
Retrofitting Jewish Practice

Informed Choice in the 21st Century

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Rationale:

In the Reform Jewish world, you sometimes hear, “I don’t have to do that because I am a Reform Jew.” In the Orthodox Jewish world, you sometimes hear, “I do this because my rabbi says so.” While these two statements appear to diametrically opposed, in truth they represent the same lack of ownership over personal Jewish practice. Since 1976, the Reform Jewish world has preached the concept of informed choice as a way for Jews to take ownership over their own practice.

“Judaism emphasizes action rather than creed as the primary expression of a religious life, the means by which we strive to achieve universal justice and peace. Reform Judaism shares this emphasis on duty and obligation. Our founders stressed that the Jew's ethical responsibilities, personal and social, are enjoined by God. The past century has taught us that the claims made upon us may begin with our ethical obligations but they extend to many other aspects of Jewish living...Within each area of Jewish observance Reform Jews are called upon to confront the claims of Jewish tradition, however differently perceived, and to exercise their individual autonomy, choosing and creating on the basis of commitment and knowledge.”

Practicing informed choice requires three steps. 1) The individual is called upon to become versed in halakhah and how it was developed. 2) The individual must experiment with these practices, using the knowledge that was gain. 3) The individual reflects upon the knowledge and the experience of practicing it to determine if, how, and to what extent it can best fit into their personal Jewish practice.

According to Jewish tradition, a young person becomes an adult, and responsible for their actions, at age thirteen. In terms of Reform Judaism, this is when a young person can begin the practice of informed choice. The purpose of this curriculum guide is to provide young people, 6th and 7th graders, with the tools necessary for making informed choices before they become accountable for their Jewish practice. Students will have a chance to explore three areas of halakhah: Berachot, Shabbat, and Pesach. One of the challenges of this age group is being a Jewish adult, while not being an adult in the outside world. Therefore, the author has chosen these three areas of halakhah to focus on as they largely relate to personal choices, without disrupting family dynamic.

Unit One is an introductory unit which will set up the frames for the rest of the class. It will cover the concepts of adulthood and informed choice, the resources available to students facilitate their deep study (also known as the “Jewish Library”), and the idea of hevruta learning, which will be discussed more in depth on another page.

Each of the three inner units brings students through a particular topic, from the purpose behind it to a specific practice within it. Unit Two looks at the source for saying blessings and will focus in on the food blessings said before meals. Unit Three looks at the concept of not working on Shabbat and will focus in on the use of electricity on Shabbat. Unit Four looks at the prohibition of eating hametz on Pesach and will focus in on the debate surrounding the food category of kitniyot.

Throughout the first four units, students will keep a journal for the class. This journal should be a repository for anything important from the class, including source sheets, notes that students wish to take, and responses to reflection prompts throughout the class. In Unit Five, students will use this journal as and everything in it as their main resource for the final assessment: their informed choice personal statement.

Students will pick one practice that has been covered in the course and write a statement that conveys the choice they have made concerning that practice, using both the knowledge they gained from their study and from their experience. These statements will go through several drafts, peer review, and teacher review, before they are presented to the community at large at a group ceremony on the last day of school.

By the end of this class, students will have gone through the study, practice, and reflection necessary for them to articulate the choices they are making about their own Jewish practice, and to continue making informed Jewish choices in the future.

Letter to the Teacher:

Dear Teacher,

Welcome to the world of halakha and informed choice. At first, it might appear to be an intense enterprise, as it requires you to know how to be able to understand and articulate texts that may not be familiar. The most important thing you can do is trust yourself and your students to go on a journey of self-discovery together.

As articulated in the rationale, this curriculum guide presents three steps necessary to support an informed choice. These are deep study, practice, and reflection. Deep study is what will happen in the classroom. Each of the three inner units brings students through a particular topic, from the purpose behind it to a specific practice within it. Each lesson is designed to be an hour long. While it is possible to extend this if the time is available to you, I would not suggest anything less than an hour, to ensure that students have time to work with their hevruta.

The next step is practice, which will take place outside of the classroom. This will require not only the buy in of the students but the buy in of the parents. I suggest sending a letter home to the parents at the beginning of the course, explaining what will be involved throughout that both parents and children will need to sign. At the beginning of each unit, send out a reminder letter to describe the particular practice their child is learning about in that unit and how to ensure that their child is participating in this important aspect of the curriculum.

Finally, have each student keep a journal that is specifically used for this class. This could be pasting in any handouts from the class, notes that the students may wish to take, and responses to reflection prompts. This journal will then become a resource for the students to draw upon when they come to the final unit and are faced with making their personal statement.

I hope you and your students enjoy the adventure you are about to embark on. It will inform the choices you make for the rest of your life.

Stacy Petersohn

Hevruta Style Learning

One of the hallmarks of this curriculum guide is that students will engage in hevruta style learning. A hevruta is often translated as a study partner. While it may look from the outside to be similar to small group learning, a hevruta can provide so much more. A hevruta should be the first sounding board of any ideas that arise from the text, challenge their partner to become more sharp and specific in their reasoning, and be a trusted confidant. According to Pirkei Avot, there is even an added level of holiness when two people study together, as it is said that God abides among them. It may take a while for some students to find the right match for them, but ultimately each student should find a good match.

Enduring Understandings:

1. Challenging, informed choices define Jewish adulthood.
2. Reform Judaism replaces obligation with informed choice.
3. Deep study, practice, and reflection inform Jewish choices.
4. A Jewish choice is not informed until it has a rationale.

Goals:

- Introduce students to the “Jewish Library” and how to use it.
- Encourage students in the practice of informed choice.
- Provide students with the tools to effectively make informed choices.

Essential Questions:

- What change happens when a person becomes a Jewish adult?
- How can the practice of informed choice impact my Judaism?

