

Unit 1: *Teshuvah* (5.1)

General Introduction

Why *Teshuvah*?

In a world culture where "talk is cheap," where "I'm sorry" becomes a throwaway line, the idea of repentance with substance is critical. Learning to master the art of *Teshuvah* (returning) beyond the High Holiday timeframe of focused practice is a priceless tool for building and maintaining healthy relationships and friendships throughout the year.

The overall goals in all grade levels are:

- To define the process of *Teshuvah*, returning: review of one's whole self, recognition of those times when one missed the mark (the literal meaning of *chet*), exhibiting sincere remorse for the breach of good behavior, asking for forgiveness and making amends as much as possible, and planning to behave in such a way to be helpful to another human being;
- To apply the '*teshuvah* process' to the life circumstances of the students and their families; providing opportunities for them to consider what went well and what didn't go so well. As Hosea (14:2) said "*return to God and say forgive what is evil and accept what is good.*"
- Learn to recognize the good that we have done and learning to summon the energy and courage that it takes to make good choices again.
- To gain insight into human behavior and how Judaism responds to the realities of the use and abuse of free will; that we are all capable of hurting one another and also making one another's lives better. There is built into every human being a *yetzer hatov*, *yetzer harah* – this is our life force or energy which can be described as an impulse for good and an impulse for evil.
- To help enrich participation in High Holiday services and rituals by adding content in class that will help to make the ritual and symbols more meaningful and more accessible in practice; and
- To understand how Jewish rituals and texts can serve as "coaches" to help improve our behavior and life with others.

Remember: your sessions can never replace a family's ability to live a holiday or a value in 'real time,' in the context of their 'real lives.' The congregation and family must be encouraged to engage the students (children and adults) in appropriate holiday activities and other home-based rituals.

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Developmental Lens: Peers

Consider the attributes of the average fifth grader (10 year old):

- Has a positive approach to life
- High importance of peer relationships - healthy friendships and peer pressure are influential
- Positive self esteem is a critical tool for healthy decision making and resisting negative peer pressure
- Growing independence and sense of responsibility
- Media use is high including television and texting
- Increase in truthfulness and dependability
- May have an improving self-concept and are more accepting of others
- May start forming relationships with teachers, coaches, and counselors.

(Developmental information from Responsive Classroom, www.responsiveclassroom.org and published in the book "Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14" from Northeast Foundation for Children.) (5.1.1 Responsive Classroom)

For this reason, we are using the "peer" lens to frame this grade's values, and we are focusing on the strength of character required to be forgiving and to ask forgiveness of their peers. How these 5th graders learn to relate to each other now can have far reaching effects on their future group behavior - in class, on teams, and in work groups.

Genesis (5: 1) The tradition tell us "Love your neighbor as yourself" and "we are created in the Image of God." We are born in the image of God and our actions allow us to live in the likeness of God.

The unit learning goals build on these ideas. We want the student to understand how participation in a group affects their behavior (for better or for worse). Since it will also affect them, they have a responsibility to the group to monitor their behavior and to be concerned about the behavior of others. This unit should address issues of peer pressure and group coercion. We can then define the process of *teshuvah* as a tool that empowers them as individuals to positively influence others in their groups (by giving them concrete steps to intervene in peer conflict situations).

The vocabulary for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur should be reviewed and framed as illustrations of acts of mutuality and responsibility. So *teshuvah* is looking back to the Image in which we were created and to the God who created us, *tefillah* is *measuring ourselves (palul) against our own aspirations and the aspirations of the tradition for us*, and *tzedakah* is the activity of healing the relationship, Isaiah (54:14) *Clear the stones, remove all obstacles from the road of my people* - so that we can reconnect with others again and start anew.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we spend a great deal of time indoors, self-reflecting, asking for forgiveness and planning how we want to *be* in the year ahead. Sukkot on the contrary is *Z'man Simchateinu*, the time or season of our joy. This becomes the time when we go out into the world and we try on our good intentions for size. Sukkot, the festival of booths offers opportunities to, meet with others, enjoy the outdoors and perhaps help to build a sukkah, a hut or booth *Ushpizin*, the tradition of inviting guests or visitors into one's sukkah is a great opportunity for students to try on their good intentions for size in terms of relating with others. First, through hospitality, acts which compel us to think of the needs of others and second, by inviting in people from the tradition as metaphors whom we can model ourselves after. The aim is to lead students to become more sensitive to interpersonal responsibilities that are the most vulnerable and that need *teshuvah* to repair, such as *mitzvot ben adam lechaveiro*, mitzvot between people – how to treat each other.

