

Stepping Up to Jewish Adulthood

An Alternative B'nai Mitzvah Pathway: A Curricular Guide

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## Introduction

### A. Description of topic selected/ content

This curricular guide is designed as an alternative B'nai Mitzvah Pathway beginning in 6<sup>th</sup> and continuing in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade for students and their families. The focus of this pathway is to deepen the students' and their families' connection to the B'nai Mitzvah process, understanding it as a rite of passage marking a step on their life-long path of Jewish learning and engagement. We believe that this can be fostered with a deeper emphasis on the meaning of the rite of passage, exploring what it means for and to our learners in the context of their families as well as the Jewish community, and through engaging with Jewish texts and experiencing Vanessa L. Ochs' *Ten Jewish Sensibilities* in their daily lives (Sh'ma Journal, <http://shma.com/2003/12/ten-jewish-sensibilities/>)

Families would meet once a month for two- hour and a half sessions to study together with the facilitator, ideally with the families taking turns hosting. This is designed to help foster a sense of community among the families, and to transfer the center of “being Jewish” from the synagogue to the home. Typically, as adolescents are developmentally more concerned with peers than family, there will be a balance between family and peer learning.

Prior to the first meeting, the facilitator will meet with both the students and their families separately through a short Skype session to begin developing relationships (if this has not already been done,) and to answer any questions the learners may have. It is important that the students know they are seen as individuals and young adults, and that they have support from the facilitator during this journey.

## B. Identified Setting

The intended setting for this unit is a Reform congregation that wants to explore other b'nai mitzvah experiences for their students. It is designed to be facilitated by the congregation's educational director, rabbi or cantor. The program is designed as a replacement for the traditional 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade religious school sessions, but is to be used in conjunction with a B'nai Mitzvah Hebrew preparation program such as tutoring. This program does not focus on the Hebrew goals of the students at their B'nai Mitzvah service such as prayer leading or chanting Torah and Haftarah (done in the supplemental program). However, students with their families will have the opportunity to explore their Torah portions and to work on their divrei Torah through this pathway.

## C. Rationale describing the worthiness of the unit

In the CCAR Responsa *Reform Attitude Toward Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah*, (1979,) the significance of the rite of passage is asserted: "The ceremony possesses considerable meaning both to the young people and to their parents. It strengthens their bonds to Judaism and the synagogue, helps cement family ties, and marks a step in the religious education of each child." We acknowledge that in reality, this is not always this case, but seek the opportunity for our learners to reach the aforementioned goals. Some b'nai mitzvah programs focus on the more performative and functional aspects for becoming bar or bat mitzvah, which can fall short of creating meaningful impact for its participants. This program seeks to create a deeper connection to becoming B'nai Mitzvah, marking a step on learner's life-long path of Jewish learning and engagement.

This program shares a similar vision of *The B’Nai Mitzvah Revolution*, a network of congregations in cohorts, working to “create models of preparation and engagement for B’nai Mitzvah that are more engaging, meaningful, and relevant for both young people and their families” (BMR Mission.) While many interesting models are being experimented with, I have yet to find one with a focus on B’nai Mitzvah family engagement in the home.

The B’nai Mitzvah ritual publically marks a transition into adolescence as well as Jewish adulthood. The CCAR asserts that,

The ceremony celebrates the entrance into the initial stages of adult life. It marks a change toward physical maturity and a new degree of intellectual maturity... Most important of all, it demands responsibility for mitzvot within the framework of the modern family and society. The actual responsibility assumed may be modest, but the process of decision-making must now be undertaken in a more serious matter. (CCAR Responsa 1979)

Through this pathway, families with their b’nai mitzvah students will explore what the implications of the statement above means to and for them. While the transition into adulthood may be confusing, it is also an important opportunity to explore life as a Jewish adult.

In *The Soul of Education*, Rachel Kessler asserts that “along with turmoil and loss, adolescents also experience an exciting awakening. Students begin to glimpse the possibility of larger purpose and deeper meaning in their lives, and in life itself... when caring and creative adults in the community listen to young people and guide them through these passages, students blossom with character, compassion, and the capacity to make positive decisions.” (138.) A goal of this two year program during this transitional phase is

to support the student throughout the first years of this journey, helping them to “blossom” as Jewish adults.

The B’nai Mitzvah is not just a rite of passage for the student, but rather the whole family, with the parents (and grandparents) experiencing this movement of their child into Jewish adulthood as well. Edwin H. Friedman, in his article “Systems and Ceremonies: A Family View of Rites of Passage,” asserts that rites of passage ceremonies mistakenly ignore the crucial role of the family at these events. “...it is really the family that is making the transition to a new stage of life at such a time rather than any ‘identified member’ focused upon during the occasion” (119.) Friedman’s research and experience led him to discover that rites of passage are crucial in family systems as times for growth and healing and have a “transporting quality” (121.) He also found that the stress and panic of the upcoming bar or bat mitzvah on parents is sometimes manifested in physical ailments. He consequently decided to involve “the family members more in the ceremony and in the preparation” (141.) In light of Friedman’s work, I wish to draw the family deeper into the b’nai mitzvah process than has traditionally been done, approaching the b’nai mitzvah process more holistically. It is also a great opportunity for students and their parents to explore their relationships with Judaism and this life cycle event together.

I wish to take this program out of the walls of the synagogue and into participants homes because I think it will help to deepen the connections made, and will help foster a sense of community within the group. As Julie Greenberg writes in her article “Parents as Jewish Spiritual Guides for Children”, “synagogues and Jewish communal institutions need to go where the families are most likely to gather and teach Judaism and spirituality.

Families are often most receptive to learning about spirituality in the comfort of their own home or in settings such as parks, soccer fields, or bookstores (193.) I hope that moving the program into the home will further personalize the experience for the participants, and will encourage the participants' relationships to endure beyond the program, having set the precedent for these families to gather together in a meaningful Jewish context.

In his article, "American Jewish Education in Historical Perspective," Jonathan D. Sarna explores the development of Jewish education in America throughout the past century. Whereas once the family served as the primary setting for transmitting Jewish values, this is no longer the case. Living in between two worlds of "American," and "Jew," the aspect of incidental Jewish education from the family eventually became "outsourced" to the realm of the synagogue. Through this pathway, I hope to empower families to reintroduce Jewish education into the home.

In "Generating Jewish Connections, conversations with Jewish teenagers, their parents, and Jewish educators and thinkers," Sylvia Barack learned that, "some parents talked about setting an example. They hoped that their own involvement in adult educational activities, both in Jewish educational institutions and at home, would show their children the ways in which Jewish learning can be gratifying and compelling for adults" (Wertheimer 200.) Parent participation in this pathway reinforces and models the value of life-long Jewish engagement for their children.

#### D. Intended audience for the curricular unit

The intended audience is families with pre- b'nai mitzvah age children wishing to explore how Judaism fits into their lives. Understanding that bar or bat mitzvah is a significant life cycle event, this program provides an opportunity for the family to have a rich and meaningful experience together, reinforcing a life-long path of Jewish learning and engagement. Families will have the opportunity to learn about this alternative B'nai Mitzvah pathway, and to sign up for the option when they are assigned the date for the bar or bat mitzvah.

Parents need to be able and willing to commit to participating in the learning sessions, as well as to hosting them. In addition, the learners must participate for both 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades regardless of where the date of their bar or bat mitzvah.

E. Resources for the teacher/guide:

The B'Nai Mitzvah Revolution Mission: <http://bnaimitzvahrevolution.org/mission>

CCAR. CCAR Responsa "Reform Attitude Toward Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah." CCAR Net, n.d. Web. <<http://ccarnet.org/responsa/arr-86-89/>>. 1979



Davis, Judith. "Mazel Tov: The Bar Mitzvah as a Multigenerational Ritual of Change and Continuity." *Rituals in Families and Family Therapy*. By Evan Imber-black, Janine Roberts, and Richard Alva Whiting. New York: Norton, 1988. 177-208. Print.

