

Oh The Places We Go on Our Jewish Adventures
Jesse Altman, 5770-5771 NFTY CAR Youth Ambassador and YoBE Co-President

Touchstone Text

Sometimes it's the smallest decisions that can change your life forever.

- Keri Russell

Goal

1. Participants will understand the significance of the Jewish choices they make in their lives. All of these choices have the potential to strengthen, weaken, or change their relationship and connection to Israel and their Jewish identity.

2. Participants will see that every Jewish experience they have, the aspects that make up their Jewish identities, has the potential to connect to Israel. They will feel that their experiences are significant to their relationship with Israel and that that relationship is significant to their Jewish identity.

Objective

1. At the end of the program participants will have been exposed to different scenarios that Reform Jewish people might face during their lives as children to teenagers to young adults.

Materials

- 1 bicycle (mini bicycle)
- 3 x Poster boards
- 3 Black Markers
- 3 Green Markers
- 3 Blue Markers
- 3 Red Markers
- 2 tallit
- 2 kippot
- 1 projector
- 1 Macbook laptop with PowerPoint Story
- 1 program outline
- 1 Appendix A
- 1 Appendix B
- 3 Appendix C
- 3 Appendix D
- 3 Appendix E

People

- 1 Facilitator
- ___ Group Leaders (GLs)
- ___ Participants (PPs)
- 1 Teenager

- 1 Parent

Space Needed

- Port Hall

Time Table

00:00-00:10 Introduction

00:10-00:13 Break into Groups

00:13-00:35 Adventure Book Activity: *Choose your own Jewish Adventure*

00:35-00:50 Group Discussion

00:50-01:00 Wrap up

Detailed Procedure

00:00-00:10 Introduction

Facilitator welcomes the group and asks PPs to share the story of David and Goliath orally (facilitator will summarize story). Two PPs will then act out the encounter. Facilitator will ask the PPs if they know what happened to David afterwards. Facilitator will then share the story of David and King Saul (Facilitator will have Appendix A – David’s encounters, which contains the David and Goliath summary and the David and King Saul story).

Facilitator will share the story from Appendix B – My Personal Encounter with Ein Gedi, which includes both a segue from David’s story to the personal story, and the personal encounter (the story includes its significance). During the story the PowerPoint story of Appendix B will be playing in the background **The PowerPoint was created on a Mac**. If the PowerPoint does not work then do the word emphasis version of the story (Appendix C). In the back up version, there are words that are bolded and words that are underlined. Bolded words are meant to be emphasized by GLs saying them as well and underlined words are meant to be repeated by GLs like an echo. From there the facilitator will then use the significance of the story to explain the activity. Facilitator explains what the activity is, splits PPs into groups with GLs.

00:10-00:13 Break into Groups

GLs lead their groups to the different locations and sit them down in circles in respective areas.

00:13-00:35 Adventure Book Activity: *Choose your own Jewish Adventure*

Each group will have Appendix D – My Reform Jewish Adventure and will start out as a Reform Jew. Groups will travel to different stations and will watch scenes taken from an average Reform Jewish teenager’s life and then discuss the questions and fill out the different sections of their poster board person (outline of a person, the upper half, with three vertical lines dividing it). There are 3 stations they will go to before returning to where they met originally where the GLs will begin discussions.

Facilitator will walk around to stations and listen in on the thought process that the groups are going through. At every station the group leader will explain to them the scene/image in front of them and discuss the respective questions (all the information will be on the appendix for their group).

00:35-00:50 Group Discussion

GLs will get feedback from the PPs about what they connected with during this activity. Why they thought it was a good activity to go through. GLs will then begin to ask questions from Appendix E. GLs will follow where the discussion is going, and as long as it is a good discussion all the questions do not need to be answered (questions with * next to them must be answered). Start with “Jewish Identity” questions and go to Israel questions later if there is time. After questions are answered and the discussion is over or after the time is up GLs will lead their groups back to the original location where the introduction occurred for the wrap-up.

Each group must nominate a representative to share their group’s poster board person. The facilitator will tell each group that or will tell the group leader that when they are walking around and joining each group’s discussion. GLs should play devil’s advocate, ask other questions related to the topic, and just try to ensure discussions are running smoothly and are causing PPs to really think.

