

A Suitcase Full of Memories

**Holocaust Remembrance
Lesson Plans
for Elementary School**



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הנדיב של:

הסוכנות היהודית
הפדרציה של שיקגו

ג'אנט ורוברט הלמן
קרן F & Z
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התנועה ליהדות מתקדמת והסוכנות היהודית

Suitcase Full of Memories

Holocaust Remembrance - Elementary Schools

To this very day, decades after its conclusion, World War II and its awful legacy remains with us, reverberating with the call “to remember and never forget.” The lesson plans that follow are about memories. By means of the memories of those who were children and teenagers during the Holocaust, we will pave the way for our students to learn about life before the war, about the changes leading up to the war, about life in wartime, and about the period of recovery afterwards. At the heart of the lessons lie the survivors’ testimonials. Through their point of view, we will consider together the way in which the fate of the Jewish people is woven.

These memories are not merely an educational tool. They themselves are central, for through memories we impart values. Passing down the memory of the Exodus from generation to generation imparts the value of freedom. Passing down the memory of the Holocaust to our students aids in imparting humanistic values, such as the concept that, “Beloved is humankind for it was created in the image [of G-d] ” (Ethics of Our Fathers, 3:14).

All of us, Jewish students and educators living all over the world, are a link in the chain of memories. By studying together in partner classes and applying the key concept, “Window and Mirror,” we will be able to deepen our understanding. Studying together with another class across the ocean provides a dual opportunity by simultaneously opening a window to another culture and providing a mirror that helps us to understand ourselves better.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, in a 1955 speech, distinguished between two kinds of covenants between the Jewish people and God: the covenant of fate and the covenant of destiny. The former is forced upon us, while the latter indicates an ideal, chosen by man of his own free will. The Jew realizes this ideal via “imitation of his Creator through an act of self-transcendence.” The responsibility that we, as educators, take upon ourselves to pass down the memory of the Holocaust is an enactment of this ideal.

The two lessons that follow explore the story of children who lived during the Holocaust as a means of introducing students to the role that memory plays in our lives. In addition, the lessons expose students to the fact that people can choose the way in which they want to act. Through seeing how choice is possible, students will deepen their understanding of the subject of identity and will become familiar with the concept of loving-kindness.

Lesson 1

Righteous Gentiles

Prior to the class, contact the teacher of your partner class to coordinate the exchange of the slideshows and/or videos you will be making.

Goals

1. Understanding the importance of memory for preserving the history of a people.
2. Getting to know one person and her life's story. In this way, students are introduced to an event with historical significance for the Jewish people, through a more relevant lens for children.
3. Gaining familiarity with the concept of "Righteous Gentiles" and with the significance of their actions.
4. Clarifying personal values regarding loving-kindness and helping the needy.
5. Understanding the shared role we play, together with Jewish students from another country, with regards to the memory of our people.

Introduction

(5 minutes)

Tell the students that today we will get to know the story of Hannah's childhood. Hannah was a girl who lived in Poland during World War II, the war in which the Holocaust took place. We will hear about her life both before and during the war. Through her story, we will learn about the good deeds that non-Jews did to help Jews who were forced to go through the Holocaust.

The same exact lesson that we are learning today is being studied

in another classroom in another part of the world. If this is the first partnership activity being done as part of the partner classes program, tell the students about their partner class and their school and country. Tell them that at the end of the class, we will send our partner class what we have prepared and they will send us what they have prepared. That way, for the next class, we will be able to see what they have sent and talk about what's similar and what's different between us and them. There will be time later for asking questions.

Getting to Know A Person

(40 minutes)

Read to the students the first three pages of "I Wanted to Fly Like a Butterfly- The Story of Hannah Gofrit: A Child's Recollections of the Holocaust," published by Yad Vashem.

Before you start reading, tell the students: Today, we're going to tell Hannah's story. Luckily, Hannah survived the Holocaust. She made aliyah to Israel where she lived in Tel Aviv, became a nurse in the local clinic, got married, and had a son. Today she's a grandmother! A few years ago, she told the story of her childhood to an author, who wrote a book about her called "I Wanted to Fly Like a Butterfly." The full book is available. I am now going to read you the first few pages.

Recommended: Project the cover of the book onto the board along with pictures of Hannah as a child and as an adult.

http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/units/images/young_book2.gif

http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/images/butterfly2.jpg

http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/images/butterfly1.jpg

“My name is Hannah. In the town where I grew up, in Poland, everyone called me ‘Hanechka.’

I was born in 1935 in Biala Ravenska, a town where Jews and Poles had lived and worked together for generations.

My grandmother lived in the center of town next to the marketplace, and all of my cousins lived in a Jewish neighborhood close by. My parents, Hershel and Zisel Hershkowitz, and I lived on a busy street in Biala Ravenska, across from another Jewish family. My Polish neighbors, Marisha, Yanek, and Basha, were my best friends. I loved to play hide-and-seek with them in the garden behind our house, where we found great hiding places in trees and bushes. I used to watch the many kinds of bugs as they carried little pieces of food back to their secret homes. Sometimes right in the middle of hide-and-seek, I would notice a bug on the ground and would lie on my stomach to study it more carefully until I heard my friends calling for me to continue our game.

At the edge of Biala Ravenska there was a stream. In the winter, when the water froze, we loved to run and slide on the slippery ice; and in the spring, when the ice melted, we made paper boats and launched them on the water, chasing them along the bank until they disappeared from view.

I was always happy, smiling and very popular. People who knew me would always stop and ask me how I was doing, and pat my curls or pinch my cheek. I loved to sing and to recite Polish poems. When my parents took me to visit friends or relatives, my mother would always ask me to sing or tell a story in front of everyone. Sometimes I did not feel like it, and I just wanted to go on playing with the other children outside.

Then things began to happen that made me forget all the songs, poems, and games that I once knew so well. A terrible war broke out; my wonderful childhood came suddenly to an end. My life was to change forever.”



Ask the students

This is a book of Hannah’s memories. Why are we studying it?
Write down some of their responses on the board.

Explain to the students that because of Hannah’s memories, and those of other people, we’re able to learn today, more than 70 years after the war took place, what happened back then, and in that way we can know the history of our people. Children’s stories from before the war let us know what their lives were like before the war. Through their personal memories as well as their memories of family and community, we get to meet children who had full, rich lives. These memories aren’t only important to people like us who get to hear them – they’re also important to the people telling their stories. It helps them to know that even though they went through very hard things, there are people for whom it is important to hear and learn from them.

