

Apples and Honey to Blintzes:

Jewish Holiday Stories and Activities To Use All Year

By
Susan Dubin
Off-the-Shelf Library Services
sdubin@offtheshelflibraryservices.net
June, 2013

Jewish Holiday Stories and Activities To Use All Year

Introduction

If you look in bookstores for Jewish stories, you may be under the impression that the only Jewish holiday is Hanukkah. Every year there seem to be more and more Hanukkah stories with a few Passover tales thrown in for good measure. The truth is that there is a wealth of Jewish books about holidays throughout the year. This collection of books and activities can be used in libraries and classrooms to give students books to remember and ideas to share.

The most important holiday in the Jewish year is one that comes every week – Shabbat. Other holidays we will talk about are Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simhat Torah, Hanukkah, Tu B' Shevat, Purim, Passover, Yom HaAtzmaut, Lag B'Omer and Shavuot. Some of these holidays have several books and others none. Where there are no books available, I will suggest books with complementary themes or short stories.

Jewish books go out of print very quickly. Although most of these books will probably be available in a good library, some may be out of print. If you are lucky enough to have some of these gems, guard them well. Your children will thank you!

Shabbat

Shabbat is the most important holiday in the Jewish year. It comes every week, starting on Friday at sundown and lasting until Saturday night when three stars appear in the sky. Shabbat is sometimes portrayed as a beautiful queen coming to visit every Jewish home, bringing with her a sense of beauty and peace.

Suggested books and activities:

Hirsh, Marilyn. Joseph Who Loved the Sabbath /retold by Marilyn Hirsh. ill. by Devis Grebu. - Viking, 1986. ISBN 0-670-81194-7

Cut 2 large fish shapes out of newsprint. Staple the 2 shapes together except on one side. Stuff with newspaper to make 3 dimensional. Put a red paper ruby inside each fish. Color or paint the fish as desired.

Miller, Deborah U. Poppy Seeds, Too...a twisted tale for Shabbat / ill. by Karen Ostrove - 1982. ISBN 0-930-49417-2

Make challah using the recipe inside the book or use frozen Bridgford dough. Flavor with cinnamon, sugar, and/or raisins.

Nerlove, Miriam. Shabbat / Morton Grove, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Company, 1998 [23] p. ISBN 0-8075-7324-8

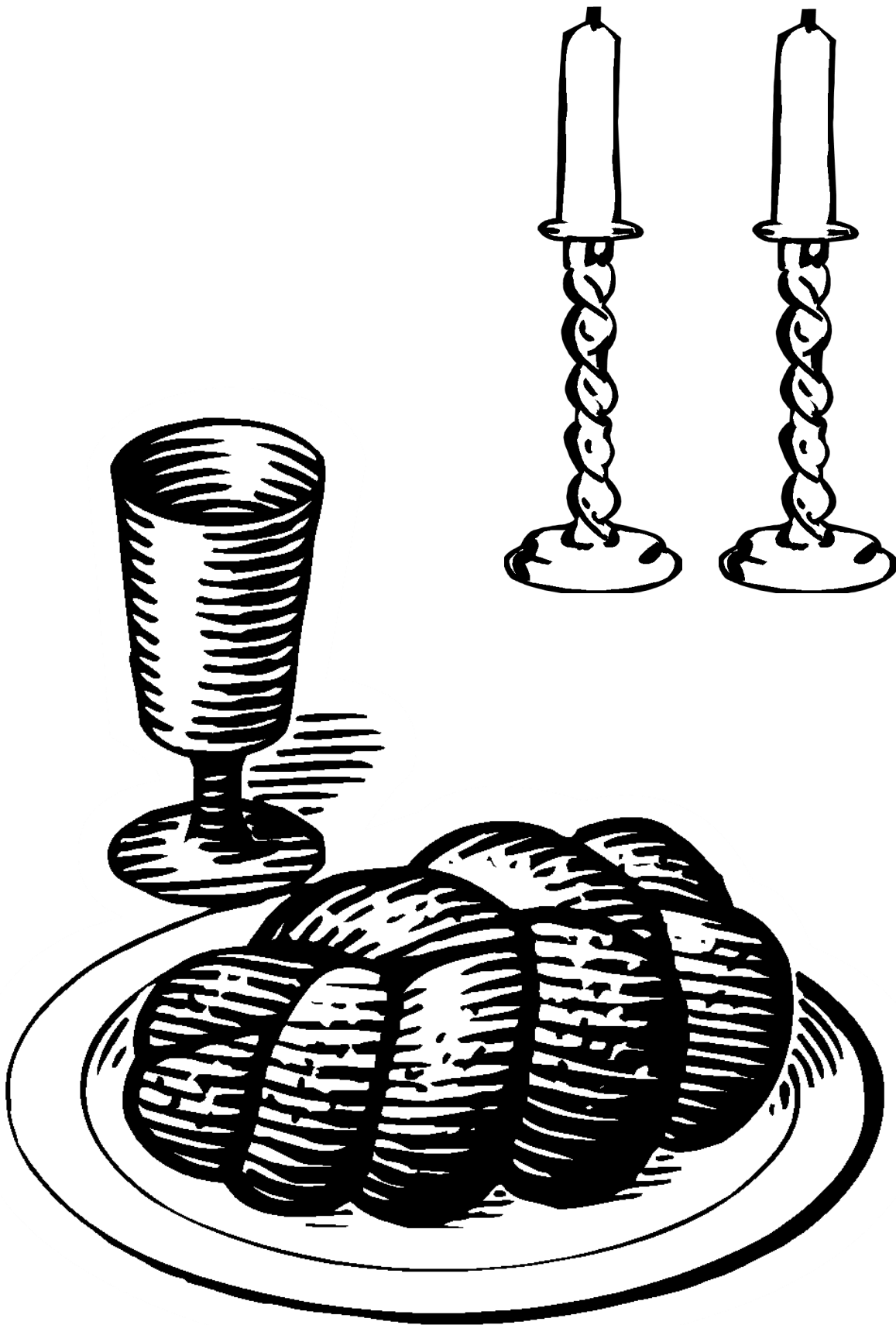
This book can be used to start a discussion about how each child celebrates Shabbat. Use the shapes on the next page as patterns for the different objects found on a Shabbat table. Cut them out and glue them on lace doilies to make a Shabbat table collage.