00:50-01:00 Wrap Up

Facilitator will ask each group to have their representative/s to come up and share what their group did/learned. Facilitator will be writing down the key points on a large, white poster board in marker or sharpie (active listening). *The poster board will be divided into the same three sections the group poster boards were, but no person outline. The sections will be titled “Parent Decisions” and “Past,” “Childhood” and “Present,” and “Individual Decisions” and “Future.”* After all groups have shared, the facilitator will use these major points to make the point that no one is the same. Everyone makes their own decisions and has their own unique Jewish identity. Also, another perspective that these posters can be looked is by changing or adding past, present and future into the columns. **Parents made all the decisions in the past. PPs are still in their childhood (technically) and are growing presently. In the future, PPs will be on their own, independent and making their own decisions.** A brief discussion can be had on this depending on the time left. *The final point should be that every participant has the power to make their own decisions about how they define themselves and express their Judaism. They must take on this responsibility and make significant Jewish choices in their lives. These choices make up their Jewish identity, so they should all strive to create their own, individual Jewish identity.*

Appendix A – David’s Encounters with Goliath and King Saul

David and Goliath

David, a young boy shepherd, goes and fights the 9 foot tall giant Philistine Goliath. He goes without any armor and no real weapon, only a slingshot, 5 smooth stones, and the faith that God will protect him. He fires one stone directly at Goliath’s forehead and kills the giant.

David and King Saul

David became a very powerful and important warrior underneath King Saul’s reign, but Saul soon became jealous of David and his fame and tried to have him killed (in short). David fled with those men still loyal to him to Ein Gedi, the wilderness near Masada, and hid in a cave from Saul and his men. David was not discovered, and the reason is that when Saul and his men were looking at the caves they saw a spider web, a symbol of age and abandonedness on David’s cave and believed the cave to be empty. Saul went into the cave to relieve himself believing that no one was there, but David captured him. However he chose not to kill Saul and because of his actions he secured his spot as the succeeding king of Canaan.

Appendix B – My Personal Encounter with Ein Gedi

Facilitator should be speaking in an awed voice and become gradually more excited as the story continues. Play PowerPoint as you tell the story, numbers in the story equal slides in the PowerPoint (1 GL should be working the PowerPoint as the Facilitator share the story)

Just as David and King Saul had their encounter at Ein Gedi, I too traveled there and had my own experience. [1→] When I traveled to Ein Gedi I discovered and created an important connection between Judaism, Israel, and myself. During our hike to the gracious, flowing Ein Gedi waterfall our tour guide, [2→] Ehud, stopped us to talk about the significance of this place we were hiking through. He began telling us that this place had biblical roots. That is, this place connected to a certain [3→] David from the Old Testament. [4→] Lucas, a new friend of mine, actually said, [5→] “David and Goliath,” when Ehud asked some question I was not paying attention to. As soon as I heard those three words from Lucas, I turned around and [6→] snapped at attention! Why? Because here, in Israel, the Jewish homeland, at the age of sixteen, we were talking about this awesome, inspiring biblical story that I had heard many, many years ago at the [7→] age of nine in Sunday school. [8→] David, a young boy at the time, stood up to the massive Goliath and killed him with a mere slingshot and stone. His wits and cunning overcame Goliath’s brute strength and size. But, that wasn’t what Ein Gedi was really about. Ein Gedi was, or rather is, about David’s journey after that. [9→] For King Saul, as you all know, became jealous of his powerful, famous soldier and forced him into hiding in Ein Gedi, you all remember the story. That brings us back to me. [10→] Small, insignificant, sixteen year-old me who was standing looking up at a cave. Because as Ehud explained what happened here, [11→] with the spider and its web, I looked up and couldn’t believe it. I was gazing at a cave, [12→] possibly the cave that David hid in thousands of years ago. While I knew that that story could very well have not happened and that this cave had no real significance whatsoever, I couldn’t help but be amazed by the fact that I was there. That wasn’t the entire reason this moment was so meaningful to me though. I think that it was the fact that something I learned about, a story I had heard as a little kid in Sunday school of all places, more than half a decade ago was staring me right in the face [←13]. My past learning and my present experiences were blending together [←14] and it was honestly one of the coolest things I have ever experienced. If I was thinking anything at that moment I believe it was this, [15→] *Wow! I learned all of those stories those many years ago in Sunday school for a reason! So I could learn them and then come here and see them! So I could have this awesome feeling that everything is connected in some way! Wow!* It was definitely at that moment that I realized how important all of the things that happened in my childhood as a Reform Jew, both the decisions my parents made for me and the decisions I made for myself, are. [16→] Every choice that was made in my life caused me to go down a certain path. Every Jewish decision I made caused me to become more Jewish or less Jewish and more connected to Israel, more or less. So what is the significance of this story? [17→] The significance is that I made a series of choices and decisions that affected and transformed my Jewish life. They were all connected in some way and they affected each other somehow also. Now it’s all of your turns to make some transforming Jewish choices.

