

ליל תורת ארץ ישראל

THE NIGHT OF TORAT ERETZ YISRAEL

Return to Yisrael three times a day
דף הנחיה



Aim

To show that Yisrael is always at the core of our prayers, seasonally and geographically. We should always strive to move closer to Yisrael and eventually be in Yisrael to fulfil our full potential.

Educational Flow

The session starts by discussing the reasons why we face towards Yisrael when we daven; then it goes one step further and explains why we even daven according to the seasons in Yisrael, no matter where you are; in the end we want to remind that wanting to be in Yisrael is not enough: there are some things that you can only do in Yisrael, and that you can only fulfill that potential in Yisrael.

Equipment

Real compass, template of a target (below), Siddur (ideally one per person), world map OR globe of the world, print pictures from below (ideally in color).

Program

1. Direction of prayer

- Take out a compass and ask them to point to the corner of the room that the needle is facing. Then rotate the compass and ask them to point to the next direction that the compass is facing. Try it again. What is the trend? (It's pointing in the same direction no matter which way you rotate the compass.) Why does the needle always point in the same direction? (The earth has a gigantic magnetic field running between the north and south poles. A compass has a light magnet at the tip of the needle and this magnet is attracted to the north pole. Just like a magnet on the front of your fridge is attracted to the fridge, the magnet of the needle in the compass is attracted to the north pole. So no matter where you are in the world, the needle will always want to move towards north and will always point north.)
- Can you think of something that's like our giant magnet? Something that no matter where we are or what we're doing, our hearts and our thoughts will always want to reach there?
- Which direction do we face when we daven? Why?

Sources

Depending on the age of your group you may or may not want to read any of these sources inside. The main message is the one of zooming in on the target.

היה רוכב על החמור, יירד; אם אינו יכול לירד, יחזיר את פניו. אם אינו יכול להחזיר את פניו, יכוון את ליבו כנגד בית קודש הקודשים.

One was riding on a donkey [and it was time to daven], he should dismount [and daven]. And if he cannot dismount, he should turn his face. And if he cannot turn his face, he should direct his thoughts (leebo - literally, his heart) towards Beit Kodshei HaKodashim.

עומד בח"ל יכוין את ליבו כנגד ארץ ישראל שנא' (מלכים א ח) והתפללו אליך דרך ארצם היה עומד בארץ ישראל יכוין את ליבו כנגד ירושלים שנאמר (מלכים א ח) והתפללו אל ה' דרך העיר אשר בחרת היה עומד בירושלים יכוין את ליבו כנגד בית המקדש שנאמר (דברי הימים ב ו) והתפללו אל הבית הזה היה עומד בבית המקדש יכוין את ליבו כנגד בית קדשי הקדשים שנאמר (מלכים א ח) והתפללו אל המקום הזה היה עומד בבית קדשי הקדשים יכוין את ליבו כנגד בית הכפורת היה עומד אחורי בית הכפורת יראה עצמו כאילו לפני הכפורת נמצא עומד במזרח מחזיר פניו למערב במערב מחזיר פניו למזרח בדרום מחזיר פניו לצפון בצפון מחזיר פניו לדרום נמצאו כל ישראל מכוונים את לבם למקום אחד

The Gemara (BT Brachot 30a) cites a baraita which expands upon the Mishnah:

One who was standing in chutz la'aretz should direct his heart towards Eretz Yisrael, as it says, 'And they will pray to you by way of their land.' (Melachim I 8:48) One who was standing in Eretz Yisrael should direct his heart towards Yerushalayim, as it says, 'And they will pray to Hashem by way of the city which You have chosen.' (Melachim I 8:44) One who was standing in Yerushalayim should direct his heart towards the Beit HaMikdash, as it says, 'And they will pray towards this house.' (Divrei Hayamim II 6:32) One who was standing in the Beit HaMikdash should direct his heart towards the Beit Kodshei HaKodashim, as it says, 'And they will pray towards this place.' (Melachim I 8:35)... Thus, one who was standing: in the east - turns his face towards the west; in the west - turns his face towards the east; in the south - turns his face towards the north; in the north - turns his face towards the south. Thus, all of Israel directs their hearts to one place.

Methods

- Explain it's like a target, becoming more specific as you zoom in. You can even print out a blank template of a target with 5 levels and ask them to fill in or draw a picture to label each circle. Zooming out from the centre is the kodesh hakodashim, then the Bet Hamikdash, then Jerusalem, then Eretz Yisrael, then Chutz Laaretz.
- Use a map of the world or a world globe, point to a place and ask which direction they would face during tefilla.
- Trick to use when you don't have a compass, eg when you're camping etc. 'Sun rises in the east and sets in the west.' You can figure out which way to face.

