

BOARD OF JEWISH EDUCATION OF GREATER NEW YORK
 EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER
 An Agency of UJA-Federation

Re-Enacting Har Sinai

- GOALS:**
- To review the procedures for the reading of the Torah at services, and compare this ritual to the event of the receiving of the Torah at Har Sinai (or vice versa).
 - To see the reading of the Torah as a simulation of the receiving of the Torah at Har Sinai.
 - To understand the importance of preparing before reading from the Torah.

AGES: Third through Adult (adjust the lesson as necessary)

MATERIALS: copies, 3 sheets of construction paper-all one color, oaktag, 3 ½ feet of velcro, scissors, markers, oaktag scraps

PREPARATION:

1. Color and cut out the title, both heading cards, and the flowers. Back the title and both heading cards with oaktag scraps.
2. Holding the oaktag vertically glue one bouquet of flowers onto the upper right hand corner and the other bouquet onto the upper left hand corner.
3. Cut out all the fact cards.
NOTE: If your copies have NOT been Xeroxed on a colored, harder stock, Cut the construction paper into six cards so that each one measures 2" X 9". Glue each fact onto one of these cards.
5. Laminate the poster, title, heading cards and all the fact cards.
6. Cut six ½" pieces of velcro. Attach one side of each of two pieces to the back of the title. Position the other side of each piece onto the poster so that the title is placed in between the flowers.
7. Using the other small pieces of velcro, attach the **קריאת התורה** heading cards onto the right side of the poster directly underneath the title and the **מתן תורה** card onto the left side underneath the title.
8. Cut one side of the remaining 3 feet of velcro in half and attach each half vertically underneath each heading. Cut the corresponding side of velcro into small pieces and attach each one onto the back of a fact card.
9. Remove all items from the poster to begin the lesson.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Ask students why we read the Torah every week, actually three times per week on Shabbat, Mondays and Thursdays Notice that the question is not why on Shabbat, Mondays and Thursdays, but rather why read the Torah period. Discuss answers and tell them they may have additional reasons after today's lesson.
2. Now ask them what they know about Rabbi Akiva? (He was a shepherd until middle age when he started studying and became a great Torah scholar.)
3. Tell the students that we all know how much Rabbi Akiva loved to study Torah and how knowledgeable he was. The following is a very puzzling story about Rabbi Akiva.
4. Rabbi Akiva was traveling with his students and they came to a town to spend Shabbat. They, of course, went to the shul for services on Saturday morning and the congregation honored Rabbi Akiva with an *aliyah* to the Torah.
(Tell students that years ago, when a person was given an *aliyah*, it not only meant that he recited the blessings before and after the Torah reading, but that he would be the **בעל קורא** reader from the Torah, for that *aliyah* as well.)
To everyone's surprise Rabbi Akiva declined this honor! Even his students were shocked.
5. Take a few minutes to illicit student's responses to: "Why do you think he did that?" "Why would Rabbi Akiva, a man full of so much love and knowledge of Torah, decline such an honor?"
6. Continue by saying that according to the story, Rabbi Akiva quoted a verse from Exodus before we received the Ten Commandments. It says "וידבר אלוקים... לאמור" which means "And God spoke...saying." Rabbi Akiva asked, "Why the repetition of "spoke" and "saying" when one word of saying would have been enough?" He explained the verse to mean that God spoke the words of the Ten Commandments first to Himself as a form of preparation and study and then He said them aloud. Rabbi Akiva explained that from this we learn the importance for the **בעל קורא** to prepare before reading from the Torah - IF GOD PREPARED HIMSELF, THEN OF COURSE WE HUMANS MUST! Rabbi Akiva refused the honor because he had not specifically prepared the reading beforehand.
7. Make sure students realize that this is a *Midrash*. Ask them what the Midrash is trying to teach. In addition to showing that one must prepare before reading from the Torah, it is teaching something else.
Rabbi Akiva compared our reading of the Torah in services with the receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, in fact he was teaching that the process of the Torah reading acts as a re-enactment of our experience at Har Sinai. Attach the title onto the top of the poster.
Tell students that we are going to do the same thing as Rabbi Akiva; we are going to compare **מתיק תורה** with **קריאת התורה**
8. Ask students what they know about the procedure of reading the Torah during the Torah service. One by one, present each of the fact cards from **קריאת התורה** and discuss. (The minimum of three people on the *bimah* refers to the reader, and the two *gabbaim*.)
9. Now, see what your students know about the receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Distribute the fact cards about our experience at Har Sinai. One at a time, students

should read their facts. As each fact card is mentioned, discuss how it is similar to the Torah

service. After each item is discussed, it should be attached to the poster - directly across from the Torah reading fact to which it is connected.

10. Now, ask again the purpose of the Midrash told about Rabbi Akiva. It's to show that our reading of the Torah every week is a way of reenacting the historic occasion of our receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

VARIATIONS:

- A. Distribute all the fact cards to the students. Have students walk through the class and find their partner, the person who has a similar fact from the other occasion (a Torah reading fact partners with a similar fact about receiving the Torah at Har Sinai). Then affix each pair of facts to the poster.
- B. Discuss our experience at Mount Sinai first, attaching the facts to the poster. Then find similar facts from our Torah reading service.

NOTE:

This lesson and instructional poster can be used for Simhat Torah, Shavuot, Bible, and/or the learning the Torah service,

Re-Enacting Har Sinai

קריאת התורה

We do not let three days go by without reading the Torah.

The reader must be standing.

Some people have the custom of standing during the reading.

The reader must prepare before reading.

Only one person may read aloud at a time.

We hear the Torah by way of a reader.

There is no talking during the reading.

A minimum of 3 people are on the *bimah* during the reading.

We respond to the בְּרָכָה before and after the reading.

מתן תורה

The people purified themselves for three days prior to the event.

Moses and the people stood at Mount Sinai.

The people stood with Moses.

God studied Torah to prepare for the event.

The Torah was given with one voice: God's.

The Torah was given via a middleman: Moses.

We watched and listened in awe and fear.

Three parties were present: God, Moses, and the people of Israel.

The people said: "נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע"
"We will do and we will listen."