

# How I Met your *Middot*: Jewish Virtues in American Pop Culture

A curriculum for 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade learners  
by Dusty Klass

Topic	Content	Learner/Setting
<p><i>Middot</i>, specifically within the two categories of <i>tipul l'atzmo</i> [caring for oneself] and <i>tipul kehilah</i> [caring for ones community].</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shmirat haGuf</i> and <i>Heshbon haNefesh</i> Healthy Bodies, Healthy Souls</li> <li>• <i>Ometz Lev</i> and <i>Samayach b'Chelko</i> Courage and Contentment</li> <li>• <i>Someach Noflim v'Rofeh Cholim</i> Lifting the Fallen, Healing the Sick</li> <li>• <i>Hachnasat Orchim</i> and <i>Dibuk Chaverim</i> Welcoming Guests and Cleaving to Friends</li> </ul>	<p>Learner: Jewish American Teens in 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades</p> <p>Setting: Synagogue supplementary school, or 8-week summer camp program</p>

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Dear Educator,

Thank you for your interest in this curriculum guide! Below, some answers to a few questions you might have:

*What do I need to know or be able to do in order to teach this guide successfully?*

The two most important tools you should have in your toolbox when teaching this guide are first, a love of Judaism and Jewish knowledge and second, a love of pop culture. Ideally, you are already an avid consumer of pop culture, but if you are not, now is the time to get started! The idea of this curriculum is to get your learners to see *middot*, Jewish virtues, popping out of the content of their favorite shows. Hopefully, this will happen to you as well, preferably before you begin teaching the curriculum itself. For more on this, see my rationale.

*How is this CG organized?*

The guide is organized in chronological teaching order; it begins by introducing the idea of “cultural navigation”, continues by familiarizing learners with the *middot* it will focus on, and then dives into the way *middot* show up in various pop culture settings! Along the way the guide tries to complicate matters a bit and give the learners some challenges.

It is important to note that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers in this guide – learners must feel free to grapple with these *middot* and whether or not they personally feel a need to adhere to them. This guide does not seek to “make better Jews” out of the learners, but rather to provide learners with a *middot* toolkit for navigating the world, to be used in whatever way they so choose.

*How might timing be adjusted if needed? Where are the opportunities for me to customize or adjust things to my own personality or needs?*

Adjust away! This CG is only a guide; it is not a complete curriculum. As such, it is actually imperative that you DO adjust timing and content to your comfort level and the comfort level of your learners.

*What is the timing or timeline of the CG?*

The curriculum in full could be completed in a semester, a year, or a full-summer camp session, depending on the amount of time you have with your learners and the frequency of your meetings.

*Where can the handouts be found?*

Handouts for each lesson can be found directly after the lesson for which they should be used.

Enjoy!  
Dusty Klass

# Rationale

The dissonant worlds in which liberal Jewish American teenagers live tend to be pit against each other. Nine times out of ten, pop culture trumps Jewish values. But what if teens had the tools to see their Judaism reflected in their everyday interaction with America and popular culture?

For about three months, Australian pop group One Direction’s song “What Makes You Beautiful” was permanently stuck in my head. Generally this proved frustrating, but one morning, it proved revelatory. As the tune permeated my thoughts, a vision formed in my mind. The vision looked something like this:

Is this a display of *anavut*, of being humble? Or is there a disconnect here between the “you” of the song and his/her body image, in which case we’re looking at a conversation about *shmirat haguf*, caring for your body.

You’re insecure,  
don’t know what for.  
You’re turning heads  
when you walk  
through the door.

Don’t need makeup,  
to cover up;  
being the way that you are  
is enough...

What does Judaism say about insecurity? Well, that we’re all created *b’tzelem elohim*, in the image of God. That means we’re all, each of us, Godly. God made us to be like God, which must mean God thinks you, me and everyone we know are awesome!

everyone else in the room can see it,  
everyone else but you.

Baby you light up my world like nobody else,  
The way that you flip your hair gets me overwhelmed.  
But when you smile at the ground it ain’t hard to tell;  
You don’t know (oh oh) – you don’t know you’re beautiful.

Observant Jews actually cover their hair as a measure of *tzniut*, modesty, for this very reason!

Jewish American teenagers spend much of their teenage years navigating their role as cultural straddlers.<sup>1</sup> They identify as both Jewish and American, and have rare opportunities to explore and articulate the ways those two identities can inform and assist each other. This curriculum guide aims to provide precisely this opportunity.

<sup>1</sup> Cultural Straddlers: “navigate strategically between multiple cultures, including their ethnic and peer groups, communities, and schools”- Prudence Carter as quoted in Sivan Zakai (2006): A Review of: “Keepin’ It Real: School Success Beyond Black and White”, Journal of Jewish Education, 72:2, 145-149



## **So What? So middot.**

*Middot*, Jewish virtues, present a roadmap for traversing life’s great challenges. Virtues help us explore the inherent difficulties we encounter when moving through the world. They anchor our decisions, providing something to go on beyond simple “gut feelings.” In fact, Jewish virtues often present two ways of looking at the same situation, sometimes even contradicting each other. Teens introducing a school friend to their NFTY community may struggle between *hachnasat orchim*, welcoming this new guest, and *dibuk chaverim*, cleaving to their already-formed NFTY group. Double-messages introduces much-needed nuance into conversations about heavy topics.

Teens are constantly being pulled in countless directions: loyalties conflict, doing the “right” thing doesn’t always feel “good,” and there isn’t enough time in the world to get much-needed rest. The content of this curriculum guide speaks to those “pulls” by focusing upon two categories of *middot* that at times clash: *tipul l’atzmo* (caring for oneself) and *tipul kehilah* (caring for ones community).

The *Tipul l’atzmo* (self-care) *middot* include:

- *Shmirat haGuf* and *Heshbon haNefesh* – Healthy Bodies, Healthy Souls. This category addresses balance and growth, protecting the body, and restoring the soul.
- *Ometz Lev* and *Samayach b’Chelko* – Courage and Contentment. This category addresses the dilemmas of when to step up and when to step back.

The *Tipul kehilah* (community-care) *middot* include:

- *Somech Noflim v’Rofeh Cholim* – Lifting the Fallen, Healing the Sick. This category will deal with ways in which we can support and heal within our communities.
- *Hachnasat Orchim* and *Dibuk Chaverim* – Welcoming Guests and Cleaving to Friends. This category explores the question: What do we do when our obligations to “guests” and “friends” conflict?

The specific *middot* chosen reflect teen needs at this point in their growth and development. Teens understand the world in relation to themselves and tend to be self-ish, though they rarely practice self-care. *And while they strive to practice community-care, their communities frequently collide.* As a result, teens can end up feeling helpless, caught between conflicting agendas.

Delving into select Jewish teachings on self-care will enable teens to shape themselves into self-aware humans. Thus, the community-care concepts will balance the self-care units, enabling learners to look beyond themselves and into the larger world. Community-care units will provide space for learners to struggle not only with the world as it is and as it could be, but also with their roles and responsibilities in helping create that “could be” world.

As mentioned above, the curriculum presents the above *middot* through the lens of American popular culture. On a first level, this enables pop-culture-saturated learners to access the *middot*. But more than that, using pop culture shows learners the implicit Jewish content present in their overwhelmingly secular-looking world. A TV show character doesn’t have to be Jewish to

display an act of courage, but through this curriculum learners will acquire the ability to recognize that character's action on a deeper level, as an act of *ometz lev*.

This curriculum will best be taught by someone who is steeped both in popular culture and *middot*. Additionally, the specific popular cultural items used within the curriculum guide will need to be updated over time by the user; ideally similar types of media will be available (one TV show can be used to replace another, etc). This, unfortunately and fortunately, is the nature of using popular culture as a teaching tool; popular culture by its definition bound to the specific period of time and culture in which it was popular.

Learners will be assessed by their ability to recognize, articulate, and analyze the *middot* present in the Youtube video that has most recently gone viral, or the latest episode of their favorite TV show. When they can do that, Judaism has become relevant to everyday life.

Enduring Understandings:

- Secular American culture overflows with vibrant Jewish content.
- Tensions that arise between different Jewish virtues enhance their ethical guiding power.
- Jewish virtues bolster everyday moments, decisions, and life choices.

Essential Questions:

1. Can a thing be Jewish if nothing explicitly Jewish is present in that thing?
2. Why should we practice *middot*?
3. Are we more obligated to our communities or ourselves?
4. When is it more important to be courageous (step up) and when is it more important to be content (step back)?
5. What do we do when our obligations to our *orchim* [guests] and *chaverim* [friends] conflict?

# Unit Sequence

## Unit 1: Why are we learning this? *Middot* as cultural navigation tools

Introducing the idea of culture and cultural straddling

## Unit 2: What's so Jewish?: A Survey of *Middot* [Scripted]

Learners will discover and delve into the curriculum's chosen *middot*?

- Shmirat haGuf and Heshbon haNefesh – Healthy Bodies, Healthy Souls: balance and growth / protecting the body, restoring the soul
- Ometz Lev and Samayach b'Chelko – Courage and Contentment: When to step up and when to step back
- Somech Noflim v'Rofeh Cholim – Lifting the Fallen, Healing the Sick: Ways we can support and heal within our communities
- Hachnasat Orchim and Dibuk Chaverim – Welcoming Guests and Cleaving to Friends: What do we do when our obligations to “guests” and “friends” conflict?
- **Building block assessment:** Learners will write a script whose main characters are two conflicting *middot* (think bibliodrama for *middot*). The script will present a conflict between the two *middot* and the resolution the *middot* come to in the end.

## Unit 3: That's so Jewish!: A Survey of American Pop Culture

Learners will come to recognize specific *middot* within different aspects of popular culture

- **Ongoing Assessment:** Learners will maintain a list [via googledocs or some other shared file] of popular culture artifacts and which “*middot* moments” they contain.
- **Unit Assessment:** Learners will create and conduct a presentation connecting one *middah* to one one pop culture artifact they encounter in their everyday life.

## Unit 4: When *Middot* Conflict

Learners will analyze moments of struggle between the categories of *middot* (and the specific *middot* themselves) at different moments in different pop culture settings.

- **Authentic Assessment:** Learners will create a *middot* decision-making dropdown chart, a method for dealing with moments in life that require them to “choose” one *middah* over another (or to choose something other than a *middah* over and above adhering to the *middah*).

## Unit 5: Measuring *Middot* Levels

This unit is entirely based on preparing and executing a final, authentic assessment:

- **Authentic Assessment:** Learners will complete a class analysis of their personal pop culture consumption through the lens of the *middot* levels present in the various pop culture media and artists they “consume.” They will choose as a class in what way they would like to display their results.

# **Unit 1:**

## **Why are we learning this?**

### ***Middot* as Cultural Navigation Tools**

Relevant Unit EUs:

- Secular American culture overflows with vibrant Jewish content.
- Tensions that arise between different Jewish virtues enhance their ethical guiding power.
- Jewish virtues bolster everyday moments, decisions, and life choices.

Goals:

- To explore “culture” as a concept
- To introduce the concept of cultural navigation
- To show learners the different worlds in which they live
- To outline the trajectory of the curriculum

Objectives: By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- Define “culture” and “cultural navigation”
- Name the different cultures of which they are part
- Analyze the different cultures of which they are part

Outcomes:

- Ongoing: learners will keep a folder of handouts and completed closure activities. This data will become a tool for them to return to and refer to throughout the curriculum.

# What is Culture?

## Unit 1, Lesson 1

### Lesson Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Define the term “culture”
- Name the cultures in which they are a part

### Lesson-specific Essential Questions:

- How should we define culture?

### Materials:

- Copies of Bruner’s definition of culture

**Set Induction:** Play a short game of word association – ask learners to write down the first word that comes to mind when they hear the term “culture”. Go around and have learners share if time permits.

### Learning Experience #1: What is culture?

Facilitator presents a mini-lecture with interspersed discussion:

- Part 1: Talk through some elements of culture<sup>2</sup>
  - **Symbols:** “things that stand for something else and that often evoke various reactions and emotions”
    - Nonverbal – example: handshake – “commonly conveys friendship and is used as a sign of both greeting and departure.”
    - Objects – example: the American flag – “symbol of freedom, democracy, and other American values”
  - **Language**
  - **Norms:** “standards and expectations for behaving”
    - **Formal** – “also called *mores* (MOR-ays) and *laws*, refer to the standards of behavior considered the most important in any society”
    - **Informal** – “also called *folkways* and *customs*, refer to standards of behavior that are considered less important but still influence how we behave.”
  - **Rituals:** “established procedures and ceremonies that often mark transitions in the life course.”
  - **Values:** “involve judgments of what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable.

**Note to Facilitator:** Skimming through the information here: [http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/bookhub/reader/2?e=barkbrief-ch02\\_s02](http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/bookhub/reader/2?e=barkbrief-ch02_s02) before teaching the “elements of culture” section will aid you in your ability to speak to the elements.

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<sup>2</sup> Most information for this section is pulled from here:

[http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/bookhub/reader/2?e=barkbrief-ch02\\_s02](http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/bookhub/reader/2?e=barkbrief-ch02_s02)

- A culture's values shape its norms.”
- **Artifacts:** “material objects that constitute a society's material culture”
- Part 2: Hand out and read through Jerome Bruner's definition of culture
  - Choose a learner to read the first section. After reading, ask the following clarifying/checking for understanding questions before continuing to the next section. Repeat for all three sections:
    - Questions:
      - Are there any words anyone would like clarification on?
      - Can anyone put this into his/her own words?
      - What are the implications of this definition?
    - **Section One:** “Culture is what shapes human conceptions of what gets accepted as customary, banal, conventional; in short, what is ordinary. Accordingly, institutions will seek to bring that which is not deemed ordinary, into the canon of the category, 'ordinary.’
    - **Section Two:** In addition to determining what is ordinary, culture shapes our conceptions of what is possible (and therefore impossible). Culture limits what people believe can be within the realm of possibility.
    - **Section Three:** Finally, culture provides humans with the means of relating to what is ordinary and what is possible (we develop strategies).<sup>3</sup>

### **Learning Experience #2: What is YOUR culture?**

Play a game of Culture “Sing Down”

- Divide learners into groups of 3-4
- Explain the rules:
  - Facilitator will list a culture.
  - Each group will have two minutes to write down as many characteristics of that culture (thinking through each of the elements) as possible.
  - After the time is up, teams take turns reading characteristics from their lists; at least one person per team must be able to explain the characteristic. Teams get a point for each characteristic on no other team's list.
- Cultures to play the game with:
  - Required:
    - American Culture
    - Jewish Culture
    - Popular Culture
  - Optional
    - Israeli Culture
    - Gaming Culture
    - Additional cultures as determined relevant by the facilitator

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<sup>3</sup> From Tali Zelkowitz's Powerpoint presentation on Jewish Identity Formation, slide 9. Sociology of Jewish Education notes, 9/16/13.

# Identity Mapping and Cultural Navigation

## Unit 1, Lesson 2

### Lesson Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Define the term “cultural navigation”
- Recognize moments of cultural navigation

### Lesson-specific Essential Questions:

- How do I [the learner] culturally navigate my worlds?

### Materials:

- Computer, Speakers, Projector
- Paper, writing utensils, different colors of highlighters

### Set Induction: Watch “Hebrew Mamita”

Youtube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAeWyGGTdEE>

### Learning Experience #1: Who are you? Identity Mapping

- Step 1: Instruct learners to take 5 full minutes to brainstorm, on paper, all possible ways they can be characterized. Those who get stuck can be given the following categories to help them:
  - Titles:
    - Given name
    - Professional titles e.g. junior lifeguard, babysitter
    - Nicknames
    - Relationships e.g. friend, brother, son, confidante
  - Characteristics:
    - Adjectives you or others would use to describe you
  - Roles you play in the world:
    - Positions you hold in clubs, on sports teams, etc.
- Step 2: Ask learners to narrow their list down to the top five; if they only had five characteristics/roles/titles to describe themselves, which of those they listed would they choose?
  - Go around and have learners share their five words (no explanation, just the five words).
- Step 3: Ask learners to choose one of their top 5 characteristics to explain to the group – why did they choose to include that characteristic in their top 5?
- Step 4: On a corner of their page, ask learners to list the top 3 cultures they see themselves belonging to. Then instruct them to color-categorize the characteristics, titles and roles that fit into each culture using three different highlighter markers. Some (perhaps many) will overlap – this is a good thing.
- Step 5: Analyze the results:
  - Which culture was most dominant?

