

# K5: Chanukah and Purim

## 'More than a Miracle'



### Concrete Concepts:

1. We can live life seeing events as miraculous.
2. Chanukah and Purim teach us about the supernatural nature of our natural world.
3. Purim and Chanukah make the transition from a miraculous to a post-miraculous era.

**Discussion Point 1: How are these festivals different from others? Do you think your chanichim know/appreciate their uniqueness?**

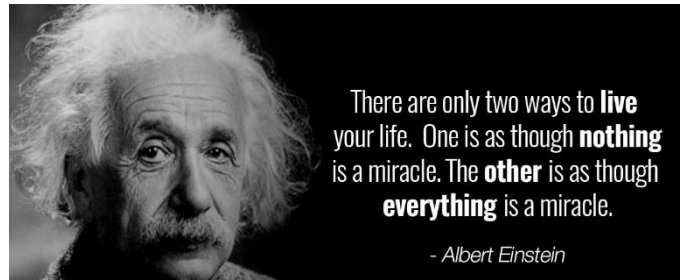
**“Miracle of Miracles”:**

**Discussion Point 2: How would you define a miracle? What events are miracles?**

How miracles are built in to the spiritual fabric of the universe – whether they are apart of nature, exceptions to nature or there’s no such thing as nature – is subject to much Jewish philosophical debate. The topic is very connected to *hashgacha* – the mechanism through which God interacts with the world. But year sixes don’t really care about any of that. They might care about how we can go about viewing the world though.

“The truth is that there is no essential difference between the natural and the miraculous. Everything that occurs is a miracle. The world has no other cause but the will of Hashem. We call God’s act a “miracle” when he wills an occurrence which is novel and unfamiliar to us. We call God’s acts “nature” when he wills certain events which occur in a recognisable pattern. This familiarity presents us with a **challenge**...” – Rav Eliyahu Dessler, *Strive for truth*

Rav Dessler firmly plants himself (and most Jewish thought) on the latter side of Albert Einstein’s distinction. What is the “challenge” Rav Dessler talks about? Well, being apart of a nation that talks so much about miracles can come with its personal challenges.



Do miracles still happen today? Does our increased understanding of science lessen what miracles mean? Does not seeing open miracles alter our relationship with God? Chanukah and Purim can shed some light (excuse the pun) on some answers...

**“Upside Down”:**

Purim is commonly called a story of *Venahafoch Hu*, - ‘and it was turned upside down’ - but what does this mean? There are also midrashim that describe people walking in Gan Eden with “their head on the ground and their feet in the air”.

We can see this upside-down business with Rabbi Akiva as well. There is a well-known story about Rabbi Akiva walking towards the Temple Mount (Har HaBayit) with some fellow Rabbis; they began crying at seeing the destruction of the Temple and the tragedy of their present circumstances, while Rabbi Akiva laughed! When the other Rabbis asked why he was laughing, he replied saying “now that we have seen the prophecy of the destruction of the temple come true, we know for sure the prophecy of the rebuilding of the temple will come true!”

**Discussion Point 3 – Is interpreting sad events optimistically always a good thing? How does it tie in to the Einstein quote above?**

### “Take a chance”:

So if everything is a miracle, nothing is really down to chance. When we think of Chanukah the most important miracle that comes to mind is the miracle of the oil. This is all well and good but if we look at another familiar source for Chanukah, the *Al Hanisim* prayer in the *Shemonah Esrei* and *Birkat Hamazon* prayers, we have a different story!

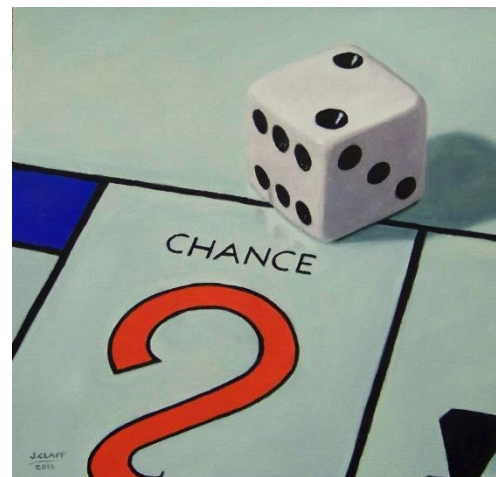
*"[We thank You also] for the miracles, the redemption, the mighty deeds, and the victories in battle which You performed for our ancestors in those days at this time..." – Al Hanissim*



Really there were two miracles in the Chanukah story – the oil and the military victory. Which one was more significant? Obviously the crazy military victory! But the military victory of Chanukah (like the Purim victory) is a **hidden miracle**. Sometimes we need a reminder that these things aren't just down to chance, but rather down to Hashem. There is no Hebrew word for luck. Sometimes it takes a more obvious miracle like a burning candle to shed some light on the real miracle taking place...

