

Program Title: Know Your Weaknesses

Category: Jewish Learning

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Touchstone Text:

"Who is mighty? One who controls one's [natural] urges, as it is said, 'One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty and one who rules one's spirit than one who conquers a city' [Prov. 16:23]"
- Pirkei Avot 4:1

Goals:

- To question why Moses was a good leader
- To become familiar with Moses' character
- To realize that Moses was an imperfect human being, as are we all
- To understand the concepts of yetzer hara and yetzer hatov
- To accept our weaknesses

Objectives:

- PPs will outline Moses' confrontation of his weaknesses
- PPs will discuss why Moses was a good leader
- PPs will identify and cope with their own weaknesses
- PPs will make keychains to display their weaknesses

Timed Procedure:

1) Skit.....	3 minutes
2) Split into Groups.....	4 minutes
3) Name Game.....	3 minutes
4) Skit Recap.....	3 minutes
5) Handout Part One	6 minutes
6) Handout Part Two.....	6 minutes
7) Handout Part Three.....	6 minutes
8) Handout Part Four.....	6 minutes
9) This is a Test.....	8 minutes
10) You've Got Weaknesses Too!.....	6 minutes
11) Let's Do Something About It!!.....	10 minutes
12) Regroup.....	3 minutes
13) Closing Skit.....	1 minute
Total Time.....	73minutes

Materials:

- 1 Handout #1 for every PP
- 1 piece butcher paper for every group
- Markers
- 12 inches Blue Cord for every PP
- 12 inches Green Cord for every PP
- 12 inches Yellow Cord for every PP
- Keyring for every PP

People:

10 GLs
2 Rovers
Happy PP's

Locations:

Normal Eisner Locations

Background Info:

Run this program in the afternoon for best PP response

Detailed Procedure:

1) Skit.....3 minutes

Moses: Hey, check it out man! It's a bush! And it's on fire! I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't this bush burn up?

God: Hey Moses! What's happening?

Moses: Nothing exciting, just tending to my father-in-law's sheep, for I am a simple man...Wait, who are you?

God: I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. I have marked well the plight of my people in Egypt and have heeded their outcry. I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them to a good and spacious land, flowing with milk and honey.

Moses: Wow! That is extraordinary!

God: Moses, you will go to Pharaoh, and you shall free my people, the Israelites, from Egypt.

Moses: Hold up, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?

God: There is no reason to worry, I will be with you.

Moses: But God, what if they do not believe me? And they won't listen to me anyways! I have never been a man of words, neither in the past nor now that you have summoned me. And I s-s-s-stutter.

God: You know, I'm telling you, you can do this, so quit being so unconfident.

Moses: But, it's just that I have so many weaknesses.

God: My point exactly!

2) Split into Groups.....4 minutes

3) Name Game.....3 minutes

GL: We're going to start with a name game! YAY! Ok, so say your name, your grade, your TYG, and tell us one reason why or one example of when you are a leader.

(Hi, I'm Jess, I'm a senior from TIFTY, and I'm a leader because that's my last name!)

4) Skit Recap.....3 minutes

GL: Ok great, does someone want to summarize what happened in the skit?

(God appears to Moses as a burning bush and tells him that he is going to lead the Jews out of Egypt. Moses complains that he cannot be a leader, but God insists that he can.)

GL: Do you think that it was reasonable for Moses to insist that he cannot be a leader? Why?

(Yes, he did not think he had the ability to do something that God was asking him, so it was only right for him to let God know.)

(No, if God is asking Moses to do something, obviously Moses should be able to do it; Moses should not be questioning God.)

5) Handout Part One6 minutes

GL: Granted that the skit was not the most accurate portrayal of what transpired between God and Moses, let's take a look at how the Torah describes their chat.

[GL passes out Handout One and has a PP read #1 on Handout 1]

GL: Do you guys think it's interesting that the Torah specifies that God waits to see that Moses turns to look at the bush?

(Yes!)

GL: The Torah definitely makes it clear that Moses is called upon to either see the bush and investigate it, and in doing so meet God, or fail to do so, and continue his walk in the wilderness as a shepherd. Why do you think God waits to speak until after he sees that Moses has chosen to acknowledge the burning bush?

(Because God wants to get Moses' attention!)

(Because God's testing Moses!)

GL: Those are all great ideas, but we can't really tell what the answer is without looking at Moses' earlier life. So let's take a detour and see what Moses was up to before now! Ok, so do you guys all know the story of Moses as a baby? Does someone want to give us a quick recap?

