



IGNITING

# *'Younity'*

Unity and Mutual  
Responsibility  
- Hanukkah

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Have you ever walked through a forest of aspen? On the surface you see a multitude of trees; each a free-standing pillar of beauty with its own unique trunk, branches and leaves.





However, just under the surface hides an enormous and intricately interconnected root system. Scientists have found that whole forests of aspen are actually one entity. Some botanists argue that such aspen forests are actually the largest living organisms on earth. For example, Dr. Michael C. Grant, in his work as a professor at the University of Colorado, reported an aspen clone consisting of 47,000 tree trunks covering 106 acres and weighing millions on pounds.

The trees may appear separate entities, but they are actually part of one wholeness. This mind-blowing fact compels us to wonder, “Where else do we see things as separate when actually they are but part of an inherent oneness?” This question is at the heart of Jewish teachings about unity, *achdut*.

**Some questions to ask yourself as you move through this unit:**

- *What could Jewish unity look like? What does unity mean when we don't agree about things we think are important?*
- *What is the Jewish way to argue? Could disagreement support unity?*
- *How can I help create Jewish unity?*

# ACHDUT - ALL WITH ONE HEART AT SINAI

The phrase, “Two Jews, three opinions,” is familiar enough to be cliché. Indeed, every page of Talmud expresses different opinions. The practice of questioning diverse opinions and exploring consistencies between them is how Jews have been studying for generations. Yet, at the root, there is a foundational oneness - *achdut*.

After the People of Israel are saved from Egypt, they travel in the desert to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. Rashi focuses our attention on a grammatical curiosity: the Torah uses the singular form, rather than the plural form, to tell us that the Israelites camped opposite Mount Sinai.

## Shemot (Exodus) 19:1-2

In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt, on the first of the month, they came to the desert of Sinai. They had departed from Rephidim and had arrived in the Sinai Desert, camping in the wilderness. Israel encamped there opposite the mountain.

א בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לְצֵאת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי. ב  
וַיִּסְעוּ מִרְפִּידִים וַיָּבֹאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּמִדְבַּר וַיַּחֲנוּ שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶד הָהָר.

**Rashi - Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki**, France, 1040-1105, the famous Biblical and Talmudic commentator

## Rashi's Commentary on Shemot 19:2

Israel encamped there: Heb. וַיַּחֲנוּ, [the singular form, denoting that they encamped there] as one person with one heart, whereas all the other encampments were [divided] through complaints and strife.

רש"י שמות פרק יט ויחן שם ישראל – כאיש אחד בלב אחד, אבל שאר כל החניות בתרעומת ובמחלוקת:

- *What do you think Rashi means when he says that the People of Israel at Mount Sinai were like “one person with one heart”?*
- *What do you think enabled the People of Israel to come together with one heart at this moment, when they had been so divided before?*
- *Have you ever experienced a time when you felt like “one person with one heart” with the Jewish people? Explain.*

## UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY

Our tradition teaches that the Jewish people are one – even though we may seem like a menagerie of radically different groups.



The hidden truth of our very essence and existence is that we are part of one unified whole.

In the words of the *Shema* prayer: “*Sh'ma Yis-ra-eil, A-do-nai E-lohei-nu, A-do-nai E-chad*,” “Hear, Oh Israel, A-do-nai our God, A-do-nai is One,” the word “*Echad*” (one), does not speak only about the number one, but also about the ultimate Oneness, unity and interconnectedness of life.

The *Shema*'s message isn't limited to God being one entity, but tells us that God is actually the Oneness of all that is. And we, in all our diversity, are also a paradoxical part of that divine Oneness.

### Writing in silence allow your thoughts to flow freely, unedited. Consider:

- *Have you experienced glimpses of the interconnectedness and Oneness of life? Has there been such a time for you in nature, in community, or with family? Recall what was it like.*
- *What connection do you see between God, Oneness or "unity"?*
- *Is there “someone” in your life for whom it is not easy to remember and notice that this person too is “some of the One!?” What could that remembering look like, for you?*
- *Some parents include the Shema prayer in their bedtime ritual with their children. In what ways might you help your child tap into the unifying energy of Oneness as they settle at the end of the day?*

## The Beauty of Diversity

One of the challenges and paradoxes of any community is balancing boundaries, the richness of diversity, and a core unity. In visual art, beauty is found in the combination of colors, in music, in the harmony of different voices or instruments.

