



TORAH HEROES AND THE LESSONS THEY LEARN

Submitted by: SHIRLY PUGATZKY

Subject Area:
Torah

Specify:
Multi-lesson unit

Target Age group:
6 years old to 80 years old (and up)
Can be performed to children with Hebrew knowledge or with no Hebrew knowledge.

Lesson Objectives:

For this kind of a lesson you will need to have the Torah. If you read and understand Hebrew it is a big plus here. If not use the English version. The idea is to read the Torah from the source and pay attention to details which can show a different or an inner aspect of the “known” or famous story.

This style of looking into the mood of the hero in the Torah stories took me and my students into a very deep understanding of life. We looked at the heroes (such as Abraham, Jonah and Noah) and tried to see the inner process of the events in their lives.

We learned how to stop judging other people for their mistakes and learned to see how the opportunity for a higher evolution is there for all of them in different ways. Each story has main motives which helps us solve the mysteries of the case. We become detectives in our studies. We look at details.

For example in **Noah** case we looked at the names of Noah and his sons. We saw that they all present basic human qualities through the meaning of their names. Noah was the kind one, Shem was presenting wisdom and knowledge (Shem means name and names are all concepts for all objects and therefore wisdom), Cham (which means hot) was passion, and joy, and Yefet (from the root of Yafet, beautiful, beauty) was beauty. We then looked at the



TORAH HEROES AND THE LESSONS THEY LEARN

Submitted by: SHIRLY PUGATZKY

down side of each personality and talked about how everyone has both sides in himself. So Noah was calm and pleasant but that could also make him weak and too easy to manipulate. Shem could become too intellectual and proud of himself for his wisdom that would go against basic humility and humbleness. Cham could get angry easily and have a lot of desire. Desire creates wars because we want things and if we can't have them we try to take them with force and manipulation. And Yefet could be also very proud and not sensitive to others. We agreed that the connection to God is the opportunity we have, to help us develop our positive sides towards wisdom and compassion.

In the story of Cain and Abel we talked about the innocent side of Cain and how he was put to a test. We agreed that the test was a big test for all people and that Cain is only an example for the test of jealousy. If we would only go by the frame story we would never know that God actually put him into a test. It is written in the Torah. We were actually looking for an answer because we could not understand why God took the offerings of Abel, but not the ones of Cain. It didn't make sense to us. So we looked and found the words of God to Cain in lines 6 and 7 (I used the word *Pasuk* in Hebrew).

Then we saw that God gave Cain an option to let his desire control him or to give it up. It was up to him and in the open. God and Cain communicated about a very difficult aspect of any human being, which is which attitude to choose, the human one or the spiritual one. That took us to a discussion about *Chet* meaning a sin. And we developed together a more compassionate attitude towards what a sin is. A sin was accepted as our own wrong concept of reality, our ignorant nature and our misunderstanding of things we can't see or grasp. So a big conclusion was that Cain's "sin" was feeling bad about not being accepted and from there he went on to killing, but the root was choosing the wrong emotion although God showed him before hand what was going on inside his soul. That made us all understand how hard it was for Cain because we knew how he felt though our own experiences



TORAH HEROES AND THE LESSONS THEY LEARN

Submitted by: SHIRLY PUGATZKY

of not being accepted in different areas of life and how hard it was not to feel anger and a need for revenge.

In this lesson I pointed out some main concepts in Hebrew such as the names of the two brothers. Cain from *Kinyan* which means possessions, and Abel for *Hevel* which means breath and also something of no significance (so here is another through about Abel not being the important issue here at all). I also introduced some cultural activities as the two brothers were working one as a shapered *Roeh Tzon* (=sheep) and Cain a earth worker *oved Adam* (=earth)

Main issues to consider is reading straight for the Torah, because then we don't get the "frame story" but rather all the little details which makes the story much deeper and whole. This is something that the children usually don't get to experience and it opens them into the depth of the torah.

For you as a teacher this lesson involves some preparation. You want to look at the different possibilities in the portion you wish to teach, look at some of the main Hebrew words and names in the story and make some connections before class. If you are some- one who studies Torah regularly that should be much easier to do then in the case of not having a personal Torah study practice.

After thinking about some main concepts, leave some room to be surprised by the children's thought on each topic. They have the wondrous ability to surprise me with new ideas every time.

If you have some questions or wish to share your ideas with me in the future please contact me. I will be happy to discuss.