

THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: JEWISH VALUES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



Explore social justice causes through the Jewish holidays.

Students will learn about Jewish values in connection to each of the holidays. They will create and participate in activities to help their local communities.

Each lesson can be done as a stand-alone event or sequentially throughout the year.

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Each lesson has activities appropriate for grades K-8, with adjustments recommended by age. These lessons could be done by individual grade, in combined groups, or as all-school or family programming.

ROSH HASHANAH & YOM KIPPUR

Collective Teshuva



During the High Holidays we do teshuva, apologizing and making amends for our past mistakes. Our liturgy is written in the plural, reminding us that we are responsible for one another and repent as a community. In this unit students will explore the idea of collective teshuva.

Collective Teshuva

Grade(s): K-2nd, 3-5th, 6-8th
Number of participants: any
Time needed: 60-75 min



Goal(s):

Students will understand the value of collective teshuva and repair, in connection to modern world events.

Objectives:

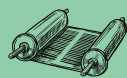
Students will:

- Explore stories of collective teshuva.
- Learn Jewish text connected to the Yamim Nora'im (High Holidays) and write their own group liturgy.
- Analyze and create art rooted in the themes of repentance and repair.

Elements of Learning



Visual Art



Torah



Reflection



Physical Activity



Jewish Values



Prayer

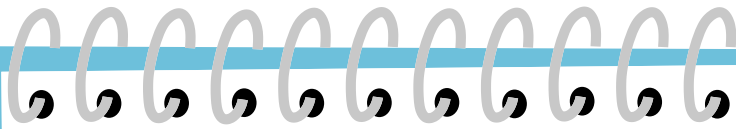
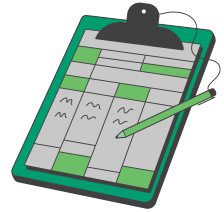


Performance Art

A Reconstructionist Lens

The High Holidays are a time to reflect and make repair for harm caused in the past year. One important aspect of the High Holiday liturgy is the focus on collective teshuva (all repentance are written in the plural). As Reconstructionists, we understand that our world is deeply broken and that it is our responsibility to participate in Tikkun (repair) to help create a more just and beautiful world. In this unit students will connect the ancient rituals and prayers of teshuva to modern issues in the world today.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Appendix texts
- Large posterboard or paper with the alphabet written vertically on it
- Markers
- Paper and pencils
- Jonah storybook and/or a computer
- Art supplies

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to move around and create skits together.

You will need 4 stations set up with activity space.

My Notes



Hebrew Wordbank

אוצר מילים בעברית

New Year	ראש השנה	Rosh Hashanah
Day of Atonement	יום כפור	Yom Kippur
Repentance/Returning	תשובה	Teshuva
Repairing the World	תיקון עולם	Tikkun Olam

Feel free to add your own!



SETTING UP



Key Words

➔ **Rosh Hashanah**

The Jewish New Year, usually in September/October. A time to reflect on the past year, commit to being our best selves in the new year.

➔ **Yom Kippur**

The Day of Atonement. Marked by fasting, prayers of repentance, and apologizing for our mistakes.

➔ **Teshuvah**

Repentance, returning to our best selves.

➔ **Reparations**

Money or other tangible ways to repair harm done to an individual or towards a group of people.



My Notes

Jewish Context

Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) are the holiest days on the Jewish calendar. They give us a chance to reflect on the past year, make amends for harm we have caused, and commit to being better versions of ourselves in the coming year.

Opening Activity



All Together (10-15min.)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the Scenarios from the Appendix

Directions:

Divide students into pairs or small groups.

For students who are reading, give each group one of the scenarios and ask them to read it, answer the questions, and then create a skit to act it out together. Ask students to consider if there are multiple ways they might respond in the scenario, and if so, to create multiple versions of their skit to show the different possibilities.

For students who are not reading, either pair a teacher/student who can read with them, OR, read all the scenarios together and then let each group pick which one they'd like to work on.

Note: You know your class best, choose scenarios that they will find interesting.

Invite students to share their skits with the class. After each, ask the group if anyone has additional ideas of how the characters in the story could have responded or acted.



My Notes

A Taste of Torah



Collective Repair (20-30 min.)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Appendix texts
- Paper and pencils
- Large piece of paper or postboard with the alphabet written out vertically
- Markers
- Storybooks and/or computer

Set Up

You will need 4 stations for this activity. Split students into 4 groups, or, if you have a small class, you can also stick together as one group.

Directions

Write these words on the whiteboard and ask students to define them together.

- Teshuva: repentance, repair, returning; making amends for wrongs
- Collective / Communal: participating as a group, working together
- Reparations: money or payment made to a person or group who have been harmed

Explain to students that on the High Holidays the prayers for repentance are all written in the plural, because we take responsibility for each other.

Station 1: Embodying Teshuva

There are many physical rituals during the High Holidays to help us get into the right mindset. At this station students will create embodied ways to connect to themes of the holidays. Give students the copy of “Whole Body Teshuva” (Appendix) and ask them to go through the activities on the page.

Station 2: Collective Repair

At this station students will explore stories from the modern world of collective teshuva. Give them copies of the stories from the Appendix and ask them to read and answer the questions together.

Collective Repair (cont.)

Station 3: Collective Ashamnu

Write the alphabet vertically on a large piece of paper and either hang it at students' height or put it on a table. Each year on Yom Kippur we say a prayer called "Ashamnu", which is an alphabetical list of missteps we have made in the past year. Assign each group of students a section of the alphabet and have them choose words to create an alphabetical Ashamnu. If students have more than one idea for each of their letters, they can add multiple words.

For example: A: arrogance; B: been rude; C: called someone a mean name ... etc.

At the end of the day, you should have all letters of alphabet -- see if this can be used during a youth High Holiday service or hung up in the school where others can see it.

Station 4: Jonah

On Yom Kippur we read the story of Jonah, a prophet that God sends to the city of Nineveh to tell the people to repent. It is one of the few stories in the Tanakh where a prophet is successful, as well as the only story of a Jewish prophet warning a non-Jewish city.

Students should explore the story of Jonah through either books or videos. Here are some suggestions or feel free to use your own:

- The Book of Jonah (by Peter Spier)
- Scarlett and Sam: A Whale of a Tale (by Eric Kimmel)
- Oh No, Jonah! (by Tilda Balsley)
- Animated Read-Aloud: Jonah
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_ggTuRYNVE (Source: PJ Library)
- Yom Kippur: A Book of Jonah song for kids
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsAcl4dXK48> (Source: BimBam)
- The Story of Jonah for Yom Kippur
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rcls2jOM74s> (Source: YouTube)



My Notes

Let's Get Creative



Collective Teshuva in Art (20-30 min.)

Materials Needed:

- Copies (digital or printed) of the Reparations artwork (Appendix)
- Art supplies

Set Up:

Students will need space to create their own Teshuva artwork

Directions

As a full group, look at the two pieces of Reparations artwork. Ask students to reflect on what they see:

- What Hebrew or English words do you recognize? What words do you have questions about?
- What images do you see? (People, animals, nature, etc)
- What messages do you find in this art? What do you think the artist wants us to learn from this piece?
- How do you feel when you see this piece? What questions do you have?
- How does this image teach us about collective teshuva?

Split students into pairs or small groups. Ask them to co-create their own piece of collective teshuva artwork. They may choose a particular event or issue in the modern world, or they may approach it as a global/general idea. Ask students to think about:

- What message do you want to share?
- What does collective teshuva look like?
- What colors, textures, images might help you illustrate your ideas?

Once each pair has completed their artwork, collage/attach all of the different pieces together to create one large class piece on collective teshuva.

Can this piece be displayed somewhere in your synagogue/school for the High Holidays? Perhaps it could inspire more conversation during High Holiday youth services or activities.

Closing Reflection



New Year Commitments (5-10min.)

Materials needed:

- Artwork from previous activity

Directions

Invite students to share their artwork and ask the group to reflect on how the larger piece shares a message of collective teshuva.

As we close the activity, invite students to reflect and share:

- One thing you learned today
- One thing you found challenging today
- Why do you think communal teshuva is important?
- One thing you would like to do better in the new year

Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage by participating in activities, asking/answering questions?
- How did students respond to the material? Curious? Thoughtful? Uninterested?
- Did students understand the ideas of collective teshuva?
- How did students show kavod (respect) to one another?
- How did students respond to the challenge to think more deeply about their own values, experiences and goals for the new year?
- Did students express themselves through artistic creation? If they struggled with this aspect, what was the root of that struggle?
- How did students choose to reflect and what insights did they gain?



Appendix

Below are some texts that you will need for this unit.

- Scenarios 1-4 (Opening Activity)
- Whole Body Teshuva
- Collective Teshuva stories
- Reparations Artwork

Scenario 1

Your group of friends at school starts saying not nice things about another kid in school. You don't join in the teasing but you also don't tell your friends to stop. You find out later that the other kid heard about the mean things that your friends were saying and is upset and sad.

- *What would you do?*
- *If you didn't join in the teasing, is it your fault that the other kid is upset and sad, or not?*
- *What would you say to your friends?*
- *What would you say to the other kid?*
- *How could you help fix this situation?*

As a group, create a skit of all the different ways you might act in this situation.

Scenario 2

A group of friends is at a park and some of them are getting too rowdy. The grownups say that if kids keep misbehaving everyone will have to go home. You try to get your friends to be more chill but in the end the grownups say its time to leave.

- *How would you feel?*
- *Is it fair that you have to leave even though you weren't the problem? What does "fair" mean to you?*
- *What would you say to the grownups?*
- *What would you say to your friends?*

As a group, create a skit of all the different ways you might act in this situation.

Scenario 3

You and your friends are playing tag and three people all run into each other at once. One person is okay, one person has a skinned knee, and one person hit their head. Each friend thinks the other two are to blame, everyone is upset and mad at each other.

- *If you were there, how might you help your friends?*
- *If you were one of the three people who ran into each other, how would you feel? What would you say?*
- *If you thought the accident was your fault, would you take responsibility, why or why not?*
- *How could this group solve this situation so that everyone feels okay with each other?*

As a group, create a skit of all the different ways you might act in this situation.

Scenario 4

Someone stole the class cookies! You ask around and figure out who did it, but they won't admit it to the teacher or the rest of the class. Now no one has cookies. The teacher says if someone takes responsibility then everyone can have cookies.

- *What would you do?*
- *Would you tell the teacher who took the cookies? Why or why not?*
- *Another kid, who did not take the cookies, says she took the cookies. You think she did it so that the teacher will give everyone cookies. Do you share the truth instead?*
- *Is the teacher's idea fair? What does "fair" mean to you?*
- *What do you think should happen?*

As a group, create a skit of all the different ways you might act in this situation.

Whole Body Teshuva

On Yom Kippur we do lots of things with our bodies to help remind us of the things we regret doing this year and how we want to do better in the new year.

Say "I'm Sorry" prayers



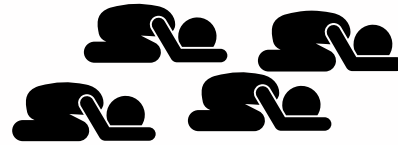
Tap our fist over our heart as we list things that we've done wrong this year.



**Many adults fast
(they don't eat or drink all day)**



In ancient Israel the people would sacrifice animals and bow their bodies all the way to the ground to show how sorry they were.



Teshuva is not just something we talk about, but something we do. As a group, create movements for the words of the prayer below. Be creative and try to use as much of your body as possible.

I'm sorry for the things I did that hurt someone

I'm sorry for the things I said that hurt someone

I'm sorry for not being my best self

I'm sorry for blaming someone else

I'm sorry for the mistakes I made

This year I will do better!

Collective Teshuva Stories

Germany Pays Holocaust Reparations

In 1951 Germany began paying money to survivors and families of Holocaust victims. To this day some survivors still receive money from the German government. This was seen as an important step for Germany to make things right after the Holocaust. Some people said that Jewish people should not take these payments, that it was disrespectful to the victims to try to put a monetary value on their lives. Others said it was the right thing to do because Germany needed to pay back the Jewish people for the death and loss they caused.

What do you think?

Should a country that killed or hurt a group of people pay money to their families or survivors? Why or Why not?

Minnesota Returns Indigenous Land

When North America was colonized, the government took land from Indigenous and Native nations living on the land. For centuries there have been efforts to return the land to the Indigenous nations. In 2022 the state of Minnesota returned 12,000 acres of land to the Ojibwe Nation, which will help them build their own futures on their ancestral land.

What do you think?

If one group took land from another group, should they give it back? Why or Why not?

What other actions might the group that caused harm need to take to make things right?

Collective Teshuva Stories (part 2)

America Apologizes to Japanese Americans

During World War II, the American government was worried that Japanese Americans who lived in America would side with Japan in the war and not America. The government forced Japanese Americans out of their homes and into internment (prison) camps. After the war, Japanese Americans worked for decades to convince the US government to apologize and repay them for the harm it had caused. In 1988 (more than 40 years later) the US government finally apologized.

What do you think?

How can a country make things right when they have hurt an entire group of people?

South Africa Faces Its Difficult History

For many decades South Africa had a system set up called “apartheid” that said that white people were citizens but Black people were not. Black people were injured, killed and imprisoned; they did not have equal access to education, health care, or the justice system. After apartheid ended, the new government apologized for what had happened and arrested some of the people who had caused harm. The government did pay some money to Black South Africans, but in much lower amounts than requested.

What do you think?

*How can a country that treated its own people so badly make things right?
How can a country heal from such a big divide?*



Marjorie Attignol Salvodon

“Hineni | הַנִּנִּי: Belonging, Memory, Action” (2022)

This piece was commissioned by Reconstructing Judaism
as part of the Reparations work in 2022.

For more information and the artist’s message:

<https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/reparations/commissioned-artwork/>



Ayeola Omolara Kaplan

“Reparations in Pursuit of Repairing the World” (2022)

This piece was commissioned by Reconstructing Judaism

as part of the Reparations work in 2022.

For more information and the artist's message:

<https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/reparations/commissioned-artwork/>

SUKKOT

A Roof Over My Head



Sukkot reminds us how vulnerable life can be as we dwell in the sukkah and experience the weather changes. In this unit students will explore the importance of housing for everyone and how they can help their community.

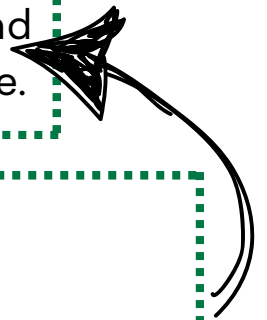
A Roof Over My Head

Grade(s): K-2nd, 3-5th, 6-8th
Number of participants: any
Time needed:



Goal(s):

Students will understand the importance of stable housing and how ensuring everyone has access to housing is a Jewish value.



Objectives:

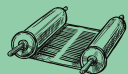
Students will:

- Explore the idea of home, housing, and helping those in need.
- Learn Jewish texts centered on community care.
- Support people in need in their local community.

Elements of Learning



Visual Art



Torah



Reflection



Food



Jewish Values

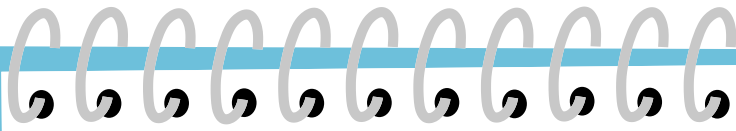


Music

A Reconstructionist Lens

Sukkot is a time that we experience physical vulnerability by spending time in the sukkah. Embodying this vulnerability reminds us of the stability needed to live fulfilling and healthy lives, and asks us to feel empathy towards those who do not have these basic needs met. In this lesson we invite students to consider the basic necessities for living a full life and how ask them to help people in their own community.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Edible sukkah materials (graham crackers, frosting, candy, snacks, plates, utensils, etc)
- Paper and pencils
- Whiteboard OR large paper and pens
- I Can Help! Bingo Board (Appendix)
- Copies of texts from the Appendix

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to build their edible sukkot. You will need 3 stations for the Text activity.

My Notes



Hebrew Wordbank

אוצר מלים בעברית

Booth	סִוְפָה	Sukkah
Festival of Booths	סֻכּוֹת	Sukkot
Guests	אוֹשְׁפִיזִין	Ushpizin

Feel free to add your own!



SETTING UP



Key Words

➔ **Sukkah**

A booth, often made of natural materials, used to celebrate the holiday of Sukkot. A sukkah has a roof made of branches and leaves so people can see the stars from inside. Often decorated with colorful art, fruits and vegetables.

➔ **Sukkot**

A harvest festival, usually in late September or October. Sukkot reminds us how vulnerable life can be, and commemorates the Israelites wandering in the wilderness. A time for festive meals, inviting guests, and celebrating the summer/fall harvest.

➔ **Ushpizin**

Ushpizin (m) /Ushpizot (f) is an Aramaic word meaning guests. There is a tradition that these 14 Biblical figures, each representing certain values, visit the sukkah each year.



My Notes

Jewish Context

Sukkot is a harvest festival in the fall, usually late September or October. It commemorates the temporary shelters the Israelites used while traveling in the wilderness, along with the small huts that farmers would have built during the harvest season. It is also called “Zman Simkhateinu” (the Time of Our Rejoicing) and is marked with festive meals and special prayers.

