Judaism Discussion #1 for a Class Participation Grade

1. Read the lyrics and then listen to the song ‘When You Believe’ sung by Mariah Carey & Whitney Houston from the movie ‘The Prince of Egypt’ and then discuss meanings you see in the song and how it relates to the 4 Cornerstones of JUDAISM?

Many nights we've prayed
With no proof anyone could hear
In our hearts a hopeful song
We barely understood
Now, we are not afraid
Although we know there's much to fear
We were moving mountains
Long before we knew we could

There can be miracles when you believe
Though hope is frail, it's hard to kill
Who knows what miracles you can achieve?
When you believe, somehow you will
You will when you believe

In this time of fear
When prayer so often proves in vain
Hope seems like the summer birds
Too swiftly flown away
Yet now I'm standing here
My heart's so full, I can't explain
Seeking faith and speaking words
I never thought I'd say

There can be miracles when you believe
Though hope is frail, it's hard to kill
Who knows what miracles you can achieve?
When you believe, somehow you will
You will when you believe

They don't always happen when you ask
And it's easy to give in to your fears
But when you're blinded by your pain
Can't see your way clear through the rain
A small but still resilient voice says "Help is very near!"

There can be miracles when you believe
Though hope is frail, it's hard to kill
Who knows what miracles you can achieve?
When you believe, somehow you will
Now, you will, you will when you believe
You will when you believe, just believe
Just believe, you will when you believe

1. According to the video you watched for today’s homework: Briefly explain what are each of the 4 CORNERSTONES of JUDAISM?...and how have you see them in what we have studied about Judaism so far?
2. Read the textbook pages 361-362 about the very important Jewish ritual of the bar mitzvah for boys and bat mitzvah for girls. Discuss your reactions, thoughts, and questions about this reading. How does it relate to the video you watched for homework and the 4 Cornerstones of Judaism? How does it relate to Big Question #1: What is the meaning of life? And Question #2: What is God?
3. Look at the Map on Page 362 and discuss any observations
4. Read Page 363-364 the section called “God” and discuss the MAIN IDEAS, KEY VOCABULARY WORDS, and your THOUGHTS ABOUT IT?

-Also discuss how have you seen any of these ideas so far in our study of Judaism (the movie Prince of Egypt, The Passover ritual, etc.)?

1. Read Page 364 “The Problem of Evil” and discuss with your partner. One of the main themes in Judaism is the exploration of this question. What are some of Judaism’s thoughts about this question and what do you think about it?
2. Read Pages 364-365 the section called “Torah” and discuss with your partner:
3. Why is “The Torah” considered one of the 4 cornerstones of Judaism?
4. How have we the seen the central importance of The Torah in class so far (the movie and Passover ritual, etc.)?
5. What is the difference between Torah and Talmud?
6. Let’s discuss the movie The Prince of Egypt.
7. What are your overall reactions to the movie? Did you like or not like it and why?
8. This movie is based on the Jewish Torah Book of Exodus. What are your thoughts about reading the Book of Exodus vs. watching this Dreamworks animation version of it?
9. How can you interpret The Book of Exodus literally vs. symbolically? If you interpret it symbolically then what are different symbols, meanings, and lessons in The Book of Exodus?
10. One reason I find the Book of Exodus so interesting is that this is the story of a slave people. These are stories from when the Hebrew/Jewish people were slaves in Egypt. So many of these stories were ‘slave stories’ told and sung by slaves secretly at night and passed along orally.
11. Some people argue that the true meaning of The Book of Exodus can only be truly understood by ‘people who are oppressed.’ People who are comfortable in life can never truly understand the true meaning of The Book of Exodus. As a teacher of US History it is certainly interesting that African-American slaves find great meaning and comfort in The Book of Exodus themselves. What are your thoughts about this…that only ‘oppressed’people (and not wealthy people) can truly understand the meaning of Exodus?
12. If the Book of Exodus is best understood as a ‘symbolic text’ of stories that were passed on orally by slaves- then how could watching The Book of Exodus as an animation movie actually be a better way of experiencing and understanding The Book of Exodus than simply reading it?
13. NOW LET’S TALK ABOUT how the Jewish people remember and celebrate the Book of Exodus through the PASSOVER ceremony.
14. What are your overall thoughts about the Passover Ceremony we did in class?
15. How does the ceremony relate to The Book of Exodus?
16. How does the ceremony relate to the 4 corenerstones of Judaism?
17. How does the ceremony relate to How Judaism answers Big Question #1: What is the meaning of life? And #2 What is God?
18. Let’s now talk about how The Book of Exodus ends. Do you remember the very last scene in The Prince of Egypt? What is happening in the very last scene?
19. In The Book of Exodus after Moses leads the Hebrew/Jewish people out of slavery in Egypt they then wander in the desert searching for their way back to ‘The Promised Land’- which is present-day Israel and the city of Jerusalem. While they are wandering in the desert, Moses goes up to a mountain, speaks with God, and returns with the famous TEN COMMANDMENTS. These are God’s ‘new rules’ for the Jewish people to follow to uphold their part of the COVENANT. If the Jewish people follow these 10 Commandments- then God will give them the Promised Land in return.
20. Work with your partner- do you know what are each of the 10 Commandments?
21. Now read The 10 Commandments at the bottom of Page 366. Some historians say this marks a major turning point in the History of World Religions and Human History in that the Jewish religions is now based on ETHICAL MONOTHEISM. What does this mean? What are your thoughts about this?
22. Finally read the textbook Pages 366-367 “Covenant and Election”
23. What are the main ideas of this section?
24. What are your thoughts about it?