

“You Shall (All) Be Holy: Jewish Virtues and the Family”

Shabbaton Family Education
Temple Israel of Hollywood
2012-2013



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2012 - 2013

Course Rationale

“I set out to try to change the world, but I failed. So I decided to scale back my efforts and only try to influence the Jewish community of Poland, but I failed there too. So I focused on the community in my hometown of Radin, but achieved no greater success. Then I gave all my effort to changing my own family, and failed at that as well.

Finally, I decided to change myself. That is how I made such an impact on the world.”
- Chafetz Chayim, twentieth-century Jewish sage and leader

Each and every day, individuals are faced with questions. Certain questions have simple answers; others plunge much deeper. These questions, no matter their content, almost always find their answers in virtues – the beliefs, values, priorities, and principles maintained by the individual deep in their heart and soul.

What are these virtues, and from where do they emerge? This curriculum maintains that personal virtues almost always find their roots in religion, family experience, or communal allegiances. Virtues are gleaned from life lessons, interactions with family, friends, and community members, personal and public histories, and the all-around determination of how one should carry him or herself in the world. These virtues carry a person forward, serving to anchor him or her through the rigmarole of daily life.

This course seeks to educate its participants on the commonly held virtues of twenty-first century Reform Jewish families. The selection of virtues presented in this curriculum reflects the progressive, diverse urban community of Temple Israel of Hollywood. Each of the virtues presented – known in Hebrew as *middot* – is examined through the lens of Jewish history, tradition, or practice. Additionally, participants will study the Jewish practice of *mussar*, a way of life inherently connected to personal virtues.

The course begins by examining the virtues of the individual and branches outward toward familial, communal, and global virtues. The succession of individual to global symbolizes the notion that, as the Chafetz Chayim stated above, one person can change the world on his or her own. As the course progresses, parents and children will explore their shared and divergent virtues in their home lives and in their professional, work, or school lives. They will ask one another, *what do we value as individuals? What does our family stand for?* As these conversations will take place alongside other families at TIOH, a great potential exists for the enhancement, growth, and cohesion of the entire synagogue community.

The goals of this course are many. At the simplest level, this course seeks to imbue its participants with a greater sense of purpose in their daily lives. It attempts to give parents and children the language with which to explore what matters most to them – as individuals and as families. Finally, this course seeks to create a stronger synagogue community; one which possesses the instruments necessary for making daily life more meaningful.

Course Enduring Understandings

- 1) Jewish virtues – *middot* – can guide the everyday lives of children and adults alike if they have access to the vocabulary, meaning, and intent behind these virtues.
- 2) Through study, intentionality, and practice, Jewish and secular virtues can form the backbone of one's Reform Jewish identity.
- 3) Parents are continually seeking out resources to help inform the decisions they and their families make, and Jewish teachings should be an important resource for them.
- 4) Virtues build upon one another, beginning with individual virtues and branching out toward those of family, local community, and global community.
- 5) Conversations between children and adults over shared and divergent values can transform familial relationships and help shape family decisions.

Curriculum Overview

Unit 1: Introduction

Lesson 1: What are “middot?” Which middot guide my personal/home life and my professional/work/school life?

Unit 2: Personal Middot

Unit EQ: "What are the individual virtues which guide my everyday life?"

Lesson 2: What is mussar?

Lesson 3: Humility (anavah)

Lesson 4: Patience (savlanut)

Lesson 5: Enthusiasm (zeirizut)

Lesson 6: Compassion (rachamim)

Lesson 7: Strength of Heart / Courage (ometz lev)

Unit 3: Family Middot

Unit EQ: "What are the core virtues of my family, and how do those virtues influence me?"

Lesson 8: Respecting our parents (kibud av v'em)

Lesson 9: Allegiance/honor/dedication (koach)

Lesson 10: Respecting our bodies (shmirat ha guf)

Lesson 11: Rituals: Marriage

Lesson 12: Rituals: Brit Milah

Unit 4: Community Middot

Unit EQ: "What are the virtues of the community to which I/we belong?"

