



Jewish Studies Curriculum Bringing SparkII Into the Classroom



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Dear Educators,

Welcome to the SparkIL Jewish Studies Curriculum. This curriculum, centered around the SparkIL platform, is a four or five part lesson plan designed to offer your students a comprehensive understanding of the following themes:

Mutual Responsibility: Explore the Jewish value of mutual responsibility and strengthen connections between Global Jews and Israelis.

The Evolution of Tzedakah: Learn how an idea the Rambam wrote 800 years ago is considered innovative today.

Diversity in Israeli Society: Highlight the diversity of Israeli society and the varied backgrounds of entrepreneurs within the SparkIL platform.

Social Jewish Entrepreneurship Workshop: Engage students in identifying and solving community issues through entrepreneurial initiatives.

Each lesson plan uses SparkIL as a practical case study to explore these concepts, highlighting the power of individual connections between Global Jewry and Israelis.

About SparkIL

SparkIL creates a direct and personal bridge between people around the world and Israeli entrepreneurs, turning support into a meaningful human connection. It gives individuals the opportunity to step into the story of a small business in Israel, not as distant supporters but as active partners, sharing in the challenges, growth, and resilience behind each venture. Through this connection, global supporters become part of something tangible and deeply personal, the journey of a real person building a life and livelihood. This is made possible through a model of interest-free loans that supports sustainable growth.

Intended Use of This Curriculum

This curriculum is tailored for Jewish students aged 11+ in day schools and supplementary schools.

We invite you to reach out to us with any questions or inquiries.

Kol Tuv!
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Instructions for Educators

- **Engagement:** Promote interactive and participatory learning. Utilize the online SparkIL platform to engage students directly with real Israeli entrepreneurs.
- **Technology:** Provide access to the SparkIL website during sessions for real-time learning. Use the following QR code for easy access. In settings without internet access, use the printable Business Index.
- **Preparation:** Acquaint yourself with the SparkIL platform and the businesses featured to effectively guide discussions and respond to student inquiries.
- **Follow-up with Students:** Students should be encouraged to follow their chosen entrepreneur's journey. Students have the opportunity to make a loan to their chosen business through the SparkIL platform. Once each student has made a loan, they will receive a survey asking about their connection to Israel and Israelis within 2 days of making the loan. Please make sure your students fill out the survey and have conversations about their connections.
- **Follow-up with Parents:** Make sure that parents receive the letter attached at the end of the lessons.



Lesson 1:

Building Bridges of Support

Through Mutual Responsibility





Activity Goals

Engage students in understanding the impact of mutual support within the Jewish community and beyond, by exploring the concept of 'כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה' (All of Israel are Responsible for One Another) through real-life examples and the SparkIL initiative.

Grade Level

Ages 11+

Materials Needed

1. Materials for Icebreaker
2. Art supplies for creative presentations
3. Access to SparkIL website
4. Printed texts (Appendix A)

Lesson Duration

60-75 minutes

Play: 'Cotton Ball Race' Icebreaker

(10 minutes)

Objective: Foster teamwork and demonstrate the power of collective effort.

How to Play: Divide the group into small teams that will compete against each other (each team receives cotton balls in a different color). Each participant in a team is given a ball and must blow it to the other side of the classroom. Once a participant reaches the other side, the next participant in the team begins blowing their cotton ball until all participants have crossed the classroom. The winning team is the one that reaches the other side first.

Ask:

(10 minutes)

- How did you feel during this game?
- Did you feel a sense of responsibility for your teammates during the game, and how did that responsibility manifest?
- In what ways can the principles of teamwork and interconnectedness from the games be extended to foster a sense of collective responsibility in broader communities and society?
- Can you think of ways you can use teamwork and cooperation in your everyday life outside of the game context?



Or in a classroom setting:

Have the students reflect on a moment they've advocated for themselves, and a moment they've advocated for someone else. Ask them to share with a partner and then ask a few students to share with the entire class.

Learn: Introduction to the value of Mutual Responsibility

(20 minutes)

- Divide the class into small groups and hand out the text study (Appendix A).
- Ask students to read the sources and answer the questions/engage in discussion around Mutual Responsibility.
- Groups will present the highlights of their discussion.

*See Teacher's Guide for more context (Appendix B).

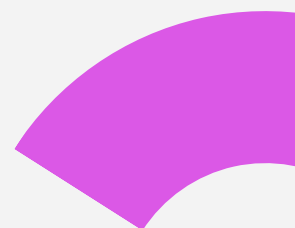
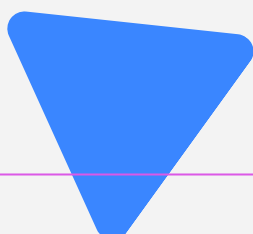
Act: If Not Now, Impacting Israeli businesses

(30 minutes)

- Introduce your students to the SparkIL initiative and how it helps local businesses in Israel.
- Divide the class into groups. Ask each group to go to the SparkIL website and choose one business that resonates with them, or, if there is no access to the internet, hand out the cards of SparkIL businesses in Business Index.
- Ask each group to present the business' story in a creative way:
 - **Artistic Expression**
 - Provide posters or art materials.
 - Ask the groups to draw the person and business and tell their peers about the drawing.
 - Create a classroom gallery to showcase the artistic masterpieces.
 - **Lights, Camera, Action!**
 - Ask groups to record a video that describes a day in the life of the person and business they have presented.

Presentation:

Each group will be able to present their chosen business to the class, using their creative projects—whether through an art showcase or a video screening. This segment highlights the diverse stories of Israelis and their businesses, fosters creativity and deepens the students' understanding of the real-world impact of financial support and community solidarity.



Pirkei Avot 1:14

**"He [Rabbi Hillel] used to say: If I am not for me, who will be for me?
And when I am for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, then when?"**

- Why do you think the three sentences "not for myself" "only for myself" and "if not now when" are in this order?
- What do you think each of them means? Put the quote in your own words.
- A famous Rabbi once said that being Jewish is being able to quote this one quote from Hillel. Why do you think he said that? What Jewish values does it encapsulate?
- The phrase "And if not now, when?" speaks to the urgency of action. Can you think of a situation where immediate action is required to support someone in your community?

Talmud: Shevuot 39a

"All of Israel are responsible for one another"

- Who do you feel responsible for?
- How do you interpret the statement "כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה" in the context of our global Jewish community? Do you feel a sense of responsibility towards other Jews, including those in Israel?
- Why should I be responsible for someone living on the other side of the world? And why should they be responsible for me?

