

With families

- Hold an "Honoring Heroes" celebration in your classroom. Invite each family to bring one real-life hero with them to the party. Students might design ribbons or medals that can be presented to their heroes at the celebration.
- Encourage families to contribute to your class hero mural.
- Challenge families to think of heroic acts they can perform as a family. They might volunteer in a soup kitchen, participate in a bike-a-thon or walk-a-thon, or bake cookies and deliver them to a local fire station. Remind families to take photos or videos as they perform their heroic acts, and display them at your "Honoring Heroes" celebration.

POSTER IMAGE INSTANT LESSON



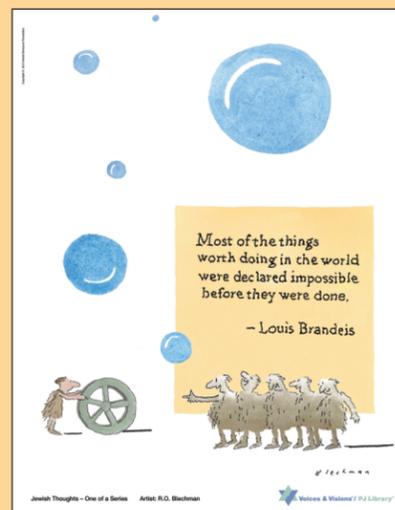
Louis Brandeis was a Supreme Court Justice known for his outspoken statements about fairness. He was a great supporter of workers' rights, and a strong proponent of the establishment of the State of Israel. Throughout his life, Brandeis was accustomed to pushing past obstacles and striving to do what others thought impossible.

Unpack the poster with your students: Look at the poster. What do you see? Who are the characters in the poster and what are they doing? Can you tell a story about what is happening in this poster?

Read the quote: Can you describe something that you once thought was impossible, that you can now do?

Look again: Is someone in this picture trying to do something difficult or impossible?

Connect to Jewish heroes: Think about heroes such as Moses, Queen Esther, or Judah Maccabee. What types of things did they do that may have seemed impossible at first?



Additional resources

- TED-Ed animation of a hero's journey: pjfor.me/herojourney
- Heroes in our culture: pjfor.me/heroculture
- Ten reasons we need heroes: pjfor.me/tenreasons

Jewish Heroes, Jewish Values: pjfor.me/jhvj
Real struggles of modern day heroes: pjfor.me/realstruggles

Philosophy and Psychology of Heroes

Why are human beings fascinated with heroes? The word hero comes from ancient Greek. It refers to a person who has done something beyond the ordinary, though not necessarily good. In general we think of a hero as one who overcomes their flaws to achieve a great task. Psychologists say we need heroes as role models, helping us conquer our own insecurities to navigate a path of good over evil. Yet who are today's heroes? How do we as educators introduce children to role models that will maintain and strengthen our Jewish community and peoplehood?

How do these materials make your life easier?

By using the theme of heroes as a guiding principle for the year, you will be able to:

- Better communicate with parents about their children's Jewish learning
- Engage your community in meaningful conversations and social action
- Build a shared vocabulary around Jewish values
- Appreciate the heroes all around us

PROGRAM MATERIALS

Book-specific resource guides and additional materials can be found online in our Educators' Center: pjlibrary.org/Beyond-Books/Educators

Books & Materials	Values	Hero Connection	Jewish Text
Zishe the Strongman (Kar-Ben)	Strength Acts of kindness	A real hero displays more than physical strength	<i>Yasher koach</i> is a Hebrew term commonly used to congratulate an individual for a job well done, such as reading from the Torah. Koach (כֹּחַ) means strength, often a characteristic of a hero.
The Chameleon that Saved Noah's Ark (Kar-Ben)	Kindness to animals Everything has its place	There can be many heroes in a single story	"Noah walked with God" (Bereishit 6:9) and distinguished himself from those around him. Being a hero could mean being different.
Hanukkah Cookies with Sprinkles (Apples and Honey Press)	Tzedakah Compassion	Anyone can be a hero regardless of age or physical ability	<i>V'ahavta l'rei-acha kamocha</i> / love others as yourself / וְאַהֲבַתְּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ Our sages teach us this is the heart of Jewish practice. Loving others can be a catalyst for heroic acts.
Nachshon, Who Was Afraid to Swim (Kar-Ben)	Courage Not standing idly by	A hero needs courage to do the right thing	<i>Mi chamocha ba'elim Adonai</i> / Who is like You, God / מִי־כְמוֹכָה בְּאֱלֹהִים יי After safely crossing the Red Sea the Jewish people rejoiced with this song thanking God. It has become a prominent piece of Jewish liturgy.
Voices & Visions posters	Jewish values through visual arts	From ancient to modern history, our ancestors offer words of wisdom	The back of each poster features related text. A Jewish heroes "instant lesson" for one poster is included in this guide.

