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God: Creator, Redeemer,  
Revealer, and Partner

A Curriculum Guide for a  
3-4 Week Summer Camp  
Session  
Grades 4-6

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## Rationale

Belief in One God is the foundation of Jewish religious faith. The struggle of the Chosen people throughout its history centers around the developing relationship with the Divine Being. Forging and struggling with a relationship to God is a troubling and difficult task for many Jews. Many people find God as a concept comprehensible, but forging a personal relationship with God is intimidating for many. This curriculum hopes to provide opportunities for Jewish children to encounter several Jewish notions of God and help reduce the intimidation of the subject at an early stage.

### Potential Perspectives

God could be taught and introduced for the sole purpose of encouraging belief and converting non-believers. Many Jewish sects dedicate their time, education, and resources to this purpose. Experiences and opportunities are provided for people to share "spiritual" moments with believers and meet people who will speak to their vulnerabilities and strive to convince the listener into believing.

Another approach to teaching God is purely academic. One could develop a curriculum that informs and educates students to the notions of God in the three monotheistic religions of the world. This distancing does not touch on the personal or spiritual relationship to God, rather it identifies God as an element of a belief system. This approach does not particularly address a Jewish encounter with the Jewish notion of God in Judaism.

A course could be developed that seeks to understand the particularly Jewish definition and understanding of God. The content might focus on the role of the liturgy in defining the Jewish relationship to God or the faces of God as found in Jewish texts. This course would be most successful if the students were not confronting the Jewish notion of God for the first time.

Struggling with a concept of God or an understanding of God is a difficult and lifelong process. One only has to look at the bestseller table at one of the large bookstores to see that God and spirituality are hot and "in" topics for today's society.

Too many adults have an elementary notion of God and this inhibits them from developing an adult relationship with God. It is important to instill in Jews, at a young age, that each person's relationship with God is a changing and growing part of Jewish belief. Helping Jews reach adulthood with an educated and informed notion of the Jewish approach to God creates the foundation for a relationship with God that gives their Judaism and Jewishness greater meaning.

This curriculum aims to nurture a sense of spirituality in children and also encourage children to begin forging a relationship with the Jewish understanding of God. It is hoped that when the children reach adulthood, less obstacles will exist to continue their exploration and development of their relationship to God. Harold Schulweiss addresses the continuing nature of the Jewish relationship to God. He writes in his book For Those Who Can't Believe,

"There is too great a temptation to rush to the word *God*. God should come at the conclusion of the argument. The Book of Genesis does not begin with the name of God. God's name comes after 'in the beginning.' When religious education is directed toward experience and growth, God is not the first but the last word." (23)

### **The Setting**

This curriculum is structured for a three week summer camp session of the upper primary grades, 4th to 6th graders. Because camp offers an experiential educational setting, there is potential for this curriculum to be integrated into more than the allotted study time. Services, evening programs, Shabbat stories, and other times can allude to the curricular emphasis on God.

### **The Content**

Although there are numerous notions of God in Judaism, this curriculum focuses on four specific Jewish images of God with an introductory unit on finding God. These four images: God as creator, God as redeemer, God as revealer and God as our partner, will be explored through various texts, prayers, and Jewish traditions. Because so much of camp experiences take place outside, nature and its place in all three defining relationships with God will be a central focus.

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The curriculum should begin with a unit on how to find God and begin struggling with faith. God may not be an comfortable notion for some of the students but enabling them to relate to God as something that is intangible but believable, such as the notion of love, may help establish a comfort with exploring the idea of God. A story that specifically addresses a child's request for proof of God is provided in the teacher resource section of this guide.

Before specific aspects of God's Self are discussed, it is important to do an introduction of the notion of covenant. The students must understand that the Jewish people and God have an agreement based on various covenants throughout the Bible. The students should discuss what makes a covenant different than any other agreement. Students should be introduced to the covenants established in the Torah and for what reasons.

Jews are introduced to God as the creator in the very beginning of the Torah. Exploring the creation of the world, the relationship between the Divine and the humans, and the creation of the cosmos is an important and essential Jewish lesson. This story and this notion of God establishes the God-human-world paradigm for the rest of the story. The value of being created B'tzelem Elohim, in the image of God, is an important aspect of this curriculum because it will translate into the following units on acting like God and being partners with God. The creative power of God will be explored through the prayers in both the Ma'ariv Aravim prayer of the evening service and the Yotzer Or prayer of the morning service. The students should also be introduced to God's creative power as the first step in a three part covenantal relationship of Creation-Revelation-Redemption. Students should be taught to understand that the three elements of creation, revelation, and redemption define the Jewish people's relationship to God.

Introducing the idea of mitzvah as God's way of commanding us to act the right and godly way will be incorporated into this unit. Also, confronting mitzvot as the laws given by God through the Torah introduces the revelation aspect of the creation-

revelation-redemption paradigm in Jewish history. Because reform Judaism does not adhere to halcha it will be important to introduce and struggle with the notion of the laws from God being interpreted to relate to our modern reform context.

Another unit will focus on God as a redeemer. This will be explored through the prayers of Mi Chamocha as well as the G'ulah. The students should discuss modern day slavery. The celebration of Pesach should be included as a part of the Jewish recognition of God as our redeemer.

Focusing on actions as replicating God's way leads into the following unit on being partner's with God. Not only should this unit focus on acting in a godly and holy way towards our fellow people but this unit introduces the Lurianic notion of tzimtzum and our partnership in Tikkun Olam.

The conclusion of the unit should focus on bringing together all of the aspects of God addressed in previous units. By the end of the curriculum, God as creator, redeemer, and revealer of Mitzvot will have been addressed. Emphasizing the importance of this progression as the basis of our covenant with God is an important concluding understanding.

### **Outcomes**

By the end of the course students will understand four aspects of God: God the creator, God the comforter, God the redeemer, and God our partner. Students will see that actions, prayers, and celebrations in Judaism provide opportunities for Jews to face God and struggle with a notion of God. The purpose of this curriculum is not to make wrestling with God easy, it is simply to introduce the struggle at an early age.

## Special Moments in the Curriculum

The beauty of camp is the twenty four hour period that we as the educators have to influence our campers through learning opportunities and special moments of Jewish content. Life is lived by a Jewish rhythm and the context in which we do anything is Jewish. The overall and implicit goal of this curriculum is to make the concept and notion of God less foreign and intangible for the campers and the counselors. There are suggestions in this curriculum for places to include elements of the theme into moments in the day that are not particularly "content" oriented. As much as possible, find moments to foster discussions and encounters with moments where it is possible to bring the issue of struggling with God into our lives. Some of these moments may be song session, tent programs, and bedtime programs.

Camp provides a twenty-four opportunity to nurture the children in a particularly Jewish environment and model the type of integration between daily living and Jewish living that this curriculum and camp hopes to achieve. **Good luck and enjoy!**

## Memorable Moments

### • **God: The Sheet Shtick**

Because we do not want to portray God as a graven image nor put any absolute image in the minds of the children, any impersonation of God has to be in an amorphic state. Therefore I suggest at each study session God appear as a white bed sheet hanging from a tree, post, tent, etc. with a voice attached to it. If the staff person is hidden and only speaks through the flowing of the sheet the kids will no view God with a person in mind.

Or, hang a sheet so that it flows and blows in the wind and have whatever character encountering "God " at that moment speak to God and respond so that we understand what "God" is saying without hearing a specific voice. Think about the "teacher" in the Peanuts cartoon. We have no distinct notion of the words or voice of the teacher but we know what he/she is saying through the words of the character interacting to her/him. This is the underlying principle of this "God". The shtick each day could include the Bible characters used in this "God" exploration facing "God" through their particular experiences as expressed in the Bible tales.

Each lesson should begin with an element of this shtick. It should link the entire session of learning.

### • **The Hasidic Storyteller**

One of the staff members should be prepared to act as the "Hasidic Storyteller". This person should make an appearance at the first dinner meal. The role of this character will be to travel from living unit to living unit at night and rotate telling stories to the campers before bed. At the end of the summer session one of the study units will culminate this experience focusing on actions, partnership, and the notion of "b'tzelem Elohim" as a key element of our relationship to God. This character can also appear during Shabbat afternoon programming or other unexpected moments. The purpose of this character is to tell stories that relate to the notion of God the group is studying or to relate the notion of partnership with God.

### • **“Dear God” journals**

Each camper should be given a journal and each day they should write a letter to God about the day or the study session. At the end of the session it is hoped that they have a personal recollection and a beginning of their own personal struggle with God. There is a book of letters written by children to God and it may be worth having the book to pass from tent to tent as an evening bedtime program.

### • **Redemption from Egypt**

This requires a lot of staff involvement. This can be an evening program or a half day camp program. Create an environment of enslavement. This could be making the campers do a lot of menial labor, picking up after the rest of the camp, doing the work for other units without kindness and rest, etc. Some of the staff can plan the role of taskmasters. At some point Moses can emerge from the group, a staff person, with guidance from God, can free the campers from slavery. This could involve the pursuit of the Egyptians or crossing the red sea, or some other simulation of redemption. The focus of this program should be on the redemption rather than the slavery.

### • **Revelation at Sinai**

The description of the revelation of Torah is very descriptive in the Torah. An evening program could focus on recreating this with the campers experiencing it or the campers could study the portion in the Torah and with the help of the camp art specialist, drama specialist, and music specialist, create a dramatic interpretation worth of performing for other units. A song could be written and performed and the entire experience can be interpreted for performance.



## Goals

There are several goals to this curriculum. The purpose of this curriculum is to help the students:

- to understand that Jews have established relationships with God by way of covenants from the beginning of Jewish history
- to understand that three central notions of God : the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Revealer of Torah are central to Judaism
- to understand that God is an integral component in Jewish tradition
- to understand that Jews recognize that God has many faces/aspects
- to understand that Jews express and explore their relationship to God through prayer, actions, and study
- to understand that the relationship between God and the Jewish people is one of partnership
- to begin struggling with a personal understanding and relationship to God
- to feel comfortable talking about God
- for each camper to have opportunities to describe personal feelings about God
- to feel that God is a part of their Jewish identity and Jewish understanding

## Brit/Covenant

A covenant is an agreement or contract between two parties. The notion of covenant, Brit in Hebrew, is essential to understanding the relationship between God and the Jewish people. Judaism defines the relationship between God and the Jewish people as one of a covenant. The Bible records several covenants that are important to the Jewish religious beliefs. In Genesis 6:18 God promises Noah that He will never again destroy the earth by flood. The rainbow is the sign offered by God to remind the people of the earth of this promise. Covenants between people can also be made. But important for exploring a personal relationship with God is to understand that developing and creating a relationship to God is a tradition in Judaism.

Other covenants important in Judaism found in the Bible center around the life of Abraham and the revelation of Torah at Sinai. Circumcision is the sign or act that reminds us of the covenant Abraham makes with God. All Jewish boys enter the covenant made between God and Abraham by way of the circumcision ceremony. Brit Banot, a ceremony marking a young baby girl's entrance into the covenant is also a tradition in liberal Jewish communities.

The Torah is the embodiment and testimony of the covenant God makes with the Jewish people at Mt. Sinai. Deuteronomy 5:2-3 reads, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our ancestors that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, the living, every one of us who is here today". In this portion, Moses is recounting to the Israelites what happen at Sinai. God reminds the people what He did for them in redeeming them from Egypt by saying, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to me. Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep my covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Deuteronomy 19) The relationship is set. God will keep the Jews if the Jews keep God. Two signs of the covenant are circumcision and the rainbow. Circumcision is the sign of the covenant that Abraham marked upon his body and the rainbow is the sign God sends to Noah informing him that the Flood is over and the world will begin to recreate.

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Shabbat is one the most important signs of the covenant. It says in Deuteronomy 31 “ And the Children of Israel shall preserve the Sabbath, to maintian the Sabbath for their generations as an everlasting covenant. Between Me and between the Children of Israel, its is a sign for all time that in six days Adonoy made the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day He abstained from work, and rested.”

## Boray Et HaKol/ Creator

God's power to create through words is the introduction a reader of the Torah has to the Almighty God. Genesis begins with two separate stories that seek to explain the root of human existence and creation. Genesis 1 focuses on God's power to create, the order in which God creates, and the instillation of Shabbat as a marker to remind God and God's believers that work is to be ceased on the seventh day because on that day God rested. Genesis 2 focuses on the power of humans to make decision, commit error, disobey God, and choose their own destiny. It is important to articulate the differences between these two stories to the campers so that all lessons about creation and God's creative powers are deduced from the text.

In Genesis 1, on the sixth day God creates man and women in God's image. The Hebrew concept for the creation of humans in God's image is "B'tzelem Elohim". Another Jewish concept that relates to the relationship we as humans have to nature as God's creation is "Bal Tashcit". Bal Tashcit is the mitzvah to take care of nature. This ties in to our responsibility to care for God's creation as worldly being created in God's image. Deuteronomy 20:19-20 reads,

"When you besiege a town for many days, waging-war against it, to seize it: you are not to bring-ruin on its trees, by swinging-away (with) an ax against them, for from them you eat, them you are not to cut-down--for are the trees of the field human beings, (able) to come against you in siege? Only those trees of which you know that they are not trees for eating them you may bring-to-ruin and cut-down, that you may build siege-works against the one that is making war against you, until its downfall."