- What characteristics fell into multiple culture categories?
- Did people find similarities in the way they chose to categorize their characteristics into cultures?

### **Learning Experience #2: Connecting the dots**

Cultural navigation in “Keeping it Real” and in Jewish education

- Step 1: Ask learners to individually read through excerpts from Sivan Zakai’s book review of Prudence Carter’s “Keepin’ it Real: School Success Beyond Black and White” [Appendix A]  
As they read, learners should pay special attention to the three types of students and think about the ways in which Jewish teens can parallel each of the three types.
- Step 2: Discussion Questions
  - What are the three types of students Carter describes?
  - What do those three types of students “look like” in a Jewish setting?
  - What does Zakai suggest is the best method for dealing with people who live in multiple cultural spaces?
  - Where does this comparison (between black students in a white-dominated world and Jews in an American world) work? Where doesn’t it work?
  - What are the benefits of cultural navigation? What are the drawbacks (if any)?

### **Closure: Identity Maps + Cultural navigation**

Explain: Today we looked first at our own selves and the space we take up in the various cultures in which we live. Then we looked at one argument for something called “cultural navigation.” For the rest of our time together, we are going to explore this idea of cultural navigation, using *middot*, Jewish virtues, as a way to see popular culture through a Jewish lens. By the end of this curriculum, you will be able to turn on the radio, listen to a Beyonce song, and enjoy it not just as a 17-year-old, not just as an American 17-year-old, but as an American Jewish 17-year-old.



## Appendix A - Excerpts from a book review of “Keepin’ It Real: School Success Beyond Black and White”

Valerie King (pseudonym) is a member of the “hip-hop generation.” A stylish 14-year-old African American girl from a working class neighborhood in Yonkers, New York, Valerie is surrounded by academic underachievers. Her peer circle predominately consists of teenage mothers, and Valerie is the only one of her friends enrolled in the honors program at Townson High School. She speaks Standard English in school, but switches to a Black vernacular dialect when among her friends. Valerie is popular in her school and home communities even though she does not follow the trends set by her Black neighborhood peers or her White classmates.

Valerie is dissimilar to many Jewish teenagers, so what makes her story relevant to Jewish education? Valerie is a “**cultural straddler**,” a term coined by Harvard sociologist of education Prudence L. Carter to describe young adults who are able to tap into the resources of mainstream American society while still maintaining a strong sense of cultural identity. Cultural straddlers are “characterized by bicultural perspectives, they are strategic movers across the cultural spheres” (p. 30). In other words, they are able to successfully inhabit the world of mainstream American society without losing touch with their distinct cultural heritage.

Carter categorizes three types of students who differ in the ways that they navigate cultural identity: cultural mainstreamers, noncompliant believers, and cultural straddlers. It is this third group, the cultural straddlers like Valerie King, who are most important for the context of Jewish education.

**Cultural mainstreamers**, the first group Carter identifies, embrace assimilation. They adopt dominant cultural forms of speech, music, art, and clothing and see these forms of culture not only as valuable, but as normal. While cultural mainstreamers can be racially and ethnically “aware,” their primary approach to culture is to “fit” into the dominant (i.e., White) cultural system. As a result, they are often successful in school, but they “face disapproval among their peers for their rejection of ethnic or in-group cultural codes” (p. 43).

**Noncompliant believers** are less academically successful than cultural mainstreamers, although they also believe that education is the primary route to

economic success. Their behavior is characterized by opposition and resistance. These students often have limited cultural capital, and they refuse to accept the norms of the “culture of power” (Delpit, 1995).

**Cultural straddlers**, like noncompliant believers, do not accept that dominant cultural forms should be normative, but like cultural mainstreamers they are successful in school. This is because they possess multiple forms of cultural capital that allow them “to navigate strategically between multiple cultures, including their ethnic and peer groups, communities, and schools” (p. 13). Some cultural straddlers embrace the cultural codes of both home and school communities; others are critical of the schools’ cultural norms but still know how to succeed in them. In either case, cultural straddlers have what it takes to succeed in schools dominated by White cultural norms, but they are known among their peers for “keepin’ it real” because they can exchange dominant cultural capital for the cultural capital valued in their home communities.

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Sivan Zakai (2006): A Review of: “Keepin’ It Real: School Success Beyond Black and White”, *Journal of Jewish Education*, 72:2, 145-149

## Unit 2: What's so Jewish? Meeting the *Middot*

### Relevant Unit EUs:

- Secular American culture overflows with vibrant Jewish content.
- Jewish virtues bolster everyday moments, decisions, and life choices.

### Goals:

- To introduce the idea of *middot*, virtues
- To provide a sturdy base of *middot* with which to work in future units
- To begin to unpack the *middot* central to this curriculum:
  - *Shmirat haGuf* – Guarding the body, taking care of your physical self
  - *Heshbon haNefesh* – Soul check-in, caring for your soul
  - *Ometz Lev* – Strength of heart, courage
  - *Samayach b'Chelko* –Contentment
  - *Somech Noflim v'Rofeh Cholim* – Lifting the Fallen, Healing the Sick
  - *Hachnasat Orchim* – Welcoming Guests
  - *Dibuk Chaverim* –Cleaving to Friends
- To explore the nuanced nature of *middot*

### Objectives: By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- Define the term “virtue”
- Define *middah/middot* as virtues with uniquely Jewish components
- Recall/list all eight *middot*
- Match each of the eight *middot* with a corresponding Jewish text and/or teaching
- Compare and contrast the eight *middot*
- Describe the way in which at least one *middah* is present in their lives
- Identify one *middah* to focus on making a more important part of their lives
- Distinguish between the two categories of *middot*: a) *tipul atzmi* – self care and b) *tipul kehilah* – community care
- Analyze various situations which call for either self or community care and argue for the implementation of one over the other

### Outcomes:

- Ongoing: learners will keep a folder of handouts and completed closure activities. This data will become a tool for them to return to and refer to throughout the curriculum.
- Assessments: Learners will write a script whose main characters are two conflicting *middot* (think bibliodrama for *middot*). The script will present a conflict between the two *middot* and the resolution that the *middot* come to in the end.

# Mi-what? (Middot!)

## Unit 2, Lesson 1

### Lesson Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Define the term “virtue”
2. Recall/list all eight *middot*.
3. Define *middah/middot* as uniquely Jewish virtues.

### Lesson-specific Essential Questions:

- What is a virtue?
- What makes a Jewish virtue Jewish?
- Why study THESE *middot*?

### Materials:

- Eight large pieces of paper
- Tape to secure paper to walls
- Markers for learners to write on wall-papers
- Copies of #virtue text sheets
- Whiteboard and markers for brainstorming
- Lined paper and pencils for freewrite

### Timeline:

- 00:00-00:05 Set Induction**
- 00:05-00:20 Introducing....middah! [#virtue]**
- 00:20-00:30 What make a Jewish virtue Jewish?**
- 00:30-00:45 Middah Gallery**
- 00:45-00:55 Condensing and Defining**
- 00:55-01:00 Freewrite**

### Detailed Timeline:

#### **00:00-00:05 – Set Induction**

Ask: Why do we do good things in the world?

*Potential responses: because we're supposed to, because otherwise we get in trouble, because it makes us feel good*

Explain: We will be spending most of our time together talking about *middot*, Jewish virtues. Virtues are often thought of, on the most basic level, as the habits that keep us 'doing good' in the world, but by the end of the day I'm hoping we'll each be able to come up with our own definition of what *middot* are to us.

#### **00:05-00:20 – Introduce middah as virtue**

- Activity: To help us define virtue, we are going to begin by surveying the “popular” understanding of virtue.

- [Ten minutes] #virtue scavenger hunt:
  - Learners will receive an envelope full of tweets [Appendix A] that contain #virtue.
  - Explain: Analyzing a cross-section of tweets that include #virtue will allow us to explore how the twittersphere defines “virtue”.
  - Have learners pair up and analyze the tweet data. They should complete the two following tasks:
    - Look at each tweet individually. How does each tweeter seem to be defining “virtue”?
    - Organize the tweets using whatever categories you choose (similar definitions, famous-people quotes, etc)

Note to Facilitator: What is a hashtag?? The act of “hashtagging” is a Twitter tool that has become part of everyday parlance. People add the hashtag symbol - # - to the beginning of a word or phrase. It is often used to help categorize statements made about a topic or event. So if a group of people went out for Rachel’s 17<sup>th</sup> birthday party and decided to tweet about it, they could each use the hashtag “#Miriam17!” [e.g. “This cake is gigantic! #Miriam17!”]. Then later, people could look back and see what everyone else had to say about the party by searching for “#Miriam17. Thus, analyzing all tweets that include #virtue will allow the group to explore how the twittersphere defines “virtue”.

**Example:**



1. This tweeter (and George Washington) seem to believe that standing your ground (or perhaps even contentment!) is a virtue.
2. This tweet would go into a category with other tweets that are quotes made by famous people.

- [Five minutes] Re-group, share, and come up with a working definition of what the twittersphere thinks “virtue” means.

**00:15-00:30 – Middah Gallery**

- Explain: Now that we have a basic understanding of what *middah* means, we’re going to begin exploring the specific *middot*

Setup: Before class, attach eight large pieces of paper to the wall, with one *middah* written on each piece of paper. Make sure to post the instructions as well.

we'll be paying special attention to all year. Around the room, as I'm sure you've noticed by now, there are eight big pieces of paper, each with one *middah* written on it. Take the next ten minutes to walk around the room and take a minute to contribute to each poster. There are instructions posted that give you some options about what kinds of things you can add to the poster. We'll go through them once together so that you can ask questions:

○ Instructions:

▪ You may do any of the following on this piece of paper:

1. Think of one person you know who does this well/embodies this characteristic. Describe a time you saw this person display an act described by this word.
2. Play word association with the written *middah* and list these word [e.g. when I think of "courage," the first things that come to mind are "the cowardly lion", and the book "Red Badge of Courage"]
3. Draw the first thing that comes to mind when you read the word

Make sure you contribute to each paper. Try to add something new to the paper rather than repeat something that has already been written. You may choose to respond to or comment on another's contribution if you wish.

List of *middot* for the posters:

- Shmirat haGuf – Guarding the Body - Caring for the Body
- Heshbon haNefesh – Soul Checkin – Restoring the Soul
- Ometz Lev – Strength of Heart - Courage
- Samayach b'Chelko –Contentment
- Somech Noflim – Supporting the Fallen
- Rofeh Cholim – Healing the Sick
- Hachnasat Orchim – Welcoming Guests
- Dibuk Chaverim – Sticking Close/Holding Tightly to Friends

### ***00:30-00:45 – But what makes a virtue Jewish?***

**Note to Facilitator:**

Essentially, virtues are Jewish because Jews do them in Jewish spaces. This presents that response in addition to a few others.

Ask learners to brainstorm "virtue scenarios"

Explain: Think of times you did something that could be classified within one of the eight categories listed on the posters we used at the beginning (see p. xx)]

Examples:

- Courage: hiking Half Dome [17-mile hike in Yosemite National Park]
- Contentment: walking out of school on the last day before summer break, the "I feel infinite" scene in the perks of being a wallflower
- Shmirat HaGuf: eating breakfast

- Heshbon HeNefesh: taking a few minutes when you wake up to think about your day; pre-swim meet / soccer game meditation moment
- Supporting and Healing: visiting a friend who's stuck at home sick
- Welcoming the guest: inviting a new student to hang out

Now what makes these scenarios Jewish? What is uniquely Jewish about *middot*?

**Note to Facilitator:** The greatest enduring dilemma when teaching *middot* is grappling with the question of “what makes a *middah*, a Jewish virtue, Jewish?” I do not know if there is one clear concise answer to this question, and I also do not believe there is one “right” answer to this question. Virtues in general are universal, and by teaching about virtues as Jewish, I do not negate that fact.

Rather, teaching *middot* gives universal virtues a Jewish lens, a Jewish “spin”. Additionally, it is important to note that the purpose of this curriculum is to teach *middot* as Judaism-infused decision-making tools rather than as a required way to live life.

An example: *ometz lev*, which is often translated as “courage” could also be translated more literally as “strength of heart,” aka “facing ones fears.” This curriculum gives learners the opportunity to do three things with this idea:

1. Explore the nuance: are “courage” and “strength of heart” the same thing? Does Judaism teach “right” and/or “wrong” ways to be courageous? Where are the connections between
2. Look at instances of *ometz lev* in Jewish tradition, comparing and contrasting it with secular instances of *ometz lev*. Where are the similarities? Where are the differences? What acts of *ometz lev* are uniquely “Jewish”, if there are any at all?
3. Analyze moments in their world in which using the lens of *ometz lev* (perhaps in conjunction with additional *middot*) can assist them in decision-making.

The conversation you will have during this section of the lesson plan should:

- a) Present ways in which *middot* are enhanced through uniquely Jewish lens
- b) Give learners the opportunity to push back against the idea that *middot* are “only” Jewish
- c) Invite learners to play, throughout the curriculum, with the idea of *middot* as having a specifically Jewish component that can help

Facilitator leads mini-lecture about some ways in which you can speak about *middot*'s specifically Jewish traits:

- Scenarios in which people act according to one virtue or another [e.g. bringing soup to someone who's stuck at home sick] can be paralleled with a specifically Jewish scenario or imperative [e.g. God visits Abraham during his post-circumcision recuperation (Genesis 17:26-18:1). Talmud (need citation) based on this verse, teaches: "as He visited the sick, so shall you visit the sick." Voila, *bikkur cholim*.
  - Another way to say this is that the virtue can be found throughout canonical tradition

- The simple act of speaking about virtues as *middot*, of using Hebrew language, nuances those *middot*. Speaking about virtues using “Jewish language” makes them Jewish (it doesn’t negate their also-universal qualities, just adds a Jewish “flavor” to them).
- Practicing *Middot* is enmeshed in the way Jews act in the world. This can be thought of as the “Jews bring food” reason – Jews who know no *halacha* and have never heard the word *middot* know to bring a *kugel* when someone dies. It’s an almost mechanical reaction.

**00:45-00:55 – Condensing and Defining**

[Five minutes] Redirect the learners’ attention to the posters:

- Does one or more stand out to you as particularly important?
- Which one was hardest to connect to your own life?

[Five minutes] Divvy up the posters between groups of three learners and ask them to write a one-sentence summary for each poster they have been given. Have groups share their summaries

- How did it feel to summarize the contents of these posters into a sentence? How does this help further the goals/objectives of this lesson? (alignment question)

**00:55-01:00 – Freewrite**

Choose one prompt to respond to:

- I am most interested in learning more about X virtue because...
- List the virtues in order of importance according to you. Then explain your reasoning.
- What makes a virtue Jewish for YOU? [you can choose to write about an addition to the list we came up with, or one that is on the list that particularly spoke to you.]



## Appendix A:



**Rick Paul** @RickSoldinie

27 Jul

The majority of TV encourages one to sloth. Read a book. Hike a trail. Contemplate. Create an original thought. Aspire to habits of **#virtue**

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**Michael Jai White** @MichaelJaiWhite

22 Jul

Self-respect is the **#cornerstone** of all **#virtue**.

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**IMTS 2014** @IMTS\_2014

4 Jun

**#Patience** is a **#virtue**. 5 great tips for leaders to use the powers of patience. [onforb.es/14beuPY](http://onforb.es/14beuPY)

📄 View summary

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**Dara Feldman** @Heart\_of\_Ed

12 May

Happy Mother's Day! Today's **#virtue** is **#love**. Retweet if you want to show someone you love them on this special day!

