

Partners with God

Kallah Aleph's education theme, *Partners with God*, is multifaceted. The educational experience which we will design for our campers will follow an arc- the arc of humanity's collaborative union with God.

We will begin by looking at the basic details of partnerships and God (given that these are the basic elements of the human-Divine partnership!) From there, we will continue our overview of the Human-Divine relationship to its very beginning- with creation. From there, we will move forward throughout this partnership all the way to the modern day. In doing so, we will trace it from creation, the beginning of the world and God's charge to humanity to be stewards for all of creation, through to revelation (in the subjects of "covenant" and "*mitzvot*"), and onward toward the ongoing labor of bringing redemption (in topics of "*tikkun*.")

By following the cycle of creation, revelation, and redemption¹, I believe that we can craft for our campers a truly rewarding and educational summer.

While there are some topics included here which may be more difficult for the younger age groups to handle, I believe that every topic on this list can be appropriately calibrated to any age of camper. Further, I believe that each of these topics is pertinent to full development of our campers as young Reform Jews. If we properly teach this curriculum to them, I'm willing to bet that they'll leave as much more informed Jews, and that they will have a far richer conception of their personal partnership with God.

Additionally, you'll notice that not all days explicitly mention partnership per se. This is because it should be taken as a given that every day should ask the question: How does this contribute to/define our partnership with God. Even on days when this is not overtly stated, this should be taken as an important goal to achieve.

¹ Of course, the campers need not realize this progression. Not that it should be entirely neglected; however, the use of this model was meant to be structural and not directly-pedagogical.

Usage of this packet

Unit heads, what you have in front of you is a relatively large packet. Please, though, don't freak out! This packet is meant to HELP YOU, not hurt you. I've striven in it to make all of my rationales as clear as possible (and should they be unclear, ask me- I will do everything in my power to assist you.) **This packet should be a resource to you: No need to recreate the wheel in making your packets, I put this packet together for you to use in your own packets. Copy and paste as you wish!**

That being said, here are your goals in creating your packets:

1. Choose from among the "days" in this packet enough days to have 1 shiur/limud for each of your educational days.
 - a. Choose your days wisely- I have extra days in here to allow you room for choice. That is where your educational art comes in: What do *you* want your campers to learn most?
2. Calibrate the topics in this packet to your age group. While all topics are suitable for all of the units, how you pitch a given topic to a particular age varies. You are the expert in your age group this summer: How do you feel your campers will react best to your topics?
 - a. (I recommend that you never underestimate your campers' potential: Rare is the child who never wants to be challenged!)
3. Ensure that what you are putting together in your packet is helpful to your staff- after all, your packets are for them! Please make certain that you have **at least 2 sample program ideas per day**. Additionally, ensure that your packet is visually manageable: **Use different fonts/styles for headings vs. for body text**. Additionally, **start each day of your ed. packet on a new page**. Get the general idea? You want your packet to be user-friendly!

Last details: Here's what you've got in front of you now. On each day's page, you have 5 things:

1. A title
2. A brief summary of the day's purpose and main ideas
3. A goal
4. "Thoughts to consider" – a section of guiding thoughts for your day

5. “Texts” – texts which I think add insight to the topic. Feel free to use these when you like them. Feel equally free to toss them out when you don’t!

Your picking of topics is not fully without restraint. In order to hold this theme together, please incorporate:

- a) Days 1, 2, 7, and 21
- b) At least one from each of the following groupings (i.e. days 3 *and/or* 4; you may *not* have neither 3 nor 4, etc.):
 - a. Days 3 and 4
 - b. Days 5 and 6
 - c. Days 8, 9, 10
 - d. Days 11 and 12
 - e. Days 13 and 14
 - f. Days 15, 16, 17, and 18
 - g. Days 19 and 20

Other than that, your creativity is the only limit to your work: Let’s make shiur/limud a pleasure for the summer. GUCI has one of the best educational programs in the URJ camping system, and your hard work ensures that success!

If you have any questions, you should know where to find me:

ariballaban@gmail.com
(513) 203-8553

I really appreciate your work- I value it more than I can express!

--Ari Ballaban

Contents

Day 0: Partnership – All Camp Shiur #1	5
Day 1: Asking Questions about Our Partner: Who is Our God?	6
Day 2: Why Might Humanity Seek a Partnership with God?	9
Creation	11
Day 3: Every story has a beginning... The Creation of the Earth and Humanity	12
Day 4: The Fruits of the Tree: The Responsibility of Knowledge	14
Covenant	16
Day 5: God and Humanity Create a Covenant: Abraham and Moses.....	17
Mitzvoth	19
Day 6: What’s a <i>Mitzvah</i> ?.....	20
Day 7: Guidance from God on Being a Good Person?	22
Day 8: Reform Judaism: Individual Autonomy in Mitzvot	24
Day 9: Ritual Commandments and Moral Commandments: Discerning the Difference.....	26
Tikkun – The Ongoing Partnership with God	28
The Basics of <i>Tikkun Olam</i> and <i>Tikkun</i>	29
Day 10: Tikkun: What Does it Mean/What is its History?	30
Day 11: What do We Mean When We Say Tikkun Olam?	32
Between Humans and the Earth	33
Day 12: What is Our Responsibility to the Earth.....	34
Day 13: How Do We Change Our World?	36
Between Humans and Others	38
Day 14: Other-Regard in Judaism.....	39
Day 15: Kindness to Strangers.....	41
Day 16: Being a Role Model.....	43
Day 17: Going Above and Beyond the Call of Duty – Lifnim Mishurat Hadin	45
Between Humans and God	47
Day 18: Is Prayer <i>Tikkun</i> ?.....	48
Day 19: Does God Need Us? Do We Need God?.....	50
Day 20: Expressing the Partnership: How Does Our Relationship with God Make Us Better People?	52

Day 0: Partnership – All Camp Shiur #1

This all camp shiur will help to frame the summer. In it, we will strive to define partnership as a general concept (not necessarily only in relationship to the human-Divine partnership.) By doing so, we will make certain that each of the following days asks the implicit question: In what way does this contribute to, related to, detract from, or even not connect with the human-Divine partnership

Our goal in this task will be to arrive at a definition of partnership which roughly resembles: A relationship between at least two parties in which each party chooses to be involved in a relationship for the sake of perceived benefit. The benefit need not necessarily be for each entity's self (i.e. one entity could enter the partnership for selfless reasons)- the partnership must simply yield a perceived gain of utility overall.

Goal(s):

1. To introduce the theme of GUCI shiur/limud for the session.
2. To consider what the meaning of partnership is.

Day 1: Asking Questions about Our Partner: Who is Our God?

In our all camp shiur the day before, the campers will have been exposed to the summer's educational theme and they'll also have asked questions regarding the basic nature of partnership. On this day, the first day of education in units, there is an inherent challenge. In addition to introducing the unit's vehicle and breaking the campers up into *sichah* groups, you must also address the day's particular topic: "Who is our God?" There is, of course, no individual correct answer to this question- every Jew is entitled to construct his own conception of the God-idea! That being said, if we are to speak of the human-Divine partnership, it sure helps if we can attempt to explain in what sort of Divine entity we believe. That is the core purpose of this day- it helps to set up the rest of the session.

