

Reform Judaism: A Living Museum

Introduction Program

Summer Kallah 5770

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Touchstone Text:

"In Jewish History there are no coincidences" – Elie Wiesel

"Reform Judaism affirms "the fundamental principle of Liberalism: that the individual will approach this body of mitzvot and minhagim in the spirit of freedom and choice. Traditionally Israel started with harut, the commandment engraved upon the Tablets, which then became freedom. The Reform Jew starts with herut, the freedom to decide what will be harut - engraved upon the personal Tablets of his life." [Martin, Bernard (1968) Contemporary Reform Jewish Thought]

Goals:

1. Participants will further their sense of pride for being Reform Jews.
2. Participants will form a deeper connection to reform Judaism and its unique characteristics.
3. Participants will grapple with the choices they make as Reform Jews and the choices we make within NFTY.

Objectives:

1. Participants will evaluate why Reform Jews do things a certain way by learning about how Reform Judaism was formed and has changed (reformed).
2. Participants will analyze the choices we make as Reform Jews and the reasons we make them.
3. Participants will decide whether the traditions we have as NFTYites are cohesive with the guidelines that we have as Reform Jews.

Materials:

- 6 Large white posters for each group to write down changes they want to make in NFTY
- A marker for each group (6)
- Pens/markers participants to write their thoughts on Museum station posters (20 pens/markers at each museum station)
- 6 Stickers to indicate what group each participant will be in which will be placed on their nametag.
- German Music to accompany the secular service
- 9 Banquet style place settings
- 1 Police man costume
- 1 Clergy style robe
- 2 Tables
- 10 Chairs
- Fake food for banquet
- Different Siddurim to be used for artifacts

People:

- 11 Advisors/RA/Adult Leadership to act out Stations
- 5 group leaders who will act as tour guides and discussion leaders
- 2 PL/Timekeepers with synchronized watches: one outside, one inside
- A Rabbi to discuss Reform Judaism in a Rabbinic way (Rabbi Sachs or Rabbi Prass)

Space Needed:

- The sports center- Big room and the smaller side rooms
- A space in the big room for each museum station
- A space around sports center for each group for before and after their guided tour

Time Table:

00:00-00:05 Introduction and break into groups

00:05-00:07 Transition to each group's 'Station 1'

00:07-01:02 **see each group's specified time table corresponding to group color**

01:02-01:10 Conclusion activity and wrap up

**Each group has a certain order of stations; please see your corresponding Appendix for your specific station rotation.

Detailed Procedure:

00:00-00:05 Introduction and break into groups

Hello and welcome to the first ever NFTY Living museum! This is a very special museum where you all will get to actually experience the events that brought Reform Judaism to become what we know it as today. You will all get a chance to walk through this interactive museum on a special guided tour! Feel free to ask questions and interact with the artifacts and exhibits. You will learn that Reform Judaism is all about making changes in the end you'll be able to give us your opinion on some of the things that NFTY-CANOE could revamp! So enjoy!

Group Split:

- Red Group- Go with _____ to the front doors of the sports center
- Orange Group- Go with _____ over to (available space)
- Green Group- Go with _____ over to (available space)
- Pink Group- Go with _____ over to (available space)
- Blue Group- Go with _____ over to (available space)

00:05-00:07 Transition to each group's 'Station 1'

Each group will move to their designated starting positions

00:07-00:52 **see each group's specified time table corresponding to group color in the appendices**

Summary of this time slot: Each group will rotate as outlined in their personalized appendix page.

At some point in the program each group will get 25 minutes in the museum to have their tour.

The time outside of the museum (which will add up to 20 minutes) will be spent in two ways

- 1) A few minutes in each group will be spent with Rabbi Prass so that he can explain what Reform Judaism is about
- 2) The other time will be spent discussing topics of things in NFTY that can/should be changed and why or why not we as Reform Jews have the right to change these things. Each group will create a poster of one thing that they think should be changed in NFTY-CANOE because we are Reform Jews. **Please see Appendix F for this discussion**

001:02-01:10 Conclusion activity and wrap up

One representative from each group will come up and explain the thing that they think would be a good change for NFTY and why.

