

## Chesed



### Aims:

- To learn about Avraham and Lot's different types of chesed.
- To appreciate how chesed is integral to being Jewish.
- To think about chesed projects we can do.



## URGENT MESSAGE FROM THE CHINUCH DEPARTMENT!

**תנועת בני עקיבא**  
**BNEI AKIVA**  
UNITED KINGDOM

**לימוד**  
**Limmud**

Your one-to-one from week-to-week!  
Bnei Akiva's Limmud is the best way to start your week.  
You can learn what you want at your own pace.  
Choose your own partner or let us pair you up!  
For details call Michael on 020 8209 1319 or email [chinuch@bauk.org](mailto:chinuch@bauk.org)

London: Mondays at 7.30 pm   Birmingham: Mondays at 6.00 pm   Manchester: Tuesdays at 7.30 pm

Limmud is one of the highlights of the BA week – it's a chance to learn with an older chavruta on whatever topic you wish as well as seeing all your friends – plus guest speakers and film showings!

This year has seen Limmud relaunched with an ALL-NEW LIMMUD RAFFLE!!!<sup>1</sup> Tickets only 50p raise money for Kaytana & prizes have included a DVD player, a mobile phone and John Lewis vouchers!

Learning is at the heart of all BA does and we would love to see you there. Just email [chinuch@bauk.org](mailto:chinuch@bauk.org) and we'll get you a chavruta or two! Limmud takes place at the following times:

London Bayit	-	Mondays at 19:30.
Manchester Bayit	-	Tuesdays at 19:30.
Birmingham Hillel	-	Mondays at 18:00.

<sup>1</sup> London only at the moment!



Pirkei Avot, otherwise known as Essex of the Fathers<sup>2</sup>, says that the world stands on three things: Torah, Avodah (referring to Korbanot) and Gemilut Chassadim (Avot 1:2). This third category, roughly translated as 'acts of loving kindness', is therefore integral not just to Judaism, but to the whole world.

Now, I will set you a challenge. Take a minute to think back to the last three parshiot we have read and find one clear example of where one person does an act of loving kindness to another?

Want more time? OK then...

And the answer is...there is none! Yes, not all the characters until now have been bad, but the Torah doesn't go out of its way to record specific acts of kindness done by anyone, even Noach in the ark.



A scale model of Noah's Ark, made in 2005 in the Netherlands

The Torah's first recorded incidences of chesed were done by Avraham. This is significant, because when we look at Avraham we have to ask the question; 'what did Hashem see in him that he should start the Jewish nation?'

If it was belief in Hashem, Adam already displayed that.

If it was obedience to Hashem, Noach already displayed that.

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<sup>2</sup> ©Aryeh Grossman



Avraham's great character trait was **chesed** – going above and beyond the call of duty to help other people. We see it many times:

- As soon as he hears that Lot was captured in the War of the Four Kings and the Five Kings, he got together 318 disciples and led an army to rescue him. This was a mission, since Avraham was living in Chevron and Damascus is 160 miles away!
- When he was ill after his Brit Mila, he was still actively looking for guests and went to fetch them some bread.
- He tries to prevent the destruction of Sodom and Amorah by arguing with Hashem – even though he was not directly affected by it.

I get it now...it's not that chesed was merely one of Avraham's 'good points'. Rather, Hashem chose him to start the Jewish race BECAUSE of his chesed. Why? Because the world relies on acts of chesed.



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<sup>3</sup> Just to clarify: the speech bubble does not relate in any way to President Barack Obama!

This is all well and good, but then along comes a very strange statement in Gemara Shabbat 127a:

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: The welcoming of guests (*hachnasat orchim*) takes precedence over welcoming the divine presence (*shechina*).

Does that mean that if you're talking to Hashem or having an intense religious experience and you see an opportunity to welcome guests, that's more important?

YES! And the proof is our great-great-great x90 grandfather, Avraham Avinu, in the first few lines of this week's Parasha!

"And Hashem appeared to him (Avraham) in the plains of Mamre and he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day. And he raised his eyes and he saw, and behold! Three men were standing over him; and he saw and he ran to greet them from the entrance of the tent and he bowed toward the ground". *Bereshit* 18:1-2.

Given that, according to Rashi, he was still recovering from his Brit Mila, this was an impressive display of eagerness to do a mitzvah. Imagine yourself in your situation – wouldn't it just be the natural inclination to say those three terrible words: Can't be bothered.





Another example of the importance of chesed can be found amongst the many stories of the Chafetz Chayim...



