

Lesson 12: Peace - Hasidic Healing Story

This week is our last Sunday of Via Transformativa, and therefore, our last Peace lesson! Next week, we'll move into Via Positiva, and our theme will be Blessings and Gratitude.

Click on any of the links below to find our previous Peace unit lessons. In parentheses, you'll find the aspect of peace highlighted in that particular story.

Introduction

This week's story comes from the Hasidic {huh-SI-dik} Jewish tradition. It's similar to last week's Jesus story in at least three ways. First, it's a story-within-a-story. Second, it focuses on the same aspect of peace - bringing peace through healing. And third, the healing is considered miraculous.

When we share this lesson with the Nurture Program kids, we begin by reviewing last week's Jesus story while re-iterating that it's difficult for people to be at peace when they are sick. Be sure to ask the kids about recent illnesses they've experienced - how they felt, who helped them feel better, how they felt once they were well again, etc.

We then share a few tidbits about Judaism, in general, and Hasidic Judaism, more specifically. Here are some points you can make.

- ❖ Judaism is a different religion. At Jubilee!, we follow Christianity, which is also a religion.
- ❖ Jesus was Jewish. In fact, he was a faith leader in that tradition, so he was a rabbi. The word "rabbi" means "teacher."
- ❖ Two of the big holidays in the Jewish faith are Hanukkah and Passover. (Some kids will know something about both those holidays.)
- ❖ About 250 years ago, a new branch of Judaism appeared in the mountains of western Ukraine and eastern Poland. (If you have world map, you can show the kids where we are and where those countries are.)
- ❖ This branch of Judaism is called Hasidic Judaism or just Hasidism {HAH-si-di-zum}. It focused on finding the Divine in everything - even the seemingly boring and tedious peasant life.
- ❖ The founder of Hasidism was a rabbi known as Baal Shem Tov {bahl shem tove}, which means "Master of the Good Name." In Hasidism, they often call their rabbis "Rebbe" {REH-bee}.

- ❖ We have a Hasidic Jewish synagogue here in Asheville. It's called Chabad {chuh BAHD} House. (The "ch" sound is made in the back of the throat.)
- ❖ Hasidic Jews are known for their special clothing. Men usually have long beards. Many also wear all black and some version of a hat. Women almost always wear dresses. In public, they also wear wigs. Children are often dressed alike, to ensure that no child is favored.



Story - Baal Shem Tov Heals

There are hundreds of Hasidic stories - mostly about the early rebbes of the 18th century. I found this story in *The Prince Who Turned into a Rooster: One Hundred Tales from Hasidic Tradition* by Tzvi Rabinowicz (Jason Aronson, Inc., 1993). In that volume, the story is called "Act of Faith." There are no video versions, but [this link](#) will take you to the story I wrote for the kids in the Nurture Program.

Thought Questions

After reading the story, consider checking in with these questions.

1. It's not really clear how the merchant's daughter suddenly became well. What do you think happened? (No right or wrong answer here. Just see what they say.)
2. Do you think any parts of this story were "miracles"? Why/why not? (Possible miracles might include: the merchant knowing about Baal Shem Tov, the merchant finding Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Wolf's family finding a mate who was willing to wait for the dowry payment, the soldiers hearing the merchant's cries for help, Baal Shem Tov knowing the merchant's history, the daughter being healed, and the merchant offering the money to Rabbi Wolf.)

Hamsa Hand Craft

Humans have long been concerned about diseases, and many cultures over the centuries have come up with interesting ways to protect themselves. One common method of protection from illness, danger, or evil centers on "amulets" which are kind of like "good luck charms." The amulets might have a symbol on them, or they might be little pouches that contain sacred objects.

The amulet on the left is the "evil eye" amulet, which is quite common in Middle Eastern cultures. The amulet on the right is an example of a Native American amulet. These often contain herbs and other objects that promote healing. Ask the kids if there are any things that bring them good luck or help them feel protected when they are afraid.



The *hamsa* {HAHM-suh} hand, which is found in a variety of cultures, is a popular amulet within the Jewish tradition. It sort of looks like a hand with 5 fingers. The fingers can be pointing upwards or downwards. Sometimes, people put the *hamsa* on a chain and wear it like a necklace. Sometimes, people hang the *hamsa* on their doors to protect their homes.



The significance of the *hamsa* hand also varies from person to person. Some people think of it as protection from the "evil eye," while others say it serves as a reminder to use all five senses to honor God, our True Protector. A nice overview of this symbol, from the Jewish perspective, can be found [here](#).

An internet search on "hamsa hand coloring page" will produce many different examples that kids (and adults) can color/decorate as this week's craft. Consider punching a small hole near the top and running a piece of string/yarn through it, so the *hamsa* hand can be hung to serve as a protective amulet.