Blast from the Past: Adventure in Jewish Time Travel

Elective 1

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| **Author(s):** | Meir Balofsky |
| **summary:** | Learn to use theater acting and visual art games to bring the Torah alive! You will find ways to connect to your heritage no matter your personal level of Jewish education. *– Submitted by Meir Balofsky* |
| **Topic(s):** | Jewish History, Visual Arts, Theater |
| **Learning Objective:** | Participants will learn new tools using visual art and drama to access new ways to relate to ancient texts and characters.  |
| **Audience:** | All ages – Group of up to 25. Very basic knowledge of Jewish tradition and biblical stories is an asset.  |
| **TIMING:** | 90 minutes |
| **AppendiCes:** | none |
| **Materials Needed:** | Cards from the game Dixit |
| **Set-UP DETAILS:** | Large room with space to move around – no furniture  |

**Session Timeline & Outline:**

**STEP 1:**

Everyone is to sit in circle. Ask: “If you could have dinner with anyone from ancient Jewish History who would it be?”  It must be someone whose story you are familiar with, so you could ask them real questions. Can be a very well-known person or relatively obscure. Everyone is to share their name, camp, and the person with whom they chose to have dinner.

**STEP 2:**

Break up into groups of 4-to-5. The person whose birthday is next in each group is selected to be the director. Have all directors stand up. Declare to the directors: “I want you to think of a moment in Jewish History that you would have loved to be a witness to and see for yourself. You are gifted with these fine props” – referring to the other people in the group and anything else they see in the room to create a Tableau or ‘Freeze Frame” of that moment in history. “Explain your moment in time and your vision to your group and prepare the tableau.”

**STEP 3:**

Give 3 minutes to prepare the tableau and then go around and each group has a chance to guess what scene is being portrayed.

Then the person with the next closest birthday is the next director.

**STEP 4:**

In the same groups, give out the Dixit cards – 5 per person. Each group also gets 5 slips of paper face down. The five slips read:

1. Exodus from Egypt
2. Respecting Parents / Elders
3. Tzekada / Charity
4. Torah Study
5. A visit to Jerusalem

**STEP 5:**

The third person whose birthday is next becomes the Judge (whoever is next after the director game) and chooses a slip and reads it out. Each person in the group - EXCLUDING the judge chooses a card from their hand that best suits the title on their slip of paper. Each person then takes a turn explaining why their card is the best fit for the title. The judge then decides which the best fit is and the person who convinced the judge gets a point (this game is similar to Apples to Apples)

Then the fourth person becomes the judge. The groups repeat step 5. Then the fifth person becomes the judge. The groups repeat step 5.

**STEP 6:**

Cocktail Party!

Everyone is to resume a seat in the big circle and is told to think back to the person they wanted to meet for dinner. Now, they think of a particularly important or challenging moment in their lives

Close eyes - What are you thinking? Feeling? Take on the thoughts and feelings of that person.

The participants should open eyes, stand up, and walk about as their character. The facilitator will then freeze the participants. After ensuring by raised hands that everyone in the group has picked a character and a moment the facilitator will ask the participants to continue walking. As they walk, the facilitator will ask the participants to find a partner. Once everyone has a partner, the participants should interview one another. Find out who the other person is and when and what is going on with them. The facilitator should then – after about 5 minutes of interviewing goes on – quiet the group and move from pair to pair asking each participant to introduce his/her partner to the group. The facilitator should ask leading questions as if he/she is a talk show host.

**STEP 7:**

In conclusion – point out how for the most part the content was generated here by everyone’s previous knowledge of the Jewish sources. This can be modified to use newly learned content. For the most part though, this program is designed to enable participants to access their creativity and apply it to material that otherwise may have been taught in a more mainstream manner.