



# ***DEVELOPING CIVIC AGENCY: LEADERSHIP & PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY***

## ***Overview***

Civic Spirit educates, inspires, and empowers schools across faith traditions to enhance civic belonging and responsibility in their student, faculty, and parent communities. Through professional support and student programs, Civic Spirit prepares the next generation to be knowledgeable, ethical, and active participants in the civic life of their community and the political life of our democracy.

This resource, adapted from Civic Spirit's Civics-Learning-in-a-Box model, includes texts and tools meant to enhance student understanding and engagement with civic life through the lens of Jewish texts. Below, you will find the 5-Step Framework that will support young tweens in developing civic agency.

## ***The 5-Step Framework includes:***

1. Historical and Contemporary Texts
2. Norm Setting Guidelines
3. Text Based Questions
4. Call to Action
5. Reflection Discussion

The icons below are meant to support your use of this resource. When you see the dinner table icon, you will find suggested strategies for a dinner table conversation. The classroom icon indicates useful classroom tools.



## Historical and Contemporary Texts

### Text A: Exodus 18

When Yitro saw that Moses was in charge of all the people of Israel, he told him, “What you are doing is not good. This is too big a job for one person; you are not able to perform it alone.”

Yitro suggests that Moses appoints a hierarchy of officers and explains, “You must find able and G-d-fearing men, men of truth, men who hate unjust gain and appoint them to be leaders of small groups of men. Let them judge the people at all times. They will still bring big matters to you, but every small matter they shall judge themselves. These men shall bear the burden with you.”

### Text B: Akeydat Yitzchak by Eliyahu Munk

Two great men were examined for their respective leadership qualities as shepherds, and when found trustworthy in their dealings with sheep became leaders in their communities. Proper care of sheep requires: Proper supervision, provision of the needs of the animals under one's care and individual attention to the needs of the strong and weak respectively.

### Text C: Jewish Institutional Leadership Guidelines

1. Listen
2. Care for the leadership team even during disagreements
3. Maintain a senior role but educate everyone
4. Seek out other trustworthy leaders
5. Create a leadership structure so that you can reach a lot of people with personalized attention
6. Make sure the leaders knows their roles and responsibilities
7. Have the people bring every major dispute to the highest leader, but let them decide every minor dispute amongst themselves

### Text D:

#### THE U.S. PRESIDENT'S JOB DESCRIPTION (according to Article 2 of the U.S. Constitution)

##### THE PRESIDENT'S POWERS

01. Serves as Commander in Chief of the armed forces.
02. Executes and enforces the laws created by Congress.
03. Appoints Cabinet members, ambassadors, Supreme Court judges.
04. Signs legislation into law or vetoes bills enacted by Congress.
05. Negotiates and signs treaties.
06. Issues executive orders to clarify and further existing laws.
07. Extends pardons and clemencies for federal crimes, except impeachment.

##### THE PRESIDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Gives Congress information regarding the State of the Union “from time to time”
2. Asks Congress to consider measures the President judges “necessary and expedient”

##### THE PRESIDENT'S QUALIFICATIONS

  
Natural-born  
citizen

35  
At least  
35 years old

14  
A U.S. resident for  
at least 14 years

10

### **Text E: Genesis 3**

G-d saw Adam and Eve hiding, and asked, "Have you eaten from the tree which I commanded that you should not eat?" Adam replied, "The woman, she gave me fruit from the tree and I ate it." So G-d said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent convinced me to do it."

### **Text F: Exodus 2**

One day, Moses leaves the Pharaoh's palace and sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. Moses looked around and saw that no one else was intervening so he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

### **Text G: Pirkei Avot**

Hillel would say: If I am not for myself who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, then when?

### ***First Things First: Norm Setting***

*Norm setting is an essential component of creating safe spaces for productive conversations. The topics you are going to discuss may elicit strong feelings and emotions --that's great, it means you care deeply! The best way to approach this is for the group to co-create a set of agreements that they will follow throughout their time together.*



Use Jamboard or Nearpod for a collaborative conversation.



Ask your children to jot down 1-2 rules that will help them feel safe and respected during the conversation. Then, make a list that includes everyone's ideas and have everyone agree to follow them.

### **Examples:**

- We will set aside the need to persuade someone to change their mind.
- We will focus on understanding each other's perspectives.
- We will be curious and ask questions without judgement.
- We will seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- We will "step up" and "step back" to make space for everyone to be heard.
- We will speak only for ourselves.

## Text Based Questions

The following two reading exercises are designed to develop a foundational understanding of leadership by working in partnership to co-construct meaning. The exercises were initially designed for chevruta learning (ancient Jewish tradition of paired learning) but can happen in a variety of ways in both the home and classroom. You can try using the included chevruta protocol, or try any of the following suggested procedures.



