

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?



