

Liberal Judaism's Day of Celebration
presents the

LAFTAs 2017



Liberal Academy for
Film & Torah Awards

What would your community look like
in the Messianic Age?

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What are the LAFTAs?

The 2013 Day of Celebration saw the launch of the LAFTAs (Liberal Academy for Film and Torah Awards), a competition where Liberal Judaism religion schools are challenged to make a short film on a Jewish topic.

In its first two years, the LAFTAs had over 175 participants from across our communities learning about our Liberal Jewish history and envisioning the future. This project is particularly beneficial because it connects Liberal Jewish communities with each other, regardless of geography or size. Using the media of film enables our communities to engage their students in a modern and exciting manner, bringing together students from all ages with different skills, interests and abilities to work on a meaningful project.

The theme of the competition goes hand in hand with the Day of Celebration's theme, which for 2017 is 'Is Liberal Judaism Political Judaism?'. Liberal Judaism is the dynamic, cutting edge of modern Judaism. It aspires to a Judaism that is always an active force for good in the lives of Jewish individuals, families and communities today, and equally makes its contribution to the betterment of society. The day is going to be celebrating the social justice achievements of Liberal Judaism, and exploring our small-p political identity (or lack thereof). The 2017 LAFTA theme connects to this by asking religion schools:

What would your community look like in the Messianic Age?

What do we mean when we say that Liberal Judaism fights for the betterment of society? What does that look like and, most importantly, how do we achieve it?

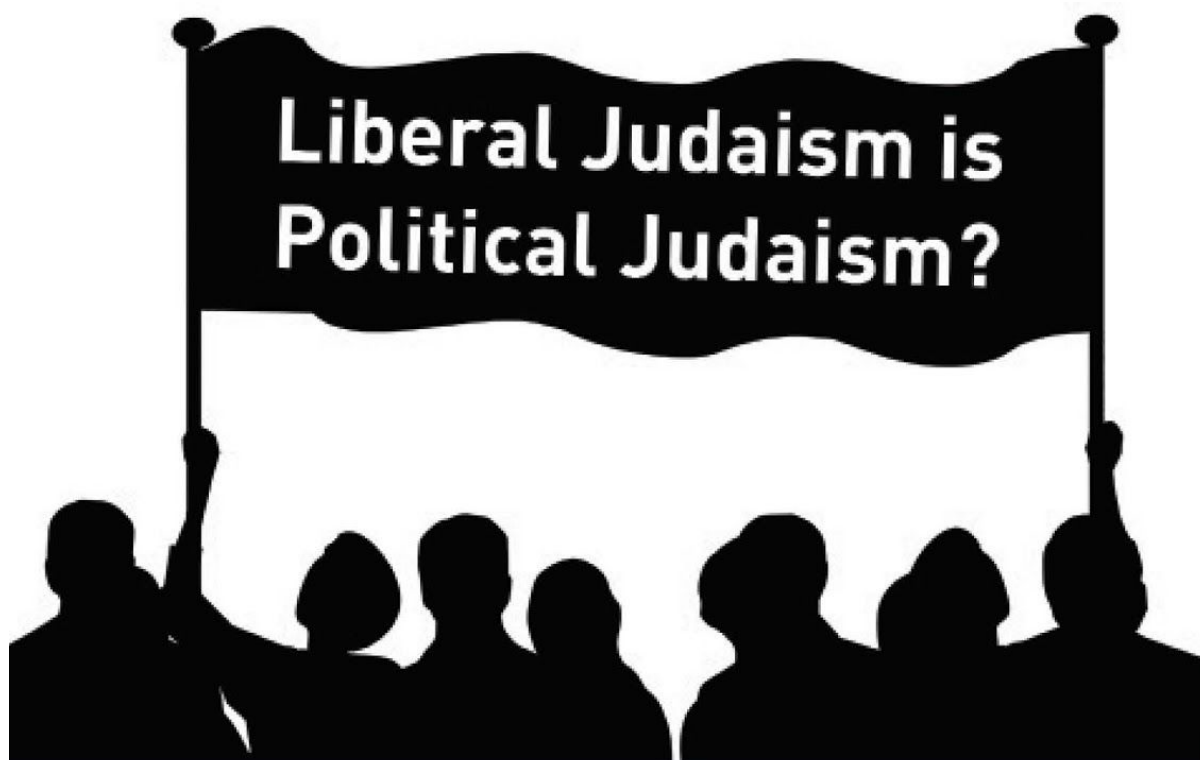
We want you to think about creating an ideal world. Imagine a world where everyone is working together towards social justice, environmental stability, global harmony – what are the issues that matter to your community specifically, and how are you using Liberal Jewish values to work on them? How does your community envision the Messianic Age? This is an opportunity to inspire and empower your community's young (and not-so-young) people to see their Judaism in a living, breathing action-taking way, as well as an excuse to have meaningful conversations about social justice with your students.

