



CHOVERET CHINUCH #10 5784

Zachor



The Choveret Chinuch is a project of Bnei Akiva of the US and Canada's Chinuch department. For comments or questions, please reach out to Rav Avishai Berman at aberman@bneiakiva.org

Dear Madrichim,

We will be reading the Torah portion telling us we must remember Amalek and how they attacked Am Yisrael when they were very vulnerable as they left Egypt. In this Choveret we will look at different ways we can remember, and learn different techniques to work on both personal and national memory. We will also be talking about Purim, the commandment to be happy and how to better achieve happiness.

Purim Sameach,
Shani Becker



Week One: Happiness On Purim



It says in Masechet Taanit, משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה, as Chodesh Adar begins we are instructed to expand our happiness.

How do we expand our happiness? In what way can we bring more joy and happiness to our lives?

Let's focus for a minute on the special holiday of Purim.

On Purim we have four Mitzvot of the day:

1. Hearing the reading of the Megillah - This Mitzvah helps us remember what happened and why we celebrate Purim
2. Seuda - Having a festive meal with friends and family
3. Mishaloach Manot - giving one person at least 2 different types of food
4. Matanot l'evyonim- giving tzedaka to the needy.

The 4 Purim Mitzvot can be divided into two categories. The first, hearing the Megilla, helps keep the memory of the Purim story fresh in our mind. Hashem saved the Jewish people from a very frightening fate and we thank Hashem on this day for this miracle.

The other 3 mitzvot fall into a very different category. They are all involved with spreading happiness to other Jews as part of our celebrating. Giving tzedaka to the needy, giving foods and treats to our friends or neighbors and eating a festive seuda with family and friends - these are ways to share our happiness, our joy, our thanks to Hashem for saving us.



If Chazal wanted us to be happy on Purim, why weren't we given the mitzva to make ourselves happy, to do some fun things that we enjoy. Wouldn't playing basketball or tennis, or going swimming, or out for pizza and ice cream make me very happy? Wouldn't getting some new clothes or nice sneakers make me really, really happy?

Well, what is very interesting is that these 3 mitzvot actually help us be happier than doing things for ourselves! How is that? Well, believe it or not, a very well-known psychology professor at Harvard, Dr. Laurie Santos, has done a lot of research on happiness, and which behaviors make us the happiest. She and other well known psychologists have discovered that those who do nice things for others are the happiest people. We feel good and happy when we give money to those who need it, and when we do random acts of kindness for others. When we give someone a compliment, hold open a door, do a favor for a sibling or friend, help our parents out - these things actually make us the happiest. Truly happy folks spend more time volunteering, reaching out to others, and giving to those in need. Spreading kindness to others makes the world a better place, and surprisingly, makes us happier people too!

For more info:

Dr. Laurie Santos: Behaviors That Make Us Happy: Kindness. The Science of Well-Being for Teens



Discussion Points:

- Why do you think helping others makes us feel happy?
- What are some ways you can incorporate more kindness into your daily life?
- How do you think being kind to others affects our relationships with them?
- Have you ever experienced or witnessed someone being kind to others? How did it make you feel?



1. Laugh Circle:

Have the Chanichim stand in a circle. Choose a Chanich who will start, they turn to their right and try doing a silly facial expression while saying “I am”, If they manage to make the Chanich next to them laugh, that Chanich must add an additional word on his/her turn, such as “I am a cat”. The Chanich near them turns to their right and says the same sentence with another facial expression,

have them go around the circle (each time someone laughs they must add an additional word).

2. What would you do?

Split the Chanichim into small groups, each group gets a scenario, they need to think of a way to solve the problem and act it out in front of the group. After they finish the Madrich can give other Chanichim the opportunity to ask the actors questions about how they solved the problem.

Scenario Ideas:

1. A student is making fun of another one in class, as they got a new haircut.
2. You're inviting kids to a birthday party and really don't want to invite one kid.
3. During lunchtime, a new student sits alone at a table looking sad and lonely.
4. A classmate is being bullied by a group of students in the hallway.
5. A classmate is struggling with a difficult assignment and feeling frustrated.
6. A student accidentally drops their books in the hallway, causing papers to scatter everywhere.
7. A student is feeling left out and excluded from a group of friends during recess.



Torah Sources:

Taanit 29a

The Mishna teaches that from when the month of Av begins, one decreases acts of rejoicing. Rav Yehuda, son of Rav Shmuel bar Sheilat, said in the name of Rav: Just as when Av begins one decreases rejoicing, so too when the month of Adar begins, one increases rejoicing.

