

SAMPLE LETTER ONE (SEE THREE MORE SAMPLES BELOW!):

Dear Parents:

It was great to see so many of the parents at the Mishpachah program today! Before meeting up with our families, we discussed the story of Adam and Eve “In The Garden”. The concepts are printed at the bottom of this letter.

1. We started our day by writing in our Jewish Value Journals. Today we focused on the value of mishpachah or family. Jewish life revolves around the family. The first mitzvah in the Torah is to create a family. The concept of surrounding yourself with family was a great tie in to the story of Adam and Eve as well as our time with parents.

2. We took turns reading the story of Adam and Eve aloud.

3. The kids really enjoyed our next activity. I posed different scenarios to students that presented the struggles we face with our yetzer ha tov {our good inclination} and our yetzer ha ra {our evil inclination}. Adam and Eve gave in and ate the apple. Now we have the free will to make our own choices. In pairs, students discussed the scenarios below and decided what to do. It wasn't always an easy decision. We talked about how we feel when we make a good choice vs. a bad choice.

- a. You are taking a test and struggling with an answer. You can clearly see a classmate's paper and the correct answer. No one will know you “peeked.” What do you do? Why did you make that choice? How do you feel afterward?
- b. You find a \$5 dollar bill on the sidewalk after school. It's a very busy time and no one would know it didn't fall out of your pocket. What do you do? Why did you make that choice? How do you feel afterward?
- c. While you are waiting for your teacher to arrive one morning you and 2 of your friends are fooling around near her desk. One of your friends knocks over her coffee cup and it breaks. When she arrives and discovers her cup, what do YOU do? Are you in any way responsible, even though you didn't break it? How do you feel about the action you took?
- d. You are on a sports team that practices every Thursday. This week your team will be practicing for a very big game on Sunday. Your friend has invited you on an outing that would be terrific fun, but you would miss practice with your team. What choice do you make? Do you have any responsibility to your team? Is it just as important to have fun?
- e. You have a homework assignment due and all children who turn their work in on time will get to be part of an ice cream party. You have not completed your homework because you were playing PlayStation. You know if you tell your teacher “a little white lie” she will allow you to bring it tomorrow and you can go to the ice cream party. What choice do you make? How do you feel afterward?
- f. You borrow a computer game from a friend. A very popular kid from school comes to your house and wants to take your friend's computer game home for a few days. What do you do? Are you responsible for your friend's game? Why did you make that choice?

4. We made our own Tree of Knowledge that included the verses from Genesis that retell the Adam and Eve story. Each student added their own apple and snake.

Please join us next week with your children for the Mishpachah program. I can't wait to see you all again for more fun learning about Torah!

Sincerely,
Carole Yellen

ADAM and EVE

God planted a Garden in Eden and put Adam there. In the middle of the Garden was the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God told Adam not to eat from this tree. God made Adam sleep in a deep sleep and he took one of his ribs and made a woman. The snake was sneaky and he manipulated the woman into eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam also ate the fruit from this tree. Then, the eyes of Adam and Eve were open and, being afraid of God, they hid. They told God that the snake had tricked them. God cursed the snake and told him to eat dust for the rest of his life. God sent Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden to farm the soil from which they were shaped.

- It is not good for people to be alone.
- God loves all of Creation.
- Human beings have free will.
- We must take responsibility for our actions.

SAMPLE PARENT LETTER TWO

Hello Temple Solel Families! We had a great time on Sunday discussing G-d, invisible yet everywhere! Here are the highlights:

- Students worked on a “Seeing is Believing” worksheet, in which they had to express how they know certain things exist although they are not visible (like wind, love, etc.). We discussed the physical evidence for such things, and related these examples to evidence that G-d is everywhere, and although we can’t see G-d, we know G-d exists.
- We read a story “The Fish That Looked for Water” by Molly Cone. This story further encouraged students to imagine and discuss how we know things are present even if we can’t see them. Then the students each gave examples of how they see G-d (in the beauty of the earth, in the kindness of others, the love of their parents, etc.)
- We had dance with Roz!
- The students made fantastic collages of images in which they see G-d’s imprint on us and all the world!
- The students watched a video on Camp Newman-SWIG and have information that they brought home about it.

