
Connections to Judaism

Spirituality and Confirmation

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Connections to Judaism

Spirituality and Confirmation

EDUCATIONAL RATIONALE

This curriculum guide is geared towards 9th or 10th graders studying to be confirmed in their congregation. The major goal is to help students connect spiritually to Judaism in a way that is meaningful to each individual. This curriculum defines Jewish spirituality as individual connection to Judaism. This definition of spirituality based on many scholars' and authors' definitions¹. The commonalities among the many definitions of spirituality are that spirituality allows Jews to connect to Judaism in a variety of ways: such as connection to God, community, individual relationships, prayer, worship, liturgy, history or a number of other outlets. Through four units of connection to people and community², prayer, ritual, and God, students will have an opportunity to explore two major principles in Judaism: God, and Torah.

By offering opportunities to explore a variety of Jewish rituals and practices, this curriculum will aid students in the discovery of their spirituality. Hearing from members of

¹ A few definitions of spirituality that influenced this curriculum guide's definition are:

"Spirituality may inclusively be regarded as the sum of the efforts of the human psyche, individually and collectively to attune to the impulses and rhythms of the universe, whether internal to the individual or external in nature." Dr. Martin A. Cohen, HUC-JIR, *The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook*

"The cognitive and/or behavioral activities designed to help individual and community to reconnect to God." Deanne H. Shapiro and Johannah Shapiro, University of California, Irvine, *The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook*

"Spirituality is the process through which the individual strives to meet God." Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky, Jewish Outreach Institute, *The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook*

"A highly personal outlook about what is sacred about us; it is the expression of our most deeply held values, and it is that sense of higher purposed that guides our daily lives." Dr. David S. Ariel, Cleveland College of Jewish Studies, *The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook*

² 'Connections to people and community' will consist of students exploring their responsibility to others, to their *kehillah* and to the *klal Yisrael*. This unit will also include components of social action.

their community who have found a way to tap into their own spirituality and taking part in an activity related to the unit, students will explore different methods in order to see what might work for them. Reflecting on experiences will help students understand their own process of connection and help them clarify what their central values are. This is a wonderful opportunity for synagogues to help students make Judaism relevant and meaningful. Teenagers actively attempt to form their own values and identity³ and this curriculum will help students formulate answers to many questions they ask during this critical juncture.

One may realize his or her spirituality via self-reflection. While this process of realization occurs internally for some individuals, this curriculum will aid the process by using external self-reflection techniques consisting of written reflections. Students will have the option to post their reflections to a personal blog, write hand-written reflections or use an alternative method of posting their thoughts (such as using a Google Doc to create an online journal)⁴. Students will receive written feedback from the teacher which will acknowledge their completion of the reflection and encourages them to continue the self-reflection process. Prior to beginning this curriculum, the teacher should be aware of the ways she/he connects to Judaism and be able to articulate those ways in order to act as a role model for the students. The teacher must also be open-minded as well as available for students when they are struggling (or able to find them appropriate guidance, such as helping to set up a meeting with the educator or a clergy member).

The class meets once a week with some additional meetings for field trips or

³ Developmental psychologists such as Jean Piaget in his Theory of Cognitive Development and Erik Erikson in his Stages of Psychosocial Development have identified teenage development as being heavily focused on value and identity formation.

⁴ It is assumed that the students and teacher(s) have access to computers (or tablets, phones, etc.) at least once a week. While the methods of sharing work are highly reliant on the above technologies, most things can be altered to accommodate schools that wish to not use technology. The use of computers, blogging, and other social media is meant to appeal to students' comfort with personal sharing through technology.

community gatherings. Most meetings will take place outside of the synagogue and will allow students to take part in an activity. Students will be guided through these units with experiences such as interviewing someone in their life about Judaism, gathering as a community for a meal, participating in a social action project together, visiting a mikveh, participating in a "twenty five hour Shabbaton"⁵, praying different services together, working with a *chevruta* to compare a piece of Torah to a contemporary text or listening to a diverse panel of speakers about their views of God. Each unit will include hands-on experiences as well as at least one conversation with a role model for the unit. For example, if there is a member of the congregation who connects to Judaism through yoga and meditation, the class will participate in one of these practices with the congregant and then have a conversation with them about how yoga and meditation enable their spiritual connection. Through this, students will have the opportunity to observe a member of their community practicing a spiritual outlet as well as being exposed to different methods. Each unit will incorporate concepts and ideas discussed in previous units and how they relate to each other in the greater context of spirituality. To ensure that students have opportunities to remain connected to the congregation in substantial ways that will continue to foster their spiritual growth, the curriculum ends with one-on-one meetings between the student and teacher to create an individual plan for Jewish life beyond confirmation. The responsibility to follow-up with these plans will fall upon the shoulders of the teacher, educator or someone else who will be involved in the synagogue during the following years.

Liberal Judaism embraces modern innovation and diverse understandings of beliefs; this curriculum offers students various outlets to engender their spirituality.

⁵ "25 hour Shabbaton" is a program to immerse students in a full day of Shabbat rituals, from beginning to end.

Enduring Understandings

Experiences in different modes of spirituality can inspire exploration of new methods of Jewish connectedness.

One expresses his/her Judaism through relationships with individuals, his/her community and *klal Yisrael*.

Rituals represent physical embodiments of our religious devotion or celebration of Jewish life cycle events.

Prayer connects us to our feelings, enables us to connect to God and engages us in Jewish history and tradition.

Reflection about God guides us to understand our own beliefs about metaphysics. This process also enables engagement in prayer in individually meaningful ways.

Dear Educator,

Thank you for your interest in this curriculum guide. I hope you find its content and experiences suitable to the experience you seek to create for your confirmation students.

This guide was created after speaking with numerous students who expressed a lack of “real connection” to Judaism. They came to religious school, listened to Torah stories, and prayed but never felt like they had ever had a chance to truly make it their own. I chose the four units of this guide based on the ways I have seen friends, family and peers find their own “real connection” to Judaism. I believe this is what people mean when they talk about being spiritual. They have found a method that works to connect them to Judaism. They have found their path to spirituality.

Experiential education is a main focus of this guide. Many of the classes are not meant to take place inside of a classroom but rather out of the synagogue. This course is geared to help students experience a connection to Judaism and then reflect on how well it worked for them. If students walk away from this course knowing that they really hate guided meditation, that’s at least a little closer to them knowing what *will* help them connect.

Building a strong, open, and caring community is a vital component for this class. Students will only feel comfortable sharing deeply personal information with one another once they feel comfortable in each other’s presence. I strongly urge you to plan a community dinner or lunch at the beginning of the school year. If you are comfortable and able, invite students to your own home. Ask students if they wish to gather for class on Shabbat during the year. Any additional community building exercises or activities that you add to this curriculum will only help its effectiveness in aiding your students feeling a sense of Jewish community.

These units are organized to build upon one another. Thinking about people and community is vital before talking about the rituals that require community. Prayer is both ritual and community based. Challenging prior beliefs about God requires feeling incredibly comfortable with classmates and having some experience with reflecting on deep issues of Judaism.

The two vital reflection components throughout the curriculum are the personal journals and the creation of a future plan for Jewish life. As the educator, it is vital that you provide feedback in response to the students’ journals. This is meant to be non-judgmental feedback that pushes students to think deeper about issues. You should read the journals at least every two times you assign them but it is optimal to read students journals after every entry. If you have the time, meeting with students individually in short advising-like sessions would be a lovely way to administer feedback and get to know students. The Future Jewish Plans should be created based on students’ worksheets completed at the end of each unit. These worksheets are intended to help students gather their thoughts about what is important to them from each unit and what goals they wish to pursue.

The class sessions vary in length. Some of the “traditional” class sessions are about one hour long while others can take up to two hours. Outside experiences can also vary in length depending on your availability and the types of organizations accessible in your area. Although this curriculum focuses on only four units, it is extremely important to ultimately impart to the students that spirituality is less about the actual method of connecting and more about the end result of feeling and acting upon that connection.

I hope that this guide helps you create a year of meaningful and fruitful study.
B’hatz’l’cha! Good luck!

Sincerely,

Allie Fischman

Unit 1 - People & Community

*What does God require of you? Only to do justice, to love goodness, and to walk humbly before God.
- Micah 6: 8-9*

Many Jewish scholars, including theologian Martin Buber, posit that connecting with others is what ultimately brings us into relationship with God. In Judaism, being part of a community is vital. This introductory unit will help students explore their relationships to other people and their role in the Jewish communities in which they belong.

Enduring Understandings

- One on one interactions allow people to develop intimate, meaningful relationships.
- Participation in community enables one to connect to the Jewish past, present and future.

Knowledge

- Relationships with individuals enable us to connect to God.
- Judaism stresses the importance of living in and participating in a Jewish community.
- *Tzedakah* and acts of *tikkun olam* enables one to connect to various members of community.
- Spirituality is dynamic and personal. Everyone connects to God and Judaism in different ways.

Skills

- Students will be able to articulate their own definition of spirituality.
- Students will be able to describe Judaism's propensity for communal living.

Evidence of Learning

- Students will participate in reflective writing assignments detailing their role in relationships with individuals and in their Jewish community.
- Students will reflect on their participation in a community service activity.
- Students will develop clear language that expresses goals for involvement in their community in the future.

Lesson 1 – Introductions and Team Building

Objectives

- Students will build community by getting to know one another.
- Students will be able to effectively communicate with one another.

Materials

Various supplies are needed for these games/activities, please check each activity individually

Activities

Depending on your relationship with these students, the size of the class and their familiarity with each other, you may wish to condense this lesson with the second lesson plan into only one introduction day.

A major component of this curriculum is building community through shared experiences and learning together. Since much of the material discussed in later units is very personal, it may be nice to ease into the year with some community building activities and name recognition games.

Activity 1 – Name Games– 5-20 minutes

Pick a few games that are directed to building community through learning each other's names or fun things about each other. A few examples include:

- 2 Truths and a Lie: Have each student say their name and give the class two true facts about themselves and one thing that is not true. The rest of the class has a few guesses to see if they can figure out which one is fake.
- My name is...: There are many variations on this kind of go-around. You can have each person state their name and then their favorite food that starts with the same first letter as their name. Then, have each person repeat all of the names of people before their turn.
- Rock Paper Scissors Ultimate Throwdown: Have students pair up and play Rock Paper Scissors. Before they begin, they need to tell each other their first name and a few facts about themselves (like their favorite tv show or movie). Then, whoever loses 2 out of 3 follows the winner to a new opponent. The loser is now a cheerleader for the winner and is encouraged to yell their name and cheer while they play their new opponent. Keep going until two students remain and one is crowned victor.

(Many more games/ice breakers can be found at the websites listed in the appendix.)

Activity 2 - Community/Team Building Activities - About 30 minutes

Five Pointed Star (http://www.teampedia.net/wiki/index.php?title=Category:Team_Strategy)

Lay a 20-50 foot rope on the ground in the shape of a circle. It is helpful if the two ends of the rope are tied together (otherwise, it is too simple).

The 5 Pointed Star begins with participants gathering around a rope on the ground in the shape of a circle. Participants are instructed to pick up the rope with both hands and then shape the rope into a 5 pointed star, with all the overlaps and criss-crosses (just like the kind you drew in elementary school). The team must take 4 minutes to come up with a plan and while they are talking they cannot start moving. It sounds easy enough, but inevitably some

eager person starts taking action during planning time - that is when the penalties start flying: blindfolds, ankles tied together, walk backwards everywhere you go, etc. Then the team must implement their plan (move) without talking, then plan again, then move again. Once they have moved through the four sequences and formed the best star possible they lay the rope on the ground and examine their handiwork.

Debrief Questions:

1. How did you work together?
2. What worked well?
3. What was challenging?
4. What did you learn about yourself?
5. What did you learn about the group?
6. What does this kind of activity have to do with our class?

Many other community/ team building activities can be found online. Other options could include a scavenger hunt around the building using QR codes (if your students have cell phones equipped for this...http://www.teampedia.net/wiki/index.php?title=QR_Code_Scavenger_Hunt) or something like a blindfolded obstacle course through an area.

Additional Resources:

Name Games and “Get to know you” Games
<http://wilderdom.com/games/NameGames.html>

Team Building Activities
<http://wilderdom.com/games/InitiativeGames.html>

Like Wikipedia but these materials are geared towards helping teams with team building activities and the like.
http://www.teampedia.net/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page

Lesson 2 – What is Spirituality?

Objectives

- Students will be able to articulate their own definition of spirituality.
- Students will be able to assess multiple definitions of spirituality.

Materials

Post-it's or notecards with definitions of spirituality

Hard copies of interview questions

Activities

Set Induction - 5 minutes

Give each student a Post-It or notecard with a definition of spirituality. Have the students find their partner who has the same definition. Give them two minutes to tell each other if they agree with the definition and why or why not. Tell them that each student will have one minute of time to talk when the other student can only listen to them. Then, switch after one minute.

Activity 1 - Ground Rules/Class Brit - 10-15 minutes

Explain to students that many of the lessons included in this year's curriculum include reflection about serious or personal topics. Though students will never be forced to share things they are not comfortable with sharing with the group, the goal is that all students feel comfortable sharing and that the classroom is a safe space. Many educators (like Ruth Charney and Rachel Kessler) recommend starting the year with a group discussion about what the ground rules for the classroom should be. For this age group, it is probably enough to have an open conversation with the group about what kind of traits are required to ensure your learning space is safe and comfortable for everyone. This may include things like "respect, honesty, keeping out judgment, etc.). You can write down the *brit* and keep it somewhere in your classroom for the year.

Activity 2 - What is Spirituality? Introduction to the Curriculum - 10-20 minutes

Begin this activity by giving students a few minutes to think to themselves about ways they have felt incredibly connected to Judaism, God or other people. Was there a time when they felt a profound connection to someone or something? Maybe their moment is not Jewish. After students have had an opportunity to think for a few minutes, ask students to share what their moment was.

Then, ask students to share the definitions of spirituality that they had from the beginning of class. Discuss whether the class agrees with these definitions or if something is missing. Explain that the major goal of this year's class will be to identify ways each of student connects to Judaism. Together, you will explore four different ways that many people connect to Judaism: community/people, ritual, prayer and God.

*Activity 3 - Nourishment! - 5-10 minutes *Inspired by an activity by Rachel Kessler**

Bring in a loaf of challah to class and pass the loaf around the classroom. As it comes to each person, have that person explain ways they are hoping to find "nourishment" this coming year. Do they hope to learn something about rituals? Do they have a particular goal

outside of their religious life that they are looking to succeed in this coming year? Maybe they are trying out for the basketball team and it means a lot to them. Ask students to share something, it can be small. Just one small way they are looking forward to finding nourishment for their mind, body or soul in the coming year.

Wrap-Up - What is spirituality? - 3 minutes

As a conclusion to the class, give students two minutes to write their own definition of spirituality. Give out strips of paper and once the students are finished, have them crumple up the sheets of paper and throw them into the middle of the room. Once all of the students have completed this, ask each student to go into the middle of the room and grab a different person's definition. Before leaving, have all students read the definition they are holding.

Assignment - Interviews

For next week's class, invite students to interview a Jewish adult who is important to them (such as a parent, teacher, aunt, uncle, mentor, or godparent). Give students five to eight questions (either from the sample questions in the appendix or ones you generate) and ask them to create three to five more of their own questions. (*See the next page for a sample of the directions sheet you can give to students.*)

Definitions of Spirituality

Something that in ecclesiastical law belongs to the church or to a cleric as such (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*)

Sensitivity or attachment to religious values (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*)

The quality or state of being spiritual (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*)

Spirituality may inclusively be regarded as the sum of the efforts of the human psyche, individually and collectively to attune to the impulses and rhythms of the universe, whether internal to the individual or external in nature. (*Dr. Martin A. Cohen, HUC-JIR, The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook*)

The cognitive and/or behavioral activities designed to help individual and community to reconnect to God. (*Deanne H. Shapiro and Johannah Shapiro, University of California, Irvine, The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook*)

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(*Dr. David S. Ariel, Cleveland College of Jewish Studies, The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook*)

Interview

Directions: Next week, we will begin studying the different ways in which we are responsible to individuals. Your task is to interview a Jewish adult who is important to you, such as a parent, teacher, aunt, uncle, mentor, or godparent. Choose at least eight of these questions for your interview and add five more of your own. You can choose to fully record these answers or to make notes so you remember the main point of your interviewee's answers. (Don't forget to explain to your interviewee about our class and why you are conducting this interview!)

Interview Questions:

- What relationships were most important to you while you were growing up?
- How should two people treat each other in an ideal relationship (platonic or romantic)?
- Why do you have these ideas of how people should treat each other? Are these ideas informed by anything in particular?
- Choose two very different relationships in your life. How do you act differently in each of these relationships?
- Do you find that your role in relationships is static? Or is it constantly changing?
- Do you often reflect on the different ways you treat people in various relationships? How so?
- What are some traits that you think are vital to successful collaboration in relationships?
- In Judaism, we are taught to treat every person as if they were created in the image of God (*b'tzelem Elohim*), does this align with how you try to treat people? Why or why not? How so?

Lesson 3 - How am I responsible to others?

Objectives

- Students will be able to list values they deem as vital to healthy relationships.
- Students will be able to rank Jewish values pertaining to individual relationships and explain their decisions.
- Students will be able to choose values that are very important to them.

Materials

Post-It notes and pencils/pens

Worksheet with values to rank

Kesbet Seven Jewish Values - Guidelines for an Inclusive Community

Activities

Set Induction – 5 minutes

When students arrive, have Post-It notes and pens available. Have the following prompt written and viewable:

- What values do you think are important in relationships between two individuals?

Give students a few minutes to silently post their values. When all students are finished, go through what everyone wrote and group any repeated values together.

Activity 1 - Values Ranking - 20 Minutes

Explain that today's class will be focused on exploring the Jewish values connected to how one person acts in relation to another person. Hand out strips of paper to students that have Jewish values about this including: *kevod* (respect), *shlom bayit* (peace in the home), *betzelem Elohim* (in God's image), *shmirat halashon* (guarding one's language), *v'ahava l'reiecha kamocha* (love your neighbor as yourself) and *derech eretz* (way of the world). See the handout from *Kesbet* for helpful descriptions of these values.

After briefly discussing what each value means, allow students a few minutes to rank the values in order of what they believe to be most important to least important.

