

## Value: **חֶסֶד** Hesed Caregiving Principle: Hope

Hesed is often translated as “kindness,” however, the Hebrew itself offers more depth and meaning. Hesed is kindness that goes beyond the call of duty. Maimonides, the great rabbi, philosopher and theologian, defined it as an “excess of good.” When a person pays attention to acts of hesed, they remember to embrace their humanity and do more than is minimally expected, with the intention of benefiting those around them.

Alan Morinis tells the following story:

“I once heard Rabbi Abraham Yachnes clarify the extent of the stretch that is necessary to have an action qualify as hesed. He said that if you are walking down the street and someone is walking beside you carrying a large box, and you offer to help the person carry the box, that’s not hesed. You’d simply be a terrible person not to help someone in that situation. What counts as hesed is when you are walking the opposite way from someone carrying a burden and you turn around to help carry that load in the direction he or she is going. That’s hesed.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the Jewish value of hesed provides two elements for exploration during this module:

- **The action - the actual doing an act of hesed.** The Book of Ruth offers numerous examples of hesed. Early in the narrative (Ruth 1:16), even after Naomi pleads multiple times for Ruth not to follow her, Ruth says “Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge.” While Ruth knew that it would be better and easier for her to return to her own family, she was aware that Naomi had no one else to support her.
- **The intention - the reasoning behind the action.** A true act of hesed goes beyond a good deed. Alan Morinis also teaches, “an act of hesed is defined as good done for another that goes beyond the dictates of justice, for the purpose and to the effect of benefiting that other person.”<sup>2</sup> The love and intention behind Ruth’s action, to follow Naomi and help take care of her, is what truly made her decision an act of hesed.

This module of hesed is anchored in the fifth principle for caregivers working with people who have faced trauma – **hope**, the expectation of brighter days in the future. A person who acts toward others through the lens of hesed anticipates a better future for themselves and for others. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs<sup>3</sup> explains that those who achieved physiological, safety, love and belonging needs, have the ability to self-actualize - finding and maintaining a sense of hope that they can share with others through hesed. When we have the strength to offer radical kindness to those around us, we open the door to hope of better days to come.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://jewishvalueseveryday.blogspot.com/2011/02/february-chesed-loving-kindness.html>

<sup>2</sup> *Chesed/Lovingkindness* by Alan Morinis

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thoughtco.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4582571>

Our module connects to the Enduring Understanding in relevant ways:

- **If I am not for myself, who will be for me?** – We want to empower children by providing them with the tools to treat themselves with *hesed*.
- **If I am only for myself, what am I?** – We want to empower children to look beyond themselves, to consider their ability to spread hope by performing acts of *hesed*.
- **If not now when?** – We want to empower children to regularly engage in acts of *hesed*.

Note that there are five distinct weeks of learning offered in the overview chart, below. Depending on the timing of holidays and pop-up or virtual synagogue-related events, an educational program might choose to introduce only four of the sessions. While an ideal calendar would allow for the scheduling of each module without interruption, this decision is for each director to make.

For a two-minute overview of this module  
that orients teachers and parents to the learning,  
check out this video:

<https://youtu.be/TnREEG1I3qw>



## OVERVIEW GRID

<p><b>Weekly Focusing Question</b></p>	<p><b>Mifgash</b> (the session in which a cohort of learners “meet” the week’s focus)</p>	<p><b>Grades K-3 Activities</b> (introduced via a subscription-type box)</p> <p><b>NOTE: Each of the five weeks stand on their own, but build on each other towards an understanding of <i>hesed</i> – the radical kindnesses we do for each other.</b></p>	<p><b>Grades 4-6 Challenges</b> (introduced via a “challenge video”)</p> <p><b>NOTE: Over the course of the five weeks, learners discover, wonder, explore, design and act as they learn about the importance of <i>hesed</i>. The module guides them to create a <i>hesed</i> landscape and a way to nurture its seeds, imagining and working to grow a world of <i>hesed</i>.</b></p>
<p>Session 1: What is <i>hesed</i>, really?</p>	<p>Explore the difference between the general concept of “kindness” and the Hebrew word <i>hesed</i>. Listen to stories from the Torah and self-construct a definition of <i>hesed</i>.</p>	<p><u>In the box:</u> Memory Game cards; Yes/No stickers; drawstring storage bag; game label; safety pin.</p> <p><u>The task:</u> Create a <i>Hesed</i> Memory Game by cutting out the cards and matching each image with a green “Yes, that is <i>Hesed</i>” card or a red “No, that is not <i>Hesed</i> card.” Then play a matching game with the extra images and the red/green cards. Post a photo of matched cards (and, if desired, a photo of the memory game being played) to Flipgrid.</p>	<p><u>The challenge:</u> Discover and collect stories of <i>hesed</i> through conversations with family members. Create a <i>hesed</i> tree to display key elements of family stories.</p>
<p>Session 2: What are acts of <i>hesed</i> I see around me?</p>	<p>Discover <i>hesed</i> in everyday actions, with consideration to what it takes to elevate a kindness to the level of <i>hesed</i>.</p>	<p><u>In the box:</u> A <i>hesed</i> Bingo game; a <i>hesed</i> tic-tac-toe game; self-inking stamp.</p> <p><u>The task:</u> Over the next week, keep an eye out for <i>hesed</i> with the support of either a Bingo or tic-tac-toe game.</p>	<p><u>The challenge:</u> Expand ideas about <i>hesed</i> by putting their tree within a larger landscape that features reflections on increasing <i>hesed</i> in their world.</p>

		When children see/find something on either the board, they mark the square with a stamp. Post the board (ideally also with a photo of one of the acts of <u>hesed</u> seen) and an explanation to Flipgrid.	
Session 3: Where and when is <u>hesed</u> needed?	Hear from a " <u>hesed</u> hero" who talks about needs in the community and some solutions/activities as a result. Learners consider the implications of this person's story to their own actions on behalf of <u>hesed</u> .	<u>In the box</u> : Small container; container label; glue; pompoms; sequins; stickers; marker; <u>hesed</u> forms.  <u>The task</u> : Create a family <u>hesed</u> container. Then, throughout the week, when a person spots another doing an act of <u>hesed</u> , they fill out a form and put it in the container. At the end of the week all the forms are read during a family meeting. Post an image of the container with a <u>hesed</u> story from the week to Flipgrid.	<u>The challenge</u> : As partners with God and inspired by the <i>G'vurot</i> blessing, explore where and when <u>hesed</u> could grow in the community by choosing one area of need. Name a " <u>hesed</u> plant" and begin to design a seed packet.
Session 4: How does <u>hesed</u> inspire hope? (Why is <u>hesed</u> important?)	Using Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's famous statement about praying with his feet (said after participating in the Selma march with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr), learners consider ways acts of <u>hesed</u> can bring hope to the world.	<u>In the box</u> : Wooden heart; random act of <u>hesed</u> label; acrylic paint; paint brush.  <u>The task</u> : Create a random act of <u>hesed</u> heart. Then, during the week, do a secret random act of <u>hesed</u> for someone, leaving the heart behind. The idea is to inspire others to pass on the <u>hesed</u> . Post a photo of where the <u>hesed</u> heart was left, along with the story about it, to Flipgrid.	<u>The challenge</u> : Design a plan for growing the <u>hesed</u> plant by reflecting on people's needs and possible solutions. Add these seeds to a seed packet started the previous week.

