DEVELOPING OUTREACH PROGRAMS

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Developing Outreach Programs

I. History of Reform Outreach
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Thesis Statement: When Moses Mendelssohn translated the Torah, the Five Books of Moses, into German, he started an outreach revolution. Outreach has become one of the most important programs of Reform Judaism. To encourage our unaffiliated and uneducated to learn more about Judaism we must continue to offer new and exciting programs to interest and influence them.
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JEWISH ENLIGHTENMENT WAS BEGINNING AND THE FIRST PERSON WHO WAS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS NEW ERA WAS MOSES MENDELSOHN. BORN IN 1729 TO A POOR Ghetto FAMILY IN GERMANY, MOSES SPENT HIS TIME IN TYPICAL ORTHODOX JEWISH SURROUNDING. PHYSICALLY, HE WAS NOT PREPOSSESSING, HIS DISPOSITION WAS GENTLE AND HIS MASTERY OF GERMAN SO COMPLETE THAT HE EXERCISED A MAGNETIC FASCINATION ON EVERYONE HE MET.

MENDELSOHN'S MAIN IMPACT WAS ON HIS OWN PEOPLE. HE BROODED ABOUT THE WAYS OF Ghetto LIFE AND THE BACKWARD JEWISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. WHY, HE WONDERED, SHOULD JEWS BE RESTRICTED TO THE USE OF ONLY YIDDISH, AND THEIR OWN CUSTOMS? MENDELSOHN DECIDED TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN PROVIDING THE ANSWERS. WITH THE HELP OF A FRIEND, MENDELSOHN TRANSLATED THE TORAH, THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES, INTO GERMAN. THIS TRANSLATION TOOK OVER FIVE YEARS.

WITHIN A GENERATION THE MENDELSOHN BIBLE HAD FOUND ITS WAY INTO ALMOST EVERY LITERATE JEWISH HOME IN CENTRAL EUROPE. A NEW WORLD HAD OPENED FOR Ghetto JEWS, AS GROWING NUMBERS SOUGHT TO UNDERSTAND MORE OF THE NON-JEWISH CIVILIZATION AROUND THEM.
WHAT IS MENDELSSOHN'S PLACE IN OUR PRESENT DAY PROGRAM OF OUTREACH? THE PASSION FOR EXPLORATION PROBABLY WOULD HAVE GROWN WITHOUT HIM. BUT THE SPEED OF INTEGRATING DEVELOPMENT WOULD PROBABLY BEEN MUCH SLOWER. HE BELIEVED THAT HIS TRANSLATION OF THE TORAH WOULD TOUCH OFF A QUIET REVOLUTION IN JEWISH CULTURE. WITHIN TWO DECADES AFTER HIS DEATH, GERMAN JEWS HAD LEARNED GERMAN CULTURE, AND IT WAS THIS MASTERY THAT IMMEASURABLY ENRICHED GERMAN AS WELL AS JEWISH CIVILIZATION. THE TWO CULTURES WERE JOINED TOGETHER IN THE FIRST EXAMPLE OF OUTREACH.

THE OUTREACH MOVEMENT COULD NOT BE STOPPED IN GERMANY. WHEN MEMBERS OF THE GERMAN JEWISH COMMUNITY ARRIVED IN AMERICA, THEY WANTED TO CONTINUE TO CHANGE THE OLD WAYS AND ASSIMILATE IN THIS, THEIR NEW COUNTRY.

THE LEADERS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY BROUGHT WITH THEM THE NEW THOUGHTS AND NEW IDEAS FOR THE OLD RELIGION. IDEAS OF MAN'S FREEDOM TO THINK AND TO CHOOSE HIS OWN FORM OF GOVERNMENT FOUND EXPRESSION IN AMERICA. THE JEWISH COMMUNITY, LONG WITHOUT A COUNTRY AND WITHOUT CIVIC RIGHTS, SUDDENLY FOUND EQUALITY AND FREEDOM OF EDUCATION. WITH EAGERNESS, THE WESTERN JEW LEFT HIS GHETTO AND TRIED TO FIND A PLACE IN THE LARGER SOCIETY.

