



Committing to Kindness (K-2nd)

Topic

Mitzvot and Middot, Gemilut Hasadim

Grade Level(s)

- Pre-K-1st
- This can also be done with parents as a family activity
- Note: This lesson is Shabbat-friendly

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will be able to:

- Articulate how it feels to help others
- Articulate that the Jewish term for helping others by giving of our time, resources, skills and self in small ways is “*gemilut hasadim*”
- Brainstorm different examples of *gemilut hasadim* that they can do

Materials needed

- Procure a copy of “The Surprise” in Frog and Toad All Year by Arnold Lobel. Copies should be available at your local library or bookstore. As an alternative, check the web for a video of the story being read. One suggestion is [here](#).
- Copies of “*Al Shloscha Devarim*” (download available)
Make sure to have additional copies to distribute to parents who may be present or to students who are able to read.

Prepare in Advance

- Consider bring in a musician to accompany the singing of “*Al Shloscha Devarim*” on guitar or piano.

Background for Teachers

In Pirkei Avot (1:2), Rabbi Shimon Hatzaddik (Shimon the Righteous) teaches that the world stands on three things: on Torah, worship, and acts of lovingkindness, *gemilut hasadim*. Many students are familiar with Torah and worship, and perhaps also with the concept of *tzedakah* or *tikkun olam*, but *gemilut hasadim* — critically important to the rabbis — may be less well known.



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While there are many *mitzvot* that obligate the giving of *tzedakah*, visiting the sick, clothing the naked and feeding the poor, *gemilut hasadim* describes the way in which people approach each other: by performing acts of kindness that show our awareness of our shared humanity. *Gemilut hasadim* invokes acts of kindness between people that require our resources, time, energy, and compassion. They are easy to do, by kids as well as grownups, and if our world were filled with more acts of *gemilut hasadim*, it would indeed be a happier place.

Description of Activities

1. Start the session by leading the kids in “*Al Shlosa Devarim*.” Teach hand motions for “Shlosa” (hold up three fingers), “Torah” (hold up a pretend Torah), “*Avodah*” (make motions as if praying) and “*Gemilut hasadim*” (giving each other high fives)
2. Read “The Surprise” aloud to the group.
3. Ask:
 - a. Why does each friend decide to rake each other’s leaves? (to help their friend, to do something for their friend that they would like to have done for themselves).
 - b. How do they feel when they are being kind to the other?
 - c. Does it matter that, at the end, the leaves fly away? Why or why not?
4. Explain: In Hebrew – when we do kind things for other people, it is called *gemilut hasadim*.
5. Have students practice saying “*gemilut hasadim*” together.
6. Ask:
 - a. What are examples of *gemilut hasadim* that you have done for a friend or a friend has done for you? (share lunch, help you when you are sad)
 - b. What does it feel like when someone does something kind to you?
 - c. What does it feel like when you do something kind for someone else? How do you think the other person feels?
 - d. Why might it be important to do acts of *gemilut hasadim* and to treat each other with kindness?
7. Prompt students: Let’s think together about examples of *gemilut hasadim* that we can do together as a class/group.
8. If there is one example that is particularly doable for the group, select it as an ongoing mission and remind students about it at regular intervals.
9. Sing “*Al Shlosa Devarim*” again as a group with the hand signals.