

## **Little's Class Summary--April 21, 2013**

This week at Or Emet JCS we learned a tiny bit about the State of Israel with Mrs. Sarah. We colored pictures, reviewed the important phrase "Tikkun Olam," and read the book If Everybody Did. We brainstormed ways that we can help take care of ourselves, each other, and our world. At the very end, we cleaned up paper towels that had been hidden around the room by a mysterious, messy person (me). The class had fun finding them, and then flattening them out so we could reuse them (their idea). Thus, we learned that we can still clean up even if we didn't make the mess.

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## **Juniors Class Summary--March 24, 2013**

In March, the Juniors class concentrated on preparing for Passover as well as learning about the life and philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, one of Humanistic Judaism's most significant intellectual forebears. After sharing their favorite Passover foods/traditions and participating in an ice-breaker game, students listened to a brief talk focused on Baruch Spinoza, his Marrano ancestry and position within Amsterdam's Sephardic Jewish community of the 1500s, and this community's response to Spinoza's heretical ideas. Sarah Berman-Young arrived next to present the day's music and Hebrew lesson, and students worked along with her to review the Hebrew vocabulary of the Seder plate and practice singing "Ma Nishtana" (aka the Four Questions). After singing, the class returned to Spinoza, divvying up roles and acting out two scenes from John A. Gunn's 1932 play, Spinoza, The Maker of Lenses, to better acquaint themselves with the philosopher's life and ideas as well as the controversies that surrounded him. Performance concluded, students reflected briefly on the play and then turned their attention to reading short selections from Baruch Spinoza's The Ethics and

A Theologico-Political Treatise. Selections touched on Spinoza's ideas about determinism and relativism, God as a dispassionate force synonymous with nature, the foundations of a free and democratic state, and the Torah as a document compiled by ancient Jewish historians instead of the actual word of God as received by Moses. Students explained the meaning of their assigned selections to each other in their own words. Finally, the morning wrapped up with a fun opportunity for everyone to write their first letter to their assigned SHJ pen pal!

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## 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 do 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.
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## **Little's Class Summary--March 24, 2013**

This week at Or Emet's JCS we welcomed Mrs. Sarah back! She taught us the song "Let My People Go" and showed us the items on a Seder plate. We learned a pint-sized version of the Passover story, colored Passover pictures, sang a rousing rendition of "If You're Happy And You Know It," and even had time for a story at the end of the day.

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## **Juniors Class Summary--February 24, 2013**

During the February session, the Juniors class turned its focus to the Spanish Inquisition and its connections to the holiday of Purim. Students listened to a brief talk about the history of the Inquisition, learning how, just as Haman tried to get

rid of the Jews in Persia in the ancient Purim story, during the late 1400s and early 1500s CE powerful people sought to eliminate the Jewish presence in Spain. The class also learned that just as Esther conceals her Jewishness in the Purim story, during the Inquisition many Jews hid their Jewishness and pretended to be Catholic in order to save their lives, while many Jewish people also acted as bravely and courageously as Esther and her uncle Mordechai to save the lives of other Jews. After playing a quick warm-up game of "The Big Wind Blows," students selected partners and split into pairs to read *The Cardinal's Snuffbox*, a choose-your-own-adventure story set during the Spanish Inquisition. Partners worked together to read and make choices about what the story's main character, a Sephardic Jewish young person, ought to do when faced with all kinds of dangers and difficult decisions. After partners had the chance to read through a couple of different storylines, the class regrouped and discussed the different things, good and bad, that had befallen their character based on the choices that they made. Students reflected on what it would have been like to live during this difficult time in history, and shared the kinds of choices that they, as Jewish people, would have made. The discussion closed with a chance for the class to reflect on the positive as well as the negative qualities that the Inquisition brought out in people, and students brainstormed ways that horrible events like it could be prevented in the future. Finally, students listened to a recording of a Purim song called "El testamento de Aman" ("Haman's Will") from a Sephardic Jewish community in Morocco, following the lyrics in Ladino and translation and briefly discussing the song's connection to the Purim story and the Sephardic Jewish experience. The lesson concluded, the Juniors headed downstairs to have lots of fun at the Purim carnival!

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## **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.

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## **Little's Class Summary--February 24, 2013**

This week at Or Emet JCS we learned the Purim story. We stomped our feet, shouted, and made noise every time we heard the name "Haman." We got to make fun noise-makers out of paper plates and beans, and we learned an awesome Purim song. Afterwards, we all had fun at our Purim carnival with all of the JCS students!

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## **Juniors Class Summary--January 27, 2013**

The January session of the Juniors class focused on exploring the three main philosophies/ways of thinking about life and religion that Jewish people in the Sephardi and Mizrahi world developed during the Middle Ages. After opening with a brief opportunity for students to reflect on Tu B'Shevat and their own concerns about the environment, the class listened to a short talk that outlined these three primary philosophies--traditionalist, rationalist, and Kabbalist--and reinforced their connection to the holiday of Tu B'Shevat (which, with its focus on Israeli fruits and a "New Year for the Trees" that happens at a time when places like Minnesota are covered in snow, is very much connected to the Middle

Eastern Jewish experience). Then Sarah came in to lead the regular Hebrew and music lesson, and students learned some Tu B'Shevat-appropriate Hebrew vocabulary for fruits, grains, etc (like "rimon," meaning pomegranate) and sang the Israeli pioneer-farmer song "Zum Gali Gali" in rounds. Students returned then to their earlier discussion, and to learn more about traditional Jewish philosophy, they took part in a Talmudic-style debate about a real question from the Talmud-is it right for someone to remove rocks from their field and pile them on public land? Students debated the question in teams, and then reflected on how traditional Jewish philosophy agreed with their own judgement that public land must be protected and respected for the good of all. Next, after considering some ways that they didn't agree with traditional Jewish philosophy, the class moved to consider the rationalist philosophy-exemplified by Maimonides-that grew out of medieval Jewish interest in science. However, instead of using rationalism to support religious ideas, students took turns coming up with rational explanations for 'miraculous' events described in the Torah. Finally, to learn more about Kabbalah, or Jewish mystical philosophy, students collaborated on a creative fill-in-the-blanks activity that required them to draw or act out missing words in a short reading about the kabbalist origins of the Tu B'Shevat seder and kabbalist ideas about spheres of energy, divinity, and tikkun olam. Students closed the day by joining in the Or Emet Tu B'Shevat seder.

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## **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.

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# **Little's Class Summary--January 27, 2013**

It was a very fun and enlightening Sunday at Or Emet this week. We learned about trees, including the astonishing fact that they provide us with much of the oxygen that we breathe! We also read one of my all time favorite books: The Giving Tree. We sang, we colored, and we ate some really great snacks at our Seder!

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