

TISHREI'S HOLIDAYS

Barbara Birenbaum

SESSION SUMMARY

Barbara shared an assortment of lessons that teach the fundamentals, as well as much deeper and personal understandings, for the *Tishrei* holidays. She provided summary samples of the lessons, as well as an in-depth look at several of them. Although the lessons were designed for intermediate and middle grades, they are easily adaptable for primary or high school, and easy-to-duplicate lesson plans were provided.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barbara Birenbaum has a broad 25-year background in secular and Jewish studies. Her extensive experience, combined with her creative energy, proves invaluable in a variety of educational settings. Her lifetime love of dancing has contributed to a remarkable expertise, and her clientele now ranges from young children to seniors.

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This cluster of lessons will serve to teach some fundamentals as well as much deeper and personal understandings for S'lichot and Tishrei's holidays:

Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah

These learning activities were designed for intermediate and middle grades, although they are adaptable for primary or high school. Lessons run about one hour and stand alone, so they can be presented chronologically with the holidays or you can pick and choose the ones that meet your needs.

Daily Reflections during Elul - Family Learning

A google search produced a number of sources for daily email prompts suggested throughout the month of Elul. Jewelsofelul.com, produced by Craig Taubman and Craig and Co, is the one I have used. He always shares a variety of reflections with creative expressions (art, writing, music...) as well as thoughtful essays. See **(1a)** "Write a Letter, Elul 17"; this is one of Craig's posts from years ago that I still find especially worthy to share.

In an email to students' parents, I invite them to explore the site(s) in hopes that they find something that reaches them somehow and motivates them to sign up to receive. I suggest to students in class as well as to parents in email, that they find will something of value to speak about together. Responding in comments or with a blog is an outstanding way to record and therefor 'own' personal Elul reflections in readiness for the High Holy Days. Participation in such a reflection process prior to S'lichot will increase students' and parents engagement in whatever observance your community enjoys.

Conversations or responses that are shared with me via cc or parent note, earn a sticker in class. (p.s. I reward students this way ALL YEAR for any verification of class content related communications between them and their parents or grandparents.)

Big Ts of Tishrei

Using a big "T" as graphic organizer, present the concepts and content details for age-appropriate comprehension of T'shuvah, T'fillah, Tzdakah, and I add Tashlich.

The Easy Questions (2a)

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Overall Tishrei holidays content-related questions for discovering and/or processing age-appropriate fundamental comprehension including background, ritual and observance practices as well as historical details. Answers/info should be presented to or discovered by students as you see fit.

Tishrei by the Numbers (2b)

Puzzle page

I have... Who has?... (2c)

This is a revolving Q & A whole class activity that is useful to find out students' prior knowledge or as a review. Print out, cut and paste or write out each pair of statements on a card. Distribute to students individually or in pairs and begin by reading the first one aloud. This method can be utilized for ANY content and is a fun way to float a lot of information involving ALL students, not just the ones who know the answers and raise their hands.

Alphabet of Woe (2d)

Brainstorm individually, in pairs or small groups and eventually as a whole class. Putting it out there that these are our collective sins takes out the sting of owning the ones that students can identify with personally. They might or might not be asked to star or highlight some specific ones to which they can personally relate.

The Hard Questions (2e)

On the left, (---) students record personal notes and/or examples specific to the more negatively targeted questions. On the right, (+++) record personal answers/examples from the positively phrased questions.

Personal Appreciations for T'shuvah

Four Steps of T'shuvah (2f) and/or, especially for younger students or any who do not know and use it: **Four Part Apology (2f)** includes background info
Giving Appreciations (2g) by Jennifer Rudick Zunikoff

I always model these processes with my own personal and somewhat sensitive issues, to give students an idea how it sounds and hopefully courage to choose a difficult issue for themselves. There will be students who will not feel comfortable sharing personal issues. To them I say choose one you can share and save the others for a private session with God.

New Year's Resolution (3a)

After pondering privately and in pair/share conversations, students consider carefully how they will choose to focus themselves this year for self-improvement. Handout an “I resolve...” scroll and direct students to record their choices for change in both of the two categories:

- 1) ‘Work’ related improvements: academic studies, Jewish or Hebrew studies, music, sports, chores, etc...
- 2) Relationship related improvements: interactive and interpersonal between student and self, parent, sibling, friend, pets...

Lessons on Appreciations (3b) by Jennifer Rudick Zunikoff is recommended here.

After deciding on and recording their resolutions, invite students to pair/share. Students give and receive appreciations which validates their personal sharing as well as serves to help them announce publically and own up to their intentions. Finally, ask if volunteers wish to share before the whole class, and receive appreciations, of course.

