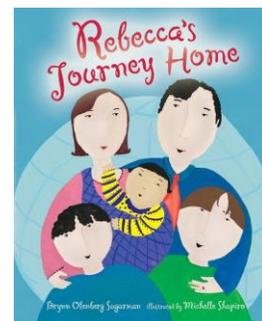


Rebecca's Journey Home

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On one foot: This is one family's story of adoption, and how they thought deeply about meshing the child's heritage with their own. Arguably the most famous Jewish adoption story is about Moses. Scholars suggest that Moses' understanding of his Egyptian legacy along with his Hebrew roots gave him the sensitivity and insight to become the great leader he was.

Highlighted Jewish Values

Significance of names

לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם

Le-kol ish yesh shem

(Literally: Everyone has a name)

Each person is unique

אָדָם יָחִיד

A-dam ya-chid

Connection to families (theme)

Families are created in various ways, tied together by emotional bonds. Rabbinic literature states: "Whoever brings up a child is to be called its parent, not the one who gave birth" (Exodus Rabbah 46:5).

Optional preparation for reading the story

Pack a suitcase with objects from the book, such as a photograph, rattle, hat, sandals, diploma, etc. Vietnamese traditional music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BieMdOAZjsI>;
Photos of Vietnam <https://www.pinterest.com/pjgts/vietnam/>

Before You Read

Jewish Values and Background Information

Lekol ish yesh shem – Significance of names

Three aspects of this value to consider

- Names convey meaning via word origin, family history, Biblical influence, or character traits
- Names are chosen based on parents' preferences and emotional ties to places and people
- There are times when you change or add onto your name

Jewish naming customs have evolved over time. Biblical parents often selected their children's names reflecting circumstances surrounding their child's birth or future dreams for their child. The matriarch Leah, grateful for the birth of her son, named her fourth son Yehuda. The name comes from Hebrew word for thanks. Many Ashkenazic Jews name children in memory of those who have died. Sephardic Jews of Spanish, French, or Middle Eastern origins often name their newborns after grandparents, living or dead, whom they admire. Some choose names based on a Jewish holiday or seasonal event that coincides with their child's birth.

Adam yachid – Each person is unique

Three aspects of this value to consider

- Nurture *and* nature: each of us is a result of our particular genetics and family culture
- Each family is distinctive in its makeup of relatives, pets, and friends
- Even within families that seem alike, each member has special traits and characteristics

Judaism cherishes individual differences. The Talmud, a book of Jewish law and wisdom, marvels over the fact that although humans originate from the same set of parents, Adam and Eve, and “are all made in the same mold,” no two people are exactly alike. Rabbi Meir, a frequently cited second century scholar, used to say a person is unique in three ways: in voice, appearance, and in mind (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 38a). A traditional Hasidic saying notes that within every person is something precious, which can be found in no one else.

When You Read

Introducing the story and engaging the children

Set the stage with questions

Choose a storytelling technique (optional)

1: Set out an open suitcase. Place objects related to the story around the suitcase, such as a baby picture, flip flops, or photos of Vietnam. As you read about the object, let a student place the object in the bag. Use these objects to help children retell the story afterward.

2: Play Vietnamese music and traditional Jewish music to set the tone for this story of merging cultures.



After You Read

Making connections and making it personal

Lekol ish yesh shem/Significance of names	Adam yachid/Each person is unique
<p>Discuss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In our story we learn that Rebecca has three names: a Vietnamese name, an English name, and a Hebrew name. How many different names do you have? Include nicknames or special names used just within your family. • Do you know any stories about how and/or why your parent’s chose your name? • Why are names important? • In what ways do you think your name matches who you are? 	<p>Discuss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to our story, in what ways will the Stein family celebrate baby Rebecca’s uniqueness? • How are you different from everyone else in your family? Think in terms of your interests and special talents. • Families are formed in many different ways, including through adoption like in this story. Other families are made up of two grandparents and a child, one dad with three children, or two moms with two children. Who are the members of your family?
 <p><i>A rose by any other name...</i></p>	



Lekol ish yesh shem/Significance of names	Adam yachid/Each person is unique
Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guess my name: To familiarize students with their classmates' names, try singing "The Name Game," made famous by Shirley Ellis (a school teacher) in the 1960's. • Name detectives: Write each student's name (Hebrew or English) on an index card with white crayon. Distribute a card to each child and have them paint over the invisible names with watercolors. For a Shabbat-friendly version, hide pre-printed cards around the room for students to find. Match cards to the appropriate student. • The story of our names: Ask each child to design and decorate a book page describing the origins of his/her name. (It might be helpful to send home a survey form that parents and kids can complete together before children design their page in class.) • Classroom naming project: Allow children to experience the thrills and challenges of selecting a name by asking the class to name one or more of the following items: the class as a whole, a classroom plant, a tree that grows outside the classroom, or a classroom stuffed animal. 	Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's great to be me: Have each student state their name along with one of their unique characteristics. The personal trait should be accompanied by a hand motion that connects to the attribute in some way. Go around the room having each student repeat the statement and gestures of the students who proceeded him/her before adding his/her own statement to the list. • Talk to the hand: Have each student trace an outline of their hand or make a handprint. Wet hands on a window is a fun, Shabbat-friendly alternative. Ask children to describe one unique aspect of themselves for each finger. 
Engaging families – The importance of names	Engaging families – Each person is unique
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up an area in your school's entrance with a large poster or paper for Family Questions of the Week. Supply post-its, paper, and pens for responses to "What name does your family use for grandfather?" or "What's your favorite nickname?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite families to work together illuminating the first letter of their family's last name. Illumination is an ancient art form that adds fanciful decorations to letters and borders to enhance a manuscript. Challenge families to illuminate their letter in a way that reflects some of their family's unique characteristics. • Ask a genealogist to speak to families at an evening or Sunday morning event. Perhaps you will create family timelines that show important moments in a family's life.