Optional Additional Learning:

Dear educator, should you wish to further enrich your students' understanding, consider allocating additional time to explore the following text:

Why Are We Called Yehudim? By Rabbi Avi Weiss (yct Torah.org)

It is commonly known that the reason that we call ourselves by the name Yehudim (Jews) is that most of us come literally from the Kingdom of Judah, or more specifically the tribe of Judah. Yet, there is a deeper reason why we have continued to use this term specifically when there are countless other names that our people and religion could go by...

In the narrative, Yosef (Joseph) takes Shimon (Simon) hostage and demands that the brothers bring Binyamin (Benjamin) to Egypt, as a precondition for both Shimon's release and his (Yosef's) providing of more food for Yaakov's (Jacob's) family.

Yaakov is understandably hesitant. Having already lost Yosef, his favorite, he fears losing Binyamin his only remaining son from his beloved wife Rachel. It is here that Yehudah (Judah) bravely rises to declare that he would act as an "Arev," a surety for Binyamin. "If I don't return him," he says to his father Yaakov, "I will bear the sin forever." (Genesis 43:9)

Yehudah's pledge is unusual. Normally when a debtor guarantees collateral, the collateral comes from a party other than the debtor. Here, Yehudah takes his obligation to a higher level. Yehudah himself is both the one who makes the commitment as well as the guarantor. This indicates how seriously Yehudah takes the pledge or the "Arevut" he is offering.

"Arevut," writes Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik. "means more than just another concern for one's fellow Jew. It means that I am a surety—each and every Jew is a surety for every other Jew. Just as a surety in money is held responsible as if he had been the debtor, so, also, every Jew is a surety for all the spiritual obligations of every other Jew."

Of course, this does not mean that Jews are not concerned for all of humankind. We are. Every human being is created in the image of God. In the words of our Rabbis, *chaviv adam shenivrah be-tzelem Elokim*. As such, we have very deep obligations to all people. But our obligation to our fellow Jews is unique. As we are more connected to our inner family with whom we share a common tradition, history, and destiny, so too concern our larger family – the people of Israel.

Hence, we are called Yehudim, as we are named after the person who so intensely exemplified *ahavat Yisrael* – Yehudah. We must realize the centrality of the principle of Jewish unity. Rabbi Yehudah Halevi, the medieval poet and philosopher notes that all of Israel can be compared to a human body. When one limb hurts, the entire being is affected. So it is with *Am Yisrael*. All Jews are one body. He taught that when one Jew is in pain, Jews everywhere feel that pain.

Yet, he also taught us that when a Jew dances and experiences joy, we all dance and feel the joy. Let us hope that we can experience the unity of joy, an important element in our obligations as Yehudim, more and more in the days, months, and years to come

Appendix B: Teacher's Guide

The concept of "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" encapsulates a profound philosophy on self-reliance, altruism, and timely action:

- **Self-Advocacy and Responsibility:** The phrase "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" highlights the importance of self-reliance and advocating for one's own needs and rights. It reminds individuals that personal growth and security begin with oneself.
- **Altruism and Community:** "But if I am only for myself, what am I?" shifts the focus to the collective, emphasizing that life's value is significantly found in our relationships and contributions to others. It questions the morality of living a life solely centered on self-interest.
- **Urgency and Timely Action:** "And if not now, when?" underscores the importance of seizing the moment to act. It encourages promptness in both personal improvement and in efforts to aid others, emphasizing that waiting for the "right time" may result in missed opportunities for action and change.

The key aspects of the concept "כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה"
"All of Israel are responsible for one another":

- **Interconnectedness:** "כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה" is the idea that Jews are not isolated individuals but are part of a larger community. The actions and well-being of one person are intertwined with the actions and well-being of others
- **Shared Responsibility:** the obligation of each individual to contribute to the welfare of the entire community. This responsibility extends beyond immediate family and friends to encompass the broader Jewish community.
- **Support and Assistance:** It implies a commitment to offering support, assistance, and care to fellow Jews in times of need. This can include both material and emotional support, fostering a sense of solidarity during times of celebration and hardship alike.
- **Ethical and Moral Dimension:** the ethical and moral implications are that It encourages individuals to act with compassion, kindness, and a sense of justice towards others in the community



Lesson 2: Ancient Wisdom,
Modern Innovation:

The 800-Year-Old Guide to Impact Lending



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Activity Goals

Students will explore the concept of impact lending through Rambam's Eight Degrees of Tzedakah, understanding ethical values and promoting self-sufficiency.

Grade Level

Ages 11+

Materials Needed

1. Ball of yarn
2. Texts describing the Eight Degrees of Tzedakah (Appendix A)
3. Printed postcards (Appendix D)
4. Access to SparkIL website

Lesson Duration

60-75 minutes

Web of Connections Icebreaker

(10 minutes)


- **Objective:** Web of Connections icebreaker. Demonstrate community support interconnectedness.
- **How to Play:** Stand in a circle and hold a ball of yarn. Start by sharing an example of a simple act of kindness or support (e.g. donating books to a local library). Then, holding onto the end of the yarn, toss the ball to a student, who will then share another act of kindness or support, and toss the yarn to another student, holding onto their part of the yarn. This continues until a web is formed, showing how many connections and impacts can be made from individual acts.



Or in a classroom setting: Have everyone briefly share a story or example of when they made a positive impact on someone else or when someone's act of kindness impacted them

Ask:

(10 minutes)

- **How can small actions contribute to big changes in someone's life or community?**
- **How do these acts of kindness connect us to others, even if we don't see the immediate impact?**
- Show the class - [leading with Lollipops](#). 
- **What Jewish values align with acts of kindness?** (Write on the board all the answers)

What is Tzedakah?

- **Introduce Tzedakah** - a foundational concept in Jewish ethics that translates to justice or righteousness, but is commonly associated with charitable giving. Explain its significance in Jewish tradition as not merely an act of generosity but a moral obligation.

Learn: Rambam's Eight Degrees of Tzedakah

(15 minutes)

Before the activity, print the eight degrees of Tzedakah (Appendix A), and cut each sentence into a separate slip of paper.

- Divide the class into small groups, give each group the slips, and ask them to rank the eight degrees from best to worst.
- Ask each group to introduce their ranking to the class and explain why they chose that particular ranking.

Discuss:

(10 minutes)

Introduce the class to Rambam's order of preferences (See Teacher's Guide-Appendix B) and discuss the following:

- Why do you think Maimonides ranked the act of empowering someone to be self-sufficient as the highest form of *tzedakah*?
- Can you share examples of support or acts of *tzedakah* you've seen or heard of, that help people become self-sufficient?
- What kind of projects or initiatives represent the highest form of giving, where the goal is to empower others to stand on their own?

