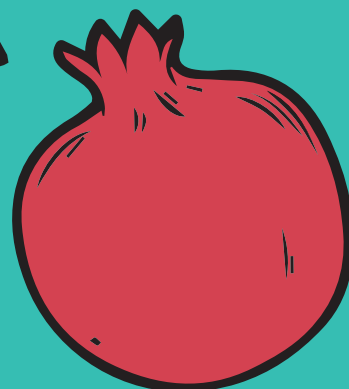
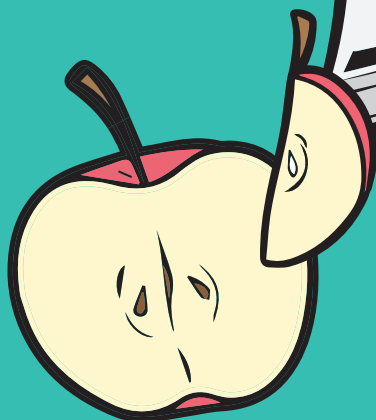
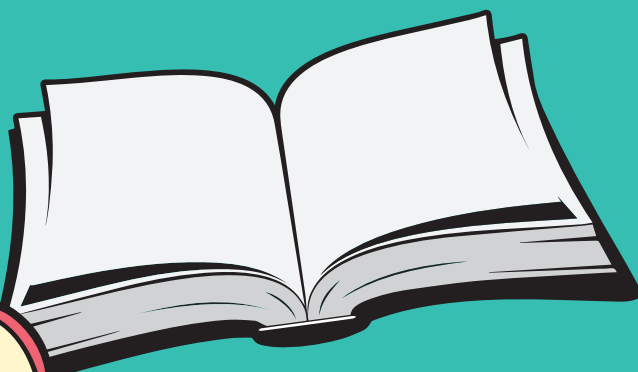




BNEI AKIVA
OF THE US & CANADA



SNIF

CHOVERET

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Dear Madrichim,

This month we are celebrating the Chagim (Holidays) of Tishrey – all those special occasions we know and love! In Hebrew we call the calendar year **מַעְגַּל הַשָּׁנָה** – the yearly cycle, thanks to its repeating nature. However, it is not so much a circle as an upward spiral. We return to the same point every year, but from a different perspective. In this choveret we will explore some ideas surrounding the Chagim and learn more about them. Hopefully, we will find ways to enhance the way our chanichim experience the Chagim this year, and help them connect to them on a deeper level. The ideas in this choveret are for you to use and adapt how you see fit, in a way that will best fit your snif.

Good luck and Shana Tova!

Batsheva



ROSH HASHANA

Rosh Hashana symbolizes the beginning of a new year. Rosh Hashana is different in many ways to how other cultures celebrate their New Year. One could say that this holiday teaches us how Judaism approaches beginnings. The lessons we learn from Rosh Hashana are relevant to any new beginnings in our life – be it the new year, the beginning of the school year, or even the first week of snif. So let's dive into some of the message of Rosh Hashana.

Shofar – Our Divine Alarm Clock

The main mitzvah we observe on Rosh Hashana is blowing the Shofar, we all gather in Shul to hear it being blown 100 times. But did you ever stop and think why? What does the Shofar symbolize? What does the sound mean?



In Hilchot Teshuva the Rambam writes that the Shofar blowing is **גזירת הכתוב** – a Torah decree that we don't fully understand. However, he says it alludes to something – it is as if the Shofar is trying to say to us **“עורו ישנים משנתכם ונרדמים הקיצו מתרדמתכם ונפשו במעשיכם וזכרו בתשובה וזכרו בוראכם”** – “Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent, remember your Creator.”

In this sense, the Shofar is a lot like our alarm clock – set once a year to wake us up, and to remind us of all the things we should be doing. But why must we be woken up? What is causing our slumber? The Rambam explains that we spend the year in what he calls **“הבלי הזמן”** – “The vanities of time” – otherwise known as our routine. Sometimes we get lost in that daily routine and need to be woken up and reminded of our goals. For that purpose, we have an alarm clock.

Extra Material for Madrichim:

Discussion Points:

- How do we feel about our alarm clock in the morning?
- Is it easy for us to wake up? How often do we press the snooze button?
- What is the purpose of the alarm?
- What do we think the Shofar alarm is reminding us about?

