

Global Jewish  
Peoplehood  
Learning Series

What is the  
Value of  
Memory?

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## **What is the value of memory, what do we remember, and how does it frame our future?** **Facilitator's Guide**

Goal: To explore the idea that memory gives us a purpose, an identity, and a history that frames our lives by those who came before us. This guide will also give students a framework to explore what their connection is to past and present day Poland, give students a platform to explore their opinions on what it means to remember life in Poland and how this memory and story influences their thought process as they prepare to return back to their home communities.

### **Part I: How do we remember?** **The negative, the positive, and the realities today.**

Set induction (15 minutes):

Show YouTube clip of the song "The way we were"

(found here, with lyrics <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqBWLep9f4>)

Ask:

1. How does this song, and the lyrics, resonate with you based on your recent experiences in Poland?
2. What is memory?
  - is it talking
  - is it action?
  - Is it prayer?
  - Our past
    - Images in our minds
    - Family story
    - Past experiences
    - Good times and bad times
    - Lessons
    - The foundation on which we walk
    - Lets think deeper:
      - The foundation through which we learn how to live
      - It's who we are and the way we were
3. What is the purpose of memory?
  - a. To preserve our past
  - b. To learn
  - c. To connect
  - d. To tell the story



Transition to part 2 (15-20 minutes):

Memory tells the story of our past, and it reminds us of the way we were. To truly understand memory, we need to understand our own stories and how we remember them.

**Part 2- Of what stories do you feel a part?  
Storytelling, remembering, and living**

Handout text sheet with this text on it:

“I can only answer the question, ‘What am I to do?’ if I can answer the prior question, ‘  
Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?’”  
-Alasdair MacIntyre, philosopher

1. What stories do you feel a part of?
  - a. Our personal lives?
  - b. Our histories?
  - c. Our communities?
  - d. Your social circles?
  - e. Your social media circles?
  
2. How do we remember the stories we are a part of?
  - a. Storytelling
  - b. Actions
  - c. Prayer
  - d. Pictures
  - e. Traditions
  - f. The arts
  - g. Visiting the sights
  - h. Eating
  
3. What have we done on this trip that you would consider to be the act of remembering?
  
4. Finally, in what ways do these acts of memory inspire you?

**Part 3 (15-20 minutes) - The power of memory and how it impacts our future.  
Steps towards action and actively remembering**

Say: As the trip is coming to a close, we need to think deeper into the question “What am I to do?”



1. How will you answer the question in the text “What am I to do?” based on what you have experienced so far on the trip?
2. What is your action plan?
  - a. Your Jewish life?
  - b. Jewish identity?
  - c. Personal connection?
  - d. The Jewish narrative?
3. How does this relate to the discussion we had at the beginning of this session about the purpose of memory?
4. What is the value of remembering our past and how can it inspire our future?

### **Concluding discussion (15 minutes)**

What is the value of memory?

What is the purpose?

Finally, how does it frame our future?

The value and effectiveness of memory is how it shapes our personal story. We are obligated to tell our stories, and to find the ones that we are a part of in order keep our stories alive.

*The value and effectiveness of memory depends on how, and to whom, we tell our story.*

The final goal is for students to walk away with how memory of the Jewish experience of Poland frames their personal connection to their own personal Jewish experience.



## Handout 1:

### Lyrics

Memories light the corners of my mind  
Misty water-colored memories of the way we were  
Scattered pictures of the smiles we left behind  
Smiles we gave to one another for the way we were

Can it be that it was all so simple then  
Or has time rewritten every line  
And if we had the chance to do it all again  
Just tell me, tell me, would we, would we?  
Could we, could we?

Memories may be beautiful and yet  
So many memories too painful to remember  
The way we were

Can it be that it was all so simple then  
Or has time rewritten every line (or has time rewritten)  
And if we had the chance to do it all again  
Tell me would we, would we?  
Ah could we, could we?

Memories may be beautiful and yet (may be beautiful and yet)  
Much too painful to remember  
We simply choose to forget  
So it's the laughter that we will remember (I know)  
Whenever we remember  
The way we were  
The way we were (I miss you baby)  
The way we were (oh I miss you so much baby)  
I miss the way we were  
The way we were



**Hillel**  
International

## Handout 2

"I can only answer the question, 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question, '

Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'"

*-Alasdair MacIntyre, philosopher*