

WHERE HEAVEN and EARTH TOUCH: Volume I
 INTRODUCTION to The Video

To The Teacher or Facilitator:

- This video is an educational toolkit from which to select segments. It is not a video to ‘show’. Its greatest impact will be realized when it is used as a springboard to discussion and action.
- Some episodes are suitable for children; others are more suitable for an adult audience. Be certain to prescreen each segment **in its entirety** before using it.
- The Introduction is must viewing for anyone using a segment of the video. It will help you introduce the concept of Mitzvah hero/teacher to your particular audience.

Some important concepts:

- Traditionally, people visiting Israel are regarded as Tzedakah *shlichim*, messengers for the rest of us. Their role was believed to ensure their safety. Whether you believe that or not, their role gives us the opportunity to extend our hand to Israel.
Think about how you can bring that tradition into your class or group. How can you symbolically travel with congregants going to Israel? If your congregation or community is planning a trip to Israel, speak to the planners. See if you can arrange for someone in the group to carry donations from your class or group to one of these featured Mitzvah heroes and then report back to your class (videos or pictures would add a sense of reality to the relationship).
- Doing Mitzvot is a ‘have to’. The concepts of philanthropy and charity are built on roots dealing with love and caring; they are options, based on human emotion. Mitzvot are actions that are built on the root meaning ‘command’. However you understand that idea, Mitzvot are sacred obligations, not options.
- ‘What’s in us that’s in them?’ – *The only difference between each of us and each of the people you will ‘meet’ in the video is that the latter have already found their Mitzvah. The rest of us are still searching.*
- Danny Siegel, quoting John Holt, the educator, said:
“Charismatic leaders make us think, ‘Oh, if only I could do that, be like that.’ True leaders make us think, ‘If they can do that, then ... I can too.’”
Mitzvah heroes are teachers. We can learn from their example – not to be like them, but to be a better us.
Analyze what each Mitzvah hero can teach us about living in our world and find examples of how we might apply their individual lesson. One didn’t overlook quiet suffering; several built on their own pain; one literally heard a cry. What can we learn from each teacher and what might we DO?
- There is no such concept as a ‘small Mitzvah’.
No Mitzvah is ‘small’ to the person it helps! One meal, one pair of new socks, one caring hand – all matter. Help your students to appreciate the power of one and their power as one.
- The definition of a person is based on what he or she DOES.
We each write the story of our own lives by the acts we perform. You can help your class to write its story as well, by verbal and visual reports of their collective Mitzvah work. Consider issuing a class monthly statement and an annual report as a summary and a teaching tool for others!

ISRAEL NATIONAL THERAPEUTIC RIDING CENTER

INTRA

<http://intra.org.il/>

**** ALERT!**

At 10+ minutes into the video Anita speaks of her son who was mortally wounded in action in Lebanon. She talks of him later when she discusses how she turned her grief into action to help others.

If using this segment with children, watch carefully and determine a point at which you will end the viewing.

Mitzvah Hero: Anita and Giora Shkedi

Curriculum Connections: modern Israeli history, geography

Mitzvah/Midah Connections:

V'ahavata L'rayecha Kamocha – loving one's neighbor as oneself

Adam Yachid – the unique value of a single human being

Chesed, Rachamin – compassion

Pikuach Nefesh – saving a life

Kevod Habriot – the dignity of human beings

Ahavat Zion – love for Israel, the nation and its people

IN YOUR CLASSROOM:

- 'Visit' INTRA via their website prior to watching the video segment.
- You might prepare for the visit by locating INTRA on the map.
- The video can be made more meaningful by distributing questions:

Before viewing -

What does Anita say about her motivation?

What are the values that are mentioned and evidenced that make INTRA a success? How can we apply those same values in our lives?

After viewing -

Pre-Bar/Bat Mitzvah students, thinking about mitzvah projects, might consider Anita's comment that her 'hobby was the way (she) could do things.' Do the students have interests that might enable them to 'do things'?

- The beautiful vistas you will see behind the video action are, of course, of the Mediterranean. This might be a good opportunity to learn the blessing said when one sees the 'Great Sea'!
- On the website you can find a list of INTRA's current needs. Class members might determine which need they can fulfill. Remember that the care of a horse for a year can be divided into days and a year of therapeutic sessions into hours, so that students can afford and understand their donation.

CLARA HAMMER:
'The Chicken Lady of Jerusalem'

Curriculum Connections: Shabbat, holiday celebrations

Mitzvah/Midah Connections:

- Lo Ta'amod al Dam Re'echa* - Not standing idly by the suffering of your neighbor
- V'ahavata L'rayecha Kamocha* - Loving your neighbor as yourself
- Ha'achalat Re'ayvim* - Feeding the Hungry
- Kevod Habriot* – the dignity of human beings

IN YOUR CLASSROOM:

- **Learn the 'chicken dance'.** Your students will never forget it!
- Create a chicken-themed bulletin board to teach everyone who sees it what you are doing to support Clara Hammer.
Be sure to include some feathers (they need not be real!).
- **Role Play:**
Act out Clara's story and offer alternative endings (or have students create them). How many people would have just ignored the little girl with the bag of bones and fat? How many would have felt sorry for her but done nothing? Imagine what went on in the heads of others who saw that child. Why did others not act like Clara did?
- **For discussion:**
The envelopes bearing Clara's checks say '*chodesh tov*,' 'Have a good month'. What difference does that make?
*This discussion might lead to an examination of the Rambam's Ladder of Tzedakah and the importance of **how** we do what we do.*

Clara says that she operates the way she does so that 'people shouldn't feel pitied'.

