

K1: Intro to theme



Objectives:

1. **Introduce** Chanichim to the theme of Machane.
2. **Demonstrate to Chanichim** that the Torah is not just a book of laws but has a special moral quality too.
3. **Help Chanichim to Appreciate** the Avot and Imahot as role models for the Jewish people.

Introduction - B'ikvot Avoteinu

The phrase "B'ikvot Avoteinu" translates to "in the Footsteps of our Ancestors". We know who the Avot and Imahot 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 Kvutza on Machane we will be attempting to do two things:

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

These two points 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.

DISCUSSION POINT 1 – What is the Torah to you?

Each Chanich/a will have a different pre-conceived notion of what the Torah is. Below are a few examples of how diverse the Torah can be; varying from the universal narrative of creation to family drama; from national praise for Hashem to minute details of the construction of the Mishkan and Divine revelation.



**וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְקוּוּ
הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל-
מְקוֹם אֶחָד וְתִרְאָה
הַיַּבֶּשֶׁת 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
וַיְגִד לְאָחָיו וַיֹּסְפוּ
עוֹד שָׁנָא אֹתוֹ:**

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

**אֲזַיִשִׁיר מִשֶּׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לֵה
'וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר: אֲשִׁירָה לֵה' כִּי גָאָה גָאָה סוֹס
וְרֹכְבוֹ רָמָה בָּיִם: עֲזִי וְזִמְרַת קֵה וַיְהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה
קֵלִי וְאֲנִיָּהוּ אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי וְאֶרְמְמָנָהוּ:**

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

ויעש בצלאל את הארן עצי שטים אמתים וחצי ארכו ואמה וחצי רחבו ואמה וחצי קמתו: ויצפהו זהב טהור מבית ומחוץ ויעש לו זר זהב סביב:

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. (Shemot 37:1-2)

אנכי ה' אלהיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים על פני

I am Hashem, your G-d, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. (Devarim 5:6)

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

The very first Rashi in Chumash addresses this issue. He asks, "Why doesn't the Torah start from the mitzvah of Kiddush haChodesh (sanctifying the new month), the first mitzvah in the Torah?"

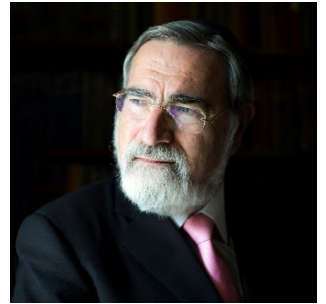
He answers that we need to know that Hashem created the world so that we can lay a proper claim to the Land of Israel. The exact answer is not particularly important for us at the moment, however the general concept is that there are things in the Torah which are not laws but are nonetheless fundamental concepts that are 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 should be influenced by some sort of guiding principle which we can find in the Torah. On Aleph Machane we are going to be focussing mainly on how we can learn these important guiding principles from our Avot and Imahot. 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 ancestors for them. Rabbi Sacks zt'l 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)



DISCUSSION POINT 2 – Would story time be an effective vehicle for chinuch in Kvutza?

The Avot and Imahot as role models

On Aleph we are going to be dealing with a number of the Imahot and 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 and Imahot 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.

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 ideal approach is that while we don't see our Imahot and 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. Most people tend to fall out somewhere in the middle. We realise that the Avot and Imahot 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 and Imahot more specifically and the character traits that they exemplify.

DISCUSSION POINT 3 – Before this Kvutza, how did you relate to the Imahot and Avot? Was this a result of early education?

Trailblazers

There is a famous doctrine called "maase avot siman l'banim", which means that the actions of the Avot and Imahot are a sign for the children. Ramban writes that everything that happened to them 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 Ya'akov, 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)*

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 Imahot and Avot were trailblazers. They were doing new things, charting a new path. But those paths were strewn with obstacles; their lives 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.

DISCUSSION POINT 4 – Have you ever felt like you are walking in the footsteps of our ancestors?

*You may notice that a lot of the literature on this topic is written in the masculine or focuses more on the Avot than the Imahot. It is important to still learn a lot from these insightful sources, even as we recognise that, in those times, women were often not focused on. We can be grateful that we live in a time where this is no longer the case.

Middah Spotlight:

At the end of each Kvutzah, we're going to put some information about a particular Middah (ethical value), mitzvah or halakha 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:

(DISCLAIMER: Although I disagree with the following ideas, I've left it in because the idea is quite well-known in popular Judaism today. There are serious issues with it though, so if you want a greater discussion about the pitfalls, come and talk to me!)

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

Ramban's comments on this notion are also important. He explains that though the Torah may not explicitly prohibit poor moral behaviour, we nonetheless must also appreciate the spirit and essence of halakha and Torah-morality.

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 their spouse, 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.

Concrete Concepts:

1. The Torah is a complex and diverse book, which can be described as a "Comprehensive Guide to Life".
2. The Imahot and 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.
3. This is the framework for the rest of the Chomer.

Peula Ideas:

- 📌 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...
- 📌 Running shtick! It's a great idea to have some good old shtick that you continue in each kvutza. As well as your random shticky running shtick, it's also a great idea to think of an educational thing that your chans do each kvutza. For example, in K1, you could give everyone a big piece of A3 paper and some paint in plates. Everyone takes their shoes off and does 9 footprints on their piece of paper. Then, each kvutza, they can write or draw on the foot print something that summarises what they've learned. At the end they'll have something nice to show their parents about what they learned on Machane – yay!

K2: Adam and Chava



Objectives:

1. **Learn** about Adam and Chava
2. **Explore** about the responsibilities of being human and an individual Jew.
3. **Discuss** the concept of gender inequality in Jewish text and how to teach this to young Chanichim
4. **Discover** the Torah perspective on environmentalism.

Fact File

- 1:27 – Hashem creates a being – both male and female – on the sixth day.
- 2:7 – Creation is re-introduced: we are told Hashem made the human (Adam) from the dust of the earth, and he blew into Adam's nostrils the soul of life, and it became alive.
- 2:15 – God put Adam into Gan 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 Adam alone is bad, and it needs a partner.
- 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 its side in order to form a partner for it. And thus, Hashem formed Adam/man and Chava/Isha/woman! Adam named her "isha" as she was taken from man (Heb. 'ish').
- 3:6 – Chava gave Adam fruit from the tree of knowledge, and he ate it.
- 3:8 – Adam and Chava tried to hide from Hashem.
- 3:11-14 – Hashem questions Adam about eating from the tree, and he blames Chava.
- 3:16 – Chava is punished with painful childbirth.
- 3:17-20 – Adam is punished.
- 3:22-24 – Adam and Chava are banished from Gan Eden.
- 4:1 – Adam and Chava had sons, Cain and Abel.
- 4:25 – Adam and Chava have another son, Seth.
- 5:1-4 – Brief summary of Adam's life.
- 5:5 – We are told Adam lived for 930 years.
- Adam and Chava only appear in Parashat Bereishit.

The First Person

Adam HaRishon was created by Hashem on the sixth day and represents the prototype of all mankind. However, we do not believe that he was the first Jew (see K4) (or even the first person, scientifically). 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." Even though Adam was not a literal first human, the Torah presents it that way to teach this fundamental lesson of equality.

To Guard and To Work

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

"וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם וַיִּנְחֵהוּ בְּגַן עֵדֶן לְעֲבֹדָה וּלְשִׁמְרָה."

"Hashem, God, took the Adam and placed it in the Garden of Eden **to cultivate and to guard it**" (Bereishit 2:15)

The first human'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, to 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'shomrah' literally means 'to guard', but it can be interpreted as to **protect, honour, or preserve**. Being a shomer/et (guard) 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/et of the world, as Hashem asks us to do, is not simply watching out for baddies or doing shmira 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 them, you have to look after them and make sure their needs are fulfilled.

