

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.”¹

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.”² 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 needs³ 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.

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

² *Chesed/Lovingkindness* by Alan Morinis

³ <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/TnREEG1l3qw>



OVERVIEW GRID

<p>Weekly Focusing Question</p>	<p>Mifgash (the session in which a cohort of learners “meet” the week’s focus)</p>	<p>Grades K-3 Activities (introduced via a subscription-type box)</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Grades 4-6 Challenges (introduced via a “challenge video”)</p> <p>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>.</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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