

Lesson #4:

Havruta on Shared Suffering

Topic Areas: Israel at War, Jewish values

Grade Level: Grades 9-12

Abstract:

Using Havruta study, students will read a Talmudic excerpt and use guided questions to facilitate discussion between them. This lesson can connect to the High Holidays - a time when we express the fragility of our lives and the unknown of who will live and who will die in the coming year and we pray on behalf of the entire community. .

Lesson Goals:



knowledge



skills



values

1. Students will practice active listening, close reading, and critical thinking skills.
2. Students will understand the importance in our tradition of feeling empathy for the pain experienced by our fellow Jews, no matter where they are.

Lesson Plan:

1. **Divide** students into pairs to read text and answer guiding questions.
2. **The text makes three unique points about shared suffering:**
 - If you don't identify with the community's suffering, you won't benefit when things get better.
 - You shouldn't enjoy your life as usual when the community is suffering.
 - You should do symbolic acts to identify with the community's suffering. In their havruta, students should consider arguments for and against the Talmud's stance.

For example:




I agree that it is important to identify with the suffering of the community because :

- It will make you a more sensitive person in general
- it will inspire you to take action
- you would want them identify with you if it was you one day
- otherwise their situation will be forgotten.

 **I think that it is problematic to identify with the suffering of the community:**

- It could paralyze you and depress you into inaction.
- It could make you not want to be Jewish.
- It could make you scared.
- It is not authentic because you aren't really suffering.
- It doesn't help for everyone to be miserable - it is better to go on with life and creativity and joy.

 **The last text explains that in order to identify with the suffering of the community, Moshe sat on a rock instead of a pillow. As a closing to the lesson or as homework, discuss the value of solidarity symbols - such as dogtags, pins, flags, ribbons, etc.**

Hauruta Study: Talmud Taanit 11a

Read the following source with your partner carefully and slowly, pausing after each section to ensure understanding.

Section #1:

Our Rabbis have taught: When Israel is in trouble and one of them separates himself from them, then the two ministering angels who accompany every man come and place their hands upon his head and say, 'So-and-so who separated himself from the community shall not behold the consolation of the community.'

תנו רבנן: בזמן שישראל שרויין בצער
ופירש אחד מהן, באין שני מלאכי השרת
שמלוין לו לאדם, ומניחין לו ידיהן על ראשו,
ואומרים: פלוני זה שפירש מן הצבור אל
יראה בנחמת צבור.

Section #2:

Another [Baraita] taught: When the community is in trouble let not a man say, 'I will go to my house and I will eat and drink and all will be well with me'.

תניא אידך: בזמן שהצבור שרוי בצער, אל
יאמר אדם: אלך לביתי, ואוכל ואשתה,
ושלום עליך נפשי.

Section #3:

The Baraita continues: Rather, a person should be distressed together with the community. As we found with Moses our teacher that he was distressed together with the community, as it is stated during the war with Amalek: "But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat upon it" (Exodus 17:12). But didn't Moses have a cushion to sit upon; why was he forced to sit on a rock? Rather, Moses said as follows: Since the Jewish people are immersed in suffering, I too will be with them in suffering, as much as I am able, although I am not participating in the fighting."

אלא, יצער אדם עם הצבור, שכן מצינו במשה
רבינו שציער עצמו עם הצבור, שנאמר: "ידי
משה כבדים ויקחו אבן וישומו תחתיו וישב
עליה", וכי לא היה לו למשה כר אחד או כסת
אחת לישב עליה? אלא כך אמר משה: הואיל
וישראל שרויין בצער – אף אני אהיה עמהם
בצער. וכל המצער עצמו עם הצבור – זוכה
ורואה בנחמת צבור.

What unique message does this section add to this topic?

Section #1:

Section #2:

Section #3:

1. The Talmud asserts that it is important for individuals to identify with the suffering of the community. Make two arguments that support the Talmud's assertion and two arguments that challenge it.

I agree that it is important to identify with the suffering of the community because :

I think that it is problematic to identify with the suffering of the community:

2. In order to identify with the suffering of the community, Moshe sat on a rock instead of a pillow. What symbolic action do you do or could you do to identify with the suffering of the Jewish community? Do you believe in the effectiveness of symbols of solidarity?

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