DISCUSSION POINT 1 – Do you think that your Chanichim see looking after the world as a Jewish value?



לְדוֹד מִזְמוֹר לַה' הָאָרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָהּ תִּבְל וְיִשְׁבִי בָּהּ:
"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.

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 this fairly large instruction by Hashem, when we look back at the pasuk 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 states explicitly that on the other six days of the week we should be working:

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלֹאכֶתְךָ

"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 בֶּנוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הַנָּשִׂיא אוֹמֵר, יִפָּה תִלְמוּד תּוֹרָה עִם דְּרוֹךְ אֶרֶץ, שִׁיגִיעַת שְׁנֵיהֶם מְשַׁכַּח עוֹן. וְכָל תּוֹרָה שֶׁאִין עִמָּה מְלָאכָה, סוּפָה בְּטֵלָה וְגוֹרְרַת עוֹן.

Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehuda haNasi 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. (Avot 2:2)

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.

DISCUSSION POINT 2 – What sort of work do you want to inspire your Chanichim to contribute to?

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) - וְהָיָה טוֹב מְאֹד

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 human 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 our creativity and ability to develop the world.

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.

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'ovdah*.

DISCUSSION POINT 3 – Do you see the World/BA/your Chanichim/yourselves as what they are or what they could be?

So what about Chava?

So far, the Torah has a distinct lack of female presence...cue Chava, aka Eve aka The OG woman. Yay! You may have noticed that we've been translating 'adam' as 'human', and referring to 'adam' as 'it'. Allow me to explain... Based on a statement in the *Massekhet Berakhot*, the first human is presented as being created possessing two sides – the male and the female – within one person. However, they could not interact with each other. They could not partner together as two entities becoming something greater than themselves; thus God split the human being into two, one male and one female. The male retained the name 'adam', and the female was given the name 'chava'.

Thus the splitting of the male and female occurs in order to prevent the human from being lonely:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹקִים לֹא טוֹב הָיִית הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה-לּוֹ עֶזְרָא כְּנֶגְדּוֹ
Hashem said, It is not good for the Human to be alone; I will make a fitting counterpart for him (Bereishit 2:18)

As we can see, Chava is described as an 'Ezer Kenegdo,' a phrase that could be translated in a fair few ways. You may have been taught using the word 'helpmate' or 'helper.' The following explanation from the Sforno will help us to understand what 'Ezer Kenegdo' means:

עזר כנגדו עזר שיהיה כמו שוה לו בצלם ודמות כי זה הכרחי לו בידיעת צרכיו והמציאם במועד' ואמר כנגדו כי הנכנס לכף נגד דבר אחר כשיהי' שוה לו בשקל יהי' נגדו בקו ישר אבל כשלא יהיו שוים שני הנשקלי' יהי' זה עולה וזה יורד ולא יהיו זה נגד זה בקו ישר ובה האופן אמרו רז"ל שקול משה כנגד כל ישראל

עזר כנגדו, a helpmate who will be equal to him, also reflecting the divine image. This is essential for him if he is to know what precisely his needs are and so that he can meet them in time. The reason why the Torah added the word כנגדו is that whenever one confronts someone of equal power, moral and ethical weight, such a confrontation is termed נגד. It is a head-on collision of will. When the two parties disagreeing are not of equal power, or moral/ethical weight, the confrontation is termed as one being עולה or יורד one of the adversaries either prevailing or losing in such an encounter. It is in this sense that we have to understand such statements as משה שקול כנגד כל ישראל, "that Moses was the equal of the entire Jewish people." (Mechilta Yitro 1)

So Hashem created the first woman as an equal partner for the first man. So far, so good. So what went wrong?

The first 5 pesukim of perek 3 describe the process of the snake persuading Chava to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge. Finally, she succumbs and decides to do the one thing she was told not to do, a classic 'you had ONE job' moment:

וַתֵּרָא הָאִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמֵאֲכָל וְכִי תִאְוָה-הוּא לְעֵינַיִם וְנִחְמַד הָעֵץ לְהִשְׂכִּיל וַתִּקַּח מִפְּרִיו וַתֹּאכַל וַתִּתֵּן גַּם-לְאִישָׁהּ עִמָּה וַיֹּאכַל:

When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable as a source of wisdom, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate. (Bereishit 3:6)

At first Chava eats it, gives it to Adam, but then after that we are told about Adam that **וַיֹּאכַל**, *and he ate it*, which shows his active role in eating the fruit. We see a few pesukim later that Adam tries to blame the sin on Chava, who in turn tries to blame it on the snake. In the end, Hashem punishes all three of them.

DISCUSSION POINT 4 – How can we use these pesukim to teach our chanichim about the concept of taking responsibility for one's own actions?

Severe punishments

The snake, Chava and Adam were all punished for the fruit debacle. However, they each encountered different punishments:

Person	Punishment
Snake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More cursed than the other animals • Crawl on the floor • Eat dust • Humans will try to kill them
Adam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard labour in order to grow crops • Crops will frequently fail • Hard work to achieve basic survival
Chava	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painful childbirth • Difficult pregnancies • Oppression from males

We can see that one of the ways which both Adam and Chava were punished was with difficult and gendered roles. These punishments are not worded as ideal states that men and women should exist in, but rather as challenges that both genders will face going forward.

Middah Spotlight – *L'Ovdah Ulshomrah*

The majority of our Ks 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 and Chava, as we mentioned at the beginning, our focus is more on developing a way of life as opposed to a specific characteristic.



Adam was told '*l'ovdah ulshomrah*' – to work and guard the land. What does the Torah have to say about our responsibility towards the land?

כִּי תִצּוֹר אֶל עִיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֵם עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְשָׁהּ לֹא תִשְׁחִית אֶת עֵצָהּ לְנֹדַח עָלֶיהָ גְרֹזֵן כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכַל וְאַתּוֹ לֹא תִכְרֹת כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה לְבָא מִפְּנֵיךְ בְּמִצּוֹר: רַק עֵץ אֲשֶׁר תִּדְעַע כִּי לֹא עֵץ מֵאֲכָל הוּא אֲתוֹ תִשְׁחִית וְכִרְתָּ וּבְנִיתָ מִצּוֹר עַל הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר הוּא עֹשֶׂה עִמָּךְ מִלְחָמָה עַד רֹדְתָה:

"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 aspects of the environment that are beneficial to human beings. Back in the day the fuel of war was wood! It made fires, spears, arrows and more...yet the Torah forbids fruit-bearing trees 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 our relation to the world; however, they very clearly and explicitly show us where Judaism stands. The above source informs us of the halakha of Bal Tashchit – not wasting useful material.

There are many ways to bring Bal 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 their 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 amot 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.*



Concrete Concepts:

1. **Adam HaRishon** was the first person and was given the responsibility of looking after the world.
2. **Chava** was made as **an equal partner**.
3. We have a responsibility to continue to **protect but improve and utilise** the world around us.

Peula Ideas

- 📖 Give your chanichim an egg to look after for 10 minutes They are its shomer/et. Slowly present them with challenges where they have to ensure to guard their egg in the best way possible and prevent it from cracking. (ALL EGGS MUST BE HARD BOILED!)
- 📖 Why not do some gardening in order to get in touch with nature?
- 📖 Bereishit art – get some paints/watercolours and make some snazzy artwork to represent the 7 days of creation

K3: NOACH

SCAN ME!



Aims:

1. **Discover** two ways of understanding the life of Noach.
2. **Understand** what social justice and responsibility are in Judaism.
3. **Explore** what social responsibility on Machane could entail.

