



Robyn Faintich

## Signature Pedagogies Statement November 2018

As a commitment to pluralism of ideas, I utilize the concept of *Eilu v'Eilu* as one of my signature pedagogies. Whether it's bringing in diametrically opposed texts to demonstrated Judaism's vast opinions on a topic, or **embolden holy debate** within a learning space, I encourage discourse which allows for many differing voices and opinions. One way I deploy this pedagogy is to bring in sources from different movement's scholars, as well as both ancient and modern texts. This leads to another signature pedagogy of how I then go about facilitating this exploration.

I believe in serving as a “**guide on the side**” and not a “sage on the stage.” I want to empower my learners to struggle with the texts and concepts and – with my **facilitation** and guidance – come to their own conclusions about how to integrate their learnings into their identity and belief systems. I believe in empowering my learners – through much self-exploration - to own their process and opinions with the hopes of inspiring their continued curiosity. One excerpted text which reminds me of this pedagogy is from Maimonides Talmud Torah Chapter 4, Section 2: “The teacher should not sit on a chair, [while] his students [sit] on the ground. Rather, either everyone should sit on the ground or everyone should sit on chairs.” This is also reflected where God told Moses in Deuteronomy 5:28: “stand together with me - עִמָּד עִמָּדִי” which implies a sense of equality since God neither sits or stands. These texts set a standard that there is no distinction made between the teachers and the students. Another text which points to a guide taking someone where they want to go is from Genesis 37:5 when the *ish* asks Joseph, “What are you seeking? - מָה-תִּבְקֶשׁ”.

As an educator, I am committed to the pedagogy of utilizing **mediated and concrete experience-based education techniques**—leveraging the text *Na'aseh v'Nishma* – to do and to pay attention (similar to *sim lev* translated as “put your heart and mind toward it.”). One method I use for executing this pedagogy is the use of manipulative materials in all learning.

As I believe that people's need to belong and feel connected outweighs their learning itself, one of my signature pedagogies is **kehillah** - to **intentionally create community** among my learners. I utilize different techniques to infuse community building with the content. In their 2006 book, *Experiential Learning: a Best Practice Handbook for Educators and Trainers* Beard and Wilson refer to “ice-breakers and energizers” as “primer activities.” They explain these activities are designed “to reduce inhibitions or to create trust, empathy, and teamwork...” I look at these primer activities as a critical part of the education experience, and consider how they feed the content learning and how their success or failure impacts the positioning of the rest of the learning.

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