Rosh Hodesh: Themes at a Glance

Lev (First) Year

In the Lev Year, girls gather 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.

Opening Month: Welcoming the Group and the Moon
The Opening Month is designed specifically for a group's initial meeting and introduces participants to the concept of Rosh Hodesh and of Rosh Hodesh groups. It creates a comfortable and supportive environment for future sharing and growth through personal introductions, the establishment of group expectations, and participation in a learning activity and collaborative craft project.

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.

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.

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.
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.

Shevat: Shevat Smorgasbord: Nature Meditations and Munchies
In Shevat Lev, we explore the nature themes of the Tu Beshevat Seder through reflection, movement, meditation, craft, and creative ritual.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Ruach (Second) Year

In the Ruach Year, participants return to the comfortable, accepting place that they have begun to cherish. They continue to look inward and learn more about themselves and then share so that they can learn more about each other.

The gatherings allow for more time for discussion as the girls are now capable of deeper conversations because of both their maturity and level of trust within the group. The group leader trusts her instincts in approaching the gathering plan in a way that she knows will both challenge and excite the girls.

Opening Month: Reconnecting—Rosh Hodesh and Us
This year, Opening Month is devoted to re-establishing the group, its rituals and guidelines. If new members are entering, the warm-up and small group activities help integrate them into the group. A creative exercise of composing “infomercials” for Rosh Hodesh helps review the learning and experiences of last year and generate excitement for this one.

Tishrey: Imagining God
In Tishrey Ruach, we use the High Holy Day liturgy as a springboard to explore and reflect upon classical and contemporary images of God, striving to develop personal metaphors for and ways to connect with God. We then turn our thoughts to our human relationships, drawing on the concept of teshuvah as an inspiration for seeking and granting forgiveness.

Heshvan: Comrades—Not Competitors
In Heshvan Ruach, we use the story of Rachel and Leah and an excerpt from a contemporary magazine article to explore the theme of jealousy. We make and exchange friendship pins as affirmations of positive connections among girls.

Kislev: Money: Madness or Mitzvot
In Kislev Ruach, we acknowledge the lure of consumerism and examine the practice of gift-giving at Hanukkah. Participants explore their personal values regarding materialism and status and become familiar with Jewish teachings on money and tzedakah. To encourage creativity and generosity of spirit, the girls brainstorm meaningful acts of kindness and create IOU coupons to give to friends and family.
**Tevet: Our Inheritance, Our Legacy**
In Tevet Ruach, we use the fact that the 10th of Tevet is *Yom Hakadish Haklali*—a day to remember those whose date of death is unknown—to explore the spiritual legacies we have inherited from our matriarchal ancestors and those we wish to leave to future generations.

**Shevat: Nurturing Nature and Ourselves**
In Shevat Ruach, we explore participants’ roles as guardians and protectors of the earth and themselves. Participants are challenged to reflect upon and commit to behaviors that are respectful of nature and their own spiritual well being.

**Adar I: Choosing to Stand**
In Adar I Ruach, we draw on the experiences of Esther, Vashti, and Dinah to discuss a range of appropriate empowerment strategies. The girls also receive self-defense instruction.

**Adar II: Purim: Courage and Community**
In Adar II Ruach, we explore the Jewish obligation of *tikun olam* (repair of the world) using the customs of Purim as prototypes for our communal responsibilities to stand up to injustice, share our good fortune, and strive to improve the world.

**Nisan: A Girls’ Seder**
In Nisan Ruach, we explore ways of making seders more engaging and experience a women’s seder that highlights women’s roles in the Exodus and the need for liberating all women to live at their full potential. Participants are encouraged to replicate portions of the group experience in their families’ observance.

**Iyar: Teen Stress? Oh, Yes!**
In Iyar Ruach we acknowledge the stress teens experience and examine the negative impact of unmanaged stress. Participants are guided to identify stress-reduction strategies from their own experiences and from Jewish practice. They learn and try out several stress-management techniques.