Goal(s):

1. To analyze beliefs about God in order to better understand the human-Divine partnership.

Thoughts to consider:

- Do you believe in God?
 - If not, why not? If so, why so?
 - Is there room for uncertainty?
- If you believe in God, what kind of God do you believe in? Describe this God.
- Is it necessary for everyone to believe in the same kind of God?

Texts:

- http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/beliefs/beliefs_1.shtml
 - Jews believe that there is a single God who not only created the universe, but with whom every Jew can have an individual and personal relationship.

They believe that God continues to work in the world, affecting everything that people do.

The Jewish relationship with God is a covenant relationship. In exchange for the many good deeds that God has done and continues to do for the Jewish People...

 - The Jews keep God's laws
 - The Jews seek to bring holiness into every aspect of their lives.
- http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/913.pdf
 - One of the central prayers in Judaism, the Shema, expresses the most profound tenet of Judaism: the belief in monotheism. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one" (Deut.6:4). Within the Hebrew Bible the struggle against polytheism is a dominant and continuing theme...

- For Jews, God is both the transcendent creator of the universe, above, beyond, and more than the universe, and at the same time an active and personal presence in the world linked by a perpetual covenant with the Jewish people. One of the ways the Talmud addresses this apparent paradox is to make the analogy of the relation of God to the world with the relation of the soul to the body:

“As God fills the whole world, so also the soul fills the whole body. As God sees, but cannot be seen, so also the soul sees, but cannot be seen. As God nourishes the whole world, so also the soul nourishes the whole body. As God is pure, so also the soul is pure. As God dwells in the inmost part of the Universe, so also the soul dwells in the inmost part of the body.” (Berakot 10a)...
- Throughout the Hebrew Bible God is described as having neither a beginning nor an end...
- Judaism teaches that God is a God of both justice and mercy.
- <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/jewfaq/beliefs.htm>
 - The closest that anyone has ever come to creating a widely-accepted list of Jewish beliefs is Maimonides' thirteen principles of faith. Maimonides' thirteen principles of faith, which he thought were the minimum requirements of Jewish belief, are: 1)God exists, 2)God is one and unique, 3)God is incorporeal, 4)God is eternal, 5)Prayer is to be directed to God alone and to no other, 6)The words of the prophets are true, 7)Moses' prophecy is better than any other prophet's, 8)The Written Torah (first 5 books of the Bible) and Oral Torah (teachings all recorded in the Talmud and other ancient writings, all summarized in Maimonides' Mishneh Torah) were given to Moses, 9)There will be no other Torah, 10)God knows the thoughts and deeds of men, 11)God will reward the good and punish the wicked, 12)The Mashiach [Messiah] will come, 13) The dead will be resurrected.

As you can see, these are very basic and general principles. Yet as basic as these principles are, the necessity of believing each one of these has been disputed at one time or another, and the liberal movements of Judaism dispute many of these principles.
- http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Theology/God/About_God/Must_I_Believe.shtml, Daniel Septimus
 - How important is belief in God? Can one be a "good Jew" without believing in God? These questions--articulated in this way--are relatively modern ones. However, while normative Judaism has always been God-centered, some thinkers--both ancient and modern--have conceptualized Judaism in ways that make beliefs about God less central...

At the heart of Wettstein's article [an article referenced by the current passage] is a quote by Abraham Joshua Heschel that echoes the thoughts about the non-centrality of belief mentioned above. According to Heschel, "Awe rather

than faith is the cardinal attitude of the religious Jew. In Biblical language, the religious man is not called 'believer,' as he is for example in Islam (*mu'min*) but *yare hashem* (one who stands in awe of God)."

Working off of this notion, Wettstein claims that at the heart of the Jewish religious sensibility is a distinctive attitude toward life, a major component of which is awe. Various aspects of Jewish religious practice--prayer, Torah study, the rhythms of the Jewish calendar--are meant to facilitate this attitude.

Wettstein acknowledges that the object of this awe is God. He does, however, propose that this awe--and the meaningful life it helps to create--is also available to a naturalist who rejects a supernatural God. To demonstrate this point, he compares this "religious naturalist" to a non-fundamentalist theist, one who believes in God and Judaism, but doesn't understand every biblical story literally.

Such a person does not believe that the creation story in Genesis reflects actual events. God didn't necessarily create the world in six 24-hour periods nor did God actually rest on the seventh day.

This, however, does not negate the meaning of the story. "The notion of Sabbath, as creative retreat from creative engagement with the world, as spiritual renewal," writes Wettstein, "will be unaffected." The imagery, religious resonances, and meaning of the story are available to this non-literalist even though she does not believe it to be factually true...Nevertheless, on an official level, most Jews are uncomfortable with the idea of a Judaism without God. This is true for the liberal movements as much as it is for more traditional Jews. In 1994, the UAHC (the synagogue council of the Reform movement) rejected an application for membership from a synagogue that practiced "Judaism with a humanistic perspective" because the synagogue's principles deviated from "the historic God-orientation of Reform Judaism."

Day 2: Why Might Humanity Seek a Partnership with God?²

On this day, you must encourage the campers to delve deeper into the human-Divine partnership's background. At this point in the session, we'll have already striven to define partnership and God- we've now reached the point where we may appropriately ask "why?" Why does humanity seek the human-Divine partnership? That is the question with which campers should engage on this, and it's one which they should be asking in the back of their heads as the summer unfolds.

Goal(s):

1. To ask questions of the purpose of the human-Divine partnership.

Thoughts to consider:

- Given definitions of partnership which we will have discussed during the opening all camp shiur, how is the human-Divine relationship properly termed a partnership?
- What do we provide for God? What does God provide for us?
- Do we have any limitations for what we may provide to God?
- Does God have any limitations for what God may provide to us?
- Given this, what does humanity stand to gain in a human-Divine partnership?

Texts:

- http://www.thejewishweek.com/arts/books/are_you_there_god_its_us_jews, Eric Herschthal
 - "Without God playing a central role, Judaism will collapse," said David Wolpe, a Conservative rabbi who leads the Sinai Temple in Los Angeles. (He is also a regular contributor to The Jewish Week and topped this year's Newsweek list.) He dismissed the idea of preserving religious rituals as merely valuable "traditions" — a common description since "Fiddler on the Roof," if not Mordecai Kaplan.

"In the end, traditions are hard to maintain unless there's an attempt to understand the traditions in a deep way, and that God is central to those traditions..."

And yet she comes to the same conclusion as rabbis like Ain and Wolpe. "I think belief in God will be more important in the future than in the past," she

² This is a precursor to the later conversation on day 20. While it's fine if some of the same conversations happen on these two days, please try to ensure that there is a difference between them if you use them both! In fact, it could be quite interesting to see how certain campers' perspectives have changed over the summer in some regards. That being said, these are two different conversations: the first is "Why does humanity seek a relationship with God?" The second is of "What are the distinctive elements of the human-Divine relationship?" These are similar but different questions. May

said in an interview. Given the difficulties other secular Jewish identities have had sustaining themselves in the past century — Zionist, Yiddish socialist, secular humanist Judaism — she believes a more traditional Jewish identity, one centered on religious practices and belief in God, will become more important.

- <http://reformjudaismmag.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=1426>
 - **What might that [why would God create the world were God truly all-perfect and without need] be?**

I believe that being the “one and only” made God very lonely. Desirous of companionship, God, with the best of intentions, created a “perfect” world and judged it as “very good.” But when faced with issues of competition, rivalry, rejection, and perceived betrayal, God demanded total obedience. When humankind failed to meet God’s exacting standards, God became enraged and reacted by cruelly flooding the entire world, almost wiping out all of creation.

