

Hello unit heads!

Below you will find the second half of the Kallah Aleph education packet which I promised you. While I explained it a little over the phone, I would like to give a bit of explanation here too because you now have it in front of you.

The resources available for you in this packet, for each topic, are possible goals, texts, and thoughts to consider. All three of these are included to help get your mind working towards the main goals/concepts that exist for each story/value. The possible goals are things that you might want to make the telos of a day's program. The texts are taken from a wide variety of places, and are not necessarily things to include in your own packet or use with your campers. If you wish to, you can do so, but realize that they are primarily meant to help you. The thoughts to consider are thoughts which I believe take the ideas of the texts and push them a little farther. They are also meant to help illustrate the questions which the stories raise.

You may feel that this packet resembles a manual or handbook- indeed, that is the idea which shaped this part of the packet's creation. After selecting which parts of the stories and associated values of Genesis you would like to use to teach your campers, you will now look to this manual. Each value that I put in red in Genesis has a related page here (presented in alphabetical order, with overlapping topics sharing pages). I would like to give you an example of how *your* education packet which you will give your counselors should look.

Let's say you are the Shoresh unit head and will have 16 shiurim during Kallah Aleph. The packet that you will create will take 16 of these topics and weave them into a curriculum which you believe effectively tells the story of Genesis to your campers. Each of your 16 topics will become one page of your education packet. On each page you will need to include certain things: you will need to make a brief synopsis of the story being in question, possible goals for the shiur, possible sichah questions for the campers, and you could even include program ideas if you wish. You will also want to shortly discuss the day's value for each topic.

I think this should give you an understanding of where to go from here. Remember: our goal Kallah Aleph, overall, is for our campers to have a wonderful time learning about the story of Genesis. On top of that, I think we can see the ethical questions inherent to the stories we are telling, and I believe our campers are capable of grappling with these questions as well.

There is a story about how Jewish children were once enticed to develop a love for Jewish learning with a special trick. When these children were young and at the beginning of their studies, a small amount of honey would be placed on each page of their books. As they encountered every new shiur, there would be a sweetness to their work- they would always look forward to the next sweet lesson to be found.

While I shudder to think of the mess our campers could collectively make given such a quantity of honey, I know that the moral here *must* hold true for how we teach our campers this summer. I can guarantee you that we will not make our campers Genesis scholars this summer. That being said, if we do our work effectively, we can give each of them a taste of the sweetness of Jewish learning. If we do this, it will make them want keep turning the pages of Judaism for the rest of their lives.

B'hatzlachah (good luck)!

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Manual of Jewish Values from the Text

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1. Determine Your Own Destiny

Goals:

1. Campers will learn the importance of taking initiative for themselves.
2. Campers will see that while it's important to let others help us, sometimes we must be in charge of making our own decisions.

Texts:

Genesis 22:10-12

And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son. Then an angel of the Lord called to him from heaven: "Abraham! Abraham!" And he answered, "Here I am." And the angel said, "Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me."

Rabbi Chanoch Yeres is the rabbi of the Beit Yisrael synagogue in Yemin Moshe, Jerusalem.

I once heard...The Torah traces the ancestry of the daughters of Tzelaphchad to Yosef Hatzaddik [the Joseph we think of in the Genesis story], their great-great-grandfather. Yosef showed initiative as he remained a tzaddik [righteous man] in a hard environment of Galut [exile] - never missing a chance to strengthen his connection to the Jewish people and mitzvot...We too must learn from this initiative and not be lax, letting others do in our place what we can do by ourselves.

Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 59a-59b

Note from Ari: if you choose this lesson, please see me to read this whole story (it's short, but too long to reproduce here). I'll summarize the main idea:

You may have heard the story of the oven of Achnai. In it there is a halachic dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and the rest of his rabbinic colleagues. He was in the minority opinion in saying that the oven was OK, and continued making his argument against them despite being outnumbered. He appealed to God, and even God told the majority of opposing rabbis that Rabbi Eliezer was correct. Their response? "Lo b'shamayim hi" - "It [the path of Jewish law through Torah] is not in heaven!" The Talmud continues "Since the Torah was given at Mount Sinai, we no longer pay attention to heavenly voices, as You [God] already wrote in the Torah at Mount Sinai: 'One must incline toward the majority.' Rabbi Natan met Elijah the prophet and asked him, 'what did the Holy Blessed One do at that moment?' Elijah the prophet answered, 'God laughed [with joy] and said "My sons have defeated Me, My sons have defeated Me."'"

Thoughts to consider:

Should Abraham have chosen his own destiny here, or is this a situation where he should have followed God?

How do we know when it's time to take matters into our own hands?

How do we model initiative while simultaneously learning from others?

What can we learn from the story of the oven of Achnai, where taking initiative can even include countering what God believes is best?

2. Doing What is Right, Even if it is Unpopular

Goals:

Campers will see that doing what's right, even when unpopular, is mandated by Jewish values.

Texts:

- *Genesis 37:18-22*
 - *And they [Joseph's brothers] saw him [Joseph] afar off, and before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another: "Behold, this dreamer comes. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into one of the pits, and we will say: An evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams." And Reuben heard it, and delivered him out of their hand; and said: "Let us not take his life." And Reuben said unto them: "Shed no blood; cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but lay no hand upon him"--that he might deliver him out of their hand, to restore him to his father.*
- *Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 59a-59b*
 - Note from Ari: if you choose this lesson, please see me to read this whole story (it's short, but too long to reproduce here). I'll summarize the main idea:
 - You may have heard the story of the oven of Achnai. In it there is a halachic dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and the rest of his rabbinic colleagues. He was in the minority opinion in saying that the oven was OK, and continued making his argument against them despite being outnumbered. He appealed to God, and even God told the majority of opposing rabbis that Rabbi Eliezer was correct. Their response? "Lo b'shamayim hi"- "It [the path of Jewish law through Torah] is not in heaven!" The Talmud continues "Since the Torah was given at Mount Sinai, we no longer pay attention to heavenly voices, as You [God] already wrote in the Torah at Mount Sinai: 'One must incline toward the majority.' Rabbi Natan met Elijah the prophet and asked him, 'what did the Holy Blessed One do at that moment?' Elijah the prophet answered, 'God laughed [with joy] and said "My sons have defeated Me, My sons have defeated Me.'"
 - The continuation of the story that many people do not know, however is as follows: After being defeated Rabbi Eliezer's position, Rabbi Eliezer's colleagues voted to excommunicate him and burn all objects he had declared OK to use. After he has the news broken to him (he was not there during the vote), it is written in the Talmud "[Rabbi Eliezer] sat on the earth whilst tears streamed from his eyes. The world was then smitten: a third of the olive crop, a third of the wheat, and a third of the barley crop. Some say, the dough in women's hands swelled up. A Tanna [ancient rabbi] taught: Great was the calamity that befell that day, for everything at which Rabbi Eliezer cast his eyes was burned up..."
 - *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Eruvin, 13b*
 - *For three years, the schools of Shammai and Hillel contended, each insisting that its opinion constituted the halakhah [Jewish law]. Thereupon, a heavenly voice proclaimed: "Both of them are the words of the living God, but the halakhah is according to the house of Hillel." Why, then, should the Hillelites have been granted the decision? Because they were pleasant and humble, teaching the opinion of both sides, and always stated the house of Shammai's view before their own.*

Thoughts to Consider:

- What do we *really* learn from Reuven's actions? Does he do enough? Too little? Too much?
- What do we learn from Rabbi Eliezer's insistence upon an idea that was clearly in the minority? Should he have relented?
- What do we learn from seeing the serious repercussions of dismissing a minority?
- What do we learn from the argument between the houses of Hillel and Shammai? (consider the importance, especially from a minority opinion-even though the house of Hillel was not this- of entertaining the possibility that one could be wrong)

3. Do Not Put a Stumbling Block Before the Blind

Goals:

- Campers will learn the importance of not taking advantage of those who are vulnerable.
- Campers will see that this sort of commandment applies to them every day.

Texts:

Genesis 25:29-32

And Jacob was making soup; and Esau came in from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob: "Let me swallow, I pray thee, some of this red, red soup; for I am faint." ...And Jacob said: "Sell me first thy birthright." And Esau said: "Behold, I am at the point to die; and what profit shall the birthright do to me?" And Jacob said: "Swear to me first"; and he swore unto him.

Genesis 27:24-25; 34-35

And he [Isaac] said: "Art thou my very son Esau?" And he said: "I am."

When Esau heard the words of his father [that Jacob had stolen his blessing], he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and said unto his father: "Bless me, even me also, O my father." And he said: "Thy brother came with guile, and hath taken away thy blessing."

Leviticus 19:14

You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but you shall fear thy God: I am the Lord.

Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, Haemek Dvar on Leviticus 19:14

This [mitzvah not to curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind] is also part of the concept of maintaining harmony and the dignity of human beings one to another...and it is written in the beraita... "This is the book of the generations of mankind" (Bereishit 5:1)-Ben Azai states: This a major principle of the Torah" and the Raavad explains that he is referring to the end of the verse "[mankind] who was made in the image of God"- whom are you degrading? [when you shame another human being], whom are you cursing? [when you curse another human being]? The image of the Holy One Blessed be He" And someone who does not think this way is labeled as if the divine image is not resting upon them!"

Placing a Stumbling Block Before the Blind Person: An In-Depth Analysis, Hershey H. Friedman, PhD

This verse is somewhat perplexing: Why single out blind people for this law [of not placing stumbling blocks before them]? Was placing stumbling blocks before blind people a prevalent practice in ancient times? Furthermore, there are a large number of laws in the Bible that deal with causing injury to others, blind or not. This may explain why the Talmud felt the need to give the verse a more profound meaning. Thus, the word "blind" is interpreted metaphorically to represent any person or group that is unaware, unsuspecting, ignorant, or morally blind, and individuals are prohibited from taking advantage of them or tempting them to do wrong. It is interesting to note that there is a dispute as to whether the verse should be interpreted literally at all. Apparently, some sages felt that there was no need to have a special law against causing blind people to stumble since there are a sufficient number of laws protecting all individuals from malicious harm (see Minchas Chinuch, 232:4). Others believe in the principal that

Biblical verses maintain their literal meaning even when the sages use the oral tradition to add additional connotations.

