



ACTIVITY

Making Jewish History Personal

Materials Needed

- Copies of phrase from Haggadah
- Copies of Katznelson quote
- Paper
- Pens/Pencil

Time Needed

30-45 minutes

Goal

Participants will consider which events in Jewish history are worth remembering with the same sense of importance as we remember the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

Before You Get Started

Look at the list of enduring understandings. Which one would you like to emphasize through this activity?

1. Judaism is not (only) a religion. It is also a People and the national component of Jewish civilization is central to understanding Jewish texts, practices and culture.
2. Many of Judaism's norms, laws and mitzvot are articulated and relevant through the Jewish collective.
3. The Jewish People (and not its constituent individuals) is the carrier of Jewish religion and civilization. Sustaining the People and continuing its legacy is therefore a core Jewish value.
4. "The Jewish People are bound by a shared past (the covenant of fate) and a shared future (the covenant of destiny)" – Soloveitchik.

Directions for Activity

1. Present the phrase from the Haggadah and how the Rabbinic approach is encapsulated in the phrase.
2. Explore the question as a group: Is it a good approach in the eyes of the group? Why? Why not?
3. Bring the piece from Berl Katznelson to underline some potential problems that can arise when we try and remember too much on a national level.

Human beings are endowed with two faculties, memory and forgetfulness. We cannot live without both. Were only memory to exist, then we would be crushed under its burden. We would become slaves to our memories, to our ancestors...And were we ruled entirely by forgetfulness, what place would there be for culture [and] science?...

A renewing and creative generation does not throw the cultural heritage of ages into the dustbin. It examines and scrutinizes, accepts and rejects. At times it may keep and add to an existing tradition.

At times it descends into ruined grottoes to excavate and remove the dust from that which had lain in forgetfulness, in order to resuscitate old traditions which have the power to stimulate the spirit of the generation of renewal..." -Berl Katznelson

4. On the assumption that we cannot “remember” all of our history and internalize it, ask the group (first individually and then in smaller groups) to choose three or four events in Jewish history that all Jews should remember and seek to internalize.
5. Why should those events be remembered and internalized over others? Each group needs to explain and justify its choices.
6. Sum up the discussion and ask participants to share a question or idea they are left with.

Note to Educator

Did the enduring understanding that you set out to teach surface during this activity?