



# ***Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!***

## **Outline of "A Taste of Rosh Hodesh"**

### **Introductory Meeting for Girls and Parents**

This informational meeting can help you excite girls and their parents about the *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program. We recommend holding your "Taste of" in the spring in order to most successfully recruit girls before their first official gathering. It is beneficial to have both girls and parents participate.

Giving parents and girls a taste will help them understand *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* and encourage them to sign up for the program. Girls often feel more comfortable attending an introductory meeting. **Get them to the introductory meeting, and then they will want to come back for more!**

You can present this meeting yourself, or invite your Supervisor or an experienced Group Leader to help you facilitate. Also, if possible, invite a girl or some girls who have participated before to attend and "psych up" the girls for participating in the group.

### **Planning Tips**

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- Find a convenient, inviting, and private space to hold your meeting. Keep in mind that you will need space for two small break-out groups.
- The meeting will take approximately one and a half hours – however, if you have less time, you can modify the meeting plan as needed.
- Solicit guidance from potential participants regarding an optimal time for meeting.
- Familiarize yourself with the meeting plan below and with the key *Rosh Hodesh* facts found in the Opening Month section of the Lev Year binder.
- Prepare:
  - ✓ *Name tags, markers, and stickers*
  - ✓ *Make 2 copies and cut out the card included at the end of this document*
  - ✓ *Popular magazines (4-8)*
  - ✓ *Poster paper cut in half (one piece for each group)*
  - ✓ *Flyers, meeting date sheet, sign-up sheet*
  - ✓ *Judaic objects such as: shofar, hagadah, challah, hamantaschen, paper rolled up like a torah, mezuzah, print out of ketubah language, lyrics to Jewish camp songs, etc...) enough for one per participant*
  - ✓ *Photocopies of Lev Year "Themes at a Glance" on cards*
  - ✓ *Copies of Calendar and Celebrations sheet for each participant*
  - ✓ *Candles*
  - ✓ *Matches*
  - ✓ *Kosher snacks (include some healthful snacks) and drinks*
  - ✓ *For your own reference, copy of the Lev Year Opening Month Essence Sheet handout*
  - ✓ *CD player or iPod with girl-friendly music*
- Arrive early to set up, but expect others to come late. Pace yourself to ensure enough time for questions at the end of the meeting.
- Arrange seating in a circle or semicircle as numbers and space permit.
- Play background music as participants arrive



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#### **Introductory Meeting for Girls and Parents**

- As participants arrive, encourage them to create nametags using markers, stickers, or other materials you bring.
- Feel free to modify or use your own ideas, as long as they meet the goals outlined in the following plan.
- Make sure to collection Girls Membership Registration forms.

# Suggested Introductory Meeting Outline

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## 1. Opening 2 minutes

Welcome girls and parents.

Introduce yourself and share your background.

Express your enthusiasm for the project.

## 2. Getting Started 15 minutes

Announce that we will start off by getting to know each other more.

Icebreaker: Tell the group that you will read a list of statements, one at a time and invite participants to rise if the description applies to them. As you go, be playful in inviting and acknowledging comments and embellishments.

“Stand up if you...

... are a middle child.

... are the oldest child.

... are the youngest child.

... are the only child.

... have a pet.

(ASK: what kind of pet? Encourage conversation and friendly remarks)

... are left-handed.

... have been in a wedding party.

... have played on a sports team.

(ASK: what sport?)

... like craft projects.

(ASK: what types of crafts?)

... play an instrument.

(ASK: what instrument?)

... have been to summer camp.

... have made potato latkes.

... have eaten potato latkes.

... love music.

(ASK: what kind of music?)

... have been in a play.

... have traveled to Israel.

... have a relative named Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, or Leah.

... have ever been part of a girls-only group.

In closing, thank them for their enthusiastic participation. Highlight diversity and commonalities

## 3. First Activity 30 minutes total: 15 minutes in smaller groups and 15 minutes back together in larger group presenting

Explain that instead of doing a presentation about what a *Rosh Hodesh* group is like, you'll give them a taste for themselves.

Divide participants into two groups – one group for parents and one group for girls. (Have the Group Leader stay with the girls and if Supervisor is present then s/he can go with parents). Give both groups a copy of the card below. Provide both groups with popular magazines and a poster-size cut-out of body. Ask groups to discuss the questions on the card.

- (Cut out card from the end of this document, have 2 photocopies and hand one copy to each group) Card reads: What are some of the messages from media and pop culture that teens receive and what effect do these messages have? Using the magazines, create a group collage representing the messages you identify.

