

K1: Intro to theme



Aims:

1. To introduce the theme of Machane.
2. To show that the Torah is not just a book of laws.
3. To appreciate the Avot as role models of the Jewish people.

Introduction - B'ikvot Avoteinu

The phrase "B'ikvot Avoteinu" translates to "in the footsteps of our Fathers". Everybody knows who the Avot were and a little about their lives and what they did, but often they remain as mythical characters from our distant past that embarked on great adventures and fanciful tales. Throughout Kvutzah on Machane we will be attempting to do two things:



1. Educate the Chanichim on the basic facts about the Avot - who they were and what they did.
2. Invoke an enthusiasm for the study of the Avot by bringing home the messages the Torah teaches us. We can achieve this by demonstrating the Avot's eternal relevance and how they can be applied to our Chanichim's' lives.

The above is for you, the Madrichim, to give you a good picture of the narrative of our Kvutzot. The two points above are running themes and should be incorporated into all of your Kvutzot. The particular messages you choose to emphasise are up to you; we have tried to keep the Chomer as broad as possible because we know that individuals will respond to some ideas and concepts different to others.

The Torah is not just a book of laws

Each Chanich will have a different pre-conceived notion of what the Torah is. Below are a few examples of how diverse the Torah can be:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱ-לֹהִים יִקְוּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל-מְקוֹם אֶחָד וַתֵּרָא הַיַּבְשָׁה וַיְהִי-כֵן:

And Hashem said: 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. (Bereshit 1:9)

וַיַּחְלֵם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם וַיַּגִּד לְאָחָיו וַיֹּסְפוּ עוֹד שִׁנְאָה אֹתוֹ:

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren; and they hated him yet the more. (ibid. 37:5)

אָז יָשִׁיר מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר: אֲשִׁירָה לַה' כִּי גָאֹה גָאֹה סוֹס וּרְכָבוֹ רָמָה בַּיָּם: עֲזִי וְזַמְרַת קַה וַיְהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה קִלִּי וְאַנְוִהוּ אֶלְקֵי אָבִי וְאַרְמְמֶנָהוּ:

Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael chose to sing this song to Hashem, and they said, "I will sing to Hashem, for He is highly exalted; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and

He is become my salvation; this is my Hashem, and I will glorify Him; my father's Hashem, and I will exalt Him. (Shemot 15:1-2)

וַיַּעַשׂ בְּצִלְאֵל אֶת הָאָרֶן עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים אֲמֹתַיִם וַחֲצִי אַרְכּוֹ וְאֹמֶה וַחֲצִי רֶחֱבוּ וְאֹמֶה וַחֲצִי קִמְתּוֹ: וַיִּצְפֶּהוּ זָהָב טָהוֹר מִבַּיִת וּמְחוּץ וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ זֶרֶזָהָב סָבִיב: *And Bezalel made the ark of acacia-wood: two cubits and a half was the length of it, and a cubit and a half the breadth of it, and a cubit and a half the height of it. And he overlaid it with pure gold within and without and made a crown of gold to it round about. (ibid. 37:1-2)*

אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱ-לֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל פְּנֵי *I am the LORD thy Hashem, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other Hashems before Me. (Devarim 5:6)*

And there are many other examples, including lists of names and complex rituals and civil laws.

The very first Rashi in Chumash addresses this issue. He asks why the Torah doesn't start from the mitzvah of Kiddush HaChodesh (sanctifying the new month), the first mitzvah in the Torah. He answers that we need to know that Hashem created the world so that we can lay a proper claim to the Land of Israel. The exact answer is not particularly important for us at the moment. The general concept is that there are things in the Torah which are not laws but are nonetheless very important for us to know.

The point is that the Torah is a complete guide to life. Every aspect of a person's life will contain some sort of guiding principle which can be found in the Torah. On Aleph we are going to be focussing mainly on how we can learn these important guiding principles from our Avot. It is crucial however, that our Chanichim are aware that the Torah provides a large scope for identifying guiding principles and we do not solely rely on our Avot for them. The former Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Sacks, writes as follows, and his words serve as the perfect bridge to the next part of the Chomer:

Each of its stories has layer upon layer of meaning and significance, which we only grasp after repeated readings. Our understanding of the book grows as we grow. Each age adds insights, commentaries and interpretations of its' own. The book's literary style allows it to be read afresh in each generation. That too tells us something significant about the Torah's view of human knowledge: The truths of the human condition are simply too deep to be understood at

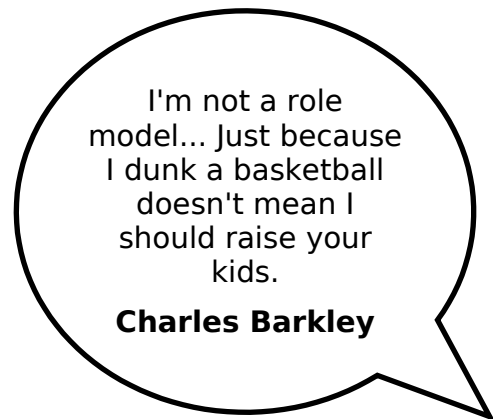


once and on the surface. Only stories have this depth, this ambiguity, this principled multiplicity of meanings.

*Most importantly, only stories adequately reflect what it is to be human. Tell a story, even to young children, and they become instantly attentive. They want to know what happens next. In logical systems, there are no surprises as to what happens next: All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal. The conclusion is already implicit in the premises. But in a story, as in life, we never know what will happen next, because human beings are free. Will Eve eat the forbidden fruit? Will Cain disregard Hashem's warning? Will Esau kill Jacob when they meet after long separation? Will Joseph's dreams come true?
 (Covenant and Conversation: Genesis, pg. 7)*

The Avot as role models

On Aleph we are going to be dealing with a number of the Avot. However, before we can look at any of them individually, we have to understand exactly how it is that they are role models. There are three basic schools of thought when it comes to how to view the Avot as role models. The first one seeks to apologise for them. This means that whenever there is something which seems a little bit fishy in their behaviour you should seek to cover it up and reinterpret it.



I'm not a role model... Just because I dunk a basketball doesn't mean I should raise your kids.

Charles Barkley

The second school views the Avot as humans who fail and sin in exactly the same way as we do. A major proponent of this is led by Rabbi Yoel bin Nun who calls this "Tanach b'gova einayim" (understanding the characters in Tanach as being people no different than us). This is a relatively modern approach.

The third and most extreme approach is that while we don't see the Avot as angelic figures who cannot sin, they are very much human but are also very godly and were operating at a much higher level of god-consciousness than us. The implication of this is that while we shouldn't assume, they were flawless, we must also speak about them with great humility, understanding that they were truly great people. For example, the Ramban criticises Sarai for her mistreatment of Hagar. Most people tend to fall out somewhere in the middle. We realise that the Avot were human, but we shouldn't be looking to criticise them at every available opportunity; they are the founders of our people and should be treated with an appropriate level of respect.

Throughout the remaining Kvutzot, we will look at the Avot more specifically and the character traits that they exemplify.

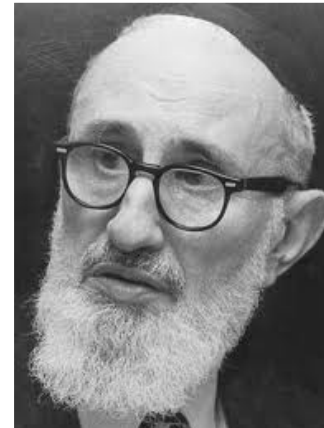
Trailblazers

There is a famous doctrine called “maase avot siman l’banim”, which means that the actions of the Avot are an omen for the children. Ramban writes that everything that happened to the Avot happened again to the Jewish people later on in history:

Let me tell you a general rule in all these Parshiot about Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and it's a massive idea - the Rabbis put it very simply...everything that happened to the fathers is a sign for the children. Therefore, the Torah wrote loads about the stories of the journeys and digging of the wells...and the onlooker might think they are extra, and a bit pointless, but they all come to teach about the future.... (Ramban Bereshit 6:12)

Rav Soloveitchik said the following in a lecture in 1975:

The wells dug in the days of Isaac are symbolic of the Bet Hamikdash. The first was destroyed by the Babylonians, the second by the Romans and the third will exist forever. The first wells dug by Isaac's servants were filled by the people of Gerar and are called by the Torah 'Esek' (conflict). Thus, when Nevuchadnezer destroyed the first Temple, he was out for victory only, not to destroy the people. Many captives were taken to Babylon and established. The second wells dug by Isaac and filled by the inhabitants were called Sitnah (hatred). Thus, the second destruction under the Romans was irrational; their purpose was to destroy the people and the land. Thus, if the theory of Maimonides is true, the people were not free to shape their destiny. Then why do the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah rebuke the people and tell them to reform and do teshuva (repentance)? They were urged to amend their ways.



This is all very well on a national level, but how does it relate to us as individuals? A good way to think of it is by teaching that the Avot were trailblazers. They were doing new things, charting a new path. But those paths were strewn by obstacles; the lives of the Avot were anything but smooth. The Torah records how they overcame those trials and tribulations. Whenever we are stuck in a similar situation, we should realise that our forefathers have been in the same place too. It would be wise for us to look at how they reacted and behaved and to attempt to learn from these as best we can. We can see our own lives echoed in the lives of the Avot if we just look hard enough.

Middah Spotlight:

At the end of each Kvutzah, we're going to put some information about a particular Middah (ethical value) to focus on relating to that particular character. As we noted, the stories in Bereshit can give lots of ethical inspiration and we should highlight that.

In this Kvutzah we'll just introduce that basic idea: it's important that we're always working on our ethical traits and trying to become a better person. Here are some interesting sources:

The Torah has quite a lot of very general ethical laws, e.g. 'Kedoshim tihiyu' ("you shall be holy"). The Rebbe of Kotzk used to say about this that God has enough angels who are holy. But He also wants man to strive to reach holiness.

Ramban's comments are important. He writes:

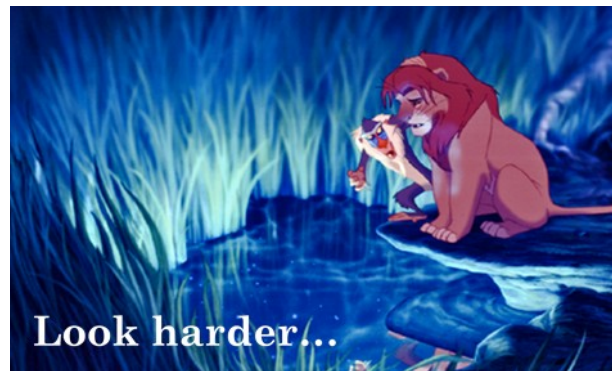
The point is that the Torah prohibits incest and forbidden foods, while permitting marital relations and eating food and wine. So, a hedonist could find legitimacy for depravity with his/her wife/husband(!), become a drunkard and glutton, swear all the time - because the Torah has not explicitly forbidden this! But this verse teaches that he/she would be a scoundrel licensed by the Torah.

For example, 'v'asita hayashar v'hatov' - ("do the right and the just"). The idea is this. There are lots of mitzvot in the Torah and they try to paint a broader moral picture. Even if something is not explicitly forbidden, you should work out that they are immoral and shouldn't be done.

Lots of ethical works say things which we sort of know already but just need reminding. It is one thing to know something in theory, another to feel it and live up to it in practice. Take the beginning of one of the greatest ethical books, Messilat Yesharim (The Path of the Just), by Rabbi Luzzato (the Ramchal):

'I have written this work not to teach people what they do not know, but rather to clearly remind them of what they already know and clearly understand'.

In the 19th century, a new movement began in Jewish thought: the Mussar Movement. They felt that too much emphasis was placed on Torah study alone, and more emphasis should be placed on character building. It has become a very big and influential school of thought.



Thinking about how we act is especially important for this Machane (for both Chanichim and Madrichim) if we are to work together well as a team. Good luck!

Hadracha Hot Tip!

Come up with a way to drill home the message of how diverse the Torah is.

One way could be to ask your Chanichim to come up with a TV advert for the Torah aimed at getting people to read it.

Another way could be to write a blurb for the Torah. You could write these pesukim out on A4 sheets and ask them to stand by the one which they think represents the Torah best and to justify their choice...

Summary of K1:

1. The Torah is a complex and diverse book, which can be described as a "Comprehensive Guide to Life".
2. The Avot are the role models for the Jewish people, both in terms of their humanity and personalities, and in terms of the directions their lives took.



K2: Adam HaRishon



Aims:

1. To learn about Adam.
2. To learn about the responsibilities of being human and an individual Jew.
3. To look at the importance and meaning of names.

FACT FILE

1:27 – Hashem creates a being – both male and female on the sixth day.
2:7 – We are told Hashem made Adam from the dust of the earth, and he blew into man’s nostrils the soul of life, and man became alive.
2:15 – God put Adam in the Garden of Eden to work and guard it.
2:16-17 God instructs Adam he may eat from any tree except the tree of Knowledge.
2:18 – Hashem decides that man alone is bad, and he needs to create helpers.
2:19-20 – Hashem brought each animal to Adam who, in turn, named them.
2:21-23 – Hashem cast a sleep upon Adam and took flesh from his side in order to form a partner for Adam. And thus Hashem formed a woman! Adam named her “Woman” as she was taken from man.
3:6 – Eve gave Adam fruit from the tree of knowledge and he ate it.
3:8 – Adam and Eve tried to hide from Hashem.
3:11-14 – Hashem questions Adam about eating from the tree, and he blames Eve.
3:16 – Eve is punished with painful childbirth.
3:17-20 – Adam is punished.
3:22-24 – Adam and Eve are banished from Gan Eden.
4:1 – Adam and Eve had sons, Cain and Abel.
4:25 – Adam and Eve have another son, Seth.
5:1-4 – Brief summary of Adam’s life.
5:5 – We are told Adam lived for 930 years.
Adam Ha’Rishon only appears in Parashat Bereishit.

She Made Me Do It!!!

Adam, the first man created by Hashem a mere 5779 years ago, was created from the dust of the earth. However, aside from his famous “she made me do it” line, we don’t seem to know much about him; the Torah doesn’t seem to divulge any personal information. The story of Adam Ha’Rishon, is included in the Torah in order to teach us something about ourselves. We learn about what it means to be a human being and where our responsibilities

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Get your chanichim to write down as many facts as they can about Adam Ha’Rishon. let them struggle for a bit! Use this as a trigger to talk about his importance and role.

should fall. Unlike our next few Ks, this K will focus on learning about a way we should live our lives as a Nation as opposed to a specific characteristic we should imitate.

Adam Ha'Rishon was created by Hashem on the sixth day and is essentially the father of all mankind. However, we do not believe that he was the first Jew (Will be discussed in a later K). From Adam descended the seventy nations that populate the earth, thus, we can be reassured that every Human, no matter who or where, was created "Betzelem Elokim".

To Guard and To Work

When Adam finally awoke in Gan Eden, he was given the following instruction:

"וַיִּקַּח ה' אֶת-הָאָדָם וַיִּנְחֵהוּ בְּגַן עֵדֶן לְעַבְדָּהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ."

*"The Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate **and to guard it**" (Bereshit 2:15)*

Man's first instruction from Hashem is a dual task. Not only are we told to guard the land, we are also told to cultivate it, in other words get creative. In order to decipher what our actual task at hand is, we need to take a closer look at the wording of our instruction.

L'shemorah literally means to guard, but some would choose to interpret it as to protect, honour or preserve. Being a shomer implies that you are responsible for an object that is being guarded. Your role is to protect an object on behalf of its owner. Being a shomer of the world, as Hashem asks us to do, is not simply watching out for baddies or doing shmura at night-time to protect from harm, it requires us to be active. It's like looking after a child; you don't simply watch over it, you have to look after it and make sure its needs are fulfilled.

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Give your chanichim an egg to look after for 10 minutes They are its shomer. Slowly present them with challenges where they have to ensure to "shomer" their egg in the best way possible and prevent it from cracking. (ALL EGGS MUST BE HARD BOILED!)

לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר לַיהוָה הָאָרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָתָהּ תְּבַל

וַיִּשְׁבֵי בָהּ:

"A Psalm by David. The earth and all that it holds is Hashem's" (Tehillim 24:1)



The world is very clearly not ours. We are very much just looking after it. Whilst we

may have the right to use it, we certainly don't have the right to abuse it. We can take this idea even further and relate it not only to the place that we live in, but the bodies that Hashem has provided us with too. In Devarim (4:15) we are told "Take utmost care of yourself" which many interpret as the source for treating our bodies with respect.