Important Texts:

- CCAR Responsum on Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- G-dcast Video about conflict
- Torah: Genesis 2, Exodus 20, Exodus 31, Deuteronomy 5, Exodus 12-13, Deuteronomy 16
- Mishnah: B’rachot Chapter 6:1-3, Pesachim 2:5
- Talmud: Masechet B’rachot 35a
- RaMBaM’s Mishneh Torah: Hilchot Brachot 1:2, 3:2, 8:1-2, Hilchot Shabbat
- Shulchan Arukh: Orach Chayyim Hilchot Brachot , Hilchot Shabbat, Hilchot Pesach 453:1
- “We will obey and we will hear” story from *The Classic Tales*
- Yeshiva University PDF on Electricity for Shabbat Candles

Authentic Assessment:

Students will pick one practice that has been covered in the course and write a statement that conveys the choice they have made concerning that practice, using both the knowledge they gained from their study and from their experience. These statements will go through several drafts, peer review, and teacher review, before they are presented to the community at large at a group ceremony on the last day of school.

Unit 1: Introduction to Informed Choice

(Unscripted)

Enduring Understandings:

1. Challenging, informed choices define Jewish adulthood.
2. Reform Judaism replaces obligation with informed choice.
3. Deep study, practice, and reflection inform Jewish choices.
4. A Jewish choice is not informed until it has a rationale.

Essential Questions:

- How can a person balance responsibility with autonomy?
- How can informed choice affect my life?
- How am I a part of the Jewish covenant?

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Define obligation and informed choice.
- Formulate a personal reflection on Jewish adulthood.
- Identify oneself as the newest link in the chain of Jewish discussion.

Building Block Assessments:

Students will respond to the following writing prompts:

Lesson 1-1: Describe how you feel about becoming a Jewish adult in the near future.

Lesson 1-2: If you could include one secular “text” (could be a book, song, poem, etc.) into the Jewish Library, what would it be and why?

Lesson 1-3: How do you feel about learning with a hevruta this year? What do you hope to gain from working with them?

Survey of Content:

- Important Resources:
 - CCAR Responsum on Bar/Bat Mitzvah
 - G-dcast Video about conflict
- Key Concepts:
 - Adulthood
 - Informed Choice
 - Contents of the Jewish Library: Torah, Mishnah, Talmud, Maimonides, Arba’ah Turim, Rav Joseph Karo, Rav Moshe Isserles, Mishnah Brurah, Rav Moshe Feinstein, CCAR Responsa
 - Working with and trusting a Hevruta

- Key Terms: hovah (obligation), minhag (custom), mitzvah (commandment), d'oraita (of Torah origin), d'rabanan (of rabbinic origin), patur (exempt), mutar (permitted), asur (forbidden)

Lesson 1-1: Adulthood and Informed Choice

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Describe the transition to adulthood as a moment when young Jews become active participants in the covenant.
- Define the ideas of “obligation” and “informed choice” in their own words.
- Develop an argument for the best method for Reform Jews to create their personal practice.

Activity 1:

As a class, have students brainstorm ideas about important markers of becoming an adult in America. (*Possible responses: first day of high school, getting your driver’s license, being able to vote, etc.*) Next, have students brainstorm ideas about important markers of becoming an adult in Judaism. (*Possible responses: Bar/Bat Mitzvah, confirmation, wedding*) In small groups, give students a handout containing a section of a CCAR responsum about Bar/Bat Mitzvah and its role in the Jewish community. As a class, come back together and discuss the following questions:

What happens when a young Jew comes of age? (*Possible response: enter adulthood*)

According to this text, what does it mean to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah? (*Possible responses: take on self-responsibility, more active role in synagogue, decision making*)

Activity 2:

Students will pretend to be going before the Central Conference of American Rabbis to pitch an idea of how the Reform movement should encourage people to make Jewish choices. Once the class is divided the class in half, one group will be assigned obligation, while the other will be assigned informed choice. Give the students enough time to come up with a five minute maximum presentation of why their position will be a stronger one for the Reform movement. Each group will give their presentation to their classmates and a panel of judges from among the senior staff of the synagogue (ex. Rabbi, Cantor, Educator, etc.) who will determine which group made the best case.

Lesson 1-1 Handout: CCAR Responsum on Bar/Bat Mitzvah¹

Bar and *Bat Mitzvah* are, virtually, universally observed by Reform Jews. They celebrate the coming to maturity for boys and girls and the accompanying obligations.

The ceremony possesses considerable meaning both to the young people and to their parents. It strengthens their bonds to Judaism and the synagogue, helps cement family ties, and marks a step in the religious education of each child.

The ceremony celebrates the entrance into the initial stages of adult life. It marks a change...a new degree of intellectual maturity, as demonstrated by the curricula of the Middle School and a wide variety of additional programs. Most important of all, it demands responsibility for *mitzvot* within the framework of the modern family and society. The actual responsibility assumed may be modest, but the process of decision-making must now be undertaken in a more serious manner.

¹ Jacob, Walter. "Reform Attitude Toward Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah." - CCAR. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 May 2015.

Lesson 1- 2: Welcome to the Jewish Library

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Research and report on the role and significance of one of 10 Jewish texts or personalities (see list below), for determining Jewish practice.
- Recall the names of all 8 sources or personalities in this curriculum's "Jewish Library," and describe one fact about it.

Activity 1:

The class will take a field trip to the library of the synagogue. Either in groups or individually, students will be assigned to research one of the following sources or personalities:

- Torah
- Mishnah
- Talmud
- Maimonides
- Rav Joseph Karo
- Rav Moshe Isserles
- Mishnah Brurah
- CCAR Responsa

Students may use both books and the internet to research; many of these have good entries in the Encyclopedia Judaica. Students who are assigned a person should focus on important biographical notes and their contributions to the field of Jewish law. Students who are assigned a body of work should focus on the contents of that work and the historical context in which it was written. Each group or individual will create a poster with the relevant information which will be presented to the class and then hung in the classroom as a reference guide for the rest of the course.

