

THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: A CREATIVE JOURNEY



Explore themes of the Jewish holidays through art.
Students will engage with the holidays using various artistic mediums, combining tradition, contemporary interpretation, and personal meaning with creative expression.

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----|
| Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur | Clay & Sculpture | 3 |
| Sukkot | Building | 12 |
| Shemini Atzeret/Simkhat Torah | Mosaic & Collage | 27 |
| Hanukkah | Drama | 48 |
| Tu Bishvat | Recycled Art | 61 |
| Purim | Painting | 72 |
| Pesakh | Dance & Music | 100 |
| Counting the Omer | Various | 114 |
| Shavuot | Food Art | 117 |

Each lesson has activities appropriate for grades K-12, with adjustments recommended by age. These lessons could be done by individual grade, in combined groups, or as all-school or family programming.

Are there artists in your synagogue community?

This is a great opportunity to invite them as guests for the day and share their artistic wisdom and knowledge with your students.

Some students (and even some teachers) think they are “bad at art.” This is a great time to remind yourself and your students that art is a way of expressing ourselves and gives us a chance to explore ideas and feelings in creative ways. None of us are bad at art, because expressing ourselves is a normal, beautiful thing. Some people find different forms of art more meaningful than others, but all are valuable ways to tell our stories.

ROSH HASHANAH & YOM KIPPUR



As we prepare for the High Holidays, we ask students to consider what values and skills they want to cultivate in the coming year. Through Jewish text, discussion and sculpture, students will think deeply about how their choices and actions will impact them in the coming year.

Shaping the New Year

Grade(s): K-12th

Number of participants: any

Time needed: 60-75 min



Goal(s):

Students will explore their hopes and goals for the New Year through Jewish values and art.

Objectives:

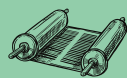
Students will:

- Explore Jewish text connected to the Yamim Nora'im (High Holidays).
- Use clay as an artistic medium to express their goals for the new year.
- Reflect on how to achieve their goals for the new year.

Elements of Learning



Visual Art



Torah



Journaling



Physical Activity



Jewish Values

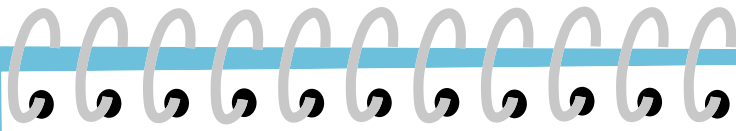


Meditation

A Reconstructionist Lens

This unit explores the themes of renewing ourselves and recommitting to our priorities in preparation for the High Holidays. In this unit we use group discussion, creative thinking, self reflection and artistic expression to guide students through their learning. Through Jewish texts and experiential learning we encourage students to connect their own personal experiences and stories to our tradition.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Creative materials of your choice: markers/crayons, play-doh, blocks, Legos, stickers, pipe-cleaners, etc.
- Clay and sculpting tools (plastic utensils work great)
- Copies of texts from the Appendix
- Pencils and paper

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to write, draw, and create with clay.

My Notes



Hebrew Wordbank

אוצר מילים בְּעֵבְרִית

Acts of
Lovingkindness

גְּמִילוּת חֶסֶדִים

Gemilut
chasadim

New Year
(literally: head of the year)

רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה

Rosh
Hashanah

Day of Atonement

יוֹם כִּפּוּר

Yom Kippur

Repetance

תְּשׁוּבָה

Teshuva

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.
- ➔ **Gemilut Chasadim**
Acts of Lovingkindness. Kind actions we do for friends and strangers.
- ➔ **Teshuvah**
Repentance, returning to our best selves.



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



Getting Started (15-20min.)

Materials Needed:

- Creative materials of your choice: markers/crayons, playdoh, blocks, Legos, stickers, pipe-cleaners, etc

Set Up:

Divide students into 4 groups and give each group a set of creative materials. Each group will be given a different prompt that they should use to create something with their materials. Students can work individually or in partners.

Directions:

Prompts: “Use your art supplies to show us...”

- Group 1: Acts of Lovingkindness (Gemilut Chasadim)
- Group 2: Cheering up a friend
- Group 3: Sharing food with someone who is hungry
- Group 4: Donating to a clothing drive

Ask students to share their work with their group and then ask 1-2 students from each group to share with everyone.

Ask students to reflect on the experience, for example:

- Did you find it easy to draw/paint/illustrate this idea?
- For those in Group 1, did you like having an open prompt? Why or why not?
- For Groups 2-4, did you like having a specific prompt? Why or why not?
- When we are trying to do good in the world, is it easier to think about a value or idea (like Group 1), or a specific action (like Groups 2-4)?

Tell students we will come back to these ideas later in the lesson.



My Notes

A Taste of Torah



Exploring the Gates (10-15 min.)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Midrash Tehillim text
- Chairs or other objects to make gateways.

Set Up

Have objects (chairs, tables, tape the floor, etc) that students can use to create “gates”. Invite students into the center of the space.

Directions

Read the text from Midrash Tehillim and ask the students to create a Gate for ...

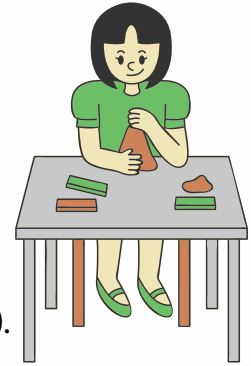
- Feeding the hungry
- Giving water to the thirsty
- Clothing someone who needs it
- Caring for vulnerable people
- Giving tzedakah or volunteering

Students can make the gates as simple or complex and creative as they want. The shape of the gate or materials its made from could relate to the theme of the gate.

Ask students to think of a story of when they did one of these actions; invite them to walk through the gate that matches their story and share that story with another student who walked through that gate. Depending on time, have students think of another story connected to a different gate and walk through and share that story with a partner. If you have a small group, you could also all walk through one gate together and share examples and stories as one group.

 *My Notes*

Let's Get Creative



Sculpting Our Futures (20-30 min.)

Materials Needed:

- Clay or playdoh
- Clay tools or forks, spoons, knives (plastic utensils work great).

Directions

Give each student some clay or playdoh and tools. Encourage them to play with the clay and experiment using tools to create different textures and shapes. (Example: dragging a fork along the clay to create lines, push the spoon into the clay to create divots, cut or slice using the knife.)

Ask students to think about: Who do you want to be in the new year? What are you looking forward to? What do you want to learn? How do you want to grow?

Have students answer by creating something with the clay. It could be a literal or figurative answer, open to their own creativity. Remind students of the opening activity and to think about if they want to set specific goals (such as, Feed the hungry) or more general goals (such as, doing acts of kindness). Ask them to think about the Midrash Tehillim text and which gates they would like to walk through this year.

Encourage students to take their time and play with the clay, discovering how they might communicate their ideas using different textures or shapes.

Depending on time and size of your class, invite students to share their artwork with a partner or the whole group.

 ***My Notes***

Closing Reflection



Getting from Here to There (5-10min.)

Materials needed:

- Pencils and paper (optional)

Directions

Invite students to either work by themselves or with a partner they feel comfortable sharing with. Since all students process differently, they can choose to reflect by writing, drawing, meditating or thinking quietly, or sharing with a partner.

Questions for reflection:

- Imagine yourself a year from now. What will you have discovered in the past year? What new things do you hope to learn about yourself?
- Can you name a goal for this new year? It could be a skill you want to learn or a different way you want to behave? How will you reach your goal?
- Imagine yourself a year from now. What choices are you most proud of, what things do you wish you could change? How can you make choices today, this week, this year, that you can be proud of next year?

Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage by participating in activities, asking/answering questions?
- How did students respond to the material? Curious? Thoughtful? Uninterested?
- Were students comfortable sharing stories from their own lives? If not, what might have encouraged them or made them feel more comfortable?
- 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

Midrash Tehillim 109:13*

פתחו לי שערי צדק. לעולם הבא אומר לו לאדם מה היתה מלאכתך והוא אומר מאכיל רעבים הייתי. והם אומרים לו זה השער של מאכיל רעבים הכנס בו. אחר אומר משקה צמאים הייתי והם אומרים לו זה השער של משקה צמאים הכנס בו. וכן למלביש ערומים ומגדל יתומים ולגומל חסדים. וכן לכל המצוות.

“Open for me the gates of righteousness.” (Psalm 118:19)

In the World to Come, God says to a person: What was your work? If the person says, “I fed the hungry,” then they say to the person, “There is the Gate for those who feed the hungry, enter it.”

Another person says, “I gave water to the thirsty,” then they say to that person, “There is the Gate for those who gave water to the thirsty, enter it.”

There are also Gates for one who gives clothing to those who need it, one who cares for the vulnerable, and one does acts of lovingkindness, as well as Gates for those who fulfill all the other mitzvot (commandments).

**Midrash Tehillim is a rabbinic midrash on the Book of Psalms. The exact authors, editors and dates are subject for debate. (Paraphrased from Sefaria.org)*

In this midrash structure, the author quotes a verse from the Bible and then adds additional ideas, values, and examples in order to help us think deeply about the verse.

If You Build It

Grade(s): K-12th

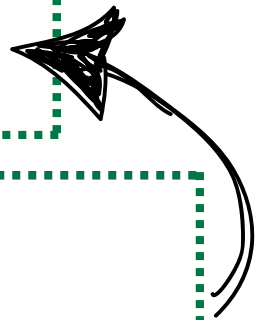
Number of participants: any

Time needed:



Goal(s):

Students will understand the values of the Ushpizin and ways to embody those values in their own lives.



Objectives:

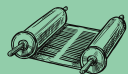
Students will:

- Learn about the Ushpizin (Biblical guests on Sukkot) and the character traits that each represent.
- Build their own miniature sukkot,

Elements of Learning



Visual Art



Torah



Reflection

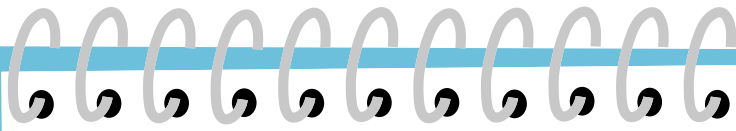


Jewish Values

A Reconstructionist Lens

In this lesson students will connect a Kabbalistic (mystical) tradition with their own values. As Reconstructionists, we engage with Jewish rituals that bring personal meaning to our lives and strive to make our tradition feel relevant and alive in the present moment. Students will explore how understanding the character traits of the Ushpizin can help our thoughtfulness and intentionality when building community where everyone can belong.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Pencils and scrap paper
- Whiteboard/chalkboard
- Sukkot storybook
- Miniature sukkah building materials. You could use natural materials (sticks, moss, leaves, flowers, etc.); or, art supplies; or, blocks, Legos; or, food for an edible sukkah.
- Copies of Appendix pages

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to move around for the opening activity, and will need surfaces to construct their sukkot on for the final 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 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 early 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

Guess Who! (10-15 minutes)

There are 2 options for the Opening Activity. Option 1 is a charades or drawing based game, students will need to draw or move their bodies. For Option 2, students will need to be able to read.

Option 1: Materials Needed

- Whiteboard or large paper to draw on

Directions

Pick one student to go first and tell them the name of a Biblical character (or story) they know. Have students take turns either drawing or acting out the character while other students guess. If students can read/write, have each of them write the name of a Biblical character (or story) on a scrap of a paper and put them into a box or hat to pull out randomly.

Option 2: Materials Needed

- Pencils or pens
- Small scraps of paper

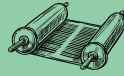
Directions

Have students write the name of a Biblical character or story the class is familiar with on a piece of paper. Each student should pick one randomly and hold it up to their forehead so they cannot read it but their classmates can. The students should walk around asking questions of each other about the character on their paper so they can try to guess who it is.



My Notes

Storytime (Optional)



Sukkah Stories (10 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- A sukkot book (check your synagogue library)

Directions

Choose an age appropriate book about sukkot and read to students. A storybook can help remind students what they already know or help them learn about new aspects of the holiday.

If you have older students present, invite them to take turns reading aloud to the younger students. If you have a large group, you could divide into smaller groups to read different stories.

If your students need a more active version, they could tell a Sukkot story themselves, using improvisation, the “one-word-story” format (sit in a circle and take turns adding one word to build a story), or telling stories from their own holidays in the past. The purpose is to help students remember and connect what they know about Sukkot already, you have lots of room to play with how they do that.

Some Sukkot books you might explore:

- [The House on the Roof](#) by David Adler
- [The Mysterious Guests: A Sukkot Story](#) by Eric Kimmel
- [Shanghai Sukkah](#) Heidi Smyth Hyde
- [The Vanishing Gourds: A Sukkot Mystery](#) by Susan Axe-Bronk
- [The Very Best Sukkah: A Story from Uganda](#) by Shoshana Nambi.



My Notes

A Taste of Torah



Welcoming Guests (10-15 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the texts (in the Appendix)

Directions: K-2nd Grade

Ask students:

- When you meet a new friend, how do you get to know each other? (Play together, ask questions, share a snack, etc.)
- What does your teacher do on the first day of school to make everyone feel welcome?
- Have you ever felt shy and had someone help you feel more comfortable? What did they do to help?

Read Text #1 from the Appendix to the students. This is a text from the Talmud that attributes specific value to welcoming guests.

Ask students:

- In your own words, what does this text say?
- Why do you think welcoming guests is so important?
- What can you do to make someone feel welcome or comfortable?
- How do you make friends with someone new?

Invite students to act out welcoming a guest into their home, school, or the synagogue. What actions or words make people feel welcome?

