



Women's League for Conservative Judaism

Mishpachah: The Modern Jewish Family

MODERN RITUALS

A Search for New Meanings

Group Activity

This Has Special Meaning for Me ...

Do this with families, with a group of friends, with your sisterhood. It could make a wonderful conversation during a Passover seder or other gathering of friends and family.

Ask everyone to bring in two Jewish objects that hold special meaning for them: one should represent what they think of as continuity with the Jewish past, and the other should express new ways of being Jewish.

Alternatively, ask them to bring in both the oldest and the newest Jewish objects they own, specifying that they needn't be ritual objects, such as a kiddush cup or tallit, but rather objects that are expressive of their Jewish commitments, such as an object that represents tikkun olam, learning or their own spiritual paths.

Ask people to share their objects. Invite them to tell the story of how the objects came into their lives, how they actually use them (even if -- ore especially if -- it is not conventional), and what meanings they hope the objects might convey to the next generation. Assure members that they needn't report on the "official" story of an object's meaning or traditional use. It's their own story that matters.

Ask people to think about how differently they relate to the old and new objects. If anyone brings in a new ritual object, such as a Miriam's cup, women's tallit, or a haggadah for a feminist seder, explore how these new objects have become dear repositories of memory.

Group leaders should know in advance that talking about the Jewish objects, old or new, conventional or idiosyncratic, can elicit a good deal of memory and feeling, and may want to assure that this is a welcoming place to express themselves. Reassure them that what they share in the group is intended to be private, unless they give permission to the group to share what they have heard.