



# *Igniting "Younity"*

Achdut, Unity and Mutual  
Responsibility - Hanukkah



*Have you ever walked through a forest of aspens? At first glance 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 trees are actually one entity. Some botanists argue that such aspen forests are actually the largest living organisms on earth. For example, Prof. Michael C. Grant, in his research at the University of Colorado, reported an aspen clone consisting of 47,000 tree trunks covering 106 acres and weighing millions of pounds.

The trees may appear to be 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?*

## WITH ONE HEART AT MOUNT 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 apparent inconsistencies 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.

### 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 מִדְבַר סִינַי. ב וַיִּסְעוּ מִרֶפְדִּים וַיָּבֹאוּ מִדְבַר סִינַי וַיַּחֲנוּ  
בְּמִדְבַר וַיַּחֲנוּ שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֹגַד הָהָר.

**Rashi – Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki** (France, 1040–1105) is the most famous of the biblical and Talmudic commentators.

### Rashi, commentary on Exodus 19:2

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

רש"י (שמות פרק יט) וַיַּחֲנוּ שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל - כאיש אחד בלב אחד,  
אבל שאר כל החנויות 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, O 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, paradoxically, part of that divine Oneness.

### Writing Exercise

Take 5–10 minutes to write down your answers to the questions in the next column. Writing in silence allows your thoughts to flow freely, unedited. When you are finished writing, discuss with your sister some of the issues and ideas that came up for you.

- *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 it was like.*
- *What connection do you see between God and Oneness or unity?*
- *Is there “someone” in your life with regard to whom it is not easy to remember and notice that they, too, are “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 for expanding the way we experience diversity and unity in our communities?*

### Babylonian Talmud, *Brachot 58a*

Our rabbis taught: If one sees a crowd of Israelites, they say, “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 breakdown 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 *hanukkah*, 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 chief rabbi of the United Kingdom from 1991 to 2013.



## Activity

### Creating a Sisterhood Community Ball

Visual and kinesthetic learners find seeing and doing to be powerful pedagogic tools. While you are exploring the topics in this unit, you can create a visual reminder of the beauty of unity through diversity by creating a multi-colored pom-pom, a community ball. Some groups have then used the ball to include everyone in the conversation: When one sister is done speaking, she passes the ball to another, inviting her to speak.

Set up chairs in a circle. As you study together, each person who speaks can wrap colorful yarn around a piece of cardboard prepared in advance. There’s no rule as to how much yarn 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 speaker. 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 this unit has more information. See pp. 207–208.)



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

## THE WONDER OF DIVERSITY



**Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**  
***The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations***

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.*

– Proverbs 20:27

### Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook

Every human being needs to know and understand

That within them is a lit candle,  
And no two people’s candles are alike,  
And there is no person who lacks a candle.

Every human being needs to know and understand

That they need to work and to discover  
How to share their candlelight 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.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935) was the first Ashkenazic chief rabbi of pre-State Israel, and a prolific writer and philosopher.

**As we kindle the lights on our *hanukkah*, may the candles’ glow connect us to the tremendous power within our fiery soul.**

- *In what ways do you take time to be nourished by your own inner light?*
- *In what ways do you radiate your light into the world?*
- *In what ways do 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 torch that illuminates the entire world”? What step can you take this holiday season toward your vision?*



## 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 the true service of God, the Jewish people, and humanity? The following sources give us some insights. As you read them, keep the following questions in mind.

- *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 “these and those” from “anything goes.”*
- *How do you invite questioning and different opinions within reasonable boundaries?*

### Disagreement for the Sake of Heaven

Our sages offer the following as the quintessential example 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 asserted, “The law is according to our view,” and the latter asserted, “The law is according to our view.” Then a heavenly voice issued forth, 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 כמותנו והללו אומרים הלכה כמותנו. 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 כמותן?

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, it is seen as vital to growth.