The Torah is full of stories about God’s fierce anger, rush to judgment, and cruel punishment. God needs to be taught many things, including the difference between obedience and love.³

³ N.B. I do not know that I or necessarily many would agree fully with Rabbi Bloom’s idea of God here- that God grows in response to humanity and that humanity can teach God how to better be God. That being said, he has a very elegant concept of the human-Divine partnership which raises terrific questions: I encourage you to read the whole article- it’s short, I promise!

Creation

As you can see in the table of contents, shiur/limud this summer will go through a variety of categories: creation, covenant, mitzvot, and tikkun. Our overall topic, of course, is partnership with God. To teach this, we will follow the trajectory of creation, revelation (the receiving of God's law), and redemption. This cycle works strongly in Jewish tradition, and it should help us form a cohesive message on the human-Divine partnership which exists. Because the story of the world begins with creation, this is where we will start our study for this session.

Day 3: Every story has a beginning...The Creation of the Earth and Humanity

This day is when we will fully begin our exploration of the human-Divine partnership. Because we wish to analyze the partnership in its entirety, we begin all the way at the beginning with creation. Not only does God's act of creation enable the existence of partnership between God and humanity, but it is in creation that God demonstrates a desire to reach out to humanity for the sake of partnership. On this day, you should introduce the campers to the idea that God begins the human-Divine partnership through creation (particularly toward the end of creation with the creation of humanity- it's not necessary to focus on the earlier days in this lesson.)

Goal(s):

1. To see the beginnings of the human-Divine partnership in creation.

Thoughts to consider:

- What does the beginning of the human-Divine relationship tell us about our partnership with God?
- Does humanity owe God something for God's part in creation?
- What obligations does one have to care for what he or she creates?
- How does creating community at GUCI mirror aspects of an ideal human-Divine relationship?

Texts:

- Genesis 1:26-31:
 - 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 creeps upon the earth.' And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them; and God said unto them: **'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creeps upon the earth.'** And God said: 'Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed--to you it shall be for food; and to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is a living soul, [I have given] every green herb for food.' And it was so. 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.
- Genesis Rabbah, 8:6
 - He [God] created him [Adam] with due deliberation: He first created his food requirements, and only then did He create him.
- Genesis Rabbah 9:12

- Me'od is identical with Adam (man), for the letters of both are identical.⁴ Thus it is written, *“and God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good,”* i.e., *“and, behold, Adam (man) was good.*

⁴ The discussion going on here is related to the spelling of “Adam” and “very” in Hebrew- they use the same three Hebrew letters: aleph, dalet, and mem. What is relevant in this piece is that the rabbis are saying that God essentially called humanity good.

Day 4: The Fruits of the Tree: The Responsibility of Knowledge

On this day, we will continue to survey the beginnings of the human-Divine relationship and demonstrate how such beginnings lead us to where we are now. Whether or not one takes the Garden of Eden story literally (and I certainly don't believe that one must do so), the notion that as one gains more wisdom he becomes more obligated to those around him is potent. Our communal obligation arises from our ability to act with good intention, and one can only act altruistically if he recognizes opportunities for altruism. The purpose of this day is to help our campers see the need for acting properly as a result of our knowledge; we will place this discussion within the context of the Garden of Eden story.

Goal(s):

1. To recognize that a big piece of the human-Divine partnership comes about because humanity has the mental capacity to be partners with God

Thoughts to consider:

- How does the possession of knowledge impact a person's life?
- Can one be a partner with God without actively striving to be so?
- How can personal reflection enhance our relationship with God?
- What ethical obligation do we have to form a relationship with God due to our ability to critically think?

Texts:

- Genesis 3:4-5, 7, 22-23
 - And the serpent said unto the woman: 'You shall not surely die [if you eat from the tree]; for God knows that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes will be opened, and you will be as God, knowing good and evil...'
And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves girdles...
And the LORD God said: 'Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.' Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.
- CCAR: A Centenary Perspective
 - *Our Religious Obligations*: Religious Practice -- Judaism emphasizes action rather than creed as the primary expression of a religious life, the means by which we strive to achieve universal justice and peace. Reform Judaism shares this emphasis on duty and obligation. Our founders stressed that the Jew's ethical responsibilities, personal and social, are enjoined by God. The past century has taught us that the claims made upon us may begin with our ethical obligations but they extend to many other aspects of Jewish living, including: creating a Jewish home centered on family devotion: lifelong study; private prayer and public worship; daily religious observance; keeping the Sabbath and the holy days: celebrating the major events of life; involvement with the synagogues and

community; and other activities which promote the survival of the Jewish people and enhance its existence. Within each area of Jewish observance Reform Jews are called upon to confront the claims of Jewish tradition, however differently perceived, and to exercise their individual autonomy, **choosing and creating on the basis of commitment and knowledge.**

Covenant

Once God has established the basis for the human-Divine relationship, creation, humanity finds itself at the outset of the partnership between God. With enactment of covenants, God cements that God desires not just a relationship with humanity, but a *partnership*. The spirit of partnership is one of the main things which drive the Jewish focus on engagement with the world. While some religions have some focus on asceticism and withdrawal from earthly foci, Judaism encourages the individual to encounter the world and interact with it in a positive way.

The covenant with God which Jews have traditionally seen themselves as possessing might be understood as the glue which binds humans to the present world. One of the most intriguing parts of this situation, though, is that it is in no way one-sided. Instead, we find that at times God seeks out humanity and strives to make a covenant with people. At other times, though, humanity finds itself reaching out to God in order to make such a covenant themselves. This next unit should allow our campers to better see themselves as partners in a tangible relationship.

Day 5: God and Humanity Create a Covenant: Abraham and Moses

Day 5 deals with one foundation of the human-Divine partnership, the covenants of Abraham and Moses. Studying these covenants may lead us to interesting places. The Abrahamic covenant is one based primarily on blind faith. When God tells Abraham, “*lekh lekha me’artzch’a, u’mi’moladetcha, u’mi’beit avicha*” “go from your land, and from your native country, and from the house of your father,” Abraham listens, full of faith. The Mosaic covenant, too, is an example of a profound trust: As Moses receives the law from God, he trusts that a binding contract is being made with God as a partner. As we will study on later days, the basic terms of this contract include things like the *mitzvot*.

On this day, we’ll have our campers consider what it means to have God and humanity come together in the hopes of partnership, and what it takes of each side to make such a partnership succeed. It is also worth pushing ourselves to ask on this day whether forming this covenant was more of God reaching out to humanity or of humanity reaching out to God (or both or neither!).

Goal(s):

1. To consider what it means to have God and humanity unite with a covenant.
 - i.e. How can *we* practically participate in this partnership?

Thoughts to consider:

- What does it mean to accept a covenant?
What can we learn from the examples which Abraham and Moses set?
 - In what ways do they work with God in partnership?
- In what ways do we reach out to God in partnership in the modern day?
- What does it mean to strive to be in a relationship with God?
- What are the implications of God reaching out to humanity for the sake of partnership?
- How might the text below from “Gateway” help Jews understand one way to become partners with God?
- *Must* one accept the partnership with God?

