

JEWISH YOUTH PLEDGE PEER LED PROGRAM

(60 Minutes Version)



Objectives

(At the end of the lesson teens will be able to...)

- Reflect on their recent Jewish experience and broader Jewish journey
- Derive meaning, inspiration a sense of responsibility toward the Jewish future
- Make a pledge, set practical goals and write a letter to their future self to help maintain commitment

Facilitator Preparation

- Familiarize yourself with the Jewish Youth Pledge and this program.
- Consider which videos/ activities you would like to use/ adapt and how you can make this your own.
- Participants will require writing material.
- This program requires a digital device for the pledge (or a handwritten option that will later be digitized by the facilitator).
- There are optional videos that require a screen and/ or sound system.
- Create a welcoming and open environment.

Session Overview

SECTION	DURATION	SUMMARY	MATERIALS
A Picking Pivotal Moments	15 minutes	Introduction and reflection on Jewish experiences	Appendix A cut out
B The Jewish People and Me	15 minutes	Consider the meaning of their Jewish identity and how they express it	Screen/ audio/ summarized text to read (Appendix B)
C Inspiration from the Greats	10 minutes	Explore the way others took inspiration and consider how to apply it	Stories
D Taking the Pledge	5 minutes	Consider commitment and sign the pledge	Digital device
E Writing the Letter	15 minutes	Decide on practical steps and writing a letter to their future self	Digital device

Preface

This program aims to help participants capture some of the magic you have created for them through this experience. By identifying the leaders and actions that have influenced them, they can then think about how they are going to transform themselves from being passive recipients to engaging and contributing as potential leaders. You will offer them an opportunity to articulate in their own language what motivates them to become active in their communities, where their passions lie and where they feel a sense of responsibility to Judaism and our people. But, this is not something you can define for them – they will need to find a way to express it for themselves. You can use this program as it is, or change it up to suit the needs of your program and participants – that's up to you! It is about you feeling comfortable to facilitate the journey. We have provided time suggestions, but if you have the time this can be extended – just remember, less is more sometimes so don't let it drag.

A

Introduction: Picking Pivotal Moments

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	MATERIALS
<p>Introduction and setting the stage</p>	<p>1. The images on the cards display various impactful moments in Jewish life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the images and choose three which you believe are the most impactful in your interpretation of Jewish life and should be prioritized? (3 mins) 	<p><i>Ensure the cards in Appendix A are cut out.</i></p> <p><i>Consider playing calm background music</i></p>
	<p>2. Initiate a discussion around what the participants chose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are these experiences most impactful for you? • How do you think the community you were raised in influenced these choices? • Is there anyone in particular who has inspired you or that has made a difference to your Jewish life. • Has this journey impacted what you would like to accomplish long term? (5 mins). 	
	<p>3. Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on 1-3 impactful moments throughout this experience. Close your eyes, picture yourself at that moment and write about the experience. • Offer the opportunity for students to share once they have written it out. (7 mins) 	<p><i>Pen and paper</i></p>

B

The Jewish People and Me

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	MATERIALS
<p>Define their unique place within the Jewish people.</p>	<p>Now that the participants have had an opportunity to reflect on what their different experiences in Judaism have meant to them – you will create a platform for them to explore and describe the meaning of their Jewish identities and how they can actively express this.</p>	
	<p>Begin by asking:</p> <p>What is one thing in your life or within the world that you truly care enough to do something about?</p>	
	<p>There are two videos that you can choose between to include at this point (we recommend using only one). They can assist with sparking ideas and personal conversations about Jewish identity. This should contribute toward shifting their emotional experiences and feelings of inspiration into potential action.</p> <p>If there is no access to a screen, the audio can be used alone and if this doesn't exist, print the script to have a participant read or share a personal reflection from Appendix B (6 mins)</p>	<p>Screen and speakers</p>
	<p>Play the Rabbi Jonathan Sacks video "Why I am a Jew":</p> <p><i>In this whiteboard animation, Rabbi Sacks explains why he is proud to be a Jew and what it is about Judaism that makes it so unique. This appeal calls on us all to connect to our people, heritage and faith.</i></p> <p>OR Play the Andrew Lustig video "I am Jewish":</p> <p><i>In this piece of slam poetry, Andrew Lustig expresses what it means to be a proud Jew and member of our people.</i></p>	<p>Link to video 1</p> <p>Link to video 2</p>
	<p>Ask the participants to: (5 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about what being part of the Jewish People means to you. • Condense your answer into one word and write it onto a large piece of paper. • Draw a picture that represents this. • Share your thoughts. 	<p>Large piece of paper</p>
	<p>After participants have shared their thoughts, the following questions could serve to assist with the discussion: (5 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which answers did you connect with? • Which answers were the most surprising? • How would you define your connection to the Jewish People two years ago? What about now? What do you hope it will be in 2 years? 	

