

Title: Purim Lessons and deeds

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Age Group: Years 7-13, Students and Adults

Format: Text Bank, Lesson Plan

Categories/Topics: Purim

Description: In these lessons students will understand the Purim story in the context of masking our true identity to survive. Some students will achieve an understanding of the inability to have total control over your own destiny. Students will connect the story and lessons of Purim to the importance of community, both Jewish and the wider community as demonstrated in the Mitzvot related to Purim, matanot Laevionim, Mishloach Manot, Seudah Purim and reading the Megillah.

Unit I:

Introduction: These two units will look at the Purim story as an allegory for the Jewish community living in diaspora. Jewish life is dependent on the good will of the governing body of the country and as in the Purim story, the Jewish community needs to take an active role in order to have a role in determining their own destiny. The students will examine this story through looking at the themes of the Purim story and will understand the Mitzvot attached to this holiday as a way of participating in community as a reaction to what might have happened in the Purim story.

Trigger

Hand out a paper plate to each person in the class and ask them to make a mask of the person they would like to be if they could be anyone. They can use words to decorate it or draw on it, whatever they choose.

When they have finished, ask for a few volunteers to describe their masks and explain why they decorated it the way they did. Ask whether people wear different masks, not actual masks, but maybe costumes, in their everyday lives. Can anyone think of any examples? When you are in a situation where you may be vulnerable you sometimes put on a mask to feel safe.

Introduce the Purim story and tell the students that they will read the story over two lessons and will be reading it to look for characters who are vulnerable and the masks they put on to show that they are different. Why do the Jewish characters in the story wear these masks?

Instruct the students to make a table in which they will put columns: **real**, **mask**, and **what do I think**. In the row section they should put the names of the main characters in the story, **Achashverosh**, **Haman**, **Mordechai**, and **Esther**. Split into pairs and give a copy of the Megillah to each pair. Instruct them to read the first 4 chapters and look for each character and in the table fill in what they think the real characteristics are and what they think are the characteristics when this character is wearing some sort of mask. For example, when Mordechai asks Esther to lie about her name and enter the beauty contest what mask is he asking her to wear?

When the class has finished, bring them back together and put a big chart on the board and ask the groups to volunteer what they have put in their squares. If they were going to make a mask for Mordechai what words would they use? Ask the same for each the main characters. Do the characters choose to put on these masks or are they forced to wear them by the situation they are in? Are there other situations that have confronted the Jewish people where they might be forced to wear different masks? Wearing different masks, pretending to be someone we are not can be challenging and can disconnect us from our community. In the next unit we will examine how the Megillah, its lessons and mitzvot we are commanded to do keep us connected to community.

Unit II

Trigger

This lesson will start with a review of the previous lesson. This review will ask the students to create a facebook page for the each of the characters in the Purim story. The profile they will create can either show their true identity or the identity they want to show to the Shushan world. When they have finished this, ask who wants to share the profile they have created with the rest of the class. Then talk about the rest of the of the story of Purim and then split into Chevruta groups to look at the last two chapters of the Megillah. Tell the students that they will need to think about the four mitzvot associated with Purim, Matanot Laevionim, Mishloach Manot , Seudah and Megillah explain what these mitzvot are and ask the students in their chevrotah pairs to think about why these Mitzvot are associated with Purim.

When they come back together, write **COMMUNITY** on the board. Ask what this story has to do with community. Discuss each Mitzvah and ask the students to volunteer what they think regarding how the mitzvah relates to the Purim story and to the idea of community. Through class discussion bridge the concept of wearing masks with identifying with a community and coming home to the Jewish community.

Split into four groups and each group will deal with a different Mitzvah and will have to come up with a way they as a class can fulfil this Mitzvah and help the rest of their school community to fulfil this mitzvah. Come together as a class and each group will choose a volunteer to present their idea.

The class should then have the opportunity to implement the ideas they have come up with.