Thoughts to consider:

When might we have put a stumbling block before the blind in our own lives?

What does Jacob do wrong in each situation? Is he sinning here, or just being cunning?

How do we know when we're not just being smart and are indeed taking advantage of someone else?

Try to soak in Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin's words: when you degrade "the blind," you are degrading God.

What can we do to protect "the blind" in our day to day lives?

4. Doing One's Best

Goals:

Campers will consider what doing one's best means

Campers will recognize that doing your best often means doing more than the bare minimum.

Texts:

- *Genesis 4:1-5*
 - *Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gained a male child with the help of the Lord." She then bore his brother Abel. Abel became a keeper of sheep, and Cain became a tiller of the soil. In the course of time, Cain brought an offering to the Lord from the fruit of the soil; and Abel, for his part, brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock. The Lord paid heed to Abel and his offering, but to Cain and his offering God paid no heed."*
- *Rabbi Zusya*
 - *The early Hassidic sage Rabbi Zusya once said, "When I reach the next world, God will not ask me, 'Why were you not Moses?' Instead, God will ask me, 'Why were you not Zusya?'"*
- *Nachmonides, Deuteronomy 6:18 (Va'asita hayashar v'hatov - ועשית הישר והטוב; and you shall do what is right and is good)*
 - *And our rabbis have a fine interpretation of this. They said: "This refers to compromise and lifnim mi-shurat ha-din (doing more than the Torah requires)." The intent of this statement is that, initially, God had said that you should observe the laws and statutes which God had commanded you. Now God says that, with respect to what God has not commanded, you should likewise take heed to do the good and the right in God's eyes, for God loves the good and the right. And this is a great matter. For it is impossible to mention in the Torah all of a person's actions toward his neighbors and acquaintances, all of his commercial activities, and all social and political institutions. So after God had mentioned many of them, such as "thou shalt not go about as a tale-bearer," "thou shalt not take vengeance or bear a grudge," "thou shalt not stand idly by the blood of thy fellow," "thou shalt not curse the deaf," "thou shalt rise up before age," and the like, God resumes to say generally that one should do the good and the right in all matters, to the point that there are included in this compromise, lifnim mi-shurat ha-din, and [matters] similar to that which they [i.e., the rabbis] mentioned concerning the law of the abutter, even that which they said, "whose youth had been unblemished," or "he converses with people gently," so that he is regarded as perfect and right in all matters.*
 - Translation from [http://www.youngisraelstl.org/articles/shulman/Modern\(6\).pdf](http://www.youngisraelstl.org/articles/shulman/Modern(6).pdf)

Thoughts to consider:

- How do Cain and Abel's offerings differ?
- Does Cain have a right to be upset with his situation?
- How does Nachmanides' interpretation of "the right and the good" relate to doing one's best?
- Is doing one's best doing "better" than regular, or should it actually be regular itself?

5. Not Embarrassing Others

Goals:

Campers will see how important it is not to embarrass others

Texts:

Genesis 37:5-10

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren; and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them: "Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves came round about, and bowed down to my sheaf." And his brethren said to him: "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren, and said: "Behold, I have dreamed yet a dream: and, behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me." And he told it to his father, and to his brethren; and his father rebuked him, and said unto him: "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down to thee to the earth?"

Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 58B

A Tanna [ancient rabbi] retold this before Rabbi Nachman son of Yitzchak: One who embarrasses another in public, it is as if that person shed blood.

<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/economic/friedman/HumanDignityJewish.htm>

If a man or woman commits bestiality, the animal must be killed (Leviticus 15-16). Clearly, the animal has not done anything wrong and is an innocent victim. Why then must the animal be killed? One reason given is that it is killed because it would be embarrassing if people would point to it and say that this is the animal that caused so-and-so to be stoned (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 54a). The Torah is even concerned with the dignity of the sinner.

The Mishna (Babylonian Talmud, Taanit 26b) describes the great days of joy on the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur when the single girls of Jerusalem would dance in the vineyards in front of the single men in order to attract a spouse. The Mishna notes that the girls went out in "white garments which they borrowed in order not to shame those that did not have the means," and could not afford nice clothing. The sages did not enact this, but the girls on their own recognized the importance of protecting the dignity of girls of limited financial means.

Thoughts to consider:

Where is the line, in Joseph's story, of not embarrassing his brothers and being true to himself?

Does Joseph, indeed, embarrass his brothers in this situation?

Is embarrassing a person in public really as bad as injuring him?

What can we learn from the first quote from the online article? How can we dialogue with the sinner without embarrassing him?

How can we be careful in matters of money not to embarrass others?

6. Showing Empathy

Goals:

Campers will consider what it means to be compassionate even to those who we do not consider our friends.

Campers will consider why all people merit some amount of compassion.

Campers will grapple with what empathy truly means- truly understanding another person's feelings.

Texts:

- *Genesis 4:13-15*
 - *Cain said to the Lord, 'My punishment is too great to bear! Since you have banished me this day from the soil, and I must avoid your presence and become a restless wanderer on earth, anyone who meets me may kill me!' The Lord said to him, 'I promise, if anyone kills Cain, sevenfold vengeance shall be taken on him.' And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest anyone who met him should kill him."*
- *Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, "Torah Concept of Empathetic Justice Can Bring Peace," The Jewish Week, (New York, 3 April 1977), pg. 19.*
 - *[Empathetic justice] seeks to make people identify themselves with each other- with each other's needs, with each other's hopes and aspirations, with each other's defeats and frustrations. Because Jews have known the distress of slaves and the loneliness of strangers, we are to project ourselves into their souls and make their plight our own.*
- *Rashi, Exodus chapter 23:9*
 - *"Do not oppress a stranger"- You know the feelings of the stranger; how painful it is for the stranger when you oppress them.*
- *Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, "The Dignity of Difference", (London: Continuum, 2002), pg. 30*
 - *David Hume noted that our sense of empathy diminishes as we move outward from the members of our family to our neighbors, our society and the world. Traditionally, our sense of involvement with the fate of others has been in inverse proportion to the distance separating us and them. What has changed is that television and the Internet have effectively abolished distance. They have brought images of suffering in far-off lands into our immediate experience. Our sense of compassion for the victims of poverty, war and famine, runs ahead of our capacity to act. Our moral sense is simultaneously activated and frustrated. We feel that something should be done, but what, how, and by whom?*

Thoughts to consider:

Does God do the right thing in protecting Cain?

If you were in God's position, and Cain had just murdered one of your beloved creations, would you have done the same thing?

What does it mean to "know the feelings of the stranger?"

How can we as Jews care for those who are further away from us, and thus harder to care for?

Do we as Jews have a greater moral obligation to help other Jews before non-Jews?

7. Generosity

Goals:

Campers will learn about what it means to be generous.

Campers will try to distinguish between: what is expected in order to be a satisfactory person and what is above the call of duty.

Campers will see themselves as part of a Jewish culture which insists that all people are expected to act righteously and be generous.

Texts:

- *Genesis 25:29-33*
 - *When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the outdoors; but Jacob was a mild man who stayed in camp. Isaac favored Esau because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah favored Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the open famished. And Esau said to Jacob, "Give me some of that red stuff to gulp down, for I am famished," which is why he was named Edom. Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." And Esau said, "I am at the point of death, so of what use is my birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.*
- *Abraham son of Rambam, Guide to Serving God, 5:1*
 - *Generosity is the bestowal of good upon one who has no claim or entitlement to it. To pay a worker their wages or a creditor their debt is not generosity, but fairness and justice. However, giving charity to the poor, bringing guests into the home, and bestowing gifts are acts of generosity.*
- *Rambam Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Matanot Aniyim 10:7-14*
 - *There are eight levels in charity, each level surpassing the other. (1) The highest level beyond which there is none is a person who supports a Jew who has fallen into poverty [by] giving him a present or a loan, entering into partnership with him,¹⁰ or finding him work so that his hand will be fortified so that he will not have to ask others [for alms].¹¹ Concerning this [Leviticus 25:35] states: "You shall support him, the stranger, the resident, and he shall live among you." Implied is that you should support him before he falls and becomes needy. (2) A lower [level] than this is one who gives charity to the poor without knowing to whom he gave and without the poor person knowing from whom he received. For this is an observance of the mitzvah for its sake alone. This [type of giving was] exemplified by the secret chamber that existed in the Temple. The righteous would make donations there in secret and poor people of distinguished lineage would derive their livelihood from it in secret... (3) A lower level than that is an instance when the giver knows to whom he is giving, but the poor person does not know from whom he received. An example of this were the great Sages who would go in secret and throw money into the doorways of the poor. This is a worthy way of giving charity and it is a good quality [to express] if the trustees of the charitable fund are not conducting themselves appropriately. (4) A lower level than that is an instance when the poor person knows from whom he took, but the donor does not know to whom he gave. An example of this were the great Sages who would bundle coins in a sheet and hang them over their shoulders and the poor would come and take them so that they would not be embarrassed. (5) A lower level than that is giving [the poor person] in his hand*

before he asks. (6) A lower level than that is giving him after he asks. (7) A lower level than this is giving him less than what is appropriate, but with a pleasant countenance. (8) A lower level than that is giving him with sadness.

Thoughts to consider:

Is what Jacob does to his brother wrong, or is it acceptable?

If what he did was acceptable, would it have been morally better to have given him the food for free?

Do we have a greater obligation to help family members (like in situations like Jacob and Esau's) than others?

Is charging someone too much for something wrong? Even if they are willing to pay for it?

What is Abraham son of Rambam trying to say? Is there a certain amount of "generosity" which is really the bare minimum to being a good person and not supererogatory?

What do Rambam's levels of tzedakah tell us generosity?

8. Giving Thanks

Goals:

Campers will recognize the enormous importance which Judaism puts on thanksgiving.