The idea that nothing is down to chance also comes up in the Purim story. From a straight reading of the Megilla, the story seems subject to chance. God doesn't even get a direct mention!

Indeed, Purim means lottery. When people want something to be random, they draw a lot. If we think about it though, it turns out there nowhere is Divine intervention clearer than in a lottery: the Jews divided up the land of Israel via lots! In Judaism, when we want to find out what God really wants, we draw a lot. It turns out, nature is actually not something we should take for granted. A lottery isn't random. The world is run according to Divine Leadership. For example, people thought that in 1967 winning the war was due to a strong army - what they didn't see was that God was running the show behind the scenes.



The Gematria of Amalek (Haman's nation) is the same as that of Safek (doubt or chance). And that's what Amalek were all about. A deterministic ideology that attributes everything to chance. Jews attribute nothing to chance.

**Discussion Point 4 – How does this outlook on randomness practically affect our attitude to life? How could it help our chanichim? What does it mean for regret?**



## We are living in a Material World:

The final piece of this puzzle can be gleaned from examining Chanukah in a bit more depth. Its not just about bringing light dark places (Chanukah takes place at the darkest time in the year). Its about bringing light to daily, mundane, physical life.

There is a Gemara that mysteriously says God's presence only rests 10 handbreadths (tefachim) above the ground. It is no coincidence that we are commanded to light our Chanukiot below a height of 10 handbreadths ideally. We bring Godliness into where God is often not – our daily mundane routines.



A lot of the laws of Chanukah make sense in this context. Lighting candles are the only mitzvah you **require** a home to fulfil – you need a daily mundane family life to appreciate what Chanukah has to offer. We have to light the candles when “people are walking back from the marketplace” – bringing holiness to our daily business activities. Most significantly, it's a very “unfestivally” Jewish festival. There's no melacha we can't do, no Seuda we have to have. Other than the lighting, Chanukah feels like a regular 8 days. And that's the point.



Under normal circumstances people walk with their feet on the ground and their head above because the head points to where we want to go, where we believe God rests. In Gan Eden we walk 'upside down', we know the truth: that **this it is in this world that God truly resides**, not the next world. It is hear that our task lies – bringing God into the mundane.

The reason Purim is such a physical festival (eating and drinking etc...) is because when we eat we feel more alive and invigorated, and when we feel alive in *this* world that's when we can see God and the meaning of life the most. That is why Purim will always exist. It is the eternal truth and the secret of the world to come **when we will see nature for the Divine miracle it really is.**

## It's a new dawn:

**Discussion Point 5 – We've spoken a lot about similar messages Purim and Chanukah convey. What could you tell your chanichim about the differences between them?**

The Gemara mysteriously comments:

*“As dawn ends the night, so Esther ends the era of miracles” (Yoma 29a)“*

Rabbi Tatz explains that the entire story of Purim describes the **transition from the revealed to the hidden**. The inversion of modes (upside-down....). At the interface between the periods of the written law and the oral law (where we are now), from the

period of polytheism to the period of atheism (randomness and chance...), miracles began to fade.

No direct open miracles occur in the whole of the Purim story. The very name "Esther" means "hidden"! Through the period of darkness and exile we learn to see the world in an entirely new way. We don't get open miracles any more because **we no longer need them**. Nature no longer needs to be overridden for the spiritual to be seen – nature can now be seen through. We can see the miracles in nature.



A bit after the Persians of the Purim story, Greece stands at the line of transition from idolatry to atheism, from divine wisdom to human wisdom, the ending of prophecy. **Purim was just inside that phase, Chanukah just outside it.**

The materialist view that Greece introduced into the world has survived until this day because the hard evidence of a greater reality (open miracles) has slipped away behind the veil of nature. Greece taught the world that only things that can be measured or calculated are real. But miracles and the spiritual world exist beyond what can simply be measured or calculated.

The war of Chanukah featured no overt change in nature and great human effort was required – the features of a post-prophetic era. The only overtly open supernatural miracle (the oil) happened in a very private context. It was the last open miracle ever witnessed. It carries the flame of the memory of open revelation into the long darkness of hidden providence.

