

# **A Sense of Belonging:**

## **A Five Senses Exploration of Jewish Ritual for Early Learners**

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## Rationale

A few years ago, while working in a Jewish early-childhood setting in an urban environment, I observed the following:

During a Hanukkah art project in which students were given cutouts of dreidles to decorate, a number of the non-Jewish students quickly realized that if you turn a dreidle upside-down it becomes something else. They gleefully flipped their cutouts around and began decorating an object they were more familiar with- a Christmas tree!

I thought about this moment a lot, and realized that what fascinated me about it was the lens through which these children are able to see the world outside of their Jewish classroom- a world which we refer to as secular but is also predominantly Christian in experience. I began to wonder if a Jewish child in a similar scenario would have made the same cognitive leap and turned a Christmas tree into a dreidle. I am inclined to believe that most would not, due mostly to the lack of representation of their Jewish experiences in the secular world which they inhabit.

The initial goal, then, of this curriculum guide, is to begin to think about how we can offer our young learners Jewish lenses through which to see the world. The secondary goal is to encourage students to make a connection between engaging with the world through a Jewish lens and the overarching motivation of doing so- a relationship to the concept of Jewish peoplehood.

Jerome Bruner wrote that “Any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development.”<sup>1</sup> I believe that engaging on a serious level with the idea of peoplehood is something that we tend to shy away from in Early Childhood, because it is such an ethereal idea and because it is not inherently an emergent process. But using a combination of repeated provocation and open ended questions, I believe it is possible to engage young children in depth about these big ideas.

Young children naturally explore the world through sensory input. Given their developmental stage, they are in the perfect place to react honestly to multi-sensory stimuli related to familiar encounters in their lives. They know how they feel about things, and are not afraid to express it. They respond viscerally, and with confidence. Because they aren't yet privy to the pre-determined stigma placed on culturally significant items, they offer a potentially objective perspective about how these pieces fit together in the world.

Designed for use in an Early Childhood setting, this is a five senses curriculum that explores the subtle but concrete differences among uniquely Jewish smells, tastes,

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<sup>1</sup> Jerome Bruner. *The Process of Education*, p.33, Harvard Press, 1960

sights, sensations, and sounds, and those which are general and belong to the larger world. Through the long established ECE tool of provocations, students will have a rich variety of opportunities to encounter these stimuli and identify what is Jewish about each of them. As such, the curriculum aims to engage with the significant issue of early identity formation of young Jews.

The content of this course will be divided into units based on specific spaces and times where Jewish ritual happens. Within each unit, multiple provocations will be offered and discussion questions will encourage learners to think about how the various materials fit into their lives and their comprehension of their world. This method allows for a variety of teaching methods to accommodate differentiated learning, and also creates the possibility for emergent learning to take place, because it will be possible to personalize each lesson to the specific community of learners. For example, in the lesson on Jewish lights, the Yartzeit candle is used, but it is suggested that this can be removed or adjusted based on the comfort of the instructor and the setting of the class. Additionally, there are always more provocation materials listed than would be used in a single session, to allow for the instructor to choose which might best suit their setting and group.

For the purposes of this curriculum, we will be focusing on those Jewish rituals that young children in a Reform setting could naturally encounter in the course of their lives at school and at home, such as Shabbat, Havdallah, and Pesach. We will be using ritual objects as a grounding point for exploring something intangible- Jewish peoplehood. As stated above, young children possess great ability to grasp concepts that may seem above their developmental level, but often they need concrete, tactile experiences from which to draw their understanding. When we use provocations such as havdallah candles, tzedakah boxes, or mezuzot, we are offering our learners a medium through which to discuss the way they feel when they sit together with their families to pray, give charity, or enter a comfortable space. Additionally, we plant the seed in them that grows into the recognition that there is something inherently Jewish about these feelings- because of the objects, people, and places they are connected to- which are different than the way they feel in the everyday experiences of their secular world.

Maria Montessori said, “We cannot create observers by saying 'observe,' but by giving them the power and the means for this observation and these means are procured through education of the senses”. As young children begin to think about how they fit into the world, we have an opportunity and an obligation to help them see their world through Jewish lenses. By evoking their natural curiosity and the development of their five senses, we can open up preschoolers to the potential of living Jewishly in a secular world, and knowing their place in the Jewish tradition.

## Letter to the teacher

This curriculum was designed with an emergent childhood setting always at the forefront of my mind. There are some activities that may seem simple to the casual observer, and some that may seem too big for your young learners. However, each lesson is designed to bring forth curiosity, discussion, and deep learning within your classrooms.

I would encourage you to look at the 'key terms and concepts' idea before each unit and think about your personal connection to each of these ideas, as occasionally questions will arise throughout the course of study which will require you to take into account your own biases or questions about certain topics. I tried to note, when possible, topics that I thought might require adaptation or omission depending on your particular group, but because no one class is the same, those are decisions you will ultimately have to make for yourself throughout the course of this curriculum.

Although I believe that each lesson has important concepts and information to offer young learners, it is more important to me that the emergent nature of an Early Childhood setting be respected. To support this I have tried to create lessons that can stand separately from each other, with the hope that you can pull from this curriculum as needed based on the trajectory of your classroom learning.

Along those same lines of thought, it should be understood that not all assessments or activities will fit your classroom exactly. Please do not feel trapped by these suggested activities or assessments- I have offered some ideas, along with a 'What to Look For' guide for each lesson. You should feel comfortable rearranging the assessment to fit your class, while keeping these 'what to look for' milestones in mind. Likewise, if a certain activity doesn't seem right for your learners and where they are at developmentally, feel free to change it or omit it completely. Each activity is meant to have an air of flexibility, with a nod toward the individual emergent learning happening within each early childhood setting.

I believe that educators of young children have a responsibility to find the best possible ways of gathering up the information of the world and laying them out in a way that children can access and understand. This curriculum is an attempt to fulfill that responsibility through a Jewish lens. I hope it brings deep conversations, memorable moments, and great personal growth to your teaching and your classrooms.

Sincerely,  
Rachel Mylan

## **Enduring Understandings**

1. Being Jewish feels, sounds, tastes, smells, and looks unique.
2. Defining who you are helps to define who you are not.
3. Awe combined with structured experience leads to belonging.
4. Ritual objects bridge the tangible with the intangible.

## **Goals**

1. To demonstrate how a connection to ritual objects can connect us to our Jewish selves.
2. To present a variety of ways to be Jewish in a secular world.
3. To provide students with the tools and incentive to look at the world through a Jewish lens.

## **Essential Questions**

1. How do we know we are Jewish?
2. What is my connection to the people who came before me?
3. How does my family narrative effect the way I experience the world?

## **Course Assessment**

Assessment will take different forms depending on the learning experience, including dictated conversation between students and teacher, photos of students engaging in activity, and other evidence of learning that emerges. Because we are working with very young children, no two assessments will look exactly the same, but teachers will be offered a guide for how to check for connection with the subject matter and independent thought about the idea of Jewish ritual and peoplehood. The collected evidence will develop throughout the course into a portfolio of learning for each child.

# Unit 1 - Getting a Sense of Ritual

*(unscripted)*

## **Unit Goals**

1. To peak our learners' interest in Jewish artifacts.
2. To teach what the five senses are and how we use them to explore the world.
3. To create a KWL chart that will be used throughout this curriculum.

## **Unit Objectives**

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

1. Identify and explain the five senses.
2. Graph their experiences
3. Recognize some Jewish ritual objects they wouldn't have previously recognized.

## **Unit Overview**

The goal of this unit is to introduce learners to Jewish artifacts in a comfortable setting and to get them thinking about how these artifacts fit into their lives. They will be engaging in activities that they may recognize while using materials that may be less familiar to them.

## **Key Terms/Concepts**

Taste Buds:

Clusters of nerve endings on the tongue and mouth that provide the sensation of taste. The four categories of taste are: bitter, sweet, sour, salty.

Ritual:

A religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order.

## **Assessment**

Assessment should be ongoing throughout each activity, with teachers paying close attention to how each child talks about the senses they are using and how they are experiencing each. Classroom assessment will also take the form of dictation and graphs.

## **What to look for**

Each child should be able to name each of the 5 senses and which part of the body they are associated with.

Students will likely have personal connections to the Jewish artifacts throughout the lessons. They should be encouraged to share those stories, and those stories should be documented for their portfolios.

Students should be able to name each of the ritual items on your KWL chart and what it is used for.



## Session 1.1 - Touch, See, Smell

### **Goals:**

To create a sensory painting experience that will encourage learners to engage with various textures, colors, and smells.

### **Materials:**

- Various colors of tempera paint.
- parsley, matzoh meal, allspice (or other spice reminiscent of Havdallah)
- crumbled leaves, rosemary, grass, dirt
- salt, baking soda, cornmeal
- glue, glitter

### **Suggested Activities / Assessments:**

- Mix each material into a separate cup of paint
- Observe students while they paint, encourage descriptive language of what the different combinations look like, feel like, smell like.
- When the work is dry, speak again about the differences in the final product, and encourage students to remember what it felt like to paint with each material.

### *What to look for:*

Children should be able to articulate the differences in the texture of each paint, both while they are painting and in viewing them after they are dry.

Children should be associating the various smells with experiences in their lives, or be able at least to speak about the differences in the smells.

