**Tzedakah Storytelling Project**

**Mindfulness Question**: What is your favorite Tzedakah Box in the world? (This can be a Tzedakah box you’ve seen, a Tzedakah box you or someone you know owns, or you can imagine an amazing Tzedakah box and explain it to your friends)

(Teachers, please come up with your answer and model them for the kids, to help them brainstorm all of the different ways Tzedakah box’s can become more meaningful. Review the Mindfulness Questions in small groups. Think about these three main ideas:

1. Why do you think there is no one way a Tzedakah Box is supposed to look (After all, most *Tzizit*, Torahs, Mezuzah’s and other Jewish objects have rules about their size, scale and placement in Judaism)?
2. What does your favorite Tzedakah box say about you? What does it say about how you see being Jewish?
3. If there is no one type of Tzedakah Box, do you think that there is a right or wrong way a Jewish person is supposed to give Tzedakah.

**Group Discussion:**

On Rosh Hashanah, it is said that there are three ways a person may be written into the Book of Life:

* *Teffilah*, prayer is one, and that is why we and our parents are spending all day in Synagogue praying.
* *Teshuvah*, the Jewish term for forgiveness, and making amends to people we have wronged, and trying to become better people.
* *Tzedakah*, giving charity or helping people through hard work is the third, powerful way we can help our community and be written into the book of life each year.

A famous Sephardi Rabbi named ***Rambam*** (also known as Maimonides) came up with Eight levels of giving Tzedakah to others, to show that it not just about how much a person can give, but the ways people give to others that matter in Judaism.

Let’s take some time in small groups and see if you can put the levels of giving in the correct order the Rambam came up with.

(Instruction: Have cut of versions of these levels unsorted (in baggies!) to hand out to the learners (you probably want enough to make multiple groups of five). For the teachers, the correct order of the levels is listed below. Place one large piece of paper with the four questions in the baggie, that the students should answer while they wait for other groups to finish, which the groups will be asked to answer when the correct order is revealed):

**Maimonides’ Eight Levels of Tzedakah**

* Level 8 — The donor is pained by the act of giving (Does not enjoy being asked to give Tzedakah)
* Level 7 — The donor gives less than they should but does so cheerfully
* Level 6 — The donor gives after being asked
* Level 5 — The donor gives without being asked
* Level 4 — The recipient (person who needs Tzedakah) knows the donor, but the donor does not know the recipient
* Level 3 — The donor knows the recipient (person who needs Tzedakah) but the recipient does not know the donor
* Level 2 — Neither the donor nor the recipient (person who needs Tzedakah) knows the other
* Level 1 — The donor gives the recipient the ability to help themselves (through training, and help the entire community)

*Once your group has finished, please answer the following questions:*

1. Can you think of an example from our world for all 8 of the Levels? Think about them, since we will call on your group to share your examples with the entire group.
2. If you needed someone to give you Tzedakah, which of these levels would make you the most comfortable, and which would make you the least? Please explain why
3. Once we read the correct order out loud, please tell the entire group if your group had any differences and share why you felt those differences mattered.
4. Can you as a group think of a lower level than level 8, and an even higher level of giving than level 1?

**Share from your Lives**: These levels are a guide for how we can make Tzedakah more meaningful to our lives. Think back, if you have ever done a Tzedakah project, what you did, and what level you think that Tzedakah project falls under (Remember, though these levels help us think about how we can help people, all of these levels happen, and everyone gets help no matter the level given, so do not be afraid to think of any kind of example). Before we share some of those projects, would each teacher in the room please start by thinking about a Tzedakah or social action experience, and how it relates to this list.

We are now going to read an old Jewish story. While we read, please think about what levels of Tzedakah this person chose to do, how they made you feel throughout the story, and if you would have handled anything differently if you were there.

**Yosi the Mensch Story:**

Once, there was a small village that had a famous Rabbi. Most people in the town were poor, and they all called upon the Rabbi when things went bad. Though the Rabbi was a poor man, he knew that Tzedakah was one of the most important things a Jewish person could do, so he gave, and he gave no matter what. For the people in town that needed help the most, The Rabbi always had some money to give him, from the small Tzedakah box that was in the synagogue, that everyone who prayed in the morning minyan would drop a few pennies in each morning, since that was all they had to give.

