

# HADRACHA CHOVERET

**BNEI  
AKIVA**  
UNITED KINGDOM



BNEI AKIVA'S WEEKLY EDUCATIONAL HANDBOOK FOR MADRICHIM

## Tzav: Habits and Refugees



### Concrete Concepts:

1. People do not easily adapt to change.
2. It is a mitzvah in the Torah to accept and love one's stranger.
3. As Jews, we have countless reasons to empathise with refugees and current events.

## Bnei Akiva Svivot 5783: Madrichim Pack

Dear Madrichim,

*Congratulations on reaching the end of Shabbat Ha'irgun season! To close off the term, this choveret will look a bit towards current events. This is a Josh Daniel original, from last year, and sadly the situation hasn't changed very much, and all the things relevant back then are still relevant now.*

Remember we're here to support you in whatever way we can! Rafi can be contacted at [svivot@bauk.org](mailto:svivot@bauk.org) or 0208 209 1319 ext. 4, and the I can be contacted at [chinuch@bauk.org](mailto:chinuch@bauk.org) or 0208 209 1319 ext. 5.

BVCLTVA,  
Ben

### Week 20: Habits and Refugees

#### Intro Videos - WATCH:

<https://youtu.be/MpbIUmmQs7o>

[https://mobile.twitter.com/kate\\_vandy/status/1499452920630231042](https://mobile.twitter.com/kate_vandy/status/1499452920630231042)

This emotive video touches on a few of the themes that we will cover in this choveret, as well as other important ones.

**Discussion Point 1: What important Jewish or educational themes can you identify in this video that might be useful to teach your chanichim about this week?**

#### 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. 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 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!



The Beit Knesset in Shiloh, modelled on the Mishkan that stood there 3000 years ago. Where once, animal sacrifices were offered up, now tefillot are offered up instead

*"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)*

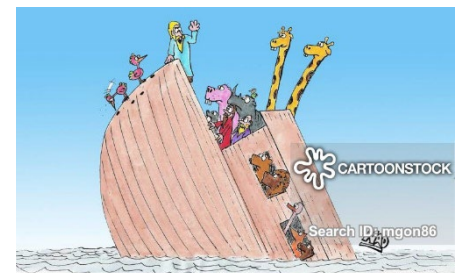
Bnei Yisrael had been brought up in an idolatrous land, where the normal mode of worship consisted of sacrificing animals in temples. The korbanot were designed to smooth over the transition from idolatrous practice to monotheistic worship. The Rambam claims that in instituting the laws of korbanot, 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.

### **Discussion Point 2: How can we communicate this concrete concept to our younger chanichim?**

The idea that people do not adapt easily to change is one we will also pick up next week when we look at Kashrut, but for now there are more important issues at hand. People around the world are being forced to adapt to changes of radical proportions...

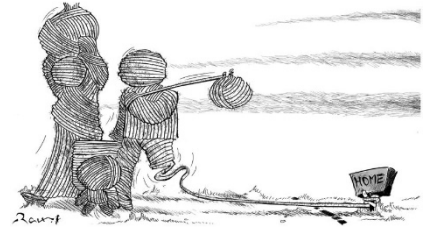
### **The first refugees**

Noach's life must have been bitter and painful. His attempt to act as saviour failed, resulting in the destruction of the world he knew and of every person alive. He witnessed a disaster of immense proportions, all while trapped in an unseaworthy boat along with an entire zoo and must have felt uncertain as to his future. Noach recognised and was grateful for the kindness performed to him by Hashem, and indeed his first action upon exiting the ark was to offer up a sacrifice expressing this. However, he was unable to adjust to life post-flood, and he drowned his sorrows in wine. He escaped death, but was left with scars and regrets, and a longing to forget his trauma.



"Ok, who brought the woodpeckers?!"

Noach is the archetypal refugee. His world was turned upside down by trauma, and he needed to learn how to adapt to a new one, much like the Ukrainian refugees currently in Berlin that we saw in the video at the start. Habits are difficult to change and you can't just forget the world you knew. He was granted a new lease of life, but he was a product of the world that he had lived in previously. Noach lived for 350 years after the flood and we are not told of any of his achievements in this time. His role was simply to keep his family alive through difficult times and once he had succeeded in this, the task of Jewish continuity was passed on to his children.



## The Jewish approach to refugees

The Torah is clear about how we are to treat strangers.

