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The Jewish Game of Life: *A Lifecycle Curriculum for 5th Graders*

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
Description of Content	3
Intended Audience & Setting	3
RATIONALE	4
Why this content?	4
Why these learners?	6
DESIRED RESULTS	7
Priority Goal	7
Enduring Understandings	7
Essential Questions	7
Learner Outcomes	7
EVIDENCE FOR LEARNING	8
LETTER TO THE FACILITATOR	10
LEARNING ACTIVITIES	12
Curriculum Overview	13
Lesson 1: Introduction to Lifecycles and Ritual Objects	14
Lesson 4: B'nai Mitzvah Family Program	22
Lesson 6: Wedding: Sheva Brachot	27
RESOURCES AND READING LIST	38
Annotated Bibliography	38
Additional Resources	40

INTRODUCTION

Description of Content

This curriculum guide is a series of lessons for 5th grade on Jewish lifecycles. The series will have an opening session on the purpose of marking lifecycles Jewishly, followed by six sessions on various lifecycle events, including a family learning opportunity, and concluding with a project that allows the learners to implement their new found knowledge. Lifecycle events may include birth/baby naming, b'nai mitzvah, confirmation, wedding, and death. While the current iteration of the curriculum guide is only eight sessions, it could easily expand to a full semester, especially in a twice a week congregational school. It depends on the desired depth of the learning and how it is incorporated into the curriculum planning for the year.

The lessons will delve into rituals, text study and context of the particular lifecycle in the Jewish journey. In the first part of the series, the students will have a taste of each lifecycle and the accompanying rituals, learning the basics of its origins, how it has evolved over time, how our community observes or celebrates it, etc. As a culmination of the series, the learners will go more in depth on a specific lifecycle, having the opportunity to prepare and teach their peers.

Intended Audience & Setting

The curriculum is intended for 5th graders, learners around 10-11 years old in a congregational, supplementary school setting. While I originally started writing with a certain group of students in mind, engaging and interactive lifecycle curriculum would

ideally be transferable to any congregational education setting. The guide would be easy to adapt up or down a grade or two (4th-7th grades).

Based on a frustrating experience with a prepared lifecycle curriculum that I considered frontal and somewhat outdated, this curriculum hopes to address some of those issues. The curriculum wasn't intended for immediate implementation to remedy the real life challenge, but having a relationship with the 5th graders helped shape some of my ideas and gave me an outlet to survey and pilot lessons.

RATIONALE

Why this content?

The study of lifecycles is part of nearly every congregational school curriculum at some point before b'nai mitzvah. While it is relevant to focus in on the experience of b'nai mitzvah, why does it matter if they learn about weddings or mourning, something that won't be immediately relevant to them? I would argue that exposure to these themes and elements of Jewish tradition throughout their formative education will encourage further development of their Jewish identity, increasing their Jewish literacy and ultimately strengthening their sense of Jewish belonging.

Literacy is more than just learning about the terms or rituals connected to the various lifecycles. In a more broadly defined examination of cultural literacy, educational theorist E.D. Hirsch says, "We know instinctively that to understand what somebody is saying, we must understand more than the surface meanings of words; we have to

understand context as well.”¹ It isn’t enough for the learners to just know the words mazel tov, chuppah, or Mourner’s Kaddish, we want them to be able to establish connections beyond their definitions and in this case, translations. As Michael Rosenak, an expert in Jewish education, advocates, Jewish education should offer breadth and depth - being intimately familiar with the texts and traditions (the “language”) in order to live Jewishly and be able to contribute to the future of the community (the “literature”).² This curriculum guide will serve as one stop on the Jewish journey of the learners, building on what they have already learned and expanding their knowledge and experience moving forward.

Joel Lurie Grishaver, a well known Jewish educator and author, shares his opinion about why there is a deep need for this content in our communities:

“The simple truth is that teaching lifecycle is more important than it ever was because many of our students don’t go to Jewish weddings, visit shiva homes, and learn the other basic skills of Jewish life. Something that was learned from the community now needs to be taught.”³

Grishaver’s notion of what is learned in the home or community versus what is learned in school is shared by John Dewey. For Dewey, intentional education is what is provided in school. In our case, those are the skills and ideas of Jewish living. Incidental Education is what is learned outside of school, what one picks up in everyday life and in the home, what it means to live Jewishly.⁴ Grishaver’s perspective is that the incidental

¹ Hirsch, E.D., Jr. *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. New York: Vintage, 1988. Pg. 3.

² Rosenak, Michael. "Educated Jew: Common Elements." *Visions of Jewish Education*. By Seymour Fox, Israel Scheffler, and Daniel Marom. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. 178-218. Pg. 184.

³ Grishaver, Joel Lurie. *The Circle of Jewish Life: Teacher's Edition*. Torah Aura Productions, 2007. Pg. 3.

