

# K1: Chessed



## Aims

- To come to terms with the idea of what chessed actually is
- To place Chessed as a Mitzvah amongst other elements of Judaism
- To realise how we can do Chessed on a personal and national level

## Imitatio Dei (Emulating God)

Unlike the other creations of the world, Hashem created man in His image, with both responsibilities towards protecting and developing the world and the creative capabilities with which to do so. In essence, he left us with a mandate to “carry on what He started” and continue developing the world for the better. This emulation of Hashem, or Imitatio Dei (for those of you so inclined) is brought down in a famous Gemara (by which I mean a Gemara I happen to know of) in Sota:

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה דף יד עמוד א

+דברים יג+ אחרי ה' אלהיכם תלכו? וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה? והלא כבר נאמר: +דברים ד+ כי ה' אלהיך אש אוכלה הוא! אלא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקב"ה, מה הוא מלביש ערומים, דכתיב: +בראשית ג+ ויעש ה' אלהים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם, אף אתה הלביש ערומים; הקב"ה ביקר חולים, דכתיב: +בראשית יח+ וירא אליו ה' באלוני ממרא, אף אתה בקר חולים; הקב"ה ניהם אבלים, דכתיב: +בראשית כה+ ויהי אחרי מות אברהם ויברך אלהים את יצחק בנו, אף אתה נחם אבלים; הקב"ה קבר מתים, דכתיב: +דברים לד+ ויקבר אותו בגיא, אף אתה קבור מתים

[R. Hama son of R. Hanina further said: What means the text:] Ye shall walk after the Lord your God? Is it, then, possible for a human being to walk after the Shechinah; for has it not been said: For the Lord thy God is a devouring fire? But [the meaning is] to walk after the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He. As He clothes the naked, for it is written: And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them, so too you should clothe the naked. The Holy One, blessed be He, visited the sick, for it is written: And the Lord appeared unto him by the oaks of Mamre, so too you should also visit the sick. The Holy One, blessed be He, comforted mourners, for it is written: And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son, so too you must also comfort mourners. The Holy one, blessed be He, buried the dead, for it is written: And He buried him in the valley, so do you must also bury the dead.

In this Kvutza we will look at how to emulate Hashem's fundamental attribute of Chesed.

## The Three Pillars

Shimon HaTzaddik used to say that the world stands on Torah, Avoda and Gemillut Chassadim (see Pirkei Avot 1:2). But what does this actually mean?



1. **Torah:** Torah study enables one to develop and strengthen their relationship with Hashem. The Torah is Hashem's manual for how we should live our lives. Furthermore, Chazal say that if not for the study of Torah the world would cease to exist (see Nedarim 32a)! We will discuss Limmud Torah properly in K3.
2. **Avoda:** This refers to making the offerings in the Beit Hamikdash, but encompasses the general performance of Mitzvot to actively strengthen your relationship with Hashem & perfect yourself. (In the absence of the Beit Hamikdash in modern times, Tefilla has taken the place of the daily Korbanot; we will discuss Tefilla in K2.) Others suggest that Avoda literally means physically building up the world and hence is a prime expression of Imitatio Dei.

3. **Gemilut Chassadim:** For the world to work, says Shimon HaTzaddik, mankind must be creatures of Chessed, building relationships with each other and helping others in their lives.



But what does Chessed actually mean and why is it so important? Surely it must be more than just “being nice”! Considering our introduction, we must look at Hashem’s acts of chessed in order to find out what we must do...

### Chasdei Hashem

R. Simlai expounded: Torah begins with an act of Chessed and ends with an act of Chessed. It begins with an act of Chessed, for it is written: And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them; and it ends with an act of Chessed, for it is written: And He buried him in the valley.

(Continuation of the above Gemara in Sota)

אָבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ הַגָּנוּ וְעֲנֵנוּ כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ מַעֲשִׂים עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ צְדָקָה וְחֶסֶד וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.  
Our Father our King, be gracious to us and answer us, though we have no worthy deeds. Do righteousness and kindness to us, and save us. (Avinu Malkeinu, the Siddur)

Chessed, therefore, would seem to be about going above and beyond the call of duty; not just being considerate of others, but actually having an outward-focused mentality of how you can improve other people’s lives. According to the Ramchal in Derech Hashem (Chapter 1), Hashem created the world simply so that He could reward us for doing Miztvot. Just like He did not stand to gain for His actions, nor was He merely “getting on with other people”, so too we must look for what acts of altruism we can be involved in.



In Avinu Malkeinu we ask Hashem to deal with us through both Tzedaka and Chessed. Tzedaka means righteousness, i.e. giving people what they deserve. But when we ask Hashem to deal with us through Chessed we are asking Him to give us things we don’t really deserve. This is how we must deal with other people in order to build positive relationships; if we’re too judgmental, relationships will break down and we will fail in mankind’s task of building up the world.

**Qontroversial Quote:** One who is one involved in Torah – is it as if he has no God. [...] [This means] someone who is not involved in Gemilut Chassadim.  
(Avoda Zara 17b)

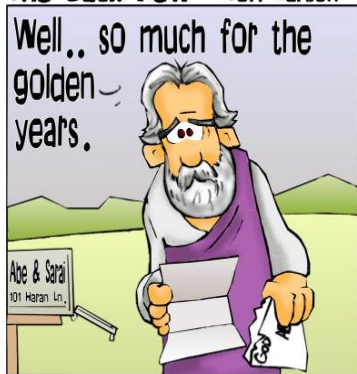


*Is this just hard-hitting rhetoric or is there more to this comparison?*

### Chessed of Avraham

Chessed is not just central to humankind in general; it was the prime Midda of Avraham Avinu, the foremost of our Avot:

### The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



and so at age 75, Abraham receives word from the 'boss' that retirement will be delayed. **Genesis 21:4**

**“And Hashem appeared to him (Avraham) in the plains of Mamre and he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day. And he raised his eyes and he saw, and behold! Three men were standing over him; and he saw and he ran to greet them from the entrance of the tent and he bowed toward the ground”.**

Bereshit 18:1-2.

Let's think about this above scenario for a little minute. Imagine you have a meeting with the queen or the prime minister. They come to meet you and as they arrive, some stranger asks you if you know what time it is. It would be pretty rude to answer them and ignore this figure of importance. Seemingly, this is exactly what Avraham did. Hashem comes to Avraham whilst he is recovering from his Brit Milah, and in the distance Avraham sees the 3 'men' and tells Hashem to come back later! This seems like an unbelievable thing to happen – yet the Gemara says Avraham did the right thing:

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף קכז עמוד א

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: גדולה הכנסת אורחין מהקבלת פני שכינה, דכתיב +בראשית יח+ ויאמר (ה') +מסורת הש"ס: [אדני] +אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר וגו'. אמר רבי אלעזר: בא וראה, שלא כמדת הקדוש ברוך הוא מדת בשר ודם: מדת בשר ודם - אין קטן יכול לומר לגדול המתן עד שאבא אצלך, ואילו בהקדוש ברוך הוא כתיב ויאמר (ה') +מסורת הש"ס: [אדני] +אם נא מצאתי וגו'.

Rab Judah said in Rab's name: Hospitality to wayfarers is greater than welcoming the presence of the Shechinah, for it is written, And he said, My lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, etc. R. Eleazar said: Come and observe how the conduct of the Holy One, blessed be He, is not like that of mortals. The conduct of mortals [is such that] an inferior person cannot say to a great[er] man, Wait for me until I come to you; whereas in the case of the Holy One, blessed be He, it is written, and he said, My Lord, if now I have found, etc.



Why would Hashem want to start the Jewish People with the ultimate Ba'al Chessed?

This Midda has been passed down through the generations, right from our ancestors in the Torah to the contemporary Jewish People. Indeed, the Torah is replete with instances of Chessed. To cite but a few: -

- When Avraham sends Eliezer to find a wife and Eliezer prays to Hashem: **ועשה חסד** עם אדני אברהם
- When Yosef is in prison and ask the other prisoners to mention him to Pharaoh: ועשית-נא עמדי **חסד** והזכרתי אל פרעה
- When Moshe pleads to Hashem and asks Him to forgive the people: ה' ארך אפים ורב **חסד**
- Rut was praised by Boaz for the Chessed she showed to Naomi and for leaving her people to join the Jewish Nation (see Rut 2:11).