While in separate groups, Group Leader should take opportunity to get to know the girls and engage with them as they are completing answering questions and creating collage.

Come back together (girls and parents) and have each group present some of the challenges and messages they have identified using the posters they created with magazine images.

Group Leader – note similarities and differences between the two. Point out that these are examples of the kinds of issues the girls will explore in their *Rosh Hodesh* group meetings.

#### **4. How are *Rosh Hodesh* groups unique? 5-10 minutes**

Highlight the following points:

- *Rosh Hodesh* offers adolescent girls the opportunity to gather on a monthly basis to learn, laugh, and grow as they explore the challenges and joys of their lives, sharing their thoughts and experiences and accessing the wisdom of their heritage.
- Point out how the themes discussed in the previous activity show how groups are unique and explore relevant topics in girls' lives. The monthly groups draw on Jewish wisdom and practice as a resource for young women as they explore an array of topics relevant to their lives.
  - Pass out Calendar and Celebrations worksheet. Ask participants to look at sheet and decided what Hebrew month their birthday falls in. Have girls and parents get into groups based on Hebrew birthday month. Give each group a Theme at a Glance card that corresponds to their month. Ask them to look at that month and see what interests them and discuss in small group.
- After groups have an opportunity to talk, discuss the experiential and girl-centered approach of *Rosh Hodesh* groups. This means that as we talk about these themes, we bring them to life by doing things together such as having a discussion, doing skits, making crafts, reflective writing, engaging in rituals, and taking on leadership roles.

#### **5. Second Activity 10 minutes (If time permits)**

Introduce next activity by saying that we will explore the role Judaism plays in their lives. Place objects in the center of circle. Encourage girls and parents to

pick up Jewish objects that they have a positive association with or that represent their connection to Judaism.

(Include both “traditional” and “non-traditional” objects that may have Jewish meaning ranging from objects such as: *shofar*, *hagadah*, *challah*, *hamantaschen*, paper rolled up like a Torah, *mezuzah*, print out of ketubah language, lyrics to Jewish camp songs, *magen david* necklace, bat mitzvah card, play guitar, etc... You may include the same object more than once based on number of expected participants.)

Invite participants to turn to each other (girls with their own parents) in *hevrutah* partnership and share what they picked and why.

If you have time, come back to larger group and invite any pair to share.

NOTE: If girls are present without parents, Group Leader should encourage girls to pair with each other. If some parents are present, but not all, girls without parents presents should create group with each other and Group Leader should join them.

## **6. What is Rosh Hodesh? 5-10 minutes**

Ask if anyone knows what *Rosh Hodesh* is, or why this project for young women revolves around *Rosh Hodesh*. Solicit ideas and embellish. Add: *Rosh Hodesh* means “Head of the Month” and refers to the start of the new month.

Legend says *Rosh Hodesh* was given to the women of Israel because they refused to give their jewelry to make the golden calf (an idol). Because of this righteousness, the women were excused from working on *Rosh Hodesh*.

Today, *Rosh Hodesh* is celebrated by women everywhere and more than 6,000 girls of all denominations have participated in *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* across North America.

## **7. Logistics 5 minutes**

Explain how *Rosh Hodesh* will be meeting at your institution (e.g. in homes on Sundays at 4pm to 6pm or after religious school on Thursday evenings... This decision should be made by the Group Leader and Supervisor prior to this meeting). Discuss role of the monthly host and what those duties include (providing private space, food, etc). Let parents and girls know that the Group Leader will email parents monthly themes after the meeting (if you as the Group Leader plan to do so.) Pass out hand-out for parents to sign up to host. Ask for a volunteer to host the first meeting. Review other logistics such as costs, contact over the month and reminders for meetings. Solicit and respond to questions.

## **8. Close 5 minutes**

Make a circle and pass out candles.

Group Leader states: In ancient Israel, the way the New Moon was determined

was by two witnesses testifying that they saw the first sliver of the New Moon. This was obviously before a cell phone text could broadcast the news, so officials would set fires from hilltop to hilltop announcing the New Moon. In this same way, we will light our flames from one person to the next symbolizing the *Rosh Hodesh* fire lighting. As you receiving the passing of the flame, take a moment to make a wish for yourself – silent or out loud – for the upcoming month.

After all candles around circle have been light, Group Leader reads:

The moon now glides toward darkness  
Toward rest.  
She retreats in order to emerge whole.  
She quiets  
In order to  
Return and fill night  
With light  
So too shall we  
Make a space for ourselves.  
A space for renewal.  
Wishing you a month filled with blessings.

