

“עולם חסד יבנה”



Inspire our Jewish youth to give of themselves

**Areyvut's 8th Annual National Mitzvah Day
Educational Materials
March 16th-18th, 2012**

Additional copies of this document can be downloaded at:

www.aryvut.org

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Introduction

On behalf of Areyvut, I welcome your help in bringing this powerful suggestion to life by participating in Areyvut's 8th annual National Mitzvah Day. The "A Kindness a Day" Calendar unites Jews across the world in an effort to inspire acts of kindness through its 365 suggestions of how to incorporate *tikkun olam* (social justice) into everyday life. On National Mitzvah Day, we will strengthen this effort as schools, synagogues, families and community organizations and thousands of people worldwide dedicate Friday, March 16th – Sunday, March 18th as a time to turn the calendar's suggestions into action.

The 2012 National Mitzvah Day Educational Material presented here focus on "עולם חסד יבנה," "the world is built on kindness," an important topic that needs to be highlighted and addressed in the Jewish community. The materials include a project planning unit to guide preparation of social action projects; detailed resources and activity ideas for projects that fit under our main theme; and a list of additional themes to spark your own creative thinking. The activities are arranged topically with suggested age ranges, but all activities can be easily adapted to meet the needs of your audience. For additional resources to use in your classroom, please see the texts that are included in the packet and consult the Areyvut website www.areyvut.org for additional ideas. Certain links provided in these resources will launch Internet sites that are not under the control of Areyvut. We provide these outside links solely for your convenience and do not endorse these particular sites. Accordingly, Areyvut makes no representations or warranties concerning the availability of or content, products and services found on those sites.

We hope that these educational resources equip schools, synagogues, communities, families and organizations to actively make a difference in the world. Please use them as a starting point to spark your own ideas and interests and remember that even the simplest act of kindness can have a powerful impact on someone else's life. Please share these resources widely but remember that when using them to properly acknowledge and credit Areyvut. We encourage those interested in other aspects of *tikkun olam* to "think out of the box" to create projects of their own and look forward to supporting these endeavors. For activity suggestions related to other themes, please refer to the National Mitzvah Day archives http://www.areyvut.org/areyvut_in_action/national_mitzvah_day/national_mitzvah_day_archives/.

We request that you please let us know what you are planning by registering on our website www.areyvut.org/register_now/ so that we can share your ideas with others. You will also find a registration form included in this packet.

We would like to thank our Board of Trustees, interns and staff who helped to bring this project to fruition. We would particularly like to thank Shira Hammerman, our Educational Consultant, Sharon Stahl, our Special Projects Coordinator, Susan A. Abravanel, Education Director at Youth Service America and Rebecca Berger, 2011 Summer Intern, for their help in developing these resources. Additionally, we want to acknowledge all those who will be participating in National Mitzvah Day.

Good luck!

Daniel Rothner
 Founder & Director
 Areyvut

About Areyvut

Areyvut, translated from Hebrew, means “responsibility.” Responsibility to one’s community, responsibility to the world. But when it comes to what Areyvut is about, responsibility is just the beginning.

Areyvut’s mission is to infuse the lives of Jewish youth and teenagers with the core Jewish values of *chesed* (kindness), *tzedakah* (charity) and *tikkun olam* (social action). Areyvut offers Jewish day schools, congregational schools, synagogues, community centers and families a variety of opportunities to empower and to enrich their youth by creating innovative programs that make these core Jewish values meaningful to them.

Areyvut’s fundamental belief is that sparking a passion for service in the young inspires a lifelong commitment to social justice. Therefore, Areyvut creates programs that reach out to Jewish youth, building on their individual interests and putting their experiences into a meaningful Jewish and communal context. We encourage young people to engage in both hands-on service and philanthropy, in the belief that all of God’s gifts should be used to improve our world. We also believe that community service benefits – and changes – both the recipient and the provider of the service.

Our target audience is middle and high school students from all denominations of Judaism, all types of Jewish education and all levels of Jewish communal affiliation.

National Mitzvah Day – Our national community service initiative actively engages *everyone*, from teens, to adults, in giving back to the community through social action programs. This, we believe, is a first step toward greater commitment to making a difference.

What You Can Do to Make a Difference:

The success of our efforts to engage our youth depends on the support of the adult Jewish community. There are several ways you can become involved:

- Learn more about Areyvut’s programs and help us bring them to your community.
- Make a tax-deductible donation to Areyvut to assist us financially, so we can expand our programs and touch the lives of more Jewish young people, as well as the people they touch. <https://www.areyvut.org/donate/>

Contact us at (201) 244-6702 or www.areyvut.org.

Project Planning Unit

This Areyvut Project Planning Unit will provide a step by step guideline on how to plan a project from start to finish. The goal is to implement service-learning, (a teaching strategy that unites community service with academic learning) in students.

