

Shmirat HaNefesh: Tools for Growth, Connection, & Wellness



An online curriculum for Confirmation/teenage learners and their educators in Reform supplemental religious schools consisting of twelve synchronous two-hour sessions and asynchronous practice and reflection

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Introduction

This curriculum looks at mental health, suicide prevention, and adolescent identity formation through a Jewish lens. Content covered will include skills utilized in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), depression, anxiety, and suicide awareness and prevention, all in relation to Jewish values, concepts, and texts. The program will be online and both synchronous and asynchronous; synchronous classes will be held on Zoom with students being sent into breakout rooms to do chevruta study for a portion of the class, while asynchronous skills practice and reflections will be done using Google Classroom. The program is intended for confirmation/early high school learners but would also be appropriate for older teens as well.

This content interests me because of personal experience. I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder at the age of fourteen and am a survivor of two suicide attempts. DBT changed my life; it enabled me to regulate my emotions and deal with distress in a healthy and effective way as well as become more mindful. I believe it could be a great resource for anyone but especially teens. I am also interested in helping adolescents take care of their emotional well-being through a Jewish lens and develop their Jewish identities.

Adolescence is a significant, often difficult time in young people's lives; they experience great change, stress, and pressure from peers as well as adults, all while developing independent identities. Currently they are experiencing all of this while also living through a pandemic. Teens need to learn to take care of themselves during these critical years. A Jewish lens is important because we want Judaism to be part of their developing identities. Judaism provides a unique and valuable perspective on mental health, valuing ourselves, and even DBT skills. This program would meet the needs of adolescents because it is relevant to their lives. It addresses the whole person. I also have yet to encounter a program like this and I doubt there has been a similar program utilizing DBT skills.

Rationale

Adolescence is a particularly challenging time in young people's lives. Teenagers are going through a variety of changes—physical, emotional, and situational—while simultaneously developing independent identities. They are dealing with peer pressure, parental pressure, academic (and often extracurricular) pressure, and internal pressure. The average teen may be experiencing body image issues, depression, anxiety, substance abuse issues, and intense stress from a variety of sources. This is under normal circumstances. The picture looks even more dire when one takes into consideration the current threat of a pandemic. The significance of taking care of one's mental health at that age and particularly during these times cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, many adolescents have not been given the tools they need to navigate these critical years healthily and effectively.

A common concern of many synagogues is the development of strong Jewish identities in the young people of their congregation. This is especially crucial during the key developmental stage of adolescence. Teens need to find their own connections to Judaism, Jewishness, and Jewry. The question is, how do we make it relevant to their lives? Confirmation curricula often consist of lessons and programs about how to change the world or how to be better Jews (or people in general). These are obviously important subjects to be engaged with. However, is enough attention being paid to the inner lives of teens? Are we acknowledging everything they are going through and addressing it properly? Confirmation programs, which catch adolescents in their early teenage years, need to provide their learners with the skills they need to take care of their mental health while framing this content through a Jewish lens. "The content—the actual images, values, beliefs, symbols and rituals—of a person's or community's faith is of central importance in informing their behavior and shaping personality."¹ Adolescents need a program that addresses their mental health needs in a Jewish way, through engagement with Jewish values, concepts, rituals, and texts.

This curriculum attends to the mental wellness needs of Confirmation-age teens using Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills and the discussion of depression, anxiety, and suicide prevention. These skills and subjects will be connected to Jewish values and texts; the learners will explore how Jewish texts can serve as a framework for developing mental well-being. It must be noted that, while this curriculum addresses common mental health concerns of adolescents and suicide

¹ Fowler, James W. "I. Toward A Developmental Perspective On Faith." *Religious Education*, vol. 69, no. 2, 1974, pp. 207–219.

prevention, it does not seek to diagnose learners who may have chronic mental illnesses or suggest or provide treatment.

DBT is used as treatment for emotion dysregulation. It started as treatment for people who were experiencing suicidal ideation, but practitioners soon realized the benefits of DBT for all kinds of people. Learning DBT skills during adolescence is ideal because they are life skills that help with emotion regulation; the sooner one learns them the better. Additionally, teens by nature are impulsive and take risks², and practicing DBT skills reduces impulsivity and high-risk behaviors.³

A critical aspect of the program will be the chevruta study the learners will participate in. Together with a partner, whom they will be paired with for the duration of the program, they will study texts related to the skills and subjects they studied as a larger group with the teacher. The Jewish texts and this Jewish process/methodology will be offered as tools for connection to support the teens. “The structure of [chevruta] holds the learner in a direct and accountable relationship with another person and the text for a period of time. (There is no room for anonymously ‘checking out’ in this smallest of groupings.)”⁴ Through participation in chevruta study, learners come to discover that they do not always need the teacher for answers, that they can rely on themselves, their partner, and the text itself. Chevruta study can “enable...students to form relationships to the content and their learning and ‘make it their own’ and form real learning relationships” with their partner.⁵ “The potential for transformation is built into the [chevruta] encounter by virtue of the fact that both the [chevruta] partner and the textual partner may present the learner with different views, values, or beliefs.”⁶ Additionally, chevruta practice can “directly cultivate qualities like sensitivity, listening, wholeheartedness, open-mindedness, vulnerability, responsibility, and ethical commitment”⁷.

The teacher will need to be well-informed about the necessary DBT skills and how they can be utilized. In addition, they will need to be familiar with the subjects of depression and anxiety to the degree that they will be able to conduct appropriate conversations on those topics. They will need to be educated in the signs of depression and suicidal ideation in adolescents and in suicide prevention. All this information

² Steinberg, Laurence. *Age of Opportunity: Lessons from the New Science of Adolescence*. Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015.

³ Linehan, Marsha M. *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder*. The Guilford Press, 1993.

⁴ Kent, Orit, and Allison Cook. “Havruta Inspired Pedagogy: Fostering An Ecology of Learning for Closely Studying Texts with Others.” *Journal of Jewish Education*, vol. 78, no. 3, 2012, pp. 227–253.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Holzer, Elie, and Orit Kent. *A Philosophy of Havruta: Understanding and Teaching the Art of Text Study in Pairs*. Academic Studies Press, 2014.

⁷ Ibid.

and the necessary resources, including the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's *More Than Sad: Preventing Teen Suicide* video, will be provided to the teacher. It is recommended that the teacher be trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid (see "Additional Learning Materials to Support Curriculum and Facilitator Training"). Finally, the teacher must be comfortable working with teens and familiar with the developmental stage of adolescence.

The program will take place in an online environment. Practically speaking, this is currently a necessity due to the present pandemic. In the future, when the pandemic is hopefully no longer an issue, the online nature of this program will allow for more flexibility and perhaps greater enrollment because learners will not need to leave home. The asynchronous portion of the program, which will be skills practice and reflection through Google Classroom, brings what the learners explored in class and in chevruta to their homes and personal lives. The synchronous portion of the program will consist of mindfulness activities, class discussions, role play, chevruta text study and conversation, some frontal teaching, and multimedia experiences.

The curriculum will be grounded in the lenses of Judaism, Jewishness, and Jewry. Learners will relate to the ideas and philosophy of Judaism in a number of ways. First, the subjects they will learn about and the skills they will practice will be connected to Jewish values and concepts. Second, they will engage in text study, exploring how religious literature relates to the subject matter. Finally, the concepts of *b'tzelem Elohim* and the soul will be central themes throughout the curriculum.

Jewishness will be addressed through practices. First, learners will engage in the traditional Jewish practice of chevruta study. They will learn about the history of this kind of study and its benefits. Second, the program will culminate in a Mental Wellness Havdalah. For this Havdalah ceremony, the learners will create rituals with their chevruta with meanings they have chosen related to what they learned during the course of the program and to the themes within Havdalah itself as well as compose blessings and discussion questions for the rituals. DBT itself is ritualistic, particularly with regards to the mindfulness practice that is at its core. Rituals help us "make meaning of our ever-changing lives", "recognize who we are and what we value", and "come together in community to share and acknowledge both the joy and pain of our existence."⁸ Havdalah was chosen as the ceremonial basis for the rituals because part of its purpose is to try to bring the peace of Shabbat with us into the rest

⁸ Imber-Black, Evan, and Janine Roberts. *Rituals for Our Times: Celebrating, Healing, and Changing Our Lives and Our Relationships*. Jason Aronson, 1998.

of the week. Likewise, we want the peace of good mental wellness that they have been learning about in class to be brought into the rest of their lives.

Learners will feel part of a long history of Jewish scholars (Jewry) as they engage in chevruta study. The shared values will promote a sense of belonging to a Jewish community. Learners will also see how mental wellness can be approached through a uniquely Jewish lens.

Learner engagement and understanding will be assessed in three ways. First, learners will be assessed through attendance and participation in class. Second, they will be assessed through their submissions on Google Classroom which will address how they practiced their DBT skills between classes and their reflections on the utilization of these skills. Finally, the culminating Mental Wellness Havdalah will serve as an authentic assessment of understanding upon completion of the program.

This curriculum is a passion project of mine because I have struggled with mental illness. My illness started in my childhood but spiraled out of control in my adolescence when I attempted suicide. At the time, no one was talking about mental health and suicide prevention with teens, and certainly not in a Jewish setting. If my friends, classmates, and teachers had been taught to recognize the signs of depression and suicidal ideation and what to do if they thought someone was suicidal, maybe I would have gotten the help I needed sooner. If I had learned DBT skills as an adolescent, maybe my teen experience would have been much better, much healthier. I want to see teens learn all this and have it be grounded in Judaism so that it resonates even more deeply in their lives.

Desired Results and Evidence for Learning

Priority Goals

- Learners will explore and understand that Jewish values can guide us to self-care and compassion for others. They will learn to pay attention to their mental health, using Jewish values, and understand their inherent worth as individuals.

Enduring Understandings

- The belief that we are made B'tzelem Elohim provides us with a sense of inherent value.
- Taking care of one's mental health is essential to one's overall well-being.
- Jewish values can guide us to take care of ourselves.

Essential Questions

- What are effective strategies we can use to take care of our mental health?
- How does mental health relate to core Jewish values and concepts?
- What do we mean by being “made in the image of God” and what does that teach us about how to act towards ourselves and others?

KDBB

Know	Learners will know skills they can use to take care of their mental health. Learners will know what to do if they think they or someone they know is experiencing suicidal ideation.
Do	Learners will practice DBT skills and reflect on the experiences. Learners will study Jewish texts in chevruta. Learners will create a ritual for a Mental Wellness Havdalah and write corresponding blessings and discussion questions.
Believe/Value	Learners will value themselves and others. Learners will relate taking care of their mental health to Jewish values and concepts.

Belong	Learners will develop a relationship with their respective chevrotot. Learners will feel part of a learning community. Learners will identify with the long history of Jews studying in chevruta.
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Accepted Evidence for Learning

Evidence for learning will take several forms. First, learners will engage in group discussions that will demonstrate whether they have understood the content taught and the texts they studied in chevruta. Thoughtful comments and questions can serve as evidence of understanding.

Second, the teacher will briefly “drop in” on chevrotot in Zoom breakout rooms to get a sense of their understanding of the text (as well as answer any questions they might have).

Third, learners will complete an assignment during the week explaining how they used the DBT skill that was taught in the previous session and reflecting on the experience or reflecting on the subject covered in the previous session (e.g., depression and anxiety). This will demonstrate whether they understood the skill and why it would be utilized or the subject and its relevance.

Finally, the learners’ preparation for and participation in the culminating Mental Wellness Havdalah will serve as evidence for learning. The learners will demonstrate their understanding of the content of the course by creating their own Havdalah rituals and writing original blessings and discussion questions that reflect what they have learned.

Curriculum Outline

This is a twelve-lesson curriculum. Eight lessons are on Dialectical Behavior Therapy skills. The ninth lesson is about depression and anxiety. Then there are two lessons dedicated to suicide awareness and prevention, and finally the last lesson is for preparation for the Mental Wellness Havdalah ceremony. As the following table shows, each lesson has a skill or subject, corresponding values or midot, and a list of the texts to be used for the chevruta study portion of each lesson. See the appendix for the texts themselves.

Session	Skill/Subject	Value/Midah	Chevruta Texts*
1	Mindfulness; 3 States of Mind; “What” and “How” Skills	<i>B'tzelem Elohim</i> ; <i>Yesod</i> – Groundedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rashi commentary and Or HaChaim commentary on Genesis 1:26 • Sforno commentary on Genesis 1:27 • Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Przysucha quote • Exodus 32:1-6 (Golden calf story) • Leviticus Rabbah 10:3 (Aaron and the golden calf)

2	ABC Skills – Accumulating Positive Experiences, Short- and Long- Term	<i>Simchah</i> – Joy; <i>G'vurah</i> – Discipline and Will Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jerusalem Talmud Kiddushin 48b (excerpt) • Deuteronomy 16:13-15 • Mishneh Torah, Shofar, Sukkah, and Lulav 8:15 (excerpts) • Hebrew words denoting “happiness” • Dennis Prager quote
3	ABC Skills – Build Mastery and Cope Ahead	<i>Netzach</i> – Perseverance and Grit; <i>Roeh et</i> <i>HaNolad</i> - Foresight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avot d'Rabbi Natan 6:2 (excerpts) • Malbim on Job 5:7 • Calvin Coolidge quote • Genesis 41:17-36 (think metaphorically) • Dr. Seuss, <i>Oh, the Places You'll Go!</i> excerpt

4	PLEASE Skills	<i>Shmirat HaGuf v'HaNefesh</i> – Taking Care of the Body and the Soul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mishneh Torah, Human Dispositions 4:1 • Vayikra Rabbah 34:3 • Kli Yakar on Deuteronomy 4:9 • <i>Sefer HaChinuch</i> quote • Asher Yatzar and Elohai N'shamah (Mishkan T'filah) • Philo quote • Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman quote
5	Check the Facts and Problem Solving	<i>Hochmah</i> – Wisdom; <i>Yetziratiut</i> – Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rashi on Leviticus 19:15 • Shevuot 30a:12 (excerpt) • I Samuel 16:13-23, 18:5-16, 24:1-17 • I Kings 3:16-22 • I Kings 3:23-28

6	Opposite Action and Radical Acceptance	<i>Ometz Lev</i> – Courage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis 4:1-10 • Genesis 27:6-44 • Genesis 32:4-24, 33:1-16 • Sotah 36b:23, 37a:3-6 • Genesis 29:15-30 • Habakkuk 1:1-13
7	ACCEPTS Skills and Self-Soothe	<i>Tiferet</i> – Balance and Inner Beauty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook quote • Deuteronomy 15:10-11 • Simon Jacobson (Chabad.org) article excerpt • Excerpt from “A Positive Approach to Loss”, Chapter 27 of <i>Positivity Bias</i> by Mendel Kalmenson (Chabad.org) • Yoma 75a:2 • Bava Batra 10a:12

8	IMPROVE Skills and TIPP Skills	<i>Shleimut</i> – Peacefulness and Wholeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eruvin 65a:10 • Maimonides quote • Isaiah 43:2, 4 • Micah 7:8 • I Kings 8:23-30 • Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz quote • Yaffa Ganz quote • Rabbi Ari Enkin quote • <i>When Bad Things Happen to Good People</i> (Rabbi Harold Kushner) excerpt
9	Depression and Anxiety**	<i>Sukkat Shalom</i> – Shelter of Peace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sotah 3a:4 • Mishnah Megillah 2:4 • Chagigah 3b:12 • Mishnah Chagigah 1:1 • Mishneh Torah, Testimony 9:9 • Mishnah Ketubot 5:5 • Ecclesiastes 4:6 • King Solomon quote • Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, <i>Alei Shur</i>, Vol. I, p. 35 quote • Maimonides quote

10	Suicide Prevention (Part One)	<i>B'tzelem Elohim</i> and <i>Pikuach Nefesh</i> – Saving a Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis 1:27 • Rabbi Yitz Greenberg quote • Erich Fromm quote • Olitzky and Forman reading • Leviticus 18:5 • Deuteronomy 30:19 • Sanhedrin 37a:13 • Mishneh Torah, Murderer and Preservation of Life 11:4 • Mishnah Yoma 8:5-7
11	Suicide Prevention (Part Two)	<i>B'tzelem Elohim</i> ; <i>Pikuach Nefesh</i> – Saving a Life; <i>Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro</i> – Sharing a Burden with One's Friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rabbi Nachman of Breslov quote • Yoma 35b:7-8 • Berakhot 5b:13-14 • Excerpt from “Shmirat Hanefesh and Tikkun HaGuf: Cultivating Mental Health” by Rabbi Dusty Klass • Pirkei Avot 1:14 • Martin Buber quotes

12	Preparing Mental Wellness Havdalah	<i>Tikun HaNefesh</i> – Repairing the Soul; <i>Areyvut</i> – Community- Mindedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beitzah 16a:12 • Pesachim 8a:4 (end) and Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 298:2 (end--RAMA) • Pesachim 54a:14 (excerpt) • Regarding holding up fingernails: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Mishnah Berakhot 8:6 (end) ◦ Mishnah Berurah 298:9 • “When We Feel Lonely: A Prayer” (<i>Gates of Prayer</i>) • “A Blessing for Unconditional Acceptance” (Judith Glass) • “A Prayer for Those Days When Life Spins Out of Control” (Naomi Levy)
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*See appendix for texts in full.

**Learners watch AFSP’s *More Than Sad: Teen Depression* (25 min.)

Sample Lessons

Each lesson will begin with a round of “Rose, Thorn, Bud” (see sample lessons) followed by a mindfulness exercise. Every lesson will include chevruta text study, and each lesson will have an accompanying asynchronous practice and/or reflection for learners to complete before the next synchronous session.

Session One

Mindfulness, Three States of Mind, “What” Skills, & “How” Skills - *B’tzelem Elohim & Yesod*

0:00-0:06 - Rose, Thorn, Bud

- Learners take turns sharing their rose (high point of the week), thorn (low point of the week), and bud (something they are looking forward to). Teacher models first, giving learners time to think, then calls on individual learners to share.

0:06-0:15 - Mindfulness Exercise

- Teacher explains that they will be doing mindfulness exercises at each session (the “why” of mindfulness will be discussed later). For this session’s mindfulness exercise, learners will be instructed to sit with their feet on the floor, back upright, and hands in their lap. They may close their eyes if they are comfortable doing so and if it will help them to be mindful. After the teacher rings a bell three times, learners should observe any body sensations and sounds they experience. If their mind wanders to other things, they should notice it without judgment and gently bring their attention back to the activity. After three minutes, the teacher will ring the bell again. Learners will then spend about four to five minutes describing what they observed. Learners are encouraged to share any thoughts or emotions that came up during the exercise in a non-judgmental way (e.g., “I noticed I had the thought, “This is stupid”” as opposed to “This is stupid”). Teacher also asks learners if their minds wandered during the exercise and, if so, if they were able to bring their attention back. Teacher explains that sometimes we have to turn our attention back again and again, and that’s ok.

