

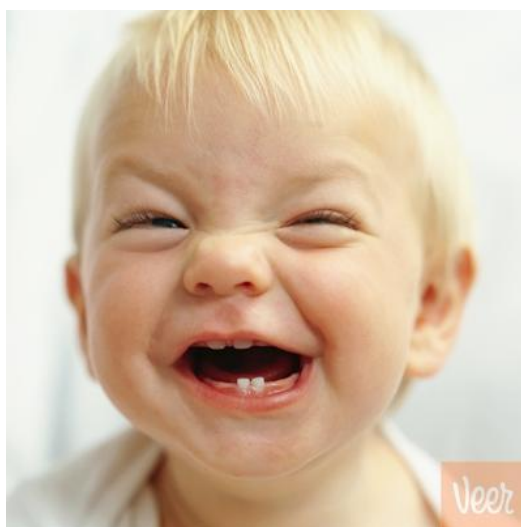
Hadracha Choveret



תנועת בני עקיבא
BNEI AKIVA
UNITED KINGDOM

BNEI AKIVA'S WEEKLY EDUCATIONAL HANDBOOK FOR MADRICHIM

Laughter



Aims:

1. To learn about laughter in this week's parasha
2. To think about different types of laughter, good and bad
3. To apply our ideas about laughter to Am Yisrael today



Shalom Roshim, Sganim v'Madrichim,

This week we are thinking about something humans do naturally – laughing. But, let's look at what the Torah has to say about it, and how we can harness it for the betterment of our people. Enjoy

Bevirkat Chaverim l'Torah v'Avodah

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P.S. WINTER MACHANE!!! Applications for madrichim and chanichim are open now! Visit www.bauk.org for the forms!





HOW TO USE THE CHOVERET: INSTRUCTION MANUAL

The structure for the choveret this year is a new take on a model invented by the Oved Chinuch of 5766, Baruch Baigel. The educational content contained within the choveret is known as “chomer”, the Biblical term for building materials (Bereshit 11:3). Thus, it is comprised of 3 elements:

1. **BRICKS:** The raw Torah/educational content – concise chinuch-flavoured nuggets of information that are essential to feed to your chanichim
2. **MORTAR:** Controversial topics to stimulate you and your chanichim, as well as practical ideas for peulot.
3. **BUILDER’S BLUEPRINT:** Additional sources and information that would certainly enhance your chanichims’ sviva experience as well as your own, should you choose to use it.



The idea is to read through the “bricks” all together, discussing any meaty topics as a tzevet. You can refer to the “builder’s blueprint” (BB) in these discussions. Then, co-madrachim can use the “mortar”, as well as any useful bits from AB to brainstorm peula ideas.

However, each sviva is different, so get stuck into it and see what works for you!

BRICKS

Aim 1: To learn about laughter in this week's parasha

Parashat Vayera opens with Avraham recovering from his Brit Mila outside his tent. Despite his pain, he runs to greet three strangers who approach his tent. After feeding them they inform him that Sarah will give birth in the coming year. Sarah overhears this seemingly impossible promise and the Torah recounts (Bereishit 18:12):

וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה, בְּקִרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר: אַחֲרֵי בְלִתִּי הִיָּתָה-לִּי עֲדָנָה, וְאֵדֵנִי זָקֵן

“And Sarah laughed to herself saying ‘now that I am withered am I to have enjoyment – with my husband so old?’”

When the child is born the Torah tells us (Bereishit 21:6):

וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה צָחַק עָשָׂה לִּי אֱלֹהִים כֹּל הַשְּׂמֵעַ יִצְחַק לִּי

“Sarah said, ‘G-d has made laughter for me, whoever hears will laugh for me’”

Jokes are generally funny because the punch-line is unexpected. It was inconceivable that Sarah would conceive, so she was surprised and laughed in **disbelief**, the second time she says that ‘G-d has made laughter for me’, her disbelief is lined with the **joy** of finally giving birth

We laugh 30 times as much when we're with other people than we do when we're alone. Laughter and comedy are very sociable things.

Regarding Sarah's laughter Rashi tells us (Rashi on Bereishit 21:6):

“many barren women were remembered with her, many sick people were cured on that day, many prayers were answered along with her and there was much laughter in the world”

(Rashi on Bereishit 21:6)



Aim 2: To think about different types of laughter, good and bad

Different types of laughter can indicate different things. Let's take a look...at some appearances of the word, to laugh *letzahcek* or *lesachek*.

BAD laughter ☹️

During the episode of the Golden Calf the Torah relates (Shemot 32:6):

“the people offered up burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well being, they sat down to eat and drink and then rose [letzachek] to mock/to laugh/to play.”



MORTAR

Aim 1: To learn about laughter in this week's parasha

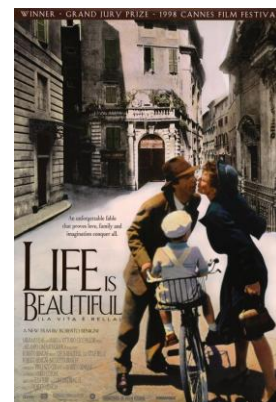
Activities

- **Comedy acting:** find a comedy sketch you like and print it out. Act it out in different ways. Have someone read it in a monotonous voice; is it still funny? Why? Try and work out what makes it funny.
- **Comedy show:** Play out the story for the chanichim in the style of an American comedy, complete with signs to hold up when you want them to laugh!
- **TV characters:** print out pictures of (age appropriate) figures from TV and popular media. Which of them are funny? What makes someone or some situation funny?

