

Adam and Eve had a profound attraction to each other as a result of the fact that they were once one. Two halves who seek to reunite is the essence of life and love, not the desire to know the other but to know one's self, to make for wholeness.

—Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz



Love



Love and Marriage

Beauty: Asset or Liability?

The PJ Library: When I First Held You

Love and Marriage

Talmud Ta'anit 30b

What is Tu B'Av? On the fifteenth of Av the tribes were allowed to marry each other. The generation of the desert stopped dying (in the fortieth year) . . .

Talmud Ta'anit 31a

The Rabbis taught: Whomever was unmarried would go there to select a wife. The Rabbis taught: The prettiest among them would say: "Look for beauty, for a woman is only for beauty." The ones from prominent families would say: "Look to the family, for a woman is only for children." The plainest among them would say: "Let your agreement to marry be for the sake of heaven, but on the condition that you adorn us in gold."

(Another version says, "...so that you (the suitor) will be adorned in gold.")

Mishnah Ta'anit 4:8

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: "There were no better days for Israel than the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur, when the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in white garments that were borrowed for the occasion, so as not to embarrass those who didn't own one. All the garments required to be purified through ritual immersion, and the daughters of Jerusalem would go out and dance in the vineyards.

"What would they say? 'Young man, lift up your eyes and see what should you select. Do not look at beauty, but look at the family. "Grace is misleading, and beauty is ephemeral, but a woman who fears the Lord, she is to be praised.'"

(Proverbs 31:30)

Mishnah and Talmud Navigator

➤ What is the purpose of everyone being dressed in white and in clothing that was borrowed? What message was being sent to the boys by setting up this encounter in this fashion?

➤ In the Mishnah, what value is most important? Does this change with the Talmud's commentary?

➤ Why is beauty acknowledged as a value in the Talmud? Doesn't the Mishnah itself quote Proverbs as saying that "beauty is ephemeral"?

➤ Which is more idealistic and why, the Mishnah or the Talmud?

➤ Does the Talmud give a flattering portrayal of what happened on Tu B'Av, or a more realistic portrayal?

➤ If you were a maiden in the vineyard how might you fill in the blank, "a woman who ___ she is to be praised," and why?

Love and Marriage

Everything about Debralee Lorenzana is hot. Even her name sizzles. At five-foot-six and 125 pounds, with soft eyes and flawless bronze skin, she is J.Lo curves meets Jessica Simpson bust meets Audrey Hepburn elegance—a head-turning beauty. In many ways, the story of her life has been about getting attention from the unwanted kind. But when she got fired last summer from her job as a banker at a Citibank branch in Midtown—her bosses cited her work performance—she got even hotter. She sued Citigroup, claiming that she was fired solely because her bosses thought she was too hot. This is the way Debbie Lorenzana tells it: Her bosses told her they couldn't concentrate on their work because her appearance was too distracting. They ordered her to start wearing turtlenecks. She was also forbidden to wear pencil skirts, three-inch heels, or fitted business suits. Lorenzana, a 33-year-old single mom, pointed out female colleagues whose clothing was far more revealing than hers: **"They said their body shapes were different from mine, and I drew too much attention," she says. (Elizabeth Dwoskin, "Is This Woman Too Hot to Be a Banker?" The Village Voice, June 6, 2010).**

Talmud Yevamot 62b

Rabbi Tanchum said in the name of Rabbi Hanila'i: Any man without a woman is without joy, without blessing, and without goodness. Without joy, as it is written: "And you shall be joyful with your household" (Deuteronomy 16:11). Without blessing as it is written: "...That a blessing may reside in your household" (Ezekiel 44:30). Without goodness, as it is written: "It is not good for Adam to be alone" (Genesis 2:18).

Kiddushin 2b

Why does it say in the Torah, "When a man takes a wife," instead of "a wife taking a man"? It is the way of man to seek a woman, and not the way of woman to seek a man. Just as when a person loses something, who seeks whom? It is the one who lost the missing object who seeks it [and not the other way around].

Genesis 2:21-24

So the Lord cast a deep sleep upon the man, and while he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that spot. And the Lord God fashioned the rib that He had taken from the man into a woman; and He brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called Woman, for from man she was taken."

