



## Living Wisdom: Engaging, Soulful Jewish Learning

A new nine-course series designed to attract new learners to the Florence Melton School

### Members of the Tribe

The first of the new Living Wisdom courses to be developed is entitled Members of the Tribe and will be available for your students in October 2020.

In this short six-session quest, we'll dive deep into a fundamental, challenging question for Members of the Tribe: *"What is the overarching purpose of Judaism?"*

Together, we'll examine aspects of what might be considered the Jewish mission, a blend of practices that distinguish us as Jews, and what to do with this idea of being called the "Chosen People." Prepare to explore how Big Jewish Ideas and lessons from our history serve to enrich our collective actions as individuals and as a people.

The following are six short synopses describing the content of this first six-lesson in this course.

#### Lesson 1: Living a Jewish Life: Finding Purpose Through Reflection

Judaism is comprised of many practices, customs, values, and beliefs. Considering possible overarching purposes of living Jewishly can help to provide perspective on how all these fit together. This lesson will examine such purposes. In this first lesson of the unit, participants are encouraged to reflect on their personal connection to different aspects of Judaism, reflections and connections that will carry through this entire unit and beyond.

#### Lesson 2: Just Remember: Symbols and Reminders in Judaism

Every religion, every culture makes use of objects that serve as reminders or symbols. Reminders serve to reinforce a thought or specific set of actions or behaviors. Symbols often represent ideas or qualities. While Judaism has many such reminders and symbols, this lesson will focus on three examples described in or derived from the biblical text. The lesson will consider how these physical symbols serve as spiritual reminders and consider how and if they speak to a 21st century Jew.





### **Lesson 3: Let My People Grow: Exodus from Egypt as a Call to Action**

The Jewish people have experienced a long and complex history including both extraordinary triumphs and devastating defeats. At first glance, it would seem difficult to determine which of these innumerable events is the most significant. Nevertheless, one event does stand out above the rest- the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. The redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery continues to be, the defining moment in the Jewish collective memory. This lesson will offer insight into the meaning of this epic event that impacted both the Jewish world and the world at large, bringing with it a call for continued action.

### **Lesson 4: Chosen People, Chosen Purpose**

The Jewish people are often referred to as the "Chosen People." This title is based on references in the Torah, which state that the Israelites were singled out from among the nations of the world for a specific reason and purpose. For some, the notion of a chosen people can be difficult to accept. With a belief that all human beings are to be treated with equal respect and dignity, how can one nation claim a status that suggests its superiority over others? This lesson will attempt to understand the concept of "chosenness" through both a traditional and a contemporary lens.

### **Lesson 5: Holy Guacamole: What does it mean to keep kosher?**

The Jewish religion has an entire category of laws governing the types of food that may be eaten, and the ways in which food may be prepared. The observance of these laws has often served to distinguish Jews from the nations of the world, perhaps more than any other laws. These laws are known as the laws of kashrut. This lesson will familiarize learners with the concepts of kashrut, as well as expose them to the basic laws of keeping kosher. It will examine some of the rationales behind these laws and consider a broader understanding of kashrut and its relevance to Jewish values and contemporary ethics.





## Lesson 6: Jerusalem, if I forget you... Israel and the Diaspora

The biblical relationship of the People of Israel (Am Yisrael) to the Land of Israel (Eretz Yisrael) began with the covenant made with Abraham and has continued for thousands of years. The biblical descriptions of this unique relationship have formed a “master-story” that has been passed down throughout the generations and has contributed to the relentless Jewish aspirations for return to the Jewish homeland.

With the establishment of the State of Israel and the Law of Return, the doors have been opened wide for Jewish return and settlement of the land. More than 70 years later, most Jews still live outside of the land in what is known as the Jewish Diaspora. This lesson strives to bring understanding to the unique past, present and future relationship between Judaism, Jews, and the Land of Israel.