I Applied My Heart To Know Wisdom:

A Jewish Perspective On Personal Ideologies

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***Scripted Lesson Plan**

Rationale

"If you make your ear attentive to wisdom, And your mind open to discernment;
If you call to understanding and cry aloud to discernment;
If you seek it as you do silver and search for it as for treasures,
Then you will understand the awe of the Lord, and attain knowledge of God...
For wisdom will enter your mind, and knowledge will delight you.
Foresight will protect you, and discernment will guard you.
It will save you from the way of evil men, From men who speak duplicity,
Who leave the paths of rectitude to follow the ways of darkness..."[1]

This curriculum guide is about personal ideologies: what they are, what purposes they serve, how they form, and how they are - or could be - present in our lives. Questions of selfhood, self-identity, and "What Is It All About" are present throughout one's life, beginning at some of the earliest stages of development and often persisting until the moment of one's death. Generation after generation of Jewish thinkers and philosophers have attempted to craft responses to the Jewish concepts of birth and death, and to the questions of meaning regarding everything in between those two bookends. Unfortunately, because of the emotionally charged and often psychologically and theologically confusing web of thoughts and feelings inherently attached to these subjects, more often than not the average Jew is led to believe one of two options: either the discussions are best reserved for textually knowledgeable, highly scholastic academics, or that the entire subject is best left alone in order to avoid feeling confusion, anxiety, or fear. This curriculum guide will provide opportunities for Jews of all ages to engage openly in such existential discussions and to validate their own thoughts, feelings, and values through the study of scripture, lifecycle events, worship, and social action.

The importance of studying, discussing, and ultimately applying one's personal beliefs of life and the world in general to their own life is of the highest importance when cultivating a new generation of participatory Jews who wish to engage in their history and culture and carry it with them into the future. The texts studied in this curriculum and the lessons which go along with them impart to their readers a clarification of our

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[1] Proverbs 2:2-5, 10-13, *JPS Translation*

collective - and possibly individual - values; they connect us to our friends and relatives throughout the world and throughout time; they "buff-out" rough spots of our self-identities which can often feel sharply contrasted and/or incongruent with wider cultural or normative beliefs. Regardless of when these ideas of existence are introduced formally into one's own life, the study of them catalyzes a journey of continued textual and experiential immersion and a constant re-cultivation of that individual's personal beliefs. In short, contemplating one's existential beliefs - or, at the very least, engaging in the process of trying to know one's existential beliefs - can lead to a more self-aware, confident, and hopeful generation of Jews who will themselves, God-willing, some day become the transmitters of our faith and our history. This curriculum guide is one way in which the Jewish people may achieve continuity.

The content of this curriculum includes: the reading of various portions of the Jewish biblical texts of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) and Job, as well as the rabbinical-era text of Pirkei Avot; a study of major Jewish lifecycle events, including conversion, as well as the liturgy of Yom Kippur; and the impetus behind- and process of social action. The selected texts are central to these areas because they are wellsprings of information for examining and framing questions of existence through a Jewish lens. This curriculum aims both to analyze these texts and then synthesize them - with regard to our own lives and the world in which we live - in order to bring alive the history and heritage of Jewish tradition.

In Unit One, the overall concept of personal ideologies is explored, as well as the process by which they form and re-form through the use of *commonplaces.* In Unit Two, classical Jewish texts are compared and contrasted to numerous secular works of literature, visual art, and music in order to strengthen, and often challenge, Jewish existential understandings. By comparing and contrasting the universal Truths of all these sources - religious or secular - one is able to form and constantly reform

Unit Three focuses on the presence of ideological questions and related themes of existence in various Jewish lifecycle events and moments of worship. Unit Four examines how Jewish tradition and text regard one's personal rights and responsibilities in this world, and how those beliefs have played out in the shape of social justice organizations. Finally, Unit Five presents two authentic assessments for the students of

this curriculum: in the first, students act just as poets and writers do in forming their own metaphors for their ideological beliefs; in the second, students will have the chance to apply the concepts and processes from throughout the curriculum by way of personal interviews and dialogue with strangers - just like philosophers do.

This curriculum is intended for day school learners in 11th and 12th graders. It is at this point in a learner's life - after the rigmarole of b'nai mitzvah is behind them, perhaps after Confirmation has been "achieved", and at exactly the time when the next chapter of their lives (college or other post-high school experiences) is so prominently unfolding on the horizon - that the value of answers to personal and universal questions of being begin to appreciate intensely. Moreover, a sense of "past, present, and future" becomes developmentally and experientially understandable for many students by this point in their lives, and for them, as well as others who may never have entertained similar thoughts, such study can become memorable "Ah Ha" moments which affectively ripple throughout their lives. The choice of a day school setting has been made with the understanding and hope that a more formal, regularly-scheduled structure maximizes the potential for connectivity from one area of content to the next, and minimizes the possibility of losing focus along the way.

It is possible, in our post-emancipation, secularized, 21st century American culture, to believe that we can find answers to life's questions and guidance toward our own personal ideologies without the inclusion of religious sources. Indeed, it is a trope seen throughout much of the modern world - including the State of Israel, the very homeland of the Jews - that knowledge of our religious texts is not necessary to figure out our standing in the world, our beliefs and values, and our calls to action, big or small. Ruth Calderon, a member of Israel's Yesh Atid political party and a secular Talmud scholar and teacher, used her first speech on the floor of Israeli Knesset to decry the decoupling of religion from the life of other *hiloni*[2] like herself:

> It is impossible to stride toward the future without knowing where we came from and who we are, without knowing, intimately and in every particular, the sublime as well as the outrageous and the ridiculous. The Torah is not the property of one movement or another. It is a gift that every one of us received, and we have all been granted the opportunity to meditate upon it

[2]A term for secular, non-observant Jews in Israel

> a we create the realities of our lives. Nobody took the Talmud and rabbinic literature from us. We gave it away, with our own hands, when it seemed that another task was more important and urgent: building a state, raising an army, developing agriculture and industry, etc. The time has come to re-appropriate what is ours, to delight in the cultural riches that wait for us, for our eyes, our imaginations, our creativity.[3]

Just as Calderon believes in the inherent power of Torah[4] as a way to shape secular Israeli Jews' personal beliefs and values, so do I believe in it's power to shape the personal ideology of an American Jew living in his or her secular society. This includes not only the study of the texts themselves, but also in understanding the moments in our lives at which their themes and messages which they address touch us personally. The ability to unpack philosophical and existential content, as well as the processes through which we utilize them, is one which every student should not only *want* to possess, but which is mandated by our faith and tradition. The educator is to serve as a "coach" throughout this curriculum - one who helps guide each "player" in their own specific way, according to his or her needs, beliefs, and values; he or she validates the life experiences and ideological viewpoints of the students, and helps direct them toward or away from certain ideas which may strike an emotional, theological, or psychological chord.

At the heart of this curriculum are the following Enduring Understandings:

- **Jewish texts influence personal ideologies and how we live our lives.**
- **The wisdom texts of *Kohelet, Pirkei Avot,* and *Kohelet* reflect the influence of personal circumstances on the formation of one's ideology.**
- **Though seeming distinct, religious and secular responses to ideological questions share common justifications of the universal human Truths which they assert.**

Keeping these in mind is of the highest importance, because this curriculum is about the way in which an individual's views of the world form. It is about an individual's personal

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[3] excerpt from Ruth Calderon's address to the Israeli Knesset, February 2013.

[4] "Torah" here, and in the excerpt of Calderon's speech, refers to both the Written (biblical) Torah and the Oral (rabbinic) Torah.

ideology of life, based on their best guesses to the questions we ask and are asked - sometimes silently - by the universe, by our relationships with others, and by our relationship with own selves. It is a chance to examine Jewish texts and traditions which relate to these questions, sometimes, as in the cases of *Pirkei Avot*, *Kohelet*, and *Job*, offering advice and other times, such as Jewish lifecycle moments and worship practices, constructing a specific moment as proof of the tradition's righteousness. It is about the messages we receive from around us on a daily basis, not intentionally rooted in Jewish religious belief, but often agreeing on the major points of their mutual existential claims. And when those assertions of how to live, what to value, and how to act disagree, this curriculum is a chance to struggle over their differences and to ultimately decide on their own ideological beliefs - hopefully with students' eyes toward their Jewish heritage as primary source of wisdom. The process of how to investigate the multitudinous commonplaces of the values of life, how to refine their beliefs and argue over alternatives, and how to arrange and enact their constellated personal ideology is as central to this curriculum as is the knowledge of Jewish texts and traditions.

Note To the Educator

Dear Educator,

Greetings, and thank you for taking the time to peruse my curriculum guide. Through it, I hope you find a meaningful journey through Jewish texts and practices, as well as a way to engage your students in a meaningful discussion about Jewish communal values as well as their own.

I have always been particularly drawn to the concept of how one's view of the world - their personal ideology - forms, and what factors each person has been influenced by. Indeed, the more people I meet in this world, the more I am convinced that Kohelet was right: when we get down to the root of it all, there is nothing new under the sun, not in the entire world. Each of us struggles to answers questions about who we are, what we believe, and how we should act during the finite days of our life. I believe that a curriculum such as this can be a worthwhile way to introduce key terms, texts and practices, as well as examples of how to enact the beliefs held within them.

Because this is, in part, a "text-heavy" curriculum, you should note that it was designed with students in mind who have already mastered basic Hebrew decoding and translating skills, and are ready to make a jump to a higher level of textual analysis. The use of Hebrew-to-English dictionaries is essential to Unit 2 of this guide, unless there is a (or many) fluent Hebrew speakers in the room. Should that be the case, I highly suggest you utilize them in creating flowing, understandable translations to the many texts in the following lessons.

Additionally, it should be noted that Unit 2 has been created with the possibility of a "beit midrash-style" classroom approach in mind; although each lesson could be done as a whole class (in *hevruta*), some educators may wish to open up the room to a self-driven, self-chosen model, in which students may pick freely (on a daily basis) from the list of lessons available. The only exceptions to this are Lessons 10 and 11, which are intended to be whole-class.

As for the content and activities, I invite anyone to contact me at any time with suggestions about alternative texts, worship and lifecycle practices, or Jewish organizations which may fit appropriately into the flow of this guide; it is only with a communal spirit of cooperation and dedicated learning that we can hope to instill in our students the very essence of what I believe it means to be a Jew: to live well, to love fully, to serve God with a full heart, and to take part in the well-being of the family, the Jewish community, and the world at large.

With best wishes for a year of learning and teaching,

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UNIT 1: Different Beliefs, Common Places
Looking For Big Answers To Big Questions

Enduring Understandings:

- *Kohelet*, *Pirkei Avot*, and *Job* present three different paths toward forming a personal ideology.

- A clear personal ideology enables us to constantly re-evaluate our own beliefs and values.

Essential Questions
- Where do I find answers to personal philosophical questions?
- How do Jewish texts reflect different life experiences?
- What does Judaism believe is the meaning and purpose of life?

Knowledge
- definitions of **ideology**, **commonplace**, **assumption**, and **value**
- ideological beliefs of *Kohelet*, *Job*, and *Pirkei* Avot
- literary and historical information associated with those Jewish texts

Skills
- compare and contrast the viewpoints of *Kohelet*, *Pirkei Avo*t, and *Job*
- application of beliefs and values to ideological commonplaces

Lesson 1: "*And Now, Here They Are...!"* Kohelet, Job, and Pirkei Avot

Objectives

- distinguish the values of Kohelet, Job, and Pirkei Avot as espoused in their respective texts
- recognize the effect of personal experience and circumstances on one's view of their life and the world
- break down the stories of Kohelet, Job, and Pirkei Avot into basic ideological commonplaces

Activity One

Introduce the concept of "wisdom" texts in Judaism:

- They are texts that seek to teach bigger lessons about the world and about life.
- They are sometimes called "didactic" texts, which means they are intended to be *informative* and *instructional*.
- Three of the most well known didactic texts in Judaism are Kohelet, Pirkei Avot, and Job.

Divide the class into three groups and assign each group on of the above texts, as well as the accompanying Resource Sheet (provided) to help get a basic background of the text. Each group should take about 10 minutes to read their texts and answer the Guiding Questions on the back of their Resource Sheets. Then, using those Guiding Questions, work to fill in one row of their Commonplaces Chart as best they can.

Activity Two

"Jigsaw" the groups so all new groups have at least one member of each original group. Together, share how they filled in their lines of the chart, and reasons why *(use the texts provided, any student's previous knowledge of the text, and the Guiding Questions to frame your answers.)* The educator should float to each group and make appropriate suggestions as necessary to keep the conversation relevant.

When each jigsaw group is finished, discuss their (now) 3 filled in lines, and explain that, as the course moves along, they will be refining, adding, deleting, and focusing both the chart's column headings (commonplaces) on the chart and their answers in each line. They will also take a look at the didactic nature of other written and performed pieces, to find the nuances of each and how they compare to classical Jewish wisdom texts.

Resources:

- Source Sheets for Kohelet, Pirkei Avot, and Job (provided)
- Commonplaces Chart (found in Lesson 2 Resources)

“Job” Resource Sheet[5]

Overview

The **Book of Job**...commonly referred to simply as **Job**, is one of the books of the Hebrew Bible. It relates the story of Job, his trials at the hands of Satan, his discussions with friends on the origins and nature of his suffering, his challenge to God, and finally a response from God. The book is a didactic poem set in a prose frame. The book of Job has been included in lists of the greatest books in world literature.

Plot

The book of Job tells the story of an extremely righteous man named Job, who is very prosperous and has seven sons and three daughters. Constantly fearing that his sons may have sinned and "cursed God in their hearts", he habitually offers burnt offerings as a pardon for their sins. The "sons of God" (angels) and Satan (literally "the Adversary Angel") present themselves before God, and God asks Satan for his opinion on Job. Satan answers that Job is pious only because God has put a "wall around" him and "blessed" him with prosperity, but if God were to stretch out his hand and strike everything that Job had, then he would surely curse God. God gives Satan permission to test Job's righteousness.

All Job's possessions are destroyed: 500 oxen and 500 donkeys carried off by Sabeans (a neighboring nation); 7,000 sheep burned up by 'The fire of God which fell from the sky'; 3,000 camels stolen by the Chaldeans (another neighboring nation); and the house of the firstborn brought down by a mighty wind, killing Job's ten children. Still Job does not curse God, but instead shaves his head, tears his clothes, and says, "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return: Lord has given, and Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (*Adonai notein, v’Adonai lakach; y’hie shem Adonai m’vorakh).*

As Job endures these calamities without reproaching God, Satan solicits permission to afflict his body and health as well, and God says, "Behold, he is in your hand, but don't touch his life." Satan, therefore, curses Job with dreadful boils, and Job, seated in ashes, scrapes his skin with broken pottery. His wife prompts him to "curse God, and die," but Job answers, "You speak as one of the foolish speaks. Moreover, shall we receive good from God but not receive evil?"

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[5] adapted from the Wikipedia page on “Job”

Three friends of Job - Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophare come to console him (a fourth, Elihu appears in Chapter 32). The friends spend seven days sitting on the ground with Job, without saying anything to him because they see that he is suffering and in much pain. Job at last breaks his silence and "curses the day he was born."

God responds saying that there are so many things Job does not know about how this world was formed or how nature works, that Job should consider God as being greater than the thunderstorm and strong enough to pull in the leviathan with a fish-hook. God then rebukes the three friends and says, "I am angry with you... you have not spoken of me what is right."

The story ends with Job restored to health, with a new family and twice as prosperous.

Having read this background info on Job, examine the texts on the flip side of this page, and then fill in one row of the Commonplaces Chart as best you can summarize.

Use these Guiding Questions to help you:

1) What *facts* do we know about Job? What facts does he mention? (*ex. He's lost everything of value to him*)
2) What *assumptions* about life does Job make? (*God always acts justly and right)*
2) What *values* about life does Job make? (*Trust in God is absolutely necessary; the purpose of life is to honor and obey God; you win some, you lose some)*
3) How does Job address the *commonplaces* of the class chart? (*Trust in God is more important than the things you own/acquire/have in life - life family, livestock, health, etc.)*

You'll be responsible for teaching your fellow classmates about this text, so be sure to have answers ready to go!

“Job” Texts

Chapter One

(1) There was a man in the land of Uz named Job. That man was blameless and upright; he feard God and shunned evil. (2) Seven sons and three daughters were born to him; (3) his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousands camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses, and a very large household. That man was wealthier than anyone in the East.

Chapter Nine

(2)Indeed I know that it is so: Man cannon win a suit against God. (3)If he insisted on a trial with Him, He would not answer one charge i a thousand. (4)Wise of heart and might in power - who ever challenged Him and came out whole? -- (5)Him who moves mountains without their knowing it, Who overturns them in His anger; (6)Who shakes the earth from its place till its pillars quake...(10) Who performs great deeds which cannot be fathomed, and wondrous things without number. He passes me by -- I do not see Him; He goes by me, but I do not perceive Him. He snatches away -- who can stop Him? Who can say to Him, “What are You doing?”...(16) If I summoned him and He responded, I do not believe He would lend me His ear... (19) If a trial of strength - He is the strong one; if a trial in court - who will summon Him for me? Though I were innocent, My mouth would condemn me; Though I were blameless, he would prove me crooked. I am blameless - I am distraught; I am sick of life. It is all one; therefore I say, He destroys the blameless and the guilty.” When suddenly a scourge brings death, He mocks as the innocent fail. The earth is handed over to the wicked one; He covers the eyes of its judges. If it is not He, then who?

"Kohelet" Resource Sheet[6]

Kohelet (or "Ecclesiastes") is a book of the Jewish Ketuvim (meaning Writings, one of the three sections making up the Hebrew bible) and of the Old Testament. The title is a Latin transliteration of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Koheleth, meaning "Gatherer", but traditionally translated as "Teacher" or "Preacher".

Koheleth introduces himself as "son of David, king in Jerusalem," perhaps implying that he is Solomon, but the work is in fact anonymous and was most probably composed in the last part of the 3rd century BC. The book is in the form of an autobiography telling of his investigation of the meaning of life and the best way of life. He proclaims all the actions of man to be inherently *hevel*, a word meaning "vain", "futile", "empty", "meaningless", "temporary", "transitory", "fleeting," or "mere breath," as the lives of both wise and foolish men end in death. While Koheleth clearly endorses wisdom as a means for a well-lived earthly life, he is unable to ascribe eternal meaning to it. In light of this perceived senselessness, he suggests that one should enjoy the simple pleasures of daily life, such as eating, drinking, and taking enjoyment in one's work, which are gifts from the hand of God.

