

Our Suggestions for Maximizing the Educational Impact of *Judy Led the Way*

1. Rabbi Sandy Sasso suggests ways to explore the importance of questioning in our Jewish journeys with *Judy Led the Way*.
2. Rabbi Erin Hirsh offers a portrait of Dr. Judith Kaplan Eisenstein's philosophy of Jewish living as it relates to the notion of Judaism as a Civilization.
3. Rabbi Jeffrey Schein suggests natural places to incorporate *Judy Led the Way* in Jewish educational programs.

A Guide to the Questions at the End of *Judy Led the Way*

By Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

I wonder how you feel about asking a lot of questions.

Is there someone who loves to tackle big questions with you?

- To be a Jew means to ask questions. Judy had lots of questions, all of which were welcome in the Kaplan household.
- Consider having students write down the big questions that they have been reluctant to ask. Let them do this anonymously. The questions can help form your curriculum as you go through the year. Remember that big questions do not necessarily require single answers or answers at all. What they need is a conversation.
- Judy commented on her family's openness to explore new ideas. "There was a sense of freedom and freedom to change. There was a constant opening up of possibilities and enrichment. It makes my being Jewish a great joy for me rather than a burden."
- Talk about what in Judaism brings you joy. Celebrate!

I wonder if you have questions about God?

- Judy remembered how, when she was eleven years old, she told her father that she did not believe in God. He asked her to describe the God which she did not believe in. Then Judy's father told her that he did not believe in that kind of God, either. They talked instead about what kind of God they did believe in.
- Have that conversation with your students. Are there things that they cannot believe about God? Imagine believing in a new way.
- Consider beginning the conversation by sharing some of these Biblical questions:

I wonder if you have questions about God?

God to Adam: “Where are you?”

- Genesis 3:9

God to Cain: “Where is your brother?”

- Genesis 4:9

Cain to God: “Am my brother’s keeper?”

- Genesis 4:9

Abraham to God: “Will not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”

- Genesis 18:25

The psalmist to God:

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains, from where will my help come?”

- Psalms 121:1

The Kaplan family kept many traditions and changed some. I wonder what traditions you want to keep and if there are any you want to change.

- The word “tradition” comes from Latin which means “something that is handed down.” Talk about the chain of tradition (of “handing down”) as in this text:

Moses received that Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to the elders; the elders to the prophets; the prophets to the men of the Great Assembly.

- *Pirkei Avot 1:1*

- Discuss who is missing in the chain described in this text.
- Ask the students who are the people in *their* chain of tradition. Have them ask their families what traditions they practiced growing up, what remains the same, and what has changed.
- What would the students want to hand down to the next generation? Why?

Judy played piano to calm herself when she was feeling worried or anxious. What do you do to help yourself through changes in your life?

Lead a meditation exercise and/or other relaxing activity.

- Then talk about the ways that students need to channel their anger and stay calm when they are worried.
- Invite the students to think of a time they were angry or anxious and draw that feeling on a sheet of paper.
- Then have them tear up the drawing and use the pieces to make something else.
- Discuss how it felt to draw, to tear up, and make something more constructive, more peaceful.

Natural Places to Incorporate *Judy Led the Way* in Jewish Educational Programs

By Rabbi Jeffrey Schein

The rich thing about stories is that they can function in so many different ways. There is always the beauty of the story itself, the “just so” quality of the story that Rudyard Kipling references. The story can also, however, be a platform for exploring issues beyond the story embedded in the curricula of most of our Jewish schools. I think *Judy Led the Way* works beautifully at both of these levels. Here are four suggestions for utilizing *Judy Led the Way* in relation to four different curricular niches and age groups.

3rd-5th Graders: Jewish Heroes and Heroines

- This suggestion may be particularly valuable to use in congregations with connections to Reconstructing Judaism.
- Read *Judy Led the Way* alongside [A Child's Biography of Mordecai Kaplan](#) by Rabbi Lewis Eron.
- What similarities and differences do you see between Father and Daughter in these two stories?

