



Celebrate the Year

Topic

Ending the Year

Grade Level(s)

K – 12th

Big Ideas

Completing a large chunk of learning is something worth celebrating.

Relevant Vocabulary

סיום (<i>Siyum</i>)	A Festive Meal After Finishing an Area of Learning (literally: Completion)
הדרן (<i>Hadran</i>)	The Name of the Prayer Recited at a <i>Siyum</i> (literally: We will return)
סעודת מצווה (<i>Seudat Mitzvah</i>)	Commanded Meal (usually festive)

Learning something new can inspire us to explore further.

Learning Targets

Students will:

1. Reflect with pride on what they learned during the school year
2. Mark their accomplishments with a traditional celebration
3. Develop a path to go deeper into something they learned about during the year

Materials / Technology Needed

- Mind mapping app such as [Superstructures](#) or white board app such as [Canva](#)
- Text of [Hadran](#) (optional)

Background for Teachers

The end of the school year offers opportunities for learners to celebrate what they learned over the course of the year. Traditionally, finishing a major portion of learning, like a tractate of Talmud or an order of Mishnah, is considered to be such a major accomplishment that a *seudat mitzvah* is held to celebrate the learning that has been done (*Shulhan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 246:26*). The event surrounding this meal is called a *siyum*, for the completion of the learning. It is an event that dates back at least 1800 years (e.g. Tractate Shabbat 118a) and possibly more. Often, friends and family are invited to the *siyum*; so they can share in the joy and accomplishment of the celebrants.

The *siyum* is generally filled with discussions about the learning that has been completed as learners share insights into the material that they studied. In addition, when one finishes a tractate of Talmud or an order of Mishnah, there is a special prayer called *Hadran* that is recited. This prayer expresses the learners' desire to return to the subject that has been studied. It is followed by several paragraphs expressing thanks for the opportunity to learn and then a special Kaddish.



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Note: This activity asks learners to create a mind map. A mind map is a way to organize ideas around a central theme. Start with a main topic enclosed in a bubble in the middle. Then build on the central idea by adding more bubble-enclosed ideas that are connected to the central idea (and each other) with lines. For more detailed information on creating a mind map, try [this article](#) from wikiHow.

Prepare in Advance

If appropriate for your learners, create a template for them to use for their collective mind map.

Description of Activities

1. Learners use Superstructures, Canva, or other app to create, in real time, a mind map of what they learned over the course of the year.
 - a. For older or more advanced learners, this can be generated based on how they want to create it. Some directions they might want to go include:
 - i. Subjects that were interesting or meaningful
 - ii. Why subjects were interesting or meaningful
 - iii. What they want to explore further and why
 - iv. How different subjects and ideas connect
 - b. For younger learners, this can be a leader-created template with learners adding to particular areas of the mind map.
 - c. Note that this can be done on an actual white board or poster board if learners are physically together.
2. Elicit suggestions for how the group can demonstrate pride in what they have accomplished over the course of the year.
3. Explain that there is a Jewish tradition to have a festive meal called a *siyum* when completing a section of learning. (See Background for more details.)
 - a. The short prayer called *Hadran* is often included as part of a *siyum*.
 - i. For advanced learners, show the *Hadran* prayer. It might be necessary to point out that the space that says “Tractate” is for specific types of learning. Discuss why someone would say this after learning something.
 - ii. For younger learners, explain that the *Hadran* prayer expresses a desire to return to the material learned and to remember it. Discuss why someone would say this after learning something.



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4. Inform learners that they will participate in a *siyum*.
 - a. If doing the *siyum* together in person, follow the guidelines of the building for bringing in food and eating together.
 - b. If doing the *siyum* remotely, encourage learners to participate with their favorite treats.
 - c. Tell learners that they will create a video that will be shown at the *siyum*. Learners should record themselves explaining one important/interesting thing they learned over the course of the year, why it was important/interesting to them, and how they will deepen their learning of the subject in the future.
 - i. Compile videos into a single group production. This can be done with a platform such as [Memento](#).
5. At the *siyum*, show the video compilation, share more successes from the year, and generally celebrate!