What do celebration foods and activities teach us about important stories for Jewish people?

Background knowledge for the teacher

- The Jewish religion has a whole host of celebrations that commemorate specific events and/or remind Jewish people of important times, such as a new year, or important aspects of their life, such as following the Torah.
- Festival celebrations are an important aspect of Jewish life and worship in both the home and the synagogue.
- Special foods eaten and activities carried out at festival times reinforce the role of home and family and provide reminders of important stories and ideas.
- Hanukkah takes place in November or December and marks the winning back of the Second Temple in Jerusalem from their enemies and a miracle of a tiny amount of oil, only enough to light the temple menorah for one day, that stayed alight for eight days.
- Shabbat is a weekly practice that involves not working from sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday, reminding Jewish people of the story of creation and a day of rest. The day is set out as different from the rest of the week. Jewish people consider it a day to be with family and friends, think about God, study, and attend synagogue.

In this unit pupils consider how food and activities remind Jewish people about important stories. There is an opportunity to learn about Hanukkah and Shabbat but also further opportunities to link to other Jewish celebrations such as Rosh Hashanah, Shavuot and Purim.

There are opportunities to cook, create and write within this work, connected to several other areas of learning for 5–7s.

This work links to RE Today units of work 1.6 How and why do we celebrate special and sacred times? and 1.7 Who is Jewish and how do they live?

Assessment for 5–7s

The statements below suggest 'emerging', 'expected' and 'exceeding' outcomes from this unit for 6-year-olds. Adapt them for the age of pupils you are teaching. If necessary, adapt the 'e' words to the assessment language of your school.

Emerging

- Retell simply the story of Hanukkah.
- Recognise simple links between the food and actions and one festival story.

Expected

- Explain what the story/stories remembered at the festival(s) studied teach(es) Jewish people.
- Explain what each of the food and activities studied remind Jewish people about.

Exceeding

- Explain why celebrations and festivals are important to religious groups.
- Give examples of other festivals that have food or actions that help people to remember the meaning of the celebration.

This unit helps pupils in Scotland to achieve RME 1-05a, 1-06a and 1-06b.

Essential knowledge for the pupil

Pupils will know:

- Celebrations are reminders of important stories for Jewish people.
- Food eaten and actions carried out during celebrations remind people of important parts of a story.
- Hanukkah celebrates a miracle that Jewish people believe happened in the Temple.
- Shabbat reminds Jewish people that it is important to take time to rest, as God did in the Jewish story about creation.

eResources

Go to **www.natre.org.uk/inspiring-re/** to access the resources below.

- The story of Hanukkah from *Religions of the World* on BBC Teach.
- The BBC Bitesize film *What is Hanukkah?*
- BBC Bitesize clips to support learning about Shabbat.

Members are able to download extra resources to support this unit:

- A baked cheesecake recipe for Shavuot.

Activity 1 Food and activities with meaning

Different people do particular actions and eat different foods that have special meanings for them.

Ask pupils what the following actions mean:

- giving someone a hug
- putting your hand up
- putting your knife and fork together on your plate

Ask the pupils to discuss in pairs some meaningful actions you do together as a school, or they do at home. Share the actions and their meanings.

Ask the pupils what the following foods might mean or represent:

- a hot cross bun
- a birthday cake
- pancakes

Ask the pupils to discuss in pairs some food with a meaning that they know about. This might be as simple as 'When we eat this, we use Grandad's recipe, so it makes us think of him.' Discuss examples that the pupils come up with.

Explain that Jewish celebrations are ways of remembering important stories and events for Jewish people. Actions and food are used during the celebrations to help people remember the stories being told.

Activity 2 How do latkes and doughnuts tell a story?

Show the pupils a jam doughnut and, if possible, allow them to taste it. Talk about how doughnuts are made and how they are cooked. You could also make some potato *latkes* to share, using the recipe on p. 15.

Explain that these two foods are eaten at a Jewish festival called Hanukkah. Show the story of Hanukkah from *Religions of the World* on BBC Teach (see eResources).

