

Chai

Learning for Jewish Life



Adapting *CHAI: Learning for Jewish Life* for Conservative Synagogues

URJ PRESS

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Adapting
CHAI
Learning for Jewish Life
for Conservative
Synagogues



David J. B. Krishef

Dear Colleagues,

At the end of a careful two-year process, my Conservative synagogue in Grand Rapids, MI, combined our religious school program with that of the Reform temple. Among the myriad of details to be negotiated was the adoption of a curriculum. We had noticed early on in the process that the basic curriculum material for our separate schools were very similar—we both taught Hebrew, holidays, life cycle, mitzvot, etc. We realized that there were a few places where there were clear differences, such as in our liturgy, the number of days one celebrates holidays, differing observance of mitzvot like kashrut, and various points of theology. We decided that we would teach both approaches, giving precedence to neither.

The CHAI Curriculum, which has sufficient resources for both professional and nonprofessional teachers to understand and develop meaningful lessons, fit our need for a strong spiraling curriculum to form the backbone of our elementary/middle school program. As I reviewed it, I noted instances in which Conservative Movement philosophy and practice needed to be incorporated. I then wrote directions to the teachers for supplementing the lessons with additional material and rewritten worksheets, and I suggested changes in lesson presentation that would appropriately reflect Conservative approaches and standards.

Out of this effort came the guide, *Adapting CHAI: Learning for Jewish Life for Conservative Synagogues*. It is written in a format that will enable you to print and three-hole punch it and insert into the CHAI Teacher's Guides at the appropriate points. Our school has successfully used this guide since 2006, and we hope to update and modify it as our experience grows. Your thoughts, comments, and suggestions about this project are most welcome.

Rabbi David J. B. Krishef
Rabbi@AhavasIsraelGR.org.

CHAI LEVEL 1



Torah Lesson 1 (p. 7) Introduction: What Is Torah?

Letter to Parents, page 13:

In the second paragraph, change: "... offered through the Reform and Conservative Movements ..."

Add the following resources to the bullet points:

- A weekly *d'var Torah* available on the Web site or via e-mail at www.jtsa.edu/Conservative_Judaism/JTS_Torah_Commentary.xml
- Two resources from the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, both available from the front page at uscj.org/index1.html
 - Torah Sparks, a summary of the *parashah* with commentary and questions
 - A brief *d'var Torah* podcast, "Two Minute Torah"
- A variety of resources on Torah and holidays can be found at www.shefanetwork.org/Torah.html

CHAI LEVEL 1



Torah Lesson 7 (p. 83) Joseph (Lesson *Alef*): Trouble among Brothers

Letter to Parents, page 91:

Add at the end: "... and from the Conservative Movement at www.shefanetwork.org/Torah.html."

CHAI LEVEL 1



Torah Lesson 8 (p. 93) Joseph (Lesson *Bet*): Personal Change and Reconciliation

Letter to Parents, page 109:

Add to second paragraph: "... others from the Reform and Conservative Movements by going to the Web sites urj.org/torah/ and www.shefanetwork.org/Torah.html."

CHAI LEVEL 1



Avodah Lesson 2 (p. 131) Sukkot

General note:

There is no necessary connection between the two Sukkot mitzvot of shaking the *lulav* and *etrog* and eating in the sukkah. We want to teach our students that they may shake the *lulav* and *etrog* whether or not they have a sukkah. For this reason, we ought to demonstrate *lulav* and *etrog* outside the sukkah, to teach that they are separate mitzvot and one can do one without the other.

CHAI LEVEL 1



Avodah Lesson 4 (p. 155) What Is a Blessing?

Introduction:

There is an error in the description of a blessing. In chains of blessings such as in *Birkat HaMazon* or the *Amidah*, each blessing after the first one has no *petikha* (i.e., it does not begin with *Baruch atah Adonai*) and always has a *hatima*.

Page 159:

Replace the final blessing with the following:

For other snacks, such as crackers, cookies, and pastries:

ברוך אתה ה', אלהינו מלך העולם בורא מיני מזונות.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, borei minei m'zonot.

This should be changed in the student booklet as well.

CHAI LEVEL 1



Avodah Lesson 6 (p. 171) Chanukah

Page 177:

The second blessing printed is not the blessing used in traditional settings or in most Reform settings. In addition, the next to last word in Hebrew is misspelled in the final blessing. Here are the three traditional blessings:

ברוך אתה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוֵּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנוּכָּה.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Chanukah.

ברוך אתה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבֹּתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, she'asa nisim lavoteinu bayamim ha'hem bazman hazeh.

ברוך אתה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחֲתִינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, shehecheyanu v'kiyemanu v'higi'anu lazman hazeh.

The second blessing should also be replaced in the student booklet.

CHAI LEVEL 1



Avodah Lesson 7 (p. 179) **Purim**

Introduction, Lesson Vocabulary, and page 187:

The spelling and transliteration for the fourth mitzvah associated with Purim is **לְאֵבְיוֹנִים מַתָּנוֹת**, *matanot la-evyonim*.

This should be changed in the student booklet as well.

CHAI LEVEL 2



Torah Foreword (p. 3)

Is the Torah true? page 4:

The answer given is more or less according to Conservative tradition as well, but rather than starting with “We don’t know,” begin in a more positive and assertive way by saying “Yes, the Torah is true, but not necessarily historically true.” There are lessons in the creation story, for example, about the implications of being created in the image of God, that are true, even if a literal seven-day creation is not.

Did God write the Torah? page 4:

The most common Conservative position is that those who wrote it were inspired by God, and the words of Torah represent God’s instructions to us.

Do I have to believe in the Torah? page 5:

According to Conservative Jewish thought, Judaism is less concerned with “believing in” the Torah than following the instructions of the Torah. We do believe that the Torah’s instructions are mitzvot in the most literal sense of divine commandments.

CHAI LEVEL 2



Torah Introduction to the Book of *Sh'mot* (page 18)

In the list of Torah translations/commentaries on page 20, add *Eitz Hayim*, the Conservative Movement's *Chumash*.

***Parashah* cards:**

The back side of the card for *Parashat T'rumah* says, "The Israelites figure out how to make a place to store the rules so they'll be remembered and kept safe." This is a reference to the *Mishkan*, the portable Tabernacle/Temple built in the wilderness. It was more than just a place to "store the rules." It was a place to worship God by making offerings of animals, first fruits, and other crops.

The Conservative Movement and the Reform Movement differ regarding the role of the Temple in a future messianic era. The Reform Movement generally removes references to a reestablished Temple, while the Conservative Movement generally preserves liturgical references, while maintaining a bit of uncertainty regarding the reestablishment of animal offerings.

CHAI LEVEL 2



Torah *Parashat Bo*: Marking Our Freedom (Session *Alef*) (page 44)

Note:

The references in the *V'ahavta* to signs on the hands and frontlets between the eyes is a reference to *t'fillin*.

CHAI LEVEL 2



Torah *Parashat Bo*: Marking Our Freedom (Session *Bet*) (p. 57)

Note:

Since it is likely that the *k'laf* used to make the mezuzot will be a photocopy, please be aware that according to the Conservative understanding of the requirements of a mezuzah, the *k'laf* is not kosher and therefore the mezuzah is not kosher and one should not recite the *b'rachah* before affixing it to a doorway.

CHAI LEVEL 2



Avodah Shabbat Blessings (p. 114)

Note:

Traditionally, *HaMotzi* is recited over two challot on Shabbat, as a reminder of the double portion of manna in the wilderness, given so that the Israelites would not need to gather food on Shabbat.