"For the rest of the weekend these posters will be hanging in the Chadar Ohel. Feel free to write on them and share your opinion on why you think this change is necessary or not. Next we will be moving to the _____ for _____"

Appendices

Table of Contents:

- A- Red Group Schedule
 - B- Orange Group Schedule
 - C- Green Group Schedule
 - D- Pink Group Schedule
 - E- Blue Group Schedule
 - F- Purple Group Schedule
 - G- Discussion (For All Groups)
 - H- Station 1 in Museum
 - I- Station 2 in Museum
 - J- Station 3 in Museum
 - K- Station 4 in Museum
 - L- Station 5 in Museum
 - M- Other References
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Appendix A- Red Group

Time Table

00:07-00:32 Rotate throughout the living museum

00:07-00:11 Station 1

00:11-00:12 Rotate to Station 2

00:12-00:16 Station 2

00:16-00:17 Rotate to Station 3

00:17-00:21 Station 3

00:21-00:22 Rotate to Station 4

00:22-00:26 Station 4

00:26-00:27 Rotate to Station 5

00:27-00:31 Station 5

00:31-00:32 Move to space outside for discussion

00:32-01:02 Have discussion about things that we could change in NFTY-CANOE since we are Reform Jews and are constantly changing and making new decisions. See **Appendix F for discussion!**

01:02-01:10 Congregate outside of sports center for conclusion

Appendix B- Orange Group

Time Table

00:07-00:12 Briefly discuss what they know about reform judaism

00:12-00:37 Rotate throughout the living museum

00:12-00:16 Station 1

00:16-00:17 Rotate to Station 2

00:17-00:21 Station 2

00:21-00:22 Rotate to Station 3

00:22-00:26 Station 3

00:26-00:27 Rotate to Station 4

00:27-00:31 Station 4

00:31-00:32 Rotate to Station 5

00:32-00:36 Station 5

00:36-00:37 Move to space outside for discussion

00:37-01:02 Have discussion about things that we could change in NFTY-CANOE since we are Reform Jews and are constantly changing and making new decisions.

Create a poster that shares on aspect of NFTY-CANOE you would like to change.

See **Appendix F for discussion!**

01:02-01:10 Congregate outside of sports center for conclusion

Appendix C- Grass Group

Time Table

00:07-00:17 Have discussion about things that we could change in NFTY-CAR since we are Reform Jews and are constantly changing and making new decisions. See **Appendix F for discussion!**

00:17-00:42 Rotate throughout the living museum

00:17-00:21 Station 1

00:21-00:22 Rotate to Station 2

00:22-00:26 Station 2

00:26-00:27 Rotate to Station 3

00:27-00:31 Station 3

00:31-00:32 Rotate to Station 4

00:32-00:36 Station 4

00:36-00:37 Rotate to Station 5

00:37-00:41 Station 5

00:41-00:42 Move to space outside for discussion

00:42-01:02 Create a poster that shares on aspect of NFTY-CANOE you would like to change. See **Appendix F for discussion!**

01:02-01:10 Congregate outside of sports center for conclusion

Appendix D- Pink Group

Time Table

00:07-00:22 Have discussion about things that we could change in NFTY-CANOE since we are Reform Jews and are constantly changing and making new decisions. See **Appendix F for discussion!**

00:22-00:47 Rotate throughout the living museum

00:22-00:26 Station 1

00:26-00:27 Rotate to Station 2

00:27-00:31 Station 2

00:31-00:32 Rotate to Station 3

00:32-00:36 Station 3

00:36-00:37 Rotate to Station 4

00:37-00:41 Station 4

00:41-00:42 Rotate to Station 5

00:42-00:46 Station 5

00:46-00:47 Move to space outside for discussion

00:47-01:02 Create a poster that shares on aspect of NFTY-CANOE you would like to change. See **Appendix F for discussion!**

01:02-01:10 Congregate outside of sports center for conclusion

Appendix E- Blue Group

Time Table

00:07-00:17 Have discussion about things that we could change in NFTY-CANOE since we are Reform Jews and are constantly changing and making new decisions. See **Appendix F for discussion!**

00:17-00:27 Create a poster that shares on aspect of NFTY-CANOE you would like to change. See **Appendix F for discussion!**

00:27-01:02 Rotate throughout the living museum

00:27-00:31 Station 1

00:31-00:32 Rotate to Station 2

00:32-00:36 Station 2

00:36-00:37 Rotate to Station 3

00:37-00:41 Station 3

00:41-00:42 Rotate to Station 4

00:42-00:46 Station 4

00:46-00:47 Rotate to Station 5

00:47-00:51 Station 5

00:51-00:52 Meet in front of the sports center for conclusion

01:02-01:10 Congregate outside of sports center for conclusion

Appendix F- Purple Group

Time Table

00:07-00:37 Have discussion about things that we could change in NFTY-CANOE since we are Reform Jews and are constantly changing and making new decisions.

See Appendix F for discussion!