## Session 1.2 - Taste

### Goal:

To engage students in exploring the four main tastes that a tongue can experience: Bitter, Sweet, Salty, and Sour.

### Materials:

- Lemon wedges, candy lemon wedges
- Grape juice, Lemonade,
- Parsley dipped in salt water, potato chips
- Raw potato, Radish, unsweetened cacao,
- Chocolate Gelt, Challah dipped in honey
- plates, cups

### Suggested Activities / Assessments:

- Before sitting at the tables, explain to students that they have ‘taste buds’ on their tongues that lets them experience different types of tastes. Give them time to look at their tongues in a mirror to see their taste buds.
- Ask them to predict how each of the items on their plate will taste, based on how they look or their previous experience with them.
- One by one, let them taste the things on their plates. They should each be tasting the same foods at the same time, to encourage discussion and increase exposure to creative language.
- Take notes of the words and phrases used to describe each food, and refer back to them in follow-up discussion.
- Create a chart with 4 sections labeled sour, bitter, sweet, and salty. Write, or have them write, the foods they tasted under each category.
- Additional/alternative assessment: Create a bar graph for each food tasted, and allow students to vote by writing their names (or placing a label with their name on it) in sections labeled sour, bitter, sweet, or salty.*
- Later, engage in discussion about which foods they liked and didn’t like, and why. Remind them of the language they used. See if they can think of other foods to write onto the chart in each of the 4 categories.

### What to look for:

Children should notice and articulate the differences in taste.  
Children should be able to name other foods in the categories they have tasted.  
Children will probably have personal stories associated with some of the foods.  
Encourage these, and expand on them if any of the food brings up a specifically Jewish memory.

## Session 1.3 - Hear

### Goal

To help children define and enhance their aural skills, with an understanding that listening to, hearing, and recreating sounds are three separate abilities.

### Materials

Small metal or plastic whistle  
Train Whistle

### Suggested Activities / Assessments:

#### Activity 1: Whistle and Seek

Hand a whistle to one child in the class, and have them hide while the others close their eyes. When the class is ready to 'seek', the child who is hiding should blow the whistle until they are found.

-Alternate between different types of whistles (a train whistle works great for this), and give each child who wants to a chance to hide.

#### Activity 2: Listening Walk

Take a listening walk together as a class, ideally outdoors.

Before you walk, ask the children some focusing questions:

- What sounds do you think we will hear on our walk?
- How can we make sure we are able to hear all the sounds?
- Where should we go if we want to hear a lot of sound? Very few sounds?

As you walk, ask the children to tell you with words about the sounds they hear (rather than mimicking the sounds themselves)

Part 2: Back in the classroom, ask students to recreate any sounds they heard, and to guess what was making the sound.

Take a dictation of this conversation and display it in the classroom for reference.

### What to look for:

Children should be able to connect sounds with what makes them.

Children should be able to mimic some sounds, and recognize others mimicked by the teacher.

## Session 1.4 - Lights

### **Goal:**

To expose learners to various types of lights and find the associations those lights hold for them.

### **Materials:**

Photos of many different types of lights as there are students.  
(stoplights, birthday candles, headlights, fluorescent lights, lamps, yartzeight candle, shabbat candles, hanukkah with candles, christmas lights, flashlight)

### Activity 1: Lights 'Matching' Game

Teacher will gather the students for circle time and place all of the pictures in the center of the circle, face down. Turn the photos over, one by one, and discuss what is on the page. See if you can 'match' each photo with a story or explanation of the type of light on it.

### **What to look for:**

-Associations with each photo- not just 'this is Jewish/this isn't Jewish' but what each thing is and where they encounter it.

-Connections to the 'Jewish' lights, and ability to say why they are different from each other. (Yartzeight candle will probably need explanation or omission, depending on your group)

### Activity 2: (to be done at least a day later)

Teacher will gather students in a circle with the pictures in a pile in front of her. One at a time she will show a picture, and ask students to share about their associations with the light.

**Ask:** "Who has seen this type of light?" "Where did you see it?" "What does it make you think of?"

### **What to look for:**

-Students will be excited to tell personal stories- be sure to connect their stories to the associations they are bringing to the lights

-A sense that different lights make us 'feel' a certain way. Some will have more personal connections than others.

-A change or increase in their connection to the 'Jewish' lights.

## Session 1.5 - Jewish Artifacts KWL

### Goal:

To familiarize learners with some Jewish artifacts, and to peak their curiosity toward exploring their connections to Judaism.

### Materials:

Mezuzah      Menorah  
Dreidle      Small Torah  
Spice Box    Havdallah Candle  
Siddur      Candle Sticks  
Yad          Kiddush Cup  
Matzoh      Seder Plate  
Challah      Tzedakah Box  
Pictures of each of these items  
Poster Board

### Activity: KWL Chart

Create a KWL (mapping what we Know, what we Want to know, and what we've Learned about something) chart with four columns, pasting pictures of each of the artifacts you intend to use in the left column, and writing K, W, L, in each of the other three. There will be as many rows as artifacts you intend to use. Put this aside.

### **Setting: Circle Time**

*You should have one teacher leading the discussion and another taking dictation.*

Place the items in a basket, hidden from sight.

One by one, remove an item from the basket.

**Ask:** "Who can tell me something about this?"

Try to engage the students in discussion about each item. First, find out what they know about it. (Where it is used, what holiday it is associated with, who in their family has one, etc)

Explain to the students that you will be creating a chart called KWL. With a KWL chart, you make visible what you Know about something, what you Want to know, and later you fill in what you Learned.

**Say:** Now that we have recorded what we know about this, we can list what we want to learn about it"

**Ask:** "Who has a questions about this?"

Repeat this for each item. You can write directly onto the chart, or take the dictation down and transfer it later. Display the chart in your classroom for the duration of the curriculum, filling in anything you learn about an item throughout the year.

# Unit 2 - Havdallah

*(scripted)*

## Goals

1. To teach students about the ritual of Havdallah
2. To familiarize students with the Havdallah prayers
3. To create a classroom book documenting our learning about Havdallah.

## Unit Objectives

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Explain when and why we celebrate Havdallah.
2. Identify the separate symbols of the ceremony.
3. Participate comfortably in the ritual of Havdallah.

## Unit Overview

In this unit, learners have the opportunity to learn the ritual of celebrating Havdallah, and discuss the individual parts of the ceremony. They will learn about besamim, the spices, and go on a hunt to choose their own spice. At the end of the unit the class will create a book about their learning.

The scripted aspects of this unit are laid out as follows:

### **Verbal Command:**

*(possible student responses)*

*Notes on actions/alternatives to take*

### Key Terms/Concepts

Havdallah (or l'havdil)- Literally translated as 'separation'. Havdallah is the ceremony that ends Shabbat, separating it from the rest of the week.

Shavua Tov: A hebrew phrase that wishes 'a good week'.

The Havdallah Blessings- Students should know these by the end of the unit.

### Assessment

The authentic assessment in this unit will be the group creation of a Havdallah book, with interviews/dictation from each student. Each student will also have the opportunity to choose their favorite scent for Havdallah spices.

## Session 2.1 - What is Havdallah?

### Materials:

- Havdallah Set (Candle, Kiddush Cup, Grape Juice, Spices and Spice Box)
- Shalom, Shabbat: A Book For Havdallah by Susan Remick Topek

### Timeline:

:00-:10 Set Induction

:10-:20 Activity- Shalom, Shabbat

:20-:25 Closing

### :00-:10 Set Induction

Setting: Circle Time

**Ask:** “Who can tell me about the holiday we celebrate on Friday?”

*(Shabbat!)*

**Ask:** “What can you tell me about Shabbat?”

*(It’s when we sing songs, light the candles, eat challah. It’s when we go to Temple. Some might talk about what their families do, etc)*

**Ask:** “Those are all great examples of how we celebrate Shabbat! Does anyone know how we celebrate the end of Shabbat?”

*(It’s likely they will not know, so be prepared to field some wild guesses)*

**Say:** “At the end of Shabbat, on Saturday night, there is a special ceremony that we do. It’s called Havdallah. At Havdallah, we light a candle, drink wine, and smell a special spice. *Introduce the individual pieces as you mention them, but for now the class can just look at them as artifacts.*

**Say:** “It kind of looks like Shabbat, but its different. In fact, Havdallah is a Hebrew word that means ‘separation’, and it shows us that Shabbat is over and the rest of the week is starting again. I have a book here that tells us a little more about Havdallah.”

### :10-:20 Activity 1

#### **Read Shalom, Shabbat**

### :20-:25

**Ask:** “What materials did they use to observe Havdallah?”

*(Candles! Grape juice! Spices!)*

**Ask:** “Can anyone remind me why we observe Havdallah?”

*(The end of Shabbat)*

**Ask:** “How do you know when school is over?”

*(our parents come, we sing ‘Shalom Chaverim’, the bell rings)*

**Say:** “There’s also a way for us to know that Shabbat is over. On Saturday night, when you can see three stars in the sky, thats how you know that it’s time for Havdallah.”

**Say:** “One great thing about Havdallah is that, although it comes on Saturday night, you can celebrate it until Tuesday! So on Monday, we are going to start celebrating Havdallah as a class.”

