

KEHILA:

CARING & COMMUNITY

1

SOURCEBOOK 1: RITES OF PASSAGE



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INTRODUCTION: YOU ARE ON A JOURNEY

We are all on a journey from one stage of life to the next. Throughout your passage you will have experiences that help you learn and grow in wisdom and understanding. These are Rites of Passage. Sometimes unexpected things happen along our journey. Marking Rites of Passage helps us with these challenges.



TEXTS: GROWING IN WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING

Growing old, man's sight worsens, but this allows him to see more. – Jewish Proverb

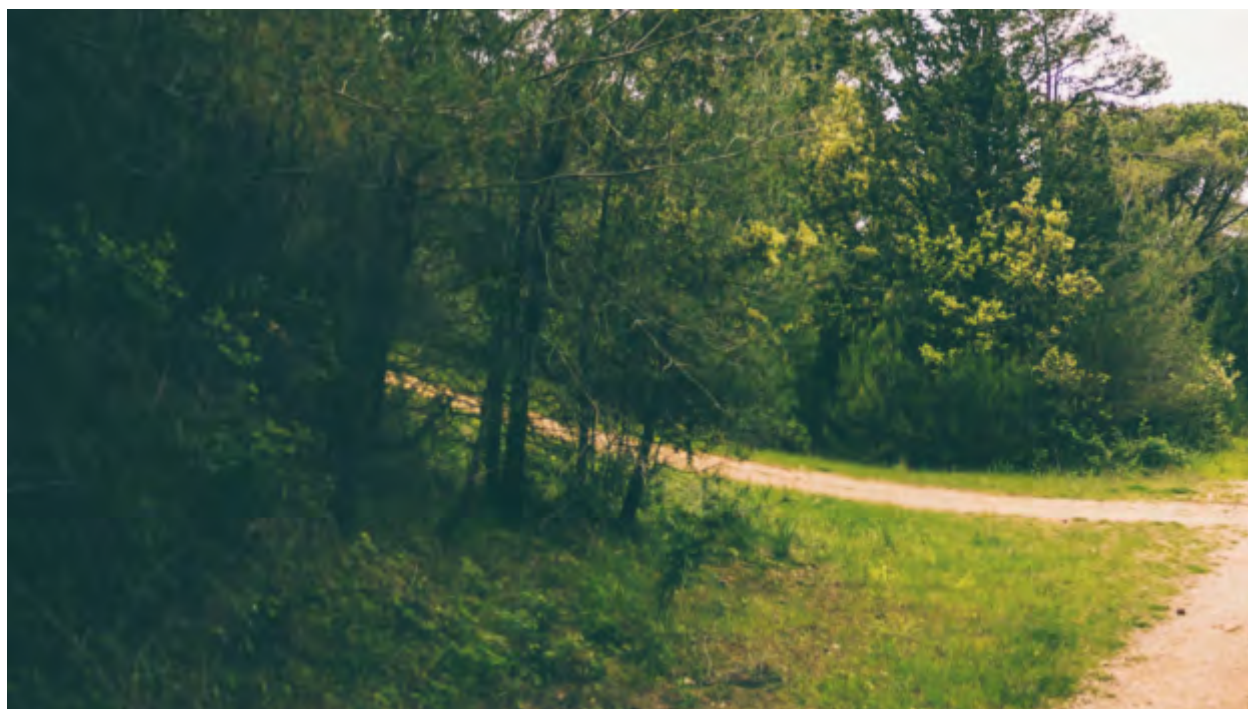
Begin with the end in mind. – Stephen R. Covey

I happen to be a person of faith. And what I have found that my tradition teaches is that there is not an amount of money in the world that makes you not want more. There is not an amount of possessions in the world that makes you feel done consuming. And at the end of the day, and when you are buried, your gravestone will not tell any of those things. We live in a hyphen. We live in the hyphen between the year that we were born and the year we died. ... I once heard a rabbi say, "What will you do with your hyphen?" – Mayim Bialik



CONVERSATION: ALONG THE WAY

- Name moments that marked your transition from one stage of life to the next.
- Which ones most increased your understanding of the world around you?
- What are the moments of change and transition in the personal hyphen of your life that have felt out of your control? How did you bring order to your life?





INTRODUCTION: BUMPS IN THE ROAD

Our passages are not always direct, but each turn is an opportunity to grow in strength and compassion.



TEXT: TURNINGS, TRAPS, AND BRANCHINGS

"...the (straightest) way by which we should go up": There is no road without turnings; there is no road without traps; there is no road without branchings.

– *Sifrei Devarim 20:4*

את הדרך אשר נעלה בה - אין לך דרך
שאין בה עקמומיות ואין לך דרך
שאין בה מקומות ואין לך דרך
שאין בה פרשות :



CONVERSATION: TRANSITIONS AND UNDERSTANDING

- Why are some decisions about which direction to go challenging? What will happen to us if we go the wrong way?
- How does a new challenge affect you?



PICTURE YOURSELF: WHICH WAY WILL YOU GO?

