

***FROM 'ME' TO 'WE'***  
***VOICES FROM THE***  
***NORTHERN BORDER***



**Educational Guide**  
**For Israel's National Days**



## EDUCATOR

As we approach Israel's national days — Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzma'ut — we do so in the shadow of two years of war whose reverberations have been felt across Israel and by Jewish communities around the world. This moment has thrust upon us a profound collective experience, and forced many of us to reckon with hard questions of collective identity — as Jews, as members of communities, as individuals trying to find where we stand and where we fit in the larger picture.

At the heart of this lesson is one of the oldest questions that runs through the core of Jewish history and thought: the relationship between the individual and the collective. We explore this question through a video, developed by the creators of the Beit Avi Chai podcast, מפלגת המחשבות (The Party of Ideas), which takes viewers to the northern Israel border— a region deeply affected by the war and ongoing security challenges. Through the stories of farmers, business owners, and community members living there, we explore how individuals balance personal ambition with collective responsibility. Their experiences reveal courage, resilience, and hope in the face of war, and shed light on how personal fulfillment and dedication to something larger than oneself shape both daily life and the broader spirit of Israeli society today. They offer a living answer to questions we are all grappling with: What does it mean to belong to something larger than yourself? Is that a source of meaning, a burden, or both? And where, on the axis between individual and collective, do you place yourself? Is this by choice or by circumstance?

### Goals

- Participants will encounter real people navigating the tension between personal ambition and collective responsibility, and explore what it means to find purpose in something larger than oneself.
- Participants will reflect on their own sense of belonging to family, community, the Jewish people, and consider how that belonging shapes their identity and choices.

### Materials

- Computer and projector or smartboard
- Whiteboard, poster board, and markers
- Journal paper and pens
- Smartphones or tablets with access to the internet

**Note to Facilitator:** This lesson touches on war, loss, and deeply personal questions of identity and belonging. Please familiarize yourself thoroughly with the material before the session, and adapt the questions and activities to the sensitivities of your group.

## PART I > INTRODUCTION

### Opening Activity

- ? Begin by asking participants the following question: What image comes to mind when you think about being part of something bigger than yourself?
- 📷 Give them 2 minutes to either search online for an image that captures that idea, or to choose one from a collection of pre-selected images (these can be projected on the board or printed and placed in the center of the circle).
- ? Invite participants to share with the group: What image did you choose, and why? Are there any recurring images or themes?

| **Note to Facilitator:** For a list of suggested images to prepare in advance, see the Appendix.

## PART II > STORIES FROM ISRAEL'S NORTHERN BORDER

**Note on the structure:** The video is divided into three sections, each following the story of a different individual living in northern Israel. This lesson plan is modular, designed to be used whether you choose to watch one, two, or all three parts in a single session or across successive lessons. Be sure to watch the video before selecting the option that best suits your group.

The three sections are framed by a conversation between the podcast hosts, Micah Goodman and Efrat Shapira- Rosenberg, which opens and closes the full video. They trace a generational shift from a collectivist ethos of sacrifice, emblematic of the early Zionists, through an era of individualism and self-fulfillment, toward what may be an emerging synthesis: personal fulfillment in service of something greater.


**Pre-Screening:** Introduce the video and provide brief context:

This video, developed by the creators of the Beit Avi Chai podcast *מפלגת המחשבות* (The Party of Ideas), takes us to northern Israel — a region deeply affected by the war and ongoing security challenges. We're going to hear the story of someone living on the northern border, which became the frontline during the war. Their story offers one possible answer to the question: What does it mean to be part of something larger than oneself?

## Before screening the video

→ ask participants to jot down three things that catch their attention as they watch:

- One visual image
- One quote: a word or sentence that stands out
- One feeling or question that comes up for them

 Invite participants to open Google Maps or Google Earth and locate the places mentioned (Dishon / Amir / Metula) on the map, noting their proximity to the Lebanese border and Hezbollah positions.