Texts:

- *Genesis 41:37-43*
 - *The plan [Joseph's plan to store grain for famine after interpreting Pharaoh's dreams] pleased Pharaoh and all his courtiers. And Pharaoh said to his courtiers, 'Could we find another like him, a man in whom is the spirit of God?' So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has made all this known to you, there is none so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my court, and by your command shall all my people be directed; only with respect to the throne shall I be superior to you.' Pharaoh further said to Joseph, 'See, I put you in charge of all the land of Egypt.' And removing his signet ring from his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph's hand; and he had him dressed in robes of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck. He had him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command, and they cried before him, 'Abrek!' Thus he placed him over all the land of Egypt."*
- *From daily Amidah, Hoda'ah prayer*
 - *We thank you, that you are Adonai, our God, and the God of our ancestors forever. You are the rock of our lives, the protector of our salvation for all generations. We thank you and shall speak your praise. For our lives held in your hand, and for our souls directed to you, and for your miracles that are with us every day, and for your wonders and goodnesses that occur at every time, evening, morning, and afternoon. You are the Good One because your mercies never end, and the Merciful One for your kindnesses never cease, we have always held our hopes for you. And for all of this your name shall be praised and raised up high, our Ruler, forever and for all times! And all life knows you and shall praise your name in truth, the God who is our salvation and our aid. Blessed are you, Adonai, Goodness is your name and it is fitting to thank you.*
- *Mishnah Pesachim 10:5*
 - *In every generation, one is obligated to see oneself as if they left Egypt, as it is said (Exodus 13), "And you will tell your child on that day, saying, 'Because of this that God did for me when I left Egypt.'" Therefore we are obliged to thank, praise, glorify, extol, exalt, beatify, bless, etc., etc. to the One who did all these miracles for our ancestors and for us: Who brought us out from slavery to freedom, from sadness to joy, from mourning to festivity, from darkness to great light, from servitude to redemption. And we say before God, Hallelujah.*

Thoughts to consider:

What is the value in giving thanks?

Is it important to appreciate what you have in order to give thanks?

Must we give thanks even at difficult times?

Leave aside thanking other people. What is the value of thanking God? Is there any?

9. Honesty

Goals:

- Campers will recognize the power that our words can have.
- Campers will realize that even small lies can have dire results.

Texts:

- *Genesis 2:16-17*
 - *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall certainly die.”*
- *Genesis 3:2-3*
 - *We may eat of the fruit of the other trees of the garden. It is only about fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said: ‘You shall not eat of it **or touch it**, lest you **may** die.*
- *Midrash Rabbah - Genesis XIX:3*
 - [Eve says] *“But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said: Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye shall certainly die” (III, 3). Thus it is written, Add not unto God’s words, lest God punish you, and you are found a liar (Prov. XXX, 6). R. Hiyya taught: “That means that you must not make the fence [around the Torah (a rabbinic concept of making Jewish practice even more stringent than the original commandment. This makes it so that if one doesn’t accomplish the ideal Jewish practice, he still has likely not broken the commandment)] more than the principal thing, lest it fall and destroy the plants. Thus, the Holy One, blessed be God, had said, For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Genesis II,17); whereas she did not say thus, but, God has said: ‘You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it’; when he [the serpent] saw her thus lying, he took and thrust her against it.” “Have you then died?” he said to her; “just as you were not stricken through touching it, so will you not die when you eat it”(ib. 5).²*

Thoughts to consider:

- How do the two version of God’s commandment differ?
- Do the very minor changes seem like they should have had a difference?
- Can you think of a time when you have changed a message a only a little, but the overall meaning changed a lot?
- How can we use language in a positive way?
- How can language have negative impacts if used irresponsibly?

10. Honoring the Dead

Goals:

Campers will understand the value of giving honor to those who have passed away.

Campers will critically encounter the subject of death in an environment which is: Jewish, mature, and respectful to those people for whom this may be a difficult topic.

Texts:

- *Genesis 23:10-13*
 - *Ephron was present among the Hittites; so Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, all who entered the gate of his town, saying, 'No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and I give you the cave that is in it; I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead.' Then Abraham bowed low before the people of the land, and spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, "If only you would hear me out! Let me pay the price of the land; accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there."*
- *Genesis 50:4-5*
 - *And when the days of weeping for him [Jacob] were past, Joseph spoke unto the house of Pharaoh, saying: "If now I have found favour in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying: My father made me swear, saying: 'Lo, I die; in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me.' Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come back."*
- *Talmud Bavli, Sotah 14*
 - *R. Hama son of R. Hanina further said: What means the text: "You shall walk after God" (Deuteronomy 13)? Is it, then, possible for a human being to walk after God; for has it not been said: "For God is a devouring fire" (Deuteronomy 4)? But [the meaning is] to walk after the attributes of the Holy One. Just as God clothes the naked, as it says, "And God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them" (Genesis 3), so do you also clothe the naked. The Holy One, blessed be God, visited the sick, for it is written: "And God appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre" (Genesis 18), so do you also visit the sick. The Holy One, blessed be God, comforted mourners, for it is written: "And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son" (Genesis 25), so do you also comfort mourners. **The Holy one, blessed be God, buried the dead, for it is written: "And God buried him in the valley" (Deuteronomy 34), so do you also bury the dead.***
- *Original source: Mishna, Pe'ah 1:1 (exists in an altered version in many different places, including in every day's service in the Mishkan T'filah- the version here is the version the Mishkan T'filah uses)*
 - ***Eilu d'varim sh'ein lahem shiur**, sh'adam ochel peroteiheim ba'olam hazeh, v'hakeren kayemet lo la'olam habah, v'eilu hen. Kibud av va'em, ugmilut chasadim, v'ashcamat beit hamidrash shacharit v'aravit, v'hachnasat orchim, uvikur cholim, v'hachnasat kalah, **ul'vayat hamet**, v'iyun t'fillah. V'hava'at shalom bein adam l'chavero; v'talud torah keneged kulam.*
 - ***These are things that cannot be measured**, of which a person eats fruit in this land, and the reward exists for him or her in the world to come, and they are: to honor father and mother, to do acts of lovingkindness, to attend the house of study daily morning and*

*evening, to welcome the stranger, to visit the sick, to celebrate with those who sanctify their love, **the burial of the dead**, to pray with sincerity, to make peace when there is strife. And the study of Torah is equal to them all.*

Thoughts to consider:

Did Abraham really need to insist on paying for the cave of Machpelah?

Was Ephron doing the right thing by offering it for free?

What do we learn from Joseph making such a large effort to bury his father according to his father's wishes?

Why should it be important for us to honor the dead?

What does it really mean to "honor" the dead?

How do we strike a balance between honoring the dead and focusing our attention on the world in which we live (ie, not being afterlife-obsessed)?

Is caring for the dead for people or God? Is this a sacred duty which we must fulfill (regardless of its effect on those people connected to the dead or the dead's prior wishes for "honor") for God's sake, or is it only necessary for its fulfillment of either the dead's wishes/the wishes of people connected to the dead?

What if the dead wishes cremation or some alternative burial- how do we as Jews handle this?

11. Identity

Goals:

Campers will see that even through difficult times, it is important to retain and be proud of our Jewish identities

Texts:

Genesis 41:50-52

And unto Joseph were born two sons before the year of famine came, whom Asenath the daughter of Poti-phaera priest of On bore unto him. And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: "for God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." And the name of the second called he Ephraim: "for God hath made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

<http://www.jkha.org/UserFiles/File/MS/Kushner%20Haggadah%20Final%20Version%204%20PDF.pdf>

The Midrash tells us that the Jewish people merited to be taken out of Egypt because "shelo shinu et shemam, ve'et leshonam, vshehayu gedurin meiarayot, velo hayu bahem delatorin"- "they did not change their names and their language, and they remained separate from immorality and did not speak lashon hara." Even while in the exile in Egypt the Jews kept their names. This shows us the pride that they had in their identity as Jews, and that even though they had to suffer tremendously they still remained proud of who they were as Jews. The fact that the Jewish people retained their language shows that they maintained their communication and interactions with each other in the way that they were brought up. They continued to socialize as Jews and retain Jewish values in their interpersonal relationships. The fact that they remained separated from immorality demonstrates the way in which the Jews carried themselves. Despite the pressures of life in Egypt they did not succumb, and remained committed to Jewish values. Finally, the fact that they did not tell tales about each other reflects the fact that they remained one cohesive unit, and did not turn on one another in times of challenge and difficulty. Despite the many difficulties to which the Jewish people were exposed they were able to retain their separate and unique identity with unity and pride

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/520294/jewish/Isnt-It-Racist-To-Believe-That-Jews-Are-Special.htm

...But when a Jew allows the Torah to guide him (rather than he guiding the Torah) when he accepts that he is here not for his own pleasure or pride or fame, but with a purpose, a mission given him by the Creator of All Things—then that Jew is able to balance both pride and nothingness in a single scale. As you wrote yourself, by recognizing that he is a Jew, he sees himself that much more a member of humanity. For what is his mission? To conquer? To dominate? No, it is to enlighten, to bear the torch lit by Abraham our father almost 4,000 years ago, until the entire world is afire with the luminance of that wisdom, until "all the world will work together as though they had one shoulder" in peace and in brotherhood.

The morning blessings that are in our Reform liturgy to say every day

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, She'asani Yisrael.

Blessed are you Adonai, our God, Ruler of the world, who made me a Jew.

Thoughts to consider:

- What value is there in assimilating into a culture instead of remaining separate?
- What value is there in remaining separate as a culture (like Jews have historically done) instead of assimilating?
- How can we, as Jews, balance the positive aspects of both assimilation and remaining proud Jews?
- What does it mean to be proud as a Jew? Does it differ from being proud as a good person? As an American? As one who holds liberal values?

12. Israel

Goals:

Campers will consider the importance of Israel (both the land and state) in our lives as North American Jews

Texts:

Genesis 12:1

Now the Lord said unto Abram: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee."

Genesis 23:11-13

'[Ephron the Hittite says] Nay, my lord, hear me: "the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee; bury thy dead." And Abraham bowed down before the people of the land. And he spoke unto Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying: "But if thou wilt, I pray thee, hear me: I will give the price of the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there."

Genesis 28:12-15

*And he [Jacob] dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood beside him, and said: "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. **The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed.** And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, **I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee back into this land;** for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."*

Genesis 49:29-31

And he [Jacob] charged them [his sons], and said unto them: "I am to be gathered unto my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying-place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah."

<http://www.yeshiva.org.il/midrash/shiur.asp?id=1693>

One striking source concerning this relationship is a rather cryptic statement in the very last Mishnah of Tractate Ketubo, "Hakol ma'alin l'Eretz Yisra'el," "Everyone may force to go up to the land of Israel..." According to the Babylonian Talmud (ibid., p. 110b), the Mishnah means that both marriage partners have the right to coerce his or her spouse to immigrate to the land of Israel. If a woman refuses her husband's request to live in Israel, he may divorce her without paying her the value of her ketubah. If a man refuses his wife's request to move to Israel, she may demand a divorce and the full payment of her ketubah.

