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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English version</th>
<th>Yiddish version</th>
<th>Yiddish transliteration</th>
<th>Yiddish literal translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Oh), Hanukah, Oh Hanukah&lt;br&gt;Come light the menorah&lt;br&gt;Let’s have a party&lt;br&gt;We'll all dance the horah&lt;br&gt;Gather 'round the table, we'll give you a treat dreidels (or &quot;sevivon&quot;) to play with, and latkes (or &quot;levivot&quot;) to eat</td>
<td>(Oy), Khanike oy Khanike&lt;br&gt;A vontef a sheynner,&lt;br&gt;A lustiker a freylekher&lt;br&gt;Nisht do nokh azoyner&lt;br&gt;Ale nakht mit dreidlekh shpiln mir,&lt;br&gt;Frishe heyse latkes, esn on a shir.</td>
<td>Geshvinder, tsindt kinder&lt;br&gt;Di Khanike likhtlekh on,&lt;br&gt;Zoge &quot;Al Hanissim&quot;, loybt&lt;br&gt;Gott far di nisim,&lt;br&gt;Un lomer ale tantsn in kon.&lt;br&gt;Zoge &quot;Al Hanissim&quot;, loybt&lt;br&gt;Gott far di nisim,&lt;br&gt;Un lomer ale tantsn in kon.</td>
<td>(Oh), Chanukah, Oh Chanukah&lt;br&gt;A beautiful celebration.&lt;br&gt;Such a cheerful and happy one,&lt;br&gt;There is none like it.&lt;br&gt;Every night with the dreidels we will play.&lt;br&gt;Fresh, hot latkes we will eat endlessly.</td>
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<td>And while we are playing&lt;br&gt;The candles are burning bright (or low)&lt;br&gt;One for each night, they shed a sweet light&lt;br&gt;To remind us of years (or days) long ago&lt;br&gt;One for each night, they shed a sweet light&lt;br&gt;To remind us of years (or days) long ago.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Comme quickly children&lt;br&gt;Light the Chanukah candles&lt;br&gt;Say &quot;Al HaNissim&quot;, praise God for the miracles,&lt;br&gt;And we will all dance together in a circle!&lt;br&gt;Say &quot;Al HaNissim&quot;, praise God for the miracles,&lt;br&gt;And we will all dance together in a circle!</td>
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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?