

**CURRICULUM GUIDE:
LIVING HOLIDAYS FOR JEWISH ADOLESCENTS**

FELICIA B. GOODMAN
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HEBREW UNION COLLEGE
LEE AND ZELDIN, INSTRUCTORS



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“LIVING HOLIDAYS FOR JEWISH ADOLESCENTS” A CURRICULUM RATIONALE

My first memories of being Jewish involve my standing in the kitchen with my mother and sister, lighting the Shabbat candles, and singing the *bracha* over them. My mother told my sister and me that there were millions of Jews all around the world who were all lighting the candles at this very same time. Though I was too young to understand the differences in time between the many countries in the world in which Jews lived-- and my mother did not bother to explain this-- every Shabbat, I would envision all of the Jewish children standing over their tall, bronze candlesticks and singing the same blessing, “...*L'hadlik ner shel Shabbat*” with their mothers.

This was a feeling and an experience which unified me with other Jews throughout the world. Though I was living in a non-existent Jewish community in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky, I felt as though lighting the Shabbat candles at the same time as “millions of other Jews” allowed me to become a part of something much bigger-- it gave me “membership” into the Jewish People, and it allowed me to feel a sense of my early Jewish identity.

Studying and “living” the Jewish calendar is a way to activate Judaism in our lives. Festivals, rites of passage, and rituals offer us the opportunity to teach Jewish history and make it relevant to the modern existence of the Jewish people. The beliefs, actions, and ultimate community which is formed are potential outcomes of the study and learning processes, and can essentially define who we are. . . our status as Jews in the community.

Jewish holidays can be celebrated and observed in a variety of ways. The Orthodox Jews observe and celebrate holidays as *mitzvot*-- because they feel that they are commanded to do so. Others may perform rituals as an expression of Jewish beliefs and values, marking historical events as times of celebration for the Jewish people. A third form of observance is displayed by those who believe that the celebration of Jewish holidays is a way for Jews to connect with their community, creating enhanced Jewish identities. Each Jew brings his own traditions and meaning to the Jewish holidays-- yet, each holiday carries much significance in the history and struggle of the Jewish people.

My curriculum, *Living Holidays for Jewish Adolescents*, allows Jewish youth to understand the significance of Jewish holidays by first learning the aspects of the history, ritual, and traditions, and then probing into the relevance that these holidays have when comparing them to the lives of these modern-day Jews. This emphasizes the festivals as historical events in the lives of the Jewish people, then connects the people with the Jewish community --and the “world community”-- in an effort to understand our unique identity. This curriculum is targeted for students in grades five through seven who are seeking meaning in their Jewishness as they near the age of becoming B'nei Mitzvah. Although these children will have been studying the holidays throughout their previous years in Sunday school, this curriculum will provide for them the study of holidays in a tangible, relevant way to the experiences which they are having as adolescents going into the stage of young adulthood.

Included in this curriculum will be a review of the background of many Jewish holidays, ranging from Rosh Hashana (a traditional holiday) to Yom Ha'atsmaut (a

contemporary holiday) from a historical, traditional perspective. Also reviewed will be an overview of the customs and traditions of these holidays as Jews have celebrated and acknowledged their importance for thousands of years. Finally, contemporary reflection will be stressed as the students will be guided to interpret the holidays with a modern perspective. Examples include "modern slavery" as studied through the Pesach story and Moshe; "Assimilation, acculturation, and Jewish survival" as studied through the story of Chanukah; and "The roles of Jews in the modern world" and "The state of the State of Israel" as studied through the holidays of Yom Ha'zikaron and Yom Ha'atsmaut.

Looking at these and other issues allows Judaism to become more tangible, more understandable, and more accessible to these young adolescents. Family issues, world issues, and modern-day life issues can all be hooked into relevant events throughout the Jewish calendar. In this way, the curriculum will allow the students to learn Jewish tradition not as something which is solely historical and traditional, but as a living culture which is still very helpful and meaningful in our lives today.

Through the study of texts, active discussions, reflective writings, and community activities, my curriculum should help these young adolescents explore, question, and understand the importance of both traditional and cultural Judaism. The students will become familiar and comfortable with Judaism as a part of their lives which is relevant to other major issues that they will encounter. Jewish values will be instilled not through only through study and texts, but also through comparing the issues of the Jewish holidays with issues that they confront on a daily basis in their lives.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOALS:

1. To allow students to develop their Jewish identities through studying Jewish history and culture in a contemporary perspective.
2. To allow students to learn Jewish tradition as a living culture which has various interpretations, still relevant and meaningful in our lives today.
3. To allow students to explore, question, and understand the importance of both traditional and cultural Judaism* through researching various angles of celebrating the holidays.

*Cultural Judaism, meaning the entities of Judaism that we experience through the rituals and community activities in which we participate.

OBJECTIVES:

The students should be able to carry out the following behaviors by the end of this course:

1. Recognize main events and main characters of each holiday.
2. Recognize the significance of each holiday in contemporary terms.
3. Recognize, describe, compare, and contrast different aspects of each holiday for different types of Jews in America and in Israel.
4. Explain the significance of the holiday in one's own words.
5. Write journal entries reflecting feelings and responses to in-class discussions.
6. Apply knowledge in order to create original artwork and dramatic interpretations.
7. Identify situations in the modern world which are similar and/or comparable to the history of the Jewish people.
8. Identify events of the past and the influence they have on our present and our future.
9. Apply what we know about history and the future of the Jewish people to predict how we might be living as a group of people in the world 50 years from now.
10. Based on historical data and contemporary facts, make a judgment on current world events which possess similarities to past events in Jewish history.
11. Argue the meaning of freedom for all people, and for whom does the appreciation of freedom come easier?
12. Evaluate the significance of ancient Jewish holidays for the modern Jew.

OUTCOMES:

Students will have the opportunity to:

1. Examine many different types of celebrations and interpretations of the Jewish holidays.
2. Review the origin's of the holidays, then relate to how each holiday is celebrated now, and predict the holiday of the future.
3. Create original artwork and write creative writings based on the knowledge, thoughts, and interpretations of the students.
4. Discuss with classmates recent events in our world, and how this relates to the past.
5. Understand history through dramatic re-enactments of the origination of the Jewish holidays and artistic interpretations in order to predict the future of the holiday in the final "time warp" culmination of the class.

SEQUENCE

The Jewish holidays include a rich portion of the heritage, history, rituals, customs, present association with, and future of the Jewish people.

Assuming that the students will already have substantial familiarity with the holidays before entering grades 5-7, the review portion will serve the purpose of a "quick refresher" before moving into more intimate subjects within each holiday.

The units are sequenced in the order of the Jewish calendar, starting with Sukkot. As the Religious School year usually begins with only one or two weeks before the "High Holy Day Vacation", this curriculum will end with the study of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur in the spring, before they leave for summer vacation.

Shabbat is positioned as Unit 2, during a gap in the calendar between Sukkot and Hanukkah. However, this is not a requirement in the sequence of the curriculum.

The students are encouraged to study in small groups, or *chevruta*, and to use outside resources in the community as well. In this way, the students will gain a greater overall understanding of the significance of the holidays.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

1. **JEWISH TIME WARP!**

This program is something which can be used as a tool for study, research, artistic creativity, and end of the year closure and presentation.

STEP 1: *For each holiday*, the class will first review and partake of some of the learning activities and discussion as described in each unit.

STEP 2: The class will be divided up into three groups. The groups should rotate so that students will participate in all three dimensions of the "time warp":

Group 1-- The background and origins of the holiday (past).

Group 2-- The current observance of the holiday from various perspectives and cultures (present).

Group 3-- Projecting into the future, what will this holiday be like? What will its impact be on the culture, traditions, and religion of the Jewish people? (future).

STEP 3: The students will apply their classroom resources, their understanding of the holiday, outside interviews, and their creativity and imagination to create what will become the "time warp" museum. Using artwork, informational posters, interactive bulletin boards, and "real-life characters" acting out different scenes (a la Disneyland), this presentation will be something which the students work on all year for the final "hurrah" of their Jewish holiday studies.

STEP 4: The museum can be set up in several different ways:
A.) It can be set up in three sections: Past, Present, and Future,
B.) It can be set up by holiday,
C.) It can be set up in the way that the class decides to do so.

STEP 5: The final three weeks of class should be devoted to the organization of the museum. Leading up to these weeks, the stress should be more on the education (focusing on the information and content) rather than the aesthetic appeal of the displays and presentations.

STEP 6: Invite the other classes, parents, and friends to join in on the final day of class and the Jewish Time Warp. This will definitely be a memorable moment for the students, their families, their friends, and their teacher! Videotape the museum for future classes.

RESOURCES NEEDED: The school will have to provide a substantial amount of art supplies for the different displays and a large enough room to use for the final museum. If it is possible, this room should be available for the final few weeks of school so that the set-up will not need to be moved continuously. The students will probably have enough in their own wardrobes to provide ample costumes and accessories.

2. YOM HA'ATSMAUT CELEBRATION

Though this is a relatively new holiday in the circuit, the importance of it is crucial in the lives of Jewish Zionists (and Israelis!) around the world. Your synagogue may or may not celebrate this holiday, so your students could very well start a new tradition within your community! If your synagogue DOES celebrate this holiday already, see if your students can assist with the planning this year, or plan it all together! This would not only be something memorable to the students, but to the entire synagogue community.

STEP 1: Check the calendar for when Yom Ha'atsmaut is. Call up the secretary of the synagogue (or whoever sets the dates on the temple calendar) and reserve a large room in the building for a Sunday afternoon close to Yom Ha'atsmaut.

STEP 2: Research the holiday with your students. Partake in some of the learning activities described in unit seven. Have your students interview some Israelis, or other members of your community who may have been in Israel during Yom Ha'atsmaut. Find out what it's really like!

STEP 3: Speak with your Rabbi. In the CCAR prayer book, Gates of Prayer, there are several services that can be read on Yom Ha'atsmaut. Ask the Rabbi to help your students prepare a short service for before the festivities begin. (*It has been noted that a true "Israeli" Yom Ha'atsmaut celebration can conflict with a religious service, as many Israelis are secular and believe that the State of Israel has been fought for and established by the people of Israel, not by an act of God, as those who are "Religious"-- or "Right-wing"-- believe. Discuss this dissonance with your students, and allow the Rabbi to discuss it with them as well. Find a balance that will fit well with the community and the synagogue in which you live and learn.)

STEP 4: Prepare a carnival! Be sure that you have plenty of displays on and about Israel, have games relating to Israel, and serve Israeli food (falafel, humus, shwarma, etc.). Have your students decorate the walls with Israeli flags, and be sure to play Israeli music and have Israeli dancing!

STEP 5: Invite the other classes, friends, and families to join in on your Yom Ha'atsmaut festivities! It will be fun and educational for everyone involved!

RESOURCES NEEDED: You will need to request a large amount of art supplies from the religious school, in addition to any Purim carnival supplies that you may be able to borrow. If you have a budget for this, you can buy large amounts of party supplies to decorate the room, and confetti for once the party begins! Call around to local kosher eateries to see if you can get any food donated or at a discount price (you may have to sell the food if a donation is not possible.) Ask around to see who has Israeli music, a sound system, and who can teach the Israeli dancing. If it's possible, try to purchase small Israeli flags to hand out or sell to those who come to the festival. Finally, be sure that you have the large room booked in the temple calendar, and you are ready for your Yom Ha'atsmaut celebration!

UNIT ONE-- Sukkot (3 lessons)

1. **Key Concepts:**

- A. Sukkot is an agricultural holiday, characterized by the "booths" that Jews feast in, symbolic of those that the Israelites built while wandering through the desert.
- B. As Passover is defined by HOPE, Sukkot confirms the covenant which is the commitment to PERSIST until the goal is reached.
- C. Sukkot celebrates the way of liberation-- the march across the barren desert to freedom and the promised land.

2. **Relationship to Modern Issues:**

In our world, there is still a huge gap between hope and reality. The real achievement of freedom doesn't come in one day. There is no fast, easy cure to slavery (persecution). Many people in the world are still struggling for their freedom as the Jewish people did years ago.

3. **Learning Activities:**

1. Assign each student to eat in a different sukkah within the community: in kosher restaurants, with families from your synagogue, and with families from other synagogues (including some that are not Reform, if this opportunity is available). Next week, have students give comparative reports of their experiences. What are the different rituals, traditions, and customs that each witnessed?
2. Review of historical significance of Sukkot in text provided in the appendix of this guide. The teacher will lead a discussion of "relationship to modern issues" based on informative and relative newspaper articles that he/she (or students who are previously assigned) will bring to class. The students will contemplate their own lives and when there has been a gap between hope and reality. When has persistence proven to get you "to the finish line"? Relate this to the story of Sukkot and the persistence of the Jewish people.
3. After reading the text including the historical facts of the holiday of Sukkot, the students will reenact the Exodus as they understood it in an impromptu manner in the classroom. They will imagine that they are in the hot, sweltering desert, and living in huts (Sukkot) and dreaming of their freedom.

The class will be divided with some of the students as the Israelites (those who struggled for their freedom) and some as Egyptians (those who had freedom handed to them "on a plate.") After the reenactment, the students will answer these questions:

- * Is freedom more meaningful to those who struggle for it?

- * What does freedom mean to the Israelites wandering through the desert and living in “booths”?
 - * What does freedom mean to the Egyptians who have not fought for it?
 - * What does freedom mean to us as Jews who were born and/or raised in America?
4. Bring in stacks of recent newspapers and magazines. Ask the students to leaf through the pages, asking themselves the question, “Who is a slave now?” Find articles, clip them, and post them to a banner. Give the banner a catchy title and hang for students to read before and after class. Discuss “who is a slave” in modern terms, and what are we able to do about modern day persecution?
 5. “Time Warp” Activities (SEE “Memorable Moments” section)

UNIT TWO-- Shabbat (3 lessons)

1. Key Concepts:

- A. Shabbat is the seventh day of creation, the "day of rest".
- B. Shabbat is the "once a week" Jewish holiday which allows Jews time to study Jewish texts, relax, and spend time with our families, away from the stressfulness of the work/ school week.
- C. Shabbat is celebrated in many different ways by different types of Jews.

2. Relationship to Modern Issues:

Noting that Shabbat was the day that God sat back, looked at what had been created, and took a day of rest, we must realize that we too work hard during the week and need our day of rest. Though different types of Jews celebrate Shabbat in different ways, it should be, for all of us, a day to pause, escape, and take notice of creation, of the world around us.

3. Learning Activities:

1. Read the story of *Bereshit*, the first chapter of Genesis, included in the appendix of this guide. Why did God rest on day seven? What does Shabbat mean to each student in the class? Also, read the articles on the differences between Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism. Ask if the students have ever experienced a Shabbat service or dinner with someone other than another Reform Jew. What was it like? Discuss how different sects of Jews celebrate Shabbat. (Invite speakers from other sects of Judaism to speak to the class if no other resources are available.) Orthodox, Conservative, Reform... Develop an understanding for each group's justification for that form of celebration.
2. Read the following story by Nachman of Bratslav:

Looking out the window on a weekday morning, the Chasidic teacher, Nachman of Bratslav, noticed his disciple, Chaim, rushing along the street. Nachman opened up the window and invited Chaim to come inside.

Chaim entered the home and Nachman said to him, "Chaim, have you seen the sky this morning?" "No, Rebbe," answered Chaim. "Have you seen the street this morning?" "Yes, Rebbe." "Tell me, please, Chaim, what did you see in the street?" "I saw people, carts, and merchandise. I saw merchants and peasants all coming and going, selling and buying."

"Chaim," said Nachman, "in 50 years, in 100 years, on that very street there will be a market. Other vehicles will then bring merchants and merchandise to the street. But I won't be here then, and neither will you. So, I ask you, Chaim, what's the good of your rushing if you don't even have time to look up at the sky?" (Gates of Shabbat, 1-2).

- * Why is Chaim always rushing?
- * Do you ever find yourself "rushing"? When?
- * Why did Reb Nachman ask Chaim if he had seen the sky? Was it the sky that was important, or something else?

* Do you ever wish that you had more time in the day to do your homework, or to watch TV, or to talk to your friends? What about more time just to *relax*?? How does this story relate to simply relaxing? How does *Shabbat* relate to all of this?

3. Creative Writing: Each student will write about his/her "normal" week. How is each day filled? How is Shabbat different? How might you make Shabbat different? Why is it important to take time out and "rest" for a day?
4. "The Limits of the Dream." Irving Greenberg discusses in The Jewish Way that "a dream without limits is an illusion" (p. 154). What are our limitations in modern society? How can Shabbat help us conquer these limitations? This can be expressed creatively through art if supplies are prepared beforehand.
5. If a video camera is accessible for the student's use, then each student will have the opportunity to sign-out the camera, purchase a tape, and record his/her Shabbat experience to share with the class. If time does not allow for this, a few students may choose to do this as their "major project" for the semester.
6. Have students interview their grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, and other older relatives to find out how they celebrated Shabbat with their families when they were younger. Open the next class with the students telling all of the interesting, informative, and fantastic stories that they learned about their own families!
7. "Time Warp" Activities

UNIT THREE-- Hanukkah (3 lessons)

1. Key Concepts:

- A. Hanukkah is still taught as the "Holiday of Miracles" where the oil which lasted within the lamps was able to re-ignite hope in the spirit of the Jewish people. Pessimists and assimilationists informed the Jews that there was no more oil left to burn.
- B. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. 4:6). Though the oil was a miracle in and of itself, there is also the miracle of the faith of the Jewish people-- that we didn't give up hope!
- C. Some think that Hanukkah came about due to the assimilation of the Jewish people in the Greek, Hellenistic world. There were some Jews who did not want to "blend in" with the Greeks-- the Maccabees. They revolted against the oppressive rulers, perhaps saving our people and our heritage from total assimilation.

