

St
BETH EMET THE FREE SYNAGOGUE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Ridge at Dempster, Evanston, Illinois 60202

RABBI DAVID POLISH, D.H.L., D.D.

IRWIN I. GLUSTOFF, Principal

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Rabbi Norman Lamm
27 W. 86th Street
New York, N. Y. 10024

Dear Rabbi Lamm:

I have enclosed a copy of a new program we have designed for the coming year at Beth Emet. For the most part it is self-explanatory but it is by no means complete. We would be most appreciative if you would make suggestions and comments that would guide and direct us.

Of great need and importance are bibliographies and citations: Modern, Biblical and Rabbinic, so that our youth will learn what Judaism has to say and said on these contemporary problems. I refer particularly to Problems II, III and IV and their sub-topics specifically, but we welcome any help you offer.

Sincerely,



IRWIN I. GLUSTOFF
Principal

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A NEW RESEARCH PROGRAM FOR THE UPPER GRADES

The Religious School of Beth Emet strives not only to keep pace with its students as they respond to a changing world, but to anticipate their needs, as well as the needs of Judaism as it depends on the successive generations of Jewish youth for strength and survival. Toward this goal, the new Team Study Activity is designed to involve students in an intense learning experience, enriching them and the teachers who aid them. The program was formulated by a committee of faculty and students who chose the following issues as topics of study:

1. Israel: Solutions to Peace Problems
2. Who is a Jew?
3. Judaism and Radicalism (Views on Society)
4. Judaism and the Person (Views on self and body)

In each case, the Judaic viewpoint will be studied in depth, culminating in a Position Paper written by students individually or in groups.

The program will begin following the Winter recess. At that time, the Senior Department will drop its regular classes and the students, individually or in small groups (limited to five to seven students) that will cross grade lines, will concentrate on one of the four areas for study, research and writing for a period of eight weeks. Groups and individuals will spend this period in reading, discussion, research, special lectures, fact-finding, and writing.

POSITION PAPER: This paper will represent the efforts of a concentrated period of study, research and thought by all the students involved. Each of the problems to be studied has various aspects to which students may address themselves. Since at least five students will be in each group, the position papers should reflect varying views of the same problem or its aspects that may complement or contradict each other but in any case will illuminate the issue as fully as possible. The papers will include bibliographies and may themselves become sources for future research by other students.

RESOURCES: The faculty and staff will be responsible for providing materials for this program. Attention will be focused on all pertinent areas of Judaica including Biblical and Rabbinic sources and modern materials. Public and quasi-public agencies of the community will be approached for materials. Interest-oriented organizations will be sought out for their particular points of view. Resource people of the community will be brought in for both lectures and discussions. The Beth Emet Bruce Gordon Memorial Library as well as community libraries will be widely used, the students encouraged to develop wide-ranging and productive bibliographies. When necessary, material will be duplicated for students needing it; as in any such project, the variety and availability of research aids cannot be underestimated and those guiding the program, understanding this, will make the search for such aids and material an activity of prime importance.

The faculty will direct the research program and guide the writing of position papers. Four faculty "teams" will concentrate on the areas of study, one team to each area, supervising the appropriate individuals and groups. Rabbi David Polish will "keynote" the beginning of this study and will be available for special sessions.

ORGANIZATION: For this program, we shall use two main divisions of the school for the establishment of research groups. One will include the 7th and 8th grades, and the other High School Grades One and Two. During this period, the regular curriculum will be suspended. This means that Hebrew study and Honors classes will not meet, those teachers joining the pool guiding the research program. Well in advance of the start of this project, class teachers will explain the new program to their students, discussing with them each of the study areas and possible approaches to a meaningful program. When the students have made their choices, study groups will be formed, staff assignments announced, and meeting locations chosen.

The 6th grade is not included in this program, since there are other adjustments to be made in this grade. The students for the first time attend school on Saturday, with its schedule far different from the Sunday session. They are new to Junior High school in secular school, as well, and most of them will be just beginning to develop independence in study and an awareness of research skills. It may be that 6th grade assignments could be made with an eye to preparing students for the advanced research of the upper grade program.

EVALUATION: Each student will be responsible for his own records and notes of lectures, discussion and reading. Each student will be evaluated twice, by and with his group and the faculty team. The first session will be near the midpoint of the program to discuss progress, unforeseen problems, and the balance of research and writing in the remaining period. The second evaluation session will focus on the overall work of the student and his final position paper. In both these sessions, the students themselves will participate actively in the evaluative process. (It is probable that the entire program will be influenced by these sessions, evolving each year as students and faculty make new discoveries and suggestions.) The faculty will then make a Pass/Fail anecdotal report of each student for the home and the regular class teacher. This research program will represent one-third of the student's academic year.

CULMINATION: The position paper written by individual students or groups of students is itself a culmination, but additional activities are being planned for the widest use and dissemination of these papers: presentation at one or more forums where members of the congregation gather. Student groups may lead a discussion, on the basis of their papers, at an Oneg Shabbat following regular Friday evening services, that would involve parents, other students, and Rabbi Polish. A panel of students may bring its findings and conclusions to meetings of the Sisterhood, the Men's Club, or the Senior Youth Group. At the student Shabbat services on Saturday morning, the students could discuss the points of view and controversies or agreements discovered in their research and their significance for their generation. It might be possible for these student panels to appear in inter-denominational work in the community. Certainly the students could use the results of their study when these topics arise in their secular schools. In short, as in all scholarship, the benefits continue long after the completion of study, bringing not only to students, but to those around them, greater knowledge and understanding. With such goals, Beth Emet launches its new program to enrich young people in their Jewish studies.

RESEARCH PROGRAM SUBJECTS

These are outlined and open-ended, to serve as a beginning guide for the Study Groups

I. Israel: Problems of Peace or Solutions to Adjustment

- A. Arab Refugees
- B. Soviet Jewry
- C. United Nations and the Security Council
- D. U. S. Foreign Policy and the State Department
 - 1. Current
 - 2. 1948 to present (Jewish voting blocs)
- E. Peace Negotiations
 - 1. Territorial
 - 2. Reparations
 - 3. Jerusalem
- F. Responsibility of the American (World) Jewry
 - 1. Aliyah
 - 2. Manpower
 - 3. Financial
 - 4. Politically
 - 5. Religious loyalty
- G. Internal Israeli Life
 - 1. Effects of contemporary life
 - 2. Life of a teen-ager (counterpart)

II. Judaism and Radicalism (Views of Judaism towards Society)

- A. War
- B. Draft
- C. Race
- D. Politics - the voice of youth
- E. Ecology and pollution
- F. Foreign Aid--Arms, Money, Food, Contraceptives, etc.
- G. Education
- H. Poverty

III Judaism and the Human Body (Views of Judaism towards Self)

- A. Attitudes towards Drugs
- B. Attitudes towards Sex
- C. Attitudes towards Birth Control/Abortion
- D. Attitudes towards Life - Death - Sickness
- E. Attitudes towards Violence and Physical Contact
- F. Attitudes towards Emotions - Family Life (responsibilities, etc)

IV. Who is a Jew?

- A. Current Israel Situation
- B. Traditional Jewish Viewpoints
- C. Problems caused by Conversion, Intermarriage, Mixed marriage

V. Independent Study

- A. Any of the four above topics
- B. Choice will be limited by approval of Staff
- C. Separate subject of student's choice, approved by Staff