Activity 2:

Now that students have researched these topics and created posters, they need a way to remember these outside of the classroom. Depending on the size of the class, either in small groups or all together, come up with a mnemonic that the students can use to remember each of the 10 personalities and sources. Here is a helpful website for the different kind of mnemonics students can choose from:

9 Types of Mnemonics for Better Memory:
<http://www.learningassistance.com/2006/january/mnemonics.html>

Lesson 1-3: All's Fair in Love and Hevruta

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Articulate the purpose of hevruta-style learning
- Describe and justify what qualities students look for in a study partner

Activity 1:

As a class, watch the following video that describes a famous hevruta pair from Jewish tradition:

Hillel and Shammai: Disagreement for the Sake of Heaven

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aL9pok2a41o>

Break up into small groups and discuss the following questions:

How did Hillel and Shammai engage one another in debate?

Did the conversation ever come to the point where Hillel and Shammai attacked one another? *(Possible responses: Yes, but only verbally. No, they kept their conversations about the topic at hand)*

What can we take away from the model that they have set for us in our own discussions and disagreements, both in the classroom and out in the world? *(Possible responses: when discussing difficult topics with people, focus on the issue and do not attack the person.)*

Activity 2:

Hevruta Speed Dating (this can be done either as a whole class or in smaller groups, depending on your class size).

Students should be divided into two groups. The two groups should make concentric circles (one circle inside the other circle.) The inner circle should face outward to the outer circle. If numbers are even, each person on the inside should line up with the person on the outside. Give each pair a copy of a text, either the one provided or one of your choosing. (If there is an odd number, have that person pair up with someone in their circle and someone from the other circle) Each pair will have five minutes to discuss the text. After those five minutes, have the people on the outside circle move one to the right. Continue in this way for four or five more rounds. Students will not be able to have a chance work with everyone, but have the opportunity to work with a few people to determine what they look for in a hevruta.

Possible text to use: **One who learns from their friend a single chapter, or a single law, or a single verse, or a single word, or even a single letter, he must treat him with respect. (Pirkei Avot 6:3)**

Lesson 1-4: Making Decisions

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Describe a moment in their life when they made an important choice
- Create a skit portraying a difficult decision

Activity 1:

Divide students into groups of three or four. Each group will be handed a scenario in which a choice needs to be made. (For example: the school dance falls on Erev Shabbat, a fellow classmate asks them to skip class) Every group should come up with a skit that illustrates their situation and the choice the group has decided to make.

Activity 2:

Ask students to think of a time recently when they had to make a Jewish choice. Students should respond to the following questions in their journals.

What choice did you make?

How did you arrive at that choice?

A few students who are comfortable should share.

Tell students that through the class they will be examining three different areas of Jewish practice, putting them into action, and reflecting upon the using the following questions:

What practice are you looking at?

What kind of study did you do into that practice?

What was the implementation of that practice like?

What choice are you making, and how did you come to that decision?

Unit 2: Blessing over Food

(Unscripted)

Note to Teacher:

Now you are entering the first of the three units in which students will go through the stages of study, practice, and reflection necessary to make their informed choice at the end of the class. As I mentioned in the first “Note to Teacher”, you should send home a letter prior to beginning this unit explaining the topic of this unit. Something that should be included in this letter is a short description of the ritual practice that will be expected from students during this unit. Student will be expected to recite blessings over their food at meals outside the classroom.

Enduring Understandings:

1. Reform Judaism replaces obligation with informed choice.
2. Deep study, practice, and reflection inform Jewish choices.
3. A Jewish choice is not informed until it has a rationale.

Essential Questions:

- Does the act of blessing food alter the perspective on the act of eating?

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Articulate the importance of the act of blessing food in their own words.
- Define the six food blessings and what food they are associated with.
- Match the six blessings to their respective food types. And recite the blessing.
- Reflect upon the practice of saying food blessings.

Survey of Content:

- Important Texts:
 - Mishnah: Masechet B’rachot Chapter 6:1-3
 - Talmud: Masechet B’rachot 35a
 - RaMBaM’s Mishneh Torah: Hilchot Brachot 1:2, 3:2, 8:1-2
 - Shulchan Arukh: Orach Chayyim Hilchot Brachot
 - “We will obey and we will hear” story from *The Classic Tales*
- Key Concepts:
 - Nothing from this world should be enjoyed without a blessing
 - Hierarchy of food blessings
 - Making a commitment to a choice

Lesson 2-1: Why do we bless?

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Articulate the importance of the act of blessing food according to the Talmudic rabbis in their own words.
- Create their own reason describing the importance of blessing food before eating.

Activity 1:

Divide up the class into small groups. Assign each group a piece of the opening text of Masechet B'rachot 35a from the Babylonian Talmud, which addresses the source and reason for blessing food before eating. Each group should read the text to understand the argument it is making. Come back together as a class. Next, have a debate between the groups that articulates the different perspectives about blessing food before eating. Determine if the different groups can come to a consensus or not. What is the final reasoning that is left at the end of the argument?

Activity 2:

In their journals, students should respond to the following prompt:
What do you think of the reason blessings being that "Nothing should be enjoyed without a blessing"? Now, create your own reason for saying blessings.

Lesson 2-3: Connecting food to its blessing

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Recite the 6 different “before eating” food blessings
- Match foods to their blessing

Activity 1:

Bring in an array of foods and drinks that apply to each of the 6 “before eating” food blessings. Be sure to include grape juice as it is one of only two things that receive the blessing for fruit of the vine (the other being wine). Place these throughout the room, with a small box, pieces of paper, and a couple pencils next to it. Each student should take their journal and a pencil, and write their guess as to which blessing each food receives. Once they record their answer, they place their guess in the box. Give students time to inspect each food. When everyone has finished, each student should take a box and tally up the guesses. As a class, present the results of the guesses together and reveal the real answer of each food to the students.

