

The Moral Educational Dilemma: What are our morals and how do we use them?

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Curriculum Rationale

Moral education is certainly nothing new. For as long as people have lived in groups, some kind of moral foundation must have been shared, communicated, and passed on. For at least thousands of years, humanity has for the most part agreed that it is wrong to kill innocent people for no reason, to maliciously steal from each other, to consume without at least the potential promise of production. But morality is much more complicated than that: morals may be socially constructed but they must also be ratified by the autonomous individual in a world of competing values, where we often don't know how or why to proceed. And yet, morals must be communicated across generations in order for society to function! It is the intention of this paper to argue for a morality based curriculum on the premise that students across a range of developmental stages can help each other navigate rocky moral terrain with Jewish sources, history, and experience as a guide.

While I'm certain that any schoolchild could produce a fine list of neatly packaged morals, there are those who believe that as "post-moderns" we live in murky moral waters¹. Just ask my grandfather. He swears that we, those self-righteous members of what he calls "Generation Hippity-Hop," are less intelligent, less attractive, and perhaps worst of all, "less moral" than those people who came before us, and he's not alone. According to Gallup's May 2012 Values and Beliefs report, 43% of Americans rate the overall state of moral values in America as "poor," and 73% of Americans think that it's only getting worse.² Further studies have

¹ McDevitt, Teresa. *Child Development and Education*, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey. pg 519

² <http://www.gallup.com/poll/154715/americans-negativity-moral-values-inches-back.aspx>

attempted to show in more quantifiable ways that public discourse on morality and ethics has declined over the course of the 20th century in the face of rampant individualism and moral relativism that consequently limits the capacity for concrete moral and ethical understandings (Kesebir and Kesebir, 2012). True, each of these claims is hotly debated. We do not truly know if our moral compass is becoming more skewed or if it always the case that people doubt the moral standing of the up and coming generation. The perception of the problem is not what is at stake. Moral education is a continuing imperative not just for us as social beings, but also more specifically for us as Jews.

With regard to Jewish education, there are those who argue that “religious education in Judaism is, to a large extent, moral education.”³ In addition, as adults increasingly seek out opportunities for Jewish education, and as educators increasingly seek opportunities to take advantage of Jewish education *in situ*, in the context in which education is relevant, lived, and reinforced, family education becomes unavoidable.⁴ Granted that Jewish family moral education fills such a clear purpose (or at least satisfies a growing pedagogical trend), we still find ourselves up against a wall to answer the inevitable question: what constitutes the substance of Jewish ethical behavior and how do we teach it?

Moral education, in many ways, naturally lends itself to family education. Here, I am reminded specifically of Kohlberg’s stages of moral development. In response to certain pointed moral dilemmas Kohlberg understood that a person’s

³ Justin Hofmann. “Religion, Ethics and Moral Education in Judaism,” *Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association*, 77:1, 57-68, 1982

⁴ Jo Kay and Evie Rotstein, “Jewish Family Education,” *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*, Torah Aura Productions, 2008 pp 143-150.

moral development could be mapped into a linear range grouped by that person's capacity to answer moral dilemmas in increasingly complex ways (see the chart below).

Level/Stage	Age Range	Description
I: Obedience/Punishment	Infancy	No difference between doing the right thing and avoiding punishment
I: Self-Interest	Pre-school	Interest shifts to rewards rather than punishment – effort is made to secure greatest benefit for oneself
II: Conformity and Interpersonal Accord	School-age	The “good boy/girl” level. Effort is made to secure approval and maintain friendly relations with others
II: Authority and Social Order	School-age	Orientation toward fixed rules. The purpose of morality is maintaining the social order. Interpersonal accord is expanded to include the entire society
III: Social Contract	Teens	Mutual benefit, reciprocity. Morally right and legally right are not always the same. Utilitarian rules that make life better for everyone
III: Universal Principles	Adulthood	Morality is based on principles that transcend mutual benefit.

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This chart shows, in essence, how Kohlberg's theory might be applied across a wide generational spectrum. (We must also remember that stages of development can be more fluid, and that there are a number of factors that contribute to a person's moral development besides age.⁵) Moral dilemmas are constructed to give the participant a choice between opposing morals. As such, there is no wrong answer to a moral dilemma; but by understanding why we choose a particular moral over another, we can come to a greater understanding not only of that dilemma in particular, but also of how we navigate morality based choices in general. With an artfully worded dilemma, we can create interesting conversation unbounded by a wide range of ages or moral development levels. Moral development, Kohlberg

⁵ McDevitt, Teresa. *Child Development and Education*, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey. pg 519

argues, necessitates exposure to higher levels of reasoning. That is to say, a person can only attain a higher stage of moral development by coming into contact with views of a slightly higher stage than they are currently at.⁶

Additionally, teaching through moral dilemmas also allows learners the opportunity to participate as active constructors of learning, and not just passive receptors of information. Students can learn to both analyze given moral dilemmas and to create their own dilemmas to allow them to practice on real world issues that they may come into contact with at some future time. Learners can participate in their own education not only by examining how they navigate rocky moral ground, but also in framing moral dilemmas based on their own experiences making tough decisions in the present, reexamining decisions made in the past, and shaping likely future decision making processes. Learning moral education as a series of conflicting values (i.e. moral dilemmas) in addition to memorizing didactic *pitgamim* from Pirkei Avot or story time about our mythic forebears allows the learner to actively partake in understanding and explaining how they feel, what they think, and how they act, and what is really important to them.