At Home: Celebrating Shabbat, page 118:

In Conservative Judaism, taking pictures is a creative act, and since we refrain from creative acts on Shabbat we do not take pictures on Shabbat. Perhaps those families can take a picture of the Shabbat table before the candles are lit.

CHAI LEVEL 2



Avodah Sh'ma (p. 130)

For the art project, please be aware that traditionally one should not casually write words referring to God fully in Hebrew on objects that are not designed to be sacred. Materials with God's name written on them might need to be buried; consult your rabbi for details. This tradition is based on Deuteronomy 12:2–4, in which we read about an obligation to obliterate the names of foreign gods, but are instructed not to do the same thing to *Adonai* your God. Therefore, when writing the *Sh'ma* on a pillowcase, please abbreviate in the following way:

for Adonai—ה'

for Elohim—אלהים

Writing God's name in English is not subject to the same restrictions. Therefore, it is not necessary to write G-d or L-rd when writing on the board or on worksheets. When writing in English, one can even write *Adonai* or *Elohim* without a problem.

CHAI LEVEL 3



Torah Introduction (p. 3)

Is the Torah true? page 5:

The answer given is more or less according to Conservative tradition as well, but rather than starting with “We don’t know,” begin in a more positive and assertive way by saying “Yes, the Torah is true—but not necessarily historically true.” There are lessons in the creation story, for example, about the implications of being created in the image of God, that are true, even if a literal seven-day creation is not.

Do I have to believe in the Torah? page 5:

According to Conservative Jewish thought, Judaism is less concerned with “believing in” the Torah than following the instructions of the Torah. We do believe that the Torah’s instructions are mitzvah in the most literal sense of divine commandments.

Did God write the Torah? page 5:

The most common Conservative position is that those who wrote it were inspired by God, and the words of Torah represent God’s instructions to us.

Do I have to Follow God's rules/mitzvot? page 5:

The word “mitzvah” means commandment. Conservative Judaism believes that mitzvot are indeed commandments from God—God is commanding us to do certain things. Therefore, Conservative Judaism believes that we are obligated to do the mitzvot. We also understand, however, that not every Jew observes every mitzvah. Nevertheless, we believe that every Jew has an obligation to study Torah and strive to observe as many mitzvot as possible.

CHAI LEVEL 3



Torah Lesson 1 (p. 7) Introduction to *Vayikra*/Leviticus— *Parashat K'doshim*: Holiness

In the list of “special” days/things, please either make an additional card that says “synagogue,” or amend the “temple” card to read “temple or synagogue.”

CHAI LEVEL 3



Torah Lesson 3 (p. 21) *Parashat Sh'mini:* **Kashrut—Holy Eating**

Note:

Please keep in mind that within Conservative Judaism, kashrut is a mitzvah. We also believe that doing mitzvot brings us closer to God, but we believe that we have an obligation to do the mitzvah, whether or not it makes us *feel* closer to God.

Emphasize that not all beef or chicken one might buy at the supermarket is kosher. Beef or chicken must be kosher slaughtered and then soaked in water and salted to remove the blood in order to be kosher.

See the appendix for a set of questions and answers about kashrut. It will fill in some gaps in the kashrut lesson, including an explanation of the requirement of kosher slaughter.

Letter to the Board of Trustees, page 26:

If you do this part of the lesson, stress that every Conservative synagogue is kosher and would not serve nonkosher food. Address your letter to the Temple board.

Letter to Parents, page 30:

This letter needs to be emended in a school setting that teaches both Conservative and Reform Jews. Use the following rewording:

line 8: "... can make us feel closer to God."

line 9: "We learned that Conservative Jews understand kashrut as a mitzvah, or obligation, and that the responsibility of Reform Jews ..."

After the quotation from Mark Washofsky, insert:

"Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, in his book *It's a Mitzvah: Step-By-Step to Jewish Living* (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House and the Rabbinical Assembly, 1995), says:

For over three thousand years, Judaism has taught that how we eat and what we feed ourselves are sacred and communal matters—sanctifying us, educating us, nourishing our identity, and fortifying our morality. We need that sustenance no less than our ancestors did. Our meals can feed our spirit, too, through the same simple guidelines that have shaped Jewish eating and Jewish living since the beginning of our people.”

Last paragraph:

“Our intention in presenting a kashrut lesson is not necessarily to convince you or your child to begin keeping kosher. Rather, it is to offer an important lesson you might want to discuss with your child ...”

Appendix: Basic Kashrut Questions and Answers

Question: *I was brought up with my religious father and keep a kosher home. My fiance and I are now talking about whether or not to keep a kosher home. It's difficult for him and he wants to understand the significance behind it. I'm having trouble answering. Please help! This is important to me if I want to remain kosher. What does it mean to keep kosher?*

Answer: It is impossible to know the original reason for keeping kosher according to the Torah, since the Torah does not give us a comprehensive explanation. In general, we keep kosher because:

- 1) We think that the Torah comes from God, and God commands kashrut in the Torah; and/or
- 2) There are lessons inherent in keeping kosher that transmit important Jewish values.

The most important value I derive from kashrut is sensitivity toward the life of animals and an acknowledgment that all life was created by and belongs to God. One who keeps kosher, which demands an ongoing vigilance against and awareness of what goes into one's mouth, should experience a heightened sensitivity toward the ethics of food productions and consumption, and a heightened appreciation for the concept of life.

The Torah explains that we should not eat blood because the life is contained in the blood. While Jewish tradition permits us to eat animals, we may not eat the part of the animal that represents the life of the animal (i.e., the blood). During the *sh'chitah*, or kosher slaughter, process, the animal's blood is spilled on the ground and covered with dust, symbolic of giving the animal's life back to God.

Jewish tradition also holds that we are forbidden to cause undue pain to animals, called *tzaar baalei chayim*. The process of *sh'chitah*, using a very sharp knife, is considered one of the least painful ways to kill an animal.

When the Torah prohibits eating dairy and meat together, the only explanation given is that one should not do so in order to be holy. Here too, one might see sensitivity toward the animal's life urging us not to mix the dead flesh of the animal with the life-giving fluid of milk.

We can only speculate on the significance of the signs of kosher and nonkosher animals (land-dwellers need to have a split hoof and chew their cud; water-dwellers need to have fins and scales). Perhaps, since they exclude animals of prey (like bears and lions) and scavengers (like lobsters and shrimp), we do not

want to eat animals that live by violence or eat garbage, because we want to avoid developing those characteristics in ourselves. Animals, such as cows, which have the characteristics of chewing their cuds and split hoofs tend to be very gentle animals.

Finally, I suspect that one of the original reasons for keeping kosher was to keep the Jews distinct from the non-Jewish peoples around them. This is still one of the results of keeping kosher, though this is not the primary reason most give for doing the mitzvah in the first place.

Question: *My husband and I are moving in about a month and I plan to keep a kosher house. I have been talking to people and am very excited but overwhelmed by this. Can you please give me some basic steps?*

Answer: Since I don't know your current level or knowledge of kashrut, I hope I am giving you what you need.

There is a wonderful book called *It's a Mitzvah* by Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House and the Rabbinical Assembly, 1995). It focuses on about 18 mitzvot, giving a basic step-by-step guide to acquiring skills in doing new mitzvot; kashrut is one of the mitzvot covered. Also, a book called *The Jewish Dietary Laws* by Samuel Dresner and Seymour Siegel (New York: United Synagogue, 1980) gives a more detailed guide to a kosher home.

As you move into a new house, you should be thinking about separating cabinets for storage of dairy and meat utensils, dishes, and cookware. Practice (if you do not already do so) finding kashrut certification symbols (OU, circle-K, Kaf-K—there are dozens of common symbols) and identifying products as dairy, meat, and pareve. Also, begin practicing the separation of dairy and meat, if you do not already do so.