Goodman, Roberta Louis. "Nurturing a Relationship to God and Spiritual Growth: Developmental Approaches." *Teaching About God and Spirituality*. By Roberta Louis Goodman and Sherry H. Blumberg. N.p.: ARE Publications, 2002. 69-96. Print.

Greenberg, Julie. "Parents as Jewish Spiritual Guides for Children." *Teaching about God and Spirituality: A Resource for Jewish Settings*. By Roberta Louis Goodman and Sherry H. Blumberg. N.p.: ARE Publications, 2002. 189-94. Print.

Kessler, Rachael. *The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000. Print.

Mahrer, Lawrence N., and Debi Mahrer. Rowe. *A Guide to Small Congregation Religious Schools*. New York: UAHC, 1996. Print.

Ochs, Vanessa L. "Ten Jewish Sensibilities | Sh'ma Journal." *Shma Journal A Journal of Jewish Ideas*. N.p., 1 Dec. 2003. Web. 13 Mar. 2015. <<http://shma.com/2003/12/ten-jewish-sensibilities/>>.

Sarna, Jonathan D. "American Jewish Education In Historical Perspective." *Journal of Jewish Education* 64.1-2 (1998): 8-21. Web.

Schoenfeld, Stuart. "Folk Judaism, Elite Judaism, and the Role of Bar Mitzvah in the Development of the Synagogue and Jewish School in America." *Bar/bat Mitzvah Education: A Sourcebook*. By Helen Leneman. Denver, CO: A.R.E. Pub., 1993. 78-89. Print.

Wertheimer, Jack. *Family Matters: Jewish Education in an Age of Choice*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis UP in Association with the AVI CHAI Foundation, 2007. Print.

F. Information/ skills/ background needed by the teacher/ facilitator:

The ideal facilitator for this unit is the congregation's rabbi, cantor or Jewish educator with:

- The knowledge and experience to engage families in Jewish learning

- a large presence/ role at the synagogue (to model life- long Jewish engagement and to continue to be accessible to the learners on their Jewish Journeys post B'nai Mitzvah.)
- Experience with pastoral care and being a non- anxious presence for families

## **Learner Desired Results**

### **Mission of Organization: Select Priority Goal(s) for Learners**

Mission of the Organization: We want our learners to become more connected to the process of becoming B'nai Mitzvah, understanding its significance as a rite of passage marking a step on their life-long path of Jewish learning and engagement. This can be fostered through a deeper emphasis on the meaning of the rite of passage, exploring what it means for and to our learners in the context of their families as well as the Jewish community, by encouraging the growth of relationships between the learners (families and their students, families and families, and all with the facilitator/ mentor,) by engaging in Jewish text study, and by reflecting on Vanessa L. Ochs' *Ten Jewish Sensibilities*, (<http://shma.com/2003/12/ten-jewish-sensibilities/>) and how our learners embody them in their lives.

### **Priority Goals for Learners (both parents and children)**

- Learners will feel more ownership over the b'nai mitzvah process.
- Learners will explore what it means to be a Jewish adult.
- Learners will be actively engaged with their Jewish community.

### **Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions**

#### **Enduring Understandings:**

- Becoming a bar or bat mitzvah marks a rite of passage on a life-long path of Jewish learning and engagement.
- I have a responsibility to enact Jewish values in my life as a Jewish adult.

#### **Essential Questions:**

How is living a Jewish life relevant for me?

How does the Jewish narrative fit into my life?

What is my family's Jewish history? What is our relationship with the larger Jewish narrative?

What does it mean to be a Jewish adult?

How do I act as a Jewish adult?

What does becoming a bar or bat mitzvah mean for me?

What does B'nei Mitzvah mean for my family?

**Learner outcomes in terms of know, do, value/believe, belong and process to engage learners in determining outcomes**

**Knowing:**

- Learners will know that b'nai mitzvah is a life cycle event which bestows upon one obligations of Jewish adulthood, and can name three ways their status' change.
- Learners will know at least 5 Jewish sources that help us understand the obligations of Jewish adulthood.
- Learners will know that being Jewish is a way of life which doesn't end at their B'nai Mitzvah.

**Doing:**

- Learners will move into Jewish adulthood embodying the Jewish values explored through this pathway.
- Learners will use Jewish terms and concepts in their journal reflections.
- Learners will check in with the facilitator/ mentor (by webcam) in-between sessions (as a non-anxious presence throughout the process,) providing support or questions regarding reflection prompts/ assignments, and progress on students' d'var Torah.
- Learners will attend one another's bar or bat mitzvah services in encouragement and support.

**Believing:**

- Learners will have the opportunity to reflect on and explore what the b'nai mitzvah process means to them in the context of lifelong Jewish engagement.
- Learners will reflect on how they will continue to engage in Jewish life after becoming B'nai Mitzvah.
- Learners will feel that they have the tools and knowledge to act as Jewish adults.

**Belonging:**

- Learners will have an increased sense of belonging in their Jewish community through the relationships fostered through this pathway.
- Learners will feel more ownership over Jewish values
- Learners will be more invested in their Jewish community post B'nai Mitzvah.

## **Acceptable Evidence for Learning**

### **a. Name what you will take as evidence for learning**

- Learners will begin to use Jewish concepts and language reflecting understanding and embracing of Jewish values in discussions, assignments and journal reflections.
- Learners will be able to express how they are living Jewish values
- Learners attend one another's bar or bat mitzvah service in support of each other
- Learners will express an interest in life-long learning, and Jewish engagement, continued membership post b'nai mitzvah.
- Learners will incorporate what they've learned into their divrei Torah

### **b. Suggested tools to collect evidence of understanding**

Online Forum to share work

Journal reflections

Assignment responses

B'nai mitzvah students' ideas for their divrei Torah

Group discussions and conversations (also through check-ins that occur in between sessions between facilitator and the learners)

Facilitator will notice participants at one another's bar or bat mitzvah service

Facilitator will notice participants forming closer relationships

Students sign up for confirmation classes and madrachim program in the religious school, and volunteering to talk about this alternative B'nai Mitzvah pathway to perspective students and their families

Students will write a reflection after their individual B'nai mitzvah, and create a family reflection of the process in any media of their choice

c. Include a process by which you will engage learners in determining evidence

After every session, I will give each family a group assignment, which they will post in an online forum to share their work with the rest of the group in any form of response they choose.

I will ask for private journal reflections twice a month, with prompts like “How did the text we studied together come alive for you during the past two weeks? How did you live what we learned? (Accessible to only the facilitator.)

Through reflection, learners will be able to articulate what it means to become B’nai Mitzvah, and the implications this has in their lives, using Jewish concepts and vocabulary.