C Inspiration from the Greats: Great Inspiration

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	MATERIALS
<p>Consider the impact of other luminaries and the way they want to make their Jewish mark.</p>	<p>Begin by sharing this idea with the participants :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A generation that does not remember the past does not deserve to be remembered in the future • Your role and responsibility to the Jewish people is beginning to evolve as you enter into new phases of your lives and the needs of the Jewish community at large are beginning to change with time, which means what is expected of you will also be changing 	
	<p>We are part of a larger community. Ask the participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did this experience make you feel a greater sense of responsibility to the Jewish people? • Has this impacted your Jewish identity? 	
	<p>The purpose of this is to widen the definition for the participants around being part of the Jewish people so it's not restricted to how they grew up but rather broadened by what they are choosing for themselves.</p> <p>Stories help illustrate important ideas. Consider the following two stories (and any others you may have) about very different characters who made an active decision to contribute to our people (5 mins):</p>	
	<p>Rabbi Akiva:</p> <p>One day, while sitting by a stream, Akiva noticed a steady trickle of water dripping on a rock. It was only a drip, but it was constant – drop after drop after drop. Akiva observed something incredible: A hole had been carved out by that steady drip of water.</p> <p>'How could it be?' he wondered.</p> <p>'If something as soft as water can carve a hole in solid rock,' he concluded, 'how much more so can words of Torah – which are as hard as iron – make an indelible impression on my heart.'</p> <p>That marked a turning point in Rabbi Akiva's life. He committed himself to learning and went on to become the greatest sage and leader of his generation, with 24,000 disciples.</p> <p>This is a powerful analogy that small steps can make a much bigger difference or impact, and when you see or experience something small, you can implement it into significant change.</p>	

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	MATERIALS
	<p>Sivan Ya'Ari:</p> <p>The first time Israeli Sivan Ya'Ari visited Africa, she was only 20 years old in a factory for Jordache Jeans in Madagascar. While in Madagascar, she had the chance to spend time with women and children from a nearby village and one night, they took her to a medical center where she saw women waiting to give birth in complete darkness, doctors could not treat their patients and the only light was a candle and a small kerosene lamp. It was then that she understood that without energy, medical centers can't store vaccines and medications, people can't access the water that exists just meters beneath their feet, and without water, people cannot drink, they cannot grow food, children are unable to attend school as they spend their days searching for water. By simply harnessing the energy of the sun, it was possible to make a real and immediate change. This is how her non-profit organization Innovation: Africa was born.</p> <p>For the past 13 years, this women-led non-profit organization has deployed clean power technology to schools, medical centers and communities, providing access to clean water. To date, the organization has completed over 500 solar and water projects with the aim to complete an additional 2,000 projects over the next five years by bringing Israeli solar, water and agricultural technologies to rural African villages across 10 African countries: South Africa, eSwatini, Uganda, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Cameroon, DRC, Senegal and Ethiopia.</p> <p>Sivan's commitment to Tikkun Olam and the pursuit of social justice is what drives one of the core Jewish values that she wants to impart to others-to not be bystanders. She emphasizes how "we need to help others, but at the same time we shouldn't act out of mere compassion. We should do it because what is still happening right now in parts of the world is unjust. I'd also like to teach the importance of curiosity, asking questions and finding a solution".</p> <hr/> <p>Discuss the following questions (5 mins):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can we learn from Rabbi Akiva and Sivan? • How can we apply this message to our own lives? • Does anyone want to share a moment where they experienced this desire to take action and do something, when they recognized the need? • How can you utilize your knowledge and skills to help strengthen your local Jewish community? • What actions do you think you can do to best contribute to your broader communities moving forward? <hr/> <p>Have the group split into pairs and discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what you would like your future biography to be when you are 50. • Pick 1-3 practical ways in which you will strengthen your Jewish self. 	