The girl in the photo below is at a crossroads. She can choose to walk in one of four different directions. Write a journal entry:

- How would you decide which direction to go?
- Which way would you choose, and why?
- Compare this to a choice you have made in your own life.





INTRODUCTION: WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

We say Tefilat Haderech when we are about to depart on a journey. The prayer asks God to keep us safe, protect us from any dangers we may encounter along the way, and to have us return in peace.



TEXT: TRAVELER'S PRAYER/TEFILAT HADERECH:

May it be Your will, Lord, our God and the God of our ancestors, that You lead us toward peace, guide our footsteps toward peace, and make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness, and peace. May You rescue us from the hand of every foe, ambush along the way, and from all manner of punishments that assemble to come to earth. May You send blessing in our handiwork, and grant us grace, kindness, and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us. May You hear the sound of our humble request because You are God Who hears prayer requests. Blessed are You, Lord, Who hears prayer.

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ
ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
שֶׁתּוֹלִיכֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם
וְתַצְעִידֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם
וְתַסְמְכֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם
וְתִבְיְאֵנוּ אֶל־מַחֲזֵי חַפְצֵנוּ לְחַיִּים וְלְשָׁלוֹם
וְתַצִּילֵנוּ מִכַּף כָּל־אֹיֵב וְאוֹרֵב בְּדֶרֶךְ
וְתִשְׁלַח בְּרָכָה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ
וְתִתֵּנָּנוּ לַחַו וְלַחֶסֶד וְלִרְחֻמִּים בְּעֵינֶיךָ
וּבְעֵינֵי כָל־רוֹאֵנוּ כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלַּת עַמְּךָ
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרַחֲמִים: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה:



CONVERSATION: PROTECTION ON YOUR JOURNEY

- When have you felt you needed a prayer, encouragement, or words of wisdom before leaving or arriving?



ACTIVITY: MARK YOUR JOURNEY

Rituals around Rites of Passage help us with the challenges of transitions. Create a new ritual to mark a transition on your life journey.

1. Purpose: What are you marking?
2. Where/When: Is there a significant time or a certain location where the ritual should take place?
3. Role of Community: Who would you like to be present?
4. Ritual and Symbols: What will you do? Will you use any ritual objects? If so, which ones?
5. Commitment: What promises will you make?



ACTIVITY: MAP YOUR JOURNEY

Use the template below to create a road map for your personal journey. Write different ages in the circle markers, and next to them, write what you envision yourself doing at those ages.



SONGS FOR THE ROAD:

Listen to the songs below. Which one resonates most with you? Why? Write an additional verse to add to the song you chose.

- Hamilton - Opening Song
- Travelin' Prayer - Billy Joel
- Blowin' in the Wind - Bob Dylan



INTRODUCTION: WHERE ARE YOU PLANNING TO GO?

Sometimes our travel plans don't turn out exactly as expected. We might be delayed due to weather, or detoured because of construction. How does this affect the journey? The text below, written by the parent of a child with a disability, compares the experience of changed travel plans to her personal experience.



TEXT: WELCOME TO HOLLAND BY EMILY PERL KINGSLEY

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability – to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this...

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip – to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy." But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place. So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills... and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

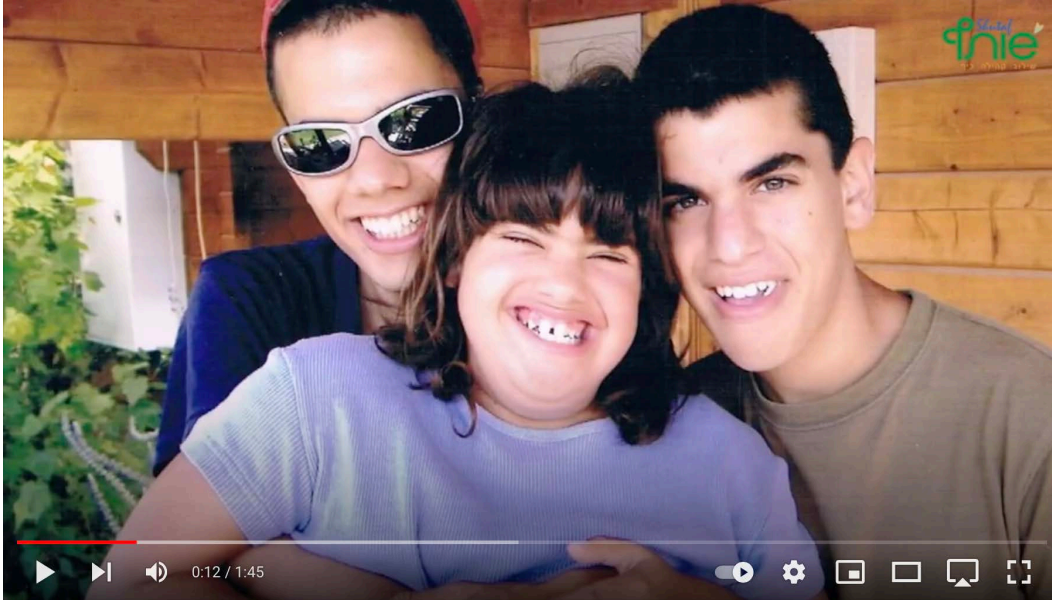
But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned." And the pain of that will never, ever, ever go away... because the loss of that dream is a very very significant loss.