A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism, CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis, the professional organization for North American Reform rabbis), 1999

We are committed to מדינת ישראל (Medinat Yisrael), the State of Israel, and rejoice in its accomplishments. We affirm the unique qualities of living in ארץ ישראל (Eretz Yisrael), the land of Israel, and encourage עלייה (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.
[emphasis original to text]

Thoughts to consider:

- What relevance does the notion of a biblical promise from God for the land of Israel mean to us?
 - Is this basis enough by itself for a stake in Israel?
- What importance is there to having a biblical legal claim (a purchase) to the land of Israel?
- What does the text from Talmud teach us about the importance which talmudic rabbis put on living in Israel?
- What can we learn from the CCAR's position on Israel, both state and land?
- Can one support the land of Israel without supporting the state (and vice versa)? How or why not?
- What does it mean to be a Zionist?

13. Keeping your word

Goals:

Campers will learn the importance of being true to our promises

Texts:

Genesis 29:21-25

And Jacob said to Laban: "Give me my wife, for my days are filled, that I may go in unto her." And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. And Laban gave Zilpah his handmaid unto his daughter Leah for a handmaid. And it came to pass in the morning that, behold, it was Leah; and he said to Laban: "What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?"

Note from Ari: Consider all of the importance of God's covenant with our ancestors (and by extension us). What would it mean if God broke that promise? Think of key Jewish terms like "the promised land."

<http://www.schechter.edu/AskTheRabbi.aspx?ID=114>

One of the seven Noachide commandments [the commandments that all people, even non-Jews, are expected to follow] is "Set up courts and bring offenders to justice" and according to some sources this includes not to make [a] false oath.

Thoughts to consider:

Is what Laban does justified by his excuse?

What effect does promise breaking have on those around us?

What would it mean if covenants weren't considered important to keep?

If there is commonly no punishment for breaking promises (especially when the only person who knows is the promise-breaker), what keeps us from breaking promises more frequently?

Is there good reason for whatever this factor is?

What does it mean to our understanding of keeping a promise that even non-Jews are considered responsible by Judaism for keeping promises as a commandment?

How should we relate to Kol Nidrei, the service the night before Yom Kippur where we ask God to annul all vows we've taken during the last year between us and God, in light of the importance (or lack thereof) of keeping promises?

14. Kindness to strangers

Goals:

Campers will learn the importance of not just loving our neighbor as ourselves, but also of being kind to the stranger in our midst

Texts:

Genesis 19:1-2

And the two angels came to Sodom at evening; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom; and Lot saw them, and rose up to meet them; and he fell down on his face to the earth; and he said: "Behold now, my lords, turn aside, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your way."

Exodus 23:9

Do not oppress the stranger; you know the spirit of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:9-10

When you reap the harvest of your land you shall not reap all the way to the edges of the field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Eternal, your God.

Commentary of Rabbi Moshe Alsheich on this verse:

Do not think that you are giving to the poor from your own possession or that I despised him [the poor or stranger] by not giving him as I gave you. For he is my son as you are, and his share is in your grain; it is to your benefit to give him his [underline added for emphasis] share from your property.

This is the meaning of the use of the plural form - "And when you (pl.) reap" - in the beginning of the verse and the use of the singular, "You (sing.) shall not wholly reap afterwards." At the beginning, the Torah uses the plural to designate the common ownership of the field by the owner, the poor, and the stranger, for in truth their share is in it. Additionally, the owner usually hires poor people and strangers to harvest the field, so the use of the plural form of "reap" refers to the owner and the reapers. Afterwards the order - "do not wholly reap but leave the corner" is addressed to the owner himself.

Thoughts to consider:

What do we learn from Lot taking the strangers into his house?

What does it mean that we as Jews constantly remind ourselves that we were strangers in Egypt?

How does this affect our treatment of the stranger in our midst?

What is the modern application of "leaving the corners of our fields?"

What can we learn from Rabbi Moshe Alsheich's words?

What does it mean to say that the stranger has a stake in our property?

What does it mean to say that we aren't being "generous" by sharing with the stranger (and poor), but instead giving them their fair share?

15. Love and G'milut Chasadim

Goals:

Campers will learn about g'milut chasadim, acts of loving-kindness.

Campers will learn about the contrast between *sinat chinam*, baseless hatred, and *ahavat chinam*, baseless love.

Campers will recognize a Jew's sacred obligation to love all others, regardless of religion or ethnicity.

Texts:

- *Genesis 29:17-20*
 - *Leah had weak eyes; Rachel was shapely and beautiful. Jacob loved Rachel; so he answered [to Laban about what he would like for payment for work], "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "Better that I give her to you than that I should give to an outsider. Stay with me." So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.*
- *Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 49B*
 - *Our masters taught: loving-kindness is greater than charity in three ways. Charity is done with one's money, while loving-kindness may be done with one's money or with one's person. Charity is done only to the poor, while loving-kindness may be given both to the poor and to the rich. Charity is given only to the living, while loving-kindness may be shown to the living and the dead.*
- *Mishnah, Pirkei Avot 1:2*
 - *Shimon the Righteous was a member of the Great Assembly. He used to say, "By three things the world exists: On the Torah, on worship and on acts of loving-kindness." ("Al shloshah d'varim ha'olam omed- al hatorah, v'al ha'avodah, v'al g'milut chasadim")*
- *HaRav Kook*
 - *"There is no such thing as 'ahavat chinam' - groundless love. Why groundless? He is a Jew, and I am obligated to love and respect him. There is only 'sinat chinam' - hate without reason. But 'ahavat chinam?' Never!"*
 - *'The 2nd temple was destroyed because of sinat chinat, baseless hatred. If this is true, it will only be rebuilt by ahavat chinam- groundless love.*

Thoughts to consider:

- What can we learn about love from Jacob's story?
- Should love be the basis for acts of loving-kindness, or should acts of loving-kindness be able to exist without this?
 - Do we act with acts of loving-kindness with even those we don't love?
- Regarding HaRav Kook's comment, are we only obligated to love other Jews, or do we have a greater obligation to all people?
- Do we "owe" anyone acts of loving-kindness, or are they acts which are above basic responsibility?

16. A Loving Family Relationship/Honoring One's Parents

Goals:

- Campers will see the importance of promoting a positive family atmosphere
- Campers will see the importance of honoring their parents.

Texts and thoughts for A Loving Family Relationship:

Genesis 37:3-4

And Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was a son of his old age; and he made him a fine woolen coat. And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, so they hated him, and they could not speak with him peacefully.

Elijah Ben Solomon Zalman, the Gaon of Vilna, From a letter to his family, mid-18th century

Let the teacher not impose their yoke heavily on the children, for instruction is only efficient when it is conveyed easily and agreeably. Give the children small presents of money and the like to please them, as this helps their studies.

A note from Ari: Remember- we are commanded to teach our children (among other places, in the V'ahavta). When we raise children (both as parents, and also at camp!), we are doing just this.

Philip Larkin

*They **ck you up, your mum and dad.
They may not mean to, but they do.
They fill you with the faults they had
And add some extra, just for you.*

*But they were **cked up in their turn
By fools in old-style hats and coats,
Who half the time were sappy-stern
And half at one another's throats.*

*Man hands on misery to man.
It deepens like a coastal shelf.
Get out as early as you can,
And don't have any kids yourself*

Thoughts to consider:

- What did Israel do wrong as a father?
- What could Joseph have done to make his family situation better?
- What does Elijah Ben Solomon Zalman mean to us as Jewish role models?
- What can we learn from Philip Larkin's sentiments? What can we do to make the children we work with grow up differently? What is a child's place/responsibility in this situation?

Texts and thoughts for Honoring One's Parents:

- *Joseph's reunion with his father in Genesis, abridged:*
 - *Genesis 45:9*

- *Hasten and go up to my father, and say to him, 'So said your son, Joseph: "God has made me a lord over all the Egyptians. Come down to me, do not tarry.*
 - *Genesis 45:23*
 - *And to his father he sent the following: ten he donkeys carrying of the best of Egypt, and ten she donkeys carrying grain, bread, and [other] food, for his father for the way.*
 - *Genesis 46:28-30*
 - *He had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph, to point the way before him to Goshen. So when they came to the region of Goshen, Joseph ordered his chariot and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel; he presented himself to him and, embracing him around the neck, he wept on his neck a good while. Then Israel said to Joseph, "Now I can die, having seen for myself that you are still alive."*
 - *Genesis 47:29-31*
 - *When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have now found favor in your eyes, now place your hand beneath my thigh, and you shall deal with me with lovingkindness and truth; do not bury me now in Egypt. I will lie with my forefathers, and you shall carry me out of Egypt, and you shall bury me in their grave." And he said, "I will do as you say." And he said, "Swear to me. " So he swore to him, and Israel prostrated himself on the head of the bed.*
- http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Relationships/Parents_and_Children/Childrens_Responsibilities_to_Parents.shtml
 - *The classic text defining the specific requirements to fulfill [the biblical commandments] "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12) and "You shall revere your mother and your father" (Leviticus 19:3) can be found in the [Babylonian] Talmud [abbreviated as BT], Kiddushin 31b. "Revere" is defined as not sitting or standing in a parent's designated place and not contradicting a parent, while "honor" is defined as feeding parents, clothing parents, and helping them come in and out.*
 - *The idea of keeping a parent's dignity as the essence of the mitzvah is borne out by a passage in the Jerusalem Talmud, which says that it is possible to feed one's parent succulent hens and still inherit hell, while a person can make his parent work on a grindstone and still inherit paradise. The passage continues to explain that the child gives a father succulent food, but when the father asks where the food is from, the son answers "Quiet, old man. A dog eats quietly, so you eat quietly." This son inherits hell. However, the second case involved the son who worked at the grindstone. When the king summoned grindstone workers to the palace to endure back-breaking work, the son told the father to take the son's place at the family's own grindstone and to work, so that the father would not suffer or be treated in an undignified manner before the king. This son inherits paradise.*

Thoughts to consider:

- How can we honor our parents in modern times?
- Are there ever any times when honoring our parents could involve going against their wishes?
- Why should we honor our parents? What does this accomplish?
- What can we take from the 2nd myjewishlearning text?

