

Benainu: Jewish Perspectives on Adolescence

Over the past few days our 6th graders participated in the *Jewish Perspectives and Anatomy, Puberty, and Reproduction* portions of Beinanu בינינו (Between Us). In both, the children displayed a high level of maturity, healthy curiosity, self-awareness, and posed significant questions.

Jewish Perspectives- Boys

Rabbi Abrahams:

- Spoke about respecting ourselves and other people from the Torah's perspective.
- He focused on the Torah's use of the word "*nefesh*"-"soul" that is used in the Torah to describe humans in the 'world of Abraham' and how this contrasts with the way Adam described Eve when he first saw her. Adam exclaimed "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" when he saw Eve.
- This led to a discussion about the difference between the way you treat yourself and other humans when you see them as a soul, a special, unique individual with a connection to God, and the way you treat other humans when you see them as simply flesh and bone.
- We discussed how important a concept this is to being good human beings and forming healthy societies.

Rabbi Krawatsky:

- Led a discussion covering the topic of male vs. female from a Jewish perspective.
- He used Judaic sources to reveal the similarities and differences between males and females, highlighting not only equality among both, but the importance of both to the Judaism and the greater world.
- There was a major focus on the concept of "*kavod*"-"respect", and its importance to our thoughts about and interactions with others.

Rabbi Oratz offered insight and meaningful explanations throughout the presentation.

Jewish Perspectives- Girls

- Mrs. Schorr led an inspirational discussion that addressed the importance of being a Jewish woman and addressed what really matters- "How I look or the way I am?"
- She gracefully brought light to adolescent female issues, while encouraging the girls to deepen their perspective and understanding of the issues using thoughtfulness, maturity, and respect.
- Some issues she addressed: problems with the "ideal" woman/models, modest dress, types of dress and what it says to the world, how being peaceful makes one powerful, what you *want* to present to the public eye vs. what you *actually* present to the public eye, the holiness of the human body (women's ability to create life) and connection (male and female) in Judaism.
- She posed the following question to the girls: What are some words you want someone to think of when they think of you? And the responses were moving: "caring, nice, respectful, understanding, responsible, trustworthy, attractive, kind-hearted, and presentable". It's clear, our 6th grade girls' minds are focused on personality traits that are of true importance. We are proud.
- Mrs. Schorr's Homework: Thank G-d for making you a woman and do something special with your womanhood.

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