

CHAI MITZVAH TEEN PROGRAM TOPIC 8

Gratitude: *Modim Anachnu Lach*

Chai Mitzvah teen program materials are designed for use in a religious school setting, by youth groups, or as a club in any school. The Chai Mitzvah program includes learning, social action, and ritual. Teen program materials include texts for learning, suggestions for increasing meaning in ritual observances, and links to social action opportunities for each topic. Choose the discussion questions and activities that best suit your group.

icons

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 activities specifically designed for groups

 suggestions for meaningful ritual observance

 social action opportunities



Gratitude: Modim Anachnu Lach



notes

Psychological studies have shown that feeling and expressing gratitude are important components of a happy, balanced life. There are elements in Jewish tradition that can help us to be aware of our blessings and to express gratitude. Expressing gratitude does not mean ignoring that there is pain and hardship in the world. It means making a daily effort to see that along with the difficulty, there is also good in life that is worth celebrating.



introduction

In the text below, the Rabbis express the idea that when we practice gratitude, we are able to see clearly how much good there is in our lives. To be grateful takes practice and effort. By consciously practicing gratitude, we actually become grateful, and are able to find positives in life. This practice provides us with a tool to help us balance our focus between the things we lack and the good we have. As you read the text, think about how the Rabbis express this idea.



text

Our Rabbis taught: It is forbidden for a man to enjoy anything of this world without a benediction (blessing), and if anyone enjoys anything of this world without a benediction, he commits sacrilege... Rabbi Judah said in the name of Samuel, "To enjoy anything of this world without a benediction is like making personal use of things consecrated to heaven, since it says, 'The earth is the Eternal's and the fullness thereof' (Psalms 24:1)'"

Rabbi Levi contrasted the two texts. "It is written, 'The earth is the Eternal's and the fullness thereof.' and it is also written, 'the heavens are the heavens of the Eternal, but the earth hath God given to the children of men! (Psalms 115:1 | 16)'" There is no contradiction: in the one case it is before a blessing has been said, in the other case, after.

Talmud Bavli, Berachot 35a-b

ת"ר אסור לו לאדם שיהנה מן העוה"ז בלא ברכה וכל הנהנה מן העוה"ז בלא ברכה מעל.
 אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל כל הנהנה מן העוה"ז בלא ברכה כאילו נהנה מקדשי שמים שנא' לה' הארץ ומלואה.
 ר' לוי רמי כתיב לה' הארץ ומלואה וכתיב השמים שמים לה' וארץ נתן לבני אדם.
 לא קשיא כאן קודם ברכה כאן לאחר ברכה.

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conversation

- Why, according to the Rabbis, is it wrong to enjoy the world without a blessing?
- What contradiction does Rabbi Levi point out in the verses he cites?
- Explain the resolution offered by the rabbis.
- How can this relate to our own lives?



activities

Every Day Attitude of Gratitude Post-er

You'll need:

- poster board
- markers
- stickers
- photographs
- glue stick

What to Do:

1. Use the markers to write a headline on your poster. You might also draw a frame around the edges if you like.
2. Every evening, think about the day that has passed. What are you thankful for? Write the date, and express your gratitude in words, pictures, or photos.
3. Hang your *Attitude of Gratitude* poster in a prominent location, where you can add to it easily.
4. Feel grateful, and pay it forward!

Post:

Create a class social media post and post something for which you are grateful each day.

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Wheel of Thanks

Berakhot Hanehenin, Blessings of Appreciation, are said when we experience moments of joy and wonder. (See the link below for examples.) You can say these blessings, and also compose your own personal prayers of thanks, whenever you feel gratitude. Have fun! *Play Wheel of Thanks* on the supplement page. You'll be grateful that you did.

You'll need:

- Wheel on supplement page (print on card stock or use a glue stick to mount on card stock)
- Ball point pen or safety pin
- Brad (paper fastener)
- Paper clip
- Tape (clear or masking tape)
- Felt tipped markers

What to Do:

1. Print out the wheel on page 3 on card stock if possible. If you haven't printed on card stock, mount it on heavier paper.
2. Write an example of "anything from this world" (See text on page 1) in each space on the wheel. For instance, a rainbow, your sibling, or even schoolwork.
3. Make a starter hole in the center of the wheel using the ball point pen or the safety pin.
4. Put the brad through the hole, but fold the back in the middle, not at the top, so that the brad is sticking up from the wheel about half an inch. Tape the back of the brad to the wheel to secure it.
5. Slip the paper clip over the brad.
6. You're ready to spin – and play – *Wheel of Thanks!*

How to Play: Player one spins the spinner. When it stops spinning, read the words in the space. If you can explain why a person might be thankful for the item you have read, you get one point. For an extra point, say a blessing, either one you've learned or one you compose yourself, about the item. If you can't think of a reason to be thankful, you don't get any points and lose your next turn. If you land on an item that someone else has already landed on, you must think of a different reason to give thanks. The first person to reach 10 points wins. You can print out more than one *Wheel of Thanks*, and play with different items each time.

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Links of Thanks

You'll need: A ball of yarn

How to Play:

Sit on the floor in a circle with everyone facing inward toward the center of the circle. · Holding firmly to the end of the string, toss the ball of string to someone in the circle who has a personality trait, or has done an act, for which you are grateful. · The person receiving the string tosses the ball of string to someone else in the circle who has a personality trait, or has done an act, for which they are grateful. Then, holding firmly onto the string, he or she tosses the ball on to another person. · The string should be held tightly and above the ground at all times. · Continue until everyone has received the string.



social action

The animals will be grateful: Help homeless animals. Volunteer your time in a local shelter, playing with or walking the dogs. Donate food for the animals, or make toys that they will like.