The book concludes with words that may have been added by a later editor disturbed by Koheleth's failure to mention God's laws: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone" (12:13).

Having read this background info on Kohelet, examine the following text and then fill in one row of the Commonplaces Chart as best you can summize.

Use these Guiding Questions to help you:

1)What *facts* do we know about Kohelet? What facts does he mention? (*ex. He's traveled the world and see lots of stuff through the eyes of a wealthy, secure man)*

4) What *assumptions* about life does Kohelet make?
2) What *values* about life does Kohelet make?
3) How does Kohelet address the *commonplaces* of the class chart?

You'll be responsible for teaching your fellow classmates about this text, so be sure to have answers ready to go!

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[6] adapted from the Wikipedia entry on "Ecclesiastes"

Chapter 1

(1) The words of Kohelet son of David, king in Jerusalem -- (2) "Utter futility!", said Kohelet. "Utter futility! All is futile! (3) What real value is there for a man in all the gains he makes beneath the sun? (4) One generation goes, another comes, but the earth remains the same forever. (5) The sun rises, and the sun sets - and glides back to where it rises. (6) Southward blowing, turning northward, even turning blows the wind; on its rounds the wind returns. (7) All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full; to the place from which they flow the streams flow back again. (8) All such things are wearisome; no man can ever state them; the eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear enough of hearing. (9) Only that shall happen which has happened, only that occur which has occurred; there is nothing new beneath the sun! (10) Sometimes there is a phenomenon of which they say, "look, this one is new!" -- but it occurred long since, in ages that went by before us. (11) The earlier ones are not remembered; so too those that will occur later will no more be remembered than those that will occur at the very end.

Kohelet Texts

Chapter 11

(1) Send your bread forth upon the waters; for after many days you will find it. (2)Distribute ortions to seven or even to either, for you cannon know what misfortune may occur on earth. (3)If the clouds are filled, they will pour down rain on the earth; and if a tree falls to the south or to the north, the tree will stay where it falls. (4) If one watches the wind, he will never sow; and if one observes the clouds, he will never reap. (5) Just as you do not know how the lifebreath passes into the limbs within the womb of the pregnant woman, so you cannot foresee the actions of God, who causes all things to happen. (6) Sow your seed in the morning, and don't hold back your hand in the evening, since you don't know which is going to succeed, the one or the other, or if both are equally good. (7) How sweet is the light, what a delight for the eyes to behold the sun! (8) Even if a man lives many years, let him enjoy himself in all of them, remembering how may the days of darkness are going to be. The only future is nothingness! (9) O youth, enjoy yourself while you are young! Let your heart lead you to enjoyment in the days of your youth. Follow the desires of your heart and the glances of your eyes - but know well that God will call you to account for all such things -- (10) and banish care from your mind, and pluck sorrow out of your flesh! For youth and black hair are fleeting.

"Pirkei Avot" Resource Sheet[7]

Pirkei Avot is a compilation of the ethical teachings and maxims of the Rabbis of the Mishnaic period. Because of its contents, it is also called **Ethics of the Fathers**. The teachings of Pirkei Avot appear in the Mishnaic tractate of *Avot*, the second-to-last tractate in the order of Nezikin in the Talmud. Pirkei Avot is unique in that it is the only tractate of the Talmud dealing *solely* with ethical and moral principles; there is little or no halacha (Jewish law).

The number of commentaries written on Pirkei Avot testify that it contains far more content and structure than can be captured in a simple outline. The following list aims merely to group some of the general commonplaces found in the work:

-*kindness toward others; respect for other people; respect for one's self; respect and devotion to God; be humble; pray well; be honest; do not leap to judgement; be fair in your judgements; be even-tempered; the punishment matches the sin; pass on your teachings to the next generation.*

Having read this background info on Pirkei Avot, examine the following text and then fill in one row of the Commonplaces Chart as best you can summize.

Use these Guiding Questions to help you:

1)What *facts* do we know about Pirkei Avot? What facts do the rabbis mention? (*ex. He's traveled the world and see lots of stuff through the eyes of a wealthy, secure man)*

4) What *assumptions* about life do the *Avot* make?
2) What *values* about life do the *Avot* make?
3) How do the *Avot* address the *commonplaces* of the class chart?

You'll be responsible for teaching your fellow classmates about this text, so be sure to have answers ready to go!

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[7] adapted from the Wikipedia entry on "Pirkei Avot"

Pirkei Avot Texts

1:1 Moses received the Torah from Sinai and gave it over to Joshua. Joshua gave it over to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets gave it over to the Men of the Great Assembly. They [the Men of the Great Assembly] would always say these three things: Be cautious in judgment. Establish many pupils. And make a safety fence around the Torah.

2. Shimon the Righteous was among the last surviving members of the Great assembly. He would say: The world stands on three things: Torah, the service of G-d, and deeds of kindness.

3. Antignos of Socho received the tradition from Shimon the Righteous. He would say: Do not be as slaves, who serve their master for the sake of reward. Rather, be as slaves who serve their master not for the sake of reward. And the fear of Heaven should be upon you.

1:10 Shmaayah and Avtalyon received from them. Shmaayah would say: Love work, loath mastery over others, and avoid intimacy with the government.

1:18 Rabbi Shimon the son of Gamliel would say: By three things is the world sustained: law, truth and peace. As is stated (Zachariah 8:16), "Truth, and a judgement of peace, you should administer at your [city] gates."

5:7 There are seven things that characterize a boor, and seven that characterize a wise man. A wise man does not speak before one who is greater than him in wisdom or age. He does not interrupt his fellow's words. He does not hasten to answer. His questions are on the subject and his answers to the point. He responds to first things first and to latter things later. Concerning what he did not hear, he says "I did not hear." He concedes to the truth. With the boor, the reverse of all these is the case.

5:10. There are four types of people: One who says, "What is mine is yours, and what is yours is mine" is a boor. One who says "What is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours" -- this is a median characteristic; others say that this is the character of a Sodomite. One who says, "What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours" is a *chassid* (pious person). And one who says "What is mine is mine, and what is yours is mine" is wicked.

Lesson 2: What Is A Personal Ideology*

Objectives
- recall definitions of *value, commonplace, assumption,* and *personal ideology*
- identify recurrent and/or overarching ideological themes within Jewish wisdom texts
- recreate the process of determining and ranking one's values when forming a personal ideology

Time Table
:00-:10 Set Induction
:10-:30 Activity One
:30-:55 Activity Two

Set Induction (10 min.)
Students are given a copy of a letter to the editor of the *Toledo Blaze* from December 26, 2007. The letter was printed during the primary season of the 2008 Presidential election, and its author states what criteria he considers when voting for a presidential candidate. In this case, those criteria are "*competence*", "*ethics*", and "*judgement*" (all of which the author goes on to define).

Read the article aloud as a class, then ask the students to rank the author's criteria (1-3, "1" being the highest). Some students may say that their answers are "tied"/of equal importance. If that happens, allow the student to "rank" them in any way they can.

Inquire as to the class' rankings (there are 9 possible combinations):

- What is the most popular combination? (*answer may* vary*)*
- Do you think these are the right criteria to consider? (*could answer Yes, No, or "There are a lot more to consider"*)
- Do you think there are other criteria to consider when picking a candidate? What are some examples? (*ex. "politics/positions on issues", "able to work with the other political party", "strong/decisive/willing to use military force, etc".).*
- Would you dismiss any of these from your own decision making process? Are any of the author's criteria not important to you? (**_____** *is important, but not as important as* **_____**).
- Do you think these are the same criteria that other people use in their decision making too? (*Some do, but there are a lot of other things to consider, and people decide what's most important to them.*)

Educator explains that when voting criteria like these become so widely used that they become standard for most people, they are what's known as "*commonplaces*". How one considers those commonplaces - and how they rank which ones are most important - helps form their political ideology. Similarly, when considering the commonplaces of life (in it's most broad sense), a person can form their own *personal* ideology.

<u>Activity One</u> (20 min.)
Educator guides students through the "What Is An Ideology" handout , "Values and Assumptions" handout, and the "Elements of a Personal Ideology" worksheet (provided), using one the commonplaces and (the author's espoused) values from the letter to the editor of the Toledo Blade.

see "Teacher" version of worksheets for examples (provided)

<u>Activity Two</u> (25 min.)
Students will try to recreate the process of ideologies using the Jewish texts from Lesson 1 to figure out the authors' personal ideologies. Educator explains to the students that, for the purposes of this class, our basic commonplaces will be:

- the Purpose of Life
- God
- Love
- Wealth
- Wisdom/Knowledge

Students break into small groups to fill in the chart provided by using the texts from Lesson 1; **they may choose which text to work with, but educator should make sure every text is being attempted.** Along the way, students may make suggestions as to how the chart could be refined, narrowed down, even re-written in some places. Encourage students to add new columns if necessary, but try to use the commonplaces provided as well (although some topics may not be covered in the texts studied).

Ex.*responsibility*, *intimacy*, *leisure*, etc.
see "Teacher" version of Commonplaces Chart for examples

Have students compare their charts with other groups, and then with the entire class. If any newly suggested commonplaces find general consensus (more than 3/4 of the class) add them on to the chart - *remember, commonplaces are topics that most people consider, even if they have different answers to them or they think different ones are more valuable.*

Remind students that these Jewish ideologies will be important to reference for the rest of the semester, and sometimes answers will change or shift as we read more about the authors. Students will also be asked to constantly apply their own values in comparison to those from the texts and other sources studied.

<u>Resources</u>
- sample chart with commonplaces filled in (provided)
- Resource sheets: "What Is An Ideology?"; "Elements of a Personal Ideology"; "What Are Commonplaces?" (provided)
- *Letter to the Editor of the Toledo Blade, December 26, 2007* (provided)

Letter to the Editor
Toledo Blade

Listen carefully, read widely, then choose

This task of selecting a new president is not about glib sound bites or a beauty contest. For me, it involves three considerations:

Competence: What experience has the candidate had in the exercise of executive power and command? Can I extrapolate how this experience will be used? For the most part, mayors and governors have that experience. It is difficult to extrapolate from the experience of a senator or representative.

Ethics: How has the candidate lived out his or her stand on moral questions? This is a judgment based on the personal virtues and attributes historically.

Judgment: Where does the candidate stand on issues that I think are important to the country? Is the stand clearly stated without waffling? Is it consistent, even if not popular, and what has been the historical practice?

I must listen carefully, read widely, and discern greatly to make an informed decision. I do not have a theological test, a gender test, a racial test, or a geographic test.

Finally, the last thing I rely on are these so called "debates" and the silly questions from the silly questioners.

JON LEE
Perrysburg

December 26, 2007

What is an ideology?

From Wikipedia:

> An **ideology** is a set of ideas [and values] that constitutes one's goals, expectations, and actions. An ideology can be thought of as a comprehensive vision, as a way of looking at things...or a set of ideas proposed by the dominant class of a society to all members of [a] society... *The main purpose behind an ideology is to offer either change in society, or adherence to a set of ideals where conformity already exists, through a normative thought process.* Ideologies are systems of abstract thought applied to public matters.

Dr. Isa Aaron of HUC-JIR's Rhea Hirsch School of Education writes,

> A useful analogy [for an ideology] is that of a constellation of stars. Like the [number of] stars in the sky, there are many possible values in [life]; and like the stars, it is difficult to focus on the values until one draws imaginary lines of connection between them. Constellations give stargazers a concrete, memorable picture, which helps to highlight and locate the stars that interest them the most. Similarly, an...ideology enables [a person] to focus on a manageable number of values and to see the [various] implications of these values.[8]

[8] Adapted from "What Is An Ideology of Education", an in-class handout written by Dr. Isa Aaron of HUC-JIR's Rhea Hirsch School of Education.

What is an ideology? (Teacher)

From Wikipedia:

> An **ideology** is a set of ideas [and values] that constitutes one's goals, expectations, and actions. An ideology can be thought of as a comprehensive vision, as a way of looking at things...or a set of ideas proposed by the dominant class of a society to all members of [a] society... *The main purpose behind an ideology is to offer either change in society, or adherence to a set of ideals where conformity already exists, through a normative thought process.* Ideologies are systems of abstract thought applied to public matters.

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Definitions: Values and Assumptions

When studying an ideology it's important to distinguish between a **fact** and a **value**.

A ***fact*** is a statement about what is; it can be tested and proven true or false using evidence gathered through the senses. For example, the following are empirical facts:

- It is raining today.
- I am taller than you are.
- Susie's IQ test score is higher than Danny's.

A ***value*** is a statement about what *ought to be*, rather than what *is*. For example:

- Honesty is the best policy.
- Strive to be the best person you can.
- Cleanliness
- Equality

Values might seem to be stated as facts (as in the first two examples) or as words (in example #3) or phrases (in example #4). But one way to tell that they are values is that they can be re-phrased as sentences with "it is good to …" or "you should.." Here is how the above values can be re-phrased:

- You should always be honest.
- It is good for people to try to do their best.
- It is important to be clean
- People who live in a democracy (or who are part of the same religious group) should have a shared language.

In Assignment #1 you will get to play around with a list of values, and see how these values sometimes come into conflict with one another.

One more important definition….

Assumptions are generalizations that are worded like empirical facts. Sometimes an assumption has strong empirical evidence behind it, but (as is often the case in education) sometimes it just *sounds* like a fact, and people treat it like a fact, but it has never been tested empirically. I call this latter category a value masquerading as a fact.

Definitions: Values and Assumptions (Teacher)

When studying an ideology it's important to distinguish between a **fact** and a **value**.

A ***fact*** is a statement about what is; it can be tested and proven true or false using evidence gathered through the senses. For example, the following are empirical facts:

- It is raining today.
- I am taller than you are.
- Susie's IQ test score is higher than Danny's.

Questions:

- What are some *facts* about the political process that the author is writing about (*these may not be present in the article itself; students can use their own knowledge of US elections).*

  ex. Happens once every four years; election is in November; winner of the electoral vote, not the popular vote, becomes President.

A ***value*** is a statement about what *ought to be*, rather than what *is*. For example:

- Honesty is the best policy.
- Strive to be the best person you can.
- Cleanliness
- Equality

Questions:

- What are some *values* the author espouses?

  ex. good judgement; ethical behavior; experience - HIS CRITERIA!

****REMEMBER****

Values might seem to be stated as facts (as in the first two examples) or as words (in example #3) or phrases (in example #4). But one way to tell that they are values is that they can be re-phrased as sentences with "it is good to …" or "you should.." Here is how the above values can be re-phrased:

- You should always be honest.
- It is good for people to try to do their best.
- It is important to be clean
- People who live in a democracy (or who are part of the same religious group) should have a shared language.

In a moment we will will get to play around with a list of values regarding the texts we read last class, and see how these values sometimes come into conflict with one another.

One more important definition….
(over)

Assumptions are generalizations that are worded like empirical facts. Sometimes an assumption has strong empirical evidence behind it, but (as is often the case in education) sometimes it just *sounds* like a fact, and people treat it like a fact, but it has never been tested empirically. I call this latter category a value masquerading as a fact.

Some examples of ***assumptions***:

- "*Women tend to be more interested in relationships than men.*" This assumption has strong empirical evidence behind it, so it is a pretty good assumption. What is not a good assumption is the statement "women are better than men," (because the word "better" could have a lot of different meanings.)
-
- "*People have different types of intelligence*." This assumption was articulated by psychologist Howard Gardner and has become conventional wisdom in many educational circles. It has common sense evidence behind it, because different people have different strengths. But to call these strengths "intelligences," you have to define them rigorously and test for them. To the best of my knowledge, neither Gardner nor anyone else, has defined "musical intelligence" or "kinesthetic intelligence" and developed a scale to test them (If you know of such a definition and test, please let me know!) So I would call this statement half assumption, half value.
-
- "*Children learn best through activity*." This assumption, which goes by the name "constructivism" is a great example of a value masquerading as a fact. To test this assumption empirically you would have to get very large matched samples of children, and have experimental and control groups taught by the same sets of teachers, one half learning a subject through activities, the other learning through what we call "direct instruction." This research would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to conduct, and no one has ever done it. Let me be clear about this: I, personally, hold this as one of my values; I looked for a constructivist school to educate my children. But none of us should be under the illusion that this is an empirically verified assumption. (If you want to read more about this, see Kieran Egan's excellent book, *Getting it Wrong form the Beginning: Our Progressivist Inheritance from Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget.)*

Ask students for some examples of *assumptions* that might be made from the letter to the editor:

Ex: *A good leader acts with integrity*[10].
Experience is the most important quality in a leader.
Good leaders have clear, consistent judgement.

---

[10] "Integrity": when one's thoughts, words, and actions all align; in other words, "When your insides match your outsides" (courtesy of Dr. Michael Zeldin, HUC-JIR RHSOE.

Elements Of a Personal Ideology[11]

For the purposes of this course, to understand someone's *personal ideology* it is necessary to read about, discuss, and ultimately decide on:

1) An articulation of ***assumptions*** the person has about:
   -- the purpose of life
   -- one's own place in the world
   -- God
   -- how people should spend time living
   -- the world around us
   -- our role models/teachers
   -- the relationship between themselves and society at large

   These considerations listed above are "commonplaces" of a personal ideology - we will look closer at commonplaces in a few minutes

2) A discussion of the ***values*** a person deems most important, and some indication of what values s/he dismisses, re-interprets, or believes to be of secondary importance. These values are based on how we consider and respond to commonplaces of life.

3) A portrait of what a person believes an "average life" would look like, including answers to some of the following questions:
   - is participation in society (meaningful interactions) mandatory? who decides whether it is or isn't
   - who sets the "rules of life"? according to what criteria?
   - how do we learn things in this world?
   - what should the relationship of an individual be to those immediately around him? In his wider community? In the world?
   - how is someone judged, by other people and by God?

In the simplest understanding:

*Our **values** are what we deem important (or dismiss) when we consider **commonplaces;** organizing and arranging our values forms our **ideology.***

A Note for the Future:

When preparing any presentation (written or otherwise) for yourself or for the class, be prepared to offer your own thoughts on:

- your own evaluation of this ideology: what are it's values? what are it's assumptions? what critiques do you have?
- the application of this specific ideology to your own life - do you agree or disagree with any parts of it?