This mitzvah has a lot of material that can link many of the issues relating to creation and our human responsibility to guard God's creations. Developing a personal relationship with God depends on our understanding and relating to the various powers of God. The partnership established between human and the Divine in the beginning of the Torah permeates the entire tale of the Jewish people's relationship with God. Struggling with God and our responsibility to God and God's responsibility for us is the essence of the relationship between the human and God.

The prayer that precedes the Shema in both the evening and the morning

service speaks to the awesomeness of God's power to create. The Yotzer (morning) and the Ma'ariv (evening) focus on the order of creation, the detail required in forming the pieces into the right pieces, and the greatness in nature as proof of God's awesome creative powers.

The second creation story, Genesis 2, focuses on the development and creation of morality in the world. This story introduces the important symbol of the "tree of knowledge". Eve is tricked by the snake into eating from the tree of knowledge, therefore disobeying God's decree, and subsequently convinces Adam to do the same. God punishes them for their transgressions by banishing them from the Garden of Eden and insuring labor pains for Even during childbirth and promising Adam he will have to work for sustenance. These signs of modern life, pain in childbirth and human's requirement to work for livelihood, serve to remind us that we have a choice in our destiny. Adam and Eve are faced with moral decisions, to eat from the forbidden tree or not. Human's create evil for themselves in this tale and are forced to face the consequences. The Torah provides lessons about dealing with human emotions and controlling anger, jealousy, and deception and the consequences that result. Adam and Eve represent all of us in the face of temptation. What can this story teach us about our ability as humans to create good and evil in the world? And, what is our responsibility as humans to guard God's creations. Last of all, how does God as the Creator fit into each of our personal relationship with God? All these qu4estions are posed at the beginning of Torah and set the stage for the drama of humanity to unfold under the watchful guard of the Divine.

## Ga'al Yisrael/ Redeemer

Whenever we think of redemption in Judaism, the first thing that comes to mind is the Exodus from Egypt. God freed the Israelites from the mighty hand of Pharaoh and brought the Israelites in the Promised Land. As Jews we celebrate Pesach remembering the act of Redemption God, our Redeemer, did for us when we were slaves. In Jewish liturgy, the G'ulah prayer that follows the Sh'ma and precedes the Mi Camocha speaks of God as the Redeemer. The situation the Israelites find themselves in after the Exodus from Egypt is one in which they must uphold their end of the deal with God. The people are freed by Divine power and redemption but in return they are to follow the mitzvot and live their lives by means of the laws of Torah. Robert Seltzer writes in his book, Jewish People, Jewish Thought,

The narrative of the exodus portray the Hebrews as an unformed, passive, and defenseless group whose liberation was the result of YHVH's initiative. Now they are to be forged into a collective entity worthy of redemption from physical bondage and spiritual ignorance. (61-62)

Redemption is literally to be freed from slavery. Slavery does not necessarily have to be physical. We can be slaves to hate, racism, prejudice, and jealousy. We are not free from all kinds of slavery in today's world. God can still be a source of redemption and it is not until we are free from all bondage, not only the physical bondage, will the Redemption in the end of days arrive. Redemption is part of our Jewish past and a hope for our Jewish future. In partnership with God, we as humans must seek to achieve the completion that will bring about the final Redemption.

## God as Partner

God and human beings begin the journey through the world at the beginning of Genesis. God creates humans in God's image and the story begins. Human temptation and banishment from garden. Humans commit murder and God punishes. The world is flooded by God's powers and a human, Noah, is responsible for helping to save life. But he was only interested in saving his family's life so another generation must begin again, enter Abraham.

Abraham begins the Jewish tradition of walking with God. Abraham and God struggle together to develop a relationship based on faith and trust. And the responsibility of transferring this faith and belief to the next generation falls for the first time in human history on the shoulders of Abraham. The story continues and generations continue to wrestle with faith in one God while the rest of the world worshipped idols and many gods. The Jewish people struggle with God, they struggle with understanding how to follow the laws handed down at Mt. Sinai and the book of Leviticus in the Torah centers on interpreting these laws. Rabbi David Wolpe writes the following in the introduction to the teacher's guide for *Partner's With God* (Behrman House).

We teach holidays. We teach history. We teach about the Bible, about our land and language. But when it comes to teaching about God, we are often silent.

This silence is strange, since God is the source and authority behind the holidays we celebrate, the history and Bible we learn, and the rich mix of traditions and teaching we revere. God infuses all that we try to transmit to our students...

We are connected to each other, and to our past, by the same powerful call. It is what connects us to the newly freed slaves of the Bible, to the Talmudic Jews of Babylonia, to the Jewish grape growers in medieval France, and to the eastern European shtetle forebears of the nineteenth century. They were all imbued with this passion to honour God and to improve God's world.

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Throughout their lives, our children will be questioned and challenged in their beliefs as Jews. Let us now teach them that they are heirs to a people that first introduced knowledge of God to humanity. Let us now teach them that they are, indeed partners with God.

God created the world: we live in it and care for it. God redeemed us from slavery and gave us the laws: we interpret them and live by them. As a people we are bound to God through many covenants. We are partners with God to play out the drama of human history.



## Unit by Unit Outline

This curriculum is developed for a three week summer camp session at a Reform summer camp for the upper primary grades, 4-6. The structure of this guide assumes that the camp unit will have the group divided into Sichot (discussion groups) so that at the end of each lesson the break out groups can discuss and do activities. It contains five basic units focused on four separate ideas and notions of God in Judaism: God as creator, revealer, redeemer, and partner. Each unit will explore the set concept through three separate lenses: nature, prayer/text, and people. The activities suggested can be developed for a Shabbat study session or an evening Shabbat program. Some of the suggested activities can be incorporated into T'filot and any other times the planners see fit. One of the aims of this curriculum is to integrate the topic into as many areas of learning and living as possible.

### **1. Introduction**

#### **Objectives**

- Students should be able to explain that God is an intangible entity
- Students should be able to explain that finding God ourselves is the struggle for the summer session

The opening lesson should begin the afternoon the students arrive with a teaser introduction and should introduce the study topic: finding God for ourselves and making our own covenants . A skit or staff song presentation making light of the topic may be an enticing introduction. For example, each counselor can introduce himself or herself to the campers and introduce the places s/he has already decided s/he wants to look for God: a prayer book, something from nature, a picture of Israel, a picture of the Jewish people, a Tzedakah box, an advertisement for volunteering at a shelter etc. That ways each counselor can be introduced to the group and take

advantage of a moment of learning. The first evening service prepared by the staff and faculty should incorporate the study topic of the session by way of personal readings, poems, songs etc. The campers should view the counselors as entering into this journey of finding God with them. Counselors should be encouraged to keep a "Dear God" journal as well. If the campers see the counselors taking it seriously, hopefully this will be encouragement.

## **2. Brit: Covenant**

### Objectives

- Students should be able to define and explain the idea of "covenant"
- Students should be able to list the covenants and the signs God gave to the Jewish people.
- Students should be able to give examples of covenant in their own lives and a sign that will remind them of their covenant with God.

### Suggested Learning Activities

#### Limudim

- A dramatic presentation of the various characters that have made covenants with God: Noah (rainbow, Genesis ), Abraham (circumcision, Genesis), Moses Exodus 24-31(Torah , the tablets, the Torah). Each character should meet with God and walk down memory lane retelling his story. Following this experience the groups should breakout and have a set of discussion questions. The questions should focus on the difference between a brit and a promise with a focus on the holiness of brit. Questions should encourage the campers to wrestle with a modern context for their own britot. Behrman House's Basic Judaism: God Teacher's Guide ( p.25) has some good suggestions on how to tailor the questions for modern relevance.

• Another suggestion found in the teacher's guide of Behrman Houses's Basic Judaism: God . On index cards or small pieces of paper list various examples of Britot. (See **Teacher Resource Section** for sample questions. Tailor the questions to fit the camp environment) Explain to the Sicho group that all the cards contain examples of Britot. Have each group examine the relationships and deduce from the information given what a Brit involves. Steer them to the notions that Brit involves: a) an agreement so some kind between two parties b) involves promises to fulfill particular responsibilities c) marked by a sign, symbol, gesture, or document. Conclude the session with the campers brainstorming Britot they have in their lives.

• Divide the campers into study groups. Have a discussion with them about the holiness of Brit and have each of them write their own Brit with God and figure out what the sign of their respective covenant would be and why.

Questions: 1) How do we know that making a covenant with God is a big deal for the Bible characters?

2) What are the signs of the covenant? (nature)

3) Why does Judaism focus on the covenants of these people?

4) Describe their sign and the nature of their covenant.

• Break into study groups. Have each group closely read each Torah portion that tells of covenant making: Noah, Abraham, Jacob, etc. If you think paper bag dramatics might help instigate the activity use it but if not, let the groups have as much freedom as desired. The skit should include the scene, the sign of the covenant, and the issue at hand between God and the person making the covenant.

• The first Shabbat of the session is a good time to focus on the fact that Shabbat is a sign of the covenant between God and the Jewish people that God gave at Mount

Sinai. We celebrate Shabbat to remember the covenant made between God and the Jewish people. V'shamru is a text that speaks about this covenant. The prayer should be taught to the campers previous to Shabbat so that on Shabbat morning before Kiddush the unit can sing it. This can be done during song sessions throughout the first week. The text should be examined carefully and discussed so that the campers understand what they are singing. (for text see **Teacher Resource Section**)

### **T'filot**

- The campers can read the stories of covenant in the Bible and choose the one covenant that speaks most to them and write a personal reading for the service.
- The theme of the service can be about promises, covenants, and personal commitments.

### **Hebrew**

- Learn the Hebrew words for all the signs of the covenant. And for each camper's personal sign of the covenant make a plaque with the Hebrew word for their chosen sign.

### **Evening Program**

Each cabin/tent can write a Brit for the cabin. Use colored butcher paper and have each living unit create a sign that will represent their covenant with God and with each other. They can be laminated and placed inside the cabin/tent or outside the cabin/tent.

## **2. God as Creator**

### **Objectives**

- Students should be able to explain the difference between the two creation stories.
- Students should be able to name the what was created on each day of the seven days of creation.
- Students should be able to identify the prayers that speak of creation.

- Students should be able to identify the connection in the prayers with the creative powers of God in the Bible stories.
- Students should be able to identify that Shabbat is the holiday that celebrates creation.
- Students should be able to express the things in nature that speak to them most about God's creative power

### **Suggested Learning Activities**

#### **Limudim**

- Begin the session by incorporating the "white sheet shtick". Have a character/person encounter God struggling with the two stories. Why are there two stories and what are the different foci? Break the group into the study sessions, read the texts, and compare/contrast the stories. You might have the campers write a song about the differences in the story. You can have the campers do a commercial for their story and how it is different from the other story. You can have a debate about which story should win the "Pulitzer Prize" for best story of the year.
- Begin the session with an introduction to the two stories of creation. It can involve the "sheet shtick" or not. Break the group into study groups. Have the students pair off and make murals illustrating the creation stories. (see **Teacher Resource Section** for a model of the mural and an explanation of the activity.)
- Have the campers go on a Nature Bible Hunt. Have the various parts of creation on the specific days placed throughout camp with clues so that by the end of the hunt, all seven days have been collected.
- To emphasize the power of creation and the unique ingredients God added to everything God created have the campers pick something in nature and write the recipe for it. Collect all of the recipes and bind a "Creation Cookbook" for everyone to take home. Each camper may want to write the recipe for him or herself is s/he made of?

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- Make creation collages collecting nature objects from around camp that represent all seven days of creation.
  - Read the English translations of Birkat HaShachar, Yotzair Or, and the Maariv Aravim. Have the campers identify the seven days of creation within these prayers. (see chart in **Teacher Resource Section**)
  - Incorporate as many songs about creation into the song sessions.
  - Have the campers do dramatic interpretations of the Adam and Eve story.
  - Have the campers do ad campaigns for the environment using knowledge from the creation stories about the environment. This should include a commercial and a banner.
  - Give each student a disposable camera. Each camper is responsible for taking 7 pictures that depict the seven days of creation. Get the film developed and have the campers make a photographic representation of the creation story. They might even want to organize creation as they would have done it. Each child should then write a description of their lay out and rationalization for their choices.

### **T'filot**

- Creation could be the theme of the evening or morning service for that day.
- Our responsibility for taking care of God's creations could be the theme for a service.
- Incorporate creation songs

### **Evening Program**

- Seven Days of Creation treasure hunt.
- Seven Days of Creation human challenge. Something like the television "Double Dare". Each station would be the forces of nature created on that day. Each child would have to overcome it for the team to move ahead. An example of a station might be, " Day 1: God creates heaven and earth, light and darkness, day and night". There could be sleeping bag race from darkness to light. Or, there could be an obstacle

course that requires a flashlight to traverse the terrain and the goal is to get through it fastest onto day 2.

### Hebrew

- Have a Milat HaYom “word of the day” that relates to creation. Words that will help the campers understand the Yotzer and the Maariv.
- Label the various things in nature with Hebrew cards. Make it a challenge for the campers to be able to order the right days by using the words of the creation in Hebrew.
- focus on reading the prayers about creation as part of the Hebrew curriculum so that all the campers can participate in them during services. They should be read in Hebrew during T'filot.

### Other

- Organize the community responsibilities around Torah commandments. One of them can be the daily duty of **Bal Taschit**, the care taking of nature.

