

גיבורים


JEWISH LIFE THROUGH JEWISH HEROES

*Giborim – Developing a
Curriculum for a Small
Religious School*


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Achim*

SYNOPSIS


Congregation Ahavas Achim is a synagogue in semi-rural New Hampshire with a very small Jewish community that skews to the Baby Boom generation. Our religious school is small enough that we need to have multi-age classrooms. Last year, we developed a new and exciting curriculum designed to meet our particular needs. It's called "Giborim: Jewish Life through Jewish Heroes." We teach Torah, mitzvot, values, history, Israel, ethics, and customs through the lens of the lives of major Jewish figures we call "heroes." We teach about the heroes in age-appropriate ways that support multi-age learning. Come and hear how this innovative program has energized our whole community!



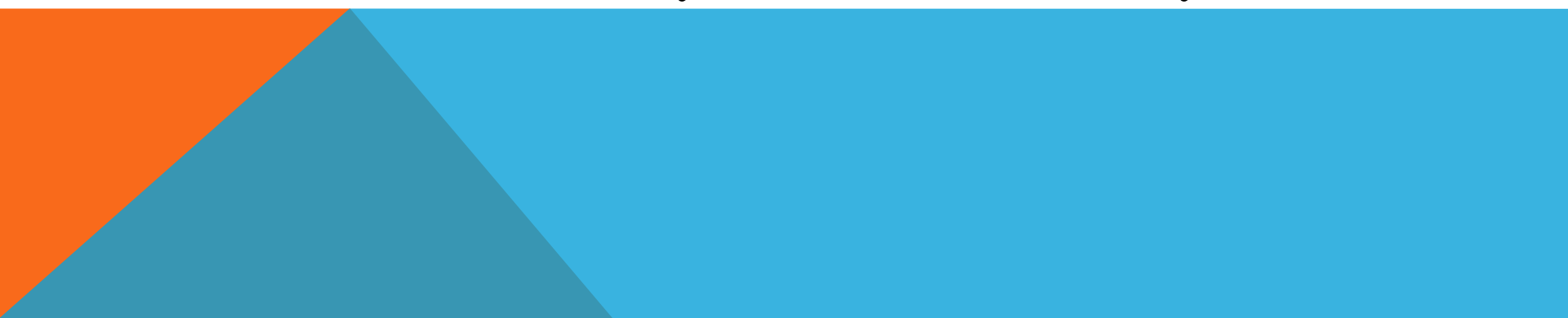
WHY A NEW CURRICULUM FOR JEWISH LIFE?

- **Small school in a rural synagogue with aging population**
 - **Baby boomers' children were raised in the shul but moved away**
 - **More retirees moving to the area and joining the shul**
 - **Currently 14 students from age 5-13**
 - **School was running much as it was run when there were 50 students, and it wasn't working**
 - **Needed a curriculum easily implemented in multi-age classrooms**
 - **Needed new material each year for children who will be in the same class for 3 or 4 years**
 - **Integrated curriculum is pedagogically sound – more engaging and greater retention when children can make connections between different subjects**
 - **Allows teaching of Israel, mitzvot, history, values, and bible stories together**
 - **Additional benefits - learning in areas like critical thinking, vocabulary building, geography, figurative language**
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JEWISH HEROES

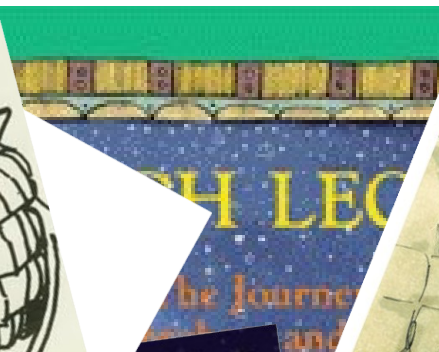
- **Biblical and Historical**
 - **Focusing on One Hero Each Week**
 - **Presented Thematically Rather than Chronologically**
 - **Themes for Each Semester**
 - **The first semester theme was “Founders.” The second semester was “Poets and Musicians.” Third semester was “Famous Pairs” and the current semester (Spring 2017) is “Scientists and Mathematicians.”**
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JEWISH HEROES

- **Two Classes – five-to-eight-year-olds and nine-to-fourteen-year-olds**
 - **Teachers are provided with materials – annotated bibliographies, books, internet resources**
 - **Teachers research heroes and develop lessons**
 - **Difficult concepts and events are covered in age-appropriate fashion**
 - **Heroes are presented as complex figures who don't always act heroic**
 - **We talk about how they are heroic and how they aren't**
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KICK OFF SESSION

- **New curriculum was presented to parents and children**
 - **Students tried to identify “heroes” from pictures**
 - **Curriculum explained and presented**
 - **Began first hero**
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Tanya Lee Stone

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM JEWISH HEROES?

