



The Jewish Education Center Of Cleveland

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The Jewish Education Center of Cleveland's **Response Curriculum** *Searching for Jewish Values in Big Bucks TV Game Shows*

The ratings success of the television game show "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" has inspired a big money, television game show renaissance on prime-time, national television. On any weeknight our students can tune into a fantasy world where trivia, fancy sets, and competition is king.

This phenomenon reached its zenith on February 15 when nearly twenty-three million viewers watched fifty women vie for the honor of marrying a millionaire whom they, nor any members of their families, had met before.

These shows have been described as entertaining, intense, suspense-filled, and demeaning. The reactions and the impressive viewer ratings suggest that the networks have tapped into a strong culture vein. More importantly for Jewish educators is the knowledge that our students are not immune to this type of programming. While it is true that many of these game shows present values that don't always reflect the Jewish values stressed in our various educational settings, it is also true that we can view this cultural pastime as a unique teaching opportunity.

The Curriculum Resources Department of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland (JECC) has developed the attached Response Curriculum as a resource for K-12 teachers to help place this television game show phenomenon into a Jewish context. The Judaic texts and activities found within will help stimulate student discussion . . . and hopefully help our students develop more critical television viewing skills.

In this resource packet you will find:

- Information on the early era of big money game shows
- Text Study & Classroom Activities
- Resources

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Information on the early era of big money game shows

During the roaring 50's the American public fell in love with prime-time television game shows. Some of the games were played for laughs and some for prizes and some for big money. On Sunday nights everything came to stop while America watched **The \$64,000 Question**. At their peak, there were 22 game shows on the air.

By 1958 the integrity of big money television game shows was rocked by a series of revelations that some of the shows were rigged. The "winners" Americans had rooted for had been supplied with the answers in advance.

The scandal prompted Congressional hearings. Although there were no laws prohibiting the "fixing" of game shows, both the networks and their sponsors acknowledged the public's distaste and kept game shows off prime-time television for quite some time.

Web Sites

- **The Game Show Convention Site**
http://www.public.usit.net/sbeverly/index_gameshow.html
- **An Examination of Television Quiz Show Scandals of the 1950s**
<http://www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/Colleges/HONR/HONR269J/.WWW/projects/venanzi.html>
- **The Game Show Network**
<http://www.spe.sony.com/gsn/>

Final Assessment Activity

Ask students to design a game show that highlights Jewish values. Invite a panel of parents to serve as "television executives" while the students "pitch" their new shows to the network. (*Teacher's Note: This activity can serve as the assessment instrument for the curriculum.)

Activities: ?øéùð ääæèà (*eyzehu ashir?*/Who Is Rich?) continued

4. What is the motivation of people who go on TV shows like, "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" Which of the winners indicate that they feel rich, even if they haven't won the million dollars? What kinds of statements do they say that helps the viewers know they are content/happy? What kinds of statements are made by those who might be feeling "poor"?
5. A game show contestant needs to take risks. Ask the students to make a list of the risks a person faces when involved in a big money television game show. Discuss the risks in light of Ben Zoma's suggestion that we should be happy with our lot in life. Can Ben Zoma's quote help formulate a Jewish "guideline" of when a contestant should stop? Ask students to think of times in their lives when they took risks for money, fun, excitement. Would they choose to do the same today? If yes, why? If no, why not? Can Ben Zoma's quote help formulate a Jewish "guideline" of when to take risks in our lives?

Focus #2: Wealth is a Blessing

TEXT STUDY & CLASS ACTIVITIES

çé:ä úì ä÷ (*Kohelet/Ecclesiastes 5:18*)

...every person who is given riches and property by G-d,
and is also permitted by G-d to eat from them...
that is a gift of G-d.

...í éñèðà øùð í é÷ì àä àì -íúð øùà í ääà-ìè
...äðî î ìèàì àèèì ùäâ
:àèä í é÷ì à úúí äæ

ãé:æ úì ä÷ (*Kohelet/Ecclesiastes 7:14*)

When you are experiencing prosperity, be happy.
And when things are going against you, remember:
G-d created both of these times...

..áàèá äèä ääâè í áéá
äàø àðø í áéää
...í é÷ì àä àùð äæ-úî òì äæ-úà í á

ã:èé èì ùî (*Mishle/Proverbs 19:4*)

Wealth makes many friends...

...í éáø í èðø óéñé 'iää

םàà" (Siddur)

Blessed are you Lord, our G-d, Ruler of the universe,
who is good and does good.

