**Tahu Vavohu**

In order to get a sense of what it was like before Hashem created the world (a very difficult concept indeed!), I ask my students what they think it was like. The typical answers include nothing, darkness and mishkabable (which some of them remember from the previous year). One year I actually had a child say that Hashem was there, which was a very deep answer for a 5 year old. I ask the children to close their eyes very tightly and tell me what they see. At first they say nothing and black. But then they say different colors jumping around. We then unroll our classroom Torah and read the words of what it was like before Hashem created each day. Some of the words we hear are “choshech” (darkness) and “tohu va vohu”, which was defined as total nothingness and a“mishkabable”. Water was everywhere and Hashem’s spirit was there. We look at our list and check off the ones that they said on their own. This is extremely empowering for the children.

In order to help the children have a better feel for this concept of “tahu vavohu”, we introduce our first artist of the year, Jackson Pollock. Jackson Pollock was not your typical artist in that he did not draw objects, people, or scenery—he made *abstract* art. He would lie on the ground or floor and move around as he would throw paint on his paper or canvas, any which way. This was known as “action painting”. We then head outdoors to have a go at our own painting using the Jackson Pollock technique. Whenever the children see their Jackson Pollock paintings; they immediately associate it with “tahu vavohu.”

We then begin our study of what was created on each day integrated with Math, Science, Literacy and Art. We also “create” a major project that will go home with each child at the end of the unit. The project used to be a gigantic wall hanging, but has been changed recently to an interactive game that the children can play at home with their families.

In addition to the many teacher-directed activities that are included in this unit, each year there are always some students who will independently make their own B’raisheet books at the Writing Center using the picture cards that are attached to the bulletin board to help them remember what was created. In addition to learning what was created on each day, the children also learn the words in Hebrew which expands their Hebrew vocabulary. They play many games using these Hebrew words throughout the unit.