Lesson 2-4 Handout: Food Blessings

Blessed are You, HaShem, our God, ruler of the universe who causes bread to come forth from the ground.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן־הָאָרֶץ.
Blessed are You, HaShem, our God, ruler of the universe, who creates many kinds of sustaining food.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵנוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי מְזֻנוֹת.
Blessed are You, HaShem, our God, ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.
Blessed are You, HaShem, our God, ruler of the universe who creates fruit of the tree.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵנוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.
Blessed are You, HaShem, our God, ruler of the universe, who creates fruit of the ground.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵנוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה.
Blessed are You, HaShem, our God, ruler of the universe, that everything comes into being by God's word.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵנוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדִבְרוֹ.

Lesson 2-4: What to do when eating more than one food?

Objectives:

Student should be able to:

- Identify the hierarchy of the food blessings.
- Apply the logic of the hierarchy of the food blessings to various complex meal situations.

Activity 1:

Hand out a text sheet that describes some of the different steps and ways of determining the blessing one should say over a whole meal. Have student work together in their hevruta pairs to discover some of these organizing principles. Afterwards, have students reflect on which of the styles presented to them made the most sense, and why.

Lesson 2-5: Commitment to Jewish Practice

Objectives:

Student should be able to:

- Define commitment in their own words
- Apply the idea of commitment to personal choice

Definition of Commitment: the hard work & loyalty that someone gives to an organization, activity, or person

Activity 1:

Tell students to stand in a straight line. Each student will Give each student a number (not in order). Tell them the object of the game is to eventually have all the students stand in a straight line in numerical order. Here is the catch: the students can only move two at a time. The students cannot stand out of line, they can only move with the person next to them. They cannot break or get out of line. If they get out of line, they have to sit out.

Questions after the game:

- Does anyone know the definition of commitment? Discuss the definition stated above.
- How was commitment shown in this activity? Answer: committed to each other by staying in line, following the rules, staying patient, etc...
- Was everyone committed to working together in order to achieve the goal? Explain.

Activity 2:

Pass out copies of the story “We will listen and we will hear” to each hevruta. Students should read the story together and respond to the following questions:

- How does this story show commitment?
- Share a moment in your life where you have shown commitment to a person, activity or organization. For example, “I have been in the band program for four years. I have been committed to both the directors and my fellow members because...”

- What can happen if we give up and don't show commitment?
- How do we show commitment to our personal choices?
- Is it possible slip up and still be committed?

Unit 3: Work on Shabbat

(Unscripted)

Note to Teacher:

Remember to send home the letter to the parents about the practice for this unit. In this case, it is not using electricity on Shabbat

Enduring Understandings:

1. Reform Judaism replaces obligation with informed choice.
2. Deep study, practice, and reflection inform Jewish choices.
3. A Jewish choice is not informed until it has a rationale.

Essential Questions:

- How can taking a day off of work each week affect my life?
- Are traditional Shabbat practices restful? If yes, how? If not, why not?

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Articulate the purpose of Shabbat in their own words.
- Define the prohibition of work on Shabbat
- Apply the practice of no electricity on Shabbat.
- Evaluate the personal impact of not using electricity for a full Shabbat.

Survey of Content:

- Important Texts:
 - Torah: Genesis 2, Exodus 20, Exodus 31, Deuteronomy 5
 - RaMBaM's Mishneh Torah: Hilchot Shabbat
 - Shulchan Arukh: Orach Chayyim Hilchot Shabbat
 - Yeshiva University PDF on Electricity for Shabbat Candles
(http://www.yutorah.org/_materials/Printable_copy-506518.pdf)
- Key Concepts:
 - Shabbat as a day of rest
 - refrain from work
 - enjoyment of Shabbat
- Key Terms: menuchah(rest), oneg(enjoyment), melachah(forbidden work), hovah (obligation), minhag (custom)

Lesson 3-1: What is the Purpose of Shabbat?

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Examine a piece of text about Shabbat from the Bible
- Analyze the connection between refraining from work and resting on Shabbat

Activity 1:

Students will receive the text of Genesis 2, Exodus 20, Exodus 31, and Deuteronomy 5. They will divide up and work on these texts with their hevruta. Depending on the number of pairs present, you can assign a specific text to different groups. While with their hevruta, they will have to answer the following questions out of the text:

- What is the origin of Shabbat?
- What is the connection between Shabbat and work?
- What are the reasons the Torah gives for celebrating Shabbat?
- What kind of person has the ability to rest once a week?

Lesson 3-2: Candles and Fire on Shabbat

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Differentiate between an obligation and a custom.
- Analyze halakhic texts about fire and lighting candles on Shabbat.

Activity 1:

Create a concept attainment exercise where one side of the page is a list of obligations according to Jewish tradition and the other side is a list of customs. In groups of three or four, students are given time together to determine the connection between the things in each list and the difference between each list.

Lesson 3-3: Case Study of Electricity on Shabbat

Objectives:

Student should be able to:

- Analyze a modern teshuvah about the use of electricity on Shabbat.
- Determine the connection between fire and electricity

Activity:

Students will receive the text of a modern teshuvah concerning electricity on Shabbat. They will divide up and work on this with a study partner. While with their partner, they will have to answer the following questions out of the text:

What connection does the author draw between fire and electricity?

Is it possible to use electricity instead of candles and fulfill the mitzvah of kindling light on Shabbat? In what circumstances might this be preferable?

Lesson 3-4: Letter of the Law vs. Spirit of the Law

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Describe the difference between the “letter of the law” and the “spirit of the law”
- Develop a personal Shabbat practice that fits the spirit of rest on Shabbat, but may violate the prohibition of work.