Facilitator will now explain the adventure book activity

Appendix C – Shortened, Spoken Word Version of My Personal Encounter

Facilitator should be speaking in an awed voice and become gradually more excited as the story continues

Just as David and King Saul had their encounter at Ein Gedi, I too traveled there and had my own experience. When I traveled to Ein Gedi I discovered and created an important connection between Judaism, Israel, and **myself**. During our hike to the Ein Gedi waterfall our tour guide, Ehud, stopped us to talk about the significance of this place we were hiking through. He told us that this place had **biblical roots**, connection to a certain David from the Old Testament. My friend Lucas said, “David and Goliath,” and as soon as I heard those three words I **snapped** at attention! Why? Because here, in Israel, the Jewish homeland, at the age of sixteen, we were talking about this awesome, inspiring biblical story that I had heard many, many years ago at the age of nine in Sunday school. A story about a young Shepard named David standing up to the massive **Goliath** and defeating him. His wits overcame Goliath’s brute **strength** and **size**. But Ein Gedi, I learned, is about David’s journey after that. King Saul became jealous of his famous soldier David and forced him into hiding in Ein Gedi, (***Look up at PPs and half smile, laugh when you say the next 6 words***) but you all remember the story. That brings us back to me, insignificant sixteen year-old me, looking up at a cave. Because as Ehud explained the story of David and King Saul at Ein Gedi, I looked up and couldn’t believe that I was in front of a cave, possibly **the** cave that David hid in thousands of years ago. While I knew that that story could very well have **not happened** and that this cave had no real significance whatsoever, I couldn’t help but be amazed by the fact that I was there. I think that the fact that something I learned about, a story I had heard as a little kid in **Sunday school** of all places, more than half a decade ago was staring me right in the face. My past learning and my present experiences were blending together and it was honestly one of the **coolest** things I have ever experienced. When I recall this experience I think, **Wow!** *I learned all of those stories those many years ago in Sunday school for a reason! So I could **learn** them and then **come here** and **see** them! So I could have this awesome feeling that everything is connected in some way! Wow! At that moment I realized how important all of the decisions my parents made for me and all of the decisions I made for myself are. **Every choice** that was made in my life caused me to go down a certain path. **Every Jewish decision** I made caused me to become **more or less Jewish** and more or less connected to Israel. (**PAUSE**) So what is the significance of this story? The significance is that I made a series of choices and decisions that affected and transformed my Jewish life. They were all interconnected in some way. Now it’s your turn to make some **transforming** Jewish choices.*

KEY:

Bold – GLs and Facilitator say them together for emphasis

Underlined – Facilitator says the word(s) and the GLs repeat those words like an echo

word - notes on inflection and posture for the Facilitator

Appendix D – My Reform Jewish Adventure

Group Leader: *The Activity of filling out the “poster person” is more important than the mini-discussions. So spend time answering the questions, but filling the “poster person” should be where the majority of the group’s time is spent.*

Group starts with the Bar-Mitzvah image: *Group Leader reads out loud the caption*

Station #1: You are a Reform Jewish boy, 13, being Bar Mitzvah. You are only becoming Bar Mitzvah because your parents say that you have to be.