⁴ Dewey, John. *The School and Society, and The Child and The Curriculum*. University of Chicago Press, 1990.

education is lacking and therefore we must increase the role of the intentional. While I don't disagree, particularly never having been to some of these lifecycle events as a young person, there is an opportunity to bring in the family and community into the classroom so that we can enrich the learning for all and hopefully encourage and support more of the incidental experiences.

Why these learners?

It is fascinating to me that not only do many congregations teach lifecycles, but also that it often occurs during the 5th grade year. So what is it about these 10-11 years that make them prime candidates for this content? Learners at this age begin to develop the ability to understand different points of view and have a sense of the bigger picture.⁵ They are able to make connections with their secular learning, which deepens their understanding and broadens their context of the content. What most 5th grader teachers and parents would also tell you is that there is a fair bit of angst in this time of middle childhood.⁶ Their physical and social dynamics are shifting and that sometimes creates an interesting environment for education. This curriculum is geared towards interactive activities that incorporates small group learning and learner driven products. Ideally, that will help the teacher engage the learners and meet them where they are at in this time of their lives.

⁵ Morin, Amanda. "Developmental Milestones for Typical Fourth and Fifth Graders." *Understood.org*, www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/signs-symptoms/developmental-milestones/developmental-milestones-for-typical-fourth-and-fifth-graders.

⁶ Pellissier, Hank. "Inside the 5th Grader's Brain." *Great Schools!*, 9 Aug. 2017, www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/fifth-grader-brain-development/.

DESIRED RESULTS

Priority Goal

Learners will explore the history, structure and interpretations of rituals that mark milestone events in Jewish lives.

Enduring Understandings

- Jewish lifecycle events help us understand what it means to live Jewishly.
- For many lifecycle events, there is also fulfillment of a mitzvah.
- Lifecycles mark different points of an individual's Jewish journey in a way that renews a commitment to the Jewish people.
- Lifecycle events bring people together, whether it be immediate family, the larger Jewish community and/or friends and loved ones who celebrate these milestones.

Essential Questions

1. What significance does the fulfillment of a mitzvah make in your celebration/observance of these lifecycle events?
2. How are Jewish lifecycle events meaningful to you and your family?
3. How might the lifecycle traditions or rituals differ by family or culture?
4. In what ways might learning about these lifecycle rituals and traditions connect us to the Jewish People?

Learner Outcomes

- Knowing: Learners will list the various milestones in a Jewish person's life, identifying specific elements of each as well as the common themes shared by all lifecycle events. Learners will know why these events have been ritualized and how the ritual makes the experience Jewish.
- Doing: Learners will compile materials to analyze and present as part of a deeper exploration into Jewish lifecycle rituals and traditions.
- Believing: Learners will articulate for themselves and others that there is meaning in marking these intimate moments of a person's life Jewishly.
- Belonging: Learners will feel a strong sense of connection to their Jewish journeys and the communities in which they are celebrated.

EVIDENCE FOR LEARNING

Throughout the course of the curriculum, learners will have the opportunity to reflect on each particular lifecycle ritual, its traditions and how it comes together with the previously learned material. The following activities can be used as evidence for learning:

- Jeopardy/Review games: Categories will be specific to the concluding lifecycle as well as building on their knowledge overall.
- Reflection: Learners will reflect on how this lifecycle impacts their Jewish journey. This can be an individual journal reflection or a collective discussion depending on the dynamics of the class or the topic at hand.

At the end of the curriculum, the learners will participate in a project that builds on the entirety of their exploration into Jewish lifecycle rituals and traditions. Learners will be split into groups, with each assigned a specific lifecycle. Each group will explore the following questions:

- What is the history of this ritual?
- What mitzvah does this lifecycle/ritual fulfill, if any?
- What are the different components of this lifecycle?
- How does my community celebrate/observe these lifecycle events?
- How is it meaningful to me and my family today?

These questions/themes will be introduced as they navigate through the curriculum and this will be an opportunity for more in depth study on a specific lifecycle. The learners will do research, guided by web resources and questions provided by the educator.

Their research will also include conducting interviews with parents, congregants willing to share their personal experiences and/or clergy. With guidance, the learners will craft their own interview questions that demonstrate their understanding of the lifecycle event and how it might impact their lives. After the research and preparations are complete, the learners will produce a presentation/project board for a showcase for the families.

LETTER TO THE FACILITATOR

Dear Facilitator,

First of all, thank you for bringing this curriculum to life! There are many curricular options for Jewish lifecycles, some of which served as rich resources for these learning experiences. The highlights of this curriculum includes family engagement, experiential learning and a concluding project based learning unit. While this was created with 5th graders in mind, these lessons could easily be adapted up or down a grade. It can also be expanded or contracted depending on how much time you can dedicate to this unit of learning.

