

Shiva Unit/Jewish Death **Chava Vidal**

Subject Area: Jewish living & Identity, Hebrew, Prayer, Jewish History, Culture & Values

Multi-unit lesson plan

Target Age: 4th grade and higher

Objectives: Students will be understand various traditions associated with Jewish Death

Students will become familiar with Shiva traditions and ritual aspects of mourning

Students will study the Mourners Kaddish (they will also be introduced to Aramaic & the 4 types of Kaddish)

Procedure:

Week One: Use a textbook of choice to teach the basic concepts about Jewish mourning and death. Ask children to write questions that arise on the subject on index cards that you provide. Collect these at the end of class.

Week Two: The Kaddish, start examining the English wording of the Kaddish. Explore the concept that the Kaddish's true meaning is to praise God and doesn't even mention death, yet is connected to death so strongly. Introduce them to the other Kaddishes (rabbi, student and hatzi) explore the differences and similarities. Then work on reading skills, although the prayer is Aramaic the letters and sounds are still Hebrew and thus it is good practice for Hebrew skills and letter identification etc. (see attached sheet with the Kaddish)

Week Three: In advance organize to have a Rabbi visit the class for the first ½ of the class and then have parents join for the second half of the class. During the first half the Rabbi will visit the classroom and answer the index card questions from week one. Then as a group the parents, rabbi and students can visit a cemetery, place rocks on the grave etc.

While students are visiting the cemetery turn the classroom into a shiva house. This can be done by bringing in a mirror which can be covered with a sheet, preparing hard boiled eggs in advance, ripped pieces of material which can be pin on and creating an area to sit

on the floor. Upon students return to the classroom, have a washing station set up and then ask everyone to be seated on the floor in a circle. In advance ask parents and student to bring in a photo of someone that has passed away and go around the circle sharing stories. This allows students and families to learn about customs, practice rituals and bond as a class. End by reciting the kaddish as a group.

Note: Fellow educators please be sensitive to the timing of this lesson. This was originally done as part of a life cycle curriculum, which focused on happier lifecycle events before and after this unit. While it is described as three week unit here it can be longer and will depend on the needs of your students, let your timeframe be somewhat student guided. Also please check with your school director or community leader to ensure no recent deaths have taken place, this might be too painful for certain situations or students. Additional recommendation would be to send out a parent letter or e-mail informing families of your intentions and asking for their support in monitoring student's emotional levels. This is difficult subject matter, be sensitive and open when you teach this.

Lastly, there is a slight amount of preparation needed for week three but weeks one and two make this easy to accomplish with a little foresight. (See attached list of prep work)

List of materials needed:

Week One: Textbook of choice (resources cannot be photocopied from textbook and are thus not attached due to copy rite laws, if a textbook is not supplied by the school a reputable Jewish website can provide information which can be made age specific.) Index cards to write questions for the Rabbi.

Week Two: Siddurim to study the Mourners Kaddish and the other three forms of Kaddish. (Premark pages in your siddur of choice to ensure seamless transitions in the classroom)

Week Three: Kaddish Sheet (attached) this can be used in addition to or instead of Siddurim. It is good to print a few of these just in case parents that accompany their children to the cemetery are not familiar with the Kaddish. Please ensure that they are disposed of in accordance with Jewish Shamos Laws.

Shiva House Supplies: a mirror, a dark colored sheet, black material cut into strips with safety pins attached, hard boiled eggs (enough for students and parents) washing cup and basin

Resources: Recommendation: TIMES OF YOUR LIFE TEXTBOOK - pages 73 – 89

The Mourner's Kaddish:

יְתַגְדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא. בְּעָלְמָא דִּי־בְרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ.
וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיֵּינוּ וּבְיוֹמֵינוּ וּבְכָל־בֵּית
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעִנְיָא וּבְזַמַּן קָרִיב. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

Congregation and Mourners

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא:

Mourners

יְתַבְרַךְ וְיִשְׁמַח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרַמֵּם וְיִתְעַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדַּד
וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלֵּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקָדְשָׁא. בְּרִיךְ הוּא. לְעָלְמָא
מִן־כָּל־בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא תְּשַׁבְּחָתָא וְנַחֲמָתָא דְאָמִירָן
בְּעָלְמָא. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן־שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־
יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־
יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

MOURNER'S KADDISH An English Translation

Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will. May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen.

May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity.

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say, Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

Preparation Needed and Suggested Timeframe:

Check with school director, community leader or Rabbi to see if there have been recent family losses or community losses that might affect students or families.

Before this unit is implemented send home a letter or e-mail informing parents about the solemnity of the upcoming units and enlisting their help. You can also use this opportunity to invite them to the third unit (visit to the cemetery and shiva classroom).

Invite a Rabbi to speak and visit with the class for the third unit.

Send out a reminder/what to expect e-mail to parents a week before the third unit. Provide them with details of cemetery location, time frame and additional information as you see fit. Also ask them to bring in photos of deceased love ones. (stress that pets are ok as well since the loss of an animal is as devastating for children as a family member)

Before the third unit ensure that you have purchased or made hard boiled eggs or other round food like lentils etc.

Bring in your own photo of a deceased love one to share with the class, this is important since you are asking them to become emotionally vulnerable it is only fair that you ask the same of yourself. This will also help your class bond.

Follow up, after the lesson send a thank you e-mail or letter home. Parents will also be touched by this unit since they are encouraged to participate as well. A small note will go a long way in solidifying positive relationships, ensuring parent participate in the future and checking on the general welfare of students/parents after such difficult subject matter.