

Tisha B'av, תשעה באב,

the summer holy day commemorating Destruction and Renewal, challenges us as educators, Jews and human beings every year. We hope these resources can aid you in your personal and communal observance of this day. Especially this summer, reflecting on this *chag* and current events, we are faced with its relevance. Conflict and injustice surround us. We must continue to learn, hope, and find ways to join as a Jewish people and as humankind to combat these recurring tragedies in search for peace and equality.

Alu v'hagshemu,

The Mazkirut Artzit



"Eicha" by Shoshannah Brombacher



Fasting by The Prophet Isaiah (taken from The Shalom Center)

What is the point of fasting? Can it make a difference?

The Prophet Isaiah (chapter 58) taught what truly fasting really means. Many years later, the ancient Rabbis thought his teaching so important they made it a major reading on the holiest day if the year -- Yom Kippur (a fast day). Said Isaiah, striding into a crowd of ancient Israelites who thought they were fasting on Yom Kippur as the Torah taught:

*Look! You fast in strife and contention.
You strike with a wicked fist.*

*You are not fasting today in such a way
As to make your voices heard on high.*

*Is that the kind of fast that I desire?
Is that really a day for people to "press down their egos"?*

*Am I commanding you to droop your heads like bulrushes
And lie around in sackcloth and ashes?*

*Is that what you call a fast day,
The kind of day that the God of the Burning Bush would wish?*

No!

*Eicha! Alas! How lonely sits the city,
Once full of joy and bustle,
Now filled with fear and sorrow.
Eicha! Alas! Bitterly she weeps in the night,
There is none to comfort her,
She is utterly disconsolate.*

-Lamentations (1:1-2)

In this resource:

- Eicha!
- Fasting taught by Isaiah
- "Your Golden Hair, Margeret" by Anselm Kieffer
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- A Tisha B'av chevruta study
- Peula: Cycles of Violence—A Jewish Perspective on Justice, Revenge, and Peace
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This is the kind of fast that I desire:

Unlock the hand-cuffs put on by wicked power!

Untie the ropes of the yoke!

*Let the oppressed go free,
And break off every yoke!*

Then when you are frightened and seek a shield to guard you,

Your own righteousness will march ahead to guard you.

And a radiance from YHWH,

Yahhhh, the Breath of Life, will reach out behind to guard you.



“Your Golden Hair, Margeret,” by Anselm Kiefer

“The Romanian poet Paul Celan was the only member of his family to survive incarceration in a concentration camp during the Holocaust, but committed suicide in 1970, at the age of 49, after producing a body of work that included the searingly painful poem, ‘Death Fugue’. In it he talks of the inhabitants of the camp drinking black milk and digging graves in the sky. Two figures are contrasted in the poem and act as the central metaphor: Margarete, with her cascade of blonde Aryan hair, and Shulamite, a Jewish woman whose black hair denotes her Semitic origins, but which is also ashen from burning.

The theme of Celan's poem has been a preoccupation of the German artist Anselm Kiefer, for whom Margarete and Shulamite have become the metaphoric protagonists in a series of paintings, of which Margarete (1981) is the concluding work.

As Kiefer's 1980s series on Margarete and Shulamite evolved, like Celan, he developed a series of visual tropes to characterise the two women. Shulamite's black hair is usually painted, while Margarete's is depicted in straw embedded in the paint. Mirror images of each other, Kiefer implies that the destinies and cultures of these women were inextricably linked. Straw added to a painting of Shulamite suggests Margarete's golden tresses, while black lines or tangled areas of black paint in Margarete imply the silent, erased presence of Shulamite. For Kiefer, Germany had maimed itself by the Holocaust. By pairing these two women in paint, he attempts a restoration of wholeness.

This impetus for examining the Nazi era may have partly derived from the 1960s spirit of revolt against the legacy of previous generations. Sensing the unaddressed presence of the Second World War everywhere within contemporary Germany, he felt compelled to confront the silent taboos of post-war German society.”

written by Sue Hubbard for the Independent

Sicha questions:

Anselm Kiefer is not Jewish. Moreover, he's German. Still, as a member of the generation born just after the Holocaust, he found his artistic purpose bringing Holocaust to the forefront of the German consciousness. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, many Germans sought to bury the tragedy from public conversations. Kiefer and other artists of his generation wanted Germans to come to terms with their past. What does it mean for a nation guilty of committing atrocities to come to terms with its past? What is Kiefer saying about the Holocaust in “Your Golden Hair, Margeret”? What can we, as Jews, learn from German Holocaust-related art?