D Taking the Pledge: Taking the Plunge

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	MATERIALS
<p>Sign the pledge as a way of committing to the Jewish future.</p>	<p>What is the Jewish Youth Pledge?</p> <p>The Jewish Youth Pledge asks Jewish teens and young adults to commit to strengthening the Jewish community throughout their lives. It calls on them to actively contribute their unique talents in a range of ways to build up their local communities and global Jewry. Invite them to watch the video.</p>	<p><i>The Jewish Youth Pledge video: Here</i></p>
	<p>Say to the participants:</p> <p>"THIS generation writes the next chapter of the Jewish story and remains a strong link in the chain of generations"</p>	
	<p>The goal is to transform them from remembering something to remembering, becoming members again of this commitment, pledge and community. Explain that "tens of thousands of Jewish youth around the world are signing a pledge to ensure we are part of the Jewish future. It is general and you can make it what you want, but the idea is "we are part of something greater than ourselves".</p>	
	<p>Invite one participant to read the pledge as all sign it:</p> <p>I hereby pledge to act today and throughout my lifetime to strengthen the Jewish people and Israel. I make this commitment because I have a responsibility to ensure that my generation writes the next chapter of the Jewish story and remains a strong link in the chain of generations.</p> <p>Share with the participants that sometimes we have moments of clarity. This is one of them. When we leave these moments, we need to remind ourselves what is truly important, regardless of what we are doing.</p> <p><i>(5 minutes)</i></p>	<p><i>Digital device</i></p>

E Writing a Letter for the Time Capsule

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	MATERIALS
<p>Writing a letter to their future selves.</p>	<p>After signing the Youth Pledge, the participants are encouraged to experience the pledge on a deeper and more personal level, by writing a letter to their future selves. This allows the pledge to be a significant part of their own journey into self-discovery and what is important to them. The letter will sit in a tailor-made digital Time Capsule and will be sent to the participant in the future by the organization through which they signed the pledge.</p>	
	<p>Explain to the participants that:</p> <p>We need to find a way to tap into what we are feeling or experiencing right now so that we can feel impacted and inspired by this particular experience regardless of where we are or what we are doing in our lives. You are about to write a letter that no one will ever read except yourselves and will receive this at a future point in your life. Make it count.</p>	
	<p>Ask them to think about the following question before writing their letter?</p> <p>If you could meet yourself in the future, what would you hope to hear that you had accomplished or contributed? Will what you wrote down that you cared about in the beginning of this program be part of your mission toward tikkun olam?</p>	<p><i>Consider playing contemplative music</i></p>
	<p>Invite the participants to write a letter to their future selves in the Time Capsule and conclude with telling them a personal message. Share that:</p> <p>Today is the first day of the rest of your life. You are here for a reason and should take the inspiration to accept the mantle of responsibility and write the next chapter of our people with distinction. (15 minutes)</p>	<p><i>Digital device</i></p> <p><u>The typeform for the letter to themselves</u></p>