Opening Activity



Edible Sukkot (15 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Edible sukkah building materials

Directions

Start by reading this quote from the Pirkei Avot:
“Yose ben Yochanan of Jerusalem used to say: Let your house be wide open, and let the poor be members of your household.” (Pirkei Avot 1:5)

Ask students:

- What does this mean to you?
- How might someone do this?
- What are some of the basic things you need everyday to live your life? (Examples: food, clothes, a bed, water, jacket for winter, shoes, snacks, etc)
- How would you feel if you didn't have access to these things? How might that make life hard?

Give students the materials they need to build their edible sukkot and tell them NOT to eat them yet.

Ask students to think of their sukkot as a community center that provides

- food
- water
- clothing
- shelter

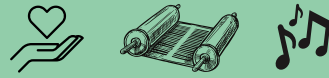
to anyone who needs it and to incorporate it into their design

Set aside their sukkot for the end of the lesson. They will share what they built and eat them as part of the closing activity.



My Notes

A Taste of Torah



Wandering in the Wilderness (30 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- “I Can Help” Bingo Card
- Paper and Pencils
- Whiteboard OR large paper and pens
- Appendix texts

Directions

Set up three stations in the room and split students into three groups.

Start by explaining to students that Sukkot reminds us of when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness and did not have stable houses to live in. We are asked to remember the temporary tents and huts they lived in by building sukkot each year. Students are now going to embark on their own journey around the room to learn about different ways our community can help each other.

Station 1: Daily Necessities

- Jewish Text 1 from the Appendix
- Pencils and papers

At this station students should read the Torah quote and explain in their own words why it is important to make sure everyone has the daily necessities they need to live. As a group, have them write a song about 5-10 things they need/use in day-to-day life and why they are so important. (For example: water, healthy food, clean clothes, a backpack, a comfy bed, etc.) Have them share their songs at the end of this activity.

Station 2: I Can Help!

- Jewish Text 2 from the Appendix
- I Can Help Bingo Card
- Pens/pencils

Have students read the quote from the Torah and the commentary below. Ask them to think about what are the specific gifts and skills they have that could help their community. Have students use the bingo card and ask their classmates what gifts they have. You could make it a race to see who can find a bingo first.

Wandering in the Wilderness (30 minutes)

Station 3: Who Comes First?

- Jewish Text 3 from the Appendix
- Whiteboard or large paper; pens / markers

Have students read the text and answer the questions below. Students should use the whiteboard or large paper to create circles of all of their own communities, such as family, school, synagogue, sports teams, etc. Students should share with each other how they decide how to spend their time and if someone from multiple groups asked them for help, how they would decide how to prioritize. They may agree or disagree with the text, the goal is for students to think about their own values and ideas.

Each group should spend 5-10 minutes at each station and then rotate. After everyone has visited all stations, come back together as a large group. Ask students:

- Why is important to take care of everyone in our community?
- Is it ever hard to help someone? Why or why not?
- What is one thing you can do to help someone?

Tell students that there's a tradition to invite Biblical guests (called the Ushpizin) into our sukkot each night. Interestingly, each of the (original male) Ushpizin was homeless or had to leave their home at some point, but someone provided them with shelter.

Ask students to think about:

- What are things you do everyday that would be hard to do without a home?
- How might you feel if you needed to ask for help?
- How can our community help people who needs homes?



My Notes

Words Into Action

Living Our Values (30-60 minutes)

There are many ways we could embody the values we have learned today. Here are a few suggestions for activities with your students, or create your own:

Option 1: Invite a Community Organization to Your Class

Is there a local organization or initiative that helps unhoused people in your community? Invite someone to come speak to your class about the work they do, the people they serve, and why this work is important. If your synagogue supports a shelter or soup kitchen, you could invite someone from those committees/programs to share why this work matters to them from a Jewish perspective.

Option 2: Packing Community Care Kits

Many community initiatives that work with unhoused people need supplies, such as socks, toiletries, outerwear, etc. Reach out to one of these organizations and get their supply kit list. Students create care kits with these supplies to donate. Alternatively, you could create a box of these kits (or individual supplies) in entryway of the school/synagogue so that anyone who needs can take without feeling embarrassed to ask.

Option 3: Create a Resource Board

Have students create a resource board for the school/synagogue lobby that has information, pamphlets, etc about community resources (locations, hours, who they serve, etc.) For example: food banks, soup kitchens, shelters, resume and job search help, clothing drives, etc. Students could also add quotes from the Jewish sources they studied so that everyone who passes the board can learn why helping our community is a Jewish value.

Option 4: Host an Educational Program in the Sukkah

Hold a community event in the sukkah where students can share what they've learned about community care with the whole school/synagogue. This could be part of a Shabbat dinner or lunch. You could invite local advocates for the unhoused and have students moderate the community discussion, or have students teach the texts they learned.

If none of these options work for your class, feel free to create your own activity.

Closing Reflection



What We Learned(5-10 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Edible Sukkot

Directions:

To close this unit we will reflect on what we have learned. In partners, ask students to reflect on the following questions while they enjoy eating their sukkot.

- One thing I learned today ...
- One thing I would like to do to help ...
- One thing I am still curious about ...

Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage in the activities?
- Were students comfortable sharing their ideas? Did they respond respectfully to one another?
- Did they demonstrate an understanding the Jewish value of community care and ensuring everyone has access to housing?
- Did they ask thoughtful questions and show curiosity for the material?
- Are there ways to bring this conversation into future lessons or community events?



Appendix

Below are some texts that you will need for this unit.

- Text 1 and questions
- Text 2 and questions
- Text 3 and questions
- I Can Help (Bingo Board)

Text 1: Exodus 22:24-26

אִם־בִּסֶּךָ תִּלְוֶה אֶת־עַמִּי אֶת־הָעֲנִי עִמָּךְ לֹא־תִהְיֶה לוֹ בְּנִשָּׂה לֹא־תִשְׂיִמוּן
עָלָיו נִשְׂךְ: אִם־חָבֵל תִּחְבֹּל שְׁלֵמַת רֶעֶךָ עַד־בֹּא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ תְּשִׁיבֵנּוּ לוֹ: אִם־חָבֵל
תִּחְבֹּל שְׁלֵמַת רֶעֶךָ עַד־בֹּא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ תְּשִׁיבֵנּוּ לוֹ:

If you lend money to another Israelite who is poor, do not charge them interest on the loan. If you take their cloak as a deposit to make sure they pay you back, you must return it before sunset; it is your neighbor's clothing and the way they keep warm when they sleep at night. Therefore, if that person cries out to Me (God) I will pay attention, I am compassionate.

- *What things do you need for everyday life?*
- *How would you feel if you didn't have those things?*
- *How does the Torah make sure everyone has the things they need to live?*
- *Why is it important to take care of each other?*

With your group, make a list of 5-10 basic things you need each day and create a song about the things you need and why they're important. At the end of this activity, you can share your song with the whole group.

Text 2: Deuteronomy 16:16-17

אִם-בְּסֹף תִּלְוֶה אֶת-עַמִּי אֶת-הָעֲנִי עִמָּךְ לֹא-תִהְיֶה לוֹ בְּנֶשֶׁה לֹא-תִשְׂיָמוֹן
עָלָיו נֶשֶׁךְ: אִם-חָבֵל תִּחְבֹּל שְׁלֵמַת רֵעֶךָ עַד-בֹּא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ תִּשְׂיָבֶנּוּ לוֹ: אִם-חָבֵל
תִּחְבֹּל שְׁלֵמַת רֵעֶךָ עַד-בֹּא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ תִּשְׂיָבֶנּוּ לוֹ:

Three times a year—on Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot—everyone shall appear before your God in the place that God will choose. They shall not appear before God empty-handed, but each with their own gift, according to the blessing that your God has given upon you.

The original meaning of this text is that everyone should bring sacrifices to the Temple based on the crops or animals that they have. Another way we could understand this verse is that we each have specific gifts, skills and talents that we can use to serve our community.

What are YOUR gifts and talents? How can you use them to help other people?

Use the “I Can Help BINGO” Board to learn more about your classmates. Ask each person about their skills and talents and see how fast you can get a Bingo.

Text 3: Mishneh Torah, Gifts to the Poor 7:13

עָנִי שֶׁהוּא קָרוֹבוֹ קִדְמָה לְכָל אָדָם. עָנִי בֵּיתוֹ קוֹדָמִין לְעָנִי עִירוֹ. עָנִי עִירוֹ קוֹדָמִין לְעָנִי עִיר אַחֶרֶת.

You should help a poor person who is your relative before helping others.

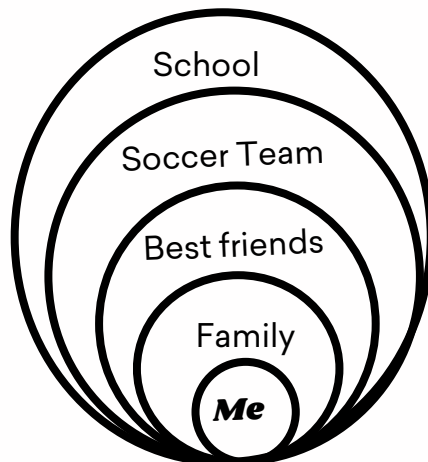
You should help the poor in your household before the poor people in your city.

You should help the poor people in your city before the poor in another city.

- *Do you agree with this text? Why or why not?*
- *If a friend and a stranger asked you for help, who would you help first? What about two friends? What about two strangers? (Assume these strangers are safe people to help.)*
- *How do YOU decide who to help or not?*

What communities do you belong to? With your group, draw circles of each community, making them closer or further away from you on the board depending on how close or far they feel.

If someone from each of these circles asked for help, how would you decide who to help first?



This is just an example. You can arrange the circles in any way you would like and use as many or as few as you need. You should discuss as a group who fits into each of these circles for each of you.



I CAN HELP BINGO

listen	share food	cheer someone up	visit someone who is sick
help a friend with homework	laugh together	FREE SPACE	be kind
tell a joke	donate old clothes	let someone else go first	(Fill in the blank with your own gift) -----
(Fill in the blank with your own gift) -----	ask for help	give food to someone hungry	share toys



SIMKHAT TORAH

Telling and Retelling



On Simkhat Torah we finish reading the Torah and immediately start back at the beginning. In this unit students will explore the power of storytelling and retelling in order to inspire change.

Telling and Retelling

Grade(s): K-2nd, 3-5th, 6-8th
Number of participants: any
Time needed: 60-75 min



Goal(s):

Students will learn how stories can inspire change on personal, local and global levels.

Objectives:

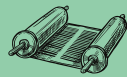
Students will:

- Understand the traditions of Simkhat Torah
- Explore how storytelling can change our perspectives.
- Learn how to use storytelling to share things that matter to them.

Elements of Learning



Performance Art



Jewish Text



Jewish Values



Journaling

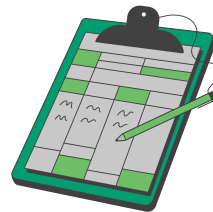


Reflection

A Reconstructionist Lens

On Simkhat Torah we finish reading the Torah and immediately start back at the beginning. Jewish tradition is full of stories that are meant to inspire us to feel and act in kind and righteous ways. In this unit, students will explore how storytelling can change our perspectives, renew a sense of compassion or curiosity, and help us build a brighter world.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Paper and pencils
- Appendix texts

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to spread out and tell each other stories during this activity.

My Notes



Hebrew Wordbank	אוצר מלים בעברית	
Rejoicing in the Torah	שמחת תורה	Simkhat Torah
Torah (5 Books of Moses)	תורה	Torah
Tanakh (The Hebrew Bible)	ת"נ	Tanakh

Feel free to add your own!

SETTING UP



Key Words

→ **Simkhat Torah**

The final holiday of the fall festivals, celebrating the completion of reading the Torah and restarting from the beginning.

→ **Torah**

The 5 Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).

→ **Tanakh**

The Hebrew Bible: Torah, Prophets and Writings. Tanakh is an acronym for Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim.



My Notes

Jewish Context

Simkhat Torah celebrates the annual conclusion of reading the Torah and beginning again at Genesis. Many communities celebrate with music and dancing with the Torah. Simkhat Torah reminds us of the cyclical nature of the year and how endings can also be a chance for new beginnings.

Opening Activity

Retelling a Story (10 min.)

Materials Needed:

- Paper and pencils

Directions:

To start, students will discover how a story can change over time. Here a few suggested activities, feel free to do one or more of them to get started.

One Word Story

Everyone gather in a circle. Each person will only say one word of the story. The first person says a word, the next person says a word, and so on. Together, the group will tell an improvised story. Try it for a few rounds and then ask:

- Did the story go where you thought it would?
- Is it hard to tell a story in a group? Why or why not?
- What surprised you about our group story?

One Line Story

Each person will write one line of the story (you could create multiple stories at once if you have a large group). The first person writes a short sentence and then passes the paper to the next person who writes one sentence that continues the story from the line above. The second person folds the paper so only their sentence is visible and the third person writes their sentence to connect to the second person's. The key is that each person can only see the most recent line, not the whole story. After everyone has a turn, unfold the paper and read it aloud.

- Did the story go where you expected?
- What surprised you?

The Details are Fuzzy

Have 2-3 volunteers step outside the classroom. Tell them a short story. Keep it simple but only tell it once. (What you had for breakfast, the last time you rode a rollercoaster, etc.) Bring one student back into the room and have them retell the story to the class. Then the next student and the next.

Retelling a Story (cont.)

After all volunteers have retold the story ask the group:

- What was it like to hear the story more than once? Did it change a lot?
- Which details did each storyteller remember?
- What details were different?
- How come each person remembered different parts of the story? Does that make either version more or less true?
- Should storytellers add their own flair to the story to make it more exciting?



My Notes

A Taste of Torah



Turn it Again (20 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Texts from the Appendix

Directions:

Ask students if they have ever rewatched a movie or reread a book.

- Why did you want to read/watch it again?
- Did you notice anything new the second time?

Ask students if their family ever retells stories (especially at birthdays or holidays).

- Does the story change when they retell it?
- Does everyone remember the events exactly the same way or do people have their own versions of the story?
- Why do you think we each remember different details?

Turn it Again (cont.)

Ask students what they know about Simkhat Torah. Remind them that on Simkhat Torah we finish reading the end of the Torah (Deuteronomy) and immediately restart at the beginning of the Torah (Genesis).

Read students this quote:

בֵּן בַּג בַּג אָמַר, הַפֶּךָ בָּהּ וְהַפֶּךָ בָּהּ, דְּכֻלָּא בָּהּ, וּבָהּ תִּחְזִי, וְסִיב וּבְלָהּ בָּהּ, וּמִנָּה לֹא תִזְוַע, שְׂאִין לָךְ מִדָּה טוֹבָה הַיְמִנָּה:

Ben Bag Bag said: Turn it [the Torah] over, and turn it over again, for everything is in it. And look into it; and grow gray and old with it. Do not move away from it, for you have no better portion than it. (Pirkei Avot 5:22)

Ask students to reflect:

- Why do we read the Torah again each year? What does this text mean “everything is in it”?
- What is something you learned from a Torah story?

One reason we read the Torah again and again is that each time we might find something we missed before or learn something new. When we read the Torah stories as children, we learn one thing; when we read it again as teenagers might find something new; when we read it as adults we will find even more. Each year when we start the Torah again is a chance to discover something we missed before.

We are going to look at a few stories in the Torah where different characters tell a story about the same event, but they tell it differently. Depending on your students' age and familiarity with Torah stories, you can choose from these suggestions, use all of them, or choose your own:

Adam, Eve and the Tree of Knowledge

Adam and Eve eat from the Tree of Knowledge. When God confronts them they retell the story.

Joseph and His Brothers

Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery. Later, when they meet Joseph but do not recognize him in Egypt, they retell the story of his death.

Moses and the Rock

God tells Moses to speak to a rock to give the Israelites water. Instead, Moses hits the rock. Years later, he retells this story to the Israelites.

Turn it Again (cont.)

For students who read:

Divide students into pairs and give each person a copy of one side of the story. For example, one person reads Joseph's story and the other reads his brothers' story. Ask students to read it more than once so they have a clear understanding of their characters' perspectives.

One student should retell the story in their own words to their partner, and then the partner should retell their version in their own words.

Next, ask students to look at the two stories side by side and circle or highlight the differences between them.

For students who are not reading:

Choose one of the stories from the Appendix. Divide students into two groups. If you have two teachers, each teacher takes a group and shares one of the versions of the story. If you have one teacher, share with one group and then the other. Have students pair off, each sharing the version of the story they heard with their partner. Ask them to notice what was similar and different in each version of the story.

For All Students:

As a full group, ask students to reflect:

- Were the two versions of your story very similar or very different?
- What were some of the similarities and differences? Why do you think the different versions had those things in common or not?
- Have you ever heard someone tell a story, but you remember it differently? Why do you think we each remember different parts of the story?
- Why do you think the Torah gives us different version of the same story? What values might we learn from including multiple perspectives?