Tell the class: Today, we are going to make a classroom memory book where everyone will recall memories from when you were in kindergarten. If we want, we can send our memory book to our partner class so that they can get to know us. We can also open up our memory book another year to see what stories we still remember, and what stories the book helps us to remember. We will make our memory book a slideshow. Every student gets one slide in the slideshow that he has to fill.

Make the slideshow using Google Slides. Using the application is really easy – here are some instructions for getting started.

<https://www.google.com/slides/about/>

Each slide on the class slideshow has the following:

Name _____

I was born in _____ in _____

The people in my family are: _____

Two things I remember

1) The first is about me and my family

2) The second is about the place where I live

After the students finish preparing their slides, ask whoever would like to share their memories.

Ask the class: Why do we remember certain things and not other things? What does it depend on? Are there stories that we only remember because we heard the story from others, but we don't actually remember it happening? Are there things that we remember but we would rather forget? What role does memory have in our lives?

Getting to Know a Place

(10 minutes)

After all the students have finished preparing their slides for the class slideshow, ask them how they imagine the town of Biala Rawska where Hannah grew up. Ask them what they think the town looks like, what there is there, how many people live there, etc. Open up Google Earth, <https://www.google.com/earth/>

and in the search box type in the name of the town, Biala Rawska, Poland. Project the results onto the board and show the students how the town looks today. Using the application you can “travel around” different parts of the town. Tell the students that nowadays around 3,000 people live in Biala Rawska, including the World’s Strongest Man Mariusz Pudzianowski http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariusz_Pudzianowski

*** Tip – if there’s time left, show the students the street where their partner class’ school / synagogue can be found.**

Righteous Gentiles

(15 minutes)

Continue telling Hannah’s story. Tell the students how after the war began, almost all the Jews who lived in the town were forced to move into a ghetto. Their synagogue was burnt down by the Germans, and some of the Jews were sent to the camps, including Hannah’s grandmother and her aunts. For a while, Hannah and her parents managed to keep living in the town. But when they realized the Nazis were planning to deport all the Jews, they ran away and hid in a pigsty. When even staying in the pigsty became dangerous, Hannah and her mother fled to the city of Warsaw and pretended to be Polish.

“... In the city of Warsaw no one knew that Mother and I were Jews. We stayed at 64 Zelzenah Street where the Skovroneck family lived on the sixth floor. Mr. Skovroneck was an electrician, and Mrs. Skovroneck sold soap in the marketplace. Their two daughters, Hanka, who was thirteen, and Basha, who was ten, were in school.

For two years we lived with them.

For two years I did not leave the building.

For two years I did not walk around the apartment.

For two years I did not go near a window – I would always crawl underneath.

For two years Hanka and Basha did not bring home any friends.

It was strictly forbidden to tell anyone that we were in the apartment. It was a secret that was a matter of life and death...

No one could know that Mother and I had been hiding in the Skovronecks' apartment. Whenever the Skovronecks had guests, Mother and I hid in the closet. Once when we had an unexpected visitor, Mother and I did not even have enough time to make it to the clothes closet, so we jumped into the coal-box and Mrs. Skovroneck sat on top of the box until our surprise guest left. Sometimes, we had to hide in the clothes closet for hours at a time, without moving, without uttering a sound. In the closet I used to pretend that I was a little elf who lived in the forest, with a blue suit and a red hat with a pom-pom. I would drink the dew on the forest floor, walk around the flowers and guess each one's name by its smell...

If German soldiers should come looking for Jews, and they would come as far as the fourth floor, then Mother and I were supposed to go down to the fifth floor and jump. That way the Germans would never know that we came from the Skovronecks' apartment and punish them for hiding us. One day, Germans came to search

the building, and soon were on the fourth floor. Mother took my hand and was about to take me down with her to the fifth floor as we had promised, when Hanka Skovroneck stopped her. She took a large ladder and told us to climb up on the roof of the building. We sat there, petrified, for an hour until Hanka called us to come down. The Germans had come as far as the fifth floor – and left. Mother, Hanka, and I danced wildly around the apartment. It was a dance of happiness, a dance of victory over the forces of evil, a dance of freedom.”



Ask the students

1. What did you learn from this story?

Pull together the students’ answers to summarize Hannah’s story in their own words. If you discover that they didn’t understand the story, retell the parts that they missed.

2. Why do you think Hannah and her mother had to hide?

After students answer, if necessary, you can fill in the picture: There were two reasons why they had to hide. First of all, they feared for their lives. The Jews were not allowed to live there. All the Jews were deported, either to ghettos or to the camps. If Hannah and her mother were discovered then they, too, would have been deported. Secondly, it was illegal for Polish people to help Jews hide. If Hannah and her mother were discovered, then the Skovronecks could have been sentenced to jail or even to death.

3. What do you think was the hardest thing for the Skovronecks?

After students answer, if necessary, you can fill in the picture: They were Polish and didn't have to put themselves in danger. It's hard enough in wartime, and they made things harder for themselves even though they didn't have to. What's more, the girls couldn't have their friends over to their house even once for two whole years. Just try to imagine that – because of people who you had never even met before, you can't have a single friend over for two years.

4. When Hannah described the dance, she called it “a dance of victory over the forces of evil.” Who do you think overcame the forces of evil? What do you think that kind of dance looked like?

Explain to the class that during the war there were non-Jews who helped Jews out in all kinds of ways. Some gave them food, directly or secretly. Some told the Jews about other people who could help them out, like their neighbor Moshelkova who sent Hannah and her mother to the Skovronecks. Some gave the Jews refuge for a single night, or longer. Everyone who helped the Jews put themselves in grave danger, because it was prohibited and anyone who was caught would be punished severely. It was a very complicated situation. On the one hand, there were Polish people who saw how the Jews were being persecuted and wanted to help them. But on the other hand, if they helped the Jews they could end up being killed themselves. Despite it all, there were people like the Skovronecks who accepted the danger and made great efforts to protect Jews from harm. They hid Jews in all sorts of places and made sure to provide them with food and whatever else they needed in order to survive the awful war. In many cases, like in Hannah's story, not only the parents, but the whole family helped

share the responsibility. In the family's way of thinking, it was a given that you had to help others, and that's how they raised their children.

These kinds of people are called **"Righteous Gentiles."**

(If you would like to know more about the Righteous Gentiles, how many there were, what they did, and more, you can read more here:

<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/about.asp>)

Ask the students – Why do you think they are called Righteous Gentiles?

After students answer, if necessary, you can add the following:

A righteous person is somebody who does acts of loving-kindness. An act of loving-kindness comes out of the good of someone's heart, and is done in order to benefit someone else and not to get something in return.