## Lesson Outline

### 1) Stepping Up to Jewish Adulthood

- Shecheyanu
- Ice breakers, getting to know one another
- What does b'nai mitzvah mean to me and my family?
- Part one of ribbon cutting ceremony

### 2) B'nai Mitzvah, What's it about?

- Open with discussion of *Keeping up with the Steins* (2006)
- History and Meaning of the Jewish rite of passage
- Text Study Midrash Rabbah Genesis 63: 8-10
- Open forum for questions
- D'var Torah process explanation
- Family HW assignment: find a family artifact (or photograph) that tells a story about your family's Jewish heritage and create a presentation together in any media to be shared next session )

### 3) Memory of One's Ancestors, Z'chut Avot\*

- Family artifacts and history
- Honoring their memories through our life
- L'dor v'dor, making Jewish memories as a family
- Homework to make family recipe together

### 4) Making Distinctions, Havdalah\*

- Explore how our tradition makes distinctions between sacred and profane time. Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, Yom Kippur
- honoring occasions, marking life cycles
- Additional session for group Shabbat or Havdalah experience hosted by facilitator



5-6) "Being a Mensch"\*

- Learners explore being a mensch and gimilut chasadim
- Text study on "Kol Yisrael Aravim Zeh Lazeh"
- Additional session on Shmirat Halashon (rechilut & lashon hara)

7) Respect & Dignity, Kavod & B'tzelem Elohim\*

- How do we act in ways that both honor and respect ourselves as well as others
- Preserving dignity and preventing humiliation.
- Text study on *Bava Mezia 58b*, *Maimonides Law of Character Development 6:8* and *Yalcut Shimoni, Hosea 14*

8-9) Tikkun Olam\* & Tzedakah

- How do we give back and help to make the world a better place?
- Text study on Tzedakah from Torah passages and Maimonides' forms of Tzedakah
- Additional session for field trip volunteer experience

10) Turning, Teshuvah\* & Self Reflection, Cheshbon hanefesh

- What does our tradition have to say about teshuvah? (Text study on *Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 17a*)
- Forgiveness and self-reflection; we are all works in progress, with the opportunity to grow and change

11) Saving A Life, Pikuah Nefesh\*

- How do we act with regard to the value of human life and health?
- Celebrating the blessings
- Caring for ourselves

12-13) Caretakers of the Earth, Shmirat ha'adamah

- Genesis text study
- Sustainable living and environmental responsibilities, what can we do to lessen our impact on the earth?
- Additional session for hands on learning experience with nature

#### 14) Keeping the Peace, Shalom Bayit\*

- stepping up to settle differences maturely and keep peace
- healthy communication within the family
- considering the “bigger picture”

#### 15) Program Wrap Up

- Luncheon to celebrate completion of track
- Reflection of process and experience
  - Take-aways
  - How has this experience helped to shape you?
  - Next steps on our Jewish journeys
- Closing ritual (finish with ribbon cutting ceremony)

\*These titles have been used and adapted from Ochs’ 10 Jewish Sensibilities, The Shma Journal <http://shma.com/2003/12/ten-jewish-sensibilities/>

## Stepping Up to Jewish Adulthood

### Lesson 1

#### Relevant Unit Enduring Understandings:

- Becoming a bar or bat mitzvah marks a rite of passage on a life-long path of Jewish learning and engagement.
- I have a responsibility to enact Jewish values in my life as a Jewish adult

#### Relevant Unit KDBB

#### **Knowing:**

- Learners will know that b'nai mitzvah is a life cycle event which bestows upon one obligations of Jewish adulthood, and can name ways their status' change.
- Learners will know at Jewish sources that help us understand the obligations of Jewish adulthood.
- Learners will know that being Jewish is a way of life which doesn't end at their B'nai Mitzvah.

#### **Doing:**

- Learners will move into Jewish adulthood embodying the Jewish values explored through this pathway.
- Learners will use Jewish terms and concepts in their journal reflections.

#### **Believing:**

- Learners will have the opportunity to reflect on and explore what the b'nai mitzvah process means to them in the context of lifelong Jewish engagement.

#### **Belonging:**

- Learners will have an increased sense of belonging in their Jewish community through the relationships fostered through this pathway.

#### Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to be a Jewish adult?
- What does becoming a bar or bat mitzvah mean for me?
- What does B'nai Mitzvah mean for my family?

\*Ahead of the session ask the learners to bring in journals and something to write with

As this program focuses on families learning together, the first part of this lesson will be about establishing a safe space and getting to know one another in order to feel more comfortable and open. Begin by having families partner with two others and make introductions. The triads would get to know each other a bit through some questions and then the whole group would get together to do icebreakers.

On this occasion of beginning our b'nai mitzvah journeys together, we will say the Shehecheyanu together- provided with transliteration. We will close with a ritual to mark this step on the b'nai mitzvah journey together, and for learners to begin to feel the implications of becoming a Jewish adult.

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Facilitator: "I am so happy to be here with you all, and to be part of your b'nai mitzvah journeys. This process can be confusing and stressful but it also can be a meaningful and exciting experience. One of my hopes is that through learning and working together over the next two years, we will build a support system for one another. We are so fortunate to have the opportunity to study together. I would like for us to recite the Shehecheyanu together, to celebrate reaching this time, which marks the beginning of a transition into Jewish adulthood."

**Shehecheyanu-** \*sung first as a niggun and then add the words once there's a feeling of comfort. (approx. 2 min)

**Ice breakers/Getting to know you questions: (20 Minutes)**

Break the families into groups together, based on how little they know about one another. When they introduce themselves, have them tell a story about a meaningful or stressful experience from when they were about 12 years old (or their current age for the younger learners.) After this, have them fill out the attached questionnaire and then read the responses aloud. The other members of the group have to guess who wrote which answers.

Facilitator: "I hope you all enjoyed getting to learn a bit about one another. I would like for us to continue along these lines with an activity that will get us moving. I will read a statement aloud and after thinking about how much you agree with it, place yourself along a continuum (over there being 0; don't agree, and the other side being 10; I agree very much.) After choosing your spots, notice where others stand around you."

This activity acts as an icebreaker, but it also allows the participants to see that they have others nearby wherever they stand on the continuum. As they realize that others are in the same position, it reinforces the notion that they are not alone through this journey.

**Activity- Continuum Survey Statements: (15 Min)**

Facilitator reads the following statements one at a time as participants locate themselves on a continuum of agreement, and asks follow up questions regarding where they have placed themselves. (Ask them to keep in mind when they've noticed they are either near their family members or are far apart)

- G. I am excited about becoming bar or bat mitzvah/ my son or daughter is becoming bar mitzvah
- H. I feel that becoming b'nai mitzvah is something every Jew should do.
- I. I am nervous about becoming bar or bat mitzvah/ my son or daughter is becoming bar mitzvah
- J. I have questions about the technical aspects of becoming b'nai mitzvah
- K. I have questions about the meaning of b'nai mitzvah
- L. I am especially excited about the b'nai mitzvah celebration
- M. I am especially excited about the b'nai mitzvah service
- N. My family is a large influence on why I am doing this (becoming b'nai mitzvah, having my child become b'nai mitzvah)
- O. There are things about the process of becoming/ my son or daughter becoming b'nai mitzvah that make me nervous
- P. In the future, I feel I will look back on this experience very positively

(Feel free to add or subtract statements)

"I hope you were able to look around and notice those nearby wherever you stood. Remember that we are in this together, and have one another as we go along this process. Please divide into two peer groups. We are going to explore a couple of questions and then come back as the larger group to share the highlights of what you discussed with your peers. Please take a few moments to answer these questions on paper individually in the journals you've brought, and then discuss them as a group." (These will be used when deciding which responses to share, but will also be compared with responses to the same questions, answered at the end of this two year journey together.)

### **Discussion Questions in two smaller peer groups- (25 minutes)**

- What does b'nai mitzvah mean? (literally, child of the commandment, becoming a Jewish adult, coming of age)
- What does becoming (or your child becoming) b'nai mitzvah mean to you? (I have to take more responsibility for my actions/ I have to fast on Yom Kippur, I get to be part of a minyan/ I can read from the Torah/ It is a shifting of the generations for my family/ It is about passing down our Jewish values to our family/ It is a celebration of all the hard work)
- What are your feelings about the b'nai mitzvah process so far? Why (I am stressed because we have never gone through this process before, and it is difficult to realize that my child is really growing up/ I am excited, but feel pressure from my family to perform really well on the bimah/I am a little confused because I'm not sure what it all means for me/ It means that you're part of adulthood, you are looked at differently after your b'nai mitzvah even if you don't feel it)
- Why are you doing this? [becoming b'nai mitzvah, or having your child become b'nai mitzvah] (It is a rite of passage, an honor to get to read from the Torah/ This means a lot to my family so I am really doing this for them/ When I was born I was also baptized, so for me this is about really saying that I am a Jew.)