Close this activity by inviting students to share with family members.

Finally, I tell the class we will revisit these “In January, when the secular community makes New Year’s Resolutions”. We’ll reread and consider how to make adjustments to reach our goals for the rest of the year. At that time, students write more details in their action plan about “how” and “why” their resolutions are accomplished and share again, with appreciations.

A Passion for the Pomegranate

Look for images of pomegranates around your synagogue and home; Have students bring in pictures they’ve taken, found or drawn. I tear them right out of old coffee table or art collection books. Keep an illustrated, annotated poster in class.

Pomegranate Study: at each step, prompt and allow time for students to consider and illustrate their observations.

1. Draw/Sketch

Best to use a beautiful freshly picked whole fruit. If a source grows on the property, begin there with students drawing the fruit-laden tree.

2. Cut it Open, while completely submerged in water in a clear bowl for visibility. (the red juices do not splatter and stain but dissipate). Encourage vocal and written observations. Analyze the internal structure - pass around a few sections for students to get a closer look and to draw.

Of what body parts are you reminded?

{When cut under the water... it appears to bleed...like a heart}

{Wrinkly and with distinct sections like a brain}...and the pith also serves as protection from a rotten, over or under rip section

3. Pass a few arils for each student to copy/draw individually.
{Notice and appreciate the ever-perfect jewel-like shape}
4. Finish releasing all the arils under the water in the bowl. Observe that the pith {white membrane} floats and the seeds sink, natural separation.
Complete sketches of whole, section and arils.
5. Distribute seeds with napkin tasting. Teacher or madrich records their reactions, description of flavor on the board [so kids can just enjoy the tasting experience and record later].
6. Gently smash the arils, careful to aim away from self, clothes and others, letting the pom juice fill in the drawing. (Everyone loves this dramatic finish)
Notice the changes in color, especially as the juice dries.
Pom juice clothing stains are tough but not necessarily permanent, recommend immediate rinsing.

Fruit and leaf shaped paper chains (4a) beyond basics Sukkah decorations

Ushpizin and Ushpizot: Stories in the Sukkah (4b)

Storytelling and dramatic improv (especially enhanced with inspiration from Jennifer Rudick Zunikoff: jenniferstories.com) serves to teach and/or reinforce and remind students of the details, traits and perspectives of the biblical characters Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Rachel, Leah, Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joseph, Deborah, David and Esther. The stories included here are samples; Simply read them aloud in the sukkah together or after reading together, I invite groups or pairs of students to dramatize the stories. Great practice for a storytelling teacher or individual students can become the biblical guest and interact with the class in character.

Elul 17

The Letter by Ed Feinstein

Write a letter. Address it to those you love – your spouse, your children and grandchildren, your friends. Put into this letter everything life has taught you: What you learned from childhood, from growing up, from your education. What you learned from marriage and raising children. What you learned from work, from your triumphs and successes in the world, from your failures and disappointments. What you learned from the death of loved ones, and the path of mourning. What is the meaning, the lesson, the wisdom of your life? What is your message?

Do this for three reasons:

Do it for yourself. You deserve to know what life has taught you. According to a Jewish tradition, each individual human soul carries into the world one letter, one byte, of God's message. You are a vessel of God's truth. Have you discovered and delivered your message?

Write the letter for your loved ones. No one lives forever. And when your time comes, what a gift it would be to your loved ones to hear your voice, to know your wisdom.

Do it for your soul. Modernity has brought us many gifts. But one of the casualties of modernity is contemplation. Our ancestors lived in a much slower world. They had time to think, to dream. So we live exhausted from day to day, from appointment to project to vacation and back again, without ever stopping to wonder why, without the chance to grow in wisdom. That's why we age. Without connection to the truth within, the spirit grows old, the soul grows tired.

No one is old who knows the truth of his or her existence, the purposes of life. Write the letter.

Ed Feinstein is the rabbi of Valley Beth Shalom in Encino, California, and a lecturer at the American Jewish University. www.vbs.org

Barbara's note: reusing this prompt is useful for new families and even for parents who've done it before to write another letter to a different loved one.

The Easy Questions

What is the English translation of Rosh Hashana?
Why is this called the Day of Remembrance?

What is the ritual combination of foods we enjoy on Rosh Hashana?
What shape is the challah for Rosh Hashana? Why?

What are the four big “T”s we consider during the Days of Awe?
What are Teshuvah, T’fillah, Tzedakah, Tashlich?

How many days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur?
What are these days called?

What color are the Torah mantles and clergy robes during the High Holy Days?
When (during what service) do we change the Torah mantles?

Why do adults fast on Yom Kippur?
Who should not fast on Yom Kippur?

How do we greet one another (with what wish) during the High Holy Days?
For what do we ask our friends and family?

Where and how do we ‘cast off our sins’ during Tashlich?
Where does your family gather for a yom tov celebration meal?

For what reason is the shofar blown?
What are the four shofar calls?

What two holidays follow the two Holy Days?
How often do Jews get an opportunity to start anew?

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2a

Tishrei by the Numbers

Fill in the blanks based on the first letter and the context of the line.

10 D___ of R_____ between R___ H_____ and Y___ K_____

1st D___ of the 7th M_____

7 D___ between Y___ K_____ and S_____

7 D___ of S_____

3 W___ on a S_____

4 S_____ C_____

7 H_____ around the S_____ with the T_____

5 B___ of M_____

7 D___ of C_____

613 C_____ in the T_____

Can you make up more puzzles like these?

Barb-Ends: **I HAVE...** Sukkot and Simchat Torah

Barb-Begins: **WHO HAS...** the English translation of Rosh Hashana?

I HAVE... Head of the Year.
WHO HAS... Why is this called the
“Day of Remembrance”?

I HAVE... We are commanded to remember
and reflect upon our actions
and behaviors of the past year.
WHO HAS... the sweet ritual combination of foods
we enjoy on Rosh Hashana?

I HAVE... Apples and Honey
WHO HAS... What shape is the challah
for Rosh Hashana? And Why?

I HAVE... round, to symbolize the cycling of
into a new year, and crown-like.
WHO HAS... the big “T”s of the High Holy Days?

I HAVE... Teshuvah, T’fillah, Tzedakah, Tashlich?
WHO HAS... the meaning of Teshuvah?

I HAVE... literally “to turn”, repentance, making amends
WHO HAS... the meaning of T’fillah

I HAVE... prayer
WHO HAS... the meaning of Tzedakah

I HAVE... acts of giving
WHO HAS... the meaning of Tashlich

I HAVE... literally “throw”;
Ritually, to throw away
our sins(symbolized by bread crumbs)
into flowing water,
WHO HAS... How many days between
Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur?

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2c

I HAVE... 10

WHO HAS... What are these days called?

I HAVE... the Days of Awe, or
The Days of Repentance.

WHO HAS... How do we greet one another
(with what wish) during the High Holy Days?

I HAVE... L'Shana Tova Tickateivu

May you be written into the
book of life for a good year.

WHO HAS... what is "it" referring to with the phrase...

"On Rosh Hashana it is written,
On Yom Kippur it is sealed."

I HAVE the Book of Life;

We are judged by God on Rosh Hashana
based on our good and bad deeds last year.
During the Days of Awe, if we make atone
and make changes for the better,
we can seal our future on Yom Kippur.

WHO HAS... how we atone?

I HAVE... by asking and giving forgiveness from God and
our family and friends for any wrongdoing
we may have done during the past year.

WHO HAS... the color of the Torah mantles
and the rabbi's robe during the High Holy Days?

I HAVE... white

WHO HAS... during what service
do we change the Torah mantles?

I HAVE... Selichot

WHO HAS... the name of the beautiful opening prayer
for the Yom Kippur evening service.

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2c

I HAVE... Kol Nidre.
WHO HAS... the torah portion
that is read during Rosh Hashana?

I HAVE... Genesis 22, the binding of Issac.
WHO HAS... Why do adults fast on Yom Kippur?

I HAVE... to purify their souls and also
to have empathy for those who
are suffering without enough
WHO HAS... Who should not fast on Yom Kippur?

I HAVE... children, the elderly,
and sick people.
WHO HAS... With whom do you
gather for a Yom Tov
celebration meal?

I HAVE... family and friends.
WHO HAS... How often we Jews get
an opportunity to start anew?

I HAVE... every year with Rosh Hashana,
every month with Rosh Chodesh,
every week with Shabbat,
every day with Modeh Ani
WHO HAS... For what reason is the shofar blown?

I HAVE... calling Jews to prayer, announcing the new year.
WHO HAS... What are the different shofar calls?

I HAVE... Tekiah, Teruah, Shevarim,
WHO HAS... What two holidays follow the two Holy Days?

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2c

An Alphabet of Woe

“Who among us is so righteous as to say ‘I have not sinned’?
We are...”

Arrogant

Brutal

Careless

Destructive

Egocentric

False

Greedy

Heartless

Insolent

Joyless

(COMPLETE THE LIST, adding personalized items if you can)

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

V

W

X

Y

Z

*Adapted from Gates of Repentance
New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe, revised 1996*

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2d

The Hard Questions

Let us ask ourselves hard questions,
For this is a [time] for truth.