Tanakh – Bible Stories

Mitzvot – Good Things to Do

History

Values/Ethics

and maybe...


How we can be heroes, too



OUR FIRST HERO:
אברהם אבינו
Abraham



WHAT ARE THE LESSONS LIKE?

- **Interactive – discussion and/or activities**
 - **Integrated – multiple topics taught together and connections among different heroes highlighted**
 - **Multimedia – books, pictures, videos, music, atlas, ritual objects**
 - **Age-appropriate – older kids often grapple with more sophisticated questions**
 - **Collaborative – groups come together for some activities (e.g. play put on by younger kids) and for “Kehillah Time”**
 - **Musical – each hero has an associated song and all the hero songs of the semester are sung at Kehillah Time**
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SHARON'S STUDENTS EVALUATE ABRAHAM'S BEHAVIOR...

Abram lived in Ur with idol worshipers, but he followed his own mind.
He refused to worship idols and challenged others to question their thinking.

Heroic?

Yes

No

Abraham followed the advice of G-d and Sarah and
cast Hagar and Ishmael out into the desert.

Heroic?

Yes

No

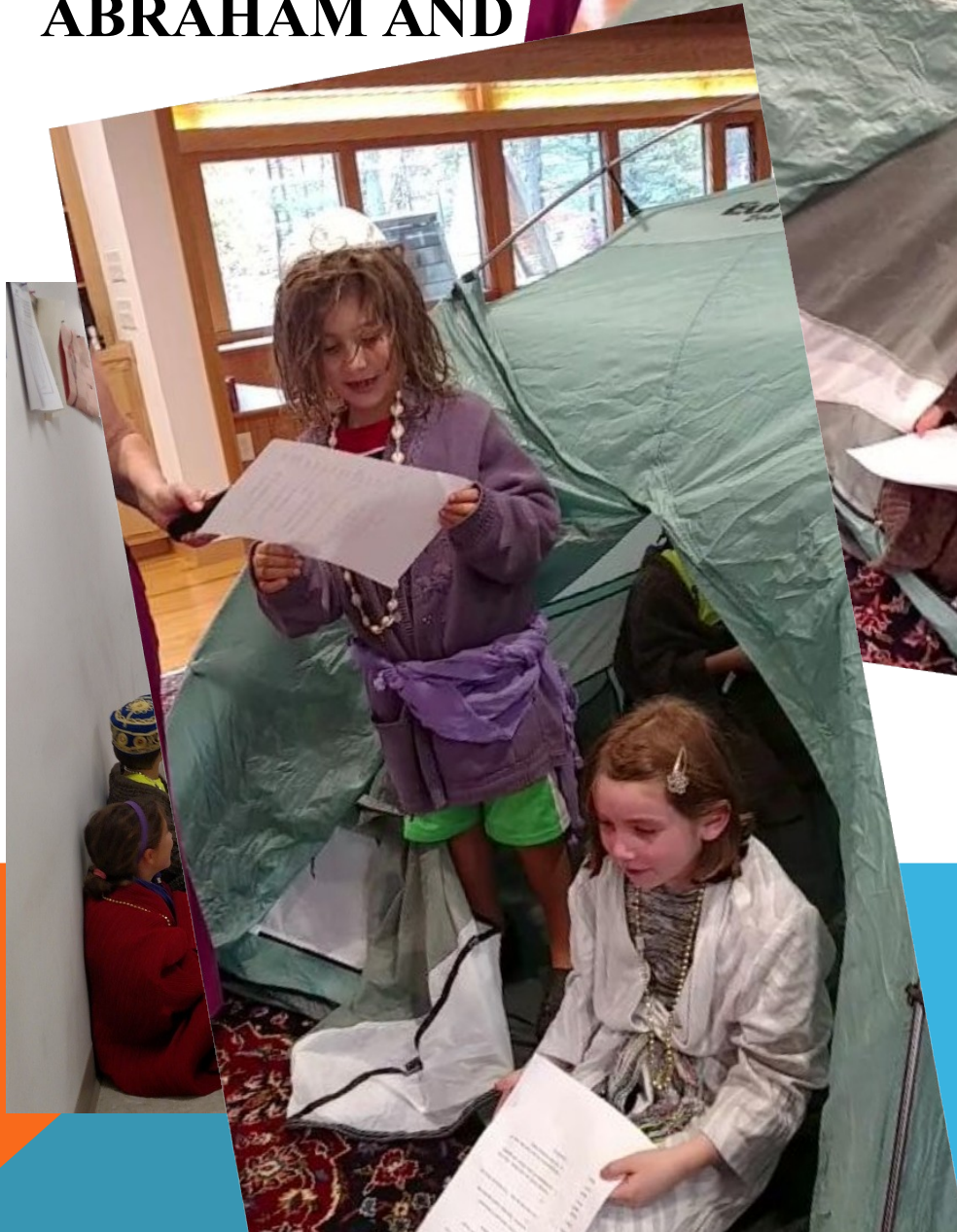
God tests Abraham and commands him to sacrifice his
son, Isaac. Abraham obeys G-d.