Wrap up by drawing a line between the Rambams' highest degree of *Tzedakah* and the concept of Impact Lending (Use Appendix C for short descriptions of the different types of modern day *Tzedakah*).

Impact lending by its nature equals to the highest degree - the lender doesn't give money away, they don't profit from the loan, and they help another person in their time of need as their peers, in a way that respects them and helps them become self-sufficient.

Act: Analyzing Impact Lending through SparkIL Case Studies

(10 minutes)

- **Objective:** Students will analyze real-life case studies from SparkIL to understand the application of impact lending and its alignment with the principles of Tzedakah or laws of lending, focusing on self-sufficiency.
- **Activity:** Divide the class into their previous groups from Lesson 1. Ask students to revisit the business page that they picked previous and find another business that they connect with. If there is no access to the internet, hand out the cards of SparkIL businesses found in the separate Business Index. Give each group the blank 'business postcards' (Appendix D) and ask them to fill them out and encourage a discussion.
- **Presentation:** Each group presents their chosen businesses and discussion insights to the class, highlighting the key aspects of how impact lending supports the business and the connection to Tzedakah principles.



Rambam's (Maimonides) Eight Levels of Tzedakah:

The givers know to whom they give but the poor don't know from whom they received the funds.

Those who give into the hand of the poor before the poor ask.

Those who give Tzedakah but with a frown [doing it only because they have to].

One strengthens someone whose economic situation is declining by providing them with a gift or a loan, or by making business partnerships, or by finding them employment to strengthen their hand, so they will not need the assistance of other human beings, to strengthen them so that they shall not fall and not be in need of asking for anyone's support.

The poor know from whom they are taking, but the givers don't know to whom they are giving.


Those who give less than is fitting but [at least] give with a welcoming face.

Those givers do not know to whom they give, and the recipients don't know from whom they take, such as when one gives money into a Tzedakah box [or donates online].


Those who give only after the poor ask.

Maimonides' Eight Degrees of Tzedakah serve as a guide for ethical giving, emphasizing the importance of dignity, discretion, and the empowerment of those in need. This hierarchy not only instructs on how to give but also deepens our understanding of the impact of our actions on others' lives. By teaching these degrees, educators can foster a nuanced conversation about the values that underpin charitable acts and the broader implications of these acts for community cohesion and individual growth.


"There are eight degrees of tzedakah, one higher than the other.




The highest degree, exceeded by none, is that of the person who strengthens one whose economic situation is declining by providing them with a gift or a loan or by making a business partnership or by finding them employment to strengthen their hand so they will not need the assistance of other human beings. As it says, You shall strengthen them ... and they shall live with you (Lev. 25:35), so strengthen them so that they shall not fall and not be in need of others' support.




A step below this stands those who give tzedakah to the needy in such a manner that the givers do not know to whom they give and the recipients know not from whom they take such as when one gives money into a tzedakah box [or today donates on line to a charitable organization who then finds the needy to help them].




One step lower is that in which the givers know to whom they give but the poor know not from whom they receive funds.




A step lower is that in which the poor know from whom they are taking, but the givers know not to whom they are giving. Examples of this were the great rabbis who would tie their coins in their scarves which they would fling over their shoulders so that the poor might help themselves without suffering shame. (Rabbi Abba in TB Ketubot 68)




The next degree lower is that of those who give into the hand of the poor before the poor ask.



The next degree lower is that of those who give only after the poor ask.




The next degree lower is that of those who give less than is fitting but [at least] give with a welcoming face.




The next degree lower is tzedakah but the one who gives does so with a frown [only because they have to]."


Explanation of Each Degree:




1. Empowerment Over Aid: The highest form of charity is to prevent individuals from becoming dependent on others in the first place. This can be achieved through providing a loan, employment, or any form of support that strengthens individuals' ability to sustain themselves. This approach is rooted in the principle of preserving dignity and fostering independence.




2. Anonymity and Dignity: The next level emphasizes giving in a way that neither the giver nor the receiver is aware of the other's identity. This method protects the recipient's dignity and ensures that the act of giving remains pure, free from any expectations of gratitude or recognition.




3. Concealed Giving: Slightly lower is the act of giving where the donor knows the recipient's identity, but the recipient remains unaware of the source. This maintains the recipient's dignity while allowing the donor to be more deliberate in their giving.



4. Anonymous Receipt: Here, the recipient knows who the giver is, but the giver does not know the specific recipients. This method was practiced by great rabbis who discreetly allowed the poor to receive aid without direct confrontation, preserving their pride.




5. Proactive Giving: Offering support before being asked is considered more commendable than waiting to be approached. It signifies attentiveness to others' needs and the desire to help preemptively.



6. Responsive Giving: Responding to a request for help, although lower than offering help unsolicited, is still a vital form of support, acknowledging the courage it takes to ask for assistance.

7. Adequate but Warm Giving: Even if one cannot give as much as might be needed, doing so with kindness and a smile conveys warmth and solidarity, which can be as valuable as the material support itself.



8. Reluctant Giving: The lowest form of tzedakah is giving unwillingly. While the act itself may still aid someone in need, the reluctance detracts from the potential to foster a genuine connection and solidarity within the community.

This section offers educators a framework to explore the diverse methods of giving in today's world. Feel free to integrate it into your lesson plan as desired.

Donating

This is the straightforward act of giving money without expecting any return, aimed at supporting causes or organizations that align with our values and beliefs. Donations can provide immediate financial assistance to those in need or help fund projects and initiatives that make a positive difference in the world.

Impact Investing

Unlike traditional donations, impact investing seeks to support projects or initiatives that not only generate a positive social or environmental impact but also offer a financial return to the investor. This approach allows supporters to contribute to the greater good while also benefiting financially, creating a sustainable model for change.

Lending

This method involves lending money, often with interest, to individuals or enterprises. Unlike donations or impact investments, lending is based on the expectation of repayment, making it a temporary financial support mechanism that can be recycled and used to support multiple initiatives over time.

In-Kind Support

Beyond financial contributions, offering time, skills, or resources directly to causes or organizations is another valuable form of support. In-kind contributions can include volunteering, providing professional services pro bono, or donating goods and materials, all of which are crucial to the functioning and success of many nonprofit initiatives.

Impact Lending - We spotlight a unique form of support

This approach combines the altruistic spirit of donating with the sustainability of lending, but without the financial gain typically associated with interest-based loans. Impact Lending allows individuals to offer temporary financial assistance to projects or businesses making a positive impact, without depleting their own resources, as the loaned amount is repaid over time.

Micro-Lending

An important aspect of Impact Lending is Micro-Lending, a key component of SparkIL's mission. Micro-Lending enables individuals of all ages to make a significant impact by lending small amounts of money to businesses and projects worldwide. This model democratizes the ability to contribute positively, allowing anyone to be a part of creating a better world through thoughtful, impactful lending.

