

CHAPTER 6

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

BECOMING AN ADULT

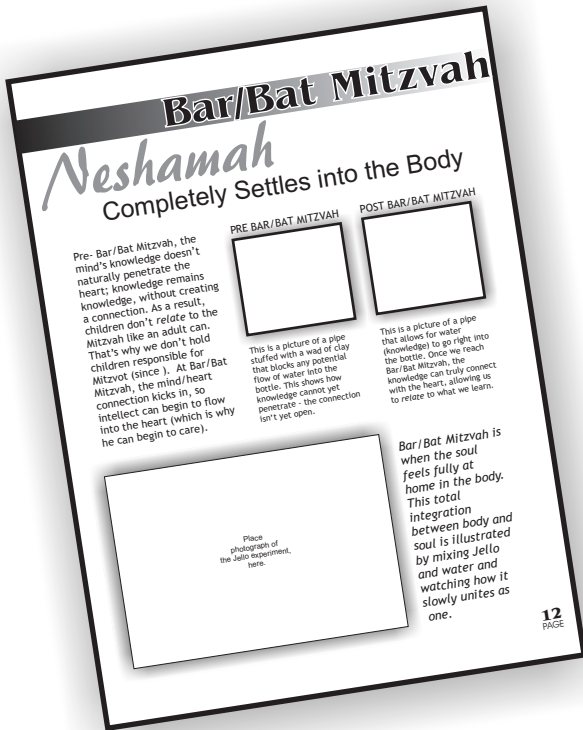
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BAR/BAT MITZVAH:

Becoming an Adult

Note:

The important message for the students is that a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not something you have, it is something you become! At this stage, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is no longer viewed as a child according to Jewish law.

Many people think that the Aliyah and party actually effect the Bar-Mitzvah, which is why you'll hear adults say they were 'never bar-mitzvahed'.

The students should understand that these things - important though they are - are not really what the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is all about; they are merely the means of celebrating an important status-change.

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this lesson the students should be able to answer the following questions:

- **At what age does a Jewish child become an adult?**
(Twelve for girls; thirteen for boys.)
- **What does the stage of 'adulthood' actually mean?**
(One is now obligated to do Mitzvot because now one relates to relate to the Mitzvot.)
- **What happens to the Neshamah at one's Bar/Bat Mitzvah?**
(It becomes completely integrated with the body.)

INTRODUCTION:

We have spent the last 12 or 13 years teaching our children morals and proper behaviors. Now it's time for their passage into adulthood.

Call on students to describe their 'children'. Discuss whether they're happy with the way they turned out, whether there's any room for improvement, etc.

Discuss the fact that Bar/Bat Mitzvah means reaching a stage when you are finally responsible for *yourself*; you are accountable for your *own* actions.

For the first years of a child's life, the child's

actions are actually the parents' responsibility. After all, how much can you really expect from a small child? They don't know any better!

Once we reach Bar/Bat Mitzvah, we're expected to behave like mature adults.

TEACH 1: ON BECOMING AN ADULT

Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrates a person's transition from child to adult. But what's really the difference between the two stages? Both a child and adult can study. They both have the ability to amass knowledge. They both have the ability to understand (at their respective levels).

The answer is that study, knowledge and comprehension aren't enough. Why? Because intellect can be detached from real life. Just because *knowers* and the importance of the Western Wall, doesn't mean that I *relate* to it. Maturity means the ability to create a *personal connection* with your knowledge - to actually begin *caring* about the subject; you've reached maturity your knowledge begins to touch your heart.

Once we have the ability to *relate* to a concept, Torah expects us to *act* on it. This wonderful ability - the capacity to really *connect* with a concept - blossoms at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah stage (girls at 12 and boys at 13). Now, with this new-found ability to *really* relate to the Mitzvot, a person becomes responsible for implementing what he understands.

For example, both a child and adult are expected to study the laws and rituals of Shabbat; but only an adult has the ability to emotionally connect with the message within the Mitzvah. So, only the adult has the Torah's full expectation - and command - to act on his knowledge.

[Note: Children's 'dinuch' is critical because it trains a youngster to form positive habits; the kids aren't performing Mitzvot, per se.]

To do:
Pre-Bar/Bat Mitzvah, one's knowledge doesn't naturally penetrate one's heart. That's why we don't hold children responsible for Mitzvot (children don't *relate* to the Mitzvah like an adult can). At Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the mind/heart connection kicks in, so intellect can begin to flow into the heart (which is why he can begin to care).