Recap the story with the pupils and then go back to the doughnuts and the *latkes*.

- What have these got to do with the story?
- How might eating them help Jewish people remember the stories?

Ask the pupils to draw and cut out a picture of a *latke* or a doughnut on a piece of card. On the reverse get them to complete this sentence starter:

- A … helps Jewish people to remember the story of Hanukkah because …

Activity 3 Actions to remember Hannukah

It is not only food that helps Jewish people to remember the stories that are remembered at festivals, but also key actions and artefacts.

Watch the short BBC Bitesize film *What is Hanukkah?* (see eResources). Discuss the film and then watch it for a second time. This time, ask the pupils to work in groups with small whiteboards to write or draw two things Jewish people do at Hanukkah to remember the story (e.g. playing with a dreidel, lighting the menorah).

Pupils could do one or both of the activities below to help remember the important events in the story. (The menorah activity is less challenging than the dreidel activity.)

Dreidel

Make a dreidel. Print the dreidel template on p. 13 onto thin card to create one. On each side there is a different Hebrew letter. They stand for 'A Great Miracle Happened There':

- *nun* – great
- *gimel* – miracle
- *hay* – happened
- *shin* – there

Allow pupils to play the dreidel game.

Ask them to write two or three sentences to explain why it is a good idea to let Jewish children play the game, and explain how it helps them remember the story.

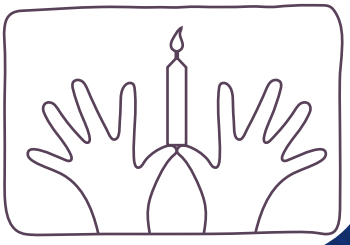
As a group, choose a different story that pupils think is important to remember, e.g. that of the birth of Jesus, or a different moral or religious story. Ask them what is the most important part of the story, and make it into a four-word phrase – e.g. *God came to earth* – and put a different four letters on their dreidel, e.g. *G, C, T, E.* As a group, draw the new dreidel with a sentence explaining how it helps pupils remember.

Menorah

Ask pupils to work in pairs. Give them a piece of thin A4 card and ask them to put the palms of their hands flat on the paper with their thumbs touching one another. The other pupil needs to draw around the hands with a pencil.

Next, draw a tall candle, almost reaching the top of the paper and coming from the place where the thumbs meet. This is the 'helper candle' or *shammash*. Now draw smaller candles coming from each finger; there will be eight smaller candles in total.

Under the Hanukkah menorah or *hanukkiah*, ask the pupils to write a sentence explaining how lighting the candles reminds Jewish people of the story.



Activity 4 Preparing for Shabbat

Shabbat or Sabbath, which some consider to be a festival that happens each week, is a day of rest. Explain to the pupils that the Jewish story of creation says that God rested on the seventh day. Ask the pupils what sort of things they would like to do or not on a day of rest. What do they think Jewish people do or don't do? For many Jewish people Shabbat is the highlight of the week; it is eagerly anticipated through the week and treasured afterwards. This day of rest and refreshment gives a rhythm to the lives of many Jewish people and is seen as a day to delight in. There are several BBC Bitesize clips you could show pupils that support knowledge and understanding of Shabbat (see eResources).

To help pupils understand what it is like to take part in a day of rest, use the Shabbat guided visualisation on p. 14. It is designed to help them think imaginatively about what it might be like for a Jewish person to celebrate Shabbat, and to consider what a day of rest might be like in their life. Would they enjoy it? Why?

Guided visualisations always begin with a stilling activity, and this is included as part of the script on p. 14. Some pupils may feel uncomfortable closing their eyes, so you could ask them to look down so that they don't disturb other pupils.