Who is a hero?

“Ben Zoma says: Who is strong? The one who controls himself...”

”בן זומא אומר: איזהו גבור? הכובש את יצרו...”

“Ben Zo-ma o-mer: Ei-ze-hu gi-bor? Ha-ko-veish et yitz-ro...”

(Pirkei Avot, Ethics of Our Ancestors 4:1)

Jewish perspective on heroes

Ben Zoma’s definition of strength reveals that in Jewish thought, a hero is not necessarily someone with large muscles, extraordinary talents, fame, or wealth. According to Rabbinic writings, heroes exercise self-control and consistently strive to “walk in God’s ways” by showing compassion to those in need (*Sotah* 14a). The Bible is full of heroes who overcome obstacles and struggle to attain their goals. Biblical heroes are remarkably human, with an array of strengths and character flaws. For example, Jacob cheats Esau out of his inheritance, and Moses has trouble controlling his anger. The everyday shortcomings of biblical heroes emphasize the Jewish belief that all individuals can develop their inner strengths and become heroes.

Your own perspective

- Who do you think of when you hear the word “hero”?
- What character traits of a hero do you find important?
- What do you suspect is your students’ current concept of a hero?
- What aspects of heroes do you hope your students will internalize?

Introduce the concept of heroes

- **Identify traits of a hero.** Ask students to describe people they consider heroes and why. Encourage students to think about historic heroes as well as everyday heroes.
- **Look out for heroes.** Throughout the year compare and contrast the characters you encounter in stories and Jewish holidays. Use this Hero Trait Chart to track your findings: pjfor.me/herotraitchart.
- **Emulate heroes.** Challenge your students to tell a story of a heroic act they have performed, or how they became a hero to someone else. What acts of heroism can your class perform?

Continuing investigation

- Create an evolving hero banner or mural for your classroom. Choose flexible fabric or felt so that you can roll it up between classes if you share space. Encourage students and families to add images of heroes or inspiring statements to the banner on a regular basis. As students add to the banner, ask them to explain their choices.
- Invite your students to come to school as superheroes – imaginary, current, from history, or from literature. An imaginary hero might possess powers dedicated to performing a mitzvah. For example, Super Tzedakah Hero brings food, clothes, and toys to those in need, carries tzedakah boxes, and is able to produce coins with a finger snap. How will you recreate historical heroes? Moses might show up with the Ten Commandments, and Rebecca could carry a water bottle and toy camel.

Growing Jewish Heroes Through the Year

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit...”

“לא בחיל ולא בכח פי אספרוחי...”

“Lo ve-cha-yil ve-lo ve-ko-ach ki im b’ru-chi...”

(Zechariah 4:6)

We can be heroes from head to toe and all throughout the Jewish year.
Use these tools to guide your thinking while learning together.

How can we use our bodies to be heroes? Fill in the blanks!

Head: Think about what’s right.

Eyes and ears: _____

Mouth: “I don’t speak because I have the power to speak; I speak because I don’t have the power to remain silent.” – *Rav Kook*

Heart: _____

Arms: “I ask not for a lighter burden but for broader shoulders.” – *Jewish Proverb*

Hands: _____

Legs: “Run to do a mitzvah.” – *Pirkei Avot* 4:2

Feet: “When I marched in Selma, my feet were praying.” – *Abraham Joshua Heschel*

There are heroes in every holiday and Torah story. Here are some examples, and space to add your own.

WELCOME TO SCHOOL

Rosh Hashanah

Yom Kippur

Sukkot

Simchat Torah

Noah

Lech Lecha

Thanksgiving

Hanukkah

Winter break

Shabbat

Tu B'Shevat

Purim

Pesach

Yom Ha-atzmaut

Shavuot



Jonah



Noah/Naamah

Abraham/Sarah



Family heroes

Esther/Mordechai



Herzl/Golda Meir



OFF TO BE A HERO!