

**Areyvut's
National Mitzvah Day
March 7-9 2014**

Inspire our Jewish Youth to Give of Themselves

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Introduction

Acts of kindness are among those things that have no limits. Mishnah Peah 1

On behalf of Areyvut, I welcome your help in bringing this powerful suggestion to life by participating in Areyvut's 10th Annual National Mitzvah Day. Areyvut's *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 *chesed* (kindness), *tzedakah* (charity), and *tikkun olam* (social justice) into everyday life. One suggestion in the calendar this year says "Acts of kindness are among those things that have no limits."

On National Mitzvah Day, we will strengthen this effort as schools, synagogues, families and community organizations and thousands of people worldwide dedicate **Friday, March 7th – Sunday, March 9th** as a time to turn the calendar's suggestions into action.

The 2014 National Mitzvah Day Educational Material presented here focuses on general acts of kindness. Included in this packet is a project planning unit to guide preparation of social action projects as well resources and activity ideas for service. For additional resources to use in your classroom, please see the texts included in this packet and/or consult the Areyvut website www.areyvut.org for additional ideas.

We hope that these materials help schools, synagogues, families and communities discover opportunities for kindness on National Mitzvah Day and every day, all year long. Materials can be used to inspire your own ideas, and begin your own Mitzvah Day activity. Feel free to share these resources with others, but please acknowledge and credit Areyvut properly.

For even more ideas, please refer to the [National Mitzvah Day Archives](#).

Please let us know what project you are planning by [registering](#) your project on our website. By doing so, we will not only be able to help you coordinate and facilitate your project, but you will also be inspiring others with your actions. For your convenience, a registration form is also included in this packet.

Thank you to our Board of Trustees, interns and staff who have helped bring this project to fruition. Thank you to all those participating in National Mitzvah Day 2014.

Good luck!

Daniel Rothner

Daniel Rothner
Founder & Director
Areyvut

About Areyvut

Areyvut's mission is to infuse the lives of Jewish youth and teens with the core Jewish values of *chesed* (kindness), *tzedakah* (charity), and *tikkun olam* (social action) so they become giving members of the Jewish community of tomorrow. Our innovative programs make these core Jewish values relevant and meaningful to our children by providing a variety of opportunities to put them into action.

Areyvut's fundamental belief is that sparking a passion for service inspires a lifelong commitment to social justice. Therefore, we encourage young people to engage in both hands-on service and philanthropy, since all of God's gifts should be used to improve the world. We partner with Jewish day schools, congregational schools, synagogues, community centers, and individual families in an effort to develop and implement meaningful and unique programming for children from all denominations of Judaism.

At Areyvut, we know the immense power youth have to make their community and the world a better place. We believe that it is important to give them hands-on opportunities to do so.

National Mitzvah Day – our national community service initiative actively engages *everyone*, from children to senior citizens, in giving back to the community through hands-on 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.
- For more information, contact us at (201) 244-6702 or info@areyvut.org.

Project Planning Unit

This Guide will help you plan your program from start to finish, and enable you to utilize service-learning: education through community service.

Step 1: Preparation

- What are your community's needs?
- What would your community look like with those needs met?

Step 2: Pick your project

- What project will address this communal problem?
 - 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

- What are the goals you hope to accomplish at the end of your project?
- What tasks need to be performed?
- Assign roles for task completion.
- Establish a timeline in order to successfully accomplish your goals.
- What costs will you have for materials or services?
- Create flyers to recruit people to participate.
- Raise community awareness about the issues being addressed.
- Take pictures to document the event and show the impact of the project.
- Utilize the attached Jewish sources to connect the project to Jewish learning.

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 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 being Jewish?
- ✓ How did this project impact you?
- ✓ How do you think you make 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 or blog 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.

Social Media

- Link your Blog post to Facebook, and tag Areyvut
- Tweet us- # to be determined...
- Make your Mitzvah Day project your Facebook status and tag Areyvut- inspire others to get involved!

Suggested Activities

Whoever performs acts of kindness merits sitting in the shadow of God...

Jerusalem Talmud Ta'anit 4

Chesed can be done in a variety of ways. One does not need to plan an elaborate program although those are always welcome. Below are suggestions for *chesed* opportunities on National Mitzvah Day and every day. Anyone can participate- from individuals to families, synagogues, schools, and community centers. Here are things one can do ranging from **Kindness** that requires no preparation at all, to **Care** and **Connect** requiring some planning on your part. Areyvut is here to help.

Kindness...

