

# ROSH HA-SHANAH & YOM KIPPUR

## EXPERIENCING THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: A PARENT FOLDER

### EXPERIENCING THE JEWISH YEAR

This year your child will be studying from *Experiencing the Jewish Year*, a book of hands-on and minds-on Jewish experiences. They need your help, too. It is good to learn about celebrating the Jewish holidays at school, but real celebration happens with family and often at home. Your school will provide exciting learning opportunities. It will be your job to complete the process. These folders that go with every holiday will guide your involvement.

In school, your child will be responsible for completing tasks, just like in a scouting movement. We call these tasks “opportunities.” There are also family opportunities that you will get to do as a family. These family opportunities will help your child to complete his or her obligations for each unit.



### ROSH HA-SHANAH: THE BASICS

Rosh ha-Shanah is the Jewish new year, but it is a different kind of new year from January 1. Rosh ha-Shanah is the day when we work on starting over. It is about looking at our behavior and seeing how it can be better people in the coming year. All of the customs that come with the holiday—apples and honey, a round hallah, the greeting of “*L’shanah tovah*,” and the sound of the shofar—convey the message that we can start over.

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### ROSH HA-SHANAH: THE THINGS WE DO

**לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה *L’shanah tovah*.** Just about every Jewish holiday comes with its own greeting. This one means “To a good new year.” You can think about the difference between wishing a good new year versus a happy new year. Not only is there a difference between “happiness” and “goodness,” but when one knows the Hebrew expression, one becomes part of the Jewish community..

**Eating apples and honey.** This traditional snack is a wish for a sweet new year. Food is a great vehicle the Jewish tradition uses for expressing its basic ideas.

**Round hallah.** A circle never ends. Hallah is the egg bread used to welcome Shabbat. It has its origin in the Temple and in the manna that fell in the wilderness. The round hallah is made especially for Rosh ha-Shanah to teach that the year is a circle.

**Hearing the shofar.** The shofar is the voice of the High Holidays. Hearing its call is the quintessential mitzvah for Rosh ha-Shanah. The voice of the shofar is designed to awaken us and remove our daze. With this heightened awareness we are able to look at our behavior and begin the process of becoming better people.



## ROSH HA-SHANAH

### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES (MAY BE DONE IN CLASS)

- ☐ Greeting your class with “*L’Shanah Tovah*”.
- ☐ Eating apples/hallah and honey with a *brakhah* or two.
- ☐ Blowing the Shofar.
- ☐ Making a Rosh ha-Shanah card.

**FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES:** These are the Rosh ha-Shanah opportunities that you can do as a family at home and your child can get credit for doing.

- ☐ **Sending out Rosh ha-Shanah cards.** This will help to define the circle of families and friends that form your family’s community.
- ☐ **Lighting the candles, saying the Kiddush, and blessing a round hallah to welcome Rosh ha-Shanah.** The Kiddush is the blessing over the wine that makes Rosh ha-Shanah into a sacred time. If your family already knows how to do the Shabbat table service, you’ll find that this is very much the same thing. If you want to start a tradition, Shabbat would be the perfect place to start.
- ☐ **Going to family (or regular) services.** Going to services is an act of belonging to the synagogue community. It says, “This place is part of our life.” It also says, “What you learn about there, we will try to make part of the way we live as a family.”



## YOM KIPPUR

### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES (MAY BE DONE IN CLASS)

- ☐ Practicing saying “I’m Sorry”.
- ☐ Making an *Al Het* List.

**FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES:** These are the Yom Kippur opportunities that you can do as a family at home and that your child can get credit for doing.

- ☐ **Saying “I’m Sorry” to each other.** Here is a chance to fix lots of unsaid issues and use the Jewish tradition to launch the opportunity.
- ☐ **Fasting for part of the day.** Fasting is not good for children, but, skipping one meal to be part of the community will cause no harm to a third grader. Here is a chance to practice being an adult.
- ☐ **Lighting Yizkor candles.** If you have a need or an opportunity to light Yizkor candles on Yom Kippur, then sharing your memories will make this practice a chance for some real family learning opportunities.
- ☐ **Going to family (or regular) services.**



**Rosh ha-Shanah cards.** Sending Rosh ha-Shanah cards is a recent tradition that arose in America. It is not only a way of sending wishes to others but it is also a way of tracing the connections that make up your family and community.

**Rosh ha-Shanah services.** Most synagogues have family services for the High Holidays. Joining with your community for this celebration lifts your child's connection to the Jewish people. Family services will be much more fun than adult services and this participation sets a good example for your child.

## YOM KIPPUR: THE BASICS

A third-grade class once defined Yom Kippur as I'm Sorry Day. Yom Kippur is our opportunity to be wrong and our chance to work on fixing things. That makes Yom Kippur a unique holy day. Most holidays celebrate past events. Yom Kippur is about creating our future. The day comes with fasting, not wearing leather, and a full panel of services.

The focus of the day is anything but childish. The best way to introduce students to the holiness of the day is to see adults model the behavior. In other words, your own commitment can do more to make Yom Kippur significant to your child than any experience that can be directly created for your child. Use it as a chance to be a great role model. Use it as a chance to apologize to your child and teach him/her that it is okay to be wrong.

## YOM KIPPUR: THE THINGS WE DO

**Spend all day in synagogue.** The big thing that adults do on Yom Kippur is pray. That may or may not be your thing, but Yom Kippur is a synagogue-centered celebration. There is little to do at home. Fasting and other acts of self-discipline (not punishment) are part of the process.

**Saying "I'm sorry."** The ten days from Rosh ha-Shanah to Yom Kippur are known as the Ten Days of Repentance. During these ten days it is a Jewish custom to atone for our sins by apologizing to anyone we know we have wronged. While students will rehearse this behavior in class, doing it for real at home can be a huge thing.

**The על חטא Al Het.** This prayer, which says "For the marks that we have missed before You," is a long list of possible areas for improvement. Each time we mention an area we may need to work on, we hit our chest. This is one of the most physical Jewish behaviors, one that reinforces the very meaning of the day.

**יִזְכוֹר Yizkor.** This custom and service means "memory." It is a time when we remember people who are important to us but who have passed away. Part of the Yizkor tradition is to light candles for people we miss. If you have such people, sharing your memory with your child, and lighting the candle before Yom Kippur can be a powerful way of sharing human meaning.



# Rosh ha-Shanah Table Service

## THE BRAKHAH OVER CANDLES

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ  
לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם טוֹב.

*Barukh Attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav,  
v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Yom Tov.*

Praised are You, Eternal Our God, Ruler of the Cosmos, Who makes us holy with the  
commandments and commanded us to kindle the lights of *Yom Tov*.

## THE BRAKHAH OVER WINE

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Barukh Attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam, Borei Pri ha-Gafen.*

Praised are You, Eternal Our God, Ruler of the Cosmos, Who creates  
the fruit of the vine.

## THE BRAKHAH OVER HALLAH

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Barukh Attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam,  
ha-motzi lehem min ha-aretz.*

Praised are You, Eternal Our God, Ruler of the Cosmos,  
Who brings forth bread from the earth.

## THE BRAKHAH OVER APPLES AND HONEY

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

*Barukh Attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam, Borei Pri ha-Etz.*

Praised are You, Eternal Our God, Ruler of the Cosmos, Who creates  
the fruit of the tree.



# SUKKOT

## EXPERIENCING THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: A PARENT FOLDER

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### SUKKOT: THE BASICS

Sukkot is the end of the story. The story starts mid-summer with the observance of *T'sha b'Av* (The ninth of the Hebrew month of Av). It is the date of the destruction of the two Temples. It is all about understanding that there is a crack in the world. Just as there is a crack in world, there is a crack in each of us. Near the end of the summer comes the month of *Elul*. This is the month when we blow the shofar every morning and get ready for Rosh ha-Shanah. Rosh ha-Shanah begins the new year. It begins the process of starting over. We begin to seal the cracks we have found. We strive to be whole and make the world whole. Rosh ha-Shanah leads to Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is when we do the heavy lifting. This is when we do our heavy duty repenting, sealing the breaks that had caused our destruction. A few days after Yom Kippur comes Sukkot. Sukkot is when we begin building again. We move out of our house and move into a sukkah, a booth. Here we begin to rebuild. Starting the sukkah is rebuilding the Temple. With our cracks healed, we begin to rebuild.

Along with the sukkah come the *etrog* and the *lulav*. Their meaning is unclear, lost in the shadows of history. What is clear is this: We shake the *lulav* and *etrog* in all six directions (north, east, south, west, up and down). We know that God is everywhere (as in six directions).

