Jewish Family Times

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A Jewish Resource Guide
...for Simchat Torah

Tzimtsum 3
October 2008/5769

Simchat Torah is a Holiday of New Beginnings

Are you service weary? Don't stop yet! Simchat Torah is the best ever bookend to the Jewish fall festivals.

Every year we read through the entire Torah in 54 set portions *(parshiot)*. On Simchat Torah, another year of study is completed. Moses says goodbye to the Jewish people, and without pause, we launch back into Genesis and the story of creation.

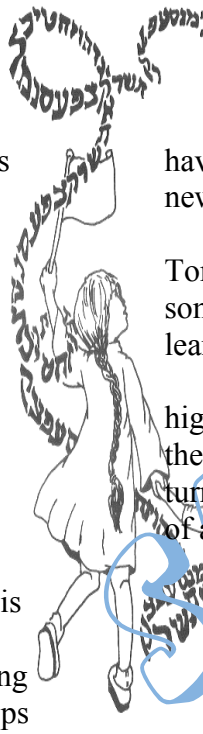
To mark this cycle, this JFT edition focuses on storytelling. Stories help us touch base with our history, values, and aspirations for daily living.

As a society, we are so hungry for stories. Like the Greek myths, stories enthrall, teach, and help us derive meaning. The Torah is a treasure trove of stories, waiting for discovery. Having a pocketful of storytelling tips can help you convey the gems of our heritage to our children.

A study partner in Israel once said, "I don't need soap operas or reality TV to fill my imagination — The Torah has it all." When we cycle through the Torah, we experience an entire range including romance, wit, wisdom, blood and gore, and kindness. Each year, we have the opportunity to notice and gain new insights.

Keep reading for ideas to incorporate Torah study into your life. Remember, sometimes less (text) is more. Torah learning can go very deep.

Simchat Torah is a bookend for the high holidays, but you don't have to close the book. Why not continue the party and turn Simchat Torah into the first chapter of a new beginning?



2008/5769 Holiday Dates
Israel/Reform: Tuesday, October 21
Traditional: Wednesday, October 22

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אב
גדה
וזחטיב
למנסע
פצקר
שת

Inside:

Dear Nina
Storytelling Tips
Take a Blessing Challenge!
Creative Torah
Recipes
Tallit Project

This publication contains names of God. Please treat it with appropriate respect.

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Create a Family Midrash

This series of activities will guide you in making your own creative midrash (story). It is traditional to say a blessing before studying Torah. Since you're creating your own wisdoms today, you can start the activity with the

Blessings for Stories

In Judaism, there is a blessing for everything. The blessing below offers a simple thanks for learning Torah.

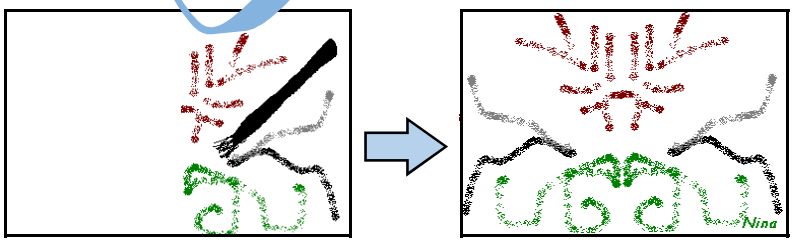
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ
לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תּוֹרָה.

Blessed are you Adonai, the God of our ancestors, who makes us holy with your commandments and commands us to take time for following Torah.

Baruch Ata Adonai, Elohaynu Melech Ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah.

Materials needed:
9" x 12" white construction paper (one per person)
paint (finger paint, tempera or watercolors)
paintbrushes
plain or ruled paper

Phase Alef:
1. Fold your construction paper in half.
2. On one half, paint a quick abstract design.
3. While the paint is still wet, fold the paper over and press the two sides of the paper together.
4. Unfold the paper and sign your name in a corner.



Directions continue on page 5

Pirkei Avot tells us that we start teaching our children Torah at the age of five. So when my son, Roi, turned five, we gave him his own set of* Chumash *[the five books of Moses]. Every night since then, we read a couple lines of Torah before he goes to sleep. Sometimes he just listens, sometimes we have great discussions.

The other night, Roi went to a sleepover at a friends house. I wasn't going to see him before he left, so I called him from the office. He said to me, "Abba, let's do the Shema." Then he said, "Abba, you have to teach me some Torah." So I taught him some Torah over the phone. I melted with excitement. It was one of the greatest things I'd ever heard. I realized it was something he looked forward to and it was an integral part of our relationship.

One of the challenges we face is not to minimize the Jewish content in our lives, but to maximize it. This can be done in Hebrew or English.

—Rabbi Michael M. Cohen

Past President,
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Assoc.

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