[pic.twitter.com/BJRSyzldLR](http://pic.twitter.com/BJRSyzldLR)

📷 View photo

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**Susie Bright** @susiebright

19 Apr

Why does feminine **#virtue** rest on high maintenance appearances? **#FullExposure** - [ow.ly/k5EXQ](http://ow.ly/k5EXQ)

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**Rob Peters** @StandardofTrust

24 Mar

Trustworthiness: The personal state or quality of being trustworthy or reliable. **#virtue** **#socialbusiness** [ow.ly/i/1qcru](http://ow.ly/i/1qcru)

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**Trusting In God** @Trusting\_In\_God

6 Aug

Tonight, offer up a prayer for a loved one who tests your patience. **#powerofprayer** **#virtue**

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**George Arden** @GeorgeArden

21 Mar

"That's what virtue is: it's the ability and inclination to act beautifully, to make good choices" [#virtue pinterest.com/pin/1669850986...](https://www.pinterest.com/pin/1669850986...)

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**ウィル** @WIEtheridge

30 Dec

People will always disappoint you, to remain happy you must learn how to forgive, forget and move on

[#virtue pic.twitter.com/Aix6astl](https://pic.twitter.com/Aix6astl)

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**Curiosityville** @Curiosityville

25 Nov 12

"A [#thankful](#) heart is not only the greatest [#virtue](#), but the parent of all the other virtues." - Cicero [ow.ly/i/1810X](https://ow.ly/i/1810X)

[View summary](#)

[← Reply](#) [↻ Retweet](#) [★ Favorite](#) [⋮ More](#)



**Life Facts** [♥](#) @sogirlslove

17 Nov 12

Integrity: the [#virtue](#) of doing [#good](#) without being watched.

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**Sean McCauley** @BroMacDoe

19 Oct 12

Yeah people. I did just give up my seat for the pregnant woman on the train. I'm a [#sigep](#) [#virtue](#)

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**Generation Change** @Genchangeteam

14 Sep 12

Want to be successful in all areas of life? "Conquer yourself rather than the world." -Descartes [#selfcontrol](#) [#virtue](#)

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**Kenji Chan** @TheKenjiChan

26 Mar 11

Good morning beautiful people! Remember if anyone throws stones at you, make a castle out of them instead of throwing them back [#virtue](#)

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**H&H Color Lab** @HHCOLORLAB

21h

Incredible Disintegrating Car Composites that Took Two Months to Create [#patience](#) [#virtue](#) [ow.ly/rwzQW](http://ow.ly/rwzQW)

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**The truth is ...** @LibertySeeds

4 Dec

Declaration: We hold this truth to be self-evident - that our unalienable rights include Life, Liberty and the pursuit of wisdom and [#virtue](#)

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**Grace Mayele** @MsMayele

3 Dec

The quicker you absorb that the easier it is to A) let things go and B) take nothing personally... [#VIRTUE](#)

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**Vince** @VinnyVinn10

7 Nov

If you're a female and are worried about finding a man to take care of you; you aren't worth being taken care of. [#independence](#) is [#virtue](#)

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**Secret Diary** @SecretDiary

4 Nov

"[#Courage](#) is the greatest virtue; b/cos, unless a man has courage, he has no security for preserving any other [#virtue](#)." - Samuel Johnson.

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**Keep Calm Tweets** @KeepCalmTweets

3 Nov

Few people have the [#virtue](#) to withstand the highest bidder.  
-George Washington

More [#FamousQuotes](#) at [Vuable.com](http://Vuable.com)

# ***Tipul Atzmi* – Introducing Self-Care *Middot***

## **Unit 2, Lesson 2**

In this lesson, learners will become acquainted with the four *middot* that fall into the self-care category (though we will not be introducing the categorization component until Lesson 4). Those *middot* are:

- *Shmirat HaGuf* – Guarding/Caring for the Body
- *Heshbon HaNefesh* – “Soul checkin” - Self-reflection/Self-awareness
- *Ometz Lev* – Courage
- *Sameyach B’chelko* – Contentment

### **Goals:**

1. To teach text in a new and alternative way from the traditional rabbinic way.
2. To explore the way Jewish thinkers understand *Shmirat HaGuf*, *Heshbon HaNefesh*, *Ometz Lev*, and *Sameyach b’Chelko*.
3. To directly connect each of the above *middot* with a Jewish text or story.

### **Objectives:**

SWBAT...

- Internalize the meaning of “oral tradition”.
- Describe each self-care-related *middah* using Jewish “language”, by matching it up with a Jewish text/story.
- Analyze the ways in which at least one of the self-care *middah* functions in their lives.

### **Essential Questions:**

1. What do Jewish thinkers say about *Shmirat HaGuf*, *Heshbon HaNefesh*, *Ometz Lev*, and *Sameyach b’Chelko*?
2. What do these *middot* have to do with me?

### **Materials:**

- Copies of text sheets
- Scratch (and blank) paper and pens for note-taking and drawing/writing
- Whiteboard and markers

### **Timeline:**

**00:00-00:05 Set Induction**  
**00:05-00:10 Explanation of “Do you Hear” and modeling**  
**00:10-00:25 “Do You Hear” pairings**  
**00:25-00:35 Regroup, debrief, connect text to *middot***  
**00:35-00:50 Small group discussion**  
**00:50-01:00 *Middot* in my life drawing/writing**

### **Detailed Timeline:**

**00:00-00:05 Set Induction – modeling Do You Hear**

Step 1: Tell the story below. Encourage people to listen, and let them know that eventually they will be asked to retell the story.

A poor Hasid came to his Rebbe. “Rebbe,” he cried, “I cannot take it anymore, I am going to go mad. We have so many people living with us that we can’t turn around in the house.”

The Rebbe counseled the man, “I have a solution. Take your goat, and move him into the kitchen.” The man rushed to do so, certain that the Rebbe’s solution would work. But it only made things worse! Now he had to move the goat in order to get to the stove, and food kept going missing. He returned to the Rebbe.

“Rebbe, the goat has only made things worse! I can do nothing in the kitchen!”

“Ah,” replied the Rebbe, “what you need to do is bring the chickens in. Set them up in the room where you all dine. They’ll be warmer in there.”

Now a bit more skeptical, the man returned home and did what the Rebbe had suggested. It was a disaster. It was impossible to walk through the house without accidentally stepping on a freshly laid egg! He returned, half crazed, to the Rebbe.

“It’s the end of the world,” cried the man. The Rebbe responded, “Well maybe that’s just because you have not yet welcomed your cow into your home. Go ahead and do that, and come see me in a few days.”

The man felt like crying, but there was no use arguing with the Rebbe, for he was the Rebbe! So he returned home and led his cow into the house. There was no peace. His wife was not speaking to him, his children refused to clean up after the goat, the chickens kept pecking at the cow and bothering her, and the idea of quiet seemed impossible. When he could take no more, he returned to the Rebbe.

“Rebbe, with all due respect, things have gotten no better, and they are steadily growing worse.”

The Rebbe looked at the man, long and hard. “Go home,” he said. “Return the goat and the chickens and the cow to their places in the barn, and report to me tomorrow.”

The following day the Hasid showed up with a serene look on his face. “Rebbe! I have never had such a good night of sleep. My home is so peaceful, so quiet. And so spacious! My hut seems like a palace now.”<sup>4</sup>

- Step 2: Read the story again. This time, preface it by inviting learners to take notes as they listen, to help them remember any key points.
- Step 3: Ask learners to turn to the person next to them and retell the story. The listener may use their notes to help keep the storyteller on track, but the storyteller should try hard to retell the story without looking at his/her notes. Allow time for both parties to play storyteller.

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<sup>4</sup> Story adapted from Jewish folklore, story is often called “It Could Always Be Worse

### 00:05-00:10 Explanation of “Do you Hear” and modeling

Explain: What we just did was an exercise called “Do you Hear.” Long before it was common to write things down, there were words and there was learning. Back in the day, people learned by speaking and listening, one to the other, over and over again. This is called “oral tradition”, and it is the way ancient scholars passed on knowledge.

To begin to learn about how Jewish thinkers have understood the virtues we are focusing on this year, we are going to teach them to each other in the way the ancients originally passed their thoughts from generation to generation.

- Step 1: Divide into groups of 2. Each pair will receive a text sheet [Appendix A] with two of the eight texts highlighted.

- Text pairings to be highlighted:
  - Texts A - B
  - Texts C - D
  - Texts E - G
  - Text H - J

<p><b>Note to facilitator:</b> each group should receive a different set of highlighted texts, so that if there are 8 people in the class, only two people should have the same highlighted text.</p>
---

- Step 2: Explain Do You Hear:
  - Just as I read the story to you twice, you each will hear the same information multiple times.
  - Person A will read his/her text to Person B. Person B should not look at his/her paper. He/she should listen but not take notes.
  - Person A will then read his/her text to Person B a second time. This time, Person B is welcome to take notes, but still may not look at his/her text sheet.
  - Now, Person B will attempt to restate the gist of the text to Person A (still without looking at the text). Person A will listen and double-check that Person B is accurately representing the text.
  - Repeat this three-step pattern with the second text – this time, Person B does the reading and Person A does the listening and restating.

### 00:10-00:25 “Do You Hear” Pairings

#### 00:25-00:35 Regroup, debrief, connect text to *middot*

Regroup. Have one person per highlighted text read their text. Invite everyone not only to look at the text this time, but also to underline/circle/make notes on the text when they find something about which they:

- Are curious
- Disagree
- Don’t understand
- Write the four *middot* on the board:
  - Shmirat HaGuf – Guarding/Caring for the Body
  - Heshbon HaNefesh – “Soul checkin” - Self-reflection/Self-awareness
  - Ometz Lev – Courage
  - Sameyach B’chelko – Contentment

- Ask: which text matches up with each *middah*?
  - Texts A - B = Shmirat HaGuf
  - Texts C - D = Heshbon haNefesh
  - Texts E - G = Ometz Lev
  - Text H - J = Sameyach b'Chelko

**00:35-00:50 Small group discussion**

Split into small groups (ideally of people who had different texts at the beginning) for discussion:

- Questions:
  - How well does the text help define the *middah* it is labeled with?
  - What does this text seem to teach about X *middah*?
  - What's missing? What else do you think is important about X *middah* that isn't acknowledged in the text?
  - Which text and/or which *middah* do you find most meaningful/relevant? How so?
  - Which *middah* challenges you most? How so?

**00:50-01:00 Closure: *Middot* in my life drawing/writing**

- Bring the group back together and pass out a piece of blank paper and a pencil to each person.
- Ask learners to fold their papers into four squares (one hamburger fold, one hotdog fold) and have them label each square with one *middah* (which should still be listed on the board, in case they don't remember the specific names).
- Give learners the remainder of the class session to either draw or write one example of how they see each *middah* play out in their lives.
  - Remember to have learners save their drawings in their folders!



## Appendix A

### Text Sheet

A) Eight things are harmful in large quantities but beneficial in small ones: travel and sexual intercourse, riches and trade, wine and sleep, hot baths and bloodletting.  
(Gittin 70a, translation from Teaching Jewish Virtues, p. 272)

#### B) Hillel in the Bathhouse

Once when the sage Hillel had finished a lesson with his pupils, he proceeded to walk along with them.

“Master,” they asked, “where are you going?”

“To perform a religious duty” he answered.

“Which duty is that?”

“To bathe in the bathhouse.”

“Is that a religious duty?” they asked.

“Yes! Somebody, appointed to scour and wash the statues of the king that stand in the theaters and circuses, is paid for the work, and even associated with the nobility,” he answered. “Since that is do, how much more should I, who am created in the image and likeness of God, scour and wash myself? As it is written, ‘in the image of God did God make mankind.’”

(Leviticus Rabbah 34:4, translation from Teaching Jewish Virtues, p. 272)

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C) Rabbi Eliezer said, “Repent one day before your death” (Avot 2:10). His pupils asked, “But who knows when he will die?” “Then,” said the sage, “repent today, lest you die tomorrow.”

(Avot d’Rabbi Natan, chapter 15, translation from: <http://www.oztorah.com/2007/06/when-will-i-die-ask-the-rabbi/>)

D) Although Shofar blowing on Rosh Hashana is a divine decree, there is a hidden message of the Shofar. The message is for those who are spiritually asleep to awaken, carefully examine their behavior, perform Teshuva, and remember our Creator. Those who forget the truth in the course of daily routines and devote all of their time to temporal matters that have no lasting impact should ponder their souls, improve their actions and thoughts. Everyone should abandon his evil actions and thoughts.

Accordingly, through the entire year, a person should always look at oneself as equally balanced between merit and sin and the world as equally balanced between merit and sin. Those who perform one sin tip their balance and that of the entire world to the side of guilt and bring about destruction. Those who perform one mitzvah tip their own balance and that of the entire world to the side of merit and bring deliverance and salvation to themselves and others.

(Maimonides *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos Teshuva, 3:4*, paragraph one translated here:

<http://koltorah.org/ravj/13->

[3%20%20The%20Rambam's%20Aseret%20Yemei%20Teshuva%20Roadmap.htm](http://koltorah.org/ravj/13-3%20%20The%20Rambam's%20Aseret%20Yemei%20Teshuva%20Roadmap.htm), paragraph 2 translation my own)



E) “Why do you boast yourself of evil, mighty fellow?” (Psalms 52:3)  
David asked Doeg [about this verse]: “Is this really might [aka, how do you define might?], for one who sees another at the edge of a pit to push the other into it? Or, seeing someone on top of a roof, to push the person off? Is this might?

When can someone truly be called a ‘mighty person’?

[Answer:] When there’s an individual who is about to fall into a pit, and that someone seizes the individual’s hand so that he/she does not fall in. Or, when that someone sees another fallen into a pit and lifts the other out of it.” (Midrash Tehillim 52:6, translation from Teaching Jewish Virtues, p. 199, with my own additions in brackets)

F) A man walking on a road saw a pack of dogs and felt afraid of them, so he sat down in their midst. (Genesis Rabbah 84:5, translation from Teaching Jewish Virtues, p. 272)

G) The whole world is a very narrow bridge and the most important part is not to be afraid.” (Rabbi Nachman of Bretzlov, translation from Teaching Jewish Virtues, and every Jewish camp song ever)

---

H) Don’t seek greatness for yourself, and don’t lust after honor. Do more than study. Don’t lust to sit at the tables of the mighty, for your [study] table is more significant than theirs, and your crown is greater than theirs. And the One for whom you work is totally trustworthy and may be counted on to give you your proper recompense. (Sefer Hasidim, 6.5, as translated in The Jewish Moral Virtues, Borowitz and Schwartz, p. 163)

I) When people have envy in their heart, their bones rot, but when they have no envy in their heart, their bones do not rot. (Shabbat 152b on Proverbs 14:30, translation from Teaching Jewish Virtues, p. 214)

J) Too many people are worried about their own stomachs and other people’s souls, when they should be worried about their own souls and other people’s stomachs. (Based on advice from The Kotzker Rebbe, *Fun Unzer Alten Otzar* by B. Jeuszoohn; Warsaw, 1924, ii, 82)

# ***Tipul Kehillah – Introducing Community-Care Middot***

## **Unit 2, Lesson 3**

In this lesson, learners will become acquainted with the four *middot* that fall into the community-care category (though we will not be introducing the categorization component until Lesson 4). Those *middot* are:

- Someyach Noflim* – Lifting the Fallen
- Rofeh Holim* – Healing the Sick
- Hachnasat Orchim* - Welcoming guests
- Dibuk Chaverim* – Sticking close to friends

### **Goals:**

- To teach text in a new and alternative way from traditional chevruta-style text study
- To explore the way Jewish thinkers understand *Someyach Noflim*, *Rofeh Holim*, *Hachnasat Orchim* and *Dibuk Chaverim*
- To begin delving into the gray area involved in text study.