### SUKKOT: THE THINGS WE DO

**Building and Dwelling in a Sukkah.** There are lots of rules about building a kosher (fit for Jewish use) sukkah. They all add up to making sure that the sukkah is a temporary structure that feels more outside than in. Sukkot is a camping experience in which we get a final chance to be in touch with the environment before winter closes in.



The mitzvah (opportunity) of the sukkah can be fulfilled two ways: (a) actually sleeping out or (b) just eating in the sukkah. Either way it is a camping opportunity.



**Shaking the *Etrog* and the *Lulav*.** In the book of Leviticus we are told “AND YOU SHALL TAKE FOR YOURSELVES ON THE FIRST DAY [OF SUKKOT] THE FRUIT OF THE *ETROG* TREE, TIGHTLY BOUND BRANCHES OF DATE PALMS, THE BRANCH OF THE MYRTLE TREE, AND WILLOWS OF THE BROOK. YOU SHALL REJOICE BEFORE THE ETERNAL YOUR GOD SEVEN DAYS” (23.40). That is as far as the explanation goes. The midrash tries to make sense of this mitzvah by finding a series of symbolic meanings for each of the four items. What we are left with is the memory of an action that has been a

traditional ritual of Sukkot (without clear explanation) for thousands of years. There is history in this physical ritual.

**Ushpizin.** *Ushpizin* is an Aramaic word for “guest.” In the *Zohar*, a Jewish mystical classic, we are introduced to the custom of inviting famous Jews from the past into the sukkah. While this started out as a mystical custom, it





now makes a great impact on Jewish identity, getting our children to know and choose famous Jews from the past. Finding and identifying Jewish heroes is a major act of Jewish identification.

**Reading the Book of Ecclesiastes.** The Book of Ecclesiastes is one of three books in the Bible that is attributed to Solomon. Solomon was considered to be wise, so his three books are considered wisdom literature. Ecclesiastes (a.k.a. *Kohalel*) is considered to be the book Solomon wrote in his old age. It is different from the other two books attributed to him, *Proverbs* and *Song of Songs*. Each Jewish holiday is connected to one book from the writings. Ecclesiastes, the one connected to Sukkot, is a fun book.

**Hosha'nah Rabbah and Shmini Atzeret.** These two holidays, the last day of Sukkot and the day after Sukkot, have important historical roots. They were more important in ancient times than they are today; they are more celebrated in some synagogues than in others.

## SUKKOT



### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

(MAY BE DONE IN CLASS)

- ☐ Dwelling in a sukkah.
- ☐ Making a sukkah decoration.
- ☐ Shaking the etrog and lulav.
- ☐ Explaining the etrog and lulav.
- ☐ Ushpizin, inviting Jews from the past into the sukkah.

**FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES:** These are the Sukkot opportunities that you can do as a family at home and your child can get credit for doing.

- ☐ **Building a sukkah.** Building or assembling a sukkah and eating in it every night is a "wow" family experience. It makes the entire week an event.
- ☐ **Sleeping in a sukkah.** Camping out in the backyard is a fun thing to do. Here is a Jewish opportunity to get out the sleeping bags and do just that. Start naming the constellations now.
- ☐ **Going to Sukkot services.** As with High Holiday services, celebrating the Jewish holidays with a community makes a huge connection. It makes you a member.
- ☐ **Reading part of the Book of Ecclesiastes.** Ecclesiastes is a book of wisdom. It is the source of the song "Turn, Turn, Turn." Ecclesiastes is read and studied during the week of Sukkot. Here is a great chance to take out the family Bible and read together.
- ☐ **Celebrating Hosha'nah Rabbah.** *Hosha'nah Rabbah* is the last day of Sukkot. One of the things that make Jewish celebrations unique is that they have endings as well as beginnings.
- ☐ **Lighting Yizkor candles.** If you have a need or an opportunity to light Yizkor candles on Yom Kippur, then sharing your memories will make this practice a chance for some real family learning opportunities.
- ☐ **Celebrating Shmini Atzeret.** *Shmini Atzeret* is a new Jewish holiday. It comes on the day after Sukkot. It is another opportunity for Jewish gathering and celebrating. For some Jews, Shmini Atzeret is the same day as Simchat Torah.



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# SIMHAT TORAH

## EXPERIENCING THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: A PARENT FOLDER

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### SIMHAT TORAH: THE BASICS

*Simhat Torah* (the joy of Torah) is a comparatively modern Jewish holiday. It is in neither the Torah nor the Talmud. While sources don't mention it till the fourteenth century, there are some earlier references.

*Simhat Torah* has a simple story. We read part of the Torah every week. *Simhat Torah* is when we read the last part and simultaneously begin the first part. It is the end and the beginning. It is a celebration of the endless cycle of learning Torah.

### SIMHAT TORAH: WHAT WE DO

**End the Torah and begin again.** The Torah is comprised of five books. It ends with the death of Moses. It begins with the creation of the world. On *Simhat Torah* we finish Moses' story (the Book of Deuteronomy) and begin again at Creation (the Book of Genesis). The message here is that Jews never stop learning. The Torah never stops being part of our life. Like a Mobius strip, it is an endless cycle. From *Simhat Torah* the year continues on from Shabbat to Shabbat, portion to portion. One of those fifty-four Torah portions will be your child's bar/bat mitzvah portion. That is one of the places where the Torah's annual orbit crosses your family cycle.



# SIMHAT TORAH

## STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

(MAY BE DONE IN CLASS)



- ☐ Make a Möbius strip and compare it to the Torah.
- ☐ Write the Shema in Torah script.
- ☐ Study some Torah.
- ☐ Design a Simhat Torah flag.
- ☐ Join your class in a Torah aliyah.

**FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES:** These are the Simhat Torah opportunities that you can do as a family at home and your child can get credit for doing.

- ☐ **Find (or buy) a family Bible and open it together.** Every family should have a Bible. It is a basic reference tool for Western culture. It is also a core Jewish resource. You may not go to services every week. You may not hear the Torah read every week. But Torah needs to be part of your home values. Just by having a Bible you are making an impact on your child.
- ☐ **Attend Simhat Torah services.** Yom Kippur may seem more important. Hanukkah and perhaps Passover are more popular, but nothing (except, perhaps, Purim) is more fun. For your children, nothing can make being Jewish more fun. When Jews living in the former Soviet Union needed to pick a date to risk government repression and gather, they picked Simhat Torah. They wanted their Judaism to be positive and fun. So do your own piece of public motivation and share with your children the celebration of Simhat Torah.



**The Torah Scroll.** The *Sefer Torah* (Torah scroll) is Judaism's holiest object. It is clothed in special garments. It is crowned with silver and other decorations. It is kept in the ark underneath the eternal light, at the nexus of Jewish communal life. The Torah is both a guide to self-improvement and a storybook, a foundation of Jewish observance and a way of connecting to God. During *Simhat Torah* we take the scrolls out of the ark and dance and sing with them. We celebrate all the connections that Judaism makes in our life.

**Hakafot.** A major piece of the *Simhat Torah* service is seven Torah parades called *hakafot*. During this celebration children often carry Torah flags. People sing and dance, led by the Torah scrolls. It is a joyous celebration, one of the most fun times that once can have in synagogue.

**Kids' Aliyah.** As part of the Torah readings, one of the Torah *aliyot* (honors) is saved for the children. They come onto the *bimah* (stage), and adults hold the fringes of the four corners of *tallitot* (prayer shawls) and fly them over the heads of the children. This wonderful vision of children, the Torah, and *tallitot* floating like flying carpets is one of the great invitations that bring children into the universe of Torah. It is pretty good for the parents, too.



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# EREV SHABBAT

## EXPERIENCING THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: A PARENT FOLDER

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### EREV SHABBAT: THE BASICS



The Friday night kiddush (the sanctification blessing over wine) teaches us that *Erev Shabbat* is the combination of two stories. The first is that God created the world and rested on the seventh day. Just like God, we rest on the seventh day. The second story is that we were slaves in Egypt, and God brought us to freedom. We remember being slaves and celebrate our freedom.

While there are public services, the essence of Shabbat happens in the home. Families make Shabbat with candles, kiddush and hallah. They sit together and spend time. They talk and share. It is a moment of togetherness. It is a time where the world slows down enough to let family bonds be tight. It is the perfect time to share and connect. This celebration of creation and liberation is the ideal family moment.

### EREV SHABBAT: WHAT WE DO

**Shabbat candles.** The Shabbat candles started out primarily as a woman's activity. While men were at the synagogue, women were home preparing the meal. They took a moment alone, lit the candles as their meditation, and

## EREV SHABBAT

### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

(MAY BE DONE IN CLASS)



- ☐ Give two reasons for Shabbat.
- ☐ Light and bless the Shabbat candles.
- ☐ Decorate a cup and make Kiddush..
- ☐ Braid, bake and say the blessing over a hallah.

**FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES:** These are the Erev Shabbat opportunities that you can do as a family at home and your child can get credit for doing.

- ☐ **Have a Shabbat Dinner.** The ritual for Shabbat includes three blessings—candles, wine, and hallah—but that is not the whole evening. You can bake your own hallah and serve a chicken dinner, but that is not the essence of Shabbat. The real magic of Shabbat is slowing down and spending time with one another. The candles and the rest are tools. They are ways of saying that this evening is different. That makes them important. But the core you have to strive for is a family that stays around the dining table, that has the television off (without texting), that listens and talks to each other. That is the kind of family you want. Shabbat is a chance to create that moment every week.
- ☐ **Have a special Shabbat bedtime ritual.** Here is your chance to have the bedtime you want to have with your child(ren). It is a chance to talk and listen, to talk about hopes and dreams, to talk about the past week and the week to come. You can use tools—saying the Shema, reading Jewish stories, talking about values—but the most important investment is your time. Again, as with dinner, you want the world to slow down. You want to create a space and time in which you and your child(ren) are together, without distraction, talking about important things. You already have a vision of the bedtime you would like to create. Use Shabbat as your chance to create it.

transformed the week into Shabbat. Today many families have moved the candles to the Shabbat table and use them as the way of beginning the Shabbat table service.

**Kiddush.** Kiddush was done in synagogue by the men and then repeated at home for the families. It was the male way to turn the week into Shabbat. Kiddush means “sanctification.” It is a process of using wine (a tangible item) to invoke the holiness of Shabbat (an abstraction). The kiddush was a male way of conjuring the Shabbat out of the

week. The kiddush also tells Shabbat’s two stories: creation and exodus.

**Ha-Motzi/Hallah.** Hallah recalls the manna that fell in the desert. The manna would not fall on Shabbat, so people had to collect a double portion on Friday. It is traditional to use two hallot on Shabbat to remember this double portion. Hallah, the braided egg bread, also takes us back to the Temple. There Jews used to bring twelve loaves of braided bread every week. When we eat hallah as a family at home, we connect to the Jewish people who used to gather in the Temple.



## Erev Shabbat Table Service



### THE BRAKHAH OVER CANDLES

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ  
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת.

*Barukh Attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam, asher  
kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.*

Praised are You, Eternal Our God, Ruler of the Cosmos, Who makes us holy with the commandments and commanded us to kindle the lights of Shabbat.

### THE BRAKHAH OVER WINE

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Barukh Attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam, Borei Pri ha-Gafen.*

Praised are You, Eternal Our God, Ruler of the Cosmos, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

### THE BRAKHAH OVER HALLAH

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Barukh Attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam, ha-motzi lehem min ha-aretz.*

Praised are You, Eternal Our God, Ruler of the Cosmos, Who brings forth bread from the earth.





# HAVDALAH

## EXPERIENCING THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: A PARENT FOLDER

### HAVDALAH: THE BASICS



*Havdalah* is a short, powerful ceremony that takes place at the end of Shabbat. One of the lost secrets of the Jewish tradition is that Shabbat is a whole day, not just Friday evening. On Saturday night, after three stars can be seen in the night sky, we ambivalently close Shabbat. On one hand, there is a desire to get back to our normal lives. On the other hand, Shabbat brings great hope for the future. Jews have always thought that the time of the messiah would be a time “when every day is Shabbat.”

*Havdalah* is connected to the prophet Elijah. Elijah was a prophet who (according to the Bible) did not die but was carried up alive to heaven in a fiery chariot. Legend teaches that he will come back to start utopian times by announcing the coming of the messiah. *Havdalah* is a time of wishes. It is held in the dark by the light of a flickering multi-wicked candle. A sip of wine and a sniff of spices add to the sensory nature of the experience. It is a service that automatically works. It is an experience that invites and involves.

### HAVDALAH: WHAT WE DO

*Havdalah* is made up of five short pieces and perhaps a song or two.

#### Introductory paragraph.

*Havdalah* begins with an introductory paragraph that talks about redemption. This paragraph is for advanced *Havdalah* observers only.

**The blessing over wine (or grape juice).** This is the one-line *brakhah* over “fruit of the vine.” In kiddush the wine is the tangible object used in blessing the holiness of the day. The same is true here. Wine is the “cup of redemption.”

**The blessing over spices.** This, too, is a one-line *brakhah*. Spices remind us of the spirit of Shabbat.

**The blessing over fire.** We start Shabbat by lighting candles. We end it by putting out a candle in



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## HAVDALAH

### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

(MAY BE DONE IN CLASS)



- ☐ Review and perform the *brakhah* over wine (grape juice).
- ☐ Make a container for *b'samin* (spices) and learn its *brakhah*
- ☐ Make a Havdalah candle and learn its *brakhah*
- ☐ Understand the concept of Havdalah
- ☐ Participate in a Havdalah service

**FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES:** These are the Havdalah opportunities that you can do as a family at home and your child can get credit for doing.

- ☐ **Read an Elijah Story.** On the following page you will find an Elijah story. On a Friday night use it as a bedtime story. Read the story and then ask one question: “What lesson does this story teach?” Have your child(ren) share an answer. Then share your own answer. Simple process. Big reward.
- ☐ **Make or attend a Havdalah service.** Organize a Havdalah service. Do it with a couple of friends. Help your child’s teacher do it for the class. Be brave and do it alone as a family. Whatever way you put this together (and there is a copy of a Havdalah service in the back of this folder), you will be creating a magic moment for your family.

the wine (grape juice). To connect to the flames as we bless them, we capture their reflection in our fingernails.

**The blessing over separation.** *Havdalah* ends Shabbat. It makes a distinction between Shabbat and the rest of the week. At the end of the service we make a blessing over many important separations, ending with “between holy and ordinary.” Following this blessing we extinguish the candle.

**Songs.** Often we sing *Shavuah Tov* (a good week) and *Eliyahu ha-Navi* (Elijah the Prophet).

## Havdalah Service



### THE BRAKHAH OVER WINE

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם  
בורא פרי הנפץ.

*Barukh Attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam,  
Borei Pri ha-Gafen.*

Praised are You, Eternal Our God, Ruler of the  
Cosmos, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

### THE BRAKHAH OVER THE SPICES

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם  
בורא מיני בשמים.

*Barukh Attah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam,  
Borei minei V'samim.*

Blessed are You, Eternal, Ruler of the Cosmos, the  
Creator of all kinds of spices.

### THE BRAKHAH OVER THE CANDLE

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם  
בורא מאורי האש.

*Barukh Attah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam  
Borei m'Orei ha-Aish.*

Praised are You, Eternal, Ruler of the Cosmos, Who  
creates fire.

### THE BRAKHAH THAT SEPARATES SHABBAT & THE REST OF THE WEEK

ברוך אתה יי המבדיל בין קדש לחול.

*Barukh Attah Adonai ha-Mavdil Ben Kodesh l'Khol.*

Praised are You, Who divides between holy and  
ordinary.

## ELIJAH STORY: ELIJAH GOES TO A WEDDING

Elijah was the prophet who did  
not die. He flew up to heaven  
alive, in a flaming chariot.

Legend teaches that he  
will come back again,  
helping to bring the  
messiah. Legend  
also teaches that  
from time to time

Elijah comes and visits people, teaching interest-  
ing lessons.



Once, dressed as a beggar, Elijah came to join a wed-  
ding. His clothing was torn and dirty. His hair was oily  
and matted. They threw him out. They thought he was  
trying to crash the wedding just to eat the free food.

An hour later he returned. This time he was dressed  
in an expensive suit. He was walking with a fine cane  
with a golden handle. One his head was an elegant  
sable hat. When he entered the room the guests all  
stood out of respect for this distinguished visitor. The  
bride and groom came up to him and asked him to sit  
at their table. He nodded and sat near them.

The first course was a piece of gefilte fish. The old man  
picked up his fish and put it in one of his pockets. He  
added a scoop of horseradish to it. When the soup was  
served he poured it into another pocket. This time he  
asked for the salt and sprinkled a little of it into the  
soup pocket, saying, "It needed just a little."

Each time a course was served this stranger shoved  
it into one of his pockets. The string beans wound up  
sticking out of his vest.