2. Relationship to Modern Issues:

At times, it is thought that something is impossible to do, or we are overwhelmed with intensity of a task before we set out to do it. As the Maccabees were not dissuaded by the pessimists or the assimilationists, we too should remember that if we work hard toward our goals and have *faith*, progress and success is possible. With this in mind, we can achieve that which we set out to accomplish.

3. Learning Activities:

1. With the text provided in the appendix, as well as other sources found in your textbook or in the library, read the story of Hanukkah and remind the students of the key concepts and important facts. Discuss the traditions and rituals of Hanukkah-- ask them how they celebrate it with their families. Has this changed through the years since they've gotten older? Should Hanukkah be more than just exchanging presents? How else can we celebrate this holiday?
2. Go to the library and find some easy to read books about the State of Israel. Divide the students up in teams of two or three, to sit quietly and skim a book, writing down important historical facts concerning the history of the State of Israel. Bring the students back together to discuss the issues of wars of independence, oppressive rulers, and miracles for the Jewish people in regards to the history of the State of Israel (since 1945). Find out what the students have learned in their research and what they can contribute to this discussion. Find similarities between the history of Israel and the story of Hanukkah, and create a wall mural which can show the parallel events in a "time-line" fashion.

3. Re-enact the story of Hanukkah in a contemporary play! Have the students write what Hanukkah means to them in regards to the current world situation (this activity may be done after activities one and two have already been completed.) Compile the students writings with a narrator, and have the students act out their parts as world leaders, every-day citizens, or historians who are assessing the situation of the past and the present. This may also be staged in the year 2050, looking back in retrospect. Themes of Hanukkah (human spirit prevailing over oppression, independence, miracles) should be base values within the play.
4. "Time Warp" Activities

UNIT FOUR-- Purim (2 or 3 lessons)

1. Key Concepts:

- A. The Jewish people had been persecuted in a land that was not our own, but were then treated fairly by the King who was saved by Mordechai and his Queen, Esther.
- B. Purim is THE holiday of the Diaspora. It reflects and affirms the experience of the Jewish people living as a minority outside of Israel.
- C. Purim is traditionally celebrated with the reading of Megillat Esther, the Book of Esther in the Tanach, and then a celebration in the community.
- D. Purim is a celebration-- Jews are commanded to drink, eat, and make noise in the synagogue.

2. Relationship to Modern Issues:

In our world today, we are free to enter the land of Israel and be where Jews have dreamed of being for thousands of years. However, Jews now have "homelands" all over the world, and despite the fact that the road to Israel is finally open to us, we still choose to live in "the Diaspora."

3. Learning Activities:

1. What are the different ways that Purim is celebrated by the various types of Jews (Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform, American and Israeli)? Invite speakers to come in and discuss their different Purim rituals in a panel discussion.
2. Review the story of Purim using the text provided in the appendix of this guide. Students will read (and act out?) the story of Esther. (This may even be done as a performance for the younger students). Be sure that students will understand the roles of King Ahashverosh, Esther, Vashti, Mordechai the Jew, and Haman.
3. Haman said to the King, "There is a people scattered and separated among the nations whose religion is different" (Esther 3:8). In Shushan, the capital city of Persia, a Jewish community thrived leading up to "Purim". Have students discuss the dispersion of Jews throughout the world now. Why are Jews dispersed when Israel is open for us? Do you believe that Israel is indeed the Jewish homeland, now, in the '90's for the Jews to live? Do you think that it is important for the Jewish people to support, fund, and visit Israel, even if we do not decide to live there? Could there ever be a time-- or was there ever a time-- when the existence of Israel can-- or could have-- save/saved the lives of Jews? (Discuss the dispersion of the Jews throughout Europe leading up to the Holocaust).
4. Create a "Jewish world" mural, cutting out photographs, drawing pictures, writing stories about different types of Jews who live all around the world. The Diaspora has become a Jewish reality... by decorating the walls, chalkboards, bulletin boards, and door, you can turn your classroom into a World of Judaism.
5. "Time Warp" Activities

UNIT FIVE-- Pesach (2 or 3 lessons)

1. Key Concepts:

- A. Jews were enslaved in Egypt by the Pharaoh, but the Jews did not simply "accept their fate as destiny".
- B. The act of eating Matzah instead of bread during the holiday of Pesach as a reminder of our escape from persecution.
- C. The Four Questions allow the young children to ask and answer the questions relating to the significance of Passover-- "Why is this night different than all other nights?", etc.

2. Relationship to Modern Issues:

As Jews who are living in America, assimilating with other religions, and living daily in a mostly non-religious environment, Passover is a holiday in which we are constantly reminded for 8 days that we are different. At school, we can look around and take note of the other students who have their sandwiches made on matzah. With our family, we make a special seder and prepare the Passover plate. Unlike other Jewish holidays which may pass by without being noticed by non-Jews, this holiday makes us stand out in our schools and among our peers.

Is it a coincidence that this holiday-- so significant in reminding us that we were once slaves, but did not accept this persecution and fought against it-- is now a holiday which drives into us the constant reminder that we are indeed Jews, *that we are different?! In a world which is so anxious to absorb our culture, our heritage, and to accept it, Passover is a reminder that we are a unique people, and we have fought to keep ourselves this way for thousands of years.*

3. Learning Activities:

1. With food, songs, stories, and the seders, Jews over the years have celebrated Passover in many different ways. Using the text included in the appendix of this guide, review the important concepts and historical events concerning Pesach. Then, assign the students to combine pictures, videos, and handwritten stories to show/display the many different ways that their families, grandparents, and friends have celebrated the holiday of Pesach through the years.
2. Go over the Four Questions. "Why is this night different from all other nights?", etc. Split the class into groups to review the significance of Passover, and its relevance to our modern Jewish culture. Create new lists of Four Questions within each smaller group, asking questions relating to the modern relevance of the holiday in relation to our Jewish lives today. Share with the class.
3. Discuss the "Relationship to Modern Issues" as stated above. Are these issues that the students can relate to? How do the students feel when they're at school and someone who isn't Jewish is wondering what they are eating? What do these non-Jews say? What is the experience that the students have during Passover concerning these issues?
4. "Time Warp" Activities.

UNIT SIX-- Yom HaShoah, Yom HaZikaron (3 or 4 lessons)

1. Key Concepts:

- A. With Yom HaShoah, we remember the tragedy of the Holocaust. We say, "We remember... Never again!" The six million Jews who died in the death camps of Nazi Germany shall not be forgotten.
- B. On this "Yom HaShoah", day of the Holocaust remembrance, it is traditional to go to a ceremony where six candles are lit, one symbolic of each million Jews who were killed.
- C. Yom HaZikaron, Israel's remembrance day, impacts every Israeli as each has had a relative, close friend, or neighbor who has died fighting for the country. It is a day of great sadness in the State of Israel.

2. Relationship to Modern Issues:

Richard Rubenstein wrote: "We learned in the crisis of the Holocaust that we were totally and nakedly alone, that we could expect neither support nor succor from God nor from our fellow creatures" (The Jewish Way, p. 319).

Following the Holocaust, a State of Israel was founded and built up by the Jewish people, for the Jewish people. Through the past 50+ years, Jews have fought for, and died for, the establishment and survival of the State of Israel. As we are reminded by the horror of the Holocaust that we had no where to go-- no where to hide-- during WWII, we must acknowledge that the State of Israel is one of the most important resources for the Jewish people.

3. Learning Activities:

1. After the Holocaust, the Jews who escaped from Israel had scattered all around the world; to Israel (then Palestine), Russia, and a lucky few to England and America. Learn your family heritage-- how did you end up living in America, in the city you are in today? Does this relate back to World War II, or before? Discuss how the Jewish Diaspora was created.
2. Create artistically (on butcher paper with different colors of tissue paper for the candles) individual displays of six candles to represent the six million Jews. Write next to each candle a blessing for the Jewish people, a memory or story a student may have of a relative or someone who perished in the Holocaust, or a poem or thought. Share with classmates the significance of the design of the candles, or-- if the student wishes to do so--the words written next to them. There is a great amount of "artistic license" in this project.
3. Discuss the significance of these new holidays which are being created due to recent events in Jewish history. What are the events leading up to their creation. What is the relation of the Shoah to the creation of the State of Israel, to Yom HaZikaron? How are they all tied together? After

this discussion, write personal essays reflecting on recent events in Jewish history leading up to where we are now.

4. Invite Holocaust survivors (or children of survivors) to come and participate in your class and tell of their experiences. (Be sure that students are prepared beforehand with information and questions to ask.)
5. "Time Warp" Activities

UNIT SEVEN-- Yom Ha'atsmaut (2 or 3 lessons)

1. Key Concepts:

- A. Zionism began with the first Jew who searched for the Jewish homeland. Zionists believe that a Jewish homeland is essential to the survival of the Jewish people.
- B. Yom Ha'atsmaut celebrates the independence of the State of Israel as the Jewish homeland.
- C. Yom Ha'atsmaut is positioned on the Jewish calendar immediately one day following Yom Hazikaron, memorial day. It was purposely designed this way so that the Israeli people would not mourn for a lengthy period of time. The saddest day of the Israeli year is followed immediately by the happiest-- a day of dancing, singing, eating, and celebrating.

2. Relationship to Modern Issues:

Yom Ha'atsmaut is said to be the Shabbat of the State of Israel. Shops close, work ceases, and the celebrating begins. For a state which has suffered so many losses, this day is a time to celebrate the miracles of what Israel has overcome. In a way, Yom Ha'atsmaut relieves some of the tension of Yom Hazikaron (the day before) and Yom Hashoah (the week before.) As Jews of the Diaspora, we can celebrate Yom Ha'atsmaut as the celebration of "our homeland".

3. Learning Activities:

1. Using the text provided in the appendix of this guide, as well as other sources which may be found in the synagogue library, discuss the holiday of Yom Ha'atsmaut. Be sure that the students understand why it is so important in the sequence of holidays, why the independence of the Jewish State is such a miracle, and how the holiday is celebrated in Israel.
2. How do different Jews (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Israeli, etc.) celebrate this holiday? Have students call other synagogues in and around your community, read local Jewish newspapers, and talk to friends and family members to find out how this holiday is celebrated. Ask older students who may have been to Israel for the March of the Living and experienced Yom Ha'atsmaut, or Israeli's in the community, to come to class and discuss what the Israeli experience is like during this holiday.
3. Have your students make displays, games, and "party supplies" (confetti, balloons, plastic "hammers", etc.) and create a sort of Yom Ha'atsmaut festival. Be sure to have a big Israel display with some educational information on it, and games which center around the freedom and independence of the Jewish people. Invite some of the younger classes to come in and enjoy the festival! Have your students teach the younger students the importance and significance of Yom Ha'atsmaut to the younger students.

4. Have a modern Zionist (from the organization ARZA, American Reform Zionists Association, or from within your community) come to speak to your students about Reform Zionism. Allow your students to research Reform Zionism beforehand in the synagogue's library, or at their community library, so they will be prepared with questions and concerns.
5. "Time Warp" Activities

UNIT EIGHT-- Shavuot (3 lessons)

1. Key Concepts:

- A. Establishing a covenant between God and the Jewish people.
- B. Shavuot comes exactly seven weeks after the holiday of Pesach. The Israelites received the Torah at Mt. Sinai, then entered the Promised Land, the land of Israel.
- C. The laws of the Torah were taught, and the Jews obeyed them.

2. Relationship to Modern Issues:

The Jews, in receiving the Torah on what is now Shavuot, became "the Chosen People"... what does this mean? It is thought that the Jews have a special relationship with God, though God remains the "Lord of all the vast universe" (The Jewish Way, p. 71). We are thought to have a partnership with God. In what way do we confirm this partnership?

3. Learning Activities:

1. Read the following story, and discuss the legend of how the Torah was given to the people of Israel using the questioning sequence which follows:

Many years ago, a legend says, God decided to give His Law to man. God went to the people of Ammon. "Do you want my Law," God asked. And the people of Ammon said, "First tell us what is written in it." When God told them His Law and said, "You must not kill," the people of Ammon said, "No, that is not the kind of Law for us."

Next, God went to the people of Moab. "Do you want My Law," God asked. And the people of Moab said, "First tell us what is written in it." When God told them, "You must not steal," the people of Moab said, "No, that is not the kind of Law for us."

God went from nation to nation, from people to people. Each one God asked, "Do you want My Law?" And each one said, "First tell us what is written in it." When God had told them His Laws for living together in peace, they all said, "No, that is not the kind of Law for us." Finally, the legend says, God came to a very small nation who had just escaped from slavery in Egypt. They were known as the Children of Israel. "Do you want My Law," God asked. And the Children of Israel answered, "Yes, we do. Now tell us what is written in Your Law."

And so God gathered the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai. He called Moses, their leader, to the top of the mountain. There He taught Moses the Ten Commandments for living together in peace. These Laws were written on two tablets of stone called luchot. When Moses came down the mountain, he taught the Children of Israel all the Laws in God's commandments. These Laws were the Torah. They said,

- * There is only one God.*
- * Do not bow down to idols.*
- * Do not swear falsely by the name of God.*
- * Keep the Sabbath holy.*
- * Honor your father and mother.*
- * Do not murder.*
- * Do not take another man's wife, or another woman's husband.*
- * Do not steal.*
- * Do not lie.*
- * Do not want what does not belong to you.*

The children of Israel learned God's Laws. And they obeyed them. And to remember this most important happening in their history, Jews forever after have celebrated the festival of Shavuot (Cashman, p. 51-52).

- What is the significance of the response that the other countries gave to God?
 - Why did God finally give the Torah to the Israelites? What did we do that was so different from what the other countries did?
 - Why do you think that the other countries turned God down? What is so difficult about keeping the Ten Commandments? (Focus on how people often think that without rules and laws, life would be better. But is this true? Of course not! Compare it to a soccer game without a referee, or a game of cards where there are no rules. The Israelites realized that the Ten Commandments, the Law, would provide a better society for the Jewish people.)
2. Break the class down into groups of 3 or 4 students. Instruct the groups to read each of the Ten Commandments separately, and discuss their meanings. Bring the groups back together to share what they discussed within their small groups. What is the meaning of each commandment? Why do you think that these were chosen to be the Big Ten? Do we all obey all of them? What about keeping Shabbat? Do we "Keep Shabbat" in our own ways? What about honoring our mothers and fathers? Do we always give enough respect? Continue this questioning with the commandments that are significant to the students.
 3. Split into small groups and create advertising schemes to "sell" the Ten Commandments in "TV commercial" form. One person should play the role of "God", the others should play the different people to whom God wanted to "sell" his commandments. What are the benefits of subscribing to these commandments? What are the rewards in becoming partners with God? Videotape these commercials to show as a presentation to other classes, or to include in an end of the year presentation.
 4. What do you think of the Israelites' "pure acceptance" of the Torah? Have there been times when your parents have asked you to do something without questioning? What about your friends? Do you think that there are times when you need to question before you go into something "blindly"? How does "peer pressure" fit into this? What if your friends asked you to try something (drinking, drugs) and told you not to worry about what it was? Do you question this??? Though the Israelites did not question God about the Torah, in our world, there are definitely times when we do need to question those around us. Discuss.
 5. If your students have any musical talent, have them write their own song with the Ten Commandments in it. Teach this song to some younger classes as a way to remember the Ten Commandments during this Shavuot holiday.
 6. What are the different ways that Shavuot is celebrated by other Jews? What is the Counting of the Omer? Why don't some Jews shave or get married, amongst other things, during the weeks between Passover and Shavuot? Have students research the answers through "hands-on" activities in the community: call around to other synagogues and have representatives from other communities speak about their Shavuot rituals. Ask them these questions, and others concerning the differences between our rituals and theirs.
 7. "Time Warp" Activities

UNIT NINE-- High Holy Days (4 lessons)

1. Key Concepts:

- A. As the first day of the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashana falls 10 days before Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. Together, they are called the High Holy Days, or the Days of Awe.
- B. A special prayer book, called a *Machzor*, is used on the Days of Awe. The rabbis wear white robes, distinguishing the difference between these days and others.
- C. During the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, it is said that the decisions are made and written in the Book of Life. "On Rosh Hashana it is written, on Yom Kippur it is sealed."

2. Relationship to Modern Issues:

It is said that during the ten days in between the two holidays, a person is supposed to concentrate on mortality and the meaning of life. Life is fragile and precious, and with people, pets, family, and acquaintances, death can be an issue which we may have already unfortunately encountered.

We must remember how fragile human life is, and respect and honor those around us as often as possible. During the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, we are told to ask forgiveness from anyone we may have hurt, offended, or upset during the year. And, just in case we have hurt someone without realizing it, we should ask everyone we know for forgiveness. In this way, we may be "inscribed in the Book of Life!"