0:15-0:23 – Introduce *B’tzelem Elohim* (In the Image of God) and *Yesod* (Groundedness)

- Teacher screen-shares slide with the text from Genesis 1:26-27 (in Hebrew and English) and asks for a volunteer to read the Hebrew and another volunteer to read the English. Ask learners to think about what it means that we are made in God's image.
- Teacher shares a link to a Padlet in the chat and instructs learners to click on the link and post in the Padlet (anonymously) what they think it means to be made in God's image. What does it say about us? What are our responsibilities/how should we behave because we are made in the image of God? Learners can "like" each other's posts. After a few minutes, teacher asks learners to share which of the posts resonated with them the most.
- Teacher asks learners to return their attention to the Zoom room. Teacher explains that, for the purposes of this particular program, we will understand that being made in God's image means that there is something divine in each of us, that we have inherent worth simply by existing, and we have a responsibility to take care of ourselves and others. It means that we each are infinitely valued, uncompromisingly equal, and blessedly unique. It also means we have a responsibility to behave in ways that reflect that divine essence.
- Teacher screen-shares another slide with the word "*Yesod*" in Hebrew and its translation (Groundedness) in English at the top, with the following definition below it: "To be well balanced and sensible, including being both mentally and emotionally stable." (definition from <https://jewishcamp.org/making-mensches/>) Teacher has a volunteer read the slide, then explains that this will directly relate to the skills we will be learning today, as well as many of the skills we will be learning in future sessions.

0:23-0:55 – Teach DBT Skills

- Teacher screen-shares PowerPoint presentation (see accompanying PowerPoint - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1f6ROYgJX0c-j5QAsuySNrbNu8PMmByg/view?usp=sharing> , also in appendix):
 - What is Mindfulness?
 - Mindfulness is being aware of your present moment (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations) without judgment and without trying to change it. It is full awareness, having an opened mind.

- Why Mindfulness?
 - Being mindful can give you more choices and more control over your behavior.
 - Being mindful can reduce your suffering and increase your pleasure.
 - Being mindful can help you make important decisions.
 - Being mindful can help focus your attention and make you more effective and productive.
 - Being mindful can increase compassion for yourself and others.
 - Being mindful can lessen your pain, tension, and stress and, in turn, even improve your health.
- Three States of Mind
 - Venn diagram of three states of mind
 - Emotional Mind (what you feel to be true; it is when you are acting or thinking entirely based on emotion, without planning, using logic, or thinking about consequences)
 - Emotional Mind is not always a problem, but sometimes it is. Discuss when it might not be a bad thing (e.g., singing at the top of your lungs at a concert with your favorite band, shouting when your team wins a play-off game, etc.). Discuss when it might be a problem.
 - Reasonable Mind (what you think to be true; it is when you are acting or thinking about something without emotions present; it's logical, planful, rational, "just-the-facts" kind of thinking; "calculator mind")
 - Ask: What are the advantages of making decisions or acting in Reasonable Mind? What are the disadvantages?
 - Ask for an example of a big decision they might have to make at some point in their lives. Ask rhetorically: Shouldn't that be decided with Reasonable Mind because of X, Y, and Z? (For example, if talking about what college to go to, shouldn't that be decided in Reasonable Mind

since you want to consider locale, size of school, student-teacher ratio, range of courses?)

- Wise Mind (what you know to be true; it involves an intuitive form of knowing, thinking, or acting, using both logical and emotional information)
- Explain: Both emotion and reason are needed for important decisions and difficult situations. That is why we need Wise Mind—the synthesis of Emotional Mind and Reasonable Mind. Ask: How would we make that big decision we discussed before using Wise Mind?
- Steps to Wise Mind: “What” Skills
 - Observe
 - Exercise: Teacher plays an audio track (classical music, nature sounds, etc.) and learners listen (observe) without judgment or applying descriptions to what they hear—they simply take in the sounds.
 - Alternative exercise: Teacher shows an image of an abstract painting and learners observe the painting without judgment or applying descriptions to what they are looking at.
 - Describe
 - Exercise: Teacher sits with crossed arms, furrowed brow, downward-turned mouth, and intense gaze—learners must try to describe how the teacher appears without applying interpretations or judgments (e.g. teacher “has crossed arms” vs “is angry”).
 - Participate
 - Exercise: Group tries to count to 10 together without more than one person saying a number at the same time. If more than one person speaks at once, everyone must start all over again at 1. Instruct learners to fully throw themselves into the game. If the group accomplishes the task quickly, change the goal to 15 or higher.

- It is impossible to do any more than one of these skills at a time.
- Steps to Wise Mind: “How” Skills
 - Don’t Judge
 - Exercise: Teacher shows a picture of a controversial figure or a person with a hairstyle/outfit from an earlier decade and learners must describe without judgement (e.g. “person has brown hair”, “person has heels that are several inches high”).
 - Alternative exercise: Teacher plays a clip from a song in a style learners probably wouldn’t choose to listen to. Learners must try to describe what they heard without judging (no negative OR positive statements).
 - Stay Focused (One-Mindfully)
 - Exercise: Teacher instructs learners to focus on two things at once: on a piece of paper, learners start with 100 and subtract backwards by 7s while simultaneously singing “The Star-Spangled Banner” (or another song everyone knows). Ask learners to describe the experience—what did they notice about their attention? Their emotions? Have learners choose one of the two activities and then do it with mindful focus. How did it feel different?
 - Ask: How many of you have driven in cars with people who are texting while driving? How about people who are driving and talking on the phone, hands free? Then ask: So what if you were in surgery? How many of you would feel comfortable with your surgeon texting with one hand while doing surgery? How about if the surgeon were talking on the phone—hands free—while repairing your aorta?
 - Do What Works (Effectiveness)
 - The “How” skills can and should be used simultaneously.

0:55-1:10 – Discuss

- How do these skills relate to the concepts of *B'tzelem Elohim* and *Yesod*?
(Possible answers: We need to take care of ourselves because we are made in the image of God; we need to behave in a way that is befitting someone who is made in the image of God; being mindful is like being grounded; the balance of *Yesod* is similar to the balance of Wise Mind)
- How can we use these skills in the coming week?
- Explain what chevruta text study is, emphasizing its long history as a Jewish method of text study. Let learners know that they don't have to get to all the texts if they want to spend more time on one text than others, then send learners into breakout rooms with their pre-chosen chevruta partner.

1:10-1:50 – Breakout Rooms: Chevruta conversation and text study

- 5 minutes for general conversation (catching up, bonding, etc.)
- Text Study (see accompanying source sheet - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zKixCYOnY5PM-RzfyVLVdEOAamslVvQy/view?usp=sharing> , also in appendix)
 - Rashi commentary and Or HaChaim commentary on Genesis 1:26
 - Sforno commentary on Genesis 1:27
 - Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Przysucha teaching
 - Exodus 32:1-6 (Golden calf story)
 - Leviticus Rabbah 10:3 (Aaron and the golden calf)
- Teacher rotates through breakout rooms to provide a little guidance during text study, answer any questions, etc.

1:50-2:00 – Regroup

- Learners share and reflect on what they learned in chevruta
- Teacher explains the “homework”
(<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Hj1iKfGXMUR5sb60Gal3DCKrneH-2pH8eHLGkuS8N0/edit?usp=sharing> , also in appendix) which will be posted on Google classroom for them to do before the next session.

Session Six

Opposite Action & Radical Acceptance - *Ometz Lev*

0:00-0:06 - Rose, Thorn, Bud

- Learners take turns sharing their rose (high point of the week), thorn (low point of the week), and bud (something they are looking forward to). Teacher models first, giving learners time to think, then calls on individual learners to share.

0:06-0:15 - Mindfulness Exercise

- Teacher will ring a bell three times. Learners will focus on playing with several simple fidget toys that were previously mailed to them by the synagogue. They should focus entirely on the fidget toys. If their mind wanders to other things, they should notice it without judgment and gently bring their attention back to the activity. After about four minutes, the teacher will ring the bell one more time, signaling the learners to return their attention to the Zoom room. Learners will take turns briefly explaining how it felt to focus on the fidget toys, which one they liked the best, etc.

0:15-0:20 - Emotions Word Cloud

- Using a live word cloud generator (such as [mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com)), learners will create a word cloud of emotions. The teacher will screen-share the screen with the code for the students and students will go on their phones, enter the code, and then type in one or more emotions they have felt recently (whatever recently means to them). The word cloud will instantly generate, showing the many emotions the learners have been feeling.

0:20-1:00 - Teach DBT Skills: Opposite Action and Radical Acceptance

- Teacher screen-shares PowerPoint presentation on skills (slides on value/midah at the end). (See accompanying PowerPoint presentation - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WEHcbON5lAiTNBVeegpOSE-XQ6p6FP3O/view?usp=sharing> , also in appendix.)
- Every emotion has an action urge. Ask: What are the action urges for the emotion of anger? Depression? Shame?
- Explain when to use Opposite Action.
- Explain what Opposite Action is (the skill of opposite action consists of acting opposite to an emotion's action urge).

- Have learners take turns reading aloud common action urges associated with a sample of emotions.
- Explain the opposite action for fear/anxiety.
 - Ask learners to share an example of something they're afraid to do or feel and ask whether they act on the urge or engage in the opposite action (teacher should model an example first). Highlight how fear and anxiety go down when they act in an opposite manner (it might take some time or repeated action but it does go down). Do not act opposite when your fear is justified, however. For example, if a dog is growling at you, do not approach and try to pet it.
- Explain the opposite action for anger.
 - Ask learners for examples of anger and whether they acted on its urge or engaged in an opposite action (teacher should model an example first). Highlight how anger dissipates when they act opposite to its urge. Note that when anger is justified, such as when you find out a peer has been spreading false rumors about you, you may not want to approach kindly or to gently avoid. However, it still may be the most effective thing to do to confront your friend and express your feelings in a controlled way, rather than, say, blowing up in public.
- Explain the opposite action for sadness.
 - Don't wait until you feel like it. Do things that make you feel effective and self-confident. How many of you, when you feel sad or depressed, tend to lie in bed or on the couch, watching TV and just "vegging"? In some ways it feels soothing, cozy, and safe. Essentially, you are acting on your urge to withdraw and not move. But if you're depressed, it is the most unhelpful thing you can do. By staying inactive, you will stay depressed. It's hard for sad people to get themselves to act opposite--to act as if they're not sad and hope that they will feel better afterward. *Acting opposite* means going to school, scheduling pleasant activities and social plans, and trusting that if you do these things all the way--that is, throwing yourself into doing them--you may begin to feel less depressed *after* you keep this up for a while. It is hard to trust that this will work, but there is solid scientific evidence that it does. Teenagers actually feel better *after* they get behaviorally activated. Get up, get out, and move.

- How many of you struggle with acting opposite to sadness? What have you tried and where do you get stuck? How can you push yourself to do opposite action all the way?
- The difference between shame and guilt:
 - Some Prompting Events for Feeling Shame:
 - Being rejected by people you care about.
 - Having others find out you have done something wrong.
 - Doing (feeling or thinking) something that people you admire believe is wrong or immoral.
 - Comparing some aspect of yourself or your behavior to a standard and feeling like you do not live up to that standard.
 - Being betrayed by a person you love.
 - Being laughed at, made fun of.
 - Being criticized in public, in front of someone else; remembering public criticism.
 - Being reminded of something wrong, immoral, or “shameful” that you did in the past.
 - Some Prompting Events for Feeling Guilt:
 - Doing or thinking something you believe is wrong.
 - Doing or thinking something that violates your personal values.
 - Not doing something you said you would do.
 - Committing a transgression against another person or something you value.
- Explain the opposite actions for shame.
 - We sometimes feel ashamed when we have violated our own sense of right and wrong and we know that others will be disappointed in us or even reject us. But we can also feel ashamed sometimes when we have not violated our values or harmed anyone, and there is nothing about us or our behavior that is objectively wrong. Shame may urge us to hide in this case because we believe that we will be rejected from a particular social setting--and sometimes this is true. For example,

proudly showing all of your tattoos when on a job interview at a bank is unlikely to get you the job. Sometimes we are not likely to be rejected--for example, telling your open-minded best friend the truth about not having enough money to go away on vacation with the friend's family or that you are gay. When we have good reasons for feeling shame, we should come clean and repair the mistake. When we feel ashamed about who we are and will not be rejected for it, we should go public with the truth or the behavior.

- ***Feeling shame for good reasons:*** How many of you have difficulty apologizing for things that you know you did “wrong”? A critical first step in helping to reduce shame, when it is justified, is by saying that you're sorry, *sincerely*. Don't stop at the apology. Making up for what you did is called a *repair*. Your effort to repair is what lets people know that you are serious and not just giving lip service to the apology. What are some examples of repairs people can make? Accept the consequences for what you did and sincerely try to avoid making the same mistake in the future. After you follow these steps, you then need to let it go. What Jewish holiday does this process remind you of?
- ***Feeling shame without good reasons:*** You may feel ashamed in the following situations but you had not done anything wrong or caused others to be disappointed in you. You turn down a friend's request for help when you have already overextended yourself helping them, or the requested help goes against your self-respect. You are ashamed about the way you look, that your uncle had schizophrenia, that your mom lost her job, that you live on the “wrong” side of town, that your clothes are not all designer labels like some of the popular kids at school are wearing. Can you think of any other examples? If you feel ashamed but have done nothing wrong, and you will not be rejected in the situation, what do you do? You go public and hold your head up high. You do not apologize for things you did *not* do, and you do not hide.
- Explain the opposite actions for guilt.
 - When we are feeling guilty, we normally have urges to overpromise that we won't commit the offense again, or we go to the opposite extreme and disclaim all responsibility. Yet another possibility: We act in harmful ways (e.g., act with rage toward the one we wronged or

punish ourselves excessively) to manage the feelings of guilt. We may hide, lower our head, or beg for forgiveness.

- ***Feeling guilt with good reason:*** When the guilt is justified because your behavior violates your own moral code or has hurt the feelings of significant others, the opposite action is to *face the music*. This means accepting responsibility for your actions and allowing yourself to experience the guilt. You can apologize and ask (but don't beg) for forgiveness and accept the consequences. What should you do next? You can repair the transgression and work diligently to prevent it from happening again. Doing something to repair the hurt helps not only your guilt but also the relationship. Can anyone give an example of a time you felt justified guilt and "faced the music"?
- ***Feeling guilt without good reason:*** If we did not do something that violates our moral code or to hurt another, we may still feel guilty. For example, you may feel guilty about your parents' divorce, guilty that you didn't let your friend cheat off your test and then she failed the test, guilty that you broke up with a partner who treated you terribly, guilty that you made team captain and your buddies did not. Can you think of a time when you felt guilt but it wasn't justified? In cases in which guilt is not justified or is excessive, don't apologize or try to make up for it. If the guilt is without good reason, then change your body posture, stand up tall to look innocent and proud, pick your head up, puff up your chest, maintain eye contact, and keep your voice steady and clear.
- Explain the opposite action for jealousy.
 - When we are jealous, we believe a valued relationship is being threatened, may have to be shared, or may be lost. Jealousy may urge us to make verbal accusations, attempt to control the other person, act suspicious, snoop as to their whereabouts and activities, and push away the threatening person. Does anyone have an example they're comfortable sharing about a time they were jealous and how they behaved?
 - Jealousy is often not justified or not effective. Even if the relationship is in danger, holding on and controlling behavior tends to backfire and drive the person away. The opposite actions for jealousy include letting

go of controlling others' actions, stopping spying or snooping, and relaxing your face, body, and voice tone.

- Explain the opposite action for love.
 - Love can be a highly positive emotion, right? However, there are times when love is not justified, appropriate, and/or effective. If a relationship is clearly over or is clearly unattainable (e.g., your college-age neighbor who is engaged, your math teacher), or the object of your love is abusive to you, it is helpful to reduce loving feelings by taking the opposite action.
 - You can act opposite to that feeling of love by *stopping* the expression of love (when not justified or effective), by avoiding the person and distracting yourself from thoughts of the person, by reminding yourself why love is not justified, and rehearsing the “cons” of loving this person. You can also avoid contact with things that remind you of the person. What are some examples of things you can avoid that would remind you of the person? (For example, stop looking at pictures, “unfriend” on Facebook, remove contact from your phone.)
- Explain that Opposite Action must be done ALL THE WAY.
 - Let's try an example. If you are experiencing social anxiety about going to a party with many new people attending, which of the following examples is using the opposite action skill *all the way*?
 - Go to party, say hello to the host, and then find a chair in the corner of the room and wait for people to introduce themselves to you.
 - Go to party, say hello to the host, find the food and drink, and sit down in the kitchen with the one person you know.
 - Go to party, say hello to the host, and then skillfully (with a smile and a firm handshake) introduce yourself to people who look toward you as you're walking by. If you are not abruptly interrupting their conversation, ask them their names and a follow-up question (e.g., how do they know the party host?).
 - It's ok if you don't do opposite action *all the way* the first time (no judging, remember?), so long as you keep trying and do it a little farther each time.

- Ask participants to observe and describe their typical responses to certain problematic emotions and what would be different in their voice, posture, eye contact, attitude, and behavior if they used opposite action all the way.
- Explain the steps required for Opposite Action.
 - 1. Figure out the emotion you are feeling (use mindfulness, observe, and describe skills).
 - 2. What is the action urge that goes with the emotion?
 - 3. Ask yourself: Does the emotion fit the facts of the situation? *If yes*, ask: Will acting on the urge of the emotion be effective?
 - 4. Ask yourself: Do I want to change the emotion (because it does not fit the facts or acting on the emotion urge would be ineffective)?
 - 5. *If yes*, figure out the opposite action.
 - 6. Do the opposite action--all the way!
 - 7. Continue doing the opposite action until the emotion goes down enough for you to notice.
- Explain: One misunderstanding people have about the Opposite Action skill is that it should work quickly. Although it can work quickly, it often takes an extended period of time of repeated opposite actions before the emotion starts to go down. If you are anxious at a party, it may take several introductions and your tolerating the anxiety for 30 minutes or so before you find yourself engaged in conversation with your new acquaintance and then less anxious. It might take several parties to truly overcome the anxiety. Be patient and keep doing the opposite action.
- Let's Practice! First, teacher models a scenario in which they are feeling a particular unjustified or ineffective emotion (but does not reveal the name of the emotion) and first acts out their action urge, then redoes the scene with Opposite Action. Learners try to guess the emotion, then state what the effects of acting on the action urges were and what the effects of acting opposite were. Then, learners are broken into pairs or small groups (depending on the size of the class) and each pair/group is sent a different link to a Google Doc with a scenario. Pairs/groups will be sent into breakout rooms. The pairs/groups will have 5 minutes to figure out what acting on the emotion's action urges would look like and what doing opposite action would

look like. They can take notes on their Google Doc if they want. When the learners return to the main room, each pair/group will act out their scenario, first acting out the action urges, then redoing the scene with Opposite Action. The rest of the class will try to guess the emotion, then state what the effects of acting on the action urges were and what the effects of acting opposite were. Possible scenarios:

- You come home and your parents are busy and ignoring you, even though you really want to tell them about your day. You feel angry. *[The opposite action could include either gently avoiding the parents or approaching them with empathy and kindness.]*
- Two of your friends are showing off their new phones. They want to know when you will be getting a new phone. It seems like everyone is getting a new phone lately. But your family cannot afford to buy you a new one, so you feel ashamed. *[The opposite action could include holding oneself upright, speaking confidently, not lying or avoiding, and saying something like, “Well, the money just isn’t there right now for that, but I hope maybe one day. That’s a really cool phone, though--got any new apps?”]*
- Your friend takes you to a carnival, but you are feeling depressed. *[The opposite action could include acting energetic, smiling, talking, and saying positive things about the carnival.]*
- You often think you know an answer in biology class, but you feel afraid to raise your hand and speak in front of everyone when the teacher asks a question. *[The opposite action could include raising one’s hand confidently rather than sheepishly, looking at the teacher, and answering in a clear and appropriately loud voice.]*
- You are feeling bad because your friend, who didn’t study, asked you if she could cheat off your test. You said no. She got a D, and you are feeling guilty.
- Your girlfriend has a cute lab partner in science and you are feeling jealous.
- Your 25-year-old Spanish teacher is attractive and friendly to you and you think you are in love.
- New Skill (Radical Acceptance): Explain that there are five optional ways of responding when a serious problem comes into your life.

