



Using Drama In The Classroom: A Multi-Lesson Unit

Submitted by: *Shari Ancell Kark*

Subject Area: Bible

Target Age Group: Elementary (Ages 6 – 10)

Duration: Multi-lesson Unit

Abstract:

Students participate in short written dialogues that can be presented with little or no rehearsal. These dialogues are designed to help young students become aware of the lessons the people in the Bible needed to learn. The drama can then be applied to lessons that need to be faced today. These dramatic dialogues have been used with multi-aged classrooms. The questions at the end of each drama provide participation for a variety of maturity levels.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Parsha People dialogues for all students in the class (if dialogues are used as a small group reading lesson.)
- A copy of The Chumash (Bible) for reference and to acquaint students with the sequence of the dialogues.
- A copy of the “Great March: Post Biblical Jewish Stories”, Rose G. Lurie. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York 1954. (Illustrations by Todros Geller), for pictorial ideas about costumes of Biblical Characters.
- 1 copy of the follow up questions arranged in maturity levels, for each dialogue to be used by the teacher, facilitator, or student participant..
- Classroom tables and chairs, arranged to look like scenes from each of the Parsha People dialogues.

Procedure:

1. Select students to present the dialogue and additional students to present the questions to the audience.
2. Instruct the class that today’s project is to learn about the Parsha People in a given portion of the Bible (Torah). Students will meet the characters and come to understand some of the difficult problems that these characters faced long ago.
3. Teacher introduces the Parsha and gives a summary of what the story is about.



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4. Characters need 5-10 minutes to practice their parts. The rest of the class can be assigned tasks to arrange the classroom to resemble the setting in the given Parsha. Later students may want to dress in costume, (refer to “The Great March” by Rose G. Lurie.), make some simple scenery, and add props such as a shepherd’s crook, or a large pot as in the case of “Lentil Soup”.
5. When the students are ready, the Parsha People, “will come alive”.
6. . After the dialogue has been presented, the teacher or facilitator presents the follow up question for that dialogue. In some cases, the facilitator may assign the questions to students to present.

Questions to consider:

- What did it feel like to act in the dialogue?
- What did you learn about the character that you played?
- Why do you think we did this activity
- How does this drama relate to decisions that you might make in your every day life?
- Do you think that our decisions we make today are the same or different from those made in Biblical times. Give reasons to support your answer.

Comments and Feedback:

Drama has long been used in the classroom to clarify ideas. Dialogues that students can read with little rehearsal have been used in many reading skills classes to develop reading comprehension. In the Religious School classroom, there is a need for dialogues based on Torah questions and Character Development (Midot). Students can discuss issues and realize that our Jewish tradition places a high value on ethical behavior and that it isn’t always simple to choose an appropriate behavior.

Additional lesson Objectives include:

- Developing identification with Biblical Characters.
- Promoting problem solving when faced with difficult choices.
- Encouraging divergent thinking.



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1. Noah's Ark *Based on Parshat Noach*

The setting is a cloudy day in a large field. A man is piling up a huge stack of boards.

Noah's Wife: Good morning, Noah. What are you doing?

Noah: I'm building an Ark, dear wife.

Noah's Wife: But, why? We already have a house. Why do we need an ark?

Noah: Because the Lord told me that there is going to be a huge flood. He said that that all of the people are going to be destroyed!

Noah's Wife: But why, Noah?

Noah: The Lord is very angry with them because they have been so-o-o evil. He can not stand it any more.

Noah's Wife: What did they do?

Noah: What did they do? I'll tell you. The husbands have been evil to their own wives. The wives have been evil to their husbands. Even the children have been evil. I tell you they are all going to be destroyed.

Noah's Wife: Do the people know the Lord's plan?

Noah: I don't think so. The Lord told me to build an ark for me and my family. He even told me how to build it. I need enough room for our family and two of each Animal.

Noah's Wife: Do you think the Lord will really destroy them after He was the one who created them?

Noah: I guess so.

Noah's Wife: But, Noah, then we won't have any neighbors. The children won't have anyone to play with.



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- Noah: I guess you're right.
- Noah's Wife: Well, Noah, have you told them what is going to happen and that they should stop their evil ways and tell G-d that they are sorry?
- Noah: Well, no, I haven't said anything to them.
- Noah's Wife: Why, Noah?
- Noah: Because they probably wouldn't believe me. I mean, who would believe such a story about a big Flood? They'd just laugh at me!
- Noah's Wife: But, Noah, think of all of those people, all of those children. Don't you think it would be a good thing to at least try to tell them?
- Noah: No I don't. It is too embarrassing. They'll just make fun of me. Come, Wife. I think it is starting to rain. I have been making this Ark for many years. I guess it is time to get in.
- Noah's Wife: Oh, Noah, I hope we are doing the right thing!