"Please take a moment to choose two responses to each of the questions to share with the rests of the group as a representation of what you discussed. "

(Big Group) **Sharing:** (5 minutes)

Facilitator: "Thank you so much for your willingness to share. Did any of the responses surprise you? Reactions?" (I was really surprised to hear what some of the younger students said, I assumed they were all only looking forward to the party/ I didn't realize how much this meant to.../It is comforting to realize that I am not alone/)

**Text Study** (10 minutes)

In same small peer groups as before, explore Pirkei Avot 5:21 and the questions (attached)

**Reflection on text study:** (5min)

## Closing Ritual: (10 min)

Facilitator: "You've all done great work today. I would like to close our first meeting with an acknowledgement that you have begun the process of 'stepping up to Jewish adulthood.' Please stand up and find a spot with your family. I am giving each family a ribbon, to be tied on one wrist of each family member (non-dominant hand, and connected together with another string if more than one family member is present.) This ribbon connects our young learners to their parents, like an umbilical cord. When you become b'nai mitzvah, you grow into the responsibilities of a Jewish adult, and stand on your own two feet. Today we mark the beginning of this process. Younger learners, when you were born, you were a passive participant in the cutting of the cord. Now, as you start your transition into Jewish adulthood, you take an active role. When you feel ready, cut halfway into the ribbon- make sure to keep the ribbon intact,(as the process of becoming b'nai mitzvah isn't completed yet) which symbolizes you 'stepping up to Jewish adulthood.'

After you have all done this, I would like for us to huddle together, and to offer you a blessing as we go on this journey. (Priestly Blessing, but an alternative blessing may be used if preferred.)

### Priestly Blessing

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה, וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ

(*Yevhārēkh-khā Adhōnāy veyishmerēkhā ...*)

**May God bless you and keep you**

יְאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וַיַּחֲנֶךָ

(*"Yā'ēr Adhōnāy pānāw ēlekhā viḥunnēkkā ...*)

**May God's light shine upon you, and may God be gracious to you.**

יֵשָׁא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וַיִּשֶׁם לָךְ שְׁלוֹם

(*"Yissā Adhōnāy pānāw ēlekhā viyāsēm lekhā shālōm."*)

**May you feel God's presence within you always, and may you find peace**

(Translation from Mishkan T'filah)

Facilitator: "Thank you again for a great day, please untie your ribbons, write your initials and hand them to me. I will hold on to them for safekeeping, until it is time for you to stand on your own as Jewish adults."

Materials:

Shehecheyanu blessing

Ice breaker questionnaire

Continuum Questions

Discussion Questions on sheet

Text study

Priestly Blessing

Permanent Marker

Ribbon

Scissors



## She-He-Che-Ya-Nu

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵנוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעֵנוּ לְזֶמֶן  
הַזֶּה.

Ba-ruch a-ta A-do-Nai e-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam, she-he-che-ya-nu ve-ki-ye-ma-nu ve-hi-gi-a-nu laz-man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this moment.

## Ice Breaker Questionnaire

My favorite color is...

My favorite holiday is...

My favorite Jewish food is...

When I think about becoming (or my child becoming b'nai mitzvah) I feel...

## Discussion Questions Handout

Please explore and discuss your answers to the following questions:

- What does b'nai mitzvah mean?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What does becoming (or your child becoming) b'nai mitzvah mean to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What are your feelings about the b'nai mitzvah process so far? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Why are you doing this? [becoming b'nai mitzvah, or having your child become b'nai mitzvah]

## Pirkei Avot 5:21

(Mishnah)

<p>He [Yehudah ben Teima] used to say: Five years [is the age] for [the study of] Scripture, Ten [is the age] for [the study of] Mishnah, Thirteen [is the age] for [observing] commandments, Fifteen [is the age] for [the study of] Talmud, Eighteen [is the age] for the [wedding] canopy, Twenty [is the age] for pursuing [a livelihood], Thirty [is the age] for [full] strength, Forty [is the age] for understanding, Fifty [is the age] for [giving] counsel, Sixty [is the age] for mature age, Seventy [is the age] for a hoary head, Eighty [is a sign of superadded] strength, Ninety [is the age] for [a] bending [stature], A hundred, is [the age at which one is] as if dead, passed away, and ceased from the world.</p>	<p>וְאֵהָא אָמַר, בֶּן חֲמִשׁ שָׁנִים לְמִקְרָא, בֶּן עֶשְׂרִי לְמִשְׁנָה, בֶּן שְׁלֹשׁ עָשָׂר לְמִצְוֹת, בֶּן חֲמִשׁ עָשָׂר לַתּוֹלַד, בֶּן שִׁשָּׁה עָשָׂר לְחַפָּה, בֶּן עֶשְׂרִים לְרִי, בֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים לְכַח, בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים לְבִינָה, בֶּן חֲמִשִּׁים לְעֵצָה, בֶּן שִׁשִּׁים לְזָקְנָה, בֶּן שִׁבְעִים לְשִׁיבָה, בֶּן שְׁמוֹנִים לְגִירָה, בֶּן תְּשַׁעִים לְשׁוּחַ, בֶּן מֵאָה כְּאֵלוֹ מֵת וְעֹבֵר וְכֻטֵּל מִן הָעוֹלָם:</p>
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Text from Sefaria.org

### Discussion Questions:

1. What is this text saying?
2. What do you think about the timeline given?
3. Why do you think thirteen is the age for observing commandments/ mitzvot?

## Memory of One's Ancestors, Z'chut Avot:\*

### Lesson 3

#### Relevant Unit Enduring Understanding:

- Q. Becoming a bar or bat mitzvah marks a rite of passage on a life-long path of Jewish learning and engagement.
- R. I have a responsibility to enact Jewish values in my life as a Jewish adult

#### Relevant Unit KDBB

##### **Knowing:**

- Learners will know Jewish sources that help us understand the obligations of Jewish adulthood.
- Learners will know that being Jewish is a way of life which doesn't end at bar or bat mitzvah.

##### **Doing:**

Learners will move into Jewish adulthood embodying the Jewish values explored through this pathway.

Learners will use Jewish terms and concepts in their journal reflections

##### **Believing:**

- Learners will feel that they have the tools and knowledge to act as Jewish adults.

##### **Belonging:**

- Learners will have an increased sense of belonging in their Jewish community through the relationships fostered through this pathway.
- Learners will feel more ownership over Jewish values

#### Essential Questions:

- How does the Jewish narrative fit into my life?
- What is my family's Jewish history? What is our relationship with the larger Jewish narrative?

- What does it mean to be a Jewish adult? /How do I act as a Jewish adult?

Topic EQ: What does the concept of L'dor Vador mean to me and my family?

### **Welcome and Check In** (7 minutes)

#### **Blessing to study Torah**

Transition: "Wherever we are, we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us.

Because of our fore-mothers and fore-fathers, we are who we are today. Though they are no longer with us, we can honor their memory through our lives. I'd love to learn about some of your fore-mothers and fore-fathers. Who would like to share their presentation first?"

**Presentations** of Family Homework assignment from last session: (20 Minutes) find a family artifact or photograph that represents your family's history, heritage, and journey, to where you are today. Create a presentation together on the artifact and its significance to your family in any media to be shared with the group next session. (If you need any special technology, please let me know ahead of time.)

#### **Group Reflection** (5 Minutes)

- Discussion Questions:

Where did you connect to anyone else's story?