<p>Session 5: How will I help build a world of <u>hesed</u>?</p>	<p>There are many ways to build a world of <u>hesed</u> – it is in the learners’ hands.</p>	<p><u>In the box:</u> Pegboard; hooks; 1-2 small pegboard containers; activity cards; timing cards; blank card; pegboard labels. <u>The task:</u> Create a pegboard <u>Hesed</u> Planner! Then, using the provided activity and timing cards (or by creating their own), pick a <u>hesed</u> activity and the time frame for that <u>hesed</u> project and do the selected project. Post the board on Flipgrid and the first <u>hesed</u> project to be accomplished.</p>	<p><u>The challenge:</u> Move toward action by recording a “grower’s guide” video that explains how they and their viewers could partner together to grow a world of <u>hesed</u>.</p>
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## The Mifgash

The *mifgash* (מִפְגָּשׁ) - meeting or gathering) is a 20-30 minute weekly synchronous session with the *k'vutzah* ("group"), comprised of teacher and learners, plus any teaching assistants (*madrichim*). During each *mifgash*, there is opportunity to: check-in with the students; build community; celebrate and share some of the activities/challenges the students accomplished the previous week; and, introduce new content for the upcoming week. Each *mifgash* follows the same format to create a sense of consistency and routine:

- **Greetings/check-in (3 minutes)**

These are hellos to every individual as they enter the meeting and a quick check-in or activity.

Examples include:

- Pass the greeting – Call on someone and ask how they are feeling today and they call on another person in the group.
- Finding each other – Everyone is asked to reach to the people on either side of them and then above and below.
- Etc.

- **Reflection/Community Building (4-7 minutes)**

This is a reminder of what happened the last session and the activity or challenge that children worked on. The Flipgrid uploads are referenced and 2-3 children's postings are spotlighted each week (over the course of a number of weeks, everyone will have a chance to be in the spotlight). The teacher might also do a 3-4 minute community-building activity that fits the theme.

- **New Content (15 minutes)**

This week's learning is introduced and the main activity is accomplished together.

- **Launching At-Home Learning (5 minutes)**

The lower elementary and upper elementary learners are introduced to their activities or challenges for the upcoming week. Ideally, these are done in breakout rooms so that each age group is offered a focused (and exciting) introduction and explanation of their task. A teen assistant, prepped for the task, could meet with one group and the teacher with another.

That said, if the entire educational program meets as a whole and then *k'vutzot* or classes are divided into breakout rooms, it will be impossible for a *k'vutzah* to use the breakout rooms for this "launch." Zoom offers only one layer of breakout rooms.

If you do not have the option of breakout rooms, you may make modifications to how you handle the lesson. For example, consider asking any children working with the upper elementary challenges to take a few minute break while you orient the younger learners to this week's activity box instructions; however, the older children should stay in earshot. Introduce the activity box to the lower elementary age children, then send them off. Call back the older children and launch their learning for the week. Note that this option will increase the launch to 10 minutes time.

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**Follow-Up** – Whether or not teachers will be scheduling call-in/“Ask Me” times during the week, children should receive work-reminders and additional resources (links to books online with complementary themes, songs, etc.). Parents should be sent or linked to the weekly Family Schmooze, designed for casual conversation around the dinner table, while in the car or any other appropriate time.







## Session 1: What is hesed, really?

### **The focus:**

Learners learn the difference between the general concept of “kindness” and the Hebrew word hesed.

### **Teacher preparation:**

Have ready the three stories from the Torah (in the curriculum, below).

FOR LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING:

- Open on your computer (available on the *La-bri'ut* website)
  - Lower Elementary Box Instructions Video
  - Upper Elementary Challenge Video

PREPARATION NOTE REGARDING WEEK #3 – A visitor needs to be invited to the third *mifgash*, someone who can share stories of hesed from within the congregation or educational program. See Session 3's write up for details.

### **The session:**

#### **1) GREETINGS/CHECK-IN (3 min)**

Teacher's choice

#### **2) REFLECTION/COMMUNITY-BUILDING (7 min)**

OPTION: Play the “The Clapping Game” – This is a great activity for a *madrich* or *madrichah* to lead. Tell the children that you are going to get a clapping pattern going with them. Everyone should join in – but they should do the pattern softly enough that they can hear your voice (or that of a teen) over the claps. Then, explain that you will ask a question and when anyone has an answer to the question, they should stop their rhythm and raise their hands. When a few people have their hands up, raise your own hands as a signal that everyone must stop and listen.

Practice the game by teaching a simple hand clapping pattern to the children (e.g., two pats on one's thighs and a clap) and start the rhythm going. Ask a question like, “Who has a pet?” When a few have their hands up, raise your hands and stop the rhythm. Call on 2-3 of the children to tell the name of ONE animal they have and its name. Resume the pattern and ask something like, “Who can name a Jewish holiday with great food?” Again, raise your hands and ask 2-3 children to offer their answers.”

Teach a new clapping pattern and practice it. Then ask the question, “Since the last time we were together, who saw someone be kind to another person?” and follow the instructions as with the first pattern.

Continue with the new clapping pattern and ask, “Who did something kind for another person in the last couple of days?”

End with everyone applauding for the great rhythm and great answers!

OPTION: Teacher's choice

### 3) NEW CONTENT (15 min)

#### a) DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN GENERAL KINDNESS AND HESED:

- i) Explain that in English we talk about kindness. In Hebrew there is a very special word called hesed which is generally translated as kindness, but it has a twist to its meaning. There are three stories you (or a *madrich/madrichah*) want to tell them from the Torah that each illustrate hesed. Their challenge is to figure out how hesed is different from kindness.

##### (1) Genesis 18:1-8 (with some slight shifts in the translation) –

Abraham was sitting at the opening to his tent on a very hot day. He wasn't feeling well, but when he saw three men near his tent, he ran to them. Abraham bowed respectfully and asked them to stop and rest.

