



June 18, 2020
Discussion Draft – For Discussion
Purposes Only

Scenario Planning Introduction

About this Work

The scenarios in this document were created by the Jewish Federations of North America, for use across the Jewish communal sector, to help organizational leaders understand our possible futures and build our capacity to navigate massive uncertainty over the coming two years.

The scenarios respond to this key question: *What might the lives of Jewish communal stakeholders look and feel like in the next 24 months?*

Exploring the scenarios is only a first step. To help leaders apply the work, JFNA is creating a toolkit that helps organizations develop strategies in response to these scenarios. The toolkit helps organizational leaders explore their own critical strategic questions in light of the scenarios and asks:

1. *Given each individual scenario, what could organized Jewish life look like (or need to look like) in the next 24 months?*
2. *Given our values and vision for our community and the capabilities and assets at our disposal, what should we be doing over the next 24 months, and how should we be doing it?*

For additional information, please email scenarioplanning@JewishTogether.org.

About Scenario Planning

Scenarios are stories about the future that help us make better decisions today. These hypotheses about how the conditions around us may change over time allow us to imagine, and then rehearse, different strategies for preparing for the future—or where possible, shaping it.

Scenarios are not singular predictions. Rather, they are vehicles to help us better understand, or even anticipate, how complex and uncertain factors could play out in very different ways—in

this case, how a combination of social, technological, economic, environmental and political dynamics might lead to very different conditions under which our members, donors, constituents, and community stakeholders in general might be living.

These scenarios are based not only on what we know to be true today, but also on the multiple directions in which current key tensions could resolve, or the way in which surprising new developments could further exacerbate--or perhaps mitigate--the health, economic or other challenges we face.

Together, a set of scenarios captures a range of future possibilities, good and bad, expected and surprising. They **require us to consider all of them as plausible worlds we might live in** as we develop plans and contingent actions for our work.

Planning for Multiple Possibilities

Scenarios aren't about planning for the perfect fool-proof strategy. Rather, with scenarios we can determine a portfolio of actions to keep our organization resilient. We live in times of unprecedented change, and scenarios are tools we can use to prepare to pivot and adapt for multiple unknowns.

The goal of strategic planning using scenarios is to structure complex conversations and agree on assumptions being made so there is clarity about what needs to get done and why, along with the potential risks. Decisions for the future will always rely on imperfect information.

Using scenarios, we can ask questions such as

- *How will our member needs change under each scenario?*
- *What strategy will be most successful?*
- *What opportunities for partnership does each scenario open up for us?*
- *How can we keep our organization's planning nimble to adapt as we see how reality unfolds?*

Part of the planning process includes staying tuned in to signals of possible futures emerging, and talking regularly with other groups, both inside and outside one's network.

How These Scenarios Were Created

Scenario design is part science, part art. It's speculative based on early signals of change we are seeing today, combined with what we can imagine tomorrow.

The JFNA scenarios were developed over conversations with more than 500 people, including multiple stakeholder groups and expert sociologists. We started by identifying critical uncertainties that most impacted organizations, members, donors, and constituents. We then met with smaller groups across JFNA and the broader Jewish network to better understand key uncertainties and refine possible futures. Across the way, we tested our assumptions to make sure the scenarios told plausible stories about the future.

There is no such thing as a “right” or “perfect” set of scenarios. The criteria for a good set is:

- They challenge current assumptions about the future;
- They diverge from one another, telling very different stories for how the future may unfold;
- They are balanced, presenting both positive and negative potential paths, and highlight both good and bad within a given scenario;
- They are plausible, in that the logic of each scenario is understandable, so we can see how we might get there, even if it doesn't seem likely right now; and
- They are relevant to our core questions about the lives of Jewish communal stakeholders, but aren't overly complex - they don't attempt to address every issue we're facing.

