

Dear B'nai Mitzvah Families,

Our hope and intention is to provide our students and families with a familiarity with Judaism's Big Ideas, core vocabulary, and key "skills." It is "foundational," a beginning on which to build as one grows and explores the world of "Jewish." This period of learning and experience is also a doorway, a portal, or a bridge; it is not an end in itself.

Our design and intention addresses each student in three ways: individually, as they reflect personally; collectively, with each other, as they exchange and interact; and with parents and perhaps grandparents who participate in the conversations. In fact, this process is as much a "family and community affair" as it is an individual life-cycle event.

It is my pleasure and delight to accompany you through this passage, to be a resource and guide to you all, to help shape each other and our futures, to help us live meaningfully. To serve the adults your children will become.

This is a Zoom-based "class," but/and we can also change things up to do different , perhaps more experiential things — depending on appetite and interest — such as a film viewing and discussion, a young adult novel, a walk of the labyrinth, a field trip to a monument or memorial. All to be discussed for consensus.

The class-by-class structure is as follows:

- I.
  - A. "What are we doing here?" — Similes, images, stories, and "beginnings" questionnaire
  - B. Intro: Judaism as a "Civilization"
    1. Elements
    2. "Evolving"
    3. Believing, Belonging, Behaving, Becoming
  - C. "Coming-of-Age"
    1. Different 'maturities' (physical, intellectual, social, moral...?)
    2. "Leaving Childhood" exercise (exploration of "growing up" and "adult"), writing and sharing in class
    3. Identity (personal) and Status (communal)
    4. Self-awareness — of own mind and others around you
- II. "Blessings"
  - A. Rabbi's Formula (6 or 10 word incantation)
  - B. Reasons and effects of reciting a blessing
  - C. How are blessings related to your knee? A swimming pool? A camera?
  - D. Occasions? (create list)
- III. "Mitzvah"
  - A. What? (different understandings, categories...)
  - B. Why?
  - C. Relationship to values, matching exercise

IV. Part 1: "Tallit"

- A. "Wrap" and "enwrap"
- B. "Tzitzit"
- C. the blessing
- D. Jewish choreography (steps, bows, kisses...)

Part 2: Ritual objects, Family heirlooms, Family stories — sharing

V. "Tikkun Olam" and Social Justice (Prophets)

- A. Bob Dylan song ("Everything is Broken") and "Shattering of the Vessels" story
- B. "Tzedek" and "Tzedakah"
- C. "Aleynu" prayer, "Hands of God" story
- D. Prophets and their messages

VI. Shabbat

- A. Love story, love songs
- B. "rest" vs. "work"
- C. Brainstorm do's and don't's
- D. From "Vishamru" prayer tune — "Shavvat v'yinafash" means... (what?) to you?

VII. "God" talk

- A. What do we mean by "spirituality" or "holiness" or "sacred"
- B. Metaphors, Images, Descriptions
- C. God and "Godliness"
- D. Not so much Who or What or even Why, but WHEN, WHERE, HOW?

VIII. Communal worship "services"

- A. "Prayer is... (what?)"
- B. Overall structure of service; Key prayers, "She'ma" and "Amidah"
- C. Torah service and "d'var torah" (speech!)

HW: "Top Ten Values"

IX. Values

- A. Connect back to "Coming of age" (beginning to know oneself) and what matters to you)
- B. Connect back to Beliefs and Behaviors and Mitzvah
- C. Connect your individual list to a "project" in the world