

*L'tahkain Olam b'Malchut Shaddai*  
*To Repair the World within the Majestic [Guidelines] of God*  
Aleinu (Concluding Prayer)

**A (humble) Guide to Teaching and Inspiring Others**

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*If you deliberately plan to be less than you are capable of becoming, then I warn you that you'll be deeply unhappy for the rest of your life. You will be evading your own capabilities, your own possibilities.*

Abraham Maslow

*The Mitzvot were given in order to refine human beings.*

Leviticus Rabba 13:3

### Section I – Introduction, Project Description and Setting

From the three daily exhortations of the Aleinu to Maslow's warning, there would seem to be no question as to what the mission of a Jew is. And if it were unclear as to how to get there, then the Midrashic mind of the Rabbis in their commentary on Leviticus, lays it out in one easy step – follow the mitzvot. So, why don't more... some... hardly any people want to save the world? And, from a Jewish perspective, why don't they feel obligated to do so? Every person has it within themselves to help make the world a better place. In fact, it is often said that people are happier and more fulfilled when they are able to help others. So why is it that people don't do more to help others and do it more of the time? Why is it that there are only a select number of individuals in this world – in all corners of it, in all religions and affiliations, in all ethnicities and cultures that tap their Maslowian capabilities to their fullest extent and rise to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the bereaved, preserve the environment – in short, to make the world a better place?

Is there something we can discover in these role models, these “heroes?” Is there some social justice DNA that we can extract from their lives and transmit to others? Can we learn from their examples and will their stories inspire others? According to Dr. Nel Noddings the answer is yes! It is called ‘modeling’ and is the first of four concrete steps (Modeling – Dialogue – Practice – Confirmation) that she suggests need to be followed in order to transform ordinary individual into caring people. The end result of this project is a Template of Action built on these four steps. The template matches a particular group of these role models called “Mitzvah Heroes,” with appropriate Jewish texts and other inspirational sources, along with practical programmatic suggestions as well.

During the 2003-04 academic-year, I had the good fortune to live, work and study in Israel as a *Chaveret Ziv* - a Fellow of the Ziv Tzedakah Fund. As such I was introduced to some of the most inspirational people I have ever known, tzedakah activists affectionately dubbed “mitzvah heroes.” As part of my fellowship, I was able to offer the opportunity for a group of Rabbinical and Education students, who were part of HUC-JIR’s first-year program in Israel, to meet once a week for 10 weeks visiting these mitzvah heroes. Our purpose was to spend time with a few of these extraordinary individuals and begin to uncover some of the “truths” behind their lives and the motivation for their work. A second goal was to begin to gauge their potential for inspiring others. I had been amazed, overwhelmed and impressed by these heroes, but it was now another thing to watch as future Jewish leaders were exposed to these same individuals. These young students, these future Rabbis and educators, will be the ones attempting to inspire others to want to do Tikun Olam – to repair the world. I hope that when that time comes, they will remember these *dugmaot* – these exemplars, whose selfless actions helped to make the lives of others a bit better and then, in turn, maybe these students will be able to serve as examples, as models for teaching others to follow in their footsteps.

We often seek the practical, the programmatic, the “next steps.” But do we understand the principles that under-gird them, the enduring questions they seek to answer? That is the task of the first part of this paper – to examine and try to comprehend the texts, and to gain a better understanding and initial appreciation of these Mitzvah Heroes.

We already know many of the traditional sources – after all, we’ve often heard them on Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur. We nod our heads, we know it’s the right thing to do, but once we leave we seem to leave the inspiration and mandate behind. Do we really need them? The answer is obviously “yes.” However, for the purposes of this project, it is because they represent the essential Jewish aspect of Nodding’s second step, **Dialogue**. But what about the **modeling** mentioned above? Are the Mitzvah Heroes whom the students in this project met inspirational? Who are these people that we are trying to use as models? What inspired them to do this chesed, these acts of loving kindness? What prompted them to change their own lives and take on causes and issues that are bigger than life? And even if we are moved by them, can we use these people to inspire others to follow in their footsteps?

## Section II – Review of Jewish Sources (Full Text)

A mitzvah is often translated by the general (Jewish) public as a “good deed.” In fact, however, a mitzvah is a religious imperative, something that a Jew is expected or “obligated” to do. There are 613 mitzvot in the Torah, some negative and some positive. Some are phrased in such a way as to tell us exactly what we should do or not do such as “You shall not murder.” In other commandments the goal is clear but not the details as how to achieve it, such as “Honor your father and your mother.”

While there are many mitzvot, I have selected some of the major ones used in Social Action or Social Justice study and programming and have organized them into three categories:

- a) the overarching or **foundational mitzvot** of Tzedakah and G’milut Chesed that cut across most areas of concern and action;
- b) **two sample sets of mitzvot**, each tied to a single theme – one showing how detailed and infused the notion of righteousness was in even the most basic laws of agriculture (one of the main “professions” at the time) and one showing how broad the context of financial responsibility to others is;
- c) the remainder of **the collection**.

### **The Foundational Mitzvot**

The three textual selections presented here represent three different types of sources. The first is Biblical. All commandments (even those added by the Rabbis) derive from the Torah.

***Zedek, Zedek tirdof***

***Justice, Justice, you shall pursue (Deuteronomy 16:20)***

Tzedakah is usually translated as charity, but this is incorrect. The English translation for this positive mitzvah is “justice.” Compared to the word charity, which comes from the Latin word *caritas* – translated as “love of God,” tzedakah is not a choice, but rather the fulfillment of an obligation. Charity is a gift, an expression of free will (albeit, a very loving and wonderful one). Tzedakah, as mentioned at the outset, is something that is expected of each and every one of us, which makes sense when you think about what “justice” demands. Justice is doing what’s right,

what's fair. If it's a gift then it is subject to how we feel, whether we want to give something or not. And even if we are in the mood, how much do we give? Justice, on the other hand, doesn't care whether we are up to it, or interested, or ready – Justice demands that we do “the right thing.”

But does doing the “right” thing make one “righteous?” The answer can be found in the second source, the poetic writings included in the Tanach, from the Book of Psalms, and in the Rabbinic commentary on it found in the Midrash, one of the great sources of Rabbinic explanation and imagination.

*“Open the Gates of Righteousness for me...”*

**Psalm 118:19**

*At the Time of Judgment in the future world,  
Everyone will be asked, “What was your occupation?”*

*If the person answers, “I used to feed hungry people,” they will say to that person, “This is God’s gate, you, who fed hungry people, may enter.”...*

*“I used to give water to thirsty people,” they will say to that person, “This is God’s gate, you, who gave water to those who were thirsty may enter.”...*

*“I used to give clothing to those who needed clothing,” they will say to that person, “This is God’s gate, you, who gave clothing to those who needed clothing may enter,”*

*...and similarly, those who raised orphans, and who performed the Mitzvah of Tzedakah, and who performed acts of caring, loving kindness (g’milut chasadim).*

**Midrash on Psalms 118**

The only question which remains is who are the individuals in the Psalm who are able to answer in the affirmative? Are they ordinary people or are they *tzaddikim*? Did they perform these actions on a daily basis or just in the last days of their lives? What is clear is that these were not single acts since they are worded in the plural.

Whatever ambiguity may remain is cleared up in perhaps the most famous of all Tzedakah texts, our third source, Maimonides’ Eight Degrees of Tzedakah. Maimonides, who was also known as the RaMBaM, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, was one of the greatest commentators on and

codifiers of Jewish law. His eight degrees of Tzedakah may suggest which level is more noble and desirable than the other, but it leaves no ambiguity that “no action” is not even an option.

*There are eight degrees of tzedakah, each one superior to the next. A person reaching the highest degree is the one who upholds the hand of an Israelite reduced to poverty by handing that person a gift or loan, or by entering into a partnership with him or her, or by finding that Israelite work in order to strengthen that person's hand, so that she or he will have no need to beg from others.*

**Mishneh Torah 10:7-15**

- Level 1 (the best) Giving a loan or getting him a job, so that he won't need to ask for charity any more.
- Level 2 When the giver does not know to whom he is giving, and the poor does not know from whom he receives.
- Level 3 When the giver knows to whom he has given, but the poor does not know from whom he receives.
- Level 4 When the giver does not know who he gave to, but the poor knows who he is getting from.
- Level 5 Giving straight to the poor, before he even asks.
- Level 6 Giving after he asks.
- Level 7 Giving, but not enough.
- Level 8 (The last and lowest level) Giving sourly, sadly. However, even this kind of charity is still a Mitzvah.



## Two Case Studies:

Throughout Jewish history, the fulfillment of the principle of tzedakah has been a noble and praiseworthy statement of communal responsibility. From Biblical days to our own times, Jews have responded to the needs of their fellow Jews, their neighbors and strangers with love and compassion. Our first “Case Study” comes from when the Israelites settled in the Promised Land after wandering in the wilderness, many of them turned to farming. The Torah gave them special laws for practicing tzedakah as they planted and harvested their crops.

A farmer harvesting his fields would naturally want to gather as much as possible. These laws served as guidelines for preventing greed as well as providing for the needy. They set forth rules, which governed the following:

- 1) *pe'ah* – the “corner” of the field: to be left unharvested.
- 2) *Shikhah* – the “forgotten” crops; to remain ungathered.
- 3) *Olelot* – the “imperfect” fruit; to be left on the vines and trees.
- 4) *Leket* – the “fallen” produce; to be left where it was dropped.
- 5) *Ma'aser ani* – the “tithe for the poor”; every third year, a one-tenth portion.
- 6) *Shemittah* – the “Sabbath” year of the land; occurring every seventh year, during which no sowing or planting would take place.

In **Leviticus 19:9, 10** it is written: *when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger.*

In **Deuteronomy 24:19** it is written: *when you reap the harvest in your field and overlook a sheaf in the field, do not turn back to get it; it shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.*

In **Deuteronomy 24:20, 21** it is written: *when you beat down the fruit of your olive trees, do not go over them again; that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick it over again: that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.*

In **Deuteronomy 14:28, 29** it is written: *every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your field of that year, but leave it within your settlements. Then the Levite, who has no hereditary portion as you have, and the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in the settlements shall come and eat their fill.*

In **Exodus 23:10, 11** it is written: *six years shall you sow your land and gather in its yield; but in the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow. Let the needy among your people eat of it, and what they leave let the wild beasts eat. You shall do the same with your vineyards and your olive groves.*

The pe'ah, the shikhah, the olelot, the leket, and the ma'aser ani were to be made available for those in want; and during the shemitah year those crops that did continue to grow by themselves would be free to all, with special attention given to the needy.

Why does the Torah include these laws? After all, some of the most joyous times in ancient Israel were the seasons of the harvest. The farmers had tilled their land, planted their seeds, watered the soil, and driven off the animals and insects that might destroy the crops. Now after months of waiting, all was ready for the harvest. But the laws of the Torah insured that those who were not able to raise crops of their own would also enjoy the blessing of the harvest. Thus the Torah repeatedly reminds the people that it is their responsibility to care for the needs of the less fortunate, so they too, can rejoice.

