

## The First Gift

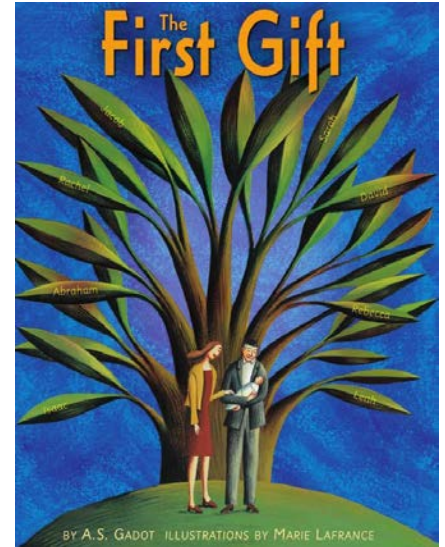
By A.S. Gadot

### Program Focus

Age group: Ages 3-6  
Time frame: 60-90 minutes  
Central value: The importance of names (*Shem Tov*)

### Synopsis

A boy tells about the first gift he ever received -- his name! Named after the legendary King David, little David introduces the concept of names and where they come from and how nicknames evolve. He also introduces names from other cultures and gives facts about Jewish naming customs, all in a picture-book format. The colorful illustrations that easily take us from biblical to present time are a great lead-in for a family discussion about roots and history.



### Goals

- Encourage families to celebrate their names
- Explore how names define us and our roles and responsibilities in life
- Introduce Jewish naming customs and how they can be integrated into diverse families

### Submitted by

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# Plan in advance

## Prepare the Location

Ideally there should be 2 program spaces: a place for families to sit together to listen to the story as well as a place for tables where participants can work on the activities together.

- Arrange chairs or have floor space where families can sit and listen to the story.
- Have tables available for families to sit and work together.
- Have the craft materials listed below placed on each table for the introductory activity and ready for any follow-up activities you are planning to do.

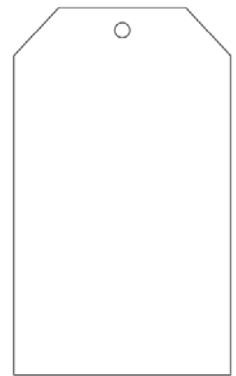
## Collect Hebrew Resources

This book introduces the concept of Hebrew names. If you plan to do an activity that uses Hebrew, you should have the following resources:

- At least one person who knows Hebrew letters and sounds
- Copies of the attached Hebrew Chart for each family or charts from these on line sources:  
<http://www.torah tots.com/alefbet/nekudot/allabouthebrew.htm>  
[http://www.akhlah.com/aleph\\_bet/aleph\\_bet\\_chart.pdf](http://www.akhlah.com/aleph_bet/aleph_bet_chart.pdf)
- A Hebrew name list
  - “Baby Name Meanings” from www.Parents.com
  - *The New Jewish Baby Book: Names, Ceremonies & Customs—A Guide for Today's Families*, 2nd Edition by Anita Diamant (Jewish Lights Publications)

## Prepare Name Tag Activity

- Copies of the gift tag below –size 5” by 7”- on card stock
- Markers and scissors.
- Yarn or ribbon
- Materials for decoration like sequins, foam cut outs, glitter, etc.



## Prepare Hebrew Bracelets

### Materials

- Wooden beads large enough to write a letter on (available at craft and Dollar stores) or use purchased Hebrew letter beads, available on line at <http://www.judaism.com>
- Pony or other decorative beads for interspersing
- Elastic string
- Permanent, thin tipped markers

## Prepare Name Book

### Materials

- 5 sheets of colored copy paper
- Stapler
- Scissors
- Marking pens

## Prepare Family Name Tree

### Materials

- Twigs with many branches (families can be told in advance to bring one or you can have a selection available)
- Green construction paper or artificial leaves
- Scissors
- Whole punch
- Yarn
- Plastic or styrofoam cup
- Play dough or other modeling clay



## Prepare Animal Name Activity

### Materials

- A strip of around 8 to 10 small address labels per family (30 to a page size)
- Plain paper-one sheet per family
- Markers