Questions:

1. Why was Noah building an Ark?
2. Why was Hashem angry with the people?
3. Why do you think Noah did not tell the people about the Flood that was coming?
4. How do you know when it is right to speak out about somebody's behavior?
How can you tell if you are just being a tattle-tale?

2. Lentil Soup

Based on Parsha Toldot

Announcer: *The setting is a large kitchen. A young boy is standing by a pot of boiling water.*

Jacob: Will you look at all these onions? How am I ever going to get them peeled and chopped in time for the Lentil Stew?



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Makes motions of peeling onions.

Jacob: Where is that twin brother of mine when you need him? He's always out hunting or going to wild parties.

Makes motions of chopping onions.

Jacob: You would think that Esau could stick around the house and help out now that our Grandfather, Avraham Avinu, has passed away.

Makes motions of putting onions into pot of water.

Jacob: Esau knows that we must have lentil stew this afternoon as a sign of mourning for Avraham Avinu.

Rebecca: Jacob, my son. How is the cooking coming along?

Jacob: Mother, the lentil stew is coming along just fine. I'll be out in just a bit.

Rebecca: Don't forget the salt.

Jacob: I won't Mother. Don't worry.

Rebecca leaves the kitchen.

Esau: *Rushing into the kitchen from outside.* Give me food, quick, Jacob. I'm famished.

Jacob: Hold on there, Esau. Have a piece of bread first.

Esau: Grabs the bread and stuffs it into his mouth.

Jacob: Esau, aren't you going to say a Bracha first?

Esau: Right. *Quickly mumbles some words.*

Jacob: Where were you, Esau?

Esau: I was out hunting game.



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Jacob: Are you sure that's all you were doing? You look terrible.

Esau: What do you care? Give me some of that very red stuff.

Jacob: But Esau, it is not time to eat yet.

Esau: Pour it down my throat I say. I'm exhausted.

Jacob: (*Teasing*). What will you give me if I do?

Esau: I'll give you anything you want.

Jacob: Will you even sell me your birthright? The one you earned by being the oldest brother of our family?

Esau: Birthright, shmirthright, who needs it?
The birthright is a horrible bother.

Jacob: Then you will sell it to me?

Esau: What do I care? The birthright only means that I'll get stuck representing this impossible family. I will have to lead in all the rituals and sacrifices. And if I do any of the rituals in an improper way, that will be the end of me.

Jacob: True.

Esau: I'm going to die anyway. So what do I care? Give me that red stuff now, I tell you. I swear, the birthright will be yours!

Jacob: *Takes a big spoon, fills up a large bowl of lentil stew, and hands it to his brother.*

Esau: Puts the spoon down and starts drinking from the bowl as fast as he can.

Jacob: I can't believe it. He really did it. He sold me his **birthright** for a bowl of lentil soup!



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Questions:

1. What is a birthright?
2. Why did Jacob want the birthright?
3. Why did Esau not want the birthright?
4. In **Pirke Avot**, Rabbi Shimon says, "The world stands on three things, Torah study, service of Hashem, and on giving loving kindness." How were Esau and Jacob different in these three things?

3. **The Secret Brother**

Parshat Vayigash

Announcer: *The name of our play is The Secret Brother.*

Narrator: *Our play begins on a hot day in Egypt. Eleven brothers, hot and dusty from their travels, are in the magnificent house of the Prime Minister of Egypt.*

Benjamin: Judah, my brother, don't do it! I can't let you give up your freedom just because of me.

Judah: But Benjamin, I must. You know what has happened before in our family. I can't let anything happen to **you**.

Benjamin: The Prime Minister will never listen to you. He thinks I'm guilty.

Judah: I don't care what he thinks.

Benjamin: You know I didn't do it. The Prime Minister thinks I stole his personal silver goblet just because it was hidden in my sack of grain. It was a frame up. I have no idea how the goblet got into that sack. You believe me, don't you, Judah?

Judah: Of course. But be quiet. Even though we are in the Prime Minister's house I will have my say.

Benjamin: All right, Judah. I sure hope you know what you are doing.

Judah: (approaching the Prime Minister). "If you please, my lord, may your servant speak a word in my lord's ears." Please don't be angry, for you are like Pharaoh.



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Prime Minister: Go on.

Judah: You asked me and my brothers if we had a father or another brother. We told you that we did. Then you asked us to bring our youngest brother down, or you would not help us get food.

Prime Minister: True.

Judah: When we told our old father, Jacob, that we needed to take our youngest brother, Benjamin, back to Egypt, he could not bear it.

Prime Minister: How so?

Judah: Our father, Jacob, cried before us and reminded us that his wife, Rachel had born only two sons before she died. The first son had disappeared and Jacob thought that he has been torn to pieces, because he has not been seen since.

Prime Minister: I understand.