*He that has a bountiful eye shall be blessed."*

**Proverbs 20:9**

*Whoever shuts his ear to the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself,  
but shall not be heard.*

**Proverbs 21:13**

Our second Case Study looks at the financial implications of being righteous. We usually associate tzedakah with the giving of money to the poor. However, why should we consider it an act of tzedakah to lend someone money to purchase the tools that will enable him to earn a living or to open a business? As we already saw in Rambam's Tzedakah Ladder, this is the highest form of tzedakah, of gemilut chesed – an act of lovingkindness, to help someone help themselves. That is why the Torah also teaches us that there are three ways in which to deal with the “plague” of poverty. The first is to relieve it temporarily. The second is to help the poor escape from it. The third is to prevent it.

While the highest form of tzedakah may be an interest free loan, the Torah actually prohibits one from charging interest in this type of circumstance, in the first place. When our brother or sister is in trouble, it cannot be seen as an opportunity to benefit from, rather it must only be seen as an opportunity to help others less fortunate (try comparing that with supply-demand economic theory)!

*In **Leviticus 25:35-37** it states: And if your brother be poor and his means fail... then you shall uphold him... do not exact from him in advance or accrue interest, but fear your God. Let him stay under you as your brother. Do not lend him money at advance interest, or give him your food at accrued interest.*

The Torah, however, goes beyond loans and interest and tackles the question of helping the needy in one's community in general. Because human nature may not always motivate us to constantly take care of those around us, and it certainly does not take into account the psychological misgivings that one may have, the Torah offers wise counsel, specific guidance, and a sense of how that favor will be returned to the one who gives:

*In **Deuteronomy 15:7, 8, 10, and 11** it states:*

*If however, there is a needy person among you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsman. Rather, you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs... Give to him readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return... God will bless you in all your efforts and*

*in all your undertakings. For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land, which is why I command you open your hand to the poor and needy kinsman in your land.*

A close reading of this last text reveals that the Torah links “needy” and “kinsman” at the beginning and at the end. In the second half it inserts a different phrase, “*For there will never cease to be **needy ones in your land**, which is why I command you open your hand to the **poor**...*” This sentence can be understood and interpreted in a variety of ways. Who are the **needy ones in your land**? Are they only your kinsman? If they are, then the Torah had already made that clear and this sentence would be unnecessary. Also since the Torah has no punctuation, perhaps the word “**poor**” was meant to be followed by a comma thus suggesting that we need to be concerned for the welfare of our kinsman and for all of those who are in need. Perhaps, the Torah is trying to teach us the meaning of one’s responsibility for one’s total community. For the most ecumenical among us, we are all children of the One God. That is why the Midrash teaches us that God created “Adam” – one being, both male and female, so that no one might argue “my ancestor is greater than yours.” If we regard our fellow men and women as brothers and sisters, then we should be willing to offer a helping hand to any one of them who may be in need. And if not, then we are clearly (at least according to the interpretation set forth here), obligated to offer that same hand “*readily and have no regrets.*” Either way the Bible is telling us to not to look down on those less fortunate, but rather to consider them as part of our extended family and community. That is why when we see a beggar, we should see someone created b’tzelem Elohim, in the image of God, a fellow child of God.

*“When a beggar stands at your door, the Holy One... stands at his right hand.”*

Vayikra Rabbah 34:10

### **The Remaining Collection:**

In addition to the texts reviewed at the beginning of this section, there are a number of additional “classic” texts that are the foundation of many of the major Jewish principles linked to *tzedakah* and *gimilut chasadim*. They are listed below as resources for text study and discussion. Those that are referenced in the “Template” section at the end are indicated with an asterik (\*). Many of these texts may be combined to address particular populations, needs and/or circumstances. Several have already been paired below because their imperatives are often linked.

1. **\*Mishaneh Habriyot – Respect for all Human Life**
  2. **\*Lechem Lreyvim – Feeding the Hungry**
  3. **Bikur Cholim – Visiting the sick**
  4. **L’hader P’nai Zaken – Respect for Elders**
  - 5a. **Shomrei Adamah – Guarding the Earth/ Ecology**
  - 5b. **Baal Tashchit – Do not Waste**
  - 6a. **Pidyon Shvuyim – Ransoming the Captive**
  - 6b. **Al Ta’amod - Do Not Stand Idly By**
  7. **Hachnassat Orchim – Welcoming Guests**
  8. **Shalom Bayit – Peace in the Home**
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1. **\*Mishaneh Habriyot – Respect for all Human Life**

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam Mishaneh Habriyot*

*Blessed are You, Ruler of the Universe, Who formed many different types of people.*

2. **\*Lechem Lreyvim – Feeding the Hungry**

*One way to enter Heaven is by feeding the hungry.*

Midrash Tehilim 118:17

3. **Bikur Cholim – Visiting the sick**

*Rabbi Akiva said, “He who does not visit the sick is as if he shed blood.”*

Nedarim 40a

#### 4. **L'hader P'nai Zaken – Respect for Elders**

*When we were young we were told to act like adults. Now that we are old we are treated like infants.*

Bava Kamma 92b

*Honor and respect the aged and saintly scholar whose physical powers are broken, equally with the young and vigorous one; for the broken tablets of stone no less than the whole ones had a place in the Ark of the Covenant.*

Berachot 8b

#### 5a. **Shomrei Adamah – Guarding the Earth/ Ecology**

*In the hour when the Holy One created the first human being, God took the person before all the trees of the garden of Eden and said to the person: "See my works, how fine and excellent they are! Now all that I have created, for you have I created. Think upon this, and do not corrupt and desolate my world: for if you corrupt it, there is no one to set it right after you."*

Kohelet Rabbah 7:28

*All that we see... the heaven, the earth, and all that fills it... All these things are the external garments of God.*

Tanya, chapter 42

*One day he, Choni, the circle drawer was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree: he asked him, "How long does it take (for this tree) to bear fruit?" The man replied, "Seventy years." Choni then further asked him, "Are you certain that you will live another seventy years?" The man replied. "I found (ready grown) carob trees in the world; as my ancestors planted these for me, so I too plant these for my children.*

Taanit 23a

#### 5b. **Baal Tashchit – Do Not Waste**

*The Law forbids only wanton destruction... Not only one who cuts down trees, but one who smashes household goods, tears clothes, demolishes a building, stops up a spring, or demolishes a destroys articles of food with destructive intent, transgresses the command - "Baal Tashchit."*

Rambam Mishneh Torah:

King and Wars 6:8, 10

**6a. Al Ta'amod Daam Re'echah - Do Not Stand Idly By the (spilled) Blood of Your Neighbor**

*One shall not stand by idly when his brother's blood is being shed.*

Leviticus 19:16

*If a person permitted certain sins to go on without strongly objecting, that person is considered a murderer.*

Moed Katan 5a

**6b. Pidyon Shvuyim – Ransoming the Captive**

*The duty of ransoming captives supersedes the duty of tzedakah to the poor.*

Maimonides, Mattenat Aniyyim

8:10

*Money set aside for charity purposes or for the building of a synagogue may be used for ransoming captives.*

Bava Batra 88b

**7a. Hachnassat Orchim – Welcoming Guests**

*God appeared to him (Abraham) at Elonay Mamray. He was sitting at the opening of the tent during the heat of the day. He lifted his eyes to see and there were three men standing over him. He ran from the opening of the tent to greet them and he bowed to the ground. He said: "my lords, if I have found favor in your eyes do not pass before me. Take a little water and wash your feet. Rest here under the tree. I will take a slice of bread and you will refresh yourselves. Then you can go..."*

Genesis 18:1-5

**7b. Shalom Bayit – Peace in the Home**

*Where there is domestic harmony, the Lord Himself dwells in the home.*

Sukkah 17a

*Whoever manages to establish peace in his home is regarded by Scriptures as if he were a king who establishes peace in Israel... and whoever allows jealousy and dissension to reign in his household is as if he is a king who established jealousy and dissension among all Israel.*

Avot D'Rabbi Natan 28:3

### Section III – Review of Theoretical Literature

Lawrence Kohlberg, a cognitive developmental psychologist focused his life's work on what he called the levels of Moral Development. His most famous work is based on questions that are raised when one has to think about an ethical dilemma and then choose the "greater good."

Kohlberg uses the example of Heinz, the man whose wife will die if he does not get her the medicine she needs. The complicating factor is that the pharmacy is charging an outrageous sum of money which Heinz cannot afford. Should he steal the medicine to save his wife's life or allow her to die because it is illegal and unethical for him to steal the medicine? At the same time, is it unethical for the pharmacy to charge whatever it wants when a person's life is at stake?

Kohlberg articulated six levels – the highest stage of which is Universal Ethical Principles, where a person develops and follows his or her own self chosen ethical principles, which are a part of an integrated and carefully thought out system of values. If social laws violate these principles, the person's actions will remain consistent with his or her ethical principles. While the mitzvah heroes we will explore in this project do not always need to fight or supersede the "system," they do need to rely on the clarity of their mission and of the ethical principles which they have ultimately made a decision to adhere to. That clarity, that unwavering devotion is what we hope to capture some small part of and try to transmit.

Abraham Maslow, one of the founders of humanistic psychology, believed that every person has it within themselves to help make the world a better place. Maslow stated, *"These 'altruistic' people may be understood, at least in part, as having been satisfied in their basic needs throughout their lives, particularly in their early years. They seem to develop exceptional power to withstand recent or future thwarting of these needs simply because they have strong healthy character structure... It is just the ones who have loved and been loved, have had many deep friendships, who can hold out against hatred, rejection, or persecution."* This was the beginning of Abraham Maslow's understanding of self-actualizing people. Self-actualization is actually the highest level of Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" thereby making it the hardest level to achieve. Are Mitzvah Heroes self-actualizers? Maslow didn't comment on that but he did refer to the people that performed extraordinary good deeds as "the best of humanity."



While Kolberg's and Maslow's teachings offer insights into the nature and character of Mitzvah Heroes, it is Nel Noddings who offers a prescriptive for how people can achieve this level of caring. Dr. Nel Noddings, Professor of educational philosophy, has developed a thesis which she calls "The Ethics of Caring". In an effort to truly transform people from just "caring about" a cause or an issue into people who "care for" a cause or person, Dr. Noddings believes that one will change if they participate in the following four pronged process: Modeling, Dialogue, Practice and Confirmation.

**Modeling.** Within a care perspective, not unexpectedly, educators are concerned with the growth of people as "care-ers" and "care-fors." Unlike cognitive developmentalists, for example, they are not primarily interested in "moral" reasoning (although there is, of course, a recognition that reasoning is important). **Educators have to show in their behavior what it means to care.** "We do not merely tell them to care and give them texts to read on the subject, we demonstrate our caring in our relations with them." (Noddings 1998:190)

**Dialogue.** According to Noddings, "Dialogue is such an essential part of caring, that we could not model caring without engaging in it" (op.cit.). While the intent to engage people in dialogue about caring is clear, the reason why to do so is not. The answer may be, that in talking directly about, and exploring our caring – we come to realize that it can be manifested in very different ways. **True and open dialogue with other caregivers and with those that we care for, may help people to critique and better understand their own relationships and practice.** This type of dialogue allows us to also evaluate our 'attempts' to care: "As we try to care, we are helped in our efforts by the feedback we get from the recipients of our care" (ibid:191). Furthermore, and most crucially according to Noddings, dialogue contributes to the growth of the cared-fors.