### Summary:

So that's it. Chanukah and Purim aren't just 'miracles' that happened a long time ago. They're more than miracles. They teach us how to approach our daily life and how to view the world. They are both part of the gradual transition from the revealed to the hidden era, the prophetic to the post-prophetic.

That's why perhaps more than any other festival – their lessons are relevant to us. They happened in the world we currently live in. The Jews then were facing the exact same problems we are facing today. How do we deal with people that want to destroy us and our ideology? How do we respond to materialistic deterministic claims of an atheist world? How can we walk upside-down when everyone else is walking the right way up? How can we bring light to darkness? How can we see the positive in terrible situations? How can we bring the holy into the mundane?

It's a tall order for a final Kevutza, but if you can even get your young chanichim to start thinking about these questions for 8 days + 2 days each year for the rest of their lives, you will have done extremely well. Good luck!

# K4: Sukkot

## 'More than a ritual'



### Concrete Concepts:

1. Sukkot teaches us that Judaism is both particular and universal.
2. Sukkot teaches us to value life.
3. Sukkot teaches us how to be happy.



**Discussion Point 1: If your chanichim had to pick 3 words to describe/explain Sukkot what would they pick? What about you?**

What I actually build vs.  
What I feel like I'm building



Rabbi Sacks calls Sukkot a “festival of unusual complexity and depth.” Getting across all of its themes and deeper meanings in a couple of pages is impossible, which is why it is here more than in any other Kevutza that you’re encouraged to explore further by yourselves. This is the best Kevutza for your chanichim to get to grips with the idea of **symbolism** in Judaism. The fact that each ritual we regularly perform is saturated with meanings and values that the Torah wants us to inculcate into ourselves.

**Discussion Point 2: What are the two primary positive Mitzvot unique to Sukkot?**

**Universalism:**

The “Shalosh Regalim” (pilgrimage festivals = Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot) are ones of national rededication to Hashem. The central section of the Amida on all these festivals starts with “you have chosen us from among all peoples.” This makes it all the more curious that we find multiple aspects of Sukkot that point to its universality:

- 1) The prophet Zechariah (14:16-19) says that in the times of Moshiach, everyone will celebrate Sukkot.
- 2) Sukkot’s association with rain. Rain is something that all nations need.
- 3) Rav Chaim points out that Pesach can be likened to birth (indoors, intimate, surrounded by family, birth of a nation....etc). Shavuot can be likened to a bar/bat mitzvah (obvious reasons...) and Sukkot is likened to adulthood – where we literally **leave our houses** and show our Judaism to the world.

This tension can be resolved by realising that Sukkot is really two festivals in one (hence its plural name!). Firstly, it is part of the national cycle of the 3 festivals. However, it is also directly following on from Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. These Yamim Noraim focus on the sovereignty of God over all of the world. They talk about what it means to be human, not just what it means to be Jewish.

Sukkot does both. It is the final step in both the “Shalosh Regalim” and “Tishrei” cycle. Where the universality and particularity of our religion are synthesised. We acknowledge that in the words of Rabbi Sacks *“The God of Israel is the God of all humanity but the religion of Israel is not, and will not be, the religion of all humanity.”* In the words of Rav Hirsch *“being a chosen people means that our people cannot belong to any other God, not that our God cannot belong to any other people.”*

**Discussion Point 3 – How could we convey this difficult concept to chanichim through a fun game?**

So how does this relate to our 2 Sukkot Mitzvot? Firstly the duality is represented in the mitzvah of Sukkah. On the one hand the Sukkah represents our years of *national* wandering in the desert and our dependence on God. On the other hand, it's the ultimate statement of leaving our house and showing Judaism to the world! The Arba Minim ("four kinds") also represent the unity of different parts of the Jewish nation *but also* are unprocessed products of nature. They are the only time we do a mitzvah with natural objects and are about humanity's *universal* dependence on nature and rain.

### Death:

On Sukkot, we read a megillah called "Kohelet". This philosophical book about the meaning of life was written by King Shlomo. What obsessed Shlomo in the book is what separated life from death. The fragility and brevity of life. It takes him a while to eventually come to a conclusion expressed in the words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow →

Life is real! Life is earnest! And the grave is not its goal; Dust thou art, to dust returnest, Was not spoken of the soul.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The obvious question is why are we talking about all this on Sukkot? It hints at another deeper theme behind the two mitzvot we perform. The halachot surrounding building a Sukkah are often connected to it being viewed as a temporary dwelling ('Diraat Arai'). On Sukkot, we leave our houses and sleep in a Sukkah, subjecting ourselves to the elements. We acknowledge that as great as life is, as nice as our houses are, ultimately all is temporary. Our bodies are as temporary as a hut rocking about the wind that could fall down at any moment. Our bodies are like Sukkot.

