

Class Summary - Middles January 2011

Sunday, January 9th, Session 4

This week our theme was immigration to this country. We talked about where our ancestors came from, and learned about Ellis Island and what the experience may have been like for our relatives who had to come through there. In keeping with that theme, our activity this week was learning how to cook knishes, a food that people brought to this country from Eastern Europe. The Hebrew lesson with Muriel this week focused on winter words. For our activity, we had a special guest speaker, Hazel Chase (my Baubie), who taught the class how to make knishes using ready-made potatoes and puff pastry. At the end of the lesson we got to eat the delicious knishes!

Sunday, January 23rd, Session 5

This week we talked about the holiday of Tu B'Shevat, and prepared for the Tu B'Shevat seder. We discussed the meaning of the holiday (the New Year for trees), and brainstormed all of the reasons that trees are important. We learned a Jewish song, "Tree of Life", and practiced it for the Tu B'Shevat seder. Our Hebrew lesson with Muriel this week focused on the holiday of Tu B'Shevat, and spring and winter words. Our activity this week involved planting basil seeds in pots, and coloring pictures of people planting trees. For the second half of class, we enjoyed a Tu B'Shevat seder, and performed the Tree of Life song for the entire group!

Class Update - Middles Oct. 2010

The middles class had fun during the second class session learning about Hebrew and religion. We talked about Hebrew being the language of the bible, and the language spoken in Israel. We shared stories about our Hebrew names, and where they came from, and even picked new Hebrew names for those students

who didn't already have them. We learned the letters of the Aleph-Bet (the Hebrew alphabet), and learned a new song to help us remember all of the letters.

With Muriel, we practiced saying "hello, my name is _____, who are you?" in Hebrew, and took turns practicing.

Finally, we read the story of the Tower of Babel, and talked about how religion and language are similar in that they can either divide people or bring them together. We discussed that as Humanistic Jews, we focus on how all people are unique, but that all people also have a lot in common, and that it is important for us to work together with other people and try to make the world a better place.

Our crafts for the week included coloring the first letters of our names in Hebrew, and making name tags to hang on our doors.

Middles Class Curriculum Planner

[Curriculum Planner for Middles 2010](#)

Class Update - Middles Class Sept. 12

We started the Middles class out with introductions, then the children learned how to say "how are you?" ("ma sholmcha" for boys and "ma shlomech" for girls), and a few responses in Hebrew. We went around the room and each responded to the question in Hebrew.

Then we talked about our theme for the year: Tradition. We talked about the meaning of the word, watched a clip from the movie Fiddler on the Roof, and

discussed some of the traditions that we observe in our families.

We had a brief Hebrew lesson from Muriel Stern, in which the children learned about the Hebrew calendar, how to say “Happy New Year” (Shana Tova) in Hebrew, and how to say mother and father.

We then briefly discussed the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as well as Sukkot. The students learned both the traditional and the Humanistic meaning of the holidays, and learned some Hebrew words associated with each one. On the topic of Rosh Hashanah, we learned the song “Apples and Honey” in both Hebrew (Tapuchim u-d’vash) and English, and then ate apples and honey. As part of the discussion of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we talked about Tashlich, and the theme of forgiveness. For Sukkot, we learned about the lulav and etrog, and how to shake the lulav.

Finally, we made origami shofars out of construction paper, and then practiced blowing them!

Class update - Middles, April 2010

We began our class by talking about where Jews live in the world today. The kids were amazed to realize how Jews make up such a small portion of the entire population and also while there are nearly the same number of Jews in the US and Israel (around 5-6 million), Jews make up a much higher percentage of the population in Israel than in the US. I think they were also surprised to find out that the country with the third highest Jewish population is France (500-600 thousand). We also talked about how Jews have moved all over the world, especially in Europe and about how many Jews ended up settling in Eastern Europe, where many of the students ancestors are from.

Muriel visited our class and showed us photos from “A Vanished World” by Roman Vishniac of Jews in Eastern Europe in the 1930s. We also learned a song in Yiddish about children studying in the cheder. The students sang very well...in both English and Yiddish!

Continuing our discussion of Jews in Eastern Europe, we learned about Shtetl life; how these were tight knit communities made up mostly of Jews where they would speak Yiddish on the streets and in homes and would use Hebrew in synagogue and when studying the Torah and Talmud. The marketplace was the center of the Shtetl where many people made their living selling the wares and where people would come to buy their food. We talked about how most people in the shtetl did not have a much money and made just enough to get by, but that it was important to help others in need within the community.

We finished up the class with the students starting to make their own dioramas of a shtetl. They were so involved, they are not yet complete, so we will continue the work in may.

