

“B’tzelem Elohim: Created in God’s Image”

Lesson Plan for Sixth Graders

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Objectives: By the end of this program, learners will be able to:

- Identify the concept of “*b’tzelem elohim*” (made in the image of God)
- Identify that the concept of *b’tzelem elohim* is first found in the book of Genesis
- Describe how we are each created in the image of God
- Recognize that each one of us is special and unique
- Identify and name different ways in which we are God-like; created in God’s image
- Describe how, moving forward, we can recognize that we are all created in God’s image

Timeline:

00-05 – Set Induction / Brief Discussion

10-20 – Skit

20-35 – Discussion

35-40 – Story

40-55 – Activity

55-60 – Closing

Materials:

Big piece of butcher paper with a person’s outline and “Shomer Shelanu” written across

Markers

Table

Guitar/songleader

Easel (if possible) to hang butcher paper

PROGRAM

Set Induction: Learners enter the learning space and sit down in no particular formation. Leader reads the following quote slowly and deliberately from Genesis as other counselors pantomime the actions:

“And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth. And God created man in God’s image; in the image of God, God created them, male and female God created them.” (Then say, this is from Genesis 1:26-27)

Discussion: Leader will ask:

- What does it mean to be created in the image of God? In Hebrew, we call this *b’tzelem elohim*.
- What does it mean to be created in God’s likeness?”
- How can we be God-like in our actions?

Guiding points for discussion:

- None of us knows what God looks like, because God doesn’t look like anything. BUT God is a part of us, God is within us, and God shaped us.
- Created in God’s image means having holiness in each and every one of us, and *being God-like in our actions*
- We are all holy BECAUSE God had a hand in shaping each of us; we each have a touch of holiness within ourselves

When we talk about God, God is...

- Compassionate, merciful, gracious, kind, thoughtful, slow to anger, truthful, forgiving
- How are we like this? Do we identify these qualities in ourselves?
- Where? How? When are we like this? Can we cite examples

Leader will then say, *“today we will explore what it means to really be created b’tzelem elohim – in the image of God.”*

Skit 1: TAs will participate in TWO skits which involve the following themes:

- A group of friends is sitting around talking
- Another kid comes in and starts acting “weird,” saying things that they don’t think is “cool.”
- The kid is noticeably different, but also has something that sets him/her “apart”
- The group starts making fun of the kid for being different or “outside” the circle
- **We stop and have a discussion about what happened. The campers determine how the next skit will go.**

Guiding Questions:

- What did they see?
- Could they relate to the situation?
- How would they handle themselves if they were involved?
- After watching this skit, do they have a different understanding of “*b’tzelem elohim*?”

Skit 2: TAs redo the skit, but with a different outcome:

- Someone else comes in and says “what’s going on?”
- The group tells him/her
- That person winds up telling them, “hey, this person may be a little different, but they’re still great. Look at what’s good about them! They are created *b’tzelem elohim*, just like you and me. Each of us is created in the image of God.
- Before we *judge* another person for being different, we must remember that we are each created with the Divine Spark. Before we jump to conclusions about people, let’s remember what makes *them* special, unique, and amazing.
- Remember how we can be “God-like” in our actions. Think of how it can transform our relationships!

Story: Leader will tell the story, “The Princess Who Wanted to be God.” TAs will act out the scenes with flair and drama.

Activity: Leader will spread out the butcher paper. Leader will say, “*I want each of you to think about something that makes you unique. Something that you think makes you created in the image of God, or that makes you God-like in your actions. Remember, God is compassionate, merciful, gracious, kind, thoughtful, slow to anger, truthful, forgiving...all these things. Can you those qualities in yourself?*”

Take a moment to think about it, and when you’re ready, please add it to the body of our Shomer Shelanu.” (Explain that this means Our Guardian)

Once the students are done, take a look at the body. Read off some of the qualities listed.

- ➔ Make a very clear point: each of us has these different qualities that make us who we are. Each of us has something that we feel makes us “*b’tzelem elohim*”
- ➔ Before we judge other people for being “different,” let’s always try to remember this list. Because each of us in Shomrim has a little bit of God in us.
- ➔ We must remember to respect each other, look for the spark, look for the good, and look for God in each of us.
- ➔ How will we look for the good and recognize that internal holiness?