## **3. Goyal Yisrael: God the Redeemer**

### Objectives

Students should be able to:

- define redemption as gaining freedom for situations of bondage
- identify Passover that celebrates and remembers God's redeeming the Israelites for slavery in Egypt
- explain that there are other types of bondage besides physical bondage (ie. prejudice, hate, racism, homophobia etc.)
- offer personal suggestions for redemption from the modern types of slavery (self reflection, prayer, self-criticism, developing tolerance)
- explain that the G'ulah prayer is about redemption

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- explain that partnership between God the Creator and God's creation is to bring about redemption

### **Suggested Learning Activities**

#### **Limudim**

- Break the campers into study groups and provide long flash cards with various definitions of redeemer and redemption. On other flash cards have portions of the G'ulah prayer copied. Have the students match the various definitions of redemption and redeemer with the notions found in the prayer
- In small groups have a discussion about the responsibility of humans in bringing about redemption. This lesson might begin with an opening skit or shtick in which a Chasidic Rabbi or the storyteller might encounter the "God sheet" and introduce the Lurianic notion of redemption. (See **Redeemer/ G'ulah notes** for definition of Lurianic notion of redemption.) The following day could be a walk through Jewish history in which the campers have to decide if God redeemed the Jews or if the Jews helped themselves in their own redemption.
- Campers should write a journal entry in their "God Journals" about their bondage; this might turn into a service theme
- Campers in small groups should write a song about redemption and perform them for the group
- Campers write their own prayers about Redemption to be read in T'filot
- Have the campers each write a proposal to God as to how each of them would aid in the redemption necessary in today's world. They should refer to the recipes they wrote about themselves and identify the ingredients in themselves that God used in creating them that would help God in the necessary redemption of today
- Gather the campers into an indoor arena or an outdoor area that is enclosed so that



the campers can hear music. Hand out the story of the Exodus from Egypt, a very descriptive edition of the story. Everett Fox's The Five Books of Moses is an excellent translation of the Torah. Have the Chasidic storyteller tell the story as music that is appropriate to the mood (Enya, Mozart, soundtrack of the movie "The Ten Commandments" etc. ) plays. Have there be paints, various brushes, and large pieces of paper for the campers to create the scene as they hear it from the music and from the storyteller.

- Write songs or cheers about redemption and praising God as Redeemer that the Israelites may have sung on their journey out of Egypt

### **Hebrew**

- Practice the G'ulah prayer
- Make a Hebrew game around the notion of G'ulah, using parts of the prayer

### **T'filah**

- Have the campers write personal writings about their own slavery and need for redemption.
- Have the campers write about what they think the world will be like when Redemption is achieved.
- Have the campers write about what they are going to do to achieve Redemption
- Have the campers write about what they think God wants us to do to help bring about Redemption

### **Bedtime Stories**

Here is a list of books about redemption and freedom. They are good suggestions for lights out programs for tents, cabins, etc. or Shabbat stories.

Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt Debra Hopkinson

How Many Days to America Eve Bunting

Bubah Leah and Her Paper Children Lillian Hammer Ross

Watch the Stars Come Out Riki Levinson

#### **4. Notayn Torah: God the Revealer of Torah**

##### **Time Frame**

This unit should last six days. It can also include an evening program that is a simulation or reenactment of the experience at Sinai.

##### **Objectives**

Students should be able to:

- Explain the trying experiences leading up to revelation including the building of the Golden Calf
- Describe the scene of revelation
- Explain that the 10 Commandments are the first laws that tell us how to live.
- God shows us love by giving us laws in the Torah to live by
- Explain that God revealed the laws that the Jewish people live by through the Torah

##### **Suggested Learning Activities**

###### **Limudim**

- Set induction idea: Do a skit reenacting the situation of the Israelites while Moses was up on Mt. Sinai. The building of the golden calf should be emphasized to convey the lack of faith the people were facing right before God revealed the Torah. Have the campers break out into study groups. Assign each group a group of people they will write a skit for and present to the group. For example, one group could be the women. That group would have to create a skit that addresses the issues women may have been facing in doubting God and what answers they sought from God. Other group ideas might be, the children, the teenage boys and girls, the wealthy, the slaves etc.
- Re-enact Moses arriving with the first of the 10 commandments. Have Moses

present them to the group and then have the groups break into study groups. Discuss the meaning of each commandment and that the first five commandments are between God and the people and the second five are between humans. Each camper should be given a copy of the ten commandments and each should paste them into their own order. If s/he were God, which would s/he have given first and why.

- Have the campers stare at a picture, an intricate piece of art and list all of the things they see. As they continue to stare for a long time, they will see more and more details and insights. You can also have them listen to a piece of music, classical or popular, over and over again. Have them explain what they hear differently each time. If using the picture idea, have the campers report after certain time intervals what they see. Relate these experiences to revelation. The more we study Torah, the more we understand it and the more we appreciate the continuing significance of this gift which was given to us out of God's love.

- Have the study groups read various Midrashim about the giving of the Torah.

**(Midrashim are in Teacher Resource section)** Each sicha group should be assigned one Midrash to act out to the group.

- Read Exodus 19-20 and discuss the scene of God giving Moses the Ten Commandments. The picture described in the scene is very descriptive. Have each study group cast the scene as a movie. This must include the actors/ actresses who would play the roles of Moses, Aaron (waiting with the people) the people, God. Who should direct the movie? What should the background music be? If time permits (or this may take 2 sessions) have the campers present their interpretation to the large group.

- Set induction idea: Do a skit involving Moses and Aaron, reminiscing about the situation before Moses returned and then upon his return from the top of Sinai. The brothers should share their experiences in retrospect: highlighting the trials, the

struggles, and the rewards of believing and faith in God.

- Have the campers fill out a questionnaire about what makes Shabbat at camp so special. Also, this activity can be done like values clarification game. Certain activities that take place at camp on Shabbat, different from other days can be read and each camper should go to the area that this marked with the aspect of God this activity reminds them of. For example, "Shabbat morning services" a student might think of God as the revealer of Torah. Or, "the long Birkat HaMazon prayer" a camper might go to God as creator because it reminds her of God's creative power to provide food.
- Each camper of study group could design a perfect observance of Shabbat for themselves once they return home. They can perform it or present it to the larger group as a skit or infomercial.
- Revelation of Torah at Mt. Sinai reenactment. (**see Memorable Moments**)

### T'filah

- Have the campers read Deuteronomy 29:13 and Jeremiah 31:13 and have them discuss the quotations regarding God's covenant with the Jewish people for all ages. Have the students write readings for the service about which quotation speaks to them personally and how the importance of revelation is part of these passages.
- Have the campers write about the Torah as a symbol of Judaism and Jewish law. What does it mean to each of them to be inheritors of the Torah.
- Some of the campers will be close to Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Have them write about what it means to be a Bar/Bat Mitzvah in terms of accepting the yolk of the covenant and of the Torah.

### Hebrew

- Learn the 10 Commandments in Hebrew
- Learn the V'shamru in Hebrew and discuss its meaning.
- Learn the Torah blessings.

- 
- Study the Ahava Rabah and Ahavat Olam and discuss the theme of love and the giving of Torah

## **5. God as Partner**

### **Objectives**

Students should be able to:

- Explain that being partners with God means respecting all of God's power: as creator, revealer, and redeemer.
- Explain that by living as caring human beings we are signs to each other of God's presence in the world
- Explain that the Mitzvot in the Torah and the stories in the Torah teach us how God wants us to behave
- Explain that we each have a unique thing to contribute to God's world and this contribution is part of our partnership
- Define special time in their lives for God by doing things to separate special time from regular time
- Explain that our actions define our partnership with God

### **Suggested Learning Activities**

- To emphasize the importance of our actions speaking for our partnership with God, plan an event to visit a local nursing home or hospital. Introduce the visit with a lesson or activity focused on the mitzvah of "Bikur Holim", visiting the sick.
- Invite special guests to the unit for dinner one night. Prepare this invitation with a lesson or activity about "Haknasat Orchim", the welcoming of the stranger. The lesson might include the story of Abraham welcoming the strangers into his tent for food. The story focuses on the fact that strangers were messengers from God. The lesson could focus on the reality that we may not know who God is and therefore we need to act accordingly to every stranger.

- The Chasidic storyteller character can begin a lesson with a story about partnership with God. The story could be left without an end. Each study group could be responsible for creating their own ending to the story and acting it out for the large group. **(For story suggestions see Teacher Resource section)**
- Begin the study session with a group gathering and a dramatic presentation by the counselors of 5 positive Mitzvot that the campers should learn that teach us how to act B'tzelem Elohim. Give each study group a scenario that involves an ethical choice. Have the 5 positive Mitzvot attached to each scenario. The campers should find a solution to the conflict in the scenario by employing one or more of the Mitzvot taught.
- The campers can do mitzvah projects around camp that are in tune with above mentioned Mitzvot.
- Each person can be asked to draw a ladder. Each rung of the ladder should be some element of the relationship with God that person feels is part of his/her partnership with God. Each person should indicate which of the rungs s/he is at or what is left to climb. The campers should divide into their study groups and everyone should share their ladders.
- Each study group can be given a bio and the Bible story about a Bible person and the nature of that person's relationship with God. Some examples might be: Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Hannah, Miriam. Each group reads the story and discusses the nature of the relationship that each of these people had with God. What was reciprocal about their relationship? What did they do for God? What did God do for them? The entire unit can reconvene and each group will select a person to play the role of its character. The characters could have a "Torah Leaders Committee" meeting up in heaven and be responsible for introducing themselves to the group.

### **Hebrew**

- Teach the word "Shutaf", שותף and have the campers design a plaque that can be

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shellacked with pictures of the actions they consider their partnership with God.

### **T'filah**

- The campers could write about what it means to be in partnership with God.
- The campers could use the book God's Paintbrush and read it throughout the service and write about each page.
- The campers could write about what they plan to do when they return home to continue the covenant and partnership with God they have been developing at camp.

### **Evening Program**

- This might be a good idea for a culminating evening program at the end of the session. Have a Beit Cafe ( a coffee house) in which God is the honored guest. The campers have to perform skits, songs, acts, etc. that center around the various themes that have been discussed that session. Songs about God they have learned, dance interpretations, etc. The staff should prepare a song or skit that encapsulates the summer session's lessons.

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## A few storybooks about God

God's Paintbrush, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso  
illustrated by Annette Compton

Jospeh Who Loved the Sabbath Retold by Marilyn Hirsh  
illustrated by Devis Grebu

What is God? Eitan Boritzer  
illustrated by Robbie Marantz

Even Higher Retold by Barbara Cohen  
illustrated by Anatoly Ivanov

The Sabbath Lion: A Jewish Folktale from Algeria  
retold by Howard Schwartz and Barbara Rush  
illustrated by Stephen Fieser



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Schulweiss, Rabbi Harold M. For Those Who Can't Believe: Overcoming Obstacles to Faith. Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1994.

Believing in God is a challenge for many Jews. Although a person will reject the label of a "religious person" s/he might refer to himself or herself as a spiritual person. Rabbi Harold Schulweiss addresses those people in his book For Those Who Can't Believe: Overcoming Obstacles to Faith. Schulweiss divides his book into eleven separate issues that face each of us as we struggle to believe in God.

The first obstacle we face is wanting a physical representation and proof that God exists. Schulweiss points out that as we grow older we no longer question the truth behind the Bible stories because we no longer believe the magic and buy into the wonder. As we progress in our Jewish education we are told that Judaism is about "behaving and not believing" (18) and therefore we no longer address the wonder questions. The Patriarchs, Matriarchs, and the Sages of old asked the same questions we ask today. For many of the questions they had no answers and so we must be satisfied without the answers too. Rabbi Schulweiss wants to give those questions credence and help modern people find suitable and acceptable answers.

Throughout this book the author advocates that God is intangible. He provides an anecdote concerning the bedtime ritual of his daughter. He would ask her to touch his nose, touch his ear, and then touch his love. Puzzled by the inability to touch his love he would respond that love is like God, unable to be touched one has to have complete faith in its existence.

Prayer is not magic. Prayer is not a request for material rewards or gifts. Schulweiss argues that, "Prayer is concerned with energizing the means so as to achieve ends of worth." (33) From a young age, a child can be taught that prayer is a means to an end. A student can be encouraged to ask God for strength to achieve his goals in school. A child can be guided to seek God in assistance when trying very

hard to play fairly with her friends. Rabbi Schulweiss intends for people to view prayer in its most traditional form, as work. It is the work that unites God and human to achieve necessary goals in the world.

Included in this book is a discussion of the two faces of God, Adonai v.s. Elohim. Adonai is traditionally thought of as the merciful side of God and Elohim is ascribed the just side of the Divine Being. Elohim is discussed as the Governor of the natural who rules with impartiality. (107) Adonai is associated with the human power and energy that has a definite role in God's nature. Schulweiss writes, "Nature and its cultivation, creation, and repair are rooted in the reality of one God of two complementary qualities." (117) The struggle to reconcile these two aspects of God is a challenge we all face.

Rabbi Schulweiss quotes Abraham Joshua Heschel in his chapter that confronts the issue of finding the godliness in our lives. He quotes, "We have no nouns by which to express His essence; we have only adverbs by which to indicate the ways in which He acts." (135) Godliness is about knowing the actions of God: healing, liberating, creating, maintaining, teaching, clothing, feedings etc. The search for God is in the actions we observe. He concludes his chapter concerning Godliness with an important point. God is not fully God without humans, and humans are not fully humans without God. This is shown through the prayer recited on Yom Kippur which lists the covenantal relationship that represents the various aspects of the bond between God and Human.

