



B”H

Lesson Plan for Older Grades

Rationale (Objectives):

To expose the children to Shem Vener’s work –

To understand that behind every name is a real person and a story,

To encourage the students to learn about a person or child who perished in the Holocaust.

To understand that we are responsible for one another. Many people perished in the Holocaust and didn’t leave behind anyone who would remember them. The entire Jewish nation is responsible for remembering them.

The lesson plan includes three source sheets corresponding to the topics discussed in the lesson: mutual responsibility, the custom of lighting a candle in memory of a deceased person and the meaning of a person’s name.

Each teacher can choose to deepen the study of these topics in their class as they deem appropriate.

The lesson in points:

Introduction – Group responsibility game (further study on the topic of mutual responsibility can be added using the attached source sheet)

Discussion – Remembering the Holocaust

Memorial candle – Familiarity with the custom (further study on the topic can be added using the attached source sheet)

Joint study – Each of Us Has a Name (further study on the topic can be added using the attached source sheet)

Learning about a victim

Conclusion and homework

The lesson in detail:

Introduction – Group Responsibility Game

The lesson begins with a game that requires the students to apply group responsibility. The objective of the experience is to spark a discussion on the responsibility of each member of the group to do a task that the entire group must accomplish. This responsibility is built upon mutual commitment; if one member of the group leaves, the responsibility that each of the remaining members must bear increases. Later in the lesson, we will use this message in two ways:

1. To understand that the Jewish nation is one unit, and when people from our nation are killed, it is the entire nation's loss and not just the loss of those who were close to them. Therefore, the Holocaust affected each one of us – even if we don't have direct relatives who were victims.

2. Based on this idea, each one of us is responsible for remembering the Holocaust, especially in light of the fact that those people who knew the victims or experienced the Holocaust themselves are gradually disappearing.

The students will stand in a circle and receive a balloon. Their task is to make sure that the balloon doesn't fall on the floor, but there is one rule – they are not allowed to hold the balloon in their hands. During the game, the teacher will ask 4 of the students to go back to their seats, but the circle will not be made any smaller. Will the remaining students still be able to keep the balloon in the air?

Analysis with the students – Were they able to actually keep the balloon in the air? How many students managed to touch the balloon more than once? What happened when the number of participants decreased?

This was a group task, and every participant was held responsible for successfully performing the task. If some of the participants left the group, the responsibility of each of the remaining players increased.

Discussion – The Holocaust and Remembering the Holocaust

Today's lesson is in preparation for Holocaust Remembrance Day. What do you know about the Holocaust?

Listen to answers.

The Holocaust is the greatest atrocity that happened to the Jewish nation in the past century. Six million people were killed and many more suffered, were tortured and lived in terrible conditions. The number is humongous and incomprehensible.

Who personally knows a person who went through the Holocaust? Does anyone in the class have relatives who perished in the Holocaust?

Listen to the answers. There were probably not be very many students in the class who personally know survivors, and even less who will know of relatives who died in the Holocaust.

The generation that went through the Holocaust and survived it is gradually disappearing. Those are the people who personally knew the victims and could remember them – the people who could tell the story of what happened there as eyewitnesses.

Connect to the game from the beginning of the lesson. The Holocaust was a tragedy for the entire nation, and the responsibility for preserving the memory of the Holocaust is upon the entire nation. People who experienced it and can tell the story are now disappearing.

Mention the 10th of Tevet – the General Day of Kaddish. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel ruled that the entire Jewish nation should recite Kaddish on this day, even people who did not have relatives who perished in the Holocaust. The teacher may quote this passage by Rabbi Yaakov Ariel:

"קדיש כלל ישראלי"

גם אדם צעיר, ואף מי שלא היו לו קרובים שנרצחו בשואה, צריך לחוש מחויבות אישית לאמירת קדיש ביום הקדיש הכללי

יום עשרה בטבת נקבע כיום הקדיש הכללי על הנספים בשואה, שרבים מהם לא הותירו אחריהם שם ושארית ואין מי שיאמר אחריהם קדיש. **בתקנת הרבנות הראשית נקבע כי הציבור כולו יאמר קדיש.** זכורני בצעירותי כאשר ראיתי את כל הציבור אומר קדיש התרגשתי מאוד עד כדי דמעות. אולם בשנים האחרונות יש רפיון בקיום תקנה זו. לדעתי הצורך בהמשך התקנה רק גובר והולך ככל שהשרידים החיים הולכים ופוחתים והשכחה וההשכחה הולכות וגוברות.

ודווקא השתא ששוב חוזרת הסכנה שעומדים עלינו לכלותנו, חלילה, מן הראוי לזכור ולהזכיר את זכר הקדושים ה' ייקום דמם. ברציחתם הנוראה הם ציוונו להבטיח את המשך קיומו של עם הנצח ובין היתר גם למנוע שואה שנייה חלילה.