APPENDIX A: MEANINGFUL MOMENTS



Passover Seder



Brit Milah



B'nai Mitzvah



Jewish Pride



Wedding

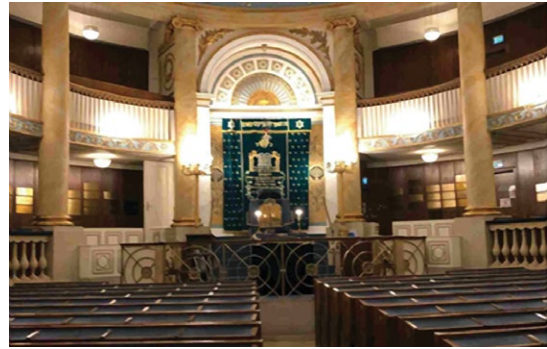


Jewish Camp

APPENDIX A: MEANINGFUL MOMENTS *(cont'd)*



Shabbat Dinner



Synagogue



Purim



Chanukah



Visiting Israel



Jewish Classes

APPENDIX A: MEANINGFUL MOMENTS *(cont'd)*



Chesed



Learning Torah



Tzedakah & Philanthropy



Israel Advocacy



Honoring Our Jewish Past

Other

APPENDIX B: SCRIPTS FOR VIDEOS

Why am I a Jew?

By Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The deepest question any of us can ask is: 'Who am I?' To answer it we have to go deeper than 'Where do I live?' or 'What do I do?' The most fateful moment in my life came when I asked myself that question and knew the answer had to be: I am a Jew. This is why. I am a Jew not because I believe that Judaism contains all there is of the human story; I admire other traditions and their contributions to the world. Nor am I a Jew because of anti-Semitism or anti-Zionism. What happens to me does not define who I am; ours is a people of faith, not fate. Nor is it because I think that Jews are better than others, more intelligent, creative, generous or successful. It's not Jews who are different, but Judaism. It's not so much what we are but what we are called on to be. I am a Jew because, being a child of my people, I have heard the call to add my chapter to its unfinished story. I am a stage on its journey, a connecting link between the generations. The dreams and hopes of my ancestors live on in me, and I am the guardian of their trust, now and for the future. I am a Jew because our ancestors were the first to see that the world is driven by a moral purpose, that reality is not a ceaseless war of the elements, to be worshiped as gods, nor history a battle in which might is right and power is to be appeased. The Judaic tradition shaped the moral civilization of the West, teaching for the first time that human life is sacred, that the individual may never be sacrificed for the mass, and that rich and poor, great and small, are all equal before God. I am a Jew because I am the moral heir of those who stood at the foot of Mount Sinai and pledged themselves to live by these truths for all time. I am the descendant of countless generations of ancestors who, though sorely tested and bitterly tried, remained faithful to that covenant when they might so easily have defected. I am a Jew because of Shabbat, the world's greatest religious institution, a time in which there is no manipulation of nature or our fellow human beings, in which we come together in freedom and equality to create, every week, an anticipation of the messianic age. I am a Jew because our nation, though at times it suffered the deepest poverty, never gave up on its commitment to helping the poor, or rescuing Jews from other lands, or fighting for justice for the oppressed, and did so without self-congratulation, because it was a mitzvah, because a Jew could do no less. I am a Jew because I cherish the Torah, knowing that God is to be found not just

in natural forces but in moral meanings, in words, texts, teachings and commands, and because Jews, though they lacked all else, never ceased to value education as a sacred task, endowing the individual with dignity and depth. I am a Jew because of our people's passionate faith in freedom, holding that each of us is a moral agent, and that in this lies our unique dignity as human beings; and because Judaism never left its ideals at the level of lofty aspirations, but instead translated them into deeds which we call mitzvot, and a way, which we call the halacha, and thus brought heaven down to earth. I am proud, simply, to be a Jew. I am proud to be part of a people who, though scarred and traumatized, never lost their humor or their faith, their ability to laugh at present troubles and still believe in ultimate redemption; who saw human history as a journey, and never stopped traveling and searching. I am proud to be part of an age in which my people, ravaged by the worst crime ever to be committed against a people, responded by reviving a land, recovering their sovereignty, rescuing threatened Jews throughout the world, rebuilding Jerusalem, and proving themselves to be as courageous in the pursuit of peace as in defending themselves in war. I am proud that our ancestors refused to be satisfied with premature consolations, and in answer to the question, 'Has the Messiah come?' always answered, 'Not yet.' I am proud to belong to the people of Israel, whose name means "one who wrestles with God and with man and prevails." For though we have loved humanity, we have never stopped wrestling with it, challenging the idols of every age. And though we have loved God with an everlasting love, we have never stopped wrestling with Him, nor He with us. I admire other civilizations and traditions, and believe each has brought something special into the world, *aval zeh shelanu*, "but this is ours". This is my people, my heritage, my faith. In our uniqueness lies our universality. Through being what we alone are, we give to humanity what only we can give. This, then, is our story, our gift to the next generation. I received it from my parents, and they from theirs, across great expanses of space and time. There is nothing quite like it. It changed, and still challenges, the moral imagination of mankind. I want to say to Jews around the world: Take it, cherish it, learn to understand and to love it. Carry it and it will carry you. And may you in turn pass it on to future generations. For you are a member of an eternal people, a letter in their scroll. Let their eternity live on in you.

