

Fort Tryon Jewish Center

Masechet

Fort Tryon

חֲמִישִׁית

to cultivate the Hebrew language
and literature

רֵאשׁוֹן

to preserve traditional Judaism

שְׁנִיָּה

שְׁשִׁי
to further all measures which lead
to an integrated Jewry

to cultivate belief in God and
reverence for the Jewish Heritage

שְׁבִיעִית

to the establishment of universal
freedom, justice and peace of mind

שְׁלִישִׁי

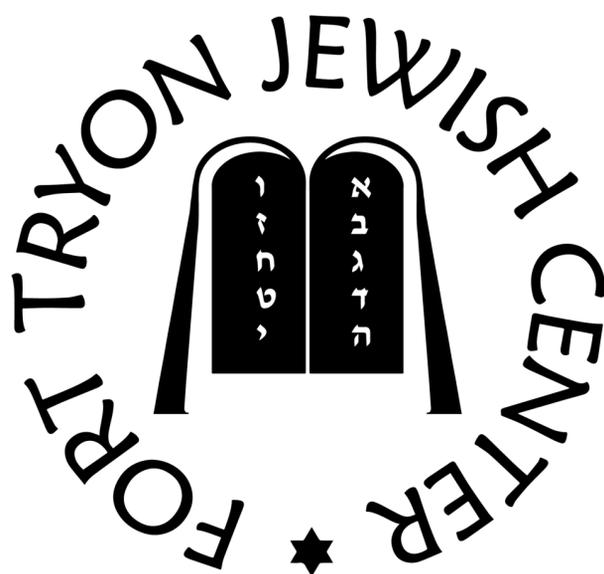
to translate Jewish Spiritual values
into terms of present-day thought
and action

בְּנוֹסָף

what's missing? what should we
add?

רְבִיעִי

to revitalize Jewish traditional
practices both in the synagogue and
the home



What's this all about?

At the June 2, 2019, Annual Congregational Meeting, we participated in this exercise. Each clause of Section 1 of the FTJC's historic "Objects & Purposes" (from our By-Laws) was put on big paper like a statement from the Mishnah. FTJC members—like later generations of Rabbis studying the Mishnah—wrote their questions, comments, challenges, and anecdotes, and responded to each other.

Why Did We Do This? The Board and Rabbi wanted an opportunity for our community to get more accustomed to listening and talking with each other about our values and reasons for being here – both to strengthen our shared purpose, and to foster understanding and respect where we differ.

Will We Do This Again? Maybe! This exercise was just one step, one mode, one opportunity. We understand that not everyone could be present, and that writing is not everyone's best mode for engaging. We may revisit this particular exercise. We certainly will create more opportunities for conversation, listening, and sharing.

Was This the Whole Text? Not quite. There are two more sections to the "Objects & Purposes." Though important, they are written in a different mode. We stuck to Section 1 to keep the exercise manageable.

Is This FTJC's Mission Statement? Not really. The "Objects & Purposes" is a legacy, both profound and expansive, from our founding generations. But FTJC doesn't have a modern, concise Mission Statement the way many organizations do today.

Will We Revise the "Objects and Purposes"? Maybe! We aren't sure yet whether a new articulation is necessary or worthwhile; and if so, whether we would revise these statements and/or create a new concise Mission Statement.

What Will Happen to These Sheets? A design team of members hopes to preserve these comments in a format like a Talmud page – with the original statement in the middle, and commentary below and around it. This format could be shared, revisited, and added to in future conversations.

Thank you to all who participated! It was so moving to see everyone's curiosity, passion, and engagement in the work of developing our shared, diverse community

For new comments and suggestions please email masechet@ftjc.org and reference the specific Object or Purpose. Happy conversing!

Objects and Purposes

(Article II of FTJC By-Laws)

date back to 1960's or 1970's; shown here in clause-by-clause formatting

Section 1. The objects and purposes of the Center shall be:

- to preserve traditional Judaism;
- to cultivate belief in God and reverence for the Jewish heritage;
- to translate Jewish spiritual values into terms of present-day thought and action;
- to revitalize Jewish traditional practices both in the synagogue and in the home;
- to cultivate the Hebrew language and literature;
- to further all measures which will lead to an integrated Jewry; and
- to the establishment of universal freedom, justice and peace of mind.

Section 2. The Center shall institute and maintain an egalitarian traditional service.
(added in 2007 after vote to become egalitarian)

Section 3. In furtherance of the objects and purposes herein stated, the Center shall be empowered to, without limitation:

- Maintain and operate a synagogue for the purposes of conducting Hebrew religious services.
- Conduct religious education and training for youth and adults, including Hebrew school.
- Conduct lectures, communal and public meetings for the advancement of Jewish cultural and religious attainments and community activities.
- Make voluntary contributions for charitable and philanthropic purposes and to give aid to all mankind.
- Receive and accept legacies and bequests and solicit funds by voluntary gifts, donations, and contributions.
- Acquire, lease, own or otherwise be interested in real and personal property when and as deemed desirable by the Board of Trustees to accomplish the objects and purposes aforementioned.

