

Jewish Impact Round Robin

Goal of session: to leave NCSYers with the feeling that we have something special that we should be rather proud of... a system of values based on Torah.

Format: Round robin. There will be 5 stations in each round robin and 4 sets of these 5 stations.

Locations and Station Speakers:

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| 1. Annex Side #1 | Kate, Margo, Yossi, Ethan, Taco |
| 2. Annex Side #2 | Aliza Pelzner, Shmuli, Shuli, Michael, Sarina |
| 3. Picnic Tables | Tanz, Sheera, Nate, Lior, Donny |
| 4. Shul | Aliza Kay, Nasya, Aryeh P, Eli Schwartz, Chasida |

Stations: In this order:

1. Morals, even when the world around us was different- **Kate, Aliza Pelzner, Tanz, Aliza Kay**
 - a. Value of Life
 - i. Infanticide, human sacrifice, killing for entertainment... these types of behaviors were the standard in many cultures of antiquity. Yet, Judaism introduced the thrust of our modern culture's version of the value of life: even the life of an unborn fetus has value.
 - ii. Aristotle: ***"There must be a law that no imperfect or maimed child shall be brought up. And to avoid excess in population, some children must be exposed. For a limit must be fixed to the population of the state."* (Aristotle, *Politics, Book VII: ch.16*).**
 - b. Education
 - i. There have been probably no other people on the planet, in the history of the world, as literate and educated as the Jewish people. While some nations specifically limit what they teach their people to maintain control, the Jewish people thrive on the autonomy of the individual and trusts them to donate to the fabric of our community.
 - ii. In 1910, the U.S. Immigration Commission carried out a study on literacy among new immigrants in America. They discovered that the rate of literacy among Jewish arrivals from Eastern Europe was 74%, significantly higher than the 60% overall figure in the U.S.. This was true even though these were Jews coming from one of the poorest and most oppressed Jewish communities in the world.
 - iii. ***"A Jew, however poor, even if he had ten sons, would put them all to letters [education]; not for gain as the Christians do, but for understanding of God's law. And not only his sons, but his daughters."* (Peter Abelard, *Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, ch. 6*)**
 - iv. Today, Jews comprise about 25% of both the student body and faculty of the Ivy League schools, although in the U.S. they constitute less than 0.2% of the population.

- v. As a minimum requirement, men and women are obligated to learn- and know- all of the code of Jewish law that applies day-to-day. This is thousands of pages of study. In addition to that minimum, men are obligated to study the entire Babylonian Talmud in their lifetime, a whopping 5,340 pages of text in 2 languages written over a span of 600 years by various authors in various lands with no punctuation or vowelization. And people actually do it every day.
- c. Charity
- i. We are obligated to give 10% of our net income to charity.
 - ii. **Martin Gilbert, in *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, notes that “100 years ago, 5 million Jews lived in poverty and oppression in the giant ghetto of Eastern Europe called the “Pale” of Jewish settlement. Of those 5 million, none of whom were wealthy, 14-25% lived off community charity. That’s a minimum of 700,000 people supported by the community.”**
2. Accomplishments- **Margo, Shmuli, Sheera, Nasya**
- a. Technology and Science
 - i. The algorithm upon which the search engine of Google is based on was made by Jews in Israel. How many of you have used Google?
 - ii. The microchip that enables cellular communication to occur was made by Jews in Israel. Do you have a cell phone?
 - iii. The Jewish people, comprise a mere 0.2% of the world. Of the 800 Nobel Prizes that have been awarded, according to our numbers, we should have won only 2 Nobel Prizes. Yet, Nobel Prizes, in every field available, have been awarded to more than 160 Jews, 80 times more than our numbers.
 - b. A Light unto the Nations- Social Welfare
 - i. The Jews taught the world about Social Welfare. **Thomas Huxley, English writer and biologist, writes, “The Bible has been the Magna Carta of the poor and oppressed; down to modern times, no state has had a constitution which the interests of the people are so largely taken into account, in which the duties- so much more than the privileges of the rulers- are insisted upon, as that drawn up for Israel in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Nowhere is the fundamental truth that the welfare, in the long run, depends on the righteousness of its citizens so strongly laid down.”**
 - ii. **Kyman Abbot, an American preacher and publicist echoes a similar sentiment. “It would be impossible to mention any other people even at a much later age... whose law and constitution embodied an ideal so noble as that embodied in the Hebrew civil laws, or any people whose history shows the existence of such political institutions so essentially just, free, and humane... We Gentiles owe our life to Israel... It is Israel, who in bringing us the divine law has laid the foundations of liberty. It is Israel who had the first free institutions the world ever saw... When sometimes our own and Christian prejudices flame out against the Jewish people, let us remember that all we have and all that we are, we owe, under God, to what Judaism has given us.”**
 - iii. The Jewish people are highly attuned to the idea of being responsible to society and the world. Jews give charity in far greater proportion than others. For example, the United Jewish Appeal raises \$750 million annually, making it the third largest charity in the U.S., after the Red Cross and the United Way. Keep in mind that Jews constitute about 0.2% of the total population of the U.S.
 - iv. In other legal systems, it's not a crime to be a bystander, even in America today.

In Judaism, however, social consciousness is a legal obligation, as the Torah states: "Do not stand by your neighbor's blood" (Leviticus 19:16).