Torah and Talmud Navigator

- At the center of the page we have a Biblical account of the creation of the first woman—Eve. What was God's motivation to create her?
- Why does the Talmudic passage from Yevamot (left-hand column) see household as synonymous with a wife?
 - How does this passage connect with the Biblical verses that recount the creation of Eve?
 - The last Talmudic passage gives an explanation for why men usually pursue women and not the other way around. What has the man lost that he is trying to retrieve? (Hint: Look at the Biblical passage.)
 - What accounts for the major differences between the Talmudic account of courtship and the way it happens today? What hasn't changed in two thousand years?

Love and Marriage

Hebrew Sources

אמר רבן שמעון בן גמליאל: לא היו ימים טובים לישראל כחמשה עשר באב וכיום הכפורים, שבהן בנות ירושלים יוצאות בכלי לבן שאולין שלא לבייש את מי שאין לו. כל הכלים טעונין טבילה. ובנות ירושלים יוצאות וחולות בכרמים. ומה היו אומרות: בחור, שא נא עיניך וראה, מה אתה בורר לך אל תתן עיניך בנוי, תן עיניך במשפחה, "שקר החן והבל היפי אשה יראת ה' היא תתהלל" (משלי לא, ל).

משנה, תענית ד,ח

חמשה עשר באב מאי היא [מה הוא], מה השמחה שביום זה? אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: זהו יום שהותרו שבטים לבוא זה בזה... אמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר ר' יוחנן: חמישה עשר באב הוא יום חג, מפני שהוא יום שכלו בו מתי מדבר, שלא מתו עוד ישראל במדבר, שכבר כלה כל דור יוצאי מצרים.

תלמוד בבלי, תענית ל,ב מהדורת שטיינזלץ

תנא [שנה החכם]: מי שאין לו אשה, נפנה לשם לבחור לו שם אשה. תנו רבנן [שנו חכמים]: יפיפיות שבהן מה היו אומרות: תנו עיניכם ליופי, שאין האשה אלא ליופי. מיוחסות שבהן מה היו אומרות: תנו עיניכם למשפחה, לפי שאין האשה אלא לבנים ויהיו הבנים מיוחסים ונוטים לדרך הוריהם. מכוערות שבהם מה היו אומרות: קחו מקחכם לשום (לשם) שמים, ובלבד שתעטרונן בזהובים אחר הנישואים, ואז נתייפה. (גירסה אחרת: בשביל שתעטרונן בזהובים).

תלמוד בבלי, תענית לא,א מהדורת שטיינזלץ

וַיִּפֹּל ה' אֱלֹקִים תַּרְדֵּמָה עַל הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן. וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת מִצְלָעָתוֹ וַיִּסְגָּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָה. וַיִּבֶן ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הַצֶּלַע אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מִן הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה, וַיִּבְרָא אֶל הָאָדָם. וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם: זֹאת הַפֶּעַם עִצָּם מֵעַצְמִי וַיִּבְשָׂר מִבְּשָׂרִי, לְזֹאת יִקְרָא 'אִשָּׁה' כִּי מֵאִישׁ לָקַחָה זֹאת. עַל כֵּן יִעֲזָב אִישׁ אֶת אָבִיו וְאֶת אִמּוֹ, וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד.

בראשית ב, כא-כד

אמר ר' תנחום אמר ר' חנינאי: כל אדם שאין לו אשה שרוי בלא שמחה, בלא ברכה, בלא טובה. ומביא ראיות לדבריו: בלא שמחה דקתיב [שנאמר]: "וְשִׂמְחַתְּ אֶתְּהָ וּבִיטָדָה", משמע שהשמחה היא כאשר מצויים איש וביתו=אשתו. בלא ברכה דקתיב [שנאמר]: "לְהַנִּיחַ בְּרָכָה אֶל בִּיטָדָה", שהברכה באה על הבית=האשה. בלא טובה דקתיב [שנאמר]: "לֹא טוֹב הָיְתָה הָאָדָם לְבַדָּה", משמע שטובה היא לו לאדם עם אשתו.