---

[11] Adapted from 'Elements of a "Complete" Educational Ideology', an in-class handout developed by Dr. Isa Aaron.

What Are Commonplaces? (Teacher)

Think of a map, which is a simplified representation of the overwhelmingly complex reality of the Earth. Elementary school students, sailors, hikers, and geographers all utilize maps, but each has a different set of interests and each requires a map that presents the necessary information, without causing undue confusion. Thus we have globes for basic understanding, flat maps for navigation, topographical maps for hikers, atlases for geography students, and so on. What all these maps have in common is that they feature *common places*—countries, cities, rivers, and so on. Of course, the relationship between the various common places might be represented differently on different maps, and certain places might appear on some maps, but not others—a factor that could tell us something about the differences between the maps. [12]

Ask about underlined quote above: What might the differences in maps tell us about the different people using them?

Ex. It tells us what's most important to them, and what things are less important. A globe shows major bodies of water because it's showing the whole Earth, but it doesn't show every little river and lake that navigators might think are important.

Remind students: As we work our way through this curriculum, we are going to encounter a lot of people - some historical, biblical, some fictitious. As we get to know their thoughts on life, it is important to pinpoint what they say not just about "life" in general, but about some specific aspects of life. Each *hevruta* is going to create a Commonplaces Chart for themselves, and as we go along and hear more and more opinions on life and the world around us, we are going to add onto it in order to compare and contrast different ideologies - and perhaps even articulate our own personal ideology in the process.

[12] From "What Are Commonplaces" by Dr. Isa Aaron.

What Are Commonplaces?

Think of a map, which is a simplified representation of the overwhelmingly complex reality of the Earth. Elementary school students, sailors, hikers, and geographers all utilize maps, but each has a different set of interests and each requires a map that presents the necessary information, without causing undue confusion. Thus we have globes for basic understanding, flat maps for navigation, topographical maps for hikers, atlases for geography students, and so on. What all these maps have in common is that they feature ***common places***—countries, cities, rivers, and so on. Of course, the relationship between the various common places might be represented differently on different maps, and certain places might appear on some maps, but not others—a factor that could tell us something about the differences between the **maps** and the **map users**.

Commonplaces Chart

Text	Purpose of Life	God	Love	Wealth	Wisdom/ Knowledge

UNIT 2: Existence Is All Around Us

Enduring Understandings

- *Kohelet* and *Pirkei Avot* teach three different ideological ways to view the world

- Though written at different times and under different circumstances, the messages of personal values contained within Jewish and secular texts address similar ideological commonplaces.

Essential Questions

- How should I live my life?
- What is the purpose of life?
- How does experience influence my beliefs?
- How do my beliefs influence my future choices?

Knowledge

- differing philosophical opinions of Kohelet, Pirkei Avot, and various artists
- various contemporary (secular) opinions of various artists via different media

Skills

- Hebrew translation
- Textual analysis
- Values-based argumentation (compare and contrast)
- Synthesis of multiple philosophical viewpoints via artistic project

Lesson 1 - *A Tale of Two Lifespans

Objectives
- translate selected portions of texts from Hebrew to English
- convert literal translations to idiomatic translations.
- Distinguish between the positions of Kohelet and Yehuda Amichai on the topic of "the time in one's life".
- Articulate personal beliefs with regard to Kohelet and Amichai's positions.
- Portray a dialogue from the perspective of Kohelet and Amichai on the topic of daily human existence.

Time Table

:00-:05	Set Induction
:05-:25	Activity One
:25-:40	Activity Two
:40-:50	Activity Three

Set Induction

Begin by asking students to take just one minute and answer the following question on a small slip of paper:

What is the meaning of life?

The educator should remind them that this is a BIG question and there are no right or wrong answers - anything they believe should be written down. Encourage them to take as much space on the paper as they need, but only to write for one minute.

Ex. "Happiness"; "Love", "Satisfaction". "The meaning of life is to be a good person and to try to make a difference in the world."

The educator should then ask students to close their eyes and imagine the following scenario:

> *One morning, a man woke up on his day off from work. He had been looking forward to this moment all week - it was a full day of doing whatever it was that he wanted. He stretched, washed his face, and slipped on his shoes before heading out into his backyard. It was a beautiful day - sunny, clear, and warm. The birds were chirping happily, the grass was already almost dry from its morning dew, and he was happy to be alive.*
>
> *Standing just outside the door of his house, he looked around and started making a mental list of what he wanted to do with his day. He loved relaxing with a cup of coffee and watching the birds, but he also*

knew that he needed to mow the lawn before noon - it was supposed to start raining then, and he was compelled to finish his work before it became too wet outside.

As he pondered what he should do first, he thought of his favorite line from the Tanakh: For everything, there is a season; there is a moment for every purpose beneath the heaven. He smiled at the thought of this, until he remembered what he once heard another man say to him: A man doesn't have time in his life to have time for everything.

He smiled at this too, and realized both statements had truth.

Immediately after reading the story, discuss with students:

- What are the two (or more) choices facing this person? *(ex. relax or get work done).*
- If you were this person in this situation, what choices would you make regarding your actions and your responsibilities? (*ex. "First relax, then get all my work done, then relax more"; "Get all of my work done so I don't have it pile up later"; "Just relax! It's my day off!)*
- What bigger situations can you think of where this dichotomy of options might happen? *(ex. choosing which college to attend; deciding whether to do homework or go play basketball, etc)*

Activity One

Educator reintroduces *Kohelet* from Unit 1; remind students what the nature of the book is about, what kinds of topics the author wants to tell us about, etc. Draw on the chart made in Lesson 1-2.

Have students work in *hevruta* to translate Kohelet 3:1-8 into English. This is to serve two purposes: first, to ensure that students can engage with texts in their original format (reading, parsing, etc; "direct translation"); and, second, to ensure that students understand the texts into which they are delving ("idiomatic translation").

Since this is the first time trying to translate (within the context of this curriculum, at least), the educator should guide them through the first line of this exercise. The two translations (direct and idiomatic) may look something like this:

- **Direct: "To/for everything, a time; and a moment to/for every object/thing/ desire beneath the sky.**
- **Idiomatic: "Everything has a season; and [there is] a moment for every thing under heaven."**

Students should have about fifteen minutes to complete both translations. At the end of this time, they'll be asked to pair up with another *hevruta* and compare translations; this is to check for overall understanding as well as specific words.

Activity Two

Now that students have examined a classical Jewish response to questions of existence, they should look at a more contemporary Jewish response to those same inquiries.

Introduce (or remind) students to Yehuda Amichai:

Yehuda Amichai was an Israeli poet who wrote from the 1960s until his death in 2000. Considered by many around the world to be the leading Hebrew poet of modern times, he was able to capture the feelings of the entire Israeli nation with his words, all of which he did using only the newly-reestablished Hebrew language (as opposed to Yiddish, which was prevalent amongst Jews worldwide at the time).

Amichai was born and raised in Jerusalem, and he grew up religiously observant and educated; he was known to quote Biblical and Talmudic passages from memory, having studied them from a young age. As an adult, he spent much of his time in Tel Aviv, the center of Israel's artistic culture with much less emphasis on religiosity and its dogmatic approach to understanding the world. Here, he wrote many poems which challenged the religious texts of his upbringing. One poem Amichai wrote was called "A Man In His Life", a response to Kohelet's beliefs.

(If you are doing this as a whole group):

The educator should ask for volunteer(s) to read individual stanzas. Students can also opt to read the poem on their own, but if they finish earlier than the class they should wait quietly. When the entire poem has been read, students should return to their hevruta groups and compare the two texts, making notes along the way of where the two philosophies match up or diverge.

At the end of their discussion, each *hevruta* should write a one- or two-sentence summary of each philosophy (Kohelet and Amichai), illustrating the essential belief they are trying to articulate.

Activity Three **(Assessment)**

This can take place easily if the whole class is studying together; if students are working beit midrash-style, students can team up with other hevrutot, or feel free to call the teacher over to watch!)

The educator should explain the premise of the activity:

A philosopher's ideas are not just an academic exercise - they believe that what they have thought up/written/expounded upon has real life implications and shouldn't just be discussed in the abstract. So today, we are going to see a sort of old-Jewish-man throw-down between Kohelet and Yehuda Amichai.

Picture it: a regular afternoon in Tel Aviv. It's warm, but not humid; children have just finished their day at school and are running, happily and hungrily, for their homes; mothers push their babies down the sidewalk in strollers, and constructions workers disregard traffic in an attempt to finish their jobs more quickly. All in all, it is a typical day in the life of a Tel Avivian.

At a stone chess table along Rothschild Blvd., two old men sit with cups of coffee clutched in their hands. One of them, a widely-traveled and experienced man, begins to explain his views on the world and on life; the other, a more subdued man who has spent most of his life in his home city, offers his own unique point of view.

Choose two students who can represent Kohelet and Amichai - it is their job to use real-life examples of human experiences and actions to prove that their argument is correct. At any point, another student may "tag-in" to the discussion and take over. This should go on for anywhere from 7-10 minutes (the educator may need to encourage and guide the conversation at first, to help students ease into the activity) before moving on to the following discussion question:

1. What, if anything, do Kohelet and Amichai agree about, in the contexts of how one should spend the time of their lives? (*ex. that TIME is an important factor)*
2. What do you think is/are the most glaring difference(s) between their conclusions? (ex. *Kohelet sees everything as individual experiences, but Amichai sees everything being connected)*
3. Which author are you, at this point in your life, most likely to side with on this issue? Why? What are the most compelling real-life situations that help you come to this decision? (*ex. "Kohelet, because when I'm not worrying about certain things, I don't connect them with every other experience I have"; "Amichai, because I believe that every action and experience is somehow connected with every other.)*

Resources/Materials

- Kohelet 3:1-8 and available translation for checking accuracy
- Hebrew-English dictionary OR access to online dictionary
- Text of "A Man In His Life" (Y. Amichai) (provided)

“A Man In His Life”[13]
Yehuda Amichai

A man doesn't have time in his life
to have time for everything.
He doesn't have seasons enough to have
a season for every purpose. Ecclesiastes
Was wrong about that.

A man needs to love and to hate at the same moment,
to laugh and cry with the same eyes,
with the same hands to throw stones and to gather them,
to make love in war and war in love.
And to hate and forgive and remember and forget,
to arrange and confuse, to eat and to digest
what history
takes years and years to do.

A man doesn't have time.
When he loses he seeks, when he finds
he forgets, when he forgets he loves, when he loves
he begins to forget.

And his soul is seasoned, his soul
is very professional.
Only his body remains forever
an amateur. It tries and it misses,
gets muddled, doesn't learn a thing,
drunk and blind in its pleasures
and its pains.

He will die as figs die in autumn,
Shriveled and full of himself and sweet,
the leaves growing dry on the ground,
the bare branches pointing to the place
where there's time for everything.

---

[13] Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai, Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Lesson 2 - *Carry On, My Wayward Son (of David, King in Jerusalem)*

Objectives:
- translate selected portions of texts from Hebrew to English
- convert literal translations to idiomatic translations.
- compare and contrast the position(s) of Kohelet and the band Kansas on the topic of existence.
- generate additional stanzas to relevant texts.

Time Table:

:00-:05	**Set Induction**
:05-:25	**Activity One - Translation**
:25-:40	**Activity Two - Discussion**
:40-:50	**Activity Three - Writing**

Set Induction/Review:
The educator should ask two students to read the previous day's texts (Kohelet 3:1-8 and Amichai) and ask for a few summaries of what the texts say, where they differ, etc. Remind students that these texts are *philosophical* in nature, and that each of the texts/ works we will study will probe individual authors' beliefs of humanity and existence. Today we are going to read another passage from *Kohelet*, but this time from the very beginning - Chapter 1, verses 1-12.

Activity One:
Educator should guide students in translating the first line of the text. Since this is less of a repetitive translation process as Lesson 1, the educator may also need to guide students on the usage of a Hebrew-to-English dictionary with regard to looking up different parts of speech

Students should divide up into *hevruta* (best if they are the same as the previous day, but OK to change at this point) and come up with a "straight" translation and an idiomatic translation. After completing both, two hevrutot should compare and contrast their definitions.

When all/most *hevrutas* are finished, the educator should guide the class in a discussion about the "essence" of the passage:
- What is the author's outlook on life? On the world? One "being"?
- What do you think the author would say is the "point" of life? What would he say about our actions in the world?
- How does this compare to the philosophy of Kohelet 3:1-8 and Amichai (from Lesson 1)?

Activity Two
Educator should explain (verbatim or in their own words):

Artists always believe that their work shows their beliefs. They like to use the word "integrity" when describing what they produce, and "integrity" means that someone's thoughts, words, and actions are all in alignment; in other words, they say what they think, and they do what they say. One band that did this with great success was Kansas.

Their song "Dust In the Wind" was NOT the kind of song that their fans were used to; they were better known for rock songs like "Carry On My Wayward Son". Their popular song, "Dust In the Wind" was far more philosophical than their other topical songs, and the language that they used intentionally drew from a source (Genesis 3:19) that they knew people would recognize and resonate with. Let's listen thought their song and see if what they claim as their Truth (and, therefore, Genesis 3:19's Truth) compares or contrasts to Kohelet's in the very beginning of his book."

Educator should distribute copies of the song's lyrics and play the song to the whole group. When the song is finished, have the students flip over the paper and answer questions to check for understanding and comprehension.

Activity Three

Each *hevruta* is responsible for writing another stanza of the song (not the chorus). Although they may disagree with the message of the lyrics (and with Kohelet), they need to remain true to the style of the song as well as write with *integrity.*

When the groups are finished, ask for volunteers to share (maybe even sing!) their new stanzas to a lyrics-free version of the song.

Resources

- text of Kohelet 1:1-12
- lyrics of "Dust In the Wind" (provided) with comprehension questions on the back
- CD/player or iPod/speakers

“Dust In the Wind”
by Kansas (1977)

I close my eyes
Only for a moment and the moment's gone
All my dreams
Pass before my eyes with curiosity

Dust in the wind
All they are is dust in the wind

Same old song
Just a drop of water in an endless sea
All we do
Crumbles to the ground, though we refuse to see

(Aa aa aa)
Dust in the wind
All we are is dust in the wind
Oh, ho, ho

Now don't hang on
Nothin' last forever but the earth and sky
It slips away
And all your money won't another minute buy

Dust in the wind
All we are is dust in the wind
(All we are is dust in the wind)

Dust in the wind
(Everything is dust in the wind)
Everything is dust in the wind
(In the wind)

(from the 1978 album *Point of Know Return* by Kansas)

Lesson 3 - *Don't Worry, Be Happy*

Objectives:
- Compare and contrast the position(s) of Kohelet and singer Bobby McFerrin on the topic of existence
- translate selected portions of texts from Hebrew to English
- convert literal translations to idiomatic translations.
- Generate additions to relevant texts

Set Induction

Educator should ask for a review of the texts studied the day before as well as the big ideas ("essences") that they spoke about. Also review the texts from the day before (K. 3:1-8/Amichai) and ask how they seem to fit together (or not fit together) so far.

The educator should begin a conversation about how it feels to talk about these texts and consider what they imply about the world - does it make us feel validated? Sad? Scared? Uplifted? Get a sense of how it feels to "know".

Kohelet himself thought that knowing too much also hurt too much sometimes. Today's text, Kohelet 1:17-18, is a response to that feeling.

Activity One

This is a short one, so consider letting them try on their own without guidance at first. The educator should definitely travel around the room and assist as necessary, but this is a good chance to informally evaluate individual translation skills up to this point.

As before, each *hevruta* should do both a "straight" and idiomatic translation. When finished, compare with another *hevruta* to check for glaring errors or differences of opinion as to the translation.

When the whole group is back together, educator should ask:
- What is the essence of what Kohelet believes in this line?
- What is the more colloquial way to say this Truth? (ex: "Don't worry, be happy")
- If Kohelet were to walk in the door to this classroom right now and see you - young, vibrant people with their whole lives ahead of them - studying such deep texts, what do you think he would say (based on the meaning of this line)?
- Who agrees with this text? Fully or in part?
- How would you phrase what Kohelet is saying in the *opposite?* For example, he basically tells us "To know about the world is to be tortured"; what's the opposite of that? Do we have a saying for that in our modern culture? (Ex: "Ignorance is bliss", etc.

Activity Two

Ask students to make a list of 3-5 things which, if they DIDN'T know them, their lives might be easier (or "might appear easier"). If the students are OK with it, make a list of them on the board big enough to easily see from every seat. *This is an opportunity for the class to open up to real concerns, fears, and discomforts in their lives. Please make sure to reiterate the necessity of compassion and confidentiality (when appropriate) with this activity.*

When the list is made, the educator should ask about the consequences of knowing those things on the board: How does knowing about those items make us behave or think or speak? Could we ever *act* as though we didn't know something even when we really do? What are some examples?

Educator should then introduce the song for the day, "Don't Worry, Be Happy" and pass out lyrics for the song. As with the days before, *hevrutas* should discuss the song afterwards and note its similarities and differences to the Kohelet verse.

Activity Three

Imagine that Kohelet is transported to 1988 and becomes roommates with Bobby McFerrin (the songwriter of "DWBH"). McFerrin has finished the song and passed out with exhaustion on his bed, but left the final draft of the lyrics on his desk. You (Kohelet) have heard him practice and re-write the song a thousand times, but you think he got the lyrics wrong - he's too optimistic! He thinks all of life's hardships can all be solved by talking to friends or just ignoring things! You decide to save the integrity of the song and rewrite the lyrics before he sends them to his producer.

As a *hevruta*, rewrite at least 2 verses of "DWBH" to show how Kohelet feels about ignorance and knowledge. After all the groups have completed theirs, share and compare. Check for real-life application of the text's existential tone by probing examples made in each *hevruta's* verses.

Resources

- text of Kohelet 1:17-18
- lyrics to "Don't Worry Be Happy" by Bobby McFerrin
- speakers/iPod/etc.)

Don’t Worry, Be Happy
by Bobby McFerrin (1988)

Here is a little song I wrote
You might want to sing it note for note
Don't worry be happy
In every life we have some trouble
When you worry you make it double
Don't worry, be happy.....