Message

It's as if Yisrael is always at the centre of our compass. So too, Yisrael is and should always be at our focus. Yisrael is our magnet and we feel a strong pull towards Yisrael, whether it be praying for rain in Yisrael or to bring us home to Yisrael (Teka Beshofar Gadol, the bracha of Kibbutz Galuyot), or whether it be the way we face. And even when we're in Yisrael, even at the kotel, we still face towards the Kodesh hakodashim because, although we know that G-d is everywhere, the place of the Kodesh haKodashim, as its name tells us, is the centre of the holiness in the world. There, G-d's schina (Divine Presence) is most concentrated. Another example is connecting to Wifi. The signal gets stronger, the closer you are to the source.

2. Seasonal prayers

Methods

- Use the pictures attached below of different cities at the same time of year. What is similar among all of them? (Time of year) What is different? (Season/weather).
- Refer to the map/globe of the world, and using the equator, explain season difference in southern and northern hemisphere.
- In our tefillot we pray for rain at the right time so that the crops can grow at the right time and be left to dry out at the right time. When would we pray for rain? (Winter) Which winter? Can you point to the picture of which winter? If winter is at different times of the year in each hemisphere, how do we know when to ask for rain?
- Use a siddur to look at the regular Shmone esre. Look at Mashiv Haruach/Morid Hatal in the second bracha and veten tal umatar/veten bracha in the bracha of Birkat Hashanim. Can they see any instructions in the siddur?
- Discuss when each are said. Which season do we say each of them? What season is it here? Is it according to the season here? It goes according to the seasons in Yisrael.

Sources (optional)

- Begin saying mashiv haruach in Musaf shmini atzeret and continues until musaf of first day pesach. [שׁוֹרֵעַ אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל קִיד:א]
- In most years, during maariv on the evening of 4th December, one begins to say veten tal umatar. In the year preceding a civil leap year, one begins to say veten tal matar one day later, on the night of 5th December. [שׁוֹרֵעַ אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל קִיד:א]

Message

It's like when you're traveling and away from home, you might have a watch or a setting on your phone that tells you what time it is back at home. Why would you need that? If you're holidaying, why would you need to know what time it is back at home? Because your home is always in your heart and you want to feel connected to what's going on there. Even though it may be breakfast time on your holiday, you will still know that it's dinner time back at home. If something was going on back at home, why would you care if you're on holiday? Why would you care if there's a storm or bush fires at home, if you're on holiday in beautiful weather? Because you have a strong connection to your home and you want the best for it.

3. Not enough to have Yisrael as your focus: we can only fulfill our national potential there

Having Yisrael at the centre of our thinking isn't enough. There are Mitzvot that you can only do in Yisrael. (Use the list below for your own reference. Please note that with regard to Hafrashat Challa, we are obligated even in Chu"l because it has a De'orayta level of obligation even today, so therefore our obligation in Chu"l is Derabanan.)

The following is a list of some of the Mitzvot ha-Teluyot ba'Aretz:

1. Leket: gleanings (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22)
2. Shikhehah: forgotten sheaf (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22)
3. Peah: corner of the field (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22)
4. Shevi'it: Sabbatical year (Exodus 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7; Deut. 15:1-3)
5. Ma'aser Ani: poor person's tithe (Deut. 26:12-15)
6. Bikkurim: first fruits (Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Numbers 18:13; Deut. 26:1-11)
7. Hallah: separation of dough (Numbers 15:17-21)
8. Terumah: tithes (Numbers 18:8; 11-12; 25-32; Deut. 18:4)
9. Ma'aser Rishon: the first tithe (Numbers 18:21-32)
10. Terumat Ma'aser: heave-offering of the tithe (Numbers 18:21-32)
11. Ma'aser Sheini: the second tithe (Deut. 14:22-27; 26:12-15; Lev. 27:30-31, 19:23-25)
12. Kilayim: the prohibition of the mixing of species (Lev. 19:19; Deut. 22:9-11)
13. Orlah: fruit of young trees (Lev. 19:23)
14. Hadash: the prohibition of new grain (Lev. 23:9-14)

Pretty much all agricultural Mitzvot. Interesting to note that the Mitzvot that can only be done in the holiest place are very physical Mitzvot. This shows the intrinsic holiness of the Land of Yisrael, that even the most physical things

like farming the land, are the unique Mitzvot that you can only do in the holiest place in the world. Clearly our natural habitat is in Yisrael. We can always think about Yisrael and be magnetized towards Yisrael but the fact is that our natural habitat is in Yisrael. That's where we are supposed to fulfill all the Mitzvot.

Conclusion

- Our Tefilot are always in Eretz YYisrael, even when we can't be.
- Eretz YYisrael is the focus of our lives, and we see this through prayer (praying for Yisrael's seasons and facing towards Yisrael).
- No matter what country they live in, what season it is or how far away we are from Yisrael, every Jew has Yisrael at the core of their tefillot. Every Jew has this in common, it is something that unites every Jew around the world.
- Clearly our natural habitat is in Yisrael. We can always think about Yisrael and be magnetised towards Yisrael but the fact is that our natural habitat is in Yisrael. That's where we are supposed to fulfil all the Mitzvot.