- *How might the two sources below provide guidance to expand the way we experience diversity and unity in our communities?*

### Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 58a

Our Rabbis taught: If one sees a crowd of Israelites, s/he says, “Blessed is the One who discerns mysteries,” for the mind of each is different from that of the other, and the face of each is different from that of the other.

ת"ר הרואה אוכלוסי ישראל אומר ברוך חכם הרזים שאין דעתם דומה זה לזה ואין פרצופיהן דומים זה לזה

### Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Ha'azinu (5773) – Let My Teaching Fall Like Rain:

The Torah is compared to rain precisely to emphasize that its most important effect is to make each of us grow into what we could become. We are not all the same, nor does Torah seek uniformity. As a famous Mishnah puts it: When a human being makes many coins from the same mint, they are all the same. God makes everyone in the same image – His image – yet none is the same as another. (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5)

- *What do these sources teach you about the rabbis' view of diversity?*
- *How is it possible to have unity if we are all so different?*
- *In what ways can God be a unifying force?*

Our sages teach us that the destruction of the Temple came about as a result of a break down in Jewish unity, a consequence of discord among the Jewish people. When we celebrate *Hanukkah*, we are celebrating a time when the Jewish people repaired their divisions and reunited around the cause of rededicating the Temple. As we kindle the lights on our *hanukiah*, we see the power of its light growing stronger with each additional flame, the power of the individual made stronger through its very connectedness to others.

**Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**, served as the British Chief Rabbi from 1991 to 2013.



## Activity

### Creating a Sisterhood Community Ball

Visual and kinesthetic learners find seeing and doing to be powerful aspect of learning. So, while you are exploring the topics on this page, you can create a visual reminder of the beauty of unity through diversity by creating a multi-color pom-pom, a community ball. In the future you might want to use it as a “talking ball/stick”.

Set up chairs in a circle. As you continue to study together, each person who speaks can wrap colorful yarn around a piece of cardboard prepared in advance. There’s no rule on how much needs to be wrapped; just talk and wrap as little or as much as you’d like. Then, pass the cardboard and yarn to the next person. It might be helpful to have a neighbor hold the yarn. At the end of the conversation you will have created a Sisterhood Ball weaving together the diversity of your group into unity. (The Facilitator’s Guide at the end of the Section has more information.)



A *hanukkiah* is a nine-branch candelabra used for Hanukkah (sometimes called a Hanukkah menorah, though the term “*menorah*” refers to the seven-branched Temple candelabra, which was lit 24/7.)



## THE WONDER OF DIVERSITY



### **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks The Dignity of Difference**

God, the creator of humanity, having made a covenant with all humanity, then turns to one people and commands it to be different, in order to teach humanity

the dignity of difference. Biblical monotheism is not the idea that there is one God and therefore one truth, one faith, one way of life. On the contrary, it is the idea that unity creates diversity.... What is real and the proper object of our wonder is not the quintessential leaf but the 250,000 different kinds there actually are; not the idea of a bird, but the 9,000 species that exist. It is not a universal language; it is the 6,000 languages still spoken throughout the world.

Cultures are like languages. The world they describe is the same but the ways they do so are almost infinitely varied.... There is no universal language. There is no way we can speak, communicate or even think without placing ourselves within the constraints of a particular language whose contours were shaped by hundreds of generations of speakers, storytellers, artists and visionaries who came before us, whose legacy we inherit and of whose story we become part.... The same is true of religion.... Religion is the translation of God into a particular language and thus into the life of a group, a nation, a community of faith.... How could a sacred text convey such an idea? It would declare that God is God of all humanity, but no single faith is or should be the faith of all humanity. Only such a narrative would lead us to see the presence of God in people of other faiths. Only such a worldview could reconcile the particularity of cultures with the universality of the human condition.



# ILLUMINATING THE LIGHT WITHIN

A human soul is the candle of God.

- Prov. 20:27

## Rabbi Abraham Isaak Kook

Each person needs to know and understand  
That in him or her there is a lit candle  
And no two people's candles are alike  
And there isn't any person who lacks a candle.  
Each person needs to know and understand  
That there's a need to work and to discover how  
To share one's candle light with others  
And to ignite it into a big torch  
That illuminates the entire world

צריך שכל אדם ידע ויבין  
שבתוך תוכו דולק נר,  
ואין נרו שלו כנר חברו  
ואין איש שאין לו נר.  
וצריך שכל איש ידע ויבין  
שעליו לעמול ולגלות  
את אור הנר ברבים  
ולהדליק לאבוקה גדולה  
ולהאיר לעולם כולו.

