



Lesson on - Mutual Responsibility

Subject | Israel, Current Israel Events, Swords of Iron War

Grades | Elementary

Pedagogies | Whole-class instruction, Active learning, Collaborative learning, Values-based learning

Required Materials | Internet access and projector



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Background

As we mourn the barbaric attack by Hamas on Israel on the last day of Sukkot in 2023, we also witness an extraordinary solidarity within the Jewish people. Tens of thousands of people are assisting their fellow Jews in these times of distress, despite the ongoing danger. Providing care to the wounded, comforting the bereaved, sending food packages, financially supporting struggling families... Do all these forces have a common origin? Are they specific to the Jewish people? These questions will be the focus of our study, which explores the obligation of solidarity and responsibility incumbent upon members of the Jewish people. Examples and uplifting stories, followed by the account of a 7-year-old girl named Hadar from Sderot, living near the Gaza border, aim to sensitize students to the needs and feelings of others. The teacher will invite the class to create a collective mutual aid system. Active participation by each student in such a project will provide a sense of meaning and accomplishment.



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Objectives

Knowledge:

1. The student will understand the obligation of every Jew to take responsibility for one another.
2. The student will understand how solidarity with one another is expressed in concrete terms.
3. Awareness will be raised among students about the challenges faced by Israelis living near the Gaza border.

Values:

Students will develop a sense of belonging to the Jewish people by engaging in exercises offering mutual aid, showing responsibility, and expressing empathy.



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Lesson Plan

Introduction:

To capture the students' attention, present the following two scenarios as a trigger (adding details to make them vivid).

1. If a man cuts his hand is it possible that only his hand hurts and not the rest of the body? (The entire body is in pain!)
2. A passenger on a boat decides to drill a hole in the floor, claiming he is free to do so since he paid for his seat! (Everyone is at risk of drowning because of his actions!)



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Step 1

Write prominently on the whiteboard the Hebrew phrase "כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה" (Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh Baze) and explain its meaning. The teacher should emphasize that the Jewish people are responsible for one another (originally, this expression pertains to a Jew's obligation to ensure that others observe the Torah laws). By extension (and this is the subject of our lesson), this expression has become a symbol of solidarity and empathy. The teacher should ask her students what the connection is between the two stories presented in the introduction with the Hebrew phrase of כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה.

Step 2

While recounting (without going into too much detail) the current events in Israel, ask the question: Based on what has happened, should Jews outside of Israel be concerned and responsible for what is happening in the Land of Israel?

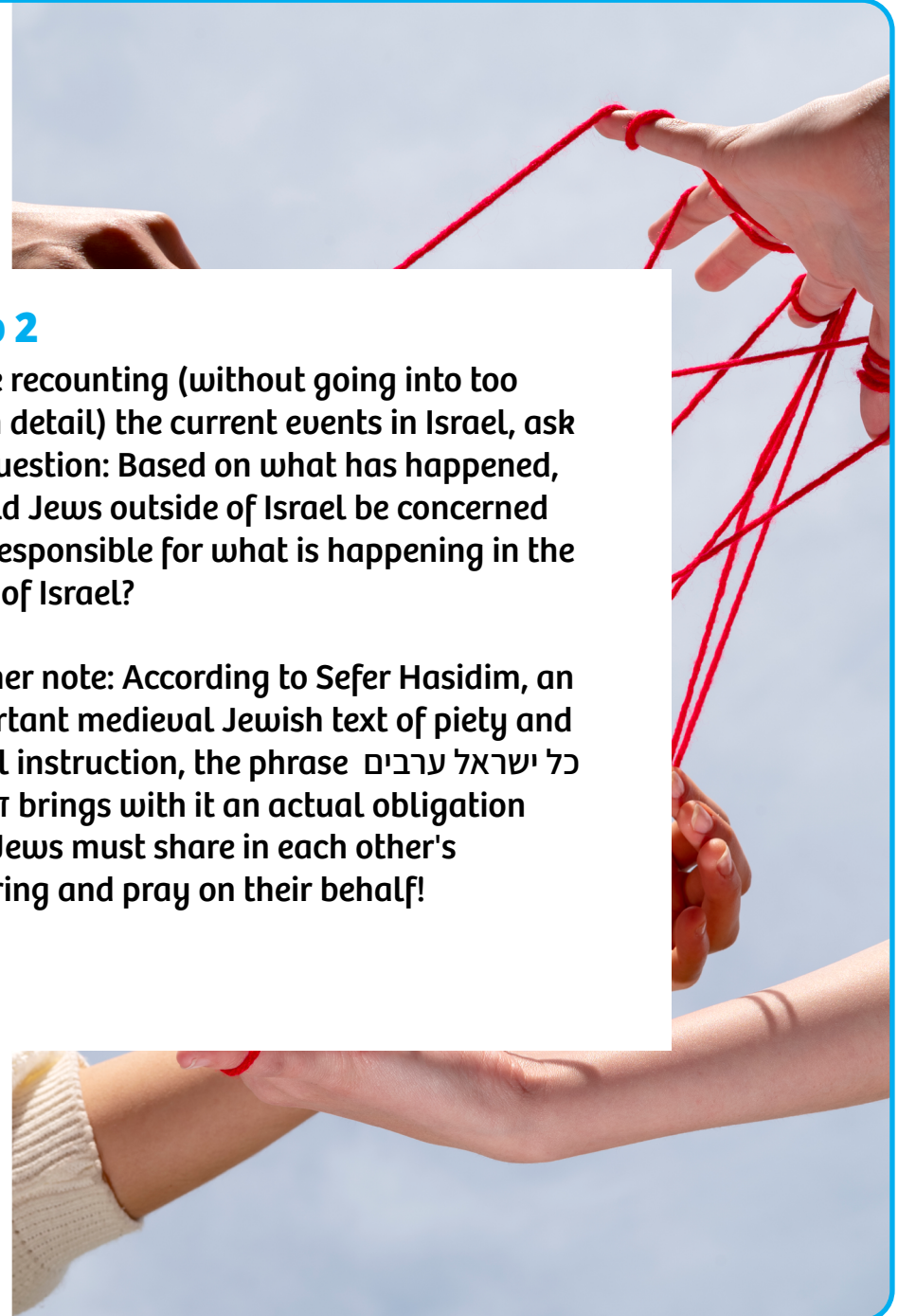
Teacher note: According to Sefer Hasidim, an important medieval Jewish text of piety and moral instruction, the phrase כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה brings with it an actual obligation that Jews must share in each other's suffering and pray on their behalf!