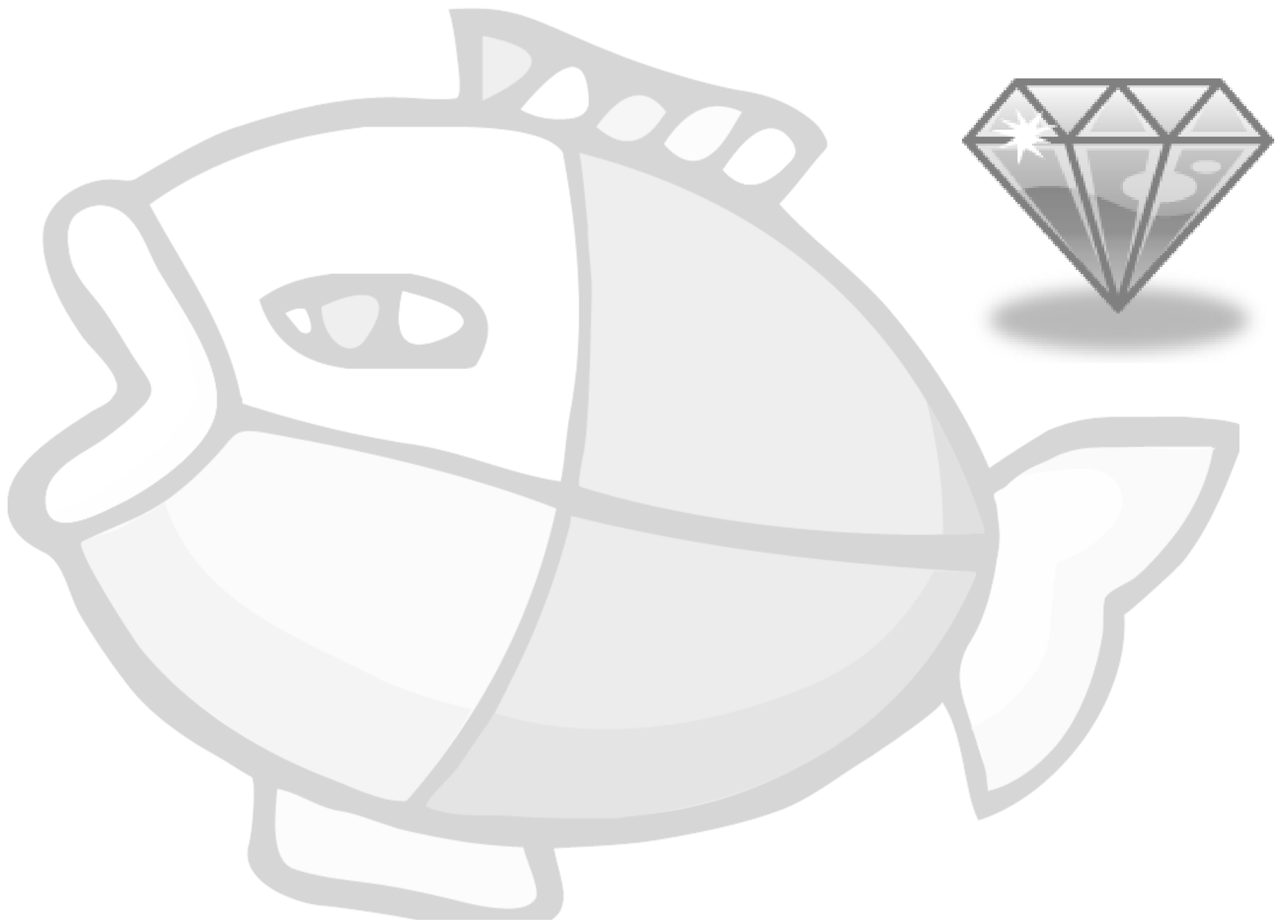
Rouss, Sylvia. The Littlest Candlesticks / By Sylvia Rouss; illustrated by Holly Hannon. - New York: Pitspopany Press, 2002. [32] p. ISBN 1-930143-48-6

Make candle holders out of bottle caps glued on a square piece of cardboard.

Schwartz, Amy. Mrs. Moskowitz & the Shabbat Candlesticks - Philadelphia : Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983. 30 p.

Discuss what it is like to move. Make a list or picture of things that would make you feel at home in a new place.





Rosh HaShanah

Rosh HaShanah literally means "head of the year." Tradition says it is the birthday of the world. It begins the ten day period of introspection when Jews ask God and their fellow man to forgive any transgressions. It is usually spent in the synagogue where the *shofar* is sounded. Apples dipped in honey are eaten to symbolize a sweet and healthy year.

Suggested books and activities:

Cohen, Deborah Bodin. *Engineer Ari and the Rosh HaShanah Ride*. Kar-Ben, 2008. 32 p. ISBN 0822586509

Make a train shape and include one fact about Rosh Hashanah on each car.

Goldin, Barbara Diamond. *The World's Birthday : A Rosh Hashanah story / pictures by Jeanette Winter* Harcourt, 1990. [29] p. ISBN 0-15-299648-6

Make a birthday card for the world with your wishes for the new year.

Kimmel, Eric A. *Gershon's Monster : a story for the Jewish New Year / illustrated by Jon J Muth*. New York : Scholastic Press, 2000 ISBN 043910839X

Make a composite monster by having children work in groups of 4. Fold a paper into four pieces width-wise. Have each child in the group make $\frac{1}{4}$ of a monster. Write a deed you regret doing on each piece of the monster.

Kropf, Latifa Berry. *It's Shofar Time / by Latifa Berry Kropf ; photographs by Tod Cohen*. Minneapolis : Kar-Ben Publishing, Inc., 2006. ISBN 9781580131582

Use an encyclopedia to find out different New Years celebrations. Make a chart showing similarities and differences between them.

Levitin, Sonia. *A Sound to Remember*. Illustrations by Gabriel Lisowski. Harcourt, ISBN 0152772480

Make a "shofar" out of a toilet paper roll. Practice blowing it.

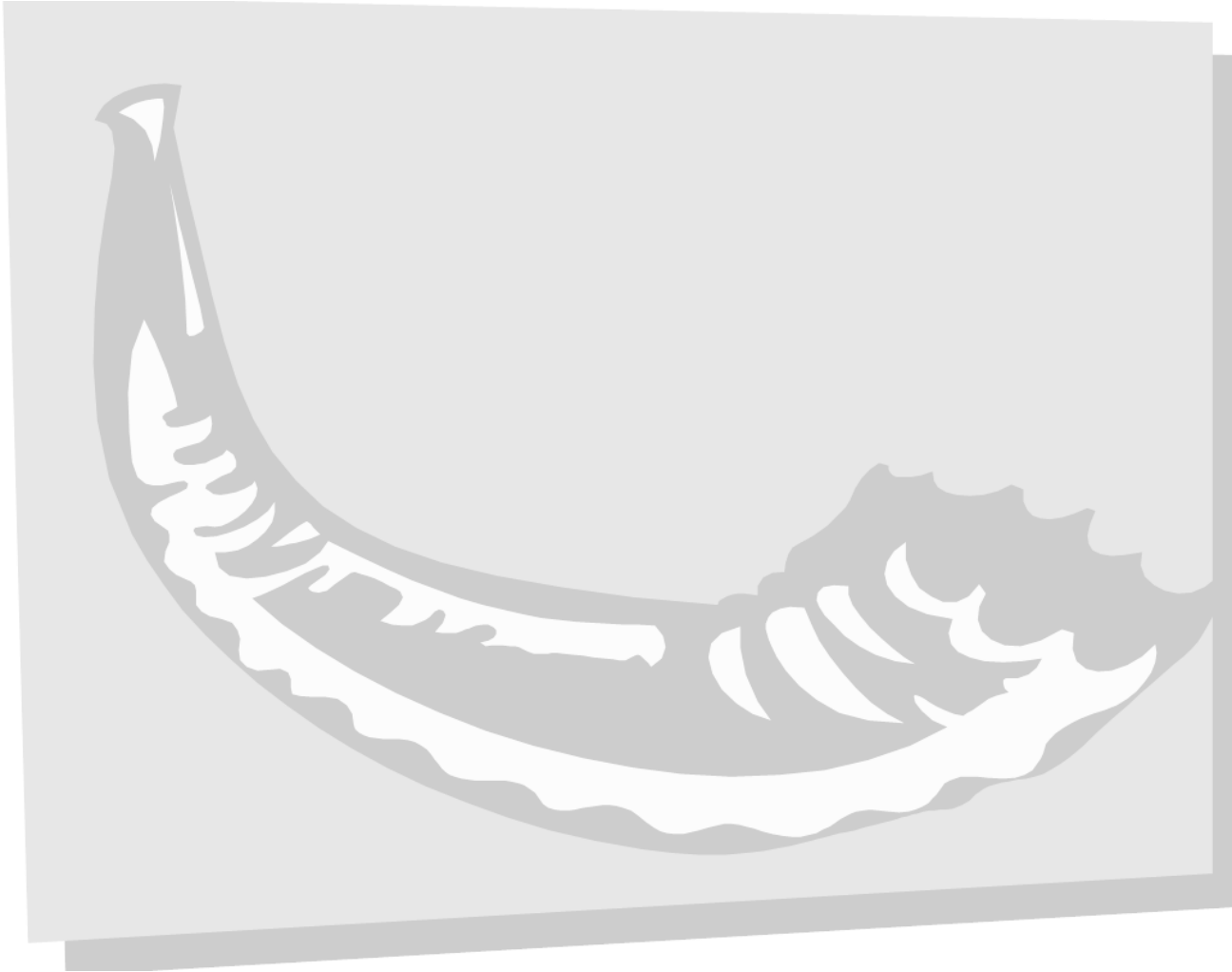
Use the pattern on the next page to make a shofar pattern. Older children can use the encyclopedia to research musical instruments. List as many instruments as you can think of.