++++

How much time did we waste
In the year that is now gone?

Did we fill our days with life
Or were they dull and empty?

Was there love inside our home,
Or was the affectionate word left unsaid?

Was there a real companionship with our siblings,
Or was there a living together and a growing apart?

Were we a help to our parents,
Or did we take them for granted?

With our friends –
Were we there when they needed us?

The kind deed: Did we perform it or postpone it?
The unnecessary [dis]: Did we say it or hold it back?

Did we live by false values?
Did we deceive others?
Did we deceive ourselves?

Were we sensitive to the rights and feelings
Of those who worked with us?

Did we acquire only possessions,
Or did we acquire new insights as well?

Did we fear what the crowd would say
And keep quiet when we should have spoken out?

Did we mind only our own business,
Or did we feel the heartbreak of others?

Did we live right?
And if not,
Then what have we learned and how will we change?

Rabbis Jack Reimer and Harold Kushner, adapted
2e

T'shuvah, while frequently translated as “repent,” has its Hebrew roots in the verb, “to turn.” When we have done something wrong, we need to turn to the other direction and commit to not wronging again. In other words, *t'shuvah* can best be understood as returning to friendship with the person we hurt and returning to a closeness with God. Our goal with *t'shuvah*, then, is getting back on the path toward becoming the best we can become.

Saadia Gaon, the famous Talmudic scholar and philosopher, taught that the process of *t'shuvah* has four steps: (1) admitting that you have done wrong and committing to never repeating the action; (2) feeling bad about the hurt you have caused; (3) asking the person you wronged, and God, to forgive you; and (4) finding your own way to never repeat the action.

What's important about *t'shuvah*, then, is our awareness of our actions. Tradition teaches that with our awareness, if we were to apologize for our actions three times with intent and meaning, then we would be forgiven by God.

“But repentance (*t'shuvah*), prayer (*t'filah*), and charity (*u'tzedakah*) temper judgement's severe decree.” -The Machzor (High Holiday prayer book)

Source: <http://www.jewishlearningmatters.com/AC-Be-Sorry-and-Forgive-T-shuvah-vS-lichah-278.aspx#sthash.cly8VFZ7.dpuf>

After reading several versions of the four steps, I chose the following for presentation to my 5th graders.

Four Steps of T'shuvah

1. Regret - acknowledging that a mistake was made and *feeling* sorry;
2. Confession - *admitting* the mistake verbally and/or in writing; asking forgiveness, with four-part apology, from the one who's been harmed and from God.

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2f

3. Let Go - *stopping* the harmful action; this shows a true commitment to change.
4. Resolution - *committing* firmly, with an action plan, to avoid repeating that
behavior in the future.

Four-Part Apology

I'm sorry for...

It was wrong

because...

In the future, I will...

Please forgive me.

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2f

Giving Appreciations

Lesson One

Overall Goal: To teach students how to give positive feedback to storytellers.

Today's Goal: To provide students with general and specific ways of giving appreciations.

Vocabulary:

Appreciations – honest praise that responds to the needs of the person being praised

Global appreciations – general praise (examples: “You are so funny!” or “You inspire me!” or “What a moving story!”)

Specific appreciations – praise that focuses on an aspect of the story; it can include individual details about the story or it can praise the characters, the imagery or the structure of the story (examples: “When you rolled your eyes, I couldn’t stop laughing!” Or “I loved the details about the color and texture of your grandfather’s old hat,” or “your long pauses really gave me the time to see each object in the treasure chest.”)

Set up and activity for practicing global and specific appreciations:

1. Students find a partner, and sit and face one another.
2. The partners decide who will speak first and who will listen first.
3. The speaker tells a story and the listener listens, giving non-verbal feedback including smiles and nods and appropriate facial expressions.
4. When the speaker is finished, the listener offers appreciations, both global and specific.
5. The speaker thanks the listeners.
6. The two students switch roles.

Follow up for practicing global and specific appreciations:

1. Ask students to notice their thoughts and feelings about this exercise. What was it like to offer appreciations? What was it like to receive them?
2. Invite students to share what they noticed with the class.
3. When working with teacher mentees, ask them how they could use appreciations in their classroom.

*The concept of “Appreciations” as a means of giving positive feedback following storytelling was created by Doug Lipman. Doug leads workshops on storytelling and coaching techniques. Please contact him at doug@storydynamics.com or read his book *The Storytelling Coach: How to Listen, Praise and Bring Out People's Best*.*

For more information about storytelling and coaching, please contact Jennifer Rudick Zanikoff at j@jenniferstories.com or at 410.526.6754. Please visit Jennifer's website at www.jenniferstories.com.

