

Piecing *me* together – finding *your* identity

As we enter into Pesach in a year that has been challenging for the Jewish people and highlighted the unique identity of our nation, we were thinking how this year fits into the chain of history. How does what we experience fit into the wider Pesach story?

It is said that in Egypt, despite the oppression, the Jews held onto their Jewish identity in three ways:

- They still spoke the “Jewish language”.
- They dressed modestly.
- They kept their Jewish names.

These three expressions of identity are what kept them together as a people and culturally pulled them through the exile.

In times like this, when the world begs us for answers on what Judaism and antisemitism means to us, what our right to the Jewish State is, and what we are willing to do for it, this is a chance to ask ourselves: what is our own equivalent of these “three expressions of Judaism”?

How do I connect to my Judaism?

In this pack, you will find different ways of thinking about and discussing your connection to Judaism. You will find a debate about the meaning of wearing a Magen David, a poem about the impact of our names and thoughts that Tribe participants shared on what Jewish identity means to them.

Engage, debate and think: how does your (Jewish) identity piece together?

As you engage in each card, turn it over and piece together the other sides, to form one image that relates to this theme.

On that note, we want to wish you a meaningful, uplifting Pesach, filled with good news for the Jewish People.

Chag Sameach!

Batsheva Wolf
Head of Education



STORY

PIECE ME TOGETHER

Having met Jews from across the religious, cultural and political spectrum during my time growing up in a large United Synagogue community, going to a non-Jewish high school, and attending a campus university, I (perhaps arrogantly) thought I had a pretty good understanding of the Jewish world.

However, I recently moved to Israel. Before embarking on a master's degree I am doing Ulpan (an intensive Hebrew speaking course), with Jews from the most diverse backgrounds imaginable. I think that there are well over a dozen countries represented!

Not only have we all grown up on opposite sides of the globe, but we are also even more diverse in the ways we connect to our Judaism. Our Jewish identities come from such a diverse wealth of experiences and sources but each and every one is both valid and powerful.

Despite this, we were able to connect immediately with each other. We had a clear shared understanding that came from our shared experience. In whatever way we connected to our Judaism, whether through common clothing, shared music, praying together or even lengthy discussions of particular Seinfeld episodes - there was something there in common.

This has been the most powerful takeaway from Ulpan so far - that this common identity and bond is so formidable it can bring people who seem so different on paper, so close together.

Jonah Weiniger

Tribe Israel Fieldworker

POINT TO PONDER

What do Jews around the world have in common and what differences might there be?



- 1 Why should I care about Jewish history and values if I express my Jewish identity by wearing my Magen David, Chai or any other Jewish symbol?**
- 2 So why does wearing a symbol of Judaism matter at all?**



- 1** The symbols are important, but so is the Judaism that takes place internally. Values and a sense of Jewish history are fundamental to Jewish life. By working on our internal identities, we more strongly align ourselves with our core Jewish values. By practising 'inner' Judaism, we become more than just the symbol that we wear.
- 2** There is a Jewish concept, introduced in the 13th century *Sefer Hachinuch*, which says "*Acharei hapeulot nimshachim ha-levavot* – our heart follows our actions. This means that our outward actions help shape our behaviour and values too. Wearing a Jewish symbol does not only impact how others view us, but also how we view ourselves.

**PIECE ME
TOGETHER**





Did you know?

The Jews in Egypt had different ways of remaining connected to their Judaism. In our day and age, we also do. Test your knowledge on the different avenues of Jewish Identity by taking this quiz!

- A** Who were the first two people to receive Jewish names?
- B** What were the 3 ways that the Jewish people held on to their identity in Egypt?
- C** Name a Jewish festival in which the Jewish people were forbidden from practising their religion?
- D** Name 3 periods in history where Jews were unable to practise their religion freely.
- E** Which Jewish symbol is popular amongst some Sephardi Jews as a necklace, and what is the significance of it?
- F** Name a Biblical personality who had to hide their Jewish identity.
- G** What is one way that Jews demonstrate their identity on a home or Jewish building?
- H** What opportunities are there for teens to strengthen their connection to Judaism in school or on campus?



