

4th Grade Family Education Day
What Is A Jewish Lifecycle Event Anyways?
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Lesson Topic: The curriculum for 4th grade is Jewish lifecycle events. This family education day will help families to learn together what is a lifecycle event and what makes it Jewish.

Students: These are about 40 students who regularly attend Sunday or Tuesday fourth grade religious school class. This session will be a family education day, which means their parents will also be students.

Milieu: Temple Beth Hillel is a medium sized synagogue in the suburbs of Los Angeles. The family programs are meant to provide a learning opportunity that will engage both the students and their parents together.

Enduring Understandings:

1. Lifecycle events can be universal, occur in moments of transition and bring people together.¹

Essential Questions:

1. What is a lifecycle event?
2. What makes a lifecycle event Jewish?²

Objectives: *Students will be able to...*

1. Define the phrase "life cycle"
2. List birth and marriage as life cycle events celebrated in Judaism
3. Enumerate stages in the life cycle generally celebrated in American society
4. Compare and contrast the Jewish and American life cycles
5. Construct their own initial answer to the question, "What makes a lifecycle event Jewish?"

¹ Brian Avner CG Guide

² Marti Barzilai CG Guide

Materials:

- Refreshments
- *Havdallah* Set
- Computer/pad
- Projector/PPT
- Green Tape
- Post it notes
- Paper
- Invitations for first rotation- Appendix C
- Text Sheets for Birth- Appendix A
- Create Your Own Jewish Lifecycle Resource- Appendix B
- Markers/Crayons
- Chupah
- Blank *Ketubah*-Appendix D
- A bunch of crafty material for families to use when creating their own lifecycle event.
- *Tanakhim*
- *Mishkan Tefillah*



Timeline:

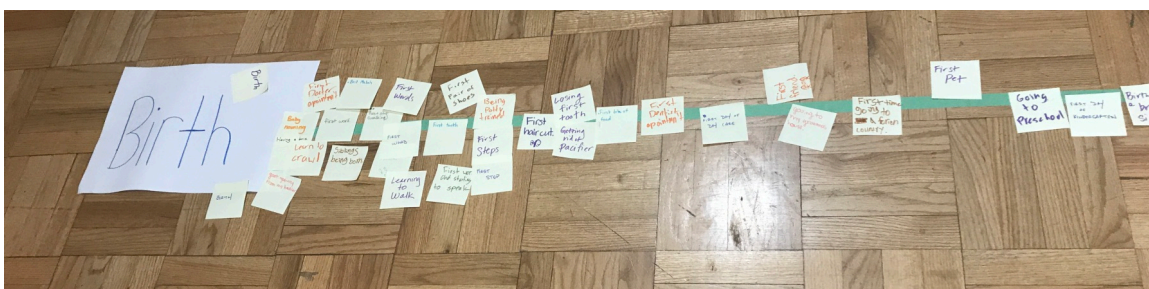
1. 9:00-9:30 T'fillah
2. 9:30-9:45 Refreshments
3. 9:45-9:55 Introductions to Daniel, Rabbi Ellie, Yael, and *Ozrim*. Introduce 4th grade curriculum and Program
4. 9:55-10:10 Set Induction Moments of Transition
5. 10:10-10:30 Activity 1: Lifeline Activity
6. 10:30-11:15 Activity 2: Jewish Lifecycles
7. 11:15-11:45 Authentic Assessment: Create your own Jewish Lifecycle Event
8. 11:45-11:55 Share
9. 11:55-12:00 Educational Closure

Learning Plan:

Set Induction: Moments of Transition 15 minutes- Daniel leads and Rabbi Ellie plays guitar

- Say: We are going to begin our program on Lifecycles by exploring moments of transitions together. (Put definition on projector). A moment of transition= a moment that occurs as you move from one thing in life to the next.
- Say: One example I have experienced is the last day of a major break or vacation. (Show picture on slide of both moments- with fade feature). I go from spending a lot of time of being at home with friends and family to spending the majority of time working in school. The time in between these moments feels weird and sometimes a little scary. When I was younger, my parents always use to take us out to get ice cream to make the moment of transition.
- Say: Another example that we recently celebrated is New Years Eve on December 31st. In this time we reflect on the year behind us and look towards the year ahead. Many of us have New Years celebrations with family and friends. (Show picture on slide)
- Ask: Now, I would like to hear from some of you. Can you think of a moment of transition that you have experienced in your life? How did you mark it? (Question should be on slide- take a couple of responses).
- Say: In Judaism, we experience lots of moments of transition. In fact, we recently just had one last night as Shabbat ended and we entered the new week.
- Ask: Does anyone know how we mark this moment of transition?
- Say: Yes, with Havdalah. The word havdalah literally means to separate. With this ritual ceremony, we separate between Shabbat and the new week. That is why we light a twisted candle, to represent the separation between the two parts of our week. As you recall, some moments of transition are sad. Some people enjoy Shabbat so much that they become sad when it comes to a close. That is why, as a part of Havdalah, we say a blessing for spices and smell them. This act is meant to help lessen the sadness of Shabbat ending.