⁶ *ibid* pg 521

Possible Critique

True, the individualized aspect of educating through moral dilemma opens up this method to critique. Moral dilemmas are problematic because many answers can be argued to be correct. If any one answer is more clearly correct, it would not be a dilemma. If virtually every answer is correct, then surely no answer is correct. If no one moral value is more correct, how can we presume to teach morality? We would simply be affirming any choice that any student wished to champion. This is a valid concern. As such, the curriculum would necessarily begin with a study of moral dilemmas for the purpose of clarifying what our values are, and how those values are or are not grounded in Judaism. Lessons would necessarily move forward into real-life issues, in which solutions are not limited, and of which we can argue there are “right” and “wrong” answers, and not just conflicting, though equally valid, morals.

Consequently, it is my belief that such a curriculum is uniquely suited for adolescents, particularly 7th and 8th grade Hebrew school b’nai mitzvah students, “Hebrew high school” students, and their parents. While these students are no doubt struggling to become capable in (or struggling to get over the trauma of) partaking in whatever arbitrary acts their synagogue has designated symbolize their entrance into adulthood, I posit that Jewish adulthood must consist of something more than symbolic ritual acts. Jewish adulthood must also be concerned with the daily process of making good, Jewish decisions, and in reflecting on what that means. By inspecting the values that underlie both fictional constructed moral dilemmas and real, experienced every day decisions, we can become more adept at navigating a

world of conflicting absolute positive values, at understanding ourselves and our decision making processes, and at understanding what kind of issues our family and community members are dealing with in the course of their daily lives, and thereby internalizing and reinforcing Jewish morals as individuals, as families, and as a community.

Curriculum in Context

On a practical level, this curriculum came about in large part due to my experience working with 7th grade students at North Shore Synagogue, in Syosset, Long Island under the kind and highly talented hand of Rabbi Rena Rifkin. While a respectable portion of the curriculum is focused on socializing, having fun, and teaching a slew of disparate yet engaging and pertinent Jewish topics of interest pertaining to our 7th graders, more than half of the curriculum is devoted solely to bar and bat mitzvah tefillah preparation, learning to read and chant tefillot. I had simultaneously engaged in multiple conversations with teachers, friends, and colleagues regarding the real purpose of b'nai mitzvah. If being a Jewish adult is about standing up in front of the community to chant torah and tefillot, then the b'nai mitzvah ritual as it is typically performed stands as proper representation of what it means to be a Jewish adult. If however, being a Jewish adult in a given community is not manifested in a person's ability to chant torah and tefillot, why are those the skills we associate with our children becoming Jewish adults? The ensuing conversations left me believing that being a Jewish adult was less about ritualized performance and more about making being able to navigate difficult moral decisions in theory and in practice.

Armed with a proper rationale for the worthiness of dilemma based moral education, and a commitment to creating a curriculum for young adults and adults focused on what it really means to act as a "Jewish adult," I began working on this capstone project. Initial research was disheartening. It seemed that such a curriculum had already been attempted. In his dissertation "Appropriating Kohlberg

for Traditional Jewish High Schools.” Barry Kislowitz discusses the possibility of using Kohlberg in a Jewish educational setting, and even references Moshe Blatt, a graduate student of Kohlberg’s who piloted moral education through dilemma in a Jewish Sunday school.⁷ Kohlberg and Blatt’s work are also referenced in almost every article and book I looked at concerning Jewish moral education. However, I had committed to not just creating a Jewish moral education curriculum through dilemmas, but a truly unique curriculum that incorporated a family/community education model that allowed students to learn dilemmas both out of personal experience and out of our sacred texts, allowing them to also take a critical eye toward the text. It sounds great: But what would such a curriculum **really** look like?

⁷ Kislowitz, pg 26

Essential Questions, Enduring Understandings

Essential Questions	Enduring Understandings
What are my values?	Deciding how to act is tough, but we use our values as a compass to point the way.
How can my values help inform the way I live out my life?	We understand our values by connecting to our tradition with a critical eye, informed by our knowledge and experience.
How does my community function in my value system?	As a community, we can expand each others' knowledge and share experiences in order to advance our understanding of each other and our values.

Learner Outcomes

❖ Know

- Students will identify a number of values, both from traditional Jewish sources and outside experience, that inform the way s/he makes decisions.

❖ Do

- Students will analyze their own and other's moral dilemmas in order to better understand what values inform their decisions and why.

❖ Believe:

- Students will reflect on the ways that values, applied to daily life decisions, challenge and benefit their choices.
- ❖ Belong:
 - Students will reflect on the importance of community to the creation and enactment of values. Students will participate in discussions and activities in a community setting, across a wide range of ages, in which each we invite students to participate equally no matter age, rank, or station.

Breakdown of Units

The curriculum consists of four major units.

Unit 1: Intro to Morals, Intro to Dilemmas

Essential Questions: What is the difference between preferences and moral? How do morals help us make decisions?

