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INTRODUCTION

An Invitation to Your Students

Rediscovering the Jewish Holidays: Tradition in a Modern Voice invites your students into the holidays, to share in the treasures of Judaism, and to make their own unique contributions to modern Jewish life. Using the holidays as a springboard, the text focuses on Judaism's core truths and values, helping students understand the dynamic nature of our tradition, and inspiring them to use their own unique talents to make new contributions. Just as our ancient sages created prayers and rituals based on those who came before them—giving us Elijah's cup for Passover and the Amidah prayer—so, too, do modern Jews continue to create new traditions, such as Miriam's cup and prayers for the modern State of Israel.

Your students will achieve a deeper level of understanding of the Jewish holidays and find personal meaning—as well as opportunities to participate—in our evolving tradition.

An Invitation to You

This Teacher's Guide to *Rediscovering the Jewish Holidays* invites you to enhance and build upon the features included in the student text. Through a wide variety of activities, discussion questions, and teaching suggestions, this Teacher's Guide will provide you with the tools necessary to offer your students a rich and meaningful learning experience.

Like the textbook, this Teacher's Guide is easy to use and adapt to your own teaching style and interests. Feel free to use all of the activities and ask all of the questions, or choose the ones that time will allow and that fit best with the capabilities and needs of your students. Only you, the teacher, know what works best for your class and with your teaching style.

Structure of the Textbook

Each chapter in *Rediscovering the Jewish Holidays* reviews one or more holidays—its origins, how it has been celebrated in the past, how we celebrate it today, and how students can personalize it for their own celebration in the future. Woven throughout the student text are special features, including the following:





- **What Do You Think?** Thought-provoking questions that foster creativity and challenge students to use their critical-thinking skills.
- **Taking Action** Jewish values, such as tzedakah and feeding the hungry, extend the message of the holiday. Students plan concrete actions they can take to incorporate the values into their lives.
- **One People, Many Customs** Interesting facts about customs in different Jewish communities help students appreciate our tradition of diversity.
- **A Tradition of Innovation** Portraits of the many ways in which our tradition has evolved—and continues to evolve—will inspire students' understanding of liberal Judaism as authentic Judaism.
- **Light Bulbs: Sharing Your Bright Ideas** Students imagine they are members of a synagogue committee—for example, the ritual, membership, or social justice committee—where they are asked to address challenges, such as how to increase congregants' involvement in tzedakah projects or in prayer services.
- **Back to the Sources** Quotes from sacred texts, presented in Hebrew and in English, illuminate the spirit and meaning of the holiday.
- **Honoring and Creating Jewish Tradition** This final feature in each chapter helps


students reflect on what they have learned, achieve mastery of the core concepts and meanings behind the holiday, and consider what contributions they can make to enrich our people and our tradition. For more detail about using this feature, see the “Using the Feature ‘Honoring and Creating Jewish Tradition’” section on pages 6–7.


Structure of the Teacher’s Guide


This Teacher’s Guide will offer you teaching techniques and suggestions that correspond to the recurring features from the textbook. Each section of the Teacher’s Guide indicates the corresponding page number in the student text.


In addition, each chapter in this Teacher’s Guide contains many of the following features:

- ▶ **Learning Objectives** Specific goals for each chapter that answer the question, “What core concepts and ideas should my students understand when we complete the chapter?” Look for the  icon.
- ▶ **Vocabulary** Key terms and definitions from each chapter to use as oral review, or on flash cards. Look for the  icon. (In addition, a complete glossary is located at the back of this Teacher’s Guide.)
- ▶ **Getting Started** A kick-off thought or activity based on core facts and concepts from the chapter, to use as a set induction or to begin teaching the chapter materials. Look for the  icon.
- ▶ **Q&A** Questions and answers corresponding to specific pages in the student text. You can use these questions to assess student understanding of the material, review key facts and concepts, or prompt additional discussion. Look for the  icon.

▶ **Make It Your Own** Ways that students can imagine and develop new traditions of their own, within the context of existing tradition. Look for the  icon.

▶ **Build Your Own Calendar** In Chapter 2, you can ask your students to create blank Jewish calendars. As they progress through each of the chapters in the student textbook, they will be able to add holidays on the appropriate dates. Look for the  icon.

▶ **Looking Ahead** Thought questions and ideas to be used as a bridge at the end of each chapter to stimulate thinking about the next chapter’s holiday and themes. Use them to give your students a taste of what’s coming next, and to get them thinking ahead. The next chapter’s “Getting Started” will continue the discussion. Look for the  icon.

▶ **Home Connection** Black-line masters—one at the end of each holiday chapter—to duplicate and send home, will spark discussion and learning for the whole family. If you wish, feel free to personalize these sheets with information pertinent to your congregation, your community, or the time of the year that you are teaching each holiday. (For example, add the date of your community’s celebration to the Purim sheet, or the date of the upcoming New Moon on the Rosh Hodesh sheet.) Look for the  icon.

B’hatzlahah! Much success!