**Sivan: Caring Communication**
In Sivan Ruach, we explore the complexity of daughter-parent relationships and expectations. Participants learn and practice communication and conflict-management techniques that are applicable to all relationships, emphasizing respectful sharing and problem solving.
Closing Month: Siyum: Celebrating Completion and Continuation
In this Closing Month, we participate in a siyum, a Jewish closing celebration held upon completion of text study or writing a Torah scroll. We draw on its traditional features of reflection, anticipation, and celebration, with an added component—appreciation.

Kol (Third) Year

In the Kol Year, the theme of the Kol year is “Journey Inward, Journey Outward.” The girls are looking at themselves—getting to know in deeper ways the young woman they are becoming, and then “taking it out” into their lives and communities.

Using a broad range of enjoyable activities, groups address adolescent developmental issues with rich Jewish content, while adding a tikun olam (social justice) component. Girls are invited to take on some rotating responsibility for their group. The group creates a Moonbook—a monthly scrapbook to document their gatherings, fun and growth. The year culminates with a self-designed and implemented social action or Mitzvah Project.

Opening Month for New Groups: Welcoming the Group and the Moon
The Kol Opening Month is designed specifically for a group’s initial meeting and introduces participants to the concept of Rosh Hodesh and of Rosh Hodesh groups. It creates a comfortable and supportive environment for future sharing and growth through personal introductions, the establishment of group expectations, and participation in a learning activity and collaborative craft project.

Opening Month for Continuing Groups: Reconnecting Through Our Gifts and Blessings
In Kol, the girls’ focus expands from looking inward to also include looking out at the world around them, recognizing that they can make personal contributions to solving problems and issues in their communities and in the world. With a link to the Elul and High Holy Day concept of teshuvah (return), Opening Month is designed to help each girl reconnect with the group and return to her best self. Each girl will become conscious of the gifts and blessings that she brings to the group through an experience of personal expression that is first individual and then collaborative.

Tishrey: Who Am I? Where Am I Going?
In Tishrey Kol, we respond to a variety of questions that inspire introspection and promote self-awareness. Participants identify their passions and priorities and establish specific and realistic goals and timelines, and give expression to their guiding mottos.
Heshvan: Legacies of Continuity and Change
In Heshvan Kol, we recognize the precious legacies preserved and handed down by our ancestors—legacies of both continuity and change. We share ritual practices, both old and new, that we find meaningful and create a personalized hamsa.

Kislev: Deeper Than Skin-Deep
In Kol Kislev, we expand the girls’ concepts of beauty and attractiveness to characteristics “below the surface.” The girls examine the destructive messages of Beauty Industry advertising, and develop strategies and affirmations to inoculate themselves against negative body image messages.

Tevet: Taking Care of Ourselves
In Tevet, we explore physical and emotional stress in teenager’s lives—the causes, effects, and potential antidotes. We highlight physical and emotional self-care as a sacred responsibility, and present several simple tools that teens can use in their daily lives to take care of their bodies, hearts, and minds.

Shevat: Holy Selves, Wholeness in Relationships
In Shevat, girls will learn that seeing ourselves as whole and holy helps us to enter positive relationships. Girls will understand from a Jewish perspective what qualities we most value in healthy relationships—both friendships and romances.

Adar: Understanding Relationships
Throughout the Purim story, truth is hidden just below the surface. Girls will become aware of the characteristics of unhealthy relationships and recognize the potential for intimate relationships to be fraught with emotional, physical and sexual abuse. They will also learn the skill of “I-Statements,” the importance of seeking adult assistance for those in abusive relationships, and techniques for helping a friend get help.

Nisan: Making Change Happen
Girls will gain insight into the complex issues of social injustice through a board game that explores systemic problems encountered by individuals in poverty. They will learn about a variety of types of social activism and Jewish women activists who employed them, and create a composite portrait of an activist, into whose shoes they can step.