Silverman, Erica. *When The Chickens Went On Strike: A Rosh Hashanah Tale*. - New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2003. [31]p. ISBN 0-525-46862-5

Discuss customs that might have changed. Act out the story.

Compare it to "Click, Clack, Moo" by Doreen Cronin. Discuss unionization and worker's rights.

Wayland, April Halprin. *New Year at the Pier*. New York: Dial, 2009. 32 p. ISBN: 0803732791



Name: _____

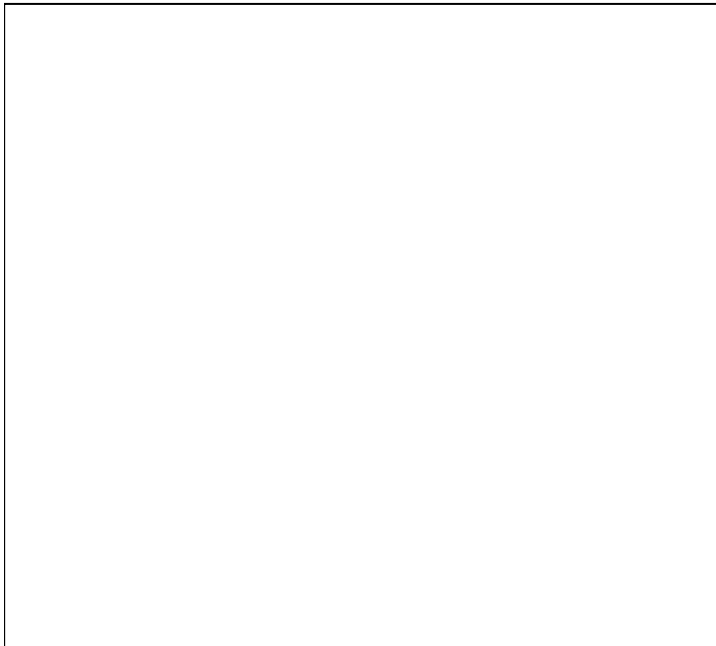
Class: _____



New Year at the Pier by April Halprin Wayland:
Identifying Characters, Setting, and Main Idea

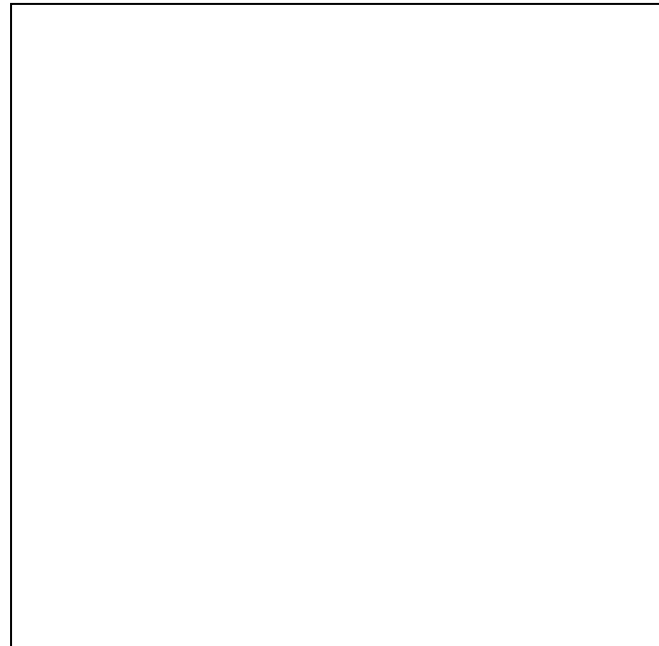
Read the story.

Draw a picture of the main character:



Name of the character:

Draw one of the supporting characters:



Name of the character:

Where does the story take place? _____

What was the main idea of the story? _____

Tell about a time you did something you were sorry about: _____

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur means "Day of Atonement." It is a solemn fast day spent in prayer and reflection. It ends the 10 day period of repentance begun on Rosh HaShanah. The *shofar* is sounded at the end of the holiday. It is customary for adults to fast and for people to not wear leather or animal skins on this day. Legend says that on this day God seals the Book of Life and you determine your fate for the coming year.

Suggested books and activities:

Cohen, Barbara. *Yussel's Prayer: a Yom Kippur Story*. Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard, 1981. ISBN 0688004601

Read *A Prayer for a Child* by Rachel Field. Write a class prayer. Decorate the prayer with doves and leaves.

Cohen, Floreva. *Sneakers to Shul*. Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York, 1978. 35 p. ASIN B0006CY45O

Cut out different color sneakers and match the colors to make a pair.

Use sneaker pattern and write title of a book on one shoe and author of the book on another. Find the author and title pairs.

Jules, Jacqueline and Kahn, Katherine. *The Hardest Word: a Yom Kippur Story*. Kar-Ben Publishing, 2001. 32 p. ISBN 1580130283

Write letters of apology to friends or family members that you have wronged.

Search the dictionary for a list of 10 hardest words. Write definitions for each.

Singer, Marilyn. *Minnie's Yom Kippur Birthday*. Harpercollins, 1989. 32 p. ISBN 0060258462

Make a birthday chart of every student's birthday. See which ones fall on holidays.

Make a bar graph to show how many birthdays are in each month.