Ain't got no place to lay your head
Somebody came and took your bed
Don't worry, be happy
The land lord say your rent is late
He may have to litigate
Don't worry, be happy
Lood at me I am happy
Don't worry, be happy
Here I give you my phone number
When you worry call me
I make you happy
Don't worry, be happy
Ain't got no cash, ain't got no style
Ain't got not girl to make you smile
But don't worry be happy
Cause when you worry
Your face will frown
And that will bring everybody down
So don't worry, be happy (now).....

There is this little song I wrote
I hope you learn it note for note
Like good little children
Don't worry, be happy
Listen to what I say
In your life expect some trouble
But when you worry
You make it double
Don't worry, be happy.....
Don't worry don't do it, be happy
Put a smile on your face
Don't bring everybody down like this
Don't worry, it will soon past
Whatever it is
Don't worry, be happy

Lesson 4: *Without A Paddle:* Images of Water

Objectives
- translate selected portions of texts from Hebrew to English
- convert literal translations to idiomatic translations.
- Compare and contrast the position(s) of Kohelet and Garth Brooks on the topic of existence and the imagery of rivers
- Articulate own beliefs regarding Kohelet's and Brooks' ideas
- Generate additions to relevant texts

Set Induction
Educator should review the previous 3 lessons' texts/songs, along with a summary of the different existential and philosophical ideas and beliefs that have been touched on so far.

After a quick review, the educator should announce that today they are going to be talking about rivers. Yes, rivers, the bodies of flowing water. What do we know about rivers, in general? Why do they form and how are they unique from other bodies of water (or, really, other rivers)? Get some general thoughts on rivers on the board (it's OK if they don't seem to deep, but make sure to get to the ideas of "flowing", "twisting/ meandering", "source" and "mouth".

Kohelet uses rivers as a metaphor for one of his philosophical points early in his book. Today's text is Kohelet 1:6-7.

Song: The River by Garth Brooks

Activity One
Same manner as previous lessons: *hevruta*, two translations, compare and contrast with another group. When all groups are finished, make a list on the board (close enough to the "river" list to compare) of the main essences of Kohelet's words in these two verses. Why might he have chosen to use rivers in his book, with regard to the facts on list 1.

Activity Two
Read the lyrics to Garth Brooks' "The River" as the song is played; ask students to make notes along the way about where Kohelet's philosophy in lines 1:6-7 peek through Brooks' words. After the song has been played, students should get into hevruta and discuss their ideas, making notes of where Brooks is more *overt* or *covert* in his writing. How do the lyrics of both Kohelet and Garth Brooks come through in real, daily life?

Activity Three
NEWSFLASH! Garth Brooks has been transported back to the days of Kohelet with the help of his magical time-traveling guitar pick (don't ask, just go with it)! He sees Kohelet's book in it's early form and decides that verse 1:17 isn't poetic enough and

doesn't use enough imagery. He decides to expand the line in his own style (since he DOES already have a hit song about rivers and knows a thing or two about them). Each *hevruta* should write at least 3 lines ("1:17b-d") expanding on Kohelet's verse. After groups are finished, ask for volunteers to share what they've written.

Resources

- text of Kohelet 1:6-7
- lyrics to "The River" by Garth Brooks
- iPod/speakers/CD players/etc.

The River
by Garth Brook

You know a dream is like a river
Ever changin' as it flows
And a dreamer's just a vessel
That must follow where it goes
Trying to learn from what's behind you
And never knowing what's in store
Makes each day a constant battle
Just to stay between the shores
And I will sail my vessel
'Til the river runs dry
Like a bird upon the wind
These waters are my sky
I'll never reach my destination
If I never try
So I will sail my vessel
'Til the river runs dry

Too many times we stand aside
And let the waters slip away
'Til what we put off 'til tomorrow
It has now become today
So don't you sit upon the shoreline
And say you're satisfied
Choose to chance the rapids
And dare to dance that tide...

And I will sail my vessel
'Til the river runs dry
Like a bird upon the wind
These waters are my sky
I'll never reach my destination
If I never try
So I will sail my vessel
'Til the river runs dry
There's bound to be rough waters
And I know I'll tke soome falls
With the good Lord as my captain
I can make it through them all
And I will sail my vessel
'Til the river runs dry
Like a bird upon the wind
These waters are my sky
I'll never reach my destination
If I never try
So I will sail my vessel
'Til the river runs dry
Lord, I will sail my vessel
'Til the river runs dry

(c.1992, Smith/Brooks)

Lesson 5 - *It Takes Two*

Objectives

- translate selected portions of texts from Hebrew to English
- convert literal translations to idiomatic translations.
- distinguish between the positions of Kohelet and S. Sondheim's characters on the topics of *partnership* and *purpose*
- articulate own beliefs regarding Kohelet's and Sondheim's characters' positions.
- generate additions to relevant texts

Activity One

Educator should guide students in translating the lines of text in *hevrutot.* Students should come up with a direct- and idiomatic translation of the text, and compare with at least one other group to check for accuracy and comprehension.

When all/most *hevrutot* are finished, the educator should guide the class in a discussion about the "essence" of the passage:

- In your opinion, what is the main point of what Kohelet is arguing here?
- What are some examples that he gives to back up his argument?
- Describe, if any, how these lines either complement or contrast earlier arguments of Kohelet which we've studied.

(*For example: in many of the other selections of Kohelet, he seems to argue that everything we do is pointless and amounts to nothing in the end. So why does he put such emphasis on partnership and helping others out if it all eventually means nothing?*)

Activity Two

Introduce the musical "Into the Woods" to the class (many may have seen it, it's been revived a few times lately and it's a standard at public/secular high schools for their drama clubs!)

> *"Into the Woods" is a musical by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine. It was on Broadway in the late '80s and early '90s, and it's since been revived a number of times in a number of cities, and it's a common choice for schools and universities to put on through their clubs and departments.*
>
> *The show is a mash-up of classic fairy tale characters and plots: there is a baker and his wife who desperately want to have a child, but have been cursed by the witch next door out of jealousy and revenge. The bakery is visited by a little girl in a red cape, on her way to visit her grandmother. As she travels through the woods, she passes by Jack, a not-too-bright youngster who has to take his beloved best friend/cow to the marketplace and sell it for money and food. Also traveling through the woods is a young woman named Cinderella, who is tortured at home by her stepmother and stepsisters, but who finds herself the object of a*

prince's affection after a magical night at a royal ball. The prince's brother - another handsome, dashing son of royalty - is, himself, wandering the woods looking for a beautiful long-haired woman who lives "high in a tower".

The witch informs the Baker and his Wife that she will lift the curse on their house if they can find and bring her four objects before the stroke of midnight in three days' time: a cow as white as milk, a cape as red as blood, a hair as yellow as corn, and a slipper as pure as gold.

The Baker instructs his Wife to stay at home as he - the "man of the house" - goes out to fix their problems. The Wife remains behind only long enough to convince herself that she must help her husband, even though he has forbidden it. They each encounter successes and failures along the way, at times possessing what they are searching for and at times losing their needed possessions. Eventually, they find each other in the deep of the forest...

Watch the video clip of "Into the Woods", with copies of the lyrics available to students who would like to read along. Afterwards, as for reactions about the message behind the song:

- What is the main point of each character's argument at the beginning of the song and at the end (if any difference)
- What is the connection between the characters' arguments in "ITW" and Kohelet's argument in 4:9-12?
- Are there differences between the different opinions? Do you agree or disagree or think differently about the choices?

Activity 3

Imagine you are Joe/Jane Kohelet, the lead theatre critic at the Newoldland Times newpaper. You've been given the assignment to attend and critique a performance of "Into the Woods" on Broadway, but you only have space for 250 words, as opposed to your usual 1,000 words. Using "your own" (read: Kohelet's) beliefs as a basis for criticism, write a review of the song "It Takes Two"; you should express what you agree with, what you disagree with, examples of where your philosophy matches up with the meaning behind the show's song, and what implications these beliefs might have on someone in the real world.

Oh, and you have a tight deadline: __ minutes!

Resources/Materials

- text of Kohelet 4:9-12
- Hebrew-English dictionary OR access to online dictionary
- A/V set up for YouTube viewing of *Into the Woods*
- lyrics to "It Takes Two" from *Into the Woods* (provided)

[BAKER'S WIFE] You've changed. You're daring. You're different in the woods. More sure, More sharing. You're getting us through the woods. If you could see- You're not the man who started, And much more openhearted Than I knew You to be. [BAKER] It takes two. I thought one was enough, It's not true: It takes two of us You came through When the journey was rough. It took you. It took two of us. It takes care. It takes patience and fear and despair To change. Though you swear To change, Who can tell if you do? It takes two. [BAKER'S WIFE] You've changed. You're thriving. There's something about the woods. Not just Surviving. You're blossoming in the woods. At home I'd fear We'd stay the same forever. And then out here- You're passionate Charming, Considerate, Clever-	[BAKER'S WIFE] You've changed. You're daring. You're different in the woods. More sure, More sharing. You're getting us through the woods. If you could see- You're not the man who started, And much more openhearted Than I knew You to be. [BAKER] It takes two. I thought one was enough, It's not true: It takes two of us You came through When the journey was rough. It took you. It took two of us. It takes care. It takes patience and fear and despair To change. Though you swear To change, Who can tell if you do? It takes two. [BAKER'S WIFE] You've changed. You're thriving. There's something about the woods. Not just Surviving. You're blossoming in the woods. At home I'd fear We'd stay the same forever. And then out here- You're passionate Charming, Considerate, Clever-

"It Takes Two" from <u>Into the Woods</u> (Sondheim/Lapine, 1990).

Lesson 6 - *What Is Love?*

Objectives
- translate selected portions of texts from Hebrew to English
- convert literal translations to idiomatic translations.
- distinguish between the positions of Kohelet and Stevie Wonder on the topics of "love" and "joy".
- articulate own beliefs regarding Kohelet's and Wonder's positions
- generate additions to relevant texts

Set Induction
What do you love in this world? Make a list: take ten things that you love (they can be anything, general or specific) and try to rank them in as best order as you can, (1) being the lowest and (10) the highest.

Now think: what would make you stop loving any of those things? What would make you love them even more? Be specific, and write down those conditions on your list too, next to the examples you've given.

"Love" is an emotion that appears throughout Jewish scripture: God loves the People Israel, Israel loves and worships God and fulfills *mitzvot*, and individuals (or a narrator) profess love for others for various reasons (e.g. Jacob and Rachel, David and Jonathan). Today we're going to look at one snippet of Jewish text which deals with love and offers some insight as to how we, as Jews, regard it.

Activity One
In *hevruta*, students should translate Pirkei Avot 5:16, producing (as always) a straight- and idiomatic translation of the text. Check for accuracy and comprehension with other *hevrutot* and with the educator.

Discussion:
- What does the anonymous author of this *perek* have to say about love? How can you restate this to make sense to others?
- Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?
- What are some examples of *unconditional love* that some people feel in their lives? Why are they *unconditional*, and not dependent on anything else (as the sages also mention)?

Activity Two
Hand out copies of lyrics to "Joy Inside My Tears". Class should read along as the song is played, and try to make as many notes as they can about why Stevie Wonder sings about *unconditional love*.

**Note: The song isn't always explicit as to the unconditional nature of the emotions Wonder is singing about. If they can't find reasons that it "IS <u>un</u>conditional", they may also want to try to find proof that it is "NOT conditional").*

Discussion Questions:

- What connections are there between Stevie Wonder's lyrics and the anonymous Rabbi's contention?
- What are some reasons why these two texts do NOT complement each other (i.e. ways in which they are articulating opposing messages)?

<u>Assessment (in class or as homework):</u>

Write a letter to someone you love explaining why you think of them when you hear this song. Incorporate parts of Kohelet's writing into your letter, whether you agree or disagree with him.

It's OK to write this letter even if you don't know who you're going to give it to yet - you can hold onto it for as long as you like, and give it to someone when you're sure it's for them!

Joy Inside My Tears
by Stevie Wonder

I've always come to the conclusion that 'but' is the way
Of asking for permission to lay something heavy on ones head
So I have tried to not be the one who 'll fall into that line
But what I feel inside I think you should know

And baby that's you - you - you
Made life's his*to*ry
Caue you've brought some joy inside my tears
And you have done what no one thought could be
You've brought some joy inside my tears

I've alwys felt that tomorroqw is for those who are too much afraid
To go past yesterday and start for today
I feel that lasting moments are coming fr and few between
So I should tell you of the happiness that you bring
Baby, baby it's you - you - you
Made life's his*to*ry
Oh baby, you've brought some joy inside my tears
Baby you have done what no one thought could be
You brought some joy inside my tears
You brought some joy inside my tears
You brought some joy inside my tears

You've brought some joy inside my tears
Baby, baby you have done what no one thought could be
He - y, you brought some joy inside my tears
Gotta tell you
You - you - you made life's his*to*ry
You brought some joy inside my tears
- you brought you brought you brought some joy inside my tears
Baby baby baby you have done what no one thought could be
You brought some joy inside my tears

You made it baby you made it baby made it made life's his*to*ry
- you you you made life's his*to*ry
You brought some joy inside my tears
You have done what no one thought could be
- No-body ever thought it would be
You have done what no one thought could be

You you you made life's his*to*ry
- Gotta shout about it baby
You brought some joy inside my tears

You have done what no one thought could be
You brought some joy inside my tears
You you you made life's his*to*ry
You brought some joy inside my tears
You brought some joy inside my tears
You brought some joy inside my
Tears

Lesson 7 - *Phony Is as Phony Does:* Kohelet, the Rabbis, and Holden Caufield

Objectives

- Distinguish between the positions of Kohelet and Holden Caufield on the topics of *meaning* and *integrity.*
- Articulate own beliefs regarding Kohelet's and Holden's positions.
- Generate additions to relevant texts

Activity One

Translate Kohelet 1:2 and 2:8-11 from Hebrew to English (in hevruta). Create a straight- and idiomatic translation for each section, and compare with another hevruta for accuracy and comprehension.

When finished, each *hevruta* should come up with possible answers for the following questions:

- What is the main point of what Kohelet is saying here? Can you boil it down to one or two sentences (in your own words)?
- Do you agree with his thesis? Disagree? Somewhere in between?
- Give real-life examples of his beliefs and your own ideas, as best as you can.

When all/most groups have completed the translations and the questions, ask groups to share and discuss the similarities and differences between all the answers given.

Activity Two

Many high school students are required to read "Catcher In the Rye" by J.D. Salinger. It is the story of a teenager named Holden Caufield who is not your average kid. After leaving his third prestigious boarding school in two years, he finds himself searching for the meaning of life and the purpose of doing *anything* in the uninhibited environment of New York City, December 1949.

Before you begin reading, in small groups (3-4 people each) come up with some answers to the following questions:

- What are 5-10 typical issues that an average teenager might be concerned with?
- What are typical ways in which teens deal with those issues?
- What elements of those issues/struggles are often misunderstood by those around you who aren't going through the same things? (in other words: What don't parents or educators "get" about the hardships of being a teenager?)

Now, as a small group, read the excerpt from "Catcher In the Rye" and answer the questions which follow it (see resources below for excerpt):

Discussion Questions:

- What are the "phony" things which Holden is referring to? Use specific examples to point toward larger ideas and concepts (Ex: He despises poverty, as shown by his thoughts on the nuns and the panhandlers.
- What does Holden believe to be "genuine" in the world? How does he believe those genuine things are achieved/acquired?
- What are your thoughts on Holden's conclusions? Does he have a good point? Is he way off-base in understanding the world? Somewhere in between? Give examples of your analysis regarding his existential beliefs.

Activity 3

As a whole class (or doubled-up *hevruta*), we are going to apply Holden's ideas and Kohelet's beliefs to a page of Talmud. Below is the text (in English) of the very end of Talmud Hullin 142a:

> *Our Sages taught us: R. Jacob used to say, "There is no commandment in the Torah - where reward is stated alongside it - from which you cannot infer the doctrine of resurrection of the dead. Thus, in connection with honoring one's parents, it is written: 'That thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee' (Deut. 5:16). Again, in connection with the law of letting [the mother bird] go from the nest [before taking her eggs], it is written: 'That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days'. Now, in the case where a boy's father said to him, 'Go up to the top of the building and bring me down some bird eggs', and the boy went up to the top of the building, let the mother bird go and took the eggs, and on his return he fell and was killed - where is this boy's length of days, and where is this man's happiness? However, 'that thy days may be prolongd' refers to the world that is wholly long [meaning "Olam HaBa", or "The World To Come" - eternal post-life existence], and 'that it may go well with thee' refers to the world that is wholly good. But perhaps such a thing could not happen? R. Jacob actually aw this occurrence. Then perhaps that person had conceived in his mind a sinful thought? -- The Holy One, blessed be He, does not recon the sinful thought for the deed. Perhaps then he had conceived in his mind idolatry, and it is written: 'That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart', which, according to R. Aha b. Jacob, refers to thoughts of idolatry? -- This was what he [R. Jacob] means to convey: if there is a reward for commandments in this world, then surely that [reward[should have stood him in good stead and guarded him from such thoughts that he come not to any hurt; we must therefore say that there is no reward for commandments in this world [and that the reward only comes to us in the next world - Heaven/Olam HaBa].*

- What is the paradox being examined here? What part of the quoted Gemara would cause Kohelet and Holden Caufield to take pause and examine their argument further?

- Would Holden and Kohelet accept the Rabbis understanding of reward and punishment? What makes you think so (or not)?

Resources/Materials

- excerpts from “Catcher In the Rye” by JD Salinger (provided)
- text of Kohelet 1:2, 2:8-11, 7:16

“CATCHER IN THE RYE” EXCERPT

Lesson 8 - *And In the End...* (Kohelet and "A River Runs Through It")

Objectives

- translate selected portions of texts from Hebrew to English
- convert literal translations to idiomatic translations.
- distinguish between the positions of Kohelet 3:20-22 and the stated beliefs of the narrator at the end of "A River Runs Through It"
- articulate own beliefs regarding Kohelet's and the narrator's positions.

Set Induction

Almost everyone - from the poorest of the poor to the richest of the rich - contemplate what happens to them when they die. Early Jewish sources simply mention that people "were no more", or had "died and been buried"; later sources speak of resurrection and a "World to Come" (ie Heaven).

The feeling of the unknown nature of death has led to anxiety and fear since the beginning of time, and Kohelet - along with many other Jewish sources - sought to give his own understanding of the process of dying and "being no more". Similarly in our modern culture, many films, television episodes, poems, and songs have addressed just such questions and feelings. Today we're going to look at a section of Kohelet and a clip from the film "A River Runs Through It" to see a few different opinions on the matter.

