



## FACING EAST: USING THE COMPASS AS A TOOL

Submitted by: WREN SIEGEL

**Subject Areas:** Judaics, geography, science, and math

**Target Age Group(s):** Upper Elementary, Middle School

**Abstract:** Using the compass as a teaching tool in endless ways to teach a wide variety of educational concepts, as well as Jewish values, with students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and older. The title “Facing East” comes from the idea that Jerusalem is East of where we are here in Colorado. Israel is in the “Middle East” and we are inherently connected to Israel. What (or Who) was the Jews’ “compass” when they walked in the desert for 40 years? Concrete Judaics connections include: what are the words for the directions in Hebrew, and how do we write the numerical degrees for each direction in Hebrew?

### Lesson Objectives:

- Learning directionality
- Learning how to use a compass
- Drawing metaphors between a compass and Judaism

\* These can be broadened to include history of navigation, magnetism, etc.

### Materials:

Compasses (enough for one for each pair of students), demonstration large compass (not a real one), key words on vocabulary cards

### Background Information:

Have you ever used a compass? When a student gets a compass in his or her hands, it often feels very uncomfortable, and very exciting at the same time, because likely she or he has never used one before. The student needs to know the four basic directions: East, South, West, and North, and the phrase “Red Fred in the Shed.” The teacher will teach how to hold a compass and use it to face in a certain direction.

The student is learning many skills at once, such as geography and math (degrees out of 360 – East = 90, S = 180, W = 270, N = 360). The content can take a natural progression to teaching about the science (principles of magnetism and magnetic North) as well as the history and types of compasses and navigation tools that were used in early exploration. This depends on how many lessons the teacher chooses to teach around the theme of the compass.



## FACING EAST: USING THE COMPASS AS A TOOL

Submitted by: WREN SIEGEL

Once the student becomes more comfortable with a compass, it could even be used as a team building activity to get from Point A to B to C. Depending on the students' comfort levels and proficiency, this can also be taken as far as the teacher and students allow!

This could also be taken to a highly metaphorical level with older students. For example: What is their 'inner' compass? What points them in the 'right' direction when faced with a difficult choice? Is it a Jewish value or teaching? A parents' influence? If Judaism itself were a compass, what would East represent? South, and so on? Would the magnetic needle be the Torah?

The main idea is teaching how to use a compass. It is up to the teacher to take it as far as he or she wants to go from there, but the compass will aid in covering limitless distance in any direction.

Hebrew Vocabulary:

|                  |               |                    |              |
|------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------|
| East – מזרח      | West – מערב   | North – צפון       | South – דרום |
| Compass- מצפן    | Israel- ישראל | Jerusalem- ירושלים | Torah – תורה |
| God – אלהים : ה' | Faith – אמונה |                    |              |



## FACING EAST: USING THE COMPASS AS A TOOL

Submitted by: WREN SIEGEL

### Procedures

#### Lesson One

Teach the directions or review. If the students are older, thoroughly teach and/or review the intermediate directions of NE, SW, and so on. Introduce the parts of a compass using a big diagram on chart paper, using the vocabulary for the names of the parts of a compass. Teach how to hold the compass correctly. Practice turning the dial to the different directions and then facing in that direction.

#### Lesson Two

Review the degrees that are represented by each direction. Teach and/or review the Hebrew vocabulary for the directions. Focus on East. What connections can the students make between the direction of East and Judaism? Guide them with suggestions if they do not come up with “Jerusalem” or even “Israel.” Look at a map and/or globe and make sure students understand that the most direct route to Israel from Colorado is by traveling East, and that Jerusalem is in the Eastern part of the country. Ask the students to describe a time in Jewish history that the Jews could have used a compass. What did they do? Again, guide the discussion so that they think about the 40 years wandering in the desert if they do not come up with this on their own. Have a piece of text available for the students to refer to.

#### Lesson Three

Review the Hebrew words for the directions as well as the numerical equivalents for the directions. Depending on the grade, age, prior knowledge, and intellectual maturity of the students, the teacher may decide to teach a lesson on Judaic metaphors, and/or teach about magnetism. Perhaps navigational history, early versions of the compass, and how it was invented will be taught. Either way, the integrated possibilities between subjects are endless!

#### Assessment

Once the lessons have been taught, a formal assessment can be administered which measures the students' knowledge of directions, their degrees, Hebrew vocabulary, and any other areas the teacher focused on.

Note: Inexpensive compasses, for about \$12.00 each, can be bought at most major local sports and outdoor equipment stores. They can also be ordered online through a variety of websites.