

## **Bnei Akiva Svivot 5780. Choveret Chinuchit**

*Dear Chaverim,*

*The world is currently in an unfamiliar place. The future holds a great deal of uncertainty and the impact of Covid-19 on the lives of British Jews is becoming evident, as shuls and communal organisations are taking precautions to ensure the safety of vulnerable members of the community. We don't know exactly how the situation will continue to unfold, but we must be prepared to react, not only by following safety guidelines, but by showing how we as a community are strong, caring and supportive of each other.*

*Whilst due to safety measures, svivot are now no longer physically able to run, we would like to still provide you with peulot (activities) and chinuch (education) to engage in with your children. We will be publishing our weekly Choveret (booklet) (usually only available to madrichim) with amazing ideas for activities and interesting reading material. Our hope is that we can help to enhance this time for both you and your children, something especially important in the current climate.*

*During this time of social distancing, it is crucial that we make an extra effort to attend to our own personal wellbeing. Within this chovert, we have aimed to show you what Judaism says about changing your habits.*

*Please feel free to share it around with your friends. If you would like to receive this activities pack directly to your email, please email [svivot@bauk.org](mailto:svivot@bauk.org).*

*Wishing you all a Shabbat shalom and good health!*

*Zoe Daniels and Chana Be'eri  
Svivot and Hadracha and Chinuch Workers*

### ***In this pack you will find....***

- ***Information about what Judaism says about changing your habits.***
- ***Questions to Ponder***
- ***Discussion Points***
- ***Peulah (activity) Ideas***

## Parshat Tzav – Old Habits Die Hard

### How do you break a habit?

Human beings are creatures of habit. We naturally seek to repeat our behaviour, feeling safe and familiar in routine. This can have incredibly positive outcomes: we are able to function more efficiently, and to learn from past behaviours to develop our skills. Unfortunately, it can also be easy to slip into a pattern of unhealthy habits and overcoming these is very challenging. According to Forbes magazine, around 50% of people make New Year's resolutions each year...and of these, 80% abandon their resolutions within a month! So why is it so difficult to change our habits?



### Setting realistic goals

This week's parasha, Tzav, continues with the instructions regarding korbanot (Temple offerings) that we began reading about last week. The Torah goes into rather gruesome detail about how and where to slaughter each animal, as well as how to dismember it and sprinkle its blood around the courtyard. It doesn't make for easy reading! And what's the point of it all? God doesn't need our gifts!

The root of the word 'korban' is 'karov', meaning 'close'. Korbanot were the method used to express ourselves to God and to get closer to Him, whether through sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving or atonement. Today, korbanot have been replaced with prayer (*"instead of bulls we will pay [The offering of] our lips"* - Hoshea 14:3). But if tefilla is able to serve as an adequate system for our relationship with

God to function, why was it not instituted by the Torah? Why the need for the attention to detail in the laws of korbanot?

The Rambam addresses this question in his Guide for the Perplexed. He claims that korbanot are in fact not an ideal practice at all!



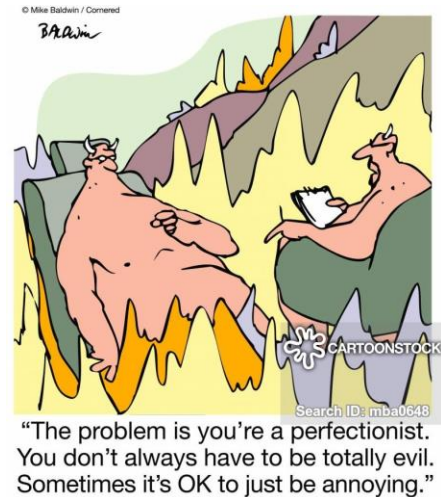
*"It is, namely, impossible to go suddenly from one extreme to the other: it is therefore according to the nature of man impossible for him suddenly to discontinue everything to which he has been accustomed...It was in accordance with the wisdom and plan of God, as displayed in the whole Creation, that He did not command us to give up and to discontinue all these manners of service; for to obey such a commandment it would have been contrary to the nature of man, who generally cleaves to that to which he is used...By this Divine plan it was effected that the traces of idolatry*

*were blotted out, and the truly great principle of our faith, the Existence and Unity of God, was firmly established."* (Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim, Part 3 32:2)

Bnei Yisrael had been brought up in an idolatrous land, where the normal mode of worship consisted of sacrificing animals in temples. The korbanot were designed to smooth over the transition from idolatrous practice to monotheistic worship. The Rambam claims that in instituting the laws of korbanot, Hashem was acknowledging a simple fact of human nature: that people do not adapt easily to change. The system of worship put in place helped the nation to overcome their idolatrous instincts and become *ovdei Hashem*, servants of God.

