

K/ 1st Grade*

Topic: Rosh Hashanah

- **The Jewish calendar** is based on the cycles of the sun and the moon. The calendar that we're used to is based only on the sun. This is why the Jewish new year does not fall later in the winter, when people usually think of the new year.
- Just like the calendar that is used everyday (January, February, etc.), the Jewish calendar also names the months-- Rosh Hashanah occurs during the month of Tishrei.
- **Rosh Hashanah** is the Jewish New Year and is celebrated in the fall. Rosh Hashanah, in Hebrew, means Head of the Year.
- Some people go to "services"-- a gathering of everyone in the community-- on Rosh Hashanah. Machar has Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services.
- Rosh Hashanah began as a holiday celebrating the end of the fall harvest when food was brought in from farmers' fields.
- Today, Rosh Hashanah is a time for people to think about what they can do to make the future better for themselves and others, a time of hope, of remembering and a time to start over again.
- Thinking about starting over is called "**Teshuvah**", a Hebrew word for turning-- just as leaves turn new colors in the fall. Like leaves, people try to "turn" and become different at the new year.
- Jewish people often wish each other "**L'Shana Tova**"-- "A Sweet Year."
- "**Tashlich**" is when people symbolically throw away parts of themselves that they would like to improve. For hundreds of years, Jewish people have gone to rivers and creeks and tossed bread crumbs or other such items in as symbols of these hard parts of themselves. As they float away, the people can imagine being kinder towards themselves and others.

Symbols:

Shofar- made from a ram's horn; in ancient times, people used the shofar to call the community to important events.

Sweet food-- for a sweet new year (example: apples and honey)

Round **Challah** -- cycle of life, cycle of the calendar, a well-rounded person New Year's cards-- send friends and family greetings for the new year Wine- thankful for the fruits of the vine

Candles-- thankful for light and for special days

Objectives:

- Recognize and use the vocabulary words highlighted above.
- Understand and appreciate how secular/ humanistic Jews celebrate Rosh Hashanah (gathering together, sharing foods, songs, greetings, considering past and future actions, sounding the shofar).
- Experience Rosh Hashanah rituals.

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Activities:

- Read and discuss How the Rosh Hashanah Challah Became Round by Sylvia Epstein.
- Show, touch and try blowing a Shofar (bring wipes to clean it between each child's turn).
- Show and compare Jewish and common calendars.
- Make Rosh Hashanah cards ("Shana Tova" or other greetings inside).
- Eat apples and honey.
- Show, discuss and eat a round Challah bread.
- Make paper shofarim by taking paper rectangles decorated with markers and glitter and rolled and taped into a shofar shape.
- Learn and practice (by saying the words and making the noises without the shofar) the sounds and the order that the shofar makes during Rosh Hashanah: Tekiyah (one long blast); Shevorim (three blasts like a siren); Teruah (nine quick staccato notes); Tekiya Gadola (one very, very long note).
- Tashlich: Ask each student to share one thing that they did this year that was helpful/ fair/ nice and the write their statement on an index card for them to decorate and keep. Then, ask each student to share one thing that they would like to change and the write this statement on a piece of paper. Ask the students to tear up their pieces of paper and throw them in a tub of water (symbolic river). If a natural body of water is nearby, consider taking a field trip in order to perform Tashlich (use bread crumbs instead of paper).
- Play Rosh Hashanah bingo .
- Read/ discuss and/or act out "The Mystery of the Missing Tishrei" by Ilan Vitenberg, Barbara Laster and the children of Fabrangen .

Topic: Yom Kippur

- **Yom Kippur** comes after Rosh Hashanah and it is more of a serious day than Rosh Hashanah. People think hard during the period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur about the good things that they did during the year and the things that they plan to change.
- Some Jewish people fast on Yom Kippur. They believe that when they are hungry they are better able to think about how to be better people. It also reminds them of people who do not have enough to eat.
- **Kol Nidre** is a very old song that Jewish people sing to express their thoughts the night before Yom Kippur-- Erev Yom Kippur. Machar holds Kol Nidre services and Yom Kippur services, for people to gather as a community and to share their thoughts not only about what they've done individually over the year, but also about what the Jewish people as a have done.
- The Shofar is blown at the end of Yom Kippur, as the new year begins.

Objectives:

- Recognize and utilize the vocabulary words highlighted above.
- Understand and appreciate how secular/ humanistic Jews observe Yom Kippur.
- Consider the past year and reflect on ways to grow and change.
- Experience Yom Kippur rituals.

Possible Activities:

- Make a collective class list (by brainstorming on a big piece of butcher paper) of things that aren't so nice that they or people that they know have done during the past year. Then, make a collective class list in the same manner of ways that they would like for themselves, their family and friends to act in the new year. Discuss the significance of doing this as a group, versus making individual "new years resolutions lists," (for thousands of years, on Yom Kippur, Jews have taken group responsibility for bad ways that they've acted).
- Play a recording of the Kol Nidre melody and ask the students how the music makes them feel. While the music continues to play, distribute paper and crayons/ markers and ask the student to draw what the music sounds like-- explaining that their drawings do not need to be representational. The teacher should participate, and show their drawing as an example early in the activity. Discuss *the significance of Kol Nidre-- the likelihood that the same melody was heard by the students' great, great, great grandparents.*
- Read and discuss the Great Kapok Tree by Lynne Cherry.
- Make shofar sounds again to symbolize the end of Yom Kippur and the beginning of the new year. Tekiyah, Shevorim, Teruah, Tekiyah Gadola (see Rosh Hashanah curriculum above).
- Read/ sing and discuss Humanistic Kol Nidre.

Topic: Sukkot

- **Sukkot** (Hebrew) is the Jewish holiday that celebrates farming, and bringing in food (crops) from the field-- called "harvesting." Some Jewish people today are farmers, but long ago, even more Jews farmed the land. In order to be closer to their crops, Jewish people used to build huts to live in in the middle of the field so that they didn't have to travel so far between their regular houses and the fields.
- These huts were called Sukkot (plural for **sukkah**). A sukkah must have at least three sides and a roof open to the light of the sun, moon and stars. The roof should be made of things that grow.
- People decorate the sukkah to make it beautiful because the holiday is a celebration. • Today, many people around the world live in homes similar to Sukkot, and Jewish people, at this time of year, build Sukkot to eat in during the week long (eight days) holiday of Sukkot.
- Four special plants, the **lulav** (palm branch), **etrog** (citron, like a lemon), **hadasim** (myrtle) and **aravot** (willows) are celebrated on Sukkot.
- Sometimes special guests, called **ushpizin**, are invited to the sukkah.

Objectives:

- Recognize and use the vocabulary highlighted above.
- Understand that Jewish practice and culture is rooted in agricultural cycles. • Appreciate how secular/ humanistic Jews celebrate Sukkot.
- Experience Sukkot rituals.

Activities:

- Conduct a class gleaning field trip and/or explain what gleaning is and send information home about upcoming opportunities to participate in gleaning (Machar often organizes gleaning activities). Explain that when more Jewish people were farmers, they saved a part of their harvest for people who were poor. They gave this portion away on Sukkot. Therefore, giving and helping others is an important part of Sukkot.
- Make shoe box Sukkot (place wooden rods/ chop-sticks along the top for the roof and drape leaves over these. Decorate with miniature fruits and strips of streamers) OR ...
- Make/ decorate etrog boxes, and send students home with lemons in them if citrons are too expensive. Remind them to have family and friends smell their boxes during Sukkot.
- Teacher shows real example of lulav and etrog, explains their significance, and answers student questions about them. Share the four species with the students by allowing them to smell, touch and shake.
- Make decorations for community or home Sukkot-- tissue paper flowers, construction paper fruits, etc... also, make chains with the students' hopes and thoughts.
- Photocopy pictures of the four species and ask the students to glue/ tape these pictures onto construction paper, making people-- the spine being the lulav, the myrtle the eyes, the willow the mouth and the etrog the heart (draw/add on the rest of the body). Explain

that long ago, rabbis thought of the four species as representing these parts of the human body.

- Read and discuss *Leo and Blossom's Sukkah* in Beni's Family Treasury: Stories for the Jewish Holidays by Jane Breskin Zalben.

- **Matching game:**

Students receive pictures of a sukkah, a palm branch, a bowl of citrus fruit, and the Hebrew words sukkah, lulav, and etrog.

Students color in pictures appropriately while instructor explains historical and cultural meaning of these symbols

Students match words to symbols

- Inviting Ushpizin: Have students each say who they would like to invite to their sukkah and why. If making shoe box sukkot, make a special chair for the "ushpizin"-- a Sephardic custom.

- Read and discuss Tikvah Means Hope by Patricia Polacco.

Homework: Ask students to research whether anyone in their family has ever been a farmer or participated in agricultural work.

Topic: Sukkot and Tzedakah

The holiday of Sukkot reminds us of the fact that some of us have more money, food or homes than others. As Jews, our cultural heritage says that we must try to fix this, through charity, or tzedakah.

Activity:

Students are given a sheet with a blank tzedakah box on it and decorate it with pictures of what they think tzedakah is using crayons and markers

Together, the class creates its own, large tzedak box using a large shoe box and pasting decorated construction paper to its sides.

Topic: Shabbat/ Shabbes

- **Shabbes** (Yiddish) or Shabbat (Hebrew) happens each week from sunset on Friday night until just after sunset on Saturday night. It is like having a special holiday every week - a time to rest and to enjoy the company of friends and family members.
- For a very long time, Jewish people have reminded themselves that it is shabbes by lighting special candles, eating Challah (egg) bread, drinking wine or grape juice in a **Kiddish cup** and singing shabbes songs. Sometimes people also wear white on shabbes.
- There are many ways to celebrate shabbes, including in a secular/ humanistic way.
- People know that shabbes is over when they see the first three stars in the sky on Saturday night. Directly after seeing these stars, they light a braided candle to remind them that the new week is beginning, sing special songs, drink wine or grape juice and smell sweet spices in hope that the new week will be sweet. Together, these activities are called **Havdallah**.
- Other people also have **Sabbaths** - for Christians it is Sunday, for Seventh Day Adventists it is Saturday, etc.

Objectives:

- Appreciate how secular/ humanistic Jews celebrate Shabbes/ Shabbat.
- Experience shabbes rituals.