Things to Keep in Mind When Reading Scenarios

While there are hundreds of scenarios we might imagine, most of us can only hold three or four possible futures in our heads at one time. The four scenarios we've chosen aim to paint a range of possibilities while making the scenarios distinct. When reading these scenarios, it's important to recognize that:

- Reality won't unfold exactly as described here, in any scenario. Actual details may vary.
- We may see elements of all of the scenarios continue to be in tension with each other.
- Communities or regions may experience the scenarios and their effects to different levels, or find themselves in different scenarios. This is particularly true, of course, when it comes to differences between American and Canadian society.
- Every scenario may remain viable over the next 24 months. We may seem to be heading down one path, but then quickly shift to another. The objective is to constantly reassess our situation and how we are investing time and resources toward any one future, and pivot as necessary as we see how reality unfolds.

OVERVIEW OF SCENARIOS

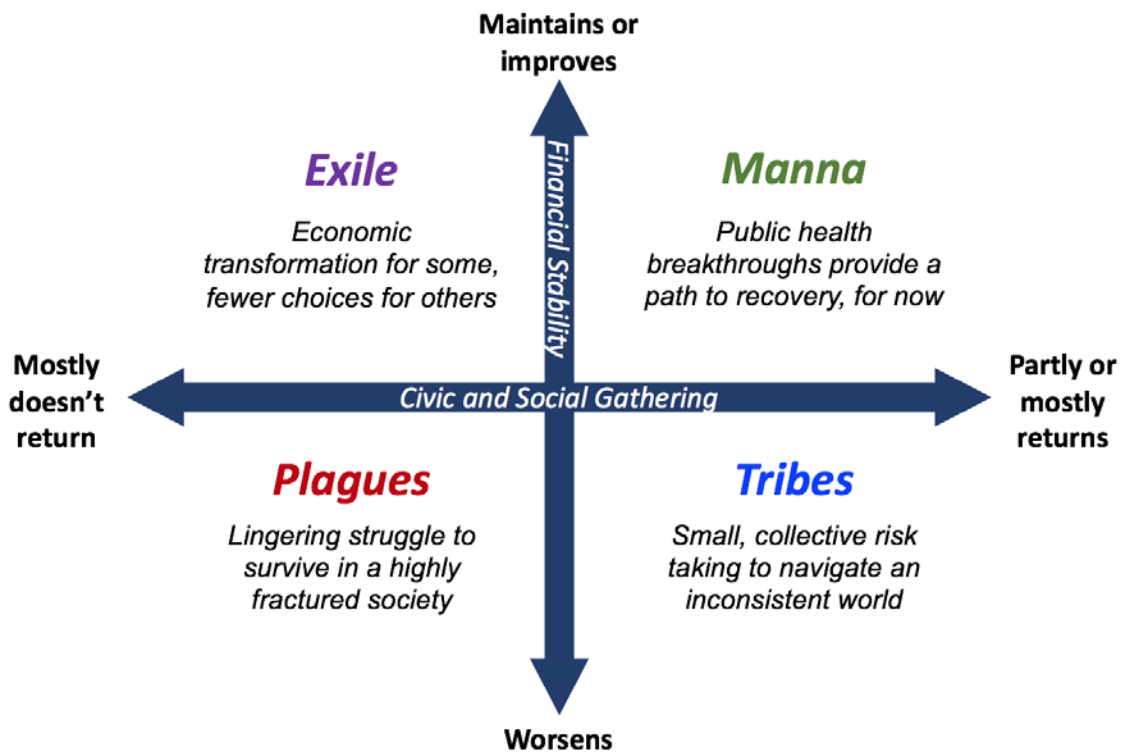
The four scenarios center on different possibilities for social gathering and for financial stability. All scenarios assume vaccine development is at least 18-24 months away. These organizing axes were selected as most relevant for the great majority of Jewish communal organizations with respect to how much individuals and families would be able to connect with and participate in organized Jewish life.

In **Plagues**, lockdowns continue and misinformation abounds. Trust and the economy deteriorate as physical gathering remains risky.