*"When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong them. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love them as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the LORD am your God." (Vayikra 19:33-34)*

For those of you who have been to the bayit – its literally the writing on the wall! There are two parts to this mitzvah. Firstly, there is a negative commandment **not to wrong a stranger**. This can be fulfilled by acting passively: if you don't do anything wrong to them, you have fulfilled this obligation. Secondly, there is a positive commandment to **love the stranger and to treat them as one of your own**. This requires more effort to fulfil: it is not enough to merely tolerate them, rather one must take active steps to welcome them in and to regard them as your own. This reminds us of the people we saw in the video at the start of this choveret, openly welcoming Ukrainian refugees into their homes, fulfilling this mitzvah (and the mitzvah of hachnasat orchim – welcoming guests) to their fullest potential.



This is not something that comes naturally to us. Humans have evolved to be tribal in our nature, and we often focus on our differences instead of the things that we have in common. As we saw with Noach, refugees who have escaped a traumatic past often find it challenging to settle into their new life, and it can be easy for us to view them as the 'other'. To overcome this requires sensitivity and compassion. We must be able to completely empathise with the stranger, and that is why the Torah reminds us that we too were once strangers, relying on the compassion of others, and that when this compassion was withdrawn, we suffered.

As Jews, we are supposed to be able to relate to this message even more. As shown in the pasuk above, we were refugees! And have been over and over again. In Ukraine currently, any men between 18 and 60 are not permitted to leave the country since they have to fight in the army. Virtually the exact same law (20-60) that Jewish men and their families had to face during war in the biblical era. We've been through these situations OURSELVES before. **How much are we empathising with our modern day strangers? How much do you think your older chanichim are empathising? What can you do to help?**



## Modern Jewish refugees

It is not only in ancient Egypt that Jews faced persecution and were forced to flee their homes. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century Jews have been uprooted from the countries that they were born in across Europe, Africa and Asia. The United Kingdom welcomed 10 000 Jewish children on the Kindertransport, and many of us today are descended from these children.

One of those children rescued on the Kindertransport was Lord Alfred Dubs. In 2016, Lord Dubs sponsored an amendment to the Immigration Act 2016 to offer unaccompanied refugee children safe passage to Britain amidst the European migrant crisis. Originally rejected by the House of Commons, the amendment was accepted by the government following a second vote in favour by the Lords. In February 2017, the Home Office abandoned the scheme after accepting only 350 of the planned 3,000 child refugees.



migrants from African countries.

Since 1948, Jews have had a home in Israel which can protect them in times of need. Since the founding of the state, Israel has welcomed in Jewish refugees from places including Russia, Ethiopia, and numerous Arab countries. However, this privilege does not extend to non-Jews and in recent years the Israeli government has faced controversy over the treatment of economic

The conversation around refugees is highly politically charged. Integrating large numbers of displaced people into a society comes with many challenges, both socially and financially. Perhaps the thing that frightens people the most though, is a fear of change. As we learn from this weeks parsha, **people do not adapt to change easily**. When a group of people moves somewhere en masse, they bring with them their culture and traditions, and over time these will begin to shape the environment around them.

We as human beings value tradition. We like things to stay as they have always been, with the continuity this brings giving us a sense of stability. We are nostalgic for things that existed in our childhood, at a time when we felt safe and protected. But the world is constantly changing, and this is something we need to face up to. It can be scary, but it can also be exciting. Encountering new people, new cultures and new traditions give us an opportunity to learn and to expand our own horizons.

**Discussion Point 3: How are you going to go about communicating these more nuanced points to your older chanichim?**

## Peula Ideas (Educational Games) for Younger Chanichim

### Games about refugees

- **Balloon game:** Imagine you are an asylum seeker or refugee trying to juggle all the competing pressures of living in the UK. Five balloons represent some of the issues you may face each day: Food, Accommodation, Education, Freedom, Language. Your challenge is, for 30 seconds, to keep as many balloons in the air as possible. You cannot catch a balloon. When a balloon hits the floor or falls out of the playing area then it is out of play. Start with making one chanich try to do this by themselves, then compare how many balloons they are able to keep up when they are helped by their friends. Discuss what the challenges are in each of these areas. (N.B. balloons cannot be blown up on Shabbat so you will need to prepare for this activity in advance.)
- **Hosts** (Hachnasat Orchim)– each person thinks of one person/character that they want to invite to a dinner party. They all tell their character to the ‘host’ (someone with a good memory!) who then lists the ‘guests’ in a random order. Everyone has to guess who chose which guest.

### Games about habits.

- **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.
- **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?

## Peula Ideas for Older Years

### Games about refugees

- **Passages:** This is a game developed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in 1995, available to view at [unhcr.org/uk/passages-game](http://unhcr.org/uk/passages-game)
- **River crossing:** each person has a piece of paper which is their ‘raft’. They must all cross the ‘river’ by only stepping on rafts. Everyone must be on the river before anyone can get off the river. If someone steps off the raft the whole group must start over. No scooting or sliding on the sheets of paper. Rafts must be in contact with a human at all times or they will be swept away with the current. Once the group has started the process, your role is to take rafts that are “swept away by the current”.

