

From the Classroom: October 3, 2010

Kindergarten

Today We:

- Started our exploration of Hebrew: we went on a “Hebrew Hunt” around Temple looking for all the different places we see Hebrew letters
- Learned about how Hebrew is different from English, and special for Jews
- Started our Hebrew Letter coloring books with the letter “Aleph”
- Had Music with Joel

Ask Me:

- Where were some of the places I saw Hebrew letters today?
- How do Hebrew letters look, and how are they different from English Letters?
- What Hebrew letter did I learn about today?

1st Grade

Today learned about the Modeh Ani prayer, our Jewish prayer for being thankful. This prayer is recited in the morning when we wake up, when we thank God for being alive. We read a story about blessings and discussed these questions: How do you feel when you pray? Why do we pray? Who do we pray to? How do we show someone how thankful we are? The children wrote and decorated their own gratitude prayers, and we sang “Thank you, God” songs with Joel.

* Hebrew for Modeh Ani (a morning prayer of gratitude):

מוֹדֵה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ, מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם, שֶׁהַחַיָּתָה בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחֶמְלָה רַבָּה אֶמְוֶנְתָּךְ

* Transliteration: Modeh ani lifanecha melech chai v'kayam, shehechezarta bi nishmahti b'chemlah, rabah emunatecha.

* Translation: I offer thanks before you, living and eternal Ruler, for You have mercifully restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is great.

2nd Grade

This week we learned about the meaning of a “brit” – covenant, a deal, a two-sided promise. We read the story about Noah and his brit with God. We made a class brit and we discussed how each of us can have our own covenant (brit) with God. I encouraged students to talk to their parents about the meaning of a brit and what it means to your family. Could your family create its own brit? Did you have a brit milah ceremony for your child when s/he was a baby? If so, what kind of promise were you as parents making to God through this ceremony? And what promise is God making? If not, what kind of brit can you as a family make with God or with one another today?

Yad b'Yad

This Sunday parents and children explored the Torah portion, Noach. While parents studied with Rabbi Greninger, students read, reviewed, and acted out the Noah story. The students also learned Israeli folk dances having to do with water (Mayim) and animals (Sayenu, Hashual). For our family activity, the theme was Biblical teachings having to do with the ethical treatment of animals. Families worked together in learning Biblical and Talmudic texts about kindness to animals.

To further your family study and enjoyment of Parshat Noach (the Noah Torah portion) here are some additional sources:

- The URJ website at www.urj.org (click the Torah study section)
- The Book of Jewish Values by Joseph Telushkin (contains very nice family essay about pet care)
- The Diamond Tree by Howard Schwartz (a collection of Jewish folktales)
- A Child's Book of Midrash (52 stories for Shabbat celebrations)
- A Child's Garden of Torah (A Read-Aloud Bedtime Bible)
- Go to Torahtots.com (check out the "parshah parade")
- And of course check out Temple Isaiah's gorgeous library!

Something to do:

Meet the author: Meet Steven Kotler, author of: *A Small Furry Prayer: Dog Rescue and the Meaning of Life* who is appearing on Sunday, Oct. 3 at 3 pm in Oakland, at Diesel A; on Tuesday, October 5, at 7 pm, Kepler's Books in Menlo Park.

For Family Study:

From: *When You Sit in Your House* by Sharon Halper, c. 1994 Torah Aura Productions:
Rashi's comment on Noah (Rashi was a great Biblical commentator who lived from 1040 - 1105): Some of our rabbis interpret the phrase "in his generation" to Noah's credit. They ask, "How much more righteous would Noah have been had he lived in a righteous generation?" Others interpret it against him. They say, "He was righteous compared with that generation; but had he lived in Abraham's generation he would have been considered as nothing special."

Family question:

Based on the Torah text, how would your family judge Noah? Does he get "extra credit" for being good in a time of corruption? Or might he just be "so-so" but looked good compared to everyone else? Indicate the verse(s) in the Torah that help you decide.

3rd Grade

Continuing with our project to create Hebrew resource materials for the Religious School, we will start drafting rules and a design plan for our first Hebrew card game. We will also talk about the work of the Sofer (writer / scribe) who writes the Torah. Why are there so many rules about the writing of the Torah and what do those rules tell us about the value given to this special book?