We encourage you to find songs in Hebrew and English, in addition to the songs we have included that speak to these points. [Craig Taubman](#), [Debbie Friedman](#), [Dan Nichols](#), [Rick Recht](#), [Mama Donni](#) (5.1.1 Oysongs) and many others have written such songs/prayers.

Overview

Enduring Understanding

Our beliefs that every person is created in the Image of God and we are to love our neighbors as ourselves compels us to find the strength to step in and change our behavior even when it is difficult.

Essential Questions

What is the extent of my responsibility to others?

Unit Learning Goals

By the end of this unit, students will:

Know:

- That during this time of *teshuvah* we need to be mindful of all that we may have done, the bad and the good things as well. Together, the good and the bad can give us courage and compassion with which we start anew.
- Their experience is valuable. That they were made in the image of God and that others were also made in this image and should be treated as such.
- Mistakes almost always can be remedied. That in the Jewish tradition a misstep is called a "*chet*," which means missing the mark, and that most missteps can be corrected.

Feel:

- They are capable.
- They have a choice.

Do:

- Opportunities to apply *teshuvah* and forgiveness concepts.

Unit Vocabulary

Hebrew	Transliteration	Translation
חטא	<i>Chet</i>	Missing the mark
הכנסת אורחים	<i>hachnasat orchim</i>	Welcoming guests
עדה	<i>Edah</i>	Group

כלל ישראל	<i>klal Yisrael</i>	Community of Israel (Jewish people)
ברית	<i>b'rit</i>	Covenant
תוכחה	<i>Tocheicha</i>	Rebuke
תשובה, תפילה, צדקה	<i>teshuvah/tefilah/tzedakah</i>	Repentance, prayer, just giving
לא תעמוד	<i>lo ta'amod</i>	the moral imperative not to stand idly by
אושפיזין	<i>Ushpizin</i>	Guests in the sukkah

Kickoff Questions

The students should take the unit Kickoff Questions survey online. Emphasize that the materials covered in the quiz will be taught during the unit and it is ok to get a question wrong (aka “miss the mark!”).

Lesson Plan Guide

In order to help you understand how activities relate to the overall unit and assist you in selecting the appropriate activities for your setting, each activity has tags at the bottom that are related to the enduring understanding as well as type of activity.

Enduring Understandings: These are ways for you to filter which sections fit into the goals you are trying to achieve more specifically. For the Teshuva unit they include:

- Love your neighbor
- Ritual reminders
- Finding strength
- Changing behavior
- Personal growth

Tags: These are categories of types of learning/activities in each section or a specific Jewish topic

Unit Lesson Overview

1. Being a part of any group requires awareness about our interactions and relationships with others in the group. The High Holiday season offers rituals and symbols to remind us to recognize our mistakes and their impact on others.

2. Being a member of a group gives you the responsibility to recognize and speak up when the group's behavior has gone astray and requires reflection and change.
3. The holidays of *Tishrei* provide us the opportunity to appreciate diversity among people and understand how we can improve at welcoming other people based on their individual needs.
4. By engaging in reflection, we can make change within ourselves and others and demonstrate our need to be responsible for one another.

Week 1: Teshuvah (5.1.1) Havurah or Online Class

Being a part of any group requires awareness about our interactions and relationships with others in the group. The High Holiday season offers rituals and symbols to remind us to recognize our mistakes and their impact on others.

Teachers: The links to the resources in ShalomLearning will work from this document when you are concurrently logged in. Otherwise, the name of the resource is given.

Suggested Setting

The *Havurah*¹ session is your opportunity to introduce the topic of the month to both students and parents. Since family engagement is a critical component to the success of all Shalom Learning's goals, careful planning of the *Havurah* sessions is critical. The choice of venue can enhance the activities. For *teshuvah* in the fall, we suggest a site where families can do apple picking (Rosh Hashanah), vegetable gleaning (Sukkot), a group *tashlich*² near a stream, and/or where you can hold a party celebrating the Jewish and academic new years. Another option is helping to build a sukkah for a local group home or a senior living residence. Use this experience as a prompt for discussions about being sensitive to the needs of others and to group dynamics – harnessing the courage and energy to be ourselves amidst a group and to have positive impact on the group.