In this unit, we begin with understanding the difference between decisions based on preferences and decisions based on morals. We begin to generate a list of morals/values that help us navigate difficult situations, and begin to think about ranking them in certain situations, keeping a journal record of our values and their ranking. We are also introduced to dilemmas, how they function, what they ask of us, how we can answer them, how we can experience growth from trying to understand each other's answers. The first lesson is done entirely separately, that is, 7th and 8th grade together, high school students together, and parents/adults together, in order to begin developing comfort with discussion among peers. By the end of the second lesson, students will begin coming together as learners to discuss dilemmas as a mixed-age group in order to expose students to a wider range of moral reasoning.

Unit 2: Our Values

Essential Questions: What are our values? Which values are most important to us? What is the place of Jewish tradition in my formulation of values?

By now, students should have the beginning of a running list of values. In this section, students spend the first part of class with their own age groups, in study of traditional texts, stories, or other vehicles for values (as is age appropriate), in order to reinforce values already on students' lists, and to add values that may be lacking from their lists. Educators should capitalize on existing lists in order to present

material that is both pertinent and challenging for students within their capacity. All measures should be taken to teach the same material/values to each age group. The second part of classes involves students coming together, forming groups transcending their normal social/age boundaries to discuss how to navigate a dilemma that incorporates values discussed in the first part of that class. Time should be taken at the end of each lesson for journal reflection on the values under investigation that day, and where they fit within the growing ranks of each student's values hierarchy

Unit 3: Take It Home

Essential Questions: How do we use our values to make real-life decisions? How can we help each other, as a community, proactively create models of productive moral exploration?

As part of Unit 3, students will continue the same model of learning texts/bases of Jewish values from Jewish traditional sources, but will have been exposed to dilemmas enough to be able to formulate their own. Students will act as co-constructors of learning, either using situations from their own experiences or creating dilemmas from scratch placing values from their lists in conflict with each other. Whereas true dilemmas have a limited number of answers, all of them valid, real true-to-life “dilemmas” have an infinite number of possible solutions, some of which are consistent with our values and others not. By practicing applying values to real and imagined-plausible situations, we are able not only to increase our moral reasoning abilities, but also to form good decision-making habits by talking out difficult decisions with peers, and elders in respectful open settings.

Unit 4: Reflection

Essential Questions: How has my values-system changed over our course of study?
How have I changed as a person?

This unit focuses on reflection on the curriculum overall. How has our hierarchy changed from the beginning of the course to now? If was a big change, what does that mean for us? If a small change, what does it mean? How can we continue learning and making good decisions?

Outline of Sample Lessons

The content and values proposed in these lessons are samples of what I felt to be particularly rich in generic values. It is highly recommended to use content and values that are dictated by the student's input, both on what values they are already comfortable with and what values they don't typically choose to deal with.

Unit 1: Unit 1: Intro to Morals, Intro to Dilemmas

Lesson 1

Title: Prefer to Choose

Content: Introduction to Preference, morals-based decisions, dilemmas

Dilemma: Sample preference choices, sample moral dilemmas

Essential Questions: How do we make choices? How do morals shape our decisions?

Lesson 2

Title: To Choose or Not to Choose?

Content: Tree of Knowledge

Dilemma: Knowledge or Ignorance: "What is better, an imperfect world with 'knowledge' or a perfect world with 'ignorance'?"

Essential Questions: What do we do when confronted with a decision that has no clear answer? How do we know when we're making "good" decisions? How do we decide if we don't know the consequences?

Lesson 3

Title: You're Not My Mom: You can't tell me what to do

Content: Abraham and Sodom, Akeidat Yitzchak

Dilemma: Autonomy or Subordination

Essential Questions: How do we know what's right? Where does moral authority come from? How do we choose when what we are told to do is not consistent with what we want to do?

Unit 2: Our Values

Lesson 4

Title: Is it true? I do, I do, I do, I do

Content: Jacob and Lavan

Values/Dilemmas: White Lies or Black Truths, Stealing from a Thief, Honoring Family, Amassing Wealth, Raising a Family, Honesty

Essential Questions: What values are the text trying to impart? How do these values correspond with our own? What might a conflict in these values look like in my life?

Lesson 5

Title: Moshe: the hero Gotham deserves, but not the one it needs right now

Content: Moshe in Mitzrayim

Values/Dilemmas: Justice or Mercy, Vigilantism, Punishment or Rehabilitation, Death Penalty, Assimilation or Cultural Seclusion, Dealing With Unjust Laws, Peoplehood

Essential Questions: What values are the text trying to impart? How do these values correspond with our own? What might a conflict in these values look like in my life?

Lesson 6

Title: My Brother From Another Mother

Content: David, Jonathan, Saul

Values/Dilemmas: Commitment to Friends or Family, Loyalty, Responsibilities toward Unjust Governments, Law, Bravery, Narcissism vs Egotism vs Confidence

Essential Questions: What values are the text trying to impart? How do these values correspond with our own? What might a conflict in these values look like in my life?

Unit 3: Take It Home

Lesson 7

Title: You Are My Mom: But so what?

Content: Responsibility of Parents to Children and Children to Parents

Dilemma: Clashing interest between parents and child

Essential Questions: How do we use our values to determine how we act? How do we balance our desires with the responsibility to our children/parents? What are the responsibilities of a child to a parent and a parent to a child? Why?