Invite all participants to join together in saying: *Hodesh Tov* (have a Good Month)

Blow out candles  
Thank all for participating



What are some of the messages from media and pop culture that teens receive and what effect do these messages have? Using the magazines, create a group collage representing the messages you identify.

### ***Theme at a Glance: Tishrey***

#### **Teshuvah: Bringing Out Our Best**

In Tishrey Lev, we prepare both personally and collectively for the New Year through reflective exploration of the High Holy Day themes of **teshuvah** (reflecting on negative behaviors we wish to abandon and positive ones we wish to enhance) and **lashon hara** (unethical speech). This session also builds on the process begun in the first month of **establishing an appreciative group atmosphere** through encouraging **lashon tov**, or ethical communication among participants.

**Tishrey and Teshuvah Tips:** Group discussion

**Practicing Ethical Speech:** Scripted dramatization

**The Ideal and the Real—The Challenge of Ethical Speech:** Discussion and improvisation

**A Look at Your Life:** Personal reflective writing

**Closing:** Elective sharing of individual **teshuvah** goals for the coming year and/or a selected Rosh Hashanah tradition

### ***Theme at a Glance: Kislev***

#### **Judith and Beyond: Heroines Past and Present**

In Kislev Lev, we explore **female empowerment** in ancient and contemporary times. We discuss the stories of a woman associated with Hanukkah—**Judith**; discover the lives of twelve accomplished **modern day Jewish women**; and explore our own ideas of what it means to be a **heroine**.

**The Story of Judith:** Reading and full-group discussion

**Today's Women of Valor:** Discussion and creating social network profile

**What Makes a Hero:** Group discussion

**Closing:** Singing and/or reading “Light and Dark” and reciting the traditional “Prayer for the New Month” with added blessings

### ***Theme at a Glance: Heshvan***

#### **The Struggles and Joys of Sisterhood**

In Heshvan Lev, we explore the life of our foremother **Rachel**, in honor of her *yahrzeit*, which is observed on the 11th of Heshvan. Through the study of classical midrashim (ancient stories that provide interpretation of biblical texts) and the creation of original ones, we will highlight the importance of **interpretation** both in Jewish tradition and in forging our own relationship with Jewish texts.

**Viewing Rachel and Leah:** Group study and discussion of this relationship as depicted in the Torah and in classical and contemporary midrashim

**Midrash Explained:** Exploration of the ancient and contemporary midrashic (interpretive) process

**Midrash and Me:** Creating original midrashim through individual reflective writing OR small-group theatrical improvisation

**Closing:** Singing *Eli, Eli*, in honor of Hannah Senesh, whose *yahrzeit* is this month, and reciting the traditional “Prayer for the New Month”

### ***Theme at a Glance: Tevet***

#### **Body as Temple: Rededication to Self-Appreciation**

In Tevet Lev, we commemorate the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, using the metaphor from Jewish mystical tradition that likens the **human body** to the **mishkan**, (the portable tabernacle used before the building of the first Temple). We **rededicate ourselves** to valuing our bodies and committing to positive thoughts and actions.

**Body Beloved:** Identification and practice of healthy and self-affirming life strategies

**Body as Temple:** Group discussion of Jewish values and practices related to the body

**Body Positive:** Guided yoga/movement session

**Rededication to Self-Appreciation:** Personal reflection of self-critical tendencies and commitment to positive thinking

**Closing:** Reciting the traditional “Prayer for the New Month”

***Theme at a Glance: Shevat***  
**Shevat Smorgasbord: Nature  
Meditations and Munchies**

In Shevat Lev, we explore the **nature** themes of the Tu Beshvat Seder through reflection, movement, meditation, craft, and creative ritual.

**Shevat Seder Fruit Analogies:** Discussion of personal character traits

**Shevat Charades:** Interpretive movement and dramatic expression of the four elements of nature

**Centered in Nature:** Guided nature meditation

**The Calm of Rain:** Making and demonstrating rainsticks and learning about Jewish liturgy on rain

**Closing:** Expressing gratitude for the natural world, and reciting the traditional “Prayer for the New Month”

***Theme at a Glance: Adar I***  
**Megilot of Our Own**

In Adar I Lev, we explore the role of **beauty** in the Purim story and in our lives through a discussion about Queen Esther and the creation of two *megilot* of our own. The first, “Song of Songs” is comprised of positive **images of women** in popular magazines, and the second “Our Lamentations,” is comprised of negative images of women in popular magazines.