Texts

- Genesis 12:1-3
 - Now the LORD said unto Abram: 'Get yourself out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and be

you a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curses thee will I curse; and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'

- Genesis 17:4-7, 15-16
 - 'As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. Neither shall your name any more be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee. **6** And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out of you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you and to your seed after you
 - And God said unto Abraham: 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son of her; yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her.'
- Exodus 19:3-6
 - Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying: 'Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, **if** you will hearken unto My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, **then** you shall be Mine own treasure from among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.
- Gateway to Judaism: The What, How, and Why of Jewish Life, Mordechai Becher
 - There are two ways to become close to God: the path of awe and fear, and the path of love and joy. Both are necessary and both play important roles in Judaism. Generally, the various prohibitions in the Torah reflect the relationship of awe and reticence, while the positive obligations reflect the relationship of love and reaching out to God.

Mitzvoth

In Judaism, the traditional way which one would become a partner with God has always been by following *mitzvoth*. Now, while we needn't necessarily agree with such a perspective, it's important that we convey this point. The covenant between God and humanity, one of the bases of the human-Divine partnerships, assumes that humans will follow God's *mitzvoth*.

In some sense, this should not be too shocking: *mitzvah* means "command!" The word command clearly entails some idea of obligation. Given this, it is important that we teach our campers what the significance of the *mitzvoth* has traditionally been in Jewish thought. From this point, we'll carry them forward to the Reform Jewish concept of the *mitzvah*. Ideally, doing this will really get our campers to appreciate the depth of *mitzvoth*'s place in the Jewish human-Divine partnership.

The stage where the Israelites (and consequently we as Jews) receive the commandments, at Mt. Sinai, is known as revelation- the time when God revealed the commandments to the Israelites. This is the second of our three foci in the cycle of creation, revelation, and redemption.

Day 6: What's a *Mitzvah*?

In days 5 and/or 6, the human-Divine covenants are discussed. Think of these as contracts between humans and God which explain what is expected of each party. While God's expectations aren't always clear, Judaism has traditionally thought of humanity's side as quite apparent- humans (in particular Jews) must follow God's commands in order to be in partnership with God. The purpose of this day, then, is to explore this bedrock assumption of Judaism. We want our campers to ask deeper questions about *mitzvot* as a result of this day. If this day is a full success, they should no longer take for granted that they fully comprehend what a *mitzvah* is- they should recognize that the essence of a *mitzvah* is up for discussion. This should, however, come from a strictly traditionally angle. Later days will tackle the question of how a modern Jew understands *mitzvot*.

Goal(s):

1. To explain more fully what a *mitzvah* is.⁵

Thoughts to consider:

- What does the word "commandment" mean?
- What is the biblical perspective on a commandment? (i.e. Is it optional?)
- What is the purpose of a *mitzvah*?
- How do you know that something is a *mitzvah*?
- Were you to write a new book of *mitzvot* today, what sorts of *mitzvot* would you include?

Texts:

- Exodus 16:28
 - And the LORD said unto Moses: 'How long refuse you to keep My commandments and My laws?
- Exodus 20:2-5 (The beginning of the Ten Commandments)
 - I am the LORD your God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. you shall not make unto yourself a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down unto them, nor serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto the thousandth generation of **them that love Me and keep My commandments.**

⁵ For this topic, while you can deviate a little from this goal, really try to stick to this very basic question. For the younger campers, this might easily be enough for one day! For the older campers, who might already feel that they "get it," try to push them to recognize *mitzvot* which they might not have learned about before. Get them, also, to ask deeper questions about the "why" behind commandedness.

- Deuteronomy 6:1-3 (This passage comes directly before the *v'ahavta*)
 - Now this is the **commandment**, the statutes, and the ordinances, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that you might **do them** in the land whither you go over to possess it-- that thou might fear the LORD thy God, to **keep all His statutes and His commandments**, which I command you, you, and your son, and your son's son, all the days of thy life; and that your days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with you, and that you may increase mightily, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised unto you--a land flowing with milk and honey.

Day 7: Guidance from God on Being a Good Person?

On this day of shiur/limud, we will explore the question of *mitzvot*'s meanings and purposes further. On the day before this, the campers will be pushed to understand a solid but essentially basic definition of *mitzvot*. At this point, we wish to build upon that framework. The questions which they should be addressing on this day relate to understanding potential purposes of *mitzvot*. Given that they will have a better idea of what a *mitzvah* is at this point (from day 7), now we need to reconstruct for them an idea of why *mitzvot* might matter.

Goal(s):

1. To evaluate whether the *mitzvot* may have the purpose of making one a better person.

Thoughts to Consider:

- There are obviously *mitzvot* which can help a person become better; are there also *mitzvot* which may make a person a worse person?
- Is there anything inherently "Good" about following a *mitzvah* (i.e., is following a *mitzvah* good *because* it is a *mitzvah*?) Alternatively, is something a *mitzvah* because it's good?
- While some *mitzvot* may make clear sense and seem rational (e.g. "thou shalt not murder), there are others which make less sense or even appear to have no rational explanation. What of these non-rational commandments- might there be a way that these make one a better person?
- If following *mitzvot* makes one a better person, is this only true for Jews?

Texts:

- Jewish Ritual and the Experience of "Rootedness," Joshua Golding
 - Jewish teleology⁶ says that, by performing the *mitzvot* and rituals, a Jew completes or realizes his nature. Thus, as a corollary, the experience of rootedness⁷ also provides some rational support for the belief that the Jew ought- in some not insubstantial sense of "ought"-to observe the rituals and *mitzvot* of the Torah.
- http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3249/jewish/Why-Do-Mitzvot.htm, Zalman Posner (Note- Chabad is a far-right Jewish group. However, I think their idea here is helpful)
 - In response to the question, "Why should a Jew follow *mitzvot*?"
 - ...in sum, then, as people and their ideas vary or change, so, too, do their personal reasons for observing the *mitzvot*. The rabbi cannot supply these motivations, for

⁶ The perspective that *mitzvot* are important because they lead to a greater good

⁷ A belief that a person feels more connected to what is important in life by following commandments and rituals

what may appeal to him is his personal affair, not some Olympian edict applying to everyone. A Jew is not free to decide whether or not a mitzvah itself is addressed to him; but every Jew is free, and indeed duty-bound, to meet the challenge of finding out *what* the observance of the mitzvah should mean to him as an individual. Don't ask someone else what *kashrut* should mean to *you*. Ask yourself, because no one can give you the answer. Others might provide guidance, but no one can supply your answer.

Day 8: Reform Judaism: Individual Autonomy in Mitzvot

As Reform Jews, we are inclined to pick and choose certain principles of the Bible to follow and others to discard. While each person may have his own reason for choosing certain commandments over others, one often does so because he finds particular mitzvot fulfilling and uplifting but others without spiritual significance or opposed to his ethical standards.

This day is meant to demonstrate that picking and choosing is not necessarily a bad thing- in fact, Reform Judaism may only survive if doing so is possible. The trick of making such a venture successful is in finding appropriate rules for how to pick and choose properly and consistently. On this day, we want to allow our campers to see how certain *mitzvot* may connect better with our modern sensibilities than others. Further, we want them to see how choosing the *mitzvot* which are best connected to our schemata of ethics may allow us to better partners with God.