My Notes

Let's Get Creative



Telling Our Own Stories (15 min.)

Materials Needed:

- None

Directions

Ask students to think of a time they changed their mind about something after learning more about that thing. (For example, someone you thought was unfriendly but was actually just shy; a historical event that you learned more about and changed your perspective; someone you did not like at first but when you go to know them you became friends, etc.)

A lot change has happened in the world because of people sharing stories. Marginalized groups (people who aren't treated fairly) have used storytelling to help other people understand their experiences and why change is needed. Older generations use stories to teach younger people what they learned from their own lives. And even fictional stories can help us imagine a more fair and and kind world.

Ask students to think of a time they heard a story that made them care about something (a person, a group, an animal, a cause, etc.). How did hearing a new perspective inspire you?

Have student work in pairs. Ask them to choose a cause they both care about and create a story about it (for example: animal shelters, school lunches, climate change, being kind to new friends, etc.) . Some prompts to give students:

- Why does this cause matter to you?
- How can you convince other people to care about this?
- Do you have a personal story you could share that would help inspire people?
- Is it appropriate to add humor to engage your audience?
- What details are super important and what can you leave out to make the story short and memorable?
- What is the mood of the story and how can you communicate that with your body? (For example: a happy story might told energetically while standing up, a sad story might be told more quietly.)
- What is the most important thing you want the listener to remember and how can you build your story around that idea?

Closing Reflection



Putting it Together (15min.)

Materials needed:

- None

Directions

Have everyone gather in a circle. If you want, you could turn off the lights and put flashlights (or phone flashlights) in the middle to create an indoor campfire.

Now students will share their stories. Invite the first pair to share their story. Then ask another group to retell the main points from the story they just heard. Ask students to think about which details seemed most important and memorable. Ask everyone to reflect on hearing the story twice: did the details stay the same, did they notice something new, etc. Continue this way until every group has shared.

Closing questions for reflection:

- One thing I learned today ...
- One way I want to use storytelling for things I care about ...
- One thing I am still curious about ...

Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage by participating in activities, asking/answering questions?
- Were students respectful listeners for one another?
- Did students demonstrate knowledge at the end of the lesson they didn't have when you began?
- Were students able to connect the ideas of storytelling, changing perspectives and Simkhat Torah together?
- How might you use storytelling in future lesson plans?



Appendix

Below are some texts that you will need for this unit.

- Adam, Eve and the Tree of Knowledge
- Joseph and His Brothers
- Moses and the Rock

Adam, Eve and the Tree of Knowledge (Version 1)

Now the serpent was the cleverest of all the wild beasts that God had made. It said to the woman, “Did God really say: You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?”

The woman replied to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the other trees of the garden. It is only about fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said: ‘You shall not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’”

And the serpent said to the woman, “You are not going to die, but God knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like divine beings who know good and bad.”

When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable as a source of wisdom, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate. (Genesis 3:1-6)

Adam, Eve and the Tree of Knowledge (Version 2)

They heard the sound of God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of day; and the man and his wife hid from God among the trees of the garden. God called out to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

Adam replied, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.”

“Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat?”

The man said, “The woman You put at my side—she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

And God said to the woman, “What is this you have done!”

The woman replied, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:8-13)

Joseph and His Brothers

(Version 1)

Joseph's brothers saw him from afar, and before he came close to them they planned to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes that dreamer! Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we can say, 'A savage beast devoured him.' We shall see what comes of his dreams!"

But when Reuben heard it, he tried to save him from them. He said, "Let us not take his life." And Reuben went on, "Shed no blood! Cast him into that pit out in the wilderness, but do not touch him yourselves"—intending to save him from them and restore him to his father.

When Joseph came up to his brothers, they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the ornamented tunic that he was wearing, and took him and cast him into the pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

Then they sat down to a meal. Looking up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, their camels bearing gum, balm, and ladanum to be taken to Egypt.

Then Judah said to his brothers, "What do we gain by killing our brother and covering up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, but let us not do away with him ourselves. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh." His brothers agreed.

When Midianite traders passed by, they pulled Joseph up out of the pit. They sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who brought Joseph to Egypt. (Genesis 37:18-28)

Joseph and His Brothers (Version 2)

In Egypt, Joseph's brothers do not recognize him. Here's how they describe what happened to their younger brother:

Joseph's brothers said: "We your servants were twelve brothers, sons of a certain man in the land of Canaan; the youngest, however, is now with our father, and one is no more." (Genesis 42:14)

They said to one another, "Alas, we are being punished on account of our brother, because we looked on at his anguish, yet paid no heed as he pleaded with us. That is why this distress has come upon us."

Then Reuben spoke up and said to them, "Did I not tell you, 'Do no wrong to the boy'? But you paid no heed. Now comes the reckoning for his blood."

They did not know that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between him and them. (Genesis 42:21-23)

Judah said: "You asked us, 'Have you a father or another brother?' We told you, my lord, 'We have an old father, and there is a child of his old age, the youngest; his full brother is dead, so that he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.' (Genesis 44:19-20)

Moses and the Rock (Version 1)

The Israelites had no water, and they joined against Moses and Aaron. [...]

God spoke to Moses, saying, “You and your brother Aaron take your staff and assemble the community, and order the rock to give its water. Thus you shall produce water for them from the rock and provide drink for the congregation and their animals.”

Moses took his staff from before God, as he had been commanded. Moses and Aaron assembled the congregation in front of the rock; and he said to them, “Listen, you rebels, shall we get water for you out of this rock?” And Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod. Out came copious water, and the community and their animals drank.

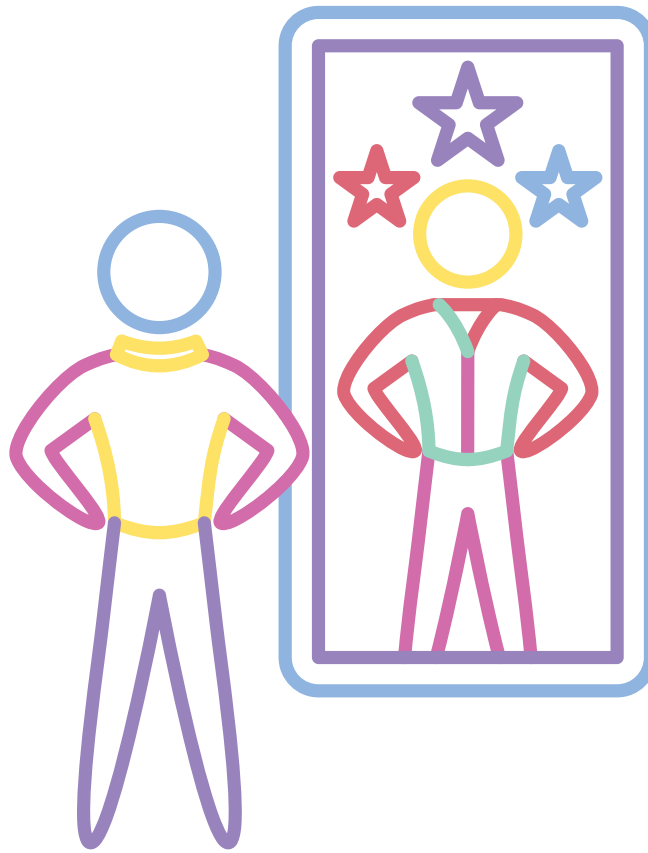
But God said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust Me enough to affirm My sanctity in the sight of the Israelite people, therefore you shall not lead this congregation into the land that I have given them.” (Numbers 20: 1, 7-12)

Moses and the Rock (Version 2)

God said to Moses: Ascend these hills of Abarim to Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab facing Jericho, and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving the Israelites as their holding. You shall die on the mountain that you are about to ascend, and shall be gathered to your kin, as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his kin; for you both broke faith with Me among the Israelite people, at the waters of Meribath-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, by failing to uphold My sanctity among the Israelite people. You may view the land from a distance, but you shall not enter it—the land that I am giving to the Israelite people.”

HANUKKAH

Proud to Be Me



What makes you who you are? In this lesson, students will explore what it means to be proud of their identities and how understanding themselves can help them be respectful and kind towards others.

Proud to Be Me!

Grade(s): K-2nd, 3-5th, 6-8th
Number of participants: any
Time needed: 60-75 min



Goal(s):

Students will deepen their appreciation of their own identities and understand how pride in themselves can lead to respect and love for those who are different than us.

Objectives:

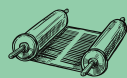
Students will:

- Explore various aspects of their own identities
- Share their own family traditions for Hanukkah
- Learn Jewish texts focused on respecting differences

Elements of Learning



Visual Art



Jewish Text



Reflection



Physical Activity

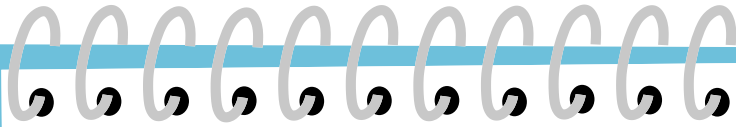
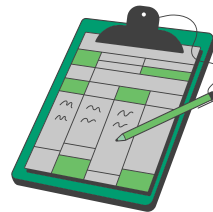


Jewish Values

A Reconstructionist Lens

On Hanukkah we celebrate the continued dedication to fostering and nurturing Jewish identity even in the darkest times. Our Reconstructionist communities are home to many intrafaith and interfaith families, and we honor their presence by understanding that Jewish identity looks different for everyone. By letting students explore and build pride for their own unique identities, we also role model how to respect those who are different than us and strengthen our communities.

SETTING UP




Materials

- Hanukkah storybook
- Flashcard size paper
- Large posterboard or paper
- Markers or crayons
- Gluesticks or tape

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to move around, and to draw and write.



My Notes

Hebrew Wordbank	אוצר מלים בעברית	
Dedication	חֲנֻכָּה	Hanukkah
Happy Hanukkah	חֲנֻכָּה שְׂמִיחַ	Hanukkah Sameach

Feel free to add your own!



SETTING UP



Key Words

→ Hanukkah

The winter festival of lights, celebrating the Jewish victory over the Assyrian/Greek army and the rededication of the Temple.

→ Identity

The aspects of ourselves that make us who we are. How we view ourselves and characteristics about us that may impact the way we experience the world. Someone might have a religious identity, a national identity, a racial identity, a cultural identity, a family identity, a gender identity, economic identity, etc. Many people take time to discover and develop their identities.



My Notes

Jewish Context

The story of Hanukkah does not appear in the Hebrew Bible! It is described in Maccabees (part of the apocrypha), in the Talmud, and in other rabbinic texts. Hanukkah celebrates the Jewish people maintaining their culture during a time of assimilation, a military victory, and a miracle of oil lasting longer than expected. There's many angles through which to explore this holiday!

Opening Activity



Connections (10-15 min.)

Materials Needed:

- None

Set Up:

Students will need space to move their bodies around.

Directions:

We are going to play two games to start thinking about our own identities and how we are connected and different from one another.

Connections

One person starts by saying something true about themselves, for example, “I have a cat.” Someone else who has a cat says, “I have a cat. Also, I like pizza.” Someone else who likes pizza jumps in, “I like pizza and also I love to read.” Each person should only speak once. By the end of the game, everyone should have shared one thing that connects them to another person. Time permitting, you can do a second round with everyone sharing new facts about themselves.

You can also do this game with everyone in a circle and toss a ball of yarn/string from one person to the next. By the end, you have a visual representation of how everyone is connected to each other.

Hanukkah Candles Shine For (an adaptation of the Wind Blows)

Have students gather in a big circle, with one person in the middle. The person in the middle should make a true statement about themselves; everyone else to whom that statement applies should travel through the middle of the circle to a new spot. (If it doesn't apply to you, don't worry, another phrase will.) The last person who doesn't find a new spot is now the leader and should make a true statement about themselves. Everyone to whom it applies should change places. This game can be chaotic with everyone laughing and running around, so make sure the area is clear and that students are respectful of each others' bodies.

Connections (cont.)

Example: Person in the middle (wearing glasses) says, “Hanukkah candles shine for everyone wearing glasses.” Everyone, including the middle person, tries to find a new spot in the circle. The last person who does not find a spot says, “Hanukkah candles shine for everyone who has a sibling.” Everyone changes places again. There should always be one less space in the circle than there are people so that someone becomes the middle person.

Storytime



Layers of Hanukkah (15 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Hanukkah storybook (younger grades)

Directions

Ask students what “Jewish identity” means to them. (You could explain that “identity” is what makes us who we are.) Remind students that we all carry multiple identities and all of them combine to make us who we are. We are going to explore stories together that think about our Jewish identities and our other identities.

Depending on the ages of your students, you can choose between the options below.

Storybook Option

Here are some suggested stories that showcase Jewish children with multiple identities. Choose one that fits well for your class or bring your own.

- Nonna's Hanukkah Surprise (by Karen Fisman)
- Queen of the Hanukkah Dosas (by Pamela Ehrenberg)
- The Only One Club (by Jane Naliboff)
- Hanukkah in Little Havana (by Julie Anna Blank)
- Jeremy's Dreidel (by Ellie Gelman)
- Hanukkah Moon (by Deborah DaCosta)

Layers of Hanukkah (cont.)

Storytelling Option

Invite students to share their own stories -- you might do this in pairs or small groups so that everyone feels comfortable. These are higher level questions, so this option is recommended for older students.

- What does being Jewish mean to you? When have you felt most or least connected to being Jewish?
- When has your Jewish identity intersected with other identities? (For example: Pride Shabbat, Jewish Disability Awareness, advocating for social change, interfaith events or holidays, etc).
- Have you ever felt “othered” for any of your identities? What happened and how did you get help?

For All Students

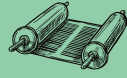
Once you have read/told stories, ask students:

- What winter holidays does your family celebrate?
- What is your favorite part of your family celebrations?
- Have you ever celebrated a different holiday or celebrated your own holiday in a different way with a friend? What was that like?
- Many winter holidays around the world have a light or candle aspect to them. Why do you think so many cultures focus on creating more light in the winter?



My Notes

A Taste of Torah



Respecting Each Other (15-20 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- flashcard sized paper (4 per student)
- a large poster board or piece of paper
- markers or crayons
- glue sticks or tape

Set Up:

Students will need space to write or draw on their paper. They will eventually glue or tape their small pieces to the large paper, creating a group collage.

Directions:

Tell students you are going to give them four separate prompts, and for each, they should draw or write their ideas or reactions on their small papers. After they are done with each one, they should glue/tape it onto the larger paper to create a collage. Remind students that collages overlap, but not to purposefully cover each other's work.

Prompt 1: Publicly Jewish

Read this quote to students:

“Place the Hanukkah lamp in the doorway to your home; if you do not have a doorway, place it in the window so that everyone passing by can see it. If it is not safe to put in the window, place it on the table.” (Adapted from Mishneh Torah, Megillat Esther and Hanukkah 4:7-8)

Do you feel comfortable being publicly Jewish? How do you express yourself Jewishly? Have you ever felt uncomfortable being publicly Jewish? Draw and/or draw your responses.

Prompt 2: What Makes You Who You Are

Each of us has many identities. We've already talked about some of them today. Think about what makes you who you are and write and/or draw all the different parts of your own identity.

Respecting Each Other (15-20 minutes)

Prompt 3: Respecting Each Other

Read this quote to students:

“God said to Israel: My children, I have given you everything, and all I ask is that you love one another and honor one another. You should not sin, steal, or harm each other.” (adapted from Eliyahu Rabbah 26)

Write and/or draw your own version of this quote.

Prompt 4: Different from Each Other

We each have different parts of us that make us who we are. How do we treat people who are different than us? Write and/or draw yourself meeting someone different and respecting each other.



My Notes

Closing Reflection



Who We Are (5-10 min.)

Materials needed:

- A very large piece of paper
- Stickers

Directions

On the large piece of paper draw the outline of a person. Give each student 3 stickers.

Who We Are (cont.)

Tell students we are going to think about how our bodies, minds and hearts can be part of our Jewish identities. Ask students to place their stickers on the three parts of the person-outline that correspond to when/how they feel MOST connected to Judaism: head; eyes; mouth; lips; nose; ears; heart; hands; feet

For example, a student might put a sticker on the ears, because the sound of Hebrew makes them feel most Jewish. Or on the mouth, because the tastes of certain foods make them feel most connected, etc.

After students have placed their stickers, ask everyone to share ONE of their choices and why it's important to them.

Close by reminding students that our identities continue to change and shape as we grow, and they get to keep discovering who they are.

Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage by participating in activities, asking/answering questions?
- Did students feel comfortable sharing personal stories?
- How did students show kavod (respect) to one another?
- Were students able to connect how understanding themselves helps them be respectful towards people who are different than them?
- Are there aspects of this lesson you can carry into future activities?



TU BISHVAT

Building Sustainable Communities



Create sustainable and healthy communities through a Jewish lens and understanding how climate change and pollution harm BIPOC communities.

Building Sustainable Communities

Grade(s): K-2nd, 3-5th, 6-8th
Number of participants: any
Time needed: 75 minutes



Goal(s):

Students will explore Jewish values of building sustainable communities and understanding the impacts of environmental destruction on marginalized communities.