### **Objectives:**

SWBAT...

- Internalize the meaning of “oral tradition”.
- Describe each self-care-related *middah* using Jewish “language”, by connecting it to a Jewish text/story.
- Analyze the ways in which at least one community-care *middah* manifests itself in their lives.

### **Essential Questions:**

1. What do Jewish thinkers say about *Someyach Noflim*, *Rofeh Holim*, *Hachnasat Orchim* and *Dibuk Chaverim*?
2. How do I handle disagreeing with Jewish texts?

### **Materials:**

- Handouts of texts, handouts of Reading for Meaning worksheet
- Blank paper, writing utensils

### **Timeline:**

**00:00-00:05 Set Induction**

**00:05-00:15 Cross the Line**

**00:15-00:20 Introduce Reading for Meaning**

**00:20-00:40 Read for Meaning**

**00:40-00:55 Small-group discussion and whole-group consensus**

**00:55-01:00 Closure**

## Detailed Timeline:

### **00:00-00:05 Set Induction**

Ask: Have you ever disagreed with a Jewish text?

*Potential responses: yes, all the time (some might say no, or feel like they don't know enough Jewish text to respond)*

Can anyone think of an example?

*Potential responses: Leviticus 19:1 about man not lying with man, parts of TaNaKH that ask Israelites to decimate entire tribes of people*

How have you resolved the issue?

*Potential responses: Ignore it, reinterpret it, "remove" it from the canon*

Explain: Disagreeing with text is part of what keeps text alive – it helps us think critically about ancient words, and find ways for those ancient words to mean something relevant in our world today.

### **00:05-00:15 Cross the Line**

Explain: I am going to read a number of statements. When you hear the statement, decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement. If you agree, move to the left side of the room. If you disagree, move to the right side of the room.

- Statements:
  - The rich sustain the poor.
  - The poor sustain the rich.
  - People should always travel in pairs.
  - Those who heal others can heal themselves.
  - It is rude to exclude some people when making a guest list for a party.
  - We should treat all guests like royalty.
  - People should be able to take care of themselves.
  - Being remembered is not as important as being recognized.

**Note to facilitator:** As you go through this exercise, ask a few people to share why they have chosen the side/answer they have chosen.

Set induction/post-framing: Today we are going to explore these statements and how they play into our lives.

### **00:15-00:20 Introduce Reading for Meaning**

Explain: To continue learning how Jewish thinkers have understood the virtues we are focusing on this year, we are going to use an exercise called "Reading for Meaning" to study some texts that talk about *someyach noflim v'rofeh holim* [supporting and healing], *hachnasat orchim* [welcoming guests] and *dibuk chaverim* [cleaving to friends].

In a moment, I will give you a set of texts and a set of statements. You have already heard some of these statements. Your job is to challenge the text. As you read, think about the statements and decide whether or not the text supports or challenges the statement. When you find evidence for or against the statement, you'll log it in the appropriate box. At this point, think only about whether the TEXT supports or disagrees with the statement; we will take time later to think about our own opinions.

### 00:20-00:40 Read for Meaning

- [10 minutes] Individually (or in pairs), read the texts and fill out the Read for Meaning worksheet.
- [5 minutes] Once completed, groups of 3-4 compare their worksheets. As a group, come to consensus regarding each statement.
- [5 minutes] Bring whole group back together and go through the worksheet one more time. When necessary, give learners the opportunity to rethink their responses and point out things they may have missed in their reading of the text.

### 00:40-00:55 Discussion

- [10 minutes] Ask learners to choose one text they can defend and one text they are challenged by or disagree with. Invite them to share their choices and their reasoning.
- [5 minutes] Point to the specific conflict between Rabbi Huna's "whosoever is hungry, let them come and eat" and Rabi's "people should not invite too many friends to their house." Ask: What do we do when we find that two Jewish texts are in conflict with each other?

### 00:55-01:00 Closure

- Explain: Please write out one instance in which *hachnasat orchim (ho)* should "win out" over *dibuk chaverim (dc)* and one instance in which *dibuk chaverim* should trump *hachnasat orchim*.
  - Example:
    - At a NFTY event, welcoming new participants should "win out" over clique-ing up with your longtime NFTY friend.
    - BUT, at your final senior year NFTY event, spending time with your other graduating senior friends trumps welcoming new participants.
- If time, learners may also create a 5-7-5 haiku for each instance.
  - Haiku example of HO over DC:  
At NFTY events  
Sit at tables with newbies  
Then they feel welcome

## Text Set #1 – Sameyach Noflim v’Rofeh Cholim - Supporting and Healing

Why indeed has God created both rich and poor? That the one might be sustained by the other. (Pesikta Kahana 191b)

Two are better off than one...For should they fall, one can raise the other; but woe to the one who is alone and falls with no companion to raise that person up.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-11)

Rabbi Hiyya ben Abba fell ill and Rabbi Yochanan went in to visit him. He said: “Are your sufferings welcome to you [knowing you can expect to be rewarded for them in the World to Come]?” ben Abba replied: “Neither the suffering nor its reward,” Yochanan said “Give me your hand.” Ben Abba gave Yochanan his hand and he raised him.

[Later], Yochanan fell ill and Rabbi Hanina went in to visit him. Hanina said to Yochanan: “Are your sufferings welcome to you?” Yochanan replied: “Neither they nor their reward.” Hanina said, “Give me your hand.” Yochanan gave Hanina his hand, and he raised him.

Why couldn’t Rabbi Yochanan raise himself? The sages reply: “Prisoners cannot free themselves from jail.” (Brachot 5b)

## Text Set #2 – Hachnasat Orchim – Welcoming Guests

When [Rabbi Huna] had a meal, he would open the door wide and declare, “whosoever is hungry let [that person] come and eat.” (Taanit 20b)

Rabi says, “People should not invite too many friends to their house, as it is written: ‘there are friends that people have to their own hurt [detriment].’” (Proverbs 18:24 in Brachot 63a)

God appeared to Abraham by the trees of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day - he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood above him. When he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed and said: “My lords, if I have found favor in your eyes, do not go on past your servant. Let a little water be fetched; wash your feet, and recline under the tree. I will fetch a bit of bread that you may refresh yourselves; then go on. After all, you *have* come your servants way.”

They replied: “Do as you have said.”

Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said: “Quickly, take three measures of fine flour, knead it, and make cakes.” Then Abraham ran to the herd and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it to the servant who hastened to prepare it. He took curds and milk, and the calf that had been prepared, and set it before them; and he waited on them under the tree as they ate.

They said to him: “Where is your wife Sarah?”

“She is in the tent.”

And one said: “I will return to you next year, and your wife Sarah shall have a son!” (Genesis 18:1-10)

## Text Set #3 – Dibuk Chaverim – Clinging to Friends

God said, “it is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him.” (Genesis 2:18)

Honi the Circle-Drawer sat down to have a meal and sleep overcame him. As he slept, a rocky formation enclosed upon him...he slept for 70 years...[when he awoke] he said “I am Honi the Circle-Drawer,” but no one would believe him. He went to the House of Study and overheard the scholars speaking positively about him and called out, “I am he!” but the scholars did not believe him. This hurt him greatly and he prayed [for death], and he died. Rabba said: “hence the saying, ‘either companionship or death.’” (Talmud – Taanit 23a)

<b>Text Set #1</b>		
<b>Evidence for:</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Evidence against:</b>
	The rich sustain the poor.	
	The poor sustain the rich.	
	People should always travel in pairs.	
	Those who heal others can heal themselves.	
<b>Text Set #2</b>		
<b>Evidence for:</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Evidence against:</b>
	It is rude to exclude some people when making a guest list for a party.	
	We should treat all guests like royalty.	
	Abraham treated the travelers well because he knew they were special.	
	Abraham is a good hostess but Sarah is not.	
<b>Text Set #3</b>		
<b>Evidence for:</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Evidence against:</b>
	People should be able to take care of themselves.	
	Being remembered is not as important as being recognized.	
	Honi died because he had no friends.	

# Introducing the *Middot* Categories

## Unit 2, Lesson 4

### Goals:

- To teach learners the difference between *tipul atzmi* [self care] and *tipul kehilah* [community care]
- To allow learners to self-define what these categories mean to them

### Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Classify each of the eight *middot* into one of the two categories of *tipul atzmi* [self care] and *tipul kehilah* [community care]
- Identify the *middah/middot* in action in given situations.
- Define the differences between the categories
- Present a pictorial composition of the *middot* categories

### Essential Questions:

- What is my obligation to myself? To my community?
- When is it more important for me to take care of myself and when should I instead focus on my community?
- What factors contribute to choosing self or community?

### Materials:

- One set of *middot* paper slips per learner
- Gluesticks
- Paper
- Magazines

### Timeline:

00:00-00:05 Set Induction  
00:05-00:20 Compare and Contrast  
00:20-00:30 Categorizing the *middot*  
00:30-00:50 Collaging  
00:50-01:00 Closure

### Detailed Timeline:

#### **00:00-00:05 Set Induction**

Post the following famous quote (from Pirkei Avot, stated by beit Hillel) on the board:

**“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, who am I?”**

Ask: What does this quote mean to you?

#### **00:05-00:20 Compare and Contrast**

Introduce “Compare and Contrast”

Explain: We are going to play a game of compare and contrast. First, let's make a list of things that come in pairs but are different [write down responses]:

- *Potential responses: crunchy v. smooth, peanut butter v. jelly, salt v. pepper, sun v. moon*  
As a group choose one set.

Explain: Now throw out some similarities and differences between the two items [facilitator writes these on separate sides of a whiteboard].

- Ex: crunchy peanut butter v. smooth peanut butter
  - Similarities: both are made of peanuts, both are eaten, both go well with jelly, both are sticky!
  - Differences: texture, preference (some people prefer smooth, others prefer crunchy), usefulness in recipes (different recipes call for different types)

Explain: We'll use this same exercise to compare and contrast the ideas of "self care" and "community care". What are some similarities between the terms "self care" and "community care"? What are some differences? [after erasing the first set of lists, list these on separate sides of the board.]

- [Some] similarities: both have to do with caring for something, both require intention and specific actions, both require making decisions, both are positive (it's good to take care of things!)
- [Some] differences: direction (self-care is directed inward, community-care is directed outward), collaboration (self-care is a solo task, community-care can be done in partnership), scale (who is/how many people are affected by self-care/community-care actions)

### 00:20-00:30 Categorizing the *middot*

Give each learner eight slips of paper, each with one of the eight *middot* listed as below:

- Shmirat haGuf – Guarding the Body - Caring for the Body
- Heshbon haNefesh – Soul Checkin – Restoring the Soul
- Ometz Lev – Strength of Heart - Courage
- Samayach b'Chelko –Contentment
- Someyach Noflim – Supporting the Fallen
- Rofeh Cholim – Healing the Sick
- Hachnasat Orchim – Welcoming Guests
- Dibuk Chaverim – Sticking Close/Holding Tightly to Friends

#### **This curriculum's categorization:**

Self Care:

- Shmirat haGuf – Guarding the Body - Caring for the Body
- Heshbon haNefesh – Soul Checkin – Restoring the Soul
- Ometz Lev – Strength of Heart – Courage
- Samayach b'Chelko –Contentment

Community Care:

- Somech Noflim – Supporting the Fallen
- Rofeh Cholim – Healing the Sick
- Hachnasat Orchim – Welcoming Guests
- Dibuk Chaverim – Sticking Close/Holding Tightly to Friends

Ask: Now that you know the difference between "self care" and "community care", organize the *middot* we've been looking at according to the two categories.



- Check in as learners work and answer any questions they may have

Once they have individually decided which *middot* fall into which category,

Discuss:

- Were any *middot* especially hard to place? How so?
- Which *middot* were easiest to place? Why do you think that is?
- Tell us about your choice to put X *middah* into X category

Conclude by presenting the categories as defined by this curriculum. Learners may end up with different categorizations, which is perfectly acceptable. They should just make sure they are able to clearly explain their choices.

**00:30-00:50 Collaging**

Explain: In our quest to understand these categories even better, we are going to collage them!

1. Choose one category, self-care or community care.
2. Glue each slip of paper that falls into that category into a corner of a larger piece of paper.

Search magazines for examples of the various *middot* that are glued onto your paper and collage them next to their corresponding *middah*.

Example (Self-care):



**00:50-01:00 Closure**

Rewrite the quote from the set induction, this time including the last piece of the text:

**“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, who am I?  
And if not now, when?”**

Ask: How does this quote fit today’s class? What, if anything, does the additional piece add to your understanding of the text?

## Unit 2, Lesson 5: Bringing the *middot* into conversation with each other

### Goals:

- To help learners grapple with the idea of conflicting *middot*
- To give learners a chance to actually make the choice of one *middah* over another
- To continue the learner's conversation about self care versus, and in relation, to community care

### Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Hypothesize about which *middah* category should outweigh the other in given situations.
- Present a literal conversation between two potential conflicting *middot*.

### Essential Questions:

- When is it more important for me to take care of myself and when should I instead focus on my community?
- What factors contribute to choosing self or community?
- How can I reconcile potential conflicts between two *middot*?

### Materials:

- Copies of scenario handout (3-4 of each)
- Writing utensils
- Blank paper

### Outline:

00:00-00:05 Set Induction

00:05-00:30 Scenarios

00:30-00:55 *Middah* Script-writing beginnings

00:55-01:00 Closure

### Detailed Outline:

#### **00:00-00:05 Set Induction**

Remind learners of last class:

Last session, we talked about the two categories of *middot*.

Ask: Who remembers what the categories are? And which *middot* fell into which category?

Today we are going to look at those situations where *middot* from the two categories, and sometimes the categories themselves, come into conflict. We will

play with some ideas for how to resolve those conflicts, and you will begin your final project for this unit!

### **00:05-00:30 Scenarios**

Split learners into groups of 3 or 4.

Explain: In a moment, I will hand out a different scenario to each group. Your task is to:

1. read through the scenario as a group,
2. determine how the two categories are in conflict and which specific *middot* are at play,
3. and use the *middot* to decide what course of action to take.

We will come together after a few minutes to share our scenarios and decisions as a larger group.

See Appendix A for scenario worksheets and Appendix B for additional information about the scenarios for facilitator use.

### **00:30-00:55 Middah Script-writing beginnings**

Explain: As a final project for this unit, we are going to write *middot* scripts and present them to the rest of the school. You have a couple of choices to make:

- First, would you prefer to work alone or with a friend?
- Second, would you rather write a script to be performed or a storyboard of a comic strip to be projected as a presentation?

Middot Script-writing Instructions [this should be handed out to learners as well as explained orally]:

- Step 1: Brainstorm an instance in which two *middot* come into (apparent) conflict.
- Step 2: Write out that conflict.
- Step 3: Create a script and/or comic strip from the point of view of the *middot*.

Each *middah* should be arguing for him/herself usefulness as a virtue to be taken into account when deciding how to address the conflict.

- Example:
- The conflict: a person notices that a teacher graded his/her test incorrectly. According to the current grading, the person has a B+, but with the correction, he/she would have an A-. Does this person tap into *contentment*, happy with a B+ and not interested in challenging the teacher's grade? OR does the person tap into *courage*, challenging the teachers grading and perhaps improving his/her grade?
- The characters: "Courage" and "Contentment"
- A taste of the script:

Courage: Suck it up, man! You were right and the teacher was wrong and that's that! You deserve all of the points you earned.

Contentment: Weeeeeell, hold on there a moment, Mr. Courage. Maybe [insert name here] doesn't care so much about a B+ or an A-; maybe [name] is happy knowing he got the answer right and doesn't need to go shoving it in peoples faces!

Courage: I'm not saying [name] needs to shove anything in anyone's face, silly. And there's a big difference between A and B. I know Mr. Teacher is a little intimidating, but it's worth it, [name]! How annoyed would you be if you got to the end of the semester and it was just this little grading difference that could have tipped you over the edge?