I look forward to seeing you all again next week!

Dana Mekler dmekler@sbcglobal.net

Concepts:

- Everybody thinks about God.
- No one knows what God is.
- There is no one authoritative, universally accepted Jewish concept of God.
- Respected Jewish thinkers have had many different ways of thinking and writing about God.
- About the only things that all Jews who do believe in God agree upon are that God is One and that God is invisible. Everything else is up for grabs. The belief that God is invisible is understood when we think about the fact that we cannot see love, but we know it exists and we cannot see air, but we know it exists. Therefore, we cannot see God, but we can know that God exists.
- We can experience God’s presence by enjoying God’s creations (flowers, trees, sky).

SAMPLE LETTER THREE

Dear Parents,

The main concept that we worked on today in class is:

- It is important to study Hebrew because it is the language of the Torah and helps us become closer to that sacred text.

Hebrew...The language of the Jews. A language that has been a flame that continues to burn brightly to this day. A flame that at some points in history has been burning brightly and at other points in history has been dimmed. But it seems that every time the flame is about to burn out, people have taken a deep breath and rekindled it. It is now 4,000 years after Hebrew began, and it is going strong. But don't get the idea that it has been an easy journey. Quite the contrary. It has been a struggle to keep Hebrew alive. But admirable people, such as Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the man who revived Hebrew and turned into modern conversational Hebrew, have been up to the fight. They have dedicated their whole lives to the existence of Hebrew and they should be commended. Because of these people, Hebrew is now the official language of the State of Israel.

We began our class today by talking about the beauty and the meaning of Hebrew, pointing out that even though we may not all speak Hebrew as a language or even all read Hebrew, we can still enjoy its beauty. Following this, we played a Hebrew Memory Match-up game: Hebrew and English word cards were randomly placed on the opposite sides of a pocket chart. The class was split in two teams. Each team received a Vocabulary Word Guide. Students on each team took turns coming up to the pocket chart and choosing one card from each side, hoping to get a match. If they got a match, they kept that pair and earned themselves another turn. If they did not get a match, the turn went to the other team. The game ended when all cards were chosen and the team with the most pairs won.

In the last part of today's class, students worked on a "Shalom" (in Hebrew) Batik Art Project. The projects are drying and will be sent home next week.

I enjoy your children each week. Thanks again for sharing them with me. Have a good week!

Mary Giller

SAMPLE LETTER FOUR

Dear Parents:

This week your children and I explored the Jewish high holy days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It was my pleasure to listen to the children as they shared stories of their lives and related them to the meaning of the holidays that are so important to the foundation of a Jewish life. The concepts taught are at the bottom of this letter.

This Sunday, the children began their “Journals of Jewish Thoughts.” They wrote about a time that they felt proud of themselves, and another time in which they could have acted differently. These writings set the stage for the concept that Rosh Hashanah is the Yom Hadin (Day of Judgment). Rosh Hashanah is not only a day when God judges the actions of Jews, but it is also a time for us to judge ourselves and our behavior.

In teams, we played a fun computerized game called Jewpardy to learn the central concepts of both Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur (ie: On Yom Kippur, Jews gather together as a community to ask for God’s forgiveness. As Jews, we must accept responsibility not only for ourselves, but for the entire community. We have all done things we are sorry about. So we say the prayer together – men and women, girls and boys. We tell God we are sorry not only for what we have done wrong, but for the things our family, friends and neighbors have done wrong too).

We also made beautiful “thumbprint” New Year cards for the residents of the Seacrest Retirement Community. One of the concepts we talked about is how God created each of us as unique. Our unique thumbprints represent this concept. The children took this Mitzvah opportunity to let the Seacrest residents know they are unique and special too, as we think of them on this New Year. Another concept we discussed is that we need to be God’s partners. By sending High Holiday cards to the elderly at Seacrest, we are being God’s partners by helping others.”

We also had our own *Tashlich* ceremony, where we wrote something we are sorry for and washed it away in a bowl of water to wash away our sins.

