

Middles Class Summary-- September 22, 2013

At their first class of the year, the Middles group had a great time learning about Jewish languages and Sukkot. As we got to know each other, we prepared for a good year by talking about what it means to be respectful, and by sharing High Holiday memories. We talked about Yiddish and Hebrew as the languages of Jewish culture, and thought about why the Jewish people might want their own language. We saw that both Yiddish and Hebrew use the same alphabet, but listening to a song in each language proved that they sound very different. We said that modern Hebrew happened "on purpose," while Yiddish is a combination of languages that happened gradually and without trying. To explore how this could be, we played a game of "Telephone." Sarah helped us review (in song!) the Hebrew alphabet and some Sukkot vocabulary words. She also shared a beautiful Yiddish lullabye with us. After music time, we learned about Sukkot and built our very own edible sukkas, using graham crackers and harvest-themed candy. To wrap up the class, the Middles joined the other JCS groups in making harvest garlands to decorate the sukkah. Several Middles students had a great time hanging their harvest garlands on the Sukkah at the Sukkot party following the program.

Middles Class Summary--May 19, 2013

The JCS Middles class had a great time joining in the Israeli dance program at the May session. After dancing, we joined the other JCS classes for music and Hebrew. We learned to sing the Hebrew alphabet. In class, we worked in small groups to create a poster, skit, or other project about something we learned this year. We shared our projects with each other to review everything we learned.

Middles Class Summary--April 21, 2013

In April, the Middles class prepared for Tot Shabbat by learning about Shabbat traditions that some Jewish families observe. We did our own candle lighting ceremony to welcome Shabbat. After talking about what happens and doesn't happen on Shabbat in traditional Jewish homes, we played a sorting game to help us remember. We also played "Shabbat Tag" (like freeze tag). Sarah taught us a song and some Hebrew words related to Shabbat. Sometimes it's hard to live without most technology the way some Jewish families do on Shabbat, so the Middles read a story about connecting to nature instead of always having "screen time." A charades-like game called Not A Stick gave students a chance to have fun without technology. We closed with our own Havdalah ceremony.

Middles Class Summary--March 24, 2013

In March, the Middles class had a great time learning about Passover. We read the story of Passover, and talked about how Humanistic Jews can think about the story. We reviewed the Four Questions by playing a Jeopardy-style game. Sarah even taught us to sing the Four Questions in Hebrew! Then everyone worked together to make yummy homemade matzah. While the matzah was baking, we looked at a Seder plate and went on a scavenger hunt to find all of the Seder plate items. Passover coloring pages wrapped up the class.

At the request of several Middles students, here is the recipe for homemade matzah:

You need: white flour (NOT self-rising), whole wheat flour, salt, water, a mixing

bowl, a wooden spoon, measuring cups, a rolling pin, forks, parchment paper, and baking sheets. This recipe makes about 8 crackers.

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees
2. Add 1 cup each of white flour and whole wheat flour to the bowl, and mix it up.
3. Add 1 cup water and a pinch of salt, to taste. Mix with the spoon. When you can't get it anymore mixed up, use clean hands to get all the flour incorporated into the dough. You may need to add a little more water or flour to get a good consistency.
4. Put parchment paper down on the counter and flour it. Get your hands floury, too.
5. Divide the dough into egg-sized pieces. Knead each piece of dough for 4-5 minutes. (You might ask children to knead it at least 10 times.)
6. Flatten the dough as much as you can with your hands. Then flip it over and use the rolling pin to make it extra thin. Don't forget to flour the rolling pin.
7. Using a fork, poke holes all over the top of the dough
8. Place the rolled out dough on a parchment lined baking sheet
9. Bake 5-6 minutes, or a little longer if you want it extra crispy. You may want to flip the matzah partway through.
10. Let cool. Then enjoy! Cream cheese and apple butter are two of my favorite matzah toppings.