Building blocks for a successful Jewish service-learning project:

Step 1: Preparation

- In order to efficiently plan a project, one first needs to assess the community's needs.
- Consider what your community would look like without these problems or needs.

Step 2: Pick your project

- Pick a project that will address and attempt to solve these communal problems.
- The project can solve an issue directly. For example, collect food for families who cannot afford it. A more indirect approach would be to have a fundraiser with all the proceeds going to an organization that distributes food to families in need.

Step 3: Make your project happen

- Create a list of goals- What do you hope to accomplish at the end of your project?
- Identify different tasks that need to be performed
- Assign roles for task completion
- Establish a timeline in order to successfully accomplish your goals
- Determine costs (if any) for materials, equipment and services you will need as you implement your project
- If it is a communal event, prepare flyers or posters to help recruit others in the community
- Raise community awareness about the issue being addressed
- Take before and after pictures to document the event and show the impact of the project
- Utilize the attached Biblical sources and connect the project to Jewish teaching and learning
- Continuously encourage the students by telling them all the good that will come from their project

Step 4: Reflection and Evaluation

Reflection is a critical part of service-learning both during and after your service activity. Reflection helps you to internalize the experience by connecting to your community, Jewish values, what you learn in school and your life outside of school.

Some Questions That Prompt Reflection Discussion:

- What did you enjoy most about what you did?
- What did you learn that you didn't know before?
- How does this connect with Judaism or with being Jewish?
- How did this project impact you?
- How do you think you made a difference in your community?
- Why do you think that the project you completed is *your* responsibility?
- What about this project will influence your thoughts and actions in the future?
- Will you continue volunteering for the same agency in the future?

Other ways to reflect:

- **Write:** have the students write a journal entry in which they reflect on the experience
- **Read:** handout articles pertaining to the type of service the students were involved with
- **Speak:** engage in class or group discussions, about the project and use the Judaic sources to spark discussion.

Evaluating your project:

Here are some general evaluation questions to guide you in the process:

- Did your activity meet the goals you established at the start of your project? Why or why not?
- What about your project worked well?
- What about your project could be improved?
- What will you do differently in future service-learning projects?

Sharing your experience:

- Areyvut would like to receive information about your project, its impact and any photos or videos from the event. Please forward pictures, videos or other information to info@areyvut.org.

Suggested Activities

The following is a list of suggested activities that are related to this year's theme "עולם חסד יבנה," the world is built on kindness. The goal is to be involved in an activity that will help "build" a foundation for the future. Of course, any other forms of *chesed* are welcomed and encouraged!

Close to Home

- Mow the lawn for an elderly neighbor that can't
- Offer to water the plants in/out of your house
- Plant a garden for your neighbor
- Make an effort to recycle
- Organize a park clean-up
- Repaint a fence or a room at a community center
- Organize a family BBQ and build a stronger family relationship

Eye on the Community

- Bring in a speaker to raise awareness about an issue pertinent to your community
- Have a raffle and donate the proceeds to a cause that will address a local communal issue

Suggestions: Ask members of the community to donate items to be raffled off. Contact Home Depot/ Lowes or other stores and ask them to donate gift certificates

- Have a communal drive (food, clothing etc.)

Flying Solo

- Establish a leftover-collection project where you distribute leftover food to the hungry
- Adopt a highway
- Help build someone's education by offering to tutor them
- Do something special for a friend
- Write a letter to a friend or family member explaining what they mean to you
- Develop a relationship with a senior citizen by visiting regularly

School Projects

1. Decorate flower pots and give them to Habitat for Humanity (elementary+)
 - **Suggested Materials:** foam stickers, paint, plastic flower pots
2. Decorate Mezuzahs (elementary +)

- **Suggested Materials:** Use clay to form a case and then paint it when it dries. Or, Construct a case out of wood. Glue the pieces together with carpenter glue. Decorate with jewels, stickers, markers paint etc.
- 3. Create placemats for women and children living in battered women's shelters. (elementary+)
 - **Suggested Materials:** stickers and markers. Laminate so that they're waterproof
- 4. Organize a school wide clothing drive for tornado victims. The students can decorate bins that can be distributed to the classrooms and local synagogue as well. (elementary +)
- 5. Organize a blood/toy/school supplies/food/book drive (elementary +)
- 6. Volunteer with Habitat for Humanity or Bonim Builders (High School/16+)
- 7. Collect old tools and donate them to Habitat for Humanity
- 8. Have a school wide Lego competition
 - **Suggestions:** charge an entry fee and donate all of the proceeds to charity. Have first, second and third place prizes as well. For example, gift certificates to local restaurants.

Sources from Jewish Texts

Succah 49b

Our Rabbis taught: Deeds of loving kindness are superior to charity in three respects. Charity can be accomplished only with money; deeds of loving kindness can be accomplished through personal involvement as well as with money. Charity can be given only to the poor; deeds of loving kindness can be done for both poor and rich. Charity applies only to the living; deeds of loving kindness apply to both the living and the dead.