Giving Appreciations

Lesson Two

Today's Goal: To teach students three different kinds of appreciations.

a. Appreciations that praise the story's effect on the listener/observer

Global example: "I smiled during the entire story!"

Specific example: "I got goose bumps when you said..."

b. Appreciations that praise the story itself

Global example: "You will inspire teenagers with that story!"

Specific example: "I loved the vivid description of the animals in the forest."

c. Appreciations that praise the storyteller

Global example: "You are an eloquent speaker"

Specific example: "You made consistent eye contact with the audience."

Set up and Activity for practicing three kinds of appreciations:

1. Students find a partner, and sit and face one another.
2. The partners decide who will speak first and who will listen first.
3. The speaker tells a story and the listener listens, giving non-verbal feedback including smiles and nods and appropriate facial expressions
4. When the speaker is finished, the listener offers appreciations about the story's effect on him/her. The listener should offer both global and specific appreciations (as discussed in "Giving Appreciations: Lesson One").
5. Now the listener offers appreciations that praise the story itself, offering both global and specific appreciations.
6. Finally, the listener offers appreciations that praise the storyteller's abilities. Again, the listener should give both global and specific appreciations.
7. The speaker thanks the listener.
8. The two students switch roles and the new speaker tells a story.

Follow up for practicing three kinds of appreciations:

1. Ask students to notice with their partner what it was like to receive and give each kind of appreciation.
2. Invite students to share what they noticed with the class.
3. When working with teacher mentees, ask them how they could use appreciations in their classroom.

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I RESOLVE...

A scroll-shaped graphic with a serrated edge, containing the text "I RESOLVE..." and several horizontal lines for writing.

Beyond your basic paper chain: Sukkah Decorations Leaf and Fruit designed Paper Chains

1. Pre-cut many strips of construction paper of various colors.
(about 2 or 3 inches wide and 12 or 18 inches long)
2. Fold strip accordion style, and crease firmly.
3. Outline a leaf, or fruit or any other design onto the facing fold; draw your own, copy from a picture, or find natural leaves or other materials to trace. For younger students, create templates for them to trace. **Make sure to draw the sides of the design to run off the paper at the folds.** It's best to avoid too narrow a space here as that will weaken the connection where each shape links to the next. Also the edges should not be too wide as this obscures the design.
4. Cut out the design, essentially cutting away the edges; make sure to **not cut at the place where the design runs off the folds** or a stack of shapes will result rather than a chain. When this happens, the student may tape or staple the shapes together in a chain, or to a straight link.
5. Open carefully; you should have a single strip of connected shapes.
6. Tape or staple the strips together one end to the next.
7. Or to form a chain of shaped strips, staple or tape both ends of one strip to each other forming a circle. This is one link in the chain. Feed the next strip through the circle and secure its ends; continue linking the strips this way creating long chains of original designs; mix or match shapes and colors.



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4a

Ushpizin and Ushpizot: Stories for the Sukkah

Madrichim.org

The holiday of Sukkot is *z'man simchateinu* – time of our rejoicing. A time to build a sukkah – that rickety, temporary hut where we celebrate and live, remembering harvests and journeys. It is our delight to build the finest sukkah we can, decorate it in the most beautiful ways we know how, and prepare delicious meals. Of course, the celebration is incomplete without guests. It's much more fun to celebrate with others, and the holiday takes on a deeper significance when it is shared. Sukkot is the ultimate opportunity to engage in the mitzvah of *hachnasat orchim* – hospitality. But on Sukkot we do not just invite friends and family. One Sukkot custom that became popular in the Middle Ages, based on the mystical text known as the Zohar, was to invite "invisible" guests to the sukkah along with "visible" ones.

The original seven ushpizin –guests - were usually Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David. Various traditions, both medieval and modern, invite female guests, or ushpizot, to the sukkah as well. According to the tradition of Medieval Italian kabbalist Menachem Azariah of Fano, the ushpizot are Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah and Esther, because these women are distinguished in the Talmud as prophetesses. Other traditions include biblical figures such as Rebecca, Leah, Rachel, Dinah, Tamar, or Ruth. Likewise, others include a list of historically significant Jewish women such as Dona Gracia de Nasi, Emma Lazarus, and Hannah Szenesh. (1)

Inviting ushpizin and ushpizot each day elevates and expands the joy of Sukkot. Introducing Jewish figures like Abraham, Miriam, King David and Queen Esther to the celebration of Sukkot connects a young child sitting in the sukkah to their brave acts and wisdom. Through the celebration of Sukkot, we want to immerse our children in the big ideas of *hachnasat orchim* and the rich expanse of Jewish history. We are part of a long chain of incredible Jewish people, part of a very long relationship to God. We help to strengthen the chain by inviting guests to the sukkah, both the flesh and blood generations – friends, parents and grandparents – and the “way back” generations – people for whom we hold their stories instead of their hands.