- When you avoid all contact with things that cause you discomfort, the more they come back to haunt you. Facing and accepting distress head-on reduces suffering. You cannot always deal with painful situations immediately; sometimes you have to tolerate and accept painful feelings that you cannot change, at least for the time being.
- Explain “Why Bother Accepting Reality?”
- Explain what Radical Acceptance is (2 slides).
 - Sometimes there is nothing you can do to change or improve a bad situation. *Radical Acceptance* is the skill of accepting the things you can’t change. Acceptance helps you cope effectively with your emotions and move on rather than suffering with bitterness.
 - Ask: How many of you have something you have to accept that is hard to accept? Take a moment to think of what that might be--perhaps the death of a family member (including a pet), or you or a family member was diagnosed with a mental disorder or a major medical condition, or you have a learning disability, or you just moved to a new home and school. Think about whether you have been able to accept that situation yet. If so, take a moment to reflect about the difference between before and after you accepted. Denial of the facts does not change the facts.
 - Ask for volunteers to briefly share examples. If there are no takers, offer an example to the group. Sample example:
 - “One teen’s parents got divorced, but the father couldn’t accept it. He moved to another house, but said how he felt it was not a ‘home’ without his full family there, even though his kids visited regularly. Because he could not accept the reality of his divorce, he did not fully furnish the house--only the bare minimum--and he hung no pictures on the walls. Finally, he realized his divorce was real. It was actually happening to him. He decided to get real furniture and hang pictures. His house then felt more home-like, and the kids felt much more at home there, too. Did it remove the pain of the divorce? No, but it allowed him to move forward and have a life. It reduced the additional suffering he was causing himself by living in stark surroundings. Nonacceptance gets you stuck and you cannot move forward or be effective.”

- Explain: Acceptance is a choice. *Turning the Mind* refers to making the choice to accept a situation, sometimes over and over again. Acceptance is a process rather than a one-time decision, and we may have to repeatedly turn our minds to go down the acceptance road when we find ourselves not accepting reality.
- Explain: Two factors that can interfere with our acceptance are beliefs and emotions that we hold.
 - Some learners may ask, “Are you implying that I’m supposed to just ‘accept’ the abuse [or the bullying, etc.]?” Teachers can respond by saying: “Acceptance does not mean approval. However, seeing reality for what it is can convert pain you cannot cope with--that is, suffering--into pain you can cope with--that is, expressing your feelings in a moderated way, getting needed social support or professional help, or progressing in your life instead of staying stuck and spinning your wheels.”
 - Reiterate that **acceptance does not mean approval**.
- Explain Willingness vs Willfulness.
 - *Willingness* is doing exactly what a situation calls for. It is being effective. *Willfulness* is the opposite: it is not facing reality, not doing what’s needed or what the situation calls for.
 - Ask learners to describe a situation where they noticed themselves being *willful* and one where they were being *willing*. Ask them to describe the associated thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and outcomes. Consider the emotional tenor of the group. You might want them to do a quiet, solitary writing exercise on willingness versus willfulness, or you might want to share a Google Doc and have learners anonymously write their responses on the doc, or you might want to ask for volunteers to share with the group at large, or you might want to send them into breakout rooms in small groups to share.
- Have learners take turns reading “Ways to Practice Accepting Reality”. Answer any questions.

1:00-1:06 - Introduce Jewish Value/Midah

- Introduce the midah “*Ometz Lev*”, “Courage”.
 - Ask: What does this value have to do with the skills we learned today?

1:06-1:46 - Breakout Rooms: Chevruta conversation and text study

- 5 minutes for general conversation (catching up, bonding, etc.)
- Text study (see accompanying source sheet - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ebd4KhppDFWg4QG4POJQKNBr_Dj_z3G3VDH6bJX29oI/edit?usp=sharing , also in appendix):
 - Genesis 4:1-10
 - Genesis 27:6-44
 - Genesis 32:4-24, 33:1-16
 - Sotah 36b:23, 37a:3-6
 - Genesis 29:15-30
 - Habakkuk 1:1-13
- Teacher rotates through breakout rooms to provide a little guidance during text study, answer any questions, etc.

1:46-2:00 - Regroup

- Learners share and reflect on what they learned in chevruta.
- Ask: How can you use the skills and value we learned today in the coming week?
- Teacher explains the “homework” (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ItMTii4Y9YL3oIDk5KMNT5PXtrh4Eu74Fqa0fIYNFVA/edit?usp=sharing> , also in appendix) which will be posted on Google classroom for them to do before the next session.

N.B.: Lesson plans for sessions one and six relied heavily on the source, *DBT Skills Manual for Adolescents* (see bibliography).

Session Eleven

Suicide Prevention (Part Two) - *B'tzelem Elohim; Pikuach Nefesh; Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*

0:00-0:06 - Rose, Thorn, Bud

- Learners take turns sharing their rose (high point of the week), thorn (low point of the week), and bud (something they are looking forward to). Teacher models first, giving learners time to think, then calls on individual learners to share.

0:06-0:16 - Mindfulness Exercise

- Teacher asks learners to sit comfortably upright, with feet flat on the floor if possible. If it helps them to be mindful, they can close their eyes. Teacher explains that they will be doing a sort of guided meditation, so they should try to focus on the exercise, paying attention to the teacher's words and how they feel (physical sensations, emotions). If their mind wanders, they should notice it without judgment and gently bring their attention back to the exercise.
- Teacher rings a bell three times and then guides learners through the meditation. Teacher asks learners to imagine warm sunlight (or Divine light) filling up their bodies, starting with the toes, then moving to the soles of the feet, then the ankles. The light fills the lower half of their legs...etc. Teacher continues, describing the light filling all the parts of the body up to the tops of their heads. At the end, teacher asks learners to sit for a moment and feel their whole body filled with this warm light.
- After, teachers rings the bell once and asks learners to share how the meditation felt, what thoughts or emotions came up (without judgments) and if they found their minds wandering, and, if so, if they were able to bring their attention back to the exercise. Teacher explains that sometimes we have to turn our attention back again and again, and that's ok.

0:16-0:26 - Review of Previous Week on Suicide Prevention

- Screen-share PowerPoint for "Suicide Prevention (Part Two)" (see accompanying PowerPoint: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qeRVcj4PqAOFjVEJU9NbqOUdLKRppDY5/view?usp=sharing> , also in appendix). Teacher explains that first we're going to review some things from our last session because they are really

important. Mention that the PowerPoint will be shared with them after the class so they don't have to take notes or try to memorize it right now.

- Reiterate that the correct language is “died by suicide” or “ended their life”. “Committed suicide” carries the connotation that they have committed a crime and reinforces the stigma.
- Review the intrapersonal risk factors (see PowerPoint).
- Review the social/situational risk factors (see PowerPoint).
- Review the cultural/environmental risk factors (see PowerPoint).
- Reiterate: DO NOT DISMISS A THREAT AS A CRY FOR ATTENTION.
- Review warning signs (see PowerPoint).

0:26-0:45 - How to Talk to a Friend or Peer About Mental Health and Suicide

- Teach “How to Talk to a Friend or Peer About Mental Health and Suicide”.
 - It can start by simply asking, “Are you ok?”
 - Ask them how they're doing, what's happening in their world these days, and what their concerns are.
 - Explain how to conduct the dialogue:
 - Listen intently and without judgment.
 - Ask open-ended questions, i.e., those that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no.
 - Resist the urge to offer quick fixes or solutions to their challenges, which tends to shut down further dialogue. Don't say, “You should...” or “Why didn't you...”
 - Validate and support their feelings.
 - Follow their cues, and say things like, “Tell me more about that.” “I'd love to understand more about what that's like for you.” “When he said that/did that to you, how did that make you feel?”
 - Ask about their perceptions, as well as other symptoms like sleep problems, mood changes, and feelings of hopelessness, or of feeling trapped or overwhelmed.

- **Don't be afraid to ask** if they ever think about hurting themselves or ending their life.
 - If they are talking about any level of distress, do not hesitate to ask them whether they're feeling changes in their mood or level of stress, or having suicidal thoughts. **Asking them directly about suicide will not increase their risk or plant the idea.**
 - You can say, "It sounds like you've been dealing with a lot lately. Does it ever get so tough that you think about ending your life?"
- If they are experiencing suicidal ideation or any level of distress, ask, "Have you talked to anybody about how you feel?"
- Provide them with the contact info for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255), and Crisis Text Line: text TALK to 741741. **Ask for their promise to call/text.**
- Starting July 16, 2022, Americans can dial **988** for mental health and suicide concerns, just like you would dial 911 if someone was having a heart attack.
 - In 2020, the FCC adopted rules to establish 988 as the new, nationwide, 3-digit phone number for Americans in crisis to connect with suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors.
 - The rules require all phone service providers to direct all 988 calls to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022.
- If you're concerned about the mental health of a friend or peer or think they are at risk of harming themselves or others, tell a trusted adult, like their parent/guardian, a rabbi or cantor, a teacher, a guidance counselor, or a school nurse. **Do not promise to keep it a secret.**
- Stop screen-share.

0:45-1:00 - Let's Practice!

- Suicide Prevention Role Play
 - Learners will be broken into pairs (can be the usual chevruta pairings or can be mixed up), with one learner labeled Teen Alef and the other

labeled Teen Bet. Two links to two separate Google Docs (see accompanying Google Docs: Teen Alef - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dzarzHhLecalnVR0kA7OPg5whhNOo64YnnZBhONJ8CQ/edit?usp=sharing> ; Teen Bet - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ocAVASko0Zegb6qEGQ74NtYX4yeeTKqO0CneHqkwkA/edit?usp=sharing> , also in appendix) will be put in the chat, the first for Teen Alef and the second for Teen Bet, along with a link to the PowerPoint presentation (uploaded to Google Slides) for guidance. Learners will be instructed to click on the appropriate link where they will find their roles with descriptions of what they are feeling/how they are behaving or what they know/what they have observed and the relationship between the two “characters”. There will be two scenarios: one where Teen Alef is (possibly) experiencing suicidal ideation and Teen Bet is feeling concerned, and one with the reverse situation. Learners will be sent into breakout rooms with their partner where they will role-play the conversation they could have based on the information provided in the Google Docs and what they learned from the PowerPoint presentation.

- Teacher will rotate through breakout rooms to observe and provide guidance.

1:00-1:05 - Jewish Values/Midot

- Screen-share PowerPoint presentation again. Teacher reviews *B'tzelem Elohim* and *Pikuach Nefesh*, then explains *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* (Sharing a Burden with One's Friend).
- Ask: What do these values have to do with what we learned about today?

1:05-1:45 - Breakout Rooms: Chevruta conversation and text study

- 5 minutes for general conversation (catching up, bonding, etc.)
- Text study (see accompanying source sheet: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/13k6jjZiunPyky23eXWWfqXhLZbErMNz7sQiqFYm7nh0/edit?usp=sharing> , also in appendix):
 - Rabbi Nachman of Breslov quote
 - Yoma 35b:7-8
 - Berakhot 5b:10-13

- Excerpt from “Shmirat Hanefesh and Tikkun HaGuf: Cultivating Mental Health” by Rabbi Dusty Klass
- Pirkei Avot 1:14
- Martin Buber quotes
- Teacher rotates through breakout rooms to provide a little guidance during text study, answer any questions, etc.

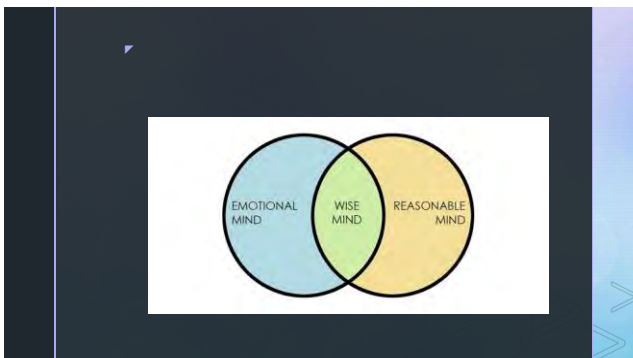
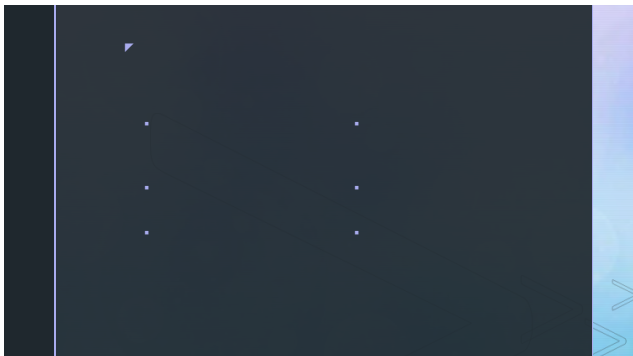
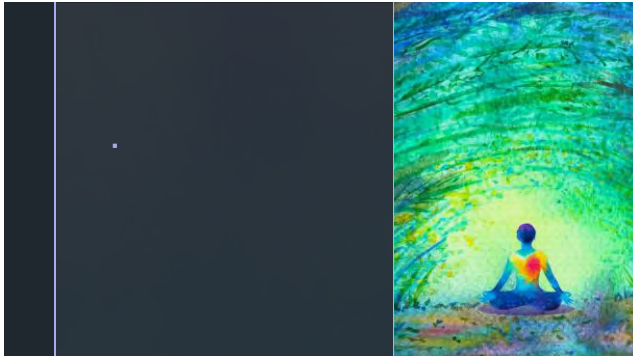
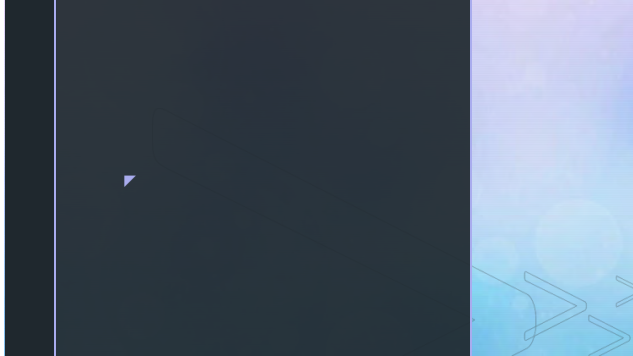
1:45-2:00 - Regroup

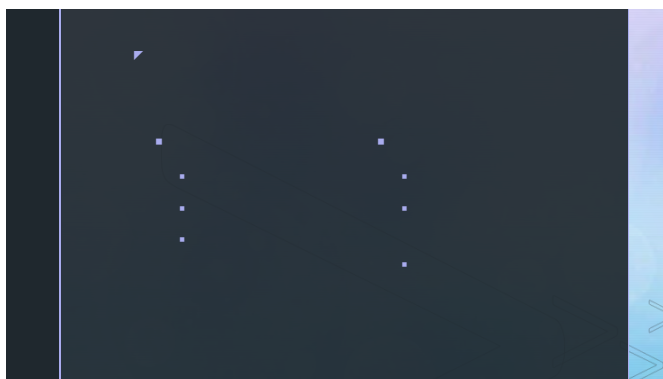
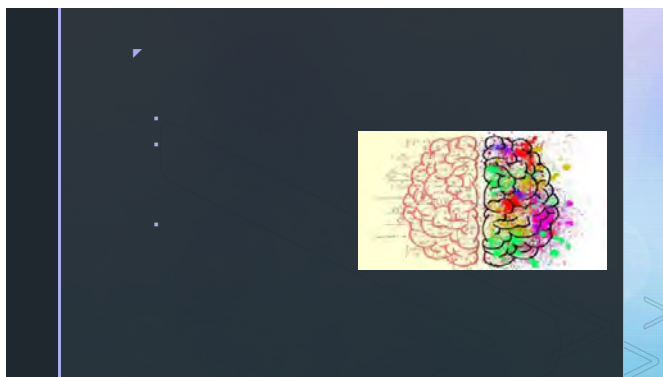
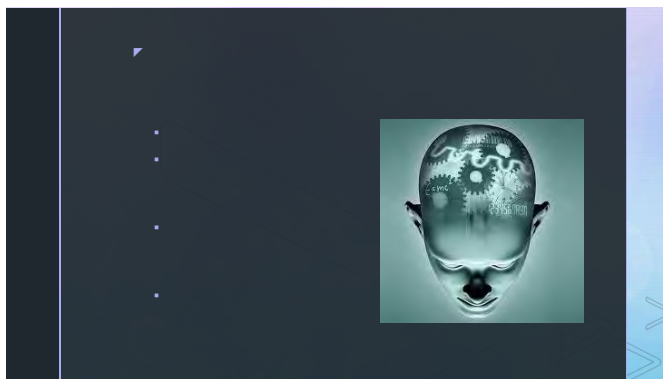
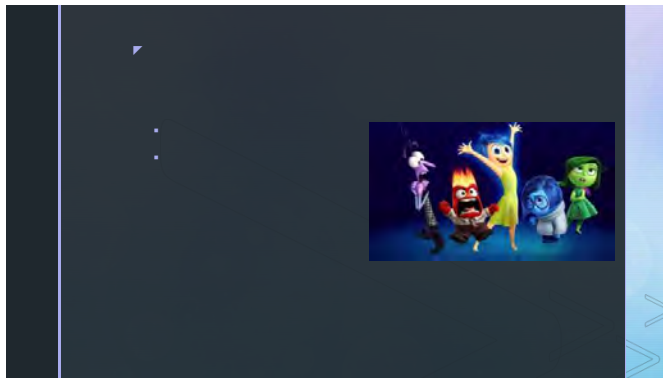
- Learners share and reflect on what they learned in chevruta.
- Review the “True or False” statements from Session 10 (Suicide Prevention - Part One) to see what they have learned; have learners hold up something green (or another color of choice) if they think the statement is true and hold up something red (or another color of choice) if they think the statement is false:
 - Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among young people age 10-24.
 - Being a bully is a risk factor for suicide.
 - Access to lethal means is not a risk factor for suicide.
 - Change in sleep patterns or eating habits is a warning sign.
 - Talking about dying is not a warning sign.
 - If someone appears noticeably happier or at peace, you should take that as a warning sign.
 - If someone is depressed, offer solutions and try to cheer them up.
 - Asking someone directly about suicide will increase their risk or plant the idea.
- Ask if the learners feel confident that they can talk to someone about suicide if they have concerns about them. If some do not, teacher should make a note of who does not and arrange (outside of class) a time to have a conversation with each of them. This is a vital skill and all learners should feel capable of having a conversation about suicide.
- Teacher explains the “homework”
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AgpbL3M4RXJySkTdhvpa3o2->