00:37-00:62 Rotate throughout the living museum

00:37-00:41 Station 1

00:41-00:42 Rotate to Station 2

00:42-00:46 Station 2

00:46-00:47 Rotate to Station 3

00:47-00:51 Station 3

00:51-00:52 Rotate to Station 4

00:52-00:56 Station 4

00:56-00:57 Rotate to Station 5

00:57-01:01 Station 5

01:01-01:02 Move to space outside for discussion

01:02-01:10 Congregate outside of sports center for conclusion

APPENDIX G- DISCUSSION!

Questions (bullet points are sample answers to help guide discussion):

- 1) What do you think it means to be a Reform Jew?
 - Being able to make changes and choices based on your life but still following the morals and values taught in Judaism.
 - Not doing everything 'by the book'.
- 2) Do you think we can just go around changing everything that we want as Reform Jews? Or are these still guidelines to how we live our life?
 - Some people might change a lot of traditional aspects of Judaism and some people might change a little it all depends on your lifestyle and what works best for you to still feel close to G-d and your religion.
 - Most Reform Jews would say that the words of the Torah and the values and morals it teaches still guide a large part of their Jewish lives but for others it is easier to just do things their own way.
- 3) What do you think are some things that Orthodox Jews do that most Reform Jews do not? Why are they different?
 - Kashrut (keeping kosher)
 - T'fillin
 - Observing the Sabbath every week
 - They are different because Reform Jews are able to make choices.
- 4) What do you think it would be like to be an Orthodox Jew in modern society? Do you think it would be a good thing to have more restrictions than most Reform Jews today do?
- 5) Do you think that Reform Jews are getting more or less 'religious' (meaning following the Torah and Jewish morals and such)?
 - Less religious because it is hard to be a religious person in society today.
- 6) What does it mean to you to be a religious Jew?

NFTY-CANOE and Reform Judaism:

- 1) What do you think are some things that NFTY-CANOE does that proves that we are reform Jews?
 - a. We do not keep strictly kosher
 - b. We do not make people wear T'fillin
 - c. Men and Women can pray in the same setting
 - d. We have women educators
- 2) As Reform Jews we are permitted to make changes to our traditions. Reform Jews think that as society and people change so should the guidelines of our religion. What do you think are some things that NFTY-CAR could change to match with society?
 - a. Have pepperoni pizza and cheeseburgers
 - b. Have less services

- 3) What do you think are some things that we could change to help feel closer to our old traditions and be more observant?
 - a. Prohibit use of cell phones on Shabbat
 - b. Wear more respectable clothing
 - c. Men wear kippot and T'fillin

Making your poster:

- 1) Pick one aspect of NFTY-CANOE that your group would like to reform (probably one of the answers to number 2 or 3 in the second part of discussion but not necessarily one of my examples) and make sure to determine why this aspect should be reformed.
- 2) Write this in large letters on the poster and also give a brief description of why this should be reformed.
- 3) Have one representative explain why you all chose that aspect and why it is important (about a 30 second explanation)

Station 1-Issac Jacobson and the First Reform Service

TG: The year is now 1810; we are in Germany during the Enlightenment period. During this time people began to break away from previous strict religious methods and began to experiment with secular practices. This is Israel Jacobson the "Father of Reform", leading the first service in Seesen Germany.

(Press Play)

Israel Jacobson: This is a first. The first sermon. Judaism has been practiced the same way for centuries and it is time that we choose how we practice. The sermon is a focal point in Christian services. It delivers a clear message derived from our texts. Today's message is simple. It is time to forge our own path. As Abraham chose to believe in Adonai against all odds our religion was formed. As Moses decided to go against Pharaoh, the most powerful man in the world, at the time our People were saved. And now it is time for us to develop and evolve. We longer have the luxury to be stuck in our classical ways. We have been kicked and beaten out of most countries so now it is time we become more like our Christian neighbors. We can still practice our Jewish customs and still worship in the way we want without ostracizing ourselves and becoming social pariahs. So let us adopt this grand idea of a sermon in our services to discuss the issues of the day and of the week and to further study the torah in a communal format. On this Sunday morning let us set the new precedent. Shabbat Shalom

Station 2-Isaac Mayer Wise and the Fistfight

TG: It is 1850 we are now in Albany, New York and Isaac Mayer Wise, a Rabbi from Vienna, leading a service at Temple Beth El.

(Press Play)

Wise: The Messiah will not come. It is impossible for resurrection to occur

President: What you are saying is radical and not what we believe it is time for you to leave this congregation we are embarrassed to have you here as our clergy man (Runs up to wise and initiates fist fight)

(Enter Police to break up fight- break up fight)

Police: What's the problem here?

