

Me, Myself and I: The Values that Shape our Lives

Aims:

- To think about the role of values in our lives and how to articulate them.
- To understand different theories of how identity develops.
- To consider some Jewish sources on identity development and values articulation.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Valuing Values - Clarification
3. Erik Erikson, James Marcia and “Who am I? Who can I be?”
4. A Jewish approach and a Bnei Akiva approach?
5. Next Kvutzah





1. Introduction:

Gimmel Machane is dedicated to exploring some of the key debates that shape Diaspora life today. The question of ‘what does it mean to be a Jew in the Diaspora?’ is one that has always challenged Jews throughout history, however today the challenge is compounded by:

- A. The existence of the State – this fundamentally changes the Diaspora when the ‘Homeland’ exists.
- B. The 21st century presents unique challenges to a modern Jewish identity. Questions of the role of religion, Halacha, personal autonomy, antisemitism, choice vs. coercion and many more all play a part.

However it is not about Diaspora life in the abstract – it is specifically about the lives of the chanichim and how they navigate through the challenges and opportunities presented to them whilst living in the Diaspora. It is important that for every issue that you discuss with your chanichim that you frame it in the ‘personal’; what matters is how they relate to and understand an issue.

For the first Kvutzah we’re going to provide a foundation for understanding how we think about our personal values and how we develop our personal identities. First we’re going to ask “what is important to me – what do I value and why?” and then we’re going to ask “who is the ‘me’ in the first place and how has my sense of self developed?”.

2. Valuing Values - Clarification

Every day, every one of us meets life situations that call for thought, decision making, and action. Some of these situations are familiar, some novel; some are casual, some are of extreme importance. Everything we do, every decision we make and course of action we take, is based on our consciously or unconsciously held beliefs, attitudes, and values. Some examples of these decisions are:

- Just how much am I willing to modify my diet to reduce fat and cholesterol? How many extra weeks of living justify my giving up ice cream and chocolate cake?
- What can I do to bring about political change these days?
- How can I find greater spirituality?
- Does religion have meaning in my life, or is it simply a series of outmoded traditions and customs?
- How important to me is my partner’s physical appearance? How important is my own?
- Can I justify spending £200 on that item of clothing?
- What can I do so that I don’t spend my life like so many others who regret the jobs they go to every morning?
- Why is it that at the end of every weekend I feel anxious and guilty about all I didn’t do?
- Shall I take early retirement?
- Should I ask more of my children/parents? Am I spoiling them/respecting them?

- What role shall I take in caring for my aging parent?
- This is the only life I'm going to get. How can I make it more fun? How can I make it more meaningful?

This is a confusing world to live in. At every turn we are forced to make choices about how to live our lives. Ideally, our choices will be made on the basis of the values we hold—the principles and priorities that are important to us. But frequently we are not clear about our own values, or we are not clear about how to translate them into daily living.

Some typical areas where we may experience confusion and conflict in values are:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| ● politics | ● school |
| ● family | ● health |
| ● religion | ● love and sex |
| ● friends | ● multicultural issues |
| ● work | ● material possessions |
| ● money | ● personal tastes (clothes, hairstyle, and so on) |
| ● leisure | ● culture (art, music, and so on) |
| ● time | |
| ● aging, death | |

Question for Madrichim: What are your own values? Can you articulate how you came to believe in them? Do your values change depending on the situation or topic?

All of us, young and old, often become confused about our values. Yet today we are confronted by many more choices than in previous generations. So how does a person choose a particular course of action? How do we develop our own sense of identity? Where do we learn whether to stick to our old moral standards or try new ones? How do we learn to relate to people whose values differ from our own? What do we do when two important values are in conflict, and the more we choose one value the less we achieve of the other? We are surrounded by a bewildering array of alternatives. Modern society has made us more sophisticated, but the complexity of these times has made the act of choosing infinitely more difficult.

How do we form our values in the first place? This occurs in a variety of ways. These include:

1. Inculcation
2. Modelling
3. Values-Clarification

1. Inculcation

There are numerous ways that our parents, teachers, religious institutions, workplaces, and societies attempt to instill their values and to form and influence ours. Through direct explanation, rules, rewards and punishments, symbols, and many other methods, from birth to death, the world around us tries to pass on its values. We do our best, as Mishlei (Proverbs)

suggests, “to train up the children in the way they should go,” to pass on our most cherished beliefs to those whose lives we touch.

As important as is the effort to inculcate the cultural wisdom we have developed, the approach of instilling values in others has limitations. One of these is that there is so much diversity in the world around us. Consider the situation today. Parents offer one set of should and should not’s. The synagogue often suggests another. Our peers, films and popular websites, teachers, politicians and many others all have different things to say about how we should live our lives. Bombarded by these influences, we are ultimately left to make our own choices about whose advice or values to follow.

Another limitation with the direct inculcation of values is that it often results in a dichotomy between theory and practice; lip service is paid to the values of the authority or the culture, while behaviour contradicts these values. Thus we have religious people who love their neighbours on Shabbat and spend the rest of the week competing with them or downgrading them. And we have obedient students who sit quietly in class and wouldn’t dare speak without raising their hands, but who freely interrupt their parents in the middle of a sentence. Inculcation frequently influences only people’s words and little else in their lives.

2. Modelling

Modelling is so potent a means of value education because it presents a vivid example of values in action. We notice how other people act and how they seem to negotiate life’s many choices. We also notice whether their behaviour matches their stated beliefs. As positive models or negative ones, we each serve continually as models for one another. Young people in particular are hungry for role models and will find them among adults or their peers, for better or worse.

Like inculcation, modelling also has its limitations. The main problem is that people are exposed to so many different models to emulate. Parents, teachers, politicians, movie and rock stars, friends, religious figures, literary characters, and others all present different models. How is a person to sort out all the pros and cons and achieve his or her own values?

3. Values Clarification

The values-clarification approach tries to help people answer some of these questions and build their own value system. It is not a new approach. There have always been parents, teachers, and other educators dating at least back to Socrates who have sought ways to help people think through values issues for themselves. They have done this in many ways—by asking good questions, being a good listener, encouraging self-knowledge, and demonstrating trust in the seeker’s ability to find the answer.

The values-clarification approach utilized in this Kvutzah is more systematic than more general techniques for encouraging introspection and personal decision making. It is based on the approach formulated by Louis Rath, who in turn built upon the thinking of John Dewey. His focus was on how people come to hold certain beliefs and establish certain behaviours patterns.



Valuing, according to Rath, is composed of seven sub-processes:

- **PRIZING one’s beliefs and behaviours**
 1. prizing and cherishing
 2. publicly affirming our beliefs, appropriate
- **CHOOSING one’s beliefs and behaviours**
 3. choosing from alternatives
 4. choosing after consideration of consequences
 5. choosing freely
- **ACTING on one’s beliefs**
 6. acting
 7. acting with a pattern, consistency, and repetition



when



In this framework, a value has three components—emotional, cognitive, and behavioural. Our values are based on our feelings. We don’t just hold our stronger values; we care deeply and passionately about them. At the same time, our values are derived by a careful process of thought. And finally, we act upon our values. We don’t just say some things are important to us, but those beliefs or preferences are clearly discernible in how we live our lives.

Question for Madrichim: Does Rath’s 7 processes make sense to you? Can you think of examples of your own values that you’ve gone through a similar process (not necessarily in order)?
Question for Madrichim: Rath splits the processes into 3 sections: emotional, cognitive, and behavioural. How can you encourage your chanichim to utilise each section to relate to their values?

3. Erik Erikson, James Marcia and “Who am I? Who can I be?”

In the previous section we looked at the question of “what are my values” and began to think about how our values are reached. In this section we’re going to be taking a step back and asking the question of “who is the ‘me’ that we’re talking about?” Specifically we’re going to look at the question of identity.

Our first theorist is a Jewish, German-American developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst known for his theory on the psychological development of human beings. He devised a series of eight stages that a healthy individual should pass through from infancy to late adulthood. In each stage, he believed that a person confronts, and hopefully masters, new challenges that are based around a series of key questions. We’re going to be focusing on the adolescent years (see the appendix for more info on the other stages). The question one asks from 13–19 years is who am I? Who can I be?

One of Erikson’s key aspects of his theory was that each stage had a particular ‘crisis’. This means a moment of exploration or conflict between two different forces. In the adolescence stage the two forces are:

- A. Identity Achievement (knowing what roles in society you want to have and it fitting with who you are)
- B. Identity (Role) Confusion (not being sure about yourself or your place in society)¹

As we grow up from a child to become adults we may begin to feel confused or insecure about ourselves and how we fit into society. As we seek to establish a sense of self, teens may experiment with different roles, activities, and behaviours. According to Erikson, this is important to the process of forming a strong identity and developing a sense of direction in life.

Thought Bubble: Think about any coming of age film in the last 30 years – does Erikson’s description of ‘experimenting with different roles, activities and behaviours’ fit with how adolescence is usually depicted? Does it match your own experiences as teenagers? Check out the lyrics from Tarzan 2 below as a great musical expression of this stage:

*“Who am I, tell me
Where do I come from
Who am I, tell me
It's like I don't fit in at all
Sometimes I feel like running away
And leaving it all behind
Try to find a place where I belong

But I'll keep looking, I'll find myself
I'll keep searching to find the real me.”*



As they make the transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescents ponder the roles they will play in the adult world. This can be challenging since commitments are being asked for before particular identity roles have formed i.e. an expectation to know what job you want so you can pick your A levels, then your GCSEs. At this point, one is in a state of 'identity confusion' - mixed ideas and feelings about the specific ways in which we will fit into society—and may experiment with a variety of behaviours and activities. Society normally makes allowances for youth to "find themselves". Indeed Bnei Akiva Machane can play a big part in this process – providing a framework for chanichim to safely explore their own identities without having one forced upon them. Initially, we are apt to experience some role confusion— Eventually, most adolescents achieve a sense of identity regarding who they are and where their lives are headed

- What’s the aim? The desired outcome or ‘product’ of teenage years is – that when a young person can freely experiment and explore—what may emerge is a firm sense of identity, an emotional and deep awareness of who he, she or they is.

Question for Madrichim: Do you think that Erikson’s theory is correct – does it match with your own experiences? How might you use this theory to better explain your chanichim’s teenage journey to them?

Question for Madrichim: Do you think that our communities are set up to support or hinder this

¹ This is only supposed to happen during our teenage years? Seems like something went wrong...#awks





process? What barriers might there be stopping young people achieving a ‘sense of self’ and how can we overcome them?

Question for Madrichim: What role do we as madrichim for our chanichim have in this process?

So how exactly are we supposed to go from identity (role) confusion to identity achievement?

Another psychologist called James Marcia refined and extended Erikson’s model. He developed 4 stages that people can move back and forth through at different stages of their adolescence and be at different stages for each of the different things that make up our identities. They are based around two poles:

- A. **Exploration** – How much have you thought or physically tried out the different options/roles available to you?
- B. **Commitment** – To what extent have you committed to one particular option or role out of that many that are available to you?

| | | Exploration | |
|------------|------|---|--|
| | | Low | High |
| Commitment | Low | This is basically the state where the phrase “I haven’t even thought about it yet” is most common. A good starting point but not the best place to stay in! Might be stuck in this place if you have a sense of not having any or enough choices.  | You’ve begun to try things out and thinking about your options – that’s good! From this place you’re almost ready to move to achievement and commit to one particular option or role. No need to rush though.  |
| | High | Too bad – you haven’t explored enough options or roles yet. You may find that you’ll regret committing too early and may want to change your mind later on. An example of this might be deciding to be a doctor from a young age. It might work out fine but often it’s worth considering your other options too.  | The best place to be in! You’ve explored and thought about your options and different roles and now you’ve made a commitment to one of them. Well done!  |

Question for Madrichim: Can you think of examples where these 4 ‘places’ might fit into your or your chanichim’s lives? Think back – have there been people that have encouraged you to ‘explore your options’ or to ‘think through the different roles/values’ you might have?

Question for Madrichim: Marcia’s model emphasises exploration as a key part of developing a



clear and healthy identity. Can you think of areas of life where exploration might not be a good thing? What about religion – should we be exploring other options when it comes to religion?

4. A Jewish approach and a Bnei Akiva approach?

There is no one specific Jewish approach to how to achieve our values or how to think about identity. Nor is there really a ‘Bnei Akiva’ approach: every Chanich is different and is going through their own Jewish and Bnei Akiva journey. Our role as Madrichim is to support them through that journey. The following selection of sources provide some ‘food for thought’ and can be used as springboards for discussing the issues already covered in the Kvutzah.

A: ‘And the boys grew’ (Bereishit. 25:27) – Up to thirteen years Esav and Yaakov went together to the primary school and came back home. After the thirteen years were over, the one went to the Beit Hamidrash for the study of the Law, and the other to the house of idols. With reference to this, Rabbi Eleazar remarks: ‘Until the thirteenth year it is the parent’s duty to train the child. After this they must say: “Blessed is God who has taken from me the responsibility [the punishment] for this child!”’ (Bereishit Rabbah 63)

B: A person should not entertain the thought held by the fools among the gentiles and the majority of the undeveloped among Israel that, at the time of a person’s creation, The Holy One, blessed be He, decrees whether they will be righteous or wicked. This is untrue. Each person is fit to be righteous like Moses, our teacher, or wicked, like Jeroboam. [Similarly,] they may be wise or foolish, merciful or cruel, miserly or generous, or [acquire] any other character traits. (Rambam Hilchot Teshuva 5:2)

אל יעבור במחשבתך דבר זה שאומרים טיפשי האומות ורוב גולמי בני ישראל, שהקדוש ברוך הוא גוזר על האדם מתחילת ברייתו להיות צדיק או רשע. אין הדבר כן, אלא כל אדם ואדם ראוי להיות צדיק כמשה רבנו או רשע כירובעם, או חכם או סכל, או רחמן או אכזרי, או כיליי או שוע; וכן שאר כל הדעות

C: It is proper for a person to subordinate all of their personal capacities to reason... and to place a single goal before their eyes. That is, they should understand it [the goal] and direct all their actions, movements, and utterances to that end, so that none of their actions are in vain (i.e. not directed to the goal) (Rambam, *Shemona Perakim (Introduction to Pirkei Avot)*)

D: “Now I [Yitro] know that the LORD is greater than all gods”
מכל האלהים [GREATER] THAN ALL THE GODS — This tells us that he had a full knowledge of every idol in the world — that he [explored greatly and] left no idol unworshipped by him. (Mekhilta d’Rabbi Yishmael 18:11:1).

Next Kvutzah:

In Kvutzah 02 we’re going to look at the first of our key challenges in the modern era: What do we do when it seems like there are multiple, equally legitimate ways of living? Or in other words the challenge of pluralism.



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Things to remember from this Kvutzah:

1. A key part of growing up is thinking about our own values and how we got them. For each of the next kvutzot there will be a presentation of debates around key topics. Always remember to emphasise the difference and balance between 'my values, the varied values of Judaism, and the values of the world around them'.

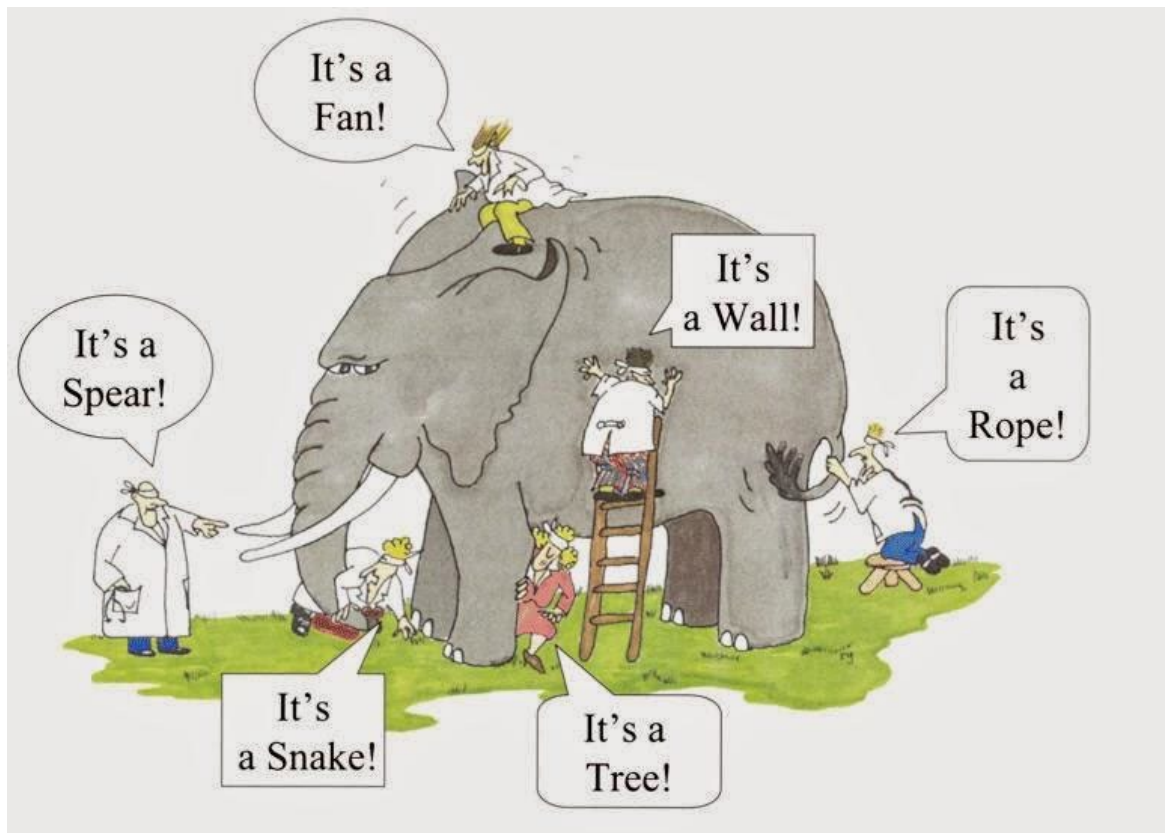
One Judaism or Multiple Judaisms: The Challenge of Truth and Pluralism

Aims:

1. To discuss the meaning of 'pluralism' and what it means for Judaism today.
2. To think about different types of pluralism and how they've been interpreted by 3 key Jewish thinkers.
3. To consider the role of pluralism in the lives of our chanichim.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Shared Language – Halacha and Aggadah
3. Does Judaism have Denominations?
 - a. Rabbi Sacks - Rejection
 - b. Rav Kook – Tolerance and Shards of Holiness
 - c. Rav Yitz Greenberg – Broken Covenant
4. Summary
5. Next Kvutzah



1. Introduction

The idea of pluralism is a complicated one. Let's first look at its meaning:

1. Political pluralism: is the belief that there should be diverse and competing centres of power in society.
2. Philosophical pluralism: is the idea that there are many basic substances that make up reality or the idea that there multiple different and legitimate ways of being/acting or the idea that there can be more than one 'truth'.
3. Cultural pluralism: is when small groups within a larger society maintain their unique cultural identities.

At the core of each of these 3 different types of pluralism is that they are plural and include the idea that there is more than one thing that is correct. This brings us onto a 4th meaning:

4. Religious pluralism: is the acceptance of all religious paths as equally valid, promoting coexistence.

Now this last one might not exactly fit with how we think about Orthodox Judaism but we're going to look at some ways in how some variation of it might. The core thing to remember is that in the modern era we live lives that are exposed to a plurality of ideas, ways of living and claims on what we should be doing. Judaism has to, and indeed does, have a framework to understand this phenomenon.

2. Shared Language – Halacha and Aggadah

As discussed in the introduction the idea of pluralism in Judaism is a complicated one. This section will demonstrate how, within Orthodoxy, there are a variety of approaches that maintain at least some form of pluralism. Primarily we can split that into:

1. Halachic pluralism
2. Aggadic pluralism

Traditionally Aggadah referred to non-legal parts of the early rabbinic literature (think Midrashim) but for this Kvutzah we're going to use it to refer to all areas of philosophy, mysticism and historical and ethical evaluation. The essential quality of Aggadah is that it isn't Halacha – it is not the legal system that requires clear and definitive answers. When two Halachic opinions conflict, we must decide between them and when two Aggadic opinions conflict, we need not.