As we kindle the lights on our *hanukkiyah*, may the candles' glow connect us to the tremendous power, encapsulated in our fiery soul.

- *What are ways that you take time to be nourished by your own inner light?*
- *What are ways in which you radiate your light into the world?*
- *What are ways you let your children know how their light and actions illuminate your world?*
- *With whom do you envision uniting to ignite your light "into a big touch that illuminates the entire world!?" What is a step that you can take this holiday season toward this vision?*

**Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook** (1865-1935) was the first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of pre-State Israel.

## HOW SHOULD WE DISAGREE?

Since we are all so different, we are bound to have disagreements. At times we think the perspective or actions of another are outright wrong or even destructive. Jewish tradition teaches us that not all disagreements are alike: there are disagreements for the sake of Heaven and disagreements that are not. How might we learn to disagree with each other in ways that are productive and in true service of God, the Jewish people and humanity? The following sources give us some insights.

- *What does the Talmud teach about our approach to disagreement?*
- *How can you incorporate Hillel's method into your own disagreements?*
- *The Schools of Hillel and Shammai were committed to rigorous study for the "sake of heaven." This qualifies and distinguishes the "this and those" from "anything goes." How do you invite questioning and different opinions within reasonable boundaries?*

### Disagreement for the Sake of Heaven

The following is the example our sages offer of a disagreement for the sake of Heaven:

#### Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 13b

For three years, there was a dispute [one of many] between the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel. The former asserting, "The law is according to our view, and the latter asserting, "The law is according to our view." Then a heavenly voice issued, announcing, "These and those [the views of both] are the words of the living God, but the law is in accordance with the school of Hillel."

Since, however, both are words of the living God, why was it that the School of Hillel merited to have the law determined according to their views?

Because they were kindly and modest, and because they studied both their own views and those of the School of Shammai, and not only that, they would study the views of the School of Shammai before their own.

#### תלמוד בבלי, ערובין יג:

אמר רבי אבא אמר שמואל: שלש שנים נחלקו בית שמאי ובית הלל, הללו אומרים הלכה כמוותנו והללו אומרים הלכה כמוותנו. יצאה בת קול ואמרה: אלו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים הן, והלכה כבית הלל. וכי מאחר שאלו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים, מפני מה זכו בית הלל לקבוע הלכה כמוותן?  
מפני שנוחין ועלובין היו, ושונין דבריהן ודברי בית שמאי. ולא עוד אלא שמקדימין דברי בית שמאי לדבריהן



## How Can Disagreement Cultivate Growth?

Here is a teaching in which not only is disagreement encouraged, but it is seen as vital to growth.

### The Life of Rabbi Nachman, Chayei Moharan, Avodat Hashem, 58

I heard in the name of Rabbi Nachman who said: Through disagreeing (*machloket*) with a person you can do him or her a favor, because through it the person can grow and develop. It's like when planting a seed in the soil — if the soil is so tightly packed together the seed cannot grow and develop into a tree in uniformly solid soil. It is necessary for the soil to be [aerated], divided up (*mechuleket*) a little in order for there to be room for the tree to grow. So it is when one has a disagreement with another; there could be in it an offering of spaciousness for [new thinking] growth and development.

**Rabbi Nachman of Breslov** (1772-1811) was a Chasidic master and religious thinker, and the founder of the Breslov Chasidic movement. His disciple Reb Noson wrote the book *Chayei Moharan* about Rabbi Nachman's life.

- *How could Rabbi Nachman's perspective on disagreement affect how we disagree with others? How might these ideas enrich our thinking about the relationship between disagreement and unity?*
- *What might this perspective on disagreement offer you? Where in your life can you transform an experience of disagreement into an opportunity for growth? Where are you with disagreements? Where would you like to be? What gets in the way? What advice do you have for yourself?*



## DEDICATING TO SHARING LIGHT

### Celebrating Hanukkah with family and community

All the People of Israel are mutually responsible  
for one another.

- Midrash and Talmud<sup>1</sup>



On Hanukkah, we light the candles using a helper candle, called the *shamash*. One flame ignites the others. How might we ignite creativity, light, and connection in our families and communities this holiday?<sup>2</sup>

#### How can we find meaning in lighting the *hanukkah*?

The Talmud teaches that the basic Hanukkah *mitzvah* is to have *one* person light *one* candle each night of Hanukkah. What can we learn from the way we light the candles these days, with many family members lighting candles cumulatively— one candle on the first night, two candles on the second night, and so on? I believe that lighting more candles each night, gradually increasing their glow, invites us to consider what else we'd like to increase in our lives.