Class Update - Middles, March 2010

We worked on phase II of our Mezuzot project...painting! The painted mezuzot are ready to be filled with their scrolls and mounted to doorways. Muriel Sterne provided our Hebrew lesson while also teaching us about Passover. For the last portion of class, we were joined by the pre-schoolers. We all worked side by side making beautiful Matzoh covers for the Or Emet seder and to take home.

Class Update - Middles, February 2010

In our last session we enjoyed learning and singing new songs with Rabbi Miriam and the rest of the adults...although the students may not have enjoyed hearing

Scott singing "Peace Be With You" over an dover again throughout the class, but he just couldn't get it out of his head!

Once again, we learned played a trivia game. This time the focus was on Purim. See the PowerPoint presentation to see all of the interesting things we talked about rerelated to Purim; from foods we eat to the Babylonian origins of the characters in the Purim story.

The students had a great time making their own Mezuzot out of clay and our looking forward to painting them during our next class. Each student was asked to work with their family to decide what they would like to put on their scrolls that will go inside their finished Mezuzot. In the [PowerPoint](#) are some ideas families could use to decide what to write on their scrolls.

While working on our craft we had a visit from Rabbi Miriam. It seems the kids were excited to meet a real Rabbi!

[Class Update - Middles, January 2010](#)

The focus of the session was on Tu B'Shevat and trivia was back! We played Tu B'Shevat trivia to learn more about the Jewish holiday that essentially celebrates trees, nature and agriculture. We talked about everything from the ancient origins of the holiday (celebration and worship of the goddess Asherah) to the foods we eat (typically fruits and nuts that grow in Israel) and we even talked about what a Kibbutz is (a communal "village" in Israel).

After trivia, we read a series of poems about trees including one from Karen Shragg, a poet from Richfield, MN. The kids had the opportunity to share what they felt the poets were saying through their poetry. Each student then created their own tree poem. It was a combination of art and poetry, where they both wrote a poem and depicted an image of a tree on the page as well. Some drew a tree and wrote the poem n it, some wrote the poem around their tree and some wrote the words in the shape of a tree. If any parents would like to email us their child's poem, we can certainly post here on WordPress!

Before joining the adults for the Tu B'Shevat seder we spent a few minutes on some Hebrew words related to Tu B'Shevat. It would be great if the parents would spend a few minutes going over these words with their children prior to the next session.

This [link](#) includes our Tu B'Shevat Trivia, the poems we read and the Tu B'Shevat Hebrew words.

Class Summary, Middles - December 2009

We spent some time talking about famous Jewish people. Many of the students talked about famous Jews they had learned about themselves such as Albert Einstein, Shel Silverstein, Natalie Portman and Anne Frank. Of course we talked about Hanukkah and in our Hebrew lesson with Muriel we learned words associated with the holiday. We also sang the song S'vivon which we later taught to the pre-school students. The remainder of the class was spent rehearsing for the Hanukkah puppet show. We had a great time practicing and hope the audience enjoyed it!

Class Summary, Middles - November 2009

The main focus of last session was on the Ten Commandments. The students were introduced to the story of the Ten Commandments in a puppet show-type format. We followed the show with a discussion of each of the commandments. Of particular interest was the second commandment (commonly known as "do not

make idols”) which in the details actually states that only were the Israelites not to make idols or any images of Yahweh, but they were to not “make any sculptured image or any likeness of anything that is in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth.” We talked about this essentially meant people could not make pictures, sculptures, drawings, etc of anything in the natural world. I think they all decided that is not necessarily a commandment they felt they would want to follow (or one that makes sense to them). We had a good discussion about the ten commandments...the only commandment that actually tells people how to think and of the difficulty in following a commandment like this (“do not covet”). The discussion covered the common Jewish view of this commandment that it is important to not act upon these desires vs. other religion’s views that the commandment must be taken more literally. We talked about the “practical vs. “idealistic” interpretations. I got a sense from the students that they basically feel people should to try and live up to certain to that idealistic vision, but that it can be very difficult and the important thing to do is to try hard. Finally, as a group, the students came up with their own ten commandments:

1. Treat everyone fairly
2. Do not murder
3. Do not steal
4. Do not lie
5. Take care of the universe
6. Honor your father and mother
7. Stay as healthy as you can
8. Don’t be a bully
9. Share
10. Love

Commandment ten was a suggestion from Kai (spelling?) from the pre-school class.. everyone agreed it needed to be included.

We ended the class with the pre-school class by making toys for the small animals at the shelter. Stuffing toilet paper tubes with hay got a few of us sneezing, but we hope the animals enjoy them.

The information about the assignment for the next class can be downloaded [HERE](#). Each parent received a copy at the session, however I am posting it here

just in case anyone needs to take a look. Each student has been asked to select a Jew of interest to do some research on and prepare to tell the rest of the class what they learned about that person. My hope is that they can also learn how being Jewish and/or a Humanist influenced the person they selected throughout his or her life.