### ***Chayei Moharan* (The Life of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov), *Avodat Hashem***

I heard in the name of Rabbi Nachman: Disagreement (*machloket*) does a favor, because through *machloket* they can grow and develop. It's like when planting a seed in the soil. If the soil is tightly packed and uniformly solid, the seed cannot grow and develop into a tree. It is necessary for the soil to be [aerated], broken 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; it can provide space for [a new way of thinking], growth, and development.<sup>1</sup>

**Rabbi Nachman of Breslov** (1772–1810) was a Hasidic master and religious thinker, and the founder of the Breslov Hasidic movement. Reb Noson, his chief disciple, 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?*

<sup>1</sup> Translation adapted from Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *The Book of Jewish Values*, pp. 186–187.

## DEDICATED TO SHARING LIGHT

*Celebrating Hanukkah with Family and Community*



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 *hanukkiyah*?**

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? Lighting more candles each night, gradually increasing their glow, can invite us to consider what else we'd like to increase in our lives.

- *To which places 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?*

### **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. Our process starts with brainstorming ideas that align with the spirit of the holiday and bring joy to dark nights. We've hosted game nights, had a sing-along, put on puppet shows, and created and delivered gifts. This year, my daughter suggested we do an art project together each evening while the candles are lit. In past

---

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

years, we’ve enjoyed singing together and playing games. Such activities invite us to pause, be creative, and step out of our regular weekday routines. Finding a restful way to pause while the candles are burning fits with our sages’ teaching that the word *hanukkah* is derived from a Hebrew pun on the words, “They **rested** on the twenty-fifth [day of the month of Kislev, when the holiday begins].” How might your family create a fun, **rejuvenating pause** while the Hanukkah candles are burning?

- *What holiday memories do 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 a leadership role 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 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 committed 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 would you want your community to 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 yourselves – as a team to making that dream become your reality, in the spirit of the Talmud’s teaching, “All the people of Israel are mutually responsible for one another.”<sup>3</sup>

- *When have I seen mutual responsibility spread light?*
- *Consider watching this two-minute video: <https://tinyurl.com/y3ntw98h>. Afterward, ask yourself: Where might I start such ripples?*

<sup>3</sup> *Midrash Sifra*; Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 27b; and elsewhere.

## 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>4</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.

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.

---

<sup>4</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.



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 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, and stimulating questions around which you can build your event.

## LEARN WITH YOUR SISTER

### *Discovering Jewish Identity in Moscow*

On Hanukkah, hundreds of Jews gather in Moscow's Red Square. The historic and colorful pedestrian area is home to some of Russia's most well-known buildings, and is a bustling site for tourists today. Though the temperature is below freezing and it's snowing so hard that Anita Grinblat can't see the person standing next to her, no one is ready to head home just yet. They have come to light the menorah together in the center of Moscow, and to share the beauty of Hanukkah with their neighbors.

Thirty years ago, this scene would have been unimaginable. Russia was part of the USSR, and practicing Judaism was prohibited. Jews could not celebrate traditions openly, let alone reveal they were Jewish. With rampant anti-Semitism, many Jews faced daily discrimination.

"Other people might have known that I was Jewish because my last name is unusual in Russia," says Anita. "But I didn't recognize myself as Jewish. My parents never talked about it."

Several years ago, Anita found herself in a deep depression, and she began exploring her roots. She found family members in Russian Jewish databases and she read about Jewish traditions. She reached out to her local Jewish community, which immediately embraced her. "I finally

found myself on solid ground – at the right place, at the right time, with the right people," she says.

Today, Anita, her husband, and their ten-year-old daughter are active members in one of Moscow's Jewish communities. There are thirty Jewish communities throughout the city and surrounding suburbs, as well as synagogues, Jewish schools, and kosher restaurants. Anita's favorite is Pardes, a small restaurant located at the back of the kosher store, which serves a delicious "Shmuel Burger."

