



## ACTIVITY

# My Role in Shaping Jewish Civilization

### Materials Needed

- Video clip
- Screening device and Internet connection
- Materials for an exhibit

### Time Needed

1 hour or over several sessions

### Goals

- To tease out the different elements that make Jewish civilization thrive.
- To think about every Jew as having the potential to influence and shape Jewish civilization.

## Before you Get Started

Look at the list of Enduring Understandings:

- Judaism is a civilization, and not primarily a religion.
- A civilization is constituted by its history, literature, language, social organizations, folk sanctions, standards of conduct, social and spiritual ideals, esthetics and values. All of these elements form a civilization.
- Jewish communities share the content of the civilization and the drive for sustaining it, but they also each bring to the table their unique local perspective and interpretation, which in turn contributes to and enriches the collective global civilization.
- The local and global dimensions of Jewish Peoplehood, as perceived through the prism of developing and sustaining Jewish civilization, represent two sides of the same coin.
- The work of building and strengthening Jewish civilization at the local Jewish community level is central to the future of Jewish peoplehood.
- The contribution of every Jew in every community can be significant to the development of the Jewish People's collective enterprise.

Which one would you like to emphasize through this activity?

## Directions for Activity

1. One of the important aspects of Jewish civilization is that every kind of Jew can see him or herself as a contributor. And every trend, ritual, book – also contributes to the ongoing evolution of Jewish civilization.

Andrew Lustig and his spoken word tribute called “I am Jewish” created in January 2012 is one example of a contribution to “Jewish Art”. While he speaks in the singular, he encapsulates many different kinds of Jews and aspects of Jewish civilization (language, holidays, life-cycle, land, and even things that are subversive – a tattoo in the shape of a Jewish star.)

2. Introduce and watch the clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEd-j6BAR3Y>)
3. Create an exhibit of Jewish civilization today. Have students bring in or make (or draw) artifacts that represent all various aspects of Jewish civilization. Consider the following:

- Tease out these categories and some examples in each. What additional categories would you add to reflect that Jewish civilization is evolving and current?
  - What are the “categories” of Jewish civilization that are reflected in the clip (some examples, Israel, Jewish holidays, food, life cycle events.)
  - What categories do you think would be the most meaningful/representative of Jewish civilization as you understand it today? (Art? Food? Books? Something that represents spirituality? or “discourse around Israel” something else?)
  - What artifacts or objects do you think should represent each of these categories?
  - Does everyone in the group agree or are there dissenting voices? If so, note that this exercise is an expansive one. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers.
4. Reflect on what you learned from the activity. Is it hard to find different artifacts? Which categories most speak to your participants?
  5. Create a space to talk about personal contributions to Jewish civilization. Participants can reflect on their own unique contributions (a family tradition at seder time, or an initiative they have taken on in their community.) Or they can research the personal contributions of others in the Jewish community. Give the students a list of Jews who are involved in actively contributing to the innovation and evolution of the Jewish community today. Examples may include Nigel Savage, the founder of Hazon a Jewish environmental organization or Tamar El-Ad Applebaum, the founder of Kehillat Zion in Jerusalem ). Do some research on them and find out what they are adding to the current moment in our evolving of Jewish civilization.
    - Look at resources like the Forward 50 and the Jerusalem Post’s 50 Influential Jews for inspiration.
  6. Set up the exhibit and invite others to view and react to it. Invite the viewers to see themselves in the exhibit as well (e.g. have a sign at the end that says something like, “And what do you want your contribution to be?”)

## Note to Educator

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