In this village, there was a rich man named Yosi. Try as they might, no one in this town could make the old man smile. Yosi, thought rich, successful, and very devoted to his religion did nothing to help the townspeople, never gave any of his wealth to others and when people called upon Yosi, he never went out to see them. Yosi was a quiet man, a skilled businessman, who had a big house with many servants. Most people in the village had to look up at his big home, imagining what it would be like to live a safe, comfortable and rich life.

When the Rabbi first met Yosi, who always came to the synagogue, he could not understand why Yosi gave so little. Yosi cared about Judaism and learned everything he could from Torah, to the Talmud, to every book about Jewish traditions and Mitzvot, so the Rabbi was surprised that whenever they passed out the Tzedakah box during Tefillot, Yosi was the only one who never gave Tzedakah. How, the Rabbi thought, could the richest man in town, be the only one who would not give Tzedakah? It was such an important Jewish tradition, the Rabbi had even seen Yosi study about Tzedakah, so he was ashamed that no matter what he tried as a Rabbi, he could not convince Yosi to give, no matter how hard it was for his poor fellow Jews.

Worse still, after bad winter snowstorms and floods from summer rainfalls, when homes, shops and even the synagogue needed to be repaired everyone in the town helped out. Everyone, except for Yosi. Yosi never gave any money, he never picked up a single tools to fix something that was not his, and when the town gathered to repair the synagogue, the synagogue that Yosi went to three times a day to pray Yosi stayed away, letting the townspeople do all the work. The Rabbi and the Jews of the village were stunned, that even the non-Jewish neighbors came to help fix the synagogue, charging the poor Rabbi very little money to help him rebuild; Did Yosi care less about helping his fellow Jews than the non-Jewish workers?!

The town grew to realizes that Yosi would never change. He was always going to live alone in his big house, hording his money, only leaving to pray at the synagogue without making new friends. The village was not jealous of Yosi. They were sad that such a man cared so little for others. Even the Rabbi, who had tried for years to get Yosi, now an old man to care for his fellow Jews had simply stopped asking.

No, Yosi was forgotten in the town. Instead, the Rabbi saw his poor people mending their homes, plowing their own fields one harvest after the other, feeding the poor with what little food they had, and relying on themselves during disaster after disaster.

Eventually, Yosi died. Very few people attended his funeral. The Rabbi made sure there were enough people to have a minyan for Yosi, they blessed him and hoped he was at peace and they buried him with dignity. To the Rabbi’s surprise, Yosi’s grave was small, much too small for a man of his great wealth. But Boris, Yosi’s most faithful servant had told the Rabbi that this is what Yosi wanted. That confused the Rabbi, surely the man with a large, lonely house would want to be laid to rest in the most lavish way possible.

Not that the Rabbi had any time to think about Yosi. The town was in chaos, the likes of which he had never seen. A day after the funeral, there was a big argument in town. A woman with eight children had not received her daily milk from the milkman.

“Please, I’m so confused.” The Milkman said, “Every morning you leave a coin on your window to pay for the milk. Today the coin was missing.”

“Rabbi, please help me!” The woman cried out, “I don’t know what he is saying. I’ve never left a coin there. Is he telling me that someone else has been paying for my children’s milk each day?”

The Rabbi pondered this. Who in his small town had the money to leave some behind to help this woman’s family?

Before he could answer his question, another cry came from the fields. It was time to plant, and something must have happened.

“What is wrong?” The Rabbi called out, rushing to meet the farmers.

“It is our seeds!” One of the farmers called out, “Every year, we pay the same few coins for our seeds, but this year, the man is only giving us one tenth of what we need to plant our fields.”

“Is this true?” The Rabbi asked the owner of the seed shop, a kind, non-Jewish man who had always been fair to his people before this.

“Well, Rabbi.” The store owner said, “It is true, every year your farmers pay me this amount, but in truth this only covers on tenth of the seeds they need. Someone else would come to me first, in secret, and give me a much larger payment so that I could give them enough for a bigger harvest.”

“Who?” The Rabbi asked. To think, that there was someone in his small village that paid nine times what the rest of them could…without this persons Tzedakah, the town would surely have starved to death.

“I am sorry, Rabbi.” The owner held up his hand, “But I was sworn to secrecy. I am not allowed to tell you who it was. But I have been assured, that if these men wait just a few days, I can get them all of the seed they are used to buying and will have a plentiful harvest.”

