

אלול

אב

תמוז

סיוון

אייר

ניסן

אדר

שבט

טבת

כסליו

חשוון

תשרי

Jewish Identity in JEANS

A Playful Window on the World of Judaism

Program for Youths
Kramim Community Stage



MONTREAL



**“A people that does not remember its past
– its present is uncertain and its future is
unclear.”**

(Yigal Alon)

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* The program is designed for non-formal educational frameworks than run parallel to the school year. Since the school year finishes in Tamuz, we decided to finish with this month. The activity may be continued during the summer/vacation months.

Introduction

In the The Lion King, Simba escapes from his homeland because he is convinced he is guilty of his father's death. When Simba meets Timon and Pumbaa, they hold the following discussion:

- Hey, where are you going?
- Nowhere.
- Where are you from?
- Who cares, I can't go back.
- You got to put your past behind you. Look kid, bad things happen and you can't do anything about it, right? When the world turns its back on you, you turn your back on the world! Repeat after me: 'Hakuna matata!'. It means 'no worries'. 'Hakuna matata' – what a wonderful phrase. 'Hakuna matata' – no passing craze.

When the situation in Simba's homeland deteriorates, Rafiki, the wise monkey, goes in search of Simba to convince him to go back home:

Simba: Will you stop following me. Who are you?

Rafiki: The question is, Who are you?

Simba: I thought I knew, but now I am not sure.

Rafiki takes Simba on an obstacle-filled path. When they reach a lake, the skies open between clouds and thunder, revealing King Mufasa, who tells his son:

You have forgotten who you are. Look inside yourself. You are more than what you have become. You must take your place in the circle of life. Remember who you are! You are my son and the one true king...

We also forget "who we are" sometimes. This forgetfulness could stem from ignorance, fear or laziness: The question seems tiring and demanding. But, not knowing our past could affect our present and future. As Yigal Alon, commander of the Palmach, once said: "A people that does not remember its past – its present is uncertain and its future is unclear".

"Jewish Identity in Jeans" is a playful introduction to Jewish sources. We believe that the encounter with Jewish texts is not one-sided, but takes the form of a dialogue in which both reader and text change. In this program, we invite everyone (secular, traditional and religious) to hold a dialogue of fresh readings and create a common Jewish-Israeli

calendar. As Bialik wrote to the people of Kibbutz Ginegar, who wished to cancel the Passover celebration: “I have one piece of advice: Continue to celebrate the feasts of your forefathers, and add to it something of your own, according to your energy and preference. The most important matter is that you celebrate it with faith, living spirit and emotional need, and not try to outsmart yourselves” (Biyalik in a letter to David Umansky, March 28, 1930).

In the Jewish sources, the People of Israel are referred to as the “Jewish People”. The word “Jewish” is derived from “Judea,” the son of Jacob. The name “Judea” comes from the word *hodaya* – thanksgiving. The first words uttered by observant Jews every morning is “I offer thanks before You”. That is, the first word that is said after opening one’s eyes is *modeh* [thanks]. Similarly, the writer of Psalms has also written that “It is good to give thanks to the Lord”.

This is an opportunity to thank everyone who has worked to bring this program to fruition. We are grateful to the Bnei Shimon local council for its partnership and willingness to adopt the program and to the Be’er Sheva-Bnei Shimon-Montreal partnership for the generous support that has allowed this program to materialize.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from one of Yair Lapid’s most famous texts, that touches upon the Israeli public’s attitude toward the Jewish texts:

The deposit period has ended. For one hundred years, secular Jews have deposited their Judaism with the religious sector. It was stored in religious safes, behind the strange walls whose honesty has never been doubted. From time to time, especially during holidays and funerals, we pulled out some of the deposited funds. We used the sum and returned the rest of it to the safe. We didn’t ask for a balance, check which actions were carried out on our behalf or even inquire about the interest. Only now, we begin to think that our banker embezzled from our account. I’m no longer willing to deposit my Judaism with the religious sector, because I feel deceived. I was sold fossilized, rigid Judaism that could not be accessed without a yarmulke or prayer garments. Nobody told me that Maimonedes wrote the Guide for the Perplexed as a response to Aristotle and that Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra was also a poet. I didn’t know that the Mishna is fraught with rabbinical disputes – some of which are funny, others annoyed, some plainly odd.