We cover the Sukkah with leaves that *cannot be attached to the ground*. They have to be dying. We shake the four species that really, are all slowly decaying. In a sense, on Sukkot, we surround ourselves with death. At risk of sounding a bit too dark, its not supposed to end there! In the words of Kohelet when all is said and done "fear God and keep mitzvot, for that is what humanity is all about." We reflect on death so that we can lead more meaningful lives. By realising how short life is, each moment of life becomes more precious.

**Discussion Point 4 – Do you think that year 6/7s will be able to appreciate this concept? If not, how could it be simplified for them? What PARTS of the idea could you get them to realise? How?**

### Joy:



The last aspect of Sukkot we need to explore is its namesake "Zman Simchateinu" – the time of our rejoicing! The Torah commands us to rejoice on Sukkot, 3 separate times. When the temple stood, Sukkot would involve the ultimate display of joy in a massive party called a "simchat beit hashoeva." The mood was so happy that the Mishna says: "One who has not seen the Simchat Beit HaSho'eva has never seen celebration in their day" (Sukkah 5:1). Why? Because we have a lot to be celebrating.....



- 1) The Torah tells us Sukkot was a harvest festival. Work in the field was over! People had both reason and time to celebrate!
- 2) The word "simcha" appears in Kohelet more than in the 5 books of the Torah combined. Kohelet comes to the realisation that simcha has the power to defeat despair. By knowing that life is finite **we can appreciate and be joyous in every moment we are alive.**
- 3) The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Emor) tells us a reason for celebration on Sukkot is that "our souls have received acquittal." This frames Sukkot in the context of the Yamim Noraim. Imagine a partner in a married couple is doing something wrong. It might take them a few weeks to realise that their habit is frustrating their partner (Elul). After that point they can look at each other and say "listen, I know what I'm doing is frustrating you but I value this relationship a lot and want to continue with it" (Rosh Hashana). Then they actually start breaking out of their habit for 10 days and their partner is like "wow! I was impressed when you said you wanted this relationship to be better but now I can actually see you change!" (10 days and Yom Kippur). After that, the couple can enjoy their NEW and CHANGED relationship. They can celebrate together!

It is in this context that a statement of the Vilna Gaon (1720-1797) makes sense. He gives us one last bit of symbolism behind the Sukkah. He says that we should compare being in a Sukkah to God giving us a hug. After a month and a half of relationship-repairing – we deserve it.



**Discussion Point 5 – What might your chanichim think is Judaism's attitude to happiness before coming to camp? How can you teach them the value of "serving Hashem with joy"? Can you think of examples?**

So that's a summary of the wealth of rich, complex and deep meaning behind our practices on Sukkot. Hopefully it help chanichim realise that all the ritual practices we do in Judaism are only there to communicate something much deeper and get us thinking about it much more.

# K3: Shavuot

## 'More than a book'



### Concrete Concepts:

1. Freedom from without freedom for is not freedom.
2. The Torah is relevant to all of us, for all time, always.
3. The giving of the Torah was an act of love.

**Discussion Point 1: On a scale of Tu B'av to Pesach, where does Shavuot rank in your chanichim's minds at the moment? What conceptions about the festival will they have coming into camp?**

### The Freedom:

Shavuot is the spiritual completion of the physical redemption at Pesach. The pinnacle of connection to God we reach gradually at the end of the counting of the Omer. The point that we were 'looking towards' from the moment we became a nation after leaving Egypt. Because just having 'freedom' doesn't really mean anything. Leaving the awful society that was Egypt isn't meaningful unless we construct a society with rules that are the antithesis of Egypt. Playing football on a roof without any fencing isn't actually being free!

**Discussion Point 2: "Freedom from without freedom for is no freedom at all." How can we communicate this unbelievably important concrete concept to year 6/7s?**

### The Spoken Word:

Often we think of Shavuot as commemorating the giving of 'the Torah'. But what do we think of when we say 'the Torah'? The 5 books? The truth is that the 'written Torah' was a small part of what was revealed to us at Har Sinai. An encrypted manual is impossible to decode with no one to explain it to us. Looking at someone's lecture notes doesn't give you much without the lecture. The lecture notes might have some useful things like "remember to keep shabbat" but only by attending the lecture would you have any idea how to do that.