COULD A JEW CONTINUE TO BE A JEW AND STILL ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF THE GREAT REVOLUTIONS? COULD THEY BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE TWO WORLDS AND REMAIN OBservANT, JEWS. SOME CHOSE TO ESCAPE ALTOGETHER FROM THE BURDEN OF
BEING JEWS, AND SOME NEEDED TO MODERNIZE THE ANCIENT
WITH SIGNIFICANT STIMULUS AND REFORM. THIS WAS THE
RISE OF REFORM, AND THROUGH REFORMS CAME THE NEED TO REACH
OUT TO THE UNAFFILIATED, THE INTER-MARRIED, AND THE NON-JEW.

THROUGH THE U.A.H.C. AN OFFICIAL OUTREACH PROGRAM WAS
CONCEIVED IN 1978, TO REACH THE UNAFFILIATED AND JEWS-BY-CHOICE.
THIS PROGRAM HAS TAKEN ROOT IN REFORM JUDAISM, AND ITS
IMPACT HAS BEEN FELT THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE NORTH AMERICAN
JEWISH COMMUNITY.

THE U.A.H.C. HAS DEVELOPED AND ENCOURAGED TEMPLES TO
DEVELOP INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM CLASSES, SUPPORT GROUPS FOR
INTERFAITH COUPLES, ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES FOR
JEWS-BY-CHOICE, PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH ON INTERDATING AND MANY,
MANY MORE. AN OUTREACH LIBRARY OF RESOURCES, INCLUDING
FILMS, PROGRAMS GUIDES AND FACILITATORS' MANUALS HAVE BEEN
DEVELOPED, AND OUTREACH TRAINING PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN
INSTITUTED FOR PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS ALIKE.

THE GOAL OF THE OUTREACH PROGRAM IS TO STRENGTHEN
JUDAISM BY HELPING INDIVIDUALS BUILD THEIR PERSONAL
CONNECTIONS TO REFORM JUDAISM, FROM THE INDIVIDUAL TO
THE COMMUNITY. BONDS CAN BE STRENGTHENED WHEN EVERY MEMBER OF
THE TEMPLE HAS A CLEAR SENSE OF THEIR RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC
IDENTITY. OUTREACH IS NOT ONLY FOR THE CONVERT OR
INTERMARRIED, IT IS ABOUT BEING JEWISH.
THE TEMPLE CAN ACCOMPLISH AN OUTREACH AWARENESS EVEN BEFORE A COMMITTEE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED. ARTICLES IN TEMPLE BULLETINS CAN BEGIN THE PUBLIC RELATIONS, SHABBAT SERMONS, QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS, PROGRAMS AT AUXILIARY GROUPS SUCH AS ADULT EDUCATION, SISTERHOOD AND BROTHERHOOD GROUPS. CONGREGATIONS DO NOT GENERALLY BECOME AWARE OF OUTREACH WITH JUST ONE PRESENTATION. IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO DO EXTENSIVE PUBLICITY. OF COURSE, THE OUTREACH PROGRAM MUST HAVE RABBINIC ENDORSEMENT, AND MANY RABBIS WILL WRITE ARTICLES FOR THEIR TEMPLE BULLETINS EXPLAINING OUTREACH.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT, ALONG WITH OUTREACH GOALS, ARE A CRITICAL STEP IN THE OUTREACH PROGRAM. THIS CAN BE DONE BY A COMMITTEE MEETING, AN OUTREACH NEED ASSESSMENT SURVEY AND A GENERAL MEETING OF INTERESTED PARTIES. THE TEMPLE MAY FIND THAT THE GENERAL NEEDS ARE FOR HOLIDAY WORKSHOPS, FOR JEWISH EDUCATION SERIES OR SUPPORT GROUPS. PERHAPS CONVERSION CLASSES NEED TO BE OFFERED, OR INTERFAITH MEETINGS.

