



ACTIVITY

Communal Institutions

Materials Needed

- Copies of Text from Sanhedrin 17b
- Link to film *Addes*
- Internet connection and screening device

Time Needed

1 hour

Goal

To learn about the essential institutions of Jewish community, in the past and to consider how these elements have changed for Jews today.

Before you Get Started

Look at the list of Enduring Understandings:

- Judaism is a civilization, and not primarily a religion.
- A civilization is constituted by its history, literature, language, social organizations, folk sanctions, standards of conduct, social and spiritual ideals, esthetics and values. All of these elements form a civilization.
- Jewish communities share the content of the civilization and the drive for sustaining it, but they also each bring to the table their unique local perspective and interpretation, which in turn contributes to and enriches the collective global civilization.
- The local and global dimensions of Jewish Peoplehood, as perceived through the prism of developing and sustaining Jewish civilization, represent two sides of the same coin.
- The work of building and strengthening Jewish civilization at the local Jewish community level is central to the future of Jewish peoplehood.
- The contribution of every Jew in every community can be significant to the development of the Jewish People's collective enterprise.

Which one would you like to emphasize through this activity?

Directions for Activity

1. Ask participants to identify one Jewish institution, which is important for them to have in a city before they would make a decision to move there (a kosher butcher? A Jewish bookstore? Synagogue?)
2. Have participants read the text entitled “Building a Community (found in the text section for this theme)– the central institutions of a Community” from Sanhedrin 17b . Ask them to pay attention to each item on the list.
3. Pose the following questions:
 - What does each required element in a city mean and why is it important?
 - What type of city are the rabbis saying Jews should live in? Do any of their elements surprise you, and why?
4. Ask participants to arrange the 10 elements into categories – what do you learn from that exercise?

5. Rewrite the text from a contemporary perspective. What kind of city should Jews live in today? What components would you replace today and what would you add instead?
6. What facilities are most important to you in your city environment? Are those things Jewish or universal?
7. Close the activity by watching the movie “Addes”, which you can find in the Media section for this theme. Consider the questions on the Synagogue as the central community institution. (<http://israeli-movies.com/en/index.php/jewish/29-addes>)

Note to Educator

Did the enduring understanding that you set out to teach surface during this activity?