Have a debate amongst the class as to which values are most important. Ask students to share their number one value. Did any of the values stand out as clearly being more important than others? How did they make their decision in ranking? How did past experiences in relationships affect the decisions they made?

Activity 2 - Brit Derech - 20 minutes

Give students the following prompt: "Think about a time when you did something or said something about someone that you later regretted. Or remember a time when someone did something that was extremely hurtful to you. Now, also think of a time when someone did something or said something about you that was incredibly kind. Using these memories and past experiences as well as having just talked about Jewish values that teach us how to treat others, create your own *brit*, your own covenant that will guide your interactions with others

in the future. How do you wish to treat others? How will you enact the Jewish values that you ranked as ‘most important?’”

It may be helpful to write your own *brit derech*, possibly even from the viewpoint of how a teacher treats a student, so they can see an example of what a *brit* should look like. If you have time, allow them to decorate their *brit* as well.

Wrap-Up - In what way am I responsible to others? - 3 minutes

After finishing the *brit derech*, ask students to generalize what they learned today. Have each student say one sentence that could act as their personal motto of answering the question, “In what way am I responsible to others?”

A sample motto may be: I am responsible to treat all people as though they were created *betzelem Elohim*, in the image of God.

Assignment - Personal Journal Intro and First Prompt

Introduce students to the Personal Journal they will be keeping throughout the year. Explain that they may choose where they keep their journal (either as a blog, a wiki page, a Word document, handwritten or a Google doc) but that you are going to ask that they turn in certain journal prompts. Let students know that you will be giving feedback but the feedback will be more about challenging them to think deeper about an issue or to ask questions in response to what they wrote. The journal is meant to help them reflect on the activities they participate in during class and ultimately, will be very helpful when they are creating their final projects.

Give students the first prompt for their journal:

- Expand upon your definition of spirituality that you came up with today. As of right now, what does spirituality mean to you? What are the ways you connect to Judaism, God or others?

Seven Jewish Values

Guidelines for Inclusive Jewish Community

★ כבוד | Kavod

RESPECT - Judaism teaches us to treat ourselves and others with respect; even the stranger is to be treated with respect. Kavod is a feeling of regard for the rights, dignity, feelings, wishes, and abilities of others. Teasing and name-calling disrespect and hurt everyone, so learn to respect people's differences.

★ שלום בית | Shalom Bayit

PEACE IN THE HOME - Our community centers, synagogues, youth groups, and camps are often our second homes. Everyone needs to feel comfortable, safe, welcome, and respected at home. Don't ostracize those who seem different. Strive to settle disagreements in peaceful and respectful ways that allow all community members to maintain their dignity.

★ בצלם אלהים | B'tzelem Elohim

IN GOD'S IMAGE - The Torah tells us that we are all created "b'tzelem Elohim" (Bereshit 1:26), in the image of God. This is a simple and profound idea that should guide our interactions with all people. We do not know the "image of God" except as it is reflected in the different types of people we encounter in the world. If we can remember that each of us, no matter how different, is created in God's image, this idea can lead us to find the connection we have with one another and help create truly inclusive communities.

★ כל ישראל ארים זה בזה | Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bzeh

COMMUNAL RESPONSIBILITY - The Jewish principle that "All Israel is responsible for one another" (Shavuot 39a) means that it is our responsibility to stand up for each other, especially for those who are vulnerable and cannot speak up for themselves.

★ שמירת הלשון | Shmirat Halashon

GUARDING ONE'S USE OF LANGUAGE - The Talmud warns us that we must take care in how we use language. Talking about others behind their backs, even if what we are saying is true, is prohibited. The guidelines for "shmirat halashon" remind us that what we say about others affects them in ways we can never predict. Words can hurt or heal depending on how we use them.

★ ואהבת לרעך כמוך | V'ahavtah L'Reiecha Kamocha

"LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF" - Commenting on Leviticus 19:18, Rabbi Hillel once stated that this was the foundational value of the Torah. It begins with loving ourselves. We must love and accept our whole selves, and in doing so create the capacity for extending that love and acceptance to others.

★ אל תפרוש מן הציבור | Al Tifrosh Min Hatsibur

SOLIDARITY - "Don't separate yourself from the community" (Pirke Avot 2:5). When you feel different from others in your community, don't isolate yourself. Find allies and supporters who you can talk to. If you know someone who is feeling isolated, reach out; be an ally and a friend.



KESHET www.keshetonline.org | info@keshetonline.org | 617.524.9227

Jewish Values

Using a scale of 1-6, rank these values in the order that they are most important to you.

- _____ *Kavod* (respect)
- _____ *Shlom bayit* (peace in the home)
- _____ *Betzelem Elohim* (in God's image, *Bereishit* 1:26)
- _____ *Shmirat halashon* (guarding one's language, Talmud)
- _____ *V'ahavta l'reiecha kamocha* (love your neighbor as yourself, *Vayikra* 19:18)
- _____ *Derech eretz* (way of the world, Mishnah *Avot* 2:2)

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Lesson 4 - How am I responsible to my *kehillah* (Jewish community)?

Rabbi Akiva taught: "Love your neighbor as yourself; (Leviticus 19:18). This is the greatest principle of the Torah."
- *Sifra, Kedoshim 2*

Objectives

- Students will be able to identify roles they can play in their *kehillah*.
- Students will be able to describe Judaism's propensity for communal living.
- Students will be able to collaborate effectively.

Resources

Aron, Isa. *Deweyan Deliberation as a Model for Decision-Making in Jewish Education*.
www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/bitstreams/10159.pdf. 2009.

Activities

Set Induction - Why community? - 5 minutes

Judaism has a long standing tradition of focusing on community. Together, generate a list of Jewish gatherings or events that take place over the course of the year. Examples include:

- Lifecycle events like *bar/bat mitzvah*, weddings, *brit milah* and naming ceremonies and funerals
- Prayer
- Holiday celebrations (break fast, Passover *seder*)
- Study (adult text study, these classes, Torah study)

After creating a fairly exhaustive list, ask students to list any Jewish events that are for individuals. This list will most likely be much shorter. Discuss the implications for Judaism's strong preference for communal living.

- What does it mean for us, as Jews, that many Jewish events need to take place in community?
- How are we, as students and the next generation of Jewish adults, supposed to take part in our community?
- Why is it important for all members of communities to have roles?

Activity 1 – What's going on in our community? Mini Deweyan Deliberation - 1 hour

Talk to the religious school director/rabbi/cantor/executive director/lay leader and find out if there is a big issue currently affecting the community. Ask if it is possible for your class to weigh-in on this important issue. Perhaps there is a big board meeting approaching and the students could present their take on the issue.

The issue should be something the synagogue is currently debating or discussing, not one that has already been resolved. Examples may include:

- Changing curriculum in the religious school

- Building/renovating spaces in the sanctuary
- Needing new *tzedakah* projects for the synagogue
- General synagogue policy changes or discussion

Invite your contact to come to class to talk to the students about the issue. Have them explain the general issue and as many details as possible. It is important to note all of the possible involved parties, financial obligations or restrictions, other Materials (such as space or time) and goals. After the students ask questions so they feel confident in their understanding of all facets of the issue, have students brainstorm the following:

Step 1: What is the issue at hand? Write a clear statement about the issue.

Step 2: What are specific key points about this issue? (These are going to be focused upon when deciding on a possible solution.)

Step 3: Identify possible courses of action.

Step 4: Identify criteria for choosing the most appropriate course of action. (IE space, time, money, personnel, alignment with goals of the synagogue, etc.)

Step 5: Assess the possible courses of action against the criteria that were chosen in step five.

After students have deliberated, have them figure out a way to present their chosen possible course of action to the synagogue board or whichever group/committee/staff are in charge of resolving the issue.

Try to ensure that all students' voices are heard. You can even ask for a student to be in charge of making sure everyone's opinions are heard and taken seriously. No suggestion is a bad suggestion and no idea too crazy!

Activity 2 – What's my role? - 15 minutes

Give students Post-It notes and allow them to write down various roles that they have in the community. Perhaps their role is to study or help babysit on Friday night while parents are attending services. Have their roles changed since their *bar/bat mitzva*? What kinds of responsibility do they have in the community?

After students have posted their current roles in one area, give out more Post-Its and ask students to write what they would like for their role and responsibility to be. Do they want more or less responsibility? Perhaps they only want different responsibilities. Ask them to think about the next few years and what it will be like after their confirmation year. Will they choose to continue to be involved in the religious school even if they no longer come to classes? Encourage students to stay involved. If you have information about programs in which students can participate, give exciting commercials about what's in store.

Assignment - Personal Journal Prompt

Based on their answers during activity two, students should write a more concrete journal entry about their current and future roles in the Jewish community. Some helpful guiding questions:

- What are your roles in the Jewish community now?
- What would you like your roles in the Jewish community to be in the future?

Lesson 5 - How am I responsible to *klal Yisrael*, all of Israel?

Objectives

- Students will be able to state at least one Jewish value that relates to responsibility to *klal Yisrael*.
- Students will be able to distinguish differences between two modern interpretations of *klal Yisrael*.
- Students will be able to critique interpretations of *klal Yisrael*.
- Students will begin to construct their own articulation of the place of *klal Yisrael* in their life.

Materials

Quotes written out on large sheets of paper

Markers/pens

Resources

Various Authors. *Emet Ve'Emunah: A Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism*. <http://www.icsresources.org/content/primarysourcedocs/ConservativeJudaismPrinciples.pdf>. The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1988.

Levy, Rabbi Richard. *A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism*. <http://ccarnet.org/rabbis-speak/platforms/statement-principles-reform-judaism/>. Adopted by the CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis). Pittsburgh, 1999.

Time

0:00-0:15	Welcome, Set Induction (Human Spectrum Activity)
0:15-0:35	Text Study Activity
0:35-1:15	Modern Understandings of <i>Klal Yisrael</i>
1:15-1:20	Journal
1:20-1:25	Wrap-Up

Procedure

0:00-0:15 - Human Spectrum

The following activity introduces the topic of *klal Yisrael*. Before starting the Human spectrum activity, explain that *klal Yisrael* normally refers to “all of Israel” and is used in many contexts by many different Jews but many people use this phrase when talking about our responsibility to others.

Then, designate one side of the room as “agree” and the other side as “disagree”. You can let students stand in the middle if they are unsure or neutral or force them to choose a side. Ask the following questions. After each question, ask one or two students to share why they chose the side on which they are standing.

- Anyone who calls him or herself a Jew is a Jew.
 - Agree: Individuals should be allowed to decide what their religious status is; it is not my ability or right to say whether or not someone else is a Jew; I normally believe someone when they say that they are Jewish; if someone is not “technically” Jewish but they say they are “Jewish”, I don’t see that much of a difference
 - Disagree: There are rules about who is Jewish and who is not; sometimes people say they are Jewish when really, they aren’t a practicing Jew so that changes their status; just because someone says they are Jewish does not mean they are Jewish; many people may have different definitions of who a Jew is
- I feel responsible to take care of fellow Jews more than non-Jews.
 - Agree: Jewish people are more important to me because they are like extended family; I am simply more responsible because they are also Jewish
 - Disagree: All people are equally important for me to take care of; I feel responsible to take care of everyone despite their religious affiliation
- I am more moved by the suffering of someone who I know in my immediate community versus someone in another country who I don’t know.
 - Agree: It is harder to ignore someone who I can see (like a homeless person on the street) but easier if they are farther away; I wouldn’t feel comfortable ignoring someone I know when they are in need; it’s easier to not think about people when you don’t personally know them
 - Disagree: It can be even more difficult to help someone I know because it may be awkward; I can do things like donate money or volunteer in other ways for people I don’t know but the people I know may see that I’m helping them and that could be weird
- When I see suffering, I am responsible to do something about it.
 - Agree: I am definitely responsible to do something if I see suffering, otherwise I am directly ignoring what I see; it is my responsibility to help someone in need when I see them suffering
 - Disagree: Although I may be responsible to help, I am not always able to do so; I may be responsible to help suffering when I see it but how could I possibly be responsible to help with suffering EVERY time I see it; I will never be able to help out with all of the suffering I see so I can’t be held responsible for all of it
- When I hear about suffering, I am responsible to do something about it.

**Note the difference between “seeing” and “hearing about” suffering...how does that affect the students’ decision of where to stand?

 - Agree: I am definitely responsible to do something if I see suffering, otherwise I am directly ignoring what I see; it is my responsibility to help someone in need when I see them suffering
 - Disagree: Although I may be responsible to help, I am not always able to do so; I may be responsible to help suffering when I see it but how could I possibly be responsible to help with suffering EVERY time I see it; I will never be able to help out with all of the suffering I see so I can’t be held responsible for all of it

0:15-0:35 - Text Study

Next, have the five quotes relating to community and *klal Yisrael* on big sheets around the room. Give students five to ten minutes to wander around the room and write their thoughts about each quote around the actual text of the quote (almost as if they are creating the commentary around a section of Talmud). Ask students to reflect on the quotes and respond specifically to topic of ‘responsibility to others’ as well as simply reflecting on the quote.

After students have wandered and responded to the quotes, ask each student to share which quote spoke to them the most.

- Why did this quote grab you?

- This quote embodies what I feel about *klal Yisrael*; I truly feel that all Jews are responsible to one another, no matter their background or ideological preferences

0:35-1:15 - Two Modern Understandings of Klal Yisrael

Have students read through the two excerpts of the Conservative and Reform movements’ statements about the importance of *klal Yisrael*. In small groups, have the students critique the two pieces.

The students should use a more formal method of critique where they can use three types of comments about the readings:

- *I notice...*things they noticed the authors wrote that they found particularly interesting. In this lesson, these could be things that the authors chose to include that refer specifically back to one of the Jewish values that you studied last class or today.
- *I wonder...*these are statements that the students wonder about why the author chose to do something a specific way. Even though the authors can not respond to these inquiries, it is an important part of the reflective process.
- *I appreciate...*students can make statements about things that they “liked” about the excerpts. This is when students can specifically talk about what contradicted or agreed with what they wrote and/or believe.

After students have time to critique the two pieces, bring the group back together and ask each group to share one item from each category (I notice, I wonder, I appreciate) that their group identified.

1:15-1:25 - Journal

Have students write their own paragraph about how they conceptualize their responsibility to *klal Yisrael*. Ask them to include who is included in *klal Yisrael*, what it means to be responsible to this group and what acting on this responsibility looks like.

I feel incredibly responsible to *klal Yisrael*. This means that I am responsible to not only other Jews but also to anyone who inhabits this world with Jews. Being responsible to *klal Yisrael* means that it is partly my job to ensure that all inhabitants of our planet have clean water, fresh air, shelter, clothes, and access to education. I need to do everything I possibly can to make sure I contribute to making this world an ideal place for all to live. This includes things like recycling, reducing my carbon footprint, donating to those in need when I can, and volunteering my time and efforts to help in organized volunteering.

1:25-1:30 - Wrap-Up

Before each student can leave, ask them to summarize their paragraph into a one sentence definition of klal Yisrael. Have the students share before dismissal.

- *Klal Yisrael* means that I am responsible to all humans who call themselves Jews.

Assignment - Community Service Project

Before going out and participating in the community service project, send students some information about the organization you are going to be working with. Request that they familiarize themselves with the organization and its goals before meeting to complete the project together.

Texts relating to *Klal Yisrael*

When reading these quotes, think about how they speak to our responsibility to klal Yisrael.

כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה. כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה

All of Israel is responsible for one another.

- Babylonian Talmud, Shavuot 39a

Nine *tzaddikim* cannot make a minyan, but if one common man joins them, he completes the minyan.

- Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav

Al tifrosh min hatzibur...do not separate yourself from the community.

- Pirke Avot 2:5

Whoever destroys a single life is as though he had destroyed an entire world, and whoever saves a single life is as if he had saved an entire world.

- Sanhedrin 4:5

We are committed to the (*mitzvah*) of (*ahavat Yisrael*), love for the Jewish people, and to (*k'lal Yisrael*), the entirety of the community of Israel. Recognizing that (*kol Yisrael arevim zeh ba-zeh*), all Jews are responsible for one another, we reach out to all Jews across ideological and geographical boundaries.

- Rabbi Richard Levy

(A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism)

Two Modern Understandings of *Klal Yisrael*

Conservative Judaism

Excerpted from *Emet Ve'Emunah*, Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism

This is an excerpt from a document compiled by various organizations of the Conservative Movement.

Between Jew and Fellow Jew

The Meaning of *Klal Yisrael*

The Conservative Movement has always maintained the importance of safeguarding the concept of *Mal Yisrael*, by which we meant that all Jews, irrespective of philosophical or religious persuasion, are part of one people, *Am Yisrael*. We also believe that every Jew responded differently to the revelation of Torah at Sinai. As the sages put it, each individual Jew perceived God's message according to his or her spiritual capacity or sensitivity. For us, this is the meaning of religious pluralism, and we hold this truth to be inviolate today as in the past. We do not view this as a curse or even as an unavoidable evil; rather we consider this diversity as a blessing and a positive element that enriches and stimulates contemporary Jewish life and thought.

Conservative Judaism and Other Jewish Groups

We accept as fundamental in Judaism the principle that all Jews are one fellowship responsible for one another. Therefore, from the days of Solomon Schechter we have worked for the good of all Jews, setting aside our own interests at times because we believe that the welfare of *Am Yisrael* transcends all parochial interests. Furthermore, we deplore the lack of civility which mars cooperative efforts within the Jewish community and which tears asunder the fragile fabric of unity built so painstakingly over the years.

Between Jew and Fellow Jew

In the face of the widening rifts that have developed primarily among the religious groups, a fundamental concern must be the furtherance of Jewish unity. Only when Jews live in harmony and peace with each other, and our people embrace fraternal love and respect will we be worth of messianic redemption.

Social Justice: Building a Better World

The Unfinished Agenda

An ancient Midrash suggests that the world remained unfinished during the Six Days of Creation so that we, as partners of God, might complete it. There is an unfinished agenda before us: *letakken olam be-malkhut Shaddai*, "to mend and improve the world under God's Kingship." It is appropriate that Jews pay attention to internal issues of Jewish survival and continuity. Nevertheless, it is of highest importance that both as a movement and as individuals we take action to fulfill the call of our tradition to advance the cause of justice, freedom and peace. Even as we speak out for Jews who are oppressed or persecuted in the Soviet Union, Arab lands, Ethiopia and elsewhere, so must we speak out on the dangers of nuclear annihilation, racism, hunger and poverty throughout the world, as well as the threats to our environment. We must work together with our fellow citizens of all faiths and take political action if necessary to achieve these goals.