This distinction becomes clear when we consider two apparently parallel passages from the Gemara:

| Eruvin 13b | Gitting 6b |
|--|---|
| Rabbi Abba said that Shmuel said: For three years Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel | <i>Context: Rabbis Evyatar and Jonathan are arguing</i> |



disagreed. These said: The halakha is in accordance with our opinion, and these said: The halakha is in accordance with our opinion. Ultimately, a Divine Voice emerged and proclaimed: **Both these and those are the words of the living God. However, the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Beit Hillel.**

over the interpretation of a verse.

And Rabbi Evyatar found Elijah the prophet and said to him: What is the Holy One, Blessed be He, doing now? Elijah said to him: He is currently engaged in studying the verse in question. Rabbi Evyatar asked him: And what is He saying about it? Elijah said to him that God is saying the following: Evyatar, My son, says this and Yonatan, My son, says that.

Rabbi Evyatar said to Elijah: God forbid, is there uncertainty before Heaven? Doesn't God know what happened? Why does He mention both opinions? **Elijah said to him: Both these and those are the words of the living God,**

Both passages assume that two conflicting positions can both be the words of the living God, which means, legitimate interpretations of the Torah. This itself is an amazing vindication of the ethic of argument: disagreement doesn't always need to be between truth and falsehood, it can be between truth and truth. However crucially what differs between these two passages is that the first is about Halacha and therefore requires a clear outcome i.e. 'Halacha is in accordance with Beit Hillel'. When it comes to Aggadic interpretation on the other hand no clear outcome is required.

Question for Madrichim: Does this fit with how you've understood Orthodoxy before this? Why might this approach be important to teach to your chanichim? What does it mean to argue between two different truths?

Question for Madrichim: Why do you think Halacha (a system of law) needs to be clearer and more precise than Aggadah? Hint: think about the context or outcome of Halacha i.e. punishments.

Do you think Halacha works the same way today – do we have 'one clear and precise' statement of Halacha for all Orthodox Jews? If not, why not?

For a very long time Judaism, a community of faith, had a shared language: everyone understood each other and operated (broadly) within the same categories of meaning and understanding. And because of this shared language conversations and arguments were possible, and even productive! There has, of course, been some latitude as to the exact makeup of the rules: there were differing interpretations of some of the principles of Jewish faith, and differences as to what was a principle of faith (more on that in K3). There were different Halachic schools, most noticeably between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, but also to some extent between Chassidim and their opponents. But these disagreements were marginal.

However from the 18th century and with the twin forces of the enlightenment and the emancipation the shared language was fractured and different sections of Judaism are no longer talking to each other using the same base layer of meaning, we're no longer using the same fundamental beliefs and Halacha. (It's no wonder we don't get on with each other sometimes – we can't understand each other!)

In the next section we're going to look at some different ways that thinkers have attempted to solve the problem.

(See the appendix for some more examples of Aggadic pluralism).

3. Does Judaism have Denominations?

An intrinsic part of modern life is that we are constantly aware that we are surrounded by others whose lifestyle and beliefs are vastly different from our own. We may choose to adopt them, and we may choose not to, but then our own lifestyles are not the result of necessity, but of choice. Sociologists have called this the 'plurality of life worlds' – that there are multiple legitimate ways of living². The institutional equivalent of this awareness is the *denomination*. **Denominations are by definition one way, and not the only way, of being religious, of expressing that religion. Each denomination within a religion does not claim to have a monopoly over truth and also accepts the de facto legitimacy of the others.**

Debate: Do you think that Judaism has denominations? Does it have more than one way of being religious? Is Orthodoxy one way of being Jewish amongst many other ways? Is there anything from the first section that might help you answer the question?

Within Judaism in the UK, Orthodoxy, Conservatism (Masorti), Reform and Liberal, are regularly portrayed as the four main denominations. However the description above of what a denomination is doesn't quite seem to fit with how we usually think about Orthodoxy. Does Orthodoxy recognise the essential legitimacy of other denominations (like the others do to each other and back to Orthodoxy)?

We're going to look at 3 thinkers that have approached the situation of multiple denominations and tried to answer this question. As you're reading through remember to be thinking about how to relate these thinkers and their ideas back to the lives and experiences of your chanichim.

1. Rabbi Lord Dr Jonathan Sacks (former Chief Rabbi of the UK)
2. Rabbi Dr Yitz (Irving) Greenberg
3. Rabbi A.Y. Kook

² Berger, Berger, and Kellner. The Homeless Mind, pages 62-77



a. Rabbi Lord Dr Jonathan Sacks = Rejection

Rabbi Sacks believes that the term denomination imports pluralism into Judaism where it does not exist. ³He writes that Orthodoxy “does not recognise the legitimacy of interpretations of Judaism that abandon fundamental beliefs or Halachic authority. It does not validate, in the modern sense, a plurality of denominations. It does not see itself as one version of Judaism among others”. He quotes Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch who said that “Judaism does not recognise any variants. It knows of no mosaic, prophetic, or rabbinic, and of no orthodox or progressive Judaism. It is either Judaism or it is not⁴”.

Question for Madrichim: Do you agree with Rabbi Sack’s approach so far?

This situation means that Orthodoxy is fated to be misunderstood by those outside it. But it also, often, leads to a misunderstanding by Orthodox Jews of the non-Orthodox denominations. This misunderstanding comes from the incredibly strong conception that Judaism has of ‘Jewish unity’. The Halachic system embraces all Jews – not just those who have chosen to accept it. Rabbi Sacks believes that “Judaism – although the emancipation sought to deny it – is a collective as well as an individual. It is the religion of a people. Obligation flows from a fact of birth. To be born Jewish is to be born into the commandments.” Rabbinic Judaism contains very little terminology that would fit with ‘denominational Judaism’. If you were born Jewish you were either a Jew or an apostate (heretic) who rejected every part of Judaism. This ‘either-or’ was the norm for a long period of Jewish history.⁵ The modern era has presented Judaism with the challenge of Jews – who wish to be identified wholeheartedly as Jews, indeed even religious Jews – who don’t accept the totality of Jewish law or share the same fundamental beliefs. The “either-or” seems to be breaking down.

One way to resolve this situation is to say: Reform Jews are Jews but Reform Judaism is not Judaism. However this can leave us with a slightly sour taste – it is right to refuse to take seriously the way that Reform Jews choose to define themselves?

Question for Madrichim: How would you solve this situation? Do you have friends or family members that are from the non-Orthodox denominations – how do they define their Judaism?

Debate: Rabbi Sacks describes an ‘either-or’ situation when it comes to Jewish status. He also claims that Reform Judaism cannot be viewed as a legitimate form of Judaism because it rejects “the fundamental beliefs and authority of Halacha”. There are sources (Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 30:15 and Eiruvim 69b) that describe breaking Shabbat publicly as being like a rejection of God and

³ One People: Tradition, Modernity and Jewish Unity, pages 31-37

⁴ Herman Schwabb, The History of Orthodox Jewry in Germany, page 9

⁵ There are exceptions to this ‘either-or’ e.g. “A Jew who sins, is still a Jew” Sanhedrin 44a and cases of “tinok shenishba – a child raised amongst gentiles” (a special case where even though they didn’t believe or follow any aspect of Judaism were still considered Jews) but the existence of these periphery cases only support the overall claim. There are the exceptions that prove the rule.



making that person 'like a non-Jew'. Yet today most Orthodox shuls welcome people who break Shabbat.

- Why do you think we might have seemingly different approaches for different categories of 'rejecting fundamental beliefs'?
- What might be different between our two cases and how might that help us answer the question?

b. Rav Kook - Tolerance and the 'Search for Shards of Holiness'

Rav Kook doesn't directly deal with our question but address a very similar one: how to relate to secular Zionists. With secular Zionists you had a group of people expressing essential connection to Judaism and Jewish life but rejecting the previously fundamental core tenets of it. His response was not to reject their way of connecting to Judaism but to find a way to legitimise it. This section will look at one of the fundamental ideas of Rav Kook's approach to the world. It is sourced from Orot Ha-Techiya, section 18, which appears in Rav Kook's book "Orot" (available in English in the London Bayit, or all good booksellers).

In this essay, Rav Kook describes three fundamental forces which can be found in any culture and in any individual, regardless of historical period or geographical location. These three forces are what drives a person:

1. **The holy, religious force.** This force is concerned with the relationship between Person and God - in other words, the spiritual aspect of a person's life.
2. **The nationalist force,** which drives people to pursue the promotion of their own community and country above other groups.
3. **The humanist, universal, ethical force.** This force knows no boundaries of state, and stresses the importance and equality of mankind.

Each one can contribute something to the other two, and can improve the other. These forces also perform an important role in limiting one another, and keeping each one under control. Unfortunately, these forces often tend not to unite, but instead to oppose one another. When we see this happening, it is our duty to speak out and to attempt to rectify the situation.⁶

According to Rav Kook each person has their own natural combination of these three forces that most speak to them. Rav Kook didn't say a person can't emphasize one over the others, but that one without the other at all is where things go wrong. Balance is still the key, but not always a perfect balance.

At the end of the essay, Rav Kook explains how the perfect balance can be achieved and these three forces can be united in the 'super' holiness (kodesh elyon), also known as the holy of holies (kodesh kodashim) with God as the ultimate source of it.

Questions for Madrichim: Do you agree with Rav Kook that these three 'forces' are the building

⁶ Know any uber-Nationalists or ultra-Orthodox people? Tell them about Rav Kook's 3 forces and remind them that they're missing some aspects of their 'driving spirit'! (It is not recommended that you actually try this...)



blocks of a person and their view of the world? Which of the three do you think most sums up your own beliefs?

An interesting question is where does Bnei Akiva and the Religious Zionist movement in general stand in regards to these 3 forces? It certainly aspires to being an ideal mix of all three forces, resulting in super holiness, but has it really achieved this goal?

And how do we relate to other groups that emphasize different aspects than perhaps we do? What about movements that really talk about the universal or really talk about the national – do we see them as being a part of the same 3 key forces and therefore legitimate?

Rav Kook actually addresses this last question and spends a fair amount of time in another essay (*The War of Opinions and Beliefs*) discussing exactly how different groups in a society should relate to each other. He claimed that the ideal relationship between groups is to recognize that while there are differences between you and your neighbour, you are both equally important, yet different, aspects of a whole. Once you recognize that everything is bathed in this upper light of unity which descends from a single God and is the origin of your's and your neighbour's forces, then it is possible for different groups within society to live side by side, without conflict, and in unity - unity of origin, unity of goal, unity of essence.

Questions for Madrichim: Do you recognise this approach in people you know or in the world today? Rav Kook's theory here can seem quite weird/'airy-fairy' – how would you explain this idea to your chanichim?

When confronted with the world around us, we witness ideas and behaviours, such as, for example, idolatry, which directly oppose our beliefs, and of which we assume we ought to be intolerant. It is seemingly inconceivable that these forces originate from the super holiness and that there can any good in them, and therefore we are unable to recognize them as part of the greater truth. Therefore, we conclude that monotheism and Judaism sometimes ought to be intolerant.

Arguing that this is not the case, Rav Kook makes use of a kabbalistic idea. **He explains that there is nothing in the universe which does not contain a divine spark of truth.** Rav Kook maintains that by recognizing and extracting this truth from falsehood, we can sieve through these foreign ideas. In that way, we can find a trace of good even within the idol-worshippers: we do not accept the 'untruths' they preach, but we can certainly appreciate and learn from their motivation to serve a god, albeit what we think is the wrong one. No group can be dismissed and excluded, because each contains a particle of truth, of Godliness.

- This is how Rav Kook legitimised and praised the 'secular' Zionists: They were expressing one of the key forces of life – nationalism! And despite Rav Kook thinking that they were wrong for not talking about God, he can take the aspects he does agree with and see as true and value them for those!
- The same approach can be applied to other denominations. It could be that Reform Judaism is expressing some aspect a different force to that found in Orthodox Judaism.



(Remember according to Rav Kook it has to have some grain of truth otherwise it wouldn't exist). It is then up to us today to try find and then combine the truth in Reform Judaism (or any other type of Judaism) with traditional Judaism!

Questions for Madrichim: What do you think the 'grain of truth' might be in non-Orthodox Judaism?

Questions for Madrichim: How do you think is idea might play out in our movement and in our relationships with other types of Judaism? What role do you think we might have in modelling this approach in the British Orthodox community?

c. Rav Yitz Greenberg – Broken Covenant

Irving (Yitzchak) Greenberg (born 1933) is a prominent Modern Orthodox Rabbi, academic and scholar. He lives in the United States and most well-known for his work on interfaith theology.



Rabbi Greenberg's answer to the question and solution to the dilemma is to reject the idea of 'either-or' even applying nowadays. His approach may be even more radical and fascinating than Rav Kook's, so hold-on-tight!

Three Eras:

Rabbi Greenberg argued that Jewish history can be split into three great eras:

1. Biblical Era
2. Rabbinic Era
3. Modern Era

The first, the biblical era, was marked by the immediacy of God, intervening in the human situation through miracles and prophetic revelation. In the second, the rabbinic era, God was more hidden. God was found not in prophecy but through study, and not in the Beit HaMikdash but through prayer. The divine presence was less directly but more widely accessible. The prophets were rare individuals; the Beit HaMikdash was a specific place. But in rabbinic Judaism, through study, prayer and a life of commandments, every individual and place became open to the divine encounter. With the destruction of the second Beit HaMikdash and the transition from biblical to rabbinic Judaism, God was experienced less *intensively* but more *extensively*.

The third era of modern Judaism was born in the Holocaust. The Holocaust, for Rabbi Greenberg, marked a yet deeper 'hiding of the face' of God, so much so that it has become impossible to have any theological certainties anymore. But just as had happened in the rabbinic era, this hiddenness meant that the scope of religious activity became wider. The birth of the State of Israel meant that political action, the building of society, an economy, and an army, the handling of power, even philanthropic and political support of Israel in the diaspora, have been endowed



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with religious meaning. Rabbi Greenberg thinks that very areas where ‘religion’ usually applied have grown and shifted. In the journey from biblical to rabbinic, ‘sanctity’ was transferred from holy people and holy places to every Jew and everywhere: Halacha (a creation of Rabbinic Judaism – mostly) created an environment of holy acts. Now in the passage from rabbinic to modern Judaism, Halacha itself must broaden to embrace what was previously seen as secular activities.

Question for Madrichim: Why do you think the Holocaust might lead to such a profound shift according to Rabbi Greenberg? Do you agree with his analysis of the different eras of Jewish history? How else might you split it up?

Hint: The Holocaust presents a profound challenge to how we think about God and God’s commitment to God’s people. There are no easy answers or any answers at all to God’s role in the Holocaust. This leads Rabbi Greenberg to make the claim in one of his books that “we are entering a period of silence in theology”.

But that wasn’t the only thing to shift: Rabbi Greenberg believes that the very relationship (the covenant) between humanity and God has changed. In the first era God was the senior partner in the relationship. In the second, humanity and God were more equal as God retreated from being active in the world more. In the third humanity emerges as the dominant voice (!).

| Era | Partnership Between God and Humanity | Key Institutions: |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| First – Biblical | God more senior | Beit HaMikdash/Kohanim |
| Second – Rabbinic | Equal partnership | Beit Kneset/Rabbis |
| Third - Modern | Humanity more senior | <i>What do you think?</i> |

All of this leads to religious pluralism. As long as one could speak of theological certainties, there could be Orthodoxy on the one hand and heresy on the other (the ‘either-or’). But after the Holocaust there are no certainties – God has become even further removed from our understanding. Rabbi Greenberg believes that this shifting nature of the partnership and the new areas of religious life mean that the partnership has become voluntary. Therefore any Jew who chooses to associate with their people or religion demonstrates their faith and commitment, however that faith or commitment is expressed. Rabbi Greenberg believed that the traditional vision of Orthodox vs. non-Orthodox might be replaced by a vision which sees all of them ‘aligned along a continuum of attempts to live by the new partnership’.

Question for Madrichim: What might our communities look like if we applied this approach of Rabbi Greenberg? What are some of the dangers or limitations of this approach?

→ Do not underestimate how radical this approach of Rabbi Greenberg is. Rabbi Sacks explicitly



rejects it but in doing so regards it as one of the most serious and scholarly approaches that he disagrees with. Its revolutionary thrust is unmistakable. Whilst Reform and Conservative Judaism concede that Orthodoxy is a viable option, Rabbi Greenberg's approach may lead to the conclusion that Orthodoxy as we know it is not possible in a post-Holocaust world. Religious certainty and Halachic authority, the key categories of rabbinic/traditional Judaism are no longer accessible.

4. Summary:

1. Halachic and Aggadic:
 - a. Halachic pluralism - lots of people present different true viewpoints, but practically we have to pick one to follow.
 - b. Aggadic pluralism - lots of people present different true viewpoints, we don't need to pick just one to follow or rather you get to pick the one you want to follow.
2. Rav Sacks:
 - a. Rejects cross-denominational pluralism.
 - b. Takes the approach of 'Reform Jews are Jews, but Reform Judaism is not Judaism'.
3. Rav Kook:
 - a. Accepts a mystical form of cross-denominational pluralism.
 - b. Takes the approach of there is a grain of truth in every aspect of life, including other denominations. It's our challenge to find that truth.
4. Rav Greenberg:
 - a. Accepts a form of cross-denominational pluralism.
 - b. Thinks that we've entered a period of 'theological silence'. This is very radical.
 - c. Takes the approach of seeing different denominations as not being 'either-or' but all along a spectrum of attempts to live with faith in the new partnership'.
 - d. (Breaks down Jewish history into 3 different eras).

5. Next Kvutzah:

In Kvutzah 03 we're going to look at the second of our key challenges in the modern era: The idea of personal choice and its effect on how we think about Judaism today or in other words 'does Judaism force us to follow it or are we free to make our own decisions'.

Things to remember from this Kvutzah:

1. There are different forms of pluralism. Whenever you're looking at a source remember to check if it's Halachic or Aggadic - this will affect how you approach it.
2. Judaism is not monolithic - it's all about argument, discussion and debate - and it has been that way throughout history. Join in the conversation!



Appendix

Examples of Aggadic Pluralism:

With regard to the revelation at Sinai, Rabbi Yohanan said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “The Lord gives the word; the women that proclaim the tidings are a great host” (Psalms 68:12)? It means that each and every utterance that emerged from the mouth of the Almighty divided into seventy languages, a great host. And, similarly, the school of Rabbi Yishmael taught with regard to the verse: “Behold, is My word not like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that shatters a rock?” (Jeremiah 23:29). Just as this hammer breaks a stone into several fragments, so too, each and every utterance that emerged from the mouth of the Holy One, Blessed be He, divided into seventy languages.

Examples of arguments left open:

1. Was the education a parent must give their child vocational or purely religious? Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Nehorai disagreed. (Mishnah Kiddushin 4:14)
2. Was the Roman Empire to be admired for its technological prowess or shunned for its ethical shortcomings? Rabbi Judah bar Ilai and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai disagreed. (Shabbat 33b)
3. Should an accommodation be reached with the oppressive Roman regime or should one choose to die rather than stop teaching Torah in public? Rabbi Yose ben Kismah and Rabbi Chaninah ben Teradion disagreed. (Avodah Zarah 18a)
4. Was the Messianic age an event within natural history or a supernatural break with history? Rabbi Yochanan and Shmuel disagreed. (Berachot 34b)

Freedom and Choice:

“Come and dance on the freedom train”

Aims:

- To think about how much freedom we have when it comes to our Judaism.
- To consider the different roles that coercion and freedom of choice might have in Judaism.
- To discuss the benefits of coercion and freedom of choice and how/when to apply them to the lives of our chanichim.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Like a Barrel Above Their Heads
3. Next Kvutzah





1. Introduction

In this Kvutzah we're going to look at another challenge of modern Diaspora life: the idea of personal choice and its effect on how we think about Judaism today. In the previous Kvutzah we discussed how in the modern era we are constantly aware of all the different choices that are available to us. Because of this, even if we choose not to explore the multiple ways of living, our own lifestyles are a choice. In the previous Kvutzah we looked at different ways Judaism thinks about pluralism. In this Kvutzah we're focusing on the choice aspect.