Activity One

In *hevruta*, translate Kohelet 3:20-21, and then get a translation of 3:22 from the educator (3:22 is especially difficult, but if there is ample time the educator may want to assign this passage to be translated as well). After writing out two different translations (as per previous lessons), compare and check for meaning with at least one other *hevruta* group. When finished, answer the following questions:

- What big questions does Kohelet try to address here? (e.g. What happens to us after death? What can I know about death without actually experiencing it?, etc)
- What do you think/know could be other answers to these questions? (e.g., some Rabbinic literature talks about "The World to Come", which means we are not just dust and we don't just "return to the earth", but rather live on someplace else in eternity).
- Do you accept Kohelet's understanding and reasoning about death and the afterlife? Why or why not?

Activity Two

Together the class will watch the last scene of "A River Runs Through It", wherein the now-elderly main character silently fishes in the waters of his childhood. He is reflecting on the meaning of his life, on what purpose it has served, and what role those he has loved and now lost played in shaping who he has become. He also describes his current relationship with those who are no longer alive.

Watch together and then discuss the following as a whole group:

- What is the narrator's overall existential belief that he articulates?
- How is this similar or different to what Kohelet describes as his belief?
- If these two men were fishing together, who's argument do you think would eventually "win" (if any). Give as specific examples as you can, either from the text/movie clip or from your own experience, to make your case.

Resources/Materials

- text of Pirkei Avot 3:20-22
- A/V set up for movie clip - "A River Runs Through It"

Lesson 9 - Pirkei A-Quotes

PLEASE CONSIDER USING THIS LESSON OVER TWO CLASS PERIODS - THERE IS A LOT OF TEXTUAL MATERIAL TO COVER!

Objectives

- Distinguish between the social/political realities of key groups of Jews throughout Jewish history.
- Diagram the beliefs and advice of Jewish 'wisdom' literature
- Portray the choices and intentions of named characters from Pirkei Avot.

Set Induction

Ask for student volunteers to role play in a short skit; the educator should choose the following number of volunteers (but don't tell them who they're playing yet!):

- Moses (1)
- Joshua (1)
- Elders (2)
- Prophets (3-4)
- Members of the "Beit Knesset HaGadol" (aka, "the people") (4-5)

Have students stand in a line and give each a prompts for what to say to the next person/people in line:

1) Moses - You are giving the Torah to Joshua; explain where you got it from, why it is so important to you, and what he should do to keep it safe and protected.

2) Joshua - You are giving the Torah to the tribal elders; explain where you got it from, and why you are giving it to ALL of them, not just to one of them; what advice do you have for this group in keeping the Torah safe and relevant?

3) Elders - You are giving the Torah to the Prophets; remember that the Prophets were those who saw *B'nai Yisrael* breaking more and more *mitzvot*, and gave fiery sermons about how their wrongdoing and how to fix it. What advice do you have for the Prophets as they take the Torah and use it for the good of the Jews in the future?

4) Prophets - You are giving the Torah to the "*Anshei Beit Knesset HaGadol"* - the scholars who read and interpret the law, and the people who follow the scholars in their decisions and practices. Remind them where this Torah has come from throughout history, and why it is so important. Lastly, make sure you give them PRACTICAL advice, not just idealistic instructions (in other words, don't tell them, "Follow this or God will strike you down", but rather a real-life, do-able way to keep the Torah (and the rest of Jewish law) as a central part of their lives.

5) Members of the Beit Knesset HaGadol - You are the scholars who will eventually become the Rabbis of the Mishna and Talmud, and who brings the knowledge of Jewish text directly to the people. What will you do with this Torah now that it's been handed to you from your ancestors? How will you make the laws of Torah relevant?

Do you foresee having to make any major changes to laws that the Torah instructs you on?

One the skit has been performed, remind students that this is from Pirkei Avot (1:), which is a part of the Mishnah, which is component of the "Oral Torah" - practical, livable interpretations of the laws of Torah, categorized by the topic of human existence with which it connects. Today the class is going to study Pirkei Avot in groups and share with others what they've come up with.

Activity One - Expert Groups

Break students into five even groups and assign each group a chapter of Pirkei Avot. Using the English translations (available online or in print) of each chapter, the groups should read through each of the *mishnayot* and, at the end of the chapter, attempt to answer the following questions:

- What are the 4-5 best *mishnayot* that your group can find? You can define "best" in any way - the best wording, the best metaphor, the best piece of advice in general, etc. Make sure to give reasons *why* your group chose these *mishnayot*.
- How would you fill in the Commonplaces Chart with these *mishnayot?* Where would you fill them in? Why?
- What *title* would you give to this chapter of Pirkei Avot? What general themes and beliefs do all (or most) of the *mishnayot* touch on? BE CREATIVE! THINK WIDELY!

Groups should signal the teacher when they have finished this activity.

Activity 2 - Jigsaw Groups

Students should form new "jigsaw" groups with at least one member from each "expert group" in all of them. Students then have a chance to share what their expert groups discussed:

- *Mishnayot* listed by each group, and why
- Where these mishnayot's themes would fit into the Commonplaces chart
- the suggested title of the chapters of Pirkei Avot

Each jigsaw groups should also attempt to answer the question: Based on what was said to each "generation" as the Torah was passed on to them, how might historical, political, or experiential/personal circumstances affect a person/groups actions when given a "gift" like Jewish traditional beliefs?

Jigsaw groups should spend time discussing how and where to add these texts to their chart (all of it will go in the "Pirkei Avot" row/column, but the wording of the additions merits scrutiny and debate). After all groups have come to consensus, bring them all together and discuss/debate.

Lesson 10 - *Just Do It - The Beauty of Metaphors, The Power of Advertisements*

****AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT****

Objectives

- Articulate the beliefs of the authors/characters of Unit 2
- Produce relevant artistic works based on the concepts of studied texts and viewed movie/tv clips

Set Induction

Show clip from "Mad Men" beginning at 39:45 and continuing until the end of the (restaurant) scene. Please note: The show takes place in the 1960s when smoking was much more common, especially in restaurants as in the scene. The educator may wish to discuss why smoking is used in period pieces such as "Mad Men" (for effect, Hollywood-ization, etc)

Activity One

On the TV show "Mad Men", Don Draper believes in the power of advertising in steering people's decisions one way or another. Listen to what he has to say about advertising and consider the following (to be discussed all together afterwards):

- What is so compelling about a good advertisement, in Don Draper's opinion and in your opinion?
- What does Don Draper believe is the reason advertisements work?
- In his opinion, what components make a good advertisement effective?

Activity Two

The educator should explain the desired product of today's class: Each *hevruta* should come up with an advertisement based on the existential philosophy of Kohelet and, perhaps, the advertising philosophy of Don Draper. Your advertisement can be for ANY product that you might find in a store, and should include:

- an image of the product (it can be either hand-drawn or found in a magazine/book/etc)
- a tagline for the product (i.e. Nike - "Just Do It")
- a short description of the product (old advertisements had up to an entire paragraph of reasons why their product is the best)

And on the back:

- a justification/explanation for why Kohelet would put his stamp of approval on this advertisement.

Students should have the majority of class to work on these, perhaps even the entirety of the remaining time; presentations of each advertisement should be made either at the end of class or during the next meeting time.

(see next page for Resources)

Resources:

- A/V set-up
- Season 1, Episode 1 (“Smoke Gets In Your Eyes”) of “Mad Men” (available on Netflix or DVD)
- Season 1, Episode 13 (“The Wheel”) of “Mad Men.” (Available on Netflix, DVD, or YouTube)
- If desired, print out some old ads in the style mentioned above. Check www.vintageadbrowser.com for a large array of examples.

Lesson 11: Summary and Charting

Objectives:

- summarize the texts and ideas studied in this unit
- distinguish which texts students identify with more and with which they do so less
- articulate real-life examples of these personal philosophical choices

Activity 1: Adding to the Commonplaces Chart

Double-hevruta (groups of 4) should work to create two copies of a chart for their group (they will use this in their standard 2-person *hevruta* throughout the course). While they're doing this, the educator should replicate the chart on the board and be prepared to fill it in during the discussion. As each group finishes, the class should work together to fill in the chart in as common language as possible (ie, if similar ideas exist in different groups' boxes, figure out how to word them similarly too). When completed, each student should more or less have the same chart.

Activity 2: Making Our Own Choices

Now that each student has the same chart, it's time to attempt making choices about their own beliefs. Using a colored pencil or marker, students should design their own system to highlight the text closest to their own personal belief in each commonplace column. After they've done this, each student should write 2 paragraphs (5-6 sentences each) on their own:

- one paragraph should indicate their feelings toward the general study of such philosophical texts as these (do they like it, does it scare them, does anything they have studied touch other parts of their lives, etc);
- the second paragraph should explicate their highlighted choices on their charts (why they made certain choices, if their actual opinion doesn't exist yet, etc).

Closure

Remind students that these charts represent the ideologies and beliefs of numerous biblical texts, musicians, writers, etc., and they help us figure out our own ideologies in the process. Ex:

"Some of these texts tell us to go out and have experiences in order to learn about the world; some tell us to study and observe. Some tell us that life eventually just leads to nothingness, and that earthly pleasures are what there is to live for; some remind us that the reward is waiting for us after this life. Figuring these things out for ourselves helps us create a kind of "constellation" that we talked about at the very beginning of the course - and they help us look at singular moments of life as entire universes of knowledge and understanding. If anything binds these Jewish (and some of the secular) texts together, it is the belief of their authors that we should be fully present and fully mindful of certain moments in our lives when we feel connected to the world - moments when we recognize the very fabric of our existence, and we ponder and question, and try to answer some of our biggest, most important questions."

Resources

- expanded Commonplaces Chart (extra copies of Unit 1 chart, or students can create their own)

Unit 3: Living Jewish Time
Memorable Moments of Lifecycle and Worship

Enduring Understandings

- Jewish lifecycle events and worship practices model the espoused values found in Jewish wisdom texts both explicitly and implicitly.

- Personal reflection on past experiences affects one's future Jewish beliefs, practices, and life choices.

Essential Questions
- What is are the connections between Jewish wisdom texts and ritual/worship?
- How can I more deeply understand Jewish texts through the act of ritual and worship
- how can I more meaningfully experience Jewish ritual and worship by encountering more text?

Knowledge
This unit is designed to help further the understanding that personal ideological commonplaces intimately relate to lifecycle events, and are acknowledged both implicitly and explicitly in worship; the concepts and ideas as expressed by the thinkers and artists from Unit 2 surface in the rhythm of Jewish time. Students are asked to revisit prior Jewish ritual and worship (B'nai Mitzvah; Yom Kippur) in their own lives, and to participate in mock ceremonies aimed at understanding those rituals and events which may lay in their futures (weddings, *brit milah*, funerals, etc). Additionally, students will look at the process of conversion to Judaism through the lens of reexamining and possibly realigning their ideological beliefs. In each case, they will be asked to reference their sources from Unit 2 and create connections between the textual and contemporary messages of being and existence they have studied with the ceremony or prayer in the lesson.

Skills
- learning how Jewish texts and resources can influence one's future Jewish lifecycle events
- connect relevant Jewish texts to corresponding lifecycle events or moments of worship

Lesson 1 - Back to the Bar Mitzvah!*

Objectives

- justify a match between Jewish wisdom texts and lifecycle/worship experiences
- write a letter reflective pieces regarding lifecycle and worship moments

Time Table

:00-:15	Set Induction/Scenes from "The Wonder Years"
:15-:25	Activity 1
:25-:45	Activity 2
:45-:55	(Optional) Begin on homework assignment in-class

Set Induction: Scenes from "The Wonder Years"

The educator should lead the class in a thought process activity:

Think back on a moment or a situation in your life which, at the time, didn't seem very important, but has grown in importance to you since. Was it a choice you made about where to spend your summer? Was it a fight you had with someone that ended up differently than you had expected? Was it a poem you read whose beauty didn't really shine until a week had passed? Was it a class you took which you didn't really understand until six months later? There's an old saying that goes, "Life gives you the test first and the lesson later." Does that ring true with the moment in your own life that you're thinking of? Are there others that have come to your mind based on the quote?

Moments of Jewish time - meaning, our major lifecycle events - are intentionally constructed to recognize the meaning behind the action, at the very moment when they are happening. Sometimes, though, the process of understanding that meaning slips through the cracks, as it does often with becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Today, we are going to revisit our experience with that moment of Jewish time, and see if we have any clarity of the lesson that process tries to teach us.

Students then view two scenes from the tv show "The Wonder Years":

-One in which Paul Pfeiffer describes his Bar Mitzvah to his friends on the school bus as a chance to have a party, get attention and receive gifts.

-Another in which his grandfather gives a speech about history and family, and presents Paul with a family heirloom: an old siddur which belonged to his own father and grandfather.

After watching the episode, the teacher should establish the idea that Paul's experience of Bar Mitzvah was transformed in this moment, from that of "party and presents" to one of weighty family allegiance and continuity.

Guiding Questions:

- How does Paul first describe his upcoming Bar Mitzvah? (*Party, presents, etc.)*
- How does his grandfather describe the importance of Paul's Bar Mitzvah? (*Moment of connection to his ancestors", "n experience to guide him in his life and help him make decisions", etc)*
- If you were Kevin Arnold (the non-Jewish main character), what might you think about the importance of a Bar Mitzvah for Jews like the Pfeiffers? (*"A ritual that connects a Jew to his community", etc.)*

Having watched these scenes and discussed these questions

Note: If time allows, you may want to watch the entire episode - approx. 22 min.

Activity 1: Revisiting B'nai Mitzvah sermons/Divrei Torah.

All students are asked (in advance) to bring in a copy of their bar/bat mitzvah speech; if there are any students who don't have copies of their own, they can work in *hevruta* with someone else. Students are asked to re-read their speeches and answer the questions, "What are the components of this d'var/sermon? What is the content of what's written?" They may answer *"text analysis" or "what this Torah portion means is..." and "I want to thank my teachers and family...", etc*. Students should demarcate these distinctions with two or three different colored highlighters, pens, markers, or anything else available. If they are using digital copies of their speeches, they can easily highlight different portions. After all have finished, discuss the above questions ("components" and "content") as a class.

Activity 2: Revisiting b'nai mitzvah sermons...again.

In light of the previous lessons on text and pop culture, and the clips of "TWY" we just watched, each student will write an insert to their original d'var Torah/sermon in order to include emotional and philosophical beliefs that they did not possess when it was originally written (in other words, things which they have learned and come to believe in the time between becoming BM and now). They will then take turns giving a synopsis of their original speech, and then read their newly-written additions.

> *Ex. "In addition to my Torah portion, I thought about a lot of things when I was getting ready for my Bar Mitzvah. I thought about how much time my mom and dad spent listening to me practice my chanting and then sitting in the rabbi's office with me once a week for the past year. One time, my dad asked my grandpa to take me instead, and after the lesson with the rabbi, my grandpa started talking about how he never thought his bar mitzvah mattered until his kids and grandkids went through it too. Then he was able to see that even though he got older and his life changed a lot, most of the big things just stay the same - like kids always having to suffer through their bar mitzvahs!"*

Assessment *(in-class if time allows)*
Each student will write a letter to themselves to be sent back in time, with well-wishes to themselves on becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah and a hope for understanding the experience in a new way (think about how Paul's grandfather transformed his understanding of *bar mitzvah* from party-and-presents to a meaningful connection with his past and a way to move forward in the future.

Resources
- A/V setup materials
- Season 2, Episode 13 ("Birthday Boy") of "The Wonder Years" (available on Netflix or DVD)

Lesson 2 - The Jewish Wedding Ceremony

Objectives
- identify components of a Jewish wedding ceremony
- explain the connection between values espoused by wisdom text and the ritual components of the Jewish wedding ceremony.

Activity One
Hold a mock wedding ceremony (assign parts: Rabbi; couple being married; parents; bridal party; guests). Use the wedding script below to guide you through the process, with each blank section filled in by the appropriate character.

For example: When it comes time for the parents to offer a blessing, they should express themselves through the lens of "seeing our little girl/boy find her/his true love", etc. The same process should be done by the Rabbi, groomsmen/maids of honor, the couple themselves, etc.

Activity Two
Using the blank "Daf" worksheet students should work individually to choose relevant quotes from the wedding ceremony and create commentary around the sides of the paper by connecting themes, quotes, commonplaces, and their own thoughts regarding the Jewish and secular texts of Unit 2.

Activity Three
You are the Best Man/Maid of Honor at your best friend's wedding. You've been asked to give a speech to the new couple, but you have stage fright and don't want to talk for long. Using the Daf you've created, write a 30-second to one-minute long (two paragraphs) speech, indicating your own personal ideology with respect for this lifecycle event. Be prepared to give your speech before dinner is served!

Resources
- Jewish wedding ceremony script (see below)

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Jewish Wedding Script[14]

Rabbi
B'rukhim ha'ba-im b'shem Adonai. Blessed are those who have come here today in the name of God! We rejoice that _____ and _____ join in marriage in the presence of God and loved ones. O most awesome, glorious, and blessed God, grant Your blessings to _____ and _____.

Surrounded by loved ones whose joy and prayers are iwth you here, you stand at this *chupa*, symbol of the Jewish home. May your home be a shelter against the storm, a haen of peace, and a stronghold of faith and love. Let us all join in a prayer of gratitude.

All
Baruch Atah, Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, shehecheyanu v'kiyemanu v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh.

Blessed are you Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has given us life, sustained us, and brought us to this joyous time.

Rabbi
The marriage of _____ and _____ is a holy union; may they, together, find love, happiness, strength, and success. While _____ and _____ were preparing for this ceremony in my office, we studied many Jewish texts together, and they would like to share some of their thoughts based on what we read.

Partner A
Rabbi _____ introduced us to a number of texts, and the one I liked best was __(*choose from among those studied in Unit 2*)__. I found three quotes that I felt represented how I felt about getting married and experiencing something new in my life:

Partner A should here use his chart and other notes to share his choices.

Rabbi
That was lovely. And now _____ would like to share some thoughts as well.

Partner B
Another text we studied was _____, which also made me think about certain aspects of our wedding ceremony. The rabbi here was also creative enough to look at songs and stuff that matched up (or didn't match up) to what the Jewish text was saying. There were three that I found that I really liked:

Partner B does as Partner A before.

