

HOW DO I EXPRESS MY JEWISH PRIDE?

Overview

This Resource unpacks the issue of **Antisemitism** through the value of **Pride**.

At-a-Glance

This resource provides an opportunity to explore the value of pride in the context of increasing antisemitism. It provides context for negotiating internal and external displays of Jewishness, and how those impact our own sense of pride. It brings a model from the narrative of the book of Esther to anchor the tension between public and private displays of Jewish identity. Learners will have the chance to explore and reflect on their own considerations and choices about how they express themselves Jewishly in public and feel validated and intentional about their decisions.



MATERIALS AND SET-UP

Time estimate:

40 minutes

Best Uses:

- For visual and artistic exercises and discussions.
- For personal reflection.

Materials Needed:

- Printed Copies or Digital Device to look at the photos below.
- Pens
- Printed copies of the Make Meaning/Take Action Prompt



FRAME THE ISSUE (10 MINUTES)

As antisemitism is on the rise, and public conversation surrounding it seems to fill our newsfeeds each day, it's only natural that we may be thinking about the ways that we express ourselves as Jews. Each and every day we make decisions about how to show up in the public sphere. Sometimes, we may be confident with a decision about public displays of our Jewish identities, only to find ourselves shifting mid-way as a result of the gaze of others around us. Acts of overt antisemitism may shift how much we reveal or hide about ourselves, with the stakes feeling even higher about making choices about which parts of our Jewish pride we want to be on display for others to see.

Let's explore the ways we show up wearing our Jewish identities through the activities below.

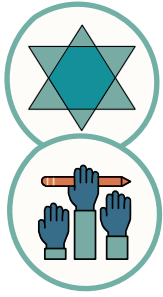
For Discussion:

- ▶ Think about your own internal sense of Jewish pride, what is its driving force? What is one thing about being Jewish that makes you most proud?
- ▶ Given your answer to the question above, how publicly do you display that sense of pride? Does it change based on the circumstances you are in? Why? Why not?

Summarize based on responses, highlighting the two competing desires: Expressing Jewish pride and being reluctant to draw attention to ourselves.

Even if we feel the strongest sense of pride in our Jewish identities, the current climate may give us pause to think about the ways we express our pride outwardly. We may have concerns about safety. We may be worried about exclusion from groups or the subject of uncomfortable questions.

How do we navigate when, where and how to express our Jewish pride balancing the different feelings we may be feeling, and the different directions we may be pulled in?



ANCHOR IN JEWISH WISDOM + ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

To explore this issue more deeply, we are going to look at two different images. Have a look at each one in turn.



#1 - The first image, *Esther at the Palace Gate* (scan the QR code to view) was painted by Sandro Boticello (in 1475) and is based upon the Biblical book of Esther and its central character. It depicts Esther's rise to power in ancient Persia, where she – a Jewish woman – became Queen of Persia and ultimately saved her people from genocide. At first, she kept her Jewish identity a secret, and only revealed it to King Ahasuerus when she needed to save her people from the evil decree of Haman. In this setting, she navigated when and how show outward expressions of Jewish pride while under the gaze of so many others. In this picture, we might imagine her contemplating when and how to reveal her inner Jewish identity and pride.



#2 - The second image is a contemporary photo and commentary of a student standing beneath Sather Gate at University of California, Berkeley. From the reflection, we learn that he, too, is questioning when and how to show up Jewishly.

Together in pairs, look at both images and reflect on the following questions:

- ▷▷ They are each standing at a gate. Why is a gate symbolic? What does it represent?
- ▷▷ Esther was encouraged to take up her position as queen by others (most notably her relative and mentor Mordecai), but ultimately grew into her role and took action to reveal identity and her Jewish pride. She was likely scared, but the impact of her decision was far-reaching and historic. How do you think she might have felt as a result of revealing her Jewish identity?
- ▷▷ In the second photo, what is the significance of the artist layering two photos on top of one another?
- ▷▷ Read the reflection that accompanies the second photo. How do you think he feels each day as he passes through the gate? Do his feeling resonate with you?

As a group, get back together and discuss:

- ▷▷ What motivates your decisions about how publicly or privately you reveal markers of your Jewish identity?



MAKE MEANING & TAKE ACTION (10 MINUTES)

DRAW:



We each have our “gates” – our platforms of sorts. Based on both images you analyzed in this session, *Under Sather Gate*, and *Esther at the Palace Gate*, draw a picture of yourself under one of your own “gates” where you most often find yourself thinking about your Jewish pride and how much to reveal or conceal.

Scan the QR code for a printable handout.

SHARE:

Share your drawings with one another, in pairs or in a full group

- ▷▷ What is the “gate” you drew here?
- ▷▷ As we think about pride, in the context of antisemitism, let’s go around the circle and reflect on our opportunity to demonstrate pride, balancing the complexity of our decisions:
 - What is one act of Jewish pride that you will express more outwardly at that gate?
 - What is one aspect of your Jewish pride that you’re more keenly aware of, but prefer to keep internal?



CLOSE WITH INTENTION (5 MINUTES)

In the exploration we have just experienced, we took an issue which is dominating our headlines and is of concern to global Jewry – antisemitism – and explored it through the value of pride. We did not only think about overtly antisemitic situations, but rather more generally offered an opportunity to reflect on the different ways we wear our Jewish pride. The questions of when, whether and how to reveal or conceal our Jewish pride are ones that we can always think about, not just when under threat. Today’s conversation provided a chance to explore what pride means and why you might at times decide to show your Jewish pride more overtly, and other times allow it to remain more internal.