He said, "Let me bring you a little water along with a piece of bread. I'll wash your dusty feet while you sit under the shade of the nearby tree."

When the men agreed, Abraham rushed to his wife Sarah and said, "Hurry – get some of the best flour we have and bake some cakes." Then, he cooked some meat and brought that, along with something to drink, to the three men and served them this feast of food.

Your challenge as teacher is not to give a definition of hesed – *accept children's responses to the question you are about to ask them. Feel free to probe for clarity, but do not tell them if they are right or wrong until after the third story is told.*

Abraham and Sarah showed hesed that day with the three men. What do learners think hesed means based on this story?

##### (2) Genesis 24:1-20 (an abridged version with some shifts in the translation) –

When Abraham was much older and his son, Isaac, was of an age to be married, Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for his son. The servant was told to return to the country where Abraham was born, where he had relatives, and find a wife for Isaac who would come to live where Abraham, Sarah and Isaac now lived.

The servant took 10 camels with him, each loaded up with gifts for the family of the woman who might marry Isaac. When he arrived at the city of Nahor, the servant made the ten camels kneel down by the water well outside the city.

Among the women getting water at the well for their families was Rebecca. The servant ran up to her and asked if she would give him water to drink. She lowered her water jar for him to drink and when he had enough she said, "I will also pull up enough water for all 10 camels, until they have had enough to drink."

*Remember not to give a definition of hesed – accept children’s responses to the question you are about to ask them. Feel free to probe for clarity, but do not tell them if they are right or wrong until after the third story is told.*

Rebecca showed hesed that day when she not only gave water to the servant, but also to ten very large and thirsty camels. What do they think hesed means based on this story?

(3) Exodus 18:1-27 (an abridged version with some shifts in translation)

Jethro (whose name in Hebrew is Yitro) was Moses’ father-in-law, the father of Moses’ wife. Yitro decided to visit Moses at the foot of Mt. Sinai because he had heard stories of how God helped the people of Israel escape Egypt.

Moses went out to greet Yitro and then shared with him the story of all that had happened in Egypt and how God saved the people.

The next day, Yitro walked around the very large camp of the Israelites. He saw that Moses sat as a judge, but there was a very long line of people waiting to talk to him.

Yitro asked Moses, “Why do you sit all alone while people have to wait to talk to you? There are so many people waiting, that you have to sit ALL day long!”

Moses answered, “When people have an argument, they come to me and I decide between one person and another based on God’s laws and teachings.”

But Yitro looked at Moses and kindly said, “This job is too big for one person - you will wear yourself out! May I give you advice? Find other wise people who understand God’s teachings and divide the work up. Let them take the easier cases, but you save yourself for the hardest of all.”

Moses did as Yitro had suggested and became a better, less tired leader.

*Remember to accept children’s responses to the question you are about to ask them. Feel free to probe for clarity.*

Yitro came just to visit, but ended up helping Moses. What do you think hesed means, based on this story?

*By now you should be able to help them make some comparisons among the stories and hopefully come to understand that when someone acts with hesed they go out of their way to do more than what is expected of them. In the case of Yitro, he came just to visit, but ended up helping Moses.*

b) A BONUS STORY

You might want to share the story told by Alan Morinis on the first page of this module. It offers a very clear image of hesed in action.

c) QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

- i) What is the difference between just being kind to someone and doing hesed?
- ii) If learners wanted to find acts of hesed this week, what might they look for?

**4) LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING (5 min)** – Ideally, this section is done in breakout rooms, one for the lower elementary learners and one for the upper elementary ones. *Madrichim* may be tapped to help lead one of these conversations. Please read the more detailed information on page seven for “Launching At-Home Learning.”

- a) **Lower elementary** (those with the activity box) – This week, learners examine which actions are acts of hesed and which are not. Learners create their own Hesed Memory Game, by cutting out one set of the image cards, the four green “*Ken* (Hebrew for: yes), this is hesed” and four red, “*Lo* (Hebrew for: no) this is not hesed” cards.

First they match each image card to a green *ken/yes* or red *lo/no* card, explaining to someone why they made those matches. A photo of these matches, with a short explanation, get posted to Flipgrid.

Next they cut out the second set of image cards and play a three-card matching game. To play, they mix up all of the cards and lay them face down. Flip over three cards; if they all match (two picture cards that are the same AND whether it *ken/yes* or red *lo/no* is hesed) then the player keeps the cards and may take another turn. If they do not match, the player flips them back over. Play continues until all the cards have been matched. Learners are encouraged to post photos or a video on Flipgrid showing the game being played.

- b) **Upper elementary** (those with the video challenge) – Share the video that introduces the first at-home challenge or ask learners to watch on their own at home. If watching the video as a group, consider showing it all the way through, returning to one of the embedded questions (your choice) to discuss as a group for a few minutes. Then, using screen-share, introduce learners to the Hesed Challenge Card #1.

Make sure they see and understand the challenge of the week: Discover and collect family stories of hesed – from stories they already know or through conversation with family members. Then, they make a hesed tree to display the stories and examples – the tree may be 2D or 3D! After this week, the tree is needed for future challenges, so it needs to be saved. More detailed instructions are on the challenge card.

**FAMILY SCHMOOZE:** A PDF of the card is on the La'bri-ut website.

This is either an idea or behavior that parents can reinforce in the coming week, or a set of open-ended questions that families may discuss around the dinner table, in the car, or anywhere they are together. If there is more than one child in the family, the schmooze will bridge the learning and thinking between younger and older, older and younger.

This last module of the year focuses on hesed, which is often translated as loving kindness, but it is much more than that. While kindness is at the core of this term, it really means going above and beyond what is expected, or “radical kindness.” This story by Alan Morinis hits the definition on the head:

“I once heard Rabbi Abraham Yachnes clarify the extent of the stretch that is necessary to have an action qualify as hesed. He said that if you are walking down the street and someone is walking beside you carrying a large box, and you offer to help the person carry the box, that’s not hesed. You’d simply be a terrible person not to help someone in that situation. What counts as hesed is when you are walking the opposite way from someone carrying a burden and you turn around to help carry that load in the direction he or she is going. That’s hesed.”<sup>4</sup>

Today the children heard three Torah stories that illustrate this nuance of “going above and beyond.” The first was of Abraham who greeted three strangers who stopped by his tent - he said he would get them water and some bread, but instead, fed them a rather full meal (Genesis 18:1-8). The second was the story of Rebecca at the well who was asked by Abraham’s servant to give him water, but she also offered to get water for 10 quite thirsty camels (Genesis 24:1-20). And the final was the hesed shown by Moses’s father-in-law Yitro (Jethro) who had come just to visit, but ending up offering a solution to the long lines of people waiting all day long to have a dispute settled by Moses (Exodus 18:1-27).