To be successful in our role as a shomer, we must realise that there can be no element of passivity in our job. We must take active jobs to ensure we are guarding what we have been left with appropriately and with the best intentions. We must be alert, looking for and dealing with potential. Guarding does not simply expect us to merely preserve what exists already; it relies on us to ensure it is there for those who come after us.

Having been presented with a fairly large instruction by Hashem, when we look back at the passuk where we receive this commandment, we see that there is a part 2, in the form of cultivating the land, which we interpret to mean being a creative entity that adds to the world. Our role is to ensure the world is never stationary. Yes we are commanded to rest on Shabbat, however the Torah makes it fairly explicit that on the other six days of the week we should be working.

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלַאכְתֶּךָ

"Six days shall you labour and do all your work" (Shemot 20:9)

Work of all kinds is essential; work is our cultivating. Even if one chooses to study Torah, which is viewed as taking precedence over any other activity, one must still engage in this world and engage with work.

רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בְּנוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הַנְּשִׂיא אוֹמֵר, יָפָה תְּלִמּוּד תּוֹכָה עִם דְּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ, שְׂגִיעַת שְׁנֵיהֶם מְשַׁכַּח עוֹן. וְכָל תּוֹכָה שְׂאִין עִמָּה מְלַאכָה, סוֹפָה בְּטִלָּה וְגוֹרְכַת עוֹן.

Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehudah the prince said 'excellent is the study of torah when combined with work, for toil in them both keeps sin out of one's mind; But [study of the] Torah which is not combined with a worldly occupation, in the end comes to be neglected and becomes the cause of sin.

Former Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks gives an example: "Life is like a downwards escalator, if you don't walk up you will end at the bottom". We need to grow, learn and bring new ideas and concepts into the world in order to fulfil our purpose on earth, and therefore play a part in cultivating the earth as we are commanded.



But it's beautiful enough ...

Guarding the world and ensuring its future is a logical and comprehensible idea. Although we have clarified exactly what it means to cultivate the earth as Hashem instructed us, when we read through Parashat Bereishit, we are presented with a problem.

"And Behold, it was very good" (Bereshit 1:31) - והנה טוב מאד

If it was good when Hashem created it, why are we attempting to change it? We are merely mortal, without a doubt what we could create Hashem could do better, so why should we change what is seemingly perfect already? Why would Hashem give us this seemingly impossible task?

The way that this is answered by those greater and wiser than us, is that man's creativity and talents were factored into the word "good". When we read the passuk "And behold it was very good", part of that goodness is man's creativity and ability to develop the world.

There is a famous episode found in the Midrash Tanchuma that tells of the meeting between Rabbi Akiva and the Roman Governor of Eretz Yisrael:

Turnus Rufus: If God wanted man to be circumcised, why didn't he create them that way?

Rabbi Akiva: Bring me some wheat, and then bring me a loaf of bread

Rabbi Akiva: Which do you prefer to eat, the wheat or the bread?

Turnus Rufus: Naturally, the bread.

Rabbi Akiva: Do you not see now that the works of flesh and blood are more pleasant than those of God?

Although this is an extreme example, Rabbi Akiva said it himself: in creating bread, man reached a new level of grandeur which cannot be attained by any other part of creation. So too, in order to cultivate the world, we take things that Hashem has created and use them in a way that makes the world even more beautiful than it was already. Of course, Hashem could have made bread trees for us, but he wants us to be creative; it is our role, our responsibility.

יְבָרַךְ אֱ-לֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת
 מְכֹל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱ-לֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת:

"And Hashem blessed the seventh day and made it holy, for on it He abstained from all His work that Hashem created to do." (Bereshit 2:3)

The world was created for us "to do" stuff to. Work has a dual purpose: it allows us to develop as people, and it also allows us to develop the world and perfect it, l'avdecha.



What's in a name?

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Romeo and Juliet II:ii:1-2

Juliet's profound statement of love wasn't simply about names, it was so much more. Without going too English Lit, the essence of Juliet's words that a name means nothing, a names properties and characteristics are what makes a person (or object) who they are.

HADRACHA HOT TIP

What does your name say about you?

If your chanichim could re-name themselves, what would they choose?

So, what do Shakespeare, names, and Adam Ha'Rishon all have in common?

וַיִּצְרֶה אֱ-לֹהִים מִן הָאֲדָמָה, כָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֵת כָּל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם, וַיָּבֵא אֵל הָאָדָם, לִרְאוֹת מָה יִקְרָא לוֹ; וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא לוֹ הָאָדָם נָפֶשׁ חַיָּה, הוּא שְׁמוֹ.
"And out of the ground Hashem formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky; and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and what the man would call every living creature, that remained its name." (Bereshit 2:19)

We learn from this passuk, that Adam Ha'Rishon gave all creatures there a name. He was the inventor of the names dinosaur, tiger and penguin (don't take that too literally). Does the fact that man created names and not Hashem, make them more or less important? Should we as Jews value the name giving process and believe in meanings behind names, or is it simply unimportant?

Chabad.org provides us with an interesting response to our question: *"According to the Kabbalah, the name of every creation is its life source. The Hebrew letters carry a Godly power, and when put together in different formations, they give life wherever they are applied. Thus, all created things are directly affected by their Hebrew names, and the letters by which they are composed."*

We can turn to the Midrash Bereshit for another look into this idea. (2:19):

"When the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to create humankind, He consulted with His ministering angels, saying, "Let us make Adam." The angels responded, "What is so wonderful about this Adam?" So, he brought each creature before the angels and asked them, "this creature, what is its name?" But they did not know. Then he brought the creatures before Adam and asked him, "This creature what is its name?" To which Adam responded, "this is a shor (Ox) this is a chamor (donkey...)"

Adam had an innate ability to perceive the spiritual components of the creative spirit that brought every animal into being and named each animal in accordance with its spiritual configuration. So, we see that an objects Hebrew name is more than just a name; it truly is what it is.

We are taught that on the day that a baby is born, its parents receive some form of spiritual guidance (Ruach HaKodesh) enabling them to pick a name that is not only a reflection of who the child is but can also influence who the child will become.



Middah Spotlight - Environmentalism

The majority of our K's intend to talk about characteristics of particular people found in Tanach and then boil down to how we can modernise and replicate these characteristics in our lives today to be better people. With regards to Adam Ha'Rishon, as we mentioned at the beginning, our

focus is more on developing a way of life as opposed to a specific characteristic.

The way in which we have chosen to illuminate the idea of "shomer and l'avdecha" to our chanichim is through environmentalism which cannot be more relevant in our times. Practically, what does halacha say about environmentalism?

כִּי תִצּוֹר אֶל עִיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֵם עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְּסָהּ לֹא תִשְׁחִית אֶת עֵצֶיהָ לְנֹדֶם עָלֶיךָ גִּרְזֹן כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכֵל וְאִתּוֹ לֹא תִכְרֹת כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשֵּׂדֶה לְבָא מִפְּנֵיךָ בַּמְצוֹר: בַּקֵּץ עֵץ אֲשֶׁר תִּדְעַה כִּי לֹא עֵץ מֵאֲכָל הוּא אִתּוֹ תִשְׁחִית וְכָרְתָּ וּבְנִיתָ מְצוֹר עַל הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר הוּא עֹשֶׂה עִמָּךְ מִלְחָמָה עַד רִדְתָּה:

"When you shall besiege a city a long time, and wage war to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against fruit trees... Only the trees which you know are not trees for food, you may destroy and cut them down to build siege machinery against the city waging war with you." (Devarim 20:19-20)

This famous commandment from the Torah really illustrates the focus that the Torah puts on protecting the environment. Back in the day the fuel of war was wood! It made fires, spears, arrows and more...yet the Torah forbids destroying the environment for it. The Rambam takes this concept further:

"This prohibition does not apply to trees only. Rather, anyone who breaks utensils, tears garments, destroys buildings, stops up a stream, or ruins food with destructive intent transgresses the command "Do not destroy." (Hilchot Melachim 6:10)

These two sources are just the introduction to Judaism's opinion on environmentalism; however, they very clearly and explicitly show us where Judaism stands. The above source informs us of the halacha of Ba'al Tashchit - not wasting.

This statement of the Halacha of "Baal Tashchit" - not wasting: is there really much more to say regarding Judaism's approach to environmentalism?!

Well there is, and there are many ways to bring Ba'al Tashchit alive for your chanichim and many ways to connect this to their daily lives. Here are some examples of where halacha has been put in place to shomer the land.

- *One must not open a shop in a courtyard if the noise pollution of customers will disturb his neighbour's sleep.*
- *Threshing floors must also be kept at this distance to prevent the chaff from creating an air pollution problem for the city.*
- *Cities must be surrounded by about 2000 feet of grassland for public enjoyment (Green Belt anyone?!)*
- *Accumulated rubbish had to be dealt with and removed from Jerusalem on the day that it was created.*
- *One does not say shehecheyanu after performing shechita for the first time since an animal had to die in the process.*



Sum up:

We started off by discussing that we don't necessarily learn specific characteristic to imitate from Adam Ha'Rishon, however, we learn how to live our lives.

Hashem commanded Adam (and us) to guard the land and also cultivate it. We looked at what the word guard meant and discovered that it is an instruction to actively protect the land from any harm and to actively ensure its preservation for the future.

We looked at the second part of Adam's commandment from Hashem which told us to cultivate the land. We then discussed the importance of working to develop ourselves as people and also develop, perfect and improve Hashem's work. We discussed that we are not attempting to out-do Hashem with cultivation; he created the world in a way that we should have creative influence.



We looked at Adam's role in naming creatures and the importance a name can have in reflecting and influencing one's characteristics.

Finally, we summed up what our chanichim could take away from this K and focused on environmentalism.

K3: NOACH



Aims:

1. To look at two ways of understanding the life of Noach
2. To understand what social justice and responsibility are in Judaism
3. To explore what social responsibility on Machane could entail

FACT FILE

We first see Noah in Bereshit 5:28

6: We meet Noah and he was "righteous IN HIS GENERATION".

G-d Tells him he is going to bring a flood and he should make an ark to save himself.

7: Noah is told to enter the Ark with his family and the animals. Then the flood comes.

8: Flood stops, a raven is sent, then the dove. Before Noah is commanded to leave the Ark. Upon he leaving he makes a sacrifice.

9: 2 IMPORTANT COMMANDMENT, EAT MEAT AND MULTIPLY!!!!!!

9:13 The rainbow appears and becomes a covenant.

9:20 Noah gets drunk, it all goes a bit wrong and he tells his sons their future.

Noah dies at the end of chapter 9

Story Recap

The story of Noah and the ark is one that we've all grown up with; we've spent many hours listening to the story and singing the songs. But what can we learn from Noah? Was he one of the greatest leaders in our history or do we view him as someone who didn't fulfil his full potential?

1. Righteous man, evil generation. Righteous man saved, evil generation DESTROYED.
2. Big boat. Righteous man on big boat. Big flood. Pairs (and septets) of animals. They are all saved to make the new world.
3. Noah sends dove (and ravens) to find out if water has diminished. Third time lucky. The people and the animals leave.
4. G-d promises not to destroy the world again. The rainbow is the sign.
5. Noah plants a vineyard and gets drunk. Cham sees his father Noah undressed and tells his two brothers (Shem and Yafet). Shem and Yafet cover Noah so they do not see him naked. When Noah wakes up, he curses Canaan (Cham's son) and blesses Shem and Yafet.

Noach's character

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו
 אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ נֹחַ:

"These are the generations of Noach; Noach was a righteous man, he was perfect in his generation. Noach walked with God. (Bereshit 6:9)



Seemingly unable to cope with witnessing the destruction of the society he had lived among, the later stages of the story paint a different character picture.

וַיִּחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּטַּע כַּרְם: וַיִּשְׁכַּר מִן הַיַּיִן וַיִּשְׁכַּר וַיִּתְגַּל בְּתוֹךְ אֹהֶלֶּה:
"And Noach, the man of the earth, debased himself and planted a vineyard. He drank from the wine and became drunk and he uncovered himself within his tent". (Bereshit 9:20-21)

Perhaps he sought solace from all he experienced by becoming sensually unaware via the inebriating qualities of alcohol. Whether we sympathise or not (if we are capable of imagining Noach's ordeal), by the end of the story Noach appears an undignified figure as his son discovers his nakedness and, as Rashi elucidates, humiliates him further.

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Once you've discussed the story in a little detail, ask the chanichim to draw a quick sketch of the part of the story which they think is most important and ask them why they chose that particular scene...

Noach is described as a Tzaddik, which can be translated as a good, just, righteous man. But we then have the words "in his generation," making it sound like a back-handed compliment. How are we to understand his character?

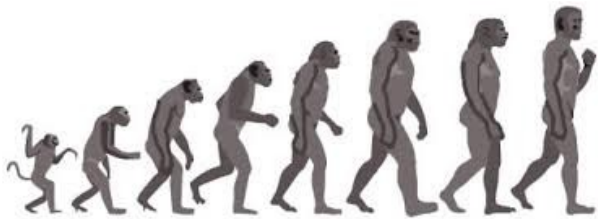
Remember how the generations are described:

וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱ-לֹהִים וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חַמְסָה: וַיַּרְא אֱ-לֹהִים אֶת הָאָרֶץ
 וַהֲנִה נִשְׁחָתָה כִּי הִשְׁחִית כָּל בָּשָׂר אֶת דַּרְכּוֹ עַל הָאָרֶץ:

The earth also was corrupt before G-d, and the earth was filled with violence. And G-d looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And G-d said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. (Bereshit 6:11-12)

The terms which the Torah uses to describe the generation of Noach include corruption and thievery. It is a generation in which moral boundaries have broken down. The fabric of society, social justice, is non-

existent. Rashi offers two opinions about “he was perfect in his generation”:



In his generations: Some of our Sages interpret it [the word בְּדֹרֹתָיו – *in his generations*] favourably: **How much more so if he had lived in a generation of righteous people, he would**

have been even more righteous. Others interpret it derogatorily: In comparison with his generation he was righteous, **but if he had been in Abraham’s generation, he would not have been considered of any importance.**

The opinion which states that he was righteous makes a lot of sense. He was singled out from his whole generation as worthy of being saved and witnessed a cataclysmic and singular disaster. But why would anyone compare him to Avraham unfavourably?

Noach vs. Avraham

To understand Rashi we can perform an analysis on the differing attitudes of Noach and Avraham. Noach does not act for the world around him. G-d tells him that he will cause a worldwide flood and he makes an ark only for his own salvation. He doesn’t try to improve the ways of the people around him. Compare that with Avraham:

Hashem tells Avraham that he is going to destroy Sodom and Amorah and what is Avraham’s response? He starts to negotiate with Hashem to save the righteous of Sodom. Unfortunately, Avraham is unable to find 10 worthy people and so Sodom is destroyed. Avraham took the responsibility to do all he could to save the people of Sodom. Noach is often compared to a person who, when he is cold, puts on a cloak; contrasted to a person (Avraham) who builds a fire.

The other opinion in the Gemara would argue that Noach rebuilds his world with vineyards. Vineyards don’t symbolise sin and lack of virtue. A vineyard is a long-term project. He was rebuilding a world, one governed by the Noachide laws that would ensure social justice.

So, in conclusion either Noach was not righteous because he wasn’t socially responsible, or he was very righteous because when he had the chance, he started to rebuild the world.

Social justice in more detail

Noach's message of social responsibility isn't just between us and other Jews, but a universal responsibility; things like taking care of the environment together, reducing poverty, anti-genocide education programs, standing up for moral values etc. These are awareness's which are part of our universal obligation of social responsibility

A few points in the story deepen our understanding of social justice.

First, let's examine the social injustices that were so terrible. Above, we discussed thievery and corruption. In fact, the Hebrew word used to describe their actions is **סֶדֶק**. Rashi identifies this as robbery whilst Sforno elucidates theft, murder, sexual immorality and kidnapping. These sins are quite blatant, but one Midrash describes a different collapse of societal values.

If a countryman brought a basket of vegetables to market, they would edge up to it, one after the other, and abstract a bit, each in itself of petty value. (Talmud Yerushalmi, Bava Metzia)

Acts of murder and kidnapping are highly significant on their own. Possibly the point the Midrash is illustrating is that social injustice can be the culmination of many small actions and not just blatant criminal activity. An isolated theft of a petty value is insufficient to tear apart the fabric of society but if everybody engages in it, the cumulative effect is damaging.