Baba Batra 9b

Rabbi Yitzchak said, "Whoever gives even a small coin to a poor man receives six blessings, but whoever speaks reassuringly to him receives eleven blessings."

Gittin 61a

We support the non-Jewish poor along with the poor of Israel.

Talmud Ketubot

The one who shuts his eyes against charity is like one who worships idols.

Talmud Succah 49b

Whoever does *tzadakah* and justice, it is as if he filled the whole world with kindness.

Baba Bathra 9a

Charity is equal in importance to all other commandments combined.

Talmud Yerushalmi Peah 1:1

Charity and good deeds are equal to all the mitzvot of the Torah, because *tzadakah* is done for the poor, and acts of kindness, are done for the poor and the rich; *tzadakah* is done for the living, and acts of kindness are done for the living and the dead; *tzadakah* is done with one's money, and acts of kindness can be done with one's money and one's body.

Talmud Sotah 14a

The Torah begins with an act of loving-kindness and ends with an act of loving-kindness. It begins with loving-kindness, as it says, "And G-d made Man and Woman garments of skin, and clothed them." It ends with loving-kindness as it says, "And He buried him in the valley.

Tehillim 89:3

"Olam chesed yibaneh – a world will be built upon kindness."

Exodus Rabbah 1

From here you see the reward of those who perform acts of kindness; Even though Moses had many names, the only name designated to him in the Torah is the one that Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh, named him.

Pirkei Avot 1:2

The world stands on three things: On the Torah, on the service (of G-d), and on acts of loving-kindness.

Mishneh Peah 1

Acts of kindness are among those things that have no limits.

Talmud Yerushalmi Berahot 5:1

Whoever is occupied with community needs, it is as if he is occupied with the study of Torah.

Whoever asks for communal needs, it is as if he comes with strength. Bemidbar Rabbah 21:14 (check trans) Whoso petitions for the needs of a community is like one who comes with main force.² Whoever petitions for communal needs, is like one who comes with strength. Numbers Rabbah 21:14

Talmud Yevamot 62b

The one who loves his neighbors, and brings his family close, about him the Torah says, "Then you will call, and G-d will answer.

Talmud Berachot 59a

One who has built a new house or bought new clothes says: Blessed is He who has kept us alive and brought us to this season.

Thinking Out of the Box

National Mitzvah Day 2012 is an excellent opportunity for your students to create a unique project that meets their interests. Below is a list of possible themes to use as a jumping-off point for their creative thinking. The planning unit included at the beginning of this resource guide is a helpful tool to structure original projects. We are happy to work with you on any idea that is of interest to your students. Please contact our staff at (201) 244-6702 or at info@areyvut.org for more information.

Brainstorm projects around the following categories:

- ❖ Love your fellow neighbor
- ❖ Character-Building
- ❖ Appreciate Israel
- ❖ Spend time with those with special needs
- ❖ Foster and strengthen relationships
- ❖ Learn and teach Torah
- ❖ Help animals
- ❖ Give *tzedakah* - charity
- ❖ Strengthen your community
- ❖ Honor the elderly
- ❖ Aid victims of terror
- ❖ Preserve the environment
- ❖ Spend time with others
- ❖ Collection drives: coats, shoes, food, clothing, toiletries, etc.
- ❖ Inform others about health and wellness
- ❖ Use prayer
- ❖ Show gratitude
- ❖ Teach youngsters to read
- ❖ Feed the hungry
- ❖ Paint a mural
- ❖ Donate books
- ❖ Teach English
- ❖ Donate clothes
- ❖ Decrease poverty
- ❖ Focus on Shabbat or different Jewish holiday
- ❖ Make people laugh
- ❖ Baby-sit
- ❖ Welcome guests
- ❖ Demonstrate the power of speech
- ❖ Build and beautify houses
- ❖ Spend time with your family
- ❖ Increase awareness and education
- ❖ See similarities with others instead of differences
- ❖ Use art, music, or dance to make people happy
- ❖ Try something new!

Guidelines for Registering

- ❖ We ask that you please officially register your project so that we can include your project and update you on the program. The registration form is available below or can be submitted electronically by visiting www.areyvut.org/register_now/.
- ❖ The information that you submit on this form will be included in Areyvut's list of this year's national Mitzvah Day projects.
- ❖ Please select a contact person for your project so that we can help guide your participation in National Mitzvah day 2012. We will include this contact person on all press releases so that the media has a point of contact.
- ❖ After you have completed your activity, we ask that you send us a brief blurb describing the experience that we can include on our website. We also ask that you include any pictures, press or project samples that give a sense of the difference that your actions made.
- ❖ **We thank you for your participation and hope that you will join us again next year! In the meantime, we hope that you can make use of the resources available on our website. Please contact us at (201) 244-6702 or at info@areyvut.org to arrange an Areyvut program in your synagogue, school or community.**