

Kedusha Family Education Program Grade 4

This material was developed over the course of several years and with the participation of a number of Jewish educators. Much of the original program was developed by Dr. Jeffrey Schein. Later adaptations and new programs were created by David Weinstein.

Kedusha Family Education: Conceptions of God

The concept of "kedusha" is one that is difficult for both children and adults. It is important then that children and parents see each other struggling to understand the concept of kedusha and God in their own lives. This program hopefully allows families to open up this dialogue on the nature of God in a safe and supportive environment.

1. The group is divided into families. Each family is given a large piece of paper and markers and a set of directions. Families are asked to develop a job description for God and to put that job description on the large paper.
2. Meet back together for a discussion and presentation of ideas about the nature of God.
3. Families are sent back to work on job descriptions for humans. These should also be presented to the whole group.
4. In large group, discuss what is expected from God and what is expected from ourselves. What are the similarities and differences in these expectations? How do we explain this overlap?
5. Families are then given "Applications for the Position of God." From this they are to decide which one best fits their job description. This is a good discussion to complete at home. Students can bring their answers back to the class for the next week to continue the discussion.

Handout #1

Directions:

On a large piece of paper prepare a job description for the position of God. Include the following information in your description:

1. Qualifications and background needed
2. Description of responsibilities
3. Hours of job
4. Location of job
5. Rewards of job

Prepare to share your work with the rest of the group.

Handout #2

Directions: On a large piece of paper prepare a job description for the position of human being. Include the following information in your description:

1. Qualifications and background needed
2. Description of responsibilities
3. Hours of job
4. Location of job
5. Rewards of job

Prepare to share your work with the rest of the group.

Handout #3: (Adapted from *Sh'ma Is for Real*, Joel Grishaver)

Applications for the Position of God:

1. A Cricket–Jiminy Cricket God is our conscience, a small voice within us
2. A Plant or Flower–God is order, the laws of nature, scientific truth
3. A Marionette–God pulls our strings, controls our actions, determines the future, performs miracles,
4. A Watchmaker–God is like a watchmaker who puts together a watch, winds it up and then leaves it running.
5. A Clipboard–God takes notes on what we do, and eventually we will get rewarded or punished for our actions.

Adult Education:

Parents have read Heschel's *The Sabbath* in preparation for this discussion on the nature of "kedusha". The focus here is not on simply "the sabbath" but what we learn about "kedusha" from this example. The connection to the child's program is that while we keep teaching about the importance of kedusha is that we are part of a radically desacralized society. The overall theme of this session should be helping the adults locate sacred moments in their own life. A second focus can be helping them think through how they might create more kodesh moments in their own lives with the help of Jewish tradition.

Activity 1: Respond to the quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind." What did Emerson mean? What kind of things ride us in contemporary life?

Activity 2: Share with the group a tradition (Jewish or non-Jewish) which is meaningful to each individual that feels threatened by contemporary society.

Activity 3: Discussion of *The Sabbath*. Leader should be prepared to turn the group's attention to passages that deserve a rereading and a response from the group as a whole.

Activity 4: Share with the group the rabbinic insight that the family (and in particular the dining table) serves as the mikdash ma'at, a replica in miniature of the holiness contained in the ancient sanctuary. Allow for open discussion of how family life can contain more of this holiness in it.

Kedusha Family Education: Great K-D-S Hunt

Begin by photocopying from Edith Samuel's *The Jewish Lexicon* the information related to the root קדש. Treat this as a game at first. Call out Hebrew-Aramaic words from the list and allow family members to call back the correct English translation. Then challenge the families to make a Jewish "mad-lib" or create a long sentence with at least six different uses of קדש.

Read Sidney Greenberg poem "Where Do We Find Holiness?"

Then raise with the group, in a serious vein, the nature of kedusha. Assign to different families the task of explaining what is holy about a particular word from the lexicon.

Then move the families through a round robin learning session. Each family should have a "Kedusha Moments Album, with one page for each of the three stations where they will talk with a leader or perform some tasks related to קדש: kiddush (sanctification of holidays and life), kaddish (mourners prayer), and kiddushin (Jewish wedding ceremony).

Kiddush Center:

Wine and a tablecloth are provided for recitation of kiddush, and discussion might focus on the interweaving of the themes of the exodus from Egypt and the creation of the world.

Kaddish Center:

Families say kaddish together and discuss the apparent anomaly of the prayer for the dead not mentioning death.

Kiddushin Center:

If possible, show a wedding video or wedding album to stimulate discussion about the element of kedusha in a wedding. Attention can be focused on the root meaning of קדש in the context of marriage (i.e., how does marriage set two individuals aside as having an absolutely unique relationship).

The theme that runs through all of our discussions about these events is that of making holy by making separate. The "sabbath" is made separate. When a wife and husband circle one another at the beginning of the wedding ceremony, they are making separate and holy space for themselves. And when we say "kaddish" we are making time (separating) to remember those who are no longer with us and to reaffirm our faith. Children and adults need to be reminded that none of the above happens without the conscious effort to separate the time and space so that kedusha can exist.

Handout #1

Kodesh Moments Album
(each statement should have its own page)

Complete the following statements about each of the kodesh moments you have seen:

Kaddish is a kodesh moment because . . .

kiddush is a kodesh moment because . . .

kiddushin is a kodesh moment because . . .

Record, draw, photograph a kodesh moment in your family's life and place it in the frame below:

_____ is a kodesh moment because . . .