## Session 2.2 - Performing the Ritual

### Materials:

Havdallah Set (Candle, Kiddush Cup, Grape Juice, Spices and Spice Box)

Boom Box and CD with the Havdallah Prayer on it

*(Note: It is assumed here that you will use the Debbie Friedman version of the prayer, though there are a variety of melody options. Another option is to simply speak the prayers at first)*

### Timeline:

:00-:05 Set Induction

:05-:10 Activity 1- Introduction to the Materials

:10-:20 Activity 2- Practicing the Ritual

:20-:25 Closing

### :00-:05 Set Induction

Setting: Circle Time, Monday Morning

**Ask:** “Who can remind me what special ceremony we talked about last week?”

*(Probably some will say Shabbat, some might describe Havdallah, hopefully some say it)*

**Say:** “It’s called Havdallah and it’s the way we recognize that Shabbat has ended and the week has begun. Today we are going to learn how to celebrate Havdallah.”

**Ask:** “Can anyone remind me what we need to start the prayer?”

*(Candles! Grape Juice! Spices!)*

-Here, you can refer back to the book, or just move forward explaining the ritual on your own, depending on time constraints and your group.

### :05-:10 Activity 1

**Say:** “We need the candle, the grape juice, and the spices.”

*Show the candle, emphasize that its just one candle, even though it is braided with three wicks. Show the kiddush cup with grape juice in it. Show the spice box and how it works- show where it opens to put the spices in, and where you can put your nose to smell it. Then show the spices, tell them the name of the spice you’re using, and let them watch you put it in.*

**Say:** “Now we are going to sing a special song that helps us say the prayer.”

*Play the song, just let them listen the first time. Depending on your group and your timing, you can teach the lai lai’s in this circle, or wait until another time.*



## **:10-:20 Activity 2**

Stop the song, and walk the students through each action in the order that the blessings happen.

**Say:** “This first blessing is for the grape juice. We hold the cup in the air, and then take a small sip. Can you pretend with me?”

**Say:** “The blessing for the grape juice is the same one that we say on Shabbat, can anyone help me say it?”

*(Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Borei P’ri Hagafen)*

**Say:** “Next we bless the spices. We pass the box around and take turns smelling the sweet scent. The blessing for the spices sounds like this:”

*Speak the blessing, then sing it.*

**Say:** “Then we bless the candle. An adult will light it and hold it up high, and you can hold your hands up and try to see the reflection of the light on your fingernails- Let’s try it!”

*This will likely take awhile, let them practice for a few minutes.*

**Say:** “The last thing we do is put out the candle into the wine. This is how we mark the separation between Shabbat and the rest of the week. If you’re very quiet, you can hear the sizzle of the flame going out, and if you watch carefully, you will see the smoke come out from the cup.”

*Put the candle out into the wine. Emphasize the sound of the sizzle. Let the smoke curl up out of the cup. Hold the quiet for a minute, if possible.*

**Say:** “Now we’ve seen how to observe the ritual of Havdallah. Lets do it all together one more time!”

*Play the song again and allow them to practice the entire ritual without stopping.*

## **:20-:25 Closing**

**Ask:** “Who can tell me why we celebrate Havdallah?”

*(because Shabbat is over. For the new week.)*

**Ask:** “Who can tell me when we celebrate Havdallah?”

*(on Saturday. Until Tuesday. When we see three stars.)*

**Say:** “We are going to celebrate Havdallah together every week on Monday, just like we celebrate Shabbat together every week on Friday! You will get to practice the prayers and take turns being Havdallah leader.”

**Say:** “At the start of Shabbat we say, “Shabbat Shalom”. At the end of Havdallah we say, “Shavua Tov.” Can we all say, “Shavua Tov!”?”

*(Shavua Tov!)*

## Session 2.3 - KWL Chart and Besamim Hunt

### **Materials:**

Kiddush Cup

Havdallah Candle

Spice Box

Variety of spices/smelly things (preferably branches from trees and bushes, dried fruits, kitchen spices)

Empty mesh satchels, one for each student and labeled with their names.

### **Timeline:**

:00-:45 Besamim Hunt

:45-60 KWL Chart

### **:00-:45 Besamim Hunt**

*Setting:* Circle time, and then around the classroom or playground.

*(Note: Ideally, this would be a walk outside of the building, where students can smell the bushes and trees, looking for something that they would want to use in their Havdallah set. If there are not many bushes around, you can bring branches and clippings from bushes into the classroom, along with dried fruits and other household spices for the students to explore and choose from. A combination of both options is described here.)*

*Show the Spice box from your classroom Havdallah set*

**Say:** “Let’s take a minute and remember the blessing for the spices from Havdallah”

*Sing the blessing, just the intro and the Spices*

**Say:** “When we bless the spices, we say ‘Borei Minei Besamim’. Besamim is the Hebrew word for ‘Spices’. *Repeat the word a few times as a class*

**Ask:** “What do you think is in our spice box”

*pass the box around to refresh their memory, let them smell it and guess*

**Say:** Inside our spice box is \_\_\_\_\_. Why do you think we used this one?

*(“It smells sweet”, “Its from nature”, “Its just the right one”)*

**Ask:** “Does anyone think they would have used a different scent if they could choose?”

*(“Chocolate”, “Flowers”, “Honey”)*

**Say:** “Now that we have learned so much about our classroom Havdallah set, we can think about what spices we would want to use in our own sets at home. We are going to take a walk around the school, and I want you to try to find something that smells good to you that you would want to use for your Havdallah spice box. Just for this activity, it’s ok to pick flowers or branches off of trees and bushes. Ask a teacher to help you so you don’t take too much”

*(Each child should receive a paper bag or basket, for collecting their spices. Teachers should carry scissors to help students only take small pieces, and to promote respectful clipping of living things)*

After the walk, come back to the classroom and encourage students to peruse the items you have brought in and choose from those, as well. When each child has chosen a few items, place them into a satchel with their name on it. Throughout the course of the rest of the day, take some time to sit with each child and talk to them about what they chose and why, taking dictation for their portfolio page.

### **:45-:60 KWL Chart**

Setting: Circle time, with KWL chart and Havdallah set displayed.

**Ask:** “Who remembers our KWL chart?” and “Who can find the Havdallah set on the chart?”

*(let children identify the pieces on the chart)*

**Say:** “Here is what we knew about the Kiddush Cup before this unit”

*(read any notes you have in the chart)*

**Ask:** “Who can tell me something they have learned about the Kiddush Cup for the last section of our chart?”

*(fill in any information they share. Remember that you can take notes and write in the chart later, if you prefer)*

**Repeat for the Havdallah Candle and the Spice Box.**

## Session 2.4 - Classroom Havdallah Book (Unit Assessment)

### **Materials:**

Havdallah satchels from Lesson 3  
Glue sticks  
Portfolio with a page for each student

### **Activity:**

Create a classroom book about Havdallah, with each student contributing a page dictating their understanding/experience of the ceremony. The goal is to make time with each student to speak privately and write down their answers. They will also have the opportunity to choose their own scent for their Havdallah spice, which can be glued to their portfolio page.

Have the students work together to create a cover for this book. The book should also include (a picture or re-creation of) the Havdallah section of the KWL chart from class, any dictation from classroom discussions, and any other relevant artwork that comes out of this unit. All of the learning from the unit is made visible here.

### **Questions to ask for dictation pages:**

What is Havdallah?  
Why do we celebrate it?  
When do we celebrate Havdallah?  
What is your favorite part of Havdallah? Why?  
What is one thing that Havdallah and Shabbat have in common?  
What did you choose for your Besamim?  
Why is this your Havdallah spice?  
Does it remind you of anything?

# Unit 3 - Hanukkah

(unscripted)

## Unit Goals:

1. To expose learners to the themes of Hanukkah through sensory input
2. To tell the story of Hanukkah in an age-appropriate manner

## Unit Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

1. Recognize Hanukkah candles as representing Jewish practice
2. Verbalize which scents remind them of Hanukkah
3. Connect various shapes with Hanukkah
4. Tell the story of Judah Maccabee

## Unit Overview:

In this unit, students will explore the themes of Hanukkah through sensory input and storytelling. Although we will not be explicitly creating a classroom book about Hanukkah, it is assumed in these lessons that your students have classroom portfolios into which their projects and dictation can go. If this is not the case, find another way to display this work throughout the course of this unit.

## Key Terms/Concepts:

**Hannukia:** This is the hebrew word for the special menorah we use on Hanukkah. A Hannukia is different from a menorah in that it has 9 candle holders, while a menorah is a lamp which may have less.

**Light and Dark:** Hanukkah coincides with a number of winter holidays in other religions that are focused on light and dark. Exploring this key concept with young learners is a sensory and age-appropriate way to think about feelings of wandering, wonder, and oppression.

## Assessment:

The assessment for this unit will be a combination of artifacts created within the lessons and the *'what to look for'* pieces included in each lesson.

## Session 3.1 - Hanukkah Shapes

### **Objective:**

To give students a tactile experience with Hanukkah shapes, and to practice fine motor development in the process.