Activity 1:

Around the classroom, hand up pictures of different activities. (For example: watching a movie, reading a book, playing in a sandbox, a family playing a game) First, ask students to go stand by the picture they think fits the prohibition against work on Shabbat. Take a few responses as to why students picked the ones they picked. Second, ask students to go stand by the picture they think fits the idea of rest on Shabbat, regardless of if it might actually be considered “work”.

Activity 2:

In their journals, students should respond to the following prompt:

Create a personal practice that you can do on Shabbat that is restful, but may be considered work.

Unit 4: Kitniyot on Pesach

(Scripted)

Note to Teacher:

Remember to send the letter to the families about this unit's practice. In this one, it is concerning kitniyot on Pesach. In this case, encourage parents to help their child stick to whatever their family custom is.

Enduring Understandings:

1. Being a Jewish adult requires making challenging, informed choices.
2. Informed choice necessitates deep study, practice, and personal reflection.
3. Informed choice demands the articulation of the reason behind each choice.

Essential Questions:

- How does a *minhag* (custom) evolve from a *halakha* (law)?
- Can a personal informed choice be affected by external forces (family, friends, etc)?

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Define the categories of *hametz*, *matzah*, and *kitniyot* according to traditional *halakhah*.
- Articulate the difference between Ashkenazi and Sephardi customs.
- Apply the rules surrounding *kitniyot* in the world outside the synagogue.
- Evaluate the personal impact of avoiding *kitniyot* during Pesach.

Survey of Content:

- Important Texts:
 - Torah: Exodus 12-13, Deuteronomy 16
 - Mishnah Pesachim 2:5
 - Shulchan Arukh: Orach Chayyim Hilchot Pesach 453:1
- Key Concepts:
 - A minhag can take on the level of halakha
 - Choices cannot be made without thinking about one's family
- Key Terms: hametz (leavened bread), matzah (unleavened bread), kitniyot (legumes), minhag (custom), Ashkenazim (Eastern European Jews), Sephardim (Spanish Jews)

Lesson 4-1: Introduction to Pesach

Objectives:

Student should be able to:

- Describe the two mitzvot associated with Pesach
- Identify and compare the important ritual foods found in different haggadot.

Set Induction (10 min):

On the board, write the following prompt for students to answer in their journals as they walk into the classroom:

How does food relate to the observance of Jewish holidays? What are some of the foods that come to your mind?

Activity 1 (15 min): Review the Story

Say: Today, we are beginning a new unit, looking at mitzvot of Passover, Pesach in Hebrew. The first mitzvah of Pesach is to retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Each hevruta pair will receive one set of slips of paper with certain parts of the story. Your task is to arrange these in order of the story as best as possible. Once everyone is complete, we will review together.

Pass out the slips of paper, and give students time to arrange the story parts in order. When each group is complete, gather all of them together to review the order of the story.

Say: What is the first piece of our story? (Potential student responses: Israelites are slaves in Egypt, Joseph brings his family down to Egypt, Abraham makes covenant with God.)

Say: What is the second piece of the story? (Potential student responses: Jacob went down to Egypt, Israelites are enslaved)

Continue in this manner until students have reconstructed the story presented in the haggadah from Abraham's covenant to leaving Egypt for freedom.

Activity 2 (30 min): Haggadah Sing Down

Pass out several different editions of the haggadah. Divide the students into as many groups as there are haggadot. As a group, have students scour the haggadah for any mentions of ritual food that appears and record what the food is and its purpose in retelling the story of Passover. Students do not need to duplicate foods that appear more than once.

Say: Now that we have reminded ourselves of the story of Pesach, we will take a look at the ritual foods that help us to tell the story. A ritual food is a food that represents a part of the story of a holiday, in our case that would be Pesach. For example: the salt water represents the tears that the Israelites cried while suffering under the Egyptians. Can someone give me another example? (Potential student answer: the charoset represents the mortar used in building up Egypt.) Good, now in small groups I want all of you to look through these haggadot to find as many as you can.

Once all the groups have created the list, have a “sing down”. One group at a time will mention one of the foods that are on their list and what it represents. If that food appears on the list of the other teams, they need to cross it off. Continue around the groups until all the foods have been mentioned.

Say: For the second half of this activity, we will use the rules of a sing down. Each group will get a chance to share one ritual food on their list, and if it appears on anyone else’s list, they must cross it off. Group A, tell me one food on your list. (Potential student response: matzah). Everyone else cross that food off your list. Up next, Group B.

Wrap Up (5 min)

Review what has been covered today, the story and how the foods of the seder relate to telling the story. Announce that for the rest of the unit you will be looking specifically at one of the foods in particular, matzah, and the rules surrounding it.

Lesson 4-1 Story Organizing Activity

Abraham made a covenant with God.

Jacob brought his family down to Egypt.

The Israelites are enslaved in Egypt.

God hears the people crying out.

God sends out the ten plagues.

Pharaoh grants the Israelites their freedom.

The first Pesach seder.

The Israelites leave the towns that they had lived in while in Egypt.

God parts the waters of the Red Sea.

God gives Torah to the Israelites.

Lesson 4-2: What is Hametz?

Objectives:

Student should be able to:

- Identify the difference between *hametz* and *matzah*.
- Explain in their own words the connection between the story of Pesach and the prohibition of *hametz*.

Set Induction (10 min):

Place a piece of bread and a piece of matzah in front of the students. Have them describe the similarities and differences between the two in their journals. (Note: students may ask if they are looking for something specific such as color, ingredients, shape, etc. Tell them that anything they can come up with is a valid answer.)