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[14] adapted from Central Conference of American Rabbis' *Rabbi's Manual* (USA: CCAR Press, 1988).p.50.

Rabbi
Thank you both. And now...I ask you: Do you, _____ take _____ to be your wife/husband, to love to honor and to cherish? (Say Yes!)

And do you, _____ take _____ to be your wife/husband, to love to honor and to cherish? (Say Yes!)

Speak now the words to each other, and declare yourself united in marriage:

(*Partners repeat after Rabbi)*
Harai at/atah m'kudeshet li. Behold, you are consecrated to me as my beloved, in keeping with the heritage of Moses and Israel.

Couple recites together:
"I betroth you to me forever; I betroth you to me with steadfast love and compassion; i betroth you to me in faithfulness" (Hosea 2:21-22)

Rabbi
We praise You, Adonai our God, who hallows our people Israel through this sacred rite at the *chupa.* I now offer the seven blessings of marriage:

We praise You, Adonai, Ruler of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.
We praise You, Adonai, Ruler of the universe, Creator of all things for Your glory.
We praise You, Adonai, Ruler of the universe, who created humanity *b'tzelem Elohim.*
We praise You, Adonai, Ruler of the universe, who creates us to share with You in life's everlasting renewal.
We praise You, Adonai, who causes Zion to rejoice in her children's happy return.
We praise You, Adonai, who causes lovers and partners to rejoice. May these loving companions rejoice as have Your creatures since the days of Creation.

(*Partner A and B drink from the same cup)*

Rabbi
And now the parents of _____ would like to read a passage in honor of their children.

Parents
As you have shared the wine from a single cup, so may you, under God's guidance, share contentment, peace, and fulfillment from the cup of life. May you find life's joys heightened, its bitterness sweetened, and each of its moments hallowed by true companionship and love.

Rabbi
In the presence of these witnesses and in keeping with our tradition, you have spoken the words and performed the rites that unite your lives. _____ and _____, you are now married in the sight of God, the Jewish community, and all people. I ask

any who are present to offer blessings of love, advice for the future, and well-wishes in your lives together.

Floor is open to "guests" to share blessings or advice. Students who choose to do so should draw from any of the sources studied in Unit 2, or beyond those if appropriate.

Rabbi
May God bless you and protect you. May God's presence shine upon you and be gracious to you. may God's presence be with you and give you peace.

Breaking of the glass - MAZAL TOV! Do motzi and enjoy some challah before starting Activity 2!

Lesson 3 - Brit Milah

Objectives
- identify components of a *brit milah* ceremony
- craft a *brit milah* service which incorporates traditional components as well as community participation
- explain the connection between values espoused by wisdom text and the ritual components of the Jewish wedding ceremony.

Activity One
In small groups (3-4 students), read through excerpts from *Jewish Living* on *brit milah* ('bris') ceremony. Students should highlight and make notes on the various components with regard to the commonplaces and teachings of Jewish wisdom texts:
- what commonplaces do they address?
- What conflicting values can be found in the *mitzvah*? (*Ex. fulfilling the whole mitzvah is a way of being reverent to God, but at the expense of your child's comfort.)*

After addressing these questions, each small group should craft a *brit milah* ceremony which incorporates the components of the ceremony of their choosing (as many or as few as they choose) based on their interpretation of the ceremony as applied to their personal (or small group) ideology. Additionally, each group should come up with 3-4 quotes from the ceremony and use the blank "Daf Brit" worksheet to create commentary on them around the sides of the paper. Remind students to connect themes, commonplaces, espoused values, and their own thoughts, as well as incorporate texts from Unit 2 into their answers.

Activity Two
Each group should assign actors to the roles in their crafted ceremony, and have them write short examples of what they would say if they were invited to speak during the ceremony.

> Ex *When it comes time for the parents to offer a blessing, they might express their feelings in the context of "a whole new person to love, a whole new experience to have in this life", etc.*

When all groups are ready, they should act out (or explain with detail) *how* they crafted their ceremony, *why* they chose to include or exclude certain components, and *what conflicting values* they encountered along the way.

Assessment
Read "Letter From A Rabbi Concerning Brit Milah" and answer the prompt at the bottom.

Resources
- texts from *Jewish Living* by Mark Washofsky (p.140-144)
- "Daf Brit" page (provided)
- "Letter From A Rabbi Concerning Brit Milah" (provided)

Letter From A Rabbi Concerning Brit Milah[15]

Question addressed: What is the Ideology behind Jewish Ritual Circumcision (Bris)?

Answer: Dear Cyndi,

You told me in your letter about a Jewish friend who did not have a B'rit Milah (Bris) for either of her two boys because "she didn't agree with the ideology." You ask for information you can share with your friend to "show her the other side of the coin."

There is no question that ritual circumcision is a difficult choice many Jewish parents. Some Jewish families once comforted themselves with the idea that circumcision would have medical benefits for their children. Nowadays, that belief has come into question as most doctors are neutral on the subject of circumcision.

As circumcision becomes less common in the American general population, Jewish parents must confront the choice -- perhaps as was always intended -- whether they will mark their boys as being "different" from non-Jewish boys....

B'rit Milah does carry an "ideology," as you put it. In Jewish tradition, circumcision serves as a sign of the covenant between God and Israel. Since this is a covenant that links generation to generation, it is appropriate that the mark is on a "generative" organ. From shortly after birth, Jewish boys are marked by the covenant in a way that prefigures the eventual passing of that covenant to the next generation.

The whole idea of B'rit Milah also seems to say something about the Jewish attitude toward our human bodies. Jewish tradition holds that human beings are not "perfect" as we are born. Before we can become our truest and best selves, we require spiritual discipline, growth and development that nature alone cannot provide. Circumcision can symbolize the ways in which we need to complete what nature has given us.

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[15] from http://judaism.about.com/od/birthtomarria2/f/bris_ideology.htm

Is this a difficult ideology to accept? Do our own values not align with them? I think that many find difficult. But I don't apologize for it. I don't think it is meant to be "easy." **B'rit Milah reinforces the message that choosing to raise a child as a Jew means making difficult choices, especially in a society that makes it so easy to ignore the wisdom of our tradition...**

[Som] object to B'rit Milah because of its implicit sexism. Tradition holds that we enter boys into the covenant with circumcision, but do nothing for our girls. **I believe that this legitimate concern is best addressed by creating new rituals for welcoming baby girls into the covenant and new understandings of the nature of the "sign of the covenant."**

In my own family, my wife and I created a public covenant ritual in which we held our daughters under the same huppah that we had used at our wedding...**To me, [this is an] appropriate [response] to the sexism of rabbinic B'rit Milah, and [a better response] than simply rejecting it...**

I hope my personal views and beliefs are helpful.

Best wishes,

Rabbi Jeffrey W. Goldwasser

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*After reading this letter, write one paragraph describing Rabbi Goldwasser's ideological stance on brit milah. Base your writing on his stated **facts**, **assumptions**, and espoused **values**, and bolster your argument with at least **two quotes** from Unit 2 (Jewish or secular). Refer back to your "What Is A Personal Ideology" worksheet if you need help!*

Lesson 4 - Jewish Death and Mourning

Objectives

- identify components of the Jewish mourning process
- craft a funeral service which incorporates traditional components as well as community participation
- explain the connection between values espoused by wisdom text and the ritual components of the Jewish funeral service.

Activity One

In small groups students read excerpts from the "Judaism 101" page on Death and Mourning and answer the following questions:

- Describe the components of the Jewish mourning process (use the ***black italicized*** words throughout the reading).
- What *metaphor* can you come up with for the process of Jewish mourning?
- Why did you choose that metaphor? Think of some adjectives or short sentences that describe your decision (Ex. "Mourning is like an escalator - you start down at the deepest part of it, and it slowly lifts you up until you're on top again.")
- What *commonplaces* might be reexamined by a person who has experienced the death of a relative or friend? Give examples of how they might change.

Activity Two

Using the blank "Daf" worksheet with relevant quotes from the funeral service, create commentary (at least 3-4) around the sides of the paper by connecting themes, quotes, commonplaces, and your own thoughts. Once written out, students should compose a short, fake eulogy for a funeral they are attending. Remember: eulogies are for the person who has died, but also, in a way, for the person who is mourning them. Make sure your eulogy aligns with *your own personal beliefs* on life; reference texts, music, poems, life experiences, or anything else which illustrates your ideology. *Remember that you already started making some metaphors in Activity One!*

Resources:

- Death and mourning information sheet (provided)
- "Daf" worksheet

Death and Mourning Information Sheet

In Judaism, death is not always a tragedy, even when it occurs early in life or through unfortunate circumstances. Death is a natural process. Our deaths, like our lives, have meaning...In addition, many Jews have a firm belief in an afterlife, a world to come, where those who have lived a worthy life will be rewarded.

Mourning practices in Judaism are extensive, but they are not an expression of fear or distaste for death. Jewish practices relating to death and mourning have two purposes: to show respect for the dead (*kavod ha-met*), and to comfort the living (*nihum avelim*), who will miss the deceased.

Mourning

Jewish mourning practices can be broken into several periods of decreasing intensity. These mourning periods allow the full expression of grief, while...allowing the mourner to gradually return to a normal life.

When a close relative (parent, sibling, spouse or child) first hears of the death of a relative, it is traditional to express the initial grief by tearing one's clothing. The tear is made over the heart if the deceased is a parent, or over the right side of the chest for other relatives. This tearing of the clothing is referred to as **keriyah** (lit. "tearing"). The mourner recites the blessing describing G-d as "the true Judge," an acceptance of G-d's taking of the life of a relative.

From the time of death to the burial, the mourner's sole responsibility is caring for the deceased and preparing for the burial. This period is known as **aninut**. During this time, the mourners are exempt from all “positive” commandments ("thou shalts"), because the preparations take first priority. This period usually lasts a day or two; Judaism requires prompt burial.

During this aninut period, the family should be left alone and allowed the full expression of grief. Condolence calls or visits should not be made during this time.

After the burial, a close relative, near neighbor or friend prepares the first meal for the mourners, the ***se'udat havra'ah*** (meal of condolence). This meal traditionally consists of eggs (a symbol of life) and bread. The meal is for the family only, not for visitors. After this time, condolence calls are permitted.

The next period of mourning is known as ***shiva*** (seven, because it lasts seven days). Shiva is observed by parents, children, spouses and siblings of the deceased, preferably all together in the deceased's home. Shiva begins on the day of burial and continues until the morning of the seventh day after burial. Mourners sit on low stools or the floor instead of chairs, do not wear leather shoes, do not shave or cut their hair, do not wear cosmetics, do not work, and do not do things for comfort or pleasure, such as bathe, have sex, put on fresh clothing, or study Torah (except Torah related to mourning and grief). Mourners wear the clothes that they tore at the time of learning of the death or at the

funeral. Mirrors in the house are covered. Prayer services are held where the shiva is held, with friends, neighbors and relatives making up the minyan (10 people required for certain prayers).

If a festival occurs during the mourning period, the mourning is terminated, but if the burial occurs during a festival, the mourning is delayed until after the festival. The Shabbat that occurs during the shiva period counts toward the seven days of shiva, and does not end the mourning period. Public mourning practices (such as wearing the torn clothes, not wearing shoes) are suspended during this period, but private mourning continues.

The next period of mourning is known as ***shloshim*** (thirty, because it lasts until the 30th day after burial). During that period, the mourners do not attend parties or celebrations, do not shave or cut their hair, and do not listen to music.

The final period of formal mourning is ***avelut***, which is traditionally observed only for a parent. This period lasts for twelve months after the burial. During that time, mourners avoid parties, celebrations, theater and concerts. For eleven months of that period, starting at the time of burial, the son of the deceased recites the mourner's Kaddish every day.

After the ***avelut*** period is complete, the family of the deceased is not permitted to continue formal mourning; however, there are a few continuing acknowledgments of the deceased. Every year, on the anniversary of the death, family members observe the deceased's ***Yahrzeit*** (Yiddish, lit. "anniversary"). On the Yahrzeit, children recite Kaddish and take an *aliyah* in synagogue if possible, and all mourners light a candle in honor of the decedent that burns for 24 hours. In addition, during services on Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret, the last day of Passover, and Shavu'ot, after the *haftarah* reading in synagogue, close relatives recite the mourner's prayer, ***Yizkor*** ("May God remember...") in synagogue. Yahrzeit candles are also lit on those days. When leaving a house of mourning, it is traditional for the guest to say, "May the Lord comfort you with all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem."

Kaddish

Kaddish is commonly known as a mourner's prayer, but in fact, variations on the Kaddish prayer are routinely recited at many other times, and the prayer itself has nothing to do with death or mourning. The prayer begins "May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified in the world that He created as He willed. May He give reign to His kingship in your lifetimes and in your days ..." and continues in much that vein. The real mourner's prayer is El Molai Rachamim, which is recited at grave sites and during funerals.

A person is permitted to recite Kaddish for other close relatives as well as parents, but only if his parents are dead."[16]

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[16] Portions of "Judaism 101: Life, Death, and Mourning". *www.jewfaq.org/death.htm*

Lesson 5 - Conversion

***Note:** This lesson requires some advanced planning in the form of at least one (but up to two or three maximum) invited guests. Consult (one of) the rabbi(s) at your school and ask to be put in touch with current conversion students or recent converts to Judaism. Assign those guests the "homework" of reading Kohelet 3:1-8 before they arrive. They don't need to memorize or prepare anything, just (re-)familiarize themselves with it.*

Objectives

- recall and describe *milah, t'vilah,* and *beit din* as components of the conversion process
- reference and justify thematically-connected Jewish wisdom texts to conversion
- consider the process of conversion through the eyes of one who in/recently in the process
- write a reflective piece regarding the process of conversion

Activity 1 - Components of Conversion

Before class, write the following quote from *Jewish Living* on the whiteboard*:*

> *"...[A]ll those who choose Judaism are "like a newborn child," born this time within the covenant, claiming their share of the heritage of Isarel."*

Ask students to think back to Kohelet 3:1-8 ("There is a time for everything...") and consider the quote above.

Guiding Questions:

- what changes to one's personal ideology may accompany an act like conversion?
- Are there any aspects that you think *must* change?
- What connections can you make between the text of Kohelet, the quote from *Jewish Living*, and the process of *beit din, t'vilah* (mikveh)*,* and *milah* (circumcision, for men)?
  Ex. of corresponding/connective verses:
  - "casting away stones" - letting go of old habits, beliefs
  - "gathering stones" - learning new knowledge as a result of joining a new community

Educator introduces the guest(s) and explains that this is a chance to ask those same questions of people who are in the process of conversion or who recently have completed the process. Educator begins with some basic questions, but then opens it up to students.

Guiding Questions:

- What is your name, how old are you, and where did you grow up?
- How long have you lived in (current city)? How did you end up moving here?
- How far along are you in the process of conversion? If you're still in it, when do you think it might be completed?
- How did you decide to convert? What caused you to even think about it in the first place?

- What is one of the biggest changes to your life that has occurred since you started this process?
- How has the process of conversion affected your personal ideology? (*have one of the students explain what we mean by that term*)

At this point, educator opens up the floor for students to ask questions. Guide them toward utilizing the texts, lifecycle events, worship practice, etc. that they have been studying (bonus points for questions about texts!).

Assessment

Imagine you are standing outside the *beit din* of your best friend, who is completing his/her journey through the conversion process. One of the rabbis has asked you in advance to join them at the end of the *beit din* with a blessing for your friend, who has worked very hard for over a year toward this day. The rabbi's email to you read, in part:

> *"Some people have said that converting to Judaism for them was like saying goodbye to their old existence, but then emerging as someone new. I think it would be lovely if your friend, at the very moment of his/her emergence, could hear assurance from someone who cares deeply for him/her about the beauty of their choice to convert. Remember: if it's from the heart and speaks to your beliefs truthfully, and if what you say has real value in the world around us, it will be a worthy blessing.*

Students should write out their answers (bullet-points is fine) and be prepared to share with the class. If they are comfortable with it, ask the guest(s) to offer feedback about their writings.

Unit 4: Belief In Action

How What We Do Shows What We Value

Enduring Understandings

- How we act toward others in our community indicates what we believe about our rights and responsibilities toward others in the world.
- The messages of Jewish wisdom texts inspire a call to action and to living with integrity.
- Jewish social justice organizations utilize and enact the principles and ideological values contained within Jewish wisdom texts.

Essential Questions

- What are my rights and responsibilities?
- To whom am I responsible?
- How do I live out the values imbedded in Jewish texts?
- How can I make a difference?
- What does Jewish tradition say about relationships with others?

Knowledge

As much as they offer insight to implicit values and beliefs, we must not forget that Jewish wisdom texts give explicit instructions on how one should conduct themselves in the tangible world. Three main themes which run throughout these various directives are *relationships, responsibility* and *taking action.* In this unit, students will re-read and discuss Hillel's famous "If I am not for myself..." quote while applying its overt and underlying message to a realistic situation; they will examine

Lesson 1 - Who's Number One?*

Objectives:
- recognize the connections between portions of Pirkei Avot and realistic examples of one's responsibility
- plan for changes they may undertake to live more closely in tune with their ideological beliefs and values regarding relationships with others

Time Table

:00-:05	Set Induction
:05-25	Activity One
:25-45	Activity Two
:45-50	Closing

Set Induction:
Educator writes two prompts on the board before class; as students settle, ask them to write out their answer to the following questions:

1) What is the difference between "having the right to do something" and "doing what is right"? (*Ex. We have the right to walk past people in the street who are begging for food or money, but it doesn't mean it's the right thing to do to just ignore them every time.")*

2) Should we only have the right to do things which are considered "right to do"? (*Ex. No, we should have the right to do whatever we want if it's not hurting anyone; too much alcohol is dangerous and deadly, but adults have the right to drink as much of it as they want!)*

Activity One[17]:
The educator should ask groups of students to act out the following two scenarios:

1) Fifteen kids came out to play on the empty lot that summer day. Larry brought the football. Problem was, Larry wasn't very good even on a good day, and this wasn't one of those. After 45 minutes, Larry left because he was frustrated. He hadn't touched the ball once; was never in the center of the action and felt like he was being overlooked. He took the ball with him.

2) Fifteen kids came out to play on the empty lot that summer day. Larry brought the football. Problem was, Larry wasn't very good even on a good day, and this wasn't one of those. After 45 minutes, Larry left because his family was going to visit his grandparents. He took the ball with him.