Films should be between **two to three minutes** and will be judged on **creativity, humour, youth participation, artistic merit** and **overall brilliance**. Your film could follow the format of a documentary, a sketch, an animation, an abstract black and white surrealist art-film, or anything else that takes your fancy. Maybe you'll use puppets, music, or some clay and a lot of patience for stop-motion. We'll leave the creative vision up to you, but we are here to support you every step of the way should you need us, starting with this mini-curriculum.

This mini-curriculum includes a lot of activities for you to pick and choose, adapt and change to suit your class, allowing you to cover *tikkun olam*, *chesed*, *tzedakah*, the Messianic Age, and hopefully enabling you and your students to become suitably inspired to a) change the world, and b) make a fantastic short film about an ideal world.

SAVE THE DATE
Liberal Judaism's Day of Celebration
Sunday 11th June 2017
Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue

"To sacrifice principle to conformity would jeopardise our cause... Integrity is not cheap. It may mean remaining a minority for a long time to come, or even forever. That too is a price we must be willing to pay, for it is better to be few and right, than to be many and wrong."



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How to use this resource

The aim of this mini-curriculum is to empower you and your students to have meaningful discussions about an ideal world, and the steps young people imagine taking in order to achieve the most equitable, just world possible. The discussions and ideas that you and your students have while using this curriculum are perfect material for the short film we hope that you will make and submit to the LAFTAs competition.

This mini-curriculum is divided into 4 units: 3 educational and 1 practical. They are all designed to be delivered either as a single session or as multiple sessions focusing in more detail on what interests the cheder teacher/community most.

Each unit begins with 3 learning objectives, outlining the key information your students should learn and discuss. There are also two Jewish teachings - normally extracts from Tanach and Talmud - relating to the theme, to show the textual roots of our values and reasoning behind our actions. We have also suggested some songs that you could teach which are relevant to the topic, and listed their page numbers in the LJY-Netzer shiron (see 5.1). If they are not in the shiron, they will be in the corresponding appendix at the end of this document, and they are linked to online recordings.

Following from the main/Jewish teaching, each unit offers an introduction and several activity options. Some of these will be more suitable for certain ages (based on an age 7-9, 10-11, 12-13 division), but they are all adaptable and can be modified to fit the particular needs of a class/teacher.

All of the resources mentioned in this booklet will be in the appendices, including additional external links to websites packed full of information.

There is also a glossary of terms used in this document and the lessons, which could be used as a teaching resource in its own right, to develop your students' Jewish vocabulary.

Introduction to the theme

The Messianic Age in Liberal Judaism

What is the Messianic Age? Each person will have their own vision of the perfect time in the future which we understand as the Messianic Age. For many, it is based on the vision of the biblical prophets, sayings such as *'Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more, but each person shall sit under their own vine and their own fig tree and none shall make them afraid'* (Micah 4:3-4) and *'The wolf shall live with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them'* (Isaiah 11:6).