לסיום אציין כי בספרי באהלה של תורה (חלק ה, סי' טו) דנתי בשאלה האם גם מי שהוריו בחיים רשאי לומר קדיש ביום זה על קדושי השואה הי"ד ותשובתי היא חיובית, שכן מדובר בקדיש כללי."

(הרב יעקב אריאל, מוסף שבת מקור ראשון ו טבת תשע"ו, 18 בדצמבר 2015)

The Jewish Nation's Kaddish

Even a young person, and even those who do not have relatives who were killed in the Holocaust, must feel personally obligated to recite Kaddish on the General Day of Kaddish

*The tenth day of the month of Tevet was set as the General Day of Kaddish for victims of the Holocaust, many of who did not leave after them anyone to say Kaddish for them. **The Chief Rabbinate ruled that the entire nation should say Kaddish.** I remember as a young man seeing the entire congregation saying Kaddish together; I was moved to tears. However, in recent years, this ruling has not been adhered to as strictly. In my opinion, the need to continue with this custom is only becoming stronger as the living survivors decrease and the memories are being forgotten.*

Specifically now, when again the danger of those who want to annihilate our nation, God forbid, is returning, it is correct to remember and mention the memories of the holy victims, may God avenge their blood. In their terrible murder, they commanded us to ensure the continuation of the eternal Jewish nation, and also to prevent a second Holocaust, God forbid.

To conclude, I will note that in my book, Ohala Shel Torah (Part 5, Section 15), I discussed the question of whether someone whose parents are alive can recite Kaddish on this day for the holy victims of the Holocaust, and my answer was affirmative, for this is indeed a general Kaddish."

(Rabbi Yaakov Ariel, Shabbat insert, Makor Rishon, 6 Tevet 5776, December 18, 2015)

What can we do today to preserve the memory of the Holocaust?

Listen to answers.

Exposure to the Shem Vener Foundation

One of the big problems related to remembering the Holocaust is the size of the atrocity. It is hard to grasp the dimensions of the Holocaust, how many people were hurt, murdered and experienced the horror. Usually, the focus is placed on the deaths of the victims. Shem Vener decided to focus instead of their lives, to get to know the people and stories behind the victims, and to light a candle for every person who was killed in the Holocaust. (Possible to show the film clip from the Shem Vener website)

There is a Jewish custom to light a candle in memory of a person who has passed away every year on the date that they died.

Lighting a candle helps provoke us to remember the deceased person.

Usually, a person's relatives and people who knew him are the ones who light the candle in his memory. But in the Holocaust, many people were killed without leaving behind anyone to remember them. Sometimes, entire families were killed together and even entire villages, and not one person survived to remember them.

Familiarity Exercise

Each student receives a note with a personality on it. On some of the notes, there will be names of famous people (TV star, athlete, political figure, a Rabbi, and more) and on others, there will be names of people who are close to the student (mother, brother, friend from the class, etc.). On the board, the teacher will use the projector to show a list of descriptions and characteristics about a person (place of residence, hobby, number of children, number of siblings, favorite food, favorite color, leisure activities, shoe size, etc.). Each student will need to write as many details as possible about the person on their note (including details that are not on the list) in one minute's time.

How many students were successful? What details did they write?

Probably, those who received a person who is closer to them will be most successful, because they are more familiar with the person. Knowing a person is not just knowing his name, but rather being familiar with his character as a whole.

Study – Name and Memory

Present the verse from the book of Yishayahu to the students:

"כי כה אמר יהוה לסריסים... ונתתי להם בביתי ובחומתי יד ושם טוב מבנים ומבנות שם עולם אתן לו
אשר לא יכרת" (ישעיהו נו/ד-ה)

"For so says God to the eunuchs...I will give them in My house and in My walls a place and a name, better than sons and daughters; an everlasting name I will give him, which will not be discontinued." (Yishayahu 56:4-5)

This prophecy is spoken to the eunuchs – people who do not have children to survive them for various reasons. This verse inspired the name of the national Israeli Holocaust remembrance institution, Yad Vashem.

What is the name that is given to the person described in the verse? How can the "name" serve as a replacement for having children? (It is recommended that a few minutes be dedicated to an in-depth

study of the verse.) A discussion may be held about how we can commemorate someone who has passed away. Are the students familiar with various ways of commemorating someone? What is the purpose of all of these memorials?

It is possible to show the students a slideshow presentation depicting various ways to commemorate someone (the cover of a Torah scroll, donating books or items, erecting a monument, a volunteer organization in memory of someone who has passed away, names of streets or institutions, etc.).

Play/read the Hebrew poem "Each of Us Has a Name" by Zelda and project the song on the board.