4th Grade

This week we are starting our study of the modern State of Israel. We will discuss how it was formed and the different symbols of Israel. I am so excited because we are simultaneously studying the biblical story of the Exodus! Not only will the class read about this great event in our people's narrative, they'll get to "live" it by creating an Exodus news broadcast!! More as it happens...

Omanut

For information about what's happening in Omanut, our Art Track for 3rd & 4th graders, check out Marsha's [Omanut blog!](#)

5th Grade

To introduce our year-long study of Jewish history, students in Kitah Hey were introduced this week to the definition of "history" (recorded events of the past). More specifically, they were introduced to the ancient Jewish belief that historical events are driven by God's reactions to the moral decisions made by Israel (i.e. follow God's commandments and God will bless us; don't follow them and God will send our enemies against us). The Christian adoption of the Jewish view of linear time and its concept of the Second Coming, hence the need to begin counting the years from Jesus' birth, was introduced to the students, to explain the current system of marking the years on timelines. The terms B.C.E. and C.E. were discussed. *Help your child(ren) to create a timeline of your own family, beginning with your child(ren)'s birth. Mark the important events in your family's life on the timeline as they occur, and ask your child(ren) to illustrate the timeline (e.g. using photographs, drawings, or magazine cutouts). Start the timeline on a piece of construction paper, and, as time goes on, add more construction paper to the original piece as needed.*

6th Grade

Today we are learning about the meaning of the Shema, & the value of monotheism. We are exploring the first of 12 Jewish Journeys, and spending time talking about the life-cycle ritual of naming (specifically, the transition from Abram to Abraham). Please talk to your child/children about who were they named after and the meaning of their names.

Shira

This Sunday, the students continued their study of the origins of Reform Judaism and its music. We listened to some familiar (and unfamiliar) synagogue tunes by early Reform composers, and compared them to some of the songs we sing here at Temple Isaiah during the High Holy Days, and throughout the year. We worked on illustrations depicting some of the Reform movement's innovations, and discussed how those innovations have evolved since they were introduced into the original Reform congregations in Europe.

7th Grade

Sunday was Sophomore Year of B'nai Mitzvah University. We spent time talking about the B'nai Mitzvah Project, sharing ideas and inspiration for each other and discussing the process. We also had time in electives. Students and parents learned about the meaning of the Shabbat service, what praying is all about (and what it means to each of us), and delved deeper into Torah study. We're looking forward to Junior Year!

From the Classroom...

October 5, 2010

3rd Grade

This week we are doing our Hebrew assessment to give us a better idea about the Hebrew skills of each student. In the last couple of weeks, I have repeatedly explained to the kids that this is not a test and there is no way any of them can fail. I hope they understood that.

We are starting our Torah study with the creation of the world. We will take a look at the story of creation in the Torah, watch a movie about the scientific theory of creation and evolution, and try to think about whether knowing the “truth” about creation should make a difference in the way we treat the earth.

4th Grade

This week we will be taking a Hebrew assessment in preparation to start/resume Mitkadem. During Torah study, we will continue working on our news broadcast of the Exodus!

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6th Grade

Shira

This week in Shira we are learning about the early days of the Reform Movement. We will be exploring the idea of leading services without a prayer book, and writing our own prayers and readings, following the central themes of weekday tefillah. We will also be continuing to shape

our definition of 'Jewish Music', through learning a few English songs that are written with Jewish themes or intent.

7th Grade

In our weekday classes this week, we spent time talking about the idea of questioning things in Judaism. Students had a chance to create their "ultimate list" of all the questions they've had about being Jewish, God, and religion in general.

In this Sunday's B'nai Mitzvah University, we will focus on tzedakah and charitable giving. We will learn about the Seventh Grade Fund and, ultimately, vote as a class on whether or not to institute the fund this school year.

Assistive technology in the classroom. Classroom tech enables differentiated learning. The pros and cons of tech in the classroom. The current situation. Create an online education form! Technology in the elementary classroom. Tablets are a great way to provide each elementary student with equal access to learning material. If a student is falling behind, the teacher can quickly see who is struggling and what the problem is. In this article, we will discuss how science experiments can be integrated into the language classroom. You try out them with your teens and young learners within your curriculum. Teachers must bear in mind that before carrying out any experiment in the classroom they must try them at home, think of the vocabulary items which they need to pre-teach in order to smoothly run the lesson. Sink or Float.