(Pharaoh commands that all Jewish baby boys be killed so his mom sets him adrift on the Nile River in a basket. Pharaoh's daughter finds Moses while bathing and adopts him as her son. Moses grows up in the Egyptian royal family)

GL: Great! So remember that our goal is to figure out why God waits to speak until after he sees that Moses has chosen to acknowledge the burning bush. Why is it important to look at Moses' past in order to talk about something that happens eighty years later?

(Because your past shapes who you become. Moses' upbringing as a Jew inside Pharaoh's household strengthens his Jewish identity.)

6) Handout Part Two.....6 minutes

GL: Well now that we can see where Moses is coming from, let's take a look at where his adventures lead him. The Torah tells us about three major events in Moses' life that occur before God asks him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. So right now, it's our job to figure out what from these three events makes God sure that Moses would be a good leader. The first thing we've got on adult Moses is this...

[Have a PP read #2 on handout 1]

GL: Ok so we've got to decide what aspects of Moses' killing the Egyptian were good and which were bad. Looking at these three lines, let's just think of some positive and negative aspects of what Moses did.

[GL picks a scribe and has the scribe make a "plus" and "minus" column, PPs shout out pros and cons of Moses' actions]

+	-
Protects his people	Quick to anger
Avenges	Hotheaded
Seeks justice	Violent
	Brutal
	Cowardly
	Doesn't make a lasting difference

GL: Alright, great! So even though Moses has good intentions here, do you guys think he accomplishes anything significant in the long run?

(No! Even though he stood up against Egyptian power, all he accomplished was getting himself banished)

GL: Looking back at the lines in #2, do you think that Moses was more focused on saving the victim or punishing the oppressor?

(He's more focused on harming the Egyptian, the oppressor, because he does not merely stop him from hurting the Jew, but he goes so far as to kill and bury the Egyptian)

7) Handout Part Three.....6 minutes

GL: Great, so we can pretty much conclude that when Moses smites the Egyptian he's got good intentions that get a bit out of hand. So now let's move on to the second big episode of Moses' life which happens just the day after.

[GL has a PP read #3 on Handout One]

GL: Fantastic, so now let's do the same thing we did for the last one and list the positive and negative aspects of this encounter.

[GL has the scribe draw a line under the last list to differentiate episodes]

+	-
Teacher-like	Fails to gain the Hebrew's trust
Has a 'noble vision'	Reprimands the evildoer instead of helping the victim

GL: This is great work guys! So how is Moses' handling of this situation different from the last? Is it better or worse?

(It's better! This time he's not violent, and he tries to stop other violence.)
(It's worse! This time even his own people don't like him, and he doesn't help the victim at all.)

GL: Did Moses accomplish anything significant this time?

(He tries to, but does not impact the behavior of the Hebrews, and fails to gain respect among his own people)

8) Handout Part Four.....6 minutes

GL: Alright, well let's take a look at his next big event and see if he learns anything from these other experiences.

[GL has a PP read #4 on Handout One]

GL: Once again, lets jot down positives and negatives. And this time there may be no negative aspects, but if you can think of one, that's totally awesome.

[GL has the scribe draw a line under the last list to differentiate episodes]

+	-
Protector Less violent Focuses on saving the strangers	

GL: Ok, great! So after Moses saves the priest's daughters from the shepherds, God is just about ready to give Moses his famous leadership role. Looking back at his other two big actions, what is different this time around that makes God trust that Moses can be a good leader?

(This time, Moses saves strangers whom he was moved to save out of compassion rather than because of the plight of his brethren. This is the first time he helps someone without feeling obligated to do so. This is the first time he successfully helps someone.)

9) This is a Test.....8 minutes

GL: So now, we just need to bring everything back together. Moses kills the Egyptian, he reprimands the fighting Hebrews, he saves Jethro's daughters, and God watches Moses' actions and judges his leadership ability, as if each of these episodes were tests! And this all leads up to the burning bush! And why does God wait for Moses to notice the bush before he speaks?

(It's a final test!)

GL: Remarkable! Moses proves that he's learned something when he chooses to confront the burning bush. Let's talk about what Moses learns through his experiences. When Moses kills the Egyptian and is forced to flee as a result, what does he learn?

(To think about the big picture, and think about long term repercussions of your actions rather than immediate)

GL: Super! So when Moses tells the two Jews to stop fighting, and finds that they don't want to listen to him, what does he learn?

(That he was being hypocritical and that reprimanding the offender is not always effective)

GL: Glorious! Now when he saves Jethro's daughters, what does he demonstrate that he has learned from the other two episodes?