Finally the stranger stood, took his glass of wine, said,  
"A toast to the bride and groom," and then spilled  
the wine on his sleeve. When he finished there was  
complete silence in the room. Many people sat with  
their mouths open. Elijah let the silence hang while  
he looked around the room. Then he said, "When I  
first came here dressed as a beggar you threw me out.  
When I returned dressed in expensive clothing you  
welcomed me and showed me respect. It is obvious  
that you were respecting my clothes, not me. So when  
you asked me to join in your feast, I let the clothes eat.  
They were your real guests." Elijah laughed and then  
disappeared. Left on the chair was his gold-handled  
cane. (Bar Ami Segel)





# HANUKKAH

## EXPERIENCING THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: A PARENT FOLDER

### HANUKKAH: THE BASICS



Hanukkah is a “festival of freedom.” We remember that because of the rightness of the cause. The Maccabees defeated the Greeks and won religious freedom for the Jews. While that is part of the story, along with the miracle of the oil that burned for eight nights, neither of these tales are the whole story.

Hanukkah began as a civil war—a fight between Jews who wanted to make every Jew observe all of the Torah and Jews who wanted to be more like the Greeks. This civil war was so problematic that Antiochus, the Greek monarch who is the bad guy of the story, imposed a national religion to soothe the friction. The Maccabees then revolted against this imposed order. The story we know (except for the miracle of the oil) is merely a slice of the larger story.

There are three different endings for the Hanukkah story. The Talmud teaches (Shabbat 21b) that we celebrate Hanukkah for eight days because the oil lasted for eight nights. In the Second Book of Maccabees (10:1-8) we are told that Hanukkah was a rerun of the missed holiday of Sukkot, which lasts for eight days. In a midrashic collection (*Pesikta Rabbi 2:1*) we are taught that the Maccabees threw eight iron spears into the ground and turned them into torches. Eight spears equal eight nights.

It doesn't matter which story is true. Hanukkah teaches us to stand up for what is right and to be a source of light in the darkness. Hanukkah means “dedication.” The name probably comes from the rededication of the Temple performed by the Maccabees, but for us it has to do with the rededication Hanukkah brings to our Jewishness.

### TORAH AURA PRODUCTIONS

## HANUKKAH

### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

(MAY BE DONE IN CLASS)



- ☐ Participate in the story of Hanukkah.
- ☐ Demonstrate lighting the Hanukkiyah.
- ☐ Participate in playing and explaining the dreidle.
- ☐ Make, eat, bless and enjoy a Hanukkah food.
- ☐ Make a mezuzah and practice dedicating a Jewish home.

**FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES:** These are the Hanukkah opportunities that you can do as a family at home and your child can get credit for doing.

- ☐ **Celebrate Eight Nights of Hanukkah.** Consistency is a big thing. It makes an impact to celebrate Hanukkah and have a party. It makes a much bigger impact to consistently celebrate Hanukkah for a week and a day. In this way the holiday of rededication becomes an act of family dedication. This commitment can make a huge impact on the identity of your children.
- ☐ **Attend a Hanukkah service.** Most synagogues make a big deal out of Hanukkah services. If you go to synagogue on the Shabbat of Hanukkah you will probably experience a major production. It should be a lot of fun.
- ☐ **Read a Hanukkah story.** We've included a good one for you in this folder, “The Return of the Junkyard Menorah, or How Judi Learned That It Is Important to Be Different”. Read it at bedtime and talk about it. Ask and share your own sense of “What lesson can we learn from this story?”
- ☐ **Put a mezuzah on a door.** If you have never hung a mezuzah on the door of your house, use this as an opportunity. If you have a mezuzah on the door of your house, this may be the perfect chance to hang one on your child(ren)'s door.

## HANUKKAH: WHAT WE DO

**Lighting the Hanukkiyah.** The one Hanukkah obligation is lighting the Hanukkiyah and saying the blessings. The first part of this practice is that you need a Hanukkiyah and candles. If you live in an area with lots of Jews, this is pretty easy. If you are part of a smaller Jewish community, there is the synagogue gift shop and the Internet.

A Hanukkiyah has nine branches. You start out with two candles on the first night and wind up with nine on the last night. One candle, the *shamash*, is the helping candle, and it gets lit first every night. One starts putting in candles (except for the *shamesh*) from the right side. One adds a candle every night. The new candle of the night gets lit first. So lighting happens from the left side.

On the first night there are three blessings to say. Every night after that one says only the first two.

**Potato latkes.** This special Hanukkah food tells the story of Hanukkah because the “oil lasted for eight nights,” and the latkes are fried in oil. In the back of this folder you will find a latke recipe.

**The dreidle is the Hanukkah game.** It is a gambling game, usually using nuts or bite-sized pieces of chocolate. The dreidle has four sides, with a Hebrew letter on each one. The four letters tell a story: “A big miracle happened there.” They also tell us how to play the game.



We start with everyone putting in a few items. Then spinning is done in turn. If you land on *nun* נ you get nothing. If you land on *gimmel* ג you get everything. If you land on *hey* ה you get half. And if you land on *shin* ש you have to put in. In the end everyone gets to eat the nuts or chocolate.

**Mezuzah.** The mezuzah is a box with a text inside. Jews place a mezuzah on the door of their house. It is not directly connected to Hanukkah, but it has a strong connection. The act of hanging a mezuzah on a door is called a Hanukkat habayit, a house Hanukkah. Just as the Maccabees rededicated the Temple, we dedicate our house as a Jewish space. This can be a big deal. It is a tradition to touch the mezuzah and

then your mouth when you exit and leave the house. This kissing of the mezuzah turns your house into a holy place.



### POTATO LATKES—MAKES 3 TO 4 DOZEN

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 4 potatoes peeled and cut into quarters | $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt |
| 1 small onion cut into quarters         | 1 teaspoon baking powder    |
| 2 eggs                                  | Freshly ground pepper       |
| $\frac{1}{3}$ cup flour                 | Oil for frying              |

1. Dice the onions and potatoes. Add the eggs and mix well.
2. Add the flour, baking powder, salt and pepper and mix to make the latke batter.
3. Fill a skillet with oil until it is  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch up the sides. When the oil is hot, drop in spoonfuls of the batter.  
Brown the latkes well on each side, turning once and pressing to flatten.
4. Drain on paper towels.
5. Serve with sour cream or applesauce.



## THE RETURN OF THE JUNKYARD MENORAH OR HOW JUDI LEARNED THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE DIFFERENT



My name is Judi, and this is the story all about how my father and I had a big fight one Hanukkah. It happened two years ago, when I was almost eight. It is the story of how I learned that it is sometimes important to be different.

I was the only Jewish kid in my class at school until Robert Gottleib moved into our neighborhood a year ago. Now that makes two. We go to a synagogue that is more than twenty minutes away.

I hate December. Every year I have to stand up in front of my class to sing "I have a little dreidle" and explain about the Maccabees. Everyone looks at me like I'm weird. I hate feeling different. For a long time I didn't understand why we were the only family who celebrated Hanukkah. I wanted to be like everyone else.

This is how this story happened. I didn't want to go to school and make a fool of myself talking about Hanukkah. The kids in my class weren't interested. Two weeks before winter vacation I told my father that I wouldn't take the family Hanukkiyah to school. He said, "You should be proud to be a Jew." That was easy for him to say. He didn't have to stand in front of the classroom. Then my father told me the family menorah story again. He told me how my Great-Great-Grandmother Rosenberg brought the family Hanukkah menorah from a place in Bavaria. I don't really know where that is. The rest of the story tells how my Great-Great-Grandmother took it from Baltimore to San Francisco in her hatbox. It had to travel on boats, trains and even a covered wagon. It was a good story, but I still didn't want to stand up in front of my class.

After the big talk I knew that my father was going to make me take the Hanukkiyah to school and tell everyone about the Maccabees anyway. I had a plan. I took the Rosenberg menorah out of the bookcase and hid it in a cardboard box. I didn't know that Mrs. Kapuchki, our cleaning lady, was going to think the box was garbage.

That night my father came into my room to tuck me in. I was still mad at him, but he wanted to have another long talk. He said, "Jews are different from other people. We don't do everything that everybody else does. We have our own important things. Our holiday is Hanukkah, and Hanukkah is a holiday about being different. When Antiochus wanted the Jews to do everything that everyone else did and not be different, the Maccabees had to fight for their freedom. Hanukkah teaches us to remember that Jews are different."

He hugged me. He said, "I love you. I want you to be special and different from everyone else. When you get older and everyone else does things like smoke or drink or take drugs, I want you to know that you can be different. When everyone else you know forgets to be kind to other people, I want you to be kind. When everyone else is afraid to stand up for what is right, I want you to be the one who

leads people to do the right thing. Never forget you are different and special."

He kissed me, said "good night," and turned off the lights. I didn't really understand him, but I loved him again.

The next day I changed my mind. When I came home from school, I went to get the Hanukkiyah. I wanted to polish it before I took it to class. Then I saw that it was gone. Mrs. Kapuchki said she had put it outside. I ran out to the alley, but the garbage was gone. The truck had taken it away.

