



THE **TORAH OF TED LASSO**

Community vs. The Lone Wolf

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Lesson overview:

This lesson plan aims to create an engaging and reflective space for participants to explore the importance of community and the dangers of isolation through the lenses of media and Jewish tradition, fostering a deeper understanding of themselves and their communal relationships.

Duration: 1-1.5 Hours

Objective:

1. To explore the importance of community and men's groups in Judaism and modern media.
2. To understand the dangers of isolation and the benefits of communal support.

Materials:

- Video clips from "Ted Lasso"
- Text excerpts from Jewish teachings and traditions
- Slides or handouts with key points and discussion questions

Introduction (5-7 minutes):

Welcome and Overview

- Brief introduction to the topic of community, men's groups, and the dangers of isolation. Consider these introductory discussion questions. Don't dwell too long on any of these:
 - Have you heard anything about men's groups in the news or casual conversations with friends?
 - Has the topic of loneliness amongst men come up in conversation?
 - Has there ever been a time when you felt isolated in some way?
 - If you feel comfortable sharing please tell us more about this experience.
 - Have you heard of the idea of a man being a "lone wolf"? Someone who doesn't ask for help from anyone. From their perspective, they are self-sufficient and can do everything they need to do on their own.
 - Do you know any men like this?
 - Can you see how their choices impact their decisions when made in isolation?
- Explanation of the lesson structure: viewing clips, discussing Jewish teachings, and integrating the concepts.

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Part 1: The Power of Community for Men (20-25 minutes)

- Show selected clips from "Ted Lasso" that exemplify the power of community and the pitfalls of being a lone wolf, and the benefits of community and brothers who can speak honestly with you.

- [Ted and Roy Experience the Diamond Dogs](#)

- **Description (Clip 1 - start up to 2:05)** - *Ted is facing several dilemmas and seeks out wisdom and guidance from the group and the Diamond Dogs are born.*
- **Description (Clip 2 - 2:06 to the end)** - *Roy and Keeli have a disagreement about their relationship, which leaves Roy upset. The clip then transitions to Roy's conversation with Ted about the event. Ted rounds up the Diamond Dogs.*

- **Discussion Questions:**

- How do the "Diamond Dogs" support each other and create a sense of community?
- Describe what happens in the process of the meeting. How does Roy feel about the meeting?
- How do men interact and treat each other during the meeting?
- What does Ted need the "Dogs" for? How does Ted feel about the meeting?
- How is honesty treated and expressed during this meeting?
- Is there a resolution to the needs/feelings?

- [Jamie Tartt's struggle with reintegration into the team](#)

- **Description:** *Jamie Tartt is Richmond's haughty young superstar for the first part of the season. At the end of season one Jamie gets kicked off the team and seeks out a spot on the Manchester City roster, which he gets. But when season 2 opens, Jamie has left Manchester City to pursue a reality TV career, including an appearance on Lust Conquers All. Jamie eventually returns to Richmond with his tail between his legs.*

- **Discussion Questions:**

- How does the apology go for Jamie?
- Does Jamie take accountability for his actions?
- How does the show depict the transformation from being a lone wolf to being part of a community?
- What are the consequences for characters who push away others with their actions, like Jamie Tartt?

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Part 1: The Power of Community for Men (Continued)

- Roy and Isaac Have a Heart to Heart

- *Isaac has an angry and violent interaction with a fan. Roy speaks honestly with him about his feelings.*

- Discussion Questions:

- What, essentially, is Roy talking about, and why does it apply to men specifically?
- Pay close attention to the body language between the two characters. What can be learned about how to talk to men when it comes to emotions, life, and moments like this?

Part 2: The Power of Community in Jewish Tradition (20-25 minutes)

- Text Study and Analysis- Provide excerpts from Jewish texts that discuss the importance of community and the dangers of isolation.

- Ecclesiastes 4:9-10: "Two are better than one..."

טובים הַשְׁנִים מִרְחָאָחָד אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְמָם שְׁכַר טָב בַּעֲמָלֵם: כִּי אִם יִפְלֹא הַאָחָד יִקְיַם אֶת-חַבְרָתוֹ
וְאִילּוּ הַאָחָד שִׁפְלָל אֵין שָׁנִי לְהַקִּימָוּ

Two are better off than one, in that they have greater benefit from their earnings. For should they fall, one can raise the other; but woe to him who is alone and falls with no companion to raise him!

- Discussion Questions:

- Why are two better off than one according to this text?
- Is this text just about finances or is there something else that useful about their relationship?
- Rashi suggests this partner is found through marriage. Does that have to be the case?



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Part 2: The Power of Community in Jewish Tradition (Continued)

- Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) 1:6: "Acquire for yourself a friend..."

יהושע בן פרחיה ונתאי הארבלי קבלו מראם. יהושע בן פרחיה אומר, עשה לך רב, וקינה לך חבר, ורמי לך את כל האדם לקייף זכות

Joshua ben Perahiah and Nittai the Arbelite received the oral tradition from the teachers who came before them. Joshua ben Perahiah used to say: appoint for yourself a teacher, and acquire for yourself a companion and judge all men with the scale weighted in his favor.