When you move into the house, you can easily *kasher* the oven by running it through a self cleaning cycle; the stovetop by cleaning the burners thoroughly and turning them on until they are red-hot; and the counters and sink by cleaning them thoroughly and pouring boiling water over them.

Question: *Are there any books explaining the health or physiological bases for keeping kosher, mixing meat with milk, etc.?*

Answer: I don't know of any books that explain kashrut in terms of a healthier diet. Moreover, I do not believe that the reasons for keeping kosher based on a healthy lifestyle are convincing. There are an abundance of high fat, high sodium, and generally junky foods that are both kosher and unhealthy!

Question: *I am looking for a basic book explaining a kosher kitchen and some easy recipes. I need this in order to help those unfamiliar with kosher cooking who are helping/working for those who want to maintain a kosher kitchen as well as eating kosher meals.*

Answer: I don't know of the specific name for a cookbook that also contains basic laws of kashrut, although many kosher cookbooks do explain kashrut in the introductions. A good, short, manual for kashrut is the book *The Jewish Dietary Laws* by Samuel Dresner and Seymour Siegel (New York: United Synagogue, 1980). For information, you may call 212-533-7800 or visit their website, www.uscj.org.

Question: *What are the parameters on kosher meat (how it's killed, what does the animal do to qualify for being kosher)? And what is the significance of a cow chewing its cud for kashrut?*

Answer: The Torah simply states the physical requirements for kosher animals; it does not tell us why certain signs are required. A land animal must have two characteristics: it must chew its cud and have split hooves. A fish must have both fins and scales. The Torah itself does not give explicit requirements for the signs of kosher fowl, but from examining the kosher and nonkosher birds listed, the rabbis ruled that any bird that seizes prey in its claws is nonkosher, but any that have an extra talon and crawl and whose stomach can be stripped are kosher. In order to be kosher to eat, land animals and birds must be killed in a special way known as *sh'chitah*, which severs the trachea and windpipe, causing the animal to die very quickly and lose most of its blood. There is no *sh'chitah* for fish.

We can only speculate on the significance of the signs. Perhaps, since they exclude animals of prey and scavengers, we do not want to eat animals that live by violence or eat garbage, because we want to avoid developing those characteristics in ourselves. Animals, such as cows, which have the characteristics of chewing their cuds and split hoofs tend to be very gentle animals.

Question: *Are the kosher laws that exist now the same as they were 2,000 years ago? If they have changed, why, when, and how? Also what is the consequence to a Jew if he violates a kosher law today?*

Answer: There have been no substantial changes in the kashrut laws since the beginning of the Rabbinic era, approximately 2,000 years ago. Certainly, technological improvements in ovens and microwaves, new materials like Teflon and Pyrex, and changes in the technology of food growth and preparation, such as hydroponics and chemical additives, have presented new questions. But the basic laws of permitted and forbidden foods and food preparation have not changed.

There is no immediate direct, measurable consequence for violating the kosher laws. It is not like running a red light and receiving an immediate speed ticket or eating spoiled food and immediately getting a stomachache. Those who believe that kashrut is a mitzvah obligation believe that the consequences for nonobservance are between the individual and God.

Question: *I would like to know if Conservative Jews are expected to keep the laws of kashrut. If so, to what extent (separate utensils and so on)?*

Answer: For Conservative Jews, kashrut is indeed a mitzvah, from eating only kosher meat and other products, to having separate utensils for dairy and meat.

For more information, see the chapter on kashrut in *It's a Mitzvah* by Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House and the Rabbinical Assembly, 1995) or *The Jewish Dietary Laws* by Samuel Dresner and Seymour Siegel (New York: United Synagogue, 1980).

Question: *Can you eat cheese on a vegetarian burger? If the law is that you cannot eat meat and cheese from the same animal than why can't you eat chicken parmesan?*

Answer: Yes, you can eat cheese on a vegetarian burger. The law of kashrut is that chicken is considered meat, because in general people do not distinguish between poultry and red meat—in most people's minds, they are both considered meat.

Question: *I've noticed on boxes of baked goods there is sometimes a U or a D with a circle around it, or sometimes it says Pareve. Does that mean there are no dairy products contained in the ingredients or does it mean it's kosher? Entenmann's products have both eggs and milk in their ingredients, yet they have the U or D stamp as well. Can you explain?*

Answer: The kosher symbols, such as a circle around a U (O-U), a circle around a K (O-K), or hundreds of other symbols usually involving a stylized letter K, tell you that the product is kosher. Entenmann's, for example, which carries the O-U supervision, is kosher.

If the product is dairy, there is usually a D next to the kosher symbol. If the product is pareve (non-dairy), it may be indicated by the word pareve next to the kosher symbol, or in the case of O-U, the lack of a D indicates pareve.

Question: *What happens if you accidentally consume meat and dairy?*

Answer: If you are asking about God's response to an accidental consumption, generally speaking we are not liable for sins committed unknowingly. However, at Yom Kippur we do ask for forgiveness for these kinds of sins, and I am pretty confident that God doesn't hold them against us!

CHAI LEVEL 3



Torah Lesson 4 (p. 35) ***Parashat K'doshim Session Alef:*** ***Stumbling Block***

The most important point of Leviticus 19:14 is not to emphasize the helplessness of a blind or deaf person. Rather, Leviticus 19:14 is addressing the more important point that talking about people behind their backs or taking advantage or misleading people in any way is wrong. For example, if somebody new to your school asks you how to find the office and you give them incorrect directions, that is a violation of putting a stumbling block before the blind. Perhaps the students can think of other examples.

CHAI LEVEL 3



Torah Lesson 6 (p. 59) *Parashat Emor: Shabbat—Holy Time*

Messianic era, page 61:

The concept of *Y'mot HaMashiach*, the messianic era, is found in traditional as well as Reform Judaism. The difference is that traditional Jewish thought also includes the notion that there will be a *mashiach*, an individual who will usher in the messianic era.

Letter to Parents, page 64:

After the reference to the UAHC book, add:

It's a Mitzvah: Step-By-Step to Jewish Living by Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House and the Rabbinical Assembly, 1995)

Final paragraph:

“... contact the school, Temple, or Synagogue for additional ...”

CHAI LEVEL 3



G'milut Chasadim Lesson 7 (p. 237) The *G'milut Chasadim* Holiday Connection—Session *Alef*

Holiday definitions, page 243:

There is no necessary connection between the two Sukkot mitzvot of shaking the *lulav* and *etrog* and eating in the sukkah. We want to teach our students that they may shake the *lulav* and *etrog* whether or not they have a sukkah. For this reason, we ought to demonstrate *lulav* and *etrog* outside the sukkah, to teach that they are separate mitzvot and one can do one without the other.

CHAI LEVEL 4



Torah Introduction (p. 3)

Questions about membership in *Am Yisrael*, page 4:

Addendum to paragraph one: Conservative and other forms of traditional Judaism do not recognize a child of patrilineal descent as halachically Jewish without a formal conversion ceremony, while a child born to a Jewish mother is automatically Jewish. However, we recognize that there are many families with non-Jewish mothers who are deeply committed to Judaism and are raising their children as Jews. The conversion ceremony is very simple, and often takes place when the child is still an infant.

Did God write the Torah? page 7:

The most common Conservative position is that those who wrote it were inspired by God, and the words of Torah represent God's instructions to us.