Ideas for Activities:

- **Musical Chairs** (can be played on Shabbat by a madrich/a singing or clapping hands) – In this game when we hear the music, it is time to get up and take action – much like our alarm clock or the sound of the Shofar.
- **Tekiah/Shevarim/Teruah (Coke/Pepsi)** – The Chanichim will be divided into pairs. They will then line up in two lines – with a member of each pair standing in each line. One line will be called “Tekiah” and one will be called “Teruah” (after the sounds of the Shofar). When the madrich/a calls “Tekiah” all the chanichim will run to the Tekiah line and link hands with their partner. When the madrich/a calls “Teruah” they must run to the Teruah side and link hands. When the madrich/a calls “Shevarim” – they must run to the center and stand back to back. When the madrich/a yells “Shofar” everyone must freeze in their spot. Groups will be eliminated if they do the wrong action, or if they are the last to do the correct action.
- **The Shofar Blows (The Wind Blows)** – The Shofar is waking us up to our goals! The chanichim will all sit in a circle, except for one who stands in the center. That chanich/a will think of a goal they have for the upcoming year. They will then say “The Shofar blows to anyone who...” and states what goal they have (examples: “wants to do better in math this year”, “wants to be nicer to their siblings”, etc). Anyone who shares this goal must stand up and quickly change seats. The chanich/a in the middle will try and catch one of the now empty seats. The chanich/a who is left in the middle has to now “blow the Shofar” with one of their goals.

Bonus for Older Groups: The Shofar reminds us of our goals. This is why the beginning of the year is a great time to set new goals. When thinking about what we want to achieve it is important that our goals be SMART:

- **Specific** – If a goal is too general, it will be harder to achieve or even to work towards. For example, instead of saying “my goal is to be a good person”– try and think what makes someone a good person – and set that as your goal.
- **Measurable** – A goal needs to be something we can track and monitor. So instead of saying “I want to do better in school this year” – set a goal for your average grade, or maybe focus on your attendance – something you can easily measure and keep track of.
- **Attainable** – It’s good to reach for the stars, but make sure that the goal we are



setting is something we can achieve in the near future. Keep your eyes on the stars, but set your first goal as building the spaceship that can get you there – that way you won't give up!

- **Relevant** – Make sure that the goals you set are relevant for your life. Think about the areas in your life you want to move forward in – school, family, friends, snif, and think then about what your goals are in each space.
- **Time bound** – To make sure that we are constantly moving towards our goal, we need to set it for a certain and specific time. The time should be not too short (only so much you can do in a day), and not too long (or you may get lost) – Try and think about the next month – what do you hope to achieve in this time.

Teach this model to your chanichim – you can prepare explanation cards or papers. Then have your chanichim discuss their goals in pairs or groups. How do they make sure their goals are SMART?

Simanim

Another Jewish tradition on Rosh Hashana is to eat special foods that symbolize the brachot we wish for in the New Year. We eat apples dipped in honey so that our year will be sweet, a fish head so that we will be as the head and not the tail, and more.



Activity Ideas:

- **Funky Rosh Hashana Seder** – Bring a bunch of snacks to Snif (or ask the chanichim to each bring a snack). Each chanich/a will get one of the snacks and have to think of a blessing to go along with it. The punnier the bracha, the better!
- **Simanim Grab Bag** – Fill a bag with a bunch of objects (if on Shabbat – make sure that they aren't muktzeh!). Each chanich/a will need to close their eyes and grab something out of the bag. They then need to think about a bracha for the new year that connects to that object.

YOM KIPPUR

Yom Kippur is the holiest day in the Jewish year – a day that we spend in prayer and focusing on our relationship with Hashem. Reflecting on our actions in the previous year, and looking towards the future. Yom Kippur may be one day of the year, but it teaches us a lot about how we should frame our entire year. It shifts our focus and helps push us to be the best version of ourselves. These ideas – while central to Yom Kippur, are important reminders for how we should be living in our everyday lives – both in our relationship with Hashem, and in our relationships with each other.

Apologies and Forgiveness

A central theme of Yom Kippur is asking for forgiveness – both from Hashem and from people we have hurt. Let's take this opportunity to explore the correct way to say we are sorry. Robert Gordon, a psychologist, presented a three part model for a healthy and sincere apology:



- **Acknowledgement:** Understanding and admitting what you did wrong and how it affected others.
- **Remorse and Empathy:** Regretting your actions and sympathizing with those you hurt.
- **Restitution:** Making things right – either by taking action to repair the damage or by acknowledging that you will not be repeating the offense.

Amazingly, this is similar to the model the Rambam gave us for Teshuva (although in a slightly different order). Teshuva is different because we are not asking forgiveness from another person we hurt, but rather are working to repair our relationship with Hashem. The Rambam's gives the following model for Teshuva:

- **Abandoning the Sin:** Before we can actually ask for forgiveness, we must remove ourselves from the sin we are asking forgiveness for, and committing to do better in the future. This can be compared to Gordon's restitution stage.
- **Regret:** We must feel remorse for our actions, much like in Gordon's form of apology.
- **Viduy:** A verbal confession of what we did wrong. We must acknowledge our actions and take responsibility for them.