FACT FILE

- We first see Noach in Bereshit 5:28
- 6:9 We meet Noach and he was "righteous IN HIS GENERATION".
- 6:13-22G-d Tells him he is going to bring a flood and he should make an ark to save himself.
- 7: Noach 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 Noach 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 sign of the covenant never to destroy the world again.
- 9:20 Noach gets drunk, it all goes a bit wrong, and he tells his sons their future.

Story Recap

The story of Noach 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 Noach?** 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. Noach 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. Noach plants a vineyard and gets drunk. Cham sees his father Noach undressed and tells his two brothers (Shem and Yafet). Shem and Yafet cover Noach so they do not see him naked. When Noach wakes up, he curses Canaan (Cham's son) and blesses Shem and Yafet.

Noach's character

אלה תולדת נח נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורתי את האלקים התהלך נח:
"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, as we will see shortly, paint a different character picture.

ויחל נח איש האדמה ויטע כרם: וישת מן היין וישכר ויתגל בתוך אהלה:
"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)

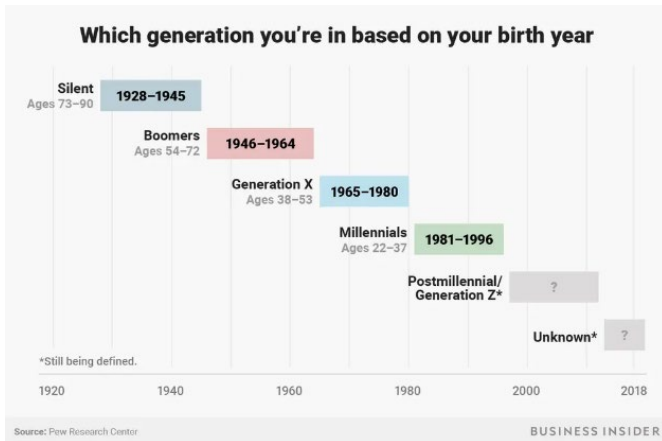
This is a bit awkward...perhaps he sought solace from all he experienced by becoming sensually unaware via the inebriating qualities of alcohol. Whether we sympathise or not (if we are capable of imagining Noach's ordeal), by the end of the story Noach **appears an undignified figure** as his son discovers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

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

Remember how the generations are described:

ותשחת הארץ לפני האלהים ותמלא הארץ חמס: וירא אלהים את הארץ והנה נשחתה כי השחית כל בשר את דרכו על הארץ:
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 בְּדוֹרָתוֹ – 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?

DISCUSSION POINT 1 – Think of the different contexts that you find yourself in in your life, would the description of your character change depending on which one you are in?

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

Regardless of which opinion you follow, the message of **social responsibility** is of paramount importance. Moreover, Noach's message of social responsibility isn't just between you and other Jews, but a universal responsibility; things like taking care of the environment together, reducing poverty,

anti-genocide education programs, fighting discrimination, 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 **חֶמְסָה**. Rashi identifies this as robbery whilst Sforno elucidates it as 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 little value. (Bereishit Rabba 31:5)

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 the genocide being perpetrated against the Uyghurs, the devastating civil wars across the Middle East to name just a few.

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

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

DISCUSSION POINT 2 – What themes can we, as a Tzevet use to teach our Chanichim about this concept?

Another interesting point we can learn 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 אֱלֹהִים זֶאת אוֹת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אָנִי נֹתֵן בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵינִי כָּל נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֲשֶׁר אִתְּכֶם לְדוֹרֹת 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 this pasuk 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 G-d 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 in the sky, we should feel **empowered with our responsibility to achieve a better world**.

Social responsibility on Machane

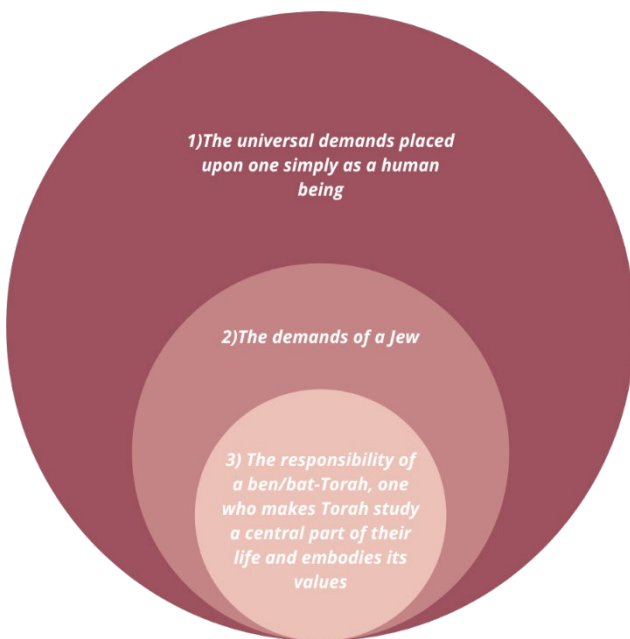
There is a concept in Judaism which arises in the Gemara (Shavuot 39a) that **"All of Israel is responsible for each other."** This message is so important for Machane; the idea that leadership isn't about having the loudest voice, it's about having responsibility for those around you. In Judaism and in life no person 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 zt'l understands that G-d's command to Adam haRishon, *I'Ovdah u'Shomra*, to work and to guard the land, tells us that there is a universal responsibility for all humankind 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:

...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.

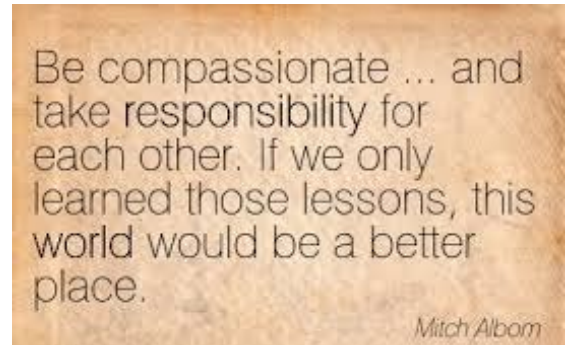
(R. Aharon Lichtenstein, By His Light, pp. 1-3)



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 was once a woman who was cold and wanted to warm herself up. She had two options: she could either buy a coat to keep herself warm or she could light a fire to keep those around her 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.
- 🔊 We also have to have responsibility towards the world as a whole as Rav Lichtenstein elucidated.



DISCUSSION POINT 3 –Do you think that you relate to those socially around you like a 'Noach' or an 'Avraham'? How can we ensure that both Chanichim and Madrichim are looking out for each other in a social capacity and not just themselves?

Some Related Themes in Pirkei Avot

- 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 ENVIRONMENTS?

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 also discussed definitions of social justice and explored our obligations and responsibility to spread that justice.



Peula Ideas:

- Once you've discussed the story of Noach 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...
- Empathy time: ask your Chanichim to pick a character who **isn't** Noach and tell the story from their perspective (e.g. Noach's wife, sons, random other people etc)

Concrete Concepts:

- Noach could be considered a good person or a bad person, depending on who he's being compared to
- The difference between Noach and Avraham is that Avraham looked to improve those around him as well as himself
- Social justice is a Jewish (and Bnei Akiva) value

K4: AVRAHAM AND SARAH



Objectives:

1. **Understand** Avraham's iconoclasm (his will to stand against the beliefs of the time).
2. **Discover** Sarah's exceptional commitment to Ratzon Hashem, even at great personal cost.
3. **Explore** Sarah and Avraham's kindness and hospitality.
4. **Learn** about the middah and mitzvah of Hachnasat Orchim (welcoming guests).

FACT FILE

- 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 [G-d] 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).
- G-d then has another chat with Avram and then there is the famous covenant of the parts (Brit Bein Habetarim) – nightmare inducing stuff (15).
- Hagar gives birth to Yishmael. Hagar and Yishmael 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).

Why Avraham?

When we started learning Chumash in Year 1, we started at Lech Lecha, probably because Bereishit and Noach are quite difficult and complex for children to comprehend. But starting Lech Lecha, you feel plunged into the middle of a story – suddenly, out of nowhere, God appears to Abraham! And not only that, but God comes on a bit strong too: 'Follow me to the land that I will show you,' 'Whoever blesses you I will bless, and whoever curses you I will curse' (AKA all of your friends are now my friends), 'I'm going to give you plenty of cash and property,' etc. What's going on?!



Actually, God's behaviour makes perfect sense – we just aren't used to considering God as a Being that could possibly be falling in love with someone, which is what he's doing with Avraham. God loves Avraham, and indeed Avraham is the only individual described that way:

”וְאַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתִּיךָ זֶרַע אַבְרָהָם אֹהֲבִי”

'But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen – the offspring of Avraham my lover' – Isaiah 41:8

As this pasuk also relates to us, since God loves Avraham, God also loves Avraham's children. Not for any of their deeds or their mitzva observance, but simply because we are the descendants of the person whom Hashem loved, and when you truly love someone, you love their children as well.

The Gemara teaches that **אע"פ שחטא ישראל הוא**, even though a Jew may sin, he or she will always remain a Jew.

VERY IMPORTANT side point.

God does not have emotions. God does not experience anything we do or anything even close to any human experience.

But God needs to interact with us in a way that we'll understand, and so God chooses to act in ways that are consistent, on the whole, with human experience. For example, the Torah says that God gets angry, or that God rejoices – all of these are metaphors, not literal depictions of God.

Therefore, once we accept that God behaves towards humans in a way that can be interpreted by said humans as a human way of behaving, then not only does God 'love' and 'hate', but he can also fall in love – which is what he does with Avraham.

Discussion Point 1: Where in our lives do we interact with non-literal things in a literal way, so as to make them meaningful? How about in the digital world?

Avraham's Journey.

So this is where Chazal (Rabbis in the Gemara and Mishna) step in with the famous midrashim about the fiery furnace et al. They're as perplexed as we are: what would make God fall in love with someone? The stories of Avraham smashing the idols and debating people about the philosophy of idolatry are intended by Chazal to try and fill in the gaps as to what may have prompted God to fall in love with Avraham. But at the end of the day, it's a spontaneous, intense, ultimately inexplicable emotion. Like Madonna's relationship with bagels.



I fell in love with some bagels

According to Rambam, Avraham did not discover God immediately at age 3 – rather, it was a process of gradual development that began when he was 3 and kept going until he was 40!

And only when he reaches the age of 70/75 (an interesting discussion that we don't have time for now) does God appear to him! The first command we see Avraham being given is 'Go for yourself' – as Rashi points out, this has to be **for yourself**; not going for God or anyone else. Avraham's life is the life of Chesed, of kindness, of giving of himself to others. Now God commands him that he must do this **for himself** (not for God!) in order to develop his own sense of identity and self, so that he can have a self to be in love with God.

In other words, God loves Avraham and therefore wants him to develop into the best Avraham he can.

Discussion Point 2: This is a long process! The journey only begins when Avraham is 70 years old, having spent 33 years just trying to apprehend God and then another 30 years spreading this message, with no communication from God. What things have replaced God/truth as the 'idol' that people are willing to invest their lives in?

Discussion Point 3: What peulot could you run that would get that point over to chanichim? How could you teach them that worthwhile things take a LONG time?

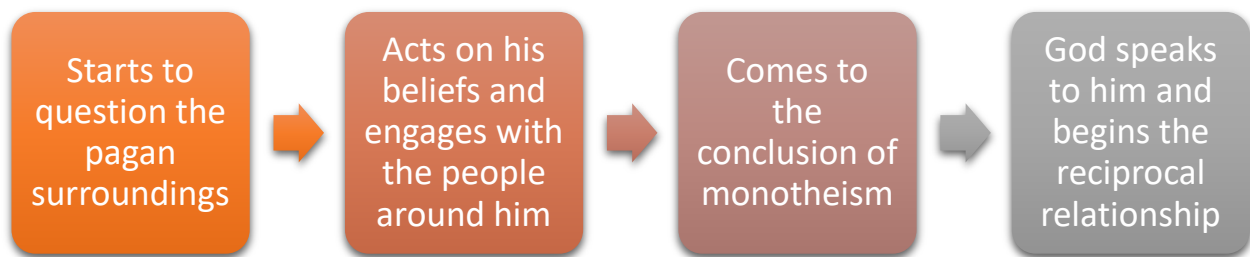


Figure 1: Part 1 of Avraham's Journey of Self-Discovery

Avraham 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 the one we mentioned above, from Bereishit

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). Eventually Nimrod has had enough and just throws Avraham into the fire, but he is **miraculously saved from its flames**. (Remember this is a midrash, not *peshat*!)

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**.

Sarah the Sacrificer

Sarah was not merely Avraham's sidekick. Chazal teach us that Sarah had a higher degree of prophecy than Avraham (Shemot Rabba 1:1), and both were equal in their charitable deeds and were a blessing for the world (Midrash Shocher Tov, Mishlei 31). Therefore, despite Sarah largely staying out of the limelight during her lifetime (an entire Parasha is named after her in death), she was no less important than Avraham.



We know that Sarah was unable to have children for most of her life, despite her tefillot, and it was because of this that Sarah, at **immense personal cost** instructed Avraham: "Behold, G-d has prevented me from giving birth. Please come to my handmaid [Hagar], perhaps I will be built up through her." (Bereishit 16:2) She thought that if she was unable to give birth, the legacy of Avraham and her monotheism, and Hashem's promise to regarding Avraham's descendants would nevertheless continue, albeit not directly through her.



How much **courage, humility, acceptance, and inner strength** are necessary for such a suggestion! Imagine the years of struggle and challenge, of partnership with Avraham, of working at his side, attempting to educate the masses, and spread monotheism throughout Canaan, without the support of family or friends – and then **relinquishing her position as biological matriarch of the Jewish nation and giving it over to a handmaid!** Sarah embraces this idea simply because this is what needs to be done right now. Ego doesn't matter; "I" don't matter. It's simply about doing the right thing.

Sarah the Educator

It's easy to fall into the trap of believing that women gain their strength from self-sacrifice, support of others and nurture of children. However, even Biblical women had more to them than this. Sarah imeinu was a teacher and an influencer. In a society that often saw women as a commodity, she developed her own **voice, opinions and courage to drive**

change. She also seemingly had a marriage filled with **respect**, where she was viewed as an **equal party**. Twice in perek 16 of Bereishit, it is explicitly stated that Avraham listened to Sarah, once of his own accord and another time after being told to do so by Hashem. Rashi also comments that she was Avraham's equal in educating:

אברהם מגיר את האנשים ושרה מגירת הנשים,

Avraham would convert the men, and Sarah would convert the women (Rashi, Bereishit 12:5)

DISCUSSION POINT 2 – What lessons from Sarah can we learn and adapt to modern day scenarios?

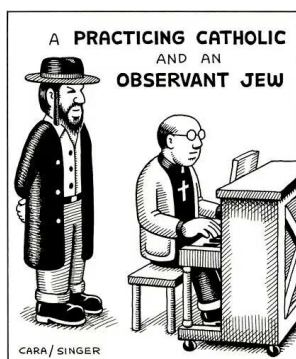
Avraham and Sarah – Models of kindness

Rambam (Matanot la'Aniyim chap. 10) writes that **being stingy is not a Jewish characteristic**, as Avraham and Sarah 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 better defined as: "awareness of the other." What this means is that **the "kind" person is always aware of what is going on around her, the thoughts and feelings of the people in her 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 pasuk (Bereishit 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.