Today, we may focus on the social injustices that rightly dominate the news such as Darfur, Sudan and civil wars across the Middle East. Individual acts of social injustice may appear to us as unfortunate but ultimately, isolated actions, such as individual cases of racial prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping add up. In fact we can learn from the story of Noach that no improper action is too small and isolated and we should take a stand

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Pair up with another kvutsa for a game of chair ball. Pump it up. Make it really competitive. Right when it's getting going start taking away some of the rules. First let people walk a few steps with the ball. Then let them go a bit further. Then let the guy on the chair get off the chair and move around in the area of the chair. Go on like this for a while, basically until they hate it and ask to stop. Explain to them the need for rules in order for things to work.

*One of Judaism's most distinctive and challenging ideas is its ethics of responsibility, the idea that God invites us to become, in the rabbinic phrase, his 'partners in the work of creation'... Life is G-d's call to responsibility - **Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks***

against them all because cumulatively they can pull the threads of the fabric of society.

Another interesting point deduced from the story of Noach, is how we should feel empowered to take action against social injustice. When talking about the rainbow the Torah says:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱ-לֹהִים זֹאת אוֹת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אֶנִּי נֹתֵן בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין כָּל נֹפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֲשֶׁר אִתְּכֶם לְדֹרֹת עוֹלָם:

And Hashem said: 'This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for generations to come. (Bereshit 9:12)

Rashi on the verse writes that some generations were so righteous that they did not need divine reminding of their obligation to combat injustice in the world. The rainbow is not simply a confirmation that God will never destroy the world again. It is also a reminder for humanity to tackle injustices, so we do not necessitate divine intervention again. When we see a rainbow, we should feel empowered with our responsibility to achieve a better world.

Social responsibility on Machane

There is a concept in Judaism which arises in Gemara Shavuot 39a that "All of Israel is responsible for each other". This message is so important for Machane; the idea that leadership isn't about having the loudest voice, it's about having responsibility for those around you. In Judaism and in life no man is an island, simply because the world cannot exist if everyone had this attitude. But, as we said, we also have to have responsibility towards the world as a whole. Rav Lichtenstein understands that God's command to Adam, l'Ovdah u'leShomra, to work and to guard the land, tells us that there is a universal responsibility for all mankind to help maintain and perfect the world:



When seeking to shape our personalities according to Torah values, we must relate to at least three levels of expectation and responsibility. These can be regarded as concentric circles, moving from the broader to the more specific:

- 1) *The universal demands placed upon one simply as a human being;*
- 2) *The demands of a Jew;*

3) *The responsibility of a ben-Torah, one who makes Torah study a central part of his life and embodies its values.*

...Here we have, then, two foci of our primary obligation: a) to guard, to have a sense of responsibility in relation to that which we have been given; and b) to work and to develop. Although Adam was commanded specifically to till and guard the Garden of Eden, I think that we would not be stretching things too far if we were to understand that this mandate applies far beyond that particular little corner of the Garden where Adam and Eve were placed. What we have here is a definition of how man is to be perceived in general: as a shomer and as an oved.

(R. Aharon Lichtenstein, *By His Light*, pp. 1-3)



Middah Spotlight - Social responsibility

We have already looked at the majority of this in the chomer but let's look at certain points in more details

- There is a parable told of a man who was cold and wanted to warm himself up. He had two options: he could either buy a coat to keep himself warm or he could light a fire to keep those around him warm as well. Noach is a Tzaddik but there are two types of Tzaddik. There is the Tzaddik like Noach who walks with Hashem and then there is the Tzaddik like Avraham and Moshe who are Tzaddikim with Hashem, but also with the people.
- There is a concept in Judaism, of "כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה" - "All of Israel is responsible for each other". This message is so important for Machane; the idea that leadership isn't about having the loudest voice, it's about having responsibility for those around you. In Judaism and in life no man is an island, simply because the world cannot exist if everyone had this attitude.
- But we also have to have responsibility towards the world as a whole as Rav Lichtenstein said.

Some Related Themes in PirkeiAvot

- Nittai the Arbelite said: Keep far from an evil neighbour and do not associate with the wicked. (1:7)

BUT

- Hillel used to say: ... In a place where there are no 'people' strive to be a 'person'. (2:6)

ARE THEY DEBATING? OR ARE THEY BOTH RIGHT IN DIFFERENT PLACES?

Sum-up:

We have seen that there are two basic ways to view Noach's character, both of which relate to his attitude towards social responsibility. We discussed definitions of social justice and explored our obligations and responsibility to spread that justice.





K4: AVRAHAM AND SARAH



Aims:

1. To learn about Avraham's iconoclasm (his will to stand against the beliefs of the time).
2. To learn about Avraham and Sarah's kindness and hospitality.
3. To learn about the middah and mitzvah of Hachnasat Orchim (welcoming guests).

FACT FILE

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Get some pictures of famous

Avram and Sarai first appear in Tanach at the end of Parshat Noach (11:26-31).
 At the beginning of Lech Lecha they (along with Lot) go "to a place that I [God] will show you" and are promised a great reward (12:1-9).
 They travel around a little before hitting a famine and decide to go to Egypt.
 Avram says Sarai is his sister and Pharaoh takes her and gets struck with a plague.
 Pharaoh wasn't happy that he was tricked – Avram and Sarai were sent on their way (12:10-20).
 Avram returns to Eretz Yisrael (13:1-4).
 Lot and Avram part ways (13:5-13).
 Hashem then repeats his promises (13:14-18).
 War of four kings vs five kings, defeating Sodom and capturing Lot – Avram saves the day but wants no reward for it (14).
 God then has another chat with Avram and then there is the famous covenant of the parts (Brit Bein Habetarim) – nightmare inducing stuff (15).
 Avram father Ishamel with Hagar. Hagar and Ishmael then flee (16).
 Hashem changes Avram and Sarai's names and makes a few more promises. (17).
 The three angels visit Avraham etc. (18).
 The Akeidah (22).
 Sarah dies and Ma'arat Hamachpeilah is bought as a burial site (23).
 Avraham sends Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak (24).
 Avraham Dies (25).

Avraham the Believer

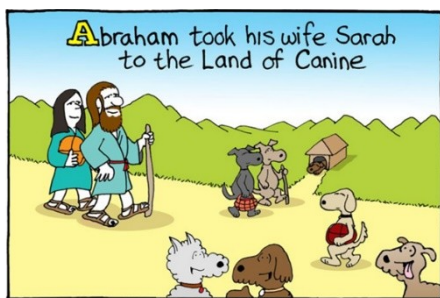
The Rambam describes how in the generations following Noach, the people once again reverted to their idolatrous practices. They began to follow false prophets and embarked on a cultic journey of worship; stones, rivers, the stars and the heavens were all deified.

It is into this society that Avraham is born. But his attitude is different from that of his contemporaries: he looks at the world



around him and concludes that there must be some sort of being behind the scenes making everything work:

In the morning when he saw the sun rise in the east, he thought "This is a great power; it must be the king who created me". That whole day he prayed to the sun. In the evening, upon seeing the sun set and the moon rise, he said "Surely this one rules even that other power to which I prayed, for it no longer shines". All night he prayed to the moon. In the morning, upon seeing the darkness pass and the east light up, he said "Surely all these have a King and Ruler Who directs them". When Hashem saw Avraham's longing for Him, He appeared to Avraham and spoke with him - Zohar 1:86a

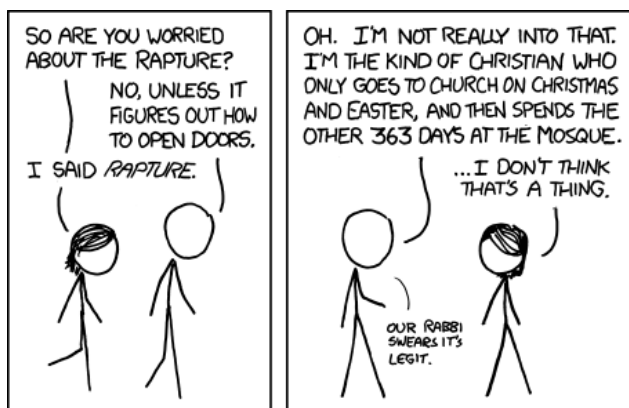


We see from this Chazal that Avraham was not happy to just go about his life in an unthinking fashion. He wanted to question the world around him and ultimately to strive for a deeper truth, an explanation at the heart of the mystery of the cosmos.

But he was not willing to keep his insights to himself. There are many Midrashim which document his iconoclasm (rejecting and fighting against the strongly held beliefs of the time). The most celebrated is Bereshit Rabbah 38:8 which tells of Avraham's smashing the idols and blaming it on the biggest one. He is taken to Nimrod, the local monarch, who forces him to bow to the fire. Avraham responds that it would be better to bow to the water, for it extinguishes the fire. Nimrod says fine - bow to the water! Avraham keeps this chain of logic through clouds, wind, and humanity (rock, paper scissors as a proof for the existence of Hashem - Dawkins didn't see that one coming. Actually, he did. But whatever. You get the point). Eventually Nimrod has had enough and just throws Avraham into the fire, but he is miraculously saved from its flames.

You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life

- Winston Churchill



These stories highlight just how counter cultural Avraham was (ancient hipster?). The salient point here is that the Jewish people were founded as a protest movement. The world around Avraham was unsatisfactory; it was founded on lies and dishonesty. Part of our mission

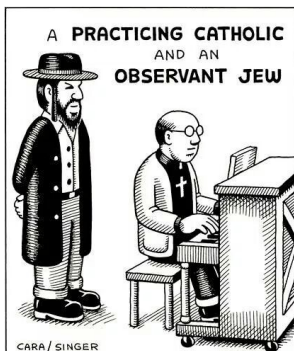
statement as a people is to follow along in our forefather's footsteps and point out to the world when it is moving in the wrong direction.

Avraham and Sarah - Models of kindness

The Rambam (Matanot l'Aniyim chap. 10) writes that being stingy is not a Jewish characteristic, Avraham exemplified charity and giving to others. But what exactly is this kindness? How would we go about defining the word itself?



If we look at the events which occurred in Avraham's life, we can get a little closer to answering the question. Avraham is sitting out in the midday sun, simply waiting for guests to arrive. We have a tradition that Avraham and Sarah's tent was open on all sides this made it as welcoming as possible. Often people don't really want to accept help from us because they think we don't really want to offer it. Avraham and Sarah sent out a clear message to everyone around them that they were more than willing to help. They went on to offer their guests a truly sumptuous meal, filled with delicacies, despite promising very little. This is another method of putting people at ease. If you tell them that you are going out your way for them, then they will feel uncomfortable, but if it is presented as no problem at all then your guests will feel better.



It is right in the middle of this story of hospitality that Hashem praises Avraham's righteousness and informs him of the potential impending destruction of Sodom. Avraham is given an opportunity to beseech Hashem to be merciful. This too is an expression of Avraham's kindness, but perhaps defined as: "awareness of the other". What this means is that the "kind" person is always aware of what is going on around him, the thoughts and feelings of the people in his sphere of influence. As above, the person who is truly aware attempts not just to give things to other people, but also to make them comfortable in receiving those things. So too, Avraham cares about the people of Sodom as he would his own family and therefore prays on their behalf.

This also explains all the Midrashim about how many converts Avraham and Sarah made. Right as they are beginning their journey to Israel, the passuk (12:5) says that they brought all the "souls which they made in Charan" with them. The various Midrashim describe their thousands of disciples, and how they were able to unite the whole world.

This is all part of the same thing; if you see everyone around you worshipping idols, you do not sit down and say “it’s their right to do as they please” - you attempt to help them and bring them back to the proper path.

It seems to me that this is the test that lies at the root of the Akeidah. In general, throughout chumash a sacrifice is a good thing; bringing one is a way of achieving a greater level of closeness to Hashem. But fundamentally, the animal is being sacrificed on your behalf; it must die so that you can achieve a higher spiritual level. Avraham is asked by Hashem to give up another human life, seemingly for Avraham’s own good. As monotheists we know that Hashem does not need sacrifices; they are for us. So, Avraham would have had to completely nullify someone else, so he can serve himself. For Avraham, who spent his whole life looking at the other, ignoring what he wanted to do in favour of what was right for the other, this would prove to be the most trying of tasks.



Robin Hood's Parents' Evening

The main point is that kindness requires a little more thought than we normally assume. We tend to think that if we give tzedakah and offer people favours we

have done our bit. True kindness requires us to truly step into the life of the “other”, to attempt to decipher exactly what it is that they need, not just the standard stuff that we assume it’s the “kind” thing to do.

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Get your chanichim to act out some of the stories from Avraham’s life with some sort of theme. Film their presentation and find a senior Tzevet member to come and watch it.

Awesome game stolen from an awesome tv show

Party quirks is a great game in a number of situations. Basically, you select one person to host an imaginary dinner party. Every 45 or so seconds he welcomes a new “guest” to his party. The guests (other chanichim) have been given a job/role/personality to act out, and it is the host’s task to work out what they are pretending to be, but only through talking to them in the way that a dinner host would talk to his guests, so by asking questions like “do you want some soup” or “how’s the wife?”. This fits in here because we have hospitality for guests with secret identities, and the concept of trying to figure out what is going on in a person’s life and how best to cater for them.

Middah Spotlight - Hachanasat Orchim

וַיָּרָא אֱלֹהֵי ה' בְּאֵלְנֵי מַמְרֵי וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הָאֵהָל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם: וַיֵּשֶׂא עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיִּרָא וַיִּרְץ לְקִרְבָּתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה:

"And God appeared to him in Elonei Mamrei, while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. And he lifted his eyes and saw, behold, three men were standing before him. And he saw, and he ran towards them from the entrance to the tent, and he bowed down to the ground." (Bereshit 18:1-2)

Notes:

- Rashi says it was on the third day following Avraham's Brit Milah – the most painful day.
- It was the hottest time of the day.
- Yet, Avraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent, waiting and even hoping for someone to pass by so he could invite them in for a pit stop.
- We know from the rest of the story that the 3 men were angels, but at this point they appeared to be "men."
- Even so, Avraham ran towards them and bowed to them, before inviting them in.
- And what activity did he stop to go and greet these men? He was talking to Hashem!
- Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, "Welcoming guests is greater than greeting the Divine Presence." [Avraham was standing before G-d and he noticed some guests approaching.] He said to G-d, "If I have found favour in Your eyes, please do not leave me" (Bereishit 18:3) [i.e. "Please wait while I go and greet the guests"] (Gemara Shabbat 127a)

Halachot (From the Chofetz Chaim, based on the actions of Avraham):

- One should seek out guests and treat them with great warmth.
- The host should treat all guests the same, irrespective of wealth or importance.
- When guests arrive, one should immediately allow them to wash or rest if they need.



Sum-up:

We have seen that part of Avraham's uniqueness lies in the fact that he was able to do what he thought was right even when everyone else was doing something else.

This is not covered in the chomer but it is vital to remember the relevance of these qualities and traits to our activities within Bnei Akiva. We are a movement which is not afraid to turn around to the wider world and say that we want change. This is what makes youth movements so vital and dynamic. Young people are not stuck in a certain routine, a certain way of doing things. The fact that something has always been done means nothing to a young person.

Another part of Avraham's greatness is a quality he shares with his wife: kindness. We saw that kindness is not a universal set of actions that can be applied to any person. Each person needs their own particular things and should be catered for individually.



K5: YITZCHAK



Aims:

4. To discover what happened in Yitzchak's life.
5. To understand why his achievements are important.
6. To analyse the challenges of Jewish continuity.

FACT FILE

Yitzchak is a different figure to Avraham (as is Yaakov). There are very few specific things that Yitzchak did. The main thing he did was follow in his father's footsteps – B'ikvot Avoteinu. The Akeidah (22).

Avraham sends Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak (24).

He moves to Gerar just like his father where he re-digs his father's wells (26).

He is tricked and blesses Ya'akov (27).

Yitzchak: "Hello, my name is Yitzchak."

Man 1: "Yitzchak?! Really?!"

Man 2: "Go on, tell us a joke!"

Man 3: "Oh I love jokes!"

