

Teaching Guide



Jewish and Me Posters: **I Can Celebrate Jewish Holidays**

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Introduction: Teaching with Posters

Jewish holidays provide excellent opportunities for experiential learning. *Jewish and Me Posters: I Can Celebrate Jewish Holidays* features the lively cat from the *Jewish and Me* holiday folders in twelve sturdy mini-posters. Make the sound of a shofar, spin like a dreidel, or dance the horah--whatever the activity, these joyful posters can be used to reinforce holiday concepts, enhance the learning environment, and inspire young children to experience Jewish holidays through movement and pretend play. This *Teaching Guide* is designed to introduce the holidays through activities based on the poster content, including tasting holiday foods, learning a traditional Israeli dance, responding to different shofar blasts, and in many other ways becoming active learning participants. A variety of early childhood disciplines are incorporated, including music, art, motor development, natural science, and counting and sorting activities.

While specific suggestions are provided for each individual poster, here are some activities that you can use with any or all of the posters:

- **Identify:** Point to a poster and ask children what the cat is doing. On what holiday do we perform this activity?
- **Make connections:** Read a holiday story. Do the characters in the story celebrate in the same way as the cat in the poster is celebrating? Ask children what they do to celebrate this holiday.
- **Pantomime:** Play some music and invite the children to imitate the cat in the poster, using real or imaginary props for that holiday.
- **Mix and match:** Ask the children to identify posters that show the cat doing activities we might do on more than one holiday, such as blowing the shofar (*Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*) or singing (*many holidays*).

In addition to these activities and the ones that follow, you may also refer to the *Teacher's Guide for Jewish and Me: Holidays*, as well as the activities and resources on the *Jewish and Me* website, www.behrmanhouse.com/jam.

I Can Celebrate Jewish Holidays

(The first poster)

Overview: The first poster in the set brings together the illustrations from all of the posters that follow. You can use this poster to introduce the first lesson of the year, or to review the holidays at any time throughout the year.

What is the cat doing? Show the poster to the children and invite them to tell you what the cat is doing in any of the pictures. Ask if they know what Jewish holiday the cat is celebrating in the picture they chose. Tally the children's answers to these questions so they can see which are the most recognizable images and holidays.

Find pairs: Help the children find pairs of pictures that have something in common. For instance, you might ask them to find two pictures that show the cat eating, or two pictures that show the cat dancing. Invite the children to find their own similarities. (*wearing clothes; making noise; holding plants, etc.*) Challenge the children to name the holidays that they have selected.

Guessing game: Play a guessing game with the pictures. Give the children hints about a particular holiday (*we light candles; we celebrate it in winter*) until somebody guesses correctly. Select a child to lead the next round.

Rosh Hashanah

Overview: On Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, we celebrate the creation of the world and look forward to a sweet new year.

A sweet new year: Invite the children to look at the poster. You might ask: How is the cat celebrating Rosh Hashanah? (*eating apples and honey*) Does honey taste salty, bitter, or sweet? (*sweet*) Explain that we dip apples in honey to show that we wish for a sweet year. Ask them what they think it means to have a sweet year. (*to have good things happen*) What "sweet" things do you hope will happen this year? (*answers may include: go on vacation; have a lot of play dates with my friends*)

Snack time blessing: Ask the children where apples come from. (*trees*) Serve apples or other fruit from trees at snack time, and lead the children in the blessing for fruit from trees: *Baruch Atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha'olam, borei p'ri ha'etz.*
Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the world, who creates the fruit of the tree.

Apple activity: Pretend a ball is an apple, and have the children roll it to one another (or back and forth to the teacher), and say, "I'm rolling the apple to [insert child's name] to say *L'Shanah Tovah*" (Happy New Year).

Yom Kippur

Overview: On Yom Kippur, Jewish adults fast and spend most of the day praying in synagogue. We seek forgiveness from God and from other people, and we reflect on how to improve ourselves in the coming year. At the end of the day we blow the shofar.

Shofar sounds: Ask the children to describe what the cat in the poster is doing. (*blowing a shofar*) Discuss the different shofar blasts, then let the children act out the different sounds while you use a keyboard, a recorder, or a shofar to play them. For *tekiah*, a long sound, instruct the children to lift their arms above their heads and lower them again. For *shevarim*, three short blasts, have them lift and lower their arms three times. For *teruah*, which is nine short bursts, the children can lift their arms and shake their hands nine times. Finally, for *tekiah gedolah*, a very long, sustained blast, the children can stretch their arms as far as they can toward the ceiling.