Extra Material for Madrichim: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pwl5PExezeg&t=2s>

Discussion Points:

- What makes a good apology?
- Can you think of a time when you apologized to someone? What was the experience like?
- Can you think of a time when someone apologized to you? Were you able to forgive them? Why?
- In what ways is asking forgiveness from a person the same or different from Teshuva and Viduy?

Sorry Dos and Don'ts

It's important when apologizing to make sure we say the right things. Here is a list of sorry dos and don'ts based on Dr. Harriet Lerner's research on apologies:



Do:

- Own your behavior
- Back your apology with corrective action
- Avoid repeating the offense

Don't:

- Include the word "but" (ex - "I'm sorry, but...") - this automatically cancels out the apology
- Focus on the other person's response (ex - "I'm sorry you felt hurt...")
- Get caught up on who started it

Ideas for Activities:

- **Apologies Scenarios:** Write up different scenarios and apologies (sincere and not sincere), ask the chanichim to act them out (or have the madrichim put them on as a skit). Vote thumbs up or thumbs down on each apology. Discuss why it was a good/bad apology.
- **Build an Apology:** Divide the chanichim into groups. Hand the groups cards with pieces of an apology on it (Ex - I'm sorry, I was wrong, [I'm sorry] you felt hurt, you have to understand..., but..., it wasn't my fault, etc). Each group should use the cards to write the ideal apology. Have the groups present their apologies and compare them.
- **"Look Up, Look Down":** When apologizing it's important to look the other person in the eye so they can see how sorry you are. In this game we will practice that. The chanichim will stand in a circle. When the madrich/a calls "look down" - everyone

must look at their shoes. When the madrich/a calls “look up” – all the chanichim must look up at someone else in the circle. If two chanichim make eye contact they must yell “SORRY!” and exit the circle. Keep playing until the last pair “apologize”.

SUKKOT

Zman Simchateinu – The Holiday of Happiness

On Sukkot we have the special mitzvah:

שְׂמַחַת בְּחֻגְךָ אַתָּה וּבְנֶךָ וּבִתְךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְהַלְוִי וְהַגֵּר וְהִתּוֹם וְהָאֲלֻמָּנָה אֲשֶׁר-
(בְּשִׁעְרֶיךָ: ... וְהִיִּית אִךְ שְׂמַחַת: (דְּבָרִים, טז, יד-טו)

“You shall rejoice in your festival, with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the [family of the] Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in your communities... and you shall have nothing but joy.”



Although this may seem like an easy mitzvah, it is actually anything but easy. In fact, it is said in the name of the Vilna Gaon, that this is the most difficult mitzvah in the Torah. For how can one be happy for 8 days straight?

And if you think about it, perhaps this is easier said than done. Yes, the holidays are supposed to be happy, but can we really say that during the holidays we have “nothing but joy”?

In order to fulfill this mitzvah on a deeper level, we need to explore what it means to be happy. A lot of research has been done on this in the last few years. Here are some of the things that were found:

- People who have strong friendships / communities are happier.
- In order to be happy, let yourself be sad – do not push away negative thoughts, rather give them the correct space and acknowledge them – that will allow you to create space for happiness as well.
- Be productive – go for a run, spend some time on a hobby, or get your homework done. All these things lead to feeling happy.
- Laugh – as they say, laughter is the best medicine. People who laugh more, are generally happier.
- Live a meaningful life – those who found greater meaning in how they live their lives were found to be happier.
- Be grateful for what you have. Counting your blessings has been proven to be a way to increase happiness. Acknowledging them and saying “thank you” increased happiness even more.
- Doing something for others. Research has found that making other people happy or doing something to help them, makes us happier in turn.

Extra Material for Madrichim: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHv6vTKD6lg>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcfmHoUiNnw&t=5s>

Discussion Points

- Is it possible to feel “only joy”? Is this a goal of ours?
- Why do we think Sukkot is a time when we should focus on happiness?
- Do you agree with the Vilna Gaon that this is a difficult mitzvah?
- What things make you happy? What can you do to be happier?

Activity Ideas

- **Don't show your teeth:** This game is all about getting us laughing. You win the game by not showing your teeth. The madrich/a gives a category (ex – fruits, sports teams, excuses for not doing your homework, etc). The chanichim must go around in a circle and list something that fits in the category – all without showing your teeth. If you fail to name something, or show your teeth (often because you are laughing), you are out!
- **Laugh off:** the madrichim will take turns telling jokes. The chanichim will rate them using a laugh-o-meter (like a cheer off, but with laughing). See who can tell the funniest joke!
- **Grateful A-Z:** Go around the circle, each chanich/a must list something they are grateful for, starting with the next letter of the alphabet. Want an extra challenge? Try doing it in Hebrew!
- **Make somebody's day!** Each chanich/a will get the name of another chanich/a in the snif. They will need to think of a way to make them happy some time during the next week / at the next peula.