AFTER THE FALL

by [the velveteen rabbi](#)

The mishna says
senseless hatred
knocked the Temple down
not the Romans with their siege
engines --
or not only them, but
our ancestors too
who slipped into petty backbit-
ing
ignored Shabbat
forgot how to offer their hearts
we're no better
we who secretly know we're right
holier-than-they
we who roll our eyes
and patronize, who check email
even on the holiest of days
who forget that
a prayer is more than a tune
more than words on a page
in Oslo parents weep
and we're too busy arguing
motive to comfort them
across the Middle East parents
weep
and we're too busy arguing
borders to comfort them
in our nursing homes parents
weep
shuddering and alone
and we're too busy --
even now what sanctuaries
what human hearts
are damaged and burned
while we snipe at each other
or insist we're not responsible
or look away?

According to the Mishnah (Taanit 4:6), five specific events occurred on the ninth of Av that warrant fasting:

1. The twelve spies sent by Moses to observe the land of Canaan returned from their mission. Only two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, brought a positive report, while the others spoke disparagingly about the land. The majority report caused the Children of Israel to cry, panic and despair of ever entering the "Promised Land". For this, they were punished by God that their generation would not enter the land. Because of the Israelites' lack of faith, God decreed that for all generations this date would become one of crying and misfortune for their descendants, the Jewish people. (See Numbers Ch. 13–14)
2. The First Temple built by King Solomon and the Kingdom of Judah was destroyed by the Babylonians led by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE and the Judeans were sent into the Babylonian exile.
3. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, scattering the people of Judea and commencing the Jewish exile from the Holy Land.
4. Bar Kokhba's revolt against Rome failed in 135 CE. Simon bar Kokhba was killed, and the city of Betar was destroyed.
5. Following the Roman siege of Jerusalem, the razing of Jerusalem occurred the next year. A Temple was built in its stead to an idol.

Here's a [Tisha B'av Chevruta \(partnered\) study session from On1Foot.org.](#)

Parker Palmer on the Tragic Gap:

By the tragic gap I mean the gap between the hard realities around us and what we *know is possible* — *not because we wish it were so, but because we've seen it with our own eyes. For example, we see greed all around us, but we've also seen generosity. We hear a doctrine of radical individualism that says, "Everyone for him- or herself," but we also know that people can come together in community and make common cause.*

As you stand in the gap between reality and possibility, the temptation is to jump onto one side or the other. If you jump onto the side of too much hard reality, you can get stuck in corrosive cynicism. You game the economic system to get more than your share, and let the devil take the hindmost. If you jump onto the side of too much possibility, you can get caught up in irrelevant idealism. You float around in a dream state saying, "Wouldn't it be nice if . . . ?" These two extremes sound very different, but they have the same impact on us: both take us out of the gap — and the gap is where all the action is.

That's the gap Martin Luther King Jr. stood in his entire life, the gap Nelson Mandela stands in to this day. That's the gap where Rosa Parks and Dorothy Day stood. I call it "tragic" because it's a gap that will never close, an inevitable flaw in the human condition. No one who has stood for high values — love, truth, justice — has died being able to declare victory, once and for all. If we embrace values like those, we need to find ways to stand in the gap for the long haul, and be prepared to die without having achieved our goals.

That means we need to change our calculus about what makes an action worth taking and get past our obsession with results. Being effective is important, of course. I write books because I want to have an impact. But if the only way we judge an action is by its effectiveness, we will take on smaller and smaller tasks, because they're the only kind with which we are sure we can get results. I'm not giving up on effectiveness, but it has to be secondary [to] faithfulness. That's what it takes to stand in the tragic gap. Faithfulness first, effectiveness second. And when people are faithful to a task, they often become more effective at it as well.

Questions to consider:

- What is the tragic gap we stand in today?
- What can we be corrosively cynical about?
- What can we be irrelevantly idealistic about?
- How do we live in the tragic gap with faithfulness?
- How do we apply Palmer's lessons to our own work?

Peula: Cycles of Violence—A Jewish Perspective on Justice, Revenge, and Peace

How do we educate about Tisha B'av in our current reality? What are our ethical obligations here? Do we focus on the current events and what it means to refuse to let senseless hatred enter our hearts as we deal with violence and tension in the Middle East? Do we focus on building a foundation of knowledge about the story of the Jewish People that will inform how chanichim interact with the world, now and in years to come? Is there a way to ACTUALLY “find a balance” between those instead of using it as a catch phrase that excuses us from the responsibility of taking a stance?

