

Vidu'i and Community
"We're All In This Together"
Materials written by Amy Dorsch

Goals (short term- by the end of the lesson):

- Learners will study two versions of the Vidu'i prayer (both creative version and literal text)
- Learners will work together to examine Vidu'i through the perspective of commonalities, community and responsibility (collective Tshuvah)

Objectives (long term):

- Learners will understand that Judaism views wrongdoings ("sins") as human and common to human nature however, we still aim to commit to *improvement* each year on Yom Kippur
- Learners will understand that "confession" in Judaism is not just an individual responsibility but a communal action (collective Tshuvah)

Materials:

Hand out: Vidui' pages (2 pages)

hand out: Instructions (1 page)

pens/pencils for each person

Marker

1 piece Flip chart paper

paper cut into strips for "chain"

Step 1: Set Induction

Invite learners up to act out the following scenes, one at a time

Scenario 1: דָּבַר רָנוּ דְּפִי

Slander, gossip, spoken ill

3 girls, one off to the side, other 2 girls are talking badly behind another's back

What misbehavior or "wrongdoing" can you identify here?

Scenario 2: טַּפְּסָה לְנוֹ אִשָּׁה קָרָה

Told a lie

Mom, son/daughter, any lie a child would tell his/her parent

What misbehavior or "wrongdoing" can you identify here?

Step 2: Discuss the set induction

- How many of you have committed either of these misbehaviors? Be honest! Everyone one of us at one point in the year have gossiped, talked badly about someone or lied at one point.
- How does knowing we've all done these wrongdoings feel? Does it make it okay? What does it mean? That we're all human? That its natural to lie? How then can we make it better knowing that we all do wrong things but still want to be good people?

Step 3: Introduce Concept: Tshuvah and Vidu'i

In Judaism, we know that we are all human and that we all make mistakes. However, on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and the days in between, we commit to making Tshuvah or "returning" to being a better person. Catholic people confess their sins to a priest in a solitary booth. Jews however, confess to their wrongdoings as a group in a collective Tshuva in synagogue. They announce together, a list of sins (such as the two we pointed out at the beginning), they have each committed as a common expression of doing wrong and vowing to improve. This list is called the Vidu'i.

Step 4: Learn the Concepts: Read Texts

Hand out Creative (Dr. Suess style) and standard Vidu'i texts.

First- read the Dr. Suess style Vidu'i in English (have a number of people volunteer to read each paragraph or go around the room and ask each person to reach line). *This gives the learners a kid-friendly idea of wrongdoings. It's cute, it's funny, it's a good introduction to admitting to our mistakes*

Next- read the actual Vidu'i.

Ask the group to read or look at the Hebrew. What one similarity do you notice about each word? If they don't see it right away, suggest the following:

Look at the Hebrew text from the Machzor. Try circling every םו that you see at the end of a word. What do you notice?

םו- these two letters added to the end of a Hebrew verb means "we."

Explain: Each verb, each wrongdoing (what is sometimes referred to as a sin), is a communal wrongdoing- something we're all guilty of at one point or another during the year.

Step 5: Practice Define Givens: Learner Action

Materials: hand out: Instructions (1 page)

pens/pencils for each person

Marker

1 piece Flip chart paper

paper cut into strips for "chain"

Action 1: In small groups, go through the *vidu'i* list of wrongdoings. Each person must underline which ones they feel they have committed this year (be honest, that's the whole point of Yom Kippur- being honest with yourself).

Action 2: Now compare!

Assign one person as the recorder. Have him/her make a list of each wrongdoing listed that everyone (or the majority) in the group had underlined. *Notice how many are common among us all*

Action 3: Chain Gang!

Write out each common wrongdoing on each slip of paper. On the other side, write out one promise of improvement you can think of as a group. Attach them with glue or tape to create a chain, connecting each of your individual actions and promises to each other.

Step 6: Present findings and discuss

Have each group send a representative to present a few links on their chain.

Ask them a number of these processing questions:

- Why is that a common wrongdoing? Why is it so human to commit an act like that?
- What do the improvements or promises do? Do you think you can keep them?
- Who do these affect? Are you impacted at all by thinking about your past actions? Why do we do this on Yom Kippur and why is it done together as a community?

Essential Question: We made a chain connected our common actions to one another. How are our actions connected to each other? How does Vidu'i help us see that we are all connected to each other and that our behavior affects one another?

Attach all chains together to make a large group Vidu'i Chain.

Step 7: Summarize

Summary: As you can see, all of our actions are connected to one another. Not only are they common- actions we have all done, but they have impacted other people.

Explain how individual actions are connected to others, committed by everyone in the community and affect everyone in the community. Therefore, Tshuvah as a whole and Vidu'i, our personal confession of wrongdoings is done as a community so you don't feel alone in spilling your guts! And doesn't it feel better to "all be in this together?" Jews are never alone in their big emotional moments and Vidu'l is no exception!

Step 8: apply to your own life

This year, when you think about things you have done in the past that were maybe not such a great idea, know that you are not alone, you are a person who makes mistakes just like everyone else. Also know, that as a Jew, you have this chance during the High Holiday season, to join others in doing Tshuvah and committing to being a better person. Think about 1 or 2 changes you can make to improve yourself for this year and feel free to share before we go.

Student handout (2 pgs)

Vidu'i: Confession

[Hebrew: Viddui.] Several times during Yom Kippur, it is customary to confess the wrong decisions we've made which have resulted in misbehavior. We "confess" our misbehaviors as a community, illustrating that we're all human and we all err.