That afternoon I had to go to Hebrew school. It was the first night of Hanukkah. I didn't want to go. All I could think about was that the Hanukkah menorah which had ridden in a covered wagon was now in the garbage. When Mrs. Hessel took out the Hanukkiyah and had the class practice the blessings, I ran out of the class crying. Josh ran out after me. He was the high school student who helped out in our class. He asked me what was wrong. I told him everything.

One minute after the bell rang, Josh and I were on our way to the garbage dump. I rode on his handlebars, and we got there with at least an hour to look before dark.

The garbage dump was really yucky. There were rotten tomatoes. Soggy papers were everywhere. I felt like I would never get clean, but we kept on looking.

We looked for an hour, and the sun was setting. I had given up. I said, "It's no use. Let's quit. I'm already in trouble."

Josh said, "What's the matter? Don't you believe in miracles?" He picked up a tin can and said, "I bet you that this tin can will land on the menorah."

To this day, I don't know how he did it. I don't think Josh knows either. He threw the can high in the air. It went way up and then came down on top of a big pile. When it hit, a tire rolled off of the pile and crashed into a cardboard box. The box moved. All of a sudden I saw the Shamash of my Hanukkiyah sticking through an egg carton. We both ran toward it.

I picked up the Hanukkiyah and kissed it. I knew just how the Maccabees felt when they cleaned the Temple. I didn't know what to say. Josh reached into his knapsack and took out a box of Hanukkah candles. He put them in the menorah, and right there we lit the candles and sang the blessings. I think I cried again.

When he rode me home, Josh pointed to a neon sign. He said, "A Hanukkiyah is just like that neon sign. That is why we put it in the window. It lets everyone know that as Jews we are proud to be different."

That night my father and I lit the Hanukkah menorah again and put it in the window for everyone to see. I told my father that I was proud to be different. I said, "If someone needs help, I will always be the one to help. If something is right and someone must speak up, I will be that person. I am going to be a good Jew."

Later that night I sneaked out of bed into the kitchen. I spent hours polishing and cleaning the Hanukkiyah. I felt just like the Maccabees. The Hanukkiyah that Great- Great-Grandmother Rosenberg brought back from Bavaria, and which came from Baltimore on a covered wagon, was always going to be protected. Late that night I had my own Hanukkah. My Hanukkiyah had its own dedication.

## PUTTING UP A MEZUZAH



1. A mezuzah should be nailed on the top one-third of the doorpost on your right as you enter a house or room. A mezuzah can be placed not only on the front doorpost, but also on the doorpost of every room, except for the bathroom.
2. The top of the mezuzah should lean about 60 degrees into the room. If the doorpost is too narrow to allow for the tilt, the mezuzah may be vertical.
3. Nail up the mezuzah.
4. Say the two blessing.

### THE BRAKHAH SAID UPON AFFIXING A MEZUZAH.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם  
אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לקבוע מזוזה.

*Barukh Attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam,  
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu lik'bo'a  
mezuzah.*

Praised are You, Eternal Our God, Ruler of the Cosmos, Who makes us holy with the commandments and commands us to affix the mezuzah.

### FOLLOW WITH THE BRAKHAH OVER HOLY MOMENTS.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם  
שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

*Barukh Attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam,  
She'he'heyanu v'kiy'manu, v'higi'anu la-zman ha-zeh.*

Praised are You, Eternal Our God, Ruler of the Cosmos, The One Who gives us life, keeps us going and helps us reach this moment in time.

## HANUKKAH BRAKHOT

THE FIRST TWO BRAKHAH ARE SAID ON ALL NIGHTS OF HANUKKAH.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם  
אשר קדשנו במצותיו  
וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה.

*Barukh Attah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melekh ha-Olam,  
Asher Kidshanu B'mitzvotav  
V'tzivanu l'Hadlik Ner shel Hanukkah.*

Praised are You Eternal, our God, Ruler of the Cosmos, Who made us holy through the mitzvot, and made it a mitzvah to kindle the Hanukkah lights.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם  
שעשה נסים לאבותינו  
בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

*Barukh Attah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melekh ha-Olam,  
She-asah Nissim la-Avotainu,  
Ba-Yamim ha-Hem, ba-Z'man ha-Zeh.*

Praised are You Eternal, our God, Ruler of the Cosmos, Who made miracles for our ancestors in their days at this very time of year.

THIS BRAKHAH IS SAID ON THE FIRST NIGHT ONLY.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם  
שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

*Barukh Attah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melekh ha-Olam,  
She-he'heyanu, v'Kiy'manu, v'Higiyanu la-Zman  
ha-Zeh.*

Praised are You, Eternal Our God, Ruler of the Cosmos, The One Who gives us life, keeps us going and helps us reach this moment in time.



# TU B'SHVAT

## EXPERIENCING THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: A PARENT FOLDER

TORAH AURA PRODUCTIONS

### TU B'SHVAT: THE BASICS



Because of a technical legal issue in Jewish law, trees need a Jewish birthday. Tu B'Shvat, the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of Shevat, is that birthday. Tu B'Shvat became the holiday for trees and in turn the Jewish day to focus on the environment.

There is a rule in the Bible (Deuteronomy 20:19–20) that it is wrong to cut down fruit trees when you besiege a city. Jewish law expands this ruling into first “Don’t cut down any tree” and then “Don’t waste anything that can be useful to other people.” Jewish law moves from fruit trees into composting and recycling.

One of the initial needs when the Jews returned to the land of Israel in the nineteenth century was planting trees. Trees were needed to change the ecology of the desert and swampland back into a land flowing with milk and honey. The Jewish National Fund was created, and its primary mission was the planting of trees. Planting trees became a Zionist commitment and an expression of connection to the land of Israel. Israel is the only country that ended the 20th century with more trees than when it began.

The Bible (Deuteronomy 8:8) lists seven kinds of special produce that is grown in the land of Israel.

### TU B'SHVAT

#### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES (MAY BE DONE IN CLASS)



- ☐ Explain why we need trees & Tu B'Shvat.
- ☐ Write a tree poem.
- ☐ Eat from the seven kinds and/or fifteen different fruits.
- ☐ Create a list of human fruits

**FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES:** These are the Tu B'Shvat opportunities that you can do as a family at home and your child can get credit for doing.

- ☐ **Planting something(s) together.** Planting something is an ongoing responsibility. Planting means watering and other caretaking. Making a family commitment to a plant or tree is a great thing to do. It means giving life together. It could be growing something as simple as parsley for the Passover seder or as complex as a fruit tree. The choice will have to be based on your realities. But something amazing happens when you grow something as a family.
- ☐ **Download a Tu B'Shvat Seder.** You may think it is hard to do a Passover seder, but a Tu B'Shvat seder is actually much easier (because there are not a lot of formal rules). Go to your computer, search out some Tu B'Shvat sederim, and pick one or a few. Use the one you find or edit the few together. Invite a few other families to join you and then create a Jewish event that you and your children will never forget. Imagine doing something Jewish, something for your family that also heals the world. That is a pretty good option.
- ☐ **Add some process to your family lifestyle that protects trees or the environment.** One of the key messages of Tu B'Shvat is that trees are essential to our lives. There is no better time to make a commitment to helping the environment. Connecting a holiday celebration to an act of Tikkun Olam (healing the world) is a powerful statement and memory.
- ☐ **Make a PowerPoint presentation of one tree.** One of the best ways to understand trees is by coming to know one tree. This opportunity suggests that a family get a chance to know one tree. Observe it and record it. Spend time with it. Take everything you have learned from this tree, everything you have collected about it, and turn it into a PowerPoint presentation. As a family, research and report on your tree.



## HONI THE CIRCLE MAKER—A STORY

A long time ago there lived a man named Honi ha-Me'agel, Honi the circle maker. Honi was a very wise man.

**O**ne beautiful spring day Honi went on a walk. He admired the trees, the birds and the flowers. While he was out on his walk he noticed an old man planting a tree. He wondered why such an old man would be busy planting a tree. A tree takes many years to grow, and he would not even be around to enjoy in its beauty. Honi was also curious about what kind of tree the man was planting. He went up to the man and asked what type of tree he was planting. The old man excitedly told Honi that he was planting a carob tree. The man added that in about seventy years the tree would produce delicious carobs. Honi was surprised. He asked the man, "Do you think you will live another seventy years?"

The man laughed. "Oh, no! I remember eating carobs when I was a young boy. Those carobs were so good. Someone must have planted the tree so I could enjoy in its sweetness. I want to plant a tree to make sure that future generations can enjoy this tree's wonderful fruit." Honi told the man what a smart thing that was to do. He told the man that it was nice to meet him and went on his way. While on his walk Honi became very tired.

