

Atheist Corner

Eat. Pray. Dare

AUTHOR(S):	Dan Libenson
SUMMARY:	If you don't believe in God, or if you don't believe prayer is effective (whether or not you believe in God), what could a regular Jewish practice look like that would align with your beliefs and help you live the kind of life you're trying to live? Join us for experimentation and creative thinking. - Submitted by Dan Libenson
TOPIC(S):	Judaism Without God Jewish Practice
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will think about what meaningful Judaism and Jewish practice could look like for people who do not believe in God and/or are not interested in "religion."
AUDIENCE:	Staff, older campers, CITs
TIMING:	45 minutes
APPENDICES:	Handouts (Jewish text – Moses at the Burning Bush)
MATERIALS NEEDED:	A Jewish text in which God plays a key role
SET-UP DETAILS:	Can be done in any space. Circle of chairs.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

45 minutes, breaks down as follows:

- 5 minutes – Introductions (Why did you choose this session, if you are willing to share?)
- 5 minutes – Framing
 - The 2013 Pew Study (confirmed by more recent Jewish population surveys) indicates that some 75% of Jews are what might be called "Jews of little to no religion." It would seem that for Judaism to be most relevant to these Jews, we would have to have a Judaism that is something other than a religion. What would that look like? Can we use the ideas and materials developed by the Jewish religion in a non-religious way? What would a non-religious Jewish practice look like? Does the metaphor of a "user interface" make sense—that religion was the user interface for Judaism, but something else is possible in the future?

- 20 minutes – Text Study
 - Study a Jewish text in which God plays a key role (e.g., Moses at the Burning Bush, the Spies/Scouts), and discuss whether the text can be valuable if God is not read as a supernatural and all-knowing being, but rather as a character in a metaphorical story (i.e., the “big boss”) or as a stand-in for “the natural consequences of a set of actions.” Break into pairs and read the text to one another; assume for the sake of discussion that the authors of the text were atheists and were writing for readers who were atheists – what value might the text have under these assumptions.

- 15 minutes – Discussion
 - Based on this example, are there other dimensions of religious Judaism that could be used as valuable sources even by Jews who do not believe in God? What are they? How might we think about them? How dramatically do we have to/should we change the way we use them? What would be the value of an atheistic regular (daily, weekly) Jewish practice? What might it look like?

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

No additional notes.