Essential Question: Why do we say this prayer together as a group? Why do we not say it silently and choose which ones we feel we are guilty of?

Its not that YOU'RE a bad person, it's that you admit to being human and admit that you've misbehaved just like everyone else.

The Machzor (High Holiday prayer book) contains lists of some common mistakes we make, arranged according to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Uncle Eli's Machzor (Dr. Seuss Style Vidu'i)

By Eliezer Segal

<http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/EliMahzor/index.html>

I did it! I'm Sorry!
Next year I'll be good.
I'll try to be better,
and do what I should.

There's no one to blame.
The fault was all mine.
Forgive me, I won't do the same
things next time.

I Ate all the cake
Mama saved for our guests.
I Broke her blue vase
and I left a big mess.
I Cried, kicked and screamed
till I got my own way
I Didn't clean up my old clothes
for twelve days.
I Erased the great novel
that Daddy was writing.

I Frightened the cat
with my scratching and biting.
I Gossiped and told tales
I knew weren't true.
I Happened to fill Suzie's slippers

with goo.
I did it! I'm Sorry!
Next year I'll be good.
I'll try to be better,
and do what I should.
There's no one to blame.
The fault was all mine.
Forgive me, I won't do the same
things next time.

I Ignored the advice
of my parents and teachers.
I Jjumped on the bed
like some wild, crazy creature.
I Knew it was wrong,

but it seemed like such fun.
I Lied just a bit
when they asked what I'd done.
I Misbehaved terribly
during the year.
I Pushed when they told me quite
clearly to pull.

I did it! I'm Sorry!
Next year I'll be good.
I'll try to be better,
and do what I should.
There's no one to blame.
The fault was all mine.
Forgive me, I won't do the same
things next time.

I Quacked like a duck while the
teacher was talking.
I Ranted and raved with really loud
squawking.

I Nagged at my parents
and drove them to tears.
I Organized protests
to close down the school.

I said I would do things but never
did do 'em.
I Told tales of lost homework
and doggies that chew 'em.
I Used Tammy's toys
that she said not to touch.
I Vanished before I could help very
much.
I Walked, uninvited, through Mrs.
Katz' courtyard.
I X-ed out the "F"s from my last
year's report card.
I Yelled till I made all the neighbors'
ears sore.
I Zoomed on my bike
'cross the fresh-painted floor.

The Vidu'i text from the Machzor

אֲשָׁמְנוּ, מְנוּ-

בָּגַדְנוּ, גָּזַלְנוּ, דָּבַרְנוּ דְּפִי. הֶעֵוִינוּ, יָנוּ, וְהִרְשָׁנוּ, עָוִינוּ, זָדְנוּ, חָמְסָנוּ, טַפְּלוּנוּ, שָׂקָר.
יַעֲצָנוּ רָע, כִּזְבְּנוּ, לְצָנוּ, מָרְדְנוּ, נֶאֱצָנוּ, סָרְדְנוּ, עָוִינוּ, פִּשְׁעָנוּ, צָרְדְנוּ,
קָשְׁנוּ, יָנוּ עֲרָף. רִשְׁעָנוּ, שָׂחָנוּ, תַּעֲבָנוּ, תַּעֲבָנוּ, תַּעֲבָנוּ, תַּעֲבָנוּ, תַּעֲבָנוּ, תַּעֲבָנוּ.

Ashamnu, bagadnu, gazalnu, dibarnu dofi, he'evinu, v'hirsha'nu, zadnu,
chamasnu, tafalnu shaker, ya'atznu ra, kizavnu, latznu, maradnu, ni'atznu,
sararnu, avinu, pashanu, tzararnu, kishinu oref, rashanu, shichatnu, ti'avnu,
ta'inu, ti'ta'nu.

We have all committed offences; together we confess these human sins. The
sins of:

Arrogance Bigotry (intolerance of a belief different from you own)

Cynicism (we have to be selfish to be motivated to do anything) Deceit (distorting the truth)

Egotism Flattery Greed Hatred Injustice Jealousy Grudging (resented
someone, held a grudge)

Lustful Malicious Narrow-minded Obstinate (stubborn) Possessive

Quarrelsome Rancorous (bitterness, resentment) Selfish Violence Weakness of will

Yielded to temptation Showed zeal for bad causes (supported or been excited about something bad)

(more liberal translation: Rabbinical Assembly of Greater Kansas City)

Instructions for group activity: Make it Your Own

Action 1:

In small groups, go through the *vidu'i* list of wrongdoings. Each person must underline which ones they feel they have committed this year (be honest- that's the whole point of Yom Kippur- being honest with yourself). Feel free to share examples or stories of what you meant when you underlined "possessive."

Action 2: Now compare!

Assign one person as the recorder. Have him/her make a list of each wrongdoing listed that everyone in the group had underlined.

Questions to discuss as a group:

- Which ones are we **all** guilty of?
- Which ones are most common? Who do they affect, hurt or disappoint? Loved ones? Teachers and friends? God? Yourself?
- How did you feel knowing you have done these things?
- How did it feel knowing that everyone else did it too?
- What can you do to improve as an individual and what commitment can you make as a team?

Action 3: Chain Gang!

Write out each common wrongdoing on each slip of paper. On the other side, write out one promise of improvement you can think of as a group. Attach them with glue or tape to create a chain, connecting each of your individual actions and promises to each other.