Iyar: Girls United
In Iyar, we explore ways in which people utilize their potential for positive impact, and seek to inspire the girls to use their own abilities to address issues in their communities. A group of girls in a poverty-stricken part of Kenya are presented as a model for peer intervention to
improve a community. The girls access their own potential for impact as they plan their group Mitzvah Project, which they will execute in next month’s gathering.

**Sivan: Intention in Action**
Sivan’s gathering is devoted to the execution of the group’s Mitzvah Project, framed by an introduction to kavannot and, afterwards, reflections on the experience.

**Closing Month: Changed Agents of Change**
In this Closing Month, we reflect on the ways we have observed Rosh Hodesh and considered the overall themes of taking care of ourselves and others this year. We generate ideas for summer practices of Rosh Hodesh and care-taking. The group creates a composite portrait of a social activist, using the actions of Jewish women as models. We celebrate the group with a potluck party and use the closing circle to say goodbye.

**Bena (Fourth) Year**

In the Bena Year, participants learn, practice, and reflect upon specific leadership skills at each meeting. Their Rosh Hodesh group becomes a “safe laboratory” for exploring and practicing accessing their power as citizens, leaders, and young women.

Activities draw on Jewish teachings and focus on life issues most germane to high school girls. The group leader encourages girls to further discover their voices as they develop new skills. By learning transferable skills, the girls will more capably contribute to secular and Jewish communities as both members and leaders as they move into their 20’s—and throughout their lives.

**Opening Month: Me, Myself, and Us**
In the opening month, participants will have an opportunity to reconnect with one another, to begin exploring the meaning of leadership, and to learn about the structure of the Leadership Years. Building on the theme of “Journey Inward, Journey Outward” from the Kol Year curriculum, participants will learn, through games and self-exploration, that leadership encompasses both of these things. Together, participants will write a ketubah, a community covenant that will help them define both what they will bring to the group and what they hope to take from the experience.

**Tishrey: Inside Out**
This session will draw upon the High Holiday themes of self-reflection and commitment to authenticity. We will use some well-known Jewish texts to initiate a discussion of both
personal and communal needs and the personal and communal voice. Through a dramatization of the life of a powerful, spiritually-centered Jewish woman, participants will explore the benefits and detriments of finding and following one's true voice. Participants will be lead through a series of meditation exercises meant to help each one find, or connect to, her inner voice. The gathering will conclude with an opportunity for each girl to express her own inner voice.

Heshvan: Women and Style
Heshvan is the one month on the Jewish calendar that contains no holidays. Girls will fill in this “empty” month with the foundations of both Judaism and leadership. Through learning about two women leaders of the labor movement, girls will examine different leadership styles. Participants will assess their leadership ability and desire in different settings. They will learn that one does not need to be at the front of the room in order to lead.

Kislev: Let There Be Light
During the month of Kislev—using the story of Hanukkah as a platform—we will open the door for a discussion of the sacred and profane, (or holy and ordinary). Girls will delve into elevating the everyday through the study and creation of blessings. They will explore how Jewish values influence leadership, and how, as leaders, they can increase the light in the world.

Tevet: One’s Company, Two’s a Crowd
During Tevet girls will participate in and process a series of games which will help them understand group dynamics and the phases of group development. Each group member will be assigned rotating roles: participants, time-keeper, gate-keeper, or observer. Through this experience, girls will be encouraged to recognize the relationship and task roles which they and other participants assume in the group and their impact on the group’s process and productivity.

Shevat: Can You Hear Me Now?
This month is all about communication. Girls will learn about and practice active listening. They will assess how they approach conflict and explore the difference between passivity, assertiveness, and aggression. Through role play scenarios, they will use their new found skills and knowledge to work through conflicts they might confront as high school leaders in both social and organizational settings.