י"י אדא ע"י אדע"י א'א א"א ע"א
.אע"י א" א"א

Yiddish folk saying (Quoted in Noah benShea's, The Word, page 211)
It is not so good with money, as it is bad without it.

Yiddish folk saying (Quoted in Noah benShea's, The Word, page 219)
A heavy purse carries a light heart.

Activities: Wealth is a Blessing

1. Discuss the texts that refer to riches/prosperity as being G-d given. What extra responsibilities might we have for gifts that are from G-d? With these quotes in mind, how might a person without material property feel about G-d? Ask students in pairs to write a letter to someone who doesn't have much money using this quote and 2-3 other quotes from the sections "Who is Rich?" and "Wealth is a Blessing." Would the letter be different if writing to someone who had won a lot of money on a game show, but lost it?
2. Ask students to look at the quotes in this section as a whole and posit Judaism's position on having wealth. Does this complement or contradict Ben Zoma's quote in the first part of this curriculum?
3. On television these days, it is common to see game show contestants and professional athletes "thanking G-d" for their good fortune. Look at the blessing the rabbis wrote (found on this page) to thank G-d for good news. Ask students to devise brief, meaningful blessings/*berakhot* that can be recited at these times. (Encourage students to find out the blessing/*berakhot* recited upon hearing bad news - "Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, Ruler of the universe, the true Judge" י"י אדא י"א י"י אדע"י א'א א"א ע"א)

Focus #3: Obligations of Wealth

TEXT STUDY & CLASS ACTIVITIES

4 א"א א"א ע"א [Dereh Eretz Zuta]

If you have done the commandment of א"א (tzedakah)
you will be privileged to be wealthy.

And if you are privileged to be wealthy,
do the *mitzvah* of א"א with your wealth.

à:ð úãããúë èì áá ããî ì ú (Babylonian Talmud *Ketubot* 50a)

R. Nahman, or as some say, R. Aḥa b. Jacob, said:

What [is the proof from] Scripture (that one should give to charity 10% of his/her earnings)?"

"...and everything that you give me I will surely give the tenth to you."

(*Bereshit* 28:22)

:á÷ðé øá àçà áø àî éúéàá ,îî çð áø øî à
?àø÷ èàî

.(áë:çë úéùàøá) èì ãðøùðà øùð èì îúú øùà ìëã...

â:ç í éøáã (Deuteronomy 8:3)

...in order to make you know

that not by bread alone do humans stay-alive,

but rather by all that issues at G-d's order do humans stay-alive.

èðéããã îðî ì...

,í ããã äéçé ããáî í çîä-ìð àì éë

:í ããã äéçé 'ä-éð àðãî -ìë-ìð éë

Activities: Obligations of Wealth

1. The top rung of Maimonides' ladder of ã÷ãö is helping others to help themselves. List ways that contest winners might be able to use a portion of their winnings to fulfill this highest level of ã÷ãö. [*Note: For background information on Maimonides' ladder of ã÷ãö, refer to Tzedakah, Gemilut Chasadim and Ahava: A Manual For World Repair by Joel Lurie Grishaver and Beth Huppín (Denver: ARE, 1983) available in the Ratner Media & Technology Center. Students can gain quick access to Maimonides' ladder of ã÷ãö on line at the Ahavat Israel web site <http://www.ahavat-israel.com/am/charity.html>]
2. Ask students to calculate the various amounts contestants on a television game show must set aside for acts of *tzedakah* based upon the calculation described in the quotation from the Babylonian Talmud *Ketubot* 50a. This would serve as a good lead into implementing the JECC Curriculum Department's *Tzedakah* Curriculum in the class. (*Teacher's Note: JECC's *Tzedakah* Curriculum is available for download at <http://www.jecc.org/edres/curric/tzedakah.htm>.)
3. The rabbis stress the importance of daily study. Ask your students to imagine that they are a big game show winner. Would they see themselves spending more or less time on study now? Explain. Ask a rabbi to join the conversation.

Focus #4: Greed**TEXT STUDY & CLASS ACTIVITIES**

è:ä úì ä÷ (*Kohelet/Ecclesiastes 5:9*)

One that loves money, will never have enough money...That too is futile.

... óñë òáúé-àì óñë áää
:ì áä äæ-í á

æ:á úááà é÷øô (*Pirkei Avot 2:7*)

The more possessions, the more worry...

The more *Torah* (study), the more life...

