



Yiddishkeit ain't a competition A High School Chanuka Lesson

By Mrs R Moore, Torah Umesorah Manchester

LO: Students will be able to appreciate how different the Yidden are to the Greeks. Students will realise how Greek culture is all about competition vs Yiddishkeit which screams the opposite and is focused on personal growth and humility.

Resources:

- Lesson plan
- Poster
- Personal growth diary

Explain: Greek culture is all about competition. The Greeks were very into sports, their ancient games were held in Olympia, Greece and that's where the concept of the Olympics comes from today. To the Greeks, winning was everything, even at the expense of basic decency, Middos and morals. Respect for one another and 'don't do to others what you don't want done to yourself,' was non-existent. To the Greek, there was only one winner and everyone else was a loser. Success to them came as a result of defeating someone else, no matter the area.

In Yiddishkeit, we have the complete opposite **השקפה**. In **פרקי אבות ד'א:**, we learn:

איזהו חכם? הלומד מכל כולם.

איזהו גיבור? הכובש את יצרו.

איזהו עשיר? השמח בחלקו.

איזהו מכבד? המכבד את הבריות.

Who is wise? He who learns from everyone.

Who is strong? He who can overpower his personal weakness.

Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot.

Who is honoured? He who honours others.

In Greek, this would be:

Who is wise? He who is wiser and more smart than the next.

Who is strong? He who beats the other person.

Who is rich? He who has more wealth than the next.

Who is honoured? He who is honoured and awarded by others.

Message: In Yiddishkeit, we only compete against ourselves. Being wise comes, when we learn from everyone else. Being strong is all about overcoming our own personal challenges and weaknesses. Being wealthy is all about appreciating and valuing the gifts that Hashem has given us. Being honoured comes when we honour others.

No matter how knowledgeable or clever we may be, we need to always remember to be humble and that we can learn something from everyone, no matter their status in society.

This Chanukah, let's focus on four things: Being wealthy. Being strong. Being honoured and being wise- from the **תורה** perspective of course...

In practice: We will focus and expand upon the four points of today's lesson.

Wisdom. Students should be given a class list and they need to write one Middah that they can learn from each classmate and how that classmate practises it. (There are good Middos that we can learn from every Yid.)

Strength. Students should identify a weakness that they have and keep it private to themselves. Students should then focus on working on this area and use the 8 day diary to help them keep track of their progress.

Wealth. We all have been blessed with so much in our lives. If we open our eyes, we will see how much we have to be grateful for. However, we can choose to focus on our blessings, or we can choose to focus on what we are missing. By choosing to opt for the former, we will see how much happier we will become.

Quick experiment:

Look around the room for 20 seconds and find all the blue things that you can see.
(Wait 20 seconds)

Ok, what did you see that was green? After students point out that you said 'blue', reply: "But you looked around, right? So why can't you tell me what was green?"

This illustrates how we expand what we focus on in our minds, whilst everything else (the green) fades away. Our brains rewire this way. How we choose to look at our lives, will determine how 'rich' we truly are and what we will take through our day / lives.

Honour. How can we honour other people? Respecting and appreciating them for who they are.

Expressing gratitude to others. When we express gratitude, we communicate to people that they matter to us and we appreciate and value them.

Gratitude letter

Instructions: Choose an adult (preferably a mentor) who you are really grateful for

and write him or her a letter to express your gratitude. Remember to be honest and specific. The more effort you put into writing your letter, the more your message will mean to the other person.

You can use the letter template below and fill in the blank spaces, or write the entire letter in your own words. You can include anything you want, but be sure to describe:

The ways this person helped you

How this person's help benefited you and made your life better

The time or effort it cost that person to help you

Why this person chose to help you

How you feel about this person.

After you write your letter, give it to the other person. You could deliver your letter in person, read it to him or her over the phone, or send it through email—it's up to you! But remember, this activity works best if you read the letter in person. We know it may feel a bit awkward, but it's more likely to make you and the other person feel good!

Gratitude Letter Template

Dear Person's name,

Thank you so much for (describe the kinds of things this person has done to help you). This has really helped me (describe how this person's actions have benefited you or what he or she inspires you to do). I also really appreciate how you (describe other things that this person does to help you or make your life better). I realise that (describe what it costs this person to help you in these ways). Your actions show me that (say why you think this person wanted to help you) and (what promise you think this person sees in you). I (describe how you feel about this person). Thanks to you I want to (say what this person motivates you to do).

Gratefully,
(Your name)

Summary:

On זאת חנוכה gather the students to discuss their take-aways from this project. Teacher should have a big dice on the desk and pick on students to roll it and answer the associating question.

1. How did the lesson on Yiddishkeit vs the Greeks impact you?
2. Did you feel like the growth diary helped you achieve your goal? Explain.
3. What is one way that we can honour other people?
4. Name a particular מידה that you appreciate from any one of your classmates.
5. What was the reaction of the person to whom you presented the gratitude letter?
6. Name something in your life that makes you feel extremely 'wealthy'.