17. Modesty

Goals:

1. Campers will learn the importance of being modest in their day-to-day lives

Texts:

- *Genesis 37:5-10*
 - *And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren; and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them: "Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves came round about, and bowed down to my sheaf." And his brethren said to him: "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren, and said: "Behold, I have dreamed yet a dream: and, behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me." And he told it to his father, and to his brethren; and his father rebuked him, and said unto him: "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down to thee to the earth?"*
- *Talmud Bavli, Yevamot 79a*
 - *This nation [Am Yisrael] is distinguished by three characteristics: They are merciful, bashful and benevolent. 'Merciful', for it is written, And show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee. 'Bashful' [or modest], for it is written, That God's fear may be before you. 'Benevolent', for it is written, That God may command God's children and God's household etc. Only he who cultivates these three characteristics is fit to join this nation.*
- *Midrash Numbers Rabba 1:3*
 - *Referencing the verse, "And the Lord spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai in the Tent of Meeting." Before the Tent of Meeting was set up, God spoke with him from the bush, as it is said, "And God called unto him out of the midst of the bush" (Exodus 3:4). Then, "And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying..." (Exodus 12:1). God also spoke to him in Midian, as it is said, "And the Lord said unto Moses in Midian." (Exodus 4:19). At Sinai also God spoke to him, as it is said, "And the Lord spoke unto Moses in Mount Sinai, saying..." (Leviticus 25:1). As soon, however, as the Tent of Meeting was set up, God thought to Godself, "Modesty is a beautiful thing, as it is said, "And walk modestly with your God." (Micah 6:8), and so God then spoke to him in the Tent of Meeting.*

Thoughts to consider:

Was Joseph, indeed, too immodest in this situation, or did he act appropriately?

If Joseph was too modest, how could he have still related his dreams but not been immodest?

What does this tell us: how can we use our gifts but still show modesty?

What does it mean that the Talmud considers modesty one of the three hallmark traits of Judaism?

What do we learn (in the Midrash) from seeing that even God sees it necessary to be modest?

18. The Special Jewish Duty to Follow Moral Commandments

Goals:

Campers will recognize the supreme Jewish obligation to moral commandments.

Campers will see Jewish moral obligations as universally valid (as in, not “just” Jewish), but able to be expressed in a unique way through Judaism.

Texts:

- *Genesis 37:21-22*
 - *But when Reuven heard it, he tried to save him from them. He said, “let us not take his life.” And Reuven went on, “Shed no blood! Cast him into that pit out in the wilderness, but do not touch him yourselves”- intending to save him from them and restore him to his father.*
- *Rabbi Michael Broyde, Human Rights in Judaism: Cultural, Religious, and Political Perspectives, pg. 273.*
 - *The Jewish tradition...is a duty based legal system; rights are not the fundamental coin in Jewish law. While it is true that almost all "rights" can be expressed as "duties", and the reverse as well, it is equally clear that the legal systems make statement about their core values when they express legal norms in one form or another. In Jewish law, the core value is a legal "duty."*
- *CCAR Pittsburgh Platform, 1885 (the founding platform of Reform Judaism)*
 - *We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only its moral laws, and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.*
- *Kohelet Rabbah (Vilna), Chapter 9*
 - *Of Abba Tahna (or Tehinna) the Pious (Hasida) the following story is told in Midrash, Koheleth Rabba, IX, 7: He came back to town with his heavy bundle upon his shoulder, on a Friday afternoon, shortly before the beginning of the Sabbath, when he met a disease-stricken man unable to move, who asked him to have pity on him and bring him into town where he could be attended to. He pondered for a while whether he could afford to lay down his bundle, containing the provisions for his house-hold for the Sabbath and attend to the sick man, thereby leaving his people without food, or whether he should provide for his household and leave the unfortunate man in his perilous condition. He decided to aid the sick man, and after he had brought him to a safe place, he went back to get his bundle. Meanwhile it had grown dark. The Sabbath had approached, and people who saw him carrying his bundle on his shoulder, wondered, saying: "Is this father Tahna the pious?" He felt conscience- stricken at having violated the sanctity of the Sabbath, when a miracle happened. The sun came forth shining again, and a voice was heard saying: "Go, eat your bread in joy, and drink your wine with gladness of heart, for God has accepted favourably your work." Here again the title Abba was a tribute given by the people to the saint.*

Thoughts to consider:

- Did the Pittsburgh Platform and its proponents go too far?

- Is there any value in ritual commandments (especially ones which have no clear practical benefits)?
- How do Reform Jews, moved by moral obligation, differ from a simple moral philosophy?
 - If it's all about the morality, why be Jewish?

19. Partnership

Goals:

Campers will recognize the power of working together, whether with another person or with God.

Texts:

- *Genesis 1:31*
 - *And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*
 - This is referring to the creation of man. It is worth noting that the creation of man is the only thing which good deems “very good”, and not just “good.”
- *Genesis 2:18-24*
 - *And the Lord God said: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper for him...” And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and God took one of his ribs, and closed up the place with flesh instead thereof. And from the rib, which the Lord God had taken from the man, God made a woman, and brought her unto the man. And the man said: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.*
- *Genesis 24:63-67*
 - *And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide; and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, there were camels coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she alighted from the camel. And she said unto the servant: “What man is this that walks in the field to meet us?” And the servant said: “It is my master.” And she took her veil, and covered herself... And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. And Isaac was comforted [from the death of] his mother.*
- *Pesikta Rabbati 44:5*
 - *A king had a son who had gone astray from his father a journey of a hundred days. His friends said to him: “Return to your father.” He said: “I cannot.” Then his father sent to him to say: “Return as far as you can, and I will come to you the rest of the way.” So God says, “Return to me, and I will return to you.” (Malachi, 3:7)*
- *Babylonian Talmud Kethuboth 62b*
 - *Raba stated: The Rabbis relied on Rabbi Adda ben Ahabah and act accordingly at the risk of [losing] their lives. Thus Rabbi Rehummi who was frequenting [the school] of Raba at Mahuza used to return home [to his wife only] on the Eve of every Day of Atonement. On one occasion he was so attracted by his subject [that he forgot to return home]. His wife was expecting [him every moment, saying] “Come already. Come already.” As he did not arrive she became so depressed that tears began to flow from her eyes. He was [at that moment] sitting on a roof. The roof collapsed under him and he was killed.*

Thoughts to consider:

What is it that is so important about partnership, that it manifests so many times in the Torah?

How is one's partnership with God similar to her partnership with other people?

How is it different?

How does the dynamic of a love-partner differ from a platonic partner?

What defines the People of Israel's partnership with Shabbat?

What can we learn from the Pesikta Rabba's notion on cooperation in partnership?

What does the Rabbi Rehumi's story teach us about each person's significance in a partnership?

20. Power of Words

Goals:

1. Campers will see how powerful their words, even as youth, really are.
2. Campers will recognize that their words can be used for both good and bad, and learn how to guard them from evil.

Texts:

Genesis 1:3

And God said: 'Let there be light.' And there was light.

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman: "Yea, hath God said: Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" And the woman said unto the serpent: "Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said: "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." And the serpent said unto the woman: "Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 33

One of the ancient rabbis sent his servant to the market with the general instruction, "Buy the best thing there that one can eat!" The servant returned with a tongue. Later, the rabbi asked him to go back to the market to buy the worst thing that one could eat. The servant again came back with a tongue. "What is with you?" asked the rabbi. "Here, I've asked you to buy both the best and the worst, and you come back with a couple of tongues." "That's true," responded the servant. "After all, cannot a tongue be one of the best things in the world and an evil tongue be one of the worst?"

Joseph Telushkin, Words that Hurt, Words that Heal

In a small Eastern European town, a man went through the community slandering the rabbi. One day, feeling suddenly remorseful, he begged the rabbi for forgiveness and offered to undergo any penance to make amends. The rabbi told him to take a feather pillow from his home, cut it open, scatter the feathers to the wind, then return to see him. The man did as he was told, then came to the rabbi and asked, "Am I now forgiven?" "Almost," came the response. "You just have to do one more thing. Go and gather all the feathers." "But that's impossible," the man protested. "The wind has already scattered them." "Precisely," the rabbi answered. "and although you truly wish to correct the evil you have done, it is as impossible to repair the damage done by your words as it is to recover the feathers."

Classic Hassidic Tale, taken from Haim Shalom,

חזרת דפי לימוד ומדריכים למורים סוגיות "בין אדם לחברו" בתרבות היהודית

The Ba'al Shem tov was visited by the people of a nearby village. "Master," they said.

"Help us. Our town faces disaster and is to be destroyed. The Ba'al Shem Tov decided he would go to a particular place in the woods that had special significance to him. He would light a fire there, in a most particular way, that seemed to help. And he would say a very particular prayer. After that, the BESHT would offer his own spontaneous

prayer: Ribono shel olam (Master of the Universe!) - I beseech you to come to our aid at this perilous moment. And surely, the disaster was averted and the town was saved.

In the next generation The Maggid of Mezrich faced a similar problem – another town was in risk of destruction so he tried to recall the teaching of his late mentor. He had some of the parts, but not all. He was able to go back to that same place in the woods, and to say the same particular prayer - but along the way, the secret of the fire was lost. He said ribono shel olam - I know that our ancestors in such times would turn to you in a special way. I am afraid that I can no longer light the particular fire, but I have come to the special place, and said the special prayer. May these be enough.” And he too returned and the crisis was averted and the town was saved.

A generation later, Rabbi Moshe Lieb of Sassov faced the same problem and he too tried to recall the teaching of his mentor. He too could not remember all the essential ingredients. The fire was long ago lost, and though he still knew the prayer, by now he was far from the land of his teachers - he couldnt go to the same sacred spot in the woods. He sent a message to his friends back in Mezrich and Medzhbedzh to go to that place on his behalf - but no one there, either, could recall the place. So he recited the prayer, and then said ribono shel olam - I know that our ancestors in such times would turn to you in a special way. I am afraid that I can no longer light the particular fire, or go to the special place, but I have said the prayer. May this be enough.” And, he too returned and the crisis was averted and the town was saved.

In the fourth generation, by the time of Rabbi Israel of Rizhyn, the great Rizhnitzer Rebbe, the troubles for the Jews in Eastern Europe had only intensified. His town faced great calamity and he knew what he had to do. But by now, not only was the secret of the fire lost, not only did he not know the sacred spot in the woods, but even the language of the prayer was lost. So he thought and thought, and finally, he sat down in his own special place, and said: ribono shel olam - I know that our ancestors in such times would turn to you in a special way. The knowledge of this is lost -- I can no longer light the particular fire, or go to the special place, or even say the particular prayer. But I do have one thing, and that is the story of my ancestors’ deeds. May this be enough.” And it was enough. He too returned and the crisis was averted and the town was saved.

Thoughts to consider:

How can we give our words the power to create, as God does in the first section from Genesis?

How do our words gain the ability to destroy, as we see in the second piece from Genesis?

What can we learn from the story from Midrash? How do we control our speech, something that has both positive and negative abilities, so that it remains a positive force?

What do we gain from the second story? What does it mean that our words have lasting effect?

What can we garner from the last story?

21. Pride (and its Excesses)

Goals:

Campers will grapple with understanding when pride is a positive Jewish value and situations where it is positive.

Campers will recognize that there are times when pride can get out of control.

Texts:

- *Genesis 34:25-29*
 - *On the third day, when they were in pain, Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, brothers of Dinah, took each his sword, came upon the city unmolested, and slew all the males. They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword, took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away. The other sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the town, because their sister had been defiled.*
- *Traditional Aleinu (most reform Jews say everything but the bold line)*
 - *Aleinu l'shabeiach la'adon hakol, latet g'dulah l'yotzeir breishit. Shelo asanu k'goyey ha'artzot, v'lo samanu k'mishpachot ha'adamah. Shelo sam chelkeinu kahem, v'goraleinu k'chol hamonam. **Shehem mishtachavim la'hevel varik, umitpal'lim el el lo yoshia.** Va'anachnu korim, umishtachavim, umodim lifnei melech malchei hamlachim, hakadosh baruch hu.*
 - *It is our obligation to praise the Lord of everything, to give greatness to the one who causes creation. That God didn't create us like the non-Jews of the lands, and didn't place us with the other families of the earth. That God didn't make our lot like theirs and our destiny like all their multitudes. **For they bow to vanity and emptiness, and pray to a non-redeeming God.** And we bend at the knee, bow, and give praise before the Ruler of all Rulers, the Holy One, blessed be God.*
- *The Duties of the Heart, by Rabbi Bachye, tr. by Edwin Collins, [1909]*
 - *There are two kinds of pride. Pride in the bodily powers and in corporeal and material things; and pride in spiritual and mental qualities, such as wisdom, and in good works. All pride of the former kind banishes humility. For all pride in the things of the world implies contempt for the Lord of all good, and ignorance of the instability of these things, and the rapidity with which they may depart, and shows that the proud man thinks he is, himself, his own benefactor, and that it is his own wisdom and his own power that has gained him the acquisitions of which he is proud The admirable kind of pride is that, when the wise man prides himself on his wisdom, and the just man on his works, he should acknowledge, in these things, the great beneficence of the Creator, and should rejoice on account of these gifts. Such pride in these gifts will then induce him to increase them and make good use of them, and to be meek with all around him; and to rejoice with his fellows, and be eager for their glory, and to cover over their folly, and to speak in praise of them, to love them, and to rejoice over them, and to be careful of their honour. Then, also, his own good deeds will appear so small in his eyes, that he will be continually striving to increase them. He will be humble because of his sense of inability to attain to the realisation of his ideal in respect to them, and he will be full of gratitude to God for giving him these precious qualities. Such pride is helpful, and not harmful, to humility. (pg. 39)*

- *Many whose intention is to do right and serve God are not on their guard against things that destroy this service, and the cause of destruction enters, without their perceiving whence it comes. Thus, one of the Pious (Chassideem) said to his pupils: "If you had no iniquities, I should fear for you that which is greater than iniquities." They said to him: "What is greater than iniquities?" He replied: "Pride and haughtiness." Man may strive to awaken his intelligence, so that it will make clear to him what the Creator has planted within his mind, by practising the praise of truth, contempt for falsehood, the choice of righteousness, and departure from iniquity. (pg. 32)*

Thoughts to consider:

How do we know when we have crossed a line from good pride to bad pride?

Does something like the Aleinu, a feature of our daily liturgy, cross this line?

How can we both be proud of who we are and not commit supremacism?

This is especially relevant for campers who live in heavily non-Jewish areas: how can we live as proud Jews and still interact healthily with our non-Jewish friends/neighbors?

22. Repentance and Forgiveness

Goals:

- Campers will see repentance as an act which should happen more than only for Yom Kippur.
- Campers should recognize that we all must learn from our wrongs.
- Campers will recognize the importance in Judaism of the forgiveness process.
- Campers will recognize that it is important to grant forgiveness to those who sincerely seek it.

Texts:

- *Genesis 9:9-15*
 - *"And I [God], behold I am setting up My covenant with you [Noah] and with your seed after you. And with every living creature that is with you, among the fowl, among the cattle, and among all the beasts of the earth with you, of all those who came out of the ark, of all the living creatures of the earth. And I will establish My covenant with you, and never again will all flesh be cut off by the flood waters, and there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said: "This is the sign of the covenant, which I am placing between Me and between you, and between every living soul that is with you, for everlasting generations. My rainbow I have placed in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Myself and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I cause clouds to come upon the earth, that the rainbow will appear in the cloud. And I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and between you and between every living creature among all flesh, and the water will no longer become a flood to destroy all flesh.*
- *Genesis 33:3-4*
 - *Jacob himself went on ahead and bowed low to the ground seven times until he was near his brother. Esau ran to greet him. He embraced him and, falling on his neck, he kissed him; and they wept.*
- *Genesis 44:20-34*
 - *And we said unto my lord: "We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; **and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him...**" "Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad is not with us; seeing that his soul is bound up with the lad's soul; it will come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die; and thy servants will bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying: If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father for ever. **Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.** For how shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me? lest I look upon the evil that shall come on my father."*
- *Ramban, Hilchot Tshuvah, 2:1*
 - *[Who has reached] complete tshuvah [repentance]? A person who confronts the same situation in which he sinned when he has the potential to commit [the sin again], and, nevertheless, abstains and does not commit it because of his tshuvah alone and not because of fear or a lack of strength.*
- *Ezekiel 18:5-24*

- *Moreover, if the wicked ones repents of all the sins that they committed and keeps all My laws and does what is just and right, they shall live; they shall not die. None of the transgressions they committed shall be remembered against them; because of the righteousness they have practiced, they shall live. Is it my desire that a wicked person shall die? -- says Adonai, God. It is rather that they shall turn back from his ways and live. So, too, if a righteous person turns away from righteousness and does wrong, practicing the very abominations that the wicked person practiced, shall that person live? None of the righteous deeds that they did shall be remembered; because of the treachery that person practiced and the sins they committed -- because of these, that person shall die.*
- *Talmud Bavli, Ta'anit 20*
 - *Our Rabbis have taught: A man should always be gentle as the reed and never unyielding as the cedar. Once R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon was coming from Migdal Gedor, from the house of his teacher, and he was riding leisurely on his donkey by the riverside and was feeling happy and elated because he had studied much Torah. There chanced to meet him an exceedingly ugly man who greeted him, 'Peace be upon you, Sir'. He, however, did not return his salutation but instead said to him, 'Reika (Worthless!), how ugly you are. Are all your fellow citizens as ugly as you are?' The man replied: 'I do not know, but go and tell the craftsman who made me, "How Ugly is the vessel which you have made".' When R. Eleazar realized that he had done wrong he dismounted from the donkey and prostrated himself before the man and said to him, 'I submit myself to you, forgive me'. The man replied: 'I will not forgive you until you go to the craftsman who made me and say to him, "How ugly is the vessel which you have made".' He [R. Eleazar] walked behind him until he reached his native city. When his fellow citizens came out to meet him greeting him with the words, 'Peace be upon you O Teacher, O Master,' the man asked them, 'Whom are you addressing thus'? They replied, 'The man who is walking behind you.' Thereupon he exclaimed: 'If this man is a teacher, may there not be any more like him in Israel!' The people then asked him: 'Why'? He replied: 'Such and such a thing has he done to me. They said to him: 'Nevertheless, forgive him, for he is a man greatly learned in the Torah.' The man replied: 'For your sakes I will forgive him, but only on the condition that he does not act in the same manner in the future.' Soon after this R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon entered [the Beit Hamidrash] and expounded thus, A man should always be gentle as the reed and let him never be unyielding as the cedar. And for this reason the reed merited that of it should be made a pen for the writing of the Law, Tefillin and Mezuzot.*
- *Rabbi Jose Bar Hanina, Yoma 8a*
 - *R. Jose b. Hanina said: When one tries to appease another, he need not try more than three times, as it is written [Genesis 1:17]: Oh, I pray Thee, forgive, I pray Thee, the trespass of thy brothers, and their sin, for evil have they done unto Thee, and now we pray Thee, forgive ("pray Thee" repeated three times). And if the offended person is dead, he should bring ten persons to his grave and say: I have sinned against God and him who lies here.*

Thoughts to consider:

- Looking at Noah's situation, Jacob and Esau's reunion, and Joseph's brothers' atonement, what can we learn about the essential nature of atoning and forgiving in Judaism?
- How do we know when repentance is necessary?
- What does it mean to truly repent? (look particularly to the text from the Ramban)

- Can one ever fully repent for certain things? Is there anything that a person could do that would put them beyond the ability of repentance?
- To whom do we owe repentance when we sin? God? Our fellow person? When is the right time to grant someone forgiveness?
- Re Rabbi Jose Bar Hanina's text, is three attempts to receive forgiveness enough? Too much?
- Is there any "real" value in achieving forgiveness other than the practical, utilitarian goals it might achieve?
- What does it mean to be as gentle as the reed and as unyielding as the cedar?