The traditional idea of a Messianic Age was elaborated in the Babylonian Talmud, where, as is typical of the Talmud, there was much debate. Was it a time in the present world, a political situation of peace and stable government, or was it at the end of time, after a final judgement? Was it for the Jewish people alone, bringing about return from Exile and freedom to be an independent people, or was it for all peoples? Who would the Messiah be who brought such a time about? It was generally agreed that he (it was not envisaged it could be 'she') would be a descendant of King David. There was a suggestion that the Messiah had already been, in the days of King Hezekiah. On the other hand, some rabbis expressed the hope that they would not see the coming of the Messiah, because it would be preceded by terrible suffering.

One of the earliest changes made by the German reform movement at the beginning of the 19th century was to eliminate any reference to a personal messiah in our prayers. Thus, 'redeemer' was changed to 'redemption' and references to the Messiah, the son of David were eliminated. Too many false hopes have been raised by men who claimed, or were claimed to be, the Messiah, from Jesus and Bar Kochba in the first and second centuries to Shabbatai Tzevi in the 17th century and beyond. In the wake of their failure, there was catastrophic disillusion, turmoil and unrest. Neither should hopes be pinned on a single individual, and to do so invests them with a semi-divine status, as we have seen with the last Lubavitch rebbe.

Yet Liberal Judaism has continued to hope for a Messianic Age. It is a time that we can all help to bring about. We can do so by participating in the task of Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, by acts of kindness and compassion and by working for justice and peace.

Rabbi John Rayner, in his book 'Signposts to the Messianic Age' points to a debate in the Talmud between Rav and Samuel, two third century rabbis, about how the Messianic Age is arrived at. Samuel emphasised the political aspect of liberation, as a time when Israel would be free from subjugation. Rav, on the other hand, emphasised the spiritual aspect. For him, the messianic age would be achieved by repentance and good deeds. This, says Rabbi Rayner, is the spiritual and moral road to the Messianic Age, and this is the route which we, as Liberal Jews, should follow. It is not that we should avoid involvement in politics, but arriving at the Messianic Age demands something more of us. As he says, 'And to influence

[human beings] - to teach us to honour and respect, to cherish and love, our fellow men and women, created in God's image - that must always be the primary task of religion.'

This is the signpost to the Messianic Age, the way that we must work to achieve the hoped for time. What form that time will take is open to speculation. Little is said about what it will be like, either in traditional sources or in Liberal Judaism. Indeed, speculation about the end of time is discouraged.

Being Liberal Jews, our vision would be universal, extending beyond the Jewish people to all humankind, and it would be egalitarian and inclusive, but beyond that, we are free to imagine and dream. We may build on the visions of the biblical prophets or our own ideas of what a perfect society would look like. When it comes to the LAFTAs, we can be as creative as we like about the world we hope to see. What matters is that we continue to work and hope for the time, living up to the best of what Judaism teaches us so that, in time to come, all God's children will be able to live up to the best that is in them and the Messianic Age will be here.

Rabbi Dr Margaret Jacobi

Unit 1: The Messianic Age

Learning Objectives:

1. To understand the Biblical/historical conception of the Messiah
2. To understand why Liberal Judaism rejects this
3. To understand what the Messianic Age would look like to Liberal Jews

Jewish Teachings:

Nation shall not lift up sword against any other nation; never again shall they prepare for war (Isaiah 2:4)

לֹא יִשָּׂא גּוֹי אֶל גּוֹי חֶרֶב וְלֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד מִלְחָמָה

And at that time there will be no hunger or war, no jealousy or rivalry. For the good will be plentiful, and all delicacies available as dust (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah)

ובאותו הזמן לא יהיה שם לא רעב ולא מלחמה ולא קנאה ותחרות שהטובה תהיה מושפעת הרבה

Songs:

[Bayom Hahu](#), Pete Tobias & Lisa Silverstein (p. 35)

[Lo Yisa Goy](#), Folktune (p. 54)

Introduction:

Ask students to close their eyes and imagine their favourite place. Talk them through the following questions: What does the place look like? Is it warm or cold? Is it dark or light? What can they see? What can they smell? What can they feel?