ראשון

to preserve traditional Judaism

Given when this was written, is “traditional” coded language?
“Orthodox”?
“Non-orthodox”?
“Non-egalitarian”?

How can we be traditional and inclusive of a variety of observance levels?

I appreciate the ambiguity. It could still work for us today.

Yes, and how can we specifically show that we value the presence and contributions of members w/varying levels of observance?

Will we preserve patriarchy? Why? Why not?
Words create worlds

Varying levels of Jewish education

How do we address the absence of the Feminine in liturgy? Can we be truly egal without changing /modifying liturgy?

Preserving “traditional Judaism” does not mitigate against rever... it. What are the principles underlying traditional Judaism to work on preserving?

Our tradition was egalitarianism so traditional/egal ALWAYS
Tension

“Traditional” Judaism is always evolved (though the traditionalists deny it while it is {illegible}). We somehow need egal where

To teach our children so they can engage in Jewish life practice

And define egal expansively egalitarianism should be active

To me, tradition almost always means grappling with the tradition or making the tradition relevant and contemporarily holy.
How can traditional and egal be on the same level?

No mechitzah isn't fullest expression of egal it's a minimum.

I believe this is so critical. W/O meaningful practice tied to our history & texts, it's a social club, not a shul.

Like a fossil

Nah, a pickle

Lol - but yeah, ‘preserve’ is an awful word in this context.

promote? Engage?

Interesting possible refinement of traditional.
No mechitzah isn't fullest expression of egal, it's a minimum

Against what outside influencers?

We already stretch tradition at FTJC always has with no m/f boundary.

שְׁנִיָּה

This is really nice. I think it is important to keep God in our mission

to cultivate belief in God and reverence for the Jewish Heritage

Through fellowship

And reverence for the divine which is everywhere

Maybe God first - before "Traditional Judaism

Reverence for"? And where is the line between heritage and history?

"Do we really need to believe in God?

Heritage implies receiving & passing on, not just knowing

What do we do if we don't believe?

Reverence can be dangerous

Seems like these should be 2 separate values/goals, heritage does genuinely belief in God, but we can rethink that.

There is no one belief in God here in this room. Reverence is knowledge of our inclusive history.

Yes & also how broadly can we define what God means?

But without reverence are we {illegible} and what

How do people feel about the language "Jewish spirituality"?

As long as we are open to the reality that not everyone among us believes in God. There are other versions to identify/affiliate w/a community.

Not good Jewish spirit...= God. We should just say that

Are there people we would define as 'out' I think there should not be.

Heritage, including cultural one, including recent?

Really? What if you think Jesus is God? Satan? Vishnu? Etc....

I think I'm getting stuck on the language "cultivate belief". I'm not sure we do this or want to. I would be more excited about cultivating relationship with God.

שְׁלוּשֵׁי

to translate Jewish Spiritual values into terms of present-day thought and action

Recognize when
change needs to
be made to
represent
“present-day

Yes, and we need
to carefully
consider ways of
figuring out how
to do this.

Nothing about us without us. We never
managed to deal with the hearing impaired
because more traditional people would not
restore a mike.

Braille...done :)

Ok, as is.

Yes, add tikkun olam.

Maybe this is in the other clauses?

Is this about social justice or just about
addressing more “modern” halakhic and
political issues?

This is lovely and still relevant?

Why spiritual values?

How do we protect the voices & rights of
marginalized community members who may
not be fully represented in the tradition?

Can we have a
more explicit
statement on social
justice than is
merely implied by
this statement?

How would this
statement translate
more regularly into
action?

Do we want just?

How does this affect us both within shul
life/community & outwardly to the greater
community?

Who is expected to do this? The rabbi? A
kollel? Everyone? Who does this work?

What does spiritual values mean?

Like the reference to spiritual values and
wonder how that plays out with belief in
God/relationship with God.

רביעי

to revitalize Jewish traditional practices both in the synagogue and the home

How is FTJC supported home life?

What education can we offer to empower families

And individuals

Is encouraging Shabbat meal hosting part of this?

And visiting the elderly in their homes

Is it a real value of this community in having Shabbos community? If so, we need to do something about it.

How do we do this when our 'homes' are different? (Families, uncoupled, younger, older etc...and in between)

Also, levels of kashrut

What about Jewish education for families at all stages?

Revitalize sounds already dead. Support what's thriving?

Why is this different from (a)? Either way, it begs the definition of the 'traditional'.

100% on point.

Can we offer chatan/kallah classes? Other ways to support home observances not readily accessible elsewhere? (incl. For queer families, single folks, etc.)

How do we remain open and welcoming of those that feel they are outside of "traditional"?

Social and religious inclusivity

How do we define traditional when we already object to certain practices - which count & and which don't hear?

The tension between traditional and adaptations that reflect our inclusive values is a big question!

Is this an inclusive or exclusive definition of 'traditional practices'?