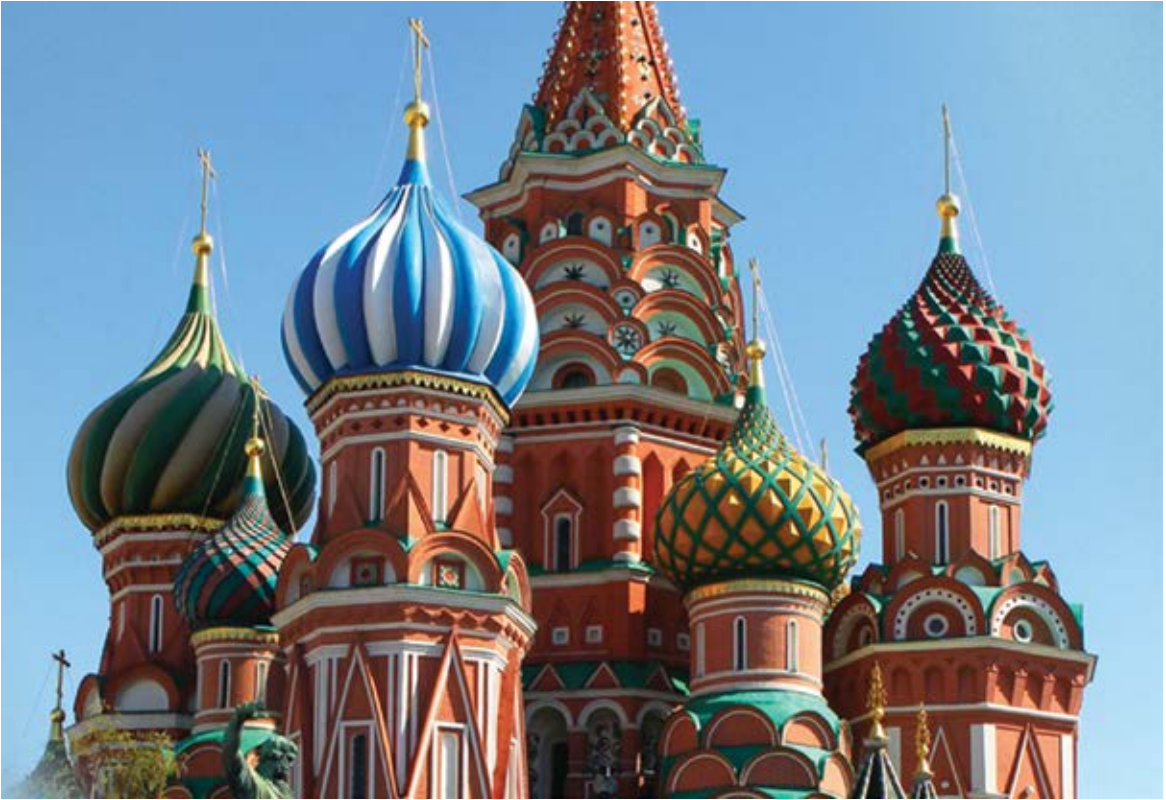
"If you didn't know about it, you'd never find it," she remarks.

She also loves Jerusalem, a restaurant that serves almost any cuisine you might want – from hummus to matzah ball soup, and from sushi to Caucasian grill.

On Shabbat, Anita and her family head to their synagogue, where they have an open invitation to the community-wide Shabbat dinner. Sometimes they join the meal, other times they enjoy an intimate family meal at home. The community's rabbi gives a lecture every Shabbat on the weekly Torah portion. During the week, Jewish professionals come to speak about various topics.

As the deputy head of digital production at one of the largest department stores in Russia, Anita





is impressed by how well the Jewish community utilizes technology and social media to publicize events and bring people together. She is part of a Facebook group that brings together Jewish mothers from Russia and Israel. Group members share their advice and life journeys with one another. For example, recently, a local Jewish woman organized a soccer championship that brought people together from all thirty Jewish communities in Moscow. This type of Jewish unity in Moscow is nothing short of transformational.

• *In what places around the world do you have family?*

- *How might you and your family learn about the Jewish experience in different communities around the world?*
- *Are there community-wide Shabbat meals where you live? Are there community-wide Hanukkah celebrations? What might be the purpose of such gatherings?*
- *When does your family gather with a diversity of people within your Jewish community, or from different Jewish communities?*
- *What is your vision for making this type of gathering fun, memorable, and meaningful?*

## AN ISRAELI LESSON IN UNITY

Rachel Sales

### Jerusalem Unity Day Prize Winners

From two thousand miles away, a middle school student in Pittsburgh invites her “twin” in Jerusalem to see her neighborhood via video.

Hundreds of strangers gather in a Haifa concert hall to sing Matisyahu’s “One Day” in English, Hebrew, and Arabic.

