

1 AN OPEN INVITATION

Student text: pages 4–11



Learning Objectives

Students will:

- ✓ Understand that Jewish tradition is an evolving one, in every generation, and that they play a key role in carrying on that tradition and in helping it evolve.
- ✓ Deepen their understanding of how new traditions are created by each generation, and will become comfortable taking part in that process.
- ✓ Assess, by reviewing their individual skills, interests, and experiences, their own personal contributions to Jewish tradition, and other ways they can contribute in the future.
- ✓ Develop an appreciation of evolving liberal Judaism as *authentic* Judaism.



Getting Started

Begin the lesson by discussing the variety of ways in which Jews celebrate holidays. To spark discussion, bring to class several items associated with Jewish observance, such as a *kippah*, dreidel, or seder plate. Display each item, one at a time, in front of the class, and ask your students to identify its purpose, including how and when it is used. (*Answers regarding how the items are used will, of course, vary.*) Explain to the students that each holiday has many objects with which it can be celebrated, and that there are many ways in which to use each of those objects.

Tell the class that as they read *Rediscovering the Jewish Holidays*, they will gain a greater under-

standing of Jewish life and values, and of the variety of ways in which Jews celebrate and observe. Explain that they will learn to make their own contributions to Jewish tradition.

Making Your Contributions (page 6)

Assess student understanding by asking volunteers to share their responses to the questions on page 6. Encourage responses by sharing your own experiences. Perhaps you can describe how you participated in a wedding, a seder, or a bar or bat mitzvah. Be specific: What role did you play? Were you the host? Which Jewish traditions were observed in these holiday or life-cycle celebrations?

Mitzvah Technologies (page 8)

After students share their responses, encourage discussion by exploring the answers further. For example, if a student suggests sending a get-well message via computer, ask how this “virtual visit” fulfills the mitzvah of *bikkur ḥolim*—visiting the sick.

What Do You Think? (page 10)

Encourage students to delve further into the first question by having them restate their answers using the word “culture.” (*Responses may include that these beautiful objects, songs, and foods help make Jewish culture unique, warm, or fun.*)

(*Answers to the second question may include how we personalize the holidays to express our values. For example, some households may have a very traditional ḥanukkiyah, while others may have a*

more modern one that reflects their own taste. Both serve the purpose of burning Hanukkah candles in a nine-branched candelabra.)



Looking Ahead

In preparation for the next chapter, have students think about this question: Why do holidays—and Jewish days in general—begin at sunset instead of sunrise?