For two days, everyone in town had a story like this. Some bills that people had not been able to pay had been paid for by a stranger. Every Tzedakah project the town had done had been given a secret donation. Every beggar in the village had been offered a free meal at one of the Kosher taverns, that the tavern owners just assumed was being paid for by the Synagogue. And the Synagogues Tzedakah box, the one that everyone had put their pennies into every day, and had not stopped to do, felt suddenly light and empty.

The Rabbi began to understand.

He went to his synagogue, over half the town behind him. There were those non-Jewish builders, who the Rabbi thought had volunteered to help them rebuild the damaged walls from after a great flood. And they knew what the Rabbi was about to ask them.

“We’re happy to help out,” one of the fellows said, “And yes, we were paid to come here and charge you little money. But we were sworn to secrecy, and we were not allowed to tell you who paid us.”

“That is okay, good sir.” The Rabbi spoke, smiling to himself, “Just tell me, where is your good friend, Boris? Where is Yosi’s servant?”

“I am here.” It was Boris. Boris was crying, “And Rabbi, I ask you now, for your forgiveness. For you see, my master has sworn me to secrecy, even after his passing. But I need to tell you all now. I need you all to know that everything will be okay.”

And in that moment, the rabbi understood it all. Yosi, so wise, so successful, and so eager to follow all of the laws in Judaism, including the great traditions on how best to give Tzedakah, had fooled them all. Every morning, Yosi would send his servants out of his large home. They would beat the milkman to people’s doors, and make sure that the poorest and neediest of families could save their money instead of spending it on milk. He would send them into the non-Jewish part of the village and erase any debts and bills they had before their neighbors had a reason to visit them and demand money they did not have. He would send his servants into the fields, planting more crops than the villagers could afford, filling their coffers every morning, and making sure that those with the least would have every chance to harvest a great crop for the town to share and live on. And for all of those needy faces, all of those people that had to ask for help and pick themselves up, it turned out that Yosi would beat the Rabbi every morning to the chapel of the synagogue, lay a large group of pennies into the near empty Tzedakah box, leave for his home and then return for morning prayers. For Yosi knew that his neighbors, his fellow Jews, his friends, needed help and deserved help, but Yosi, like the greatest sages in Jewish history wanted them to have that help, and he never wanted them to beg for it. He never wanted a single Jewish man, woman or child to know that it was he who gave them all so much, because he never wanted anything else in return. Yosi found a way to give, and he must have laughed to himself at the very end, knowing that he did it. He gave all he could, even saving money with a small, final resting place for his mortal body, and no one, not even the great Rabbi, could ever pay him back for all he did.

“It’s okay, Boris.” The Rabbi said, tears in his eyes, grateful that he had met such a man in life. As he saw the large parchment in Boris’ hand, that he knew would say that Yosi had left the town, secretly, all of his earthly wealth to continue his good deeds, he knew that everything would be alright. More than that, this great example, of a giver that no one knew had ever given, would inspire others to rise up, and to find ways to give themselves without any thought of mortal reward, “You don’t need to say it, we all know that Yosi was a Mensch.”

Questions:

* 1. After reading this story, what do you think that a Mensch means?
  2. Which level of giving do you think Yosi tried to do? How did it make you feel?
  3. How did the characters in this story, mainly the Rabbi and Yosi make you feel?
  4. Do you agree with the choices Yosi made? What different choices would you have made?
  5. If you saw people struggling, (maybe a friend in school is upset, or a current events topic makes you want to help out) how would you go about trying to help?
  6. Which of these three things do you think is the hardest, and which, right now, is most personal to you (and why):
     + Tefillah- Praying
     + Teshuvah- Asking for Forgiveness
     + Tzedakah- Giving Charity to others