In this project, I have expanded "dialogue" to include a conversation with the history, traditions and values of Judaism through Jewish texts. This not only roots the learning in Jewish sources but puts the learner in direct conversation with these texts and with commentators throughout the centuries.

**Practice.** Nel Noddings (1998:191) argues that the experiences in which we immerse ourselves tend to produce a ‘mentality.’ If we want to produce people who care for another, then it makes sense to **give students practice in caring and the opportunity for reflection on that practice.** This is the thinking behind “required” community service in high schools and many youth organizations.

**Confirmation.** This particular component, it is suggested, sets caring apart from other approaches to moral education. In making her case, Nel Noddings draws particularly on the work of Martin Buber. He describes confirmation as **an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others** (see *Between Man and Man*).

Ordinary people may be concerned about the homeless and the hungry in our community and it is certainly important to make a donation to help those people. But to do so once a year when the phone rings and we are asked to contribute is quite different from actually picking up leftovers from a banquet weekly and delivering it to a homeless shelter or soup kitchen. Dr. Noddings’ premise is that “caring about” is empty if it does not culminate in ongoing, caring relations. (Noddings 2002:23-4)

In the body of this paper, I will introduce the reader to several people – Mitzvah Heroes – that I believe reflect the thinking of both Kolberg and Maslow, and perhaps more importantly, do their chesed work in accordance with Dr. Noddings’ key components. These individuals may not know about Nel Noddings or her work, yet they are true exemplars of her underlying premise and assumptions about caring. It is because of this correlation that the “template” at the end of this project incorporates Noddings’ four-pronged process.

#### Section IV – ZIV Tzedakah Fund

The following is the current Mission Statement for the Ziv Tzedakah Fund:

*The Ziv Tzedakah Fund, started by Danny Siegel in 1981, is an exciting and unusual organization that is dedicated to the collection and distribution of funds to various little-known Tzedakah projects (we define "Tzedakah" as pure, decent caring or, simply put, "just doing the right thing"). Based upon Jewish tradition, Ziv funds both Jewish and non-Jewish programs. Ziv is also devoted to bringing the educational message of Tzedakah to communities and Jewish and secular schools throughout the United States, Canada and Israel.*

To date the Ziv Tzedakah Fund has distributed almost \$10 million. A description of the funds current efforts, educational resources, links to many of its recipient organizations, and copies of Ziv's annual reports are all available online at [www.ziv.org](http://www.ziv.org). A copy of the report from the year the project was conducted and the most recent Ziv Tzedakah Fund Annual Report are included in the Appendix of this project.

In recent years, Ziv has also produced a series of DVD's on many of the Mitzvah Heroes visited by the students who participated in this project. These DVD's can and should be used in conjunction with the project's Programmatic Template and are available for purchase from Ziv's website and can also be viewed at or borrowed from the Tartak Learning Center on the Los Angeles Campus of HUC-JIR ([www.huc.edu/tartak](http://www.huc.edu/tartak)).

## Section V – Mitzvah Heroes

Abraham Joshua Heschel once said, “What we need more than anything else is not textbooks, but text people. It is the personality of the teacher, which is the text that the pupils read: the text that they will never forget.”

As someone who has worked with teenagers for the past twenty-five years, I have come to understand that this statement by Rabbi Heschel is indeed true. We all look to people, to teachers of all kinds, formal and informal, for the answers about how to live our lives and how to model ourselves. In particular, however, young people need heroes, indeed they seek them out. In a day and age when teens are asked who their personal hero is and they respond with the name of a rock star or athlete, not for their philanthropy but because of their “professional” status, something is wrong. You can admire these individuals for their talent, prowess or professional achievements but they should not earn “hero” status as a result. This section tells the stories of several of the Mitzvah heroes with whom I had the honor of working during my fellowship and, in turn, introducing the HUC students to as part of this project.

Most people do not grow up hoping or planning to be a Mitzvah Hero, nor usually, is it something that a person suddenly decides to be. It seems like it just happens – at least that is what I have learned from my experiences with the Ziv Tzedakah Fund. Through my involvement in this most amazing organization, I have had the good fortune to meet and be inspired by the people who, Danny Siegel, founder and chairman of Ziv, refers to as “Mitzvah Heroes.” Over the past ten years, I have had the privilege of getting to know a variety of individuals, whose lives were transformed by a serendipitous moment or an epiphany-type experience. However, at their core they were already Mitzvah heroes in the making. The only question was what would happen to catapult them forward, when would it happen, and, ironically, would they even be able to pinpoint a particular moment or incident or “would it just happen?”

The Mitzvah Heroes that I have highlighted here are ‘ordinary’ human beings who currently live and work in Israel. The only difference is that they are very busy doing ‘extraordinary’ things.

This guide was written not to just share the stories of selected Mitzvah Heroes, but rather to help encourage all of us to do our part in making the world a better place. The encouragement is part of Nel Noddings 'modeling' and making the world a better place is pure Maslow. We all need role models in our lives, people to inspire us to grow and reach our true potential. I truly believe that we all have the power to get involved and make a difference. We are all capable of doing *tikun olam b'malchut shaddai – repairing the world within the majestic guidelines of goodness, righteousness, and Godliness.*

I will be highlighting six individuals and couples here. These and several others will be included in the next section (Programmatic Recommendations) even though they will not be covered in as much detail here. The six are:

1. **The Rabbanit Bracha Kapach**
2. **Clara Hammer**, The Chicken Lady of Jerusalem
3. **Anita Shkedi**, the Director of the **Israel Therapeutic Riding Association**
4. **Malky and Kalman Samuels**, creators of **Shalva**
5. **Miriam and Zarem Freier**, founders of **Shalhevet**
6. **Avshalom Beni**, who operates an organization called **H.A.M.A. – Humans and Animals in Mutual Assistance**

### **Rabbanit Bracha Kapach**

There are no Saints in Judaism however if we did have them I think the Rabbanit Bracha Kapach would come the closest to what I think a true saint is. The Rabbanit was married at the age of eleven and made aliyah from Yemen when she was fourteen, along with her husband and first child. Later in life after she had given birth to her children she busied herself with a full business of her own where she had sixty women embroidering clothing. It was a very successful business. One day she was walking home from work and heard a neighbor woman yelling out her window "Ani Reevah... Ani Reevah" I am hungry. The Rabbanit could not just walk past as if she had not heard anything, so she went in to find out about this woman. She found an elderly woman who had been abandoned by her family and had no way to provide for herself. The woman was laying in bed, in a filthy dirty apartment. The Rabbanit immediately washed the woman, gave her a meal and cleaned her apartment. From that moment on the Rabbanit provided three meals a

day for this woman, for the next four years of her life, and then provided a full funeral for her as well. This woman changed the Rabbanit's life. She closed down her business and instead went into the business of helping others. In a way the rest is history. Today the Rabbanit feeds hungry people in the Nachlaot area of Jerusalem every week. With donations from local caterers, following the many weddings that take place in Jerusalem, she distributes bags of prepared food to dozens of people who come to her door each Friday morning. However, she does not have enough food for the chaggim, the holidays. Therefore before a holiday a representative of the Ziv Tzedakah fund goes to the supermarket and purchases 100 bags of flour, 100 bags of sugar, 100 bottles of oil, 100 bags of rice and pasta, as well as coffee, tea and other day to day necessities for the Rabbanit to distribute.

The Rabbanit is the recipient of both the Israel Prize and the Jerusalem Prize. In fact, she and her late husband, the Rav, have the distinction of being the only married couple to have received the Israel Prize, and both for different reasons. In addition to feeding the hungry the Rabbanit lends beautiful wedding dresses to brides who could not otherwise afford one, gives clothing to those who do not have, runs a summer camp for the local underprivileged children of Nachlaot and she oftentimes writes checks to help keep someone's electricity from being turned off. The Rabbanit is a legend in Jerusalem and people who meet her cannot help but be impressed by her strong will and sense of purpose.

**Clara Hammer**, The Chicken Lady of Jerusalem, was at her butcher to purchase her weekly Shabbat order (over 20 years ago) and saw the butcher hand a bag of chicken fat and bones to a young girl. After the girl left the shop Clara inquired as to what the girl would be doing with such stuff. Mr. Hacker, the butcher, informed her that the girl's father was ill and that the family had run up quite a tab at the shop. He could no longer afford to help the family. So, at least the chicken fat and bones would make chicken soup and help in a cholent. Clara was appalled and told the butcher that from that day forward she wanted the family to be given two chickens and a kilo of ground meat. She would pay for this anonymously. A week later Mr. Hacker, the butcher called Clara Hammer with a similar story and the rest is history. Through donations, large and small she now supports over 190 families on a weekly or monthly basis. Her weekly bill at Mr. Hacker's butcher store is about 6,000 NIS = approximately \$1500.00. Today Clara is

94 years old and still going strong. In spite of a pacemaker and other maladies, she told us that she has to remain healthy and continue to live because so many people depend on her. In the United States Clara had been a Talmud Torah teacher, along with her husband, but she had always dreamed of making aliyah, which they did not long after the 6 Day War. She had always done volunteer work, even before her life changing moment at the butcher shop. It is a part of her life that she knows is something she is privileged to do. Even at the age of 94 she goes out often to share the story of what she does, trying to inspire others to follow in her footsteps.

**Yossi Samuels** was born a healthy happy baby. At the age of fifteen months he was given a tainted DPT shot which caused him to become blind, deaf and hyper-active. His parents searched for ways to communicate with Yossi and to also raise their family of seven other children as normally as possible. Yossi was introduced to Shoshana Weinstock who, deaf as well, was a teacher for the deaf. Shoshana became the Israeli Ann Sullivan and Yossi became the Israeli Helen Keller. After living to see their son Yossi able to share his feelings and live as close to normal a life as possible, **Malky Samuels** prevailed upon her husband **Kalman** to create a place where other families with special children might be able to find help or a respite during the day from the difficulties of raising a special child. Thus **Shalva** was born. This unique facility provides every kind of physical and occupational therapy for the entire range of children with special needs, i.e. deaf, blind, down's syndrome, autism and more. Kalman and his wife, Malky, know only too well the challenges of raising a child with severe special needs and it was because of this that they wanted to help others to learn from their experiences and to help make their lives a bit less stressful. The building that Shalva is in today is only a few years old. For many years Malky did day care and other support programs out of a two bedroom apartment. Shalva is a dream come true. It is complete with a swimming pool for therapy, an arts and crafts room, a full stage, a computer lab, a sound and sensory room, a music room, a dormitory for overnight stays, two full kitchens and much more. It is truly a miracle that such a place exists, but does so because of the tenacity and strong will of Malky and Kalman Samuels.