To illustrate this, make two representations - one for pre Bar/Bat Mitzvah and one for post Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Materials needed:

- 2 empty soda bottles, with a picture of a heart drawn on each
- 2 6" piece of transparent, flexible pipe - 1" in diameter (available in most hardware stores)
- Wad of clay
- Pitcher of water

● Activity Book - page 12

Pre: Take one of the pipes. Stuff a wad of clay in one end - blocking any potential flow. Put the pipe - clay side down - into the empty soda bottle.

Post: Put the other pipe into the other soda bottle.

Now we'll demonstrate how water (representing knowledge) can flow into the bottle (representing the heart). When you pour water through the first pipe, the knowledge cannot penetrate - the connection isn't yet open. Then pour a cup of water through the other pipe. The water (knowledge) goes right into the bottle. Once we reach Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the knowledge/heart connection begins to work.

Have the students illustrate this in the ACTIVITY BOOK - page 12

TEACH 2: THE NESHAMAH IS AT HOME IN THE BODY

At the *very* beginning of a baby's formation, the moment of conception, a Neshamah is designated for this new human being. There's a Neshamah, but there isn't really a body yet.

Still, the soul attaches itself to this body-to-be. Although there isn't enough body to fully 'house' the soul, the soul forms a connection with the bit that's there. Then, as the body forms and develops, the Neshamah slowly integrates into its new home (the body). The more the body develops, the more the soul unites with it. However, The Neshamah doesn't *fully* integrate until the baby is actually born (when it 'crowns').

Interestingly, there are stages of development even *after* the baby is born; the Neshamah continues to 'unfold' and mesh further with the body. One stage of 'unfolding' is at the baby-naming or Brit. An added level of Neshamah becomes present in the body at that time. Throughout childhood, additional dimensions of the Neshamah will constantly increase. But at Bar/Bat Mitzvah the Neshamah is fully 'ripe' and integrated.

Materials needed:

- Flavored Jello powder
- 2 cups of boiling water
- Bowl
- Mixing spoon
- Decorative mold
- Camera

To do:

In a bowl, mix the boiling water and Jello mix. Notice how the Jello's color is commingling with the water. As you mix it, the Jello 'integrates' more and more, until it is perfectly distributed. (This is a visual of how the Neshamah and body integrates slowly into one holistic entity.)



Then, pour the mixture into the mold and leave to harden. (This part of the exercise illustrates how, as life progresses, the Neshamah 'gels' and ripens.)

Photograph the Jello exercise horizontally. Place in ACTIVITY BOOK - page 12.

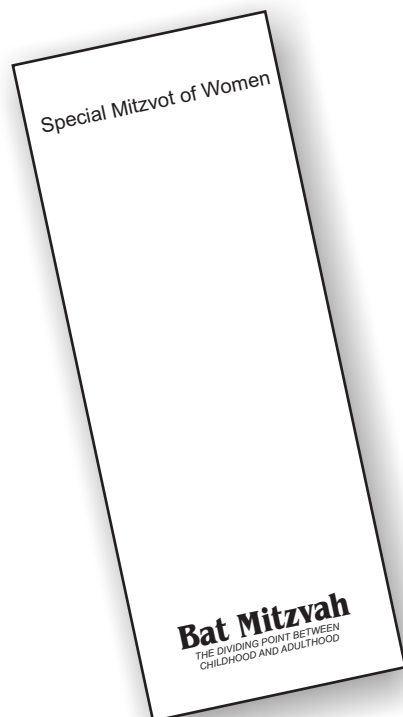
CLOSE:

To do:

Once we reach Bar/Bat Mitzvah, we are expected to make more mature decisions.

Post the 6 sceneries (Appendix 1 - Bar/Bat Mitzvah) in a pile. Have each student, or group of 2-3 students, choose a card and try to resolve the dilemma. Imagine the inner conflict between the good inclination in you (your G-dly soul) and the not good inclination in you (selfish soul).

Shluchim Office
Sample



BAT MITZVAH:

Becoming an Adult

INTRODUCTION:

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not about 'graduating' from Judaism; it's about maturing in our connection with Hashem. Bar/Bat Mitzvah is about changing the focus on our destiny.

