

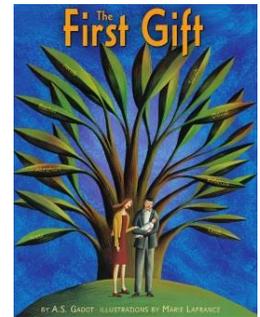
Read the PJ Library Book

The First Gift (3s)

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Synopsis

Where do names come from? When we are born we are given our first gift, the special name our parents choose for us. Our given names often represent our family heritage or geographic location. During our lifetime we may acquire other names that are a reflection of our traits, character, and roles in life.

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Family - *mish-pa-cha* - משפחה

Significance of names (Literally: Everyone has a name) - *Le-kol ish yesh shem* -

לכל איש יש שם

Introducing the value of the significance of names

Lekol ish yesh shem

From Jewish teachings

Names and the act of naming are central themes in Judaism. When God creates the creatures of the earth, God gives Adam the power to name all of the animals. A commentary on the Torah says that in life people are called by three names- one is the name given by our parents, one is the name people call us, and one is the name we acquire for ourselves. “The best [name] is the one he acquires for himself” (*Tanchuma, Vayak’heil*).

For the teacher

- Most of us react differently based on how we are addressed. How do you introduce yourself when you meet new people?
- How do you feel about your own name?
- How do children’s names play into the day to day workings of your classroom? Do you call children by their first and last name?

Questions for children

- Do you know your full name? First, middle, last?
- Who shares the same last name with you?
- What are the names of the other people in your family?
- Have you ever given someone/something a name? A pet/stuffed animal? How did you chose that name?

Introducing the value of family *Mishpacha*

From Jewish teachings

Family is a cornerstone of Jewish life. It is so important that the entire first book of the Torah focuses on family. We see the spectrum of family experiences from love and jealousy to sibling rivalry and forgiveness through a variety of role models. As in many cultures, Judaism sees the family as essential to children's education. The *Shema*, often considered the central prayer in Judaism, states: "You shall teach them [words of Torah] diligently to your children, and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:7). In other words, families are the living exemplars of Jewish values.

For the teacher

- Consider your role in your own family. In what ways does that impact how you focus on families in the classroom?
- What are some of the most significant values that you have learned from your family?
- What do you think is important for children to explore about families in the classroom?

Questions for children

- Who are the people in your family? Are there people in your family who don't live with you?
- What are some things that you enjoy doing with your family?
- Tell us about something you've learned from a family member.



Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

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

In the Classroom / Centers

- ☆ **Lekol ish yesh shem/names:** This is a perfect opportunity to encourage **literacy** by labeling the objects around your room. Take a tour of your different classroom centers and ask the children to identify what's there. Work together to make name labels in English and Hebrew, if you are able. Encourage the children to sound out parts of the words as they become more familiar with letter sounds. Then serve alphabet soup for **snack!**
- ☆ **Lekol ish yesh shem/names:** Create a **sensory table** letter search where the children can find the letters that make up their names by filling a tub with shaving cream and hiding magnetic/plastic/wooden letters. Once the children find the letters they can trace them or use them as stamps to extend the activity.
- ☆ **Mishpacha/family:** Provide an opportunity in your **arts and crafts** center for the children to draw pictures of their family. Ask questions along the way, and record their thoughts about family along with their drawings. (Make sure to respect the child's artwork by recording your observations on different piece of paper.) Take note how children's perspectives about family evolve over the year, and how an individual child may be feeling about changes at home.
- ☆ **Mishpacha/family:** Add a dollhouse, cars, and small "people" dolls to your **block area** to encourage family play in areas other than your home or kitchen area. What other areas of the classroom will give children an opportunity to include family play?



Bridging Home and School

What's in a name?

Invite parents into the classroom to talk about names. Perhaps a Rabbi, Cantor or other Jewish professional can help families choose Hebrew names for themselves and their children if they don't already have them. The names do not need to be religious in nature. Supply naming certificates for the families to use.

Class loom/class quilt

The family members of your students can, and should, have a presence in the classroom. Have every student's family contribute pieces of fabric or ribbon with their name written on them. (You may choose to provide the ribbon.) Weave these pieces together on a small loom or create a class quilt. This helps to show that our families are connected to each other.



Family Engagement at Home

Encourage your families to talk about where their names came from. Children love knowing that their parents have names other than Mommy or Grandpa, so share these and their origin. Were the children named for someone special? Do they have names in Hebrew or other languages that are significant? Suggest that your families find a place to write and display their family names.

Share

your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... about how children understand family

Observe children as they incorporate families into dramatic play. Tell us what you are noticing. For example: *I was watching Grace play with Ilan and I noticed that they are expanding their definition of family to include aunts, uncles and cousins. I heard Grace instruct Ilan "You be the Uncle and I'll be the grandma..." Our students are seeing that family is more than just the people who live in their homes.*

More

resources and websites for inspiration

<http://forward.com/opinion/israel/179006/why-jewish-baby-names-are-so-important/>
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-power-of-a-name-the-power-of-naming/>
<http://www.kveller.com/article/jewish-naming-practices/>
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-american-jewish-family-today/>