- Step 4: Practice/enhance your sketches with more final drawing
- Step 5: Perform/Present!

### **00:55-01:00 Closure**

Briefly bring learners together to share the topic of the project they decided to work on.

**Note to facilitator:** Learners may require a class session dedicated to work on these projects and a second class session dedicated to performance. These should be factored into the overall pacing of the curriculum.

## Appendix A

### Scenario #1:

Your math tests are graded on a curve, which means that only some people can get A's. The final is coming up, and the teacher has allowed each student to prepare one page of notes to use on the test. An A on this test is key for your GPA, which will obviously affect your college apps. You have studied very hard and put together a killer notes sheet. A friend comes to you and asks if she can use your notes sheet. She has not studied at all. What do you do?

Middot:

- **Shmirat haGuf** – Caring for the Body
- **Heshbon haNefesh** –Restoring the Soul
- **Ometz Lev** –Courage
- **Samayach b'Chelko** – Contentment
- **Someyach Noflim** – Supporting the Fallen
- **Rofeh Cholim** – Healing the Sick
- **Hachnasat Orchim** – Welcoming Guests
- **Dibuk Chaverim** – Holding Tightly to Friends

Categories: **self care** and **community care**

### Please respond as a group:

List which *middot* are at play:

In what ways will you need to consider each *middah* when making your decision?

Are the categories in conflict? If so, how?

What is your solution? What choices did you have to make in choosing to make the decision you did?

## Scenario #2:

You're attending your 17<sup>th</sup> NFTY regional event. You are super-excited to see all of your NFTY friends, many of whom you only get to see at these events. You are also super-excited because your really good friend from high school finally said he'd come with you to an event. He's Jewish but has never been to a NFTY event before, and he doesn't know your NFTY friends. How do you deal?

### Middot:

- **Shmirat haGuf** – Caring for the Body
- **Heshbon haNefesh** –Restoring the Soul
- **Ometz Lev** –Courage
- **Samayach b'Chelko** – Contentment
- **Someyach Noflim** – Supporting the Fallen
- **Rofeh Cholim** – Healing the Sick
- **Hachnasat Orchim** – Welcoming Guests
- **Dibuk Chaverim** – Holding Tightly to Friends

Categories: **self care** and **community care**

## Please respond as a group:

List which *middot* are at play:

In what ways will you need to consider each *middah* when making your decision?

Are the categories in conflict? If so, how?

What is your solution? What choices did you have to make in choosing to make the decision you did?

### Scenario #3:

You just got over the flu. It was miserable – you hate being sick and you missed a whole week of school. Your parents took good care of you and a couple of friends texted and called (one even visited, which was really nice of him!), but all in all it was not a pleasant experience. Now one of your friends has come down with the flu herself. What actions do you/don't you take?

Middot:

- **Shmirat haGuf** – Caring for the Body
- **Heshbon haNefesh** – Restoring the Soul
- **Ometz Lev** – Courage
- **Samayach b'Chelko** – Contentment
- **Someyach Noflim** – Supporting the Fallen
- **Rofeh Cholim** – Healing the Sick
- **Hachnasat Orchim** – Welcoming Guests
- **Dibuk Chaverim** – Holding Tightly to Friends

Categories: **self care** and **community care**

### Please respond as a group:

List which *middot* are at play:

In what ways will you need to consider each *middah* when making your decision?

Are the categories in conflict? If so, how?

What is your solution? What choices did you have to make in choosing to make the decision you did?

### Scenario #4:

You just got in a huge fight with one of your best friends from synagogue. It doesn't matter what it was about – just know it was serious and you both said some pretty mean things to each other.

You've known each other since you were little – you went to preschool together and also elementary and middle school, and have never gone more than a week without talking. But it's been over two weeks since your fight and you haven't talked at all.

You go to different high schools and have started making different sets of friends. On the one hand, you miss your friend. On the other hand, maybe it's time to move on.

What do you do?

#### Middot:

- **Shmirat haGuf** – Caring for the Body
- **Heshbon haNefesh** –Restoring the Soul
- **Ometz Lev** –Courage
- **Samayach b'Chelko** – Contentment
- **Someyach Noflim** – Supporting the Fallen
- **Rofeh Cholim** – Healing the Sick
- **Hachnasat Orchim** – Welcoming Guests
- **Dibuk Chaverim** – Holding Tightly to Friends

Categories: **self care** and **community care**

### Please respond as a group:

List which *middot* are at play:

In what ways will you need to consider each *middah* when making your decision?

Are the categories in conflict? If so, how?

What is your solution? What choices did you have to make in choosing to make the decision you did?



## Appendix A - For Facilitators

### Scenario #1:

Your math tests are graded on a curve, which means that only some people can get A's. The final is coming up, and the teacher has allowed each student to prepare one page of notes to use on the test. An A on this test is key for your GPA, which will obviously affect your college apps. You have studied very hard and put together a killer notes sheet. A friend comes to you and asks if she can use your notes sheet. She has not studied at all. What do you do?

- *Middot* at play:
  - Community care:
    - *Dibuk chaverim*, cleaving to friends – isn't friendship more important than grading?
    - *Someyach noflim*: supporting – this friend is asking for help; that's what friends are for, right?
    - Other things to keep in mind: choosing to help your friend will alter the graded curve, which will affect the community
  - Self care:
    - *Sameyach b'chelko*: contentment
    - *Heshbon haNefesh*: self check-in
    - AKA – are you okay with doing all of this work and letting your friend benefit from it?

### Scenario #2:

You're attending your 17<sup>th</sup> NFTY regional event. You are super-excited to see all of your NFTY friends, many of whom you only get to see at these events. You are also super-excited because your really good friend from high school finally said he'd come with you to an event. He's Jewish but has never been to a NFTY event before, and he doesn't know your NFTY friends. How do you deal?

- *Middot* at play:
  - Finding a way to forge a middle ground between *dibuk chaverim* [clinging to friends] and *hachnasat orchim* [welcoming guests].

Question you can ask learners if they get stuck: What choices do you make throughout the weekend that fall under one/both of these *middot*?

### Scenario #3:

You just got over the flu. It was miserable – you hate being sick and you missed a whole week of school. Your parents took good care of you and a couple of friends texted and called (one even visited, which was really nice of him!), but all in all it was not a pleasant experience. Now one of your friends has come down with the flu herself. What actions do you/don't you take?

- *Middot* at play:
  - Community care:
    - *Rofeh cholim*, healing the sick
    - *Someyach noflim*, supporting the fallen

- In regards to these two *middot*, we're thinking metaphorically here – doing things to help your friend feel better will make her feel supported and that will help heal her (not physically, but spiritually and mentally, perhaps)
- Self care:
  - *Shmirat haguf*, caring for your body
    - Your immune system is weak and you REALLY don't want to get sick again!

**Scenario #4:**

You just got in a huge fight with one of your best friends from synagogue. It doesn't matter what it was about – just know it was serious and you both said some pretty mean things to each other.

You've known each other since you were little – you went to preschool together and also elementary and middle school, and have never gone more than a week without talking. But it's been over two weeks since your fight and you haven't talked at all. You go to different high schools and have started making different sets of friends. On the one hand, you miss your friend. On the other hand, maybe it's time to move on. What do you do?

- *Middot* at play:
  - Self Care:
    - *Heshbon hanefesh*, soul “check-in”
    - *Sameyach b'chelko*, contentment
    - *Ometz lev*, courage
  - Community Care:
    - *Dibuk Chaverim*, cleaving to friends
    - Also worth keeping in mind: how does your current status with your friend affect your synagogue community (e.g., do you see each other at events/Teen program? How will you interact on those occasions?)

## Unit 3: That's so Jewish! A Survey of American Pop

### Relevant Unit EUs:

- Secular American culture overflows with vibrant Jewish content.
- Jewish virtues bolster everyday moments, decisions, and life choices.

### Goals:

- To teach learners to recognize *middot* within pop culture
- To show that the way values are expressed in pop culture affect learners' lives (e.g. being thin benefits people in pop culture settings, which projects the value that being thin is worth striving for)
- To help learners recognize the ways in which *middot* can help them navigate the values expressed by pop culture (e.g. connecting the idea of body image and *shmirat haguf* can help learners better handle the pop culture message about being skinny)

### Objectives: By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- Differentiate between implicit and explicit Jewish pop culture moments
- Define all eight *middot* in relation to at least one pop culture moment
- Identify "*middot* moments" in their own lives

### Outcomes:

- Ongoing:
  - [Throughout the entire curriculum] Learners will keep a folder of handouts and completed closure activities. This data will become a tool for them to return to and refer to throughout the curriculum.
  - [Throughout this unit] Learners will maintain a list [via googledocs or some other shared file] of popular culture artifacts and which "*middot* moments" they contain.
- Authentic Assessment: Learners will create and conduct a presentation connecting one *middah* to one one pop culture artifact they encounter in their everyday life.

# Is that my Judaism? Our Religion, on TV.

## Unit 3, Lesson 1

### Lesson Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Question the “Jewishness” of explicitly Jewish pop culture moments
- Analyze the various components of explicit Jewish pop culture moments
- Create a definition what makes up an explicit Jewish pop culture moment

### Lesson-specific Essential Questions:

- Is the Judaism we see on TV an accurate representation of Judaism?
- How do you know when you have found Judaism in an American pop cultural moment – what are the criteria?

### Materials:

- Projector, speakers, computer
- TV show clips that contain explicit Jewish content [facilitator will add to this collection, ideally with content relevant to the present time in which the curriculum is being used]:
  - **Mad Men, Season 1, Episode: Smoke Gets in your Eyes**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v\\_nvvydiIDY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_nvvydiIDY)  
In this clip, one character asks another “Do we have any Jews on staff?” The repl? “Not on my watch.” Why is he asking? There’s a Jewish company coming in for a meeting with the ad agency and Roger wanting to have someone in the room from the ad agency who will make them “feel comfortable.”
  - **Big Bang Theory, Season 5, Episode 21**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXblAAAtUZEU>  
In this clip one character suggests that another character should do him a favor so he can go to “Jewish Heaven.” When the (uber-nebishy stereotypical Jewish character) replies that “Jews don’t go to heaven,” the retort is “well then, so you won’t go to Jewish hell,” which in turn is met with “Have you met my mother? I AM in Jewish hell.”
  - **Any appropriate clip from any of The OC Christmikkah episodes:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oS3szMD7wMc>  
In which Seth has to deal with juggling two ladies he likes, and also introduces the idea of Christmikkah: “So what’s it gonna be, huh? You want your menorah, or a candy cane?...Don’t worry about it buddy cuz in this house, you don’t have to choose! Allow me to introduce you to a little something that I like to call: Christmikkah.”
- Copies of articles [again, facilitator will be able to add to these articles or switch out the articles currently listed for more relevant articles if necessary]
- Paper and writing utensils

**Set Induction:** Ask learners to share their “favorite Jewish pop culture moment.”

**Learning experience #1:**

- Begin by watching 3-5 clips from TV shows and movies that contain explicit Jewish content. As they watch, learners should maintain a list of what is “Jewish” within the clip.
- After completing all of the clips, discuss:
  - What did people notice about the various clips?
    - Create a list of those things that were most commonly noticed
    - Note similarities in Jewish content between different shows/clips
  - Did you feel there was anything missing from the clips?
  - How do you feel about the way Jews/Judaism are represented in these clips? What within the clip contributed to those feelings?

**Learning experience #2:**

- In groups of three, learners will explore articles that analyze the Jewish content of these shows/clips (each group will look at one or a pair of articles)
  - Rachel Shukert in Tablet: “Mad Mensches: AMC’s 1960’s New York Drama series returns – full of ascendant Jews.” April 12, 2013  
<http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/128934/mad-mensches-2>
  - Amy Klein in Haaretz: “Why I won’t be watching the new season of ‘Mad Men’ ...It reminds me too much of my Orthodox upbringing.” April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013  
<http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/jewish-world-features/why-i-won-t-be-watching-the-new-season-of-mad-men.premium-1.513417>
  - Marc Tracy in Tablet: “How Jewish is Lady Grantham? Jonathan Sarna weighs in on 19<sup>th</sup> century Cincinnati Jewry.” January 26, 2012  
<http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/89419/a-rigorous-inquiry-into-lady-grantham-s-jewishness>
  - Renee Ghert-Zand in The Times of Israel: “Sorry Fans, No Yiddishkeit at Downton Abbey.” January 3, 2013  
<http://www.timesofisrael.com/sorry-fans-no-yiddishkeit-at-downton-abbey/>
  - Excerpts from: Olson, Tamara, “Popular Representations of Jewish Identity on Primetime Television: The Case of The O.C.” (2006). Honors Projects. Paper 1. May 1, 2006  
[http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/hmcs\\_honors/1](http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/hmcs_honors/1)
- Discussion questions to guide the reading:
  - What is the author’s main point?
  - What “evidence” does the author cite when talking about the Jewishness present in the TV show?

- Where does the author challenge or laud the Jewishness in the TV show?

**Pulling it together:**

- Split the learners into groups of 3-4. Ask each group to use the information they gathered from the clips, the articles, and their resulting conversations to come up with a working definition for what makes up an “explicit Jewish pop culture moment”.
- For groups that could benefit from a step-by-step process:
  - Step 1: ask each learner to think about the information they have looked at today: the clips, the articles, and their conversations with classmates.
  - Step 2: ask each learner to think about what all of the clips had in common (beyond “they talked about Judaism/Jews/Jewishness”)
  - Step 3: ask each learner to write their own definition of an “explicit Jewish pop culture moment.”
    - Think about these questions when writing your definition:
      - What do you need in a scene in order for the scene to be “Jewish”? Jewish people? Jewish stuff (like a menorah or a kippah)? Jewish ideas? The word “Jewish”?

# Is it still Jewish if there's no menorah?

## Unit 3, Lesson 2

### Lesson Objective:

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Recognize *middot* we have previously learned about when they are present in media/pop culture

### Lesson-specific Essential Question:

- How can we recognize Jewish moments in TV shows/music/etc. if nothing explicitly Jewish is mentioned?

### Materials:

- Copies of Calvin & Hobbes comic
- Copies of images in Appendix B: one set of images per group (cut so that each image is on its own, and without the page-heading)
- Song/TV/movie clips that contain implicit Jewish *middot*
- Computer, projector, screen.

### Set Induction:

Show learners the Calvin & Hobbes comic in Appendix A

Ask: in what ways is this cartoon Jewish?

### Learning experience #1: Middot Review

- Matching game:  
In 3-person teams, learners must categorize images within the *middah* “category” the image most strongly represents [see Appendix B]
  - **Step 1:** Hand out one packet of images to each team, complete with headings.
  - **Step 2:** Once teams finish separating the images into the 8 *middot* categories, they must choose the image in each category that in their opinion most strongly connects to the *middah*.
  - **Step 3:** After all groups have completed the first two tasks, have each group bring their “chosen” image per *middah* to the front of the room, where each *middah* should be listed. They should tape their “chosen” images, one for every *middah*, onto the wall under the appropriate *middah* heading, so that the class can see which images were most popular.
- Short group discussion:
  - Why did you choose this image as most representative of [insert *middah* here]?

And/or

- Why do you think most groups chose this image as most representative of [insert *middah* here]?

**Learning experience #2: “Middahparady”**

- List five categories on a whiteboard or chalkboard with 4 options under each category:

Game Board:

Songs	Memes	YOUTube	TV Shows	Movie Clips
100	100	100	100	100
200	200	200	200	200
300	300	300	300	300
400	400	400	400	400

- Each of the four options within the category will contain a *middah*-infused clip from that category (e.g. the 100 level of “Songs” will contain a clip from a song in which one *middah* is pretty noticeably present).
- In 5-person teams, learners will choose a category and a level. The teacher will then play the clip associated with the learner’s choice and learners will have to list all *middot* they can find within the clip.
- Feel free to keep score and award prizes!