Goal(s):

1. To recognize why being able to choose *mitzvot* is not just acceptable, but potentially important and good.

Thoughts to Consider:

- Reform Judaism encourages the individual Jew to make decisions about his personal practice regarding *mitzvot*: is this reasonable?
 - What could be the reasons for allowing such choice (something which is clearly a break from traditional Judaism)?
- What must a Jew do before making choices about following *mitzvot*?
- If a Jew must be educated before making choices, how does one ensure that he is educated enough?
- Could one simply choose to not follow any *mitzvot*?
- What might make one *mitzvah* worth following and another not?

Texts:

- <http://www.osb.org/aba/news/3201/indexa.html>, Valerian Odermann
 - Yet a danger does still remain. It is the danger of "cafeteria Christianity," which lets people mix and match traditions any way they want, without discipline and without accountability. Unless we transcend cafeteria Christianity, our practices will be more sarabaitic or grovogue than Benedictine.⁸
- 1885 Pittsburgh Platform (A founding platform of the Reform movement)
 - 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

⁸ I use a Christian example here because the same charge of "cafeterianism" is leveled in that world too.

our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.

- <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/what-does-reform-judaism-stand-for/>
 - Here the guiding principle has been autonomy and choice. Each individual Jew has the inalienable right to define which aspects of the faith are personally meaningful to him; so long as these choices are “informed,” the movement not only tolerates but endorses them.

Day 9: Ritual Commandments and Moral Commandments: Discerning the Difference

One of the dichotomies of commandments which Reform Judaism recognizes is that of ritual commandments and moral commandments. In trying to create a system for picking and choosing commandments which are important to follow, the early reforming Jews challenged the legitimacy of ritual commandments (those which pertained for the most part to actions and states of being apparently unconnected to morality) and elevated the importance of moral commandments (those commandments which can be understood as being morally important for a reason other than ‘one ought to follow the *mitzvot*’). While the distinction appears quite clear at first glance, there may be more to understanding what is morally-connected and what is not. The meat of this day’s content comes in trying to discern what makes something morally-relevant and something else not so. (i.e. Why do we consider not coveting morally important, but do not consider the injunction against mixing fabrics similarly moral?)

Goal(s):

1. To consider what makes something either a ritual or a moral *mitzvah*.

Thoughts to consider:

- Is there any real distinction between moral and ritual commandments?
 - Should any such difference change the way a Jew might follow *mitzvot*?
- If there is any real difference between moral and ritual commandments, how can one tell the difference?
- If there is any real difference between moral and ritual commandments, does one have more of an obligation to follow one kind or another?
- Earlier Reform Jews felt less compelled to follow ritual *mitzvot* than modern Jews- why might this be?

Texts:

- 1885 Pittsburgh Platform (A founding platform of the Reform movement)
 - 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.
- 1999 Pittsburgh Principles (A successor to the above Pittsburgh Platform)
 - We are committed to the ongoing study of the whole array of *mitzvot* and to the fulfillment of those that address us as individuals and as a community. Some of these *mitzvot*, sacred obligations, have long been observed by Reform Jews; others, both ancient and modern, demand renewed attention as the result of the unique context of our own times.

- Trialogue: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Dialogue, Swidler, Duran, and Firestone
 - One of the major innovations of Reform was to reexamine the place and meaning of the divine commandments. The Reform Movement in Judaism distinguished between ritual commandments and moral-ethical commandments. They considered the ritual commandments of Judaism such as the particular (kosher) food laws, use of Hebrew prayer and other forms of Jewish ritual practice to have been developed by the ancient rabbis in order to separate Jews from a world populated entirely by idolaters or people who would harm Jews... they felt that there was little need to keep the particular rituals that set Jews apart from other civilized peoples. This strongly reduced the cultural differences between Jews and others, while Reformers retained the major theological distinctions.

Tikkun – The Ongoing Partnership with God

The way which we will discuss *tikkun* here may be a little different than how you have heard it before, though it should be quite similar. When we discuss *tikkun* in this unit, we mean to discuss it in the way which the *kabbalists* (Jewish mystics) did so. In order to give you a better understanding of what I mean, I will provide a little bit of background information. This information will be the focus for day 9, from which day 10 will draw, and the rest of the unit will develop from there.

When the *kabbalists* thought about *tikkun*, they thought of it in a way much grander than just what we might call *tikkun olam*. The *kabbalists* believed that during creation, God created 10 vessels which would hold God's Divine light or essence. When God filled these 10 vessels with God's light, they were unable to hold it and they shattered, sending pieces of the light throughout the world.

According to the *kabbalistic* idea of *tikkun*, when one follows the commandments and makes the world a better place, he is helping God (as a partner) to re-collect the various pieces of divine light. Only with humanity's help, through these acts of *tikkun*, can all of God's essence be brought back together.

Whether you believe this notion literally or metaphorically, it is no doubt powerful to think that humanity has the ability to repair the world around us (*tikkun* literally means repairing; hence, when combined with *olam*— world —you get repairing of the world.) The idea behind this final unit is that humanity is a partner in bringing redemption to the world through acts of *tikkun*.

The Basics of *Tikkun Olam* and *Tikkun*

We'll start our campers off with the very basics of *tikkun* and *tikkun olam*. As I described earlier, it is from this basis which we will be able to give them a much more rich understanding of what it means *l'takein et ha'olam* (to repair the world.)

Day 10: Tikkun: What Does it Mean/What is its History?⁹

This first day is mainly intended to be informational. Similar to how we needed to discuss the basics to *mitzvot* before asking deeper questions about them, we need to really consider the origins of *tikkun* and *tikkun olam* before we can adequately delve deeper into them. The purpose of this day is to create such a basis.

Goal(s):

1. To understand the basic aspects of *tikkun*.

Thoughts to consider:

- What did the *kabbalists* mean when they said *tikkun*?
- We use the phrase *tikkun olam* relatively glibly at camp and even within Reform Judaism. Would a better understanding of the phrase and its history change the way we use it?
- Does *tikkun olam* essentially mean social action or volunteerism, as it is often used, or more?
- Do we believe in the idea of *tikkun* which *kabbalists* had or is our idea of *tikkun* novel?

Texts:

- http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ethics/Caring_For_Others/Tikkun_Olam_Repairing_the_World/_Lurianic_Kabbalah.shtml, Dr. Lawrence Fine
 - *Tikkun* is to be achieved by human beings through their contemplative action. Every religious act requires contemplative concentration on the various dimensions of divinity and the various combinations of the divine name in order to "raise up the fallen sparks [God's light]." The focus of concentration is the inner dynamics of reorganization and restructuring that takes place in the course of acts of devotional piety.
The kinds of activities by which the *kabbalist* seeks to accomplish these goals [*tikkun*] include a) liturgical prayer; b) the performance of all other mitzvot; and c) the practice of certain special exercises, such as those known as *yihudim* ["unifications", that is, of the Godhead]. The same general contemplative idea characterizes each of these types of activity...
- <http://www.newkabbalah.com/tikkun.html>, Sanford L. Drob
 - The symbol of Tikkun ha-Olam embodies the most distinctively Jewish, as well as the single most important ethical injunction of the Kabbalah: the command that humanity must restore and redeem a broken and fallen world ... As articulated by Isaac Luria in 16th century Safed, Tikkun is a symbol with both metaphysical and theological implications. Luria and his disciples understood every event in the created universe, indeed the very act of creation itself to be an introduction and

⁹ This will likely be one of the more content-heavy days. Make sure to encourage whichever staff members receive this day to make good use of their faculty resources- the faculty love to be involved and they know how to help out!

prelude to Tikkun ha-Olam. For them it is only as a result of the world's restoration that both cosmos and God can be said to be complete.