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.**

Hagar, Yishmael and Yitzchak

As soon as Hagar married Avraham, she conceived, and as a result started demeaning Sarah:

[Hagar] would say (about Sarah): "This woman – she looks righteous, but she must not be. How many years is she married to Avraham and has not conceived. Whereas I have conceived in one night." (Bereishit Rabba 45:4)

Years later, Sarah eventually did give birth to their son, Yitzchak. He grows up in the same environment as Yishmael, who at this point is involved in dangerous and immoral behaviour. Sarah again approaches Avraham:

And Sarah said to Avraham: "Send out this handmaid and her son, because her son will not inherit with my son, with Yitzchak." And this thing was very bad in the eyes of Avraham about his son. And G-d said, "Everything Sarah says to you – listen to her voice. For by Yitzchak your seed shall be called." (Bereishit 21:10-12)

Chazal provide us with the backstory of this conversation, highlighting that Sarah was not acting out of personal vindictiveness, but quite the opposite:

Yishmael was building altars and offering sacrifices for idol worship. Sarah said, "What if Yitzchak, our son, learns from him? There will be a great desecration of G-d's Name!"

Avraham said, "Now that we have brought Hagar in and made her a lady, how can we drive her out? What will people say of us? There will be a desecration of G-d's Name!"

Sarah said, "In that case, if we're both talking about a desecration of G-d's Name, He must decide between your words and mine."

And G-d said, "Everything Sarah says to you, listen to her voice." (Tosefta – Sota 5:7)



Avraham, the pillar of kindness, openness, and acceptance, saw the immediate impression that this expulsion would create upon the neighbours and followers they had influenced. Sarah was able to see beyond the immediate, to the more far-reaching effects of Yishmael remaining in the home of the forefather of the Jewish people. If Yitzchak would be influenced by this person, the Jewish nation would be in danger! This is a far more devastating desecration of G-d's Name! Sarah, with clear-sighted vision and a discerning ability to analyse and prioritise, was able to establish the foundations of her home and nation with determination and strength.

DISCUSSION POINT 3 – Does your environment influence you?

Middah Spotlight – Hachnasat Orchim

וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהֵי ה' בְּאֵלְנֵי מַמְרֵי וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פְּתַח־הָאֹהֶל כַּחַם הַיּוֹם: וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיִּרְץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֲרָצָה:

"And G-d 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 Chafetz 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.



DISCUSSION POINT 4 – How willing are you to sacrifice your personal discomfort to help others?

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. We can also see this from Sarah, and her willingness to sacrifice her own visions for the betterment of the Jewish people and the fulfilment of the Divine Will in this world.

Although it is not covered in the chomer, 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 Sarah's greatness is a quality she shares with her husband: 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.

Peula Ideas

- 📖 Get some pictures of famous protest movements and individuals; Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Gandhi, the #occupy! Movement and ask the chanichim if they

know who these people and groups are. If there was one thing about the world that they could protest what would it be? Make a movement name, get some slogans and placards and see how far you get...

- 📌 **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 she welcomes a new "guest" to her 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 her guests, so by asking questions like "do you want some soup" or "how are the kids doing." 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.

Concrete Concepts

1. Avraham's iconoclasm set the tone for how good people should think
2. Sarah was intelligent, intellectually honest, and full of self-sacrifice
3. Sarah and Avraham epitomised kindness and hospitality.



Madrichim Chomer
SUMMER MACHANE 5783

Aleph: In the Footsteps of our Ancestors - בעקבות אבותינו

K4: Avraham and Sarah



K5: RIVKA AND YITZCHAK



Objectives:

1. **Discover** what happened in the lives of Yitzchak and Rivka.
2. **Understand** why their achievements are important.
3. **Analyse** the challenges of Jewish continuity.

FACT FILE

- Just as Rivka is a different figure to Sarah, Yitzchak is a different figure to Avraham. There are very few specific things that Yitzchak and Rivka did. The main thing they did was follow in the footsteps of Sarah and Avraham – B'ikvot Avoteinu.
- 22: The Akeida.
- 24: Avraham sends Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak.
- 24: Rivka passes Eliezer's tests with flying colours.
- 24: Rivka is "brought into Sarah's tent."
- 26: Yitzchak moves to Gerar just like his father where he re-digs his father's wells and, like Avraham, lies and says that his wife is his sister.
- 27: He is tricked and blesses Ya'akov.

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.

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

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. When a parent is hugely successful and well known, there is a risk of her child being diminished as a result.

This puts into context Yitzchak's life: the mission he undertook was not to be the novel, superman-esque hero that 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 child’s task is to hold steady, not to create. Avraham dug wells and creates a **new ideology and set of values**. Time, enemies, and habits gradually fill and block these wells. It is then 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”* (Bereishit 25:19) 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.



It is great when people want to be leaders and pioneers, if not necessary. However, great ground breakers also need people to follow what they’re doing and carry on their work. We can’t have a society where everyone wants to lead.

DISCUSSION POINT 1 – How can we approach the importance of supporting other people’s ideas in a hadracha setting?

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Rivka

Just as Yitzchak carried on the legacy of Avraham, so too Rivka continued and established Sarah's legacy.

The Torah tells us that after meeting Rivka, and hearing Eliezer's account of his journey to find her, *"Isaac then brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he took Rebekah as his wife. Isaac loved her, and thus found comfort after his mother's death."* (Bereishit 24:67) The commentators all understand this passuk to allude to Rivka taking Sarah's place in all that entailed; she accepted her role as one of the Imahot. Rashi is perhaps most explicit in spelling this out, quoting from Bereishit Rabba (60:16):

He brought her into Sarah's tent, and Rivka became the embodiment of Sara his mother. As long as Sara was alive, a perpetual light illuminated the tent from one Erev Shabbat to the next, a blessing was upon the dough, and a cloud rested upon the tent. When Sarah died, these things ceased. When Rivka entered that tent, they returned..."

Additionally, Chizkuni explains the second half of the passuk – *"and thus found comfort after his mother's death"* – to be a further link between Sarah and Rivka.

Yitzchak was comforted when he saw that Rivka had the virtues of his mother. With that in mind let's explore Rivka's character.

Let's start at the beginning. Avraham sends Eliezer, his servant, to find a wife for Yitzchak. Eliezer, feeling the weight of his mission, beseeches Hashem for a sign to confirm that he has found the right women for Yitzchak:

"Let the maiden to whom I say, 'Please, lower your jar that I may drink,' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels'—let her be the one whom You have decreed for Your servant Yitzchak. Thereby shall I know that You have dealt graciously with my master." (Bereshit 24:14)



As it turns out, Rivka rises to the occasion:

"Drink, my Lord," she said, and she quickly lowered her jar upon her hand and let him drink. When she had let him drink his fill, she said, "I will also draw for your camels, until they finish drinking." Quickly emptying her jar into the trough, she ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels.' (Bereishit 24:18-20)

Rivka quickly, and repeatedly, makes the effort to give the camels water to drink, even though she certainly didn't need to, nor did she have to refill the trough herself. Nonetheless she demonstrated her incredible proactive and giving personality.

Another occasion in which Rivka's Middot are demonstrated in a brilliant fashion is the giving of the bracha to Yaakov. We will look at in more depth in the next K, but b'kitzur Rivka sees what needs doing for the betterment of the future of the Jewish people and makes sure that it happens and Yaakov receives the bracha.

DISCUSSION POINT 2 – On Machane and beyond, is it always good to personally make sure things go how they should, even if not everyone is on the same page?

Yitzchak and Rivka in summary

We have seen from this K, the seemingly uneventful lives of Yitzchak and Rivka, yet we now know that they played a crucial role specifically by no doing anything earth-shattering.

