

## Simhat Torah Idea Slam

### **1. Torah is central in our lives. (personal verses)**

- Use individuals' stories to create a new narrative of Torah and Jewish life in your community
- Give each person a personal verse from the Torah that might inspire or challenge them in the coming years
- Everything we do revolves around Torah. It comes up in every educational or ceremonial moment.
- Have congregants record short divrei torah, share them on Friday Hoshanah Rabbah
- Tikkun Leil Hoshanah Rabbah as a way of celebrating Torah. You could use FlipGrid for this <https://info.flipgrid.com/>
- I once heard of the custom to chant the entire book of Devarim on Hoshanah Rabbah or Simchat Torah to prepare for the ending of the Torah.
- Use Artscroll verses to give people the verse for their names ( can teach idea of personally taking hold of Tanach through the meditation of the name verses).
- Will have a rolling of the Torah, with a camera trained onto it, and narrate the highlights or stories as we pass by them.
- Use of a digitalized Torah scroll to show images of the Sefer Torah and ask for people to guess portions
- At our shul in the past we've put Hillel Smith's Parsha Posters in 5x7 frames all around the shul on the Torah we unscroll - maybe there's something we can do with his posters, outside, as a "journey through Torah"
- During online services, invite congregants to show their mezuzot (it's a Torah scroll we each have in our homes!). I love connecting people to their spaces - using the environment's that we find ourselves in
- Have individuals share favorite Torah passages. Encourage Zoom participants to read from humashim, Eng or Heb.
- Share Torah Stitch By Stitch in Toronto, but also accessible online
- Story slam on a Torah theme
- Use Kahoot to create a game of question and answer over Torah narratives, etc
- PDF of Torah Scroll from Hewlett-East Rockaway Jewish Centre:
- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2SbKjWtI2BUSzN5ZjJJZ3pnTzA/view?usp=sharing>
- <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B2SbKjWtI2BUUmE1ajlyOFZjYmc?usp=sharing>
- How about an apples to apples type game - People choose or are given a biblical scenario and must share a personal example or make up a story based on the biblical tale. Noah's flood, Jacob-Esau tensions, Song at the sea, etc.
-

## Simhat Torah Idea Slam

### **2. Simhat Torah is the happiest day on the Jewish calendar because we celebrate Torah, the covenant between God and the Jewish people, with dancing, joy, and circles of celebrations.**

- If in person, dancing in family pods and/or providing ropes for people to hold while dancing in a social distanced fashion
- Hire a klezmer band to come and play a set in the parking lot for social distancing dancing.
- Unlike the wild celebrations of Purim, Simchat Torah is more focused on Torah and our joy in celebrating the end and the beginning. **I wonder how this changes the way we celebrate - is it a different sort of joy?**
- Someone mentioned "Walk-afot" - love it!
- Hakafot outside with social distancing around a block with music playing from speakers?
- Hire someone to lead Israeli dancing on zoom? While someone is holding a scroll
- David Melech/Hand Jive - dancing with hands only, so it can be seen while sitting at a screen
- Drum circle
- Steve Weintraub coined the term "zoom kaboom" for an online flashmob: send out a video with simple choreography in advance, then everyone is invited to do it together in real time!
- Booze - is there an appropriate 'drinking game' that can be played? Small bottles like hotels or airplanes [or invite congregants to submit creative Torah themed cocktail recipes which you can publish in your newsletter]
- Also Covid-themed cocktail recipes!
- If dancing in real life, do line dances with place markers so ppl stay at a safe distance.
- Israeli Folk Dancing? Can we have recorded music?? Either parking lot or Zoom
- -line dances rather than circle dancing: Israeli folk dancing/music the kids are into these days
- Can we use music to bring joy through singing even online? Gather a few singers to do a kumzitz for the community?
- There is a tradition of solo expressive dance in Ashkenazi communities (called khusidl or solo freylekhs), that could be taught in advance and then done on the night. This is authentic Jewish dancing that can be done alone at home.
- Hakafot: circle around your laptop with your mezuzah?
- Many in my congregation have the stuffed toy Torah's at home--encourage families to bring them to the zoom, and to dance with them while music is played from home, pass them to family members, etc
- Similar to above, but have kids make "Torahs" in an "arts and crafts" type of way, or, perhaps out of food (ice cream bars and pretzels as handles?) and then share over the screen (and then eat!)
- Food art - making Torahs out of different foods - kits sent home? Part of an in-person activity? Over zoom together?
- Involve teens with a Simchat Torah tik tok dance video
- Smule -app that does cost money (40/person) can allow people to sing together?

## **Simhat Torah Idea Slam**

- Tiktok: invite your teens to do something
- Chironomy but full body: torah trope as dance

### **3. Simhat Torah reminds us of the importance of Jewish continuity, and the circularity of life, (as we end Devarim and begin Beresheet immediately, even in a year that is so different from what we have known in the past and hope for the future.)**

- -putting the names of parshiyot on signs on the lawn (outside) as a trail to follow and discuss the whole Torah
- Get collect names and b'nai mitzvah parshiyot and see if in the living history of the congregation every parashah has had at least 1 BMitzvah
- -walk 7 circles around the synagogue outside
- I want to give people the sense of completing and restarting the Torah. Maybe creating a sheet for people/families to read at home that has in English some of Dt. 32, Gen 1 and Joshua 1... incomplete thoughts. Do storahelling kind of thing of Dt. to Joshua to Gen.
- Hakafot - using poems (shir) instead of songs (shir). Or call & response songs. Or a song from each book of the Torah
- Invite congregants to share what they are passing from generation to generation (eg ethical wills)

### **4. On Simhat Torah we honor those who give of themselves to help our synagogue and community thrive. It is an honor to be given the last aliyah of Devarim and the first of Beresheet. After a busy High Holiday season, it is important to honor and thank our volunteers.**

- Could honor individuals via zoom if you are using that technology- challenge of honoring multiple people on that platform if one wanted to honor a group (not usually done in the context of those aliyot-, but perhaps this year would be different; or perhaps it can happen in a different 'slot' over Simchat Torah)
- Hold a service Sunday night after Simhat Torah via zoom in order to end and begin the Torah and even without aliyot do some kind of honoring - ie invite the honorees to read Torah from the humash or even in english
- Since we can't do hakafot and dance, we're thinking of having 7 groups (could be a way to honor groups of volunteers) create fun, Torah-related skits or

## Simhat Torah Idea Slam

songs that could be performed on Zoom - a way to bring some fun, joy, lightness and reimagine what hakafot are. Kind of a talent/variety show that would highlight/honor various groups in the shul.

- We do honor our volunteers but it also is a soft landing to the end of the holiday season. We make fun of the holidays past and enjoy that we have all survived the “season”. It is attended mostly by those who are with us at every other service.
- **Honor medical/essential workers as a group, rather than honoring any individuals/couples**

### **5. While primarily a “synagogue holiday,” Simhat Torah reminds us that Judaism is a family experience, and that we are bound together as lifelong learners, more similar and united than not.**

- “Walkafot” - using a ‘walkathon’ framework, make it an at-home program where families walk in their own area and share about it on social media
- Use USCJ Parsha summaries to have Zoom break-out groups learning the “whole” Torah
- A family program we are able to duplicate on zoom before the chag involves giving young kids a few words or up to a pasuk to read from the end of the Torah. We will do this via zoom, involving the families as in the past, with some music bookending the celebration- for younger kids - creating your own Torah scroll beforehand and then show and tell.
- Can engage in family Torah study
- Can study across parshiyot like some do at a Tikkun Leyl Shavuot - **maybe stay up all night?**
- Can look at the linear aspect of Torah from Devarim to Joshua
- It would take some effort, but could you ask congregants to each pick one parsha one verse from that parsha to somehow share as their favorite- one verse and one or two sentences as to why they found it meaningful- a quick “survey” of the Torah?
- Connect Sukkot and Simhat Torah telling stories from each Sefer over five nights from the sukkah over zoom
- Kids making a Torah story board. Laminated and put outdoors for people to walk through

## **Simhat Torah Idea Slam**