Reform Judaism

Excepted from A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism adopted by the CCAR in 1999.

This is an excerpt from the current residing document about the core beliefs of Reform Judaism.

Israel

We are Israel, a people aspiring to holiness, singled out through our ancient covenant and our unique history among the nations to be witnesses to God's presence. We are linked by that covenant and that history to all Jews in every age and place.

We are committed to the (*mitzvah*) of (*ahavat Yisrael*), love for the Jewish people, and to (*k'lal Yisrael*), the entirety of the community of Israel. Recognizing that (*kol Yisrael arevim zeh ba-zeh*), all Jews are responsible for one another, we reach out to all Jews across ideological and geographical boundaries.

We embrace religious and cultural pluralism as an expression of the vitality of Jewish communal life in Israel and the Diaspora.

We pledge to fulfill Reform Judaism's historic commitment to the complete equality of women and men in Jewish life.

We are an inclusive community, opening doors to Jewish life to people of all ages, to varied kinds of families, to all regardless of their sexual orientation, to (*gerim*), those who have converted to Judaism, and to all individuals and families, including the intermarried, who strive to create a Jewish home.

We believe that we must not only open doors for those ready to enter our faith, but also to actively encourage those who are seeking a spiritual home to find it in Judaism.

We are committed to strengthening the people Israel by supporting individuals and families in the creation of homes rich in Jewish learning and observance.

We are committed to strengthening the people Israel by making the synagogue central to Jewish communal life, so that it may elevate the spiritual, intellectual and cultural quality of our lives.

We are committed to (*Medinat Yisrael*), the State of Israel, and rejoice in its accomplishments. We affirm the unique qualities of living in (*Eretz Yisrael*), the land of Israel, and encourage (*aliyah*), immigration to Israel.

We are committed to a vision of the State of Israel that promotes full civil, human and religious rights for all its inhabitants and that strives for a lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors.

We are committed to promoting and strengthening Progressive Judaism in Israel, which will enrich the spiritual life of the Jewish state and its people.

We affirm that both Israeli and Diaspora Jewry should remain vibrant and interdependent communities. As we urge Jews who reside outside Israel to learn Hebrew as a living language

and to make periodic visits to Israel in order to study and to deepen their relationship to the Land and its people, so do we affirm that Israeli Jews have much to learn from the religious life of Diaspora Jewish communities.

We are committed to furthering Progressive Judaism throughout the world as a meaningful religious way of life for the Jewish people.

In all these ways and more, Israel gives meaning and purpose to our lives.

Lesson 6 - Community Service Day 1

Objectives

- Students will be able to describe the importance of the value of community service.
- Students will be able to demonstrate the importance of “doing” in Judaism.

Materials

Paper and pencils/pens

Activities

Set Induction - Pre-Reflection - 5 minutes

Before beginning the community service project, ask students to take a few minutes to write about the following two prompts:

- Why do we, as Jews, perform acts of community service?
- What do you hope to gain from today’s experience?

Activity 1 – Community Service Project

Bring students to a community service project where they can participate as a group but may not come in contact with people who are in need. The goals of this project are to get students comfortable with helping in the community (if they have not done so before) and to better your community somehow. Examples may include:

- Park, beach or highway cleanup
- Sorting food at the local food bank
- Fundraising and then taking part in a walk for a cause
- Participate in a local Relay For Life event or similar

Be sure to brief the students before the activity about how their participation will affect the community. It may be helpful to have someone with the organization speak with students about the organization’s mission and goals.

Activity 2 – Reflection Debrief

After you have completed the project, debrief with the students about what it was like to work on this project for the day. This debrief could take the form of a discussion. Or, if you would like to be more creative, use one of the fun and different reflective debrief methods in the Debriefing Activities packet at the end of the guide. During this time, you may also come back to the answers the students wrote during the set induction free write.

Additional Resources

Find volunteer projects in your area: www.volunteermatch.org

You may also want to check with local Red Cross offices, food banks, and homeless shelters for volunteering opportunities.

UW Extension 4H Packet about Debriefing after Community Service Project
4h.uwex.edu/pubs/showdoc.cfm?documentid=22661

Lesson 7 - Community Service Day 2

Objectives

- Students will be able to describe the importance of the value of community service.
- Students will be able to demonstrate the importance of “doing” in Judaism.

Materials

Paper and pens/pencils

Activities

Set Induction - Pre-Reflection - 5 minutes

Before beginning the community service project, ask students to take a few minutes to write about the following two prompts:

- What kind of impact do you think you will have today?
- What do you hope to gain from today’s experience that may be different than the first project we did together?

Activity 1 – Community Service Project

This community service day should be geared towards having students interact with individuals who are in need instead of a community focused project. Try to find an organization where your students will come in contact with others and help them with something or do something with them. Examples may include:

- Working at a homeless shelter during a mealtime and talking with the guests
- Working with younger children at an after-school program (like Big Brother/Big Sister)
- Socializing with members at a Jewish retirement center or nursing home
- Volunteering at a hospital event or volunteering to visit patients through an organized program for volunteers

Activity 2 – Reflection Debrief

After you have completed the project, debrief with the students about what it was like to work on this project for the day. This debrief could take the form of a discussion. Or, if you would like to be more creative, use one of the fun and different reflective debrief methods in the packet from 4H attached to the appendix. During this time, you may also come back to the answers the students wrote during the set induction free write.

- How was it different to work with individuals rather than on a project that did not have interactions with individuals?
- Did you feel differently working on this project? If yes, how so?

Assignment - Personal Journal Prompt

Ask students to write in their personal journal about their experiences with volunteering. Prompts can include:

- How did this volunteering compare to any volunteering you have done before?
- Did you enjoy volunteering?
- Did you feel as though you had the opportunity to enact certain elements of your personal *brit derech* during these experiences? How so?
- How was it different to volunteer in a way that you had to interact with others? Did you find it comfortable or strange at first?

Lesson 8 - People & Community Wrap-Up

Objectives

- Students will be able to identify global issues.
- Students will choose which issues are important to them.
- Students will express ways in which they will contribute to the community.

Materials

Descriptions and websites of Aid Organizations

Activities

Set Induction - Quick Review - 5 minutes

Since it has been a few weeks since the class has met for a “normal” class, conduct a brief review of the topics from this unit. Ask students to review what they learned about during this unit on community. Some questions that may help include:

- What Jewish values teach us how to treat others?
- How do you understand the term *klal Yisrael*?
- How is it different to help people directly rather than working at a food bank or raising money for a disaster relief?

Activity 1 – Issues Around the World - 45 minutes

Explain to students that there are a variety of Jewish organizations that focus on helping with issues bigger than what is happening in just one Jewish community. Give students the sheet with brief descriptions of some of these organizations. Allow students to break up into small groups or pairs and research more about one of these organizations. If they wish, they can research a specific project the organization is working on. Then, ask each of the groups or pairs to write a brief article that could be sent to the synagogue to include in a monthly/weekly bulletin. If you cannot include these in the synagogue’s newsletter, send them out to the families of the students in the class. Or inquire if there may be a bulletin board somewhere in the synagogue’s main meeting area that information about these organizations can be posted.

The article should include a description of the organization, a brief description of the organization’s major projects and a paragraph or so with a ‘call to action’. The call to action should inform the reader about how they can volunteer or participate in the work of the organization. Once students are finished with their organization’s article, have the groups briefly present to one another so all of the students hear about these very important and worthwhile causes.

Activity 2 – My Future Jewish Plan - 15 minutes

Give students time to complete a first draft of the community section of their “Future Jewish Plan”. Ask them to include their own working definition of spirituality that they began to construct during one of the first classes as well as their own description of the importance of *klal Yisrael*.

My Future Jewish Plan

Community

Today you will begin to draft your own plan for your Jewish future. This worksheet is a guide to help you gather your thoughts about your future plans and goals for involvement in community.

What is your working definition of spirituality?

Describe the importance of *klal Yisrael*.

How would you like to stay involved in your Jewish community?

Examples: Attending services twice a month, joining the adult Torah study class, or being an aid in the religious school

To help me fulfill these goals, I will:

-
-
-
-
-
-

Why is it important to help in the community and do acts of *tikkun olam*?

Is there a community service project you are interested in pursuing? If you could help with any project in the synagogue or community, what would it be?

Descriptions of Aid Organizations

American Jewish World Service (AJWS) - <http://ajws.org>

Inspired by Judaism's commitment to justice, American Jewish World Service works to realize human rights and end poverty in the developing world.

Four main goals of AJWS are:

- AJWS fights hunger, disease and poverty in the developing world
- AJWS offers service volunteer opportunities with a difference
- AJWS advocates for global change
- AJWS educates the American Jewish community about global issues

Jewish World Watch (JWW) - <http://www.jewishworldwatch.org>

Jewish World Watch is a leading organization in the fight against genocide and mass atrocities, engaging individuals and communities to take local actions that produce powerful global results. Founded in 2004 by Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis and Janice Kamenir-Reznik as the Jewish response to the genocide in Darfur, it has grown from a collection of Southern California synagogues into a global coalition that includes schools, churches, individuals, communities and partner organizations that share a vision of a world without genocide. JWW bears witness to first-hand accounts in conflict regions, partners with on-the-ground organizations to develop high-impact projects that improve the lives of survivors and help build the foundation for a safer world, and inspires our communities to support tangible projects and advocate for political change. JWW has raised more than five million dollars for relief and development projects that impact tens of thousands of people in Sudan and Congo.

Kulanu - <http://www.kulanu.org>

Kulanu ("All of Us" in Hebrew), founded in 1994, is a non-profit organization which supports isolated and emerging Jewish communities around the world, many of whom have long been disconnected from the worldwide Jewish community.

Kulanu engages with these dispersed groups and individuals through networking and support. We raise awareness and support for emerging communities through education, research, and publications about their histories and traditions. Our connections help all of us enrich our Jewish lives.

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) - <http://www.hias.org>

HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, is the international migration agency of the American Jewish community. We provide rescue and refuge for persecuted and oppressed Jews around the world. In recent years, as the population of Jewish refugees has diminished, we have directed our expertise to assist refugees and immigrants of all backgrounds. HIAS also advocates in Congress for fair and effective policies affecting refugees and immigrants. Since 1881, HIAS has assisted more than 4,500,000 people worldwide.

Anti-Defamation League (ADL) - <http://www.adl.org>

The Anti-Defamation League fights anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry in the U.S. and abroad through information, education, legislation, and advocacy. ADL serves as a resource for government, media, law enforcement, educators and the public.

MISSION STATEMENT

"The immediate object of the League is to stop, by appeals to reason and conscience and, if necessary, by appeals to law, the defamation of the Jewish people. Its ultimate purpose is to secure justice and fair treatment to all citizens alike and to put an end forever to unjust and unfair discrimination against and ridicule of any sect or body of citizens." (ADL Charter October 1913)

Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC) - <http://www.irac.org>

The public and legal advocacy arm of the Reform Movement in Israel, IRAC was founded in 1987 with the goals of advancing pluralism in Israeli society and defending the freedoms of conscience, faith, and religion. Today IRAC is the preeminent civil and human rights organization in Israel focusing on the issues of religion and state and is the leading Jewish organization that advocates on behalf of a broadly inclusive Israeli democracy, infusing social justice advocacy with the spiritual energy and humane worldview of Progressive Judaism.

IRAC uses litigation, legislation, public policy and advocacy to advance civic equality. These activities have established IRAC as a leading Jewish organization working to strengthen the democratic character of Israeli society.

Religious Action Center (RAC) - <http://rac.org>

For 50 years, the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism ("the RAC") has been the hub of Jewish social justice and legislative activity in Washington, D.C. As the DC office of the Union for Reform Judaism, the RAC educates and mobilizes the Reform Jewish community on legislative and social concerns, advocating on more than 70 different issues, including economic justice, civil rights, religious liberty, Israel and more. As a 501c3 non-profit organization, the RAC's advocacy work is completely non-partisan and pursues public policies that reflect the Jewish values of social justice that form the core of our mandate. The RAC's work is mandated by the Union for Reform Judaism, whose 900+ congregations across North America include 1.5 million Reform Jews, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), whose membership includes more than 1,800 Reform rabbis. Representatives of these two organizations, as well as the Union's affiliates, comprise the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, which governs the RAC's policy positions.

As the social justice arm of the Union and the CCAR, the RAC receives approximately 1/3 of its annual operating budget from the Union, 1/3 from program fees, and 1/3 from contributions from individuals and foundations.

Unit 2 - Ritual

This unit will focus on different rituals in Judaism. Students often learn about rituals in a classroom setting but here they will have the opportunity to learn inside the classroom and also outside of the synagogue. Ritual is vital to Judaism. Most celebrations, holidays, lifecycle events and daily occurrence have at least one ritual attached to it. Some of the rituals focused upon will be very physical and students will have the opportunity to try the ritual. Other rituals are more abstract and students will be encouraged to discuss the ritual and its meaning.

Enduring Understandings

- Exploration of ritual can allow for discovery of meaningfulness in ritual.
- Knowledge of the meaning of a ritual enhances significance for the ritual-doer.
- Experience with a ritual allows students to assess whether a ritual speaks to them and may enhance their spiritual life.

Knowledge

- Rituals are used to mark time, occasions, transitions or states of being.
- Jewish rituals are influenced by history, community and individual preference. Many rituals are constantly changing and evolving.
- Rituals have many origins (such as from texts or specific communities).

Skills

- Students will be able to describe various rituals that relate to various Jewish holidays or lifecycle events.
- Students will be able to express their understanding of rituals and their modern variations on certain rituals.
- Students will construct a new ritual to be completed either before their confirmation ceremony or during the ceremony.
- Students will evaluate Jewish rituals and determine their own stance on the place of Jewish rituals in their lives.

Evidence of Learning

- Students will complete free-write style journal prompts after each ritual experience.
- Students will be asked to determine a set of rituals that are meaningful to them as well as a rituals they wish to explore in the future to include in their follow-up plans that will be completed at the end of the curriculum.

Lesson 1 - Introduction and Exploration of Ritual Objects

Objectives

- Students will be able to identify the role of ritual objects in relation to the ritual in which it is used.
- Students will be able to describe the importance of ritual objects in Judaism.

Materials

Computers/iPads/iPods/smart phones for Internet access

Paper and pencils

A variety of ritual objects for students to "play" with

Worksheet for students to use while exploring ritual objects

Time

0:00-0:05 Introduction to the Unit

0:05-0:35 What is a ritual? What is a Jewish ritual?

0:35-1:10 Exploration of Ritual Objects

1:10-1:20 Wrap-Up

0:00-0:05 Set Introduction to the Unit

Ask students to take a moment to consider what a "ritual" is. Ask students to write down a sentence or two with their own description of ritual.

- What does ritual mean?

- Ritual is a group of religious actions; ritual is what we call a thing we do in Judaism, like *bar/bat mitzvah*; rituals are made up of ceremonies with special objects or customs; ritual is a predetermined set of directions for doing something; ritual marks transitioning from one phase to another

Allow students to share their definition with the group. Then, ask students to think again about the kinds of rituals they have in their lives already (secular or Jewish). Allow them a few minutes to write down responses before sharing with the group.

- Brushing my teeth first thing when I wake up in the morning; getting dressed and ready for school in the same order each day; pre-game rituals for sports; saying the Shema every night before bed; special *afikomen* rules about prizes

If you would like to start the unit a little more creatively, you can compile pictures or videos of secular rituals students would recognize (like the national anthem before a sports event, or a team cheering together before taking the field, students taking pictures before attending a school dance, etc). Then, ask the students if they can identify what all of the pictures or videos have in common. Then, continue by asking them as a group what kinds of rituals they regularly engage in.

0:05-0:35 - *What is a ritual? What is a Jewish ritual?*

If available, give students a few minutes to search online to see what other people describe rituals as in the secular world and the Jewish world. Ask students to see if they can discern differences between secular and Jewish rituals. Bring the group back together to see what information they have found. (If you do not have Internet access, you can always compile a short packet of information about both secular and Jewish rituals culled from online materials ahead of class.)

- Possible differences: aspect of Godliness involved; prayer; people who are allowed to take part in the ritual
- Possible similarities: specific clothing required; music involved; leader of ritual and participants of ritual; connected to a certain time

Create a sort of venn diagram about the differences and similarities between secular and Jewish rituals. Decide, as a group, what a Jewish ritual consists of. Push students to think of rituals in many different ways such as "ancient rituals vs. modern rituals".

Close out the introduction to the unit by explaining what types of rituals will be explored (ritual objects, Shabbat, *mikveh*, death and grieving and marriage).

0:35-1:10 - *Exploration of Ritual Objects*

This activity will allow students to feel, touch, smell, hold, try on, and use a variety of ritual objects. Bring as many ritual objects as possible to the class (especially ritual objects used in prayer like *kippot*, *tallitot*, *tefillin* and *siddurim*). It may be beneficial to have a few volunteer helpers in class during this exercise to help students try wrapping *tefillin* or wear a *tallit gadol*. Students should be given a set amount of time to "play" with the objects. It may be useful to hand out a worksheet to students that asks them to separate the objects into categories of their own choosing or to respond to each ritual object in some way (such as describing what they feel while wrapping *tefillin*). Also bring in objects used on holidays (*shofrot*, *sedar* plates, a kittle, *tallit katan*, etc). Students should keep notes on a worksheet like the one at the end of the lesson.

After students have ample time to explore, bring the group back together to talk about the ritual objects. Ask students what caught their eye, or hand.