- *To where can I bring light?*
- *To which relationships do I want to devote more attention and time?*
- *Which parts of my life do I want to enrich?*

<sup>1</sup> Midrash Sifra, Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 27b and elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from an interview with Dr. Ronit Ziv-Kreger conducted and drafted by Rachel Sales.

### How can we make Hanukkah memorable for our children?

Each year, before or during Hanukkah, our family envisions how we'll make the holiday special. This year my daughter suggested we do art together each evening while the candles are lit. We've enjoyed creating music together and collaging. Such activities invite us to pause, be creative and step out of our regular weekday routines. We loved this idea even before realizing how well it fits with our sages' teaching that the word Hanukkah is derived from a Hebrew pun on the words "they rested on the 25th [day of the month of Kislev]." Other years we've hosted game nights, singing parties, put on puppet shows or created and delivered gifts. Our process starts with brainstorming ideas that align with the spirit of the holiday and bring joy to dark nights.

- *What are holiday memories I cherish from past years?*
- *What might be a way of engaging my family in Hanukkah themes this year?*
- *How might I help my children take leadership in making the holiday memorable?*

### What are some ways that we can celebrate Hanukkah as a community?

Before the Maccabees revolted against the Syrian Greeks, it would have been much easier for them to say, "We're the weak and we're the few. It will be impossible for us to overcome the oppression, so there's no point in trying." Instead, the Maccabees imagined a reality in which they resisted the Syrian Greeks, brought the Jewish people together, and rededicated the Holy Temple. They dreamt big, shared their vision and dedicated themselves to making it come true. Hanukkah is the perfect time to come together and share your dreams. Ask yourselves, if you could enter a time machine and exit five years later, what do you imagine your community would look like? Listen to each other's dreams. Pinpoint those that you share and use them as inspiration to create a vision for your future. Then, dedicate yourself — as a team — to making that dream become your reality.

- *To what do I want to more fully dedicate my life? Are there others with whom I'd like to collaborate? If so, how might I devote time for listening, envisioning and crafting with them a vision for mutual responsibility?*
- *When have I seen mutual responsibility spread light? Consider watching this two-minute video: <https://tinyurl.com/y3ntw98h> Where might I start such ripples?*

## SPOTLIGHT ON ISRAEL – A TIME FOR UNITY

### Unity Day

#### *From ‘Bring Back Our Boys’ to ‘Unity Day’*

*This piece was written by Iris and Ori Ifrach, Rachelli and Avi Fraenkel, and Bat-Galim and Ofer Shaer, the parents of Eyal Ifrach, Gil-ad Shaer and Naftali Fraenkel<sup>1</sup>*

One year ago, our families were thrust into a nightmare beyond anything we could have ever imagined.

Our sons, Eyal Ifrach, Gil-ad Shaer and Naftali Fraenkel, had been kidnapped while making their way home from school. For 18 (chai) days, we hovered somewhere between despair and hope while we prayed for their safe return.

Tragically, that would not come to pass. Our boys joined the thousands before them who lost their lives as Jews and in the name of our ancient homeland.

During that period of uncertainty we all shared an intense sense of unity, unlike anything our people had experienced in recent years, with the message of “Bring Back Our Boys” reaching people from so many different backgrounds and places. The feeling of togetherness, of belonging and caring for one another only increased in fervor during the funerals and the shiva. And today

we are incredibly inspired by the actions people have taken to continue this spirit in memory of our boys.

During the shiva, our homes overflowed with visitors seeking to offer us comfort, and so many conversations stood out.

But in one interaction, with Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat, who made his way to each of our homes, a seed of an idea was hatched that we knew needed to be developed. He said that we needed to find a way to harness that spirit of unity and keep it alive because this would serve as the ultimate legacy for our sons.

And so the idea of the Jerusalem Unity Prize was conceived. . . [We later] embarked on the concept of Unity Day . . . where Jewish communities all over the globe stop and consider the value of unity and how to work even harder to bridge the obvious divides that exist within our society.

<sup>1</sup> Iris and Ori Ifrach, Rachelli and Avi Fraenkel, and Bat-Galim and Ofer Shaer, From ‘Bring Back Our Boys’ to ‘Unity Day’, JTA, May 26, 2015.