Activities:

- Conduct a mock "shabbes"-- with a table cloth, shabbes candles, Challah and grape juice. Have each student say something good that happened during the past week (explain that people often do this during shabbes). Light the candles and explain that they are a symbol of life, hope and warmth. Say a secular/ humanistic blessing for the candles such as: "How wonderful is the light of the world. How bright are the candles of peace. How beautiful are the lights of Shabbat." Next, drink grape juice, explaining that juice is the symbol of fruit from plants that provide food for people. Last, take the Challah bread and have all of the students touch it, breaking off pieces after saying a secular/ humanistic blessing for the grape juice and bread such as "How important is the work of people's hands. How beautiful is the bread of the earth and the fruit of the vine. How great are our hopes for peace and justice in the world." Ask the students for additional ideas of what to say in appreciation for the candles, juice and Challah.

Explain that the Challah has six braids to remind people of the six days of the work week that are separate from the seventh day of rest. Last, sing "Shabbat Shalom, Shabbat Shalom, Shabbat, Shabbat, Shabbat, Shabbat Shalom" (translation: Sabbath peace).

- Read and discuss Mrs. Moskowitz and the Sabbath Candlesticks by Amy Schwartz.
- Read The Shabbat Box by Lesley Simpson and make "Shabbat Boxes." The story tells about a boy who loses his class' "Shabbat Box" (a special box with candlesticks, a kiddush cup and a Challah cover inside) and makes a new one.
- Discuss how/ if students already celebrate shabbes. What is it like/ what would it be like to do the same thing each week... to know that there was special time set aside?

Topic: Tzedakah (Hebrew)/ Tzeduka (Yiddish)

- **Tzedakah** comes from the Hebrew word **Tzedek**, which means justice. Justice means treating people fairly.
- Tzedakah is a way for people to share what they have-- so that there are less people who are poor. People often talk about Tzedakah by saying that they "give Tzedakah," but Tzedakah does not only mean giving money. It means helping people in many different ways.
- Machar has a **Tzedakah box** that is passed around to everyone during the singing before Sunday School.
- Often, Jewish people have Tzedakah boxes in their homes-- in Yiddish these are called pushkes. It is up to the person (just as it is up to Machar) who they will give their money to once the Tzedakah box or jar is full.
- Some people give Tzedakah money to groups of people or organizations. • Many children keep their own tzdukah **pushkes**.

Objectives:

- Recognize and use the vocabulary highlighted above.
- Understand that collecting and giving Tzedakah is something that children can participate in.
- Consider how the act of giving tzedakah can be rewarding for the giver.

Activities:

- Make/ decorate Tzedakah boxes using coffee cans (cut slit for coins in the plastic cover and have pre-cut pieces of construction paper to tape around the cans that they students decorate). Make a collage from magazine pictures expressing what the students care about in the world. Tape these collages onto the tzedakah boxes.
- Read and discuss The Giving Box by Fred Rogers (Mr. Rogers).
- Discuss ways that the students and their friends/ family can help others, as well as the ways that their friends/ family have *been* helped.
- Discuss how it feels to help another person.
- Read and discuss *The Apple Orchard:: A Tzedakab Story* .

Homework: Students research whether anyone in their family keeps or has kept a Tzedakah box/ pushke.

Topic: Jewish Life Cycle Events

- A **cycle** is a series of events that happen one after another in the same order, over and over again. For example, spring, summer, fall and winter is the seasonal cycle.
- **Life cycle** events are things that happen over and over again to people. We can think about this as a circle. But these events do not necessarily happen over and over again to the same person.
- Jewish people have special life cycle events that involve family and community gatherings.
- Jewish secular/humanistic life cycle events are one way to connect with Jewish **ancestors** - relatives that lived a long time ago.
- The life cycle starts with a new life-a baby is born. The birth and adoption (explain adoption, if needed) of babies has been celebrated in all cultures since ancient times. Jewish birth, adoption and baby naming ceremonies welcome babies into the world and allow for the parents to tell their community that they promise to take care of their child and to help them to grow up and take their own special place in the community.
- A long time ago, Jewish parents began naming their children after relatives who had died. Today, Jewish children may have more than one name-- in English, for example, as well as in **Hebrew, Ladino or Yiddish**.
- Having a mitzvah ceremony is often the next life cycle event in Jewish people's lives. The mitzvah ceremony happens when a boy or girl turns 13 and is thus closer to being an adult.
- For secular/ humanistic Jews, the mitzvah ceremony is a time for young people to think about what is important in their lives and what they hope to learn more about. In Machar, the seventh graders prepare with their parents for a special mitzvah ceremony. Each of the students lead the community in songs and readings and make a presentation about a Jewish topic of their choice. After the ceremony, there is a party for their family and friends to celebrate.
- Once people become adults, more life cycle events occur. For some people this includes meeting one special person to share their life with and having a ceremony to celebrate the love that they share. For others, adult life includes having a community of friends instead of, or in addition to, loving one particular person. Sometimes people choose to be parents, and sometimes they do not.
- Regardless of these choices, everyone eventually dies. This is part of the life cycle as well.

Objectives:

- Recognize and use the vocabulary highlighted above.
- Understand what a life cycle is and that they are a part of it.
- Appreciate that there are many stages in life and special Jewish events to mark them.