A WONDERFUL IDEA FOR BRINGING NEW FACES INTO TEMPLE LIFE IS TO ADVERTISE IN THE LOCAL NEWSPAPERS. THIS BRINGS THE COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND OFFERS TO NON-MEMBERS A CHANCE TO LEARN ABOUT JUDAISM AND WHAT PROGRAMS ARE OFFERED. THIS, IN TURN, BRINGS ABOUT UNDERSTANDING AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEMPLE MEMBERS AND INTERFAITH COUPLES ALONG WITH THE COMMUNITY.
WHEN A PROGRAM IS STARTED WITH REGARD TO OUTREACH, A THOROUGH EXAMINATION MUST BE MADE OF THE TEMPLE'S BY-LAWS. WHAT IS A MEMBER, CAN A NON-JEW BE A MEMBER, CAN THEY HOLD OFFICE? IS IT IMPORTANT ENOUGH FOR THE TEMPLE TO MAKE EACH OFFICER A JEW, CONVERTED OR BORN? THESE ARE A FEW OF THE QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO DEALT WITH REGARDING OUTREACH. THERE IS A NEED FOR BOUNDARIES TO BE SET BY EACH PARTICULAR CONGREGATION. WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE SYNAGOGUE? ISSUES MUST BE RAISED BY THE RABBINIC AND LAY LEADERSHIP REGARDING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN JEWS AND NON-JEWS.

MANY TEMPLE'S STRESS THAT MEMBERSHIP MUST BE RESERVED FOR THOSE OF THE JEWISH FAITH, BUT MAKE IF CLEAR THAT PARTICIPATION OF NON-JEWISH SPOUSES IS ENCOURAGED. RITUAL DECISIONS ARE MOST OFTEN MADE BY THE RABBI, AND POSITIONS RANGE FROM A STRICT READING OF TRADITION TO LIBERAL INTERPRETATIONS. FOR LIFE CYCLE EVENTS THE RABBI IS USUALLY SENSITIVE TO THE MEMBERS AND HOW THEY HAVE RAISED THEIR CHILDREN. THE NON-JEWISH PARENT CAN BE INCLUDED IN A MEANINGFUL WAY AND INVITED TO SIT ON THE BIMAH DURING A LIFE CYCLE EVENT. RITUAL BOUNDARIES SHOULD BE NARROW ENOUGH TO PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY OF JUDAISM BUT BROAD ENOUGH TO INCLUDE THE NON-JEWS WHO HAVE SHOWN A PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO RAISING JEWISH CHILDREN.
AFTER THE SURVEYS HAVE BEEN SENT OUT, AFTER THE PUBLIC RELATIONS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED, AND FINALLY AFTER THE BOARD HAS COME TO DECISIONS ON THE BY-LAWS, ONLY THEN CAN COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON'S BEGIN THE SPECIAL EVENTS. (see page 11a)

DECEMBER BECOMES A DIFFICULT TIME FOR JEWS AND FOR JEWS-BY-CHOICE. MANY FEEL DEPRIVED AND SAD BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT CELEBRATING THIS HIGHLY COMMERCIALIZED HOLIDAY. THIS IS A CRITICAL TIME FOR THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE TO HAVE PROGRAMS TEACHING THE RELIGIOUS VALUES OF CHANUKAH, THE FREEDOM OF RELIGION, DEDICATION AND VALUES EMBODIED IN JUDAISM. AND WITH THE HELP OF THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES WILL LEARN THESE VALUES AND, IN TURN, WILL BUILD THEIR OWN TRADITIONS.

A CHANUKAH EVENT TO BRING MEMBERS AND NON MEMBERS INTO THE TEMPLE IS A DINNER WITH FAMILIES OF ALL AGES BEING INVITED. THE RABBI COULD OPEN BY TELLING THE STORY OF CHANUKAH. THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THIS CELEBRATION IS TO MAKE EVERYONE WELCOME AND CREATE A WARM ATMOSPHERE FOR ALL ATTENDING.