Two Israeli women from very different communities sip coffee and chat for hours after a Torah study session. They were strangers only hours before.

Each point of connection and unexpected friendship was made possible by organizations focused on forging mutual acceptance and respect between diverse communities – and each organization has received the Jerusalem Unity Day Prize in recognition of its work.

### United in School

Through the Global School Twinning Network, Israeli schools are paired with Jewish schools across the world. The partnered schools embark on a series of classroom lessons and group projects to better understand their Jewish peers.

The program is now more than six hundred schools strong. It has affected the way teachers discuss Jewish history and values, and the discussions students have with their parents and communities. It has also enabled students to

connect through their passions and share details about their lives through artwork, photography, and music.

### United in Song

Koolulam, another Jerusalem Unity Day Prize-winning project, unites strangers of all ages through song. The musicians behind Koolulam post a location online and teach a piece of music to the crowds that appear.

Koolulam’s creators were inspired by videos of worshipers at holy sites and realized that in the right circumstances, Israelis of all backgrounds could put aside their differences to create beautiful music.

When videos of the collaborative music-making hit the internet, they racked up millions of views. Koolulam struck a chord with viewers across the Jewish world, and its participants have found hope in the sound of their united voices.

### United in Study

Keshet Yehudi connects communities through the text that unites Jews everywhere: the Torah. The program matches participants as Torah study partners, most often pairing together individuals from diverse Jewish communities.

During hours spent discussing the founding words of their shared religion, Keshet Yehudi participants find themselves overcoming any awkwardness they felt when they first met. They discover that what divides them is much less important than what unites them, and emerge from their studies with new friendships.

The Jerusalem Unity Day Prize celebrates the organizations that are combating intolerance by uniting individuals through creativity, kindness, and hope. Today, it is more important than ever to continue that work.

To read about other Jerusalem Unity Day Prize winners, check out <http://www.unityprize.org/en>.

- *What connections did you form on your Momentum 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 skills of making connections when it isn't easy have you shared with your children? How can you help them build bridges to others?*



## LEARN WITH YOUR SISTER

### *7 Habits of Jewish Unity*

David Bratslavsky, executive director of the US-Israel Business Council, delivered an ELI Talk in 2013 outlining seven key habits of mind and practice to create a more unified Jewish community.<sup>5</sup>

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

- *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?*

---

<sup>5</sup> David Bratslavsky, "7 Habits of Highly United Jews," Eli Talks: <https://elitalks.org/david-0>.

**Give and receive together**

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

**Expand our definition of "us"**

We are all one family and one community.

**Proactively discover and work on common goals**

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

**Share common space**

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

**Teach shared values, then discuss particulars**

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

**Define the right "them"**

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

**It is up to me!**

Take personal responsibility to achieve Jewish unity.

## TRY IT OUT

### PRACTICAL TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

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

#### For Yourself or with a Partner

- Check out the podcasts, videos, and articles on [MomentumUnlimited.org](http://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. Phrases to consider:
  - One people with one heart (Rashi)
  - *Shema* – Hear, O Israel, A-do-nai our God, A-do-nai is One
  - *Achdut* – Oneness at the root
  - 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 (Midrash and Talmud)
- Aleph Beta Academy is an online library of videos offering in-depth, text-based Jewish learning. To learn more about Hannukah, check out the video, “Hanukkah: What Burns and Burns, and Is Never Consumed?” (35 minutes).

#### For Families with Children of All Ages

- Explore the Unity Day website with your family. Investigate whether there are Unity Day activities you can attend in your area as a family. If not, brainstorm together a project that your family can do to bring more unity to your community. Find Unity Day activities near you at: <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 “Joint”), 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 a 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 “How Should We Disagree?” (pp. 188–189) for more details.