Day 11: What do We Mean When We Say Tikkun Olam?

Having come to better understandings regarding *tikkun* and *tikkun olam*'s roots, we'll now turn our attention to our modern, Reform notion of *tikkun olam*. When we speak of *tikkun olam*, we have particular ideas of social justice and environmentalism- this day should be one on which campers note the differences between the *kabbalistic* idea of *tikkun* and their own, and one on which they will consider how one determines if an action helps to repair the world.

Goal(s):

1. To better understand our own conceptions of what it means to repair the world.

Thoughts to consider:

- Do we agree with the *kabbalists*' idea of *tikkun*?
 - If so, what do we find compelling about it?
 - If not, do we believe in any idea of *tikkun* (literal or metaphoric)?
 - If so, what is it?
- How are modern ideas of *tikkun olam* different from the earlier *kabbalistic* ideas?
- How can we tell if something is an act of *tikkun*?

Texts:

- <http://urj.org/socialaction/judaism/advocacy/>, Rabbi Marla Feldman
 - It has become axiomatic that to be a Jew is to care about the world around us. To be a Reform Jew is to hear the voice of the prophets in our head; to be engaged in the ongoing work of *tikkun olam*; to strive to improve the world in which we live.
- 1999 Pittsburgh Principles
 - We bring Torah into the world when we strive to fulfill the highest ethical mandates in our relationships with others and with all of God's creation. Partners with God in *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, we are called to help bring nearer the messianic age. We seek dialogue and joint action with people of other faiths in the hope that together we can bring peace, freedom and justice to our world. We are obligated to pursue *tzedeq*, justice and righteousness, and to narrow the gap between the affluent and the poor, to act against discrimination and oppression, to pursue peace, to welcome the stranger, to protect the earth's biodiversity and natural resources, and to redeem those in physical, economic and spiritual bondage. In so doing, we reaffirm social action and social justice as a central prophetic focus of traditional Reform Jewish belief and practice. We affirm the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, setting aside portions of our earnings and our time to provide for those in need. These acts bring us closer to fulfilling the prophetic call to translate the words of Torah into the works of our hands.

Between Humans and the Earth

There are a few different categories of ways in which one might perform *tikkun*. The first which we will go through is of the human need to perform *tikkun* in regards to the earth. As we all realize, we live on a world which is fragile a susceptible to change. We, as humans, have the potential to either make a change for the better on our planet or to allow it to become unsustainable. Thus, one of the extraordinarily important facets of the human-Divine partnership is ensuring that we take care of our planet.

Day 12: What is Our Responsibility to the Earth

One specific outlet for *tikkun* which Reform Judaism considers to be a part of *tikkun olam* is environmentalism. One might, without deeply considering, conclude that humanity does not have any intrinsic obligation to the earth because the earth is not a moral entity. However, through experience most people recognize that there is some moral obligation to take care of the earth- whether it is because we owe it to God to take care of the planet, because it is for the well-being of humanity who will use the earth after us, or because we feel that the earth in some way deserves intrinsically to be taken care of. Given this, it is appropriate for us to spend a day contemplating why taking care of the world is important to us as Reform Jews. Our job as stewards for the earth is one of the most important ways in which we work as partners with God.

Goal(s):

1. To perceive humanity's obligation to take care of the earth.

Thoughts to consider:

- What does it mean to take care of the earth?
- What makes humanity responsible for ensuring the earth's continued health?
- If we do, indeed, have such an obligation, is it for any reason other than our practical desire to survive?
 - Does God expect us to take care of the earth, or do we take care of the earth for our own reasons?

Texts:

- Genesis 1:27-29
 - God created humanity in the Divine image, in the Divine image did God create humanity; male and female God created them. God blessed them and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on the earth." God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food."
- Genesis 2:15
 - The Eternal God took the man (Adam) and placed him in the garden of Eden, to keep it and to watch over it.
- Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 23a
 - Once, while the sage, Honi, was walking along a road, he saw an old man planting a carob tree. Honi asked him: "How many years will it take for this tree to give forth its fruit?" The man answered that it would require 70 years. Honi asked: "Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?" The man answered: "I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. So, too, will I plant for my children."
- Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kama 50b
 - A certain man was removing stones from his ground and putting them onto public ground when a pious man found him doing so and said to him, 'Fool, why

do you remove stones from ground which is not yours to ground which is yours?' The man laughed at him. Some days later he [the stone-removing man] had to sell his field, and when he was walking on that public ground he stumbled over those stones. He then said, 'How well did that pious man say to me, "Why do you remove stones from ground which is not yours to ground which is yours?"'

Day 13: How Do We Change Our World?¹⁰

At this point in the summer, the campers will have learned a fair amount about *tikkun olam* in theory; this day is a chance for them to really get into the practical elements of the topic. They might say before this day, “So, we have a real obligation to take care of our planet... so what? What can I do as an individual Reform Jew?” This day should leave the campers feeling that they can, at least in part, answer that question. Whereas prior days have focused on the theory, this day should center on the praxis.

Goal(s):

1. To consider ways which one could personally work to make the world a better place.

Thoughts to consider:

- How can one *personally* take responsibility for the improvement of the world?
- What are some simple, practical things a person can do any day to help take care of the world?
- What are some projects that one could do, even as a child/camper, which assist in the repairing of the world?
- What special responsibility, if any, do Jews have to take care of world?
- How does taking care of the world make us better partners with God?

Texts:

- Avot de Rabbi Nathan, 31b
 - Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai said... If you have a sapling in your hand, and someone says to you that the Messiah has come, stay and complete the planting, and then go out to greet the Messiah.
- Sefer HaChinuch, #529
 - The purpose of this mitzvah [bal tashchit] is to teach us to love that which is good and worthwhile and to cling to it, so that good becomes a part of us and we will avoid all that is evil and destructive. This is the way of the righteous and those who improve society, who love peace and rejoice in the good in people and bring them close to Torah: That nothing, not even a grain of mustard, should be lost to the world, that they should regret any loss or destruction that they see, and if possible they will prevent any destruction that they can. Not so are the wicked, who are like demons, who rejoice in destruction of the world and they are destroying themselves.
- <http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/pillars-jewish-environmental-awareness?print=yes>, Dr. Gabe Goldman
 - Like most of the Torah’s commandments, taking care of the earth is made the responsibility of the individual. Earth stewardship is not made the responsibility of political parties, environmental movements or religious organizations. According to a traditional Jewish story, this point was made dramatically clear by

¹⁰ This is a similar topic to the day before it, however this day is meant to be more about the practical aspects of *tikkun* through environmentalism while the day before is meant to be more about the general concept. This could be a wonderful day to shake things up and do a mini-*tikkun olam* project as a unit.

God to the first man and woman. Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah (7:13) – "When God created Adam, God led him around all of the trees in the Garden of Eden. God told him, 'See how beautiful and praiseworthy are all of my works. Everything I have created has been created for your sake. Think of this and do not corrupt the world; for if you corrupt it, there will be no one to set it right after you.'"