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| **Jewish THINGS**  **Mindfulness Question** (around 10 minutes):Name one item, object or idea in Judaism that you think represents time. (everyone introduces themselves and answers the question. Help them expand on their answers)  *(For Teachers: Some examples are The Shofar, Shabbat Candles, The Torah…any item specific to holidays, Jewish history or things we use for a specific time are good answers to focus on.)*  Teachers: We are going to spend the day talking about some of the core Jewish things we might interact with during the Jewish year (and especially during the High Holidays). By the end of the day, we will have an understanding of what these objects mean for Judaism, our community, and ourselves at this stage in our lives.  **Group Discussion:** Before 1948, Golda Meir, who would later become Prime Minister of Israel went before the King of Jordan. There was going to be a terrible war, that no one thought the Jewish people could survive, so the King of Jordan was eager to tell Golda Meir that he wanted there to be safety between him and the Jews…and he could come into Israel and make everyone feel safe. But to ensure this, Golda Meir and the Jews needed to give up one thing.  What one thing do you think the king demanded the Jews give up? What thing would you give up in order to stop a terrible war from happening?  (Take answers, if someone guesses the preferred answer, validate them, then finish taking guesses).  The one *thing* he wanted, was the Jewish people’s **independence**. Golda Meir said no, she went back home, and the rest is history. The Jewish State survived and eventually prospered.  Things can be simple things, they can be ordinary things, but sometimes, things can represent big ideas, big values and big parts of who we are as people. Today, as we talk about some essential Jewish objects, we want to talk about why these things have been passed down, from generation to generation, and why we should try to forge a personal connection with them, so they matter to us and let us think about who we are as people.  **Activity 1: Matching Ritual Objects** (20 minutes):  Introduce activity: We are going to look at four essential objects we use in Jewish prayer, and we are going to ask how these objects are and should be used in a Jewish person’s life.  You will be put into groups, given four pictures of objects, and asked to place 24 statements about those objects next to the correct object, and in the order of what time in a Jewish person’s life they would interact with that object.  You should make the top of your list what the youngest learner would say and go down until you get to what you feel the oldest, or most mature learner would say about what their object means to them (There are 6 levels for each object). There is a preferred list of oldest to youngest, but we can discuss as a group if you feel differently about where you and your teammates chose to place the statements.  For Teachers: Students will look at the 4 unique objects used in Jewish Tefillah. They will then be given the statements and teachings on those four objects, that exist within Michal Shire’s levels of faith. They must then match those definitions correctly and in ascending order of their levels of difficulty that go through a person’s life. The goal is to show how these ritual objects play a role in our lives as we get older and advance in our understanding. An image and name of the four objects should be placed separately on the table, and all 24 statements should be scattered between them, with learners needing to look at all of the statements and put them in the correct order.  Here, the levels are place next to the statements for teachers, for the printout they obviously wont, and will just be the statements.  **Object 1. The Torah**  Level 1: I like holding the (plushy) toy Torah when I come to synagogue.  Level 2: All of the grown-ups stand up when they hold the Torah.  Level 3: When the Torah Comes around, I will stand and kiss the Torah with my Siddur, to show my respect.  Level 4: I must start to learn Hebrew and know the stories of the Torah so that I can one day read the Torah from the Bima.  Level 5: Now that I can read Hebrew and understand the stories in the Torah, how do I feel about the Torah portion this week?  Level 6: I can now lead the Torah Service, bring the Torah around and into my community, and connect the Torah Portion this week with values shared by my community.  **Object 2. The Tallit**  Level 1: I am shown the Tallit and watch my parents wear it at synagogue or when they pray at home.  Level 2: I see all of the Tallitot at synagogue, and my parents show me how I can use the Tzizit to do some of the special movements during the prayer service.  Level 3: I will wear a practice Tallit at my Jewish school, learn the blessing for putting the Tallit on and which prayers to kiss my Tzizit. If I am wearing the Tallit when the Torah comes around, I will kiss the Torah with my Tzizit.  Level 4: I will learn the Torah passages that talk about Tzizit, Tefillin and how these are symbols for remembering to love God. I will also begin to learn different customs from different Jewish communities on how and why we wear these items.  Level 5: As a part of my Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration, I with my family will choose the Tallit and Tefillin set that will be most meaningful to me, and I will wear them when I attend services.  Level 6: As I go through life, I will look at more Tallitot, and find personal connection in finding the right pair for me, and I will continue to learn about the deeper values the Tallit holds for me as a Jewish person.  **Object 3. The Siddur**  Level 1: My parents say the Shema with me at night.  Level 2: I will look at my first Siddur, most likely a youth siddur with pictures.  Level 3: I will attend Tefillah services at my Jewish school and learn different prayers and the page numbers in the siddur.  Level 4: Using the siddur, I will learn the deeper meanings of each of the prayers and have a better understanding of why we recite them.  Level 5: I now know the meaning behind many of the prayers and can recite them enough that I can lead services in my community. I will also learn that different Jewish communities have different kinds of siddurs and their order for their prayers might be different than mine.  Level 6: I will be able to lead and teach with the siddur, now able to ask and answer questions about the origins of the prayers, (for example: I know prayers like the Shema come from the Torah service, where the blessings of the Amidah are about 2000 years old).  **Object 4. The Shofar**  Level 1: My parents show me someone blasting the shofar and I hear the noises.  Level 2: I was given a toy shofar to blast during Rosh Hashanah services.  Level 3: I know that names of the four unique shofar blasts (Tekkiyah, Shevrim, Teruah, Tekiah Gedolah), and I stand respectfully as I listen to the Shofar  Level 4: I understand that I am standing, silently to the Shofar because I am meant to think about the upcoming year, and mistakes I made this past year. If I want to, I can try to be the one to blow the shofar at school.  Level 5: I understand the origins of the Shofar from Jewish sources and use the time to reflect on the kind of person I want to be this year.  Level 6: I understand that the Shofar time, both in the month of Eilul and during the High Holy Days, is a time for personal reflection and prayer, designed to help me focus on me, my mistakes and my hopes and dreams.  