Gentiles are all the people who aren't Jewish.

Righteous Gentiles receive a special medal stamped with their name as well as a certificate of honor, and their names are engraved in the Garden of the Righteous at the Yad Vashem museum in Jerusalem.



Group Work (Hevruta)

(20 minutes)

In order to engage more deeply in our Torah study, and to create a peer group experience where everyone's voice is valued equally, there is an age-old Jewish custom of studying in hevruta. Your class, too, will experience what it's like to study in hevruta. Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students. Each group (hevruta) will receive a sheet with a number of sources on it. Instruct the students to read the texts, study them together, and respond to the attached questions. When they have finished, ask each group to share the insights they gained. Make it clear to the students that there's no single right answer to the attached

questions, but rather the significance of group study is in listening to many different voices and opinions. The sheet with the texts can be found in the appendix (Lesson One, Appendix A).

Genesis 24:14

“The young woman to whom I will say, ‘Please, offer your pitcher that I may drink,’ and who replies, ‘Drink, and I will also water your camels’ – let her be the one whom You have chosen for Your servant Isaac. By this I will know that You have dealt kindly (*chesed*) with my master.”

This verse comes from the Torah portion, *Hayei Sarah*, in Genesis. Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for his son, Isaac. Before the servant reaches the well, he decides that he’s going to ask the young woman he meets there (who turns out to be Rebecca) for some water. If she offers water not only to him but also to his camels, then he’ll know that she’s meant to be Isaac’s wife and that God has done a kindness for him.

Genesis 40:14

“But remember me when it is well with you, and do me the kindness (*chesed*) of mentioning me to Pharaoh, in order to get me out of this place.”

This verse comes from the Torah portion *Vayeshev*, in Genesis. After Joseph is brought down to Egypt he is thrown in jail. While he is in jail, Joseph correctly interprets the dreams of Pharaoh’s chief cupbearer and his chief baker. The chief cupbearer is pleased by Joseph’s interpretation, and Joseph asks him to do him a kindness. Joseph asks the chief cupbearer to speak with Pharaoh after he is released from jail and ask Pharaoh to free Joseph from jail.

Hosea 6:6

"For I desire kindness (chesed), not sacrifice; obedience to God, rather than burnt offerings."

In this verse, from the book of Hosea, Hosea prophesizes to the people that God would rather they do acts of loving-kindness than bring sacrifices to the Holy Temple. When the Holy Temple was destroyed, prayers took the place of sacrifices. In that sense, a new interpretation of the verse is that God would rather the people do acts of loving-kindness than just pray.



Read these three passages and together come up with answers to the following questions

1. In the first passage, Abraham's servant says that God has done a kindness for him. Do you think Rebecca herself was acting out of kindness? Why?
2. Why does Joseph think that the chief cupbearer mentioning him to Pharaoh would be an act of kindness?
3. What is the difficulty that Rebecca faces and that the chief cupbearer will face if he brings Joseph up with Pharaoh?
4. In your opinion, why does God prefer loving-kindness to sacrifices or prayer?
5. Is there a connection between these acts of kindness and the actions of the Righteous Gentiles?



Sharing

(10 minutes)

Ask the students to share some of their responses. Aim to get a lot of the students involved. Remind them that the answers are a matter of opinion, and that it is important for us to hear many different opinions. After students answer, if necessary, you can add:

Question 1: The students are likely to respond in two ways:

- 1) What Rebecca did for Abraham's servant was a kindness because she didn't even know him. She didn't have to give him water, and she certainly didn't have to also give his camels water. It required a lot of effort to fill her pitcher and provide water for him and for his camels.
- 2) Rebecca wasn't acting out of kindness. She saw that he was a rich man and thought that she would get something out of it by giving him water.

It could be that students will think of other answers.

Question 2: Joseph knows the chief cupbearer has no reason to mention his name to Pharaoh, so he's appealing to his sense of compassion.

Question 3: Rebecca faces the physical hardship of filling all the pitchers, as well as the fact that as a result she might be late returning home. Having already made it out of jail, the chief cupbearer might fear Pharaoh's response. If he is perceived to be a close associate of Joseph's, Pharaoh could put him back in jail.

Question 4: Prayer is primarily giving thanks and making requests, not taking action. Doing good and kindness for others helps create a better society. For believers, it's understood that prayer has significance. However, the verse reminds us that it is not enough to pray, and that if we have to choose, good deeds take priority over prayer.

Question 5: Throughout the generations, there have been people who did good deeds and acts of loving-kindness. Both the Bible and the history books remind us of this fact and encourage all of us to strive to do more and more.

Optional Activity

If you have time left, and if your students are comfortable enough listening to a song in Hebrew, you can close by listening to the song "Kulanu zkuim lichesed (We all need acts of loving-kindness)" at the following link on YouTube:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rROZKLwxLss>

Tell the students that one of the lines in the song means "What's given once can never be taken away." Ask them: Why do you think that is? Focus on the idea that acts of loving-kindness remain in the hearts of the recipients forever, and no one can ever "take them back."

Artwork that We'll Share with Our Partner Class

(20 Minutes)

For this lesson, you and your partner class will jointly undertake one of two art projects. Make sure to coordinate your choice with the teacher of your partner class.

Regardless of which option you choose, it's important that you emphasize certain facts to your students: Both we and the students from our partner class are part of the Jewish people. We are all living in

this period of history, several decades after the Holocaust took place, and we have a shared duty: to preserve the memories, so that future generations will know our people's history and will try to learn a lesson from it. The students in the two classes are jointly committing to try to act according to the principles of loving-kindness that they learned in this lesson. Try to have this commitment find expression in their artwork.

Option #1 – A Medal for Righteous Gentiles

Every student will receive a sheet with two circles drawn on it. You can find an example in the appendix (Lesson One, Appendix B). Ask the students to design a new medal for the Righteous Gentiles. Stress to them that the medals need to express the principle of loving-kindness and also the gratitude felt by the Jewish people towards these heroes. Before they begin, ask the students to think about what's most important to them to express through their medals. The students will decorate both sides of the medal.

Take a picture of all the medals. Using the pictures, you'll make a slideshow to share with your partner class. Next, you and the students will make a class Board of Honor for the Righteous Gentiles, either inside the classroom or outside it. Hang up the class's medals on the board.