Question for Madrichim: So, do you think that we have choice when it comes to Judaism? What areas do we have choice and freedom to decide what to do? What areas do you think we don't have choice?

Before we start it is important to define our key terms. We have four key terms that are relevant:

1. **Freedom:** This is the ability to act, without internal or external constraints (something stopping me), and having sufficient resources and power to make my desires effective.
 - a. **Coercion:** The thing that stops me from doing the thing that I want to do i.e. a constraint (could be a person)
2. **Autonomy:** the independence and authenticity of the desires (values, emotions, etc.) that move one to act in the first place.
 - a. **Heteronomy:** values that are influenced by a force outside of me e.g. a traditional religion or God (or the state).

For the most part whenever people talk about choice they're talking about 'freedom vs. coercion' i.e. can I do the things that I want to do. However some of the time it might be more appropriate to talk about 'autonomy vs. heteronomy' i.e. what is the source of my values (which we began to discuss in K1).

Question for Madrichim: Now that you've seen these definitions have your answers to the questions above changed? Is Judaism free or coercive? autonomous or heteronomous?

Until relatively recently, the authority of religion, even when not manifested in daily religious involvement, could be seen in day-to-day life. Religion was heteronomous and that the authority of religious texts, figures or values was enforced. A famous anthropologist Carl Withers wrote about a town under the pseudonym of Plainville. He described the role of religion as follows:

It is difficult in a few words to fairly assess the role of religion and churches in Plainville. The daily interests of most people... seem to be not religious at all, but work, sociability, and gossip. Yet religion seems to permeate the daily air... The religious control of morals operates mainly through gossip and the fear of gossip. People report, suspect, laugh at, and condemn the misdeeds of others, and walk and behave carefully to avoid being caught in any trifling missteps of their own. (West 1945, 162)



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Social control or coercion of this sort is no longer feasible, if for no other reason than the increasing plurality of different communities, both religiously and culturally.

In addition, modernity has an emphasis on the autonomy of the individual. Western (for want of a better word) culture places great importance on individuals making decisions for themselves and not having those decisions be coerced or imposed on them from outside. This has contributed to an increasing tendency to tolerate all forms of behaviour that do not directly infringe on others: as long as you're not imposing yourself on others or affecting others it's ok. (This is quite a simple version of this but will do for now). The individual is placed at the centre of determining value – 'what it means to me' is the primary factor. This isn't something limited to Judaism – it affects all religions. Read the following extract from an interview with a born-again Christian in Ohio:

Thus, Linda Kramer, a born-again Christian in Ohio, when asked why she goes to church and whether church attendance is a requirement for religiosity, responded in terms of her own 'growth.' As she put it:

'You don't have to go to church. I think the reason I do is because it helps me grow. It's especially good for my family, to teach them the good and moral things. To see that families can operate as a unit'.

As religiously committed as she is, Linda values religion for what it does for her own spiritual growth and that of her family. (Roof 1993, 191–194)

Question for Madrichim: Does the description above of Plainville or the motives of Linda Kramer match with any place or anyone you know (even yourself)? What impact do you think what they're describing might have on religious communities and religious people?

Question for Madrichim: Do you think that the 'religious control of morals operates mainly through gossip and the fear of gossip' is a good thing or a bad thing? How else might you have some form of religious coercion? Would you even have any form of coercion?

So if that's the situation today we're left with the question of what does Judaism think about these issues.

Note: In this Kvutzah, from this point, we're only going to be discussing the formulation about freedom and choice. The question of autonomy vs. heteronomy is too broad to discuss here. It's important you're aware of the tension – if you want to discuss how to resolve the tension speak to the Chinuch Worker, the Shlichim or your Senior Tzevet.



2. Like a Barrel Above Their Heads

Consider the following Aggadah:

They gathered at the foot of the mountain' (Shemot 19:17). Rav Avdimi bar Hama bar Hasa said: 'This teaches us that God suspended the mountain above them like a barrel and said, 'If you accept the Torah, good. **If not, there will be your burial place.**'

Rav Aha bar Yaakov said: 'From here emerges a great protest about the Torah' [i.e., since the people were coerced into the covenant, **they are not responsible for the agreement**]. Rava said: 'Nonetheless, they reaffirmed their acceptance in the days of Achashverosh, as it says: 'The Jews established and accepted,' (Esther 9:27). They established what they had already accepted.' (Shabbat 88a)

This Aggadah is a retelling of the story of Har Sinai (that's the mountain being referred to). The Torah describes how the people of Israel, in preparation for receiving the Torah, camped 'be-tachtit ha-har' – 'at the bottom of the mountain'. Rav Avdimi's wordplay on this phrase is quite clear. Instead of understanding 'be-tachtit ha-har' as 'at the foot of the mountain,' he translates the phrase as 'underneath the mountain.' Therefore he pictures the mountain as literally being held over their heads as a threat to the people of Israel.

Question for Madrichim: Why do you think Rav Avdimi wanted to depict this part of the story with a threat from God to the people? What messages might we learn from his version of the story?

Question for Madrichim: What do you think it means "they are not responsible for the agreement"? How might this line effect how we understand the importance of freedom and choice?

Rav Avdimi introduces a shocking shift into the biblical account of this story. The version in Sefer Shemot portrays the Jews as freely choosing to enter into the covenant at Sinai. In fact, Chazal praise the Jews of that time for affirming their acceptance even before hearing all the details of the mitzvot. Why detract from that praise by introducing an element of coercion into the story? Furthermore, does Rav Avdimi truly think that the Jews were not accountable for their religious observance until the Purim story? After all, Jews were punished throughout the period of the First Temple for their religious shortcomings.

Debate: Here we have a brilliant example of coercion vs. choice. The original text in the Torah emphasises the free choice of the people of Israel but the Aggadah, some 1500 years later, adds in this element of coercion. Which approach do you think fits with how you think about Judaism?

There are a couple of different ways that people reading this Aggadah have dealt with the contradictory understandings of Har Sinai.



1. Rejection of Rav Avdimi's Approach:

This approach basically says “Rav Avdimi doesn't really mean what he's saying rather it's a rhetorical point to counter any possible critics”. The Ritva (Yom Tov ben Avraham Asevilli, 1260s – 1320s, a medieval commentator) argues that Rav Avdimi puts forward his reading to counter critics. In other words, even those who think that the Sinai covenant was accepted under duress should realize that the Jews subsequently accepted it of their own free will. So anyone claiming that Jews never freely accepted the Torah is wrong, because it happened later too.

2. Combining both positions – both right/necessary elements of a religious life:

R. Yaakov Kamenetsky (February 28, 1891 – March 10, 1986, was a prominent Rosh Yeshiva, Posek and Talmudist in the post-World War II American Jewish community) in his Emet le-Ya'akov book sees God's threat with the mountain as a necessary supplement to the free acceptance which preceded it. As he sees it, the talmudic account strives to combine the twin components crucial for religious life: fear and love. Without the mountain hanging overhead, the formative covenantal experience would consist only of a loving agreement. As religious success sometimes depends on fear of God as well, R. Avdimi introduced a more intimidating element into the story to provide the proper balance.

3. Combining both positions – both right/necessary for different parts of the Torah:

The Midrash Tanchuma states that the written law was freely accepted, but that the oral law required coercion. Apparently, there is something frightening about Torah she-be'al Peh. This could be because the oral law expands the parameters of what Halakha demands. Alternatively, the need for human interpretation and initiative could have generated a certain amount of reluctance and resistance. One can imagine the people saying, “Give us a definitive written Torah, but do not make us responsible for utilizing our intellect in order to understand it. Just tell us what to do! Don't make us have to work to figure it out!”

Quick Summary:

1. Rav Avdimi doesn't really mean it – obviously the Jewish people accepted the Torah freely and even if you think they didn't at Har Sinai, they certainly did later. Conclusion: Freedom and choice are of supreme importance!
2. Sometimes we might need some fear (read: coercion) in addition to love (read: freedom) in our religious experiences and lives. Conclusion: Coercion can serve as an important balance or aspect of a religious relationship with Torah and God.
3. Sometimes the coercion might be needed to get us to accept something we really don't want to do but is for our own good. Think about a parallel to a parent's relationship with their child - sometimes they might threaten a punishment in order for the child to brush their teeth/eat their vegetables etc. For the Jewish people having responsibility for developing the Oral Torah was scary. Conclusion: Coercion can be for our own good sometimes.



Question for Madrichim: How have these 3 approaches affected your understanding of the balance between coercion and freedom of choice? Which approach do you agree with and which do you disagree with?

Question for Madrichim: Why do you think that, according to the Midrash Tanchuma, the Jewish people might be scared of the Oral Torah? How do you relate to the Oral Torah today?

4. Choice – it's really important!

Although we have seen a number of fine interpretations, I believe that the Maharal (*Judah Loew ben Bezalel, 1512-1609, was an important Talmudic scholar, Jewish mystic, and philosopher who, for most of his life, served as a leading rabbi in the cities of Mikulov in Moravia and Prague in Bohemia*) writing in his book *Gur Aryeh* on Shemot 19:17, provides the most profound of them all. He explains that the Gemara does not refer to threats, intimidation, or coercion. Rather, this Gemara tries to instruct us about the nature of Torah and the gravity of our choices. Maharal understands that the Jewish people did indeed freely choose to accept the Torah. At the same time, it was crucial for the world that the Torah be accepted, and rejection of the Torah was sure to have catastrophic consequences. "Here will be your burial place" is not a quote of God threatening immediate punishment, but rather a statement about the seriousness of the choice and the potential consequences for humanity if the wrong choice occurs.

This idea may have specific resonance for our Kvutzah. Today, as we've discussed people value free choice, and sometimes believe even that whatever the individual chooses is the best choice for them. According to the Maharal, Judaism should take the first step, but reject the second. Judaism greatly values free choice, and methods of coercion should be employed only sparingly. At the same time, this does not mean that our choices are comparable to selecting a particular flavour of ice cream. We can recognize our freedom of choice even as we also affirm the ultimate significance and the weighty ramifications of our choices. Rather than being dismayed at the gravity of our choices, we can find joy in the ability of our decisions to change the world.

Question for Madrichim: Does the Maharal offer a new or different approach to the other 3 or is it more of a combination of all of them?

Question for Madrichim: Why do you think that, according to the Maharal, the Jewish people accepting or not accepting the Torah would have profound ramifications for the world? Hint: the Maharal takes a mystical approach to understanding the world. This means he might see the Torah being in the world as offering some form of essential stabilizing mystical force. How might you understand his position from a non-mystical approach?

Debate 1: Now that you've learned all about the tensions between choice and freedom in Judaism. Which do you think should play a bigger part in a young person's Jewish life? How might

the experiences of your chanichim effect when and how to apply either coercion or freedom of choice?

Debate 2: Can you think about other areas of life where this same tension between coercion and freedom applies? What does it mean to be free? Are there different types of freedom?

3. Next Kvutzah:

Still to add.

Appendix:

Quotes about Freedom and Choice:

“I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will.”

— Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre

“Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.”

— Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own

“Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

“When a man is denied the right to live the life he believes in, he has no choice but to become an outlaw.”

— Nelson Mandela

“Some birds are not meant to be caged, that's all. Their feathers are too bright, their songs too sweet and wild. So you let them go, or when you open the cage to feed them they somehow fly out past you. And the part of you that knows it was wrong to imprison them in the first place rejoices, but still, the place where you live is that much more drab and empty for their departure.”

— Stephen King, Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption: A Story from Different Seasons

“When I discover who I am, I'll be free.”

— Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man

“Expose yourself to your deepest fear; after that, fear has no power, and the fear of freedom



shrinks and vanishes. You are free.”

— Jim Morrison

“Freeing yourself was one thing, claiming ownership of that freed self was another.”

— Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

“Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves”

— Abraham Lincoln, *Complete Works - Volume XII*

“Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does.

It is up to you to give [life] a meaning.”

— Jean-Paul Sartre

“We were the people who were not in the papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of print. It gave us more freedom.

We lived in the gaps between the stories.”

— Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

“Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom.”

— Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*



Israel and the Diaspora: Three Pillars of a Relationship

Aims:

1. To consider the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora and examine four models of that relationship.
2. To think about our role as young Jews currently living in the Diaspora and our responsibility towards both Israel and the Diaspora.
3. To discuss 3 possible pillars on which to build a new relationship between the Diaspora and Israel.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Three Pillars
3. Key Thinkers





Introduction:

In K1 we talked about how Gimmel Machane is dedicated to exploring some of the key debates that shape Diaspora life today. The question of ‘what does it mean to be a Jew in the Diaspora?’ is one that has always challenged Jews throughout history. This Kvutzah is going to look at the challenge that is presented by the existence of the State of Israel to the idea of the Diaspora and the identity of Jews living in it.

(Reminder: Diaspora refers to “a scattered population whose origin lies in a separate geographic local”. For us it means the communities and people living outside of Israel. It specifically sets up a relationship and connection between people in Israel and people outside of Israel).

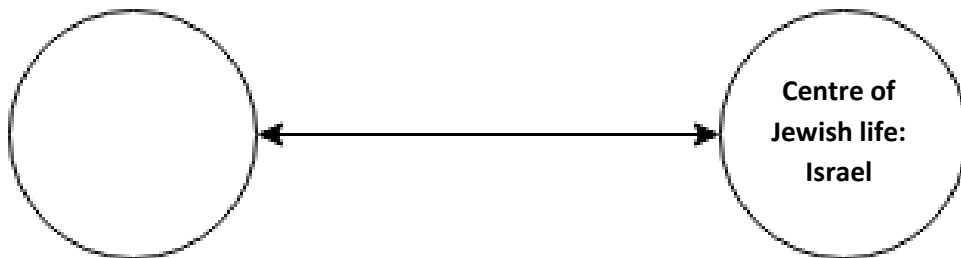
David Ben-Gurion (Israel’s first Prime Minister) was known to have said that the ‘greatest challenge to the state of Israel was the continued existence of a thriving, strong diaspora”.

Question for Madrichim: Why do you think Ben-Gurion thought this? What do you think the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora should look like?

For a long time the relationship was relatively simple⁷: You had almost the whole Jewish population creating communities, living their lives and generally getting on with things wherever they were living whilst always maintaining some connection and perspective towards their ancient homeland – Israel. The centre of Jewish life was outside of Israel. Picture the relationship like this:



However once the State of Israel was established and especially today this relationship has changed, there is no longer one single centre of Jewish life but two:



⁷ This is a recurring theme throughout the Gimmel chomer – things were relatively simple and now they’re not! In reality things have always been complicated, they were just complicated in different ways.



Question for Madrichim: How do you think Israel should think about its relationship to the Diaspora?

Today there are three key models of the relationship:

1. Peripheral
2. Negative
3. Outdated

We're going to look at each model and then see if we can develop a fourth one.

Peripheral:

Consider the following person – let's call them Rachel.

Rachel is a poster child for Jewish education in almost all respects. She went to JFS, was very involved in her youth movement growing up, she teaches in her local cheder and is studying Geography at University of Birmingham where she is very involved in her J-Soc. She's checked off all the boxes we set up for young British Jews.

But she isn't interested in Israel.

"I just don't need Israel," Rachel says. "I have a rich Jewish life in every respect. I love Shabbat, I love my community, I have a great Jewish social life, and many Jewish and non-Jewish friends. I enjoy studying Jewish texts – especially Mishnah and I find meaning in many of the ritual elements of Jewish life. It's not that I have anything against Israel – I just don't need it. I have a perfectly rich Jewish life without it".

Rachel's relationship with Israel is a peripheral one. If we were to picture her model of the relationship between the Diaspora and Israel the arrow leading from the Diaspora to Israel is pretty faded, and it certainly isn't leading back from Israel to her.

Negative:

Consider the following person –let's call them Avi.

Avi is a Masters student in philosophy, studying in Israel for the year as part of his course. He is taking classes in Bar Ilan University, and while he enjoys the studying, he doesn't seem to talk much his Israeli classmates. When asked "Avi, whom do you feel you have more in common with – these Israelis in your class - who are, after all, fellow Jews, also studying philosophy – or a group of typical liberal non-Jewish Brits?". Avi's response is "The British non-Jews, of course! I have nothing in common with these Israelis."

Avi's relationship with Israel (and indeed Israelis) is a negative one. He doesn't see any connection between him and Israel. If we were to picture his model of the relationship between the Diaspora and Israel it wouldn't exist.



Outdated:

Consider the following person –let’s call them Abigail.

Abigail is working towards an undergraduate degree in Jewish education. She is smart, thoughtful, dynamic Jewish educator-to-be. Part of her course is a 3-week seminar in Israel. In an orientation session before the trip, going over packing-lists with the group Rachel quiets down everybody for an important announcement: “We shouldn’t just take our own stuff. We need to take something with us from the UK to give to Israelis. I think we should all go out and buy a few pairs of socks, and when we get to Israel, we’ll give them to an organisation there that gives out clothes to the poor”.

Abigail’s relationship with Israel is outdated. In the 1950s through to the 1970s the Diaspora’s relationship with Israel was all about funnelling money, goods and support to the struggling state. Today that relationship has shifted to investment, partnership and supporting Israelis themselves to make change rather than ‘doing it for them’. Consider if Abigail would make the same announcement if she were to travelling to Paris or New York both of which have pockets of poverty? If we were to picture her model of the relationship between the Diaspora and Israel it would have a massive, thick arrow from the Diaspora to Israel and none coming back from Israel to the Diaspora.

Question for Madrichim: What do you think of these three archetypes and models? Do you agree with how they have been categorised (Peripheral, Negative, and Outdated)? How else might you have categorised these relationships? Are there other models that you think might be missing and what are they?

Question for Madrichim: Do you recognise any of these characters in your chanichim or other people you know?

Note: We’re going to look at some other models of relationship between Israel and Diaspora later in the Kvutzah and some key thinkers and text that express them. So don’t get too frustrated that it’s quite simplistic so far.

Sociologists Steven M. Cohen and Charles Lieberman called this last model the ‘mobilization narrative’: from the 1950s through to the 1970s the State of Israel was depicted as a fledgling, struggling state-in-the-making; a despised but heroic David surrounded by a series of genocidal Goliaths; a refuge for Jews ejected from the developing world; a country struggling with enormous economic problems and in need of immense political and philanthropic support from the Diaspora. Whether or not this was true it was tremendously powerful in mobilizing the Diaspora communities in support for Israel. Today in sections of the community it continues to hold sway, however in many areas it has started to break down. A new relationship is needed to replace it.

One response to this breakdown in the relationship between Diaspora Jews and Israel is to simply blame Diaspora Jews for not being Zionist or Jewish enough – for not caring enough. Many people think that the weakening relationship is located entirely in the Diaspora context and due to its dwindling sense of Jewish particularism (being part of a distinct people). However it takes two to



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tango. In the 'Israel education' scene there is a famous and evocative phrase to describe a relationship with Israel: 'hugging and wrestling' – it talks about the balance between how much does one love (hug) Israel and how much does one criticise (wrestle) Israel. However this approach still locates the main problem with the Diaspora – it's about how they relate to Israel.

We need to go further and broaden the horizons of what a Diaspora-Israel relationship might look like:

“(Religious) Zionism must reframe the issue of connection with Israel from being a one-sided problem, in which one party simply needs to love the other party more strongly, to being a maturing, dialogical relationship, in which both partners have work to do in order to improve the relationship.”