I encourage you to reach out to the families prior to and throughout the curriculum. While we won't always know the family context of each learner, as much as we can, it is important to be aware of the lifecycles happening in the lives of our learners and their families. Here are some things to consider:

- Do you have a learner who has lost a loved one?
- Do you have a learner who has a parent recently remarried or divorced (and the various implications of that)?
- Do you have a learner from a multi-faith family? Same-sex family?
- Do your learners have their b'nai mitzvah dates yet?
 - This information might shift the nature of the conversation during the b'nai mitzvah lessons depending on what kind of questions they have and what the process is in your particular setting.

As we delve into the study of Jewish lifecycles, we want to share the variety of experiences and traditions that could be relevant to that lifecycle event. One of our essential questions includes “How might the lifecycle traditions or rituals differ by family or culture?” We want to acknowledge that these rituals and traditions will look different for every family and every occasion. This is a wonderful opportunity to have family members come in and share their experiences. It also opens the door for the conversation about Reform Judaism and can spark learning about the evolution of some of our lifecycle rituals and how it might be approached in different denominational communities. There is a family learning b’nai mitzvah lesson included as a part of this curriculum guide, but feel free to include the families more, even inviting them to mock lifecycles or if possible, in attending and sharing in actual lifecycle events.

Finally, engaging with the clergy will enrich this learning. Some suggestions on how to do so include bringing them into the classroom, having students interview them, asking if students can attend lifecycle events and having the clergy facilitate a mock lifecycle event. The clergy can serve as resources for these lifecycle events and often are just waiting to be asked to join!

I hope this curriculum will guide you in the development of a meaningful and engaging learning. Good luck on this new journey!

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The activities will range widely over the course of this curriculum. By infusing different styles of learning into the classroom, the goal is to have interactive, inclusive activities that meet the learners where they are at. The final session will be an interactive project in which the learners will work in small groups answering a question that ties together the entirety of the curricular content and offering a showcase presentation at the end. The task of the teacher will be to bring this curriculum to life in a way that is most meaningful and appropriate for their particular learners. There will be a variety of activities that span a lifecycle unit that draw on different learning styles.

Curriculum Overview

	<i>Lesson Theme</i>	<i>Core Concept</i>	<i>Suggested Learning Activities</i>
1	Introduction: Ritual Objects	The symbolism and function of ritual objects make lifecycle events uniquely Jewish.	Ritual object gallery walk
2	Birth & Naming	Our Jewish journey starts from birth and links us to our family and to the Jewish People.	Family tree; Naming a class mascot
3/4	B'nai Mitzvah (<i>One will be a family program</i>)	Transitioning to adulthood is an important mile marker on our Jewish journeys.	Tallit workshop; Jewish self board; Torah time; Clergy Q&A
5	Confirmation	Torah and the Jewish People are strong grounding forces as we move into the next phase of our Jewish lives.	Text study; Interviewing teens
6	Wedding	Celebrating a couple at their wedding is a joyous and festive opportunity to fulfill mitzvah.	Matchmaking; Sheva brachot 2.0; Mock wedding
7	Death & Mourning	In times of mourning, Judaism offers meaningful guidance and supportive communal moments.	Mourner's Kaddish study; Service project to prepare food for a shiva
8	Conclusion Project*	How are Jewish life cycle events meaningful to you and your family?	Small group in-depth study and presentation showcase

**While the curriculum overview indicates this as a single lesson, the culmination project as outlined in the Evidence For Learning (pgs 8-9) could actually span 2-5 sessions. This would allow the learners to do research on their selected lifecycle event and prepare the presentation materials. For the presentation showcase, this is a good opportunity to invite clergy, families and others to join.*

Lesson 1: Introduction to Lifecycles and Ritual Objects

Core Concept:

The symbolism and function of ritual objects make lifecycle events uniquely Jewish.

Essential Question:

- How are ritual objects used in marking Jewish moments?
- How are Jewish lifecycle events meaningful to you and your family?

Materials:

- Paper
- Writing utensils
- Copies of the Jewish Ritual Objects handout (1 per student/group)
- Poster for each ritual object
- Ask synagogue or families to bring in ritual objects for the gallery walk

Learning Activity: (60 minutes)

Introducing Lifecycles (15 minutes)

- Introduce Joe Jew and Joanna Jewess - ask students to take 5 minutes to write a family story for them (they can write a story, they can make a timeline, they can draw pictures, etc)
- Ask for some examples - pull out common themes
 - *Ideally, collectively you get B'nai Mitzvah, getting married, having babies, education, dying, etc.*
- From here, you can introduce the idea that for the most part, these things happen in people's lives generally, but that as Jews we have special rituals and ways to mark these events Jewishly. Over the course of this unit, we are going to experience Jewish lifecycle events, starting with some of the ritual objects that help make those moments uniquely Jewish.

Ritual Object Gallery Walk (30 minutes)

- Split the learners into five groups or pairs
- Explain that placed around the room are different ritual objects used in a Jewish lifecycles
 - As much as possible, it would be ideal to have the actual objects, if not several examples of each item. If you don't have a tangible item, a picture will work. Each item will have a corresponding card to introduce and explain the item.