- Say: As you know, Shabbat just ended last night. Therefore, we are going to do Havdallah together right now!
- Say: Let's do Havdallah. Ozer 1- Grape Juice Ozer 2- Spices Ozer 3- Candle (On slide, have each blessing up as we go so they can follow along).
- Say: Moments of transition happen not just in Judaism, but also all throughout our lives. Some moments of transition can be classified as lifecycle events, which you have been studying all year up until now. In order to be a lifecycle event, there must be a moment of transition, like Havdallah. The one major difference, though, between a life cycle event and Havdallah, though, is there also must be a crossing of critical thresholds in our lives.



Activity 1: Lifeline Activity 20 minutes- Daniel, everyone else assist

There will be a line of tape down the middle of the room. This will be our “life line.” At one end I will label birth and the other death.

- Say: Students and Parents, please think of moments of transition that personally affect peoples’ lives. These do not need to be religious. Write them down on sticky notes and then place them in the appropriate place on our class “life line.” Then, you may walk the “life line” to see what it looks like when everyone is finished. Before we begin, let me give you an example of both a Jewish and non-Jewish example. A Jewish example could be a B’nai Mitzvah. A non-Jewish example of a moment of transition could be your first day of Kindergarten. (10 minutes)
- Ask: The following questions to small groups. Daniel at one table, Yael at another, Ozrim work together for the third one. (5 minutes)
 - Which of these events do we choose?
 - Which happen whether we choose them or not?
 - Which of these events have American rituals associated with them?
 - Which of these events have Jewish rituals associated with them?
 - Is there any overlap between the American and Jewish rituals?
- Ask: To the large group, how would you define a lifecycle event now?



Activity 2: What makes a life cycle event Jewish? (something with rituals) 45 minutes

On the projected slide there will be a list of Jewish lifecycle events. The students are going to spend time traveling to them and figuring out, what makes them specifically Jewish. Are there key ingredients? The students and parents will uncover what makes these lifecycle moments specifically Jewish. (Rituals!). Each one also happens outside the realm of Judaism. Yael and Daniel will run these tables along with one Ozer each. The third Ozer (Alexander) will be the timekeeper and help Daniel when possible. Each rotation will last for 20 minutes. I will hand each family an “invitation” to either the Birth of A New Child or the Wedding to attend first. (See Appendix C)

- Birth- Welcome to the Covenant of Judaism- Daniel- In Social Hall
 - At this booth, Daniel will facilitate a discussion about the ritual of Brit Milah/Brit Bat in liberal Judaism.
 - Say: Babies are born not just in Judaism but also in every religion. However, when a Jewish baby is born there is a special ritual ceremony. For a boy, a *Brit Milah* and a girl a *Brit Bat*. Please sit with your families and examine the origins of these two ceremonies, found

in the Torah. Then, discuss the questions together that follow. (See Appendix A)

- Ask: Now that you have studied the textual source for a *Brit Milah/Brit Bat*, what would you predict are the elements that make these lifecycle events for either a boy or girl Jewish? Hint, the word *brit* means covenant. (Either ceremony welcomes the baby into the covenant of Judaism, something to do with naming as names are very intentionally given in Judaism. Tallit is one ritual object, which a baby is wrapped in a symbol of the covenant).
- Say: If we examine all ceremonies of *Brit Milah* and *Brit Bat*, we find a section, which welcomes the baby into the covenant and shares their name with the community for the first time. In the remaining minutes of our time together, talk with your family about either the meaning of your Hebrew or English name. Why did your parents give you your name? How does it link you to your past? What meaning do you find in your name today? Draw/write your findings on the paper provided.



- Wedding- Creating a Jewish Home- Yael/Zoey- In Sanctuary
 - There will be a *chuppah* set up. Yael will facilitate an experience that shows how a Jewish wedding helps to establish the beginning of the Jewish home that a couple is about to begin together. First she will talk briefly about what things need to be considered for this purpose by showing two short video clips. Then, students will make their own *ketubah* with their families to talk about the things that are important in their family home.

- Ask: What makes a wedding a moment of transition? How do we mark it?
- Say: Ok, now we are going to watch two short Bim Bam (previously God Cast) Clips about weddings to learn about two rituals which help to mark a wedding in a Jewish way. The first one is going to be about one ritual aspect, the *Chuppah*.
- Show clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYYinMgfn9k> (This 1.5 minute video provides a clear explanation of how the *chuppah* ritual represents the building of a Jewish home at a wedding)
- Ask: How does a *chuppah* set a Jewish wedding apart from a non-Jewish wedding? What does a *chuppah* demonstrate? (Demonstrates that a wedding is a transition from an individual Jew to a partnership that is going to build a Jewish home together. The *chuppah* represents the Jewish home the people getting married will build together)
- Say: Now, we are going to watch a short clip about a *ketubah*.
- Show clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIM1SEJfixo> (This 1.5 minute video clearly explains how a *ketubah* can function in liberal Jewish communities to demonstrate the couple's agreement to build a Jewish home together)
- Ask: At the end of the clip, we learn some Jewish people hang their *ketubah* in their home. How might a *ketubah* be related to creating a Jewish home? (Couple can discuss the ways that
- Say: Reform Jewish *ketubot* can include the promises that each partner in the marriage makes to the other to build a strong, vibrant Jewish home. Since you are also partners with your adults to create a strong Jewish home, your task for the last five minutes is to come up with a few ways that you and your adult(s) can build a strong Jewish home? For example, how will you support one another? How do you want to celebrate happy occasions together/Jewish holidays? See Appendix D for blank *ketubah*, which they may color when they finish writing.