After both scenarios have been acted out, discuss:

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[17] This lesson is adapted from the Jewish Civics Initiative curriculum of PANIM http://www.justaction.org/lessonplans/view.htm

- Should Larry have taken the ball with him? (*Ex. Why not? He was going home and then leaving town, he had to put his stuff away"; "He shouldn't have ruined the game by storming off when he got frustrated. It's not other people's fault he sucks!")*
- Does it make a difference if Larry:
  - left because he was frustrated? He hadn't touched the ball once; was never in the center of the action; felt like he was being overlooked. (*ex. he shouldn't have taken it - he ruined other people's fun*)
  - left because his family was going to visit his grandparents? (*ex. he has a right to take his stuff home when he has to leave. It's not everyone's football, it's his!")*
  - left because he got hurt when he was being tackled? (*ex. they should have called the game and gone home anyway - that's the rules when you play sports!")*
  - left because he got stung by a bee, to which he was allergic? (*ex. everyone should have stopped playing, and he would have to go home and get help. So yeah, he could take it home then.")*
  - was afraid to leave the ball because it was his father's high school game ball? (*ex. He should definitely take it home! He shouldn't have brought it in the first place!")*

Discuss, then ask students:

- What were Larry rights? (*ex. use his own personal property any way he likes)*
- What were the teams' right? (*ex. good sportsmanship - if you don't play well, you don't play much. But you can't hold other people accountable for your lack of skill!)*
- What was Larry responsibility to the players? (*ex. to be a good sport and a good person - don't take out anger on other people, don't ruin everyone else's time because you're angry. Wouldn't like it if they did it to you!)*
- What was the players' responsibility to Larry? (*ex. to be fair and let him keep playing; to allow him to take his stuff home with him when he left; to not hold a grudge that he had to keep his commitments to his family.)*

Activity Two - Text Study

Remind students about Hillel, from the Mishnah - he was one of the greatest, most articulate rabbis of them all, and many of his sayings are known widely today. Place the three statements in different corners of the room.

> *Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving your fellow creatures and bringing them close to the Torah. (1:12)*
>
> *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, when?*
>
> *What is hateful to you, do not do unto others. That is the whole Torah, and the rest is just commentary - now go study it." (Shabb. 31a)*

Ask students to choose the statement toward which they are most inclined, and stand by it. When there are a group of students in each corner, hand them the following questions to discuss:

• Why did you choose this statement? (*Ex. I pick 1:13 because tells me that I need to remember to do what I need to take care of myself, but also can't forget to consider others. And it says that I shouldn't wait to act like that, I should do it now and always."*

• Why is this statement more important than the other two? (*Ex. I think the quote from Shabbat 31a is the most important, because it doesn't just say to think about everyone when you act, it says you should actually NOT do things to others that you, yourself, would find hurtful. Its more powerful because it places a restriction on us that we know we should have.*

• What *rights* and *responsibilities* do these texts address? (*Ex. Responsibility to keep peace amongst people; responsibility for fair play and friendship; right to make your own choices)*

• What ideological commonplaces do these quotes touch on for you? How do they align with your personal ideology? (*Ex. "Knowledge" means to understand how and why people and things operate the way they do, so these quotes are relevant because they speak directly to the relationships we form and how to act within them.)*

Create new (jigsaw) groups with at least one student from each original group. Hand them the following questions to discuss::

- What is the relationship between these three statements? Do they contradict each other or are they compatible?
- Is there a clear logic from one that leads to the next, or an order in which they must be said?
- How might one's understanding of this (full) quote influence - or be influenced by - one's personal ideology?
- How is Hillel's statement connected to the story about the kids playing football that we discussed earlier?
- What can we learn from his statement about the responsibilities we feel toward ourselves and others, and the tension between those?

Closing (each student must answer before they can leave for the day!)
• How can you put the demands of Hillel's statements to practice in your own life? Think of one practice that you can adopt in general, and how it relates to some/many/all of the ideological commonplaces we have discussed.

Lesson 2 - What Is My Responsibility?

Objectives

• define "responsibility" with regard to one's self and to others
•

Activity One

Read and discuss the definition of *responsibility (adj.)*: "To act with intention and commitment; to be accountable for your actions."
• In your own words, what does responsibility mean? Give examples of "acting responsibly."
• What might an *excess* of responsibility look like? What might a *lack* of responsibility look like?

Together, read the following text in which the folksinger Harry Chapin riffs about his grandfather, someone who takes responsibility to live his life in a way that is meaningful to him. Listen to the recording of the text and follow along. NOTE: The audio recording continues on after the printed text is completed. Listen also to Chapin's personal addition to the story, and answer the questions below[18]:

Harry Chapin, *My Grandfather*

My grandfather was a painter. He died at age eighty-eight, he illustrated Robert Frost's first two books of poetry and he was looking at me and he said, "Harry, there are two kinds of tired: there's good-tired, and there's bad-tired." He said, "Ironically enough, bad-tired can be a day that you won. But you won other people's battles, you lived other people's days, other people's agendas, other people's dreams and when it was all over there was very little 'you' in there, and when you hit the hay at night, somehow you toss and turn—you don't settle easy." He said, "Good-tired, ironically enough, can be a day that you lost. But you don't have to tell yourself, 'cause you knew you fought your battles, you chased your dreams, you lived your days, and when you hit the hay at night, you settle easy—you sleep the sleep of the just, and you can say 'take me away.'" He said, "Harry, all my life I've painted. God, I would've loved to be more successful, but I painted and I painted, and I am good-tired and they can take me away."

"*My Grandfather." Harry Chapin: The Gold Medal Collection. Elektra/Asylum Records: 1988.*

Harry Chapin (1942–1981) was an American folksinger-songwriter and humanitarian. While he is best known for his number-one hit "Cat's in the Cradle," his work to end world hunger inspired the creation of

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[18] adapted from the AJWS curriculum *Live The Questions* (Julie Gersten, ed., 2011), pp.MUS-13.

the Presidential Commission on World Hunger in 1977. He was posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for his work on social issues.

Discussion Questions

1. How would both Chapin and his grandfather define responsibility?
2. When in your life have you acted in a way that the grandfather would characterize as making you bad-tired? Why did you act this way?
3. When in your life have you acted in a way that the grandfather would characterize as making you good-tired? What helped you to act with intention and commitment at this time?
4. How do you think you could plan to exercise responsibility in your next steps in life? What does acting with responsibility mean for you?

Together, read Kohelet 9:10a:

Whatever it is which comes forth from [the work of] your hands, let it be done with mighty vigor.

Discussion Questions:

- restate this quote in your own words
- what are some examples of living out this maxim in one's own life?
- how could encountering this line of text impact one's personal ideology?

Resources:

- copies of Harry Chapin text
- audio recording of text: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbpoUWO3kA8
- a/v set up

Lesson 3 - Jewish Values In Action

**Note: this lesson assumes that students have access to computers/iPads/etc. If these resources are not available, the educator can print the Mission/Vision statements out.*

Objectives

- analyze the Mission and/or Vision of three Jewish service organizations
- synthesize the Mission and/or Vision statements with Jewish wisdom texts as answers to ideological commonplaces

Activity One

Divide students into three groups ("Expert Groups") and assign each group one of the Jewish social action organizations being discussed: Hazon, American Jewish World Service (AJWS), and Jewish World Watch (JWW). Direct students toward their groups's Mission and/or Vision statement (online or printed out) as well as the additional information sheet (provided). After reading through the documents, work together to answer the following questions:

- what *facts* do your organization provide in their documents?
- what *values* do they espouse?
- what *assumptions* do they express?
- to the best of your groups ability, state in two-to-three sentences what this organization's ideology is; use quotes or paraphrases from the Mission/Vision statements to support your idea
- which, if any of our standard ideological commonplaces do these organizations attempt to touch in your life? do any of them make you think about what you value and how you show that value?

Students should refer back to their handouts from Unit 1 (Lesson 2) if they need help recalling these definitions. Each student in the group should be prepared to answer the three questions to other in their class.

Activity Two

Jigsaw the class into new groups (at least one member from each Expert Group in each new group). Share the answers to the above questions, and work together toward the following:

- list as many examples as possible where the three different organizations found common ground; this can be examples of work they do, ways in which they study and teach, values/principles they believe in, etc.
- list at least one difference between each group
- decide as a group (vote or argumentation, or both) which organization seems to be the most worthwhile to support; give specific reasons why their work is more important or more noticeable
- come up with a new logo for one of the organization's website/stationery; incorporate their espoused values and principles into the design, and make a tagline using at least one quote from any of the Jewish wisdom texts we have studied in this course.

(over)

Resources

- Information sheets for Hazon, AJWS, JWW
- Mission statements also availabel at:
  - http://www.hazon.org/about/vision-and-mission/
  - http://ajws.org/who_we_are/
  - https://www.jewishworldwatch.org/about/our-mission

Hazon Information Sheet

Kemach V'hazon:

How do we leverage both resources & vision?

"*Without vision, a people perish" (Proverbs 29:18)*

"Without bread there is no Torah; without Torah there is no bread" (Pirkei Avot 3:21)

Introduction and background

I founded Hazon – Hebrew for vision – in the belief that as a community we spent too much time focusing on what we were against. We were against anti-semitism, against attacks on Israel, against assimilation and intermarriage. So was I. But what were we for? The key question was not, where had we come from, but rather, where were we going? What is, was or could be our vision? And, linked to this: how did we apply Jewish tradition to address some of the greatest and most important issues that the world today faces?

Those questions animate me still. The last decade has seen the growth of birthright Israel, of the independent minyanim, the Moishe houses, the development of an indigenous Israeli non-orthodox Judaism, the emergence of new expressions of Jewishness in Europe, new uses of technology in Jewish life; the flourishing of Hazon and the Jewish Food Movement. These are all testament to the vibrancy of what's possible in an open society. There is energy and momentum in Jewish life and there is power in Jewish tradition.

Yet the Jewish community is in a difficult place. A majority of synagogues have structural challenges – declining and aging memberships and a business model that doesn't work. Most Jewish day schools have structural challenges – stalling enrollment and a business model that doesn't work. The federations have campaigns that have steadily declined in inflation-adjusted terms. The median age of age 2 donors is rising. The relationship with Israel is weakening and any unity we may once have had in relation to Israel has ended. And from a longer-term perspective the numbers are even more depressing. A century ago we were 1% of the world's population. Today, partly because of the Shoah, partly because of assimilation, partly because of the growth of populations in the developing world, we're down to 0.2% - a drop of 80%.

Even if we were to punch at ten or twenty times our weight in our number of entrepreneurs, writers, scientists, Nobel prize winners – the positive impact we've had in the world in the last century looks set to shrink as this century unfolds.

This picture is sobering and fairly clear. I'm somewhat gloomy about our prospects too, but only because we seem to have a lack of vision and a lack of will. Yet in my bones I don't think we need to be pessimistic. There is much that we could do - that we *can* do, if we *choose* to....[19]

[19] from a response on philanthropy by Nigel Savage: http://www.jewishfederations.org/local_includes/downloads/57483.pdf

Jewish World Watch Information Sheet

GLOBALISM AND JUDAISM
Rosh Hashana 2004 sermon
by Harold M. Schulweis

Don't throw away the newspaper! Newspapers are the day-to-day records of history. Judaism has a passion for meaning. Events have meaning. What do events mean? How do changes instruct us? Look around at the world. Every event has something to teach us. As the Zohar instructed: "There is nothing in the world empty of God." When the Industrial Revolution took place, it overwhelmed the world of the shtetl, the Jewish village. It is told that the disciples in one shtetl asked the rabbi, "What does it mean? What can we learn from the invention of the train, the telegraph, from the telephone?" The rabbi answered, "From the train, we learn that, but for one moment, everything can be lost. Once the door of the train is closed, you miss the great journey.

Pay attention!

And what can you learn from the telegraph? From the telegraph you learn that every word counts. Guard your tongue! And what can you learn from the telephone? From the telephone you learn that whatever you speak here is heard there." Words have consequences.

We live in the age of globalization--economic, political, cultural, technological globalization. What meaning does globalization have for us? It has entered our life, the life of our country, the life of world civilizations. This is the age of the Internet, satellite television, computers, cell phones, email and out-sourcing. The world is smaller and more interconnected than ever before in its history. Things move faster. Space is more constricted. Geography has shrunk. What happens in Baghdad affects Tarzana. What happens in Darfur affects Washington. What happens in Indonesia affects Iowa...

How about us? Judaism is a religion of meaning. What does Judaism have to say about the phenomenon of globalization? Rosh Hashanah speaks to the entire world because Judaism is a global religion...

Open the first pages of the book of Genesis: The first eleven chapters do not deal with a Jew--not with Abraham nor Isaac nor Jacob nor Moses nor Aaron. It deals with Adam, and Adam as the archetype of humanity. Adam is not a Jew--the name is derived from "adamah" which means "earth". And when the sages ask, "From which place in the universe was this earth taken? Was it from Athens or Rome or Jericho?" (or Encino?)? the answer given is that it was taken from four corners of the earth: north, south, east and west. And what was the color of this clay that formed the human being? Our sages answered, "It was black, and white, and red and yellow."

Rosh Hashanah doesn't celebrate the birth of any particular religion...God created every human being--man, woman, child--in God's image. Whatever color, whatever race, whatever ethnicity. God created every human being with Divine potentiality....

...Adam is not created as different species or kinds. Adam is one. There is only one humanity and only one universe and only one God and only one universal obligation. In the Midrash it is written: "When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, he took Adam around to see the trees of the Garden of Eden, which included the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, and He said to Adam, "Behold My work. All this I create for you. Take care you do not destroy it, for if you do, there is no one left to repair it." This charge is addressed to every man, to every human being, and every human being can say, "For my sake was the world created." For when the rabbis asked, "Why did He create Adam singly, by himself, and not as part of a family?" the rabbis answered, "So that no one should say, 'My ancestor is superior to yours.'"

Rosh Hashanah conveys a Jewish particular, universal, global meaning:
To be a Jew is think big.
To be a Jew is to think globally.
To be a Jew is to act globally.
To be a Jew is to love God, who is global.
"Baruch Attah Adonai, Eloheiny Melech Ha-Olam."
Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the entire universe." King of this universe. God's universe is not to be escaped, or denied, or demeaned. The universe is to be sanctified...

We are a small people with a big idea. When Egypt, by 3000 B.C.E., had built its pyramids, and Sumer had its huge empires, we Jews were a tiny band of nomads milling around the upper regions of the Arabian Desert. When this small people finally settled down on the land, it was 150 miles in length, from Dan to Beersheva; 50 miles across Jerusalem. But significantly, this small people accepted God's majestic agenda. God's agenda is the entire world and humanity. Look at God's agenda. Look at God's world. Close the book--open up a newspaper:

God's world is populated by six billion people.
One sixth of the world's people, twenty two percent, live below the poverty line.
1.3 billion human beings have no access to safe drinking water.
2.6 billion live without elementary sanitation.
841 million people are severely malnourished.
150 million people go to bed hungry every night.
Thirty thousand children will die today, as they will every day, from starvation, from lack of shelter, from poverty.

Enough! Close the newspaper! Open the Machzor: This is a synagogue, not a political party, a political convention. This is Rosh Hashanah, not an economic summit. Close the newspaper. But--you can't close the newspaper once you believe in a global God. For if you close the newspaper, you make God's world irrelevant. If you close the

newspaper, you make a mockery out of prayer and repentance and goodness. A synagogue of prayer must have a window, not a mirror; a window to look out at the world.

“But Rabbi, we are a small people. Would you add new burdens upon us?”

Who in the world do you think we are? That is the question of Rosh Hashanah: "Who in the world do I think I am?" Let me rather talk about the membership at our Temple and its dues structure--that's important, but evasive. I confess: "There is another man within me, and that man is angry with me." If I close the window of the newspaper, I close the character of Jewish world religion. What shall I say to my children and my grandchildren? That we are a tribal faith with a narrow vision?

Our greatness as a religion is that we Jews conceived of ourselves as God's allies, as God's partners, as God's friends. We gave the world conscience. We gave to the world a sacred universalism that remains at the foundation of our relationship with the world...

Judaism gave the world not ziggurats or pyramids or mausoleums, but compassion and responsibility. We gave the world a sacred humanitarianism. We gave the world an economic which commands us to set aside a corner of a field, to set aside a corner of the harvest, for the poor...

We gave the world the unique heroes of a world religion who were not merely philosophers searching for a definition or miracle men who promised life after death, but emphasized the goal of all life here and now. The prophet touched the ethical nerve and chastised the kings of all nations, including Judah. Damascus and Judah, to protest the lot of the poor, the widow, the orphan, the sick here in God's world. The Jewish religious hero adopted God's agenda as his own--and it became our agenda.

The Torah insists that I open the newspaper, and not only the entertainment section. Why should I care about "them"?...I recalled the confession of Pastor Martin Miemoeller who, during the Nazi years, was silent and indifferent to the lot of Jews and socialists and workers. When, in 1937 the Nazis came for Miemoeller, he wrote these celebrated lines:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out--because I was not a socialist.
Then the came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out--because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out--because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me--and there was no one left to speak for me.

Dear friends, they are killing people every day in Darfur, in the Sudan. They are raping girls and women. They have already forcibly displaced a million human beings--200,000 refugees with nowhere to go. Men, women and children die of starvation--30,000 dead in only 18 months. The janjaweed militia of Sudan continues to destroy, pillage, torture. "Janjaweed" is an Arabic term that is translated, "A devil on horseback

with a gun...”

I say: "Never again!" Was this vow only to protect Jews from genocide? Don't I remember what you and I said, and preached, and taught and heard: "Where are the nations of the world? Where are the churches of the world? Where are the priests, pastors, the bishops and the Pope? And will my children and grandchildren ask of me, "And where was the Synagogue, where were the rabbis, and where you during Rwanda, when genocide took place in 1994?" Or the slaughter of the Tutsis by the Huti?

Can I shut the newspapers; do I dare shut my eyes and my ears so as not to see, not to hear what is going on in God's world? You and I know that the real question is not why God does not intervene; the question is why God's partners, in whose nostrils God breathed Divine potentiality, pretend that they are mute, paralyzed, deaf, impotent. On Rosh Hashanah, I must answer the man within that is angry at me. Perhaps you have heard from him as well...