Business Postcard:

Business Name:

Write the name of the business you've explored.

Location:

Where is this business based?

Business Mission:

In a sentence or two, describe what this business aims to achieve.

Challenge Faced:

What major challenge was this business facing before receiving the impact loan?

Impact Loan Use:

How will the business use the loan to address its challenge?

Reflection on Tzedakah and Impact Lending:

How does this story and SparkIL illustrate the concept of enabling self-sufficiency? In what ways does this case reflect the values of tzedakah? Can this form of financial support be considered a form of tzedakah? Why?



Lesson 3: Peripheral Perspectives: Israel's Diverse Communities



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In this session, students will explore the concept of Israel's periphery and the diversity of Israeli society. They will gain insights into the socio-economic, cultural, and geographical factors that shape the lives of individuals. This session offers a unique way to learn about Israeli society by highlighting the complexities and intersections of various identities and backgrounds in the peripheral regions of Israel, emphasizing that the periphery is not only geographical but also cultural and economic.

Activity Goals

Students will learn and understand what constitutes Israel's periphery and how different socio-economic and cultural factors affect individuals' lives in Israeli society.

Grade Level

Ages 11+

Materials Needed

"Steps of Society" cards (included in Appendix A)

Lesson Duration

60 minutes

Play: "Steps of Society"

(30 minutes)
(Appendix A)

- **Objective:** Explore how different socio-economic and cultural conditions affect people's lives in Israeli society through "Steps of Society" cards. Please see Educator's Guide (pg 25) for full explanation on how to play the game.
- **Say:** Now that we understand why we act, from the last two lessons, let's understand who we are acting for.

How to play:

(10 minutes)

- Distribute one card from each category to each student at the beginning of the game (you will need to print several copies, depending on the number of students).
- All students start at the designated starting point on the game path.
- The educator reads the scenarios in each category (e.g., "If you live in Tel Aviv, take 2 steps forward. If you are unemployed, take 2 steps backward.>").
- Students who have cards matching the prompt move themselves forward or backward along the path accordingly.



Pause after each category to discuss the impacts of each scenario. Ask students how such factors could influence a person's opportunities and decisions in real life. Clarify names of places or aspects that are not known to students.

See Educators Guide for discussion questions.

End the game after a set number of rounds or once all cards have been addressed.

Discuss:

- **How does what you just experienced connect to the idea that all Jews are responsible for one another?**
- **What aspects impact people the most and define them as 'Periphery' in Israel?** What did this game teach you about the complexities of social, economic, and cultural dynamics in Israeli society?
- **What identity intersections do you think exist in real life in Israel?** Consider the fact that you randomly got cards with different aspects—let's try to combine a real person from these cards.

Part 2: Exploring SparkIL and the Israeli Periphery (30 minutes)

Reintroduce SparkIL (5 minutes)

- Highlight how SparkIL helps foster economic development in less-developed areas by providing financial resources to local entrepreneurs.

Group Activity: Discovering Peripheral Businesses (10 minutes)

- Divide the class into their small groups from lesson 1 & 2. (Or you can mix the groups up)
- Instruct each group to identify three SparkIL businesses on the platform. For each business, they should consider and discuss the following questions:
 - **Why is this business defined as part of the periphery?** Encourage students to think about geographic location, economic status, and social impact.

Present: (10 minutes)

- Have each group present the business they've explored to the class and share their insights on why this business is considered a peripheral business based on what they've learned.

Optional Final Discussion (5 minutes)

- Following the presentations, facilitate a discussion about the common themes and characteristics observed in these businesses. Discuss how support from platforms like SparkIL can impact these peripheral areas positively.

Steps of Society: Educator's Guide

This session aims to teach students about the diversity in Israeli society through the lens of Israel's periphery. The concept of the Israeli periphery goes beyond geographical boundaries to include social, cultural, and economic dimensions. Understanding the Israeli periphery requires recognizing that central and peripheral distinctions are not always clear-cut. Some cities in the central region have high unemployment rates and low equality of opportunity, thus demonstrating that periphery issues can exist in various locations. This multifaceted view of the periphery highlights the complexity of Israeli society and the diverse challenges its people face.

Overview - "Steps of Society" cards: the cards in this session are designed to help students understand the diverse experiences of individuals living in different socio-economic and cultural contexts within Israel. Through gameplay, participants will explore how factors like geographic location, professional life, cultural background, and educational opportunities influence one's ability to progress in society.

Objective: The objective of the game is for players to navigate through societal challenges and opportunities, represented by cards, to reach the end of the game path. Through this process, players will gain insights into how different backgrounds can impact one's social mobility and overall life trajectory.





The different topics presented

1. Geographical Location

Geographical location plays a significant role in shaping the opportunities and challenges individuals face. In Israel, geographic peripheries include remote areas such as the Negev Desert, northern regions like the Golan Heights, and tourist-centric locations like Eilat. These areas often experience disparities in access to services, infrastructure, and economic opportunities compared to central regions like Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Key Implications:

- **Access to Services:** Remote and rural areas may have limited healthcare, education, and transportation services.
- **Economic Opportunities:** Central regions often offer more diverse and higher-paying job opportunities than peripheral regions.
- **Cultural Isolation:** Residents in geographically isolated areas may experience a sense of cultural isolation from the mainstream.

2. Professional Life

The type of profession and industry an individual is involved with significantly influences socio-economic status and personal growth opportunities. In Israel, the high-tech sector located primarily in central urban areas such as Tel Aviv and Herzliya offers substantial economic benefits and career growth compared to traditional industries in more peripheral regions.

Key Implications:

- **Economic Stability:** Careers in high-tech and advanced sectors often provide greater stability and higher wages.
- **Career Growth:** Opportunities for professional development are typically more abundant in urban centers.
- **Work Conditions:** Variations in work conditions, such as stress levels and job security, differ significantly across sectors.

3. Cultural and Ethnic Background

Israel is a mosaic of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, including Jewish immigrants from various countries, Arabs, Druze, Bedouins, and others. Each group faces unique challenges and contributes differently to the societal fabric. *If this is the first time your students are encountering these groups, you may need to define them for the class.*

Key Implications:

- **Social Integration:** Some ethnic groups face challenges in social integration and access to equal opportunities.
- **Cultural Preservation:** Minority groups often strive to maintain their cultural identities while seeking greater inclusion in the broader society.
- **Representation:** Political and social representation varies significantly among different ethnic and cultural groups.