Get them to share their ideas if they want to, noting how different and similar they all are. Introduce the idea of an 'ideal world' more broadly: how we could work together to make sure that everyone's different ideas about an ideal world are met?

Activities:

Option 1:

The shoebox world. Obtain enough shoe boxes or other small receptacles for your class group to work comfortably, either in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class (depending on the size of your group).

Explain that the shoe box represents the ideal world, the world of the Messianic Age. Discuss the sorts of things we might want to keep in our ideal world.

Using craft materials, everyday objects from around the room and perhaps some pre-prepared images and words from newspapers and magazines encourage the students to start to fill the boxes with symbols of what they would like to see in the world to come.

As an extension activity, depending on interest and ability, children can start to either decorate the outside of their boxes to look like a cuboid planet earth, or if they are creating their shoebox worlds in groups, they debate and discuss each item in the box.

Video idea: the items in the boxes could be used in the LAFTAs entry using stop motion, puppeteering, or as props.

Option 2:

The second paragraph of both the weekday and Shabbat *Amidah* ends with the blessing '*Baruch atah Adonai m'chayeh ha-metim*', which literally translates as 'Blessed are You God (normally written as 'we praise You, O God' in Liberal liturgy) **who brings to life the dead**'.

The belief in bodily resurrection at the time of the coming of the Messiah flitters through Biblical and Rabbinic literature (see Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2, Sanhedrin 72a), and although Liberal Judaism has rejected the idea it remains in our liturgy.

Show students a selection of *siddurim* and how they deal with the *Amidah*'s bodily resurrection topic. Fill in the worksheet (1.2), starting with the following questions:

- 1) What is different about these extracts?
- 2) Which do you think is older?
- 3) Should we keep the traditional Hebrew text? Should we change the English translation?
- 4) Should we keep this line of the *Amidah*?

And discussing more generally:

- 5) Do you believe in life after death?
- 6) Do you believe in resurrection?

Unit 2: Justice and Kindness

Learning Objectives:

1. To understand the concepts and Jewish significance of:
 - a) צדקה (*tzedakah*) - charity
 - b) צדק (*tzedek*) - justice
2. To understand the concepts and Jewish significance of:
 - a) חסד (*chesed*) - kindness
 - b) גמילות חסדים (*gemilut chasadim*) - acts of loving kindness
3. To understand how these principles can be applied to our everyday lives

Jewish Teachings:

The world depends on three things: on עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל
 Torah, on worship and on acts of loving הָעֲבוּדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים
 kindness (Pirkei Avot 1:2)

Justice, justice you shall pursue
 (Deuteronomy 16:20)

צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף

Songs:

[Olam Chesed Yibaneh](#), Rabbi Menachem Creditor (2.1)

[Al Shlosha Devarim](#), Chaim Tzur (p. 33)

Introduction:

Ask if anyone has ever heard about the word *tzedakah*. What does it mean? Some will say charity and others justice. Let them make definitions of each.

- a) Justice: balance out a wrong, who brings justice? (courts – even in biblical times).
- b) Charity: give money or things. Latin root is *caritas* (love – give because you want to).

The difference between them is between the choice to give versus having the responsibility to give. Which one is better/higher? Don't give them the answer - let the students discuss it as a class or in small groups.

Activities:

Option 1:

Look at the two cartoons in the appendix (2.2, 2.3). What do these cartoons show? What do these cartoons tell you about justice? Are they effective? Or not? Why? Discuss the cartoons in pairs and/or as a class.

Students can then make their own cartoons showing the difference between justice and charity.

Option 2:

Here are a selection of video clips and materials that you might wish to show to your classes in order to inspire them to start small and change the world. Each one is accompanied by some suggested discussion questions.

