

RESPONDING TO ANTISEMITISM: BURDEN OR PRIVILEGE?

Overview

This resource unpacks the issue of **Antisemitism** through the value of **Responsibility**.

At-a-Glance

This resource provides an opportunity to explore the value of responsibility in the context of responding to antisemitism. It provides learners a chance to relate to antisemitism on a personal level, engage with a photo gallery to reflect on the different responsibilities they have in their lives and gain new insights into how they view those responsibilities by examining the words of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z”l. It concludes with an opportunity to consider what responsibility means to each of us in calling out antisemitism when we see it.



MATERIALS AND SET-UP

Time estimate:
50 minutes

Best Uses:

- For group reflection with an individualized component
- For informal settings
- For more tech-oriented activities

Materials Needed:

- Digital Device to view/print photos
- Pens
- Printed Copies of the Make Meaning/Take Action



FRAME THE ISSUE (10 MINUTES)

Explore the connection between antisemitism and responsibility

In the interconnected world in which we live, we are part of many communities for which we may feel responsible: our families, friend groups, teams, organizations and beyond. Our obligations, commitments and responsibilities may at times feel like a burden, and other times a privilege.

The responsibility we each have to do something when witnessing or hearing about antisemitic incidents in our local communities, online or around the world, can be a matter of perspective: Is taking responsibility something I have to do? Is it something I'm lucky to be able to do?

It's a complicated question and one ripe for exploration.

Use the prompts below to introduce the topic, grounded in both facts and lived experiences.

According to the American Jewish Committee (AJC), antisemitic incidents have increased 40% in the last year (2021.). Many of us have experienced or seen acts of antisemitism that our parents never experienced.

As a full group, share personal experiences using the following questions:

- ▶▶ Have you ever witnessed an act of antisemitism for which you felt equipped to step in, take responsibility and do something about?
- ▶▶ Have you ever been the subject of an antisemitic attack, either in-person or virtually, and wish someone else had stepped in and taken responsibility to stop it? Describe the situation.



ACTIVITY: PHOTO GALLERY - BURDENS AND PRIVILEGES (10 MINUTES)

Perspectives on the value of responsibility



We have all sorts of responsibilities in our lives; sometimes they can make us feel uplifted and trustworthy, at other times they can feel annoying or burdensome. **Let's explore different types of responsibilities we may have and how we view them through this photo gallery. Use the QR code to scan or print photos in advance.**

- ▶▶ Have a look at the objects featured in the photo gallery (scan the QR code).
 - Choose one image that for you evokes “privilege” and one that evokes “burden”.
 - Find a partner and explain your choice,
 - Now choose one image that sometimes might feel like a privilege and other times might feel like burden. Share your choice with your partner.
 - In the full group, reflect on times in our life when we feel like what we are able to accomplish, or are called to do, can feel at once like a burden and like a privilege.
 - Finally, share with the group, do you view your ability to respond to hatred and bias as a privilege or as a burden?



ANCHOR IN JEWISH WISDOM (15 MINUTES)

In his book, *From Renewal to Responsibility*, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, writes the following:

“Jewish responsibility means carrying our identity into the public domain, living by Jewish values in our work, our careers and our interactions with others. Many Jews feel awkward about this. They still believe, as did Jews in the nineteenth century, that one should be “a person in the street and a Jew at home.” I believe, to the contrary, that non-Jews respect Jews who respect Judaism. They are embarrassed by Jews who are embarrassed about Judaism.”

- ▶▶ What do you think Rabbi Sacks means when he writes “many Jews feel awkward about this”? To what is he referring? Give examples.
- ▶▶ Why might someone feel awkward about carrying their Jewish identity into the public sphere? Have you ever felt this way?
- ▶▶ When have you felt that being a Jew is a privilege? Describe the moment, and why you felt this way.



MAKE MEANING & TAKE ACTION (10 MINUTES)

Diary Entry: What feels light and what feels heavy?

Begin writing down your thoughts on the following prompts:

- ▷▷ What does responsibility mean to you?
- ▷▷ What responsibilities feel heavy? What feels light?

Now think about your Jewish identity:

- ▷▷ What about your Jewish identity weighs you down?
- ▷▷ What feels uplifting?

Now consider **all** actions you can take to confront antisemitism, and then place them on a burden - privilege scale.

BURDEN  **PRIVILEGE**

»» What is an **action** you can take that goes slightly beyond your comfort zone? That might feel like a burden, but that you are willing to hold?



CLOSE WITH INTENTION (5 MINUTES)

In the exploration we have just experienced, we took a contemporary issue - antisemitism - which is painful and frightening, and explored it through the value of responsibility. Doing so offers an empowering way to contend with this unfortunate reality. Today's conversation provided a chance to explore what responsibility means to you - and why you might embrace, or shy away from, certain responsibilities in your lives - perhaps shifting some perspectives. While we hope you don't encounter or witness acts of antisemitism, there is the unfortunate reality that you may. If that's the case, we hope you feel prepared to consider your role in confronting it in a way that is meaningful to you.