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ROSH HASHANAH

Start with an apple and build a curriculum. Applying the senses, explore the attributes of your apple. Cut the apple in different directions and make observations. Taste.

Buy apples. Sort them according to color, size, etc. Cut them in two and in four. Core and peel the apples; make apple rings and hang them in the air to dry. Watch the peeled portion of an apple turn brown and the rest of its skin wrinkle; compare with intact apple. Cook applesauce in a Pyrex saucepan and make continuing observations. Count the seeds in different apples and compare size, number, color. Plant some seeds. Chill some for later planting. Cut others open. Dip apple slices in honey.

Bring some honey in a honeycomb (available in health food stores). Taste and compare with different jar honeys. Examine the honeycomb. Chew the wax. Manipulate it. Look at bees in books and pictures. Can you find any still flying about? How do they work? What is their job in the world? Why do they sting? Help the children understand so that they can be reasonable and cautious, rather than hysterical and helpless.

In ancient times, the *shofar* was used to gather the people together. Find other ways to produce sound by the movement of air. Try paper rolled like a funnel, straws with their ends cut to a V-shape. Make a telephone from two juice cans and a candle-waxed string to whisper communications to one person. Call into a large conch shell to communicate with many people at a distance. Get the rabbi or the chazan to bring the *shofar* into the room and blow it for the children.

Sing the *Shanah Tovah* song to each child, filling in the child's name. Let the children sing to the teacher, then to one another. This is a good way to get to know each other's names. Add a handshake to the greeting you sing as you walk over to the other person. This physical contact is part of the face to face *l'shanah tovah* wish.

If it is at all possible bake your own round *Yom Tov* challah. Or bake a frozen round *Yom Tov* challah, usually available from the kosher butcher. If you cannot bake, visit the bakery and study the window before buying your round challah for *Yom Tov*. Study its roundness. Compare it with the usual braided Shabbat challah. What other breads are round? Taste a roll, a bagel, pita, etc. Taste the round challah and compare. Does the shape affect the taste? Consider the implications of roundness in terms of continuity and the cycle of life: While the old year is ending, a new one begins.

If your community observes *Tashlich*, visit a local body of water prior to *Rosh Hashanah*. Don't talk about *Tashlich* at all. Just make it a field trip with magnifying glasses to look for signs of life in and around the water. Perhaps you can bring back a sample bottle of the water to compare with tap water in two bowls on a table in your classroom. You can certainly bring back samples of things that grow near the water in plastic specimen bags. When the children go to *Tashlich* with their parents on *Rosh Hashanah*, the place will be familiar, and they will have a focus of their own. Pockets emptied of

crumbs in the *Tashlich* ritual may be feeding the insects or fish they observed in the water. They will certainly be aware that this is a living body of water: an important concept for science learning and for religious Judaism.

Visit the synagogue in an informal way and form the natural connection to *Yom Kippur* during the period of time between the two holy days. For those children who were in the synagogue during *Rosh Hashanah*, there will be a dramatic contrast with the quiet place in which the group finds itself. For all, this is a time to approach the ark closely, to examine it open and closed. Look at the Torah and touch it. Begin to feel the specialness of it as expressed by its elegant holiday dressing and embellishments, the velvet or satin cloth, the gold embroidery, the crowns, the bells, the *yad*. With such rich sensory experiences the love of Torah can begin for young children.

Make a lotto game using pictures of synagogues and related ceremonial objects. Collect pictures from magazines, greeting cards, Jewish publishers' catalogs, discarded Sunday school and first grade workbooks, and draw your own simple sketches. A very special game can be made using photographs of your own synagogue's ark, Torahs, eternal light, etc. Mount your pictures on Bristol board and cover the small and large playing cards with transparent contact paper or laminate them for longer life.

Having experienced apples, you can make a set of sequence cards: a whole apple, halves of an apple, smaller pieces of apple, and a piece of apple dripping with honey.

Pictures of *shofarim* of different sizes can be mounted on cards to be ordered in size sequence from the smallest to the largest or the other way around. These few examples should suggest to you many other possibilities for creating learning games which bring a Jewish awareness to your game shelf.