תלמוד בבלי, יבמות סב,ב מהדורת שטיינזלץ

ר' שמעון אומר: מפני מה אמרה תורה "כי יקח איש אשה" (דברים כב, יג) ולא כתב "כי תלקח אשה לאיש"? מפני שדרכו של איש לחזור על (לחפש אחר) אשה ואין דרכה של אשה לחזור על איש. וטעמו של דבר: משל לאדם שאבדה לו אבדה מי חוזר על מי? הרי בעל אבדה מחזר על אבדתו ולא להיפך.

קידושין ב,ב מהדורת שטיינזלץ

Beauty: Asset or Liability

Talmud Gittin 58a

Our Rabbis have taught: Rabbi Joshua bar Hanania once happened to go to the great city of Rome, and he was told there that there was in the prison a child with beautiful eyes and face and curly locks. He went and stood at the doorway of the prison and said, as if to himself, "Who gave Jacob for a spoil and Israel to the robbers?" (Isaiah 42:24). The child answered, "...Is it not the Lord, He against whom we have sinned and in whose ways they would not walk, neither were they obedient unto his law" (Ibid). Rabbi Joshua said: "I feel sure that this one will be a teacher in Israel. I swear that I will not budge from here before I pay his ransom, whatever price may be demanded." It is reported that he did not leave the spot before he had ransomed him at a high figure, nor did many days pass before he became a teacher in Israel. Who was he?—He was Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha.

Ta'anit and Gittin Navigator

- The center column tells a story of beauty inhibiting scholarship, while the left-hand column tells a story of beauty indicating something special about the child. Both are told by the same person. How would he reconcile these two perspectives without contradicting himself?
- How would Rabbi Joshua bar Hanania respond to the *Village Voice* article?

Ta'anit 7a-b

The daughter of the Roman Emperor once addressed Rabbi Joshua bar Hanania, "Such glorious Wisdom in such an ugly vessel." He replied, "Does not your father keep wine in an earthenware vessel?" She asked, "Where else should he keep it?" He said to her, "You who are nobles should keep it in vessels of gold and silver." Thereupon she went and told this to her father and he had the wine put into vessels of gold and silver and it soon turned sour. When he was informed of this he asked his daughter, "Who gave you this advice?" She replied, "Rabbi Joshua bar Hanania."—Immediately, the Emperor had him [Rabbi Joshua] summoned before him and asked him, "Why did you give her such advice?" He replied, "I answered her according to the way that she spoke to me." But are there not good-looking people who are learned?—If these very people were ugly they would be still more learned.

Nedarim 66a

Once there was a man who made a vow not to glean benefit from his orphaned niece [because he did not wish to marry her]. Rabbi Yishmael took her in, and made her beautiful. Rabbi Yishmael said to her uncle, "My son, is this the one whom you vowed not to marry?" He answered, "No." Rabbi Yishmael immediately nullified the vow. He declared at that moment, "The daughters of Israel are lovely. It is only their poverty that makes them look so unseemly."

When Rabbi Yishmael died, the daughters of Israel lamented him, saying: "The daughters of Israel are crying because of Rabbi Yishmael." The same was said of King Saul: The daughters of Israel are crying because

of Saul. [Because he also saw to the needs of the daughters of Israel.]

Nedarim Navigator

- What is Rabbi Yishmael's claim here? According to him, are all daughters of Israel lovely?
- Why is Rabbi Yishmael the protector of orphaned girls?
- How would he define beauty?

Beauty: Asset or Liability

Hebrew Sources

אמרה ליה ברתיה [אמרה לו בתו] של הקיסר הרומי לר' יהושע בן חנניה כשהיה ברומי: אי [אוי] לחכמה מפוארה כשלך שהיא מונחת בכלי מכוער! שרבי יהושע אף שהיה חכם גדול, לא היה יפה מראה. אמר לה כאילו שלא מן העניין: אביך רמי חמרא במני דפחרא [אביך שם יין בכלי חרס]? אמרה ליה [לו]: אלא במאי נירמי [במה נשים]? אמר לה: אתון דחשביתו, רמו במאני דהבא וכספא [אתם שאתם חשובים, שימו אותם בכלי זהב וכסף]. אזלה ואמרה ליה לאבוה רמיא לחמרא במני דהבא וכספא, ותקיף [הלכה ואמרה לו לאביה לעשות כן ושמו את היין בכלי זהב וכסף, והחמיץ]. אתו ואמרו ליה [באו ואמרו לו] לקיסר שהחמיץ היין. אמר לה לברתיה [לבתו]: מאן [מי] אמר לך הכי [לעשות כן], מי יעץ לך עצה זו? אמרה ליה [לו]: ר' יהושע בן חנניה. קרוהו [קראו לו] לבוא. אמר ליה [לו] הקיסר: אמאי [מדוע] אמרת לה הכי [כך]? אמר ליה [לו]: כי היכי [כפי] שאמרה לי כך אמרי [אמרתני] לה, להוכיח שדברים משובחים אין משתמרים אלא בכלי פחות. אמר לו: והא איכא שפירי דגמירי [והרי יש אנשים יפים שלמדו] ומלאים חכמה! ענה לו: אי הוּו סנו [אילו היו מכווערים] טפי הוּו גמירי [יותר היו לומדים].