English translation:

Each of Us Has a Name

Zelda

A) Each of us has a name
given by God
and given by our parents
Each of us has a name
given by our stature and our smile
and given by what we wear

B) Each of us has a name
given by the mountains
and given by our walls
Each of us has a name
given by the stars
and given by our neighbors

A) Each of us has a name
given by our sins
and given by our longing
Each of us has a name
given by our enemies
and given by our love

B) Each of us has a name
given by our celebrations
and given by our work
Each of us has a name
given by the seasons
and given by our blindness

A) Each of us has a name
given by the sea
and given by
our death.

Part A: Let the students react freely to the poem.

Part B: Ask the students if they thought of any questions while reading the poem, or if anything is unclear to them. The teacher will answer and discuss the questions.

Divide the class into groups.

Each group will discuss how the words of the song connect to the Holocaust and then write down the ideas that are raised by the group.

The group will discuss the meaning of the names of students in the group (why is each person called by their specific name? Who gave them their names, etc.). Notice the different names that each person has.

Over time, this poem has become associated with the Holocaust and it is often played on this day and at various ceremonies. What do the different names of the person in the poem represent?

Every person is made up of different facets and aspects, which Zelda described using the various different names in the poem. To connect to the familiarity exercise we did – Knowing a person is not just about knowing his name or job. A person's memory, leaving his "name" in the world, can serve as his perpetuation in the world, and can even be a replacement for leaving behind children or relatives.

It is recommended that the poem be compared to the following Midrash:

"את מוצא שלשה שמות נקראו לו לאדם :

אחד מה שקוראים לו אביו ואמו ,

ואחד מה שקוראין לו בני אדם ,

ואחד מה שקונה הוא לעצמו .

טוב מכולן מה שקונה הוא לעצמו .

.....

זה שאמר הכתוב: **טוב שם משמן טוב ויום המות מיום הולדו** (קהלת ז א)

אמרו לשלמה: מה טוב שם משמן טוב ?

אמר להם: בשעה שאדם נולד, אין הכל יודעין מי הוא. נפטר בשם טוב, משפיע מעשים טובים, באין ישראל מטפלין

עמו, עושין עמו גמילות חסד. מכריזין שבחו ואומרים: פלוני זה, כמה צדקות, כמה תורה, כמה מצות עשה, משכבו

תהא עם הצדיקים"

(מדרש תנחומא פרשת ויקהל סימן א)

Translation of the Midrash:

"A person is called by three names:

One is the name that his father and mother call him,

One is the name that people call him,

One is the name he acquires for himself.

And the best of all of these is the one he acquires for himself.

...

*The verse says: **A name is better than good oil, and the day of death than the day of one's birth** (Kohelet 7:1).*

They said to Shlomo: How is a name better than good oil?

He said to them: When a person is born, not everyone knows who he is. When he dies with a good name and good deeds, people come and take care of him, and do acts of kindness for him. They announce his praise and say: This person – what a righteous person he was, how much Torah he learned, how many mitzvot he performed! May he rest with the righteous.”

(Midrash Tanchuma Parashat Vayakhel Section A)

Learning about a person who perished in the Holocaust

Divide the class into groups; each group will present the person in a creative way. The teacher can bring newspapers and pictures or various materials for the students to use in order to present the person or create a “photo album” of the person, an item/sculpture that represents the person, etc.

The teacher will summarize – Knowing the many names of a person, meaning the person’s entire character as a whole, preserves his memory. In this way, we continue the life that the person lived. The teacher can show a film clip in which a Holocaust survivor says that living in Israel, and the family that he raised, are the greatest victory of all over the Nazis.

Conclusion of the lesson –

The Holocaust was a terrible atrocity that happened to the Jewish nation. In the Holocaust, many people were murdered without leaving anyone behind to remember them. We are all responsible for preserving the memories of the victims, because we are one nation and the Holocaust is a national atrocity. By lighting a candle and learning about the life of a person who was killed, we can preserve his memory and in this way, continue his life.

Homework – Every student receives a candle with a name on it (or needs to pick a name on his own from the website). Each student must prepare an information card about the person he received or present the person in a creative way.

Follow-up Activity –

It is recommended to designate a corner of the classroom/school for collecting the candle cups after they have been used, along with the creative presentations that the students made. The corner can be designed in a special way or a sculpture can be made out of the candle cups.

It is recommended that lighting the candle in memory of the specific victim that the student learned about in class will become an ongoing tradition that the student will try to maintain once a year, every year.

Supplies for the lesson –

Balloon

Link to Shem Vaner's film clip

Notes with people + list of characteristics

Verse to be studied

Poem – Each of Us Has a Name

List of Holocaust victims

Candles to distribute + page to fill out