Heroic?

Yes

No

A CLASS PLAY D ABRAHAM AND



SOME EXCERPTS FROM HEROES LESSONS

Teaching about Herzl

- Taught during “Founders” semester
- Younger group had never heard of anti-Semitism
- Neither group knew of Herzl or the Dreyfus affair
- Wanted to convey the idea of Zionism as well as the idea of fulfilling a dream, some of the historical context, and something about the tension between distinctive Jewish culture and assimilation
- Song for the lesson was Im Tirtzu



THE BLUE DOT EXERCISE

Set Induction to Teach about Responses to Prejudice

Teacher with Blue Dot – Kids ask Why

Story followed by question: What should I do?

Intention to elicit four responses to anti-Semitism and then apply them to Herzl's life



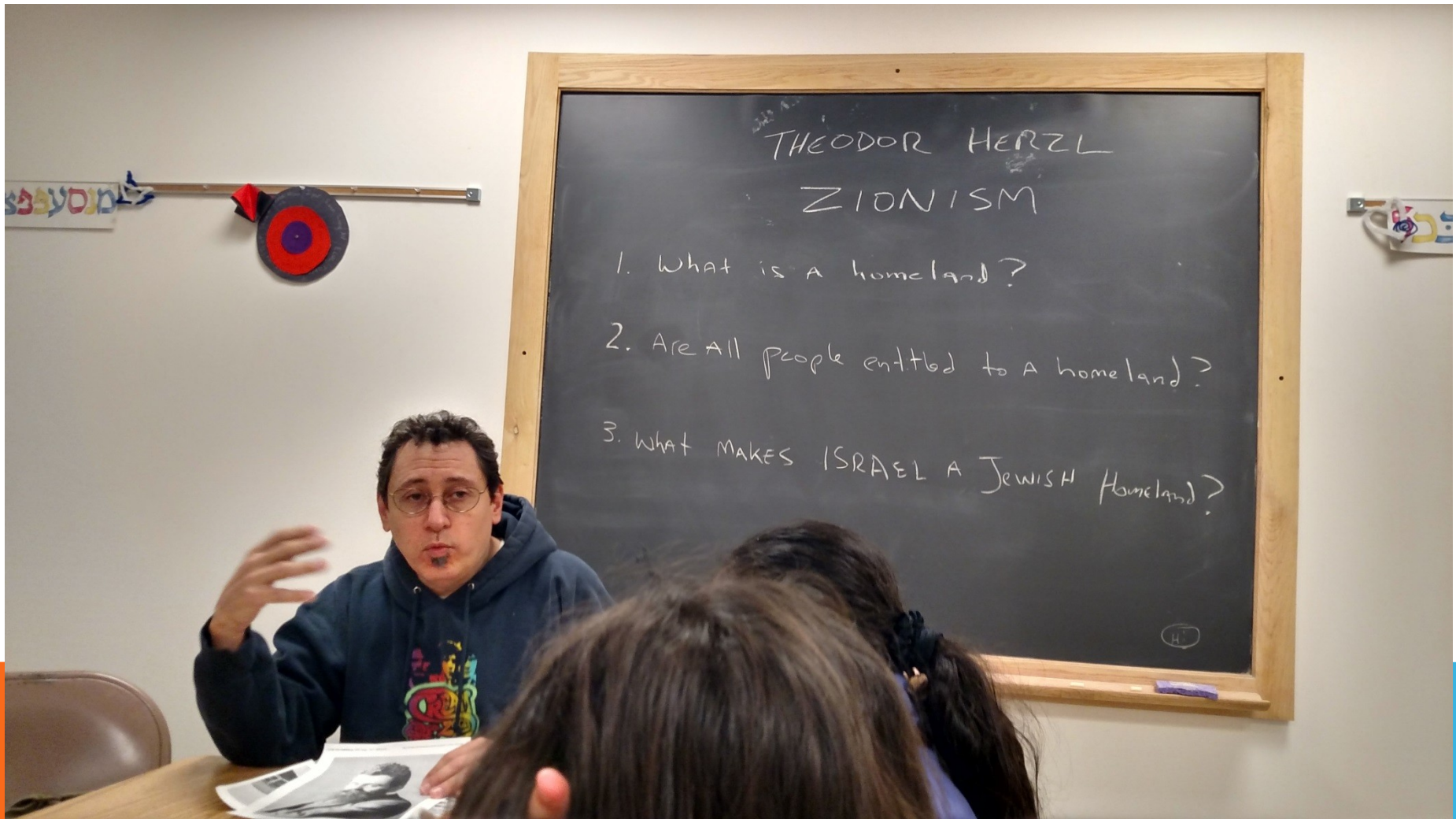
Persuasion

Assimilation

Conversion

Emigration

SCOTT RODOLITZ TEACHES ABOUT HERZL



EXCERPT FROM A POETS AND MUSICIANS LESSON

Class was 5- to 8-year-olds.

Hero was Rachel Bluwstein, more often known as Rachel the Poet.

Lesson began with recap of previous heroes.

Lesson covered biography, significance, analysis of some of her poems, nature of kibbutz life, connection with previous heroes, even public health (she died of tuberculosis)

Children wrote a poem or drew a picture about nature around them at the end of the lesson.



WHAT IS A KIBBUTZ?

“The Kibbutz operates under the premise that all income generated by the Kibbutz and its members goes into a common pool. This income is used to run the Kibbutz, make investments, and guarantee mutual and reciprocal aid and responsibility between members. Kibbutz members receive the same budget (according to family size), regardless of their job or position. In terms of education, all children start equally and are given equal opportunity. The Kibbutz is governed by a system of direct participatory democracy, where the individual can directly influence issues and events in the community. In this mostly self sufficient community, the collective as well as the work ethic play a major role.”