As Rav Michael Hattin puts it:

"From a purely structural perspective, it is therefore clear that Yitzchak and Rivka, in contrast to their predecessors and successors, are more transitional figures. Their mission is neither to smash the cherished idols of an unmindful society, nor to transform fractious individuals into the cohesive kernel of a nation, but rather to serve as the indispensable link between those two stages. As such, theirs is a trial of trust, a test of faith, the struggle to remain steadfast even in the face of strident opposition and the ostensible unraveling of Avraham and Sarah's legacy."

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 these 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 "Rivka/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 Aliyah?

Jewish pride?

Awareness of Jewish history?

Education, education, education?

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 Kabbala; Reb Chaim Soloveitchik and 'Lomdus'; Sarah Schneirer and the Beis Yaakov movement; 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 Aryeh Handler (pictured), Esther Cailingold and Yoni Jesner.



Middah Spotlight - 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...*



Why is it that the recorded ethics of Judaism are preceded by a recounting of the 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.

DISCUSSION POINT 3 - Is tradition 'out-of-date' and 'behind-the-times'? What should the balance be between Tradition (mesorah) and Innovation (chiddush)?



"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.

Concrete concepts

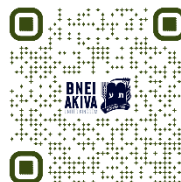
1. It is important to continue other people's work at the expense of every single person being a pioneer
2. We can learn from Rivka about the importance of proactive giving
3. Jewish tradition and continuity can be challenging concepts

Peula ideas

- 📺 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.

- 📺 Film analysis – Fiddler on the roof!

Show these videos to your Chanichim in order. Feel free to cut to the important bits as they're a bit long, unless you are a FOTR super fan like some of us! The chup is that with each daughter's



request, Tevye is forced to open his mind that much more. This is a positive thing, until his beliefs are pushed too far. Use this as an opportunity to discuss the importance of unchanging tradition vs open minded development and ask them what they think of the phrase, 'If I bend that far I'll break.'

K6: YAAKOV AND ESAV



Objectives:

1. **Explore** Yaakov and Esav's personalities
2. **Appreciate** how the key features of Yaakov and Esav's personalities are embodied in the "Yisrael" figure.
3. **Relate** "Yisrael" to Religious Zionism and Bnei Akiva's ideology.

FACT FILE

- Yaakov and Esav were 2 very different brothers – Bereishit (25)
- The sale of the birthright (25:29-34).
- Esav marries Yehudit and Basmat, both daughters of Hitites: (26:34-35).
- The blessing swip-swap (27).
- Yaakov's dream of the angels and ladder while the stones join. (28:10-22).
- Yaakov meets Rachel and wants to marry her but is tricked into marrying her sister before eventually marrying her as well. They each give birth (29-30).
- Yaakov runs away from Lavan (31).
- Esav comes to attack Yaakov so Yaakov prepares for battle and fights with an angel (32).
- Esav'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).
- Yaakov blesses all his children before dying (49) and then mourned by all of Egypt.

Yaakov and Esav: two peas in a pod?

Our story begins under familiar circumstances. Yitzchak and Rivka were at first infertile, but Hashem answers their tefillot 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 בְּבֶטְנָךְ וְשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים מִמֶּעַיֶךְ יִפְרְדוּ וְלֵאמֹם מְלֹאָם יִאֶמְץ 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 Bet Midrash and the other turned to idols. (Rashi on Bereshit 25:27)

As Chazal portray the story, Esav became a bit of a rebel 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 funky. Yaakov and Esav in a nutshell:

Under somewhat suspicious circumstances, Yaakov exchanges some lentil soup for the birthright with his brother. Yaakov later masquerades as Esav to trick Yitzchak, who was

blind by now, to give him the firstborn's blessings (which now belonged to Yaakov, although Yitzchak wasn't to know). Esav was not best pleased, as he wanted that blessing. Fleeing Esav, 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, Esav 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 Rav Yoel bin Nun entitled "Yedei Esav – Kol Yaakov", published in his book on Sefer Bereishit, "Pirkei Avot"):

- 🗨️ If Esav was such a bad man, 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 Esav it was too late and gave Esav (surely the victim) a rather crushing bracha.

Yitzchak's Vision

Let's first try to understand **why Yitzchak loved Esav 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, Esav, who lived by the sword (and would later lead an army of 400 men and conquer Har Seir), 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**. Esav 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, Yaakov 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 and Imahot 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, Esav 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 Esav's hand in the path of Torah.

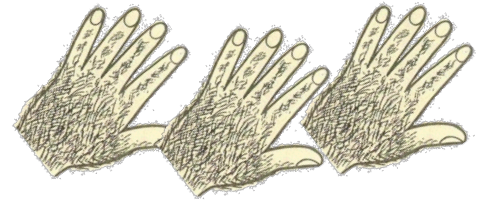


DISCUSSION POINT 1 – Do we value physical or spiritual work more?

However, Esav was not all that Yitzchak thought him to be. Chazal tell us that Esav **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). Rivka also knew a bit more than her husband (remember what Hashem told her earlier about two nations emerging?). She could see that Esav 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-יִצְחָק 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 Ya'akov voice, but the hands are Eisav's hands.'" (Bereshit 27:22)

He was perplexed and may even have thought that his fighter-son Esav 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 Esav 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 Esav-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 his brother Esav. Remember he was someone who was always fleeing wars, not fighting them!
- ❏ Several of the commentators (Ramban and 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 Esav, 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 Ya'akov considered a new man and merits a new name:

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יִקְרָא עוֹד שְׁמֶךָ כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי שָׂרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹקִים וְעִם אַנְשִׁים וַתִּוְכַל:

"And he said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Ya'akov, 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 Esav, while keeping the voice of Yaakov. It is clear that the "person" whom Yitzchak blessed was neither Yaakov nor Esav, rather it was this magical mixture.

The moral, religious Yaakov was not compromised, but gained the physical strength of Esav 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 'איש תם, ישב' - 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 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 Esav 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 Esav**.



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 Ya'akov – 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 'הקל קול יעקב, והידיים, ידי עשו' – the voice being the voice of Ya'akov, 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 Ya'akov's Torah.

It is these values that **make Bnei Akiva unique** – we believe that the ideal is the “Yisrael” model. Today that may mean **servicing in the army alongside Yeshiva/Midrasha study**. We are not apologetic about putting aside our Gemara and leaving the Bet 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 Esav as necessary, but to guard the voice of Yaakov throughout**.

DISCUSSION POINT 2 – Is going into the IDF the only way to fulfil this idea?

Middah spotlight: Kibbud av va'em – Honouring one's parents

“And Esav hated Yaakov because of the blessing that his father had blessed him, and Esav said to himself, ‘Let the days of mourning for my father draw near, I will then kill my brother Yaakov.’” Bereshit 27:41)

Notes:

- 📖 Now Esav 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 (enough to explode any Middot-ometer I think!)
- 📖 He also decides to find a new wife from the daughters of Yishmael because of the pain his marriages to Cannanite 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 Esav 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, Esav 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 Esav’s best clothes to dress up in. These were the clothes that Esav would always wear to serve Yitzchak.



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

- Both men and women are obligated to honour and revere their parents.
- One must honour and respect **grandparents** and **older siblings**.
- 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 Esav 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**.

DISCUSSION POINT 3 – Is it better to do one mitzvah really well or lots of mitzvot at a mediocre level?

Peula Ideas

- In 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/a 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).

Ya'akov: 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.

Concrete Concepts:

1. Yaakov and Esav had very different personalities
2. The key features of Yaakov and Esav's personalities are embodied in the "Yisrael" figure
3. It is a mitzvah to honour one's parents and older relatives

K7: RACHEL AND LEAH



Objectives:

1. **Learn** about the main events in Rachel's life.
2. **Appreciate** her character as someone who can transform their life through teshuva.
3. **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 (Ya'akov) 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 Avot could help?** We've spent so many K's talking about how epic they were; why do they fail here?