### **Materials Needed:**

plastic dreidles (with raised letters)  
various Hannukiot  
beeswax candles  
gelt (wrapped)  
white paper, colored crayons  
cookie cutters in Hanukkah shapes  
photocopy of Hanukkah shapes (or something with just the outlines visible, for reference)

### **Activity 1: Rubbings**

Lay materials out on the writing table, showing students how to make a 'rubbing' by placing the paper over the object and running a crayon over the raised edges of the materials, discussing with the students how each item feels in their hands and under the paper. Talk about which are harder to get a good picture of, and why.

### **Activity 2: Cutting and Tracing**

At the fine motor center, have cookie cutters and other Hanukkah shapes that are traceable. Help students to trace the edges and then, depending on age and ability, to cut out the shapes that they made. Use these shapes in a class collage, or have the student choose 1 or 2 cut outs (or traced, not-cut out shapes) to put in their portfolio.

### **Activity 3: Sand Drawings**

Pour a fine layer of sand over the light table. Have students take turns drawing the shapes with their finger on the sand. You can have a reference sheet available of the shapes they might want to try. A teacher should be on hand at this station for guidance and can take photographs to document students' work before clearing the board for the next student.

### **What to Look For:**

Each child should come away from this lesson with at least one physical piece of art to add to their portfolio. Teachers should also be taking dictation at these stations to supplement the portfolio work with children's' thoughts as they work.

## Session 3.2 - What Does Hanukkah Smell Like?

### **Objective:**

To explore the different scents of winter and find what Hanukkah smells like

### **Activity: Scent Boxes**

Materials Needed:

Film Canisters

Various olfactory items from nature and winter holidays: pine needles, ice, burnt matches, sautéed onion, frosting, mint, gelt (unwrapped), dough,

Poke holes in the canister lids and place the objects in the canisters to create scent boxes

During morning free play, place boxes out on a table for free exploration. A teacher should be nearby to facilitate. Teacher should take dictation from each student as they explore the boxes, making note of their guesses and their associations with the scents.

### **Assessment:**

Will take the form of dictation to be added to the learner's portfolio. Take note for each student as to how many scents they can guess correctly in the first try, second try, seventh try.

**Say:** "The first time you tried this you guessed (2) correctly, and this time you guessed (8) correctly! *Write down their response to this.*

**Ask:** "Why do you think it got easier to recognize the different scents"? *Write down their response.*

### **What to Look For:**

- General connections to the scents- stories of what they invoke for the students
- Excitement when they 'match' a scent, curiosity when they can't guess it.

This activity can be repeated throughout the week, with scents rotating through or remaining the same, depending on your age group.

## Session 3.3 - Exploring Hanukkah in Light and Dark

### **Objective:**

To give students a visceral visual experience of the Hanukkah story.

### **Materials Needed:**

Judah Who Always Said 'No' by Harriet K. Feder

Projector or some other large light source

White Sheet which can be hung so that there is space in front of and behind

Light Table

Opaque Straws

Transparent, 'Lego' type blocks

### **Activity 1: Judah Who Always Said 'No'**

In the week before this activity, read the story of 'Judah Who Always Said No' a few times, enough so that the class is familiar with it.

Set up the sheet with the projector shining onto it, so that anyone standing in front of the light casts a shadow onto the sheet. The projector should be 'backstage'.

*(Note: Give students at least one class session to simply explore this space, playing with lengthening and shortening their shadows, watching each other behind the curtains, and making different hand motions and projections onto the screen. When they seem comfortable with the set up, proceed with the activity.)*

Re-tell the story of Judah, with students taking turns acting out the parts of Judah and the Maccabees. Those students acting out the story should be behind the sheet, with some students and a teacher on the other side, service as the audience.

### **Activity 2: Bending Light with Hannukiot**

On the light table, place a variety of transparent lego blocks and a large number of straws. Help the children experiment with creating hannukiot by placing the straws on the lego nubs. The light should shine up through the straw, creating beams of light similar to candles. Documentation should be in the form of photos and dictation of children's' thoughts as they move the light and make hanukkiot.

### **What To Look For:**

-Students will be reacting both to the story of Judah Maccabee and to the light exploration. Assessment can be in the form of dictation and photos showing the progression of learners' grasp of Hanukkah shapes and the story.

What to Look For:

-Connection to the shapes, knowledge of the names (Hannukiah or Menorah, Dreidle or Sivivon, Gelt, Candles, Shamash, etc)



- A sequenced understanding of the story of Hanukkah, and more specific details, depending on the age of your learners.
- A connection to the idea of light and dark. Statements like, 'It's brighter with more candles' or 'when I'm closer my shadow gets smaller'. An awareness of the interplay between their actions and the changing light.

## Session 3.4 - KWL Chart and Hanukkah Party!

### **Objective:**

To showcase students' learning and revisit the unit as a class.

### **Activity 1: KWL Chart**

Setting: Circle Time

Display the chart and the Menorah, Candles, and Dreidle.

By now, the students should be familiar with this process of re-visiting the chart. Go through each item and discuss what you knew about it ahead of time, the questions you had, and what you learned.

### **Activity 2: At Your Hanukkah Party**

Setting: Classroom

Likely you will have a hanukkah party planned for your class already. Here are some ideas to extend your learning, and to make the learning you've already done visible at the party.

1. Set up stations around the classroom re-creating the activities from this unit.  
Encourage the students to show their parents what to do at those stations. See how many parents can correctly guess what is inside the scent boxes!
2. Perform the story of *Judah Who Always Said No!* for the parents, using the shadow stage.
3. Make sure the students' portfolios are out so that they can share with their parents what they have been creating, and so that parent's can read the dictation from the unit.
4. Encourage students to explain the KWL chart to their parents.

# Unit 4 - In The Sanctuary

*(unscripted)*

## Unit Goals

1. To familiarize students with the sanctuary and remove the 'china shop' aspect.
2. To expose students to the Torah and teach them that it is an accessible Jewish artifact.
3. To allow the students an opportunity to engage with the Rabbi and Cantor.

## Unit Objectives

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate respectful behavior in the sanctuary.
2. Recognize key elements of a sanctuary and compare items found there to items found in the classroom or at home.
3. Recognize the Torah and its accessories, and recall the importance of each piece.
4. Recreate a work of art from the sanctuary and justify choosing one piece of art over another.

## Unit Overview

This unit engages students in an exploration of a sanctuary in a Reform Jewish setting. Students will have the chance to think about why the sanctuary is decorated as it is, what makes it a holy space, and how it is different from secular spaces in their lives. They will also have a chance to engage with the Torah up close, and to create replications of artwork from within the sanctuary.

## Note To Teacher

If you are not in a school setting with a sanctuary nearby, you can choose to still engage in these lessons by reading any of the suggested books as an introduction. You may also decide to do only the classroom activities and leave out those activities that were designed to be done in a sanctuary. If you choose to adapt the sanctuary lessons into classroom lessons, I would recommend bringing in photographs of specific parts of the sanctuary you intend to discuss, as well as carefully revisiting the suggested books before each activity.

## Key Terms

**Sanctuary:** Lit. 'Holy Place'. The sanctuary is the inner prayer space of a temple or church. Sometimes called 'chapel', you can also find sanctuaries in schools, hospitals, airports, and other public places.

**Torah:** The Torah is the written scroll of the five books of Moses.

**Ner Tamid:** The eternal light which hangs above the ark.

**Ark:** The cabinet in which the Torah is kept.

## Assessment

The authentic assessment of this unit is the creation of stained glass art and a documentation of learning book that students will create together.

## Session 4.1 - What Do We Do In The Sanctuary?

### Activity 1: What is the Sanctuary?

Suggested reading:

Bagels from Benny by Aubrey Davis

Sammy Spider's first Simchat Torah by Sylvia A. Rouss

Look at your classroom KWL chart.

**Ask:** "Which things on this chart belong in the sanctuary?"

*(Torah, prayer books, candles, tzedakah box,)*

**Ask:** "What else do you think we might see when we go into the sanctuary?"

*(Rabbi, Cantor, People, Piano, chairs, guitar)*

Make a list together of everything you think you might find in the sanctuary. This is your scavenger hunt list. Write down everything they suggest. *(Ideally, you would make this list on a large piece of butcher paper or poster board so that students can see the results)*

Invite the Rabbi or Cantor (or both!) to come with you on a sanctuary scavenger hunt. Tell them what's on your list and ask them to add anything they want the students to look for. Add these to the list.

Have the Rabbi or Cantor explain how we should behave in the sanctuary. Then, walk together to the sanctuary and begin your hunt. As you find items on the list, put a check mark next to them. If there are items on the list that are not there, cross them out with one line so that they are still visible. After going through the entire list, sit with the students in the sanctuary and review.

### **Questions for discussion:**

"What surprised you about what we found in here?"

"Is there anything that looks very important in the sanctuary that we didn't have on our list?"

"What else do you notice about the sanctuary?"

"Is there anything that you really thought would be here that isn't? Why do you think it's not here?"

"What is different about this sanctuary than our classroom?"

Close by singing Hinei Mah Tov

## Session 4.2 - The Torah

### **Goal:**

To allow students to develop a relationship with the physical Torah scroll in an effort to concretize their relationship with the stories within.

### **Materials:**

Yad  
Torah Cover  
Torah Belt  
Breastplate  
Torah Scroll  
Mini Torah  
Plush Torahs

### **Activity 1: Torah Talk**

Setting: In your classroom

Take out the Mini Torah and place it in front of you for the students to see.