### Games about Habits.

- **That old game** – Pick a game that you have played with your chanichim countless times this year. The one they love, the one they’re used to. Now change the rules completely. Play it in a new, unfamiliar environment. Discuss how difficult it must be to adapt to sudden change.

## Random Games Corner

*Over here each you'll find random games that we've compiled from the days of old. The titles are a bit weird and they're mostly just for fun but you never know when they might connect to an educational message!*

### TWO DEEP

**TYPE: Active** Play standing in a circle Two players are chosen: one to be the chaser, one to be the runner. The chaser runs around the circle, trying to tag the runner. When he does so, the runner becomes the chaser and vice versa. But the runner can get someone else to run in his stead by stepping in front of any player standing in the circle. Then that player becomes the new runner. Variation: Three deep--have two concentric circles instead of one

### THE SONG ALEPH-BET

**TYPE: Moderate** The players are divided into teams. The first team must start a song starting with an aleph. When the song is over (or when the leader stops it), the second team must start a song with a bet. When the song is completed, the third team starts a song with the third letter, a gimme, and so on. If a team can not sing a song with the letter they are out. Play continues until only X number of teams remain. Hint: To keep the game moving, a time limit (30 seconds) should be set on the singing of each song.

### WHAT IS IT?

**TYPE: Moderate** Equipment: Sets of cards (3 in a set), with things' or people's names on them. Three players are chosen from the group. Attach to their foreheads (use bobby pins) cards, on each a different thing or person from a category. Examples: Famous Zionists: Herzl, Kalischer, Gordon Chief Rabbis of Israel: Kook, Yosef, Herzog Cities in Israel: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa Cars: Chevette, Electra, Nova The players must guess what is written on their cards. They can only ask "yes" or "no" questions, and they may look at what is written on the other players' cards. The first one to guess wins.

### POSING

**TYPE: Quiet** Two or more players stand with their backs to the group. The leader gives each player a different position to assume (i.e. a baseball player). The group tries to guess what the positions are. The first player whose position is guessed, wins. Variation: The players all assume the same position. The best position wins.

### SAMECH PEY

**TYPE: Quiet** A Chumash (Bible) is needed A Chumash is given to the first player. Each player (in turn) randomly opens the Chumash to any page. The object is to open to a page with either a triple pey--25 points, a triple samech--50 points, or a chazak--100 points. If the page that the player opened to has one of the above three things, the player scores that many points; if not, the player has a chance to predict how many pages away one of those three things are. If he is right, he scores that amount of points. The first player to get 1,000 points wins.

## **ZIEGFELD RELAY**

**TYPE: Relay** Each team sits in its own line, with the players sitting side by side, facing the same direction. Every player crosses his right leg over his left. At the signal, the first player uncrosses his legs, and crosses the left leg over the right. When he is done, the second player does the same. The first team to finish wins.

## **ZIGZAG RUN**

**TYPE: Relay** Each team forms a line; five chairs are needed for each team. The first player from each team must run to the other side of the room zigzagging between the chairs both ways (see diagram). When he gets back, he tags the second player who does the same. The first team to finish, wins.

## **IS THIS IT?**

**TYPE: E.S.P.** The leader is sent out of the room. The players select an object in the room. The leader returns and the assistant asks him about different objects in the room. When he asks him about the selected object the leader identifies it. Solution: The code is in the way that the assistant asks about the object. For all of the objects he asks "Is this the object?" or "Is it this object?" When he uses the word, "that," instead of "this," the leader knows that is the selected object.

## **NINE BOOKS**

**TYPE: E.S.P.** Nine books are needed. Nine books are laid on the floor in a rectangle (see diagram). The leader leaves the room and the players decide on a book. The leader reenters the room and the assistant points to the books one at a time. When he points to the selected book, the leader identifies it. Solution: The assistant points to the first book in a certain way. If he points to the center of the book, it means that the center book was the selected book. If he points to the top right hand corner of the book, it means that the book in the top right hand corner was the selected book, etc.

## **OBJECT**

**TYPE: E.S.P.** The leader leaves the room and all of the players pick an object in the room (i.e. clogs, chair, etc.). The leader reenters and the assistant names a variety of objects in the room. When he names the selected object, the leader identifies it. Solution: Before the game the assistant tells the leader that the selected object will be after a black object. When the assistant names a black object the leader knows that the next object is "It." Variation: Instead of just black, choose a sequence of colors (i.e. red, white, and blue).