**Appendix C** contains the content for the Songs category. Facilitator should find relevant content for the remainder of the categories.

**Closure:** In game teams, have learners rank all eight *middot* (list them on the board, see below for list) in order based on how dominant they think each *middah* is in pop culture.

Middot:

- Guarding the Body, Shmirat Haguf
- Protecting/checking in with the Soul, Heshbon HaNefesh
- Courage, Ometz Lev
- Contentment, Sameyach b’Chelko
- Supporting the fallen, Someyach Noflim
- Healing the Sick, Rofeh Cholim
- Sticking Close to Friends, Dibuk Chaverim
- Welcoming Guests, Hachnasat Orchim



Appendix A



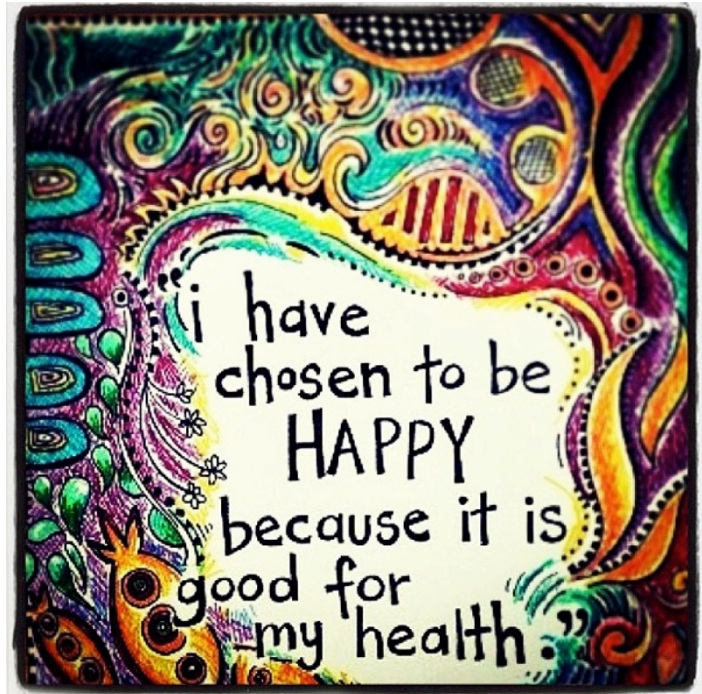


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**Images:**  
***Heshbon HaNefesh* – Accounting for  
your soul**

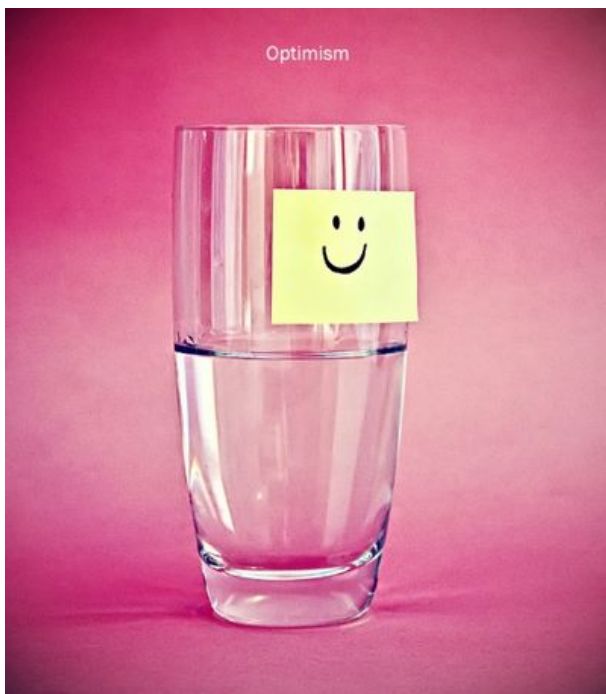




**Images:**  
*Ometz Lev* – Strength of heart,  
courage



**Images:**  
***Samayach b'Chelko* -Contentment**





**Images:**  
***Somech Noflim v'Rofeh Cholim -***  
**Lifting the Fallen, Healing the Sick**

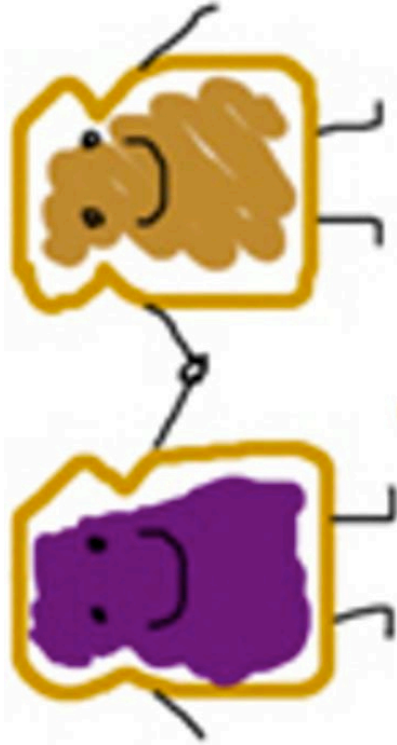


**Images:**  
***Hachnasat Orchim – Welcoming Guests***





**Images:**  
*Dibuk Chaverim -Cleaving to Friends*





## Appendix C

### **Songs:**

- 100 Category
  - Clip from “Happy,” by Pharrel Williams
  - Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6Sxv-sUYtM&feature=kp>
  - Potential Answers: *Sameyach b’Chelko*, Contentment
  
- 200 Category
  - Clip from “Brave,” by Sara Bareilles
  - Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUQsqBqxoR4>
  - Potential Answers: *Ometz Lev*, Courage OR *Heshbon haNefesh*, Caring for your soul
  
- 300 Category
  - Lyrics from Death Cab For Cutie, “I will follow you into the dark”
  - Lyrics to read and/or display:

You and me have seen everything to see  
From Bangkok to Calgary  
And the soles of your shoes are all worn down  
The time for sleep is now  
It's nothing to cry about  
'Cause we'll hold each other soon  
In the blackest of rooms

If Heaven and Hell decide  
That they both are satisfied  
Illuminate the "No"s on their vacancy signs  
If there's no one beside you  
When your soul embarks  
Then I'll follow you into the dark  
Then I'll follow you into the dark
  - Potential Answers: *Dibuk chaverim*, Sticking close to friends OR *Someyach Noflim*, Supporting the fallen
  
- 400 Category
  - Clip from “The Monster,” by Eminem
  - Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHkozMIXZ8w&feature=kp>
  - Potential Answers: *Shmirat Haguf*, Caring for the body OR *Heshbon Hanefesh*, Accounting for the soul

# Jewish Texts, Secular Content AKA Glee – the *Middah* Edition

## Unit 3, Lesson 3

### Lesson Objective:

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Recall Jewish stories that teach various *middot*
- View *middot*-related Jewish texts through the lens of secular content

### Lesson-specific Essential Question:

- Where do Jewish texts and secular content meet?

### Materials:

- 4 copies of each story
- 4-6 paper bags with 5 random items in each them
- slips of paper containing TV show titles

**Set Induction:** Ask learners to brainstorm movies whose storylines are based on classic texts OR who retell stories in different contexts than they were originally written for (e.g. the film *Ten Things I Hate About You* is based on Shakespeare’s play *Taming of the Shrew*, the 1996 film *Romeo and Juliet* takes place in the “hip modern suburb of Verona”).

### Learning experience #1: Middot Paper Bag Skits

Learners will revisit some of the Jewish texts they studied in U2 - specifically, a text that presents a story about a *middah* in action.

- Step 1: Learners, in groups of 4, will receive
  - a. A paper bag containing 5 random items and
  - b. A slip of paper with a current TV show title and
  - c. A text.
- Step 2: Learners will be instructed to re-tell the story in the text using the items in the paper bag AND using the characters and setting” of the TV show/movie.

### TV Show/Movie Slips:

- Glee
- Greys Anatomy
- That 70s Show
- Game of Thrones
- Law & Order
- Southpark

**Note to Facilitator:** as at other points in this curriculum, feel free to replace these TV show titles with more current ones. The most important thing for this exercise is to choose shows with easily recognizable characters/catchphrases and that represent a wide variety of settings.

Texts:

- **Shmirat Haguf – caring for the body:** Once when the sage Hillel had finished a lesson with his pupils, he proceeded to walk along with them.  
“Master,” they asked, “where are you going?”  
“To perform a religious duty” he answered.  
“Which duty is that?”  
“To bathe in the bathhouse.”  
“Is that a religious duty?” they asked.  
“Yes! Somebody, appointed to scour and wash the statues of the king that stand in the theaters and circuses, is paid for the work, and even associated with the nobility,” he answered. “Since that is so, how much more should I, who am created in the image and likeness of God, scour and wash myself? As it is written, ‘in the image of God did God make mankind.’” (Leviticus Rabbah 34:4, translation from Teaching Jewish Virtues, p. 272)
  
- **Sameyach b’chelko - contentment with ones lot:** A poor Hasid came to his Rebbe and complained that his house was too full. The Rebbe counseled the man:  
“I have a solution. Take your goat, and move him into the kitchen.” The man rushed to do so, certain that the Rebbe’s solution would work. But it only made things worse! He returned to the Rebbe.  
“Rebbe, the goat has only made things worse! I can do nothing in the kitchen!”  
“Ah,” replied the Rebbe, “what you need to do is bring the chickens in. Set them up in the room where you all dine. They’ll be warmer in there.”  
Now a bit more skeptical, the man returned home and did what the Rebbe had suggested. It was a disaster. He returned, half crazed, to the Rebbe.  
“It’s the end of the world,” cried the man.  
The Rebbe responded, “Well maybe that’s just because you have not yet welcomed your cow into your home. Go ahead and do that, and come see me in a few days.”  
The man felt like crying, but there was no use arguing with the Rebbe, for he was the Rebbe! So he returned home and led his cow into the house. There was no peace. When he could take no more, he returned to the Rebbe.  
“Rebbe, with all due respect, things have gotten no better, and they are steadily growing worse.”  
“Go home,” said the rebbe. “Return the goat and the chickens and the cow to their places in the barn, and report to me tomorrow.”  
The following day the Hasid showed up with a serene look on his face.  
“Rebbe! I have never had such a good night of sleep. My home is so peaceful, so quiet. And so spacious! My hut seems like a palace now.”<sup>5</sup>
  
- **Someyach noflim v’Rofeh cholim - Supporting and healing:** Rabbi Hiyya ben Abba fell ill and Rabbi Yochanan went in to visit him. He said: “Are your

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<sup>5</sup> Story adapted from Jewish folklore, story is often called “It Could Always Be Worse

sufferings welcome to you [knowing you can expect to be rewarded for them in the World to Come]?” ben Abba replied: “Neither the suffering nor its reward,” Yochanan said “Give me your hand.” Ben Abba gave Yochanan his hand and he raised him.

[Later], Yochanan fell ill and Rabbi Hanina went in to visit him. Hanina said to Yochanan: “Are your sufferings welcome to you?” Yochanan replied: “Neither they nor their reward.” Hanina said, “Give me your hand.” Yochanan gave Hanina his hand, and he raised him.

Why couldn't Rabbi Yochanan raise himself? The sages reply: “Prisoners cannot free themselves from jail.” (Brachot 5b)

- **Hachnasat Orchim – Welcoming guests:** God appeared to Abraham by the trees of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day - he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood above him. When he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed and said: “My lords, if I have found favor in your eyes, do not go on past your servant. Let a little water be fetched; wash your feet, and recline under the tree. I will fetch a bit of bread that you may refresh yourselves; then go on. After all, you *have* come your servants way.” They replied: “Do as you have said.” Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said: “Quickly, take three measures of fine flour, knead it, and make cakes.” Then Abraham ran to the herd and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it to the servant who hastened to prepare it. He took curds and milk, and the calf that had been prepared, and set it before them; and he waited on them under the tree as they ate. They said to him: “Where is your wife Sarah?” “She is in the tent.” And one said: “I will return to you next year, and your wife Sarah shall have a son!” (Genesis 18:1-10)
- **Dibuk Chaverim - sticking close to friends:** Honi the Circle-Drawer sat down to have a meal and sleep overcame him. As he slept, a rocky formation enclosed upon him...he slept for 70 years...[when he awoke] he said “I am Honi the Circle-Drawer,” but no one would believe him. He went to the House of Study and overheard the scholars speaking positively about him and called out, “I am he!” but the scholars did not believe him. This hurt him greatly and he prayed [for death], and he died. Rabba said: “hence the saying, ‘either companionship or death.’” (Talmud – Taanit 23a)

### **Learning experience #2: Discussion**

- How did it feel to tell these Jewish texts via secular methods?
- Did you find that the stories lent themselves to retelling in TV show-settings? If so, how? If not, what made it difficult?
- What speaks to you most about the story you acted out?
- Did any of the stories presented bother you at all? If so, how?

# Where in the world is Carmen Sandi-*middah*?

## Unit 3, Lesson 4

### Lesson Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Confidently conduct research for their unit assessment
- Independently prepare their Jewish pop culture artifact mini-presentation

### Lesson-specific Essential Questions:

- How can we best prepare ourselves for success when preparing for and presenting in class?

### Materials:

- Copies of research and presentation guidelines and instructions [Appendix A]
- iPads/laptops, headphones per learner

### Learning experience #1: Presenting the Presentation

- Ask:
  - Which TV shows do you watch regularly?
  - What is the most recent YouTube video you watched?
- Present the task:
  - Explain: By the end of today, you are going to be able to take something you are already watching or listening to that doesn't contain any explicit Jewish content and begin to create a presentation showing all of us how Jewish is really is.
  - How to prepare your presentation:
    - Step 1: Determining content:
      - Watch what you usually watch, listen to what you usually listen to. BUT, watch it with your list of *middot* nearby. When something jumps out at you as representing a *middah* in action, make a note.
      - Look through your notes: which *middah* showed up the most? In which TV show/song/movie did you have the most *middot* moments?
    - Step 2: Preparing presentation:
      - Presentations should be 3-5 minutes long.
      - Each presentation should include the following components:
        - A piece of the chosen clip (song/TV show/movie)
        - An explanation of the clip – including contextualization (something that helps us understand the clip in light of what happens before/after the clip)

- A statement about which *middah* (or *middot*) you see represented in this clip, including information about what parallels (or disagreements) we can see between Jewish texts on this *middah* and its portrayal in the clip
- A paragraph arguing for this pop culture media clip to be included in the canon of implicit Jewish cultural references.

**Learning experience #2:**

In-class research – invite learners to spend the remainder of class listening to/watching shows and keeping notes.

# Presentations

## Unit 3, Lesson 5

### Lesson Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Describe a number of implicitly Jewish pop culture artifacts
- Analyze other people's implicit Jewish pop culture artifacts for validity as such.

### Lesson-specific Essential Questions:

- What defines an implicit Jewish pop culture artifact?
- Does viewing pop culture through a Jewish lens affect the way we view pop culture? If so, how?

### Materials:

- Projector and screen set-up
- Speakers that can hook up to iPods or laptops
- Writing utensils
- Copies of rubric, enough for every learner to complete one for every other learner

### Learning experience #1:

- Viewing presentations [each presenter should take 8 minutes total; 3-5 for the presentation and up to 3 for questions]
- Each participant will judge each presentation based on the rubric in Appendix A.

### Learning experience #2:

- Debrief discussion:
  - Regarding the presentation-creation experience:
    - How did you go about "looking for" your artifact to present? (Where did you look? Did you look at all?)
    - Did this project change the way you were watching TV/listening to the radio? If so, how?
  - Regarding the presentation-watching experience:
    - Did people pick up on any commonalities between people's presentations? (multiple artifacts from the same show, many people choosing the exact same artifact, etc)
      - If so: Why do you think so many people got XX *middah* out of XX show/song/movie? Do you think that other episodes of the show/songs by the artist/movies of that genre would yield similar results?
    - Did people go in different directions at all? If so, explore that for a minute – did it have to do with people's personal cultural

consumption tastes? Did it have to do with the *middot* people chose?

- Did people have trouble finding *middot*? What make it hard? Were there any things you specifically looked for to find your *middah*?



**Appendix A**

Please highlight the pieces within each category that best represent your opinion of \_\_\_\_\_'s presentation:

	Over and above!	Complete	Incomplete
Connection between <i>middah</i> and artifact	Connection is clear (you can make the connection yourself)	Connection exists (you see the connection but may need the presenter to connect a few dots for you)	The connection is not there / is a stretch (you do not see the connection or must make a few leaps to get there)
Presentation of artifact	Presenter spoke clearly, prepared audiovisual aids well, and was able to summarize his/her artifact well.	Presenter had prepared his/her presentation and audiovisual aids, and was able to speak about his/her artifact	Presenter did not seem prepared, and could not speak well about his/her artifact
Understanding of <i>middah</i>	Displayed clear understanding <i>middah</i> through explanation and examples, was able to speak about the <i>middah</i> 's Jewish components	Displayed understanding of the <i>middah</i> via explanation, was able to link the <i>middah</i> to Judaism, though perhaps not strongly.	Did not present understanding of the <i>middah</i> , could not link the <i>middah</i> to Judaism.

Please complete the following statements:

1. One thing that impressed me about this presentation:

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2. One thing that this presentation made me think about:

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## Unit 4: When *Middot* Conflict

Relevant Unit EUs:

- Secular American culture overflows with vibrant Jewish content.
- Tensions that arise between different Jewish virtues enhance their ethical guiding power.

Goals:

- To re-introduce *middot* categorizations (self care and community care)
- To explore moments of struggle between *middot* at different moments in different pop culture settings.
- To give learners tools to navigate moments where two important *middot* clash
- To challenge learners to clarify their understanding of the various presented *middot*
- To build learners' decision-making skills

Objectives: By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- Recognize the difference between the two *middot* categories (self-care and community-care)
- Recognize life moments in which two or more *middot* conflict
- Discuss the challenges we face when confronted with decisions that involve conflicting *middot*
- Analyze the way in which one or more *middot* challenge and/or enhance one or more pop culture moments
- Articulate their reasoning for “choosing” to act upon one *middah* over and above another in certain circumstances
- Create a *middot*-plan of action for use in *middot*-conflicting moments.

Outcomes:

- Ongoing:
  - [Throughout the entire curriculum] Learners will keep a folder of handouts and completed closure activities. This data will become a tool for them to return to and refer to throughout the curriculum.
  - [Throughout this unit] Learners will note moments in their everyday lives (or in the pop culture they consume) in which adherence to two *middot* conflict.
- Authentic Assessment: Learners will create a *middot* plan-of-action, a step-by-step method for dealing with moments in life that require them to “choose” one *middah* over another.

# Taking the *Middah* Challenge

## Unit 4, Lessons 1-3

### **Lesson Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Identify the obstacles that stand in the way of adhering to *middot*
- Question obstacles that complicate *middot* adherence for their efficacy.
- Hypothesize methods for overcoming obstacles to *middah* adherence.

### **Lesson-specific Essential Questions:**

- What makes it hard to adhere to *middot*?
- What obstacles prevent us from practicing *middot*?
- How can we best navigate those *middah* obstacles?

### **Materials:**

- Copies of Math Minute, writing utensils
- Two sets of Jenga
- Copies of Covey Quadrant worksheet
- Copies of Words of Encouragement Gingerbread Man Handout
- Granola bars, pie tins, whipped cream
- Paper bag
- Magazines, glue, paper
- Copies of “Yes-No” dropdown quiz
- “Fear” Items: Rubber cockroach, Clown, Test with an “F” on it (represents failure), Tall building (represents height), Elevator (represents claustrophobia), Coffin (represents death), Picture of a Facebook profile with no friends (represents being alone)
- Tug-of-war rope
- Copies of Self-care assessment

### **Note to facilitator:**

This lesson will take more than one hour-long time-slot. I estimate that the entire endeavor (completing all eight stations + debrief) will require three hours to do thoughtfully. Feel free to break up the stations as you see fit; here are some options:

- Take one three-hour timeslot and complete the entire activity
- Break it into three one-hour time-slots; complete three stations during each of the first two lessons and the last two stations + debrief time during the last lesson.

## **Set Induction:**

Ask: If *middot* are so important, why doesn't everyone just do them?

### Learning Experience: Traversing the *Middah* Obstacle Course

Learners will spend time in eight stations. Each station represents one *middah*. In order to complete the station, learners will have to complete two activities – one representing an obstacle that must be overcome in order to “reach” the *middah* and a second representing a method for overcoming the obstacle.

#### ○ **Station 1: *hachnasat orchim*, welcoming guests**

- The obstacle: too much homework
- The task representing the obstacle: you must complete the following word puzzles (See Appendix A) before you may invite anyone over to your house for the afternoon
- The task overcoming the obstacle: time management – watch mini-lesson on Covey's four quadrants; then graph your week according to the system
  - Link to quick description of Covey's four quadrants:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI9VLDWXavg>

**Note to Facilitator:** The answer sheet can be found in Appendix B.

#### ○ **Station 2: *someyach noflim*, supporting the fallen**

- The obstacle: spreading yourself too thin, needing to support too many folks
- The task representing the obstacle: play a round of Jenga – notice how the bottom of the tower thins out as the supporting blocks all get used up and placed on top of the tower
- The task overcoming the obstacle: create criteria for making support choices, list people you can reach out to for support yourself and/or send people to when they need support

#### ○ **Station 3: *rofeh cholim*, healing the sick**

- The obstacle: people don't know what to say/how to act
- The task representing the obstacle: Sick-person Taboo  
The goal of the game: give your partner enough hints to guess the word (pain) without using any of the associated words (medicine, hurt, gain) in your hints.
  - Pain
    - Medicine
    - Hurt
    - Gain
  - Hospital
    - Doctors
    - Nurses
    - Greys Anatomy
  - Vomit

- Throw up
  - Puke
  - Food Poisoning
- Feeling
  - Emotion
  - Smile
  - Frown
- Optimism
  - Smile
  - Feeling
  - Glass
- The task overcoming the obstacle: words of encouragement gingerbread man
  - Each team is given pens, mini-post its, and an 11x17 piece of paper with an outline of a gingerbread person (Appendix C).
  - Their task is to think of good statements, phrases, and questions to ask and place them in the appropriate place on the gingerbread person.
    - e.g. “Is there anything I can bring you?” could go on the hand because of the hand-held nature of bringing
    - “What can I get from your house?” could go on the foot because of the movement nature of going somewhere to get something.
- **Station 4: *shmirat haguf*, guarding/caring for your body**
  - The obstacle: junk food cravings!
  - The task representing the obstacle: You must remove the [wrapped] granola bar from the whipped cream pie while keeping as much whipped cream in the pie tin as possible.
  - The task overcoming the obstacle: List the things that you crave, and why you crave them. Then brainstorm healthier things that can help satisfy those cravings.
- **Station 5: *ometz lev*, courage/facing your fears**
  - The obstacle: fear
  - The task representing the obstacle: each person on the team must reach into a grab bag of fears and pull out an object (ideally a miniature version of the object, but if nothing else at least a picture of said object) that represents a common fear:
    - Rubber cockroach
    - Clown
    - Piece of paper with an “F” on it (represents failure)
    - Tall building (represents height)
    - Elevator (represents claustrophobia)
    - Coffin (represents death)

- Picture of a Facebook profile with no friends (represents being alone)
  - Learners must first determine what fear is being represented and then spend a minute within their group talking about what ways, if any, that the fear manifests itself in their lives.
  - The task overcoming the obstacle: Some sort of trust thing (trust fall maybe? Or trust circle?)
- **Station 6: *sameyach bchelko*, contentment with your lot**
  - The obstacle: our modern world of advertising
  - The task representing the obstacle: team should spend a few minutes gathering pictures from a magazine and gluing it all into a collage that represents all the things they want (or just make a list of all the things they want right now – can be tangible or not)
  - The task overcoming the obstacle: making a list of all the things you have
- **Station 7: *dibuk chaverim*, sticking close to friends**
  - The obstacle: Your two best friends don't get along
  - The task representing the obstacle: Play a game of tug of war
  - The task overcoming the obstacle:
    - Think of a time when two people who are important to you have both needed something from you at the same time; you can only help one:
    - Write a pro/con list to help you come to a decision.
- **Station 8: *heshbon hanefesh*, soul check-in**
  - The obstacle: a *nefesh* is a hard thing to comprehend; you're working with something you can't see
  - The task representing the obstacle: Draw a picture of your soul with your eyes shut
  - The task overcoming the obstacle: Complete Self-Care Assessment Form (Appendix D)

Debrief Questions:

- What did you think of the obstacles?
- What other things make it hard to practice these *middot*?
- Are any of these *middot* more important to you than others? If you had to choose four of the eight to focus on, which would you focus on? Why?

Closure: Journal entry:

- List the *middot* on the board:
  - *hachnasat orchim*, welcoming guests
  - *someyach noflim*, supporting the fallen
  - *rofeh cholim*, healing the sick

- *shmirat haguf*, guarding/caring for your body
- *ometz lev*, courage/facing your fears
- *sameyach bchelko*, contentment with your lot
- *dibuk chaverim*, sticking close to friends
- *heshbon hanefesh*, soul check-in
- Ask: If you were to order these *middot* according to their level of difficulty (Level 1 being the “easiest” *middah* to follow and Level 8 being the most difficult), how would you order them? Explain your thought process.

Appendix A:

compliments of [akelascouncil.blogspot.com](http://akelascouncil.blogspot.com)

1 history history history	2 R g rose e i n	3 MEREPEAT	4 _____ read _____
5 Arrest You're	6 Me Me a l Me a a l l Me a l	7 E more more more more	8 wonalicederland
9 me right	10 stefrankin	11 Chimadena	12 settle
13 millio1n	14 <sup>d</sup> e r <sup>d</sup> e r v i v i  <sup>d</sup> e r <sup>d</sup> e r v i v i	15 land time	16 mini'llbetheute
17 R R a a i i l l	18 scope	19 ban ana	20 o_er_t_o_
21 e t a d	22 Meal Λ	23 issue issue issue issue issue issue issue issue issue issue	24 XQQQME
25 time time	26 FLUBADENCE	27 1 knows	28 BIG BIG ignore ignore
29 BIRD	30 chair	31 ICE <sup>3</sup>	32 lang4uage
33 VA DERS	34 9S2A5F4E1T8Y6	35 _____it	36 chawhowhorge
37 RIGHT RIGHT	38 T <u>u</u> l <u>i</u> p <u>s</u>	39 \$0 all all all all	40 knee light light

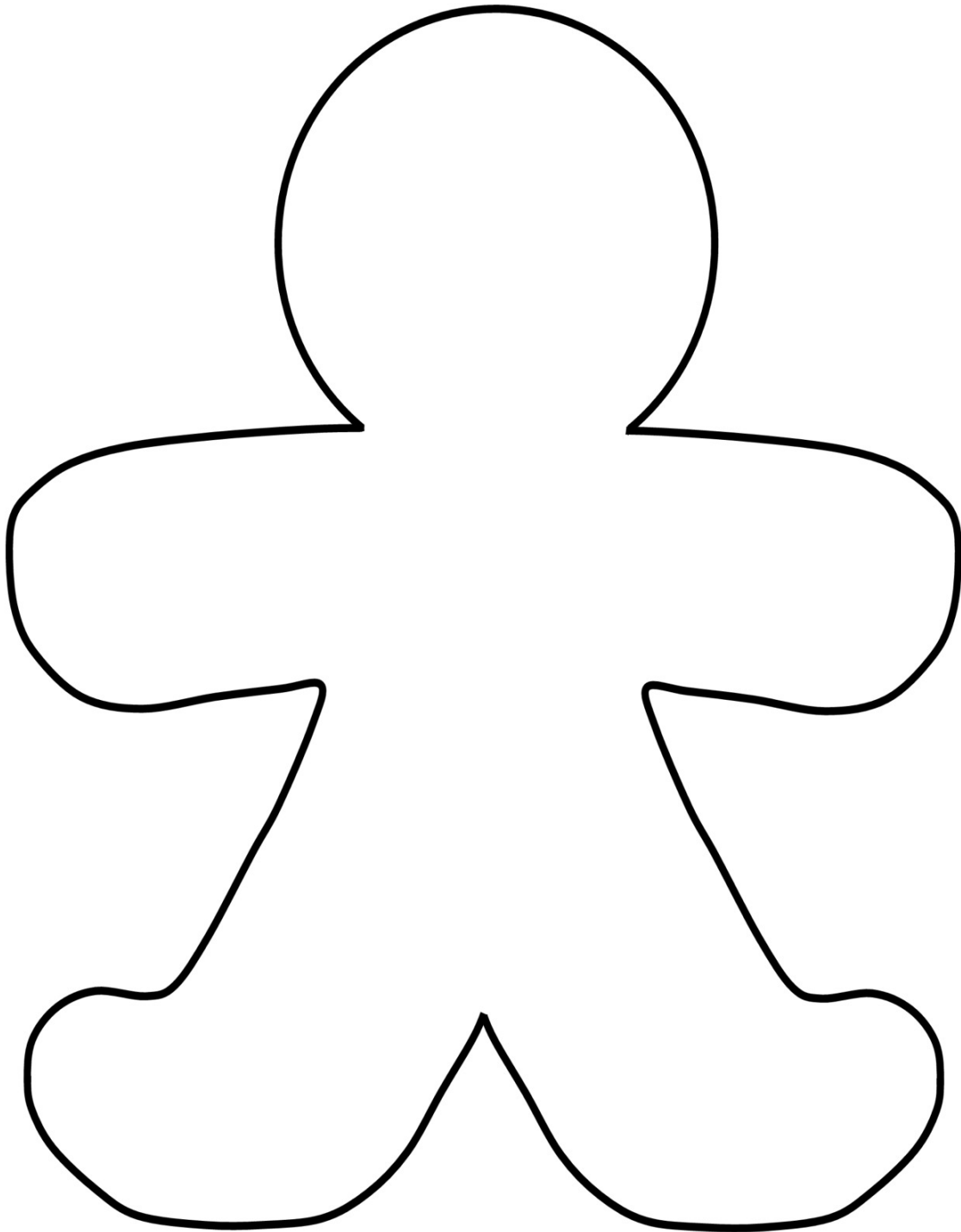


Appendix B:

compliments of akelascouncil.blogspot.com

1 history repeats itself	2 Ring around the rosie	3 Repeat after Me	4 Read between the lines
5 you're under arrest	6 Square Meal	7 Ready for more	8 Alice in Wonderland
9 Right Beside Me	10 Frankenstein	11 Made in China	12 Settle down
13 One in a Million	14 Four Wheel Drive	15 The Land Before Time	16 I'll be there in a minute
17 Rail Crossing	18 Microscope	19 Banana Split	20 painless operation
21 Update	22 Well Balanced Meal	23 Tennis Shoe (10 issue)	24 excuse me
25 Time after time or double time	26 Bad Influence	27 Won by a nose	28 Too big to ignore
29 Big Bird	30 High Chair	31 Ice Cube	32 foreign language
33 SPACE INVADERS	34 Safety in Numbers	35 Blanket	36 who's in charge
37 Equal Rights	38 Tiptoe thru the tulips	39 Free for (4) all	40 neon lights

Appendix C:



Appendix D:



**SELF-CARE**

Self-Inquiry Assessment Form

*How well do I take care of myself relative to these categories?*

1 = I don't    2 = Poorly    3 = Adequately    4 = Well    5 = Very Well

**Physical Health**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Nutrition and Diet
- \_\_\_\_\_ Exercise and Fitness
- \_\_\_\_\_ Healthcare and Medical Needs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sleep

**Psychological, Emotional and Mental Health**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Stress Mastery
- \_\_\_\_\_ Creativity and Play
- \_\_\_\_\_ Emotions and Mood
- \_\_\_\_\_ Self-Esteem

**Social Support and Environment**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Relationships with Family
- \_\_\_\_\_ Relationships with Friends and Colleagues
- \_\_\_\_\_ Work, Career, and Calling
- \_\_\_\_\_ Financial Health
- \_\_\_\_\_ Environment and Nature

**Spiritual and Religious Life**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Spiritual Reflection and Experiencing the Sacred
- \_\_\_\_\_ Religious Practice and Ritual
- \_\_\_\_\_ Life Purpose and Service
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gratitude or Appreciation Practice

Self-Inquiry Form

# What can pop culture teach us about how to overcome *middot* obstacles?

## Unit 4, Lesson 4

### Lesson Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Recognize pop culture moments of *middot* navigation
- Analyze the way in which TV show/movie characters navigate *middot* obstacles

### Lesson-specific Essential Questions:

- What can pop culture characters and their actions teach us about navigating through the obstacles that challenge our ability to adhere to *middot*?

### Materials:

- Projector, Speakers, Screen, Computer

### Set Induction:

Ask: which of the *middot* do you think is hardest to adhere to? Why? What are the obstacles people face?

### Learning Experience #1

Watch selected clips from two movies whose storylines follow characters overcoming obstacles that stand in the way of practicing various *middot*. Prior to watching the clips, inform learners of the *middah* the character is struggling to adhere to.

Ask learners to take note the obstacles the character faces and the methods he/she uses to overcome the obstacle.

Example: “We are about to watch some clips from *Mulan*; as we watch, think about how *Mulan* acts with *ometz lev*, courage. Use one half of your paper to note those obstacles that challenge her ability to be courageous and the other half to note the methods she uses to overcome those obstacles.”

Model this task by talking through the first clip with the group.

- **Mean Girls** (Dibuk Chaverim)
  - Obstacles faced: peer pressure, the lure of wanting to be cool
  - Methods used to overcome obstacle: self-reflection, support from adults
- **Mulan** (Ometz Lev)
  - Obstacles faced: societal norms, gender, lack of physical strength

#### **Note to teacher:**

This list is for your own edification. Learners will be creating their own lists.

- Methods used to overcome obstacle: determination, wit, brains, help from friends,

Step 2: Ask learners, in groups of 2-3, to compare their notes. What did all group members similarly notice? Have each group combine their notes so that each group has a solid list of obstacles and methods.

Step 3: Bring the larger group back together and discuss:

- What obstacles did you see [character name] struggle with?
- How did she/he overcome those obstacles? DID she/he overcome them in the end?
- Do you agree with his/her methods for *middot* obstacle navigation? Are they realistic?

### **Closure**

Ask learners to write down one *middah* they would like to focus on and list all of the potential obstacles that might come up against them when trying to practice that *middah*. Then, in pairs, have learners work with each other to brainstorm and write down as many solutions as possible to overcoming their listed obstacles.

# ***Middah v. Middah***

## **Unit 4, Lesson 5**

### **Lesson Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Recognize life moments in which two or more *middot* conflict
- Discuss the challenges we face when confronted with decisions that involve conflicting *middot*

### **Lesson-specific Essential Questions:**

How do we choose between two important but conflicting *middot*?

Do we have to “choose” between conflicting *middot*?

### **Materials:**

### **Set Induction:**

Explain: We’ve been talking about the ways in which adhering to a *middah* can be hard due to various obstacles. Today we are going to talk about what happens when the obstacle preventing you from practicing a *middah*... is another *middah*!

### **Learning experience #1: The 12 Scouts – a Case of Conflicting Middot**

- Ask learners to pair up and read through the account of the 12 scouts [Appendix A].
- In pairs, learners should respond to the following comprehension questions as they read:
  - Who are the main characters?
  - What does Moses tell the spies to look for?
  - What information do the spies return with?
  - Do the spies answer Moses’ question? Do they add any information he did not ask for?
  - What does Caleb say?
  - What do the rest of the spies do after Caleb says his piece?
  - How do Caleb and Joshua respond to the worries of the Israelite community?
- Come back together as a group to further study the text of the 12 spies incident.
  - Ask:
    - Does anyone see any of our *middot* present in this conflict? Where?
      - Work the group toward the following:
        - the response of the 10 = *sameyach b’chelko*/contentment with ones lot
        - and the response of the 2 = *ometz lev*/courage, facing fears

- What would you have done if you were a spy sent to scout the land? Why?

**Learning experience #2: When Middot Conflict: Looking at Modern Cases**

- Show a TV show clip in which characters must choose between adhering to *sameyach b'chelko* v. *ometz lev*.
- Show three TV show clips in which characters must choose between adhering to one *middah* or another. TV show clips should ideally utilize any of the following *middot* in conflict:
  - Taking care of our bodies (*shmirat haguf*) v. healing the sick (*rofeh cholim*)
    - I'm thinking of practical problems here – sometimes when you help out a friend who's sick, you catch what they have!
  - Welcoming guests (*hachnasat orchim*) v. cleaving to friends (*dibuk chaverim*)
    - This is best represented by any character who's torn between spending time/focus on their friend group and the desire to make a new kid feel welcome; in the lunchroom, at a NFTY event, etc.
  - Lifting the fallen (*someach noflim*) v. healthy souls (*heshbon hanefesh*)
    - Here I'm thinking of the toll that "lifting the fallen" can take on a person's psyche.
  - Taking care of our bodies v. cleaving to friends
    - Peer pressure re: substance abuse (is this too "truth ad" for them?)

Discussion: when *middot* conflict in these ways, what do we do? Is there only one answer? Are the *middot* really "in conflict"? How else can we look at the problem of trying to adhere simultaneously to two *middot* that seem to clash?

***Ometz Lev or Sameyach b'chelko?***  
**Selections from Numbers 13-14**

Translation from NJPS with language accessibility emendations by Dusty Klass

**Numbers 13:1-3**

God spoke to Moses, saying: "Send spies to scout the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelite people; send one representative from each of their ancestral tribes, each one a chieftain among them."

So Moses, by the Eternal's command, sent them out from the wilderness of Paran, all of them being notables, leaders of the Israelites...

**Numbers 13:17-21**

When Moses sent them to scout the land of Canaan, he said to them: "Go up there into the Negev and on into the hill country, and see what kind of country it is. Are the people who dwell in it strong or weak, few or many? Is the country in which they dwell good or bad? Are the towns they live in open or fortified? Is the soil rich or poor? Is it wooded or not? And take pains to bring back some of the fruit of the land." ...so they went up and scouted the land...

**Numbers 13:25-33**

At the end of forty days, they returned from scouting the land. They went straight to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran, and they made their report to them...This is what they told him: "We came to the land you sent us to; it does indeed flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who inhabit the country are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large; moreover, we saw the Anakites [enemy tribe] there. Amalekites [another enemy] dwell in the Negev region; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites [you guessed it, more enemies] inhabit the hill country; and Canaanites [also enemies] dwell by the Sea and along the Jordan.

Caleb [one of the scouts] hushed the people before Moses and said, "Let us by all means go up, and we shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it."

But the spies who had gone up with him said, "We cannot attack that people, for it is stronger than we." Thus they spread lies among the Israelites about the land they had scouted, saying, "The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers. All the people that we saw in it are of great size; we saw the Nephilim there – the Anakites are part of the Nephilim – and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them."

**Numbers 14:1-2, 6-9**

The whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night. All the Israelites railed against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died in the land of Egypt," the whole community shouted at them, "or if only we might die in this wilderness!"

And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephuneh [two of the scouts] said: "The land that we traversed and scouted is an exceedingly good land. If please with us, the Eternal will bring us into that land, a land that flows with milk and honey, and give it to us; only you must not rebel against the Eternal. Have no fear then of the people of the country, for they are our prey: their protection has departed from them, but the Eternal is with us. Have no fear of them!"



# When Pop Culture Becomes the Obstacle

## Unit 4, Lesson 6

### **Note to the teacher:**

In the week prior to leading this lesson, give learners the EQ: “How do aspects of pop culture challenge or contribute to our ability to adhere to *middot*?”

Invite them to each bring in one example of an aspect of pop culture that answers that question.

For example, someone could bring in the fact that companies take note of our internet activity and use the information to cater the internet ads we see to fit the types of things we’re interested in.

This challenges our ability to adhere to the *middah* of contentment, *sameyach b’chelko*.

### **Lesson Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Identify ways in which aspects of pop culture can become obstacles to *middot* adherence
- Identify ways in which aspects of pop culture can contribute to our *middot* adherence
- Analyze the role pop culture itself plays in our ability to adhere to *middot*

### **Lesson-specific Essential Questions:**

- How do aspects of pop culture challenge or contribute to our ability to adhere to *middot*?

### **Materials:**

- Board, writing utensils
- Construction paper, glue sticks, sample Torn Paper art piece

**Set Induction:** Explain - In our quest to seek out all of the varying obstacles *middot* run into, we next turn to pop culture itself.

### **Learning Experience #1 – Pop Culture Values, Jewish Virtue: in tandem or in tension?**

- Ask: What values does pop culture present [come up with a list on the board]? As learners respond, make sure they explain the way in which that value manifests itself in pop culture.
- List the eight *middot* we have been focusing in on next to the list of pop culture values
- Ask: How are the two value-sets in sync or in tension with each other?
- After a discussion comparing the two value-sets, ask: what is missing on either side? What other values are present in Jewish culture that are either bolstered by or brought into tension with pop culture values?
- Ask: How do you feel about the tensions and parallels we have been talking about today? Do any of the values, Jewish or pop culture, conflict with your personal set of values? How so?

### **Learning Experience #2 – Torn Paper Art: When Values Clash**

- Invite learners to choose a *middah* they are particularly conflicted about, along with a way in which pop culture challenges that *middah*. Their task is to represent the challenge via construction paper. Each learner will be given one piece of colored construction paper as a background, and will fill their page with an abstract depiction of their challenge by tearing pieces of construction paper from a central pile and gluing them onto their backdrop paper.

## **Unit 5: Measuring *Middot* Levels**

### **How much of which *middot* are present in which pop culture moments?**

Relevant Unit EUs:

- Secular American culture overflows with vibrant Jewish content.
- Jewish virtues bolster everyday moments, decisions, and life choices.

Goals:

- To give learners a sense of which *middot* are most present in their cultural consumption
- To help learners analyze the information they implicitly receive via pop culture
- To give learners tools to translate the learning from this curriculum into their lives once this course is complete

Objectives: By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- Recognize the multiple *middot* present in the work of various pop culture artists
- Rank the level of *middot* presence in pop culture artists work
- Identify their own *middot* “consumption” via their pop culture consumption
- Analyze the effect their pop culture consumption has on their view of various *middot*
- Create a ranking system for measuring the level of *middot* presence in various media and pop culture artists work
- Debate the influence that presence (or absence) of *middot* have on their pop culture consumption

Outcomes:

- Ongoing:
  - [Throughout the entire curriculum] Learners will keep a folder of handouts and completed closure activities. This data will become a tool for them to return to and refer to throughout the curriculum.
- Authentic Assessment: Learners will complete a class analysis of their personal pop culture consumption through the lens of the *middot* levels present in the various pop culture media and artists they “consume.” They will choose as a class in what way they would like to display their results.

# Measuring *Middot* Levels

## Unit 5, Lesson 1-3

### Lesson Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Recognize the multiple *middot* present in the work of various pop culture artists
- Rank the level of *middot* presence in pop culture artists work
- Create a ranking system for measuring the level of *middah* presence in various media and pop culture artists work

### Lesson-specific Essential Questions:

- What *middot* are present in our pop culture consumption?

### Materials:

**Set Induction:** Create a list of all pop culture media and artists that learners consume (this should include TV shows regularly watched, favorite musical artists, any Youtube channels they frequent, magazines, books/book series). Record the list in a word or other on-computer document.

### Learning Experience – Measuring *Middah* Levels – Creating the tool

Step 1: Ask - What does it look like when people act in accordance with [insert *middah* here]?

What does it look like when people act against that same *middah*? Do this for all eight *middot*.

Example: A list of responses for *shmirat haguf* might look like:

- People who act in accordance with *shmirat haguf* look and feel healthy. They are active (either they formally exercise or just move a lot). They are confident in their skin and make well-thought-out choices about their bodies.
- People who act against *shmirat haguf* don't feel healthy. They might have eating disorders. They do not feel comfortable in their own skin and often make rash or ill-thought-out decisions in the way they treat their bodies.

Step 2: Use these answers to create spectrum levels for each *middah*, where one end of each spectrum represents the *middah* when it is being practiced and the other represents the same *middah* when it is not being practiced (or perhaps even practiced against).

Example: spectrums for *shmirat haguf* might look like:

This pop culture artist/artifact projects/presents/promotes:

Confidence ←-----→ Self-Consciousness

Well-thought-out body choices ←-----→ ill-thought-out body choices

Moderate eating habits ←-----→ Extreme eating habits (binge/abstain)

Step 3: Create a *middah* rating system based on the spectrum levels created for the various *middot*.

Sample rating system for *shmirat haguf*:

<b>Spectra:</b>	<b>Rating awarded on the spectrum:</b>	<b>Reasoning/evidence for rating:</b>
Confidence (1) ←----- -----→ Self-Consciousness (10)		
Well-thought-out body choices (1) ←-----→ ill-thought-out body choices (10)		
Moderate eating habits (1) ←-----→ Extreme eating habits (binge/abstain) (10)		
Total <i>shmirat haguf</i> level (average of the above #s):		

Step 4: Guide the learners in using the system to measure the *middah* levels of one of the pop culture artist/media listed by the learners at the beginning of the lesson, ideally one common to a majority of them.

Before beginning, decide on the criteria for rating the artist/artifact – will you rate him/her/it based on the entire body of their work? A few songs/episodes? If you are rating a person, will you be rating his/her personal life or the “art” she/he produces?

See below for an example of what the *shmirat haguf* chart might look like when filled out for a musical artist:

<b>Spectra:</b>	<b>Rating awarded on the spectrum:</b>	<b>Reasoning/evidence for rating:</b>
Confidence (1) ←----- -----→ Self-Consciousness (10)	10	All of this artist’s songs are about his innate ability to attract women; he doesn’t seem to have very many body image issues
Well-thought-out body choices (1) ←-----→ ill-thought-out body choices (10)	2	This artist’s lyrics frequently talk about consuming massive amounts of alcohol and not sleeping very much. His lyrics also imply that he has multiple sexual partners.
Moderate eating habits (1) ←-----→ Extreme eating habits (binge/abstain) (10)	N/A	I do not recall this artist mentioning food in his music
Total <i>shmirat haguf</i> level (average of the above #s):	$(10+2)/2=$ <b>6</b>	

Step 5: Give each learner 3-5 items/people/pop culture artifacts from the list the learners made at the beginning of class. Each learner will then take the time (in class, over the remainder of this session and into the next) to rate the media he/she has been assigned according to each of the eight *middot*. As they complete their ratings, learners will add the numbers they arrive at a shared google spreadsheet, which will end up looking something like this:

Artist/TV show/movie /youtube channel/etc.	Shmirat haGuf	Ometz Lev	Heshbon haNefesh	Sameyach b'chelko	Dibuk Chaverim	Hachnasat Orchim	Someyach noflim	Rofeh cholim
Musical Artist #1	8	4	10	2	9	8	5	6
Musical Artist #2	4	6	2	3	3	3	4	5
TV Show #1	5	2	3	9	7	8	7	6
TV Show #2	9	7	5	10	2	6	7	8
Movie #1	2	9	6	7	5	4	7	1
Movie #1	5	10	7	5	1	3	6	10
Youtube channel #1	1	3	9	4	6	7	5	9
Youtube channel #2	0	2	8	8	8	5	3	7
Etc.								

Step 6: Individually and as a whole class, learners will analyze the data gleaned from their research.