- Discussion Questions:

- Is there a relationship between seeking out a teacher and finding a friend?
- What about the other way around in seeking a friend and acquiring a teacher?
- Why does it matter how we judge people in this context?
 - Why bring it up here after we've spoken about teachers and friends?
 - Do we learn anything about judgment when in relationship with others?

- Babylonian Talmud - Section: Bava Metziah Page: 84a - "Foes, Friends, and Family"

ACT 1: The Meeting

One day Rabbi Yohanan was bathing in the Jordan river, when a thief named Resh Lakish was passing by and saw him. Immediately Resh Lakish dropped his weapon and leapt into the Jordan river to confront Rabbi Yohanan. Rabbi Yohanan said to him, "*Your strength should be used for the study of Torah.*"—Resh Lakish replied, "*Your beauty should be used for women.*"

Rabbi Yohanan said, "*If you will repent for your past wrongdoings, I will give you my sister in marriage, who is more beautiful than I.*" So Resh Lakish repented and did not return to his old ways. Rabbi Yohanan personally taught Resh Lakish Torah and Mishnah, and he became a great scholar.

Discussion Questions:

- What do we learn about these characters from this part of the story?
- During their very first encounter, what did each character learn about the other? Did either of them have assumptions about the other?
- Describe how the relationship between these two men changes over the course of these two paragraphs.?Note how the their relationship develops over the rest of the story.

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ACT 2: The Dispute

One day there was a dispute in the study hall regarding the purity of weapons. Rabbi Yohanan asked: “*At what stage in their creation can a sword, knife, dagger, spear, and hand-saw become ritually impure?*” “*When their creation is complete.*” Answered Resh Lakish. Rabbi Yohanan asked again, “*And when is their creation complete?*” Resh Lakish answered one more time: “*When they are hardened in a furnace, and polished in water.*”

Rabbi Yohanan smugly said to Resh Lakish: “*A thief understands his trade.*” Offended, Resh Lakish responded, “*And what good have you been for me? I was a master thief, and I became a scholar in the study hall.*” Rabbi Yohanan responded angrily and said to him, “*I have done good by bringing you under the wings of the Shechinah!*” Resh Lakish became ill knowing that he had deeply offended Rabbi Yohanan.

ACT 3: The Grief

Resh Lakish died, and Rabbi Yohanan plunged into deep grief. The Rabbis said, “*Who will go to ease Rabbi Yohanan’s mind? Let’s send Rabbi Eleazar, for his statements are sharply formulated.*” So Rabbi Eleazar went and sat before Rabbi Yohanan. Every time Rabbi Yohanan stated a law, Rabbi Eleazar would say to him, “*There is a textual source which supports you.*”

But Rabbi Yohanan was not comforted by Rabbi Eleazar’s remarks and said to him, “*Do you think you are like Resh Lakish? When I stated a law Resh Lakish used to raise twenty-four objections, to which I gave twenty-four answers, which led to a better understanding of the law. But all you say to me is, ‘a textual source supports you.’ Do you think I don’t know that I’m right?*”

Thus Rabbi Yohanan went on rending his garments and weeping, “*Where are you, Resh Lakish!?*” “*Where are you, Resh Lakish!?*” And he cried until his mind slipped from him. The Rabbis prayed for mercy on his behalf and Rabbi Yohanan died.

Discussion Questions:

- As you read these scenes what are the strengths and weaknesses of their relationship?
- How do the two men help and hurt each other?
- Have you ever had a relationship like what you saw in this story?
- What do we learn about relationships from this story?
- How do these Jewish texts emphasize the importance of community?
- Can you identify examples where community support is crucial in these teachings?
- How do these teachings compare to [this additional example from Ted Lasso?](#)

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Part 3: Integration and Personal Reflection (10-15 minutes)

Group Activity: Reflecting on Community and Isolation

- Break into small groups or pairs.
- Reflect on and discuss their own experiences with community and isolation.
- **Discussion Prompts:**
 - Describe a time when you felt supported by a community or group.
 - What are the benefits you experienced from being part of that community?
 - How can the examples from "Ted Lasso" and Jewish teachings inspire you to seek or strengthen community bonds?

Part 4 - Sharing Insights

- Reconvene as a whole group.
- Invite participants to share insights from their small group discussions.

Conclusion, Summary and Takeaways (5 minutes)

- Recap the main points discussed: the importance of community, the dangers of isolation, insights from "Ted Lasso," and Jewish teachings.
- Encourage participants to continue reflecting on these concepts in their personal and communal lives.

Final Thoughts

- If we are stepping through this life, indifferent to those around us and thus separate from our fellow human beings, it is by conscious choice. It may be hard to reach out to someone close, but there will always be a willing hand to receive our own. Each of us has been created to offer others our unique gifts. When we choose a posture of indifference, we are denying to the universe what we have to give.
- There is magic in the realization that our acquaintances, our co-workers and neighbors, are presented to us by design. We are here to learn lessons and we play teacher to each other. When we have stepped away from the circle of people calling to us, we are denying them the opportunities for growth they may need and preventing it in ourselves as well. We need one another, and being helped by someone else fulfills more needs than our own.