

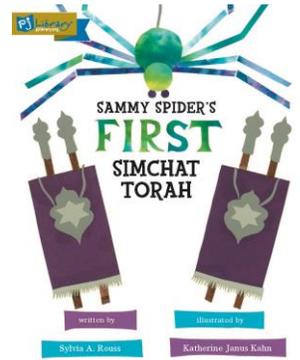


GOES to SCHOOL

Read the PJ Library Book

Sammy Spider's First Simchat Torah (3s)

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Synopsis

Curious about the candy apple attached to Josh's Simchat Torah flag, Sammy soon finds himself stuck to the apple and on his way to Josh's synagogue, where he learns important lessons about Simchat Torah.

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Joy [happiness] / *Sim-cha* - שמחה

Love of Torah [and learning] / *A-ha-vat To-rah* - אהבת תורה

Introducing the value of joy *Simcha*

From Jewish teachings

A key component to Judaism, the word *simcha* appears 16 times in the Torah. It is most frequently mentioned in connection with communal holiday celebrations, indicating that joy is best experienced in the company of others. Throughout the ages, our sages have recommended various techniques for experiencing joy. The Hasidim suggest dancing and singing; Maimonides cites the performance of mitzvot; while others note that the appreciation of beautiful sounds, scents, and sights (Brachot 57b) are effective means of experiencing joy.

For the teacher

- What are some things that bring you joy?
- What aspects of holiday celebrations bring you the greatest joy?
- Why might it be important to discuss joy with young children?
- How can you ensure that joy plays a prominent role in your classroom?
- How do you like to celebrate?

Questions for children

- Think of a holiday that you love. What parts of the holiday make you feel happiest?
- When else do you feel joyful and happy?
- How do you let others know that you are feeling happy?
- How can you tell that your friends and classmates are feeling happy?



Introducing the value of love of Torah/learning *Ahavat Torah*

From Jewish teachings

The Torah is described as “a tree of life,” nourishing those who follow its rules and *mitzvot* (commandments). The traditional method of Torah study – and good practice for all learning – involves asking questions and analyzing the meaning of any Jewish text, ancient and modern, that explores aspects of Judaism. The Rabbis emphasize the importance of turning a text “over and over” to continue to learn from it. That is one reason why on Simchat Torah, as soon as the Torah is finished being read, it is started again immediately.

For the teacher

- How do you learn best?
- What do you like (and dislike) about reading a book more than once?
- How might you incorporate traditional elements of Torah study, such as studying with a partner (*chavruta*) and asking questions about the text, into your classroom?
- What do you think about adding Torah study into your planning time?



Questions for children

- Do you own a special book? How do you treat it?
- What is the Torah and what does it contain?
- Do you prefer to read a book many times or just once?
- On Simchat Torah the very last chapter of the Torah is read aloud and then the Torah is started all over again. Why don't we look for something new to read?

Imagine

 your community living these Jewish values.

**How would your classroom change?
How will families be involved?**

In the Classroom / Centers

- ☆ **Simchaljoy:** Play different types of music and ask children to dance to the music. Have the children vote on which kind of music creates the most simcha. Consider graphing the voting results using an appropriate symbol, such as smiley faces.
- ☆ **Simchaljoy:** Create an ongoing list of what brings joy to the classroom. Snap photos of joyous classroom moments and attach the photos to your list. Alternatively, use the class list as well as photos and child-drawn illustrations to create a classroom “Simcha Book.”



- ☆ **Ahavat Torah/love of Torah and learning:**

The study of Torah can extend to every center in your classroom. If you have access to a synagogue, start with a trip to look inside the *Aron Kodesh*, the Holy Ark where the Torah stays. Perhaps a rabbi or other synagogue staff will take out a Torah to examine closely. What intrigues the children? Explore the Torah's coverings by adding jewels and velvets into your **art center**; add bells to your **music center** to mimic a Torah crown's tinkling silver. Feel the texture of parchment and feather quills in your **science** or **literacy centers**.

- ☆ **Ahavat Torah/love of Torah and learning:** Find a topic your students would like to research. It can be simple, such as “red things,” or more complex, such as plants that grow in your playground. Model asking questions that encourage curiosity: “How many colors of red can we make?” “How many kinds of flowers can we find?”



Bridging Home and School

Family Torah

The Torah is a collection of stories and law that teaches about the Jewish heritage and way of life. Invite families to school so they can make a scroll of their own with stories and important ideals. Serve tasty treats, such as the Torah tortilla shown here. Make it savory with carrot sticks and cream cheese, or use gluten-free pretzels with raisins and honey.



Happy, happy, joy, joy

Collect video snippets of families explaining what fills them with joy. Have the video running as school opens in the morning.

Family Engagement at Home

Simchat Torah – combining joy and respect

While the primary theme of Simchat Torah is rejoicing, its underlying principle is to love and honor the Torah. The Torah is carried around the synagogue during seven *hakafot*, or circuits – a great parade for the Torah. The inside of the Torah is never touched by hand, but rather with a ceremonial pointer. Ask families to consider things in their home they love and revere, such as precious family heirlooms or beloved books from childhood. Are these items kept on a separate shelf? Do they need to be handled in a special way? Encourage families to share the history of some of these items in a discussion at home. Perhaps they will share their discussion with your class.

Share your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... about joy

Help children identify their feelings of happiness by labeling moments of joy during your day, particularly when the class is joyful together. You might snap a photo during snack time or a class celebration when smiles are abundant. Write what you notice. For example:

Our class loves snack time, especially when we eat outside. I see happy faces and hear excited giggles as we share stories of our morning with one another. Look at our smiling faces. What made you happy that day?



More resources and websites for inspiration

Cultivate happiness: <http://www.ahaparenting.com/parenting-tools/emotional-intelligence/happiness>

7 Torah facts: <http://mentalfloss.com/article/28878/7-things-you-need-know-about-torah>

Spread love of learning: <http://generationon.org/news/share-your-love-learning>