Learning Goals

- Students will get to know a little bit about their classmates and get used to the ShalomLearning interface.
- Students will associate Rosh Hashana with a new beginning and a chance to learn from past mistakes.

¹ A *chavurah* or *havurah* (חבורה Hebrew: "fellowship", plural *chavurot*) is a small group of like-minded Jews who assemble for the purposes of facilitating Shabbat and holiday prayer services, sharing communal experiences such as lifecycle events, or Jewish learning

² *Tashlich* is a Jewish ritual, performed on the afternoon usually of the first day of Rosh Hashanah, in which the participants symbolically cast off their sins by gathering along the banks of a river or stream and reciting prayer of repentance. See http://www.chabad.org/holidays/jewishnewyear/template_cdo/aid/564247/jewish/What-is-Tashlich.htm (5.1.1 Chabad)

- Students will learn about some of the Rosh Hashana rituals including blowing the shofar, eating symbolic foods, tashlich. Students will understand the symbolism of actions and see them as a catalyst for personal change.
- Students will reflect on their own behavior and the potential that a new beginning has to offer.

Mistakes Happen!

Time Allotment 10 minutes

Teacher begins a discussion of fixing mistakes by presenting the following scenario.

There are only two minutes left in the big soccer game and Abigail's team is down by one. Abigail gets the ball and makes a perfect pass to her teammate Sherry who is standing right in front of the goal. Sherry kicks the ball but it bounces off of the goal post and doesn't go in. Game over. After the game, Abigail tells Brenda that Sherry is a terrible player. Brenda tells Sherry that Abigail said that about her. Next day in school Sherry refuses to speak to Abigail.

Discussion:

- What mistake did Abigail make?
- How can she try to fix her mistake?
- Did anyone else in the story make a mistake?
- Were all mistakes made equal?
- Do they all have the same solution?
- Can you think of any other scenarios like this one where mistakes were made?
- How might those scenarios be changed to fix the mistakes?

(Additional 15 minutes for in-person class) Students can be broken up into groups of four. Two members of the group can come up with and act out a scenario and the other two members can discuss the mistake. Alternatively, the class can brainstorm scenarios and the teacher can assign each one to a group to discuss.

Connection to Enduring Understanding: Love your neighbor, personal growth

Tags: skits, discussion, mistakes

Learning from Mistakes

Time Allotment: 10 minutes

Video: **Former Apple CEO John Sculley: You Learn from Your Mistakes, Not Your Successes (5.1.1 John Sculley)**

John Sculley discusses that to run a successful business, it is crucial to learn from your mistakes. He explains that everyone makes mistakes, the key to success is to learn from them for next time. This is an important idea in understanding teshuva as a positive step towards growth. Everyone will make mistakes but Rosh Hashana and teshuva remind us to learn from our mistakes.

Discussion:

- Why do some people not want to admit that they have made a mistake?
- How can recognizing that you made a mistake help you become a better person?
- In the video, John Sculley says that the mark of a good entrepreneur is “never give up.” How does this apply to teshuva?
- Can you think of a time that you made a mistake?
- Was it hard for you to recognize the mistake?
- How might you behave differently next time?

Connection to Enduring Understanding: finding strength, changing behavior, personal growth

Tags: video, discussion, mistakes

Teshuva – Roots of the Word

Havurah and Online

Time allotment 10 minutes

Write the word תשובה / *teshuva* on a white board or on butcher paper or display slide on the screen. *Does anyone know what this word means?*

Highlight the letters שׁוּב in the middle of תשובה. Explain that the root of the word in Hebrew often shows an essential quality of the word. The root of word teshuva is שׁוּב – return/again.

In person class activity: Everyone stand up and move to a different part of the room and high five someone on the way. Now RETURN to your seat.

Online activity: Stand up and go get something from another part of the room and then RETURN to the computer.

Discussion:

- Why was it important for you to return to your seat after you got up?
- Without your return, would we have been able to keep going in our class?
- When you make a mistake, do you need to do anything to continue on?
- Why do you think that we use the word for return when we talk about fixing our mistakes?
- What are we returning to when we do teshuva?
 - “To God”: How might we show God that we are doing teshuva?
 - “To our good selves”: What are some ways you try to be a good person? How might we do teshuva for ourselves to get back to these things?
 - “To our community”: Why is it important to remember that we are part of a community? How might we do teshuva for our community?