This week, keep an eye out for examples of hesed that occur in your family’s daily life. Just by saying, “wow, that was a wonderful hesed you did” will help bring this Jewish value to life for your child. If you still read to, or with, your child and an act of kindness comes up in the story, you might explore whether or not it is kindness (which is great!) or hesed (which offers an extra special quality). And, keep an eye out for the times when you might be able to nurture a kindness into an act of hesed.

**At the next session, children will be asked to bring to the call something that represents hesed or kindness. It would be helpful if this week you help them give it some thought.** The item could be something that they were given, something that shows kindness to others (perhaps an item in the recycling box as a kindness to the earth, a *tz’dakah* box whose contents will help others), something that shows the kindness the family does for each other (like a broom that represents a sweeping chore they do keep their home clean), or perhaps it is a book that is about kindness or hesed. They will have a minute to go and get this item at the next session; giving this advance thought will help.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://jewishvalueseveryday.blogspot.com/2011/02/february-chesed-loving-kindness.html>

### **FOLLOW-UP DURING THE WEEK**

- Immediately after the session send upper elementary children and parents a link to the challenge video so they may watch it again AND send lower elementary parents a link to the box instructions video to share with their child.
- Send a check-in note to parents; include the Family Schmooze page (link is on the *La-bri'ut* website). You might want to send them this video called, "Abraham's Tent: A Playful Jewish Explanation of Why this Bible Hero Matters." <https://youtu.be/LuZVq0Mmbxg>. Within, it tells the story about Abraham and the three visitors. But it also tells much more about Abraham that adults interested in expanding their Jewish understandings would appreciate.
- Remind students to share their work on Flipgrid ("I can't wait to see what you post!").
- Respond to children's postings
  - To encourage students for future sessions
  - To choose what to share in the spotlight section of the next session



## Session 2: What are acts of hesed that I see around me?

### **The focus:**

Discover hesed in everyday actions, with consideration to what it takes to elevate a kindness to the level of hesed.

### **Teacher preparation:**

Open on your computer:

- RESOURCE SHEET A: What does hesed look like? [Note that the lower elementary age children will recognize these pictures as ones that were part of their box activity this past week; this should help them comfortably participate in this session.]

Have something next to your computer that represents kindness to you. [See the explanation under "GREETINGS/CHECK-IN."]

FOR LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING:

- Open on your computer (available on the *La-bri'ut* website)
  - Lower Elementary Box Instructions Video
  - Upper Elementary Challenge Video

REMINDER: Next week's session features a guest who will share examples of hesed that the congregation or educational program have been involved in. Make sure this person is lined up and understands how to prepare for the children – they should understand the definition of hesed being used, that they are being asked to offer a specific focus on the needs in the community, and provide examples how people (ideally, even children) have stepped with an act of hesed.

### **The session:**

#### **1) GREETINGS/CHECK-IN (3 min)**

OPTION: Ask everyone to first think of something that represents kindness or hesed – it could be something that they were given, it could be something that shows kindness to others (perhaps a kindness to the earth with an item from the recycling box, a *tz'dakah* box), it could be something that shows the kindness the family does for each other (like a broom that represents a sweeping chore that keeps their home clean), or perhaps it is a book about kindness or hesed. Once everyone has something, give everyone a chance to quickly talk about their item. Note that if you choose this option, you should combine the check-in time with the community-building one.

OPTION: Teacher's choice

#### **2) REFLECTION/COMMUNITY-BUILDING (7 min)**

OPTION: See above in the check-in section.

OPTION: Teacher's choice

### 3) NEW CONTENT (15 min)

#### a) REVIEW

- i) Review with the children the difference between kindness (which is ALWAYS a good thing!) and hesed (defined sometimes as loving kindness, but meaning an action that goes beyond what others expect you to do).
- ii) Offer some examples discussed the previous week and ask for one or two new examples seen in the week between the sessions.

#### b) DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN KINDNESS AND "NOT KINDNESS" AND CHANGING A KINDNESS TO AN ACT OF HESED

- i) Share RESOURCE SHEET A on your screen; it is set up so that you can show four pictures at a time. Make sure children have their kindness item nearby – they will be using it to signal when they see an act of kindness in the pictures.
  - (1) Tell children that you have eight pictures to show that illustrate either
    - (a) Kindness or
    - (b) Not-kindness
  - (2) Explain that first someone in the group will describe what they see WITHOUT saying anything about it being a kindness or not. [Demonstrate how this would work with picture #1.]
  - (3) Then, everyone will be asked to hold up their kindness item IF they think the picture is showing someone doing a kindness for someone else. If they think this is NOT a picture of kindness they keep their item out of camera view.
  - (4) If it turns out that the group feels the picture shows a kindness, then they will work together to figure out what story could be told that explains how this is hesed.

For instance, picture #1 shows an adult and a child bringing flowers and food to another person (probably an older adult). So yes, that is a kindness.

For it to be a hesed, the two visitors would have to be doing something unexpected, beyond what is normal. For a story, they might have heard that this person had a hard time standing for any period of time AND that they were lonely. So the visitors came by not to deliver groceries, but to spend a few hours and cook a dinner they would all have together.

Be creative in your stories!

- ii) Run through each of the pictures and have the discussion outlined above, using their kindness items to signal when they see kindness. Know that four of the pictures are of kindness and four are not.

c) QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

- i) How easy or hard is it to change a kindness to a hesed? Why?
- ii) How easy or hard will it be on the lookout for opportunities to do acts of hesed this coming week? Why?
- iii) How do acts of kindness or hesed help those who receive them?

Challenge children to do one thoughtful act of hesed this coming week.

**4) LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING (5 min, ideally in breakout rooms)**

- a) **Lower elementary** (those with the activity box) – This week, learners explore acts of hesed they see in the world around them through a Bingo or tic-tac-toe scavenger hunt. Using the provided boards and stamp, learners look at the world around them through a lens of hesed. When they see an act of hesed on either game board, they take a photo and mark that spot on the board with a stamp. Post at least one picture from a board's challenge to Flipgrid and talk about that act of hesed.
- b) **Upper elementary** (those with the video challenge) – Share the video that introduces the second at-home challenge or ask learners to watch on their own at home. Then, using screen-share, introduce learners to the Hesed Challenge Card #2.

Make sure learners see and understand the challenge of the week: Expand the hesed tree created last week into a hesed landscape with

- o clouds that show dreams and hopes for a world of hesed
- o plants and flowers that represent examples of acts of hesed (such as in the synagogue or school community). Teachers might want to brainstorm some of these examples with the learners.
- o a sun that shows how the world is made brighter when acts of hesed are done!