After the guided visualisation ask pupils to:

- draw, on a window outline, what they might see if they peeped into a house on Shabbat
- draw, on another window outline, what they would like to do with friends or family on a day of rest
- write a sentence saying how Shabbat helps Jewish people remember an important story for them

Activity 5 Celebration food at other festivals

Choose a festival (or more than one) to focus on from the ones listed below or studied during this unit. Produce a set of class recipe cards that tell the story of the festival on one side and have a simple recipe on the other. Pupils should include a sentence to say how the food links to the story. This work links well to the English national curriculum and the need to write for a variety of purposes. Pupils should of course have the opportunity to make and eat the food where possible!

Purim: a festival that celebrates Queen Esther and her triumph over Haman, who was trying to persuade the king to kill all the Jews. Jewish people eat biscuits called *hamantaschen* ('Haman's pockets') to remember the evil Haman. There is also dressing up and shaking of rattles in the synagogue when evil Haman is mentioned. There is a recipe for *hamantaschen* on p. 15.

Shavuot: a spring/summer festival celebrating the giving of the Ten Commandments and the Torah. Foods containing milk are eaten as it sustains the body, just like the Torah sustains Jewish people. Members can download a baked cheesecake recipe that is eaten at that time.

Rosh Hashanah: Jewish new year. A time to look back and say sorry for the things they have done wrong. Honey cake is made, and apples are dipped in honey and eaten in the hope of a sweet and happy new year.

Activity 6 Linking the learning

Remind the pupils of the unit question: what do celebration foods and activities teach us about important stories for Jewish people? How would they answer the question?

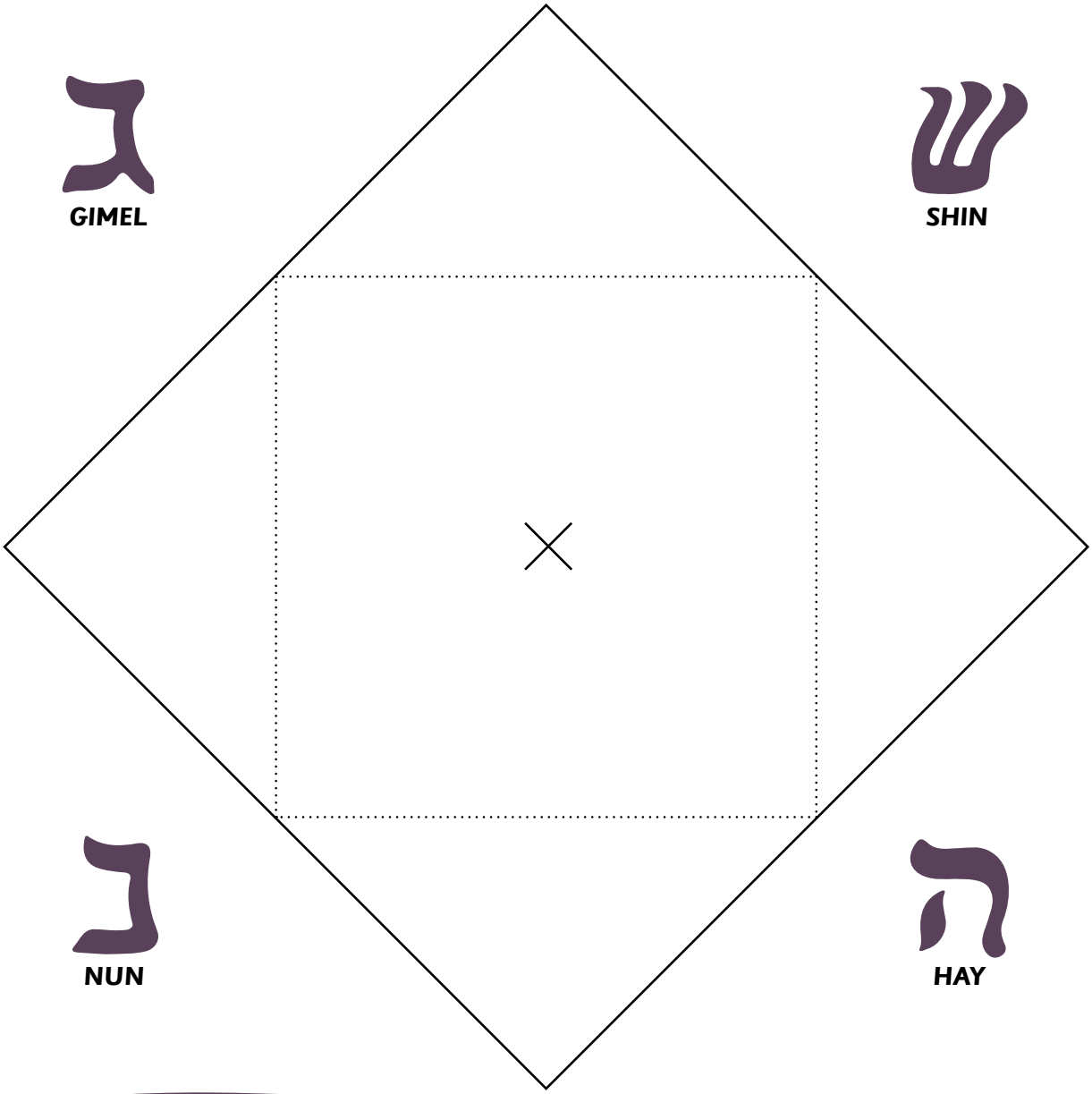
Show pupils pictures or words related to the actions and food and ask them to tell you how it links to the festival meaning or story. You could create a bingo card to do the same thing.