Objectives:

Students will:

- think creatively about how to build sustainable communities
- study Jewish values of community care
- understand the impact of environmental destruction on marginalized communities and cultivate empathy for those impacted

Elements of Learning



Visual Art



Prayer



Jewish Values



Outdoors

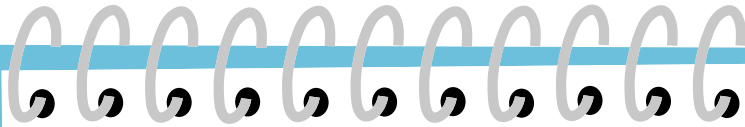


Torah

A Reconstructionist Lens

This unit is structured around the holiday Tu B'Shvat and uses the Jewish values of community and environmental sustainability to engage students in current issues facing our world, including how climate change disproportionately impacts BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities. We anchor students' learning in Jewish texts and provide opportunities for them to explore ways to cultivate and enact these values in their own lives.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Art supplies / Building materials
- Whiteboard or chalkboard
- "We Are Water Protectors" by Carol Lindstrom
- Small Planting pots (indoor option)
- Soil (indoor option)
- Seeds or seedlings (either option)
- Planting tools (outdoor option)

Set Up Suggestions

This unit could be done entirely inside, outside or a combination of both.

Students will need a space to build a community, a place to sit and listen to a story, and either small pots or outdoor space to plant seeds.

My Notes



Hebrew Wordbank

אוצר מלים בעברית

Tu Bishvat

טו בשבט

The 15th of the month of Shevat

In Hebrew, each letter has a number value.

$$9 = ט$$

$$6 = ו$$

$$9+6 = 15$$



SETTING UP



Key Words



Tu Bishvat

The Jewish New Year for the trees. Sometimes called “Jewish Earth Day”, it is a time to focus on the natural world.



Sustainability

Creating communities where we take care of each other and make sure we have the things we need now without causing future harm to other people or the natural world.



Environmentalism

Being concerned about the environment and standing up to protect the earth.



Environmental Racism

When polluting is intentionally done in BIPOC communities.



BIPOC

An umbrella term that stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. (Pronounced “bye-pock”)



My Notes

Jewish Context

Tu Bishvat is the Jewish New Year for the trees. It falls on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat. Historically, this was a date recorded for tithing (collecting) fruits for the Temple, and the Medieval Kabbalists added mystical and spiritual meanings to the holiday. Today, Tu Bishvat has become a Jewish environmental holiday as well.

Opening Activity

Building Community (30 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Building materials -- these could be playdoh, Legos, blocks, or, “found objects” (random small objects that students find and assign meaning to; this is a great chance to teach about reusing and recycling). If you’re outdoors, use leaves, twigs, rocks, etc.
- Whiteboard or chalkboard.

Set Up:

Divide students into small groups of 2-4 people at tables or another flat surface. Give each group a collection of building materials.

Directions:

In this activity we are going to build a community. In the large group, invite students to share some aspects of a community and write these on the whiteboard.

(Examples: a school, parks, houses, grocery store, library, synagogue. Encourage students to be creative and imaginative, e.g. a unicorn store, a healthy ice cream restaurant, etc. Students do not need to list everything that their real life communities have, this is a chance to imagine a new world together.)

Ask each small group of students to choose the things they want to put in their communities and use the art supplies/building materials to build it. They can build their communities any way they want (encourage imagination and creativity!), they just need to include a few guidelines from Jewish tradition:

- K-2nd Grade: your community should include making sure there’s a way for everyone to get food*, and a way to help lost animals get home**.
- 3-5th Grade: your community should incorporate the rules from the Torah (in the Appendix)
- 6-8th Grade: your community should incorporate the texts from the Talmud (in the Appendix)

Building Community (cont.)

Give students 15-20 minutes to build, depending on how engaged they are. You know your class best! When students are done building, invite them to tour each others' communities and share what they built. If they are feeling shy, ask them to share their favorite part of the community or a part of it they wish existed in their real world communities. Ask the students to share how they incorporated the rules from Jewish tradition into their builds.

Now that students have shared their communities, ask them to think about how sustainable they are. "Sustainability" means that we have the things we need but we think about how the choices we make when building will impact people later. One example of sustainability is recycling, since it lets us reuse the materials instead of just throwing them away.

Ask students what other ways they might add sustainability into their communities. (Examples: not wasting water; reusing something for a new purpose; fixing something instead of throwing it away; composting; staying on the trail when we go hiking; etc.)

**Based on Leviticus 19:9 which tells us to leave the corners of our fields.*

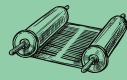
***Based on Exodus 23:4 which tells us to return lost animals to their caretakers.*



My Notes



A Taste of Torah



Taking Care of One Another (10 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Grade appropriate texts from the Appendix

K-2nd Grade Directions:

This text comes from a conversation in the Talmud about special rules for the people who lived inside the walls of Jerusalem. Read this text aloud to students and ask them how each of these rules helps create a clean, safe, environment for the people living in Jerusalem.

Bava Kama 82b

וְאִין עוֹשִׂין בְּה אֶשְׁפֹּתוֹת מְשוּם שְׂקָצִים, וְאִין עוֹשִׂין בְּה גְבֻשׁוֹנוֹת מְשוּם
קוּטְרָא, וְאִין עוֹשִׂין בְּה גְבוֹת וּפְרִדְסִין מְשוּם סִירְהָא

One may not build a garbage dump in Jerusalem, because it will attract animals. Nor may you build kilns because of the smoke. Nor may you farms or orchards because of the smell of weeds and fertilizer.

Questions to spark conversation:

- Why is it important to keep the garbage away from where people live?
- How would the air look if there was a lot of smoke? Have you ever been somewhere that the air is harder to breathe?
- Why is it important that we create communities that are clean and safe for everyone?
- What does your city/town/community look like? Is there garbage on the ground? Are there playgrounds or parks to play in? How does it stay clean or what needs to happen to make it cleaner?

It often helps to read the text more than once to help students understand and internalize the ideas. Try reading it, asking 1-2 questions and then reading it again and asking more questions.

Taking Care of One Another (cont.)

3rd-5th Grade Directions:

Split students into pairs or small groups. Give them Text 1 or 2 from the Appendix and ask them to read it aloud together and the questions on the page.

Ask students with Text 1 to share their text and their own ideas from reading it with the whole class. Ask students with Text 2 to do the same. More questions might arise as they share with the class, this is a great time model that Jewish text study has a lot of questions and sometimes the answers are not clear right away. That's why we keep exploring and expanding the text.

- Text 1 (Bava Kama 82b) is a conversation in the Talmud with special rules for the people who lived inside the walls of Jerusalem.
- Text 2 (Kohelet Rabbah 7:13) comes from a midrash expanding on the Creation the story where God gives humanity directions to care for the Earth. This text provides a Jewish lens on climate change and our responsibilities.

6th-8th Grade Directions:

Split students into pairs or small groups. Give them Text 1 or 2 from the Appendix and ask them to read it aloud together and the questions on the page.

Ask students with Text 1 to share their text and their own ideas from reading it with the whole class. Ask students with Text 2 to do the same. More questions might arise as they share with the class, this is a great time model that Jewish text study has a lot of questions and sometimes the answers are not clear right away. That's why we keep exploring and expanding the text.

- Text 1 (Kohelet Rabbah 7:13) comes from a midrash expanding on the Creation the story where God gives humanity directions to care for the Earth. This text provides a Jewish lens on climate change and our responsibilities.
- Text 2 comes from the Joyous Justice podcast (S2Ep1) which discusses Judaism, Tu Bishvat, and anti-racism practice. This text invites us to consider what wisdom we can learn from trees and their ecosystems.

Storytime



Environmentalism Today (10-15 minutes)

Materials needed:

- K-5th Grade: “We Are Water Protectors” by Carole Lindstrom (There are recordings of this book read online if you do not have a paper copy)
- 6-8th Grade: Copies of young activist stories (Appendix)

Directions:

Remind students that when they did the opening activity (building a community) they did their best to make sure everyone had access to the things they need -- food, clean water, parks, schools, etc. We just looked at some Jewish texts that reminded us how important it is to build our cities in a sustainable ways that keep our earth, water and air clean.

Unfortunately, not all communities are built this way. Sometimes cities or countries build a factory or garbage dump near peoples’ homes, or dump chemicals into the water and make it harder for everyone to have clean water to drink. Many people in the USA live in places where they can turn on their kitchen sink and get clean water. Many people also live in places where the water in their sinks is not safe to drink. Unfortunately, sometimes the people in charge make choices that lead to the water becoming unsafe to drink.

Many people know that this is not fair and are working hard to make sure everyone has access to good food, clean water, and clean air. Some of those people are grownups and some of them are young people like you!

Depending on the ages of your students, choose between the different story options

K-2nd Grade:

Read the story “We are Water Protectors” by Carole Lindstrom (There are video recordings of this book read online if you do not have a paper copy). This is a story about Indigenous communities standing up for their right to clean water.

After you read the story, prompt the students to reflect on the story:

- What do you use water for everyday?
- Why is the “black snake” in the story bad for the water?
- How would you feel if you didn’t have clean water at home? Why is it important that everyone has clean water? How can we make sure everyone has clean water?

Environmentalism Today (cont.)

3rd-5th Grade

In addition to the introduction above, you can also share with students: climate pollution happens more in communities that have mostly Black people, Indigenous people, Latino people, or immigrants or refugees living there. Everyone is impacted by climate change, but some communities will be harmed more quickly and more severely because our country's policies don't protect everyone equally.

According to studies done by the Environmental Protection Agency, Black neighborhoods are more likely to be impacted by air pollution, making it harder for kids to breathe. Latino communities are more likely to be affected by extreme temperatures, making it hard for kids to safely play outside.* Indigenous communities have been fighting for years to have companies stop polluting their water with chemicals that make it unsafe to drink.

Many people know that this is not fair and are working hard to make sure everyone has access to good food, clean water, and clean air. We are going to read a story about Indigenous people standing up for their right to clean water.

Read the story “We are Water Protectors” by Carole Lindstrom (There are video recordings of this book read online if you do not have a paper copy).

After you read the story, prompt the students to reflect on the story:

- What do you use water for everyday?
- Why is the “black snake” in the story bad for the water?
- What would you do if you did not have clean water at home? How would your life be different and what would you have to do to brush your teeth or shower?
- Why is it important that everyone has clean water?
- How can we make sure everyone has clean water?

*From “EPA Report Shows Disproportionate Impacts of Climate Change on Socially Vulnerable Populations in the United States.” Sept 2, 2021. www.epa.gov



Environmentalism Today (cont.)

6th-8th Grade

In addition to the introduction above, you can also share with students: climate pollution happens more in communities that have mostly Black people, Indigenous people, Latino people, or immigrants or refugees living there. Everyone is impacted by climate change, but some communities will be harmed more quickly and more severely because our country's policies don't protect everyone equally.

According to studies done by the Environmental Protection Agency, Black neighborhoods are more likely to be impacted by air pollution, making it harder for kids to breathe. Latino communities are more likely to be affected by extreme temperatures, making it hard for kids to safely play outside.* Indigenous communities have been fighting for years to have companies stop polluting their water with chemicals that make it unsafe to drink.

Many people know that this is not fair and are working hard to make sure everyone has access to good food, clean water, and clean air. We are going to read some of their stories today.

Divide students into 3 groups and give each one of the young climate activist stories from the Appendix.

After they have time to read it, ask them to create a short, creative presentation of the activist's story. For example, they could "interview the activist" with each of them playing different roles; they could create an art collage; make social media style awareness posts about the issue, etc.

*From "EPA Report Shows Disproportionate Impacts of Climate Change on Socially Vulnerable Populations in the United States." Sept 2, 2021. www.epa.gov



My Notes

Closing Reflection



Planting good intentions 15-20 minutes

Materials needed:

- Small planting pots (indoor option)
- Soil (indoor option)
- Seeds or seedlings (either option)
- Tools (outdoor option)

Directions

Our final activity is a reflection on what we've learned today.

Remind students that today/this week/this month we celebrate Tu Bishvat, the New Year for the Trees. On Tu Bishvat we start to see signs that Spring is coming: the days are getting longer, the snow is starting to melt in colder places and plants are starting to sprout in warmer places.

One custom on Tu Bishvat is to plant trees or seeds for the year. By adding more plants to the earth we help make sure there's green places for kids to play outside, clean air to breathe, and we show that we care about the earth and all the living creatures who live here and rely on plants for food.

Before you plant, ask students to answer the following prompts with a partner:

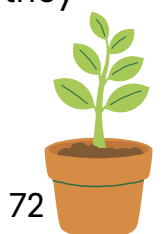
- One thing I learned today ...
- One thing I have questions about ...
- One thing I want to do to help the earth ...

Option 1: Indoor planting

Give students small pots, soils, seeds or seedlings. As they prepare to physically plant, ask them to reflect on what they have learned and choose a prayer or wish for their community. Have them write or draw this prayer on the pot.

Fill the pots with soil and have students plant and lightly water their seeds. As they plant their seeds, invite them to share their prayer for the community aloud.

Prayer examples: clean water and healthy food for everyone, green parks and space to run around for every child, tall trees and lots of flowers, etc.



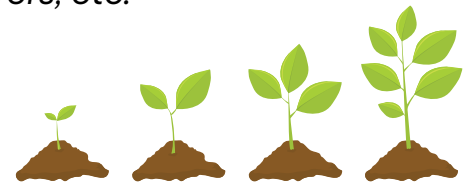
Planting good intentions (cont.)

Option 2: Outdoor planting

If you live in a climate where it is possible to plant outdoors at this point in the year and have space to do so, try this! Pick a spot for students to plant something: flowers in front of the synagogue, a new tree for the landscape, the first seeds of the community garden, etc.

As students physically plant, ask them to reflect on what they have learned and plant a prayer or wish for their community.

Prayer examples: clean water and healthy food for everyone, green parks and space to run around for every child, tall trees and lots of flowers, etc.



Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage in the activities?
- Did they ask interesting questions or show curiosity?
- Did they show empathy for communities impacted by climate change?
- Did their prayers/wishes/intentions demonstrate an understanding of the content?
- How can you continue cultivating the values in this lesson in future conversations and activities with students?



Happy Tu Bishvat!

Appendix

Here are some additional pages you will need for this unit

- Opening Activity Texts, 3-5th Grade
- Opening Activity Texts, 6-8th Grade
- A Taste of Torah: 3-5th Grade
- A Taste of Torah: 6-8th Grade
- Young Activist Stories

Opening Activity: 3rd-5th Grade

Exodus 23:4

כִּי תִפְגַּע שׁוֹר אִיבָהּ אוֹ חֲמֹרוֹ תֵעָה הַשֵּׁב תְּשִׁיבֵנּוּ לוֹ:

When you encounter your enemy's ox or donkey wandering, you must return it.

Exodus 23:9

וְגַר לֹא תִלְחָץ וְאַתֶּם יֹדְעֵתֶם אֶת־נַפְשׁ הַגֵּר כִּי־גֵרִים הֵייתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:9

וּבִקְצֹרְכֶם אֶת־קְצִיר אֲרָצְכֶם לֹא תִבְלֶה פְּאֵת שְׂדֵךְ לְקַצֹּר וּלְקַט קְצִירָהּ לֹא תִלְקֹט:

And when you reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

Opening Activity: 6th-8th grade

Bava Kama 82b

וְאִין עוֹשִׂין בְּהַ אֲשַׁפְתוֹת מְשוּם שְׁקָצִים, וְאִין עוֹשִׂין בְּהַ כְּבִשׁוֹנוֹת מְשוּם קוּטְרָא, וְאִין עוֹשִׂין בְּהַ גְּבוֹת וּפְרִדָּסִין מְשוּם סִירְחָא

One may not build a garbage dump in Jerusalem, because it will attract animals. Nor may you build kilns because of the smoke. Nor may you farms or orchards because of the smell of weeds and fertilizer.

Sanhedrin 17b

ותניא כל עיר שאין בה עשרה דברים הללו אין תלמיד חכם רשאי לדור בתוכה בית דין מכין ועונשין וקופה של צדקה נגבית בשנים ומתחלקת בשלשה ובית הכנסת ובית המרחץ וביהכ"ס רופא ואומן ולבלר (וטבח) ומלמד תינוקות משום ר' עקיבא אמרו אף מיני פירא מפני שמיני פירא מאירין את העינים:

Our Rabbis taught: A Torah scholar may not live in a city that does not have these ten things: a court; a charity fund collected by two and distributed by three; a synagogue; a bathhouse; a public bathroom; a doctor; a bloodletter; a scribe; a butcher; a teacher. Rabbi Akiva said: the city must also have varieties of fruit, because varieties of fruit illuminate the eyes.

A Taste of Torah: 3-5th Grade

Text 1: Bava Kama 82b

וְאִין עוֹשִׂין בְּה אֲשַׁפְּתוֹת מְשוּם שְׁקָצִים, וְאִין עוֹשִׂין בְּה כְּבִשׁוֹנוֹת מְשוּם
קוּטְרָא, וְאִין עוֹשִׂין בְּה גְנוֹת וּפְרִדְסִין מְשוּם סִירְחָא

One may not build a garbage dump in Jerusalem, because it will attract animals. Nor may you build kilns because of the smoke. Nor may you farms or orchards because of the smell of weeds and fertilizer.