Once you have used this card, turn it over and create the image by putting all six cards together

ANSWERS: **A.** Abraham and Sarah **C.** Chanukah **D.** Holocaust, Soviet Union, Spanish Inquisition **E.** Hamsa - to ward off the evil eye **F.** Esther **G.** Putting a mezuzah on the doorpost **H.** Get involved with Tribe and Chaplaincy - we visit your school and campus with Lunch&Learns, Friday night dinners and social events



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Each of Us Has A Name

**By Zelda, a Holocaust survivor from Ukraine (1914-1984).
Translated by Marcia Lee Falk, 2004**

Like the Pesach Seder, this poem is an expression of who we are as individuals and a nation.

Each of us has a name
given by God
and given by our parents

Each of us has a name
given by our stature and our smile
and given by what we wear

Each of us has a name
given by the mountains
and given by our walls

Each of us has a name
given by the stars
and given by our neighbours

Each of us has a name
given by our sins
and given by our longing

Each of us has a name
given by our enemies
and given by our love

Each of us has a name
given by our celebrations
and given by our work

Each of us has a name
given by the seasons
and given by our blindness

Each of us has a name
given by the sea
and given by
our death.



**Is our name only what we are called or also
a reflection of who we are and what we do?**

Once you have used this card, turn it over and create the image by putting all six cards together



WHAT OUR PARTICIPANTS SAY

PIECE ME TOGETHER

There are many different ways to connect to our Judaism. We asked some of our Tribe participants how they connect and what that means to them. Sitting around your Seder table, you can discuss these comments or any other ideas that are relevant for you.

PRACTICE

"Keeping Jewish laws, helps me strengthen my faith."
(Israel Tour participant)

- **Do you feel a connection between Jewish Law and faith?**
- **How would you describe it?**

NAMES

"My Hebrew name is מִיכָאֵלָה (Michaela), for me this represents my dual identity; on the one hand I'm your average teenage girl doing teenage girl things, but on the other hand I have an incredible sense of belonging and connection to the Jewish nation. This is such a defining part of who I am."
(Tribe Poland participant)

- **What is your Jewish name and what does it mean to you?**

ISRAEL/ ZIONISM

"To me, Israel is a place that does not discriminate or judge. It is a place that, no matter what you do or where you come from, will welcome you with open arms."
(Tribe Israel Tour participant)

- **Is Israel central to your Judaism?**
- **Has this changed in any way this year?**

COMMUNITY

"For me, Tribe has turned Judaism into more than just a religion, it is a community of people of all different ages and backgrounds that are unified by their Jewish identity. Tribe looks beyond how religious someone is to ensure everyone feels welcome into a community that supports each other and comes together at varying points of the year for great experiences."
(Tribe Madrich).

- **Can one experience the fullness of Judaism without community?**
- **How can you help to make your community more inclusive?**

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On January 1, 2000, the New York Times ran a Millennium edition. It was a special issue that featured three front pages. One had the news from January 1, 1900. The second was the actual news of the day, January 1, 2000. And then they had a third front page, projecting future events of January 1, 2100. This fictional page included things like a welcome to the fifty-first state: Cuba, as well as a discussion as to whether robots should be allowed to vote. And so on. In addition to the fascinating articles, there was one more thing. Down at the bottom of the Year 2100 front page, was the Shabbat candle-lighting time in New York for January 1, 2100. Nobody paid for it. It was just put in by the Times. When the production manager of the New York Times – an Irish Catholic – was asked about it, his answer was right on the mark. He explained: “We don’t know what will happen in the year 2100. It is impossible to predict the future. But of one thing you can be certain, that in the year 2100 Jewish women will be lighting Shabbos candles.” His answer speaks to the eternity of our people, and to the power of Jewish tradition.

POINT TO PONDER

It is incredible how lighting Shabbat candles, one of our ways of connecting to Judaism, has become a vital part of the fabric of our people and history. Our nationhood stretches back to the Exodus from Egypt and the story we tell at the Seder. Why do you think lighting Shabbat candles is such a meaningful tradition?

SOURCE:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/nyt-millennium-edition-levi-levitin>