Do I have to believe in the Torah? page 7:

According to Conservative Jewish thought, Judaism is less concerned with "believing in" the Torah than following the instructions of the Torah. We do believe that the Torah's instructions are mitzvah in the most literal sense of divine commandments.

What if one of my parents is not Jewish? page 7:

Addendum: Conservative/traditional Jews believe that if your mother is Jewish you are Jewish by birth; and if only your father is Jewish, but your parents are committed to raise you as a Jew, there is a simple conversion ceremony to formalize your Jewish identity.

CHAI LEVEL 4



Avodah Lesson 4 (p. 155) The *Sh'ma* and Its Blessings: Finding *Kavanah* in *Keva* (Session Alef: *Sh'ma* and *V'ahavta*)

Page 161:

The text of the *Sh'ma* as it appears in many Reform publications is different than the full text of the *Sh'ma* found in Conservative and traditional siddurim. Of the text found in the book, verses 1–6 are the *Sh'ma/V'ahavta*. Verses 7–8 are the last two verses of the third paragraph of the *Sh'ma* (Numbers 15:37–41 is the entire paragraph). Verses 9–11 are a portion of the second paragraph of the *Sh'ma* in a traditional siddur (Deuteronomy 11:13–21 is the entire paragraph).

This lesson may be easily supplemented by passing out the following copy of the three sections of the *Sh'ma* as it appears in *Siddur Sim Shalom*.

Three Sections of the Shema (from *Siddur Sim Shalom*)

Section 1—*Sh'ma* and *V'ahavta*

Hear, O Israel! *Adonai* is our God, *Adonai* alone.

You shall love *Adonai* your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I command you this day, you shall take to heart. Teach them, diligently, to your children, and recite them at home and away, night and day. Bind them as a sign on your hand, and as a reminder above your eyes. Inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Section 2—*V'Haya im Shamoa*

If you will earnestly heed the commandments that I give you this day, to love *Adonai* your God and to serve God with all your heart and all your soul, then I will favor your land with rain at the proper season, in autumn and in spring, and you will have an ample harvest of grain and wine and oil. I will assure abundance in the fields for your cattle. You will eat to contentment. Take care lest you be tempted to stray, and to worship false gods. For *Adonai's* wrath will be directed against you. God will close the heavens and hold back the rain; the earth will not yield its produce. You will soon disappear from the good

land that *Adonai* is giving you. Impress these words of Mine upon your heart. Bind them as a sign on your hand, and let them be a reminder above your eyes. Teach them to your children. Repeat them at home and away, night and day. Inscribe them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates. Then your days and the days of your children on the land that *Adonai* swore to give to your ancestors, will endure as the days of the heavens over the earth.

Section 3—*Vayomer Adonai*

Adonai said to Moses: Instruct the people Israel that in every generation they shall put tzitzit on the corners of their garments and bind a thread of blue to the tzitzit, the fringe on each corner. Look upon these tzitzit and you will be reminded of all the mitzvot of *Adonai* and fulfill them, and not be seduced by your heart nor led astray by your eyes. Then you will remember and observe all My mitzvot and be holy before your God. I am *Adonai* your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I, *Adonai*, am your God.

CHAI LEVEL 4



Avodah Lesson 6 (p. 175) *Kiddush: Sanctifying Our Lives Through Fixed Prayer and Personal Feelings of Holiness*

Page 182:

Add the following to the worksheet, to find the in *Siddur Sim Shalom* in the *Shacharit* and *Musaf* services for Shabbat.

Find the **ש—ך—ק** in the *Siddur*!

Column Alef

Hatzi Kaddish

Kaddish Shalem

Kedusha

Kaddish Yatom (Mourner's *Kaddish*)

Column Bet

Pages 392 and 506/138 and 181

Page 512/184

Page 338/106

Pages 356 and 432/116 and 157

Answers for Teachers

Hatzi Kaddish

Page 338/106

Kaddish Shalem

Pages 392 and 506/138 and 181

Kedusha

Pages 356 and 432/116 and 157

Kaddish Yatom (Mourner's *Kaddish*)

Page 512/184

Bold face pages are from *Siddur Sim Shalom* for Shabbat and festivals.

CHAI LEVEL 5



Torah Lesson 7 (p. 75) Elijah: Who Was He? Who Is He?

Elijah Text Worksheet 6, page 89:

Please include the following additional text page with traditional *Havdalah* text.

Elijah Text Worksheet 11

The text we have is from the *Havdalah* service.

Elijah the prophet ... May he come speedily in our time, bringing the Messiah, the descendant of David.

Behold, the God who delivers me! I shall trust and not be afraid for Yah—*Adonai* is my strength and might, and has been my deliverance. Joyfully shall you draw water from the fountains of deliverance. Deliverance is *Adonai's*, Your blessing be upon Your people. *Adonai tzeva'ot* is with us, the God of Jacob is our haven. *Adonai tzeva'ot*, happy is one who trusts in You. *Adonai*, grant victory! Sovereign, answer us when we call. For the Jews there was light, happiness, joy, and honor—so may it be for us. (from a Conservative *Havdalah* service).

This text is taken from (circle one):

The Bible

Our liturgy (a prayer)

Midrash

1. In one word, what is this text suggesting that we pray for at the end of Shabbat (Hint: the word—or a variation of the word—is used four times in the paragraph)?
2. Define the word that you wrote down for the answer to #1.
3. Who is going to grant our prayer?
4. What is the specific role of Elijah?

Elijah Text Worksheet 11 Answers

This text is taken from (circle one):

The Bible

Our liturgy (a prayer)

Midrash

It is taken from the liturgy, although most of the verses come from the Bible.

1. In one word, what is this text suggesting that we pray for at the end of Shabbat (Hint: the word—or a variation of the word—is used four times in the paragraph)?

Deliverance

2. Define the word that you wrote down for the answer to #1.

Remove suffering from the world, make the world into a perfect place.

3. Who is going to grant our prayer?

God is a perfectly acceptable answer. Introducing the paragraph with the song about Elijah hints that God will work through the agency of the Messiah.

4. What is the specific role of Elijah?

To announce the coming of the Messiah.

CHAI LEVEL 5



Torah Lesson 8 (p. 99) Reform Judaism: Response to Prophecy

Homework Instructions, page 108:

Remove the word Reform—it does not change the substance of the lesson:

1. As Jews, we believe ...

Letter to Parents, page 109:

Change: “I am attaching selections from documents of the Reform and Conservative Movements regarding some of the Jewish values ...”

From *Emet Ve’emunah*: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism (1988)

The Conservative Movement has a long and honorable history of concern for social justice for Jews and non-Jews alike. Sabato Morais, first president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, jeopardized his own position as a rabbi in Philadelphia when he publicly preached on Yom Kippur on behalf of striking shirt-makers. In more recent times, Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel became the conscience of the nation, recognized for his concern for the aged, children, the ill and helpless, and above all for his passionate espousal of the cause of black Americans in their struggle for civil rights. Heschel denounced racism as “an eye disease, a cancer of the soul” and he and numerous Conservative rabbis and lay people marched arm in arm with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in demanding basic human rights.

Over the years, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the Rabbinical Assembly, and the other arms of the Conservative Movement have issued significant statements on the need to deal with the injustices and tragedies of our times. These social justice pronouncements have urged our nation to work for nuclear disarmament, to eliminate poverty and homelessness, to create a national health plan as well as other measures to aid the impoverished. The Conservative Movement reaffirms its commitment to social justice and freedom for men and women of all faiths and ethnic origins.