Show appreciation: *A Package from Home* is an organization that sends care packages to Israeli soldiers. These care packages are not only a warm reminder of love and esteem, but are also items they truly need. For more information, go to: packforisrael.com



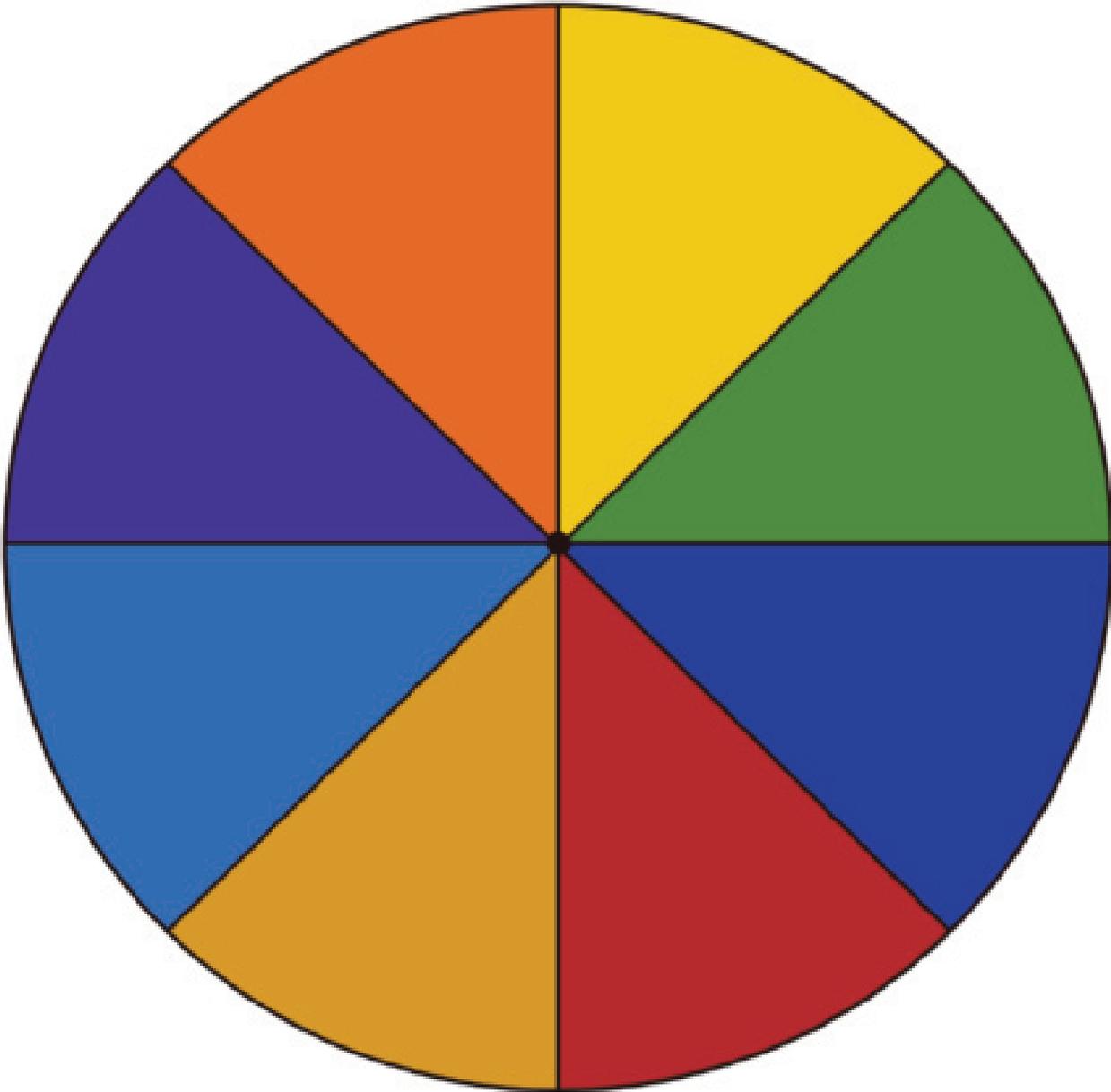
links

- **Gratitude Journal App:** *Gratitude Journal* from Happy Tapper is available for \$1.99 in the App store. As seen in USA Today, NPR, and Oprah, *Gratitude Journal* is easy and effective, and geared to get you happy!
- [Berakhot Hanehenin](#) can be said any time you feel wonder.

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WHEEL OF THANKS: Write an example of “anything from this world” in each space. Add the spinner (see page 2) and you’re ready to play!





Chai Mitzvah was created as a way to engage adults in a Jewish journey throughout their lives, to take some time to reflect on where they are Jewishly and what they would like to achieve.

Chai Mitzvah teen program materials provide teens, who are in a time of personal discovery, with a way to move forward with their personal Jewish journeys.

It is our hope that Chai Mitzvah will serve as a catalyst and ignite deeper Jewish engagement and continued growth into the 21st century.

Chai Mitzvah is an unaffiliated, non-profit independent 501(c)3 corporation, funded through donations and grants. Please consider sponsoring a Chai Mitzvah program in your community or making a gift today.