USING THE FEATURE

“HONORING AND CREATING JEWISH TRADITION”

Each chapter of the student textbook ends with a page called “Honoring and Creating Jewish Tradition.” This page contains four open-ended questions designed to allow you and your students to explore the meaning of the holiday in a personal and creative way. It is the culmination of the chapter—the place where students have the opportunity to synthesize what they have learned and develop their own unique ways in which to understand, participate in, and contribute to our Jewish tradition.

Depending on the time available and the interests and abilities of your students, you may choose to use this page as a jumping-off point for summarizing the chapter, or as an opportunity to help your students explore the holiday more deeply, and develop their own personal understanding of what it means to them.

There is an almost infinite variety of possible answers to the questions posed in “Honoring and Creating Jewish Tradition.” Those answers will depend on the focus of your classroom instruction, the interests and abilities of the students, and the amount of time you choose to spend on them. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the contents of these pages, and some of the ways you may choose to treat the material.

Each “Honoring and Creating Jewish Tradition” contains four parts:

Question 1: What do you think is the most important message or lesson of [name of the holiday]? Describe one way this teaching can help you become your best self.

This is an opportunity to ask your students to think back over the chapter’s material and to review the important underlying messages and meanings of the holiday. Then, they can con-

sider how those concepts can be applied to help them grow into the kind of people they would like to be.

For example, students may consider that Rosh Hashanah is more than a celebration of a new year, even more than the beginning of the days of repentance and of forgiveness—that it is in fact a time where we consider how we would like to behave, and what sort of people we want to be, in the coming year. Or they may consider that it is a time to decide to avoid confrontations with friends and siblings by practicing more patience, or by choosing their words more carefully.

Question 2: Describe a traditional [holiday] ritual or custom that you think is particularly meaningful, and explain why you find meaning in it.

With this question, you can invite your students to reconsider their favorite rituals or customs, and to ask why they are attractive. You should especially encourage them to consider how their views of the holiday have changed, and are changing, as they get older and more mature.

For example, when they were younger your students may have enjoyed searching for the *afikoman*, while today they find greater meaning in asking a probing question during the seder or in helping to prepare a creative Sephardic version of *haroset* made from walnuts, almonds, and dried fruits.

Question 3: How can you add beauty and meaning to [the holiday] through the tradition of *hiddur mitzvah*?

This is the perfect opportunity to encourage students to imagine ways in which they—

through their own artistic and creative touches—can bring new meaning and depth to their experiences, and to the holiday experiences of their family, friends, and perhaps even community. This is a great place to account for multiple intelligences and to consider the many ways in which students learn. Go beyond book learning. Encourage your students use words, art, song, and motion.

For example, students might create a clay *hanukkiyah* with the names of family members inscribed on each branch. Or they might portray the events leading to the birth of the State of Israel through an expressive dance in honor of Yom Ha'atzma'ut. Or they might infuse greater beauty and meaning into their celebration of Rosh Hodesh by writing and presenting a short skit or poem portraying the announcement of the New Moon in ancient times.

Consider allowing 30–45 minutes at the end of each chapter for students to plan ways to enhance the holiday through *hiddur mitzvah*. Then provide an opportunity for students to share their ideas and creations with the class and perhaps with other classes in the religious school, with parents, or with the congregation as a whole.

Question 4: Describe a new ritual (or an innovation to a familiar ritual) that you would like to add to the traditions of [holiday]. Explain why this addition would be appropriate and how it would add meaning or beauty to the holiday.

The last question of the “Honoring and Creating Jewish Tradition” feature will provide your students with an opportunity to develop their own rituals, and enhancements to traditional ones. It is the culmination of the chapter—the place where they can develop their burgeoning Jewish creativity, and also cultivate their own personal approach to observance.

There are no right or wrong answers. And responses to this question will vary widely. But to help your students make the most of this activity, make sure they consider not only the nature of the ritual or innovation they propose, but also the meaning beneath it: Why would this ritual be meaningful to them? What is its relationship to the spirit of the holiday? How is it related to past observance?

For example, students may wish to read, to themselves, with their families, or in class, the account of the building of the Temple from the Book of Kings on Tisha B'av. They might report that it is meaningful to them because it helps them visualize the ancient Temple in its full glory. They would recognize that it furthers the spirit of the holiday because it preserves the memory of the Temple for later generations. And it is related to past observance because it is in some ways like saying Kaddish for the Temple, as we might for a loved one.

You can also use this question and activity as an opportunity for cooperative learning. Consider expanding the activity by dividing the class into groups of two or three students, asking each group to develop a new ritual, and then to present their new ritual to the class in the form of an oral presentation. You could even ask the class to adopt one, or more, as part of an official class celebration.

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In all of these questions and activities, let your students play and have fun. They have been studying the holidays for their entire religious school career. This can be one of their earliest opportunities to exercise their capacity for Jewish creativity. And it can be the time when they begin to learn that Judaism will be for them what they make of it and what they learn from and share with others. It can be the time when they realize that they have begun their journey to becoming adult, Jewishly literate, practicing Jews.