The final three chapters of the book address the issue of God in the wake of the Holocaust, the role of rites of passage in defining the godliness in each of us, and the struggle each of us face in reconciling our loyalty to humanity or to our community. The author answers the last dilemma with the words from Pirkei Avot, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me, and if I am only for myself, what am I." Judaism does not ask us choose ourselves over the greater humanity, we are to express our Godliness

in our actions outside our community as well as inside our community.

This book provides a perspective on how to tackle the obstacles of faith in our modern world. Rabbi Schulweiss combines anecdotal evidence from his experience and wisdom to relate tough issues to the wondering reader. He offers no simple solutions, only solid strategies to struggle with the questions.

Coles, Robert. The Spiritual Life of Children. Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, 1990.

Robert Coles, a doctor of psychiatry and pediatrics, explores in his book The Spiritual Life of Children, how children reveal their soulful and spiritual selves. He investigates what media their expression takes and how children negotiate a spiritual life for themselves. Through encounters with children, interviews, and field work throughout the world, including with Hopi children, Coles gathered information and came to various conclusions about the spiritual life of children.

At the center of the book are dozens of interviews and conversations with children throughout the world from various religious communities and cultures. In addition, children without any particular religious affiliation are also interviewed and their means of developing a spiritual side of themselves is also explored. Coles asked the children not only to speak with him but encouraged them to draw pictures of God, biblical images, and each child's opinion of a visual portrayal of the profane and the sacred. Robert Coles searched for the universal questions children ask about the spiritual and the sacred and sought the answers children provide for their questions. Robert Coles writes, "[This is not] an attempt to impose a linear theory of cumulative cognitive awareness on the children interviewed, to examine their 'faith development'...But the major thrust of this book is narrative rather than abstract and analytic, consisting of the telling of religious and spiritual experiences..." (38-39)

In the chapter on psychological themes, Robert Coles offers many anecdotes and interviews that exemplify his conclusion that children are in search of why things happen to them. They do not only attempt to try and understand what exactly is happening but more importantly, they seek an explanation and a rational. Looking back on interviews with children suffering from fatal diseases or life altering afflictions, Coles realized that God takes any shape needed by a child. God can be a friend, a

protector, a potential enemy, a source of encouragement or a source of anxiety.

Biblical stories and lessons from the Koran are used by children for multi-purposes. Coles states that children use these stories to look for God and to look inside themselves. Robert Coles writes,

It should come as no surprise that the stories of Adam and Eve, Abraham and Isaac, Noah and the Ark, Abel, and Cain, Samson and Delilah, David and Goliath, get linked in the minds of millions of children to their own personal stories as they explore the nature of sexuality and regard with awe, envy, or anger the power of their parents, as they wonder how solid and lasting their world is, as they struggle with brothers, and sisters, as they imagine themselves as actual or potential lovers, or as actual or potential antagonists. The stories are not mere symbolism, giving expression to what people go through emotionally. Rather, I hear children embracing religious stories because they are quite literally inspiring-exciting their minds to further thought and fantasy and helping them become more grown, more contemplative and sure of themselves. (121)

At the end of the book, Robert Coles interviews children from all three monotheistic faiths and investigates what notion of God each of them sees as the tenant of their religion. He concludes that Christianity offers a spiritual notion that God and spirituality is salvation, in Islam the ultimate sign of belief is to surrender to the strength and holiness of God, and in Judaism, God is accepted as a moral guide and a demanding judge.

Through his inquiry into the spiritual life of children, Robert Coles concludes that children are journeyers. We all march through life, but how we approach our "big issues" in life and the greatest challenges is affected by how we begin to think about the issues from an early age. We all will face moments in life when we will need to be able access our spiritual selves, Robert Coles offers a phenomenal insight into the early years we all experience, and moments from other children we can learn that speak to our general need to tap into our own spiritual element.

**"ONE OF US"**

written by Eric Brazilian

recorded by Joan Osborne

Album -- "Relish" 1995, PolyGram Records, Inc.

If God had a name -- what would it be?  
And would you call it to His face, if you were faced with Him  
In all His glory -- what would you ask if you had  
Just one question?

Yeah, yeah ... God is great  
Yeah, yeah ... God is good  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

What if God was one of us?  
Just a slob like one of us?  
Just a stranger on the bus  
Trying to make his way  
Home

If God had a face, what would it look like and would  
You want to see, if seeing meant that you would  
Have to believe in things like heaven and in  
Jesus and the Saints and all the Prophets  
[or -- Moses and the Judges and all the Prophets]

Yeah, yeah ... God is great  
Yeah, yeah ... God is good  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

What if God was one of us?  
Just a slob like one of us?  
Just a stranger on the bus  
Trying to make his way  
Home

Trying to make his way home  
Like up to heaven all alone  
Nobody calling on the phone  
'cept for the Pope maybe in Rome

**"FROM A DISTANCE"**

written by Julie Gold

recorded by Bette Midler

Album: "Experience the Divine" 1993, Atlantic Recording Company

From a distance the world looks blue and green  
And the snow-capped mountains white  
From a distance the ocean meets the stream  
And the eagle takes to flight

From a distance there is harmony  
And it echoes through the land  
It's the voice of hope; it's the voice of peace  
It's the voice of every man.

From a distance we all have enough  
And no one is in need  
And there are no guns, no bombs, and no disease  
No hungry mouths to feed

From a distance we are instruments  
Marching in a common band  
Playing songs of hope, playing songs of peace  
They're the song of every man.

God is watching us, God is watching us  
God is watching us ... from a distance.

From a distance you'll look like my friend  
Even though we are at war  
From a distance I just cannot comprehend  
What all this fighting's for.

From a distance there is harmony  
And it echoes through the land  
It's the hope of hopes, it's the love of loves,  
It's the heart of every man  
It's the hope of hopes, it's the love of loves,  
This is the song of every man.

And God is watching us, God is watching us  
God is watching us ... from a distance.



**"GOD"**

written and recorded by Tori Amos

Album: "Under the Pink" 1994, Atlantic Recording Comapny

God, sometimes you just don't come through  
God, sometimes you just don't come through  
Do You need a woman to look after You?  
God, sometimes you just don't come through

You make pretty daisies, pretty daisies, love  
I gotta find what You're doing about things  
Here a few witches burning gets a little toasty  
Here I gotta find why You always go when the wind blows

God, sometimes you just don't come through  
God, sometimes you just don't come through  
Do You need a woman to look after You?  
God, sometimes you just don't come through

Tell me You're crazy maybe then I'll understand  
You got Your 9 iron in the back seat just in case  
Heard You've gone south, well babe, love Your new 4 wheel  
I gotta find why You always go when the wind blows

Will You even tell her if You decide to make the sky fall  
Will You even tell her if You decide to make the sky

God, sometimes you just don't come through  
God, sometimes you just don't come through  
Do You need a woman to look after You?  
God, sometimes you just don't come through

**"UNANSWERED PRAYERS"**

written by Pat Alger, Larry Bastain, Garth Brooks  
recorded by Garth Brooks

Album: "No Fences" 1990, Capitol Records, Inc.

Just the other night at a hometown football game  
My wife and I ran into my old high school flame  
And as I introduced then the past came back to me  
And I couldn't help but think of the way things used to be

She was the one that I'd wanted for all times  
And each night I'd spend prayin' that God would make her mine  
And if He'd only grant me this wish I wished back then  
I'd never ask for anything again

CHORUS:

Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers  
Remember when you're talking to the man upstairs  
That just because He doesn't answer doesn't mean he doesn't care  
Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers

She wasn't quite the angel that I remembered in my dreams  
And I could tell that time had changed me  
In her eyes too it seemed  
We tried to talk about the old days  
There wasn't much we could recall  
I guess the Lord knows what he's doin' after all

And as she walked away and I looked at my wife  
And then and there I thanked the Good Lord  
For the gifts in my life

CHORUS

**"God Shuffled His Feet"**

written by Brad Roberts

recorded by Crash Test Dummies

Album: "God Shuffled His Feet", 1994, Arista Records, Inc.

After seven days  
He was quite tired, so God said:  
"Let there be a day  
Just for picnics, with wine and bread"  
He gathered up some people he had made  
Created Blankets and laid back in the shade

The people sipped their wine  
And what with God there, they asked him questions  
Like: do you have to eat  
Or get your hair cut in heaven?  
And if your eye got poked out in this life  
Would it be waiting up in heaven with your wife?

God shuffled his feet and glanced around at them  
The people cleared their throats and stared right back at him

So he said: "Once there was a body  
Who woke up with blue hair  
To him it was a joy  
Until he ran out into the warm air-  
He thought of his he friends would come to see;  
And would they laugh or had he got some strange disease?"

God shuffled his feet, and glanced around at them  
The people cleared their throats and stared right back at him

The people sat waiting  
Out on their blankets in the garden  
But God said nothing  
So someone asked him, "I beg your pardon:  
I'm not quite clear about what you just spoke-  
Was that a parable, or a very subtle joke?"

God shuffle his feet and glanced around at them  
The people cleared their throats and stared right back at him

**"DEAR GOD"**

written by Andy Partridge and Colin Moulding

recorded by XTC

Album: "Skylarking" 1986, Virgin Music

Dear God, hope you got the letter and ...  
I pray you can make it better down here  
I don't mean a big reduction in the price of beer  
But all the people that you made in your image  
See them starving on their feet  
'Cause they can't get enough to eat from  
God,  
I can't believe in you

Dear God, sorry to disturb you but ...  
I feel that I should be heard loud and clear  
We all need a big reduction in amount of tears  
And all the people that you made in your image  
See them fighting in the street  
'Cause they can't make opinions meet about  
God,  
I can't believe in you

Did you make disease and the diamond blue?  
Did you make mankind after we made you?  
And the devil, too?

Dear God, don't know if you've noticed but ...  
Your name is on a lot of quotes in this book  
And us crazy humans wrote it, you should take a look  
And all the people that you made in your image  
Still believing that junk is true  
Well I know it ain't, and so do you, dear God  
I can't believe in  
I don't believe in

(Continued)

I won't believe in heaven and hell  
No saints, no sinners, no devil as well  
No pearly gates, no thorny crown  
You're always letting us humans down  
The wars you bring, the babes you drown  
Those lost at sea and never found  
And it's the same thing the whole world 'round  
The hurt I see helps to compound  
That Father, Son, and Holy Ghost  
Is just somebody's unholy hoax  
And if you're up there you'd perceive  
That my heart's here upon my sleeve  
If there's one thing I don't believe in

It's you  
Dear God

**"EVERYTHING FALLS APART"**

written by Peter Stuart

recorded by Dog's Eye View

Album: "Happy Nowhere" 1995, Columbia Records

(Verse III)

I met God this afternoon  
Riding on an uptown train  
I said, "Don't you have better things to do?"  
He said, "If I do my job what would you complain about?  
So I let it go to hell, and now I have something to do."  
He said, "I let it go to hell; does that sound familiar to you?"

Well, everything falls apart  
And then I get to try to put it back together

Teacher  
Resource  
Section

quickly. 'You see, now, that I was right,' said the Hasid who had not complained. 'Had the nobleman not been ahead of us, we should have been forced to wait until the milk wagon had been repaired. The owner would never have bothered to transfer the milk cans for our sake.'

*Nif. Haz., p. 9.*

### 23. CONTROVERSY WITH GOD

#### 1. *A Judgment for the Rabbi*

A terrible famine once occurred in Ukraine and the poor could buy no bread. Ten Rabbis assembled at the home of the "Spoler Grandfather" for a session of the Rabbinical Court. The Spoler said to them:

"I have a case in judgment against the Lord. According to Rabbinical law, a master who buys a Jewish serf for a designated time (six years or up to the Jubilee year) must support not only him but also his family.<sup>1</sup> Now the Lord bought us in Egypt as his serfs, since He says: 'For to Me are the sons of Israel serfs,'<sup>2</sup> and the Prophet Ezekiel declared that even in Exile, Israel is the slave of God. Therefore, O Lord, I ask that Thou abide by the Law and support Thy serfs with their families."

The ten judges rendered judgment in favor of the Spoler Rabbi. In a few days a large shipment of grain arrived from Siberia, and bread could be bought by the poor.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kiddushin, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 25: 55.

<sup>3</sup> This is a particularly fine story, and lends itself to treatment in a drama. It is an expression of the idea in Micah 6: 3: "O My people, what have I done unto Thee? And wherein have I wearied Thee? Testify against Me." See also the Book of Job. The phrase in the Hebrew is: "Din Mishpat Be-Kadosh Baruch Hu."

*Tifereth Maharal, p. 158.*

#### 2. *Let Israel Triumph*

Said the Koznitzer Maggid: "There is a controversy between Israel and the Lord. The Lord says to us: 'Return unto Me . . . and I will return unto you' (Zechariah 1: 3). Israel answers: 'Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Lord, and we shall be returned' (Lamentations 5: 21). Therefore Jeremiah pleads: 'Wherefore wilt Thou forget us because of Thy wish to win the controversy?'<sup>1</sup> Say, O Lord: 'My sons have triumphed over me'<sup>2</sup> and 'Cause us to return, etc.'"

*E. O., p. 82.*

<sup>1</sup> In Lamentations 5: 20; the word "La-Netzach" means "forever" or "to triumph."