Activity 1 (30 min): Hevruta

Explain to students that, during Pesach, Jews are traditionally forbidden from eating *hametz*, leavened bread, and must eat *matzah* to fulfill one of the mitzvot of the holiday. Give students text sheets that describe the definition of *hametz* and the line that is drawn between *hametz* and *matzah*. Students should pair up with their hevruta to discuss these texts.

Say: Today, we will be looking at the traditional prohibition of eating hametz on Pesach. On your source sheet, you will find texts that trace the line of this prohibition from the Torah to later halakhic writers. Get together with your hevruta to go over these sources. Be sure to pay attention to the framing questions.

Activity 2 (15 min): Discussion

Bring the students back together as a whole class. Go over the texts and any questions the students have to clarify the ideas presented in the text.

Questions to ask the students:

Why do we eat matzah during Pesach? (possible responses: God said to, did not have time to let the bread rise as we left, remember leaving Egypt)

What kind of grains can be made into matzah? (possible responses: wheat, barley, spelt, oats, and rye)

What is the connection between hametz and matzah (possible responses: matzah can only be made from grains that also make hametz)

Questions students might ask:

How do these grains make hametz? (Response: the flour of these grains rise after being mixed with water)

This text says that it is okay to eat rice on Pesach, but my parent says that we don't eat it on Pesach, why? (Response: over time, some people have developed different traditions around what is okay to eat, and what is not okay to eat on Pesach. We will more closely at some of those next.)

Wrap up (5 min):

Have students respond to the following prompt in their journals:

What are the possible complications that might arise from the distinction between *hametz* and *matzah*? Is there a possible grey area that has not been addressed yet?

Lesson 4-2: What is Hametz?

Exodus 12:14-15

This day (Pesach) shall be to you one of remembrance: you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD throughout the ages; you shall celebrate it as an institution for all time. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread (*matzah*); on the very first day you shall remove leaven (*hametz*) from your houses.

Exodus 12:18, 20

In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat *matzah* until the twenty-first day of the month at evening...You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your settlements you shall eat *matzah*.

Deuteronomy 16:3-4

You shall not eat anything leavened with it; for seven days you shall eat *matzah*, bread of the poor – for you departed from the land of Egypt hurriedly – so that you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt as long as you live. For seven days no *hametz* shall be found with you in all your territory.

Questions:

What do the texts in Exodus say about *hametz* and *matzah* during Pesach?

What does the text from Deuteronomy add to those from Exodus?

Mishnah Pesachim 2:5

These are the types of grain with which one may fulfill his obligation of *matzah* on the first night of Pesach: Wheat, barley, spelt, rye, and oats. [*Matzah* must be made from flour that can become *hametz*.]

Shulchan Arukh 453:1

The following are the grains with which one can fulfill the obligation to eat *matzah*: wheat, barley, spelt, oats, and rye. However, one cannot fulfill with rice or other kinds of *kitniyot* (buckwheat, beans, mustard seed, etc.) *Kitniyot* also do not become leavened and it is therefore permitted to prepare a cooked dish out of them for Pesach use.

Questions:

How does the text in Mishnah Pesachim describe *matzah*?

What is the connection between *matzah* and *hametz*?

What group of food cannot become *matzah*? Why is that?

Lesson 4-3: What is Kitniyot?

Objectives:

Student should be able to:

- Describe the role of kitniyot in the Pesach traditions.
- Compare Ashkenazi and Sephardi traditions in terms of kitniyot.

Set Induction (10 min):

Around the room, post pictures of plants that either produce grains that are forbidden on Pesach or that are permitted on Pesach. (Include wheat, barley, corn, beans, rice, quinoa, mustard, oats, and rye) With each picture, there should be a number and a chart, on one side it says forbidden and the other side permitted. Students should go around and examine the pictures and mark whether they think this plant produces a grain that is forbidden or permitted.

When students finish, look at each picture, how many students said it was forbidden, how many students said it was permitted. Then reveal the name of the plant and its actual status of either forbidden or permitted.

Activity 1 (20 min): Hevruta

Explain to students that, over the centuries, the Ashkenazim (eastern European Jews) and the Sephardim (Spanish Jews) have developed different traditions. Give students text sheets that describe the different traditions surrounding a new category of food, kitniyot. Students should pair up with their hevruta to review these texts and answer the accompanying questions.

Say: We just looked at some foods that are forbidden on Pesach and some that are permitted. As we talked about last week, the foods that are forbidden on Pesach, hametz, rise when combined with water. At one point, the foods that are permitted were allowed for everyone to eat. But over time, some communities have developed different customs concerning a group of food called kitniyot, foods that look similar to grains that can become hametz. Now we will look at how different communities approach kitniyot.

Activity 2 (15 min): Discussion

Bring the students back together as a whole class. Discuss the texts and any questions the students have to clarify the ideas presented in the text.

Questions to ask the students:

Who originated the idea of not eating kitniyot on Pesach? (Possible responses: Rav Moshe Isserles, Raba, the Babylonian Jewish community, the Ashkenazi Jewish community)

How can we resolve these two origins? (Possible response: the Ashkenazi Jewish community was influenced by the text from Pesachim 40b.)

How can not eating kitniyot elevate your experience of Pesach? How can it detract from it? (Possible responses: heighten awareness of the kind of food that is not permitted on Pesach, provide too much focus on the food element rather than on the celebrating freedom aspect of the holiday)

Question the students might ask:

How can there be more than one reason for not eating kitniyot? (Response: The different reasons for not eating kitniyot reflect both the place and time in which they were developed.)

Journal Response (10 min):

Have students respond to the following prompt in the journals:

What are some reasons for people to eat kitniyot on Pesach, even if they are Ashkenazi? How would you characterize new world foods like corn and quinoa?

Wrap up (5 min):

Have students stand up. Create a spectrum between 1 and 10 across the room, where 1 is lenient and 10 is very strict. Ask students to place themselves along the spectrum for the following question:

Where might you place your own sense of your Jewish decision making when it comes to using halachic principles?