A SIGNIFICANT PART OF THE OUTREACH PROGRAM IS TO REACH THE YOUNG MEMBERS OF THE TEMPLE AND COMMUNITY. A PANEL DISCUSSION ATTENDED BY TEENS RAISED IN HOMES WITH JEWISH AND NONJEWISH PARENTS IS A GOOD START. THIS DISCUSSION MIGHT HAVE THE RABBI OR A LAY MEMBER OF THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE AS A MEDIATOR AND DISCUSS THE WAY EACH TEEN HANDLES THEIR DECEMBER DILEMMA. THIS DISCUSSION WILL BRING THE PROBLEMS OF EACH TEEN TO THE SURFACE AND WILL HELP THEM TO UNDERSTAND THEIR OWN PROBLEM. (see page 11b)
EVERY JEWISH HOLIDAY WE CELEBRATE CAN BECOME A STEPPING STONE FOR REACHING OUT TO THE MEMBERS OF OUR TARGETED GROUPS. PASSOVER BECOMES A WONDERFUL EVENT TO BRING THE JEW BY CHOICE AND THE UNAFFILIATED INTO THE TEMPLE. A MOCK SEDER, HELD WITH THE RABBI OR HEAD OF THE COMMITTEE, EXPLAINING THE HISTORY OF PASSOVER AND GOING OVER EACH PART OF THE SEDER AND THE HAGGADAH IS AN EXCELLENT BEGINNING. A MOCK SEDER IS BEST HELD ABOUT A WEEK BEFORE PASSOVER TO FAMILIARIZE EACH PERSON ATTENDING WITH THE TRADITIONS OF THE PASSOVER SEDER. MEMBERS OF THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE CAN BRING OR MAKE TRADITIONAL PASSOVER FOODS TO THE SEDER. IT IS A NICE THOUGHT TO ARRANGE TO MAKE A FEW SPECIAL DISHES WITH THE PEOPLE ATTENDING, BEFORE THE MOCK SEDER BEGINS. THIS ALLOWS EVERYONE TO JOIN IN AND FEEL A PART OF THIS SPECIAL TIME.

THIS MOCK SEDER IS A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF THE OUTREACH PROGRAM.

(see page 11c)

THE YOUNG FAMILIES OF THE TEMPLE AND COMMUNITY OFTEN ARE NOT MADE TO FEEL COMFORTABLE IN THE TEMPLE FOR SERVICES. A SPECIAL SHABBAT SERVICE FOR "TOT'S" IS A WONDERFUL WAY TO MAKE GRANDPARENTS, PARENTS AND CHILDREN FEEL WELCOME. A KABBALOT SHABBAT SERVICE WITH A SHORT SHABBAT DINNER AFTERWARDS MAKES A INVITING AND INTERESTING OUTREACH PROGRAM.

(see page 11d)
PURIM IS ONE OF THE BEST HOLIDAYS TO BRING PEOPLE INTO THE TEMPLE AND TO LEARN ABOUT JUDAISM. A HAPPY FESTIVAL WITH A SPECIAL THEME FOR EVERYONE. THE YOUNG FAMILIES CAN BE INVITED TO THE PURIM CARNIVAL OR A COSTUME PARADE. THE OLDER MEMBERS COULD BE INVITED FOR THE MEGILLAH READING. AGAIN, THE RABBI NEEDS TO EXPLAIN THE HISTORY OF PURIM TO ALL THOSE ATTENDING.

ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS CAN BE OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO THE OUTREACH PROGRAM. HELD DURING THE DAY OR IN THE EVENING, ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS CAN BE SCHEDULED WITH ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES. A FEW PROGRAMS COULD CENTER AROUND JEWISH LIFE CYCLE CEREMONIES, GOD CONCEPTS, JEWISH MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS, ISRAEL, OR A TOUR AND DISCUSSION OF THE SYNAGOGUE. A MAIN SPEAKER COULD BE BROUGHT IN OR THE RABBI COULD LEAD EACH GROUP. DISCUSSION SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED AND QUESTIONS ANSWERED WITH A FRIENDLY ATTITUDE. SMALL ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES ARE IDEAL, AS PEOPLE WILL FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE.

THROUGHOUT HISTORY JEWS HAVE TRIED TO ASSIMILATE AND THROUGH THIS EVOLVED OUR REFORM JUDAISM. CHANGE WAS GOOD, AND EVEN MORE IMPORTANT WAS THE ASPECT OF BRINGING INTO OUR RELIGION MORE EDUCATED AND INFORMED MEMBERS, CONVERTS OR JEWS, NEEDING TO AFFILIATE WITH A TEMPLE. OUTREACH EXPLORES THE POTENTIAL THAT CONVERSION OFFERS AND THE EDUCATION THAT JEWS-BY-CHOICE FIND THEY NEED. THE OUTREACH PROGRAM CAN ASSIST BORN JEWS AND JEWS-BY-CHOICE IN DEVELOPING THEIR JEWISH IDENTITY.