<sup>2</sup> This expression is found in the Talmud; Baba Metzia, 59.

#### 3. *Di*

A poor man came to the poverty. The Radviller had a donation, he comforted him (3: 12): "For whom the L

His father, the Zlotzov son: "Truly this is an unw should be understood thus with Him.' He should put himself to shame by Lord, to vouchsafe him h

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew verb "Yokim monishing."

#### 4. *Accusi*

Said the Karliner: "W of merit.<sup>1</sup> If this applies does it apply to God?"

<sup>1</sup> "Ethics of the Fathers" 1

#### 5. *Li*

After Yom Kippur t asked him to relate his ar tailor said:

"I declared to God: have committed only mi cloth, or I may have eate without washing my hand

"But Thou, O Lord, taken away babies from t Let us be quits: mayest

Said the Berditschever might have forced Him t

#### 6.

In the vicinity of Ral woman who was pursued was taken from her in for her little ones. Once wife, and spoke in her t God had inflicted upon r saying: "A Jewess must whatever transpires, and

... Hasid who had ... of us, we should ... had been repaired. ... the milk cans for

*Nif. Haz., p. 9.*

TH GOD

*Rabbi*  
... and the poor could ... the home of the "Spoler ... Court. The Spoler said

... the Lord. According to ... fish serf for a designated ... must support not only ... bought us in Egypt as his ... sons of Israel serfs,'<sup>2</sup> and ... Exile, Israel is the slave ... thou abide by the Law and

... favor of the Spoler Rabbi. ... arrived from Siberia, and

*Tifereth Maharal, p. 158.*

... to treatment in a drama. ... people, what have I done ...? Testify against Me." See ... is: "Din Mishpat Be-Kadosh

*Amph*  
... is a controversy between ... us: 'Return unto Me ... (3). Israel answers: 'Turn ... shall be returned' (Lamenta- ... ds: 'Wherefore wilt Thou ... the controversy?'<sup>1</sup> Say, O ... e'<sup>2</sup> and 'Cause us to return,

*E. O., p. 82.*

... "etzach" means "forever" or "to ... Baba Metzia, 59.

3. Dispute With the Lord

A poor man came to the Radviller Rabbi and complained of his poverty. The Radviller had no money to give him, but, in lieu of a donation, he comforted him with the words of the verse (Proverbs 3:12): "For whom the Lord loveth He correcteth."<sup>1</sup>

His father, the Zlotzover Maggid, witnessed this and said to his son: "Truly this is an unworthy way to aid the indigent. The verse should be understood thus: 'For he that loveth the Lord shall argue with Him.' He should plead: 'Why shouldst Thou cause a man to put himself to shame by begging aid, when it is in Thy power. O Lord, to vouchsafe him his necessities in an honorable fashion?'"

*A. H., p. 18-19.*

<sup>1</sup>The Hebrew verb "Yokiach" means "correcting, arguing, punishing, admonishing."

4. Accusing God of Wrong-Doing

Said the Karliner: "We are told to judge all men in the scale of merit.<sup>1</sup> If this applies even to men, how much the more, then, does it apply to God?"

*M. D., p. 238.*

<sup>1</sup>"Ethics of the Fathers" 1:6; Singer, p. 185.

5. Letting God Off Easily

After Yom Kippur the Berditschever called over a tailor and asked him to relate his argument with God on the day before. The tailor said:

"I declared to God: You wish me to repent of my sins, but I have committed only minor offenses: I may have kept left-over cloth, or I may have eaten in a non-Jewish home, where I worked, without washing my hands.

"But Thou, O Lord, hast committed grievous sins: Thou hast taken away babies from their mothers, and mothers from their babies. Let us be quits: mayest Thou forgive me, and I will forgive Thee."

Said the Berditschever: "Why did you let God off so easily? You might have forced Him to redeem all of Israel."

*O. I. H., p. 20.*

6. A Justified Complaint

In the vicinity of Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov there lived a poor woman who was pursued by misfortune, since one child after another was taken from her in the first year of its life. She wept long for her little ones. Once she poured forth her anguish to the Rabbi's wife, and spoke in her bitterness a word against the injustice which God had inflicted upon her. The wife of the Rabbi interrupted her, saying: "A Jewess must not speak thus. She must accept patiently whatever transpires, and say: 'What God does, is just and righteous in my eyes.'"



snatch a little sleep after sunrise. Once I became so engrossed in a subject that I did not lie down for rest until a short time before Services. I awoke but had not time to change from my sleeping robe. A worshiper came, and admonished me for appearing at Services in so unseemly a garment. I replied as follows: 'We read in the Evening Service for Sabbath (Singer, p. 122): "Read not here 'Banayich,' 'Thy children,' but 'Bonayich,' 'Thy builders,' namely 'Thy students.'" When the general public call at a palace, they must be garbed in fitting dress, but when builders enter to make repairs, they enter in their working clothes.' The man smiled, and walked away satisfied."

*Nif. Haz., p. 26.*

5. *Manners in Drinking*

Said Rabbi Bunam: "One should not gulp down his glass of water, but should drink slowly, even as he should eat slowly. Understand that we are not mere animals, and, even though we must feed our body, we must do so in a mannerly way, in order that we may display our superiority over the animals. This discipline will aid your soul. Especially in drinking water we are in danger of imitating the animals, since we drink it as we find it in its natural state, without preparing it for human use."

*R. T., p. 184.*

26. CREATION AND EVOLUTION

1. *God is the Creator*

Said the Sassover: "The Torah begins with the words: 'In the beginning God created.'<sup>1</sup> This means: the first thing to know is that God is the sole Creator of everything."

*M. Hat., p. 60.*

<sup>1</sup>Gen. 1:1.

2. *Offering the First Part*

Said the Lekhivitzer: "The Torah begins with the word: 'Bere-shith'<sup>1</sup> which may be translated: 'for the sake of the first' the Lord hath created the world. All that the Creator demands is that a man make a beginning in the right direction; thereafter He will aid him to continue in the right path. To symbolize this He ordained that we should devote to the Lord the first fruits; the first stalks of grain; the first-born cattle; and the Law of Tradition commands us to devote the first part of every day to prayer."

*O. Y., p. 14.*

<sup>1</sup>Gen. 1:1.

3. *The Unfinished Vessel*

Rabbi Bunam said: "The Lord created the world in a state of beginning. The universe is always in an uncompleted state, in the form of its beginning. It is not like a vessel at which the master

works and he finishes it; it requires continuous labor and unceasing renewal by creative forces. Were there a second's pause by these forces, the universe would return to primeval chaos."

*S. S. K., ii, 17.*

#### 4. *The Re-Creation of the World*

Said the Besht: "It is written (Lamentations 3:23): 'They are new every morning: great is thy faith.' A man should believe that each day the world is re-created, and that he is reborn each morning. His faith will then be increased, and he will take a fresh interest daily in his service to the Lord."

*M. R. T., ii, 24.*

#### 5. *"For My Sake"*

The Bratzlaver said: "Declare at all times: 'The world was created for my sake.' Do not declare: 'Of what concern is this to me?' But do your share to add some improvement, to supply something that is missing, and to leave the world a little better for your sojourn in it."

*K. L. M., p. 6.*

#### 6. *Infinite Understanding*

Said Rabbi Bunam: "We read (Psalms 147:5): 'Great is our Lord and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.' Let me explain this: God causes an insignificant fact to occur in order that it may bring in its train another occurrence; the second causes a third, and this is continued a myriad of times. All the events have been caused directly by the first insignificant occurrence. When God caused the first thing to happen, he understood every least thing to the end of time, and knew what the impulse of the first thing would cause to transpire. This is what we have in mind when we offer praise that God's understanding is infinite."

*R. T., p. 233.*

#### 7. *Hints from Genesis*

Rabbi Wolf Strikover finds these hints in the first verse of the Bible (Gen. 1:1): "Bereshith" has the initial letters of 1) "Bitachon," or trust; 2) "Ratson," or will; 3) "Ahavah," or love; 4) "Shetikah," or silence; 5) "Yir'ah," or fear; 6) "Torah," or learning. These are the most important essentials in the character of a man of goodness.

"Bara" reminds us of the three most important and fundamental material needs: 1) "Bara," suggests children from "Bar," a son; 2) "Bara," health, from "Bari," healthy; 3) "Bara," food, from "Bar," grain.

"Bara Elohim Eth." The last letters of these words spell "Emeth," truth. The creation can rest only upon truth.

*F. U. A. O., i, 7.*

2. *In a Strange Land*

Commenting on Psalms 137:4, the Riziner said: "The words 'How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land' mean: 'How can we sing songs when the Shekinah is in a strange land.'" *E. O., p. 137.*

3. *The Shekinah's Exile*

Said Rabbi Schmelke: "We read in Psalms 42:4: 'My tears have been my food day and night: while they say unto me all the day: where is thy God?' Because we cry day and night only for food, therefore we remain in exile. The Lord saith: 'Would that they cried unto Me: 'Why is our God not in His Holy City? Why is the Shekinah still in exile?' Then Redemption would speedily come.'" *S. ha-Tov, p. 44.*

4. *The Length of Our Exile*

Said the Radomsker: "It is often asked why the present exile lasts so long. One reason may be that the Shekinah is impatient to return to Palestine and desires that the good Jews be redeemed, even if the impious ones assimilate and become non-Jews. But the Zaddikim have compassion on the irreligious also, and petition the Lord to allot them a longer time wherein to strive for the repentance of the impious, so that they also may be redeemed." *O. S., p. 47.*

5. *Travail of Redemption*

Rabbi Abraham Jacob of Sadigura once faced the following dilemma. During a merciless persecution of the Jews in Russia, he stayed his prayer for divine intercession, saying: "This, I am told and am inclined to believe, indicates that the labors giving birth to Redemption are upon us. But the travails are so terrible that the Jews cry unto heaven, protesting their inability to sustain them. Then God in His mercy abates the pains and Redemption is delayed. Whether I pray, then, or stay my prayer, I have reason, either way, to be heavy of heart." *Bl., Gem., p. 325.*

6. *The Hindrance*

Once in a certain year Rabbi Jacob Yitzchak Lubliner was confident of the advent of the Redeemer before the end of the year. But the twelvemonth came to an end and Redemption was still far to seek. The Rabbi said to his favored disciple, the "Yud": "The common people have turned from their evil ways, and on their part there is no hindrance to Redemption. It is the scholars that bar the way; they cannot attain to humility, and therefore, not to repentance." *B., p. 480.*

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... said: "The words 'the land' mean: 'How strange land.'"

*E. O., p. 137.*

... 2:4: 'My tears have run into me all the day; night only for food, day: Would that they were for the Holy City? Why is redemption would speedily

*S. ha-Tov, p. 44.*

... why the present exile Shekinah is impatient and Jews be redeemed, the non-Jews. But the also, and petition the have for the repentance ended."

*O. S., p. 47.*

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*Bl., Gem., p. 325.*

... ak Lubliner was con- the end of the year. demption was still far ple, the "Yud": "The says, and on their part the scholars that bar and therefore, not to

*B., p. 480.*

7. *Sheep That Wait*

In his comments on the Torah, Rabbi Aryeh Leib Gerer wrote the following discussion of Genesis 29:7: "Israel says to the Lord: 'If the day of redemption is to be long awaited; if the time that Thy sheep should be assembled to be taken home, has not yet arrived, I implore Thee, O Lord, do not leave them to perish during the long interim; water the sheep and go and feed them so that they may have the strength to wait.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The verse reads: "And he said: 'Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together; water ye the sheep and go and feed them.'"

*S.S.K., ii, 33.*

8. *Submission to Exile*

The well-known Rabbi Samuel of Posen illustrated the verse in Isaiah 51:13 by the following parable:

"A nobleman's son was guilty of grave disobedience towards his father. As a punishment he was exiled to work as a farmhand for one of the nobleman's tenants. The father expected that his son would feel the ignominy of so lowly a position and would beg for forgiveness. The son, however, became accustomed to his work and seemed to have forgotten his former estate.

"The nobleman instructed his vassal to treat his son roughly. The son, thereupon, begged his father to instruct his employer to treat him kindly. The father replied in anger: 'Does the cruelty of the farmer's treatment of you constitute all that matters? Have you fallen so low in your self-esteem that with benevolent treatment your condition as a farmer's servant would be acceptable to you?'

"The Prophet exclaims: 'And hast forgotten the Lord thy Maker . . . because of the fury of the oppressor?' (in exile). And where is the fury of the oppressor? The vital thing is your state of exile and your contentedness to remain in exile."<sup>1</sup>

*Shaar Bath Rabim, Exodus, p. 16.*

<sup>1</sup> See below No. 18. "The Foolish Request."

9. *The Real Exile*

Rabbi Henoah of Alexander once said: "The real exile of Israel in Egypt was that they had learned to endure it."

*S. S. K., iii, 130 (in name of Rabbi Bunam). (B., p. 650).*

10. *God's Sabbath*

Many unfortunates came to the Belzer Rabbi with their tribulations and complaints. The Belzer remarked:

"We say in the Grace after meals on the Sabbath: 'May the All-Merciful give us a share in the day which shall be wholly Sab-

7. *When Punishment is Decreed*

Said the Besht: "When it is decreed in Heaven that punishment is to be meted out to a sinner, the power of trust in the Lord is taken away from him."