Honi decided he would take a short nap. He lay down on the ground and fell asleep. While he slept a tree grew over him. It became like a covering. The tree protected him from rain, snow, sun and wind. Honi slept a long time.

When Honi finally woke up the sun was shining. What a good nap I had, he thought to himself. Honi saw a man nearby picking carobs from a tree. He did not look like the man that Honi was talking to before he fell asleep. Honi went over to the man and asked him if he was the one who planted the tree.

The man laughed, "Oh, no—my great-grandfather planted this tree for me seventy years ago." Honi could not believe what he had just heard. He must have slept for seventy years. The man looked at Honi and said, "I am going to plant a tree like this for my children and grandchildren, too, just as my great-grandfather did, so my family can enjoy the carobs just as I do."

Honi remembered the words of the old man. He smiled and went on his way. The carobs were great.

It became a tradition to eat these seven foods on Tu B'Shvat. The Kabbalists (mystics) from Tzfat (in the 1500s) turned the eating of the seven kinds of food into a structured meal, a Passover-like seder. Today Tu B'Shvat seders are major Jewish events. They are a chance to connect to the land of Israel and use trees to show concern for the environment.

## TU B'SHVAT: WHAT WE DO

Tu B'Shvat is the day in the Jewish year when we celebrate trees. Jews have taken a minor law that was used to tithe fields and turned it into a national celebration. It is a day for celebrating trees in what we eat, in what we do, and in what we learn.



**Planting trees.** Perhaps the definitional act of Tu B'Shvat is planting trees. It can be buying trees in the land of Israel, or it can be a tree that grows in your (or the synagogue's) backyard. If you live in a place where Tu B'Shvat falls in the middle of winter, it can be planting things inside that can later (when it is warmer) be transplanted. Planting indoor plants is perfect, too. Tu B'Shvat is showing the green.

**Tu B'Shvat seder.** The most important religious expression of Tu B'Shvat is the Tu B'Shvat seder. Here we take the spiritual dimension of trees and the spiritual dimension of the land of Israel and work them into a meal in which we eat and drink fruits, nuts, grains, and produce. We do it with blessings and lessons, and we connect the gift of the land of Israel to the gift of the earth.



# PURIM

## EXPERIENCING THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: A PARENT FOLDER

TORAH AURA PRODUCTIONS

### PURIM: THE BASICS



On Purim we celebrate the story of Esther, who became a Jewish hero after she revealed her hidden Jewish identity to the non-Jewish king she married and saved the Jewish people. Esther, with the help of her Uncle Mordechai, saved the Jewish people from destruction by the wicked Haman. It is the story of how people wound up saving the Jewish people on their own, or it is a story of how people influenced by God saved the Jewish people.

After the first Purim, when the Jewish people were saved, Esther and Mordechai sent two letters to the Jewish people all over the world giving them four mitzvot (commandments).

1. To celebrate this date every year.
2. To hear the Megillah of Esther when it is read out loud.
3. To send gifts of food (*shelah manot*) to friends and family.
4. To send gifts to the poor (*matanot l'evyonim*).

These four mitzvot create the celebrations for Purim. For example, the mitzvah to celebrate has given us costumes, carnivals, and most of the playful elements of the holiday.

## PURIM

### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

(MAY BE DONE IN CLASS)



- ☐ Make a Purim mask.
- ☐ Examine a Megillah.
- ☐ Make a gragger.
- ☐ Act out the story of Purim.
- ☐ Bake hamantashen and send *shelah manot*.
- ☐ Use Purim as a tzedakah opportunity.

**FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES:** These are the Purim opportunities that you can do as a family at home and your child can get credit for doing.

- ☐ **Go to Purim services.** Purim services are probably the most fun you can have in a synagogue. Purim services are really a party. This is a chance to see Jewish life as a total celebration. Here is a promise: Go to Purim services in a costume, bring a noisemaker, and you will experience one of the best Jewish moments of your life.
- ☐ **Send *shelah manot* (food gifts) to friends.** Here are the possibilities: Make a list of your best friends. Set your children decorating containers. Go into the kitchen and bake. Remember, it takes two different kinds of food (like a hamantashen and a brownie) to be valid *shelah manot*. Place the food in the decorated container and use your list to make deliveries. Fun! Like a pyramid scheme, in a couple of years (even if you are the first person on the block) you will be getting more than you give.
- ☐ **Give family *matanot l'evyonim* (gifts to the poor).** Use Purim as the opportunity for a family tzedakah council. Set up a family meeting and decide how to allocate your Purim tzedakah. Set an amount that can be spent. Pick various possible recipients and then discuss and vote on the way your family will fulfill that *matanot l'evyonim* obligation. The family process will teach a great lesson.

## PURIM: WHAT WE DO

**Costumes.** Purim is not Halloween, but it is the Jewish costume opportunity. It is a tradition to wear a Purim costume to the Megillah reading and/or the Purim carnival. On Halloween we dress up to fool the goblins and the ghosts. On Purim, as at Mardis Gras, costumes are a form of celebration. They are a version of pure celebration and a part of acting out the story. By dressing as Mordechai or Moses, as Esther or Ruth, we give our children a chance to become Jewish heroes. We are saying “You can make a difference to the Jewish people.”



**Reading the Megillah.** The Megillah (scroll) is the Book of Esther. It tells the story of how Esther found her courage and saved the Jewish people. Esther’s story is the story of every Jew. By following her example, even Jews who are not the most involved can have their Jewish moments. They, too, can make a difference.

**Gragger/Ra’ashan.** Whenever we read Haman’s name in the Megillah it is the responsibility of the congregation to make as much noise as possible. It is act of blotting out evil. The gragger is a noisemaker designed for the

Megillah reading. In Hebrew it is called a *ra’ashan*. The lesson here is that when act together we are stronger than evil. This is an important lesson to share with your children.

**Hamantashen.** Hamantashen are triangle-shaped cookies that are made for and eaten on Purim. One tradition teaches that Haman wore a triangular hat, another that he had triangular ears. These cookies are often part of *shelah manot*. As with all Jewish holiday foods, hamantashen create Jewish memories and powerful connections to the Jewish people.

**Shelah Manot.** Tradition teaches that Mordechai and Esther commanded us to celebrate Purim by sending gifts of food to family and friends. That commandment teaches us that we do not live in the world alone. *Shelah manot* gifts often include hamantashen, friet, candy and sometimes a bottle of wine. To fulfill *shelah manot* prepare baskets for the people who are part of your inner circle. *Shelah manot* builds connections, and that is a good thing for every family.

**Matanot L’Evyonim.** *Tzedakah*—doing the righteous thing to help others—is a major Jewish value. Just about every holiday has its own special tzedakah opportunity. The one for Purim is *matanot l’evyonim*. One of the really nice lessons of the Jewish tradition is that there are constant opportunities to heal the world. Day by day, holiday by holiday, we have an obligation to make the world a better place. It is a great lesson that every time we celebrate we go beyond ourselves to make a difference.

### HAMANTASHEN—MAKES 3 TO 4 DOZEN



- |                                   |                                |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2 tablespoon vegetable shortening | ½ teaspoon vanilla             |
| 2 tablespoon butter               | 1⅓ cups flour                  |
| ⅓ cup sugar                       | pinch of salt                  |
| 1 egg                             | Pie filling, jam or preserves  |
| 1 tablespoon orange juice         | egg wash made of egg and water |

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Grease baking sheets.
2. Cream together the shortening and sugar. Add the egg and blend until smooth. Stir in the orange juice and vanilla.
3. Fold in the flour, salt and baking powder and mix to make a firm but soft dough. Cover and let rest ten minutes.
5. Roll out dough on lightly-floured board to a ¼" thick. Use a 3-inch cookie cutter and cut the dough into rounds. Brush each with the egg wash.
6. Fill the round with some of the filling. Draw three sides together by folding two sides toward the center to form the top and the remaining dough toward the center to meet the other edges. Brush with egg wash.
7. Bake until golden brown, about 18-20 minutes. When done, remove the Hamantaschen from the cookie sheet and let cool.