Following are stories for the traditional list of ushpizin as well as the list of ushpizot that I felt was most relevant and familiar to young children, specifically Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Miriam, Deborah, and Esther. Most of these characters are familiar from Genesis, the first book of the Torah. Those who are not found in Genesis are noted below.

Day One: Abraham and Sarah

Abraham is the first Jew, and Sarah is his wife. They are the models of *hachnasat orchim*, so it is exceedingly appropriate to invite them to our *sukkah* on the first night of *Sukkot*. Encourage children to talk about why Abraham and Sarah were such good hosts, and how they too can be good hosts.

One hot day, when Abraham was old, he was sitting in the entrance of his tent. Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw three men approaching. He ran to greet them, bowed low to show them respect, and begged them to stay and be his guests. "Please do not pass me by! I will bring water for you to wash your feet, for they must be dusty and tired from walking through this desert. You can rest under this tree. I will bring you some bread, as I am sure you are hungry. Then you can continue on your way." The three men said, "That sounds great. Do as you have said." Abraham ran to get everything for the guests. He rushed to the tent where Sarah was. "Sarah, we have guests. Quickly, please use the finest flour to make bread and cakes!" Sarah was glad to help and quickly got to work. Abraham ran to the cattle and chose a fine calf. He asked his servant boy to help him prepare it. As soon as all the food was ready, Abraham brought the feast to his guests. He stood with them while they ate, in case they needed anything else.

When they finished eating, the three men stood and asked, "Where is your wife, Sarah?" Abraham told the men, "There, in the tent." When Sarah heard her name she put her ear close to the entrance of the tent, so she could better hear the men talking. One of the men said, "I will come back next year, and Sarah will have a son." Sarah laughed with surprise and joy. She thought to herself, "What a wonderful surprise to have a baby when I am so old!" (You can invite that son tomorrow).

Day Two: Isaac and Rebecca

4b

4b

Isaac is the son of Abraham and Sarah, and Rebecca is his wife. They each get their own story, highlighting their strongest moments. In each story, a well plays a crucial role.

Rebecca

One day, when Rebecca was a young girl, she went to the well in the center of her town, with a large clay jar, to fetch water for her family. When she arrived at the well, she saw a man there who she had never seen before. The man looked tired. He had ten camels with him, and the camels looked tired too. Rebecca filled up her jar, and then the man came up to her and said, "Please, let me sip a little water from your jar." "Of course you may drink," said Rebecca. She lowered her jar and let him drink. Then Rebecca said, "I will also bring water for your camels." This was a very big thing to do! Camels can drink a lot of water, and water is very heavy to carry! But Rebecca went back and forth from the well to the camels until the camels were finished drinking. Then the man asked if there was room at Rebecca's house for him and his camels to stay overnight. Rebecca said, "Of course! Follow me." When they got to Rebecca's mother's house, the man told them all that he had come from Abraham to find a wife for Isaac. The man said, "Rebecca was so kind to me at the well. Can she come back with me and marry Isaac?" Her brother Lavan said, "Yes." In the morning, the man said, "It's time for me to take Rebecca back to marry Isaac." But Rebecca's mother and brother said, "Wait! That's too soon. Let her stay here for a little while and then she can go with you." But the man said, "I must get going as soon as I can." And Rebecca bravely said, "I will go now." So Rebecca rode on one of the camels across the desert. When she saw Isaac, she jumped from the camel. When Isaac heard of the kind and brave things Rebecca had done, he loved her, and they were married right away.

Isaac

Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah, lived with his wife Rebecca and their sons in the wadi of Gerar. Years before, Isaac's father Abraham had lived there, and Abraham had dug wells, so he could have water. The wells had filled up with dirt, so Isaac dug them again. When he found water in the first well, the other people living in Gerar said, "That water belongs to us!" Isaac didn't want to fight with the people, so he moved, and dug up another of his father's wells. When he reached water, the people came and said, "That's our water!" Again, Isaac was strong enough not to fight with the people, so Isaac moved again. He dug up a third well, and this time, no one argued with him over the water. Isaac named the well Rehovot, and said, "Now at last God has given us enough space to live in this land!"