Option #2 – Butterflies of Loving-Kindness

Out of the 6 million who were murdered in the Holocaust, around 1.5 million were helpless children whose dreams perished along with them. Sue Klau, a leading member of the Jewish community in Puerto Rico, created a memorial project for them. Inspired by the poem "The Butterfly," written by Pavel Friedman while he was a prisoner in the

Teresienstadt concentration camp, Klau chose the butterfly as a symbol for the children murdered in the Holocaust. Klau enlisted the help of the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC) and the Education Department of the Israel Movement for Reform & Progressive Judaism in order to publicize this effort and recruit Jewish and non-Jewish children from around the world. Each child colors a paper butterfly; writes their name, age, and where they live on the bottom of the left wing; and cuts them out and sends them in. The goal is to reach 1.5 million paper butterflies. The underlying idea for this project- to encourage the world's children to create 1.5 million decorated butterflies over the course of ten years – is to remember that each and every boy and girl who perished in the Holocaust had dreams, freedom, and hopes. This memorial project in a sense restores to these children the right to live, validates a life of freedom and liberty, and leaves us with hope for a more civilized, ethical world.

We encourage you to record the butterflies so that we can all benefit from the colorfulness and the variety of this art that transforms the Jews' most bitter and complex memories into a pluralistic message of tolerance and love.

For more, we recommend you watch this short video including an interview with Adina Schnitzer, the widow of Pavel Friedman, and a presentation of the “Butterflies: Coloring the Memories” project (in Hebrew with English subtitles):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJa43mLhRNo&list=UUinWkErOxLgBdkGxDOEY64A&index=34>

Each student will receive one butterfly to decorate and write on it one act of loving-kindness that he will make an effort to do. Take a video of each student with his or her butterfly, and send it to your partner class.

Conclusion

We began this lesson by speaking about memories. We saw how Hannah's memories taught us about the time in which she lived. (During the lesson we also made our own classroom memory book.) Thanks to Hannah's story, we also learned about the Righteous Gentiles. We explored the meaning of the word *chesed* (loving-kindness). We came to understand the importance of the Righteous Gentiles' deeds and how they impacted on many Jews' lives.

Let the students know that at the end of Hannah's book, she invites readers to send her a letter or an email (Hannah Gafrit, Pinkas 54, Tel Aviv, Israel 62261; gafrit@netvision.net.il). Students who would like to do so are more than welcome. They can ask the appropriate teacher for help in learning how to write a letter.

Your partner class in Israel could even arrange to meet Hannah. You can ask your students to prepare questions for the Israeli students to ask Hannah and then let your students know what she responded.

Lesson 2

Borrowed Identity

This lesson offers two options:

1. To prepare materials before the lesson together with your partner class. That way, during the discussion part of the lesson itself you'll be able to use the materials from the students in your partner class. **For those choosing this option, the instructions appear in green.**
2. To prepare the materials during the lesson and at the end of the lesson send them to your partner class.

Note: Even though it's not easy, we encourage you to choose the first option. It will enrich the discussion, stimulate greater interest in the other class and deepen the connection between them, and help students learn the educational message.

Before the lesson

Ask each of the students to think of the four most important components of his or her identity. Recommend that they think about it together with their parents. Each student will write these four parts of his or her identity in the joint forum with your partner class. Before class, prepare a sheet with the list generated by the students in your partner class.

For either option, be sure to be in touch with the teacher of your partner class to coordinate exchanging the materials you'll be creating.

Bring to class index cards or sheets of paper cut into pieces so that each student can have four cards or slips of paper to work with. If that's not possible, you'll ask the students to create four slips of paper from the sheets of paper they have with them.

Goals

1. Getting to know one person and the story of her life.
2. Becoming familiar with the concept of “borrowed identity” and what it means.
3. Clarifying personal values regarding good deeds.
4. Understanding the role we play, together with students from another country, in creating a “Monument of Good Deeds.”

***If this lesson is lesson #2 of Suitcase Full of Memories program, begin the lesson by showing the students the materials that the partner class sent to you.**

Ask the students: What can we learn from the medals/butterflies that the students in our partner class sent us? Together with the students, see if what they produced is similar to what you produced. If so, then what is similar? If not, then what in particular is different? Did they use the same art supplies and materials? What can we learn from that?

If they made butterflies, what are the acts of kindness they committed to doing? What can we learn from that?

If they made medals for the Righteous Gentiles, what things did the students in your partner class emphasize? What can we learn from that?

Introduction

(5 minutes)

Tell the students that today we’ll get to know the story of Marta Goren’s childhood. Marta was a girl who grew up in Poland during the Second World War, when European Jews went through the Holocaust. We’ll hear about what her life was like both before and during the war. Through her story, we’ll learn about how during this time some of the

Jews had to make major changes in their lives in order to stay alive and save their families.

The same exact lesson that we are learning today is being studied in another classroom in another part of the world. If this is the first partnership activity being done as part of the partner classes program, tell the students about their partner class and their school and country. Tell them that at the end of the class, we'll send them what we've prepared and they'll send us what they've prepared. That way, for the next class, we'll be able to see what they've sent and talk about what's similar and what's different between us and them. There will be time later for asking questions.

Warmup Activity

(5 minutes)

Read the following poem to the students:

Fork Girl and Spoon Girl / by Nurit Zarchi

Fork Girl took a jab, alas,
at everyone she passed.
Fork Girl stuck it to them all with a biting jeer.
Some people grabbed her by the ear.
They turned her into Spoon Girl
and everyone cheered, dancing with a whirl.
But when it was complete
They found they had no way to eat:
Cakes
Or meat
Or veggies
Or fish.
And every breakfast, lunch, and dinner
Soup was their only dish.



Ask the students

What happened to the girl in the poem? Why did that happen to her?
What happens to someone who “turns from a fork into a spoon”?
What’s the significance of that change?
Who does the change affect? How?
Is the change reversible?

After students answer, if necessary, you can add: Whoever “turns from a fork into a spoon” loses the ability to stick himself into certain foods, limiting his options. This means changing or losing some essential elements of one’s personal identity. In this poem, the girl had to undergo a change because the people around her didn’t like the previous elements of her personality. The change may well be reversible, given how easily the change took place in the poem. But it bears remembering that even if the girl “goes back to being a fork,” meaning she goes back to her previous identity, she will always remember what happened and why and everything she experienced as a result. Similarly, the people who brought about the change now know the meaning of that change and its true costs and benefits.

The Identity Game

(15 minutes)

Ask the students to write down, on four identical slips of paper or index cards, four key pieces of their identity.

Ask the students to write down, on four identical slips of paper or index cards, the four components of their identity that they listed during the forum before class.

Once they have finished, ask them to think to themselves: If they had to give up one of them, which piece would they give up? At this stage, tell the students to remember their answers but not share them yet.