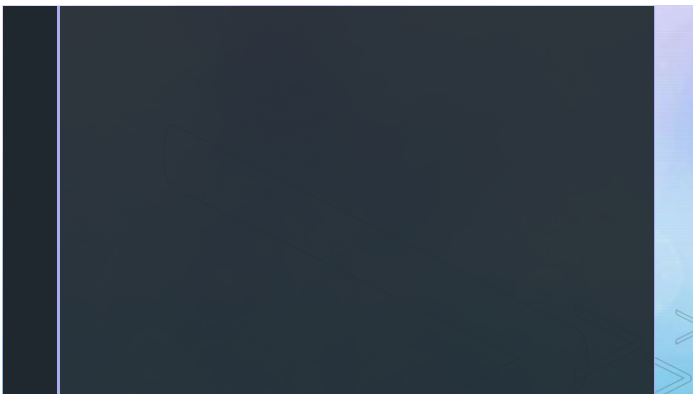
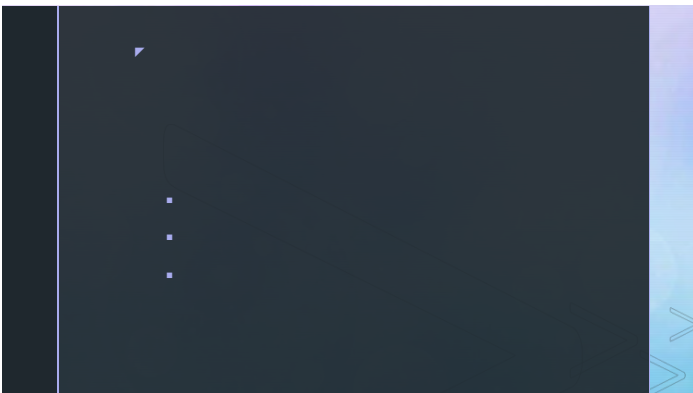
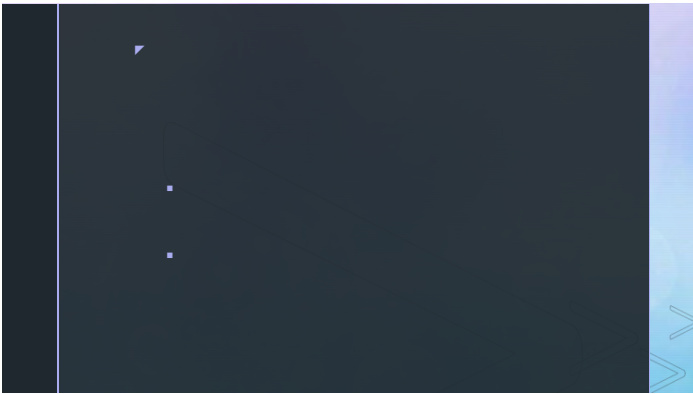
[DO7MDz6Nhorx8r98WSI/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/DO7MDz6Nhorx8r98WSI/edit?usp=sharing) , also in appendix) which will be posted on Google classroom for them to do before the next session.

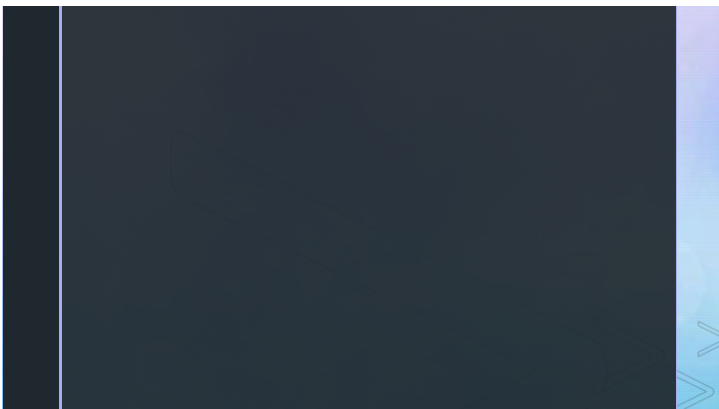
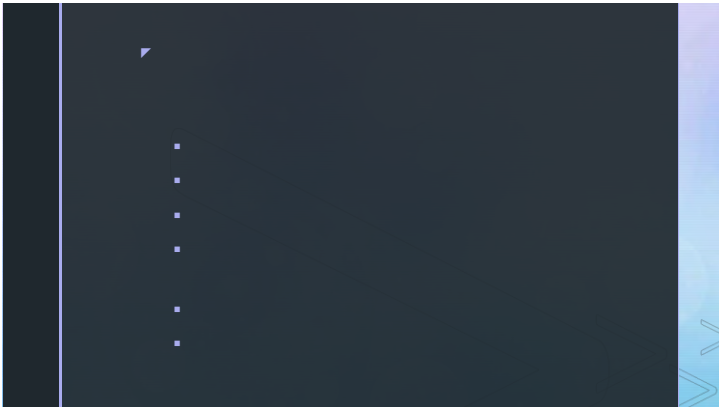
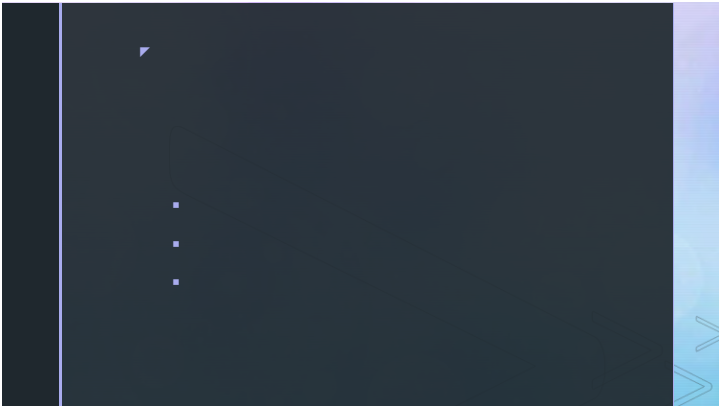
Appendix

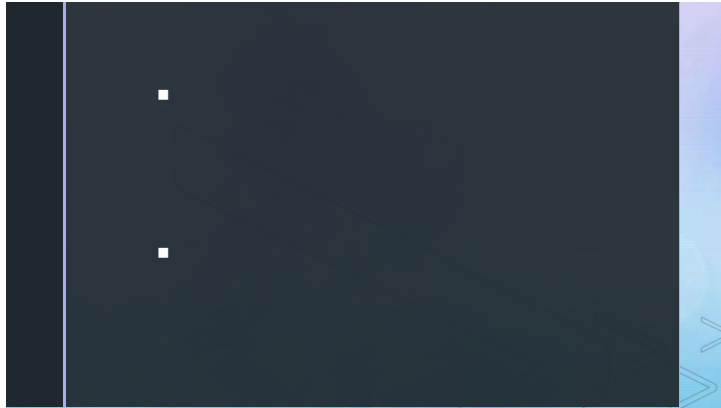
Session One PowerPoint Lesson



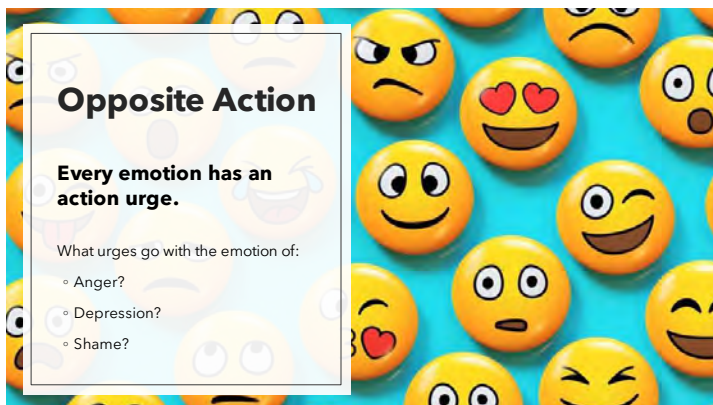








Session Six PowerPoint Lesson



When to use Opposite Action

- The emotion *does not fit the facts* of the actual situation, that is, it is not justified.
- Your emotion is too intense, it has lasted too long, or acting on the emotion *will not be effective* (or is no longer effective) in the situation, even if the emotion is justified.



**A Skill for Emotions
That No Longer Serve You**

What is Opposite Action?

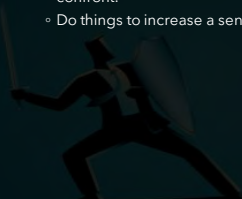
- The skill of opposite action consists of acting opposite to an emotion's action urge.
- THIS IS NOT EASY, and once isn't enough. It takes repeated effort, but it can work.
- It is natural to want to act on the urge, and you may sense that it will relieve the emotion. It does seem to relieve it—but only in the immediate short term. The problem is that this doesn't really work; in fact, it just keeps the emotion around.
- We can change our emotions by acting opposite to how we feel.
- Let's take a look at these ideas with regard to some specific emotions ...

Common Urges Associated with a Sample of Emotions:

- **Fear** → Escaping or avoiding
- **Anger** → Attacking
- **Sadness** → Withdrawing, becoming passive, isolating
- **Shame** → Hiding, avoiding, withdrawing, saving face by attacking others
- **Guilt** → Overpromise that you will not commit the offense again, disclaim all responsibility, lowering head, begging forgiveness
- **Jealousy** → Verbal accusations, attempt to control, acting suspicious
- **Love** → Saying "I love you", making effort to spend time with the person, doing what the other person wants and needs, giving affection

Emotion: **Fear/Anxiety**

- Opposite Action: **APPROACH**
 - Approach events, places, tasks, activities, people you are afraid of, over and over; confront.
 - Do things to increase a sense of control and mastery over fears.



Emotion: **Anger**

- Opposite Action: **GENTLY AVOID**
 - Gently avoid the person you are angry with (rather than attacking).
 - Take a time out and breathe in and out deeply and slowly.
 - Be kind rather than mean or attacking. (Try to have sympathy or empathy for the other person.)



Emotion: **Sadness**

- Opposite Action: **GET ACTIVE**
 - Approach, don't avoid.
 - Build mastery and increase pleasant activities.



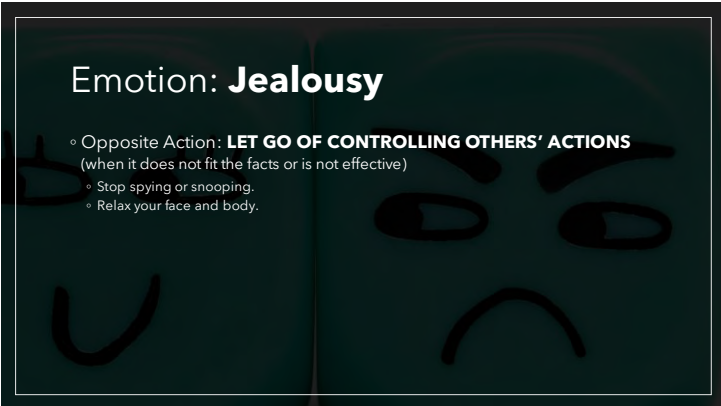
Emotion: **Shame**

- Opposite Action: **FACE THE MUSIC** (when your behavior violates your moral values or something shameful has been revealed about you and the shame fits the facts)
 - Apologize and repair the harm when possible.
 - Try to avoid making same mistake in the future and accept consequences.
 - Forgive yourself and let it go.
- Opposite Action: **GO PUBLIC** (when your behavior does NOT violate your moral values and the shame does NOT fit the facts)
 - You continue to participate fully in social interactions, hold your head high, keep your voice steady, and make eye contact.
 - Go public with your personal characteristics or your behavior (with people who won't reject you).
 - Repeat the behavior that sets off shame over and over (without hiding it from those who won't reject you).

Emotion: **Guilt**

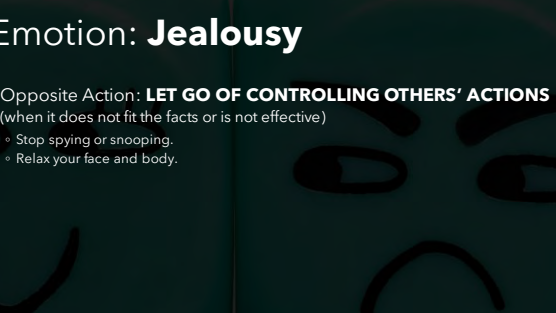
- Opposite Action: **FACE THE MUSIC** (when your behavior violates your moral values, hurts feelings of significant others, and the guilt fits the facts)
 - Experience the guilt.
 - You ask, but don't beg, for forgiveness and accept the consequences.
 - You repair the transgression and work to prevent it from happening again.
- Opposite Action: **DON'T APOLOGIZE OR TRY TO MAKE UP FOR IT** (when your behavior does NOT violate your moral values and the guilt does NOT fit the facts)
 - Change your body posture, look innocent and proud, head up, puff up your chest, maintain eye contact, keep voice steady and clear.

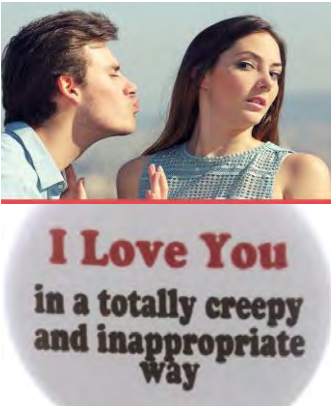




Emotion: **Jealousy**

- Opposite Action: **LET GO OF CONTROLLING OTHERS' ACTIONS**
(when it does not fit the facts or is not effective)
 - Stop spying or snooping.
 - Relax your face and body.

- 
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- Opposite Action: **LET GO OF CONTROLLING OTHERS' ACTIONS**
(when it does not fit the facts or is not effective)
 - Stop spying or snooping.
 - Relax your face and body.



Emotion: **Love**

- Opposite Action: **STOP EXPRESSING LOVE** (when it does not fit the facts or is not effective, e.g., the relationship is truly over, not accessible, or abusive)
 - Avoid the person and distract yourself from thoughts of the person.
 - Remind yourself of why love is not justified and rehearse the “cons” of loving this person.
 - Avoid contact with things that remind you of the person (e.g., pictures)

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The opposite action is done ALL THE WAY

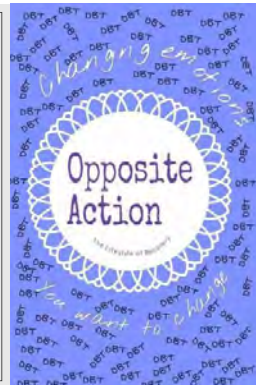
- Opposite behavior
- Opposite words and thinking
- Opposite facial expression, voice tone, and posture

- ## The opposite action is done ALL THE WAY
- Opposite behavior
 - Opposite words and thinking
 - Opposite facial expression, voice tone, and posture

Opposite Action Requires These 7 Steps

1. Figure out the emotion you are feeling.
2. What is the action URGE that goes with the emotion?
3. Ask yourself: Does the emotion fit the facts in the situation? If yes, will acting on the emotion's urge be effective?
4. Ask yourself: Do I want to change the emotion?
5. If yes, figure out the OPPOSITE ACTION.
6. Do the opposite action-ALL THE WAY!
7. Repeat acting in the opposite way until the emotion goes down enough for you to notice.

- # Opposite Action Requires These 7 Steps
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LET'S
PRACTICE!

Five optional ways of responding when a serious problem comes into your life:

1. Figure out how to solve the problem.
2. Change how you feel about the problem.
3. Stay miserable (no skill use).
4. Make things worse (act on your impulsive urges).
5. *Accept it.*

Radical Acceptance

◦ Why Bother Accepting Reality?

- Rejecting reality does not change reality.
- Changing reality requires first accepting reality.
- Rejecting reality turns pain into suffering.
- Refusing to accept reality can keep you stuck in unhappiness, anger, shame, sadness, bitterness, or other painful emotions.



What is **Radical Acceptance**?

- Sometimes there is nothing you can do to change or improve a bad situation.
- *Radical acceptance* is the skill of accepting the things you can't change.
- Acceptance helps you cope effectively with your emotions and move on rather than suffering with bitterness.

"A moment of radical acceptance,
is a moment of genuine freedom."

– Tara Brach

Radical Acceptance

- RADICAL = complete and total accepting in mind, heart, and body.
- ACCEPTANCE = seeing reality for what it is, even if you don't like it.
- ACCEPTANCE can mean to acknowledge, recognize, and endure not give up or give in.
- ACCEPTANCE does NOT mean approval or that you're happy about it.
- It's when you stop fighting reality, stop throwing tantrums about reality, and let go of bitterness. It is the opposite of "Why me?" It is "Things are as they are."
- Life can be worth living, even with painful events in it.



Accepting Reality: Turning the Mind

- ACCEPTANCE is a choice. It is like coming to a fork in the road. You may have to turn your mind toward the "ACCEPTANCE" road and away from the "REJECTING REALITY" road.
- First, notice you are not accepting reality (anger, bitterness, "Why me?").
- Second, make an inner commitment to ACCEPT.
- You may have to turn your mind over and over and over again.

Factors That Interfere with Acceptance

- **Beliefs** get in the way: You believe that if you accept your painful situation, you will become weak and just give up (or give in), approve of reality, or accept a life of pain.
- **Emotions** get in the way: Intense anger at the person or group that caused the painful event; unbearable sadness; guilt about your own behavior; shame regarding something about you; rage about the injustice of the world.

Remember: ACCEPTANCE DOES NOT MEAN APPROVAL!

Willingness



WILLFULNESS is...

- Refusing to tolerate a situation or giving up.
- Trying to change a situation that cannot be changed or refusing to change something that must be changed.
- The opposite of DOING WHAT WORKS

Replace WILLFULNESS with **WILLINGNESS**

WILLINGNESS is...

- Allowing the world to be what it is and participating in it fully.
- Doing just what is needed—no more, no less. It is being effective.
- Listening carefully to your Wise Mind and deciding what to do.

When willfulness doesn't budge, ask: "What is the threat?"



Ways to Practice Accepting Reality

1. Acceptance of reality as it is sometimes requires an act of CHOICE.
2. Breathe **mindfully** to be in the moment and to help develop a more accepting mindset.
3. Accept reality with your face: half -smile.
4. Rehearse in your mind those things that you would do if you really did accept reality *as it is*.
5. Practice **willingness**.
6. Remember to **turn the mind** back to "Accepting Reality" Road.

