

L’Dor Vador

Players: 8 and up, one of those players also acts as the facilitator.

Materials: Space where you can have a conversation, one notecard for each player, name tags optional, a 1-2 pieces of paper, and pens.

Time: 2- 2.5 hours including character preparation.

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In English, l’dor vador means “from generation to generation.” It is the Hebrew phrase for the philosophy of the Jewish people to pass down our way of life and the traditions that maintain our existence to future generations. It can include family lore, stories, beliefs, and music, among many other things. L’dor vador is not just considered a philosophy, it is also a responsibility.

In this game, you’ll play members of a Jewish family gathered for Rosh Hashanah, the first day of the Jewish new year. On Rosh Hashanah, G-d determines your fate for the next year: you are written in the Book of Life, or your name is blotted out. During the week between now and Rosh Hashanah, you have a chance to contemplate on your misdeeds of the past year and repent. And on Yom Kippur, a week from today, your fate will be sealed. The upcoming reckoning with your transgressions sits in the back of your mind. But for now, you have survived another year. It is time to give thanks, reconnect with your family, and most importantly, eat.

This game takes place pre-meal-- but you might be hungry after. If you would like to have food for appetizers during the game, you can find some examples of traditional food eaten during this time as well as a recipe for my favorite Rosh Hashanah dish.

Safety and Accessibility Modifiers

I encourage players to modify this game to fit their needs. I’ve included a few safety modifiers here, but change anything as you require. It is 100% necessary to use safety mechanics for this game:

Calibration: Give everyone a notecard; have players write down topics they do not want discussed in play. Even if you have none, that out. Hand all cards to the facilitator, and have them read the topics.

Cut and Largo: To stop game play, players can say “cut”, hold their arms crossed above their head, or both. To pause or slow play, players can say “largo”

Disability modifier: If arm movement is limited and the player finds they cannot speak, use your phone to make an alert system; set your phone so it doesn’t go to sleep. Have the ring tone menu open. Place the phone near the players hands. To cut, have them press one ringtone-- it should play a sample. Choose another tone for largo. Make sure other players hear these sounds and know what they mean.

Open Door Policy: If a player needs to leave, they should with no questions ask.

Above all: the player is more important than the game. Take care of yourselves.

Game Play

Draw In Your Family: Create your family tree. Each player should pick a role they want to play. Unless you are playing with the found family module, at a minimum the following roles need to be filled: at least one grandparent, at least one parent, at least one sibling of a parent and/or grandparent (does not need to be a living or present grand/parent), two children of the parental figure(s), and two children of the parent/grandparent's sibling. If desired, the found family module can be found in the appendix. Fill in other roles as you see fit. On your name tags, write your characters name and position in the family.

Character Creation: Use the character creation sheet attached to create your character.

Family Details: You can use these questions as a guide, but feel free to create your own: Did your family immigrate? How recently? How did your grandparent figures meet, or your parental figures? Do you have a profession common in your family? Are there people who no longer attend family gatherings? Why?

After Creating Your Character: Write each characters name on two slips of paper. Mix them up, and then have each player pick two. These are who your character wishes to receive what they choose to pass on.

Players should, with group input, determine one family member their character likes, one they can't stand, and one they find excruciatingly boring, as well as why.

Begin Count off in twos; one group will sit in the room, and the other will enter. This is the first time you've seen each other all in the same place for quite a while; exchange greetings, the food you might have brought, and introduce significant others if this is their first family gathering. The facilitator will, in character, call "one and a half hours until dinner!" and announce every half hour until then.

Find a character who is not your character's favorite person. You haven't seen each other in a while; exchange greetings and inquiries, and begin to try and pass what you have picked to your chosen players. Remember that you have two people to talk to, but each character has something to give, whether it's gossip or information on the other characters that can inform your decisions, or help navigating awkward social situations.

Debrief

When the game comes to a close, sit in circle and answer the following:

1. What was it you wanted to pass on? To whom?
2. Did you succeed?
3. Did you succeed in passing it to who you intended?

After everyone is finished, take four deep breaths. The game is over.

Character Creation

Per any game where you're playing a culture you may be unfamiliar with, staying away from stereotypes will enhance your play. The Jewish diaspora is exactly that, a diaspora; we are scattered all over the continents of the world, from North America to Asia, and each regional practice has its own traditions.

Name:

Role:

Age:

Answer the same questions as your character:

Think of a time when you really succeeded at something; what was it? How did you do it?

What is your greatest mistake?

How good a listener are you?

What pulls you away from your family? What pulls you back?

Did you convert to Judaism or were you born Jewish?

What is your favorite food?

Pick a theme:

Peace

Mistake

Hate

Justice

Education

Relationship

Power

Using your character questions as a guide, decide what your character would like to pass up or down in the family. Possibilities include a story, a life lesson, or an experience. Pick two characters you'd like to pass it to.

Appendices

A. If playing with the found family module, the following roles should be filled before any others: two of the first people who became family; two people who were added second; three people added third, and one added fourth. These can be people of any age, and with any relationship type-- two or three may be partners, but two are unofficial adopted siblings, etc.

B. Even though the game takes pre-meal, you may wish to serve appetizers or even some food post-game. The following are foods from different Jewish customs that are eaten Rosh Hashanah; some are more accessible than others: fish with the head attached, apples and honey, round challah, dates, pomegranates, legumbres yaprakes (stuffed vegetables), tzimmes (root vegetables and dried fruit stew), gefilte fish, leeks, beets, and noodle kugel. The following is my grandmother's recipe for kugel, as it's my favorite thing to eat-- it's something, though not the only thing, I'd like to pass along:

12 oz. wide noodles cooked	Mix together sugar, 3 tbsp. melted butter, and vanilla in bowl. Beat eggs and milk and then add to bowl. Mix cottage cheese, farmer cheese, cream cheese, sour cream, and vanilla in another bowl. Make sure one of these is fairly large, because you need to be able to mix the noodles, cheese, and the wet ingredients together.
1 cups sugar	Cook noodles.
3 tbsp. melted butter	Add everything together, and put into a 9 x13 pan or two 8x8 pans.
1 tsp. vanilla	Top with a mixture of 4 tbsp. of melted butter mixed with 1/2 cup brown sugar.
12 oz. cottage cheese, room temperature	Bake 325 for 1 hour 15 min to 1 hour 30 min, or until not soupy. and toasty on top.
12 oz. farmer's cheese, room temperature (when I can't find this, I replace with drained and pressed cottage cheese)	
8 oz. cream cheese, room temperature	
1 cup sour cream	
2 cups milk	
6 eggs	
4 tbsp. butter melted	
1/2 cup brown sugar	