

Wicked Text Study

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SUMMARY: What is this feeling? In this session, something will change within you while studying the songs from the hit Broadway show and movie, Wicked, while also Defying Gravity with traditional Jewish texts.

GOALS:

- Participants will feel more comfortable with the methodology of exploring traditional Jewish texts.
- Participants will get a song or two – and a text or two – stuck in their heads.
- Participants will gain knowledge of Jewish texts and connect them to the wildly popular movie tour de force the Wicked that came out in 2024.
- Participants will feel more skilled in, and more welcome to, creating links between traditional Jewish texts and modern Jewish and/or secular texts (like a movie or a TikTok video).

AUDIENCE:

- Camp staff
- Group of a minimum 1 bunk, maximum 1 unit of kids at camp
- Ages: middle school and older

TIMING: 60 glorious minutes

MATERIALS:

- Source Sheet – ALL TEXTS BELOW AT BOTTOM OF THIS WRITEUP
- Pen/pencils
- Plain white paper

SET-UP:

- Circle of chairs
- Spotify playlist of Wicked songs.
<https://open.spotify.com/album/3JUJJP460nFIqwjxM19sIT?si=eomCEygeSmW-vy7M0w8c0A>
- Bluetooth speaker

SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:10 – Introductions – What is this feeling?
- 00:10-00:50 – Deep Text study & Songs
- 00:50-01:00 – Debrief

SESSION OUTLINE

00:00-00:10 – Introductions – What is this feeling?

- We've been so excited to spend this time learning and singing with you a bit!
- How would YOU describe yourself in this moment? Use a line from Wicked to describe how you're doing. (We hope your flesh isn't crawling.)

00:10-00:50 – Deep Text study & Songs

- Step 1 – 00:10-00:25
 - Break into *chevruta*! What's a *chevruta*? A structure for Jewish text study where two people learn a text or texts together in partnership, out loud.
 - Facilitators break group into these text study groups and assign some texts from the long sheet for participants to share. Participants will have a handful of lines and become experts...there's nobody wiser!
 - Decide which of participant is impossible to describe...or blonde. The blonde will read first!
 - There's been some confusion for you see my [chevruta] is:
 - Unusually and exceedingly peculiar and quite impossible to describe
 - Blonde?
 - Using your group of texts...
 1. Famous relationships
 2. Goodness/wickedness
 3. Scapegoating and the common enemy
 4. Misunderstood Heroes and Challenging Power
 5. Defying Expectations & Embracing Power
 - ...examine and try to answer some of the following questions (it's like a buffet, try a few questions and see what really gets your conversation going):
 - Why was this text chosen to teach about your particular topic (#1-5)?
 - What did you learn in this text?
 - Which text spoke to you loudest?
 - Was there a text you fundamentally did not agree with? Why?
 - Was there a text that surprised you? How could you explore it further?
 - How is this text interesting or meaningful to you today?
 - What was one thing you never thought to compare to Wicked before today?
 - What is one Jewish thing you want to teach the group from this conversation?
 - What is one Wicked thing you want to teach the group from this conversation?
- Step 2 – 00:25-00:35
 - Choose a favorite text & write a song!

- Participants' songs should: using your answers and observations from the text study, teach the group about one or more texts from your source that you want to share
- It doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to be yours. Participants can sing, talk, or make poetry. Just show the group what you're excited to share, and if it's to the tune of Popular, well, that would be so nice.
- Step 3 – 00:35-00:50 – Presentation of Songs

00:50-00:60 – Debrief

- What was it like to study Jewish texts for you?
- Was this your first or thousandth time? Either way, what was new to you in this session?
- How could you make something like this work at your camp?
- What was challenging about this session for you?
- Where did you grow during our time together?

BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

Taking from our debrief questions above, think about modifications you could make to this session at your own camp – would you project the source sheet? Integrate this into a lip synch competition? Use for sharing the torah portion on Shabbat? Indoors/outdoors? Big group or small group session? Rainy day program or something else? Who can you ask to help you run or create something like this for your camp?

Example:

At my camp we do not have specialist counselors, so we would be responsible for this session in bunk as there is no one person focused on Israeli dance - if you have someone who focuses on this at your camp, you could share this specifically with them to run!

1. Famous Relationships in Jewish Texts (Like Glinda & Elphaba)

Moses and Pharaoh (Exodus 5-12) – Oppositional Yet Intertwined

- Pharaoh and Moses start off in the same world (raised in the palace) but **become enemies**, much like Glinda and Elphaba start as friends but take opposite paths.
- **Source:** [Exodus 5:1-2](#) – Pharaoh refuses Moses' demands, leading to a showdown between them.