תענית ז,א-ב מהדורת שטיינזלץ

תנו רבנן [שנו חכמים]: מעשה בר' יהושע בן חנניה שהלך לכרך גדול שבְרומי, אמרו לו: תינוק (ילד) אחד יש בבית האסורים, והוא יפה עינים וטוב רואי וקווצותיו סדורות לו תלתלים. הלך ועמד על פתח בית האסורים, אמר כאילו לעצמו: "מי נתן למשפחה יעקב וישְרָאֵל לבוֹזִים" (ישעיה מ"ב, כד)? ענה אותו תינוק ואמר את המשך הכתוב: "הלא ה' זו חטאנו לו ולא אבו בְדַרְכֵי הַלֹּךְ ולא שמעו בְתוֹרָתוֹ" (ישעיה מ"ב, כד). אמר ר' יהושע: מוֹבְטַחְנִי בו שיהיה מוֹרָה הוֹרָאָה בְיִשְׂרָאֵל אם יתנו לו את ההזדמנות לכך, שהרי כבר עתה הוא חכם כל כך. ונשבע: הַעֲבֹדָה (בעבודת המקדש)! שְׂאִינִי זֶז מִכָּאֵן עַד שְׂאֲפָדְנוּ בְּכָל מָמוֹן שְׂפוֹסְקִין (שקובעים) עָלֵינוּ. אָמְרוּ: לֹא זֶז מִשָּׁם עַד שְׂפָדְאוּ בְּמָמוֹן הַרְבֵּה, וְאִכּוּ, לֹא הָיוּ יָמִים מוֹעֲטִין עַד שֶׁהוֹרָה הוֹרָאָה בְיִשְׂרָאֵל. וּמָנוּ [ומי הוא זה]? ר' יִשְׁמַעֵאל בֶּן אֱלִישֶׁע.

גיטין, נח,א מהדורת שטיינזלץ

מעשה באחד שְנִדָּר מִבֵּית אָחוֹתוֹ הַנְּיִיָה (הנאה) ולא רצה לשאתה, וְהִכְנִיסוּהָ לְבֵית ר' יִשְׁמַעֵאל וַיִּיפּוּהָ. ולאחר מכן הביאווה לפניו, אמר לו ר' יִשְׁמַעֵאל: בְּנִי, מִזוּ נִדְרָתְךָ? אָמַר לוֹ: לֹא [לא], וְהִתְיַדָּה ר' יִשְׁמַעֵאל, שראה בזה נדר טעות. בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה בָּכָה ר' יִשְׁמַעֵאל וְאָמַר: בְּנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל נְאוֹת הֵן, אֵלָּא שֶׁהַעֲנִיּוֹת מְנוּלָתָן (מכערת אותן). וְכִשְׁמַת ר' יִשְׁמַעֵאל הָיוּ בְּנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל נוֹשְׂאוֹת קִינָה, וְאוֹמְרוֹת: "בְּנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל ר' יִשְׁמַעֵאל בְּכִינָה", וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר בְּשֹׂאוֹל שֶׁגַם הוּא דָאָג לְבְנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל: "בְּנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל שֹׂאוֹל בְּכִינָה הַמְּלִבִישְׁכֶם שְׁנֵי עִם עֵדָנִים הַמְּעַלָּה עֲדֵי זֶהב עַל לְבוּשְׁכֶךָ" (שמואל ב א, כד).