Other sample discussion questions:

- What did it feel like to wear a ritual object you have never felt before, like a *tallit gadol*, *tefillin* or *kippot*?
 - It felt weird, I'm not used to wearing something like that; it felt cool, I liked wearing something that was different than what I'm used to; it felt uncomfortable, I don't think I liked it
- What makes an object a "ritual" object? Could I decide to make a regular wine glass into a *kiddush* cup? Why or why not?
 - Ritual objects are objects that are produced to be a ritual object; ritual objects are what we say are ritual objects; you could make a regular wine glass into a *kiddush* cup if you didn't have anything else to use, it really just needs to hold wine, but there's something special about a *kiddush* cup that is meant to be a *kiddush* cup; you

cannot just make whatever you want into a ritual object, otherwise we would have a million different objects to use each day, it could be overwhelming

- How do we treat ritual objects? Do you think it's appropriate to throw a *kippah*? Or what about when you drop a *siddur*? Do you immediately kiss it? Why or why not?
 - Ritual objects are meant to be treated differently than other objects because they are holy; ritual objects can be treated just like regular objects, except for certain ones, like the Torah
 - It's okay to throw a *kippah* if you are just throwing it to someone so they can wear it, otherwise, it should be respected; who cares? Throwing a *kippah* doesn't take away its holiness!
 - Dropping a *siddur* feels different because God's name is in it so I would kiss it; I don't kiss it because it feels weird to kiss a book, even if God's name is written in it; I don't think you need to kiss a *siddur* if you drop it because it's just God's written name, not God in the *siddur*
- Are these items "holy"? What does that mean?
 - We decide what is holy and what is not holy; some of them are holy and others are not; I think that things like *siddurim* and the Torah are holy but other things like a *kippah* are not as holy

Challenge students to think about the ritual objects in ways they have not before.

- How could these items be used differently than they are intended but still respectfully as a ritual object?
 - Maybe we could use a *siddur* as a drum during services, in a respectful way; we could use a *sefer* plate and create a new ritual for foods that you would include in a *Shabbat seder*; we could use a shofar to signal the beginning or end of the religious school day

1:10-1:20 - Wrap-Up

As a group, decide on a ritual that can be done together as a class. Perhaps the class will say “*la’asok b’divre Torah*” at the beginning of class from now on. Perhaps you create a new ritual as a group. Direct them to think about what the ritual will mean for the class and what it will actually consist of. Will there one leader or will everyone do something together for the ritual? Will you use an existing Jewish text to complete the ritual or will you write one of your own? Once the class creates this ritual, be sure to begin using it during your next class meeting.

Assessment: Personal Journal Prompt

- Challenge students to utilize a new ritual object in the week to come and then write a response to it in their journal.
- Prompt: What kind of ritual objects can you see yourself using (often) when you are in college or living away from your parents? What about if/when you start a family of your own?

	<p>WHILE YOU PLAY WITH ALL OF THE RITUAL OBJECTS - FILL OUT A BOX FOR EACH YOU FEEL CONNECTED TO.</p> <p>RESPOND TO ONE OF THESE QUESTIONS IN EACH BOX:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- IS THIS OBJECT HOLY? WHY OR WHY NOT?- WHAT MAKES THIS OBJECT A 'RITUAL' OBJECT?- DID YOU LIKE USING IT/ WEARING IT? WHY? <p>FEEL FREE TO DRAW OR WRITE. HAVE FUN!</p>	

Lesson 2 - *Mikveh* as Ritual Practice

Objectives

- Students will be able to explain the use of *mikveh* both in history and in modern day.
- Students will be able to recognize reasons why some Jews visit the *mikveh*.
- Students will be able to decide if *mikveh* is meaningful to them.

Materials

Variety of art supplies for debriefing art activity

Alternate *brachot* (blessings) from www.ritualwell.org

Activities

Activity 1 - Visiting the Mikveh

Many students may have heard about a *mikveh* but may not know what it is used for or any other details. There are liberal *mikvaot* as well as *mikvaot* run by Orthodox groups. Taking the group to a liberal *mikveh* may offer an interesting viewpoint.

If your students are not familiar with *mikveh*, you may want to give them a short excerpt to read over before arrival at the *mikveh*.

Ritual immersion is an ancient part of Jewish tradition, noted in the Torah and in later Rabbinic commentaries. Today, there are only a few cases where immersion is still designated as a mitzvah, or an act required by Jewish law: for converts to Judaism, for brides, and for women observing niddah, the practice of immersing monthly following menstruation.

Mikveh has also been used for other purposes throughout Jewish history: for example, by men prior to Shabbat and the holidays, by women in the ninth month of pregnancy. At Mayyim Hayyim, people are welcome to immerse to commemorate a wide variety of transitions and occasions: prior to reading Torah for the first time, before or after surgery, on the occasion of being ordained a rabbi, or becoming a grandparent, or reaching the age of 40, or 50, or 85.

Every religious tradition uses water to denote change and transformation. In Jewish tradition, water is part of our sacred narrative, as when Hebrews traveled through the waters of the Red Sea as they left Egypt, marking their transformation from a tribe of slaves into a free people.

Mikveh is the Jewish ritual that symbolically enacts this kind of profound change for individuals. The mikveh pool recalls the watery state that each of us knew before we were born; the ritual of entering and leaving mayyim hayyim, living waters, creates the time and space to acknowledge and embrace a new stage of life.

<http://www.mayyimhayyim.org/Using-the-Mikveh>

Encourage students to write down questions ahead of time. Besides Shabbat, *mikveh* is the only other ritual this curriculum focuses upon which many perform on a regular basis.

Activity 2 - Debriefing the Mikveh Visit

Back at the synagogue (or at a student's home), give students time to reflect on their visit to the mikveh. Give students time to write about the experience of visiting the *mikveh*.

Guiding questions may include:

- What do you think, in general, about the ritual of *mikveh*? Do you like it? Why or why not?
- What might it be like to immerse oneself in the *mikveh* for the first time?
- Do you believe that *mikveh* has a place in modern Judaism? Why or why not?

After, ask students if they would like to share their creations. If you wish, you can print off some of the alternate *brachot* from www.ritualwell.org to help students.

Facilitate a discussion with the group to reflect on the visit. Sample discussion questions:

- What are some possible modern uses for the *mikveh*?
- Would you ever visit the *mikveh*? Why or why not?
- What can you imagine you might get out of a visit to the *mikveh*?

Discuss the role of routine rituals and how *mikveh* is used as a time marker for married couples, a pre-Shabbat ritual for some, or conversion for others. *Mikveh* also links Jews today to Jews in Israel and all over the world. It also creates a link between our history and our present.

Lesson 3 - Rituals of Death and Grieving

Objectives

- Students will be able to identify the main rituals connected to death and grieving.
- Students will be able to articulate the relevancy of these rituals to modern Jews.
- Students will be able to express an opinion about the unchanging methods of grieving in the Jewish community.
- Students will be able to explain what they would modify or add to current Jewish rituals.

Materials

Access to a local funeral home/cemetery

Volunteer clergy member to speak about planning and executing a funeral service

Resources

Prince, Michele. *A Conversation about Death and Dying*. Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health. 2012.

Information regarding modern or interpretive rituals can be found on www.ritualwell.org

Activities

Activity 1 - Visiting a Funeral Home/Cemetery and Shiva

To help students understand both the concrete and abstract components of rituals connected to death and grieving, the main activity for this lesson should be visiting a funeral home and cemetery. Many funeral homes have a staff member who frequently speaks to classes. Depending on your community, it may be beneficial and add an extra layer to the experience to invite parents to join the class on the field trip.

The class should begin the field trip at the synagogue. Since death is an incredibly sensitive topic that some of the students may or may not have experience with, it is helpful to have a conversation with the students to see what their background is. Some students may have strong reactions to talking or learning about death. A conversation as a group before the field trip would present a time to preface the field trip and its sensitive content.

At the funeral home and cemetery, students should be given a tour to see what the inside looks like as well as what they could expect to see and hear at a typical service. If it is available, students may be allowed to see the coffins or cremation vessels funeral homes offer. At all times, students should be encouraged to ask questions.

It may be helpful to have a clergy member or another person who has led funeral services with the group. Focus on the rituals associated with the process of death and grieving such as meeting with the family, *keria* (tearing of clothing by family members), funeral service and/or graveside service readings and prayers, shoveling dirt into the grave, recitation of mourner's kaddish, and *shiva* and all of the rituals associated with it

A follow-up discussion of the visit to the funeral home/cemetery is vital.

Attached is a compilation handout with many texts about Jewish sources on death. It is a helpful starting place to familiarize oneself with various Jewish rituals and texts pertaining to death.

Sample discussion questions:

- What did you notice about the funeral home/cemetery?
- What, if anything, affected you emotionally? Did anything we talked about or learned about bring about any strong emotions?
- Do you think there is something missing from the Jewish rituals associated with death and grieving?

Activity 2 - Sitting Shiva

This curriculum focuses heavily on giving students authentic and meaningful experiences. If it is possible, try to arrange for students to make a *shiva* call to a congregant's home. Ask the students to read a short document that briefly explains the rituals associated with sitting *shiva*. Students should be asked to make mental or physical notes about anything they notice in the home (such as covering mirrors, couch cushions removed, etc). Afterwards, discuss with the students about the dynamics of being in a home where people are sitting *shiva*.

If the class is unable to make a real *shiva* call, the teacher could set up their home or a room in the synagogue as a *shiva* home would be set up. Rather than creating a “mock shiva” scenario, take the students on a tour of the home and point out items or traditions related to *shiva*. Show students a covered mirror and talk about what covering mirrors means to mourners. Have some *kriya* ribbons (ribbons mourners cut instead of their own clothing) and have a short discussion about symbols. Have the students ever worn ribbons for a day of remembrance or for a cancer awareness event? How does it affect someone to wear this kind of symbol?

Assessment: Personal Journal Prompt

For this lesson's journal prompt, students should be given the choice to either free-write a response about the field trips or to respond to the following prompt:

- It is inevitable that at some point in our lives, we will experience the loss of a loved one. Perhaps you already have experienced this kind of loss. Do you think the Jewish rituals will offer you comfort in these times (or have they offered you comfort)? Is there something missing from our rituals?
- Do you feel as though these Jewish rituals are relevant to Jews today? Are they relevant to you?



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A Conversation about Death and Dying

Core Jewish Convictions

Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah, 339:1

We are forbidden to hasten death...

Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah, 339:1

...we are permitted to remove all factors which delay that death unnecessarily...⁶

Jewish Perspectives, Elliot Dorff

Judaism asserts that while we should seek to cure and may not do anything to hasten death, we should not prolong the dying process.⁷

Quality of Life, Tendler and Rosner

To prolong life is a mitzvah, to prolong dying is not.⁸

Obligations and Contemporary Conversations

Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah, 335:7

A sick person should be encouraged to settle affairs...

Healthcare Instructions and the Five Wishes

1. The person I want to make care decisions for me when I can't
2. The kind of medical treatment I want or don't want
3. How comfortable I want to be
4. How I want people to treat me
5. What I want my loved ones to know

Organ Donation

⁶ Washofsky, M. (2001). *Jewish Living: A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practice*. New York: UAHC Press, p249.

⁷ Dorff, E. (2005) End of Life: Jewish Perspectives, *The Lancet*, vol. 366.

⁸ Tendler, M and Rosner, F. (1996) Quality and Sanctity of Life in the Talmud and Midrash, in *Care of the Critically Ill*, Hoboken: Ktav, p. 146

Reform Judaism has long been an advocate of organ and tissue donation. A 1968 Reform responsum commented that the use of such organs to heal or save a life is in keeping with the Jewish tradition and a positive act of holiness.⁹

So That Your Values Live On - Ethical Wills

The tradition of bequeathing a spiritual legacy either in the form of a codicil to a conventional will or as a separate document has its roots in the Bible and the Talmud¹⁰

How Do We Honor Our Loved Ones?

Case Study One

As day school director, you are involved with two male siblings, ages 10 and 8, who have been students as part of the congregation since preschool. Their mother, who used to teach at the religious school, was diagnosed with stage III stomach cancer six years ago. The younger sibling has been falling behind in his reading, and did not turn in this week's writing assignment. The classroom teacher suggests a family conference, but hesitates to burden the parents. How do you assess the teacher, student, and family, and what are your actions steps?

Case Study Two¹¹

A president of the Sanhedrin and editor of the Mishna is on his death bed. His students are at the bedside keeping him alive with prayer. His handmaid, after noticing how hard it is to relieve himself, prays that he be allowed to die, and smashes a jug to distract the other students' prayers. At that moment, Rav Judah dies. What does Jewish tradition say about her actions?

Jewish Mourning

Who Is a Mourner?

By Jewish law, a mourner is someone who is the son, daughter, sister, brother, mother, father, or spouse of the deceased. Others, such as a son-in-law or daughter-in-law, are often included in the category of mourner.

The Jewish Mourning Calendar

Jewish tradition defines several stages in the process of mourning, which correspond quite well to modern understanding of the emotional process.

Aninut

The period from the moment of death until the burial is called *aninut*, and a person in this stage is called an *onen*. The *onen* has no religious obligations except to attend to

⁹ <http://urj.org/life/community/health/bioethics/> Several brochures and ethics guides are available here.

¹⁰ Reimer, J. and Stampfer, N., ed. (1991). So that your values live on – Ethical Wills and how to prepare them

¹¹ Based on Rabbi Judah's Handmaiden, Ketubot 104a

the practical necessities of arranging for the funeral. The Jewish understanding is that an *onen* cannot focus on anything other than the immediate issue of the burial, and should not be expected to be capable of any ritual observances, even those that might otherwise be performed on a daily basis, such as reciting *Sh'ma*. [burial – k'riah ribbon]

Returning From the Cemetery

Immediately on returning from the cemetery, mourners should be greeted with a "meal of consolation" prepared by their extended family and/ or community. It is traditional to place a pitcher of water, a bowl and towels outside the door of the house for the ritual hand washing.

Once burial has occurred, relatives in the seven categories listed above are considered *aveilim* (mourners).

Shiva

Jewish tradition offers very specific recommendations for gradual reentry into normal life. The first week after the funeral is known as *shiva* (literally, "seven"). During this period, the mourners are treated with the utmost care and respect. Their needs are met by the community, both their physical needs, such as meals, babysitting, etc., and their spiritual and emotional needs. *Shiva* is a period of up to a week during which the mourners remain at home. During this time, mourners mostly remain at home and a service is held daily at the home, so that the mourners may recite the *Kaddish*. Mourners are encouraged to join the congregation on *Shabbat* to say *Kaddish*.

Friends, relatives, and community members visit and bring some food for the household. It is traditional to include round foods (hard-boiled eggs, lentils, bagels, etc.) that are symbolic of the wholeness of life. The *shiva* period gives the mourners a time to withdraw from the business of the world and begin to integrate and accept their loss. At the close of *shiva*, the tradition has friends or family accompany the mourner for a brief walk (e.g., around the block) to symbolize the start of reentry into the world.

Our tradition emphasizes focusing on memory and things of emotional significance, and relieves the mourner from focusing on the external world. For this reason there are traditions that the mourner cover mirrors and need not bathe, shave, change clothes, or use makeup. The aim of these practices is to de-emphasize externals, and to keep the focus on the spiritual and emotional aspects of loss. [sitting close to the ground; wait for mourner to initiate conversation]

Shloshim

The next stage of the mourning process is known as *shloshim* (literally, thirty). This 30-day period is counted from the day of the funeral (and so includes the period of *shiva*). Following *shiva*, the mourner returns to work during *shloshim* but is still not completely back in the world. This ongoing mourning is expressed by avoiding parties, concerts, and other forms of public entertainment. The *kri'ah* ribbon continues to be worn during this time.

At the conclusion of *shloshim*, the formal mourning period ends, except for those who are mourning parents. For these mourners, formal mourning, including the recitation of the Mourner's *Kaddish*, lasts eleven months. Some people may wish to mark the end of *shloshim* with a special *minyan* [or event] at which the mourner or family members speak about the deceased.

Shnat Ha-Evel (the first year of mourning)

Traditionally, mourners who have lost a parent say *Kaddish* daily for eleven months (or a full year), whereas mourning for all other relatives ends with the *shloshim*. In modern practice, mourners may recite *Kaddish* for eleven months for other immediate relatives as well. This is a time we are encouraged to get back into life fully, while honoring our dead on a daily basis through the saying of *Kaddish*.

Unveiling

There is a traditional obligation to create some form of *matzevah* ("monument") to mark the site of the grave. The "unveiling" is a formal ceremony following the placement of the *matzevah*. Customs differ, but the unveiling is generally held after *shloshim* and usually in the month before the first *yahrzeit*. The ceremony is very brief, usually of some psalms and readings, a few words about the deceased, the removal of a covering from the monument, the *El Malei Rachamim*, and, if a *minyan* is present, the Mourner's *Kaddish*.

Yahrzeit

Yahrzeit means "time of year" and is the yearly anniversary of a loved one's death (traditionally observed on the Hebrew calendar). We observe *yahrzeit* at home by lighting a *yahrzeit* candle (which burns for 24 hours) in memory of the deceased. In the synagogue, we observe *yahrzeit* by saying the Mourner's *Kaddish* at services.

From *Kavod v'Nichum* <http://www.jewish-funerals.org/>

Basic Assumptions and Self-Awareness

Levitt, J., 10/31/10, "Modern Love: Keeping Them Company at the End," *New York Times*

Fear vs. Privilege

Awe vs. Intimacy

Pain vs. Comfort

A Good Death

What is a Good Death?

Twelve principles of a good death were identified in *The Future of Health and Care of Older People* by the Debate of the Age Health and Care Study Group.

Principles of a Good Death, according to the study group included:

- To know when death is coming, and to understand what can be expected.
- To be able to retain control of what happens.
- To be afforded dignity and privacy.
- To have control over pain relief and other symptom control.
- To have choice and control over where death occurs (at home or elsewhere).
- To have access to information and expertise of whatever kind is necessary.
- To have access to any spiritual or emotional support required.
- To have access to hospice care in any location, not only in hospital.
- To have control over who is present and who shares the end.
- To be able to issue advance directives which ensure wishes are respected.
- To have time to say goodbye, and control over other aspects of timing.
- To be able to leave when it is time to go, and not to have life prolonged pointlessly.¹²

How can we teach our Jewish communities about these principles? How can we reduce the stigma of planning for a good death?

More...

There are many, many topics under the umbrella of death and dying which we will not have time to discuss during this course. I encourage you to engage in life long learning around these themes.

End of life liturgy and prayers, including but not limited to the vidui

Death rituals, including but not limited to chevra kadisha and tahara

The afterlife

Cremation

The theology of “why?”

Bioethics on decision-making

Shiva – communal support, lay-lead services, taking back tradition

Loss related to suicide

Engaging healthcare professionals

The sanctity of life – assisting the divine

Loss of a child

Additional congregational responses

And more...

