



Values Curriculum:

Yom Kippur: Using Words Wisely

OVERVIEW	This session explores the holiday of Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement. On Yom Kippur we consider our behavior, including how the words we say impact the people around us. Students connect to the meaning of Yom Kippur by exploring the Jewish value of mindful speech.
OBJECTIVE	To consider the impact of our words and how we can take responsibility for them and to link that practice to the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur.
VALUE(S)	<i>Koach Lashon</i> (the Power of Speech)
STORY	A Sack Full of Feathers by Debby Waldman and Cindy Revell
MATERIALS	Word-Feathers, Word-Trap Contraption materials
AT HOME CHALLENGE	Students will take their word-trap contraptions home to help them practice mindful speech.

Materials List

Activity One

- Small boxes, or similar containers
- Buttons, jewels, sequins, googly eyes, small bits of paper, and other fun things for decorating the boxes
- Glue
- Pairs of scissors
- Markers

Activity Two

- No materials necessary.

Gathering Activity

- Word-feathers (prepared and hidden in advance)

Opening/Closing Circle

- Book: A Sack Full of Feathers by Debby Waldman and Cindy Revell
- Big pad of paper and markers
- At Home Challenge Sheet

Gathering Activity: Word-Feather Hunt (15 Minutes)

Children will hunt for word-feathers. Once all of the feathers are gathered the group will work together to spell out a phrase.

1. In advance, using the words provided at the end of this lesson, prepare the feathers by taping one word onto each feather. Before the children arrive, hide them (not too hard) in the learning space.
2. Gather children around a table.
3. At the table, show them a feather and tell them that we are going to find 13 feathers in this space. When someone finds a feather they should bring it back to this table before continuing to look. Once all the feathers are found everyone will gather at the table to puzzle out a secret message.
4. Send the children to look. Support them in giving everyone a chance to find a feather. Children can search in pairs if that's easier.
5. Once all of the feathers are on the table, read the words aloud or if you have readers in the group, invite them to read the words they know.
6. Try different combinations to see what kinds of sentences you can find until you land on the phrase we are looking for: If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all.

Opening Circle (10 Minutes)

Gather everyone into a circle, bringing the feather words with you, and begin with a melody, a *niggun* or a greeting song such as *Hineh Ma Tov*.

Tell about today's theme:

- What does our feather phrase mean?
- Today we are learning about Yom Kippur.
- What do we already know about Yom Kippur?
- Yom Kippur is: our Day of Atonement, a day for thinking about what mistakes we've made this year, a time for saying sorry, a time for forgiving other people who might have hurt you, observed by fasting and spending much of the day in services
- What does our feather phrase have to do with Yom Kippur?

Introduce today's Hebrew words: *Lashon & Mileem*

- Everybody stretch out your arm in front of you and undulate it as though it was a huge tongue, and say "lashon." You can make your arm move to the sound "Lashon, lashon, lashon."
- Lashon means tongue. It's also means language or speech, what we say with our tongues.
- Everyone bring one hand to your heart and say "Mi." Then bring that hand up to your lips and say "Leem." Put them together and say "Mileem."
- Mileem are words. They start in our hearts and come out of our mouths.

Story (20 Minutes)

Introduce the Story – *A Sack Full of Feathers*

- Ask the children if they have ever told a story about someone else, maybe about a sibling, or a friend, or a classmate.
- The story we're going to read is about a child named Yankel who loves to tell stories about other people. Let's find out what happens when he tells his stories.

Read the Story. Ask some good Questions.

- **Check for Understanding**
 - ◇ Were Yankel's stories true?
 - ◇ How did Yankel's story about the salty rugelach change the way his friends thought about the bakery?
 - ◇ Why did the rabbi have Yankel give the feathers out and then try and collect them again?

- **Get Curious**

- ◇ What are kids wondering about the story?
- ◇ Encourage kids to wonder about WHY something happened in the story, WHAT might happen next, or HOW someone did something.
- ◇ Record these questions on the big pad of paper.
- ◇ These questions don't have to have answers - though kids are welcome to try and answer each other's questions.
- ◇ Have kids respond to each other's questions with "good question!" and a thumbs up

- **Give one more Question to Ponder**

- ◇ I'm wondering: Is it ever okay to tell a story about someone else?

10 Minute Break

Activity One: Looking Back and Looking Forward (20 Minutes)

Children will make word-trap contraptions for capturing words that they might have said by accident or that they realized later weren't a good idea to say.

Introduce the Activity:

In our story, Yankel could not take back all the words and stories he had told about other people just like he couldn't find all the feathers he had scattered in the village.

Today we are going to build word-trap contraptions to capture words we know we shouldn't say out loud or that we might have said by accident or that we might have said and then thought better of.