Wake up: The purpose of the shofar blast is to “wake us up,” to remind us that we need to pay attention and do the good things that God wants us to do. Ask the children if a loud noise has ever woken them up when they were sleeping. What was it? (*thunder, cars honking, someone talking loudly*) Allow the children to imitate these loud noises, one by one. Next, blow a shofar (or play a recording of a shofar) and ask the children to describe and imitate the sound. Invite the children to discuss which loud noises would make them stop and pay attention.

Sukkot

Overview: Sukkot is a week-long autumn harvest festival. We build a sukkah and we shake the *lulav* and *etrog*, which remind us of the many wondrous things that grow in the earth. The *lulav* is made of palm, willow, and myrtle branches, and the *etrog* is a fruit similar to a lemon with sweet-smelling skin.

Shake like a lulav: Ask the children if they recognize the objects the cat is holding. (*a lulav and an etrog*) Show the children how we wave a *lulav* and *etrog* (using a real *lulav* and *etrog* or pictures). Encourage the children to shake like a *lulav*, to wave in the air like willow branches, to rustle like myrtle branches, and to curl up into a ball like a round *etrog*.

Make a lulav: Provide lots of green materials (pipe cleaners, fabric, popsicle sticks, green paint, construction paper, and so on) and let children create their own *lulavim* (plural of *lulav*) to shake. Put on some music and let the children dance and shake their *lulavim*.

Simḥat Torah

Overview: We celebrate and dance on Simḥat Torah because we have finished reading through the whole Torah, from beginning to end. Soon, we will start again from the very beginning!

The ḥag sameaḥ dance: Ask the children what the cat is doing (*dancing*) and what the cat is holding. (*the Torah scroll*) Invite the children to dance around the room while you play the song “Ḥag Sameaḥ,” which you can find at www.behrmanhouse.com/jam. (Click on “Simḥat Torah.”) Explain that ḥag sameaḥ means “happy holiday” in Hebrew. Let the children carry toy Torahs, or storybooks with Bible stories in them, while they dance.

Exploring the Torah: Visit a sanctuary. Take out a Torah (or ask the rabbi or cantor to help you) and open it so the children can see the writing, but make sure they don’t touch it. Talk about the Torah’s “clothes.” Let the children take turns holding the *yad* and pretending to read from the Torah. Read a few passages (or ask the rabbi or cantor to do this).

Ḥanukkah

Overview: On Ḥanukkah, we remember the victory of the Maccabees and the miracle of the oil that lasted for eight days. We celebrate by lighting the Ḥanukkah menorah (a ḥanukkiyah), eating latkes, and playing dreidel.

Human dreidels: Ask the children to tell a story about the picture. (*the cat is spinning like a dreidel*) Examine a dreidel with the children. Discuss the different letters (*nun, gimmel, hay and shin*) and the rules for a game of dreidel. (Visit <http://www.elijahrocks.net/Hanukkah.html> for this information and a fun online dreidel game.) Have children become dreidels, and ask them to imagine they have the letters of the dreidel on their tummies, their backs, and on their left and right sides. Play some Ḥanukkah music and invite the children to spin until the music stops, and then to fall down like dreidels. Ask them to call out the letter they landed on.

Dreidel sorting: Put a pile of diverse dreidels in the middle of the table and ask the children to describe how they are different from each other. (*different sizes, colors, materials*) Help the children to agree on the best way to sort the dreidels and then help them to do so. Afterwards, practice spinning dreidels. Discuss whether any of the dreidels are easier to spin than others.

Tu B'Shevat

Overview: Tu B'Shevat is the festival of the trees. It is a time when we can look forward to Spring and say “thank you” to God for all of the good things we receive from trees.

Growing from seeds: Invite the children to become trees, like the cat in the poster. Begin by asking the children to curl into tight balls like seeds. Describe the process of planting and watering these seeds, and invite the children “sprout” --to reach out first with fingers and toes and then with arms, heads and the rest of their bodies. They may want to open their hands to the sun like leaves.