In **Tribes**, people are restless to get back to their lives and so they take necessary risks to gather with those they trust. Different regions/states play by different rules, making it increasingly expensive for organizations to operate safely and efficiently and complicated to establish consistent protocols and practices.

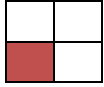
In **Manna**, health breakthroughs improve day-to-day conditions and people begin to gather again. But privacy concerns linger and some jobs never return.

In **Exile**, a new technological reality enables urban flight and remote living for elites. Some can afford the geographic and digital shifts, while others who can't are left behind economically and socially.



SCENARIO: Plagues

Lingering struggle to survive in a highly fractured society



This is a world in which...

The response to the health and economic crisis becomes further politicized, leading to intentional misinformation and poor coordination in understanding and containing the virus. Continued lockdowns stall re-opening efforts. Lockdowns are met with compliance in some places and resistance in others, while fear and uncertainty increases everywhere. Growing tensions reignite unresolved social issues, including racial injustices and economic disparity. Trust is harder to find and perceived risk of physical gathering remains high, not just because of health, but also due to physical violence and crime.

Market systems strain to adjust as the ability of the economy to function disappears with continued limits on physical gathering domestically and trade disruption globally. Access to food and other basic household needs is often interrupted, and income insecurity proliferates as jobs continue to be lost (except for the very wealthy or self-reliant). Personal health is a priority, and individuals do whatever it takes to look out for themselves and their immediate family--including avoiding any gathering that is deemed non-essential.

Additional Details

Health, Politics, and Economy

- The virus is poorly contained. Individuals are stressed and spend significant time on basic needs.
- Significant misinformation campaigns abound, with viral alternative narratives. There is significant political divisiveness and public policy prioritizes the economy.
- There is economic downturn, depression, and potential collapse. Households are in financial distress, even for some in the upper-middle and upper classes.
- There are perceptions and instances of scarcity as supply chains are challenged (including protective equipment and food). There are random, ad hoc relief measures with little guarantee of ongoing support from government.
- Social competition increases. Basic social services, including health care, require waitlists.

Community and Daily Life

- Formal school systems are rejected in favor of home-schooling or self-organized co-ops.
- Virtual experiences abound but advancing technology (such as to virtual reality) is expensive, not accessible by many.
- Networks are hyper-local. Families move closer together or create pods with neighbors or other trusted social groups, because travel is not possible or desirable, and to address lack of childcare and financial resources.
- Anti-Semitism and racism rise considerably as supremacist groups look to blame minorities for social ills; there are higher degrees of physical violence against minority groups.
- Families and individuals have less emotional capacity to engage in Jewish life and don't see the connection to their daily struggles. Ritual, when possible, is done at home by the very knowledgeable.
- Travel and movement are considered too risky, very expensive, or both for most people. The very wealthy are able to move, even globally.
- For some, Israel is considered attractive for relocation, and there is a surge in *aliyah*.

Headlines from the Future

- *"What's old is new: Organized crime sets its sights on food delivery trucks."*
- *"Amazon launches Homeschooling.com for Prime members."*
- *"Secret High Holiday services shut down by Health department."*

SCENARIO: Tribes

Small, collective risk taking to navigate an inconsistent world



This is a world in which...

In the face of continued economic decline and feeling of isolation, people are restless to get back to work and other important aspects of their lives. Individuals willingly take certain types of risks to gather. Meanwhile, a lack of a coordinated national effort leads to different regions, states and cities experimenting with different rules for containing virus transmission.

Given a patchwork of safety guidelines, and without clear and consistent legal precedents, organizations are mostly left to their own devices to implement health and safety measures and assume liability. Most physical gathering is highly resource intensive and capacity limited. As a result of continued health uncertainty and financial insecurity, people are exclusive and selective in the types of groups and people they're spending time (and money) with, and they seek out trusted options that meet their personal standard-of-care.

