

# Know Thy Directions: Exploring Nature and Our Moral Compass

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**SUMMARY:** In this session we will explore how to use the compass, both an actual compass and our moral compass. How do we set the moral compass of our campers to the North?

**GOALS:**

- You will have an opportunity to examine your values
- You will explore whether nature can help define or guide your values
- You will examine if you should align your current path to values that you identify as important

**AUDIENCE:** Target size is around 15 participants

**TIMING:** 75 minutes

**MATERIALS:**

- Land Rabbi story (included below)
- Biblical Moral Dilemmas worksheet (included below)
- Finding Your Values worksheet (included below)

**SET-UP:** Outdoor, natural area/forest

## SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:05 – *Story of rabbi and the land*
- 00:05-00:15 – *Meeting our community and setting up norms*
- 00:15-00:25 – *Activities (Self graphing, Hitbodedut)*
- 00:25-00:40 – *Text Study, Biblical Moral Dilemmas*
- 00:45-00:55 – *Values Clarification worksheet*
- 00:55-00:70 – *Hitbodedut*
- 00:70-00:75 – *Debrief*

## SESSION OUTLINE

### 00:00-00:05 – Story of rabbi and the land

Open with Bob Marley's Exodus playing in background.

Joke: Why did Moses wander in the desert for 40 years? Because he didn't have a compass!

Jerusalem is in the East, it's our hope (it's where the sun rises). If you are in the dark, the sun is your hope! We need to know our direction to find hope! Story of Arnold Schwarzenegger. Direction in life. Have a direction in life or else you are just flailing along.

### 00:05-00:15 – Meeting our community and setting up norms

Please share name, camp, position at camp.

Norms, what do you need to feel safe here. Like at Burning Man and in Vegas, what happens here, stays here!

### 00:15-00:25 – Activities (Self graphing, Hitbodedut)

Self-graphing activity – you can do this for anything. It does not have to be about moral dilemmas. I used this about nature v nurture or camping in tents v staying at the Waldorf Astoria in NYC!

Participants place themselves on a human graph to determine where they stand (literally). Use the following cues:

Peanut M&Ms-----	Regular M&Ms
Black licorice-----	Red licorice
Cilantro-----	No cilantro
Get it done-----	Procrastinate
I (Individual)-----	We (Community)
AI (Chat GPT)-----	Luddite (Hard-work)
Saibaba-----	Moral dilemma

### 00:25-00:40 – Text Study, Biblical Moral Dilemmas

Break into *Hevruta* groups (groups of 2-3 people), receive Biblical Moral Dilemma worksheet. (*Hevruta* is a term that means friendship study. It's the way Jews have been studying texts for thousands of years!)

Study for 10 minutes

2-3 groups present for 2-3 minutes. Summarize your text and 1 take away from text.

### 00:45-00:55 – Values Clarification worksheet

Pass out the values clarification worksheet. Participants have 10 minutes to do this on their own. Come back together to offer insights

**00:55-00:70 – Hitbodedut**

*Hitbodedut* comes from the reflexive Hebrew verb *L'hitboded*, to cause oneself to be alone.  
Meditation!

Introduce Martin Buber, I-thou. There are 2 ways of seeing everything, “I-it” and an “I-thou”.  
Torah is supposed to be a moral anchor in Judaism. We call the Torah *Eitz Haim Hei*, a tree of life. Yet we have just seen there are morally questionable characters in our story. Perhaps trees can help us navigate our moral dilemmas?

Go find A tree.

Ask permission to sit under it and receive its energy.

Sit and breathe with it in an I-thou relationship. Can the tree guide us to moral certainty?

Regroup, share what we experienced

**00:70-00:75 – Debrief**

Debrief: Bringing it back to your camp

- How can you bring this back to your camp?
- How do your campers get to experience moral dilemmas at camp?
- Is camp a place to have them develop moral attributes or is it a place to be free from moral dilemmas?

Mazel Tov! Know thy directions so you can find your path lit by good stars!

**BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP**

This is a great program for the outdoor space at your camp. It brings morals and nature into alignment and is a perfect way to get campers and staff outdoors.

*Two farmers were arguing over a piece of land. Each claimed ownership and bolstered their ownership with proof. To resolve their dispute, they agreed to put their case before the rabbi. The rabbi listened but could not come to a decision because both seemed to be right. Finally he said, 'Since I cannot decide to whom this land belongs, let us ask the land.' He knelt down to the ground and whispered the question, 'To whom do you belong?' He then put his ear to the ground, and, after a moment, stood up. 'Gentlemen, the land says that it belongs to neither of you-but that you belong to it.'*

- Jewish Folk tale

### 1. The story of David and Bathsheba (*Bat Sheva*)

The story of [David](#) and Bathsheba is one of the most dramatic accounts in the Old Testament. One night in Jerusalem, King David was walking upon his rooftop when he spotted a beautiful woman bathing nearby ([2 Samuel 11:2](#)). David asked his servants about her and was told she was Bathsheba, the wife of [Uriah the Hittite](#), one of David's mighty men ([2 Samuel 23:39](#)). Despite her marital status, David summoned Bathsheba to the palace, and they slept together.