The landscape could be in 3D or 2D, with children as creative or as simple as they want!  
Instructions are on the challenge card.

**FAMILY SCHMOOZE:**

This session posed an interesting question – What are the acts of hesed that children see around them? But a kindness does not always fit the definition of hesed used in this module. We ARE trying to be very clear with children that kindness is wonderful, to be applauded and to be strived for. But we are also trying to help them understand that when we talk about hesed, it's about going above and beyond the expected.

In this week's *mifgash* we looked at kindnesses and created "back-stories" that raised very lovely (and kind) situations to the level of hesed. You know your child and where they are developmentally – if you are ready to help them push beyond kindness, you might schmooze about opportunities to do hesed, whether in real-time or in response to characters portrayed in stories, tv shows or movies.

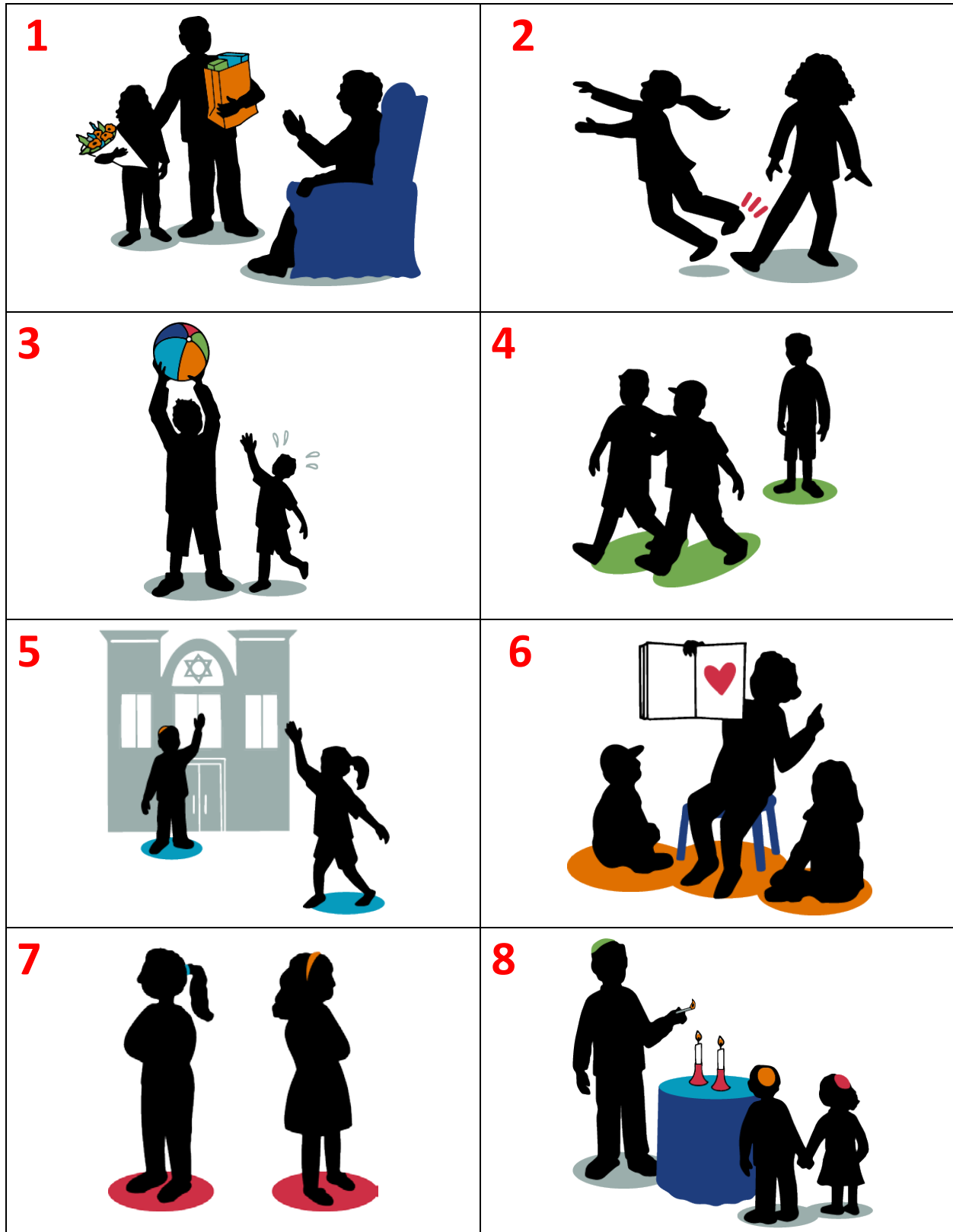
We leave you with a bonus, a video by Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg who offers great wisdom as a rabbi, an educator and most importantly, as a parent. While her definition (and spelling!) of hesed is a bit different from what we have used for the children, this short video is definitely worth watching:

“Chesed, Tzedakah, Tzedek: What’s the Difference,” <https://tinyurl.com/y6mv8kpw>

#### **FOLLOW-UP DURING THE WEEK**

- Immediately after the session send upper elementary children and parents a link to the challenge video so they may watch it again AND send lower elementary parents a link to the box instructions video to share with their child.
- Send a check-in note to parents; include the Family Schmooze page (link is on the *La-bri'ut* website). Feel free to suggest that they look out for Jewish children’s books on the theme of kindness and hesed (there are MANY of them, so the question is which would appeal to their child!). They may already have some of these PJ library books at home:
  - *9 Children’s Books about Kindness (PJ Library)* - <https://tinyurl.com/y62uxf5m>
  - *PJ Our Way books for older children on the theme of kindness* – Go to this page <https://pjourway.org/story-central> and scroll down until you see the book search tool. In the “theme” box, type in “kindness.”
- Remind students to share their work on Flipgrid.
- Respond to children’s postings.

RESOURCE SHEET A: WHAT DOES HESED LOOK LIKE?





### Session 3: Where and when is hesed needed?

#### **The focus:**

Stories of hesed abound in the community – in this session, children hear from a hesed hero who focuses especially on needs in the community and some solutions/activities as a result. Learners consider the implications of this person's story to their own actions on behalf of hesed.

#### **Teacher preparation:**

In advance of this session, find a dynamic adult or teen from the synagogue, educational program or community who can share a hesed story or two that would interest your age group (a parent from among the children is a possibility). Make sure that this guest knows:

- The definition of hesed being used in this module
- That they are being asked to specifically focus on needs in the community (those living alone who need a social connection, families that don't have enough money for food and who need groceries delivered, etc.).
- That they should provide examples how people (ideally, even children) have stepped up with an act of hesed.
- The time constraints of the session and some of the ways you have been working with Zoom.