Yitzchak: "Well I actually do know one that's pretty good. There was this mollusc, and he walks up to this sea cucumber. Normally, they don't talk, sea cucumbers, but in a joke everyone talks. So, the sea mollusc says to the cucumber...NEEEEEEMOOOOO!"

(See finding Nemo...)

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Play Chinese Faces. Everyone sits in a circle but facing outwards. The person starting makes a particular action, involving facial contortions to the person next to them. That person needs to pass it around the circle until it gets all the way back to the beginning. Compare the two. Hilarity should ensue. You can also play other games like chair races; they may not be so interesting for the people in the middle but without them it would be impossible to play.

Yitzchak

The main events of Yitzchak's life are:

1. The Akeida;
2. His father's servant finds him a wife;
3. He moves to Gerar and behaves just as Avraham did vis-à-vis his wife;
4. He re-digs Avraham's wells;
5. He is tricked and gives Ya'akov the Bracha.

Though there seems to be a lot here, Yitzchak remains a shadowy figure, obscure and incomplete, inviting inquiry and a desire to know more about the man behind the story. What stands out most is that nothing stands out! It almost seems that the nature of his actions (almost more like non-actions) seem banal and certainly not worthy of Avot-status.

In almost all those five events, Yitzchak appears to either be passive, or he was acted upon by others and had little scope for initiative. His actions seem to be vague and were more a response to other circumstances thrust at him. Lots of what he does is as original as Martin Luther King's name - he just copies his father. He gives the impression of being almost a non-entity, who might be called the son of his father or the father of his son.

He dug the wells his father had already dug; he experienced his own variation of his father's encounters with Avimelech and with Pharaoh.

Who was Yitzchak?

We must understand Yitzchak's life in its context. His life does not seem to have been an easy one. Being a son of Avraham, with all the weight of that heritage on his shoulders, he would need to be an extraordinary person to be known in his own right. History is full of many overwhelming fathers who seem to fill the entire space and leave no room for their sons to assert themselves.

Consider the postage stamp: its usefulness consists in the ability to stick to one thing until it reaches its destination.

-Josh Billings

This puts into context Yitzchak's life: the mission he undertook was not to be the novel, superman-esque hero that daddy Avraham was, rather it was an equally noble and worthy one - to carry on. The task of the "successor" has always been one of the most unrewarding of all tasks in history. While it is true that "all beginnings are difficult", continuation can be even more challenging. The capacity to persist is no less important than the achieving of power to begin with. In all the significant revolutions in history, it is evident that the first generation, the revolutionaries themselves or the "founding fathers", usually have to contend with formidable circumstances.

However, the verdict of history concerning their success, whether it was a glorious victory, merely a passing episode, or whether it has a lasting impact, the verdict lies with their successors - the generation that must stabilise and consolidate the revolution. This second generation has to bear the brunt of the backlash from displacing the old order and the relentless struggle without the original zeal and ardour.

Yet the second generation is not credited with the same glorious qualities - the sons' task is to hold steady and not to create. The father dug wells and creates new facts, a new ideology and set of values. Time, enemies and habits gradually fill and block these



wells. It is Yitzchak's task to go back and dig the wells again, to release the living waters and let them flow again. Yitzchak's place is of utmost value and significance. The verse, "*These are the generations of Yitzchak... Avraham begat Yitzchak*" contains deeper meaning in that although Avraham and Yitzchak may be worlds apart and Avraham towers over Yitzchak both in personality and in the magnitude of his actions, they are nonetheless together as one – Yitzchak not only justifies Avraham, but establishes him forever. By virtue of Yitzchak, Avraham's legacy is made what it is. Yitzchak was different but no less important because of it. His worthy destiny was to be the one who carried on.

This message is especially apt in today's world where the most visible role-models for children are celebrities. Although some celebrities do incredible work, the emphasis is on appearance, and we see them doing one-off events, a far cry from the long-term day-to-day commitment we learn from Yitzchak Avinu.

Jewish continuity

The British Jewish community, estimated in the 1950s to number some 450,000 individuals, had declined by the late 1990s to 280,000. This means that the Jewish community has lost ten Jews a day, every day, for more than forty years. From 1985-90, 57% of U.S. Jews married non-Jews. Only a small percentage of the couples planned to raise their children as Jews. In Britain, during the same time period, 44% of Jews married non-Jews.

It's also important to remember some other factors, including low birth rates in non-Chareidi communities, and of course more positive ones like Aliyah. But even after factoring those in, this is really happening, and we are losing the battle to maintain our people.

Have we forgotten the message of Yitzchak? Our task as committed Jews is not just to innovate, but also to strengthen and maintain our people and help other Jews re-dig those wells of our ancestors.

How can we ensure that the “Yitzchak” side of us is manifested?

Some suggestions:

Aliya – does this solve the problem?

Is this the only reason to make Aliyah? Are our grandchildren more likely to be Jewish if we make Aliya?

Jewish pride?

Awareness of Jewish history?

Education, education, education?



Finally, let's read this passage to scare us about what the future might hold if we don't start acting:

The Last British Jew

My name? My name is not important. Who am I? I am the last British Jew. The year is 2050; the place is the Natural History museum in London. I am in a glass-fronted cage, on exhibit. People pass me on their way, staring and pointing, sometimes laughing at me, the freak on show. On the walls are hung the remnants of the Jewish culture; a tallit, a Sefer Torah, a siddur, tefillin etc., and on a little metal table, nailed to the floor is a menorah. Each day as I sit here, I wonder how the hundreds of thousands of Jews who lived in Britain could have vanished away.

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Devise a policy to stop British Jewry from declining. Discuss the major issues affecting the community and see if you can come up with a hypothetical strategy for combating those issues. Then you can write letters to the Board of Deputies and we can send them off.

My grandparents used to talk to me about the Jewish communities in the 19th and 20th centuries; the larger populations in Golders Green, Hendon, Salford and Gateshead; about Jewish organisations like Bnei Akiva, FZY and others. I remember my father telling me how successful and well off the British Jew was. All this completely disappeared. I contemplate the reasons, remember the events and search for the answer. I believe I know the answer to why the Jews disappeared. Small things that happened gradually. Families stopped attending Shabbat services, stopped sending their children to cheder, the Shabbat candles were never lit. My grandfather told me that they were still good Jews - they attended the Yom Kippur services, held the Pesach seder every year. The history books say that soon, this too, ended. To attend the Kol Nidre service became a chore, not an honour, to hold a siddur became a task. The rituals of Judaism began to vanish. This was the first step...

I was reading of a Rabbi Levy who pushed for equality between the Jews and everyone else in Britain. In time the Jews did become equal and accepted in society. The Jew was at the same level as the Christian and the hatred of the Jew began to die off. With all this equality, all differences were put aside. Jews stopped putting mezuzot on their doors. When asked if they were Jewish, they would give a brisk "no", or wouldn't answer at all. A new form of Judaism emerged, with a more liberal approach, they couldn't see that it couldn't exist. Judaism needs Jews, but Jews also need Judaism. Without one, the other was dead.

And then there was that awful period 40 years ago. The Arab nations became strong. They wanted Israel destroyed, and they acted accordingly. With 2 nuclear pellets, 5 million Israelis were obliterated and the holy land was charred beyond all recognition. When the news was announced, to the Jews in Britain, we said, "What could we have done?"

And Britain was not alone in such an attitude. The Jews of America, South Africa and France also adopted such an opinion. It wasn't so long ago that one man orchestrated the destruction of over a third of our people. At that time, they all swore that they would never forget. They swore that they would always support Jews across the world. They pledged their donations to Israel and vowed their allegiance for the progress of all Jews. In time, the donations stopped coming and the vows were forgotten. How forgetful a people can be! When the people lost pride in themselves, their religion and Israel, they lost everything.

I am the last British Jew. In less than 20 years, I too shall die. Never again will another Jew set foot in this planet, as there are no more Jewesses. My G-d, Hashem, where did we forsake you? How could we forsake you? Why did no one realise until now, when it's just too late?

MiddahSpotlight - Tradition

Tradition in Pirkei Avot

1:1 - *Moses received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly.*

3:17 - *Rabbi Akiva said: ... Tradition is a safeguarding fence around the Torah...*

Famous question: why is it that the ethics of Judaism that has a Mesorah. Surely it is the laws which are passed down by tradition, and this Mishnah should preface the other books of Mishnah!? What do you think?



A common and important answer is that we know that halakha follows the rabbis, but we may not have thought that ethics also does. However, to some extent Judaism has an everlasting ethical vision which gets passed down from Sinai, and about which the rabbis all share their personal insight and we learn from.

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

One of the key things we can learn from Yitzhak is how to cope with being the following act to great people. We should not be scared of following their ways. In fact, look at modern schools of Judaism. All have started with one remarkable figure that has moulded a community. Take the Ba'al Shem Tov and Chasidut; the Ari and Kabbalah; Reb Chaim Soloveitchik and 'Lomdus'; Rav Soloveitchik and YU/Modern Orthodoxy; Rav Kook and Religious Zionism; The Rebbe and Chabad etc. All these have been Avraham-Yitzchak stories. Even Bnei Akiva has one of these stories to some extent with some of our recent role models, such as Rav Neriya, Aryeh Handler etc.



Is tradition 'out-of-date' and 'behind-the-times'?



"You can call it oral tradition if you want to, but I still say it's gossip!"

Sum-up

We have seen that continuing in the same path as those who came before us is just as vital a task as is the innovation that they achieved. British Jewry is in a state of decline, and it is important that we realise that we are always going to be fighting an uphill battle.

It is important at this point to realise that the situation in Israel is very different. Recent statistics have shown that Jews in Israel are flourishing and progressing in ways that Jews in the diaspora are not.

K6: YA'AKOV AND EISAV



Aims:

7. To appreciate how the key features of Yaakov and Eisav's personalities are embodied in the "Yisrael" figure.

8. To relate "Yisrael" to Religious Zionism and Bnei Akiva's ideology.

FACT FILE

Ya'akov and Eisav were 2 very different brothers – Bereishit(25)
 The sale of the birthright (25:29-34).
 Eisav Marries: (26:34-35).
 The blessing swip-swap (27).
 Yaakov's dream of the angels and ladder while the stones join. (28:10-22).
 Ya'akov meets Rachel and wants to marry her but is tricked into marrying her sister before eventually marrying her as well. They each give birth too (many children)! (29-30).
 Ya'akov runs away from Lavan (31).
 Eisav comes to attack Ya'akov so Ya'akov prepares for battle and fights with an angel (32).
 Eisav's chronicles (36).
 Yaakov's chronicles (37:1-4).
 Yaakov's favourite son – Yosef was taken in chains and sold (and bought by a captain named Potiphar!!!!) (37:25-37).
 Ya'akov blesses all his children before dying (49) and then mourned by all of Egypt.

Yaakov and Eisav: two peas in a pod?

Our story begins under familiar circumstances. Yitzchak and Rivka were at first infertile, but Hashem answers their prayers and Rivka conceives. However, as we all know, Rivka was pregnant with twins. Pained by her pregnancy, she went to Hashem to find out what was going on. Hashem gave her a cryptic answer:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לָהּ שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם בְּבֶטְנְךָ וְשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים מִמֶּעֶיךָ יִפְרְדוּ וְלֵאמֹם מְלֹאִם יֶאֱמָץ וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צָעִיר:

“And Hashem said to her: Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples shall be separated from your bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” (Bereshit 25:23)

And so it was that these two kids started out in life together, as Rashi points out, indistinguishable in their actions. But, as they grew, their paths diverged:

Rashi comments:

...When they got to 13, one turned to the Beit Midrash and the other turned to idols. Rashi on (Bereshit 25:27)

As Chazal portray the story, Eisav became your classic chav whilst brother Yaakov was a pure and uncomplicated man, an *ish tam* - *simple man*, and more concerned with learning Torah.

Then it gets a little bit Guy Ritchie. Yaakov and Eisav in a nutshell:

Under somewhat suspicious circumstances, Yaakov exchanges some lentil soup for the birthright with his brother. Yaakov later masquerades as Eisav to trick Daddy Yitzchak, who was blind by now, to give him the firstborn's blessings (which now belonged to Yaakov, although Yitzchak wasn't to know). Eisav was not best pleased, as he wanted that blessing. Fleeing Eisav, Yaakov runs off and spends a few years in Lavan's home where he faces some shenanigans from his uncle when he tries to marry Rachel. Many children, wives, concubines and much hard work later, he sets off home. Unfortunately for him, Eisav had laid on a welcoming party consisting of an army of men. However, after some careful preparation by Yaakov, the twin brothers meet, embrace and kiss each other... The End!

Despite this apparent happy ending to the story, this still leaves a couple of major questions unanswered (This part of the chomer is based on an article by RavYoel bin Nun entitled "YedeiEisav - KolYaakov", published in his book on SeferBereishit, "PirkeiAvot".):

- If Eisav was such a badman, why did Yitzchak like him so much to the extent that he preferred him over Yaakov?
- When Yitzchak found out he had been tricked, why did he not try to reverse it? Instead he told Eisav it was too late and gave Eisav (surely the victim) a rather crushing Beracha.

Yitzchak's Vision

HADRACHA HOT TIP

In your teams have a debate about the relative worth of having a physical fighter-type person or a more scholarly and gentler person as the leader of the Jewish people. One madrich should go with each group for five-ten minutes to prepare an argument. Basic pointers:

Eisav: A natural nation, living on the field, by the sword, without ethics and boundaries. A strong kingship (established 8 generations before Am Yisrael did).

Yaakov: A people lacking in physical strength, using trickery and always holding onto his brother's ankle. He has spirituality yet lacks roots on the field and the land.

Let's first try to understand why Yitzchak loved Eisav so much despite our negative view of him. Yitzchak was a farmer, the first of the forefathers who really tried to settle the land. He did not have it easy: the Philistines drove him out and stole his wells. In the face of these challenges, Yitzchak wanted to have some strength. His son, Eisav, who lived by the sword (and would later lead an army of 400 men and conquer HarSeir), was the perfect candidate to defend the family. As the firstborn, Yitzchak would have seen him as the strong military leader, vital to lead the family. Eisav was essentially a conqueror, who was establishing the family empire. Yaakov, however, appeared to be the priest, the prophet and the spiritual part of the family.

In Yitzchak's eyes, he was serving an important role, but he was not worthy of the blessings. These personal, familial considerations would reflect themselves in the running of the people which would eventually form; similar to what we saw in K1 - that which happened to the Avot are due to happen to their children; traits and roles which expressed themselves in a "family" setting would again express themselves in a "nation" setting.

As far as Yitzchak saw, Eisav would be the Prime Minister, the Chief of Staff doing the realpolitik, while Yaakov would be the frum son, learning Torah, perhaps the "Chief Rabbi" of the family, guiding Eisav's hand in the path of Torah.

However, Eisav was not all that Yitzchak thought him to be. Chazal tell us that Eisav murdered at the age of 15, and that Avraham died early so he would not hear of the evildoing of his grandson (he committed 5 evil sins on the day of Avraham's death). Mother Rivka also knew a bit more than her husband (remember what Hashem told her earlier about two nations emerging?). She could see that Eisav was not fit to lead the nation and receive the blessings, being the bad boy that he was. She saw that it had to be Yaakov, due to his moral and ethical character, despite



him being deficient in other, more practical areas. Lesson learned: Communication in marriage is key.

Before we attempt to assemble a solution, we can also return to the other question: why did Yitzchak not try to retract his mistake in giving the blessings to Yaakov?

In order to answer this question, let's remember Yitzchak's response when Yaakov came to him:



וַיִּגַשׁ יַעֲקֹב אֶל-אִיִּצְחָק אָבִיו וַיִּמְשְׁהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר
 הַקֵּל קוֹל יַעֲקֹב וְהַיָּדַיִם יְדֵי עֵשָׂו:
 "And Ya'akov drew close to his father,
 who felt him and said, 'The voice is
 Yaakov voice, but the hands are Eisav's
 hands.'" (Bereshit 27:22)

He was perplexed and may even have thought that his fighter-son Eisav had now taken on the moral, "frum" side of Yaakov. Yitzchak was delighted to be blessing his "new son" and was sure that this was the will of Hashem.

Only later, when the real Eisav turned up, did Yitzchak realise that he had got the whole story wrong. It is clear from the Torah that Yaakov was the intended recipient of the blessing. Yitzchak accepted this after he had worked out what had happened.