1. [Evan Almighty](#)

This video clip from the comedy film 'Evan Almighty' depicts a conversation between a modern day Noah and God (played by Morgan Freeman). It addresses the problem of not knowing where to start when changing the world feels overwhelming.

Discussion points:

- ★ Do small acts of kindness really change the world?
- ★ Why does Evan (Noah) seem so reluctant to do what God asks?
- ★ What lessons is this clip trying to teach us?

2. [Pay it Forward](#)

This video clip from the film 'Pay it Forward' shows a classroom situation in which a teacher sets a year-long 'change the world' assignment for his class and they are reluctant to get on board.

Discussion points:

- ★ What does the world expect from children?
- ★ Is it important for children to try to change the world?
- ★ Do you think the teacher is being fair?

3. [20 Random Acts of Kindness](#)

This clip shows a young woman carrying out twenty "random acts of kindness" to celebrate her 20th birthday, including leaving pennies for people to find, buying someone's coffee, and giving a stuffed toy to a small child.

Discussion points:

- ★ Are all of these acts of kindness "random"? If not, what are the different types of kindness that this woman is showing?
- ★ Do acts of kindness need to be "random" to matter?
- ★ What's the point in acts of kindness like this?

Maimonides' ladder of *tzedakah* (2.4) might be an interesting resource to add to this discussion; is the worth of an act of kindness affected by who its recipient is?

Unit 3: Tikkun Olam

Learning Objectives:

1. To understand what *tikkun olam* means
2. To be able to name and understand the concentric circles of *tikkun*
3. To explore the relationship between *tikkun olam* and the principles of *tzedeq/tzedakah*

Jewish Teachings:

Help us to perfect the world (an extract from the *Aleinu*, p. 521 in *Siddur Lev Chadash*)

לְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת שְׁדֵי

It is not your duty to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it (Pirkei Avot 2:16)

לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְלָאכָה לְגַמְרָהּ, וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶּן חוֹרִין לְבַטֵּל מְמִנָּה

Songs:

[Ani v'Atah](#), Arik Einstein (p.43)

[Lo Alecha](#), Noam Katz (3.1)

Introduction:

Ask if any of the students already have an understanding of *tikkun olam*. Give them a chance to explain it to the class, and come up with a broad class definition - let them know that at the end of the lesson, you will revisit the definition and perhaps you will agree to redefine it based on what you have learnt together.

Activities:

Option 1:

Label each colour on a twister mat with one of the concentric circles of *tikkun* - e.g. green is *tikkun atzmi* (repairing the self), yellow is *tikkun kehila* (repairing the community), blue is *tikkun am/tikkun medinat* (repairing the people/state) and red is *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).

Split the group into pairs and label them 'A' and 'B'. All of the 'A's will be playing twister first. Spin the twister board (or if you don't have one, pick a combination of left/right; green/blue/yellow/red; hand/foot for each turn) and instruct whoever's turn it is to put the relevant limb on the relevant circle.

They cannot, however, put their limb down until their partner (the 'B') has written on that circle. If 'A' has to put a **hand** down, 'B' must write down a **problem** of that colour/circle of *tikkun*. If they have to put their **hand** on a **green** square, they could write down 'body confidence'; if they have to put their **hand** on a **red** square, they could write down 'global warming'.

If they have to put their **foot** down, they have to write down a **solution/way this circle can be performed in reality**. So, if they have to put their **foot** on a **green** circle, they could write down 'having more diverse models'; if they have to put their **foot** on a **red** square, they could write down 'eating less meat'.

If 'A' falls over then 'B' takes their place on the twister mat. More than one idea can be written in each circle, but the same idea cannot be repeated.

Option 2:

Hold a debate on the statement 'God gave us a handbook for *tikkun olam*: it's called the Torah'.

Assign roles in the debate (for/against) and give the students time to formulate their arguments. Hand out the source sheets (3.2) and get the students to find the passages in a *tanach* (or online) to use as evidence in the debate.