In trying to figure out what responsible education looks like for such complex topics, I have found Jerome Bruner’s concept of *the spiral curriculum* to be helpful. This approach to education is based in the understanding that an effective curriculum “should emphasize grasping basic ideas intuitively” and then “revisit these basic ideas, repeatedly building upon them until the pupil understands them fully.”

With this in mind, one concept I think is inherently at the center of both commemorating Tisha B'av and educating about Israel’s current events is understanding the roots of “cycles of violence” and examining how we should relate to them from a Jewish perspective. Even for our youngest chanichim, the anger that comes with feeling mistreated is relatable and it is only a few steps from there to an understanding that the way you choose to react can be the difference between a horrible escalation of mistreatment between parties or a more peaceful resolution. By using Jewish texts that show different and conflicting messages about how Jews should relate to revenge, justice and peace, *the attached peula* (Cycles of Violence—A Jewish Perspective on Justice, Revenge, and Peace) aims to bring out the question of how we can continually choose to put peace at the center of our actions, as Jews, as Socialist Labor Zionists and as people existing in a world with endlessly complex systems of oppression.

If you choose to use this resource, I ask that you adapt it to fit the needs of your chanichim and consistently ask yourselves “am I meeting my chanichim where *they* are at rather than trying to bring my own struggles to them in the forms they exist for me?” because I think this question is at the core of building age-appropriate education.

Peula: Bringing Talmud to Life – The Story of Bar Kamza

Though the 5 calamities that we are commemorating on Tisha B'av are connected to the material world (not being allowed to enter the *land* of Israel, the loss of the First and Second Temple, the seizure of the city of Beitar, and the destruction of the city of Jerusalem), we can also see how these stories center on the non-material, interpersonal interactions of those involved. In the story of Bar Kamza, we see how Rabbi Yohanan attributes the destruction of the Temple and our People’s exile from Israel to the actions of Rabbi Zechariah ben Abkulus. Rabbi Yohanan’s interpretation places blame not on the foreign power that destroys the Temple, but on the Jewish leader who guides the reactions of the community. Without condoning the destructive actions of others, Rabbi Yohanan draws attention to our need as Jews to take responsibility for our own people.

Attached is an activity outline (Bringing Talmud to Life – The Story of Bar Kamza) with some prewritten questions that aim to help “bring the Talmud to life” and give chanichim a chance to explore the many other questions about accountability that arise in the story of Bar Kamza. Our hope is that on Tisha B'av, a day set to commemorate our collective history, we can take the time to examine some of the classic texts of Tisha B'av and ask ourselves “How do you want these stories that are a part of our collective history to inform what we do now, both as individuals and as Jews?”

A Time of Choice

adapted from “Season of Our Sorrow: War & Global Scorching” by Rabbi Arthur Waskow, The Shalom Center (7/9/2014) by Kali Silverman

There are three weeks from 17 Tammuz (when the Babylonian Army broke through the walls of Jerusalem) to Tisha B’Av (when they destroyed the Temple). In the Western calendar, these three weeks run from July 15 to August 4-5. Traditionally, these three weeks were about danger to the Temple and then its destruction. It was through the Temple that ancient Israel made contact with God.*

According to the records of Jeremiah the Prophet (Jeremiah 34), as the Babylonian Army approached the city, he had called on the Israelites to free all their slaves and make real the Jubilee.**

In the Jubilee, the Earth was released from human exploitation and the poor were released from exploitation by the rich — for each family received an equal share of land. The rich would release themselves from greedy domination, the poor would release themselves from fear and rage.

So the people heeded Jeremiah and freed their slaves. The Babylonians pulled back. Perhaps they were impressed by this demonstration of the people’s unity and commitment.

But — seeing the besieging army withdraw, the slaveholders changed their minds and took back their slaves.

Then Jeremiah prophesied their doom: “Says God, Breath of Life: ‘You would not hear My Voice and proclaim a release, each to his kinsman and countryman. Here! I proclaim your release — declares God — to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine.’”

If you will not let the Land rest, you will be exiled and it will rest in your absence. If you will not free your slaves, you will all become slaves. If you will not hear and listen to the still small ‘Voice of the Breathing’ (read: God) that connects all life, your own breath will be taken from you.