#### FOR LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING:

- Open on your computer (available on the *La-bri'ut* website)
  - Lower Elementary Box Instructions Video
  - Upper Elementary Challenge Video

#### **The session:**

##### **1) GREETINGS/CHECK-IN (3 min)**

Teacher's choice, though it would be helpful to ask children to share a hesed that they saw or did since the last session.

##### **2) REFLECTION/COMMUNITY-BUILDING (7 min)**

OPTION: Play a quick game of "Hesed - Imagine If..." with the group. Offer two scenarios such as these:

- Imagine if your parent got an important phone call at home just as they were getting ready to cook dinner. What might be a hesed you could do for them?
- Imagine if during the pandemic you were supposed to go to the Bat Mitzvah of a good family friend, but the ceremony gets changed from being in-person at the synagogue to live streaming. Your friend really wanted you to be there and now is leading a service from home. What might be a hesed you do for them?
- Imagine if you and your family are on a long drive and the car gets a flat tire. What might be a hesed you do for the adults in the car? [And no, you are not going to change the tire!]

And then offer this one:

- Imagine if you had spent 12 hours on a plane traveling to Israel. You are excited to finally have landed, but you are exhausted and a bit nervous about being in a country you have never seen before. What is a hesed someone might do for you? Okay, this is a set-up for having a little dance party while watching this video. It's the arrival of a Birthright Israel group after a very long flight and Israelis welcome them with song and dance! <https://tinyurl.com/y6d5nh97> (note that the dancing ends at around 2:40, but if children don't seem to enjoy the video, you could stop after 60 seconds, once they see the reaction of the travelers).

### 3) NEW CONTENT (15 min)

- a) SETTING UP FOR THE GUEST – Today your children have the honor of hosting a guest, much like Abraham and Sarah did. Spend a little time having them consider how they can show both kindness and hesed toward this person when they are with the group. If children have some specific ideas, like making sure they introduce themselves to the guest, set up that opportunity in a way that the guest's time is preserved enough for their own sharing.

- b) THE GUEST - Decide how best to structure this part of the session. After the guest speaks, help children reflect on what they heard. Consider using this structure, or another one that works for you.

“From what I heard ....”

“... I like \_\_\_\_\_”

or “... I appreciate \_\_\_\_\_”

“ ... I wonder \_\_\_\_\_”

or, “I have questions about \_\_\_\_\_”

“ ... I would like to \_\_\_\_\_”

Ask children what they learned from the guest that could be helpful to their own thinking about hesed? [Not just project ideas, but questions such as how important is it to the guest to do acts of hesed?]

- c) QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

- i) What other kinds of needs do learners think are in their community?
- ii) What kinds of hesed activities did the conversation spark for them?
- iii) How might they do kindness for others?
- iv) How might they go above and beyond and use their personal energy for hesed?
- v) What kinds of hesed might they be able to take on?

### 4) LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING (5 min, ideally in breakout rooms)

- a) **Lower elementary** (those with the activity box) – This week, learners consider different ways hesed is needed in the world and how we (and our families!) can help fulfill those needs. In the box/kit this week, learners find a container, decorations and “hesed forms.” After decorating the hesed container, they look for ways to discover and do actions of hesed. Whenever they or



a family member sees hesed, they fill out a form, fold it and put it in the container. At the end of the week, the family can sit and review/read the forms. Learners post photos and an explanation on Flipgrid of where and when they and their family were able to use the forms.

- b) **Upper elementary** (those with the video challenge) – Share the video that introduces the third at-home challenge or ask learners to watch on their own at home. Then, using screen-share, introduce learners to Hesed Challenge Card #3.

Make sure the learners see and understand the challenge of the week: Choose one of three particular areas of need inspired by how we, humans, can partner with God as suggested in the *G'vurot* prayer (part of the *Amidah*)

- Support those who have fallen (not literally, but are going through a hard time)
- Heal the sick
- Help free those who do not have freedom

Teachers will want to confirm that the learners understand the 3 areas of need, and ask whether each child has one in mind to explore.

Then, learners watch the three videos on Challenge Card #3 that relate to their chosen opportunity to act as God's partner. Afterwards they think about the needs that were explained in the videos and some of the suggested solutions. Learners begin creating a seed packet that represents what solutions can be planted in the world. All their work this week needs to be saved for next week – there is a second step coming! Instructions, video links, and a seed packet example are on the Challenge Card.

#### FAMILY SCHMOOZE:

This week, children heard from someone who shared hesed work in the community, with a special focus on some of the needs, as well as solutions to address them.

Yes, it can be difficult for young children to get their hands into hesed work, but it is not impossible. Depending on your family's time and energy, you might be on the lookout for appropriate projects – through your synagogue, education program or community (e.g., Federation, which often has a volunteer network that extends to families with young children).

Sometimes hesed work is organized and communal, but it often is individual and one-on-one. Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg (you met her in last week's Family Schmooze) shares this wonderful story of her own family, and the power of lunchbox notes to inspire a true act of hesed by her young son. Check it out here: "How to Raise an Upstanding Child," with Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg: <https://tinyurl.com/y338skc6>.

**FOLLOW-UP DURING THE WEEK**

- Immediately after the session send upper elementary children and parents a link to the challenge video so they may watch it again AND send lower elementary parents a link to the box instructions video to share with their child.
- Send a check-in note to parents; include the Family Schmooze page (link is on the *La-bri'ut* website).
- Remind students to share their work on Flipgrid.
- Respond to children's postings.

#### Session 4: How does hesed inspire hope? (Why is hesed important?)

##### **The focus:**

Using Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's famous statement about praying with his feet (said after participating in the Selma march with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr), learners consider ways acts of hesed can bring hope to the world.

##### **Teacher preparation:**

In advance of this session, ask parents to make sure their child has paper and a bold writing/drawing instrument (marker or crayon).

Open on your computer:

These are all copyrighted materials and could not be directly shared in this document.

- Martin Luther King, Jr marching with two rabbis (Maurice Eisendrath and Abraham Joshua Heschel)  
<https://tinyurl.com/y5u7jqst> – This was shared in the fourth session of *G'vurah*
- Abraham Joshua Heschel marching with Martin Luther King and others in Selma  
<https://tinyurl.com/y4u4onk7>
- “When I marched in Selma, I felt my legs were praying” poster, from “Voices and Visions”  
<https://tinyurl.com/y5wtu99u>
- “Praying with Our Feet” song by Rabbi Joe Black and Steve Brodsky  
<https://tinyurl.com/y3zyt4pw> This is cued up to start in the middle of the song; for our age group you MUST stop at 1:06. Another option is to consider the segment between 2:30 and 2:47. The reason why such a short segment is suggested is because we don't know parents feel comfortable children knowing about the George Floyd protests in June 2020.