Between Humans and Others

One main category of *tikkun* is the set of actions which occur between a person and his fellow. There is no question that our world has shortcomings in respect to human interrelations. That being said, it is our responsibility to educate our campers about how Judaism cherishes positive relationships between humans. Such a type of *tikkun* is one in which God depends largely on our side of the partnership: There is no denying that *we* (i.e. humans) are entirely in control of the way which people relate to one-another. Perhaps, if we assert strongly that this is a necessary element of the human-Divine relationship, we can help our campers to see how much of a difference they can make by acting rightly with others.

Day 14: Other-Regard in Judaism¹¹

Other-regard in Judaism is another topic which Reform Jews quite frequently take for granted: Jews typically assume that it is obvious that Jews have an obligation to take care of other people and be altruistic. That being said, it is worth having our campers ask the question: Why can't one be primarily concerned with self-regard as a good Jew? Especially given the milieu of American individualism in which most of our campers live, it is worth us pushing ourselves to find authentically Jewish reasons why one is obligated to take care the other and not just himself.

Goal(s):

1. To learn that Judaism places significant emphasis on valuing the other
2. To learn that Judaism is a religion that essentially rejects egoism.

Thoughts to consider:

- In what ways is a Jew obligated to help the other?
 - Does it matter who the other is? Another Jew? A non-Jew? Someone who you might consider evil?
- If you see yourself as obligated to help the other, why is it so?
- How does helping others make humans partners with God?
- Can one's own priorities be less important than his fellow's?
 - If so, how does you know when you should help someone else even when it might be disadvantageous to you?

Texts:

- Genesis 18:20-23
 - Then the Lord said [to Abraham] “The outrage of Sodom and Gomorrah 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?”
- 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.

¹¹ This day is meant to focus on person-to-person other-regard in Judaism (as opposed to day 14 which is about community-wide kindness toward strangers.)

- 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.
- Talmud Shavuot 39a
 - "*Kol Yisrael areivim zeh bazeh*," "All Israel is responsible for one another."

Day 15: Kindness to Strangers

Judaism does not limit other-regard to scope of individual-to-individual relations. In fact, it's quite the opposite: Judaism places immense weight on community-to-community relationships. Of course, this includes the relationships of one community working with another. What we will wish to focus on for this day, though, is the Jewish community's obligation to work in partnership with non-Jewish communities. Perhaps it is due to Judaism's continual status as a minority religion that it became so comfortable interacting with other religions; regardless of the cause, Judaism leaves little doubt that one must learn to cooperate and work positively with those of other communities around him. On this day, we will strive to teach our campers about the value and some of the details of interfaith work.

Goal(s):

1. To learn the importance of Jews interacting positively with those of other faiths.

Thoughts to consider:

- Why is it important that Jews value interfaith dialogue?
 - Do Jews have more of a need to see this than those of other faiths?
- What can be accomplished by Jews working to interact positively with those who aren't Jewish?
- What should the goals of interfaith work be?
- How can the average Jew work to promote interfaith understanding?

Texts:

- 1885 Pittsburgh Platform (A founding platform of the Reform movement)
 - We recognize in Judaism a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason. We are convinced of the utmost necessity of preserving the historical identity with our great past.. Christianity and Islam, being daughter religions of Judaism, we appreciate their providential mission, to aid in the spreading of monotheistic and moral truth. We acknowledge that the spirit of broad humanity of our age is our ally in the fulfillment of our mission, and therefore we extend the hand of fellowship to all who cooperate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men.
- Diana Eck, on "What is Pluralism?"
 - First, pluralism is not diversity alone, but *the energetic engagement with diversity*. Diversity can and has meant the creation of religious ghettos with little traffic between or among them. Today, religious diversity is a given, but pluralism is not a given; it is an achievement. Mere diversity without real encounter and relationship will yield increasing tensions in our societies.

Second, pluralism is not just tolerance, but *the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference*. Tolerance is a necessary public virtue, but it does not require Christians and Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and ardent secularists to know anything about one another. Tolerance is too thin a foundation for a world of religious difference and proximity. It does nothing to remove our ignorance of one another, and leaves in place the stereotype, the half-truth, the fears that underlie old patterns of division and violence. In the world in which we live today, our ignorance of one another will be increasingly costly.

Third, pluralism is not relativism, but *the encounter of commitments*. The new paradigm of pluralism does not require us to leave our identities and our commitments behind, for pluralism is the encounter of commitments. It means holding our deepest differences, even our religious differences, not in isolation, but in relationship to one another.

Fourth, pluralism is *based on dialogue*. The language of pluralism is that of dialogue and encounter, give and take, criticism and self-criticism. Dialogue means both speaking and listening, and that process reveals both common understandings and real differences. Dialogue does not mean everyone at the “table” will agree with one another. Pluralism involves the commitment to being at the table -- with one’s commitments.¹²

¹² Unlike day 13, day 14 is meant to be a sort of macro-focused other-regard topic. In this vein, I think talking about interfaith work could be successful. Should you want to take the topic elsewhere, I’m open to that too- so long as it is sufficiently differentiated from the previous day.

Day 16: Being a Role Model¹³

Effective role-modeling is one of the most important ways in which any individual can be empowered to make a difference in the world around him. As the line in Pirkei Avot reads, ‘In a place where no one acts as one ought to, strive to act as one should.’ Judaism places extraordinary emphasis on setting a good example for those around us- this may be an extension of Judaism’s valuing of teaching others. In any event, on this day we should make it clear to our campers the importance of being a good role model in the world. In doing so, you may choose to discuss both the background (Why should one strive to be a good role model?) and the practical issues of the topic (How does one ensure that he is being a good role model? What are some common situations in which it may be challenging to be a positive role model?).

Goal(s):

1. To see how being a positive role model helps one to be a better partner with God.

Thoughts to consider:

- Why is it necessary to work to be a good role model?
- What sorts of people are role models in our lives?
 - Is there anyone in life who might not be an ideal role model?
- As a role model, what should one teach others?
- How does one ensure that he is being a good role model?
- How is working as a role model mirroring God’s guidance to humanity?

Texts:

- <http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/rolemodels/>
 - A teacher of the Torah must be a role model as a human being, as well as a scholar. The Talmud admonishes that one should accept a teacher whom he respects as if he were an angel of God... The Talmud teaches that one can learn as much or more from the private lives of the Sages as from their teachings in the study hall (Berachos 7a), and that the ordinary conversations of Torah scholars are worthy of study (Avodah Zarah 19b). Halachic [Jewish legal] rulings have been based - definitely so - on the private deeds of great Torah figures, even when observers have not understood the legal basis of what they did.
- Mishna Pirkei Avot 1:6
 - Joshua ben Perachyah said: Provide for yourself a teacher and get yourself a friend; and judge every man towards merit.

¹³ This might be a better topic for the older campers rather than the younger campers, however I imagine it could work for any age group.

- Deuteronomy 6:5-7
 - And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Day 17: Going Above and Beyond the Call of Duty – Lifnim Mishurat Hadin¹⁴

In most of our discussions over the summer, we ask question of what Judaism mandates in terms of personal moral obligations. The impression which this sometimes leaves with the observer is that in Judaism one is merely obligated to a minimum standard, to have done his fair share, and that beyond this Judaism makes no requirement of the individual. In reality, this could not be further from the truth! Judaism always encourages one to do what is most good (not just “good enough”) in any situation (especially in interpersonal ones). One principle which teaches this is “*lifnim mishurat hadin*,” a principle which advocates for one to always act in excess of the law for the benefit of the other. On this day, we should get our campers to discuss how Judaism asks us to be our own most challenging critics. Our campers should get the sense on this day that they should always be striving to do their best, even if this means going above and beyond what is minimally obligated of them.