- Why is it important to keep the garbage away from where people live?
- Why does the Talmud want to keep smoke away from the city? Have you been somewhere where the air feels easier or harder to breathe?
- Why is it important that we create communities that are clean and safe for everyone?

Text 2: Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

בְּשַׁעָה שֶׁבָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן, נִטְלוּ וְהַחְזִירוּ עַל כָּל אֵילָנַי
גַּן עֵדֶן, וְאָמַר לוֹ, רְאֵה מַעֲשֵׂי כַּמָּה נְאִים וּמִשְׁבְּחֵי הוֹ, וְכָל מֵה שֶׁבָּרָאתִי
בְּשִׁבְלֶיךָ בְּרָאתִי, תוּ דַעְתָּךְ שֶׁלֹא תִקְלַקֵּל וְתַחַרִּיב אֶת עוֹלָמִי, שְׂאֵם קִלְקֵלְתָּ אִין
מִי שִׁיתְקוּ אַחֲרַיךְ

When the Holy Blessed One created Adam the first human, God took him and showed him all the trees in the Garden of Eden, and God said to him: ‘See My creations, how beautiful and exemplary they are. Everything I created, I created for you. Make certain that you do not ruin and destroy My world, because if you destroy it, there will be no one to fix it after you.’

- What do you think God was most excited to show Adam in the Garden of Eden?
- Why does God tell Adam to be careful not to destroy God’s creation?
- How can we make sure to protect the earth and not destroy it?

A Taste of Torah: 6-8th Grade

Text 1: Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

בְּשֶׁעָה שֶׁבָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן, נִטְלוּ וְהִחְזִירוּ עַל כָּל אֵילָנֵי
גֵן עֵדֶן, וְאָמַר לוֹ, רְאֵה מַעֲשֵׂי בְּמָה נָאִים וּמִשְׁבַּחַיִּין הֵן, וְכֹל מֵה שֶׁבָּרָאתִי
בְּשִׁבְלֶיךָ בָּרָאתִי, תֵּן דַּעְתְּךָ שְׁלֵא תִקְלַקֵּל וְתִחְרִיב אֶת עוֹלָמִי, שְׂאֵם קִלְקֵלֶת אֵין
מִי שְׂיִתְקֶן אַחֲרָיִךְ

When the Holy Blessed One created Adam the first human, God took him and showed him all the trees in the Garden of Eden, and God said to him: ‘See My creations, how beautiful and exemplary they are. Everything I created, I created for you. Make certain that you do not ruin and destroy My world, because if you destroy it, there will be no one to fix it after you.’

- *What do you think God was most excited to show Adam in the Garden of Eden?*
- *Why does God tell Adam to be careful not to destroy God’s creation?*
- *How can we make sure to protect the earth and not destroy it?*

Text 2: Tu B'Shevat and the Wisdom of Trees

“Trees are meditative, and trees take their time, and this world as it exists right now wouldn’t be possible without trees. And trees can live for a very long time. They take the time they need to grow strong and big, and they’re in communication with each other. They often honor each other’s boundaries. And they’re incredibly resilient.” (April N. Baskin)

- *What are some of the ways that trees support life on earth?*
- *How do you think trees are resilient?*
- *How can we make sure to protect trees and not destroy them?*

You're Never Too Young to Make Change

**The Climate Movement Needs More People Like Me (by [Isra Hirsi](#))
originally published on thegrist.org, March 25, 2019**

I am a Black Muslim woman in the environmental justice movement.

I grew up in Minneapolis, where the Somali population is visible. I went to schools with kids who looked like me and had the same culture as me – people I could relate to. Growing up in these predominantly black and Muslim neighborhoods, I was always aware of who I was.



When I first got involved in environmental work, I wanted to keep my identity and my community with me in my activism, especially given the droughts in my parent's birth country, and the increased air pollution in my own hometown. But that hasn't always been easy.

When I joined my high school's environmental club, I was the only black kid at most meetings, and usually the only person of color. The club consisted of a group of white students talking about their camping trips. I knew that I would never fit in. It was difficult to look like their token and attend their meetings, but I kept going because I wanted to change that.

Being the only person of color in these spaces made me realize why it was so difficult for other people of color. I remember, in late January, when we first started organizing the U.S. Youth Climate Strike, reporters would ask me, "So do you strike every Friday?" My immediate response to that question was, "No, and I'll tell you why."

While striking is a powerful form of protest, there are many barriers that make it inaccessible. Being able to skip class that frequently, even if it's for just a period or two, is not an option for many middle- and high school students. Just getting to your state capitol or city hall, or anywhere symbolic, can be difficult, especially for youth of color and low-income communities.

So, no I don't strike every Friday, because I can't. But that doesn't mean my activism is not valid. That doesn't mean that the activism of thousands of youth across the world is not valid.

Attending the climate strike in Washington, D.C., was everything I wanted but also dreaded. We had amazing speakers — our own organizers! But a diverse group of organizers didn't mean a diverse group of participants. Talking about my experiences to a crowd of thousands was amazing, but it was discouraging how few of the faces in the crowd looked like me. It showed how the climate movement needs a drastic change toward diversity before we can truly be intersectional and effective.

All of these experiences taught me that it is so important to make sure that those that are disproportionately affected by climate change be at the forefront of the issue, advocating for ourselves and our communities.

Let us remember our privilege for being here and the work of hundreds of indigenous activists before us. We strike because we can. Because the media focuses on some and not others. But many can't.

This movement is not one person, or one group. This movement is all of us and we need to make sure we value those who are disproportionately affected by this crisis. And allow those who are affected to lead.

You're Never Too Young to Make Change

“Meet Xiye Bastida, Indigenous Climate Activist | NowThis NEXT”

Oct 28, 2021

Xiye Bastida (pronounced “she-ay”) is an Indigenous climate activist.

My name is Xiye Bastida. I'm 19 years old and I'm a climate justice activist. My parents met at the first Earth Summit in 1992, so you could say it's in my veins, but obviously I chose this path for myself.

My dad is Otomi, which is an Indigenous group in Mexico. I was raised with a philosophy of reciprocity, of taking care of mother earth because mother earth takes care of us.



Growing up, I just absorbed everything that they were saying, everything that they were doing. Up until this day, they're still fighting to make whatever community they're in a better place. And that was really inspirational for me. Spaces like this is exactly what I want more of in New York. Being here in Little Island shows me that the future that we're trying to imagine is possible because it's a way of incorporating more green spaces into the city.

In 2015, my hometown suffered from flooding. That was the moment that pushed me over the edge of it's not gonna happen by the end of the century, it's already happening right now. I think that all of the youth movement is thinking that. We're seeing what's happening around us and we're not seeing our government doing enough or companies doing enough or society doing enough. It was not enough to get involved in local politics.

And that's when Greta Thunberg called for the first global climate strike. The day of the strike, 600 kids, which is half my school, walked out with me. After that, I came together with different organizers from around the city and we created Fridays for Future NYC.

And the biggest climate strike we organized was the September 20th climate strike with 300,000 people just in New York City. We really have to step up and demand action because it's our futures we're fighting for and our presents as well.

And now that I'm in college, activism for me is being a climate communicator. The only way in which we're gonna get strong enough to mitigate the worst effects of the climate crisis, which is what we all are trying to do, is by changing our culture to a culture of climate consciousness. To be honored as a Vital Voice is really special, especially being an immigrant. Sometimes you don't really feel like you found your place or that you have a say in the place where you're in.

The fact that I was part of all of those efforts and that that is recognized validates a lot of my feelings about belonging. Just being alongside such accomplished, amazing women also made me feel really empowered. I think a vital voice is a courageous voice because it takes courage to tell the truth.

My advice for someone who wants to get into climate activism is to show up because showing up is 50% of the work. There is no one in the movement who doesn't want more people because we need more people. We need everyone to be part of the solution.

The climate crisis is the biggest challenge that we have, but it's also our biggest opportunity to come together and build a better world.

You're Never Too Young to Make Change

“This Teenaged Water Protector Wants You to Have Safe Drinking Water Everywhere You Go.”

August 9, 2022

Autumn Peltier is a First Nations activist and part of the Wiikwemkoong Nation.

I believe that no matter what race or color, or how rich poor we are, everybody deserves clean drinking water. Water is the lifeblood of Mother Earth, it's the lifeblood of everything. That's why I find it so critical, because those teachings had a direct impact on what I believe in and kind of how I look at this entire thing. Respect it as if it's like a human. You look at it as if it's a living thing.

My name is Autumn Peltier, I'm 17 years old. I'm the Chief Water Commissioner for Anishenabek Nation. I'm an Indigenous Rights activist and water activist.



Autumn's journey to becoming a water protector began when she was eight, unexpectedly sparked by a visit to an Indigenous community in Canada a few hours from her home.

I had to go to the washroom. When I went to go wash my hands I realized that directly on the mirror it said, “Do not drink the water. Not for consumption, and boil water advisory.”

I asked my mom, What does this mean? And she told me, Well. they can't drink their water here. I said, Why? She says, Because their water is polluted. And so later that night, I go home and I research what a boil water advisory was. I was only eight, but for me at the time, I kind of like, thought about the fact that there was kids that were my age and younger who had no idea what it's like to just go to your tap and drink water or be able to go wash your hands or wash yourselves. And so that kind of impacted me in a way for me to feel like I needed to use my voice to speak up.

My people, the First Nations People of Canada, we believe that water is the main element of our culture. Being born, just like Anishinaabe People, Native People, we're given the automatic responsibility of having to care for the land and care for the water, as we are people of the land. We lived off the land. We lived off the animals. We lived the water. And so we kind of always have that connection and understanding of that.

When I first started doing my work, I was 10 years old. At the time there was very, very little, almost no media coverage, about any Indigenous issues, especially the water crisis in First Nations Communities.

She spent the past eight years speaking out about the importance of clean water to international organizations like the UN and the World Economic Forum. And in 2021 she received the planetary Health Award from the Prince Albert II's Foundation.

Being awarded by people like the Prince of Monaco shows that my voice is not only being heard within Canada, it's being heard internationally. So the issues that were not talked about are now being talked about globally and internationally, it's part of the global conversation now.

It's different for this generation because of social media. From my personal opinion, we're always on our phones, we're always on social media, different apps. And we're able to see all these different posts, all these different things about climate change, or just world issues in general.

When I speak, my goal, it really is like, the younger generations, young people, because for me, the way I look at this entire thing, your voice is so much more powerful and so much more important, you wouldn't generally think that a kid or a young person would speak up about world issues or political issues, that we shouldn't have to be speaking about it in the first place, and so that's why it's so much more powerful because that's how you know something is wrong. That's how you know something has to be done. We are the leaders of tomorrow. We're the people that are going to be inheriting the issues right now.

PURIM

Everyone Needs to Eat



Food is an integral part of Jewish life. On Purim we share food with family and friends, and we donate money to those in need. In this unit, students will explore Jewish values of feeding the hungry and find ways to help in their own local communities.

Everyone Needs to Eat

Grade(s): K-2nd, 3-5th, 6-8th
Number of participants: Any
Time needed: 60 minutes (or more)



Goal(s):

Students will connect Jewish value of ensuring everyone has food to the tradition of Purim to share food with family, friends, and those in need.

Objectives:

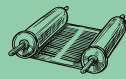
Students will

- Know what mishloakh manot and matanot la'evyonim are
- Understand what food insecurity is and the Jewish value of feeding the hungry
- Create their own activity to address food insecurity in their community

Elements of Learning



Performance Art



Torah/ Jewish Text



Jewish Values



Journaling



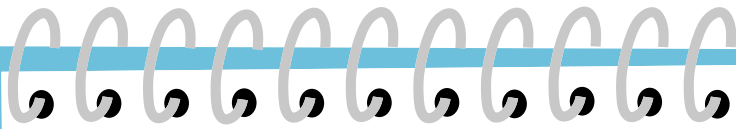
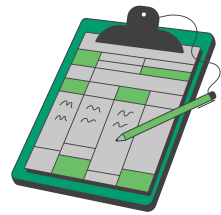
Reflection

A Reconstructionist Lens

One of the traditions of Purim is to donate money and/or food to people in need. In this unit students will explore the concept of “food insecurity” and understand how it impacts people in their community. As Reconstructionists, we want our tradition to inspire us to action.

Grounding our learning in Jewish values of feeding the hungry, students will choose ways they help end hunger in their own community.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Storybook
- Whiteboard
- Sticky notes and pencils
- Texts from the Appendix

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to listen to a story and move their bodies. You will need a whiteboard to write key words for the older students.

The final activity has several options and set up will vary depending on what you decide.

My Notes



Hebrew Wordbank

אוֹצֵר מְלִים בְּעֵבְרִית

Purim	פּוּרִים	Purim
Gifts of Food	מְשֻׁלוֹחַ מְנוֹת	Mishloakh Manot
Gifts for the Poor	מְתָנוֹת לְאֶבְיוֹנִים	Matanot la'evyonim

Feel free to add your own!



SETTING UP



Key Words

➔ **Purim**

A holiday on the 14th of Adar, which celebrates the Jews of Persia being saved by Esther's bravery.

➔ **Manot**

Gifts of food that we share with family and friends on Purim.

➔ **Matanot La'evyonim**

Gifts (money or food) that we give to people in need on Purim.

➔ **Food Insecurity**

When someone doesn't have consistent access to food or doesn't know where their next meal is coming from.

My Notes

Jewish Context

Purim is a holiday celebrated in the Hebrew month of Adar. We retell the story of Queen Esther who advocated for the Jews of Persia so they would not be killed. Celebrations usually include costumes and masks, reading the Megillah (a scroll telling Esther's story), giving gifts of food to friends and family, a festive meal, and donating money to the poor.

Opening Activity



Everyone Needs to Eat (15 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Storybook

Directions:

In this activity we will be talking about food insecurity. It's important to remember that some students may be experiencing food insecurity, while others are not.

For Younger Grades:

Start with a storybook to think about food and hunger. Here are some recommendations:

- Bagels from Benny (by Aubrey Davis)
- Bone Button Borsht (by Aubrey Davis)
- Maddi's Fridge (by Lois Brandt)

Ask students to reflect on the stories. Here are some suggested questions, feel free to add more specific questions for the story you read:

- Who was hungry in the story we read?
- How did someone share food in this story?
- What difficult decisions did the characters make in the story?
- How does food help connect us?
- If you were a character in the story, what choices would you make?

For students who need to move their bodies to help them focus, you can also invite them to act out scenes from the book to help answer the questions.

Explain to students that some people do not always know where their next meal is coming from. This is called "food insecurity" and it can be scary to not know when or how someone is going to eat.

Ask students to think about the story you just read.

- What did the characters in the story do to make sure everyone had enough to eat? Is there anything else they could have done or a different choice they could have made?
- Why is it important that everyone gets enough to eat?

Everyone Needs to Eat (cont.)

For Older Grades:

Write these words on a whiteboard and invite students to write definitions or other related words/phrases/ideas underneath the key words. You could also give students sticky-notes to add to the board with their thoughts.

- Hunger
- Food security
- Food insecurity
- Food desert
- Food swamp

Review the students' ideas together, allowing students to ask each other clarifying questions and/or add more context that didn't fit on the sticky-note. Next, review the definitions below to help round out the conversation

Definitions (from the Merriam Webster Dictionary):

- Hunger: a craving for food, an uneasy physical sensation from lack of food, weakened condition from consistent lack of access to nutrition
- Food security: able to consistently access or afford adequate food
- Food insecurity: being unable to consistently access or afford adequate food
- Food desert: an area where little fresh produce is available for sale
- Food swamp: an urban area with only fast food and corner-store food available

Show students a brief video(s) on food insecurity. Here are some suggestions or you can find more with a quick internet search:

- Child Food Insecurity Report on NBC Nightly News: Kids Edition (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkRs73b0Enk>)
- What Is Food Insecurity? (<https://www.pbs.org/video/what-is-food-insecurity-38509/>)

Ask students to reflect on the video(s) they just saw.

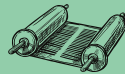
- How do you feel when you're hungry?
- Is it hard to focus at school or playing with your friends when you are hungry?
- What might cause someone to become food insecure? What could help them become food secure?
- Why is maintaining dignity for someone who is hungry important?

Everyone Needs to Eat (cont.)

Ask students to think about their school, synagogue, and any other communities they are part of:

- Does your community help feed people who are hungry? How?
- Have you ever volunteered at a food bank, soup kitchen, or food drive? What was that experience like? What did you learn? What surprised you?
- Hunger can often be invisible unless we know someone really well and they trust us enough to tell us they are hungry. How do we help lessen the stigma (negative perception) of hunger so that people can ask for help without feeling embarrassed?
- How do we help people gain access to food without embarrassing them?

A Taste of Torah



Food as a Jewish Value (10-15 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of texts from the Appendix

Directions:

In this activity we will look at a few Jewish texts that remind us to ensure everyone has food, along with the relevant verse from the Megillah.