Directions: 3-5th Grade

Ask students:

- How do you make your friends feel comfortable?
- When you meet a new friend, how do you get to know each other? (Play together, ask questions, share a snack, etc.)
- Have you ever felt shy or had a hard time making friends in a new school? How did people help you feel comfortable?

Give students copies of Text 1 from the Appendix and invite them to read it with a partner. This is a text from the Talmud that attributes specific value to welcoming guests.

Directions: 3-5th Grade (cont.)

Ask students:

- In your own words, what does this text say?
- Why do you think welcoming guests is so important?
- What can you do to make someone feel welcome or comfortable?
- How do you make friends with someone new?

Invite students to act out welcoming a guest into their home, school, or the synagogue. What actions or words make people feel welcome?

Directions: 6-8th Grade

Ask students:

- When you make a new friend, how do you get to know each other?
- What does your teacher do on the first day of school to make everyone feel welcome? What else could your school do to help everyone feel like they belong?
- Have you ever felt overwhelmed somewhere new and someone helped you? What happened?

Split students into pairs or small groups and give each pair either Text 1, 2 or 3. These are texts from rabbinic tradition that describe the value of welcoming guests.

Ask students:

- In your own words, what does your text say?
- Why do you think welcoming guests is so important?
- Beyond welcoming actual guests into a new place, how else can we live this value in our to day lives?
- How do we help people feel like they belong?

Invite students to briefly share a summary of their group's text with the rest of the class. Ask students to think about your own synagogue or learning community. How do we make people feel welcome and comfortable in our community? What else could we do?

Directions: 9-12th Grade

Ask students:

- How do you make new friends? Have you struggled to make friends somewhere new? How did someone help you or what did you do?
- How do you make your friends feel comfortable when they visit you or when you hang out together?
- Can you describe a time you felt like you belonged somewhere? What made that experience positive?

Split students into pairs or small groups and give each pair either Text 1, 2, 3 or 4. These are texts from rabbinic tradition that describe the value of welcoming guests.

Ask students:

- In your own words, what does your text say?
- Why do you think welcoming guests is so important?
- Beyond welcoming actual guests into a new place, how else can we live this value in our to day lives?
- How do we help people feel like they belong?

Invite students to briefly share a summary of their group's text with the rest of the class. Ask students to think about your own synagogue or learning community. How do we make people feel welcome and comfortable in our community? What else could we do?



My Notes

Let's Get Creative!



Building Sukkot (30 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Miniature sukkah building materials. You could use natural materials (sticks, moss, leaves, flowers, etc.); or, art supplies; or, blocks, Legos; or, food for an edible sukkah.
- Copies of the “Ushpizin: Who are they?” page from the Appendix

Set Up

Invite students to work in pairs or individually. Give each a copy of the Ushpizin page and building materials.

Directions

Invite students to look through the Ushpizin page (for those who are not reading, read the page alone to them). Explain that, according to Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism) each of the Ushpizin (Biblical guests) are seen as exemplars of the character traits listed by their names.

Explain to the students that during Sukkot there's a custom to invite these Biblical guests (or their qualities) to join us in the sukkah**.

Ask students to pick one of the Ushpizin and use the building materials to create a sukkah that represents their character traits. For example, Isaac represents Gevurah (strength), how can you build a sukkah that represents Gevurah? Invite them to play with colors, structure, how many rooms or how tall they want the sukkah to be to help represent their characters.

After students have constructed their sukkot, invite them to share with the group and describe how they represented the qualities of their Biblical character.

If there a place to publicly display your students' sukkot in the school or synagogue, this is a great way to encourage community education as well.

**Note: The original version of the Ushpizin tradition only includes the male characters. In contemporary Judaism there are multiple versions of the female characters, two of which are listed in this curriculum.

Closing Reflection



Wrapping Up (5-10 min)

Materials needed:

- None

Directions

Invite students to reflect on their learning. Select from the questions below -- don't worry about getting through all the questions!

- Can you share one thing you learned today?
- What is your favorite part of your sukkah?
- How can we be welcoming to each other in this group?
- How can we welcome new people when they join our community?
- Describe a time you felt like you belonged to a group?
- If you could invite another character from the Bible who we didn't learn about today into your sukkah, who would it be?
- If you could invite a fictional character to your sukkah, who would it be? How would you make them feel welcome?
- If you could invite a hero or someone who means a great deal to you into your Sukkah, who would it be?

Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage by participating in activities, asking/answering questions?
- How did students respond to the material? Curious? Thoughtful? Uninterested?
- Were students comfortable sharing stories from their own lives? If not, what might have encouraged them or made them feel more comfortable?
- How did students show kavod (respect) to one another?
- Were students engaged in artistic expression during sukkah building? If they struggled with this aspect, what was the root of that struggle? How might you adapt the unit in the future?
- How did students choose to reflect and what insights did they gain?

Appendix

Below are some texts that you will need for the Taste of Torah section of this unit.

- Text 1 (Shabbat 127a)
- Text 2 (Pirkei Avot 1:5)
- Text 3 (Mishneh Torah, Aveilut 14:2)
- Text 4 (Avot deRabbi Natan 7:1)
- Ushpizin: Who are they?

Text 1: Shabbat 127a

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: גְּדוּלַת הַכְּנֻסָּת אוֹרְחִין כְּהַשְׁכָּמַת בֵּית הַמְדָּרָשׁ ... אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה
אָמַר רַב: גְּדוּלַת הַכְּנֻסָּת אוֹרְחִין מִהַקְבָּלַת פְּנֵי שְׂכִינָה

Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Hospitality toward guests is as great as rising early to go to the study hall. Rav Yehuda said that Rav said on a related note: Hospitality toward guests is greater than receiving the Divine Presence.

Text 1: Shabbat 127a

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Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Hospitality toward guests is as great as rising early to go to the study hall. Rav Yehuda said that Rav said on a related note: Hospitality toward guests is greater than receiving the Divine Presence.

Text 1: Shabbat 127a

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Text 1: Shabbat 127a

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Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Hospitality toward guests is as great as rising early to go to the study hall. Rav Yehuda said that Rav said on a related note: Hospitality toward guests is greater than receiving the Divine Presence.

Text 2: Pirkei Avot 1:5

יוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים אומר, יהי ביתך פתוח לרוחה, ויהיו עניים בני ביתך,

Yosei ben Yochanan, man of Jerusalem, says: May your house be open wide, and may the poor be members of your household,

Text 3: Mishneh Torah, Aveilut, 14:2

שכר הלוויה מרבה מן הכל. והוא החק שחקקו אברהם אבינו ודרך החסד שנהג בה. מאכיל עוברי דרכים ומשקה אותן ומלוא אותן. וגדולה הכנסת אורחים מהקבלת פני שכניה.

The reward one receives for accompanying guests is greater than all of the others. This is a statute which Abraham our Patriarch instituted and the path of kindness which he would follow. He would feed wayfarers, provide them with drink, and accompany them. Showing hospitality for guests surpasses receiving the Divine Presence.

Text 4: Avot de'Rabbi Natan, 7:1

יושב ומהדר בעולם וכשימצא אורחין מכניסן בתוך ביתו את שאין דרכו לאכול פת חטין האכילהו פת חטין את שאין דרכו לאכול בשר האכילהו בשר ואת שאין דרכו לשותות יין השקהו יין ולא עוד אלא עמד ובנה פלטרין גדולים על הדרכים והניח מאכל ומשקה וכל הבא ונכנס אכל ושחה וברך לשמים לפיכך נעשית לו נחת רוח.

Abraham sat and looked out at the world, and when he would see potential guests, he would go bring them into his house. And if someone was not accustomed to eating wheat bread*, he would feed him wheat bread. And if someone was not accustomed to eating meat, he would feed him meat. And if someone was not accustomed to drinking wine, he would pour him wine. Not only that, but he built large booths out on the roads, where he would leave food and drink, and anyone who came by and entered would eat and drink and bless the heavens, and he would feel content.

**Wheat bread, meat and wine were more expensive and fancier foods.
This text tells us that Abraham gave his guests the nicest possible food.*

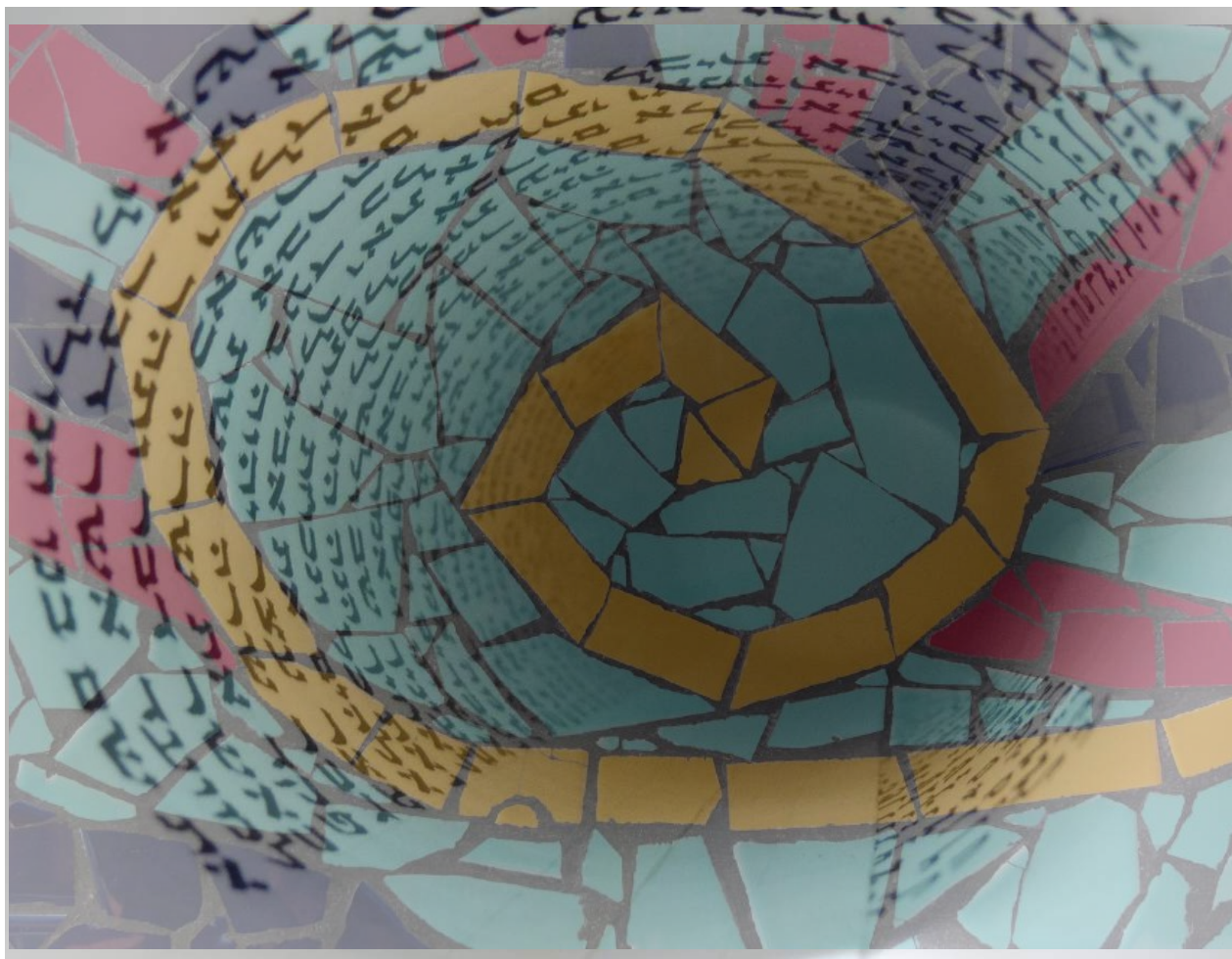
Ushpizim: Who are they?

| | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Sarah | Chesed Lovingkindness | טוֹב Tov | Abraham |
| Rachel | Gevurah Strength | הַגְּבוּרָה Hagvurah | Isaac |
| Rebecca | Tiferet Splendor | תְּהִלָּה Tehillah | Jacob |
| Leah | Netzach Glory | נֶצְחָה Netzach | Joseph |
| Miriam | Hod Holiness | תִּה Tih | Moses |
| Abigail | Yesod Eternity | יְסוּד Yesod | Aaron |
| Esther | Malchut Sovereignty | מַלְכוּת Malchut | David |

Another version of the Ushpizot (women):

Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, Esther.

SIMKHAT TORAH



In this lesson students will explore ancient mosaics from the land of Israel that depict stories from the Tanakh. They will create their own mosaics to celebrate Simkhat Torah.

Mosaics of Torah

Grade(s): K-12th

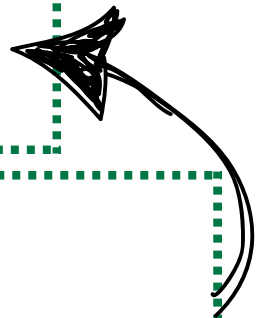
Number of participants: any

Time needed: 60-75 min



Goal(s):

Students will appreciate how the Tanakh has inspired Jewish art for centuries and find their own inspiration for creative expression.



