



Rosh Hashanah: “White” the Slate Clean

Objectives:

- Students will be able to express what the color white represents.
- Students will be able to articulate why the color white is associated with the *Yamim Nora'im* (High Holidays).
- Students will reflect on the change in year.

Materials Needed:

- Dressed Torah (preferable, but optional)
- Images of Torah available on JTeach.org (if you do not have access to a Torah)
- 1 Large White Poster Board with the passing year (e.g. 5774) written at the top
- 1 Large White Poster Board with the new year (e.g. 5775) written at the top
- Construction Paper (can be cut into smaller pieces depending on the size of the class)
- Markers
- Scissors
- Glue Sticks

Background for Teachers:

Many congregations have special ornaments with which they dress their Torahs on the *Yamim Nora'im* (High Holidays). These ornaments are most often white. This lesson will give students the opportunity to see the difference between what the Torah's dressings look like during the year and what they look like for the *Yamim Nora'im*.

- Check to see if the Torah dressings have already been changed over.
- If they have not been changed over, arrange, if possible, to have the *Yamim Nora'im* ornaments available and on display near the building's *aron* (ark for the Torah) so that students can compare the year-round dressings and the *Yamim Nora'im* dressings.
- If the dressings have been changed over, arrange, if possible, to have the year-round dressings available and on display near the building's *aron* so that students can make the same comparison.
- Note that it might be difficult to have an extra *parochet* (ark curtain) to compare because of its size.
- In case you cannot take your students to see the Torah, pictures of the Torah from the year and from the *Yamim Nora'im* are provided at the end of this lesson.



For Primary Grades:

1. Brainstorm with students what major events happened in their lives during the past year.
 - This brainstorming session could lead to a discussion about what constitutes a major event. It could also lead to a discussion about how things that seem minor to one person can be major to another person. You might choose to have these discussions if there is time or you might choose to put aside these discussions.
2. After students come up with some ideas, explain to students that they will represent their events on paper. They can draw their events; write down words that describe their events; cut designs in the paper to represent their events, etc.
3. Give students paper, markers, scissors, and other materials that you think will be helpful.
4. Students can draw a picture, write a description, create a poem, etc. of the important events in their lives.
5. Create a collage of the students' representations on the poster board with the passing year.
6. Take students on a *tiyul* (trip) in your building to see the Torah.
7. Show students the Torah.
8. Ask students how the Torah looks. Direct conversation to the colors of the Torah's dressings (as well as those of the *parochet*).
9. Show students the additional dressings. Ask students what is different about them. Students should be able to identify that the various coverings (e.g. the *Me'il* (Torah mantle) and the *Parochet* (Ark curtain)) are white on the *Yamim Nora'im* instead of their regular colors.
10. If you have time, you can ask students to identify where each of the additional dressings would go. For example, students can identify that the *Me'il* would cover the Torah.
11. Explain to students that the Torah gets special clothing for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
12. Ask students whether they wear special clothing on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Explain that, often, people dress in special clothes when they come to services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
13. Ask students why they think the Torah has special clothing for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
14. Ask students what the color white represents. Answers will vary. You can lead conversation to ideas of newness; purity; possibility; being clean, clear, and fresh.



15. Explain to students that, just as they filled up a large white poster board with events from the past year, they will have a blank white poster board for the upcoming year. They will have the opportunity to fill up the poster board with major events from the upcoming year.
16. Post the poster boards from the passing year and from the new year where students can see them.
17. Students create new representations for the new year poster board as the year progresses.

For Intermediate Grades:

1. Take students on a *tiyul* (trip) in your building to see the Torah.
2. Show students the Torah.
3. Ask students how the Torah looks. Direct conversation to the colors of the Torah's dressings (as well as those of the *parochet*).
4. Show students the additional dressings. Ask students what is different about them. Students should be able to identify that the various coverings (e.g. the *Me'il* (Torah mantle) and the *Parochet* (Ark curtain)) are white on the *Yamim Nora'im* instead of their regular colors.
5. Explain to students that the Torah gets special clothing for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
6. Ask students whether they wear special clothes for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Ask students why they wear special clothes on these days.
7. Ask students why they think the Torah has special clothing for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
8. Ask students what the color white represents. Answers will vary. You can lead conversation to ideas of newness; purity; possibility; being clean, clear, fresh.
9. Return to the classroom.
10. Brainstorm with students what important events happened in their lives during the year.
 - This brainstorming session could lead to a discussion about what constitutes an important event. It could also lead to a discussion about how things that seem minor to one person can be major to another person. You might choose to have these discussions if there is time or you might choose to put aside these discussions.
11. After students come up with some ideas, explain to students that they will represent their events on paper. They can draw their events; write down words that describe their events; cut designs in the paper to represent their events, etc.
12. Give students paper, markers, scissors, and other materials that you think will be helpful.



13. Students create representations of the important events in their lives.
14. Create a collage of the students' representations on the poster board with the passing year.
15. Show students the collage and the poster board for the new year.
16. Depending on the level of the students, ask students what is different between the two poster boards. What do they think each poster board represents? Direct discussion to the passing year being filled with events that have already happened and the new year being open with possibility and opportunities.
17. Explain to students that they will fill up the white poster board with the events of their lives as they occur this year.
18. Post the poster boards from the passing year and from the new year where students can see them.
19. Students create new representations for the new year poster board as the year progresses.

Epilogue:

This can be a yearly project. Poster boards can be posted in the hallways and left up each year. In each succeeding year, each class (e.g. class of 2015) fills up a new blank poster board with the corresponding year. The class can then follow its progression through the years.