**Discussion Point 3: If you were tasked with creating a cake recipe that your descendants would be able to follow for years into the future how would you do it? Write down the recipe? Show your children how to make it? What could you do to ensure it isn't distorted with time?**



The "Torah Sh'baal Peh" (Oral Law) is what enables the Har Sinai revelation to transform with time – with time our language changes, the laws we need to focus on changes, the parables we use change. Eventually the Oral Law was written down in a coded way (to preserve the oral 'active learning' nature of it) in the Talmud which continues to be the way and language we can use to talk about Torah and converse with Hashem.



*"The oral law, as long as it remains something that is transmitted from one generation to another – means you can always adjust it to the language, usage and problems of any generation." – Rav Adi Steinsaltz*

One of the strangest things about Shavuot (6<sup>th</sup> Sivan) is that the giving of the Torah actually happened on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Sivan! The Gemara (Shabbat 87a) explains that Moshe perceived that the correct thing to do was to add an extra day before the giving of the Torah. Shavuot therefore commemorates the first instance in Jewish history that exemplifies what makes the oral law so special. Hashem gives us autonomy in certain instances over the Torah. Shavuot is also called **zman matan torateinu** – the time of the giving of OUR TORAH.

### For all Time, Always:

*"I am Hashem **your** God. Why does it say your God in singular, not in plural? Because Hashem spoke to every single person at Har Sinai." – Chizkuni Shemot 20:2*

For your chanichim to see the Torah as 'more than just a book' they need to appreciate the role they play in its ongoing learning. Rav Kook in 'Orot HaTorah (chapter 2)' explains how the 'light of Torah' that one person reveals through his learning and "chiddush" (creativity and coming up with new ideas) cannot be similar to that of another person. Therefore, the Torah itself is never fully 'revealed' in the world without every single person doing their bit to decode the hidden messages within it!



What we can also learn from this teaching is that no two people connect so the exact same part of Torah. Torah comes in so many forms (Gemara, Tanach, self development, philosophy, mysticism, chassidut, halacha.... etc to name a few) and everyone has their own individual bit to connect to.

*"By refusing to give the revelation at Sinai any formal commemoration, the Torah makes the crucial point that the revelation at Sinai is not a past experience which needs to be reactivated in the present (like Pesach or Sukkot). **It is an ongoing adventure!** At Sinai, the revelation started but never came to a close. [...] it continues through the Torah itself, and its study. **Learning Torah is revelation!**... Learning Torah is neither the study of what happened a long time ago nor is it what God once commanded man to do. Rather it is the confrontation with the Divine word at this present moment." - Rabbi Nathan Lopes Cardozo*

**Discussion Point 4: How can we use this Kevutza to make chanichim feel like they have an individual connection to Torah?**

**Torat Chesed:**

*Rabbi Zeira says: "This megilla does not have anything in it concerned with impurity or purity nor what is forbidden and what is permitted. So why is it written? To teach us the greatness of the reward for acts of lovingkindness."*

אמר רבי זעירא, מגילה זו אין בה לא טמאה, ולא טהרה, ולא אסור, ולא היתר, ולמה נכתבה ללמדך כמה שכר טוב לגומלי חסדים

What megilla is this referring to? None other than the one we read on Shavuot - Ruth. There are a few given reasons for why we read Ruth on Shavuot - Ruth accepting the Torah onto herself, the harvest festival, Shavuot also being the Yahrzeit of David Hamelech (Ruth's descendant). But according to the quote above, it is ultimately Chesed, loving-kindness, that permeates the book. Ruth shows Chesed to her mother-in-law by not leaving her. Boaz is moved by Ruth to the extraordinary kindness of looking after Ruth and Naomi.



What happened at Har Sinai can be viewed as the most extraordinary act of loving-kindness. The prophet Hosea in fact describes the event as an "erusin" - a betrothal. Hashem betrothes us to him in love and loyalty. That is what Shavuot is all about - Hashem's love to us and us to him.

*"In a world where religion is too often associated with extremism and prejudice, we would do well to remember that essential message of Shavuot and the book of Ruth - that at the heart of faith is that faithfulness that binds us to one another in the love that is loyalty and the loyalty that is love. We need more of it today." - Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks*

**More than a book:**

So that's it! Shavuot celebrates a revelation that is way more than a book. It's a Torah that gives us true freedom through law, a Torah that is timeless whilst being able to change with the times. A Torah that belongs to God and belongs to us. A Torah that was given to a nation but that every individual has a connection to. And finally - a Torah of love.