I enjoyed getting to know your children, and look forward to many more weeks of special time with them. If you have concerns or questions, please feel free to call me (760-842-1696

Sincerely,

Laurie Ildau

Rosh Hashanah Concepts for Third and Fourth Grade

- The Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur prayerbook is called a machzor. It contains special prayers for the High Holidays. What kinds of subjects do you think these prayers contain? Now take out a machzor and see if you were right!!
- Rosh Hashanah has three other names:
 - 1) Yom Hadin (Day of Judgment) – Rosh Hashanah is not only a day when God judges the actions of Jews, but it is also a time for us to judge ourselves and our behavior. What kinds of behaviors can we be judging in ourselves this year (because Judaism is a religion that teaches the importance of community, we can also talk about behaviors that someone else needs to change – even if we ourselves do not need to change those behaviors)?
 - 2) Yom Hazikaron (Day of Remembrance) – God remembers each of us on Rosh Hashanah. What actions did you take during the past year that you would like to be remembered?

3) Yom Teruah (Day of the Sounding of the Shofar) – In the Torah, Numbers 29:1 talks about the shofar. “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a sacred occasion; you shall not work at your occupations. You shall observe it as a day when the horn is sounded.” Which of the three names for Rosh Hashanah do you like best? Why?

- There are two ways of obtaining forgiveness. We may pray to God for forgiveness for the wrongdoings we have committed against God, but we must ask forgiveness directly from any people we have hurt. We can pray to God for the courage and wisdom to be fair and honest with those people we have wronged. Think about a time that you “wronged” God (swearing, using God’s name in a way that is not respectful, destroying the earth’s resources by cutting down trees unnecessarily or driving our cars more than we need). Think about a time you wronged a friend or family member.
 - Blowing the shofar helps to intensify the spirit of reverence and solemnity of the Rosh Hashanah worship service. It wakes us up and commands our attention. There are three kinds of sounds made by the shofar: Tekiah (a long, deep note which ends abruptly), Shevarim (three shorter notes) and Teruah (a wavering sound consisting of nine short broken notes) The last Tekiah is prolonged and is called the Tekiah Gedolah. The great sage and scholar, Saadia Gaon (882-952CE) listed ten reasons why we are commanded to blow the shofar: They can be summed up as follows:
 - The shofar calls us to change our ways.
 - The shofar heralds God’s monarchy as trumpets herald a monarch.
 - The shofar was heard at Sinai as a war alarm at the destruction of the Temple*My Jewish Year Teacher’s Guide*-pg 15
- How do you feel when you hear the shofar? Does it call you to change your ways?

Yom Kippur Concepts for Third and Fourth Grade

- Kol Nidre is the opening prayer on the evening of Yom Kippur. This prayer admits that we may have made promises we were not able to keep. The Kol Nidre prayer frees us from those promises we made that we were not able to keep. Think about promises that you were not able to keep during the past year, and ways that you will try harder to keep your promises in the coming year.
- During the Yom Kippur service, we read an important prayer called the Al Chet. In the Al Chet prayer we confess our sins as a group. As Jews, we must accept responsibility not only for ourselves, but for the entire community. We have all done things we are sorry about. So we say the prayer together –men and women, girls and boys,. We tell God we are sorry not only for what we have done wrong, but for the things our family, friends and neighbors have done wrong too. Many times during the Yom Kippur service we sing a special prayer called Avinu Malkenu. The prayer asks God to forgive us and to treat us kindly, even though we don’t always act the way we should.
My Jewish Year-pgs. 29-30
Why do you think that, as Jews, we accept responsibility for the entire community? Share some examples of sins that are committed by others and how we could somehow be partially responsible for them (ie: “A student in class teased another student and I did not speak up and tell him not to do it.”).
- On Yom Kippur, we look back at the year that has passed and we look ahead to the new year that has just begun. We feel clean and good and full of hope. We have made a new start. We know that we can be better people in the new year. And we hope the new year will be good for all people everywhere. On Yom Kippur, we think of the many things in our world we would like to make better. People are hungry, people don’t have jobs, people are treated unfairly. And we want to heal those hurts. We think of the things we can do to help other people. *My Jewish Year*, Behrman House, pgs. 31-32
Name some actions we can take to help other people (ie: We can feed the hungry, visit people who are sick, and help our friends at school. We can give money to the poor, money to help Israel, and money to people who try to make the world better.)