However, the most significant embezzlement is not related to facts, but to ownership. The religious sector has managed to convince us that if we are secular we should steer clear of Judaism lest we be drawn in by their well-oiled “repentance” machine. It’s as if we cannot learn our history, cultural heritage or excellent literature, without being struck by a magically-clinging Hassidic hat. It’s a great shame that Hillel the Elder is dead – he would have laughed his head off. We cannot be secular – truly secular and genuinely heretic – without trying to know Judaism: it would not be secularism but plain ignorance. We do not need to accept all its essences. We are adults and have the right to decide what’s best for us. I’m still a beginner, but have shaken all the books and no angel has jumped out and tried to draw me in. Faith only frightens those who are not sufficiently familiar with its sources. In my youth, I read all 841 pages of Joyce’s Ulysses, and as far as I know I did not become Irish...”

Yair Tiktin

Senior Adviser to the Program

Manager of the Amihai Preparatory Program, Kramim

On a Personal Note

On the day I ascend to the heavens and the angels inquire about the contents of my bag of knowledge, culture and spirit, I will proudly announce that I read Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* in high school (the full text, not the abridged version) completed a Master's degree in philosophy (*cum laude*) and read all Shakespeare plays, most Plato dialogues and some Buddhist texts.

"Wait a second," they will curb my enthusiasm, "You visited the world's cultural sites and that is indeed impressive, but what did you pick up from your Jewish heritage, the one into which you born and from which you are departing today? You leave your children behind – what are you bequeathing to them from your ancestors?" Then, I will stand there in disgrace and face the truth: "I didn't pay many visits to the lands of Jewish culture, but only consumed modern Israeli works. My children are left with a measly Jewish tradition that is mostly related to Jewish holidays, and not much in addition to that".

My son will soon start junior high and will celebrate his Bar Mitzvah in six months. "Judaism in Jeans" was written for him as well as for his friends and other adolescents.

Much effort was put into making Jewish culture and texts accessible – even exciting and intriguing – to youths in Israel and in the Diaspora. We tried to combine past and present, and retell stories that took place a long time ago with a present-day groove. We attempted to connect Jewish tradition with Israeli culture, tying both of them to our 21st-century world. The program is structured according to the Hebrew calendar and each activity is connected to a universal topic (beginnings, rain, heroism, sustainability, mutual responsibility, memory, freedom, etc.) that is related to that particular month and embeds enjoyable activity and Jewish and Israeli texts.

The program was designed for secular youths, but is also suitable for a mixed secular-religious crowd and offers a unique meeting point for youths who come from different backgrounds and traditions.

Regrettably, I did not benefit from such a program when I was young, but am blessed with it now. The work on it encouraged me to continue to study Jewish culture. I very much hope it will do the same to our younger generation.

Tamar Milstein
Initiator and Producer
Community Stage
Kramim

KISLEV - HEROISM

Age Group: 7th-12th grade (additions are suggested for the senior age group)

Duration: 90 minutes

Goals: Learning the connection between Hanukkah and heroism and examining the terms 'hero/ine' and 'heroism'

Required Equipment: Printed cards (Attachment A), heroism-meter (instructions for preparation are attached), tape, photos of heroes (Attachment B), signs ("What is a Hero?" and definitions (each definition should be indicated separately on a page, print A4 paper with options for processing (the instructions are given at the "processing" stage)

For the Senior Age Group: Music Player, Bella Bellissima lyrics (attached)

This activity is based on the one prepared by Yair Tiktin, Head of the Amichai Mechina – a pre-military preparatory program for social Zionism, Kibbutz Kraimim



Background

Kislev is the third month on the Hebrew Calendar and runs parallel to November-December. Hanukkah is celebrated in Kislev (25 Kislev – 2 Tevet).

Hanukkah is celebrated for 8 days, commemorating the miracles of the Jewish victory over the Greeks – a victory of a few over many.



Topic – Heroism

Heroism is one of Hanukkah's central themes and is related to a people's right to fight for its freedom as well as for its spiritual and political independence. The value of heroism is embedded in both the feast itself and the historical events related to it. From the heroism of the few Maccabees who fought many Greeks and defeated them, to the victory of Hannah and her seven sons, Elazar HaSofer, and others who fought for their beliefs.

