Ideas To Spark Learning

Idea #1: A Torah by any other name

Gather together different formats of the Five Books of Moses, including a small Torah scroll, Chumash, an all English translation, an all Hebrew translation, a very small book, a large type format book, a Tikkun, a picture bible, etc.* Divide students into Hevruta study pairs and give them one book to explore. Ask students to come up with three words to describe their book. List words on a large piece of paper. The goal is to have them understand that Torah comes in many forms; and is studied over and over again in a variety of formats. It also exposes students to the idea of Hevruta learning. Use this activity as a bridge from Simchat Torah to the study of the Torah stories. At the end of the school year after a year of study, revisit the activity with your students. Their additions will reflect their learning and serve as an assessment tool.
For second and third grade classes, include copies of The Five Books of Moses with translations into other languages such as French, Russian or German. This addition sparks deeper discussions around topics such as the dispersion of Jews around the globe or need for accessibility of translations for those who are not fluent in Hebrew.

Idea #2: Creation spin art to separate light from darkness

Supplies needed:
- Salad Spinner
- White tempera paint, thinned slightly with water
- Heavy black paper

Directions:
1. Cut paper into pieces that fit into the salad spinner. Place one piece of paper in the spinner at a time.
2. Drip white paint onto the black paper.
3. Close the spinner and turn the crank rapidly.
4. Open your spinner to reveal the light separated from the darkness.

Note: This spin art project provides a great opportunity for a Madrech / Madracha to work with each student individually.

Idea #3: Teach the chorus from Jeffrey Klepper’s song In the Beginning.

Listen to the whole song. Invite students to create hand motions to accompany each verse.

Idea #4: Days of Creation; an accordion folded book

Instead of an accordion book, this project may be formatted as individual sheets of paper bound together or a giant pizza wheel divided into 7 sections.

Supplies needed:
- White poster board (you can get 2 books per piece of 22"x28" poster board)
- Days of creation text, 1 set per student [click here for texts to glue on the bottom of each page]
- Markers, stickers, crayons, die-cuts
- Glue sticks
- An assortment of beautiful picture books retelling the story of creation

Create a separate page for each day of creation. Paste the text at the bottom of each corresponding page. Illustrate each page using a variety of decorations and materials. See examples of creation books at the MJLC.
Idea #5: Group Creation Mural
Separate the mural paper into seven sections, and label each day. Break the students into 7 groups, have each group illustrate their day. This is a great classroom community building project, as the mural can be completed if everyone works together. You may also invite the students to act out their assigned day, as well.

Idea #6: MJLC Bereshit Puzzle Poster
The Marshall Center has a large puzzle poster depicting the days of creation. This manipulative can be re-created as a classroom activity, or on a smaller scale for each child to assemble and take home. Stop in and make one for your classroom.
A Selection of Books for Parashat Bereshit


Like a potter, a painter, and a musician, God creates the earth and what dwells there, then celebrates having finished his work by sharing a cup of grape juice with the boy and girl he made in his image and resting on the first Shabbat. (K-2)


Introduces the story of creation in Genesis through Hebrew text and simple English translation opposite beautiful illustrations. A literal English translation and glossary are included. Other titles in this excellent series include Noah’s Ark, The Tower of Babel: Migdal Bavel, Lech Lecha: The Journey of Abraham and Sarah, Rebecca, Jacob’s Travels, and Joseph the Dreamer. (K-3)


This beautifully illustrated version of the familiar story takes into account creation myths the world over. (K-1)


Retells the story of two brothers who, after years of sharing everything, become angry enough to lose control and bring violence into the world. (K-2)