

## A Guide to the Questions at the End of *Judy Led the Way*

By Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

*I wonder how you feel about asking a lot of questions.*

*Is there someone who loves to tackle big questions with you?*

- To be a Jew means to ask questions. Judy had lots of questions, all of which were welcome in the Kaplan household.
- Consider having students write down the big questions that they have been reluctant to ask. Let them do this anonymously. The questions can help form your curriculum as you go through the year. Remember that big questions do not necessarily require single answers or answers at all. What they need is a conversation.
- Judy commented on her family's openness to explore new ideas. "There was a sense of freedom and freedom to change. There was a constant opening up of possibilities and enrichment. It makes my being Jewish a great joy for me rather than a burden."
- Talk about what in Judaism brings you joy. Celebrate!

*I wonder if you have questions about God?*

- Judy remembered how, when she was eleven years old, she told her father that she did not believe in God. He asked her to describe the God which she did not believe in. Then Judy's father told her that he did not believe in that kind of God, either. They talked instead about what kind of God they did believe in.
- Have that conversation with your students. Are there things that they cannot believe about God? Imagine believing in a new way.
- Consider beginning the conversation by sharing some of these Biblical questions:

*I wonder if you have questions about God?*

**God to Adam: “Where are you?”**

**- Genesis 3:9**

**God to Cain: “Where is your brother?”**

**- Genesis 4:9**

**Cain to God: “Am my brother’s keeper?”**

**- Genesis 4:9**

**Abraham to God: “Will not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”**

**- Genesis 18:25**

**The psalmist to God:**

**“I lift up my eyes to the mountains, from where will my help come?”**

**- Psalms 121:1**

*The Kaplan family kept many traditions and changed some. I wonder what traditions you want to keep and if there are any you want to change.*

- The word “tradition” comes from Latin which means “something that is handed down.” Talk about the chain of tradition (of “handing down”) as in this text:

***Moses received that Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to the elders; the elders to the prophets; the prophets to the men of the Great Assembly.***

- *Pirkei Avot 1:1*

- Discuss who is missing in the chain described in this text.
- Ask the students who are the people in *their* chain of tradition. Have them ask their families what traditions they practiced growing up, what remains the same, and what has changed.
- What would the students want to hand down to the next generation? Why?

*Judy played piano to calm herself when she was feeling worried or anxious. What do you do to help yourself through changes in your life?*

**Lead a meditation exercise and/or other relaxing activity.**

- Then talk about the ways that students need to channel their anger and stay calm when they are worried.
- Invite the students to think of a time they were angry or anxious and draw that feeling on a sheet of paper.
- Then have them tear up the drawing and use the pieces to make something else.
- Discuss how it felt to draw, to tear up, and make something more constructive, more peaceful.