The myth of the Maccabean heroism served as a source of inspiration for the Zionist movement that was established with the aim of restoring the People of Israel in their Land. Since the Zionist revolution and the establishment of the State, Hanukkah has served as a symbol for the bravery of few against many. We too will address Hanukkah as a feast of heroism.



Opening Game – Power Circle

All the participants stand in a circle and hold hands, and then begin to spread their arms and push backwards as far as they can. All participants must then lean back and the two who let go first are disqualified and begin from the beginning.

כסליו



Activity

A "heroism-meter" is hung on the wall (it should be big enough to contain all the cards in Attachment A). The "heroism-meter" can also contain further categories such as "Not Heroic", "Slightly Heroic", "Quite heroic", "Very heroic", etc.

*Absolutely
Not Heroic*

Truly Heroic

The cards are read out loud and the participants should place them where they see fit, in accordance with the actions indicated on them. All the cards should be placed on the meter to be used at a later stage.

Photos of heroes are spread on the floor (Attachment B). More photos can be added, of course. Each participant chooses one photo and explains why s/he chose that particular one.



Questions for Discussion

- Why is s/he your hero/ine?
- Why is s/he a hero/ine?
- Do all your heroes and heroines have something in common?
- Try to define the term 'hero/ine'

After all/some of the questions are answered, a definition of heroism is formulated.

One of the ways of defining heroism is through its antithesis. The counselor poses the following question:

What is the opposite of a hero/ine?

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Several pages will be presented, each containing a possible definition of the opposite of the word 'hero':

<i>Selfish</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>Egotistical</i>
<i>Hesitant</i>	<i>Cowardly</i>	<i>Gentle</i>

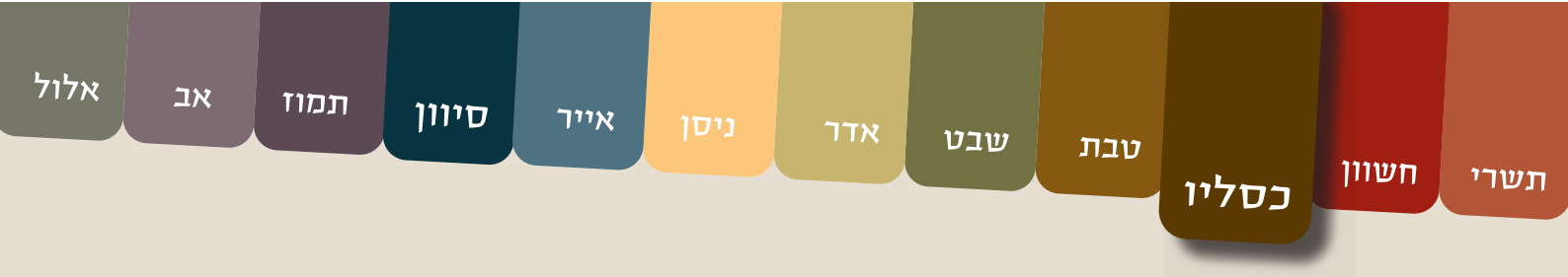
A superficial examination of the significations related to heroism may show that it is interpreted differently in different cultures.

In different folk myths, the hero is either a warrior who wins wars and conquers lands or a freedom fighter who liberates his people for their enemies. In Judaism, however, a hero is a person who "overpowers his inclinations" (Pirkei Avot 4, 1 – Mishnah 1).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a hero as:

1. A person who is admired for their courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities
2. The chief male character in a book, play, or film, who is typically identified with good qualities, and with whom the reader is expected to sympathize
3. (in mythology and folklore) A person of superhuman qualities and often semi-divine origin, in particular one whose exploits were the subject of ancient Greek myths

There is great diversity, it seems, between the various types of heroes – some are forceful and not necessarily benevolent, whereas others are attributed ethical excellence.



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Hence, heroism is not only won in battle but can also be expressed in day-to-day life: it is not only a physical quality, but primarily a moral one. Sometimes, however, the physical elements blur its true essence. True heroism continues to prevail, even if it's defeated on the battlefield. Its victory is an ethical one.

The Hebrew word 'gevurah' is derived from 'hitgabrut' – overcoming – not only others, but mostly inner forces that continue to give in to lower impulses, weakness and fear.