On that last occurrence, Targum Yonatan notes the fact that the Passuk seems to equate joining the Jewish People with doing acts of Chessed. Perhaps this is because Chessed is one of the main national characteristics of the Jewish people, along with mercy and humility/shame (see Yevamot 89a). And if it is a national characteristic, it must be a vehicle through which we can fulfil our national mission...

### **National Chessed**

*“Learn to do good, seek justice, vindicate the victim, render justice to the orphan, take up the grievance of the widow” (Yeshayah 1:17)*



Hashem does not want us to just “look after number 1”; we are expected to build a just society and to always be involved in its development. Whilst this did happen within Jewish Societies in exile over the years, now we have fantastic potential in the State of Israel to build a truly Godly society, through organisations such as Yad Sarah and Emunah. But we have a long way to go before we fully achieve Imitatio Dei. What will YOUR contribution be...?

*How do we do Chessed personally, as a community in Chutz La’Aretz and as part of Am Yisrael as a whole?*



### **Summary of K1:**

1. We must emulate Hashem.
2. The world stands of Torah, Avoda and Gemilut Chassadim.
3. Chessed is about being kind and helping people even when they don’t deserve it.
4. Avraham was a massive Ba’al Chessed, and he passed this on to his descendants.
5. We have great opportunities for Chessed on a national level in the State of Israel.



# K2: Tefilla



## Aims:

- To understand why we have Tefilla and what can we get out of it
- To be proud of our opportunity to use Tefilla to connect to Hashem
- Understand a bit more of what we are praying for when saying the set liturgy

## **Wow... This is big stuff!**

Tefilla is a massive concept that we can't hope to cover fully in a single Kvutza, and can only really be taught through actually Davening with the Chanichim. On the plus side, you'll get to do this with your Chanichim 3 times a day over the course of Machane! But for the purposes of this Kvutza we will focus on the following:

- (a) Where does Tefilla comes from?
- (b) Set prayer vs Spontaneous prayer (the classic showdown!)
- (c) Do I actually have to Daven?

## **Where Tefilla comes from?**

The Gemara in Brachot gives 2 versions of the origins of Tefilla. The first has Tefilla as an innovation of the Avot – Avraham initiated Shacharit, Yitzchak Mincha, and Yaakov Maariv. In the second version, Tefilla is simply a replacement for the Korbanot in the Beit Hamikdash – Shacharit corresponds to the morning Korban, Mincha the afternoon Korban, and Maariv the burning of any limbs and fats not fully consumed on the Mizbeach during the daytime.



*Are these opinions mutually exclusive historical opinions or do they reflect different aspects of the nature of Tefilla?*

## **Set Prayer vs Spontaneous Prayer**

Imagine the scene: It's late afternoon, and Yitzchak and Yaakov and Davening Mincha. As they conclude Aleinu, Yitzchak starts to feel more relaxed. He closes his Siddur and goes to put the kettle on. All of a sudden, with great fervor, Ya'akov raises his voice: "V'HOO RACHUM..." Yitzchak doesn't know what's going on! Ya'akov turns to him and says: "I'm just come up with this great new prayer, you should try it sometime..."



It seems rather unlikely that the Avot actually came up with Shacharit, Mincha and Maariv; they just related to Hashem in different ways and hence prayed in different ways.

Rav Kook explains that Avraham was the first person to go out and discover Hashem, so he "stands" to pray in the morning. As someone who spent his life standing against the rest of the world, he davens at the beginning of the day, praying for the strength to stay true to Hashem in a world hostile to Godliness.

Yitzchak relates to Hashem's Middat HaDin (strict justice and "doing things by the book"), hence his Tefilla is one of reflection in the middle of the working day. He takes time out to pray that Hashem help him to conduct all his activities according to His expectations.

Lastly, Ya'akov davens at Bet El in the evening, before having the dream about angels ascending to and descending from Heaven. No doubt when he davened he reflected on

his time in Yeshivat Shem v'Ever. Therefore, perhaps the prayer of Ya'akov is one of reflection, thanking Hashem for all he has done in the past and praying for the future, the future that was revealed to him in his dream that night.

The daily Korbanot, on the other hand, was a far less individualised form of Avodat Hashem; it was the same every day!

It would seem, therefore, that the Gemara is highlighting the tension between fixed and spontaneous forms of Tefilla.

### **Set Prayer**

Today, our tefillot are “fixed” in 2 ways:

1. **Fixed times** – Shacharit, Mincha and Maariv. Sof zman kriyat Shema, no shacharit after Chatzot, no Mincha after Shkia. All that Jazz.
2. **Fixed text** - The earliest siddur as we know it is that of the Gaonim (R. Amram and R. Sadia both had). The Brachot of the Amidah are even earlier.

### **Structure of our Amidot**

There is a set structure to our tefillot, seen most clearly in our weekday Amidot; we begin with shevach (praise), and then move on to bakasha (request) and wrap it up with hoda'ah (thanks).

This seems a little bit of a strange format. It looks like we're trying to butter up Hashem, then asking Him for our needs, and then reminding Him how amazing He is! Surely Hashem can see straight through that?

Like all good Jews, let's try and answer this by asking another question: *How can Tefilla work? Surely we don't have the power to change Hashem's mind? Once he's decided what's going to happen to us it's going to happen no matter what!*

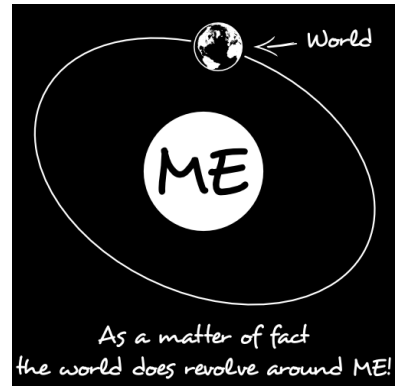


The English word to 'pray' comes from the Greek word meaning 'to beg' – stemming from the incorrect belief that 'prayer' is about begging to G-d and if we ask Him really nicely, suck up to him and grovel, He might 'change His mind' as we will have 'appeased' Him. This essentially is a rather pagan concept, viewing Hashem as human-like Being who can be easily bribed.

However, the Hebrew word for 'prayer' – 'Tefilla' comes from the word 'hitpalel', meaning to 'meditate' or 'inwardly reflect'. By Davening properly, we by definition are inwardly reflecting and improving ourselves, therefore becoming more worthy of a better judgment from Hashem and building a closer relationship with the One Above. Through Tefilla we are hopefully motivated to change ourselves, and by changing ourselves we become 'different people' who will be worthy of a different judgement from Hashem. Of course we're not changing Hashem's mind – we're changing ourselves!



Hence, praising Hashem before making requests isn't just "buttering up" - it's teaching ourselves to say 'wow!' realising the power, wisdom and overriding awesomeness of Hashem, so that we realise that all He does is good. This should trigger within us a greater commitment to carrying out the word of Hashem in this world. Only then are we in a position to move on to the bakashot, asking – with humility – for what we need whilst truly appreciating that we live at the will of Hashem. Then we thank once more, this time in the form of Hoda'ah. In truth, the word 'hoda'ah' means admission/acknowledge. Here we are admitting that we can't do anything without Hashem, as well as implicitly thanking Hashem for listening and awaiting an answer.



So considering Tefilla now appears to be all about changing ourselves, does it really make sense to have set time and wording for Tefilla?

Yes it does! There are 3 main reasons for fixed forms of Tefilla:

### 1. **Structuring your day**

Tefilla gives us a *structure* to the day, preventing us from accidentally forgetting about Hashem because of the busyness of our lives [school, uni, work, Facebook, mobile, chores, friends, more Facebook...]. If we didn't have the set times and laws of Tefilla, we may be tempted just to waste time and say "I'll make up the time to pray later". In the end, we'd never pray and show appreciation to G-d which we desperately need to do!