4. Educational Background

Education is a critical determinant of socio-economic mobility. In Israel, educational opportunities can vary greatly depending on one's location, economic background and cultural factors. Higher education institutions like the Technion and Hebrew University provide significant advantages.

Key Implications:

- **Economic Impact:** Higher educational attainment is closely linked to better job prospects and higher income.
- **Socio-Economic Impact:** Education can be a key factor in overcoming socio-economic barriers.
- **Access Disparities:** Not all communities have equal access to quality education, particularly in peripheral areas



Geographical Location		
Prompt	Action	Questions for discussion
Negev Desert Resident: You live in a remote part of the Negev Desert, where public transportation and access to healthcare facilities is limited.	Take 2 steps backward.	Which areas are peripheral in Israel, and why? How can access to transportation affect opportunities for people living in peripheral areas? In what ways might job availability differ between peripheral and central regions? How can geographic isolation impact cultural integration and access to activities?
Tel Aviv Resident: You live in Tel Aviv, Israel's economic and technological hub, with easy access to numerous job opportunities and cultural activities.	Take 2 steps forward.	
Golan Heights Resident: You live in the Golan Heights, which offers beautiful landscapes but has fewer educational institutions and economic opportunities than central Israel.	Take 1 step backward.	
Eilat Resident: You live in Eilat, benefiting from a thriving tourism industry but limited in terms of diverse job opportunities outside of hospitality and retail.	Take 1 step forward, 1 step backward.	



Professional Life		
Prompt	Action	Questions for discussion
High-Tech Employee: You work for a leading high-tech company, enjoying a high salary and career growth opportunities.	Take 3 steps forward.	Would you rather be a healthcare worker in JLM or a teacher in a small town? And why? How do career growth opportunities in peripheral areas compare to those in central regions? How might economic stability differ for workers in various professions across peripheral and central regions? What are the challenges and benefits of different work conditions in peripheral versus central areas?
Teacher: You are a teacher, facing challenges like limited resources and lower pay scales.	Take 1 step backward.	
Healthcare Worker: You are a nurse at a major hospital, providing critical services but often working under stressful conditions.	Take 1 step forward, 1 step backward.	
Factory Worker: You work in a factory, providing stable employment but with few opportunities for advancement.	Take 1 step forward, 1 step backward.	



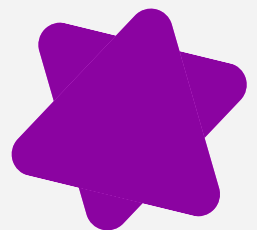
Cultural and Ethnic Background		
Prompt	Action	Questions for discussion
Immigrant from Russia: You are an immigrant from Russia, struggling with language barriers but contributing new cultural perspectives.	Take 1 step forward, 1 step backward.	What challenges might different cultural and ethnic groups face in integrating into broader Israeli society? How can strong community networks help individuals overcome socio-economic challenges? How does national representation vary among different ethnic and cultural groups in peripheral areas? Why do new immigrants consider the periphery in Israel although they might live in central areas?
Ethiopian Jew: You are part of the Ethiopian Jewish community in Ashdod, facing social integration challenges but supported by a strong community network.	Take 1 step backward, 1 step forward.	
Druze Citizen: You are a Druze, maintaining a unique cultural identity but facing challenges in national representation.	Take 1 step backward.	
Jewish immigrant from Canada: You are a recent immigrant from Canada, you learned Hebrew in day school and have some family in Israel.	Take 1 step forward.	



Educational Background		
Prompt	Action	Questions for discussion
<p>Student at Technion: You are studying engineering at the Technion, equipped with excellent prospects for your future career.</p>	<p>Take 3 steps forward.</p>	<p>How does access to education influence opportunities for people? How can cultural and economic background relate to access to education? How do career prospects differ based on educational background between peripheral and central regions? How can education help individuals from peripheral areas overcome socio-economic barriers?</p>
<p>High School Dropout: You dropped out of high school due to financial pressures, facing significant challenges in entering the job market.</p>	<p>Take 2 steps backward.</p>	
<p>Art Student: You are pursuing a degree in fine arts, passionate about your studies but concerned about job prospects.</p>	<p>Take 1 step forward, 1 step backward.</p>	
<p>Ph.D. Candidate in Environmental Science at Ben-Gurion University: You are a Ph.D. candidate specializing in environmental science, contributing to sustainable development research with promising career opportunities.</p>	<p>Take 2 steps forward.</p>	



Economic Status		
Prompt	Action	Questions for discussion
<p>Wealthy Background: Your parents are startup founders and you come from a wealthy home.</p>	<p>Take 3 steps forward.</p>	<p>How does a family's economic background influence the opportunities available to its members? How does economic background impact the ability of people to move to areas with better access to services? In what other ways can economic background affect individuals?</p>
<p>Single-Parent Household: You come from a single-parent household where the parent works multiple jobs to support the family.</p>	<p>Take 1 step backward.</p>	
<p>High Debt Household: Your family has accumulated significant debt and struggles to keep up with payments.</p>	<p>Take 2 steps backward.</p>	
<p>Financially Stable: Your family has a stable income and can comfortably afford all basic needs.</p>	<p>Take 2 steps forward.</p>	



Appendix

Steps of
Society Cards



Geographic Location

Negev Desert Resident

You live in a remote part of the Negev Desert, where public transportation is sparse and access to healthcare facilities is limited.

Geographic Location

Tel Aviv Resident

You live in Tel Aviv, Israel's economic and technological hub, with easy access to numerous job opportunities and cultural activities.

Geographic Location

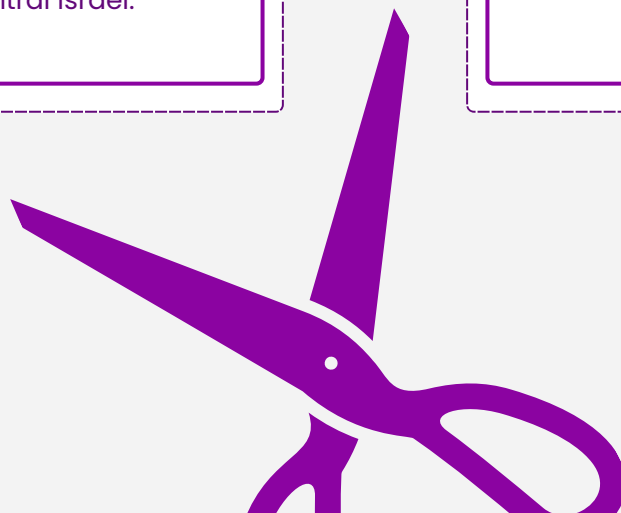
Golan Heights Resident

You live in the Golan Heights, which offers beautiful landscapes but has fewer educational institutions and economic opportunities than central Israel.