### For Families with Young Children

- Consider saying the *Shema* prayer: “*Shema Yis-ra-eil, A-do-nai E-lohei-nu, A-do-nai E-chad*” with your children at bedtime. Done every night when you tuck them in, this can be a loving, spiritual, and nurturing tradition that will stay with your child through out their life. Include time to talk about the translation of the prayer in your native

language 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: A Purim Tale* (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* (age 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

- Together, as a family, watch the Global Jewish Unity Day 2017 video on YouTube. This short and inspiring film encapsulates the growing movement of Unity Day, in both Israel and the Diaspora, efforts born from a tragedy which have blossomed into a movement that nurtures unity across communities.
- 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 children 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 children to look around themselves and take note of all the things that make them who they are. Follow this up by discussing the following questions:<sup>6</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 the 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, and shared the same views, practices, and traditions, what kind of world would it be? Do you think this would be a place where you'd want to live? Why or why not?*

<sup>6</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  
<https://extension.psu.edu/diversity-discussion-starters>.



## USE THIS CHART TO PLAN AND TRACK YOUR PROGRESS REGARDING JEWISH UNITY

### Acknowledgment

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?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Vision

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

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Goals

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

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Accountability

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?*

### Meaningful Vocabulary

<i>echad</i>	אֶחָד	one
<i>achdut</i>	אַחְדוּת	oneness/ interconnectedness/ unity
<i>arevut hadadit</i>	עֲרֵבוּת הַדָּדִית	mutual responsibility
<i>Shema</i>	שְׁמַע	the oldest Jewish fixed prayer, recited in morning and nighttime prayers, which calls on Israel to acknowledge Oneness
<i>hanukkiah</i>	הַנְּקִיָּה	the nine-branched candelabrum we light during the holiday of Hanukkah
<i>menorah</i>	מְנוֹרָה	the seven-branched candelabrum that resided in the Temple in Jerusalem

### Facilitating the Session

#### 1. Seek Participant Input

Well before the session invite a few sisters to take a small role in leading it. For example:

- Prepare what's needed for the Sisterhood Community Ball activity, including color-changing yarn. Ask them to watch a YouTube video in advance on how to make a pompom, and to have all the materials needed
- Share Hanukkah memories or tips and suggestions for making Hanukkah a memorable holiday for children and families
- Plan an activity to kick off the session or accompany it (see **Extra! Program Ideas**)
- Host the event
- Co-facilitate the session
- Invite one or more of the women 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)

Remember: You know what will best engage your participants, and we encourage you to 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 room by arranging the space or seating to support connection. Think about what materials you will need and make sure you have everything prepared.

## 4. Welcome and 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 two minutes each, as they share what’s new for them and what’s on their mind today.

## Reminder! Sisterhood Safe Space

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

## 5. Intro and Inspiration

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

## 6. Soul Sparks Activities

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

### *Achdut – With One Heart at Mount Sinai* (p. 182)

Reflecting on the quip, “Two Jews, three opinions,” invite women to think of a place where they wish there was more unity. Read together the Torah text about arriving at Mount Sinai, and Rashi’s commentary. Discuss 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* (pp. 183–185)

Ask a participant to introduce the sisterhood community ball activity (p. 185). Then give the women time to review the text in the rest of this section, either by themselves or with a partner.

Provide space and materials for silent reflection, giving women 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 you have a nice, thick piece, create 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 the poem by Rav Kook, “Illuminating the Light Within” (p. 187), and reflect on the questions. Gather women together to share their insights. Invite them to brainstorm ideas for expanding their usual Hanukkah traditions to include a new activity. Scan in advance ideas in the section titled, “Dedicating to Sharing Light: Celebrating Hanukkah with Family and Community” (pp. 190–191).

## **7. Reflection and Closing**

Recall the main ideas explored in the session, and create an opportunity for reflection.

**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**” section (pp. 200–203). These suggestions will help them bring home to their families the learning they have done today, in fun and interesting ways. Encourage them to choose at least one thing they will do with their families and to report on how it went at the next session. Give a brief overview of the rest of the unit.

Provide participants with the opportunity to schedule a time with their learning partner before they leave the session today (see “**Learn with Your Sister**” activity, pp. 194–199). This serves as an entry point for conversations that may never otherwise happen. Tell participants 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



*Proceeds from 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.*

We'd value hearing from you about how you are using *Year of Growth*. You can share ideas and suggestions at <https://momentumunlimited.org/year-of-growth>

**Momentum Unlimited**

6101 Executive Blvd, Suite 240, Rockville, MD 20852

240-747-7080 | [info@MomentumUnlimited.org](mailto:info@MomentumUnlimited.org)