Bathsheba later discovered she was pregnant ([2 Samuel 11:5](#)), and she informed David. The king's reaction was to attempt to hide his sin. David commanded Uriah to report back to him from the battlefield. Bathsheba's husband dutifully answered David's summons, and David sent him home, hoping that Uriah would sleep with Bathsheba and thus provide a cover for the pregnancy. Instead of obeying David's orders, Uriah slept in the quarters of the palace servants, refusing to enjoy a respite with Bathsheba while his men on the battlefield were still in harm's way ([2 Samuel 11:9-11](#)). Uriah did the same thing the next night as well, showing integrity in sharp contrast to David's lack thereof.

It became apparent that David and Bathsheba's [adultery](#) could not be covered up that way. David enacted a second, more sinister plan: he commanded his military leader, Joab, to place Uriah on the front lines of battle and then to purposefully fall back from him, leaving Uriah exposed to enemy attack. Joab followed the directive, and Uriah was killed in battle. After her time of mourning, Bathsheba married David and gave birth to a son. "But," [2 Samuel 11:27](#) notes, "the thing David had done displeased the LORD."

When David and Bathsheba's child was born, the Lord sent the [prophet Nathan](#) to confront David. Nathan used a parable: a rich man took a poor man's only sheep and killed it, even though he had many flocks of his own. David, a former shepherd, was so angered by this story, which he thought was true, that he responded, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity" ([2 Samuel 12:5-6](#)).

Nathan then pointed to David and uttered the chilling words, "You are the man!" ([2 Samuel 12:7](#)). David was the one guilty of this sin, and judgment would be upon his house in the form of ongoing violence. David repented (see [Psalm 51](#)), and Nathan said, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the LORD, the son born to you will die" ([2 Samuel 12:13-14](#)). The [child did die](#) a week later, and David's household experienced further hardship in later years. In total, four of David's sons suffered untimely deaths—the "four times over" judgment David had pronounced upon himself.

Reference:

Got Questions, (n.d.). What is the story of David and Bathsheba (<https://www.gotquestions.org/David-and-Bathsheba.html>)

### 2. The Akedah, The Binding of Isaac

Genesis 22:1-22:19

22:1. Sometime afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Here I am."

22:2. And He said, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights which I will point out to you."

22:3. So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him.

22:4. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar.

22:5. Then Abraham said to his servants, "You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you."

22:6. Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. He himself took the firestone and the knife; and the two walked off together.

22:7. Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he answered, "Yes, my son." And he said, "Here are the firestone and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"

22:8. And Abraham said, "God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son." And the two of them walked on together.

22:9. They arrived at the place of which God had told him. Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

22:10. And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son.

22:11. Then an angel of the LORD called to him from heaven: "Abraham! Abraham!" And he answered, "Here I am."

22:12. And he said, "Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me."

22:13. When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son.

22:14. And Abraham named that site Adonai-yireh, whence the present saying, "On the mount of the LORD there is vision."

22:15. The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,

22:16. and said, "By Myself I swear, the LORD declares: because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one,

22:17. I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore; and your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes.

22:18. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed My command."

22:19. Abraham then returned to his servants, and they departed together for Beer-sheba; and Abraham stayed in Beer-sheba.

Questions:

- What was morally questionable about these characters and/or their actions/behavior?
- What would you have done differently if you were the character in the story?
- Have you ever done something that you are ashamed of or wish you could have a "do over?"
- Why are these character flaws related to us in the Bible? Why not erase them out/don't mention them in the text?
- What can these characters, and the situations they are in, teach us?

Finding Your Values worksheet

**Finding Your Values: Valuing Your Findings**

**"Open your eyes and look within,  
Are You Satisfied with the life you're living?"**

**-Bob Marley**

This exercise is for your eyes only. We will not collect these papers. You can share if you want, but do not feel obligated. This activity is very much for and about you.

“...Life is like a river, and most people jump on the river of life without ever really deciding where they want to end up. So, in a short period of time, they get caught up in the current: current events, current fears, and current challenges. When they come to forks in the river, they don't consciously decide where they want to go, or which direction is right for them. They merely "go with the flow." They become a part of the mass of people who are directed by the environment instead of by their own values. As a result, they feel out of control. They remain in this unconscious state until one day the sound of the raging water awakens them and they discover that they are 5 feet from Niagara Falls in a boat with no oars. At this point, all they can say is, "oh, shoot!" But by then it's too late. They are going to take a fall. Sometimes it's an emotional fall. Sometimes it's a physical fall. Sometimes it's a financial fall. It is likely that what ever challenges you have in your life currently could have been avoided by some better decisions upstream.”

-Robbins, A. (1991). Awaken the Giant Within. Summit books. New York, NY. (pp.41-42)

What are 3 things you are looking forward to doing in the near future? Why are you looking forward to doing these things? Why is it fun/interesting to you?

1.
2.
3.

What are 3 things that bring you joy? Do you want these things to be part of your life in 30 years?

1.
2.
3.

Name 3 people you admire most in your life. Why do you admire them?


If you had \$1,000,000 that you had to give away, who/what would you give it to? Why?


Create/Design your perfect day. What do you do on this perfect day? Where are you? Who are you with? What are the activities you choose?


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Analyze your answers from above. Are there common words? Themes? Ideas? Are there motifs or connections? What are they?


Are you setting up your life so that it matches the life that you want and value?  
Can you change the direction/trajectory of your life? Should you? Why, why not?

In 10, 20, 30+ years, will you be able to answer “yes” to Bob Marley’s question: “Are you satisfied with the life your living?” How can you change your life to match your current morals and values? (Use the space below to answer these questions and add additional notes, questions or ideas.


What values would you like to share/instill in your campers this summer?

1.	
2.	
3.	





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