Tell the students to place their slips of paper face down, so they cannot tell what is written on each one. Pass through the class, randomly removing one or two slips from each student and placing them in front of a different student.

Tell the students to flip over their slips of paper and see how their identity has changed.



Ask the students

Who lost the piece of identity that you were already thinking of giving up? How does it feel when you really do not have it anymore? How does that affect the rest of the pieces of your identity? (For example, let's say a student said to himself that he would give up on his hometown, and that's the piece that the teacher took away from him. How does that impact on his identity now? What other changes come about as a result of losing this piece?)

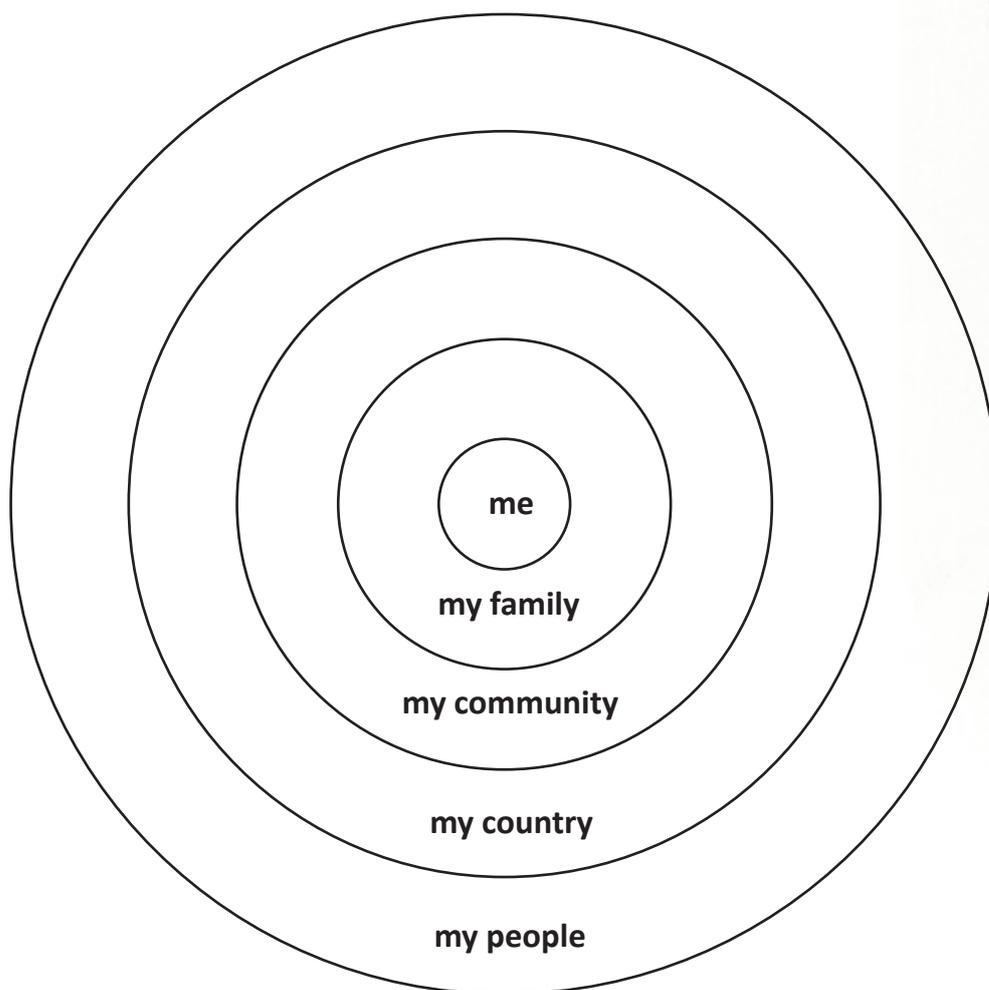
Who lost a piece that you were not willing to give up on? How did it feel after being forced to give it up? How does this change affect the rest of the pieces of your identity?

Ask several students to share their new identity that resulted from swapping the slips of paper. What feelings does this change evoke in them (alienation, confusion, embarrassment, joy, strangeness, curiosity, etc.)? Ask them: Do you think you'll be able to preserve the pieces of your identity that didn't change, despite the piece that did change? Enable the students to express their thoughts, opinions, and ideas without being judgmental.

Continue asking: What are the central components that make up our

identity? Which circles of belonging impact on our identity? What are the most important things? What looms largest in our identity? Which part of our identity would be hardest for us to give up on? Did you ever have an experience, like the girl in “Fork Girl Spoon Girl,” where the people around you wanted you to be something else? Pull the responses together on the board and arrange them into “circles of belonging” that make up the elements of identity.

Ask them, do you think we could draw the circles differently? Is there one circle of identity that is more important than others?



Read the responses of the students in your partner class out loud. Together with the students, try to integrate those responses into the circles of identity that you drew on the board. How similar or different are the pieces of their identity from ours?

Getting to Know Martha

(10 minutes)

Ask: Why do you think we read that poem and played the identity game for a class about Holocaust memory? It's true that the poem and the game are imaginary and even funny, but they also teach us about what it's like to switch identities and the significance of that kind of change. Today we'll get to know Marta's story. Marta is a woman who had to take on a new identity during the Holocaust in order to save her life. Understandably, switching her identity was no simple matter, and it had a major impact on her and on the people around her. Happily, changing her identity saved Marta's life. Today, she lives in Rehovot, in Israel, with her husband Amos. Eight years ago she wrote a paper for a university about the city of her birth. She is a mother of three and also a grandmother.

The book, "The Daughter We Had Always Wanted" (published by Yad Vashem) tells the story of Marta's childhood. Today we'll read parts of the book. We'll start by getting to know Marta before the war, and then we'll continue on with the part where she adopts a new identity.

Start by reading from the first few pages:

"The Daughter We Had Always Wanted"

The Story of Marta

...We lived on 3 Rinek Street. Grandfather Yitzhak and Grandmother Monja Sternshus lived in an apartment on the third floor with their daughter Lunia. Grandfather's store was on the first floor. The Winter family lived on the second floor in a big apartment: Netty, my mother, was Grandmother and Grandfather's daughter; Yisrael, my father, was a lawyer; and the little daughter, Marta, was me...

I remember walking with Father to the nearby Black Forest.

Every Saturday morning we walked to the Great Synagogue.

Father prayed and I played outside with my friend Dusha....