Activities:

- Ask the students to share what they know about their names. Do they have Hebrew, Yiddish or other non-English names? Were they named for anyone? Do they like their name? What are some other names in their family?
- Ask the students to discuss names that they would like to name a baby. Why?

- Invite the Machar mitzvah students to meet with the class to discuss their projects and how it feels to be approaching their mitzvah ceremony and/or have mitzvah students from the previous year visit with the class to discuss how they felt about their ceremonies.
- Paint a class mural of pictures representing what the students hope to be able to do when they are 13.
- Ask children to work individually or in pairs to create a life cycle event for events in their lives-- for riding a bike for the first time, going to school for the first time, getting a dog, etc... Ask them to share their idea with the class, including who would be invited to the event, what activities people would participate in, where the event would take place, what people would say, eat, sing, etc. Design invitations for these events.
- Read and discuss Families: A Celebration of Diversity, Commitment and Love by Aylette Jenness. This book features seventeen children who tell the stories of their different families.

TEACHER RESOURCE

Secular/Humanist Approach to Life Cycle Events

Jews believe that every single individual is absolutely unique and important. What we do with our time helps determine the world of the future. But we each share with every other person the same rhythm of life: birth, birthdays, puberty, death.

— From Harry Gersh, *When a Jew celebrates*, Behrman House, Inc., New York, 1971.

Human beings have always taken joy and comfort from celebrating the milestones of the rhythm life, and have created rituals that help each individual think about what the milestone means and how their personal milestone relates to, and is part of, their kinship group and the human community. Humanistic Judaism recognizes the importance of these rituals and celebrations within the kinship group of Jews. Secular/Humanistic Judaism is a work in progress and new rituals and practices are developed frequently to serve those that carry them out.

Birth: As humanistic Jews, we believe in the complete equality of the sexes, and reject rituals that symbolize inequality. Circumcision as a public ritual is such a symbol. Although it may be valid for health reasons, as a public ritual it is performed to “bless and protect” boys – but there is no such ritual for girls. As an alternative, humanistic Jews are developing ceremonies that provide equal status to boys and girls and dramatize the connection of the child and the future of the family, the Jewish people, and humanity. The announcement of a Hebrew name is a fitting symbol of the Jewish attachment.

Puberty: The essence of the historic bar mitzva ceremony is not religious. It is a celebration of the arrival of puberty – which in ancient times, when people did not live as long as they do today – also marked the beginning of adulthood. Today, the age of thirteen no longer marks the advent of adulthood, but it is still a perfect time for a public ceremony to mark the reality of adolescence. In keeping with the humanistic ideal of equality, we no longer call such a ceremony a “bar” or “bat” mitzvah, but simply a mitzva, which in popular Hebrew and Yiddish means more than “commandment.” It means “good deed.”

There are many ways that the milestone of puberty can be marked. For example, children can research and present a paper or project on something of interest to show their growing involvement in the world of Jewish history and culture.

And there is no reason why a developing child should have only one developmental ceremony. While the mitzva celebration marks entry into adolescence, another celebration should be available to mark the beginning of adulthood. The Confirmation ceremony developed by the Reform movement is such an event.

Marriage: Humanistic Jews reject the idea that the purpose of marriage is the licensing of reproduction. People may choose marriage even though they have no intention of having children, and they may choose to bear children even though they are not married. In the eyes of humanistic morality, marriage is more than living together. It is a public promise by two people to offer each other mutual support, and exclusive sexual intimacy. Further, “marriage” is not limited to a man and a woman deciding to be life partners – any two people of any sex or gender can make that decision.

A humanistic wedding must reflect this perspective. Canopies, wine cups, and broken glass can be given humanistic meanings. But the traditional purchase documents and paternalistic marriage formulas are unacceptable.

Death: The denial of death is the heart of traditional religion. Physical death is only an illusion – people, in actually, live on in a different form. However, the secular vision begins with the recognition that death is real, and that rituals that deny death compromise human dignity by rejecting a reality of the human condition. A humanistic Jewish memorial service is an opportunity to teach a humanistic philosophy of life. Both the meditations and the eulogies must serve to remind people that the value of personal life lies in its quality, not its longevity.

Topic: Hanukkah

- **Hanukkah** is a winter holiday that is celebrated for eight days. One of the reasons Jewish people created Hanukkah during the winter was to bring light to the darkest part of the year. Many people all over the world have special celebrations at the time of the **winter solstice**.
- The winter solstice is the time of the year with the least amount of light during the day (the days begin to grow longer). This is because of the position of the sun in relation to the earth.
- Hanukkah means *Festival of Lights*. The **Hannukia** (Hebrew), often called a menorah (which actually means candelabra, not necessarily one used for Hannukah), is the special candle holder used during Hanukkah. People use the leader candle (shamas) to light one candle the first night, two candles the second, and so on, until the last night when there are nine candles lit (eight nights plus the shamas).
- Friends and family members often give each other gifts (Historically, only children would receive a gift, and it would be **Hanukkah gelt** -- money/ coins).
- People often host parties and eat potato pancakes (**latkes**).
- The **dreidel** (spinning top) is a favorite Hanukkah game. It has four Hebrew letters on it-- **shin, gimmel, hay and nun**.