Authentic Assessment: Create Your Own Jewish Lifecycle Event 40 minutes- Daniel leads, everyone else assist. Handout Appendix B to each family.

- Say: It's time to think creatively. You are being tasked with making your very own Jewish Lifecycle Event from scratch. This Jewish lifecycle event should be one, which you can use in your family home moving forward. Let's review the basic criteria that we have uncovered this morning
 - Ask: What kind of event can you choose? It should include moment of transition that you have either experienced or know you will which is not already an established Jewish lifecycle event.
 - Ask: What do you need to create in order to make the Jewish lifecycle event Jewish? It should have rituals/blessings that ties such a moment to Judaism in some way. Looking back to the beginning of our time together, *havdallah* has a candle and four blessings that make the

ritual a Jewish one. For this, you may either design an item, prayer, etc. You may use any of the material on the table as resources or to aid you in constructing your lifecycle event.

- Say: Please work with your parents. You may use whichever resources you would like. At the end of your work time, you will have an opportunity to share your Jewish lifecycle event with the class.
- Ask: Who would like to share about their lifecycle event?



Educational Closure: 5 minutes-Daniel

- Ask: I would like to know, can a few people share some takeaways about lifecycle events and what makes them Jewish?

Appendix A

Genesis 17:2-12

2) I will establish my covenant between me and you, and I will make you exceedingly numerous.

3) Abram threw himself on his face, and God spoke to him further.

4) As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

5) And you shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I make you the father of a multitude of nations.

6) I will make you exceedingly fertile, and make nations of you; and kings shall come forth from you.

7) I will maintain my covenant between me and you, and your offspring to come, as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages, to be God to you and to your offspring to come.

8) I assign the land you stay in for you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding. I will be their God.

9) God further said to Abraham, "As for you, you and your offspring to come throughout the ages shall keep my covenant.

10) Such shall be the covenant between me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised [as a sign of the covenant between me and you.]

Discussion Questions

1. How would you define the word "covenant" after studying these verses of Torah?
2. Why does God want every boy to be "circumcised?"
3. Look back at verse 17:5. Avram means father. What does the fact that God changes Avram's name to Avraham, which literally means, "father of them" say about the significance of a name in Judaism?

Appendix B

Create Your Own Jewish Lifecycle Moment

Your family is going through a special moment of transition, of your choice. Your task is to decide what that moment is and create a Jewish lifecycle event to mark the moment of transition in a Jewish way. As the designer, you get to be creative but have a few guidelines you should follow!

- 1) You get to pick the moment of transition. It can be any moment that you have experienced or know you will experience (first day of a new school, getting a drivers license, etc). Think about one, which is meaningful to you and your family.
- 2) Make it Jewish! In order to do so, you have to find a way to link the moment of transition to Judaism. You may choose to use a few blessings that already exist, modify one or create your own. You can also take a verse or two of a Torah story that you know.
 - a. **Many blessings begin with:** *Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu*_____ - Blessed are you Adonai our God who has sanctified us in God's commandments and commanded us to _____.
 - b. **Shehecheyanu Blessing**= Blessing that can be used when ever you are doing something for the first time ever or for the first time in a season. *Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higianu laz'man hazeh.* Blessed are you Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this season.
 - c. **Sh'ma:** *Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad!* Hear O'Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One!
 - d. **Welcome:** *Bruchim Habaim* _____
 - e. **Priestly Benediction:** May God bless you and keep you. May God's light shine upon you, and may God be gracious to you. May you feel God's Presence within you always, and may you find peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)
 - f. **Blessing Over Wine:** *Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam, borei p'ri hagafen.* Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.
 - g. **Blessing of Strength (As someone embarks on a journey, does something in a moment of transition)-** *Mi sheberiach avoteinu v'imoteinu, Avraham Yitzchak v'Yaakov, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel v'Leiah....*May the one who blessed our ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah bless ___ as they _____.
- 3) Design a ritual item to go along with your lifecycle event. Remember the Jewish lifecycle events that you looked at. In the birth, we examined a naming ritual/circumcision. In the wedding, we looked at a *chuppah* and *ketubah*, which are tied to building a Jewish home. You can either draw your item or make a model with the supplies that have been provided. (Common ritual items include Kiddush cup, tallit, candles)

Appendix C

You are invited to first attend the BIRTH station!



You are invited to first attend the WEDDING station!



You are invited to first attend the BIRTH station!



You are invited to first attend the WEDDING station!



Appendix D