Possible Answers: *"The chanukiah reminds me of one we used when I was a young girl. I haven't thought about that in a while./My great grandparents were also immigrants, but they had nothing to really pass down to us physically. / Since I am a convert, I don't have any artifacts that describe my Jewish heritage as it wasn't handed down to me, but that won't be the case for my children."*

What did you learn about another family that you hadn't known before?

Possible Answers: *"I didn't realize that Sara and I have a lot in common, our grandfathers both worked in the Lower East Side, I will definitely talk to her about that later/ I hadn't known that Isaac's grandmother was part of kindertransport, it was incredible to get to hear about that."*

**Activity: What's "Begot"ten into you? (12 Minutes)**

Facilitator will hand out the prepared sheet and have the group read it aloud. Then ask learners to take 5 minutes to answer the question individually. Afterwards, pair up the learners with their family members to share their responses. After they have all shared with one another, they can add to each other's lists things they may have missed (*"your grandma loved to read, you definitely get that from her!"*)

**Text Study: L'Dor Vador (15 minutes)** Mix up the peer groups and families in chevruta so that adults are working with pre-teens, but not their own family members.

- Post chevruta Sharing/Reflection (3 minutes)

**Art Activity: "Making" Jewish memories as a family (20 minutes)**

Facilitator will hold up a "yad" and ask "what it is?"

Possible Answers: *"It's a pointer/ it looks like a back scratch/I forget what it's called"*

"Do you know why we use it? What we use it for?"

Possible Answers *"I think we use it to read Torah"*

"On the day of your bar or bat mitzvah, you will read from the Torah for the first time. When we read from the Torah, we use this pointer to help us keep our spot, but also to protect the scrolls from any dirt or smudges with our fingers. As a family, you are going to create a yad for your child's bar or bat mitzvah, with the intention of passing it on to future generations on the same occasion."

- Instructions/ Demonstration on how to make the yad with the materials

**Wrap up: (8 Minutes)**

- Closing Comments
- Family Homework assignment: Pick a favorite "passed down" recipe from your family, and then cook the dish (or even a whole meal) and enjoy eating it together.
- Journal prompt: What arose for you during this session? How do you imagine yourself to be a "link" in your family's "chain?" (How will you carry parts of them forward to future generations?)

Materials:

Yad craft kit (order in advance) <http://www.tjssc.com/p-3616-yada-yada-yad-yad-in-bulk-as-low-as-24-ea.aspx>

Prepared Handouts:

- What's "Begot"ten (into) You
- L'dor Vador Text Study



## What's "Begot"ten (into) You?!

After creation, expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel (Adam and Eve's first children,) the Torah describes the growth of humanity. Chapter five of Genesis is a record of Adam's line, 10 generations until we get to Noah and his sons. It contains a series of "begots," listing the passage of generation to generation. The new generations carry their stories forward, and are a link to the next.

### Genesis 5:1-7

<p><sup>1</sup>This is the record of Adam's line. When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God; <sup>2</sup> male and female He created them. And when they were created, He blessed them and called them Man. <sup>3</sup> When Adam had lived 130 years, he begot a son in his likeness after his image, and he named him Seth. <sup>4</sup> After the birth of Seth, Adam lived 800 years and begot sons and daughters. <sup>5</sup>All the days that Adam lived came to 930 years; then he died. <sup>6</sup> When Seth had lived 105 years, he begot Enosh. <sup>7</sup> After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived 807 years and begot sons and daughters...</p>	<p>זֶה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדֹת אָדָם בְּיוֹם בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם בְּדְמוּת אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֹתוֹ: זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָאם וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמֵם נִיְחִי אָדָם שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה שָׁנָה וַיֻּלְדַּ (אָדָם בְּיוֹם הַבְּרָאָה: ס) בְּדְמוּתוֹ כִּצְלָמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שֵׁת: וַיְהִי יָמֵי־אָדָם אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־שֵׁת שְׁמֹנֶה מֵאֹת שָׁנָה וַיֻּלְדוּ בָנִים וּבָנוֹת: וַיְהִי כָל־יָמֵי אָדָם אַשְׁרֵי־חַי תִּשְׁעַ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת: וַיְחִי־שֵׁת חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁנִים וּמֵאֹת שָׁנָה וַיֻּלְדַּ אֶת־אֶנֶשׁ: וַיְחִי־ (ס) שֵׁת אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־אֶנֶשׁ שִׁבְעַ שָׁנִים וּשְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיֻּלְדוּ בָנִים וּבָנוֹת:</p>
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### JPS Translation

Think about your family, what's "begot"ten (into) you? In other words, what characteristics, attributes, and values, have been passed down to you? Do you have any stories that illustrate this? What do you want to pass on to your future generations?

Please describe below:

## Text Study: L'dor Vador

### Deuteronomy 6: 4- 8

4. Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone	שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:
5. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might	וְאַהֲבָתָה אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ:
6. Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day	וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֶנֶכִּי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם עַל-לִבְּךָ:
7. <b>Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise up.</b>	וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִקְחֶךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמֶךָ:
8. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead, inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.	וְקָשַׁרְתָּם לְאָזֶן עַל-יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ:

## JPS Translation

You may recognize this as the Shema and V'ahavta.

- What do you think this text is saying?
- What does it mean to you?

### The Mishna -Pesachim 116b

5. In every generation, one must see himself as if he has gone out of Egypt.	בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים
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We recite this every year at our Passover Seder.

- What does it mean to you?
- Why do you think it is important that we see ourselves as having been brought out of Egypt?

### The K'dusha (Mishkan T'filah)

For all generations we will tell of Your greatness and for all eternity proclaim Your holiness. Your praise, our God, will never depart from our mouths, for You are a Sovereign God, great and holy.	לְדוֹר וָדוֹר נִגִּיד גְּדֻלָּתְךָ וְלִנְצַח נִצְחִים קִדְשָׁתְךָ נִקְדִּישׁ, וְשִׁבְחָתְךָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִפִּינוּ לֹא יָמוּשׁ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, הָאֵל הַקְדוֹשׁ.
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During t'filah, we say this in the third section of the Amidah, the K'dusha.

- What do you think it means?
- Why is it important that our future generations continue to proclaim God's holiness?

### Discussion Questions:

- How are these three texts related?
- How do you, or could you embody these texts?
- How do these texts shape the way you think about your responsibilities as a Jewish adult?

## The Power of Words

### Lesson 6: Being A Mensch (Session 2/2 on topic)

Relevant Unit Enduring Understanding: I have a responsibility to enact Jewish values in my life as a Jewish adult

Relevant Unit KDBB:

#### **Knowing:**

- Learners will know that b'nai mitzvah is a life cycle event which bestows upon one obligations of Jewish adulthood, and can name ways their status' change.
- Learners will know Jewish sources that help us understand the obligations of Jewish adulthood.
- Learners will know that being Jewish is a way of life which doesn't end at their B'nai Mitzvah.

#### **Doing:**

- Learners will move into Jewish adulthood embodying the Jewish values explored through this pathway.
- Learners will use Jewish terms and concepts in their journal reflections

#### **Believing:**

- Learners will feel that they have the tools and knowledge to act as Jewish adults

#### **Belonging:**

- Learners will have an increased sense of belonging in their Jewish community through the relationships fostered through this pathway.
- Learners will feel more ownership over Jewish values

Essential Questions:

- How does the Jewish narrative fit into my life?
- What does it mean to be a Jewish adult?

Topic EQ:

How does a mensch act?