Stories surrounding the holiday:

There are many stories about Hanukkah and why Jewish people celebrate it. For many Jewish people, it is a holiday about religious freedom. This is because thousands of years ago, some Jewish people decided that other Jewish people weren't living religiously enough, while the more religious Jewish people were told by the Greeks that they could no longer practice their religion. People on all sides were judging each other a lot, making freedom very difficult.

The Hebrew word Hanukkah means dedication, because the religious Jewish people fought for their beliefs and eventually won their temple back, where they celebrated and dedicated the temple.

One story that people tell about Hanukkah has to do with when the religious Jewish people won their temple back from the Greeks. According to the story, they could only find enough oil for the lamp (menorah) for one day. They had to travel for eight days to get more oil, but when they came back the menorah was still burning. This is why people eat foods such as doughnuts and latkes (potato pancakes) during Hanukkah that are made with oil. In Eastern Europe where many Jews used to live, potatoes were one of the few foods available in the wintertime.

Hanukkah has many different spellings: Hanukah, Chanukkah, Chanukah, etc... since it is a Hebrew word, people find different ways to spell it in English. All of these spellings are fine.

Objectives:

- Recognize and use the vocabulary highlighted above.
- Understand the connection of Hanukkah to the winter solstice.
- Understand the stories and ideas behind the observance of Hanukkah.

- Experience Hannukah rituals.

Activities:

- Make dreidels with non-baking clay and toothpicks. Show students how to write Hebrew letters on their dreidel before it dries.
- Make a Hanukkiah using a piece of wood and metal nuts (see attached directions).
- Make Hanukkah candles using sheets of beeswax and string (see attached directions).
- Teach and play the dreidel game with pennies, peanuts or wrapped pieces of candy. Ask the students to sit in a circle. Place 10 or more pennies in the center of the circle. Give each student 5 pennies. Ask the students to take turns spinning the dreidel. If it lands on Hey, the student takes half of the pennies in the middle. If it lands on Shin, they put one penny in the middle. If it lands on Nun, they do nothing and if it lands on Gimmel, they take all of the pennies in the middle ("Let's Play Dreidel" sheet attached).
- Create and sing new verses for the dreidel song in English.
- Sing the dreidel song in Yiddish.
- Read and discuss Latkes and Applesauce by Fran Manushkin (additional books: The Winter Solstice by Ellen Jackson; In the Month of Kislev by Nina Jaffe; Northern Lights by Diana Cohen Conway).
- Lead attached "Spin, Little Dreidels" exercise.
- Create a latkah machine-- this is a variation on the machine drama game in which volunteers decide on a movement and sound that they repeat, with others adding on, until everyone is standing near each other doing their movements and making their sounds--becoming a "machine." For the latkah machine, ask the students to think of different movements associated with making latkahs (cracking eggs, grating potatoes, etc).

Topic: Tu' B'Shevat

Tu' B'Shevat literally means “the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat,” and falls in January or February. In Israel, the almond tree, with its white and rosy buds, is the symbol of Tu' B'Shevat, and all sorts of trees are planted.

The Talmud regards Tu' B'Shevat as the beginning of the year when it comes to certain ancient agricultural laws related to tithing. And according to Jewish tradition, Tu' B'Shevat is the beginning of the growth year for trees.

In the Middle Ages, certain Jewish communities began to mark this time of year with a festival, including a special seder.

In recent years, secular Jews have used the festival of Tu' B'Shevat to honor nature and to re-dedicate themselves to the preservation of the environment. (Of course, this should be done throughout the year.)

Objectives

Gain an understanding of the unity between humankind and nature, and of the fact that we must work to preserve our environment if human beings are to survive.

Activities

- ◆ **Read the poem** “A Tree is Nice” by Janice May Udry. First graders can either follow along looking at their own book or can read the poem in a “round robin” fashion.
- ◆ **Read and discuss** The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein. Discuss how the children feel about the way the boy/man treated the tree. Discuss what we get from trees. Talk about what trees get from us.
- ◆ **Read and discuss:**
 - “The Carob Tree”
 - Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf
 - The Tiniest Seed.
- ◆ **Sing:**
 - “Tu' B'Shevat, Tu' B'Shevat” by Jack Gabriel can be found on Jack Gabriel's holiday tape.
 - “Garden Song”
 - The Green Grass Grew All Around”
 - “Hashekeidiya”
- ◆ **Recite** rhymes in Fun With Holiday Rhymes, by Sylvia Rouss, such as “One Little Tree,” “Five Little Trees,” “Five Little Trees in a Row
- ◆ **Plant parsley seeds**

Materials: paper cups, yogurt containers or pint size milk cartons, soil, package of parsley seeds, water

Procedure: Make a small hole or two on the bottom of the cup or container for proper drainage. Fill cups/containers almost to the top with soil using a scoop. Make three holes a few inches apart, and place a seed in each hole. Cover the holes with soil. Water plant. When children take the plant home, tell parents to water it only when the soil is dry. The parsley should be ready for Peasch.

- ◆ **Plant other things.** Following the same procedures, plant orange, apple, lemon or grapefruit seeds.
- ◆ **Help plants sprout**

Sweet potato, potato or turnips

Materials: sweet potato, potato, or turnip, toothpicks, glass of water

Procedure: Place four toothpicks around the center of the root vegetable of choice and balance it in a glass of water. About half of the vegetable should be in the water. In a few days leaves and roots will begin to grow.

