



### **Classroom Activities, Section 3: Activities for Developing Jewish Pride**

#### **Activity Goals:**

1. Students will focus on the positive aspects of Jewish life.
2. Students will take notice of Jewish support all around them.
3. Students will be inspired by stories of Jewish strength through hard times.
4. Through familiarization with Jewish pride, students will feel empowered to handle challenges that they may face as Jewish people.

*In addition to developing elements of Jewish pride, some of the activities below also set the stage for a later discussion (when students are older) about how these symbols are sometimes used for antisemitic expression or a conversation as to why individuals might be hesitant to display these symbols due to antisemitism.*

#### **Activity 1: Symbols of Jewish Pride**

Have students look around the room and point out all Jewish symbols that they see – this can include Jewish stars, Jewish holiday symbols such as a menorah or a *shofar*, *kippot*, Israeli flags, Hebrew language, and more. *This can be broadened for older students to their floor in their school, or the school building.*

Keep a running tally on the whiteboard of all the Jewish symbols that the students notice each day and encourage students to keep their eyes out for other Jewish symbols that they may see outside of the classroom (ex. at home, on other levels of the school building, on the bus, etc.) as well.

Students can then report back and share what they have seen the next day in class.

Once the tally reaches an agreed-upon number (such as 100 total Jewish symbols counted), a prize can be distributed to the class of a Jewish symbol. The teacher can debrief why it is significant that there are so many Jewish symbols that they have found, and the teacher should share the idea that one way Jewish pride is expressed is by proudly wearing or displaying Jewish symbols.

This activity will train students to look out for Jewish symbols everywhere they go, helping them to notice that Jewish pride can be found in many places, and may encourage students to wear or display Jewish symbols themselves.

#### **Activity 2: Jewish Hero Profiles**

Teach students about a select Jewish hero and briefly share their story. Before Jewish holidays, discuss the stories of strong characters connected to the upcoming holiday – for example: Judah the Maccabee before Chanukah, Queen Esther before Purim, etc. At other times, a character from Jewish history or current events can be profiled. In all cases, highlight the person's strong Jewish identity and his/her strength and ability to overcome adversity.



These characters can be introduced to students as a “Guess Who” type game, with students needing to ask or answer questions to determine who the Jewish hero may be. Students can share which character traits they admire the most from each Jewish hero that they learn about. Through learning about the determination of Jewish people throughout time, students will feel inspired that we come from a history of empowerment and strength and that Jews today can handle the challenges we are facing as well.

If a teacher wants to broaden this experience, the teacher can have a “hero of the month” and a scrapbook can be created to keep track of the heroes, their challenges, traits, and successes.

### **Activity 3: Jewish Pride – Continue the Story**

Play a game and have students complete the sentence. Seat all students in a circle and ask one student to begin by answering a prompt about the positive aspects of Judaism. Then, the student to their right needs to continue the thought by adding a few more words or a short sentence of their own that builds on the first sentence. The next student to the right adds another sentence in the same vein, and so forth until all students have shared. Remind students to keep their comments appropriate and on topic and adjust as needed to keep the game on track.

Sentence starters can include: “I love being Jewish because.....,” “My favorite Jewish story is.....,” “Jewish people are strong because.....,” “My favorite Jewish holiday is.....,” “My favorite mitzvah is.....”, etc.

Here is an example of how this game may play out:

“Jewish people are strong because.....”

Student 1: “....we never give up”

Student 2: “....even when it feels very hard”

Student 3: “Like during the time of the Maccabees...”

Student 4: “When they fought even though they had a small army!”

This game will encourage students to consider why they love being Jewish and to focus on the positive aspects of their own Jewish experiences.

### **Activity 4: Jewish Show and Tell**

Each student should be prompted to bring in an item from home that demonstrates a sense of Jewish pride in their home. For example, this can be a siddur from a grandparent, a *kiddush* cup, or a special painting. After showing the class the object, or a picture of the object, students should identify it and its important place in their family home or history, and how this connects to their personal identity as Jews. Then, students should be prompted to explain why that identity makes them proud.



For example, a student can bring in an old siddur that has been in his family for generations. They can explain, “This is my great-grandfather's siddur that he brought over from Europe. He was very poor and had nothing but the clothing he was wearing and this siddur. He would never give up this siddur. This siddur represents my great-grandfather's Jewish identity, and it is also a symbol of my Jewish identity. It makes me proud to think that when my great-grandfather had nothing, he held onto this siddur because it was a way for him to connect with God. It makes me proud to think that I too, use the same siddur, to connect with God.”

This activity aims to provide both a deeper and more personal meaning to the Jewish symbols and artifacts that we may see in our daily lives.