I think this could be refined...to be more inclusive

Can/Should/Do we make room for/acknowledge different levels of observance that realistically exist in FTJC community or is there a desire to define narrowing the halachic expectations?

Traditional as in conversation w/tradition? That could be nice.

How do we cultivate relationships across differences of home life & social context?

Education - adult & children & support

Is there 1 set of traditional Jewish Practices?

חֲמִישִׁית

to cultivate the Hebrew language and literature

This should include literature in any language arising from or illuminating the experience of being Jewish.

What about Israeli culture specifically?

Agree, is this about Israel or about culture? If the latter...Yiddish, ladino etc.

Can we just say, "Jewish Languages & literatures"? Does that somehow devalue Hebrew?

Then we also need to talk about occupation.

How about English Jewish Lit?

What about non-Israeli Jewry (Latin American, Mizrachi, Ethiopian, or just Jews of color?) Yay

Can conversational Hebrew groups/classes make FTJC more relevant for our less frum neighbors?

Is there a place for you if your Hebrew is poor - or not up to others?

What about making more room for Jewish cultural production (music, lit., film, etc.) regardless of language?

How can we help folks feel empowered AND encourage/enable Hebrew literacy?

All Jewish heritages inclusive of Eastern Europe, Sephardi, and greater diaspora.

What do we think/feel about Jewish peoplehood?

Yes please

Are we united with Jews in Israel and around the world? Is education part of this?

Yiddish too

Which literature?

Why would I expect this for a shul?

Can it be broadened to include literacy in a diverse range of Jewish text study?

b/c it's the historical language of tefilla, halacha, etc....

What kind of literature? Include translations? Secular themes?

This should include music

A modern Israeli state & the importance of our ISF. Amer. should be positively represented "Dead Israeli Soldiers as well as Arabs" Israel is a country and it should be respected publicly.

What physical spaces are available/required for this? Infrastructure

How do we create an environment in which people want to learn more & also feel proud of what they already know?

נשני

to further all measures which lead to an integrated Jewry

All Measures? Seems a bit sweeping for something so vague.

What are the implications for interfaith families?

Patrilineal Jews

“Big tent” is great...but not when it conflicts with other values

Tents, no matter how big, have walls.

What specific measures? Very Vague

Does integrated mean integrating all kinds of Jews within the community or integrating Jews with America as a whole?

Not sure what this means.

Every part is confusing. I think there are some nice things to be integrated into other things. But this is extremely non-specific.

Would be really nice to understand what was meant by this? We should try better.

What does this mean for community building?

Can we collaborate with our neighboring congregations?

Does this speak to our ‘bigger tent’ and to be welcoming? And/or does it speak to integrating Jewish values in the way we live our lives in the world?

I think it could be worth making this more explicit/updating - e.g. ‘fighting to remove barriers between different Jewish communities.

“What about when our FTJC values don’t align w/those of other Jewish Communities.

Learning tolerance. It can’t be infinite but it’s bigger than we think.

Is this where issues of accessibility fit? How do we integrate our own?

What does this mean? Esp. for a shul w/such a strong unaffiliated identity?

What about this text suggests anything about affiliation? Pls elaborate on your question.

שְׁבִיעִית

Is the shul to be an actor or haven against what goes on outside our doors. Really like this idea but maybe we would update wording and include competencies about our WH community.

to the establishment of universal freedom, justice and peace of mind

Social Justice

Environmental Justice

Peace of mind? How do we cultivate this as a community? DO we want to?

Developing the heart + peace of mind = quieting the mind

How do we make for basic and deep disagreement about what these are and what would bring them about?

For whom?

Petty, but can we add a serial/oxford comma?

To collaborate with our fellow community members in N. Manhattan to make our community a more just place for all. Yes.

Yes. let's name our spheres of influence and reach.

Peace of Mind seems different turns Justice & Freedom we can strive to secure Justice & Freedom, but Peace of Mind is an internal state.

Unless P of M refers to basic stability of physical wellbeing (via food/housing) and political freedom.

How can one shul establish universal anything? Maybe we should have particular (specific/detailed) goals

Maybe this begs who are we as an institution in this NY Jews, in this neighborhood, and how we support our neighbors more broadly?

How can we accommodate different views on how to achieve these things?

Universal = not just Jews Should this be to help the process of universal etc.

I feel fine with this as an aspiration, but I don't think it's an actual goal.

Peace of mind - rather forward thinkers - mindfulness

בנוסף

Not a by-laws issue
but adult activities
would be nice

What's missing?

Encouragement of lay
leadership

Like what?

What should we add?

Hearts

A sense of duty to the community! Why must
we always ask for help cleaning?

Explicit naming of egalitarianism and queer-
affirming community

Israel!

Hearts

Yes, and how!

I would love to see language that reflects the
beautiful value of welcome that animates FTJC.
And a discussion about WHO is welcome - big
blind spots in our messages around interfaith
& patrilineal {illegible}

No...

Why do we have to default Zionism here?

Be a good WaHi neighbor

Light in the larger community

Presumably {illegible} “universal” {illegible}
freedom