

Kenissa Konnections

April 2021

Message from Rabbi Sid

Last month I provided a [link to an article](#) that appeared in JTA featuring the work of Kenissa, authored by Gary Rosenblatt. Subsequent to its publication, one of our Kenissa members, Kohenet Keshira haLev Fife, published a letter to the editor that appeared in the *Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle*. It raises a critical issue that faces so many Kenissa organizations: how shall we position ourselves vis a vis the mainstream Jewish community? Keshira points out, rightly in my view, that notwithstanding the flattering coverage of Kenissa in the article, the headline of the article undermined the very mission of Kenissa. I not only want to give a shout-out to Keshira here, but we are also reprinting her Letter to the Editor. Tell us what you think about the point Keshira makes here.



Headline misrepresents intention of innovative groups

This letter is in response to "Don't call them 'fringe': Innovative groups seek respect from the mainstream" (online, Feb. 19, 2021). While the article itself did a wonderful job lifting up the work of Sid Schwarz and Kenissa, it seems to me that the headline of this article is not only inaccurate, it also undermines the article itself. The article primarily focuses on Kenissa, demonstrating that its network of 400-plus "fringe" organizations is having a significant impact on many parts of the Jewish community across the country.

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Kenissa Network Meet-Up Wednesday April 21st at 1pm (Eastern)

Remember the excitement of meeting peers also creating new models of Jewish life and community when you attended a National Kenissa gathering?
Join the Meet-Up with Rabbi Sid. Each participant will provide an update of their organization and their plans for the future. Meet colleagues from across the country doing cool things like you.

[Click here](#) to add this event and Zoom information to your calendar

<https://zoom.us/j/98931062835?pwd=YW11czhFeHQvNks0OTNGR2Y5R1c5UT09>
Meeting ID: 989 3106 2835
Passcode: 658391

Build and Raise

Building relationships to help raise more money



Plan. It's a 4-letter word which many nonprofits fear. Who has time to think about tomorrow when we're dealing with 1,001 things today? Word to the wise: That's the mindset that prevents you from growing. Which means less revenue rolling in. Which means servicing fewer people in your community. You should be thinking about tomorrow today. Consider your long-term vision and then build a strategy to meet the goals you've jotted down. The overall goal? Not survival. Thrival. (And yes, it's a word I made up.) Having a thrive attitude means that [when the next rainy day comes](#), you're fully prepared to meet the challenge.

Part of your strategy includes planning how you'll fundraise over the next 3-5 years. Understanding fundraising principles and knowing your donors are critical to success. That includes:

- Fundraising is about [shared values and building relationships](#). Not money. The money is a means to an end (your mission), not an end in itself.
- Knowing what [four conditions have to be in place](#) in your organization even before you can make an ask.
- Recognizing the [seven reasons why donors are motivated to give](#). You may be the nicest person in the world, but that's not enough.
- Comprehending how households make their giving decisions. ([Excellent study from the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy](#). I suggest downloading and reviewing.)



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[Ephraim Gopin](#) is the founder of [1832 Communications](#), an agency which helps nonprofits build relationships and raise more money by connecting their fundraising and [marketing strategies](#). You can subscribe to [Ephraim's free daily enewsletter](#) which includes relevant content for any NPO role you fill.

Braver Leadership

Lead wiser,
Lead braver



According to the Society for Human Resources Management, employee quit rates reached their lowest level in 9 years in 2020. Unfortunately, rather than reflecting an increase in job satisfaction, this was indicative of employees staying put to ride out the uncertainty of a global pandemic. Increased workloads, blurring of work-life boundaries, Zoom fatigue, and greater social isolation due to working at home are among the many factors that subsequently contributed to *increasing* employee burnout. As we emerge from the pandemic, and the fear of economic insecurity decreases, organizations should anticipate an increase in employee turnover.

Burnout is routinely identified as a major reason that employees leave jobs. While the usual burnout prevention recommendations (i.e. meditation, yoga, therapy, etc.) are focused on aiding an individual employee, leaders need to recognize that burnout is not an "individual" problem when it impacts a majority of employees. In a study conducted by [Limeade](#) of companies with 500 or more employees, a shocking 72% reported feeling burnt out in August of 2020. A [HubOne](#) survey of 88 non-profit organizations in Michigan similarly reported staff stress levels at nearly 7 out of 10.



If you heard of an employee benefit that was being described by employees as "the best benefit I'd ever had," a benefit that would increase employees' mental and physical health, [and](#) cost your organization nothing to implement, would you be interested in learning more?

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[Arinne Braverman](#) is a Kenissa Network member, Jewish Organizing Initiative alumna, and currently serves as the Executive Director of [Returning the Sparks](#) and President of [From Strength to Strength](#).

Jewish Megatrends and Responses

Editor's Note: Every Kenissa Network member was asked to respond to Rabbi Sid's lead essay in Jewish Megatrends on the future of the Jewish community. We'll be featuring one of those essays in each issue.

Partnership *Minyanim*: A Unique Niche

Sarah Weinberg

The work of Kol Sasson Congregation aligns well with Rabbi Sid's 3rd proposition, although it also differs from it in some ways: "At a time when technology has made meaningful social intercourse much harder to come by the Jewish community must offer places where people can find support in times of need, a gathering of friends in times of joy, and the kind of human relationships that make life fulfilling."



As an independent *minyan*, we leverage the talents and contributions of community members and, while we do pay a *halachic* advisor, we currently have no paid clergy. At the same time, I would argue that the reason for the existence of Kol Sasson is not necessarily that the community members want to do it all themselves, rather it is that we have found that mainstream organizations don't offer the type of prayer model and *halachic* structure that we wanted.

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How We Built This

Editor's Note: Every Kenissa Network member was asked to explain how they launched their new enterprise, a feature we call "How We Built This". We'll feature one organization in each issue.

Jon Adam Ross

The In[HEIR]itance Project



Before Covid, America was already dealing with a pandemic of antipathy. The isolation, economic devastation, and national reckoning with racism of the past year has only served to fortify our silos. [The In\[HEIR\]itance Project](#) was born in 2015 as an experimental playmaking project, aimed at activating difficult civic conversations. Our unique process sits at the intersections of sacred and artistic practices. We endeavor, through collaborative artmaking, to investigate what we as HEIR's do with our shared and individual inheritances (myths, narratives, ideas, theologies, systems, etc.) and how we can apply them to hard conversations in our communities. And we do that work by inviting the community into the process as [co-creators](#) at every step.



Since its founding, The In[HEIR]itance Project has created original pieces of theater in communities spread across the country ([Charleston](#), Seattle, [Kansas City](#), etc), engaging over five thousand participants. And 100% of the box office receipts, over \$30,000 to date, has gone to local artists and arts organizations to continue the civic conversations through their own artistic practice.

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