**Beauty in the Purim Story:** Brainstorming and discussion of images of women in the Scroll of Esther

**Making Megilot of Our Own:** Craft and discussion of images of girls and women in the media and our own experiences

**Social Activism:** “Girlcotting” and individual letter-writing to companies using problematic female images in their advertisements

**Closing:** Identifying personal strengths and reciting the traditional “Prayer for the New Month”

***Theme at a Glance: Adar II***  
**Hide and Seek: Megilat Esther, Masks  
and Me**

In Adar II Lev, we explore issues of **Jewish identity** and **anti-Semitism** through a discussion about Queen Esther and the creation of decorative plaster masks.

**Esther in the Palace:** Group discussion of Jewish identity (hidden or declared)

**The Minority Experience:** Personal reflection and sharing

**Revealing Masks:** Mask-making craft project and discussion of identity

**Closing:** Sharing individual masks and their meaning, reading poem “Myself” and reciting the traditional “Prayer for the New Month”

***Theme at a Glance: Nisan***  
**Miriam: Her Life and Legacy**

In Nisan Lev, we learn about the life of **Miriam** the prophet, sister to Moses and Aaron, by reading and creatively retelling stories about her. Inspired by her courage, we explore the notion of healthy and unhealthy **risk-taking**. We invite the girls to rewrite a popular song, create an interpretive dance, or perform a skit about Miriam—anything **creative** that will honor her **celebratory spirit**. In Nisan, we also decorate our own **Kosot Miriam** (Miriam’s Cups) for use at the seders we attend.

**More About Miriam:** Creative retelling of Miriam’s story through creation and performance of original songs, dances, or skits

**Kos Miriam (Miriam’s Cup):** Creating individual cups for the seder with discussion on risk-taking

**Closing:** Conducting *Kos Miriam* ritual and reciting the traditional “Prayer for the New Month”

***Theme at a Glance: Iyar***  
**Knowing What Counts: The Omer and Being True**

In Iyar Lev, we read a magazine article, “How to Be Popular,” as an inroad to a discussion about **popularity** as it relates to being true to ourselves, choosing and maintaining healthy **friendships**, and developing a sense of **self-worth**. We build on Jewish mystical traditions about the Omer through making our own Omer Bracelets. We also explore Iyar as a time for **personal growth**. A special Facilitator's Resource provides guidance for converting this gathering plan into a Closing Month.

**Counting Friends vs. Friends that Count:** Group discussion of magazine article, “How to Be Popular,” by Deirdre Dolan

**Being My Best Self:** Identifying personal character goals through crafting of Omer Bracelets

**Closing:** Sharing bracelets and their meaning, and reciting the traditional “Prayer for the New Month”

***Theme at a Glance: Sivan***  
**Ruth and Naomi: Listening With Your Heart**

In Sivan Lev, we examine Megilat Rut (The Book of Ruth) as a springboard for an exploration of **successful friendship**. We identify **effective communication** as an essential component of **healthy relationships** and learn and practice **communication skills**. A special Facilitator's Resource provides guidance for converting this gathering plan into a Closing Month.

**Opening and Warm-Up:** Group discussion of Megilat Rut and its Theme of Friendship

**Active Listening Defined:** Paired role-play to identify effective listening skills

**A Good Friend is a Good Listener:** Group demonstration and practice of active-listening techniques

**Share a Treat:** Paired make-your-friend-a-sundae activity, reinforcing the use of and importance of listening skills

**Closing:** Reading of poem “Listen” and reciting the traditional “Prayer for the New Month”



**ROSH HODESH: IT'S A GIRL THING!**

# Calendar and Celebrations



## FALL



**Tishrey** (September/October)

*Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simhat Torah*



**Heshvan** (October/November)

*no holidays*



**Kislev** (November/December)

*Hanukkah*



## WINTER

**Tevet** (December/January)

*Hanukkah*



**Shevat** (January/February)

*Tu Beshvat*



**Adar (I and II)** (February/March)

*Purim*



## SPRING

**Nisan** (March/April)

*Pesah, Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Memorial Day)*



**Iyar** (April/May)

*Yom Hazikaron (Israel's Memorial Day), Yom Ha'atzma'ut (Israel's Independence Day), Lag Be'omer (33rd day of the Omer), Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day)*



**Sivan** (May/June)

*Shavuot*



## SUMMER

**Tamuz** (June/July)

*17th of Tamuz*



**Av** (July/August)

*Tishah Be'av*

**Elul** (August/September)

*Selihot*