**Ask:** “Who can tell me about this?”

*(“Its a Torah!” “Thats from our chart!” “We read it in Hebrew”)*

**Say:** “Today we are going to look at the Torah and see what questions from our KWL chart we can answer”

**Ask:** “Did you know that the Torah has its own special clothes?”

*(depending on their level of observance at home, some might know the names of the Yad and Breastplate. Don't forget to point out the Yad especially, if it is on your KWL chart)*

Take each piece out one by one. You can either undress the mini Torah in front of you, or have additional pieces prepared for this activity. Use the information provided below to explain each piece of dressing to students.

### **Parts of the Torah:**

**Eitzei Chayim:** These are the two wooden rods onto which the Torah is scrolled. Eitzei Chayim is Hebrew for ‘Tree of Life’. Eitzei Chayim is the plural form.

**Gartel:** This is the belt which is used to hold the Torah together while it is rolled up. Gartel is Yiddish for belt.

**Mantel:** This is the cover that goes over the Torah once the gartel is on. Usually made of lush materials like velvet and often embroidered with beads or silk. Mantel is Yiddish for cloak.

**Kesser:** This the the crown which rests on the eitzei chayim, which are intended to decorate the Torah and show that we honor it. Can be one or two pieces, and not every Torah will have one. Kesser is Hebrew for crown.

**Breastplate:** This is used to cover the Torah and is reminiscent of the breastplate worn by the priests during the time of the Temple in Jerusalem. Most breastplates are made

of silver and have some representation of the 12 tribes of Israel, usually indicated with 12 precious stones inlaid into the breastplate. It is attached to a chain and is hung over the eitzei chayim so that it protects the front of the Torah.

Yad: This is the pointer that a person uses while they are reading from the Torah to help them follow along with the words. Touching the Torah scroll with fingers is avoided because the oils from your skin can damage the the ink or parchment. The Yad is attached to a chain that can be hung over one of the eitz chayim.

Torah scroll: Written on pieces of parchment usually made from animal hide (though there are vegan Torah scrolls) that are sewn together to create one long scroll. A special scribe called a 'sofer' has to write the Torah scroll by hand, and even one wrong or missing letter can invalidate the entire scroll. It takes about a year to write an entire Torah scroll out.

After you have explored each piece of the Torah scroll, fill out the Torah 'L' section of your KWL chart with dictation from students.

Close by singing Torah Torah or Eitz Chayim Hi

### **Activity 2: A Sense of the Torah**

Setting: In the sanctuary

#### **Note to teacher:**

*This activity is going to bring the Torah right up close to your students. The goal is to give students a chance to see and touch the Torah and to remove some hesitation about interacting with a fragile, holy item. However, the Torah **is** fragile and holy. Use your discretion regarding class size, the Torah you use, and the space in which you set the Torah down. You may want other teachers or aides on hand to help remind students to look with their eyes, move carefully around the Torah, and to wait their turn to touch and smell.*

Bring students up onto the bima (or gather them around the ark). Open the doors to the ark and talk about what you see inside.

#### **Possible questions for discussion:**

“Why is there more than one Torah in here?”

“Why does the light come on when we open the doors?”

“Why do we keep the Torah in this ark?”

“Why is there a curtain?”

Remove the Torah from the ark and move it to a low table that children can stand or sit around.

Undress the Torah. Use this as a time to review the names of each accessory.

Move the accessories off the table and open the Torah scroll slightly. Invite students to share what they notice about the writing, the stitching, the paper. Have another teacher taking dictation.

One by one, allow those who want to to feel the parchment (allowing them to touch the blank side) and to smell the Torah. Ask them what it smells and feels like, again taking dictation.

When everyone has had a chance to smell, touch, and see the Torah up close, explain that the Torah text has a special way that it is read, called chanting. Invite the Rabbi or Cantor to chant a few lines from the scroll using the Yad so students can see them following along with the text.

Redress the Torah, again naming each accessory as you go.

Close by singing Torah Torah or Eitz Chayim Hi.

## Session 4.3 - Sanctuary Lights

### **Goals:**

1. To explore the various lights found within the sanctuary.
2. To re-create a piece of art from the sanctuary and allow students to critique their own work

### **Activity 1: The lights we light**

Setting: In the Sanctuary

Bring your class into the sanctuary and sit together in the area designated for the congregation.

**Ask:** “What lights do you see in here?”

*(the overhead lights, the light above the ark, the yartzeight lights, the light coming through the windows, the light inside the ark, candles- these are all the things you should be looking for, though they likely won't know the names of most of these and will just be pointing to them)*

**Ask:** “The light above the ark is called the Ner Tamid. Where else have you heard the word ‘ner’?”

*(likely they will not know, but help them say the blessing for lighting candles and emphasize ‘l'hadlik ner’- lit. ‘to light light’)*

**Ask:** “Does anyone want to guess what ‘ner’ means now?”

*(candles, light, fire. Help them get there)*

**Say:** “Tamid means ‘always’ or ‘forever’. So a ‘Ner Tamid’ is a light that is always on. We keep this light on in the sanctuary to remind us all the time of our Jewish history and story.

*(Note: The Ner Tamid is also representative of God's eternal commitment to the Jewish people and the Jewish people's commitment to God. Include this if you are comfortable)*

**Say:** “The lights with names next to them are called ‘yartzeit lights’. These are a way of showing that we are thinking about someone we love who has died. The reason that only some of them are lit up is because we generally like to pay extra attention on days that were special for those people who we miss.

*(note: you may choose not to address these lights, but likely if they are in the sanctuary a child will ask about them)*

**Ask:** “What do you notice about the light that comes through these windows?” (pointing out the stained glass)

*(It's colorful, There are pictures, There is writing on them)*

**Say:** “These windows are called ‘Stained Glass’. Do they look stained to you? They are colored with special material to make the pictures appear, and we use them in the sanctuary to help us remember our stories as Jewish people and to add decoration to the room”



**Ask:** “Who can share something they see in one of the windows?”

*(a man, a cow, a dog, grass, trees, etc. Give them time to really notice the details of the pictures)*

**Say:** “We are going to have a chance to make our own stained glass. What do you think we would need to make our stained glass look like this stained glass?”

*(brainstorm materials, taking dictation)*

### **Activity 2: Making Stained Glass**

Setting: In the Classroom

*Note: You will be working on a class project as well as individual pieces.*

Materials Needed:

Clear Contac Paper

Black paper tape

Black electric tape

Glass panels (a recycled window pane works great)

Colored tissue paper

Colored transparency paper

Clear transparency paper

Liquid Water Color paint

Tempra Paint

Chalk

Other art materials you brainstorm with students

Scissors

Glue or Mod Podge

### **Class Project**

Take the glass panels and tape the edges with electrical tape if they are exposed glass. Then, use the electrical tape to create geometric divisions in the frames. There should be more small sections created than there are students in your class.

Put this project out on a table for the week. Each day, use a different medium to paint/ glue onto the exposed glass. Every student does not need to paint with every medium, but everyone should have a chance to contribute to the piece. The mediums that will work and look best with this piece are the colored tissue and transparency papers and mod podge that you have colored with liquid watercolor paints.

Be sure to document the creation process and any conversation that comes out of it surrounding which mediums the students enjoy working with and which look the most like the stained glass in the sanctuary. When this piece is finished, display outside of the school or, if possible, hang from the ceiling in front of a window.

### **Individual Exploration**

Each student should make one of each of the following stained glass pieces:

### 1. Contac and Tissue paper

Cut two matching squares of Contac paper. Peel back the paper on one piece and tape it, sticky side up, to a table. Help students use black paper tape to frame the edges and to create geometric divisions on the paper. Students can then tear and place tissue paper however they like on the sticky side until it is completely covered (unless they don't want it completely covered, that's ok, too). When they are done, peel off the paper of the second piece and stick it over the first.

### 2. Contac and Colored Transparency Paper

Use the same methods described above, but with colored cellophane. You will need to cut the cellophane into smaller pieces ahead of time.

### 3. Clear Transparency Paper and Liquid Watercolor

Create a similar framed piece of divided paper, but using clear transparency paper and black electric tape. Mix a few colors of liquid watercolor with clear drying glue or modpodge. Let students paint directly onto the transparency, tape side up.

### 4. Clear Transparency Paper and Tempura Paint/Chalk/Other materials

Create the same template as above. Allow students to experiment with different mediums on the transparency paper.

### **Assessment:**

Create an art gallery in a window, so that light can shine through the pieces.

When a student has completed as many variations as they would like to, ask them to choose their favorite and explain why. Make sure to hold each piece up to the light so they can see which look the most like the stained glass in the sanctuary. Take dictation and display next to their chosen piece.

## Session 4.4 - Family Shabbat

### **Goals:**

1. To share students' learning with their parents
2. To create a classroom book that students can refer back to.
3. To practice celebrating Shabbat in the sanctuary.