And he was right. The Imperial Army realized that the people were no longer united, but divided by the greed of the rich and the rage of the poor. The Army returned, conquered the city, and destroyed the Temple.

Much later, the Rabbis named the ancient sin as idolatry. And indeed, as the slaveholders made idols of their own domineering power, they rejected God.

They themselves had already destroyed their real connection with God, and the Destruction was simply an affirmation of their rejection.

The three weeks between 17th of Tammuz and the 9th day of the Jewish month of Av were weeks of uncertainty — of choice.

Choice for the Israelites and for the Babylonians. Which side were they on — their own power to lord it over other people and Mother Earth herself, or the ‘Breath of Life’ that intertwines us all?

Shall we choose the God Who calls for freedom, for release, for a turning-away from our own arrogance?

When the walls between us have fallen, can both sides reach out to release themselves and each other from being enemies? Or shall we resort to subjugating others, and pay the price of being ourselves subjugated?

In 586 BCE, both peoples failed. And for the Jews, the day of the final Destruction became a day of deep mourning, a 25-hour Fast from food and water, luxurious clothes and perfumes, even sex.

Jewish tradition also saw this day of despair, Tisha B’Av, as the day when the Messiah was born — and hidden away for a time of transformation. From hitting rock bottom comes the courage and commitment to arise. In short, a day of grief and hope and action.

In our generation, how can we turn from grief for the destruction of one community’s ancient sacred place (physical or metaphorical) to grief, hope, and above all action focused on the future of our evermore endangered world?

We must pause to realize we can choose the path of reconnection, of repairing our interwoven threads of deep connection. We must make the choice to act in these times of uncertainty.

**The contact came not by words of prayer or words of Torah study, but by offering on the Altar a portion of the foods that God had brought forth from the Earth. So the Israelites praised God and celebrated the sharing of life through the food that came from the earth.*

****The Jubilee (yovel יובל)** year is the year at the end of seven cycles of *shmita* (Sabbatical years), and according to Biblical regulations had a special impact on the ownership and management of land in the Land of Israel. Jubilee deals largely with land, property, and property rights. According to Leviticus, slaves and prisoners would be freed, debts would be forgiven and the mercies of God would be particularly manifest.

Peula: Cycles of Violence – A Jewish Perspective on Justice, Revenge and Peace

Length: 1.5-2hr (depending on how you choose to run it)

Ages: flexible (the peula is supposed to be pretty malleable and has a few options that you can work with to shape it for your chanichim)

Context: This peula is designed to come after the chanichim have learned some of the central biblical and historical events connected to Tisha B'av. The idea is to take the concept of “senseless hatred” and understand more about where it can come from as a way to talk about how we can work against it. For older chanichim, there are some guiding questions of ways you could draw in some of the current events in Israel, but this is not intended to be the focus of the peula.

Matarot:

- Have chanichim understand how the mindset of “retribution” can easily lead to escalated feelings of distrust, hurt and frustration
- Explore some of the Jewish biblical texts that are used to justify different attitudes towards justice, specifically ideas of revenge and forgiveness
- Discuss the concept of “cycles of violence” and how they relate to the events connected to Tisha B'av and what it means to work to break those cycles

Tziud: capture the flag flags, small pieces of paper (x2 per chanich), pens, printed quotes, tape

Trigger: Retribution Capture the Flag

Divide the chanichim into two teams and establish boundaries. Each team should have 4-5 flags that they hide and the other team is trying to find them and make it back across the center line without getting tagged. Here's the twist: every time Team 1 steals Team 2's flag, Team 2 gets to choose a punishment for Team 1 and vice versa. They can come up with the punishment, but madrichim should be involved in the conversation, both to make sure that the team understands that they “deserve to give the team a punishment because they caused damage to us” and to give examples of possible punishments. Help them start with small punishments, but allow the punishments to escalate in later rounds.

- Examples could include things like: 3 people on the other team have to hop on one leg in the next round, 6 people have to hold hands with one other person while they run, etc
- Play multiple rounds so that punishments can go from mild and affecting only a few people to ones that affect more people.

****Note:** if the space your working with doesn't work for capture the flag, you can really convert any two team game into a “retribution” version by having whichever team DOES NOT get a point make up a “retribution” for the other team for “taking something away” from the losing team.

Sicha: Hand out two slips of paper to each chanich and ask them to write down a word that describes how they feel on each. Put them into a big bowl and then read out a bunch of them.

