

92NY

The Elie Wiesel Living Archive

LESSON #2 – Middle School: The Relevance of Hasidism Today (1991)

GOALS

- Deepen participants' understanding and appreciation of Hasidism
- Invite reflection on the importance of taking action from a Jewish perspective
- Inspire and begin action and advocacy rooted in Jewish values

OBJECTIVES

Participants will be able to:

- Describe the components of Hasidism's message
- Explore the possibilities for speaking out when the world is "mad"
- Reflect on Hasidism's relevance today
- Commence the process of taking action in their community

MATERIALS

- Access to Elie Wiesel's 1991 Lecture (speakers loud enough for the whole class to hear!)
- Pen/pencil
- Ice Breaker handout
- Hasidism background information handout
- Rabbi Nachman story prompt handout

Introduction & Ice-Breaker/Warm Up – 15 minutes

- Distribute the "Ice Breaker" handout and invite everyone to read the poem (you can do this in small groups or as a whole class).
- Share that today we're going to discuss the ideas of social responsibility with Hasidism.
- Some background to share: Elie Wiesel believes in the power of storytelling as a means for learning, growing, and developing spiritually. Judaism is, in part, a religion rooted in narrative and storytelling. We use stories to connect with God, one another, and our past and future.
- Invite participants to read the handout and then reflect individually/independently (on their own) first, jotting notes, and then to share in small groups (2-3 people) by answering the prompts listed. After they exchange ideas, the small groups should share with the whole class what they discussed (e.g. what objects they would have taken from their home, how do they embody stories, etc.).

Hasidism Review – 30 minutes

- Distribute the Hasidism handout and transcript

- Review the prompts listed below the transcript and invite students to consider these questions as they listen.
- Listen to the clip (you'll need to fast-forward mid-way through) from Elie Wiesel.
- Remind participants that near the end of this lesson, they'll contemplate opportunities for taking action in their lives today.

Rabbi Nachman and “Madness” – 45 minutes

- Distribute handout with Rabbi Nachman transcript/handout and briefly review the questions.
- Invite the participants to listen to Elie Wiesel's telling of Rabbi Nachman's story about the King and his advisor (approx. 5 minutes long).
- As they listen, have them consider the handout prompts

Use Your Voice:

Now it is time to contemplate ways in which participants can take action in their own lives, communities and beyond. See handout and prompts.

Closing Exercise – 10 minutes

Invite each participant to reflect on the day's lesson by selecting their favorite quote from Professor Wiesel's transcripts used today. Go around the room and share them.