Every possible connection should be made to Israel. Pictures of holiday celebrations in Israel, songs sung there, ceremonial objects made there, etc. should be introduced.

BOOKS

WE DISCOVER SOUNDS AND MUSIC, R.H. Rice and I.M. Simkiss.

YOM KIPPUR

A couple of days before *Yom Kippur* read *Sneakers to Shul* and use the opportunity for the children to add their own ideas of what a "fast" is. It is important for the teacher to be aware of what is practiced at home. If sneakers are not worn to synagogue in your community, the children have learned about another custom some Jewish people practice at holiday time.

Make *kayek*, a sesame cracker which is traditionally eaten by Syrian Jews to break the *Yom Kippur* fast.

RECIPE

Place in a bowl: 2 cups flour
Make a hole in the center of the flour.

Add:

2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 cup water
2 eggs
3 tablespoons oil
1 tablespoon salt
2 1/2 ounces sesame seeds

Mix with hands kneading the dough at least five times. Don't worry if it's sticky. Put the dough on a well-floured table or board. Roll the dough into a very thin sheet. Cut into crackersize pieces. Bake at 375° until light gold in color (about 20 minutes). This recipe should make 40 to 45 crackers.

Send some home to break the fast after *Yom Kippur*.

BOOKS

SNEAKERS TO SHUL, Floreva Cohen.

SUKKOT

A Jew's first activity after breaking the fast of *Yom Kippur* has traditionally been hammering in of the first stake for building the *sukkah*.

There are so many things to be learned from the building of a *sukkah*. First have a look at the materials used in the building. Where does wood come from? Go visit your tree again. Perhaps you can take a branch or two to include in the *sukkah*. How does the *sukkah* stand? How is the roof put on? Can the walls be uneven, of unequal sizes or heights? Building can be done experimentally with blocks, then move on to working with wood for a frame. Arrange to watch the erection of the school or synagogue *sukkah*. Convince the builders that even small children can help in many ways.

Sukkot is the time of the fall harvest. If you can, visit a local farm or a vegetable garden where plants are still in the ground. Next best is a farm stand; at the very least, everyone can get to the produce department of a supermarket. Take a small group. It is better to make three visits with a group of six children each, than one trip with eighteen. You will find the extra effort rewarding.

Observe the seasonal vegetables and fruits on sale. Surely there are many the children can recognize and name. Bring a variety back to school. Explore the shape, texture, smell, and taste in many different ways. Example: Put one vegetable at a time in a brown paper bag. Let the children take turns guessing what it is. Cut raw vegetables for smelling and tasting. How do they look inside? Recall the apples you cut at *Rosh Hashanah*.

Cook some of the fruits and vegetables using the Pyrex saucepan. Observe the steam, the evaporation and condensation, and reinforce the earlier experience with the applesauce. Cook things separately for comparison. Then put some vegetables together to make a soup. Save seeds for planting. For, in order to maintain the continuity of life, if we harvest, we must plant if we want to harvest again.

Wherever possible, decorate the *sukkah* with fresh fruits and vegetables. Decorate your own *sukkah* with the strings of apple rings you have been drying since *Rosh Hashanah*. You might try tasting some of them now. The children can string cranberries and string beans to make garlands for the *sukkah*. Tie string on carrots, peppers and different kinds of squash to hang in the *sukkah*. Use colorful and interesting (though inedible) gourds for decoration. Observe the changes in the fruits and vegetables exposed to the elements as they hang in the *sukkah*. Compare these with specimens saved and refrigerated.

Remember the apple rings when you are ready to take the decorations down. You will have delicious dried apple candy for a special *erev* Shabbat snack. When you have eaten and enjoyed them, try drying other fruits. The key to success in air-drying is to keep air circulating on all surfaces of the fruit. Gourds to be saved from the *sukkah* decorations for use at *Purim* time may be hung, each in a net bag (salvaged from onions bought at the supermarket). A drying rack for grapes can be made simply with a piece of window screening framed by four pieces of wood to elevate the rack from the table and permit air to pass under the grapes. Buy several bunches of different kinds of grapes and watch them become ... raisins! Put some where they can get several hours of sun daily. If you have

plant lights, put some grapes under them. Place others in regular light. Make frequent observations. Older children may devise some means of recording their observations and comparisons. Good opportunities for language development will arise. This would be a good opportunity to use the cassette tape recorder with the teacher supplying the date before each taped observation.