- What kinds of words come up? Why do you think people were feeling that way? Did the game feel fair to you? Why or why not? What kinds of reactions did people have if they were feeling mistreated?

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(Time saver: don't have a sicha here, instead just read out some of the words and ask them to reflect internally before they go into the next part of the peula. How did they feel? How do they think they made other people feel? Do their actions in the game reflect "who they want to be" in their normal life?)

Method: Option 1 – Museum, Option 2 - Tableau

Option 1: Museum (Advantage – quicker, more time to look at the original texts. Disadvantage – less interactive, harder to know what chanichim get out of each text)

Put 5 quotes up around the room and have chanichim read each of them. Give them guiding questions so they understand the context you are trying to put them in. How would you use this text to guide your actions if you were in a fight or conflict with another person/group? What is the main message? Do these texts align with what you think is "fair" or "just"?

Option 2: Tableau (Advantage – interactive. Disadvantage – takes longer, requires more prep)

Break chanichim into 5 groups and give each group one of the texts. They have to plan out how they will position 2-4 madrichim's bodies to reflect the message of the text they have. They can use a few different frames if they want to (Ex. Frame 1: Person hitting eye of manservant, Frame 2: Person setting manservant free). Madrichim should go between groups and make sure chanichim understand the text.

Then, each group will go, one by one, and show their tableau. The other chanichim try and guess what's going on and then the group will explain (have them do it in their own words first, and then read out the quote) *Pre-write large versions of each text and post them on the walls once the group has presented so that people can reread the text if they want.*

- If chanichim are struggling, look through each quote and use some of these prompt questions:
 - Leviticus 19:17: What does it mean that you are allowed to "rebuke" your brother but not hate him in your heart? Why do you think it's considered a sin to hate your brother in your heart?
 - Leviticus 19:18: What does it mean to bear a grudge? Why is it a part of "loving your neighbor as yourself" to avoid holding a grudge or taking revenge?
 - Exodus 21: 12-14: Why is the punishment for killing someone intentionally worse than when it's an accident? Does this suggest that someone who kills by accident should have no consequences? What do you think this passage implies about whether we should think in terms of "retaliation"?
 - Exodus 21: 23-25: What does this say about "retaliation" and justice? What are some different ways this could be interpreted?
 - Exodus 21: 26-27: Why is the compensation for hurting your servant to give them your freedom? What does this say about the responsibility people have when there is a power imbalance? Why is the punishment not that the servant can damage the eye or tooth of the person in return?

Come back togher: (in large or small groups, just make sure each group has at least one madrich/a)

- What are some of your reactions to the passages from the Torah? Which ones do you think are a good guide for how to act? Which ones do you not like?

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- What do you think these quotes say about the way that we, as Jews, should approach responding to situations in which we're hurt by others? Do you agree or disagree?
- What do you think these passages say about Jewish approaches to ideas like “revenge” or “forgiveness”? How does that connect to situations you've been in in the past?

L'madrich: (not necessarily to be said word for word to chanichim, more to give you a context of why this connects to Tisha B'av) Tisha B'av is a holiday about commemorating many of the tragedies that have happened to the Jewish people. Here we're looking at the ways some Jewish texts look at revenge and forgiveness as a way to understand how we want to react to our shared history and allow it to guide our actions now. Some of these passages have been used by people to justify committing violent crimes against other people, but a part of learning about Tisha B'av is learning about why “senseless hatred” is so harmful and should be fought against. Obviously some of these texts have conflicting messages, and some of them we may really disagree with, but by comparing and contrasting these different passages, we can better understand where we stand and then make an active choice about what we want it to mean to take responsibility for the Jewish people and the world around us.

Sicha:

- Has anyone heard of the concept of “cycles of violence”? Could you explain it to the group?
 - The term **cycle of violence** refers to repeated and dangerous acts of violence as a cyclical pattern, associated with high emotions and doctrines of retribution or revenge. The pattern, or cycle, repeats and can happen many times during a relationship. Each phase may last a different length of time and over time the level of violence may increase. (from Wikipedia on cycle of violence)
- Why do you think cycles of violence happen? Think back to the game of capture the flag and the emotions that came out of it.
- Where do you feel like you've encountered cycles of violence before?
- Have you ever experienced anything like this before? Have you ever done something because something was done to you? (This can be on any scale, including things like when your friend spread a rumor about you, you spread a different one about them.)
 - **For younger chanichim:** these concepts are really relatable especially in terms of social dynamics and bullying. Push them to really think about times they've felt justified in doing something they wouldn't otherwise do because of something bad they felt had been done to them. What do they think can be alternatives to acting out of revenge? How can they use this understanding to try and understand where other people are coming from? How can they be a part of breaking down cycles of violence they see in their day to day lives? This approach can be useful to help younger chanichim process the tragic events they learn about on Tisha B'av by creating an alternative to just feeling upset and instead talking about how, as Jews, we can fight against this kind of injustice taking place in the future.
 - **For older chanichim:** Here there is space to draw some connections to the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Why is it so hard for the peace process to move forward? How does the cycle of violence play out in the current events? How do you create social change that acknowledges the incredible anger and hurt that comes with exile, loss of life

