

A TEST CASE

Having presented an overview of some of the central texts in Jewish culture, it is now important to ask "How does a madrich/a actually use this information?" If a group of madrichim wants to plan a peulah (activity) around a particular subject incorporating some of these sources, there are certain steps to follow. The following represents an example of the process one might take. Not all of the steps will be relevant for every peulah and different peulot will necessitate other steps.

The process outlined below is an ideal; reality will probably dictate that only part of the process is followed.

Let us assume we are planning a peulah on the topic of "giving land for peace" in Israel...

Step 1 - Write down the primary goals, which would be for this peulah, for example:

- a. to clarify the issue for the chanichim: What, exactly, is the debate?
- b. to have chanichim understand the complexity of the issue, to show them that many factors are involved : religious, security, economic, cultural... and that there are no clear black and white answers to the questions raised.
- c. to explore with the chanichim what Judaism has to say about this issue; to show chanichim that Judaism has related to it at least indirectly for generations.
- d. to expose chanichim to some relevant Jewish texts and have them grapple with them.

Step 2 - Examine some of the questions that the specific issue raises. For example:

What are the questions that lie behind the issue of 'land for peace'? How does Judaism view our relationship to the land of Israel? What is the nature of the holiness of the land? Does the value of peace ever outweigh the value of the land?

Step 3 - Consider some of the practical questions regarding the peulah. For example:

- What do our chanichim already know about the subject?
- What is the time-frame for the peulah?
- What types of activities seem to work best with our chanichim? And more...

The main task, now, is to gather the sources dealing with the issue. And here we go to the "Jewish Library".

Step 4 - Start by asking a shaliach/a, Rabbi, librarian or Jewish educator for advice: Do they have any books to recommend? Are there any aspects of the issue that they consider particularly important?

Step 5 - Go to a good library, Jewish if possible, to look for any good books that may deal with the subject. There may be a book which does all the work, which traces all of the Jewish sources regarding the particular subject.

Step 6 - Check a number of **General books** such as:

Encyclopedia Judaica, a great starting point for almost any subject. Check all references which may be relevant. Some include basic information on the subject and also cite other relevant subjects which are dealt with elsewhere in the encyclopedia. Check Israel-land, Israel-politics, peace, promised land, covenant, holiness of the land. Some will appear, some will not. The bibliography of each reference sends you to other relevant books.

The Jewish Catalogue, edited by Michael and Sharon Strassfeld. The Catalogue appears in three parts and is non-academic and very readable. It relates to many issues on the contemporary Jewish agenda.

Francine Klagsbrun's Voices of Wisdom is a collection of Jewish texts (sayings, passages, stories) organized according to various themes.

Louis Jacob's What Does Judaism Say About...? answers that question for a multitude of timely subjects.

Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought, edited by Arthur Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr is a very comprehensive collection of clear and concise articles on a wealth of subjects. Each entry has a short bibliographic list which is very up-to-date and helpful.

After gaining a general background it is then time to look at specific sources and time periods.

Step 7 - Refer to some of the **Biblical sources**

Start with the Concordance. This is a book which indexes the entire Tanach. Every word in the Tanach appears in the Concordance with a list of places where the word appears. Check under various words related to your subject matter. Then go to the Tanach itself to examine the specific verses.

Turn to Gunther Plaut's The Torah, A Modern Commentary, to see whether he has related to the subject specifically. Plaut's work includes a modern Progressive interpretation of the Torah as well as relevant sources from different periods and different cultures.