- If the object is there, encourage the students to carefully pick it up or touch it - part of the experience is sensory!
- Stations:
 - Chuppah (ask if the congregation has a chuppah that you are able to set up in your classroom, or right outside in the hall)
 - Kiddush Cup(s) (bring at least two)
 - Tallit (bring a big tallit, can bring multiple if possible)
 - Ketubah (try to have at least one, in addition, bring photos for comparison)
 - Yahrzeit Candle (can bring a 7-day candle or just a 1-day candle)
- Each group will have a worksheet with questions about each item to answer together as they go through the stations. They should spend about 5 minutes with each item/station and we will come back together to talk about it. Play music or have a time for the rotations.

Debrief (*15 minutes*)

- After each group has gotten a chance to see the ritual objects, come back together as a larger class
- Go over each ritual object asking for learners to share their worksheet answers and observations.
 - If the ritual object has a story, share it with the learners. This will help to reinforce that each person/family connects with ritual objects and they might have a history or legacy that is part of the story.
- Ask learners:
 - How do you understand these objects as symbols for Jewish life?
 - What objects do you see reappearing in different Jewish lifecycles and rituals?
- Encourage the students to look around their homes to see if they have some of these ritual objects as well! You can offer to open the next session with show and tell if anyone wants to bring theirs in with a family story.

Jewish Rituals Objects

KIDDUSH CUP

What is the design on the kiddush cup? What does the design symbolize? _____

What does kiddush represent? _____

TALLIT

When do we traditionally wear a tallit? Why? _____

If you open the tallit and put it around you, what does it feel like? _____

KETUBAH

What does the Ketubah represent? _____

What do the different art designs represent to you? _____

CHUPPAH

What is the design of the chuppah? _____

What is the feeling of standing under a canopy? Why is it emphasized at a Jewish wedding?

Yahrzeit Candle

What does the yahrzeit candle represent? _____

What is the significance of having a candle burn for 24 hours? _____

KETUBAH



The ketubah is the Jewish wedding document, meaning “that which is written.” It’s earliest form dates back to the 5th century and has evolved over time. The traditional text includes information about the wedding (names, dates, who is there), obligations of the groom during the marriage, the dowry of the bride and what happens if the marriage should end. The ketubah is signed by a rabbi and two witnesses. In modern times, the text changes to include the role of the bride and her obligations as well a declaration of love. Art has long been a part of ketubah tradition.⁷



⁷ Kadden, Barbara Binder, and Bruce Kadden. *Teaching Jewish Life Cycle: Traditions and Activities*. A.R.E. Press, 1997. Pg 64. Adapted.

CHUPPAH

Meaning: The Chuppah is the canopy the couple stands under during the Jewish wedding ceremony. It literally means “that which covers or floats above,” and is said to be a spiritual place with a direct gateway to God. As long as a Jewish marriage is performed under a chuppah, the wedding can take place in any location, from a synagogue to a beach to your own backyard.

Origin: The Chuppah is a symbol of the home (tent) of our biblical ancestors Sarah and Abraham, open on all sides so guests would know they were always welcome.

Personalize It: Chuppahs can be designed or decorated to reflect your personal taste, match your wedding theme or color palette, or honor loved ones. You can have your wedding guests contribute to a patchwork collage chuppah, or use a tallis or huppah that belongs to a beloved family member.⁸



⁸ “Jewish Wedding Traditions & Customs.” *Mazelmoments* , www.mazelmoments.com/blog/jewish-wedding-tools-resources/jewish-wedding-traditions-customs-rituals/.

KIDDUSH CUP



Saying the blessing over wine is most familiar to us on Shabbat and Jewish holidays. However, the kiddush is done on many occasions that mark special moments in our Jewish lives. Kiddush comes from the root קדש, which means holy. We use kiddush to sanctify the moment with wine/juice representing the sweetness we have in our lives..

You can use pretty much any cup for kiddush, provided that it holds a significant amount of wine (and it isn't disposable, according to some). People tend to have special cups just for this mitzvah, often made of silver or other decorative materials.⁹

⁹ "What Is Kiddush?" *Shabbat*,
www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/260252/jewish/What-Is-Kiddush.htm.

TALLIT

The tallit, or a prayer shawl, is a symbol to remind the Jew of the commandments of the Torah. How do the fringes of the tallit remind one of the commandments? Each of the fringes contains 8 threads and 5 knots, making a total of 613. This number corresponds to the 613 commandments in the Torah.¹⁰



In the Reform movement, both men and women wear tallitot (plural of tallit). A tallit is traditionally worn during a morning service (weekdays, Shabbat and holidays). It is also used at lifecycles events - a baby is wrapped in a tallit at their bris/naming ceremony, a tallit can serve as a chuppah at a wedding, the wedding couple are wrapped in a tallit during the final blessings, a young person wears a tallit for the first time at their b'nai mitzvah and traditionally, the tallit is buried with the deceased.