Connection to Enduring Understanding: personal growth, changing behavior, finding strength, love your neighbor

Tags: Hebrew, discussion

Brain Break: Hokey Pokey

Time Allotment: 3 minutes

Class: Havurah and Online

Rosh Hashana Rituals

Time Allotment: 5 minutes

Class: Havurah and Online

Doing Teshuva is represented in the rituals and symbols of Rosh Hashana.

Why do you think each of these symbols is part of Rosh Hashana?

How do these symbols make us think about Teshuva?

If you would do teshuva on Rosh Hashana, how could it change your year?

Symbolism:

- Apple in Honey – Looking forward to a sweet new Year
- Fish Head – Hope to be a “head” and not a “tail.” This means we should be leaders, not followers, we should have goodness in our lives, not difficulties.
- Pomegranate – The pomegranate has many seeds and we hope to have many good deeds in the new year

Connection to Enduring Understanding: ritual reminders

Tags: food, discussion, Rosh Hashana, rituals

Steps to Teshuva

Time Allotment: 10 minutes

Class: *Havurah* and Online

Moses Maimonides defined Teshuva as having four parts:

- Recognize your mistake
- Regret what you have done
- Apologize/confesses and try to make it right
- Make a plan so you will not to do it again

Discussion:

- Why do you think each part is important?
 - What does it mean to regret something? How do you know when you regret something?
 - Why is it important to say out loud what you have done? How does it affect you? How does it affect other people?
 - What are some ways you can try and remember not to make the same mistakes?
- How would these three steps help a person do teshuva?

Connection to Enduring Understanding: finding strength, changing behavior, personal strength

Tags: discussion, text

Virtual Tashlich

Time Allotment: 15 minutes

Class: *Havurah* and Online

Tashlich is another Rosh Hashana ritual in which we say a prayer next to water and symbolically throw our sins into the water by tossing pieces of bread. It represents that we are starting the year fresh. It is another method of looking at our past mistakes and having a new beginning.

Activity:

Show this brief video explaining Tashlich.

<https://youtu.be/JmlPBP3fC1k> (5.1.1 Tashlich A Rosh Hashanah Tradition)

Tashlich is the Hebrew word for “casting off/throwing off”. An early example of this custom, carried out by Babylonian Jews was to send a “sin-filled” container out into the waters. Kurdistan Jews threw themselves into the water and swam around to be cleansed of their sins.

Divide the class into groups. Ask each group to create a new ritual that can symbolize the casting off of the wrongs that they have committed in the last year.

Students can create a reading or a prayer to accompany their ritual, include ritual items and explanations of how they relate to the themes of *tashlich*.

Connection to Enduring Understanding: personal growth, changing behavior, finding strength, ritual reminder

Tags: tashlich, ritual, writing, activity

Rosh Hashana Party with Symbolic Foods

Time Allotment: 15 minutes

Class: *Havurah* only

Join other *Havurah* groups at a *Rosh Hashanah* party and eat the symbolic foods, using the *yehi ratzon* formulas

<http://torah.org/learning/yomtov-roshhashanah-vol1no38a/> (5.1.1 Yehi Ratzon)

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaism/species.html> Which of these foods can help us think about our behaviors when in a group? Challenge parents and students to come up with their own *yehi ratzon* puns related to group behavior, using any food or object they wish.

Connection to Enduring Understanding: changing behavior, ritual reminder

Tags: food, ritual, *yehi ratzon*, family, Rosh Hashana

Wrap Up

Time Allotment: 3 minutes

- Everyone makes mistakes, but you can become a great person if you don't give up and fix your mistakes
- Rosh Hashana rituals remind us that every year we have a new beginning and can fix our mistakes
- Next week: Teshuva can help you be a better friend!

Table Talk

What is a mistake you made that you wish you could go back and fix? Discuss!

MyShalomLearning Activity

This week we talked about teshuva and starting fresh for the New Year. A great way to have a fresh start is with your friends. Please watch the following video clip: "You never had a friend like me" from Aladdin – in Hebrew!

Link - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJ5x7t_23BE

Discussion Questions to answer:

1. Can you describe one occasion in which you acted like a good friend?
2. What about your actions showed that you were a good friend?