Unit 4: Let's Make a Movie

Timeline and Process:

You and your students should be thinking about your film as you go along, but after you have finished the educational units here are some chronological steps to help you create your film.

1. Brainstorm: what is your Messianic Age like? What medium/style do you want to make your film in?
2. Storyboard: draw out the order and content of your film.
3. Script: write a script so everyone knows what will happen.
4. Resources: what props do you need? Where will you film it?
5. Camera/audio: are you going to film it on a phone or on a camera? Check the lighting and the sound before you film!
6. Editing: who will edit it? With what software? Do you want any music or special effects?

Ideas and Inspiration:

Source 4.1 is a website full of resources elaborating on the above, and explaining how to engage students in film making. Watch the videos from the previous LAFTA winners for inspiration:

2015 - 'A Day in the Life of Israel'

Watch Gloucestershire Liberal Jewish Community's winning film [here](#).

2013 - 'The Future of Liberal Judaism: The Next 100 Years'

Watch South Bucks Jewish Community's winning film [here](#).

You can also watch Robin Moss, the then Head Teacher of SBJC's Cheder, talking about the educational merits of taking part in the LAFTAs for the whole Cheder [here](#).

Sikkum

If you need support at any point throughout the project, please do not hesitate to contact us (Candy Parfitt and Daisy Bogod) on laftas@liberaljudaism.org.

We look forward to watching all of your creative short films. Remember, this project is all about using our imaginations to make a better future into a reality. We have faith in you: good luck!

And, most importantly, now is the time to sign up for Day of Celebration 2017! It is happening on **Sunday 11th June 2017** at **Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue**. The day is going to be celebrating the social justice achievements of Liberal Judaism, and exploring the question of '**is Liberal Judaism political Judaism?**'

Tickets are available [here](#), and if you have any questions or want to know more please visit the [Day of Celebration page](#) on the website or email montagu@liberaljudaism.org.

SAVE THE DATE! LIBERAL JUDAISM'S DAY OF CELEBRATION



Sunday June 11, 2017

Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue

Glossary

Aleinu	Prayer that marks the end of all three daily Jewish prayer services. Its two paragraphs express both particularistic and universalistic themes: The first paragraph speaks of a specifically Jewish obligation to praise God; the second calls for universal recognition of God by all people
Amidah	The central prayer of Jewish liturgy, composing of 19 <i>brachot</i> , also known as the 'standing prayer'
Bracha	(Plural: 'Brachot') Blessing
Chesed	Loving kindness
Gemilut Chasadim	Acts of loving kindness
Genizah	A storage area for unwanted books/pieces of paper with God's name on
Messianic Age	Traditionally, the arrival of the Messiah (<i>mashiach</i> , meaning 'anointed one'): a leader of the Jewish people who comes from Davidic descent and leads the world to global peace and justice. Liberal Judaism affirm the universalistic hope of the Prophets for a 'Messianic Age' brought about gradually, through the acceptance of God's values by all humanity.
Mishnah	The classical post-biblical code of Jewish law, compiled in Israel circa 200 C.E. by Rabbi Judah Ha-nasi (Judah the Prince)
Pirkei Avot	The ethical maxims of the Mishnah, as quoted in the names of the early Rabbis. Literally: 'The chapters of the fathers'
Siddur Lev Chadash	Liberal Judaism's daily, shabbat and festival prayerbook
Talmud	Commentaries and discussions of the Mishnah, compiled circa 400 C.E. – 600 C.E.
Tikkun Olam	Repairing the world
Tzedakah	Used to mean 'charity'; comes from the root 'צדק' which means 'righteous'
Tzedek	Used to mean 'justice'; comes from the root 'צדק' which means 'righteous'

Appendix 1 - Unit 1 resources

Please remember to recycle any resources that you print. in accordance with Liberal Jewish values of *tikkun olam*, environmental preservation, and our view that recycling paper that contains the name of God is our modern day, ethical *genizah*. This could spark an interesting discussion with your students about the ethics and principles behind recycling and environmental activism, and Liberal Jewish values.