As we reach this stage in life, we try to focus on the life that lies ahead of us. We try to think about what our Creator has in mind for our lives.

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this lesson the student should be able to answer the following questions:

- **What is the difference between male and female?** *(The female is more in touch with the inner me.)*
- **Why is a woman not obligated to perform all of the 613 Mitzvot?** *(She is involved in creating a Jewish home and can't be distracted from that primary focus.)*
- **What should one's dress reflect?** *(A sense of dignity.)*
- **What are some special Mitzvot for women?** *(To light Shabbat candles, make challah and to create a Jewish home.)*

We gain perspective by taking a serious look at our personal potential and our soul-structure - as they're explained in the Torah, life's 'manufacturer's manual'. Looking at the Torah and at ourselves, we begin to chart the path toward a meaningful life.

According to the Torah, no gender is intrinsically 'better' than the other. Each gender is created by Hashem to live and lead a meaningful life.

But we certainly aren't identical. There are clear biological and emotional differences between men and women.

Let's look at the inner dynamics of what makes a man and women different:

TEACH 1: WHO'S THE REAL 'ME' ?

We all have an 'outer self' and an 'inner self'. The 'outer self' is our face to the world; it's how we project ourselves to others. My 'outer self' may be my profession, my bravado, my attempts to be

popular or my attempt to fit in.

For example:

- I *appear* brave in the dentist's chair.
- I *wear* the latest style clothing and look really trendy.
- I am a comedian by *profession*. I constantly try to make people laugh.

Then there's my 'inner self'; that's where the true 'me' resides; it's where I feel my deepest loves, fears and ambitions.

For example:

- Although, I appear brave in the dentist's chair, *inside* I am trembling.
- Although, I wear the latest styles, *inside* I wish that I didn't have to 'keep up'.
- Although I act very humorous and outgoing, *inside* I'm shy and reserved.

My deepest self is where I am unmasked and, therefore, that's where I am most vulnerable. Because it's really a defenseless part of me, I only share my core 'inner-me' with my loved ones and in my defense-free environments (e.g. at home).

Outside the home, my 'outer self' often acts as a protection for my sensitive 'inner self'.

For example:

- My tough demeanor helps to overshadow my inner fear.
- My external dress masks how out-of-place I feel in the 'cool' scene.
- My boisterous 'outer face' conceals the fact that crowds intimidate me.

In normal life, it's possible to get caught up my 'outer self' - with the facade of life - so that I forget the 'real me' inside. I can get caught up in the aggressive rough-and-tumble of life, forgetting my deepest needs.

That's not healthy. I've got to be in touch with the real me.

TEACH 2: 'KEEPERS OF THE ME'

Women are the keepers of the 'real-me'. Women have a natural feel for that inner aspect of life. They - in comparison to the male personality - find it easier to connect with the deeper, private level of life; they can find it and nurture it.

Since women have this natural talent, they have a responsibility to use it. Women, like men, have many Mitzvot to do. They may work hard to earn a living for their families. As we know, women can be the best lawyers, doctors, etc. But the *distinctly female talent* lies in strengthening and developing the private aspect of life, the home, the soul.

Women are actually required to do most Mitzvot but they have their home as their central expression of soul. Although they can express themselves in many ways, the central way is through the home

Fathers are obviously critical to the home environment. Dads are special too, but they can never be Mommy. There's a special nurturing touch that only Mommy can provide. The family needs a Mommy.

Dad needs her a lot too. By nature, a man may be inclined to stay in 'work mode', even at home. Mom can help him get past that, touching his real self - the 'home' self.

TEACH 3 - HASHEM'S RECOGNITION OF THE WOMAN'S CRUCIAL ROLE

At Mt. Sinai, Hashem basically said: "I have a Torah for you, a very important program for humanity. There are a lot of necessary Mitzvot. But I don't want the women *obliged* to perform Mitzvot with time-restraints. They have an important goal; they are the nurturers of society's 'inner me' (as described in Teach 2). We can't distract them from that goal by limiting their schedules. Their work is too crucial.

For example, a woman - as the nurturer - should focus on infusing the Shabbat spirit into her family's life, starting with their home. What if time doesn't permit her to accomplish both - creating that atmosphere, and making it to synagogue for Friday night services?

The Torah way of thinking is to let her focus on the beauty of the family's Shabbat experience, she doesn't have to go to the synagogue (but if she *can* - without compromising her primary focus - then she should).