### 2. **Unity**



Tefilla contains many important references to our shared history, such as the Avot and Yetziat Mitzrayim; talking about such event on a daily basis reminds us that we are part of the ongoing Jewish story, together with all the other Jews around the world. Indeed, save for a few variations in Nusach, we ALL pray with the same words every single day! This allows us to remain connected to Jews around the world. For example, if I need a Shacharit in Hong Kong I know it's going to be basically the same as my Shacharit in London.

### 3. **References to Israel**

Furthermore, our set prayers keep us connected to Eretz Yisrael. Indeed, when we pray for rain we are specifically praying for rain in Israel. But more importantly, we speak about our shared destiny, namely our national return to our homeland in Israel. We believe that eventually Hashem will gather us from among the nations, return all of us to Eretz Yisrael and reveal Himself to the entire world so that all of mankind acknowledges Him and is united in His service. In amongst this, we will fully assume our role as a "goy kadosh" - a holy nation, and live united in Israel, serving Hashem with the Third Beit

Hamikdash. Basically, we're asking for Hashem to help us to be Am Yisrael, b'Ertetz Yisrael, v'al pi Torat Yisrael. May we witness this bimheira b'yameinu (Amen!)

This is what we pray for the WHOLE time. So many prayers refers to our return to our land and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, e.g. Et Tzemach (in the Amida), the Yehi Ratzon (at the end of the Amida), U'va L'Tzion, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of Aleinu...



The concept of Mashiach thing is not easy to remember in the hectic-ness of everyday life; Tefilla focuses us on the Geula and should make us start to act in a way that helps us all to achieve it.

*Practically speaking, how can we relate to the idea of Mashiach?*



### **But do I actually have to Daven?**

These are all very nice ideas but do I have a hard and fast obligation to Daven? Well, as is usually the case in Judaism, there's a Machloket as to the answer.

The Rambam, based on psukim in (Shemot 23:25 + Dvarim 6:13 and most famously the Shema, **לְבַבְכֶם בְּכָל יוֹמְכֶם וּלְעַבְדוֹ**) where the commandment to do AVODA is mentioned, understands avoda to mean none other than AVODA SHEBALEV i.e. Tefilla. Furthermore, in Hilchot Tefilla he says that a person needs to introspect and praise Hashem daily as well as request things! In essence, he maintains that it's a Biblical commandment to pray each day although there's no Biblical commandment as to what to say or when to say it.

The Ramban disagrees and holds that there is NO daily Biblical obligation to pray!

However, everyone agrees that in times of trouble there is a Biblical obligation to pray; when the natural response to crisis is to call out for help, Hashem expects us to turn to Him. And if things still don't go so well, it doesn't mean our Tefillot have failed. Rather, the process of Tefilla should have brought us to the point where we are willing to accept the Ratzon of Hashem, whatever it happens to be.

### **Putting Tefilla into practice**



Most of the time, however, we're not crying out in prayer; on Machane, we seem to Daven just because we have to. We need to change this! Davening is an opportunity to have a conversation with Hashem and to build a relationship with him. Tefilla is our time to talk to Hashem. But how does Hashem respond? Stay tuned for the next exciting K...

### **Summary of K2:**

1. Tefilla was instituted by the Avot and also serves as a replacement for the daily Korbanot.

2. Tefilla is more about self-reflection than begging Hashem for our needs.
3. Set prayers give structure to our day.
4. Through Tefilla we connect with our shared past, present and future.
5. Rambam says daily prayer is a Biblical obligation but the Ramban disagrees.

### **Extra Chomer – Examples of “failed” Tefillot**

#### **Nachshon Wachsmann**

Golani Brigade Sergeant Nachshon Mordechai Wachsmann was an IDF soldier abducted by Hamas in 1994. He was held hostage by the organization for six days and executed during a failed military rescue operation.



Wachsmann was at his Jerusalem home on leave, when his commanders instructed him to attend a one-day training course in northern Israel. He left for his assignment on Saturday night and was last seen by a fellow soldier on Sunday evening, October 9, 1994, at the Bnei Atarot Junction in central Israel; trying to hitchhike back home, to Jerusalem.

According to published reports, Wachsmann boarded a car with four men in it, all believed to have been wearing kipot so not to arouse suspicions. The four overpowered him, rendered him unconscious and drove to the Palestinian village of Bir Nabala, located about six miles northwest of Jerusalem.

Two days later the kidnappers released a videotape of Wachsmann. A Hamas gunman was shown displaying the soldier's Israeli ID and reading aloud his name, home address and identity number.

The tape then showed Wachsmann's plea: "A group from Hamas kidnapped me. They are demanding the release of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and another 400 (men) from Israeli prisons. If their demands are not met, they will execute me on Friday at 8 pm."

Wachsmann's parents immediately appealed to world leaders, including then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, American President Bill Clinton and Muslim religious leaders to take every action necessary to have their son released.

On Thursday night, with only 24 hours remaining until the ultimatum expired, prayer vigils for Wachsmann were held across Israel and over 100,000 people from all religious, political, and social spheres gathered at the Western Wall to pray for his safe return.

Israeli Intelligence first believed that Wachsmann was held in Gaza Strip. Ruled by Yasser Arafat at the time, a rescue operation was deemed extremely difficult and dangerous to pursue. While Israel began negotiating the release of Hamas leader Ahmed Yassin, the Shin Bet was able to arrest one of the kidnappers – a Palestinian youth with no prior offenses. His subsequent interrogation revealed that Wachsmann was being held in Bir Nabala.

When it was ascertained that Wachsmann was indeed held so close to Jerusalem, Prime Minister Rabin ordered the military to extract the captive soldier and a rescue operation was slated for Friday, October 14. The extraction was to be carried out by Sayeret Matkal – the IDF's elite Special Forces unit.

The operation proved disastrous and riddled with technical malfunction, the likes of defective explosives, and faulty intelligence with impeded the force's attempt to rescue Wachsmann out of the room he was held in.

During the attempt to reach him, they came under heavy fire. Captain Nir Poraz, the extraction team's commander was killed, as were three of the gunmen guarding the Israeli soldier.

When the force was finally able to break into the room they found that Wachsmann had been shot dead by his captors. Nachshon Wachsmann was buried in the Mount Herzl Military Cemetery on Saturday night, October 15.

Nachshon's mother recalls: "I asked women throughout the world to light an extra Sabbath candle for my son. From about 30,000 letters that poured into our home, I learned of thousands of women who had never lit Sabbath candles, who did so for the sake of our son -- who had become a symbol of everyone's son, brother, friend.



On Thursday night, 24 hours before the ultimatum, a prayer vigil was held at the Western Wall and, at the same hour, prayer vigils were held throughout the world in synagogues, schools, community centers, street squares ... and, yes, churches throughout the world. People of good faith everywhere hoped and pleaded and prayed for Nachshon.

At the Western Wall 100,000 people arrived, with almost no notice -- Chassidim in black frock coats and long side curls swayed and prayed and cried, side by side with young boys in torn jeans and ponytails and earrings. There was total unity and solidarity of purpose among us -- religious and secular, left wing and right wing, Sephardi and Ashkenazi, old and young, rich and poor -- an occurrence unprecedented in our sadly fragmented society.

On Friday night we ushered in the Sabbath, and I spoke to my son on the media and begged him to be strong, for all our people were with him. We sat rooted to our Sabbath table; my eyes were glued to the door, expecting Nachshon to walk in at any moment.

My husband asked Nachshon's Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Mordechai Elon, who gave the eulogy, to please tell all our people that God did listen to our prayers and that He collected all our tears.

My husband's greatest concern when burying his son was that there would be a crisis in faith. And so he asked Rabbi Elon to tell everyone that just as a father would always like to say "yes" to all of his children's requests, sometimes he had to say "no" though the child might not understand why. So our Father in Heaven heard our prayers, and though we don't understand why, His answer was "no."



### **Eyal, Gilad and Naftali**

Sadly we experienced a comparable occurrence in summer 2014, with the kidnap of Eyal Yifrach, Gilad Sha'ar and Naftali Fraenkel. In the twelve days between their disappearance from the roadside to the discovery of their bodies, Jewish people from all walks of life came together to beseech Hashem for their safety. Videos online show Jews gathering together at the Kotel and elsewhere. The images are similar to those of 1994 when Nachshon Wachsman was kidnapped -- people from every sect and walk of life coming together for a single purpose, with love for their brothers.