### **Materials Needed:**

Construction paper  
Hole Punch  
Binder Rings  
Lamination paper/machine  
All of your documentation from the unit

### **Activity 1: Documentation of Learning Book**

- Gather all of the photos, dictation, and other documentation from this unit and paste it, chronologically, onto construction paper. Each page should have a mix of photos and dictation.
- With the pages still loose and un-laminated, spend time looking through them with your class. During free play, set the pages out on a table (just a few at a time) and invite students to look at them with you. Ask them to narrate what is happening in each of the pictures. Quote their observations and memories below each picture.
- When every page has been additionally dictated, laminate the pages (if you wish), but don't bind them together yet.
- After the Family Shabbat, you can bind the book together and keep it in the classroom for students to revisit.

### **Activity 2: Family Shabbat and Presentations of Learning**

- Invite families to a special classroom Shabbat in the sanctuary. Plan with the Rabbi and Cantor to create a family shabbat service that also showcases all that the children have learned.
- Display pages from the documentation book around the sanctuary and encourage students to walk around with their family members and share what they've learned.
- If possible, you can also display the stained glass projects that the students made, along with their dictation as to which they chose to display and why.

# Unit 5 - Passover

(unscripted)

## Unit Goals

1. To explore the symbols of the Seder in an age-appropriate manner
2. To provide hands on experiences of brick, matzah, charoset, and grape juice making.
3. To teach some of the 10 plagues and experiment with STEM curriculum in the process.
4. To create original poetry exploring the themes of slavery and redemption.

## Unit Objectives

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Identify the symbols on the seder plate, and discuss how they look, taste, smell, and feel.
2. Tell the story of Nachshon and sing Mi Chamocha
3. Describe some of the 10 plagues in their own words.
4. Relate to the experience of slavery through poetry.
5. Share what they've learned with the families at a classroom seder

## Unit Overview

In this unit, students will explore some basic themes of Passover, and use STEM (*science, technology, engineering and math*) to look in depth at the 10 plagues. They will also have the chance to create sensory poems by imagining themselves in Egypt.

## Note to Teacher

There are a number of aspects of the Passover story that can be problematic for a preschool setting. I have attempted to deal with the bigger questions when possible, but in some instances I found it was necessary to leave aspects out of the telling while still working to retain the important messages from the story. You should review the story with your own class in mind before delving into the material.

## Key Terms/Concepts

Seder Plate/Items on the Seder Plate

Mi Chamocha- A prayer of redemption, commemorating the exodus from Egypt.

## Assessment

In addition to the KWL chart, students will show their parents the various artifacts of their learning at a unit-ending classroom Passover Seder.

## Session 5.1 - A Sense of Passover

### **Goal:**

To introduce elements of the Passover story in sensory specific ways.

### **Activity 1: The Seder Plate**

#### Materials:

Various Seder Plates

Shank bone

Parsley

Hard Boiled Egg

Simple Charoset

Horseradish (both the root and the paste, ideally)

Romaine Lettuce

Salt Water

Matzoh

-Place a few seder plates on the tables, with the requisite items in their places on the plates.

-Create also a plate for each student with tastes of each item from the seder plate (except the bone)

-Make a chart with each item of the seder plate on the left hand side and four columns more to write what each item looks, smells, feels, and tastes like.

-Go through each item on the seder plate as a class, taking notes as students' describe, smell, feel, and taste each of them. Be careful with the horseradish. Allow students who wish to smell and touch the shank bone. Everyone can look and describe what the bone looks like.

### **Activity 2: Brick Making**

#### Materials:

Various dirt samples

Sand

Leaves and Grass

Twigs

Gravel

1 Brick, for comparison

Buckets/Bowls

Large stirring spoons

Ice cube trays (Large square silicone is best)

-Place the different samples in small bowls on a table, and leave the brick on the table, as well.

-Allow students the time to explore the contents of each bowl, while encouraging conversation about which materials might mix well together and which will make strong bricks.

-Take dictation on students' hypotheses.

-When they have had time to explore, make mixtures of every possible combination

-Pour some of each dry mixture into a plastic bag, and mix the rest in a bowl with water.

-Pour mixtures into the ice cube tray, labeling with which mixture is in each square.

-Let the mixtures dry in the sun for at least two days.

-Attach the plastic bags to a poster board, writing the students' hypotheses alongside each mixture. Leave a third column blank, to fill in student observations of the dried bricks upon completion.

### **Activity 3: Mi Chamocha**

Materials:

Spray bottles of water

Nachshon Who Was Afraid to Swim: A Passover Story by Deborah Bodin Cohen

Lyrics, Mi Chamocha

-After reading the book, talk with students about what Nachshon might have been feeling, seeing, and thinking when he went into the water.

-Tell students that you are going to imagine you are all Nachshon, about to enter the sea.

-Sing Mi Chamocha (*whichever melody you prefer*).

-Create two lines of students, facing each other, and give each student a spray bottle of water (*set to 'mist'*).

-Similar to a conga line, two students at a time will walk down the middle of the two rows, while the other students spray them with water. Continue to sing Mi Chamocha throughout the activity.

## Session 5.2 - Making Our Own

### Activity 1: Charoset Taste Test

In this activity, you will make several different types of Charoset as a class. Materials for each charoset are listed separately.

- Make small batches of different Charoset recipes from various regions. Students can help with almost every aspect of the cooking. Use judgement based on age and class size.
- After all of the recipes are made, have a taste test. Create a chart where students can vote for their favorite recipe by writing their name under the region from which the recipe came. Afterward, tally the votes as a class to see the most and least popular.

Recipes:

*(note: these are just suggestions. Feel free to find other recipes. Also note that some of these recipes require nuts. Adapt based on classroom needs)*

#### **Israeli**

2 red apples  
2 bananas  
2 oranges  
½ cup pitted dates  
¼ cup white grape juice  
Cinnamon

#### **Iraqi**

honey  
figs  
dates  
raisins  
currants  
dark grape juice

#### **Ashkenazi Style (Central and Eastern European)**

2 large apples cut up  
1 tsp. cinnamon  
2 tsp. honey  
½ cup chopped walnuts  
¼ cup sweet Passover wine

#### **Italian**

chopped pitted dates  
apple  
orange  
banana  
grape juice  
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
Matzo meal as needed

#### **Turkish**

pitted dates  
peeled and sliced apples  
dried apricots  
Dried figs  
ginger, coriander  
cinnamon  
dark grape juice

#### **Californian**

banana  
dried apricots  
mango  
dried apples  
banana chips  
cinnamon and curry

## Activity 2: Making Matzoh

Materials:

Matzah

Tin Foil

Forks

Rolling Pins

3c Flour

1.5c Water

Pinch of salt

*(note: this recipe makes about two baking sheets of matzoh. Adapt based on class size)*

-Line baking sheets with tinfoil, set aside.

-Pour the flour into a bowl and add the water on top.

-Knead the dough until it is soft and well-mixed. You may need to add more flour or water.

-When the dough is ready, break off small handfuls for each student.

-Encourage students to roll and flatten their dough as thin as they can get it. This likely won't be very thin. That's ok.

-Prick the dough all over with a fork. Sprinkle with salt.

-When they are ready, place each piece of matzah dough on the baking trays, labeling with a marker or tape on the tinfoil the name of the student. *(If desired. You can also simply make a giant classroom tray)*

-For a more authentic and hands (eyes) on approach, let the matzah dry in the sun.

-If it is not sunny or hot on your play yard, you can cook the matzah in the oven. Preheat the oven to 500 and cook for about 10 minutes *(depending on the size of your matzahs)*

-When the matzohs are cooked, have a taste test comparing them with store bought matzah. Make a chart and compare them in appearance, smell, feel, and taste. *(You can also do 'sound', and compare the crunch the store bought matzah makes to your homemade ones, which will likely be softer and chewier.)*



## Session 5.3 - Playing With the Plagues

### Goal:

To use STEM curriculum to explore the plagues and give students concrete connections to these ideas.

### Materials:

Red food coloring

Water

Cornstarch

Large popsicle sticks

Ice trays (in different shapes, if possible)

Tempra paint

Liquid water color

White construction paper

Videos/Recordings of frog, cricket, cow, lion, and elephant noises

Pictures of each of these animals and outlines of their footprints

Projector or strong flashlight

White butcher paper

Black paint/Black markers

Large white sheet

10-12 Mini flashlights

### **Activity 1: Water into Blood**

Setting: Circle time

-Out of sight of the students, place a few drops of red food coloring into the bottom of a glass container. Place the glass container on the rug or hold it in your hand in a way that conceals the drops of food coloring in the bottom. Have another clear container of water on hand.

-In the circle, ask the children to recount the 10 plagues. After they have named them all (or, as many as you are comfortable talking about in your class), focus on ‘water into blood’.

**Ask:** “How do you think water could turn into blood?” “What would it look like?” “Do you think we can turn this water into blood?”

*Hold up the second pitcher of water. Slowly pour it into the pitcher with food coloring at the bottom. As the water pours into the second pitcher, it will turn red.*

**Ask:** “Do you think this is really blood in this pitcher?” “How do you think I made the water red?”

After they guess, re-do the trick from the beginning, showing them how you put the food coloring in the bottom of the glass.

**Say:** “We are going to experiment with turning water into blood (or turning water red)”

On the table, set out clear containers of various sizes, some with water and some without.

Place small beakers of red food coloring out, with eyedroppers available.

Let students experiment with dyeing the water red. Some experiments could include: Dropping food coloring into an existing container of water vs. Pouring water into a container with food coloring in the bottom.

