

Celebrating Our Lives

Dear parent or guardian:

Our class is beginning a unit on religious diversity and cultural traditions. Our first step is to reflect on our own traditions. Please take a moment to help your child complete this worksheet. If you have questions, please contact me.

Teacher:

Event 1:

List and describe 3 events that you have celebrated or observed during the past year. Include events that:

- Are of personal importance to you, like a birthday;
- Involve your family or friends, like a wedding or religious event; or
- Are celebrated in the community, like a national holiday.

Event 2:

For each of the 3 celebrations that you list, think about and share:

- Who was involved - family, friends and/or others in the community?
- How you celebrated. Did you go somewhere special? Do something special? Eat something special?
- The reason for the celebration. Why was this day or event important? Do you or your friends celebrate it every year? If so, has the way the tradition is observed changed over time? If so, how? How would you change traditions if you could?

Event 3:

Be prepared to share highlights of your traditions with the class.

Completed by:

Sample, front

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Teacher: Ms. Thomason 555-1243, rthomason@sample.edu

Event 1: Bat Mitzvah

Last year we celebrated my bat mitzvah. Relatives came from far away and joined with friends at the synagogue where we had my initiation into ceremony. It means that I now old enough to be responsible for my actions. We had some of my favorite foods like brisket and cookies and I wore my tallit, or prayer shawl and a head covering called a kipitah. If I could change anything, I would not make kids learn so much Hebrew. The tradition has not changed very much, and we still read the ancient text.

Event 2: Wedding Ceremony

An important ceremony that we celebrated was my cousin's wedding. The wedding ceremony symbolizes their love and their obligations to each other and to the Jewish people. The synagogue was crowded as friends, family and many members of our community joined in the ceremony. The vows were said under a canopy or huppah that represents the new home the couple will make together. We had a very festive meal called a seudah with a lot of food and wine. My favorite food was the cake. The wedding ended by the groom stepping on a glass and breaking it to show that life is fragile, or some people say that this is the last time the groom gets to put his foot down.

The Jewish wedding still honors many old traditions. I wouldn't change anything about the tradition.

Event 3: Chanukah

A religious celebration that is celebrated in our Jewish community is Chanukah. Chanukah usually falls in December. The celebration lasts for 8 days, and it is called the Festival of Lights. Every year, during Chanukah, we light special candelabra called the Menorah. One candle is lit each night until, on the 8th night all are glowing. The light of the candles remind us that God helps us in times of darkness. We get a gift or money each night of Chanukah, so we get treats for 8 nights!

The holiday is mentioned in the Temple by the rabbi, and often there are Chanukah suppers at the Temple/Synagogue. But, our main celebration of Chanukah takes place at home with a big family party.

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Be prepared to share highlights of your traditions with the class.

Completed by: Eli Phillips

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Event 3: Chanukah, continued

We have special foods such as potato latkes, beef brisket, chopped liver and sweet and sour cabbage soup. I love the brisket and don't like the liver. I like to get the bags of special chocolate coins wrapped in gold foil. These are called "gelt".

A fun game is for the children gather around the table and spin the dreidel. The dreidel is a top with the Hebrew letters that spell "a great miracle happened there." The dreidel was used to hide the fact that the Torah/Bible was being studied. Long ago, every time a Syrian soldier approached, the Torah was hidden and the dreidel was brought out.

Chanukah is not only a lot of fun; it reminds us of the sacrifices that we have made to keep faith with God. It is celebrated to remember how God saved the Jewish people from evil King Antiochus, long ago. The Chanukah story is an early example of the fight to preserve religious freedom.

The changes that I might make would be to make the food even more likeable for the children and let the adults join the kids playing dreidel.