What's more, thousands of regular people joined the ground search for the boys, taking it upon themselves to do what they could. Tragically, the boys bodies were found, and it was discovered that they had been shot dead very shortly after being kidnapped. For those twelve days, our whole nation prayed and cried for something that was never going to be. Nevertheless, the boy's families articulated that this tragedy had nevertheless produced something amazing. As the mother of Naftali Fraenkel said, "We went out looking for the boys, but we found ourselves."

These two events hammer home 2 important messages:

2. Tefilla changes us. In these cases, Tefilla helped us to achieve unity, reliance on Hashem, humility and a change in our everyday actions. That is what true Tefilla is all about.
3. Sometimes Hashem does not grant us what we ask for. We do not understand why this is, but it does not negate the importance or impact of Tefilla, on ourselves or on the world.

# K3: Limmud Torah



## Aims:

- To learn and teach about the Mitzva of Limmud Torah
- To appreciate what we gain from Limmud Torah.
- To consider the impact Medinat Yisrael has had on worldwide Limmud Torah.



## Introduction

If Tefilla is our opportunity to talk to Hashem, learning Torah is about Hashem talking to us, namely through the Mitzvot. However, learning Torah is more than just learning Halacha. If it was we'd never bother opening a Gemara; we'd just learn everything from Shulchan Aruch and then sit back and relax. So what is Limmud Torah REALLY about?



## The Supremacy of Talmud Torah

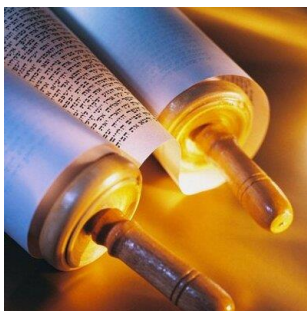
Although there is a Machloket in the Gemara (Menachot 99b) as to the exact requirements for the Mitzva of learning Torah, it is clear according to all opinions that it is central to Jewish life, seemingly more so than other Mitzvot. Indeed, this is evident from Eilu Devarim, the piece of Gemara we say every morning after Birchat haTorah:

These are the precepts whose fruit a person enjoys in this world but whose principal remains intact for him in the world to come. They are: the honour due to father and mother, acts of kindness, early attendance at the house of study morning and evening, hospitality to guests, visiting the sick, providing for a bride, escorting the dead, absorption in prayer, bringing peace between man and his fellow – **and the study of Torah is equivalent to them all** – Shabbat 127a



What does this mean?

## Learning for it's own sake



Talmud Torah, unlike other Mitzvot, has 2 components. It's not just a means to an end, but it also an end in and of itself. For example, I can learn Hilchot Shabbat to know how to keep Shabbat, but at the same time I am getting rewarded purely for the fact that I'm learning. Hence why we don't just learn Shulchan Aruch; there's a Mitzva to learn even the no-longer-practical aspects of Torah, such as laws relating to Korbanot and ritual purification.

## Learning to know Hashem

For the Rambam, Talmud Torah is all about getting to know Hashem. He writes in his 'Sefer Mitzvot' that: "He commanded us to love Him, may He be exalted. This means that we should analyse and ponder His commandments, His words, and His works until we comprehend it and we enjoy in its comprehension the ultimate delight." He also states in

Hilchos Tefilla that “every Jewish man whether poor or rich, healthy or sick, young or old, is required to set time every day and night to learn Torah”.

Torah study is the crucial tool that can help us decipher the workings of the world and appreciate its wonders. Just as you can understand more about an artist by looking at their painting, you can understand more about Hashem by learning His Torah.



Additionally, studying Torah instills **Yirat Shamayim** (Fear and Reverence for Hashem) in a person. This happens not only because one who studies it becomes deeply connected with its text but the time spent delving into it helps one become closer to Hashem. The reward you receive for learning Torah is based on the effort you put in. The end product of how many chapters you cover or pages of Gemara you cover is not as important. It's the **time and effort** you put in that counts the most. Learning Torah is not just about “finishing”, **it's about continuing, progressing, constantly striving and improving.**



But in order to know someone, you can't just read their CV; you have to have deep conversations with and about them. Maybe this is why we have Torah SheBa'al Peh (oral Torah). We are supposed to discuss Ratzon Hashem, debating what He really wants from us! Furthermore, Torah is not supposed to just be a reference book that sits on the shelf. Rather G-d wanted His Torah to be constantly alive in the mouths and hearts of all of us throughout the generations. He therefore in His infinite wisdom created the oral Torah in order that the Torah will be passed down father to son through the generations and the Torah will truly be a 'Torat Chayim'. And, of course, having an oral Torah means you can never think you're done with learning; there's always another argument that requires analysis, another commentator who is unclear, another Halachic case that is yet to be resolved....

### Learning to teach

*“He who learns in order to teach will be enabled both to learn and to teach. But he who learns in order to practice will be enabled to learn, to teach, to observe, and to practice.” (Pirkei Avot 4:6)*

According to the Rambam, teaching is fundamental to the Mitzva of learning Torah (although others disagree). This is because when you have to teach someone else you are forced to clarify the material for yourself first. This is basically what pre-camp is all about! Only after we've immersed ourselves in and fully understood the Chomer can we possibly attempt to pass it on to our Chanichim.

If one were just to learn and not teach, the chain would stop there. He might know a massive amount of Torah, but if he doesn't pass it on to the next generation it will be taken to the grave with him, lost to the rest of the world.

Remember that song by Scouting for Girls called Elvis isn't dead? Now we all know that Elvis IS dead, but their reasoning for him still being alive is "cos I heard him on the radio". The same thing applies for Torah. It may have given to us thousands of years ago, but it lives through us and our study of it.

But it goes further than this. To really teach Torah we have to be an example to the Chanichim and LIVE (or "practice", in the words of Pirkei Avot) Torah. It's up to us, here on Machane, to help create the next link in the 3000 year chain of tradition (...not much has changed but they live under water...). We have to show them our enthusiasm for Torah and Mitzvot, or else all we are doing is passing on 3000 year old bits of irrelevant information.



### **Learning as the ultimate Jewish Constant**

Although much has changed since the giving of the Torah, from food and clothes to music and technology, the Torah is the only thing in our lives that truly remains constant. Yes, it's applications in Halacha may have changed (e.g. Moshe wasn't teaching the Jewish People not to drive to Shul on Shabbat!) but ultimately it's still the same Torah. Thus, Limmud Torah is crucial because it connects us to the Jewish past AND to the Jewish future.

### **Learning in Medinat Yisrael**

In recent years, there has been a massive increase in Torah learning across the world. Although some of this may be down to more Torah being available in English and other popular spoken languages, a large part of this is down to the State of Israel. In addition to the Israeli government helping to fund many Yeshivot across the country, a significant number of Jewish youth from around the world spend a year post high school studying in Yeshiva or Seminary, something that would never have been possible with the Jewish State. Lastly, the existence of Medinat Yisrael has led to greater worldwide interest in previously theoretical topics that are only relevant in Israel, such as Shemitta; more than just facilitating Torah learning, Medinat Yisrael is giving us the opportunity to live a more complete Torah Yisrael.