## It's not all or nothing

The Rambam's message is incredible. The Torah, the blueprint of the world and the word of God, caters to human imperfections! In fact, this is not the only instance in which the Rambam identifies this pattern. He claims that the laws of Kashrut are a concession to mankind's desire to eat meat (Adam and Chava were vegetarian - Bereishit 2:16) and that the laws pertaining to the *Eshet Yifat To'ar* (Devarim 21:10-14) and the *Ben Sorer Umoredh* (Devarim 21:18-21) only exist as a compromise. Whilst recognising the Torah's underlying values, we are commanded to cater to our base desires in a controlled manner.



The Torah was designed for us to live our lives by. It is not supposed to be completely unattainable. The message is clear: we are not supposed to suppress our nature. God created us as individuals, with different interests and talents and we are supposed to use these in our observance of the mitzvot. We must learn to harness our capabilities in service of the Creator, even if we are not able to live up to perfection in every area.

Judaism is a religion of growth. We believe in the idea that a person can never stop striving for a greater level of holiness. We can never reach perfection; the goal is merely to try one's best. When making changes in our lives, our focus should not be on our failures, and we should not give ourselves unattainable goals. Rather, we should work with our own natures and celebrate when we are able to achieve something new.

## Questions to ponder

- Why does God want us to have a relationship with Him?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using korbanot to connect with God instead of tefilla?
- Why doesn't the Torah explicitly state what its values are?

## Discussions

- What techniques could you use to make it easier to develop new habits?
- Can you think of any habits you have developed yourself? In five years time, what will those behaviours look like?
- What other examples can you think of where the Torah gives us a commandment that is not completely ideal?

## Peula (Activity) Ideas

- **Fold your arms** - now fold them the other way! How does this feel? Try to fold your arms the 'wrong' way for a day - does it get easier over time?
- **DIY Kintsugi** - Kintsugi is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by mending the areas of breakage with lacquer mixed with powdered gold, making the cracks into something beautiful. You can try this at home: use gold or coloured paint pigment mixed with glue to mend a broken plate or mug. Send us photos of your creations!
- **Competition time** - think of a new habit that you'd like to achieve. Each member of the household must keep up with their habit every day, whoever lasts the longest wins a prize!
- **My secret habit** - each person has to write ONE bad habit (for example - biting fingernails, watching reality tv, picking your nose, emotional shopping, wasting time on facebook) they have on a piece of paper. Collect all the paper-pieces. Distribute them again randomly. Each person takes it in turn to read out the bad habit on the paper, and then others can try to guess who's bad habit it is - play in a household or over Zoom using an anonymous Google form instead of paper.
- **123 boom** - does it get easier with repetition?

Everyone stand in a circle with one person in the middle. The person in the middle has to point at people randomly and count to 3 and the person they point to has to say their full name in that count. If the person does not say their name in time, the person in the middle shouts "BOOM" and they are out!

Extras:

- 1) "Toaster" - the person in the middle points to someone and says "Toaster", at which point the two people on either side become the walls of the toaster and put their hands up to surround the person who was pointed at, who is the bread and jumps up and shouts "ping!"
- 2) "Elephant" - the person in the middle points to someone and says "Elephant", at which point the two people on either side become the ears of the Elephant and put their hands up to be the ears of the person who was pointed at, who is the elephant and waves their hand like a trunk and makes the sound an elephant makes
- 3) "Washing machine" - the person in the middle points to someone and says "Washing machine", at which point the two people on either side become the walls of the washing machine and put their hands up to surround the person who was pointed at, who is the clothes in the washing machine and spins around
- 4) "Charlie's Angels" - the person in the middle points to someone and says "Charlie's Angels", at which point the two people on either side become the sidekicks to the middle person and all three of them have to make "hand guns" and do the classic Charlie's Angels pose



5) (the best one) "Jump Jump" - the person in the middle shouts "jump jump", at which point everyone in the circle jumps up and down twice and shout "mushroom mushroom" as they do so

Mix these up and be silly and dont forget about the 1, 2, 3, boom because if you do you'll get caught out and be out.

- **Lego tower contest** - There's only one rule. Each piece that you add must be larger (by counting the studs) than the one you last added. The winner is the player who uses the greatest number of bricks in their tower - growing by building on your last achievements. If it falls, start again - changing habits isn't always easy if you work at it and keep going, you'll be sure to achieve.
- **IT/Stuck in the Mud** - Life is full of us constantly running around and rarely having the opportunity to stop and think about the habits we have formed consciously or subconsciously and whether they are having a positive or negative impact on our lives and those of us we interact with.



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