23. Respect for all Genders and Sexualities

Goals:

Campers will recognize the importance of fully respecting other people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender

Texts:

- *Genesis 19:7-9*
 - *And he (Lot) said: "I pray you, my brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters that have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes; only unto these men do nothing; forasmuch as they are come under the shadow of my roof."*
- *Genesis 34:1-4*
 - *Now Dinah, the daughter whom Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, chief of the country saw her, and took her and lay with her by force. Being strongly drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and in love with the maiden, he spoke to the maiden tenderly. So Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl as a wife."*
- *Rambam, Laws of Marital Relations 3:19*
 - *Even though a father has permission [from the Torah] to betrothe his daughter while she is a minor to anyone that he wants, it is not right for him to do this. Rather, the sages have commanded that a man should not betrothe his daughter while she is a minor. Rather, she must become an adult and say, "To so-and-so I wish to be married."*
- *CCAR [the governing organization for Reform Rabbis in the US] On Ordination of Women as Rabbis*
 - *Whatever may have been the specific legal status of the Jewish woman regarding certain religious function, her general position in Jewish religious life has ever been an exalted one. She has been the priestess in the home, and our sages have always recognized her as the preserver of Israel. In view of these Jewish teachings and in keeping with the spirit of our age and the traditions of our conference, we declare that woman cannot justly be denied the privilege of ordination*
- *CCAR Resolution on Same Gender Officiation*
 - *The Ad Hoc Committee on Human Sexuality issued a report in 1998 which included its conclusion, by a committee majority of 11 with 1 abstention, that "kedushah [a requirement for Jewish marriage] may be present in committed same gender relationships between two Jews and that these relationships can serve as the foundation of stable Jewish families, thus adding strength to the Jewish community." The report called upon the CCAR to support all colleagues in their choices in this matter, and to develop educational programs.*
 - *RESOLUTION*
 - *WHEREAS justice and human dignity are cherished Jewish values, and*
 - *WHEREAS, in March of 1999 the Women's Rabbinic Network passed a resolution urging the Central Conference of American Rabbis to bring the issue of honoring ceremonies between two Jews of the same gender to the floor of the convention plenum, and*

- *WHEREAS, the institutions of Reform Judaism have a long history of support for civil and equal rights for gays and lesbians, and*
- *WHEREAS, North American organizations of the Reform Movement have passed resolutions in support of civil marriage for gays and lesbians, therefore*
- *WE DO HEREBY RESOLVE, that the relationship of a Jewish, same gender couple is worthy of affirmation through appropriate Jewish ritual, and*
- *FURTHER RESOLVED, that we recognize the diversity of opinions within our ranks on this issue. We support the decision of those who choose to officiate at rituals of union for same-gender couples, and we support the decision of those who do not, and*
- *FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the CCAR to support all colleagues in their choices in this matter, and*
- *FURTHER RESOLVED, that we also call upon the CCAR to develop both educational and liturgical resources in this area.*

Thoughts to consider:

What can we glean from the CCAR resolutions?

How/Is this different from loving your neighbor as yourself?

What can we take from Shechem's role in this story? Remember: he "loved" Dinah, but still hurt her.

In the same way, what do we take from Lot's story? He was trying to protect his guests, the angels, but was willing to trade his daughters' safety for theirs.

24. Shabbat

Goals:

Campers will learn that while Judaism values hard work, it also values our weekly rest: Shabbat

Texts:

Genesis 2:1-3

And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished God's work which God had made; and God rested on the seventh day from all God's work which God had made. 3 And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it God rested from all God's work which God in creating had made.

Weekly shabbat liturgy

V'shamru v'nei yisrael et hashabbat, la'asot et hasabbat l'dorotam b'rit olam. Beini uvein evein bnei yisrael ot hi l'olam, ki sheishet yamim asah Adonai et hashamayim v'eit ha'aretz, uvayom hashvi'i shavat vayinafash.

And the children of Israel shall keep the Shabbat, to make the Shabbat an everlasting covenant for all their generations. Between Me and between the children of Israel, this covenant shall be forever, for six days God made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day God rested and was refreshed.

<http://www.shemayisrael.co.il/parsha/kahn/archives/yisro71.htm>

On Shabbat, we add extra portions in the Bircat Hamazon. Towards the end of Bircat Hamazon we say, "The Merciful One, God shall let us inherit the day that is totally Shabbat and rest for eternal life." ("Harachaman, Hu yanhileinu yom shekulo shabbat umnuchah l'chayei ha'olamim.") This alludes to the fact that Shabbat somewhat resembles the World to Come, a world of spirituality and peaceful rest. Our sages (Osiyos of Rabbi Akiva) relate that at the time of the Revelation, God said to the Jewish people, "My children, I have a precious item in the world and I am going to give it to you for all eternity, if you will accept My Torah and keep My commandments." The Jewish people responded and said, "Master of the world, what is this special item that You will give us if we keep Your Torah?" When God answered that God was referring to the World to Come, they said, "Master of the word, could You show us a sample of the World to Come?" To this God answered and said, "The Shabbat! This day is one-sixtieth of the World to Come, a world that is totally Shabbat."

The first stanza of the Lechah Dodi, a song of praise sung weekly during Kabbalat Shabbat

*"Shamor v'zachor b'dibor echad,
Hishmianu, El ham'yuchad
Adonai echad u'shmo echad
L'sheim ultiferet v'lithilah"*

*"Keep and remember [the Shabbat] in a single utterance,
Cause us to hear, O' singular God
Adonai is one and God's name is one
For the sacred name, and the glory, and the praise."*

Thoughts to consider:

- Is it important, even today, for Jews to keep Shabbat?
 - If so, in what ways do you feel it should be kept?

- What do we do as modern Reform Jews for Shabbat?
 - Do you do similar things at camp and at home?
 - Is there anything from camp you wish you could take home?
 - Is there anything from home you wish you could take to camp?
- In the Torah, there are two versions of the ten commandments. In one we are commanded to “keep” the Shabbat and in the other we are commanded to “remember” the Shabbat. How do we balance these tasks? Is one more important than the other?

25. Struggling With God

Goals:

1. Campers will learn that struggling with God, both in the big issues and in everyday life, is essential to Judaism

Texts:

Genesis 32:25-29

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. And he said: "Let me go, for the day breaketh." And he said: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." And he said unto him: "What is thy name?" And he said: "Jacob." And he said: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 59a-59b

Note from Ari: if you choose this lesson, please see me to read this whole story (it's short, but too long to reproduce here). I'll summarize the main idea:

You may have heard the story of the oven of Achnai. In it there is a halachic dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and the rest of his rabbinic colleagues. He was in the minority opinion in saying that the oven was OK, and continued making his argument against them despite being outnumbered. He appealed to God, and even God told the majority of opposing rabbis that Rabbi Eliezer was correct. Their response? "Lo b'shamayim hi" - "It [the path of Jewish law through Torah] is not in heaven!" The Talmud continues "Since the Torah was given at Mount Sinai, we no longer pay attention to heavenly voices, as You [God] already wrote in the Torah at Mount Sinai: 'One must incline toward the majority.' Rabbi Natan met Elijah the prophet and asked him, 'what did the Holy Blessed One do at that moment?' Elijah the prophet answered, 'God laughed [with joy] and said "My sons have defeated Me, My sons have defeated Me."'

<http://www.mishpacha.org/wrestling.shtml>

The Talmud itself – the corpus of law and learning at the center of Judaism as defined in the centuries following the destruction of the Second Temple – is about challenging and questioning. It is a book of questions and arguments, not answers, which can only be studied through a process of questioning. This sort of interactive study of Talmud – or the Torah, or other sacred texts – is, to some thinkers, the central religious act in Judaism.

For contemporary Jews, Judaism is adopted by choice rather than the inevitable result of their birth. This makes questioning more important, and Judaism embraces this living struggle with the holy.

Thoughts to consider:

- What do we learn from having one of our major patriarchs be known for wrestling with God?
- While our modern struggle with God probably isn't physical in the same way as Jacob's, we still must struggle with God. In what ways do we do so?
- What do we learn from the Talmudic source about struggling with God?

Must God always be correct in our struggles with God?

What are some contemporary examples of people needing to struggle with God?

What are some examples of people failing to struggle with God when maybe they should have?

How do we know we aren't struggling with God in situations where God's commandments are truly correct?

26. Taking Care of The World – Tikkun Olam

Goals:

- Campers will explore what it means to take care of nature.
- Campers will come up with ideas of how they can be proactive in the protection of nature.
- Campers will understand what it means to “repair the world,” "l'takein et ha'olam."

Texts:

- *Genesis 1:26-28*
 - *And God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and **let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.**" And God created man in God's own image, in the image of God created God him; male and female created God them. And God blessed them; and God said unto them: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and **replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the earth.**'*
- *Genesis 6:17-20*
 - *And I [God], behold I am bringing the flood, water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which there is the spirit of life, from beneath the heavens; all that is upon the earth will perish. And I will set up My covenant with you [Noah], and you shall come into the ark, you and your sons, and your wife and your sons' wives with you. And of all living things of all flesh, two of each you shall bring into the ark to preserve alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the fowl after its kind and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing upon the ground after its kind; **two of each shall come to you to preserve alive.***
- *Blessing to repair the world*
 - *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melech ha'olam, shenatan lanu hizdamnut l'takein et ha'olam.*
 - *Blessed are you Adonai, our God, Ruler of the world, who gave us the opportunity to repair the world.*
- *Deuteronomy 20:19-20*
 - *When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you may not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city? Only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed; you may cut them down for constructing siegeworks against the city that is waging war on you, until it has been reduced.*
- *Avot D'rabbi Natan 31B*
 - *Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai ... used to say: if you have a sapling in your hand, and someone should say to you that the Messiah has come, stay and complete the planting, and then go to greet the Messiah.*

Thoughts to consider:

- What does it mean to have "dominion" over the earth? What responsibility does it imply?
- What does it mean to "replenish" the earth and to "subdue" it?

- What does Noah's role in the flood teach us about modern humanity's ideal relationship with nature?
- Could/should Noah have done more to help save nature (ie, does humanity have a place saving nature against what might be interpreted as natural progress and God's will)
 - What does this mean in relation to saving endangered species?
- What does it mean to "repair" the world and not just to protect it?
- What does it mean to have an "opportunity" to repair the world and not an "obligation?"

27. Taking Responsibility

Goals:

- Campers will recognize that, as humans, we are inclined to do wrong.
- Campers will learn that, despite our inclination to do evil that inevitably will end with occasion wrongdoing, we must take responsibility for our wrongs.