## Screen the video

For easier navigation, the video includes “markers” that divide it into the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. Dishon
3. Amir
4. Metula
5. Conclusion

## 1. Post-Screening Discussion

Invite participants to share their first impressions. This can be done with an online tool like Mentimeter or on a poster board or whiteboard. Use these initial responses as a springboard for the discussion that follows.

**Note to Facilitator:** The questions below are organized in three layers — basic comprehension, personal reflection, and section-specific discussion. You do not need to cover all of them; select what suits your group and the time available.

Begin here to ensure everyone is grounded in the story before moving to deeper reflection.

- **Where** is this taking place?
- **What** does this place mean to the person we met, and what does it represent in the broader picture? (home/front line; a life's work/food security for the Israeli people; family continuity/historical continuity)
- **Who** did we just meet? What can we say about them: their life, their family, their personality?
- **What** threats and challenges did they face, and what choices did they make?
- **Why** do you think they chose to stay? What do you think gave them the strength to persevere?

## 2. Personal Reflection

- ? What do you think about their decision to stay? What would you have done?
- ? What values or beliefs do you see reflected in this story? Do they resonate with your own life? and if so, how?
- ? When in the past two years have you found comfort or strength in being part of a collective? When has it felt like a burden?

## 3. Section-Specific Questions



### Section 1: Micha'el the farmer and his daughter Paz

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Micha'el says: *"Our roots here are deep. People here are ready to die, to sacrifice their lives, and to continue to work the land. Otherwise, there's no explanation — why did twenty farmers stay here and continue to work the land under fire? Because you don't abandon home."* What does "home" mean to him?

\* Possible direction: community, identity, responsibility, source of income, family roots

Paz says that if she packed her things and left, it would feel like a betrayal of the region and the moment: *"If there aren't strong young people here who come and support this region, I don't know where we'll end up."* Paz chose to follow her father's path, rather than that of her peers.

- What would guide you in making your own decision?

## **Section 2: Avishai the Baker**

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Avishai says: “This whole chain that led to the reconstruction and the establishment of the State of Israel — it’s not a coincidence. It’s in everyone’s hands.”

- What do you think he means by that? Does that resonate with you?

He also says: “Security is the means, not the goal”—and describes his aspiration as simply continuing to do good for people, for himself, for his family.

- How does that reframe the way we usually talk about the conflict in the north?
- Does separating “means” from “goals” change anything in your understanding of the conflict?

## **Section 3: Liat from Metula**

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She says: “*There is no place in this country to live that doesn’t carry some kind of challenge — I choose the challenge that defines who I want to be as a person.*”

- What does it mean to actively choose your challenge rather than simply endure it?
- Is there a challenge in your own life that you have chosen — or could choose — that defines who you want to be?

She says she wants her intergenerational legacy to her children to be “*that there is something worth dying for.*”

- How does that land with you? Is that a value you recognize, admire, or find difficult to relate to, and does it feel different knowing she had returned to her destroyed home just an hour before this interview?

## **Section 4: Closing conversation between Micah and Efrat**

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- What conclusion do they reach, following these three stories? What are your thoughts?

## PART III > FINDING MY PLACE BETWEEN 'ME' AND 'WE'

Read the following statements aloud, one at a time, and invite participants to “vote with their feet”: one side of the room represents “agree,” the other “disagree,” and anywhere between the two. After each statement, invite one or two participants to share why they stood where they did.

\* Feel free to choose the statements most relevant to your group.

### Statements

“In each and every generation, a person is obligated to see themselves as if they personally left Egypt”

*[Passover Haggadah, based on Mishnah Pesachim 10:5]*

“It is good to die for our country.”