**Welcome and Check in:** talk about homework assignment (8 Minutes)

**Blessing before studying Torah** (1 minute)

**Opening activity:** Sitting in a circle on the couches, facilitator will ask “What do we know about Miriam from the Torah? What qualities does she possess?” and create a list with their possible answers on a white board. (3 Minutes)

Possible Answers:

- *She was kind, caring and protective*
- *She watched after her brother in the Nile*
- *She was talented and a leader*
- *She sang with her timbrel, leading the women in song after crossing the Red Sea*
- *She was a prophetess*
- *She was righteous*

**Art Activity:** (10 Minutes) At a big table, families will decorate an empty pillow case, making it look like Miriam’s face. They can include symbols from her Biblical history, as listed before (such as a river and reeds, a timbrel.) When they are done decorating, they will put feathers inside of the pillow case and hot glue it shut. (You will come back to this later in the lesson.)

**Text Study:** In pairs (mixing up families and generations,) read Numbers 12 & Leviticus 19:16 and discuss the questions at the bottom of the page (15 minutes)

**Group Share:** (5 minutes) After chevruta, come back together to share some responses

Discussion Questions & Possible Answers:

- What did Miriam and Aaron do? *They spoke badly about their brother, they talked behind his back, and they didn’t go straight to the source to deal with the problem and challenged his authority.*
- How does God react? *God calls out the siblings to stop, he punishes Miriam. Why does he only punish Miriam?*
- Who do Miriam and Aaron’s actions and words affect, and how? *They talk about Moses, but since he is the leader, it can impact the whole community, the Israelites are already unhappy and it is a bad time to spread rumors about Moses.*
- What do you think Miriam’s punishment was about? (Why the serious consequence?) *The talk could spread to the community and damage Moses’ reputation, putting the Israelites at risk*
- Are there any parts of this text that you can relate to? If so, please explain.

*"Miriam and Aaron jumped to a conclusion without giving Moses the benefit of the doubt. I've done that before/ my dad has called my siblings and me out to yell at us. / I have had friends "gang up" on me. /I could really relate to God at this point, having to discipline my kids. /Things were said about me behind my back that spread through school and hurt my reputation."*

"Does anybody know what the value shmirat halashon means? Shmirat has the same root as shomer, as in shomer Shabbat which means to guard, keep or protect. Lashon translates literally as tongue, but the phrase together means guarding your words, and has to do with the ethics of speech."

"Who has heard the phrase 'lashon hara?' We just learned lashon, and hara means evil. So what is it?" (*evil tongue*)

"What do you think that means?"

Possible Answers: *"Speaking badly about someone/talking disrespectfully to people/Making assumptions/Spreading rumors/Making people feel bad with your words/ embarrassing others, laughing at someone else's expense"*

"At the second text we looked at in the study (Leviticus 19:16,) the Hebrew word רַכִּיל is in bold. In Hebrew, we call tale baring or spreading rumors, rechilut. Both lashon hara and rechilut can cause damage to others but also to ourselves, and they're both still forbidden, even if the information is true.

Would anybody like to share an experience where gossip or negative comments have been hurtful to you or a loved one? "

Possible Answers: *"I had a best friend but I found out she was saying mean things about me all the time to our other friends. I didn't know how to confront her because she had a lot of power in the group and I had to basically make all new friends because of her. It was awful/ I felt like everyone was whispering about our family when we first moved into town. It took a really long time to be able to build relationships in the community."*

(At this point instruct the learners get their pillow case *Miriams*, and hand a scissor to an adult in each family unit.)

**Story & Questions:** (20 minutes) Pass out the Chasidic Feather tale, *A Pillow Full of Feathers*, as retold by Shoshannah Brombacher, pre-cut into numbered paragraphs. Sitting in a circle, the families will take turns reading their part of the story aloud and when you, get to number 8, instruct the adults with the scissors to cut Pillow Miriam's "mouth" open, and then shake her to make her "talk." (The feathers will spill all over, just as in the story.) After reading number 9, ask the younger learners to pick the feathers up, just as in the story. When you see them getting frustrated, gather them back together and read number 10.

“Why do you think the rabbi asked the man to spill all of the feathers?”

Possible Answers: *“It was a metaphor for the power of words”/“It’s really hard to undo something that’s been done”*

Then read them the conclusion of the story, and say, “The Sages said: lashon hara kills three people, the one who speaks it, the one who listens to it, and the one who it is spoken about. (Talmud Erechin 15b.)”

- “What do you think this means? How does *lashon hara* “kill” three people?”

Possible Answer: *“It makes the person who said it look bad, it makes the person it’s about feel bad and the person who listens to it is put in a bad position”*

- “Look at our Pillow Miriam, how can you relate her present condition to what the Sages teach?”

Possible Answer: *“She looks beat up, its evidence that lashon hara and rechilut takes a toll on the person who speaks it. All of her good traits were temporarily tainted by how she spoke.”*

The Book of Deuteronomy states, “Remember what Adonai your God did to Miriam on your way out of Egypt” (Devarim 24:9)

“Why do you think that we are told to *remember* Miriam’s punishment?”

“Why do you think it is important that Miriam is the protagonist of Numbers 12 and not someone else?”

Possible Answers:

“She was righteous and still struggled.”

“She made a valuable mistake that everyone is able to learn from.”

“She was an important figure and it shows that we are all human.”

“She was forgiven, so we can be forgiven too.”

### **Lashon Hara & Rechilut in the Internet Age (20 minutes)**

Although the world has changed a bit since Biblical times, the texts we looked at teach us a lesson that is still applicable in our lives. Now more than ever, with so many different ways to instantly communicate and make our thoughts known to the public, we have the potential to hurt others with words when used irresponsibly.

Breaking the learners into peer groups, ask them to answer these questions:

“Have any of you ever experienced or witnessed cyber bullying? How did it make you feel?”

Possible Answers:

Adults: *“Not personally, but sometimes I see comments people have written and I’m so surprised by how hateful they seem/ When I was younger this wasn’t an issue and I’m concerned for our children”*

Younger learners: *“I thought it was mean but felt pressure to join in, I had to cancel my Facebook account, my friend had to switch schools. I felt powerless; I didn’t know what to do.”*

Gather the group back together and then present the following accounts to the group.

“Imagine that Miriam has transported to the year 2015. She sees the types of things people are saying to one another, often in anonymity on the internet. She has read the following accounts: “

- *Jodi Plumb from Mansfield Nottinghamshire*  
<https://sites.google.com/a/cypanthers.org/cease-cyber-bullying/real-life-examples-of-cyber-bullying>  
“Jodi Plumb was distraught when she found out there was a website containing terrible comments about her. It was talking about her weight and they estimated a time of her death. Jodi's mom went straight to the school board and asked for harsher action taken about the bullies. Jodi had been attacked twice in school. People also were taking pictures of her for the website.
- *14 year-old girl from New Jersey: <http://www.cyberbullying.us/shareyourstory.php>*  
“Being bullied besides over the internet is worse. It's torment and hurts. They say "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." That quote is a lie and I don't believe in it. Sticks and stones may cause nasty cuts and scars, but those cuts and scars will heal. Insulting words hurt and sometimes take forever to heal.”

“What are your reactions to these two accounts?”

- Possible Answers: *“I think it is so horrible/ I worry that I have no control over what my son encounters on sites like Facebook/I still have scars from name calling and it scares me that people can do it anonymously over the internet.”*

“How do you imagine Miriam would respond to this? What do you think she learned from her experience?”



Possible Answers: *"She might say that being kind to one another is more important than fighting/We should speak about each other with respect, it's better for the community."*

"As a family, please take the next few minutes to write a short letter from Miriam to someone who is being bullied. What insights or advice might she have to share?"

