

G-d Part 1

Materials

- paper/pens
- Yogurt containers with dates, apricots, chia seeds
- Exodus chapter 3
- Computer set up to watch prince of egypt
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ds9y3JJGig> from 1:00-4:50
- Hubble photos ready and loaded [Hubble Space Images for G-d Part 1](#)
- Blank Index cards
- Index cards with G-d definitions on them
- Towels

Purpose

- introducing the idea of a transformative encounter with the Divine using Moses at the Burning Bush
- learning about YHVH as just one Jewish way to think about divinity and the sacred.
- why do people struggle with naming 'what will be, what is, what was'?
- 'feeling our way' through the struggle to name something that is beyond naming

Goal

- To use our intellect to contemplate the idea or concept of G-d.

G-d Part 1

1. Write names of G-d on the board. Using social barometer, how does each person feel about each of the names. On one side of the room "I like it" on the other side of the room "I don't relate to this one/I don't like it" or anywhere in between. Read each name off and students move to stand where they feel they fit when hearing that name.
2. Watch Prince of Egypt Burning Bush scene and then discuss the following questions:
 1. What strikes you about this scene?
 2. How is G-d portrayed in this "Hollywood" version?
 3. How did you feel watching it?
 4. What does it mean that G-d is portrayed as a bush that burns but is not consumed?
3. Read G-d Quotes (see below)
4. Play with the human tendency to have to categorize and name things using these experiential exercises:
 1. Describe yourself in chevruta with a friend. Ask that friend if the description is fully you.
 2. Look at each of the Hubble space pictures in turn. Try to describe them.
 3. Students take turns closing their eyes and putting their hand into one or two of 3-4 containers that the teacher prepares ahead of time. Instructions to the student: Do not name what is in the container. Resist the urge to name it. Instead, describe it. - four containers 1) chia seeds in liquid, 2) date logs covered in flour, 3) dried apricots (could also use: peeled grapes, bloomed tapioca, spaghetti cut into tiny pieces)
5. Write the answer to one of these prompts:
 1. Have you ever experienced a time that seemed unexplainable?

2. Have you ever experienced a time that you felt completely connected to everyone/everything around you?
3. When is a time you've ever felt spiritually connected?
4. What does belief in a higher power do for someone?

6. Write your own definition of G-d on index cards

Names of Gd

Elohim - Divine Justice

Yah - Breath of Life Itself

YHVH (YHWH)

Adonai - Master/Lord

Adonai - Uniter of All Existence

HaShem - The Name

Ein Sof - Infinity

Shekhinah - presence in humanity/female

Melech - King

Ribboyno Shel Olam - Master of the Universe

Ruach ha olam - spirit of the world/universe

HaMavdeel - the Divider of Time

I am that I am - What G-d says to Moses at the burning bush

G-d Quotes

We all have images of Gd that the past has bequeathed to us, and sometimes these images get in the way. But these images are not Gd: they are just images of Gd. "God language" can be of great help to us in relating to the infinite, but we should not confuse it with the real thing. If we are to have some hope of regaining the wonder that inspired our ancestors to invent the word...we need to clean the world up a bit in our own minds...In those moments when we feel the need to send out appreciation, or thanks, or pleading, or sorrow, or rage - not to a specific human target but to the universe - we send it out to an Other. - Reb Zalman Shachter Shalomi Jewish With Feeling p. 8-9

One problem with the word god is that god is a noun. Almost all of our names and appellations for God are nouns...the name of a person, place or thing. By defining "God" exclusively as a noun, we "thingify" or objectify God in our minds, no matter how often we protest that God is free from all the properties of matter, beyond time and space, and so on..think of God as a verb...action, of process...a process that the universe is doing, has been doing, and will continue to do - at least on our scale of comprehension - forever. p. 19-20

If there is a god, then that god is me, all of us, animals, trees, rocks, everything - not some personified Other who 'wants' our prayer or our obedience. - Reb Zalman Shachter-Shalomi

If Gd made people by filling them with holy breath, then Gd has whispered into each of us. So, each time we exhale, we are releasing Gds breath, the message of Gds being. That means we are all messengers from the source, and maybe, if we treat every person we met as if they were a messenger, we would get the message p. 92-3 Jacob the Baker Noah Benshea

Reality to us is in thinghood consisting of substances that occupy space; even Gd is conceived by most of us as a thing. The result of our thingness is our blindness to all reality that fails to identify itself as a thing, as a matter of fact. - Abraham Joshua Heschel

"We start with wonder, or with thankfulness, or yearning, or even rage, and we ask ourselves: Wonder or rage at what? Thankfulness toward what? Yearning for what? It was simple, searching questions like these that started our ancestors thinking in terms of "God". p. 7

The beginning of knowing about Gd...is simply paying attention, being fully present where you are, or as Rashi suggests, waking up.-Lawrence Kushner

You know the way we feel right now? This connection between us that we don't understand and we don't want to let go of? That's G-d... I think we're all connected, everyone on earth...I think all the good parts of us are connected on some level. The part that shares the last double chocolate chip cookie or donates to charity or gives a dollar to a street musician or becomes a candy striper or cries at Apple commercials or says I love you or I forgive you. I think that's G-d. G-d is the connection to the very best parts of us." - Nicola Yoon, *The Sun is Also a Star*