# K2: Pesach

## 'More than a story'



### **Concrete Concepts:**

1. Ideas in the Pesach Story have relevance today.
2. The story of redemption is still unfolding today.
3. Remembering Egypt helps us envisage the society we want to create through mitzvot.



**Discussion Point 1: What CCCs (Classic Chanichim Conceptions!) might there be about Pesach coming into camp?**

**The Shalosh Regalim:**

The Shalosh Regalim are the three festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. The festivals are called 'Regalim' in Hebrew, meaning 'feet' because it is during these three festivals that the Jewish nation was commanded to ascend to Jerusalem. When the Jewish people were brought together during these three focal points in the year, it gave them the opportunity to affirm and strengthen their ties to the rest of the nation. Back in the day most Jews in Israel were not lawyers, bankers or accountants but rather farmers who were dispersed throughout the land of



Israel to cultivate and grow produce. They were dispersed, and in so being it was very easy for them to forget that they are part of not only their locality but of the whole Jewish people. The Shalosh Regalim gave them the opportunity to re-identify with the rest of the nation, united with a common purpose.

This time gave the people time not only to re-affirm their bond to one another but also, by coming to Jerusalem, the centre of religious life, they were given the opportunity to immerse themselves at regular intervals in a positive environment. One that would re-charge their religious batteries, so to speak, invigorating them for the months to come.

Pesach would kick off this entire cycle. Whilst we don't head off to Jerusalem since we are in Galut, we do use the opportunity to recharge our spiritual batteries. Each one of the Shalosh Regalim teaches us some very different and very important values. You're welcome to (and encouraged!) to reinforce some classic Pesach knowledge in this kevutza (e.g laws of chametz, seder night...etc). You can use the sefarim box to learn about these things. What's presented in this chomer are some values associated with the festival you might want to communicate.

**Jewish Pride Today:**

**Discussion Point 2: What was the most difficult part of the Pesach Story for Bnei Yisrael?**

The Pesach story gave us our identity as a nation but it also forced each Jew to solidify their identity as an individual, following in the footsteps of Avraham in

smashing the 'idols' of power, ego and exploitation around them. In Galut (exile) therefore, one of the roles the seder night takes on is consolidating our identities and pushing us to think about what it means to be Jewish – to 'stand on the other side of the river' like Avraham did.

*"Even when we have failed to stand our ground, even when some of us have made metaphorically manufactured boats to cross the river and enthusiastically join the other side, ultimately, the nations of the world send us back. Time and again, Jews of all kinds and in all kinds of situations have attempted to bridge the gap by compromising their fundamental beliefs and rejecting their heritage. But it doesn't work." – R' Dovid Milston*

<p>וְהִיא שְׁעֵמֻדָּה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ שֶׁלֹּא אַחַד בְּלִבָּד עָמַד עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתָנוּ אֲלָא שְׁבָכַל דּוֹר וָדוֹר עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתָנוּ וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְצִילֵנוּ מִיָּדָם</p>	<p>And it is this (the Torah) that has stood by our ancestors and for us. For not only one (enemy) has risen up against us to destroy us, but in every generation they rise up to destroy us. But the Holy One, Blessed be He, delivers us from their hand</p>
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**Discussion Point 3: What makes it difficult for our chanichim to be proud to be Jewish? What can we do to help our chanichim? How would we respond to the message below?**

**Letter from the office of the Chief Rabbi:**

Dear Community,

I have some vital news to share with you. We have it on first class authority that we as a people are about to realise our destiny. Moshiach will arrive within the next week. This is an unbelievable dream come true and one that we as a people have been yearning for millennia.

However there is a graduation process as we would expect, just like in Egypt. We need to demonstrate our faith in Hashem and our ability to relinquish the culture that has been ours. This coming Sunday please order a poster of the Royal family, including Kate and William, and one of the National football team and hang them on the outside of your home. On Thursday, just after midday, douse them with paraffin and incinerate. We have of course been grateful for the patronage of this country but now we need to show ourselves and Hashem that we can move on. These instructions are not mind. They are from the highest realms, Hashem himself.

I look forward to joining you on the journey of redemption.

The Chief Rabbi

*"We were led out of Egypt because we kept three things intact: our name, our clothing, and our language." - Midrash*

#### **Discussion Point 4: To what extent do we keep these three things intact?**

#### **Geulah:**

The Pesach story is not just History. Not only because it has 'messages' that still have so much relevance today like the one above. But because in a sense, the story of redemption continues to unfold today...