¹² Smith, R. (15 January 2000). “A good death: An important aim for health services and for us all,” *British Medical Journal*, 320: 129-130.

Lesson 4 - Shabbat and its Rituals

Objectives

- Students will be able to describe what "traditional" Shabbat observance is and what they believe Shabbat observance is.
- Students will be able to describe their experience with observing Shabbat.
- Students will be able to compare what it is like to celebrate Shabbat versus not distinguishing between Shabbat and the rest of the week.
- Students will be able to argue the pros and cons of celebrating Shabbat.

Materials

Volunteer speakers for guest panel

Paper and pencils *(Some of these activities offer the option to write answers out. Feel free to modify these activities so they are discussions instead of writing on Shabbat.)*

Activities

Main Activity - 25 Hour Shabbaton

To give all students a real taste of what it can be like to celebrate a whole day of Shabbat, invite the class to a 25 Hour *Shabbaton* in the synagogue (if you have the facilities to have students stay overnight, by all means, do so). Families should be invited for the Shabbat evening dinner and Kabbalat Shabbat services. Students should be encouraged to participate in the service, if they are able to. Ask each family to bring a dish to represent their family's favorite Shabbat or family meal. Have a song session on Friday evening. In the morning, students should be present to attend Saturday morning services (either with the rest of the congregation or alone as a class). Host a brunch for students after services. Let them know ahead of time that they will have time to hang out with classmates but ask them to leave electronics (especially cell phones) at home or tucked away in bags. Give students some time to just enjoy each other's company on Saturday. (If you have the financial means, take the class on a *Shabbaton* at a local camp or retreat center.)

Towards the end of the program, engage the students in a discussion of what it was like to have Shabbat together as a community. Ask them for general reactions and give them a few minutes to meditate about their experience with observing Shabbat. End the Shabbaton with *havdalah* as a group before departing for home.

Activity 1 - What does it mean to observe Shabbat?

To get your students thinking about components of Shabbat, have them give you one or two words that come to mind when they think of Shabbat (food, challah, lights, candles, services, family, etc.). Then, post the following question, "What does it mean to 'observe' Shabbat?" Request that students write their answer on the left side of a piece of paper. Then, ask them to write the answer to this question on the right side of the paper, "How do you celebrate Shabbat?" Ask students to share the differences between the two sides.

Discuss what it means to "observe" Shabbat. Ask students to generate a picture of what we now believe it means to traditionally observe Shabbat. Then challenge students to think of

alternate forms of observing Shabbat. Is it still observing Shabbat if you drive your car to dinner out with your family?

Activity 2 - Guest Speaker Panel

Invite a few congregants or community members to join your class for a discussion. Try to set up a panel of a few speakers who have very diverse modes of celebrating Shabbat. Have each speaker introduce themselves and describe a typical Shabbat. Ask students to write at least three questions each before the speakers arrive. Let students interact and question the speakers about their observance.

End the panel by allowing students 5-10 minutes to talk about any observations or comments they have after the panel about what Shabbat observance is. Did the panel change their ideas at all? Push students to think of ways they could celebrate Shabbat every week.

Activity 3 - Shabbat Debate

Talk with students about how many people believe that whether you do it for religious reasons or not, taking one whole day off each week is good for the mind, body and soul. Other people would argue that as long as you give yourself some rest time each week, it doesn't matter when you do it. Split the class into two groups and have the class debate whether or not Shabbat is relevant to modern Jews.

Extra Activity - The Shabbat Challenge

Challenge your students to unplug for one entire Friday evening to Saturday evening. Invite them to accept "The Shabbat Challenge" of fully embracing a Shabbat observance that separates the rest of the week from Shabbat. Ask them to journal (either during or after Shabbat) about their experience.

Assessment: Personal Journal Prompt

- What do you consider celebration of Shabbat?
- Would you like to change your Shabbat practice from what it currently is? Why or why not?
- This coming Shabbat (or after if you are keeping Shabbat *halakhically*), keep a journal of some sort (perhaps a photo journey?) of your Shabbat observance. What were the highlights or most important parts of your observance? Show the story through pictures or drawings.

Lesson 5 - Ritual Conclusion

Objectives

- Students will be able to construct a new ritual.
- Students will evaluate Jewish rituals and determine their own stance on the place of Jewish rituals in their lives.

Activities

Activity 1 - A New Confirmation Ritual

This activity could span more than one class, if need be. After briefly reviewing the ideas students generated in the first lesson about what rituals consist of, ask them to create a new ritual for the class to complete before or during their confirmation service (if your synagogue has a confirmation service). The ritual could consist of using an object, a blessing said over the class, or perhaps even a set of special readings that the students compile or create. This ritual should be created by the students. Encourage them to use their reflections from all of the lessons to inform their ritual.

Encourage students to think about all elements of the ritual. Will there be someone who ‘officiates’ it or will the students lead it? Should it be a single event or incorporated in a service? How can students show, either to themselves or others they invite to their ritual, all of the things they have learned about Judaism or themselves? How can this ritual enhance each person’s spirituality?

Activity 2 -My Future Jewish Plan - Ritual Component

Give students time to reflect on their experiences with the ritual unit. What were they drawn to, if anything, during this unit? Are there Jewish rituals they want to learn more about? Give students many questions and possible directions they can head in for creating some commitments to Jewish ritual for their future. Would they like to keep Shabbat every week? Do they plan on starting out small and continuing to add things? Maybe some students would like to start saying the *Shema* every night before they go to sleep.

Perhaps some students may want to create their own personal ritual to complete on a daily or weekly basis.

My Future Jewish Plan

Ritual

Today you will draft ideas for the second section of your future plan. This worksheet is a guide to help you gather your thoughts about future goals for participating in rituals and including rituals as a regular part of your life.

What were you most drawn to during this unit?

Describe the importance of rituals in Judaism.

What place do rituals have in your life? How would you like to include rituals in your life?

To help me fulfill these goals, I will:

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Why is it important to do rituals? What place do ritual objects have in rituals?

Are there Jewish rituals they want to learn more about?

Unit 3 - Prayer

Prayer is an integral and vital component of Jewish life. Prayer can take shape in numerous ways but unfortunately; students often only see one version of prayer. The goal of this unit is to introduce students to thinking about the question “Why do we pray?” as well as offering opportunities to experience different kinds of prayer.

Enduring Understandings

- Reflection about the nature of prayer enables engagement in prayer in individually meaningful ways.

Knowledge

- Prayer is expressed in many different ways in many different settings.
- The *shacharit* service prayers follows a specified order.
- Prayers of the *shacharit* service elicit certain moods or feelings from worshipers.
- Prayer is one way to express our personal relationship with God.

Skills

- Students will recognize the various types of prayers that are included in traditional liturgy (such as praise, petition, thanksgiving, etc.).
- Students will participate in multiple variations of prayer services.
- Students will create an ideal prayer experience that expresses the components of prayer they find to be meaningful and personally significant.

Evidence of Learning

- Students will participate in reflective writing assignments detailing their experience with various modes of prayer.
- Students will assess the variety of prayer experiences they have encountered.
- Students will create an ideal prayer experience that includes what they deem to be vital components of prayer.

*Notes:

Part of this unit includes participating in a *shacharit* service held at a different congregation. If students don't normally attend *shacharit* services at your synagogue, it may be helpful to either have them attend a typical *shacharit* service or pray together during one of your class sessions.

Lessons 4, 5 and 6 are simply examples of alternative services. Be creative in what you expose your students to!

Lesson 1 – What is Prayer?

Objectives

- Students will be able to articulate their questions about prayer.
- Students will be able to list different reasons why people pray.

Materials

Text worksheet - “What is Prayer?”

Activities

Set Induction – Intro to Prayer – 5-8 minutes

Give students a few minutes to write about the following prompt:

- What does prayer mean to me?

After students have a few minutes to write about this prompt, ask them to formulate at least two questions they have about prayer. When everyone is finished, you can ask students to do a popcorn/go-around with one or two words from their answer to the prompt.

Activity 1 – Texts about Prayer – 30 minutes

Break students into *chevruta* and have them read through the text worksheet. Students will read a variety of texts that relate to prayer and discuss them with their *chevruta* partner. If you have time, bring students back into one group and ask for responses from the *chevruta* groups about what resonated with them from the texts.

Activity 2 – What does prayer look like? – 20 minutes

Brainstorm with the students to think of all of the different kinds of settings people pray in. Come up with a list that includes the following types of answers:

- Praying in synagogue, silent prayer, meditation, praying to oneself anywhere, saying blessings alone, saying blessings in a community, praying while on vacation, praying with a *minyan*, praying without a *minyan*, prayer during a *seder*, blessings over Chanukah candles

After you come up with your list, ask students to talk about the way they actually feel when they pray. Are they happy? Are they sad? Are they bored? What were some moments when they felt inspired by prayer? Does the setting make a difference to them? Does the type of music make a difference in your mood? What about the people you pray with; does it change the prayer experience to pray as a group as opposed to praying by yourself? Why or why not?

If students respond that prayer is normally with a group or that prayer has to happen in a synagogue, push them to expand their conception of prayer. Can it be called ‘prayer’ when someone talks to God while they are alone, driving home from work?

What is Prayer?

Quarantine for the Soul

Prayer clarifies our hopes and intentions. It helps us discover our true aspirations, the pangs we ignore, the longings we forget. It is an act of self-purification, a quarantine for the soul. It gives us the opportunity to be honest, to say what we believe, and to stand for what we say. For the accord of assertion and conviction, thought and conscience is the basis of all prayer.

- Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Between God and Man*

Prayer tells the individual as well as the community what his or its genuine needs are, what he should, or should not, petition God about...

God needs neither thanks nor hymns. God wants to hear the outcry of people...Prayer teaches a person how to behold the vision and how to strive in order to realize that vision, when to be satisfied with what one possesses, and when to reach out for more.

- Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik

If prayer worked the way many people think it does, no one would ever die, because no prayer is offered more sincerely than a prayer for life, for health and recovery from illness, for ourselves and for those we love...

People who pray for miracles usually don't get miracles, any more than children who pray for bicycles, good grades, or boyfriends don't get them as a result of praying.

But people who pray for courage, for strength to bear the unbearable, for grace to remember what they have left instead of what they have lost, very often find their prayers answered. They discover that they have more strength, more courage than they ever knew themselves to have.

- Rabbi Harold Kushner

Prayer is an invitation to God to intervene in our lives, to let God's will prevail in our affairs; it is the opening of a window to God in our will, an effort to make God the Master of our soul.

- Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Prayer, then, is not merely a one-way street. It is a vehicle through which humans and God strengthen each other, as humans and God, together, sanctify the world by serving each other. God has God's work, as witness the endless power which God pipes into the universe, but there are certain tasks reserved for humans, which humans alone can do and must do in moving the mutual case forward.

(Edited to gender neutral language)

- Herbert M. Baumgard, *Judaism and Prayer*

Lesson 2 – A Look at Our Siddur

Objectives

- Students will be able to explain what draws them to prayer (if anything).
- Students will hypothesize about what they will relate most to during the prayer unit.

Materials

Congregational *siddur*

Feinstein, Edward. *Tough Questions Jews Ask: A Young Adult's Guide to Building a Jewish Life*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003. p 13-20.

Activities

Activity 1 – Our Siddur: what is it telling us? – 30 minutes

Depending on how familiar your students are with the *siddur* used in your congregation, you may wish to take about half an hour to look through the *siddur*. Some things you may want to go through and point out to students are:

- The layout and structure of the *siddur*
- What prayers or services are included in the *siddur*
- How to use the *siddur* (i.e. where to look for the service names, etc.)
- What is included in the back of the *siddur* or on the bottom of pages, Materials and “extras” such as songs, etc.

It may also be interesting to talk about the physicality of the *siddur*. Is this *siddur* intended to be taken along while traveling? Is it heavy or light? Hardcover or softcover?

Many *siddurim* include a note from the editor at the front of the *siddur*. If your *siddur* has one of these, you could have students read through it to see if any of these questions are answered there.

If your synagogue uses a *siddur* written by the synagogue, another option is to have someone come and speak to the class for a few minutes about the process of creating the *siddur*. Students should be encouraged to ask questions about decisions made during the process.

Activity 2 – So what's the point of prayer? – 20 minutes

Ask students to once again take a moment to write down a few notes to themselves before discussing with the whole class. Give the following prompt:

- “What is the purpose of prayer?”

After students have a few minutes to think about this question, bring the group back together to discuss. Bring back some of the texts from the worksheet used during Activity 1. Perhaps students will even use some of the ideas from those texts in answering the question. Ask students to share some ideas before moving on.

Next, read the excerpt from Rabbi Edward Feinstein about the purpose of prayer. Ask students to read a paragraph each and then discuss what Rabbi Feinstein wrote. Do the students agree? Do they disagree?

Conclusion – Hypothesize – 3 minutes

Before ending class, ask students to reflect on their past experiences with prayer, their current prayer life and what they can see for themselves in the future. Tell the class that during the next few lessons, they will have an opportunity to experience a few different kinds of prayer settings. Ask them to hypothesize about whether or not their views of prayer will change during the next few weeks.

Chapter 3:

Do I Have to Go to Services? What Good is Praying?

Does God Listen? Does God Answer?

Excerpted from Tough Questions Jews Ask by Rabbi Edwards Feinstein

"I have to go to services on Saturday for my friend's Bar Mitzvah," reported Daniel to the class. "I hate services. They're sooooo boring." Daniel was being honest. Then he suddenly remembered that I'm the rabbi, so he retreated. "You go to services every Saturday. Don't you find it boring?"

"No, actually, I like praying," I told him.

This, he couldn't believe. "You actually like it? Why? What good is praying? Does God listen? Does God answer you?"

Abraham Joshua Heschel was an important rabbi and philosopher who lived in the middle of the twentieth century. Heschel traveled around the world, teaching in synagogues, churches, and universities. Whenever he gave an evening lecture, he would begin by telling the audience, "Ladies and gentlemen, a great miracle just happened!" People would stop to listen very carefully, wondering: What miracle happened? Why didn't we see it? Then Heschel would continue, "A great miracle just happened: The sun went down!" Some people would laugh. Some would shake their heads at this crazy rabbi. Other remained puzzled about what he meant. Then Heschel would begin to talk about how a religious person sees the world.

Miracles happen all the time, Heschel taught them. Amazing things, magnificent things are happening all around us. But most of us don't notice. We have learned how to ignore them.

We normally think that miracles are events that break the laws of nature-seas split, plagues that fall from the sky, or sticks that turn into snakes. Heschel understood that the most remarkable things are not these rare and unusual events, but the normal, regular, everyday things that we never notice. How can normal things be miracles? It's all in how we look at them.

Have you ever been really sick? Do you remember how wonderful it felt when you started to get better? Do you remember when the fever went away, or the first time that you could swallow without pain? It's an amazing feeling. Maybe you promised yourself that you'd never forget how great it feels. You promised that you'd appreciate your health and never take being healthy for granted again! That lasted about thirty minutes, and then you forgot; we all do. What could be more wonderful than being healthy-feeling all the parts of your body working well? Being healthy is a miracle, but one that most of us never notice. Yet how much happier would we be if we could just notice each day how wonderful it is to be healthy? We would probably complain a lot less about small things that bother and annoy us if we looked upon our health as a precious gift. And we might take better care of ourselves.

The religious person, taught Heschel, notices the miracles. The religious person notices how amazing things - all things - really are. The religious person stops and wonders at the beauty of a sunset, the power of a thunderstorm, and the kindness of a stranger. The opposite of being religious, according to Heschel, isn't a person doesn't believe in God, but a

person who doesn't notice all the amazing things around us. The opposite of being religious is being bored.

We've discussed the moments we have when we feel God close to us. Heschel believed that these moments can happen all the time. The problem is that we're distracted. We're too busy. We have homework to complete and piano to practice. We have TV shows to watch and phone calls to make. We have places to go and things to do. We are very busy people. And we miss the opportunities to feel God close by.

Prayer is a way to learn how to stop and notice the miracles around us. Prayer is a way to have a moment with God. Most people think that prayer is a way of asking for things from God, but only a very little bit of Jewish prayer is "asking prayer." Most Jewish prayers get us to stop and notice. Prayer in Judaism is a way to learn mindfulness - how to pay attention to the miracles that are all around us.

...The purpose of prayer is not to change God. The purpose of prayer is to change us. The purpose of prayer is to make us aware of the miracles around us and the moments of God's closeness waiting for us each day. Prayer doesn't bring heaven down; prayer brings us up. So the question in the end is not, Does God hear my prayers? Rather, ask: Do I hear my prayers? Am I listening? Am I paying attention? Do I notice the miracles happening around me all the time?

Lesson 3 – The Ebb and Flow of a Service

Note: This lesson is written using Mishkan Tefilah, the Reform Siddur. Components can easily be changed to better suit your class' needs.

Objectives

- Students will be able to identify the major components of a *shacharit* service.
- Students will be able to explain the different moods each section of the service are supposed to elicit from prayers.

Materials

Congregational *siddur*

Other *siddurim* (if you choose)

Slips of paper/Post-It notes with prayers of *shacharit* service

Siddur scavenger hunt

Pencils and slips of paper

Time

0:00-0:05 Welcome, Set Induction - Whip Around

0:05-0:25 Shacharit Service Order Game

0:25-0:50 Our Liturgy - *Siddur* Scavenger Hunt

0:50-1:00 The Moods of the *Shacharit* Service

1:00-1:02 Wrap-Up - Exit Pass

Activities

0:00-0:05 - Set Induction

Use a quick whip around and ask students to share two words with the class. First, how do they feel at the beginning of *tefillah*? Second, how do they feel at the end of *tefillah*? Write the words down on two separate lists. These will be used later in the lesson plan in Activity 3.

0:05-0:25 - The Shacharit Service Order Game

Note: If your class meets in the afternoon/evening, any of these activities can be changed to use the *ma'ariv* service.

Split students into small groups and give them slips of paper that each have one of the components of the *shacharit* service listed on them. Ask students to organize the service in order with their group.

Once students finish, together as a class, go over the components of the service. Point out the sections of the service (*Birchot ha'shachar*, *p'sukei d'zimrah*, *Shema u'virchotehah*, *Amidah* and *Concluding Prayers*).

