

**“When the people saw the thunder and lightning and
heard the trumpet...”**

Giving of the Torah - Activity Plan for Grade 4

This plan deals with:

Lesson 1 – Shavuot festival of the giving of the Torah!?

Become familiar with the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai, and how Shavuot became the holiday of the giving of the Torah.

Lessons 2-3 The Ten Commandments and our commandments

Become familiar with the Ten Commandments; Creating class commandments.

Lesson 4 - what is Torah?

Learn *midrashim* (ancient commentary) and proverbs on the Torah and giving of the Torah.



The Shavuot Festival and the giving of the Torah

Objectives

- Become familiar with the Bible story on the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai, and *midrashim* connected with it.
- Encourage creative activity in connection with the Bible story.
- Create discussion on the topic of being chosen and convinced when receiving the Torah.
- Explain the connection between the giving of the Torah and the Shavuot holiday.

Course of activity

- Read Exodus 19 and answer the questions.
- Imagine that you are reporters or photographers of a newspaper, and your job is to cover the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai. Write an article or draw a picture describing the events.
- Read the *midrashim* (interpretations) and respond to the questions.
- Read the sections on the connection between the giving of the Torah and the Shavuot holiday.

Exodus Chapter 19

On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. They set out from Refidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain. And Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel. You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel. Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, We will do everything the Lord has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the Lord. The Lord said to Moses, I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you. Then Moses told the Lord what the people had said. And the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes, and be ready by the third day; because on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not approach the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death. They are to be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on them. No person or animal shall be permitted to live. Only when the ram's horn



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sounds a long blast may they approach the mountain. After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes. Then he said to the people, Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations. On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightning and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. The Lord came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the Lord said to him, Go down and warn the people, so they do not force their way through to see the Lord and many of them perish. Even the priests, who approach the Lord, must consecrate themselves, or the Lord will break out against them. Moses said to the Lord, The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy. The Lord replied, "Go down and bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the Lord, or he will break out against them. So Moses went down to the people and told them.

Questions:

- When does the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai take place? What descriptions of time are there in this section?
- What is the 'setting' in which the Ten Commandments are given? What can be seen and heard?
- Why in your opinion are the commandments given in such a way?
- How do the people react? What are the emotions described in the text?
- How, according to the section, should the giving of the Torah be celebrated?

Midrash Tanchuma (Buber) Lech Lecha 6

Resh Laqish said: The proselyte who converts is more beloved than Israel when they stood at Mount Sinai. Why? Because, had they [Israel] not seen the thunder and lightning and the mountains trembling, nor heard the noise of the trumpets, they would not have accepted the Torah. But this < proselyte > who saw none of them came, resigned himself to the Holy One, and took upon himself the Kingdom of Heaven. Is any of you more lovable than this one?

- How does receiving the Torah by someone who was at Mt. Sinai differ from someone who was not?
- How does this source present receiving the Torah?
- What does the *midrash* add to the question of the importance of the 'setting'?



Explain the connection between the giving of the Torah and the Shavuot holiday.

The Biblical Festival of the Harvest

You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath: from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the Lord. You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as first fruits to the Lord.

(Leviticus 23)

You shall count seven weeks: Count off seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give, as the Lord your God blesses you. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there. (Deuteronomy 16)

- When was the Shavuot Festival held? Was a date given? How is the appointed time of the holiday calculated?
- What connection is there between the appointed time of the Shavuot Festival and the date on which the Torah was given?

Our Rabbis taught: The Sages taught: On the sixth day of the month of Sivan, the Ten Commandments were given to the Jewish people. Rabbi Yosei says: On the seventh day of the month.

(Babylonian Talmud)

- According to the Rabbis, when were the Ten Commandments given? Why at that particular time?



According to the Bible, Shavuot is the Festival of the Harvest on which the first fruits of wheat are brought.

- What difficulty arises in celebrating this festival when there is no Temple, and when the Jewish people live in exile and not in the Land of Israel?

When the people do no farming and thus cannot celebrate a harvest festival, then the holiday calls for other content.

Thus, *hazal* find the connection to the giving of the Torah. This, despite the fact that the appointed time is not indicated, and there is no command to celebrate it.

Thus, customs associated with the giving of the Torah develop such as *Tikkun Leil Shavuot* (Service of the Night of Shavuot), reading and study of sections from the Bible, Talmud and Zohar on the night of Shavuot.



The Ten Commandments:

Objectives

- Become familiar with the Ten Commandments.
- Understand the importance of the laws and rules of society.
- Encourage thought on the desired laws for the class.

Course of activity

- a. Reading of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). Identifying the commandments within the text.
- b. Dealing with the questions connected with the Ten Commandments.
- c. Descriptions of situations: take one of the commandments and write a description of a situation / story in which the commandment was important; One in which someone violated it or considered doing so. Collect the stories.
- d. Each student shall think of one commandment that is important in the classroom. Collect the Ten Commandments of the class.
- e. Read the *midrashim* (interpretations) and respond to the questions.

Exodus Chapter 20

1) And God spoke all these words: {S}

2) * I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery: You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. {S}

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. {P}

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. {S}

Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. {S}

You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. {S}

You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. {p}

When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance, and said to Moses, Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning. The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

- Try and identify the Ten Commandments. Number them from 1 to 10.
- How are the commandments formulated, positively or negatively?
- What types of laws are they? Towards whom (G-d, family, society) is each commandment directed?
- What is the most important commandment, in your opinion?

