

#9: Do Not Testify Falsely - The Ten Commandments

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Step 1: Lesson Goals

Goals:

- **Affective:** Students will reflect on the importance of truthfulness and evaluate their own behavior in relation to honesty.
- **Behavioral:** Students will develop strategies to cultivate a habit of truthfulness in their daily lives, particularly in their relationships and online interactions.
- **Cognitive:** Students will analyze ethical dilemmas involving lying and critically examine Jewish teachings to understand when lying may be justifiable.

Audience:

Middle or high school students

Materials:

- Video: ["#9: Do Not Testify Falsely | The Ten Commandments"](#)
- Scenarios from the [NYTimes article](#) (provide a handout or display on a screen)
- Printout or slide with text from [Talmud Bavli, Ketubot 16a-17b](#)

Essential Questions/Big Ideas: Essential Questions/Big Ideas:

1. Is it important to be truthful all the time?
2. Does telling occasional small lies impact one's character?

1. The more you tell small lies, the more you become desensitized to telling bigger ones.

3. When might lying be the correct ethical choice?	2. Lying can have a negative relationship on both our character and our relationships. 3. While in some exceptional cases, Judaism allows us to lie in order to prevent someone from being hurt, to fulfill our mission as individuals and society, we have to strive for truth.
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Step 2: Learning Plan

Hook/Trigger: (10 minutes)

Play the video ["#9: Do Not Testify Falsely | The Ten Commandments"](#) (until 8:33) to introduce the topic. Afterward, ask the students:

- How do you personally define lying?
- Do you think lying is always wrong? Why or why not?

Learning Activities: (25 minutes)

1. Activity #1: Spectrum (10 minutes)

Play spectrum with your students. Designate one side of the room as **agree** and the other side as **disagree**. Have students stand along the spectrum where they most identify based on the following statements:

- I consider myself a truthful person.
- It is never okay to lie.
- Lying has damaged my relationships with other people.
- It's okay to lie if telling the truth will hurt someone's feelings.
- Telling the truth is one of Judaism's most important values.

After moving to where they most agree, students should discuss with the other students there why they chose that area and then open the conversation to the

whole group to explain their stances and share personal examples. Students may change where they stand based on the conversation.

2. Activity #2: Ethical scenarios (10-15 minutes)

Divide the students up into groups and assign each group a few scenarios from the 10 listed in this [NYTimes article](#). Ask students to respond whether or not they would lie in that case and to explain their reasoning. Have each group share with the class and open the scenarios up for debate.

- Are there situations where it is completely forbidden to lie and times when it is more of a gray area?
- How do we determine those situations?

Then, share the [Talmudic text from Ketubot 16b-17a](#) with the students. This text presents two competing values - the importance of being honest and the importance of not hurting a person's feelings. Which one takes precedence over the other and when?

Reflection: (5 minutes)

Ask students to respond to the following questions in writing or through class discussion:

- Reflecting on your own behavior, do you feel satisfied with your level of truthfulness? Why or why not?
- How do you think truthfulness affects the quality of your relationships?
- How can you cultivate a habit of truthfulness in your daily life? Provide two specific examples.

Step 3: Assessment

Checking for Understanding: (5 minutes)

Ask students to choose one of the following questions to answer:

- When might lying be the correct ethical choice?

- How can truthfulness impact our relationships?

Additional activities and questions (time permitting or to be completed outside class or in place of previous activities)

Materials:

- Paper and pens/highlighters

Learning Activities

Activity: Impacting our relationships (10 minutes)

Ask your students to make a list of all their interactions from the past 24 hours. They can keep it private and don't have to share it with anyone. Ask them to highlight the times they were more honest or less honest in different colors.

1. How do they feel about their list? Is truthfulness an area in which they would want to improve?
2. What impact did their level of truthfulness have in their different relationships? Did they impact them in positive or negative ways?
3. What are steps they can take in the future to be more truthful?