(If you see someone who needs help...help them! And he is not very violent this time, which shows that he has learned that violence doesn't necessarily solve problems.)

GL: Stupendous! Knowing that he has gained all this knowledge from these three events, when Moses turns aside from his set course to investigate the burning bush, what does Moses prove that he has learned?

(The importance of paying attention to the little things and appreciating more spiritual, less material things)

GL: Righteous! So from this, what weakness can we say he has overcome throughout his journeys?

(Moses stops acting impulsively and overcomes his disinterest. He learns to consider the outcomes of his actions before he commits them. He learns to act devoid of anger, violence, and excess emotion, and focuses simply on saving the victims.)

GL: So we've pretty much identified Moses' weakness as a combination of disinterest and impulsiveness. Can you guys think of a time later on when Moses allows his weakness to resurface?

*(When he hits the rock for water after God instructs him to speak to the rock.
(When he questions God's ability to feed the Israelites.)*

10) You've Got Weaknesses Too!.....6 minutes

GL: So at the burning bush, Moses proved that he knows what his weakness is and is able to control it. So why does he allow his weakness to resurface?

(Because weaknesses aren't just something that we realize and are able to rid ourselves of.)

GL: Exactly. The best we can do is to be aware of our weaknesses and work to control them. If you are aware that you suffer from a weakness you will be more motivated to overcome it. However, those who are unaware of their weaknesses will struggle with their "evil inclination". If any of you guys were at December Institute last year, you may remember learning about the Hebrew concept of evil inclination, also known as...

(Yetzer Hara!)

GL: Right, so if anyone was at December institute or knows anything about yetzer hara, could you share what you know with the group?

(As Jews we have a good inclination, yetzer hatov, and an evil inclination, yetzer hara, and we must learn to follow our good inclination and not allow our evil inclination to dictate our lives)

GL: Hooray! So we've come to realize that as Jews we all share a weakness, our Yetzer Hara. We also have individual weaknesses that we have to learn to control, so they don't impede our normal lives. The first step of overcoming is admitting. Let's go around Alcoholics Anonymous style and admit to one of our weaknesses. If you don't know what your weakness is yet, feel free to say so, because unawareness is a weakness, too.

(Hi, my name is Jessica, and I procrastinate like hell ("Hi Jessica!"))

11) Let's Do Something About It!!.....10 minutes

GL: Great, so now as a group, let's accept our weaknesses and agree to strive to keep them in mind and control them. I'm going to pass out cords and everyone should take one of each of the three colors. We're going to make key chains that we can carry with us everywhere that will remind us to be aware of our weaknesses. The blue represents our yetzer hara and our individual weaknesses, which we are susceptible to. The yellow represents our yetzer hatov and the things

that we like about ourselves. And the green represents our balance of the two. We're going to braid these three cords together to remind ourselves to be aware of the forces impeding our lives, and to learn to control and find a comfortable balance between them.

[Pass out the three cords and key rings]

[If PPs don't know how to braid, have other PPs teach them]

GL: These are awesome guys. Remember to put them somewhere where you will see them every day and remember to be aware of the different forces in your life. Alright guys, you're absolutely awesome. Let's head back to regroup.

12) Regroup.....3 minutes

13) Closing Skit:.....1 minute

Moses: Whoa! I get it now! I'll be a good leader because I know my own weaknesses!

God: That's right! And since you know them, it's your responsibility to keep an eye on them.

Moses: Ok, I can do that.

God: You must make sure you don't let your weaknesses control your actions.

Moses: I will.

God: So we're cool?

Moses: Very cool.

Jess Leader
Holy Moses!
Handout One

1 Exodus: 3: 1-4

1 Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 An angel of God appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. 3 Moses said, “I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn’t this bush burn up?” 4 When God saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: “Moses! Moses!” He answered, “Here I am.”

WHY DOES GOD WAIT?

2 Exodus: 2: 11-12

11 Some time after that, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his kinsfolk and witnessed their labors. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen. 12 He turned this way and that and, seeing no one about, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

3 Exodus: 2: 13-14

13 When he went out the next day, he found two Hebrews fighting; so he said to the offender, “Why do you strike your fellow?” 14 He retorted, “Who made you chief and ruler over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Moses was frightened, and thought: Then the matter is known!

4 Exodus: 2: 16-17

16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came to draw water, and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock; 17 but shepherds came and drove them off. Moses rose to their defense, and he watered their flock.