נדרים טו,א מהדורת שטיינזלץ

תנו רבנן [שנו חכמים]: כיצד מְרַקְדִין לְפָנֵי הַפֶּלֶה, מה אומרים לפניו בזמן הריקוד? בֵּית שְׁמַאי אוֹמְרִים: פֶּלֶה כְּמוֹת שֶׁהָיָא. כלומר, משבחים את הכלה לפי מעלותיה. וּבֵית הַלֵּל אוֹמְרִים: לְכַבּוּדָה שֶׁל כָּל כְּלָה שְׂרִים: "פֶּלֶה נְאֻה וְחִסּוּדָה". אָמְרוּ לָהֶן בֵּית שְׁמַאי לְבֵית הַלֵּל: הֲרִי שֶׁהִיָּתָה הַכְּלָה חִיגְרָת אוֹ סוּמָא (עוורת), אוֹמְרִים לָהּ: "פֶּלֶה נְאֻה וְחִסּוּדָה"? וְהֲרִי הַתּוֹרָה אָמְרָה: "מְדַבֵּר שֶׁקָּר תִּרְחֶק" (שמות כג, ז)! אָמְרוּ לָהֶם בֵּית הַלֵּל לְבֵית שְׁמַאי: לְדַבְּרֵיכֶם, מִי שֶׁלֶקַח (קנה) מִקַּח רַע מִן הַשּׁוּק, הָאִם אָדָם אַחַר הָרוּאָה אוֹתוֹ לְאַחַר שֶׁקָּנָה יִשְׁבְּחֶנּוּ בְּעֵינָיו אוֹ יִגְנְנוּ בְּעֵינָיו? הֲנִי אוֹמֵר יִשְׁבְּחֶנּוּ בְּעֵינָיו וְלֹא יִגְרוּם לוֹ עוֹגְמַת נַפֶּשׁ. מִכָּאֵן אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים: לְעוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה דַעְתוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם מְעוֹרְבָת עִם הַבְּרִיּוֹת, וַיִּנְהַג עִמָּם בְּנִימוּס. וְאִף כֵּאֵן, כִּיּוֹן שֶׁבָחָר בְּכָלָה זוֹ, מִשְׁבַּחִים אוֹתָהּ שֶׁהִיא נְאֻה וְחִסּוּדָה.

כתובות טז,ב-יז,א מהדורת שטיינזלץ

Beauty: Asset or Liability

Hebrew Sources

ועוד אמרו בפ"ב דכתובות (ז"ז, ב'): תנו רבנן: כיצד מרקדין לפני הכלה? בית שמאי אומרים: כלה כמות שהיא, בית הלל אומרים: כלה נאה וחסודה. אמר להם בית שמאי לבית הלל: הרי שהיתה חיגרת או סומא אומרים לה כלה נאה וחסודה? והרי התורה אמרה מדבר שקר תרחק! אמרו להם ב"ה לב"ש: לדבריכם מי שלקח מקח רע מן השוק ישבחנו בעיניו או יגננו בעיניו? הוי אומר ישבחנו בעיניו, כאן אמרו חכמים לעולם תהא דעתו של אדם מעורבת עם הבריות. כי אתא רב דימי אמר: הכי משרו קמי כלתא במערבא: לא כחל ולא שרק ולא פירכוס ויעלת חן. פ"י: כי אין נקרא זה דבר שקר, אע"ג שהכלה בעצמה אינה נאה וחסודה, מכל מקום כלפי הבעל שבחר בה היא חסודה בעיניו. ואנו אין באין לשבח אותה מצד עצמה רק מצד שנמצא דבר בכלה זאת שהיא חסודה, שהרי החתן נשאה והיא מצאה חן בעיניו. וזה שאמר: מי שלקח מקח מן השוק ישבחנו או יגננו בעיניו, כלו', שאין ראוי שיגננו אחר שלקח המקח הרי ה' נאה בעיניו, וכן גבי כלה אין אנו רוצים לשבח הכלה מצד עצמה, רק כאשר הוא מצד החתן, אע"ג שהאמת היא שהכלה אינה נאה מכל מקום מצד החתן היא נאה. אבל במערבא היו אומרים: לא כחל ולא שרק ויעלת חן, דבר זה יותר ראוי לאומרו, שהרי באמת היא מעלת חן בעיני החתן ואין כאן מדבר שקר תרחק כי החן הוא אצל החתן שנשאה. וזה שאמר הכתוב: מדבר שקר תרחק, כי יש להרחיק השקר בכל מה שאפשר, כי אין לומר דבר שהוא שקר גמור רק כמו זה כלה נאה וחסודה, שהיא נושאת חן בעיני הרואה, או בלא כחל ובלא שרק ויעלת חן והחן הוא אל הרואה, כדכתיב (אסתר ב') ותהי אסתר נושאת חן בעיני כל רואיה, אע"ג שאינו ודאי כך אל הכל, סוף סוף הרי הכלה מצאה חן בעיני הרואה הוא החתן לכך אין זה שקר, וזה מבוואר.

מהר"ל, נתיבות עולם נתיב האמת פרק א

Beauty: Asset or Liability

Rabbi Yehuda Leib of Prague on Ketubot 16b–17a

What Beit Hillel said is not considered untrue; even though the bride is not objectively beautiful, but in the eyes of the groom who chose her, she certainly is, and our praise is not an objective appraisal, but rather to acknowledge that her groom has found her worthy. After all, the groom has chosen to marry her, and she has found favor in his eyes. Therefore, it is written that: When a person makes a bad deal in the marketplace should you praise his purchase to him or should you disparage it? This means that it is not sensible to disparage his purchase after the

fact. He likes what he bought. It is thus with the bride as well; we come not to praise her in the objective sense, but we come to honor the choice the groom has made because he thinks she is lovely.

But what they say in the West: “No powder and no paint and no waving [of the hair], and still she ascends in grace.” This is more appropriate because in actuality she ascends in grace before the groom, and there is no deceit at all. For the grace is perceived by the one who is marrying her. This is why the verse states that one should stay far away from deceit—as far away as possible. One should not utter something entirely untrue. For grace is always in the eye of the beholder, as it is written about Queen Esther: “And all who saw Esther found her to be graceful.” Certainly not everyone held this opinion, but in the end, one found grace in her, and that was her groom, King Ahaseueras. This is why it is not considered to be a lie. And this should be clear to all.

Ketubot 16b–17a

The Sages taught: How does one dance before the bride? Beit Shammai said: “One describes her as she is.” Beit Hillel says: “One calls her a bride who is lovely and pious.” Beit Shammai countered: “What if she were lame or blind? Would you call her a lovely and pious bride? Does not the Torah say: ‘Stay far away from deceit?’” (Exodus 23)

Beit Hillel answered: “According to you, when a person makes a bad deal in the marketplace, should you praise his purchase to him or should you disparage it? I would say that you should praise it.” Therefore, the Sages said: Always should the disposition of a person be pleasant with people. — When R. Dimi came, he said: Thus they sing before the bride in the West: “No powder and no paint and no waving [of the hair], and still she ascends in grace.”

Ketubot Navigator

- Do both opinions agree that beauty is objective?
- How do you understand Beit Hillel’s perspective?
- Why do you think Beit Shammai wishes to give an objective appraisal?
- What is the value of saying something nice if everyone can see it is not true?



Lullaby Books and Music

When I First Held You
Mirik Snir

Before You Were Born
retold by Howard Schwartz

Sunrise, Sunset
Sheldon Harnick

Age Appropriate:
New parents with babies



Class Length:
45 minutes

Look Closely and Select a Book

WHY THESE BOOKS WERE SELECTED

- All books that can help connect evening and naptime rituals to Jewish life
- The language and rhythm patterns of these books make them ideal for bedtime and naptime reading



This book-based Program curriculum was developed by The PJ Library.

The **L-I-S-T-E-N** rubric was initially developed by Ina S.G. Regosin, Director, Hebrew College, Early Childhood Institute, with input from Rachel Raz and Sherry Grossman.

Program submitted by Iris Koller, Syracuse, NY:
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Identify Big Ideas

VALUES TO HIGHLIGHT

1. Expressing unconditional love
2. Bringing comfort
3. Expressing gratitude
4. *L'dor v'dor*: passing rituals and Jewish life from generation to generation

GOALS OF PROGRAM

1. Bring to life the values above.
2. Send families home with the knowledge and tools to continue to live these values as part of daily life.
3. Bedtime and even morning can be hard times for new parents and for little ones. Rituals help to form a pattern for our lives, which provides comfort.
4. There is so much love between parent and child; rituals help to allow time to share that caring; the words of lullabies and bedtime books help to provide words of this universal story of the gift of our children.
5. Foster relationships and build community between the moms/dads in attendance.