Sukkot

Sukkot is a fall harvest holiday, one of the 3 pilgrimage holidays mentioned in the Bible. In ancient times, people would travel to Jerusalem to make sacrifices from their harvest at the Temple. It is celebrated for 8 days. *Sukkahs* or small booths are constructed with at least three walls and a roof made out of tree branches, typically palm, so that the sky is visible. These booths resemble the ones used by the Israelites out in the fields during harvest time. Meals are eaten in them during the holiday, and some people sleep in them as well. Imaginary guests, *ushpazin*, from biblical stories are welcomed in each *sukkah* with songs and stories. The booths are decorated with hanging fruit and vegetables, paperchains, and brightly colored cards or drawings. A *lulav*, a wand made out of a willow branch, a myrtle, and a palm, and an *etrog*, a citron, are symbols of this holiday.

Suggested books and activities:

Adler, David. *The House on the Roof*/ illustrated by Marilyn Hirsh. Kar-Ben, 1984. ISBN 0930494342

Make a model sukkah using an upside down tomato basket. Decorate with leaves and flowers.

This is the story of a real court case. Act it out with one person being the judge, others attorney for defense and prosecution, the landlord, witnesses, the old man. The class can be the jury to decide the outcome.

Kimmel, Eric. *The Mysterious Guests: a Sukkot Story*/ illustrated by Katya Krenina. Holiday House, 2008. ISBN 0823418936

Research different biblical characters that might come as *ushpazin*.

Write a biographical dictionary entry for each person and "publish" an Ushpazin Dictionary.

Lebovics, Aydel. *The Wind and the Sukkah*. Merkos Linyonei Chinuch, June, 1990. ISBN 0826603610

Keep a weather chart for one week. Note on the chart sun, rain, wind, fog, clouds.

Find books in the library on predicting the weather.

Polacco, Patricia. *Tikvah Means Hope*. Yearling, 1996. ISBN 0440412293

Compare this story to *Mrs. Katz and Tush*, also by Patricia Polacco. Write a character sketch of the cat in the story.

Listen to the song *HaTikvah*, the national anthem of Israel.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JTmoJXcpyA>

Hatikva - English Lyrics

As long as deep in the heart,
The soul of a Jew yearns,
And forward to the East
To Zion, an eye looks
Our hope will not be lost,
The hope of two thousand years,
To be a free nation in our land,
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.

Hebrew Lyrics

Transliteration

התקווה

Kol od balevav p'nimah	כל עוד בלבב פנימה
Nefesh Yehudi homiyah	נפש יהודי הומיה
Ulfatey mizrach kadimah	ולפאתי מזרח קדימה
Ayin l'tzion tzofiyah	עין לציון צופיה
Od lo avdah tikvatenu	עוד לא אבדה תקותנו
Hatikvah bat shnot alpayim	התקווה בת שנות אלפים
L'hiyot am chofshi b'artzenu	להיות עם חופשי בארצנו
Eretz Tzion v'Yerushalayim	ארץ ציון וירושלים

History

The title of the national anthem, HATIKVA, means "The Hope." It was written by Naftali Herz Imber (1856-1909), who moved to Palestine in 1882 from Galicia. The melody was arranged by Samuel Cohen, an immigrant from Moldavia, from a musical theme in Smetana's "Moldau" that is partly based on a Scandinavian folk song.

Hatikva expresses the hope of the Jewish people, that they would someday return to the land of their forefathers as prophesied in the Hebrew Bible. The Jewish people were exiled from Israel in 70 C.E. by the Roman army led by Titus who destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem. During the two thousand years of exile, the Jewish people said special daily prayers for return to Israel while facing the East in the direction of Jerusalem. They celebrated the holidays according to Hebrew seasons and calendar. Zion is synonymous with Israel and Jerusalem.

Simhat Torah

Simhat Torah literally means rejoicing in the five books of Moses. This holiday is the day after *Sukkot* and is when the *Torah* is finished being read and started over again every year. The last chapter tells about the death of Moses and the first chapter is the creation story. The holiday is celebrated by dancing with the Torah scrolls and marching around the synagogue with Israeli flags with apples stuck on top.

Suggested books and activities:

McDermott, Gerald. *Creation*. Dutton, 2003. ISBN 0525469052

This is one of many beautifully illustrated books about the creation. Make one picture for each day of creation and glue them together to make a scroll.

Have children work with a partner to find a different book about creation for each of the days listed in the Bible. (Each team finds seven stories). First team to make it to Shabbat (the seventh day) gets a 10 minute period of rest.

Rael, Elsa Okon. *When Zaydeh Danced on Eldridge Street*/ illustrated by Marjorie Priceman. Simon and Schuster, 1997. 40 p. ISBN 0689804512

Make an Israeli flag and have a parade waving the flag.

Read the article at <http://www.nyc-architecture.com/LES/LES010.htm> and write a brief history of the Eldridge Street Synagogue.

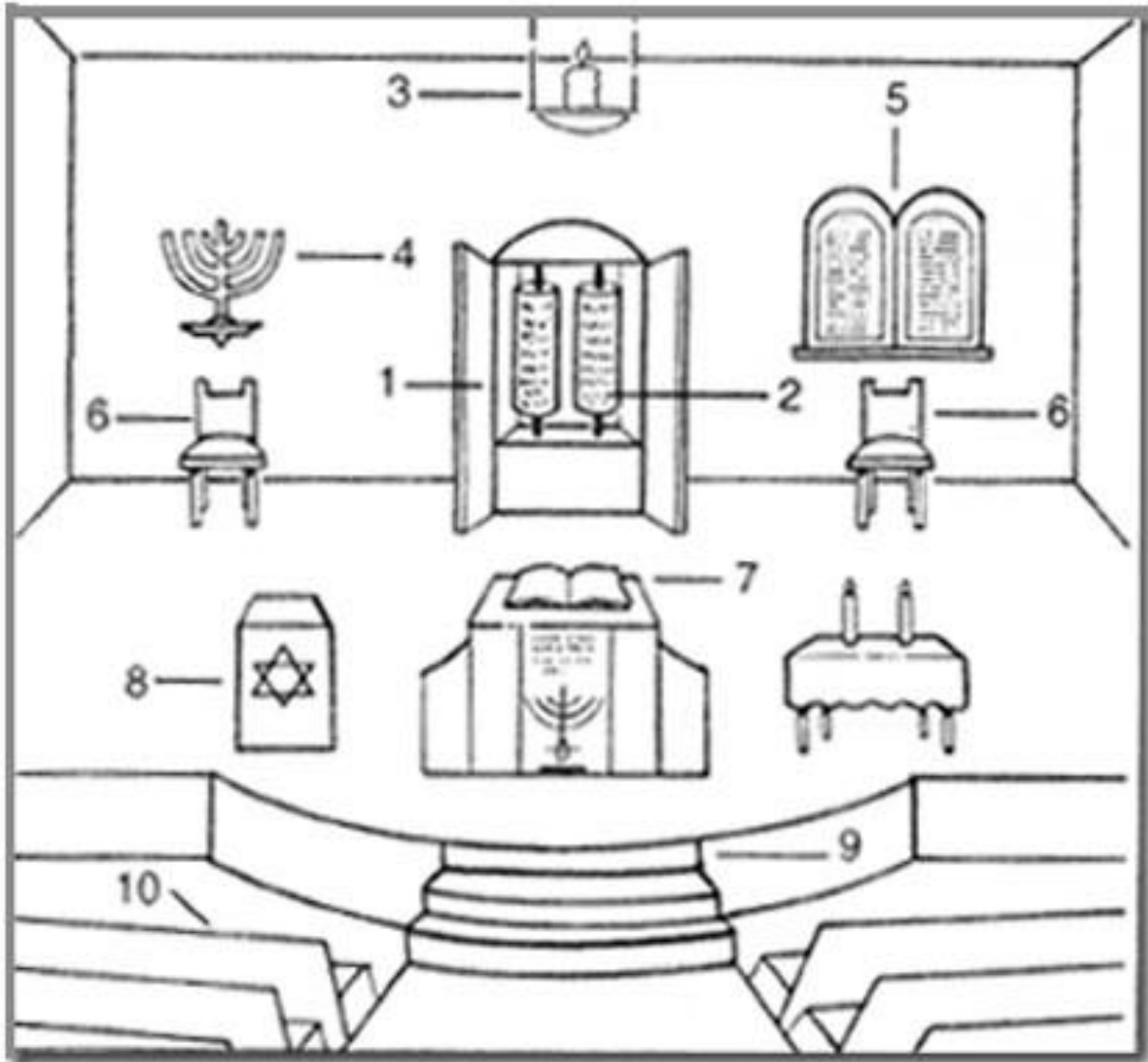
Ray, Eric. *Sofer: Story of a Torah Scroll*. Torah Aura Productions, 1998. 32 p. ISBN 0933873980