Lesson 13: Community (kehillah)

Lesson 14: Justice (tzedek)

Lesson 15: Diversity (gi'vun)

Lesson 16: Lifecycle Events: Bar and Bat Mitzvah (Grades 3 and 4), Funeral (Grades 5 and 6)

Lesson 17: Reform Judaism (yehudim reformim)

Unit 5: Global Middot

Unit EQ: "What are the global virtues and issues which guide and influence my everyday life?"

Lesson 18: Repairing the world (tikkun olam)

Lesson 19: Ecology (teva/ekologika)

Lesson 20: Poverty/Hunger (oni)

Lesson 21: Justice, part 2 (tzedek) --> Global justice

Unit 6: Closing

Lesson 22: Emerging Curriculum

Lesson 23: Final Day in Classroom

Lesson 24: Final "Middot Fair"

A Letter to the Instructor

Dear Educator,

Before you lies a true labor of love. This curriculum was and continues to be a true pleasure to write; it is something that I feel proud to share with you and hope that you will find equally as much joy in teaching it.

I had the immense privilege of working with the Shabbaton community during the 2011-2012 school year. It is an extraordinary group of families; parents who are so committed to their child's Jewish education that they themselves are along for the ride, and children who have been raised with education as a top priority. These are families who crave not only Jewish knowledge, but a meaningful Jewish experience at their beloved synagogue, as well.

The curriculum is structured in a way that allows for a certain degree of freedom. Though each lesson is planned out with specific goals and objectives and contains specific content, how you choose to present that content to your learners is up to you. Please use these ideas as a springboard for how to engage students in the study of *middot* and *mussar*, and feel free to own this material yourself.

A few tips for a successful learning experience:

- Always open with a set induction and close with a specific closure. These three-to-five minute introductions and conclusions do a world of good in teaching.
- Assess which activities you think will work for your students early on, and repeat those activities to fit your classroom of learners. Without becoming repetitive, own and take pride in what works for your learners.
- Take ownership of your classroom and create a strong, vibrant classroom community. Make sure that by the end of the first day of Shabbaton, each of your students knows the name of each person in his or her classroom. Creating a learning community is essential to student success!

Finally, and most importantly, have fun with this material. If you have any questions or need further explanation or resources, do not hesitate to reach out.

B'hatzlacha! Best of luck,

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Unit 1: Introduction

Essential Questions (EQs): What are *middot*? What are the middot which guide my everyday life?

For the instructor: The purpose of this unit/lesson is twofold: to introduce students to the concept of middot, and to form a classroom community on the first day of Shabbaton. It is important that the instructor make a connection between the virtues students will learn about this year and the ways in which each of them is expected to behave. Today is a day where students can generate their own expectations of each other and, depending on their age and abilities, write a communal *brit* together reflecting these expectations.

Unit Objectives: By the end of this (brief) unit, students will be able to:

- Define the word “midah” as virtue and measure
- Articulate why middot are significant to Judaism writ large, and to them as individuals
- Distinguish middot from “mitzvot”
- Connect “middot” with the concept of being a good person
- Formulate a connection between “middot” and being part of a greater community – their classroom, Shabbaton as a whole, and Temple Israel of Hollywood

Unit Key Terms and Definitions:

Middot – Middot comes from the Hebrew word “midah,” which means measure. Middot in this context are translated as Jewish virtues. They are used to describe measures of behavior for how one should act in this world. Middot include the principles of humility, patience, and compassion; key virtues which, especially when studied in a Jewish context, teach a person how to be the best version of themselves.

Mitzvot – Mitzvot, in colloquial English, means “commandment.” More commonly defined as “good deed,” Mitzvot come from three main sources: the Torah, the Talmud, and the Codes (Shulchan Aruch, etc.). Mitzvot are the do’s and don’ts of living a Jewish life within a social context; of being a part of a greater community and expressing your obligation to that community. Reform Jews do not typically consider themselves followers of mitzvot. However – in Reform Judaism the common parlance of mitzvah as “good deed” has become a key element of most learning and social justice work.

Brit – A “brit” in English is a covenant. In Genesis, God establishes a several “britot” with various characters, including Noah and Abraham. These britot are like contracts, where God vows to uphold one end while the other individual involved upholds another. In the classroom, a *brit* serves as a reminder of learners’ commitments to one another. It is typically written on the first day of class and kept in a visible spot throughout the year. All students should sign the brit, as is typically done with legal contracts.