**Anita Shkedi**, is the Director of the **Israel Therapeutic Riding Association** where children and adults with neurological diseases or trauma, as well as survivors of terror attacks, are helped to walk and function again. Israel National Therapeutic Riding Association is based at Hadassah

Neurirm and is a magical place where lives are transformed through the science of Therapeutic Horseback-riding. Anita is a world expert in the field and has been helping people gain a quality of life that they may not have thought possible. People who are physically impaired or have any variety of different mental or physical issues are helped by riding atop a horse because the movements of the horse most closely replicates the body's own movements and in turn stimulates the nerves and muscles in the spine. Balance and muscle control are developed. People begin to take control of their bodies. When I was at INTRA I saw a group of riders who are mentally disabled adults who are given lessons once a week. It helps them interact with other people and also provides a chance for them to care for the horses. I also saw a young man who had become skizophrenic as an adult. The riding was helping to calm his nerves and was giving him something in his life in which he truly excels.

Following a five month boat trip around the Straits of Tiran, Anita and her family arrived in Israel to make Aliyah, only to find out that the Dr. with whom she was going to work, at Tel Hashomer Hospital, had died during her trip. Upon finding out this information Anita needed to reevaluate what she was going to do for work in her new home. Having been raised in England with horses, she was both an expert and a lover of horseback-riding. Soon she realized that she could take her passion for horses and her training in physical therapy and combine the two into a truly meaningful way to help others. She trained at the Wingate Institute and became the expert that she is today.

**Miriam Freier's** husband Zarem, was the head of Pediatrics at Shaarey Zedek Hospital for over thirty years. About twenty five years ago, Zarem asked Miriam if he could bring home a severely physically disabled little girl, who had been abandoned at birth. She was about ten at that time. Miriam said yes and thus began Miriam's devotion to helping make the lives of the physically disabled just a bit better. This little girl came home weekly and stayed overnight at the Freier's home, playing with the family's five children. After this little girl passed away Miriam began to take physically disabled people to Europe, a trip that they never thought possible. She raises money and puts on both a Hannukah party and a Pesach Seder for people who live with physical disabilities. As a one woman performer of miracles, Miriam took on the city of Jerusalem and convinced the "powers that be" that there was a need for an apartment



building for the physically challenged to live independently. *Shalhevet, Housing for the Handicapped* is what the apartment building is called. It has thirteen disabled occupants, several of whom have caregivers. The people who live there were either born physically disabled or had an accident or illness that caused them to become disabled. They live in these apartments that have been built to specifications for the needs of the disabled. For some of the residents, this is the first time they have ever lived outside of their parent's home or outside of an institution.

**Avshalom Beni** runs an organization called *H.A.M.A. – Humans and Animals in Mutual Assistance*. Avshalom is a graduate of Reed College of Oregon and was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship which he turned down because he could not afford for his wife to go with him to Europe for the year. He then began studying law at Harvard University, but it did not take him long to determine that this was not his calling. Instead he made Aliyah in 1969 and came to live on a Kibbutz, where his love of animals and his knowledge of psychology came together. Avshalom spends his life working with the abused and often neglected elements of Israeli society, doing therapy with the help of cats and dogs. He works with Holocaust Survivors, physically assaulted and sexually abused children, as well as victims of terror. He saves animals that have been abused and uses them in the therapy – a three legged Canaan Dog that was abused by a cult, a small sweet dog that was physically abused beyond recognition, but who lived to be an inspiration to people who now have to live with scars from the random acts of terror that has been a part of Israeli life for such a long time, as well as cats and an entire flock of Pekinese dogs. These animals are able to help those that have suffered so much by allowing them to care for the animals and to love them. It is through these interactions that the patients will invariably open up and share their innermost feelings.

*These additional Mitzvah heroes were also visited by the students participating from HUC in Jerusalem and some are incorporated into the Programmatic Recommendations of this project.*

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**Dr. Eliezer Jaffe**, known as the father of Social Work in Israel and founder of the **Israel Free Loan Association**. Dr. Jaffe is very familiar with Rambam's ladder of Tzedakah, and it became clear to him as the influx of Russians and Ethiopian immigrants were arriving in such large numbers that they were going to need a hand to get set up and established. So in 1990 he founded this Free Loan Association. To date they have given out more than \$36,000,000 worth of loans. Dr. Jaffe was named the Centraid-L. Jacques Menard Professor for the Study of Nonprofit Organizations, Volunteering and Philanthropy and is now Professor Emeritus at the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This is the only Chair on this subject at any university in Israel and is an important element of the Master's degree program in Nonprofit Management, the first program of its kind in Israel.

**Reb Shmuel Munk** is the founder of an organization known as **Bayit Cham**, where he takes people who have suffered from mental illness and has put them back into the work force helping them to lead as normal a life as possible. Reb Shmuel has the uncanny ability to listen to what these people say to him, looking deep inside their soul and then using what he sees to help them rebuild their lives, finding meaningful work in the "real world". Over 250 people have benefited from Shmuel's intervention. They include grocery store workers, a silversmith, a florist, cooks in restaurants and banquet halls, as well as many other respected professions. **Bayit Cham** has made it possible for these people to lead relatively self-sufficient lives. **Bayit Cham** has made it possible for these people to live in dignity, with self-respect, without needing to receive subsidy or support from the welfare system of the government of Israel, in turn saving the State of Israel many thousands of dollars. If it were not for **Bayit Cham**, many of these people would end up in institutions or on the street.

The **Dental Volunteers of Israel Free Clinic** was founded by the late Holocaust survivor, Trudy Birger and is now still kept viable by her husband **Zev Birger**, also a Holocaust survivor, who took up Trudy's work after her unexpected death a few years ago. The DVI Clinic is the only

clinic of its kind in the world. Dentists volunteer from all over the world, spending usually two weeks treating the underprivileged children of Jerusalem. After having survived the Holocaust Trudy felt that she had been spared for a reason and felt compelled to find a way to help the less fortunate. Thus DVI was born.

Back near the beginning of the current intifada a woman named **Ruth Schlossman** was standing across the street from the Sbarro Pizzeria when the bomb went off. While she was not personally physically injured in that terror attack, it did have a dramatic effect on her nerves. After a few weeks she decided she needed a massage to try to relieve some of the stress and tension in her body. Following that very therapeutic massage she realized that if it could help her cope, then how much more so could it help the many people who were physically affected by terror attacks, and thus *The Gift of Comfort* was born. The Gift of Comfort uses licensed massage therapists who provide their services at a discount. Hundreds of survivors of terror attacks have benefited from this unique therapy.

**Alice Jonah** is the volunteer activities director at the Diplomat Hotel. The Diplomat Hotel is a former five star hotel in a suburb of Jerusalem. I visited the former Soviet Union, and along with many of our friends, worked very hard to help the Jews of Russia to emigrate, but none of us truly knew what was going to happen to them once they got out from under the heavy hand of communism. Fast forward about ten to fifteen years and come to the *Diplomat Hotel* in Jerusalem, home to about 500 elderly former Russians. In 1990, at the height of the immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union, the city of Jerusalem asked the owner of the Diplomat Hotel to turn itself into an absorption center for the new residents of Israel. Today these residents are watched over by the ever patient and very strong-willed **Alice Jonah**. The Diplomat is not a retirement hotel. There is no communal dining room. Each person or couple lives independently. But Alice makes sure that these people have some form of quality of life, from providing concerts and lectures to encouraging a choir of their own and arranging for them to perform at Old Age Homes around Jerusalem. She watches over the residents and makes sure that they receive special assistance should they become ill or have a special need or concern.

**Barbara Silverman**, survivor of four life threatening illnesses, works day and night sending *Packages from Home* to Israeli Soldiers who are protecting their country. She began her project taking Shabbat dinners to a group of soldiers who were stationed not far from Jerusalem, near Ramallah, but eventually was told by the army that it was too dangerous for her to continue. She felt she needed to do something, so Packages from Home was created. With the help of donations from all over the world, of both monetary and the much needed specific items, she works with volunteers to send packages of t-shirts, socks, toiletries, candy, cookies, batteries, cards and letters to soldiers serving in the IDF all over Israel.

**Keren Hanan Aynor** is an organization that was founded in memory of Hanan Aynor, former Israeli Ambassador to Ethiopia. Upon his death his very dedicated and strong-willed wife, Sara Aynor, decided to create a fund to offer scholarships for advanced education to Ethiopian Immigrants. Since its inception it has conferred over 800 such scholarships in 90 different disciplines. The recipients are educated contributing members to Israeli society.

## Section VI – Programmatic Recommendations

Thus far, this paper has tried to examine “the principles that under-gird” the next steps and programming of Tikkun Olam, particularly among teenagers and adults – the classic Jewish sources, the theoretical literature of moral action and the “ethics of caring,” and the lives and examples of people, these “mitzvah heroes” who live by these principles knowingly or not. The purpose then, of this section, is to meld these three elements into a “programmatic template” that can help frame these final suggestions and recommendations. The three examples listed here are just that – examples. One of the goals of this project is for the reader to take other Jewish sources from this paper or from their own research, match them with the stories of these Mitzvah Heroes or other relevant and inspirational individuals, and then combine that with practical suggestions for projects and activities.

In order to apply this template, one needs to identify a target audience (e.g., teenagers, college students, one-time adult efforts, sustained family tzedaka/mitzvah projects) and understand something about the nature of volunteering. Since it also helps to have a long list of quick, no excuse recommendations, I have included that here as well.

In general, people in our society are taught that volunteering is a good thing to do. Most faith-based youth programs build volunteer opportunities into their programming. Many schools now require “community service” hours. The goal in all of these efforts is usually to build a balance between “value” and “obligation.” Part of the value can actually be considered self-serving because, often, volunteers are people willing to take action to help build the kind of community that they want to live in. A wise friend of mine, who is passionate about recycling, once explained that we should expect, even demand, that Jewish teenagers and adults do simple things like picking up trash whenever it is in front of them (and disposing of it properly) for three reasons – one, because they feel responsible, two, because they feel good about doing it, and three, because it represents the type of world they want to live in.

Some volunteering choices are not this easy. As a volunteer, choosing between the causes and groups that need help can be tough... they are all important! Since we can’t do it all, Danny

Siegel, in his book,  $1 + 1 = 3$ , suggests that we must begin by answering several questions about ourselves:

1. What am I good at?
2. What do I like to do?
3. What bothers me so much about what is wrong in the world that I weep or scream in anger and frustration, or am speechless at the horror of it?
4. Whom do I know?
5. Why not?

Once you have an idea of what most of these answers are, Danny believes that it can be as simple as “caring, hugging, holding the hand of those who are critically ill, driving for hours on end, ...or bringing presents to others at the perfect moment when they are most needed”.

In general, volunteers are needed in almost every area of life. There is most certainly a pressing need for people with professional skills or special talents. If you are a writer, a bus driver, a plumber, musician, bookkeeper, doctor or lawyer, you can use your skills to help others. However, all nonprofit organizations also need help with clerical work (answering phones, stuffing envelopes, filing) as well as fundraising and publicity. This work may not seem exciting, but in most programs it is the behind the scenes work that holds everything together and makes it possible for the organization to fulfill its mission.