With the help of the cards we try to provide an antithetical definition of the word 'hero/ine'. 'Weak' is one possibility, but its opposite is 'strong' (a weightlifter is strong, but is s/he necessarily a hero/ine?). 'Cowardly' is an additional option, but its opposite is 'brave' (a pirate is brave, but is he a hero?).

The right answer: **Selfish/Egotistical**

The correct answer allows a closer examination of the term. In conclusion: **A hero/ine is a person who thinks not only of him/herself but is willing to sacrifice and overcome for the greater good. Heroes can be found not only on the battlefield, but also in everyday life.**

The following questions can be put on the floor and discussed:

*Who is the greatest hero?
One who turns an enemy into a friend
- Avot of Rabbi Natan*

*Who is the greatest hero?
One who overpowers his inclinations
- Pirkei Avot*

After the definition of heroism is discussed, the "heroism-meter" on the wall can be re-examined. The participants can decide whether they are still certain about the placement of the cards or would like to move them around.

The following text by Yitzhak Sadeh, that attempts to summarize the true definition of heroism, is read:

Heroism is not the pinnacle of achievement. It is a pathway towards a goal, a path that allows for no shortcuts. Like all paths, it has its branches, and sometimes those branches lead downwards. The way of valor is ultimately a process of purification. The true path always leads in one direction: to the top of the mountain. We try to find the path to heroism for ourselves, despite the risk falling off course, of falling into the abyss.

Let us note that the essence of heroism is not bravery, but rather a readiness to sacrifice oneself. Heroism can even manifest itself in the coward, so long as he is willing to make such a sacrifice. Indeed, true valor reveals itself in the how we live our lives each day. We normally associate the term "heroism" with those in the military, for understandable reasons: is not a prerequisite for the soldier the willingness to offer the ultimate sacrifice?

This, however, is far from the only pathway to the pinnacle of valor. It may be a pathway that we idealize, but recall that there are thousands of trails to the top of the mountain.

Heroism takes precedent over all moral values in that the sacrifice that it demands is not a cruel or selfish one, but is rather the ultimate form of giving. At its core, heroism is in the love of the other.

(Yitzhak Sadeh – "Pathways to Valor")



Processing

After the activity, the experience is processed.

The counselor spreads sheets with the following definitions: "Something that annoyed me", "Something I connected to", "Something I take with me", "Something I oppose to", etc. Others can be added, of course.

Each participant chooses one definition and shares it, and the reason for choosing it, with the group.



Addition for the Senior Age Group

The story behind this activity is a complicated one. Read it and decide whether it's suitable for the participants.

Listen to "Bella Bellissima" (on YouTube).

The song was written about Bella Freund. On May 12, 1992, Adnan Alafendi from the Deheishe refugee camp stabbed two Jewish children near the market in Jerusalem. An angry mob chased him and eventually caught him in a parking lot. Shots were fired at him and he was beaten by the mob. Freund passed there and managed to shield Alafendi with her body, preventing the mob from venting its anger. She was called an "Arab lover", and was kicked, beaten and burnt with a cigarette. The mother of one of the injured children cursed her and even claimed that her rage against Freund is greater than her hatred of the terrorist. After 27 minutes, the police arrived and arrested the Palestinian.

כסליו

Bella Bellissima – Dag Nahash

*This is a story that should be told to children
It is a worthy story*

*On a Tuesday, 12th May, 1992
A woman steps out of her house in Jerusalem
Normal day, nothing special, like any other day
Lots of kids were on the streets, there was a teachers strike
At that same time a vile terrorist
Pulls out a kitchen knife and stabs two innocent kids
Another mad cruel attack
Another nationalist assault*

*He sets off running because a mob is in pursuit
And catches him after a few seconds in the car park
Dozens kicked him, wanting to settle the score
I don't judge them, it's an irrational thing
It's a flawed situation, awful, devastating, unclear
But then turns up the woman who re-writes the end of the story
Because she throws herself on the terrorist and
Protects him with her body
He is a terrorist, who is also a human being and without her body he would have ended up a corpse
I don't understand, weren't you afraid with that madman beneath you and the mob so close?
Wouldn't it be easier to get up and leave?
She replied to the journalist that she hadn't had time to think.
She replied to the journalist that she hadn't had time to think.*

Bella Bellissima

That incident with the woman is engraved in my head
 Where did she get the strength to lie there without moving, without fear
 I ask myself what I would have done in her place
 If at the same moment I had been in the area
 It's clear to me that I wouldn't have gone over to boot him
 But to be fair and to tell the truth
 I don't think I would have been capable of doing what she did
 It's much easier to get up and run away
 Or try to find a policeman or something
 But she lay there until she lost her strength
 She took all those kicks for twenty minutes
 Her kids watched and didn't stop crying.