¹⁰ "The Tallit: Spiritual Significance." *My Jewish Learning*, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-tallit-spiritual-significance/>.

Yahrzeit Candle



Yahrzeit is a Yiddish word meaning anniversary of a death. It is the yearly anniversary of a loved one's death (traditionally the anniversary of the Hebrew date). Jews observe yahrzeit at home by lighting a special long-burning candle in memory of the deceased.¹¹

During *Shiva*, the first seven days after a loved one has passed away, we light a tall candle that will burn for the whole week as a sign of memorial.



¹¹ "Yahrzeit: Remembering on the Anniversary of a Death." *My Jewish Learning*, www.myjewishlearning.com/article/yahrzeit-remembering-on-the-anniversary-of-a-death/.

Lesson 4: B'nai Mitzvah Family Program

Core Concept:

Transitioning to adulthood is an important mile marker on our Jewish journeys.

Essential Question:

- What significance does the fulfillment of a mitzvah make in your celebration/observance of these lifecycle events?
- How are Jewish lifecycle events meaningful to you and your family?

Materials:

- Torah connection posters
- Post-it notes or stickers
- Writing utensils
- Copies of the text study (1 per person)
- Large white queen sheet
- Scissors
- Smaller square patches of colorful fabric (1 per person)
- Fabric markers
- Hot glue gun
- String

Learning Activity: (60 minutes)

Note: As a family program, this may be a longer session. You can do welcome, mixers, music, family t'filah, etc. Ideally, this 60 minute learning activity can be a part of that or can operate as the sole program. The art project can also be done over a series of sessions.

Set Induction: Torah Connections (10 minutes)

- Around the room are different statements about the way we connect with the Torah:
 - Torah is the source of Jewish values and the Jewish ethical system by which we should live our lives.
 - Torah tells the story of our Jewish people and is the basis for our history as a community.
 - Torah is an important way through which Jews understand God.
 - Torah is the source of Jewish law, of *mitzvot* (commandments), which we are obligated to perform as a part of our covenant with God.
 - Characters in the Torah are role models for our family and communal relationships, teaching us both what to do and what not to do.

- Many of our important Jewish holidays are based in the Torah.
- As a family, walk around and decide what are the top three ways you connect with Torah. After you have decided, walk around to the posters on the walls and add your three stickers to the three connections with which you resonate. Discuss with other families why you chose that connection.
- Briefly unpack together: What were some of the connections you picked, and why did you pick them? Which ones did you feel least connected to?

Text Study: What you bring to our community (15 minutes)

- Much like when you are preparing for your bar/bat mitzvah, today we are going to study a little Torah text together
- Exodus 35 - give a context for the building the of the Mishkan
 - Israelites are newly freed from Egypt, wandering in the desert, Moses goes up the mountain to get instruction from God, God shares a very in depth list with Moses, who then shares it with the people in order to build a holy space where God can dwell among the people - the Mishkan (or Tabernacle)
 - This story lasts several weeks in our Torah reading cycle
 - This chapter comes from Parashat Vayakhel, talking about gathering the people
- Pass around handouts
 - Say the blessing for Torah study together - we are fulfilling a mitzvah!
 - Give families 7-8 minutes to read thru the text and talk about the questions in small groups
- Come back together and talk about the questions (also included on their handout)
 - Who are the characters in this story? What are their relationships?
 - *Moses, God, the Israelites - Moses is sort of an intermediary in the relationship between God and the people; People seem to be committed to God*
 - What does it mean to you to give a gift freely? How do you think that changed their contributions?
 - *When I give freely I know it is by choice and with an open heart versus the begrudging gift, meaning more for both me as the giver and the recipient*
 - Why do you think this Torah portion is focused on the gathering of the community?
 - *We all have something to contribute and we are even stronger together as a community*
 - Please write one word, phrase, or sentence that describes a main theme of this Torah story.

Art Project: Community Tallit (30 minutes)

- Without explaining the final project, have each person (learners and their family members) take a small square cloth and draw a handprint
 - They should cut it out and on it, write five things they contribute to this community
- As time allows, start gluing the handprint cut outs onto the sheet
- Once most everyone is done (or about 5 minutes before wrapping up), bring everyone back together
- Explain that this will be our community tallit
 - Cut slits into the corners and tie tzitzit
 - We will use this for family blessings at Shabbat services, for our various retreats leading up to the b'nai mitzvah year and possibly during the b'nai mitzvah services as the community blesses each learner on their Jewish journey

Wrap-up (5 minute)

- Key points to conclude with:
 - We all have something to contribute to our community
 - Becoming b'nai mitzvah connects us to our community and Torah in new ways
 - Torah is part of what binds us together, in our community and with the Jewish People
 - However you think about your connection to Torah, continue to engage with it as a family!
- Thanks all for coming and we look forward to using our community tallit soon!