Here are 24 general guidelines (enough for a two-year program) for volunteering (or how to counter standard excuses):

1. It is easier than you think to be a volunteer.
2. You are usually in control of the timing. Pick a time that is convenient for you. You can put in as much or as little time as you want.
3. You don't necessarily have to make a long-term commitment – you can oftentimes do one time jobs such as spending an afternoon cleaning the beach or helping sort food at a food bank.
4. There are thousands of non-profit organizations that can benefit from one's assistance.

5. Some agencies may even create a job just for you. If they truly need you, they will be flexible and welcome your involvement.
6. You can come as you are. Many jobs do not require any special skills. What may be needed may be as simple as painting over graffiti on a freeway underpass or delivering meals to homebound elderly.
7. If there is something special that you need to know for a particular agency, most places will train you.
8. Everyone can help – everyone can do something.
9. Most people will find that there are volunteer opportunities within minutes of their own home or workplace. You can even help to begin a project like a neighborhood watch or neighborhood cleanup.
10. One of the underlying benefits of participating in volunteer programs is how it strengthens your community.
11. Volunteering can increase your sense of belonging and community spirit. Volunteering brings people together.
12. Volunteers often come from diverse backgrounds, they may have different skin color, may come from a different religion, or different ethnicity, but they all have the same goals, that of making the world a better place – to do Tikun Olam - repairing the world. Working together actually provides them with an opportunity to see just how much they have in common.
13. Volunteers who help the police, participate in neighborhood watch groups, learn CPR, or train to help in a disaster are creating a more secure community for everyone.
14. Volunteering together is also a good way to strengthen the bonds within a family. It teaches the children that the parents do as they do, not just as they say, and it helps the children see that they are an important part of the community too.
15. When schools have volunteer help from parents and other community members they can give students more individual attention and offer a wider range of activities, including sports, music and art classes, after-school programs and more.
16. By cleaning up our parks and our beaches and painting over graffiti volunteers make the world look better, and in turn that makes people feel better about the communities in which they live.

17. Volunteers provide valuable community service, which translates into saving some serious money. This money can be used for funding other local improvements. For example if neighbors help maintain a local park, the city can then spend more on things like replacing old benches or broken playground equipment.
18. Almost all programs that encourage teenagers to stay in school, help them get jobs, or provide after-school recreation rely heavily on volunteers.
19. While one volunteers they will learn a tremendous amount about themselves, about how to do things, about the government, about their community and certainly about other people.
20. People oftentimes learn that they have a hidden talent that they did not know about until they began volunteering. Taking on a new challenge creates an opportunity for people to learn that they are capable in new and different ways. They may find out that they are better with children than they thought or that they can actually sit and visit with a person in the hospital or an elderly person in a convalescent home.
21. Depending on the volunteer job, people may find that they learn a new skill. They may learn how to landscape, use a computer, do research or any variety of office skills.
22. It can be a very powerful experience to see that little things really do make a difference.
23. It changes a person's view of his or her own worth.
24. It can be a revelation, a life changing experience.

*Gimilut Chasadim are actions we do that show our love and care for one another.*

*Gimilut Chasadim is greater than Tzedakah. Tzedakah uses one's money.*

*Gimilut Chasadim uses one's money and oneself. Tzedakah is for poor people.*

*Gimilut Chasadim is for poor people and rich people. Tzedakah is for the living.*

*Gimilut Chasadim is for the living and the dead.*

Sukkah 49b



## Section VII – Programmatic – Part B (Template)

This template is built on the four part process of Dr. Nel Noddings (see page 17) – Modeling, Dialogue, Practice and Confirmation.

**Topic:**            **Lechem L'reyvim – Feeding the Hungry**

**Modeling:**       Rabbanit Bracha Kapach, Clara Hammer (see pages 21 and 22)  
(Hero/es)

**Dialogue:**       *One way to enter Heaven is by feeding the hungry.*    Midrash Tehilim 118:17  
(Text &  
Discussion)       *Discussion/Dialogue questions:*

- *Who's obligation is it to feed the hungry? Why?*
- *What are the positive and negative implications of helping people who are hungry? Should we be addressing sustainability and root causes?*
- *Why do you the Rabbis saw this action as deserving of entry into heaven?*

### **Practice (Recommended Activities):**

- Have a canned food drive in your synagogue or school. A youth group or Boy Scout or Girl Scout Troop can also do this in their local neighborhood by writing a letter and providing an empty grocery bag... coming back several days later to collect it.
- Around Thanksgiving or Pesach – do a special food drive.
- Find out what the caterer or the sisterhood does with their leftovers. It is legal to pack them up and give them to the needy. Google the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Law for more information.
- Volunteer to work in a shelter or soup kitchen.
- Find local restaurants, bakeries or bagel shops that would be willing to donate their leftovers or day old bread and arrange for someone to pick it up and deliver it to a shelter or soup kitchen on a regular (maybe even daily) basis.

**Confirmation:**    Pitch an article to a local newspaper or television news program. Collect reflections from participants for the article and then share them on a synagogue website and/or public forum (e.g., Shabbat Services).

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**Topic:**        **Mishaneh Habriyot – Respect for all Human Life (Special Needs)**

**Modeling:**     **Anita Shkedi**, the Director of the **Israel Therapeutic Riding Association**,  
(Hero/es)        **Malky and Kalman Samuels**, creators of **Shalva**, and/or **Miriam and Zarem**  
                     **Freier**, founders of **Shalhevet** (see pages 23, 24 and 25)

**Dialogue:**     *Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam Mishaneh Habriyot*  
(Text &        *Blessed are You, Ruler of the Universe, Who formed many different*  
Discussion)     *types of people.*

*Discussion/Dialogue questions:*

- *What might have prompted the bracha's author(s) to have written it?*
- *Is it better to have separate places available for special needs individuals and their families like Shalva, Shalhevet and INTRA or should they be integrated into the general community?*
- *How might the volunteers and the recipients get to contribute in these environments to the program and to each other?*

**Practice (Recommended Activities):**

- Arrange for a special needs program in the synagogue... it may be a once a month social group, or it can actually be a Hebrew School or Religious School Program. Match up young people from the synagogue youth group to be buddies at these programs.
- Offer a support group for parents of children with special needs.
- Do sensitivity training with the students in the synagogue Religious School or Youth Group.
- Contact local group homes for people with special needs and see if any of the residents are Jewish. Invite them to a Shabbat or Holiday dinner or program. Arrange for them to attend High Holiday Services or even attend Shabbat Services regularly.
- Take a tour of your synagogue. Look at it from the perspective of a physically challenged person. Is it handicapped accessible? What can be done?

- Is there a wheelchair in the congregation (or why not?) Take a ride around the building in the wheelchair. Could a wheelchair bound person go up to the Torah for an Aliyah? How far back would they have to sit in the sanctuary?
- Arrange for large print siddurim in the synagogue and even Braille siddurim
- Arrange for hearing aids in the synagogue.
- Have a program with a deaf interpreter and a deaf person to help sensitize the congregation to people with hearing disabilities.
- Have a program with a person who can talk about using a dog for independence (and meet the dog)!

**Confirmation:** Plan a “special needs” Friday night service at your synagogue or in the community as a culmination for the year’s efforts. Have participants highlight several of the projects, have family members speak about their needs in the Jewish community, and have people participate in simulations (e.g., closing their eyes or even better turning off the lights, accessing the bimah in a wheelchair, having the Cantor or Rabbi mouth their words for 60 seconds, etc.).

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**Topic:**            **L’hader P’nai Zaken – Respect for Elders**  
**Shalom Bayit – Peace in the Home**

**Modeling:**        **Avshalom Beni, Director of HAMA – Humans and Animals in Mutual**  
 (Hero/es)           **Assistance** (see page 25)

**Dialogue:**        *Honor and respect the aged and saintly scholar whose physical powers are*  
 (Text &                *broken, equally with the young and vigorous one; for the broken tablets of stone*  
 Discussion)         *no less than the whole ones had a place in the Ark of the Covenant.*    Berachot 8b

*Where there is domestic harmony, the Lord Himself dwells in the home.*

Sukkah 17a

*Discussion/Dialogue questions:*

- *What is the reference to the broken tablets and why were they kept in the ark?*
- *Why is Shalom Bayit an appropriate principle to teach with this hero?*
- *Why is special about working with Holocaust survivors?*
- *Why does Avshalom have the children work with the animals?*

**Practice** (Recommended Activities):

- Arrange for a Holocaust speaker to come and share their experiences, so that the community can understand the “nightmares” that these people live with.
- Offer a class showing the students how to use animals when visiting people in the hospital, at a nursing home or with abused children.
- Help to walk or bathe the animals that do the visiting.
- See if your animal could be a “therapy” animal or a visiting pet for the patients in the hospital or nursing home.
- Have a program where an animal therapy pet and their owner or trainer shows the group how they do what they do best.

**Confirmation:** Have a party (maybe even with the residents and certainly with a least one trained animal) to celebrate having successfully visited the hospital or Home for the Aging over a given period of time.

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There are many places that we can all lend our skills and expertise in Jewish life and the community at large. Here are additional “Programmatic Recommendations” that could be applied as the “Practice” section of a new template that you can build and modify on your own.

### **Hachnassat Orchim – Welcoming Guests**

- Examples of gimilut chasadim projects would be:
- Project Chicken Soup – providing meals for homebound people who suffer with AIDS
- Meals on Wheels – providing meals for homebound elderly
- Habitat for Humanity – building an affordable home for a family that would otherwise not be able to ever own one.
- Helping to provide Shabbat or Holiday meals for students who are away from home and live in your community.
- Arranging for Pesach Seders for strangers within your midst.
- Working with a local homeless shelter, preparing meals and possibly referring clients to them.

### **Bikur Cholim – Visiting the sick**

- Create a Bikur Cholim committee within the synagogue. Learn about the art of bikur cholim – visiting the sick from your Rabbi... there are helpful hints that can make it easier to visit strangers. Arrange to get weekly lists as to the members of the congregation that are in each of the local hospitals. Create a round robin for the visitations.
- When you have a family member or friend who is in the hospital, make sure you go to visit them. Take a small potted plant or flowers and visit a stranger. It is amazing how much it can help anyone to have a friendly person to talk to.
- Create generic hospital kits to be given to members who are hospitalized. The kit can include magazines and paperback books, maybe some taped music or a video tape of a funny movie. For children you might want to include a teddy bear.
- Create a team of Mitzvah Clowns that might be interested in visiting people in the hospitals.

### **L'hader P'nai Zaken – Respect for Elders**

- Visit the local Old Age Home or Nursing Home – visit, ask questions; the residents love to tell their stories.
- Arrange for the flowers from the synagogue parties go to the Home to help brighten up the space.
- Bring a group of children to perform and play with the residents. They love to play bingo.
- If you can read dramatically, come and read a good book to the residents who can no longer read themselves, due to failing eyesight.
- Bring a group of Mitzvah clowns to the Home too. Cheering up is always a good thing.
- Ask the home if they will allow animals to visit (see the earlier template on Avshalom Benni).
- Arrange for large print books to be donated to the home.

### **Shomrei Adamah – Guarding the Earth/ Ecology**

- Start a recycling program in your home, at your synagogue or in your school. Newspaper, plastic, aluminum and glass.
- Plant a vegetable garden at the synagogue. Sell the produce and donate the proceeds to tzedakah.
- Plant flowers, trees and bushes around the synagogue buildings to beautify the landscaping.
- Help JNF sell trees to beautify Israel. Participate in other JNF projects such as the water project.
- Participate in a clean up project such as: Heal the Bay, Treepeople, Adopt a highway or canyon, do a city or park clean-up or graffiti clean-up.
- Do a survey of cleaning products and see which are bad for the environment. Alert the congregation.

### **Baal Tashchit – Do not Waste**

- Collect used books to donate to a book drive. Proceeds to go to tzedakah.
- Collect hotel size samples to donate to homeless shelters or to send to soldiers in Israel.
- Clean out your closets and give away good used clothing to shelters or rummage sales where the proceeds can go to tzedakah.
- Collect used car seats and baby clothes and toys and give to young families that do not have them.
- Collect used eyeglasses to be given to eye clinics that can recycle them.
- Collect used cell phones and donate to the police department to give to victims of domestic abuse for 911 calls.
- Help collect unused medical supplies that are not used in our hospital operating rooms, but are thrown away. Donate them to REMEDY, an organization that sends these much needed items to Third World Countries.
- Arrange for the bima flowers to be taken to a Nursing Home or Old Age Home or Hospital.
- Encourage families to celebrate their simcha with baskets of food or books or toys or any other creative items that can then be donated to people less fortunate.

### **Pidyon Shvuyim – Ransoming the Captive**

- Learn about people that are still being used as slaves today... children in many countries are used to do slave labor, Find out about these people and begin a campaign to help free them.
- Learn about Craig Kyleberger and his campaign to free the children of Pakistan and how the students at the Broad Meadows School in Massachusetts began a campaign to help spread the story of Iqbal Masih, a child who was a slave and was murdered by his former owners because he spoke out.

### **Al Ta'amod - Do Not Stand Idly By**

- Learn about various social justices causes that are in our midst...labor union disputes, sweat shop labor, conscientious objectors, immigrant detention – patriot act?,
- Learn about oppression and Genocide that is currently taking place around the world... Darfur, Sudan. Raise money to build wells for safe water in the Sudan.
- Conflict in Ireland, killing in the Congo – Protest, Protest, Protest... Write letters to elected officials and circulate petitions.
- Learn about Righteous Gentiles who saved the lives of Jews during the Holocaust.

### **Shalom Bayit – Peace in the Home**

- Make sure there are abuse hotline numbers printed and posted on bathroom stalls in the synagogue.
- Collect used cell phones to be given to victims of domestic abuse in order to call 911.
- Have a therapist come and speak about issues of stress and how it affects Shalom Bayit.



## CONCLUSION

One of my many wonderful experiences in Israel was attending a meeting of BNI, Business Networking International. The meeting was in September, very early in my year in Israel. The meeting was conducted completely in Hebrew, so I had to try very hard to follow along. At one point everyone was asked to tell about him or herself and to share a personal dream, all in sixty seconds. I figured that I would not have to talk since I was a guest, but lo and behold, no such luck. When it was my turn I told them that in a former life I worked with teenagers, that I was currently working with the Ziv Tzedakah Fund and that my dream was “Le Takhain Olam b’malchut shaddai” – to repair the world in the kingdom of god. The man across from me, said: “is that all, what about ending world hunger and homelessness?” I said: “that too.”

Merrill Alpert  
Final Project  
Hebrew Union College  
School of Jewish Communal Service

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## Exit Interview

What was one of the best aspects or qualities of this program?

- seeing such incredible acts of selfless generosity and caring
- being inspired to do something meaningful/similar in the US
- experiencing the beautiful side of Israeli society
- meeting people who have dedicated their lives to helping/serving others
- going to the homes of Israelis... that was great!

What was one of the most frustrating or difficult aspects of this program?

- trying to find good times to visit all the heroes (scheduling was very difficult!)
- meeting with heroes with very different political views than my own... it was wonderfully enlightening, but sometimes frustrating/difficult, too

Did this add to your experience in Israel? Absolutely!If so, how?

It showed me another side of Israel that I didn't see in any other context. I learned about the generosity of Israelis, and it was wonderful to see such an inspiring segment of society (especially amidst all the stress and general negativity we saw in other contexts).

Would you recommend that this program be continued? YES!!!If not, why? n/aIf so, under what circumstances?(times per week, hours etc.)

It should begin when we start fall semester (right after the High Holidays) or when we're in Summer Ulpan... that way it's in our schedule from the BEGINNING. It should be one afternoon/week; number of hours would depend on the visit, but at least we'd know which day of the week to keep our schedules open. If it's in Jerusalem, then 1-1.5 hours; if it's outside Jerusalem, then you'd need more time (which is totally fine, as long as there's advanced notification).

Additional comments or recommendations:

Maybe have people jot down a few thoughts right after each visit? Or keep a small journal?

Mitzvan Heroes that we met

Miriam Freier – Shalhevet Housing for the Handicapped

Sara Aynor – Keren Hanan Aynor (Scholarships for Graduate or Professional School for Ethiopian Immigrants)

Clara Hammer – The Chicken Lady of Jerusalem

Ruth Schlossman – The Gift of Comfort

Rabbanit Bracha Kapach – Keren Segulat Naomi

Anita Shkedi – Israel National Therapeutic Riding Association

Avshalom Beni – HAMA – Humans and Animals in Mutual Assistance

Dr. Eliezer Jaffe – Israel Free Loan Association

Rabbi Kalman Samuels – Shalva

Zev Birger – Dental Volunteers of Israel

Reb Shmuel Munk – Bayit Cham

Barbara Silverman – A Package from Home

Given that the goal of this project is to help create synagogue communities that might be inclined to perform Tikun Olam (Repair of the World) or Gimilut Chasadim (Acts of Loving Kindness) I want to get feedback from you as to how these people might help us to teach others how to do these Jewish acts.

- 1.) Overall, did you personally find meeting these people to be inspiring? VERY inspiring!
  - a.) In what ways, yes? The heroes were SOO selfless, and their ideas seemed to pop out of nowhere... just an innate desire to help other people.
  - b.) In what ways, no? Their political opinions were often very different from mine, and their desire to do good was sometimes based on principles/beliefs I don't have.

I also wanted to mention that it was interesting to see how many of the heroes were "dati", or orthodox. It made me realize that religion can lead to incredible good OR incredible evil in the world, depending on how it's used. I hope that in my career I can help people find ways to do good in the world because of their faith/beliefs/religion!

4.) SPECIFICALLY, OF THE INDIVIDUALS YOU MET, WHICH ONES ARE THERE GOING TO BE YOU THINK others might find inspiring? All of them were very inspiring and/or interesting to me in some way... it's hard to choose just three!

a.) Avshalom Beni – the work he does with children and animals is unbelievable, he's such a friendly guy, & I liked that the services are available for ALL children in Israel (not just Jews)

b.) Rabbi Kalman Samuels – Shalva is out of this world. I couldn't believe how incredible their facilities were, how much they've done with their resources, and how much the program helps children and families in need. However, the one frustrating part of the visit was hearing about their brand new center in Gush. Why not put the new one in Tel Aviv or Haifa, where I'm sure it's also badly needed?! I don't know if I'd give money to an organization that was using it to create services in the Territories...

c.) Reb Shmuel Munk – Bayit Cham was probably the most inspiring place we visited. Reb Munk is absolutely amazing, and meeting him changed the way I think about Haredim. His eyes sparkle, and you can see the love he has for all human beings. His humility is also incredible. I am SOO glad we visited him!

3.) Do you think that people are inherently altruistic? Or inherently selfish?

Neither... I think it's mostly determined by our environment. For example, US culture teaches people to be selfish... we're a very individualistic society where we often put our needs above others' needs.

4.) What do you think could inspire ordinary people to do extraordinary things? Do you think it has to be a "beshert" moment or can it be planned?

"Bshert" moments are fabulous when they happen, but I believe people can be inspired in more planned/intentional ways. It's easy to inspire people; the challenge is convincing people to ACT on that inspiration, to follow through. I don't have any answers, except that people are more willing to act in areas that have personal meaning/connection.

5.) Do you think that as a Rabbi or an Educator you will try to create a Mitzvah oriented community as part of your community?

YES!!

a.) Do you see this as a priority? Absolutely

b.) Do you think it is something that the Rabbi or Educator can impose on the community or does it have to come from within the community – grassroots style?

It's better if it's grassroots style, but if nothing is emerging from within, then it's better for the rabbi/educator to encourage or impose it than for it to not happen at all.

6.) Why do you think the Reform Movement places so much emphasis on Social Justice?

The Reform Movement places so much emphasis on social action/justice because it's one of the most important components of Judaism, and it's one of the easiest for people to feel

## Exit Interview

Merrill Alpert  
Master's Project  
School of Jewish Communal Service  
Hebrew Union College Students - Jerusalem, 2004

What was one of the best aspects or qualities of this program?

- It was inspiring - mostly b/c these were ordinary people who did/are doing extraordinary things.
- It provided a whole new lens to see Israel, & in the midst of so much suffering, provided hope

What was one of the most frustrating or difficult aspects of this program?

- It was disheartening to see intense bigotry & hatred in some of the heros - Clara & Ruth come to mind in particular
- Scheduling always worked out, but took a lot of effort and could have been a lot easier although Merrill was exceedingly accommodating. It prob. would have been easier to have a more regular schedule.

Did this add to your experience in Israel? YES!

If so, how?

① See ques #1!

② These are stories that will enrich my presentation of the complexities of Israel to people at home

Would you recommend that this program be continued? Absolutely.

If not, why?

If so, under what circumstances?  
(times per week, hours etc.)

I liked doing 2 heros at once & would therefore recommend 3-5 hrs every other week (2x/month)

Additional comments or recommendations:

I don't know if any exist, but it would be nice to see more heros/orgs that are young & just starting - people in their 20s & 30s -- I want to be like the Rabbanit when I'm 80, but I would have also loved to meet her when she was my age!!

Miriam Freier – Shalhevet Housing for the Handicapped

\Sara Aynor – Keren Hanan Aynor (Scholarships for Graduate or Professional School for Ethiopian Immigrants)

\Clara Hammer – The Chicken Lady of Jerusalem

Ruth Schlossman – The Gift of Comfort

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\Reb Shmuel Munk – Bayit Cham

Barbara Silverman – A Package from Home

Given that the goal of this project is to help create synagogue communities that might be inclined to perform Tikun Olam (Repair of the World) or Gimilut Chasadim (Acts of Loving Kindness) I want to get feedback from you as to how these people might help us to teach others how to do these Jewish acts.

1.) Overall, did you personally find meeting these people to be inspiring?

a.) In what ways, yes? *b/c many of them started YES!*

b.) In what ways, no? *Small & have done amazing things*

*b/c, as you ask on the next page, I don't know how to move people from inspiration to sustained (not one-time) action.*



2.) Specifically, of the individuals you met, which ones and what about them, do you think others might find inspiring?

- a.) Rabbi Kalman Samuels - Shalva <sup>He is very approachable</sup> = Shalva is amazing, the story is very personal, the anecdote of parents hearing mezel for the first time still makes me cry,
- b.) Rabbanit Bracha Kapach - so cool.

- c.) Sara Aynor - Although she was not the best speaker/presenter, her project typifies the "teach a man to fish & he will eat for life" approach to social justice & it is important for people to see the next generation of Ethiopian kids
- d.) Clara Hammer - a great story & she's a riot
- e.) Reb Shmuel Munk - v. approachable & warm

3.) Do you think that people are inherently altruistic? Or inherently selfish?

Both. I think people want to be altruistic, but often need someone/something else to make it easy for them to be - being selfish is much easier & is often an issue of inertia

4.) What do you think could inspire ordinary people to do extraordinary things? Do you think it has to be a "beshert" moment or can it be planned?

First, I think for most people, if you make it easy for them, they will do it. <sup>so we have to figure out how to make it pa</sup> To do something hard takes either a beshert moment, or constant <sup>encouragement</sup> ~~support~~ <sup>from the community</sup> - maybe even positive pressure/mentor

5.) Do you think that as a Rabbi or an Educator you will try to create a Mitzvah oriented community as part of your community?

Absolutely

a.) Do you see this as a priority? Yes

b.) Do you think it is something that the Rabbi or Educator can impose on the community or does it have to come from within the community - grassroots style? Yes, I just haven't figured out how to do it yet.

6.) Why do you think the Reform Movement places so much emphasis on Social Justice?

Because if Judaism is just about ritual, it has lost its meaning & place in the world. I believe in a G-d that is far more interested in how often I make like better for another one of G-d's creatures/children, than how often I do the traditional liturgy each day. I believe social justice is a genuine & holy form of prayer.

## Exit Interview

Merrill Alpert  
 Master's Project  
 School of Jewish Communal Service  
 Hebrew Union College Students - Jerusalem, 2004

What was one of the best aspects or qualities of this program? INTIMATE MEETINGS -- THE INSIDER FEELING. THE WILLINGNESS / DESIRE TO SHARE FROM THE M. H.

What was one of the most frustrating or difficult aspects of this program? FINDING THE TIME. FEELING LIKE I'D HEARD THE STORY ALREADY FROM THE PREVIOUS M. H.

Did this add to your experience in Israel? YES.

If so, how? MET ISRAELI'S AND EXPERIENCED FIRSTHAND THE CULTURE OF VOLUNTEERING / DEDICATION TO Tzedakah THAT MAKES ME PROUD OF ISRAEL.

Would you recommend that this program be continued?

YES. ZIV & HUC IS A NICE MATCH.

If not, why?

If so, under what circumstances? (times per week, hours etc.) YEAR LONG B) MONTHLY VISITS.

Additional comments or recommendations:

MITZVAN HEROES that we met

Miriam Freier – Shalhevet Housing for the Handicapped

Sara Aynor – Keren Hanan Aynor (Scholarships for Graduate or Professional School for Ethiopian Immigrants)

✓ Clara Hammer – The Chicken Lady of Jerusalem

Ruth Schlossman – The Gift of Comfort

✓ Rabbanit Bracha Kapach – Keren Segulat Naomi

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Given that the goal of this project is to help create synagogue communities that might be inclined to perform Tikun Olam (Repair of the World) or Gimilut Chasadim (Acts of Loving Kindness) I want to get feedback from you as to how these people might help us to teach others how to do these Jewish acts.

1.) Overall, did you personally find meeting these people to be inspiring?

a.) In what ways, yes?

b.) In what ways, no?

a) yes. it is always great to hear people's stories and to experience the energy that emanates from a powerful person. All the people we visited were very strong and charismatic. They told their stories in a very meaningful way. Their Hesed is infectious.

b) I have nothing negative to say about this experience. Hard though it is to find time for these visits it is worthwhile.

2.) Specifically, of the individuals you met, which ones and what about them, do you think others might find inspiring?

a.) MIRIAM - 1<sup>ST</sup> VISIT. GREAT STORY. VERY HOSPITABLE.

b.) CLARA - A CLASSIC RELIGIOUS ZIONIST VERY CHARMING.

c.) R. SHMUEL - VERY MAGICAL. DEFIES STEREOTYPE. EXCEEDINGLY HUMBLE.

3.) Do you think that people are inherently altruistic? Or inherently selfish?

DEPENDS ON THE PERSON. I BELIEVE PEOPLE ARE BORN

"OPEN" AND "RECEPTIVE." FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS PEOPLE BECOME CLOSED. THESE M.H. HAVE BECOME OPEN AGAIN OR WERE PERHAPS NEVER IRREVERSIBLY

4.) What do you think could inspire ordinary people to do extraordinary things? Do you think it has to be a "beshert" moment or can it be planned?

EITHER. ORDINARY PEOPLE DO EXTRAORDINARY THINGS ALL THE TIME. THE M.H. DO EXTRAORDINARY THINGS THAT TRANSCEND IN QUANTITY THE E.O. THINGS THAT MOST ORDINARY PEOPLE DO. AGAIN I THINK SELFISHNESS, EGO, VANITY, NEAR-SIGHTEDNESS NEED TO BE TRANSCENDED IN ORDER TO BE A M.H. FOR THIS A PERSON MUST BE OPEN. AN OPEN PERSON IS EASILY INSPIRED. INSPIRED TO ACTION? DEPENDS ON THE PERSON -- IF THEY HAVE TEACHERS AND ROLE MODELS WHO VALUED ACTION OVER

5.) Do you think that as a Rabbi or an Educator you will try to create a Mitzvah oriented community as part of your community? YES OF COURSE.

a.) Do you see this as a priority? YES.

b.) Do you think it is something that the Rabbi or Educator can impose on the community or

does it have to come from within the community - grassroots style?

DEPENDS. THERE ARE LOTS OF PEOPLE WHO LOOK TO THE RABBI, UNKNOWINGLY, TO WAKE THEM UP, SUMMON THEM TO ACTION, SOUND THE SHOFAR. IF WE MAKE THE INITIAL MOVE I BELIEVE THOSE WE SERVE WILL RISE TO THE OCCASION. IF THEY MAKE THE INITIAL MOVE, WE MUST RISE.

6.) Why do you think the Reform Movement places so much emphasis on Social Justice?

LIB. JUDAISM IN ITS PUREST DOCTRINE TEACHES US TO SANCTIFY GOD'S CREATION, TO SANCTIFY MEANS TO RESTORE/CREATE A WORLD WHEREIN PEOPLE ARE REDEEMED. THE R.M. EMPHASIZES THIS BECAUSE SOCIAL JUSTICE IS A JEWISH VALUE THAT CAN AND MUST BE FLOWING OUT OF US.

GIVEN THE HISTORY OF THE R.M. IT IS NO SURPRISE THAT SOCIAL JUSTICE IS A PARAMOUNT VALUE B/C IT DOES NOT REQUIRE HALAKHIC COMMITMENT. IT AFFORDS WHAT I NEED AS A JEW THE OPPORTUNITY TO STRUGGLE AND SERVE GOD.

THANK YOU MERRILL,  
MICAH

## Exit Interview

Merrill Alpert  
Master's Project  
School of Jewish Communal Service  
Hebrew Union College Students - Jerusalem, 2004

What was one of the best aspects or qualities of this program?

See

What was one of the most frustrating or difficult aspects of this program?

Learning about the dire straits most social welfare programs are in today. This experience was challenging mentally b/c of that.

→ Did this add to your experience in Israel? Absolutely!

If so, how? Most of the time we are exposed to problems + issues w/in the country - and they are usually politically oriented. This project gave me the opportunity to see a very different and very important side of Israel. I was very inspired to meet the Mitzvah heroes - they gave me hope for the future (as I'm sure they do to many people!)

Would you recommend that this program be continued?

Definitely - rounded out other experiences during the year & was very meaningful.  
If not, why?

If so, under what circumstances? - Another idea would be to integrate it as part of the Wed. program (times per week, hours etc.)

Maybe 2x/month.

I think you were extremely patient (a special track) and understanding with our group.

Doing more visits @ the beg. of the school year would be helpful for the students - Summer w/ an night be a good time to start.

Additional comments or recommendations:

This was an invaluable addition to my year.

I have been to Israel many times & I gained a whole new perspective.

I think every student should be a part of this program.

It was inspiring & educational - what an amazing project!

Do further away visits sooner when people have more time.

Thanks for opening this up to the spouses. Inviting us was very welcome.

- Miriam Freier – Shalhevet Housing for the Handicapped
- Sara Aynor – Keren Hanan Aynor (Scholarships for Graduate or Professional School for Ethiopian Immigrants)
- Clara Hammer – The Chicken Lady of Jerusalem
- Ruth Schlossman – The Gift of Comfort
- Rabbanit Bracha Kapach – Keren Segulat Naomi
- Anita Shkedi – Israel National Therapeutic Riding Association
- Avshalom Beni – HAMA – Humans and Animals in Mutual Assistance
- Dr. Eliezer Jaffe – Israel Free Loan Association
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Given that the goal of this project is to help create synagogue communities that might be inclined to perform Tikun Olam (Repair of the World) or Gimilut Chasadim (Acts of Loving Kindness) I want to get feedback from you as to how these people might help us to teach others how to do these Jewish acts.

1.) Overall, did you personally find meeting these people to be inspiring?

a.) In what ways, yes?

b.) In what ways, no?

*Very inspiring - but frustrated  
that they don't get more governmental  
support - representative of a deeper  
issues of what a Jewish state  
is supposed to represent (actuality vs. dream)*

2.) Specifically, of the individuals you met, which ones and what about them, do you think others might find inspiring?

a.) Aneta Shkedi -

INTRA

Personal inspiring story that led to a way to physically & mentally assist those in need

b.) Clara Hammer

One of the most inspiring things to see is when someone gives of themselves to make sure everyone gets food & doesn't go hungry.

c.) Bayet Ham

One of the most challenging aspects of living in Israel is the mental anguish people endure. To work w/ mental aspects of healing is crucial to a person's well being

3.) Do you think that people are inherently altruistic? Or inherently selfish?

Altruistic is too strong of a word. I believe many people want to help others but not in a completely unselfish way.

4.) What do you think could inspire ordinary people to do extraordinary things? Do you think it has to be a "beshert" moment or can it be planned?

I think to dedicate your life to a cause like that is beshert. Right place, right time, right influences, right challenges... It has to be a personal connection to a cause

5.) Do you think that as a Rabbi or an Educator you will try to create a Mitzvah oriented community as part of your community?

Imperative. It must be an underlying theme through everything. Last yr. in my job I created a Mitzvah Corps theme through the entire year - projects, discussions, etc., trips

a.) Do you see this as a priority?

b.) Do you think it is something that the Rabbi or Educator can impose on the community or does it have to come from within the community - grassroots style?

As w/ any "new" idea people must take it on as their own. Effective leadership

6.) Why do you think the Reform Movement places so much emphasis on Social Justice?

It's a hands on, visual effective way to make a difference in the world. We are all searching for meaning & happiness - doing <sup>acts of</sup> social justice brings us closer to both as well as bringing others closer.

## Exit Interview

Merrill Alpert  
Master's Project  
School of Jewish Communal Service  
Hebrew Union College Students - Jerusalem, 2004

What was one of the best aspects or qualities of this program?

- Meeting the mitzvah heroes in person, face to face, & hearing their stories
- Merrill did nice job coordinating transportation
- meeting heroes of all observance levels, from different communities, etc. was very interesting

What was one of the most frustrating or difficult aspects of this program?

- Scheduling / last minute cancellations were sometimes frustrating
- Email communication within the group sometimes tough to follow

Did this add to your experience in Israel? Yes

If so, how?

- Met incredible people (the heroes)
- Let me see a side of Israel, i.e. the underprivileged, that I hadn't really seen
- Motivated me to try to give of myself in the future

Would you recommend that this program be continued? Yes!

If not, why?

If so, under what circumstances?

(times per week, hours etc.)

either 1, regular scheduled meeting per week

or

2 heroes at a time → particularly for those outside of Jerusalem, in a longer "day"  
(I enjoyed our "Field Trips")

Additional comments or recommendations:

- More group discussion after the events
- Small groups of 4-10 visitors results in a good group dynamic during the visits ... i.e. don't change the size



ETHIOPIAN HEROES THAT WE MET

Miriam Freier – Shalhevet Housing for the Handicapped

Sara Aynor – Keren Hanan Aynor (Scholarships for Graduate or Professional School for Ethiopian Immigrants)

Clara Hammer – The Chicken Lady of Jerusalem

Ruth Schlossman – The Gift of Comfort

Rabbanit Bracha Kapach – Keren Segulat Naomi

Anita Shkedi – Israel National Therapeutic Riding Association

Avshalom Beni – HAMA – Humans and Animals in Mutual Assistance

Dr. Eliezer Jaffe – Israel Free Loan Association

Rabbi Kalman Samuels – Shalva

Zev Birger – Dental Volunteers of Israel

Reb Shmuel Munk – Bayit Cham

Barbara Silverman – A Package from Home

Given that the goal of this project is to help create synagogue communities that might be inclined to perform Tikun Olam (Repair of the World) or Gimilut Chasadim (Acts of Loving Kindness) I want to get feedback from you as to how these people might help us to teach others how to do these Jewish acts.

1.) Overall, did you personally find meeting these people to be inspiring?

a.) In what ways, yes?

b.) In what ways, no?

Yes, I loved hearing their stories, abt. their lives, how they became "heroes"  
They were always excited to see us, which was fantastic.  
They had so much energy & give so much of themselves.

2.) Specifically, of the individuals you met, which ones and what about them, do you think others might find inspiring?

a.) Shmuel Mink - puts a new face on the orthodox community

b.) Clara Hammer - amazing personal story of trip to Israel & what she's made of her life

c.) Rabbani - amazing story again....

3.) Do you think that people are inherently altruistic? Or inherently selfish?

I hope!

4.) What do you think could inspire ordinary people to do extraordinary things? Do you think it has to be a "beshert" moment or can it be planned?

Both.... learning about altruism helps people to "recognize" the moment in life when you can make a difference

5.) Do you think that as a <sup>Doctor</sup> Rabbi or an Educator you will try to create a Mitzvah oriented community as part of your community?

I hope so!

a.) Do you see this as a priority? Yes

b.) Do you think it is something that the <sup>Doctor</sup> Rabbi or Educator can impose on the community or does it have to come from within the community - grassroots style?

Can be "imposed" by setting a great example & inspiring others to follow you lead!

6.) Why do you think the Reform Movement places so much emphasis on Social Justice?

- Saw the opportunity in the past & jumped... today we're still riding the momentum

- People can feel "involved" without being overly "religious"

Exit Interview

goodman

Merrill Alpert  
Master's Project  
School of Jewish Communal Service  
Hebrew Union College Students - Jerusalem, 2004

What was one of the best aspects or qualities of this program?

meeting inspirational, generous people dedicated  
to tikkun Olam

What was one of the most frustrating or difficult aspects of this program?

That some of the presentations took a long time,  
weren't focused & the people couldn't communicate  
the wonder of what they were doing

Did this add to your experience in Israel?

If so, how?

yes Provided an insight into Israeli society - how important  
Tzedakah is, how different Israelis take on the  
role of contributing to society & insight into the challenge

Would you recommend that this program be continued? *for people living here*

If not, why?

yes

If so, under what circumstances?

(times per week, hours etc.)

once a week - 2 hours max

Additional comments or recommendations:

tell people in advance who the group is, remind  
them that time is limited  
refrain from too much small talk w/ person

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1.) Overall, did you personally find meeting these people to be inspiring?

a.) In what ways, yes?

b.) In what ways, no?

*Yes - Shmuel Munk, the animal people, the Rabbanite  
all were unassuming, passionate & providing  
vital services*

*Their dedication & insight into problems & their  
solutions have been amazing  
Especially the dental clinic & the story of the  
family*

2.) Specifically, of the individuals you met, which ones and what about them, do you think others might find inspiring?

a.) Shumel Munk

b.) Avshalom Ben

c.) Rabkowitz

3.) Do you think that people are inherently altruistic? Or inherently selfish?

& this

4.) What do you think could inspire ordinary people to do extraordinary things? Do you think it has to be a "beshert" moment or can it be planned?

Personal experiences, sensitivity, awareness of others, inspiration of others. I think beshert moments can be ~~orchestrated~~ engineered - not a guarantee of "beshert" -

5.) Do you think that as a Rabbi or an Educator you will try to create a Mitzvah oriented community as part of your community?

absolutely

but putting the right person in the right situation helps

a.) Do you see this as a priority? yes

b.) Do you think it is something that the Rabbi or Educator can impose on the community or does it have to come from within the community - grassroots style?

can be inspired by professional but with buying involvement of lay people.

6.) Why do you think the Reform Movement places so much emphasis on Social Justice?

it's a key element of tenets of reform - idea of not being observant just for oneself but bringing holiness to lives of others

I still want Avshalom's address for student donations next year.

## Exit Interview

Merrill Alpert  
Master's Project  
School of Jewish Communal Service  
Hebrew Union College Students - Jerusalem, 2004

What was one of the best aspects or qualities of this program?

#1 Getting to see people and places in Israel  
I would otherwise not had been exposed to.

What was one of the most frustrating or difficult aspects of this program?

Scheduling conflicts - not enough time to meet  
everyone

Did this add to your experience in Israel? yes!

If so, how?

see #1

—also gave me stories & connections I can  
put others in touch with. Shows  
another side of Israel beyond politics &  
the situation.

Would you recommend that this program be continued?

yes

If not, why?

If so, under what circumstances?  
(times per week, hours etc.)

2x/month on a regular schedule.

Thurs afternoon/evening  
Wed or Sun evening

Additional comments or recommendations:

rather than just meeting the heroes find  
a way to get hands on with their  
projects. One way would be to talk w/ Rose  
& get some of these projects set up as a  
regular volunteer project of HUC like the  
inovasset group.

INTERVIEW SUBJECTS LISTED IN ORDER

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- 1.) Overall, did you personally find meeting these people to be inspiring?
  - a.) In what ways, yes?
  - b.) In what ways, no?

A) showed me that one person can do something & make change.  
gives me an opportunity to support amazing projects and people

B) showed a major flaw in Israeli society.  
There are many underserved populations.  
Also showed me what the pressure of living here can result in ... neglect, abuse, illness

2.) Specifically, of the individuals you met, which ones and what about them, do you think others might find inspiring?

- a.) Avshalom → seeing him in action, mtg the animals
- b.) Shalva → seeing the facility, mtg Yossi, hearing the story from the people that made it a realization & seeing how it thrives.
- c.) Rabbanit Kapach → her personal life story, also seeing the heart of her organization in action

3.) Do you think that people are inherently altruistic? Or inherently selfish?

Selfish

4.) What do you think could inspire ordinary people to do extraordinary things? Do you think it has to be a "beshert" moment or can it be planned?

I think overcoming adversity OR being a part of someone else's process is the inspiration. I'm not sure of the source.

5.) Do you think that as a Rabbi or an Educator you will try to create a Mitzvah oriented community as part of your community?

Absolutely

a.) Do you see this as a priority? Yes

b.) Do you think it is something that the Rabbi or Educator can impose on the community or does it have to come from within the community – grassroots style? It needs to be a combination.

6.) Why do you think the Reform Movement places so much emphasis on Social Justice?

We're about responding to modernity. This is a very modern way in which we can realize our partnership with Gd.



## Exit Interview

Merrill Alpert  
Master's Project  
School of Jewish Communal Service  
Hebrew Union College Students - Jerusalem, 2004

What was one of the best aspects or qualities of this program?

- meeting amazing "angels" who are truly an inspiration
- diversity of the heroes

What was one of the most frustrating or difficult aspects of this program?

not being able to meet every hero due to scheduling conflicts

Did this add to your experience in Israel?

Absolutely  
If so, how? This made the concept of doing mitzvot + tikun olam very real in the country considered our "homeland" - it was very powerful. Some things cannot be learned in classrooms but from example

Would you recommend that this program be continued?

most Definitely  
If not, why?

If so, under what circumstances?  
(times per week, hours etc.)

Keep the same structure  
It is hard for everyone to be available 100% but this worked quite well

Additional comments or recommendations:

Someone who works with the elderly

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- 1.) Overall, did you personally find meeting these people to be inspiring?
  - a.) In what ways, yes?
  - b.) In what ways, no?

Yes - seeing devotion and love  
being put into their cause;  
often a personal experience was  
the impetus showing how tragedy  
start something to help others

2.) Specifically, of the individuals you met, which ones and what about them, do you think others might find inspiring?

- a.) Avshalom Benic - the relationships we share with animals & how we give to each other through love & trust
- b.) Rabbi Kalman Samuels - how a personal tragedy helped them touch so many & change the lives of individuals & families
- c.) Clara Hammer - undying dedication of this very elderly lady teaches of devotion to her cause despite her age

3.) Do you think that people are inherently altruistic? Or inherently selfish?

These are 2 extremes but I would say more altruistic than selfish

4.) What do you think could inspire ordinary people to do extraordinary things? Do you think it has to be a "beshert" moment or can it be planned?

Beshert moments are powerful, but planned moments can be inspirational as examples are set

5.) Do you think that as a Rabbi or an Educator you will try to create a Mitzvah oriented community as part of your community?

Yes

a.) Do you see this as a priority? Yes

b.) Do you think it is something that the Rabbi or Educator can impose on the community or does it have to come from within the community - grassroots style?

from the community preferably with education

6.) Why do you think the Reform Movement places so much emphasis on Social Justice? Support

- Reference to the Torah
- a way of bringing community together