NEW PROGRAMS ARE BEING DEVELOPED EVERYDAY, PROGRAMS TO HELP GRANDPARENTS OF INTERFAITH GRANDCHILDREN, PROGRAMS TO HELP ANSWER THE QUESTIONS INHERENT IN INTERFAITH MARRIAGES, BOTH FOR THE PARENTS AND FOR THE COUPLE THAT ARE TO BE MARRIED.
WITH ALL THE WORK BEING DONE ON THE OUTREACH PROGRAMS, WITH
THE PUBLICITY AND NEW PROGRAMS BEING INTRODUCED IN THE
TEMPLES, THERE IS ONE MORE PROBLEM THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED.
SOME MEMBERS OF TEMPLES OR BOARD MEMBERS, THAT HAVE A LONG
HISTORY WITH JUDAISM, TEND TO HAVE A BIASED OUTLOOK ON THE
JEW-BY-CHOICE. IF THIS IS THE CASE, THEN THIS MUST BE BROUGHT TO
THE ATTENTION OF THE RABBI AND LAY LEADERSHIP SO THEY CAN BE
EDUCATED.

MANY MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY WILL ASK A SOON TO
BE CONVERT "WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO DO A THING LIKE THAT?"
THIS REACTION WILL CAUSE THE CONVERT TO FEEL UNWELCOMED.
MANY JEWS FEEL THAT BECAUSE A PERSON WAS NOT BORN
A JEW, OR BORN OF A JEWISH MOTHER, THEY ARE NOT A FULL JEW.

THE RECENT INCREASE IN CONVERSION TO JUDAISM HAS TAKEN
MANY JEWS BY SURPRISE, AND MANY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT.
MANY POSSESS NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD CONVERTS DUE TO
JEWISH ISOLATION, PERSECUTION AND OSTRACISM FROM THE GENERAL
COMMUNITY.

THE OUTREACH PROGRAM SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO EDUCATE THE
BORN-JEW ALONG WITH THE JEW-BY-CHOICE. THERE IS A NEED TO
FURTHER INCREASE AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY TO THIS IMPORTANT
AND TIMELY SUBJECT.
A MINI-COURSE PRIMARILY DESIGNED TO EDUCATE ABOUT CONVERSION, HAS THE BONUS OF FOCUSING ATTENTION ON THE QUESTION "WHY BE JEWISH?" THIS IS A QUESTION, USUALLY NEVER ASKED BY A BORN-JEW, BUT IS CENTRAL TO THE CONVERT. BY STUDYING ABOUT OTHERS WHO ARE BECOMING JEWISH, STUDENTS WILL BE CHALLENGED TO EXAMINE THEIR OWN JEWISH IDENTITY. A JEW-BY-CHOICE CAN TEACH BORN-JEWS THE BEAUTY OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE JEWISH.

BY SEEKING TO ASSIST BORN-JEWS AND A JEW-BY-CHOICE IN DEVELOPING AND ENHANCING THEIR JEWISH IDENTITY WE CAN STRENGTHENED THE BONDS OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL AND HELP THEM TO HAVE A CLEAR SENSE OF HIS OR HER RELIGION AND OF THEIR ETHNIC IDENTITY. OUTREACH IS NOT ONLY ABOUT CONVERSION AND INTERMARRIAGE, IT IS ABOUT BEING JEWISH. OUTREACH ENABLES EVERYONE OF US TO LOOK INWARD AT WHO WE ARE AS REFORM JEWS AND OUTWARD TOWARD OUR CHANGING COMMUNITY.

NO BOOK OR ADULT EDUCATION CLASS CAN FULLY EXPLAIN TO PEOPLE ABOUT OUTREACH, BUT IT IS A START AND WE MUST CONTINUE, BECAUSE THIS PROGRAM WILL HELP JUDAISM AND HELP INDIVIDUALS REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND BECOME HAPPIER AND MORE FULFILLED HUMAN BEINGS.

"I AM SORRY TO BE BORN A JEW BECAUSE I WAS THUS DENIED THE OPPORTUNITY AND PERSONAL SATISFACTION OF INDEPENDENTLY CHOOSING JUDAISM."

