"Jews and Jedi" (PAGES 8–9)

LESSON PLAN BY TRACY GUREN KLIRS AND INA MILLER LERMAN

By studying the quotations of *Star Wars* character Yoda, students will learn that the aged Yoda is revered by other Jedi masters for his wisdom. Students will play a game before reading the article to match Yoda's sayings to quotations from "even older" Jewish sources, which they will study in greater depth.

CONCEPTS AND OBJECTIVES

- By studying various texts, students will realize that wisdom is more important than size, physical strength, or physical skill.
- Students will understand that Judaism values the elderly because it places a high value on wisdom and experience.
- Students will study and discuss a selection of classic texts.

KEY QUOTES AND QUESTIONS

"Revered for his knowledge by generations of Jedi warriors—including Obi-Wan Kenobi and Luke Skywalker—Yoda embodied the ancient Jewish teaching that says, 'With age comes wisdom, and understanding comes with length of days.'"

What is meant by "wisdom"? How is wisdom different from knowledge?

Is it possible to be uneducated but wise?

Is it possible to be learned but foolish?

Why do you suppose people become wiser with age? [You may want to direct students to the Torah Page on page 5 of BabagaNewz as a lead-in to this discussion.]

MOTIVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Before the lesson, make a complete set of quotations, printing each one in large letters on a separate sheet of paper. A printable set of these quotations is available on www.babaganewz.com/teachers.

2. When students arrive in class, read the introduction to the article on pages 8–9 of BabagaNewz aloud in a very deep, "movie-narrator" voice (up to "May the Force be with you").

3. Use masking tape or safety pins to affix one of the quotation signs to the back of each student without letting the student see what you are affixing to his or her back. Tell your students that all participants have a "match" in the room and their job is to search for their "match." There is only one correct match for each participant. Do not explain that a match consists of a quotation from Yoda and a quotation from Jewish sources; rather leave it up to students to figure this out.

Here are the rules for finding your "match": You may ask only "yes or no" questions of other participants. Other participants are allowed to look at your sign but you are not allowed to see it. Ask questions that will help you figure out what ideas are on your back. As you look at other participants, you will begin to get an idea about the contents of the signs. You may ask only questions that may be answered with a "yes" or "no." As others ask you questions, you may respond only "yes" or "no" to their questions.

When you believe you have found your "match", come to the teacher for verification. [As above, you can only respond "yes," meaning the match is good, or "no," meaning the match is not good.]

If you do not have exactly twelve students in your class, you have several alternatives:

a. Play the matching game twice at the same time. Use a different color paper when you make the second group of signs and tell students that their "perfect match" must also be the same color. (Students won't know what their color is; that is part of what they must discover.) If you have more than 12 students, but fewer than 24, you can use some of the quotations twice.

b. Make some of the students the "experts" rather than the players. The experts are the only participants allowed to answer questions from the players. In this case, 12 students will have signs on their backs and the others will be the "experts." The "experts" may respond only "yes" or "no."

c. If you have an odd number of students, you will need to put the final sign on your back and participate in the game.

d. If you use less than the full set of 12 quotations, make certain you use pairs that match. Check page 9 of the magazine for the answers.

Once participants have found their correct match, have pairs of students sit together to study the Jewish text in greater detail. If you used "experts," assign one expert to each group to form triads. Give the study partners a worksheet with their source and discussion questions. These worksheets are available to print at www.babaganewz.com/teachers. The questions are listed below.

For each text, ask students to compare Yoda's quotation to the Jewish quotation for their similarities and differences.

Additional Jewish texts to explore in this lesson are available to print at www.babaganewz.com/teachers.

4. To conclude the lesson, ask students to think of wise sayings or phrases that their older family members or friends have shared with them. Instruct students to write these sayings on sentence strips or construction paper. Create a "Words from the Wise" bulletin board with the sayings. Include comparable Jewish texts from this lesson or other sources if possible.

JEWISH TEXTS

Megillah 6b

If someone tells you, "I tried, but I did not succeed," do not believe; if someone tells you, "I have not tried, but I did succeed," do not believe. But if someone tells you, "I tried, and I succeeded," believe!

What is the difference between the different statements in this quotation?

Do you agree with this idea about work and success? Why?

How does this statement apply to school? To other arenas of your life?

How does this statement compare to Yoda's quotation?

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:4

Arise from your slumber, you who are asleep; wake up from your deep sleep, you who are fast asleep; search your deeds and repent.

To whom does this verse speak? Who is asleep? Why must they wake up?

In what ways are you a "sleeping person"?

Identify the three steps of *teshuvah* outlined in this verse. Give examples of each from your own life.

How does this statement compare to Yoda's quotation?

Pirkei Avot 4:27

Do not look at the container, rather at what is inside of it.

What other sayings express the same idea?

How does this idea apply to the relationship between a teacher and a student?

How does this idea apply to the relationship between an older person and a younger person?

How does this statement compare to Yoda's quotation?

Pirkei Avot 1:12

Hillel said: Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving your fellow creatures, and bringing them closer to the Torah.

What do you think is the difference between loving peace and pursuing peace?

How do the acts of loving peace, pursuing peace, and loving your fellow creatures bring people closer to Judaism?

How does this statement compare to Yoda's quotation?

Rabbi Naḥman of Bratzlav

The entire world is a very narrow bridge, but the main thing is not to fear at all.

Why do you think Rabbi Naḥman compared the world to a narrow bridge? What does it mean to think of the world this way?

What does the end of this verse mean to you: "the main thing is not to fear at all"?

Does this verse apply only to people in dangerous or scary situations? To whom else might these words be important advice and why?

How does this statement compare to Yoda's quotation?

Rabbi Bunim, Hasidic tale

Every person should have two pockets. In one pocket should be a piece of paper saying: "I am but dust and ashes." When one is feeling too proud, reach into this pocket and take out this paper and read it. In the other pocket should be a piece of paper saying: "For my sake was the world created." When one is feeling disheartened and lowly, reach into this pocket and take this paper out and read it.

In what ways are you "but dust and ashes"? Why does Rabbi Bunim suggest thinking about this when one is feeling too proud?

What might the words "For my sake the world was created" encourage you to think about? How could these words lift your spirit when you feel sad or discouraged?

What is the overall message of Rabbi Bunim's words?

How does this statement compare to Yoda's quotation?

FOLLOW-UP AND ENRICHMENT

Using *Star Wars* images, your students can create posters illustrating the paired quotations.

RELATED WEB SITES/ADDITIONAL SOURCES

The official web site of the Star Wars *movies*
www.starwars.com

VOCABULARY FOR YOUR STUDENTS

חָכְמָה	wisdom
יְדִיעָה	knowledge
פִּתְגָם	saying, aphorism
סִיסְמָה	slogan