

BOARD OF JEWISH EDUCATION OF GREATER NEW YORK  
Teachers' Centers

56

PURIM - A LESSON ON JEWISH IDENTITY  
Based on Melton Gimel Curriculum  
Adapted by B. Ross

GOALS:

1. Students will examine their own feelings about their Jewish identity.
2. Students will compare their own feelings with those expressed in the Megilla.

GRADE: 5 and 6

MATERIALS:

1. Copies of chapters 2,3,4, and 7 of the Megilla
2. Student worksheets #1, #2, and #3
3. Group tally sheet for worksheet #1

TIME REQUIRED: 45 minutes

METHOD:

1. Tell students that they are going to begin the study of Purim this year by exploring their own feelings about their Jewish identity before examining those expressed in the Megilla.
2. EITHER:
  - a. Distribute student worksheet #1 and have students answer individually OR
  - b. Divide students into groups of 2 or 3 and answer the questions as a group OR
  - c. Ask the questions on student worksheet #1 ORALLY and have students respond with a show of hands.
3. If you have chosen 2c, you already have a group tally. If you have chosen either 2a or 2b, do a group tally now.
4. NO MORE THAN HALF THE CLASS TIME SHOULD BE SPENT ON THE ABOVE PART OF THE LESSON.
5. Tell students they are now going to examine portions of the Megilla which deal with the issue of Jewish identity.
6. Hand out copies of chapters 2,3,4, and 7, and worksheet #2
7. EITHER:
  - a. Read the text aloud in sections, asking each question at the appropriate point in the story OR
  - b. Read the entire text aloud and ask the questions orally afterwards OR
  - c. Read the entire text aloud and have the students answer on their own afterwards by underlining the answer in their copy of the text and writing the number of the question next to the phrase they have chosen.

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WORKSHEET #1

1. Did you ever see a Jewish youngster on the street wearing a kippah? Did it make you feel embarrassed, proud, or didn't affect you? (Underline one)
  2. Does it matter to you whether or not other people know you're Jewish?
  3. Do you think a person who has never met you before and then spent an afternoon with you would know that you are Jewish? Why or why not?
  4. If a friend came into your house, would there be anything there to let him know you are Jewish? (If yes, what things?)
  5. What would you think of a Jewish parent whose child is going away to summer camp and the parent says: "Don't make a big deal about being Jewish"! I would think that the parent is
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WORKSHEET #2

1. How is Mordecai first introduced?
2. Why didn't anyone besides Mordecai know Esther was Jewish?
3. How many times are the instructions Mordecai gave to Esther about her Jewishness repeated?
4. Whom did Haman decide to destroy?
5. What was Esther's first reaction to Mordecai's sackcloth and mourning?
6. What would Esther have to admit, if she were to follow Mordecai's instructions?
7. Whose safety is Esther most worried about - her own or her people's?
8. What statement of Mordecai's made Esther change her mind and decide to take the chance of speaking to the King unannounced?
9. Whom did Esther ask to fast with her?
10. Quote the phrase from the end of this section that lets us know that Esther was no longer concerned only with her own safety.

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WORKSHEET #3

1. Did you ever hear of anyone or know anyone who wanted to hide his or her Jewishness, as Esther did at first?
2. Why do you think Mordecai and Esther wanted to hide Esther's Jewishness? (No clues in the Megilla - what do you think?)
3. Can you find any sections from the text where Esther's feelings about her Jewishness change?
4. Why do you think they changed?
5. Did anything ever make you want to hide your Jewishness? Can you think of anything which might?
6. Did anything ever make you want to be more Jewish? Can you think of anything which might?