There is no doubt that those divisions waned during those terrible days a year ago. But tragedy cannot be the primary catalyst for unity. Rather, it is incumbent upon us to harness the lessons of that time to build a better society.

During the course of the year, we have all had our own personal moments to reflect on where these events will take us in the future. Indeed, we all have our personal answers and know that the road ahead will not always be easy. But we also know that this path will not be taken alone.

Through the power of the memories of Eyal, Gil-ad and Naftali, not only will their deaths have brought us together but their memories will have as well.

In that spirit, it is our eternal joint prayer that they be remembered not simply as victims of a brutal tragedy but also as three “normal” boys who succeeded in bringing a nation together. May the memories of Eyal, Gil-ad and Naftali inspire us all to really live as one people with one heart.

- *If you could speak with the mothers who wrote this letter, what would you like to hear and learn from them? What else?*
- *What do you imagine they might answer?*

## Plan A Unity Day Event

What can you do to create a more unified Jewish community? Find out when Unity Day is this coming year and organize a program or activity in your community.

Visit Unity Day's Academy at <https://bit.ly/2qvEcjV> to find helpful resources in planning an event including:

- The "Ask Big Questions" Guide, created in partnership with Hillel International, to build trust, strengthen community, and deepen understanding across different groups.
- Ideas for unity related art, text study, and discussions.
- Videos, songs, stimulating questions around which you can build your event.

## LEARN WITH YOUR SISTER AN ISRAELI UNITY DAY PRIZE WINNER

**Kesher Yehudi** (the Jewish Connection) is an organization that seeks to create connections between Ultra-Orthodox (haredi) and secular Jews through Torah study.

### Think Again: Yes, Jewish Unity Is Possible

Jonathan Rosenblum, Jerusalem Post, June 10, 2016

TZILA SCHNEIDER, the 54-year-old mother of 11 who founded Kesher Yehudi seven years ago, would at first glance seem an unlikely societal mover and shaker. She grew up in Mea She'arim, next door to Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, in a family of Slonimer Hassidim.

Her core message has remained clear and consistent from the beginning: Torah belongs to the entire Jewish people and to every Jew individually. Much of her effort has been directed at changing attitudes in her own haredi world. First and foremost, she seeks to shake the complacent assumption that non-observant Jews have no interest in Torah learning and therefore haredim need feel no obligation to seek to engage them in Torah study.

For that engagement to take place, a change in attitude is required. Schneider tells the haredi study partners: "If you

view your participation only as an act of hessed [charity] for an ignorant secular Jew, this is not the program for you. If you do not believe that every time two Jews meet each has something to offer the other and that both can gain and grow from the relationship, this is not the program for you."

With that perspective, true friendships are formed. I have been at several gatherings where women who have been studying over the phone for a period of time meet each other for the first time in person. It is common to see them sit for the next two hours with their arms around each other and say of each other, "She is my best friend."

The joy in the connection goes both ways. Faigy, 38, of Betar Illit, says of her study partner: "Liat is a friend for life. I could never have dreamed up someone like her, and now I can't imagine life without her." While from the other side of the

\*To read about other Israel Unity Prize winners, check out [www.unityprize.org/en](http://www.unityprize.org/en)

secular-religious divide, Etti, a lawyer from Tel Aviv, says, “It is fun to rediscover each time [we study] that the Torah is the precious possession of every Jew. And it does not matter where you are coming from, the Torah is glue holding us together.”

“I started this organization because of my strong belief that it is possible to overcome the alienation and mutual fear between religious and non-observant Jews.

But that will be done only by the nation itself, the thousands of participants in our programs,” Schneider [says].

- *What connections did you form on your JWRP trip with Jewish women who seemed very different from you?*
- *What surprised you most about those connections?*
- *How can you continue to build bridges in the Jewish community?*
- *With whom in your life is it hard to connect? How might you make a connection? What support could help you?*
- *What have you done to share with your child(ren) skills of making connections when it isn't easy? How can you help your child(ren) build bridges to others?*





## LEARN WITH YOUR JWRP SISTER

### 7 HABITS OF JEWISH UNITY

David Bratslavsky, the Executive Director of the US-Israel Business Council, delivered an ELI Talk in 2013 outlining 7 key habits of mind and practice to create a more unified Jewish community.<sup>1</sup>

Before reading them, consider with your partner: what 7 habits might you suggest for building Jewish unity in your community? Then consider David Bratslavsky's list, and see how it is similar and different from your thinking:

**Expand our definition of "us"**

We are all one family and one community.