Suggested procedure:

Think-Pair-Share or Turn-and-Talk

Suggested procedure:

Read the texts independently (now is a good time to take a few bites of food!) and write down your initial thoughts or questions.

Regroup to clarify or ask any questions.

Read the questions for discussion together.

Pause to give everyone ample time to think about their responses and formulate their thoughts.

Discuss the questions as a group --and don't forget to pass the salt and pepper!



Exercise 1	Exercise 2
<p><b><u>Read about Leadership:</u></b>                      Exodus 18 (A)                      Akeydat Yitzchak (B)                      Jewish Leadership Guidelines (C)                      President's Job Description (D)</p> <p><b><u>Discussion Questions:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you notice about how each text describes the role of leadership?</li> <li>• What is similar in each text? Different?</li> <li>• What words stand out to you?</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Read about Personal Responsibility:</u></b>                      Genesis 3 (E)                      Exodus 2 (F)                      Pirkei Avot (G)</p> <p><b><u>Discussion Questions:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you define personal responsibility? Do Adam or Eve exhibit this trait? How do you know?</li> <li>• What is a bystander? What is an upstander? Who fills these roles in the texts?</li> <li>• How does <i>Pirkei Avot</i> inform your reading of the excerpts from Genesis and Exodus?</li> </ul>

### **Chevruta Protocol**

Partner 1: I understood that \_\_\_\_\_ because it says \_\_\_\_\_ in the text.

Partner 2: What do you mean by \_\_\_\_\_? OR Can you explain why you wonder about \_\_\_\_\_?

Partner 1: The reason I wonder about \_\_\_\_\_ is because \_\_\_\_\_. OR The words in the text that prove my idea are \_\_\_\_\_.

Partner 2: I agree/ disagree with your idea because \_\_\_\_\_. OR I wonder if the reason the text says \_\_\_\_\_ is because \_\_\_\_\_.

Partner 1: Our discussion made me realize that \_\_\_\_\_. OR When you suggested \_\_\_\_\_, it made me think that \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Now What: Call to Action**

*As a community member, it's our most important job to be able to evaluate who we want as our leader and who is going to help us to move forward toward our goals. When we study foundational documents about leadership, it can support us in becoming a more deliberate thinker about the campaign process. Answer the questions below so that you can transition your civic learning into civic action.*



Use Jamboard or Nearpod so as to invite as many voices as possible.



This is the perfect dessert conversation!

- Does voting for a president or other elected official feel like a difficult decision or an easy one? Why?
- What are the most significant 2-3 factors you will consider when voting for president? Mayor? Other elected officials?
- Would you vote for a presidential candidate based on policy issues or based on the candidate's personal traits?

### **Complete this sentence and post your finished statement on social media:**

"I would vote for a leader who \_\_\_\_\_. Who would YOU vote for?"

### **Reflection**

*The best way to deepen the learning process is through reflection. Reflection creates an opportunity for information to become meaningful knowledge. It provides a chance to make connections to your life and allows children to develop a personal relationship with the material. It is suggested to answer the questions below by writing a journal or diary entry. This can be a private activity and does not need to be shared.*

How does something you discussed today connect to what you already knew?

How did these exercises extend your thinking further?

What questions do you still have?

## Classroom Extensions

For [Activity 1, Character Profiles](#), you can copy the template from page 7 and use the whiteboard function on Zoom to do this as a whole group activity. Alternatively, students can draw their own template on Google Drawings and then share their document with the class. For [Activity 2, What Would You Do?](#) you don't need anything except a copy of the fable (below) and a problem-solving mindset!

Activity 2 works well at home, too!

### Activity 1: Character Profiles

Read *Carl the Complainer* by Michelle Knudsen -full PDF with pictures [here](#)- and create a Character Profile for Carl, Dale and Mr. Henry. You can use what the text says directly as well as anything that can be implied from the text. Then, think about the current pandemic situation in your community and discuss:

- Who were the Carls, Dales and Mr. Henrys?
- Who were you?

### Activity 2: What Would You Do?

Read the fable below and then discuss:

- The island had a problem; according to law, the king's first-born son was next in line to the throne, but he was not suitable for the role. How did the island elders solve the problem?
- Why are bad manners and being self-centered qualities the island did not want in their leader? Are they qualities you would want in a leader? What are some qualities you feel a leader should have?
- Do you agree with how the island handled this situation?
- Are there other ways to plan for a change in leadership? Like what?

There was once an island ruled by kings and they decreed a new law: "The firstborn son of the king and the firstborn son of the son after him will automatically inherit the throne. No election shall ever be held. This law is not subject to review and is unchallengeable."

Many years later, a king had two sons. The firstborn was bad-mannered and self-centered, i.e. totally unfit to rule. His younger brother however, possessed all the qualities needed to make him a suitable ruler. Unfortunately, the island was bound to the law.