Tree investigation: Take the children on a field trip to investigate local trees, right outside or in a nearby park. Ask the children to examine the trees’ trunks by wrapping their arms around them to compare their thickness. If a tree is too wide to reach around, suggest that two or more children hold hands to encircle the whole tree. Afterwards, discuss the children’s findings. Explain that trunks generally get thicker as trees grow. Ask them which trees they think are the oldest, and which ones are the youngest.

Purim

Overview: We remember the story of Queen Esther and Mordechai, who saved the Jewish people from wicked Haman. We celebrate by wearing costumes, waving noisemakers to drown out Haman’s name, and eating *hamantashen*.

Costumes: Encourage the children to come to class in costume, or make costumes using items from the dress-up area. Ask the children what costume the cat is wearing in the poster. (*a king or queen*) Ask “Is it fun to dress up in a costume? Why?” (*it’s fun to be silly or to pretend to be something else.*) Explain that we dress up in costumes on Purim for fun and to help us remember the Purim story. Read a children’s version of the Purim story and discuss what kinds of costumes someone might wear to dress like Esther, Mordecai, and the other characters.

Making masks: Let the children use many different materials to make their own masks. Provide pictures and real examples of different kinds of masks to give the children ideas.

Passover

Overview: We celebrate Passover with our families by having a special meal called a seder. During the seder, we sing many fun Passover songs.

Passover songs: Ask the children what Passover songs they think the cat might be singing. (“Dayenu;” “*Had Gadya*,” “*Who Knows One*,” “*Eliyahu Hanavi*”) Sing songs together, or visit www.behrmanhouse.com/seasonofrenewal to listen to Passover songs.

Dayenu: After listening to “Dayenu,” explain that the word *dayenu* means “it would have been enough,” and that *dayenu* is a special way that we say thank you to God for the good things in our lives. Go around the circle, letting each person name something that God has given them. (parents, pets, candy) After each person speaks, everyone sings the refrain of the song “Dayenu.”

Yom Ha’atzma’ut

Overview: Yom Ha’atzma’ut is Israel’s Independence Day, the birthday of the State of Israel.

Dancing together: Ask the children what the cat is doing in the picture. (*dancing with a friend*). Explain that the cat is dancing the horah, an Israeli dance that is performed in a circle. Play a CD of Jewish music and do some Israeli dancing with the children. To teach them the basic “grapevine step,” have children join hands and form a circle. Moving clockwise, step the right foot across the left foot. Then, step left with the left foot; step the right foot behind the left foot, and step left with the left foot again. Repeat, and keep going.

How old is Israel? Count out Israel’s age. Have the children trace their feet and cut out their “footprints.” Make enough footprints to have one for each of Israel’s years, and let Israel’s “history” trail through the halls of your school.

Shavuot

Overview: On Shavuot, we remember that Moses traveled to the top of Mount Sinai and came back with the Ten Commandments, to tell us what God wanted us to do.

Climbing a mountain: Tell the children that the cat in the poster is pretending to be Moses climbing Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. On the playground, name a tall climbing structure “Mount Sinai.” Encourage the children to climb the mountain just like the cat, and like Moses. (Be sure to steer children towards a “mountain” that is appropriate for their age and skill level.)

Commandments and rules: Ask the children to give examples of rules they follow at home or at school. Why do we have rules? What would happen if there were no rules? Discuss the reasons for rules. (*everyone is treated fairly; nobody will get hurt or get lost*) Explain that the Ten Commandments are God’s rules for us. If there is a list of class rules, look over it now and discuss the reasons for the different rules. If not, ask everyone to contribute to a list and write those rules on a poster.

Shabbat

Overview: Shabbat is a day of rest that comes every week. We eat special foods on Shabbat, including ḥallah and grape juice.

Flavored ḥallah: Ask the children what the cat is eating. (*ḥallah, a braided bread*) What would they put in a ḥallah to make it extra yummy? (*raisins, chocolate chips*) Encourage silly answers, and make a chart of the children’s choices. If you bake ḥallah in your class, be sure to use some of the children’s suggestions. You can visit www.behrmanhouse.com/jam and click on “Shabbat” for a ḥallah recipe.

Shabbat objects: Let the children pretend to be different Shabbat objects. For example, stand up tall like a candle with your hands fluttering like flames above your head, cup your arms like a Kiddush cup full of grape juice, or twist your arms together like a braided ḥallah. Encourage the children to think of their own ways to imitate these objects.