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**Teach shared values, then discuss particulars**

There is so much more that unites us than divides us.

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**Define the right "them"**

Figure out who our true adversaries are, the real challenges that affect all of us.

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<sup>1</sup> David Bratslavsky, "7 Habits of Highly United Jews," Eli Talks: <https://elitalks.org/david-0>

### Proactively discover and work on common goals

With a spirit of cooperation, reach out to other Jews to foster unity.

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### Share common space

Find ways to share space together — by attending shared events or inviting others to your home.

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### Give and receive together

We must give to all kinds of Jews. We all rise and fall together.

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### *It is up to me!*

Take personal responsibility to achieve Jewish unity.

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- Which of these ideas have you already been bringing to your family and which might you now focus on bringing to your family, workplace, and community?
- Which of these ideas can you put into practice this week?
- What might you do with your Momentum sisters or with others?

## TRY IT OUT

# PRACTICAL TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Ideas for bringing the value of Unity, *Achdut*, into your family life.

### For Yourself or with a Partner

- Check out the podcasts, videos, and articles on [MomentumUnlimited.org](https://MomentumUnlimited.org)
- Select a phrase that inspires you, write it on a card and place it where you'll see it. Repeat the phrase to yourself a few times each morning with enthusiasm. Phases you could consider:
  - One people with one heart. (Rashi)
  - Shema – hear Oh Israel, Adonai our God, Adonai is One.
  - Oneness at the root – *achdut*.
  - These and those are the words of the living God. (Talmud)
  - Disagreement and growth go together.
  - All the People of Israel are mutually responsible for one another (from the Midrash and Talmud)
- Aleph Beta Academy is an online library of videos offering in-depth Jewish learning based in text. To learn more about Hannukah, check out the video “Hanukkah: What Burns And Burns, And Is Never Consumed?” (35 minutes): <https://bit.ly/2E24wd1>

### For Families with Children of All Ages

- Together, as a family, watch the Jewish unity video at <https://bit.ly/2qsppFS>. This short and inspiring film encapsulates the growing movement of Unity Day, both in Israel and the Diaspora, efforts born from a tragedy which have blossomed into a movement that nurtures unity across communities.
- Explore the Unity Day website with your family. Investigate whether there are Unity Day activities you can attend as a family in your area. If not, brainstorm together a project that your family can do to bring more unity to your community. Find Unity Day activities near you by clicking this link: <https://bit.ly/2EJvx1o>.
- When deciding upon your family's giving (*tzedakah*) commitments, consider choosing to include organizations that offer support for all Jews and/or support for people across religious identities. One example is the American Joint Distribution Committee (the “JDC”) which works “in nearly 70 countries to alleviate hunger and hardship, rescue Jews in danger, create lasting connections to Jewish life, and provide immediate relief for victims of natural and man-made disasters.” Visit <http://www.jdc.org> for more information.

- Invite people from different backgrounds or denominations to your home for a meal or game night. Plan to share foods and/or games that reflect your heritage and encourage your guests to do the same. The Hanukkah season offers a great opportunity to do this! Remember to consider dietary requirements to make your event inclusive.
- Encourage your family to be mindful of speaking positively about others. Brainstorm strategies that can help everyone grow in this regard. Here's an example: if someone puts down another, they contribute money to a special giving (*tzedakah*) box just for this (a quarter for younger kids, increasing in amount as appropriate for older kids). Follow up by selecting and sending that *tzedakah* contribution to an organization that supports unity.
- Help your children practice the “Hillel way” of arguing — by first restating and considering the other side’s point of view. This can easily be made into a conversational game for the dinner table. **See the Learn with Your Sister** titled “How Should We Disagree” for more details.



### For Families with Young Children

- Consider saying the *Shema* prayer: “*Sh’ma Yis-ra-eil, A-do-nai E-lohei-nu, A-do-nai E-chad*” with your children at bedtime. Done every night at tuck in, this can be a loving, spiritual and nurturing tradition that will stay with your child through their lifetime. Include time to talk about the translation of the prayer in your native language (if not Hebrew) to reinforce its meaning. When reciting the last word “*Echad*” (one), focus on the oneness of the Jewish people through unity, interconnectedness, and *achdut*.
- Include in your bedtime story library the sweet book, *Goodnight Sh’ma* by Jacqueline Jules. Intended for children ages 6 months to 2 years, *Goodnight Sh’ma* tells of a child being calmed by the nighttime version of the traditional Jewish prayer.