Text 1, Esther 9:20-22: describes the rituals of Purim, including mishloakh manot (sending gifts to friends) and matanot la'evyonim (gifts to the poor).

Text 2, Tur, Yoreh Deah 251:1: a halakhic (legal) text, explaining that when someone tells us they are hungry we believe them right away without checking.

Text 3, Deuteronomy 15: shows a tension between God's promise there will never be hungry people and the reality that there will always be hungry people and its our responsibility to feed each other.

Food as a Jewish Value (cont.)

For Younger/Non-Reading Grades:

Read the first text aloud to students. Give them a chance to ask clarifying questions. Read the text again and invite them to share any questions they have about the meaning of the text. Don't worry about answering everything, the goal is to spark their curiosity. Invite other students to try to answer each other's questions to start a conversation.

You can repeat this with as many of the texts as you want.

For Older/Reading Grades:

In small groups, have students read one of the texts and list as many questions as they have about it. Encourage students to read the text through more than once, they might see something new the second or third time they read it. Don't worry about answering all the questions, the goal is to spark their curiosity and for students to share their own ideas and thoughts with each other.

Ask each group to share their text with the larger group, along with their questions. Invite students from other groups to ask their own questions as well.

For All Students

- What did your text say about hunger?
- How are we supposed to help each other, according to your text?
- Why do you think it's important to make sure everyone has enough to eat?



My Notes

Words Into Action



Living Our Values (30-60 minutes)

There are many ways we could embody the values we have learned today. Here are a few suggestions for activities with your students, or create your own:

Option 1: Invite a Community Organization to Your Class

There are probably many local organizations working to end hunger in your community. You could invite someone from the organization to come speak to your class about the work they do, the people they serve, and why this work is important. Have students prepare questions ahead of time so they can be prepared for the speaker. If someone in your synagogue community volunteers for a local food insecurity organization, invite them to come speak about why this work matters. to them from a Jewish values perspective.

Option 2: Run a Purim Food Drive

Have students create a Purim food drive and ask the community to bring food to donate at the Megillah reading. Students could create posters, social media posts, and decorate bags or boxes to collect the food. Ask families to volunteer to drop it off at a local food bank.

Option 3: Build a “Little Free Food Library” for your school or synagogue

Have students decorate a special box or cabinet in the entrance or lobby of the synagogue or school. It should be clearly labeled so people coming into the space know they can either bring food to donate or take food if they need. If your community already has something like this, ask students to create a campaign to advertise it more: social media posts, posters about community hunger and Jewish values, etc, to help draw more attention to this assistance.

Option 4: Volunteer with a Local Organization

Your students could choose a local organization that addresses food insecurity and volunteer to help. Some examples: a food bank, a local food drive, a soup kitchen, an emergency shelter, an after-school program. Your rabbi, Social Action Committee, or Bikkur Cholim Committee might have suggestions.

Closing Reflection



What We Learned(5-20 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Whiteboard + markers
- Sticky notes + pencils

Directions:

To close this unit we will reflect on what we have learned.

Write the following prompts on the whiteboard and invite students to write their answers underneath (or use sticky notes)

- One thing I learned today ...
- One thing I would like to do to help ...
- One thing I am still curious about ...

For a non-writing version of this activity, you can go around in a circle and have everyone share (or pair share if you have a large group).

Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage in the activities?
- Were students comfortable sharing their ideas about food and hunger? Did they respond respectfully to one another?
- Did they demonstrate an understanding the Jewish value of feeding the hungry?
- Did they ask thoughtful questions and show curiosity for the material?
- Are there ways to bring this conversation into future lessons or community events?



Appendix

Here are some additional pages you will need for this program:

- Texts on Feeding the Hungry

Esther 9:20-22

...וישלח ספרים אל-כל-היהודים אשר בכל-מדינות המלך אחשוורוש הקרובים והרחוקים:
לקיים עליהם להיות עשים את יום ארבעה עשר לחדש אדר ואת יום-חמשה עשר בו בכל-שנה
ושנה: בימים אשר-נחו בהם היהודים מאיביהם והחדש אשר נהפך להם מיגון לשמחה ומאבל
ליום טוב לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה ומשלח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאבינים:

... Mordechai sent letters to all the Jews throughout the lands of King Ahasuerus, near and far, commanding them to observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar every year, the same days on which the Jews found relief from their enemies and the same month which had been transformed for them from one of grief and mourning to one of festive joy. They were to observe them as days of feasting and joy, and as an occasion for sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor.

Tur, Yoreh Deah 251:1

מי שבא ואומר האכילוני אין בודקין אחריו אם הוא רמאי

When someone comes to us and says, "I am hungry, feed me." We do not investigate to see if that person is telling the truth. We feed them immediately.

Deuteronomy 15:5, 7-8, 11

רק אם-שמוע תשמע בקול יהוה אלהיך לשמר לעשות את-כל-המצוה הדאת אשר אנכי מצוה
היום: [...] כי-יהיה בך אביון מאחד אחיך באחד שערך בארצה אשר-יהוה אלהיך נתן לך לא
תאמץ את-לבבך ולא תקפץ את-ידך מאחיק האביון: כי-פתח תפתח את-ידך לו והעבט
תעביטנו די מחסרו אשר יחסר לו: [...] כי לא-יחדל אביון מקרב הארץ על-פן אנכי מצוה
לאמר פתח תפתח את-ידך לאחיק לעניה ולאבינה בארצה:

There shall be no needy among you – since your God will bless you in the land that your God is giving you as an inheritance

If, however, there is a needy person among you, one of your kin in any of your settlements in the land that your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kin. Rather, you must open your hand and lend whatever is sufficient to meet the need.

For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land, which is why I command you: open your hand to the poor and needy kin in your land.

PESAKH



On Pesakh we celebrate our freedom and remember every person who lives under a system of oppression. In this unit students will connect the themes of Pesakh to social justice causes they care about, creating their own Justice Hagaddah.

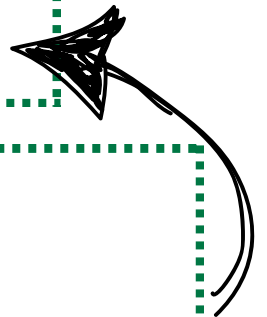
Justice Hagaddah

Grade(s): K-2nd, 3-5th, 6th-8th
Number of participants: Any
Time needed: 60 minutes (or more)



Goal(s):

Students will connect the themes of Pesakh to the global idea of freedom and justice.



Objectives:

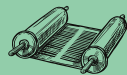
Students will:

- Learn/Review the story of Passover
- Explore important moments of the Hagaddah
- Create their own hagaddah pages combining the traditional texts with modern social justice issues.

Elements of Learning



Physical Activity



Jewish Text



Reflection



Visual Art



Jewish Values



Journaling

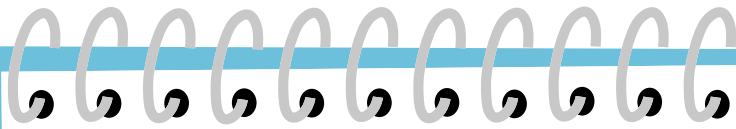
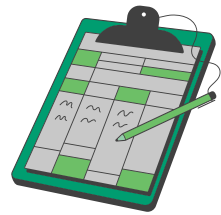


Meditation

A Reconstructionist Lens

The Pesakh Hagaddah tells the story of the Israelites leaving Egypt, escaping oppression for freedom. This story has inspired many freedom movements in the past and present. As Reconstructionist Jews, we understand that Judaism speaks to our current lives, encouraging us to let the Exodus story inspire our own social justice work as we strive to build a world where everyone is free.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Copies of Hagaddah texts (Appendix)
- Art supplies for Hagaddah creation
- Pesakh storybook (check your synagogue library)

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to use art supplies to create their hagaddah pages.

My Notes



Hebrew Wordbank

אוֹצֵר מְלִים בְּעֵבְרִית

Passover

פֶּסַח

Pesakh

Hagaddah

הַגָּדָה

Hagaddah

(also:the story)

Freedom

חֵירוּת

Heirut



Feel free to add your own!

SETTING UP



Key Words

➔ **Pesakh**

Passover, a celebration of the Israelites being freed from slavery in Egypt. Pesakh is often celebrated with a festive meal and retelling the story of leaving Egypt, called a Seder.

➔ **Hagaddah**

The special book used for the Pesakh that tells the story of leaving Egypt, has songs and prayers for the holiday, and outlines the rituals for the Seder.

➔ **Seder**

Meaning “order”, the rituals, prayers and songs for the festive meal on Pesakh.

➔ **Social Justice**

An idea that everyone deserves equal and fair social, economic and personal rights and opportunities.



My Notes

Jewish Context

Pesakh (Passover) is a spring harvest festival that celebrates the Israelites being freed from slavery in Egypt (the first chapters of Exodus tell this story). On Pesakh we celebrate with a festive meal and many rituals that remind us of the bitterness of slavery and the sweetness of freedom. Today, many communities use Pesakh as an opportunity to acknowledge modern struggles for human rights.

Opening Activity

Remembering Egypt (10-15 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Pesakh Storybook (for younger grades)
- Scraps of paper + pencils (for older grades)

Set Up

For this activity, students should first gather to listen to the story and then have space to move their bodies around for the second part.

Directions:

Ask students what they remember about Pesakh. They may list rituals or foods for the Seder, the story of the Israelites leaving Egypt, or personal rituals their family has.

For Younger Grades:

Read a Pesakh storybook to help fill in the gaps and make sure everyone knows the story. Here are some suggested books, but you can also use any version of the Pesakh story that you want:

- Let My People Go! (by Tilda Balsley)
- Miriam at the River (by Jane Yolen)
- The Story of Passover (by David A. Adler)
- Max and Emma Cross the Red Sea (by Carl Harris Shuman)
- The Longest Night (by Laurel Snyder)

After you read the story, review some of the major plot points with students. Ask them to act out these moments with their bodies -- acting it out will help them remember more. Here are some suggested major moments:

- The Israelites are enslaved in Egypt, building cities with clay and bricks
- Yocheved hides baby Moses in a basket in the Nile River and he is found by Pharaoh's daughter
- Moses grows up in the palace until he runs away and becomes a shepherd
- God talks to Moses from a burning bush and tells him to go free the Israelites
- Moses and his brother Aaron tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go
- God sends 10 plagues to Egypt because Pharaoh keeps saying No: Blood, Frogs, Lice, Wild Animals, Cattle Death, Boils, Hail, Locust, Darkness, Death of the Firstborn
- Pharaoh lets the Israelites go. They leave, they are free!

Remembering Egypt (cont.)

For Older Grades:

Ask students to review the Passover story using charades. You can either ask each student to write a part of the story on a slip of paper, or you can prepare the slips ahead of time.

Here are some suggested major moments of the story. Have students take turns acting them out and guessing.

- The Israelites are enslaved in Egypt, building cities with clay and bricks
- Pharaoh says that all Israelite baby boys will be killed
- Yocheved hides baby Moses in a basket in the Nile River
- Baby Moses is found by Pharaoh's daughter in the river and she raises him
- Adult Moses sees an Egyptian beating an Israelite and kills the Egyptian
- Moses sees two Israelites fighting and tries to stop them. They tell everyone that he killed the Egyptian
- Moses runs away and becomes a shepherd in Midian
- God talks to Moses from a burning bush and tells him to go free the Israelites
- Moses and his brother Aaron tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go
- God sends 10 plagues to Egypt because Pharaoh keeps saying No: Blood, Frogs, Lice, Wild Animals, Cattle Death, Boils, Hail, Locust, Darkness, Death of the Firstborn
- Pharaoh lets the Israelites go. They leave, they are free!



My Notes

Let's Get Creative!



Creating Our Own Hagaddah (40 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Hagaddah texts from the Appendix
- Art supplies

Directions:

In the Appendix you will find a few different excerpts from the Hagaddah. You and/or your students can choose additional texts from the Hagaddah if you want.

Ask students to think about problems in the world or causes that they care about. Here are some questions to spark conversation:

Younger Grades:

- What does “fair” mean? What does it look like?
- What would a totally fair world look like?
- What’s something you care about? What’s a problem in the world you would like to see change? What do you think should happen?
- Can you think of someone (either someone you know or a famous person) who has changed the world? What did they do?

Older Grades:

- What’s a problem in the world you would like to see fixed? Why do you care about this problem? What should be done?
- What does “justice” mean to you? What would a totally just/fair world look like?
- If you were in charge of the world (or country, or city) what would you do to help everyone around you?
- Can you think of a person (someone famous or someone you know personally) who has inspired you by making the world a better place? What do you admire about them and what parts of their story inspire you?

Ask students to choose a cause they care about, it could be something immediate in their lives such as no bullying at school or something more global such as climate change.

Creating Our Own Hagaddah (cont.)

Students can work individually, in pairs, or in groups. Give students page(s) of the hagaddah and review the prayers/songs. Let students know that we will be creating a group hagaddah, sharing their work with everyone in the class.

For Younger/non-writing Students

Invite students to choose a page (or section) of the hagaddah that relates to the cause they care about, and decorate the page in a way that connects the hagaddah concepts to the modern issue. For example, they might use the 10 Plagues page and illustrate ten ways to prevent bullying in their school, or use Ha Lachma Anya to show how important it is for everyone to have access to healthy food. Students can also add their own words to the page (some might need help writing/spelling).

For Older/writing Students

Invite students to choose a page (or section) of the hagaddah that relates to the cause they care about. They can add their own poetry, ideas, thoughts and comments to the page, connecting the prayers in the hagaddah to the modern issue. Encourage them to decorate and illustrate as well. For example, they might use the 10 Plagues page and illustrate ten modern plagues (climate change, hunger, war, etc), or the afikomen page to write/draw about finding hope during difficult times.

Invite students to share their work with the group:

- What cause did you choose?
- Can you tell us about your artwork and writing?

Make photocopies of all the hagaddah pages and staple them together, giving a copy to each student to take home and share at their own seder.



My Notes

Closing Reflection



Changing the World (5-10 minutes)

Directions:

Tell students that you are going to reflect on this activity and ask them to think about their own ideas. Some students may choose to do this activity by drawing or doodling, others may want to move their bodies or sit quietly and reflect. Ask students to choose one way to reflect and stick with it for the whole activity so they don't disrupt each other.

Questions for reflection:

- Imagine waking up in the morning. You live in a perfect world where there are no problems. Look around, what do you see? What is everyone doing in this perfect world? What do you do all day?
- Think about the cause you chose. Why is it important to you? What can you do to help solve that problem?
- If you could talk to all the leaders of the world and ask them to help you solve this problem, what would you say?
- Imagine you solve the problem you chose. What would the world look like? How much closer would it be to the perfect world you imagined?
- What would you help do next?

Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage in the activities?
- Were students able to articulate causes they care about?
- Did students demonstrate an understanding of connecting the hagaddah texts and/or the themes of Passover to the causes they care about?
- Did students show kavod (respect) towards one another?
- If students found this unit difficult, what was the cause of the difficulty and what kind of support might they need in the future?

Appendix

Here are some additional pages you will need for this program:

- Yachatz
- Mah Nishtanah (The Four Questions)
- Ha Lachma Anya
- The Four Children
- The Four Cups
- The 10 Plagues
- Dayeinu
- Afikomen

You can also choose other passages of the Hagaddah as well.

Yachatz יַחַצ

Breaking the Middle Matza

Take the middle matza and break it in half. The larger piece becomes the afikomen, wrapped up and hidden for later in the Seder.

Ma Nishtanah מה נִשְׁתַּנָּה

The Four Questions

מה נִשְׁתַּנָּה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות?

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֶמֶץ וּמֶצֶה, הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה – בְּלוּ מַצָּה.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין שְׂאֵר יִרְקוֹת – הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה (בְּלוּ) מָרוֹר.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אֵין אָנוּ מִטְבִּילִין אֶפְּיֵלוּ פַּעַם אַחַת – הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי פְּעָמִים.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבִין וּבֵין מְסֻבִּין – הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה בְּלָנוּ מְסֻבִּין

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On all other nights we eat leavened bread and matzah, and on this night only matzah.

On all other nights we eat all vegetables, and on this night only bitter herbs.

On all other nights, we don't dip our food even once, and on this night we dip twice.

On all other nights we eat sitting or reclining, and on this night we only recline.

Ha Lachma Anya הָא לַחְמַא עֲנִיָּא

This is the Bread of Affliction

הָא לַחְמַא עֲנִיָּא דִּי אָכְלוּ אַבְהַתְנָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְּכָפִין יִיְתִי וְיִיכּוּל, כָּל
דְּצָרִיף יִיְתִי וְיִפְסַח. הַשְּׁתָּא הָכָּא – לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל. הַשְּׁתָּא
עַבְדֵּי – לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוּרִין.

This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Anyone who is hungry should come and eat, anyone who is in need should come and partake of the Pesakh sacrifice. Now we are here, next year we will be in the land of Israel; this year we are slaves, next year we will be free people.