5th-7th Graders: The Jewish Life Cycle

- This is, in some ways, the most obvious curricular niche. The institution of the *bat mitzvah* evolved over time and the book tells the story of aspects of that critical development. The story could open dialogues across the generations in a congregation.
- Invite each prospective *bat mitzvah* in your congregation to read the book to an older woman in the community. Then the prospective *bat mitzvah* could record that woman’s memories of becoming *bat mitzvah* or of not having become *bat mitzvah*.
- Judith Kaplan Eisenstein’s story reminding us that Jewish Peoplehood must embrace women if Judaism is to thrive in the 21st century. *Judy Led the Way* is a wonderful resource to incorporate in service of the great narrative of our people.

6th-8th Graders: American Jewish History

- The Kaplan Center's [Celebration of Judy Led the Way](#) includes a slideshow by Rabbi Sasso of what was going on in the Jewish world as the early 20th-century Jewish communities wrestled with issues of modernity.
- Any number of 2-3 minute segments of the PowerPoint narrated by Rabbi Sasso could launch interesting discussions.

8th-12th Graders: Comparative Judaism

- Near the end of Rabbi Sasso's presentation, we see Judith's musical creativity at work. But Judy didn't just inject music into "Judaism." Judy's musical skills actually "reconstructed Judaism" in the process.
- Judy's English lyrics to the traditional Yiddish song, *Hanukah, Oy Hanukah*, exemplify this concept.
- **A handout with which to teach about Judy's English lyrics reconstructed what English-speaking Jews understand themselves to be celebrating when they sing *Hanukah, O Hanukah* each year.**

The literal translation of the second stanza of the Yiddish song would be:

Come quickly, children and light the Hanukah candles.

Say Al Ha-nissim and praise God for the miracles.

And we will dance together in a circle!

Say Al-Ha-nissim, praising God for the miracles and we will dance together in a circle.

Judith's non-literal translation is:

And while we are playing, the candles are burning bright.

One for each night, they shed a sweet light, to remind us of days long ago.

One for each night, they shed a sweet light, to remind us of days long ago.

- In a parallel way, Sandy Brusin's retelling of the *Hanukah* story, [Who Can Remember?](#) transvalues the notion of "miracle." **Comparing the two could yield rich discussions.**

Hanukah, O Hanukah English lyrics by Dr. Judith Kaplan Eisenstein

English version	Yiddish version	Yiddish <u>transliteration</u>	Yiddish literal translation
<p>(Oh), Hanukah, Oh Hanukah Come light the menorah Let's have a party We'll all dance the <u>horah</u> Gather 'round the table, we'll give you a treat <u>Dreidels</u> (or "<u>sevivon</u>") to play with, and latkes (or "levivot") to eat</p>	<p>חנוכה אוי חנוכה א יום-טוב א שיינער א לוסטיקער א פריילעכער נישט דא נאך אזוינער אלע נאכט מיט דריידלעך שפילן מיר, פרישע הייסע לאַטקעס, עסן און אַ שיעור.</p>	<p>(Oy), <i>Khanike oy Khanike</i> <i>A yontef a sheyner,</i> <i>A lustiker a freylekher</i> <i>Nisht do nokh azoyner</i> <i>Ale nakht</i> <i>mit dreydlekh shpiln mir,</i> <i>Frishe heyse latkes, esn on a shir.</i></p>	<p>(Oh), Chanukah, Oh Chanukah A beautiful celebration. Such a cheerful and happy one, There is none like it. Every night with the <u>dreidels</u> we will play, Fresh, hot latkes we will eat endlessly.</p>
<p>And while we are playing The candles are burning bright (or low²³) One for each night, they shed a sweet light To remind us of years (or days) long ago One for each night, they shed a sweet light To remind us of years (or days) long ago.</p>	<p>געשווינדער, צינדט קינדער די חנוכה ליכטלעך און, זאגט על-הניסים, לויבט גאט פאר די נסים, און לאַמיר אַלע טאַנצען אין קאָן. זאגט על-הניסים, לויבט גאט פאר די נסים, און לאַמיר אַלע טאַנצען אין קאָן.</p>	<p><i>Geshvinder, tsindt kinder</i> <i>Di Khanike likhtlekh on,</i> <i>Zogt "Al Hanisim", loybt</i> <i>Got far di nisim,</i> <i>Un lomir ale tantsn in kon.</i> <i>Zogt "Al Hanisim", loybt</i> <i>Got far di nisim,</i> <i>Un lomir ale tantsn in kon.</i></p>	<p>Come quickly children Light the Chanukah candles Say "<u>Al HaNissim</u>", praise God for the miracles, And we will all dance together in a circle! Say "Al HaNissim", praise God for the miracles, And we will all dance together in a circle!</p>