A variation of this activity is to give students Post-It notes with the names of the prayers, or have the entire class work together to put the service in order instead of small groups.

It may be beneficial to briefly summarize what each prayer is about. Depending on your congregation, you may want to write the name of the prayers in Hebrew, English, and transliteration.

0:25-0:50 - *Our Liturgy*

Using the congregation's *siddur* of choice, create a "scavenger hunt" for the students in the *siddur*. The goal of this activity is to have students look at the *siddur* in a way they have not before. Sample questions can include:

- What page does the *shacharit* service begin on?
- How does the *siddur* feel in your hands? What do you think you're supposed to feel when you pick up the physical book?
- Besides the prayer, what is included in the *siddur*?
- Are there variations of prayers?
- Does the *siddur* allow for flexibility as to what a service includes?

Bring the group back together after allowing students to search through the *siddur*.

- What have they noticed that they hadn't noticed while using the *siddur* in services?
 - There are a lot more readings than what we normally go through; there are a lot of different writings in here that are not just alternatives to prayers; there are a LOT of services listed in this *siddur*; prayers for weekdays are the first ones listed in the *siddur*, which is very interesting
- Do they like the way the *siddur* is laid out or would they prefer the *siddur* to be different somehow?
 - I like the way it is laid out because it gives you options to look at if you are not connecting to a prayer; there's a lot going on, it can be confusing; I don't really like it, all of the extra stuff distracts from what I want to focus on
- Does any of this matter? Why or why not?
 - It matters because what else is on a page could distract you from praying; it matters because it is the *siddur* our synagogue uses so we should like using it; it doesn't really matter because when I'm in services, I don't really pay attention anyway
- How does the book affect our praying?
 - It can be distracting; it can enhance your ability to pray because it gives you so many extra options to read if your mind starts to wander during prayer; the book is really heavy and gets tiring to hold up for long periods of time; how a book feels can make a difference in how you approach prayer

If your students are interested and if you have the resources, it may be interesting to show the students a variety of *siddurim* used in different congregations or movements.

- Be a *siddur* critic for a moment...what do you notice that's different than our *siddur*?

0:50-1:00 - *The Moods of the Shacharit Service*

Remind students of the lists generated during the set induction and ask:

- Are there any other parts of the *shacharit* service that have "moods" connected to them.

- Many of the early blessings are very festive and upbeat sounding; sometimes *Mah Tovu* can sound kind of slow and meditative; Shema can feel very serene; *Mi Chamocha* is exciting because we're reenacting the crossing of the sea and how excited we were to escape slavery; *Amidah* is very contemplative; Mourner's Kaddish is very somber
 - Is there a prayer that "screams exuberance"?
 - *Mi Chamocha*; certain melodic versions of other songs are very exuberant, such as Psalm 150; sometimes an opening or closing song can also be very exuberant
- As a group, brainstorm the different moods certain prayers elicit.
- How much does the musical selection affect the mood of a prayer?
 - The musical selection can greatly affect the mood of a prayer because it can make it go slower or faster, sound exciting or kind of boring; it doesn't make that much of a difference because the prayers are the same no matter what; I don't really notice much of a difference between musical pieces so I don't really notice it

1:00-1:02 - Wrap-up – Exit Pass

Hand out slips of paper to students and ask them to write one thing they learned today, one thing they would like to learn about prayer during the rest of this unit, and one question they have. They can use this slip of paper as their "exit pass" before leaving class.

Personal Journal Prompt

Then, give students 5-10 minutes to free-write about their experience with one of the prayers you talked about as a group.

Shacharit Service Order Game - Slips for Students

MODEH/MODAH ANI

PSALM 150

L'HITATEIF BAT'ZIT'ZIT

YISHTABACH

L'HANIACH TEFILLIN

YISHTABACH

MAH TOVU

CHAT'ZI KADDISH

ASHER YAT'ZAR

BARECHU

ELOHAI NESHAMAH

YOTZER OR

NISIM B'CHOL YOM

AHAVAH RABBAH

LA'ASOK B'DIVREI TORAH

SHEMA

EILU D'VARIM

V'AHAVTA

KADDISH D'RABANAN

EMET V'YAT'ZIV

BARUCH SHE'AMAR

MI CHAMOCHA

PSALM 100

AMIDAH

ASHREI

ALEINU

PSALM 145

KADDISH YAT'OM

Shacharit Service Order Game - Key for Teacher

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. MODEH/MODAH ANI | 15. PSALM 150 |
| 2. L'HITATEIF BAT'ZIT'ZIT | 16. YISHTABACH |
| 3. L'HANIACH TEFILLIN | 17. YISHTABACH |
| 4. MAH TOVU | 18. CHATZI KADDISH |
| 5. ASHER YAT'ZAR | 19. BARECHU |
| 6. ELOHAI NESHAMAH | 20. YOTZER OR |
| 7. NISIM B'CHOL YOM | 21. AHAVAH RABBAH |
| 8. LA'ASOK B'DIVREI TORAH | 22. SHEMA |
| 9. EILU D'VARIM | 23. V'AHAVTA |
| 10. KADDISH D'RABANAN | 24. EMET V'YAT'ZIV |
| 11. BARUCH SHE'AMAR | 25. MI CHAMOCHA |
| 12. PSALM 100 | 26. AMIDAH |
| 13. ASHREI | 27. ALEINU |
| 14. PSALM 145 | 28. KADDISH YATOM |

Lesson 4 - Synagogue Visit

This lesson is written to be general so that it can be used to visit a synagogue of any denomination or affiliation.

Objectives

- Students will be able to compare and contrast components of different *schacharit* services.

Materials

Paper and pencils (if completing the reflection together)

Activities

Set Induction – Preconceived Notions – 3 minutes

Before arriving at the synagogue, talk with students about any preconceived notions about the synagogue you're about to visit. If the service will be drastically different than what they are used to, you may want to tell them about the big differences (or not, depending on the students). If the synagogue is part of a different movement, it also may help students if you send them some information about the movement ahead of time.

Activity 1 – Debrief – 20-30 minutes

Debrief with students about the service. Did they notice many differences about this service and what they are used to? What were the differences? Was the music, liturgy or language used different? Did they feel the same kinds of moods they feel during a service they normally attend? Was there a part of the service that stood out to them?

Activity 2 – Chart Reflection – 15-25 minutes (This activity can also be assigned to do for the following week.)

Ask students to create a chart in order to reflect on the service they just experienced. You can give them a structure to use such as columns of “like, dislike, just seemed different” or you can let them create their own categories. Students can list out different things about the service, either components or feelings they experienced during it, that stood out to them.

If you have time, you can have students share their charts and at least one item from each category they chose. You can also discuss some follow up questions:

- Did the students enjoy the service?
- Did they connect to God or Judaism during the service?
- What about this service either enabled them or disabled them from feeling a connection during prayer?
- Was any part of the service distracting to them?
- Was there any part of the service they really disliked? Why did they dislike it?
- Did they feel comfortable during the prayer experience? Why or why not?

Lesson 5 – Alternative Service 1 – Art *Tefillah*

Objectives

- Students will be able to assess their own connection to a different kind of method of prayer.
- Students will be able to evaluate an art prayer service in comparison to other services they have attended.

Materials

Method 1 - construction paper and glue sticks

Method 2 - various kinds of art supplies

Method 3 - butcher paper or long sheets of construction paper and some kind of writing tool

Activities

Method 1 – Paper Midrash

Conduct a “typical” *shacharit* service but choose a few prayers (or even just the *amidah*) and instruct students to create a piece of art that reflects how they feel about the whole prayer, or just a piece of it. The students should tear the paper to create the shapes they want.

Method 2 – Prayer Centers

Using just the idea of the paper midrash from method 1 or a variety of art supplies (such as pastels, paint, markers, crayons, interesting types of paper or surfaces, etc), set up a variety of “prayer centers” that are similar to learning centers. Tell students that they can visit the centers in the order of the service, if you wish, or at random. At each center, have one type of medium and a prayer. For example, choose four prayers and have four prayer centers for students to create a small art project at each or even at one of them during the entire service. You may choose to begin and end the service together as a group. You may also want to have students share their work with a short description, if they are comfortable doing so. If you have the space available, set up a display with the works of the art from the service.

Method 3 - Draw the Prayers

Give each student a long sheet of butcher paper or a sheet of construction paper and some kind of writing tool. Ask students to draw during each of the prayers, as they pray. It would be helpful to have a leader who doesn’t mind leading/singing by themselves during this service. Ask students to draw out their feelings or moods during a prayer or something that the prayer elicits from them.

Conclusion - 5-15 minutes

Similar to after the synagogue visit, have students reflect on their experience during this service. You can have students write silently for a few minutes before sharing impressions.

- Did this type of service help them focus on their connection to God, each other, Judaism or the prayers? Why or why not?
- What did they like and dislike?

Lesson 6 - Alternative Service 2 - Outdoor *Tefillah*

Objectives

- Students will be able to assess their own connection to a different kind of method of prayer.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast various forms of prayer.

Materials

Just a nice outdoor area

Activities

Outdoor Tefillah is doable during any kind of weather/surroundings but be sure to let students know if you're going to be outside and may need special clothes/sunscreen. If you don't have somewhere on your premises to hold an outdoor tefillah, have the students meet at the local Botanical Gardens or at a park near the synagogue.

The following is a sample list of activities used to enhance a "typical" tefillah that is held outdoors.

Focus Activity

Rabbi Jamie Korngold, the "Adventure Rabbi" uses the following activity to help participants focus on nature:

Ask students to spend 10 minutes focusing on either sight or sound. Take a walk around the area you'll be praying in. Ask that no one talk during this time. After the ten minutes are up, spend a few minutes asking students what they noticed. Did they hear things they did not think they would? Did they feel relaxed? Was it comfortable or uncomfortable to not talk for the prescribed time?

Nisim B'chol Yom

Instead of reciting the morning blessings from the *siddur*, say or sing the beginning of the blessing together and then ask students to say things that they are thankful for that are related to outdoors, nature, or their ability to experience the outdoors. (IE: *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam...*for giving me joints that are flexible enough to allow me to ski during the winter.)

Mi Chamocha Guided Meditation

Bring along a guided meditation about standing on the shores of the sea while leaving Egypt.

Shema - Breathe Deep

Before the Shema, ask everyone to focus on their breath. Breathe in, breathe out. Repeat this for a minute or two. Explain that for the Shema, each word will have its own breath. Remind students to focus on the in and out of their breath while reciting.

Amidah - Spread Out!

During the *amidah*, ask students to find a space in the surrounding area that can be their own during the recitation of the *amidah*. Let the students wonder off a little ways, if possible. Give them a cue for when they should rejoin the group, such as singing *Oseh Shalom*.

Silent Meditation

End the service with another minute or two of deep breathing. If your class meets at the beginning of the week, you can ask students to focus on something they are going to do in the following week to bring prayer, God or spirituality to their daily routine. Prompt them to consider one thing they are going to specifically focus on during the week. After, pick a melody (perhaps one that is a softer, gentler melody) to end the service.

Lesson 7 - Alternative Service 3 - Drum Circle *Tefillah*

Objectives

- Students will be able to compare and contrast various forms of prayer.

Materials

Djembe type drums or buckets, tambourines or anything they can use as a drum (if you only have a few drums, share them throughout the service, students can also drum on the ground if you don't have drums)

Videos like this one: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVptGr33T90&feature=relmfu>
(There are many other videos that teach how to play the drum!)

Activities

Drum circles or *tefillot* with drums can be an incredibly powerful experience. It can also be difficult to control a larger group of people playing drums all at once! Set a few ground rules at the beginning of the service, such as "Anytime I wave a hand across the group (like in a 'cut' motion), everyone stops drumming." If you have never drummed before, drum teachers can be hired to come and teach how to actually play the drums. There may even be a musician in your synagogue who can come in to do this. In some areas of the country, you may even be able to find someone skilled at teaching drum circle *tefillah*.

Basic Drum Strikes

Teach the group two basic drum strikes. One, the "bass" strike, is done with an open palm. Strike the middle of the surface of the drum and let your hand bounce off of the drum, creating a full bass note. Two, the "tone" strike, is done by curling your fingers over at your second knuckle and striking the edge of the drum, creating a higher note. Practice together, first giving verbal directions (bass, bass, bass, tone) and then having the students repeat. You can go around the circle, if you wish, having everyone try each note. Then, give students a chance to play for a few minutes, while you set a rhythm.

Playing with the service

Choose versions of prayers to sing/chant that the students are familiar with. Some melodies offer themselves to drumming more than others. Choose a few prayers that you can play to that are easy to repeat (such as *Mi Chamocha* or *Shema*) that you can chant through a few times.

End the service

At the conclusion of the circle, engage the students in a freestyle drum circle. Using your hand as a vertical "up and down" level indicator, have students take the noise all the way down to as quiet as possible and then escalate to as loud as possible. Experiment with having the rhythm go slower, then faster. The inclination when using drums is to speed up the beat, so start the group off very slowly.

Debrief/Wrap-Up - 5 minutes

After the service, conclude with reflection about the service. Did the students enjoy the service? Did they feel more "connected" during this than during other services? Why or

why not? Ask the students to share at least one thing they all appreciated about the service before leaving class.

More Alternative Service Ideas:

- Art
- Musical (all music service, humming prayers, etc.)
- Silent/contemplative
- Yoga
- All English service
- Alternative readings for each prayer
- Use an LGBTQ *siddur* (such as *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*)
- Meditation
- Rosh chodesh, holiday service, memorial service, or healing service

Assignment: Personal Journal Prompt

Ask students to respond to the following prompt in their personal journals:

- What did you like or dislike about these different kinds of prayer services?
- Were there particular prayers that you felt connected to?

Lesson 8 – Prayer Wrap-Up and Assessment

Objectives

- Students will be able to identify parts of the *shacharit* service that move them.
- Students will be able to collaborate as a community.
- Students will be able to synthesize ideas about the flow, moods and settings of prayer.

Materials

Paper and pencils/pens

Siddurim as references

Activities

Set Induction - Free-Write - 5 minutes

Give students a few minutes to reflect on the last six days of class. Give the prompt:

- “What do you think are necessary components of a successful *shacharit* service?”

Activity 1 - Create Your Ideal Service

Instruct students that they are going to create their own “Ideal *Shacharit* Tefillah”. It may be helpful to students to construct a list of necessary components for a service. Together, as a group, you can brainstorm about what is necessary to include in a description of a service (such as materials, time cues, page numbers in a *siddur*, extra readings, etc). After you have compiled a list of necessary items, allow students time to put together their ideal service. As a group, you can review the prayers included in the *shacharit* service.

Other helpful prompts may include:

- What kind of mood do you wish to create?
- Will you include music? What kind of instruments?
- Who will lead this service? Can anyone or does it need to be someone specific?

If students decide to not include some components of the prayer service, ask them to write a short explanation of their decision.

After all of the students have an opportunity to create their service, students should present their creation to the class. The class should be allowed to ask questions about the service but not critique the student’s decisions.

If you have time, this activity could be an entire class by itself. Students could be encouraged to speak to community members or staff at the synagogue to help with the collection of any materials they may need for their service. This activity can act as an assessment for the unit.

Activity 2 - Create the Confirmation Service

Many synagogues have traditions already in place for the confirmation class service or ceremony. If your synagogue is open to something new, speak with the clergy and staff to see if your students can be in charge of planning the service. If not, plan a service that the students can invite friends and family to attend. Have the group work together to create a

service that includes components of prayer that were most influential to them throughout the unit. Encourage the students to think outside of the box in constructing their service.

The service could take place at one of the students' homes or at the synagogue. Allow students to decide if they will create a *shacharit* service or invite friends and family for a Shabbat service. Will they include a meal as part of the service? Where will the service take place? Will they lead the music or will they enlist the help of a professional/member of the congregation?

After finding a day that works for the class and the congregation, send some kind of invitations to friends and family of the class. (Will the class create handmade invitations or will an Evite suffice?) Help the class take ownership over the entire night by having students assign members to be in charge of turning in set-up forms, arranging the meal, etc.

Wrap Up - My Future Jewish Plan

Give students a few minutes to fill out the worksheet about their Future Jewish Plan. Again, this is a first draft of the prayer section to be included in their final plan.

My Future Jewish Plan

Prayer

Today you will draft ideas for the third section of your future plan. This worksheet is a guide to help you gather your thoughts about future goals for including prayer in your life.

What were you most drawn to during this unit?

Describe the importance of prayer in Judaism.

What place does prayer have in your life? How would you like to include prayer in your life?

To help me fulfill these goals, I will:

-
-
-
-
-
-

Is it important to pray? Why or why not? What does prayer mean to you?

What else do you want to learn about prayer?

Unit 4 - God

This unit will focus on introducing students to Jewish concepts of God in order to lay the foundations for students' own exploration of personal theology. Many students may come to class with ideas about God while some may have only thought about the topic briefly. God is a main tenet of Judaism and it is beneficial to talk about God at many different points during one's development. The end of this unit also includes culminating lesson plans for the entire curriculum.

Enduring Understandings

- Reflection about God enables engagement in prayer in individually meaningful ways.
- Knowledge of the traditional Jewish views of God can frame one's ideas about God.
- Hearing from others about their God ideas encourages one to examine his/her theology and relationship with God.
- Reflection about God, either internally or through dialogue with others, enables one to construct a personal theology.

Knowledge

- The idea of covenant with God is foundational to Judaism. How one participates in that covenant is left to individual discretion.
- Jewish liturgy and sacred texts highlight many different views of God.
- Our personal relationships with God can be carried out in numerous ways.

Skills

- Students will recognize the various traditional models of God displayed in Jewish sacred texts and liturgy.
- Students will construct and present a personal theology.
- Students will evaluate one another's personal theologies and challenge each other to think deeply about their ideas about God.

Evidence of Learning

- Students will complete drafts of their personal theology throughout the unit.
- Students will participate in a reflective writing assignment at the end of the unit where they will be asked to summarize and analyze their feelings about exploring God.
- Students will utilize the language of theology that they learn during the introduction unit in their personal theology and in class during activities.

Lesson 1 - Introduction and GODShopping

Objectives

- Students will be able to articulate their questions about God and theology.
- Students will be discuss how Judaism supports the questioning of God concepts.
- Students will be able to describe at least three of the major viewpoints of God based in Jewish texts.