The Four Children

בְּנֵי אֲרֵבָעָה בְּנִים דִּבְרָה תּוֹרָה: אֶחָד חָכָם, וְאֶחָד רָשָׁע, וְאֶחָד תָּם, וְאֶחָד שְׂאִינֹו יוֹדֵעַ לְשֹׂאֹל. חָכָם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְכֶם. וְאִם אַתָּה אָמֹר לוֹ בְּהִלְכוֹת הַפֶּסַח: אֵין מִפְטִירִין אַחַר הַפֶּסַח אֲפִיקוֹמֵן: רָשָׁע מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֲבוּדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם. לָכֶם – וְלֹא לוֹ. וְלִפִּי שְׂהוּצִיא אֶת עַצְמוֹ מִן הַבֶּלֶל בְּפֶר בְּעֵקֶר. וְאִם אַתָּה הִקְהָה אֶת שְׁנֵי וְאָמֹר לוֹ: "בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה יי לִי בְּצִאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם." לִי וְלֹא-לוֹ. אֱלֹו הִיָּה שָׁם, לֹא הִיָּה נִגְאָל: תָּם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה זֹאת. וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו "בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוּצִיאָנוּ יי מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים." וְשְׂאִינֹו יוֹדֵעַ לְשֹׂאֹל – אֶת פֶּתַח לוֹ, שְׁנֵאָמֵר, וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבְנֶךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה יי לִי בְּצִאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם.

The Torah refers to four children: One wise, one wicked, one simple and one who does not know how to ask a question.

What does the wise child say? "What are the testimonials, statutes and laws that the Lord our God commanded you?" You should tell him about the laws of Pesakh, that one may eat no dessert after eating the Pesakh offering.

What does the wicked child say? "What does this service mean to you?" To you and not to them. Since they exclude themselves from the community, they deny a basic principle of Judaism. You should respond harshly: "It is for the sake of what God did for me when I left Egypt." For me and not for them. If they were there they would not have been redeemed.

What does the simple child say? "What's this?" You should say to them: "With a strong hand God took me out of Egypt, from the house of slavery."



And the one who does not know how to ask, you should open the story, as the Torah says: "And you should tell your child on that day, saying 'It is for the sake of this that God did for me when I left Egypt.'"

The Four Cups

We drink four cups of grape juice during the seder.

- The Cup of Blessing (Kiddush)
- The Cup of Memory (Maggid)
- The Cup of Gratitude (Birkat Hamazon)
- The Cup of Praise (Hallel)

The Talmud (Yerushalmi Pesachim 10:1) connects the cups to God's four promises to the Israelites: "I will take them out I will rescue them ... I will redeem them ... I will be their God."

 *What else could the 4 Cups represent?* 

The 10 Plagues

1. Blood	דָּם.
2. Frogs	צְפַרְדֵּיִעַ.
3. Lice	בְּנִיִּם.
4. Wild Animals	עָרוֹב.
5. Cattle Die	דָּבָר.
6. Boils	שֹׁחַיִן.
7. Hail	בָּרָד.
8. Locust	אֲרָבָה.
9. Darkness	חֹשֶׁךְ.
10. Death of the Firstborn	מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת

Dayeinu דַּיְינוּ

It would be enough!

אלו הוציאנו ממצרים - דַּיְינוּ!

אלו נתן לנו את התורה - דַּיְינוּ!

אלו נתן לנו את השבת - דַּיְינוּ!

Dayeinu!

Had God only brought us out of Egypt -- Dayeinu!

Had God only given us the Torah -- Dayeinu!

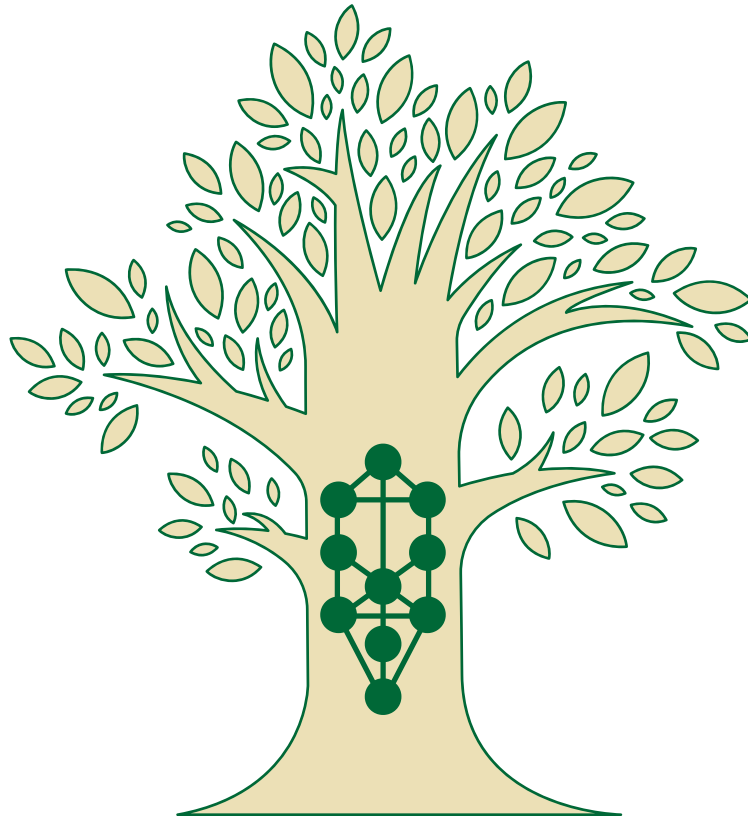
Had God only give us Shabbat -- Dayeinu!

Afikomen אֶפִיְקוֹמֹן

Finding the hidden/broken matza

*Someone hid the afikomen and we can't finish the
Seder without it. Can you find it?*

OMER COUNTER



During the seven weeks between Pesakh and Shavuot (called the Omer), we invite you to reflect on seven Jewish values that will help you make change in the world.

Counting the Omer

What is the Omer?

There are 7 weeks (49 days) between Pesakh and Shavuot. There is a tradition to count the days between the holidays and use them as a time for personal reflection. Each week has a Kabbalistic (mystical) theme that encourages us to think about how we act in our day to day lives.

Each week you will reflect on a new value and think about how it shows up in your life or how you would like to practice it.

How to Count the Omer

Starting on the second night of Pesakh, we say a blessing and then count the day of the Omer.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ (מֶלֶךְ) הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סִפְרֵת הָעֹמֶר:

*Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu ruakh (melekh) ha'olam
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tizivanu al sefirat ha'omer.*

Blessed are you, Source of Life, our God, Spirit of all worlds, who has made us holy with your mitzvot and commanded us to count the Omer.

Each day, count the current day. For example:

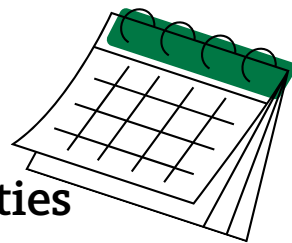
Today is day one of the Omer.

When you reach a week, you start counting weeks as well. For example:

“Today is day eight, which is one week and one day of the Omer.”

...and keep counting until you reach Day 49!

In this packet you will find questions and activities for each weekly theme of the Omer. See how many you can complete!



Week 1: Chesed (Lovingkindness)

Easy Questions:

- When do you feel loved?
- How did you show love this week?
- When did someone show you love this week?



Intermediate Questions:

- Lovingkindness is love shown without being repaid. How can you show lovingkindness to others?
- When has someone shown you lovingkindness?

Advanced Questions:

- When is it hardest to show lovingkindness?
- Can someone be deserving or undeserving of love? How come?

תּוֹבֵן:



 <p>OFFER YOUR HELP</p>	 <p>SAY KIND WORDS TO YOURSELF</p>	 <p>SHARE AN ACTIVITY YOU LOVE</p>	 <p>LISTEN ATTENTIVELY</p>
			

Add your own examples to the boxes above

Week 2: Gevurah (Strength/Justice)

Easy Questions:

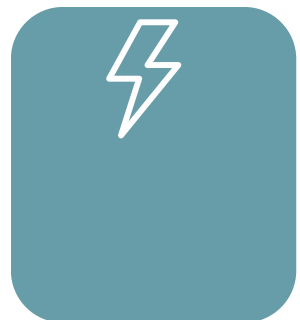
- When do you feel strong?
- When is it easy or hard to ask for help?
- Share a time you stood up for something you believe in.

Intermediate Questions:

- Is the world around you fair? Why or why not? What does a fair world look like?
- What are your strengths? How can you use them to help others?

Advanced Questions:

- Can you think of a time you made a difficult decision? What and/or who helped you decide?
- What is justice? What does a just world look like?



Add your own examples to the boxes above

Week 3: Tiferet (Beauty/Glory)

Easy Questions:

- Look around and find 3 beautiful things in your space.
- What makes something beautiful?

Intermediate Questions:

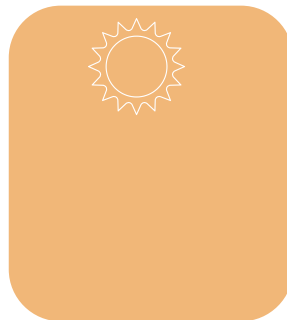
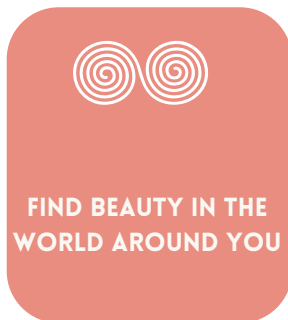
- How do you find beauty (not just physical) in day to day life?
- Name 2-3 things you like about yourself.

Advanced Questions:

- How do you stay positive when life gets difficult?
- What (or who) is something that inspires you?



תִּפְרֵת



Add your own examples to the boxes above

Week 4: Netzach (Victory)

Easy Questions:

- Name something you did this week that you feel proud of?
- Can you share a story of when you tried your best at something?

Intermediate Questions:

- When did you learn something from succeeding? When did you learn something from missing the mark?
- How do you respond when you have a difficult moment with a friend or family member?

Advanced Questions:

- How do you balance being proud of your accomplishments and respectful of others?
- Can you think of a time you didn't feel proud of yourself, what did you do to change the way you feel?



נצח:
נצח
נצח



Add your own examples to the boxes above

Week 5: Hod (Splendor)

Easy Questions:

- What is something you are good at?
- What is your favorite way to celebrate something good?

Intermediate Questions:

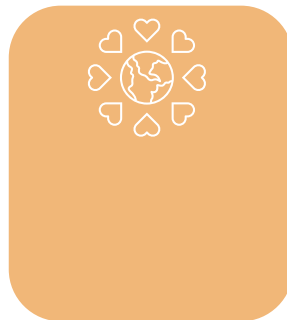
- Describe a talent you're proud of. How can you use this talent to help the world?
- Is there a song, book or piece of art that inspires you? What is special about it?

Advanced Questions:

- What is an accomplishment you are proud of? What did you do to achieve your goal?
- How important is it to feel joy when there's bad things happening in the world? Why?



תִּיב



Add your own examples to the boxes above

Week 6: Yesod (Connection/Foundation)

Easy Questions:

- How do you make friends? How do you decide if you want to be friends with someone?
- Name 2-3 things that are really important in your life and why they are important to you.



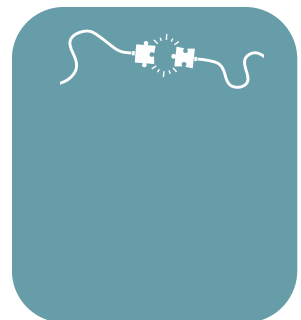
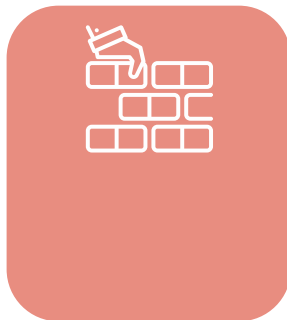
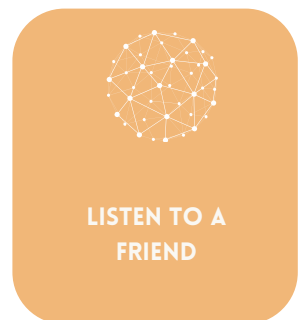
Intermediate Questions:

- Who are the people in your life that help you when things are difficult (friends, teachers, family)?
- How do you balance all of the things you want to do each day?

Advanced Questions:

- How do you navigate when you and your friends have different ideas or priorities?
- Name 2-3 values that help guide your day to day decisions.

Tip!



Add your own examples to the boxes above

Week 7: Malchut (Majesty)

Easy Questions:

- Who is a leader you admire? Why?
- Do you feel comfortable being a leader? Why or why not?

Intermediate Questions:

- What makes someone a good leader?
- Share a time when you were responsible for someone else. How did you make decisions and help them?

Advanced Questions:

- How should a leader balance responsibility to each individual and to the whole group?
- How should a leader respond to group members who might disagree or challenge them?



Add your own examples to the boxes above

SHAVUOT



On Shavuot we read the story of Ruth, a stranger in a strange land. Students will explore immigrant stories and the Jewish value of welcoming the stranger.

Stranger in a Strange Land

Grade(s): K-2nd, 3-5th, 6-8th
Number of participants: Any
Time needed: 60-90 minutes



Goal(s):

Students will understand how welcoming guests, immigrants and refugees is rooted in Jewish tradition.

Objectives:

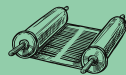
Students will

- Read the story of Ruth
- Learn the Jewish values of Welcoming Guests and Welcoming the Stranger
- Engage with their local community to create a welcoming place for everyone

Elements of Learning



Visual Art



Torah/ Jewish Text



Reflection



Performance Art

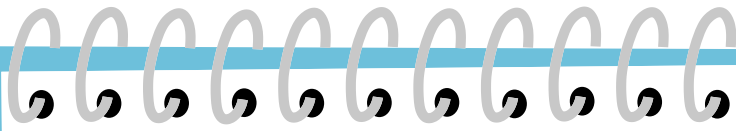


Jewish Values

A Reconstructionist Lens

Traditionally on Shavuot we read the Book of Ruth, which tells the story of a Moabite immigrant, named Ruth, who follows her mother-in-law Naomi to ancient Israel. For many, Ruth is seen as the original Jew by Choice, actively choosing to leave her homeland and join the Jewish people. In Ruth's story we see examples of migration, economic uncertainty for immigrants, and "ahavat hager" (welcoming the stranger). As Reconstructionists, we can learn from Ruth's story the struggle of migrants and be inspired to support and welcome immigrants, refugees, and other new faces into our communities.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Storybook for Opening Activity
- Video Access (computer, tablet)
- Copies of Ruth (6-8th grade)
- Materials for “Words Into Action”

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to read/listen to stories, watch short videos, and participate in the Words into Action activity.

My Notes



Hebrew Wordbank

אוצר מלים בעברית

“Weeks”	שבועות	Shavuot
Welcoming guests	הכנסת	Hakhnasat
Loving the stranger	אורחים	orchim
	אהבת הגר	Ahavat hager

Feel free to add your own!



SETTING UP

Key Words



→ **Shavuot**

A summer harvest festival, celebrating the Jewish People receiving the Torah. Usually celebrated by staying up late (or all night) and studying Jewish texts and ideas.

→ **Ruth**

A book from the Ketuvim (Writings) section of the Hebrew Bible, which tells the story of Ruth traveling from her homeland in Moab to Israel and joining the Jewish People.

→ **Hakhnasat Orchim**

The mitzvah of welcoming guests, making sure everyone feels included and cared for.

→ **Ahavat Hager**

Loving the stranger. The Torah tells us 36 times to welcome and love the stranger, reminding us how hard it was to be strangers in Egypt.



My Notes

Jewish Context

Shavuot is a harvest festival that happens seven weeks after Pesakh, and celebrates the Jewish People receiving the Torah. Many communities host learning sessions where people study Jewish texts, wrestle with modern challenges through a Jewish lens, and enjoy many delicious snacks.

Opening Activity



Welcoming Everyone (15 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Whiteboard (optional)

Set Up

You and/or your students should decide if you want to do this activity with charades or a Pictionary-style game -- you will either need space to act and move around or a place to draw.

Directions:

We will begin exploring the concept of welcoming and including people through a game. For students who are not reading yet, have a teacher read one of the phrases below to them. For students who are reading, write the phrases below on slips of paper and have them pick one.

Phrases:

- First day of school
- Moving to a new neighborhood
- Making a new friend
- Stopping bullying
- Have a friend over for dinner
- Having a sleepover with friends
- Including a younger kid in your game
- Feeling shy
- Helping someone feeling shy
- Cheering up someone feeling sad
- Meeting someone different than you

Feel free to add your own phrases that relate to the topic!



My Notes

Welcoming Everyone (cont.)

Charades Option:

1-2 students pick a slip of paper and act out the scenario. Other students take turns guessing.

Pictionary Option

1 student picks a slip of paper and draws the scenario on the whiteboard while other students guess what they have drawn.

Storytime



Guests and Immigrants (10-15 minutes)

Materials needed:

- K-5th Grade: Storybook from the list below (or one of your own)
- 6-8th Grade: Video access (computer, tablet, etc.)

