

Parshat Matot

Goal: To connect the parsha to the vows and obligations in campers' lives and to increase awareness of their personal relationships and commitments.

- Vows can be between you and god, yourself, or other people.
- The term "relationship" can be interpreted in both a romantic or non-romantic context

1) Split into groups and read the following summary of the parasha:

Moses tells the heads of the tribes what God commands about nedarim (vows). If a man makes a vow to God, he must carry out what he promised. If a woman makes a vow, her vow will stand as long as her father and her husband do not object to it. Then, God commands Moses to have one thousand men from each tribe attack the Midianites. The Israelites burn the Midianite towns and hold the Midianite women and children captive. Then, Moses tells the Israelites to kill every man and woman who is not a virgin but to spare the virgin women.

2) Activity: stand in a line holding hands with their eyes closed and read the following statements. For the first set of statements, if they agree they should take one step forward and if they disagree they should take one step backwards. If they are indifferent, they can stay where they are. For the second set of statements, they should choose which part of the statement they agree with more. Remind them that there is no right or wrong answer and if they can't decide they should go with their first instinct.

Agree or disagree statements (step forwards if agree, backwards if disagree):

- I choose to be in a relationship with someone that I like.
- I believe that a relationship requires commitment.
- Marriage is between a man and a woman.
- Marriage is a commitment between two people.
- I believe that the Torah permits same-sex marriage.
- I believe that same-sex marriage should be permitted.
- I know someone who likes someone of the same gender.
- I have done something to advocate for LGBTQ+ rights.

Choose one of the following statements (step forward for the first statement, backwards for the second statement):

- The point of marriage is to build a family. The point of marriage is love.
- Is it more important to be honest all the time even if it hurts, or to be sensitive even if it means lying.
- Is a vow something of the heart (emotional) or is a vow something of the mind (rational).
- I think that marriage is primarily a religious thing. I think that marriage is primarily a social thing.

3) Discussion

- How did you feel during this activity?
- How do you think this relates to the parsha?**
- What does the word vow mean to you?
- What are some examples of vows in your daily life?
- What vows are important in a relationship?
- What vows are important in a marriage?
- What do you think defines a marriage?