5th Grade Family Program

Blessing for Torah Study

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.
Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu la'asok b'divrei torah.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us with commandments, and commanded us to study words of Torah.

Exodus 35:4-29¹²

35 4 Moses said to all the Israelites, "This is what God commanded: 5 Gather special gifts for God. Each of you should decide in your heart what you will give. And then you should bring that gift to God. Bring gold, silver, and bronze; 6 blue, purple, and red yarn and fine linen; goat hair; 7 ram skins dyed red and fine leather; acacia wood; 8 oil for the lamps; spices for the anointing oil and spices for the sweet-smelling incense. 9 Also, bring onyx stones and other jewels to be put on the ephod and the judgment pouch.

10 "All of you who are skilled workers should make all the things God commanded: 11 the Holy Tent, its outer tent, and its covering; the hooks, boards, braces, posts, and bases; 12 the Holy Box, its poles, the mercy-cover, and the curtain that covers the area where the Box stays; 13 the table and its poles, all the things on the table, and the special bread on the table; 14 the lampstand that is used for light and the things used with the lampstand, the lamps, and oil for the light; 15 the altar for burning incense and its poles; the anointing oil and the sweet-smelling incense; the curtain that covers the door at the entrance to the Holy Tent; 16 the altar for burning offerings and its bronze grating, the poles, and all the things used at the altar; the bronze bowl and its base; 17 the curtains around the yard, their posts and bases, and the curtain that covers the entrance to the yard; 18 the pegs used to support the Tent and the wall of curtains around the courtyard, and the ropes that tie to the pegs; 19 and the special woven clothes for the priest to wear in the Holy Place. These are the special clothes for Aaron the priest and his sons to wear when they serve as priests."

20 Then all the Israelites went away from Moses. 21 All the people who wanted to give came and brought a gift to God. These gifts were used for making the Meeting Tent, everything in the Tent, and the special clothes. 22 All the men and women who wanted

¹² <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+35&version=ERV>

to give brought gold jewelry of all kinds. They brought pins, earrings, rings, and other jewelry. They all gave their jewelry as a special offering to God.

23 Everyone who had fine linen and blue, purple, and red yarn brought it to God. Anyone who had goat hair or ram skins dyed red or fine leather brought it to God. 24 Everyone who wanted to give silver or bronze brought that as a gift to God. Everyone who had acacia wood came and gave it to God. 25 Every skilled woman made fine linen and blue, purple, and red yarn. 26 And all the women who were skilled and wanted to help made cloth from the goat hair.

27 The leaders brought onyx stones and other jewels. These stones and jewels were put on the ephod and judgment pouch of the priest. 28 The people also brought spices and olive oil. These things were used for the sweet-smelling incense, the anointing oil, and the oil for the lamps.

29 All the Israelites who wanted to help brought gifts to God. They gave these gifts freely, because they wanted to. These gifts were used to make everything God had commanded Moses and the people to make.

Read Chapter 35 together

Think about the following:

- Who are the characters in this story? What are their relationships?
- What does it mean to you to give a gift freely? How do you think that changed their contributions?
- Why do you think this Torah portion is focused on the gathering of the community?

Please write one word, phrase, or sentence that describes a main theme of this Torah story:

Lesson 6: Wedding: Sheva Brachot

Core Concept:

The blessings and rituals of a Jewish wedding are beautiful moments of connection between the wedding couple, their family, community and Jewish People.

Essential Question:

- In what ways do the sheva brachot frame the Jewishness of a wedding?
- How might the lifecycle traditions or rituals differ by family or culture?

Materials:

- Copies of the Jewish Weddings wordsearch (1 per student)
- Writing utensils
- Copies of the Sheva Brachot worksheets (2-3 of each blessing)
- Smartboard/computer setup for video

Learning Activity: (60 minutes)

Overview of the Jewish wedding (20 minutes)

- Do Now: Word Search with Jewish wedding terms
- Review of the Jewish wedding ceremony:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxQ87qN7E9o>
 - This should include many of the words in the search so they can bring it together
 - This is one of many bimbam wedding videos - if your students are into them, feel free to watch a couple on the Jewish wedding topics
 - If this is your first and only wedding lesson you can also watch a clip from Fiddler on the Roof or other pop culture examples of the Jewish wedding ceremony

Sheva Brachot (40 minutes)

- Ask - what are the types of blessings that you would want to wish a couple on their wedding day?
- At a Jewish wedding, we share these seven blessings
 - These are blessings that can be said by anyone, not just rabbi or cantor - way to include other people as a way to fulfil the mitzvah of rejoicing with the wedding couple
 - It's the second kiddush at the wedding, but you wait until all the blessings are complete to drink

- Pair everyone off - figure 7 groups
 - Each group will get a copy of the translation and text for the Sheva Brachot
 - There will be a question or two for each blessing, including a prompt to rewrite the blessing
- Give everyone about 10 minutes to look at the blessings and answer the questions
- When all the students are done, go around in order to share their new versions
 - Recap the themes as we go thru them!
 - If possible, share a blessing musically (especially the last one) - in what ways does the music imitate the meaning of the blessing?