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and a lack of security that both Israelis and Palestinians have experienced (in different ways and at different times), but also finds a way to move beyond the hurt to a path towards compromise and peace? Why is breaking the cycle of violence about MORE than just getting the physical violence between Israel and Gaza to stop?

- **NOTE:** the idea is NOT for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to become the focal point of the peula, but rather to give them another access point to understand why it's so important to break down cycles of violence.
- What do you think helps break down a cycle of violence? (I'madrich: it has to be more than just stopping physical harm. Not only does the security of all parties involved have to be built/restored, but we have to break down mindsets of "revenge" and "retaliation" as a way of thinking about justice.)
- How do these ideas connect to Tisha B'av as a day in which we commemorate the losses our People have experienced?
- How does the idea of "senseless hatred" tie into cycles of violence?
- How can you be a part of breaking cycles of violence and fight against senseless hatred?
- What responsibility do we have, as Jews, to fight against senseless hatred moving forward? What does that look like?

Sikkum: Tisha B'av is a day to commemorate many of the tragic events that have been a part of our shared history as the Jewish people. A part of belonging to a people is learning about where our people have come from and what they've experienced. As a Habonim Dror community, we are constantly seeking to pursue justice and work to end the senseless hatred that still exists in the world today and by understanding cycles of violence and how we want to fight against them, we can use our understanding of the past to build a more concrete understanding of what we want to build for the Jewish future.

17. You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your fellow, but you shall not bear a sin on his account.

י. לא תשנא אֶת אָחִיךָ בְּלִבְךָ הוֹכֵם תוֹכִיחַ אֶת עַמִּיתְךָ
וְלֹא תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֲטָא:

- Leviticus 19:17

18. You shall neither take revenge from nor bear a grudge against the members of your people; you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

י. לא תקום וְלֹא תטֹר אֶת בְּנֵי עַמְךָ וְאֶהְבֶּתָ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי
יְהוָה:

- Leviticus 19:18

12. One who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put

יב. מִכֶּה אִישׁ נֶמֶת מוֹת יוֹמֵת:

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to death.

13. But one who did not stalk [him], but God brought [it] about into his hand, I will make a place for you to which he shall flee.

יג. וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא צָדָה וְהֶאֱלֵהִים אֹנֶה לְיָדוֹ
וְשִׁמַּתִּי לָהּ מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יָנוּס שָׁמָּה:

14. But if a man plots deliberately against his friend to slay him with cunning, [even] from My altar you shall take him to die.

יד. וְכִי יִזְדֶּה אִישׁ עַל רֵעֵהוּ לְהַרְגוֹ בְּעַרְמָה
מֵעַם מִזְבְּחֵי תִקְחֶנּוּ לְמוֹת:

- Exodus 21:12-14

23. But if there is a fatality, you shall give a life for a life,

כג. וְאִם אָסוֹן יִהְיֶה וְנִמְתָּה נַפְשׁ תַּחַת
נַפְשׁ:

24. an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot,

כד. עֵינַי תַּחַת עֵינַי שֵׁן תַּחַת שֵׁן יָד תַּחַת יָד
רֶגֶל תַּחַת רֶגֶל:

25. a burn for a burn, a wound for a wound, a bruise for a bruise.

כה. כּוּיָה תַּחַת כּוּיָה פָּצַע תַּחַת פָּצַע
חִבּוּרָה תַּחַת חִבּוּרָה:

- Exodus 21: 23-25

26. And if a man strikes the eye of his manservant or the eye of his maidservant and destroys it, he shall set him free in return for his eye,

כו. וְכִי יִכֶּה אִישׁ אֶת עֵינַי עַבְדּוֹ אוֹ אֶת עֵינַי
אֲמָתוֹ וְשִׁחַתָּה לְחַפְּשֵׁי יִשְׁלַחֲנּוּ תַּחַת עֵינָיו:

27. and if he knocks out the tooth of his manservant or the tooth of his maidservant, he shall set him free in return for his tooth.