FOR LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING:

- Open on your computer (available on the *La-bri'ut* website)
  - Lower Elementary Box Instructions Video
  - Upper Elementary Challenge Video

##### **The session:**

##### **1) GREETINGS/CHECK-IN (3 min)**

Teacher's choice, though it would be helpful to ask children to share a hesed that they saw or did since that last session.

## 2) REFLECTION/COMMUNITY-BUILDING (7 min)

- a) OPTION: Ask everyone who is comfortable closing their eyes to do so – you just want them to think carefully about their bodies because when they open their eyes you will ask them a question whose answer will be part of their body. So, ask them to close their eyes and think with you about the parts of their bodies (read each word slowly, with a slight pause in between so children can focus on their body parts)
- Their heads
  - Their hair
  - Their brains
  - Their eyes
  - Their ears
  - Their nose
  - Their mouth
  - Their lips
  - Their neck
  - Their shoulders
  - Their arms
  - Their hands
  - Their heart
  - Their stomach
  - Their back
  - Their legs
  - Their knees
  - Their feet
- b) Ask everyone to open their eyes and think for a minute about praying and about their body. Ask them to quickly draw a part of their body used when people pray. If they can give a serious answer besides, “mouth,” that would be very cool.
- c) Have everyone share their pictures to the camera and peek around to see what everyone else drew. Have a general conversation about the variety of responses. Tell children that you have an unusual answer to the question, one that helps also answer the day’s big question, “How can hesed inspire hope?”

## 3) NEW CONTENT (15 min)

- a) INTRODUCING THE IDEA OF PRAYING WITH OUR FEET
- i) Share this photograph <https://tinyurl.com/y5u7jqst> and see if they can remember in which module they were introduced to it. It was the fourth lesson of *G’vurah*, when they considered the power of joining together with other people “for good.” What do they remember of the picture? Martin Luther King, Jr marching with two rabbis (Maurice Eisendrath and Abraham Joshua Heschel)
  - ii) Share this photo and ask children what is the same and what is different from the first one? <https://tinyurl.com/y4u4onk7> This is a photo of Abraham Joshua Heschel marching with

Martin Luther King and others, but this time in Selma, Alabama. Many people feel those at that march were doing hesed – going above and beyond to march together was a very powerful way to change the world. They were demanding equality and justice for Black Americans.

Someone asked Heschel if he had time to pray the day he was marching in Selma, which as a traditional Jew he did three times a day. Can learners guess what his answer was?

- iii) Share this poster which provides his response: <https://tinyurl.com/y5wtu99u> “When I marched in Selma, I felt my legs were praying.” [Some people offer the quote as “praying with my feet.”] Discuss with children the idea of doing hesed and praying with one’s feet at the same time, hopefully getting to the idea that when we do hesed we are helping other people (or animals, or the environment, or....), offering a prayer of hope. Hesed – doing big acts of kindness and goodness - brings us hope for the future.

Not for the children directly, but for your own context and understanding, Dr. Erica Brown said this in response to this poster:

*Praying is not limited to a sanctuary and a prayer book. We pray when we live our values with the totality of ourselves. Such was Abraham Joshua Heschel’s commitment to racial equality and social justice. As a towering rabbinic luminary, he understood the power of the library and the synagogue. But **as a force for goodness, Rabbi Heschel also knew when it was time to leave the library and take to the streets for the causes you believe in. Marching for civil rights was for him a form of prayer.*** (emphasis added)

- iv) Finally, share this segment from the song, “Praying with our Feet,” by Rabbi Joe Black and Steve Brodsky: <https://tinyurl.com/y3zyt4pw> (this is cued up to start in the middle of the song; for our age group you MUST stop at 1:06). The visuals were added in June, 2020 after George Floyd’s death. The segment children view in this session includes the words, “we’re marching hand in hand, when we heed the call for justice we are praying with our feet.”

b) WAYS CHILDREN CAN PRAY WITH THEIR FEET (OR EVEN THEIR HANDS)

- i) Most of the time when we do hesed, we use our feet and our hands. We are praying in a very active way, whether our hesed is helping a person, an animal, the earth, or another challenge in today’s world.
- ii) End this segment the way you started it, but with a different question.
  - (1) Ask them to turn their paper over and draw a “need” that could use their helpful hands and feet. It may be someone they know who is lonely who could use a phone call, a friend who needs help with homework, a pet dog that would enjoy extra time chasing a ball, an adult who would smile if someone kindly set the dinner table.
  - (2) As they draw, they should think about how hesed creates light in the world, as well as hope for better times ... for example, a friend who has an easier time with homework, has hope for better grades.

We do hesed with our feet and our hands, our heads and our hearts. Heschel would say that hesed is a form of prayer. And both hesed and prayer bring hope to those doing these acts, as well as to the world.

c) QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

- i) What hope can you give others by doing an act of hesed for them?
- ii) How does it feel to do hesed for others? Might it also give you some hope for a better future?

**4) LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING (5 min, ideally in breakout rooms)**

- a) **Lower elementary** (those with the activity box) – In the box, learners find a wooden heart, a label for the heart and some paint. Once the hesed heart is decorated, learners are tasked with doing a random act of hesed for another person, without that person knowing who did it. To let that person know someone did a random act of hesed for them, learners will leave the hesed heart behind for that person, which will hopefully encourage that person to pass along the random act of hesed. Learners should take a photo of where they leave their hesed heart, then post the photo along with an explanation of their random act of hesed to Flipgrid.
- b) **Upper elementary** (those with the video challenge) – Share the video that introduces the fourth at-home challenge or ask learners to watch on their own at home. Then, using screen-share, introduce learners to the Hesed Challenge Card #4.

Make sure they see and understand the challenge of the week: How can one design and grow a world of hesed? They create solutions to the need they identified the previous week and write them on seeds that could grow into a hesed plant and make a better world. Instructions and seed examples are on the challenge card. [Teacher may want to brainstorm some possible solutions for each area of need that the learners themselves could do.]

**FAMILY SCHMOOZE:** *A PDF of the card is on the La'bri-ut website.*

This week we expanded the idea of hesed as bringing hope to the world. While our examples for children had to do with “simple actions” – reaching out to a person you know is lonely, helping a friend with homework, throwing a ball to the family dog extra times, or stepping up to set the dinner table when a parent has a lot to do (we hope some of you might end up being surprised by the latter!) – we used the iconic images of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel walking with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr in Selma, Alabama to make our point. After the march, Heschel was asked if he took time to pray. His response was that he prayed with his feet (or legs – there are two versions of this quote).

We do hesed with our feet and our hands, our heads and our hearts. Heschel would say that hesed is a form of prayer. And both hesed and prayer bring hope to those doing these acts, as well as to the world. We hope you find ways to continue this conversation at home.

### **FOLLOW-UP DURING THE WEEK**

- Immediately after the session send upper elementary children and parents a link to the challenge video so they may watch it again AND send lower elementary parents a link to the box instructions video to share with their child.
- Send a check-in note to parents; include the Family Schmooze page (link is on the *La-bri'ut* website). Parents may enjoy hearing the entire song, "Praying with our Feet."  
<https://youtu.be/yNF5GLIqqeM>
- If you wish to have a songleader teach *Olam Hesed Yibaneh* ("The world will be built on hesed") next week, make arrangements now (see the community building section on page 33).
- Let parents know that you have scheduled a Kahoot game for next week. The best way to play would be for each family as a team, thus needing only one smartphone or laptop per household for the game. If using a laptop or computer, two screens need to be open – one for the Zoom call and one for Kahoot; children will need help from a parent to set this up. All the answers are yes/no, making it easy-enough for the younger children to play.
- Remind students to share their work on Flipgrid.
- Respond to children's postings.





## Session 5: How can I build a world of hesed?

### **The focus:**

### **Teacher preparation:**

Make a Kahoot game [Kahoot.com] for your learners using the questions provided on RESOURCE SHEET B. We would have made a full game for you, but you need to control the game from your end and may want to add (or substitute) some questions that use local examples. A tech-savvy *madrich/madrichah* can put it together for you.

Open on your computer:

- Your Kahoot game.

FOR LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING:

- Open on your computer (available on the *La-bri'ut* website)
  - Lower Elementary Box InstructionsVideo
  - Upper Elementary Challenge Video

### **The session:**

#### **1) GREETINGS/CHECK-IN (3 min)**

Teacher's choice, though it would be helpful to ask children to share a hesed that they saw or did since that last session.

#### **2) REFLECTION/COMMUNITY-BUILDING (7 min)**

OPTION: Have a song leader come and teach children the song, *Olam Hesed Yibaneh* ("The world will be built on hesed") <https://tinyurl.com/y6tm94oz> (note that the song builds from a soft starting point, to strong and pounding)

OPTION: Teacher's choice

#### **3) NEW CONTENT (15 min)**

##### a) REVIEWING THE DEFINITION OF HESED

- i) Kahoot! We have been saving this game for last! Create a game using the questions and images on RESOURCE SHEET B. A tech-savvy *madrich* or *madrichah* (aren't they all techies?) can help you do this. So there are not last minute disappointments, communicate in advance to parents about the game so that children are set up to play (see the note on page 31, above).

As you play, use each question as an opportunity to review ideas discussed during this module – make a comment or open a conversation after each one.

b) QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT (AND ACTION!)

Challenge children to think of ways they can and will build the world with hesed.

- What will they try and accomplish over the summer?
- How will they bring to life some of the ideas they learned in the earlier modules?

**4) LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING (5 min, ideally in breakout rooms)**

- a) **Lower elementary** (those with the activity box) – This week, learners have the opportunity to plan for the future, continuing to do acts of hesed. Using the provided pegboard, accessories and labels, learners create their own hesed project board. They use the board by first picking a hesed activity card, along with a timing card. Then, learners get to try to complete that hesed activity in the timeframe chosen. When that project is done, they choose a new hesed activity with a new timeframe and so-on. Learners should take a photo of their completed hesed board that is set up with the project they chose first and post it on Flipgrid.
- b) **Upper elementary** (those with the video challenge) – Share the video that introduces the fifth at-home challenge or ask learners to watch on their own at home. Then, using screen-share, introduce learners to the Hesed Challenge Card #5.

This week, learners record a “grower’s guide” video that accompanies their seed packet. The video explains how they and their viewers could partner together to grow a world of hesed.

**FAMILY SCHMOOZE:**

This week, the final one in the hesed module, children were challenged to consider ways of building the world with hesed. And it’s not just about hesed, per se. It’s about attention to

- Creating *sukkat shalom*, a shelter of peace and safety, for oneself and for others
- Calming BIG FEELINGS by tapping into one’s *ometz lev* to create a calmer environment
- Using one’s *g’vurah*, power and strength, for good
- Tapping into one’s social connections to build a stronger *k’hillah*, community
- And of course, going above and beyond by finding ways not just to be kind, but to do hesed for others

We hope that you continue schmoozing with your child, finding ways to keep building and strengthening their toolbox. Someone once said that Jewish education is the process of becoming, in dialog with Jewish tradition. This year has brought that concept to life in very powerful ways for us who wrote this curriculum, for us who taught it, and we hope for you and your child, as well.

May we all go from strength to strength, in health and wellness. *La-bri’ut!!*

Amen!

### **FOLLOW-UP DURING THE WEEK**

- Immediately after the session send upper elementary children and parents a link to the challenge video so they may watch it again AND send lower elementary parents a link to the box instructions video to share with their child.
- Send a check-in note to parents; include the Family Schmooze page
- Remind students to share their work on Flipgrid
- Respond to children's postings, especially encouraging them to "keep the powerful work!" over the summer and into next year.



## RESOURCE SHEET B: SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR KAHOOT GAME

Here are some suggested questions about hesed with their correct answers. They are Yes/No questions so that the early readers can play along. When you set up your own game, use the Kahoot image library to illustrate each question.

1. Is hesed the name of a city in Israel?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
2. Is it hesed if you offer to play with a fussy baby sister so your parent can make dinner?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
3. Is it hesed if your job on the family chart is to sweep after dinner ... and you sweep!
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
4. Is it hesed if you do what your teacher asked and you spend 20 minutes practicing the violin?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
5. Is it hesed if you tie your shoe with a double-knot?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
6. Is it hesed if you go after school for a few days to help a young neighbor learn to tie her shoe?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
7. Is it hesed if you and some friends spend an afternoon talking with older people about their life as a child?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
8. Is it hesed if you eat all your peas?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
9. Is it hesed if you hug your whimpering dog during a thunderstorm?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

10. Can you recognize a hesed hero by their red cape?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
11. In a “world of hesed” would we be allowed to eat ice cream for breakfast every day?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
12. After he marched with Martin Luther King, did Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel say that his feet hurt?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
13. Does *La-bri'ut* mean “To health and wellness?”
  - a. Yes
  - b. No