We gave the world the sacred power of conscience. Conscience stayed the hands of those who would destroy our children. Conscience must not slumber, conscience can waken the world.
Join in the World Jewish Watch.
And if you ask, "Who in the world are we?" the answer is clear: we are Jews.

American Jewish World Service Information Sheet

Learning and Doing: The Relationship and Reconciliation of Two Jewish Values

By Aaron Dorfman

Judaism values both study and action. The Talmud teaches that the study of Torah is greater than all other commandments (Shabbat 127a), and yet the rabbinic tradition is obsessed with the minute details of ritual and ethical behavior. As a passage in Pirke Avot teaches, "It is not the study that is essential, but rather the action (1:17)." This latter source suggests that the rabbis understood that while study and action are both fundamental components of the religious life, they are also in tension with one another. So which is more important, study or action? How do we balance these two priorities?

A Talmudic Debate

In a frequently cited passage from the Babylonian Talmud (Kiddushin 40b), Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon debate this very question:

"Rabbi Tarfon and the Elders were once reclining in the upper story of Nithza's house, in Lod, when this question was posed to them: Which is greater, study or action? Rabbi Tarfon answered, saying: Action is greater. Rabbi Akiva answered, saying: Study is greater. All the rest agreed with Akiva that study is greater than action because it leads to action."

Rabbi Akiva's opinion is sensible. Both study and action are essential, and thus we should prioritize the one that facilitates the other. Action may occur in the absence of study, but, according to Akiva, study itself will prompt and inspire action. Yet this solution is curious, as well. If action is the ultimate goal, why not bypass study altogether?

The answer is that study not only leads us to action, it leads us*through* action. Study offers us guidelines for what kind of action to take. In the realm of social justice, our learning outlines the nature of our obligations. For example, the Torah defines our duty to pay workers fairly and promptly. The principle of *pikuah nefesh*--the prioritization of saving human life--is articulated in the Talmud. And Maimonides codifies for us how much charity we should give and to whom we should give it.

Indeed, though Rabbi Akiva's principle seems to imply that study*could* lead to action, there are many rabbinic sources that seem to accept Akiva's principle yet suggest that study *must* lead to action. According to the rabbinic sage Rava, "The purpose of learning is repentance and good deeds (Berakhot 17a)." In another

source, another sage, Rav Huna, articulates this sentiment even stronger: "He who occupies himself only with studying Torah acts as if he has no God (Avoda Zarah 17b)."

The Source of Responsibility
Of course, learning Torah only facilitates action if we've learned where our acts are needed. Interestingly, the relatively obscure laws of *met mitzvah* ("a person one is obligated to bury") give us insight into this type of learning.

A met mitzvah is a murder victim found in the wilderness. The Torah stipulates that the elders of the town closest to the corpse must take responsibility for it. They must bury it, sacrifice a heifer, and then make this unusual declaration: "'Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it done.' (Deuteronomy 21:8)"

Why do the elders have to explicitly state that they did not perpetrate the crime? Would we really have suspected them? The mishnah in Sotah (9:6) explains:

"The elders of that town washed their hands in water at the place where the neck of the heifer was broken, and they said, 'Our hands have not shed this blood neither have our eyes seen it.' But could it be that the elders of a Court were shedders of blood? [They meant], 'He came not into our hands that we should have dismissed him without sustenance, and we did not see him and leave him without escort!'"

According to the mishnah, the elders' statement is an acceptance of broad responsibility. Because they didn't see the man, they didn't provide him with food or security. But if they had seen him and had failed to provide him with those things, they would have been culpable for his fate, even though they didn't act directly against him. Knowledge of an injustice or an imminent danger creates responsibility and an obligation to act.

Case Study
Parallel events in the last two decades provide us with a case study to explore this phenomenon. The tsunami of December 2004 killed some 225,000 people and elicited the greatest outpouring of humanitarian aid in human history. We embraced our obligation to help and responded with extraordinary generosity.

But before the tsunami of 2004, there was another tsunami, in April of 1991, in Bangladesh. This disaster killed nearly 140,000 people. Few people remember it and there was little in the way of international response. Why the difference?

In 1991, we knew of our obligation to help alleviate suffering as well as we knew it in 2004. The difference was that we saw the tsunami of 2004. It struck vacation destinations filled with tourists toting video-cameras. We watched the tsunami on television. We were able to witness and "learn" the event in a palpable, visceral way. And because we saw it, like the elders in Deuteronomy, we accepted responsibility for the well-being of the victims.

In stark contrast, the tsunami in Bangladesh received limited coverage in the media. It was like the met mitzvah--something we didn't see and, therefore, something we could reasonably claim to ignore.

Conclusion

The lesson seems to be that in order for us to realize Akiva's proposition, that study leads to action, we need to not only accept the responsibility to act, but also expose ourselves to the circumstances in which action is necessary.

But here, too, there is a fine balance. The world is filled with suffering and injustice and immersing ourselves in it too deeply can be paralyzing. It can lead to what the essayist Annie Dillard calls "compassion fatigue"--being overwhelmed by the magnitude of a problem and thus stricken with an inability to act.

Our tradition anticipates and addresses this challenge, as well. In Pirke Avot, we read, "You are not required to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it." Or as Ruth Messinger, the President of American Jewish World Service says, "The numbers are overwhelming, but we cannot retreat to the convenience of being overwhelmed."

Jewish tradition values study and action and hallows the connection between the two. Studying our traditional texts gives us a framework for understanding our obligations in the world. Studying our world makes those obligations urgent and immediate. Paraphrasing Akiva, study is greater because it leads to action, but only *if* it leads to action.

Unit 5: I Applied My Heart to Know Wisdom

Finding and Applying Texts To Our Lives

Enduring Understandings

- Metaphors enable us to organize our own thoughts and beliefs with regard to the commonplaces of life and the world around us.

- Metaphors transform abstract ideas into concrete values.

- The life stories of those we encounter reveal the impact of experience on formation process of personal ideologies.

Essential Questions

- How are Jewish philosophical texts relevant to my life?
- How can I express what I believe to be true in life?
- What connects me to my Jewish textual inheritance?

Knowledge

The true test of a poet, a songwriter, a philosopher, and even an authors of Jewish wisdom texts, is to turn what they believe into something useful in the here-and-now, not only in the dark quiet of our brains. Each uses metaphors to bring intangible philosophical beliefs into the realm of real life, and in this unit students will study the process of synectics, which leads to genuine metaphor-making by way of utilizing the beliefs and emotions of those who go through it. Furthermore, students will be given the chance to interact and create dialogue with an array of fellow Jews, in an attempt to investigate where one's personal metaphors for life stem from, and to make practical usage of the texts, philosophies, artists, lifecycle events, and social action organizations studied up to this point.

Lesson 1: *Living In Metaphor* (Synectics)

Note: While this is not a fully scripted lesson plan, the steps of the synectics process is described step-by-step in Activity One. I suggest that the educator go through the process themselves at least once before teaching this lesson!

Objectives
- Explain the process of synectics as a way to make metaphors
- Compose metaphors through the synectics process

Time Table

:00-:05	Set Induction
:05-:25	Synectics, Round 1 (guided)
:25-:50	Synectics, Round 2 (individual or *hevruta*)
:50-:55	Discussion/Wrap Up

Set Induction

Educator shows a short scene from the film "Forrest Gump", focusing on the line, "*Life is like a box of chocolates....you never know what you're gonna get."* Explain that using metaphors is an important skill of philosophers, thinkers, and especially artists. Don Draper understands a rotating slide projector as a "carousel through time" because it takes you back to your moments of greatest fun and happiness; Garth Brooks believes that "a dream is like a river" because it flows and changes, and simply carries the sailor/dreamer along as it does. Good metaphors are a powerful, fun way to try and organize and understand our own thoughts and beliefs - they help bring abstract ideas into the world around us. So let's think through the process of making good metaphors about "life".

Activity One

On the whiteboard, create four columns (three vertical lines) and number them "I", "II", "III", and "IV" (or Alef-Bet-Gimel-Dalet, or any other style). In **Column I**, write the prompt, "Life is like a...", and then ask for suggestions from students as to how to end that metaphor. Examples may include: "box of chocolates", "circus", "zoo", etc. As an entire class, choose and circle one of the nouns in the column, and then write it at the top of column II.

In **Column II,** ask students to list as many *adjectives* as possible to describe the chosen noun. For example: if the class decides on "Life is like a zoo", some adjectives/adjective sentences could be "loud and noisy", "a place to see lots of different types of creatures", "stinky and disorganized", etc. After one or two rounds of suggestions from students, ask students to pair up any adjectives on the list as *opposites*. Ex. "WILD AND CRAZY" and "BORING" to describe a zoo. Write all possibly word pairs in **Column III.**

In **Column IV**, students should list any possibly objects/things which also embody those word-pair opposites. For example, "wild and crazy" and "boring" are descriptions of a

zoo, but could also be used to describe a tennis match. Therefore, according to this activity, there is a metaphorical connection between a *zoo* and a *tennis match*, with regard to one's life. Each student should spend 5 minutes writing a paragraph about the process, starting from the prompt, "Life is like a _____ because/when...", using the objects listed in Column IV. Ex. "Life is like a tennis match, because there are moments of intense action, but also moments of boredom. Sometimes you are "playing offense" in life, and sometimes you are "playing defense....", etc. In addition to simply free writing, students must find an appropriate way to infuse the beliefs put forth in the texts we have studied into their paragraphs. This may require students having access to their Wisdom Commonplaces charts throughout the lesson. The teacher should collect the paragraphs written and distribute them randomly for classmates to read, consider, and share.

Ex: Life is a tennis match, with the players bouncing a tiny, inconsequential "thing" back and forth, back and forth. Mostly boring, you can often find yourself ignoring the action and paying attention to the sky or the people around you. But every now and then, there is a moment that takes our breath away - when we see a feat so spectacular, a maneuver of humanity or of nature, that stuns us...sometimes making us cheer, sometimes making us cry.

Activity Two

Now that all students have gone through the synectics process together, it is time for them to try it out on their own, just as philosophers do when they experience the world and interact with human subjects. It is the students' jobs to venture outside the classroom and find someone to take through the process on their own. Students may go to the library, the administrative offices, any outdoor spaces, the cafeteria, etc., *so long as they don't disturb anyone's teaching, learning, or working.* The teacher should give each student a double-sided copy of the synectics steps, with the columns on one side and the instructions on the other. When they have completed the entire process, including the writing exercise at the end, have them return to class in order to share what they've come up with.

Closure

Students will share the compositions they have come up with by interviewing those outside the classroom. Discuss with the metaphors that people came up with, and the connective traits between them and "Life". Ask students: Are there any metaphors that stand out for you? Any that you strongly agree or disagree with? Any you are especially drawn to or put-off by? Have students file these away with the rest of their writings.

Resources

- 2-sided copy of synectics process worksheet (see below)
- A/V set up - "Forrest Gump" clip

Synectics Process Worksheet

I “Life is like...”	II	III	IV

Lesson 2 - *Jewpra: The Jewish Talk Show** **MEMORABLE MOMENT**

Note: This lesson requires the educator to invite 3-5 panelists to their class in advance of the lesson. Panelists can come from within the school or without - just make sure to invite them early and remind them in advance!

Objectives

- recognize examples of ancient Jewish belief being lived by contemporary Jews
- examine the relationship between Jewish and secular texts and the experiences of panelists
- recommend relevant Jewish texts to new acquaintances, based on the experiences shared.

Time Table

:00 - :05 Set Induction
:05 - :25 Activity One: Large-group panel (**see questions below**)
:25 - :45 Activity Two: Small-groups with panelists
:45 - :55 Closure: Small-group recaps and closure

Set Induction

The educator should explain that today, the classroom/learning space has been taken over by a new television show called "Jewpra: The Jewish Talk Show." The students will be the audience members, and together they are welcoming __ panelists to share their personal life stories with their fellow Jews. *Moderator should welcome the panelists, but not formally introduce them yet.*

Activity One

The object of this activity is to present panelists as living, breathing models of Judaism for students to observe and interact with. The moderator will begin by asking all panelists some introductory questions (to establish themselves as test cases):

- What is your name, where are you originally from, and how old are you?
- What is your profession/main "job" in life right now?
- Who is in your family?

The moderator should ask each panelist all of the above questions at once, then move on to the next person and ask all of them again, etc. You want to establish them as examples of people from all walks of life and in all sorts of circumstances and conditions (like each of the thinkers/artists studied earlier), but bound together by the same heritage of Jewish text and wisdom.

After each panelist has answered all of the above questions, the moderator is free to ask any one of them more in-depths questions about their Jewish identity, upbringing, etc. For example:

- who is one of your mentors or role models? How did your relationship with them form? *(ex. My rabbi from growing up; he led our Youth Group and was a really sweet, calm, caring person who always looked you in the eye.)*
- what Jewish practice do you do? In other words, "How are you Jewish?" *(We don't belong to a synagogue, but we always have Rosh Hashanah dinner and a seder at Passover.)*
- What is your relationship with God? Do you ever pray? *(I believe in a higher power, so I guess I believe in God. And I pray quietly to myself sometimes, but I don't really go to temple. When I do go, for a Bat Mitzvah or for Yom Kippur, I read the prayers as best I can but I'm not sure if it really makes me feel connected to God.)*
- how connected do you feel to your Jewish community? how do you connect with them? *(my kids all went to Hebrew school until they had their bar mitzvahs, so they are connected to lots of those friends. And I'm friends with their parents, and we've been to their houses for Shabbat dinners and such. But I'd say we're mostly connected to our kids' school community, not the Jewish community.*

These questions can go on until the conversation comes to a natural stopping point, or the "audience" is getting restless. At this point, the moderator should announce that they will be taking a "commercial break"; break up students in the number of groups equal to the number of panelists, and assign each group a panelist to speak with personally.

<u>Activity Two</u>

In these small groups, students are free to ask the panelist questions which expand on answers previously given which they (the students) found interesting or challenging. During this time, both the students and the panelists should be considering and asking some questions about the panelist's life (either out loud, or to themselves with answers found by close listening):

Students:

- What part of the panelist's life is he/she most *proud* of? (*ex. family, home, work success)*
- What, if any, parts of the panelist's life are he/she regretful or wistful about? (*ex. work too much, could't balance home life with work, didn't travel enough and see the world)*
- What does the panelist think is the secret to happiness? to wisdom? to strength? (*ex. find someone to love and be loved by; talk to everyone you meet and genuinely get to know them; be sure of your beliefs, but also willing to reexamine them if necessary)*

Panelist:

- What have you been studying this semester, and why do you think I've been asked to be on a panel such as this today? (*ex. what to value in life, what big questions everyone asks, etc)*

- What connections between your course material and my life can you tell me about? (*ex. all of the texts are based on values and beliefs; they are influenced by life experience)*
- What music do you think I should listen to, based on what you've heard about me? (*ex. Garth Brooks, Bobby McFerrin, etc.*)

Students should have their sources available to them to look over and work with during the conversation. After the discussion, all groups should come back together, and the panelists should return to their places in front of the group. The panelists are asked to explain what the group talked about, what part of their own lives they spent time discussing, and what the students thought about the connection between the texts/ media studied and their participation in the panel today. Finally, ask each panelist:

- *What have YOU gained from your participation today, with regard to the Jewish sources you discussed with your group? Have you thought of any other ways in which those texts resonated with your life?*

(over)

<u>Closure</u>

The educator/moderator should thank all of the guests who have participated, and invite them to join students in sitting at tables/desks/etc. The educator should then take a moment to reflect on the entire curriclum that students have just worked their way through, touching on moments of in-class discussion (specific to each class) as well as universal "Truths" which have become clear in the course of their study.

Ex.

I have a policy of never trying to teach something that isn't worthwhile for students to learn, something that may not prove useful throughout one's entire life. That's why, even though I know some students absolutely despise it, I think math class is good for everyone. That's why writing essays, learning about biology and studying music are good for everyone. But it's harder to pinpoint where, exactly, learning about personal ideologies fits into a student's education, or how it may affect one's career choices. Some of you may very well become philosophers and write volume upon volume about existentialism and the theories of religions' impact on the human experience; but some of you might become doctors or lawyers or business executives - or even a teacher....or even a rabbi!

So what do we do with this wealth of textual and cultural knowledge that we've just come into? How do we find a place for it in our own lives, and how might it affect things like our educations or our career choices? How might it affect any part of our lives? We've all just met "run-of-the-mill" Jews, all of whom live their lives in a variety of ways. Does anything we've talked about teach us something about them, or about our interactions with them? Does it teach us anything about our own lives? Does it reveal to us anything new - or anything that we already knew - about what we should do and what the purpose of this journey called life is all about? Does it help illuminate our true selves? Does it help illuminate God?

The educator should ask each student (who is willing) to share what they imagine the direct impact of studying ideologies and values and expressions of them to their own lives. Ask them to think about the entire curriculum in terms of:

- When do I perceive these themes, values, experiences, questions, etc. will explicitly show up in my life?
- Can you think of any experiences you have had which, at the time, you did not recognize as a values-rooted, ideologically-indicative moment, but which has since revealed itself to you as one? (Think lifecycle events, moments of illumination, personal interactions with others, even tragic moments.)

Finally: Ask students, “What will you tell your parents/siblings/friends about this curriculum? What have you already shared with them, and what can you further share with them now that you have completed this journey?”

Resources:

- Panelist questions (see sample below)

Full Panel Questions

(sample, not exhaustive)

- Who are you named after, if anyone?
- What's your Hebrew name? Do you know where that name came from?
- What was your Jewish upbringing like? Did you go to shul with your family at all? Have Shabbat dinner (did it involve candles, challah, wine, etc.)? Go to Hebrew school?
- Did you become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah? What was that experience like for you? (How much prep time, what was the service like, what did you do to celebrate it?)
- (If married) Did you have a Jewish wedding ceremony, or components of a Jewish wedding in your ceremony?
- Do you speak any Hebrew? Did you ever study it?
- Did you go to summer camp or youth group events?
- Do you believe in God?
- What are the three most significant moments in your life that you can think of? What is it about *those moments* which make them more valuable to you than any others?
- Who or what influenced your beliefs?
- Do you believe in following *mitzvot*?
- Do you think Jews should marry other Jews?
- Did your parents ever talk to you about dating Jews/non-Jews when you were a teenager?
- What do you think happens to us after we die?
- How do you observe Shabbat? Pesach? Sukkot? Hanukah?
- Do you fast on Yom Kippur?