Lesson 1: Introduction

EQs: What are *middot*? What are the middot which guide my everyday life?

Lesson Goals:

- To introduce students to the concept of “middot”
- To introduce or re-introduce students to one another
- To help students distinguish “mitzvot” from “middot”
- To have students grasp the overall theme of this year’s Shabbaton learning
- For each classroom to begin to form their own community
- To have each class compose their own *brit* for the year

Lesson Objectives: (By the end of the lesson, students will be able to...)

- Define “*middah*” as both a Jewish virtue and a measure
- Distinguish *mitzvah* (commandment) from *middah* (virtue/measure)
- Articulate how virtues – in Hebrew, *middot* – are foundational, beginning with the individual and branching outward toward family, community, and the world
- Identify Rabbi Hillel through his quote from Avot 1:14: “*If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?*”
- Connect Rabbi Hillel’s quote above with the concept of “starting with oneself” before branching outward to change the world
- Create a classroom *brit*

Text Message for Sichat Yomi: *Discuss with your family how middot are already present in your life. What virtues do you currently demonstrate to one another on a daily basis?*

Materials Needed:

Sound amplification

Michael Jackson’s “Man in the Mirror” on Mp3

Lyrics for “Man in the Mirror” (in supplement, below)

Large pieces of white butcher paper

Markers – lots of markers!

Large colored poster or butcher paper for the *brit*

Pens for students to sign their names

Copies of “Mitzvah or Middah?” cards

Hand mirrors (there are a few left over from last year in the RS supply closet)

Introduction

This introduction can work either for the all-Shabbaton intro *or* for each classroom. Students should listen to Michael Jackson’s song “Man in the Mirror,” either in its entirety or just the chorus. Instructor should have copies of the song lyrics at the ready. Once the song or segment of the song has completed, instructor should focus on the following lines of the song:

I'm starting with the Man in the Mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways
And no message could have been any clearer
If you want to make the world
A better place
Take a look at yourself
And then make a change.

Once the song has finished playing, instructor should ask students to compose, in 20 words or less, a summary of what they just heard. For example, "*this is a song about starting with yourself before going to change the world.*"

Instructor should comment that this song, in addition being a classic tune composed by the late, great Michael Jackson, is a representation of our curriculum this year, and our classroom learning. This year we are looking at how to make the world around us a better place through our respective Jewish virtues, or *middot*. But before we look to the world around us, and before we even *start* to think about how to engage with the world around us, we must first start with ourselves – we must look at the man, woman, boy, or girl in the mirror, and make that change.

Suggested Learning Activities:

You will notice that each of the activities has been broken up by age range; younger translates to 3-4 and older 5-6. However – the instructor should feel free to use his or her discretion, and is welcome to modify activities.

This day especially, please make sure to balance the getting-to-know you components with content explaining the year's curriculum. Forming a classroom community is essential, and today is just the start. Feel free to add your own icebreakers and getting to know you games, and keep coming back to them throughout the school year.

Above all else, have fun!

Activities For Younger Grades:

Icebreaker: Getting to Know You – All of You!

Have students sit in a circle. Ask for a volunteer to begin by telling the group his or her name and something about themselves – either their favorite ice cream flavor or their favorite song on the radio. The person next to them will go next, offering the same information but also the information of the person who preceded them. Then the person next to them goes, doing the same thing all the way through until the very last person in the circle identifies everyone's name AND the piece of information they added.

As a way of making sure everyone knows each others' names by the end of the activity, have everyone switch their place in the circle and then ask people to randomly attempt naming and identifying everyone and their special "fact."

Icebreaker: Catch Me if You Can

Form two lines of equal length with participants facing one another about a foot apart. Ask everyone to find one partner. Have them introduce themselves to one their partner and ensure they know their partner's name.

Next, instruct everyone to *study* their partner: facial features, what they're wearing, how they're standing, etc. Following this, ask everyone to turn around so the two lines are facing outward. Have everyone switch only *one* thing about their appearance. (*Shifting a front-facing hat to the side, rolling up one sleeve of their sweater, etc.*) Give them a few moments, then have everyone turn back towards one another and try to figure out what their partner changed about themselves.