Goal(s):

1. To recognize that sometimes it is proper to go beyond the bare minimum to which one is obligated for the sake of good person-to-person relations.

Thoughts to consider:

- What are some common situations in which a person does best by giving someone else the benefit of the doubt?
- How does going beyond our minimum requirements ensure that we will live in a better world?
- Why do you think Judaism pushes for the individual to do more than his minimum duty?
- How does acting in this way make certain that we are effective partners with God?

Texts:

- http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ethics/Business_Ethics/In_Practice/Ethical_Practices_at_Work.shtml, Rabbi David Golinkin
 - “It happened that Rav Safra had some wine for sale, and a potential buyer came to him while he was reciting the *Shema* [required twice daily]. The customer said ‘Sell me this wine for such and such a price.’ Rav Safra did not answer [so as not to interrupt the Shema]. Assuming that he was unwilling to settle for the price

¹⁴ Literally, “within the line of judgment”

offered, the customer added to his original offer, and said, ‘Sell me this wine for such and such a price.’ Rav Safra still did not answer. [Presumably, this cycle was repeated, with ever-escalating prices.] Upon finishing the Shema, Rav Safra said to him: ‘From the time you made your first offer, I had resolved in my mind to sell it to you. Therefore I may take no greater amount [than your first bid].’”
(*Sheiltot Vayehi*, No. 38)

- <http://www.thejc.com/judaism/jewish-words/lifnim-mishurat-hadin>, Rabbi Julian Sinclair
 - Those who see Judaism as a religion of precise law may be surprised to hear that the Jewish ideal is always to act beyond the letter of the law: *lifnim mishurat hadin* in Hebrew, literally meaning, inside the line of law...

In the period leading up to Rosh Hashanah, we fear what might be the consequences if God were to judge us with precise justice, untempered by compassion. In numerous places, the Rabbis teach that if we behave towards others *lifnim mishurat hadin*, with generosity and kindness beyond what is strictly required, then we might hope that God will act *lifnim mishurat hadin* with us, and forgo the harshness that rigorous application of justice would require.

Between Humans and God

The last category of *tikkun* on which we will focus will be *tikkun* between humanity and God. This may be the most obvious extension of the human-Divine partnership, and with this our campers will hopefully be brought around to the general discussion with which we began. This also will help us move toward a close with our discussion of redemption, the last part of our creation-revelation-redemption cycle.

The main notion by which this unit will function is that by being in right relationship with God, humanity engages in *tikkun* and brings about its own redemption.

Day 18: Is Prayer *Tikkun*?

On this day of shiur/limud, we want our campers to be pushed in considering the importance of *t'filah*. Prayer can be either spontaneous or fixed (i.e. set and planned, like our evening *t'filot*), however it remains an open subject of whether any variety of prayer actually makes the world a better place. With this concept in mind, it is important to have our campers consider whether prayer can actually create benefit for the world. If they conclude that it does not (as they might appropriately conclude), they should be challenged to find what meaning prayer *does* have for themselves and others. Beyond this, they should ask themselves how prayer functions as a piece of the human-Divine partnership.

Goal(s):

1. To examine the topic of prayer and ask whether or not prayer may positively change the world.

Thoughts to consider:

- Consider that prayer has long been considered one of the most intimate ways in which humans and God can connect: do we still agree with this concept?
- Does prayer provide any benefit to either humanity or God?
- If prayer may provide benefit to humanity, what sort of benefit is it?
- How might prayer function as an act of *tikkun* to help to make the world a better place?

Texts:

- Living Judaism: the complete guide to Jewish belief, tradition, and practice, by Wayne D. Dosick 229-230, 1st ed.
 - Prayer is an intensely personal quest, and Judaism acknowledges and acclaims the individual prayers of the individual pray-er. But much of Jewish prayer is public, communal, shared...

My father remembers a Yom Kippur eve in the early years of World War II. Parents had just sent their young ones off to war, to danger unknown and fates unsure. When the cantor chanted the words of the traditional Kol Nidre prayer, "From this Yom Kippur until next Yom Kippur, may it be for us for good," a spontaneous collective cry went up from the mothers and fathers standing in that synagogue. They did not know what the next year would bring them and their precious sons, but being together in community gave them a sense of united purpose, shared commiseration, and collective strength.
- <http://www.jewfaq.org/prayer.htm>

- Many people today do not see the need for regular, formal prayer. "I pray when I feel inspired to, when it is meaningful to me," they say. This attitude overlooks two important things: the purpose of prayer, and the need for practice.

One purpose of prayer is to increase your awareness of God in your life and the role that God plays in your life. If you only pray when you feel inspired (that is, when you are already aware of God), then you will not increase your awareness of God.

Day 19: Does God Need Us? Do We Need God?

As a final content-oriented topic, we will ask our campers to reflect on the details of the human-Divine partnership which they have analyzed all summer long. Given what they have considered, it may now be more appropriate than ever to ask about who needs what from the human-Divine partnership. The human-Divine partnership may in fact be lopsided (e.g. humans need God more than God needs humans or vice versa) or it may be balanced (e.g. both humans and God need each other or neither humanity needs God nor God needs humanity). Regardless of what the campers conclude from their summer's educational experience, they should be pushed to ask about what dependencies exist or are absent from the human-Divine relationship.

Goal(s):

1. To consider the partnership between humanity and God directly.
2. To question what defines the human-Divine partnership.

Thoughts to consider:

- Does humanity need God? Does God need humanity? Both? Neither?
 - If it's some combination, is one more in need than the other?
- In what ways does humanity appear to need God?
- According to the *kabbalistic* and modern ideas of *tikkun* and *tikkun olam*, in what ways does God need humanity?

Texts:

- 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)

- <http://www.jweekly.com/article/full/6275/devarim-successful-prayer-does-not-require-rationality/>, Rabbi Eliezer Finkelman

In 11th century Spain, Rabbenu Bahaya ibn Pakuda, in his "Obligations of the Heart," praises an ancient pious worshipper who prayed: "Your knowledge includes everything that is good for me, and I have not told you my needs to make you aware of them, but so that I will realize my utter dependence on you and my reliance on you."

Similarly, in 19th century Germany, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch characterized the highest form of prayer as "judging oneself." Thus he analyzed the grammar of the most common Hebrew word for prayer as a reflexive form of the verb "to judge": Hitpallel, from which "tefillah" is derived, originally meant to

deliver an opinion about oneself, to judge oneself -- or an inner attempt at so doing, such as the reflexive of the Hebrew verb frequently denotes (Horeb, 472).

For the party known as rationalists, finite beings cannot properly praise the infinite being, cannot make sensible requests of the all-knowing being. So we finite beings must logically, when we say words that sound like praise, petition and thanksgiving, really be engaged in a process for our own benefit.

Day 20: Expressing the Partnership: How Does Our Relationship with God Make Us Better People?

Goal(s):

1. To sum up what has been learned about the human-Divine partnership over the summer.

This day is meant to be used as a culmination day. On it, units should strive to summarize what they have learned over the course of the summer. They should especially focus on finding ways to characterize the human-Divine partnership about which we will have been talking and on ways in which their improved understanding of the partnership will help them function as better people.