Bella Bellissima

This lady did not turn into a symbol
 And in effect her name has been erased from consciousness.
 There is no stamp with her face
 Perhaps because Israel is not yet ready and is not willing
 To embrace a hero
 Whose heroism is not armed, a hero
 Whose heroism is not military, a hero
 Whose heroism is just moral
 A hero who's a woman, and a haredi woman at that
 Know this, dear woman, that I did not forget
 The story of your heroism I promised to myself
 That this is a story that should be told to children
 That this is a story that should be told to children
 It's a worthy story

Bella Bellissima



Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think about Bella's action?
2. Do you think she's a heroine?
3. The song contains the following lines:
 This lady did not turn into a symbol
 And in effect her name has been erased from consciousness.
 There is no stamp with her face
 Perhaps because Israel is not yet ready and is not willing
 To embrace a hero
 Whose heroism is not armed, a hero
 Whose heroism is not military, a hero
 Whose heroism is just moral
 A hero who is a woman, and a haredi woman at that

What do you think?



ATTACHMENT 1

Helping my parents	Not copying from someone else during a test	Winning the lottery and helping the needy	Donating blood	Stealing and not getting caught	Preparing a sandwich for my little brother
Stopping at a red light	Not gossiping about others	Going to war	Getting up in the winter	Helping a lost child return home	Giving money to a beggar
Patently listening to a friend	Giving up something I wanted for someone else	Washing the glass I drank from	Donating a kidney	Keeping a secret that your friend did something that hurt others	Not giving something that someone asked you for because it's bad for him/her
Speaking with respect	Informing on someone who did something bad	Stealing to give to the poor	Admitting I didn't do my homework	Speaking the truth	Break into a cafeteria and bringing snacks for everyone



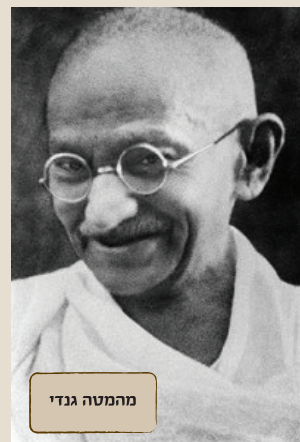
ATTACHMENT 2



אילן רמון



סופרמן



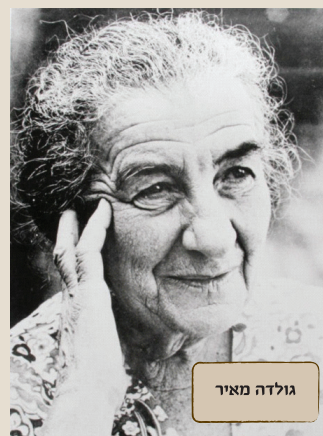
מהמטה גנדי



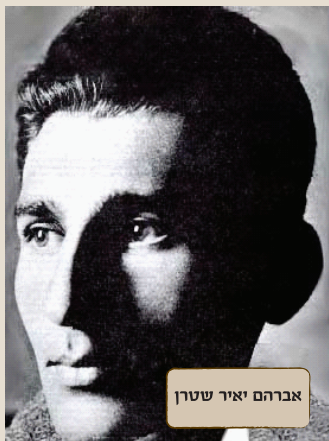
הרצל



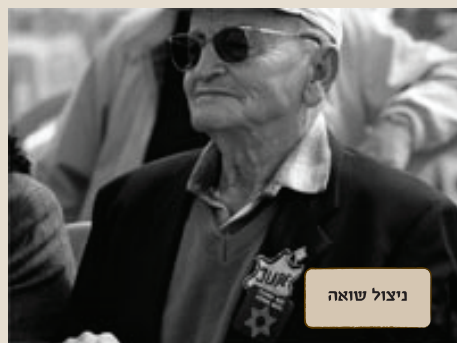
אובמה



גולדה מאיר



אברהם יאיר שטרן



ניצול שואה



סרן זיו שילון



אחר



המלכה אליזבת



איתי שגב

כסליו