Icebreaker –The Mating Game

First, ask students to close their eyes. Take the students through a very silly "guided meditation" where they are running through the forest and noticing all the trees and streams and, of course, the animals. Introduce them to five animals on their "walk through the forest:" a wolf, a cat, a rooster, a lion, and a cow. (Yes, these things DO exist in YOUR forest) Ask students to pick one animal that they connect with, and only one. This animal will become their "spirit" animal.

Next, tell students that after you say GO and with their eyes closed, they will need to find their pack of spirit animals by making the sound of the animal they chose and finding all others who are making the sound. They must keep their eyes closed!

Once the instructor says "go," all students should be making the sounds of their animals, trying to find one another. Once they have found one another, have them sit in a circle and get to know each other! (Names, where they go to school, favorite song, etc)

Learning Activity: Measuring Ourselves

For this activity, instructor should pre-draw the outline of a life-size person on a piece of butcher paper. After placing this on a flat, hard surface, instructor should invite all students to come stand around the person's outline with one bright marker in their hand. First, invite all students to write their name inside the outline of the person. Then, instructor should say: "*in the same color you just wrote your name, I want you now to write as many positive qualities or characteristics about yourself you can think of - are you funny, smart, determined, kind? – and write them inside the lines of our person.*"

After giving students a few minutes to write down different qualities, ask everyone to stop and step back from their area. Have students share observations – is there a lot of

one color represented? Are there repeated positive qualities? What seems to be the most popular quality represented? (Instructor should call out a few of the notable ones he/she sees)

Next, instructor should say: *“I see that we have certain qualities that many people share – the measure of X quality is very big. I see that we only have one of Y quality. That means the measure of Y quality in our classroom is somewhat low. Everyone see?”*

Instructor should then ask all students to head back to their seats and desks and hang the outline of the person on the board. Instructor should then take this time to explain that in Hebrew, a quality – also known as a *virtue* – is a *midah*. *Midah* in plural is *middot*, and it is also translated as “measure.” Looking at the person the class just created, there are certain *middot* that have greater measure – ones that many of us can identify with. And then there are some with smaller measure – ones that only a few of us recognized.

The topic of our learning this year is *middot*. And we will explore all different types of *middot* – elements of who we are – as a way of understanding who *we* are, and what we stand for.

****Important Note: Make sure to save this butcher paper person for a future lesson in unit 3 on *sh'mirat ha guf!*****

Activity: Mitzvah or Midah?

Instructor should first clarify the difference between a *mitzvah* and a *midah*. The simplest definition is that a *mitzvah* is something you are commanded to do; it is an obligation. A *midah* is a quality or virtue that you yourself possess; something that makes you who you are. *Middot* and *mitzvot* are not entirely unrelated, rather, they function together to help us live rich, meaningful lives.

The Torah and other Jewish law codes describe the *Mitzvot*, or commandments, we, as Jews, should follow. They tell us what to do, what not to do, and when. This includes ritual observance and ethical conduct. *Middot*, or Jewish virtues, on the other hand, are guidelines that teach us how to carry out our deeds and how to interact with others, ourselves, and God. They reflect our intentionality and the principles that drive our actions.¹ When we live our lives according to virtues, we begin to transform ourselves. When we strive to be our best selves and change ourselves, we, in turn, change the world.²

In the supplemental section is a game called “Mitzvah or Midah?” Instructor can do this one of two ways. First way is to put students in teams, simply hold up the card, and whoever gets it right first gets the point. Another way is to form teams, ask one student from each team to come up and pantomime what’s on the card, and whoever gets it right wins the point.

¹ Freeman, Teaching Jewish Virtues p. 1

² “It’s All About Relationships: The Values which Guide Us,” Lisa Berney Curriculum Guide, 16

What is included below is intended as a jumping-off point. Instructor should feel free to add or augment what is included.

Activity: Who Am I?