...ääãä äáøî ,í èñëð äáøî
...í ééç äáøî ,äøáú äáøî

Alphabet of Ben Sira (Quoted in R. Alcalay's Words of the Wise, p.415 - #3982)

No one can be poorer, not even the lowliest mendicant,
than a very rich man not content with his estate.

.äøùðî ìäöø òáú äðéää ìäää øéùðë ,ìáìáî éðð äéáéù ,éðð í ìáðá èì ìéà

Nachman of Bratslav (Quoted in Noah benShea's, The Word, page 212)

Those who submerge themselves in the desire for money are always in debt.

Alexander Bloch (Quoted in Noah benShea's, The Word, page 213)

Money is a wonderful thing, but it is possible to pay too high a price for it.

Midrash Rabbah (Quoted in Noah benShea's, The Word, page 213)

One who has a hundred, wants two hundred.

Maimonides (Quoted in Noah benShea's, The Word, page 223)

It is within human nature to make an effort to gain money and add to it;
and in our desire to seek more wealth and honor is the largest source of agony for
human beings.

Activities: Greed

1. Divide students into groups of 2 or 3, give each one of the quotes from this section, and ask them to develop a short skit that shows the others in the class the meaning of their quote. It would help the students watching to have a copy of the quote being performed written on the board or a large sheet of chart paper.
2. Give students a copy of these quotes. Divide them into pairs. At a given signal, ask each pair to read the first quote together and then spend 3-4 minutes discussing it. [You might place the following guiding questions on the board to help their deliberations: Are there any words either partner does not understand? What would be another way to say this sentence, using different words? Is there an example from TV or a book that fits this quote?]. After the pairs have discussed the particular quote, ask students to indicate how much they agree with the statement with a Thumb Up ("I really agree"), Thumb Down ("I absolutely disagree") or a Shake of the Hand ("I'm undecided").
3. These quotes lend themselves to an art project. Ask students each to pick a quote that they find interesting and then to illustrate it. Be sure they include the full text on their page, as well as the source.

Focus #5: Fragility of Wealth**TEXT STUDY & CLASS ACTIVITIES**

ע"י י' ע"י ע"א (Tehilim/Psalms 49)

Do not be afraid when a person becomes rich,
 when his household goods increase;
 for when he dies he can take none of it along;
 his goods cannot follow him down.
 Though he may bless himself in his lifetime,
 others will praise you if you improved yourself.

.א"ע"א א"א"ע א"א"ע ע"ע ,ע"ע"א ע"ע"ע"ע ע"ע א"ע"ע"י א"à
 .א"א"א"ע א"ע"ע"א א"ע"ע א"י ,י"ע"א ע"ע"ע א"א"א"י א" א"י ע"ע
 .ע"י א"ע"ע"ע"ע ע"ע ע"א"א"ע"א , ע"ע"ע"ע א"ע"ע"ע"א א"ע"ע"ע"ע ע"ע

ע"ע"ע"ע"ע ע"י ע"י (Mishle/Proverbs 11:28)

Who trusts in one's wealth, shall fall...

...י"ע"ע"ע א"א"א א"ע"ע"ע"ע"ע ע"ע"ע"ע"ע

à:çñ úääáúë èì áá äâî ì ú (Babylonian Talmud *Ketubot* 68)
R. Joshua b. Korha said,
a person who disregards charity is as one that serves idols.

:øí àà äçø÷ íá òùääé éáø
.í éáëäë úääáò äääò àì èàë - ä÷äöä ìî äëðèò í èì òî ä ì è

Shmuel Hurvitz (Quoted in R. Alcalay's Words of the Wise, p.233 - #2223)
A person cannot create the smallest worm, but fashions idols in their thousands.

Shmaryah Levin (Quoted in R. Alcalay's Words of the Wise, p.233 - #2226)
Every idol demands sacrifices.

á:ãð äøæ äääáò èì áá äâî ì ú (Babylonian Talmud *Avodah Zara* 54:b)
Our Rabbis taught:

Philosophers asked the elders in Rome, 'If your g-d has no desire for idolatry, why does G-d not abolish it?'

They replied, 'If it was something of which the world has no need that was worshiped, G-d would abolish it; but people worship the sun, moon, stars and planets; should G-d destroy the Universe on account of fools?! The world pursues its natural course, and as for the fools who act wrongly, they will have to render an account.'