For older pupils

- Think of an important story for your school or town or from a particular religion, and create new ways to remember it. Could there be a meal with memorable food and actions, or would it be something different? Ensure the meaning of the story is really clear.
- Focus on Pesach and study the meaning of the foods in this festival. There are good units on this in *RE Ideas Journey* and *RE Ideas Celebration*, both RE Today publications.

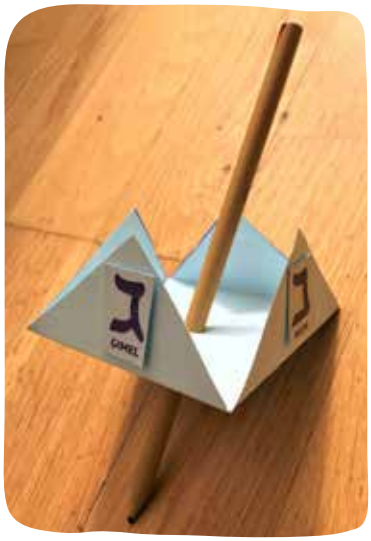
Dreidel

1. Print the template onto thin card and cut out around the edge of the dreidel shape.
2. Fold the triangle shapes in towards the centre of the square (along the dotted lines).
3. Copy or cut out the four letters and stick them on the outside of each triangle.
4. Carefully push a pencil through the cross in the middle of your square. You can now spin your dreidel.



Playing dreidel

1. Everyone takes an equal amount of prizes (coins, sweets, raisins, etc.).
2. Each put one of your prizes into the kitty in the middle.
3. The first player spins the dreidel. When it falls down, look at which letter lands on the top. If it is:
   - ***nun*** – the player does nothing
   - ***gimel*** – the player has won everything in the kitty! He or she must take everything out of the kitty and keep it with his or her own prizes
   - ***hay*** – the player takes half of the kitty
   - ***shin*** – the player must put one of his or her prizes into the kitty
4. Play continues in a clockwise direction with each player spinning the dreidel then carrying out the action linked to the letter.
5. If you do not have any prizes to put in when you land on shin, you are out. The winner is the last person left in.



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Shabbat: imagining a day of rest

Preparing to imagine

Tell the pupils to:

- sit comfortably … with your back straight … legs crossed … hands in your lap … relaxed …
- let your eyes close gently … or look at the floor so you don't disturb other people …
- listen to the sounds that you can hear outside the room …
- listen to the sounds that you can hear in the room …
- breathe slowly, quietly, silently … notice the way your breath enters and leaves your body …
- now listen to the scene I am going to describe to you and try and imagine it in your mind …

Script to read out

Read the following script to the children:

You are standing in the hall of a house. It is an ordinary house, a bit like the house or flat that you live in. You can hear the voices of two children, a boy and a girl. Go through the door into the sitting room … Look at the children … They are both seven years old … They are finishing off some homework from school.