Objectives:

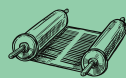
Students will:

- Review and/or learn well known Torah stories.
- Explore ancient Jewish art from the land of Israel.
- Create mosaics/collages, connecting them with their ancient artistic counterparts

Elements of Learning



Visual Art



Jewish Text



Journaling



Jewish Values

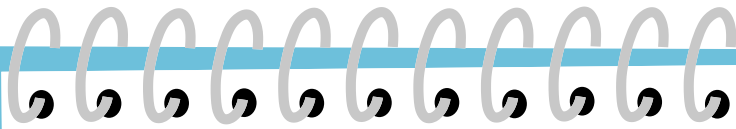


Reflection

A Reconstructionist Lens

In this unit students will explore ancient Jewish culture through religious art and understand how Jewish texts have inspired Jewish art for centuries. Understanding the connection between sacred text and creative expression will shape students appreciation for Judaism as a civilization, while giving them the opportunity to engage with Jewish text in the same way as our ancestors, inspiring their own creative pieces.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Copies of the “Out of Order Torah” pages
- Physical or digital copies of the Mosaics shown in the Appendix
- Mosaic materials: boards, tiles, tile adhesive, grout, gloves
- Collage materials: cardstock/large paper, scissors, glue sticks, small paper scraps

Set Up Suggestions

This lesson is best done with flat working surfaces for students to do the various activities.

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.

→ **Mosaic**

A picture created with small colorful objects, usually tiles or stones.

→ **Collage**

Visual art created with scraps of paper, magazine clippings, pictures, fabric or small objects.

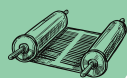


My Notes

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



Out of Order Torah (5-10min.)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Out of Order Torah, by grade (in the Appendix)

Set Up:

Divide students into groups and give each group a copy of the Out of Order Torah. Cut up the page so they can move the words/images around.

Directions:

Youngest students or those who aren't reading:

- Match the characters and their settings, see if you can guess the story.

Younger students who are reading:

- Match the characters to their stories. What do you remember about each story?
- Bonus: What book of the Torah has this story?

Older students who are reading:

- Match the story to the book of the Torah where it happens.



My Notes

A Taste of Torah



Ancient Jewish Art (10 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Digital or printed copies of the Torah mosaics

Directions

Tell students that we are going to look at some ancient depictions of biblical stories. These “visual texts” tell us both about the stories themselves and about the style and culture of the communities they come from.

The mosaics shown here are all from the Galilee region of Israel. They were created in the 5-6th centuries, during the Byzantine period. The first discovery was in the 1930s and archeologists have continued uncovering other mosaics in ancient synagogues since then.

Prompts for students:

- What do you see? (People, animals, objects)
- What story do you think this is? Why do you think that?
- Why do you think they chose this story to create a mosaic?
- If you were designing the synagogue and choosing stories to illustrate, what stories would you choose and why? Which stories feel most important?

****Note to teachers:**

If your synagogue/school has mosaics, stain glass windows, Biblical art, or other relevant pieces accessible to your students, this is a great opportunity to incorporate those into the lesson as well.

Explanations of the Mosaics:

Mosaic 1: Noah’s Ark

Huqoq Synagogue, 5th century. The Ark is in the upper right corner, the animals are gathering in pairs to board the Ark before the flood. (Image source: UNC Chapel Hill)

Mosaic 2: Tower of Babel

Huqoq Synagogue, 5th century. On the left we ancient building and stone carving techniques. On the right we see the people building the Tower of Babel. People have different styles of clothing and skin color, creating the image of a multicultural society. (Image source: nationalgeographic.org)

A Taste of Torah



Ancient Torah Art (10 minutes)

Explanations of the Mosaics (cont.)

Mosaic 3: Binding of Isaac

Tzipori Synagogue, 5th or 6th century CE. This mosaic shows Abraham's two servants waiting with the donkey while Abraham and Isaac go up Mt Moriah. Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic letters are used to tell the story. The original mosaic showed Abraham and Isaac on the right side, but that section is damaged. (Image source: pbs.org)

Mosaic 4: Binding of Isaac

Bet Alfa Synagogue, 6th century CE. We see (left to right) the two servants and the donkey, the ram, Abraham, Isaac and the altar. The hand of God reaches down from the center (this is an image often used in ancient Jewish art). Abraham and Isaac's names appear in the mosaic next to them, the hand of God says "al tishlach", "Do not raise your hand against the boy" (Gen 22:12). Next to the ram are the words, "ve'hinei ayil", "Behold, a ram" (Gen. 22:13). (Image source: wikipedia.com)

Mosaic 5: Egyptians drowning in the Sea

Huqoq Synagogue, 5th century. Much of this panel has been destroyed, but we can see the Egyptian soldiers who have chased the Israelites into the Red Sea are being swallowed by the waves and by the fish in the sea. (Image source: nationalgeographic.org)

Mosaic 6: Spies bring back produce from Canaan

Huqoq Synagogue, 5th century. Some of this panel is missing, but we can see two of the Twelve Spies carrying a giant cluster of grapes on a poll between them, according to the Biblical story. The words at the top say "vamot bishnayim" "on a staff by two of them" (Num. 13:23) (Image source: nationalgeographic.org)

Mosaic 7: Jonah and the Whale

Huqoq Synagogue, 5th century. This mosaic shows the sailors who have just cast Jonah off the boat. Jonah's legs are seen being swallowed by a giant fish. The multiple layers of this giant fish could show it in motion, or could imply multiple fish. This mosaic is surprisingly details, showing multiple species of fish and other marine life. (Image source: nationalgeographic.org)

Let's Get Creative



Torah Mosaics (30-40 min.)

Notes for teachers:

- You can do this activity with mosaic tiles, or create collages with paper and other textiles.
- This is a great opportunity to invite a community member who does tile work, mosaics or collage to guest teach your class.

Materials Needed:

- Mosaic supplies; tiles, boards, cement, etc. OR,
- Collage materials: paper scraps, glue, etc.

Directions

You can have students work individually, in pairs or small groups. Students can either choose their Torah story OR you can assign them to story. Your class could focus on one particular book of the Torah or try to choose a variety of stories from each book.

Invite students to use their art supplies to create their Torah story. Remind students they can be literal or abstract in their work. Here's some ideas to ask them to consider:

- What story do you want to create and why?
- Do you want to focus on one moment of the story or create a mural that shows multiple connected moments/stories?
- How big do you want your piece to be? How does the size, shape and colors you use help tell the story?
- How else can you tell this story? How might those alternative ideas help inform your design?
- What elements did you see in the examples we looked at that you might want to include in your design?



Closing Reflection



Putting it Together (10min.)

Materials needed:

- Torah artwork from the previous activity

Directions

Invite students to put their artwork in chronological Torah order to the best of their ability (you should gauge when your students need some hints or help). They can share their work with the rest of the group. Then, ask them reflect on the following questions (with a partner or the whole group, depending on group size and time).

Questions for reflection:

- Share one thing you learned today?
- What was fun and what was challenging about this style of creating art (mosaic or collage)?
- What other stories from the Torah would you like to illustrate this way if you had time to do another?

Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage by participating in activities, asking/answering questions?
- How did students respond to the material? Curious? Thoughtful? Uninterested?
- Were students familiar with the Torah stories in the opening activity, and able to share their knowledge with each other? If not, what could help them gain confidence?
- Did students demonstrate knowledge at the end of the lesson they didn't have when you began?
- How did students show kavod (respect) to one another?
- Did students engage in the mosaic or collage creation aspect of this lesson? If they struggled expressing their ideas artistically, what could be done to help them gain confidence in their creativity?

Appendix

Below are some texts that you will need for the activities in this lesson.

Out of Order Torah Pictures

- Noah's Ark
- Moses and Exodus
- Creation / Adam and Eve
- Tower of Babel

Out of Order Torah

- For younger readers
- For older readers

Mosaics

- Noah's Ark
- Tower of Babel
- Binding of Isaac
- Binding of Isaac #2
- Egyptians in the Red Sea
- The 12 Spies
- Jonah and the Whale

Cut up these pictures and ask students to match the stories together



Cut up these pictures and ask students to match the stories together

Noah

(The animals in the ark, the rainbow)



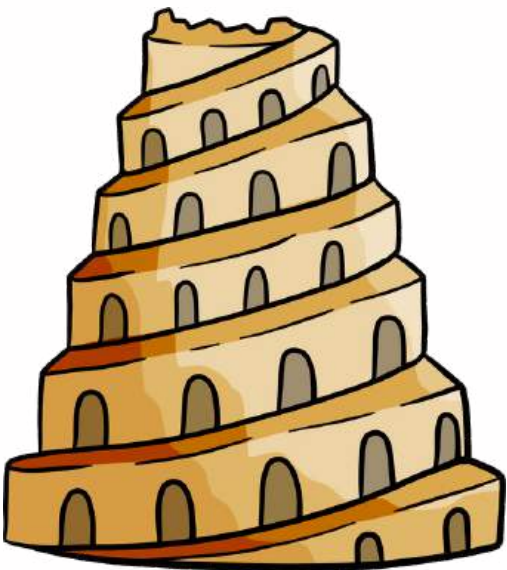
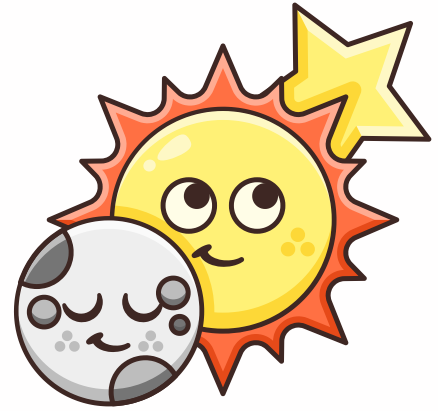
Answer key

Moses

(Burning Bush, Splitting the Sea, the 10 Commandments)



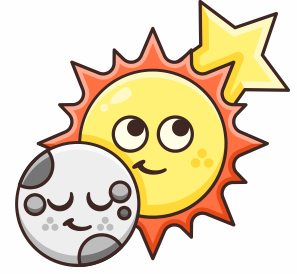
Cut up these pictures and ask students to match the stories together



Cut up these pictures and ask students to match the stories together

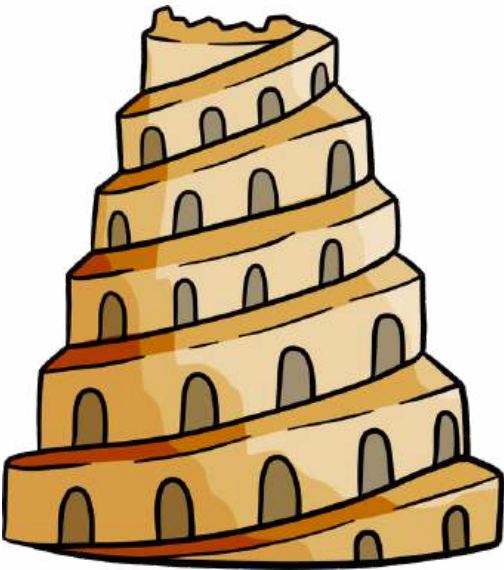


Creation



Answer Key

Tower of Babel



**Cut out these characters and stories and
ask students to match them**
(This version is for younger readers)

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Adam and Eve | First humans created |
| Noah and his family | A flood, and ark, a rainbow |
| Abraham and Sarah | They want a child for many years and have an baby when they are old |
| Isaac | His father almost sacrifices him to God |
| Jacob | He steals his brother's blessing |
| Rachel and Leah | Sisters who marry the same man; they are the mothers of the 12 Tribes |
| Joseph | Has a coat of many colors and can interpret dreams |
| Moses | Asked by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt |
| Miriam | Watches over her baby brother when he is placed in the Nile River |
| Aaron | Is the first High Priest |
| Joshua | Leads the Israelites after Moses' death |

**Cut out these stories and books of the
Torah. Ask students to match them**
(This version is for older readers)

The world is created

Aaron's sons die

A flood, and ark, a rainbow

The Israelites build and worship a golden calf

Abraham almost sacrifices his son to God

Moses sends 12 Spies to scout out the land of Canaan

Rebecca travels to a new land to meet her future husband

Moses dies and God buries him

Jacob steals his brother's blessing and runs away from home

**Breisheet
(Genesis)**

Yocheved hides her baby son in a basket

**Shemot
(Exodus)**

God speaks to Moses from a burning bush and asks him to lead the Israelites

**Vayikra
(Leviticus)**

The Red Sea parts

**Bamidbar
(Numbers)**

God gives Israel the Ten Commandments

**Dvarim
(Deuteronomy)**

**Cut out these stories and books of the
Torah. Ask students to match them**
(This version is for older readers)

The world is created (Genesis)

A flood, and ark, a rainbow (Genesis)

Abraham almost sacrifices his son to God (Genesis)

Rebecca travels to a new land to meet her future husband (Genesis)

Jacob steals his brother's blessing and runs away from home (Genesis)

Yocheved hides her baby son in a basket (Exodus)

God speaks to Moses from a burning bush and asks him to lead the
Israelites (Exodus)

The Red Sea parts (Exodus)

God gives Israel the Ten Commandments (Exodus)

Aaron's sons die (Leviticus)

The Israelites build and worship a golden calf (Exodus)

Moses sends 12 Spies to scout out the land of Canaan (Numbers)

Moses dies and God buries him (Deuteronomy)

Mosaic 1



Mosaic 2



Mosaic 3



Mosaic 4



Mosaic 5



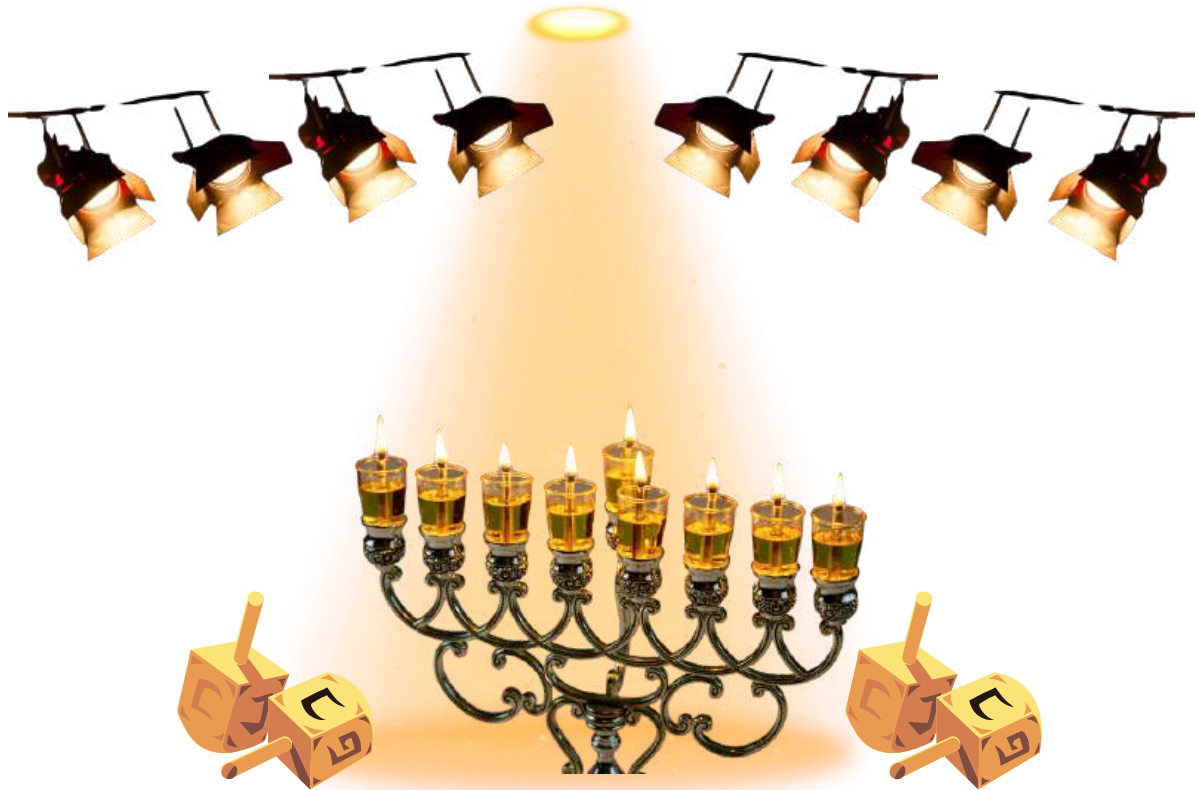
Mosaic 6



Mosaic 7



HANUKKAH



Lights! Places! Action!

Students will perform the Hanukkah story, using improv and drama to explore the idea of miracles, conflict and being true to ourselves.

Hanukkah Dramakah

Grade(s): K-12th

Number of participants: any

Time needed: 60-75 min



Goal(s):

Students will understand the two Hanukkah narratives and the values associated with each.

Objectives:

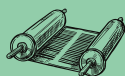
Students will:

- Use improvisation to discover how to use movement to tell a story.
- Learn/Review the Hanukkah story, understanding the tension between the military victory and miracle of the oil.
- Create and perform their own version of the Hanukkah story.

Elements of Learning



Performance Art



Jewish Text

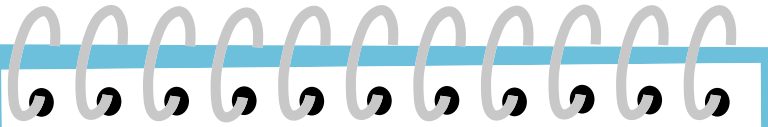
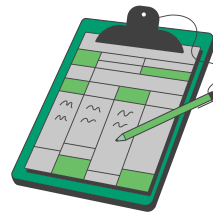


Reflection

A Reconstructionist Lens

There are two miracles in the Hanukkah story: a military victory and the miracle of the oil lasting eight days. In this unit students will explore the tension between human victory and divine miracles, they will question the meaning of miracles if one does not believe in a God who intervenes in day to day life. They will bring the story to life, choosing the aspects of the holiday that feel most relevant and personally meaningful.

SETTING UP




Materials

- Hanukkah book (check your synagogue library)
- Copies of Appendix texts
- Props and costumes

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to move around, to work in small groups, and to perform.



My Notes

| Hebrew Wordbank | אוֹצֵר מְלִים בְּעֵבְרִית | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|----------|
| Dedication | חֲנֻכָּה | Hanukkah |
| Miracle | נִס | Neis |

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.

→ Miracle of the Oil

According to the story, after the Jews reclaimed the Temple they wanted to relight the menorah but only had enough oil for one day, which miraculously lasted for eight days until they could make more.



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



Improv Warmups 5-10min.)

Materials Needed:

- Random objects for improv games

Set Up:

For improv games, students will need space to move around.

Directions:

In this lesson we will explore the Hanukkah story through drama and performance. In order to get warmed up, we start with some improv games. Here's a list of some games to choose from, or you can introduce your own. The goal is for students to get their bodies, minds and creative senses activated and engaged.

Freeze Dance

Ask everyone to spread out in an open space so they can move. Turn on some music and start dancing! When the music stops, everyone freeze. See how quickly everyone can freeze and who is in the silliest position. Turn the music back on and do it again!

Pickup and Twist

Ask everyone to bring a random object and put it in the middle of the circle. Take turns picking up an object and using it for something different than its intended purpose. (Example: pick up a pencil and use it as a microphone.)

Fruits and Veggies

Invite students to take turns being “the leader”. The Leader calls out the name of a fruit or vegetable and the participants all make that shape with their bodies. Bonus round: use the Hebrew names of the foods.

Improv Warmups (cont.)

Counting Game

Have everyone gather together and close their eyes. The goal is to count to 10 without speaking over each other. Each person says a number in order (1, 2, 3, etc.) If two people say a number at the same time, start over and try again. Bonus round: try counting in Hebrew OR use the alef-bet.

One Word Story

Everyone gathers in a circle. The goal is to tell a story with each person only saying one word at a time. Go in order around the circle, each person adding another word to the story. See how creative and silly it can get!

What are You Doing?

Everyone gathers in a circle. One person starts miming an action and the person next to them asks, “What are you doing?” The first person says a different action than what they are doing, and the second person starts doing that action. The first person’s turn ends and the third person asks the second person, “What are you doing?” The second person says a different action than what they are doing, their turn ends, and the third person begins the action the second person said. Continue until everyone has gotten a turn.

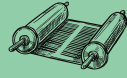
Hebrew Letter Shapes

Have students take turn being “the leader.” The Leader calls out a Hebrew letter name and students make the shape of the letter with their bodies. Students can play individually or in pairs/groups.



My Notes

A Taste of Torah



The Hanukkah Story (10 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Hanukkah storybook (younger grades)
- Copies of Hanukkah Texts (older grades)

Directions

Start by asking students what they already know about Hanukkah. It does not need to be in order, and some students might need hints or prompts to jog their memories. Once students have shared what they know about Hanukkah, let's look at the story a little closer.

For younger students, you may want to read a Hanukkah storybook. Check out your synagogue's library to find a good one for your class, or, you could watch a short video to learn the Hanukkah story.

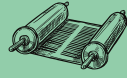
After reading the story or watching a video, here are some questions to prompt discussion:

- Please share 1 part of the story you remember from the book/video.
- What are the miracles of Hanukkah? Do you think one was more important than the other, why?
- Do you have family or friends who celebrate different holidays than you? Have you ever shared your holidays with a family or friend? Can you tell us about it?
- What winter holidays does your family celebrate? What's the best part?
- Why do you think it's important to respect each others' holidays?



My Notes

A Taste of Torah



The Hanukkah Story (cont.)

Directions (cont.)

For middle grade and high school students, take a look at the Hanukkah Texts in the Appendix. These texts describe the different major aspects of the holiday -- the military victory and the miracle of the oil. You could split students into pairs or small groups, or look at the texts all together

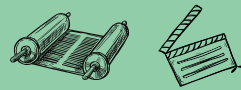
. After reading the texts, here are some questions to prompt discussion:

- Please share 1 part of the story you remember from the book/video.
- What are the miracles of Hanukkah? Do you think one was more important than the other, why?
- Why do you think the Talmud stressed the miracle of the oil and not the military victory? Do you agree or disagree with that choice, why?
- Can you think of a time you shared a Jewish holiday with someone new? What was most exciting and most challenging?
- What winter holidays does your family celebrate? What's the best part?



My Notes

Let's Get Creative



Dramatized Hanukkah (30-45min)

Materials Needed

- Costumes, props, anything else your students need for their scenes.

Directions

As a full class, choose the main sections of the Hanukkah story. Divide students into pairs or groups and have them choose which sections of the story they will tell.

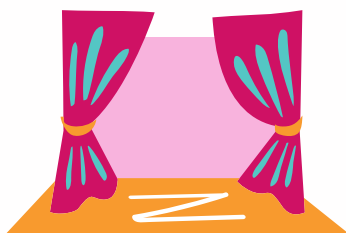
Some ways to encourage creativity:

- Ask each group to pick a random setting or rule for their section, such as: in outer space, in the Old West, Shakespeare style, mimed with no words, no speaking only singing, the speaking character has to breakdance, etc.
- Each group pick a keyword from the story they cannot say, adding comedy as they have to speak around that word (like the game Taboo).
- Tell the story with puppets, or use classroom objects as puppets.
- Everyone has to keep in constant motion during their scene, or, everyone has to sit perfectly still.
- Everyone moves backwards or says their lines backwards.
- Students pick a social media trend to mimic (such as, “Great Ready with Me to light the menorah”).
- Anything else that will help students get creative and have fun.

Depending on your resources, you may have access to costumes or props, or, need to get creative. This is a great chance to encourage students to use their imaginations.

You might ask them:

- What are the most important props for your scene and how could you create them with everyday objects?
- What kinds of costumes pieces will help tell us who each character is?
- If you're setting your story somewhere else (outer space, etc.) how might you show the audience where you are through costumes and props?
- What can you leave to the audience's imagination?



Closing Reflection



Showtime! (15-20min.)

Materials needed:

- Props, costumes, anything else students need to perform.

Directions

Invite students to perform their scenes for the whole class. After the performance, here are some questions for students to consider:

Questions for reflection:

- What's one thing you learned today about Hanukkah?
- Which character(s) do you feel like the most?
- After we read the Hanukkah story we thought about the difference between the military victory and the miracle of the oil. Now that you've performed the story, do you think one of these is more important? Why? Do you think we should focus more on one or the other? Why?

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 take healthy risks by getting silly and creative together?
- How did students show kavod (respect) to one another? Were they able to balance performing and making space for everyone in the group?
- Did students engage with the performance aspect of the lesson? If they struggled with performing, what happened? How could they gain more confidence for performing or expressing themselves?

Appendix

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

What is Hanukkah? (from the Talmud)

Al Hanisim (from the Siddur)

Text 1: Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b

מאי חנוכה? דתנו רבנן: בב"ה בכסליו יומי דחנוכה תמניא אינון דלא למספד בהון ודלא להתענות בהון. שפשנכנסו יונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל. וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום, בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד. נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים. לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהליל והודאָה.

What is Hanukkah, and why are lights kindled on Hanukkah?

On the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the days of Hanukkah are eight. One may not mourn on them and one may not fast on them. Why not?

When the Greeks entered the Temple they destroyed all the oil in the Temple. When the Hasmoneans (Maccabees) defeated them and were victorious over them, they search and found only one bottle of oil that had the seal of the High Priest and was not destroyed. But there was only enough oil to light the menorah for one day. A miracle occurred and they lit the menorah from that oil for eight days.

The next year the Sages declared those days a holiday, with the prayers of Hallel and thanksgiving.

Some notes about this text:

- *The Talmud was edited in the 5th century CE. It records conversations and arguments as the rabbis try to figure out how to best understand the Torah and Jewish law. The Talmud often speaks in question and answer format, and sometimes goes on long tangents. Did you know, before it was written down, the whole Talmud was memorized?*
- *The Maccabees were also called the Hasmoneans, and they became the new kings and priests of Israel after they defeated the Greeks.*
- *The priests could only use pure oil to light the menorah, and they knew if a bottle was pure if it had the High Priest's seal on it. Think of it like the plastic seal on a new bottle of juice, it lets you know that it's sealed and safe.*
- *According to the legend, it would take eight days to make more pure oil, and the menorah was supposed to be lit everyday. Waiting to light it until they had new oil would have felt disrespectful to God.*

Text 2: Al Hanisim (from the Siddur)

עַל הַנִּסִּים וְעַל הַפְּרָקוֹן וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל הַמְּלַחְמוֹת שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ
בְּיָמֵינוּ הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה: בְּיָמֵי מַתְתָּיָהוּ בֶן יוֹחָנָן כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל חֲשֹׁמוֹנָאִי וּבְנָיו כְּשֶׁעָמְדָה מַלְכוּת
יָוֵן הַרְשָׁעָה עַל־עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַשְׁפִּיחַם תּוֹרַתְךָ וּלְהַעֲבִירָם מִחֻקֵּי רְצוֹנְךָ, וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ
הַרְבִּים עָמַדְתָּ לָהֶם בְּעַת צָרָתָם רַבָּתָּ אֶת־רִיבָם וְדָנְתָּ אֶת־דֵּינָם מִסַּרְתָּ גְבוּרִים בְּיַד חַלְשִׁים
וְרַבִּים בְּיַד מְעַטִּים וּרְשָׁעִים בְּיַד צְדִיקִים וְזָדִים בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תּוֹרַתְךָ. וְלָךְ עָשִׂיתָ שֵׁם גָּדוֹל
וְקָדוֹשׁ בְּעוֹלָמְךָ וּלְעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְדוֹלָה וּפְרָקוֹן כֹּהֵיּוֹם הַזֶּה. וְאַחֲרֵיכֵן בָּאוּ
בְּנֵיךָ לְדַבֵּר בֵּיתְךָ וּפְנּוּ אֶת־הַיְכָלְךָ וְטִהְרוּ אֶת־מִקְדָּשְׁךָ וְהִדְלִיקוּ נְרוֹת בְּחִצְרוֹת קִדְשְׁךָ
וְקָבְעוּ שְׁמוֹנֶת יָמֵי חֲנֻכָּה אֵלֶיךָ לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל:

For the miracles, for the redemption, for heroic acts, for saving deeds, for consolations, all of which you have done for our ancestors at this time of year in days gone by. As in the days of Mattathias, son of Yohanan, the Hasmonean High priest, and Mattathias' sons, a wicked Greek government arose against your people Israel, forcing them to shun your Torah and to forget the laws you gave them. And you, in your abundant mercy, stood up for Israel in their hour of distress. you championed them and got justice for them. You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the wicked into the hands of the just, and the vicious to the hands of those who study Torah. You made known your name that day, and make it holy in your world. And you delivered your people Israel as in our own time. Afterward, you children came into your Temple's sacred rooms. They cleared your sanctuary, purified your holy place, kindled lights inside your holy courtyards, and established these eight days of Hanukkah, for giving thanks and praise to your great name.