*K. S. T., p. 9a.*

8. *The Lack of Faith*

Said the Bratzlaver: "Lack of faith is the cause of our Exile. When faith will take the place of rationalism, the Messiah will come. A man may gain faith only through truth. He knows the truth only through intimacy with great leaders."

*K. L. M., p. 12.*

9. *A Consequence of Faith*

The Besht told this story: "I once stopped at an inn for the Sabbath. Suddenly a peasant went over to the table and knocked on it thrice. The innkeeper explained that this was a signal agreed upon by the village-owner and himself that the rent for the inn must be paid, or heavy penalties would be inflicted. I inquired if he had the money and he replied that he was penniless; nevertheless he had no anxiety and observed the Sabbath with a joyful spirit. In the evening he departed to confer with the village-owner. I saw, as I watched, that a merchant halted at the door, and after a short conversation gave a roll of money to the innkeeper. The merchant entered, and in reply to my query, informed me that he had purchased from the innkeeper next season's produce, and had paid him in advance to assure delivery. I then saw that perfect trust in the Lord receives its timely reward."

*N. Besht, p. 11.*

10. *The Lord as Partner*

The Apter Rabbi told this story: "I chanced to sojourn once at a village inn, and noticed that the innkeeper owned two boxes for cash; whatever money he received, he divided equally between the two receptacles. I was curious as to the meaning of this, and, making known my identity, I asked him the reason for his odd action. The innkeeper replied as follows: 'Once I lost all my money in an unlucky venture, and was unable to keep my inn. My wife advised me to look for a partner, and I went to the city to do so. Passing through the forest, I suddenly conceived the idea to implore the Lord to enter into partnership with me, and I promised to devote to charity His half share. I prayed to the Lord, and suddenly I found some money on the ground. I regarded this as a sign that my prayer was accepted, and since then I have faithfully observed the oral contract, and I am prospering.' I praised the innkeeper's simple trust in the Lord, and pronounced a blessing over him."

*N. Besht, p. 45.*

the class what human obligations the rainbow reminds us of. For more on this theme, see p. 26 of the Student Activity Book.

**Page 38. Shabbat as a Sign of Brit** Similarly, ask students what obligations we have with respect to Shabbat. What are God's obligations in this Brit? Use the questions in the "Think About It" section on p. 39 to help students recognize the differences in the obligations of the parties in the Brit of the rainbow and Shabbat.

**Page 40. Brit Milah** This section is bound to cause a stir among budding adolescents. Nevertheless, you should be straightforward and matter-of-fact in defining circumcision with them. Tell them that circumcision is the removal of the foreskin, a fold of skin over the tip of the penis. You may decide to read the material to the class directly from the textbook. It is a good idea for you to do the explaining or the reading here, rather than have the students read the section aloud.

In discussing circumcision, be sure to emphasize that the "bris" is more than the circumcision: circumcision is the *sign* of Brit. If the students do not raise the issue themselves, point out the disparity between the traditional welcome given a baby boy and that given a baby girl. Let them know that many people are working on enriching the ceremonies for baby girls. See "Words of Welcome" on pp. 24–25 of the Student Activity Book.

**Page 41. Circumcision as a Sign of Brit** Read the Midrash up to the point where the Roman official asks why God puts the Jews to the trouble of circumcision. Ask the class to suggest answers to the question before reading the rabbi's answer. After reading the rabbi's response, ask students to explain it in their own words. Do they find the rabbi's response convincing?

## Activities

1. Invite a Mohel to visit the class. (In some major cities, groups of physicians have become Mohalim.) Ask him to bring the equipment he uses to do the ceremony, as well as a copy of the service. Either the week before the visit or for homework, have the students prepare questions to ask him.
2. Have students do research reports on the Israeli/Egyptian peace accords approved at Camp David, Md., in September 1978 and signed in Washington, D.C., the following March. They can find information in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica Decennial Book, 1973–82*, or in any good general encyclopedia yearbook.
3. Create a class Brit. Discuss what it should contain. Students will probably enjoy putting it in official-sounding contract language. Use the Camp David accords as a model (see above) or ask a parent who is an attorney to assist you. Have the final copy typed on official school stationery. You might want to ask a student who knows calligraphy to inscribe a large copy for the classroom.
4. Teach (or ask the cantor or music teacher to teach) your students a version of VeShamru. You'll find a version by Debbie Friedman on the album *Ani Ma'amin*, distributed by Behrman House. The words are:

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-הַשְּׁבֹט, לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-הַשְּׁבֹט לְדַרְתָּם בְּרִית עוֹלָם. בְּיַד וּבֵין  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הַיָּא לְעָלָם, כִּי שֶׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה יְיָ אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ.  
וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנְפֹּשׁ.

Find and circle all of the words on the list. Then define 6 of them. Words are horizontal or vertical.

Words: Torah, *Atz Chayim*, parchment, Abraham, Isaac, Noah, Adam, five, year, Ark, Israel, God.

I B X D E T A L O  
 P A T O R R A H F S  
 A T O L T T D L I S  
 R Z A C K A V V E  
 C C D G F M W E T  
 H H G O D N O A H  
 M A B R A H A M C  
 E Y E A R R J F  
 N I S A A C K D I  
 T M I S R A E L L  
 V G J Q W Y U S O

(Note to teacher: After this lesson, most items to be taken home with the letters to parents are found in Appendix C and are ready for you to reproduce.)

## SESSION 2: CREATION (Genesis 1:1-2:24)

### OBJECTIVES

*Students will be able to*

- order the events of the days of creation.
- describe the two versions of the story of the creation of human beings.
- describe the role of God in the creation of the universe.

### CONCEPTS TO BE CONSIDERED

There is a beginning to the universe and to time. The world, which God created, is intended to be a good place. People have a responsibility to serve as caretakers in the world and to complete the work of creation.

### CLASS MEETING

Show the students copies of the Torah, both a scroll and a printed text. Explain that these five books contain the accounts of the beginning of the Jewish people, and that they show us how our ancestors looked at the world around them.

Introduce the idea of beginnings by discussing the kinds of things and events which have beginnings and the feelings which each person experiences at a new beginning. List all of the examples which students suggest.

Introduce the word *Bereshit* - in the beginning. This first word of Torah is very important. Show what it looks like in Torah script and in modern Hebrew script.

Tell both versions of the creation story. Genesis 1:1-2:3 describes the day by day acts of creation and God's response to each act. Genesis 2:4-24 focuses on the creation of the first man and woman and on the creation of a dwelling place for them. It assumes the creation of many of the things described in the earlier story and focuses on something of great interest to us — people. As an aid when telling the story, use the creation posters available from The Learning Plant.

Explain the Centers for today. Assign children to one Center and encourage them to select a second Center with a different type of activity during the rotation.

For example, if a child begins in an Art Center, his or her second activity should be a Workbook or Creative Writing Center.

### ACTIVITY PERIOD: ART CENTER

Working with a partner, illustrate each section of the mural.

#### *Materials needed:*

A sheet of mural paper for each pair of students divided into 8 sections (see Fig. 2 below). Crayons, paint, pastels, collage materials, glue scissors.

Beginnings	Evenings	Rainbows	Eden	Sun	Heavens	Image	Trees
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Fig. 2

the seed of Amalek is blotted out from the world will the throne of the Lord be whole and the Name of God complete.<sup>1</sup>

24. "Write this for a memorial in the book" (Exod. 17:14). The sages of yore say: Throughout all generations there obtains the rule that the scourge with which Israel is smitten will in the end itself be smitten. All mankind should learn proper conduct from what happened to Amalek, who came to harm Israel, and the Holy One erased him from life in this world as well as from life in the world-to-come, as is said, "I will utterly blot out" (ibid.). Likewise, every nation and every kingdom that set out to harm Israel God always judges according to this rule.<sup>2</sup>

### The Giving of Torah

25. R. Isaac said: Israel were worthy of receiving the Torah immediately upon leaving Egypt. But the Holy One said: Because of their servitude in clay and bricks, My children's look of good health has not yet come back, and therefore they cannot receive the Torah at once. God's delay in giving the Torah may be illustrated by the parable of a king's son who had just got up from his sickbed. His tutor said: Let your son go back to school. The king replied: My son's look of good health has not yet come back, yet you say, "Let him go back to school!" Let my son be indulged for two or three months with good food and drink, so that he may fully recover—then he can go back to school. Likewise, the Holy One said: My children's look of good health has not yet come back—they have just been released from slaving with clay and bricks—shall I now give them the Torah? Let My children be indulged for two or three months—with the manna, with the waters of the well, with the quail—then I will give them the Torah.<sup>3</sup>

26. R. Joshua ben Levi said: When Israel left Egypt, there were among them men crippled by heavy labor, for as they worked in clay and bricks, now and then a stone, dropping from the structure, would break a man's arm or sever his leg. Hence the Holy One said: It is not right that I give My Torah to cripples. What did He do? He beckoned to the ministering angels, and they came down and healed them.<sup>4</sup>

27. [As to the consequences of Israel's refusal to accept the Torah], Resh Lakish said: Why is it written, "And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day" (Gen. 1:31)? What is the significance of using the definite article?<sup>5</sup> Singling out the "sixth day" by means of the definite article shows that the Holy One stipulated with the preceding works of creation, saying to them: If Israel accept

the Torah [on the sixth day of Sivan], you will continue to exist; if not, I will return you to desolation and chaos.<sup>6</sup>

28. "As a lily among thorns" (Song 2:2). R. Azariah, citing R. Judah son of R. Simon, illustrated the verse by the parable of a king who had an orchard planted with a row of fig trees, a row of grapevines, a row of pomegranate trees, and a row of apple trees. The king turned this orchard over to a keeper and went away. After a while the king came back and looked into the orchard to see how it had done, and found it overgrown with thorns and thistles. He summoned woodcutters to raze it, but as he looked again at the thorns, he noticed among them a rose-colored lily. He took hold of it and breathed in its fragrance, and his spirit was calmed. Then the king said: Because of this lily, let the entire orchard be spared.

Likewise, the whole world, all of it, was created only for the sake of the Torah. But after twenty-six generations,<sup>7</sup> when the Holy One looked closely at His world to ascertain what it had done, He found it [muddy] water within [muddy] water<sup>8</sup>—the generation of Enosh, water within water;<sup>9</sup> the generation of the flood, water within water; the generation of the dispersion of mankind, water within water.<sup>10</sup> He summoned destroyers to raze the world, but then he noticed there a rose-colored lily—Israel. He took hold of it and breathed in its fragrance—He gave Israel the Ten Commandments. When he heard their response, "We will do and we will hearken" (Exod. 24:7), His spirit was calmed.

The Holy One then said: Because of a lily, an orchard was spared. Because of Torah and of Israel, let the world be spared.<sup>11</sup>

29. "The Lord came unto Sinai; after having [first] risen at Seir unto the people thereof, then having shined forth at Mount Paran,<sup>12</sup> He came unto the myriads holy, at His right hand a fiery law for them" (Deut. 33:2).<sup>13</sup> When he who is everywhere revealed Himself to give the Torah to Israel, He revealed Himself not only to Israel but to all the other nations as well. At first God went to the children of Esau. He asked them: Will you accept the Torah? They said right to His face: What is written in it? He said: "Thou shalt not murder." They replied: Master of the universe, this goes against our grain. Our father, whose "hands are

<sup>1</sup> Tanhuma B, *Ki Tetze*, §18.

<sup>2</sup> Mek, *Be-shallah, Amalek*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Eccles. R. 3:11; §2; Song R. 2:5, §2.

<sup>4</sup> Tanhuma, *Yitro*, §8.

<sup>5</sup> The preceding days are referred to as "a second day," "a third day," and so on, with the indefinite article.

<sup>6</sup> B. Shab 88a.

<sup>7</sup> In the generation when the Torah was given.

<sup>8</sup> Wicked people in a wicked environment. For a further explanation of "water within water," see below, part 3, chap. 1, §15, n.o.

<sup>9</sup> It was partly wiped out by water. See Gen. R. 23:6 on Gen. 4:26.

<sup>10</sup> Also inundated in part. See Gen. R. 38:10.

<sup>11</sup> Lev. R. 23:3; Song R. 2:2, §3.

<sup>12</sup> Seir is a reference to Edom, and Paran to Ishmael.

<sup>13</sup> JV: "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose from Seir unto them. He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came from the myriads holy, at His right hand was a fiery law unto them." Here the commentator attempts to solve the meaning of God's peregrinations; he is also baffled by the strange statement that God came *from* Sinai, whereas in truth He came *to* Sinai. Accordingly, the commentator takes the proposition *mi* (usually rendered "from") as meaning rather "the place or region in or at which a thing is" (see Gesenius, *Lexicon*, p. 584; cf. Gen. 12:8). The "myriads holy" are the myriads of Israel.



the hands of Esau" (Gen. 27:22), led us to rely only on the sword, because his father told him, "By thy sword shalt thou live" (Gen. 27:40).<sup>1</sup> We cannot accept the Torah.

Then He went to the children of Ammon and Moab, and asked them: Will you accept the Torah? They said right to His face: What is written in it? He said: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." They replied: Master of the universe, our very origin is in adultery, for Scripture says, "Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father" (Gen. 19:36). We cannot accept the Torah.