Day Three: Jacob and Rachel

Jacob was one of Isaac and Rebecca's sons, and Rachel was his favorite wife. There is also a well in their story.

Jacob, the son of Isaac and Rebecca, set out to go to the home of his Uncle Lavan, his mother's brother. When he got to Lavan's town, he came to the well, where the people were gathering with the sheep. He asked the people at the well, "Do you know Lavan?" The people said, "Yes, and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep." The well was covered with a large stone. When all the sheep were gathered around the well, the people would roll the stone off the well so the sheep could drink the water from the well. When Jacob saw Rachel, he loved her right away. He rolled the stone off the well so her sheep could drink. Then Jacob kissed Rachel. He told her that he was her relative, and she ran to tell her father Lavan. Lavan was very happy to meet Jacob, and invited him to stay with them. Jacob told Lavan, "I want to marry Rachel. I will work for you for seven years so I can marry her." Lavan said, "Ok. Stay and work for me for seven years." So Jacob worked for Lavan for seven years, but it seemed like only a few days, because he loved Rachel so much. Many years later Rachel and Jacob had a baby boy named Joseph (who you can invite in a few days).

Day Four: Moses and Leah

Moses was the leader who led the Jewish people out of slavery in Egypt and through the desert for 40 years. Moses received the Torah from God at Mt. Sinai and brought it to the Jewish people. Leah was Rachel's sister and was also Jacob's wife. While she was the less favored wife, she bore him seven children.

Moses

Moses lived for a time shepherding sheep in Midian. One day he was with the sheep far into the wilderness, and he came to a mountain. There Moses saw a bush that was on fire but was not burning up. Moses turned to look at the bush more closely. God called to Moses from the bush and said, "Moses! Moses!" and Moses replied, "Here I am." God said, "Do not come any closer. Take off your shoes, because the place you are standing is holy. I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. God said, "I know how much the Jewish people are suffering in Egypt because of slavery. I will rescue the Jewish people from Egypt and bring them to Israel, a land flowing with milk and honey. I shall send you to Pharaoh and you shall take my People out of Egypt." Moses was afraid, and said to God, "Who am I that I should do this great thing, and take the People out of Egypt?" God said, "I will be with you." Moses said, "But I am afraid. I can't do it. I can't speak very well. What if they don't listen to me?" God began to get angry with Moses. God said, "I will send your brother Aaron to join you, and speak for you. With your staff – your walking stick – you will make magic and wonders. Go to Egypt and take out the Jewish People." So Moses went to Egypt. He met his brother Aaron (who you can invite tomorrow) and with God's help, was able to take the Jewish people out of Egypt and lead them to freedom across the Sea of Reeds.

Leah

Leah was Lavan's daughter, and Rachel's older sister. When Jacob was about to marry Rachel, Lavan decided that the older sister should get married first. So he hid Leah under the veil at the wedding, and Jacob married Leah instead of Rachel. Jacob was pretty upset, so a week later, he married Rachel also. (In the days of the Torah, a man could have more than one wife at the same time. We don't have that rule any more. But we did learn something from Rachel and Leah. Today, at Jewish weddings, the groom lifts up the bride's veil before the wedding, to make sure he's got the right girl!) God saw that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, so God made it easier for Leah to have babies. Over time, Leah had six sons. She also gave birth to Jacob's only daughter, named Dina.

Day Five: Aaron and Miriam

Aaron was Moses' older brother. Miriam was Aaron and Moses' sister. The Talmud says she is a Prophetess, and hold it was she who foresaw that Moses would be born and redeem the people from slavery.

Aaron

Aaron was not only Moses' older brother, who helped Moses speak to Pharaoh. After God freed the People from slavery in Egypt, they lived in the desert for 40 years, learning to be a free people. Aaron became the Kohain Gadol – the High Priest, which means he was in charge of helping the People learn to live the way God wanted them to live. Aaron wore very special clothes, to show what an important job he had. He wore a robe that was gold, turquoise, purple and scarlet, with little bells around the bottom. He wore a breastplate, on his chest, made of gold, with 12 stones in it to remind the People of the twelve sons of Jacob, who became the 12 Tribes of Israel. Today, we do not have a Kohain Gadol, but we dress the Torahs like Aaron, the Kohain Gadol, was dressed, so we remember how we are supposed to live.

