

Hadracha Choveret



תנועת בני עקיבא
BNEI AKIVA UK

BNEI AKIVA'S WEEKLY EDUCATIONAL HANDBOOK FOR MADRICHIM

In this pack:

1. **A linear guide through the Prezi. The prezi only makes sense with this linear guide. It is primarily designed for you as Roshim, and explains the concept/lesson that I'm trying to teach in the Choveret.**

I recommend reading through this guide before you start the meeting so you're familiar with the structure and concept/lesson.

2. **A suggested plan for the madrichim meeting with suggested activities that can help to teach/explain the concept/lesson being discussed.**

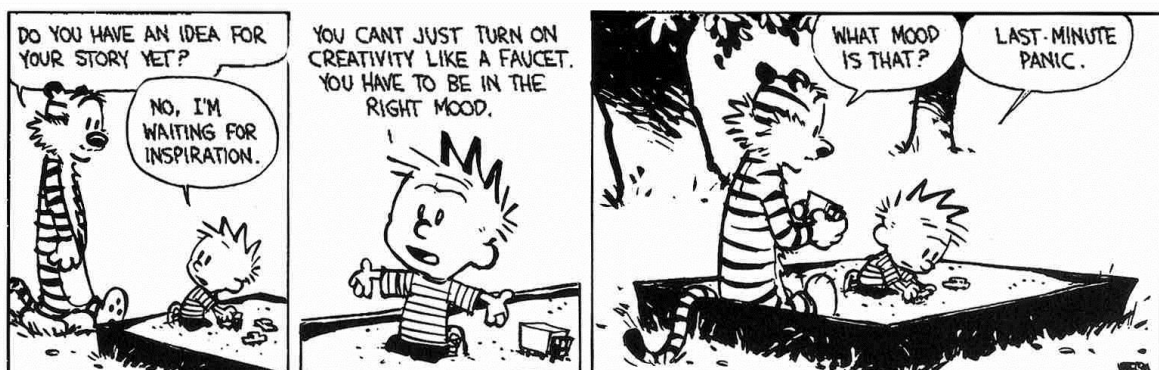
This will be helpful as you're starting out in the year, and once you become familiar with what works and what your madrichim enjoy in the meeting, it will become less relevant.

3. **A selection of suggested games/activities that your madrichim can use in Sviva that are linked to the topic. (Attached separately).**

4. **A summary sheet that can be handed out to madrichim. (Attached separately).**

5. **A PDF of the slides of the Prezi if you need. (Attached separately).**

Please note the London Bayit has projectors and screens that you can borrow for your meetings.



Linear guide through the Prezi

1. Introduction: Reading Text of Torah

There are two popular ways of reading and understanding the text of the Torah:

1. Pshat – reading the text from your perspective and trying to figure out what the basic meaning of the story is. This is done **without** using any commentaries or prior knowledge i.e. without any pre-conceptions.
2. Not Pshat – reading the text from the perspective of a commentary or midrash, and using the secondary text to figure what the meaning of the story is.

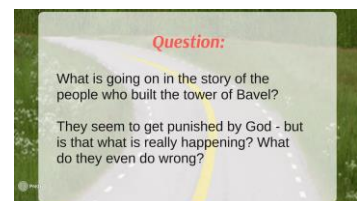
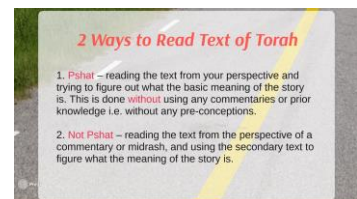
Of these two different ways of reading it is most likely that your madrichim/chanichim will have mostly done the second. However we believe that the first is a very important part of developing a sense of ownership of Torah. By setting up the reading of the text of Torah as, in the very first instance, as coming from your own perspective we are led to challenge what we think we know or were taught and develop our own original understanding of the text.

- **Example: Question for Madrichim – what is the ‘sin’ of the people who built the tower of Bavel?**

It’s not very clear from just reading the pshat (bare text with no additional interpretation) what the ‘sin’ of the builders of the tower of Bavel was.