David and Saul (1 Samuel 18-31) – From Allies to Rivals

- Saul originally welcomes David, but jealousy and power struggles **turn them into enemies**. Like Glinda and Elphaba, they are **tied together yet divided by fate**.
- **Source:** [1 Samuel 18:6-9](#) – Saul resents David's growing power, setting them against each other.

Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25-33) – A Complicated Friendship

- Their **rivalry and eventual reconciliation** reflect the **love-hate dynamic** between Glinda and Elphaba.
- **Source:** [Genesis 33:4](#) – After years of tension, Esau embraces Jacob.

Hillel and Shammai (Talmud, Eruvin 13b) – Opposing Visions of the World

- These two great sages **argued constantly** but respected each other deeply. Their **philosophical clashes** mirror Glinda's optimism vs. Elphaba's realism.
- **Source:** [Eruvin 13b](#) – "Both are the words of the living God."

2. Goodness vs. Wickedness

Adam, Eve, and the Serpent (Genesis 3) – Who is Truly Wicked?

- The serpent is **blamed for evil**, but does it really deceive, or just open Adam and Eve's eyes? Like Elphaba, its role is **ambiguous**.
- **Source:** [Genesis 3:4-5](#) – The serpent's words lead to humanity's fall—or its awakening?

Cain and Abel (Genesis 4) – Misplaced Jealousy and Perceived Wickedness

- Cain **resents Abel's favor with God** and acts out, much like how Elphaba is scapegoated for being different.
- **Source:** [Genesis 4:9-10](#) – God confronts Cain after Abel's murder.

Sodom and Abraham (Genesis 18-19) – Who Decides What is Wicked?

- God plans to destroy **Sodom**, but Abraham argues for its righteousness—showing how **good and evil aren't always clear-cut**.
- **Source:** [Genesis 18:23-32](#) – Abraham challenges God's justice.

3. Scapegoating and the Common Enemy

The Scapegoat Ritual (Leviticus 16) – A Literal Example

- On Yom Kippur, one goat is **sent away into the wilderness**, carrying the sins of the people—just as Elphaba is **blamed for everything** wrong in Oz.
- **Source:** [Leviticus 16:10](#) – The goat "carries away" the sins of the people.

The Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 1) – A People Blamed for Society's Problems

- The Israelites are **oppressed and treated as a threat** by Pharaoh, just as the people of Oz turn on Elphaba.
- **Source:** [Exodus 1:9-11](#) – Pharaoh fears the Israelites and enslaves them.

Haman's Plot Against the Jews (Book of Esther) – The Search for a Common Enemy

- Haman makes the **entire Jewish people** into a scapegoat, turning the Persian king against them, much like how the Wizard turns Oz against Elphaba.
- **Source:** [Esther 3:8-9](#) – Haman spreads fear about the Jews.

4. Misunderstood Heroes and Challenging Power

Miriam's Leadership and Rebellion (Numbers 12) – Misunderstood Power

- Miriam, like Elphaba, **challenges the status quo** and is **punished** for it.
- **Source:** [Numbers 12:1-15](#)

Korach's Rebellion (Numbers 16) – Resisting Authority

- Korach, like Elphaba, **challenges leadership** and is vilified for it.
- **Source:** [Numbers 16](#)

Joseph and His Brothers (Genesis 37-50) – Outcast to Leader

- Joseph, like Elphaba, is **misunderstood and cast out**, only to later rise to power.
- **Source:** [Genesis 37:19-20](#)

The Witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28) – The Feared Magical Outsider

- Like Elphaba, she is a **powerful woman practicing magic**, feared by society.
- **Source:** [1 Samuel 28](#)

5. Defying Expectations & Embracing Power

Esther's Hidden Identity (Book of Esther) – From Silence to Action

- Esther **hides who she is**, but ultimately **embraces her power** to change the world.
- **Source:** [Esther 4:14](#)

Hannah's Silent Prayer (1 Samuel 1-2) – Misjudged for Being Different

- Hannah prays in a **way others don't understand**, much like how Elphaba is judged for being different.
- **Source:** [1 Samuel 1:12-16](#)

Yael and Sisera (Judges 4-5) – The Unexpected Hero

- Yael is **an outsider who takes bold action**, defying expectations.
- **Source:** [Judges 4:17-22](#)

David's Early Struggles (1 Samuel 16-17) – The Underdog Who Rises

- David is **dismissed at first**, like Elphaba, but proves his greatness.
- Source:** [1 Samuel 16:11-13](#)