CHAI LEVEL 5



Torah Lesson 9 (p. 111) Your Sons and Daughters Shall Prophecy

Page 120:

Amend the following sentence in the letter, and add two additional Web sites to the list:

“You might want to explore these Web sites:

United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism: www.uscj.org—click on the social action tab

Rabbinical Assembly: www.RabbinicalAssembly.org—click on social action”

CHAI LEVEL 5



Avodah Lesson 3 (p. 149) ***Amidah Section 1: B'rachot of Praise***

Page 153:

The section in the middle of the page will be called, “Looking at Changes in Liturgy.”

Hand out, read, and have the students underline all of the differences in three versions of both *Avot* and *G'vurot*: Traditional, egalitarian traditional, and Reform.

From *Siddur Sim Shalom* (revised)

Traditional Avot

ברוך אתה ה' א-להינו וא-להי אבותינו, א-להי אברהם א-להי יצחק וא-להי
יעקב; ה-א-ל הגדול הגבור והנורא, א-ל עליון, גומל תסדים טובים וקונה הכל,
וזוכר תסדי אבות ומביא גואל לבני בניהם למען שמו באהבה. מלך עוזר
ומושיע ומגן. ברוך אתה ה' מגן אברהם.

Praised are You *Adonai*, our God and God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, great, mighty, awesome, exalted God who bestows lovingkindness, Creator of all. You remember the pious deeds of our ancestors and will send a redeemer to their children's children because of Your loving nature. You are the Sovereign who helps and saves and shields. Praised are You *Adonai*, Shield of Abraham.

**Traditional Avot Including Imahot
(Ancestral Mothers)**

ברוך אתה ה' א-להינו וא-להי אבותינו, א-להי אברהם א-להי יצחק וא-להי
יעקב; א-להי שרה, א-להי רבקה, א-להי רחל וא-להי לאה, ה-א-ל הגדול
הגבור והנורא, א-ל עליון, גומל תסדים טובים וקונה הכל, וזוכר תסדי אבות
ומביא גואל לבני בניהם למען שמו באהבה. מלך עוזר ופוקד ומושיע ומגן.
ברוך אתה ה' מגן אברהם ופקד שרה.

Praised are You *Adonai*, our God and God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, God of Sarah, God of Rebecca, God of Rachel, and God of Leah, great, mighty, awesome, exalted God who bestows lovingkindness, Creator of all. You remember the pious deeds of our ancestors and will send a redeemer to their children's children because of Your loving nature. You are the Sovereign who helps and guards, saves and shields. Praised are You *Adonai*, Shield of Abraham and Guardian of Sarah.

CHAI LEVEL 5



Avodah Lesson 5 (p. 183) Amidah Section 3: B'rachot of Thanksgiving

Page 188:

Hand out an additional page of a traditional version of the *R'tzei b'rachah*.

WORSHIP—Conservative text, from *Siddur Sim Shalom* (revised)

רִצֵּה ה' אֶל־לִהְיוֹנוּ בְּעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִתְפִלָּתָם, וְהָשִׁב אֶת־הָעֲבוּדָה לְדָבִיר בֵּיתְךָ,
וּתְפִילָּתָם בְּאַהֲבָה תִקְבֹּל בְּרָצוֹן, וְתִהְיֶה לְרָצוֹן תָּמִיד עֲבוּדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ.
וְתִתְּנֵנָה עֵינֵינוּ בְּשׁוּבָה לְצִיּוֹן בְּרַחֲמִים. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' הַמְּחַיֶּה שְׁכִינָתוֹ לְצִיּוֹן.

Accept the prayer of Your people Israel as lovingly as it is offered. Restore worship to your Sanctuary, and may the worship of Your people Israel always be acceptable to You. May we witness Your merciful return to Zion. Praised are You, *Adonai* who restores the Divine Presence to Zion.

CHAI LEVEL 5



Avodah Lesson 6 (p. 193) *The Aleinu Prayer: Choosing God*

Page 202:

White out the words “Reform Movement” from this worksheet.

CHAI LEVEL 5



***Avodah* Lesson 8 (p. 213)** **Israel in Our Prayers**

Page 221:

Add the following supplemental page with excerpts from Conservative Movement publications.

Teacher's answer sheet:

Our Father in Heaven ...

G or R

We rejoice in the existence ...

R

Our Father in Heaven, Rock and Redeemer of the people Israel: Bless the State of Israel, with its promise of redemption. Shield it with Your love; spread over it the shelter of Your peace. Guide its leaders and advisors with Your light and Your truth. Help them with Your good counsel. Strengthen the hands of those who defend our Holy Land. Deliver them; crown their efforts with triumph. Bless the land with peace, and its inhabitants with lasting joy. And let us say, Amen.

(from *Siddur Sim Shalom*)

This is a(n) _____ text.

We rejoice in the existence of *Medinat Yisrael* (the State of Israel) in *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel) with its capital of Jerusalem, the Holy City of Peace. We view this phenomenon not just in political or military terms; rather, we consider it to be a miracle, reflecting Divine Providence in human affairs. We glory in that miracle; we celebrate the rebirth of Zion.

(from *Emet V'emunah*: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism)

This is a(n) _____ text.

CHAI LEVEL 5



Avodah Lesson 9 (p. 227) **The Prayer-to-Action Wrap-Up**

Page 236:

In order to emphasize the part of the tallit (the tzitzit) that represents the mitzvah, paraphrase the tallit *b'rachah* as follows:

We praise You ... to wrap ourselves in the tzitzit of the tallit.

CHAI LEVEL 5



G'milut Chasadim Lesson 3 (p. 265) *K'vod HaMet: Showing Honor* to the Dead

Page 269, 2nd paragraph:

“... part of a community system for assuring what we today refer to as ‘the caring community.’ ”

CHAI LEVEL 6



Introduction (p. vii) Revelation: A Note to the Teacher

Page xvii

The following material is intended to give some insight into a Conservative understanding of the Revelation of Torah.

Defining what happened at Mount Sinai is a very complicated question, because the Torah itself does not actually say how it was written/delivered. The section of Torah usually called the “Ten Commandments” (more accurately, the “Ten Statements”) does not claim that every word from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Deuteronomy was spoken by God at Mount Sinai. It does claim that the Revelation began from the mountain being spoken to the entire people Israel, but the voice of God was too powerful, and after hearing the first ten statements, the people asked Moses to intercede, saying, “You speak with us and we will hearken, but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” From that point on, the laws were spoken by God to Moses privately, and Moses transmitted the tradition.

Further, whenever the Torah uses the word “torah,” it means law or teaching. It rarely refers to more than a few verses or sections of Torah; in Deuteronomy, it may refer to the book of Deuteronomy as a whole, but never does it refer to the book that we today call the Torah.

So what happened at Sinai, and how did the Torah take shape as the living, inspired word of God?

I believe that the Israelites did experience a Revelation from God. Each one of them, in those first moments of the “Ten Statements,” came in contact with the Divine presence. They walked away from Sinai changed by the experience, carrying the memory of Torah and mitzvah, obligations toward God and toward each other. What they carried away from that encounter with God was not the literal words of Torah, but the sense of relationship with God and commandedness by God.

In the centuries that followed, the traditions of Sinai were set down in writing. Not every version was exactly the same, because each person was trying to formulate an intensely personal moment with God in language that his or her fellow could understand. The strands of tradition were collected and woven together to form more complete versions, and during the exile in Babylonia following the destruction of the first Temple, the major strands were woven together into one standardized version, which is the book that we call Torah today.

Conservative Judaism understands the Torah as containing our record of God's Revelation. The Torah is considered to be God's word—the Torah's instructions are considered to be mitzvot in the literal sense of God's commandments to us.