3. Learning Activities:

1. Using the texts provided in the appendix of this guide, the siddur (prayerbook) used for the holidays in the synagogue, and other texts which may be useful, discuss the issues of atonement and accounting for our sins. In Judaism, we believe that our atonement on Yom Kippur allows us to begin anew with each year. In a journal writing, describe what things you may have atoned for or will atone for. What sort of things would you like to be forgiven for? (remind students that they will not be sharing this with other students in the class.)
2. In the synagogue library, with texts suggested in the "Learning Resources" and "Teaching Resources" of this guide, and with the texts provided in the appendix of this guide, research the different customs and traditions of different Jews at the High Holy Day period. What is *Tashlich*? Research this, then create a *Tashlich* service, or join in with a local "*shul*" for theirs.
3. The blowing of the shofar is symbolic of our proclamation that the Judge is before us... meaning that God sees us and is observant of everything that we do. What prevents us from doing things which we know are not right? From who do we fear the punishment will come? Ask students to go home and ask their parents the same question, as well as their grandparents. Do we fear our parents? Law officials? Teachers? Bosses? or God?
4. "Time Warp" Activities

LEARNING RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Each student should have a copy of:

1. **Gates of the Seasons: A Guide to the Jewish Year, New York: CCAR, 1983.**

This book defines each holiday, giving important meanings, blessings, traditions, rituals, and methods of celebrations in the Reform perspective. As review, this book will serve to refresh and even provide additional information to the student. The contents of the book are easy to understand, but somewhat difficult for the younger students. The teacher will have to be well-versed in the contents of the book in order to maximize its usefulness.

The book is not very aesthetically appealing, as it is fact-oriented and was not created to entice young students with colorful pictures and fun activities. For this reason it should be used only as a fact-filled supplement to the course.

Also, this book focuses mostly on the Reform perspective of each holiday. The teacher will have to supplement the book with other resources in order to give a broader view of each holiday's celebrations and interpretations.

2. **Weber, Jessica B. My Jewish Year, New Jersey: Behrman House 1993.**

This book is a colorful, content-filled study of the Jewish holidays. It provides background information, important concepts, vocabulary, and how to "observe the holidays in today's world." In addition, prayers and recipes are provided for the students.

This book does not "teach itself", though it was seemingly designed to do so. The teacher will still have to be well-versed on the holidays in order to explain the text and implement activities. A teacher's guide has been written to give additional information and "translate the textbook".

This book is definitely appropriate for the 5-7th grade age group.

The class library should contain copies of:

1. **Cashman, Greer F. Jewish Days and Holidays, New York: SBS Publishing, Inc. 1979.**

This colorful, aesthetically appealing book provides interesting and educational facts and stories about many Jewish holidays. Though this book is not thorough enough to be a main resource for the holidays curriculum, the information and stories within prove to be a valuable supplement to the course.

2. **CCAR's Gates of Shabbat, New York: CCAR Press, 1991.**

In studying the Shabbat unit, this book is a very useful guide to the blessings, readings, definition of Shabbat and observances and rituals. Because it is published by the Reform movement, it gives a traditional, liberal interpretation of the holiday. However, the students should be encouraged to probe further into other texts for a broader perspective of the various ways that Shabbat is celebrated. The songs, poems, and short stories contained in this book should not be passed over, as they are an excellent complement to the other more factual texts.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING RESOURCES

1. **Greenberg, Rabbi Irving. The Jewish Way, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988.**
A modern, comprehensive, and contemporary perspective on the Jewish holidays. Greenberg relates many of the ancient events to modern day situations, and is able to tie in and make relevant historical Judaism to the modern Jew. This is not a book for the students, but an excellent resource for the teacher. (See book review at the end of this guide.)
2. **Fields, Rabbi Harvey J. A Torah Commentary For our Times: Volumes 1-3: New York: UAHC Press, 1990.**
Once the students research the background of the holidays and their biblical origins, they will be able to pull up additional commentaries and contemporary issues to ponder using these books. They are excellent in providing a wide variety of commentaries on each portion, and could provide the student with issues to debate regarding more modern, relative interpretations. However, the teacher will still need to be a resource in finding the portions for each holiday. There is a table of contents in the front of each book, but it may still be confusing to the student.
3. **Klein, Isaac. A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice. New York: JTS, 1992.**
When the students begin to research the more "traditional" ways to observe a holiday, this should be a major resource in the classroom. It is written from a Conservative, traditional perspective (and is published by the Jewish Theological Society, an institution of the Conservative movement), but gives many Orthodox methods on the observance and rituals of the holidays. Though this does not offer much contemporary reflection, it is an excellent resource for traditional Jewish laws and customs.
4. **Weber, Jessica B. Teacher's Guide for My Jewish Year. New Jersey: Behrman House, 1993.**
An excellent supplement to the students' text. It provides background information, important concepts, vocabulary, historical perspectives, and sheds light on some contemporary issues. Best used as a supplement for the teacher.
5. **Goldin, Barbara Diamond. A Child's Book of Midrash. New Jersey: Aronson, 1990.**
This book is filled with 52 stories, many relating to different holidays and providing an alternate (more traditional, fiction-like) perspective to the student. Should only be used as a supplement to the study of the holidays, in addition to more factual research through the other texts. Often, these *midrashim* can provide a deeper understanding of the holiday through legend and rabbinical interpretations.

Rabbi Irving Greenberg's
The Jewish Way
as a Tool for Teaching Holidays to Jewish Adolescents

by Felicia B. Goodman

10/30/95

Lee: Instructor

In the book The Jewish Way by Rabbi Irving Greenberg, the major Jewish holidays are explained in a very thorough, probing way. Rabbi Greenberg takes the reader through the holidays from start to finish – beginning with biblical stories, following up with historical anecdotes, and concluding with what the holidays mean to us, and how we can relate to them in our modern time. Interpreting from religious meanings to personal meanings, the author allows the reader to learn and understand the background of each holiday – yet he takes it to a much deeper level: the reader is left questioning how this affects his/her own life.

The impending question mark looms high overhead as one uncontrollably ponders the history of our ancestors in relation to the world in which we now live. Judaism has always strived for perfection, for redemption, for equality and the end to persecution and slavery... and The Jewish Way leaves us with the question of: “When will our dream become a reality?”

Rabbi Greenberg acknowledges that Judaism is most visible and most accessible to modern Jews through the holiday experiences. “To celebrate the holidays is to relive by reliving the Jewish way” (p. 13). The holidays have promoted the continuity of Jewish history, the understanding of the world, and the values of life to all be expressed even in our modern time. There are thousands of details and practices associated with each Jewish festival. Customs have grown and changed over millennia, each community and every age adding its own flavor and detail (p. 17). Each time there is a major new event or decisive turn on the road through history, new insights or patterns emerge. These events are marked and inserted into the record by adding a new holiday to the Jewish calendar.

The holidays are the “register” of Judaism into history. And just as Judaism and the Jewish people are not finished, neither is the role of the holidays (p. 18). In the 20th century, two new holidays were created from the tragedy of the Holocaust (Yom Hashoah) and the creation of the independent Jewish State (Yom Ha’atsmaut).

“Living the Jewish way means dreaming a dream of total perfection so vivid that you can almost touch it, while affirming and working with what IS in order to make the dream come true. The lifestyle designed to teach the hope and pass it on – the specific acts and images needed to nurture the people who must live out this challenging way – is what this book on the Jewish holidays is all about” (p. 33).

PASSOVER

Judaism does not believe that we must accept our fate at any given time in history, and Exodus is a perfect example of this. Exodus also brings up the issue of God’s concern with human life: God heard the cries of the Israelites, saw suffering, and redeemed them (p. 34). Obviously, the issue of slavery is also brought forth with the celebration of this holiday, as we were “brought forth out of the land of Egypt” where our forefathers and foremothers were enslaved. Greenberg discusses the fact that “slavery is merely and exaggerated version of the reality endured by most human beings” still today (p.34). People who live in chronic conditions of poverty, hunger, and sickness tend to

show similar patterns of acceptance and passivity. As with slaves, their deprivation derives from their political and economic status, and then becomes a moral and psychological reality. It was THIS "reality" that was overthrown in the Exodus.. and what we are all still striving to overcome today. (ISSUES: world peace, Bosnia, racism, and prejudice.)

Greenberg states that the Exodus implies that a partnership between God and humanity will carry out the transformation of the world (p. 36). Greenberg also brings up the issues of: Where does Israel get the strength – the *chutzpah* – to go on believing in redemption in a world that knows mass hunger and political exile? How can Jews testify to hope and human value when they have been continuously persecuted, hated, dispelled, destroyed? (p.37). "Out of the memories of Exodus!"

Also, there are issues of being an outsider in the land of Egypt. Jews take special note of this in their treatment of the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the landless – those who are vulnerable in every society – with compassion, generosity, and love. (How does this affect us today? ISSUES: tzedakah, crime and violence, community.)

Greenberg goes on to explain many of the ceremonial rituals of Passover: tefillin, Seder, retelling of the Exodus story, exclusion of chametz, eating of matsah, etc.

SHAVUOT

"The covenant of redemption." Greenberg addresses the issues of freedom and redemption while confronting the holiday of Shavuot. The Covenant of Israel turns the Exodus into an ongoing process. On Passover, God committed to the covenant by an act of redemption. On Shavuot, standing at Sinai, the Jewish people responded by accepting the Torah (p. 68).

By accepting this covenant, the Jewish people took on many responsibilities and laws. There is one law for the citizen and the outsider: HUMAN LIFE IS PRECIOUS; MURDER IS THE ULTIMATE CRIME. Human life is in the image of God – sacred. Greenberg states, "In principle, capital punishment for homicide is required" (p. 69). (ISSUES: crime, murder, capital punishment, the value of human life, the value of every life.)

Another major issue brought up with Shavuot is that of the Jewish people as the Chosen People. God has a special relationship with Israel, but also remains the Lord of Lords, the Lord of all the vast universe. (ISSUES: a universal God, universal laws, the term "Chosen People" in today's world). And one must not forget the dominant motif of Shavuot as the "Feast of the Harvest." With the holiday comes the counting of the Omer, and reading from the book of Ruth.

SUKKOT

Passover states Judaism's goal, which is defined by hope. Shavuot confirms the covenant, which is the commitment to persist until the goal is reached. Sukkot addresses the third dimension of Judaism's religious core: how to get there (p. 94).

In Exodus, time and time again, the Israelites were thrown by the prosaic frustrations of no meat, boring food, and insufficient water. In our world, there is still a huge gap between hope and reality. Sukkot addresses the fact that the real achievement of freedom doesn't come in one day – there are no quick cures to those issues the inflict pain upon

living beings. During Sukkot, we remember how our ancestors walked the long way to freedom – dwelling in Sukkot, enduring painstaking days of misery (p. 99).

Also discussed are the meanings behind and the implications of: construction requirements of a sukkah, the four species, the “birchat hageshem”, the Zionist holiday, and the upcoming Simchat Torah and Hakafot.

SHABBAT

In this section, Greenberg assesses the most frequent (and often neglected) of the Jewish holidays – Shabbat. “Just when there may be a danger of complete absorption into this world, there is an alternate reality to enter into: the Shabbat” (p. 129). He speaks about the Shabbat as a foretaste of Messianic redemption, creating a world of perfection. But he does not overlook the fact that in this time of assimilation and acculturation, Shabbat may be a temporary anti-reality of perfection (p. 131). (ISSUES: is it realistic to escape from reality? Is there such a thing as perfection?)

Creation – Bereshit – “and on the seventh day, God rested.” For one day a week, humans are called upon to enter a state of rest. Workaholics must set aside what could seem to be another form of idolatry – that of their work which also becomes a sort of obsession to many. The transition goes from work to self, from self to relationship (with family and community.) other issues which Greenberg addresses concerning Shabbat are: spirituality, life, and “the limits of the dream – A dream without limits is an illusion” (p. 154).

THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

During the cluster of High Holy days, the tradition of Judaism is to concentrate on the individual’s attention to death. Human beings cannot be mature until they encompass a sense of their own mortality (p. 184). Greenberg discusses the Days of Awe as being a trial for the Jewish people – that Jews envision standing before the One who knows all. Each life is placed on the balance scales: “Who shall live, and who shall die?” And finally, the Shofar proclaim that the Judge before whom there is no hiding is now sitting on the bench (p.186). Greenberg goes on to discuss issues of guilt, confession, and repentance.

PURIM

Confronting Jewish destiny, Purim is a holiday that grew out of history. It is also THE holiday of the Diaspora, as it reflects and affirms the experience of the Jewish people living as a minority outside the land of Israel (p. 224). Greenberg comments on the fact that though Purim masquerades itself as the most festive of Jewish holidays, it is actually a stressful holiday for the Jewish people. He discusses that, in its own way, Purim offers a special guide to Jews who plan to continue living in Diaspora, despite the fact that, after 2000 years, the road to Jerusalem is open to any Jew who wants to go there (p. 224). Purim also confronts the issue that exile was/is considered to be punishment for sins: “The Lord uproots them from their soil in anger and fury” (p. 225).

Purim incorporates the story of the book of Esther, the issues of Diaspora living, secularity, and natural joy. It also displays how humor plays a major role in modern, as well as historical, Judaism.

HANUKAH

Greenberg discusses the incorporation of the issues of assimilation, acculturation, and Jewish survival in terms of Hanukah and its impact on modern tradition. He goes back to the challenge of Hellenism, Greek culture. The Greeks sought to coerce Jews to forget the Torah and abandon the commandments – but Greenberg discusses the central significance of the power or the spirit and the ability of God's people to live by the divine light (p. 272). The Menorah symbolizes the light of God, and Greenberg states that the proper response is not to curse the darkness, but rather, to light a candle””(p. 282).

TISHA B'AV

To many people, when the Temple was destroyed in the year 70 C.E., it seemed that Judaism itself was shattered beyond repair. Greenberg discusses how God was becoming less visible, and in a world in which God is less visible (more hidden), a more secular world evolves (p. 287). However, it is also discussed that the classic Jewish response to catastrophe is to renew life. Every major Jewish catastrophe has led to the falling away of some Jews as they lost faith, but every major tragedy has also led to revival, as other Jews strove harder to match tragedy with hope (p. 287).

YOM HA'SHOAH AND YOM HA'ATSMAUT

In the 20th century, the Holocaust brought about such a great tragedy that inflicted massive amounts of pain and suffering on the Jewish people. Richard Rubenstein wrote: “We learned in the crisis that we were totally and nakedly alone, that we could expect neither support nor succor from God nor from our fellow creatures” (p. 319).

Many issues are brought up with the issues of the Holocaust and the holidays of Yom Ha'shoah: God, the Diaspora, Israel, the belief in mankind, and Judaism as a whole. Zionism began with the first Jew who searched and yearned for an unknown land whose name he did not know (p. 373). Abraham only knew that he had a promise that in this destined land, his family would develop into a great nation, a blessing to the entire world.

With Yom Ha'atsmaut come the issues of the New Exodus, the ingathering of the exiles, and the possible end of Galut. “When the Lord and the people were in Zion, all was well with the world” (p. 373). The relationship of the Diaspora and Israel come into focus on renewed Jewish sovereignty and power. As Yom Ha'atsmaut concludes a week filled with much sadness and sorrow (Yom Ha'shoah and Yom Ha'zikaron), we are reminded how lucky we are to be in the land of Israel, and to be in the city of Jerusalem, Ha'Eer Ha'Kodesh.

Greenberg incorporates all levels of the Jewish holidays into an accessible and thought-provoking account of our history. Though he is not able to provide all of the answers, he is brilliant at leaving the reader with an “agenda” – what we must do be responsible, contributing, productive, and JEWISH, members of the world in which we live.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis'
Gates of the Seasons, A Guide to the Jewish Year
as a Tool for Teaching the Holidays to Jewish Adolescents

by Felicia B. Goodman

12/13/95

Lee: Instructor

"Judaism emphasizes action rather than creed as the primary expression of a religious life, the means by which we strive to achieve universal justice and peace. Reform Judaism shares this emphasis on duty and obligation. Our founders stressed that the Jew's ethical responsibilities, personal and social, are enjoined by God" (From the "Centenary Perspective," adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1976).

In Gates of the Seasons, the Reform Jewish guide to the Jewish calendar, Alexander Guttman writes that it is "necessary to have a basic understanding of the Jewish calendar... in order to appreciate fully the meaning of the Jewish holidays-- their relationships to the seasons, to historical events, and to each other" (p. 7).

Gates of the Seasons provides a very factual and instructional approach to the Jewish holidays. Very little effort has been put into the interpretation or relevance of the holidays to our modern world, as Rabbi Yitzhak Greenberg has done in The Jewish Way. Rather, the emphasis is put on tradition, halakcha, mitzvah, and ritual.

Whereas Greenberg describes the Shabbat as "a temporary anti-reality to perfection" (p. 131), the Gates of the Seasons describes the mitzvah of Shabbat, stating that, "It is a mitzvah for every Jew, single or married, young or old, to observe Shabbat" (p. 21). In addition, Shabbat activities and events are described, including the mitzvot of rest, sanctification, hospitality, preparation, tzedakah, and kindling the Shabbat candles. Though interpretation is limited, the thorough ritual and traditional explanations are tangible ways to teach and explain this very significant holiday to the middle school aged group. I believe that the book itself does not provide material stimulating enough to base a lesson plan on alone. However, combining this book with The Jewish Way would allow an informative introduction to deeper meaning and thought-provoking interpretation and of the holidays.

Though it would seem that much of this book is "review" for any "minimally-educated Jew", it could also be used to fill in many gaps and clarify factual information for even the well-informed Jew. There is no doubt that the information contained in this book would be age appropriate for the fourth through sixth grade age range. In addition, taking the holidays and looking at them in the perspective of being "mitzvot" could be a different and more enlightening way for students to encounter the holidays. Many children simply engage in Jewish holidays by learning traditional aspects, or by incorporating the "fun" quotient. But looking at them from the point of view that the Torah has *commanded* us to celebrate these holidays adds an entirely new ingredient for many students.