But as we discussed above, Yitzchak rightly knew that the "frum", Torah-learning son would not be appropriate to lead Am Yisrael. Instead, Yaakov had needed to disguise himself to be someone he was not, as Yitzchak knew that the blessings could only go to someone with the necessary physical strength.

The problem is that Yaakov received the blessings under false pretences! He was not a fighter – he was just wearing fancy dress when he tricked his father! How could this be right?

Yaakov the trickster

A study of the subsequent episodes in Yaakov's life, however, reveals that the tricking of Yitzchak was only the beginning of a complete transformation of personality:

- He lived with Lavan for 20 years, as a manual labourer, on the land, i.e. living an Eisav-like life! He faced the challenges of physical enslavement and succeeded. Yet he kept his values as a "pure man, a tent-dweller".

- However, this was not enough. Yaakov was not yet a fighter like brother Eisav. Remember he was someone who was always fleeing wars, not fighting them!
- Several of the commentators (Ramban & Rashbam) even tell us that he was trying to flee the fight with Eisav and avoid a confrontation just before they met.
- Worry not, Yaakov did change even more...
- While Yaakov was preparing to meet Eisav, he found himself face-to-face with some wondrous man. Yet instead of running away, as you may have expected from his previous history, Yaakov fights to the bitter end and succeeds, coming out unscathed (apart from a dodgy sinew in his thigh).

Only at this stage in the development of his character is Yaakov considered a new man and merits a new name:

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יִעֲקֹב יֹאמֶר עוֹד שְׁמֶךָ כִּי אָם יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי שָׁרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹהִים וְעַם אַנְשִׁים וַתִּזְכָּל:

“And he said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Yaakov, but Yisrael - for you have striven with Hashem and with men and succeeded’”.

Only now does Yaakov really merit Yitzchak’s bracha, now that he has shown that he can use the hands of Eisav, while keeping the voice of Yaakov. It is clear that the “person” whom Yitzchak blessed was neither Yaakov nor Eisav, rather it was this magical mixture.

The moral, religious Yaakov was not compromised, but gained the physical strength of Eisav through long, hard struggles. Only now is Yisrael born! From this point on, Yaakov is often referred to as Yisrael, to reflect the transformation of his personality.



The modern Jew

Just like Yaakov, who is initially described as an 'אִישׁ תָּם, יוֹשֵׁב אֶהָלִים' - a Torah scholar, who was involved in spiritual matters yet impotent as a fighter and a defender, Am Yisrael had a similar fate during its 2,000 years of exile. Jews spent much of their time and effort learning Torah in yeshivot from North Africa to Eastern Europe, from central Asia to France. For the most part, they had no means of self-defence, shown by the countless episodes of persecution, most starkly during the

HADRACHA HOT TIP

It is at this point that you announce the “winner” of the competition. The most important thing though is to show them that in fact we try to synthesise the two different people, Yaakov and Eisav together become Yisrael. Try and link it back to Bnei Akiva. We are an ideological movement and this particular kvutsa is a perfect example to explain that ideology.

horrors of the Holocaust, as six million were led like sheep to the slaughter.

This period of “impotent” exile is an important part in Jewish history. Rav Kook compares the nation to Yaakov, arguing that we needed this period just as Yaakov did, to consolidate our foundations, even though we had neither a land nor physical strength. Conversely, if we only had physical strength, how could the Jewish nation possibly build a state according to the moral values of the Torah?

From when the burgeoning ideology of Zionism became increasingly popular amongst secular Jews throughout the Diaspora in the late 19th Century, up until today’s flourishing state, many have mistakenly tried to separate the Yaakov and the Eisav figures amongst our people. We regularly hear voices saying, “Let the religious sit in their Beit Midrash learning Torah, while the secular can build up Medinat Yisrael and defend it.” We totally reject this stance and believe that the spirituality of Yaakov is not inconsistent with the physical strength and prowess of Eisav.

It is not incidental that our people are named after the “Yisrael” figure – and we have reached those heights before...but not for about 2000 years. However, in the last century we are starting to experience a Yaakov – Yisrael transformation. At the beginning of the end of the long night of exile, we are starting to relive this unique combination, and to merit the brachot of Yitzchak.

Yitzchak’s description of 'הַקֹּל קוֹל יַעֲקֹב, וְהַיָּדַיִם, יְדֵי עֵשָׂו' - the voice being the voice of Yaakov, and the hands, the hands of Eisav, is our aim, our guide for life. We must seek to build our nation and the State of Israel according to Eisav’s abilities, with our hearts and minds guided by Yaakov’s Torah.

It is these values that make Bnei Akiva so unique – we believe that the ideal is the “Yisrael” model. Today that may mean serving in the army alongside Yeshiva/Midrasha study. We are not apologetic about putting aside our Gemara and leaving the Beit Midrash to defend our country. Rather, should we need to, we go



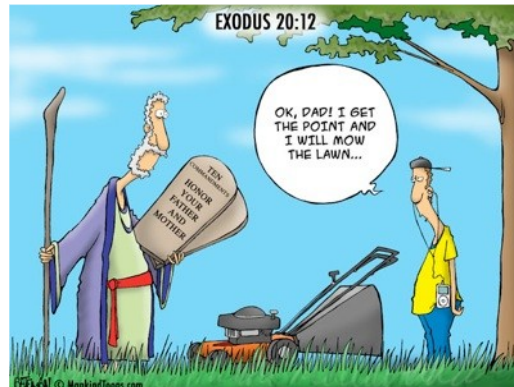
into battle unashamedly - Tanach in hand (The IDF gives each soldier a Tanach at their swearing-in ceremony).

Nonetheless, our newfound military might often challenge our Torah-based sensitivities. But hey, nobody said it was easy...

Yitzchak's blessing to us is **to use the hands of Eisav as necessary, but to guard the voice of Yaakov throughout.**

Middah spotlight: Kibbud av va'em

"And Eisav hated Jacob because of the blessing that his father had blessed him, and Eisav said to himself, 'Let the days of mourning for my father draw near, I will then kill my brother Jacob.'" Bereshit 27:41)



Notes:

- Now Eisav wasn't a goody by any stretch of the imagination, but he did love his dad!
- He wants to wait until Yitzchak dies before killing Yaakov.
- He also decides to find a new wife from the daughters of Yishmael because of the pain his marriages to Canaanite women caused his father.
- *Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said, "All my days, I did not serve my father with one-hundredth of the honour with which Eisav served his father. When I would serve my father, I would wear [ordinary clothes, even if they were] dirty, yet when I went out in the street I put on clean clothes. In contrast, Eisav specially dressed in royal garments when he served his father." (Devarim Rabba 1:14)*
- The proof is that in passuk 27:15 Rivka gives Yaakov Eisav's best clothes to dress up in. These were the clothes that Eisav would always wear to serve Yitzchak. (The Midrash says it was a crazy coat that Hashem made Adam...)

Halachot (Adapted from Rabbi J.I. Schochet on chabad.org):

- Both men and women are obligated to honour and revere their parents.
- One must honour and respect grandparents, older brothers and older sisters.
- It is also the duty of children to arouse their parents for the performance of any religious duty (which might otherwise be neglected) as all are equally bound to honour Hashem.

- When a child sees their parent violate the Torah they must not say to him "You have violated a command of the Torah"; they should rather say: "Is it not written in the Torah thus and thus?", speaking to them as though they were consulting them instead of admonishing them, so that the parent may correct themselves without being put to shame.
- The Torah is rigorous not only with respect to one who strikes or curses their parents but also with one who puts them to shame. For one who treats them with contempt, even by using harsh words against them, or even by a discourteous gesture, is cursed by Hashem, as it is said: "*Cursed be he that dishonours his father or his mother.*" (Devarim 27:16)



Sum-up

We have seen that Yaakov and Eisav in their early lives represented two different types of people. As Yaakov grows older though, he manages to synthesise these two contrasting poles. We tried to relate this to modern Jewry, when we are finally leaving the walls of the ghettos, built no more around our homes than they were in our hearts, and becoming a people once again.



K7: RACHEL AND LEAH



Aims:

9. To learn about the main events in Rachel's life
10. To appreciate her character as someone who can transform their life through teshuva
11. To view Leah as representing the virtue of gratitude, and how relevant it is to our lives.

FACT FILE

29: Yaakov becomes a shepherd and he meets Rachel, Lavan's daughter. They decide to get married but he is tricked by Lavan and marries Leah, her sister, instead. Rachel gives Leah the secret signs to display to Yaakov at the wedding to make him think that he's marrying Rachel. Rachel did not want to cause an upset and embarrass her family.

Yaakov then marries Rachel after working for Lavan for a further 7 years.

30: By now Leah has had 4 children with Yaakov and Rachel has none. Rachel gives Yaakov Bilha – her maidservant to bear children instead of her and Rachel may be built up through her. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaid, Zilpah, for the same reason.

30 22-24: Rachel gives birth to Yosef

45: 16-21 Rachel gives birth to her second son, Binyamin, before dying and being buried by the roadside in Bet Lechem.

Today, many people flock to Kever Rachel (where she is buried in Bet Lechem) to daven.



Mama Rachel Cries



The source for this well-known and much loved song is to be found in the Midrash:

...He (Yaakov) knew that in the future the Beit HaMikdash would be destroyed and his sons would be exiled. They would approach all of the forefathers and ask that they pray on their behalf, but they

could not help. On the path of their exile they would encounter the tomb of Rachel and she will stand and ask mercy from Hashem, saying before Him: Master of the Universe! Listen to the voice of my weeping and have mercy on my sons, or return to me my onia (trickery). Immediately, Hashem will listen to her... (Pesikta Rabbati 8)



The question is why was Rachel effective when none of the other avot could help? We've spent 5 K's talking about how epic they were; why do they fail here?

Rachel screws up

From the second that Yaakov first lays eyes on Rachel and gives her a bit of a snog (true story), she is not exactly presented in the fairest light. The first major point of interest is her barrenness. Although she is following a proud biblical tradition in being barren, the situation is slightly different to that of Sarah and of Rivkah. When it comes to Sarah, she takes the initiative and offers Hagar to Avraham. In the case of Rivkah, Yitzchak davens for her. Rachel seeks to emulate this model by asking Yaakov to daven on her behalf, but his reaction is quite different from his father's:



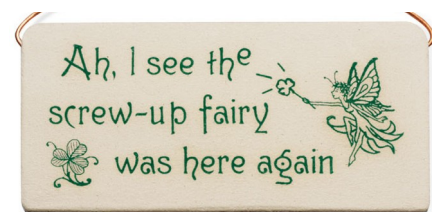
וַתֵּרָא רָחֵל כִּי לֹא יֵלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב וַתִּקְנֶא רָחֵל בְּאָחִתָּהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל יַעֲקֹב הֲבָה לִי בָנִים וְאִם אֵין מֵתָה אָנֹכִי: וַיַּחַר אָף יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר הֲתַחַת אֶ-לֵהִים אָנֹכִי אֲשֶׁר מִנַּע מִמֶּךָ פְּרִי בֶטֶן:

"And Rachel saw that she had not given birth for Yaakov and became jealous of her sister and said to Yaakov: 'Give me sons! And if not I am dead!' And Yaakov became angry with Rachel and said: 'Am I in the place of Hashem, Who withheld a child from you?'" (Bereshit 30:1-2)

The reason for the difference between Yitzchak and Yaakov is obvious; Yaakov already has children. How is he supposed to approach Hashem and ask for a child when he already has one? Effectively what he is saying is "Hashem has no problem with me - He proved so by giving me children. The one who He is holding children from is you and you need to be the one to sort it out." It seems that he is quite justified in his anger; Rachel should be turning to Hashem - not to her husband. Instead of looking within herself she is trying to cut corners.

Rachel screws up again...

A little later, Reuven, the son of Leah, has just come back from the field where he picked some mandrakes (mandragora officinarum) to give to his mother. Sweet. Rachel, who slept with Yaakov most nights, went to Leah and swapped a night with Yaakov for the mandrakes. Not so sweet. Chazal are not particularly impressed with Rachel's business-like manner here:



Said Rebbi Shimon: because she treated this tzaddik (Yaakov) so lightly she did not merit to be buried next to him... (Bereishit Rabbah 72)



The Midrash continues like that for quite some time. Basically they take her to town. This attitude is also hinted at, though not quite as clearly, in the well-known Midrash about how she gave the signs to Leah so that Lavan's trickery would not be found out on the wedding night, thereby shaming Leah. Now that's all fine and dandy, but ultimately she still shamed Yaakov - he was tricked into marrying someone who he did not want and had to work seven years in return. So, she made a choice; and left Yaakov out to dry.

So, after all this, we are no closer to answering our question - in fact we have strengthened it. Before, we just wondered why the other avot were ineffective; now we don't understand why Rachel would have been.

Rachel Repents

There is no explicit verse saying that Rachel realised her sins and returned to Hashem, but implicitly it is fairly clear. In both of the areas which we highlighted above (not turning to Hashem and treating her husband with disrespect) she turns things around. The first is the most obvious. When she does finally have a child, the Torah says that Hashem remembered and heard her. Obviously, he could not have done if she had not prayed. Therefore, it seems that she took her husband's advice and stopped acting like a spoiled child and entered before Hashem in honest and sincere prayer.

Said R'Avahu: the place where those who have done teshuva stand- even complete tzaddikim cannot stand.

The second issue is also resolved later on. Yaakov approaches his wives informing them of all the evil that their father has done to him. This is a tense moment, as they are going to have to choose between their father and their husband:

וַתַּעַן רַחֵל וְלֵאָה וַתֹּאמְרָה לּוֹ הַעוֹד לָנוּ חֵלֶק וְנַחֲלָה בְּבַיִת אָבִינוּ:
"And Rachel and Leah responded, and she said to him: 'do we still have a portion in our father's inheritance?!'" (Bereshit 31:14)

The Targum Yonatan points out that Rachel responded first and claims that Leah let her do all the talking and was happy to agree. At this moment, Rachel demonstrates her unwavering and unflinching commitment to her husband.

We can now understand why it is that Rachel is the one who is successful in her prayers, as Rav Amnon Bazak outlines:

From then on, Rachel - and specifically Rachel - has served as a powerful symbol for her descendants in exile. As if Rachel says to us, her children, I - more than anyone - know and understand what you are going through. Nobody is aware more than I of the complex workings of a person, the inner tension of conflicting interests and desires, the individual's strive for excellence and frequent moments of collapse and confusion. I, more than anyone, can assure you that just as one has the capacity to corrupt, he has the capacity to correct. There is hope for your future, my children, and, sooner or later, you will return to your homeland.



Self-sacrifice

Another really important characteristic which Rachel demonstrates is that of self-sacrifice. When she gave the signs to Leah, so that Lavan's trick would not be recognised, she thought only of Leah's well-being. She had no idea that Yaakov would end up marrying her too. She was prepared to sacrifice her hopes and dreams merely to prevent her sister from being embarrassed.

Leah and giving thanks

Leah can teach us a very important message which is directly transferrable to our lives, and that is how to give thanks. Leah calls her fourth son Yehuda, which comes from the root of hoda'a - which means thanks. Chazal interpret her as a character who appreciates that all she has comes from Hashem:

"From the day that Hashem created the world, there was no one who thanked Hashem until Leah came and thanked Him" (Gemara Brachot 7b)

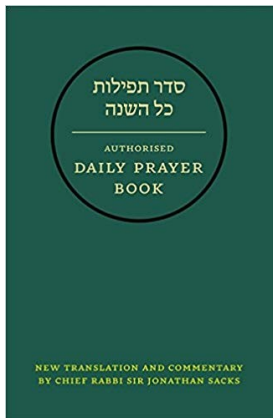
There is also a Midrash about why the Torah describes Leah as having soft eyes. It says that she thought that, as the firstborn girl, she would have to marry Esav. Whenever she thought about this she would turn to Hashem

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Many of your chanichim might not want to share personal thoughts and expressions of gratitude with the group; they might not even know how to. Let them go off by themselves and write a letter to someone that they are very grateful towards. Roll that letter up and put it in a balloon. Mix all the balloons up and give one to each chanich. Ask them to pop their balloons and read the letter inside. No names have to be used, so no one needs to feel uncomfortable about sharing.

in prayer. Her prayers were so effective that she was rewarded by preceding her sister in marrying Yaakov (Bereishit Rabbah 70:16).

I think that these two virtues are tied up together. Another translation of the word הודאה is "admitting". It could be that real thanks is admitting that without the other person you would have nothing. Leah realises that without Hashem's input she truly would have had nothing. A person who appreciates the hand of Hashem in our lives is the same type of person who will pray to Him for salvation from a potential evil.