ALBERT EINSTEIN
HUSBAND'S RESPONSE | WIFE'S RESPONSE | SINGLE PARENT
---|---|---
1. **AGE:**
   - 21-28
   - 29-35
   - 36-45
   - 46-55
   - 56-65
   - over 65
2. **I AM A:**
   - born Jew
   - person with one Jewish
     and one non-Jewish parent
   - Jew-by-Choice
   - Non-Jewish partner in
     an interfaith marriage
   - Jewish partner in an
     interfaith marriage
   - person considering con-
     version to Judaism
   - person in the process
     of converting to Judaism
   - person born of parents of
     whom one or both were converts
3. **IF YOU HAVE CONVERTED, APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY YEARS HAS IT BEEN**
   **SINCE YOU BECAME A JEW?**
   - less than one
   - 1 - 2
   - 3 - 5
   - over 5
4. **HOW MANY CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE?**
   Male, ages____________________
   Female, ages____________________
5. **WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT MARITAL STATUS?**
   - married
   - divorced
   - widowed
   - single
6. **HOW LONG HAS YOUR FAMILY BEEN MEMBERS OF A SYNAGOGUE?**
   - before children were born
   - when oldest child was
     old
   - when oldest child began school
   - other____________________
WELCOMING

- Jews-by-Choice
- Those interested in choosing Judaism
- Intermarried couples and couples contemplating intermarriage
- Children of intermarried couples
- Parents of intermarried couples
- Jewish youth on interdating, intermarriage and Jewish identity
- Inreach to born Jews on issues relating to Jewish identity, attitudes toward the changing Jewish community, and policy for defining the role of non-Jews in the synagogue.
Kiddush

Wash hands

Eat green parsley

Break the middle matzah

Tell the Pesach story

Wash hands

Eat matzah

Eat bitter herbs

Eat a sandwich of bitter herbs and charoset

Eat dinner

Song of praise

End of Seder

Find the afikoman

Blessings of thanks for the meal

Let all who are hungry come and eat.
Suggestions for Tot Shabbat Worship Experiences:

- A lot of singing, dancing and movement. Teach simple Shabbat songs with one or two Hebrew words. (Ex: Bim Bam, Shabbat Shalom).

- A short story using props, puppets, or a flannel board.

- A trip to the pulpit (BIMAH) to explore and become familiar with the ritual objects: Eternal Light (NER TAMID), Menorah, Ark (ARON-KODESH), Torah, Prayerbook (SIDDUR), etc. Encourage children to use their senses to feel the Torah dress (MEIL), touch the crown (KETER), shake and listen to the bells (RIMONIM), touch the breastplate (TSITS) and Pointer (YAD).

- An exploration of the sanctuary—perhaps a walk or march through the sanctuary in order to become familiar with the setting. (Sing a marching song like "Hands Hold the Torah.")

- Follow the service with the blessings over the wine and challah. Hand out typed blessings in Hebrew, transliteration, and English so that everyone can participate. Ask the parents to encourage this tactile experience with their children: taste the sweet wine, pull, taste, smell, and eat the challah.

Tot Shabbat Programming Reminders:

- Keep the service short. Do not expect the children to sit for a long time.

- Schedule the service for Saturday morning rather than Friday evening. You will find that the family participation is better and everyone is more alert.

- Make sure the activities are age-appropriate and based on sensory experiences which encourage children and parents to participate with each other.

- Do expect movement, wrestling, talking, crying, laughing, and expressions of excitement.

- Do expect and invite siblings, grandparents and other extended family members and friends to come. This is a joyous and important Jewish time for the families, congregation, and community.
4. Invite the rabbi, cantor, temple educator and executive director to participate in your first Parenting Center session.

5. Dedicate your Parenting Center room (even if it's a space which you only have access to once a week) by hanging a mezuzah on the doorpost. Make sure you hang one mezuzah at the children's height. Follow this with the ("shehecheyanu") blessings and something sweet to eat. Hand out a copy of the blessings in Hebrew, transliteration, and English so that everyone will feel comfortable participating. Encourage the adults to take this resource home to use during their own family celebrations.

6. Schedule your first family and father-child sessions early in the semester.

7. Invite the families to participate in a special Shabbat service honoring the members of the Parenting Center. Include a naming ceremony for the children. Schedule this special service early in the semester.

8. During the first session, introduce children by their English and Hebrew names. Use them in welcoming and naming songs.

9. Take a photograph of each family during the first meeting. Create a poster display of all the group members for the second week. Entitle it: "Our Chevrah." (A group of caring friends who learn together). Make sure you display it at the children's eye level.

10. Begin making a photo album of Jewish activities which the group experiences together. This will be an excellent tool to share with the children at quiet moments. It creates a sense of group identity, builds a spirit of cohesiveness, and shared Jewish events.
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