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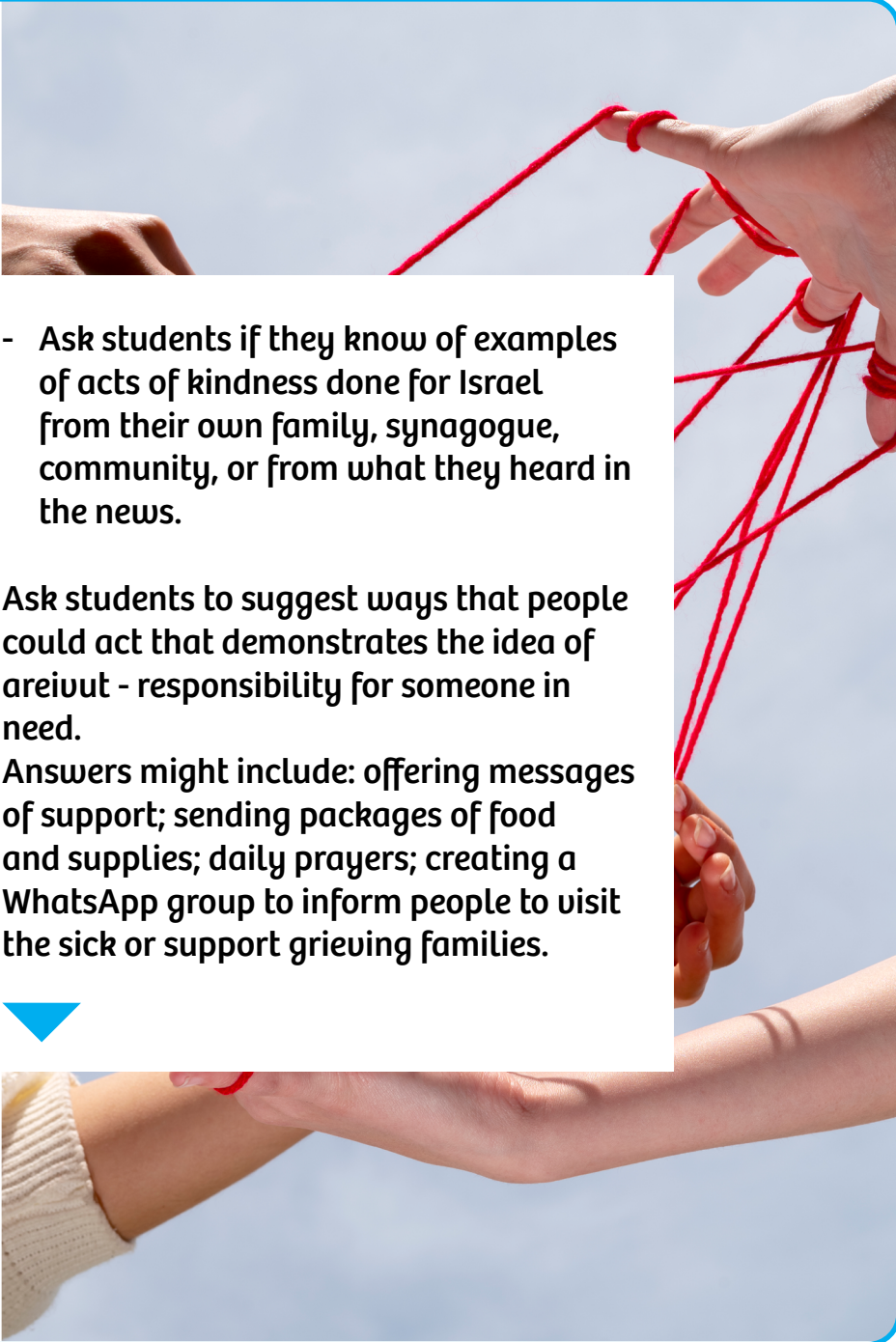
Step 3

The teacher should lead a discussion with her students leading with the following questions -
How should we act in accordance with this precept?
What are the different ways to express our suffering for others?
What good deeds should we perform that relate to mutual responsibility?