Then He went to the children of Ishmael. He asked them: Will you accept the Torah? They said right to His face: What is written in it? He said: "Thou shalt not steal." They replied: Master of the universe, it is our very nature to live off only what is stolen and what is got by assault. Of our forebear Ishmael, it is written, "And he shall be a wild ass of a man: his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him" (Gen. 16:12). We cannot accept the Torah.

There was not a single nation among the nations to whom God did not go, speak, and, as it were, knock on its door, asking whether it would be willing to accept the Torah.

At long last He came to Israel. They said, "We will do and hearken" (Exod. 24:7). Of God's successive attempts to give the Torah, it is written, "The Lord came unto Sinai; after having [first] risen at Seir unto the people thereof, then having shined forth at Mount Paran, He finally came unto the myriads holy, at His right hand a fiery law for them" (Deut. 33:2).<sup>2</sup>

30. "Why do you scurry about and contend, ye mountains that are crooked?"<sup>3</sup> (Ps. 68:17). R. Yose the Galilean said: When the Holy One came to give the Torah to Israel on Sinai, the mountains scurried about, striving with one another, one saying, "The Torah should be given on me," and another, "It should be given on me." Mount Tabor came from Beth-elim, and Mount Carmel from Apamea, one saying, "I have been summoned," and another saying, "I have been summoned." Finally, the Holy One said, "Why do you scurry about and contend, ye mountains that are crooked?" You are, to be sure, lofty mountains, but you are crooked, blemished, since idolatry has been practiced at the top of each one of you. But Sinai—idolatry has never been practiced upon it—Sinai is "the mountain which God has desired for His abode" (ibid.).<sup>4</sup>

31. Whence did Sinai come? R. Yose taught: Out of Mount Moriah—the place where our father Isaac had been bound as a sacrifice—Sinai plucked itself as a priest's portion is plucked out of the dough.<sup>5</sup> For the Holy One

said: Since their father Isaac was bound upon this mount, it is fitting that his children receive the Torah upon it.<sup>6</sup>

32. "And they stood under the mount" (Exod. 19:17).<sup>7</sup> R. Avdimi bar Hama said: The verse implies that the Holy One overturned the mountain upon them, like an inverted cask, and said to them: If you accept the Torah, it is well; if not, your grave will be right here.<sup>8</sup>

33. R. Simai expounded: When Israel hastened to say, "We will do," before saying, "We will hearken," sixty myriads of ministering angels came down and fastened two crowns upon each and every one in Israel, one as a reward for saying, "We will do," and the other as a reward for saying, "We will hearken." But when Israel sinned,<sup>9</sup> a hundred and twenty myriads of destroying angels came down and removed the crowns, as is said, "The children of Israel were stripped of their ornaments from Mount Horeb" (Exod. 33:6).<sup>11</sup>

R. Eliezer said: When Israel hastened to say, "We will do," before saying, "We will hearken," a divine voice went forth and exclaimed: Who has disclosed to My children this secret, which only the ministering angels make use of? For they are told, "Bless the Lord, ye angels of His, that do what He saith, [and then] hearken to the voice of His Word" (Ps. 103:20)—first they are described as "doing," and then as "hearkening [obeying]."<sup>12</sup>

34. R. Abbahu said in the name of R. Yohanan: When the Holy One gave the Torah, no bird chirped, no fowl flew, no ox lowed, not one of the *ofannim*<sup>13</sup> stirred a wing, not one of the seraphim said, "Holy, holy, holy!" The sea did not roar, creatures did not speak—the whole world was hushed into breathless silence; it was then that the voice went forth: "I am the Lord thy God" (Exod. 20:2).<sup>14</sup>

35. "I am the Lord thy God." Because the Holy One appeared to them at the Red Sea as a mighty man waging war,<sup>15</sup> at Sinai as a pedagogue teaching Torah, in the days of Solomon as a young man, and in the days of Daniel as an aged man full of mercy, the Holy One said: Because you see Me in many guises, do not imagine that there are many gods—for I am He who was with you at the Red Sea, I am He who was with you at Sinai, I am the same everywhere. "I am the Lord thy God."<sup>16</sup>

36. "His mouth is most sweet" (Song 5:16). It is said in the name of R. Yohanan: The moment Israel at Sinai heard

<sup>6</sup> MTeh 68:9; BhM 5:72-73.

<sup>7</sup> The translation is literal. JV: "And they stood at the nether part of the mount."

<sup>8</sup> B. Shab 88a; AZ 2b.

<sup>9</sup> Exod. 24:7.

<sup>10</sup> Through the golden calf.

<sup>11</sup> That is, what they had received at Mount Horeb.

<sup>12</sup> B. Shab 88a.

<sup>13</sup> "Wheel-angels." See Ezek. 1:16.

<sup>14</sup> Exod. R. 29:9.

<sup>15</sup> Exod. 15:3.

<sup>16</sup> Yalkut, *Yitro*, §286; Mek, *Be-shallah*, *Shirata*, 4.

Here the BR but the text in PRF is followed.

<sup>1</sup> See *Shab*, §143; PR 21 (PRF, p. 99b; YJS 1:417).

<sup>2</sup> The text is like the askance, ye mountains of peaks." But in the comment that follows, *terazedun* ("look askance") will be construed as portmanteau for *rutz* ("run, scurry") and *dun* ["dun"] ("contend, strive").

<sup>3</sup> *Gen. R.* 99:1.

<sup>4</sup> On *shallah*, the priest's share of the bread, see Num. 15:20.

the word "I," their souls left them, as is written, "My soul left me when He spoke" (Song 5:6). At once, the Word returned to the Holy One and said: Master of the universe, You are ever alive and enduring, the Torah is ever alive and enduring, yet You are sending me to the dead?—they are all dead! So, for Israel's sake, the Holy One went back and sweetened [made soft] the Word, as is said, "The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is stately" (Ps. 29:4), which, as R. Hama bar Hanina explained, means that the voice of the Lord was powerful for young men and had measured stateliness for the aged. [In agreement with R. Hama bar Hanina], R. Levi said: Had it been written, "The voice of the Lord is in His strength," the world could not have stood it. Hence Scripture says, "The voice of the Lord is fitted to the strength" (Ps. 29:4),<sup>1</sup> that is to say, to the strength of each and every person—the young, according to their strength; the aged, according to their strength; the little ones, according to their strength; the sucklings, according to their strength; the women, according to their strength.

R. Simeon ben Yohai, however, taught: The Torah that the Holy One gave to Israel was the one who helped restore their souls to them. She pleaded before the Holy One for mercy on their behalf, saying: Is there a king who gives his daughter in marriage and slays the courtier whom she is to wed? The entire world rejoices for my sake, yet Your children [Israel, to whom I am being given], are dying! At that, their souls returned. "The Law of the Lord is perfect, it restores souls" (Ps. 19:8).

Another exposition of "His mouth is most sweet" (Song 5:16): [The Holy One was] like a king who spoke so harshly to his son that the latter fell into a faint. When the king saw that he had fainted, he began to hug him, kiss him, and speak softly to him, saying, "What is it with you? Are you not my only son? Am I not your father?" So, too, as soon as the Holy One said, "I am the Lord thy God," then and there Israel's souls left them. When they died, the angels began to hug them and kiss them, saying to them, "What is it with you? Be not afraid—'ye are children of the Lord your God'" (Deut. 14:1). At the same time, the Holy One repeated the Word softly for their sake as He said, "Are you not My children, even as I am the Lord your God? You are My people. You are beloved unto Me." He kept speaking gently to them until their souls returned.<sup>2</sup>

37. "Thus thou shalt say to the house of Jacob" (Exod. 19:3)—that is, to the women, meaning that God said to Moses: Tell them those essentials that they can understand; "and tell the children of Israel" (ibid.)—that is, the men, meaning: You may tell them also specific details of precepts, which they [unlike women] can understand.

Another explanation: Why did He mention the women first? Because they are prompt in fulfilling commandments.

Still another explanation: In order that they may lead their children to the study of Torah.<sup>3</sup>

38. R. Joshua ben Levi said: With each and every word that issued from the mouth of the Holy One, the entire world, all of it, was filled with the fragrance of spices. If the first word filled the world, where did the fragrance of the second word go? Out of His treasures the Holy One brought forth a wind, which carried each fragrance along in orderly succession.

R. Joshua ben Levi said also: At each and every word that issued from the mouth of the Holy One, the soul of Israel departed, as is said, "My soul departed when He spoke" (Song 5:6). But if their souls departed at the first word, how could they receive the next word? He brought down the dew, with which He will in time resurrect the dead, and restored Israel to life.

R. Joshua ben Levi said further: At each and every word that issued from the mouth of the Holy One, the Israelites recoiled a distance of twelve *mil*<sup>4</sup> and the angels moved from back [to Sinai], as is said, "Hosts of angels flee, they flee" (Ps. 68:13). Read not *yiddodun* ("they flee") but *yeddadun* ("they move").<sup>5</sup>

39. Hananiah son of R. Joshua's brother said: Just as the sea there are ripples and wavelets between each major wave, so between each of the Ten Commandments there were Torah's unwritten minutiae, as well as all of Torah's letters.<sup>6</sup>

40. "For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?" (Deut. 5:23). Come and see how the voice went forth to all of Israel, to each and every one in keeping with his particular capacity—to the elder in keeping with his capacity, to young men in keeping with their capacity, to the little ones in keeping with their capacity, and to the women in keeping with their capacity. R. Yose bar Hanina said: If you are astounded at such an assertion, then draw the relevant inference from the manna, which came down for Israel varying in taste, in keeping with each Israelite's particular need—to young men it tasted like bread, to the elderly it tasted like wafer made with honey, to sucklings it tasted like milk from their mother's breast, to the sick it tasted like fine flour mingled with honey, while for the heathen it tasted a bitter as linseed. Now, if the manna, which was all of the same kind, changed into so many kinds to provide for the particular need of each individual, was it not possible for the voice, in which there is such divine strength, to vary according to the capacity of each individual, so that no harm should befall him? Hence Job said, "God thundereth marvelously with His voice" (Job 37:5).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Exod. R. 28:2.

<sup>2</sup> A *mil* is about 1,620 yards.

<sup>3</sup> MT: "Kings of armies."

<sup>4</sup> B. Shab 88b.

<sup>5</sup> That is, all the details of the Oral Law, as well as the six hundred and thirteen precepts. P. Shek 6:1, 49d.

<sup>6</sup> Exod. R. 5:9.

<sup>1</sup> Literally, "The voice of the Lord is in strength," a deviation from normal syntax, which would require suffixing the appropriate personal pronoun—e.g., "Jacob lifted his feet" (Gen. 29:1), not simply "lifted feet"—whenever a part or an attribute of the body is mentioned. Cf. Tanhuma, *Shemot*, §25.

<sup>2</sup> Song R. 5:16, §3; Exod. R. 5:9 and 29:4.

41. At Sinai, when the Holy One gave the Torah to Israel, He manifested marvels upon marvels for Israel with His voice. How so? As the Holy One spoke, the voice reverberated throughout the world. At first Israel heard the voice coming to them from the south,<sup>1</sup> so they ran to the south to meet the voice there. It shifted to the north, so they ran to the north. Then it shifted to the east, so they ran to the east; but from the east it shifted to the west, so they ran to the west. Next it shifted to heaven. But when they raised their eyes toward heaven, it seemed to rise out of the earth. Hence Israel asked one another, "But wisdom, where shall it be found? And where is the place of understanding?" (Job 28:12).

"And all the people perceived the thunderings" (Exod. 20:15). Since there was only one voice, why "thunderings" in the plural? Because God's voice mutated into seven voices, and the seven voices into seventy languages, so that all the nations might hear it.<sup>2</sup>

42. R. Yohanan asked; What is implied in "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" (Ps. 68:12)? That each and every word that issued from the mouth of the Almighty divided itself into seventy languages. Accordingly, citing the verse "As a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces" (Jer. 23:29), the school of R. Ishmael taught: Just as a hammer that strikes a rock causes sparks to fly off in all directions, so each and every word that issued from the mouth of the Holy One divided itself into seventy languages.<sup>3</sup>

43. R. Yohanan said also: Each and every word that issued from the Holy One was transmuted into seventy languages. R. Joshua ben Levi said: As when a man strikes an anvil and causes sparks to fly off in all directions. R. Yose bar Hanina said: As when a man strikes a rock with a hammer and causes chips to fly off in all directions, so, too, did "the great company of those that published it."<sup>4</sup>

44. It is taught: "Remember" and "observe" were spoken in one utterance, something that is beyond the human mouth to articulate or the human ear to absorb.<sup>5</sup>

45. "And God spoke all these words, saying"<sup>6</sup> (Exod. 20:1). God can do all kinds of things at one and the same time—He can put to death and bring to life at one and the same time. He can wound and heal at one and the same time. If there is a woman giving birth; people going down to the sea, traveling through deserts, or being kept

in prison—though one is in the east and another in the west, one in the north and another in the south—He can hear them all at one and the same time.<sup>7</sup>

46. "And God spoke all these words, saying" (Exod. 20:1). R. Isaac said: At Mount Sinai the prophets of each and every generation received what they were to prophesy, for Moses told Israel, "But with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day" (Deut. 29:14). He did not say, "That is not standing here with us this day," but, "That is not here with us this day," a way of referring to souls that are destined to be created. Because as yet these had no substance, Moses did not use the word "standing" for them. Still, even though they did not as yet exist, each one received his share of the Torah. Nor were the future prophets the only ones who received at Sinai the prophecy they were to utter. The sages who were to rise in each and every generation—each and every one of them also received at Sinai the wisdom he was to utter.<sup>8</sup>

47. When the Holy One gave the Torah to Israel, His voice traveled from one end of the world to the other, and in their palaces all kings of the nations were seized with trembling, yet they were constrained to chant a song in praise of God. All of them gathered themselves about the wicked Balaam and asked, "What is this loud tumult we hear? Is another flood coming upon the world?" Balaam replied, "The Holy One has already sworn that He will not bring another flood upon the world." "Perhaps," they asked further, "He will bring not another flood of water but a flood of fire?" Balaam reassured them: "He has already sworn that He would not destroy all flesh." "What, then," they asked, "is this loud tumult we hear?" Balaam replied, "The Holy One has a precious thing in His treasury that had been stored with Him nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the world was created,<sup>9</sup> and now He wishes to give it to His children, as is said, 'The Lord giveth strength to His people' " (Ps. 29:11). The kings of the nations, all as one, immediately exclaimed, "May the Lord bless His people with peace" (ibid.).<sup>10</sup>

48. As soon as Israel accepted the Torah, the Holy One invested them with some of the splendor of His own majesty. What precisely did He invest them with? Crowns, according to R. Yohanan; weapons, according to R. Simeon ben Yohai, upon which God's Explicit Name was engraved—as long as these weapons were in their hands, the angel of death had no power over them.<sup>11</sup>

49. R. Joshua ben Levi taught: When Moses went up on high, the ministering angels dared say to the Holy One:

<sup>1</sup> When facing east, the south is on the right side, the side where the Torah was given. Hence the commentator begins with the south.