Dropping food coloring with the eye dropper vs. Using a sponge or paintbrush

Experiment with different amounts of food coloring

Add cornstarch to make the mixture thicker, then color it with dye using a paintbrush.

## **Activity 2: Make it hail**

### Part 1: Making Hail

-Place a variety of ice trays out on the table. It would be ideal to have the trays that make small, round balls of ice, but any shapes will do, really.

**Say:** “Who can tell me what hail is?”

*(Snow! Ice! Rain! Slush!)*

**Say:** “Hail is when rain freezes really hard, and its like a frozen clump of snowflakes that falls down. Usually hail is very small, but sometimes it can be as big as baseballs! Hail is usually white like ice, but sometimes it can be dirty and grey”

-Explain to students that they will be making hail paintings, and first they need to make colored hail. **Say:** “We are going to freeze different types of paint. Which do you think will be better for painting with once its frozen?”

For Tempra cubes, pour the paint directly into the ice trays. For liquid watercolor, pour water 3/4 of the way up in each hole and then drop paint in with eyedroppers.

Have students help pour the paint, do the droppers, and pick the colors.

When all the trays are full, put them in the freezer. Explain that we have to wait until tomorrow to paint with them.

### Part 2: Hail Painting

When the ice cubes are frozen, bring them out (a few trays at a time so they don't melt) and let the students experiment with painting. Take dictation of how they experience the different textures and colors as they paint. Tempra will be darker and gooier, while the liquid watercolor will be lighter and feel more like water as it melts. Students can paint directly onto paper holding the ice in their hands.

You can also line the inside of a large plastic container with a lid (like a peanut butter jar) with white construction paper and put a few ice cubes inside. Let students shake the container around and paint that way.

Display these, with the dictation, around your classroom. Allow students to choose their favorite picture from the different painting methods and add to their portfolio.

### **Activity 3: Locusts, Frogs, Beasts**

-Cut out the footprints of a cow, an elephant, a lion, a dog, a cat, a frog, and a cricket. Place these around the room, taping them down so that they can be stepped on without being damaged.

-Have recordings of each of these animals noises available. To your phone would be best, so that you can switch back and forth between them easily.

-Wait until students notice the footprints and ask about them. During free play, engage with any questions that students have individually. Encourage them to think about what animal might have made this footprint and what sound they make. Do not play them the sounds yet.

-In circle time, read one of the following books:

Whose Tracks are These? By James Nail

Wild Tracks! A Guide to Nature's Footprints by Jim Aronsky (this also has life-size animal tracks for tracing and cutting out)

Whose Footprint is that? Animal Detectives by Jacqui Brown

Footprints in the Snow: Counting by Twos by Michael Dahl

**Ask:** "Did anyone notice footprints in our classroom this morning? What did you see?"

**Ask:** "Who can guess one of the animals that made footprints in our room?"

*(dog, cat, bear, elephant, frog, cricket)*

Let students guess, and after each guess ask them to show which print they are referring to, and why it was made by the animal they guessed. Let other students offer opinions.

When all of the prints have been guessed, move on to hearing their calls.

**Say:** "I'm going to play an animal call, and I want you to move to the footprint of the animal you think is making the noise"

Play this game with all of the sounds (including, if you want, sounds from animals which aren't represented in your room). Let students tell you why they think the sound matches the footprint.

### **Activity 4: Exploring Darkness**

Shadow painting. Telling the Passover story in shadow play. Flashlight tag.

Part 1:

Set up the sheet and projector the same way you did for the Hanukkah unit. Let students revisit shadow play until you feel they are ready to use the area for this exercise.

Read: Let My People Go! By Tilda Balsley

Once you have read it a few times, allow students to act out the story in shadow.

**Part 2:**

Use a long piece of butcher paper and black paint to make shadow paintings.

Stretch the paper lengthwise between two walls (or other stationary furniture). Leave room on both sides of the paper.

Set up the projector on one side, far enough back that a child can stand in front of it. Their shadow will be projected onto the paper, so that someone can trace or paint it. For older students, pair them up and let them paint each others' shadows. Teachers might want to trace the shadows of younger students, and then let them fill in the outline.

**Part 3:**

Give each student a small flashlight and turn out the lights in your classroom.

First, sit together in a group and practice 'tagging' items with their lights.

**Say:** "one, two, three, refrigerator!" (they all should shine their light on the fridge)

Practice this with big and small items all around the room.

Next, let them move to different areas of the room. Play the same game, but include people.

**Say:** "one, two, three, Miriam!" (all should 'tag' Miriam with their light beams)

**What to Look For:**

Students should be connecting the various explorations with their biblical plague, and teachers should encourage conversations about Passover throughout the Lesson.

Regarding the STEM curriculum, students should be making the cognitive connections to interact with the experiments and talk about them with a teacher.

## Session 5.4 - Passover Poetry

### Goal:

To encourage students to think about what it would have felt like to be a slave in Egypt, and to create original poetry to share at their seder.

### Materials:

Construction Paper

Lamination paper/machine (if desired)

Crayons/Markers

### Note to Teacher:

In this lesson, students will have the opportunity to create 5-line poems imagining the experience of being a slave in Egypt. Teachers will take dictation individually, which can be spread out over the course of a week based on classroom needs.

### **Activity:**

After learning the story of Passover, find time throughout the week to sit with each student and encourage them to imagine they are a slave in Egypt.

**Ask:** “What do you see?”, “What do you hear?”, “What do you smell?”, “What do you taste?” “How do you feel?”

Take dictation, writing down everything they say at first.

**Say:** “Now think about what it’s like to be a free person”

**Ask:** “What “What do you see?”, “What do you hear?”, “What do you smell?”, “What do you taste?” “How do you feel?”

-Write out their words in the following form:

I am a slave.

I see *their answer here*

I hear *their answer here*

I smell *their answer here*

I taste *their answer here*

I feel *their answer here*

I am free

*(same outline as above)*

*(For 3-4yo)* Later, remind them of their words and ask them to draw a picture of what they said.

Display the poems side by side (with the drawing, if they made one).

### **What to look for:**

Connection to the stories/songs of Passover and how slavery was described. Words like: sweat, hot, tired, yelling, sand, bricks, Egypt, Pharaoh.

## Session 5.5 - At Your Seder

### Goal:

To showcase and extend students' learning while celebrating seder as a community.

### Materials Needed:

KWL Chart

Seder Plate

Passover Seder Supplies

### **Activity 1: KWL Chart**

Setting: Circle Time. Display the chart and the seder plate

Remind students what they had known about the seder plate already, and about any questions they had about it. Fill out the 'Learned' section of the chart together, adding in information about the symbols on the plate as well.

### **Activity 2: At Your Classroom Seder**

Setting: Classroom

Plan a classroom seder for students and their families. In addition to the community building aspect, this is a safe space for family members who may be less informed about Passover to learn a little bit about how to put on a seder. Additional ideas to extend learning and showcase student projects from this unit:

1. Display your KWL chart, as well as your seder plate chart exploring the different symbols from the plate. Invite students to introduce each item on the plate at the seder.
2. Display the bricks you made as a class, along with the chart about which materials worked well for making them.
3. After your seder, invite families to re-enact the MiChamocha activity, letting students spray them with the water while everyone sings.
4. Use some of the plague experiments you did as a class during your seder.
5. Display the students' poetry and encourage them to speak to their family members about what they wrote and why.

# Unit 6: Shabbat

*(unscripted)*

## **Unit Goals:**

1. To teach the Shabbat prayers
2. To introduce students to some customs of Shabbat
3. To create a Shabbat Box so that families can celebrate Shabbat together at home.

## **Unit Objectives:**

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Say the blessings over the candles, challah, and wine.
2. Explain the main themes of Shabbat
3. Assist their families in observing Shabbat at home.

## **Note to Teacher:**

At the end of this unit, students will make Shabbat boxes to take home. The candles and challah cover created in the second and third units should be set aside and sent home as a set once the unit is completed.

## **Suggested Reading:**

Dinosaur on Shabbat by Diane Rauchwerger

A Holiday for Noah by Susan Topek

Braid the Challah by Beily Paluch

Many Days, One Shabbat by Fran Manushkin

Lights Out Shabbat by Sarene Shulimson

## Session 6.1- What Do We Like About Shabbat?

### Activity 1: What Is Shabbat?

Setting: Circle Time

Read one of the suggested books about Shabbat, and then review the Shabbat ritual items on your KWL chart.

Explain that Shabbat is the day of rest, or, 'the week's nap'. You may want to explain that some people choose not to drive cars or turn on lights or cook during Shabbat. Make sure to emphasize that we observe Shabbat early at school so that we can celebrate together, but in reality Shabbat starts on Friday night when the sun goes down and ends on Saturday night with Havdallah.

Sing 'What do we like about Shabbat'

As each child names their favorite thing about Shabbat, ask them to add a physical representation of that thing. (*ex: for challah, they can pretend to eat or breathe in deeply like they are smelling the bread cooking*) Try to encourage use of physical actions tied to the five senses.

Finally, explain that in Jerusalem there is a special siren that is sounded to let everyone know when Shabbat has started. Sort of like an alarm clock that lets you know its time to rest.

Find a clip of the siren sounding in Jerusalem and play it for the group.