Step 4

Focus on current events by providing examples and stories that illustrate the extraordinary mutual aid in these tragic times!

- One example was the case of an anonymous man in an airport in the United States who purchased 250 plane tickets for mobilized soldiers who needed to return to Israel.

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- A photograph showing several hands holding and pulling on red string, creating a complex web of connections. The background is a clear blue sky. This image is used as a metaphor for community and mutual aid.
- Ask students if they know of examples of acts of kindness done for Israel from their own family, synagogue, community, or from what they heard in the news.

Ask students to suggest ways that people could act that demonstrates the idea of areivut - responsibility for someone in need.

Answers might include: offering messages of support; sending packages of food and supplies; daily prayers; creating a WhatsApp group to inform people to visit the sick or support grieving families.



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Step 5

The teacher should emphasize the importance that everyone should care for each other in times of joy or sorrow. It is essential to feel empathy to more easily identify the needs and feelings of others.

Hadar's story, a 7-year-old living in Sderot near Gaza, can sensitize the students. See Appendix 4. Appendices 1-3 (photo of a missile shelter; recording of the siren in case of an alert; image of the window shutters of a safe room) help students visualize the concepts mentioned in the story that are likely unfamiliar to the young non-Israeli audience.

Students should then be asked to answer the following questions:

What challenges does Hadar face?

If you could speak to her or write to her, how would you encourage her?

Write a fictitious letter to Hadar on the board. Ask each student to contribute a line or two.

Step 6

The teacher, at this point in the lesson, should make the point that until now we have learned about the importance of being responsible for a Jew in need. But, now present students with an action challenge.

Pose - What can WE do in relation to what we have studied?

Project Launch - Create an action plan for the students to do as a class whereby they will discover their capacity for selflessness. Have students develop a list of possible initiatives they can do to be helpful to Jews in Israel. Once the list is compiled, conduct a classroom discussion about the ideas and their feasibility. Ultimately, have the class vote on one or two they plan to do with the teacher's guidance and oversight.



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Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by stressing with students that the solidarity of the Jewish people allows everyone to feel as if they are an integral part of the our people, never abandoned, and always supported by one another. Bring the lesson back to the expression "כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה" (Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh Baze) - All Jews are responsible for one another.



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Appendices

Appendix 1

Photo of a missile shelter
(shikunbinui.com)



Appendix 2

Siren during attacks
(Azaka, Tseva Adom)



Appendix 3

Image of window shutters of safe room (isramigun.co.il)



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Appendices

Appendix 4 - Hadar's Story

My name is Hadar, I am 7 years old, and I live in Sderot. I have 2 younger brothers: one is at gan (preschool), and the other is a 1.5-year-old baby. I enjoy playing like all children my age. In the pre-school, there is a "migounit" (shelter; see Annex 1). Do you also have a "migounit" in your school or near your home? In Sderot, there is one on every street corner. This provides us with a place to take cover in case of a siren. It's not at all pleasant when it sounds. Do you know what an "Azaka" siren is? (see Annex 2). In the Gaza Strip, not far from us, there are enemies who disrupt us all the time. They send rockets that explode in the streets and cause a lot of damage. Sometimes, in case of rockets fired too high, we hear from the city's loudspeakers (instead of the siren, so as not to frighten the residents too much), "Tseva Adom, Tseva Adom" (Red Color, Red Color). We then have 15 seconds to take cover. If we are outside at the time we run to the "migounit" to take cover and if we are in our houses there is a safe room, the "mamad" (see Annex 3),

that we go into. After the siren goes off and we take cover we must stay in our protected area for 10 minutes. Once, while my younger brother was in the bathroom, the siren went off! Often, at night, there are alerts, and afterward, it's difficult to fall back asleep. It's not easy to live under such a threat, and sometimes I wish to move closer to my grandparents' place. But I really love Sderot! I enjoy the holiday of Sukkot and especially Simhat Torah, when we dance with the Torah and the children receive lots of candy and prizes. This year (2023) on Simchat Torah things were very different! The sirens woke us up very early, and we heard that the situation was very serious in many other places also. I feel like we are at war, and it might be a long one. My parents are worried. I would love to go back to school, see my friends again, go shopping, visit the synagogue... We pray for the success of our soldiers and their safe return. I worry a lot about my cousins, mobilized in the army on Shabbat. They want to protect us. I pray for them and for their quick return to us, in peace, with all their friends.



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