Geographic Location

Eilat Resident

You live in Eilat, benefiting from a thriving tourism industry but limited in terms of diverse job opportunities outside of hospitality and retail.



Professional Life

High-Tech Employee

You work for a leading high-tech company, enjoying a high salary and career growth opportunities.

Professional Life

Teacher

You are a teacher, facing challenges such as limited resources and lower pay scales.

Professional Life

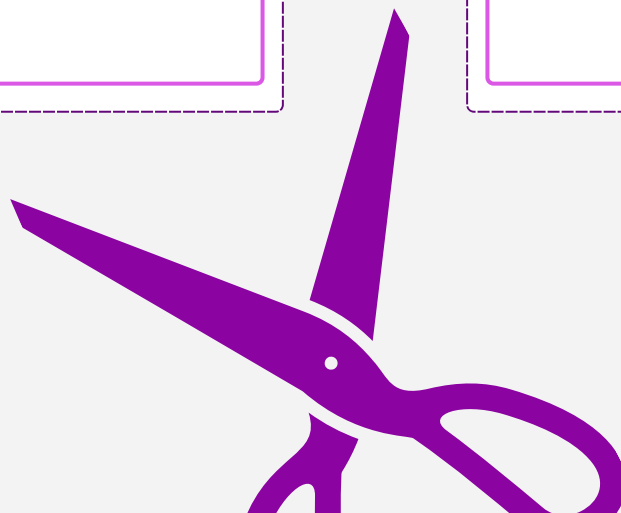
Healthcare Worker

You are a nurse at a major hospital, providing critical services but often working under stressful conditions.

Professional Life

Factory Worker

You work in a factory, providing stable employment but with few opportunities for advancement.



**Cultural and Ethnic
Background**

**Immigrant from
Russia**

You immigrated 15 years ago from Russia, struggling with language barriers but contributing new cultural perspectives.

**Cultural and Ethnic
Background**

Ethiopian Jew

You are part of the Ethiopian Jewish community, facing social integration challenges but supported by a strong community network.

**Cultural and Ethnic
Background**

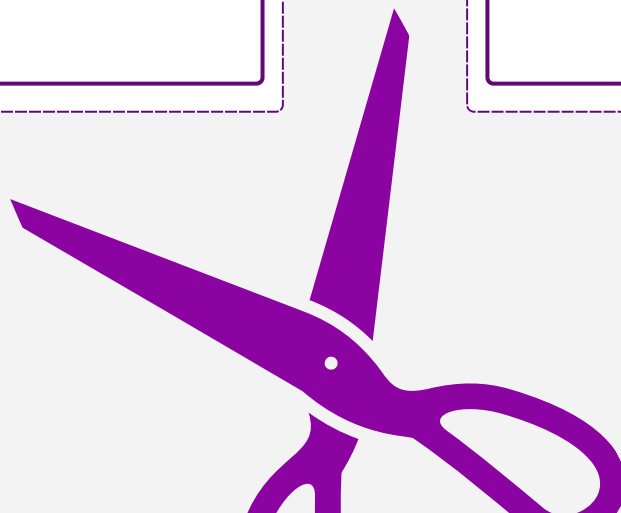
Druze Citizen

You are a Druze, maintaining a unique cultural identity but facing challenges in national representation.

**Cultural and Ethnic
Background**

**Jewish immigrant
from Canada**

You are a recent immigrant from Canada, you learned Hebrew in day school and have some family in Israel.



Educational Background

Student at Technion

You are studying engineering at the Technion, equipped with excellent prospects for your future career.

Educational Background

High School Dropout

You dropped out of high school due to financial pressures, and you are facing significant challenges in entering the job market.

Educational Background

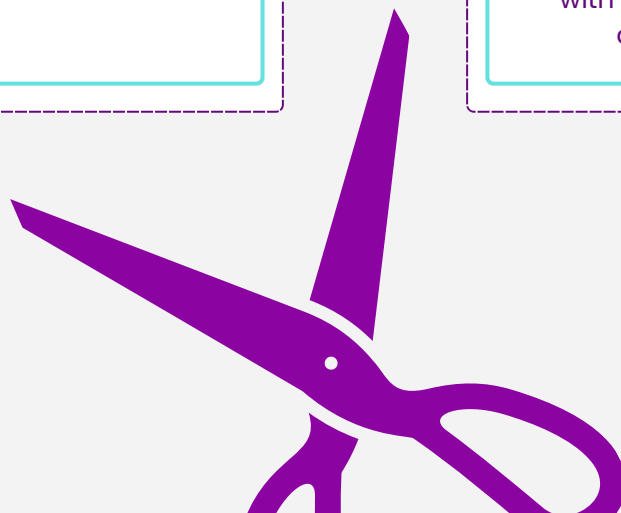
Art Student

You are pursuing a degree in fine arts, passionate about your studies but concerned about job prospects.

Educational Background

Ph.D. Candidate in Environmental Science at Ben-Gurion University

You are a Ph.D. candidate specializing in environmental science, contributing to sustainable development research with promising career opportunities



Economic Status

Wealthy Background

Your parents are startup founders and you come from a wealthy home.

Economic Status

Single-Parent Household

You come from a single-parent household where the parent works multiple jobs to support the family.

Economic Status

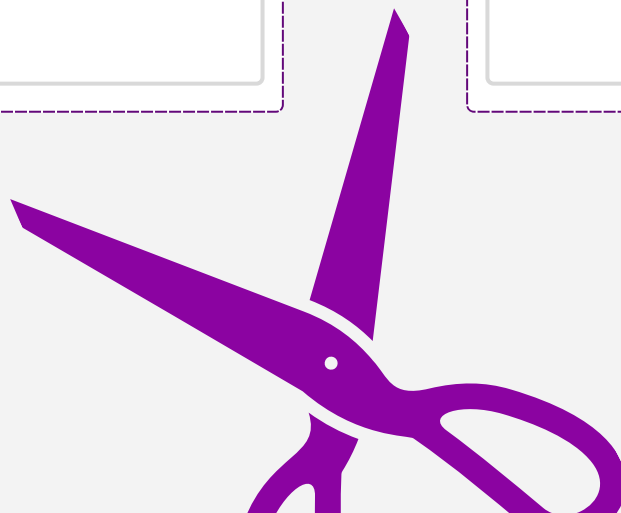
Financially Stable

Your family has a stable income and can comfortably afford all basic needs.

Economic Status

High Debt Household

Your family has accumulated significant debt and struggles to keep up with payments.





