

Chavruta Study/Discussion Guide

By Lisa Schonberg and Alicia Jo Rabins

We created this study guide to inspire discussion after viewing the short documentary by Jodi Darby, *Chavruta: A Drummer's Bat Mitzvah*. This study guide can be used in a classroom, gathering of friends, community workshop, or anywhere else you might find it useful.

Note: by “women” in this study guide, we mean anyone who identifies as a woman or non-binary person.

WEBLINKS (captioning available): [Vimeo https://vimeo.com/256182607](https://vimeo.com/256182607) | [Youtube https://youtu.be/WQUkBp_awAo](https://youtu.be/WQUkBp_awAo)

Drumming Mini-Lesson

Sit on a chair with both feet on the ground. You do not need drumsticks for this exercise.

This exercise will teach you how to play the basic rock beat. At a drum set, your dominant hand would play the hi-hat, your non-dominant hand would play the snare drum, and your dominant foot plays the kick drum (bass drum). For this exercise we will ‘play’ the left hand on your left thigh and right hand on your right thigh.

1. Count “1, 2, 3, 4” slowly, and repeat
2. Tap your dominant hand on the 1, 2, 3, 4 (this is your hi-hat hand)
3. Stop tapping your hand.
4. Tap your dominant foot on the 1 and 3. (Keep counting!)
5. **Add** your non-dominant hand on the 2 and 4. So now you’re alternating between your dominant foot and non-dominant hand.
6. Stop tapping.
7. Tap your dominant hand on the 1,2, 3 and 4. Add your non-dominant hand on the 2 and 4.
8. Stop tapping.
9. Tap your dominant hand on the 1,2,3 and 4. Add your dominant foot on the 1 and 3. **Keep it slow!**
10. Add in your non-dominant hand on the 2 and 4. Now you’re playing a full beat with three parts. Congrats! If it gets tricky, **slow it down and start again.**

Questions for discussion (or writing prompts):

1. Did you have a bar/bat/b'nai mitzvah or other coming of age ceremony? What was your experience?
2. Did this film remind you of any elements of your own spiritual journey (Jewish or otherwise)? Did you relate to any aspects of Lisa or Alicia's story?
3. The film follows Lisa and Alicia's decision to be a beginner at something during the year they both turned 40. If money and time weren't an issue, what new skill would you want to learn this year?
4. Jewish tradition puts great value on discussion and on questioning and challenging our sacred texts. What questions and challenges do you have about the Judaism you have been taught (or, if you aren't Jewish, your own tradition?)
5. In the film, Alicia and Lisa discuss various places they experience holiness and connectedness: in the woods, in text, in history, in community. Where do you find a feeling of sacredness and peace?
6. How do you think the Torah and Jewish traditions (or your own spiritual tradition) could best support the following:
 - a. addressing the ongoing ecological/environmental crisis
 - b. the need for continuing to learn and grow as adults
 - c. spiritual leadership by women
 - d. political action led by women
 - e. the need for self-expression and creativity
 - f. musical expression and artistic leadership by women
 - g. biocentrism (the idea that the rights and needs of humans are not more important than those of other living things)
7. The film follows Alicia and Lisa's creation of a non-traditional Bat Mitzvah ceremony. Can you think of an example of a Jewish tradition or ritual you (or your family or community) have 'personalized' and made distinctly yours? What does this personalization add to your experience of it?
8. If you were going to create a ritual, course of study or project to meet a need in your own spiritual life at the moment, what would that look like?

Suggested Reading/Bibliography

Alicia and Lisa studied these books in the course of this project; some of our favorite resources for drummers are also listed.

1. [*When the Drummers were Women*](#) by Layne Redmond (Three Rivers Press, 1997)
2. [*Ecology and The Jewish Spirit*](#) by Ellen Bernstein (Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998)
3. [*Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*](#) by Catherine Bell (Oxford University Press, 1995)
4. [*In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women Culture & the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth*](#) by Tikva Frymer-Kensky (Ballantine Books, 1993)
5. [*Hebrew Priestess Ancient & New Visions of Jewish Women's Spiritual Leadership*](#) by Rabbi Jill Hammer (Ben Yehuda Press, 2015)
6. [*Inventing Jewish Ritual: New American Traditions*](#) by Vanessa Ochs (University of Nebraska Press, 2007)
7. [*The DIY Guide to Drums*](#) by Lisa Schonberg (Tom Tom Publications, 2017).
8. [Tom Tom Magazine](#). Quarterly print publication and website. www.tomtommag.com

Artist websites

Explore the work of Lisa Schonberg, Alicia Jo Rabins, and filmmaker Jodi Darby:

www.aliciajo.com

www.lisaschonberg.com

www.jodidarby.com