NOTE: *Keep the pace of this program slow, allowing time for moms/dads to talk and connect.*

Lullaby Books and Music

SETTING

- A lounge-type room with chairs and couches and a rug where moms/dads will feel comfortable having their babies on the floor
- A table/project workspace
- Have some toddler toys available for older siblings who might come along

Set the Scene

General Materials Needed

- Sign-in sheets
- PJ sign-up forms for new families
- Name tags and black permanent markers
- Song sheets/parent handouts
- Any take-home handouts for parents (websites, articles, etc.)

{ Introductory Activity }

Opening Discussion



LEADER INTRODUCTION

Welcome all participants and invite them to introduce themselves and to share a bit about their family—where they live, how old their baby is, etc. Let them know you understand that babies do not always stay calm and quiet. They should feel free to move, get up and walk, get down on the floor with their little one, change/feed them, etc.

Ask parents if they have sought advice since their baby was born, and if so, where have they found valuable advice and what they have learned. Share that you have found that often the most valuable advice has come in parent to parent conversations, if that is not mentioned.

Let them know that today the group will have a chance to discuss and seek advice from each other about snuggling, nap and bedtimes, and much more. First you'd like to share one (or two, if you wish) Jewish stories that are perfect for bedtime reading as well as some Jewish lullabies. Reading and singing are such natural parts of our days and nights with little ones; bringing Jewish books and songs into these times will go a long way to making Judaism a seamless part of the rhythm of your baby's daily life.

Tell the Story

{ Preparation / Props }

NOTE: *If you can, listen to hear if any of the families include adopted babies. The book *Before You Were Born* may be difficult for these families who were not with their child at the moment of birth, so you might not choose to read it in the group.*

LEADER INTRODUCTION

Invite parents to gather their little ones in their laps; siblings are welcome to join in the snuggling as you read. Share the story, using a calm, quiet, soothing tone and pacing. (Practice the story a few times before this session to ensure you get the “rhythm” right.) Following the reading and after a quiet moment where your last words can “hang,” you, and hopefully others, take a calm “ahhhh” breath as they snuggle their little ones a bit tighter.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

If you read *When I First Held You* ask moms/dads to share some of the images that came to their minds when they first held their new child, as they continue to snuggle them now.

If you read *Before You Were Born*, share with the group that this is the retelling of a *midrash* from Jewish tradition. Explain that a *midrash* is a story that scholars developed to, in essence, fill in some of what seems to be missing from the narratives of our tradition. Ask moms/dads if they have any special stories or messages from the Jewish tradition or their own lives that they hope to pass on to their children.



Enhance and extend the Experience

{ Follow-up Activity }

Make a Special Wall Document

LEADER: INTRODUCTION

As the sharing and conversation dies down, share with moms/dads that “rituals and memories you wish to pass on often involve words and objects. Today I want to offer you the opportunity to make something that you can use as part of a bedtime ritual. Sometimes I know that I cannot find the words to express all that I am feeling; perhaps that happens to you as well. In those moments, and perhaps every night as you put your child to sleep, these words will help share what you cannot quite express. Come join me at the table.”

NOTES:

- As moms/dads move to the table, play Kobi’s Lullaby in the background (the song can be found on OyBaby 2 and Rick Recht’s Free to Be the Jew in Me.
- As parents are working, move informally around. Prompt conversations by asking what secret have they found for bedtime or another moment of the day they struggled with; what “secret” are they still seeking—anyone have an idea?



{ Follow-up Activity }

Materials Needed:

- Pre-printed copies of the three quotes (located at the end of the lesson)—copies to be done on high-quality paper, such as parchment or linen
- Washable ink stamp pads large enough to fit a baby’s hand and foot
- Unscented disposable wipes (to clean little hands and feet)
- Fine point markers or gel pens for personalization
- Jewish music CDs, such as *Oy Baby 1* and *2* to play quietly in the background as moms/dads work
- Manila folders so that moms/dads can take their finished work home without it getting bent in their diaper bags!

