"Shalom in the Home"

MAGAZINE PAGE 8

In this article, students read about a new reality show in which families strive to achieve *shlom bayit*. With the advice and guidance of Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, who draws from his experience, expertise, and the Jewish tradition of *shlom bayit* in making his suggestions, families learn ways to live more harmoniously. In this lesson, students will write their own advice for scenarios in which families struggle to maintain *shlom bayit*. They will then consider how to apply the same type of advice to their own family situations.

OBJECTIVES

- **Students will explore the concept of *shlom bayit* by responding to and offering solutions for different family issues.**
- **Students will discuss Jewish texts related to *shlom bayit* and use the texts as the basis for their responses to various family issues.**

VOCABULARY

עֵצָה	advice
יוֹעֵץ	counselor
בְּעָיָה	problem
פִּתְרוֹן	solution
שְׁאֵלָה	question
תְּשׁוּבָה	answer

QUOTES & QUESTIONS

"Before the Lubners can stop the eruption, another cycle of pain has begun."

What is the pain referred to in this sentence?

Who is experiencing the pain?

What is a "cycle" of pain? [Point out to your students that the cyclical nature of the pain teaches us about the magnitude of the pain.]

"The goal of each show, Boteach says, is to teach troubled families to develop successful relationships."

According to Boteach, what is a "successful" family relationship? What do you consider a successful family relationship?

According to Boteach, what is a "troubled" family? How do you define a "troubled" family?

What kind of issues might you expect Boteach to address on his show?

What are some ways he might help these families?

ACTIVITY: ADVICE CENTRAL

1. Read the article "Shalom in the Home" on page 8 of BabagaNewz. Discuss the Quotes & Questions above. Explain to the students that, like Rabbi Boteach, they will now have the opportunity to give advice about issues relating to *shlom bayit*. Explain that they will work as advice columnists who have several questions to answer about family dynamics and how to resolve family issues.

2. Before you give students the advice questions, study the Jewish texts. These texts should serve as the basis for the responses that they will write. Focus the discussion on the following questions:

What behavioral technique is described in each text?

How might this behavior create *shlom bayit*?

***PIRKEI AVOT* 1:6**

Judge everyone favorably.

What does it mean to judge another person?

What does it mean to judge favorably? What would it mean to judge unfavorably?

Under what circumstances would judging favorably work best? Are there circumstances when you wouldn't recommend judging favorably? Why?

***PIRKEI AVOT* 1:15**

Receive everyone with a cheerful face.

What does it mean to "receive everyone with a cheerful face"?

What are the results of greeting people with a smile?

When would this be good advice?

Under what conditions is this not good advice?

***PIRKEI AVOT* 2:5**

Do not judge your fellow until you have reached his or her place.

What does it mean to judge your fellow?

What does it mean to "have reached his or her place"?

Why is it important to have reached his or her place? What if you are not in his or her place?

Under what circumstances would this best apply?

***PIRKEI AVOT* 4:1**

Ben Zoma says: ...Who is honored? One who honors others.

What does it mean to be honored?

What does it mean to honor others?

How does honoring others lead to being honored?

Do you agree with Ben Zoma's answer? How else might you answer this question?

How does this text apply to family relations?

***PIRKEI AVOT* 4:4**

Be exceedingly humble in spirit.

What does it mean to be humble?

How does one act humbly?

Why does the text teach us to be exceedingly humble?

How might this advice apply to *shlom bayit*?

3. Once the students are familiar with the texts, divide the students into small groups of two or three. Give each group one question to which it must respond; the questions are available at www.babaganewz.com/teachers. In their response, groups must keep the format of an advice column and write a letter explaining their suggestions. They must also be sure to use at least one of the texts in their letter, explaining the text they are citing, what the family can learn from the text, and how to use the behaviors described in the text.

4. After the groups have completed their letters, have each group share its problem and its proposed solution.

While the groups are sharing, challenge your students to reflect on the following questions:

What did you learn from this experience?

What surprised you about the texts?

What surprised you about the responses?

How can you apply what you learned to your own family?