Materials

Dreskin, Rabbi Billy, and Dreskin, Cantor Ellen, and Shapiro, Rabbi Mark Dov.
GODShopping: An Exploration in Personal Theology.

****SEE ALL MATERIALS IN DETAILED LESSON PLAN BELOW****

Kessler, Rachael. *The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000.

Introduction to the Unit – 5-10 minutes (Adapted from a

A few days or a week before class, let students know that you'll begin a unit on God next class. Ask them to think about questions that keep them up at night or that they wonder about when they're walking alone to the school bus, etc. They will not be asked to read their own aloud but will only be asked to write them down before they are shared aloud by the teacher.

Ask students to do this activity when they get to class. The questions may be unanswerable and that's okay. A fun idea may be to take the questions and put them on a board (like a corkboard) so they are visible throughout the God unit. If you can, you may want to leave out more cards and pens so students can add questions to the board whenever they come up.

Activities

Activity 1 – GODShopping – 1.5-2 hours (depending on the chattiness and artsiness of your students)

Set up the GODShopping activity in a space that is big enough for your class to wander about a little. There are a few different components: first, give students a few minutes to free write answering the prompt, “I want there to be a God because...” before you explain eight different viewpoints found in Jewish texts about God. Second, students will have an opportunity to express which of these ideas speak to them. Third, students will have the chance to travel around the room and “shop” for strips of paper that describe different ideas they hold about God. Then, there is time for an art project with the strips towards the end. This project can act as an assessment for this program because you can ask students to paste the strips they picked up about God onto construction paper and create a meaningful piece of art with it. If you have the Materials, bring out a variety of art supplies for students to use in this project. A full range of discussion questions are included in the program.

Preparation for Lesson 2 and Journal Prompt – 5-10 minutes

Let students know that the next lesson includes a guest panel of a variety of community members. Give students a few minutes in class to write some questions about God that they will pose to the group. Allow students to be creative with their questions and perhaps you may encourage them to use some of their own mysteries questions up on the board. Offer

some examples of questions, such as “Why do bad things happen to bad people?” or “Does God control my destiny or do I make my own destiny?”. Themes that students could ask about may also include faith (when someone came to realize their faith or question their faith), suffering, predetermination, creation, etc.

GODshopping: An Exploration in Personal Theology

Cantor Ellen Dreskin • Rabbi Billy Dreskin • Rabbi Mark Dov Shapiro

from Woodlands Community Temple's Confirmation Curriculum, "God, Torah and Israel ... What's In It For Me?"

Objectives for the participant:

- To understand that Judaism asks of us three acts of faith regarding God: 1) that we believe in God; 2) that we believe God is One; and, 3) that we believe God has something to ask of us about how we live our lives.
- To understand that, while it is difficult to have complete faith, it is possible to develop a personal idea of God that is both reasonable and meaningful.
- To acknowledge that Judaism has many varying ideas about God, and that they are worth considering as we strive to piece together our personal ideas about God.
- To realize that it's okay in Judaism both to question God, to change our ideas about God, and to piece together for our individual self ideas about God that are reasonable to accept.
- To consider that while encouraging individual thought about God, Judaism will challenge us on the components of our God-belief, spurring us on to uncover and accept a God that wants us to better the world.

Materials:

- Mp3 recording: Bill Cosby's "Noah."
- Mp3 player.
- "GODshopping: An Exploration in Personal Theology" worksheets.
- "GODshopping Text Study" handouts.
- Paper and pens.
- Pencils with erasers.
- GODshopping posters. Posted around room. Set of 8 posters: one per God-concept, each bearing a picture, its title, each of its statements glued to it. And attached to the bottom, tear-off copies of each individual statement (enough copies so each student could, if they want, take one).
- GODshopping craft materials: scissors, glue, multi-colored construction paper.

Implementation:

- [Optional] Distribute paper and pens. Ask participants to complete in writing the phrase, "I'd like there to be a God because ..." Then take some time to share the writings.
- Present:
- Okay, we've shared some thoughts about *why* we'd like for there to be a God. Now we have to consider what it is that God might actually *do*.
 - Discuss: Can you name any people with a clear "picture" of what God does?
 - Here's someone with one. Play recording of Bill Cosby's "Noah".
 - Judaism asks of us to commit to three acts of faith regarding God: 1) that we believe in God; 2) that we believe God is One; and, 3) that we believe God has something to ask of us about how we live our lives (a "Commanding Voice"). This isn't about "hearing voices" in our heads, but

about reaching an intellectual and spiritual decision that someone/something in the universe wants us to behave in a certain way that benefits everyone/thing else.

- Shopping I
- Let's explore some more pictures of God.
 - Each one of these comes from somewhere out of 4000 years of Jewish life and thinking about God.
 - Each one reflects the three Jewish acts of faith about God: that God exists, that God is One, and God has something to ask us about how we live our lives.
 - Four corners.
 - Listen to the following four descriptions of God, and select the one which comes closest to what you believe.
 - Facilitator uses posters (posted around program space) to explain the first four God-ideas: 1) Watchmaker (*Ya'atof v'Lo Er'eh* ... The Hidden God I Cannot See); 2) Ruler of the Universe (*Melekh haOlam*); 3) Jiminy Cricket (*Kol D'mama Dakah* ... The Still Small Voice); and, 4) The Force (Naturalism, *Yotzer Or/Maariv Aravim* ... Creator of Light/One Who Makes Evening Fall).
 - Students select idea "that may not be perfect for you, but comes closest to something you could accept about God" ... then all move at once to location.
 - Corner discussion: Why did you choose this corner?
 - [Optional] 1 or 2 members of each corner share a summary of their thoughts with the entire group.

- Shopping II
- There are quite a few more ideas out there about God. Let's take a look at four more.
- Station-rotation (or, if only one staff person, a "guided tour").
 - Distribute "God-Shopping Text Sheet."
 - Participants divide into four groups and rotate to different locations (the hoped for benefit of moving the groups rather than the presenters is to prevent *shpilkes* and to maximize participants' ability to focus on the presentations – you may certainly opt to leave the groups in place and move your presenters instead).
 - Facilitator uses "God-Shopping Text Sheet" to explain this second set of God ideas: 1) Partner in Creation (*Shotef b'Ma'aseh Vereshit*); 2) Author of Life and Death (Puppetmaster, *M'khayei HaKol* ... The One Who Gives Life to All); 3) Goodness/Love/Dreams/Ideals (*HaTov v'HaM'rakbem* ... The One Who is Good and Compassionate); and, 4) Ayn Sof (The Infinite One).

- Shopping III
- It's important to know that, while Judaism encourages us each to believe in God, there is much latitude as to what we choose to believe.
 - Even concerning the eight concepts we've just presented, we can (if we prefer) pick and choose from within the concepts themselves to begin piecing together an idea about God that seems reasonable and meaningful to us.
 - And that's exactly what we're going to do. We're going GODshopping!
 - Distribute the following: "GODshopping: An Exploration in Personal

'Theology' worksheets, pencils with erasers, scissors, glue, construction paper (many colors).

- Part one.
- Work through the "GODshopping" worksheet (which is an exact repetition of the God-ideas we've met in both the Four Corners and Station Rotation exercises) by placing a check next to those ideas which seem "reasonable and meaningful" to you.
- Not only may you mix-and-match from the different categories, you are also invited to change the wording of any statement you *would* like if such a change were made.
- You may even add your own statements to this list.
- Part two.
- Hanging from the bottom of each poster are strips of paper, each containing one statement from within that God-idea.
- Tear off those strips which match those you checked on your worksheet, make any needed changes to the text, and glue your individual set of statements to one side of one piece of construction paper.
- Names on back, please.

Wrap-up

- Once again ... Judaism asks of us three acts of faith regarding God: 1) that we believe in God; 2) that we believe God is One; and, 3) that we believe God has something to ask of us about how we live our lives.
- Hopefully, these God-ideas each of you have developed are all *reasonable and* meaningful for you.
- As time goes on, your ideas about God will likely change; that's fine.
- For now, the challenge is to find a personal idea of God that is relevant and reasonable, and that might actually help you to "find your place in the world."
- And ... an idea about God that you can use during *t'fillah* as well. It's important not to "worship" someone else's ideas about God. Be sure you bring your own!

Lesson 2 - A Panel about God

Objectives

- Students will be able to recognize different traditional Jewish viewpoints of God from panelists' remarks.
- Students will compare and contrast the panelists' ideas with their own ideas about God.
- Students will begin compiling ideas and thoughts that will later be included in their personal theology.

Materials

Thank you note materials

Activities

Set Induction – Free Write – 5 minutes

Give students a few minutes to reflect on the past week's class. Ask them to write about if they have any new mysteries questions from last week or if the activity opened them up to anything new about God.

Activity 2 – A Panel about God – 1.5 hours (Students are asked to write questions for the panel during the end of Lesson 1.)

Assemble a panel of three or four guests to come and speak to the students about their views on God. Try to find a variety of guests so the panel will be diverse and interesting. Perhaps the educator or staff can aid in finding community members if you are not sure who may be willing to come out and help. It may be interesting to invite one person from an Orthodox background, Conservative background and Reconstructionist background on the panel. Encourage one of your clergy members or an educator from the synagogue to also sit on the panel.

Have your students help you set up for the arrival of guests. Put out water on the panel table and have students greet them at the door. It's also nice to have the students write the thank you notes to the panelists (individually or together). Depending on your students, you may wish to debrief them on the structure of the panel and when it may be appropriate to participate.

One possible structure for the panel could be allowing a few minutes to each of the participants so they can introduce themselves and briefly describe their relationship to God. Then, you could open the floor for a question and answer segment.

Activity 3 – Debrief – 15 minutes

Give students a few minutes to think or write about the answers they just heard in the panel and instruct them to create one sentence or a phrase that sums up their reaction to the panel. After each student shares, discuss their reactions. Where they surprised by answers? Where they shocked by anything? Or did they expect to hear exactly as they heard?

Assignment - Thank You Notes

Ask a few students to write personal thank you notes for the class to the panelists.

Lesson 3 - 6 Word Memoirs and God Cartoons

Objectives

- Students will articulate their own beliefs about God in 6 words.
- Students will be able to explain representations of God.
- Students will analyze their connection to various traditional beliefs about God.
- Students will illustrate their own understanding of God.

Materials

Paper

Pencils, markers, colored pencils

God Cartoons

Post-Its or note cards for 6 word memoirs

Activities

Activity 1 - 6 Word Memoirs

“Legend has it that Hemingway was once challenged to write a story in only six words. His response? “For sale: baby shoes, never worn.” In November 2006, SMITH Magazine reignited the *recountre* by asking our readers for their own Six-Word Memoirs. They sent in short life stories in droves, from the bittersweet (“Cursed with cancer, blessed with friends”) and poignant (“I still make coffee for two”) to the inspirational (“Business school? Bah! Pop music? Hurrah”) and hilarious (“I like big butts, can’t lie”).” (www.smithmag.net)

Using this concept of a 6 Word Memoir, have students create at least one and no more than six, 6 word memoirs about God. Prompt them about different themes to write memoirs. For example, they could use some of the mysteries questions as a jumping off point. Some memoirs could be based on wondering about the existence of God, or God’s power. Maybe a student would like to write a memoir from the viewpoint of God. They can be serious, funny, heartfelt or convey confusion. It may also be helpful to show some examples from the Smith Mag website.

If you have the space, it may be fun to display the 6 word memoirs around the room on big Post-Its. If students put them up throughout the first few minutes that they are writing, take a few minutes to walk around the room, like in an art gallery. You could also put out extra post-its and have students write responses to memoirs with new memoirs, or a piece of paper under each memoir where others can comment on the memoirs.

Activity 2 - God Cartoons *Adapted from an activity created by Rabbi Morley Feinstein*

Split students into *chevrutot* and give each pair a different cartoon about God. Ask each student to look at the cartoon and figure out what they think it’s about and whether or not they like it or agree with it. Then have the pairs share the cartoon and their thoughts with the rest of the class.

Assessment: Create Your Own God Cartoon

Students should be given supplies to create their own God cartoon. They can use their six word memoirs to inspire their cartoon or come up with a new concept. If you have computers available, there is a wonderful program called Comic Life by Plasq that enables students to use Mac computers to create their own comics.

Encourage students to write cartoons both about their own feelings or conceptions of God as well as if God was writing a cartoon.

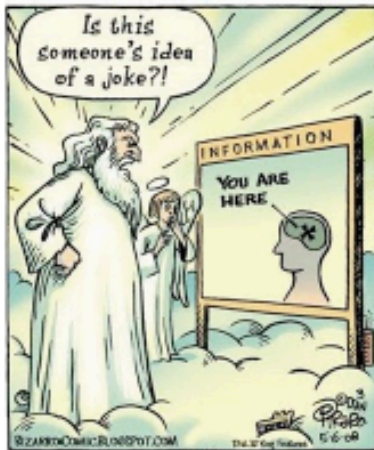
Wrap-Up - Mash Up and Art Gallery

Have students post their cartoons around the room. Then, give them another big Post-It and have them write a 6 Word Memoir about their cartoon. Have them present their cartoon and the 6 Word Memoir before letting everyone walk around and look at the cartoons.

Assignment: Personal Journal Prompt

Give students the following prompt for their personal journals:

- What questions do you still have about God?
- How comfortable are when you talking about God?
- Reflect on making the cartoons in class. Was it difficult or easy? Why did you draw the cartoon you decided to draw?



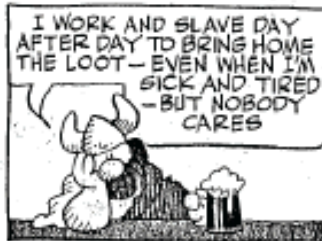
For Better or For Worse

By Lynn Johnston



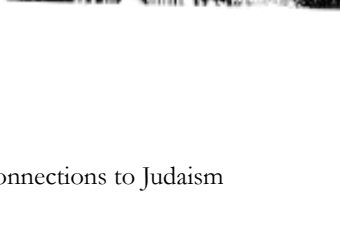
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE

by Dik Browne



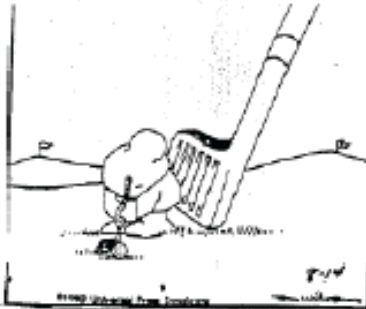
HAGAR The Horrible

BY DIK BROWNE



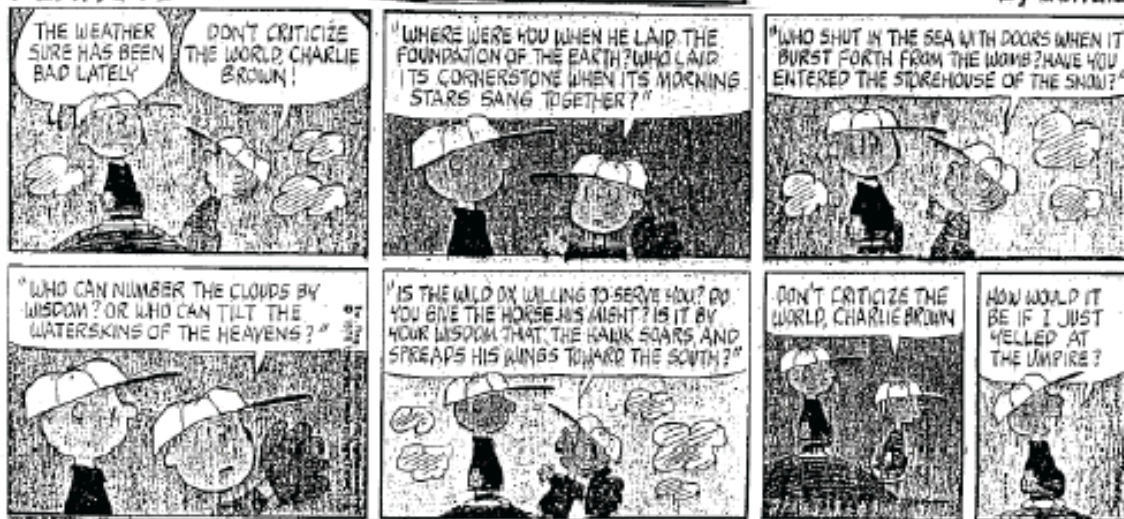
BROOM HILDA

by Russell Myers



PEANUTS

By Schulz



Yahweh: The Sunset Years

EDWARD SOREL

WHEN I STARTED OUT IN THIS BUSINESS THERE MUST'VE BEEN OVER A HUNDRED GODS UP HERE. NO KIDDING.



MOST ARE GONE NOW, EVEN THE BIGGIES LIKE THOR AND ZEUS. BUT BY ME—KNOW WOOD—BUSINESS COULDN'T BE BETTER.



IT'S 'CAUSE I HAVE SUCH A WONDERFUL CLIENTELE...Y'CAN'T BEAT JEWS AND CHRISTIANS WHEN IT COMES TO LOYALTY.



FR'INSTANCE, SAY A PLANE GOES DOWN IN A STORM. THEY NEVER BLAME ME FOR THE DISASTER. NEVER. ON THE OTHER HAND...



... IF ANYONE LIVES THROUGH IT THE FIRST THING HE'LL SAY IS "IT'S A MIRACLE! ONLY THE HAND OF GOD SAVED ME."



IT'S REALLY TOUCHING...THEY'VE READ ABOUT THE MIRACLES I DID IN THE OLD DAYS AND THEY ASSUME I STILL DO THAT SORT OF THING.



BUT YOU KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I STARTED TO DO REAL MIRACLES AGAIN? I'LL TELL YOU...



... I'D BE UP NIGHT AND DAY, DAY AND NIGHT ANSWERING PRAYERS FOR WHO KNOWS WHAT. LET'S FACE IT...



... I CAN'T KEEP THOSE KIND OF HOURS ANYMORE.



Lesson 4 - Theodicy: “Why do bad things happen to good people?” (SCRIPTED)

Objectives

- Students will discuss personal doubts and struggle with belief in God.
- Students will analyze various texts about theodicy.
- Students will explain their own evolving understanding of theodicy.

Materials

Theodicy Text Sheet

Pens/pencils

Paper

Resources

Feinstein, Edward Rabbi. *Tough Questions Jews Ask: A Young Adult's Guide to Building a Jewish Life*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003.

Kushner, Harold S. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. New York: Schocken, 1981. Print.

Time

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 00:00-00:05 | Welcome and Set Induction - Personal Prompt |
| 00:05-00:40 | Text Study and Discussion |
| 00:40-01:10 | Ask the Educator/Rabbi/Cantor |
| 01:10-01:30 | Assessment - Your Turn to Create |
| 01:30-01:35 | Wrap-Up |

Activities

00:00-00:05 - Personal Prompt

Give students five minutes to gather their thoughts and free-write about the question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?”

00:05-00:40 - Text Study and Discussion (See Text Worksheet)

Using the sample of texts inserted at the end of this lesson plan and others (if you have them and wish to add to those provided), have students break into *chevrutot* and read the texts. Students should answer the “guiding questions” found on the text sheet.

- How does each text answer the question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?”

- Rabbi Feinstein’s quote: Bad things happen because that is simply nature’s course; bad things happen because God does not want to interrupt nature; bad things don’t happen because someone did something or did not do something, they just happen

- Isaiah and Proverbs: Bad things happen to people because they are wicked and good things happen to the righteous because of their piety

- Talmud/Harold Kushner: Bad things happen to people because they are being tested for having great spiritual strength, God knows they are strong enough to endure the suffering

After students have read through the texts, bring the group back together to talk about the major questions they have after reading the texts. Some guiding questions may include:

- What was most striking to you from these texts?
 - There is a big gap between people believing that bad things happen to good people because of something they did and that there is really nothing we can do about it; Jewish texts seem to believe that the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be punished, how can that be?
- What is God's role in our lives?
 - God's role could be seen as giving us strength and hope during these times of crisis; maybe God's role is to remind us that there is something bigger than each of us in the world; God's role is to

00:40-01:10 - Ask the Educator/Rabbi/Cantor

Invite the educator or a member of the clergy to class to conduct an open forum to ask any questions students may have about God or theology. Encourage honesty and openness. It may be helpful for the educator/clergy to start the forum by sharing a personal story about their own beliefs about God or ideas about theodicy.

01:10-01:30 - Assessment: Your Turn to Create (See Second Worksheet)

Give students time to formulate a more articulate answer to the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Perhaps their opinions have changed since the opening prompt. When students finish writing on this topic, ask them to write about one of the following prompts:

1. *One of your good friends is going through a rough time because his/her parent is sick. While hanging out one day, your friend expresses that they just don't understand why something so bad would happen to a good person. What do you say to them? Do you express your own ideas about theodicy? Or would you try to say what you think your friend wants you to say?*
2. *If you were going through a rough time, would all of these things that you learned about God and theodicy be comforting to you? Or would you turn away from them? What would be comforting to you?*

Assignment for Personal Journal: This I Believe

Assign students to outline an essay entitled "This I Believe" for next session. The essay should somehow be connected to the God unit or, for example, about a God moment that they had. Students will be asked to write out their essay and then audio record it to be posted on the synagogue's website or blog. To help them with the project, direct them to <http://thisibelieve.org/>. Students should listen to at least three different essays so they understand the style of the project.

Why do bad things happen to good people?

(Theodicy)

There are people who believe that everything that happens to them is God's decision. Everything, they believe, happens for a reason, even if only God knows the reason. If something good happens, they thank God. If something bad happens, they feel better thinking it was no accident. God brought this to them; therefore, it must be for the best. When bad things happen, they conclude that God is punishing them. All they need to do is figure out what they did wrong.

But if something really terrible happens, they might get angry and scream at God or give up on God. After all, they reason, if God is supposed to take care of them, how could this happen? Would could they have done to deserve this? Like the family we talked about before, these poor people suffer three times as much: They suffer the bad things that have happened to them. And then they suffer double because they believe that they did something to deserve it; they think they're being punished. And they suffer triple because most of the time, they can't figure out what they did to deserve it. They feel guilt, they feel hurt, and they feel God has abandoned them.

I don't agree with this way of thinking about God. I don't believe that God decides everything that happens to us. I don't believe that God punishes us with earthquakes and diseases and accidents. I don't believe for example, that God sent the earthquake to destroy my house or that God sends diseases that destroy the lives of our loved ones....Nature follows its own rules, and God doesn't stop it. God doesn't break nature's rules.

-Rabbi Edward Feinstein, *Tough Questions Jews Ask*

Tell the righteous it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds. Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for what his hands have done shall be done to him.

- Isaiah 3:10-11

No ills befall the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble.

- Proverbs 12:21

If you go to the marketplace, you will see the potter hitting his clay pots with a stick to show how strong and solid they are. But the wise potter hits only the strongest pots, never the flawed ones. So too, God sends such tests and afflictions only to people He knows are capable of handling them, so that they and others can learn the extent of their spiritual strength.

- From the Talmud, as found in *When Bad Things Happen To Good People* by Harold S. Kushner

Answer these questions with your *chevruta* before returning to the larger group:

1. How does each text answer the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?"
2. Do you agree with each quote's message? Why or why not?
3. Are any of these texts surprising to you?
4. Do any of these anger you? Do any of them provide you comfort?

Why do bad things happen to good people? (Theodicy)

Using what you wrote during your free-write at the beginning of class, create a more thorough answer to the question “Why do bad things happen to good people?”

Next, pick one of the following prompts to respond to:

- One of your good friends is going through a rough time because his/her parent is sick. While hanging out one day, your friend expresses that they just don't understand why something so bad would happen to a good person. What would you say to them? Would you express your own ideas about theodicy? Or would you try to say what you think your friend wants you to say?
- If you were going through a rough time, would all of these things that you learned about God and theodicy be comforting to you? Or would you turn away from them? What would be comforting to you?

Lesson 5 - This I Believe - God Unit

Conclusion

Objectives

- Students will articulate their own beliefs about God.
- Students will be able to synthesize various ideas about God.

Materials

Recorders

Paper and pens/pencils

Activities

Set Induction - Reactions - 10 minutes

Begin class with reactions from students about outlining their “This I Believe” essay.

Activity 1 - This I Believe - 1 hour

Allow students time to write their essays out during class. Allow them to ask you or other students questions while working. If some students would like a quiet place to work, make sure there is somewhere they can do so. Make sure you have some kind of decent recording device. Either use a computer or a recorder that you can hook up to a computer later so students can work with each other to audio record their essays when they are finished.

Stress the importance that the essays should be a culmination, but not a final, representation of something that was sparked by the God unit. “This I Believe” was founded on the principle that the essays describe values that guide peoples’ daily lives.

Each student’s “This I Believe” should be at least three pages of double-space writing. The essay should focus on a core idea that the student lives by. For example, if a student has decided that they firmly believe in God, they can write their essay about why they believe this and include a narrative of experiences that have helped them realize their faith.

Activity 2 - My Future Jewish Plan - 20 minutes

Give students time to complete the worksheet to gather ideas for their Future Jewish Plan.

Wrap-Up - Fish Bowl - 5 minutes

To conclude the God unit, do a fish bowl activity. Give students one minute to write down a predetermined number of new or old questions or insights they have about God. Have half of the students stand in the “inner” circle and the other half on the “outer” circle. Have the students face a partner and share a question or insight before having one of the circles rotate one person to the right. Repeat until desired amount of questions or insights have been shared.

My Future Jewish Plan

God

Today you will draft ideas for the fourth section of your future plan. This worksheet is a guide to help you gather your thoughts about God.

What were you most drawn to during this unit?

To the best of your ability, summarize what you currently think about God.

What place does God have in your life? What place would you *like* God to have in your life?

To help me fulfill these goals, I will:

-
-
-
-
-
-

Have your ideas about God changed during this unit? How so?

What questions do you still have about God?

Lesson 6 – My Future Jewish Plan

Objectives

- Students will be able to articulate their future goals as a Jewish adult.
- Students will be able to appraise the personal meaning of different modes of connection.

Materials

Paper and pencils/pens (or computers/tablets)

Activities

Set Induction - Moments of Connection - 5 minutes

Just as you did during the second introduction lesson, give students a few minutes to think on their own about a time in which they felt incredibly connected to Judaism, God or other people during your class sessions. After students have had an opportunity to think for a few minutes, ask students to share what their moment was.

Activity 1 – Reflection from the Year - 15-20 minutes

Ask students to fill out an end of the year reflection sheet (*see example in the appendix*). This document will help guide the writing of their Future Jewish Plan. This reflection should include questions about area in which they have grown during the past year.

Activity 2 - My Future Jewish Plan - 1 hour

If possible, give students a chance to meet individually with the person (either the educator, clergy member or teacher) who will be around the synagogue to follow-up with students about their plan.

Using the worksheets from the conclusion of each unit, students should have an opportunity to compile their Future Jewish Plan. Encourage creativity in the format the complete plan takes. It may be helpful to provide a sample of an excellent plan. These points of action should be realistic and based around students have found to be their personal favorite ways to connect to Judaism during the course of the year. Students should use the sections they have written at the end of each unit to create a cohesive plan of which they are proud.

Lesson 7 – Final Project Ideas and/or Culmination Activity

Objectives

- Students will be able to identify a mode of connection to Judaism that they are drawn to.
- Students will be able to communicate their understanding of their own spirituality.

Materials

Computers or tablets (either the synagogue's materials or the students')

Activities

Note: The following are options for culminating projects. Any of these could be combined with a confirmation service that already exists in your school. Use the Final Project Assessment Rubric to assess students' projects.

Each project should include:

- a story (of some kind) of the student's experience with each mode of spirituality (people and community, ritual, prayer and God)
 - This is a vital component. The purpose of these projects is to allow students to show their growth throughout the year. This "story" or narrative is the time when students can convey their growth in each mode of spirituality. For example, using option 1, a student could write four short pieces to accompany four separate paintings detailing the journeys they took throughout the year.
- a working definition of spirituality
- the student's self assessment of their favorite and least favorite ways to connect to Judaism
- what the student is most excited about pursuing from their Future Jewish Plan

Together, you may choose to add additional components but these should be the foundation of the project.

Option 1 - Exhibit of Our Spiritual Journeys

Have students create an exhibit, like an art exhibit, that shows their spiritual journeys. Some students may want to create an audio visual presentation while others may be drawn to creating a piece of art that reflects where they started and where they have come to. If a student wishes to simply print out their reflections from the year and present them in an aesthetically pleasing way, that is also fine. Have students create a proposal about the kind of presentation they wish to create. Instead of you being the judge of these proposals, have students present to each other and judge the proposals based on a rubric of your creation.

Option 2 - Pecha Kucha Presentations

Pecha Kucha is a style of presentation that was founded in Japan in 2003. The premise is simple; each person gets to present 20 slides, 20 seconds per slide. The presenter normally

talks while the slides are presented and change but students can also pre-record their presentation, if they wish.

Have each student present a Pecha Kucha that details their spiritual journey. You can give more specific directions such as directing each student to pick one method that they have decided works especially well for them to connect to Judaism. Then, the student needs to create a Pecha Kucha that helps the audience understand how that mode reaches the student. The key to a compelling Pecha Kucha is that the material should be something the student is incredibly enthusiastic about and simply loves.

You could also direct students to be very broad. Let each student decide what will or will not be included in their Pecha Kucha.

Option 3 - Printed/ Online Exhibit

Another option is to help students create a printed or online edition of an exhibit of their spiritual journey. Perhaps the majority of your students enjoy writing or sketching. If your students are especially interested in technology, it may be an option to create a webpage (or a wiki) for the class to display their products. Students can create things like video blogs and link them to the online version or they could each create a two page spread that communicated their journey for a printed version.

Option 4 - Create a new project.

There is always an option to allow the class to come up with a way to both design and exhibit their spiritual journey. If you are comfortable with giving the reins to your students, allow them to design what the final project looks like and how they will show the community. You can even still create a rubric together and do peer critiques of proposals.

Final Project Assessment Rubric

	Advanced Project	Intermediate Project	Emerging Project
Clarity	Project is consistently clear to outside audiences, observer can correctly identify core values of student by viewing their project/presentation	Project is somewhat clear to outside audiences, observer is left to guess or make conclusions about the student's experiences	Only a presentation by the author could convey the message of the project, observers are confused and unable to make sense of the project
Components	Includes all of the required components for the final project (information about student's journey, definition of spirituality, etc.)	Includes most of the required components but a few are missing, without explanation	Significant omissions without explanation
Display of Growth	Project clearly displays the student's growth throughout the year through detailed self reflection of experiences and change in ideas and beliefs	Project somewhat displays the student's growth throughout the year, it may be unclear how the student grew in one or two areas of study	Project does not clearly display the student's either through superficial writings included, lack of effort or many missing narratives

Annotated Bibliography

Morinis, Alan. *Every Day, Holy Day.* **Boston: Trumpeter Books, 2010.**

Every Day, Holy Day: 365 Days of Teachings and Practices from the Jewish Tradition of Mussar is a great book to recommend to any students or teachers who are looking to reflect daily on major themes such as love, compassion and generosity. The book includes a few sentences about the theme of the day, a quote from a Jewish source, and a small space for a written reflection. This is very accessible for most ages.

Barkin, Josh, ed. *God? Jewish Choices for Struggling with the Ultimate.* **Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2008**

These are examples of excellent individual theologies written about God. Written by Jews of many ages and backgrounds, these short essays provide glimpses into personal beliefs about God.

Feinstein, Edward Rabbi. *Tough Questions Jews Ask: A Young Adult's Guide to Building a Jewish Life.* **Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003.**

This book is perfect for those young Jews who wonder why they need to attend services or whether or not God listens to prayer. Written in an accessible tone, Rabbi Feinstein's book is useful for any young adult looking to discover the answers to many of their toughest questions.

Frishman, Elyse D., ed. *Mishkan T'filah.* **New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007.**

The Reform Movement's *siddur* contains Reform liturgy on the right side of the two-page spread and alternative readings on the left side. There is an impressive amount of songs located in the back of the *siddur* as well as numerous readings about prayer throughout the *siddur*.

Kadden, Bruce, and Barbara Binder Kadden. *Teaching Tefilah.* **Denver: A.R.E. Publishing, 1994.**

The "Teaching" series of books are wonderful source books for finding ideas and guidelines for important topics in Jewish education.

Grishaver, Joel Lurie. *The All New Shema is for Real.* **Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 1993.**

This unique workbook for learning prayers is focused on helping students learn the words of prayers in order to create more meaning out of them. With its fun, hand drawn illustrations, teachers and students will both delight in using this book as a resource when learning literal meanings of prayers and the order of a worship service.

Matlins, Stuart M. *The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook: A Guide to Understanding, Exploring & Living a Spiritual Life.* **Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2001.**

This is a compilation of essays on the topic of spirituality. The essays take the reader on a journey to discover what spirituality is, where spirituality can be found, where it can enter your life, how and why you can and should make spirituality a part of your life.

Korngold, Rabbi Jamie S. *God in the Wilderness – Rediscovering the Spirituality of the Great Outdoors with the Adventure Rabbi.* New York: Three Leaves Press (Random House Inc.), 2007.

For anyone who is looking to reconnect with nature or find God in the wilderness. Rabbi Korngold shares her own journey of connecting to the outdoors and Judaism through personal stories and narratives.

Various Authors. *Emet Ve’Emunah: A Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism.* <http://www.icsresources.org/content/primarysourcedocs/ConservativeJudaismPrinciples.pdf>. The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1988.

This document is a comprehensive packet detailing the principles of Conservative Judaism. Written by a variety of authors from Conservative organizations, the statement is incredibly detailed and contains very helpful information for researching more about Conservative Judaism.

Levy, Rabbi Richard. *A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism.* <http://ccarnet.org/rabbis-speak/platforms/statement-principles-reform-judaism/>. Adopted by the CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis). Pittsburgh, 1999.

These principles are the foundation of Reform Jewish belief. The principles focus on the central tenets of Judaism; God, Torah and Israel. They include values of inclusion, *tzedakah*, performing *mitzvot* and choice through knowledge.

Prince, Michele. *A Conversation about Death and Dying.* Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health. 2012.

This handout is a helpful primer to Jewish rituals pertaining to death and grieving. There are many quotes listed on it that express Jewish beliefs about “EOL” or “end of life” treatment. The Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health is dedicated to promoting discussion among Jewish leaders and health care professionals.

Kushner, Harold S. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People.* New York: Schocken, 1981.

Rabbi Kushner wrote this book based on his own experiences with a child that was severely disabled before dying at a young age. His personal stories mixed with narratives and Jewish text provide a thought-provoking starting point for anyone trying to explore the topics of suffering and theodicy.

Main Page. *Teampedia*. Web. 10 Apr. 2012. http://www.teampedia.net/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page.

Modeled after “Wikipedia”, this is an online resource page devoted to posting different team building and community strengthening exercises.

Jens, Jessica. Web. 6 Apr. 2012. *UW Extension 4H Packet about Debriefing after Community Service Project.* 4h.uwex.edu/pubs/showdoc.cfm?documentid=22661

This packet is full of creative and fun debriefing ideas that are specifically geared towards talking about community service projects.

Dreskin, Rabbi Billy, and Dreskin, Cantor Ellen, and Shapiro, Rabbi Mark Dov. *GODShopping: An Exploration in Personal Theology.* <http://www.dreskin.us/GODshopping.DreskinDreskinShapiro.DistributionPacket.zip>. 1987.

Kessler, Rachael. *The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000.

This book is based on Kessler's experiences teaching a seminar for students. The main goal of the seminar was nourishment of students' souls. Kessler maintains that all students deserve to have these nourishing experiences at public school. Although it is written in a narrative style, it is full of useful activities perfect for teaching about spirituality.

Ritualwell. www.ritualwell.org

Ritualwell is an online resource sharing site for traditional and new Jewish rituals. Rituals are grouped by holidays, lifecycle events, healing and other useful themes. Anyone can add their own ritual to Ritualwell.

Helpful Background and Additional Resources

Aron, Isa. *Deweyan Deliberation as a Model for Decision-Making in Jewish Education.* www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/bitstreams/10159.pdf. 2009.

Yedwab, Paul. *The God Book – A Necessarily Incomplete Guide to the Essence of God.* USA: UAHC Press, 2002.

This book, part journal and part explanations of various Jewish beliefs about God, is a helpful companion to any class studying God concepts.

Charney, Ruth Sidney. *Teaching Children to Care.* Turners Falls: Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc., 2002.