Gates of the Seasons approaches the other Jewish holidays in a similar fashion. Rosh Hashana is no longer just a "new year", the "birthday of the world, or a holiday of apples and honey to the student guided by this book. "It is a mitzvah to observe Rosh Hashanah on the first of Tishri. As the Torah teaches, 'In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a sacred occasion; You shall not work at your occupations. You shall observe it as a day when the shofar is sounded' (Numbers 29:1)" (p. 39).

Gates of the Seasons invites both the teacher and the student to delve into text study. The questions of "Why do we celebrate this holiday? Where did these holidays come

from? Where are we commanded to observe these rituals?" are answered by using the oldest Jewish reference, the *Torah*, as a guide. Whereas Greenberg looks at the High Holy days by discussing issues of guilt, confession, and repentance, Gates of Repentance should be used simultaneously as a way of teaching meaning and patching over the textual gaps. As students learn history and the meaning of the holidays in terms of tradition, they can also learn why and how the holidays and their meaning can tie into their modern and everyday lives.

The other book that I would like to use as a source for teaching holidays to the sixth and seventh grade age group would be the book of Midrash. So far, I have incorporated factual, traditional, and interpretational (in terms of modern day relevance) into my plans of teaching the holidays to these students. However, there are many fantastic stories in our Midrash which incorporate the holidays into stories that reach out and "grab" the students. This is a method of teaching that basic, factual, or textual information is not always able to do. Though relating the holidays to modern day relevance is one way to draw the student's attention to the subject at hand, I have found that there is a mysterious and miraculous aura created when the students hear midrashic tales.

In the book A Child's Book of Midrash, Barbara Diamond Goldin presents a few holiday-related Midrashic stories which could be used in conjunction with both Gates of the Seasons and Greenberg's The Jewish Way in planning a holiday curriculum. In the story, "The Women's Reward," a wonderful midrash is given on the creation of the oftentimes overlooked holiday of *Rosh Hodesh*. Beginning with a dialogue-filled and action-packed story about the Jewish people awaiting Moshe's return at Mount Sinai, this midrash tells the story of how Rosh Hodesh emerged as the women's festival. "At each appearance of the new moon, the women would stop work, sing blessings, share festive meals with their sisters, light candles, and dance with the Shekhinah, God's presence in the world" (p. 15).

Quite obviously, Midrashic tales cannot be the sole teaching of holidays and rituals to Jewish students. However, I believe that these beautiful and symbolic stories are fantastic supplements to historical, factual, and interpretive information. The teacher can use Midrashic tales as a tool for expression and understanding. By creating lesson plans in which the stories are discussed, analyzed (which would be appropriate for the middle school grades and up, but not the younger grades), and even acted out in drama skits and performed for other classes, can provide an excellent educational resource. Through these stories, the students can derive deeper meaning into the holidays, as well as formulating historical and traditional relevance to our interpretation of them today.

The books The Jewish Way, Gates of the Seasons, and A Child's Book of Midrash each provide information and sources for creating a comprehensive, exciting, and stimulating curriculum for teaching the holidays to middle school aged students. Each book allows a definitive and exploratory route to studying the holidays, and each is an excellent educational tool in its own way. By combining these (as well as other books) together in formatting a curriculum in teaching the holidays, the students and teacher are insured to receive a broad-based spectrum of interpretations, information, and paths of exploration into this very important aspect of Jewish education.

APPENDIX

- Textual material to supplement units

APPENDIX FOR UNIT ONE

- Text for Sukkot

סוכות

Feast of Tabernacles • Sukot

17

For forty years after they escaped from slavery in Egypt, the Children of Israel wandered through the desert. They were waiting to receive the Ten Commandments from God and to be allowed to enter the Promised Land. Because they wandered from place to place, they did not bother to build permanent houses. Instead, during these forty years, the Children of Israel lived in temporary booths which they called *sukot*. These sukot could be easily built, and just as easily taken down.

When the Children of Israel entered the Promised Land, most of them became farmers. At the time of the

harvest, they would go to the fields to cut their crops. Because the fields were far from their homes, and only donkeys and horses were used for transportation, the people would live in the fields for the entire period of the harvest. To protect themselves from the strong sun by day and from the cold and wind at night, the farmers built sukot.

The harvest was a time of celebration, a time to thank God for the goodness of the earth. When there was a Temple in Jerusalem, the people would bring the first fruits of their harvest to the priests in the Temple. They would bring it on foot, walking up to

Jerusalem. This was called a pilgrimage. It was one of the *Shalosh Regalim*. Today, although only very few Jews are farmers, Jews still celebrate the harvest each fall in a holiday called Sukot.

18

On Sukot, Jews do exactly what their ancestors did long ago. They leave the comfort of their homes, and for eight days they live in temporary booths that have no real roofs or doors. They eat, and sometimes even sleep in the sukot, remembering how their forefathers wandered through the desert, and how later on, in the Land of Israel, they harvested their crops and gave thanks to God.

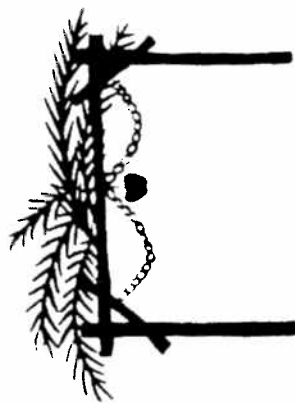
The festival of Sukot comes exactly four days after Yom Kippur. It is a custom to begin building the sukah on the day following Yom Kippur. The sukah can be built anywhere — in back yards, on terraces, on roofs. The sukot are usually made from pieces of wood and cloth, and are decorated with pretty pictures and cut-outs, and hanging fruits which reminds us of

the harvest. The roofs of the sukot are usually of hay, or of branches of trees, so that at night, the stars shine through.

On Sukot, Jews make special prayers over the *lulav* and *etrog*. The *lulav* is a long palm branch around which have been wrapped branches of myrtle and willow. The *etrog* is a citron, which looks almost like a lemon. As the prayers are said, the *lulav* and *etrog* are waved in all directions.

The Wise Men of Israel say that the *lulav* represents the Jewish people. The palm tree, which has taste but no scent, is like the Jews who have learned all about Jewish law but do not do good deeds. The myrtle, which has smell but no taste, is like the Jews who do good deeds even though they do not know the law. The willow, which has no taste and no scent, is like the Jews who do not know the law and do not do good deeds. They are all bound together so that the good qualities of one will make up for the bad qualities of the other. The *etrog*

stands apart, because it has both taste and scent. It stands for those Jews who know the law and practice all the good deeds they can.



The *sukah* is a booth, usually covered with hay or branches of trees.



- a) The *lulav* is a palm branch with twigs of myrtle and willow wrapped around it.
- b) The *etrog* is a citron.

APPENDIX FOR UNIT TWO

- **Text for Shabbat**

שַׁבָּת

Sabbath • Shabbat

In six days, the Bible says, God created the sun and the moon and the stars, and the fish that swim in the seas, and the plants and flowers that grow on dry land, and the birds that fly, and all the wild and gentle animals that live on earth. When He had finished all His other creations, God created man and woman, and He called them Adam and Eve. As the sun set on the sixth day after He had begun to create, God rested from all His work. All that He had created rested, too. It was the first Shabbat, the first Sabbath. It was a very peaceful, very holy time.

Jews celebrate Shabbat each week on Friday night and all day Saturday.

They remember the first Sabbath, and are obeying the fourth of the Ten Commandments which says, "Six days shall you labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. You shall not do any manner of work for the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it."

שַׁבָּת שְׁלוֹמִים

A good Sabbath.

Not all Jews understand this commandment in the same way, and

not all Jews celebrate the Sabbath exactly alike. Some people understand the law very strictly. They do not work, or cook, or drive in cars, or put on lights. Other people understand the law to mean that Shabbat is a day for rest and relaxation. But however they interpret the commandment, there are many, many customs shared by all.

By late Friday afternoon, the Sabbath table is set with a snowy white cloth and the best dishes, with wine and a wine goblet, two loaves of sweet, braided Sabbath bread called *challot*, and with candlesticks. As the sun begins to set, the woman of the house welcomes the Sabbath with the blessing of the candles. The house is all aglow as the family leaves for services in the synagogue.

When the family returns from synagogue, the Sabbath meal begins. Before eating dinner, the wine goblet is filled to brimming. The man of the house raises the cup and recites the special blessing over the wine called *Kiddush*. *Kiddush* means "to make

holy." By reciting this blessing, Jews remember that the Sabbath is a holy time. Everyone tastes the wine, and by doing this becomes holy, too.

A blessing is made over the challot and the meal begins. Fish, soup, chicken, and puddings made from noodles and potatoes are Shabbat favorites. During the meal, the family sings Sabbath songs called *zemirot*. The verses of these songs are hundreds of years old but the tunes are usually modern.

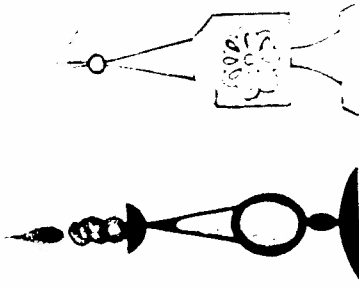
On Shabbat morning, the family attends services in the synagogue once again. During this service, the Torah scroll is removed from the ark and is read. After services, the kiddush is recited once again.

On Saturday evening, when three stars can be seen in the sky, a special ceremony known as *Havdalah* helps to separate the Sabbath from the rest of the week. A wine goblet is filled and raised, a braided candle with many wicks is lighted, a sweet-smelling box of spices is passed from person to

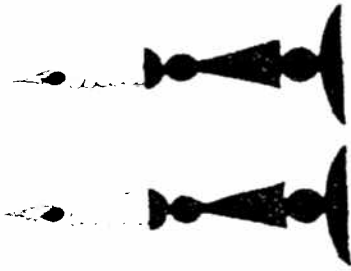
person, and a special blessing is said thanking God for the Sabbath and for separating the holy from the ordinary. A new week has started.

שַׁבָּת טוֹב

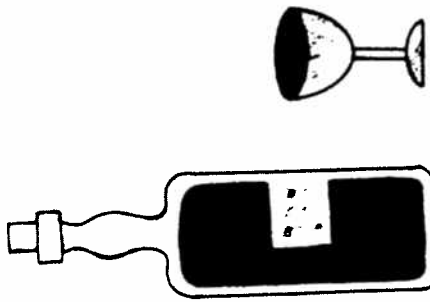
A happy week.



A twisted candle and spices from a spice box are used to make the Havdalah.



Candles are lit to welcome the Sabbath.



A special blessing called Kiddush is said over the wine.



Challot are special Sabbath loaves.

GENESIS

1 When God began to create^a heaven and earth—²the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from^b God sweeping over the water—³ God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.^c

⁶God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water.” ⁷God made the expanse, and it separated the water which was below the expanse from the water which was above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸God called the expanse Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

⁹God said, “Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering of waters He called Seas. And God saw that this was good. ¹¹And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that this was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

¹⁴God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years; ¹⁵and they shall serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars. ¹⁷And God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, ¹⁸to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

^a Others “In the beginning God created.”

^b Others “the spirit of.”

^c Others “one day.”

²⁰God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and birds that fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." ²¹God created the great sea monsters, and all the living creatures of every kind that creep, which the waters brought forth in swarms, and all the winged birds of every kind. And God saw that this was good. ²²God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile and increase, fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." ²³And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

²⁴God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind." And it was so. ²⁵God made wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And God saw that this was good. ²⁶And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." ²⁷And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth."

²⁹God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. ³⁰And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food." And it was so. ³¹And God saw all that He had made, and found it very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. ²On the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased^a on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. ³And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done. ⁴Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created.

When the LORD God made earth and heaven—⁵when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because

^a Or "rested."

- OBJECTIVE:** Identify the Words Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist as Labels of Jewish Religious Affiliation
- OPENING:** Divide the board into four sections (or tape four pieces of poster board to it), labeling them Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist. Explain that today's lesson-is about the four different branches of Judaism. The first part of the lesson will be devoted to facts and myths about each one. Ask the students to tell you anything they know about each branch. List their responses on the board or pieces of poster board. If they hesitate, encourage them. Be prepared to ask questions if their replies are not forthcoming (see questions and answers below).
- FOCUSING:** Look at one chart at a time. Read one item at a time. Ask the class to vote on whether they think it is a fact or a myth. Then explain which it is. If it is a fact, put a star next to it. If it is a myth, erase it or cross it out.
- LEARNING:** Divide the class into four groups. Give each group a set of 3 x 5 index cards. Designate one group as Orthodox, the second as Reform, the third as Conservative, and the fourth as Reconstructionist. Have each group write the facts on the board pertaining to their branch of Judaism; one fact per card on one side of the card and the name of the branch of Judaism on the other side. Each group should make two sets of cards. The group then switches cards with the group next to it, and places the new set of cards on a desk, fact side down, the name of the branch of Judaism facing up. Play Concentration by taking turns turning over a card, reading the fact out loud, turning over another card and looking for the matching fact. If a student finds a matching pair, s/he puts it aside and gets a point. The game continues until all of the facts are matched.
- SHARING:** Ask the students if they have ever been to a synagogue affiliated with a movement other than Reform. They might also think about relatives or friends whose personal religious practices differ from theirs and how they might view their association with another branch of Judaism.
- REVIEWING:** Pass around many different English dictionaries. Have everyone look up the words "reform," "reconstruct," "conservative," and "orthodox" in at least two dictionaries. Have them compile a dictionary definition of these terms. Then ask them to write their own definitions of Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, and Orthodox Judaism.
- CLOSING:** Explain that even though American Judaism is divided into four branches, we are all one because we are all Jews, and must support each other. Teach "Am Yisrael Chai" (p. 3, the *NFTY Songbook*) and discuss its meaning.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

The following information is from *Keeping Posted*, vol. 27, no 3; vol. 24, no. 1; vol. 26, no. 3; and vol. 25, no. 4, as well as from Eugene Borowitz, *Understanding Judaism* (New York: UAHC, 1981).

O=Orthodox, Ref=Reform, C=Conservative, Rec=Reconstructionist

Who gave the Jews the oral and written (Torah) law?

O: God. Written and oral Torah were given by God through Moses to all Jews at Mount Sinai. The commandments and teachings are divine, permanent, and unchangeable.

Ref, C: They are a product of the Jewish People and God.

Rec: People seek God and discover (unfold) the Torah.

Can Jewish doctrine (laws) change?

O: No. To change the laws of the Torah is to defy God. All Jews are bound to all the laws.

Ref: Yes. When situations change, we are obligated to keep Judaism alive by reforming our laws to make them meaningful to the time.

C: Yes. Jewish law and ideology were not set once and for all at Sinai but have evolved and must continue to do so.

Rec: Yes. We should try to uphold our traditional religious practices, but we are also responsible for adapting and changing the tradition of past laws and being innovative whenever the present calls for it.

Who should make these changes?

O: No one may change the law.

Ref: Jews are allowed to make a personal and individual choice as to what laws they decide to uphold, depending on what they believe God wants, what Jewish tradition says, and what other Jews are doing.

C: The community or a group of scholars may decide upon new interpretations of the laws for the community as a whole.

Rec: The community and individuals. Jewish tradition plays an important role in this decision.

Can women become rabbis?

O: No.

Ref: Yes. First woman ordained in 1972.

C: Yes. First woman ordained in 1985.

Rec: Yes. From the inception of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in 1968, women were accepted. The Reconstructionist Jews were the first movement to have a Bat Mitzvah ceremony and to ordain women.

Can women be counted in a minyan or be called for an *aliyah* (Torah reading)?

O: No.

Ref, Rec: Yes.

C: It is up to the individual congregation to decide.

What is the history of the movement in America?

O: First to come to America.

Ref: First came to America in 1820-60 from Germany. Organized in Germany in response to Orthodox dogmatism.

C: Began in America at the end of the nineteenth century in reaction to the rigidity of Orthodoxy and the freedom of Reform.

Rec: Began as an offshoot of the Conservative movement, centered around the Jewish People rather than Torah or God. Gained strength in the 1960s.

Is English (or the vernacular) used in services?

O: No.

Ref, Rec, C: Yes.

What lies at the center of Judaism?

O: God, Torah, Jewish law. Immersing oneself in Torah study is the most fundamental of all *mitzvot*.

Ref: Theology, God, ethics.

C: God and the Jewish People, but Jewish law still very strong.

Rec: The Jewish People, Jewish civilization, the Land of Israel.

How is God described?

O: Eternal, not subject to change, all-powerful.

Ref: Jews ground their lives, personally and communally, on God's reality and remain open to new experiences and conceptions of the Divine.

C: The Conservative movement affirms the critical importance of belief in God but does not specify all the particulars of that belief. There are two basic views of God. One is that belief in God equals faith in a supreme, supernatural force that exists and controls the world. The other is that God is the starting point to our experience of the world and our place in it. Therefore, God exists when people do what God has commanded.

Rec: Not supernatural, not a being, God is to be sensed or experienced as a "process" or "power." We experience God as the force or power which, when mediated through humans, manifests itself as conscience and makes for goodness, justice, kindness, and truth.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

a) Review a display of publications (prayerbooks, newsletters, magazines, stationery) as well as pictures of office buildings, schools, and synagogues of the Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist movements in Judaism.

b) Illustrate the four major trends in Jewish religious affiliation by means of a tree diagram (common roots in Torah, which, in turn, develop into four branches).