I loved visiting Grandfather and Grandmother. Grandmother was a great cook and the smell of her freshly baked-for-the-Sabbath hallot (bread for the Sabbath) wafted from her kitchen window to our apartment. Grandmother also baked raisin-cinnamon yeast cookies whose wonderful taste remains with me until today. My Aunt Lunia took care of me as though she were my older sister and, although she was eleven years older, took me along to visit her friends. On cold wintry days, she went sledding with me and helped me build the most beautiful snowmen in the world.

My mother was quite beautiful and very smart. Before her marriage to Father, she had studied pharmacology in Vienna, Austria. Upon returning to Czortkow, she worked in the pharmacy that was on the main street close to where we lived. Every day during lunch break and towards evening, when I heard the tapping of high heels on the stairs, I knew that Mother was returning home from work...

When I was four years old, World War II broke out and Germany conquered most of Poland.. All the Jews of the city were ordered to

leave their homes and move into a ghetto. The ghetto was a small area at the edge of the city whose inhabitants had been evacuated; all the city's Jews were forced to live there. Barbed wire surrounded the ghetto, and the guards at the gate only allowed Jews with permits to leave....

Mother was allowed to leave the ghetto to go to work. The owner of the pharmacy convinced the German officer that he could not manage the pharmacy without her. She received a special permit to leave the ghetto every morning, stay in the pharmacy for the entire day and return to the ghetto at night.... To venture outside was dangerous, but inside, in the room, it was very boring and crowded. I did not have any toys or games...

One day, Mother woke me early in the morning and said, "Martush, today you are coming to the pharmacy with me." I was very glad to be spending the whole day with Mother. It was strange to leave the ghetto after so much time inside it. I was afraid of the armed guard who stood at the gate of the ghetto, but when we reached the gate Mother did not hesitate. She continued to walk, and said matter-of-factly, "We are going to the pharmacy." Once we were out of the ghetto, I calmed down. I looked at the people walking on the city streets. They did not look fearful like the people in the ghetto... We finally reached the street of the pharmacy.... we quickly entered the pharmacy. Mother closed and locked the door behind us. "We only have a few minutes until this place is open to customers," Mother told me. "Come and see where you will be staying." "I won't be with you?" I asked, surprised and disappointed. "No!

You mustn't be seen. Follow me," she said and quickly went down the winding stairs. The stairs led to a big basement...

And a storage area where a bed had been set up. Mother said, "No one knows that you are here. Don't go upstairs and don't open the door. When I finish work, I will come to get you. If you hear the sound of boots on the stairs, get into the closet and close the door from the inside."...

Mother said, "since the situation is very bad and the lives of the Jews in town are in grave danger, you are staying here with me."

"We are not going back to the ghetto?"

"No."

"How long will we stay here?" "As long as possible. But let us talk about more important matters, like your studies. If there wasn't a war now and the Germans hadn't occupied Poland, you would be in second grade. Right now, Jewish children are not allowed to attend school. It is very important for me to prepare you for life after the war and therefore at this moment I announce the festive opening of the school year in Marta's school."

"How will I study without books and without school supplies?"

"I've thought about that too," Mother answered. She opened one of the closet doors and announced, "There are notebooks, pencils and crayons. Take a pencil and a notebook and let's begin..." Every evening I learned to read, write and solve arithmetic exercises. I memorized the multiplication table and drew all different kinds of clocks on old cartons and I learned to read a clock with numbers...It was difficult to stay locked in the basement and to only be able to see the feet of people on the sidewalk. However, I was a diligent and good student and I had a marvelous teacher and friend – Mother.

Then read pages 29-32

One night after we had finished studying and had lain down to sleep, Mother stroked my hair and whispered, “Martush, we must part.” “What?” I jumped up and stood on the mattress as though bitten by a snake.

Mother sat up and held my hands gently. I sat down. “The situation is worsening each day,” Mother said, stroking my hand. “There are almost no Jews left in the ghetto. The Germans have declared Czortkow to be Judenrein (An area free of Jewish presence) and every Jew that is caught will be sentenced to death. Soon I will be forbidden to work in the pharmacy.”

“We can hide in the basement together.”

“That is dangerous. Someone has to bring us food and water, and I am afraid that we will be reported. Martush, I have no intention of ever leaving you; you will travel first and I will follow.”

“Where to?”

“To Warsaw.”

“Warsaw is very far away, it is on the other side of Poland,” I said with my new found knowledge.

“Good for you! You have learned well,” Mother said encouragingly.

“Warsaw is really far and you will travel there by train.”

“Alone?” I asked in a panic.

“No. You will travel with Lydka. Listen to me. I have good friends in Warsaw, a family called Schultz. They have a large agricultural farm near Czortkow, and Father was their legal adviser. Anna and Joseph Schultz wrote to me that we could come to Warsaw. Since it is dangerous, you will travel first and I will come afterwards.”

Mother added, “In a week from now, Anna and Joseph Schultz’s daughter, Lydka, will come to Czortkow and take you with her. In

Warsaw you will see blue skies and birds, play with other children and go to school.”

“A mother who loves her daughter does not send her away with a stranger!” I said angrily. Mother leaned back on the bed, looked at me tiredly and said, “When there is no choice, one does that as well...”

” For the next six days, I rehearsed my new identity: My name is Krystyna Gryniewicz – but everyone calls me Kryshya. I was born in a village. I am a Catholic, I go to church every Sunday, and I know how to pray.

Anna Schultz, who lives in Warsaw with her family, is my father’s sister. My mother is sick and cannot take care of me. Since I am a gifted student and the village school has been closed since the war broke out, my Aunt Anna and Uncle Joseph have agreed that I live with them in Warsaw and study at a good school in the city.

Every evening Mother repeated the following instructions:

Be nice and smile and then they will love you.

Do what you are told and help as much as possible.

If I am delayed and you miss me, cry into your pillow quietly so that you are not heard.

Don’t eat with a knife and fork – village girls only use a spoon.

Study well and do your homework so that everyone is proud of you. Don’t write to me – I will write to you.

And most important of all: Always try to have laughing eyes; children do not like other children with sad eyes.

When I asked Mother if the people that I would meet in Warsaw were nice, Mother answered confidently, “They are very nice and they also want to save your life.”

Continue with page 41

That was it. I erased Marta and I became Kryshya through and through.

On Sunday I went to church together with the whole family. I was struck by the silence and by the wealth of pictures and sculptures. I observed that everyone who approached the altar bent down, genuflected and crossed himself. I, Krystyna Gryniewicz, decided to show that I was a devout Catholic. I kneeled at the entrance to the church and walked on my knees all the way to the altar. When we returned home, Mrs. Czaplinska rubbed salve on my sore knees and hung a necklace with a pendant of the Madonna and child around my neck.