מְשֻׁנְנִים אֶב מִמַּעֲטִין בְּשִׂמְחָה
וְכוּ'. אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה בְּרִיה דְּרַב
שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר שִׁילַת מְשַׁמֵּי דְרַב:
כְּשֶׁם שְׂמֻשְׁנִים אֶב מִמַּעֲטִין
בְּשִׂמְחָה - כֵּן מְשֻׁנְנִים אֶדָר
מְרַבִּין בְּשִׂמְחָה

Taanit 21a

The Gemara inquires: And why did they call him Naḥum of Gam Zu? The reason is that with regard to any matter that occurred to him, he would say: This too is for the good [gam zu letova]. Once, the Jews wished to send a gift [doron] to the house of the emperor. They said: Who should go and present this gift? Let Naḥum of Gam Zu go, as he is accustomed to miracles. They sent with him a chest [sifta] full of jewels and pearls, and he went and spent the night in a certain inn. During the night, these residents of the inn arose and took all of the precious jewels and pearls from the chest, and filled it with earth. The next day, when he saw what had happened, Naḥum of Gam Zu said: This too is for the good.

וְאָמַי קָרוּ לִיה נַחֻם אִישׁ גַּם זֶה
– דְּכָל מִלְתָּא דְהוּה סְלֵקָא לִיה,
אָמַר: גַּם זֶה לְטוֹבָה. זִמְנָא חֲדָא
בְּעוּ לְשַׁדְוֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל דּוֹרוֹן לְבִי
קִיסָר, אָמְרוּ: מֵאֵן יִזְיֵל – יִזְיֵל
נַחֻם אִישׁ גַּם זֶה, דְּמְלוּמַד בְּנִיסִין
הוּא. שְׁדַרוּ בִידֵיה מְלָא סִיפְטָא
דְּאַבְנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמְרַגְלִיּוֹת. אַזְל,
בְּתַ(ט בְּהוּא דִירָא. בְּלִילִיא קָמוּ
הֲנָךְ דִּירָאִי וְשִׁקְלִינְהוּ לְסִיפְטִיה
וּמְלוֹנְהוּ עֶפְרָא

Week 2: We Must Remember



Close your eyes, and try to imagine your front door. When you look at it closely you'll see that someone threw an egg at it! You're a little surprised but you open your door, take off your shoes and see right near your moms slippers is a pile of flour. You walk into the family room and see something dripping from the ceiling onto your coffee table, when you look closely you see its oil! Gross. You turn around and try to head to your room but you slip on something white, you feel the need to taste it and you realize you have sugar on your floor!

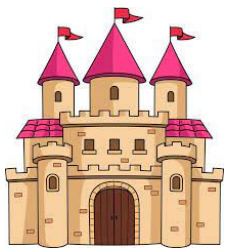
Enough is enough - you look for your mom and find her in the kitchen. She turns to you and asks if you want pancakes - can you repeat the recipe?

(egg, flour, oil, sugar)

In the past, people were very reliant on their memory, remembering numbers, dates, people's names, but as time progressed and technology took over, we had less need to remember things ourselves. The tricks they used in the past to better remember have been forgotten.



Think about why it was important to write down the mishna into one written text.



The Memory Palace: This is a technique used to improve memory. It involves mentally placing information to be remembered in specific locations within an imagined physical space, such as a palace or building, and then mentally “walking” through that space to retrieve the information when needed.

Memory palaces help speed recall, and simple words or phrases can represent bigger concepts or a lot of information. For example, you may associate “blue” with your blue bedding, which helps you remember the phrase, “In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue.”

The Memory Palace : Can You Do It?



Shabbat Zachor: In the Torah the word ‘Zachor’, meaning remember, comes up many times. We are told to remember Shabbat, leaving Egypt, Amalek. The Gemara implies that the importance of remembering what Amalek did to us, even so many years after this event occurred, is meant to teach us to identify the Amalek of each generation. Look at the evil people in each generation and recognize that they too are Amalek. Shmuel and Shaul fought Amalek and their king, Agag, and we read this in the Haftara of Shabbat Zachor. Later in history, Esther and Mordechai had to face Haman, descendent of Agag, who wanted to destroy the Jewish people.



In addition, when the entire Jewish people share these joint memories of what happened to us as a nation, it connects us, and binds us together.

Rabbi Sacks says the following:

“Our identity is bound up to those who came before us, whose story we make our own. To be a Jew is to be a link in the chain of the generations, a character in a drama that began long before we were born and will continue long after our life. Memory is to know that the history of our people lives on in us.”

The memories ensure that we don’t forget our past. Being commanded to remember collectively binds us to Am Yisrael both in the past and in the future.



Discussion Points:

- How do you usually remember important things?
- Do you think it’s important to remember things if we can find them easily on the internet?
- As Jews, we find it very important to remember our past. What are some examples of how we implement this?



1. Memorize This:

Split the Chanichim into pairs, divide them each into A or B. Hand A a piece of paper with many numbers, have them read it out to B and see how many numbers they can remember, then have them swap. After the Chanichim switch,

tell them to try and bunch the numbers together to give them more of a meaning, and see how many they can remember now.

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2. Spot The Difference:

In pairs, have one Chanich turn around while the other makes a small change in their appearance, have the Chanich try and see what the change was. Then have them switch.

3. I'm Going To Israel And I'm Bringing:

Have the Chanichim sit in a circle, each Chanich needs to say on their turn "I'm going to Israel and I'm bringing...", they then say what they want to bring. The Chanich after them must say first what all those who preceded him/ her said and then a new thing.

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