Miriam

When Miriam was a young girl, her parents had a baby boy, a little brother for Miriam. The Jewish people were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Pharaoh had said No Jewish baby boys! Miriam's mother hid the baby for as long as she could, and then, Miriam helped her mother take the baby build and ark - a little boat - for the baby, and float the baby down the Nile River. Miriam stayed near the ark and followed it until she saw that Pharaoh's daughter herself open it and take out Miriam's baby brother. Gathering all her courage, and being as brave as she could be, Miriam went up to Pharaoh's daughter and asked her if she needed someone to help raise the baby. Pharaoh's daughter was glad for the help, so Miriam brought her mother, the baby's mother, to Pharaoh's daughter. Pharaoh's daughter asked Miriam's mother to take care of the baby for her until her was old enough to come and live in the Palace. Pharaoh's daughter named the baby Moses. When Moses grew up, he left Egypt for a time, but came back at God's bidding to take the Jewish People out of slavery and out of Egypt. Moses was a great leader of the Jewish People, but Miriam was also a great leader. After the People crossed the Sea of Reeds, Miriam took her timbrel – a small, joyful instrument – in her hand. All the women took their timbrels and Miriam led them in dancing and singing, giving thanks to God for bringing them out of Egypt.

Day Six: Joseph and Deborah

Joseph was the son of Jacob and Rachel. He was Jacob's favorite son because Rachel was Jacob's favorite wife. Deborah was the Bible's only female judge and the only judge to be called a prophet. Her story is told in Judges 4 and 5.

Joseph

Joseph was a dreamer. He dreamed that he was in the fields cutting wheat with his brothers. In the dream, his bundle of wheat stood up straight, but his brothers' bundles bowed down to his. When Joseph told his brothers about the dream, it made them really mad. Then Joseph had another dream. In the dream, the sun, moon and eleven stars were bowing down to him. His eleven brothers were even madder about this dream. To get rid of him, they sold Joseph to be a slave and he was taken to Egypt. With God's help, Joseph was able to interpret dreams, to tell people what their dreams meant. Before too long, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, had some strange dreams and needed to know what they meant. Joseph helped the Pharaoh out, and soon was helping to rule in Egypt. There came a famine throughout the land, but not in Egypt, due to Pharaoh's dreams and Joseph's interpretations. Joseph's brothers came to Egypt, and in the end, Joseph's dreams came true – his brothers did bow down to him.

Deborah

Deborah was a prophetess and a judge. She would sit under a date palm tree, and the people would come to her with their problems, so she could help them figure out the truth and solve their problems. In times of war, Deborah guided the warriors. She told her friend Barak what God had commanded, and how to fight the war so it would be over quickly. Deborah sang songs of praise to God, and helped bring peace to the land of Israel for a long time.

Day Seven: David and Esther

David was the greatest King of Israel. He ruled after Saul, the first King of Israel. His story is told in Samuel I and II. Esther was the heroine of Purim; her story is told in Megillat Esther - the Book of Esther.

David

David was a shepherd. He guarded his father's sheep with kindness and wisdom, leading them so they would always be safe. David played the harp, a beautiful instrument. Saul, the King of Israel, was sometimes troubled, and called for David to come and play the harp for him, to calm him and make him feel better. David would play beautiful music until Saul felt ok again. God saw David and decided he should be the next king in Israel. Saul was not so happy about David being the next king, and he became very angry with David. David ran away from Saul and hid in the hills. Saul and his soldiers chased after David. David found a small cave and climbed inside to hide. Saul was not far away. Suddenly, a spider climbed onto David's nose. David tried to brush it away, but the spider said, "David, I can help you." David said, "Oh spider, you are too small to help me." But the spider climbed to the entrance of the cave. Quickly the spider spun a beautiful web across the entrance of the cave. Just then, Saul and his men spotted the cave. One of the men said, "David could be hiding in this cave!" But Saul said, "No, that's impossible. Look at the spider's web, covering the entrance. If David had gone in there, he would have broken the web." Saul and his soldiers rode away to continue looking for David, and David was safe. David said to the spider, "Thank you for saving me. Now I know that no one is too small to help another." In time, David did become King of Israel instead of Saul. He was a great king who led the people with wisdom and bravery.

Esther

When Esther became the Queen to King Ahasuerus, she became braver than she ever knew she could be. When her uncle Mordecai told her that Haman was planning to hurt the Jews, at first Esther thought there was nothing she could do. Who was she, just a kind girl who had somehow won the king's love and become the queen? But Mordecai reminded Esther that she could make a difference, and save the Jewish people. He told her, "Maybe you have become the queen just so you could save the Jews." Esther gathered together her faith and her bravery and told Mordecai, "Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast in my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens will observe the same fast. Then I shall go to the king, even though I am not allowed to go to see him without an invitation. If he shall be angry, then let him be angry." The king was happy, not angry, to see Esther. She was clever and brave, and she saved the Jewish people from wicked Haman!