# Introduce with an activity

## Make Name Tags

### Directions

1. Invite families to introduce themselves by sharing their first name and any nicknames they have.
2. Allow a few minutes then instruct the group that they will be making gift tags with their names on them to wear during the story.
3. Give each participant a blank gift tag and a piece of string or yarn long enough to hang tag around their neck.
4. Pass out markers, scissors, decorative materials, and glue (if decorating)
5. Have each participant write his/her given name in large letters on the tag and all the other names and nicknames they are called around it or on the back of the card.
6. Decorate around the names, if desired.
7. Punch whole in the tab end and thread yarn/string through the whole.
8. Suggest that participants wear their tags around their necks for the story reading.



## Introduce the Story

### Introduction

*The story we will be reading today is about names. Everyone has a name. It is the first gift we receive from our parents. The names we are given plus the names and nicknames we acquire over our lifetime define who we are. One of the first words a child learns is his/her own name. Before we read our story, we are going to make name tags in the shape of big gift tags (for our “first gift”). Let’s begin this activity by learning about our names and how we got them.*

- What is your first name? Middle name?
- Are you named after a special person?
- Do you know the meaning of your name(s)?
- Do you have a nickname?
- Do you have a Hebrew name? What do you know about it? (who you are named after, etc.)
- What else are you called (daughter, son, sweetheart, mom, dad, honey bun, etc.)?
- Anything else about your names you can think of?
- You are only one person. Why do you have many names?

*Our story celebrates how special our names are. As we read we will be learning many things about names... So put on your nametags and let’s begin!*

# Read the story

## Encourage Participation

Read the story. As you come to each name, ask the participants if they have a special name that the indicated person calls them and if so to tell it to the group.

Example: “His mother called him Davey”

Pause and ask: Do you have a special name that your mother calls you?

## Discussion after the Story

*The book tells us about all kinds of names. Children in different countries have different names. Do any of you have a name from another country? The boy, David, in our story, has a Hebrew name. Some of us may have a Hebrew name ourselves. (Look at the nametags for Biblical names like David, Rachel, Sarah, Joshua, Ben, etc. on the nametags and name them). At the back of our book is a section Jewish naming customs. Let me read it to you. (Read the last page.)*

*Some of us may have been given special Hebrew names in addition to their regular name. Does anyone have a special Hebrew name to share?*

Have several copies of Hebrew name books and/or lists available for reference.





# Follow Up activities and resources

## Make Hebrew Bead Bracelets

### Introduction

We have just talked a little about Hebrew names. Did you know that Hebrew is actually a language- the language of the Bible and the language that is spoken in the country of Israel? This language has its own special letters! We are going to make name bracelets using these Hebrew letters.

### Directions

1. Pass out Hebrew letter charts (see attached).
2. Go over the letters and explain that in most cases the sound the letter makes is the same sound that begins its name.
3. Show that Hebrew is written from right to left.
4. We will only be looking for consonants. Hebrew has no vowels. Vowel sounds were added later (David would use the letter sounds D V D).
5. When names and Hebrew spellings have been determined, have parents choose the Hebrew letters they need for their child's name from already lettered beads or help them write each letter on a bead.
6. Cut pieces of elastic string to size for each wrist remembering to provide enough length to tie the bracelet after the beads have been strung.
7. Knot the end of the string and have parents help children string their Hebrew letters with pony beads in between for added decoration if desired. Remember to explain that they will be stringing the names backwards because Hebrew is written from right to left.
8. Alternate Beads can also be made out of clay dough and letters drawn on them with a toothpick before they dry.



## Make a Name Book

Participants will make a simple staggered page “step” book to illustrate all their different names. Names are written on each tab beginning with the given name and continuing with other names they relate to. On each page next to the name, children can draw a picture that tells about it and children and parents together can write a short story about the name and how they got it. The actual book can be made during the program and sent home for adding the names after the first page with the given name is completed.