REFORM JUDAISM

GOD

Reform Judaism, unlike Orthodoxy, is very interested in theology or ideas about God. The early Reform rabbis who were strongly influenced by German non-Jewish philosophers such as Kant and Hegel wrote a good deal about God. They described God as a spirit in the universe that maintains order in

nature and morality in people. They could not accept the Orthodox view of a supernatural God who performs miracles and interferes with the laws of nature. Miracles such as the parting of the Red Sea or the sun standing still for Joshua were interpreted by Reform scholars as ancient tales or legends that tell more about how people thought of God than how God actually acts in the world.

Modern Reform thinkers have developed new ideas about the meaning of God, and they now speak of a more personal God. Although they do not think of God as a person in the human sense, they believe that God's personality or spirit is present in us and in our world. God is felt in our history, especially in our Jewish history. The Reform scholar Rabbi Eugene B. Borowitz writes that the truest idea of God will inspire us to keep Torah in our lives and preserve the Jewish people. Any idea of God that does not do these two things is improper and false. And to deny the existence of God altogether, he argues, will lead to chaos in our society.

Some Reform thinkers suggest that God is a part of nature and is the living power in the universe. Others believe that God is a force we feel as we struggle to evolve and develop physically and morally. Clearly, Reform ideas about God are rich and diverse. They vary widely from an almost Orthodox, supernatural God who performs miracles and revealed the Torah, to an almost naturalistic idea of God as a power in the universe.

Orthodoxy, as we have seen, firmly believes that God revealed the Torah to Israel at Mount Sinai, that every word of the Torah is sacred and unchangeable, that every law is important. But Reform has a very different view. Reform thinkers believe that only the moral and ethical laws of the Torah are binding

forever. Thus, the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule, "Love your neighbor as yourself," must never be forgotten; but ritual rules such as kashrut and Sabbath restrictions were created by human beings for a specific time in history and are therefore not divine and not necessarily binding on Jews today.

Furthermore, Reform thinkers teach that revelation is progressive; that is, God is self-revealing and communicates Divine will and laws to every new generation. In ancient times God revealed rules that were necessary then; in our day God reveals new rules through the people of Israel and their teachers and scholars. These new rules meet the needs of Jews today.

So Reform thinkers do not believe that God gave the entire Torah word for word. They believe that the Bible is a collection of people's thoughts throughout the ages and may even contain primitive ideas and errors. They also teach that the Talmud and the huge body of rabbinic literature are human creations and not eternally valid. On this basic point—God's revelation of Torah and law—Reform differs sharply with Orthodoxy.

TORAH

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

We have studied how Reform ideology denied the authority of halachah and insisted that only the ethical and moral rules are binding on Jews. In their eyes the hundreds of mitzvot that Orthodox Jews practiced were no longer important and they even laughed at times at some of these restrictions. But over the years

Reform has loosened its opposition to ritual observances and moved in the direction of tradition. This does not mean that Reform Jews today feel that they *must* observe mitzvot; rather they are more sympathetic, more open to the idea that mitzvot can enrich Jewish life and add to Jewish consciousness.

It is hard to say exactly what the average Reform Jew does in the area of observance because Reform leaves it up to each individual to decide whether or not to follow a particular law. Even though the Reform movement

prefers that people rest on the Sabbath, it does not look upon working as a sin. A Reform Jew has the option to work or not to work. Of course, Reform Jews are expected to attend synagogue on Sabbaths and holidays in order to fulfill their Jewish duty.

Kashrut is usually not observed in Reform homes or synagogues. Riding, smoking, writing, and recreation on the Sabbath are allowed. Reform Jews do not insist on having their children circumcised by a mohel, although most Reform Jews do insist on circumcision. At one time Bar Mitzvah had been replaced by confirmation because the early Reformers argued that it was foolish to consider a thirteen-year-old boy a man. Recently, however, Bar Mitzvah has been restored to most Reform temples and Bat Mitzvah for girls has also been introduced. While marriage to a Jewish mate is certainly the ideal of all Reform families, they do not totally condemn interfaith marriage.

Most Reform rabbis do insist that the Christian partner of an interfaith marriage be converted to Judaism, although they do not require traditional rituals of conversion such as circumcision and immersion in a mikveh.

Men and women sit together in Reform synagogues and instrumental music and choirs are generally a part of the service. The most important service is likely to be the late service on Friday evening when Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations are sometimes held. Reform congregations use the *Union Prayer Book* or the new *Gates of Prayer* and conduct most of their prayers in English with some Hebrew

prayers and songs. *Kippot* or yarmulkes are not generally required and men do not generally wear a talit or put on tefillin, although lately some Reform temples have begun to allow the yarmulke and talit on an optional basis. The second days of festivals such as Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot have been dropped in keeping with the biblical practice. The English sermon is considered the highlight of a Reform worship service and Reform has a liberated attitude toward women, welcoming women as rabbis, cantors, and presidents of their congregations. Most Reform synagogues run a Sunday school, often with one or more additional days of Hebrew school during the week.

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM:

D **C**onservative Judaism is like Reform in that its thinkers and leaders have taught varied views about God. Some believe in a personal, supernatural God who listens to prayers and is keenly aware of human events. Thus, Solomon Schechter wrote that God is not a mere idea but a spirit found everywhere—in the temple, in the court of

law, in the family, on the farm, in the marketplace, and at moments when we enforce God's laws. Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser wrote that God is not a person, but is greater than any person: God's personality or presence fills the world.

The late religious thinker Professor Abraham J. Heschel wrote several books on the subject. Heschel was a mystic. He believed that we should not try to prove the existence of God but we should feel God's spirit or presence in the order of the universe and in the moral laws we find among human beings. According to Heschel's belief, we feel a basic "amazement" when we experience the glories of nature and history, an amazement that we cannot express properly or put into words. We also feel God's presence when we pray, study Torah, and perform mitzvot.

On the other end, there are many Conservative thinkers who do not accept the idea of a supernatural or personal God. Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, for example, wrote of God as a power or process in people and in the universe that makes for human salvation or fulfillment. Rabbi Robert Gordis believes that God is the creative power in the universe and the force behind social, political, and scientific progress in the world. Gordis says that God may be found both in the order of nature and in the course of our history. We cannot know what God is; we can only feel God's workings through our world and the people in it.

Most Conservative Jewish males do not wear skull caps all the time; rather, they wear them at prayer or when studying the Torah. Similarly, Conservative women do not cover their hair with wigs or scarves. Conservative males are expected to pray daily and to wear a talit and tefillin and recite the various prayers before and after meals. A Conservative woman is required to run a kosher home and light candles for Sabbath and the holy days. But she does not usually go to the mikveh, except for conversion.

The worship service and the pattern of prayer in Conservative synagogues differ from congregation to congregation. For example, some synagogues permit the use of an organ and have choirs of men and women, while others do not. Most conduct services on the second day of *Yom Tov*, but a few do not. All include some English prayers in the service and have an English sermon or Torah discussion, although the length of the Torah reading may vary. Almost all Conservative synagogues allow men and women to sit together during prayer services. In many congregations the main service is the late one on Friday evening. There is usually more reading in English at this service than at Sabbath morning services.

the Rabbinical Assembly and the Jewish Theological Seminary are now considering the possibility of allowing women to study in order to become rabbis. At present about one-third of the Conservative synagogues have given girls and women equal rights at services. Many others allow women to hold office in the congregation. So while it appears that the issue of women's rights will be debated for some time, the current trend is toward granting females equal rights with males in every way.

Conservative Jews are expected to lead ethical and moral lives, to give charity, to help needy friends and neighbors, and to act in an honest, kind, moral, and decent way toward all. For Conservative Jews, the ethical laws and rules of Judaism are even more important than the ritual laws because, in the Conservative view, the purpose of Judaism is to shape us into

better and more honorable human beings. Theoretically then, Conservative Jews are expected to live according to the demands of Jewish law and Torah in every way.

ORTHODOX JUDAISM:

BELIEFS ABOUT GOD

Orthodoxy accepts the traditional views of God as developed in the Bible, Talmud, and Midrash and as taught in the writings of medieval philosophers. To an Orthodox Jew, God is a spirit in the universe that has created all things and keeps all things alive. God is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise, and universal. God sees our actions; hears our thoughts, prayers, and words; God is aware of all we say and do. People understand God's will by studying Torah and performing mitzvot, the commandments.

Believing that God is all-powerful and totally in control gives rise to a difficult question: Why is there evil in the world? In our times this question has taken on a new meaning, and modern Jewish thinkers have asked, "Why did the Holocaust take place; and where was God when six million Jews were sent to their deaths?" Not many Orthodox thinkers have dared to deal with this subject. One who has, Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits, admits that we simply cannot know the purpose behind the Holocaust. We certainly cannot think that all the Jews were slaughtered because they were sinners. To believe that would be to think of God as unspeakably cruel. But even though we as human beings cannot understand God's purpose in the Holocaust, we can take comfort in knowing that the state of Israel was born out of that tragedy.

TORAH

One subject that Orthodox thinkers take seriously is the question of Torah and the Torah's place in Jewish life. It is an Orthodox belief that the Torah is the revealed word of God, given at Mount Sinai thirty-one centuries ago. To be Orthodox, a Jew must be "Torah-true" and must believe that every word, every law, every commandment of the Bible as explained and developed by the rabbis is God's word and thus is binding on a loyal Jew. Most Orthodox thinkers insist that the words of the written Torah *and* the oral laws and interpretations are God's words, and are of equal importance. The 613 mitzvot found in the Torah are all of *equal* importance, and no human has the right to choose one over another. Furthermore, the ritual laws (such as kashrut) and the ethical laws (such as love of neighbor) are equally vital, and a Torah-true Jew is expected to practice both kinds.

Once this basic understanding of the Torah's place is accepted, it is not difficult for a person to be an Orthodox Jew. For, if the Bible is God's word rather than the word of human beings, how can we *not* keep its laws? And once we agree that the rabbinic interpretations of those laws are true for all time, then those laws must be observed as well. This is the Orthodox view of halachah.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Orthodox Judaism is an all-encompassing system of commandments laid down in the Bible and Talmud and spelled out in the *Shulhan Aruch*, the Code of Jewish Law. A truly Orthodox Jew observes mitzvot from the moment of awakening in the morning to the moment of falling asleep at night.

Following mitzvot strictly is basic to Orthodox Jewish life. The Orthodox male must be circumcised according to law by a *mohel*. The female is named in the synagogue, usually on the first Sabbath after her birth. Children are to receive a good, intensive Jewish education, preferably in a yeshivah or day school where religious subjects are emphasized over secular subjects. At age thirteen, a Jewish boy becomes *Bar Mitzvah* in the synagogue. Orthodox girls rarely receive official recognition or *Bat Mitzvah*. An Orthodox boy or girl is expected to marry within the faith according to the Jewish laws of matrimony and with a rabbi conducting the ceremony. Orthodox Jews consider mixed marriage (marriage to a non-Jew) a sin, and they will not accept converts where the purpose of the conversion is marriage. If the marriage fails, the partners must receive a Jewish divorce, or *get*. An Orthodox rabbi will never remarry a Jew who was once married and lacks a *get*. When an Orthodox Jew dies, the body is prepared for burial according to Jewish law by being washed and dressed in plain linen wrappings by a special Holy Burial Society, then placed in a simple coffin. Mourners tear their garments as a sign of grief (this is called *keriah*), observe seven days of mourning during which they do no work (the seven-day period is called *shivah*, from the Hebrew word for "seven"), and go to no entertainments. They recite the *Kaddish* prayer daily for eleven months if the deceased is a parent or thirty days for other relatives or for a mate.

Affixed to the doorposts of every Orthodox Jewish home is a *mezuzah*, a small box containing passages from the Torah, to remind the family that the home must be filled with Jewishness. Males cover their heads at all times with a skull cap (in Yiddish, *yarmulke*; in Hebrew, *kippah*) or hat as a sign of respect for God; married women cover their hair with a kerchief or wig as a sign of modesty. Men are required to pray three times daily and wear a prayer shawl (*talit*) and phylacteries (*tefillin*) each morning. Every Orthodox Jew tries to study the Torah daily. Orthodox Jews eat only kosher food, never mix milk and meat, are careful not to eat bread or other products prepared with leavening during Passover, and recite a blessing before and after each meal. The Orthodox woman is expected to maintain a kosher home, light Sabbath and festival candles

The Orthodox are careful to observe the Sabbath and festivals in every way. They will not work, write, smoke, ride, or carry even a handkerchief out of their homes on the Sabbath, nor will they use radio, television, or lights on that day. They build a *sukkah* at home on the festival of Sukkot, fast on Yom Kippur and other holy fast days, eat only foods that are kosher for *Pesah* during Passover, and observe all the other rituals for each holy day of the year.

Orthodox Jews will pray only in an Orthodox shul. The shul is designed so that men and women sit separately with a partition or curtain (*mehitzah*) between them so that they will not distract members of the opposite sex. The service is almost entirely in Hebrew, although the more modern synagogues have added some English prayers and an English sermon by the rabbi. The traditional prayerbook (*Siddur*) is the only one used, and no changes or additions to the prayers are allowed. Musical instruments and choirs with female singers are never allowed at Sabbath or holy day services.

The Orthodox are strict about not changing the prayer services or any of the prayers. They believe that those who have altered these things have often adopted Christian ways such as mixed seating, organs, and mixed choirs, and that these are signs of assimilation. They feel that the traditional prayers are beautiful as they stand and that it is arrogant and improper to change them.

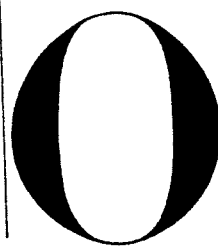
In other ways, however, some modern Orthodox congregations have adopted new patterns. They have sometimes become synagogue-centers with clubs, youth programs, and athletic activities; and most Orthodox rabbis preach in English on subjects of current interest. In every other respect, Orthodox services today are almost the same as they were in Europe a century ago.

Women have almost no role in synagogue worship in the Orthodox movement, and while most seem content with this, some women have been asking for greater opportunities to participate in worship. As a result, some Orthodox shuls have created a sort of Bat Mitzvah ceremony for girls even though this is a change in tradition. Women have also made demands in other areas of Jewish life. For example, under traditional law a woman cannot inherit if there are males in the family, nor can she be a witness in a court case. And there is a law that says that women cannot issue divorces but can only hope that the men will agree to issue a *get*. Some Orthodox women want these laws changed. And while few changes have taken place thus far, the winds of women's liberation are blowing in Orthodox Judaism as they are in all religions.

Finally, the Orthodox Jew is expected to conduct his business and professional life according to Jewish law and ethics. In fact, one of the four sections of the *Shulhan Aruch* is concerned with business practice. Truly pious Jews must not cheat or steal or lie; their word must be their bond. They may not lend money at interest; they must pay workers on time; they may not cheat a boss; they must not short-change a customer or give false weight of goods; they must give charity to the poor and help the sick and aged. While most Orthodox Jews do respect these ethical laws, others stress the ritual commandments and neglect the ethical. But Orthodoxy does demand that a Jew observe *all* mitzvot equally and so it teaches that ethical rules are always as important as rituals.

The life of an Orthodox Jew is a demanding one and requires great commitment and sacrifice. The essence of Orthodox Judaism is observance of the mitzvot, and the truly Orthodox Jew devotes a lifetime to the service of God, the study of the Torah, and the keeping of God's law.

ORAH



Orthodoxy builds its faith on the absolute belief that God gave every word of the Torah at Mount Sinai, and Reform believes that only the ethical rules were revealed there. Conservative Judaism tries to steer a course between the two. Nearly all Conservative thinkers accept the idea that God revealed the Torah to

Israel. But there are some who believe that the revealing of Torah, or *revelation*, happened only once in history, while others consider revelation to be an on-going process by which each generation of Jews uncovers more and more of God's word.

But what does "revelation" mean? Most Conservative thinkers do not believe that God actually spoke each word of Torah to Moses and Israel. Indeed, biblical studies have shown that there are different sources in the Bible text, and that Moses could not have been the only writer. So the majority of Conservative thinkers do not believe that the *entire* Bible is the word of God. But they do believe that the basic core of Torah, the important parts, is Divine. Without this notion the faith would crumble.

The reason that Conservative Jews cannot accept the Orthodox position that the Torah is the complete and final word of God is because change and growth would then be impossible. Nor can they agree with the Reform movement that only ethical rules are God-given, since it may very well be that God is concerned with the observance of ritual laws as well as ethical laws.

Furthermore, Conservative thinkers, unlike Orthodox thinkers, believe that revelation is a two-way process, or a dialogue between God and humanity. The core of God's truth cannot be denied, but the ways in which we think about that truth as developed in the Bible and Talmud are our own and therefore may contain human errors and are subject to change. Conservative Jews believe, then, that the Bible and Jewish laws are our response to God's call; the mitzvah is human interpretation and application of Divine principles.

JUS
ICES

A Conservative Jew is expected to refrain from working, riding, writing, or smoking on the Sabbath. (However, a Jew may ride to and from the synagogue on the Sabbath and festivals if the distance is too great for walking.) Conservative Jews are permitted to use electricity on Shabbat and the festivals since the Law Committee of the Rabbinical Assembly has ruled that electricity is not the same as fire, which is prohibited. The committee also recommended that the observance of the second day of festivals (Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot) shall be optional so that our calendar will be the same as that used in Israel. But only a few synagogues have dropped the second day.