A young person once visited the famed teacher known as the Chafetz Chaim. The guest had arrived at the synagogue just as the Sabbath began, having been on the road for many hours. He was hungry and weak as they walked from the synagogue to the Rabbi's home. To the surprise of the guest, the Chafetz Chaim skipped the singing of '*Shalom*

*Aleichem*' (a song that greets the Sabbath angels) and, after quickly reciting the *kiddush* and *hamotzi*, began to eat.

"Why did you skip the singing of *Shalom Aleichem*?", the young man asked his host.

The Chafetz Chaim replied: "You were hungry. A hungry person should be fed as soon as possible. The angels can wait to be greeted".

## *Points* TO *Ponder*

- ✚ What do you think of the Chafetz Chaim's decision?
- ✚ Was that what you would have expected him to do?
- ✚ How far does prioritisation of the mitzvah of chesed go?

Based on that last question, let's take a look at the story of Lot, Avraham's nephew. Lot moved to Sodom where the people were not so nice, yet he seemed to start to bring some law and order to the place – the Torah hints to us that he was a judge and leader there.

In one instance, he met two messengers/angels (delete as appropriate for your translation!) who were happy to sleep in the street yet Lot convinced them to stay with him. But his attempt to copy Avraham's chesed and go beyond the call of duty to help

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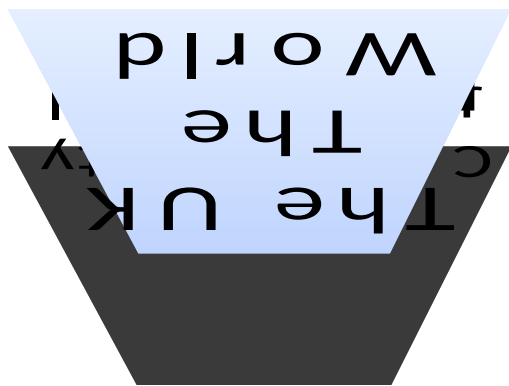
...The people of Sodom converged upon the house...and they called to Lot and they said to him "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us and we will know them." And Lot went out to them at the door and he closed the door behind him. And he said "My brothers, please do not act wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known a man: I will bring them out to you and do with them what is good in your eyes – only these men, do not do anything just because they came in the shade of my roof".

*Bereshit 19:4-8*

What is Lot's view of chesed? What would you have done in his situation?



As you have probably concluded, Lot's chesed is not the way to go. There is no point in damaging one person to help others. The Jewish view of chesed is always to look out for helping others, but always looking after oneself as well.



This diagram is my own way of prioritising who to focus on, when doing chesed and social action.

How would you prioritise who to help? Why?

Do you find that although you may like to help everyone, realistically helping everyone is not practical?

In the choveret, we have looked at Torah examples, mostly from Parashat Vayera, of how to do chesed, acts of loving kindness. We have seen that the very essence of being Jewish is to look to help other people – this is the character trait Hashem looked for when he was choosing a person to start Am Yisrael. Subsequently, throughout our history, we have been a people of chesed. To emphasise this, try and name all the Jewish charities you can think of. You will probably be there for a while because there are loads – and more starting all the time.

But now is the time to take this peula and make something happen from it. We are in the middle of term with weeks of festival-free Shabbatot to try some new ideas...so let's look at what WE can do.





## MitzvahDayUK

*make your mark*

Mitzvah Day, on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November, is a great way to do chesed projects in the community, which helps others and is a great Kiddush Hashem for you, BA and all Jews! Bnei Akiva are involved in this event and here are some of the things for you/your sviva to be a part of (but feel free to start your own projects!):

- Help decorate cards for Israeli soldiers, wrap gifts for Norwood children and run a tea party for elderly people who have difficulty leaving home – all taking place in **Hendon United Shul**, 10am-5pm (don't need to be there the whole time – come and help however you wish).
- Making and decorating things for Langdon College and visiting the Heathlands care home, Manchester. Starts at the Bayit, 1.00-4.30pm.

Maybe use this week as a springboard for ongoing chesed projects in your sviva. You could visit old age homes, visit hospitals, raise money for tzedaka (our movement's current tzedaka project is Kaytana – email [israel@bauk.org](mailto:israel@bauk.org) for more info) or do plenty of other things! The world is your kneidlach...