Carrot Tops

Materials: carrots with green tops, small, shallow bowl or dish, water, gravel (optional)

Procedure: Cut about an inch off the top of the carrot. Put a layer of gravel in bowl if you choose. Put carrot top in bowl. Add water. It will take about a week before you see the little green tops begin to grow.

- ◆ **Make an “almond tree”**

Materials: paper cut-outs of tree trunks and branches, glue, white paper, cotton balls, red markers

Procedure: Provide a cutout of a tree trunk with branches. Children glue trunk and branches on to paper, then glue cotton balls to branches. Encourage children to dot cotton balls with red markers. This is supposed to resemble an almond tree.

NOTE: First Graders-Children may be able to cut out own trunks with branches or draw it with a brown marker or crayon.

♦ Make Collages

SEED COLLAGE

***Materials:* glue, white paper**

Procedure: Have children bring in seeds from home (apple, orange, lemon, grapefruit, etc) and glue them on paper.

TREE COLLAGE

Materials: branches, leaves, glue, white paper

Procedure: Go outside and have children collect twigs, branches and leaves from the ground. Children may glue found objects on paper. It's nice to add green or brown food coloring to glue. Some children may create "trees"- especially older children.

PICTURE COLLAGE

Materials: pictures of trees, plants, fruits, vegetables, flowers, etc, cut from old magazines or seed catalogues, glue, construction paper, scissors

Procedure: Glue pictures of choice on paper. Or: provide the children with the magazines and scissors, and let cut out their own pictures.

Topic: L'Dor V' Dor – Learning From Grandparents and Other Generations

L'Dor V'Dor means “from generation to generation.”

Grandparents are a rich connection to a child's past. Children can listen to narratives about what life was like in this country (or another country) when a grandparent was younger; they can learn a skill such as cooking, baking, etc.; or they can just enjoy the company and guidance of an older person. Some grandparents may be storytellers and they may be able to tell stories that were told to them. The oral tradition is such an important part of our Jewish past.

Objectives:

- ◆ Appreciating our past and realizing that there is so much to learn from past generations.
- ◆ Learning the Hebrew and Yiddish words listed below.

Activities:

- ◆ **Learn these words**

Yiddish

Grandpa – Zayda
Grandma – Bubba
Father – Tatta, Papa
Mother – Moota, Mama
Brother – Broder
Sister – Shvester

Hebrew: learn the words in “Bnai Hamishpachah,” to the tune of Farmer in the Dell, with gestures.

Hi-ney abba (Here is Father)
Hi-ney abba
Hi-ney, hi-ney
Hiney abba.
Choose a child to be a father.
Now the father chooses a mother:
Hi-ney ema...
Now a brother:
Hi-ney ach...
Add a sister:
Hi-ney ah-chot...
Grandfather:
Hi-ney sabah...
Grandmother:
Hi-ney savtah...
Everyone:
Hi-ney hamishpachah

♦ **Read and discuss:**

- The Keeping Quilt by Patricia Polacco. This story tells about how an immigrant family make a quilt using old clothes and how it is passed down to each generation.
- Mrs. Katz and Tush by Patricia Polacco. This story is about the relationship between an elderly Jewish woman and an African- American boy. It is very touching. This book is more appropriate for first graders.
- Abuela by Arthur Dorros. A fantasy about a little girl's adventures with her grandmother.
- "The Red Slippers" from Jewish Stories One Generation Tells Another – Retold by Penninah Schram

♦ **Bring a grandparent (or another person who is a surrogate grandparent) to class**

Have people break into groups of two children and one or two grandparents, depending on how many show up. A grandparent can share a story or tell a narrative about life during their youth.

NOTE: It is better to do this activity in small groups rather than the whole group, since some children may find it hard to sit for a long time. Ask visiting grandparents to bring a snack that they enjoyed during their youth.

♦ **Interview a grandparent.**

Since many children do not live near their grandparents, they can interview a grandparent about their youth by phone or email. They can share the interview in class. Before the children do the interview, the teacher may want to have the class decide what questions they will ask. (This is more appropriate as a first grade activity.)

♦ **Bring a picture of a grandparent.**

Children can show their pictures and talk about what they like to do with that grandparent or what they have learned from that grandparent. The teacher may want to model this activity by showing a picture of his/her own grandparents.

♦ **Grandparent Collage**

Materials: photos of child's grandparents or pictures of elderly people from magazines, glue, scissors, construction paper

Procedure: Children make a collage using photos of grandparents or magazine cut-outs of elderly people.

♦ **Grandparent Paper Dolls**

Materials: paper dolls(look at "Purim paper dolls" for procedure), glue, different colors of yarn, small pieces of paper, little pom-poms

Procedure: Children decorate paper dolls as they feel their grandparent looks.

◆ **Family Tree**

Materials: precut leaves. precut tree trunk, pre-cut branches – out of construction paper

Procedure: Children glue trunks and branches on a construction paper. Help children place “leaves” in appropriate places. Children write or dictate names of family members. Tell and help children write names in Hebrew or Yiddish.