Women can choose to fulfill time-restricted Mitzvot, schedules permitting, but they don't *have to*. For example, women took upon themselves the Mitzvah of hearing the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah.

Note:

The following are some questions that might come up in the discussion of women and Mitzvot.

- If a woman may choose to take on additional Mitzvot even if she is not officially obligated to, then why can't she, Halachically, choose to wear Tefillin and Tzitzit?

*1. Tzitzit are not a direct obligation on anyone; they are a conditional mitzvah. A man only has the obligation **if** he's wearing a four-cornered garment. Should a man wear other clothing, such as we wear today, there is no violation in the abstention from Tzitzit. Committed Jewish men seek out four-cornered garments, so that they might have the obligation of Tzitzit. Since the mitzvah is 'one-step-removed' from men, it's one step further from women.*

*Our Rabbis suggested that women focus on Mitzvot directed at them, or at least at the Mitzvot **directed** at men, not such distant Mitzvot as Tzitzit (it smacks of arrogance to be seeking such non-commanded Mitzvot).*

2. Tefillin are very holy articles. In a way, they're even holier than the Tzitzit (the Kohen Gadol's forehead-plate). Imagine wearing a Sefer Torah on your head and arm!

Taking your mind off of these holy objects would be disrespectful, so these sacred Tefillin need constant focus while we're wearing them.

This is very difficult. In fact, people used to (centuries ago) wear Tefillin the entire day; yet we've discontinued that practice - because we can't keep focus.

Men have a direct obligation to lay Tefillin every weekday, so they have to try to keep focus for the limited span of time. But **they** have no choice. Why would anyone volunteer for the great risk of disrespecting such sacred objects? So our Rabbis suggested that women refrain from Tefillin too.

- What about women *without* time-consuming family responsibilities (e.g. a barren woman, or one whose children are fully grown): Why aren't *they* obligated in time-bound Mitzvot?

Mitzvot are exercises for the soul. Hashem, the soul-Manufacturer, knows His 'merchandise' (our souls) and what they need. A Kohen's soul needs one thing, a gentile's soul something different, etc. That's why we have different scales of Mitzvot; each applies to a different soul-type.

When the Torah teaches that the feminine soul is relieved of certain Mitzvot (because of time-constraints), it is saying that **this** soul-type doesn't need **this** Mitzvah. The soul will be fine without this specific exercise.

The Torah's not telling women to deprive their souls because of family responsibilities. The Torah is saying that they don't **need** these Mitzvot for their soul growth.

When the Torah tells women: "You don't need to implement these Mitzvot because of you (generally-speaking) focus on the inner-me", the Torah's actually saying to women: "Your souls - the feminine souls - were designed so that they don't need these Mitzvot". Because Hashem created woman with the innate ability to be the backbone of the family, Hashem designed her soul - the feminine soul - so that it doesn't need the time-bound Mitzvot.

The soul-structure is given at birth. The fact that a woman remains single (for instance) doesn't change her essential soul-structure. She's a feminine soul, and doesn't need the time-bound Mitzvot.

So, when the Torah tells most women that they don't need these Mitzvot,

the Torah's telling all women; the Torah's addressing the soul-type and its needs.]

- There are certain Mitzvot with time restraints (such as Mikveh), that a woman is obligated to fulfill. How does that correspond with what we've said above?

Women are relieved of Mitzvot that might disrupt her focus on the 'inner me' /home life (primarily time-restrained Mitzvot). Mitzvot that are directly aimed at strengthening that mission, are her responsibility, time-restrained or not. Going to the Mikveh directly impacts the feminine mission and spiritual component of family life.

- If a woman can pray, then why can't a woman be counted in a Minyan?

Although a woman is obligated to pray, she is not obligated to pray at fixed times. A Minyan is a group of ten people who share a Torah-obligation, which they will discharge as a unit. Since she doesn't share the obligation, she can't contribute to the quorum.

TEACH 4: THE GLORY OF THE KING'S DAUGHTER

This focus on the 'inner me' also guides the way we conduct ourselves in matters of dress. In Tehillim, King David sings about the 'glory of the King's daughter', which is found in her sense of privacy, sensitivity and introspection.

This knack for the 'inner me' goes beyond nurturing a family, etc; it has to find expression in the way we (especially women) lead our lives. Privacy is an expression of that idea.