- Celebrity Bikur Cholim (*visiting the sick*): One person pretends to be ill in hospital and one by one, the others 'visit' them. They act as different celebrities and the *choleh* (ill person) has to guess who they are.
- Ask chanichim to speak about chesed they have done and what made them do it?
- Name that Mitzvah – how many chesed mitzvot can you name?
- Musical Chesed: A new and exciting game to hit BA! Chanichim run around to madrichim humming music and when it stops, all chanichim have to immediately do an act of 'chesed' to another person e.g. visit the sick, welcoming guests, help them across the road etc. If someone's actions are slightly questionable, they can be challenged and perhaps be 'out'!
- Get groups to think about a social action project they want to do and try and sell it to the madrichim, who eventually choose one – and put it into action in your sviva! This could also work using the whole sviva with Mifkad being the exciting revealing of the 'Chesed Project Competiton'!
- A classic 'chinuch worker when running out of ideas' game that I remember from when I was a madrich: 'Che said' – roughly (or to be honest, exactly) like Simon Says. This wasn't my idea, honestly!

**Hadracha Tip:** Always be enthusiastic and look energetic. One of the most common features of young people today is ‘can’t be bothered’. Be bothered! Go the extra mile! What you are doing has a MASSIVE effect on chanichim – are we enthusing and inspiring the next generation or are we just going through the motions each week? Put the extra effort in and you won’t regret it. To quote last week’s Haftorah (Yishayahu 40:31)...



וַיִּשְׁפּוּ זָעִירִים וַיִּנָּעוּ  
וּבְחֹרִים פָּשׁוּל יִפְשְׁלוּ: וְקִנְיָן הָיָה יִחְלִיפוּ כֹחַ  
יֵשׁוּ אֶבֶר בְּזָעִירִים יִרְצוּ וְלֹא יִיָּאֲצוּ יִלְכוּ וְלֹא  
יִיָּעֲפוּ:

“And young people will be weary and young men will surely stumble. But those who hope in Hashem will have renewed strength, grow wings like eagles, run and not get tired, walk and not grow weary”.

And finally...



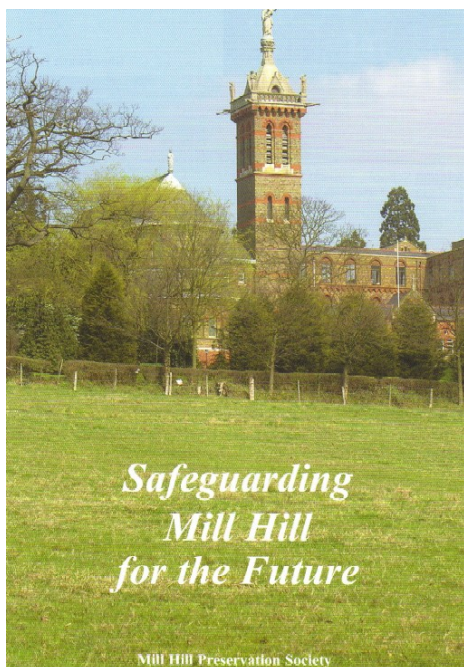
Below is a suggested Shabbat afternoon yomi (*timetable*) for BA in 1962:

3.30	Mifkad – yes, at the start!	4.45	Rikkudim – dancing!!!
3.45	Mincha	5.00	Mesiba – fun and games
4.15	Sicha – an educational talk	6.00	Neilah – not the prayer! It means ‘closing time’!



## Sviva of the Week: Mill Hill

**“The King of Rhyming Suburbia”** *(Quote from Mill Hill BA jumpers)*



**Roshim:** Saul Gallick & Dina Minsky

**Sganit:** Shoshi Goldstein

**Madrachim:** Gaby Laitman, Emily Deaner, Sammy Assil, Naomi Singer, Simeon Simberg, Aviv Boonin, Jack Cohen, Joel Newman, Hannah Goldstein & Max Sherrard

Did you know that the NW7 postcode covers the biggest area in London?

### Facts about Mill Hill:

- ❖ In Hebrew, מיל is a measure of distance. Therefore one should really call the suburb ‘Mile Hill’ – which is interesting because...
- ❖ Mill Hill was originally called ‘Myllehill’.
- ❖ Historians<sup>4</sup> believe that Yemin Moshe, the Jerusalem suburb built by Sir Moses Montefiore famed for its iconic windmill, was due to be called ‘Givat Tachana’, the hill of mill, as inspired by the London suburb of similar fame.

Do you want to be Sviva of the Week? E-mail [chinuch@bauk.org](mailto:chinuch@bauk.org) and tell me why?!!!

<sup>4</sup> Jeffay and Rainsbury et al, 2009.