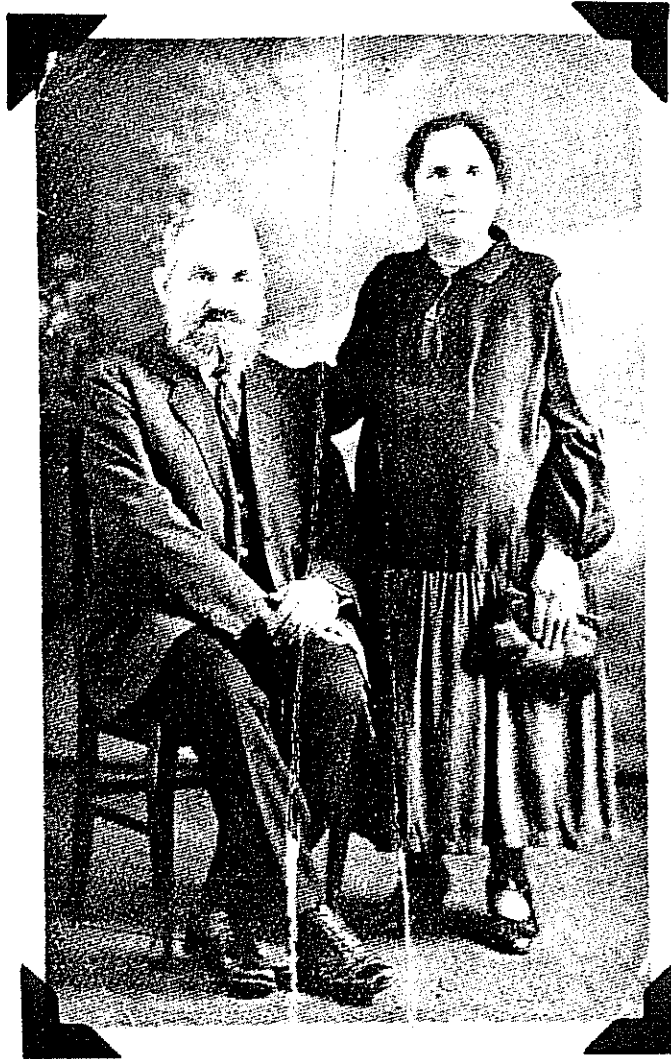


teacher's guide.

*Conservative Judaism:
Our Ancestors to Our Descendants*

*Lesson plan
from:*



BY

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TO UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEXITY OF AN HALACHIC ISSUE AND TO
STUDY THE PROCESS OF HALACHIC DECISION-MAKING.

OBJECTIVES

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- | OBJECTIVES | SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Students will express their personal feelings about an issue that has been controversial in the Jewish community.</p> | <p>1A. Choose one of the <i>halachic</i> issues listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Allowing women to have <i>aliyot</i> to the <i>Torah</i>; b. Driving to the synagogue on <i>Shabbat</i> and holidays; c. Eating dairy foods in non-kosher resraurants; d. Permitting abortion; e. Permitting organ transplants; f. Allowing women to act as <i>shlichei tzibbur</i> at services. <p>Discuss the issue you have chosen by referring only to your surface ("gut") reactions to it. Do not yet refer to texts or ask expert advice in dealing with the issue.</p> |
| <p>2. Students will be able to state the basic elements of the issue they have discussed. They will interview members of their community to ascertain other views on the issue.</p> | <p>1B. Follow this discussion with the reading of the section in the sourcebook on "How the Conservative Movement makes decisions about Jewish Law."</p> <p>2A. Study the responsa of the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Law and Standards and/or other Conservative Movement legal sources (Novak, Klein, etc.) that are pertinent to the issue you are discussing.</p> <p>2B. Assign students to interview members of the rabbinate/professional and lay Jewish community about the issue they are studying. The interviews can be with a number of concerned individuals, but should include: at least one Conservative rabbi; the president of the Congregation and at least one board member; parents (or spouses, if the students are adults) of each student; at least two other adults who are members of the Congregation; youth leaders, teachers, principal, cantor.</p> |

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

REFERENCES/OTHER RESOURCES

2A. Try to understand:

- a. Why the issue is a source of disagreement or controversy;
- b. What precedents in Jewish law have influenced the way people think about the issue;
- c. What the current position of the Committee on Law and Standards is--and why.

2B. Interview questions might include:

- a. Why do you think this issue is a source of disagreement or controversy?
- b. What is your stand on this issue?
- c. What makes you take this stand?
- d. What role does the Jewish community play in your adopting this point of view?
- e. How do you think your position does or should affect the community in which we live--and the Jewish people in general?

1B. Conservative Judaism
sourcebook, pp.158-161.

2A. Copies of Rabbinical Assembly responsa or other legal materials. These are probably most easily obtainable from your congregational rabbi. Note other references in sourcebook, p. 244.

24 GOAL: TO UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEXITY OF A HALACHIC ISSUE AND TO STUDY THE PROCESS OF HALACHIC DECISION-MAKING.

OBJECTIVES

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

3. Students will formulate an opinion and the issue they have been researching. They will be able to state a number of elements that are involved in the Conservative *halachic* decision-making process, and will be able to explain the role of the *mara d'atra*.

3A. Assemble of the evidence collected in the interviews and the responsa materials. Either duplicate copies of all the materials, or ask the students to describe the interviews and materials. Clarify as much as possible the various positions of those interviewed.

3B. Divide into small groups of about 5 members each. Assign the following task:

You are the advisory board to the *mara d'atra* of your community. You must decide as a group how to advise the rabbi (*mara d'atra*) about the issue we have been discussing. What kinds of evidence should he take into account in making his decision about the issue? What are the implications of his making the decision either in favor or against the issue? What questions should he be prepared to answer as a result of dealing with and acting on the decision? How do you, as a group, advise him to act on the issue?

Write cogent arguments expressing the majority and minority opinions of your group that could be presented to the rabbi to help him make this *halachic* decision.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

REFERENCES/OTHER RESOURCES

Questions for discussion summarizing lessons 11-13:

1. How is making *halachic* decisions different from making other decisions, like medical, economic, or political ones? How is making *halachic* decisions similar to other kinds of decision-making?
2. What do you think differentiates Orthodox *halachic* decisions from Conservative ones? What concerns about *halacha* do you think Reform Jews have?
3. What do you think about what you know of the Conservative decision-making process for Jewish law? What are its strengths and weaknesses?

- 3B. Conservative Judaism sourcebook, pp. 158-161.