Adar I: Where You Lead, I Will Follow
This month is about the role of the leader in a group setting. Girls will experience, reflect on, and script the role of the group leader in creating a welcoming environment. Participation in
a team building exercise will help participants see how leadership style affects individual group members and group dynamics. Through a discussion of Jewish texts and a quote from Golda Meir, they will explore the value of asking for help and delegating tasks, and their own comfort level utilizing these skills.

Adar II: Powered Up
In honor of the women of the Purim story, this month participants will explore power and what it is like to lead among men. Looking at famous gender studies as well as their own experiences, participants will explore the differences between all female and mixed gender groups. Through reflecting on the ways in which the people in their lives are powerful, girls will redefine the concept of power. In the closing exercise, the participants identify the ways in which they are powerful.

Nisan: Like Herding Cats
During Nisan girls will explore many facets of effective group facilitation. Through a study of Passover’s four children, they will learn about and gain insight into the motivations behind archetypal group behaviors. They will practice engaging and responding to these types using a group survival scenario. Together, they will brainstorm strategies for managing difficult behaviors in group settings.

Iyar: Risky Business
This month is all about taking risks. As Yom Ha’atzma’ut occurs during Iyar, girls will explore risk taking through a look at the lives of Israeli pioneer and freedom fighter, Hannah Senesh. They will also learn from a pioneer of a different sort, artist Judy Chicago. They will discover and sharpen their own internal sense of safety in risk taking by playing a series of improvisational theater games. They will discuss personal safety nets, which buffer risk, and craft a visual representation of their own support network.

Closing Month: Blessed Are You When You Go
This month with be part culmination, part celebration. Girls will have the opportunity to review what they have accomplished as leaders. They will revisit the Wonderful Women they have met throughout the year and—using their lives as an example—commit to the next steps they will take as leaders. They will close the evening by bestowing blessings on one another. This gathering plan provides an opportunity for you to create a celebration which is appropriate to your Rosh Hodesh group.

Because of the celebratory nature of this gathering, some of the standard elements, such as Bring it In, have been omitted. Others have been placed at different points in the gathering, so that it ends on a high note.
Koach (Fifth) Year

In the Koach Year, participants are offered the unique opportunity to train and lead a Rosh Hodesh group. The group leader empowers, organizes, and coaches the girls to take on responsibility for elements of the group. The group leader takes a step back from facilitation and becomes the “wind beneath the wings” of the girls as they step up and lead themselves.

By taking on responsibility for group tasks, girls learn more about and develop their personal leadership style.

The year culminates in a project of the group’s choosing, design and presentation.

Opening Month: Pay Attention to the Women Behind the Curtain
Throughout the course of the year, the girls—like the characters in the Wizard of Oz—will have an opportunity to “look behind the curtain” to see all that planning and facilitating a Rosh Hodesh gathering entails. As the year ends they will see that they have within themselves all the skills and knowledge they need to plan for and facilitate a gathering or confidently lead in another venue.

During the Opening Month gathering, girls will reconnect to one another through a brief game. They will use role play to appreciate planning and attention to detail. They will complete a self-assessment about delegation, and be introduced to the “Leadership Deck,” the system by which they will be invited to take on greater responsibility for each gathering.

Come Together: Review of group guidelines and reconnecting game
One, Two, Buckle Your Shoe: Group activity and processing
Stacking the Deck: Introduction of and invitation to greater leadership responsibility
Help, I Need Somebody! Help, Not Just Anybody: Self-assessment on survey on delegation

Tishrey: Food for Thought
In this month, girls will learn about and practice one of the building blocks of leadership—the art of feedback. They will take a quiz through which they will assess the subtle difference between feedback and criticism. Through role play, they will have an opportunity to give feedback in situations they might encounter in their own lives, such as a confrontation with a parent or a difficult group member. They will explore the concept of teshuvah—admitting mistakes and asking forgiveness—through a classic Rosh Hashanah story.