Once you check the preferred lists (best done by calling on multiple people to read what their group has chosen), ask the following questions:   1. If you had to pick one of the four ritual objects you connect to most as a Jewish person, which would you pick and why? 2. Looking at the different levels, which level do you think you are on right now? Explain why. 3. Looking at the different levels, is there one level that you are most excited about doing as a Jewish learner (you can go to an earlier level from your past if you want to) 4. Looking at the different levels. Would you flip any of these, saying you think one level is more advanced or easier than where it is placed? (Teachers, make sure you validate any well-constructed answers here with a follow-up comment or response)   **Storytelling: “**[**Something from Nothing**](https://www.amazon.com/Something-Nothing-Phoebe-Gilman-ebook/dp/B06X3WWZ7P/ref=sr_1_1?crid=ZB6BPZ7KL05U&keywords=something+from+nothing&qid=1692658294&sprefix=something+from+nnothing%2Caps%2C80&sr=8-1)**” by Phoebe Gilman** (15 minutes):  You can read the provided story out loud or call on students to read in front of the class. Ask students to think about this question to answer once the story is done:   1. Can you think about a Jewish story from either the Tanakh, or history, where someone needed something, and all they had was nothing?   (For Teachers, some answers you might hear and can discuss: Loosing the blanket is like the Jewish people losing Israel and the temple. It can also be an analogy for Jewish persecution, where life gets harder and harder for the Jews, where they want to keep their Judaism when they’re told they aren’t allowed to. It is up to you if you want to bridge these more mature themes into your discussion, use the guiding questions below so we can bridge this story about a Jewish item with Jewish values)  After you read the story, see if anyone has any answers to what stories this one reminded them of. Ask the following questions students can volunteer to answer:   1. How did you feel about the grandfather’s choices during the story? 2. How did you feel about the boy, and his asking for the grandfather to keep changing the item? 3. If you were the blanket, would you have wanted to be transformed over and over again? Why or why not?   Bring it together: On the High Holidays, we pray for the coming year, and ask God to give us important things: Life, forgiveness, happiness, and success. As time moves on, and our lives change, we always want these things, and sometimes we get them, and sometimes we don’t. Like the boy in this story, we sometimes learn to live with what we can’t have, and sometimes, we try to change to make ourselves better people for those we care about. Our goal together is to learn about Jewish values, since those values can help us at times where we want something, need something, and need to be the best versions of ourselves throughout the year.  **SOURCE SHEET Discussion** (15 minutes):  Before we do Trivia, we are going to split into groups, look at these five famous Jewish Teachings that talk about the importance of ***things***. You in your groups should read the English versions, discuss which quote you connect to most, which you connect with least, and prepare to share your answers with the group:  “Shimon the Righteous…used to say: the world stands upon three **things**: the Torah, the Temple service, and the practice of acts of Kindness.”- Pirkei Avot 1:2  “Shimon, his son, used to say: all my days I grew up among the sages, and I have found nothing better for a person than silence. Study is not the most important **thing**, but actions; whoever indulges in too many words brings about sin.”- Pirkei Avot, 1:17  “Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel used to say: on three **things** does the world stand: On justice, on truth and on peace, as it is said: “execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates” (Zechariah 8:16).”- Pirkei Avot 1:18  “[Ben Azzai] used to say: do not despise any person, and do not discriminate against **anything**, for there is no man that has not his hour, and there is no **thing** that has not its place.”- Pirkei Avot 4:3  “Rabbi Elazar of Modiin said: one who (insults) sacred **things**, and one who despises the **festivals**…he has not a share in the world to come.”- Pirkei Avot |
| Students will compete in groups to answer as many true or false questions about Jewish history as they can. Throughout the competition, you should follow Daily Double rules, where the groups have to wager their points to either lose them or double them if they get a hard question correct.   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Torah | Siddur | Tallit/Tefillin | The Shofar | | There are five books of the Torah (True)  The Torah rests in a box we call the Ark (True)  When we take the Torah out, everyone is supposed to rise (true)  When we read from the Torah in synagogue, we all must stay standing (False- we only stand when the Torah is up)  The Torah scroll we read on Shabbat and Holidays features all five books of Moses (true)  The Torah includes the Havtorah reading we read on Shabbat and holidays (False- those come chronologically after the Torah)  On shabbat, we read 6 different sections of the Torah (False- we read 7)  On weekdays, we read seven different sections of the Torah (False- we read three)  We read more sections of the Torah on Holidays than we do during Shabbat (False, Holidays are normally 5, and Shabbat is normally 7) | We use the Siddur during Tefillah (True)  Every Siddur in the world is the same (False)  All of the prayers in the siddur were written at the same time in history (False)  The Shema prayer uses words from the Torah (true)  The Mi Chamocha prayer does not use words from the Torah (False)  The Kedusha, the important prayer that we believe we sing with the angels in heaven uses all of its words from the Torah (False)  In the Siddur, there are different prayers for the mornings and the evenings (true)  There are unique prayers we say for Shabbat and holidays (True)  We only use the siddur during Teffilot (False- technically, the siddur has blessings that we use during Jeiwsh meals, and what to say when we see things in the world that we want to thank God for)  At Park Avenue Synagogue, our Siddur is mainly inspired by Ashkenazi Jewish tradition (True) | Traditionally, a Jewish person wears a Tallit once they become a Bnei Mitzvah (true)  The Tallit has 6 sets of Tzizit (False)  We often wrap the Tzizit around our fingers during the Amidah prayer (False)  The Tallit was the inspiration for the flag for the State of Israel (True)  There is one blessing for the Tallit and the Teffilin together (False- there are separate blessings)  Children are not allowed to touch an adults Tzizit (False, many parents want their children to see Tallit and Tzizit to learn how to wear them before their B’nei Mitzvot)  We often wrap the Tzizit around our fingers during the Shema prayer (True- technically the 3rd paragraph of the Shema) | We only hear the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah (False)  There are 4 unique blasts of the Shofar (True)  The Ram, a common animal for the Shofar was an animal we used to sacrifice in the Temple (True)  We would sacrifice a ram in the temple when we felt sad (False- when we felt guilty)  We only here the Shofar two months during the year (True)  We Hear the Shofar during the month of TIshrei (True)  We Hear the Shofar during the month of Nissan (False-that’s passover)  We Hear the Shofar during the month of Av (False)  We Hear the Shofar during the month of Eilul (true)  We Hear the Shofar during the month of Kislev (False-that’s Hanukkah)  When we hear the Shofar, we are supposed to kneel (False)  When we hear the Shofar, we are supposed to silently stand (True) | |
| Play games in the room as we wait for all students to be picked up by their parents. |