Go around room, ask students for the number they picked and a brief explanation.

Lesson 4-3 Handout: Kitniyot on Pesach

Rav Joseph Karo - Shulchan Arukh 453:1

The following are the grains with which one can fulfill the obligation to eat matzah: wheat, barley, spelt, oats, and rye. However, one cannot fulfill with rice or other kinds of *kitniyot* (buckwheat, beans, mustard seed, etc.) *Kitniyot* also do not become leavened and it is therefore permitted to prepare a cooked dish out of them for Pesach use.

Rav Moshe Isserles – HaMapah Shulchan Arukh 453:1

There are authorities who forbid this (eating *kitniyot* on Pesach). It is the practice of Ashkenazic communities to be strict.

Mishnah Berurah comment on HaMapah Shulchan Arukh 453:1

The reason for this stricture is that grain is sometimes mixed with these kinds of *kitniyot*. It is impossible to sort out the grain well and the grain that is left with them will become leavened when one bakes or cooks them...Therefore, these communities accepted upon themselves to be strict with *kitniyot* on Pesach and they forbade all bread and all cooked dishes from them.

Questions:

- Which custom does Joseph Karo represent? Moshe Isserles?
- How do these two customs differ from one another?
- What explanation does the Mishnah Berurah give for not eating *kitniyot* on Pesach?
- Who created the custom of not eating *kitniyot* on Pesach for Ashkenazi Jews?
- What conflicts can arise because of the difference between the Ashkenazi tradition and the Sephardi tradition?

Talmud Pesachim 40b

R. Papa permitted the stewards of the house of the *Reish Galuta* (head of the Babylonian Jewish community) to mash a dish with *chasisi*. Said Raba: Is there anyone who permits such a thing?

Tosfot on Talmud Pesachim 40b

Chasisi – these are lentils (a kind of *kitniyot*)

Questions:

- This story presents a different reason for not eating *kitniyot*. What is it?
- Does this change the way you view what Rav Moshe Isserles and the Mishnah Berurah said about this custom? If so, how?

Lesson 4-4: Grocery Store Visit

Note to Teacher: Be sure to prepare for this lesson ahead of time. First, determine which store you are going to. One that is close to your school will be optimal, especially if it is in walking distance. If there is not one nearby, arrange for parents who will drive students to the store. Depending on how many students you have, ensure that there is at least one parent for every three or four students. This will ensure that one parent can accompany each group while in the store. Everyone should meet at the school first, then head over to the store together. Remind students that by going on off the school's campus, they will be thought of as representing the school, and should act accordingly.

Expressive Activity:

Students will have the opportunity to react to grocery shopping for Pesach, according to Ashkenazi custom of avoiding kitniyot.

Eisnerian Outcome:

Students will have the opportunity to reflect on the experience and express their reflections through guided questions.

Activity:

Students will come to a local grocery store to practice grocery shopping for Pesach. Students will be divided up into small groups of three or four. Each group will be given a sheet of paper that lists foods that do not need a heksher, possible hekshers they will see on food packages, and ingredients to avoid.

Each group will be tasked with gathering food for a particular meal: breakfast, lunch, or dinner. At the end of the experience, have the students respond to the following prompt in their journals:

Describe the experience of searching for foods that are kosher for Pesach.

What did you find easy? What did you find to be hard?

How might this experience influence your choice about not eating kitniyot during Pesach?

Lesson 4-4 Handout: Food List for Grocery Story Trip

Foods that do not need a heksher:

Fruits
Vegetables
Eggs
Dairy Products
Meat

Possible hekshers to see:

A circle with a letter U inside, and a letter P next to it
A circle with a letter K inside, and a letter P next to it
A star with a letter K inside, and a letter P next to it
A *kaf* with a letter K inside, and a letter P next to it

Ingredients and foods to avoid:

Flour
Corn (flour, meal, syrup)
Soy
Peanut (butter, oil)
Legumes (green beans, peas, lentils, all beans)
Rice
Buckwheat
Mustard

What meal are you assigned to create (circle one): Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

What are the items you have identified as being kosher for your meal (specify the brand on packaged items):

Lesson 4-5: Shalom Bayit and Informed Choice

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Articulate the meaning of “Shalom Bayit”
- Compare and contrast
- Evaluate and express the role Shalom Bayit plays in making informed choices

Set Induction (20 min):

Trust Walk

Before class, set up a mini obstacle course using chairs and other objects you can find. Students pair up with their hevruta. Ask one partner to be the navigator (guide), and the other to be blindfolded. When the blindfolded partner is ready, slowly spin the person around a few times so that they do not know which direction they are headed. From this point on, the guide should not touch the partner at all, but rely on verbal cues (e.g. “About five steps ahead, there is a branch. Step over it slowly.”)

The guide is solely responsible for his or her partner’s safety. He or she should be navigated to avoid obstacles. In this way, participants learn valuable lessons related to teamwork: the guide learns about the challenge and responsibility of caring for another individual’s well-being, while the blindfolded partner learns to trust and rely on another person. Ask participants to reflect and share upon their experiences.

Sample Questions:

- *What was the purpose of this activity?*
- *What was it like to be the guide, responsible for the safety of your partner?*
- *Did you have any difficulty trusting your partner while blindfolded? Why or why not?*
- *How well did you communicate with each other? Was communication, trust or both the key to success here?*
- *Why is trust in your teammates important?*
- *How did it feel when you and your teammate successfully trusted each other to accomplish something challenging?*
- *How does this relate to being part of a family?*

Activity 1: Hevruta (20 min)

Students continue to be paired up with their hevruta. Hand them a text sheet that includes the stories of Jacob deceiving Isaac for Esau's blessing and Joseph telling his dream to his father.