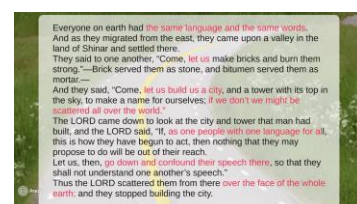
- **Read the following text:**

Look at the reason put forward by the people. What do you think it means? (Remember no pre-conceptions).



Everyone on earth had the same language and the same words.
And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to one another, **“Come, let us make bricks and burn them strong.”**—Brick served them as stone, and bitumen served them as mortar.—
And they said, **“Come, let us build us a city, and a tower with its top in the sky, to make a name for ourselves; if we don’t we might be scattered all over the world.”**
The LORD came down to look at the city and tower that man had built, and the LORD said, **“If, as one people with one language for all, this is how they have begun to act, then nothing that they may propose to do will be out of their reach.**
Let us, then, **go down and confound their speech there**, so that they shall not understand one another’s speech.”
Thus the LORD scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

The story of the Tower of Babel is introduced with the uniquely human phenomenon of speech: “And all the land was of one tongue” (11:1; see Targum Onkelos 2:7). The story continues to document various acts of social cooperation. **First**, there was cooperation in overcoming the limits of the Shinar valley environment, which lacked stones needed for building. **Second**, we find cooperation in the building of a city and the tower. The common language, pooling



resources to create artificial building materials, and the determination to build a city, are all expressions of the emerging human society.

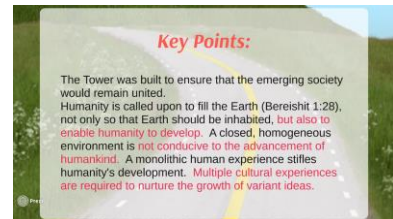
The generation that was destroyed in the Flood, on the other hand, was a generation of anarchy and injustice. It was a world of thievery and strife. In that state, the world could not be redeemed. The engineers of the Tower represented the new order. They created a civilized society based on cooperation and working towards common goals.

➔ **The most basic understanding of what the problem was that God didn't like two things with their project:**

1. **All of humanity is gathering in one place doing the same thing.**
2. **They have the same language and the same words i.e. they all agreed with each other and all understood each other.**

So what's wrong with that?

The Tower was built to ensure that the **emerging society would remain united**. At another point in history, it would have been a noble and legitimate endeavour. However, at this early stage of human development, it was detrimental to the growth of civilization. Man is called upon to fill the Earth (Bereishit 1:28), not only so that Earth should be inhabited, but also to **enable humanity to develop**. A **closed, homogeneous environment is not conducive to the advancement of mankind**. A **monolithic human experience stifles man's development**. Multiple cultural experiences are required to nurture the growth of variant ideas. Different cultures must be developed, each with distinctive perspectives. Cross-pollination of these perspectives and ideas will help humanity move forward.



- **Q: Do you agree?**
- Often we picture the ideal/utopia as all of humanity 'unified' and doing the same thing, working towards the same goal.
- We also sometimes say the same thing about the Jewish people: "if only we had unity and everyone agreed with each other!"
- **Q: What do you think this story in the Torah tells us about the idea of 'unity'? Does the Torah think it's always a good thing?**
- **Q: What is the difference between:**
- Unity: "the state of being united or joined as a whole".
- Homogeneity "the quality or state of being all the same or all of the same kind."

EXTRA CREDIT:

If you're not convinced by the argument in the Choveret so far (which is fine) please compare:

1. In our story the people are described as having **אֶחָד שְׂפָה** – "One language".
 2. In Zephaniah 3:9 it describes how in the end-of-days God will **אֶחָד שְׂפָה** – **אֶל־עַמִּים שְׂפָה** - For then I will make the peoples pure of speech (clear speech).
- I think it's possible to read these two pesukim together so we can almost picture a series of developmental stages: A. One unified speech = not good. B. lots of different languages = better, but difficult to understand C. Language used in such a way to be understood by everybody.
 - ➔ Unity of speech and thought is not good, but that doesn't mean we should live for ever in our different silos of thoughts, cultures, communities. Eventually we are supposed to have developed so that we are able to communicate clearly and properly with all people, whilst still maintaining our differences.