

Bnei Akiva Svivot 5781: Choveret Chinuchit

Dear Chaverim,

As we progress through our third lockdown, we need to remain more connected and inspired than ever. The closure of our schools is hard to bear, and there is no certainty of how long this will continue. These certainly are trying times, but as Jews we are known for our resilience and perseverance, and today is no different.

We know that despite the upheaval, we all still need our fix of BA on Shabbat and are therefore distributing this Choveret Chinuchit (education booklet). These normally go to madrichim and are used to plan Sviva, however for this lockdown, we are urging all of you to become madrichim in your own household Svivot.




We hope that this choveret will help you learn, grown and have fun over Shabbat, and we look forward to seeing you at your virtual Svivot events next week.

Shabbat Shalom,

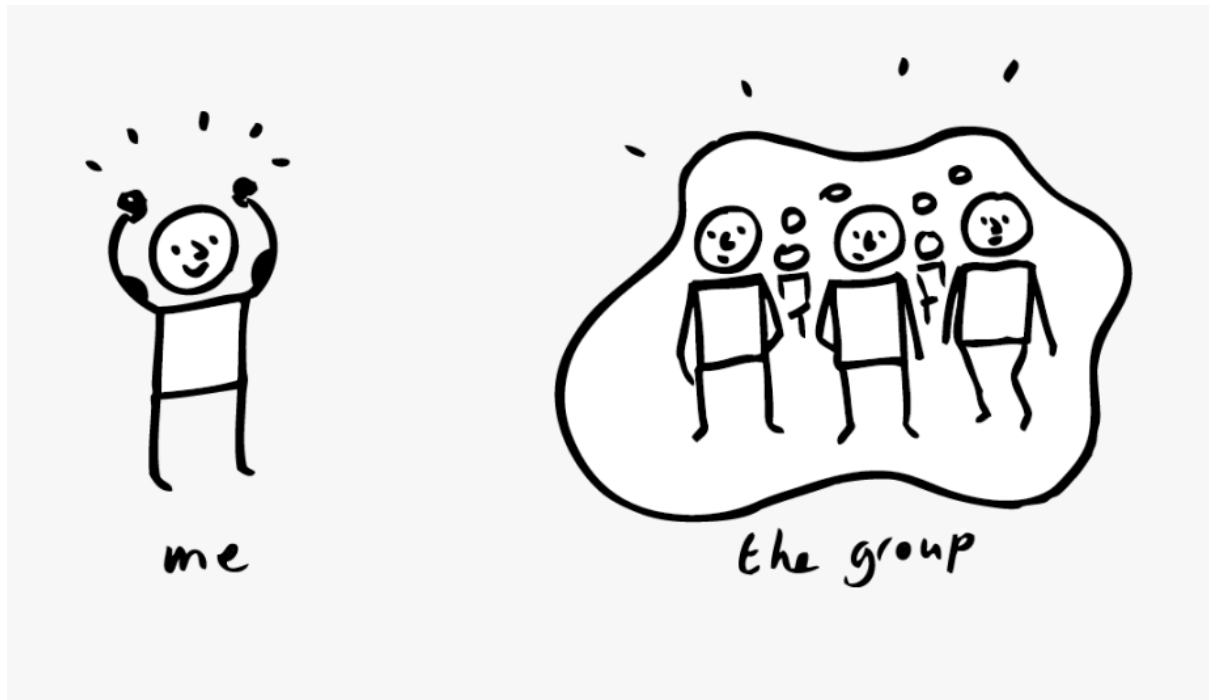
Daniella Wieder and Daniel Ross

Svivot and Hadracha Worker and Chinuch Worker

In this pack you will find:

-  An idea based on the parasha
-  Discussion Ideas
-  Games and activities

Parashat Yitro: The Collective and the Individual



Aims:

- 🔍 **Recognise** the tensions in the Parasha between the individual and the collective.
- 🔍 **Explore** the deeper symbolism of 'Individual' Torah.
- 🔍 **Think** about how we can find a balance between the individual and the collective.

The Tension of the Individual vs the Collective

Parashat Yitro begins with the reunification of Moshe's family - his wife Tzipporah, his sons Gershom and Eliezer, and his father-in-law Yitro reunite with him at the base of Har Sinai. This is followed by Yitro observing Moshe exhausting himself with judging all the grievances of the entire nation, and



suggesting that Moshe establishes judges to ease his burden.