Lesson 4/5: From
Inspiration
to Action:
**Building
Your
Social
Initiative**



FOUNDING PARTNERS



sparkil.org

**Objective:**

Enhance students' understanding of social initiatives and entrepreneurship. Develop critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration skills through planning and executing a social initiative plan.

Grade Level

Ages 11+

Duration:

120 minutes (you can divide this activity into several classes)

Materials Needed

- Post-it notes
- Box for each group
- Markers
- Large sheets of paper or flipchart

Before the class ask students to watch the YouTube video. This video is 18 min. long, you can also show in class and adjust the timing of your class lesson :

How to be a Social Entrepreneur:
Andy Stoll at TEDxUlowa.



PART 1: Opening

Discuss the video watched by students (10 minutes)

- Who are the social entrepreneurs talked about in the video?
- What problems did they solve?
- Which aspect of the entrepreneur's journey resonated with you the most?
- How does what a social entrepreneur does reflect the Jewish value we studied in Lesson 1 & 2?
- Share with the students that they will get tools to start a social initiative, these tools can be used in their future as well.

Think – "What Matters to Me" (15 minutes)

- Ask the students to write down on post-it notes three challenges in their community, school, or camp that matter to them.
- Collect the post-its and read them aloud, grouping similar ideas into "clusters" (e.g., environmental challenges).
- Ask students to choose the cluster they resonate with the most and form small interest groups based on their chosen cluster.

Group Activity: Brainstorming 'Bad Ideas' (10 minutes)

- Ask each group to choose a challenge they'd like to focus on.
- Have students write all their 'bad ideas' for solving the chosen issue on paper, crumple the papers, and place them in a box.
- Students take turns picking an idea from the box and reading it to their groups.
- After each idea is read, the group has 20 seconds to quickly think about how to turn a bad idea into a good one or move to the next "bad idea".



This activity should be done quickly. Encourage students to write down whatever comes to mind without overthinking. The goal is to generate as many ideas as possible, as even "bad" ideas can lead to good ones. End by Sharing with the students that when brainstorming there is no such thing as a 'bad idea', as it can always open our minds to new directions and ultimately - good ideas.

Part 2: Learn – What is a social initiative through SparkIL (15 minutes)

Explain the concept of Social Initiatives (15 minutes)

- Explain what social enterprises are and how they differ from traditional businesses (Appendix A).
- Introduce SparkIL through the method of WH questions (Appendix B).
- **At the end of this session, ask students to prepare 3–5 ideas for a social initiative for the next class.**
- **End of Class 1: completion of Part 2.**



Part 3: Idea Development and Roadmapping (45 minutes)

Idea Generation and Selection (10 minutes)

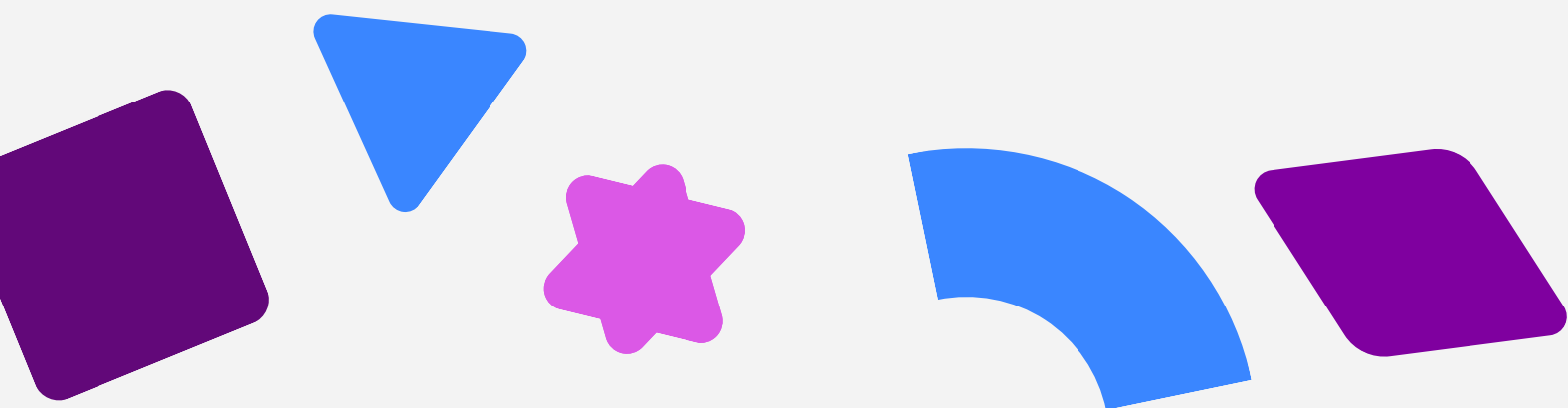
- Ask groups to brainstorm potential social initiative ideas that can solve the challenges they chose.
- Ask them to write all the ideas on a large chart.
- Ask them to select one or two main ideas they'd like to develop.

Idea Selection and Refinement (15 minutes)

- Give groups the provided worksheets (Appendix D).
- Ask groups to use WH questions to examine the chosen ideas:
 - Who** will benefit from or participate in this initiative?
 - What** are the expected outcomes?
 - Where** will the initiative take place?
 - When** will key activities occur?
 - Why** is this initiative important?
 - How** will the initiative be implemented?

Developing the Initiative Blueprint (30 minutes)

- Give the students the blueprint worksheet to start drafting their goals and action plans for their initiative.
- In groups, students use large poster boards to draft their roadmaps, outlining steps, potential partners, resources needed, and milestones.





Part 4: Presentation and Wrap-up (30 minutes)

Group Presentations (20 minutes)


- Each group presents its Social Initiative Blueprint.
- Peers and facilitators provide constructive feedback, focusing on feasibility, impact, and sustainability.

Closure Reflection & Next Steps (20 minutes)

- Discuss the importance of social entrepreneurship and its impact on the community.
- Encourage students to pursue their ideas beyond the classroom by consulting with teachers, local entrepreneurs, or community leaders.
- Students can have a real impact now by visiting the SparkIL website and making a personal loan or use Appendix D to create a Loan Raising project



Please note for students to make an individual loan without the personal use of a credit card, you will need to contact SparkIL ahead of time to generate a coupon code. Contact Audrey Bloomberg, U.S. Partnerships and Outreach Manager, at AudreyB@sparkil.org, at least 2 weeks ahead of your planned session.



A social initiative is a project or organization that addresses social, cultural, or environmental issues. Unlike traditional businesses that primarily aim to generate profit for owners and shareholders, social initiatives prioritize creating positive impact and solving societal problems.