There are other areas in which Conservative Judaism is more flexible about halachah. A Conservative Jew is expected to observe kashrut, but may eat dairy in a nonkosher restaurant. A Conservative Jew must marry only a Jewish mate; and no Conservative rabbi will officiate at an intermarriage unless the non-Jewish partner converts first. But the Conservative movement has been more willing than the Orthodox to accept such converts. When a marriage ends in divorce, a Conservative Jew must receive a Jewish get, or divorce, before remarrying.

RECON- STRUCTIONISM:

GOD

Mordecai Kaplan's ideas about God are untraditional. Kaplan is a "humanist-naturalist." He is a humanist because he finds God in people and in human experience. Our potential and our striving to do better, to reach higher, to achieve greater things, and to rise above the lowly animals

reflects the power of God. And Kaplan also finds evidence of God in the universe and in nature because the universe has order and laws, rules and design. Nature's order is designed to help us to achieve our highest goals. In this way, Kaplan believes that we must found our belief in God on modern, scientific, and rational facts and on a faith in humanity and in the universe as having the elements we need for raising our own moral and ethical behavior.

Kaplan defines God as the power or process that makes for human salvation and fulfillment, for the realization of the "highest ideals for which men strive." Basically, Kaplan has a deep faith that people (and the universe of which people are part) have in them a force or power driving them to reach for ideals such as justice and truth, goodness and peace. Just as gravity is a power in nature which cannot be seen but is always felt, so there is a power in human beings and in the world that makes us search for betterment and fulfillment. That power is what we call "God."

But the most radical change in the way Kaplan thinks about God is his idea that God's power is limited. For if God were all powerful, how could He allow evil and suffering in the world? The Reconstructionists believe that there are things that are within God's power and things that God cannot control, at least not now. For God's holiness has not yet filled the world. That part of life and the world not yet filled with God's presence is what we call "evil." We must have faith that someday God's spirit will fill the entire world and evil and suffering will disappear. Our task as human beings and as Jews is to bring that day ever closer.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Because of their belief that mitzvot can be changed or even dropped, the religious practices of the Reconstructionists differ from congregation to congregation, from place to place. The movement believes that Jews observe some rituals in order to enrich their lives spiritually and strengthen their ties to the Jewish people. But the choice of which to observe is left to the individual and the congregation; and the movement tries not to use any force or to speak of sin or guilt. Dr. Kaplan has remained throughout his life an observant Jew: he prays daily, keeps kosher, observes Sabbath and festivals. But many of his followers are not nearly so observant.

Although the movement has published a *Guide to Ritual Usage*, it is merely a guide. The individual is free to follow or not follow it. For example, the *Guide* states that on the Sabbath one may do things not possible the rest of the week as "a way of enjoying life." For some people this means going to synagogue, refraining from work, and studying Torah. But for others this may mean playing golf or tennis or sailing. Some keep the Sabbath carefully and others do not. Kashrut is officially favored by the movement, because—as Kaplan wrote—it teaches us that we eat to live, not live to eat, and it raises the animal act of eating to a holy act. But Kaplan suggested that if keeping kosher away from home is too difficult and requires too great a sacrifice, then the Reconstructionist may eat nonkosher foods. Many Reconstructionists will keep kosher at home and eat nonkosher when away from home.

Reconstructionists believe firmly in marriage within the faith. They use a ketubah but do not insist on a get. Their children are circumcised and named in traditional fashion and some new ceremonies for the naming of girls have recently appeared. Bar and Bat Mitzvah are important milestones in a Reconstructionist life, and the movement tries to provide good Jewish education for the children of its members, stressing Hebrew, Israel, ethics, and thought. Burial and mourning rituals differ greatly from place to place depending on how traditional the mourners are and what practices they choose to observe.

TORAH

Reconstructionism differs greatly from traditional Judaism because it does not believe that God revealed the Torah to Moses at Sinai. The Reconstructionists accept the thinking of modern biblical scholars who teach that the Bible is the work of many people in many ages. Kaplan wrote that the

Bible is not the record of God's word to us but of our search for God. Whenever we discover a religious truth or great moral idea, it is for us a revelation of God's will.

Because of this view about the giving of Torah, Reconstructionists do not believe that the halachah is holy and unchangeable and do not speak in terms of mitzvot. They point out that since the Jewish community can no longer enforce observance of Jewish law and since each Jew can now *choose* to keep the law as he or she sees fit, it is foolish to use the old terms "halachah" and "mitzvot." The Reconstructionists instead call the mitzvot "folkways" and "customs." Every people in history has created its own folkways and customs; each civilization has its heroes, sacred events, holy days, and holy objects. In the same way, Judaism has its heroes—Moses, Akiba, Rashi, Maimonides—its sacred events—birth, marriage, Bar and Bat Mitzvah—its holy days—Sabbath, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur—and its holy objects—Torah. These folkways and customs bring us closer to God and help us to lead more meaningful lives. But even more importantly, they bind us together as a people and keep the Jewish people alive and flourishing. So we need not observe rituals such as Sabbath because God commanded us to do so and they are mitzvot or law, but because observing Sabbath teaches us the importance of rest and helps us to survive as one people by uniting us.

APPENDIX FOR UNIT THREE
Text for Hanukkah

תּוֹרַת

Festival of Lights • Chanukah

25

The Jews had been defeated by the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes. He was a very cruel ruler. Although Antiochus was a Syrian, he followed the ways of the Greeks. He wanted the Jews to follow the ways of the Greeks, too. As much as they could, they refused to obey the king. The king was very angry.

On the twenty-fifth day of the Hebrew month of Kislev, the king ordered a new decree. He would force the Jews to obey his laws. From this time forward, he ordered, Jews were forbidden to read from their holy books. They were forbidden to pray to their God. They were forbidden to

celebrate their holidays or the Sabbath. They were forbidden to observe any of the laws of their religion. Soldiers would make sure that the Jews observed these new laws. They would also set up pagan altars in the holiest Jewish place, the Temple. There the Jews would be made to sacrifice unclean animals to the Greek god Zeus. The Jews were horrified. But they were forced to obey the Syrians.

Syrian messengers went throughout the land telling the Jews of the king's decrees. When Mattathias, the priest of Modi'in, and his five sons, heard the bad news, they decided that something must be done. They could

not obey the king's orders. They ran to the hills, where they organized a small army. They were led by one of the brothers, Judah. They became known as the Maccabees. They fought for the freedom of their people.

For three years, Judah and the Maccabees fought against the Syrians. They fought on the mountains, and in the forests, and in the farmlands. After three years, on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, the Maccabees were finally successful. They pushed the Syrian army out of their land. They were free people once again.

The Maccabees rushed for their holy Temple. They removed the pagan altar, and all the unclean animals. The *menorah*, the eight-branched candelabrum which was always to be burning in the Temple, was dark. They looked for the special, pure oil used to light it. It would take them eight days to make new oil. They searched and searched, but all they could find was one small cruse — enough oil to keep the menorah

burning for one day.

The Maccabees lighted the menorah. They said special prayers of thanks to God. They thanked Him for bringing them to a time when they could be free men. And then, according to legend, a great miracle happened. The little cruse which had only enough oil to last for one day lasted for eight full days.

To remember the recapture of the Temple, and the miracle of the oil, Jews each year on the 25th of Kislev, which is in December, celebrate the holiday of Chanukah, which is also known as the Festival of Lights. Chanukah is celebrated for eight days, one for each day the oil burned.

A special menorah used for Chanukah can be found in many Jewish homes. This menorah, sometimes called a *chanukiyah*, is sometimes very old looking, and sometimes very modern. Sometimes it uses oil, and sometimes candles. Always, though, it has eight main branches, like the menorah

lighted by the Maccabees in the Temple. For all of the eight days of Chanukah, the menorah is placed near a window so that all who pass can see its bright and beautiful glow.

On each night of Chanukah, the family gathers around the menorah. One light is lighted for each night — on the first night, one candle, on the second night two, and by the eighth night, eight lights are lighted. Special prayers are said over the lights, thanking God for the miracles He performed in the time of the Maccabees, and even now. Chanukah songs are sung by the entire family, telling of the great wonders that happened to the Maccabees long ago. One of the favorite songs is called *Maoz Tzur*, which means Rock of Ages. It sings praises to God, and also tells the story of the first Chanukah.

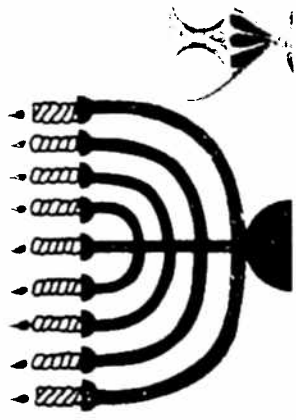
After the lighting of the lights, children usually play special gambling games, using a top called a dreidl or *sevivon*. On the sides of the dreidl are four Hebrew letters: Nun, Gimmel, Heh,

and Shin. These four letters stand for the words, *Nes Gadol Hayah Sham*, which means, A great miracle happened there. Each person playing the game starts off with a stash of raisins and almonds, and sometimes small money. Everyone places some of his stash in the center. Then each player in his turn starts to spin. If the dreidl falls on Gimmel, the player takes in the entire pot. If it is Heh, he takes half. If it is Nun, he takes nothing. And if it is Shin, he must put something extra into the pot.

While the children are playing dreidl, there are usually wonderful smells wafting through the house. Chanukah is a time for latkes, special potato pancakes, which are also called *levivot*. Many people also eat jelly-filled doughnuts called *savganiot*.

Chanukah is also a time for giving presents. Some parents give their children one or two presents for the holiday, and some give a different present for each of the eight nights of the holiday.

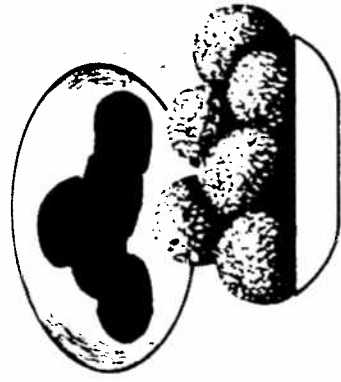
The Festival of Lights has a very special meaning in Israel. There, every year at the start of Chanukah, a torch is lighted in Modi'in, the home of the Maccabees, and is carried by runners all the way to the home of the president, many miles away. The torch reminds the Israelis of the lights of freedom, in days past and even today.



The menorah is the symbol of the miracle of Chanukah. The cruse found in the Temple contained oil for only one day. It lasted for eight.



Sevivon or dreidl is a special chanukah top sometimes played for money and sometimes for nuts.



Latkes are potato pancakes eaten on Chanukah. Sufganiot are jelly doughnuts eaten on Chanukah.

APPENDIX FOR UNIT FOUR
Text for Purim

פּוּרִים

Feast of Lots • Purim

There is one day in the year when Jewish children can be seen walking around in costumes of kings and queens and villains, wearing masks and twirling noisemakers and carrying baskets of fruits and cakes. This day usually comes some time in March, on the fourteenth day of the Hebrew month of Adar. It is known as Purim and it is one of the merriest days in the Jewish year.

The story of Purim is written in the Bible. It is called *Megillat Esther*, the Scroll of Esther. Long ago, the story says, in the ancient kingdom of Persia, in the capital city of Shushan, there lived a king by the name of Ahasuerus. King Ahasuerus was very rich and his kingdom spread over 127 countries. He was a happy king, and he liked to give great parties.

Once Ahasuerus made a feast that lasted for days and days. All the great people in the kingdom were invited. When the feast was almost over, the king asked that Queen Vashti be brought to him. When Vashti refused, the king ordered her sent away from the kingdom. After the feasting was over, the king became very lonely. A king must have a queen, he said to himself. I will find another, more beautiful woman than Vashti and make her my queen. The king ordered his servants to issue a proclamation. There was to be a great beauty pageant. The most beautiful girl in the pageant he would take for his new queen.

All the girls in the kingdom wanted to become queen — all except one by the name of Esther. Even so, she was the most

For three days the Jews of the kingdom prayed for Esther's success. Then Esther went to the king. The king was pleased and held out his scepter to her; she would not be killed. The king offered Esther anything she wanted, even half of his kingdom. All she wanted, she said, was that the king and Haman join her for dinner the following evening. It was agreed.

At the same time, Mordecai saved the king's life. While sitting at the palace gates, he overheard some servants planning to murder the king. Mordecai informed the king, and was written down in the book of good deeds. One night, when the king could not sleep, he read his book and remembered he had done nothing to thank Mordecai. He ordered Haman sent in.

The king told Haman he should like to give special honor to one of his subjects. Haman decided the king was speaking of him. So he suggested that this man be dressed in the king's very own robes and crown, and that he be seated on the king's very own royal steed. He should then be led through the streets of Shushan by the king's own guard. The king's face lit up. A splendid idea.

When the king told Haman it was Mordecai

beautiful of all the girls, and Abasuerus chose her to be his new queen. The king did not know that Esther was Jewish, and Esther did not tell him.

Because Ahasuerus was always busy giving parties, he had very little time to rule his kingdom. This he left to his chief advisor, a man by the name of Haman. Because Haman was wicked, the people obeyed his orders. Only one man, Mordecai the Jew, refused to obey Haman. Mordecai was also Queen Esther's cousin.

Haman became very angry with Mordecai and with all the Jews. He decided to have them killed. Haman cast lots, or *purim*, to choose a date for the killing. The lots fell on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. Haman asked for the king's seal on the decree, and the king agreed. Haman's plan was all set.

When word of the decree reached Mordecai, he rushed to the palace to see his cousin the queen. It was time, Mordecai said, for Esther to tell the king she was Jewish, and to beg him to save her people. Esther was afraid the king would have her killed. She could see the king only if he called her. Finally, Esther agreed to speak to the king.

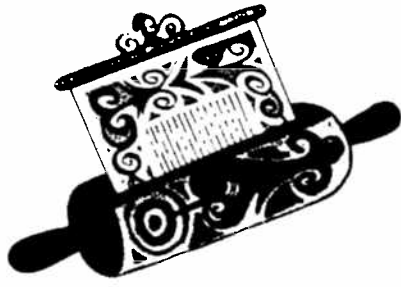
the Jew who was to be honored, Haman flew into a rage. He had special gallows built for Mordecai which were to be used on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. Even so, Haman had to lead Mordecai through the streets of Shushan calling, "Thus shall be done to the man the king delights to honor."

Esther made ready for her banquet. And when the king and Haman arrived, Ahasuerus once again offered Esther anything she wanted, even half of his kingdom. All she wanted, Esther said, was that the king and Haman join her again for another banquet the next evening. It was agreed.

The next evening, the king again offered Esther anything she wanted. And this time Esther said that she wanted her life spared and the lives of her people. She told Ahasuerus she was Jewish and that the wicked Haman was about to have all the Jews killed. Ahasuerus became very angry. He ordered Haman hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. The Jews were saved, and they held a great feast to celebrate.

Jews today celebrate Purim by reading the

Megillah or Scroll of Esther. Every time the name Haman is mentioned, people stamp their feet and twirl noisemakers to drown out the sound of the name. Children dress up in costumes and put on plays that retell the story of the holiday. People send gifts called *mishloach manot* and eat special three-cornered cakes called *hamantaschen*. These cakes are the shape of Haman's three-cornered hat and are usually filled with prunes or poppyseeds.



Megillah, scroll, or rolled up paper, sometimes made of parchment. Long ago scrolls were used for writing books and for sending out proclamations.



Hamantaschen, three-cornered cakes in the shape of Haman's hat, usually filled with prunes or poppyseeds.



Masks and costumes help to retell the Purim story.

APPENDIX FOR UNIT FIVE

- **Text for Pesach**



Passover • Pesach

39

For many years, the Children of Israel had been slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. The taskmasters were cruel and forced them to work harder and harder. They were building the great pyramid storehouses of Pithom and Ramses. As they worked in the hot sun, they remembered a better time, before they had become slaves.

The Children of Israel had come to live in Egypt when Joseph, their brother, was prime minister. They had come, seventy people in all, and settled in the city of Goshen. There they lived and worked as free people. They had many children and became a large nation. They were happy in Egypt.

A new Pharaoh came to rule over Egypt. He was frightened of the Children of Israel. He thought that perhaps they would go to war against Egypt. He issued a cruel decree. All their newborn sons would be killed. All the Hebrews were to become slaves.

At this time, a son was born to a Hebrew by the name of Yocheved. She did not kill her son. Her daughter Miriam was to set the child afloat in a basket on the River Nile. She was to watch over it and make sure it was safe. The basket was found by Pharaoh's daughter who took the child home and adopted him as her own son. She called the child Moses.

As Moses grew up, he saw the suffering of the Hebrews. It made him angry. Once, Moses saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave. He killed the Egyptian and ran away.

Moses became a shepherd in the land of Midian. There, while tending his sheep, he came across a bush. It was burning, but it did not turn to ash. From the bush Moses heard the voice of God. It told him to go to Pharaoh and tell him that the God of the Hebrews said to free His people from slavery.

Many times, Moses went to Pharaoh. Always, Pharaoh agreed to let the Children of Israel leave. Always he went back on his word. Many plagues were brought upon the Egyptians — blood, wild animals, hailstones. With each plague, Pharaoh said the Hebrews could leave. When the plague was gone, he changed his mind again.

