



Mazel Tov

2020-5780

Congregation Tifereth Israel
Adult B'nei Mitzvah Class

Linda Marlin
Susan Sitler
Peter Stahl
Amy Tannenbaum
Chris Zeigler

Please Join Us
Shabbat Shavuot Morning
Saturday, May 30, 2020
9:00 am

Each member of the class will read a section of the Torah, lead part of the Haftarah and other sections of the service, and offer words of insight into the various elements that are part of our ritual for the second day of Shavuot.

ZOOM Link

Meeting ID: 628202612

Conflict Between Tradition, Change Found Everywhere

Education Director Miriam Berk | mberk@tiferethisrael.org



I will be receiving my executive master's degree in Jewish educational leadership at the end of May. Our final project is to present and write about an enduring dilemma, when one finds oneself challenged by two opposing values. My group chose to present on the values of "comfort" and "disruption" (stated more simply, tradition and change). Everywhere one turns, one faces this tension – when to make a change and when to leave things well enough alone. Who would have thought our enduring dilemma would be front and center in the last few months as we fight the COVID-19 pandemic? Our world has been turned upside down and we find ourselves needing to find the comfort and stability in the disruption of our work, our schooling, the way we entertain, and the way we pray. While I had toyed with moving some religious school programs to a virtual format, I never anticipated the need to transform our program from a brick-and-mortar school into an online learning experience within the span of two weeks! Here are few things I've learned, through the lens of our school's Jewish values:

Shmirat HaGuf: Protecting our Bodies

Normally, we speak to students about the need to keep our hands and feet to ourselves in the classroom (no kicking someone else's chair, poking others, etc.). In the time of COVID-19, this has taken on a whole new meaning. The rabbis and I have talked over our ZOOM sessions about *pikuach nefesh* (the value of saving a life) in terms of the importance of distancing to protect ourselves and others from getting sick. Additionally, teachers have been incorporating Hebrew through movement into their lessons, bringing home the importance of taking care of our bodies and staying healthy, even if we have to spend so much time indoors.

Kavod: Respect

Using our new ZOOM format has been a great way to stay connected to our students and families. Our students are still expected to be respectful of their teachers and classmates as we face new challenges that this format presents ("everyone, put yourselves on mute!"). And we are offering our online

classes during regular school hours to maintain a sense of continuity and normalcy and to respect and honor routines while at home.

Kedusha: Holiness

There is something sacred in these gatherings – reaching through a screen to maintain connection with faces we are used to seeing weekly in person. Humans are not meant to be isolated; and as Jews we work best in community. Returning to school online allows our community to flourish and students to interact with one another and to be seen and heard during these difficult times.

Talmud Torah: The Value of Education

As we planned to complete our last six weeks of classes virtually, the staff spoke about what we feel are the important objectives we want our students to walk away with. Overwhelmingly, our teachers felt contact with their students superseded content. That is why each session begins with a connecting prompt to help maintain and strengthen community amongst the students, even with our physical distancing. And they are doing their best to engage students with creative and interactive lessons, teaching the remaining holidays of the year, Bible stories, and Hebrew prayer and reading. Based on emails I've received from parents, they so appreciate our efforts in continuing to provide a warm, inviting space for students to be seen, to share, and to learn!

From the time I canceled in-person classes until our teachers were holding virtual lessons was less than two weeks. I am in awe of, and have tremendous gratitude for, our teachers and specialists who pushed through some discomfort and uncertainty to figure out how to convert their lessons to a virtual format. We "met" during our scheduled spring break to figure out how to use ZOOM and to share best practices of how to have meaningful and effective online lessons. Those with stronger technical skills reached out to guide those who were having more difficulties. We were all learning from one another in this new world! I can't thank our teachers enough for rising to the occasion to finish out our year strong and connected to their students.