Mishnah Avot Tractate Chapter 6 Mishnah 2

Said Rabbi Joshua the son of Levi...

And the tablets are the work of G-d, and the writing is G-d's writing, engraved on the tablets.

Read not "engraved" (charut) but "liberty" (chairut) ---for there is no free individual, except for he who occupies himself with the study of Torah. And whoever occupies himself with the study of Torah is elevated...

- What does the *midrash* say about the Ten Commandments?
- How can laws and commitment to the Torah create liberty?

Kohelet Rabbah (Vilna) Chapter 3

R. Yitzhak said: the people of Israel were worthy of receiving the Torah immediately after leaving Egypt, but G-d said: My sons have not yet reached their radiance. They had just been released from bondage of mortar and bricks; hence, they were not yet fit to receive the Torah. What is this comparable to? It is comparable to a king whose son had just recuperated from an illness, and was told: Your son should go to his school. He said: My son has not yet reached his radiance, and you

say he should go to his school? He should wait another two or three months, with proper nourishment and regain his health, and then go to his school. Thus, G-d said: My sons have not yet reached their radiance. They have just been released from bondage of mortar and bricks, and I should give them the Torah already? Let them be nourished for two to three months with manna and quail, and then I will give them the Torah.

- Why, according to the *midrash*, was the Torah not given immediately after the Israel's exodus from Egypt?
- According to the *midrash*, who is the king? Who is the son of the king? And what is the school?



What is Torah?

Course of activity:

Each student / group of students shall receive a paragraph with questions. Each student / group shall answer the questions.

Each student / group shall present the main message of the paragraph they received to the rest of the class, either verbally, graphically (drawing) or dramatically.

Assembly (*Atzeret*)

Why is the Shavuot holiday called Assembly?

Since the Torah was given it stops a person from taking a wrong path, and endows him with life in the hereafter.

R. Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev

- a. Where does the connection between the Shavuot festival and the giving of the Torah find expression?
- b. According to this section, what is the role of the Torah?
- c. How does the Torah prevent a person from taking an wrong path? What aspect of the Torah does the section emphasize?

Giving of the Torah and Receiving the Torah

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk used to say:

The Shavuot holiday is called “the season of the giving of our Torah”, since the Torah was given equally to all of Israel.

As opposed to this, the Torah is not distributed equally among all people of Israel: Rather, each individual receives the Torah according to his worth and comprehension.

- a. What is the difference between the giving of the Torah and receiving the Torah?
- b. What does according to his worth and comprehension mean? Why do people differ in their ability to “comprehend” the Torah?
Perhaps this has to do with differences in age, qualifications, desire, and study?
- c. Give an example from everyday life, of different comprehension of something studied.



- d. If comprehension means understanding, what other interpretation can we give to the statement that each person receives the Torah according to his comprehension, and not according to wisdom or ability?

Where was the Torah given

Why was the Torah not given in the Land of Israel? In order not to sow dispute between the tribes, one saying the Torah was given in my territory; hence, it was given in no man's land.

- What is no man's land?
- Why was the Torah given in the desert and not in the Land of Israel?
- What is the importance of the place in which the Torah was given?
- What characteristic of the Torah does the section emphasize? To whom does it belong?

Torah like fire and water

The Torah has been compared with fire and with water. Just as they are for free, so the Torah is for free.

No person can keep the Torah just for himself or his family; rather, it must be spread among all men, and anyone may have the opportunity to learn.

- How is the Torah likened to fire and water?
- What should be done with the Torah?
- Why should a person not keep the knowledge to himself?
- What aspect of the Torah does the section emphasize? To whom does it belong?

Passover and Shavuot

"...The Shavuot holiday is a kind of end to the Passover holiday, as the harvest and first fruits constitute an end to seeds, growth and blossoming.

The 'season of our freedom' is linked to the time of the giving of our Torah, to inform you: there is no freedom without Torah... Freedom without laws of life, without Torah of life, is nothing more than rebelliousness, lawlessness and anarchy, which no society or nation can abide. ..."

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- What is the connection between Pesach and Shavuot similar to? Why does the writer use this imagery?
- Which value is central to Passover? Which to Shavuot?
- What happens when there is liberty-freedom without laws? Try and think of examples from everyday life, for a situation in which there are no laws, but rather disorder and anarchy (and irresponsible things are done).
- What is the connection between liberty and Torah?

Torah and Merchandise – A Folk Legend

This is the story of a sage who traveled by ship, on which there were merchants with their merchandise. Over the course of the journey, the merchants would discuss their matters and show each other their merchandise. The sage would sit on the side in silence. The merchants asked him:

Where is your merchandise?

And He said: It is with me.

The merchants searched the entire ship but could not find his merchandise. They began mocking the sage, whose merchandise could not be seen and did not take up space. And the sage just sat in silence.

While approaching the shore, pirates raided the ship and robbed everything on it. The merchants went ashore destitute and impoverished, like poor men begging. The sage went to the Beit Midrash (place of Torah study) and began speaking words of Torah. The people in the Beit Midrash saw how much knowledge he had, and honored him greatly. Before long, they appointed him as their rabbi. The merchants then realized what merchandise the sage had, that it was not visible nor did it take up space; hence, it could be taken from him.

The merchants approached the sage and told him: Please forgive us for ridiculing you. Now we realize: Your merchandise is better than ours was.

Ours was lost and yours still exists. Ours was taken from us and we have nothing left, whereas you give yours away freely yet you do not lack any of it.