Finally, Moses told Pharaoh that if he did not let the Hebrews go, a tenth plague would be brought on the

Egyptians. All the firstborn sons would be killed. Pharaoh was frightened. He was the eldest in his family. He told Moses to take his people and leave the land of Egypt.

Moses told the Children of Israel to prepare themselves. They were to sacrifice a lamb, and paint some of its blood on the doorposts of their homes. The Angel of Death was to come and kill all firstborn Egyptians. He would pass over the homes whose doorposts were painted with blood. They did as Moses said. Quickly they prepared bread for the journey. But before the bread had time to rise, they were already on their way. When he saw them leaving, Pharaoh once again changed his mind.

The large nation of slaves followed Moses. They walked until they reached the Red Sea. There, Moses took his rod and touched it to the water. A great miracle happened. The water spread apart so that the Children of Israel could pass on dry land. As the Egyptians came up behind, Moses once

again touched the water with his rod. The waters returned, and the Egyptians and their chariots were drowned in the sea. The Children of Israel sang songs of joy. They were free men once again.

To celebrate this freedom, each year Jews observe the holiday of Pesach, which is called Passover in English. The holiday of Pesach begins on the fourteenth day of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which is sometime in April or May. Some people celebrate the holiday for seven days, and some for eight.

On Pesach Jews eat no bread. Many clean out their entire homes so that no trace of bread is left. By the first night of Pesach, the house is usually spotlessly clean. The table is set in preparation for the *seder*, the retelling of the story of Pesach.

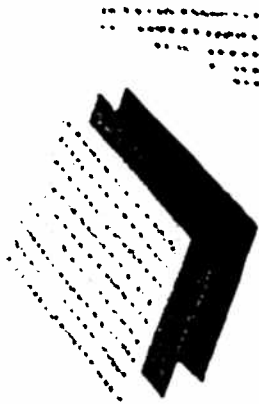
The family gathers around the table. The seder is about to begin. Each place is set with a special booklet called a *hagadah*, and with a wine goblet.

The youngest child opens the seder with four questions. "Why", he begins, "is this night different from all other nights? Why on all other nights do we eat all kinds of bread, and on this night we eat only matzah?" When he has completed his questions, the head of the house reads the answers from the *hagadah*. "Because we were slaves in Egypt" he begins. "And now we are free men." The retelling of the story begins.

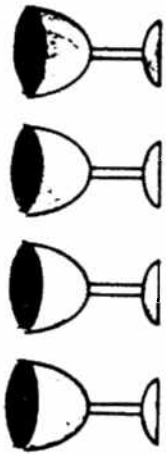
During the seder, each person drinks four cups of wine. He eats bitter herbs called *maror*, to remind him of the bitterness of slavery. He eats a special apple and nut paste called *charoset*, to remind him of the bricks used in building the pyramids. He dips vegetables in salt water to remind him of the tears shed by the Hebrew slaves. Many of these foods are placed together on one plate, along with a roasted bone, which reminds people of the lamb sacrificed in Egypt. On the table, too, are three *matzot* — the flat bread quickly baked by the Children of Israel as they rushed from Egypt.

During the reading of the hagadah, many songs are sung and interesting stories told. A special cup of wine is poured for the Prophet Elijah, who, it is thought, comes to visit each Jewish home on this night.

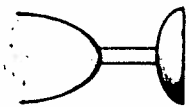
As the seder comes to an end, people eat a last piece of matzah known as the *afikomen* and thank God for His very special gift of freedom.



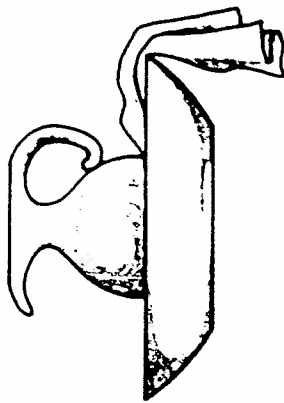
Matzah is unleavened bread.



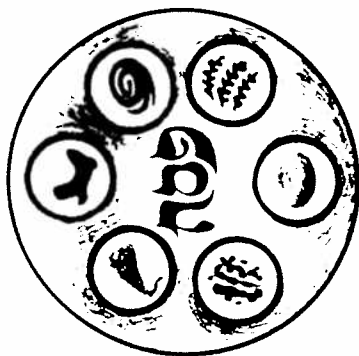
At the seder each person drinks four cups of wine.



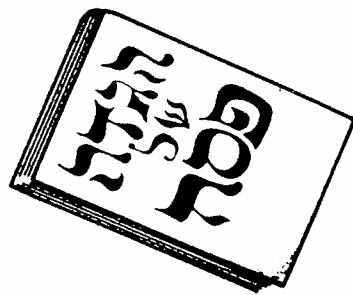
The cup of Elijah is set on the table.



A pitcher and basin are used to wash hands twice during the seder.



The seder plate has a roasted bone, bitter herbs, charoset, parsley, and a roasted egg.



The Hagadah tells the story of Pesach.

APPENDIX FOR UNIT SIX

• **Text for Yom HaShoah**

(Text for Yom HaZikaron to be researched separately in synagogue library)

YOM HASHOAH

(Text pages 134-135)

Shoah is the Hebrew word for "Holocaust." Both in Hebrew and in English it is an uncompromising word that depicts the terror of its reality.

I am old enough to have personally known many survivors. Members of my own family, parents of friends that I grew up with, both touched me in silent ways, communicating their tragedies to me in small but poignant gestures. I have often wondered about the family friends I never had the opportunity to know, the aunt I was named after, the "first family" of my best friend's mother. They are always with me, but I wonder if they will be with my children. They too have known survivors, but not as closely as I have. They read *Anne Frank*, *Number the Stars*, *Maus*, and the books of Elie Wiesel. Yet with each day, the distance grows and the challenge of remembering becomes greater.

That is where we, the teachers, come in, for it is our responsibility to aid this process of remembering. Just as we recall the Maccabees, the Exodus from Egypt, the revelation at Sinai, so too we must teach the Holocaust, although this is a more delicate task, especially with young children. How can we teach the Holocaust experience without unduly frightening the child?

When I was a child I always loved to ask my father, "What was it like in Poland when you were a child?" And after stories of the big black stove in the kitchen, of the runaway horse and cart that he lost control of when he was seven, there would come the inevitable end of the story: "No one from that town is left. They all died in the war." This frightened me as a child, and my father knew that, so he lied to me, a sweet and loving lie that I thought was true well into my adulthood. "Don't worry," he would tell me. "There are more Jews alive today than there were before the war." But despite his reassurance, Hitler chased me in my dreams for many years.

Rather than tell those well-meaning lies, we have several good books available to help teach the Holocaust experience to young children. *Promise of a New Spring* by Gerda Klein (Dallas: Rossel Books, 1981), *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm* by David Adler (New York: U.A.H.C., 1987), and *Terrible Things* by Eve Bunting (Philadelphia: Jewish

Publication Society, 1989) all tell stories that a child can understand and relate to without feeling overwhelmed.

You might want to show your class a yahrzeit candle. Discuss its use, when we light it, and why. You might also want to teach the Kaddish prayer, or just recite it, pointing out that the words are an affirmation of life. Discuss why we affirm life when we are thinking most about death.

An appropriate song to teach during this lesson would be "Ani Ma'amin." The words translate, "I believe with perfect faith, that even though the Messiah tarries, the Messiah will one day come."

C. YOM HASHO-AH (HOLOCAUST DAY)

THE twenty-seventh of the Hebrew month of Nisan, called Yom HaSho-ah, was in 1951 set aside as a day of mourning for the

victims of the Holocaust by the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament). The Central Conference of American Rabbis in June 1977 called for the annual commemoration of Yom HaSho-ah on this date.²²⁵

Anti-Semitism and Nazism did not die with the end of World War II. The *Sho-ah* is a constant reminder of the potential for evil which lies below the veneer of civilization. The seeds of the Holocaust must not be allowed to find fertile soil again.

It is a *mitzvah* to remember the six million Jews who were murdered in the *Sho-ah* by attending special memorial services. With them we should also remember *Chasidei Umot Ha-olam*, the righteous non-Jews who gave their lives in attempts to save members of the Jewish people.

In order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of remembrance, it is suggested that a memorial candle be lit and passages found in *Gates of Prayer* (pages 407-411) be read. Either as preparation or as part of the observance, one should spend time reviewing the events which led to the *Sho-ah* and discussing ways of preventing its recurrence.

In keeping with the spirit of Yom HaSho-ah as a day of mourning, weddings should not be scheduled. It is further suggested that one eat a very simple meal on the eve of Yom HaSho-ah as an act of identification and solidarity with those who were in the concentration camps and slowly starved to death. Particularly important is providing for a permanent memorial to the *Kedoshim*, the holy ones who perished. Therefore, our *Tzedakah* on Yom HaSho-ah should be directed to institutions which preserve their memory.

APPENDIX FOR UNIT SEVEN

- **Text for Yom Ha'atsmaut**

יום העצמאות

Israel Independence Day • Yom Ha-Atzmaut

47

When the Romans conquered the Land of Israel, many Jews were taken away as slaves. They were scattered all over the world — in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, and later in the Americas, too. The Jews were in exile in strange lands. Sometimes, they were well accepted in the countries in which they lived. Most of the time, though, they had to pay high taxes, and wear special clothes, and live in separate sections of towns. They were beaten, and robbed, and even killed. Wherever they lived, always in their hopes and their dreams, they remembered their land. Always, they spoke of returning to it. Next year in Jerusalem was forever on their lips.

At the very beginning of the twentieth century, at a time when the Jews of Europe were having a very difficult time, a new movement called Zionism was born. The head of the movement, Theodor Herzl, believed that the Jewish people should live in a land of its own. He called meetings of great Jewish leaders from all over the world. He told them, "Perhaps not in five years, but in fifty, there will be a Jewish state. If you will it — it is no dream."

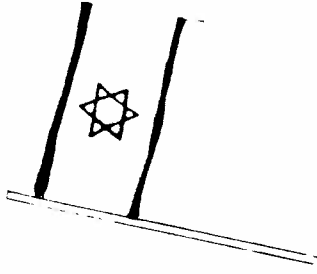
The fifty years that followed this first Zionist meeting were probably the worst in all of Jewish history. Many millions of Jews were killed by the

Nazis during the Second World War. The British were in control of the Land of Israel, which was then called Palestine. Jews who escaped from the Nazis and came to Palestine were sent away. Many people tried to sneak into the country in the middle of the night. Sometimes, the British sunk the ships and many people drowned. Even so, the population of Palestine grew and grew.

In 1947, the United Nations voted to establish a national homeland for Jews. On May 14, 1948, David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, read the Declaration of Independence of the New State. The Hebrew date was the fifth of Iyar. The Jewish people in the country went wild with joy. They danced and sang and cried. Jews all over the world shared their joy. It was the first Yom Ha-Atzmaut, the first Israel Independence Day. After 2,000 years, the Jews had come home.

Each year on Yom Ha-Atzmaut, Israelis gather together around bonfires

to sing and dance and watch fireworks. They tell stories of the founding of the country and of the pioneers who helped to build it. And they remember all those who died fighting for independence in Israel's four wars with its Arab neighbors.



The flag of Israel is blue stripes on white, with a star of David in the center.

YOM HA'ATZMA'UT

(Text pages 136-147)

Important Concepts

1. Yom Ha'atzma'ut is the birthday of the State of Israel. It occurs on the fifth of Iyar.
2. The modern state of Israel was born in 1948.
3. Even though we were forced to leave the Land of Israel two thousand years ago, we have always remembered our homeland.
4. Theodor Herzl is the father of modern Zionism.
5. The Jews of Israel had to fight to make Israel a Jewish country.
6. Jews come to live in Israel from all over the world.
7. Hebrew is the language spoken in Israel.

Vocabulary

Aliyah The word *aliyah* means "going up." We use the phrase "making aliyah" to refer to the act of going to live in Israel, because we see this as a spiritual ascent. In the same way, we see the act of being called to the Torah to say the blessing (which is referred to as "having an aliyah") as a spiritual ascent.

Hatikvah *Hatikvah* is the Hebrew word for "hope." It is also the name of the national anthem of Israel.

Theodor Herzl A journalist from Vienna who encouraged Jews to resettle the land of Israel and create a national homeland. His ideas of statehood for the Jewish people became known as "Zionism," and he is now known as the father of modern Zionism.

Hora A joyous Israeli dance performed in a circle. The hora has become a common form of celebration in the streets of Israel on holidays.

Kibbutzim The root of the word *kibbutz* means "draw together." A kibbutz is a community of people who work and live together, sharing common goals and the profits of their labor.

Kotel The word *kotel* means "wall." This specific wall is the last remaining outer stone wall of the ancient Temple that stood in Jerusalem before it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. Today it is a holy site where people come to pray.

Magen David This is the six-pointed star found on the Israeli flag. A *magen* is a "shield." The star is traditionally known as the symbol that adorned David's shield.

Medinat Yisrael Hebrew for "the State of Israel."

Ulpan An *ulpan* is literally a studio or place where one thing is done intensively. We commonly use this word to mean a school that teaches intensive Hebrew to new Israeli immigrants.

Zionism A belief that arose in Europe in the late 1800s that the Jewish people need to be responsible for their own destiny through living in and running their own sovereign state.

Background Information

A Personal Experience

Recently I was teaching a group of Bar/Bat Mitzvah students the proper choreography for the recitation of the Amidah prayer. It is customary when reciting this prayer to rise, face east, and take three steps forward before beginning. I asked the group why we do these things. No one knew, so I explained. "We rise because this is the most important prayer. We recite it as though we are entering God's presence. We face east so that we are facing Jerusalem, our holy city, and we take three steps forward in order to express the feeling of entering the throne room of the Holy One. At the end of the prayer," I added, "we take three steps back again in order to signify our leaving."

We practiced doing this a few times. The following week when we met for our lesson, I asked if anyone remembered why we do these three things. They remembered why we rise, and they remembered why we face east, but there was silence when I asked about taking the three steps. After a quiet moment of shifting around, one brave girl spoke up. "We take three steps forward because we really want to go to Israel," she guessed, "and when we know that we really can't go there today, then we take three steps back."

Oh, well. Even the best students don't always remember all the information, but I thought this response was rather interesting. Embedded in the Jewish psyche is our connection to the Land of Israel. Even though it was not exactly the correct response,

this girl knew that we express our feelings toward our homeland through our prayer, and even though she wasn't sure exactly how, she made a logical, Jewish guess.

For over two thousand years we have maintained our connection to the Land of Israel, mainly through our thoughts and prayers. When we end the Passover seder, we sing, "Next Year in Jerusalem." When we recite the Birkat Hamazon, we ask God to rebuild Jerusalem speedily. A standard synagogue service includes a prayer for the State of Israel, and we teach all our young people to sing "Hatikvah." As adults we join Zionist organizations such as Hadassah and give our tzedakah money to United Jewish Appeal or to Jewish National Fund, the organization that plants trees in Israel.

Many of us who were born after 1948 have trouble imagining a world without an Israel. Israel has always been there for us, making deserts bloom, defeating enemies despite all odds, showing a face of Jewish strength in the world. And yet, for two thousand years before this, there was no Jewish state, and life was very different for the Jewish people. In the face of oppression and intolerance there was nowhere to turn. Those days are easy to forget in the short time since 1948, and one of the most important things we can communicate to our students is to not take Israel for granted. We must teach that the State of Israel needs the support of world Jewry, for the country sits in what seems to be a permanently fragile situation.

We must encourage future American Jews to give to UJA, to plant trees, to spend a year of high school or college studying in Israel. We must teach them how beautiful our land is and how much we need it.

"If you will it, it is no dream." Theodor Herzl called Jews to action with these famous words at the First Zionist Congress. We are the inheritors of these beautiful words even today as we bring Russians and Ethiopians home to Israel for better lives as free Jews. So as players in the drama that is Israel's story, we continue to act. The book is not closed; we just need to write the next chapter.

A Historical Perspective

Joshua brought the Jews into the land of Israel in about 1200 B.C.E. The kings of Israel—Saul, David, Solomon, and others—ruled for about a thousand years until the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. At that time Rome removed Israel's status as a province of the Roman Empire and attached the little strip of land to Syria. Except for a brief period during the Bar Kochba rebellion, Jews did not rule the Land of Israel again until 1948.

Throughout two thousand years of exile there were always Jews that remained in the land of Israel. Every generation brought pilgrims who settled in the land, and there

were often scholars who went there to study. But the Jews remained poor and few in number, often dependent on the help of world Jewry for their survival.

Zionism

During the nineteenth century some European Jews began to call for a return to Israel. They called themselves Zionists after the term "Zion," the tall hill in the center of the city of Jerusalem. Wealthy European Jews such as the Rothschilds began buying up tracts of land for agricultural settlements, and Jews began to resettle the land. The city of Tel Aviv was founded in 1909 when Arabs refused to let Jews settle in the coastal city of Jaffa; the Jews moved a few miles up the beach and began to build the city that is now home to over one million people. That same year also saw the birth of the first kibbutz, Kibbutz Degania on the Sea of Galilee.

As more and more Jews came to settle on the newly bought land in Israel, a need developed to speak a common language. People from all over the world were uniting with a common goal, but not with a common language. Eliezer Ben Yehudah and his family took it upon themselves to revive the Hebrew language, which had been lying dormant for years. (Jews used it for prayer and study but not for daily speech.) Ben Yehudah taught his family to speak Hebrew and then proceeded to teach others. He wrote the first modern Hebrew dictionary, assigning new meanings to ancient words and creating new words for things such as television, newspaper, and airplane. The language was revived in one generation, a remarkable feat considering that Hebrew is the only "dead" language ever to be successfully revived.

