

The Things We Carry: A Pedagogy of Jewish Migration and Adaptation

OVERVIEW

The Things We Carry is a multisensory pedagogy that invites learners into the lived experiences of Jewish migration, adaptation, and cultural creativity across the diaspora. It begins with the belief that memory lives not only in our minds but also in our bodies. This approach engages all five senses — sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell — to make Jewish history personal, embodied, and emotionally resonant. It shifts learning from something we study to something we feel.

The experience opens with a suitcase placed at the center of the room. As each item is uncovered and placed on a story cloth, the suitcase becomes a vessel of memory, movement, and reinvention. Inside is a curated collection of objects that reveal both continuity and change in Jewish life — a weathered siddur annotated in multiple languages, a recipe card adapting traditional dishes with local ingredients, a vial of anise that connects kitchens across continents, maracas that carry Jewish melody into new musical traditions, and a kippah stitched with Indigenous textile patterns. Through these encounters, learners discover that Jewish migration is not only a story of loss or displacement. It is also a story of creativity, resilience, and transformation.

A VISION OF JEWISH PEOPLEHOOD

Jewish peoplehood is not a fixed or uniform concept. It is a living expression of memory, movement, and belonging. My worldview is rooted in the belief that to be Jewish is to be in motion. This motion takes many forms: spiritual searching, geographic relocation, cultural adaptation, and the constant work of building and rebuilding home. It reflects a people shaped by journey and by the resilience that emerges from navigating change.

I grew up within layered identities. I am Peruvian and American. I am an immigrant and a citizen. I am Latina and Jewish. Throughout my life, I was often told I was too much of one thing and not enough of another. I moved through liminal spaces between communities, crossing social, emotional, and psychological borders each day. What became clear to me early on is that Jewish identity cannot be flattened or confined to binaries. It is layered and multidimensional, shaped along the journey to find connection, meaning, and home. This pedagogy emerges from my commitment to reclaiming and elevating the multiplicity of Jewish migration stories.

As the founder and chief executive officer of Jewtina y Co., I have spent years working with Latin-Jews who live in a "double diaspora," existing outside of both Israel and Latin America. Their migratory paths hold both fragility and strength, rupture and resilience, as they navigate what it means to hold two homelands at once, neither of which is where they currently reside. Their stories live in the foods they cook, the music they inherit, the ritual objects they protect, and the languages they turn to in prayer and in the intimacy of home. These sensory fragments are not simply remnants of the past. They are threads that bind memory to identity and identity to community. This pedagogy challenges cognitive-centered models of Jewish education that privilege text over experience, and it draws on a tradition that has always known that Jewish memory is embodied: we smell *besamim* (fragrant spices) at Havdalah, hear the *shofar* (ram's horn) on Rosh Hashanah, taste the *matzah* of our ancestors at Passover. Jewish memory does not live solely in books. It lives in bodies and senses, in kitchens and sanctuaries, in migration routes and family stories.

JEWISH MIGRATION AS SACRED PATTERN: THE CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION

Jewish tradition is, at its core, a tradition of movement. From our earliest sacred texts, the Jewish people are portrayed as wanderers, seekers, and builders of new homes. The Passover declaration *Arami oved avi* — "My father was a wandering Aramean" (Deuteronomy 26:5) — anchors Jewish identity in the act of migration. It is both collective and personal. At the seder table, we do not just remember; we relive. We taste the bitterness of *maror* (bitter herbs), feel the urgency of the *matzah*, and hear the story as if we ourselves were leaving Egypt. This ritual teaches that the experience of migration is not only part of our past but a foundation of who we are becoming. The Hebrew language itself reflects this truth: *halakh* (to walk) is the root of *halacha*, the path of Jewish law; *avar* (to cross over) gives us the word *lvri*, Hebrew, meaning one who crosses; and *shuv* (to return) is the root of *teshuvah*, returning to self and to relationship. Migration and adaptation are not deviations from tradition. They are essential expressions of it.

This pedagogy is also grounded in educational theory that centers embodied, culturally rooted, and inclusive practices. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences reminds us that learners understand and express knowledge through many modalities — among them bodily kinesthetic and spatial intelligences, activated when participants hold textured objects or trace migration routes. John Dewey's philosophy of learning by doing affirms that meaningful education must emerge from direct encounter, not passive reception. And Geneva Gay's framework of culturally responsive pedagogy insists that education is most impactful when it honors the cultural knowledge and lived experiences learners bring with them. Neuroscience supports these approaches as well: multisensory learning activates more neural pathways, deepening both retention and emotional connection.

Together, these frameworks affirm something that Jewish ritual has always known: when learners are given the opportunity to feel, taste, hear, and hold the stories of our people, we are not merely teaching history. We are cultivating relationship — with the past, with community, with family, and with self. Ruth Behar captures this beautifully in *Across So Many Seas*, tracing centuries of Jewish journeys from Inquisition-era Spain to Cuba and the United States, showing how Jewish identity is carried not only in texts and traditions but in objects, songs, recipes, and resilience. Her insight that "every family has a suitcase of stories, some spoken and others carried silently" is the animating truth of this pedagogy.

THE PEDAGOGY OF PEOPLEHOOD

The Things We Carry is an immersive, multisensory learning experience designed for participants aged 14 and above and requiring approximately 100 minutes. It unfolds in five stages: (I) Preparing for the activity; (II) Unpacking the suitcase; (III) Discovery phase; (IV) Personal story activation; and (V) Closing: Adaptation and imagination. Each phase guides learners through a layered exploration of Jewish migration, memory, and identity, using sensory-rich materials and reflective prompts rooted in both personal and collective story.

The experience begins with a vintage suitcase placed at the center of the space. Learners watch as 5–7 symbolic objects are slowly unpacked and placed on a shared story cloth — each one passed hand to hand, inviting touch, smell, sound, and sight before any words are spoken. Once the suitcase has been unpacked and curiosity is alive in the room, learners move into a guided discovery phase, using the M² Passport resource to reflect on what the objects evoke and what questions they raise. The experience then turns personal: participants share an object they have brought from home, connecting the collective suitcase to their own family stories in small-group conversation. Finally, in a closing imagination exercise, each learner writes a note to a future relative, extending their object's journey forward in time and locating themselves within the larger, unfolding story of Jewish migration.

When tested with diverse groups — middle school students, high school teens, and intergenerational adults — participants consistently reported deep emotional engagement, surprise at how quickly the time passed, and a hunger to learn more about their own family histories. One participant noted: "I realized I don't know enough about where my family came from. I want to go home and ask my parents everything." This response, which was typical, shaped the development of the M² Passport, which extends the pedagogy beyond the session itself and into participants' everyday lives.

CONCLUSION

The Things We Carry matters because it challenges the dominant narratives of Jewish education that have often centered certain geographies, languages, and histories while marginalizing others. It affirms that there is no single way to be Jewish, no single path of migration, no single vessel that holds our collective memory. When learners engage with this pedagogy, they discover three essential truths: that Jewish migration is both universal and particular, connecting us to all who have left home in search of safety and belonging while carrying the specific texture of Jewish memory and covenant; that resilience is not just survival but creativity, as the Jews who crossed borders did not simply endure but innovated and created something new; and that every Jewish learner belongs in this story, because curiosity and the desire to connect are themselves acts of continuation. This is an ongoing Jewish story, shaped by movement, adaptation, and the things we choose to carry forward – and every learner is part of it.



To access the full practice guide, including facilitation scripts, the M² Passport resource, and all materials, scan the QR code or [click here](#).



Dr. Analucia Lopezrevoredo is a sociologist, experiential educator, and organizational leader fascinated by the many ways Jewish communities have adapted, thrived, and remained connected across the globe. As Founder and CEO of Jewtina y Co., a nonprofit dedicated to celebrating, elevating, and expanding Latin-Jewish life by connecting Latin-Jews to one another and strengthening their connection to global Jewry, Analucia is constantly exploring how Jewish identity, culture, and community are being reimaged in the 21st century. Born in Peru and raised between cultures, she believes that the diversity of the Jewish people is one of its greatest strengths, and that building bridges across Jewish communities worldwide is among the most powerful ways to strengthen identity, belonging, and peoplehood today.