We're going to now look at a fourth model that is built around four key pillars:

The fourth model claims that the Diaspora-Israel relationship should be based around a series of **conversations** about the **complexities** of each society. In these conversations participants should be **empowered** to dialogue and disagree with each other about a variety of issues.

These are the four pillars:

1. Complexity
2. Conversations i.e. dialogue.
3. Empowerment

Question for Madrichim: Why do you think blaming one side of the relationship might not be a good idea? What does claiming mutual responsibility do to affect the perspective of each side to the other participant in the relationship? Can we think of other examples where mutual responsibility rather than blaming is important?

Three Pillars of a Relationship

1. Complexity:

Any parent who has a baby knows what simple love is. Your relationship with your baby is simple. You love her and provide for her. Period. A parent's relationship with an adolescent child is much more complicated. You still love them, but you sometimes disagree with them – and they with you. You try to find ways to have these disagreements become educative and nurturing, rather than debilitating and alienating. You can collaborate with them and build ideas together. You can sometimes find each other infuriating and frustrating; yet you still try to remain in loving-dialogue. The aim of the parent during the teenage years is to try and understand the complex person that their child is becoming. By acknowledging that there are many different, sometimes even contradictory facets of this young person the relationship is likely to become more equal and understanding. It's a much more complicated kind of love – but probably a much richer kind of love.

The same is true for the relationship between the Diaspora and Israel. It is important that both sides acknowledge the complex realities of the other's society and communities. And to express that complexity with a love, a love that isn't simple but a love that is mature.

Question for Madrichim: How might you apply this analogy of parent-child vs. parent-adolescent to help your chanichim develop their understanding of their relationship with Israel and Israel's relationship to them?

Let's just focus on this term 'love' for a moment. It's very easy to get into a tangle over what it means to 'love Israel'. There is an important feminist philosopher of education called Nell Noddings who takes the term love and suggest that perhaps we should use the word 'caring' instead (she wasn't talking about Israel but it applies equally for our Kvutzah). Here is how she defines the term:

"The analysis of caring reveals the part each participant plays. The one-caring (or carer) is first of all attentive. This attention, which I call 'engrossment' is receptive; it receives what the cared-for is feeling and trying to express. It is not merely diagnostic, measuring the cared-for against some pre-established ideal. Rather, it opens the carer to motivational displacement. When I care, my motive energy begins to flow towards the needs and wants of the cared-for. **This does not mean I will always approve of what the other wants, nor does it mean that I will never try to lead them to a better set of values**, but I must take into account the feelings and desires that are actually there and respond as positively as my own values and capacities allow." (*Book: Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education, 1984*)

There are a couple of key things to take away from this quote:

- Engrossment: Teachers and madrichim should not expect to go about their business without being attentive to who their students or chanichim are, what they are thinking and what their world is. So too Jews in the Diaspora or Israel should be attentive to the thoughts and desires of the other, to their arts and culture, to their political and sociological realities, and to everything that makes them, them.
- Motivational displacement: This means that both sides need to consider the needs, wants and desires of the other and to not consider their own first. To literally displace their own motives.⁸
 - Caring is not a relationship of hierarchy but one of a purer, simple desire to be in a relationship with the other.
 - Caring also opens the door to **conversations** and to **empowered** action.

Question for Madrichim: How would you implement this idea of caring into your own practise as madrichim? Do you agree or disagree with this model of a complex relationship between the Diaspora and Israel? Does it fit with how you think about your own relationships with Israel?

⁸ If you want to you can discuss what motives towards the chanichim you bring as a Tzevet to Machane. Do they differ to the motives (reasons) of the chanichim coming to Machane? Example: Education vs. Fun. How might this idea of motivational displacement effect how we act as madrichim towards our chanichim? Whose motives/needs come first?

2. Conversations:

Anyone who has ever studied Gemara knows that it is a cacophony of conversations; it is home to a plurality of voices that often vehemently but lovingly disagree with each other. When teaching a section of Gemara or indeed any part of our Jewish tradition (mesoret Halacha) any good educator is going to try and bring those different voices into conversation with each other. You saw how in K2 (in the appendix) how so many arguments in the Gemara are left open-ended, without conclusion. There is a fancy education theory term for these sorts of conversations – they are ‘educative’. John Dewey described how they are likely to lead to growth and to the desire for future similar experiences of conversation. They are ‘more-ish’. They are fascinating. They are divergent, rather than convergent; they lead in all sorts of possible directions.

The very existence of the State of Israel opens up similar conversations about Judaism and Jewishness that were simply unimaginable just decades ago. It is the only place on earth where Judaism and Jewishness play themselves out in a national-sovereign-public setting. It challenges us to think about what Judaism looks like when lived as the majority. And on the other hand the experience of most Diaspora Jews today in an accepting, multi-cultural society that welcomes them (mostly) with open arms is also something that was unimaginable just a few decades ago. This experience also challenges us to think about what it means to live amongst people who are not unlike ourselves, to think about how to be a minority amongst other diverse minorities. Our task as madrichim is to both invite our chanichim into these conversations but to keep them powerful, educative and open-ended.

Our fourth model of the relationship is **an invitation to both sides to engage in significant, honest, constructive, caring conversations about and with each other about the State and the Diaspora, and the lives of Jews in both of them.**

Question for Madrichim: This aspect of ‘conversations’ can sometimes be quite challenging to carry out. What might some of the barriers be that would stop these sorts of conversations? How might we as a movement carry out these types of conversations? Do you see the wider community around you doing it? If not, why not?

3. Empowerment:

If caring can lead to good conversations, then caring together with conversations can lead to empowerment. Caring opens the door to action which when combined with passion and sometimes even anger *demand*s action. A relationship built on caring and conversations can be a highly empowering relationship. Perhaps the best way to think about this sort of empowerment is through ‘intervention’:

An intervention is a deliberate process by which change is introduced into people’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours. The overall objective of an intervention is to confront a person in a non-threatening way and allow them to see their negative behaviour, and how it affects themselves, family and friends. It usually involves several people who have prepared themselves to talk to a



person who has been engaging in the negative behaviour. In a clear and respectful way they inform the person of factual information regarding the behaviour and how it may have affected them. They then invite that person into a conversation about their behaviour.

A relationship that involves intervention is when both sides empower themselves and each other to talk candidly about how each other's actions affect them. They express how much they care for the other person and that's why they are intervening. It allows both sides to express their possible upset, frustration or hurt without walking away or sweeping it under the carpet, and to do it in the context of a caring, complex relationship.

This is exactly the model of a mutually complex and empowered relationship that's expressed through respectful and caring conversations that can exist between the Diaspora and Israel.

Question for Madrichim: This aspect of 'empowerment' can sometimes be quite challenging to carry out. It can involve some very intense emotions and responses from each side. What might an empowered relationship look like that is expressed through complex and caring conversations? What are some of the barriers stopping this from happening?

Key Thinkers:

Remember how we said we would come back to some other models of the relationship. Well one model that we haven't talked about is one that, whilst it's not one that Bnei Akiva endorses, it is an important aspect of some people's Religious Zionism. The model is called 'Shelilat HaGola' which means the denigration of exile/Diaspora. Its approach to the relationship is not to talk about how good Israel is but how bad the Diaspora is. Some examples are:

Shelilat HaGolah – Negation of Exile/Diaspora:

1. Sifrei (43 of Sifrei on Devarim) – The Mitzvot done in the Diaspora don't really count, they're only for practice!

"Even though I am about to exile you from the Land (of Israel) to a foreign land, you must continue to be marked there by the commandments, so that when you return they will not be new to you. A parable: A king of flesh and blood grew angry with his wife and sent her back to her father's house, saying to her, "Be sure to continue wearing your jewellery, so that whenever you return, it will not be new to you." Thus also the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel, "My children, you must continue to be marked by the commandments, so that when you return, they will not be new to you."

So basically, according to this source, for someone who lives outside of Israel, the mitzvot are just for practice, so that we know what we're doing when we live in Israel again – that they won't be 'unfamiliar'. Now this source is pretty shocking – can it really be that mitzvot can be of greater or lesser value depending on where one fulfils them? Surely the command doesn't change i.e. if I'm supposed to keep Shabbat should it really matter where I am whilst keeping it?



The Ramban in his commentary on Vayikra 18:25 quotes this Sifrei and takes it very seriously. Indeed many people in Israel in the Religious Zionist community view this approach as the normative model. Needless to say that many people living in the Diaspora point to a Gemara in Kiddushin 36b that says that “Any commandment that is not dependent on the Land (of Israel) must be performed outside of the Land, and any of them that is dependent on the Land is not performed except for in the Land.” And if you remember from K2 when it comes to Aggadah (Sifrei is a type of Aggadah) we’re much more free in agreeing or disagreeing with what is said, so practise or not – you decide!

Question for Madrichim: What are some of the positive and negative outcomes by choosing to emphasise or teach the Sifrei’s and Ramban’s approach? How might it effect the fourth model we’ve been arguing for?

Rav Kook/Judith Butler

Coming back to our model of a mutually complex and empowered relationship that’s expressed through respectful and caring conversations between the Diaspora and Israel. We’re now going to look at, quickly, two key thinkers that expressed these ideas quite early on.

1. Mordechai Kaplan – Greater Zionism

In the mid-1950s, Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan⁹ warned that Zionism could not be limited just to building and operating the apparatus of the State. He argued that “a greater Zionism” needed to be constructed that would help Israel impact the Diaspora, and most radically for the time, allow the Diaspora to positively influence Israel. Indeed, Kaplan’s New Zionism sees cultural and spiritual mutuality between Israeli and Diaspora Jews as adding value and Jewish depth to the experiences of both. Each has what to gain and give, from and to the other.

“Zionism, as a movement to redeem the Jewish People and regenerate its spirit through the reconstitution of Jewish Peoplehood and the reclamation of Eretz Yisrael, has to meet the following requirements: (a) it has to foster among the Jews both of Israel and the Diaspora a sense of interdependence and process of interaction; and, (b) it has to give the individual Jew the feeling that participating in that interdependence and interaction makes him more of a person.” (*A New Zionism, Mordecai Kaplan, 1955*)

In *A New Zionism*, Kaplan warned that until a profound and deep cultural mutuality between Israelis and Diaspora Jews was established, Zionism had much more to do still.

⁹ Kaplan started out life as Orthodox Rabbi in Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in New York City and assisted in the founding of the Young Israel movement of Modern Orthodox Judaism in 1912. He then became involved in the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, where on March 18, 1922, he held the first public celebration of a Bat Mitzvah in America, for his daughter Judith. This led to considerable criticism of Kaplan in the Orthodox Jewish press. In 1945 the Union of Orthodox Rabbis “formally assembled to excommunicate from Judaism what it deemed to be the community’s most heretical voice: Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan”. (This was probably a rhetorical point but demonstrates the depth of feeling and fear and anger). His students then went on to found a new stream of Judaism called ‘Reconstructionist Judaism’. All that being said we can still learn from people we might disagree with and his perspective on Zionism here is quite fascinating.



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Another key thinker is A.D. Gordon, one of the early Socialist Zionists. Despite Gordon's intense connection to the physical land of Israel, he never negated the possibility of organic Jewish life in the Diaspora. In 1921, Gordon wrote a stirring essay in the American Zionist weekly Ha-Ivri that mapped out an inspiring vision for Israel-Diaspora relations.

In "The Work of Revival in the Lands of the Diaspora," Gordon made it clear that it was neither realistic nor preferable to assume that all of the Jewish People would immigrate to the Land of Israel. Jews living outside of Israel, therefore, must go through a process of renaissance and development parallel to that of the Jewish People living in its land.

In this essay, Gordon likened the Jewish people to a global tree whose roots would be struck in the land of Israel but whose branches, whose leaves and limbs, would stand wherever Jews found themselves. Roots in Israel would bring badly needed water to replenish the Jewish communities of the world, but world Jewish communities, through their own unique experiences, would send to Israel the air by which Jewish life in the Land of Israel would not be suffocated by its insularity. Gordon made it clear that the realization of Zion must be "a mutual enterprise, a mutual revival."

For Gordon, the creation of a new Jewish reality need not be founded upon the negation of Jewish life outside Israel—as long as that Diaspora life is creative and organic.

Question for Madrichim: What do you think the impact of Kaplan's and Gordon's approach might be if more people applied it to the Diaspora-Israel relationship? Kaplan talks about how the interaction between Israel and Diaspora makes those involved 'more of a person' – what do you think this means? Gordon describes a great tree with roots in Israel and the exchange of air and water between Israel and the Diaspora, keeping both alive. He doesn't talk about two great trees – why do you think that might be?



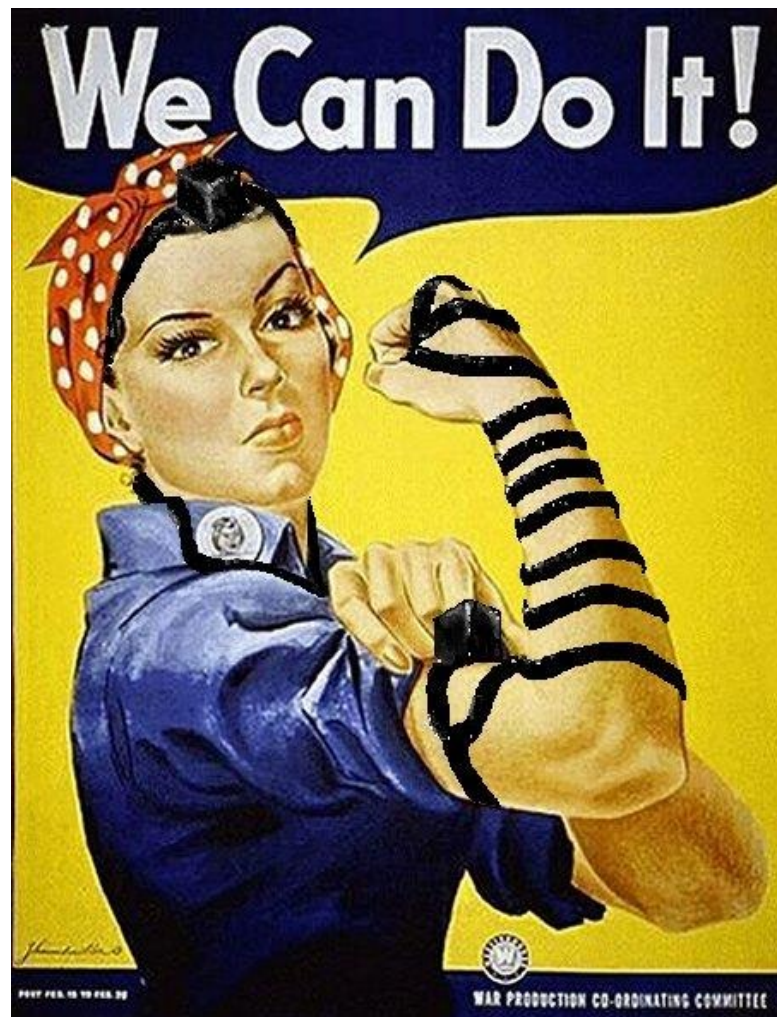
Feminism and Judaism: **Are they compatible?**

Aims:

- To understand what feminism is, why it is important, and where it is compatible with Judaism.
- To look at the halachic ramifications of a feminist Judaism
- To explore the feminist movements that are shaping Modern Orthodoxy
- To examine what role we as madrichim have to play in the debate

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. A Changing Halacha
3. Modern Jewish Orthodox Feminism
4. The Future





1. Introduction:

Feminism at its core is the belief in and advocacy of **equal rights and opportunities** for all genders. It consists of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of genders.

Past feminist movements have helped to establish equal legal rights for men and women, including the right to vote, to hold public office, to work, to earn fair wages or equal pay, to own property, to receive education, to enter contracts, to have equal rights within marriage, and to have maternity leave. However, many countries do not offer these opportunities to women and place restrictions on their education, behaviour and aspirations. Additionally, while many societies do offer de jure equal rights to women, the de facto state of affairs is that many women experience discrimination, restrictions on their freedom, and violence due to their gender in all areas of life – whether this discrimination is intentional or due to an unconscious gender bias.

Question for Madrichim: What examples can you think of where a person might face unconscious gender bias? Have you experienced gender bias or held unconsciously biased views yourself?

Question for Madrichim: Based on this definition, why do you think that many people are uncomfortable with defining themselves as feminists?

Question for Madrichim: What problems might we encounter when trying to approach Judaism from a feminist perspective?

We live in a world where women are increasingly empowered in secular areas. Young girls are taught to have aspirations in academia, in business, and in society. Modern Orthodox women are a part of this world, yet the Jewish world has not always caught up with this change. The result is that women are encouraged to push themselves and develop their values around a secular viewpoint and not a Jewish one. Those women who do have aspirations to achieve in Judaism often face resistance.

Rachel Adler is a prominent Jewish feminist thinker. The following text is an extract from her article [The Jew Who Wasn't There: Halacha and the Jewish Woman](#), written in 1971:

“Make no mistake; for centuries, the lot of the Jewish woman was infinitely better than that of her non-Jewish counterpart. She had rights which other women lacked until a century ago...the problem is that very little has been done since then (1000 CE) to ameliorate the position of Jewish women in observant society. All of this can quickly be rectified if one steps outside of Jewish tradition and Halacha. The problem is how to attain some justice and some growing room for the Jewish woman if one is committed to remaining within Halacha...The halachic scholars must examine our problem anew, right now, with open minds and with empathy. They must make it possible for women to claim their share in the Torah and begin to do the things a Jew was created to do...For too many centuries, the Jewish woman has been a golem, created by



Jewish society. She cooked and bore and did her master's will, and when her tasks were done, the Divine Name was removed from her mouth. It is time for the golem to demand a soul.”

Question for Madrichim: Do you agree with Rachel Adler's call to action? Who must act?

Question for Madrichim: What is the role of education in empowering Jewish women?

2. A changing Halacha:

It is common to address questions of women's roles in Judaism by looking at halachic boundaries. Some activities are halachically permissible, while others are not. For example, which of the following activities are women halachically permitted to engage in?

- Making Kiddush
- Making Hamotzi
- Making Havdallah
- Learning Torah
- Learning Gemara
- Holding a communal leadership position
- Reading from the Torah
- Participating in a zimun
- Dancing with the Torah
- Giving a Dvar Torah in shul
- Wearing a tallit
- Leaving the house whenever she chooses
- Becoming a Rabbi

In fact, halacha is not black and white. It is full of machlokot (debates) and is constantly changing to reflect the world around it. The very root of the word halacha is הלך – to go, to walk. You will find legitimate halachic opinions from various time periods both permitting and forbidding women from engaging in any of the activities from the above list!

Question for Madrichim: Does anything on this list surprise you? Which halachot did you assume were definitely not permitted for women to do?

The application of a feminist ideology (and indeed any modern concept) to Judaism faces a non-halachic barrier: tradition. We are so steeped in our ways that we are resistant to change, and therefore while many poskim today hold that all of the above activities are technically permissible, many communities don't practise them.

It is important not to be too critical of this approach. Tradition is a central tenet of Orthodoxy and is responsible for the preservation of Judaism throughout history. We value our minhagim so much that we elevate the most widely practiced ones to a level almost equivalent to that of



halacha, even if they were based on error – yes, I am talking about kitniyot! Rav Shagar, a postmodern philosopher, had the following to say about tradition:

“ ... tradition is, first and foremost, belonging. Those who question tradition, who are compelled to justify, defend, or preserve it, no longer belong to it, , for it is, by definition, a function of self-identity rather than reflexivity... a lifestyle of halachic commitment bereft of the rootedness of traditionalism is soulless – and the soul, as we know, is the essence.”¹⁰

Throughout Jewish history, there have always been women who defied tradition and were praised for their actions. Devorah judged Bnei Yisrael and led them in battle. Michal, Shaul’s daughter, wore tefillin.¹¹ Hulda was a teacher of Torah. Beruriah paskened halacha. All of these were exceptional cases that still seem radical today. However, there have also been cases where halachic norms have changed as the result of the actions of a few, and the role of women in Judaism has developed and modernised.