The Chief Rabbi writes (pg. 90 of his siddur) regarding the bracha of modim:

...the blessing begins as a confession of faith and moves to thanks for Hashem's blessings which surround us continually...Nachmanides explained the difference between a "revealed" and a "hidden" miracle. Revealed miracles stand outside the laws of nature; hidden miracles take place within them. Hashem is present not only in signs and wonders, but also in the very laws that govern the universe. To see the miraculous in the everyday is part of the Judaic vision, beautifully expressed in these lines.

All too often in the modern, scientific era, we attribute the things that go on around us to the rules of nature and forget He Who Stands Behind that nature. We would do well to view Leah as a role model in this regard; someone who never forgets the guiding hand of Hashem in our lives.

So effectively, it's a double message. The first is about true thanks; genuinely appreciating that without the people around us we would not be the same. The other is about Divine Providence; recognising the hand of Hashem in our everyday lives.

Middah Spotlight - Emunah:

In this Kvutsah we've looked at some aspects of Rachel and Leah showing what fantastic role models they are. Summing this up, along with Sara and Rivka's middot, we have:

Sara's Middot

Rivkah's Middot

Rachel's Middot

Leah's Middot

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Righteousness • Prophetess • Kept Mitzvot to an exceptional level • Modest • Strong Emunah • Hishtadlut (initiative and action) • Taught Torah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chessed • Respectful & kind to people and animals • Prophetess • Spiritually sensitive • Wise, cunning, driven • Takes action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounded in this world • Considerate • Merciful • Willing to sacrifice own happiness for that of others • Determined • Hishtadlut • Emunah in Hashem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intuitive • Doesn't complain • Patient • Respected husband • Good mother • Close relationship with Hashem
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Emunah in Hashem/tefillah

Bereishit 25:21 - "And Yitzchak prayed to Hashem opposite his wife because she was barren, and Hashem accepted his prayer, and Rivkah his wife conceived."

Rashi: He stood in one corner and prayed; she stood in the other corner and prayed.



As we said before, all the imahot were barren at some stage. The question is: WHY?

The simple answer is that Hashem wanted to hear the prayers of these righteous women. Now, philosophical questions aside, the episodes concerning the prayers of the imahot should serve as a lesson to us regarding the power of tefillah. Perhaps the fact that Hashem wants and appreciates our tefillot should even serve as an extra motivation to pray. We should also try to replicate in our own hearts the immense emunah that the imahot had that their prayers would be answered (though the answer may sometimes be 'No').

In other words, we should attempt to daven with kavanah! This means saying each word and (hold on to your seats) UNDERSTANDING what you're saying! (Amazing, I know)! Easy ways to do this include: reading the English, learning Hebrew, getting one of those cool artscroll interlinear siddurim (not so cool really. More annoying if you ask me)! This is perhaps one of the most important lessons you can teach the chanichim... after all, this is the first time most of them will be spending a long period of time davening three times-a-day...they might as well understand what they're saying!

Sum-up

We have seen that Rachel is an extremely relatable character - she falls down a number of times but also picks herself up and repents. Leah teaches us exactly how we should view the amazing things which we have received, from Hashem and from others, and also how to turn to Hashem and recognise his permanent place in our lives.



K8: YOSEF AND THE BROTHERS



Aims:

- To discuss the theme of brothers in Bereshit
- What can we learn about responsibility and leadership from the brothers?
- To view Yosef as an inspiration for religious Zionism and modern orthodoxy
- Not to sing too many Joseph songs

FACT FILE

Yosef and his brothers are all born in Perakim 29&30 (except from Binyamin who is born in 35)
 34:25-26 Shimon and Levi kill every male in Shechem – for abducting their sister Dinah.
 37:1-11 this Perek begins with the chronicles of Jacob and his offspring, before Yosef having his 2 dreams that intensifies the hatred of his brothers.
 37:12-17 Yaakov tells Yosef to join his brothers pasteurising in Shechem
 37:18-24 The brothers see him coming and plan to kill him and throw him in a pit, Re'uven insists they don't kill him and just throw him in a pit (so he can save him later)
 37:25-35 Yosef is sold and his brothers tell Yaakov that a beast devoured him.
 39 Yosef is bought by Potiphar and Yosef found favour in Potiphar's eyes and was placed in charge of his house hold. Mrs Potiphar chirpsed him and upon failing lied about him lying with her and so Yosef ended up in prison, where he was placed in charge of other prisoners.
 40 Now into Yosef's prison cell were flung two very frightened men, one was a baker, a cook in his prime one was a butler, the Jeeves of his time. Yosef interprets the dreams and they come true
 41 1-36 42 1-13 Guess what? In his bed Pharaoh Had an uneasy night ... No-one knew the meaning of this dream ... Then his butler said "know of a bloke in jail Who is hot on dreams" ... "Well fetch this Yosef man, I need him to help me if he can" Yosef Solves the dream!
 41 37-49 Yosef, you must help me further ... You shall be my number two.
 41 50-52 Yosef has 2 sons, Ephraim and Manasseh
 41 53-57 The famine happens and everyone come to Yosef for food
 42 1-13 Yosef's brothers are sent to Egypt to get food, "Binyamin stays behind.
 42 14-20 Yosef insist Binyamin is brought to him too
 42 21-22 the brothers say their anguish is because of what they did to Yosef.
 42 23-24 Yosef imprisons Shimon until Binyamin is brought to him
 42 29-38 the brothers return and plead to their father that they return with Binyamin
 43 16-34 the brothers arrive and are sent to Yosef's house, Yosef is stirred by Binyamin and goes to hide and cry.
 44 1-15 then, unseen, Yosef nips out around the back, and planted a cup in young Benjamin's sack, who's the thief? Could it possibly be Benjamin YES YESYES!
 45 1-15 can't you recognise my face? Is it hard to see, That Yosef, who you thought was dead, brothers, It's me.
 45 16-24 the brothers are sent back to get their father with gifts from Yosef
 45 25-28 -Yaakov is happy and comes to Egypt
 46 So Jacob came to Egypt, No longer feeling old, And Yosef came to meet him In his chariot, Of gold, Of gold, Of gold, Of gold, Of gold
 50 After Yaakov dies Yosef assure his brothers that they are still friends, Yosef then dies too.

Brothers in Bereshit

Throughout the book of Bereshit, the relationship between brothers is a recurring and progressing theme.

1	Cain and Hevel	Fatricide (great word)	4	Yosef and his Bros	Live together after a lot of strife and suspicion
2	Yitzchak and Yishmael	Go to their father's funeral together, and that's about it.	5	Ephraim and Menasheh	Live together harmoniously always
3	Yaakov and Esav	H.U.G. (after all the "I hate you and want to kill you" stuff)	6	Moshe and Aharon	Work together as leaders.

Suspicion and resentment dominate the early relationships between siblings. By the end, we reach a point of 'shevet achim gam yachad', brothers sitting harmoniously together. There is a gradual progression throughout all these stories of moving from bad to worse.

Let's zoom into the stories of Yosef and co. The first thing which stands out about them over the other 5 examples is the sheer number - 12 instead of 2.

Why is Yosef quite so hated? Was boasting about some dreams really the justification to advocate murder? It might be that the brothers realised that in every prior generation, someone is chosen to continue the covenantal line. Yitzchak was chosen over his older brother Yishmael. The same was true of Yaakov over Eisav. In both cases the younger sibling left with the prized covenantal promise. It was not irrational to suggest that the same thing would occur with the brothers particularly when Yosef kept relaying dreams in which he lorded it over his brothers. In fact, they misunderstood the divine plan since all the brothers were to become the foundation of Am Yisrael.

It snowed last year too: I made a snowman and my brother knocked it down and I knocked my brother down and then we had tea.

- Dylan Thomas

The Torah in general has an interesting tension between patriarchal rights (what you get because of who you were born to and in which order) and merited rights (what you get because you deserve it). All of those chosen in Bereishit are not chosen because they were born first, but because they deserved it. This is despite the fact that monetarily they get first dibs (remember how Yaakov "buys" the birth right from Eisav?). This trend continues throughout Chumash. Originally, all the first-born sons of Israel are supposed to be the ones to





work in the temple. However, after the sin of the golden calf, the tribe of Levi earned that right and the Cohanim are therefore from that line.

There could be a number of different reasons for this tension. A particularly good one (I thought of it myself) is that the Torah reflects the way society works; it reflects reality. We are all born under certain circumstances, to certain parents, in a certain place, at a certain time, in a certain social situation (#whiteprivilege). These things are obviously

HADRACHA HOT TIP

critical in determining the direction our lives will go in, but ultimately, it is what we do and the choices that we make which affect the types of people we will become.

Play Giraffe in the Middle [note: this is the more kosher version to Piggy in the Middle] (throw ball around, Giraffe(s) in the middle has to catch the ball). The giraffe has been randomly selected but has the ability to rise above his given situation. The opposite is true of those who are on the outside. You can always spruce the game up – make all the chanichim act as a certain animal whilst they are playing the game. Always look to customize games; add interesting twists to make them livelier and fun. No one expects you to make up brand new games, but revamping old ones is a time-honored BA tradition and a great hadracha technique.

Another reason would quite simply be that sometimes, proper breeding is a good thing. If someone is brought up in a certain way then some things later on will be easier for them. The son of a shoemaker might not be the right person to be appointed king, and equally a crown prince might not be the right person to be appointed as town shoemaker. However, there are obviously problems with this model as it induces a culture of entitlement and leads to problems of appointing the wrong people to the job just because they were born on the royal potty.

Reuven and Yehuda

Who is the leader out of the brothers? Reuven was the eldest and even after sinning by moving his father's bed (Shabbat 55b) following Rachel's death, he is still labelled as the firstborn. (Bereshit 35:23)



23. The sons of Leah [were] Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. **כג. בְּנֵי לֵאָה בְּכוֹר יַעֲקֹב רְאוּבֵן וְשִׁמְעוֹן וְלֵוִי וְיְהוּדָה וְיִשְׁשָׁכָר וְזִבְלוּן:**

Jacob's firstborn: Even at the time of [Reuben's] error, [Scripture] calls him the firstborn [with all its honors]. — [from Gen. Rabbah 82:11] **בְּכוֹר יַעֲקֹב:** אפילו בשעת הקלקלה קראו בְּכוֹר:

Yet, later as Yaakov lies on his deathbed, he lambasts Reuven and awards the double portion usually accorded to the firstborn to Yosef. (Bereishit49:4 and Bereishit48:21)

21. And Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am going to die, and God will be with you, and He will return you to the land of your forefathers.

כא. ויאמר ישראל אל יוסף הנה אנכי מת והיה אלהים עמכם והשיב אתכם אל ארץ אבותיכם:

22. And I have given you one portion over your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow."

כב. ואני נתתי לך שכם אחד על אחיך אשר לקחתי מיד האמרי בחרבי ובקשתי:

you shall not have superiority. You shall no longer receive all **one portion over your brothers:** Heb. שכם אחד על אחי, the actual [city of] Shechem, which will be for you one share over your brothers. [Accordingly, we render: Shechem, [which is] one [share] over your brothers.] - [from Gen. Rabbah 97:6] Another explanation: "One portion" refers to the birthright, and indicates that his (Joseph's) sons should take two shares.

על אחיך. על שכם אחד על אחיך: שכם ממש, היא תהיה לך חלק אחד יתירה על אחיך:

At what point did Reuven lose his position of leadership over his brothers? Furthermore, Yehuda appears to be an intermediate leader when he vouches for Binyamin, guaranteeing his safety in Egypt. When and why did he become leader? For the first part of the story, the brothers are simply referred to as 'the brothers' or 'the men'. Only after Binyamin is

14. And Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he was still there, and they fell before him upon the ground.

יד. ויבא יהודה ואחיו ביתה יוסף והוא עודנו שם ויפלו לפניו ארצה:

accused of stealing the silver goblet and Yehuda's assurance that he would safeguard Binyamin is challenged, do we see a new way of defining the brothers. (Bereishit44:14)

There is one crucial moment when Reuven and Yehuda both attempt to grapple with the problem that they had no food and it is Yehuda that emerges as leader. (Bereishit 42:37)

37. And Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "You may put my two sons to death if I don't bring him (Benjamin) to you. Put him into my hand[s] and I will return him to you."

לז. ויאמר ראובן אל אביו לאמר את שני בני תמית אם לא אביאנו אליך תנה אותו על ידי ואני אשיבנו אליך:

38. But he (Jacob) said, "My son shall not go down with you, because his brother is dead, and he alone is left, and if misfortune befalls him on the way you are going, you will bring down my gray head in sorrow to the grave."

לח. ויאמר לא ירד בני עמכם כי אחיו מת והוא לבדו נשאר וקראהו אסון בדרך אשר תלכו בה והורדתם את שיבתי בגון שאולה:

My son shall not go down with you: He did not accept Reuben's offer. He said, "This firstborn is a fool. He offers to kill his sons. Are they his sons and not my sons?" - [from Gen. Rabbah 91:9]

לא ירד בני עמכם: לא קבל דבריו של ראובן. אמר בכור שוטה הוא זה, הוא אומר להמית בני, וכי בני הם ולא בני:

This is the last we hear of Reuven before Yaakov addresses him on his deathbed. When the need arose to seize the responsibility and command the respect of his father and brothers, Reuven essentially blew it. Contrast this with Yehuda's attempt. (Bereishit43:1)

What is tangibly different in the requests? Reuven was unhelpful when he

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. But the hunger was severe in the land.</p> | <p>א. והרעב כבד בארץ.</p> |
| <p>2. And it came to pass, when they finished eating the grain that they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back [and] buy us a little food."</p> | <p>ב. ויהי כאשר כלו לאכל את השבר אשר הביאו ממצרים ויאמר אליהם אביהם שבו שברו לנו מעט אכל.</p> |
| <p>3. But Judah spoke to him, saying, "The man warned us repeatedly, saying, 'You shall not see my face if your brother is not with you.'</p> | <p>ג. ויאמר אליו יהודה לאמר העד העד בנו האיש לאמר לא תראו פני בלתי אחיכם אתכם.</p> |
| <p>4. If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy food for you.</p> | <p>ד. אם ישק משלח את אחינו אתנו נרדה ונשברה לך אכל.</p> |
| <p>5. But if you do not send [him], we will not go down, because the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face if your brother is not with you.'</p> | <p>ה. ואם אינך משלח לא נרד כי האיש אמר אלינו לא תראו פני בלתי אחיכם אתכם.</p> |
| <p>8. And Judah said to Israel, his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will get up and go, and we will live and not die, both we and you and also our young children.</p> | <p>ח. ויאמר יהודה אל ישראל אביו שלחה הנער אתי ונקומה ונלכה ונחיה ולא נמות גם אנחנו גם אתה גם טפנו.</p> |
| <p>9. I will guarantee him; from my hand you can demand him. If I do not bring him to you and stand him up before you, I will have sinned against you forever.</p> | <p>ט. אנכי אערבנו מידי תבקשנו אם לא הביאתיו אליך והצגתיו לפניך וחסאתי לך כל הימים.</p> |

offered to sacrifice two of Yaakov's grandsons but other than that the requests are broadly similar. As the Ramban says:

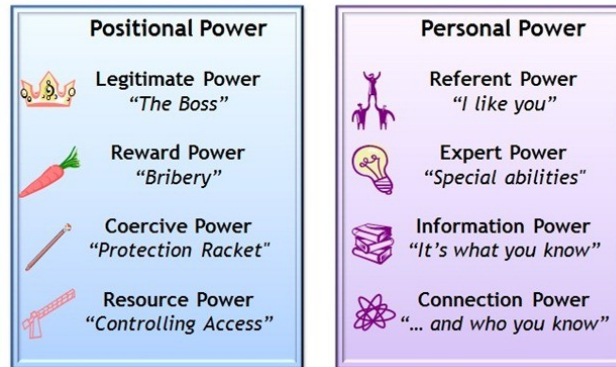


Reuven took an oath to return Binyamin to his father by saying, "kill my two sons - as your punishment will fall on me - if I do not return him." This is the same idea as what Yehuda said, "I shall bear the blame before you forever" ... And Yaakov did not trust in Reuven, for Yehuda was the most powerful of the brothers, and for Reuven had already sinned against his father, so he did not trust him. In general, Yehuda's plan was right, to leave the old one be until there would be no food in the house, for then he

would listen.