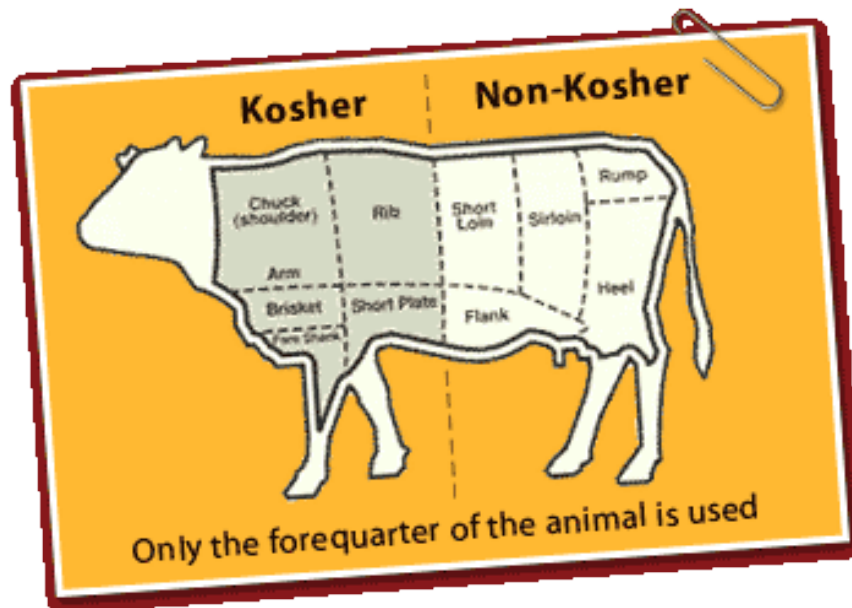


*What's the point of going to learn in Israel? Why not just set up a nice Religious Zionist Yeshiva in England?*

### **Summary of K3:**

1. There is an obligation to learn Torah, both as a means to an end and as an end itself.
2. Learning Torah allows us to gain a deeper understand of Hashem.
3. Learn it, teach it, live it!
4. Learning Torah connects us to the Jewish past and future.
5. Torah learning has increased massively in recent years, largely because of opportunities facilitated by the State of Israel.

# K4: Kashrut



## Aims:

- To discuss what a Chok is.
- To begin to understand some of the ideas that emerge from Kashrut
- To look at the effect the State of Israel has had on people keeping Kashrut



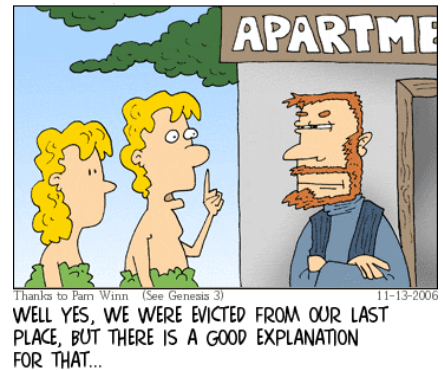
## Introduction

When trying to determine if someone is a Religious Jew or not, the questions most often asked are “Is s/he Shomer Shabbat? Is s/he Shomer Kashrut?” This is because these two areas of Halacha demand a lot from us on a regular basis. Indeed, we can’t eat ANYTHING without thinking about the laws of Kashrut, and we can’t do ANYTHING on Shabbat without knowing at least some of the basic Halachot. In this Kvutza we will discuss:

- (a) The Source for Kashrut in the Torah
- (b) Some ideas in Jewish thought related to Kashrut
- (c) Some interesting ideas about how the State of Israel promotes keeping these Halachot.

### The Source: Where it all began...

Food has always been central to the Torah and Jewish life! In fact, the very first commandment ever given to Adam was not to eat from the Tree of Life. Hence it should come as little surprise to discover that Judaism had far-reaching Halachot about what one can and can’t eat.



Indeed, the Torah spends an entire chapter detailing which animals may and may not be consumed and how to tell the difference. It concludes by saying:

***For I am God, Who has elevated you from the land of Egypt in order to be your God, so you shall be holy, for I am holy. This is the law of the beast, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that swarms upon the earth; to make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the living thing that may be eaten and the living thing that may not be eaten.***

**Vayikra 11:46-7**

This chapter provides the foundation for one of the most well-known and recognisable aspects of Judaism; we are forbidden from eating many types of food and we are limited to eating that which is kosher, fit.

### What’s the point of Kashrut??

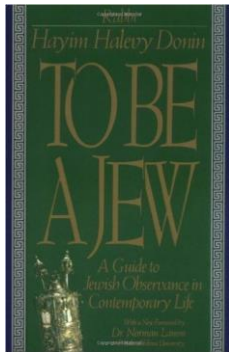
Over the years people have put forward various explanations of the laws of Kashrut. Some people understand kashrut as a question of health, others explain that it is simple cleanliness. Yet there are those who have understood that only kind animals can be consumed or even that the breeding of kosher animals is better for the environment. All of the above fall short in actually explaining why we give so much thought and consideration to that which passes our lips.



Ultimately, Kashrut is a “Chok”, meaning that it’s a Mitzva that Hashem doesn’t give us the reasons for. Furthermore, even when we Mitzvot that do seem to have reasons we only do so because Hashem tells us to. This even extends to “logical” laws, like not stealing or killing!

However, just because we can never know the reasons BEHIND Kashrut doesn’t mean we can’t consider the ideas that EMERGE from the Halachot.

But what’s the problem with suggesting reasons for Chukim?



In his book "To Be a Jew" (an excellent resource on traditional Judaism), Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin explains that the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, pure and defiled, the sacred and the profane, is very important in Judaism. Indeed, it is specifically with regards to Kashrut that the Torah stresses the need to **“to make a difference [l’havdil] between the unclean and the clean”** (Vayikra 11:47)

Imposing rules on what you can and cannot eat ingrains that kind of self-control, requiring us to learn to control even our most basic, primal instincts. Thus, Kashrut is an opportunity to develop self-control and to suppress our natural self-centeredness; even when we are hungry and thinking about our own stomachs we are required to consider what Hashem wants us to eat and what He does not want us to eat.

Donin also points out that the laws of kashrut *elevate* the simple act of eating into a religious ritual. The Jewish dinner table is often compared to the Temple altar in rabbinic literature. A Jew who observes the laws of kashrut cannot eat a meal without being reminded of the fact that he is a Jew.

Furthermore, beyond the exercise of self-restraint, the Rabbis in the Talmud came up with another, more mystical idea. If you eat non-kosher food, they said, it reduces your spiritual capacity - "clogs up the pores of your soul."

Just as a healthy diet is good for the body, so we keep kosher because it's good for the soul. In the Jewish home, the table is an altar, the kitchen is a domestic sanctuary.



**Qontroversial Quote:** Our Sages taught: One should not say, “I find pork disgusting,” or “It is impossible for me to wear shatnez [a mixture of wool and linen],” but should rather say, “I indeed wish to, but what can I do – my Father in Heaven has imposed these decrees upon me?” (Rashi, Vayikra 20:26)



Why do the Rabbis not want us to like Halacha?!

## Kashrut in Israel

Whilst finding Kosher food in Chutz LaAretz can sometimes be difficult, (- in England, for example, if you're not in a Kosher shop you'll need to consult the revered KLBD list!) keeping Kosher in Israel tends to be rather easy; so much Kosher food is available, even though many of the Jews living in Israel are not religious and may not be particular about Kashrut themselves!



This is a direct result of the policy of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel towards Kashrut certification. In an attempt to ensure as many people as possible keep Kosher, the Chief Rabbinate adopts the most lenient views in determining whether a slaughtered animal is Kosher. This means that more carcasses make it to the kosher market, making kosher food cheaper and widely available. However, the Chief Rabbinate and other Kashrut authorities also give "Mehadrin" Hechsheim to food companies who comply with stricter Kashrut rules, thus ensuring that food with a higher standard of Kashrut is available for those that want it.



What's the point of being strict on yourself? Kosher is kosher, no?



Unfortunately, some people over the years have taken advantage of people's desires for kosher food and have produced fake kosher certifications. Thus, it's very important to check if you recognise the Hechsher before buying a product!



It would seem, therefore, that Kashrut has a nationalist component in the State of Israel. The fact that so much kosher food available across the world comes from Israel and that it's quite hard to get non-Kosher food in Israel makes Kashrut somewhat synonymous with Israel. Ultimately, Kashrut is an expression of the fact that Torat Yisrael pervades even the most mundane aspects of Medinat Yisrael, and from Israel impacts the whole of Am Yisrael, wherever they may be.

### **Summary of K4:**

1. Kashrut is a Chok, meaning that we don't know the reason Hashem told us to keep it.
2. Kashrut helps us to develop self-control and can sanctify the mundane acts of eating and drinking.
3. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel ensures that Kosher food is easily available in Israel.
4. Beware of false Hechsheim!

# K5: Shabbat

Shabbos is coming we're so happy.....



## Aims:

1. To understand why we keep Shabbat.
2. To consider what we gain from Shabbat.
3. To instill a sense of pride over Shabbat in our Chanichim
4. To learn about how Shabbat in Israel is particularly special.