1. What strikes you as the major difference between the traditional version and Dr. Eisenstein's version?
2. Which words and phrases of the original Yiddish version did Dr. Eisenstein translate directly into English? Is the English version more special because it has so much in common with the original version?
3. What phrases from the Yiddish version did Dr. Eisenstein leave out of the English version? Why do you think she decided not to keep those ideas in her version?
4. What new words, phrases, and ideas did Dr. Eisenstein add to the English version of Hanukah O Hanukah? How do you think those additions impact the meaning and power of the song?
5. How do you feel about the changes Dr. Eisenstein made when she wrote her version? Would you have made the same choices? Why or why not?
6. Do you sing this song at Hanukah? Do you know if it was part of your parents' or grandparents' Hanukah tradition? Does hearing or singing Hanukah Oh Hanukah evoke a spiritual or emotional response for you?
7. How does it feel to know that Judy Kaplan - the daughter of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan and the first girl to become *bat mitzvah* in the United States - grew up to create a song that is such an important part of so many Hanukah celebrations?

Reflecting on the Meaning of Judaism as an Evolving Religious Civilization through the Poetry of Dr. Judith Kaplan Eisenstein

By Rabbi Erin Hirsh

Mordecai Kaplan introduced the idea that Judaism is more than a religion; Judaism is a **civilization**. Religious beliefs and practices are profound aspects of Jewish life, but our Jewish civilization also encompasses art, music, social justice, food, literature, language, history, values and ethics.

Judy's lifelong passion for Jewish music exemplifies her father's appreciation of the central role that creative arts have always played in Jewish communal life. When Judy was a young child, she loved Jewish music. Throughout her life, Judy created, shared, and taught Jewish music. Judy published the very first songbook of Jewish music for children. Eventually, Judy earned a doctorate in Jewish music education and became Dr. Eisenstein. For Jewish people all over the world, the joy of *Hanukah* is not rekindled in our hearts until we sing Dr. Eisenstein's English version of *Hanukah*, *O Hanukah*.

On the next page you will find a poem that Dr. Eisenstein wrote describing the role of Jewish music in our civilization.

It would be a wonderful poem to read aloud when:

- teaching Judy's story or about Jewish music
- celebrating *Shabbat Shira*
- or honoring a cantor or a choir.

It can also be used as a text to study with teens and adults.

Judy's life and career afford us a unique opportunity to teach learners of all ages that Judaism is a civilization at the same time as we teach the richness and power of Jewish music. We can't imagine a more fitting way to honor Dr. Judith Kaplan Eisenstein.

The people gave the music life,
and the music, in turn, pulsed in the people,
passing from parent to child,
and from land to land.
The joys and triumphs,
the tenderness and warmth,
the agony and sorrows,
the prayer and protest which we shared by Jews
and made them one,
were poured into music;
and where they are still felt,
that process continues today.
When we live for a moment with that music,
we are touching the pulse itself,
and our own is quickened in turn.

- *Dr. Judith Kaplan Eisenstein*
Heritage of Music, 1972