(5 Minutes later, Group share, 3 minutes)

**Wrap up:** (8 Minutes)

- What have we learned today about our responsibility with regard to the use of language?
- How does what we put out externally affect us internally?
- How does the concept of shmirat halashon connect to being a mensch?
- Explain homework assignment

Assignment: Set an example the next time you are confronted with lashon hara or rechilut. If you're too uncomfortable to point out this is wrong, change the subject, direction or even walk away. What did you find most challenging about this?

Journal Prompt- Over the next two weeks, pay close attention to the words you use with and about others. Did you catch yourself falling into old patterns? Were you able to increase the depth of conversation by avoiding rechilut and lashon hara? If so, how did that make you feel?

Teacher Resources:

<http://torah.org/learning/halashon/rchapter1.html#prohibition> Descriptions about rechilut, all the various forms

Materials:

Blessing to study Torah

Pillowcases

Fabric markers

Feathers

Scissors

Hot glue gun

Numbers 12 & Leviticus 19:16 Handout

*A Pillow Full of Feathers*, (a Chasidic tale) Retold by Shoshannah Brombacher, in numbered paragraphs

([http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/812861/jewish/A-Pillow-Full-of-Feathers.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/812861/jewish/A-Pillow-Full-of-Feathers.htm))

Cyberbullying accounts

Vacuum for clean up

## **A Pillow Full of Feathers** by Shoshannah Brombacher

1) In a small town somewhere in Eastern Europe lived a nice man with a nasty problem: he talked too much about other people. He could not help himself. Whenever he heard a story about somebody he knew, and sometimes about somebody he did not know, he just had to tell it to his friends. Since he was in business, he heard quite a lot of rumors and stories. He loved the attention he got, and was delighted when they laughed because of the way he told his “anecdotes,” which he sometimes embellished with little details he invented to make them funnier and juicier. Other than that, he was really a pleasant, goodhearted man.

2) He kind of knew it was wrong, but . . . it was too tempting, and in any case, most of what he told had really happened, didn't it? Many of his stories were just innocent and entertaining, weren't they?

3) One day he found out something really weird (but true) about another businessman in town. Of course he felt compelled to share what he knew with his colleagues, who told it to their friends, who told it to people they knew, who told it to their wives, who spoke with their friends and their neighbors. It went around town, till the unhappy businessman who was the main character in the story heard it. He ran to the rabbi of the town, and wailed and complained that he was ruined! Nobody would like to deal with him after this. His good name and his reputation were gone with the wind.

4) Now this rabbi knew his customers, so to speak, and he decided to summon the man who loved to tell stories. If he was not the one who started them, he might at least know who did. When the nice man with the nasty problem heard from the rabbi how devastated his colleague was, he felt truly sorry. He honestly had not considered it such a big deal to tell this story, because it was true; the rabbi could check it out if he wanted. The rabbi sighed.

5) “True, not true, that really makes no difference! You just cannot tell stories about people. This is all *lashon hara*, slander, and it's like murder—you kill a person's reputation.” He said a lot more, and the man who started the rumor now felt really bad and sorry. “What can I do to make it undone?” he sobbed. “I will do anything you say!”

6) The rabbi looked at him. “Do you have any feather pillows in your house?” “Rabbi, I am not poor; I have a whole bunch of them. But what do you want me to do, sell them?” “No, just bring me one.”

7) The man was mystified, but he returned a bit later to the rabbi's study with a nice fluffy pillow under his arm. The rabbi opened the window and handed him a knife. “Cut it open!” “But Rabbi, here in your study? It will make a mess!” “Do as I say!” said the rabbi.

8) And the man cut the pillow. A cloud of feathers came out. They landed on the chairs and on the bookcase, on the clock, on the cat which jumped after them. They floated over the table and into the teacups, on the rabbi and on the man with the knife, and a lot of them flew out of the window in a big swirling, whirling trail.

9) The rabbi waited ten minutes. Then he ordered the man: “Now bring me back all the feathers, and stuff them back in your pillow. All of them, mind you. Not one may be missing!”

Facilitator:

10) The man stared at the rabbi in disbelief. “That is impossible, Rabbi. The ones here is the room I might get, most of them, but the ones that flew out of the window are gone. Rabbi, I can’t do that, you know it!”

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### Conclusion

Facilitator:

“Yes,” said the rabbi and nodded gravely, “that is how it is: once a rumor, a gossip story, a ‘secret,’ leaves your mouth, you do not know where it ends up. It flies on the wings of the wind, and you can never get it back!”

He ordered the man to deeply apologize to the person about whom he had spread the rumor; that is difficult and painful, but it was the least he could do. He ordered him to apologize to the people to whom he had told the story, making them accomplices in the nasty *lashon hara* game, and he ordered him to diligently study the laws concerning *lashon hara* every day for a year, and then come back to him.

That is what the man did. And not only did he study about *lashon hara*, he talked about the importance of guarding your tongue to all his friends and colleagues. And in the end he became a nice man who overcame a nasty problem.

## Blessing to Study Torah

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam  
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu  
la'asok b'divrei torah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ  
לְעִסּוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with  
mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

(Mishkan T'filah)

## Numbers 12

After Moses leads the Israelites in Exodus from Egypt, they trek through the wilderness and start to complain, and civil unrest begins to churn. In Numbers 11, some of the Israelites complain to Moses about the delicious food they had back in Egypt as slaves, bemoaning the manna given by God to sustain them throughout their journey. Those who had the craving were struck down by a plague and buried at Kibroth-hattavah, meaning “hill of gluttony.” They then set out for Hazeroth.

1. When they were in Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman he had married: “He married a Cushite woman!”  *It is thought that this is a reference to Moses’ wife being of foreign decent and having dark skin	וַתְּדַבֵּר מִרְיָם וְאַהֲרֹן בְּמֹשֶׁה עַל-אִשְׁתּוֹ הַכּוּשִׁית אֲשֶׁר לָקַח כִּי-אִשָּׁה כְּשִׁית לָקַח:  וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה:
2. They said, “Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?” The Lord heard it.	וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֲרַק אֱלֹהֵי-מֹשֶׁה דִּבֹּר יְהוָה הֲלֹא גַם-בָּנוּ דִּבֹּר וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה:
3. Now Moses was a very humble man, more so than any other man on earth.	וְהָיָה מֹשֶׁה עֲנוּ [עָנִי] מְאֹד מִכָּל-הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה
4. Suddenly the Lord called to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, “Come out, you three, to the Tent of Meeting: So the three of them went out.	וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה פֶּתְאֹם אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאַל-אַהֲרֹן וְאַל-מִרְיָם צֵאוּ שְׁלֹשְׁתֵּיכֶם אֶל-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיֵּצְאוּ שְׁלֹשָׁתָם:
5. The Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, stopped at the entrance of the Tent, and called out, “Aaron and Miriam!” The two of them came forward	וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן וַיַּעֲמֵד בְּפֶתַח אֹהֶל וַיִּקְרָא אֶהֱרֹן וּמִרְיָם וַיֵּצְאוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם:
6. And He said, “Hear these My words: when a prophet of the Lord arises among you, I make Myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream.	וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמַעוּ-נָא דְבָרֵי אִם-יִהְיֶה נְבִיאְכֶם יְהוָה בִּמְרֹאֶה אֵלָיו אֶתְוֹדַע בְּחִלּוֹם אֲדַבֵּר-בּוֹ:
7. Not so with My servant Moses; he is trusted throughout My household.	לֹא-כֵן עֲבָדִי מֹשֶׁה בְּכָל-בֵּיתִי נֶאֱמָן הוּא:
8. With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of the Lord. How then did you not shrink from speaking against My servant Moses!”	כִּי אֵל-לִפְנֵי אֲדַבֵּר-בּוֹ וּמְרֹאֶה וְלֹא בְחִידֹת וּתְמִינֹת יְהוָה יָבִיט וּמַדּוּעַ לֹא יִרְאוּם לְדַבֵּר בְּעַבְדִּי בְּמֹשֶׁה:

9. Still incensed with them, the Lord departed.	וַיֵּחָר אֶף יְהוָה בָּם וַיֵּלֶךְ:
10. As the cloud withdrew from the Tent, there was Miriam stricken with snow-white scales! When Aaron turned toward Miriam, he saw that she was stricken with scales.  *the Rabbis understood this skin condition to be called “metzora,” as it indicates the sin of slander, (motzi shem ra, uttering an evil name, Lev. Rab. 16:1-6)	וַהֲעִנּוּ סָר מֵעַל הָאֹהֶל וַהֲגָה מְרִימָם מִצָּרְעַת כַּשָּׁלֵג וַיִּפֹּן אֶהְרֹן אֶל־מְרִימָם וַהֲגָה מִצָּרְעַת:
11. And Aaron said to Moses, “O my lord, account not to us the sin which we committed in our folly.	וַיֹּאמֶר אֶהְרֹן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בִּי אֲדֹנָי אֵל־נָא תִשָּׂא עָלֵינוּ חַטָּאת אֲשֶׁר נִוְאלְנוּ וְאֲשֶׁר חָטֵאנוּ:
12. Let her not be as one dead, who emerges from his mother’s womb with half his flesh eaten away.”	אֵל־נָא תְהִי כַמֶּת אֲשֶׁר בָּצֵאתוֹ מִרֶחֶם אִמּוֹ וַיֵּאָכֵל חֲצִי בָשָׂרוֹ:
13. So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying “O God, pray heal her!”	וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה לֵאמֹר אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ:
14. But the Lord said to Moses, “If her father spat in her face,* would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut out of camp for seven days, and then let her be readmitted.”	וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאִבֶּיהָ יִרְק יֶרֶק בְּפָנֶיהָ הֲלֹא תְכַלֵּם שְׁבַעַת יָמִים תִּסָּגֵר שְׁבַעַת יָמִים מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְאַחֵר תֵּאָסֵף:
15. So Miriam was shut out of camp seven days; and the people did not march on until Miriam was readmitted.	וַתִּסָּגֵר מְרִימָם מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה שְׁבַעַת יָמִים וְהָעָם לֹא נָסַע עַד־הָאָסֵף מְרִימָם:
16. After that the people set out from Hazeroth and encamped in the wilderness of Paran.	וְאַחֵר נָסְעוּ הָעָם מִחֲצֵרוֹת וַיֵּחָנוּ בְּמִדְבַּר פָּאֲרָן:

#### Discussion Questions:

What do Miriam and Aaron do?

What is God reacting to?

Who do Miriam and Aaron’s actions and words effect, and how?

What do you think Miriam’s punishment was about? (Why the serious consequence?)

Are there any parts of this text that you can relate to? If so, please explain.

## Leviticus 19:16

Do not spread rumors among your countrymen; do not stand by the blood of your fellow	לֹא-תֵלֵךְ רִכְזִיל בְּעַמֶּיךָ, לֹא תַעֲמֹד עַל-דַּם רֵעֶךָ: אֲנִי, יְהוָה
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What is this text saying?

How are the two phrases related?

How does it relate to Numbers 12?

Translations and footnotes from the Jewish Study Bible. *The Jewish Study Bible*. Ed. Marc Z. Brettler. NY: Oxford, 2004.

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### **Annotated Bibliography**

Friedman, Edwin H. "Systems and Ceremonies: A Family View of Rites of Passage." Rituals in Families and Family Therapy. By Evan Imber-black, Janine Roberts, and Richard Alva Whiting. New York: Norton, 1988. 119-47. Print.

Author Edwin H. Friedman, in his experience as clergy and family therapist asserts that the family is central in making transitions to a new stage of life that occurs during rites of passage. We tend to focus on the “identified member” during the process, but the term “life cycle” only makes sense when we think of them as a member of a family system. He differentiates between the celebration and the rite of passage, which is a process. Friedman explains that during these times of transition, the family is in flux, which has the potential to open doors for healing, but also can create stress and tension. Including families in the process of rites of passage has helped to build better and more meaningful experiences for rites of passage, as well as decrease anxiety throughout the process.

Kessler, Rachael. The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000. Print.

In this book, Rachael Kessler writes about helping students find “connection, compassion and character at school.” While intended for a secular school setting, it is applicable to religious education. Kessler explores how to give honor to our student’s voices, help them to explore meaning and purpose, and talks about the process of initiation and rites of passage for teenagers. She asserts that a meaningful rite of passage isn’t just about cognitive growth, but that the learning that takes place should create changes to the core. She discusses how educators can design meaningful programs for rites of passage programs that go beyond assisting in a transition, toward encouraging and enabling transformation.

Goodman, Roberta Louis. "Nurturing a Relationship to God and Spiritual Growth: Developmental Approaches." *Teaching About God and Spirituality*. By Roberta Louis Goodman and Sherry H. Blumberg. N.p.: ARE Publications, 2002. 69-96. Print.

Author Roberta Louis Goodman describes important aspects of the religious developmental theories of Fritz Oser (European philosopher) and James Fowler (Protestant minister and theologian,) both of whom were influenced by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. The author asserts that stage theories can help us be aware of developmental differences which can guide our expectations and preparation as we teach. Goodman also explores how the religious developmental theories such as faith development and moral development can be applied to a Jewish educational setting. A rubric for activities that nurture faith and activities by stage that promote "meaning making" are also included.

Grant, Lisa D., and Diane Tickton Schuster. "Teaching Jewish Adults." *The Ultimate Jewish Teacher's Handbook*. By Nachama Skolnik. Moskowitz. Denver, CO: A.R.E. Pub., 2003. 140-63. Print.

The authors discuss key aspects for effective adult Jewish learning, such as meeting your learners' needs, creating safe space, building relationships, action with reflection and teamwork. Grant and Schuster explore different developmental aspects of Jewish adulthood with regards to engagement, as well as Jewish Identity development. They take a look at how we can honor our adult learners' life experiences create opportunities for them to "make meaning," and to guide them to live in community with other Jewish adults. The authors also assert that Jewish adult learning can empower the learners to become transmitters of culture, and help them feel more connected to the Jewish people.

Kay, Jo. "Family Education." *The Ultimate Jewish Teacher's Handbook*. By Nachama Skolnik. Moskowitz. Denver, CO: A.R.E. Pub., 2003. 164-76. Print.

Author Jo Kay writes about the importance of educators meeting the needs and lives of our Jewish learners. She explains that through family education, it is possible to build a connection between the classroom and the home, and to engage in Jewish study and experience within the framework of family growth. The author explores various family dynamics (divorce, adoption, intermarriage, interracial,) that educators may encounter, and ways to work sensitively with these modern families. Jo Kay also explores the Parent Parallel Education as an alternative way of family study and its benefits. Teaching considerations for working with families are also included.

Schoenfeld, Stuart. "Folk Judaism, Elite Judaism, and the Role of Bar Mitzvah in the Development of the Synagogue and Jewish School in America." *Bar/bat Mitzvah Education: A Sourcebook*. By Helen Leneman. Denver, CO: A.R.E. Pub., 1993. 78-89. Print.

Stuart Schoenfeld explores the evolution of religious education and the Bar Mitzvah in America throughout the past century, and what the Bar Mitzvah means on both folk and elite levels. He points out that instead of the Bar Mitzvah as a celebration marking full participation in sacred rituals, it has become a "ritual of discontinuity," marking the last time the student is obligated to participate. Schoenfeld discusses another aspect of the Bar Mitzvah; how it plays a role in institution building through encouraging affiliation, providing motivation for participation in religious school and creating Jewish educational standards.