According to the Ramban the key difference was one of timing. Yehuda waited for the right time to come forward (and he didn't offer more death). Furthermore, Yehuda does not present a plan and ask permission to implement it like Reuven did. He presented the facts to Yaakov that either they go to Egypt with Binyamin or they do not go at all. He demands a decision from Yaakov and in doing so forces him to confront the facts. Perhaps this is why he becomes leader. He realises the hard choices that need to be made, he waits for the correct timing to make the decision and then when leadership is required when Binyamin is arrested by Yosef, he leaps forward to defend his brother.

This defence in and of itself is an impressive feat of leadership. Put



yourselves in the brothers' shoes. Do they know for sure that Binyamin is innocent? After all, the goblet was found in his sack. Surely under such circumstances Yehuda would be freed of his promise to his father. If I promise my mum to look after my brother one evening and he goes and gets arrested for slapping a policeman in the face with a mackerel, then presumably I am completely blameless!



However, Yehuda does not wipe his hands of his brother and renounce responsibility (as would be his right) of Binyamin. Instead he steps forward and demands of the second most powerful man in the whole known world that he take Yehuda instead. What kind of characteristics does Yehuda demonstrate? How are those characteristics required for leadership?

Yosef, the first and best Diaspora Jew

Yosef stands out for being a prototype of the diaspora Jew. Of course, Ya'akov is to some extent: he has a long period of wandering in his life, and there's a lot we can learn from him about one aspect of living in exile. But Yosef is really, quite scarily... us. He lives in Egypt and goes up and up and up. The Jew is in control of the country, ever heard that one before?

But here's the thing: once again, we have to delve in and explore inside the character. How does he see the world? To answer this question, we have to look into another



really exciting question which requires us to look between the lines of the story.

Why didn't Yosef write a letter home to Ya'akov!? I mean, he hasn't seen him in years. He knows that his father loves him and will miss him. It's not like he can't - after all he's got mamash power man. The Torah mentions nothing of it. One beautiful answer by Rav Yair Kahn is this:

Yosef's story is... absurd. He is a nothing, going to an everything. How does everyone else feel? All these Egyptians going slowly up the ranks... and suddenly overtaken by this random Jewish lad with a pretty face and nice voice who can interpret dreams. They must hate him! They'll be looking for every excuse they can get to depose him. Yosef, a smart guy, knows this, and he has to do everything he can to be perfect and faultless. He has to show them: I am fully Egyptian. I was an Ivri, but now I am one of you.

So, Yosef has a choice, our choice. He wants to get up in society, but he thinks he has to play the part. He must lose his tradition. He marries out. His first son is named after "forgetting all my toil and my father's house". He becomes a new person. The job takes over his family. That was Yosef's choice. That's why he never makes any contact with any relatives.

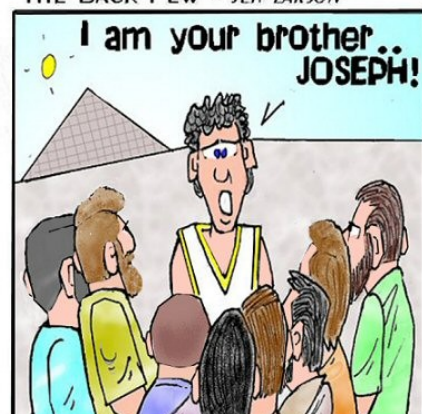
But his brothers come back and... he cries, again and again. His past is coming back to haunt him. He's forced to confront his tradition and, eventually, he can't keep it in anymore. He reveals himself. The text says that the news spread quickly across Egypt - but Pharaoh, it turns out, has no problem with it, and Yosef learns he can be frum and high up in general society.

So, his is the story of the conflicted Jew in exile, standing between tradition and assimilation.

One of the shtarkest things that stand out about Yosef is the number of times Hashem's name is mentioned. Yosef is always mentioning Hashem, except for that conflict interlude:

1. When Pharaoh asks him to interpret his dream, Yosef replies that it's not really him doing it, but Hashem who will solve the mystery. He says the same when he interprets the dreams. This has such an effect on Pharaoh that even he starts talking about Hashem!

THE BACK PEW - JEFF LARSON



No more frightening family disclosure has been uttered since Darth Vader proclaimed.. "Luke I am your father." in a galaxy far far away. **Ge. 45:3**

2. The names Yosef chooses to call his second son calls Egypt the land of affliction 'for Hashem has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.' His attitude towards it has changed.
3. After the reunion, Yosef tells his brothers to tell their father that "Hashem has made me master over Egypt".

Example is not the main thing in influencing others; it is the only thing.
 - **Albert Schweitzer**

This, of course, is the ideal. He maintained his beliefs, his Jewish values and his identity. He had some hard times and decisions but succeeded, nonetheless. Likewise, life in England is

not always easy but we, like Yosef, can live up to the challenge. He did try to credit Hashem with everything. He wasn't ashamed. This is "Kiddush Hashem" in its most pure sense. Additionally, it is clear that Yosef successfully behaved as an Or La'goyim - a light unto the nations. They would have seen him as someone who led by example, who upheld high values that others would have wanted to copy. Ultimately Yosef remembered his roots in the Land of Israel. Given his position, Yosef would have had a state funeral and the Egyptians would have wanted to bury him. Yet his final words of life, request that his bones would be returned home.

As Diaspora Jews, we can certainly feel a huge affinity with Yosef. We know how hard it is to live amongst a culture which is slightly alien to our own, although we play such a major role in it. We feel this tension, just as Yosef would have done, between not wanting to appear "too Jewish" in our interactions with others on the one hand, and on the other hand, wanting to spread the message of the Torah and be a "Kiddush Hashem". Yosef appears to have got the balance right, being a proud Jew, but he had to work for it making our people a light unto the nations and crediting Hashem with everything. When talking to our chanichim about this, we must understand that this is only one way to look at Yosef's character. Not everyone agrees with this "assimilated" Yosef character, however, it is a good way of connecting Yosef to our chanichim.

Middah Spotlight - Lashon Harah



If we cut off our heads and put them inside the brothers (DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME), we realise something very important. It was all because of a form of lashon harah. They see their father giving something to Yosef and think "that's not fair". But as life would have it, we can't see past the end of our nose. Maybe, just maybe, we're misinterpreting things again. As soon as

we discuss it with other people, and find that they agree, we become *sure that we are right*. It leads to strength in numbers; it is the most dangerous sort of lashon harah. Thus, our middah will be speaking well about others:

- It forms part of a prohibition in the Torah in Vayikra 19:16: **You shall not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people.**
- The great advocate of not speaking *lashon harah* was the Chofetz Chayim, so called after his book, Chofetz Chayim which talks about not speaking lashon harah. In his book, he shows how people who speak lashon harah are actually transgressing 31 mitzvot at once, such as: *you shall not wrong another; you shall not utter a false report; do not place a stumbling block before the blind*, amongst others.
- According to the Gemara (Erchin 15b), it causes tzara'at. This explains why Miriam, after speaking unfavourably about Moshe, is sent out of the camp with tzara'at.
- In Sota 42a, it says that those who speak *lashon harah* are not tolerated in G-d's presence.

However, sometimes it's important to speak out and that's when things get tricky. If we're silent all the time, then anything which is wrong will never get fixed. So, here are some important caveats:

- To help someone improve by discussing his faults with someone who can help him. 2. To prevent someone from being harmed. 3. To end a dispute between people. 4. To help others learn from mistakes people make.
- Also: we should start making a brand-new concept: Lashon Hatov: (see Lord Sacks - "Seeing the good in people and telling them so is a way of helping it become real"). **This is really important on Machane for the Tzevet to keep strong together. I hope that by the time we read this on camp, there will not have been any LH at all. Especially about me!**

Sum-up:

We have seen how there is a general theme within Chumash of family relationships and the problems involved with basing society on such rules. We have also seen, the complex interplay between the brothers and discussed who ends up leading the brothers and why.

We have seen that Yosef is an outstanding role model to us in terms of his ability to live in a secular world and still maintain his spirituality. He is even able to influence others and has the ability to plan for the future.

Not everything we hear should we tell and not everything we know should we sell. Otherwise we'll find we've made a world without friendship, loyalty and trust; and that can't be good news in the long run.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

K9: MOSHE, AHARON AND MIRIAM



Aims:

- To understand how the stories of Moshe's upbringing are vital for his future leadership
- To learn about Aharon as a character
- To learn about peace on a national, Jewish and individual level
- To think of real ways to increase the peace
- To learn about Miriam as a character
- To appreciate the deep faith that motivated her, and how that applies in our lives

FACT FILE

Shemot

2: Moshe is born. He is hidden and then protected by Miriam before being taken in by Pharaoh's daughter. He identifies with his people and kills an Egyptian and finds himself a wife!

3&4: The burning bush conversation. Moshe leaves to Mitzrayim to be met by brother Aharon.

5: Moshe and Aharon: "LET MY PEOPLE GO". This doesn't work. Instead, Pharaoh increases the slaves workload. B"Y not happy with this. Very cross with Moshe and Aharon. Very cross indeed.

6: Hashem makes Moshe feel better ([sigh] uhhhh).

Ten plagues and YetziatMitzrayim.

17: B"Y Complain to Moshe about the lack of water. War with Amelek (nice!)

32-34: Golden calf story; Moshe saves the day (woo)

Bamidbar

1: B"Y complain (again) and Moshe despairs (again).

12: Miriam speaks lashon hara about Moshe to Aharon. She is separated from the encampment (rude)

13/14: Moshe has to deal with spies (fun times. Let's join MI5 and MI6. The pay's ok).

16/17: Moshe needs to deal with the Korach rebellion (happy families).

20: Miriam dies and there is no water – Moshe needs to deal with this

21: Moshe has to deal with Amelek attacking (arms in the air everybody!!)

31: Moshe and war with Midian.

Devarim

4: Moshe is told he and Aharon would not be entering Eretz Yisrael.

31: Moshe begins to depart and gives a very long speech, summarising the past and looking to the future.

33: Moshe blesses the B"Y

34: Moshe dies (pasuk 10) (RIP)

FACT FILE

Shemot

2: Miriam hides Moshe, and watches him in the River Nile story.

5: Moshe and Aharon: "LET MY PEOPLE GO". This doesn't work and Pharaoh increases slave labour. B"Y not happy with them.

32-34: golden calf story: Aharon tries to buy some time.

39: Kohen Gadol clothes.

Vayikra

8: Aharon and kohanim consecrated.

9: Priestly blessings and Aharon bless the B"Y.

10: Aharon's sons die and kohanim are instructed not to drink alcohol at the OhelMoed.

Bamidbar

12 Miriam speaks lashonharah about Moshe to Aharon. She is separated from the encampment.

18 Aharon's duties are reiterated after the Korach rebellion.



"I'm your mother — I'm *supposed* to impose my moral values on you!"

Moshe's Upbringing

Moshe is the big one. He is the model leader of Am Yisrael. He guides them through the exodus, through their stays in the desert, finally leaving them, mission completed, on the banks of the Jordan. But what is it that actually makes him so suited to be a leader? He is chosen before any of these events!

Effectively, the history of the Am Yisrael in the Chumash has two halves. The first half starts with Avraham and ends at the end of Bereishit and deals with Am Yisrael as a small, nucleated family. The second half begins with the slavery in Egypt; its central character is Moshe. Moshe's backstory is very different to that of Avraham in that he actually has one. Before Moshe is chosen to be the leader we have 25 passukim jam-packed with narrative, which deal with his early life and upbringing. Compare this with Avraham, for whom the story really starts with Hashem telling Avraham to go to Israel. Why do we need all these stories about Moshe's upbringing? In this kvutsa we will aim to look at just two of these stories and establish how they are vital in

terms of our understanding of Moshe as a personality, and of Jewish leadership in general.

Moshe's Parents

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Play "Chuckaroo"!! One Chanich is the human whiteboard. Get a number of sticky labels or post-its or whatever and get the other chanichim to write on it qualities that a "Jewish Leader" would need to have. One by one they approach the whiteboard and stick their labels on. The whiteboard is armed with a cup of water and a prearranged number, for example five (nobody except the whiteboard and the madrich knows the number). When the fifth person sticks the label on the whiteboard, the whiteboard chucks the cup of water in their face and everyone shouts "chuckaroo!!"

The Gemara (Sotah 12a) writes that after the decree of wicked Pharaoh regarding first-born males, the Jews stopped procreating; each man separated from his wife. After a little persuading from their daughter Miriam, Amram and Yocheved decide that they must re-unify, and the rest of Bnei Yisrael followed suit. (This is actually pshat (simple reading) of the passukim if you read them with a little sensitivity and ignore the chapter breaks. Look it up. Trust me it's pretty cool. It also explains why Chazal say that Yocheved was one of the midwives; they are emphasising the fact that her actions spurred the Am Yisrael on in their drive to fight Pharaoh's policy of death with a counter-policy of life)

In hadracha, we would call such behaviour rosh gadol; taking initiative. This is the trait of someone who looks around himself, realises that something needs to be done and goes ahead and does it. This is a trait which Moshe learnt from his parents, and dutifully applied later on in his life:

Moshe is going about his business checking out the slaves when he sees an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Jewish slave. Moshe looks this way and that, sees that there is no man (ish) in the nearby vicinity and kills the bully. Most interpretations of Moshe's reconnaissance focus around looking for witnesses. However, there is another way to look at this.

In a place where there are no worthy people, strive to be a worthy person (ish)...

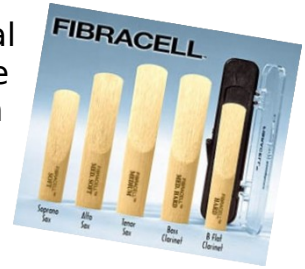
- Rabban Gamliel, Avot 2:5

The Chief Rabbi connects the word *ish* from the passuk with the word *ish* in Pirkei Avot and writes as follows in his obituary from Marc Weinberg (former Mazkir of BAUK):

If he saw something was lacking or something was wrong, he would not complain. He would not wait for others to act. He would say, let me be among the first to put things right, and he brought others with him. They were inspired by his vision, his faith, his moral courage, his passion and compassion. They were drawn to him and he drew out the best in them. He made you feel the world could be a better place. He was one of the outstanding leaders of our generation.

Pharoh's daughter

All too often our childhood education can prove detrimental to the way we read Chumash. We already know all the stories, so we never bother to really think about them again, to appreciate the drama of the narrative and the humanity of the tale, free from embellishments and augmentations. One of the best examples of this is the story of Moshe in the reeds:



וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת בֵּת לֵוִי: וַתֵּהָרֵם הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתִּקְרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב
 הוּא וַתִּצְפְּנֵהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים: וְלֹא יָכְלָה עוֹד הַצִּפְיָנוּ וַתִּקַּח לוֹ תֵבַת גֹּמָא וַתַּחְמְכֶהָ
 בַּחֲמֵר וּבַצִּפְתִּים וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עַל שְׂפַת הַיָּאָר:

And a man of the house of Levi took for a wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him for three months. And when she could no longer hide him, she made him an ark of rushes, and layered it with clay and pitch; and she put the child in it, and laid it in the rushes by the riverbank. (Shemot 2:1-3)

We have already established what a risk Yocheved took here. When she gave birth she knew that this day would come -the day when she would have to abandon her child, and trust that he would be safe. She sends her daughter along to keep her updated with information:

וַתִּתְצַב אַחֲתוֹ מֵרְחֹק לְדַעַה מֶה יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ:

And his sister stood at a distance, to know what would be done to him. (Shemot 2:4)

Now put yourself in Miriam's shoes. She is standing there by the banks, praying and hoping that the baby would be safe (cue the song). She sees a figure in the distance and her heart plummets. This person is not a saviour; it is the daughter of the genocidal dictator himself, Pharaoh.