TG: Due to this fight, Anshe Emeth, a congregation of Wise's supporters and friends, was the first congregation to be reform from its inception, led by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise.

Station 3-Isaac Mayer Wise discusses UAHC and the HUC

TG: The time is now 1874; Isaac Mayer Wise is now speaking at a hole-in-the-wall reform congregation in New York City.

(Press Play)

Isaac Mayer Wise:

My fellow Hebrews we are at a time of much disorganization. Most of our community is praying without ordained rabbis and with no true guidance. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations is ready to help you grow and succeed but we need your help. We want to create a seminary for American Jewish Rabbis and Cantors. We are proud and we are passionate. We want you to join us and become a part of the UAHC and help us help you by funding our seminary the Hebrew Union College. Through your help a Rabbi will be ordained and come to help your congregation succeed and flourish and spread out as we are commanded by Adonai. Please do not be shy, donate to the future and help our cause grow and become the greatest Union of Jews in the world.

Station 4-Treifa Banquet

TG: The year is now 1883; we are at a banquet celebrating the first graduating class of the Hebrew Union College.

(Press Play)

Waiter: Welcome and congratulations to the graduates. We will now celebrate with our elaborate meal. Our first course tonight is little neck clams on the half shell. Enjoy!

(Two Rabbi's get up and leave the room, disgusted by the non-kosher selection)

Person 1: These dinner selections are not kosher.

Person 2: I will absolutely not partake in this meal, I am flabbergasted and insulted.

(Some people eat; some people just sit there stoically and do not touch their food)

Waiter: Our next course is Salad of Shrimps, followed by our meat course, which will then be followed by our cheese course.

(Serves food)

Person 1: Is this some kind of sick joke or something?

Station 5

TG: We now have a few different relics and artifacts for you to investigate in this exhibit. Please feel free to read different selections from the different prayer books and pay close attention to the differences between each siddur. Notice the changes that have occurred over time as our movement reforms our services.

(Encourage participants to go around and explore)

Timeline of Reform Judaism in the United States

1824 Playwright and journalist Isaac Harby leads forty-seven Jews in Charleston, South Carolina to petition for major changes in the Shabbat service at Congregation Beth Elohim, including that each Hebrew prayer in the service be immediately followed by an English translation, that new prayers reflecting contemporary American life be added, that the rabbi offer a weekly sermon in English to explain the Scriptures and apply them to everyday life, and that services be shortened.

1842 Congregation Har Sinai in Baltimore, Maryland, adopts Reform services

1845 Temple Emanu-El becomes New York City's first Reform congregation

1857 Wise writes the first American siddur, "Minhag American."

1873 Wise founds the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

1875 Reform Judaism's Hebrew Union College is founded in Cincinnati by Isaac Mayer Wise.

1885 A group of Reform rabbis adopts the Pittsburgh Platform.

1889 The Central Conference of American Rabbis is established.

1922 Reform Rabbi Stephen S. Wise establishes the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. It merged with Hebrew Union College in 1950. A third center was opened in Los Angeles in 1954, and a fourth branch was established in Jerusalem in 1963.

1937 The Central Conference of American Rabbis adopts "The Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism", known as the Columbus Platform.

1976 On the occasion of the centennials of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Central Conference of American Rabbis adopts *Reform Judaism: A Centenary Perspective*.

1983 The Central Conference of American Rabbis formally states that a Jewish identity can be passed down through either the mother or the father, if the child is raised with a Jewish identity, thereby making official what had been the state of affairs in many Reform communities since the early twentieth century. Despite its rejection by Conservative Judaism and Orthodox Judaism, as well as the religious establishment of the State of Israel (although immigrant children who have a Jewish father but a non-Jewish mother are recognized as Jewish by the Registry Office¹), descent through the mother or the father becomes the standard for American Reform Jews (Canadian Reform congregations are divided on this issue).

1997 On the occasion of the centenary of the first World Zionist Congress, the Central Conference of American Rabbis adopts the *Miami Platform*, dedicated to the relationship between Reform Judaism and Zionism.

1999 The Central Conference of American Rabbis adopts "A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism" in Pittsburgh.

2003 The congregational arm of the Reform Movement in North America adopts the new name "Union for Reform Judaism" (URJ), replacing its previous name "Union of American Hebrew Congregations" (UAHC) at its Biennial Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

2007 *Siddur Eshel*, a new North American Reform Siddur is published

This timeline will be available in large scale format on the back wall of the Sports Center, PPs will be able to add their own Jewish events (i.e. Beth's Bat Mitzvah)