APPENDIX B: SCRIPTS FOR VIDEOS *(cont'd)*

I am Jewish

By Andrew Lustig

I am the collective pride and excitement that is felt when we find out that that new actor, that great athlete, his chief of staff... is Jewish

I am the collective guilt and shame that is felt when we find out that that serial killer, that Ponzi schemer, that wife beater... is Jewish

I am the Jewish star tattooed on the chest of the teenager who chooses to rebel against his parents' and grandparents' warnings of a lonely goyim cemetery by embracing that same Judaism and making permanent his Jewish identity

I am all the words in Yiddish I've been called all my life that I still don't understand.

I am going to all three Phish shows this weekend.

I am my melody of Adon Olam. I am my melody of Adon Olam. The words may be the same but I am my melody of Adon Olam.

I am not getting Bar Mitzvahed. I am a Bar Mitzvah.

I am a concept foreign to the rest of the world. I am not Judaism. I am sleep-away camp.

I am your grandmother who's seen Chortkov and Auschwitz, who's seen '49, '67, and '73 and whose tired of trying to make peace with those people who just want to blow up buses and destroy her people.

I am the 19 year old who's seen Budrus, Don't Mess With the Zohan, and Waltz with Bashir and who thinks – who knows – peace is possible.

I am the complicated reason you take the cheese off of the burger you eat at the Saturday morning tailgate

I am constantly struggling to understand my Jewish identity outside of religion.

I am the Torah and not the Old Testament

I am a Kepah and not a Skull Cap

I am a Jew and not an Israeli

5,000 years old... not 60

A religion, not a country

I am never asked if I have horns or a pot of gold, if I rule the world or why I killed Jesus.

I am asked where my black hat is, if I really get 8 presents on my Christmas, why my sideburns aren't super long, and if I've really never tried bacon.

I am asked what a Gefilte Fish is. I say, "I don't know. I don't like it. Nobody does. But we eat it because its what we do."

I am asked if my dad's a lawyer. I say "no... my mom is... my dad's an accountant."

I am asked if my grandparents were in the Holocaust as if it were a movie. "Yeah, they were. But luckily they were also on Schindler's List."

I am on JDate and not Match.com because, well, it's just easier that way.

I am that feeling of obligation to buy the Dead Sea salt at the mall kiosk because you know the woman's Israeli.

I am an IDF sweatshirt and the Chai around your neck. I am a \$100 Challah cover you will never use and a 5 Shekel piece of red string you will wear until it withers away. I am your Hebrew name. I am your Israeli cousins. I am your Torah portion and your 13 candles. I am your Bat Mitzvah dress and the cute Israeli soldier on your Birthright trip.

I am 18 when I discover that Israel is not actually a garden of Eden of milk and honey where Jews of all backgrounds, ethnicities, and styles of worship come together – eternally happy and appreciative – to do a constant Hora in the streets of the promised land.

I am still confident it will be.

I am the way your stomach forgets to be hungry and your lungs forget to breathe when the Rabbi commands the final Tekiah Gadolah and an entire congregation – a congregation that is not any one synagogue but an entire people – listens to what on January 1st is a ball dropping in Times Square, but today – any day in late September or early October for the 5770th time is a Ram's horn being blown into for what seems like 10 minutes, like the 8 days the oil burned, and how David defeated Goliath, and how Moses parted the seas – it would have been enough, dayenu – how we won the war, and how your grandparents survived, Nes Gadol Haya Sham – Shana Tova – time for bagels and lox. I am Jewish.