(Adapted from Siddur Kol Haneshama)

Some notes about this text:

- This text comes from the siddur and was likely written around 875 CE. It is added to the Amidah and Birkat Hamazon (Blessing after Meals) during Chanukah.

TU BISHVAT



One modern theme of Tu Bishvat is taking care of the environment and preserving the natural world. In this unit students will use recycled objects to illustrate Jewish values of caring for the earth.

Upcycling Art

Grade(s): K-12th

Number of participants: any

Time needed: 60-80 min



Goal(s):

Students will understand that caring for and preserving the earth is a Jewish value.

Objectives:

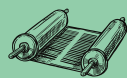
Students will:

- Investigate their community's sustainability practices.
- Explore Jewish texts about environmentalism.
- Create upcycled art through found/recycled objects.

Elements of Learning



Visual Art



Torah



Reflection



Physical Activity

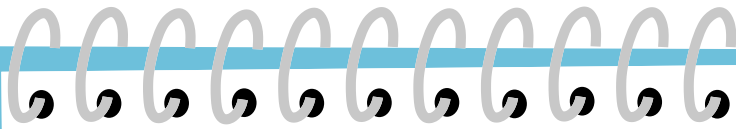
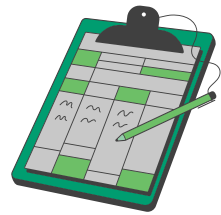


Jewish Values

A Reconstructionist Lens

On Tu Bishvat we engage with the natural world: through planting gardens, celebrating the trees, or centering environmentalism. As Reconstructionists, we bring together the ancient holiday with the modern need to address climate change and preserving the earth. In this unit, we celebrate Tu Bishvat by inviting students to look closely at their own community and explore how it could become more sustainable.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Copies of the Scavenger Hunt
- Copies of Jewish texts from Appendix
- Recycling (paper, cans, bottles, etc.)

Set Up Suggestions

Students will explore their synagogue/ or school for the opening activity.

Students should either bring or find (clean) recycled objects to use for their art projects.

My Notes



Hebrew Wordbank

אוצר מלים בעברית

15th of Shevat

טו בשבט

Tu Bishvat

Do not destroy

בל תשחית

Baal Tashchit

Guarding the earth

שומר אדמה

Shomer
adamah

Feel free to add your own!



SETTING UP



Key Words



Tu Bishvat

The 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat, known as the New Year for the Trees. In modern times it has become a kind of Jewish Earth Day, focused on environmentalism.



Baal Tashchit

“Do not destroy”, a commandment from the Torah, reminding us not to destroy the natural world.



Shomer Adamah

Protecting/guarding the earth



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.



Upcycling

Repurposing an old or discarded object for something new.



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

Sustainability Scavenger Hunt (15-20min.)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the Sustainability Scavenger Hunt from the Appendix
- Pencils/pens

Directions:

In pairs, students should explore your space (classroom, building, synagogue, etc.) and find as many things as possible for the scavenger hunt. They should write down the examples they find to share with the group.

As a group, share back the examples they found.

Introduce the idea “sustainability”.

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. Sustainability asks us to think creatively how to reuse things or use different things so we create less garbage; use reusable or recycled objects; and think about the impact we have on the planet and our communities.

Invite students to think about how the things they found in the scavenger hunt are examples of sustainability.

Ask students to consider why sustainability is a Jewish value?



My Notes

Let's Get Creative + Torah



Upcycling Art (30-45min)

Materials Needed

- Copies of the Tu Bishvat texts
- Clean recycling materials

Directions

Read through the texts from the Appendix together. Ask students to reflect on the texts. Here's some prompts to get conversation started:

- What does this text say about protecting the earth? Why is this important?
- Can you think of modern examples of the problems mentioned in these texts?

Divide students into pairs or small groups and ask each pair/group to choose one of the texts to inspire the piece of art they are about to make.

Explain what “found objects” are.

Found objects: An object—often utilitarian, manufactured, or naturally occurring—that was not originally designed for an artistic purpose, but has been repurposed in an artistic context. (Source: Museum of Modern Art, <https://www.moma.org>)

Recycled art (sometimes called “upcycling art”), allows us to reuse discarded items to create beautiful pieces of art. For examples, see the Appendix.

Using the recycling items your class collected, invite students to create a piece of art that teaches the text they choose. Challenge students to only use the recycled items (and not supplement with additional art supplies), this will encourage creative thinking about to build, attach, and illustrate their ideas.

Some prompts to help students get started (if needed):

- What does your text say about taking care of the earth?
- What kinds of shapes, colors, and materials do you want to use?
- How can you share the message of your text through these objects?

If possible, display students' art at a synagogue Tu Bishvat event or in the main area of the school to encourage creative thinking about sustainability in the wider community.

Closing Reflection



Sharing Our Work (15-20min.)

Materials needed:

- None.

Directions

Invite students to look more closely at each other's creations and think about:

- What objects did your classmates use? Which objects did they use most creatively?
- What text did they choose and how does their artwork help you think about that text in a new way?
- What's something you can learn by looking at your classmates' art?

As a whole class, invite students to reflect on the entire experience. They could do this in a pair-share, by writing, or just thinking about the questions.

Questions for reflection:

- What's one thing you learned today about taking care of the earth?
- Can you remember one example of sustainability you found on the scavenger hunt?
- Can you think of another way we can be sustainable at home? At school? In our class community and/or the synagogue?
- What's one thing you can do this week to help take care of the earth?

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 take healthy risks by getting silly and creative together?
- How did students show kavod (respect) to one another? Were they able to balance performing and making space for everyone in the group?
- Did students engage with the performance aspect of the lesson? If they struggled with performing, what happened? How could they gain more confidence for performing or expressing themselves?

Appendix

Below are some resources that you will need for this lesson:

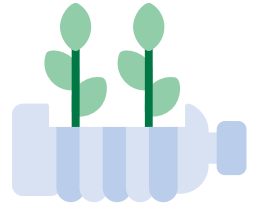
Sustainability Scavenger Hunt

Tu Bishvat Texts

Recycled Art examples



Scavenger Hunt



See how many you can find!

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Water refill station</p>  | <p>Recycling</p>  | <p>Compost</p>  |
| <p>Saving electricity</p>  | <p>FREE SPACE</p>  | <p>Repurposing</p>  |
| <p>Reuseable options</p>  | <p>Donation collection</p>  | <p>Plants</p>  |



Text 1: Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings 6:10

ולא האילנות בלבד, אלא כל המשבר כלים, וקורע בגדים, והורס בניין,
וסותם מעיין, ומאבד מאכלות דרך השחתה--עובר ב"לא תשחית"

Not only one who cuts down a fruit tree, but anyone who destroys household goods, tears clothing, demolishes a building stops up a spring, or ruins food deliberately, violates the prohibition of Bal Tashchit, 'do not destroy.'

Text 2: Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 67b

...אמר רב זוטרא האי מאן דמיכסי שרגא דמשחא ומגלי נפטא קעבר משום
בל תשחית...

One who covers an oil lamp [causing the flame to burn inefficiently] or uncovers a kerosene lamp [allowing the fuel to evaporate faster] violates the prohibition of bal tashchit.

Text 3: Avot d'Rabbi Natan 31b

אם היטה נטיעה בתוך ידך ויאמרו לך "הרי לך המשיח", בוא ונטע את הנטיעה
ואחר כך צא והקבילו

Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai used to say: If you have a sapling in your hand and are planting it, and someone should say to you that the Messiah has come, stay and complete the planting, and only then go to greet the Messiah.

Text 4: Pirkei Avot 5:10

ארבע מדות באדם. האומר שלי שלי ושלקה שלקה, זו מדה בינונית. ויש אומרים, זו
מדת סדום. שלי שלקה ושלקה שלי, עם הארץ. שלי שלקה ושלקה שלקה, חסיד. שלי שלי
ושלקה שלי, רשע:

There are four character types among people: One who says "My property is mine and yours is yours" is an average character type, but some say the characteristic of Sodom. One who says, "mine is yours and yours is mine" is an unlearned person. One who says, "Mine is yours and yours is yours" is pious. One who says "Yours is mine and mine is mine" is wicked.

Recycled Art Examples



Image source: www.paperseed.org



Image source: www.diyjoy.com



Image source: [instagram.com/tctrashart](https://www.instagram.com/tctrashart)



Image source: www.acua.com

PURIM



Participants will explore the Purim story through artwork. They will identify themes of Purim and create their own collaborative art piece that brings their own stories to life.

Purim Paintings

Grade(s): K-12th

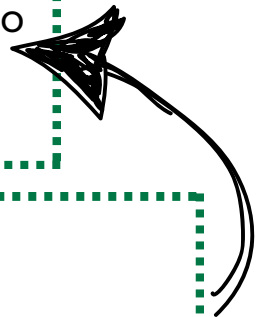
Number of participants: Any

Time needed: 60 minutes (or more)



Goal(s):

Students will understand the themes of Purim (bravery, being true to yourself, speaking up for what you believe in), learning how to use visual art to express big ideas.



Objectives:

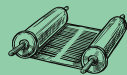
Students will

- know the main events of the Purim story.
- learn how to find themes and feelings in art.
- share their own stories through art.

Elements of Learning



Visual Art



Torah/ Jewish Text



Journaling



Performance Art



Jewish Values



Reflection

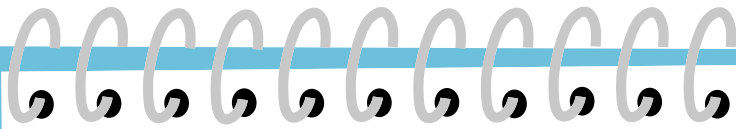


Music

A Reconstructionist Lens

This unit centers on Purim, exploring themes of the story and how they show up in our own lives. By looking at artwork, students will have a chance to consider the story through various points of view, perhaps finding something new they had not seen before. By creating art in the final activity, students will bring the importance of Purim's themes into their own lives, and find that these themes are very much alive in our world and their own lives.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Digital or physical copies of artwork in the Appendix
- Copies of the Purim texts
- Art supplies (clay, markers, paint, etc)
- Purim storybook (check your synagogue library)

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to look at the artwork (either printed out or on a projector) and talk to their peers.

Students will also need space to create collaborative artwork together (tables, art supplies, etc).

My Notes



Hebrew Wordbank

אוצר מלים בעברית

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Purim, also "lots" | פּוּרִים | Purim |
| Courage | אֹמֵץ לֵב | Ometz lev |
| Mask | מַסְכָּה | Maseikha |

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.

➔ **Megillah**

A scroll, usually referring to Megilat Esther, the story of Esther saving the Jews of Persia.

➔ **Theme**

A recurring or central idea in a story, sometimes shown literally and sometimes shown metaphorically.



My Notes

A note to get started ...

This lesson plan could be done in a one hour session, or split into two sessions, giving more time for the creative activity at the end ("Let's Get Creative, part 2).

You could run this program with any age group. There are suggestions to adjust based on age for each activity.

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 hungry.

Opening Activity

Out of Order Megillah (15 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Out of Order Megillah (if using)
- Purim Storybook (if using)
- Post-Its and pens (if using)
- Whiteboard (if using)

Set Up

Depending on how you want to review the Megillah story, you will need some combination of the materials above and a place for students to work together in small groups.

Directions:

We will start by reviewing the Purim story. Here are a few suggested methods of review; choose the one that best fits your students' ages and previous knowledge:

- Read a Purim storybook from your library.
- Have students retell as much of the Purim story that they remember.
- Have students draw key moments they remember from the story.
- Give the students a few post-it notes and have them write moments they remember from the story on them. Have them put their post-its on the wall or floor and try to put the story in order.
- Cut up the Appendix page “Out of Order Megillah” and have the students try to put the story back in order.



My Notes

Exploring the Story

Looking at the Megillah (5-15 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the verses from Esther (in the Appendix)

Directions:

Next we will explore two short scenes from the Purim story. You may choose to use one or both texts, depending on your students.

With younger students, you may choose to either skip this step, or go back to the Purim storybook version you read before, as that may be more developmentally appropriate than the original texts. (Remember: you know your students best!)

You may choose to look at these texts as a whole group, in pairs, or small groups.

Both texts demonstrate bravery, standing up for what you believe in, and believing in yourself. Each text has Hebrew, English, and discussion questions for students. Feel free to add your own questions as well.

Texts:

- Mordechai asks Esther to ask the king not to kill the Jews. Esther is hesitant at first, but Mordechai convinces her and she agrees. (Esther 4:13-16).
- Esther tells the king about the plot to kill the Jews and names Haman as the villain. (Esther 7:2-6).

 *My Notes*

Esther 4:13-16

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶרְדֵּכַי לְהָשִׁיב אֶל־אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־תְּדַמֶּי בְּנַפְשְׁךָ לְהַמְלִיט בַּיַּת־הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל־הַיְהוּדִים: כִּי
אִם־הִחַרְשׁ תִּחְרִישִׁי בְּעַת הַזֹּאת רֹחַ וְהִצְלָה יַעֲמֹד לַיהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אַחַר וְאַתָּה וּבֵית־אָבִיךָ
תֵּאבְדוּ וְיָמֵי יוֹדֵעַ אִם־לָעַת כְּזֹאת הִגַּעְתָּ לְמַלְכוּת:
וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהָשִׁיב אֶל־מֶרְדֵּכַי: לָךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת־כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוּשָׁן וְצוּמוּ עָלַי
וְאֶל־תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֶל־תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם גַּם־אֲנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי אֲצוּם בֶּן וּבְכוֹן אָבוֹא
אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־כֹדֶת וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אֲבִדְתִּי אֲבִדְתִּי:

Mordechai sent this message to Esther: “Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king’s palace. On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, while you and your father’s house will end. And who knows, perhaps you have been put in this royal position for a time such as this.”

Then Esther replied to Mordechai: “Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast on my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will observe the same fast. Then I shall go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I am to die, I shall die.”

Discussion Questions

- How do you think Mordechai feels during this scene?
- How do you think Esther feels?
- Why do you think Esther changes her mind?
- How does Mordechai show courage?
- How does Esther show courage?
- Have you ever stood up to a friend or family member about something you believe in? How did it feel?
- Have you ever stood up to a stranger about something you believe in? How did it feel?

Esther 7:2-6

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר גַּם בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי בְּמִשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן מִה־שָּׂאלְתְּךָ אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וְתַנְתִּן לִּי
וַיִּמְהַר־בְּקִשְׁתְּךָ עַד־חֲצֵי הַמַּלְכוּת וְתַעֲשֶׂה:
וַתַּעַן אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וַתֹּאמֶר אִם־מְצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב תַּנְתִּן־לִי נַפְשִׁי
בְּשִׂאלְתִּי וְעַמִּי בְּבִקְשָׁתִּי: כִּי נִמְכַרְנוּ אֲנִי וְעַמִּי לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרוֹג וּלְאַבֵּד וְאֵלֹהֵי לַעֲבָדִים
וְלִשְׁפָחוֹת נִמְכַרְנוּ הַחַרְשָׁתִּי כִּי אֵין הַצָּר שׁוּה בְּנִזְק הַמֶּלֶךְ:
וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה מִי הוּא זֶה וְאִי־זֶה הוּא אֲשֶׁר־מְלֹאוֹ לְבוֹ
לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן:

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִישׁ צָר וְאוֹיֵב הָמֵן הָרַע הַזֶּה וְהָמֵן נִבְעַת מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמַּלְכָּה:

On the second day, the king asked Esther, “What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half the kingdom, it shall be given.”

Queen Esther replied: “If it pleases Your Majesty, let my life and my people’s lives be spared. For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed and killed. Had we only been sold as slaves, I would have kept silent; for the enemy is not worthy of the king’s trouble.”

Thereupon King Ahashverosh demanded of Queen Esther, “Who dares to do this?”

“The enemy,” replied Esther, “is this evil Haman!” And Haman cringed in terror before the king and the queen.

Discussion Questions

- How do you think Esther feels during this scene?
- How does Esther show courage? Do you think it was hard for her to be brave with Haman sitting there?
- What do you think that Esther felt like talking about/exposing what Haman did with Haman in the room?"
- How do you think King Ahashverosh feels in this scene?
- Can you share a time you had to be brave and say something hard?
- What do you do when you need to be brave?

Let's Get Creative! (Part 1)

Purim Themes in Art (10 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Printouts or digital way to view the artwork

Directions:

In the Appendix you will find a collection of artwork that depicts moments from the Purim story. Choose a few based on the ages of your students. You may also choose to use the illustrations from a Purim storybook, or other Purim artwork that you love.

The goal of this activity is for students to engage with the story through artwork, to understand how big ideas or feelings can be depicted without using words.

Knowing that some kids have never analyzed art before, we start with big, open questions to spark their curiosity, and then (depending on age) we can ask more specific questions to focus their attention. (Important: there are no wrong answers!)

Discussion questions:

- What do you see in this picture? What's happening?
- What colors does the artist use? How do the colors make you feel?
- What is the brightest and darkest part of the picture?
- Who did the artist include in this picture? Why?
- Why do you think the artist chose this moment of the story?
- What does the size or placement of the people tell you about the story or the characters?
- If you were to add a thought bubble for any of the characters, what would it say?
- What themes do you see here? (e.g., bravery, hiding, heroism, etc.)



My Notes

Let's Get Creative! (Part 2)

Telling Our Own Stories (30 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Art supplies (any kind will work!)

Set Up

This next activity will give students a chance to use their own creativity to engage the Purim story. They will need to create a collaborative art piece (either visual or movement based).

You could do this activity in 30 minutes OR you could dedicate more time, or a second session to the creative process.

Directions:

Now that students have seen how artwork can show us the themes of a story, we invite them to get creative too. Start by asking students to identify some of the themes of Purim they found in the story (bravery, being true to yourself, speaking up, etc). Students can split up into groups based on which theme they want to work on, or the whole class can work together.

Students should create a collaborative art piece exploring how the theme from Purim shows up in their own lives. They can use any art medium to do this -- painting, collage, dance, music, drawing, sculpture, etc.

Here are some prompts to help students get started:

- What themes (big ideas) did we see in the Purim story?
- Who are the people you look up to OR who are your heroes, and Why?
- When have you felt _____ (brave, courageous, true to yourself, able to speak up for others, proud to be Jewish, etc.)? Tell us about a time you felt proud of yourself.
- What colors or textures or shapes or movement could help you tell your story? (For example, when I'm brave I feel shiny, when I'm brave I feel orange, etc.)
- (Feel free to add your own!)

Let's Get Creative! (Part 2)

Directions (cont.)

Working in groups, have students create an art piece that tells their story, adding in elements of the Purim story if they feel appropriate. Examples:

- A mural showing students' stories of speaking up for something they believe in. Maybe Queen Esther is in the background cheering them on.
- A dance that shows the importance of being true to yourself.
- Using playdoh or clay to share their pride in being Jewish or a time they have felt a need to hide or downplay their Jewish identity.
- A song students write that tells stories about how they helped others, with Mordechai chiming in on the chorus.

If students create something tangible, is there somewhere you can display it in the classroom or synagogue?



Important Reminder:

Some students (and even some teachers) think they are “bad at art.” This is a great time to remind yourself and your students that art is a way of expressing ourselves and gives us a chance to express ideas and feelings in creative ways. None of us are bad at art, because expressing ourselves is a normal, beautiful thing. Some people find different types of art (music, painting, sculpture, drawing, abstract, dancing, drama, etc.) more meaningful than others, but all forms are valuable ways to tell our stories.



My Notes

Closing Reflection



Sharing Our Stories (5-20 minutes)

Directions:

To close this unit we will share what we have learned with each other.

Have students display and share the art pieces they created in the previous activity. If they created a performance piece, have them perform for the group. If they created a visual art piece, ask them to display and share it. Time permitting, students can ask each other questions about each others' work.

Closing reflection questions.

Students could write these down, share with a partner, or share with the whole group:

- What's one thing you learned today? (About Purim, about art, about yourself)
- What's one way you hope to be more brave or true to yourself in the future?
- What is one new thing that I am taking away from today's discussion and program about Purim?
- What's one thing you're looking forward to on Purim?

Evaluating Student Success:

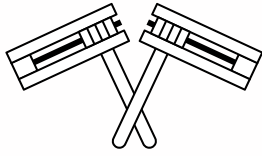
- Did students engage in the activities?
- Did they demonstrate an understanding of the Purim story?
- Did they ask questions or make observations about the artwork?
- Were students able to collaborate in telling their stories through art?
- How might you revisit the themes from Purim in connection with other material to help strengthen their connections and understandings?



Appendix

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

- Out of Order Megillah + Answer Key (Opening Activity)
- Esther excerpts and discussion questions (Exploring the Story)
- Artwork (Let's Get Creative)



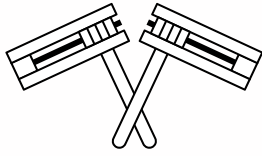
Out of Order Megillah



Oh no! The Megillah is all scrambled and out of order. Can you help fix it?

*Number the events to put them back in order, OR
cut up this piece of paper and put the sentences back in order.*

- ___ Esther asks King Ahashverosh to save the Jews
- ___ Queen Vashti is banished from Persia
- ___ Haman leads Mordechai through the city on a horse
- ___ King Ahashverosh throws a party for the whole kingdom
- ___ The Jews of Persia are saved! They throw a party!
- ___ Esther is chosen as the new Queen
- ___ Haman is angry at Mordechai and decides to kill all the Jews in Persia
- ___ King Ahashverosh asks Haman how to honor someone
- ___ Mordechai tells Esther not to tell anyone she is Jewish
- ___ Esther invites the King and Haman to dinner
- ___ Mordechai won't bow down to Haman
- ___ Mordechai asks Esther to ask the King not to kill the Jews
- ___ Mordechai stops a plot to kill King Ahashverosh



Out of Order Megillah



Oh no! The Megillah is all scrambled and out of order. Can you help fix it?

*Number the events to put them back in order, OR
cut up this piece of paper and put the sentences back in order.*

- 12 Esther asks King Ahashverosh to save the Jews
- 2 Queen Vashti is banished from Persia
- 11 Haman leads Mordechai through the city on a horse
- 1 King Ahashverosh throws a party for the whole kingdom
- 13 The Jews of Persia are saved! They throw a party!
- 3 Esther is chosen as the new Queen
- 7 Haman is angry at Mordechai and decides to kill all the Jews in Persia
- 10 King Ahashverosh asks Haman how to honor someone
- 4 Mordechai tells Esther not to tell anyone she is Jewish
- 9 Esther invites the King and Haman to dinner
- 6 Mordechai won't bow down to Haman
- 8 Mordechai asks Esther to ask the King not to kill the Jews
- 5 Mordechai stops a plot to kill King Ahashverosh

Esther 4:13-16

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶרְדֵּכַי לְהָשִׁיב אֶל־אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־תְּדַמֶּי בְּנַפְשְׁךָ לְהַמְלִיט בַּיַּת־הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל־הַיְהוּדִים: כִּי אִם־הִחַרְשׁ תִּחְרִישִׁי בְּעַת הַזֹּאת רֹחַ וְהִצְלָה יַעֲמֹד לַיהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אֲחֵר וְאַתְּ וּבֵית־אָבִיךָ תֵּאבְדוּ וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם־לָעַת כְּזֹאת הִגַּעְתָּ לְמַלְכוּת:
וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהָשִׁיב אֶל־מֶרְדֵּכַי: לָךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת־כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוּשָׁן וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאֶל־תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֶל־תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם גַּם־אֲנִי וְנִצַּרְתִּי אֲצוּם כִּן וּבְכוּן אָבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־כֹדֶת וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אֲבִדְתִּי אֲבִדְתִּי:

Mordechai sent this message to Esther: “Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king’s palace. On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, while you and your father’s house will end. And who knows, perhaps you have been put in this royal position for a time such as this.”

Then Esther replied to Mordechai: “Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast in my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will observe the same fast. Then I shall go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I am to die, I shall die.”

Discussion Questions

- How do you think Mordechai feels during this scene?
- How do you think Esther feels?
- Why do you think Esther changes her mind?
- How does Mordechai show courage?
- How does Esther show courage?
- Have you ever stood up to a friend or family member about something you believe in? How did it feel?
- Have you ever stood up to a stranger about something you believe in? How did it feel?

Esther 7:2-6

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר גַּם בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי בְּמִשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן מִה־שְּׂאֵלֶתְךָ אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וְתַנְתֵּן לִּי
וַיִּמְהַר־בְּקִשְׁתְּךָ עַד־חֲצֵי הַמַּלְכוּת וְתַעֲשֶׂה:
וַתַּעַן אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וַתֹּאמֶר אִם־מִצְּאֵתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב תַּנְתֵּן־לִי נַפְשִׁי
בְּשֵׂאֵלֶתִי וְעַמִּי בְּבִקְשָׁתִי: כִּי נִמְכַּרְנוּ אֲנִי וְעַמִּי לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרוֹג וּלְאַבֵּד וְאֵלֹהֵי לַעֲבָדִים
וְלִשְׁפָחוֹת נִמְכַּרְנוּ הַחַרְשָׁתִי כִּי אֵין הַצָּר שׁוֹה בְּנִזְקֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:
וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה מִי הוּא זֶה וְאֵי־זֶה הוּא אֲשֶׁר־מְלָאוּ לְבוֹ
לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן:
וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִישׁ צָר וְאוֹיֵב הָמֵן הָרַע הַזֶּה וְהָמֵן נִבְעַת מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמַּלְכָּה:

On the second day, the king asked Esther, “What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half the kingdom, it shall be given.”

Queen Esther replied: “If it pleases Your Majesty let my life and my people’s lives be spared. For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed and killed. Had we only been sold as slaves, I would have kept silent; for the enemy is not worthy of the king’s trouble.”

Thereupon King Ahashverosh demanded of Queen Esther, “Who dares to do this?”

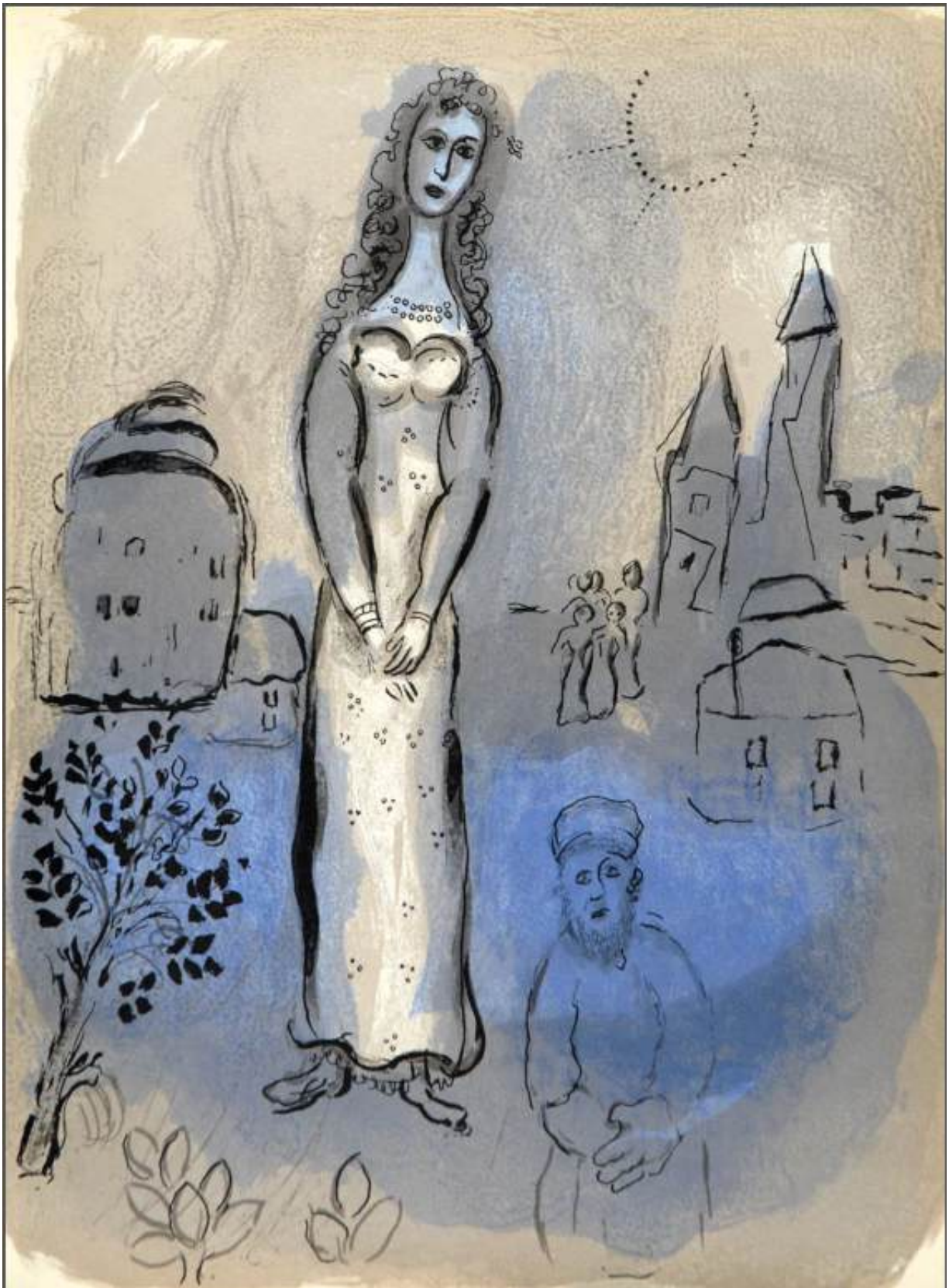
“The enemy,” replied Esther, “is this evil Haman!” And Haman cringed in terror before the king and the queen.

Discussion Questions

- How do you think Esther feels during this scene?
- How does Esther show courage? Do you think it was hard for her to be brave with Haman sitting there?
- How do you think King Ahashverosh feels in this scene?
- Can you share a time you had to be brave and say something hard?
- What do you do when you need to be brave?



“The Feast of Esther”
Jan Lievens, 1625, Dutch



"Esther"

Marc Chagall, 1960, Belarusian and French



“Purim Story”
Yoram Raanan, 2022, Israeli



“Queen Esther”

Minerva Teichert, 1939, American



**The Feast of Esther',
Frans Francken II, 1630, Flemish**



**“Queen Esther Approaching the Palace of Ahasuerus”
Claude Lorrain, 1658, French**



Book of Esther
Modern



Queen Esther Seeking Permission to Speak
Lilian Broca, 2009, Canadian
(tile mosaic)



Queen Esther and Mordechai.
Arthur Szyk, 1950, Polish



**Esther Illumination, Saint John's Bible
Samford University Library**



**“Esther before Ahasuerus”
Artemisia Gentileschi, 1620s, Italian**

PESAKH



Let's get our bodies moving!

Students will explore the Passover story, using movement and dance to bring the texts to life.

Dancing the Hagaddah

Grade(s): K-12th

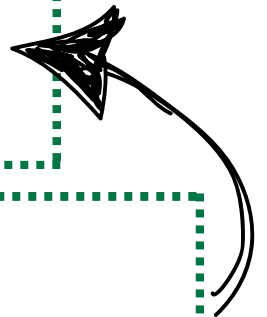
Number of participants: Any

Time needed: 60 minutes (or more)



Goal(s):

Students will understand key moments of the Hagaddah, using dance and movement to embody these themes.



Objectives:

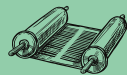
Students will:

- Explore how dance and movement can express ideas and feelings
- Learn/Review important moments of the Hagaddah
- Use dance and music to embody the themes of Passover.

Elements of Learning



Physical Activity



Jewish Text



Reflection



Performance Art



Jewish Values

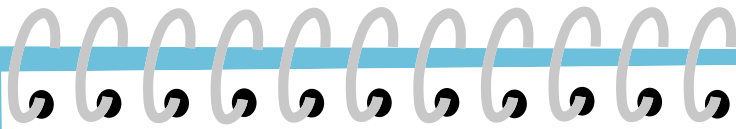
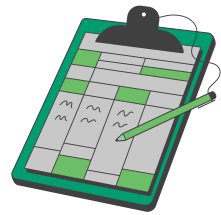


Music

A Reconstructionist Lens

The Pesakh hagaddah invites us to each imagine that we personally left Egypt and celebrate our freedom. In this unit students will embody the ideas of struggle and freedom, darkness and light, narrowness and expanse through dance and music. We ask students not to just think about these ideas, but to find personal meaning in these texts by bringing them to life with movement and dance.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Multiple devices to play music from
- Copies of Hagaddah texts

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to move their bodies and to eventually perform for one another. They will also need access to devices to play music.

My Notes



Hebrew Wordbank

אוֹצֵר מְלִים בְּעֵבְרִית

Passover

פֶּסַח

Pesakh

Egypt

מִצְרַיִם

Mitzrayim

(also: narrowness)

It would be enough!

דַּיָּנוּ

Dayenu

Hagaddah

הַגָּדָה

Hagaddah

(also: the story)

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.



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.

Opening Activity

Warming Up Our Bodies (10 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Music

Set Up

For this first activity, make sure you have plenty of space for students to move their bodies.

Directions:

In this activity we are going to warm up our bodies and get moving. Have students spread out so they have plenty of space to move. Make sure that students who need to do the activity while seated or using mobility devices have space for their chairs and/or equipment.

For the first song, have students “freeze dance”: when the music plays, they move, and when you pause the music they immediately freeze.

Once students are warmed up and comfortable moving around, choose a few different types of songs (slow, fast, rhythmic, instrumental, etc). Invite students to move around the space as the music plays, changing levels (getting high or low), moving fast or slow, rhythmically or frenetically, moving only certain parts of their bodies or the whole thing at once, etc. Ask them to try to match their movements to the music, to let the mood and sound of the music help them figure out how to move their bodies. The goal is to get physically warmed up and conquer any shyness about feeling silly while dancing.



My Notes

Let's Get Creative!



Dancing the Hagaddah (40 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Hagaddah texts from the Appendix
- Multiple devices to play music on

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.

Split students into pairs or small groups, giving each a piece of Hagaddah text. For younger/non-reading students, read through the text together. For older/reading students, ask them to read the text in their group and consider:

- What is this text about? Why do we read it on Pesakh?
- What “mood” is this text -- happy, sad, heavy, light, dark, joyous, etc?
- Can you choose colors that would match the mood of this text?

Once students are familiar with their text, ask one student to read it aloud to their pair/group and the others to start moving their bodies in a way that “feels like” the text. They are not yet choreographing movement, they should play around and try multiple different ideas together.

- How does the text feel in their bodies? It is light or heavy? How can the way they move show those feelings?
- Do they want their bodies close together or far apart?
- Do they want to move fast or slow? Smoothly or chaotically?
- Are there certain motions that capture some of the words or ideas from this text?

As students get more comfortable moving around and playing with the text and their bodies, ask them to think about what kind of music that fits with their text. Is it fast or slow? Loud or quiet?

Ask students to take all of their groups' ideas and put them together into a dance. Have them choose a song that matches the themes/feelings of their text and choreograph a dance that also represents these ideas.

Let's Get Creative!



Dancing the Hagaddah (cont.)

Some questions to consider when choreographing:

- How do your movements tell the story of the text? What emotions, ideas, questions can you show with your bodies?
- Are you all doing the same motions or different motions?
- How does the music and dance steps fit together to teach us the text?
- What colors do you want to incorporate through costumes or props?
- How can your dance reflect the bigger themes of Pesakh: freedom, memory, community?

For some students, physical movement and performance art will feel natural and easy. For others, it may feel scary or difficult. Remind students to show kindness and openness to one another so everyone can feel comfortable. You know your students best, so if they need more framing to feel confident participating, it is important to take the time to build that foundation of trust together.

 *My Notes*

Closing Reflection



Performance time! (10-20 minutes)

Directions:

Designate one part of the room as the performance area and invite all students to find a seat where they can see this area.

Invite each group to take a turn sharing their text and performing their dance. Some individuals might feel anxious performing, use your judgement about how to make students most comfortable to participate or not.

After everyone has had a chance to perform, invite students to reflect on their experiences (either in a large group or with a partner).

- What's one thing you learned today?
- How did you feel bringing the story into your body through dance?
- Name one favorite part of another group's dance.
- What's one thing you're looking forward to at Pesakh?

Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage in the activities?
- Did they demonstrate an understanding of the hagaddah texts?
- Did they respectfully collaborate with one another?
- Were students thoughtfully engaged with both their own performances and those of their peers?
- For those students who found performance difficult, how could you support them for future performance-based units?

Appendix

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

- Mah Nishtanah (The 4 Questions)
- Ha lakhma Anya
- The 4 Children
- The 10 Plagues
- Dayeinu

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

The 4 Questions - Mah Nishtanah

מה נִשְׁתַּנָּה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות?

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֶמֶץ וּמֶצֶה, הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה – בְּלוֹ מֶצֶה.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין שְׂאֵר יִרְקוֹת – הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה (בְּלוֹ) מְרוֹר.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אֵין אָנוּ מְטַבֵּילִין אֶפְּיֵלוֹ פְּעַם אַחַת – הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי פְּעָמִים.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבִין וּבֵין מְסֻבִּין – הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה בָּלָנוּ 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.

The 4 Questions - Mah Nishtanah

מה נִשְׁתַּנָּה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות?

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֶמֶץ וּמֶצֶה, הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה – בְּלוֹ מֶצֶה.

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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 lakhma Anya - This is the Bread of Affliction

הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיָא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אַבְהֵתְנָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְּכָפִין יִיתִי וְיִיכּוֹל, כָּל
דְּצָרִיךְ יִיתִי וְיִפְסַח. הַשְּׁתָא הָכָא – לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל. הַשְּׁתָא
עַבְדֵּי – לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה 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.

Ha lakhma Anya - This is the Bread of Affliction

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The Four Children

בְּנֵי אַרְבָּעָה בְּנִים דִּבְרָה תוֹרָה: אֶחָד חָכָם, וְאֶחָד רָשָׁע, וְאֶחָד תָּם, וְאֶחָד שְׂאִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לְשִׂאוֹל. חָכָם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הַעֲדוֹת וְהַחֲקִים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְכֶם. וְאִם אַתָּה אָמֹר לוֹ בְּהִלְכוֹת הַפְּסֹחַ: אֵין מִפְּטִירִין אַחַר הַפְּסֹחַ אֲפִיקוֹמָן: רָשָׁע מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֲבוּדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם. לָכֶם – וְלֹא לוֹ. וְלִפִּי שְׂהוּצִיא אֶת עַצְמוֹ מִן הַכָּל בְּפֶר בְּעֶקֶר. וְאִם אַתָּה הִקְהָה אֶת שִׁנּוּי וְאָמֹר לוֹ: "בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה יְיָ לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם." לִי וְלֹא-לוֹ. אֵלֹהֵי הָיָה שָׁם, לֹא הָיָה נִגְאָל: תָּם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה זֹאת. וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו "בְּחוּצָק יָד הוּצִיאָנוּ יְיָ מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים." וְשְׂאִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לְשִׂאוֹל – אֶת פֶּתַח לוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה יְיָ לִי בְּצֵאתִי 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 10 Plagues

דָּם. צְפַרְדֵּי. בְּנִים. עָרוֹב. דָּבָר. שְׁחִין. בָּרָד. אֲרָבָה. חֲשָׁה. מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Blood | 6. Boils |
| 2. Frogs | 7. Hail |
| 3. Lice | 8. Locust |
| 4. Wild Animals | 9. Darkness |
| 5. Cattle Die | 10. Death of the Firstborn |

The 10 Plagues

דָּם. צְפַרְדֵּי. בְּנִים. עָרוֹב. דָּבָר. שְׁחִין. בָּרָד. אֲרָבָה. חֲשָׁה. מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת

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| 5. Cattle Die | 10. Death of the Firstborn |

Dayeinu

Dayeinu (It would be enough!)

אלו הוציאנו ממצרים

דיינו

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

אלו נתן לנו את התורה

Had God only given us the Torah -- Dayeinu!

דיינו

Had God only give us Shabbat -- Dayeinu!

אלו נתן לנו את השבת

דיינו

Dayeinu

Dayeinu (It would be enough!)

אלו הוציאנו ממצרים

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אלו נתן לנו את השבת

דיינו

Dayeinu

Dayeinu (It would be enough!)

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אלו נתן לנו את התורה

Had God only given us the Torah -- Dayeinu!

דיינו

Had God only give us Shabbat -- Dayeinu!

אלו נתן לנו את השבת

דיינו

OMER COUNTER



During the seven weeks between Pesakh and Shavuot (called, The Omer) we invite students to use seven art forms to explore the seven Jewish values of the Omer.

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.

In this packet you will use different types of art to count the Omer and explore the weekly themes.

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 סְפִירַת 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.

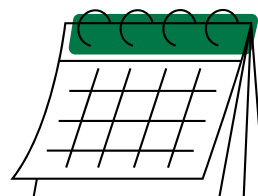
Each day, count the current day. For example:

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!



My Omer Art Journey

Each week of the Omer has a theme, shown in the chart below. For each week, choose a type of art and create something that reflects the theme of the week.

Types of art you might choose:

Drawing, painting, dance, drama, music, poetry, sculpting, fabric, yarn, photography, video, etc.

| | Theme | Type of Art | What did you create? |
|--------|-----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Week 1 | Chesed (Lovingkindness) | | |
| Week 2 | Gevurah (Strength) | | |
| Week 3 | Tiferet (Spendor) | | |
| Week 4 | Netzach (Glory) | | |
| Week 5 | Hod (Holiness) | | |
| Week 6 | Yesod (Eternity) | | |
| Week 7 | Malkhut (Sovereignty) | | |

SHAVUOT



To celebrate Shavuot, students will explore the Ten Commandments and use food to create edible art.

Delicious Torah

Grade(s): K-12th

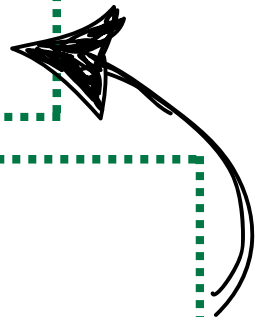
Number of participants: Any

Time needed: 45-60 minutes



Goal(s):

Students will wrestle with the tension of how and why rules are important to a functioning community.



Objectives:

Students will

- learn about themes of Shavuot
- explore the 10 Commandments and consider their importance in Jewish tradition
- use food to create edible art representing the texts they learned

Elements of Learning



Visual Art



Torah/ Jewish Text



Reflection



Food

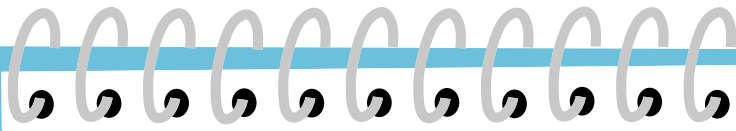


Jewish Values

A Reconstructionist Lens

Many Jewish communities read the Ten Commandments on Shavuot, celebrating the story in Exodus of receiving the Torah on Mt. Sinai. As Reconstructionists, we understand the Torah as divinely inspired and see ourselves as part of the evolving process of interpreting our tradition. In this unit, students are invited to explore the Ten Commandments or the story of Ruth, considering how the values expressed in these texts relate to their own daily lives.

SETTING UP



Materials

- Plates, utensils
- Food for art (fruit, veggies, crackers, cheese, snacks, candy, etc)
- Copies of Appendix texts
- Shavuot storybook (check your synagogue library)

Set Up Suggestions

Students will need space to read together and table space to create their edible art.

My Notes



Hebrew Wordbank

אוֹצֵר מְלִים בְּעִבְרִית

“Weeks”

שָׁבָעוֹת

Shavuot

10 Commandments
(lit: 10 sayings)

עֲשָׂרַת
הַדְּבָרוֹת

Aseret Hadibrot

Ruth

רוּת

Rut

Feel free to add your own!



SETTING UP



Key Words

→ Shavuot

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

Torah

→ The word Torah usually refers to the scroll containing the 5 Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), but can also mean Jewish texts in general or Jewish teachings.

Ruth

→ A book from the Ketuvim (Writings) section of the Hebrew Bible, which tells the story of Ruth showing love and devotion to her family and choosing to join the Jewish People.

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

What is Shavuot? (15 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Shavuot storybooks

Set Up

Depending on age groups, you may want to start with a storybook about Shavuot, or, with a review of the holiday.

Directions:

For younger students, here are some Shavuot storybooks that will help (re)introduce the holiday:

- No Rules for Michael (by Sylvia Rouss)
- The Art Lesson: A Shavuot Story (Allison and Wayne Marks)
- The Littlest Mountain (by Barb Rosenstock)
- Kopecks for Blintzes (by Judy Goldman)

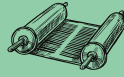
For older students, invite them to consider some of the themes of Shavuot:

- The Torah contains stories that ask us to think about how to live ethically. Is there a particular story from the Torah that you relate to or has taught you something?
- On Shavuot we read the Ten Commandments from the Torah. What are some rules in your home, school, or sports teams? What purpose do they serve? If you were in charge at school for a day, what rules would you put in place?
- On Shavuot we read the story of Ruth, who shows deep love and loyalty to her mother-in-law, Naomi. Can you share a story about a friend who has really helped you through a rough time or a time you helped a friend?

Some important aspects of Shavuot to cover with all ages:

- Shavuot celebrates receiving the Torah (and Ten Commandments) at Mt Sinai. Whether we believe this happened literally or is a symbolic story of the creation of the Torah, we celebrate the idea of study, asking questions, and connecting to our tradition on Shavuot.
- There is a tradition to stay up all night studying with the community.
- Many Jews eat dairy foods on Shavuot (there are countless explanations as to why).
- Traditionally, we read the 10 Commandments and the Book of Ruth.

A Taste of Torah



Exploring the Texts of Shavuot (15 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the 10 Commandments (in the Appendix), and/or, copies of Ruth

Directions:

There are two texts traditionally read on Shavuot: the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20) and the Book of Ruth.

Here are a few recommended ways to share these texts with students:

- For younger/non-reading students, read through the 10 Commandments and the discussion questions together.
- For younger/reading students, divide them into pairs or small groups and have them read through the 10 Commandments and answer the discussion questions.
- For older/reading students, give them the 10 Commandments Remix page, which invites them to compare the 10 Commandments from Exodus with their retelling in Deuteronomy.
- If you want to look at the Book of Ruth, you could use a storybook version from your synagogue library, watch a short video retelling the story, or give students copies of the Book of Ruth to explore (it's only 4 chapters!)



My Notes

Let's Get Creative!



Food Art! (15-20 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the texts used above
- Plates
- Food for art: fruits, nuts, crackers, candies, etc

Directions:

There's an older Jewish tradition that when children started learning Hebrew and Torah their teachers would hide candies in the pages so the children would be excited to open their books, or draw the alef-bet with honey that the smallest students could lick from their plates to inspire a positive and sweet association for them with Jewish learning.

Today we will be inspired by this tradition and use sweet foods and snacks to create the texts we studied above.

Invite students to use the food provided to create visual art of the texts they studied. This could be: a scene from the story of Ruth; the Israelites at Mt Sinai; the tablets of the 10 Commandments; illustrating one of the Commandments; etc. Encourage students to get creative, using lots of colors, different types of foods, considering either 2D (laying the food flat on the plate) or 3D uses of their food to bring the Torah stories to life.

Don't forget to wash hands before you start!



My Notes

Closing Reflection



Time to Share and Eat (10 minutes)

Directions:

Invite students to share the text they created with their food art. Once everyone has had a chance to share, participants should enjoy eating their creations!

While they eat, invite them to reflect on the experience.

Closing reflection questions.

Students could write these down, share with a partner, or share with the whole group:

- What's one thing you learned today?
- Why do you think Judaism values study and learning?
- What questions do you still have about Shavuot?
- What's the tastiest thing on your plate?

Evaluating Student Success:

- Did students engage in the activities?
- Did they demonstrate an understanding of Shavuot?
- Did they participate in respectful conversations together?
- How did the edible aspect of this lesson impact students' participation and is there a way to bring food into other lessons in a positive way?



Appendix

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

- 10 Commandments
- 10 Commandments Remix

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1-14



God spoke all these words, saying:

1 I am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage:

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
לֵאמֹר: אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ
מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים:

2 You shall have no other gods besides Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, your God, am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

לֹא־יְהִי־לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל־פָּנָי: לֹא־
תַעֲשֶׂה־לְךָ פֶסֶל וְכָל־תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשָׁמַיִם
מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם
מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ: לֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם וְלֹא
תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קַנָּא
פֶקֶד עֵוֹן אָבֹת עַל־בָּנִים עַל־שְׁלֹשִׁים
וְעַל־רִבְעִים לְשָׁנָאִי: וְעָשָׂה חֶסֶד לְאֲלֹפִים
לְאַהֲבֵי וּלְשֹׂמְרֵי מִצְוֹתַי:

3 You shall not swear falsely by the name of your God, for God will not clear one who swears falsely by God's name.

לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת־שֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׂוּא כִּי
לֹא יִנְקֶה יְהוָה אֶת אֲשֶׁר־יִשָּׂא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ
לְשׂוּא:

4 Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of your God: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements. For in six days God made heaven and earth and sea—and all that is in them—and then rested on the seventh day; therefore God blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

זְכוֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ: שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים
תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל־מְלַאכְתֶּךָ: וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה
כָּל־מְלַאכָה אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ־וּבִתֶּךָ עַבְדְּךָ
וְאִמְתֶּךָ וּבְהֵמְתֶךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ: כִּי
שֵׁשֶׁת־יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם
וַיִּנַּח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל־כֵּן בֵּרַךְ יְהוָה
אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֶׁהוּ:

5 Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that your God is assigning to you.

כְּבֹד אֶת־אָבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמְךָ לְמַעַן יַאֲרֹכּוּן יְמֶיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ:

6 You shall not murder.

לֹא תִרְצֹחַ:

7 You shall respect your relationships.

לֹא תִנְאָף:

8 You shall not steal.

לֹא תִגְנוֹב:

9 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

לֹא־תַעֲנֶה בְרַעַף עַד שִׁקְרָה:

10 You shall not covet your neighbor's house: you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox or ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

לֹא תַחְמֹד בֵּית רֵעֶךָ לֹא־תַחְמֹד אִשְׁתֵּךָ רֵעֶךָ וְעַבְדּוֹ וְאִמָּתוֹ וְשׁוֹרוֹ וַחֲמֹרוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ:

Discussion Questions

- Do you have questions about any of these commandments?
- Why do you think these 10 rules are considered so important?
- If you were to add an 11th Commandment, what would it be?
- How do rules help us? Is there such a thing as a “bad rule”?



Ten Commandments Remix

There are two versions of the Ten Commandments in the Torah.
Compare these two texts below and find the similarities and differences.

Exodus 20:1-14

God spoke all these words, saying:

I am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. **1**

You shall have no other gods besides Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, your God, am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

You shall not swear falsely by the name of your God, for God will not clear one who swears falsely by God's name. **3**

Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of your God: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your

Deuteronomy 5:5-18

I [Moses] stood between God and you at that time to convey God's words to you, for you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain—saying: I am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage.

2 You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters below the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

3 You shall not swear falsely by the name of your God; for God will not clear one who swears falsely by God's name.

4 Guard the sabbath day and keep it holy, as your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or your donkey, or

Exodus 20:1-14

settlements. For in six days God made heaven and earth and sea—and all that is in them—and then rested on the seventh day; therefore God blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that your God is assigning to you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house: you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox or donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

Deuteronomy 5:5-18

any of your cattle, or the stranger in your settlements, so that your male and female slave may rest as you do.

Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore your God God has commanded you to observe the sabbath day.

5 Honor your father and your mother, as your God has commanded you, that you may long endure, and that you may fare well, in the land that your God is assigning to you.

6 You shall not murder.

7 You shall not commit adultery.

8 You shall not steal.

9 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

10 You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. Likewise, none of you shall crave your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

Discussion Questions

- What differences can you find between these two texts?
- Why do you think some commandments have explanations and some do not?