Introduce the *lulav* and the *etrog* in the classroom. Observe the different kinds of leaves and branches that compose the *lulav*. Take a walk in the neighborhood or go to a park. How many different kinds of plants can you find growing? Collect leaves, branches and seed pods to bring back to school. Make centerpieces for your tables by poking your branches and other items into pieces of styrofoam taped into baskets, bowls, or paint-dipped cans or plastic tumblers. String seed pods, acorns, sweet gum balls to hang in the *sukkah*. Press some leaves flat; make crayon rubbings to decorate the walls of the *sukkah*. Don't forget to include your own tree.

Plant willow cuttings for *aravot* for future *Sukkot* holidays. It will take four or five years before you have something usable for a *lulav* but the planting will produce much of interest to the children soon. Cuttings of prairie willow or dwarf pussy willow can be obtained from neighbors or a local nursery. Start with a goodly number; the success ratio is low. Put the cuttings in a container of water and watch for roots to start. Choose a spot for outdoor planting that gets plenty of light, but avoid water pipes as the developing root systems can cause problems later. Transplant your rooted cuttings before the first frost. This is a good time to listen to weather predictions for night-time temperature drops and to use the large room thermometer outdoors. Mark the freezing point clearly on the thermometer and observe changing temperatures in relation to it. Good luck with your willows. In about three years you can cut them back to encourage denser growth. When they're over two feet in height you can distribute cuttings to neighbors. This generosity will help your bush grow even fuller.

Make your dramatic play area into a *sukkah* by turning a table on its side. Stretch an old sheet or brown wrapping paper to make the two other walls. Cover the roof with branches as in a true *sukkah*. During the week of *Sukkot* arrange to have a snack and/or lunch in a *sukkah*. If you can't gain access to the large one as a group, let small groups of children take turns eating in your improvised *sukkah* in the dramatic play area. Shake the *lulav* and listen to its sound. Handle the *etrog* with care and compare it with other citrus fruits. Bring oranges, lemons, grapefruit, and others into the classroom.

Visit the large *sukkah* at different times of day and observe the changing sky through the branches. What happens when it rains? The *sukkah* is a "shelter" which compels us to stay in touch with nature. Visit other *sukkot* in the neighborhood. Perhaps some children have their own *sukkot* at home. Arrange a snack-time visit.

BOOKS

THE LITTLE HOUSE ON THE ROOF, Adler and Hirsch.

THE SUCCA AND THE BIG WIND, Lilly Edelman.

SIMHAT TORAH

Visit the synagogue again. Get a little closer to the Torah. Get permission to take off the beautiful covering and look at the Torah itself. Examine the letters and get the rabbi or *chazan* to chant a small portion for you.

If a small Torah and an *Aron* are used as part of your program, it should always be treated with great respect.

Make an *Aron Kodesh* from a grocery carton, using beautiful colors and textures. Cover the box with velvet or satin cloth in brilliant colors. Embellish it with symbols in gold and silver. Have door flaps that are hinged with strips of leather or vinyl, and that can close with a fastening or ribbons that tie, or a button and loop. If you use a cloth drawn across to close the open *Aron*, guard against a sad droopy look. The image should always remain one of beauty and caring that show our continuing love and respect for the Torah.

For *Rosh Hashanah*, the children took home greeting cards. Continuing the cycle, it is now time to bring to school collections of greeting cards being discarded at home. These discards, bright with color and symbols taken from Jewish life, will provide excellent material for decorating *Simhat Torah* flags. They can be pasted on construction paper and attached to "sticks" made by rolling a sheet of newspaper very tightly and fastening it with tape. These will serve adequately where wooden dowel sticks are unavailable or too expensive.

Revitalizing an old custom, fix apples on the points of Israeli or *Simhat Torah* flags. Parade the children through the school and around the block with their flags and a Torah, singing all the while.

*Degel, degel, degel tov
Degel tov sheli Hayom Simhat Torah
V'zeh digli, digli.*

My good flag. Today is Simhat Torah and this is my flag.