**OMETZ
LEV**

Courage



Ometz Lev- Courage - אומץ לב

◦ The ability to do something that frightens one; strength in the face of pain or grief.

"All dreams can come true if you have the courage to pursue them" - Walt Disney



Session Eleven PowerPoint Lesson

Suicide Prevention (Part Two)

B'TZELEM ELOHIM – IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

PIKUACH NEFESH – SAVING A LIFE

NOSEI B'OL IM CHAVEIRO – SHARING A BURDEN WITH ONE'S FRIEND

Review

- ▶ “Committed Suicide”
- Vs.
- ▶ “Died by Suicide” or “Ended One’s Life”

Review: Intrapersonal Risk Factors

- | | |
|--|--|
| ▶ Mental disorders | ▶ Disciplinary problems |
| ▶ Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, guilt, worthlessness | ▶ High risk behaviors |
| ▶ Previous suicide attempt | ▶ Issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity |
| ▶ Alcohol and other substance use disorders | |

Review: Social/Situational Risk Factors

- ▶ Recent or serious loss (e.g., death, divorce)
- ▶ Family history of suicide
- ▶ Witnessing family violence
- ▶ Child abuse or neglect
- ▶ Lack of social support
- ▶ Sense of isolation
- ▶ Victim of bullying or being a bully

Review: Cultural/Environmental Risk Factors

- ▶ Access to lethal means (e.g., firearms, pills)
- ▶ Stigma associated with asking for help
- ▶ Cultural and religious beliefs
- ▶ Barriers to accessing services
- ▶ Lack of bilingual service providers
- ▶ Unreliable transportation
- ▶ Financial costs of services



Do not dismiss
a threat as a
cry for
attention!

Review: Warning Signs

- ▶ Talking about dying or disappearing
- ▶ Change in personality
- ▶ Change in behavior
- ▶ Change in sleep patterns
- ▶ Change in eating habits
- ▶ Fear of losing control
- ▶ Isolation from family and friends
- ▶ Mood swings
- ▶ Giving away belongings
- ▶ Talking about feeling hopeless or trapped
- ▶ Talking about being a burden to others or not belonging
- ▶ Writing or drawing about suicide, or acting it out

Review: Warning Signs

- ▶ Often when someone has made the decision to end their life, they may appear noticeably **happier** or **at peace**—be aware of any **drastic** changes in mood

**Let's
Talk
About It**



How to Talk to
a Friend or Peer
About Mental
Health and
Suicide

It can start by simply asking:

▶ “Are you ok? ”

Ask:

- ▶ “How are you doing?”
- ▶ “What’s happening in your world these days?”
- ▶ “What are you concerned about? ”

How?

- ▶ Listen intently and without judgment
- ▶ Ask open-ended questions

How?

- ▶ Resist the urge to offer quick fixes or solutions
 - ▶ Don't say, "You should..." or "Why didn't you..."
- ▶ **Validate and support** their feelings

Follow their cues and say things like:

- ▶ "Tell me more about that. "
- ▶ "I'd love to understand more about what that's like for you."
- ▶ "How did that make you feel? "

Ask about:

- ▶ Their perceptions, as well as other symptoms like sleep problems, mood changes, and feelings of hopelessness, or of feeling trapped or overwhelmed

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK!

ASK!

- ▶ If they are talking about any level of distress, do not hesitate to ask them whether they're feeling changes in their mood or level of stress, or having suicidal thoughts.
- ▶ "It sounds like you've been dealing with a lot lately. Does it ever get so tough that you think about ending your life?"

Asking them directly about suicide will not increase their risk or plant the idea.

If they are experiencing suicidal ideation or any level of distress, ask:

- ▶ "Have you talked to anybody about how you feel?"

Provide them with the contact info for:

- ▶ National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- ▶ Crisis Text Line:
Text TALK to 741741

Ask for their promise to call/text.

Starting July 2022: Call 988

- ▶ Starting **July 16, 2022**, Americans can dial **988** for mental health and suicide concerns, just like you would dial 911 if someone was having a heart attack.

Tell a Trusted Adult!

DO NOT PROMISE TO KEEP IT A SECRET

Let's Practice!



B'tzelem Elohim
In the Image of God
בצלם אלוהים

BEING CREATED BTZELEM ELOHIM—IN GOD'S IMAGE—MEANS ALL OF HUMANITY SHOULD BE AFFORDED DIGNITY AND RESPECT, AND SHOWING THESE VALUES TO THOSE EXPERIENCING MENTAL ILLNESS CAN COUNTER THE SHAME AND STIGMA THAT EXIST. IT ALSO MEANS THAT WE HAVE INHERENT VALUE—OUR SOULS HAVE A DIVINE SPARK—WE ARE SACRED, AND OUR LIVES MATTER.

Pikuach Nefesh
Saving a Life
פיקוח נפש

THIS JEWISH VALUE, WHICH LITERALLY MEANS "GUARDING A SOUL" TEACHES THAT A PERSON MUST DO EVERYTHING IN THEIR POWER TO SAVE THE LIFE OF ANOTHER. PRESERVING A LIFE IS RULED AS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ALMOST EVERY OTHER JEWISH LAW, AND OTHER LAWS ARE OFTEN SUPERSEDED FOR THE SAKE OF PIKUACHNEFESH.

Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro
Sharing a Burden with One's Friend
נושא בעול עם חברו

BEYOND THE IDEA THAT ALL JEWS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ONE ANOTHER (*KOL YISRAEL AREVIM ZEH LA ZEH*), THE RABBIS TEACH THE VALUE OF SUPPORTING ANOTHER PERSON (*PIRKEI AVOT 2:9*). TOGETHER, WE MAY CONFRONT MANY DIFFICULTIES, BUT WE CAN OVERCOME THEM BECAUSE WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER.

Session One Chevruta Texts

Genesis 1

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדּוּמֵנוּ וַיִּרְדּוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבַעֲוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

(26) And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth."

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

(27) And God created man in God's image, in the image of God, God created him; male and female God created them.

Rashi on Genesis 1:26

AFTER OUR LIKENESS — with the power to comprehend and to discern. כְּדִמְתֵּנוּ

Or HaChaim on Genesis 1:26

And [about] its stating, "in our image, in our likeness," it is possible that the intention is to say that there should be a side of mercy and a side of judgment in [man], to implement the ways of judgment and the ways of mercy in what they set up; and understand [it].

Sforno on Genesis 1:27

בצלם אלוקים, when the word אלוקים appears as a description, i.e. in the nature of an adjective, it refers to creatures who are spiritual in their essence, not just that they possess spiritual potential. Such beings are devoid of such physical matter, are totally disembodied. This is what makes them basically infinite. This is the reason why such an adjective, attribute, is applied to G'd as well as to His angels. The term is also used in connection with judges, i.e. describing the predominating intellectual function they must perform if their decisions are to reflect true justice. Whereas it is an undisputed fact that the human intellect operates without direct dependence on any part of the body, that it does not age along with the remainder of the body it inhabits, but, on the contrary, sometimes improves while the body ages and becomes barely able to sustain the soul which inhabits it, and while it is also a fact that exercise of the intellect does not result in fatigue, etc, it is still not called אלוקים, something divine, but only צלם אלוקים, "something which mirrors something divine." Until this intellect has acquired חכמה, i.e. a reverence for G'd and love for Him, its Creator, it is completely imperfect. It follows that it is man's task to perfect his G'd given intelligence by acquiring the knowledge and insights which can be provided only by the study of Torah and by the practice of the laws of the Torah. If man, i.e. religiously atheistic intellectuals, do not use their intellect in the manner G'd meant for them to use it, it actually becomes a negative asset, a hindrance, so that in the end it turns out to be completely vain, as pointed out in [Psalms 49,21](#) אדם ביקר ולא יבין, "if man does not understand the divine gift his intellect represents he is comparable to the beasts which perish." This entire lesson is condensed in the two words בצלם אלוקים.

1. According to Rashi, Or HaChaim, and Sforno, what does it mean to be made in God's image/likeness?

2. Based on those interpretations, what might be our responsibilities as human beings?
3. How do these interpretations of *B'tzelem Elohim* relate to the skills we learned today?
4. What other thoughts do you have about these texts?

Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Przysucha (19th century):

“Every person should have two pockets so he can reach into one or the other, according to his needs. In one pocket, carry a note that says ‘Bishvili Nivrat Ha’Olam - for my sake, the world was created.’ In the other pocket, a note that says, ‘Anochi Afar Va’Efer - I am dust and ashes.’”

1. Why should a person carry both notes? When might you need to read the first note? When might you need to read the second note?
2. How does this relate to the value of *Yesod* (Groundedness)?
3. How does this relate to the skills we learned today, particularly the Three States of Mind?
4. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

Exodus 32:1-6

וַיֵּרָא הָעָם כִּי־בִשָּׁשׁ מֹשֶׁה לָרִדֹת מִן־הָהָר וַיִּקְהֵל הָעָם עַל־אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּמֹה | עֲשֵׂה־לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים
אֲשֶׁר יֵלְכֻנוּ לִפְנֵינוּ כִּי־יָזָה | מֹשֶׁה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלָנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֹא יָדָעֵנוּ מַה־הָיָה לוֹ:

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, the people gathered against Aaron and said to him, “Come, make us a god who shall go before us, for that man Moses, who brought us from the land of Egypt—we do not know what has happened to him.”

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם אַהֲרֹן פָּרוּ | וְנִזְמִי הַזֶּהב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵי גְשֵׁיכֶם בְּנִיכֶם וּבְנִיתֵיכֶם וְהָבִיאוּ אֵלָי:

Aaron said to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.”

וַיִּתְּכּוּ כָל-הָעָם אֶת-נִזְמֵי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל-אַהֲרֹן:

And all the people took off the gold rings that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron.

וַיִּקַּח מִיָּדָם וַיַּצַּר אֹתוֹ בַּחֶרֶט וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ עֵגֶל מִסִּכָּה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלֵנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

This he took from them and cast in a mold, and made it into a molten calf. And they exclaimed, “This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!”

וַיֵּרָא אַהֲרֹן וַיְבִן מִזְבֵּחַ לִפְנָיו וַיִּקְרָא אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר הַיּוֹם לַיהוָה מָחָר:

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron announced: “Tomorrow shall be a festival of Adonai!”

וַיֵּשֶׁב מוֹמָחֳרָת וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת וַיִּגִּשּׁוּ שְׁלָמִים וַיֵּשֶׁב הָעָם לֶאֱכֹל וּשְׂתוֹ וַיִּקְּחוּ לַצֶּחֶק: (פ)

Early next day, the people offered up burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; they sat down to eat and drink, and then rose to dance.

1. Why did the people want to create an idol?
2. In your opinion, what state of mind (Emotional/Reasonable/Wise Mind) were the people in? What state of mind do you think Aaron was in? Why do you think that?
3. If the people were in a different state of mind, how might they have behaved differently?
4. Which skill would you have used in this situation as a member of the people? As Aaron?
5. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

Leviticus Rabbah 10:3

Rabbi Berachiyah said in the name of Rabbi Abbah Bar Kahana expounding on the verse about Aaron. At the time when the Israelites were about to commit the act [make the golden calf] they first came to Chur, and they said to him: "Make us a

god!" Since he did not listen to them, they rose up and slew him. This is why it's later written in the prophets: "Also in your wings we find the blood of the souls of the innocent and the poor etc." This refers to the blood of Chur. . . . " Afterwards, they went to Aaron and said to him: "Make us a god." Aaron had heard about what they did to Chur, and became afraid. It is therefore written: "Aaron was frightened and built an altar before them." Aaron was frightened that he might be the one who was going to be slaughtered. Aaron said, what should I do? They've already killed Chur, and he was a prophet. Now if they kill me, the priest, they will fulfill the word later written in scripture: "Should priest and prophet be slain in the sanctuary of YHWH ([Eicha 2:20](#))." If they kill me, they will all be exiled.

Here is another interpretation (*Davar Acher*): Aaron saw this, and built an altar before it ([Exodus 32:5](#)). What did he see? He saw the situation playing out like this: If they build it, one will bring a pebble, another a larger stone, and they will finish the building of the idol in one day. If I build it, then I can delay and dally, and give time for our teacher Moses to come down the mountain and then destroy this idol worship. And if I build it, I can dedicate it to the name of the Holy one Blessed be God, therefore it is written: "Aaron called and said this shall be a festival for YHWH." It is not written a feast for the calf, but a feast to YHWH.

Another interpretation: "And Aaron saw this, etc." What did he see? He saw the situation playing out as follows: "If they build it the sin will be upon them, but if it will be better if I build it, so that the sin should be upon me and not the people. Rabbi Abba Bar Yodan said in the name of Abbah, we can give a parable that demonstrates this. It's like the son of a king who became filled with pride in his heart and took a sword and rose up to try and cut his father. The son's tutor said to him: Don't trouble yourself, leave it to me and I'll do cut him for you." The king saw the tutor and said to him: "I know what your intention was, it was that you believed it better that the sin should be upon you than upon my son. As you live, you shall not leave my palace, and that which remains over from my table, you shall eat it, and you will receive twenty four perks. So too with Aaron: "You shall not leave my palace" is compared to "He shall not go out of the sanctuary [Leviticus 21:12](#)" And that which remains of the table, you shall eat it" is compared to: "That which is left of the meal-offering shall be Aaron's and his sons ([Leviticus 2:3](#))." The twenty four perks are paralleled to the twenty four gifts of the priesthood assigned to Aaron and his sons...

1. According to this midrash, why did Aaron make the golden calf?

2. In your opinion, what state of mind (Emotional/Reasonable/Wise Mind) was Aaron in when he made the golden calf? Why do you think that?
3. Would you have acted differently? Why/why not? And if so, how?
4. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

Session Two Chevruta Texts

Talmud Yerushalmi Kiddushin 48b, excerpt

“Man will have to give account in the future for every lawful enjoyment offered to him which he has ungratefully refused.”

Deuteronomy 16:13-15

חג הסוכות תעשה לך שבועת ימים באספך מגרונך ומיקרבך:

After the ingathering from your threshing floor and your vat, you shall hold the
Feast of Booths for seven days.

ושמחת בחגך אתה ובנך ובתך ועבדך ואמתך והלוי והגר והיתום והאלמנה אשר בשעריך:

You shall rejoice in your festival, with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in your communities.

שבועת ימים תחג ליהוה אלהיך במקום אשר יבחר יהוה כי יברכך יהוה אלהיך בכל ת ואתך ובכל מעשה ידך והיית אף שמח:

You shall hold a festival for Adonai your God seven days, in the place that Adonai will choose; for Adonai your God will bless all your crops and all your undertakings, and you shall have nothing but joy.

Mishneh Torah, Shofar, Sukkah, and Lulav 8:15 (excerpts)

“The joy which a person derives from doing good deeds and from loving God, who has commanded us to practise them, is a supreme form of divine worship. Anyone who refrains from experiencing this joy deserves punishment, as it is written: “Because you have not served Adonai your God with joy and with a glad heart” (Deuteronomy 28:47).... True greatness and honor are attained only by rejoicing before Adonai, as it is written: “King David was leaping and dancing before Adonai” (II Samuel 6:16).”

(From Wikipedia) There are a number of words in the Hebrew language that denote happiness:

- *Simcha* (Hebrew: שמחה), happiness more generally, or a celebration (e.g. a wedding, bar/bat mitzvah), it is also a name for both males and females
- *Osher* (Hebrew: אושר), a deeper, lasting happiness
- *Orah* (Hebrew: אורה), either "light" or "happiness"
- *Gila* (Hebrew: גילה), an exuberant outburst of joy or the happiness of discovery
- *Rina* (Hebrew: רינה), refreshing happiness
- *Ditza* (Hebrew: דיצה), a sublime joy
- *Sasson* (Hebrew: ששון), a sudden unexpected happiness
- *Tzahala* (Hebrew: צהלה), either "happiness" or "dancing"
- *Chedva* (Hebrew: חדווה), the happiness of togetherness

“Happiness is dependent on self-discipline. We are the biggest obstacles to our own happiness. It is much easier to do battle with society and with others than to fight our own nature.” (Dennis Prager)

Session Three Chevruta Texts

Avot d’Rabbi Natan 6:2 (excerpt)

Another explanation: *Become dirty in the dust of their feet*: This refers to Rabbi Eliezer; *And drink in their words thirstily*: This refers to Rabbi Akiva.

What were the origins of Rabbi Akiva? They say that he was forty years old and had still not learned anything. Once, he was standing at the mouth of a well and he said: Who carved a hole in this stone? They said to him: It is from the water, which constantly [falls] on it, day after day. And they said: Akiva, don't you know this from the verse (Job 14:19), “Water erodes stones”? Rabbi Akiva immediately applied this, all the more so, to himself. He said: If something soft can carve something hard, then all the more so, the words of Torah, which are like steel, can engrave themselves on my heart, which is but flesh and blood. He immediately went to start studying Torah. He went with his son and they sat down by the schoolteachers. He

said to one: Rabbi, teach me Torah! He then took hold of one end of the tablet, and his son took hold of the other end. The teacher wrote down *aleph* and *beit* for him, and he learned them (*aleph* to *tav*, and he learned them; the book of Leviticus, and he learned it). And he went on studying until he learned the whole Torah. Then he went and sat before Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua. My masters, he said, open up the sense of the Mishnah to me. When they told him one law, he went off and sat down to work it out for himself. (This *aleph* – what was it written for? That *beit* – what was it written for?) Why was this thing said? He kept coming back, and kept asking them, until he reduced his teachers to silence. Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said: I will give you a parable to tell you what this was like: Like a stonecutter who was hacking away at the mountains. One time he took his pickaxe in his hand, and went and sat on top of the mountain, and began to chip small stones away from it. Some people came by and asked him: What are you doing? He said to them: I am going to uproot the mountain and throw it into the Jordan! They said to him: You cannot uproot the entire mountain! But he kept hacking away, until he came to a big boulder. So he wedged himself underneath it, pried it loose, and threw it into the Jordan. And he said to it: Your place is not here, but there! This is what Rabbi Akiva did to Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Tarfon. Rabbi Tarfon said to him: Akiva, it is about you that the verse says (Job 28:11), “He stops up the streams so that hidden things may be brought to light.” For Rabbi Akiva has brought to light things which are kept hidden from human beings.

Malbim on Job 5:7

“Man was created to work hard with his own hands. When wealth is inherited without hard work, ultimately it will be lost by the next generation. At the end of the day, the essence of a man’s success depends on his persistence and hard work.”

“Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated failures. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.” (Calvin Coolidge)

Genesis 41:17-36

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “In my dream, I was standing on the bank of the Nile,

when out of the Nile came up seven sturdy and well-formed cows and grazed in the reed grass.

Presently there followed them seven other cows, scrawny, ill-formed, and emaciated—never had I seen their likes for ugliness in all the land of Egypt!