Questions:

1. What are some decisions your parents made for you when you were little?
2. How did the decisions they made then affect you now?
 - a. Do those decisions still affect you now?
3. Why is it important they your parents make decisions for you?

Group Leader: *Go to station #1 and the Bar-Mitzvah image. Then discuss parental decisions made for PPs. PPs get a piece of poster board with the outline of a person on it divided into three vertical sections. They will put parental decisions in the left section and label it parent decisions with markers given to the group. The answers from questions 1 and 3 must be on the poster.*

Station #2: Back up several years. You are just learning how to ride a bicycle! Think back to that childhood moment and try to remember everything about that moment in time.

Questions:

1. What are childhood events that you remember?
Things happening to you now are still childhood events.
2. What do all of these childhood events make up of you?
 - a. Your memory?
 - b. Your identity?
3. Did they/Do they continue to affect who you are and the decisions and things you do today?

Group Leader: *Go to station #2 and the childhood memory image. Then discuss “things that happened in my childhood” with the PPs. After the discussion add these childhood events to the middle section of their person and label that section childhood events. Answers from questions 1 and 3 must be on the poster.*

Station #3: You choose to attend youth group events, and eventually become a member.

Questions:

1. What are some examples of decisions you make on your own?
 - a. Why do you make your own choices?

2. Is having the capability to make your own choices important to you?
 - a. Why is it important for you?
3. How important is it to you to have the capability to make those choices?

Group Leader: *Go to station #3 and the independent choice scene. Then discuss individual decisions with PPs. Fill in the remainder of the poster board (the third section of the person outline) with those decisions PPs made and label the section individual decisions. Answers from questions 1 and 2 must be on the poster.*

When you return to your discussion area you will explain the significance of the "person" you filled in and created. Discuss the varying importance of each section of the poster board person. One group representative will explain at the end the person they made, and which sections were most crucial to this person's identity and why they decided this. NOW START DISCUSSION.

The "person" that the PPs just filled out/created is themselves and everyone else as well. Their identities are made up of all of the different sections of the "poster person." Every decision that they made has an effect on who they are and the decisions they make. The things that happened in their childhood and the decisions their parents made for them also affect their identities, personalities, and decisions they are making today.

****Group Leader:** *If you have anything you think helps elaborate on this brief explanation feel free to add on! If you do so then please make a note of it on your given appendix so that I can make changes or add on to this for future use.***

Appendix E – Group Discussion Questions

Jewish Identity Questions

1. What do you think makes a choice transformative?
 - a. What does transformative even mean? (Ah-ha moment vs. **wow moment**)
2. What are the some transformative choices you have made as a Reform Jew?
3. What do you think is the most transformative choice you made? Choose from all of the things already said.
4. Why does this choice stand out to you more than the other choices? Explain.
5. Is it the outcome of these decisions that makes them meaningful?
 - a. Is it the precursor, the path that led you to doing it?
 - b. Or is it both?
6. Do you think it is fair to say that all of these choices make up the shape of your Jewish identity?
7. What is your Jewish identity?
 - a. What are some words that can describe your Jewish identity?
8. Okay, now I want to take a minute, remember back to the beginning of this discussion, the choices we were talking about. Did they change your Jewish identity?
 - a. How?
 - b. Why?

Answers from questions 1, 6, 7, and 8 go in the head of the “poster person.”

Discussion is equally as important as the activity.

****If time, go to Israel questions****

Israel Questions

9. Does your Jewish identity cause you to have a connection to Israel like Jesse’s moment at Ein Gedi did to him? (10 if no, 13 if yes)
10. Why do you think you don’t you have a strong connection to Israel?
11. Do you think this lack of a connection affect your Jewish identity?
 - a. How?
12. Can you change that and strengthen your connection to Israel?
 - a. Do you want to change your connection, no, your relationship with Israel?
13. For those of you who do connect to Israel, Is it the land, the people, of Israel that you feel connected to or is it the idea of Israel being the Jewish homeland that you connect to?
 - a. Why?
14. Why do you all think that some of you connect to Israel and others don’t? ****If some do and don’t****
15. How would you describe Israel in relation to your Jewish identity?
16. Its obviously different for all of you, so why do you think Israel is or isn’t this important to your Jewish identity?