This is not the only approach that has been labeled "Conservative." For a more complete explanation of the Conservative approach to Revelation, I recommend chapter 1 of the book *Sacred Fragments* by Rabbi Neil Gillman, "Revelation: What Really Happened?" (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990).

CHAI LEVEL 6



Torah Lesson 1 (p. 7) Introduction to *K'tuvim*/Writings

Page 12:

Eichah/Lamentation: Note that Tishah B'Av, the 9th of Av, is the anniversary of the destruction of both the First and Second Temples, and expulsions from England in 1290 and Spain in 1492.

CHAI LEVEL 6



Avodah Lesson 1 (p. 99) Standing at Sinai: My Role in Revelation

Page 102:

Replace the term for the receiving of the Torah with תּוֹרָה קַבָּלָה, *kabbalat Torah*.

CHAI LEVEL 6



Avodah Lesson 2 (p. 109) **The Torah Service** **as a Public Reading**

Supplement to the Statements of Revelation from Reform Movement publications of various eras.

Emet V'emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism (1988)

Read the statement below and answer the questions.

Conservative Judaism affirms its belief in revelation, the uncovering of an external source of truth emanating from God. This affirmation emphasizes that although truths are transmitted by humans, they are not a human invention. That is why we call the Torah *torat emet* (a Torah of truth). The Torah's truth is both theoretical and practical, that is, it teaches us about God and about our role in God's world.

1. What is the difference between an “internal source of truth” and an “external source of truth”?
2. Does this imply that all truth is contained in the Torah? Is everything that is not in the Torah false?
3. How, then, is Torah defined?
4. How does this differ from the 1999 Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism?

CHAI LEVEL 6



Avodah Lesson 3 (p. 127) **The Torah Service and Community Building**

Page 133:

The *Mi Shebeirach* prayer from the Conservative *Siddur Sim Shalom* is substantially the same as printed in the Chai curriculum. The only change is that the first four words of the third line (in Hebrew) are omitted, the words, “because we are praying on their behalf.”

CHAI LEVEL 6



Avodah Lesson 4 (p. 135) **Finding Our Way to Sinai:** **A Map of the Torah Service**

I would suggest either redoing the worksheets for this unit or doing a minor cut and paste to reflect the changes outlined on the following pages:

Page 141:

Note that the “The Torah is read in the synagogue four times each week ...”

The answer is Monday, Thursday, and twice on Shabbat (morning and afternoon).

Page 143:

The Torah service can be found on pages 394–426 in the full *Siddur Sim Shalom* or pages 139–154 in *Siddur Sim Shalom (revised) for Shabbat and Festivals*.

The last box should be adjusted to read:

The Torah is held high to be honored. In Reform congregations we sing *Eitz Chayim Hi* as the Torah is lifted and put back into the ark. In Conservative congregations we sing *V'zot HaTorah* as the Torah is lifted.

You might also add a sixth box:

In Conservative congregations, at the end of the Torah service we take the Torah around the sanctuary and return it to the ark while singing Psalm 124 and a second paragraph ending with the song *Eitz Chayim Hi*.

CHAI LEVEL 6



Avodah Lesson 5 (p. 147) Choreography and Etiquette of the Torah Service

Page 152:

Add Gabbai Sheni (2nd Gabbai): In the traditional Torah service, there are two gabbai'im. In the picture, you can see that there is a person on both sides of the Torah.

Note that the translations of the Torah blessings in *Siddur Sim Shalom* are in substance identical to *Gates of Prayer*.

CHAI LEVEL 6



***G'milut Chasadim* Lesson 9 (p. 279) Hineini—Here I Am! I Am Ready to Act!**

This is a difficult lesson to rewrite. The text study and the message of the lesson that one should support one's synagogue movement are fine, but all of the supporting materials are exclusively from the Reform Movement. Supplement this lesson with information about the Conservative Movement around the world.

The Masorti Movement Worldwide

We are witnessing an unprecedented disappearance of young Jews seeking to “blend in” with their peers and disappear. As Conservative/Masorti Jews, our challenge is clear! We must establish vibrant Masorti synagogues, schools, camps, NOAM youth groups, and MAROM young leadership networks everywhere that Jews reside: Western and Central Europe, Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, Latin America, Australia, and South Africa. Our message is unique and indispensable to World Jewry.

Masorti *k'hilot* connect Jews to God, one another, to sacred study, to acts of *chesed*, to Israel, and to Jews throughout the world. Masorti rabbis are communicators of the Jewish heritage into a modern-day idiom suited to all ages and stages of life.

They attend to pastoral concerns among the members, to community building, and to role-modeling being a modern yet observant Jew.

Masorti Judaism affirms the value of Orthodoxy and of Reform, but insists that without a vibrant “Center” (Masorti), Jewish unity and continuity is imperiled. Masorti Judaism balances classic wisdom with modern scientific truths. It welcomes Jews at all levels of observance and knowledge into our ranks, enabling them to become Jews striving toward religious growth. Masorti Judaism validates theological grappling and doubts, seeing the journey of faith as an ebb and flow in response to illumination and to life experiences. Masorti Judaism affirms Zionism and Hebraism.

We see commitment to Israel and to Jewish peoplehood as a bulwark against assimilation. Connection to Israel is not an “all or nothing” but a continuum, with *aliyah* at the top, yet including visits, sabbaticals, retirement homes, study programs, and more. The World Council of Masorti/Conservative

Synagogues (Masorti Olami) is blessed to stand at the very center of global efforts to stem the tide of erosion among diaspora Jews and to bring rebirth and renewal.

[From the Masorti Olami (World Council of Masorti/Conservative Synagogues) Web site, by Rabbi Alan Silverstein, President]

The Masorti Movement in Israel

The Masorti (Conservative) Movement in Israel's overall goal is to promote and strengthen a religious, communal, and spiritual Jewish approach, combining faithfulness to Judaism, Zionism, and Democracy, which will play a leading role in Israeli society, contributing to *K'lal Yisrael*.

The Masorti *k'hilot* (congregations) are the principal vehicle of the Masorti Movement for achieving this goal. Proudly flying the flag of pluralistic and inclusive Judaism in some 50 centers throughout the country, the members, services, and activities of the *k'hilot* bring the message of Masorti Judaism to the wider community in which they are located.

Masorti *k'hilot* uniquely present traditional Jewish values in programs that transcend Shabbat and holiday services. Unlike most Israeli synagogues, Masorti congregations offer a broad range of social and educational programs with Jewish content for members and the wider community, from preschoolers to senior citizens. Programming includes lectures, study groups, family education, and holiday celebrations. Masorti Rabbis, together with the Movement's Religious Affairs Bureau, provide for life-cycle events, such as circumcisions, bar/bat mitzvahs, weddings, and burials.

Our *k'hilot* range from fully-fledged communities with their own synagogue building, regular services, weekly study programs and other communal activities, to small *chavurot* that meet in private homes or public bomb shelters. The Movement places great importance on the development of existing and new *k'hilot*.

For more information, see www.Masorti.org and www.Masortiworld.org.

[From the Masorti Olami (World Council of Masorti/Conservative Synagogues) Web site]

Page 283:

Lesson Vocabulary

Add:

Masorti	Literally, "traditional"; the name of the Conservative Movement outside of the United States.
Mercaz	The name of the Conservative movement's Zionist Movement.

Page 284:

Rename the section at the bottom “Learning about Other Communities,” and in addition to information about a few Reform congregations, use the Masorti Web sites above to find a few Masorti congregations’ Web sites and print off a few pages.

Page 285:

Internet research activity: Students may choose to research Reform and/or Masorti congregations.