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The first time we see this happening is in the Torah itself! The story of Machla, Noah, Chogla, Milca, and Tirzah appears in Sefer Bamidbar, chapter 27:

א ותקרבנה בנות זלפחד בן-גלעד בן-מכיר בן-מנשה למשפחת מנשה בן-יוסף ואלה שמות בנותיו מחלה נעה וחקלה ומלקה ותרצה: ב ותעמדנה לפני משה ולפני אלעזר הכהן ולפני הנשיאים וכל העדה פתח אהל-מועד לאמר: ג אבינו מת במדבר והוא לא-היה בתוך העדה הנועדים עלי-יהוה בעדת-קרח כייבטטאו מת ובנים לא-היו לו: ד למה יגרע שם-אבינו מתוך משפחתו כי אין לו בן תנה לנו אחזה בתוך אחי אבינו: ה ויקרב משה את-משפטן לפני יהוה: ו ויאמר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: ז פן בנות זלפחד דברת נלח תתן להם אחנת נחלה בתוך אחי אביהם והעברת את-נחלת אביהן להן: ח ואל-בני ישראל תדבר לאמר איש פיי-ימות ובן אין לו והעברתם את-נחלתו לבתו... ויהי-לך לבני ישראל לחקת משפט כאשר צוה יהוה את-משה:

¹ The daughters of Zelophehad, of Manassite family—son of Hephher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh son of Joseph—came forward. The names of the daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. ² They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the chieftains, and the whole assembly, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and they said, ³ “Our father died in the wilderness. He was not one of the faction, Korah’s faction, which banded together against the LORD, but died for his own sin; and he has left no sons. ⁴ Let not our father’s name be lost to his clan just because he had no son! Give us a holding among our father’s kinsmen!” ⁵ Moses brought their case before the LORD. ⁶ And the LORD said to Moses, ⁷ “The plea of Zelophehad’s daughters is just: you should give them a hereditary holding among their father’s kinsmen; transfer their father’s share to them. ⁸ “Further, speak to the Israelite people as follows: ‘If a man dies without leaving a son, you shall transfer his property to his daughter... This shall be the law of procedure for the Israelites, in accordance with the LORD’s command to Moses.”

¹⁰ *Religious Life in the Modern Age*, essay in *Faith Shattered and Restored: Judaism in the Postmodern Age* by Maggid Books

¹¹ *Mo'ed Katan* 16b

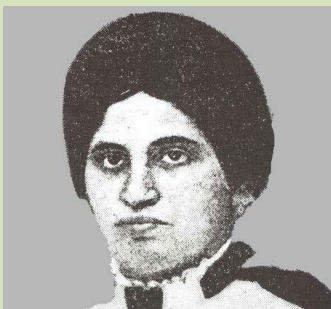


The events described here are astonishing. In an age where women could not even own property, the daughters had the confidence to go and speak to the leader of the entire Jewish people to demand that an injustice was rectified. Not only was their request heeded, but the law was changed for the entirety of Am Yisrael!

Question for Madrichim: Why do you think the five daughters had their request granted? Hashem claims that they were right to make the request, so what does this say about the pre-existing law? What precedents can we take from this story?

A more modern story of change is the tale of Sara Schenirer. Born into a rabbinic family of Belzer Chassidim in Poland in 1883, she was brought up learning Jewish texts that her father translated into Yiddish for her, but she envied her brothers' ability to learn texts from their original source. At the same time, she observed the growing alienation from Judaism felt by young women who were receiving a secular education but were still forbidden from learning Torah. She once wrote:

"And as we pass through the days before the High Holy Days...fathers and sons travel, and thus they are drawn to [Ger](#), to Belz, to [Alexander](#), to [Bobov](#), to all those places that had been made citadels of conceited religious life, dominated by the figure of the rebbe's personality. And we stay at home, the wives, daughters, and the little ones. We have an empty festival. It is bare of Jewish intellectual content. The women have never learned anything about the spiritual meaning that is concentrated within a Jewish festival. The mother goes to the synagogue, but the services echo faintly into the fenced and boarded-off women's galleries. There is much crying by elderly women. The young girls look at them as though they belong to a different century. Youth and the desire to live a full life shoot up violently in the strong-willed young personalities. Outside the synagogues, the young girls stay chattering; they walk away from the synagogue where their mothers pour out their vague and heavy feelings. They leave behind them the wailing of the older generation and follow the urge for freedom and self-expression. Further and further from the synagogue they go, further away, to the dancing, tempting light of a fleeting joy."¹²



Sara Schenirer worked as a dressmaker by day and studied both religious and secular texts by night. She would regularly attend shiurim and studied Torah through the lens of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, under the instruction of Rabbi Dr. Flesch. Inspired by a Chanukah shiur he gave about Yehudit, Sara Schenirer decided to set up a school for Jewish girls. Her brother, a

¹² *The ultra-Orthodox Seamstress Who Determined the Fate of Jewish Women* by [Avital Chizhik-Goldschmidt](#) for Haaretz



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prominent member of the Belzer community, tried to discourage her, insisting that her chances were slim, but finally agreed to take her to meet with the Belzer Rebbe in Marienbad, today in the Czech Republic. Upon hearing Schenirer's idea of a school, the old rabbi offered her two words: "Mazel ubrocha". And so, in 1918, she gathered seven young pupils in a rented room in Krakow. Ten years later, The Beis Yaakov school system had expanded into 265 schools in Poland alone, and is still going strong today.

Sara Schenirer's radical actions changed the face of Torah study. Until 100 years ago, women studying Torah was an almost unheard of phenomenon. Today, almost every Jewish community values girls' education, and permits study directly from the texts (to varying degrees).

3. Modern Jewish Orthodox Feminism

A number of feminist organisations and movements are prominent in Modern Orthodox circles today. A selection are described here.

Women of the Wall



“As Women of the Wall, our central mission is to attain social and legal recognition of our right, as women, to wear prayer shawls, pray, and read from the Torah, collectively and aloud, at the Western Wall. We work to further our mission through social advocacy, education and empowerment...Every time we meet to pray, we empower and encourage Jewish women to embrace religion freely, in their own way. We stand proudly and strongly in the forefront of the movement for religious pluralism in Israel, with the hope to inspire and empower women from all over the world and across the spectrum of Jewish movements to find their spiritual voices and create meaningful Jewish identities.”¹³

Women of the Wall has been at the centre of controversies in Israel. Their monthly Rosh Chodesh women’s service has empowered women and given them a meaningful tefila experience. At the same time, their presence has upset many who believe that the way that they pray is not in accordance with halacha, and therefore they should not be permitted to daven at the Kotel. In 2003, the Israeli Supreme Court forbade women from wearing tefillin or reading from the Torah at the Kotel, but advised the designation of Robinson’s Arch as an egalitarian prayer space. The size and hours of access to this space were increased in 2013, partly due to the activism of Women of the Wall. This caused divisions in the group – Reform members (including Women of the Wall founder Anat Hoffman) were satisfied with the compromise while Orthodox members did not want to participate in an egalitarian service, but did want the right to conduct their own service with tallitot and Torah reading. This resulted in Women of the Wall splitting into two organisations. In January 2017, the Supreme Court ruled that women could read from the Torah at the Kotel, but the Women of the Wall still face protest and harassment at their services.

Yeshivat Maharat

Yeshivat Maharat in New York is currently the only Orthodox institution to give semikha to women. Women study for four years and can subsequently choose the title Rabbi, Rabba, or

¹³ <https://www.womenofthewall.org.il/mission>



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Maharat. Rabba Sara Hurwitz was the first woman ordained in 2009. In 2015, the Rabbinical Council of America passed a resolution which states, "RCA members with positions in Orthodox institutions may not ordain women into the Orthodox rabbinate, regardless of the title used; or hire or ratify the hiring of a woman into a rabbinic position at an Orthodox institution; or allow a title implying rabbinic ordination to be used by a teacher of Limudei Kodosh in an Orthodox institution."¹⁴

JOFA

“JOFA, the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, expands the spiritual, ritual, intellectual and political opportunities for women within the framework of halakha (Jewish law), by advocating meaningful participation and equality for women in family life, synagogues, houses of learning and Jewish communal organizations to the full extent possible within halakha.”¹⁵ The organisation was set up in 1997 after the first International Conference on Feminism and Orthodoxy, organized by writer Blu Greenberg. JOFA runs events, produces publications relating to women in halacha, and organises Torah-learning opportunities directed at women.

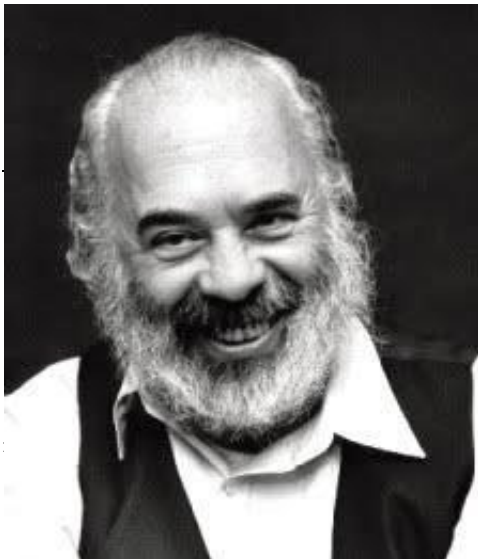


JOFA UK was launched by JOFA ambassador Rabba Dina Brawer, who recently became the first woman in the UK to receive semikha from Yeshivat Maharat. In her position as JOFA head she was the scholar-in-residence at Hampstead Synagogue for a number of years.

#MeToo

The #MeToo Movement is a movement against sexual harassment and assault. Tarana Burke, an American social activist and community organizer, began using the phrase "Me Too" as early as 2006, and the hashtag #MeToo spread virally in October 2017 in an attempt to demonstrate the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment. It followed soon after the sexual misconduct allegations against Harvey Weinstein. Whilst not directly a Jewish movement, sexual harassment and violence is as prevalent in the Jewish community as the rest of the world, and instances of both of these within the Jewish community began to emerge.

The most prominent and divisive case was that of Rav Shlomo Carlebach. Allegations of sexual misconduct emerged before his death in 1994, but it was an article entitled *Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach's Shadow Side*, appearing in *Lilith* magazine in 1998, which laid bare the full extent of the accusations about his actions. The #MeToo movement has brought the controversy to the forefront of the community's awareness.



Carlebach's music and torah has formed a significant part of many people's Jewish identities and to reject

bans ordination and hiring of women rabbis



them is inconceivable to many. At the same time, how can we become bystanders and allow sexual abuse victims to feel unwelcome in their own community?

Ultimately, people have known about the accusations of Carlebach's dark side for decades. Every few years, the issue comes to the fore again and the debates resurface. Will this be the occasion that the community decides to take action? What action would be appropriate? Or will the Carlebach saga fade from everyone's memories until its next resurgence?

4. The Future

The Modern Orthodox world is at a delicate point of change. We must develop a balance to ensure that there is a place for modern women in our faith, while not losing the essential traditionalism that makes us who we are. How can we respond to women who wish to take a more active role in communal life? How do we remove prejudices and perceptions that alienate women from achieving full participation in a halachic lifestyle? How can we prevent women (and men) becoming disillusioned with and disinterested in Jewish life by the roles and opportunities offered to them? How can we ensure that women have a voice in our movement?

Finally, where does Bnei Akiva fit into all this? Please think about the following questions and then read the article in the appendix by Jemma Silvert for Yediot.

Question for Madrichim: What role does Bnei Akiva have in shaping the future of Orthodox feminism? What obligation do we have to our chanichot and to our chanichim in terms of the environment that we provide on machane and the chinuch that we provide?

5. Next Kvutzah

Appendix

[Welcome to the Men's Club – and I Want In](#)

[April 4, 2017](#)

By Jemma Silvert

There are a thousand things that this article could be, and there are a thousand things that it is not. This could very easily be a conversation about the Orthodox Union's recent barring of women from serving as clergy in synagogues; this could very easily be about the potential of Partnership Minyanim within Orthodoxy. This could very easily be about the ways that my desire to follow halacha and my desire to fight for equality seem to conflict with each other on a daily basis. It is about none of these things. (Well, maybe the last one...)

Instead, I wish to step outside halacha for a moment. I'm in no way halachic expert (to say the very least), and my opinions and beliefs on the things I mentioned above are far from fully formed. So let's step outside halacha. Or rather, let's step outside this questioning of our halachic system that seems to have become synonymous with any desire for progress and inclusivity. It assumes that the only way to fight for gender equality in Orthodoxy is to push the boundaries of halacha and, in all honesty, I don't think that that's true. It assumes that gender is as equal a construct as it is ever going to be within the current halachic framework, and so the notion that



there is no room for change within that framework is an unsurprising conclusion, but it is a myth nonetheless.

As it is, there are so many ways that Orthodox Jewish spaces are not as inclusive as they could be, and should be, for those who don't identify as male – even within the realms of halacha.

The weekend before last, my (female) friend and I went to daven ma'ariv after Shabbat in the United Synagogue shul I was visiting for the weekend. We walked in to find a small-ish room of men (all of whom turned to stare at us), with no space left for women to daven, and no mechitza in sight. We stood in the doorway long enough to make our intention to join the service clear, and when not a single person offered to make space for us or to help us locate a mechitza, we left, and instead davened without a minyan in the hallway outside. This isn't an isolated incident. Another friend told me a similar story: how she'd walked into a Shabbat mincha service a few weeks earlier, again only to be met with blank stares, again the only woman in the room. Here, at least, someone did eventually ask if she'd like him to get a mechitza for her, but by this point she was too embarrassed and too conscious of disrupting the service to accept. Again, she left and davened outside instead. My shul in Leeds is a little better: when I go on a Friday Night (again, usually as the only woman) there are always people who clear a table and who help me bring in a mechitza; here, doing so as soon as they see me coming, rather than waiting for me to hover awkwardly for a while amongst the men first.

I say this shul is a little better; in fact, it's one of the best Orthodox shuls I've been to in this respect. Yet the fact remains, there is still no space set aside for women from the outset. In general, I still feel awkward and embarrassed to walk in to a communal prayer service. As a woman, I am not afforded the privilege of being able to walk into an Orthodox shul and know that there will be somewhere for me to pray, alongside the members of its community, and in a space that does not have to be adjusted according to my presence. From friends I have spoken to, I know that they feel the same. These are women who have been involved in their communities and in their shuls since they were little girls; women who have been davening their entire lives; women who are confident and self-assured individuals. If women like this still feel uncomfortable walking into shul at any time other than a Shabbat morning, then what hope is there for individuals who are perhaps less confident? For those who move to a new area, or are new to Orthodoxy? For those who want to start davening more, and to do so with a minyan, as part of their community? Walking into a room and being obviously in the minority is difficult enough, let's not make it harder.

I appreciate that the experiences I described above are largely due to the general lack of non-male attendance at these services. If you usually only have men, it makes sense that you'd set up the room in accordance with that. However, this not only self-perpetuates the lack of female involvement, it also turns the space into somewhat of a 'Men's Club'. Sure, we're inclusive, we're equal, we'd let women daven with us if they wanted to. This is not equality, and this is not inclusivity. Is the effort saved by not setting up an extra table and a mechitza really worth the alienation of 50% of the congregation? At the Motzei Shabbat incident I mentioned the other week, there was an event in the shul taking place both before and after ma'ariv, at which many women were in attendance. If we usually only have men, and so set the room up in accordance with that; it may not be entirely excusable, but it is at least understandable. At a service where we know women will be present, why are we not inviting them to daven with us? Why are we not setting up and creating a space for a prayer in a way that enables women to join, not as an afterthought, not with some initial awkwardness and disruption, but as just as much a part of the community as anyone else? Equality is not allowing women into the Men's Club. Inclusivity is not



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helping to adjust the space once women arrive. These things consist in creating a space that is just as welcoming for one gender identity as it is for any other.

Whether you believe in basic human dignity or whether you're going on to fight for female rabbis and Partnership Minyanim, the place to start is by building equality and inclusivity within the frameworks that already exist. I believe a lot of progress has been made in this regard within Bnei Akiva, from enabling women to kiss the Torah to waiting for there to be 10 boys and 10 girls present before beginning davening, but this sense of equality and inclusivity shouldn't be just another part of the 'camp bubble'. It shouldn't be just another illusion we create on machane. Orthodox prayer services are intrinsically unequal, but when our chanichot and madrichot go home, they should feel just as welcome and just as much a part of any space in which they choose to daven as they did on machane.

Rightly or wrongly, there are a lot of ways in which Orthodoxy is criticised for not keeping up with the times. Having uninclusive davening spaces does not need to be one of them. Let's share this with our communities, share this with our shuls – let's make a change.



Antisemitism: Who, What and Why

Introduction:

This Kvutzah is going to look at how the enduring nature of antisemitism presents a particular challenge to life in the modern world. To start with lets see a definition:

- Antisemitism (also spelled anti-Semitism or anti-semitism) is hostility to, prejudice, or discrimination against Jews. A person who holds such positions is called an antisemite. Antisemitism is generally considered to be a form of racism.

Antisemitism may be manifested in many ways, ranging from expressions of hatred of or discrimination against individual Jews to organized pogroms by mobs, state police, or even military attacks on entire Jewish communities. Although the term did not come into common usage until the 19th century, it is now also applied to historic anti-Jewish incidents.

The root word Semite gives the false impression that antisemitism is directed against all Semitic people, e.g., including Arabs and Assyrians. The compound word antisemite was popularized in Germany in 1879 as a scientific-sounding term for Judenhass ("Jew-hatred"), and has been its common use since then.

Over this Kvutzah we're going to look at some of the 'classic' types of antisemitism and some of the possible causes of antisemitism and what we can do about it.

When reading through the chomer bear in mind the following question:

What does the existence of antisemitism mean for our status, roles and identities around the world?

→ **Note:** This is an absolutely huge topic, with thousands of years of history. There is no way this chomer is going to address even a small percentage of it. Hopefully though this can serve as an introduction to the topic and a way to start thinking about its implications.

→ **We're** also not going to look at contemporary antisemitism e.g. in the far-left or far-right. It's very complicated. The essential take-away: They are applying many of the classic forms of antisemitism but in a new format or to a new target e.g. the State of Israel.

Types of Antisemitism:

1. Economic Antisemitism
2. Religious Antisemitism
3. Racial Antisemitism

Economic Antisemitism:



The underlying premise of economic antisemitism is that Jews perform harmful economic activities or that economic activities become harmful when they are performed by Jews.

Linking Jews and money underpins the most damaging and lasting Antisemitic canards (an unfounded rumour or story). Antisemites claim that Jews control the world finances, a theory promoted in the fraudulent Protocols of the Elders of Zion¹⁶. In the modern era, such myths continue to be spread in books such as *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*¹⁷ published by the Nation of Islam¹⁸, and on the internet. There are two components to the financial canards:

- a) Jews are savages that "are temperamentally incapable of performing honest labour"
- b) Jews are "leaders of a financial cabal seeking world domination"

Abraham Foxman, an American lawyer and activist (head of the Centre for the Study of Anti-Semitism at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City) describes six additional facets of the financial canards:

1. All Jews are wealthy
2. Jews are stingy and greedy
3. Powerful Jews control the business world
4. Jewish religion emphasizes profit and materialism
5. It is okay for Jews to cheat non-Jews
6. Jews use their power to benefit "their own kind"

Economic antisemitism can be summarized as the myth that '[Jews] control the banks, the money supply, the economy, and businesses—of the community, of the country, of the world'. The common language used are as illustrations: many slurs and proverbs (in several different languages) which suggest that Jews are stingy, or greedy, or miserly, or aggressive bargain'ers. During the nineteenth century, Jews were described as "scurrilous, stupid, and tight-fisted", but after the Jewish Emancipation and the rise of Jews to the middle- or upper-class in Europe were portrayed as "clever, devious, and manipulative financiers out to dominate [world finances]".