וַתֵּרָד בֵּת פַּרְעֹה לָרְחֹץ עַל הַיָּאָר וַנַּעֲרֹתֶיהָ הִלְכֹת עַל יַד הַיָּאָר וַתִּקְרָא אֶת הַתֵּבָה
 בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת אֲמָתָהּ וַתִּקְחֶהָ:

And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the river; and her maidens walked along by the riverside; and she saw the ark among the flags and sent her handmaid to fetch it. (Shemot 2:5)

Surely this is the end of the baby's short stay in this world. The reader is supposed to feel the tension of the narrative; Miriam and Yocheved's optimistic hopes, soon to be shattered by the daughter of Pharaoh. This is what makes the next פסוק so remarkable:

וַתִּפְתַּח וַתִּרְאֶהוּ אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד וְהִנֵּה-נֹעַר בֶּכֶה וַתַּחֲמַל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר מִי־לִדֵי הָעִבְרִים זֶה:
And she opened it, and saw it, even the child; and behold a boy that wept. And she had compassion on him and said: 'This is one of the Hebrews' children.' (Shemot 2:6)

Bat Paroh is not someone who cares about the fact that he is a Hebrew. Ultimately, it is a boy crying. She sees a child; the child is weeping; she has compassion on the child.

This ability to see beyond the externals and recognise every human as an individual worthy of respect and dignity later expresses itself in Moshe. After his crime is found out by Pharaoh he flees the country. He finds himself by a well in Midian, tired and alone:

וּלְכֹהֵן מִדְיָן שִׁבְעַ בָּנוֹת וַתִּבְאֵנָה
 וַתִּדְלְגָנָה וַתִּמְלֵאנָה אֶת הַרְהָטִים
 לְהַשְׁקוֹת צֹאן אֲבִיהֶן: וַיָּבֹאוּ הַרְעִים
 וַיִּגְרְשׁוּם וַיִּקָּם מֹשֶׁה וַיּוֹשַׁעַן וַיִּשְׁקֵן אֶת
 צֹאנָם:

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moshe stood up and saved them and watered their flock. (Shemot 2:16-17)

Moshe does not know these girls. They are not his family. He owes nothing to them. But all of that is irrelevant. Ultimately, he sees the weak preying on the vulnerable and is stirred to act as a saviour.

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Depending on your chanichim: get them to do some creative writing. Let them pick a character from the story, Yocheved, Miriam or Bat Paro, and ask them to write a short piece based on what that person is thinking throughout the story. It could be straight up writing, or they could write some poetry, a rap, a song - whatever. They don't have to present it to the rest of the group if they don't want. Not every kvutsa will be able to do this but if you can it's really cool.



Jewish Leadership

We have looked at just two stories from Moshe's past in an attempt to isolate which traits made Moshe such an exemplary leader. We do not have time to look at others, including spiritual awareness and being "in touch" with those who are to be led, but we have seen two ways which are exceptionally relevant in our day-to-day lives. Moshe learns these values from his

"two mothers"; Bat Pharaoh and Yocheved. The values which you learn at home prove to be instructive in terms of what type of a person you will become. In the Torah, Moshe assumes the role of "leader", and the stories from his upbringing are related to how exactly he will lead.



Middah spotlight: Humility

- 'Our Rabbis taught: "A person should always be humble like Hillel and not impatient like Shammai."
- Judaism does not want arrogance, but nor does it want self-effacement. It wants somewhere in between - humility.
- Humility is being sure enough in yourself to get stuff done but being modest enough to realise where your powers come from. This is what we are told in the following verse:



וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְּךָ כִּחִי וְעֹצְמִי יָדֵי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת־הַחֵיל הַזֶּה: וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת־ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הִנְתֵּן לְךָ כֹּחַ לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל לְמַעַן הִקִּים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם כַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember Hashem your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his promise, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

It is also the meaning of this juxtaposition in Tehillim:

מַה אָנוֹשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבֶן אָדָם כִּי תִפְקֹדֵנוּ: וְתִחַסְרֵהוּ מֵעַט מֵאַלְהִים וְכָבוֹד וְהָדָר תִּעֲטֶרֶהוּ:

What is man that You should remember him, and the son of man that You should be mindful of him? Yet You have made him slightly less than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and majesty. (Tehillim 8:5-6)
(Man is just an animal, Yet God has given him the potential to go so high)

- There were two schools of Mussar in the Lithuanian Yeshivas: one emphasised how bad we all are, how rubbish, how much we are all filth. The other emphasised, "yo, you're AMAZING, you have so much potential and you're just... not quite reaching it. Push yourself a tad further mate, you can do it, I know you can".
- So for us, we should try to realise the potential God has given to man to reach the skies, but, we should be modest enough to realise how and why we have that power, and not to think that we are so amazing and have done it all ourselves. We stand on the shoulders of giants with the spirit of God, so no wonder we have a lot to expect of ourselves.

Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less.
 - C. S. Lewis

Aharon

Was Aharon just Moshe's brother and the Kohen Gadol, or did his role extend into other areas as well?

Until Aharon dies, he is portrayed in the Torah generally as Moshe's brother, spokesman, and the Kohen Gadol. However, once he dies:



וַיֵּרְאוּ כָּל הָעֵדָה כִּי גִוַע אַהֲרֹן וַיִּבְכוּ אֶת אַהֲרֹן
 שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 The whole congregation saw that Aharon had expired and they wept for Aharon for thirty days, **the entire House of Israel**. (Bamidbar 20:29)

The Midrash describes Aharon as a beloved and exceptionally popular figure, even more so than the great leader Moshe. The people truly loved Aharon, and this can be seen by comparing the reaction of the Am Yisrael when Moshe dies:

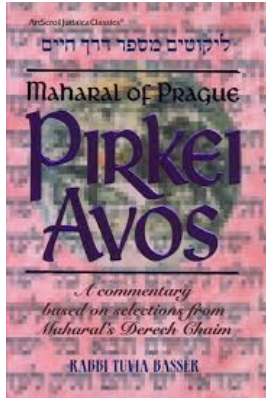
וַיִּבְכוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת מֹשֶׁה בְּעֵרְבַת מוֹאָב שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם וַיִּתְּמוּ יְמֵי בְּכִי אֶבְל מֹשֶׁה:
And the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days, and the days of weeping over the mourning for Moses came to an end. (Devarim 34:8)

They wept for thirty days for both Moshe and Aharon. But WHO wept? For Moshe it was "The Sons of Israel" but not "The entire House of Israel!" It would appear that Aharon had captured a greater popular appeal.

Rashi comments:

"The sons of Israel": the males. But of Aharon, because he would pursue peace and instill peace between man and his fellow man, and between a

wife and her husband, it says the entire house of Israel wept for him, males and females.



So what exactly is the trait that made Aharon so popular? What was his charm? What attracted the masses of Bnei Yisrael to him? The Mishnah in Avot (1:12) tells us:

Hillel says: Be one of the disciples of Aharon. He loved peace and pursued peace; loved people and drew them close to the Torah"

The Alshich (A kabbalistic Rabbi from Tzfat 16th century) notes that the Mishnah does not instruct us to be equal to Aharon; that would be impossible. Rather we should be one of his students, following in his ways to the best of our abilities!

Peace

The Maharal (leading Rabbi of Prague, 16th century - also a kabbalist) suggests that this idea of bringing peace is the essential task of the Kohanim, and particularly that of the Kohen Gadol. As the ones who bring offerings in the Temple, priests make peace between people and Hashem. So too Aharon was able to create peace amongst the people by his various activities.



In calling a person who engages in such activities a student of Aharon, the Mishnah is reminding us that this was the central mission of Aharon and all the Kohanim: to reunify those who are separated whether or not the separation was from Hashem, Torah, or other people.

Aharon was the perfect example of the man of peace; he uncomplainingly played the role of his younger brother's second, he made peace with himself and with Hashem even when challenged by personal loss. God speaks of Aharon's superb qualities:

תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת הִיְתֵה בְּפִיהוּ וְעוֹלָה לֹא נִמְצָא בְּשִׁפְתָיו בְּשָׁלוֹם וּבְמִישׁוֹר הִלֵּךְ אִתִּי וּרְבִים הִשִּׁיב מִעוֹן:

The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips; he walked with me in peace and uprightness and turned away many from sin. (Malachi 2:6)

How did Aharon turn people off sinning? The Midrash in Avot D'Rabbi Natan (12:3) fills in the details of the story:

Imagine all the people living life in peace. You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will be as one.

- John Lennon

When Aharon went on his way and a wicked person encountered him, Aharon greeted him and befriended him. The next day, that man wanted to commit a sin, but thought, "Woe is to me!

How will I raise my eyes afterwards and look at Aharon? I am ashamed before him, for he greeted me. And how did he keep the peace?

When friends would fight with each other Aharon would approach each one separately, without the other one's knowledge, and say, "why are you fighting with your friend? He begged me to approach you and arrange reconciliation." With this tactic, Aharon was able to bring peace between the two people.

R. Shimon Ben Elazar says: *If a person keeps himself to himself, he is not pursuing peace; rather he should go out and actively look for ways to make peace.*



Not only did Aharon love peace, he incessantly and actively pursued it, and this earned him the affection of ALL Am Yisrael.

Aharon's mission was to draw the people together in a peaceful way. His mission was simply drawing out a positive outlook and resolving differences between people by reminding them of the love that they feel for one another deep down. He is described as 'ohev et habriot' - a lover of people - and was very popular with the masses because of this.

He is also said to have *makrivan l'torah* - he brought the people closer to the Torah. He did not make peace between people in order to bring them closer to the Torah; it was something that he did separately and also as an effect of bringing peace.

Miriam

וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אָחוֹת אַהֲרֹן אֶת הַתֵּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתֵּצֵאֵן כָּל הַנְּשִׂיִם אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּתַפִּיִּים וּבַמַּחֲלָת: וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כִּי גָאָה גָאָה סוּס וְרָכְבוּ רָמָה בַיָּם:

Miriam the Prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the tambourine in her hand, and the women followed her with tambourines and cymbals. Miriam

said to them: Sing to God, the Exalted a horse and its rider He cast into the sea. (Shemot 15:20)

Why does the Torah refer to Miriam as a prophetess? Why is she mentioned as only Aharon's sister and not Moshe's!? The Talmud explains the historical background, going back to the time when Miriam was the sister of (only) Aharon before Moshe was born. Miriam had then boldly declared with prophetic vision, "My mother will give birth to a son who will redeem Israel..."

But why is Miriam mentioned by her special "prophetess" title only here, not in other places in the Torah? Why does the Torah find it necessary to single out Miriam's song from the rest of Israel? Isn't she already included as part of all the Am Yisrael?

To better appreciate Miriam's major contribution to the Exodus and the Redemption, let us review the details of Miriam's personal background...

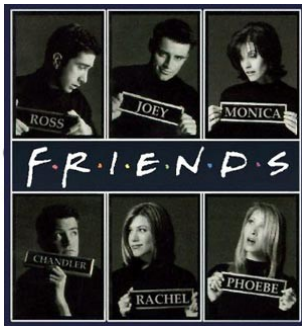
Pressured by Pharaoh's decree to kill all firstborn boys, Jewish families began to break apart and Miriam's own parents Amram and Yocheved divorced. Amid all this despair and hopelessness, Miriam announced a Divine prophecy: "My mother will give birth to a son who will save Israel."



Inspired by their daughter's prophecy, Amram and Yocheved remarried. When the baby was born, the house was filled with light, and Amram kissed Miriam on the head, exclaiming: "My daughter! Your prophecy has come true!" However, three months later, when little Moishela had to be hidden in the river amongst the reeds, her father tapped her on the head demanding; "My daughter! Where is your prophecy?! 'This is why Miriam stood among the reeds "from afar to know." Watching and looking forward to the realization of God's promise, she remained firm in the truth of her prophecy...'

Was it all over now? Miriam's prophecy apparently went down the drain, and the Redemption was now impossible. All hope seemed lost as Moshe; the intended redeemer of Israel was doomed.

But Miriam refused to change her stance. "She remains firm and strengthens herself in her prophecy." She knew that she didn't fabricate this prediction. These were Divine and holy words and she faithfully clung to her prophecy: "My mother will give birth to a son who will save Israel."



Miriam's song, years later, was a powerful vindication and triumph over many years of doom and gloom. Miriam rejoiced and was thankful that her prophecy was proven right.

The Torah tells us specifically that Miriam's song was accompanied by tambourines. Why do we need to know this?

The Jewish women of that generation were confident of Divine miracles, so they took along their tambourines from Egypt (Pesikta Zutra)

Even during the darkest Exile, the righteous women knew that the Divine promise would be fulfilled, and they would eventually be redeemed. Moreover, those faithful women translated the hope in their hearts into action. Rather than vague wishful thinking, their belief in the Redemption was real and tangible, (as in the folk-saying: "When praying for rain, carry an umbrella!")



So why are we specifically told about Miriam's song at the sea?

Miriam and the women were fully ready and prepared for this great and auspicious moment. Having strengthened and encouraged Israel's faith during the hard-depressing times, these women deserved to herald the redemption, leaving Egypt with a song in their heart and tambourines in their hands.

Miriam's song was indeed different, and it therefore stands out in a class by itself! Miriam's song was not inspired after the fact, as was the singing by the rest of Israel. Rather than being a result and effect of the miracle, her song of faith was the cause and reason for the miracle itself.

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Miriam always trusted in Hashem, and never doubted for a second that things would work out - so play trust games! A couple of examples would be the "Catch Me!" game (where you fall backwards and hope to get caught) or a "Golden Balls" or "X and Y" style game, where they need to discuss together and trust each other in order to get the best results.

Middah Spotlight - Bein adam lechaveiro

We have peace, harmony, unity as being central to Judaism. We need to incorporate this into our lives as a means of tikkun olam.



Does the world work like this? If we are peaceful in our personal relationships can that really affect the bigger picture?

"וְאַהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה'!"

Love your neighbour as yourself, I am Hashem. (Vayikra 19:18)

The Ibn Ezra points out that the words “Ani Hashem” at the end of the passuk are explaining the reason for “Ve’ahavta lere’ach akamocho;” that ‘I am one God who created you.’ On one level, this means that since we are all brothers and sisters, we are to get along with and show love for each other. But on another level, it is alluding to the concept that we reflect Hashem in this world, and unity amongst Bnei Yisrael allows Hashem’s Shechinah to reside in this world. Similarly, it was when we put individual differences aside and we were ‘Like one man with one heart’ (Rashi on Shemot 19:2) that Hashem revealed Himself to us, so to speak, and gave us His Torah.

As Rav Dessler points out, it is a focus upon spiritual goals that fosters peace and unity and obviates dispute, because, unlike with physical pursuits, there is enough room for each person to achieve their spiritual goals without infringing upon others.

Let’s use this Kvutzah to try and make our chanichim think about the relationships that they have with their families and friends so that they might realise that only through treating everyone nicely will good things happen!

Sum Up’s:

Moshe’s leadership is rooted in his two homes. The values which we focused on specifically are:

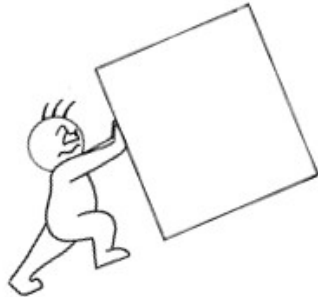
1. Rosh Gadol: when there is a job that needs to be done, and nobody is doing it, take the initiative.
2. Caring for everyone, regardless of birth and nationality

From this chomer we see that peace, harmony, communal unity, achdut and shalom serve as key principles which have a central role in Judaism and general life, and that truth (on an individual level) can be sometimes be compromised to reach that peace. We can learn a lot from the way Aharon led his life and constantly pursued peace. We live in a world where we



are constantly fighting with each other. How can we expect there to be peace for Am Yisrael when we do not even tolerate each other? As Rav Dessler points out, it is a focus upon spiritual goals that fosters peace and

unity and obviates dispute because, unlike with physical pursuits, there is enough room for each person to achieve their spiritual goals without infringing upon others.



The Final Push

When the time comes, the last two weeks (three for us) our chanichim have been eating, sleeping and living in the microcosm that we call Aleph Machane. Our microcosm has been built on the founding ideals of Bnei Akiva and before us, our forefathers.

Torah V'Avodah isn't just that thing we mention at mifkad; it's the message of our Avot. All of our ancestors lived and breathed Torah and this is the very essence of Torah V'Avodah; nothing in this world is mundane and we have the power to elevate it to a higher level, to sanctify it just as our Avot did.



Our Avot pave the way of Am Yisrael B'Eretz Yisrael al pi Torat **Yisrael**. They pave the footprints for us to reach our ultimate goal. Aleph Machane 5778 has shown us that if we take the lessons from our Avot and bring them into 2018, we can and will achieve *Am Yisrael B'Eretz Yisrael al pi Torat Yisrael*. **B'Ikvot Avoteinu is not just a theme for this Machane, it is a way of life.**