

May I Ask you a Question

Topic

Asking Questions, Hebrew, Culture

Grade Level(s)

6th – 8th

Big Ideas

Exploring young people's questions allows adults to get a glimpse into young people's minds.

Learning Targets

Students will:

1. Learn a Hebrew song about the topic of asking questions and find out the Hebrew *milot she'eilah*
2. Evaluate the adult's responses to the child's questions in the song
3. Understand that their questions are of extreme importance even when adults find it difficult to answer them all
4. Create a class culture where students are not shy to ask questions and the teacher is patient to listen to students' questions and open to answer them candidly.

Relevant Vocabulary

שְׂאֵלָה/שאלות (<i>She'eilah/She'eilot</i>)	Question(s)
מִלוֹת שְׂאֵלָה (<i>Milot She'eilah</i>)	Wh-questions
כְּשֶׁתִּגְדְּלִי תִבְיָנִי (<i>K'shetigdeli Tavini</i>)	Lit. When you will grow up, you will understand Fig. Someday you'll understand
לֹא הַבִּישָׁן לָמַד, וְלֹא הַקַּפְדָּן מְלַמֵּד (<i>Lo habaishan lamed, v'lo hakapdan melamed</i>)	A shy person cannot learn, and an impatient one cannot teach
פְּרָקֵי אָבוֹת (<i>Pirkei Avot</i>)	Ethics of the Fathers (consists of short statements of wisdom and ethics)

Materials / Technology Needed

- [Song K'shetigdeli Tavini](#)
- [Song – Translation](#)
- Article: "[The Right to Question](#)"
- Article: "[How to Get Your Students to Ask More Questions](#)"
- [Learning Hebrew through Song](#)

Prepare in Advance

1. Print two copies per student of the song *K'shetigdeli Tavini*, one of the *English/Hebrew (pages 5 – 7)* and one of *color-coded Hebrew (page 8)*.
2. Print copies of the *Milot She'eilah* (page 9).
3. [Poll Everywhere](#)
4. Question Box

May I Ask you a Question

Background for Teachers

In the article "[The Right to Question](#)" Ismar Schorsch, former JTS Chancellor, says that "Judaism is a religion that not only permits but encourages us to ask *she'elot*. Because things are sacred does not mean that we have forfeited the right to think for ourselves." Our Sages taught that a person who won't ask questions due to shyness or embarrassment will remain with their questions unanswered and therefore will not learn and progress. Additionally, a teacher who is not patient with their students when they ask questions, cannot and should not teach because the students will not learn from such a teacher ([Mishnah Avot 2:5](#))

Biblical literature is filled with examples of individuals asking thought-provoking *she'elot* to each other and to God. *She'elot* provide the respondent a glimpse into the person's mind, interests, and motivations, and can be more important than providing the right answers.

In education, the importance of questioning is described by teacher and author Jackie Walsh in her article "[How to Get Your Students to Ask More Questions](#)." Walsh disputes the commonly accepted classroom expectation that teachers ask the questions, and the learners are required to answer. She says, "Student-generated questions put learners in the driver's seat. They advance both learning and engagement."

The song *K'shetigdeli Tavini* references the well-known fact that children ask lots of questions when they are young. Research sheds light into the role of questioning in the development of a child. "Preschoolers' questions may play an important role in cognitive development as a mean to gather information and solve problems." According to Michelle M. Chouinard in *Children's Questions: A Mechanism for Cognitive Development*, "Preschoolers questions may play an important role in cognitive development."

The song *K'shetigdeli Tavini* features a dialogue between a small girl and her mother. The girl asks the mother many questions as she is trying to make sense of the world around her, and the mother tries her best to answer most questions. In response to some questions, the mother satisfies by saying; "someday you will understand."