## Introduction

As in the previous Kvutza, we won't be going through Hilchot Shabbat with our wonderful Chanichim but will rather focus on just some of the core ideas. We will cover:

- (a) The sources for keeping Shabbat in the Torah
- (b) What Melacha is and why we can't do it on Shabbat
- (c) How Shabbat in Israel is fundamentally different to Shabbat in Chutz LaAretz.

## Let's start at the very beginning...

### Bereishit 2:1-3

א ויכלו השמים והארץ, וכל צבאם. ב ויכל אלקים ביום השביעי, מלאכתו אשר עשה; וישבת ביום השביעי, מכל-מלאכתו אשר עשה. ג ויברך אלקים את-יום השביעי, ויקדש אתו: כי בו שבת מכל-מלאכתו, אשר-ברא אלקים לעשות

1 And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day Hashem finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. 3 And Hashem blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which Hashem in creating had made.



We should all be familiar with these Pessukim, but do they really make sense? If Hashem made the whole world and He was so great, surely He didn't need a "day off" to relax? In response to this classic question, Rabbi Lord Sacks explains in his book 'From faith in the future' about the concept of reflection: Obviously Hashem doesn't need a day off, but we need one. We need a day to reflect on the week. We should be asking ourselves the following questions; what have I achieved? What were the good and not so good happenings of the last week? How can I improve and change?!

The Mitzvah of Shabbat is mentioned many times in the Torah, including both versions of Aseret HaDibrot (Shemot 20:8-11 and Devarim 5:12-15). On those two occasions however, Shabbat is spoken about differently....

זכור את-יום השבת, לקדשו. ה ששת ימים תעבד, ועשית כל-מלאכתך. ט ויום, השביעי--שבת, לה אלהיך: לא-תעשה כל-מלאכה אתה ובנך ובתך, עבדך ואמתך ובהמתך, וגרך, אשר בשעריך. י כי ששת-ימים עשה ה את-השמים ואת-הארץ, את-הים ואת-כל-אשר-בם, וינח, ביום השביעי; על-כן, ברך ה את-יום השבת--ויקדשהו

Shemot 20:8-11

**“Remember** the Shabbat day to keep it holy. You can work during the 6 weekdays and do your work. But the 7<sup>th</sup> Day is a Shabbat to Hashem your L-rd. Do not do anything that constitutes work. (This includes) you, your son, your daughter, your slave, your maid, your animal, the foreigner in your gates. **It was during the 6 weekdays that Hashem made Heaven, the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day.** G-d therefore blessed the Shabbat day and made it holy.”



יא שְׁמֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת, לְקַדְּשׁוֹ, כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוְּךָ, ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ. יב שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד, וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל-מְלֶאכֶתְךָ. יג וְיוֹם, הַשְּׁבִיעִי--שַׁבָּת, לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ: לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל-מְלֶאכֶה אֹתָהּ וּבִנְיָ-וּבִתָּהּ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְעַמְּךָ וְשׂוֹרֶךָ וְחִמְרְךָ וְכָל-בְּהֵמָתְךָ, וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ--לְמַעַן יָנוּחַ עַבְדְּךָ וְעַמְּךָ, כָּמוֹךָ. יד וְזָכַרְתָּ, כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, וַיֹּצֵאֲךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִשָּׁם, בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֶרַע נְטוּיָה; עַל-כֵּן, צִוְּךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, לַעֲשׂוֹת, אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת  
 Devarim 5:12-15

**Observe** the Shabbat and keep it holy as Hashem your God commanded you. You can work during the 6 weekdays and do your tasks. But the 7<sup>th</sup> day is Shabbat to Hashem so don't do anything that constitutes work... **You must remember that you were slaves in Egypt, when Hashem brought you out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. It is for this reason that Hasem has commanded you to keep the Shabbat.**



Why the changes from the 1<sup>st</sup> version to the 2<sup>nd</sup> version? And what has Yetziat Mitzrayim got to do with Shabbat anyway?

One possible reason for the difference between Shemot and Devarim is that keeping Shabbat as a testament to creation is showing an appreciation of Divine will. Shabbat was not the result of a phenomenon or event; it was itself the event because of the absolute will of Hashem to rest. One who remembers this shows an acceptance of the absolute will of Hashem. Meanwhile, in Devarim, the exodus from Egypt represented a time of eternal freedom granted by Hashem to observe the Torah and mitzvot. In appreciation of this we are commanded to guard the mitzvah of keeping Shabbat. (Rambam, Guide for the Perplexed/Moreh Nevuchim)



Furthermore, the Rabbis teach that “Remembering” Shabbat refers to the positive aspects of Shabbat, such as the Mitzvot of Kiddush and having 3 meals, whereas “Observing” Shabbat refers to the negative aspects of Shabbat , i.e. refraining from doing the 39 Melachot.



**Melachot = things NOT to do on Shabbat**



- |               |                |                    |                |
|---------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1 Carrying    | 2 Burning      | 3 Extinguishing    | 4 Finishing    |
| 5 Writing     | 6 Erasing      | 7 Cooking          | 8 Washing      |
| 9 Sewing      | 10 Tearing     | 11 Knotting        | 12 Untying     |
| 13 Shaping    | 14 Ploughing   | 15 Planting        | 16 Reaping     |
| 17 Harvesting | 18 Threshing   | 19 Winnowing       | 20 Selecting   |
| 21 Sifting    | 2 Grinding     | 23 Kneading        | 24 Combing     |
| 25 Spinning   | 26 Dyeing      | 27 Chain Stitching | 28 Warping     |
| 29 Weaving    | 30 Unravelling | 31 Building        | 32 Demolishing |
| 33 Trapping   | 34 Shearing    | 35 Slaughtering    | 36 Skinning    |
| 37 Tanning    | 38 Smoothing   | 39 Marking         |                |

The word Melacha literally means work. BUT, what if you're a madrich on Shabbat, that's (hard) work isn't it?

However, in truth, Melacha doesn't mean "work" but rather means "creative activity". Indeed, Bereishit 2:2 in the context of Hashem finishing the melacha He performed to Create the world. Therefore we can deduce that Melacha refers to a type of work that is *creative* or exercises control over your environment. Really, the word for work is "Avoda", not "Melacha"! Thus, carrying a wardrobe up and down the stairs may not be melacha, but writing something is.



Apart from its mention in the Torah about Shabbat and festivals, Melacha is only mentioned elsewhere concerning the building of the Mishkan where interestingly Shabbat restrictions were also re-iterated. Many commentaries maintain that the juxtaposition of Shabbat with the construction of the Mishkan teaches us that the building of the Mishkan was stopped for Shabbat. We therefore learn that we must also stop involving ourselves in any type of work that took place in the Mishkan on Shabbat.

Rashi comments that although there is a major importance in building the Mishkan, it may not be built on Shabbat, because the day that testifies to Hashem's existence supersedes the Mishkan, where He is served. They found 39 categories of forbidden acts all of them types of work required to build the Mishkan.

In Short – the Mishkan shows man's creativity but Shabbat is a day to recognise G-d's creativity.

***But why should the Chanichim be excited and proud to keep Shabbat?***

Well, the truth is having a day off after a hectic week is really no bad idea. In fact, most cultures have adopted a day to replenish energy stores. If it weren't for Shabbat and we worked for seven days solidly there would be a significant risk of us succumbing to fatigue – in other words burn out!



Furthermore, Rabbi Sacks says that in life we have some things which are urgent and some things which are important. Urgent things are all those short-term goals, for example, coursework, cooking supper, making money etc. There are other things though which are important – more so than the urgent things and with more meaningful long-term importance – such as quality family time, learning Torah, taking time out to re-assess our lives and our true aims and goals, spending time with our friends and focusing on enjoying the wonderful gifts which Hashem has given to us.

In life, these important things often fall by the wayside. Shabbat comes along and allows us, or maybe even forces us to take a pause from the urgent and focus on the important, which after all is far more important!

## Shabbat in Israel

On the one hand, Shabbat is testimony to the world about G-d's creation of the world in 6 periods of time and His resting on the 7<sup>th</sup>. However, Shabbat is also a special covenant and a sign between G-d and us. In short Shabbat is sign a] between G-d and the world and b] between G-d and the Jews.

We can combine these two concepts, and suggest that by us keeping the Shabbat as a sign of our covenant with G-d, we are publicising to the world that in 6 periods of time God created the world and on the 7<sup>th</sup> he rested.

Thus, when Am Yisrael keep Shabbat, we are giving eydut, bearing testimony and showing the world that Hashem created the world and rested on Shabbat. People keeping Shabbat on their own or in groups is one great level of eydut, but if a whole 'am' is doing it ba'arezt, being part of a whole society and nation keeping Shabbat, it is a much



stronger eydut to the world. We are giving eydut on a national level to the rest of the world that Shabbat is testimony to the fact that Hashem created the world in six and rested on the seventh. We are also fulfilling our covenant with Hashem in its most ideal and greatest level. Indeed, by us keeping Shabbat, not only are we doing all of the above but we are also reaffirming the special relationship and covenant between us and G-d!

### **Summary of K5:**

1. Shabbat is both a remembrance of how Hashem rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of creation and an eternal sign between Him and the Jewish People.
2. The 39 Melachot are the categories of forbidden “creative activity”, not “work”.
3. Shabbat is an opportunity to think about the **important** things in life, not just the **urgent** things.
4. When the Jewish People as a nation keeps Shabbat in Israel it is a national testimony to the fact that Hashem created the world in 6 days/time periods, as well as reaffirming the special relationship between us and Hashem.

Special K.....Which is actually a T!  
Confused much?



Aims:

- To learn about Ma'apilim
- To teach the Chanichim about the Ma'apilim!
- To appreciate why our Machane has its name

## MA'APILIM, MA'APILIM ANACHNU!

So who were / what was the Ma'apilim?!

The Bnei Akiva madrichim's guide of 1962 explains Ma'apilim as meaning 'endeavours' in the sense of "daring persistence in all ventures".

The word Ma'apilim first appears in Sefer Bamidbar. After the tragedy of the Meraglim [the spies who said bad stuff about Eretz Yisrael], there were a bunch of people who took extreme measures in the other direction. The morning after Am Yisrael had been told that they wouldn't go into the Land until after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, a group of people armed themselves and ignoring Moshe's advice attempted to go up to the Land of Israel. Because they disobeyed they were all killed by the Amalekites and the Canaanites. The verb used to describe the actions of these people was 'vayapilu', hence they were the 'ma'apilim'. The word 'vayapilu' can be translated as 'and they defiantly ascended'. Grammatically, the ones who 'defiantly ascended' would be called Ma'apilim. These original Ma'apilim were people of in many ways, good intentions but had acted wrongly and were therefore not successful. So where does Ma'apilim in the context that we use it come from.

Based on the idea of these original Ma'apilim trying to sneak into Eretz Yisrael, the name Ma'apilim was given to the Jewish 'illegal' immigrants to Palestine under the period of the British Mandate.

I am generally on principle against copying and pasting from Wikipedia but on this occasion, the Wikipedia article appeared very well written and informative, so I present it below subject to a bit of editing.

This group of Olim who made aliya "illegally" defying the British government's decree to restrict Jewish immigration from 1939 were also known as "Aliya Bet" which is the term favoured by the Wikipedia article.

**Aliyah Bet** (Hebrew: עלייה ב'), meaning "Aliyah 'B'" (bet being the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet) was the code name given to "illegal" immigration by Jews to the British Mandate for Palestine in violation of British White Paper of 1939 restrictions, in the years 1934-1948. In modern day Israel it has also been called by the Hebrew term **Ha'apala** ("ascending"[or'defiantly ascending' 'defiantly endeavouring' 'daringly persisting' etc]; Hebrew: ההעפלה[rd ma'apilim the same verb as the wo]).

It was distinguished from *Aliyah Aleph* ("Aliyah 'A'") (Aleph is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet): the limited Jewish immigration permitted by British authorities in the same period.

## Organization

During *Ha'apala*, several Jewish organizations worked together to facilitate immigration beyond the established quotas. As persecution of Jews intensified in Europe during the Nazi era, the urgency driving the immigration also became more acute. Those who



participated in the immigration efforts consistently refused to term it "illegal", instead calling it "clandestine."

*Ha'apala* occurred in two phases. First, from 1934 to 1942, it was an effort to enable European Jews to escape Nazi persecution and murder. From 1945 to 1948, in a stage known as *Bricha*, it was an effort to find homes for Jewish survivors of the Nazi crimes (Sh'erit ha-Pletah) who were among the millions of displaced persons ("DPs") languishing in refugee camps in occupied Germany. During the first phase, several organizations (including Revisionists) led the effort; after World War II, the Mossad LeAliyah Bet ("the Institute for Aliyah B"), an arm of the Haganah, took charge.

## Routes

Post-World War II, *Ha'apala* journeys typically started in the DP camps and moved through one of two collection points in the American occupation sector, Bad Reichenhall and Leipheim. From there, the refugees travelled in disguised trucks, on foot, or by train to ports on the Mediterranean Sea, where ships brought them to Palestine. More than 70,000 Jews arrived in Palestine using more than 100 ships.<sup>[1]</sup>

American sector camps imposed no restrictions on the movements out of the camps, and American, French, and Italian officials often turned a blind eye to the movements. Several UNRRA officials (in particular Elizabeth Robertson in Leipheim) acted as facilitators of the emigration. The British government vehemently opposed the movement, and restricted movement in and out of their camps. Britain also set up armed naval patrols to prevent immigrants from landing in Palestine.

## History

Over 100,000 people attempted to "illegally" enter Palestine. There were 142 voyages by 120 ships. Over half were stopped by the British patrols. Most of the intercepted immigrants were sent to [internment camps](#) in [Cyprus](#): (Karaolos near [Famagusta](#), [Nicosia](#), [Dhekelia](#), and [Xylotumbou](#)). Some were sent to the [Atlit detention camp](#) in Palestine, and some to [Mauritius](#). The British held as many as 50,000 people in these camps (see [Jews in British camps on Cyprus](#)). Over 1,600 drowned at sea. Only a few thousand actually entered Palestine. [In the big picture, this is inaccurate as those held in the internment camps in Cyprus eventually made it to Israel some before, and some after the establishment of the State.]

The pivotal event in the *Ha'apala* program was the incident of the [SS Exodus](#) in 1947. The *Exodus* was intercepted, attacked, and boarded by the British patrol. Despite significant resistance from its passengers, *Exodus* was forcibly returned to Europe. Its passengers were eventually sent back to Germany. This was publicized, to the great embarrassment of the British government.

One account of Aliyah Bet is given by journalist [I. F. Stone](#) in his 1946 book [Underground to Palestine](#), a first-person account of traveling with European displaced persons attempting to reach the Jewish homeland.<sup>[2]</sup>

Some 250 American ex-veterans including Murray S. Greenfield (of the ship *Hatikva*) from WWII volunteered to sail ten ships from the USA to Europe to load 35,000 survivors of the Holocaust (1/2 of the so-called illegals) to Palestine, only to be deported to Cyprus detention camps. ("The Jews' Secret Fleet").

## Voyages



United States lands Jewish refugees in Nahariya, 1948



Exodus arriving at Haifa harbour, July 20, 1947



Haganah ship *Jewish State* in Haifa harbour, 1947

The *Tiger Hill*, a 1,499 ton ship, built in 1887, sailed from Constanța on August 3, 1939, with about 750 immigrants on board. She took on board the passengers from the *Frossoula*, another illegal immigrant ship that was marooned in Lebanon. On September 1, the first day of World War II, the *Tiger Hill* was intercepted and fired on by British gunboats off Tel Aviv, and was beached.

## Disasters

On October 3, 1939, a large group of immigrants sailed from [Vienna](#) on the river boat *Uranus*, down the [Danube](#). At the [Romanian](#) border, the *Uranus* was stopped and the immigrants were forced to disembark at the old fortress town of Kladovo in [Yugoslavia](#). About 1,100 refugees were stranded there. In May, 1941, they were still in Yugoslavia, where 915 of them were caught and eventually killed by the invading Nazis.