Topic: Purim

Purim, a very joyous holiday, begins on the 14th day of Adar each year. This is February or March. It is traditionally celebrated by reading the Megillah or Book of Esther. The name Purim means “lots” for Haman used threw a “lot” to decide when to kill the Jews, and it fell on the month of Adar. For traditional Jews this is not a holy day, for even though the Book of Esther is in the Bible, it is not part of the Torah.

The holiday’s main ritual is telling the story of Esther, and every time Haman’s name is mentioned to make noise to drown out the name. Other rituals include a festive meal on the afternoon of Purim, sending gifts of food to friends (mishloch manot) and giving money to the poor (mattanot le-evyonim). People celebrate by wearing costumes, having plays, doing parades (Purim Shpiels) and drinking lots of liquor. This is all meant to make the day topsy-turvey; it is kind of like a Jewish Mardi Gras.

The Book of Esther is basically a parody. Queen Vashti is banished by her husband King Ahasuerus because she refuses to dance. Esther, a Jew, is chosen after a beauty contest to be the new Queen. The courtier, Haman, becomes grand vizier, but Mordechai, Esther’s uncle, refuses to bow down to him. Haman takes his anger out on all Jews and convinces Ahasuerus, to allow a decree calling for the massacre of the Jews throughout the kingdom. Esther tells the King that she is Jewish and convinces him not allow her people to die. Haman is hanged and everybody celebrates.

According to Michael Strassfeld in the book, The Jewish Holiday: A Guide and Commentary, many scholars question the story’s historicity. For example, Persian kings of the period married women from seven leading families, so the king’s marriage to Esther would have been impossible. Some scholars believe that Purim is related to an ancient pagan festival that was transformed by the Jews. Another theory is that the holiday and story were invented as a reaction to anti-Semitism. Some people also say it is a time to let loose and act silly before having to prepare for Pesach.

Objectives

- ◆ To learn the Purim story, and recognize and use the Hebrew and English words used in connection with Purim.
- ◆ To experience Purim rituals.
- ◆ To be silly and have fun, in keeping with the spirit of Purim.
- ◆ Learn the secular perspective about Purim.

Activities

- ◆ **Read and discuss**
 - It Happened in Shushan: A Purim Story by Harriet K. Feder.
 - Purim by Miriam Nerbove
- ◆ **Read and dramatize** “The Purim Trunk” from The Uninvited Guest and Other Jewish Holiday Tales by Nina Jaffee.
- ◆ **As a class, write a Purim Shpiel** (more appropriate for first grade).

- ◆ **Make a grogger**
Materials: small paper plate, dried beans or pebbles, stapler, popsicle sticks, crayons or markers, glue, decorating scraps like yarn, sequins, tissue paper, etc.
Procedure: Fold a paper plate in half. Put dried beans inside and staple the plate shut. Staple a stick to the plate to make a handle. Children may decorate by drawing pictures or by gluing scraps of paper on plate.
- ◆ **Make Purim paper dolls**
Materials: precut paper dolls (Fold white butcher paper in fourths and take a cookie cutter of a person, outline it and cut it out.) Precut pieces of yarn. Glue, Scraps of colored paper, tiny pom-poms. markers, scissors
Procedure: Give children paper dolls connected or separate. Encourage them to make Purim characters if they choose. (First Graders should be able to make paper dolls by themselves)
- ◆ **Make shalach monet bags/ mishloch monet**
Materials: white paper, lunch bags, crayons/markers, goodies for bags (i.e. raisins, nuts, hamantachen, etc.)
Procedure: Have children decorate bags. Tell them to give it to somebody such as a friend, sibling.
- ◆ **Make masks**
Materials: white paper plates, hole punches, different colored pieces of yarn, crayons/markers, glue
Procedure: Children decorate plates as they wish. Punch a hole on each side and tie a string / yarn so child can wear.
- ◆ **Make paper bag costumes**
Materials: plain paper grocery bag, marker/crayons, glue, scraps of paper, buttons, pom-poms, scissors
Procedure: Help children make a hole for head and on the sides for arms. Children decorate bags as they wish.
- ◆ **Sing:** “Three Cornered Hat,” “Purim”(tune of “Bingo”), “Hop Mayne Hamentashen,” “Chag Purim.”
- ◆ **Play the game** “King, King, Haman”(Duck, Duck, Goose).

Topic: Passover/Pesach

Pesach (“Passover” in English) begins on the 15th day of Nisan, which is in March or April, and lasts for eight days. This is a time to think about freedom – both for groups of people and for individuals. It is also a time to remember that throughout history the Jewish people have not always been free, and that there are many people who still are not free.

As we contemplate our freedom and enjoy the spring season, we remember the Pesach story, which describes how the Hebrews escaped from slavery and fled Egypt. Actually, there is no existing evidence that this was an historical event, but the story can be told as a metaphor. For example, as we leave an oppressive winter we experience a rebirth in springtime.

Passover is celebrated for eight days. On the first two nights, it is traditional that Jewish families share a special meal. Seder means “order,” and rituals are done in a certain order preceding the eating of the meal.

Objectives

Appreciate the Secular/Humanistic aspects of Passover: it marks the beginning of spring, it celebrates freedom, and it commemorates resistance to tyranny.

Recognize and utilize the words associated with the Passover story.

Experience Passover rituals.

Activities

♦ **Tell** the story of Passover, or read from any number of secular texts.