The song was written by Tirza Atar, a translator, poet, children's writer, and actress. She was the daughter of Israeli writer Nathan Alterman and the actress Rachel Marcus. *K'shetigdeli Tavini* is beautifully sung by Chava Alberstein, a famous Israeli musician, composer, and lyricist.

May I Ask you a Question

Description of Activities

- 1) Using Poll Everywhere, ask students the following questions:
 - a) How often do you get your questions answered by your parents now? (multiple choice)
 - always, sometimes, rarely, never
 - b) Did you get your questions answered by your parents when you are younger (5-6 years old)? (multiple choice)
 - always, sometimes, rarely, never
 - c) How do you respond to the statement : “small children ask a lot of questions” (open-ended)
 - d) Please explain (open-ended)
 - e) What do you think happens when children’s willingness to ask questions as children get older?
 - f) Please explain (open-ended)
 - g) Do you agree with the Jewish saying “A shy person cannot learn”?
 - Why or why not? (open-ended)
 - h) Discuss the Poll Everywhere responses obtained by the group.
- 2) Distribute the song (Hebrew on one side and English on the other). Divide students into *chevrutot* (learning pairs) and ask them to read the entire song in English first.
- 3) Discuss the interchange between the girl and her mother.
- 4) Let students listen to the song in Hebrew.
- 5) Distribute the *K’shetigdeli Tavini* color-coded song in Hebrew and read it out loud to model fluent reading.
- 6) In *chevrutot* students read the song as a dialogue; one student reads the girl’s lines highlighted in yellow and another student reads the mom’s lines highlighted in pink. In a second reading, switch roles.
- 7) Discuss the *Milot She’elah* featured in the song with the students.
- 8) Allow students time to write down their questions about this song.
- 9) Present a Question Box and explain to students that you would like them to write questions they have that are off topic and place them in the Question Box anonymously whenever they have questions. Teacher will check the Question Box regularly and present them for discussion.

May I Ask you a Question

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

- Ask students to draw a picture based on the song.
- Students cut out the labels with the *Milot She'elah* and decorate the Question Box with them.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- Ask students to write a new chorus in English or Hebrew. The current song's chorus "No, it's difficult to explain. Believe me, when you grow up, you'll understand."

לא, זה קשה להסביר, האמיני, כשתגדלי תביני

- Research the bios of both Tirza Atar and Chava Alberstein.

When you grow up you'll understand

כְּשֶׁתִּגְדְּלִי תִּבְיֵנִי

Mom when will I already be big?

מָא, מָתֵי אֶהְיֶה כְּבָר גְּדוּלָה?

In a couple of years, my child.

בְּעוֹד כַּמָּה שָׁנִים, יִלְדָתִי

And will I have a baby in the stroller?

וְיִהְיֶה לִי תִינוּק בְּתוֹךְ עֲגָלָה?

Of course, you'll have, my child.

כְּמוֹכֵן שְׂיִהְיֶה לָךְ, בְּתִי

Mom does the dog have a father?

אָמָא, לְכָלֵב יֵשׁ אָבָא?

Sure.

וְדָא

And grandpa?

וְסָבָא?

Perhaps.

אוּלַי

I don't have a grandpa why?

לִי אֵין סָבָא לָךְ לֹא מְדוּעָ?

'cause your grandpa is in heaven, isn't he?

כִּי סָבָא שְׁלָךְ בַּשָּׁמַיִם, הֲלֹא

How did he reach there, with a ladder?

אֵיךְ הוּא הִגִּיעַ לָשָׁם, עִם סֻלָּם?

No, it's difficult to explain. Believe me, when you grow up, you'll understand.

לֹא, זֶה קָשָׁה לְהַסְבִּיר, הֲאִמִּינִי,
כְּשֶׁתִּגְדְּלִי תִּבְיֵנִי

Mom at night I had a dream and there was in it a star with a face.

אָמָא, בַּלַּיְלָה חֲלַמְתִּי חֲלוֹם
וְהָיָה שָׁם כּוֹכֵב עִם פָּנִים

Mom what is the dream a picture or a place?