When World War I broke out, Jews fought on both sides, some with the Turks who ruled in "Palestine" and some on the side of the British. At the end of the war, England gained control of Palestine (the name given to the area by the Romans; it means Philistines).

In the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the British pledged their support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, even though over the years they had also made similar promises to the Arabs of the area. When there were anti-Jewish riots in Israel, the English did little to stop them. Throughout the 1930s Jews attempted to immigrate to Israel in order to escape persecution in Europe. The British, caving in to Arab pressure, restricted immigration to that area, and boatloads of Jews were imprisoned on the island of Cyprus rather than being allowed to enter Israel.

Finally, in 1947 the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into both a Jewish and an Arab state. The Jews accepted this plan, but the Arabs did not, so as Israel

announced its Declaration of Independence, it was invaded by the armies of the neighboring Arab states.

Despite the odds, Israel survived the attacks and remains to this day a state struggling for its survival in a sea of enemies. A rich Jewish culture has grown up there, both religious and secular, a testament to Jewish strength and tenacity.

Introducing the Lesson

You might want to begin this lesson by discussing birthdays. Ask the children to tell when their birthdays are, and to describe how they celebrate.

Explain to your students that everything has a birthday, whether it be a person, an animal, a plant, or even a country. On the board, list some famous birthdays, such as George Washington, Martin Luther King, yourself, the world (Rosh Hashanah), trees (Tu B'Shevat), America (July 4), and Israel (the fifth of Iyar). Discuss how each of these birthdays is celebrated.

Then ask each child how old he or she is. Ask how they know. Ask them if they know how old Israel is. Help the class figure it out, and then help them to imagine a cake with that many candles on it.

Finally, show pictures of famous places in the Land of Israel. Explain that as we learn about Israel's birthday, we are also going to learn a bit about the people and places of that special land.

Teaching the Text

Israel's Birthday Explain that Israel declared its independence somewhat like the United States did—by drafting a Declaration of Independence.

Never Forgetting Israel Ask the children if they know where their families came from. Point out that Jews have lived all over the world during the last two thousand years. Ask if anyone knows Jews that speak languages other than English because they lived in different countries.

Jewish people were scattered across the world . . . Use a large map to point out the locations of some of the countries in which Jews have lived. Talk about the routes people might have taken to get to those places from Israel and why they might have needed to go there.

We spoke of our love for Israel in our prayers . . . Point out how the arks in most synagogues face east toward Jerusalem.

Returning to the Land Discuss the reasons why Jews needed a land of their own. (They were not always welcome in other countries. Sometimes they were thrown out or persecuted for being Jewish.)

They drained the muddy swamps . . . The Jews took a desert land that could not grow any food and learned how to make it productive. How did Israelis learn to grow food in the desert? Why did they need to plant so many new trees? What did they need to build? (They used water running through pipes that have little holes in them to let only a drip of water out at a time. They planted trees for soil conservation, shade, and beauty. They built entire communities—houses, roads, school, stores, sewers, water pipes—where there had been none.)

Independence When Israel was attacked by its neighbors, how was the Jewish victory like the victory of the Maccabees in the Hanukkah story?

Returning to Israel Ask your students to name some of the reasons Jews came to live in Israel. Do they still come today? (They came to escape persecution in other countries or to find new homes after theirs were destroyed in the Holocaust. They also came out of a conviction that it was important for Jews to live in Israel and build a strong Jewish state. Jews are still coming even today, especially from the countries of Russia and Ethiopia.)

An Ancient Language Comes to Life Eliezer Ben Yehudah taught his family to speak Hebrew. His son was not allowed to speak any other language and was the only Hebrew-speaking child of his day. (He must have been a little lonely.) But by the time he was an adult, many Jews in Israel could speak Hebrew. Tell your class the story of the tower of Babel and discuss how reviving Hebrew was the opposite of that story. Jews who spoke many different languages could now work together because they were able to speak one common language—Hebrew.

B. *YOM HA-AT SMA-UT*
(ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY)

ON the fifth day of the Hebrew month of Iyar 5708 (May 14, 1948), Israel was reborn as a modern, independent state. Since that time Jews throughout the world have celebrated the day in commemoration and rejoicing. In response to the widespread observance of Yom Ha-Atsma-ut among Reform Jews, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, at its convention on Mount Scopus in 1970, proclaimed Israel Independence Day "a permanent annual festival in the religious calendar of Reform Judaism."²²⁴ In addition, the Reform Movement has published a special worship service to mark the occasion and has provided special Torah and *Haftarah* readings for the day (see *Gates of Prayer*, pages 590-611, and *Gates of the House*, page 295).

The celebration of Yom Ha-Atsma-ut recognizes that a new era has dawned in the life of the Jewish people. It attests to the essential unity of the whole household of Israel, and marks the cultural and spiritual renaissance which draws strength from the symbiotic relationship between Israel and world Jewry. The rebirth of Israel from the ashes of the *Sbo-ab* is a symbol of hope against despair, of redemption against devastation.

It is a *mitzvah* for every Jew to mark Yom Ha-Atsma-ut by participation in public worship services and/or celebrations which affirm the bond between the Jews living in the Land of Israel and those living outside. Furthermore, a special act of *Tzedakah* to an organization or institution which helps to strengthen the State of Israel would be a significant way of affirming the unity of the Jewish people. One may wish to have a festive meal on Yom Ha-Atsma-ut at which one serves foods from Israel and sings Israeli songs.

APPENDIX FOR UNIT EIGHT

- **Text for Shavuot**

שבועות

Feast of Weeks • Shavuot

51

Many years ago, a legend says, God decided to give His Law to man. God went to the people of Ammon. "Do you want My Law," God asked. And the people of Ammon said, "First tell us what is written in it." When God told them His Law said, "You must not kill," the people of Ammon said, "No, that is not the kind of Law for us."

Next God went to the people of Moab. "Do you want My Law," God asked. And the people of Moab said, "First tell us what is written in it." When God told them His Law said, "You must not steal," the people of Moab said, "No, that is not the kind of Law for us."

God went from nation to nation, from people to people. Each one God asked, "Do you want My Law?" And each one said, "First tell us what is written in it." When God had told them His Laws for living together in peace, they all said, "No, that is not the kind of Law for us." Finally, the legend says, God came to a very small nation who had just escaped from slavery in Egypt. They were known as the Children of Israel. "Do you want My Law," God asked. And the Children of Israel answered, "Yes, we do. Now tell us what is written in Your Law."

And so God gathered the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai. He called Moses,

their leader, to the top of the mountain. There He taught Moses the Ten Commandments for living together in peace. These Laws were written on two tablets of stone called *luchot*.

When Moses came down the mountain, he taught the Children of Israel all the Laws in God's commandments. These Laws were the Torah. They said,

- **There is only one God**
- **Do not bow down to idols**
- **Do not swear falsely by the name of God**
- **Keep the Sabbath holy**
- **Honor your father and mother**
- **Do not murder**
- **Do not take another man's wife, or another woman's husband**
- **Do not steal**
- **Do not lie**
- **Do not want what does not belong to you.**

The Children of Israel learned God's Laws. And they obeyed them. And to remember this most important happening in their history, Jews forever after have celebrated the festival of Shavuot.

But the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai is only part of the reason for Shavuot. After the Children of Israel left Sinai, they entered the Promised Land, the Land of Israel. There they settled down and most people became farmers. In order to thank God for giving them good harvests, the people would go by foot, three times a year, up to the holy city of Jerusalem, to the Temple, to bring God's priests, the *Kohanim*, a part of their harvests. These three times were called the *Shalosh Regalim*, or pilgrimages. Shavuot, which comes at the time of the spring harvest, is one of the *Shalosh Regalim*.

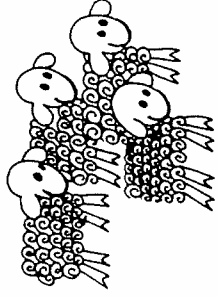
Shavuot comes exactly seven weeks after the holiday of Pesach, on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan. Many Jews in Israel and Jews all over the world celebrate the holiday by decorating their homes with beautiful flowers and leaves which remind them of the spring harvest. It is also a custom to eat meals of dairy products such as cheese and eggs. Many people eat special

pancakes filled with cheese, called blintzes.

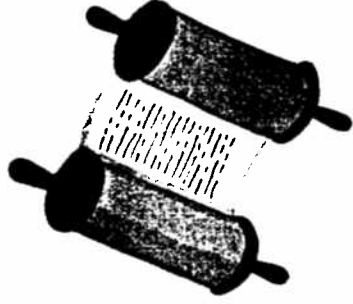
On Shavuot, Jews go to synagogue and thank God for giving them the Torah. They also read a book from the Bible called the Book of Ruth. This book tells the story of a young Moabite woman who left her land and her people to go with her Jewish mother-in-law to the Land of Israel.

The story takes place at the time of the spring harvest, and tells of Ruth's strong love and faith.

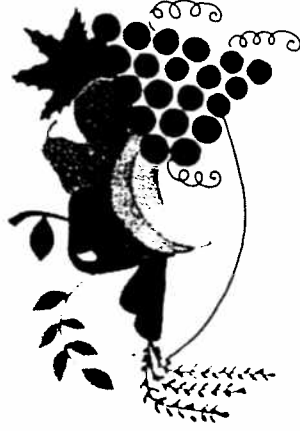
Shavuot is also a time when some Jews begin to give their children a Jewish education. By beginning to teach their children the Torah, they feel they too are standing at the foot of Mount Sinai, helping their children to receive God's Law.



Firstborn animals were brought to God's priests in the Temple.



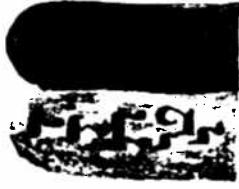
The Torah tells God's Laws, and also the early history of the Children of Israel. It is written on a scroll and has five parts.



Bikurim, the first fruits of the harvest, were brought to God's priests in the Temple.



Flowers decorate Jewish homes to remind people of the harvest.



The Luchot, the Ten Commandments, were written on two stone tablets. The commandments are written in the Torah.



The Harvest was a time when Jews thanked God for the food of the Earth.

APPENDIX FOR UNIT NINE

- **Text for High Holy Days**

הַאֲשֵׁר

New Year's • Rosh Hashanah

5

For thirty days during the Hebrew month of Elul, Jews prepare themselves for the holidays to come. Each morning in their prayers they think about their behavior for the year just past. They think of any wrongs they may have done to their friends and relatives. They ask forgiveness from anyone they may have hurt, and just in case they may have hurt someone without realizing it, they ask everyone they know for forgiveness. They send cards with good wishes, saying, "May you be written down for a good year." Each morning during this special month, they hear the sound of the *shofar*, the ram's horn. It reminds them of the specialness of the time,

and of the holy period that is about to arrive.

When Elul is over, the month of Tishri begins. The first ten days of Tishri are known as the High Holy Days. They are the most important days in the entire Jewish year. The first two days are Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. The last day is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are called the Days of Penitence.

Rosh Hashanah comes in the fall, usually in September or October. It starts a brand new calendar year for Jews. But Rosh Hashanah is not only

the Jewish New Year; it is also what Jews call *Yom Hadin*, the Day of Judgment.

According to Jewish tradition, there is in heaven a symbolic book in which all of man's deeds are written. On one side are his good deeds and on the other, his bad. On Rosh Hashanah, Jews believe, God begins to study each and every man's behavior for the past year. Has he been a good person? Has he tried to be helpful? Has he hurt someone without knowing it? God studies all of man's actions. For the entire ten days of the High Holy Days, the heavenly book is kept open. As the sun goes down on Yom Kippur, God writes down, or inscribes what man's life will be like for the year to come.

Because man's fate is not sealed until the end of Yom Kippur, Jews spend the time from Rosh Hashanah onward trying to make themselves better people. They try to repent, which means they try to understand anything bad they may have done in their lives, and then try to change their ways.

They hope that by repenting, they will be written down for a better life. It is a very serious and very holy time.

Because Rosh Hashanah is such a holy time, Jews spend much of it in the synagogue praying. Many Jews wear simple white clothing to remind themselves of the holiness and purity of the time. The prayers, read from a special Rosh Hashanah prayer book, are old and beautiful and written like poems. Sometimes they are sung as songs. The same shofar which was sounded once each morning during the month of Elul is sounded more than 100 times during the two days of Rosh Hashanah. The long and short blasts are sharp and trill, and add to the very holy feeling of the period.

On Rosh Hashanah Jews read the portion of the Bible which tells of the sacrifice of Isaac. The story tells of how God commanded Abraham to take his son Isaac, his only son whom he loved very much, and to sacrifice him to God. Abraham had great faith in God, and prepared to follow His

command. He took the boy to a far off place, and built the altar as God had commanded. As he raised the knife, Abraham heard the voice of God tell him not to harm his son. He was to sacrifice an animal instead. As Abraham turned his head, he saw a ram caught by its horns among the thickets. This ram was to be Abraham's sacrifice to God. To this day, when Jews hear the shofar, which is the ram's horn, they remember Abraham's great faith in the ways of God.

There are many interesting customs for Rosh Hashanah. The special holiday bread called challah which is usually in the shape of a braid is for this holiday made round, like the snail's shell. This reminds people that the year goes around and around. It is also a custom to eat sweet things such as pieces of apple or challah dipped in honey. The honey is a symbol of a sweet year. It is also a custom to eat a new fruit of the season, and to say a prayer over it.

On the afternoon of the first day of

Rosh Hashanah, Jews say special prayers called Tashlich near a running stream of water. When they have finished the prayers, they throw crumbs of bread into the water. They hope that like the crumbs, their evil ways will float away.



Apples dipped in honey, and honey cake are symbols of a sweet year.



New fruits of the season are blessed and eaten.



The shofar is made from the horn of a ram.

יום כיפור

Day of Atonement • Yom Kippur

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Yom Kippur comes exactly ten days after Rosh Hashanah. It is the holiest day of all the High Holy Days. On this day, Jews believe, God decides on the kind of life each man will have for the year to come.

On Rosh Hashanah, Jews believe, God opens a heavenly book. He looks at man's deeds for the year just past. For ten days, God studies man's deeds. On Yom Kippur, which is also known as the Day of Judgment, man's future is decided. The book is closed for another year.

Jews spend the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

repenting for their sins. They try to understand their behavior, and anything wrong they may have done. They try to find ways to make themselves better people.

Yom Kippur is a fast day. On it, Jews eat no food and drink no water for twenty-five hours. They spend almost all their time in the synagogue. Fasting helps to keep their minds clear. They want to spend the entire time of Yom Kippur praying and repenting.

People come to the synagogue dressed in their best clothes. Some men wear a white robe, known as a kittel. The whiteness is a sign of purity. Many of

the women wear white clothing, too.

During the Ten Days of Penitence between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Jewish people ask for forgiveness from anyone they may have hurt. Jews believe they can only ask God's forgiveness after they have asked for man's. The Ten Days of Penitence give enemies a chance to become friends once again.

It is a Jewish custom, on the day before Yom Kippur, to take a chicken and swing it around the head three times while special prayers are said. The ceremony, known as *Kapparah*, is a very ancient ceremony. People long ago hoped that all their sins would be given over to the bird, and that any punishment they were to get would then also be given to the bird instead. Today, many people observe the ceremony of *Kapparah* with money instead of animals. After the ceremony the money is given to charity.

Yom Kippur begins, like all other Jewish holidays, in the evening.

It opens in the synagogue with the leader singing a prayer called *Kol Nidrei*. Jews read prayers from the Yom Kippur prayer book, and also begin to say prayers in their hearts and minds as well. They spend the entire time of the holiday thinking about their ways, thinking how they can become better people, praying that they will be forgiven for any wrongs they may have done. Many of the prayers are said out loud, with all the people in the synagogue joining in. The prayers ask God for forgiveness.

On the afternoon of Yom Kippur, the Bible story of the Prophet Jonah is read in the synagogue. The Prophet Jonah heard the voice of God. It told him to go to the wicked city of Nineveh. There, he was to tell the people to change their ways or they would be punished. Jonah refused. He ran from the voice of God. He ran to sea and was caught in a great storm. Jonah knew the storm came because God was angry with him. He told the sailors to throw him overboard, and the storm would end.

Jonah was thrown into the sea, and a great fish came and swallowed him. Jonah lived in the fish's belly where he prayed to God for forgiveness. After three days, the fish spit him out on the shores of Nineveh. Jonah did not want the people of Nineveh to be saved. Even so, he brought God's message to them. The people repented.

As Jonah sat in the hot sun, God made a tree grow. It protected Jonah from the sun. Jonah was pleased. Then a worm came and destroyed the tree. Jonah was very angry with God. "How can You have so little mercy on a tree," Jonah asked God. And God answered, "Shall I have mercy on a tree, and not on a whole nation of people?" The story of Jonah reminds Jews that God is eager for people to repent. If they repent, He will change His decree. He will write them down for a good year in the book of Life.

As the sun goes down on Yom Kippur, as the gates of heaven begin to close, Jews say the *Neilah* prayer, which is the holiest prayer of the Jews. And

then, there is a long blast of the shofar. The holiday has come to an end. People go home to eat their first meal after the fast, and to prepare for the next holiday, Sukot, which comes in only four days.

