

Sinai – Jewish Vision

Ideas for sessions

Jewish vision – the goal and responsibility of being Jewish

1. What are my goals in life as a human being, in the areas of:
 - Myself
 - My family
 - Friends and community
 - Society/the world?

2. Is being Jewish an aim in and of itself, or is it a means to an end?

3. What would an ideal Jewish community look like? What would an ideal world look like?

4. What are some of the goals involved in being Jewish?

5. What goals emerge from Jewish texts and/or role models? How do I relate to them?

6. Depending on how we answer these questions, what kinds of Jewish identity/lifestyle emerge? What values/rituals/activities are we committed to in order to realise our “Jewish goals”?

Methodological ideas:

Dramatic presentations by madrichim/participants of Jewish characters with conflicting visions of the goals of Judaism

Values clarification – relating to the goals of being Jewish, or to the methods we use to realise these goals

Creative activity: designing the ideal community

Text study (statements game, envelopes activity)





The 10 commandments of Jewish identity

1. Constitutions, codes:
Different examples (Declaration of Independence of USA, Declaration of Human Rights, Basic Law: Human Dignity, The Scouts' Promise/Law, 7 laws of Bnei Noah, something Eastern or Islamic, something socialist/communist)
2. What are the values contained in each code? What kind of society are they destined to create?
3. What is the reality which each code is trying to deal with?
4. Why is it important to have codes? Does every society have them (cross-cultural comparison)? Is there another option for running a society?
5. The 10 commandments:
 - The fact that they command the individual in very specific ways
 - What are the values contained in the commandments?
 - How do we relate to the values contained in them; how do we feel about the society this code would create?
 - What would we add to or remove from the 10 commandments?
6. What code of laws would we create for the Jewish people?
7. What phenomena exist in the Jewish world that our code would have to take into account?
8. How would we translate our goals/vision into a specific set of commandments/rules aimed at the individual? – our ten commandments of Jewish identity

Methodological ideas:

- Text study of the various codes
- Values clarification of 10 commandments
- Debate: which code is the best?
- “Parliament” simulation – drafting a group 10 commandments





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“Two worlds of Judaism” - Israeli and Diaspora Judaism.

1. Inter-group comparison: what comprises our Jewish world/life? (beliefs, values, lifestyle, language, symbols)
2. What do we have in common and what separates us?
3. How does one kind of Jewish community judge and get on with another? What is the relationship between the communities like?
4. Sinai as the idea of Jewish unity around a common set of values: does this exist today? Is it desirable? Is uniformity necessary for unity? What values can we agree on?
5. Jewish texts/values on intra-Jewish relations, models for coexistence

Methodological ideas:

Multi-media presentations on each community's Jewish culture (created by the groups or utilising pre-made films, music etc)

Small mixed group-work – questions and answers about each group's Jewish culture; crystallising the points of similarity and friction

Text study on different models of Jewish diversity and coexistence

Drama activity (using texts) on different models of Jewish diversity and coexistence

Discussion on values of diversity and unity





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Am Segula and/or Or Lagoyim?

1. Jewish relations with non-Jews – different models
 - seclusion,
 - integration,
 - self-defence,
 - assimilation,
 - multi-culturalism,
 - responsibility,
 - dependence,
 - symbiosis
2. Diaspora communities vs Israel – Majority/minority – the different situations and appropriate values for Jewish - non-Jewish relations
3. Example – how do we relate to the issue of immigration and foreign workers in our various communities?
 - What are our positions as Jews?
 - What responsibilities do we have towards non-Jews?
 - Jewish responsibility towards other Jews vs non-Jews
4. Different interpretations of “Chosenness” –
 - Is it status or responsibility or both?
 - Is it defined by us or by others?
 - The Jewish people as “role model” – what do we want to teach the world?
 - Do we accept the idea or reject it?
 - Various interpretations from Jewish texts.

Methodological ideas:

Media (press, TV, film) activity about foreign workers, minorities

Values clarification – models of Jewish-non-Jewish relations

Text study – including classical and modern texts (incl. Declaration of Independence)

Street interviews

Personal experiences of relations with non-jews (art activity?)





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Authority in Judaism

1. Who defines my Jewish identity and my Jewish responsibilities – God, my community, Jewish history or memory, myself, Western culture, the government of Israel....?
2. Dilemmas – who and what influences my decision in each case?
3. Factors that shape my life – the media, friends, family, religion, teachers, the government, etc. Which ones are strongest? What influence do they have?
4. Diverse approaches to authority in Judaism: streams of Judaism that attach authority to Torah, the community, the State, the individual, the People. Attitudes of the different groups
5. The elements of my Jewish identity and where they come from, where did I learn them?

Methodological ideas:

- Dilemmas-drama-group discussion exercise
- Creative activity about influences on my life (“concentric circles”)
- Meetings with representatives of the streams of Judaism (or madrichim as “characters”)
- Personal stories about role models
- Debate – who determines what Judaism is (positions: the individual, the community, the Torah???)