And the seven lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven cows, the sturdy ones; but when they had consumed them, one could not tell that they had consumed them, for they looked just as bad as before. And I awoke.

In my other dream, I saw seven ears of grain, full and healthy, growing on a single stalk;

but right behind them sprouted seven ears, shriveled, thin, and scorched by the east wind.

And the thin ears swallowed the seven healthy ears. I have told my magicians, but none has an explanation for me.”

And Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh’s dreams are one and the same: God has told Pharaoh what He is about to do.

The seven healthy cows are seven years, and the seven healthy ears are seven years; it is the same dream.

The seven lean and ugly cows that followed are seven years, as are also the seven empty ears scorched by the east wind; they are seven years of famine.

It is just as I have told Pharaoh: God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do.

Immediately ahead are seven years of great abundance in all the land of Egypt.

After them will come seven years of famine, and all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten. As the land is ravaged by famine,

no trace of the abundance will be left in the land because of the famine thereafter, for it will be very severe.

As for Pharaoh having had the same dream twice, it means that the matter has been determined by God, and that God will soon carry it out.

“Accordingly, let Pharaoh find a man of discernment and wisdom, and set him over the land of Egypt.

And let Pharaoh take steps to appoint overseers over the land, and organize the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty.

Let all the food of these good years that are coming be gathered, and let the grain be collected under Pharaoh's authority as food to be stored in the cities.

Let that food be a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will come upon the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish in the famine."

"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who'll decide where to go..." (Dr. Seuss, *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*)

Session Four Chevruta Texts

Mishneh Torah, Human Dispositions 4:1

Seeing that the maintenance of the body in a healthy and sound condition is a God-chosen way, for, lo, it is impossible that one should understand or know aught of the divine knowledge concerning the Creator when he is sick, it is necessary for man to distance himself from things which destroy the body, and accustom himself in things which are healthful and life-imparting. These are: never shall man partake food save when hungry, nor drink save when thirsty; he shall not defer elimination even one minute, but the moment he feels the need to evacuate urine or feces he must rise immediately.

Vayikra Rabbah 34:3

Another Thing: 'But if he is impoverished', here it is written, "The merciful man does good to his own soul (Proverbs 11:17)," this [refers to] Hillel the Elder, who, at the time that he was departing from his students, would walk with them. They said to him, "Rabbi, where are you walking to?" He said to them, "To fulfill a commandment!" They said to him, "And what commandment is this?" He said to them, "To bathe in the bathhouse." They said to him: "But is this really a commandment?" He said to them: "Yes. Just like regarding the statues (lit. icons) of kings, that are set up in the theaters and the circuses, the one who is appointed over them bathes them and scrubs them, and they give him sustenance, and furthermore, he attains status with the leaders of the kingdom; I, who was created

in the [Divine] Image and Form, as it is written, "For in the Image of G-d He made Man (Genesis 9:6)," even more so!...

Kli Yakar on Deuteronomy 4:9

Look out for yourself and guard your life exceedingly. "Guard yourself" means look after your physical body. It does not add "exceedingly" as it does after the second part of the verse which refers to guarding one's soul, because one must be even more careful to protect one's soul than one's body.

"The body is a vessel of the soul, through which the soul functions." (Rabbi Aaron Ha Levi, *Sefer HaChinuch*)

Asher Yatzar (Mishkan T'filah)

Praise to You, Adonai,
our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who formed the human body with skill
creating the body's many pathways and openings.
It is well known before Your throne of glory
that if one of them be wrongly opened or closed,
it would be impossible to endure and stand before You.
Blessed are You, Adonai, who heals all flesh, working wondrously.

Elohai N'shamah (Mishkan T'filah)

My God, the soul You have given me is pure.
You created it, You shaped it, You breathed it into me
and You protect it within me.
For as long as my soul is within me,
I offer thanks to You,

Adonai, my God

and God of my ancestors

Source of all creation, Sovereign of all souls.

Praised are You, Adonai,

in whose hand is every living soul and the breath of humankind.

“The body is the soul’s house. Shouldn’t we therefore take care of our house so that it doesn’t fall into ruin?” (Philo)

“In order for the soul to exist in the material world, it must be clothed in a body through which the soul may achieve its purpose. For this reason we must supply the body with its essential needs like food, water, sleep, and exercise, without which the body could not exist and the soul could not fulfill its potential.” (Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman)

Session Five Chevruta Texts

Rashi on Leviticus 19:15

“...judge your kinsman fairly.” Another explanation is: Judge thy fellow man with an inclination in his favour.

Shevuot 30a:12

Alternatively, it is derived from the verse: “**But in righteousness shall you judge your colleague,**” that you **should judge another favorably**, and seek to find justification for his actions, even if when interpreted differently his actions could be judged unfavorably.

I Samuel 16:13-23, 18:5-16, 24:1-17

Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD gripped David from that day on. Samuel then set out for Ramah.

Now the spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD began to terrify him.

Saul's courtiers said to him, "An evil spirit of God is terrifying you.

Let our lord give the order [and] the courtiers in attendance on you will look for someone who is skilled at playing the lyre; whenever the evil spirit of God comes over you, he will play it and you will feel better."

So Saul said to his courtiers, "Find me someone who can play well and bring him to me."

One of the attendants spoke up, "I have observed a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is skilled in music; he is a stalwart fellow and a warrior, sensible in speech, and handsome in appearance, and the LORD is with him."

Whereupon Saul sent messengers to Jesse to say, "Send me your son David, who is with the flock."

Jesse took an ass [laden with] bread, a skin of wine, and a kid, and sent them to Saul by his son David.

So David came to Saul and entered his service; [Saul] took a strong liking to him and made him one of his arms-bearers.

Saul sent word to Jesse, "Let David remain in my service, for I am pleased with him."

Whenever the [evil] spirit of God came upon Saul, David would take the lyre and play it; Saul would find relief and feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.

...

David went out [with the troops], and he was successful in every mission on which Saul sent him, and Saul put him in command of all the soldiers; this pleased all the troops and Saul's courtiers as well.

When the [troops] came home [and] David returned from killing the Philistine, the women of all the towns of Israel came out singing and dancing to greet King Saul with timbrels, shouting, and sistrums.

The women sang as they danced, and they chanted: Saul has slain his thousands; David, his tens of thousands!

Saul was much distressed and greatly vexed about the matter. For he said, “To David they have given tens of thousands, and to me they have given thousands. All that he lacks is the kingship!”

From that day on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

The next day an evil spirit of God gripped Saul and he began to rave in the house, while David was playing [the lyre], as he did daily. Saul had a spear in his hand, and Saul threw the spear, thinking to pin David to the wall. But David eluded him twice.

Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him and had turned away from Saul.

So Saul removed him from his presence and appointed him chief of a thousand, to march at the head of the troops.

David was successful in all his undertakings, for the LORD was with him; and when Saul saw that he was successful, he dreaded him.

All Israel and Judah loved David, for he marched at their head.

...

David went from there and stayed in the wildernesses of En-gedi.

When Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told that David was in the wilderness of En-gedi.

So Saul took three thousand picked men from all Israel and went in search of David and his men in the direction of the rocks of the wild goats;

and he came to the sheepfolds along the way. There was a cave there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the back of the cave.

David’s men said to him, “This is the day of which the LORD said to you, ‘I will deliver your enemy into your hands; you can do with him as you please.’” David went and stealthily cut off the corner of Saul’s cloak.

But afterward David reproached himself for cutting off the corner of Saul’s cloak.

He said to his men, “The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my lord—the LORD’s anointed—that I should raise my hand against him; for he is the LORD’s anointed.”

David rebuked his men and did not permit them to attack Saul. Saul left the cave and started on his way.

Then David also went out of the cave and called after Saul, "My lord king!" Saul looked around and David bowed low in homage, with his face to the ground.

And David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the people who say, 'David is out to do you harm?'"

You can see for yourself now that the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave today. And though I was urged to kill you, I showed you pity; for I said, 'I will not raise a hand against my lord, since he is the LORD's anointed.'

Please, sir, take a close look at the corner of your cloak in my hand; for when I cut off the corner of your cloak, I did not kill you. You must see plainly that I have done nothing evil or rebellious, and I have never wronged you. Yet you are bent on taking my life.

May the LORD judge between you and me! And may He take vengeance upon you for me, but my hand will never touch you.

As the ancient proverb has it: 'Wicked deeds come from wicked men!' My hand will never touch you.

Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A single flea?

May the LORD be arbiter and may He judge between you and me! May He take note and uphold my cause, and vindicate me against you."

When David finished saying these things to Saul, Saul said, "Is that your voice, my son David?" And Saul broke down and wept.

I Kings 3:16-22

Later two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him.

The first woman said, "Please, my lord! This woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house.

On the third day after I was delivered, this woman also gave birth to a child. We were alone; there was no one else with us in the house, just the two of us in the house.

During the night this woman's child died, because she lay on it.

She arose in the night and took my son from my side while your maidservant was asleep, and laid him in her bosom; and she laid her dead son in my bosom.

When I arose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, it was not the son I had borne."

The other woman spoke up, "No, the live one is my son, and the dead one is yours!" But the first insisted, "No, the dead boy is yours; mine is the live one!" And they went on arguing before the king.

I Kings 3:23-28

The king said, "One says, 'This is my son, the live one, and the dead one is yours'; and the other says, 'No, the dead boy is yours, mine is the live one.'

So the king gave the order, "Fetch me a sword." A sword was brought before the king,

and the king said, "Cut the live child in two, and give half to one and half to the other."

But the woman whose son was the live one pleaded with the king, for she was overcome with compassion for her son. "Please, my lord," she cried, "give her the live child; only don't kill it!" The other insisted, "It shall be neither yours nor mine; cut it in two!"

Then the king spoke up. "Give the live child to her," he said, "and do not put it to death; she is its mother."

When all Israel heard the decision that the king had rendered, they stood in awe of the king; for they saw that he possessed divine wisdom to execute justice.

Session Six Chevruta Texts

Genesis 4

(1) Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gained a male child with the help of the LORD."

(2) She then bore his brother Abel. Abel became a keeper of sheep, and Cain became a tiller of the soil.

(3)In the course of time, Cain brought an offering to the LORD from the fruit of the soil;

(4)and Abel, for his part, brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock. The LORD paid heed to Abel and his offering,

(5)but to Cain and his offering He paid no heed. Cain was much distressed and his face fell.

(6)And the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you distressed, And why is your face fallen?

(7)Surely, if you do right, There is uplift. But if you do not do right Sin crouches at the door; Its urge is toward you, Yet you can be its master.”

(8)Cain said to his brother Abel ... and when they were in the field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him.

(9)The LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” And he said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

(10)Then He said, “What have you done? Hark, your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground!”

1. How did Cain feel when his offering was not accepted? How would you feel?
2. What is God’s advice to Cain in verse 7?
3. Why doesn’t Cain listen to God’s advice?
4. How does this story relate to the skills and the value we learned today?
5. How would you have reacted if you were Cain?
6. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

Genesis 27

(6)Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “I overheard your father speaking to your brother Esau, saying,

(7)‘Bring me some game and prepare a dish for me to eat, that I may bless you, with the LORD’s approval, before I die.’

(8)Now, my son, listen carefully as I instruct you.

(9)Go to the flock and fetch me two choice kids, and I will make of them a dish for your father, such as he likes.

(10)Then take it to your father to eat, in order that he may bless you before he dies.”

(11)Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, “But my brother Esau is a hairy man and I am smooth-skinned.

(12)If my father touches me, I shall appear to him as a trickster and bring upon myself a curse, not a blessing.”

(13)But his mother said to him, “Your curse, my son, be upon me! Just do as I say and go fetch them for me.”

(14)He got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared a dish such as his father liked.

(15)Rebekah then took the best clothes of her older son Esau, which were there in the house, and had her younger son Jacob put them on;

(16)and she covered his hands and the hairless part of his neck with the skins of the kids.

(17)Then she put in the hands of her son Jacob the dish and the bread that she had prepared.

(18)He went to his father and said, “Father.” And he said, “Yes, which of my sons are you?”

(19)Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau, your first-born; I have done as you told me. Pray sit up and eat of my game, that you may give me your innermost blessing.”

(20)Isaac said to his son, “How did you succeed so quickly, my son?” And he said, “Because the LORD your God granted me good fortune.”

(21)Isaac said to Jacob, “Come closer that I may feel you, my son—whether you are really my son Esau or not.”

(22)So Jacob drew close to his father Isaac, who felt him and wondered. “The voice is the voice of Jacob, yet the hands are the hands of Esau.”

(23)He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; and so he blessed him.

(24)He asked, “Are you really my son Esau?” And when he said, “I am,”

(25)he said, “Serve me and let me eat of my son’s game that I may give you my innermost blessing.” So he served him and he ate, and he brought him wine and he drank.

(26)Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come close and kiss me, my son”;

(27)and he went up and kissed him. And he smelled his clothes and he blessed him, saying, “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of the fields that the LORD has blessed.

(28)“May God give you Of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth, Abundance of new grain and wine.

(29)Let peoples serve you, And nations bow to you; Be master over your brothers, And let your mother’s sons bow to you. Cursed be they who curse you, Blessed they who bless you.”

(30)No sooner had Jacob left the presence of his father Isaac—after Isaac had finished blessing Jacob—than his brother Esau came back from his hunt.

(31)He too prepared a dish and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, “Let my father sit up and eat of his son’s game, so that you may give me your innermost blessing.”

(32)His father Isaac said to him, “Who are you?” And he said, “I am your son, Esau, your first-born!”

(33)Isaac was seized with very violent trembling. “Who was it then,” he demanded, “that hunted game and brought it to me? Moreover, I ate of it before you came, and I blessed him; now he must remain blessed!”

(34)When Esau heard his father’s words, he burst into wild and bitter sobbing, and said to his father, “Bless me too, Father!”

(35)But he answered, “Your brother came with guile and took away your blessing.”

(36)[Esau] said, “Was he, then, named Jacob that he might supplant me these two times? First he took away my birthright and now he has taken away my blessing!” And he added, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?”

(37)Isaac answered, saying to Esau, “But I have made him master over you: I have given him all his brothers for servants, and sustained him with grain and wine. What, then, can I still do for you, my son?”

(38)And Esau said to his father, “Have you but one blessing, Father? Bless me too, Father!” And Esau wept aloud.

(39)And his father Isaac answered, saying to him, “See, your abode shall enjoy the fat of the earth And the dew of heaven above.

(40)Yet by your sword you shall live, And you shall serve your brother; But when you grow restive, You shall break his yoke from your neck.”

(41)Now Esau harbored a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing which his father had given him, and Esau said to himself, “Let but the mourning period of my father come, and I will kill my brother Jacob.”

(42)When the words of her older son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, “Your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you.

(43)Now, my son, listen to me. Flee at once to Haran, to my brother Laban.

(44)Stay with him a while, until your brother’s fury subsides—”

1. What are some of the emotions Jacob was probably feeling by the end of the text? (Note: He does listen to Rebekah and flees to Haran.)
2. How would you feel if you were Esau? Why? How would you feel if you were Jacob? Why?
3. Would you have acted differently if you were Jacob? If you were Esau?
4. How does this text relate to the skills and value we learned today?
5. How could both Jacob and Esau be more skillful if the text had ended differently?
6. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

(4) Jacob sent messengers ahead to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom,

(5) and instructed them as follows, "Thus shall you say, 'To my lord Esau, thus says your servant Jacob: I stayed with Laban and remained until now;

(6) I have acquired cattle, asses, sheep, and male and female slaves; and I send this message to my lord in the hope of gaining your favor.'"

(7) The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau; he himself is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him."

(8) Jacob was greatly frightened; in his anxiety, he divided the people with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps,

(9) thinking, "If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, the other camp may yet escape."

(10) Then Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Return to your native land and I will deal bountifully with you'!

(11) I am unworthy of all the kindness that You have so steadfastly shown Your servant: with my staff alone I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.

(12) Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; else, I fear, he may come and strike me down, mothers and children alike.

(13) Yet You have said, 'I will deal bountifully with you and make your offspring as the sands of the sea, which are too numerous to count.'"

(14) After spending the night there, he selected from what was at hand these presents for his brother Esau:

(15) 200 she-goats and 20 he-goats; 200 ewes and 20 rams;

(16) 30 milch camels with their colts; 40 cows and 10 bulls; 20 she-asses and 10 he-asses.

(17) These he put in the charge of his servants, drove by drove, and he told his servants, "Go on ahead, and keep a distance between droves."

(18) He instructed the one in front as follows, "When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, 'Whose man are you? Where are you going? And whose [animals] are these ahead of you?'

(19)you shall answer, ‘Your servant Jacob’s; they are a gift sent to my lord Esau; and [Jacob] himself is right behind us.’”

(20)He gave similar instructions to the second one, and the third, and all the others who followed the droves, namely, “Thus and so shall you say to Esau when you reach him.

(21)And you shall add, ‘And your servant Jacob himself is right behind us.’” For he reasoned, “If I propitiate him with presents in advance, and then face him, perhaps he will show me favor.”

(22)And so the gift went on ahead, while he remained in camp that night.

(23)That same night he arose, and taking his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children, he crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

(24)After taking them across the stream, he sent across all his possessions.

...

(1)Looking up, Jacob saw Esau coming, accompanied by four hundred men. He divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maids,

(2)putting the maids and their children first, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last.

(3)He himself went on ahead and bowed low to the ground seven times until he was near his brother.

(4)Esau ran to greet him. He embraced him and, falling on his neck, he kissed him; and they wept.

(5)Looking about, he saw the women and the children. “Who,” he asked, “are these with you?” He answered, “The children with whom God has favored your servant.”

(6)Then the maids, with their children, came forward and bowed low;

(7)next Leah, with her children, came forward and bowed low; and last, Joseph and Rachel came forward and bowed low;

(8)And he asked, “What do you mean by all this company which I have met?” He answered, “To gain my lord’s favor.”

(9)Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; let what you have remain yours.”

(10)But Jacob said, “No, I pray you; if you would do me this favor, accept from me this gift; for to see your face is like seeing the face of God, and you have received me favorably.

(11)Please accept my present which has been brought to you, for God has favored me and I have plenty.” And when he urged him, he accepted.

(12)And [Esau] said, “Let us start on our journey, and I will proceed at your pace.”

(13)But he said to him, “My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds, which are nursing, are a care to me; if they are driven hard a single day, all the flocks will die.

(14)Let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I travel slowly, at the pace of the cattle before me and at the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.”

(15)Then Esau said, “Let me assign to you some of the men who are with me.” But he said, “Oh no, my lord is too kind to me!”

(16)So Esau started back that day on his way to Seir.

1. (Note: This text takes place many years after the previous text.) What are some of the emotions Jacob and Esau were probably feeling leading up to their meeting?
2. Why do you think Jacob and Esau decided to act the way they did in this text?
3. How does this text relate to the skills and value we learned today?
4. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

Sotah 36b:23

§ What was the incident where Judah sanctified God’s name in public? As it is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Meir would say: When the Jewish people stood at the Red Sea, the tribes were arguing with one another. This one was saying: I am going into the sea first, and that one was saying: I am going into the sea first.