Lesson 8

Title: Why were you so surprised/ that you never saw the stranger?

Content: Responsibility of the group to the individual/ to the “other,” to the stranger

Dilemma: Big Tent or Draw the Line

Essential Questions: How do we use our values to determine how we act? How do we respond to new and different people/experiences? Why?

Unit 4: Reflection

Lesson 9

Title: Reflection

Essential Questions: How has my value system changed? How do my values correspond with my peers? With my parents?

Scripted Lesson Plans

Lesson 1 - Intro to Morals, Intro to Dilemma

7th & 8th Grade

0:00-0:05

Welcome and intro.

0:05-0:10

Give **one word** to describe your past Hebrew school experience.

0:10-0:15

Judaism is a journey, not a destination. While Judaism has a history and a culture and a language and lots of other things we can memorize, really living out Judaism has nothing to do with Judaism, it has to do with everything else. Living out Judaism is about making decisions about the way we interact with the world, the way we navigate value tensions, the way we make decisions.

0:15-0:25

Two Sides of the Room

Ask a few people to explain why they chose what they chose. You must choose one or the other. No middles. Even if you hate both, you must hate one more than the other.

- 1 Which ice cream flavor do you like better: chocolate or vanilla?
- 2 What is better, Harry Potter or Hunger Games?
- 3 What is better, doing homework or having fun?
- 4 What is better, helping 100 people a lot, or helping 500 people a little?
- 5 It's Saturday morning. Your best friend is having a bar mitzvah today, but the sports team you play on has a huge game at the same time. Both are counting on you to be there and support them the whole time. Bar mitzvah or sports game?

Sometimes we choose things because we just like one better than the other. I just like the taste of vanilla more. Sometimes though, you have to figure out what's more important. Maybe you like Harry Potter because Hunger Games is too violent. What did you have to think about in order to decide what's more important: to keep your promise to your friend or to your whole sports team?

0:25-0:35

In groups of 4ish, hand this out, have them write. Invite people to agree or disagree with their group.

To Tell, or Not to Tell

Judy was a twelve-year-old girl. Her mother promised her that she could go to a special rock concert coming to their town if she saved up from baby-sitting and

lunch money to buy a ticket to the concert. She managed to save up the fifteen dollars the ticket cost plus another five dollars. But then her mother changed her mind and told Judy that she had to spend the money on new clothes for school. Judy was disappointed and decided to go to the concert anyway. She bought a ticket and told her mother that she had only been able to save five dollars. That Saturday she went to the performance and told her mother that she was spending the day with a friend. A week passed without her mother finding out. Judy then told her older sister, Louise, that she had gone to the performance and had lied to her mother about it. Louise wonders whether to tell their mother what Judy did.

Why might Louise tell her mother what Judy did?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Why might Louise not tell her mother?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

If you were Louise, what would you do?

Why?

0:35-0:40

Go around, take a few responses, which would you do and why?

0:40-0:50

Have the word "VALUES" written on the board.

If you decided that Louise has to tell her parents, what are you saying is important?

Examples:

Telling the truth
Responsibility/honor to parents
Safety
Trust

If you decided that Louise shouldn't tell her parents, what are you saying is important?

Examples:
Having fun
Keeping promises
Responsibility to sister
Trust

When you make one of these choices, you're not saying that one is important and one not. Both of these things are important. But the circumstances we find ourselves in change the kind of decision we make. Not because one thing becomes any less or any more important. Telling the truth and keeping promises are both important, but we have to choose, and choosing means we think one is more important than the other, right now.

0:50-0:60

In chavrutot:

Think about a situation when you had to choose between two things. Where there values involved? What values?

Homework: Pick one time during this coming week when you have to decide between two things. Before you decide, ask yourself, are there values underneath what I'm deciding? What are the values?

Lesson 1 - Intro to Morals, Intro to Dilemma Hebrew High School

0:00-0:05

Welcome and intro.

0:05-0:10 Class Discussion

What did you think being a “Jewish adult” was going to look like?

How did that image mesh with the reality of life after your bar/bat mitzvah?

0:10-0:15

As far as Judaism is concerned, being an adult is about being responsible for your actions, about being responsible for making decisions about how you interact with the world around you. Really living Judaism has nothing to do with remembering your Hebrew lessons, nothing to do with chanting torah, nothing to do with being able to repeat Bible stories. Living out Judaism is about making informed decisions about the way we interact with the world, the way we navigate value tensions, the way we make decisions.

0:15-0:25

Two Sides of the Room

Let’s look at a few simple decisions we make, but think for a second why you make those decisions. Remember, there is no right or wrong answer.

Ask a few people to explain why they chose what they chose. You must choose one or the other. No middles. Even if you hate both, you must hate one more than the other.

- 1 What tastes better, lasagna or grilled chicken?
- 2 What is more fun soccer or basketball?”
- 3 What is better, the kitchen or the living room?
- 4 What is better, getting good grades or learning a lot?
- 5 What is better, telling your friend a small lie that makes them feel good, or telling them the truth that makes them feel bad?

0:25-0:35

Being a Jewish adult is about making choices. Sometimes these are based on preference, but some really strike at what’s important to us. By making a decision, we are saying that one thing, one value, is more important to us than the alternative.