¹⁶ The Protocols of the Meetings of the Learned Elders of Zion is an antisemitic fabricated text purporting to describe a Jewish plan for global domination. The forgery was first published in Russia in 1903, translated into multiple languages, and disseminated internationally in the early part of the 20th century. According to the claims made by some of its publishers, the Protocols are the minutes of a late 19th-century meeting where Jewish leaders discussed their goal of global Jewish hegemony by subverting the morals of Gentiles, and by controlling the press and the world's economies.

¹⁷ *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* is a book released in 1991 by the Nation of Islam that asserts that Jews dominated the Atlantic slave trade. The Secret Relationship has been widely criticized for being antisemitic and for failing to provide an objective analysis of the role of Jews in the slave trade. The American Historical Association issued a statement condemning claims that Jews played a disproportionate role in the Atlantic slave trade, and other historians such as Wim Klooster and Seymour Drescher concluded that the role of Jews in the overall Atlantic slave trade was in fact minimal. Critics of the book assert that it uses selective citations in order to purposefully exaggerate the role of Jews.

¹⁸ The Nation of Islam, abbreviated as NOI, is an African American political and religious movement, founded in Detroit, Michigan, United States, by Wallace D. Fard Muhammad on July 4, 1930. Its stated goals are to improve the spiritual, mental, social, and economic condition of African Americans in the United States and all of humanity. Critics have described the organization as being black supremacist and antisemitic. The Southern Poverty Law Centre tracks the NOI as a hate group.



Question for Madrichim: Why do you think economic antisemitism continues to exist today? Have you ever joked about 'Jews being good with money' before? What does it mean to use the language of those who hate us to describe ourselves? Is it a way to fight against it, to reclaim it or an internalization of the antisemitic tropes?

Religious Antisemitism:

Religious antisemitism, also known as anti-Judaism, is antipathy towards Jews because of their perceived religious beliefs. In theory, antisemitism and attacks against individual Jews would stop if Jews stopped practicing Judaism or changed their public faith, especially by conversion to the official or right religion. However, in some cases discrimination continues after conversion, as in the case of Christianized Marranos or Iberian Jews in the late 15th century and 16th century who were suspected of secretly practising Judaism or Jewish customs.

The two most common forms are Christian antisemitism and Muslim antisemitism.

Christian rhetoric and antipathy towards Jews developed in the early years of Christianity and was reinforced by the belief that Jews had killed Christ and ever increasing anti-Jewish measures over the ensuing centuries. The action taken by Christians against Jews included acts of ostracism, humiliation and violence, and murder culminating in the Holocaust.

Christian antisemitism has been attributed to numerous factors including theological differences, competition between Church and Synagogue, the Christian drive for converts, misunderstanding of Jewish beliefs and practices, and a perceived Jewish hostility toward Christians. These attitudes were reinforced in Christian preaching, art and popular teaching for two millennia, containing contempt for Jews, as well as statutes which were designed to humiliate and stigmatise Jews.

'Reasons' for Christian antisemitism:

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), a Doctor of the Catholic Church, said:

'For us the Jews are Scripture's living words, because they remind us of what Our Lord suffered. They are not to be persecuted, killed, or even put to flight.'

Early Christians were presented with a problem: if Jesus was a Jew and if Christianity was the natural and correct development of Judaism, why did the Jews reject Jesus and Christianity?

The answer: The Jews had been the chosen people but broke the covenant with God, and were condemned to spend the rest of eternity suffering on earth, a symbol of degradation and sub-humanity. It was because of this belief that many Medieval European rulers protected the Jews, but considered them property of the king.

Jews were subject to a wide range of legal disabilities and restrictions in Medieval Europe. Jews were excluded from many trades, the occupations varying with place and time, and determined by the influence of various non-Jewish competing interests. Often Jews were barred from all occupations



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but money-lending and peddling, with even these at times forbidden. Jews' association to money lending would carry on throughout history in the stereotype of Jews being greedy and perpetuating capitalism.

In the later medieval period, the number of Jews permitted to reside in certain places was limited; they were concentrated in ghettos, and were not allowed to own land; they were subject to discriminatory taxes on entering cities or districts other than their own, *The Oath More Judaico*, the form of oath required from Jewish witnesses, in some places developed bizarre or humiliating forms, e.g. in Swabian law of the 13th century, the Jew would be required to stand on the hide of a sow or a bloody lamb.

The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 was the first to proclaim the requirement for Jews to wear something that distinguished them as Jews (and Muslims the same). On many occasions, Jews were accused of a blood libel, the supposed drinking of blood of Christian children in mockery of the Christian Eucharist¹⁹.

Question for Madrichim: “Antisemitism and attacks against individual Jews would stop if Jews stopped practicing Judaism or changed their public faith, especially by conversion to the official or right religion” – What makes religious antisemitism different to economic antisemitism? Why does ‘putting the power’ to stop their oppression in the hands of Jews do to Jewish identity?

Important to note: Today, in response to the Holocaust (though earlier accounts of reconciliation exist) and many other instances of the persecution of Jews by Christians throughout history, many Christian theologians, religious historians and educators have sought to improve understanding of Judaism and Jewish religious practices by Christians. There have been many successful attempts at reconciliation between Judaism and Christianity and Jews and Christians. A very visible example of this is the ongoing friendships between each recent Chief Rabbi and the respective Archbishops of Canterbury.

Racial Antisemitism:

Racial antisemitism is a form of antisemitism or prejudice against Jews based on the belief that Jews are a racial or ethnic group, rather than prejudice against Judaism as a religion. The definition is based on the premise that Jews constitute a distinctive race or ethnic group, whose traits or characteristics are in some way abhorrent or inherently inferior or otherwise different to that of the rest of society. The abhorrence may be expressed in the form of stereotypes or caricatures. Racial antisemitism may present Jews, as a group, as being a threat in some way to the values or safety of

¹⁹ Is a Christian rite that is considered a sacrament in most churches and an ordinance in others. According to the New Testament, the rite was instituted by Jesus Christ during the Last Supper; giving his disciples bread and wine during the Passover meal, Jesus commanded his followers to "do this in memory of me" while referring to the bread as "my body" and the wine as "my blood". Through the Eucharistic celebration Christians remember both Christ's sacrifice of himself on the cross and his commission of the apostles at the Last Supper.



society. Racial antisemitism could be seen as worse than religious antisemitism because for religious antisemites conversion was an option and once converted the 'Jew' was gone. With racial antisemitism a Jew could not get rid of their Jewishness.

In the context of the Industrial Revolution, following the emancipation of the Jews and the Haskalah (the Jewish Enlightenment), Jews rapidly urbanized and experienced a period of greater social mobility. With the decreasing role of religion in public life tempering religious antisemitism, a combination of growing nationalism, the rise of eugenics, and resentment at the socio-economic success of the Jews, and the influx of Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe, soon led to the newer, and often more virulent, racist antisemitism.

Scientific racism, the ideology that genetics played a role in group behaviour and characteristics, was highly respected and accepted as fact between the years of 1870 and 1940. This acceptance of race science made it possible for antisemites to clothe their hatred of Jews in scientific theory.

The logic of racial antisemitism was extended in Nazi Germany, where racial antisemitic ideas were turned into law, which looked at the "blood" or ethnicity of a person, and not their current religious affiliations, and their fate would be determined purely on that basis. When added to its views on the Jewish racial traits which the Nazi pseudoscience devised, led to the Holocaust as a way of eradicating conjured up "Jewish traits" from the world.

But this focus on blood didn't start with Nazi Germany:

Racial antisemitism has existed alongside religious antisemitism since the Middle Ages, if not earlier. **In Spain** even before the Edict of Expulsion of 1492, **Spanish Jews** who converted to Catholicism (conversos in Spanish), and their descendants, were called New Christians. They were frequently accused of lapsing to their former religious practices ("Crypto-Jews"). To isolate conversos, the Spanish nobility developed an ideology of "cleanliness of blood". The conversos were called "New Christians" to indicate their inferior status in society. That ideology was a form of racism, as in the past there were no grades of Christianity and a convert had equal standing. Cleanliness of blood was an issue of ancestry, not of personal religion. The first statute of purity of blood appeared in Toledo in 1449, where an anti-converso riot led to conversos being banned from most official positions. Initially these statutes were condemned by the monarchy and the Church. However, the New Christians came to be hounded and persecuted by the Spanish Inquisition after 1478, the Portuguese Inquisition after 1536, the Peruvian Inquisition after 1570 and the Mexican Inquisition after 1571, as well as the Inquisition in Colombia after 1610.

Focusing in on Nazi Germany:

In Medieval Europe, all Asian peoples were thought of as descendants of Shem. By the 19th century, the term Semitic was confined to the ethnic groups who have historically spoken Semitic languages or had origins in the Fertile Crescent, as the Jews in Europe did. These peoples were often considered to be a distinct race. However, some antisemitic racial theorists of the time argued that



the Semitic peoples arose from the blurring of distinctions between previously separate races. This supposed process was referred to as semiticization by the race-theorist Arthur de Gobineau.

Gobineau himself did not consider the Semites (decedents of Shem) to be of a lesser race. He broke people up into three races: white, black, and yellow. The Semites, like the Aryans (and Hamites) came from Asia and were white. Over time each of the groups had mixed with black blood. The Aryans had stayed pure longer and it was not until more recent times that they had mixed. It was this mixing of races that would lead to man's downfall. This idea of racial "confusion" was taken up by the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg. It was used by the Nazis to perpetuate the idea that the Jews were going to destroy Germany.

This concept suited the interests of antisemites, since it provided a theoretical model to rationalise racialised antisemitism. Variations of the theory are to be found in the writings of many antisemites in the late 19th century. The Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg developed a variant of the theory in his writings, arguing that Jewish people were not a "real" race. According to Rosenberg, their evolution came about from the mixing of pre-existing races.

The result: the Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935 prohibited sexual relations and marriage between any Aryan and Jew (such relations under Nazi ideology was a crime punishable under the race laws as Rassenschande or "racial pollution"), and made it that all Jews, even quarter- and half-Jews, were no longer citizens of their own country (their official title became "subject of the state"). This meant that they had no basic citizens' rights, e.g., to vote. In 1936, Jews were banned from all professional jobs, effectively preventing them having any influence in politics, higher education and industry. On 15 November 1938, Jewish children were banned from going to normal schools. By April 1939, nearly all Jewish companies had either collapsed under financial pressure and declining profits, or had been persuaded to sell out to the Nazi government. This further reduced their rights as human beings; they were in many ways officially separated from the German populace so as to 'preserve the Aryan race' from mixing with Jews.

Question for Madrichim: Why do you think this theory of 'racial antisemitism' became more prominent in the 20th century? Why did it 'overtake' religious antisemitism? What do you think its connection is with economic antisemitism?

Causes:

The causes of antisemitism are incredibly complex – anything is that deals with peoples thoughts and feelings. The causes of antisemitism and prejudice continue to be a huge area of study for sociologists, psychologists and historians.

→ Important to note: Looking at the cause of something does not mean to justify something. Understanding why something may have happened doesn't mean that it is correct that it happened, or that the person doing it doesn't have essential agency and responsibility for their actions.



Prejudice and discrimination have been prevalent throughout human history. Prejudice has to do with the inflexible and irrational attitudes and opinions held by members of one group about another, while discrimination refers to behaviours directed against another group. Being prejudiced usually means having preconceived beliefs about groups of people or cultural practices. Prejudices can either be positive or negative—both forms are usually preconceived and difficult to alter. The negative form of prejudice can lead to discrimination, although it is possible to be prejudiced and not act upon the attitudes. Those who practice discrimination do so to protect opportunities for themselves by denying access to those whom they believe do not deserve the same treatment as everyone else.

1. Scapegoating:

Sociologists and psychologists hold that some of the emotionality in prejudice stems from subconscious attitudes that cause a person to ward off feelings of inadequacy by projecting them onto a target group. By using certain people as scapegoats—those without power who are unfairly blamed—anxiety and uncertainty are reduced by attributing complex problems to a simple cause: “Those people are the source of all my problems.” Social research across the globe has shown that prejudice is fundamentally related to low self-esteem. By hating certain groups (in this case, minorities), people are able to enhance their sense of self-worth and importance.

Question for Madrichim: Can we think of examples of our own prejudices? Can you think of contemporary examples where scapegoating may be happening? How would you solve this particular cause?

2. In-group vs. out-group:

It's a well-known principle in social psychology that people define themselves in terms of social groupings and are quick to denigrate others who don't fit into those groups. Others who share our particular qualities are our "ingroup," and those who do not are our "outgroup." Sometimes groupings are determined by factors intrinsic to who we are (sex, age, race/ethnicity) but in many other cases they are arrived at in a somewhat arbitrary fashion e.g. sports teams.

The arbitrary nature of ingroup-outgroup distinctions between fans of different sports teams carries over to many other everyday mundane situations. For example, consider the distinction between pedestrians and motorists. When you are the pedestrian entering a crosswalk, you feel entitled to take your time to make it across the street. "Oh, let me just stop a second and send this text to my friend." The drivers in the cars who are waiting for you to cross the street just have to wait, no matter whether you're typing two words or a three-page missive. In fact, you might hurl an insulting comment out to the motorist while you're at it ("Chill out, buddy!"). Now put yourself in the role of the motorist. Your agitation and annoyance build as you watch the idiotic pedestrian strolling in front of you seemingly oblivious to anyone else. A few choice insults might come to your mind as well.



One of the most significant "experiments" on ingroup-outgroup bias was not carried out in the psych lab at all, but in the school room of an Iowa teacher, Jane Elliot. In 1968, the day after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Elliot decided to address the problems of racial prejudice by dividing her third grade class into groups on the basis of eye colour. As profiled in the PBS Frontline Documentary, "A Class Divided," Elliot showed how easy it was to turn her 7-year-old pupils into hate mongers by making the brown-eyed children the targets of discrimination by the "better" blue-eyed children. Within minutes, the blue-eyed children sadistically ridiculed their unfortunate classmates, calling them "stupid" and shunning them in the playground during recess. Then she flipped the situation and showed that the brown-eyed children, when on top, exacted the same punishments onto their blue-eyed classmates. (After this study she dedicated her life to teaching about prejudice and travelled around the United States and the world doing so).

Question for Madrichim: Are there any benefits to the 'in-group vs. out-group' dynamic? How would you describe your community within this framework?

What can we do about it?

For decades, sociologists have looked to ways of reducing and eliminating conflicts and prejudices between groups:

1. One theory, the self-esteem hypothesis, is that when people have an appropriate education and higher self-esteem, their prejudices will go away.
2. Another theory is the contact hypothesis, which states that the best answer to prejudice is to bring together members of different groups so they can learn to appreciate their common experiences and backgrounds.
3. A third theory, the cooperation hypothesis, holds that conflicting groups need to cooperate by laying aside their individual interests and learning to work together for shared goals.
4. A fourth theory, the legal hypothesis, is that prejudice can be eliminated by enforcing laws against discriminative behavior.

Practical:

1. Recognize the arbitrary nature of many ingroup-outgroup distinctions. The example of pedestrians and motorists is perhaps the easiest one for understanding this point. Your ingroup at one moment is your outgroup the next.
2. Put yourself in the place of the outgroup member. The little kids in Jane Elliot's classroom were sad and afraid when they were suddenly thrust into the role of outgroup member. Think about times when you've been put in an outgroup position and remember how painful that was.
3. Look for commonalities between opposing groups. Fans of opposing sports teams equally love the sport. People of different religions regard their faith as important to them. There are basic human needs that transcend particular labels.



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4. Work on building your inner sense of security. People are more likely to stereotype when they feel they have something to lose. If you feel more confident about your own identity, you'll be less likely to criticize someone else's.
5. Pass along the lesson. We can't all be Jane Elliot's and go on a mission to change society one classroom at a time, but we can teach others the value of overcoming outgroup stereotyping.

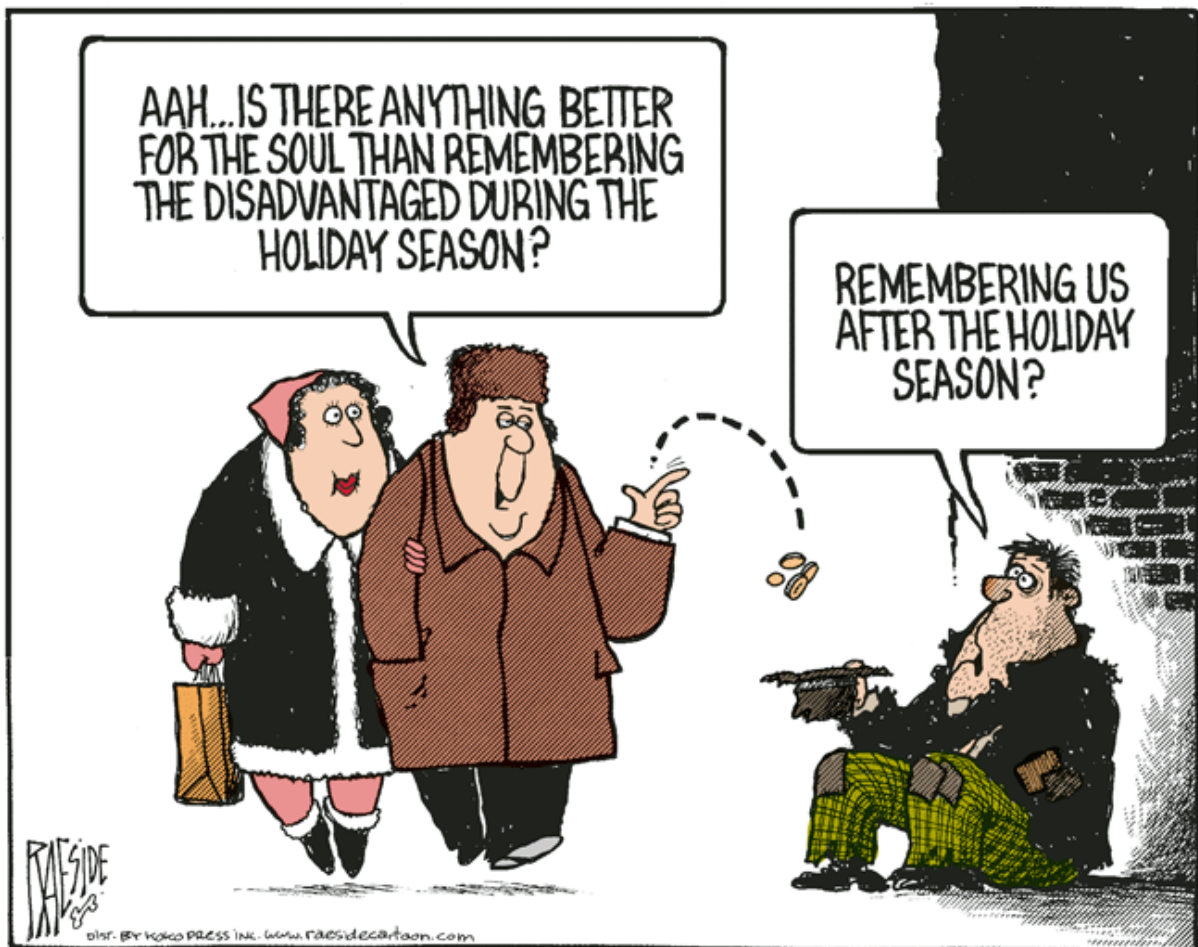
K7 Priorities of Giving: “Justice, Justice you shall pursue”

Aims:

1. To think about how poverty around the world today might actually be a challenge that is unique to our lives in the modern world.
2. To look at three different ways to think about our obligation to others and to discuss the exact nature of our responsibility towards other people.
3. To consider the balance between our responsibility towards different people and groups in the world.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Spheres of Obligation
3. Next Step – What’s actually going on and what about helping just Jewish people?
4. Conclusion
5. Appendix



Introduction:

There is a general obligation to give 'Tzedaka' in Jewish law (Rambam Sefer HaMitzvot – Positive Commandment 195). As a nation whose mark is chessed (see Gemara Yevamot 79a), our commitment to others is a distinction we carry with pride. Our duty to society, both as Jews and as human beings, and our obligation to those less fortunate are of great significance to us as individuals and as a people. The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (34:1) quite literally says that the desire to act charitably is a trait that characterizes us as the descendants of Avraham Avinu.