♦ **Read:**

- The Matzah that Papa Brought Home by Fran Munushkin
- Mrs. Katz and Tush by Patricia Polacco (This is a great book for first graders. It is not recommended for four and five year olds. The theme is very sophisticated)
- The Carp in the Bathtub Janice Kramer.
- One Little Goat by Marilyn Hirsh.

♦ **Make a Four Questions Book**

Discuss with the children what four questions – about anything at all -- would they most like answered.

Write those questions on four separate pieces of paper, and have the children illustrate each question as they wish.

♦ **Make “matzah” from papier mache.**

♦ **Make spring flowers**

Materials: precut cups from a cardboard egg carton, green pipe cleaners, tissue paper precut into manageable pieces, glue, scissors

Procedure: Encourage children to decorate cups the way they wish with tissue paper. Help them put the pipe cleaner through the cup.

♦ **Tie-Dyed Afikomen Cloth**

Materials: 3 large bowls with warm water, food coloring, men's large white hankies, crayons

Procedure: Write the word AFIKOMEN in the middle of the cloth so the color will be bright. Draw designs around edges. Put a cup of water in each bowl. Add a few drops of food coloring. Mix a different color in each bowl. Twist corner of the cloth and dip it into bowl of colored water. Squeeze it out. Repeat with other corners until cloth is colored. Lay flat to dry.

♦ **Make a Seder plate**

♦ **Make an Elijah's or Miriam's Cup**

Topic: Shavuot

Shavuot occurs on the sixth day of Sivan, seven weeks from the second day of Pesach, which is in May or June. “Shavuot” means “weeks.”

Originally, Shavuot was an agricultural festival that celebrated the second harvest in ancient Israel, the harvest of wheat – Chag Ha-Katzir. Wheat was brought to the Temple as an offering. Another name for the holiday is Chag Ha-Bikkurim – Holiday of the First Fruits. Farmers would bring their first fruits to the Temple and take part in religious rites.

With the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, it was hard to observe the agricultural rites. At some point during the Rabbinic period, the holiday began to be connected with Moses “receiving” the Ten Commandments from a god on Mt. Sinai. This connection was made probably because the Bible says that Moses went on top of Mt. Sinai during the month of Sivan.

These days, Jewish people acknowledge Shavuot’s agricultural roots. There are various religious and secular celebrations for the first fruits of the season. There are processions, dancing and singing to celebrate the abundance of the land, and symbolic first fruits are carried with ceremony and placed on a central dais.

Some other customs that occur on Shavuot are: decorating the home with branches, green plants and trees and eating dairy foods. One explanation for eating dairy is the connection with spring time. During the spring, baby animals are born and this brings an abundance of milk. In a way it is like a first “fruit” of the season.

Objectives:

- ◆ Understand the secular roots of Shavuot.
- ◆ Experience Shavuot rituals.

Activities:

- ◆ **Discuss the holiday.**
- ◆ **Read and discuss**
 - “The Two Brothers.” This story is not exactly about Shavuot, but it is about harvesting wheat, so it is definitely appropriate.
 - A Mountain of Blintzes by Barbara Diamond Goldin.
- ◆ **Make bikkurim baskets**

Materials: cardboard or plastic fruit basket (from strawberries or cherry tomatoes), yarn strands, glue, tissue paper, pipe cleaners

Procedure: Either weave yarn into basket or glue pieces of tissue paper on basket. Fasten with a pipe cleaner to use as a handle. Line basket with a napkin. Fill basket with fruits that are related to Shavuot.

- ◆ **Make flowers** (Look at Pesach for directions)

- ◆ **Plant flowers** (Sunflowers grow well.)

Materials: potting soil, containers such as plant pot, yogurt cup, paper cup, etc., package of sunflower seeds, water, scooper

Procedure: Make a few tiny wholes in container for proper drainage. Fill container with soil almost to the top. Poke two or three holes in soil. Place a seed in each hole. Cover seeds with soil. Water plant. Children can replant in home garden once seeds have sprouted.

- ◆ **Sing**

- “Zum Gali, Gali”
- Saleinu Al K’Teifeinu.

The Last Day or Two of the School Year

Objective:

The last day of class can be a formal and informal review of the year. This can be done with games in a fun and meaningful way.

Activities:

- ◆ **Read a story that's already been read.** Display many of the books that were read during the year. Have the class decide on which story that they would like to hear.

- ◆ **Whole group matching game:**

Materials: Two pictures each of Jewish symbols

Procedure: Hide two of each symbol around the room. Children need to find picture and find the child that has the matching picture. The class decides on which holiday it represents.

- ◆ **Another matching game:**

List each holiday (including Shabbat) on an experience chart. Show symbols. Children say which symbol goes to which holiday.

- ◆ **Connect the symbols game:**

Children pick all the symbols that go together and make a picture on a flannel board. (i.e. a menorah, a latke and a wrapped gift.)

- ◆ **Make a memory game:**

Materials: pictures of Jewish symbols (i.e. shofar, dreidel, succah , etc), stencils of Jewish symbols, markers, scissors, blank index cards, glue

Procedure: Children draw or trace or glue symbols on index cards.

- ◆ **Collage:**

Materials: cut outs of pictures of Jewish symbols, paper, glue

Procedure: Glue pictures to make a collage