Childbearing conundrums

From the second that Yaakov first lays eyes on Rachel, she is presented in a confusing 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 daven 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 בְּאַחֶתָּהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל יַעֲקֹב הֲבֵה לִי בָנִים וְאִם אֵין מִתָּה אֲנֹכִי: וַיַּחַר אֵף יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר הֲתַחַת אֱלֹהִים אֲנֹכִי אֲשֶׁר מִנַּע מִמֶּךָ פְּרִי בֶטֶן:

"And Rachel saw that she had not given birth for Ya'akov and became jealous of her sister and said to Ya'akov: 'Give me sons! And if not I am dead!' And Ya'akov 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." (oof) 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.

Self improvement and perseverance

When Rachel does finally have a child, the Torah says that Hashem remembered and heard her. Obviously, he could not have done if she had not davened. Therefore, it seems that she took her husband's advice and stopped looking to him to fix things 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. (Brachot 34b)

We see from this that Rachel was someone who was constantly looking to improve her character and who was willing to work hard to get results.

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:

וַתַּעֲן רָחֵל וְלֵאָה וַתֹּאמְרֶנָּה לוֹ הֲעוֹד לָנוּ חֵלֶק וְנַחֲלָה בְּבֵית 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.

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.

DISCUSSION POINT 1 – How can we teach our Chanichim to constantly work on themselves and be motivated to do so?

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.



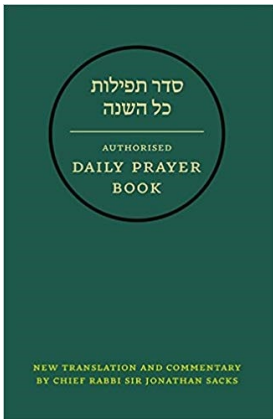
Leah and giving thanks

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

These two virtues are tied up together. Another translation of the word הוֹדָאָה 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.



Rabbi Sacks zt'l writes (pg. 90 of the Chief Rabbi's 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 forget the guiding hand of Hashem in her life.

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.

DISCUSSION POINT 2 – What are you grateful for?

Middah Spotlight - Emunah:

In this Kvutseh 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:

Sarah's Middot	Rivka's Middot	Rachel's Middot	Leah's Middot
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Righteousness • Prophetess • Kept Mitzvot to an exceptional level • 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 • Good mother • Close relationship with Hashem

Emunah in Hashem/tefilla

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 tefilla. 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. 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!

DISCUSSION POINT 3 – How can we help our chans to daven with kavanah (KAVANAH)?

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.



Concrete concepts:

1. Rachel was a motivated and determined individual who always strived to work on herself
2. Leah was a gratitude pro
3. All four of the Imahot were powerful and complicated individuals who taught us a lot about character development
4. In order to daven successfully, we must have Emunah and kavana

Peula ideas:

- 📖 Gratitude exchange: 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.

K8: YOSEF AND HIS BROTHERS



Objectives:

1. **Discuss** the theme of brothers in Bereshit.
2. **Explore** what can we learn about responsibility and leadership from the brothers.
3. **View** Yosef as an inspiration for Religious Zionism and Modern Orthodoxy.
4. **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, Reuven 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 tried to entice 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 and Asnat have 2 sons, Ephraim and Manasheh
- 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 insists 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 YES YES!
- 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
- 50 After Yaakov dies Yosef assure his brothers that they are still friends, Yosef then dies too.

Brothers in Bereishit

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

1	Kayin and Hevel	Fratricide (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	Ya'akov and Esav	HUG (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 five 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 Esav. 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 men get because of who they were born to and in which order) and merited rights (what people get because they 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 the oldest males 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 Kohanim are therefore from that line.

There could be a number of different reasons for this tension. A particularly good one 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. These things are obviously 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.

DISCUSSION POINT 1 – How can we reconcile the patriarchal nature of historical inheritance with the values of a meritocracy and feminism?

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)

Yet, later as Yaakov lies on his deathbed, he lambasts Reuven and awards the double portion usually accorded to the firstborn to **Yosef instead**. (Bereishit 49:4 and Bereishit 48:21)



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 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. (Bereishit 44:14)

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):

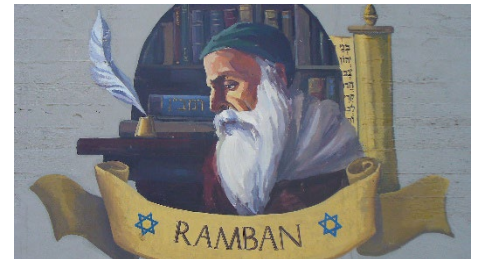
"Then Reuben said to his father, 'You may kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my care, and I will return him to you.'"

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 (Bereishit 43:8-11):

"Then Judah said to his father Israel, 'Send the boy in my care, and let us be on our way, that we may live and not die—you and we and our children. I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible: if I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, I shall stand guilty before you forever. For we could have been there and back twice if we had not dawdled.'" Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so ..."

What is tangibly different between the requests? Reuven was unhelpful when he offered to sacrifice two of Yaakov's grandsons but other than that the requests are broadly similar. As the Ramban says:

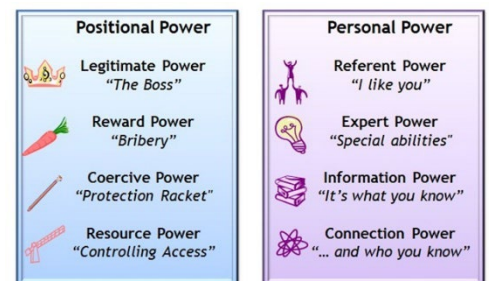
Reuven took an oath to return Binyamin to his father by saying, "kill my two sons - as your punishment will fall on me - if I do not return him." This is the same idea as what Yehuda said, "I shall bear the blame before you forever" ... And Yaakov did not trust in Reuven, for Yehuda was the most powerful 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.



DISCUSSION POINT 2 – What leadership lessons do you think it's important for your 11 year old Chanichim to learn now?

Yosef, the first and best Diaspora Jew

Yosef stands out for being a **prototype of the Diaspora Jew**. Of course, Yaakov 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 becomes super successful.

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 Yaakov!? 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! 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" (Bereishit 41:51). 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.

DISCUSSION POINT 3 – What aspects of non-Jewish culture do you think are particularly tempting to your Chanichim?

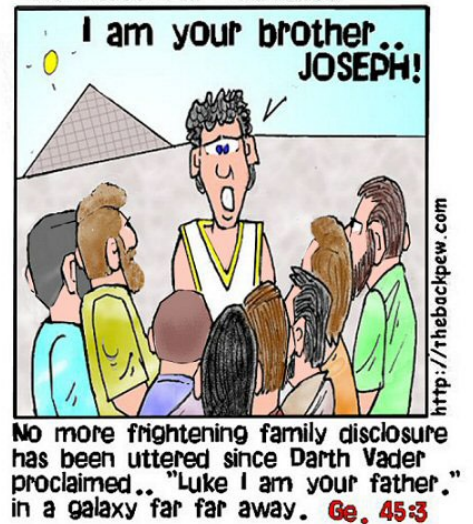
But his brothers come back and he cries, again and again. His past is coming back to haunt him. He's forced to confront his tradition and, eventually, he can't keep it in anymore. He reveals himself. The text says that the news spread quickly across Egypt – but Pharaoh, it turns out, has no problem with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

THE BACK PEW - JEFF LARSON



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.

Yet 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 us, and to our chanichim.

Halacha Spotlight – Lashon Hara



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 hara. 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.