Dip feathers in paint to have students simulate writing with the quill used for making a Torah.

Read *How a Book Is Made* by Aiki and compare and contrast making a book to making a Torah.

Rosenblum, Richard. *The Old Synagogue*. Jewish Publication Society, 1989. 32 p. ISBN 0827603223

Share vocabulary words: *bimah*—pulpit; *aron kodesh*—ark where Torah is kept; *ner tamid*—eternal light over the ark; *Torah*—first five books of the Bible in scroll form. Color and label the picture on the next page.



1. _____ 6. _____

2. _____ 7. _____

3. _____ 8. _____

4. _____ 9. _____

5. _____ 10. _____

Hanukkah

Hanukkah is probably the best known Jewish holiday because of its proximity to Christmas. Although it is one of the minor holidays in the Jewish calendar, there are many stories about Hanukkah. It celebrates the military victory of the Maccabees over the Assyrians and the rededication of the Temple in Israel. The holiday is celebrated for 8 days. Each night of the holiday a candle is lit until 8 candles are kindled on the 8th night. One additional candle called the *shammes* is used each night to light the other candles. Potato pancakes (*latkes*) and jelly donuts (*sufganiyot*) are traditional foods. A game is played with a top called a *dreidel* or *s'vivon*. Gifts and chocolate coins are exchanged.

Suggested books and activities:

Hirsh, Marilyn. *Potato Pancakes All Around*. Jewish Publication Society, 1982
ISBN 0827602170

Read *Stone Soup* by Marcia Brown or Ann McGovern and compare the stories.

Make potato pancakes using the recipe in the book.

Kimmel, Eric. *The Chanukah Guest*. Holiday House, 1992. 32 p. ISBN 0823409783

Use the faces on the next page as stick puppets to make a puppet show of this story.

Kimmel, Eric. *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins*. Holiday House, 1994. 30 p.
ISBN 0823411311

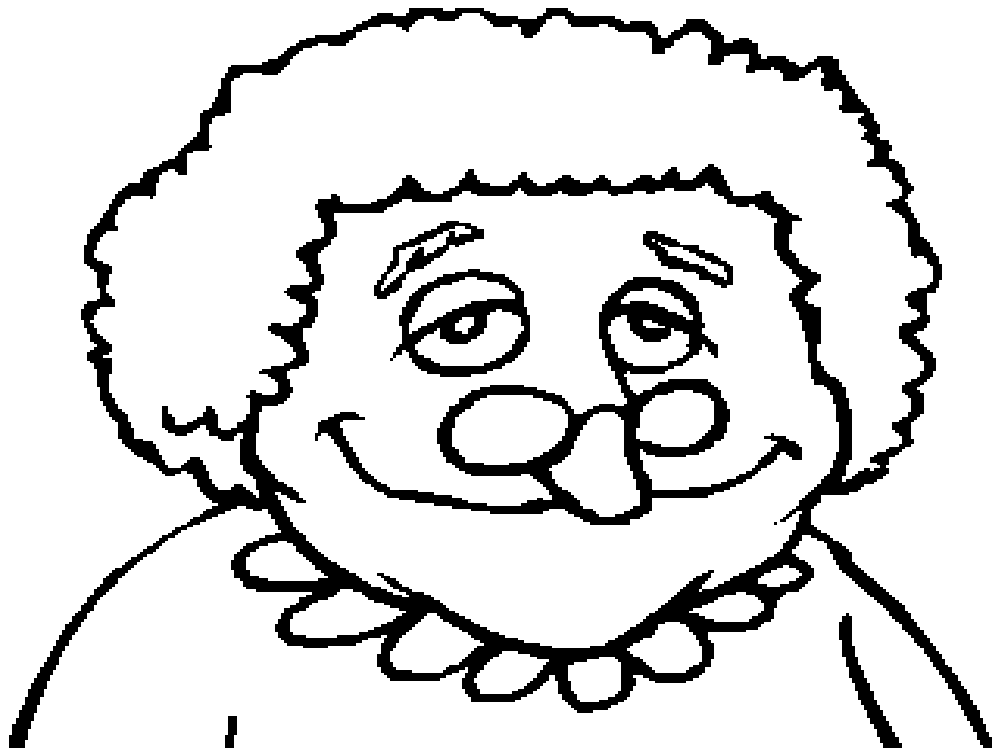
Read the story aloud until the point where the King of the Goblins is coming the next night. Have students suggest solutions to Hershel's problem. Read the ending of the story after students finish writing their guesses about what happens.

Draw pictures of what the different goblins might look like.

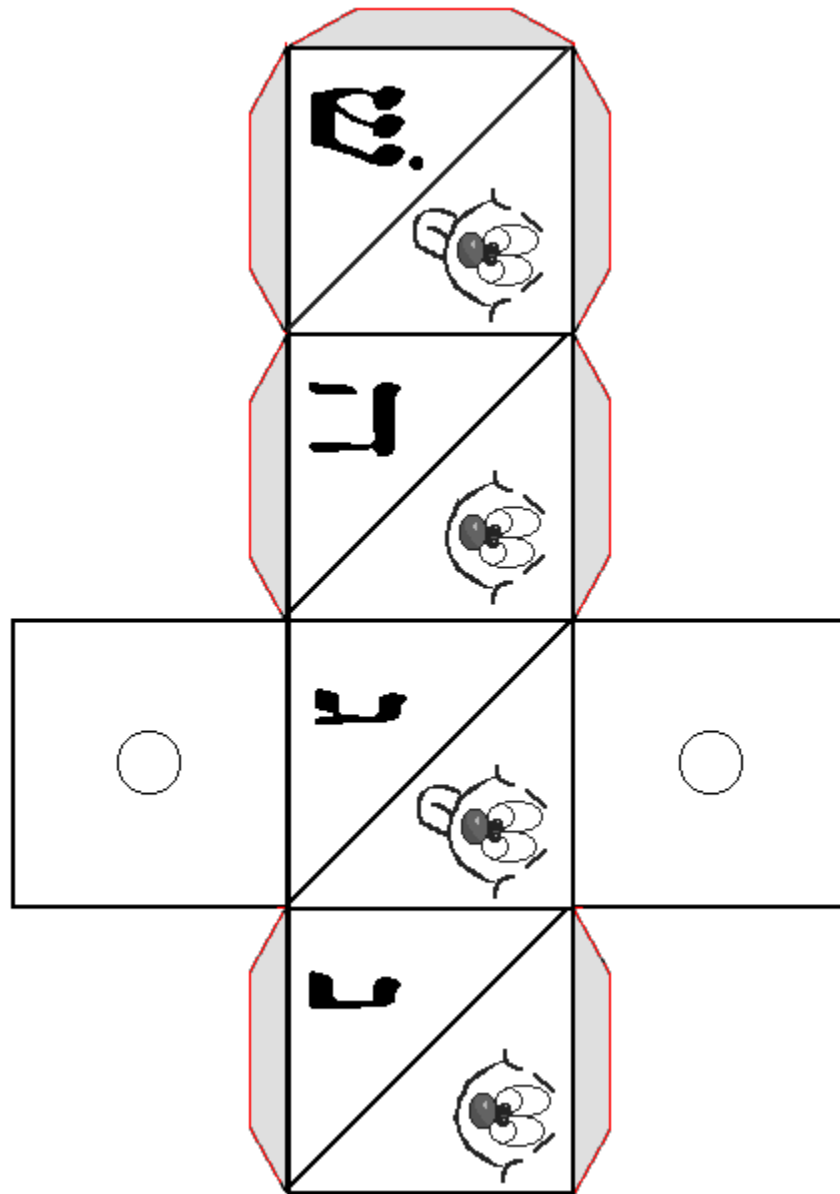
Kimmel, Eric. *The Magic Dreidels: a Hanukkah Story*. Holiday House, 1996.
ISBN 0823412563

Make a dreidel and play the game according to the directions on the next few pages.

Chanukah Guest Puppet Faces



Make a Dreidel



Use a paper punch to put round holes in the top and bottom area of the Dreidel. Fold the flaps (this is the gray areas), then glue them to form a box shape. Allow the glue to dry. Once dried, place a (short) pencil through the round holes.

Now... take it for a spin! Have fun!

The Dreidel Game

Usually you use candy or nuts to play this game. In case you don't have those items to play with, we've added points here for you to use.



N - Nes ... N or nun stands for nisht or nothing. If the dreidel lands on nun, you do nothing.

No Points.



G - Gadol ... G or gimel stands for ganz or all. Take everything in the middle.

Give yourself 20 Points.



H - Haya ... H or hay stands for halb or half. Take half of what is in the middle plus one if there are an odd number of objects.

Give yourself 5 Points.



S - Sham ... S or shin stands for shtel or put in. Put two objects into the middle.

Take Away 2 Points.

The four letters which appear on the four corners of a dreidel allude to the miracle of Hanukkah. They spell out: Nes (N-miracle), Gadol (G-great), Haya (H-happened) and Sham (S-there, meaning in Israel).

Tu B' Shevat

Tu B'Shevat is the Jewish equivalent of Arbor Day. It is the "New Year of the Trees." "Tu" is the Hebrew number 15, and the date in the Jewish calendar is the 15th day of the month of Shevat. Planting trees or other seeds are the favorite ways to celebrate.

Suggested books and activities:

Alexander, Sue. Behold the Trees! / illustrated by Leonid Gore. Arthur A. Levine, 2001. 48 p. ISBN 0590762117

Make a timeline of the history of Israel. Illustrate with the trees that grew at that time.

Make an annotated bibliography of 15 sources of information that could be used on Tu B'Shevat. Annotations need to be at least one sentence.

Schwartz, Barry L. Honi the Circlemaker and Other Eco-Fables from Ancient Israel. Friendship Press, 1992. 44 p. ISBN 0377002518

Soak lima beans and "plant" them in wet cotton balls or paper towels in egg cartons. Replant in pots or garden when they sprout.

Dr. Seuss, The Lorax. Random House Books for Young Readers, 1971. 72 p. ISBN 0394823370

Make a list of 15 ways you can help the environment.

Zalben, Jane Breskin. Pearl Plants a Tree. Simon and Schuster, 1995. ISBN 0689800347

Make a tree in the library or classroom on a bulletin board or door. Have children add a leaf in memory or honor of someone for every book they read.

Leaf Pattern

I read _____

In honor / memory of

Purim

Purim celebrates the bravery of Queen Esther of Persia who stood up to her husband's wicked advisor, Haman and saved the Jewish people from annihilation. The holiday is celebrated by reading the story aloud and cheering the hero Mordecai and booing Haman. Children dress in costumes and make noise with noisemakers called *groggers*. The traditional food is a poppy seed or fruit filled cake called a *hamentashen*.

Suggested books and activities:

Feder, Harriet K. It Happened in Shushan: a Purim Story. Kar-Ben, 1988. 24 p.
ISBN 093049475X

Use an overhead projector or write this rebus story on a chart to share out loud.
Have children supply the picture words.

Make noisemakers out of toilet paper rolls filled with beans or rice with tin foil secured around the ends with rubber bands. Shake the noisemaker whenever Haman's name is read.

Gerstein, Mordicai. Queen Esther the Morning Star. Simon and Schuster, 2000. 32 p.
ISBN 0689813724

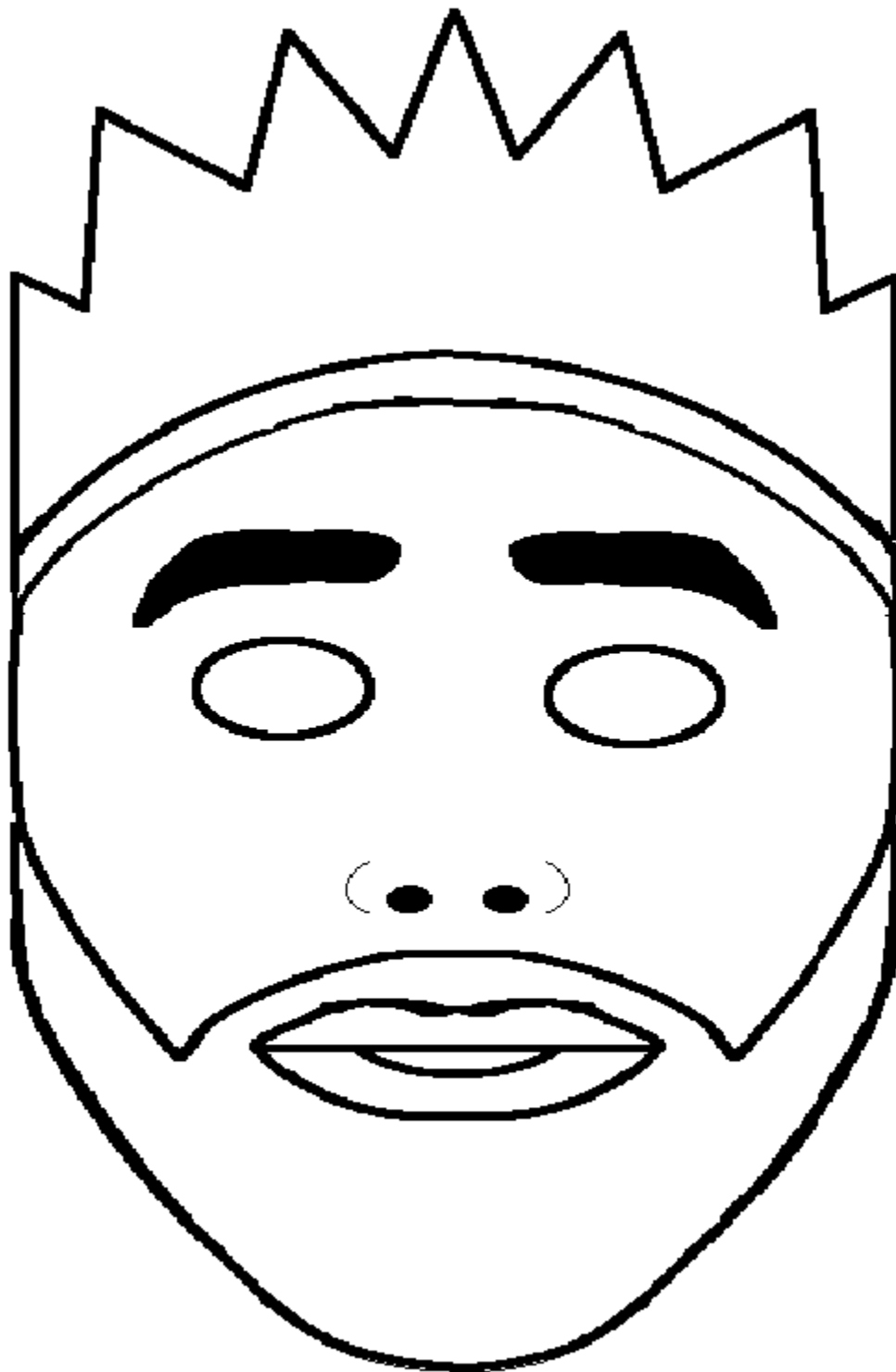
Write a riddle to describe each person in the Purim story. Include at least 3 clues.

Goldin, Barbara Diamond. Cakes and Miracles. Puffin, 1993. ISBN 0140548718
Share a book in Braille. Use a Braille writer to write children's names.

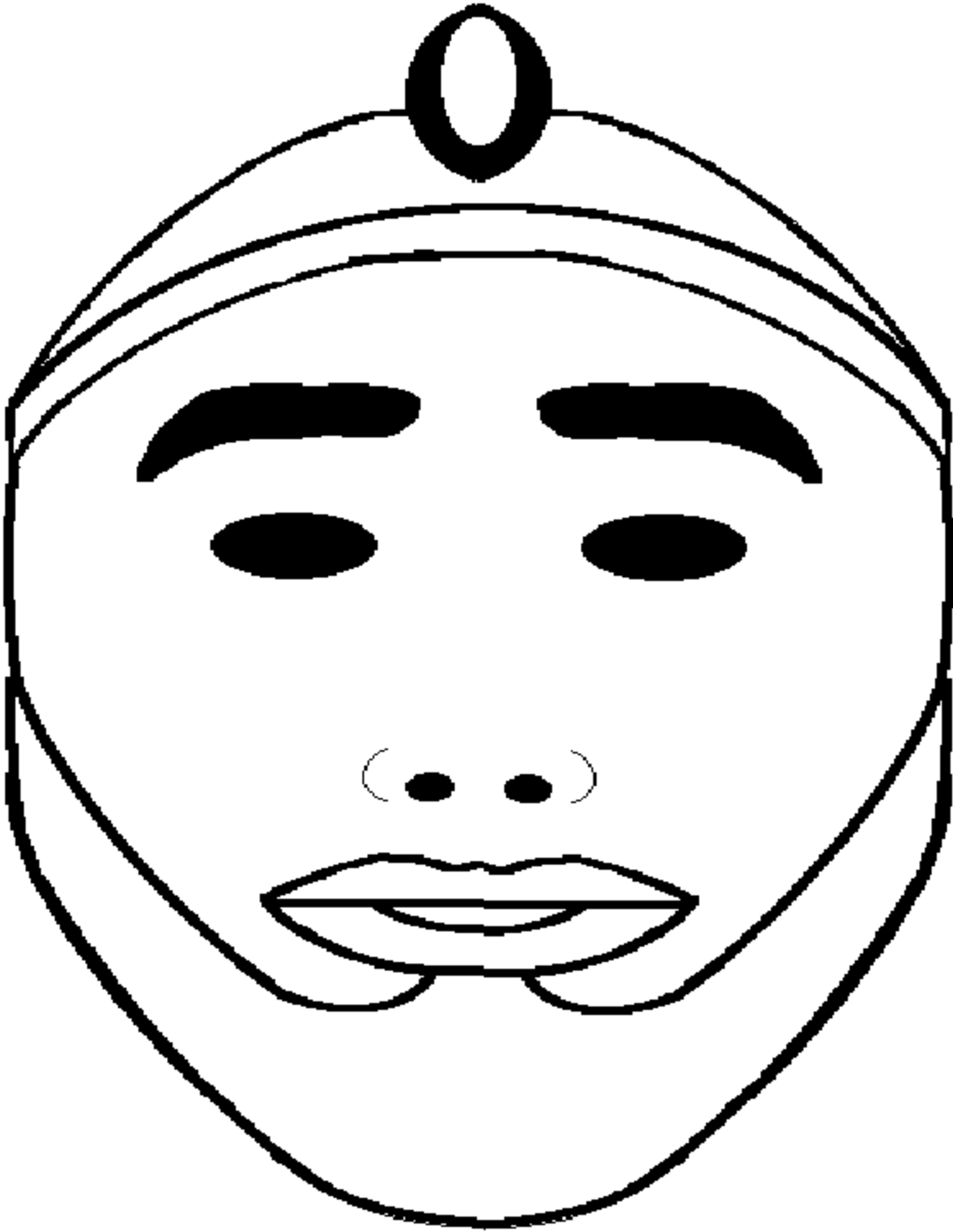
Hoffman, Amalia. Purim Goodies. Gefen, 2007 ISBN 965229389X

Make a basket out of a paper plate and fill with fruits, nuts, or cookies and give to a Senior in a Senior Housing Development.

PURIM MASKS







Passover

Passover is a spring holiday which celebrates the escape of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. It is celebrated for 7 days during which no leavened products such as bread are eaten. Instead, people eat *matzah*, a flat unleavened cracker. The story of the escape from Egypt, the Exodus, is told at a special dinner called a *seder* from a special book called a *haggadah*. Special foods are eaten during this meal.

Suggested books and activities:

Cohen, Barbara. *The Carp in the Bathtub*. Kar-Ben, 1987. 48 p. ISBN 0930494679
Cut 2 fish shapes out of construction paper and glue them together leaving an opening through which newspaper or tissues can be stuffed inside. Decorate "Joe."