- v. President John Adams, in letter to F.A. Van der Kamp in 1808 writes, ***"I will insist the Hebrews have [contributed] more to civilize men than any other nation. If I was an atheist and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the nations... They are the most glorious nation that ever inhabited this Earth. The Romans and their empire were but a bubble in comparison to the Jews. They have given religion to three-quarters of the globe and have influenced the affairs of mankind more- and more happily- than any other nation, ancient or modern."***
3. Unique History and Fulfillment of Prophecies- Mark Twain, how we are the only people to be exile twice and still made it out of the galus.- **Yossi, Shuli, Nate, Aryeh Polstein**
 - a. Yeshayahu 11:11- "And it shall come to pass that on that day, the Lord shall continue to apply His hand a second time to acquire the rest of His people, that will remain from Assyria and from Egypt and from Pathros and from Cush and from Elam and from Sumeria and from Hamath and from the islands of the sea." In the recorded history of the world, no people have ever been exiled twice, been subject to as much persecution as the Jews and STILL RETURNED TO THEIR HOMELAND. This prophecy is remarkably unlikely to be fulfilled without some help from above.
 - b. Yechezkel 37:21- "And say to them, So says the Lord God: Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side, and I will bring them to their land." In this prophecy, the intent is to discuss the unique flow of people from around the world who have moved to Israel and populated the land. The flood of people in Israel was not seen a single time in this volume at any point since our exile. Programs such as Nefesh B'Nefesh assist in bringing thousands of people per month from all over the globe.
 - c. Zechariah 8:4,5- "So said the Lord of Hosts: Old men and women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of old age. And the streets of the city shall be filled, with boys and girls playing in its streets." Take a walk through the Jewish quarter. You will see exactly what this verse describes.
 - d. Yechezkel 36:34- "The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it." Fascinating. Who ever thought that desolate land would be cultivated? Israel created a first-of-its-kind irrigation system that is used to bring water vast distances at minimal use of water to enable successful irrigation... even in the middle of a dessert? Israel created such a technology and uses it to make even the most remote places fertile.
4. The Family Unit- **Ethan, Michael, Lior, Eli Schwartz**
 - a. In 2000, a study was done for the "observant" Jewish community to determine the rates of divorce. The study indicated that while the general population of the United States had a divorce rate of 49%, and Cuba had a divorce rate nearing 75%, the observant Jewish community had a divorce rate of 7%. Why is this true? Why was there a 42% discrepancy between the general populace and observant Jews? Here are some reasons, though they may be many more:
 - i. Family purity laws, which govern how a couple interacts once they are married. It is not always a time to touch...
 - ii. Shabbos, a 25 hour slot every week where we turn our focus inwards toward to our family and spend time communicating and hanging out together. We are actually obligated to have 4 meals together over the course of those 25 hours. In fact, many of the laws that govern Shabbos are based on the following premise: if it is not of vital importance, it doesn't get to interrupt our family time... the family

- is sanctity.
- iii. Maimonides, a 12th century Philosopher and Talmudic Scholar, writes that a man is obligated to love his wife as much as he loves himself and to respect her even MORE than he respects himself. All of this was in a time and culture where women, to say the least, were not exactly first class citizens.
 - b. The Torah writes that it is the obligation of the father to teach his child Torah. Back in the day, much of the information of Torah was specifically not in written format. Why? Because it forced the father to do his best to make his relationship with his kids in such a way that he could teach this vital information. Real primary educators are parents. And this is not new. It is a verse in the Torah: "V'shinantam levanecha..."
 - c. The Torah specifically states the obligations that children have to their parents, to recognize the importance of connecting with our past to enable us to . And it is reinforced in the educational system. We don't sit in our parents' set seats without permission, we are obligated to give them food and drink when they ask, and much, much more.
5. Torah is an Oasis- **Taco, Sarina, Donny, Chasida**
- a. The Torah is a code of laws that, while they are divine in nature, have also have shaped society over the course of the millenia. From food to money, we are governed by a set of laws that can pride itself on creating a sense of balance in a world that is rather crazy. Even more, the Torah is actually a system where, when followed properly, we can maximize the pleasure we have to offer. Wanna know how to do that? Here is a short answer to a tough questions: What decisions will give you the best long term benefits? If you live your life according to that, you will see just how amazing the Torah is. You can eat Reese's Peanut Butter Cups all day... but it might not have the best long term results...
 - b. In many cultures, the morals and values that we ascribe to are shaped by the heads of government, by the leaders of the communities. In Judaism, we don't get to decide those values. We live based off of a Divine set of morals. Man can be clouded when trying to make a moral judgement. That is why we have a Book that can guide us through the maze of life. And sometimes that maze can get pretty confusing. Man-made values lead to bias and shortsighted vision... G-d-made values don't. The Torah is the instruction manual for what is- to say the least- a life filled with a few curve balls.
 - c. One of the reasons that the Jewish people have been successful in contributing to the world around us, in spite of not being the world's favorite people, is that over the course of our history, we have had a rigorous standard of learning. The Talmud, comprised of some 600 years of authorship from multiple countries in 2 languages, is one of the rafts that has saved us. It taught us to think creatively. To think out of the box. Not only that, but we aren't the only people who study the Talmud anymore. Check this out: "Close to 50 million people live in South Korea, and almost everyone is taught the Talmud at home by their parents. "We tried to understand why the Jews are geniuses, and we came to the conclusion that we think it is because they study Talmud," said the Korean ambassador to Israel, Mr. Young Sam Ma. And this is how "Rav Papa" became a more well known scholar in Korea than in Israel." While I would temper the word geniuses, I would say that the complex thinking models taught in the Talmud and the rigorous applications of these logics have been a staple of our history and got us out of many tough situations.

After that, you are done! There are other people who are assigned to do a wrap up session with the kids.

Thanks. You are awesome!