,ø"ú

,í éáëäë úääáòá äðäøø íèà í èé÷ì à í à :éí äøá í èð÷æä úà íèòáñàì ò àì àù
?äì èáî äðèà äî èðîî

,äì èáî äää èøä íèääò äéä àì èøäò í ì äðä íèàù øáâì àì èà :í àì äøî à
,úâî æî ì á í éáëäèì ä äðäì ì ä äî çì íèääò ì ä èøä
,ääð äääðî è í ì äð äì à !?í èèàùä èðîî í ì äð äääé
.íèää úà íúèì íèäéùð àì ÷ì ÷ù í èèàùä

Activities: Idol Worship

1. Cut pictures from magazines, or download pictures from the Internet, which illustrates modern idols (e.g., money, cars, computers, the fastest computer). Divide students into groups of three and give each group 3-5 pictures. Ask them to talk as detectives might to figure out why their pictures might be considered modern idols. Bring the class together to synthesize thoughts. Develop a modern definition of idol worship. Look at the second commandment and see how to apply the law to modern life.
2. Give students a copy of these quotes and ask them what they might have to do with winning big on TV game shows. Why do they think that people take such an interest in shows like, "You Want to Be a Millionaire?" or in activities like playing the lottery?
3. What sacrifices might wealth and fame demand? Are they worth it?
4. The rabbis of the *Talmud* make a clear connection between becoming/being wealthy, *tzedakah*, and idol worship. Ask students to discuss how withholding money for charity is similar to idol worship. Brainstorm how the game show producers might help contestants and viewers think less about worshipping money and more about helping the needy.
5. High school students may be interested in discussing the issue raised in the quotation from *Avodah Zarah*: If G-d doesn't like idol worship (in this case worshipping money), why does G-d allow it to exist? (*Teacher's Note: The answer given by the rabbis, "the world pursues its natural course," is a cornerstone to understanding why evil exists.)
6. Invite a rabbi to share his/her thoughts about big money game shows and idol worship.

WHAT'S WORTH KNOWING
(Deep knowledge vs. game show knowledge)

TEXT STUDY & CLASS ACTIVITIES

æ:áë èì ùî (*Mishle/Proverbs 22:17*)

Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise; set your heart to My knowledge.

:éúðãì úéùú êáìá í éî ëç éðáã òî ùâ êðæà èä

â:ã òùãã (Hosea 4:6)

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you, that you shall not be a priest to me; seeing that you have forgotten the Torah of your G-d, I will also forget your children.

úøáú çèùúá èì ìäèì [èñàì àà] èàñàì àà úñàì úòãã áúà èè úòãã èì áí èì ò áí ãð
:èðà-í á èéðá çèùà èé-ì à

à:á úááà é=øø (Pirkei Avot 2:1)

Rabbi (Yehuda ha-Nasi) said...know what is above you.

.èì î àì òì ì áì òã ...:øì àà éáø

á:î ìèùãã÷ èì áá ããì ì ú (Babylonian Talmud *Kiddushin* 40b)

Learning is great because it leads to (good) deeds,

.äùðì éãèì àéáî ããì ì úäù ,ìããã ããì ì ú

à:àî í èøãð èì áá ããì ì ú (Babylonian Talmud *Nedarim* 41a)

Abaye said: We have it on tradition that no one is poor save a person who lacks knowledge.

.äðãá àì à èðð ìéà :ìðéè÷ð - ,ééáà øì à

Mishlei Y'hoshua (Quoted in R. Alcalay's Words of the Wise, p.264 - #2508)

It is better to know well, than to know much.

Alcalay, (In Words of the Wise, p. 265 - #2511)

There is knowledge that suffices for window-dressing and knowledge that can fill a whole shop.

Albert Einstein (Quoted in Noah benShea's, The Word, page 241)

Education is that which remains when one has forgotten everything he learned in school.

Moses of Evreux (Quoted in Noah benShea's, The Word, page 243)

Fill your time to whatever extent you can by learning about things that are divine, not simply to know them, but also to do them; And when you shut your book, observe around you, see within you, to know if by your own hand you can make into a deed something that has been learning.

Activities: What's Worth Knowing?

1. Successful contestants in game shows need to know lots of information about a variety of topics. Divide students into small groups and give them the quotes in this section. Ask them to analyze the quotes for what Judaism has to say about the kind of learning that "makes Jewish winners."
 2. Give students a copy of the quotes. Ask them to create a "diploma" that includes one of the quotes. The diploma should include: the name of the "institution" from which the student graduated, the name of a made-up person, the quote in the border, and a seal that somehow illustrates the quote chosen.
 3. In pairs, ask students to choose 2-3 quotes on which they wish to focus. For each of the quotes, have the students give an example of a school situation in which they learned that way. They might give a subject, a specific lesson, or their own learning on a particular topic.
 4. Ask students to identify any game shows that demonstrate information that is worth knowing. What criteria did they use when making their choice?
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RESOURCES

All items are available from the
Ratner Media & Technology Center of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland.