Look around the room. There are toys scattered around the floor … What can you see? The children start to clear them up into the cupboard and toy box … Help them to tidy up the toys …The children talk about Granny and Grandpa coming round soon …

Think about who you like to come and visit your house …

Dusting and hoovering are being done by Dad and the children … Everyone is working very hard … but they are smiling …

What would you need to do in your house to prepare for a special guest?

Walk into the kitchen … Mum is stirring a big pan of soup on the cooker … It is chicken and vegetable soup … Smell the soup … From the oven Mum carefully removes a challah loaf … It is long, with a plait down the middle …

Next, walk into the dining room … Here the children are setting the table …

What can you see them putting out?

… Candles … cups … a cloth to cover the bread … a bottle of wine …

Everything is ready … Everyone stops working hard … The whole family sit down together around the dining room table … Look at the faces of the children and the grown-ups …

How do they feel?

There is a knock at the door … Follow the children as they run to the door… It is Granny and Grandpa … '*Shabbat shalom*,' they say while hugging the children …

Everyone sits back around the table … Mum covers her eyes and lights the candles … Look at the flame … and listen as Mum recites a blessing: 'Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has made us holy through his commandments and tells us to light this Shabbat flame' …

It is time for everyone to eat … Listen to the chat … Smell the food …

Later … the whole family play a board game together in the sitting room … The TV isn't on … The computer isn't used … It is a time to rest from work … time to rest together as a family … No one phones up … Nothing stops them being together …

The game is finished … and packed away …

I wonder: if we peeped in later, what would be happening in this house?

If there was a day of rest and delight in your house, what we would see if we peeped in through the window? Who would be there? What would you do?

When you are ready, open your eyes … Quietly go to your table and draw what might happen later on Shabbat in the house we visited …

When you have finished, quietly draw what we might see if we peeped into your house on a day of delight and resting …

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Celebration food

Auntie Julia's latkes



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Ingredients

- 2kg potatoes
- 2 onions
- 3 eggs
- 3 tablespoons flour or matzo meal
- Oil for frying

Method

1. Peel the potatoes and grate them.
2. Wrap the grated potatoes in a tea towel and squeeze them so as much water as possible is removed.
3. Finely chop two onions.
4. Beat the three eggs.
5. Mix together the potatoes, onions, eggs and enough flour or matzo meal to make a thick pancake batter.
6. Ask an adult to fry spoonfuls of the mixture in very hot oil. Tell them to turn over the *latkes* when they are brown on one side.

Eat them while they are hot. Think about why the oil reminds Jewish people about the story of Hanukkah.

Haman's pockets, or hamantaschen, for Purim



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Ingredients

- 2 mugs of flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ mug of caster sugar
- Jam for the centre of the biscuits
- ¼ mug of vegetable oil
- 3 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Method

1. Sift together the flour and baking powder into a bowl.
2. In a different bowl mix the oil and sugar.
3. Add the eggs and mix together.
4. Slowly add the wet mixture to the flour. Mix well each time.
5. Put your hands into the bowl and make the mixture into a ball.
6. Put the dough into the fridge for one hour.
7. Sprinkle some flour onto the surface and roll out the mixture to 0.5 cm.
8. Cut out circles (about 30) using the rim of a glass or a circular cutter.
9. Put half a teaspoon of jam into the middle of each circle of mixture.
10. Wet your finger with water and then pick up the sides of the circle to make a triangle (see photo).
11. Pinch the edges of the mixture together so there is only a tiny space at the top.
12. Brush the tops of each cookie with milk or beaten egg.
13. Cook in an oven at 180 degrees for approximately 15 minutes.

Allow them to cool. As you eat them remember the villain Haman from the story.

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