<sup>2</sup> The Torah is intended for all nations—it is not to remain Israel's sole prerogative. Exod. R. 5:9; Tanhuma B, *Shemot*, §22.

<sup>3</sup> B. Shab 88b.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., as cited in Yalkut, Ps., §695.

<sup>5</sup> In Exod. 20 the fourth commandment begins with the words "Remember the Sabbath day," whereas in Deut. 5 it begins with "Observe." B. RH 27a.

<sup>6</sup> "All these words, saying," being regarded as redundant, is construed as implying that at one and the same time God can do even things mutually opposed.

<sup>7</sup> Exod. R. 28:4.

<sup>8</sup> Exod. R. 28:6.

<sup>9</sup> The Torah was to have been given at the end of a thousand generations.

But God advanced the time and gave it during the twenty-sixth generation from Adam. See TdE, ed. Friedmann, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> B. Zeb 116a and En Yaakov, ad loc.

<sup>11</sup> Exod. R. 51:8.

Master of the universe, what business does one born of woman have in our midst? God replied: He came to receive the Torah. They argued: This precious thing, which has been stored with You for nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the world was created, You are about to give to mere flesh and blood? "O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is Thy Name in all the earth! Let Thy majesty continue to be celebrated above the heavens. . . . What is man that Thou shouldst be mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou shouldst think of him?" (Ps. 8:2 and 8:5). Then the Holy One said to Moses: Let you be the one to reply to the ministering angels. Moses spoke right up: Master of the universe, I fear that they will consume me with the fiery breath of their mouths. God said: Take hold of the throne of My glory and reply to them. Moses spoke up again: The Torah You are about to give me—what is written in it? "I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. 20:2). Then, turning to the angels, he asked: Did *you* go down to Egypt? Were *you* enslaved to Pharaoh? What need have you for the Torah? What else is written in it? "Ye shall have no gods that others worship" (Exod. 20:3)—do *you* live among nations who worship idols? What else is written in it? "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Exod. 20:7)—are there business dealings among *you* [that might lead to swearing a false oath]? What else is written in it? "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exod. 20:8)—do *you* do the kind of work that requires you to rest? What else is written in it? "Honor thy father and thy mother" (Exod. 20:12)—do *you* have father or mother? What else is written in it? "Thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal" (Exod. 20:13)—is there rivalry among *you*, is the impulse to evil within *you*?

At that, the angels conceded to the Holy One, for at the psalm's end, they said once more, "O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is Thy Name in all the earth," although they did not add [as before], "Let Thy majesty continue to be celebrated above the heavens."<sup>1</sup>

Then each of the angels came to be favorably disposed toward Moses and gave him a token of his favor, as is implied by what was said to him: "Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast taken the prize [of Torah]; thou hast received gifts [to compensate for the angels' calling thee] a mere man [a groundling]" (Ps. 68:19). Even the angel of death turned over his secret to Moses, for later, after the plague had begun, it is said of Moses that he told Aaron to "put on the incense and make atonement for the people" (Num. 17:12); and Scripture goes on to say, "And he stood between those who were about to die and those who were to remain alive" (Num. 17:13). How would Moses have been able to distinguish between the two, had not the angel of death made him a gift of the secret?<sup>2</sup>

50. R. Simeon ben Lakish said: The Torah given to Moses was written with black fire upon white fire, sealed with fire, and swathed with bands of fire. While writing

it, Moses wiped off the reed on his hair—thus he received the radiance that was to emanate from his countenance.<sup>3</sup>

51. R. Joshua ben Levi said: After Moses had come down from the Holy One's Presence, Satan appeared and asked Him bluntly: Master of the universe, where is the Torah? He answered: I gave it to the earth. Satan went to the earth and asked: Where is the Torah? The earth replied, "God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof" (Job 28:23). He then went to the sea, which replied, "It is not with me" (Job 28:14). Finally he went to the deep under the earth, which replied, "It is not in me" (ibid.). So he returned and said to the Holy One: Master of the universe, I searched for it throughout the world, but did not find it. God said, "Go to the son of Amram." Satan went to Moses and asked, "Where is the Torah the Holy One gave you?" Moses replied, "Who am I that the Holy One should have given the Torah to me?" The Holy One asked: Moses, are you a liar? Moses replied: Master of the universe, You had hidden away a precious thing in which You took delight every day—shall I now claim credit for myself about it? The Holy One said to Moses: Since you make so little of yourself, the Torah shall be called by your name—"remember ye the Torah of Moses My servant" (Mal. 3:22).

R. Joshua ben Levi said also: When Moses went up on high, he found the Holy One busy joining crowns to the letters [of the Torah,<sup>4</sup> and Moses remained respectfully silent]. Finally, God asked, "Moses, where you come from, were you not taught to extend greetings?" Moses replied, "May a servant presume to greet his master?" "Nevertheless," said God, "you should have encouraged Me [by saying something]." Presently [during a later ascent] Moses cried out [without being reminded], "May the power of the Lord increase!" [Then he added], "Is not this what You told me to do?" (Num. 14:17).<sup>5</sup>

52. R. Hanina ben Agil asked R. Hiyya son of R. Abba: Why does it not say in the first version of the Ten Commandments, "That it may go well with thee," while in the second version there is such a promise?<sup>6</sup> He replied: Before asking me why "That it may go well with thee" is not mentioned in the first version, you should ask me whether such a promise does or does not occur in the second version—the fact is, I do not know whether it occurs or not.<sup>7</sup> Go to R. Tanhum bar Hanilai, who visits regularly with R. Joshua ben Levi, an expert in *Aggadah*. When he went to him, R. Tanhum said: From R. Joshua ben Levi, as it happens, I never heard anything on this matter. But Samuel bar Nahum told me, "Because [the Tablets containing the Commandments' first version] were

<sup>3</sup> P. Shek 6:1, 49d; Yalkut, *Berakhah*, §951.

<sup>4</sup> The crowns (*tagin*) are three small strokes that are added on the top of certain letters. See *JE*, s.v.

<sup>5</sup> B. Shab 89a.

<sup>6</sup> In Deut. 5:16, it is stated, "That thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee."

<sup>7</sup> No halakic point was involved in this text. Hence R. Hiyya could not recall its exact wording.

<sup>1</sup> That is, they conceded that the Torah need not remain in heaven.

<sup>2</sup> B. Shab 88b–89a.

destined to be broken,<sup>1</sup> [the promise of well-being does not occur in them]. But even if they were destined to be broken, how would that eventuality affect the promise of well-being?" R. Ashi explained: Well-being would then, God forbid, have altogether ceased in Israel.<sup>2</sup>

53. In the way of the world, when a king of flesh and blood issues a decree, it may or may not be obeyed; and even if you find that it is obeyed, it may be so only while he is living but not after his death. However, Moses our teacher issued many decrees and introduced many enactments—and these abide forever and ever and ever.<sup>3</sup>

54. Come and see that the way of the Holy One is not like the way of human beings. The way of a human being: when he sells a valuable object to his fellow,<sup>4</sup> the seller grieves, while the buyer rejoices. Not so the Holy One. When He gave up the Torah to Israel, He rejoiced: "I have given you a good purchase;<sup>5</sup> forsake not My teaching" (Prov. 4:2).<sup>6</sup>

55. A certain Galilean expounded in the presence of R. Hisda: Blessed be He who is everywhere, who has given the three-fold Torah<sup>7</sup> to a three-fold people<sup>8</sup> through a third[born]<sup>9</sup> on the third day<sup>10</sup> in the third month.<sup>11</sup>

#### Nadab and Abihu

56. "Unto Moses He said: 'Come up unto the Lord, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu'" (Exod. 24:1). The verse intimates that Moses and Aaron walked first, followed by Nadab and Abihu, then by all of Israel. [Treading, so to speak, on the heels of Moses and Aaron], Nadab said to Abihu, "When will these two old men die, so that you and I may lead this generation?" The Holy One said to them, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow" [Prov. 27:1]—We shall see who will bury whom." As R. Papa, quoting a common proverb, put it: Many a young ass has died and had its hide turned into saddlecloths for its dam's back.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 32:19.

<sup>2</sup> Had the promise of well-being been inserted in the first version of the Ten Commandments, such well-being might have ceased altogether after the Tablets containing that version were broken. B. BK 54b-55a.

<sup>3</sup> Moses' own decrees and enactments deal with such matters as the public reading of Scripture and the division of priests into rotas or watches. B. Shab 30a.

<sup>4</sup> When forced to do so by poverty.

<sup>5</sup> JV: "Good doctrine." But *lekah* ("doctrine") may in postbiblical Hebrew also mean "purchase."

<sup>6</sup> By praising it, God showed He was pleased that He made the "sale." B. Ber 5a.

<sup>7</sup> Pentateuch, Prophets, and Writings.

<sup>8</sup> Israel was made up of priests, Levites, and Israelites.

<sup>9</sup> Moses was born after Aaron and Miriam.

<sup>10</sup> The third day after separation from their wives. Exod. 19:11.

<sup>11</sup> In Sivan. B. Shab 88a.

<sup>12</sup> B. Sanh 32a; Lev. R. 20:10.

#### The Sin of the Golden Calf

57. "And when the people saw that Moses delayed (*boshesh*) to come down from the mount" (Exod. 32:1). "Six hours (*ba'u shesh*) of the day<sup>13</sup> have passed," they said, "and Moses has not yet come down, even though when he went up on high he promised, 'After forty days, at the beginning of the day's sixth hour, I will be back.'"

At the end of forty days, there gathered forty thousand [of the mixed multitude]<sup>14</sup> that had come up with Israel, together with two of Egypt's magicians, whose names were Jannes and Jambres<sup>15</sup>—it was they who performed all those acts of witchcraft in Pharaoh's presence, as is said, "They also, the magicians of Egypt, did in like manner with their secret arts" (Exod. 7:11). All of them gathered against Aaron and said, "Moses will not come down again." Aaron and Hur responded, "Any moment he will be coming down from the mount." But the mixed multitude paid no attention to them.

Some say that Satan came and brought confusion to the minds of the people. Satan began by asking, "Where is Moses your teacher?" "He went up on high." "But the sixth hour of the day is here." The people paid no attention to him. "He is dead," [Satan said]. They still paid no attention to him. Finally he showed them a likeness of Moses' bier suspended in the air between heaven and earth. Then the people pointed with their fingers, saying, "This is indeed Moses, a mere man" (Exod. 32:1).

Hur stood up and rebuked them: "You stiff-necked people! Do you not remember how many miracles he performed in your behalf?" But the people rose up and slew him.

Then they gathered against Aaron and said, "If you make a god for us, well and good; but if not, we will do to you what we did to Hur."

When Aaron saw how things stood, he was afraid and attempted to distract them with subterfuges. Thus he said, "Break off the golden rings, which are in the ears of your wives" (Exod. 32:2), a difficult request to execute, since the wives were likely to balk. Indeed, when the men went to their wives [they did balk, but for a different reason]—they defied them, saying, "God forbid that we should make an idol and betray the Holy One, who wrought such miracles and mighty deeds in our behalf." So, since the wives refused, "all the [men among the] people broke off the golden rings which were in their ears (Exod. 32:3)<sup>16</sup>—their own ears.

When the men brought the golden rings—so said R. Jeremiah—Aaron raised his eyes toward heaven and said, "Unto Thee I lift up my eyes, O Thou that art enthroned in the heavens" [Ps. 123:1]. You know all thoughts—it is against my will that I am about to do this." But as he threw the gold rings into the fire, the magicians came and

<sup>13</sup> Twelve noon—thus, six hours have passed of the fortieth day, the day Moses promised he would be back.

<sup>14</sup> See Exod. 12:38.

<sup>15</sup> See *JE* 7:71.

<sup>16</sup> In this verse, the wives are not mentioned.