Additional Details

Health, Politics, and Economy

- Decisions are made regionally, state-by-state, city-by-city, district-by-district.
- More understanding exists about which conditions lead to higher or lower transmission and how to design and manage spaces for lower risk.
- There is reliance on behavioral solutions to contain transmission (e.g. masks, spacing, hand washing vs. medical or technological solutions).
- Spikes and occasional periods of shelter-in-place still occur.
- Selective governors and mayors use shelter-in-place and economic policies to make political statements.
- The economy grows very slowly and primarily stays in recession.
- Consumers are cautious with spending.
- Recent college graduates settle for lower paying and often technical (gig, hourly wage) work.

Community and Daily Life

- Schools reopen but nervousness among parents abounds, and those with resources look for smaller, private alternatives.

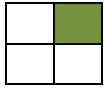
- Locations (including Israel) with more liberal reopening policies (or safe shelter-in-place guidelines) attract new residents.
- Technological innovations are in a cycle of grow-but-stall as the economy waxes and wanes.
- Small groups of trusted friends meet regularly; individuals do not travel beyond their pods.
- DIY micro-communities grow based on hobby or task (such as joint purchasing).
- Biases against minority groups grow, including antisemitism and political rifts.
- Intergenerational homes increase.
- Life moves outdoors to reduce virus transmission.

Headlines from the Future

- *“Superdome given permission to transform into “outdoor” food court.”*
- *“The hottest job for recent liberal arts students? Private camp counselor.”*
- *“Texas Governor Abbott now promises California-style reopening after multiple abrupt shutdowns.”*

SCENARIO: Manna

Public health breakthroughs provide a path to recovery, for now



This is a world in which...

There is a coordinated, highly technical approach to reopening. Health breakthroughs come about thanks to globally funded efforts to understand the virus and produce treatments that reduce effects. There are standard containment guidelines and government shoulders the costs for testing and tracing services. A new public service corps helps manage the distribution and implementation of these public health initiatives. Organizations still make smart changes to physical spaces, but the bar is generally lower for any particular space given the ability to leverage the public health system to understand and manage the risk of individuals coming through the door.

At first people cautiously gather in person again, and then quickly gain confidence to broaden their movement. Individuals generally accept the new rules around personal tracking and the required mandatory quarantining or return to SIP when necessary. However, for many, where they spend time and with whom have been permanently altered from the trauma of past sheltering experiences.

As economic activity is recovering, many also feel they're on stable grounds. However, not everyone is back doing the same job as before, and some jobs don't return at all. Portions of the middle class in every community continue a slide into financial hardship. And even as life seems to be getting back to a semblance of pre-virus "normal," unintended consequences emerge, including debates over data surveillance and privacy, and rising stigmas against those who were sick or remain most vulnerable.

Additional Details

Health, Politics, and Economy

- Second wave of cases drives greater cohesion and willingness to comply and individuals trade privacy and degree of movement for the greater health good. Minority groups reject idea of government control but seen more as fringe.
- Government funding spread wide but thin across industries and organizations. Relief programs grow. Greater emphasis on supporting essential workers; jobs programs adopted. Greater public and private partnerships create opportunities for employment.

- Individuals take cautious approaches to spending disposable income on long-term commitments.
- Most stay in current homes, even while a noticeable minority leaves urban areas.
- Number of vulnerable grows (those in categories of increased risk), their mental health and other needs increasing due to isolation.

Community and Daily Life

- Highly informed trade-offs are made between social gathering and risk of transmission. Mid-size and small gatherings are common.
- Public schools reopen with new health regulations and are seen as viable.
- Digital experiences are complementary to small, live experiences, accessible because more families have financial resources.
- Travel is more open though highly controlled; strict “no fly” rules based on contact tracing and testing data.
- Extremist groups face back into the shadows as racist and antisemitic expressions are viewed as fringe.
- Time of questioning assumptions: past affiliations, how people spent time, commitment to a better world.
- Israel feels more distant, because of length of travel and lack of need for escape.
- Donors seek out opportunities to express gratitude and thanks for better economic and living conditions.