In groups of 4ish, hand this out, have them write. Invite people to agree or disagree with their group.

Camp Problems

Bobby has loved baseball his whole life, and has developed into one of the most respected players on his team. With Bobby’s help, his school’s baseball team wins a lot of games, bringing a lot of new students and good press to the school. He often

spends long hours after school and on the weekends working on his fastball or slider and taking batting practice with one of his coaches. This doesn't leave as much time as his parents would like for Bobby to spend on his homework. As a result, his parents have decided he must either bring his grades up to B average or quit the baseball team. Bobby's baseball coach wants to talk to his teachers about changing Bobby's grade without making him do any more work because baseball is so important to the school.⁸

Why should Bobby quit baseball?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Why should Bobby continue to play baseball?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

What would you do if you were Bobby's coach?

Why?

What would you do if you were Bobby?

Why?

⁸ Based on: Moral Development Questions for Teenagers | eHow.com
http://www.ehow.com/info_7873287_moral-development-questions-teenagers.html#ixzz2RDrNBsYr

0:35-0:40

Go around, take a few responses, which would you do and why?

When you make one of these choices, you're not saying that one is important and one not. Both of these decisions are correct. All of these things are important. The values stay the same, but the circumstances we find ourselves in change the kind of decision we make. But we can't have everything we think is important, so we have to compromise on something.

0:40-0:50

Write "VALUES" on the right side of the board.

Write the following answers on the right side of the board.

When you say Bobby should quit baseball, what are you saying is important?

- Listening to parents

- Getting good grades

- The value of hard work

When you say Bobby should continue to play baseball, what are you saying is important?

- Responsibility to the team/ to the school

- The needs of the many over the needs of the few

- Doing what you love

We love our parents immensely but we might want to have some independence, some space. We want to help the whole family, but we deserve to benefit from what we earn. We can all agree that all of those things are important, and we don't make decisions because the values become and more or any less important to us, but sometime we have to prioritize certain values because you can't always have everything.

0:50-0:60

In groups: Think about a time that you had to decide between two things but needed help to figure out what to pick. What helped you decide? What values, if any, did you have to take into account?

Homework: Pick one time during this coming week when you have to decide between two things. Before you decide, ask yourself, are there values underneath what I'm deciding? What are the values?

Lesson 1 - Intro to Morals, Intro to Dilemma

Parent Students

0:00-0:05

Welcome and intro.

0:05-0:15

By means of learning a bit about each other, everyone go around the room and say your name, and a sentence or two on why you're here.

0:15-0:20

And as a second quick introduction, turn to your neighbor. Answer the question, when you were a kid, what did you want to do when you grew up, and what do you do now?

0:20-0:35

While this might be just another ice breaker/ mixer game, I'll tell you that I also think this is the crux of what Judaism really is. Sure, Judaism is a whole history, and culture, and a religion, and everything that we all learned and forgot about from Hebrew school. But what is Judaism if it's not lived? Judaism isn't just what you learned in Hebrew school, and it's not the rituals you do in the synagogue, it's what you do in your daily life when you're not in the building. It's what you do for a living, it's how you got to where you are, and it's how you figure out where you're going. Being Jewish means interacting with the world in a "Jewish way." Being Jewish means making informed decisions about how we interact with our environment.

Let's look at some sample decisions to begin understanding what we mean. Remember that there is no wrong answer.

Ask for a show of hands, and ask a few people to explain their answers:

- 1 What's better, coffee or tea?
- 2 What's better, romantic dinner in or romantic dinner out?
- 3 What's better, playing it safe or taking risks?
- 4 What's more important, encourage kids to take it easy or to push for excellence?
- 5 Your family's been having a little bit of a tough time, and you all agree that the only time you can all get away is Passover, even though you already promised your in-laws you would go to their seder/meal. Passover seder or family vacation?

In your explanations why, we started to see that we don't just make decisions arbitrarily, there's a lot of thinking that goes on behind every little yes or no. Some decisions are based on preference: coffee or tea. Some questions require us to think a little harder about what our priorities are, what our values are. Even though our priorities might be different, the values are the same, and we can all agree that all

the values here are important. Relaxation is important, but so is academics, family unity is important, but so is fulfilling commitments. All answers are right, it just depends on how each individual prioritizes these values to determine the outcome.

Let's look at a little more in depth at one decision in particular and analyze the values that go into it.

0:35-0:45 The Immoral Philanthropist

In groups of 4ish, hand this out, have one person take notes for every group. Invite people to agree or disagree with their group, and take their own stance.

As an active and educated member of the synagogue, they have asked you to sit on the general board. Unfortunately, the synagogue has been having a bit of financial troubles lately, and for the last 5 years has been operating with a deficit. This year, a community philanthropist offers to donate 10 million dollars not only to bail out the temple but also to reinvigorate the community and fund outreach programs. The synagogue gladly accepts. Right as the check is cashed, news breaks that this philanthropist acquired much of his fortune through nefarious, illegal, and otherwise immoral means. While the synagogue lawyer says the courts can't touch the money, half the board decides that they can no longer accept his donation.

Why might someone want to accept the donation?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Why might someone want to refuse the donation?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

What would you do?