If you had a gorgeous piece of jewelry, worth a fortune, would you wear it to the supermarket? If you had a very special wish, secret or aspiration - something that really touched your heart - would you want to share it with everyone, or just with the people you love and trust?

Especially in today's world, this principle should guide our choice of clothing. A garment isn't just a piece of fabric, they are symbols. They tell the world something about the wearer, and how the wearer wants to be perceived. Clothes can send the world the answer to a critical question: Do you want to be perceived as someone who values her inner self and body, or not? How do *you* want to be perceived?

TEACH 5: SPECIAL MITZVOT FOR WOMEN

Materials needed:

- Challah dough in a bowl
- Baking tin
- 3" piece of twine - 3 pieces per student

- Glue
- Challah recipe (see template in section 3/Bar-Bat Mitzvah)
- Candlesticks
- Blessing for candle lighting (see template in Section 4/Bar-Bat Mitzvah)
- Side Panels for Bat Mitzvah

Of the many Mitzvot which women do, there are three that are more specifically the woman's domain. They all reflect the woman's talent in stabilizing, warming and nurturing the home (even though a man has a relationship with these Mitzvot too, they are considered feminine in nature).

Note:

One of the three Mitzvot is that of *Family Purity*. These include Mitzvot that ensure the family's spiritual Holiness - things that help put a positive focus on Jewish family life. However, the laws of Family Purity may be a bit premature for the age that this course is geared to. If you feel your students are ready for this topic, tell them that - since Family Purity applies to married women - you will address it in greater detail when you cover the unit on marriage.

CHALLAH

One special Mitzvah is called 'Challah':

[Hashem told the Jews to give a portion of their food to charity. Usually that meant giving it to the Kohanim (priests) who couldn't have regular jobs and make money because they spent their time working in the Beit Hamikdash, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. So they were given gifts of food by the rest of the Jews.

One of the gifts was a piece of dough. This piece of dough was called 'challah'. The bread we eat on Shabbat and Holidays is also called challah.

Nowadays, when there is no Beit Hamikdash, we tear off a piece of dough (whenever we use more than 3½ pounds of flour to make challah) to remember this gift. It also makes us hope for the time when the Temple will be rebuilt. Since we can't give it to the Kohen we make a blessing, then burn it in the oven instead, and later throw it out.]

Food sustains and nourishes, this is a cross-cultural fact. The type of food we eat - and the attendant care, setting, rituals, rules etc. - reflect a lot about our values. The Torah specifically wants our meals to be Holy experiences, nourishing to the soul (in addition to the body).

This important exercise is primarily in the woman's hands. A woman provides more than the physical sustenance in dinner, she provides *holy* nutrition for both body and soul.

The Mitzvah of Challah, with the baking of the bread together with the acknowledgment

of Who (Hashem) provides us with our sustenance, represents a woman's care for the total nourishment - body and soul - of the family.

To do:

Tear off a piece of Challah, make the blessing of "*l'hafrish challah...*", braid the rest of the dough and bake.

To do:

Give each student three pieces of twine. Have them braid it into a Challah. Have them paste the 'Challah' and its blessing on the SIDE PANELS of Bat Mitzvah.

SHABBAT CANDLES

A second Mitzvah is lighting '*Shabbat Candles*'.

The candles are lit every Friday evening to welcome the Shabbat. Shabbat is a time of withdrawal from the distracting pace of 'outer' life. On Shabbat, we focus on the inner 'me'; on Shabbat we step back from 'external creativity' (the forms of prohibited labor) so that we might focus on 'inner creativity' (with Hashem, family, etc.).

Shabbat is, therefore, a quite a 'feminine' day. That's why we call it the Shabbat '*Queen*' and the Shabbat '*Bride*'.

So, although a man may light the Shabbat candles, it is seen as the woman's talent and function to usher in this special day of serenity and spirituality for the home.