This can be as short or as long as instructor prefers. Instructor should have students sit down with a hand mirror, a piece of paper, and a pen. Have them write one line down the center of the paper. One side should say “Virtues,” and the other should say “Middot.” After giving students some time to look themselves in the mirror, instructor should then ask students to write down what qualities of themselves they recognize. What are the qualities of themselves that they see? And – what are the specifically *Jewish* qualities they see – the middot?

The frame for this exercise should be the following quote from Rabbi Hillel:

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
If I am only for myself, what am I?
And if not now, when?” (Avot 1:14)

This quote, while potentially ego-inflating, really carries a similar message to the Michael Jackson song quoted above. The quote reminds us that we must start with ourselves in order to make an impact on the world around us.

Following this exercise should be a follow-up conversation about what each student saw in the mirror, and why they consider some virtues/qualities “Jewish” and some not.

Activity: Writing the Brit

Following these various activities, students should spend some time working on their classroom brit. Instructor should direct the process with student input.

Activities for Older Grades

Icebreaker: Two Truths and a Lie

This classic getting-to-know-you game involves each participant telling the group three different facts about themselves. Two are true, and one is a lie. It is the job of the group to determine which fact is the lie. Participants should think of the most out-there, totally over the top facts about themselves in order to stump their fellow players.

Icebreaker: Fastball (involves a large-size handball)

The object of this icebreaker is to never let the ball drop. It is a modified version of the poorly-named children’s game Indian Chief.

First, have all participants stand in a big circle. Second, have one person go outside or away from the area so they cannot hear what the group is discussing. While that person is away, the instructor will pick one “leader.” That leader will be responsible for keeping some sort of steady, constantly changing rhythm – one that will be made with hands and feet. As is the case with Indian Chief, it is up to the leader to change the rhythm and up to the person who left the circle to guess who Indian Chief is. (Only, for the sake of this game, let’s just call them the Fastball)

Next, the ball enters the circle. At the same time the group is trying to keep a steady rhythm, (while standing up, mind you) they are also passing a ball back and forth, across the circle, in no particular order, AND they are calling out the name of the person they are going to pass it to as they are doing it. Hopefully the game will be silly, ridiculous, challenging, and fun.

Icebreaker: Party Tricks

In a similar vein as the icebreaker mentioned above, Party Tricks involves one person leaving the group, only to return to guess what everyone else already knows. In this game, the person who left is throwing a “party.” As that person pantomimes getting ready for the party, the doorbell will ring. Three separate guests will enter – guests whose identities were determined while the host/hostess was outside. Party guests can include celebrities or people everyone knows: Lady Gaga, the Queen of England, Albert Einstein, or Rabbi Jocee, for example.

The objective is for the host or hostess to guess whom their guests are. Obviously, their guests have to act like over-the-top versions of the people they were assigned in order for the host to guess their identities. Hilarity ensues when the host has no idea who their guests are.

Activity: Mitzvah or Midah

Instructor should use the aforementioned “Mitzvah or Midah” activity as a way of introducing the theme of the year. First, instructor should begin by writing the definition of each on the board and explaining how a midah – also known as a measure – is a virtue by which we as Jewish individuals live our lives. Instructor should also clarify the meaning of mitzvah and generate a discussion about how the two are unique.

Activity: Studying “Eilu D’varim”

In our daily prayers we find a piece called “Eilu D’varim.” Eilu D’varim begins:

Eilu d’varim sh’ein lahem shiur
These are the things that have no measure...

The prayer goes on to describe the things in this world for which there is no measure (midah), including honoring one’s parents, providing for a wedding couple, and

accompanying the dead for burial. While many items on this list are mitzvot, their connection with middot is also clear. These are the things a person must do in order to be a caring, committed member of a society.

Students should engage in this text study (the questions are below the text) and address their questions all together, as one class.

Activity: Writing a Brit

Students should spend a considerable amount of time writing their communal classroom brit. This brit should reflect the activities and the learning which took place today. What are the “mitzvot,” or obligations, of the classroom? What are the middot, or virtues, or ways in which everyone should behave with one another? What are the expectations each student has of their fellow student?

The instructor should guide this conversation and assign one student to write the final, agreed-upon brit, which all students should sign.

Closure: For closing today, instructor should have one student read aloud the *brit* students worked on together and signed.

Additional Materials

“Man in the Mirror” Lyrics

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I'm Gonna Make A Change,
For Once In My Life
It's Gonna Feel Real Good,
Gonna Make A Difference
Gonna Make It Right . . .

As I, Turn Up The Collar On My
Favorite Winter Coat
This Wind is Blowin' My Mind
I See The Kids In The Street,
With Not Enough To Eat
Who Am I, To Be Blind?
Pretending Not To See
Their Needs
A Summer's Disregard,
A Broken Bottle Top
And A One Man's Soul
They Follow Each Other On
The Wind Ya' Know
'Cause They Got Nowhere
To Go
That's Why I Want You To
Know

I'm Starting With The Man In
The Mirror
I'm Asking Him To Change
His Ways
And No Message Could Have
Been Any Clearer
If You Wanna Make The World
A Better Place
Take A Look At Yourself, And
Then Make A Change
(Na Na Na, Na Na Na, Na Na,
Na Nah)

I've Been A Victim Of A Selfish
Kind Of Love
It's Time That I Realize
That There Are Some With No
Home, Not A Nickel To Loan
Could It Be Really Me,
Pretending That They're Not
Alone?

A Willow Deeply Scarred,
Somebody's Broken Heart

And A Washed-Out Dream
They Follow The Pattern Of
The Wind, Ya' See
Cause They Got No Place
To Be
That's Why I'm Starting With Me

I'm Starting With The Man In
The Mirror
I'm Asking Him To Change
His Ways
And No Message Could Have
Been Any Clearer
If You Wanna Make The World
A Better Place
Take A Look At Yourself And
Then Make A Change

Mitzvah or Midah?

The Act	Mitzvah or Midah?
Lighting Shabbat candles	Mitzvah
Being humble	Midah
Honoring your parents	Mitzvah
Keeping Kosher	Mitzvah
Circumcising an eight-day-old boy	Mitzvah
Having enthusiasm	Midah
Reading from the Torah	Mitzvah
Being patient in a time of uncertainty	Midah
Praying to God	Mitzvah
Having compassion	Midah
Not stealing	Mitzvah
Giving tzedakah	Mitzvah
Attending a Jewish wedding	Mitzvah
Being honest in all relationships	Midah
Not taking God's name in vain	Mitzvah
Being modest in the way you dress	Midah
Respecting your and others' bodies	Midah

An Alternative Eilu D'varim

Composed by Jaclyn Fromer, February 2011

Eilu D'varim she-ein lahem shiur	רועש מהל ויאש מירבד וליא
She'am ocheil peiroteihem	מהיתורפ לכוא מעש
Ba'olam hazeh	הזה מלועב
V'hakeren kayemet lanu l'olam habah	תמיק ורקהוונל אבה מלועל
V'eilu hein:	ןה וליאו
Kibud ha'horim	מירוהה דוביכ
U'gmilut chasadim	מידסה תולימגו
V'hashkamat beit hamidrash	שרדמה תיב תמכשהו
Shacharit v'arvit	תיברעו תירחש
V'hachnasat orchim	מיחרוא תסנכהו
U'vikur cholim	מילוח רוקיבו
V'hachnasat ahuvim ulvayat hameit	תמה תיולו מיבוהא תסנכהו
V'iyun t'filah	הליפת וייעו
V'ha'va'at shalom	מולש תאבהו
Bein kol ha'olam	ועה לכ ויבלם
V'talmud Torah k'neged kulam	מלכ דגנכ הרות דומלתו

These are things for which there is no measure through which people enjoy the fruit of this world. They serve as the foundation for those people in the world to come.

And they are:

Honoring one's parents, acts of loving kindness, arriving early for study morning and evening, being welcoming to guests, visiting the sick, celebrating with the wedding couple, attending funerals and comforting the families, moments of prayer, and the creation of peace between all members of the world.

And the study of Torah is equal to them all.

Questions:

1. How do you define "the things that have no measure?"
2. What might this text mean by saying "people enjoy the fruit of the world?"
3. Which of these "things" with no measure do you most identify with?
4. Are any of these "things" with no measure more or less important to you?
5. How is the study of Torah "equal to them all?"