Often, people picture "the redemption" or the coming of the Mashiach as a miraculous event. They imagine that they will hear the shofar and then the Beit HaMikdash will fall from heaven, and all the Jews will immediately come to Israel. It is true that some midrashim describe the redemption in these terms. However, many sources describe it quite differently, with redemption coming 'cloaked in nature' instead of it being nature-defying.

*"Like the break of day so is the redemption of Israel. It begins little by little and, as it proceeds, it grows greater and greater." Talmud Yerushalmi, Brachot 1:1 (4b)*

We believe that the ultimate redemption to be a gradual process which we are currently in undergoing. We believe that Geula takes time and human effort to bring it about. And of course, we believe that recent events surrounding the creation of the state of Israel are the beginning of the Geula – what is known as "Reishit Semichat Geulateinu", "The First Flowerings of our Redemption."

Our previous redemptions also occurred gradually. When Hashem took the Jews out of Egypt, the nation achieved physical independence without improving its spiritual standing; a first stage. The ultimate goal of this redemption – to transform Israel into a G-dly nation – only came about 49 days later when they received the Torah at Har Sinai, and they only entered Israel 40 years later!



**Discussion point 5: How does the religious Zionist ideology reframe the seder night and what we say at the end of it? Which practices of the seder reflect the fact that we have still not achieved Geula?**



## More than just History:

One of the most striking features in the Torah that tells us the Pesach story is so important is the fact that it is quoted as the 'reasoning' behind a multitude of mitzvot. From Shabbat, to agricultural laws to "you shall love the stranger, for *you yourselves* were strangers in the land of Egypt." This gets to the heart of the reason behind the Pesach story:

*"To create a new society you need to leave an old one. That is why Avraham had to leave all that was familiar to him. Time and time again, when Moses explains the mitzvot, he asks them **to remember what it felt like to live in a society where things were arranged otherwise.** Bnei Yisrael were commanded to create a society that was NOT Egypt. It would be a society where even slaves rested every seventh day and breathed in the wide air of freedom. It would be one in which no one was deprived of the basic necessities of life. It would be one in which the margins of society, the widow, orphan, stranger – were to be treated with dignity and included in national celebration." – Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks*

Pesach is not just history – it frames the entirety of the Torah. Egypt made us realise what it was like to be on the wrong side of Power and Pesach helps us **taste the contrast.**



The contrast between the bread of

affliction + bitter herbs vs the four cups of wine, each marking a stage in the long walk to freedom. And with every commandment, every mitzvah we do, we remember what Bnei Yisrael are charged with. Creating a just society that recognises the powerlessness of power and the power of the powerless.

**Discussion Point 6: As far as concrete concepts go, this is quite a difficult one to get across to year 6s. How can we communicate the idea to chanichim that Yetziat Mitzraim allows us to remember what living in an unjust society feels like?**

My Mock Seder Night chug is still talked about TO THIS DAY!!



# K1: The Yamim Noraim

## 'More than a prayer'



### **Concrete Concepts:**

1. Teshuva is a process of self-change.
2. The Prayers of the Yamim Noraim facilitate Teshuva.
3. The Mitzvot and Rituals of the Yamim Noraim facilitate Teshuva.

**Discussion Point 1: What conceptions, images, ideas and memories might your year 6/7 chanichim already have about Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur coming into camp?**

Rosh Hashana is also called "Yom HaDin" – "the day of judgment" on which the whole world is judged according to the actions of the year passed. There are two reasons that this day was chosen: the first being that it was on this day that mankind was created, the second it was on this day that mankind first sinned regarding the famous episode in the garden of Eden and was forgiven. Beyond imaged of judgement like scales and books that aren't helpful for kids entering high school on a number of levels, lets go into the depths of what the Yamim Noraim are really trying to get us to do...

**Teshuva**

Teshuva is something that we should be doing all year round, but it gets special attention during the first 10 days of Tishrei (the Aseret Y'mei *Teshuva*), which include Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Teshuva one of the deepest, revolutionary and most radical ideas that Judaism has to offer and getting your chanichim to appreciate its full force in this Kvutza will be no easy task.