- Smile when you greet people throughout the day
- Make a friendly phone call to parents or grandparents
- Drive a friend to an appointment or the airport
- Don't gossip or associate with people who do
- See what you can do to help a friend who seems overwhelmed
- Help around the house without being asked- take out the garbage, clean the kitchen...
- Don't litter/recycle
- Be respectful of everyone you come in contact with today
- Have coffee with an older relative or neighbor
- Do something to make someone else happy

Collect...

- Personal products such as soap, shampoo, toothbrushes for a homeless shelter
- Coats for a VA center
- Nonperishable food for a food pantry
- Diapers/wipes for a shelter for women
- Cleaning supplies for a state experiencing a natural disaster
- Books for a school
- New socks and underwear for children in a shelter
- Art supplies for children in after school programs for at risk youth
- Toys for children in a hospital
- Teddy bears for children affected by terrorism
- School supplies for lower income families
- Musical instruments for an inner-city music program

Create...

- Drawings for a nursing home or hospital
- Bracelets for children in a hospital
- A cookbook to share with friends and family
- A bulletin board in your school or synagogue to highlight a mitzvah project
- A mural or poster to donate to a medical facility
- Gift baskets for new members of your community
- Letters for soldiers, family, friends, or teachers telling them how much you appreciate them
- Bins for recycling or a food/clothing drive at your school, synagogue, or local store
- Letters to Congressional, Senatorial and other representatives who support Israel, thanking them for their support.
- Flyers to help publicize an event coming up at your synagogue, community center, or school

Care...

- Sign up for Areyvut's Mitzvah Clowning and commit to a year of service
- Volunteer at a local non-profit
- Deliver a meal through a meals on wheels organization
- Send a care package to an Israeli soldier in the IDF
- Help build a home for people in need
- Organize supplies at a food pantry
- Start a free loan society in your community, to lend interest-free money to those in need
- Clean up a park or cemetery
- Pray for someone who is having a difficult time

Connect...

- Visit a local shelter and play games with the children
- Visit a senior center or nursing home- if you know how to play an instrument, plan a concert for the residents
- Organize a weekly game night at a senior center
- Volunteer to teach computer skills to an elderly neighbor
- Coordinate an evening for parents of children with special needs
- Prepare and serve food at a soup kitchen
- Help a child who is sick with his or her homework
- Play with animals in an animal shelter
- Accompany a friend who is ill to a doctor's visit
- Organize a social event for which attendees will pay an entrance fee that will go to charity

Sources from Jewish Texts

Connect a quote to an act of *chesed*

Acts of kindness are among those things that have no limits. *Mishneh Peah 1*

Kindness: Smile when you greet people throughout the day

Act while you can; while you have the chance, the means, and the strength. *Shabbat 151b*

Care: Deliver a meal through a meals on wheels organization.

As one hand washes the other, so must one person help another. *Mishlei Agur*

Connect: Help a child who is sick with his or her homework

Charity and acts of kindness are equal to the whole Torah. *Yalkut Tehilim 859*

Connect: Start a free loan society to lend interest-free money to those in need.

Each person who was ready to volunteer then came forward. *Exodus 35:2*

Kindness: Drive a friend to an appointment, or the airport

Everything depends on deeds. *Pirkei Avot 3:15*

Create: Bracelets for children in a hospital

Four virtues refresh the world: charity, justice, truth and peace. *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah 16*

Collect: Teddy bears for children affected by terrorism

He who is kind to the poor, happy is he. *Proverbs 14:21*

Connect: Prepare and serve food at a soup kitchen

In the next world one will be asked, 'What was your occupation?' If one answers, 'I gave clothing to those in need,' they will say, 'This is the gate of G-d. Those who gave clothing to the needy may enter.' *Midrash on Psalms 118:17*

Collect: New socks and underwear for children in a shelter

Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue... *Deuteronomy 16:20*

Kindness: Be respectful of everyone you come in contact with today

Run to perform a minor deed as if it were a major one. *Pirkei Avot 4:2*

Connect: Accompany a friend who is ill to a doctor's visit

You must also show your love toward the stranger, since you were strangers in the land of Egypt. *Deuteronomy 10:19*

Create: Gift baskets for new members of your community

You shall honor the old. *Leviticus 19:32*

Connect: Organize a weekly game night at a senior center

You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and to your needy in your land. *Deuteronomy 15:11*

Care: Help build a home for people in need

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 2014. 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 of 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 at your synagogue, school or community center.

Registration Form

Contact Person: _____

Contact Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Project Details:

Target Audience:

