



## Leadership Can Be Sweet

### Topic

Leading through Loving-kindness

### Grade Level(s)

5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>

### Big Ideas

1. Leadership does not always mean standing in front of a room or leading a meeting.
2. Being kind and compassionate can be a form of leadership.
3. Everyone can lead through kindness.

### Relevant Vocabulary

גְּמִילוּת חֶסֶדִים ( <i>Gemilut Hasadim</i> )	Loving-kindness
עֲבוּדָה ( <i>Avodah</i> )	Worship
צְדָקָה ( <i>Tzedakah</i> )	Charity, Justice

### Learning Targets

Students will:

1. Be able to explain the Jewish value of *gemilut hasadim*, loving-kindness
2. Be able to reinterpret acts of kindness as leadership moments
3. Reflect on and acknowledge others who have been leaders in their lives through acts of kindness
4. Choose one thing they can do to become a leader through kindness

### Materials / Technology Needed

- Card stock
- Scissors
- Pens and/or markers
- Black/white board or large sticky-paper notes
- Tablet or laptop to watch videos. If possible, a television or other large screen so that they can be seen more easily.
- Optional: Personal devices, such as phones or tablets if using Poll Everywhere

### Prepare in Advance

- Test video equipment; load and bookmark videos.
- Watch videos.
- Prepare a story of your own about a time that someone changed your situation through an act of kindness.
- Photocopy (and cut out) blank lollipops available at the end of this activity.

### Background for Teachers

*Gemilut Hasadim* is a Hebrew phrase most often translated as loving-kindness. The basic principle is that in performing an act of *gemilut hasadim*, a person gives of themselves.



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This is different than *tzedakah* in that, in giving *tzedakah*, a person is giving of their money or their material possessions. Engaging in *gemilut hasadim* can encompass these things but is usually understood as giving one's time or talents, most often directly to another person or group of people. There are a number of citations in the Talmud that explain the concept. Here are a few:

<b>Pirkei Avot 1:2</b>	<b>פרקי אבות א:ב</b>
Shimon the Righteous... would say, "The world stands on three things: on Torah, on <i>avodah</i> , and on <i>gemilut hasadim</i> ."	שְׁמַעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מְשִׁירֵי כְּנִסֵּת הַגְּדוּלָה. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוֹת חֲסָדִים:

<b>Tractate Sukkah 49b</b>	<b>מסכת סוכה מט:</b>
The Sages taught, "In three respects <i>gemilut hasadim</i> is superior to <i>tzedakah</i> . <i>Tzedakah</i> [can only be done with] one's money, <i>gemilut hasadim</i> with one's person and one's money. <i>Tzedakah</i> [can be given] only to the poor, <i>gemilut hasadim</i> to the poor and to the rich. <i>Tzedakah</i> [can be given only] to the living, <i>gemilut hasadim</i> to the living and to the dead."	ת"ר בשלשה דברים גדולה גמילות חסדים יותר מן הצדקה צדקה בממונו גמילות חסדים בין בגופו בין בממונו צדקה לעניים גמילות חסדים בין לעניים בין לעשירים צדקה לחיים גמילות חסדים בין לחיים בין למתים

The following paragraphs are brief summaries of two different moments that exemplify the concept of *Leading through Kindness*.

### Rebecca

In Genesis 24 we meet Rebecca, who will become one of the four matriarchs. Eliezer, Abraham's servant, has been sent to find a wife for Isaac. As he comes to the town of Nahor, he prays that God deal graciously with him and that he find a woman who offers not only to give him something to drink but also to water his camels, and that this woman be the person whom God has chosen for Isaac. As soon as he's done speaking, Rebecca comes and offers exactly what he's asked.

Commentators suggest that Rebecca's giving water to Eliezer was not particularly significant as she likely had the water drawn for herself. Though sharing was kind, it did not require that she put forth much effort. Her kindness was drawing water for ten camels. (*Kedushat Levi*, Genesis, Portion *Chayei Sarah*). An average camel can drink more than 50 gallons of water in three minutes. To sate the camels that traveled with Eliezer, Rebecca would have had to draw more than 500 gallons of water, a monumental task.