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# PASSOVER

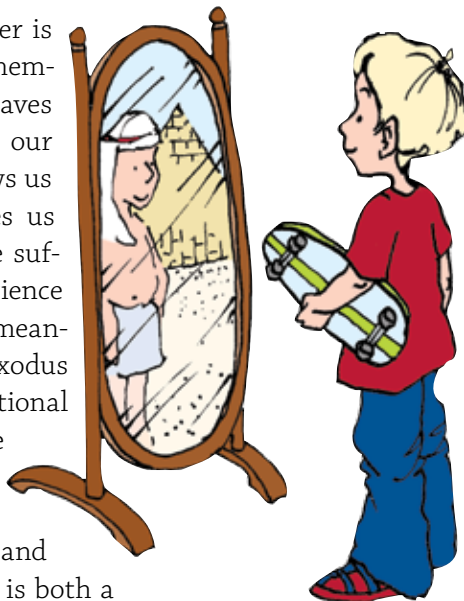
## EXPERIENCING THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: A PARENT FOLDER

### PASSOVER: THE BASICS



Here is the irony: Passover is the most complicated of Jewish home performances. It requires specific foods, a difficult and lengthy home ritual, a set of sophisticated rules about what may or may not be eaten, and more. On the other hand, Passover represents the most the Jewish celebration with the chance to make the greatest impact. What that means is that doing Passover is a lot of work, but it has a big payoff. The good news is that the ceremony comes with a guidebook, the Haggadah.

At the heart of Passover is the notion that our memory of having been slaves in Egypt is central to our Jewish identity. It draws us together and motivates us to help others who are suffering. The Egypt experience is central to all Jewish meaning. The story of our exodus from Egypt is foundational story that leads to the creation of the Jewish people, to the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai, and to the land of Israel. It is both a religious and a national anchor for Jewish life.



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### PASSOVER

#### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

(MAY BE DONE IN CLASS)



- ☐ Ask and answer the Four Questions.
- ☐ Bake and eat matzah.
- ☐ Make and eat haroset.
- ☐ Tell your own story of being a slave in Egypt.
- ☐ Make and eat maror in a Hillel sandwich.
- ☐ Say the plagues and dip out grape juice with your finger.
- ☐ Sing Dayyenu.

**FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES:** These are the Passover opportunities that you can do as a family at home and your child can get credit for doing.

- ☐ **Create, modify or supplement your family Haggadah.** Look at [www.ehow.co.uk/how\\_6939170\\_make-own-haggadah.html](http://www.ehow.co.uk/how_6939170_make-own-haggadah.html) and the pages attached to it. It gives you permission to create a haggadah just for your family. You can pick and edit the readings. You can write plays or your own pieces. You can add songs and games. You can build a seder service that is perfect for your family. Go and have a try at it.
- ☐ **Have or attend a seder.** We have already waxed poetic about the importance of participating in a seder. Now it is your turn to go and do it.
- ☐ **As a family, keep Passover for the week.** While sederim are big moments, the week of Passover is a test. It is really a question: "Can I remain Jewish and do all the other things I want to do with my life?" Keeping Passover for a week is a test of the assumption that Judaism fits with my life. When the whole family makes a commitment to keep Passover together, it is not only easier, but it makes a huge statement about the future of Jewish life in your family. It is a great thing to do together.

The basic Jewish ritual meal consists of candles, kiddush (blessing over wine), *ha-motzi* (blessing over bread) and *birkat ha-mazon* (grace after meals). The seder service preserves these four elements and weaves around them another eleven pieces (for a total of fifteen). While a Passover seder may seem long, it is really nothing more than the Shabbat seder on steroids. If you can handle a Friday night ritual at home just by reading and following directions, you can expand it into a Passover seder. The thing that expands the Passover seder is the telling of the story, the ritual eating of the Passover foods—parsley, matzah, bitter herbs—and three additional blessings over wine. Some songs and some readings complete the seder.

The seder was the original family education program. In invited children to play hide-and-seek with matzah and ask questions; it assigned parts to different family members and was designed to appeal to the senses. It is one of the most powerful experiences and memories you can have as a family.



## PASSOVER: WHAT WE DO

**Eat matzah.** Matzah is the essence of Passover. It is a simple food. It is just flour and water, mixed and cooked within eighteen minutes. It is very important that it is

given absolutely no chance to rise.

Matzah comes with a set of meanings. It is the bread that didn't have time to rise when we ran from Egypt. It is the poor bread that we ate when we were slaves. And it is the taste of redemption. It is a memory of Egypt, part of the story of the Exodus, and the taste of the best possible future.

We may eat matzah all year, but we especially eat matzah at Passover. Matzah plays a major role in the seder. Bread is central to any Jewish meal because we bless it to bless the entire meal. But matzah's role in the seder is even greater. It is the through line by which we unfold and tell the whole story of Passover.

**Burn hamatz.** Hametz is the opposite of matzah. It is food that has risen, that has fermented, that is more than simple flour and water, matzah. Before Passover we collect and get rid of the hametz; on the night before Passover we collect the last of the hametz and burn it. The idea is not to eat hamatz all through Passover. We want to stay on the level of matzah.

The core idea is this: Matzah is simple, plain, basic. It represents our true self. Hametz is inflated, bloated, stuffed with all kinds of things that keep our true self from coming through. We use Passover to get rid of all the hametz that retards our life and get back to the simple, plain, basic level of matzah.

**Keep Passover for a week.** Keeping Passover for a week is a big thing. It means that a part of your Jewish self is always active. Kids may go to school, eat with their friends, go out to recess, and still keep Passover in the food that they eat. This is a huge idea. It is a way of manifesting a piece of your Jewish self in the ordinary world. Passover teaches us how to keep a part of Jewish self active while interacting in the world as a normal person. This teaches that Judaism is more than the synagogue, more than what we do at home, and can be part of everything that we are and we do.



**Make seder.** Some Jews skip seder. Other Jews just have a meal together on Passover and call it a seder. Many Jews go to family and friends (or have them over) and create a full seder service and a wonderful Passover meal. This last option is the most difficult (though it is not much harder than Thanksgiving). But the effort, the sweat, the cut finger and all the other things that are involved make this a life changer. Seder is family Judaism at its best.



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# YOM HA-ATZMA'UT

## EXPERIENCING THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: A PARENT FOLDER

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### YOM HA-ATZMA'UT: THE BASICS



Yom ha-Atzma'ut fireworks over Tel Aviv

Yom ha-Atzma'ut is Israeli Independence Day. It celebrates the creation of the modern State of Israel. Yom ha-Atzma'ut is an automatic event inside the land of Israel; it takes over the whole country. In America Yom ha-Atzma'ut is a choice; you have to go out of your way to participate. When we celebrate Yom ha-Atzma'ut outside of the land of Israel, we express our connection to the miracle of the state of Israel.



For an American Jewish family, Yom ha-Atzma'ut comes with a question: "What relationship do I want our family to have with Israel?" There are lots of options: (a) Israel can be a Jewish place that keeps Jews safe. (b) Israel is the center of the Jewish people. (c) Israel is a place we can/will visit to build our Jewish connections. (d). Israel is a source of Jewish culture, identity, and learning. Your choice of a way to celebrate Yom ha-Atzma'ut begins the foundation of one of these relationships (or others).

In America there are communal gatherings, walks, parades,

### YOM HA-ATZMA'UT

#### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES (MAY BE DONE IN CLASS)

- ☐ Observe a moment of silence and then sing Ha-Tikvah.
- ☐ Fill in locations on a map of Israel.
- ☐ Learn an Israeli dance.
- ☐ Go on an internet Israeli shopping trip.
- ☐ Make and eat an Israeli snack.

**FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES:** These are the Yom ha-Atzma'ut opportunities that you can do as a family and your child can get credit for doing.

- ☐ **Attend a community Israel event.** The easiest way of getting a lift from Yom ha-Atzma'ut is to find a community event that celebrates it. There is something very powerful and influential about being at a gathering of a large number of Jews. Celebrating Israel is one of the things that bring the Jewish community together. You should be part of it.
- ☐ **Make real (or imaginary) plans for a family trip to Israel.** The most powerful way of building a connection to Israel is by going there. It would be nice if your family already had plans to go to Israel. But if those plans have not yet been made, planning an imaginary trip conveys the message that such a visit is possible. We want our children to want to go to Israel because Israel represents the strongest foundation for Jewish connection and identity.
- ☐ **Have an Israel birthday party.** Want to make a small but effective statement about Israel? Have a birthday party. Make a cake. Hang Israeli flags. Dress in blue and white. And most of all, have a good time. This can be just a family event, the kind of thing you can do alone in your home. That's fine and wonderful. What you most want to do is to say "Israel matters to us."



and lots of other ways of celebrating. Some synagogues have their own events or services. If you look (try the local Jewish newspaper if you have one), you will find options. If none of the other possibilities work, you can create your own event—make it a barbeque with some friends or something you do just as a family. But to build a family connection to Israel, Yom ha-Atzma'ut is the right time.