1. Have each child think for a minute about what kind of contraption they would like to make. Does it eat their words like a creature? Does it flush them like a toilet? Does it mush them up like a blender?
2. Give a child a box or container, or if they are varied, let each child choose one.
3. Have each child craft the contraption they have in mind using the craft materials you have provided.
4. When you have 5 minutes left and/or most students seem done



with their work, do a group gallery walk so that everyone can see each other's creations. Invite children to say a few words about how their contraptions work.

5. Leave the contraptions on the table so they can dry as needed.

Activity Two: Tongue Twisters & Telephone (20 Minutes)

Children will explore what a tricky tool the tongue can be by playing with tongue twisters and the game telephone.

Introduce the Tongue Twisters:

Who can remember the new Hebrew word we learned today for tongue?

Let's make the word with our bodies again. Everybody stretch out your arm in front of you and undulate it as though it was a huge tongue, and say "lashon." You can make your arm move to the sound "Lashon, lashon, lashon."

Our tongues are very small but very powerful. Let's see what we can do with our tongues.

- Everyone stick out your tongue and say "ahhhhh!" Louder!
- Can you do a "tongue" trick?
- Who can make a cool shape with their tongue?
- Who's got an idea about what else tongues can do, or how they're powerful?

We are going to test our tongues with some tongue twisters. Ready? Repeat after me:

[You can have all of the children repeat the phrase after you say it OR repeat it several times in a row OR have one person say it to the next as it goes around the circle]

- Buy blue blueberry biscuits before bedtime
- How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck would chuck wood?
- Bobby blue blows big blue bubbles
- She sells seashells by the seashore
- Freshly fried flying fish
- And in Hebrew: "גן גידל דגן בגן, דגן גדול גדול בגן"
ganan gidel dagan bagan, dagan gadol gadal bagan
A gardener grew grains in the garden, big grains grew in the garden.

Introduce the Telephone Game:

When Yankel shared stories, he often only told a part of the story. And then he added something to it. And then the listeners added something else to it. So, as the rabbi said, "A story goes where it goes, and you cannot say where or how or when."

1. Have children sit in a circle.
2. Use a short phrase like:
3. A dog named Moose ran loose through the spruce forest chasing a goose.
4. If I were a dinosaur, I'd be an Ankylosaurus, a tough, armored exterior but with a leafy loving heart of gold!
5. Koala bears are cute and pandas bears are cuddly.
6. Whisper that phrase to the child sitting next to you.
7. Each child whispers whatever they heard or whatever they remember to the next child.
8. A listener can have the phrase repeated to them only once and in its entirety, then they have to do their best to say what they heard.
9. When the phrase has gone all the way around the circle, have the last child say what they heard.
10. Talk for a minute about how that worked out. Did we get it? Did the message change? Was the rabbi right about how a story can change when it gets repeated from person to person?

Closing Circle (10 Minutes)

Have children go get their word-trap contraptions and return to the circle.

Before we go, we are going to practice using our word-trap contraptions. Our word-traps can capture our words either before we say them out loud or after we already said something so we won't do it again. Let's test them!

- Can someone think of something not-nice to say?
- Let's all whisper that into our word-traps.
- This time think of your own thing; you don't have to say it out loud.
- Now whisper your own words that you want trapped into your word-trap.

On Yom Kippur we remember mistakes we have made with our words. We use our words to say we're sorry. And we promise we will do better in the future, though we know we will still make mistakes. Our word-traps will help us to remember and to practice being thoughtful about our words every day.

Review the Hebrew Words of the Day:

- Have the children practice the Hebrew words with their bodies:
- Everybody stretch out your arm in front of you and undulate it as though it was a huge tongue, and say "lashon." You can make your arm move to the sound "Lashon, lashon, lashon."
- Everyone bring one hand to your heart and say "Mi." Then bring that hand up to your lips and say "Leem." Put them together and say Mileem.
- Have the children say what the words mean: Lashon (tongue) and Mileem (words).

Pass out the At Home Challenge Sheet, Sing a goodbye song like *Shalom Chaverim* or *Oseh Shalom*

At Home Challenge: Using Words Wisely

Today, as part of learning about Yom Kippur, we learned about using our words wisely. We made word-trap contraptions to capture the words we shouldn't say or to put words that we maybe shouldn't have said away so that we won't say them again.

Here are the next steps to take at home to use words wisely.

1. Put the word-trap contraption somewhere that everyone in the family can access.
2. When you find yourself wanting to say something that you shouldn't, go and whisper what you were going to say into the word-trap.
3. If you or someone else says something that they shouldn't have, apologize and then use the word-trap contraption to tuck those words away OR remind whoever spoke that they can do the same.
4. See if the word-trap contraption helps your family be more mindful about their speech.

At Home Challenge: Using Words Wisely

Print these words and cut them out. Then attach one word per feather using tape.

If
you
don't
have
anything
nice
to
say
don't
say
anything
at
all