

וְהִדַּרְתָּ פְּנֵי זֶקֶן: 'Respect Your Elders'

The Elderly Hostages

Facilitator Guide

Do I have a responsibility toward the elderly in general, and toward the elderly hostages in particular? If so, how do I act on that responsibility?



"Release the Grandpas: Haim Perry, Amiram Cooper Yoram Metzger"
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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Who are the elderly hostages? What are their stories?
- Are we responsible for them?
- How can we share that we care?
- What are their names and stories?

FRAMING THE ISSUE

As we will learn, there is a Torah obligation to care for the elderly. There are still elderly hostages being held by Hamas in Gaza. The majority of these hostages are male. At least 10 of the hostages are 75 or older. We know nothing of their fate. Do they have the medicines they need? Are they being treated with kindness? Do they have blankets to keep warm and enough food to eat? Are they suffering from long term illnesses that require treatment? Who is looking out for them?

Info For Facilitator



Target Audience:

Elementary and Middle school children. In Jewish Day Schools; Congregational Schools; Bar/Bat/B-mitzvah kids



Length Of Program:

2 part unit. Each session up to 60 minutes



Materials & Prep:

- Large poster boards with the two texts written on them
- Colored paper, markers, stickers to make cards (in both sessions)
- Prepare cards with names, photos, and short bios of the elderly hostages ([Find them here](#))

LET'S EXPLORE

Session 1

Study & Discussion:

- After the framing above, ask the kids to look at two posters on the wall with the text written in bold letters.
- Walk them through the texts and engage them with the questions.
- Facilitate a conversation about what they agree or disagree with.

1

מִפְּנֵי שִׁיבָה תִּקּוּם וְהִדְרָת פְּנֵי זָקֵן וְיִרְאַת מַאֲ-לֵהִיךָ אֲנִי ה'

***You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old;
you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.***

Leviticus 19:32

Context: This is from the Biblical Book of Leviticus, from the "Holiness Code" section (Chapter 19) which gives ways to live a holy life through interactions with others.

Questions:

- Why do you think there is a commandment to rise before the elderly? (Fun fact: there are signs on Israeli buses with quotes from this verse to encourage passengers to give their seats to the elderly.)
- What does the word "deference" mean? Give examples of how you can show deference to the elderly?
- What happens if your friends don't share this value?

2

***"A test of a People is how it behaves toward the old... But the affection and care for the old,
the incurable, the helpless are the true gold mines of a culture."***

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays on Human Existence (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p.72.

Context: Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was a Conservative rabbi who focused heavily on social justice issues. He marched with Dr. Martin Luther King in Selma, Alabama in 1965. This is a quote from one of his writings.

Questions:

- Do you think we do enough to help the elderly?
- What should younger people be responsible for the elderly?
- Share some examples from your family or community about helping the elderly?

Activity:

Each student will create their own card with written wishes or drawn pictures, to send to a family member of an elderly hostage to say that they are thinking of them and are waiting for them to come home. They can write from their heart and draw whatever they want.

These can be sent by the teacher as part of the Tree of Wishes Campaign from UnitED (see details below).

Homework Assignment between the two sessions

Step 1:

Ask each student in your class/youth group to interview a grandparent or a senior that they know. Ask the following 5 questions:

1. What type of phone did you have as a kid? When did you get your first computer?
2. What is a song you remember from your childhood? Try to find it and listen to it together
3. Share a story about a holiday that you love.
4. Is there a historical event you lived through that you remember where you were when it happened?
5. What is beautiful & challenging about growing older?

Step 2:

Divide a sheet of paper in half. On one half of the paper, draw or print a picture of the person you interviewed doing something they love. On the other half of the paper, write the answers to the questions. Bring this to class for Session 2.

Session 2

- Hang the papers in your school to create a gallery. Each student walks around the gallery to “meet” with their new elderly friends. Come back together and ask a few students to share the stories of their grandparents or elderly friends.
- In small groups, ask the students to create a similar poster for the elderly hostages using the photos and bios provided.
- Ask the students to imagine their elderly hostage in captivity: What do you think they are feeling? What are they worried about? What are they lacking?
- Add the posters of the elderly hostages to the gallery. Ask the school if they can remain hanging until they all come home.
- Teach the students about the power adults have to lobby their representatives. Have them create small cards with this url on it: www.oneminaday.com

Homework Assignment after the second session

Students should go back and meet with the grandparent / senior they had interviewed and share with them the name, picture and story of the elderly hostage they learned about. The kids should then ask the seniors to take action on their behalf, by calling their representatives. They give them the cards they made that say: www.oneminaday.com and encourage them to take on this small daily action.

TAKE ACTION!

Session 1

The cards created by the students for the families of the elderly hostages, should be collected by the teacher.

If this is before Tu B'Shvat, the cards can be uploaded as part of [the Tree of Wishes Campaign from UnitED](#). Wishes or pictures from thousands of students across the world will be affixed to a tree that will be 'planted' at Hostage Square in Tel Aviv by a delegation of leading global educators from across the world before Tu B'Shvat. Submissions are due by January 21, 2024.

[For details click here.](#)

Session 2

The students should encourage their senior interviewees (or any adult- parents, care givers, teachers, etc) to take action for the elderly hostages by calling their representatives. The kids give out the www.oneminaday.com cards they made.

CLOSING INTENTION

- After this unit, how do I feel about the elderly in my family/community?
- How do I imagine the elderly people are holding up in captivity?
- What is one thing I am taking away from this unit?