Texts:

Genesis 3:8-13

They heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day; and the man and his wife hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. The lord God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" He replied, "I hear the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." Then God asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat?" The man said, "The woman you put at my side-she gave me of the tree, and I ate." And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done!" The woman replied, "The serpent duped me, and I ate."

<http://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/Torah+Corner/88510/Bais+HaVaad+Parsha+Perspectives:+Tazria.html>

...one is often held liable for indirectly causing damage to another even when done unintentionally, as long as he was negligent to some degree. For example, the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat, 306; 4-7) discusses a coin inspector that was hired by a merchant to advise him on accepting a certain coin from a prospective buyer as being genuine. The Shulchan Aruch there rules that if he recommended the coin as being genuine and it was later discovered to be counterfeit, he would be responsible to reimburse the merchant for his loss, provided that other professionals in the field would have picked up on the coins nature. This type of damage is referred to as garmi, (lit. causing)...

Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 54

Whoever can prevent their household from committing a sin but does not, is responsible for the sins of their household; whoever can prevent the people of their city, is responsible for the sins of their city; if the whole world, one is responsible for the sins of the whole world.

Thoughts to consider:

- How could Adam and Eve better have taken responsibility for their actions?
- Could Adam and Eve have been doing the appropriate thing by trying to explain their behavior?
- What does it mean that our tradition makes one have legal responsibility for their wrongdoing? Is this anything more than basically satisfactory to morality?
- What can we learn from the sentiment present in the Talmud Bavli?

28. Trust

Goals:

1. Campers should learn what it means to truly trust in someone or something.
2. Campers should grapple with when it is and isn't wise to trust.

Texts:

- *Genesis 12:1-4*
 - *The Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse the one who curses you; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you.' Abram went forth as the Lord had commanded him, and Lot went with him."*
- *The Duties of the Heart, by Rabbi Bachye, tr. by Edwin Collins, [1909]*
 - *Of all things the most necessary to him who would serve God, * is trust in God. If one does not trust in God, one trusts in something, or in some one, else. And he who quits his trust elsewhere than in the One Eternal, removes God and His ruling providence from over him, and puts himself in the hands of that thing or person in whom he trusts.*

Thoughts to consider:

Why does Abram receive a reward from God? Is it for trusting God?
 Should one always trust God, or is there a time when one should "wrestle with God?"
 When should one trust her neighbors, and when should she remain skeptical?

29. The Value of Life and Do Not Murder

Goals:

Campers will see how valuable Judaism considers life.

Campers will see life as of inestimable value in their own lives.

Campers will see the commandment of not murdering as a logical extension of the Jewish value for life.

Texts:

- *Genesis 4:7-8*
 - *[God said to Cain] “But if you do not do right, sin couches at the door; Its urge is toward you, yet you can be its master.” Cain said to his brother Abel [“let us go to the field”] and when they were in the field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him.*
- *Genesis 22:9-12*
 - *They arrived at the place of which God had told him. Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son. Then an angel of the Lord called to him from heaven: “Abraham! Abraham!” And he answered, “Here I am.” And the angel said, “Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from me.”*
- *Midrash Rabbah - Genesis LVI:7*
 - *“And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of Heaven, and said: Abraham, Abraham.” R. Hiyya taught: This is an expression of love and encouragement. R. Liezer said: [The repetition indicates that God spoke] to him and to future generations: There is no generation which does not contain men like Abraham, and there is no generation which does not contain men like Jacob, Moses, and Samuel. “And the angel said: lay not thy hand upon the lad, etc.” Where was the knife? Tears had fallen from the angels upon it and dissolved it. ‘Then I will strangle him,’ said he [Abraham] to the angel. “Lay not they hand upon the lad,” was the reply. Let us bring forth a drop of blood from him,’ he pleaded. “Neither do thou any thing to him,” the angel answered - ‘inflict no blemish upon him. “For now I know”- I have made it known to all-that thou lovest Me, “And thou hast not withheld” And do not say, “All ills that do not affect one's own person are not ill,” for indeed I ascribe merit to thee as though I had bidden thee sacrifice thyself and thou hadst not refused.*
- <http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/5761/vayera61.htm>
 - *On the surface, it would seem that G-d's command to Abraham that he bring his beloved son Isaac as a whole burnt offering demonstrates the ultimate power on the part of a father, the power to even sacrifice his son's life to a higher ideal. But this perception is radically reworked in the Torah commentary of Rav Joseph Ibn Kaspi (1279-1340) who maintains that the real test of Abraham lay not in the command of G-d that he sacrifice Isaac but rather in the second command of the angel that he stay his hand from the sacrifice. We must remember, suggests Ibn Kaspi, that the social reality of Abraham is rooted in the blood-drenched days of the god Moloch, where child sacrifice was the normative expression of religious commitment. Hence, Abraham must very well have been expecting his newfound G-d of justice and righteousness to require that same act of*

devotion. From this perspective, the true test of Abraham's dedication was not his willingness to obey G-d and sacrifice but rather in his ability to heed the angel and stop the sacrifice even when the knife was but an inch from Isaac's throat: "Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do anything to him."(Genesis 22:12)

- http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Judaism/pikuach_nefesh.html
 - *In Judaism, human life is essential and so pikuach nefesh, the obligation to save a life in jeopardy, is considered a major value to uphold. This obligation applies to both an immediate threat and a less grave danger that has the potential of becoming serious. Pikuach nefesh is derived from the biblical verse, "Neither shall you stand by the blood of your neighbor" (Leviticus 19:16). According to pikuach nefesh a person must do everything in their power to save the life of another, even donate bodily organs. Ovaday Yosef, the former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, ruled that one may donate an organ to a person in critical need, so long as it does not put the donor's life at risk*
- *Mishna, Sanhedrin 4:5*
 - *Therefore man was created singly, to teach you that whoever destroys a single soul of Israel, scripture accounts it as if he had destroyed a full world; and whoever saves one soul of Israel, scripture accounts it as if he had saved a full world.*
- *Talmud Bavli Yoma 82a*
 - *Nothing stands before [the duty of] saving life except for idolatry, incest, and murder.*
- *Exodus 20:13/Deuteronomy 5:17 (the ten commandments)*
 - *Thou shall not kill.*

Thoughts to consider:

- Should Abraham have risked his son's life in this situation? What if God hadn't stopped him?
- Was there even a chance that God could have not stopped him? Is this level of complete trust still praiseworthy?
- Why is life so valuable in our tradition?
- How does Judaism function without a solid conception of an afterlife?
- What does it mean when the Mishna says 'to destroy one life is as if to destroy a whole world?'
- Having read what the Talmud Bavli says about what a person can't do to save a live, what would you consider not worth doing to save a life?
- If we believe what Rav Kaspi has to say, what can we take from this story- what do we learn when God goes out of God's way to demonstrate that murder isn't what we do as Jews?
- How do we know the difference between murdering and killing? Is there really even an significant difference?
- What should we take from the Midrash Rabbah when it says "and do not say, 'all ills that do not affect one's own person are not ill?'"

30. “And You Shall Love your Neighbor as Yourself,” We Are All Responsible For One Another/Am I My Brother's Keeper, and Taking Care of Those in Need

Goals:

- Campers will learn what it means to take care of our fellows.
- Camper will understand our *obligation* to take care of those in need.
- Campers will view it as our sacred duty as Jews to take care of those who are in need.
- Campers will learn that while we must care for Jews, we must also be certain to care for the non-Jewish among us.
- Campers will see social issues as central to the discussion of being a Reform Jew.

Texts:

- *Genesis 4:9*
 - *And the Lord said unto Cain: "Where is Abel thy brother?" And he said: "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?"*
- *Genesis 18:20-23*
 - *Then the Lord said [to Abraham] "The outrage of Sodom and Gemorroh is so great, and their sin so grave! I will go down to see whether they have acted altogether according to the outcry that has reached Me; if not, I will take note." The men went on from there to Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Abraham came forward and said, "Will you sweep away the innocent along with the guilty?"*
- *Genesis 21:17-19*
 - *God heard the cry of the boy, and an angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heeded the cry of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him." Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the skin with water, and let the boy drink*
- *Talmud Shavuot 39a*
 - *"Kol Yisrael areivim zeh bazeh," "All Israel is responsible for one another"*
- *Mishna, Pirkei Avot 2:16*
 - *Lo alecha hamlachah ligmor, v'lo atah ben chorin l'hibatel mimenah*
 - *It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task. Yet, you are not free to desist from it.*
- *Babylonain Talmud, Avodah Zara 17B*
 - *Rav Huna said: He who occupies himself only with studying Torah acts as if he has no God, as it says, "Israel has gone many days without a true God..." What is meant by "without a true God?" That one who occupies himself only with Torah is like a person who is Godless.*
- *Babylonain Talmud, Gittin, 61A*
 - *Our Rabbis taught: We sustain the non-Jewish poor with the Jewish poor, visit the non-Jewish sick with the Jewish sick, and bury the non-Jewish dead with the Jewish dead, for the sake of peace.*
- *CCAR Pittsburgh Platform (the original platform of beliefs put out by the Reform Movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis)*

- *In full accordance with the spirit of the Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relations between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.*
- *Exodus Rabbah 31:12*
 - *There is nothing in the world more grievous than poverty; it is the most terrible of all sufferings. Our sages have said: If all troubles were assembled on one side and poverty on the other, [poverty would outweigh them all].*
- *Proverbs 31:8*
 - *Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.*

Thoughts to consider:

- Why could it be appropriate in the story of Sodom and Gemorrah for Abraham to challenge God, but it not have been appropriate for Abraham to challenge God during “lech lechah?”
- Should Abraham have challenged God here? Why or why not?
- If so, did Abraham do enough?
- Does Abraham do enough in this story to care for Hagar and Ishmael?
- What does it mean to say that all Israel is responsible for one another? Is this true?
- How do we know when we have done our part of “the task?” (As in Mishna, Pirkei Avot)
- What does it mean that only studying Torah and not acting to better the world is wrong?
- What is the significance of this in a religion where the study of Torah is one of the highest (if not *the* highest) values?
- What does it mean to love one’s neighbor as oneself?
- How can we care for both our Jewish “family” and non-Jews? Does our “family” come before others?
- What can we do, as individuals, to fulfill the words of the Pittsburgh Platform, to solve “the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society?”
- What place does socialism (as in socialized healthcare) play in a Jewish take on morality?