In this Kvutzah we're going to look at one of the challenges in Tzedaka that is particularly unique to modern Jewish life: the extreme poverty²⁰ in the developing world. For a long period of Jewish history, whilst thinkers and poskim have talked about poverty, their concerns were (mostly) decidedly more local or national than perhaps how we today think about our responsibility towards others.

Question for Madrichim: Why do you think that the existence of extreme poverty in the developing world might be a challenge that is unique to today? Hasn't poverty always existed – what makes this different?

Hint: Think about a) the nature of the poverty b) our awareness of it c) our ability to do something about it d) the differences between the developed and developing world.

We're now going to look at 3 sources that are going to give us some "food-for-thought" and will help to provide a framework to think about the question above.

Spheres of Obligation

Jewish thinkers and poskim throughout history have wrestled with the exact nature of the obligation to give Tzedaka. We're specifically interested here in how they wrote about the scope of the obligation and how to work out who to give to first. The next three sources create three different ways to do so:

1. Location
2. Time
3. Perspective

1: Mishnah Torah, Rambam - Gifts to the Poor 7:13

A poor relative takes precedence over all people; the poor of your household before the poor of your city; the poor of your town before the poor of another town; as it says: 'to your brother, to your poor, and to your needy in your land' (Deuteronomy 15:11)

עני שהוא קרובו, קודם לכל אדם; ועניי ביתו, קודמין לעניי עירו; ועניי עירו, קודמין לעניי עיר אחרת: שנאמר "לְאָחִיךָ לְעֵנִיךָ וּלְאֲבִינֶךָ, בְּאַרְצֶךָ" (דברים טו,יא)

²⁰ Extreme poverty defined as living on less than \$1.25-a-day for all your needs e.g. food/water, housing, medical, education etc.



In this source the Rambam sets out a series of concentric circles of obligation based around location. Those physically closest to you take precedence over those further away. The responsibility extends outwards from the individual to all other people.

Here we begin to see also why today the existence and awareness of extreme poverty around the world presents a particular challenge: the limits of the circles the Rambam draws are at the edges of ‘your land’ – the particular country that you are living in, and doesn’t seem to extend beyond them.

Question for Madrichim: Do you agree that we can categorise the Rambam here as being based of location? Does the first line of the source (“poor relative takes precedence over all people”) fit with the rest of the source – maybe my poor relative might live in the next town? Think about how this might have changed from then (1200 CE) to today.

Let’s look at the next source:

2: Yad, Rambam - Gifts to the Poor 9:12

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>A person who dwells in a city for thirty days is forced to give tzedakah to the Kupah (community fund that feeds the resident poor with a weekly food allocation) with the rest of the residents of the city. If one dwelt there three months they force that person to give to the Tamhui (public soup kitchen for any hungry person). If one dwelt there six months they force that person to give tzedakah for clothing to clothe the poor. If one dwelt there nine months they force that person to give tzedakah for the burial fund which provides all the burial requirements for the poor.</p> | <p>מי שישב במדינה שלשים יום כופין אותו ליתן צדקה לקופה עם בני המדינה, ישב שם שלשה חדשים כופין אותו ליתן התמחוי, ישב שם ששה חדשים כופין אותו ליתן צדקה בכסות שמכסים בה עניי העיר, ישב שם תשעה חדשים כופין אותו ליתן צדקה לקבורה שקוברין בה את העניים ועושין להם כל צרכי קבורה.</p> |
|---|---|

In this source the Rambam creates a different mechanism to define the obligation: time. The more time you spend in a place, the more you owe to that place and its community. This can be because of two reasons:

- a. Personal benefit – if you belong to a community, you use its services, you make friends, have favours done for you etc. – it naturally follows that you also owe something to that community. A key part of collective living is that everyone contributes to the wellbeing of those in the group. The longer you live there, the more you have benefited and become part of the group, the more you owe.
- b. Awareness – it makes sense that if you’re travelling through a city that you aren’t expected to solve its long-term problems. However the longer you live there the more aware of the problems you become and once you become aware of a problem – you are expected to try and do something about it. This source actually sets out a very natural progression of



integration into a community. If you move into a new area – it takes time to really get to know what’s going on there.

This presents us with the next step of why today the existence and awareness of extreme poverty around the world presents a particular challenge: with the establishment of global communication (social media/internet etc) the scope of what we are aware of drastically increases. We only need to scroll through a news feed to see examples of tremendous suffering and poverty in places far-away from us physically, but now much closer to us cognitively. Communities are no longer defined by physical locations but are much broader and loosely defined.

Question for Madrichim: What other reasons for the way that the Rambam sets out the different obligations? Think about the specific things being required e.g. clothing the poor vs. food vs. burial requirements. What do they say about the nature of community?

Question for Madrichim: What communities, if any, are you a part of that aren’t physical? Are there groups online that you get support and support others in? Think about your chanichim – how might you teach them about this idea of ‘non-physical (digital) community’?

Our last source is a really beautiful piece from Rav Kook written in his typically flowery and artistic style. It’s quite long so if you’re pressed for time focus on the **bolded** bits of text.

3: Rav Kook, Orot Hakodesh II, p. 444 (Four-fold Song)²¹

There is one who sings the song of his own life, and in himself he finds everything, his full spiritual satisfaction.

There is another who sings the song of his people. He leaves the circle of his own individual self, because he finds it without sufficient breadth, without an idealistic basis. He aspires toward the heights, and **he attaches himself with a gentle love to the whole community of Israel.** Together with her, he sings her songs. **He feels grieved in her afflictions and delights in her hopes.** He contemplates noble and pure thoughts about her past and her future, and probes with love and wisdom her inner spiritual essence.

There is another who reaches toward more distant realms, and he goes beyond the boundary of Israel to sing the song of all human beings. His spirit extends to the wider vistas of the majesty of man, generally, and his noble essence. **He aspires toward man’s general goal and looks forward toward his higher perfection.** From this source of life, he draws the subject of his meditation and study, his aspiration and visions.

Then **there is one who rises toward wider horizons, until he links himself with all existence, with all God’s creatures, with all worlds, and sings his song with them.** It is of one such as this that tradition has said that whoever sings a portion of song each day is assured of having a share in the

²¹ This text (unlike others in the chomer) has not been edited to ensure gender neutral language. Translating Rav Kook is particularly hard and meaning gets lost as it is. When reading this text it can be an opportunity to consider what changes through translation and what gets added or what gets lost when editing for gender neutral language. If a later Chinuch Worker would like to edit this text further feel free though!



world to come.

And then there is one who rises with all these songs in one ensemble, and they all join their voices. Together, they sing their songs with beauty, each one lends vitality and life to the other. They are sounds of joy and gladness, sounds of jubilation and celebration, sounds of ecstasy and holiness.

The song of the self, the song of the people, the song of man, the song of the world, all merge in this person, at all times, in every hour.

And this full comprehensiveness rises to become the song of holiness, the song of God, the song of Israel, in its full strength and beauty, in its full authenticity and greatness. **The name “Israel” stands for shir-el, the song of God. It is a simple song, a twofold song, a threefold song, and a fourfold song.** It is the Song of Songs of Solomon, Shlomo, which means peace or wholeness. It is the song of the King, in whom is wholeness.

In this source Rav Kook introduces our last mechanism for thinking about the obligation towards others: Perspective. Here Rav Kook acknowledges that different people have different capabilities and interests. Some of us only have the ability to think about ourselves and our most immediate needs, others can go slightly further to a community, to a city or to a whole country. Others however can go even further and concern themselves with all of humanity, others can go further still and extend their perspective of what is relevant to them to the whole world and everything in it. Then there is the last person who is able to keep all perspectives present within them at the same time! Whilst Rav Kook doesn't seem to condemn those who don't reach that far, he does clearly set up a hierarchy where it is infinitely more preferable to be able to “rises with all these songs in one ensemble”.

This presents us with the next step of why today the existence and awareness of extreme poverty around the world presents a particular challenge: Rav Kook's hierarchy seems to suggest that we should be equally concerned with all of humanity as we are with ourselves or our nation. When there is poverty in our communities and poverty around the world and in a world where it is incredibly easy to give money or time to alleviate suffering and poverty, it can be especially challenging to work out the correct balance.

Question for Madrichim: What do you think of Rav Kook's piece? Can you identify different types of people that you know that might fit with the different songs/singers in his piece?

With all three of these spheres of obligation (location, time/awareness, perspective) in mind it is clear that the challenge of poverty today is a complex one. There are no easy solutions to the challenge. What we can do though is keep trying to find the right balance, keep trying to come up with a solution.

Next Step – What's actually going on and what about helping just Jewish people?

There are two key questions:

- A. What is the situation today?
- B. Is there a Halachic obligation to help 'non-Jews'? (Our immediate response might be "well, even if there isn't a specific law – we should do it anyway". We're going to briefly see the debate around this).

Question for Madrichim: What is it like to be really poor? Can you imagine what it's like to not have enough food to eat and go to bed hungry at night?

1. More than 3 billion people live on less than \$2.50 a day and an estimated 1.3 billion live in extreme poverty, making do with \$1.25 or less daily.
2. 1 billion children worldwide are living in poverty. According to UNICEF, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty.
3. 805 million people worldwide do not have enough food to eat. Food banks are especially important in providing food for people that can't afford it themselves.
4. More than 750 million people lack adequate access to clean drinking water. Diarrhoea caused by inadequate drinking water, sanitation, and hand hygiene kills an estimated 842,000 people every year globally, or approximately 2,300 people per day.
5. In 2011, 165 million children under the age 5 were stunted (reduced rate of growth and development) due to chronic malnutrition.
6. Around 1 billion people entered the 21st century not knowing how to read and write.

Poverty is still a big problem in the world today, as you can see from the numbers. This is in spite of the progress that we can see around us. The good news is that in 2010, only 18% of the world's population was living way below the poverty line as compared to 36% in 1990. It's a small victory, but the progress is slow. The problem with poverty is that the causes are extremely complicated with different factors contributing to the problem. Ending it requires more than just economic growth. "Developed" countries with strong economies still have a significant number of people who are struggling to survive. There is no 'silver bullet' for ending poverty.

One of the key problems when talking about poverty is the question of how it is measured. The state of poverty is not the same for everybody. A person may be earning \$3 a day but their financial capability still needs to be compared to the rest of the population (what can they actually buy with those \$3?). So, a poor person in the US has a different poverty level than a poor person in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Question for Madrichim: What do you think about the statistics above? Do they shock you – why?

Halachic obligation to help 'non-Jews':

If we think that today the existence and awareness of extreme poverty around the world presents a particular challenge to our ethic of Tzedaka, we must ask if, with 3 billion people living in poverty, our obligation to alleviate poverty extends to 'non-Jewish' people?

So from the outset it is important to state that the Halacha has a clear-cut obligation to give Tzedaka to both Jewish people and 'non-Jewish' people. However the reason given as to why that obligation exists can lead to some fascinating discussions:

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 34:3

| | |
|--|--|
| We should also support and clothe the non-Jewish poor together with the Jewish poor because of ‘darchei shalom’. | מִפְּרֻנְסִין וּמִלְבִּישִׁין עֲנֵי עוֹבְדֵי אֱלִילִים עִם עֲנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִפְּנֵי דְרָכֵי שְׁלוֹם |
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This phrase ‘darchei shalom’ has two very different meanings:

- A. For the sake of peaceful relationships: Whilst living as neighbours with ‘non-Jewish’ people it makes sense to not antagonise them by seeming to only care about ourselves. Therefore, we need to help alleviate their poverty too.
- B. Ways of peace: The Torah is interested in creating a world full of peace and kindness (shalom and chessed). Of course we should care for poor people who aren’t Jewish – they too are part of the world that we are trying to create.

Question for Madrichim: Which meaning do you think is more accurate? Do you think that each one may have been emphasised at different points in Jewish history and if so when and why? Which meaning do you prefer? How would connect either meaning to the 3 ‘spheres of obligation’ sources we looked at in the previous section?

The Rambam actually goes to great length to avoid the first meaning of the phrase darchei shalom when he discusses this issue. He seems to want to guard against any attempt to look upon moral actions towards ‘non-Jews’ as grounded exclusively in purely pragmatic considerations calculated to secure the peace of the Jewish community:

Mishnah Torah, Rambam, Laws of Kings and Wars, 10:12

| | |
|--|--|
| Our Sages have commanded us to visit their sick and bury their dead along with Jewish dead, and sustain their poor along with the poor of Israel is for the “sake of peace”, since it says, “God is good to all, and His mercies extend upon all his works” (Tehillim 145:9) and it says, “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Mishlei 3:17). | אִפְלוּ הָעֲבוּ"ם צוּ חֻכְמִים לְבַקֵּר חוֹלִיָּהֶם וּלְקַבֵּר מִתֵּיהֶם עִם מֵתֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּלְפָרֵנס עֲנֵיָהֶם בְּכָל עֲנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִפְּנֵי דְרָכֵי שְׁלוֹם. הָרִי נֹאמֵר (תהילים קמה, ט) "טוב ה' לכל וּרְחֻמָּיו עַל כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו". וְנֹאמֵר (משלי ג, יז) "דְרָכֶיהָ דְרָכֵי נֵעַם וְכָל נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם": |
|--|--|

By linking the pursuit of peace with the divine attribute of compassion the Rambam suggest that what is involved in the ‘ways of peace’ is an overriding religious imperative. The Rambam actually uses the same verse in Tehillim as evidence that the cultivation of compassion is one of the ways to emulate God in becoming ethically perfect!

Question for Madrichim: How would you incorporate this approach of the Rambam into your own lives? What might be some of the challenges in doing so and how would you overcome them?

Conclusion:



Bnei Akiva
Machane Chomer – Gimmel
החזון של הגולה – The Vision of the Diaspora

In this Kvutzah we've looked at how today the existence and awareness of extreme poverty around the world presents a particular challenge. We've examined many different ways to think about this challenge, however unlike in other Kvutzot we haven't really given an answer. This is because the exact balance of where you draw your responsibility is going to be a personal thing. Ultimately we should keep coming back to Rav Kook's 'four-fold' song and pushing each other to reach out that little bit more and that little bit further, to draw the circle of who we are responsible for just a little bit bigger.

Appendix:

Who is charity supposed to be for? Compare these two almost identical Aggadot. They each present a different answer to this question based around their interpretation of the word 'maskil' – 'wise'.

A: Midrash Tehillim 41:2

| | |
|--|---|
| Happy is the person who is maskil in relation to the person in need (Ps. 41:2) Rabbi Yonah said: Happy is the one who is maskil and gives to the person in need. What does maskil mean? That the person doing tzedakah takes an intense look and considers the best way to give the person back his or her decent and dignified life. | אשרי משכיל אל דל. אמר ר' יונה: אשרי משכיל ונותן אל דל, מהו משכיל? שמסתכל וחושב עליו היאך להחיותו. |
|--|---|

B: Vayikra Rabbah 34:1

| | |
|---|--|
| Rabbi Yonah said: "Happy is the one who gives to the person in need" is not what the verse says, but rather, "Happy is the one who is maskil in relation to the person in need," meaning, Look at the situation carefully, and keep in mind how it is a privilege to do the mitzvah through that person. | אשרי משכיל אל דל. אמר ר' יונה אשרי נותן אל דל אין בת' כן, אלא אשרי משכיל אל דל, הוי מסתכל בו היאך לזכות בו |
|---|--|

A modern interpretative version of Rav Kook's 'four-fold' song (written by Eli Gaventa (Chinuch Worker 2017/18 in 2012 for a group of chanichim):

A person sings four songs in their life: like the river, the patterns they form in the rock that is their identity stays the same, it is ever winding, following its path each and every day. However from its



source deep in the mountains the river is constantly renewed, the ice melting and new water falling. So too we are never static – each experience challenging the previous patterns of our life, offering new opportunities to change.

First we sing the song of our family for it is the basis of our existence. It is from our family that we get our basic values and our first relationships. Often we take it for granted that our parents will always be present. We go through the first years of our life certain of this and our able to leave home sure in that knowledge, travelling out into the world, always able to return to where we were born and raised.

That a child is considered a member of his family is a universal rule. When a child is born, the river of the parent's life is given a completely new course. The song has grown in some as yet undetermined but powerful way. Sometimes it is like a sharp bend and a sudden drop and in others the shift is barely noticed, but in all cases, the song has an extra layer and a new focus. The parent's now define themselves through the child. When asked what they do, often they say "I am a parent". A sacrifice on behalf of someone else, if significant enough, compels an investment in their future. Conversely that somebody becomes vital to their own plans for their future selves. In addition, on the child's half, the parents are a part of the child. The smells and sounds of home form a mosaic of memories, alluding to past experiences and rejuvenating visions and hopes for the future. What our parent's think, feel and do, is often similar to how we think, feel and do. Although we are very different, we will always have our love for each other at heart.

The second and next song is that of their community for it is the framework in which their family operates. As a child they believe that their parents can do nothing wrong. As they grow up they expands their role models and comes to rely on others for how they should act. It is at this stage that their friends are incredibly important. They are often the sanctuary from the tremendous changes going on their life, providing a touchstone, an anchor, as they too are all travelling down the same path. Some slower and some faster, all reaching the end at some point. In the past we only helped my family, but now, who we consider important has grown and has encompassed our friends and their families. we will give up and sacrifice ourselves to help them, just as they would for us. We tell them things we would tell no-one else. And so our circle and song has gotten bigger.

The third song is the harmony to the first and second, it sounds lightly and softly, running gently in the background. Its name is our nation. It is more than just a collection of communities and families. It is more than just earth and mud. It is what unifies all the different voices into one beautiful choir, where everyone is heard and where no-one is louder than the other. When we can hear this song, we know that there are things greater than just me and my friends and that we all have a role to play in the cacophony of dreams that is my nation. We will always look to the future and what we can build together. When it is under threat, all the singers forget about their own little tunes and begin to sing together. We look forward to the time when we don't have to forget and ignore our



own tunes in order to create that wonderful harmony again.

The fourth and final song is so large and so awe-inspiring it is not often heard. Many don't even realise that it is there. The deep thumping beat is like the slow tick-tock of a metronome counting down towards the end of the music. This fourth song is that of all of humanity. Every single person, is a person, and we all have that in common. Each unique and joyous thud of our hearts is what keeps all the other songs in time with each other. When offbeat the discord is deafening, and all are forced to stop singing; it is then that the family, community or nation realise that they are out of sync and have lost sight of what should bring them all together.

One day all of these songs will sound together, each in their place and each important, until then we will continue to sing about these songs until we all can hear. Only then will the refrain of our lives ring out true and clear, so beautiful and pure that all will know it to be true.

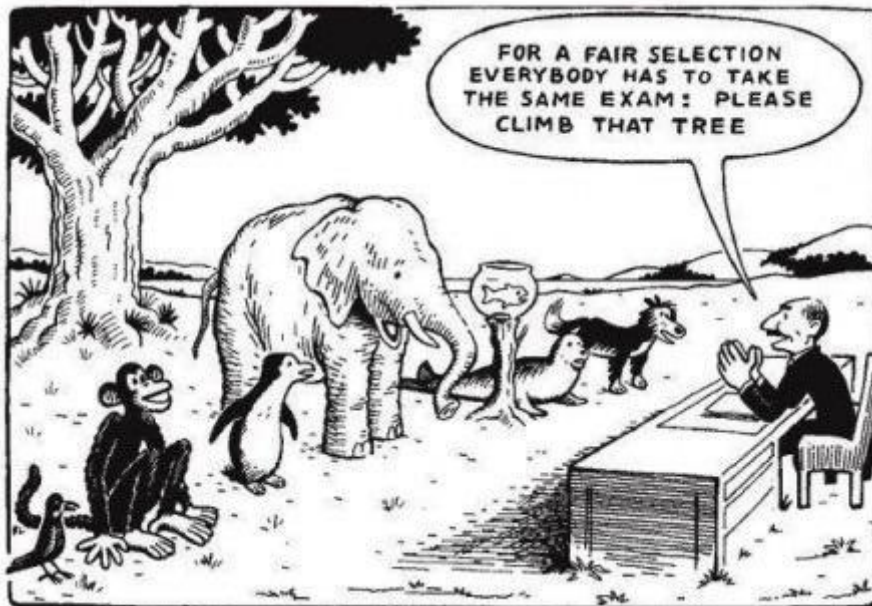
Hadracha 101: It's in the game?

