

Juniors Class Summary--December 2, 2012

The Juniors class spent the December session focused mostly on Hanukkah. Students opened the class by sharing sentences that included Yiddish terms like “gelt” and “shvitsn” that they learned at the previous session. Then, after briefly reviewing the history of the Ashkenazi Jewish diaspora, they listened to a short talk on the subject of Ashkenazi Jewish folklore and folk heroes that introduced them to the character of Hershel of Ostropol—a famous prankster figure celebrated in Ashkenazi stories for his skill in outwitting the rich and powerful, and whose exploits are based on those of a real person who lived in 18th century Ukraine. Students took turns reading aloud the story Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins, breaking in the middle for a lesson with Sarah where they learned to sing the classic Yiddish song “Oy, Chanukah.” After returning to the book and finishing their reading, students took a snack break and then turned their attention to a short play script based on the Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins story, choosing roles and, after a brief round of auditions, voting to select the play’s lead. Once all roles were assigned, the class rehearsed the short play twice and brainstormed simple costuming ideas. The lesson closed with a class discussion that touched on the ways that Herschel and the Hanukkah Goblins can be read as an allegory for the Ashkenazi Jewish struggle against antisemitism, and students shared their knowledge about antisemitism, their experiences with it, and thoughts about how best to respond to it. After a morning by turns joyously lively and more thoughtful, the Juniors left the classroom prepared to sing “Oy, Chanukah” and perform their play at the upcoming Or Emet Hanukkah party.

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.

Little's Class Summary--December 2, 2012

This week at Or Emet JCS we read Chanukah stories, learned how the dreidel game is played, and lit a menorah. We also learned the dreidel song! We are very excited for the Chanukah party!

Juniors Class Summary--November 4, 2012

During the November lesson, the Juniors class shifted its focus to the beginnings of the Ashkenazi Jewish diaspora. After playing a warm-up game of Jewish food-themed Pictionary, students listened to a short lecture that touched on the founding of Jewish communities in Europe by traders about 1500 years ago, the development of Yiddish and Ashkenazi Jewish religious and cultural life, and the ways that Jewish life and migrations in Europe were shaped by antisemitism and economic pressure. To familiarize themselves more with Yiddish and become aware of the Yiddish words already a part of their daily vocabulary, the class split into teams and played a matching game that required students to transliterate Yiddish terms like “shtetl” and “oy vey” with the aid of Yiddish alphabet guides and then match them with their definitions. Sarah came after the game ended to teach everyone to sing the classic Yiddish folk song “Tumbalalaika.” Then, to prepare students for the last portion of the lesson, she taught the class some Hebrew vocabulary focused on cooking and kitchens. Students spent their last hour working together to cook two classic Ashkenazi dishes—potato knishes and carrot tsimmes—and then sampled the tasty results!

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.

Little's Class Summary--November 4, 2012

November was one of the rare months out of the year where we didn't have a Jewish holiday to discuss. Instead, we learned about mitzvot, and how we can help one another. We also started learning the Aleph Bet song, and did some Hebrew alphabet yoga with Mrs. Sarah!

Juniors Class Summary--October 7, 2012

The October session of the Juniors class focused on the history of the so-called Jewish "Golden Age" in Spain and North Africa. After introducing themselves to the day's visitor and sharing their Jewish New Year's resolutions, students reviewed the history of the diaspora covered in the previous session and split into two groups. Each group read a short excerpt from [A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People: From the Time of the Patriarchs to the Present](#) that focused on an aspect of this "Golden Age"; one group's reading described how Jewish people welcomed the advent of Muslim rule in the region in 711 CE because of the increased tolerance and freedom this rule afforded Jews, while the other group's reading focused on the spiritual/philosophical and literary achievements made by Jewish people during this age of increased freedom and prosperity. Each group worked to summarize what they learned and then shared their summaries with the larger group. Next, students looked briefly at a poem by "Golden Age" poet Samuel bin Nagrela (aka Shmuel HaNagid) and, using it as inspiration, wrote original poems from the perspective of imaginary Jewish people alive during this historical era. Many of the poems touched on the idea of 'convivencia,' or coexistence, which is

the term that people who study the “Golden Age” use to characterize relationships between Jews, Muslims, and Christians during this time-period. After some students shared their poems with the larger group, the class took a break to eat snack and help decorate the year’s sukkah panel.

When students returned to the classroom after their break, they learned about the important “Golden Age” Jewish thinker Maimonides and his ideas about tzedakah. They studied his “Ladder of Tzedakah” and discussed whether they had ever achieved its highest rung—helping a person to become self-sufficient. Students then selected prepared tzedakah boxes and began to paint them (using acrylic paint as well as matte medium to affix Maimonides’s Ladder of Tzedakah to each box), drawing inspiration from photos of the patterns found in “Golden Age” synagogue decorations. As they painted, students reflected on how they might fill their tzedakah boxes and where they would devote the money that they collected. Hebrew and music teacher Sarah Berman-Young popped in to play some Sephardic-style music while students worked. After class, many students and their families attended the Or Emet Sukkot party!

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.

Little's Class Summary--October 7, 2012

Our Little's class for the month of October was all about Sukkot. We read a story about a rooftop sukkah, learned a song about building a sukkah, and added to the Or Emet JCS sukkah panel. We also welcomed a new friend, Kai, to our class, which was extra exciting!

Juniors Class Summary--September 9, 2012

The Juniors class got off to a great start this session! Students introduced themselves to old friends and newer faces and played a game where they had the opportunity to guess fun Jewish facts (favorite traditions, Hebrew names, etc) about their classmates. Then, veteran JCS-ers explained to newcomers the things that make Or Emet and Humanistic Judaism unique.

Students next spent a short time reviewing the biblical/ancient Jewish historical topics that they studied last year, and then prepared to begin this year's study of the Jewish diaspora unfolding from the fall of the Second Temple through the early 1800s. (Note--the history of Jewish diaspora from the late 1800s until the modern day will be the focus of inquiry next year.) To visualize this Jewish diaspora, students began by sharing snippets of family history and marking the places that their Jewish ancestors came from with stickers on a world map. They discussed the geographic patterns that emerged on the map, and then read an excerpt from a Jewish history book for YA readers that summarizes the history of the Jewish people and their movements/migrations through the late 18th century.

After break and a Hebrew and music lesson with Sarah (where students learned a song about eating apples and honey for Rosh Hashanah as well as the traditional melody "B'rosh Hashanah"), students returned to the reading that they completed

before break. Focusing on different sections in small groups, they cut out arrows to describe different stages of movement in the Jewish diaspora and affixed them to the world map. After, students studied this map and discussed how their new understanding of Diaspora history helped them to make sense of the patterns that they saw in their classmates' Jewish family origins. Class ended with a combination cake walk-trivia game which gave students the chance to explore High Holidays traditions from around the Jewish diaspora. Highlights included sampling teiglach, pastry nuggets cooked in honey that are a Lithuanian-Jewish Rosh Hashanah specialty, and listening to Kol Nidre sung in Moroccan-Jewish style.