End by singing Bim, Bam or Dinosaur on Shabbat or another Shabbat tune.

### Activity 2: The Six Days of Creation

One way to help students understand the nature of Shabbat is to learn about the six days of creation. There are a variety of ways to do this, and how you choose to explore this theme will depend on your class size and population. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

-Using classroom toys, 'act out' the six days together. Lay a sheet on the ground to represent nothingness, then give each student a prop to add to the scene for each day of creation.

-Make a 3-D classroom collage for each of the six days, using spray glue or modpodge to adhere larger items to the canvas.

-Go on a nature walk and focus on finding examples of each of the days of creation. Talk about how each thing looks, feels, smells. (*What does a sunny day smell like vs a rainy day? What does it look like to have grass and bushes and trees vs sand and gravel and water? What does light feel like vs darkness?*)



## Session 6.2- Baking Challah

Note: To begin this lesson, read one or more of the Challah books from the suggested reading list.

### **Activity 1: Baking Challah**

Setting: Group Activity

Using your favorite recipe, or the one offered below, make challah dough together as a class.

The dough will need to sit overnight in the refrigerator, so plan accordingly.

While you are making the challah, review with your students the blessing over challah.

Teach them the word '*lechem*' and explain that it is the hebrew word for bread.

Repeat the prayer and ask students to raise hands or call out when they hear the word *lechem*.

Make sure to emphasize the five senses during this process.

What does the dough smell like?

How does it feel to knead the dough? To punch it down? Is it easier the second time?

What does the dough taste like? (*taste test only if you're not using raw eggs*)

What does the dough remind you of? (*what does it look like?*)

Once cooked:

How does the Challah smell different from the dough?

Is it heavier or lighter once it is cooked? Why do you think that is?

What does the Challah sound like when you knock on it? (*it will sound hollow*)

Say the prayer before eating, and remind students about the word '*lechem*'.

### **Challah Recipe**

3 cups of water

50 grams of yeast (*or 4 tablespoons dry yeast*)

one cup of sugar or honey (or a mixture of both)

3 eggs (this recipe also works without eggs!)

one cup of oil

3 tablespoons of salt (don't try to reduce the salt in the recipe)

2.2 - 2.5 kilo flour (*or 1 5 lb. bag of flour ( approx. 12 cups)*)

1) Dilute 50 grams of yeast in one cup of warm water, one cup of flour and one cup of sugar. Wait until it froths -- about 10 minutes.

2) Add 2 more cups of water, one cup of oil, 3 eggs, and one bag of flour. Mix.

3) Add 3 tablespoons of salt and the rest of the flour. Keep on mixing until you discover that you are kneading and not mixing. Keep at it until the dough is smooth and not sticky.

- 4) The dough now needs to sit for at least three hours. If you don't have this much time in your class schedule, you will need to put it in the refrigerator and wait until tomorrow.
- 5) Punch the dough down again, then let it rise again. (It will go quicker the second time around.)
- 6) Roll into braids, knot into rolls, or shape any way you wish.
- 8) Let the twisted loaves rise for about 30 minutes, then put onto baking pans lightly sprinkled with cinnamon. Brush with egg yolk diluted with water, and sprinkle with sesame seeds.
- 9) Bake at an initially high heat and reduce to medium heat after 10 minutes. The challahs are done when they look done and sound hollow when you tap them. Depending on their size, this will take between 30-60 minutes.

### **Activity 2: Challah Covers**

Setting: Free Play Activity

Give each student a square of silk

On a table, spread newspaper and tape down.

Using liquid watercolor, students can decorate their square to make a challah cover.

Paint can be applied using brushes, sponges, spray bottles, or eyedroppers.

If desired, stencils can be used with shapes or hebrew letters.

Talk with students about their choices of color, brush, and design, and document for portfolio.

## Session 6.3- Candles

Materials:

Beeswax

Wick

White Silk Squares

Liquid Watercolor

### **Activity 1: Candle Making**

Setting: Free Play Option

Set up a candle making station at a table. One teacher should be stationed here. With basic beeswax, students can choose colored wax and roll it into a candle easily. Give each student a long wick, and show them how to roll the wick into the wax. Each student should make two candles, which can be tied together for presentation, if desired.

*Note: With older learners (4-5) a hot wax candle can be made, as long as you have enough supervision and a mature group. With this model, melt wax in a crock pot and allow students to dip their wax in repeatedly until a candle forms. This will take awhile, and for safety only 2-3 children should be near the pot at one time, always with a teacher present.*

While making candles (or before, if using hot wax), talk with students about the candle blessing.

Emphasize the words ‘*l’hadlik ner*’ and teach that they are Hebrew for ‘to light light’. Also point out that the candle blessing is special because it is a blessing that is just for Shabbat.

Ask students to raise hands or call out when they hear the words ‘*l’hadlik ner*’ or ‘*Shabbat*’.

Questions for discussion:

What does the wax feel like? Smell like? Look like?

What colors are you choosing for your candles and why?

Why does the wick need to go all the way through the candle?

How is the wax different when it is melting?

Why do you think we use candles to start Shabbat instead of lights?

Why do you think we need special candles? Could we use birthday candles instead?

Take photographs and dictation for student portfolios.

## Session 6.4- Grape Juice

Materials:

1-2 lb. Red Grapes

1.5 C Water

1/4 C Sugar

Blender

Strainer

### **Activity 1: Making Juice**

- Let the students help to pick all the stems out of the grapes and wash them.
- Fill blender with grapes, add water and sugar, and blend until mixed.
- Pour out juice over a strainer into a pitcher to remove the pulp.
- Repeat until there is enough juice for everyone and every student has had a chance to help with the cleaning and straining.

-Separately, give students a handful of grapes each, and a small bowl, and encourage them to smash the grapes into their bowl as much as possible.

Let students taste both the juice they made by smashing grapes and the juice you made together as a class.

Questions for discussion:

Which juice do you like better? Why?

Which juice did you like making more? Why?

What did it feel like to mush the grapes?

What did it smell like?

Does the juice you made look different from the juice the class made? Why do you think that is?

### **Activity 2: Blessing the Wine**

Teach the blessing for wine.

Emphasize the word '*gafen*' and teach students that it is the hebrew word for 'vine'.

Teach that '*p'ri*' is the hebrew word for 'fruit'

Repeat the prayer and ask students to raise hands or call out when they hear the words '*p'ri hagafen*'

Take photos and dictation for student portfolios.

## Session 6.5- KWL Chart and Shabbat Boxes

### Activity 1: KWL Chart

Setting: Circle Time

Refer back to your KWL chart and fill in any missing information about the Shabbat ritual items.

Discuss what else you have learned about Shabbat. Take dictation and display the group discussion in the classroom.

Sing 'What do we like about Shabbat' again, acting out the various responses.

### Activity 2: Shabbat Box

Materials:

Enough shoeboxes for everyone in the class (Or nicer wooden boxes, if you have the resources)

Tempra Paint

Paint Brushes or Sponges

Each student's candles and challah cover (and their challah, if you choose)

Setting: Circle Time

Read: The Shabbat Box by Leslie Simpson

Explain that you will be making Shabbat Boxes to take home.

Spread out boxes and paint on the table and let students decorate their boxes.

*(optional: take dictation of each student talking about the three prayers they learned and include these in the boxes)*

When boxes are dry, they can be sent home with the candles and challah cover for use in family Shabbat celebrations.

## Annotated Bibliography

Kress, Jeffrey S. *Growing Jewish Minds, Growing Jewish Souls*. URJ Press 2013

A book designed for “promoting spiritual, social, and emotional growth in Jewish Education”, there seems to be quite a lot of information here about the building blocks of teaching children spirituality and giving children the language to express their emotional and spiritual questions and thoughts. In chapters about Jewish Peoplehood, Teaching Sensitivity, Moral Education, and a specific chapter on Jewish Educational Moments, this book provides for teachers a framework through which to view their classroom interactions with students.

Rotenberg, Rena; Feinberg, Miriam; Chubara, Yona. *Torah Talk: An Early Childhood Teaching Guide*. Berman House, Inc. 1989

This is an ECE guide for teachers with activities and lesson plans designed to help them teach Torah in their classrooms. A great number of the lesson plans include activities in which the teacher tells the bible story and then engages the children in discussion. Discussion questions are a good resource for teachers on how to talk to their students about God, Torah, and Jewish teachings.

Handelman, Maxine. *Jewish Every Day: The Complete Handbook for Early Childhood Educators*. A.R.E. Publishing, 2000.

This is an ECE handbook for classroom teachers filled with lesson plans and ideas for infusing your teaching with Judaism. Although there are likely lessons in the book that I could use in similar ways as the previous two sources, the part that interests me most is the introduction, in which the authors discuss the need for surrounding children with Jewish language, symbols, and practice. There is also a great chapter on developmentally appropriate practice, which I think can translate well to teaching developmentally appropriate language.

Stevens, Bonnie K. *Teach Them Diligently*. Berman House, 2005.

This book looks at the Jewish year and relates it to teaching practice. It is mostly meditative reflections on teaching, but the back of the book has discussion questions and activities for faculty development, which are designed to encourage teachers to think about their classroom practices and focus on creating new approaches for engaging their students in Jewish conversation. Potentially helpful guidelines for leading introductory sets during professional development meetings.