



Bentching GomeI

Topic

Bentching GomeI—Responses and discussion when someone has survived tragedy

Grade Level(s)

3rd to 7th

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

- Students will be able to express and discuss their feelings regarding having survived a dangerous situation, or knowing someone (a classmate, parent, relative, or community member) who has survived a dangerous situation.
- Students will be able to recite the *gomeI* prayer and talk about what it means.

Materials Needed

Pens, paper, worksheets, markers, construction paper

Technology Needed

Computer with projector or SmartBoard to share the *G-dcast* video on *bentching gomeI* (optional)

Background for Teachers

What is *bentching gomeI*? *Bentching GomeI* is the reciting of the *gomeI* prayer after surviving a life threatening or dangerous situation. It may be recited by women after safely giving birth, or by anyone completing a trip, surgery, or surviving an accident or life threatening incident. It is often recited in synagogue during a regularly scheduled prayer service, or in the context of a minyan (with ten Jewish adults present).

Bentch is the Yiddish word for “bless” and while most of us don’t often use Yiddish words in everyday speech (even in synagogue we typically use Hebrew), for some reason this one has stuck even in modern Hebrew/Jewish settings. We “*bentch*” when we recite *birkat hamazon* (grace after meals) and we “*bentch*” *gomeI* when we recite the *gomeI* prayer.

When we “*bentch gomeI*” there is a line recited by the affected individual and a responsive line recited by the congregation. As part of this lesson we have provided a link to a *G-dcast* video as well as a Hebrew resource sheet that explains what to say and when.

This lesson is designed to be personalized, based on individual needs in the classroom setting. The idea is to help the teacher think about what to do and how to respond if they have a student in their class who has survived a dangerous or life-threatening



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situation. It could also be used as a response if something dangerous happens in the community, like a fire, flood, or even a shooting or bomb threat. In these cases, the teacher should take care with what they choose to share and how they help their students respond. In either case, the teacher should communicate effectively with their school leaders and parents, as the very nature of this topic makes it sensitive. If you are dealing with a particular student, make sure to talk with them beforehand to ensure that they are comfortable sharing their situation, and talk with them about the best way to handle the class conversation. If you are talking about a potentially scary or troubling situation that affects your community (or the world community), you may want to talk with your education team, school director, rabbi or classroom parents to determine the best way to approach the situation.

Description of Activities

1. Opening prompt (choose one of the following options)

Option A: Individual: Presenting of the situation for which we recite *gomet*. Since this is so particular, every situation will be different. If you have a student who has recently survived a traumatic event, this lesson can be very powerful in helping them deal with it and with talking about it as a class. In this case, you will want to make sure to talk about it with the student and possibly their parents beforehand, and make sure that they are comfortable talking about this with their class. Depending on their age and comfort level, they may be able to present their situation to the class, or they may want you, the teacher, to do so.

Option B: Communal: you can also use this lesson to respond to a communal situation. It could be used if your community survives something, like a fire, a flood, a tornado, or even a bomb threat. In this case, use the communal event as a prompt to talk about your students' feelings about the event.

Option C: General: if you are teaching the concept of *Bentching Gomet* as a general lesson, without responding to a real life situation, then you can start by sharing the *G-dcast* video on *bentching gomet* and ask students to think about why we might have a prayer specifically for people who have survived dangerous circumstances.



Bentching Gome!

2. **Discussion and processing:** Feel free to use any of the following ideas to help your students process their feelings and thoughts regarding the situation they have encountered.
 - a. **Ripped Paper Art:** Using construction paper, ask students to create a piece of abstract art about how they are feeling. Abstract art is not about creating images, but rather about reflecting feelings. So students can use color, shape and textures to reflect their inner state. Students should have one large piece of construction paper as their base. They can then cut or rip other pieces of construction paper or magazine paper into shapes and glue them down using glue sticks or white school glue. Allow students a chance to talk about their work or to write about its meaning.
 - b. **Reflection worksheet:** Using the downloadable emoji worksheet, allow students to record what they know, how they are feeling, and what they would like to talk more about. You can use these sheets to help direct the next parts of your conversation.
 - c. **Text sheet for study and response:** For more advanced or older students, you can use the downloadable source sheet to talk about what constitutes danger, and how that has changed over time. Students can evaluate the Talmudic text and think about who might want or need to recite *gome!* today.
3. **Teaching the Gome! Prayer** — use the *G-dcast* video found here:
4. <http://www.g-dcast.com/gome!/> and/or the prayer sheet provided to give students a chance to learn the prayer.

5. **Putting it into practice:**

Option A: Allow the student in question, or the class, to stand up and recite the *gome!* prayer, and speak about what it means to them. You can also have all your students recite it together (see differentiation options below).

Option B: Creation of a personalized service focusing on reciting the *gome!* prayer. You can have students create and conduct a service in which they recite the *gome!* prayer. The service can center around this prayer, but can also include personal prayers, poems, or even the sharing of artwork that reflects their feelings on surviving, or on the bad/scary thing that happened. The focus of the service would most likely be on gratitude and reflection (optional, see differentiation options below).



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Differentiation Options

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

For learners who need more assistance

- If the learning of the *gomeI* prayer is too difficult for your students, you can share the prayer with them and ask them to think about why we might recite such a prayer. The teacher or other classmates can do the reciting of the prayer, and the student(s) needing additional help can repeat, or they can simply talk about the meaning. They can also learn the translation of the prayer instead of the Hebrew.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- We have included a source sheet from the Talmud on who should recite the *gomeI* prayer. Have advanced or older students go over the source sheet and discuss the examples given.
- Students can personalize this even further by creating and conducting a service in which they recite the *gomeI* prayer. The service can center around this prayer, but can also include personal prayers, poems, or even the sharing of artwork that reflects their feelings on surviving, or on the bad/scary thing that happened.