But 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 hara. Here are some important things to note about Lashon hara:

- ❑ 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 hara* was the Chafetz Chayim, so called after his book, Chafetz Chayim which talks about not speaking lashon hara. In his book, he shows how people who speak lashon hara 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, we are taught 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 their faults with someone who can help them.
- ❑ To prevent someone from being harmed.
- ❑ To end a dispute between people.
- ❑ To help others learn from mistakes people make.

We should start making a brand-new concept: Lashon Hatov: (see Rabbi 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 zt'l

Concrete Concepts:

- 🔊 The Torah is full of examples where patriarchal rights are questioned, and are often substituted for a meritocracy
- 🔊 When it comes to leadership, it isn't about seizing power, but instead a good leader knows when the time is right to follow and when to step up
- 🔊 We can learn from Yosef that it is important to combine a Torah lifestyle with contributing to modern society

Peula Ideas:

- 🔊 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 their 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-honoured BA tradition and a great hadracha technique.

K9: MOSHE, AHARON AND MIRIAM



Objectives:

1. **Understand** how the stories of Moshe's upbringing are vital for his future leadership.
2. **Learn** about Aharon as a character.
 - Explore peace on a national, Jewish and individual level.
 - Think of real ways to increase the peace.
3. **Discover** 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. Miriam hides Moshe, and watches him in the River Nile story.
- 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 his 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]).
- Ten plagues and Yetziat Mitzrayim.
- 17: B"Y Complain to Moshe about the lack of water. War with Amelek.
- 32-34: golden calf story: Aharon tries to buy some time, Moshe saves the day back up on Har Seenai.
- 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 Ohel Moed.

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

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 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 pesukim 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 kvutza 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

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 reunify, and the rest of Bnei Yisrael followed suit. (This is actually pshat (simple reading) of the pesukim 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 themselves, 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 person in the nearby vicinity and kills the oppressor. 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*

- Avot 2:5

Rabbi Sacks zt'l connects the word *ish* from the passuk with the word *ish* in Pirkei Avot and writes as follows in his obituary for Marc Weinberg (Mazkir of BAUK 5759, and incredible community leader), comparing him to Moshe and the ideal laid out by Rabban Gamliel:

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.

DISCUSSION POINT 1 – What's one area of machane that you will look out for Rosh Gadol opportunities in?

Princess Batya

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:

וַיֵּלֶד אִישׁ מִבֵּית לְוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת בֵּת לְוִי: וַתֵּהָר האִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב הוּא וַתִּצְפְּנֵהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים: וְלֹא יָכְלָה עוֹד הַצִּפְנִינוּ וַתִּקַּח לוֹ תֵּבַת גֹּמָא וַתַּחְמְרָהּ בַּחֲמֵר וּבִצְפֹת וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עַל שִׁפְתֵי 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 מֵרֶחֶק לְדַעַה מָה 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, davening 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.

וַתֵּרֶד בַּת פַּרְעֹה לְרַחֵץ עַל הַיָּאֵר וַנְּעֻרְתֶּיהָ הִלְכָת עַל יַד הַיָּאֵר וַתֵּרָא אֶת הַתְּבָה בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת
אֲמָתָהּ וַתִּקְחָהּ:

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 passuk so remarkable:

וַתִּפְתַּח וַתֵּרְאֶהוּ אֶת-הַיְלֶדוֹהִנָּה-נֹעֵר בְּכָה וַתַּחֲמַל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר מִיֶּלְדֵי
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.

DISCUSSION POINT 2 – Is compassion innate or is it something people can learn and develop?

This ability to **see beyond the external 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 וַתְּבֹאנָה וַתִּדְלְגָה וַתִּמְלֶאנָה אֶת הָרְהֻטִים לְהִשְׁקוֹת צֹאן אֲבִיהֶן: וַיָּבֹאוּ הָרְעִים
וַיִּגְרְשׂוּם וַיִּקָּם מֹשֶׁה וַיּוֹשְׁעֵן 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. Thank you Princess Batya!

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": **Batya and Yocheved**. The values which we learn from parents 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

- We are told: "Now Moses was very humble, more so than any other man on earth." (Bamidbar 12:3)
- '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 בְּלִבְבְּךָ לֶחֱי וְעַצְמִי יָדִי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת־הַחֵיל הַזֶּה: וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת־ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הִנְתֵּן לְךָ לֶחֱ לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל לְמַעַן הִקִּים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּע לְאֲבוֹתֶיךָ כִּי־וְהָיָה:

You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember Hashem your G-d, 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 אָנוּשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבֶן אָדָם כִּי תִפְקֹדֵנוּ: וְתַחֲסְרֵהוּ מֵעֶט מַאֲלָקִים וְכָבוֹד וְהַדָּר תַּעֲטֹרֵהוּ:

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. (Tehillim8:5-6)

(A person is just an animal, yet G-d has given her 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."

Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less.

- C. S. Lewis

So for us, we should try to realise the potential G-d has given to humankind 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 G-d, so no wonder we

have a lot to expect of ourselves.

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 בְּעֶרְבַת מוֹאָב שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם וַיִּתְּמוּ יְמֵי בְּכִי אֲבֵל מֹשֶׁה:

***And the children 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 children of Israel" but not "The entire House of Israel!" It would appear that Aharon had captured a greater popular appeal.

Rashi comments:

"The children of Israel": the males. But of Aharon, because he would pursue peace and instill peace between a person and their fellow, 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 Mishna 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 Mishna 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!

DISCUSSION POINT 3 – What's the best way to get chanichim to make up after an inevitable fight?

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 Bet Hamikdash, 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 Mishna 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. G-d speaks of Aharon's superb qualities:

תורת אמת היתה בפיהו ועולה לא נמצא בשפתיו בשלום ובמישור הלך אתי ורבים השיב מעון:
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:

When Aharon went on his way and a wicked man 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. (Avot d'Rabbi Natan 12:6)*



Not only did Aharon love peace, but he also 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 אֶחָת אֶהֱרֹן אֶת
הַתֵּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתִּצְאֵן כָּל הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ
בְּתַפִּים וּבַמְחֹלֶת: וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם
שִׁירוּ לַה' כִּי גָאָה גָאָה סוּס וּרְכָבוֹ רָמָה
בָּיָם:

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 G-d, 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 (Megilla 14a) 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 Moishele 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 G-d'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" (Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 15:20).

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.

DISCUSSION POINT 4 – With a change of perspective, can we see everything as a miracle?

Mitzvah Spotlight – Bein adam lechaveiro

We know that peace, harmony and unity are central to Judaism. Perhaps the best way we can express this is through our interpersonal relationships.

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

"וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה'" data-bbox="705 310 942 332"/>

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

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 G-d 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 person with one heart' (Rashi on Shemot 19:2) that Hashem revealed Himself to us, so to speak, and gave us His Torah.

Another way we can strive to make these things more central to our lives is a focus upon spiritual goals. Rav Dessler points out that it is this which 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.

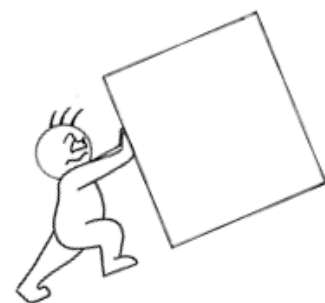
Let's use this Kvutza to try and make our chanichim think about the relationships that they have with their families and friends so that they might realise that only through treating everyone nicely will good things happen!

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 and Imahot paved 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 5782 has shown us that if we take the lessons from our Avot and bring them into 2021, 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.

Concrete Concepts:

- 📖 Moshe's leadership style was one of Rosh Gadol and also high level modesty
- 📖 Aharon pursued peace and as a result was a great people's person
- 📖 Miriam was a strong leader and had total trust in Hashem



Peula ideas:

- 📖 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 kvutza will be able to do this but if you can it's really cool.
- 📖 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!!"
- 📖 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.