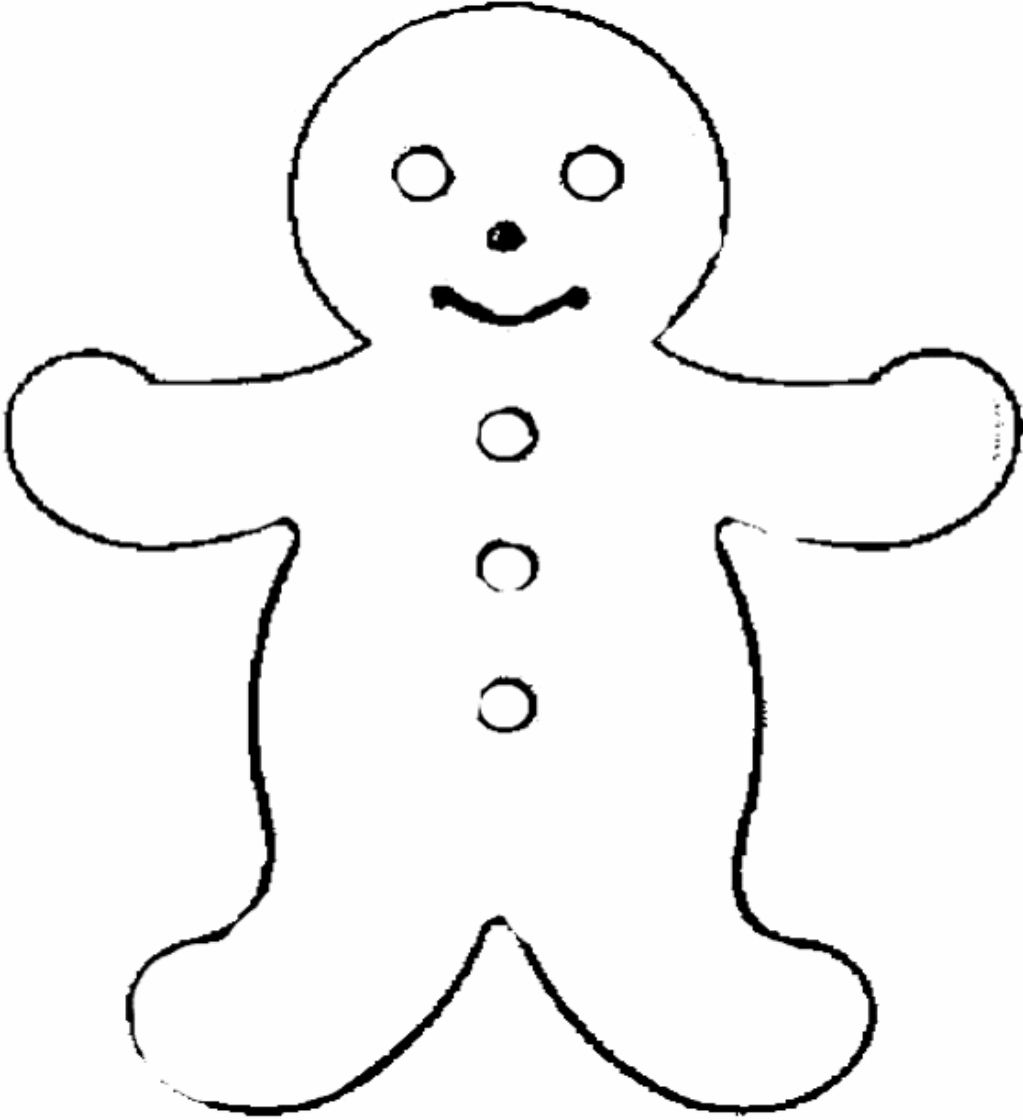
Howland, Naomi. *The Matzah Man: a Passover Story*. Clarion, 2002. 32 p. ISBN 0618117504
Cut out a matzah man shape to color and use it to retell the story from Matzah man's point of view.

Medoff, Francine. *Mouse in the Matzah Factory*. Kar-Ben, 2003. 32 p. ISBN 1580130488
Have students retell the story in the correct sequence to outline the steps in making matzah.

Miller, Deborah Uchill. *Only Nine Chairs: a Tall Tale for Passover*. Kar-Ben, 1982. 32 p. ISBN 093049413X
On a large piece of chart paper draw a holiday table. Cut out and glue 9 construction paper chairs around the table. Have all the children in the class draw and cut out a picture of themselves. Have them decide where to glue them around the table using only the chairs that are there.

Zusman, Evelyn and Kahn, Katherine Janus. *The Passover Parrot*. Kar-Ben, 1999. 32 p. ISBN 1580130240
Make a chart of the pets of students in the class.

Matzah Man



Yom HaAtzmaut

Yom HaAtzmaut is Israeli Independence Day. Israel became a modern state in 1948. This holiday is celebrated by singing Israeli songs, dancing, and eating foods such as oranges, dates, and olives.

Suggested books and activities:

Da Costa, Deborah. Snow in Jerusalem. Albert Whitman, 2008. ISBN 0807575259
Use an almanac to chart the weather in Jerusalem through out the year.

Dietrick, Ellen Cohen, Todd. It's Israel's Birthday. Kar-Ben, 2008. ISBN 0822576686
Pretend you are a travel agent and plan a trip to Israel. Make an itinerary of places you would go and sights you want to see.

Make an Israeli flag as a collage.

Edwards, Michelle. Chicken Man. Junebug Books, 2008. 2nd edition. 32 pages.
ISBN 1588382230
Act out the story.

Lag B'Omer

Lag B'Omer is the 33rd day of the counting of days between Passover and Shavuot. It commemorates the story of Rabbi Bar Yochai who hid from the Romans in a cave for seven years and the story of the students of Rabbi Akiba who disguised themselves as hunters, hiding their scrolls in their quivers so as not to be caught by Roman soldiers when studying the Torah was forbidden.

Suggested books and activities:

Benjamin-Farren, Joan. Shuli and Me: from Slavery to Freedom; a Storybook Omer Calendar. Black Jasmine, 2006 ISBN 097888020X
Make bows and arrows out of paper for each child. Have them watch for "Roman soldiers" and hide their books if they see one.

Make a calendar and count the days between Passover and Shavuot.

Shavuot

Shavuot is a spring harvest festival. It is also the time when the story of Ruth is told. It celebrates the giving of the ten commandments and the Torah at Mount Sinai. Dairy foods are eaten, especially *blintzes*, fruit or cheese filled crepes.

Suggested books and activities:

Children of America. Eleventh Commandment: Wisdom from Our Children. Jewish Lights, 1996. ISBN 187904546X

Write and illustrate your 11th commandment.

Goldin, Barbara Diamond. A Mountain of Blintzes. Gulliver Books, 2001. ISBN 0152019022

Make a list of things that you see in the spring.

Marzollo, Jean. Ruth and Naomi. Little, Brown, 2005. 32 p. ISBN 0316741396
Tell the story from Ruth's point of view. Tell it from Naomi's. Tell it from Boaz's.

Topeck, Susan Remick and Cohen, Todd. Ten Good Rules. Kar-Ben, 2006. ISBN 158013209X

Decorate the shape of the tablets that the ten commandments were written on.

Make up ten rules for the library or classroom.

Ten Commandments