Directions:

Depending on the ages of your students, choose between the different story options

K-2nd Grade:

Read a story about welcoming guests, welcoming strangers, or immigration. Here are a few suggestions, or feel free to choose your own:

- Welcome (by Stephane Barroux)
- Yuvi's Candy Tree (by Lesley Simpson)
- The Mitten String (by Jennifer Rosner)
- Where Butterflies Fill the Sky (by Zahra Warda)

After you read the story, prompt the students to reflect together:

- Who were the characters in the story?
- Why were they traveling and what did they hope to find?
- How do you think they felt on their journey?
- Were they welcomed (or not)? What made them feel welcome?
- Have you ever moved? Or started a new school or a new sport? How did it feel to be the “new kid”? How did people treat you? How did you make friends?
- How could you help someone who is new to your school, synagogue, community? How can we show them kindness?

Guests and Immigrants (cont.)

3rd-5th Grade:

Read a story about welcoming guests, welcoming strangers, or immigration. Here are a few suggestions, or feel free to choose your own:

- Emma's Poem (by Linda Glaser)
- When Jessie Came Across the Sea (by Amy Hest)
- Seven Fathers (by Ashley Ramsden)
- Yuvi's Candy Tree (by Lesley Simpson)

After you read the story, prompt the students to reflect together:

- Who were the characters in the story?
- Why were they traveling and what did they hope to find?
- How do you think they felt on their journey?
- Were they welcomed in their new home? What made them feel welcome?
- Have you ever moved? Or started a new school or a new sport? How did it feel to be the "new kid"? How did people treat you? How did you make friends?
- Have you ever been nervous about becoming friends with someone different than you? Why or why not? Do you have a story to share about it?
- How could you help someone who is new to your school, synagogue, community? How might we show them kindness?

6th-8th Grade

Explore some stories of children immigrants together. Here are some suggested videos and resources, or feel free to use your own:

- **Little Birds: migrant children tell their stories from a shelter in northern Mexico:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=li2tZF4EYf0&t=408s> (Source: Doctors Without Borders)
- **Migrant Child Storytelling**
<https://www.migrantchildstorytelling.org/the-stories/> (Source: migrantchildrenstorytelling.org)
- **Meet Young Immigrants**
https://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/young_immigrants/index.html (Source: Scholastic.com)
- **Immigrating to America: The Jewish Experience**
<https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/language-literature-culture/wexler-oral-history-project-films-features-news/features/immigrating-america> (Source: Yiddish Book Center)

Guests and Immigrants (cont.)

Once you have watched the videos, here are some reflection questions to prompt discussion with students:

- Who were the children in these stories? Where were they from?
- Why did their families immigrate to a new country? What challenges did they encounter along the way?
- How do you think these children felt during their journeys?
- Have you ever moved to a new place? What was it like? How did people treat you and how did you make friends?
- Have you ever been nervous about becoming friends with someone different than you? Why or why not? Do you have a story to share about it?
- How could you help someone who is new to your school, synagogue, community? How might we show them kindness?



My Notes

A Taste of Torah



Ruth (15 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- K-5th: Video access (computer, tablet, etc)
- 6-8th: Copies of the Book of Ruth (Appendix)

Directions:

Traditionally, we read the Book of Ruth on Shavuot. Ruth is a Moabite who follows her mother-in-law Naomi to Israel and is often considered the first Jew by Choice, based on her declaration to Naomi in Chapter 1. Depending on the ages and learning styles of your students, there are multiple options for exploring the story of Ruth.

Ruth (cont.)

K-5th Grade

Explore the story of Ruth with your students. You could read a storybook (check your synagogue library), tell the story with props if you're familiar with it, invite a storyteller from your community to tell it, or watch one of the videos below:

- **The Book of Ruth: A music video for Shavuot**
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txmyWXKc9zY>, Source: BimBam)
- **What is Shavuot? All About the Jewish Holiday for Torah and Learning**
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEckwkaljpmk>, Source: BimBam)

After you share the story, ask students to reflect:

- Why does Ruth go with Naomi? How do you think Ruth felt moving to a new country? How do you think people treated her when they arrived?
- Who showed kindness to Ruth? Why?
- How can we get to know someone who is different from us?
- Why is it important to treat everyone with respect?

6th-8th Grade:

Split students into four groups and give each a chapter of the Book of Ruth. Ask them to read through the chapter together and answer the questions on the page.

Ask each group to share 3 main events from their chapter so that the whole class becomes familiar with the entire story.

As a large group, ask students:

- Why did Ruth immigrate to Israel? How did people treat her and Naomi?
- Who showed kindness to Ruth and Naomi? Why do you think he did that?
- Why do you think people are scared of people who are different than them?
- How do we become more comfortable with people who are different than us?
- Why is it important to treat everyone with respect?



My Notes

Words Into Action

Living Our Values (30-60 minutes)

There are many ways we could embody the values we have learned today. Here are a few suggestions for activities with your students, or create your own:

Option 1: Invite a local immigration organization

Does your community have a local organization that works with immigrants and refugees? You could invite someone from the organization to come speak to your class about the work they do, the people they serve, and why this work is important. Have students prepare questions ahead of time so they can be prepared for the speaker. If your synagogue supports immigrant/refugee families directly, invite people involved with that initiative to share how this work embodies their Jewish values.

Option 2: Invite an immigrant family from the community

Are there immigrants or the children of immigrants in your community? See if they are interested in sharing their stories (not everyone will want to share, it's important to model for students that we are not entitled to other peoples' stories). If they want to speak to your class, have students prep questions ahead of time.

Option 3: Pack welcome kits for immigrant/refugee families

Is there a local organization that helps set up new families with the supplies and housewares they need to start a new life? Find out what your class can collect and donate. Create and add colorful cards and signs of welcome so that families feel the love of their new community. If your community doesn't have an immigrant focused organization, many homeless shelters and women's shelters need similar support.

Option 4: Create Welcome Signs

Ask students to think about the values of welcoming guests and welcoming new people into the community. What would make someone feel welcome in your synagogue or school? Create colorful posters and signs that share the community values, welcome new people, and create an atmosphere of inclusivity.

If none of these options work for your class, feel free to create your own activity.

Closing Reflection



Wrapping Up (10 minutes)

Directions:

Ask students to pair up and share their reflections with a partner.

Closing reflection questions:

- What's one thing you learned today?
- What's one thing that surprised you?
- What questions do you still have?
- How do you want to be welcomed when you go somewhere new?
- What is one thing you can do to help welcome new people in your school, synagogue or community?

Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage in the activities and ask thoughtful questions?
- Did students demonstrate an understanding of the Jewish values of welcoming guests and loving the stranger?
- Did they participate in respectful conversations together?
- How can you build on today's values and continue incorporating them into the school/synagogue culture?



Happy Shavuot!

Appendix

Here are some additional pages you will need for this program:

- The Book of Ruth (Chapter by chapter, with discussion questions)

Ruth Chapter 1

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine (no food) in the land; and a man of Bethlehem in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the country of Moab.

The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and his two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. They came to the country of Moab and remained there.

Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth, and they lived there about ten years. Then those two—Mahlon and Chilion—also died; so the woman was left without her two sons and without her husband.

Naomi started out with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab; for in the country of Moab she had heard that the Lord had taken note of God's people and given them food (the famine was over). Accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, she left the place where she had been living; and they set out on the road back to the land of Judah.

But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Turn back, each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me! May the Lord grant that each of you find security in the house of a husband!"

And she kissed them farewell. They broke into weeping and said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people."

But Naomi replied, "Turn back, my daughters! Why should you go with me? Have I any more sons in my body who might be husbands for you? Turn back, my daughters, for I am too old to be married. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I were married tonight and I also bore sons, should you wait for them to grow up? Should you on their account stop yourselves from marriage? Oh no, my daughters! My lot is far more bitter than yours, for the hand of the Lord has struck out against me."

Ruth Chapter 1 (cont.)

They broke into weeping again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law farewell. But Ruth clung to her. So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods. Go follow your sister-in-law."

But Ruth replied, "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may the Lord do to me if anything but death parts me from you."

When Naomi saw how determined she was to go with her, she stopped arguing with her; and the two went on until they reached Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole city buzzed with excitement over them. The women said, "Can this be Naomi?"

"Do not call me Naomi," she replied. "Call me Mara (bitterness), for Shaddai (God) has made my lot very bitter. I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. How can you call me Naomi, when the Lord has dealt harshly with-f me, when Shaddai has brought misfortune upon me!"

Thus Naomi returned from the country of Moab; she returned with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabite. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Discussion Questions

- *Who are Naomi and Ruth? How are they related?*
- *Why does Naomi tell her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab?*
- *How does Ruth convince Naomi to let her come along? Why do you think Ruth wants to go with Naomi?*
- *What new name does Naomi want to be called? Why?*
- *At the end of the chapter the text says "Ruth the Moabite". We already know Ruth is a Moabite, why does the text say it again here?*
- *What other questions do YOU have about this chapter?*

Ruth Chapter 2

Chapter 1 Recap: Naomi and her family travel to Moab; her husband and two sons die. Her daughter-in-law Ruth returns to Israel with her.

Now Naomi had a cousin on her husband's side, a man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "I would like to go to the fields and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone who may show me kindness." "Yes, daughter, go," she replied; and off she went. She came and gleaned in a field, behind the reapers; and, as luck would have it, it was the piece of land belonging to Boaz, who was of Elimelech's family.

Presently Boaz arrived from Bethlehem. He greeted the harvesters, "The Lord be with you!" And they responded, "The Lord bless you!" Boaz said to the servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose girl is that?"

The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is a Moabite girl who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.' She has been on her feet ever since she came this morning. She has rested but little in the hut."

Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen to me: Don't go to glean in another field. Don't go elsewhere, but stay here close to my workers. Keep your eyes on the field they are harvesting, and follow them. I have ordered the men not to bother you. And when you are thirsty, go to the jars and drink some of the water that the men have drawn."

She bowed herself with her face to the ground, and said to him, "Why are you so kind as to single me out, when I am a stranger?"

Boaz said in reply, "I have been told of all that you did for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and came to a people you had not known before. May the Lord reward your deeds. May you have a full recompense from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge!"

Ruth Chapter 2 (cont.)

She answered, “You are most kind, my lord, to comfort me and to speak gently to your maidservant—though I am not so much as one of you maidservants.”

At mealtime, Boaz said to her, “Come over here and partake of the meal, and dip your bread in the vinegar.” So she sat down beside the reapers. He handed her roasted grain, and she ate her fill and had some left over.

When she got up again to glean, Boaz gave orders to his workers, “You are not only to let her glean among the sheaves, without interference, but you must also pull some stalks out of the heaps and leave them for her to glean, and not scold her.”

She gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned—it was about an ephah of barley— and carried it back with her to the town. When her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned, and when she also took out and gave her what she had left over after eating her fill, her mother-in-law asked her, “Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be he who took such generous notice of you!” So she told her mother-in-law whom she had worked with, saying, “The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz.”

Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not failed in kindness to the living or to the dead! For,” Naomi explained to her daughter-in-law, “the man is related to us; he is one of our redeeming cousin.”

Ruth the Moabite said, “He even told me, ‘Stay close by my workers until all my harvest is finished.’” And Naomi answered her daughter-in-law Ruth, “It is best, daughter, that you go out with his girls, and not be annoyed in some other field.” So she stayed close to the maidservants of Boaz, and gleaned until the barley harvest and the wheat harvest were finished. Then she stayed at home with her mother-in-law.

Discussion Questions

- *Where does Ruth go to gather food?*
- *Who is Boaz? What type of person does he seem to be?*
- *Why does Boaz treat Ruth with kindness? What does he do to help her?*
- *The text says “Ruth the Moabite” multiple times -- why do you think the text reminds us that Ruth is an immigrant?*
- *What questions do YOU have about this story?*

Ruth Chapter 3

Chapter 1-2 Recap: Naomi and her family travel to Moab; her husband and two sons die. Her daughter-in-law Ruth returns to Israel with her. Ruth goes to gather food in a field that happens to be owned by Naomi's cousin, Boaz, who is very kind to Ruth.

Note: a "redeeming relative" is the closest male relative who could marry a woman if her husband died, giving her financial security and a home. This may seem strange to us now, but it ensured widows were protected and cared for.

Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to Ruth, "Daughter, I must seek a home for you, where you may be happy. Now there is our kinsman Boaz, whose girls you were close to. He will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor tonight. So bathe, anoint yourself, dress up, and go down to the threshing floor. But do not disclose yourself to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he lies down, and go over and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what you are to do."

Ruth replied, "I will do everything you tell me." Ruth went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her.

Boaz ate and drank, and in a cheerful mood went to lie down beside the grainpile. Then she went over stealthily and uncovered his feet and lay down.

In the middle of the night, the man gave a start and pulled back—there was a woman lying at his feet! "Who are you?" he asked.

And she replied, "I am your handmaid Ruth. Spread your robe over your handmaid, for you are a redeeming relative."

He exclaimed, "Be blessed of the Lord! Your latest deed of loyalty is greater than the first, in that you have not turned to younger men, whether poor or rich. And now, have no fear. I will do in your behalf whatever you ask, for all the elders of my town know what a fine woman you are. But while it is true I am a redeeming relative, there is another redeemer closer than I.

Ruth Chapter 3 (cont.)

Boaz said: “Stay for the night. Then in the morning, if he will act as a redeemer, good! let him redeem. But if he does not want to act as redeemer for you, I will do so myself, as the Lord lives! Lie down until morning.”

So she lay at his feet until dawn. She rose before one person could distinguish another, for he thought, “Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.”

And he said, “Hold out the shawl you are wearing.” She held it while he measured out six measures of barley, and he put it on her back. When she got back to the town, she came to her mother-in-law, who asked, “How is it with you, daughter?”

She told her all that the man had done for her; and she added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying to me, ‘Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”

And Naomi said, “Stay here, daughter, till you learn how the matter turns out. For the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today.”

Discussion Questions

- *Where does Ruth go? What does she ask Boaz to do?*
- *How does Boaz respond to her request? What could prevent him from marrying her? Why does he call her selfless?*
- *How does Boaz show Ruth kindness and compassion?*
- *What questions do YOU have about this story?*

Ruth Chapter 4

Chapter 1-3 Recap: Naomi and her family travel to Moab; her husband and two sons die. Her daughter-in-law Ruth returns to Israel with her. Ruth meets their closest “redeeming relative”, Boaz, who is very kind to Ruth. She asks him to marry her to ensure she and Naomi are cared for. Boaz says he wants to, but there’s another redeeming relative who is closer and he must check with that man first.

Note: a “redeeming relative” is the closest male relative who could marry a woman if her husband died, giving her financial security and a home. This may seem strange to us now, but it ensured widows were protected and cared for.

Meanwhile, Boaz had gone to the gate and sat down there. And now the redeemer whom Boaz had mentioned passed by. He called, “Come over and sit down here, So-and-so!” And he came over and sat down.

Then Boaz gathered ten elders of the town and said, “Be seated here”; and they sat down. He said to the redeemer, “Naomi, now returned from the country of Moab, must sell the piece of land which belonged to our kinsman Elimelech. I thought I should disclose the matter to you and say: Acquire it in the presence of those seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you are willing to redeem it, redeem! But if you will not redeem, tell me, that I may know. For there is no one to redeem but you, and I come after you.”

“I am willing to redeem it,” So-and-so replied.

Boaz continued, “When you acquire the property from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabite, you must also acquire the wife of the deceased, so as to continue the name of the deceased upon his estate.”

The redeemer replied, “Then I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own estate. You take over my right of redemption, for I am unable to exercise it.”

Now this was formerly done in Israel in cases of redemption or exchange: to validate any transaction, one man would take off his sandal and hand it to the other. Such was the practice in Israel. So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Acquire for yourself,” he drew off his sandal.

Ruth Chapter 4 (cont.)

And Boaz said to the elders and to the rest of the people, “You are witnesses today that I am acquiring from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. I am also marrying Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, as my wife, so as to continue the name of the deceased upon his estate, that the name of the deceased may not disappear from among his kinsmen and from the gate of his home town. You are witnesses today.”

All the people at the gate and the elders answered, “We are. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built up the House of Israel! Prosper in Ephrathah and continue your name in Bethlehem! And may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah—through the offspring which the Lord will give you by this young woman.”

So Boaz married Ruth; she became his wife. The Lord let her conceive, and she bore a son. And the women of the town said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not withheld a redeemer from you today! May his name be continued in Israel! He will renew your life and sustain your old age; for he is born of your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons.”

Naomi took the child and held it to her bosom. She became its foster mother, and the women neighbors gave him a name, saying, “A son is born to Naomi!” They named him Obed; he was the father of Jesse, father of David.

This is the line of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered (King) David.

Discussion Questions

- *Why do you think the other redeeming relative is not named and just called “So-and-so” (in Hebrew: “Ploni”)?*
- *Why does Ploni not want to marry Ruth?*
- *Who is Obed? Why is he special to Ruth and Naomi?*
- *Why does the story end with King David’s genealogy? Why is it important that Ruth is his ancestor?*
- *What questions do YOU have about this story?*