Siddur (Date of Publication)	Hebrew ברוך אתה "..."	Literal Translation	English Given We praise You, O God...
Siddur Lev Chadash	מחיה המתים <i>M'chayeh ha-metim</i>	Brings to life the dead	Source of eternal life
Thoughts:			
Service of the Heart	נטע בתוכנו חיי עולם <i>Noteia b'tocheinu chaye olam</i>		Who has implanted within us eternal life
Thoughts:			
LJY-Netzer Siddur/Mishkan T'filah	מחיה הכל <i>M'chayeh ha-kol</i>		Source of all life
Thoughts:			

Appendix 2 - Unit 2 resources

2.1

Olam Chesed Yibaneh

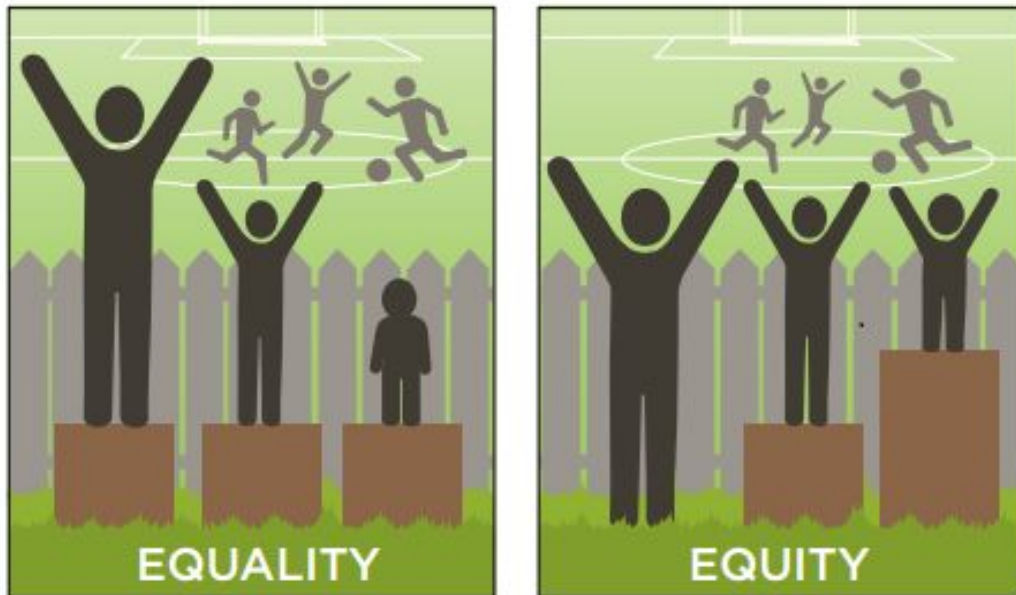
Music: Rabbi Menachem Creditor

Lyrics: Psalm 89:3

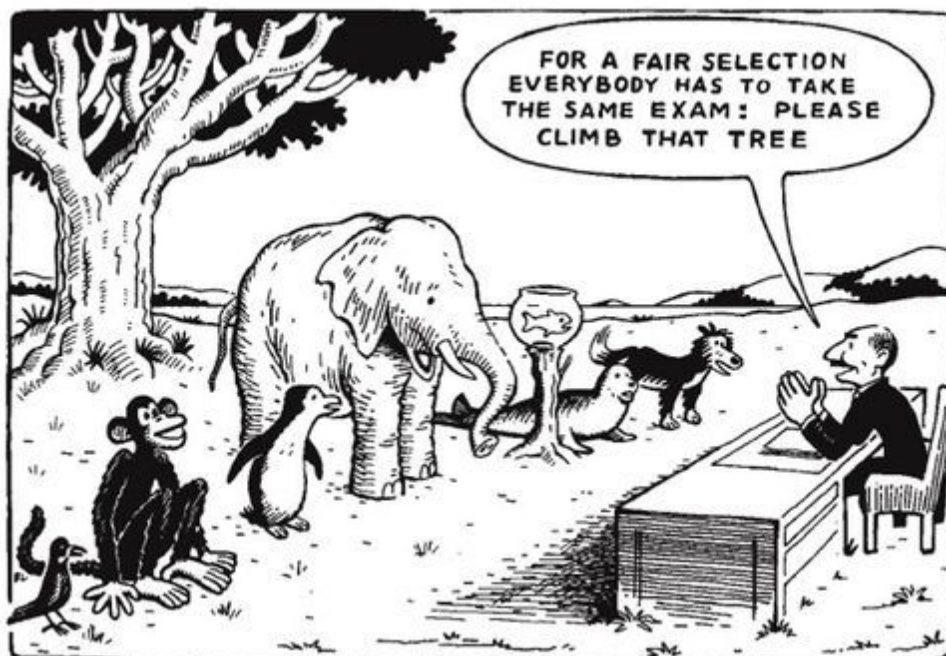
Em D C D Em
 Olam chesed Yibaneh ya nai nai nai nai nai nai nai nai (x2)
 G D C D Em
 Olam chesed Yibaneh ya nai nai nai nai nai nai nai nai (x2)

I will build this world from love ya nai nai nai nai nai nai nai nai
 And you must build this world from love ya nai nai nai nai nai nai nai nai
 And if we build this world from love ya nai nai nai nai nai nai nai nai
 Then God will build this world from love ya nai nai nai nai nai nai nai nai

2.2



2.3



2.4

8

Giving in a way that helps someone to be self-supporting
(such as a gift, loan, business partnership, education, or a job)

7

Giving so that neither the giver nor the recipient
knows who the other is

6

Giving so that the giver doesn't know who receives the money,
but the recipient knows who gave the money

5

Giving so that the recipient doesn't know who gave the money,
but the giver knows who got it

4

Giving before being asked to do so

3

Giving when asked to do so

2

Giving less than one should, but being nice about it

1

Giving less than one should and not being nice about it