But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ...about Holland.



CONVERSATION: YOUR PERSONAL JOURNEY

- Have you ever experienced a change in plans? The video below is an example of something unexpected that came up in one family's life journey.
- What unexpected things have you experienced?



VIDEO: MIRIAM AND YEHUDA RECEIVING THE DIAGNOSIS

Watch [the video](#) above, and then discuss:

- Think about how they react and what they say – what would you do if you were part of their family? How might you feel as a sibling? As a friend? How would you offer support?
- Has anything ever not gone as planned in your life? How did this make you feel (positive and/or negative)?



INTRODUCTION: WHERE OUR WORDS CAN TAKE US

The words we use can take us in one direction or another. What language do we use to describe people different from ourselves? Can negative language push us off the path? Can positive language make the world a better, more inclusive place?



TEXT: CELEBRATING OUR DIFFERENCES

Jewish law prescribes the recitation of a blessing upon seeing an unusual person, though there is a wide range of opinions over just what that means. In modern times, this blessing can focus us on celebrating our differences.

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who makes creatures different.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
מְשַׁנֵּה הַבְּרִיּוֹת



MORE: WORDS ABOUT WORDS

- [More about Positive Language](#)
- [What “Tard” are You Anyway?](#)



CONVERSATION: THE WORDS WE CHOOSE

- Look back at the road map of your personal journey on page 5. How do you describe your plans? What kinds of words do you use to describe yourself?
- How do you feel when you're told there are words you can't use, or words you can't use anymore?
- Can you use inclusive language but still exclude people?
- Does positive language make the world a more inclusive place? Explain.



TEXTS: EVERYONE HAS THEIR HOUR

Ben Azzai taught: Despise no one and call nothing useless. For there is no person who does not have his hour — and no thing that does not have its place.

— Pirke Avot 4:3

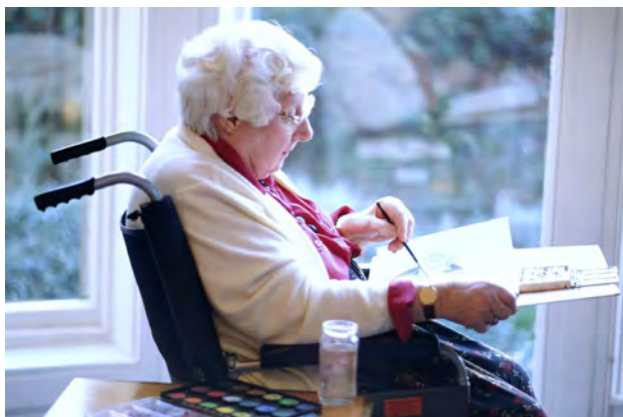
It is easy to pass judgment on the laws in the Torah and to claim that we are morally superior to it, but we can only do that if we first face up to our own practices. And so let me ask you these questions:

- If *Yitzchak Avinu*, Father Isaac, who became legally blind in his old age, were to come into our synagogue and want to daven with us, would we have a large print prayer book available for him?
- If *Yaakov Avinu*, Father Jacob, who was injured in an encounter with a mysterious stranger and limped for the rest of his life as a result, were to come into our synagogue and want an aliyah, would he be able to get up to the bimah here? And if not, if we don't have a ramp that makes the bimah accessible to the people with disabilities, what would we say to him?
- If *Moshe Rabeynu*, Moses our teacher, who had a speech defect, were to come into our shul and want to read from the Torah that he gave us, could we handle it without becoming embarrassed if he were to stutter? – Rabbi Jack Riemer



GAMES AND SURPRISING FACTS

- Can language make you feel judged? Play this game to learn more:
[Labels, Categories, and Diagnoses: One Game, Two Variations](#)
- In countries such as the United States, with life expectancies of well over 70 years of age, individuals spend on average about 8 years, or 11% of their life span, living with disabilities. How many people with disabilities do you think there are?
[Click here to see if you are correct!](#)



CONVERSATION: THE ACTIONS WE CHOOSE

- How does language (positive or negative) affect our actions and our thoughts?
- How does positive and negative language affect the way we view the people around us?
- What are some things we can do to make the world a more inclusive place?

Chai Mitzvah was created as a way to engage adults, teens, and families in their Jewish journeys and in their communities throughout their lives. Combining texts to spark discussion, ritual, and social action, Chai Mitzvah provides the framework for a meaningful Jewish experience.

Shutaf Inclusion Programs in Jerusalem is dedicated to providing quality, inclusive services for children, teens, and young adults with disabilities, regardless of labels and perceived functioning differences, while inspiring and educating others towards the acceptance and inclusion of all members of the community.

It is our hope that your Chai Mitzvah/Shutaf Inclusion Programs experience will ignite deeper insight and continued growth.



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