כז. וְאִם שֵׁן עַבְדּוֹ אוֹ שֵׁן אֲמָתוֹ יִפִּיל
לְחַפְּשֵׁי יִשְׁלַחֲנּוּ תַּחַת שֵׁנוֹ:

- Exodus 21: 26-27

***Notes about these texts: These are all drawn from just two sections of the Torah because each sentence has a lot that can be delved into. If you want to expose your chanichim to a wider set of texts, please do! Just make sure your tzevet has a chance to talk about what you want them to get out of each one you include, both in terms of concepts and questions.

Peula: Bringing Talmud to Life – The Story of Bar Kamza

Matarot:

- Increase chanichim's exposure to classic Tisha B'av texts
- Examine how Tisha B'av is connected to our responsibility to treat others respectfully and be accountable for our actions
- Give chanichim a basic understanding of the layout of a page of Talmud

Set up: project image of a Talmud page (check out links below) onto the wall above the area you'll use as a stage.

Picture of a page of Talmud with different colours and a brief explanation for each section:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24367959>

Other guides to understanding the different parts of a page of Talmud:

http://www.joshua-parker.net/portfolio/resourceguides/talmud_layout.pdf

<http://people.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/TalmudPage.html>

**These can be used to give a short tutorial about the anatomy of a Talmud page*

Method: Act out the Story of Bar Kamza with Interactive Questioning

Give a group of chanichim the story of Bar Kamza and 10-15min to prepare how they will act out the different scenes. While the audience waits, project a picture of the Talmud page and go through its anatomy using one of the resources listed above.

Once on stage, the group will act out the story as a madrich reads out the story. Keep the picture of the Talmud page there with them acting in front of it as a part of "bringing it to life." The madrich should let everyone in the audience know that they can freeze the play at any moment to ask a question that will then be discussed by the group. When they ask a question they have to go stand on the side of the stage (like how the commentary surrounds the central text on the Talmud page.) A few madrichim should be dispersed throughout the audience with "ready to go" questions in case the chanichim don't start thinking of questions at first.

The Story:

Gittin 55b

A certain man had a friend Kamza and an enemy Bar Kamza. He once made a party and said to his servant, Go and bring Kamza. The man went and brought Bar Kamza. When the man [who gave the party] found him there he said, See, you tell tales about me; what are you doing here? Get out. Said the other: Since I am here, let me stay, and I will pay you for whatever I eat and drink.

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*(56a) He said, I won't. Then let me give you half the cost of the party. No, said the other. Then let me pay for the whole party. He still said, No, and he took him by the hand and put him out. Said the other, Since the Rabbis were sitting there and did not stop him, this shows that they agreed with him. I will go and inform against them, to the Government. He went and said to the Emperor, The Jews are rebelling against you. He said, How can I tell? He (Bar Kamza) said to him: Send them an offering and see whether they will offer it [on the altar]. So he sent with him a fine calf. While on the way he made a blemish on its upper lip, or as some say on the white of its eye, in a place where we [Jews] count it a blemish but they do not. The Rabbis were inclined to offer it in order not to offend the Government. Said Rabbi Zechariah ben Abkulas to them: People will say that blemished animals are offered on the altar. They then proposed to kill Bar Kamza so that he should not go and inform against them, but Rabbi Zechariah ben Abkulas said to them, Is one who makes a blemish on consecrated animals to be put to death? Rabbi Yohanan thereupon remarked: Through the humility of Rabbi Zechariah ben Abkulas our House has been destroyed, our Temple burnt and we ourselves exiled from our land.**

**In the Hebrew, the language implies that Rabbi Yohanan is finding fault in Rabbi Zachariah's lack of flexibility about how to observe Jewish laws.*

Discussion Questions:

The Basics:

- What's the basic story here?
- Why do you think that Bar Kamza was willing to pay for the whole party rather than be thrown out? Why was he upset?
- Why do you think the party thrower still decided to throw him out of the party, instead of letting him stay?
- Who does Bar Kamza think is at fault for his humiliation? What blame does he put on the Rabbis and why?
 - o What do you think? Were the Rabbis at fault?
- Do you agree with Bar Kamza's response to his humiliation (to go and inform against the Jews to the ruling Government)? If so, why? If not, what do you think would have been an appropriate response?
- Why did Rabbi Zechariah ben Abkulas think it was so important not to sacrifice a blemished animal even at the price of compromising the peace with the Government (set precedent? How others perceive the Jews?)?
 - FYI: it can be read such that the Hebrew implies that it would have been within his rights to sacrifice it