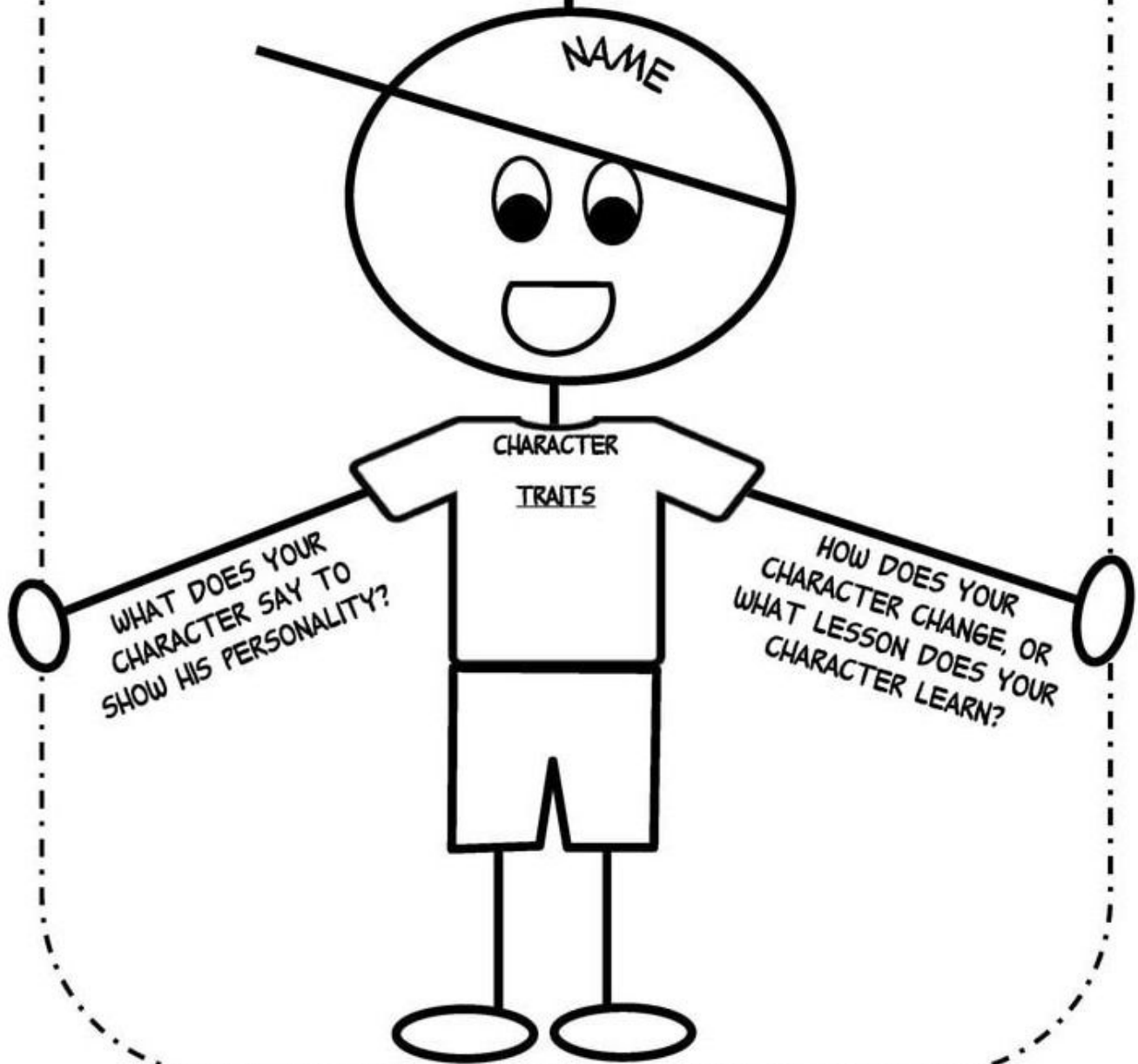
After much debate, the island elders decided that their only course of action was to convince the older of the two brothers to voluntarily decline his seat on the throne. So, they prepared a great banquet and invited the entire island. During dinner, the elders pointed out to the older son all the burdens of office that would interfere with the luxurious and unrestrained lifestyle he so loved.

And thus, they succeeded in getting the older son to decline his claim to the throne.

# CHARACTER PROFILE

WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER DO TO SHOW HIS PERSONALITY?

WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER LOOK LIKE ON THE OUTSIDE?



## **Resources**

**Essential Partners** partners with communities and organizations around the globe, equipping them to navigate the values, beliefs, and identities that are essential to them.

**MitzVote** is a non-partisan get-out-the-vote campaign that provides students with the education and resources they need to mobilize and vote in 2020.

**Sefaria** is a non-profit organization dedicated to building the future of Jewish learning in an open and participatory way.

**Vote by Design** is a non-partisan digital learning experience that helps students become informed & engaged voters.