"**Teshuvah**, tefillah and tzedakah, commonly translated as **repentance**, prayer and charity, are concepts much more profound than their translations suggest. Indeed, they cannot be adequately translated, for they are notions which exist only in the realm of Judaism.... Teshuva is **a return** to the essential real self." – Lubavitcher Rebbe

"At the deepest level Teshuva lies in coming to want something different. The person who committed an act of 'sin' in the past now regrets that act, wishes he/she had not done it and **wouldn't do it again if they were put in the same situation**. Teshuva annuls the past not because the past and its consequences have miraculously disappeared but because **its perpetrator has disappeared**. Punishment is now inappropriate because this is no longer the person that committed the crime." – Rabb Akiva Tatz

**Discussion Point 2: What concrete concepts about Teshuva would be useful for our chanichim to appreciate? In what creative ways could we transmit those concepts?**



## Lost in Translation

The Lubavitcher Rebbe emphasised the pitfalls of English translations of Hebrew words. For chanichim that can't understand Hebrew prayers, English translations in the Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur prayer books could lead to huge misconceptions.

HEBREW	ENGLISH	SPANISH	↔	ENGLISH	SPANISH	ARABIC
על חטא שחטאנו לפניך בתשומת יד דברנו דפי על כן נקוה לך	X			For a sin that we have sinned before you with attention We talked pages Therefore, we will clean for you		

### Discussion Point 3: Which prayers from Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur davening do you remember? Which might your chanichim know? Is it 'better' to pray them in Hebrew or English? Why?

Two other important themes over Rosh Hashana are the Anniversary of Creation and the Kingship of God. **Discussion point 4: How might the image of God as a king facilitate Teshuva in our prayers? How might thinking about the creation of the world do the same thing?**

## Significance of the Shofar:

**The Magic Bell** - Once upon a time, a rich person invited a poor person to have a meal at his house. The poor person could not believe what he saw inside the home of the rich person. Most of all though, the poor person was fascinated by a little bell that the rich person rang from time to time. Each time the bell was rung, servants would appear with elaborate trays of food. At the end of the meal the poor person asked his friend if he could have a look at the bell. He discovered that it was just an ordinary bell and he decided to go and buy one for himself. The next morning the poor person proudly took it to a shop. He asked them to sit around the table and he rang his new bell. Nothing happened. Furiously the person stormed out of the house and went straight back to the shopkeeper. "I demand my money back," he shouted. "This bell doesn't work properly!" "You are being foolish," the shopkeeper explained. "The bell doesn't make the food appear it just signals to the servants that it is time to bring it to the table! The servants and cooks have been working all day to cook and prepare the food!" – Maggid of Dubno

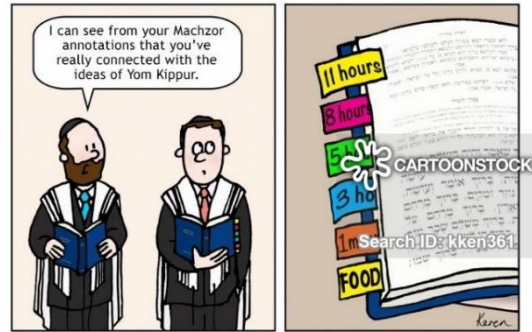


### Discussion Point 5: The shofar is the central observance of Rosh Hashana What does this story teach us about the shofar? How could we transmit that message to chanichim?

**Its the most wonderful time of the year:**

Yom Kippur is a serious day but as the Gemara in Ta'anit points out Yom Kippur is one of the two happiest days of the year. It is on this day that we are given a second chance to change and become better people. It is a serious day as well, just like one goes into court to plead for one's case, however we have the benefit of knowing that ultimately we will be forgiven.

Yom Kippur only atones for transgressions against God. However, in order to be forgiven by other people we must seek their forgiveness separately, by appeasing them and repairing the damage we have done



Yom Kippur is a complete shabbat and fast, beginning before sunset on the evening before Yom Kippur and ending after nightfall on the next day. The Talmud also specifies additional 'restrictions' including washing and bathing, anointing one's body (with cosmetics, deodorants, etc.), wearing leather shoes and engaging in sexual relations are all prohibited on Yom Kippur.

**Discussion Point 6: How do the actions on Yom Kippur help us connect to what we are supposed to be thinking about on Yom Kippur?**

Josh could you do a fb post about YK and remember to include Dania's amazing poster?

Sure thing!

Josh posts this:

Noooooo  
oooooo  
oooooo!

Bnei Akiva UK  
13 September

Final reminder to sign up for Yom Kippur at the London and Manchester Batim!

London: <http://www.tinyurl.com/BA-YK-5782>  
Manchester: <http://www.tinyurl.com/BA-YN-5782>