



Educator's Guide

Learning & Education

Why has Judaism survived for thousands of years? Along with rituals and communities, a major factor in the endurance of Judaism is the central role of education. In fact, teaching and learning has a precedence that stretches all the way back to the Bible. So, why has there been such an emphasis on education through the generations and how does Jewish education of yesteryear compare to what Jewish learning looks like today? Utilize the accompanying educational resources to engage your students.

[Link to video](#)

Further Learning

1. Unpacked, ["The Mishnah"](#)
2. Z3 Conference, ["The New Town Square: Talking Israel and Identity in the Media"](#)
3. Tzvi Senensky, ["Yehoshua ben Gamla, Founder of the Jewish Day School Movement"](#)
4. Alisha Abboudi, ["The High Cost of Jewish Continuity: Affording a Jewish Day School Education"](#)
5. My Jewish Learning, ["Sarah Schenirer"](#)

Review Questions

1. Which major group did Shimon Ben Shetach set up a school for because they were not being taught?
 - Boys
 - **Orphans**
 - Married women
 - Divorced men
2. Which Jewish prayer encourages one to educate their children at all times?
 - Amidah
 - Ashrei
 - **Shema**
 - Kaddish



3. Many believe that due to Judaism's focus on education, Jews were more _____ than the general community
 - Rich
 - Spiritual
 - Better looking
 - **Literate**
4. Which type of educational programs often give students powerful Jewish experiences?
 - Youth groups
 - Israel trips
 - Jewish summer camps
 - **All of the above**

Discussion Questions

1. Each video in this series makes the claim that it is the most important Jewish priority. Based on the video and your own thoughts, make a compelling case for why learning & education should be the most important priority within the Jewish world.
2. The [Talmud](#) (Shabbat 127a) says:

"These are the things for which you now enjoy the benefit of (in this world), and the principle remains for you (in the world to come), namely: honoring parents, doing acts of lovingkindness, going to pray night and day, welcoming guests, visiting the sick, celebrating with a bride, burying the dead, studying prayer, peacemaking between people including husband and wife; and the study of Torah is "k'neged kulam" (equal to all of them)."

The phrase "k'neged kulam" could be interpreted as the study of Torah being equal to all of the righteous deeds listed such as welcoming guests, burying the dead and making peace between people combined. Alternatively, others could interpret it as "k'neged kulam" meaning that the study of Torah leads to these good deeds and should always be in mind when performing them. How do you interpret "k'neged kulam"? Is the study of Torah equal to all of these good deeds combined or do they go hand in hand?

3. Former Knesset Member, Dr. Ruth Calderon, founded the first *beit midrash* (study hall) in which secular and religious women and men studied and taught Torah together, helping change the way Jewish learning was perceived in the non-religious space. In her first speech as a member of Knesset, she gave a



Talmud lesson to the entire plenum which included religious and secular Jews as well as non-Jewish Arabs. Watch the speech [here](#) and answer the following question: What do you think is the best way to make Jewish learning attractive to all Jews, regardless of religious affiliation?

4. In an [essay](#), Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz said, “The main point is to ensure that every grandchild of every Jew remains a Jew.” What point do you think Rabbi Steinsaltz is trying to make here vis-a-vis Jewish education? Do you agree or disagree?
5. In the Talmud (Bava Metzia 84a:15-18), read the [gemara](#) from which we learn what constitutes a great *havruta* (study pair). How does this story articulate what makes a great *havruta*? Also, why do you think *havruta* learning has been so significant for the Jewish world when it comes to education?

Learning Activities

1. Turn the lights off in your room, light a few candles and ask your students to close their eyes while listening to the following [video](#) from Rabbi Sacks. After listening, ask your students to either reflect on the video with art or through a written response. The video can also be debriefed through discussion.
2. Many Koreans believe that the reason that there are so many Jewish [Nobel Prize laureates](#) is because of the Jewish approach to education. Read this [article](#) about the Talmud-inspired craze sweeping South Korea and answer the following questions:
 - How would you describe the Jewish approach to education?
 - How do you think this approach impacts Jewish culture?
 - What can we learn from the South Korean interest in Jewish learning?
3. Watch our video about the [Talmud](#) and utilize the accompanying educational resources.
4. [Read](#) this article about Sarah Schenirer, the founder of the Beis Ya’acov educational movement. What lesson did Sarah teach us about the importance of Jewish learning for everybody, regardless of gender?
5. Give your students our [Kahoot](#) on Learning & Education!



Reflection Questions

1. What was your most meaningful Jewish educational experience? Describe it and explain why you think it was so impactful.
2. The Talmud (Shabbat 31a) tells the story of a gentile who was interested in converting to Judaism. First, he went to Shammai and asked him to teach him the entire Torah while he stood on one foot. Insulted by this request, Shammai kicked him out of his house. Next, the man went to see Hillel who accepted the peculiar challenge. Hillel responded "what is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary. Now go study!" Imagine you were asked the same question. How would you answer it?
3. There is an age-old [debate](#) within Israeli society whether Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) Israelis should serve in the IDF as they are able to indefinitely postpone their enlistment as long as they are learning Torah full time in Yeshiva. The [majority](#) of Israelis support the enlistment of Haredi Israelis while the Haredim assert that their full-time Torah learning is essential to Israeli society. They view Torah learning as a basic value of the Jewish people and as a national service to the country, as a Jewish State. Put yourself in the shoes of both Haredi Israeli Yeshiva students and non-Haredi Israelis who serve in the IDF. Defend the argument from both sides.
4. The "Shema" prayer is considered by many Jews to be the most important prayer in Judaism. In the prayer, taken from [Devarim 6:4](#), it emphasizes the importance of education for the next generation when it says "teach your children, when you sit at home and when you travel, when you lie down and when you rise." Think about your own upbringing. What are the most important lessons you have learned from your older relatives (parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts etc) about Judaism? What do you think are the most important Jewish lessons that you will one day teach to future generations?
5. Outside of Israel, the costs of Jewish educational experiences such as Jewish day school, Jewish summer camp, youth groups, synagogue memberships and Israel trips can be quite exorbitant for many families. In the United States, the number of school age children that [attend](#) Jewish day school is just under 300,000, a small percentage of the total Jewish population of that age bracket. The financial burden of Jewish educational experiences is a major sacrifice for Jewish families around the world. If you were in the shoes of your parents and



could only choose either day school, camp or a participation in a youth group, which would you choose and why?