Sotah 37a:3-6

Rabbi Yehuda said to Rabbi Meir: That is not how the incident took place. Rather, this tribe said: I am not going into the sea first, and that tribe said: I am not going into the sea first. Then, in jumped the prince of Judah, Nahshon ben Amminadab, and descended into the sea first, accompanied by his entire tribe, as it is stated: “Ephraim surrounds Me with lies and the house of Israel with deceit, and Judah is yet wayward toward God [*rad im El*]” (Hosea 12:1), which is interpreted homiletically as: And Judah descended [*rad*] with God [*im El*].

And in this regard, the tradition, i.e., the Writings, explicates Nahshon’s prayer at that moment: “Save me, God; for the waters are come in even unto the soul. I am sunk in deep mire, where there is no standing...let not the water flood overwhelm me, neither let the deep swallow me up” (Psalms 69:2–3, 16).

At that time, Moses was prolonging his prayer. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: My beloved ones are drowning in the sea and you prolong your prayer to me? Moses said before Him: Master of the Universe, but what can I do? God said to him: “Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward. And you, lift up your rod and stretch out your hand” (Exodus 14:15–16).

For this reason, because Nahshon and the tribe of Judah went into the sea first, the tribe of Judah merited to govern Israel, as it is stated: “Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion. The sea saw it and fled” (Psalms 114:2–3). The *baraita* interprets the verses in this manner: What is the reason that Judah became His sanctuary and Israel came under His dominion? It is because “the sea saw it and fled.”

1. (Note: This story takes place as the Israelites are fleeing slavery in Egypt and the Egyptian army is pursuing them.) How do you think the Israelites were feeling at the edge of the sea?
2. Why did Nahshon go into the sea? What would you have done?
3. Why did God reward the tribe of Judah?
4. How do these texts relate to the skills and value we learned today?
5. What other thoughts do you have about these texts?

Genesis 29

(15)Laban said to Jacob, “Just because you are a kinsman, should you serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?”

(16)Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older one was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

(17)Leah had tender eyes; Rachel was shapely and beautiful.

(18)Jacob loved Rachel; so he answered, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.”

(19)Laban said, “Better that I give her to you than that I should give her to an outsider. Stay with me.”

(20)So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.

(21)Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife, for my time is fulfilled, that I may cohabit with her.”

(22)And Laban gathered all the people of the place and made a feast.

(23)When evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to him; and he cohabited with her.—

(24)Laban had given his maidservant Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her maid.—

(25)When morning came, there was Leah! So he said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? I was in your service for Rachel! Why did you deceive me?”

(26)Laban said, “It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the older.

(27)Wait until the bridal week of this one is over and we will give you that one too, provided you serve me another seven years.”

(28)Jacob did so; he waited out the bridal week of the one, and then he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife.—

(29)Laban had given his maidservant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid.—

(30)And Jacob cohabited with Rachel also; indeed, he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served him another seven years.

1. Why did Laban trick Jacob into marrying Leah?
2. How do you think Jacob felt after being tricked? How do you think Leah felt? How do you think Rachel felt?
3. Why did Jacob work another seven years for Laban after he had already served him for the first seven years they had agreed upon? Would you have done the same if you were Jacob?
4. How does this text relate to the skills and value we learned about today?
5. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

Habakkuk 1

- (1)The pronouncement made by the prophet Habakkuk.
- (2)How long, O LORD, shall I cry out And You not listen, Shall I shout to You, “Violence!” And You not save?
- (3)Why do You make me see iniquity [Why] do You look upon wrong?— Raiding and violence are before me, Strife continues and contention goes on.
- (4)That is why decision fails And justice never emerges; For the villain hedges in the just man— Therefore judgment emerges deformed.
- (5)“Look among the nations, Observe well and be utterly astounded; For a work is being wrought in your days Which you would not believe if it were told.
- (6)For lo, I am raising up the Chaldeans, That fierce, impetuous nation, Who cross the earth’s wide spaces To seize homes not their own.
- (7)They are terrible, dreadful; They make their own laws and rules.
- (8)Their horses are swifter than leopards, Fleeter than wolves of the steppe. Their steeds gallop—their steeds Come flying from afar. Like vultures rushing toward food,
- (9)They all come, bent on rapine. The thrust of their van is forward, And they amass captives like sand.
- (10)Kings they hold in derision, And princes are a joke to them; They laugh at every fortress, They pile up earth and capture it.

(11)Then they pass on like the wind, They transgress and incur guilt, For they ascribe their might to their god.”

(12)You, O LORD, are from everlasting; My holy God, You never die. O LORD, You have made them a subject of contention; O Rock, You have made them a cause for complaint.

(13)You whose eyes are too pure to look upon evil, Who cannot countenance wrongdoing, Why do You countenance treachery, And stand by idle While the one in the wrong devours The one in the right?

1. (Note: Habakkuk was a prophet.) Why is Habakkuk complaining to God?
2. What do you think life was like for a prophet?
3. Have you ever complained to or criticized God? (There’s nothing wrong with doing that!)
4. How does this text relate to the skills and value we learned today?
5. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

Session Seven Chevruta Texts

“In everything you do you encounter sparks full of life and light, aspiring to rise toward the heights. You help them and they help you.” (Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook)

Deuteronomy 15:10-11

Give to him readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return the LORD your God will bless you in all your efforts and in all your undertakings.

For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land, which is why I command you: open your hand to the poor and needy kinsman in your land.

“Instead of being broken by pain, you must demonstrate your complete trust in G-d by continuing your life with an intense commitment to goodness, thereby challenging G-d to live up to His promises of being righteous and fair. ...Freeing yourself from pain can only come about through movement — moving away and

distracting yourself from the painful situation, moving away from the cause that produced such painful symptoms. This movement may be as simple as finding a new friend, reading a new book, getting involved in a project or taking a class — anything to alter your solitary, limited perspective on yourself and the world.” (From “Pain” by Simon Jacobson, chabad.org)

“...the good deeds performed by those in mourning can certainly be a source of comfort to the bereaved, filling the void left by death with positive action....

This was an important and consistent theme throughout the Rebbe’s teachings: Intensifying positive activities after a loss helps foster a heightened sense of purpose and can be an effective means of achieving comfort.

In 1956, after a vicious terrorist attack at a school in the Israeli village of Kfar Chabad had claimed six lives, the local inhabitants were completely devastated.

In the words of a newspaper article that appeared at the time, “Despair and dejection pervaded the village and began to eat away at its foundations. Some officials in town wanted to close the school. Others saw what happened as a sign that their dream of a peaceful life in the Holy Land was premature. Perhaps we should disband, seek refuge in safer havens? The village was slowly dying.”

The Rebbe’s reaction? While Judaism does not provide explanations for tragedy, it does have a response. Thus, the Rebbe’s message to the stricken village was: ‘I strongly hope that, with G-d's help..., you will overcome all hindrance, you will strengthen private and public construction, you will expand all the institutions in quantity and quality, and you will intensify Torah study—our protection—and mitzvah fulfillment with joy...’

The doubts the residents of Kfar Chabad had begun to harbor regarding their communal project of establishing a village were being exponentially exacerbated by their preoccupation with grave thoughts and pessimistic conversations. Only by immersing themselves in positive activities to further growth would they begin to see their mission in a better light, and their faith in its future would blossom again.

By choosing to intensify forward movement in the face of loss—especially in the face of terrorism and acts of hatred—we quietly claim a victory for peace and hope over violence and fear. In effect, our actions become living proof that evil does not prevail, and that ultimately life triumphs over death.” (“A Positive Approach to Loss”, Chapter 27 of *Positivity Bias* by Mendel Kalmenson, quoted from chabad.org)

Yoma 75a:2

The Gemara explains another verse in Proverbs: **“If there is care in a man’s heart, let him quash it [yashhena]”** (Proverbs 12:25). **Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi** dispute the verse’s meaning. **One said: He should forcefully push it [yashena] out of his mind.** One who worries should banish his concerns from his thoughts. **And one said:** It means **he should tell [yesihena] others his concerns,** which will lower his anxiety.

Bava Batra 10a:12

It is taught in a *baraita* that **Rabbi Yehuda** says: Great is charity in that it advances the redemption, as it is stated: **“So said the Lord, uphold justice and do charity, for My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed”** (Isaiah 56:1). **He would say: Ten strong entities were created in the world,** one stronger than the other. **A mountain is strong,** but **iron,** which is stronger, **cleaves it. Iron is strong,** but **fire melts it. Fire is strong,** but **water extinguishes it. Water is strong,** but **clouds bear it. Clouds are strong,** but **wind disperses them. Wind is strong,** but the human **body withstands it. The human body is strong,** but **fear breaks it. Fear is strong,** but **wine dispels it. Wine is strong,** but **sleep drives it off. And death is stronger than them all,** but **charity saves a person from death,** as it is written: **“And charity delivers from death”** (Proverbs 10:2, 11:4).

Session Eight Chevruta Texts

Eruvin 65a:10

Rav Hiyya bar Ashi said that **Rav** said: **Anyone whose mind is unsettled should not pray,** as it is stated: **When distressed, one should not issue decisions.** The Gemara relates that **Rabbi Hanina,** on a day that he was angry, would **not pray,** as he said that it is written: **When distressed, one should not issue decisions.** The Gemara similarly relates that **Mar Ukva,** on a day of a **south wind,** would **not venture out to the court,** for this hot and harsh wind would disturb his usual clarity of mind.

“Even when [a person] sleeps and seeks repose, to calm his mind and rest his body, so as not to fall sick and be incapacitated from serving God, his sleep is service of God.” (Maimonides)

Isaiah 43:2, 4

When you pass through water, I will be with you; Through streams, They shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire, You shall not be scorched; Through flame, It shall not burn you.

Because you are precious to Me, And honored, and I love you, I give men in exchange for you And peoples in your stead.

Micah 7:8

Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy! Though I have fallen, I rise again; Though I sit in darkness, the LORD is my light.

I Kings 8:23-30

And [Solomon] said, “O LORD God of Israel, in the heavens above and on the earth below there is no god like You, who keep Your gracious covenant with Your servants when they walk before You in wholehearted devotion;

You who have kept the promises You made to Your servant, my father David, fulfilling with deeds the promise You made—as is now the case.

And now, O LORD God of Israel, keep the further promise that You made to Your servant, my father David: ‘Your line on the throne of Israel shall never end, if only your descendants will look to their way and walk before Me as you have walked before Me.’

Now, therefore, O God of Israel, let the promise that You made to Your servant my father David be fulfilled.

“But will God really dwell on earth? Even the heavens to their uttermost reaches cannot contain You, how much less this House that I have built!

Yet turn, O LORD my God, to the prayer and supplication of Your servant, and hear the cry and prayer which Your servant offers before You this day.

May Your eyes be open day and night toward this House, toward the place of which You have said, ‘My name shall abide there’; may You heed the prayers which Your servant will offer toward this place.

And when You hear the supplications which Your servant and Your people Israel offer toward this place, give heed in Your heavenly abode—give heed and pardon.

“Although we don’t know if (or how) our prayers affect God, we know prayer changes us. Prayer sparks a moral revolution in our soul.” (Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz)

“Our prayer can be a wordless cry from the depths of the heart.” (Yaffa Ganz)

Noting that the terrorist organization Hamas claimed responsibility for the killing of three Yeshiva students in 2015, [Rabbi Ari Enkin, the rabbinical director of United with Israel] wrote, “Hamas is an organization that spews darkness. Let us respond with light. Lots of light. Light that is contagious and addictive...Fill every day with meaning and significance. We must make a difference in the world. Do an act of kindness. Help another person. Make a donation to a cause that was close to the hearts of the victims.”

“Let me suggest that the bad things that happen to us in our lives do not have a meaning when they happen to us. They do not happen for any good reason which would cause us to accept them willingly. But we can give them a meaning. We can redeem these tragedies from senselessness by imposing meaning on them...The painful things that happen to us are not punishments for our misbehavior, nor are they in any way part of some grand design on God’s part. Because the tragedy is not God’s will, we need not feel hurt or betrayed by God when tragedy strikes. We can turn to Him for help in overcoming it, precisely because we can tell ourselves that God is as outraged by it as we are.” (Rabbi Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*)

Session Nine Chevruta Texts

Sotah 3a:4

“Reish Lakish says: A man commits a transgression only if a spirit of folly or madness [shetut] enters him...”

The Rabbis of the Talmud used the term “shoteh” to refer to someone who was mentally compromised. The term is derived from another word meaning “wanderer” or “vagrant.” (Jewish Education Project)

Mishnah Megillah 2:4

“All are qualified to read the Megillah except a deaf person, an idiot (mentally unstable person) and a minor.”

Chagigah 3b:12

“Our Rabbis have taught, What is a ‘shoteh’ [translated until now as a mentally ill person]? He who goes out alone at night, and he who sleeps in a cemetery, and he who tears his clothes. It is stated: R. Hunna said, So long as they all take place at one time. R. Yochanan said, Even [only] one of them.”

Mishnah Chagigah 1:1

“All are obligated in seeing [the Temple Mount], except for a deafmute, a shoteh, or a minor; a Tumbtum [person with recessed sexual organs whose gender is therefore impossible to determine, presently, by external examination. an Androgynos; women, unfreed slaves; a lame person, a blind person, or a sick person; or an old person who cannot stand upon his feet.”

Mishneh Torah, Testimony 9:9

“A shoteh’s testimony is invalid on a biblical [level] because he is not eligible [to perform] Mitzvot. This [does not refer to] only to a shoteh who goes naked, breaks things, and throws stones rather anyone whose sanity is impaired and finds his

intellect constantly confused on some point even if he can ask [questions] and converse on topic regarding other things.”

Mishnah Ketubot 5:5

“Rabbi Shimon ben Gamaliel says: if a man forbade his wife under a vow to do any work he must divorce her and give her ketubah to her, for idleness leads to insanity.”

Ecclesiastes 4:6

“Better to work a little in joy than to be obsessed with work at the expense of tranquility.”

“Anxiety in the heart of a person causes dejection, but a good word will turn it into joy.” (King Solomon)

“The very knowledge of the fact that it is natural to have good days and bad days has the power to assuage a lot of despair and sadness.” (Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, *Alei Shur*, Vol. I, p. 35)

“The soul is subject to health and disease, just as is the body...” (Maimonides)

Session Ten Chevruta Texts

Genesis 1:27

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them

“Being in the image of God means that each human being is born with three intrinsic dignities—infinite value, equality, and uniqueness. These dignities are mine, and yours, and everybody’s...” (Rabbi Yitz Greenberg)

“If it is a virtue to love my neighbor as a human being, it must be a virtue—and not a vice—to love myself, since I am a human being too. There is no concept of man in which I myself am not included.” (Erich Fromm)

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said “An entourage of angels always walks in front of people, with a messenger calling out. And what do they say? ‘Make way for the image of the Holy One!’” (Midrash--Deuteronomy Rabbah, *R'eih*)

A common malaise which many of us suffer is feeling that we are insufficient or somehow unworthy. It undermines our spirit and our intent and, unfortunately, leads to distress. Judaism teaches that each person is a world unto [themselves]. A Mishnah (Sanhedrin 4:5) expresses this idea by teaching that if we destroy one life it is as if we have destroyed an entire world. What would it take for us to feel worth and uniqueness?

Imagine, if we could actually hear God’s angels proclaiming our approach with the words, “Here comes an Image of God.” Many of us need such a forthright reminder of our relationship to the Divine. When we walk around with a low sense of self, we deny God’s presence in our very being. It is as if we have erased the image of God that resides in our souls. Affirming our inestimable worth can help. When you question yourself, you can stand before a mirror and say, “I am created in the Image of God.” If you feel shamed or disregarded, you can say, “I am created in the Image of God and no one can take this fact away from me.”

(Kerry Olitzky and Lori Forman, from *Sacred Intentions: Daily Inspiration to Strengthen the Spirit*)

Leviticus 18:5

You shall keep My laws and My rules, by the pursuit of which man shall live: I am the LORD.

Deuteronomy 30:19

I call heaven and earth to witness you today: I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse — therefore choose life...

Sanhedrin 37a:13

The court tells the witnesses: **Therefore, Adam** the first man **was created alone, to teach you that** with regard to **anyone who destroys one soul from the Jewish people**, i.e., kills one Jew, **the verse ascribes him** blame as if he **destroyed an entire world**, as Adam was one person, from whom the population of an entire world came forth. **And** conversely, **anyone who sustains one soul from the Jewish people, the verse ascribes him** credit as if he sustained an **entire world**.

Mishneh Torah, Murderer and Preservation of Life 11:4

The roof is like every other thing that has danger in itself, and which is possible that a person will make a mistake with it and die. An example is having a pit in one's property, whether it has water or not - one is obligated to make a wall of ten tefachim (80cm./32 in.) around it, or a covering over it, so a person won't fall in it and die. And so too any stumbling block in which there is a danger to life: it is a positive mitzvah to remove it, and to guard against it, and to be exceedingly cautious about it, as it is written "take care of yourself and guard your life" (Deut. 4:9). And if one has not removed the stumbling blocks that bring people to danger, one has cancelled a positive commandment and transgressed "do not bring bloodguilt" (Deut. 22:8).

Mishnah Yoma 8:5-7

With regard to **a pregnant woman who smelled** food and was overcome by a craving to eat it, **one feeds her until she recovers**, as failure to do so could lead

to a life-threatening situation. If a person is **ill** and requires food due to potential danger, **one feeds him according to** the advice of medical **experts** who determine that he indeed requires food. **And if there are no experts there, one feeds him according to his own** instructions, **until he says** that he has eaten **enough** and needs no more.

In the case of **one who is seized** with the life-threatening illness *bulmos*, causing him unbearable hunger pangs and impaired vision, **one may feed him even impure foods** on Yom Kippur or any other day **until his eyes recover**, as the return of his sight indicates that he is recovering. In the case of **one whom a mad dog bit**, **one may not feed him from the lobe of the dog's liver**. This was thought to be a remedy for the bite, but the Rabbis deem it ineffective. **And Rabbi Matya ben Harash permits** feeding it to him, as he deems it effective. **And furthermore, Rabbi Matya ben Harash said:** With regard to **one who suffers pain in his throat**, **one may place medicine inside his mouth on Shabbat**, although administering a remedy is prohibited on Shabbat. This is **because** there is **uncertainty** whether or not it is a **life-threatening** situation for him, as it is difficult to ascertain the severity of internal pain. **And** a case of **uncertainty** concerning a **life-threatening** situation **overrides Shabbat**.

Similarly, with regard to **one upon whom a rockslide fell**, and there is **uncertainty** whether **he is there** under the debris or whether **he is not there**; **and** there is **uncertainty** whether he is still **alive** or whether he is **dead**; **and** there is **uncertainty** whether the person under the debris is **a gentile** or whether he is **a Jew**, **one clears the pile** from **atop him**. One may perform any action necessary to rescue him from beneath the debris. If **they found him alive** after beginning to clear the debris, **they** continue to **clear** the pile until they can extricate him. **And if they found him dead**, **they** should **leave him**, since one may not desecrate Shabbat to preserve the dignity of the dead.