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Jewish Weddings

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

BREAKINGGLASS
CHUPAH
CIRCLING
ERUSIN
KETUBAH
KIDDUSH
KIDDUSHIN
MARRIAGE
RINGS
SHEVABRACHOT
VOWS

Word Search Answer Key

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Jewish Weddings

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

BREAKINGGLASS
CHUPAH
CIRCLING
ERUSIN
KETUBAH
KIDDUSH
KIDDUSHIN
MARRIAGE
RINGS
SHEVABRACHOT
VOWS

Sheva Brachot: Blessing #1

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

The theme of this blessing is _____

What does kiddush represent in Jewish rituals? Why is it significant that we do kiddush twice during a wedding ceremony?

Rewrite this blessing to share in your own words what you think it means or another interpretation of its theme:

Sheva Brachot: Blessing #2

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַכֹּל בָּרָא לְכַבּוֹדּוֹ.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, whose glory is revealed in all creation.

The theme of this blessing is _____

Why do we consider all the things of God's creation during a wedding?

Rewrite this blessing to share in your own words what you think it means or another interpretation of its theme:

Sheva Brachot: Blessing #3

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, יוֹצֵר הָאָדָם.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of humanity.

The theme of this blessing is _____

Why do we consider the creation of all humanity when we are focused on this particular couple?

Rewrite this blessing to share in your own words what you think it means or another interpretation of its theme:

Sheva Brachot: Blessing #4

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצִלְמוֹ, בְּצִלְמֵ דְמוּת תְּבִנִיתוֹ,
וְהִתְקִין לּוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ בְּנִין עַדִּי עַד. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי, יוֹצֵר הָאָדָם.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, You formed us in Your image, and implanted in us the blessing of life's ongoing renewal. Blessed are You, Adonai, Creator of humanity.

The theme of this blessing is _____

What does it mean to be made in the image of God? Why is that significant to mention at a wedding?

Rewrite this blessing to share in your own words what you think it means or another interpretation of its theme:

Sheva Brachot: Blessing #5

שׁוֹשׁ תְּשִׁישׁ וּתְגַל הָעֵקֶרָה, בְּקִבוּץ בְּנֵיהָ לְתוֹכָהּ בְּשִׂמְחָה. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי, מְשַׂמֵּחַ צִיּוֹן בְּבִנְיָהּ.
Let Zion rejoice with the sounds of those who bring hope and happiness. Blessed are You, Adonai, for bringing joy to this couple.

The theme of this blessing is _____

What do we mean when we ask Zion to rejoice? (*remember Zion is another way to say Israel*)

Rewrite this blessing to share in your own words what you think it means or another interpretation of its theme:

Sheva Brachot: Blessing #6

שִׂמְחַת תְּשׁוּמַח רַעִים הָאֲהוּבִים, כְּשִׂמְחַח יִצְיֹרֶךְ בְּגֵן עֵדֶן מִקֶּדֶם. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי, מְשַׂמְחַח חַתָּן וְכֻלָּה.

May these loving companions rejoice together with the joy You have set aside for them since the days of Creation. Blessed are You, Adonai, who grants joy to this couple.

The theme of this blessing is _____

What do you think is the connection between Creation and the wedding?

Rewrite this blessing to share in your own words what you think it means or another interpretation of its theme:

Sheva Brachot: Blessing #7

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא שִׁשּׁוֹן וְשִׁמְחָה, חֵתָן וְכָלָה גִּילָה רָנָה, דִּיצָה וְחֻדָּה, אֲהָבָה וְאַחֲבָה, שְׁלוֹם וְרַעוּת. מְהֵרָה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יִשְׁמַע בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה וּבְחוּצוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם קוֹל שִׁשּׁוֹן וְקוֹל שִׁמְחָה, קוֹל חֵתָן וְקוֹל כָּלָה, קוֹל מִצְהָלוֹת חֲתָנִים מְחַפְּתִים וְנִעָרִים מִמִּשְׁתֵּה נְגִינָתָם. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי, מְשַׁמֵּחַ חֵתָן עִם הַכָּלָה.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of joy and gladness, love and companionship, laughter and song, pleasure and delight, harmony and celebration, peace and friendship. O God, may there forever be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem: the voices of joy and gladness, the voices of loving companions joined together in marriage, the voices of celebration and song. Blessed are You, Adonai, who causes this loving couple to rejoice together.

The theme of this blessing is _____

Why do you think this blessing uses so many different ways to say joy and happiness?

