



WHOSE STORIES DO WE TELL?

PREP FOR THE SESSION

Overview

This resource engages with our relationship to **Israel** through the value of **Tolerance**.

At-a-Glance:

This resource provides an opportunity to explore the stories we might include in the family of the Jewish people, and those we choose not to include. It presses learners to think about the value of tolerance in the context of Jewish peoplehood and to ask, what is our tolerance to include stories and narratives that differ from our own? When do we expand? When might we contract? By creating a visual map, and through listening to a clip from Israel Story podcast, learners will have the opportunity to explore what is gained – and what might be lost – when we bring in the voices and stories of others.



Time Estimate:

45 minutes



Materials Needed:

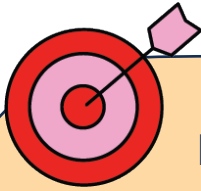
- Pens and paper for activity section “My Family Circles”
- Digital device to listen to podcast



Best Uses:

- For teens and young adults
- For moments when issues of Jewish Peoplehood are in the news
- For a way to reflect upon diverse perspectives and stories

LET'S GET STARTED



FRAME THE ISSUE

Facilitator reads for framing:

Imagine you were creating a museum exhibit about the “Story of the Jewish People.” How would you choose whose stories to tell? And how would you tell them? How far outside of the unit of the Jewish people would you be willing to go?

Facilitator prompts the group:

- Think of a moment when you were surrounded by an expansive and diverse group of Jewish or non-Jewish people (even those you may disagree with), that proved to be worthwhile for you. When was it? What about it made it worthwhile?
- Now think of another moment when you were surrounded by a similar expansive and diverse group, but it made you think twice about whether you would do this again. When was it? Why are you hesitant to do it again?

5 min





ACTIVITY

CREATING A VISUAL MAP:

Facilitator reads the following for framing:

My Family Circles:

As individuals we are connected to many other individuals and groups who we spend our time with, who we care for, whose stories we respect, understand and tell. Of course, there can sometimes be a hierarchy of this kind of caring and connection. What is our tolerance level of including others into our own circles? When might we expand and when might we contract? In this activity you will have the chance to explore these questions in the context of your own circles.

Directions:

A. Create Your Visual depiction of your Family Circles

In 3 or 4 circles write and or draw the following:

- Circle 1: You
- Circle 2: The people you feel the greatest connection to on a regular basis, whose stories you know well. For example, there might be people you live with, or talk to/text with daily.
- Circle 3: The people or groups you feel a connection to on a less regular basis - these are people you have a connection to but not as strong as Circle 2. For example, people you learn with, volunteer with, spend summers with, your neighbors, etc.
- Circle 4: The people you have a connection to that is not only less regular, but may also feel a bit theoretical, and not as strong a caring or connecting to as those in Circle 3. For example, social movements, countries.

B. Create Your Visual depiction of your Family Circles

When you have completed your visual depiction of your family circles, turn to a partner and choose 2-3 of the following prompts to discuss:

- Who is in your circles and why?
- Where do you think you should pay the most attention? Those in the first circle? To those who are most vulnerable?
- What keeps you from reaching outside your inner circle?
- What keeps you from expanding your outermost circle?
- What are the dangers in not making your inner circle broader?

C. Get back together as a whole group and discuss times that circles expanded.

7 min





EXPLORE THE VALUE: TOLERANCE

Facilitator reads for framing:

The discussion and activities above prompt us to think about the value of tolerance as it relates to our own individual circles, and to the circle of Jewish peoplehood.

Tolerance as a value is the willingness to accept feelings, beliefs, habits and ideas that are different from one's own. In telling our own stories – individual, and those of the Jewish people - what happens when we tolerate, and even invite the stories of others? Does it foster greater strength by making space for others and recognizing our shared humanity and our togetherness? Or does it diminish something special and unique about the core group?

Facilitator prompts the group:

- Imagine you were working on creating the Instagram page “Human of Judaism.
- Think of two stories – one that would fall squarely in a Jewish peoplehood framework, and one that calls for a more tolerant and expansive view of who should be included.
- By including the second story:
 - What is added?
 - What is lost? (i.e. - by including it, what is it coming at the expense of? How might the “Humans of Judaism” page change as a result?)

7 min





JEWISH ANCHOR

Facilitator reads for framing:

The Pesach Seder is a natural time to think about who is in our “peoplehood story.” It is a moment to consider who is around our tables and how expansive and tolerant we can or want to be. As we tell our peoplehood story, what other stories might we include?

Israel Story is a podcast whose mission is to promote a deeper understanding of - and connection to - Israel, through non-political, human-interest storytelling.

The episode of Israel Story linked below tells of diverse seder experiences and opens in the kitchen of Rabbi Susan Silverman who is hosting 40 African asylum seekers and refugees in Israel as part of her seder, including a family of Sudanese refugees.

Scan the QR Code or [click here](#) to listen to minute 2:45 until 5:00 to hear a bit about the diversity of the Silverman seder.



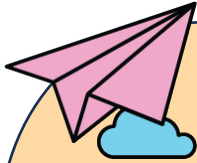
Facilitator prompts the group:

- Does this resonate?
- Why might you choose to include this story in your Jewish family story? Or why might it simply not fit?

10 min



5 min



PROMPT ACTION

Facilitator prompts the group:

Consider the following cases:

- A café owner designs a night of “speed dating” for Israeli-Jews and Israeli-Arabs who might not otherwise know one another to have the chance to meet. As a result, a new soccer league of Jews and Arabs is formed.
- A 7 year-old child asks their parents to invite the child of an estranged family member to their birthday party and afterwards the families share in future celebrations.

With these in mind, identify one person whose story you want to learn about who is outside, but connected to your “Jewish Family.”

- Once identified, write down three concrete actions you can take to learn their story. *(There are many ways to learn other people's stories - from movies, to books, to actual conversations.)*
- How will you go about doing that?
- What's hard about that? What's easy?
- Share your action plan with the group.

3 min



CLOSE WITH INTENTION

Facilitator reads:

At moments of both calm and crisis, we are invited to consider many different stories and voices as part of larger narratives of Jewish peoplehood. We may be more tolerant of including some over others. In the resource above we explored whose stories we might want to tell, and what might be gained as well as lost when we do.



Facilitator prompts the group:

- Based on the conversation above, how can you see your idea of family and peoplehood expanding?