Headlines from the Future

- *“China, Europe and US science coalition releases COVID symptom treatment protocols.”*
- *“Anti-mask wearing case reaches Supreme Court.”*
- *“Contact tracing management track seen as viable college alternative for some high school grads.”*

SCENARIO: EXILE

Economic transformation for some, fewer choices for others



This is a world in which...

Funding for collaboration, social networking, telehealth and other relevant technology platforms all accelerate, leading to a new digital lifestyle for those who can afford it. New employment opportunities open up to those with the required skills and/or education, including otherwise unemployed youth, and this revitalizes key economic and social prospects for a good portion of the middle class and especially the upper-middle class. For those groups, the task of staying at distance becomes much more bearable, and in some cases preferred.

The demand for new ways of living and working remotely is partly driven by the desire of certain families to flee unhealthy environments, and partly due to an acceleration away from centralized, physical offices to more to a more distributed (rural and ex-urban) and remote workforce. This not only changes the demographic makeup of all of these places but also leads to a massive split in the quality of life between different types of workforces and populations (e.g. creative/tech/office workers, shared economy workers, and essential workers). Two-thirds of the population is left behind because they can't afford the transition to an expensive digital-first lifestyle, lack the training and personal networks needed to participate, or are in the wrong job at the wrong time.

Additional Details

Health, Politics, and Economy

- Virus containment is in flux and reliant on maintaining physical distance.
- Classic left-right tensions ease initially due to overall economic stability, but exacerbate issues of equity and classicism.
- Economy continues to shift from physical commodities to digital; there is more gig economy work and not necessarily a return of past jobs.
- Those with financial means restructure their lives around digital solutions; new digital platforms and solutions abound.

Community and Daily Life

- Temporary and permanent movement occurs, out of expensive, crowded urban areas; once less-desirable communities now offer better and more affordable quality of life.

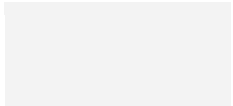
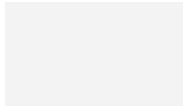
- Online education is preferred, particularly by families with more means.
- Alternative spiritual solutions and communities grow (such as Headspace, virtual congregations, Peloton as spiritual space).
- Driven by a growing lower class, racist and anti-Semitic actors mobilize online, including coordinated service attacks against Jewish platforms.
- Jewish activity happens primarily online and at home.
- Business connections with Israel strengthen due to the booming technology scene.
- Many consider Israel a viable place to live thanks to telecommuting opportunities.
- Geographic proximity continues to matter less; individuals choose experiences based on factors including perceived quality, trust, time of offering, ease of technology.

Headlines from the Future

- *“She left, he stayed: How some couples are navigating remote opportunities and essential work requirements.”*
- *“Virtual music platform Singalong becomes the latest collaboration unicorn.”*
- *“Jewish groups forced to move off public social media platforms amidst growing online anti-Semitism.”*

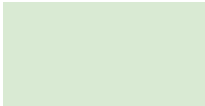
Key differences in each scenario

		Plagues	Tribes	Manna	Exile
Context	Economy	Depression	Recession	Recovering	Partially recovering
	Virus containment	Poor, continued lockdowns	Incremental, state-by-state via cautious activity	Contained, proactive coordination and tracking	Fluctuating; those who are able to escape dense areas, do so
	Wealth disparities	Middle class splits further from upper class	Middle class splits up and down, wide regional differences	Split between permanent and temporary workforce	Split between remote and in person workforces
	Politics	Highly divisive	Competing for power	Cohesive	Tensions across class lines
Daily life	Gathering	Limited, lockdowns	Small, resource intensive	Small & large with informed tradeoffs	Remote, technologically enabled
	Social structures	Hyper-local	Proximal, trusted	Mix of old and new networks	Interest aligned
	Spending patterns	Down significantly across the board	Highly selective given higher cost of living	Unpredictable, with less commitment	Shifts to digital goods and services
	Household structures	Multigenerational / extremely	Multigenerational / communal	Small units / single adults	Small units / single adults / some



tight knit if
not related

(roommates,
co-ops)



multigenerati
onal