



ACTIVITY

Jewish Identity Beyond the Individual: Buber's View

Materials Needed

- Text from Buber

Time Needed

30-40 minutes

Goal

Participants will explore the place of Jewishness within their own identities and consider the ways it is both situated in the “self” and goes beyond it as well.

Before You Get Started

Look at the list of enduring understandings. Which one would you like to emphasize through this activity?

1. Judaism is not (only) a religion. It is also a People and the national component of Jewish civilization is central to understanding Jewish texts, practices and culture.
2. Many of Judaism's norms, laws and mitzvot are articulated and relevant through the Jewish collective.
3. The Jewish People (and not its constituent individuals) is the carrier of Jewish religion and civilization. Sustaining the People and continuing its legacy is therefore a core Jewish value.
4. "The Jewish People are bound by a shared past (the covenant of fate) and a shared future (the covenant of destiny)" – Soloveitchik.

Directions for Activity

1. Examine the Buber text.
2. Reflect on the following questions with the group: What is he saying about the way we grow an identity? What is the difference between giving such a message to Jews living in Diaspora and giving it to any other non-Jewish audience?
3. One of the ways to think about the text is that Buber understands that Jews in the Diaspora have a choice and need to make that choice consciously. From his point of view, the Jewish identity should be chosen as the dominant root identity. Discuss with the group how they feel about that assumption. Should their root choice be for a Jewish identity or a different one? Do the changes in the world in the last century invalidate Buber's ideas? In what ways? In what ways do they not?
4. Sum up the discussion and ask participants to share a question or idea they are left with.

Note to Educator

Did the enduring understanding that you set out to teach surface during this activity?