Why isn't it enough to get the chicken? What values come into play in this situation? If you've studied the Rambam's ladder, find Clara on that ladder.

Clara reminds us that a 'good name is better than good oil' (Ecc.7:1) What is the value of a good name and how do we make one for ourselves?

Doing a unit on Hebrew names, with an emphasis on each student's name and how/where we can find it in Jewish tradition, can help students to develop pride in their Hebrew names and in themselves.

Consider a unit on nicknames. Clara Hammer has earned a wonderful nickname: 'The Chicken Lady'. How can students earn a nickname that tells something important about them? Perhaps they can give their class a nickname that teaches others what is important to them as a group.

A PACKAGE FROM HOME

www.apackagefromhome.org

Mitzvah hero: Barbara Bloom Silverman

Curriculum Connections: modern Israeli history, *Yom Ha'atzmaut*

Mitzvah/Midah Connections:

V'ahavata L'rayecha Kamocha – loving one's neighbor as oneself

Adam Yachid – the unique value of a single human being

Chesed, Rachamin – compassion

Pikuach Nefesh – saving a life

Ahavat Zion – love for Israel, the nation and its people

IN YOUR CLASSROOM:

- Plan a class 'visit' to A Package from Home via their website.
Assign small groups of students one aspect of the information and then have them teach one another about their area of research
- Learn about the IDF – the Israel Defense Force - and the role of the Army in Israeli society.
Discuss the ramifications for young people and for their families.
- Compare and contrast the IDF with the American Army in terms of who serves and for how long.
- Reach out in your community and through the Israeli Embassy to find a veteran of the IDF who can visit your class and share their experiences.
Be certain to share your goals for the experience with the person.
- Collect items that can be distributed in the packages and ask congregants or community members that are visiting Israel to be the class *schlichim*, mitzvah messengers.
- Raise funds for A Package from Home to purchase needed items in Israel.
Consider adopting a unit or providing a specific celebration (for Purim or Chanukah). The website can give you information about current projects and needs.
- Write letters to be included in the packages. Letters of gratitude from recipients of parcels often speak of the morale boost caused by reading the letters that are included within each package.
It's also a wonderful opportunity for students to learn and use some Hebrew vocabulary.

THE AMUTA: Girlfriends of the IDF (Israel Defense Forces)

**** ALERT!**

This segment is particularly emotional and is likely to be very upsetting to a Hebrew school-age audience. It is perfect for a young adult/adult audience (post B.M., High School Youth Group, Young Professionals).

Mitzvah hero: Phyllis Heimowitz and Tamar Heimowitz-Richter

Mitzvah/Midah Connection:

Nihum Avelim - Comforting mourners

Ahavat Zion – Love of Israel

IN YOUR CLASSROOM:

- Understanding the place of the Army in Israeli society.
Ask someone to speak to your group about the IDF and what it means to be an Israeli citizen.
- What to say to someone who is grieving.
Help your congregants or group to serve others by asking the rabbi, or other appropriate professional, to speak with them about how best to be a source of solace to someone who has suffered a loss.
- ‘Growing’ a personal experience into a communal venture.
Phyllis Heimowitz and her daughter Tamar used their personal experience to serve the needs of others. Help others to see how they can do the same in numerous, perhaps less dramatic, ways. A knitter can begin a group that knits hats for children in need; a baker can share his or her skill with the guests at a local soup kitchen, etc.
- Raise funds to support a group of girlfriends.
Unfortunately the need for support groups continues to grow. We can share our concern by helping to sponsor a girlfriend through the group experience.

THE RABBANIT BRACHA KAPACH

Mitzvah/Midah Connection:

Tzelem Elohim - Believing that everyone is created in the image of God
Lo Ta'amod al Dam Re'echa - Not standing idly by the suffering of your neighbor
Talmud Torah - The study of Torah
Hachnasat kallah - Celebrating with bride and groom
V'ahavta L'rayecha Kamocha - Loving your neighbor as yourself
Ma'ot Chitim – providing Pesach foods to poor people
Hiddur Pnai Zaken – respect for elders
Gemilut Chasadim – helping those in need
Tzedakah – acts of righteousness
Halbashat Arumin – clothing the needy
Ahavat haShem – loving God

IN YOUR CLASSROOM:

- Provide students with a list of Mitzvot prior to viewing the segment. Ask students to categorize the Rabbanit's actions according to Mitzvah.
- Provide students a list of the Rabbanit's activities highlighted in the video segment. Ask students to name the Mitzvah each action represents.
- After watching the video, summarize the Rabbanit's philosophy by writing a 'prescription for life' according to the Rabbanit.
- The Rabbanit says that doing Mitzvahs is like a magnet - 'You can't pull away from it'. Create a Rabbanit-inspired bulletin board with students completing the phrase 'Doing Mitzvahs is like _____ because _____' using words or illustrations.
- To Discuss:
 - Someone whom the Rabbanit helped asked 'Who sent you?' How would the Rabbanit respond?
 - The Rabbanit said of someone she helped, 'I was happier than she was.' How could that be? Ask students to answer as they think the Rabbanit would.
- Research The Israel Prize. Determine what values were being awarded by the selection of the Prize winners.
- The Rabbanit said that at the end of the day she asks herself 'What have I done today?' Ask students to get into the habit of keeping a journal of the acts they have performed about which they are proud and/or would want others to know. In Jewish tradition doing so is NOT considered bragging; instead, sharing one's mitzvah-life is seen as a way of teaching others.

HAMA: Humans and Animals in Mutual Assistance
<http://www.hama-israel.org.il/>

Mitzvah hero: **Avshalom Beni**

**** Alert!**

This segment is one towards which students would naturally gravitate because of the use of animals. The concept, application and narrative, however, are far more sophisticated than the visuals of dogs and cats. Furthermore, Avshalom Beni, the two-legged master behind HAMA, touches on issues that could be part of the lives of students watching the video (family violence, etc.), which could lead to unintended outcomes of viewing the video. The mention of the previous abuse of the animals that HAMA employs in its programs might also be upsetting to children.

Careful previewing, along with notation of which segments to use in class, is advised. The tape might also be muted at some points, with the teacher providing the narration.

Curriculum Connection: *parashat Noach*, the Creation

Mitzvah/Midah Connection

Ahavat Habriot - Loving God's creatures

Chesed, Rachamim – compassion, caring

Pikuach Nefesh – saving a life

Tsa'ar Ba'alei Chayyim – prohibition of cruelty to animals

What your class can do:

- 'Adopt' a HAMA animal for a period of time, providing the cost of its food and/or veterinary care.
- Provide a piece of equipment (grooming, toy, lead) for an animal.

BAYIT CHAM: Healing the Broken Spirit

Mitzvah hero: **Shmuel Munk and Yoram Mordechai**

**** Alert!**

Students must be old enough to understand that illness can be invisible and non-physical in order to understand the magic of Bayit Cham.

You might brainstorm the types of illnesses that students are aware of and how each is treated. Chart the results on the blackboard.

Depending upon responses, you might have to add mental illness to the class list. It is important for students to know that therapists and medication are not reserved for the physically ill!

Mitzvah/Midah Connections:

Tzelem Elohim - we are all created in the image of God

Lo Titeyn Michshol – not putting a stumbling block before the blind

V'ahavata L'rayecha Kamocha – loving one's neighbor as oneself

Lo Ta'amod al Dam Re'echa - not standing idly by the suffering of your neighbor

Adam Yachid – the unique value of a single human being

Chesed, Rachamin – compassion

Kevod Habriot – the dignity of human beings

Pikuach Nefesh – saving a life

IN YOUR CLASSROOM:

- Shmuel Munk describes how he determines what sort of placement might work for an individual. He says that he takes the person for a walk in order to see to what the person is drawn.
Provide the class with a list of mitzvot/middot and ask how Bayit Cham demonstrates each one. Students might be given one in advance of watching the video and then take notes of when and how they see that value being practiced.
- Shmuel teaches that you have to have your eyes wide open to learn about someone.
Why is it sometimes difficult to keep your eyes wide open? What causes us to close our eyes to a situation?
- The Silversmith in the video says: 'He (Shmuel) gave me back what I lost.'
What had the man lost? And, how did Shmuel 'return' that to him?



THE DIPLOMAT HOTEL: Hotel Becomes Home

Mitzvah hero: Alice Jonah

Curriculum Connections: modern Israeli history, Jewish ethnicities, immigration, *Yom Ha'atzmaut*

Mitzvah/Midah connections:

Kol Yisrael Areivim zeh Bazeh - All Israel is responsible for one another

Hiddur P'nai Zaken - respect for the elderly

Hachnasat Orchim – hospitality, welcoming

Ahavat Zion – love of Israel

Kavod – dignity

IN YOUR CLASSROOM:

- Use of this segment can be connected to sharing real-life immigration stories by members of your community.
- The residents of the Diplomat Hotel live in two worlds – the world of their original homeland, The Former Soviet Union, and the world of the Promised Land. After viewing the video, students might list those aspects of the residents' lives that are reminiscent of their life 'at home' and those that represent their new lives in Israel.
- Your class might do a fund raiser to support some activity that was shown or mentioned in the video. Like the residents of the Diplomat Hotel, class members might make items that they sell at a congregation-wide event.
- You can purchase a CD of chorus members singing a repertoire of Russian and Hebrew music. Contact Alice Jonah at aleph1@bezeqint.net. Students might learn some in music class or the CD can accompany them as they work on their fund-raising project.
- Have a Jewish food festival, featuring foods of the Jewish communities of the Former Soviet Union, with volunteer chefs preparing the dishes.