

# Shine a Light 2022 Parent Lesson MS/HS

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## The #ShineALight Initiative

The #ShineALight Initiative is a national project to create a collective light of celebration spreading the Jewish joy of Chanukah and the beautiful traditions we honor in our homes with our families.

Sponsored in part by the UJA-Federation of New York, the initiative is designed as a counter-expression to antisemitism and other messages and acts of hate towards Jews and Israel. The #ShineALight Initiative is leveraging education, community partnerships, workplace engagement, and advocacy among Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

The Jewish Education Project is a proud content partner of the #ShineALight Initiative and is delighted to provide these free materials to parents and other caring adults. We encourage you to utilize this education content in the week leading up to and through Chanukah (this year and in the future), and if applicable, at other times of the year.

## Purpose:

The purpose of this lesson and its accompanying set of activities is to learn and discuss what antisemitism is, to have a conversation with your pre-teens and teens about their knowledge, experiences, and opinions about antisemitism in the world around them, and gain insight into how to use values and character strengths to shape their daily lives.



## Overview:

- 1) Learn and discuss what antisemitism is through the viewpoint of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks <sup>z"l</sup>
- 2) Have a conversation about current antisemitic events
- 3) Explore the role of values through character traits (middot)

## Supplies Needed:

Computer or other electronic device to watch a video and view an online PDF



## Parent/Pre-teen-Teen Activities:

### 1. Video: Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks: What is Antisemitism?

- a. Who is Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks <sup>z"l</sup>?
- b. Watch this 3-minute video together (video transcript below)
- c. Discuss the following questions:
  - i. What does Rabbi Sacks say is at the core of antisemitism? *[Possible answer: hatred]*
  - ii. For the most part, Jews throughout the ages, chose not to assimilate to the dominant culture or dominant faith when threatened by the ruling country or party. How does this directly relate to the Maccabees in the Chanukah story? *[Possible answer: The Brothers Maccabee arose to meet the challenge of their age and uphold the faith of their forebears, each making the ultimate sacrifice in order to restore freedom of religion and national independence (sovereignty) to the Jewish People. <https://www.jpost.com/blogs/one-of-the-people/-436009>*

## Activities, Continued

- iii. How does the hatred of Jewish translate into the hatred of all humanity (all people)?  
*[Possible answer: since the core of antisemitism is hatred of different and each person is different from the next, hatred of difference means hating everyone]*

**Video transcript: What is antisemitism?** The short answer is this, there have been many definitions given, but the simplest is actually the earliest. The statement of perhaps the world's first anti-semite, Haman in the Book of Esther. Haman says to Ahasuerus, "Yesh lo am echad mephuzah mephorad ben orhamim v'dataihem shenot mikol am." There is one people scattered throughout the peoples whose religion is different from all others. Antisemitism is dislike of the unlike. Jews were hated because they were different.

Now, you will say that everyone is different, and everyone is different. It's just that Jews were the only people consistently throughout history who insisted on the right to be different, even the duty to be different. And so they became the only nation in history not to assimilate to the dominant culture or convert to the dominant faith. And that is why antisemitism is the paradigm case of hatred in world history.

And that is how we must fight antisemitism. Antisemitism begins with Jews, but it never ends with Jews. And the reason is because antisemitism is hatred of difference, but difference is what makes us human. Precisely because every one of us is different from every other one of us, each of us is unique, therefore irreplaceable, therefore sacred.

Therefore, a nation that has no room for Jews has no room for humanity. And that is why we must stand together in the fight against antisemitism, not just Jews, but everyone who cares for the sanctity of human life and the non-negotiable principles of freedom and dignity.

## 2. Discuss the current state of antisemitism in the US

- a. Much has been in the news lately about antisemitic incidents, sentiment, and antisemitic tropes.
- b. Discuss:
  - i. What antisemitic incidents have each of you heard about in the news, online, social media, school/work, etc.
    1. Talk about them briefly; What happened? Where was it? Who did it impact? What was the response?
  - ii. What are your feelings about what you are hearing? *[i.e. it is very scary to hear that Jews are being blamed for the war in Ukraine when we had nothing to do with it]*
  - iii. What might you be able to do, as a family, to support each other's feelings around antisemitic things that are happening? *[i.e. let's agree to talk about what we hear is being said about the Jews so that we can check in with each other to make sure we feel safe]*
  - iv. What might you be able to do, as a family, to counteract antisemitic things that are happening? *[i.e. let's subscribe to the Anti Defamation League's website so we can get factual updates on incidents in real-time]*

## 3. Values clarification through character traits (Middot)

- a. Values are the guiding principles that give us a sense of what is right or wrong. Values ultimately guide the decisions we make. Our values are evident in what we say, what we do, and what we chose not to say or do.
  - i. Examples of values are: honesty, integrity, kindness, tolerance, compassion, empathy, trust, open-mindedness

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## Activities, Continued

- b. The role of parents is to "mold" tweens into the moral beings we hope they will become, while stepping out of their way and letting them have experiences that allow them to be reflective about what matters to them.
- c. In Judaism, we also view values in terms of character traits. Middot are character traits that allow us to move through life as ethical human beings.
- b. Discuss:
  - i. Print or share on computer screen "[Making Menschen: A Periodic Table](#)"
    - 1. Conversation:
      - a. Which middot (character traits) are most important to each of you?  
*[i.e. Community Mindedness תוברע Areyvut]*
      - b. Why are those middot important to you? *[i.e. it is important because I live my life surrounded by other people and if I want them to be there for me, I have to be there for them as well]*
      - c. How can you impact those around you through living your life through those middot?  
*[i.e. if I think about my community as I make decisions about what to do each day, I can be more thoughtful about how my decisions might impact those around me]*
      - d. Which middot are reflected in the Chanukah story and how can I apply it to your life?  
*[i.e. Courage אומץ בל Ometz Lev; sometimes I hear people saying things that aren't appropriate, but I don't say anything even though I should]*
      - e. How can I use middot to guide me as I struggle to make sense of antisemitism or antisemitic acts, comments, etc.? *[i.e. I can commit to behaving in a way that is opposite of those who are antisemitic as a way to bring more kindness and care into the world]*



### Wrap-up:

In addition to exploring the issue of antisemitism with your pre-teen and teen through the lens of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z"l, current events, and values, we also hope this set of activities gave you an opportunity to connect with and learn more about your pre-teen or teen. Your ability to connect with them and offer guidance and support when challenging issues like antisemitism arise, will help build your collective relationship as they move through adolescence and into adulthood.