**Kol Nidrei**

Mindfulness Question: What object do you think about when you hear the word spirituality? Please explain in a few details what connection those objects have.

1. What kind of people would you consider to be spiritual people?
2. When you think of being a Jewish person, do you connect with Judaism more as a culture, a language or a religion?

Yom Kippur is considered one of the most spiritual experiences in the world. We imagine that God, like a judge, is deciding our fate, and we as people have one more chance to reflect on who we want to be. While it is sometimes easier to connect with the High Holidays through actions we take, and things we can do, we also want an opportunity to think about ways Jews connect with God, a higher power, or positive forces in the world.

We will read a series of stories from Y.L Peretz Who wrote a series of short stories that talk about how different types of people express their spirituality and what spirituality says about the Jewish spirit. Peretz’s stories are dark, satirical and touch on life and death. They are good sources of Jewish learning for Kol Nidrei:

The Three Gifts (Story Printout)

Bontscha The Silent (Comic books to be provided by Dov)

Create a Play:

Now that we’ve read these stories, we will create a play based on the scene or story you connected to the most. Working with other members in the room, create either a play, Tableaux or Improve scene that:

1. Depicts one scene from the Peretz stories we’ve read.
2. Create a modern interpretation of one of these scenes. From your point of view, what three gifts would a modern person be sent to earth to find, or what kind of person would be praised by the heavens like Bonstscha the Silent?

