

July 21, 2008
For July 26, 2008

Halutzim 2008 Shabbat 2: G'milut Chesed

Goal of Programming: To explain the important Jewish value of g'milut chesed, instill within the aidah a sense of its necessity, and understand our responsibility to others and to ourselves.

Schedule of Programming:

Hachanah l'Shabbat: Jacob will share a story about when he did something special for others. Then we'll tell a Carlebach story 'Yossele the Holy Miser.'

D'var Torah: Jonathan Bubis

Afternoon Activity: 6 groups, 3 activities (two sections of three groups). Leaders to rotate between groups.

Peulah 1: Story: "If Not Higher" (See Attached)

Group Leaders:

Questions:

1. Do you agree with the rabbi's decision? Is it ever ok to break a mitzvah in order to fulfill another mitzvah (e.g., visiting a sick person on Shabbat)? When and why?
2. What kinds of g'milut chesed have you done? What are some acts of g'milut chesed that you have seen other people do?
3. How does it feel when someone does something unconditionally nice to you? How do you feel when you do it for someone else?
4. The Rabbi did these acts without any expectations of a reward. Do you do acts of chesed expecting a reward? Should you do acts of chesed expecting a reward?

Peulah 2: Discussion of G'milut Chesed

Group Leaders:

Hillel taught: If I am not for myself, who am I? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?

What does this passage mean?

"If I am not for myself, who am I? If I am only for myself, what am I?"—Ask the campers what this means. Explain the conflict implied in this quotation. Mention that it's egotistic to simply focus on you, yet it is an important aspect of being human.

"And if not now, when?"—When is it appropriate to do g'milut chesed? When is giving asking to much of us?

G'milut chesed means acts of unconditional kindness. Do you think we should do every act of chesed unconditionally?

Anecdote: Once a couple encountered a person who asked for a significant amount of money for medicine. The couple wanted to help, but did not feel comfortable giving over \$150 up front. The couple agreed to meet the person at the pharmacy in order to insure that the money was actually paying for the medicine. In the meantime, they gave

the person money for gas.

What does this story have to do with Hillel's words? How did they maintain a balance of being for themselves, yet not only for themselves, and understanding when to act?

Why is g'milut chasadim important?

How far can one act of chesed go? (Share smile story)

Peulah 3: Game to Demonstrate Chesed (Truth or Dare) and Song (Al Shlosa Devarim)

Teach the song first; explain that, as the song teaches, our religion places as much emphasis on Talmud Torah and worship of G-d as it does on acts of chesed.

Truth or Dare: Use prepared truths and dares. Each participant will get a truth or a dare.

Truth:

Have you ever given up something to make someone happy?

Do you think gemilut chesed is specifically Jewish? Why or Why not?

Would you still do g'milut chesed even if it was not a commandment?

Have you ever stood by and not helped someone in need? If so give an example. How did it make you feel to know you could have helped?

Name three things you have done for others in the past week. How did it make you feel?

Is there any act of gemilut chesed that you wouldn't do?

Name an act of chesed that someone has done for you in the past week. How did it make you feel?

Dare:

Give someone on the kikar part of your chatif

Get to know someone you haven't met before. (Ask them about their life at home, favorite color, favorite memory.)

Act out helping an elderly person across a street (pick someone to be an elderly person)

Act out what you would do if you encountered a beggar (pick someone to be a beggar)

Stand up for someone if you see him/her being picked on.

Choose your own act of g'milut chesed that you will make sure to do this week.

Aidah Sport: Kickball Game!

Peulat Erev: Dodgeball Tournament

Two games 15 people on each team. Best two out of three games, and then winners play one championship game.

Yossele, the Holy Miser

By Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, Adapted by Jacob Slutsky

In the city of Krakow, on a Sunday night, the chevrah kedushah, the people responsible for burial of the dead, gathered around the deathbed of Yossele. While not dead yet, Yossele knew his time would come. Despite being a wealthy man—perhaps the wealthiest Jew in all of Poland—Yossele had never given a cent to the tzedakah box in the synagogue, nor to any beggar or schnorrer that came to his doorstep.

“Yossele,” the chevrah kedushah said to him. “Please, you must pay the synagogue ten percent of your wealth. If you do not, we will not bury you.”

“That suits me,” replied the dying Yossele. “I refuse to give out my precious money.”

“But Yossele, you have no wife. You have no children. Where will all your money go?” they asked him.

“Bah,” Yossele answered. “It will rot with me.”

“Yossele, please,” the people implored him. “This is not the Jewish way.”

“I care not,” Yossele said finally, and turned away on his pillow.

Yossele died the next morning, just as the sun rose over the eastern sky. The chevrah kedushah had not received word of any money going to the synagogue, so they did not take his body out of the bed. It sat there Monday, and Tuesday, and Wednesday, and Thursday, giving off a terrible smell. Anyone who passed by told the children at play, “There lies Yossele, the miser.”