Page 287:

Redo the handout/flyer, entitling it “Reform/Masorti Congregations around the World.” White out the numbers in parentheses following the country names and add the following countries:

Aruba, Columbia, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, Venezuela

Pages 288 and 289:

White out the word “Reform” and use the worksheet as is.

CHAI LEVEL 7



Torah Introduction (p. 3)

Insert in binder following page 6:

The following brief essay is intended as a supplement to the questions on pages 5 and 6, to give some insight into a Conservative understanding of the Revelation of Torah.

Defining what happened at Mount Sinai is a very complicated question, because the Torah itself does not actually say how it was written/delivered. The section of Torah usually called the “Ten Commandments” (more accurately, the “Ten Statements”) does not claim that every word from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Deuteronomy was spoken by God at Mount Sinai. It does claim that the Revelation began from the mountain being spoken to the entire people Israel, but the voice of God was too powerful, and after hearing the first ten statements, the people asked Moses to intercede, saying, “You speak with us and we will hearken, but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” From that point on, the laws were spoken by God to Moses privately, and Moses transmitted the tradition.

Further, whenever the Torah uses the work “torah,” it means law or teaching. It rarely refers to more than a few verses or sections of Torah; in Deuteronomy, it may refer to the book of Deuteronomy as a whole, but never does it refer to the book that we today call the Torah.

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This is not the only approach that has been labeled “Conservative.” For a more complete explanation of the Conservative approach to Revelation, I recommend chapter 1 of the book *Sacred Fragments* by Rabbi Neil Gillman, “Revelation: What Really Happened?” (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990).

Did God write the Torah? page 5

The most common Conservative position is that those who wrote it were inspired by God, and the words of Torah represent God’s instructions to us.

What if I don't believe in God? page 5

The position of the Conservative Movement is well encapsulated by the following midrash, from the collections known as *P’sikta D’Rav Kahana*, which places the following words in God’s mouth regarding the Jews: “Would that they forgot Me but observed my commandments, for in doing My commandments, they will find their way back to Me.” In other words, belief is only significant if it leads to action. Our behavior is primary; belief in God, while not unimportant, is secondary.

CHAI LEVEL 7



Torah Lesson 2 (p. 13) Cain and Abel: Family Relationships

Reading Resources for Teachers, page 14:

Add: Lieber, David L., ed. *Etz Hayim*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, Rabbinical Assembly, and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, pp. 24–27

CHAI LEVEL 7



Torah Lesson 3 (p. 223) *Akeidat Yitzchak*/The Binding of Isaac: Honoring, Not Necessarily Obeying Parents

Reading Resources for Teachers, page 25:

Add: Lieber, David L., ed. *Etz Hayim*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, Rabbinical Assembly, and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, pp. 117–121

CHAI LEVEL 7



Torah Lesson 4 (p. 33) Rebekah: A Virtuous Woman?

Reading Resources for Teachers, page 35:

Add: Lieber, David L., ed. *Etz Hayim*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, Rabbinical Assembly, and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, pp. 132–135, 136–138

CHAI LEVEL 7



Torah Lesson 5 (p. 41) Rebecca: Tough Choices

Reading Resources for Teachers, page 43:

Add: Lieber, David L., ed. *Etz Hayim*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, Rabbinical Assembly, and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, pp. 146–148, 153–159

CHAI LEVEL 7



Torah Lesson 6 (p. 53) God and Abraham: A Relationship Life No Other

Reading Resources for Teachers, page 54:

Add: Lieber, David L., ed. *Etz Hayim*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, Rabbinical Assembly, and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, pp. 102–104

CHAI LEVEL 7



Avodah Introduction (p. 91)

Page 93, bottom paragraph:

Amend: “Although new customs and traditions surrounding life-cycle events may evolve and change over time, the significance of the events themselves do not change, even as new ones develop (such as consecration and confirmation in the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist Movements)....”

CHAI LEVEL 7



Avodah Lesson 1 (p. 93) Introduction to the Jewish Life Cycle

Reading Resources for Teachers, page 95:

Add: Klein, Isaac. *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1979

Learning activity 3, page 97:

Amend: "...we become a bar or bat mitzvah at age 13 (or 12 for girls in the Conservative or Orthodox Movements), though the public acknowledgment of this is optional (girls in the Conservative as well as Reform Movement generally celebrate bat mitzvah at age 13)...."

CHAI LEVEL 7



Avodah Lesson 2 (p. 107) **Major Transitions: B'nei Mitzvah and Marriage: Responsibility and Relationships**

Text 1—Bar/Bat Mitzvah: Becoming a Jewish Adult, page 113

There is no comparable statement on bar/bat mitzvah from the Conservative Movement, and this itself is interesting and instructive. Perhaps the reason that the Reform Movement published such a statement is that earlier in its history it removed bar/bat mitzvah from the life-cycle rituals, and replaced it with Confirmation. Throughout the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century, up until the 1970s, many Reform Temples did not celebrate bar/bat mitzvah at all.

Thus, when the Reform Movement returned to the idea of bar/bat mitzvah as a significant life-cycle event, it needed to encourage adults, who themselves may have never celebrated bar/bat mitzvah, to arrange for their children to celebrate it.

The Conservative Movement, on the other hand, always considered bar mitzvah to be an important life-cycle ritual, and by the 1950s bat mitzvah were beginning to be common as well. Therefore, they never needed to issue a statement encouraging the celebration of bar/bat mitzvah.

Page 114:

Supplement with the following description of a traditional Conservative wedding ceremony:

Text 2—Steps to a Jewish Marriage

1. **Engagement**—no change.
2. **Aufguf**—A Yiddish word meaning an *aliyah* to the Torah. The day or week before the wedding, the bride and groom are called to the Torah for a special blessing. It is customary to throw candy at the couple.
3. **Signing the *ketubah***—The *ketubah* is signed by two witnesses, before the wedding. The bride and groom need not sign the *ketubah*, though many modern *ketubot* have a place for them to sign. Both the

bride and groom are asked to perform the symbolic act of tugging on the end of a handkerchief held by the rabbi to symbolize their acceptance of the provisions of the *ketubah*.

4. Bedekin ceremony—Following the signing of the *ketubah*, the groom is escorted to his bride for the *bedekin* ceremony, in which he puts the veil over her face. The origins of the veil go back to our ancestor Rebecca, who, when she saw Isaac for the first time, “alighted from her camel ... took a scarf, and covered her face” (Genesis 24:64–65). By allowing the groom to place the veil, we are assured that no last-minute substitution may take place, such as happened to Jacob, when he unknowingly married Leah instead of Rachel! The veil is also a symbol of the Jewish value of modesty.

5. Procession to the chuppah—Attendants, *chatan* and *kalah* (often accompanied by their parents) proceed to the *bimah*. The *chatan* waits in front of the chuppah until his *kalah* is next to him before entering the chuppah. At this point, in traditional wedding ceremonies, the *kalah* and *chatan* often walk in a circle around each other three times to symbolize their lives revolving around each other.

6. Kiddushin—The first part of the wedding ceremony, the betrothal, where the *chatan* and *kalah* are promised to each other.

7. Blessing over wine/betrothal—The ceremony begins with a blessing over wine, followed by a blessing setting apart the *chatan* and *kalah* for each other.

8. Ring ceremony—The *chatan* gives the *kalah* a plain gold ring, and recites the phrase (in Hebrew) “Behold, you are consecrated to me by this ring, according to the law of Moshe and Israel.” The *kalah* then gives the *chatan* a ring and says, “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.” The rings are placed on the index finger of the right hand because the ceremony needs to be visible and witnessed by the congregation. The rings have no stones on them so that their value can be easily determined.