Key Characteristics of Social Enterprises:

1. **Purpose-driven:** Social enterprises are founded with the primary goal of addressing specific social, environmental, or cultural issues. Their mission is central to their business model.
2. **Profit Reinvestment:** Instead of distributing profits to shareholders, social enterprises reinvest profits back into the organization to further their social mission. This can include funding for community projects, improving services, or expanding reach.

Differences between Social Enterprises and Traditional Businesses:

- **Mission Focus:** Traditional businesses focus on profit maximization, whereas social enterprises focus on social impact.
- **Profit Distribution:** Traditional businesses distribute profits to shareholders, while social enterprises reinvest profits into their mission.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Traditional businesses focus on customer satisfaction and shareholder returns, while social enterprises prioritize engaging with and benefiting their target communities.

Presenting SparkIL as an example of a Social Initiative

SparkIL is a website that lets people from all over the world give interest-free loans to small businesses in Israel. What makes SparkIL different from a regular business is that its main goal isn't to make money, but to help people and make a difference. The money loaned through SparkIL goes straight to helping small business owners succeed. Any money SparkIL earns is used to help even more people, instead of making a profit for shareholders. By connecting people who want to help with those who need support, SparkIL is a great example of a social initiative—an organization that's all about creating positive change in the world.



We have used SparkIL as an example of how to answer the WH questions. Your students will answer the WH for their own ideas.



What is the goal?

To help small businesses in Israel grow by giving them interest-free loans.



Who is involved and who benefits?

Small business owners in Israel benefit from the loans. Lenders from overseas benefit because they do something good and helpful for their Israeli peers.



Where does it take place?

In various areas of Israel.



Why is this initiative needed?

To support small businesses in areas that have economic challenges and support people who are struggling with challenges.



How does it work?

Through the SparkIL website, people lend money to small businesses without charging interest. The businesses repay the loans, and the money can be lent again to other businesses.



Social Initiative Title: _____

Group Members: _____

1 Initiative Overview (Use WH questions to guide your summary):



- **What** is the goal of your initiative?

- **Who** will be involved and who will benefit?

- **Where** will it take place?

- **Why** is this initiative needed?

- **How** will it be implemented?

2 Key Steps & Timeline:



- **Step 1:** _____

Due Date: _____

- **Step 2:** _____

Due Date: _____

- **Step 3:** _____

Due Date: _____

(Add more steps as needed)

3 Potential Partnerships and Resources:



- **Partners:**

Partner 1: _____

Role/Contribution: _____

Partner 2: _____

Role/Contribution: _____

- **Resources:**

Resource 1: _____

Needed for: _____

Resource 2: _____

Needed for: _____

(Add more as necessary)

4 Roles and Responsibilities:



- **Member 1:** _____

Responsible for: _____

- **Member 2:** _____

Responsible for: _____

- **Member 3:** _____

Responsible for: _____

(Assign more roles as necessary)

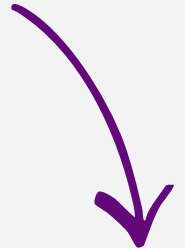
Purpose:

This project aims to immerse students in a hands-on experience of supporting Israeli businesses, leveraging the insights gained from our lessons and the spirit of entrepreneurship.

1

Step 1: Selection and Analysis

- **Choosing a Business:** Decide as a class or in groups which Israeli business you'd like to support through your loan-raising. Discuss the reasons behind your choice. Use the SparkIL website to explore different businesses.
- **Understanding Needs:** Research the selected business on the SparkIL website to identify its specific needs and challenges.



2

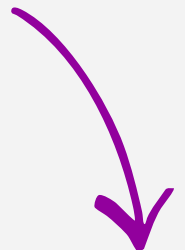
Step 2: Creative Conceptualization

- **Idea Generation:** Encourage creative thinking to come up with a variety of loan-raising ideas. Think about events, online campaigns, or community initiatives that could generate funds.
- **Collaboration Potential:** Explore possibilities for partnering with local businesses, schools, or organizations to amplify your efforts.

3

Step 3: Feasibility Study

- **Resource Listing:** Identify what resources (materials, volunteers, digital tools) will be necessary for your chosen loan-raising idea.
- **Challenges and Solutions:** Anticipate potential obstacles and discuss strategies to overcome them, ensuring the feasibility of your plan.



4

Step 4: Decision Making

- **Selecting the Best Idea:** As a group, choose the loan-raising idea you believe will have the greatest impact.
- **Naming Your Initiative:** Create a catchy and meaningful name for your loan-raiser that captures its essence and purpose.

5

Step 5: Implementation Plan

- **Team Formation:** Determine what teams or roles are needed to bring your loan-raiser to life (e.g., logistics, marketing, finance).
- **Task Assignment:** Clearly define tasks and responsibilities for each team member, focusing on areas such as logistics, social media outreach, and event management.
- **Scheduling:** Set realistic deadlines for all tasks and key milestones, including planning, promotion, and the actual event.

Subject: Empowering Our Kids – A Lesson in Unity and Support

Dear Parents,

We hope this letter finds you well. Recently, your child participated in a series of engaging and educational activities that explored the concept of Mutual Responsibility, Tzedakah, Impact Lending Israel's Diverse Communities and Jewish Social Entrepreneurship. We wanted to share the valuable insights they gained and invite you to be part of a meaningful initiative called SparkIL inspired by their experiences.

Activity Highlights: In our sessions, your child embarked on a journey through the multifaceted nature of Tzedakah, illuminated by the teachings of Maimonides. Through interactive discussions and activities, they explored how the concept of the periphery extends beyond geographical boundaries to include social, cultural, and economic dimensions. Students delved into the idea of Social Entrepreneurship and understood how a social enterprise is built through the SparkIL platform.

Our Invite! We invite you to join us in a unique opportunity. Consider making a refundable, interest-free impact-loan, in the name of your child, to the actual business they selected during the activity. Your impact-loan will directly support the growth and resilience of a local business in Israel.

Why Participate?

Educational Value: This initiative further reinforces the values and lessons your child learned about tzedakah and the promotion of self-sufficiency.

Community Impact: Your impact-loan will directly support the success of a local business in Israel, through the platform of SparkIL, which is especially needed during these trying times.

Empowering our Kids: By actively involving parents, we show our children the real-world impact of their actions and the power of collective support. We recommend doing this together with your child!

Next Steps: Please go to www.sparkil.org, find a business your child connects with, and follow the instructions to make an impact-loan starting from as little as \$36. Starting a month after giving the impact-loan, you will begin receiving the repayment from the business, until the full loan is repaid. Upon receiving the money, you can withdraw the funds, or re-lend to another business!

We appreciate your consideration and support. Together, let's continue to instill these important values and make a positive impact on our community.

[Organization/School Name] [Contact Information]



Spark™