Directions:

1. Share the three quotes with the group and allow each one to pick the one that they want to hang over their child’s bed.
2. Invite them to use the gel pens or fine markers to personalize as they wish (baby’s name and date of birth; today’s date and a message from parents; words that come from their memories of the feelings and images moms/dads had as they first held their baby).
3. Let moms/dads know they can use the inkpads to add their baby’s hand and/or foot prints (and the wipes to clean them off!).
4. Provide each mom/dad with a manila folder to hold their finished work.
5. Invite them to send you pictures once they have framed and hung their work.

{ Follow-up Activity #2 }**A Story for Dancing and Singing****LEADER'S INTRODUCTION:**

As moms/dads put their folder into their bags, invite them to join you back in the reading area of the room.

"I don't know about you, but many times when I watch my children I can't help but see them when they were younger and imagine what might be in their future. And, then I'd listen to another parent whose child is doing something mine wasn't and I'd begin to question myself and wonder if I was making the right choices or if my child was doing OK. Has that ever happened to you? And it will continue to—as you hear a mom or dad talking about a program their child is enrolled in or the sport the child will soon begin. I can only share with you what I came to learn—I needed to trust myself. I needed to remember all I wanted my child to enjoy, which included the pleasure of free time to read, to dream, to play and to be creative. I also needed to listen to my children to know what they really wanted to do, but to also hold some limits on how much they could do and still have time for them and for me to enjoy life and for us to share in traditions, values, and stories important to us."

Let them know that traditions, and stories, must not always be read; they can be danced and sung. They probably already learned that gentle movement can calm a cranky little one. The soothing voice of mom or dad singing adds to the calming event.

{ Follow-up Activity #2 }**Materials Needed:**

- A recording of the song *Sunrise/Sunset* and/or your comfort in singing without a recording

Directions:

If you have time and babies aren't too restless, consider sitting and reading the story first so that moms/dadas can see the beautiful illustrations; if not, then:

1. Invite moms/dads to dance with their little ones as they just absorb and enjoy the moment and imagine the joys yet to come.
2. Play or sing *Sunrise/Sunset* and, as you also dance around the room, show the beautiful illustrations to the families.
3. As you did with the first story, be sure to allow for a silent pause at the end of the story/song.
4. "Sigh... this has been such a special time; I hate for it to end. Before we go, let's sing our goodbye/*shalom* song." Teach them the song below by singing it once alone and then together.

Shalom Chaverim

*Shalom Chaverim,
Shalom Chaverim
Shalom, shalom
L'hit-ra-ot, L'hit-ra-ot
Shalom, Shalom.*

*Goodbye my friends,
Goodbye my friends,
Goodbye, goodbye
We'll meet again soon,
We'll meet again soon,
Goodbye, Shalom.*

Nurture the Family

Before families leave, let parents know of upcoming events and that you will be sending them some links to articles, upcoming events in the Jewish community, future PJ events, and links to where they might be able to find more Jewish music for little ones.

Remind them to send you photos of the artwork they just finished!

{ Try This at Home }

- If the group wishes, consider compiling contact information for those who attended, especially if they are first-time parents.
- Find an article or two to share from one of the websites below and, having heard some specific areas of concern, consider adding some resources to your next e-blast.
- In addition to all or some of the websites below, consider adding information about local mom's groups, library lapsitter storytimes, Tot Shabbats, etc.

www.jewishfederations.org/page.aspx?id=1073

www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Relationships/Parents_and_Children/Routines_for_Children.shtml

<http://urjbooksandmusic.com/home.php?cat=340>

<http://parenting.ivillage.com/tp/tpsleeper/0,,6r7r,00.html>

Lullaby Books and Music

Before I close my eyes at night and sleep;
Before I drift off to my dreams;
I give thanks for the blessings in my life;
For the people who care for me.

Thank you God for my family;
Thank you God for my friends;
Thank you God for the earth and sea;
Thank you God for the trees and the air I breathe;
Thank you God for me.

Words from the lyrics of Kobi's Lullaby by Rick Recht

The world begins anew with every child.

from the Talmud

The day you came into our lives is the day God decided
that the world could not exist without you.

Adapted from Rabbi Nachman of Breslow