Aims:

1. To think about the purpose of Sviva.
2. To learn two different methodologies of how to take material/content and turn it into a 'learning experience'.
3. To look at some quick Tips and Tricks of Hadracha

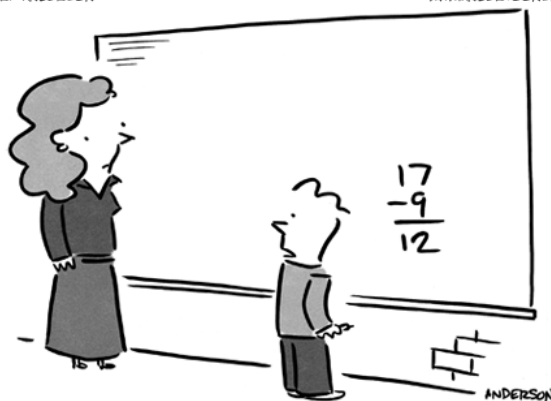
Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Multiple Intelligences or "thinking with different boxes"
3. The Cycle of Learning or "mirrors and windows"
4. Tips and Tricks



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"I know it's wrong, I'm just waiting for the autocorrect."



Introduction:

In this Kvutzah we're going to look at some ways to think about three of the really essential questions for Bnei Akiva:

- What is the purpose of Sviva/Kvutzah?
- How do we think creatively when planning programs?
- How do chanichim learn from the programs that we do?

For the first question there are really two obvious answers (the difficulty comes in the nuances of those two answers. The purpose of any program that Bnei Akiva runs is:

1. **Socialisation:** A general term for the many different ways and processes by which children come to be able to function as members of their social community – understanding implicitly what is required/expected of them to be a part of that community. Specifically done (mostly) through non-formal methods i.e. everything that we do on machane that isn't saying "do this or do that" – everything that we model to our chanichim.
 - Understanding what it means to be a part of the Bnei Akiva community.
2. **Education:** The process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university. The imparting of information, concepts and ideas to our chanichim.
 - Synonyms: teaching, schooling, tuition, tutoring, instruction, pedagogy, andragogy, coaching, training, tutelage, drilling, preparation, guidance, indoctrination, inculcation, enlightenment, edification, cultivation, development, improvement, bettering.

For this Kvutzah we're only really going to look at number two "education" so just remember that there is a whole other aspect of what it means to be a Madrich that we're not talking about.

Question for Madrichim: What role does a game play in the process of your chanichim learning?

Key thing to know: a basic game is at the most 10% of the process of learning for our chanichim. It is what happens during and, importantly, after where the learning takes place. In the next two sections we're going to find out more about this.

Multiple Intelligences or "thinking with different boxes"

In this section we're going to look at the theory of Multiple Intelligences developed by Howard Gardner. Howard Earl Gardner (born July 11, 1943) is an American developmental psychologist and has written hundreds of research articles and thirty books that have been translated into more than thirty languages. He is best known for his theory of multiple intelligences, as outlined in his 1983 book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*.

The nuts and bolts of the theory is not too important for us (although I do recommend some further reading of his work). What is important is that it **provides us with a framework of how to develop**



diverse and interesting peulot and programming. And this is key to creating an experience/program for our chanichim that makes it more likely that learning will take place.

So what exactly is the theory:

Gardner argued that the contemporary (in his time) model of what should be considered 'intelligence' was outdated because it did not match up with the everyday experiences of students and educators around the world. He wrote that instead of defining intelligence as "as a single general capacity for conceptualization and problem solving" it should be understood as seven different fundamental intelligences (and then added 2 more later):

| | Intelligence | Description |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Mathematical - Logical | The ability to organize thoughts sequentially and logically |
| 2 | Verbal - Linguistic | The ability to understand and express ideas through language |
| 3 | Bodily - Kinaesthetic | The gaining of knowledge through feedback from physical activity |
| 4 | Musical | Sensitivity to tone, pitch and rhythm, and the ability to reproduce them |
| 5 | Visual - Spatial | Capacity to think in images and pictures, to visualize accurately and abstractly |
| 6 | Interpersonal | Capacity to detect and respond appropriately to the moods, motivations and desires of others |
| 7 | Intrapersonal | The ability to access one's own feelings |
| 8 | Naturalistic | <i>The ability to understand and be in tune with one's relationship with the natural environment</i> |
| 9 | Existential | <i>Sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence</i> |

Question for Madrichim: Do any of these describe you and the way you interact with the world? Which of these 9 things do you think you're good at/bad at, prefer/dislike?

So how do we actually use this in practise:



The key part of Gardner’s theory for us is as a framework – a prism to use when planning our activities. Gardner claims that one of the central messages of his theory that educators should take away is the need to:

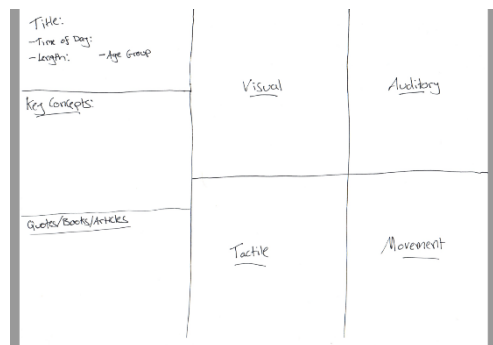
- a. Individualise: Understand the needs and interests of your group of chanichim (students) and create programming that suits each one of them.
- b. Pluralise: Create a program that allows for **all** chanichim to engage with the content in a **variety** of ways.

“An educator convinced of the relevance of MI theory should individualize and pluralize. By individualizing I mean that the educator should know as much as possible about the intelligences profile of each student for whom he has responsibility; and to the extent possible, the educator should teach and asses in ways that bring out that child’s capacities. By pluralizing I mean that the educator should decide on which topics, concepts, or ideas are of greatest importance and should then present them in a variety of ways. Pluralization achieves two important goals: when a topic is taught in multiple ways, one reaches more students. Additionally, the multiple modes of delivery convey what it means to understand something well. When one has a thorough understanding of a topic, one can typically think of it in several ways, thereby making use of one’s multiple intelligences...” (Book: *Frames of Mind*)

Whenever planning a program ask yourself: have I included within this enough opportunities for my chanichim to engage with what I want them to learn in more than one way. Consider each intelligence as a box that you need to fill with one aspect of your peulah/program. Now this doesn’t mean there needs to be equal emphasis on all the different boxes or that you need to fill all 7 (9). What it does mean is that you should be trying to hit at least one more.

An example: Consider the typical scrapheap challenge peulah. Which intelligences does it more obviously cater for and how would you incorporate more variety?

If you look at Bnei Akiva’s standard Peulah (K sheets or Tochnit sheets) you’ll notice that it encourages you to think in a linear manner about your session i.e. Trigger, Main 1, Main 2 and Conclusion. This method encourages you to think in a non-linear manner about your program. Both are important ways to develop interesting, engaging and creative programs. An example of how to use some of the intelligences when planning:





Some practical examples:

| Multiple Intelligence Type | Incorporated into subject matter | Way of demonstrating understanding |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Verbal-Linguistic | Books, stories, poetry, speeches, author visits | Writing stories, scripts, poems, storytelling |
| Mathematical-Logical | Exercises, drills, problem solving | Counting, calculating, theorizing, demonstrating, programming computers |
| Musical | Tapes, CD's, concert going | Performing, singing, playing, composing |
| Visual-Spatial | Posters, art work, slides, charts, graphs, video tapes, laser disks, CD-ROMs and DVDs, museum visits | Drawing, painting, illustrating, graphic design, collage making, poster making, photography |
| Bodily-Kinesthetic | Movies, animations, exercises, physicalizing concepts, rhythm exercises | Dance recital, athletic performance or competition |
| Interpersonal | Teams, group work, specialist roles | Plays, debates, panels, group work |
| Intrapersonal | Reflection time, meditation exercises | Journals, memoirs, diaries, changing behaviors, habits, personal growth |
| Naturalist | Terrariums, aquariums, class pets, farm, botanical garden and zoo visits, nature walks, museum visits | Collecting, classifying, caring for animals at nature centers |
| Existential | Working on causes, charity work, astrology charts | Community service |

Question for Madrichim: What other examples can you come up with?

Important things to note:

1. Gardner’s theory is controversial. There hasn’t been a clear way to test his claims and if there is no way to test it, it will remain a theory.
2. It’s connected to a teaching method called ‘Multiple Learning Styles (MLS)’ that is widely considered to either be a. the best thing for education ever or b. a load of complete nonsense. The MLS theory claims that individuals only learn in one of the 7 ways and therefore we need to really differentiate the way that we educate.

For us these two points are less relevant:

- What’s important is that regardless of its veracity it provides us with another way to think about our programs, and the more ways we are thinking about our programming the better.

The Cycle of Learning or “mirrors and windows”

David A. Kolb (born 1939) is an American educational theorist that developed a framework that is an incredibly useful tool for us as Madrichim.

Question for Madrichim: Picture your standard Kvutzah or Peulah. At what point does ‘learning’ take place?

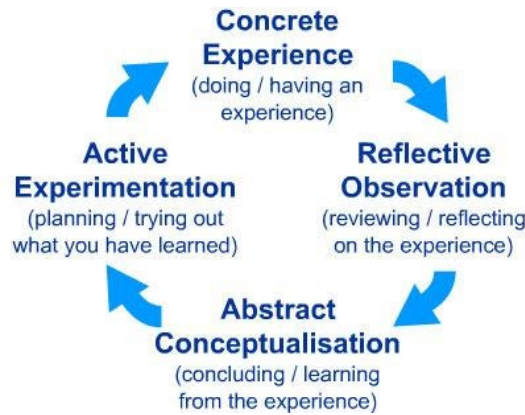
Kolb was troubled by the same question. He saw many, many programs of ‘experiential learning’ (learning through experience) where not much was being learned. He came up with a four-part cycle of learning that included:

1. **Concrete Experience** (a new experience or situation is encountered).



2. **Reflective Observation** of the new experience.
3. **Abstract Conceptualisation** (reflection gives rise to a new idea, or a modification of an existing abstract concept).
4. **Active Experimentation** (the learner applies the new idea to the world around them to see what results).

Or as an image:



At Bnei Akiva we actually already do number 1 really well and number 2 somewhat well. We create really amazing experiences for our chanichim. We then sometimes provide really great spaces and opportunities for the chanichim to reflect on those experiences. **Think about this step as a mirror** – we hold up a mirror to our chanichim to encourage them to look inwards and process the experiences that they’ve just gone through. However the next step is where it can get quite hard. **Think of step 3 – conceptualisation as a window** – a window that the chanichim can use to develop new concepts to understand themselves and the world around them. Crucially, and this is why it’s hard, Kolb argued (as do we at BA) that the educator or madrich can’t impose their own window on the student or chanich. The whole point of the process is for the learner to do it themselves at a time, place and in a way that is relevant to them.

Question for Madrichim: What might ‘imposing our windows on chanichim’ look like? How can we avoid doing it?

The following questions can be very helpful when doing reflection or conceptualisation with your chanichim:

Sample RO/AC Questions

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION QUESTIONS (Always answer in first person)</p> <p>Descriptive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did we do / what happened? • What were you thinking / feeling? • What was most significant / meaningful to you? • What ideas, thoughts, feelings are you dealing with? • How was what we did personally relevant to you? <p>Personalized</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is it like? • What surprised you? • What did you consider or reconsider? • What points of view did you appreciate? • What was unexpected about the experience? • Balcony questions: if someone (XYZ) would see | <p>ABSTRACT CONCEPTUALIZATION QUESTIONS</p> <p>The learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What questions did the learning answer? • Define what you learned • What I now know is... • _____ is... • What are the benefits of the learning? • What is the added value of what I learned? • What is a new idea I am walking away with? <p>Conceptualization – Experimentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What I now know is... and therefore... • In what circumstances will you apply what you learned? • What can change as a result of what we have learned? • What can / will you do differently? • What variables are necessary to implement what was learned? |
|--|---|



Question for Madrichim: What do you think the last stage: experimentation looks like? How would you create space for this stage in your svivot/programming?

Tips and Tricks:

Rafi Cohen, Svivot and Hadracha Director 2018-2019 (5778/9), wrote the following Tips and Tricks:

A: The Doughnut Effect

You are the jam; the chanichim around you are the dough. You need to keep them quiet and involved. Sit opposite your co, this ensures that you can have good eye contact and communication with them and that you can control as many chanichim as possible. Just try to control your half of the room, if everyone tries to control the room then no control will be established.

At other times, e.g. davening this becomes even more vital as you control the chanichim around you, ensuring they remain engaged, and if you allow talking in your area (particularly if you instigate the talking) then the whole room descends into CHAOS.

B: Disneyland Effect

Ensure things are prepared, with lots of eye-catching cool symbols. Everything can be spruced up with a bit of preparation. Make things colourful – if everything is black and white and drab then your group will be black and white and drab. Everything benefits from a little bit of Disney, even discussions can benefit from having quotes and bullet points.

C: Dealing with different types of chanichim

Let's get to know some of the chanichim who will be taking part in the activities you create. As you never really know what you're going to get, let's meet the group from hell, and think about what the best way might be to deal with them...

William The Waffler



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William doesn't understand the concept of thinking before talking. The consequence of this is that he doesn't know when he should shut up. He just goes on and on and on and on....

Adam the Attention Seeker

To Adam, the world is a stage and he thinks he's the only actor around. He constantly tries to attract attention by doing a whole lot of things that always distracts the group and infuriate you. Because he is so concerned to be noticed, Adam doesn't notice what anyone else is trying to do and that includes you trying to take the group.

Noel Know It All

Bless him, Noel knows everything. Not only is he highly knowledgeable on the topics you want to talk about, but he also finds it rather difficult to accept anyone else's point of view, including yours.

Sarah the Shy One

Sarah loves coming to BA and she does have lots of friends in the group. However, Sarah is extremely shy, and she is obstinate that she is not ever going to talk in kvutza. Trying to involve her makes her even more self-conscious...

Naomi Not Interested

Whatever topic you are talking about, Naomi just isn't interested. She has done it before, she knows all about it or she has got no desire to be educated about it.

Lionel & Lillian Love Birds

These two suffer from a bad case of over-active hormones. They are inseparable causing trouble when you want to split people into groups and they gaze lovingly into each other's eyes, not listening to you.

Dalia Destructive

Dalia comes to BA with one aim: to muck up your meeting. She'll undermine you at every turn.

D. Running Discussions

What is the role of a madrich/a in a discussion? – FACILITATOR!

Hopefully the discussions will be about an interesting topic, but you as the madrich/a still need to sell it well.

Introduction:

Start off with an exciting trigger – never introduce with “ok guys we're now going to have a discussion about x”. Make it as natural as possible, springing from something which came up in the game or earlier on in discussion.



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Throughout:

Don't let the discussion go too off topic – be in control and prod in directions which you want to be considered.

Create things – quotes, topics, pictures... when things are discussed put them down to give the discussion a bit more structure and remind the chanichim that this is a productive time.

Ensure that all chanichim are getting involved, perhaps ask a question to somebody who hasn't yet got involved, monitor whether chanichim are interested in this part or whether it needs to be pushed forward to something else.

Make sure that it is always pitched at the right level with all chanichim able to get involved.

Finishing it off:

Once the various topics have all been touched upon, remind the chanichim how this fits into everything else which has gone on, which leads nicely on to the next thing.



K9: Conclusion

Introduction:

Gimmel Machane has been dedicated to exploring some of the key debates that shape Diaspora life today. The question of ‘what does it mean to be a Jew in the Diaspora?’ is one that has always challenged Jews throughout history, however today the challenge is compounded by:

- A. The existence of the State – this fundamentally changes the Diaspora when the ‘Homeland’ exists.
- B. The 21st century presents unique challenges to a modern Jewish identity. Questions of the role of religion, Halacha, personal autonomy, antisemitism, choice vs. coercion, pluralism, suffering around the world and many more all play a part.

However, it is not about Diaspora life in the abstract – it is specifically about the lives of the chanichim and how they navigate through the challenges and opportunities presented to them whilst living in the Diaspora. We said how it is important that for every issue that you discuss with your chanichim that you frame it in the ‘personal’; what matters is how they relate to and understand an issue. This Kvutzah is dedicated to moving the discussion from personal impact of the challenges we’ve discussed to their impact on our movement: Bnei Akiva.

Q: What does it mean to be a part of Bnei Akiva?

The Bnei Akiva Lifestyle:

To be part of Bnei Akiva is a lifestyle choice which can impact on one’s entire life. Any fully worked-out and all-encompassing ideology, including a Torah Ve’Avodah outlook, is not something that we can just sign up for; it takes constant work and self-improvement. To become a vegetarian, one simply has to refrain from eating meat and then the status has been achieved, but to become a Bnei Akiva Jew, one cannot stand still.

Hoshea 14:10

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>The ways of the Lord are upright, and the righteous walk in them and sinners stumble in them.</i> | כִּי-יִשְׁרִים דְרָכָי ה', וְצַדִּיקִים יִלְכוּ בָם, וּפְשָׁעִים, יִכָּשְׁלוּ בָם. |
|--|--|

Rav Dessler picks up on the specific usage of “walk.” In his mind, a place of learning Torah should be a ‘Yeshiva’ in name alone. What does this mean? Yeshiva literally means sitting; but Judaism does not allow us to sit and watch things go by. Especially in our spiritual existence, to sit still is to fall backwards; like being on a down escalator, even to maintain the same height, and certainly to make progress, requires effort. Or as Bob Dylan puts it: ‘*He not busy being born is busy dying.*’





To know that every one of our actions contributes to our character and personality, and can create a new and better reality, should mean that we see the significance of every choice and every action: by making good choices, we can live our lives in a way that improves ourselves.

Q: How do you want our movement to ‘walk’ i.e. to change? What do you think are some of the most pressing challenges facing the movement?

Ideology as Purpose:

It is proper for a person to subordinate all of his personal capacities to reason... and to place a single goal before his eyes. That is, he should understand it [the goal] and direct all his actions, movements, and utterances to that end, so that none of his actions are in vain (i.e. not directed to the goal)

Rambam, Shemona Perakim (Introduction to Pirkei Avot)

Having a worldview means that your life is imbued with a purpose – it provides a framework of meaning through which to view the world. Think of it as a pair of glasses you can take on and off, whilst you’re wearing them – the whole world looks different. The goals of the movements and your own personal goals can give you the desire to wake up every morning, and the framework helps you shape your choices towards those goals. It is what keeps you excited, passionate and motivated throughout the day.

If our actions are motivated by our values and belief, we can mould ourselves towards the lifestyle associated with that worldview, bringing it from a set of ideas to a concrete reality, constantly shaping and improving ourselves, and ultimately the world.

The challenges facing Israel, facing Diaspora life, facing Jewish identity and facing Bnei Akiva shouldn’t scare us away from trying to solve them – we should think of them as golden opportunities to be active and to gloriously live out our lives in the search for solutions. And once we’ve solved the current problems – we’ll start on the next set and so on, and so on.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is fond of quoting the Mishna Avot and to paraphrase: It is not up to us to finish the work, but we are also not free to stop doing it either!

Q: What do you think are some of the solutions to the challenges you’ve discussed across this Machane? What do you think are some of the solutions to the challenges facing Bnei Akiva? How are you going to put them into practice?



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