

2. These questions about the roles played by program participants prompt a broader set of educational questions. Our findings point to two primary vectors of growth among participants, one pertaining to their understanding (what they now know about Israel and how they perceive Israel), and the other pertaining to their facility (what they now feel able to do). Sometimes, it can be challenging to develop both greater understanding and greater facility. What should program providers like Moishe House do when those who deliver or organize programs within their framework may have a good deal of understanding, but lack the ability to lead a meaningful discussion? Alternatively, what about those who are really skilled at managing conversations, but don't know so much about the topic? This dilemma is widespread among organizations (such as congregations and youth organizations) that seek to train paraprofessionals or non-professionals.

3. Moishe House has opened the door to deeper, more nuanced Israel programming. In institutional terms, this expresses a willingness to bring about a culture shift in the organization that will take form over time. On the ground, the participants in the 4HQ at Moishe House program will move on soon to other places and to other interests; some already have. What will it take to ensure that new generations of residents will carry forward what has been accomplished during the past couple of years?

4. While most participants valued the ways in which program staff modeled how to facilitate Israel programming in a "neutral" or "balanced" fashion, there was one participant who had a different experience. This individual tends to hold more conservative views and felt alienated on the trip and among peers in the 4HQ program. Though this perspective was an outlier in our research, it is valuable to consider how program providers, such as Makom and Moishe House, can ensure that they're creating as much of a "safe space" as possible, so that participants feel like they can voice their opinions—whether liberal, conservative, or anywhere in between—without fear of being ignored or even attacked. How can program providers be as welcoming and inclusive as possible, or demonstrate the broadest range of political positions?

5. As mentioned by several Moishe House staff members, a potential contribution of the 4HQ framework lies in its potential to enable "stretching" conversations about complex topics that extend well beyond Israel. Few participants used the framework in relation to topics not concerned with Israel, though a few mentioned that they used it to talk about Israel outside of Moishe House settings (with family, friends, etc.). If Moishe House intends to apply the 4HQ methodology to a broader set of topics, how are Makom and Moishe House thinking about or adapting the program curriculum for future cohorts to meet these wider interests?

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