Say: Today, we are looking at shalom bayit. Shalom bayit literally means "peace in the home". Examine the texts with your hevruta, and focusing on the dynamics between father and son.

Activity 2 (10 min):

Bring the class back together. On the board write up the following two quotes:

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God gives you." (Exodus 20:12)

"Hear, my child, the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother." (Proverbs 1:8)

Pose the following questions to the class:

How do we honor our parents and gain their trust and respect? (Possible responses: listening to them, following their rules, recognizing that their rules are to keep us safe)

What do we do when they just frustrate us and make us so mad with their rules or expectations? (Possible responses: cry, keep calm, express feelings)

Is it important to keep shalom bayit and honoring parents in mind when making an informed choice?

Activity 3 (10 min):

Students should respond to the following prompt:

How can I involve my parents in making informed choices without them choosing for me?

Lesson 4-5 Handout: Shalom Bayit and Informed Choice

Genesis 27:18-2

[Jacob] went to his father and said, "Father." [Isaac] said, "Yes, which of my sons are you?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau, your first born; I have done as you told me." ...Isaac said to Jacob, "Come closer that I may feel you, my son – whether you are really my son Esau or not." So Jacob drew close to his father Isaac, who felt him and wondered. "The voice is the voice of Jacob, yet the hands are the hands of Esau." He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; and so he blessed him.

Questions:

What is Jacob doing?

Why is he lying to his father?

What do you think will happen to their relationship when the truth comes out?

Genesis 37:9-11

[Joseph] dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers, saying "Look, I have had another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." And when he told it to his father and brothers, his father berated him, He said to him, "What is this dream you have dreamed? Are we to come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow low to you to the ground?"

Questions:

What makes Jacob so angry?

Did Joseph mean for that to happen?

What could Jacob have done for a better result? What about Joseph?

Unit 5: Making an Informed Choice

(Unscripted)

Enduring Understandings:

1. Challenging, informed choices define Jewish adulthood.
2. Reform Judaism replaces obligation with informed choice.
3. Deep study, practice, and reflection inform Jewish choices.
4. A Jewish choice is not informed until it has a rationale.

Essential Questions:

- How will making an informed choice affect me in the future?

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Articulate and defend an informed choice they are making based on the learning, practice, and reflection throughout the year.
- Evaluate and provide feedback on the informed choice personal statements of fellow students.
- Present personal statements about one informed choice they have decided to make to the synagogue community.

Lesson 5-1 Invitation Workshop Day

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- Compose a letter to invite family, friends, and community members to their end of the year ceremony.

Activity 1:

As a class, develop an invitation that students will send out to people in their lives, both in and out of the synagogue, to come to their end of the year presentations.

Included in this invitation should be:

- A description of the learning students have gone through over the past year
- A description of the personal statement that students will be sharing
- The time and date of the presentation
- The location of the presentation
- An RSVP contact (teacher, school secretary, or educator)
- An RSVP date (two weeks before the presentation)

This invitation should be sent out as separate emails to their parents and the synagogue's clergy, educator, and president.

Lesson 5-2: Writing Day

Objectives:

Student should be able to:

- Articulate and defend an informed choice they are making.
- Write a first draft of their informed choice personal statement.

Activity 1:

Using their journals, students will review the three practices that have been covered over the last year, saying blessings before eating, not using electricity on Shabbat, and avoiding *kitniyot* during Pesach. Each student will choose one topic from the year to write a personal statement about the choice they are making. Provide students with the following questions to help write their first drafts:

What practice are you looking at?

What kind of study did you do into that practice?

What was the implementation of that practice like?

What choice are you making, and how did you come to that decision?

Students can work alongside their hevruta so they have someone to discuss their ideas with and help them articulate their thoughts.

Lesson 5-3: Peer Review Day

Objectives:

Student should be able to:

- Review the informed choice personal statements of fellow students.

Activity:

Depending on the size of the class, this can be done as a whole class or in smaller groups four or five. Everyone should be sitting around a large table(s), with their personal statements in hand. Next they will pass their statement to the person on the left, so that everyone has the personal statement of another student. For five minutes, they will review the personal statement in front of them. In their review they should consider the following ideas:

- What topic (blessing, Shabbat, or Pesach) is this person focusing on?
- Does this person talk about the interaction between what they have studied and what they experienced in practicing it?
- Is the choice being expressed in this statement explained clearly?

After five minutes, student should pass the personal statement in front of them to the person on the left. Continue in this fashion for as many rounds possible.

Lesson 5-4: Editing Day

Objectives:

Student should be able to:

- Revise their personal statements using the notes provided by their peers in the last class.

Activity:

Students will take the notes that their peers gave them on their personal statements from the week before and incorporate them. At the end of class, students will give their personal statements to their teacher for one more review of grammar and

Lesson 5-5: Presentation Day

Expressive Activity:

Students will have the opportunity to react to presenting their personal statements to their parents, senior staff, and important guests.

Eisnerian Outcome:

Students will have the opportunity to reflect on the experience and express their reflections through a discussion with their parents.

Activity:

Students will present their personal statements before an audience made up of their parents and the synagogue's, clergy, educator, and president.

When all of the presentations are completely, students will join their parents for a reflective discussion about their personal choices. Hand out pieces of paper with the following questions to facilitate the discussion between the students and their parents:

- Does your child's informed choice make sense to you? How so? Any questions about it?
- Do you think you might like to engage in this practice with your child? How so, not so? If not so, what are some ways you think your child could be supported to do so in a home where people are practicing different ways?
- What impresses you about the process and decision your child made?
- What feelings and reflections about your own personal Jewish practices might these students' statements raise for you?

When these individual discussions finish, the educator or rabbi will share insights with the parents and the students about what they heard, and reflect back to them insights, observations about the process as a whole.

Finally, congratulate the students for starting the journey of making informed Jewish choices.

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