Middles Class Summary--February 24, 2013

In February, the Middles class learned about Purim. Class started on a light note, as each student was asked to share a favorite joke in honor of this fun celebration. Then, after sharing what they already knew about Purim, students compared Esther to another strong Jewish woman, Donna Gracia. Donna Gracia rescued many people from the Inquisition. Students made their own groggers to take home. They also used their groggers while they listened to the Megillah. Class ended early, so that everyone could enjoy JCS's annual Purim Carnival. It was so much fun this year, with new games created by staff, parents, and students.

Middles Class Summary--January 27, 2013

In January, the Middles class prepared for Or Emet's annual Tu B'Shevat seder by learning about nature and how we can respect the earth. We read *A Tree is Nice* by Janice May Udry, and talked about why we love trees. Then we made our own Tu B'Shevat trees, and each student decorated their tree by writing about how we can respect nature on the different leaves. Ms. Sarah taught the class a great song to share at the seder, and then we planted parsley seeds to celebrate growth and nature. With careful care, students may be able to use their parsley on their family's Passover seder plates.

Middles Class Summary-- December 2, 2012

In December, the Middles group learned about Hanukkah and Jews in early America, tying the two ideas together with the themes of hope and optimism. After our warm-up activity, students took turns reading facts about how and why Jews came to the English colonies, as well as Jewish involvement in the American Revolution. We talked about what it's like to go somewhere you've never been before, and made drawings to show our thoughts. After learning Hanukkah-related Hebrew words and music with Sarah, we read an interesting story called *Hanukkah at Valley Forge*. This book tells how George Washington was inspired when he learned the story of Hanukkah from a Jewish soldier. Believe it or not, it is based on true events! We talked about lighting the menorah, and how at the time of the American Revolution, people might have used oil lamps just like the Maccabees do in the story of Hanukkah. Then we got to work making clay oil

lamps - that really work! At the end of class, students got to choose between playing dreidel and completing a Hanukkah coloring page. Note that the oil lamps have now been baked. Students can pick them up at the Hanukkah party, or at the January JCS lesson.

Middles Class Summary-- November 4, 2012

This month, the JCS Middles class learned about the Golden Age in Spain. We talked about how people of different religions were accepting of each other during this period, and were able to achieve great things. After reading a story about accepting differences, we worked together to make noodle kugel, a traditional Jewish food. At the end of class, we learned Hebrew and music with Sarah.

Middles Class Summary--October 7, 2012

The JCS Middles group learned about Jewish ghettos and how, even though life in the ghetto was hard, the Jewish people kept up strong traditions and helped each other by being generous. We played charades to celebrate some of our own favorite traditions, read a story about Sukkot, and decorated panels for the sukkah. Sarah taught us some Hebrew words about Sukkot, and then we learned a song to celebrate the holiday. Many Middles students attended the Sukkot party that afternoon and helped to decorate the sukkah.

Middles Class Summary-- September 9, 2012

After getting to know each other by playing a name game, the JCS Middles class used a map to learn about the Jewish Diaspora and how it contributed to the cultural split between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Students shared their knowledge of the High Holidays, focusing primarily on Rosh Hashanah, and learned about the foods a Sephardi Jew might eat to celebrate. They noticed that apples and honey was a food tradition shared by all Jews. While the students ate snack (including apples and honey, of course), they heard a story called *Seed by Seed* (by Esme Raji Codell and Lynne Rae Perkins) about Johnny Appleseed, and how he lived by example. Using Johnny Appleseed's morals (use what you have; share what you have; respect nature; try to make peace where there is war; reach your destination by taking small steps) as a guide, the students wrote a goal for the coming year on a bread-shaped paper cutout. Then the class had a Tashlikh, where everyone threw their "crumbs" into the "ocean" (a blue parachute). Toward the end of our class, Sarah, another JCS teacher, visited and taught some Hebrew words related to Rosh Hashanah, and the students learned to sing "Apples and Honey."