*[Attributed to Joseph Trumpeldor, early Zionist pioneer killed in 1920 while defending the settlement of Tel Hai]*

“You can't spell 'awesome' without 'me.’” *Taylor Swift*

“Do not separate yourself from the community.” *Hillel [Pirkei Avot 2:4]*

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And when I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” *Hillel [Pirkei Avot 1:14]*

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” *Old proverb*

“Every Jew is responsible for one another.” *Babylonian Talmud, Shevuot 39a*

“We're all in this together.” *[High School Musical]*

“Every Jew is a letter in G-d's scroll... To detract from the individuality and uniqueness of one is to detract from the integrity of the collective whole.”

*The Lubavitcher Rebbe, based on Menachot 29a*

“You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.”

*Rabbi Tarfon (Pirkei Avot 2:16)*

“The Jewish people were only able to receive the Torah when they were like one person with one heart.” *Rashi on Exodus 19:2*

“I have come to understand [...] that being successful can't hold a candle to being of use.”

*Dr. Larch, The Cider House Rules*

“Judaism values individuality, not individualism. Individuality means that I am a unique and valued member of a team. Individualism means that I am not a team player at all.”


*Rabbi Jonathan Sacks*



## PART IV > SUMMARY

We close by returning to the questions at the heart of this lesson, and inviting participants to reflect on where they've arrived.

### Closing Reflection

 The following texts (Appendix B) are offered as food for thought, touching on the questions we've explored today. Hand them out and invite a couple of students to read them aloud, one at a time, pausing between them to let the words land.

*"The Jewish people are like a living Torah scroll, and every individual Jew is a letter within it. If a single letter is damaged or missing, or incorrectly drawn, a Torah scroll is considered invalid. So, too, in Judaism, each individual is considered a crucial part of the people, without whom the entire religion would suffer."*


From the introduction to A Letter in the Scroll by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, based on a teaching of the Baal Shem Tov

*"Every Jew is a letter. Each Jewish family is a word, every community a sentence, and the Jewish people at any one time are a paragraph. The Jewish people through time constitute a story, the strangest and most moving story in the annals of humankind."*

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Radical Then, Radical Now

**Note to Facilitator:** These two texts work together: the first establishes the metaphor of the individual as irreplaceable and singular, while also only having meaning as part of the whole – neither the individual nor the collective is complete without the other. The second text adds layers of identity – family, community – as “stepping stones” connecting the individual and the Jewish people. It also introduces the element of time (in the spirit of b'chol dor vador), touching on how we see our story as a part of a greater legacy.

### Reflective Writing

 Read the two texts to yourself. Circle one word, phrase, or sentence that resonates, surprises, or stays with you. Give yourself a moment to sit with what you chose and why.

 Then, choose one of the following options:

- Write down the word, phrase, or sentence you circled, and begin a two-minute stream of consciousness exercise. Write for two minutes without filtering, and don't put your pen down.
- Use the word, phrase, or sentence you circled as a title, and write a paragraph relating to it.

**Note to Facilitator:** Invite participants to voluntarily share what they've written, whether a sentence, phrase, or full reflection in a circle or small groups.

## APPENDIX A › SUGGESTED IMAGES FOR OPENING ACTIVITY

The following images work well as prompts for the opening activity. They can be projected on the board or printed in advance and placed in the center of the circle.

**Nature** › A single bird in a murmuration · a tree with a shared root system · a single wave in the ocean · a bee in a hive · a single brick in an arch

**Human and Social** › An orchestra / a sports team in a huddle / hands joined in a circle · a single candle lighting others / a rowing crew

**Structural** › A single tile in a mosaic / a star in a constellation / a thread being woven into fabric / a gear in a mechanism

**Tension and Complexity** › (images that raise questions rather than resolve them) A person standing apart from a crowd / a single tree at the edge of a forest / a salmon swimming upstream

## APPENDIX B › TEXTS FOR CLOSING REFLECTION

*“The Jewish people are like a living Torah scroll, and every individual Jew is a letter within it. If a single letter is damaged or missing or incorrectly drawn, a Torah scroll is considered invalid. So, too, in Judaism, each individual is considered a crucial part of the people, without whom the entire religion would suffer.”*

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› Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Radical Then, Radical Now*