

Jewish Identity Lesson Plan

Introduction

In this lesson, students will explore Jewish texts that deal with questions of identity and belonging. They will then create identity cubes, using symbols and/or imagery that represent various parts of their identities. These cubes will, in turn, help the students identify how they can each contribute to the Jewish community, uniquely.

Objectives

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Analyze texts that connect the self to the community
- Identify various factors that shape their identity
- Create cubes from cutouts (see below), using symbols and/or imagery that represent key elements of their identity
- Explain what objects they included on their cubes and how they could use these traits to contribute to, connect or engage with the Jewish people

Essential Questions:

- Who am I?
- How is identity formed?
- To what extent are we defined by our talents and interests?
- What are my strengths and talents?
- What is unique about my background or experience that makes me different?
- How can I make a difference?
- How do all of these questions apply to Jews living in the Soviet Union who were oppressed? How was their individual and collective identity defined?



Duration: 45-60 minute period

Materials: (For class of 30 students)

- Printout of text to read as a group
- 30 cube templates
- 30 scissors
- Magazines, markers, other supplies and crafts for cutting out and pasting onto the cube in order to create a collage
- Tape or glue

Procedure:

1. Guided Discussion: Read the discussion texts from the source sheet. As you facilitate the discussion, list important ideas, words or phrases that they mention so that they can refer to them later on. Examples may be: Jews need community, relationship or connection to God, appreciating our abilities, identifying with the struggles of my people and my responsibility toward them.

- What makes the Jewish community unique according to Rav Kook?
- What is the responsibility of each individual according to Josef Mendeleovich?
- According to Rabbi Sacks, what is Jewish Identity?
- Which of these passages connects most to the experience of Soviet Jewry, in your opinion? Which may have spoken to Jews who went through oppression?



2. Project: After examining the texts, let each individual create a cube of Jewish identity (template found on the source sheet).

- Explain that students will be using a cube to help contemplate what identity is and begin to choose their own Jewish identity and how it fits into the world.
- Show students a sample cube collage with the inside and outside decorated.
Give each pair a cube template, tape, and scissors. Some examples of things to include: descriptive words like “independent,” “creative,” “caring.” A picture of a person who made a difference to their country or a group of people (eg: MLK, Henrietta Szold). Jewish identity could also be described using images of things such as Jewish artifacts, or photos of life cycle events.
- On the outside of the cube, they should find images that demonstrate the parts of their Jewish identity that they show to the world.
- On the inside of the cube, they can choose images that they internalize, or keep inward, about Judaism.
- When they have created their cube, they should share it with someone else or with a small group.
- Finally, as a group share all the identity cubes. Discuss their projects and begin to think about Soviet Jews in terms of identity. If a Soviet child were doing this project, what might they keep hidden about their identity? What might be universal?

3. Guided Discussion:

- Are there patterns that emerge? What are they?
- Do they have any ideas about how they will use their individuality to contribute to the Jewish people? What are they?