To do:

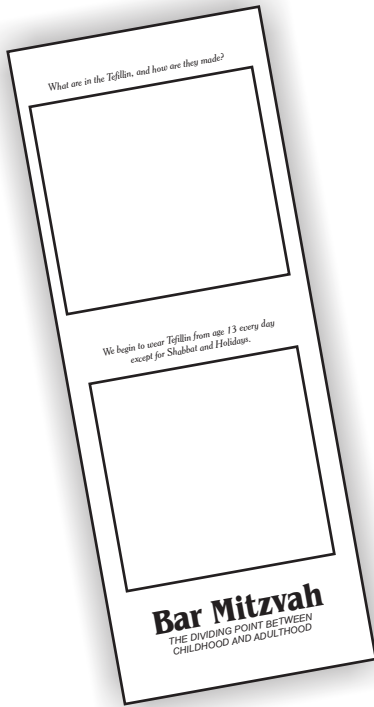
Encourage the girls to light Shabbat candles. You have most likely given out the candle-lighting times when the 13-year old lesson was taught, but hand out duplicates to anyone who misplaced it.

To do:

Draw a picture of Shabbat candle-lighting in the SIDE PANELS of Bat Mitzvah. Paste the blessing for candle-lighting alongside the drawing. Candle lighting is an auspicious time to pray to Hashem. Have the students write a personal wish for the spiritual welfare of their family.

CLOSE:

Girls: Did this lesson on the beauty and uniqueness of femininity make you think differently about being a Jewish woman? How so?



BAR MITZVAH:

Tefillin

INTRODUCTION:

We've studied that there are special Mitzvot for women; wearing the Tefillin is a special mitzvah for men. (Boys become men at Bar Mitzvah.)

TEACH 1: WHAT IS THE MITZVAH OF TEFILLIN?

Materials needed:

- Siddur with English translation

The Torah tells us - *four separate times* - to wear a 'sign' on our heads and forearms. These 'signs' were meant to be reminders of Hashem's presence, and His care for us.

At Mt. Sinai, Moshe taught us that these 'signs' are 'Tefillin'. What are 'Tefillin'? Moshe explained that we were to take those four Torah-sections and insert them into black boxes. The commandment of Tefillin is to secure the boxes on our forearms and our heads.

To do:

Open a Siddur to the Shemah prayer. Look at the "v'ahavta..." paragraph. Have a student read the words "Ukeshartam l'ot al Yadecha, v'hayoo litotafot bain ainecha..." Read the English translation.

TEACH 2: WHAT IS THE SHEMAH MESSAGE?

The Torah-verse of Shemah is one of our most famous prayers.

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this lesson the students should be able to answer the following questions:

- **What is the mitzvah of Tefillin?** (The Torah tells us to wear a sign that there is ONE Hashem. Tefillin is the box that holds the relevant verses.)
- **What is the Shema message?** (That our entire day's focus should be on G-dliness; everything we do should be working towards that goal.)
- **How are Tefillin made?** (Tefillin are made from the hide of a kosher animal and written by a trained Sofer.)

But what does the Shemah actually say? It states that we (the Jewish people) should recognize that Hashem is One.

What does that mean? Is the Torah simply telling us not to believe in *two* or more gods? What if someone believed in one *rock* as god, would he fulfill the Shemah obligation? Obviously not. So what is the Shemah's deeper message?

Our Rabbis explain that the Shemah teaches us to recognize only one *reality* in the world - and that reality is Hashem. This idea can be difficult to grasp. When we look around, we don't see one reality - we see many. We see trees, people, computers, chairs, etc.; there are lots of 'realities'!

But, actually, our eyes don't see the true nature of life. Just as you need a microscope to see the true, molecular nature of your chair, you need the soul's spiritual lens to see the true nature of the world. We can't only use our eyes to see truth.

So we cover our eyes (to indicate that we won't be misled by our eyes) and proclaim Shemah! - there's only ONE Reality in the world - Hashem!

What does this 'Oneness' mean in real life?

Imagine a day that goes like this:

To do:

As you verbally describe each segment of the following schedule-of-the-day, list it on the board.

- Toys R Us
- Radio Shack
- Lunch
- Local University
- Family mechanic

You go to Toys R Us, then your parents drive you over to Radio Shack. You spend a few hours tinkering with your toys and some tools. Now you're hungry, so you make time for a nutritious lunch.

Now, you're off to local university to speak with a professor. Then you run to the local department store. On your way home you stop at your family mechanic, to speak with him for a while.

Discuss:

What kind of day would a person watching you from afar, think you're having? Wouldn't he think it's rather scattered, jumping from one thing to another? After all, what do Toys R' Us, a professor and a mechanic have in common?

But *you* know that your day has actually been very focused. How can that be?

Actually, you had decided to devote an entire Sunday to a science project: You want to