The Rabbi of Krakow was in his study on Friday morning. He heard a knock at his door. He opened it; it was Mottle, a beggar.

“Please Rabbi,” Mottle said, “I am in distress. If you could find it in your heart to give me just three zlotys, I would be forever grateful. For Shabbos, Rabbi, for Shabbos.”

“Certainly, Mottle,” the Rabbi agreed. “But I must ask, how come you have never come to me before.”

“Well, the last person I ever went to begging for money was Yossele, the miser,” Mottle replied. “He took me into his house when I knocked, gave me a blintz and a cup of tea, and asked me what I would need for Shabbos. I told him I would need two challot, a bit of wine, one piece of chicken in shmaltz. . . no more than three zlotys’ worth. He seemed interested, but once I mentioned the price, he became angry and threw me out of his house. ‘What am I, a charity fund?’ Yossele roared. Then, Friday morning, I found an envelope under my broken door. In it were three zlotys, with a note saying, lichvod Shabbos, to honor the Sabbath.”

The Rabbi bid him good-day and Shabbat Shalom. The Rabbi had barely closed the door and sat back at his desk to finish his sermon when another knock sounded. It was Shprintze, the widow with four children.

“Please, Rabbi, I beg you,” she said. “I have no money. If you could spare seven zlotys, no more, I would be forever grateful.”

“Shprintze, I would never do otherwise,” the Rabbi told her. “I cannot turn my back on someone in need. But I ask you, why have you never come to me before?”

“Well, five years ago, after my husband died, I went begging for food on a Thursday. I knocked on the door of Yossele’s house, and he took me in. He fed me, and asked what I would need for Shabbos. I told him I would need two challot, wine, matzah ball soup, herring, chicken. . . I have many mouths to feed. But just seven zlotys would do it. When he heard the number, he yelled at me to leave his house at once. I ran out, yet on Friday morning I found an envelope under my broken door. In it were seven zlotys, with a note saying, lichvod Shabbos, to honor the Sabbath.”

The Rabbi bid her good-day and Shabbat Shalom. He again closed the door and sat down. Yet he kept getting up, finding people begging at his doorstep for food for Shabbat. Lazar the beadle, Shlomo the fishmonger, down on his luck. Chana the philosopher’s wife; people from all over Krakow, all with different-sized families, asking for different amounts of money. They all had come to Yossele at some point many years ago, and explained to him their predicaments. They told him a number of zlotys they would need for Shabbat, and were kicked out promptly. Yet, every Friday morning, there was an envelope under their doors, with enough money for them to have a pleasant Shabbat. In each envelope, a note said, “Lichvod Shabbos,” to honor the Sabbath.

The Rabbi of Krakow understood. Even as he shunned schnorrers and beggars and members of tzedakah funds, Yossele had been paying these people out of his pocket, quietly and discretely. And now he

rotted in his bed.

The Rabbi gathered all the villagers after Shabbat was over. “It seems, we never really knew where the Holy Spirit of the Almighty dwelled in Krakow. We thought it dwelled within the ark of our house of prayer, yet it dwelled in the strongbox of Yossele the miser. His kindness has sustained the Jews of Krakow for generations.”

And so, anyone who passes by the small Jewish cemetery in Krakow today will see a splendid grave, with etching so clear, so careful, so precious: “Here lies Yossele, the Holy Miser.”

Peulat Shabbat Essentials

Peulah 1: Story

The Story is about g'milut chesed with no expectation of recognition.

The Rabbi decides that this act of chesed is so great, it is even greater than being in shul on Yom Kippur, which is an obvious dilemma.

Peulah 2: Discussion

The Hillel quotation is about finding balance between helping others and being true to oneself, and being able to act in the moment

Anecdote addresses the question, as follows:

“If I am not for myself, who am I?”—They didn’t give all the money over right away, kept their means and interests in mind.

“If I am only for myself, what am I?”—They wanted to help a person in need.

“If not now, when?”—They acted in the moment, didn’t shrug it off.

Peulah 3: Song/Game

Song demonstrates the importance of g'milut chesed, that it is as important as Torah and mitzvot.

Game is self-explanatory.

Peulat Shabbat Essentials

Peulah 1: Story

The Story is about g'milut chesed with no expectation of recognition.

The Rabbi decides that this act of chesed is so great, it is even greater than being in shul on Yom Kippur, which is an obvious dilemma.

Peulah 2: Discussion

The Hillel quotation is about finding balance between helping others and being true to oneself, and being able to act in the moment

Anecdote addresses the question, as follows:

“If I am not for myself, who am I?”—They didn’t give all the money over right away, kept their means and interests in mind.

“If I am only for myself, what am I?”—They wanted to help a person in need.

“If not now, when?”—They acted in the moment, didn’t shrug it off.

Peulah 3: Song/Game

Song demonstrates the importance of g'milut chesed, that it is as important as Torah and mitzvot.
Game is self-explanatory.