Session Eleven Chevruta Texts

“The day you were born is the day that God decided that the world cannot exist without you.” (Rabbi Nachman of Breslov)

1. What does Rabbi Nachman mean in this statement?

2. What are the implications of this statement for someone who is feeling suicidal? What are the implications of this statement for someone who knows someone who is feeling suicidal?
3. How does this text relate to the skills and values we learned about today?
4. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

Yoma 35b:7-8

They said about Hillel the Elder that each and every day he would work and earn a half-dinar, half of which he would give to the guard of the study hall and half of which he spent for his sustenance and the sustenance of the members of his family. One time he did not find employment to earn a wage, and the guard of the study hall did not allow him to enter. He ascended to the roof, suspended himself, and sat at the edge of the skylight in order to hear the words of the Torah of the living God from the mouths of Shemaya and Avtalyon, the spiritual leaders of that generation.

The Sages continued and **said: That day was Shabbat eve and it was the winter season of Tevet, and snow fell upon him from the sky. When it was dawn, Shemaya said to Avtalyon: Avtalyon, my brother, every day at this hour the study hall is already bright from the sunlight streaming through the skylight, and today it is dark; is it perhaps a cloudy day? They focused their eyes and saw the image of a man in the skylight. They ascended and found him covered with snow three cubits high. They extricated him from the snow, and they washed him and smeared oil on him, and they sat him opposite the bonfire to warm him. They said: This man is worthy for us to desecrate Shabbat for him.** Saving a life overrides Shabbat in any case...

1. How do we know keeping Shabbat is so important?
2. Why did Shemaya and Avtalyon desecrate Shabbat?
3. Why would saving a life override Shabbat?
4. What are the modern-day implications of this? What are the implications of this more broadly (i.e., what are the implications of the idea that saving a life is the most important thing)?
5. How does this text relate to the skills and values we learned today?

6. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

Berakhot 5b:10-13

The Gemara continues to address the issue of suffering and affliction: Rabbi Yoḥanan's student, Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba, fell ill. Rabbi Yoḥanan entered to visit him, and said to him: Is your suffering dear to you? Do you desire to be ill and afflicted? Rabbi Ḥiyya said to him: I welcome neither this suffering nor its reward, as one who welcomes this suffering with love is rewarded. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: Give me your hand. Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba gave him his hand, and Rabbi Yoḥanan stood him up and restored him to health.

Similarly, Rabbi Yoḥanan fell ill. Rabbi Ḥanina entered to visit him, and said to him: Is your suffering dear to you? Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: I welcome neither this suffering nor its reward. Rabbi Ḥanina said to him: Give me your hand. He gave him his hand, and Rabbi Ḥanina stood him up and restored him to health.

The Gemara asks: Why did Rabbi Yoḥanan wait for Rabbi Ḥanina to restore him to health? If he was able to heal his student, let Rabbi Yoḥanan stand himself up.

The Gemara answers, they say: A prisoner cannot generally free himself from prison, but depends on others to release him from his shackles.

1. Why couldn't Rabbi Yohanan help himself?
2. What is the message of this text?
3. Do you agree with the message of this text? Why or why not?
4. How does this text relate to the skills and values we learned today?
5. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

In another section of Talmud, we learn the story of Rabbi Eleazar.

Rabbi Eleazar could not get out of bed. It wasn't that he didn't want to; it wasn't that he didn't understand that staying in bed all day wasn't healthy. He just couldn't do it. He lay there, curled up in a ball, turned away from the door, pinned down by an invisible pain.

Rabbi Yochanan entered the room, looked down through the darkness at his friend, pulled up a chair and sat down. Preparing to sit in this heavy silence for a long time, he began to roll up his sleeve. Rabbi Eleazar turned to face his friend.

Yochanan asked: “Why are you crying?”

Rabbi Eleazar was silent for another moment. He noted the light Yochanan’s presence had brought into the room. “I weep because all light fades into darkness. Because all beauty eventually rots.”

After some time Rabbi Yochanan replied: “Yes, ultimately, everything dies. So perhaps, you have reason to weep.”

And together, they wept.

Yochanan asked: “Does darkness comfort you?”

[Shake head] “No – it did in the beginning, but now it can’t protect me from my thoughts.” “And the silence? Is it comforting?”

“No.”

“And being alone?”

Eleazar looked into his friend’s eyes. “No, loneliness adds to my suffering.”

Yochanan continued gently: “Do you still welcome this darkness, this silence, this sadness? Would you like me to leave for awhile?”

“No,” came the reply. “Before, I couldn’t bear the light, noise, or laughter. Now I can no longer bear the alternatives. But I don’t know the way back to the living.”

Yochanan asked: “Will you let me help you?”

“I will try.”

Yochanan extended his hand and Eleazar grasped hold of it.

He felt the first pinpricks of light and life return to him. He gathered the first shreds of strength and warmth. He held on tight, his friend raised him out of his bed, and together they walked to the door.

(Babylonian Talmud, Brachot 5b. Adapted in “Shmirat Hanefesh and Tikkun HaGuf: Cultivating Mental Health” by Rabbi Dusty Klass from an adaptation by Rabbi Paul Kipnes from a version told by Rabbi Susan Lippe in her sermon “A Jewish Response to Mental Illness”.)

1. What are the darkness and silence metaphors for?
2. How did Yochanan help Eleazar?
3. How does this text relate to the skills and values we learned today?
4. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

Pirkei Avot 1:14

He [also] used to say: If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am for my own self [only], what am I? And if not now, when?

1. What are the messages of this text?
2. How do each of these questions in the text relate to the skills and values we learned about today?
3. What other thoughts do you have about this text?

“When people come to you for help, do not turn them off with pious words, saying, ‘Have faith and take your troubles to God.’ Act instead as though there were no God, as though there were only one person in the world who could help -- only yourself.” (Martin Buber)

“I think no human being can give more than this. Making life possible for the other, if only for a moment.” (Martin Buber)

1. What does Buber mean when he says, “Act instead as though there were no God...”?
2. What are the implications of the first text by Buber?
3. What does Buber mean in the second text?
4. What is the relationship between the first Buber text and the second?
5. How do these texts relate to the skills and values we learned today?

6. What other thoughts do you have about these texts?

Session Twelve Chevruta Texts

Beitzah 16a:12

As Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, gives a person an additional soul on Shabbat eve, and at the conclusion of Shabbat removes it from him, as it is stated: “He ceased from work and was refreshed [*vayinafash*]” (Exodus 31:17). Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish expounds the verse as follows: **Since he ceased from work, and now Shabbat has concluded and his additional soul is removed from him, **woe [*vai*]** for the additional **soul [*nefesh*]** that is **lost**.**

Pesachim 8a:4 (excerpt)

Rava said: a torch for Havdalah is the ideal way to perform the mitzvah.

Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 298:2 (excerpt)

RAMA: a candle whose fire comes from two wicks is considered a torch.

Pesachim 54a:14 (excerpt)

[God] thought to create [fire] before Shabbat [in the week of creation], but it was not created until after Shabbat [on Saturday night]. As Rabbi Yossi taught in a braita...after Shabbat, the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Adam wisdom akin to that of the Divine. He [Adam] brought two stones, ground them against each other, out of which came fire.

Regarding holding up fingernails:

Mishnah Berakhot 8:6 (excerpt)

We do not bless over the flame until its light is used/benefitted from.

Mishnah Berurah 298:9 (excerpt)

Also because the fingernails are a sign of blessing, since they always grow [literally, that they are fruitful and multiply forever].

When We Feel Lonely: A Prayer

(from *Gates of Prayer--The New Union Prayerbook*)

[God], many are tired and lonely;

Teach us to be their friends.

Many are anxious and afraid;

Help us to calm their fears.

Some are tortured in body and mind;

Imbue them with courage and strength.

Others in their emptiness seek only wealth, fame, or power;

Teach them to value other gifts than these.

Some are drained of faith: they are cynical, bored, or despairing;

Let our faith shine forth for them to see, that through us they

May come to Your love.

And some live with death in their souls: they are stunned, violent,
and filled with hate.

Give us wisdom to save them from the wastelands of the spirit.

And teach us to show our love; let compassion and knowledge

Combine for the welfare of all Your children--

That all may know they are not alone.

A Blessing for Unconditional Acceptance

By Judith Glass

נְבָרֵךְ אֶת מְקוֹר הַחַיִּים, שֶׁבָּרָא אֶת צוּרוֹת הַחַיִּים לְמִינֵיהֶן, וְאֶת
כָּלנוּ שְׁלֵמִים, גַּם אִם לֹא מִשְׁלָמִים.

*N'vareich et m'kor hachayyim, shebara et tzurot hachayyim l'mineihen, v'et
kulanu sh'leimim, gam im lo mush'lamim.*

Let us bless the Source of life in its infinite variety, that created all of us whole,
none of us perfect.

A Prayer for Those Days When Life Spins Out of Control

By Naomi Levy

When I panic, God, teach me patience.

When I fear, teach me faith.

When I doubt myself, teach me confidence.

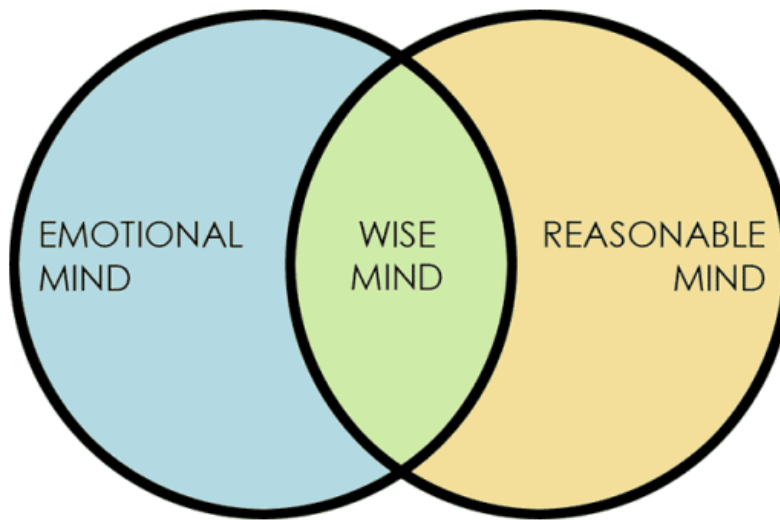
When I despair, teach me hope.

When I lose perspective, show me the way--

Back to love, back to life, back to You. Amen.

Session One Asynchronous Skills Practice/Reflection

Three States of Mind



Emotional Mind is “hot”, ruled by your feelings and urges.

When I am in Emotional Mind, I tend to:

Reasonable Mind is “cool”, ruled by thinking, facts, and logic.

When I am in Reasonable Mind, I tend to:

Wise Mind includes both reason and emotion; it is the wisdom within each person and the state of mind to access to avoid acting impulsively and when you need to make an important decision. (Wise Mind helps us think more clearly in the presence of strong emotions.)

When I am in Wise Mind, I tend to:

Skills Practice: Three States of Mind

One example of **Emotional Mind** this week was (please describe your emotions, thoughts, behaviors):

One example of **Reasonable Mind** this week was (please describe your emotions, thoughts, behaviors):

One example of **Wise Mind** this week was (please describe your emotions, thoughts, behaviors):

Skills Practice: Mindfulness “What” and “How” Skills

Check off one “**what**” skill and one “**how**” skill to practice during the week.

“What” Skills

___ Observe

___ Describe

___ Participate

“How” Skills

___ Don’t Judge

___ Stay Focused (One-Mindfully)

___ Do What Works (Effectiveness)

Briefly describe how you used each skill during the week (include what, when, and where):

Briefly describe how the skills affected your thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors:

___ Were you able to get into Wise Mind?

___ Were you able to better notice the present moment?

___ Were you able to better focus your attention on just one thing at a time?

Session Six Asynchronous Skills Practice/Reflection

Accepting Reality

Describe a situation during the week in which you were distressed and there was no way to change the situation right away:

Rate your distress from 1 to 10 (with 10 being the worst):

If you couldn't solve the problem right away or change how you felt about it, what did you choose to do? (Highlight which one you chose):

1. ~~Solve the problem.~~
2. ~~Change how you feel about the problem.~~
3. ACCEPT the situation.
4. Stay miserable (refuse to accept situation).
5. Make the situation worse.

If you tried to radically accept the situation, what exactly did you do or say to yourself?

Did you notice that you had to "turn your mind" back to radical acceptance? If yes, how?

If you chose to stay miserable or make things worse, what did you do?

Rate your distress after you turned your mind toward acceptance (rate 0-10, with 10 being the worst distress):

Willingness and Willfulness

Describe one situation when you noticed your **willingness** and one in which you noticed your **willfulness**:

Where were you **willful**?

How were you willful (e.g., thoughts, feelings, body sensations)?

What happened?

Where were you **willing**?

How were you willing (e.g., thoughts, feelings, body sensations)?

What happened?

Session Eleven Asynchronous Skills Practice/Reflection

Suicide Prevention (Part Two)



Imagine your friend is having suicidal thoughts. What are some signs you might notice (changes in behavior, changes in mood, things they say, etc.)?

If you noticed these things, what would you do?

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Session Eleven Role Play: Teen Alef

Directions: Act out scenario 1, where Teen Alef is concerned about Teen Bet. Use what you learned from the lesson to guide your conversation. When you finish, switch to scenario 2, where Teen Bet is concerned about Teen Alef.

Scenario 1:

You notice Michael has seemed withdrawn lately. He doesn't participate in class anymore or socialize with your friends.

Scenario 2:

You (Sarah) have been feeling pressured by your parents to do better in school but you're struggling. You haven't been sleeping well so you're tired all the time. You feel so overwhelmed and hopeless and you've thought about ending your life.

Session Eleven Role Play: Teen Bet

Directions: Act out scenario 1, where Teen Alef is concerned about Teen Bet. Use what you learned from the lesson to guide your conversation. When you finish, switch to scenario 2, where Teen Bet is concerned about Teen Alef.

Scenario 1:

You (Michael) are being bullied at school. You don't have a plan to end your life, but you feel helpless and have had feelings of wanting to disappear.

Scenario 2:

You've noticed that Sarah has seemed really tired all the time. She's mentioned a couple of times how she feels she's a burden on everyone and how she feels hopeless.

Annotated Bibliography

Fowler, James W. "I. Toward A Developmental Perspective On Faith." *Religious Education*, vol. 69, no. 2, 1974, pp. 207–219.

Fowler was an American theologian and professor who is best known for his concept of the stages of faith development. I chose this article because I was looking for a summary of the typical faith development stage of an adolescent and what contributes to faith development. This would be important in the development of the Mental Wellness Havdalah in particular. While this is not a recent article, its arguments, particularly the argument that faith should be understood as a verb, as "a way of knowing" and a way of "interpreting one's existence", still apply today.

Gordon, Sol. *When Living Hurts: a Lively What-to-Do Book for Yourself or Someone You Care about Who Feels Discouraged, Sad, Lonely, Hopeless, Angry or Frustrated, Unhappy, Bored, Depressed, Suicidal*. UAHC Press, 1994.

Dr. Sol Gordon is professor emeritus of Child and Family Studies at Syracuse University. His book *When Living Hurts* is an honest discussion about difficult issues that affect many teenagers such as depression, suicidal thoughts, drug and alcohol use, sex, family problems, and much more, intended for an adolescent audience. I chose this book to use with the learners of my curriculum because it is on their level, easy to read, and addresses difficult subjects in an accessible way. Additionally, this is a book I would recommend to learners and their parents/guardians for supplemental reading.

Holzer, Elie, and Orit Kent. *A Philosophy of Havruta: Understanding and Teaching the Art of Text Study in Pairs*. Academic Studies Press, 2014.

Elie Holzer serves as a Senior Lecturer and as the Head of Curriculum Studies in the School of Education at Bar-Ilan University; Orit Kent is a Senior Research Associate as the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education at Brandeis University. Their book is an in-depth evaluation of the chevruta study model based on significant research. I chose this book because I wanted to be able to defend my use of chevruta study in my curriculum as an effective learning and personal growth tool.

Imber-Black, Evan, and Janine Roberts. *Rituals for Our Times: Celebrating, Healing, and Changing Our Lives and Our Relationships*. Jason Aronson, 1998.

Evan Imber-Black, Ph.D., is an internationally recognized consultant and practitioner of family therapy and is the director of the Family and Group Studies Program and Professor of Psychiatry at Albert Einstein College of Medicine; Janine Roberts, Ed.D., is the director of the Family Therapy Specialty Area of the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Their book examines the role rituals play in our lives and the possibilities for rituals for individuals and families, from daily rituals to family traditions to celebrations to life-cycle rituals to rites of passage. I chose this book because I wanted a better understanding of how rituals work so that I could more clearly explain why I chose to have the learners develop a Mental Wellness Havdalah and how it would work.

Mencher, Rabbi Edythe Held, et al. *Resilience of the Soul: Developing Emotional and Spiritual Resilience in Adolescents and Their Families: a Program and Resource Guide for Congregations Based on the Kedushat Ha Guf Program*. URJ Press, 2007.

This book is a resource, program, and study guide produced by the Department of Jewish Family Concerns of the Union for Reform Judaism that “is designed to help facilitate and guide discussions and programs with the Jewish community that seek to validate, dignify, and honor individuals and families who have had to deal with challenging and stressful emotions and situations.” (ix) *Resilience of the Soul* has been a great resource for my curriculum, particularly with regards to how to explain the necessity of such a program to faculty, staff, and parents/guardians and how to approach implementing an effective program that will truly help young people. There are also sample texts that I have chosen to utilize in my curriculum. This is a wonderful, thorough resource for any Jewish community wishing to implement a program on resilience for adolescents. I should note that I am not sure how current the statistics stated in the book are.

Steinberg, Laurence. *Age of Opportunity: Lessons from the New Science of Adolescence*. Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015.

Laurence Steinberg, Ph.D., is an expert on adolescence and has written more than 350 scholarly articles and a dozen books. This book examines the “science” of adolescence, particularly to explain why adolescents think, feel, and act the way they do based on their brain development. I chose this book because I read it for a course that I took at HUC called “Adolescents and Emerging Adults” and I found it to be both an engaging read and extremely informative about adolescent behavior. This book is a wonderful choice for anyone who wants a better understanding of why adolescents are the way they are.

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Rathus, Jill H., et al. *DBT Skills Manual for Adolescents*. The Guilford Press, 2017.

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Miller, Alec L., et al. *Dialectical Behavior Therapy with Suicidal Adolescents*. Guilford Press, 2017.

Segal, Karen Legman, and Sara Seligson. “Youth Mental Health Facilitators Guides and Resources.” *Youth Mental Health Facilitators Guides and Resources | The Jewish Education Project*, www.jewishedproject.org/resources/youth-mental-health-facilitators-guides-and-resources.

“Youth.” *Mental Health First Aid*, 24 Aug. 2020, www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/population-focused-modules/youth/.