Peula: Bringing Talmud to Life – The Story of Bar Kamza

- Do you think that he says that they shouldn't kill Bar Kamza for the same reason? (If not, how are they different)
- Do you agree with his stance or do you think Rabbi Zechariah was being too inflexible about Jewish tradition?
- What does Rabbi Yohanan think are the consequences of Rabbi Zechariah ben Abkulas' decisions? Why do you think he ties the actions of Rabbi Zechariah to the destruction of the Temple and the exile from our land?

Some larger questions:

- What does this story say about how we should treat each other?
- Do you think the story has any messages about how we should react to situations in which we are hurt or threatened? What about when we've made a mistake?
- Why is it significant that Rabbi Yohanan focuses on the role that a Jewish leader had in the situation instead of the foreign government or even the man who throws the party?
- What messages can you gain from this story that you would want to guide your actions today? Are there particular messages you hope the Jewish communities around the world take away from learning about this story?

Sikkum:

In Habonim Dror Tisha B'av education, we often talk about the idea of "senseless hatred" in terms of the things that were enacted upon Jews by others. Here, the emphasis is put on how we, as Jews, can be perpetrators of "senseless hatred" towards each other. By looking at this representation, with the multiple acts and layers of "senseless hatred" that these Jews are enacting upon each other, we can push ourselves to examine the ways we want to reject being bystanders and actively take responsibility for the Jewish people to fight against senseless hatred and apathy.

Tisha b'Av Hangman Peula

By Camp Moshava's Va'ad Tisha B'av 2008 (Avi Edelman, Hannah Lieberman, Adrian Weiss, Yonah Lieberman, David Meyer and Talia Chicherio)

Goal: To engage the machaneh in critical dialogue about indifference and apathy; to view tragedy and oppression through a lens of activism and empowerment; to think about what action we can take to address modern conflicts.

Method:

The entire machaneh will gather in the MLC to watch *Hangman*, a short animation of a Maurice Ogden poem ([link](#)). Then everyone will break up into schavot for discussion. We recommend that each tzevet further divide their kids into intimate groups of 5-6 people and have each madrich/a lead a sikum (the tzimukim can stay all together).

Begin the discussion with reactions to the poem and with questions to help them get at the poem's meaning:

- How does the scaffold change throughout the story? What makes it grow? What do you think this represents?
- One person protests the second hanging. Why does the protest stop? What do you think the Hangman means when he says that his noose is meant for "He who serves me best"?
- Why do you think the Hangman started with someone from a foreign land?
- How does the Hangman explain why he is taking more people? What excuses does he make? Do you agree with his explanations?
- What happens at the end of the poem?

Next, broaden the discussion to apathy and indifference and the necessity to intervene to stop atrocities. Attached are three other readings, two quotes and an excerpt from an Elie Wiesel speech. Have the kids read the materials (you can have the kids pair up and give each pair one of the resources if you want).

- How do the ideas from *The Hangman* and the other readings relate to Tisha b'av? Is it enough to simply be aware about bad things happening in the world?
- What can we do to prevent ourselves from becoming like the man in *The Hangman*?

Have the kids pick an issue in the world (they can think about things they learned about during the round robin or special chugim!) Have them brainstorm ways (both at machaneh and during the year) that they can be taking action against injustice. You will be provided with butcher paper and markers; make a poster of your issue and your ways to address it. Bring it to the misrad after the peula; we will hang it up as part of the closing tekkes.

From a tombstone at Tombstone Cemetery:
*"Here lies George Johnson, hanged by mistake 1882—
he was right, we was wrong, but we strung him up
and now he's gone."*

*First they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up,
because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews,
and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came
for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up, because I was a
Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was
no one left to speak up for me.*

--Rev. Martin Niemoller, 1945

*Indifference is not a beginning, it is an end. And, therefore,
indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits
the aggressor—never his victim, whose pain is magnified
when he or she feels forgotten. In the place that I come from,
society was composed of three simple categories: the killers,
the victims, and the bystanders. During the darkest of times,
inside the ghettos and the death camps...we felt abandoned,
forgotten. All of us did.*

--Elie Wiesel, 1999