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Some rabbinic sages put Rebecca's age at three years old during this narrative (Tractate *Soferim* 21:9, et al.). Though it's difficult for us to conceive of a three-year-old being allowed the freedom and responsibility to serve at a well, her young age is used to elevate her service. It is not many toddlers who would have the inclination to share, nor the wherewithal to see a kindness like this through until the end.

### Francine Christophe

Francine Christophe was born in France in 1933, the same year Hitler rose to power. When she was a little girl, she and her mother were sent to Bergen-Belsen. She tells the story about how, while there, her mother asked her to give the piece of chocolate she had hidden away to someone who needed it more than she. She published *From a World Apart: A Little Girl in the Concentration Camps* in 2000 and has written other books about the Holocaust and her life.

### Description of Activities

1. Ask students to brainstorm a list of qualities that make someone a leader. As the students call out ideas, write these on the board or on a large sheet of paper taped to a wall. Optional: Use an app, such as Poll Everywhere, to collect answers.
2. Briefly explain the Jewish value of *gemilut hasadim*, loving-kindness.
3. Show students the "Everyday Leadership Ted Talk by motivational speaker Drew Dudley. It can be found [here](#). Ask students to share stories of a time when someone changed a situation for them through kindness. You may want to get the conversation going by sharing a story of your own.
4. Show videos about [Rebecca](#) (3:30), and [Francine Christophe](#) (4:55 minutes). (Preview videos first to make sure content is appropriate for your students.) Ask students what leadership qualities the people in the videos show, if any. (they might recognize initiative or courage, for example). Ask the students what the protagonists of each video have in common (e.g., making sure others have what they need, putting others' needs ahead of their own).
5. Lead students in a discussion on how they feel about the concept of *Leadership through Kindness*. Ask:
  - Is it leadership? How do you know?
  - Is it just being a "mensch"? If so, is being a mensch being a leader? (You might remind them of *Pirkei Avot* 2 "In a place where there are no "men" strive to be a "man.")
  - What effect does kindness have on the recipient? On the person showing kindness? On others around them?



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- Is it possible to be an unintentional or accidental leader?

Give examples about how kindness has led to something bigger. You can find some examples here or use experiences of your own:

- Starbucks customers pay it forward:  
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/08/21/378-people-pay-it-forward-at-fla-starbucks/14380109/>
- Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation:  
<https://www.alexslimonade.org/about/meet-alex>
- <https://makeadiff.wordpress.com/2006/06/02/the-history-of-random-acts-of-kindness/>

6. Give each student two lollipop cutouts. On one, ask them to write a *thank you note* to the person who showed them kindness and suggest that they try to deliver it. You might let them know that the person might not be aware of the impact their kindness had. (If you would like to incorporate technology, students can create virtual lollipops to give to someone whom they do not see often or who they have not seen in many years.) On the other lollipop, direct students to write one way that they can lead through kindness. You may choose to laminate these lollipops and hang them in the classroom, checking in with students periodically about their kindness progress. Alternatively, you can encourage students to hang them someplace visible at home as a reminder to be kind. If students have reached a kindness goal, you might consider giving them another lollipop on which to write another aspiration.
7. If you choose, you might give the students lollipops (Dum-Dums and Tootsie Roll Pops are kosher) and remind them that leading through kindness is sweet. You might also have students attach the edible lollipops to the lollipops they wrote on to give to someone else. They can also earn their own lollipops when they accomplish their kindness goal.

### Differentiation Options

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

#### **For learners who need more assistance**

- Instead of writing a thank you note, students might draw the interaction instead. They might also draw how the interaction made them feel.
- Help students send video/audio thank-yous to individuals that made a difference in their lives.



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### ***For learners who need extension opportunities***

- Have students research other leaders known for their kindness. Offer students the option to compile their research into a Prezi (<https://prezi.com/>) or a PowerPoint presentation to share with the class.
- Encourage students to involve other members of their family in their quest to lead through kindness, asking everyone to make a kindness pledge and keeping track, or to bring the idea of leading through kindness to their secular school.



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