Appendix 3 - Unit 3 resources

3.1

Lo Alecha

Music: Noam Katz

Lyrics: Pirkei Avot 2:16

F

Lo..alecha ham'lacha ligmor (x2)

Bb F

V'lo..ata ben chorin

Bb C

L'hi-ba-teil mi-mem-nah

Bb C F

Even if you can't finish what you begin

Bb C F

There's no reason you shouldn't dig your heels in

Bb C Dm

Roll up your sleeves for the hour is late

Bb C F

Doing your part to make this world great

(Can also be played F-G-C on capo 3)

3.2

‘God gave us a handbook for *tikkun olam*: it’s called the Torah’

For		Against	
Joseph distributing grain among the Egyptians	Genesis 41:56-57	The flood	Genesis 6:13
Moses’ father-in-law	Exodus 18:17-18, 21-13	The story of Job	Job
Treatment of strangers	Leviticus 19:33-34	We are reminded to ‘love the stranger’ 36 times in the Torah. Why do we keep on needing to be reminded; is it because we aren’t doing it?	
10 Commandments	Exodus 20	Slavery	Exodus 21

Appendix 4 - Unit 4 resources

4.1

[Kids'Vid](#) is an instructional website to help teachers and students use video production in class to support project-based learning.

Appendix 5 - External resources

5.1

LJY-Netzer [shiron](#)

5.2

[Lesson plans](#) from the Random Acts of Kindness website

Tzedek's 'Responsibility and Participation' [resource pack](#) for B'nei Mitzvah students

[Lesson plans](#) on *tzedakah* from the Jewish Women's Archive

5.3

Rayner, John, *Signposts to the Messianic Age* (London, Vallentine Mitchell: 2006)

Rayner, John, *Principles of Jewish Ethics* (London, Liberal Judaism: 2005)

Scholem, Gershom, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism: and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York, Schocken Books: 1971)