- PJ Library recommends a number of books that address the value of Respecting Differences, an important element in creating unity, from various perspectives. Consider the following titles, choosing from among the list those that have the most meaning for your family.
  - *Cakes and Miracles* (Ages 3-10) - Disability Awareness: each human being has unique abilities and challenges
  - *Nathan Blows out the Hanukkah Candles* (Age 5+) - Autism Awareness: Accepting children who act and learn differently.
  - *Snow In Jerusalem* (ages 8+) - Two boys living in Jerusalem--one Muslim, the other Jewish--are surprised to discover they've been looking after the same stray cat.
  - *Yaffa and Fatima: Shalom and Salaam* (ages 5-6) - Yaffa and Fatima are dear friends, despite coming from different backgrounds. This rendition of a classic Jewish folktale is an inspiring look at how friendship perseveres.
  - *Queen of the Hanukkah Dosas* (ages 5-7) - Instead of latkes, Sadie and her family celebrate *Hanukkah* with tasty Indian dosas.

### For Families with Older Children

- Watch Rabbi David Aaron's video together with your kids (12+) about Ray, who is having an existential crisis, because he doesn't believe in the Sun and "rayligion"! This humorous and to-the-point video brings home the values of unity and diversity <https://bit.ly/2YmRD8T>.
- Share the following short poem with your older children:

### Crayons

*Author unknown*

We could learn a lot from crayons: Some are sharp,  
Some are pretty,  
Some are dull,  
Some have weird names,  
and are all different colors,  
But they all have to live in the same box.

Talk with your child(ren) about how appreciating diversity is valuing what makes us similar as well as different. This poem talks about learning to live together and appreciating the unique qualities of others. Encourage your child(ren) to look around themselves and take note of all the things that make them who they are. Follow this up with a discussion of the following questions<sup>1</sup>.

- *How are people similar to a box of crayons?*
- *How can people with varying traditions, beliefs, and values learn to live together in the same community? What would you expect to be the positive and negative about that type of situation?*
- *What if everyone in the world was exactly the same? If they all looked the same, talked the same, shared the same views, practices, and traditions, what kind of world would it be? Do you think this would be a place you'd want to live? Why or why not?*
- *What have you done to share with your child(ren) skills of making connections when it isn't easy? How can you help your child(ren) build bridges to others?*

<sup>1</sup> This activity is adapted from *Diversity Discussion Starters: A Collection of Ice Breakers Designed to Start Conversation about Diversity* produced by the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, 2004.





 Use this chart to plan and track  
your progress regarding Jewish unity

## Acknowledgment (*Vidui*)

How would you describe your current sense and experience of Jewish “unity”? Where in your life do you help build and support unity? Where is there room to grow?

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## Vision (*Kavanah*)

What does your ideal vision of Jewish unity look like? In your vision, what types of concrete expressions of Jewish unity would one see?

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What are small, doable steps you could take to realize your vision of Jewish unity? Include concrete ideas inspired by the 7 Habits of Jewish Unity.

How can you track your progress toward your goals? Who can offer support and help you in that process? How? When?

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

In this session, we explore the value of *achdut*, unity.

## The Guiding Questions in this Unit Are:

- *What could Jewish unity look like? What does unity mean when we don't agree about things we think are important?*
- *What is the Jewish way to argue? Could disagreement support unity?*
- *How can I help create Jewish unity?*

## Meaning-ful Vocabulary

One	<i>echad</i>	אֶחָד
Oneness/interconnectedness/unity	<i>achdut</i>	אֶחָדוּת
Mutual Responsibility	<i>arevut hadadit</i>	עֲרֻבוֹת הָהֶדְדִּית
The oldest Jewish fixed prayer used in morning and night time prayers, which calls on Israel to acknowledge Oneness	<i>shema</i>	שְׁמַע
During the holiday of Hanukkah, we light a candelabra with nine candle holders called a <i>hanukkiah</i>		הַנִּזְיָה
In the Temple in Jerusalem, there was a seven holder candelabra, called a <i>menora</i>		מְנוֹרָה

## Facilitating the Session

### 1. Seek Participant Input

In advance, invite a few sisters to take a small role in leading the session such as:

- Preparing what's needed for the Sisterhood Community Ball activity, including color-changing-yarn. The middle section of this 2-minute video could be helpful <https://tinyurl.com/y35to8so>
- Sharing Hanukkah memories or tips and suggestions for making Hanukkah a memorable holiday for children and families
- Planning an activity to kick-off the session or accompany it (see **Extras! Program Ideas.**)
- Hosting the event
- Co-facilitating the session
- Ask if one or more of the women would like to share a way she brought home the learning from your last gathering.

**\*\***Involving participants helps them take ownership over their learning and prepares them to take the lead in their family and community!

## 2. Choose Your Session Activities (in advance)

You know what will best engage your participants and what are their personal and parenting goals for growth and development, so tailor the session to their interests and needs. **Soul Sparks** activities carry a particular power, and we encourage you to include them where possible.

## 3. Prep Your Space

Before the session begins, prepare the space by helping the hostess put out a spread of Hanukkah-themed food and drinks. Arrange the space or seating to support connection. Think about what materials you will need and make sure you have everything prepared.

## 4. Welcome & Warm- Up

Make a ritual of transitioning your participants from their hectic, everyday lives to your safe space of learning and growth. Consider, for example, having women pair-up and listen to each other, for 2 minutes each, as they share what's new for them and what's on their mind today.

## Reminder! Sisterhood Safe Space

Remind everyone that you are in your Sisterhood Safe Space of confidentiality and compassionate listening, free of judgment and unsolicited advice.

## 5. Intro & Inspiration

Lead into the topic of unity by asking participants about their experience on the Momentum trip. How would they describe their experience of being with so many Jewish women from different countries, backgrounds and religious denominations? Invite women to share a moment she has felt a sense of unity, something in her life or on the trip.

## 6. Soul Sparks Activities



There are several different activities in the session that will encourage learning and growth; we suggest choosing one or two for your session. Below are some of our favorites:

### *All with One Heart at Sinai*

Reflecting on the quip, “two Jews, three opinions,” inviting women to share a place they’d wish there was more unity. Read together the Torah text about arriving at Mount Sinai, and Rashi’s commentary. Reflect on the questions on the page, reflecting back to places participants have experienced unity, such as on the Momentum trip. How might we foster the sense of unity felt on such special moments back into our daily lives?

### *Unity Through Diversity*

Ask a participant to introduce the Sisterhood Community Ball Activity. Then, give the women time to review the text in this



section, either by themselves or with a partner. Provide space and materials for silent reflection, giving them the opportunity to write out their thoughts if they choose. Once participants have finished, bring everyone back together and begin a conversation about the questions in the section. Following the instructions for the Community Ball Activity, pass the cardboard and yarn to each speaker, having her wrap the yarn as she speaks. When there's a good thickness to the yarn wrapping pause for revealing the pompom Community Ball that weaves individual action into a cohesive whole. In future sessions, you might choose to use the ball for a game or as a "talking stick."

### ***Illuminating the Light Within***

Pair your participants and have each pair read "Illuminating the Light Within," and reflect on the questions. Gather women together to share their reflections. Invite them to brainstorm ideas for expanding their usual Hanukkah traditions to include a new activity. The facing page's middle question includes some ideas.

## **7. Reflection & Closing**

Recall the main ideas explored in the session and create an opportunity for reflection. Hand each woman a sheet of paper and a pen and invite each to write a six-word-poem on what unity means to her or how she can help foster it. Have those who'd like share their poem.

**Reflection Suggestion:** Ask participants to reflect on the following- possibly by writing or drawing before sharing: "Something I'll bring home from our session today is..." or "I would like to further bring *achdut* to my family by..."

Direct the women's attention to the "**Try It Out: Practical Tips and Resources for Families.**" These suggestions offer ideas – by age group for bringing the learning back home. Encourage them to choose at least one thing they will do with their families and come back next time and report on how it went. Give a brief overview of the rest of the unit.

Provide an opportunity for participants to arrange a time to connect with another sister to continue exploring, reflecting, and offering each other support and accountability. This "**Learn with Your Sister**" activity serves as an entry points for conversations that may never otherwise happen. (See pages XXXXXX) Let all the women know when you'll be meeting again and what theme will be explored.

### **Extra! Program Ideas:**

To enhance your session, you may want to consider the following:

- Hosting a Hanukkah party for families and spouses after the learning, complete with lighting the *hanukkiah* and special holiday treats.
- Including a winter clothing drive for those in need, as part of your session.



The sales of Year of Growth are used entirely to cover costs of creating, producing, distributing, and supporting the successful use of this educational resource.

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