

# KEHILA:

## CARING & COMMUNITY

### LEADERS' GUIDE FOR SOURCEBOOK 1: RITES OF PASSAGE

#### THEMES & SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES:

The *Kehila: Caring and Community* materials are designed to be flexible. Use as many of the texts, videos, and activities as work for your group and your schedule. Additional activities below can add even more to the experience if time permits.



#### THEMES:

- Your life can be compared to a journey. Throughout your life, your travels will include rites of passage that help you learn and grow. We come out of these in some way permanently changed and transformed. Marking our lives with life cycle events is one way Judaism works to bring order to chaotic times of change and transition in our lives.
- Being in a family of someone with a disability can be compared to the experience of changed travel plans, or having your life follow a course you did not plan and did not want to take. That doesn't make it bad, just different from what you expected.
- There are parts of our lives that we can control, and other parts where we can only control how we react to them.
- Jewish text and tradition addresses the issues of disability and inclusion – advising us to show respect through our words and actions.



#### YOU ARE ON A JOURNEY

**PAGES 2-3:** Start where the students are. Focus on their own personal life journeys, through both a Jewish lens and a secular one.

#### RITES OF PASSAGE

Hang poster boards with different age spans written on them (0-7, 8-11, 12+). If remote, use a jamboard. Ask students to think about their lives as Americans and Jews and to record responses to the following question on the boards: *What are the milestones and rites of passage that you encountered during each of these age spans?* (Include both secular rites of passage such as going to sleepaway camp for the first time, and Jewish rites of passage that they have personally experienced, or have experienced through family members, such as Bar/Bat Mitzvah.) The group may want to compare these rites.

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We hope that you will enjoy using *Kehila: Caring and Community*! If you have a creative teaching idea that you would like to share, please contact [nina@chaimitzvah.org](mailto:nina@chaimitzvah.org)

4-5

## WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

**PAGES 4-5:** Transitions are challenging – they do not always go as expected. Even happy transitions can cause stress. Rituals around Rites of Passage help us with the challenges of transitions.

### TURNINGS, TRAPS, AND BRANCHES

**You'll Need:** YARN: 1 long piece (about 6 feet long) and at least 5 shorter pieces (about 6 inches long) • At least 5 SLIPS OF PAPER with different Rites of Passage written on them. OPTIONAL: Cup to put the slips of paper.

#### What to Do:

1. Write different Rites of Passage on the slips of paper. You can choose from a biography of a well known person, or from the examples the students shared earlier.
2. Have one student hold each end of the long piece of yarn, and stretch it from one end of the room to the other.
3. Invite a student to come pick a slip of paper with a Rite of Passage written on it. Ask the student to identify whether it is a Turning, Trap, or Branch. For Turning, the student pulls the yarn and holds it. For Trap, twist the string, and discuss what to do to get back on track. Once you've decided, let the twist out. For Branch, take a shorter piece of yarn and tie it to the longer one. The next student will choose whether to add to the branch, or to the longer piece.

6-7

## WHERE ARE YOU PLANNING TO GO?

**PAGES 6-7:** How do you navigate the parts of your life that you did not choose?

### PODCAST: MAYIM BIALIK WITH STEVEN LEVITT, "PEOPLE I (MOSTLY) ADMIRE"

Listen to the [podcast](#) (51 minutes, or read the transcript) – Mayim Bialik talks about her life choices.

- What are some Rites of Passage in Mayim Bialik's life?
- What parts of her life could she control, and what parts were out of her control?
- How did she react, to the things she could not control, and how did that help her keep her equilibrium?

## WHERE OUR WORDS CAN TAKE US

PAGES 8-9: How do words impact on inclusion?

### APPLES

Tell the students that you work in the produce section of the local grocery store. Hold up an apple. Ask the group for words to describe the apple. Respond to the students every few words with “you can’t use that word anymore.” You can’t say *red*. You have to say “*very, very deep and dark pink*.” You can’t say “*crisp*.” You have to say, “*makes a snapping sound when you bite into it*.” Ask, “How does it make you feel when you are told there are words you can’t use anymore?”

Go to the Conversation:

- Can you use inclusive language but still exclude people?
- How does positive language make the world a more inclusive place? Explain.
- How does negative language make the world a less inclusive place?

### BAGELS

On the board if in person, or a Jamboard if remote, ask students to write the characteristics of a person who eats a certain type of bagel: everything, plain, or gluten free.

Tell the students, “Creating categories – established and of our own making (like people who eat certain types of bagels) – is a normal and human response.

- Have you ever been labeled? If so, was it a positive or a negative label? How did you feel? How do you think that your labels might change over time?
- Is there a need for people to “put other people into boxes”?
- How do we look at each other and make immediate assumptions about... everything?
- Why do we create categories in the first place? Do they help us or hinder us?
- What is a *label* as opposed to a *category*? Is there a difference? NOTE: How do we get to know people beyond our assumptions based on the categories or labels assigned to them? For example, we know that not every New Yorker is loud and obnoxious, not every Israeli is pushy, and not all teenagers are angry, and yet we often reinforce these presumptions. Why?
- How can we work past creating categories in order to create a more inclusive community?