Already from this incident we can begin to observe a tension which continues throughout the Parasha: the interest of the collective versus the interest of the individual.

The next day, Moshe sat as magistrate among the people, while the people stood about Moses from morning until evening.

But when Moses' father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?"

Moses replied to his father-in-law, "It is because the people come to me to inquire of G-d.

When they have a dispute, it comes before me, and I decide between one person and another, and I make known the laws and teachings of G-d."

But Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing you are doing is not right; you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.

(Shemot 18:13-18)

Moshe is sacrificing his individual need for the greater collective need. He spends all day, wearing himself out, judging the cases of the people and teaching them for the sake of overall communal benefit.

This dialectic continues with Hashem's offer of the Torah to Moshe, and by extension Bnei Yisrael:

Having journeyed from Rephidim, they entered the wilderness of Sinai and encamped in the wilderness. Israel encamped there in front of the mountain, and Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel:

'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me.

Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel."

(Shemot 19:2-6)

We are charged with collective and individual responsibilities.

The Collective experience of Matan Torah:

When it comes to Matan Torah itself, the Divine Revelation of the Torah, this trend continues. In Sefer Devarim, when Moshe recounts the giving of the Torah, it is referred to as "Yom haKahal," the "Day of Assembly."

Moreover, the mitzvah of Hakel, the gathering of the entire Jewish people to assemble and hear the Torah being read by the King, was to commemorate the giving of the Torah at Har Sini. Even at Har Sini itself, Bnei Yisrael are considered as one, "K'ish echad b'lev echad - Like one man with one heart" as Rashi comments.



Point to Ponder

Does it surprise you that the Torah was given to a nation, and not individuals?

The Individual Experience of Matan Torah:

Yet at the same time, the 10 Commandments are all grammatically in the singular form of 'you' rather than the plural, the collective. They relate to us as individuals, and our personal relationships with Hashem.

Indeed, when we think of mitzvot and the way we carry them out, we usually think of this in the singular, individual responsibilities that we must live up to.

Rav Kook suggests that this notion is indicative of the galut, our exile. In Chutz l'Aretz we are forced, by virtue of our status as minorities, to focus on the development of the individual, and this is reflected in our perception of the mitzvot. The Talmud Bavli, composed in Bavel, Babylon converts that which is written in the Tanach from the collective to the individual. For example, in Mesechet Keddushin, Chazal understand the concept of 'Milchemet Hashem', G-dly wars to refer to Torah, but for David haMelech, these were actual, national wars.

Finding the Balance:

For those of us living in the western world, individualism is second nature to us. We are constantly exposed to the prevalence of the 'I' over the 'We', yet Matan Torah reminds us that whilst we are individuals with unique missions, skills and aims, we are also a collective Nation.

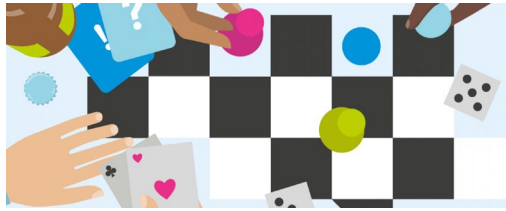
Bnei Yisrael are charged with a two-fold mission should they accept the Torah: they must be both "a kingdom of priests" and simultaneously "a holy nation." Rav Hirsch, the 19th century ideological trailblazer of neo-Orthodoxy, explains that "a kingdom of priests" is a requirement of "each and every individual of you is to become a Kohen, a priest, inasmuch as he is required to allow all his actions to be 'regulated' by Me [Hashem]." On the other hand, regarding the obligation to be "a holy nation", he writes, "just as, individually, you are to appear priestlike, so is the impression which Israel as a nation is to make on the world to be one of holiness to G-d."

Discussion Ideas:



- 🗣️ Is there a difference between a nation and a group of individuals?
- 🗣️ What are these differences?
- 🗣️ Do you relate to the pandemic as an individual, or as part of a nation?
- 🗣️ Does the way we speak of it (in terms of thousands of cases) detract from individual identities?

Activity Ideas:



- 🎲 Speak only using the 'royal we' for a meal!
- 🎲 Make sure everyone helps to clear the table after dinner – is this quicker in a proportionate amount, or are you faster than the sum of your parts?!