

Memory & Remembrance

Session plan for Jewish youth philanthropy programs to explore Holocaust education through storytelling, intergenerational dialogue, remembrance, and *tzedakah*.



This resource was
generously funded by
Seed the Dream
Foundation



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🕒 **RUN TIME: 1 HOUR AND 30 MINUTES**
PARTICIPANTS: TEENS

Please note: Due to the nature of the content in this session, a certain base knowledge of the Holocaust is needed by participants. We recommend that this session should not be the first exposure for participants to the history and themes of the Holocaust, but can be used as further or extended learning.

Online Resources

- Link to the digital version of curated set of Imagining Giving cards
- Zachor and Yizkor slides
- Text Study sheet
- Glossary
- Yahrzeit candle and matches/lighter
- Stars by Hannah Senesh sheet

In-Person Resources

- Imagining Giving Cards
- Zachor and Yizkor slides to project or print
- Text Study sheet to project or print
- Glossary
- Post-it notes
- Markers
- Poster board
- Yahrzeit candle and matches/lighter
- Stars by Hannah Senesh sheet to project or printed copies



» Welcome Activity

🕒 5 MINUTES

- 1 Say to participants:

"Have you ever noticed that you can remember the lyrics of a song even if you haven't heard it in a long time? Lyrics stick with us more than other things we hear. That's because when words and melody are heard together, multiple parts of our brains are engaged in processing the information. Next time you're studying for a test or trying to learn lines for a play- if you put those words together with music- you have a better chance of success."

- 2 Hand out the post it notes, markers, and poster board.
- 3 Instruct each participant to think of a favorite song lyric or a lyric that is meaningful to them at this moment in time.



IN-PERSON Write it on a sticky note, and then stick it on the poster board on the wall.



ONLINE Use the Zoom white board feature, where participants can type directly onto it.

- 4 Once everyone is finished, read the lyrics aloud and see if the participants can guess the song, the artist, and who chose those lyrics.

» Introduction

🕒 5 MINUTES

- 1 Display the first page of the [Zachor and Yizkor Slides](#) or share a printout and ask participants to only look at the first page.
- 2 Say to participants:

"Does anyone know what this word is? Does it look familiar?" (If you get correct responses, great! If not, click through to show the transliteration, translation, and share) "this is the Hebrew word for remember. The word *zachor* is seen approximately two hundred times in the Torah."

- 3** Click through the next slides/pages and ask someone to read aloud the Hebrew and the English.
- 4** Say to participants:

"Did you notice what these words have in common? Both in Hebrew and in English they share a common root. Today we're going to explore why these words encompass such an important concept in Jewish tradition."

Testimony and Text Study

 **25 MINUTES**

- 1** Display the [Text Study](#) sheet or hand out a printed copy.
- 2** Ask a participant to read the first text:
 - "But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes and so that they do not fade from your mind as long as you live. And make them known to your children and to your children's children."
– Deuteronomy 4:9
- 3** Ask another participant to read the second text:
 - "Forgetfulness leads to exile while remembrance is the secret of redemption."
– Baal Shem Tov (Known as the founder of Hasidic Judaism. Ukraine, 1698-1760)
- 4** Ask a participant to read the third text:
 - "Jews have six senses; touch, taste, sight, smell, hearing ... memory."
– Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* (American novelist, born 1977)
- 5** In pairs, discuss the first set of text study questions.
 - How do you think these three pieces of text are tied together?
 - What role does the idea of memory play in each of these texts?
 - What do you think Safran Foer means by the Jews having memory as a sixth sense?
- 6** Come back together as a large group. Distribute the [Glossary](#), which includes key words pertaining to the Holocaust, either by sharing the link, displaying the document, or printing copies.
- 7** Go through the glossary sheet with the group and answer any questions they have about any particular items.

- 8** Say to participants “As you watch this video, take note of which words resonate with you, which words the speaker seems to emphasize or repeat, and write them on the back of the sheets or in the chat box.” Then begin this video:

The Wicker Chair, Written and Read by Louise Lawrence-Israels

- 9** After the video, ask a participant to read the fourth text.

- “For in the end, it is all about memory, its sources and its magnitude, and, of course, its consequences,” – Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Romanian-American author, professor, Nobel laureate, and Holocaust survivor. 1928-2016)

- 10** Then read this text together:

- “I was shocked to see that eight decades after the Holocaust, the Star of David symbol has been painted once again on Jewish homes all across Europe and the United States...It echoes the antisemitic persecution I suffered as a child. I never imagined that something like this could ever happen again.” (Haim Raanan, *Holocaust survivor from Budapest, commenting after October 7, 2023.*)

- 11** As a group, discuss the second set of text study questions:

- Having seen this video and heard this additional piece of text, what is the importance of memory to these two Holocaust survivors?
- What words and ideas are emphasized by these two survivors?
- Taking a look at the glossary sheet that we shared, what are your thoughts about how these two survivors focused on other themes in the memories shared here?
- Are there words in the Glossary that you have questions about?
- What do you think Wiesel is referring to when he writes “it is all about memory”?
- Why do you think this particular story of Louise Lawrence-Israel’s birthday and her birthday presents is one that has stuck with her for over 70 year?
- What do you think are the consequences of memory?
- What is your reaction to the use of the word “echoes” in the final text? How do memories and echos intersect?
- How can discussing memories and past experiences help educate future generations in combating antisemitism?

» How to Listen

🕒 20 MINUTES

1 Say to participants:

This next activity is going to give us some insight around storytelling. It's a tool we can continue to use in other aspects of our group work together.

2  **IN-PERSON** Divide the participants into smaller groups of 3 or 4 people.

 **ONLINE** Put them in breakout rooms.

3 Display the curated set of Imagining Giving cards.

4 Each group should choose three cards. (You can use curated images from the physical Imagining Giving card deck or share this [slide deck with the selected 8 cards](#)).

5 Say to participants

"Most of the stories we hear growing up - fairytales, and children's picture books - have a beginning, a middle, and an end. As a group, look at the three cards you chose and decide together what order these cards should go in. Then use those cards to tell a 3-sentence story that has a beginning, middle, and end.

Use the formula: "First _____. Then _____. And finally, _____."

6 Each group will tell that story to the larger group.

7 Ask the participants to return the cards to the table.

8 Ask each of the participants to choose one card that connects to the idea of "memory" for them personally.

- 9 Each participant will write three words that come to mind when they look at their chosen card on an index card.



IN-PERSON Place the index card below the image at their places at the table.



ONLINE Have the participants enter which card they chose and their words into the chat.

- 10 Invite participants to look at each other's cards and what they wrote.
- 11 Ask participants to return the cards to the table, and this time to each select a card that most strongly connects to a memory of the Jewish people.
- 12 Participants will now go around and share why they chose that card and how it's connected to the collective memory of the Jewish people.

» Processing Imagining Giving

🕒 10 MINUTES

- 1 Say to participants:

"After using the Imagining Giving cards in different ways, which part of the activity did you find easier?"



IN-PERSON "If you thought the small group part of the activity was easier stand all the way in the front of the room, if you thought the individual part of the activity was easier, go all the way to the back of the room."



ONLINE "If you thought the small group part of the activity was easier, keep your camera on. If you thought the individual part of the activity was easier, turn your camera off." (Make sure to ask all participants to turn their cameras back on after this part)

- 2 In those two groups, [Online- send the "small group was easier" participants to a breakout room] ask each group to discuss why that was easier for them. Have a representative share back to the larger group.
- 3 Invite the participants to come back together and ask the following questions:
- Why do you think we started with the small group activity and then the individual activity?
 - Would things have felt different if we had done those activities in the other order?
 - What are some ways you can imagine using the same approach in other group work?

» Shared Language

🕒 15 MINUTES

- 1 Say to participants:

“As teenagers, when thinking back and conjuring up memories, everything that has happened in your lives is very “recent history” in the grand scheme of things. When we speak with seniors - grandparents, family friends, and other in the community - it’s important to note that they have lived much longer lives, have lived through lots of trends, cultural events, and world events. Their vocabularies are shaped by those experiences. We looked at some of those experiences, words, and phrases in our text study earlier. Now we’re going to think about what else might come up in conversation with them that we might need definitions for.”

- 2 Ask the participants to brainstorm words and phrases that they’ve heard older people use that they’ve had to look up/Google. Go around the group or just have folks speak up and share.
- 3 Pass out markers or pull up the white board function of Zoom. Instruct the participants to now brainstorm any words or phrases that **they** frequently use that seniors (or even their parents!) might not understand clearly.
- 4 Participants will each take one or two of those words and create short videos defining those words and phrases that they can share with seniors they meet in their community or as part of an intergenerational program.

» Closing and Reflection: How to remember

🕒 10 MINUTES

- 1 Say to participants:

“Today we’ve spent time thinking deeply about memories and the role they play in our lives, and in the collective memory of the Jewish people. Let’s take a moment to honor those memories by lighting a candle and reciting this beautiful poem by Hannah Senesh. Senesh was a Hungarian Jewish poet who emigrated to British Mandate Palestine and became a paratrooper. She was later captured, tortured, and eventually tried for treason and executed in Hungary in 1944 at the age of twenty-three.”

- 2 Display [Stars by Hannah Senesh](#) sheet or pass out printed copies.

- 3** Ask a participant to read the poem:

*There are stars above
whose light reaches the earth
only after they themselves have disintegrated and are no more.
And there are people
whose scintillating memory lights the world
only after they have passed from it.
These lights –
the ones which shine in the darkest night –
are those which illumine for us the path.*

- 4** Say to participants:

“When we light a candle, the flame doesn’t dimmish the brightness of another. Bringing a new source of light into the world only increases the glow. Just like the candles that we light, we can do that work as well- by sharing stories, bearing witness, and spreading goodness through the work we are doing as philanthropists.”

- 5** Light the candle.

» Additional Programming Ideas & Resources

After this session is complete, here are some ideas for follow up and extensions on the theme:

- ☐ Bring teens and seniors together for a joint giving experience.
- ☐ Conduct a giving experience focused on funding an organization connected to the Holocaust.
- ☐ Consider inviting a speaker to present at your organization:
<https://www.jcouncil.org/form/request-holocaust-speaker>
- ☐ Support Holocaust survivors through the KAVOD SHEF initiative:
<https://kavodensuringdignity.com/kavod-shef-initiative/>
- ☐ Check out these excellent resources that directly connect to the experience of being a teenager during the Holocaust:
<https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/some-were-neighbors/teenagers/teenagers-intro>
- ☐ Think about hosting a book club for teens using one of these great titles recommended by the Jewish Book Council: <https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/books/reading-lists/holocaust-books-for-young-adults>
- ☐ See the Honeycomb [Holocaust Giving Resource](#) for more ways resources and suggestions