9. Read the *ketubah*—The wedding document is read, outlining their responsibilities as a married couple.

Paraphrase of a traditional *ketubah* text:

On this {DAY} day of the week, the {DATE} day of the month of {MONTH} in the year {YEAR}, corresponding to {ENGLISH DATE}, the holy covenant of marriage was entered into between the groom {NAME} and his bride {NAME}. The groom made the following declaration to his bride, “Be my wife according to the law of Moses and Israel. I faithfully promise to be a true husband unto you. I will honor and cherish you. I will protect and support you, and provide all that is necessary for your sustenance and all obligations prescribed by Jewish tradition.” The bride has entered into this covenant of marriage with love and sincerity, and assumes the duties incumbent upon a Jewish wife. Bride and groom agree to be bound by the provisions of this *ketubah* and supplement. The covenant was executed and witnessed properly, and signed by witnesses.

10. Nisu’in—The second part of the wedding ceremony, where the *kalah* and *chatan* are formally brought together as husband and wife.

11. *Sheva B'rachot*—The seven marriage blessings, recited at the end of the wedding ceremony and at every meal at which there is a minyan for the week following the wedding.

Partial translation:

The source of blessing are You, Adonai our God, eternal Sovereign of the universe, who created all things, who created human beings in Your image, so together they may perpetuate life. May Zion rejoice as her children return to her in joy, and grant perfect peace to these loving companions, as You did to the first Man and Woman in the Garden of Eden. As you created happiness, joy, delight, rejoicing, love, harmony, peace, and friendship, may there be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem voices of joy and gladness, bride and groom, and the jubilant voices of young people feasting and singing. The source of Blessing are You Adonai, who causes the bride and groom to rejoice. Amen.

12. *S'udat mitzvah*—A celebratory meal following a wedding. It is a mitzvah to have this meal, meaning that it is an obligation for us to eat and celebrate with joy after a wedding.

¹From *Emet Ve'emunah*: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism (1988).

CHAI LEVEL 7



Avodah Lesson 3 (p. 117) Birth and Death: Teach Us to Number Our Days

Page 123:

Add a third text:

Does Life Have a Purpose? What Does Conservative Judaism Say?

Text 3

Throughout most of its history, Jewish life was an organic unity of home and community, synagogue and life

Three characteristics mark the ideal Conservative Jew. First, he or she is a *willing* Jew, whose life echoes the dictum, "Nothing human or Jewish is alien to me." This willingness involves not only a commitment to observe the *mitzvot* and to advance Jewish concerns, but to refract all aspects of life through the prism of one's Jewishness. That person's life pulsates with the rhythms of daily worship and Shabbat and *Yom Tov*. The moral imperatives of our tradition impel that individual to universal concern and deeds of social justice. The content of that person's professional dealings and communal involvements is shaped by the values of our faith and conditioned by the observance of *kashrut*, of Shabbat and the holidays. That person's home is filled with Jewish books, art, music, and ritual objects

The second mark of the ideal Conservative Jew is that he or she is a *learning* Jew

Finally, the ideal Conservative Jew is a *striving* Jew. No matter the level at which one starts, no matter the heights of piety and knowledge one attains, no one can perform all 613 *mitzvot* or acquire all Jewish knowledge. What is needed is an openness to those observances one has yet to perform and the desire to grapple with those issues and texts one has yet to confront. Complacency is the mother of stagnation, and the antithesis of Conservative Judaism.¹

Questions for Discussion:

1. Based on this text, what is the purpose of our lives according to Conservative Jewish thought? Underline the words or phrases that would support your answer.
2. Do you agree or disagree with this Conservative Jewish viewpoint? Why?

CHAI LEVEL 7



Avodah Lesson 4 (p. 125) The High Holy Days: Focus on Repentance

Page 131:

Kol Nidre—from the Harlow Mahzor.

All vows and oaths we take, all promises and obligations we make to God between this Yom Kippur and the next we hereby publicly retract in the event that we should forget them, and hereby declare our intention to be absolved of them.

CHAI LEVEL 7



Avodah Lesson 5 (p. 133) **Pesach—Questions: Then and Now**

Reading Resources for Teachers, page 135:

Add: Zion, Noam, and Dishon, David. *A Different Night*. Jerusalem: Shalom Hartman Institute, 1997.

CHAI LEVEL 7



Avodah Lesson 7 (p. 161) **My Jewish Identity: *Eilu D'varim*—** **What Must I Do?**

Page 161:

Change last sentence from "...to be a Reform Jewish adult." to "...authentic, responsible Jewish adult."

Questions to Be Addressed, page 162:

Change question 2 from "...Reform Jew" to "...as a Jew today?"

Page 165:

Change "...in the weekday Reform Movement prayer service." in Learning Activity #6 to "...weekday *Siddur Sim Shalom*."

CHAI LEVEL 7



Avodah Lesson 8 (p. 169) **My Jewish Identity: *Sh'ma*—What Do I Believe?**

Page 169:

Change last sentence in second paragraph to "... Judaism's emphasis on the mitzvot of social action and *tikkun olam* ..."

CHAI LEVEL 7



G'milut Chasadim Lesson 1 (p. 185) Time for a Checkup

Page 186:

Amend second bullet point under Enduring Understandings:

Our development as emerging Jewish adults and authentic members of the Jewish community...

CHAI LEVEL 7



G'milut Chasadim Lesson 2 (p. 193) **That's What Friends Are For: Being a Loyal Friend (*Dibuk Chaverim*)**

Page 193:

Amend second bullet point under Enduring Understandings:

Our development as emerging Jewish adults and authentic members of the Jewish community...

CHAI LEVEL 7



G'milut Chasadim Lesson 3 (p. 201) Truth as an Act of Kindness (*Emet*)

Page 202:

Amend second bullet point under Enduring Understandings:

Our development as emerging Jewish adults and authentic members of the Jewish community...

CHAI LEVEL 7



G'milut Chasadim Lesson 4 (p. 213)

Stop the Bullying NOW:

Not Standing Idly By

(Lo Taamod al Dam Rei-echa)

Page 215:

Amend second bullet point under Enduring Understandings:

- Our development as emerging Jewish adults and authentic members of the Jewish community...

CHAI LEVEL 7



G'milut Chasadim Lesson 5 (p. 225) **Keep Your Cool: Being Slow to Anger** *(Erech Apayim)*

Page 226:

Amend second bullet point under Enduring Understandings:

- Our development as emerging Jewish adults and authentic members of the Jewish community...

CHAI LEVEL 7



G'milut Chasadim Lesson 6 (p. 237) **What's With the Attitude?** **Having a Pleasant Demeanor** ***(Selver Panim Yafot)***

Page 238:

Amend second bullet point under Enduring Understandings:

- Our development as emerging Jewish adults and authentic members of the Jewish community...

CHAI LEVEL 7



G'milut Chasadim Lesson 7 (p. 247) **Courage! (*Ometz Lev*)**

Page 248:

Amend second bullet point under Enduring Understandings:

- Our development as emerging Jewish adults and authentic members of the Jewish community...

CHAI LEVEL 7



G'milut Chasadim Lesson 8 (p. 269) Living Generously (*N'divut*)

Page 270:

Amend second bullet point under Enduring Understandings:

Our development as emerging Jewish adults and authentic members of the Jewish community...

CHAI LEVEL 7



***G'milut Chasadim* Lesson 9 (p. 279) *Hineini*—Here I Am! I Am Ready to Act!**

Page 280:

Amend second bullet point under Enduring Understandings:

- Our development as emerging Jewish adults and authentic members of the Jewish community...