Sukkot Bonus – Sukkah Hopping Ideas!

We all love Sukkah hopping! Here are some ideas you can do on your Sukkah Hopping --journey:

- **Sukkah Hopping Bingo** – create a bingo board with things you might see / happen in a Sukkah (a paper chain, potato chips, the host shares a D'var Torah, etc). Play bingo as you go from Sukkah to Sukkah. If you are hopping on Chag/ Shabbat – you can make a Chag/Shabbat friendly version by making holes in the board in advance, and using paperclips to mark off the bingo boxes.
- **Wheel of Four-Minim** – Create a wheel with the four minim on it. At every Sukkah have someone spin the wheel. Have them do an activity based on what they landed on:



- o Lulav – Stand tall like a lulav and give a speech.
- o Etrog – The Etrog has both smell and taste, let's test your senses with a blind food taste test. (Bring some food with you, and don't forget to ask about allergies!)
- o Hadasing! Choose a song for us to sing together!
- o Aravot – the aravot have no flavor or smell. One could say they have no voice. Do a round of pantomime! (Madrachim will prepare cards in advance)
- **Sukkah Story Time** – Ask your first host to give you the first line of a story. Ask your next host to continue the story. At each Sukkah collect the next part of the story. See where the Sukkah hopping adventure takes you!

“ACHAREY HACHAGIM” – TIME FOR ROUTINE

Now that the Chagim are behind us, it's time to “start” daily life again. This may be difficult for some of us, how do we go from the highlight of the Chagim to our daily life. This is a good chance to reexamine routine, and ask ourselves – is it as bad as we think it is?



A lot of research has been done in the last few years on the power of routine, and it seems that routines and habits actually help us in many ways:

- **Habits are efficient:** when we get used to certain habits or rituals, it becomes easier to do our daily activities. It doesn't require much thinking to walk to school, make a cup of coffee, or get dressed in the morning, because we have built a routine. This gives us more time and mental energy to spend on the important things.
- **Routines make us efficient:** Not only do the daily habits help us save time, but the routines allow us to work towards our goals. Think how much harder it would be to accomplish things we want to, without having a structure.

However, as we saw when discussing the Shofar, routines can also be challenging. It is easy to get lost in a routine, and forget what we are working towards. So while the Chagim represent our goals, and help us focus on where we want to go in life, the routine allows us to actually get there. It is important when entering our routine to carry the Chagim with us, and give ourselves tools to “keep our eyes on the prize”! Here are some ways the researchers suggest we keep ourselves focused on our goals:

- **To Do lists** – keep track of what you want to accomplish, and the steps you need to take to get there. Check off your successes as you go!
- **Build your routines around your goals** – if your goal is to better in school, make sure you have time in your routine for studying. Want to run a marathon – schedule regular training times. Remember that the routine is there to help us reach our goals.
- **Leave time for reflection** – make sure you are doing regular check-ins and making sure that you are on the right track.
- **Schedule breaks in your routine** – if you are the kind of person who needs to change it up, that's ok! Make sure you are doing something a week that will break your routine. This will allow you to explore and be adventures, while still holding onto the important structure that allows us to move forward.



Extra Material for Madrichim: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8PTQNDfdnU>

Discussion Points:

- How do we feel now that the Chagim are over?
- How do we usually feel about routine? Do we have positive or negative connotations with our routine?
- What can we do to carry the message of the Chagim into the rest of the year?
- What is one thing you are looking forward to in your daily life?

Activity Ideas:

- **The Routine Machine:** The chanichim will stand in a circle. Tell them that they are now part of the Routine Machine and need to act as such. The first chanich/a must do an action of their choice while making some kind of noise (ex - jump while clapping their hands once, spin on the spot while laughing, raising their hands while yelling hooray!). The next chanich/a must repeat this action+noise, and then add their own action+noise combination. The following chanich/a must do the action+noise of both chanichim and then add their own. Continue through the circle. Let's see how long the machine can go without breaking the routine!
- **Daily Relay Race:** Create a relay race built after a daily routine (start sitting down and they need to wake up, run to a sweater and put it on to represent getting dressed, do the floss dance to represent brushing teeth, etc). Have two teams compete to finish their daily race as quickly as possible.
- **What are you doing?** The chanichim stand in a circle. One chanich/a starts miming an action (ex - brushing their teeth). The chanich/a next to them asks them "Hey! What are you doing". The chanich/a will respond with any action other than the one they are doing (ex - "I'm playing basketball!"). The second chanich/a will now start miming that action. The next chanich/a will then ask "Hey! What are you doing?" Continue until someone gets confused.