What do we mean when we say that celebrations should take place in Judah and Jerusalem? (*the word "Jews" comes from the word "Judah"*)

Rewrite this blessing to share in your own words what you think it means or another interpretation of its theme:

RESOURCES AND READING LIST

Annotated Bibliography

Berger, Ron. *An Ethic of Excellence: Building a Culture of Craftsmanship with Students*. Heinemann, 2003.

Berger's work is typically connected with the more formal project based learning and while I initially considered including PBL in this capstone, Berger's teachings aim to inspire and empower teachers to unleash the potential of their students, which is relevant for any educational environment. This resource in particular equips educators with a toolbox to guide their students through a process of drafting and revising for innovative projects. While the final project for this curriculum won't necessarily be as in depth as Berger is framing, the steps of feedback and revisions will help learners go further in depth on their lifecycle and take ownership over their final presentation.

Dewey, John. *The School and Society, and The Child and The Curriculum*. University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Originally published in 1899 as a series of lectures by Dewey, this expanded edition includes an introduction by Philip Jackson, boosting Dewey into the modern conversation about education. While not intended for religious education, Dewey was writing at a time when great changes were being made in secular education and his ideals are applicable to this day. Dewey's progressive approach to education is a natural fit for congregational schools seeking interactive and diverse experiences for their learners. Dewey is slightly more on the theoretical side of these resources, but Dewey's philosophy is an important foundational value for this curriculum.

Diamant, Anita, and Karen Kushner. *How to Raise a Jewish Child: A Practical Handbook for Family Life*. Schocken Books, 2008.

Award-winning author Anita Diamant has written a number of books about Jewish living, highlighting the role of lifecycle events. I chose this book as a resource for this capstone for two reasons. First of all, as a way to contextualize the lifecycle events, Diamant and Kushner include information about the developmental stages of children, the various lifecycle traditions and rituals (of childhood) and a diversity of experiences. Second, it is a fairly easy read and would not only be a good resource to share with the learners for the final project, but also with the parents as a relevant way to complement the learning of their children.

Kadden, Barbara Binder, and Bruce Kadden. *Teaching Jewish Life Cycle: Traditions and Activities*. A.R.E. Press, 1997.

As part of the A.R.E Press Teaching series (*Teaching Tefilah, Teaching Jewish Holidays, etc.*), I find the layout to be incredibly useful. On the theme of Jewish lifecycles, each lifecycle has background, Jewish text and a variety of leveled activities that can be utilized and adapted depending on your age group and setting. While this served as a great resource for this capstone, some of the material is a bit outdated and focuses on a straight, Ashkenazic perspective.

Knobel, Rabbi Peter S., editor. *Navigating the Journey: The Essential Guide to the Jewish Life Cycle*. Central Conference of American Rabbis, CCAR Press, 2017.

(Maslin, Simeon J., editor. *Gates of Mitzvah: A Guide to the Jewish Life Cycle*. Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1979.)

Knobel's newly released compilation is an updated and revised version of *Gates of Mitzvah*. Both books go through the lifecycles, sharing different rituals, traditions, and contemporary (to their time) essays. This resource is slightly different than the other lifecycle guides included in this capstone as it focuses on the role of mitzvah. Within each lifecycle, there are any number of mitzvot we are commanded to fulfill and these offerings frame lifecycle events in the context of Reform Judaism.

Additional Resources

Cardin, Nina Beth, and Scott Blumenthal. *The Time of Our Lives: A Teen Guide to the Jewish Life Cycle*. Behrman House, 2003.

Grishaver, Joel Lurie. *The Circle of Jewish Life*. Torah Aura Productions, 2007.

Grishaver, Joel Lurie. *The Circle of Jewish Life: Teacher's Edition*. Torah Aura Productions, 2007.

Hirsch, E.D., Jr. *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. New York: Vintage, 1988.

Milgram, Goldie. *Living Jewish Life Cycle: How to Create Meaningful Jewish Rites of Passage at Every Stage of Life*. Jewish Lights Pub., 2009.

Morin, Amanda. "Developmental Milestones for Typical Fourth and Fifth Graders." *Understood.org*, www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/signs-symptoms/developmental-milestones/developmental-milestones-for-typical-fourth-and-fifth-graders.

Musleah, Rahel. *Journey of a Lifetime: The Jewish Life Cycle Book*. Behrman House, Inc., 1997.

Pellissier, Hank. "Inside the 5th Grader's Brain." *Great Schools!*, 9 Aug. 2017, www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/fifth-grader-brain-development/.

Rosenak, Michael. "Educated Jew: Common Elements." *Visions of Jewish Education*. By Seymour Fox, Israel Scheffler, and Daniel Marom. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. 178-218.

Wiener, Rabbi Nancy H. *Beyond Breaking The Glass: A Spiritual Guide to Your Jewish Wedding*. Central Conference of American Rabbis, CCAR Press, 2012.