What values are you exemplifying by making that decision? (Rank in order of importance: 1 being most important)

What argument(s) could you use to persuade the half of the board that disagrees with you?

0:45-0:50

Go around the groups. Ask them which ones they chose, and the values they recorded. Write them on the board in two columns, "ACCEPT DONATION" and "DECLINE DONATION"

All of us can agree that continuity, community, financial security, modeling positive actions and morale, are important. We all know that is not only a religious building but also a business that has to generate revenue in order to operate. We want our shul and our community to stick around as long as possible, but we have to draw a line somewhere; the question is, where exactly? We can all agree that all of those things are important, and we don't make decisions because the values become any more or any less important to us, but sometime we have to prioritize certain values because you can't always have everything.

0:50-0:60 Text study

In groups, discuss this summary of text.

When Jacob, our forefather, ran away from his brother Esau, he went to live with his uncle, Laban. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying his daughter Leah, instead of Rachel, and consequently Jacob was forced to work for Laban another 7 years. At the same time, in order to fulfill God's promise of wealth, Jacob tricked Laban into a deal that would give Jacob all the "spotted, speckled, and dark" animals, after which Jacob invented a system so that all newborn animals would be speckled, effectively making all of Laban's cattle his.

Discuss: How do our values listed before apply to this case?

This week: Sometime this week when you have to decide between two things, think carefully: Are there values underlying what I'm deciding? What are the values?

Lesson 2 – To Choose or Not to Choose?**7th & 8th Grade****0:00-0:05**

Welcome and intro

0:05-0:15

Hand out journals. Invite students to write down any values/morals they remember from the previous class. If any of them did the homework and thought about using values to help them make a decision, invite them to share/write down those values. If people need help thinking, invite people to share or prompt with values discussed last time, i.e. honesty, responsibility/honor to parents/family, safety, trust, having fun, keeping promises

0:15-0:25 Heinz Dilemma

Have them break into groups. Make it clear that there are no wrong answers. Have each group come up with an answer they can agree on, **write it down** and do a 30 second skit to explain their solution. Write their solutions on the board.

Heinz's Dilemma**By Lawrence Kohlberg, as told by RebelMangoTV (Youtube)**

Heinz's wife is dying because of a special kind of cancer. There is only one drug that the doctors think might save her. It is a new formula which a pharmaceutical company in the same town has recently discovered. The drug is very expensive to produce, but the company is charging 10 times the production cost. Heinz goes to everyone he knows to borrow money but he can only collect half of what the drug costs. He tells the CEO of the company that his wife is dying and asks him to sell it for less or if he can pay at a later time. But the CEO refuses. He can make no exceptions. The research had been very expensive and the company needs to turn in a profit. What should happen next?

- 1) Heinz should steal the drug, and not go to prison as this is unfair.
- 2) Heinz should not steal the drugs because he would be breaking the law.
- 3) Heinz should steal the drug, and accept any prison sentence.

Should Heinz steal the drug?

Why?

0:25-0:35

Go over an answer "yes" and an answer "no" that is above their moral development level, and explain why that answer might be right.

0:30-0:45

Tell the story of Eve deciding whether or not to eat the fruit. Make it clear that she is deciding between knowledge and death. Ask students to think about one reason why she should eat it and one reason why she shouldn't. Discuss their solutions, and offer at least one solution above their moral development level.

0:45-0:55

Students from all three classes join together. They form predetermined groups to ensure that there is a mix of ages. In those groups, each student goes around and presents the what they think Eve should do **and why**.

0:55-1:00

Write down in your journal any morals or values we talked about today that you had not written down before. If you had to pick the most important of these values, which one would it be?

Homework: Think about a time when your teacher/parent/sibling told you to do something that you really didn't want to do? What did you do?

Lesson 2 – To Choose or Not to Choose?

Hebrew High

0:00-0:05

Welcome and intro

0:05-0:15

Hand out journals. Invite students to write down any values/morals they remember from the previous class. If any of them did the homework and thought about using values to help them make a decision, invite them to share/write down those values. If people need help thinking, invite people to share or prompt with values discussed last time, i.e keeping promises, the value of hard work, honoring your parents, putting needs of the family/of the many/of the school/community above your own, doing what you love, having fun.

0:15-0:25 Heinz Dilemma

Have them break into groups. Make it clear that there are no wrong answers. Have each group come up with an answer they can agree on, **write it down**. Write their solutions on the board.

Heinz's Dilemma

By Lawrence Kohlberg, as told by RebelMangoTV (Youtube)

Heinz's wife is dying because of a special kind of cancer. There is only one drug that the doctors think might save her. It is a new formula which a pharmaceutical company in the same town has recently discovered. The drug is very expensive to produce, but the company is charging 10 times the production cost. Heinz goes to everyone he knows to borrow money but he can only collect half of what the drug costs. He tells the CEO of the company that his wife is dying and asks him to sell it for less or if he can pay at a later time. But the CEO refuses. He can make no exceptions. The research had been very expensive and the company needs to turn in a profit. What should happen next?

- 1) Heinz should steal the drug, and not go to prison as this is unfair.
- 2) Heinz should not steal the drugs because he would be breaking the law.
- 3) Heinz should steal the drug, and accept any prison sentence.

Should Heinz steal the drug?

Why?

What do you think your parents would answer?

0:25-0:35

Take some comments about the difference between their answer and their parents answer. Go over an answer “yes” and an answer “no” that is above their moral development level, and explain why that answer might be right.

0:30-0:45

Read the story of Eve deciding whether or not to eat the fruit. Make it clear that she is deciding between knowledge and death. What value does the text say is more important? What value do you think is more important?

The Woman's Dilemma

Genesis 2:16-17

God Eternal then commanded the man, saying, “You may eat all you like of every tree in the garden—but of the Tree of All Knowledge you may not eat, for the moment you eat of it you shall be doomed to die.”

3:1-6

...[The serpent] said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You may not eat of any tree in the Garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “Of any tree in the Garden we may eat the fruit; but God said, ‘Of the fruit of the tree in the middle of it do not eat, and do not [even] touch it, or you will die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You most certainly will not die! On the contrary: God knows that when you do eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing all things.” The woman saw how good to eat the tree’s fruit would be, and how alluring to the eyes it was, and how desirable the insight was that the tree would bring...”

What should happen next?

- 1) The woman should eat the fruit, attain wisdom, and not be punished, as this is unfair.
- 2) The woman should not eat the fruit because she would be breaking the law.
- 3) The woman should eat the fruit, attain wisdom, and accept any punishment.

Should the woman eat the fruit?

Why?

1)

2)

0:45-0:55

Students from all three classes join together. They form predetermined groups to ensure that there is a mix of ages. In those groups, each student goes around and presents what they think Eve should do **and why**.

0:55-1:00

Write down in your journal any morals or values we talked about today that you had not written down before. If you had to pick the most important of all of these values, which one would it be?

Homework: Think about a time when your teacher/parent/sibling told you to do something that you really didn't want to do? What did you do?

Lesson 2 – To Choose or Not to Choose?**Parent students****0:00-0:05**

Welcome and intro

0:05-0:15

Hand out journals. Invite parents to write down any values/morals they remember from the previous class. If any of them did the homework and thought about using values to help them make a decision, invite them to share/write down those values as well. If people need help thinking, invite people to share or prompt with values discussed last time, i.e following the law, charity, protecting the weak, supporting the community, honest business dealings. If they can, have them rank them in order of importance to them. At least choose a number one value.

0:15-0:25 Heinz Dilemma

Have them break into groups. Make it clear that there are no wrong answers. Have each group come up with an answer they can agree on, and have them note any values that come up in the example to the list in their journals.

Heinz's Dilemma**By Lawrence Kohlberg, as told by RebelMangoTV (Youtube)**

Heinz's wife is dying because of a special kind of cancer. There is only one drug that the doctors think might save her. It is a new formula which a pharmaceutical company in the same town has recently discovered. The drug is very expensive to produce, but the company is charging 10 times the production cost. Heinz goes to everyone he knows to borrow money but he can only collect half of what the drug costs. He tells the CEO of the company that his wife is dying and asks him to sell it for less or if he can pay at a later time. But the CEO refuses. He can make no exceptions. The research had been very expensive and the company needs to turn in a profit. What should happen next?

- 1) Heinz should steal the drug, and not go to prison as this is unfair.
- 2) Heinz should not steal the drugs because he would be breaking the law.
- 3) Heinz should steal the drug, and accept any prison sentence.

Should Heinz steal the drug?

Why?

What do you think your children would answer? Why?

0:25-0:35

Take some comments about the difference between their answer and their children's answer. Go over an answer "yes" and an answer "no" that on Kohlberg's highest level of moral development, and explain why that answer might be right.

0:30-0:45

Hand out the story of Eve deciding whether or not to eat the fruit. What values does Eve think is more important? What value does God think is more important? Who do you agree with? Does it bother you to disagree with God? That God is not operating on Kohlberg's highest level of moral development?

The Woman's Dilemma

Genesis 2:16-17

God Eternal then commanded the man, saying, "You may eat all you like of every tree in the garden—but of the Tree of All Knowledge you may not eat, for the moment you eat of it you shall be doomed to die."

3:1-6

...[The serpent] said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You may not eat of any tree in the Garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "Of any tree in the Garden we may eat the fruit; but God said, 'Of the fruit of the tree in the middle of it do not eat, and do not [even] touch it, or you will die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You most certainly will not die! On the contrary: God knows that when you do eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing all things." The woman saw how good to eat the tree's fruit would be, and how alluring to the eyes it was, and how desirable the insight was that the tree would bring..."

What should happen next?

- 1) The woman should eat the fruit, attain wisdom, and not be punished, as this is unfair.
- 2) The woman should not eat the fruit because she would be breaking the law.
- 3) The woman should eat the fruit, attain wisdom, and accept any punishment.

Should the woman eat the fruit?

Why?

1)

2)

0:45-0:55

Students from all three classes join together. They form predetermined groups to ensure that there is a mix of ages. In those groups, each student goes around and presents what they think Eve should do **and why**.

0:55-1:00

Write down in your journal any morals or values we talked about today that you had not written down before. If you had to pick the most important of all of these values, which one would it be?

Homework: Think about a time when your teacher/parent/sibling told you to do something that you really didn't want to do? What did you do?

“Mission” of 7th Grade at NSS

From: <http://www.northshoresynagogue.org/school1.php>

For Grade 7, we are thrilled to offer a 7th grade program that encourages students to see Judaism as both personal and communal. Our 7th grade Judaica class meets every Tuesday evening from 6:00 until 7:30 and includes dinner.

Each week the class will have a different theme which will be discussed through the lens of what it means to be a Reform Jew. Students will help set the direction of the class by choosing many of the topics that we study. The four themes are:

Mitzvot: Throughout the year, students will discuss the concept of *mitzvot* and what it means to be commanded to help other people. Students will have the opportunity to participate in various hands-on mitzvah projects. Examples include: creating care packages for those in the armed forces, volunteering at the HUC Soup kitchen or visiting North Shore Animal League.

Jewish Community: In trying to see themselves as part of a larger community, the students will encounter various members of the Jewish community. Members of the synagogue, the local Syosset community and the larger Jewish community will speak with our students about what community means and their role in the synagogue, local and global Jewish communities.

Torah: During class we will discuss how Torah is relevant to us today through exploration of "hot topics" such as relationships, bullying, sportsmanship, Facebook/social media, etc.

Social Programming: The 7th grade class is as much about social interaction and down time as it is about learning. Our teens will have the opportunity to connect with their classmates in a social setting on Tuesday evenings during out-of-house events such as laser tag, a mall scavenger hunt and in-house events such as gaga, tie dying, a chocolate Passover Seder and many more!

Bar & Bat Mitzvah Training

Preparation for a student's specific Bar/Bat Mitzvah service is conducted by our clergy and tutors. The student's prayer learning is done as part of the seventh grade Hebrew curriculum. About six months before the date of the service, the student will begin work with one of our tutors to prepare his/her individual Torah and Haftarah portions. Students meet with the Rabbis to prepare their individual speeches about a month before their service. A special parents' meeting with the Rabbi is held in the fall of the seventh grade year. A Bar/Bat Mitzvah date is assigned in the student's fourth grade year.

All 7th Graders are expected to attend one hour of Hebrew class on Sunday mornings or Tuesday afternoons. Students who excel in Hebrew have an opportunity to serve as student aides in our Religious School.

Capstone PowerPoint Presentation

THE MORAL EDUCATIONAL DILEMMA

What are
our
values
and how
do we
use
them?

BACKGROUND

- North Shore Synagogue, Syosset, Long Island
- 7th Grade B'nai Mitzvah Students:
 - “What does it mean to be a ‘Jewish adult’?”
- 7th Grade B'nai Mitzvah Parents:
 - “What does it mean to be a ‘Jewish child’?”
- Hebrew High Students

RATIONALE

- Bnai Mitzvah
 - Values-informed Decisions
 - Lawrence Kohlberg:
“Stages of Moral Development”
 - Moral Dilemma

KOHLBERG'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Level/Stage	Age Range	Description
I: Obedience/Punishment	Infancy	No difference between doing the right thing and avoiding punishment
I: Self-Interest	Pre-school	Interest shifts to rewards rather than punishment – effort is made to secure greatest benefit for oneself
II: Conformity and Interpersonal Accord	School-age	The “good boy/girl” level. Effort is made to secure approval and maintain friendly relations with others
II: Authority and Social Order	School-age	Orientation toward fixed rules. The purpose of morality is maintaining the social order. Interpersonal accord is expanded to include the entire society
III: Social Contract	Teens	Mutual benefit, reciprocity. Morally right and legally right are not always the same. Utilitarian rules that make life better for everyone
III: Universal Principles	Adulthood	Morality is based on principles that transcend mutual benefit.

The Psychology Notes Headquarter - <http://www.PsychologyNotesHQ.com>

UNIQUENESS

- Family Education Model
- Teaching and Learning in Community
- Critical Eye Toward Text
- Working from Past Experience
- Active Constructors of Learning

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What are my values?
- How can my values help inform the way I live out my life?
- How does my community function in my value system?

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- Deciding how to act is tough, but we use our values as a compass to point the way.
- We understand our values by connecting to our tradition with a critical eye, informed by our knowledge and experience.
- As a community, we can expand each others' knowledge and share experiences in order to advance our understanding of each other and our values.

LEARNER OUTCOMES

- **Know**
 - Students will identify a number of values, both from traditional Jewish sources and outside experience, that inform the way s/he makes decisions.
- **Do**
 - Students will analyze their own and other's moral dilemmas in order to better understand what values inform their decisions and why.
- **Believe:**
 - Students will reflect on the ways that values, applied to daily life decisions, challenge and benefit their choices.
- **Belong:**
 - Students will reflect on the importance of community to the creation and enactment of values. Students will participate in discussions and activities in a community setting, across a wide range of ages, in which each student's voice, no matter age, rank, or station, is of equal importance to the learning process

COURSE OUTLINE

- **Unit 1: Intro to Dilemmas**
- **Unit 2: What are our values?**
- **Unit 3: How do we use our values?**
- **Unit 4: Reflection**

SAMPLE LESSON



THE DILEMMA DILEMMA

Heinz's Dilemma

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

The Woman's Dilemma

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

QUESTIONS



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