On May 18, 1940, the old Italian paddle steamer *Pencho* sailed from [Bratislava](#), with 514 passengers, mostly [Betar](#) members. The *Pencho* sailed down the [Danube](#) to the [Black Sea](#) and into the [Aegean Sea](#). On October 9, her engines stopped working, and she was wrecked off [Mytilene](#), in the Italian-ruled [Dodecanese](#) Islands. The Italians rescued the passengers and took them to [Rhodes](#). All but two were then placed in an internment camp at [Ferramonti di Tarsia](#) in southern Italy. They were held there until [Allied](#) forces liberated the area in September 1943. The story of the *Pencho* was published as *Odyssey*, by John Bierman.

In October 1940, a large group of refugees were allowed to leave Vienna. The exodus was organized by Berthold Storfer, a Jewish businessman who worked under [Adolph Eichmann](#). They took four river boats, *Uranus*, *Schönbrunn*, *Helios*, and *Melk*, down the Danube to Romania, where the *Uranus* passengers, approximately 1,000, boarded the *Pacific*, and sailed on October 11, 1940. They arrived at [Haifa](#) on November 1, followed by

the *Milos*. The British transferred all the immigrants to the [French](#) liner *Patria*, intending to take them for internment to Mauritius. To stop the *Patria* from sailing, the Haganah smuggled a bomb on board. The explosion blew a hole in the side of the ship, which capsized, killing 267 persons. The British, by order of [Winston Churchill](#), allowed the survivors to remain in Palestine.

In December 1940 the *Salvador*, a small [Bulgarian](#) schooner formerly named *Tsar Krum*, left [Burgas](#) with 327 refugees. On December 12 the *Salvador* was wrecked in a violent storm in the [Sea of Marmora](#), near [Istanbul](#). 223 persons, including 66 children, lost their lives. The survivors were taken to Istanbul. 125 survivors were deported back to Bulgaria, and the remaining 70 left on the *Darien* (No. 66).<sup>[3]</sup>

On December 11, 1941 the *Struma* sailed from [Constanța](#), flying the [Panamanian](#) flag. The *Struma* was torpedoed and sunk by the [Soviet submarine Shch-213](#) on February 24, 1942. 770 lives were lost. There was one survivor.

On September 20, 1942 the *Europa* sailed from Romania, with twenty-one passengers. The boat was wrecked in the [Bosporus](#).

On August 5, 1944, the *Mefkura* (or *Mefkure*) sailed from Constanța with 350 persons on board. The ship travelled with the *Morino* and *Bulbul*. During the night the *Mefkura* was sunk by gunfire/torpedo from by the [Soviet submarine SC-215](#). Of the 350 persons being transported, only five survived. They were picked up by the *Bulbul*.

## Conclusion

The success of *Aliyah Bet* was modest when measured in terms of the numbers who succeeded in entering Palestine. But it proved to be a unifying force both for the Jewish community in Palestine (the [Yishuv](#)) and for the Holocaust-survivor refugees in Europe ([Sh'erit ha-Pletah](#)).

Wikipedia yet again has a surprisingly well-written article on the internment camps where Ma'apilim were imprisoned:

**Cyprus internment camps** were operated by the [British](#) for [internment](#) of Jewish immigrants who attempted to immigrate to the [Mandatory Palestine](#) during the 1940s in violation of immigration quotas set for Jews. In spite of repeated requests to lift restrictions to save lives otherwise lost in the [the Holocaust](#), and later the plight of thousands of displaced [Holocaust survivors](#), the British still enforced the quotas set in the [White Paper of 1939](#). Jews escaping Europe in the *Berihah* and attempting *Aliyah Bet* were detained at sea or after landing, and held indefinitely and without trial in prison camps on nearby British-controlled [Cyprus](#).

Where transport ships were intercepted on the high seas by the British [Royal Navy](#), those ships that did not sink (many were old and not seaworthy vessels) were escorted to [Cyprus](#) where internment camps were constructed for up to 30,000 detainees. They consisted almost entirely of Holocaust survivors. Funds for maintenance of the camps were taken from taxes collected from the Jewish population of Palestine.

The first camps were constructed by German [prisoners of war](#) (POWs). Conditions for POW's were determined by the [Third Geneva Convention](#); there was no equivalent convention for imprisoned civilians so the German POWs were generally treated far better than the Jews.<sup>[1]</sup> Use of POWs for construction purposes was eventually halted as it interfered with British [de-Nazification](#) programmes.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> Jewish inmates did not take the German presence very well either.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

Because of pressure from the [United States](#) and in response to the recommendations of the [Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry](#), Britain agreed to allow 1,000 Jews a month into [Palestine](#). To reduce pressure in [Cyprus](#) (there was fear of a Communist led Cypriot uprising<sup>[4]</sup>), half that quota, 500 Jews a month, were allowed in from Cyprus. That meant that most Cyprus internees expected to spend a couple of years there before being allowed into Palestine.

In August 1947 the New York Times reported that 16,000 were being held in the camps and that 4,000 were children.<sup>[5]</sup>

In November 1947 the [United Nations voted to recommend the UNSCOP plan](#) in [Palestine](#), which called for the establishment of a Jewish state, including a harbor into which Jews could immigrate. Britain refused to implement this point before the mandate ended, leading to accusations that the British government was in contravention of the United Nations decision. The Soviet Union responded to the British failure by allowing Jewish illegal migration to depart from [Romania](#).

Despite donations from Jewish charities in the United States and contributions from the [Jewish Agency](#) in Palestine, conditions in the camps were hard. The camps lacked proper supplies of running water, soap, clothes, sheets and there were complaints regarding inadequate food supplies. Most of the inmates were deeply traumatized Holocaust survivors including large numbers of orphan children.

Camp inmates did not face the kind of viciousness or deprivation associated with Nazi [concentration camps](#). The [American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee](#) was allowed to supplement the diet and provide support to camp inmates. Volunteers from Palestine were allowed to live in the camps and these included educators, nurses and doctors. The volunteers were unpaid and shared the inmates living conditions, except that they could take occasional holidays while the inmates could not leave.

Over time 50,000 people were imprisoned in the camps and several thousand children were born there. At its peak the camps held almost 10% of the population of Cyprus. Even after the establishment of the state of [Israel](#) the British government continued to hold 8,000 Jewish men of "military age" and 3,000 of their wives in order to prevent them joining the [1948 Arab-Israeli war](#). During this period inmates were held under conditions of indefinite detention with no known release date. They were eventually released in February 1949, following the British government's decision to recognize the state of Israel.

### From the Jewish Virtual Library

During World War II, the aliyah effort focused on rescuing Jews from Nazioccupied Europe. Some olim entered the country on visas issued under the "White Paper" quota; the majority came as illegal immigrants. This immigration, called Aliyah Bet, arrived by land and by sea, from Europe and the Middle East, in contravention of the Mandatory Government's orders.

The loss of contact with European countries, the hazards of maritime travel under wartime conditions, and the difficulty in obtaining vessels for transport of illegal immigrants placed severe constraints on Aliyah Bet. Several boatloads of immigrants who managed to reach Palestine were sent back by British authorities upholding the quota system. Many lost their lives at sea or in the Nazi inferno in Europe. Overland, 1,350 Syrian Jews were escorted to Palestine in an intricate and audacious operation.

During the years 1944-1948, the Jews in Eastern Europe sought to leave that continent by any means. Emissaries from the yishuv, Jewish partisans and Zionist youth movements cooperated in establishing the Beriha (escape) organization, which helped nearly 200,000 Jews leave Europe. The majority settled in Palestine.

From the end of World War II until the establishment of Israel (1945-1948), illegal immigration was the major method of immigration, because the British, by setting the quota at a mere 18,000 per year, virtually terminated the option of legal immigration. Sixtysix illegal immigration sailings were organized during these years, but only a few managed to penetrate the British blockade and bring their passengers ashore. In 1947, 4500 immigrants on the *Exodus* were sent back to Europe by the Mandatory government. The British stopped the vessels carrying immigrants at sea, and interned the captured immigrants in camps in Cyprus; most of these persons only arrived in Israel after the establishment of the state. Approximately 80,000 illegal immigrants reached Palestine during 1945-48.

The number of immigrants during the entire Mandate period, legal and illegal alike, was approximately 480,000, close to 90% of them from Europe. The population of the yishuv expanded to 650,000 by the time statehood was proclaimed.