אמא מה זה חלום, תמונה או מקום?

It's a story you see when you are asleep.

זה ספור שרואים כששנים?

Mom did Ronit get well?

אמא רונית כבר הבריאה?

Sure.

נדאי

Fully?

לגמרי?

Perhaps.

אולי

What is a doctor?

מה זה דוקטור?

A healer.

רופא

Why?

מדוע?

He is called a healer because he is a healing man.

קוראים לו רופא כי הוא איש מרפא?

Why not everybody is a healer only sick?

למה כלם לא רופאים רק חולים?

Offhand it's difficult to explain. Believe me, when you grow up, you'll understand.

כך זה, קשה להסביר, האמיני, כשתגדלי תביני

Mom, a moon is a kind of a stone?

אמא גרם זאת אבן כזאת?

Yes, big, huge, and white, but it's very, far away so it looks small.

כן, גדולה ענקית ולבנה
אבל היא רחוקה נורא מאוד ולכן היא
נראית קטנה

Mom a baby it's in the tummy?

אמא תינוק זה בבטן?

Sure.

נדאי

And you will have one?

ויהיה לך?

Perhaps.

אולי

I don't have a big tummy.

לי אין בטן גדולה

No, you don't have,

לא, אין לך

Now you are small, so it isn't possible.

עכשו את קטנה אז אי אפשר

How is the baby there inside like a butterfly?

איך התינוק שם בפנים, כמו פרפר

No, it's difficult to explain. Believe me, when you grow up, you'll understand.

לא, זה קשה להסביר, האמיני, כשתגדלי תביני

And only I and the answers in my mouth

ורק אני והתשובות שבפי

Know the big secret.

יודעות את הסוד הגדול

That even when you grow up you don't understand.

שגם כשתגדלים לא מבינים

Just simply, one day

רק פשוט יום אחד

You stop asking.

מפסיקים לשאל.

כְּשֶׁתִּגְדְּלִי תִּבְיֵנִי

ילדה-Girl (yellow)

אמא-Mom (pink)

אמא, מתי אהיה כבר גדולה?

בעוד כמה שנים, ילדתי

ויהיה לי תינוק בתוך עגלה?

כמוכן שיהיה לך, בת

אמא, לכלב יש אבא?

נדאי

וסבא?

אולי

לי אין סבא

לך לא

מדוע?

כי סבא שלך בשמים, הלא

איך הוא הגיע לשם, עם סלם?

לא, זה קשה להסביר, האמיני, כשתיגדלי תביני (2)

אמא, בליקה חלמתי חלום

והיה שם כוכב עם פנים

אמא מה זה חלום, תמונה או מקום?

זה ספור שרואים כשישנים

אמא רונית כבר הבריאה?

נדאי

לגמרי?

אולי

מה זה דוקטור?

רופא

מדוע?

קוראים לו רופא כי הוא איש מרפא

למה פלם לא רופאים רק חולים?

כך זה, קשה להסביר, האמיני, כשתיגדלי תביני (2)

אמא גרם זאת אבן קזאת?

כן, גדולה ענקית ולבנה

אבל היא רחוקה נרא מאוד ולכן היא נראית קטנה

אמא תינוק זה בבטן?

נדאי

ויהיה לך?

אולי

לי אין בטן גדולה

לא, אין לך

עכשו את קטנה אז אי אפשר

איך התינוק שם בפנים, כמו פרפר?

לא, זה קשה להסביר, האמיני, כשתיגדלי תביני

ורק אני והתשובות שבפי

יודעות את הסוד הגדול,

שגם כשגדלים לא מבינים

רק פשוט יום אחד

מפסיקים לשאל.

מָה?	What?
לְמָה/מֵדוּעַ?	Why?
אֵיךְ?	How?
מֵתִי?	When?
כַּמָּה?	How many?