In keeping with the goal of transparency, which is woven throughout the year, the participants will be given the opportunity to evaluate the gathering.
Heshvan: 10% Inspiration, 90% Perspiration
The month of Heshvan is an “empty” month, with no holidays or celebrations—the perfect time to take a step back and plan for the time ahead. Using a Rosh Hodesh gathering as a model, this month the girls will learn all about the planning process. By viewing material designed for Jewish young adults, participants will be introduced to the concept of knowing your audience. They will put their new knowledge into action, creating short presentations for a number of different target groups. The last portion of the gathering will be devoted to the initial planning stages of the final project.

Kislev: Up and At ‘Em
During the month of Kislev we celebrate Hanukkah. Our gathering for Kislev will focus on an important, and sometimes overlooked, aspect of the holiday: standing against injustice. Using the story of Hanukkah as a trigger, participants will explore what factors they might consider in deciding when and if they will speak up. Through examining situations which may arise in their own lives, participants will learn about different tactics they can employ when responding to injustice. By writing letters to their elected officials, participants will put all they have learned into action and actively work at getting counted and having their voices heard.

Tevet: Bending to Gender?
Participants will discover their own gender biases through a sentence completion exercise and a quiz. Through rewriting familiar stories, they will both challenge gender assumptions and see the impact—both positive and negative—caused by gender bias. As they discuss real-life experiences of women and respond to scenarios themselves, they will develop strategies for combating gender prejudice. Participants will also explore the impact gender bias has on leadership.

Shevat: Sense and Sexuality
With its celebration of Tu Beshvat—the New Year for Trees, the month of Shevat is about blossoming and growth. The gathering begins with a brief introduction to what it means to be a sexual being, including a clarification of terms and concepts that are important to understanding and discussing the broad notion of sexuality. Then, the focus of discussion is on two fundamental aspects of sexuality: sensuality & emotional and physical intimacy. The girls explore sensual pleasure through making and sharing chocolate fondue. They look at their own “circles of intimacy” through a categorization exercise.

Adar: Take It to the Limit
During the month of Adar we celebrate Purim, a holiday in which many things are not as they appear. During this gathering, in the spirit of Purim, we will turn the themes of the holiday upside-down focusing not on concealment, but openness. By looking at the women in the
Purim story, participants will begin to discuss **limits and boundaries**. They will use a sentence completion exercise to discover the **motivations for their own actions** in intimate and other settings. Through a series of interactive games, they will also explore **honest communication**.

**Nisan: All Stressed Out and Nowhere to Go**
During Nisan we celebrate Passover, getting rid of all the *hametz* (leavened products) in our homes. Some people use this time to rid themselves of spiritual *hametz*—the things that are weighing us down. This month’s gathering is about **stepping back and gaining perspective**. Through the making and breaking of a piñata, participants will both name the things which *cause them stress* and have the opportunity to **release some stress** in a safe environment. Participants will create their own tip sheet for dealing with common stressors such as public speaking or test-taking. Through exploring a traditional Jewish story, participants will learn to **contextualize their stress**.

**Iyar: Are You There, God? It’s Me….**
The Hebrew month of Iyar is about journeys; we move from darkness to light, war to independence, spring to summer. This month, participants will focus on their own spiritual journey. Through looking at the **labels** we use to **describe ourselves**, participants will begin to define their own **Jewish paths**. They will explore their personal **ideas about God** and will use traditional and modern **images of God as models for their own behavior** in the world.

**Closing Month: Lehitraot, Until We Meet Again**
This month—about **closure and separation**—mirrors the havdalah service. Through looking at Jewish women who have left familiar surroundings, participants will **explore the benefits and challenges of separation** and will **mark their own separation** from the group. They will use the model of the *Wonderful Woman* to **recognize what they have gained from each other**. This will allow them to take some of the sweetness of the group experience with them as they part. They will mark the day with a **celebration**.