Judah: So he did not want us to take Benjamin in case disaster should happen to him too. Then Jacob's old age would be ended in evil.

Prime Minister: So what are you saying?

Judah: Well, if I come to my elderly father and he sees that the youth is not with us...you see his soul is so attached to Benjamin's soul, when he sees that Benjamin is missing, he will die.

Prime Minister: Go on.

Judah: I promised my father that I would take care of Benjamin. So, please let **me** remain with you as a servant, and let Benjamin go back

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with his **brothers**. How can I return to my father if the youth is not with me?

Prime Minister: (shouting) Remove all my assistants from this room!



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Benjamin: I wonder what is wrong.

Prime Minister: (Crying loudly) I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?

Benjamin: What is this?

Judah: Can it be?

Prime Minister: Come close to me, please. "I am Joseph, your brother. It is me, whom you sold into Egypt."

Benjamin: What is happening here?

Judah: Who is this man?

Prime Minister: And now, don't be upset or blame yourselves for having sold me here. You must see that it was Hashem that sent me ahead of you to be a provider for you.

Judah: How has this come about?

Prime Minister: This is the second of the hunger years in the land. There are still five more years of famine to come. You can see that Hashem has sent me ahead of you to insure your survival. You will survive in this land for a grand deliverance.

Benjamin: Is all of this true?

Prime Minister: It was not you who sent me here, but Hashem. Hashem has made me father to Pharaoh and master of his entire household and ruler throughout the entire land of Egypt. Hurry. Go to my father and tell him to come to Egypt without delay. You all will live in the land of Goshen and I will provide for you. For there will be five more years with no harvest.

Benjamin: (Stares with joy as he recognizes Joseph.)

Prime Minister: Behold! Your eyes see, as do the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that is speaking to you.

Judah: It is true! His mouth- - he looks exactly like our father, Jacob.

Prime Minister: Oh, Benjamin. It has been so long!



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Benjamin: My brother!

Prime Minister: (Hugging his brothers). My brothers!

Brothers: Joseph!

Questions:

1. Why were the brothers in Egypt?
2. Why did Judah offer to stay in Egypt as a servant to the Prime Minister?
3. Who recognized Joseph first?
4. Why was Joseph not angry that his brothers had sold him into slavery?
5. This Parsha teaches us that things are not always as bad as they seem. How do we know that?

4. **Let My People Go** Parsha Bo

Announcer #1: *The name of our play is **Let My People Go**
The name of the Torah Portion is **Bo**.*

Announcer #2: *The characters are Miriam and her brothers, Aaron and Moshe.*

Narrator #1: *Our play begins in Egypt, right outside of Pharaoh's palace. Miriam is looking for her brothers.*

Miriam: Aaron, Moshe, my brothers. Where are you going?

Aaron: Miriam, don't try to talk to Moshe right now. He is burning angry.

Miriam: Why? What happened?



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Aaron: Well, he just got through talking to Pharaoh and that man had the nerve to threaten him.

Miriam: I don't understand.

Aaron: Well, you know what happened after the Ninth plague?

Miriam: You mean the plague of darkness?

Aaron: Yes, it was so dark that no one could move. It was like that for three days.

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Miriam: But I thought that Pharaoh hated darkness.

Aaron: He did hate it

Miriam: So, I thought he said that Moshe could go and that even the children could go.

Aaron: Yes, but that Pharaoh is so arrogant. Can you imagine that he was going to make us leave behind all of our cattle and herds of sheep?

Miriam: But in the end, Pharaoh did not send us out anyway.

Aaron: That's the problem. Moshe told Pharaoh that soon even Pharaoh would send offerings with the Jewish people to go out and serve Hashem.

Miriam: What happened next?

Aaron: Well, Pharaoh threw him out and said that he never wanted to see Moshe again. And, if he did, Moshe would die.

Miriam: Die? What did Moshe do then?

Aaron: Moshe said... You are right. I shall never see your face again!

Miriam: But Moshe still stayed in the palace. Why?



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Aaron: Because Hashem told Moshe about the last plague, The Tenth Plague....the death of the first born. Moshe re-told the warning to Pharaoh.

Miriam: Can it be true?

Aaron: Yes. At about midnight every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die...from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the beast.

Miriam: So what did Pharaoh say?

Aaron: Nothing.

Miriam: What happened then?

Aaron: Well Hashem wants all the Children of Israel to go out and “borrow” gold and silver from the Egyptian people.

Miriam: Really? Then we are to be truly free.
Our time belongs to us. ***We are to work for Hashem***, not for Pharaoh?

Aaron: That is true

Miriam: But Moshe continues to warn Pharaoh. What did Moshe say?

Aaron: Moshe told him that Pharaohs own servants would come and beg Moshe and the entire Jewish people to leave. “After that, Moshe said, “I will leave!

Miriam: Wait. Here comes Moshe now. I must go.