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| Kol Nidrei Discussion: *Ashamnu* |
| Focus on Touch: On Yom Kippur, there is a special Amidah prayer service, and it is repeated 5 times during the 25 hours. During this service, there are two different prayers where we list all of our sins, and when we say them, we gently strike our hearts. How does it make you feel to do this? Remember, the goal is not to hurt ourselves, but rather to feel something when you mention all of this. |
| Let’s look at the Prayer, discuss it, then use it for our activity: |
| אָשַֽׁמְנוּ. בָּגַֽדְנוּ. גָּזַֽלְנוּ. דִּבַּֽרְנוּ דֹּֽפִי. הֶעֱוִֽינוּ. וְהִרְשַֽׁעְנוּ. זַֽדְנוּ. חָמַֽסְנוּ. טָפַֽלְנוּ שֶֽׁקֶר. יָעַֽצְנוּ רָע. כִּזַּֽבְנוּ. לַֽצְנוּ. מָרַֽדְנוּ. נִאַֽצְנוּ. סָרַֽרְנוּ. עָוִֽינוּ. פָּשַֽׁעְנוּ. צָרַֽרְנוּ. קִשִּֽׁינוּ עֹֽרֶף. רָשַֽׁעְנוּ. שִׁחַֽתְנוּ. תִּעַֽבְנוּ. תָּעִֽינוּ. תִּעְתָּֽעְנוּ: |
| **Ashamnu**– we have trespassed;  **Bagadnu**– we have dealt treacherously;  **Gazalnu**– we have robbed;  **Dibarnu dofi**– we have spoken slander;  **He’evinu**–we have acted inappropriately  **V’hirshanu**– we have done wrong;  **Zadnu**– we have acted presumptuously;  **Hamasnu**– we have done violence;  **Tafalnu sheker**– we have practiced deceit;  **Yaatsnu ra**– we have counseled evil;  **Kizavnu**– we have spoken falsehood;  **Latsnu**– we have scoffed;  **Maradnu**– we have revolted;  **Niatsnu**– we have blasphemed;  **Sararnu**– we have rebelled;  **Avinu**– we have committed iniquity;  **Pashanu**– we have transgressed;  **Tsararnu**– we have oppressed;  **Kishinu oref**– we have been stiff necked;  **Rashanu**– we have acted wickedly;  **Shichatnu**– we have dealt corruptly;  **Tiavnu**– we have committed abomination;  **Tainu**– we have gone astray  **Titanu**– we have led others astray. |
| Questions:  Which of these sins are the worst for you? Work with the group to create a list of which ones seem like really bad sins, and which ones you don’t think are as bad.  Why do you think the prayer says ***we*** have (sinned) rather than saying ***I*** have (sinned)?  In what special way have they chosen to organize the *ashamnu* Prayer? |
| Activities:   1. **Current Events Challenge**: Do you think we would find any of these words used in a modern Newspaper? If you think your kids can do the activity respectfully, hand them a few pages of a Newspaper and see if they are able to find any appropriate articles that use the words laid out in the *Ashamnu* prayer. 2. Have you heard any of these terms in the news, current events? In what way were they used? Who were those words referring to? 3. **Political Discussion**: In your studies of Jewish history, have you heard any of these terms applied to the Jewish people? 4. Which of these terms describe something good from Jewish history? Why do you think it was good?   Concluding questions:   1. How do you feel about having to mention all of your mistakes so many times during Yom Kippur? Good or Bad? 2. Do you personally learn more when you focus on the negative, or the positive? 3. Why do you think Judaism focus away our senses like this? In your own words, what is the goal?      |  | | --- | | 40 Minutes: **Torah Mock Trials** | | Students will be broken into smaller ‘law firms’ and need to defend some of our most famous court cases through Jewish history. Teachers play the judges and guide the students through the stories so that they can make the best arguments possible. These cases will be:  Abraham vs Isaac: The Sacrifice of Isaac  Jonah vs God: Was Jonah allowed to run away from God’s mission  Moses vs God: Moses wants to enter the promised land even though he made a pretty big mistake. | | Play games in the room as we wait for all students to be picked up by their parents. | |