### Directions

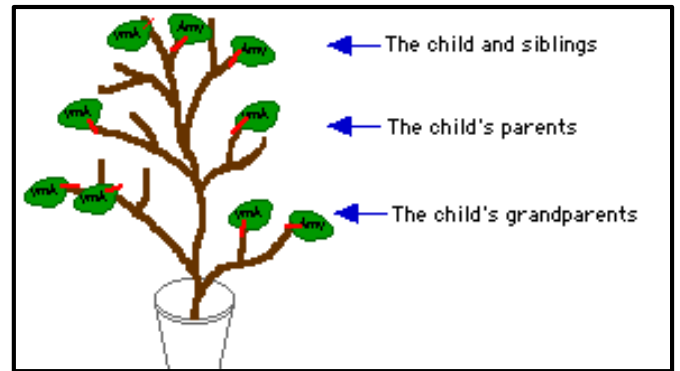
1. Take 5 pieces of paper and lay them out so that each piece of paper is about an inch lower than the one before it.
2. Take all five pages and fold them in the middle of the first page. This gives you a book with pages that stick out like tabs (see illustration above).
3. Staple it together at the crease
4. The tab parts (parts that stick out) should be used to write each name.
5. On the part of the page that is not sticking out, have participants illustrate or write special things about the name on the tab.
6. This book can be constructed during the program and completed at home.



## Make Family Name Tree

### Directions

1. Have each family select a twig with many branches.
2. Put a lump of clay in the bottom of a plastic or Styrofoam cup.
3. Insert the twig securely so that it remains upright.
4. Cut out big leaves from the green construction paper or use artificial leaves. Each leaf will represent a person in the family and should be big enough to write that person's name on the leaf. Cut enough leaves for each of the child's siblings, parents, and grandparents (or more!).
5. Write the name of each person on a leaf. You might want to include the relative's relationship to the child, like "Grandma Joan Stein."
6. Punch a hole on the end of each leaf. Tie the leaves to the tree.
7. The youngest generation goes at the top of the tree, the parents at the second level, and the grandparents at the bottom.
8. \*For an alternative project, use photos, and paste them on the leaves. Or use cutouts of fruit (like apples), and/or flowers to represent the people.



## Animals and their Names Activity

### Introduction

*In the Torah, we learn that when God created the world, God gave humans the responsibility to take care of the world and the things in it. A human was given the job of naming the animals. When we give someone a *Shem tov*, a good name, it means that we care about him or her.*

*How many of you have stuffed animals at home? Here are some labels that you can use as nametags. Make a list of the animals you have at home. If they have names, write or ask a parent to write its name on a label. If they do not have a name, see if you can think of one now and make a nametag for it.*

### Directions

1. Pass out a sheet of labels, a sheet of paper, and markers to each family.
2. Take your nametags home and put them on your animals.

# Resources for parents, teachers, families

## Nurturing the Family

Encourage families to take their animal name labels home to their stuffed animal friends and to remember to give special names to all new animals. Here are some suggested books for further family reading:

*Sophie's Name* by Phyllis Grode, (ages 3-7)

Sophie Davida Finkle-Cohen is unhappy with her name. It has too many letters for a short person, she concludes, and convinces her family to call her Sue. But as Sue begins to learn about each of her namesakes, the name begins to fit just right.

*Mommy Doesn't know My Name* by Suzanne Williams (ages 3-7)

This engaging story takes its cue from the endearments all parents' use with their kids--pumpkin, funny monkey, alligator, etc.

*New Jewish Baby Book: Names, Ceremonies & Customs—A Guide for Today's Families 2nd Edition* by Anita Diamant

Complete resource to the traditions and rituals for names and customs surrounding them along with commemorating a naming event in family life- whatever your family constellation.



# The Aleph - Bet

H as In "House"    D as In "Dad"    G as In "Girl"    V as In "Vine"    B as In "Boy"    Silent Letter

Y as in "Yes"    T as in "Tall"    CH as in "baCH"    Z as in "Zebra"    V as in "Vine"

M as in "Mom"    L as in "Look"    CH as in "baCH"    K as in "Kitty"

Silent Letter    S as in "Sun"    N as in "No"

K as in "Kitty"    TS as in "nuTS"    F as in "Food"    P as in "People"

T as in "Tall"    S as in "Sun"    SH as in "Shape"    R as in "Red"