Moshe: My brother, Aaron. Do you know what Hashem has commanded?

Aaron: Yes, I do. This month, Nisan, will be for us the beginning of months of the year.

Moshe: And on the evening of the 14th day, Hashem is planning to go through Egypt and strike every first born, but
He will pass over the Jewish people.



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Aaron: It will become a remembrance for us. It will be a **festival for Hashem for all generations.**

Narrator: *And it was at midnight that Hashem killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt. But He passed over the homes of the Jewish People. Pharaoh and all his servants rose up at midnight. Pharaoh called out to Moshe and Aaron and begged them to go and serve Hashem. Pharaoh pleaded with them to take everything, and go... and to pray for him as well.*

Miriam: Hashem has spoken to Moshe.

Moshe: Hashem has commanded us to remember the special holiness of every firstborn. We are to remember this day that we have left Egypt.

Aaron: Because of what Hashem did for me, I shall redeem all the firstborn of my sons. And it shall be a sign upon my arm, And they shall be as frontlets between my eyes. For with a strong hand, Hashem has taken us from Egypt.

Miriam: Now we are free!

Moshe: Now we are free!

Announcer #2: Thank you for coming to our play.

Questions:

Question #1: What was the 10th Plague?

Question #2: What did Pharaoh promise after the 9th Plague, the plague of darkness?

Question #3: What did Hashem want the Children of Israel to “borrow” from the people of Egypt?

Question #4: What was Hashem planning for the 14th day of Nisan?

Question #5: How do the Jewish people remember that Hashem took them out of Egypt?



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5. Who Will Build the Tabernacle? Parsha Terumah

Narrator: The scene is a warm day in the wilderness. Two teenage boys are standing outside of a very large tent.

Oholiab: Wait up, Bezalel. Where are you going?

Bezalel: Oholiab, my friend, I must be quick. I am going to help the men bring more gold to Moshe for the Ark.

Oholiab: No, Bezalel, haven't you heard? There is already enough gold. We are not to bring more.

Bezalel: I can not believe it. The people are so generous. Gold, silver, and copper; wool and linen of turquoise, purple, and scarlet; goat hair and red-dyed ram skins, tachash skins, and even acacia wood.

Oholiab: But where did they get the acacia wood? There are not many trees here in the wilderness.

Bezalel: Don't you remember? Father Jacob knew we would need wood to build the Tabernacle. He planted acacia seeds in Egypt and urged his children to harvest the wood and carry it with them when they would leave Egypt.

Oholiab: What a blessing.

Bezalel: What have you heard about this Tabernacle, this Mishkan, we are to build?

Oholiab: Well I haven't heard many of the details yet. I just know that the Tabernacle is to be a resting place for Hashem's presence.

Bezalel. Then it must be true. We will build an Ark of acacia wood to carry the Tablet's of the Law. The Ark will be covered both inside and out with pure gold!

Oholiab: Yes, but why do we need so much gold?



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Bezalel: Well, because the Ark will have a gold crown all around. Besides that, the Ark will have a Cover of pure gold and two pure gold Cherubim with the faces of young children. The Cherubim will have wings spreading upward sheltering the cover.

Oholiab: Bezalel, if we have so much gold, why don't we make the ark just of gold? Why do we need the acacia wood?

Bezalel: The wood comes to teach us a lesson. The gold represents purity and sincerity. These qualities do not happen quickly. The wood represents constant and steady growth. Steady growth supports the pure gold and is the most fitting protection for the Tablets of the Law.

Oholiab: But Bezalel, if no one has seen this Ark before, how will we know just how to build it?

Bezalel: Hashem has described it all to Moshe and Moshe will explain it to me. Moshe knows that I enjoy working with my hands. Will you help me?

Oholiab: Certainly. Bezalel, your grandmother, Miriam, will be very proud of you.

Bezalel: With Hashem's help, we will build it so well that it will last forever. Even our great-great- great, grandchildren will be able to see it.

Oholiab: That will be wonderful.

Bezalel: Come, Oholiab, lets go see if the men need any help with the acacia wood.

Oholiab: I'll be right with you.

Narrator 1: The Children of Israel carried the beautiful Ark through the wilderness for 40 years. The Ark remained in the Temple of Solomon and also was in the Second Temple. It is not known for sure where the Ark of Bezalel is today.

Narrator 2: Today we still have the Tablets of the Law in the form of the Torah. When we stand before the Ark in our Synagogues today, we can still remember how Bezalel fashioned the Golden Ark in the wilderness.



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Questions:

1. *Why did they need a lot of gold?*
2. *How did they get the wood in the Wilderness?*
3. *Describe the Ark*
4. *Who was Bezalel's Grandmother?*
5. *How is our Ark different from Bezalel's Ark?*
6. *How is our Ark the same as Bezalel's Ark?*

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