Continue the end of page 49 and page 50

Several days later, while Mrs. Czaplinska was combing my hair, I told her that I felt that Anna and Joseph Schultz were my parents and that I would remain a Christian after the war. I also repeated what the children in the courtyard had said, "It is good that there are no more Jews left."

(From "The Daughter We Had Always Wanted" the International School for Holocaust Studies,)

Ask the students what they understood from the story. If necessary, you can fill in the details. Invite the students to share how they felt while listening to Martha's story and what they think about it.
(10 minutes)

Processing the Information

Summarize and connect it to the previous discussion.

Ask: What parts of her identity did Marta change? In your opinion, what was hardest for her?

Circle of self: Marta changed her name to Christina/Kryshya.

Circle of her family: Marta didn't really change her family, she just pretended that they lived in a village.. But towards the end of the story, she said that she feels like she has different parents.

Circle of her hometown: Marta told everyone she grew up in a village, instead of in the town of Czortkow. In adopting her new identity, she moved to Warsaw.

Circle of her country: Marta remained in Poland.

Circle of her people: Marta pretends to be a Christian, and at a certain point she chooses to adopt that identity for herself.

Ask the students to write down their own definition of the word "identity." Ask for a few students to share what they wrote down. Then ask them what they think is the definition of a "false identity." Compose a definition together on the board. Together with the students, see what the difference is between their definitions for the word "identity" and the definition you came up with together for "false identity." As a class, examine the differences.



A Monument to Good Deeds and Group Work (Hevruta)

(20 minutes)

Show students this short video containing Donia Rozen's ethical will. Afterwards, you'll divide them up to do work in small groups (hevruta). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOeCROldCnc&feature=youtu.be>

The following is the text that accompanies the video:

"From Donia Rozen's Memory of Her Ethical Will – 'A Survivor's Wish to Testify'

From My Journal: June 23, 1943

"Olena managed to get me a few scraps of paper and a pencil stub. I decided to write a journal, and I asked Olena to pass it on to the first Jew she met after the war.

"I am absolutely convinced that I won't survive until the end of this war, but I have a great desire that these words, which I put down on paper with a hand trembling in fear, will live on after me. My wish is that this journal will be preserved as a living testimony to the suffering and torment which were my lot. My wish is that people will remember this period of horrors as a nightmare that passed. I don't know when it will happen, but I am certain that this day will come. That victory will come. That better days than these will come. And my wish is that precisely in those days, after many years, when a better life has blurred the memory of this cruel period, when a schoolchild won't know the answer to the question, Did Hitler have a mustache or a beard – that at that time my words will get people speaking, and will return you to years long gone by. I believe that these memories will teach you to love your friends and hate your enemies. That they will teach you to avenge and combat the enemies of mankind. The enemies of freedom, justice, and law. It is challenging for me to write – perhaps I lack the necessary talent. I don't know if I will be able to reproduce reality with my simple words. I don't know if I will have at hand the necessary colors to immortalize this reality, to immortalize life and death, the storm, the struggle against evil and injustice and cruelty, together with the bitterness, the unending bitterness of my soul. Words fail me. But I must write, I must, because I want to speak with you even after I die, with you people who have already been saved. I want these words to bind me to you. I want to ask you not to forget the dead...

I wish for you to raise a monument for us that will reach to the heavens, a commemoration that the entire world will see. A statue, not of marble nor of stone, but of good deeds. For I believe, with complete faith, that only this kind of monument can ensure a better future for you and your children, where evil never again rules over the world, turning life into hell.”

When the video ends, divide the students into groups of two or three. Give each group the handout (Lesson Two, Appendix A) with a text to study and questions to answer.

In order to engage more deeply in our Torah study, and to create a peer group experience where everyone’s voice is valued equally, there is an age-old Jewish custom of studying in hevruta. Your class, too, will experience what it’s like to study in hevruta.

Divide the class into groups of two to three students. Each group (hevruta) will receive a sheet with a number of sources on it. Instruct the students to read the texts, study them together, and respond to the attached questions. When they have finished, ask each group to share the insights they gained. Make it clear to the students that there’s no single right answer to the attached questions, but rather the significance of group study is in listening to many different voices and opinions.

Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya would say

"To what may one whose wisdom exceeds his deeds be compared?

To a tree with many branches but few roots.

When the wind comes, it uproots and overturns it.

To what may one whose deeds exceed his wisdom be compared?

To a tree with few branches but many roots.

Even if all the winds in the world were to come and blow against it, they couldn't move it from its place."

(Based on Ethics of Our Fathers, 3:22)

Explanation

Wisdom = Learning

Deeds = Acts of loving-kindness (chesed) and charity (tzedakah)

1. Read the source from Ethics of Our Fathers.
2. Explain in your own words what the source is saying.
3. According to this source, how can a person (who is compared to a tree) survive difficult periods (which are compared to the wind)?
4. What is the connection between this source and Donia Rozen's request?
5. Make a list of things you could do together to increase your good deeds.



Class Discussion

Ask the students to share their responses. If necessary, you can add:

Question 1: Rabbi Elazar says that people must be sure to engage in good deeds and not only in study. If he engages only in study, he'll be like a tree with few roots. The wind can easily uproot trees like that. If he makes sure to do acts of kindness and good deeds, then he'll be like a tree with deep roots that the wind can't uproot. Pay attention to the comparison between good deeds and roots. Usually we speak about roots when we're speaking about previous generations. In this case, good deeds connect us to the previous generations more than study does.

Question 2: By increasing his good deeds, he will make himself and those around him stronger, leaving himself a better chance of surviving through hard times.

Question 3: Donia Rozen asked us, the generations after the Holocaust, to erect a Monument of Good Deeds. As she wrote, good deeds have the power to banish evil from the world. Both she and the source from Ethics of Our Fathers ask us to multiply our good deeds.

Ask the students how they think they could fulfill Donia Rozen's will in their daily lives. Stress to them that every little deed contributes to creating the monument of good deeds. Your class, too, together with your partner class, will contribute to creating it.



Joint Project With Your Partner Class

(20 minutes)

For this lesson, you and your partner class will jointly undertake one of two projects. Make sure to coordinate your choice with the teacher of your partner class.

Regardless of which option you choose, it is important that you emphasize to your students that both you and the students from our partner class are part of the Jewish people. Donia Rozen left her will to the entire Jewish people, no matter where they live. We need to remember that the more people take part in activities intended to increase goodness, the greater the effect in multiplying goodness.

Option #1 – Publicizing the idea of the monument

Divide the class into groups of four to five students. Each group will create a poster to publicize the idea of jointly creating a Monument of Good Deeds. Take a picture of the posters and turn it into a slideshow to send to the whole school community so they can know about the idea also. Send the slideshow to your partner community as well.