LITERATURE

Who Is Rich?

Primary Grades

Getzel. *The Stonecutter Who Wanted to be Rich*. NY: CIS, 1990.

Hirsh, Marilyn. *Joseph Who Loved the Sabbath*. NY: Viking, 1986.

Elementary Grades

“Elijah and the Fisher Boy” in *The Mysterious Visitor* by Nina Jaffe. NY: Scholastic, 1997.

“Elijah and the Three Brothers” in *Journeys with Elijah*. (Above)

Hautzig, Esther. *Riches*. NY: HarperCollins, 1992.

Frankel, Ellen. *The Classic Tales: 4,000 Years of Jewish Lore*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993.

“Abraham the Carpenter and the Money Hidden Under the Tree”, #188

“Elijah and the Three Wishes”, #292

“The Gift of Seven Years”, #291

“Seven Good Years” in *Journeys with Elijah* by Barbara Diamond Goldin. San Diego, CA: Gulliver/HarcourtBrace, 1999.

“The Three Brothers” in *The Mysterious Visitor* by Nina Jaffe. NY: Scholastic, 1997.

Acceptability of Wealth

Elementary Grades

“The Dream” in *The Mysterious Visitor* by Nina Jaffe. NY: Scholastic, 1997.

“The Fragrance of Paradise” in *Journeys with Elijah* by Barbara Diamond Goldin. San Diego, CA: Gulliver/Harcourt Brace, 1999.

Obligations of Wealth

Primary Grades

“By Loving Man You Honor G-d” in *Ten Traditional Jewish Children’s Stories* by Gloria Goldreich, 1996.

“Nicanor’s Golden Doors” in *Ten Best Jewish Children’s Stories* by Daniel and Chana Sperber. NY: Pitspopany, 1995.

Elementary Grades

“The Bear in the Forest” in *The Mysterious Visitor* by Nina Jaffe. NY: Scholastic, 1997.

Greed

Primary Grades

Jaffe, Nina. *In the Month of Kislev*. NY: Viking, 1992.

Kimmel, Eric A. *The Magic Dreidels*. Illus. by Katrina Kreyina. NY: Holiday House, 1996.

Elementary Grades

“The Blessing” in *Journeys with Elijah* by Barbara Diamond Goldin. San Diego: CA: Gulliver/Harcourt Brace, 1999.

“The Candlesticks” in *The Adventures of Hershel of Ostropol* by Eric A. Kimmel. NY: Holiday House, 1981.

“The Two Brothers” in *The Uninvited Guest and Other Jewish Holiday Tales* by Nina Jaffe. NY: Scholastic, 1993.

Fragility of Wealth

Elementary Grades

“Dalfunka, Where the Rich Live Forever” in *Naftali the Storyteller and His Horse, Sus* by Isaac Bashevis Singer. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976.

Idol Worship

Elementary Grades

“The Life of Elijah” in *Journeys with Elijah* by Barbara Diamond Goldin. San Diego: Gulliver/Harcourt Brace, 1999.

What is Worth Knowing?

Primary Grades

Prose, Francine. *You Never Know*. NY: Greenwillow, 1998.

Schur, Maxine Rose. *The Peddler's Gift*. NY: Dial Books, 1999.

Silverman, Erica. *Raisel's Riddle*. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.

Elementary Grades

Frankel, Ellen. *The Classic Tales: 4,000 Years of Jewish Lore*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993.

“Hillel and Shammai,” #130

“Hillel the Snow Scholar,” #129

“Solomon's Gift of Wisdom,” # 238

“The Ugly Wise Girl”, #293

VIDEOS

They Lied To Us. Gospel Films, 45 minutes, color.

In our search for answers to questions about values, relationships and spirituality, are we listening more to what society says than what G-d says? We want to fit in; we want to be happy. Society tells us how we should look, what we should do, and where we should go to have it all. But does society really know? This emotional video explores the lives of several young people who bought the message purveyed by television, movies, music and print and suffered the consequences. Much of this film has Christological references, however the message of media impact on the lives of young people is quite good.