

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.