Option #2 – Collecting tzedakah

Together with your school administration, set a day to hold a carnival to raise money for tzedakah. It's key that throughout the fair you should publicize the fair's goal and mention the idea of the Monument of Good Deeds. Every student from the class should bring in a baked good or drink to sell. Donate the proceeds to an organization that provides support for Holocaust survivors. Make the decision about who each class should donate to together with the teacher of your partner class. You can make a video of the fair and send it to your partner class.

Conclusion

Today we learned about Donia Rozen's will and about Marta Goren's story. We learned about the difficulties that children faced as they were forced to change their identities. We were happy to discover that for some of them, enduring these difficulties saved their lives. We also spoke about the pieces of our identity, as well as that of the students in our partner class. We saw how good deeds can increase the goodness in the world and contribute to make a better, more perfect society.

Appendix



Lesson One, Appendix A

Genesis 24:14

“The young woman to whom I will say, ‘Please, offer your pitcher that I may drink,’ and who replies, ‘Drink, and I will also water your camels’ – let her be the one whom You have chosen for Your servant Isaac. By this I will know that You have dealt kindly (chesed) with my master.”

This verse comes from the Torah portion, Hayei Sarah, in Genesis. Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for his son, Isaac. Before the servant reaches the well, he decides that he’s going to ask the young woman he meets there (who turns out to be Rebecca) for some water. If she offers water not only to him but also to his camels, then he’ll know that she’s meant to be Isaac’s wife and that God has done a kindness for him.

Genesis 40:14

“But remember me when it is well with you, and do me the kindness (chesed) of mentioning me to Pharaoh, in order to get me out of this place.”

This verse comes from the Torah portion Vayeshev, in Genesis. After Joseph is brought down to Egypt he is thrown in jail. While he is in jail, Joseph correctly interprets the dreams of Pharaoh’s chief cupbearer and his chief baker. The chief cupbearer is pleased by Joseph’s interpretation, and Joseph asks him to do him a kindness. Joseph asks the chief cupbearer to speak with Pharaoh after he is released from jail and ask Pharaoh to free Joseph from jail.

Hosea 6:6

"For I desire kindness (chesed), not sacrifice; obedience to God, rather than burnt offerings."

In this verse, from the book of Hosea, Hosea prophesizes to the people that God would rather they do acts of loving-kindness than bring sacrifices in the Holy Temple. When the Holy Temple was destroyed, prayers took the place of sacrifices. In that sense, a new interpretation of the verse is that God would rather the people do acts of loving-kindness than just pray.

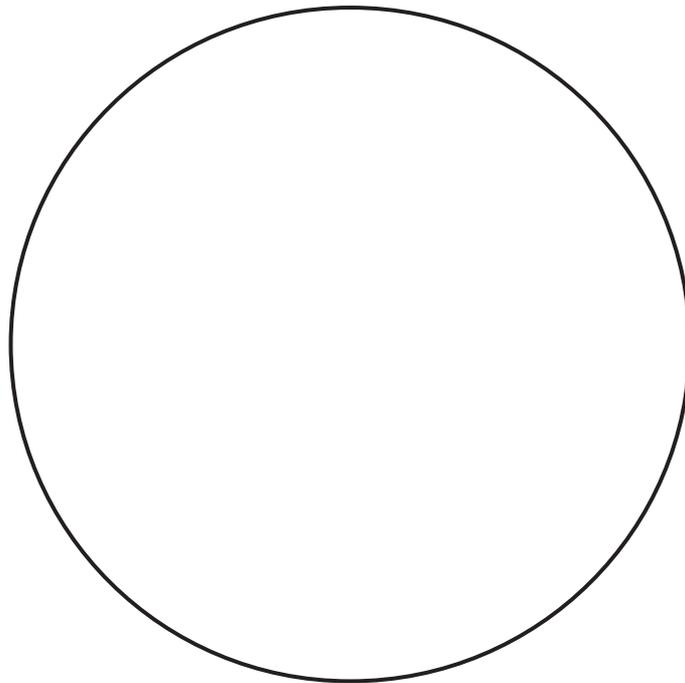
Read these three passages and together come up with answers to the following questions

1. In the first passage, Abraham's servant says that God has done a kindness for him. Do you think Rebecca herself was acting out of kindness? Why?
2. Why does Joseph think that the chief cupbearer mentioning him to Pharaoh would be an act of kindness?
3. What is the difficulty that Rebecca faces and that the chief cupbearer will face if he brings Joseph up with Pharaoh?
4. In your opinion, why does God prefer loving-kindness to sacrifices or prayer?
5. Is there a connection between these acts of kindness and the actions of the Righteous Gentiles?

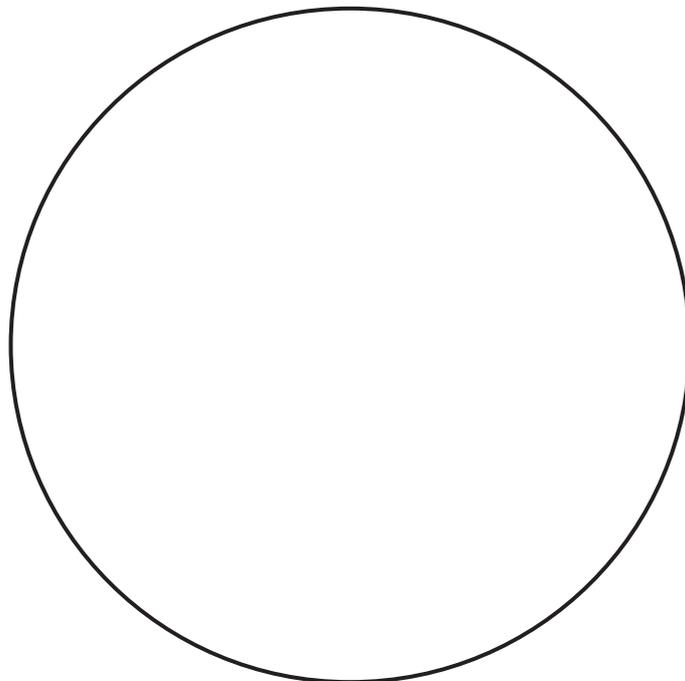
Lesson One, Appendix B

Medal for the Righteous entiles

Side A



Side B



"Whoever saves one life... it is as if he has saved an entire world."
(Based on the Mishna, Sanhedrin 4:5)

Lesson Two, Appendix A

Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya would say:

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