The Sachnut – Jewish Agency



WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

“A Common Pool for Income” – if a kibbutznik earns money it belongs to everyone on the kibbutz

“used to run the Kibbutz, make investments, and guarantee mutual and reciprocal aid and responsibility between members.” – the money is used for everybody on the kibbutz. When the money is saved, it is saved for everyone. Everybody takes care of one another.

“same budget (according to family size) regardless of their position.” - nobody gets better or fancier stuff because their job is more important. Everyone’s job is just as important.

“All children start equally and are given equal opportunity.” - everybody gets to learn all the subjects. There is no “tracking” – deciding that only some kids can learn some subjects.

“Direct Participatory Democracy” – the community gets together and votes to make decisions



RACHEL WAS A FARMER AND KIBBUTZNIK



A SHORT POEM

Pear Tree

By Rachel the Poet

**Conspiracy of spring –
to awake and through the window see
a pear tree blossoming,
and instantly the mountain weighing on your heart
dissolves and disappears.**



A POEM THAT BECAME A SONG

Many of Rachel's poems have biblical references.

**Almost all the words in this poem are from the bible –
but from different parts.**

Israeli children study the Jewish bible in school.

**They study it as national literature, whether or not they
are religious.**

What do we study as national literature?

Let's look at the poem.



עֲקָרָה AKARAH

The title means “Barren Woman.”

What is a barren woman?

What does it mean in the bible?

What did it mean to Rachel?

http://ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com/ancient_hebrew_poetry/2012/03/a-poem-by-rachel-a-song-by-noa.html#more

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EReAwPaoVNo>



RACHEL'S MOST FAMOUS POEM

To My Country

I haven't sung to you, my country.