When *Simhat Torah* is over, take down the fruits and vegetables you hung in the *sukkah*. Examine them and make observations. Cut them up.

PLANNING AHEAD

As an offshoot from observing changes in some of the other vegetables put some carrot and beet tops in water to root them. Try some potatoes and sweet potatoes in water as well. Then set up your special potato garden.

Plant potatoes on *Sukkot* for *Hanukkah latkes*.

Put one heavy-duty plastic garbage bag inside another. Doubling the bags will give you a sturdy plastic planter. Fill it with a good soil mix to a depth of eight or nine inches.

Cut up a number of potatoes with well-developed eyes and plant the pieces in the soil. Water when needed. Cultivate the soil regularly with hand tools.

Your plastic garden will present a number of problems. Working on the solutions will offer you learning opportunities in a number of varied disciplines.

First, you will need to make your garden movable. Put a piece of wood, large enough to support your garden, under the plastic bag to provide a rigid base. Now can it be moved more easily? Drill two holes in the wood and put a piece of clothesline through for a handle. This makes it easier to pull the garden along the floor. But it's still difficult. Investigate friction with other objects like blocks and toy vehicles. Nail furniture glides to the corners of your wooden garden platform to make the heavy object more easily movable. Attaching furniture casters to the platform will give you mobility in all directions and a chance to observe the action of wheels and ball bearings. This experience using one of the basic simple machines can be extended to the investigation of the wheel, the incline plane, the level, and the fulcrum, all of which play an important part in our daily lives.

Now you can observe and note the needs of your garden from inception until harvest. Feel the soil to determine whether more water is needed. Since your garden is encased in plastic, moisture will evaporate only through the exposed top surface. Too much water will cause your seedling potatoes to rot. Poke about in the soil periodically to check their condition. It will be easier if you have inserted numbered or colored markers to remind you of where the seedlings are planted. Partially expose one potato and leave it out to see what difference light makes. Remember chlorophyll? Observe how the new little potatoes form. What happens to the seedling you started with?

Measure the growth of the potato plants with strips of paper and use the strips to form a graph. Graph them at intervals of one week or two. Count how many potatoes you planted. How many new ones are growing? Graph the number from each plant. Use the color on the marker to identify the plant, e.g. the red one has three potatoes represented by three red circles pasted to the graph; the blue one has none and the green one has two new potatoes represented by two green circles on the graph chart. The number of math experiences and their complexity will depend in part on the age of the children and in part on the interest of the adult.

You won't have enough potatoes by *Hanukkah* to make *latkes* for the group, but won't it be exciting if you add even a few homegrown ones to those you buy?

Save the gourds from the *sukkah*. Dry them. Check them often. Shake them to loosen the dried seeds inside. By *Purim* you should have noisemakers.

Stick enough cloves into an *etrog* to cover it completely. Hang it up in the air. This will be your *b'samim*. (Smell it!) Keep it around for *havdalah*. Make *etrog* jelly. Leave one *etrog* lying around and check its condition frequently.

Observe seasonal changes. The air is becoming cooler; you may need a light sweater. Darkness comes a bit earlier. Some leaves are falling; others are changing color or getting dry and curling. Listen to them underfoot. Continue collecting seed pods. What's happening to and around your tree?

If all the seeds that ripen and drop to the ground in the early fall were to sprout in the late fall or early winter, they would surely freeze to death before they were strong enough to get through the winter. So the seeds enter a period of dormancy. Falling leaves cover the seeds. Then snow falls and the seeds are kept cold and moist. When spring finally brings the warming of the earth they begin to grow.

If you want to succeed in growing plants from seeds of wild trees or fruit, you will have to simulate this moist, cold treatment. The perfect temperature for stratification is 40° Fahrenheit which is the approximate temperature of the vegetable crisper in your refrigerator.

Put the seeds you've gathered in a plastic sandwich bag along with a mixture of half sphagnum moss (available at garden centers) and half sand. Soak the sphagnum moss, then squeeze out the water so that it's moist but not wet. Keep the bag in the crisper for three months or until you notice the seeds germinating. Look at them periodically and talk about them with the children who seem interested at the time. When the seeds begin germinating, plant them in a regular potting mixture and grow them on your window sill.