## YOM HA'ATZMA'UT: WHAT WE DO

**Yom ha-Zikaron.** In Israel, the day before Yom ha-Atzma'ut is called Yom ha-Zikaron, The Day of Remembering. It is set aside to honor those who fell in the creation and protection of the state of Israel. Just before 11:00 A.M. there are two minutes of silence that are followed with a siren that begins Yom ha-Atzma'ut.

**Ha-Tikvah** is the national anthem of the state of Israel. It translates as "The Hope". It is sung on Yom ha-Atzma'ut and at many other Jewish occasions. To connect to the Jewish people, you and your children should know how to sing it. You can find words, translations, transliteration, chords, and MP3 files on the internet to help you out.

**Israeli folk dancing.** One of the big ways of celebrating Israel is by learning and doing Israeli folk dances. Your synagogue or your community may have Israeli dance opportunities. It is a fun family thing to do.

## HA-TIKVAH

*Kol od ba-levav p'nimah  
nefesh yehudi homiyah.  
u'lfatei mizrah kadimah,  
ayin l'tziyon tzofiyah.*

*Od lo avdah tikvateinu  
ha-tikvah bat sh'not alphayim.  
lih'yot am hofshi b'artzeinu  
eretz tziyon vi'rushalayim.*

כָּל עוֹד בְּלֵבָב פְּנִימָה  
נֶפֶשׁ יְהוּדִי הוֹמִיָּה.  
וּלְפָאֵתִי מִזְרַח קְדִימָה  
עֵין לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפִיָּה.

עוֹד לֹא אֲבָדָה תִּקְוַתֵּנוּ.  
הַתִּקְוָה בַּת שְׁנוֹת אֲלָפִים.  
לִהְיוֹת עַם חֲפָשִׁי בְּאַרְצֵנוּ  
אֶרֶץ צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

As long as in the heart, within,  
a Jewish soul still yearns,  
And onward toward the East,  
an eye still watches toward Zion—

Our hope has not yet been lost,  
the two thousand year old hope,  
To be a free nation in our own  
homeland,  
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.



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# SHAVUOT

## EXPERIENCING THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS: A PARENT FOLDER

### SHAVUOT: THE BASICS



Shavuot is the lost Jewish holiday, probably because it happens at the end of the school year and often represents the last session of Jewish schools. It is also undersold by the Jewish tradition. There are three Jewish festivals when Jews used to bring their offerings up to Jerusalem to the Temple. The other two pilgrimage festivals are each a week long. Sukkot comes with the sukkah, a camping experience. Passover comes with matzah and a change in diet. Shavuot, the third pilgrimage festival, is a one- or two-day affair with no major symbols or rituals.

Shavuot does have a good story. It is the Mount Sinai holiday, remembering when God gave us the Torah and we said, *Na'aseh v'nishma*, "We will do and we will listen." That turns into basic practices—studying all night and eating dairy—that come from midrashim about the time when the Torah was given.

Shavuot is the second Torah holiday in the year, and it has gained momentum as the Confirmation holiday. Shavuot Confirmation is a kind of graduation from Jewish learning that was added by first the Reform Movement (and then others), where it was felt that thirteen was too young an age at which to end one's formal Jewish education. Confirmation was placed on Shavuot and became a reenactment of Mount Sinai in which confirmands say *Na'aseh v'nishma*, "We will do and we will listen."

Shavuot means "weeks." It comes exactly seven weeks after Passover, and those intermediate weeks were set aside for the

Shavuot is the lost Jewish holiday, probably because it happens at the end of the school year and often represents the last session of Jewish schools. It is also undersold by the Jewish tradition. There are three Jewish festivals when Jews used to bring their offerings up to Jerusalem to the Temple. The other two pilgrimage festivals are each a week long. Sukkot comes



### TORAH AURA PRODUCTIONS

## SHAVUOT

### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

(MAY BE DONE IN CLASS)



- ☐ Count the days from Pesah to Shavuot.
- ☐ Make a storyboard of the *bikkurim* prayer.
- ☐ Green your classroom.
- ☐ Tell a personal story of Mt. Sinai.
- ☐ Act out the Book of Ruth.

**FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES:** These are the Shavuot opportunities that you can do as a family and your child can get credit for doing.

- ☐ **Make a *milkhig* meal for Shavuot.** This is a simple change that will signify the reality of Shavuot in your family life. By making a holiday dinner with candles, wine (grape juice), *hallah*, and dairy, *erev* (the evening of) Shavuot will be a moment in your family's Jewish life.
- ☐ **Go to a confirmation or Shavuot service.** Confirmation will show you Jewish teenagers at their best. Your child will see teenagers who have completed the first part of their Jewish education, creating a positive expression of their Jewish experience. There is no better way to say that Judaism will always be part of your life.
- ☐ **Green your house for Shavuot.** Here is a chance to connect your Jewish commitments to the environment. Celebrate the coming of summer, open your windows, and bring the outside in as a Jewish act.
- ☐ **Midnight Torah study.** Try waking your child at midnight (eleven or ten P.M. will do nicely) and read the following story as a Torah study for Shavuot. (It is actually a midrash.) Don't worry about the right answers. Have a good time and make it a moment to remember. Take a picture of your late-night study session as a reminder. It will go in your child's textbook.

counting of the omer—a method of timing the spring wheat harvest. On Shavuot Jewish farmers brought their *bikkurim* (first fruits) of the *sheva minim* (the seven kinds)—wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates—to the Temple in Jerusalem (Deut. 8:8).

## SHAVUOT: WHAT WE DO



### Decorating with green.

Here is a tradition that started with harvest in ancient Israel that you can bring into your home. In ancient Israel, when Jewish farmers brought their first fruits on Shavuot to the Temple in Jerusalem, they decorated

their oxen and carts with flowers and greens. Shavuot is on the cusp between spring and summer. It is when we connect our insides to the out-of-doors. It is a nice idea to celebrate Shavuot with a connection to nature by bringing flowers and plants into your home.

**Leil tikkun Shavuot.** One story told about the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai is that the Jews overslept on the morning it was supposed to happen. As a way of making sure that it never happened again, it has become a custom to study Torah all night (or late into the night) on Shavuot.

**Dairy.** Cheesecake and blintzes are popular Shavuot foods. It is a tradition to eat dairy (rather than meat) food on Shavuot. This comes from an understanding that the laws of ritual slaughter (the creation of kosher meat) didn't come to the Jewish people until the Torah was given on Shavuot.

**The Book of Ruth.** On each of the major Jewish holidays a book from the Writings (the third part of the Bible) is read. For Shavuot we read the book of Ruth. Ruth is the story of a non-Jew who had married a Jewish man. When her husband died she took care of her mother-in-law and went as far as converting to Judaism. Eventually she fed her mother-in-law by gleaning in a field and came to marry the Jewish owner of the field. This story of harvest love became connected to the holiday of Shavuot.

## ABRAM MEETS GOD—A STORY

When Abraham was a boy he was called Abram. This is a story about Abram. This is not a Torah story. It is a midrash—a story that grows out of a Torah story.



Long ago Nimrod was a wicked king. Nimrod wanted everyone to bow to him. Nimrod wanted everyone to treat him like a god. Nimrod wanted everyone to believe that he was a god.

One night a huge star came into the sky and ate four other stars. It ate the North Star. It ate the South Star. It ate the East Star. It ate the West Star.

Nimrod asked his wizards, "What does this mean?"

The wizards all said, "A boy has been born who will let people know that you are only a person."

Nimrod said two things. Nimrod first said, "I am a god." Then Nimrod said, "Kill the boy."

For three years they searched for the child. Teraḥ and Amtela were scared. They hid their son Abram in a cave. They wanted him to be safe.

Abram stayed in the cave day and night and looked out at the world. He was lonely. He was scared. He wondered, "Who created the world?" He wondered, "Why am I here?"

Abram saw the sun. The sun was hot. The sun gave light. The sun gave life. Abram thought, "The sun must be god." Then a wind blew a cloud in front of the sun. It got darker. Abram said, "The wind can stop the sun. The wind must be god."

Night came. When the sun went down, the wind stopped. Then the moon rose. Abram said, "The moon must be god." He thought about her all night long.

In the morning the sun rose again. Abram knew that the sun could not be god. Then Abram suddenly knew the truth. He said, "There must be one God who created everything. One God made the sun. The same God made the wind. The same God made the moon. The same God made Nimrod. And the same God made me. I believe in one God."

Then Abram heard a voice that said, "I am here, My son. I believe in you."

Abram said, "I am not alone anymore. I am not afraid anymore." Then Abram began to pray.

1. How can God whom we cannot see be more powerful than the sun, the moon and stars that we can see?
2. What do you think Abram said in his prayer?
3. The first commandment says, "I am the Eternal your God..." What does this mean to you?