Closing

Songleader will teach the group “*B’tzelem Elohim*,” a song which praises the spark in each of us. For lyrics and chords to this song, see:

<http://static.squarespace.com/static/50550cd6c4aad0824d1ea95f/t/5066625ac4aa71efcf502062/1348887130697/B'tzelem%20Elohim%20Chord%20Sheet%201.pdf>

The Princess Who Wanted to See God

As Told by Rabbi Jason Gwasdoff

Once upon a time, in a kingdom far far away, there lived a princess. And that princess got everything she ever wanted, always. Her father was always trying to please her and make her happy. And she was a very demanding princess.

Once, the princess said to her father “Daddy, I want a golden pony!” So her father, the king, called in his assistants and his viziers and his magicians and, together, somehow, they produced a beautiful golden pony.

Once, the princess said to her father, “Daddy, I want a sunbeam in a jar!” So her father, the king, called in his assistants and his viziers and his magicians and, somehow, they were able to place a bright shining sunbeam in a jar.

But one day, the princess said to her father, “Daddy, I want to see God!”

Her father turned his head, looked at his daughter, and said, “Darling, I don’t think that’s possible.”

The princess replied, “Daddy! I WANT TO SEE GOD!” She stomped her feet and put her hands on her hips.

“Okay, okay,” said her father, the king. “We’ll do our best!” And so he called in his assistants and his viziers and his magicians and told them, “My daughter, the princess, wants to see God.” All of them laughed. “No one can see *God*,” said one. “It’s simply not possible,” said another.

But two men came forward – the treasurer and the cartographer, or mapmaker. The treasurer said, “I can show your daughter God.” And so he took the princess by the hand and led her to the treasury in which all the valuables in the kingdom were stored. He said to the princess, “Here! Here is where you see God. For anyone who could ever want anything knows that this is where they must come... all the gold and silver and rubies and emeralds in the world. This is God, princess.”

The princess stomped her feet and stuck out her tongue. “This isn’t God! I want to see God!” She cried.

Next, the cartographer took the princess by the hand and led her to the top of the castle, to its highest point overlooking all the land. “My princess, look out over the kingdom. Look at all the beautiful buildings and the town square, and look beyond that to the rolling hills and the mountains far in the distance. Look at this lush, green, beautiful kingdom. All this is God.”

Once again, the princess stomped her feet and stuck out her tongue. “This isn’t God! I want to see God!” She cried.

The king was beginning to lose hope. He felt it was quite possible he may never give his daughter what she ultimately wanted.

But then – one of his oldest advisors, a man who was well into his nineties, who walked with a limp and who rarely spoke up in meetings, came forward. “I can show your daughter God,” he said.

And so, the old man took the princess by the hand and led her out of the castle. He led her out of the town square and then out of the town itself. He led her deep into the forest, and there they came upon a tiny cottage in a clearing.

“What’s this?” asked the princess.

“My princess, please go inside.” The old man led her to the front door. The princess knocked gently. “*Please come in*,” came a voice on the other side.

The princess walked into the tiny cottage with one little room. Sitting in a bed before her was a little girl, probably the same age as the princess herself. She stayed in her bed and did not stand up when the princess entered. And this, quite simply, outraged the princess.

“How dare you not rise when I enter?” demanded the princess. “I am a princess! I am royalty! Have you no respect for me or for my family?” The princess cried.

The little girl looked at the princess. “I apologize, my princess,” she said. “But you see, I cannot rise. I cannot even stand, because my legs do not work. I have been in this bed for nine long years. And I wish, more than anything, that I could stand to greet you. Because I am honored that you have come to see me.”

The princess was stunned. She was silent. She could not believe what she had heard.

After a few moments, the princess left the cottage. She walked outside, to the old man who was waiting for her. He looked down at her. “My princess, did you see what you wanted to see?” he asked.

The princess looked straight ahead and said, “I cannot believe that poor girl. I feel so sad for her. She cannot even stand, and she has been in that bed for nine long years. How awful, and how tragic.” Suddenly, a tear formed in her eye. Soon that tear rolled down her face.

The old man took out a mirror and told the princess to look inside. “Princess,” he began. “With your tear, now I know. You have seen God.”