Aim 2: To think about different types of laughter, good and bad



- The film *La vita è bella* (Life is Beautiful) tells the story of an Italian man (Guido) and his young son during the Holocaust. In the concentration camp Guido is determined to shelter his son from the evils around them and convinces him they're in an elaborate contest to win (of all things) a tank. Guido tirelessly maintains the ruse with comic ingenuity, even as the horrors escalate and the camp's population continues to dwindle--all the more impetus to keep his son safe, secure and, most of all, hidden.
- Does it help to laugh at serious topics?



Activities

Younger groups

- **Pictures:** Get the chanichim to work out the Tanach stories involving laughter (see Builders Blueprint for more) using pictures
- **Tweedledum & Tweedledoo:** Two teams in lines opposite each other – one person from each team has to step forward and they take steps towards each other, one says 'Tweedledum' and the other says 'Tweedledoo', they have to say it in increasingly humorous ways to try and make their opponent laugh, the first one to crack up loses.

Older groups

- **Charades:** Get the chanichim to work out the Tanach stories involving laughter (see Builders Blueprint for more) by playing charades
- **Joke Freeze:** Everyone has to think of their favourite situation joke. They have to in a pair act out their favourite joke, if someone says 'Freeze!' they come in and carry on acting out their favourite joke.



BRICKS

Aim 2: To think about different types of laughter, good and bad CONTINUED

In this instance clearly the laughter is a negative trait. Not only were they worshipping an idol but they were doing so in a joyful and playful manner. They avoided thinking about their actions by just enjoying their sin and getting carried away with the excitement.

GOOD laughter 😊

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 59b) tells of a dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and the rest of the Sages. They argue but despite a host of heavenly miracles and even a heavenly voice they proclaim that the Halacha is in accordance with the majority because, 'lo bashamayim hi', 'it is not in heaven'. The Torah was given to man apply to the physical world as it is. After the incident the Gemara tells us:

R. Natan met Elijah the prophet and asked him "What did the Holy One do then?"

Elijah answered "He laughed, and said 'My children have defeated me, my children have defeated me!'"

**What sort of laughter is this?
Can you think of other cases of joyous laughter?**

Aim 3: To apply our ideas about laughter to Am Yisrael today

1. Micro

On a personal level, life can get stressful. Sometimes it really pays for us to use humour to prevent ourselves from “sweating the small stuff” realise that things we worry about are not always life-or-death 😊.

Also, when thinking about good and bad laughter, we should also consider this in terms of our interactions with each other. Are we “laughing with” someone, or “laughing at” them?

2. Macro

Kalut Rosh vs Ten chiyuch

There are certain times when laughter and humour don't seem to have a place. We are told that one may not act light headedly (b'kalut rosh) in a cemetery or a Bet Kneset.



Chassidut stresses the importance of joy and happiness in Avodat Hashem (service of G-d). The Breslav Chasidim in Israel have a popular sticker:



‘Give a smile and all will be good’

So, we see that we can use laughter and humour in great ways, both in our relationship with **Hashem** and with **other people!** We just need to make sure we don't use it for the **wrong reasons**.

MORTAR

Aim 3: To apply our ideas about laughter to Am Yisrael today



- What is “banter”? We all love it, it is a staple of all madrichims’ meetings :P
- When we are among friends, we relax and joke around... But are there jokes that we should not say?
- What if a joke is rude, but doesn't offend anyone? Does that mean it's definitely OK?

Activities

- **Smile if you love me baby:** don't just play the game but ask them why it is that they smile and laugh and why someone might think that smiling means you love them.
- **Captains Coming Face Expressions:** using the principle of captain's coming that you give a command and the last person to do it, or do it well is out. Command face expressions e.g. crying, pained, joyous, laughing. See how hard it is to fake laugh, maybe the fact that it is not generally conscious makes it remarkable.



builder's blueprint

Yitzchak the Joker



When Yitzchak was living in the land of Gerar he claimed that Rivka was his sister in order to prevent the locals killing him in order to get Rivka. He was rumbled however when Avimelech saw him:

"and Avimelech king of the Philistines gazed down through the window and saw that behold Yitzchak was jesting (metzachek) with his wife Rivka"

It seems that in this case laughter is described as something very intimate, it was clear from their interaction that they were not siblings but partners.

Laughter is something we share with those close to us. When we are in comfortable surroundings we can let ourselves go and really laugh.

Really letting go leaves us vulnerable; we remember that we aren't totally in control.

Black Humour

The famous story of Yoseph interpreting the dreams of the butcher and the baker may well be the first record of black humour. (Bereishit 40)

When telling the butler what will happen to him Yosef says:

"in three days' time Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your post and you will place Pharaoh's cup in his hand"

Upon hearing this we read:

"and the head of the bakers saw that he had interpreted well"

And he tells Yosef his dream. The baker did not know the outcome and doesn't seem interested in the fact that maybe Yosef was someone special, rather he thought that there were good interpretations going on and he wanted a slice of the action.

Yosef tells the baker:

"in three days' time Pharaoh will lift up your head... from your body and he will hang you on a tree"

The baker is sure that his interpretation is going the same way as the butler but all of sudden he hears of his impending death. They say in Yiddish that "Man plans, G-d laughs" *Mann traach, Gott Lauch*, here it seems that G-d laughs at the self importance of Man. The baker thought that he was in charge and at that point G-d chuckles to himself and reminds him that he isn't. G-d laughs at Man's self importance. When we think that we know everything that is going on and we have visions of grandeur the G-d often mocks us.

Peulah Planning Sheet

Peulah Title:

Trigger:

Aim 1:

Related Activities and how they relate:

Aim 2:

Related Activities and how they relate:

Aim 3:

Related Activities and how they relate:

What we still need to do (tziud + other preparations):

Conclusion: