

CHAI MITZVAH MIXTAPE TEEN PROGRAM: DECEMBER

GMI'UT CHASADIM ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS



CHAI MITZVAH
Grow Your Judaism

WWW.CHAIMITZVAH.ORG

Dear Educator,

In 2017, Hip Hop surpassed Rock 'N Roll's sixty-year's of dominance to become the most popular genre in the world on the Billboard Charts. Thanks to "Hamilton," the Broadway smash hit, older generations are just now beginning to open their eyes to the potential of rap in education. This curriculum uses Hip Hop to teach Judaism in a way that will inspire, engage, and enlighten both students and teachers alike.

What is Rap?

Rap music is a form of rhyme spoken rhythmically over a musical backdrop of beats. Representing a fusion of multiple cultural spheres and a loose set of basic ground rules, it offers its listeners and creators an easily accessible, power-packed mode of self-expression and cultural exploration. As an artistic form, rap embraces a recognition of, respect for, and encouragement of poetic play. To that end, rap vocals emphasize lyrics, wordplay, and general cleverness over melody and harmony. It is a genre all about the 'truth' of the artist as expressed in words.

Why do the Bible and Rabbinics lend themselves to rap?

Biblical stories are very word-heavy. Because Rap focuses so self-consciously on wordplay, it easily lends itself to experimentation, explication, and interpretation. The genre makes the Bible feel more relevant, more colorful, and ultimately, more real-to-the-touch. Furthermore, much like the Bible, Rap tends to shine brightest when it touches on controversial subject matter. Because biblical stories explore the complexities of the human condition, human relationships, and God, Rap offers itself up as a dynamic tool with which to probe and prod our presuppositions from a variety of different angles. To this end, it is important to note that the Bible is not one voice, but a compilation of voices. It is a polyphony of characters in motion. Throughout the Bible we encounter people who love, hate, compromise, fight, save, escape, rebel, and submit. While we receive some first-hand perspectives, the texts are often sparse and details are often missing. Thanks to the unique toolkit that is Rap music, we are forced into the interior dimensions of character and positioned knee-deep in the waters of internal-conflict. Rap allows us to take on the "voice" of the biblical character in question and to create inner monologues rife with the conflict and ambivalence that they themselves were no doubt subject to. Rap helps students to delve deeply into the thick of the inner lives of biblical characters and to uncover untold layers to their persona.

Why is rap a good pedagogical tool?

Jewish learning has traditionally been very text-based, (we are, after all, "the people of the book"). It is generally accepted that students will engage if information is presented in a format with which they are familiar or from which they can derive some personal enjoyment. Using approaches that appeal to multiple learning styles and strengths better engages and excites the students. This curriculum seeks to provide teachers, parents, and students a novel way of accessing the stories of our history.

Students less confident with language or written skills respond with greater enthusiasm to an appealing oral delivery using a method that may seem to them to be more culturally relevant

and easier to relate to. Surprisingly, mnemonic devices and teaching methods involving music are a largely untapped area in the education field. We hope that this curriculum will encourage teachers to take an eclectic approach to teaching without compromising the tradition. Our aim is to create a curriculum that sparks meaningful discussions and discovery for you and your students.

Interactive components of Chai Mitzvah Mixtape

Rapping Rebbes: Students can follow and directly send personal messages to the Rapping Rebbes via Instagram at [chai_mitzvah](https://www.instagram.com/chai_mitzvah). This provides students with an opportunity to ask the Rapping Rebbes questions they might have about the monthly materials or to ask them more personal questions about their relationship with Judaism..

Culminating Class Video: Each class includes “Creative Time.” This is a time set aside specifically for students express their impressions of the *middah*. Save your students’ creative impressions from each session because for the culminating project you will compile the best pieces, as determined by the group, to represent the class. Compile your curated material (iphone videos and photos): visual highlights from the year; videos, photos, illustrations, memes and/or movements, social action, and any other materials together to reinforce and crystallize the lessons of the preceding semester. From these materials, Matt Bar will edit and create a final class rap video. You can send them to info@chaimitzvah.org

The Chai Mitzvah program includes learning, social action, and ritual. Teen program materials include texts to spark discussions, suggestions for increasing meaning in ritual observances, and examples of volunteer opportunities for each topic that can inspire the group towards creative ideas for social action. There are also links to additional information on each topic. Activities are varied, to accommodate groups of different levels and interests. Choose the discussion questions and activities that best suit your group.

Join the Chai Mitzvah teen educators [monthly webinars](#) and the Chai Mitzvah teen educators [private Facebook group](#).

For Teachers: How to Rap (Click on photo to view video.)



B'hatzlacha,
Matt Bar and the Chai Mitzvah team

GMITZT CHASADIM ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS

PART

Read and discuss the texts below.



WORDS AND ACTIONS

Introduction:

The first recorded breakdown of what Judaism is about: 1,000 years after Moses received the Torah at Sinai, Shimon the Righteous, (Circa 300 BCE) broke it all down like this: "On three things the world stands: on the Torah, on the service of God and on acts of lovingkindness."

Incredibly, acts of loving kindness gets top-billing. Showing compassion and love IS Judaism. What is important for Shimon the Righteous is not simply that we feel compassion, it is that we transform it into acts of kindness. If we accept this, the central question for us then becomes not how it is that we, as individuals and as societies might become kinder; but how can we, as individuals and societies encourage the transformation of kind feelings into loving deeds?



Texts - Definitions:

Compassion

....is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers. If one feels that there is nothing 'we' can do, then one starts to get bored, cynical, apathetic. *Susan Sontag*

....is not just acting as the good Samaritan to lift as many people out of the ditch as you can, but to recognize that maybe the whole road to Jericho needs to be repaved. *Martin Luther King Jr.*

....is the antitoxin of the soul: Where there is compassion even the most poisonous impulses remain relatively harmless. *Eric Hoffer*

....is such that it binds us the one to the other not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future. *Nelson Mandela*

....is sometimes the fatal capacity for feeling what it is like to live inside somebody else's skin. It is the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too. *Frederick Buechner*

....is such that, for the friend, ought to conceal itself under a hard shell. *Friedrich Nietzsche*

....is not part of the natural order of the world nor is it based on necessity. It opposes this order and is therefore best thought of as being in some way supernatural. *John Berger*

....is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another. *Thomas Merton*



Conversation:

- 1 Can you think of any examples of when you have felt compassionate but not acted on it, and then regretted having done so?
- 2 Can you list some ways that compassion can be turned from a feeling into a deed?
- 3 Sometimes humanitarian medical aid groups come under attack because their efforts sometimes to help not just victims, but also aggressors. It's a complicated problem. Can you think of any times when compassion is actually a negative rather than a positive?

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Rap exercise - Cypher

Work in groups to make a rap about compassion. When it's done your teacher will rap it!

From these words that rhyme with Compassion choose seven and place them at the end of the lines. With *chevruta*, try fill in the rest of the bars to make it make sense.

Imagine, lasting, captain, relaxing, attacking, attracting, blastin, surpassing, a ration, fashion, cracking, stacking, macking, collapsin', a wagon, packing, smacking, ashes, massive, mansion, fraction, dragon, wagging, abandon, Riboflavin, jabbing (More at rhymenation.com)

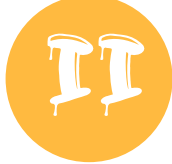
Notice the rhymes are approximate rhymes. In rap, rhymes just need to hit the ear right, not the eye. Use your voice to make the rhymes work. It's just practice so don't think too hard!

Rap Lib.

This here's a rap all about Compassion

- _____ (word 2)
- _____ (word 3)
- _____ (word 4)
- _____ (word 5)
- _____ (word 6)
- _____ (word 7)
- _____ (word 8)

PART



BIBLE RAPS RAPORT



(Click on photo to view video.)

GMI'UT CHASIDIM

ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS

PART



Read and discuss the texts below.

TEXT TALK:

Text: *Why Did God Create Atheists?*



Source 1: *Martin Buber, Tales of Hasidim Vol. 2 (1991)* There is a famous story told in Chassidic literature that addresses this very question. The Master teaches the student that God created everything in the world to be appreciated, since everything is here to teach us a lesson.

One clever student asks “What lesson can we learn from atheists? Why did God create them?”

The Master responds “God created atheists to teach us the most important lesson of them all — the lesson of true compassion. You see, when an atheist performs an act of charity, visits someone who is sick, helps someone in need, and cares for the world, he is not doing so because of some religious teaching. He does not believe that God commanded him to perform this act. In fact, he does not believe in God at all, so his acts are based on an inner sense of morality. And look at the kindness he can bestow upon others simply because he feels it to be right.”

This means, the Master continued “that when someone reaches out to you for help, you should never say ‘I pray that God will help you.’ Instead, for the moment, you should become an atheist, imagine that there is no God who can help, and say ‘I will help you.’”



Conversation:

- What point is Buber making about compassion?



Text:

Source 2: *Eli Wiesel, Souls on Fire, Page 47* During New Year services, it was the Grandfather of Shpule's custom to retire to his room for an hour or two before the blowing of the shofar. Why? To speak to God in a language which is not that of prayer books: “Don't think of man's sins, I beg of You. Think rather of his good deeds. They are fewer, I agree. But You must admit, they are more precious. Believe me, it isn't easy to be good in this world. And if I didn't see with my own two eyes that man, in spite of all obstacles, is capable of kindness, I would not believe it. And so I ask of You: don't be harsh with Your children; rare as it may be, it is their kindness that should surprise You.”

GMITLUT CHASADIM ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS



Conversation:

- Do you see more hate or love in the world? Cruelty or kindness?
- How can you incorporate compassion into your life/community/school/world to make a positive influence?
- Does the internet's anonymity increase or decrease Gmitlut Chasadim? How might the internet's anonymity increase gmitlut chasadim?
- Compassion is one of the Divine Attributes - one of the core "concepts" of God. How could acting with compassion make more room for God and holiness in your life?



Text:

Source 3: *Bava Batra 7b*

MISHNA: They may coerce him to share the cost of building a gatehouse and a gate for the joint courtyard.

GEMARA: This implies that the building of a gate house is a [good] thing. But wait! There is a case of a righteous person whom Elijah the Prophet would regularly speak with. He built a gate house for his house, and Elijah no longer spoke with him.

RASHI: For it gates off the poor people who are shouting for money and assistance and their voices are not heard.

בבא בתרא ז'

מתני' כופין אותו לבנות בית שער ודלת לחצר

גמ' למימרא דבית שער מעליותא היא והא ההוא חסידא דהוה רגיל אליהו

דהוה משתעי בהדיה עבד בית שער ותו לא משתעי בהדיה

רש"י ולא אשתעי בהדיה לפי שמפסיק בעיינים הצוקין ואין קולם נשמע:



Conversation:

- If the person supports building a gatehouse, is he still righteous? Why or why not?
- Why does Elijah no longer talk to the righteous person?
- How can paying taxes be used as an opportunity to develop compassion?

GMI'UT CHASANIM ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS

PART BEAT MIDRASH: Facts from Lefty



(Click on photo to view video.)

Text:

Facts from Lefty

By Poppa Left

Don't think of man sins
 Cuz everybody do good even Sampson
 So give em a chance dang
 I knew this rapper made it out the hood to the mansions
 used to pray for the rain and now his chain is dancing
 no gated communities just open mics in public libraries.
 These politicians going to show up like the job fairy kinda scary,-
 but no matter how much cash you get
 always remember to be compassionate.



Conversation:

- Underline the parts of the rap above that you recognize from the texts you've just read. How did Lefty incorporate them?
- Lefty is referencing a rapper named Chance the Rapper from Chicago. Do you have a role model for the attribute of Compassion? If you do, please explain, and if you don't, who would you choose?

GMI'UT CHASADIM ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS

PART HUMANE HUMANS



Read and discuss the texts below. How does each show kindness?

Texts of Humane Actions:



Source 1: *Sefer HaYirah, Rabbeinu Yonah* Be careful not to afflict any living creature, whether animal or bird, and all the more so, one should not afflict a person who is created in the image of the Divine.

הַשְׁמֵר מִלְצַעֵר בְּעַ"ח הֵן בַּהֵמָה הֵן עוֹף, וְכ"שׁ שְׁלֹא לְצַעֵר אָדָם שֶׁהוּא עֲשׂוּי בְצַלֵּם הַמְקוּם



Source 2: *Deuteronomy 22:6-7* If you happen across a birds nest on your way, whether in a tree or on the ground, and there are eggs or hatchlings in it, and the mother is guarding the nest – Do not take the mother with her young. Send away the mother and you may take the young –this is for your own good and your long life.

כִּי יִקְרָא קוֹצֵצֵפוֹר | לְפָנֶיךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּכָל־עֵץ | אוֹ עַל־הָאָרֶץ אֶפְרָחִים אוֹ בִיצִים וְהָאֵם
לְבָצֵת עַל־הָאֶפְרָחִים אוֹ עַל־הַבִּיצִים לֹא־תִקַּח הָאֵם עִלֵּיהֶם: שְׁלַח תְּשַׁלַּח
אֶת־הָאֵם וְאֶת־הַבָּנִים תִּקַּח־לָךְ לְמַעַן יֵיטֵב לָךְ וְהָאֲרֻכָּת יָמֶיךָ:



Source 3: *Exodus 23:19* The choice first fruits of your soil you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mothers milk.

רֵאשִׁית בְּכוּרֵי אֲדָמָתְךָ תָּבִיא בֵּית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא־תִבְשֹׁל גְּדִי בַחֲלֵב אִמּוֹ:



Source 4: *Leviticus 22:28* However, no animal from the herd or flock shall be slaughtered on the same day with its young.

וְשׂוֹר אוֹ־שָׂה אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־בְּנוֹ לֹא תִשְׁחָטוּ בְיוֹם אֶחָד:

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Source 5: *Exodus 23:5* When you see the donkey of your enemy struggling under its burden and would refrain from helping it, you must nevertheless help it with him.

כִּי־תִרְאֶה חֲמֹר שֹׂנְאֶךָ רֹבֵץ תַּחַת מְשָׁאוֹ וְחִדַּלְתָּ מֵעֲזֹב לוֹ עֹזֵב תֵּעָזֵב עִמּוֹ:



Source 6: *Deuteronomy 5:14* The seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God, you shall not do any work –You, your son or your daughter, your slaves and servants, your ox or donkey or any of your cattle.

וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת | לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כָל־מְלָאכָה אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ־וּבִתְךָ
וְעַבְדְּךָ־וְאִמְתְּךָ וְשׂוֹרְךָ וְחֲמֹרְךָ וְכָל־בְּהֵמָתְךָ



Conversation:

- How do the texts above show compassion towards different creatures?
- Do you believe that animals should have the same rights as humans? Why or why not?
- How are all these forms of compassion complimentary? -
- How do they add to a person's wellbeing?

GMILOT HASADIM ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS

PART VI RAPPING REBBE 1: Matt Bar



(Click on photo to view video.*)



Text:

Dream a Dream

By Matt Bar

When you ask why
I'll reply because is love above
within from her from him
blindness is no match for kindness
many times your remind us, its crazy,
the meanest man thats ever been was a was once a baby
so baby as I lay you down to sleep
remember in your dreams to keep
one foot in your prayers one foot in reality



Conversation:

- HaGra (HaGaon Rabbenu Eliyahu) or Elijah Ben Solomon (Lithuania 1720-1797) defines Gmilut Hasadim as: Something that you are not obligated to give to another, yet you give anyway out of your own kindness. What are some things you do that fall into this definition?
- Compare an act of obligatory giving to an act of voluntary giving .Why is the GRA elevating acts of voluntary giving?
- Something as simple as writing a grandparent or a former teacher can make them happy. What kind act can you plan to do?

GMI'UT CHASADIM ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS

PART



RAPPING REBBE 2

Students are invited to IG Rapping Rebbe– you will get a reply in 48 hours or less! Ask Rapping Rebbe a question at [Chai Mitzvah's Instagram page](#), or share creative activity productions.



PART



FOLLOWING GOD

Read and discuss the texts below.

Text:

Source 1: *Deuteronomy 13:5* Walk following God your Lord and be in awe of him; keep his commandments, listen to his voice, serve him, and be forever close to him.

אַחֲרַי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם תֵּלְכוּ וְאֹתוֹ תִירָאוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּבְקִלּוֹ תִשְׁמְעוּ וְאֹתוֹ תַעֲבֹדוּ וְבוֹ תִדְבְּקוּן:



Source 2: *Babylonian Talmud Tractate Sota 14a* Rabbi Hama in the name of Rabbi Hanina teaches: What is the meaning of the verse **Walk following God your Lord** (Deut. 13:5)? Is it possible for a human to actually walk behind the Shechina? [No] because God your Lord is a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24)



Rather the first verse means to follow the attributes of God. (Here are some examples for you:)

1. Just as God clothes the nude (after all, God made clothing for Adam and Eve), so too you should give clothing to those who need.
2. Just as God visits the sick (after all, God visited Abraham when he was recovering from surgery), so too you should visit the sick.
3. Just as God comforts those in mourning (after all, God blessed Isaac after Abraham died), so too you should comfort those in mourning.
4. Just as God buries the dead (after all, God buried Moses in Gai), so too you should bury the dead...

GMITLUT CHASADIM ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS

Rabbi Smalai teaches: The Torah begins with *gmilut hasadim* and ends with *gmilut hasadim*. It begins with *gmilut hasadim* when God gave Adam and Eve clothing; and it ends with *gmilut hasadim* when God buried Moses.



Conversation:

- What is the logic used by the Rabbis to make 'Walk following God your Lord' mean doing acts of loving kindness?
- Do you feel closer to God when you do acts of loving kindness?

PART



CREATIVE TIME:

Choose one of the texts you studied today. Then choose an activity from the suggestions below:



- Write your reply in rap form (with or without a partner or two) 2-8 bars.
- Illustrate 3-5 words that are most important to you.
- Ad lib the text while you show the word!
- Meditate on the text. Share your thoughts out loud or in a journal.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- **ELI Talk: Compassion and the Heart of Jewish Spirituality**
Compassion and empathy are essential pieces of being Jewish even when being compassionate is scary and hard. That's why we need to reevaluate how kindness and *chesed* are incorporated into Jewish education,
- **Forrest Gump Bus Scene:** Kindness to strangers.



SUGGESTIONS FOR SOCIAL ACTION:

- **A Kindness A Day:** Subscribe to [Areyvut.org's](http://Areyvut.org) Kindness a Day e-mails or order a printed Kindness a Day Calendar to inspire acts of loving kindness.

Chai Mitzvah was originally created as a way to engage adults in a Jewish journey throughout their lives. Chai Mitzvah teen program materials provide teens, who are in a time of personal discovery, with a way to move forward with their personal Jewish journeys. It is our hope that Chai Mitzvah will serve as a catalyst and ignite deeper Jewish engagement and continued growth into the 21st century.

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



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