I have not glorified your name
with great heroic deeds,
or loot from the battlefield.

My hands have simply planted a tree
on Jordan's calm shores.

My feet have simply formed a path
through the fields.

Indeed, a humble gift it is,

I know this, Mother.

Indeed, your daughter's offering makes
a very humble gift:

Only the thrilling cry of joy,
on the day the light will break through,

Only my secret tears for you,
for your present misery.

RACHEL OFTEN WROTE POEMS ABOUT THE NATURAL WORLD AROUND HER

We can, too!

It's spring in New Hampshire.

What does that look like?


What would a poem about that sound like?

What would a drawing you made look like?

Let's look at some pictures and then draw or write.

https://www.google.com/search?q=spring+in+new+hampshire&espv=2&biw=1366&bih=643&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjs2bnL6bjMAhUKRyYKHVCHBNwQ_AUIBigB#imgsrc=4Gbek7eHimgCGM%3A

LEARNING ABOUT LEONARD COHEN

- **A living (at the time) Hero**
 - **Older class took two songs and analyzed liturgical and biblical roots (Hallelujah and Who By Fire)**
 - **Younger class focused on the folk process and folk song revival of the 1960s**
 - **Introduced concept of songs changing as part of the folk process**
 - **Talked about differences between studying current heroes and those from a long time ago**
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WHAT'S DIFFERENT WHEN YOUR HERO IS ALIVE?

LIVED A LONG TIME AGO

- Lots of different versions of the stories about him
- No way to know what's true and what changed over time
- No pictures
- No videos
- Can't meet him

LIVING NOW

- Still might be different stories about him.
- Could ask people who were there.
- Pictures
- Videos
- You might even meet him.



OUR SCHOOL VERSION OF HALLELUJAH

**We come to Hebrew School in Keene
We learn to be nice and not to be mean
To treat folks like you want them to be to ya
We take the Torah as our guide
We wear our Jewishness with pride
We're Ahavas Achim and we say Hallelujah**

**On Sundays at Ahavas Achim
We learn about the Giborim
Our heroes make me proud to be a Jew, yeah
They're real people like you and like me
We learn how heroic we can be
We're Ahavas Achim and we say Hallelujah**



HANNAH SENESH

Covered in “Poets and Musicians”

**Heroism also in her work as a spy and in not revealing
names of her contacts under torture**

**Hard one to cover – she wasn’t that much older than the
kids learning about her**

History, poetry, Israeli founding and culture



An English paratrooper in World War II



HANNAH WAS SENT ON A RESCUE MISSION TO HER OLD COUNTRY - HUNGARY

She was captured!

**They wanted her to tell on her partners from Palestine
and the people who would help her in Hungary.**

She wouldn't tell them anything!

She was very brave.

They had a trial and said she was guilty of treason.

They killed her.



SHE KEPT WRITING

She kept a diary.

She wrote poems.

When she was in school, she wrote.

When she was at the kibbutz she wrote.

When she was in the army she wrote.

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the slide consisting of three overlapping triangles. The leftmost triangle is orange, the middle one is a darker teal, and the rightmost one is a lighter blue. They are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement.

HANNAH'S MOST FAMOUS POEM

Eli Eli

May these things never end:

The sand and the sea

The rustle of the water

The lightning in the sky

The prayer of people

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFcXeGtDg7w>




LET'S REMEMBER HANNAH WITH POETRY AND PICTURES

What are the things you want never to end?



BRINGING THE HEROES TO THE LARGER COMMUNITY

- **Parents invited to participate in lessons or attend plays**
 - **Students share some of what they learned at “Religious School Shabbat”**
 - **Rabbi’s Kol Nidre Sermon was on “What does it take to be a hero?”**
 - **Potential Adult Ed series covering same heroes as taught in Religious School, but on an adult level**
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JEWISH HEROES

**A Flexible, Integrated Curriculum to Teach Multi-age
Classes**

Innovative Content Developed by the Teachers

**Lessons Reinforced in Kehillah Time with Songs about the
Heroes**

**Holiday Curriculum Taught Separately in Multi-activity
Stations**

**Hebrew Reading Taught Separately in Small Groups by
Achievement Level**



WITH THANKS TO THE HEROES TEAM...

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.... and Rabbi Amy Loewenthal

