



TEACHER'S GUIDE

MY POWER OF CHOICE

PRODUCED BY:

Torah Umesorah Brooklyn Teachers Center
620 Foster Ave. Brooklyn, NY 11230
frontdesk@torah-umesorah.org
718.744.3100

Coordinated by: Mrs. Goldy Goldberger

Written by: Mrs. Shana Rosenbaum, Mrs. Chana Leah Hertz, Mrs. Miriam Kirschen, Mrs. Nechami Sagi

Design by: Mrs. Malky Honigwachs, Mrs. Faigy Reich

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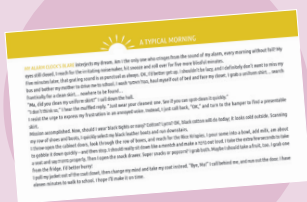
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📖 MY POWER OF CHOICE | SOURCES:

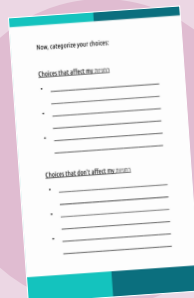
- ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים ואת הטוב ואת המות ואת הרע... ובחרת בחיים (דברים ל:טו-יט)
- מין זה של אדם היה אחד בעולם, ואין לו מין שני דומה לו בזה הענין, שיהא הוא מעצמו בדעתו ובמחשבתו יודע הטוב והרע ועושה כל מה שהוא חפץ, ואין לו מי שיעכב על ידו מלעשות הטוב או הרע. (הלכות תשובה, פרק ה')
- ומען הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו, כי ביום אכלך ממנו מות תמות (בראשית ב:יז)
- ודקה מפריו ותאכל ותתן גם לאישה עמה ויאכל (בראשית ג:י)

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1 per student

'A TYPICAL MORNING' CARD
Anticipatory Set



1 per student

'DAILY CHOICES' CARD
Student Exercise



1 per student

BATTLEFIELD BOARDS
Activity



1 per student

BATTLEFIELD STICKERS
Activity

My Power of Choice

LESSON AT A GLANCE

INTRODUCTION



CONCEPT:

A person's entire life is comprised of opportunities to choose right over wrong. This power of choice helps each person become greater.



ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What is the value in all of the struggles I confront on a daily basis; my struggles seem to make it harder for me to connect with Hashem!



ANTICIPATORY SET:

'A Typical Morning'

Brainstorm: How many choices do I make throughout a typical day?

LESSON

PART I

EXPLORING THE
CONCEPT OF BECHIRA

PART II

IDENTIFYING MY
PERSONAL BATTLEFIELD

PART III

STRENGTHENING
OURSELVES FOR BATTLE



STUDENT EXERCISE:

'Daily Choices'

Purpose: Students explore the choices they make on a daily basis.



ACTIVITY:

'My Personal Battlefield'

Purpose: Students identify the areas that they can use their power of bechira to overcome personal struggles.



DISCUSSIONS:

- Does Everybody Share the Same Struggles?
- Different Nurture, Different Struggles
- Different Natures, Different Struggles
- The Procrastination Pitfall
- Combatting the Procrastination Pitfall
- A Journey Starts with a Single Step



CLOSURE: 'A Step Forward'

My Power of Choice



A person's entire life is comprised of opportunities to choose right over wrong. This power of choice helps each person become greater.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What is the value in all of the struggles I confront on a daily basis; my struggles seem to make it harder for me to connect with Hashem!

ANTICIPATORY SET

A TYPICAL MORNING

BRAINSTORM: How many choices do I make on a typical day?

Teacher distributes cards with the following scenario to the class. Teacher reads the scenario aloud and instructs students to mark down any choice they notice the narrator making throughout her morning.

A TYPICAL MORNING

My alarm clock's blare interrupts my dream. Am I the only one who cringes from the sound of my alarm, every morning without fail? My eyes still closed, I reach for the irritating noisemaker, hit snooze and roll over for five more blissful minutes. Five minutes later, that grating sound is as punctual as always. OK, I'd better get up. I shouldn't be lazy, and I definitely don't want to miss my bus and bother my mother to drive me to school. I wash **ניגול וואסער**, haul myself out of bed and face my closet. I grab a uniform shirt... search frantically for a clean skirt... nowhere to be found...

"Ma, did you clean my uniform skirt?" I call down the hall.

"I don't think so," I hear the muffled reply. "Just wear your cleanest one. See if you can spot-clean it quickly."

I resist the urge to express my frustration in an annoyed voice. Instead, I just call back, "OK," and turn to the hamper to find a presentable skirt.

Mission accomplished. Now, should I wear black tights or navy? Cotton? Lycra? OK, black cotton will do today; it looks cold outside. Scanning my row of shoes and boots, I quickly select my black leather boots. Finally dressed, I run downstairs.

I throw open the cabinet doors, look through the row of boxes, and reach for the Rice Krispies. I pour some into a bowl, add milk, am about to gobble it down quickly -- and then stop. I should really sit down like a mentch and make a **ברכה** out loud. I take the extra few seconds to take a seat and say **מונות** properly. Then I open the snack drawer. Super snacks or popcorn? I

grab both. Maybe I should take a fruit, too. I grab one from the fridge. I'd better hurry!

I pull my jacket out of the coat closet, then change my mind and take my coat instead. "Bye, Ma!" I call behind me, and run out the door. I have eleven minutes to walk to school. I hope I'll make it on time.

Prompt students to share examples of choices they found in the story. Conclude by pointing out to students that in just one day, an average person makes many, many choices.

🔗 **CONCLUSION:** Every person makes countless choices a day.

🔗 **FOCUS!** A person is expected to think about the choices he makes and strive to make the right choices.

LESSON

Part 1 / Exploring the Concept of Bechirah

📄 STUDENT EXERCISE DAILY CHOICES

➤ **PURPOSE:** The students explore the choices they make on a daily basis.

PROCESS

- Teacher distributes Daily Choices Cards to students.
- On the first side, students are instructed to list 5 choices they make on a typical day.
- Teacher asks students to share some examples of choices they wrote.

🔗 **CONCLUSION:** Many things a person does each day without even thinking essentially involve making a choice.

WHICH CHOICES MATTER?

What does the Torah tell us about our choices? Which of our choices matter more to Hashem?

It does not matter all that much if we choose Super Snacks or onion rings, a gold necklace or a blue necklace, rubber boots or shoes. When it comes to purely גשמיות choices, Hashem has no preferences about what we should choose.

Which category of actions are important to Hashem? Those that affect our רוחניות. We are constantly presented with choices, in which we must choose between טוב and רע. For example: Will I choose to be careful to make a ברכה before eating? Will I choose to speak respectfully to my mother when I am upset? Will I buy the shoes that are not a flashy,

🔗 **CONCLUSION:** Each person struggles with different things, and therefore has a very individual *nekudas habechira*.

EXPLORING CONQUERED TERRITORY

Why do different people have different “battlefields/הבקירה”? Why are certain areas such a struggle for me, and seemingly so easy for my friends?

There are three basic ways in which a person can have “conquered territory”:

1. **Nurture**
2. **Nature**
3. **Personal Struggle**

Let's discuss each one.

Teacher uses a dry-erase marker to draw two lines that divide the whiteboard in three. Teacher labels the sections as follows: CONQUERED TERRITORY, BATTLEFIELD, and NOT YET CONQUERED.

THE IMPACT OF ONE'S NURTURE ON הבקירה

- When we are trained to act correctly in a certain area from a young age, we usually find it easy to continue doing the right thing in that area for the rest of our lives.

Example: When Chaviva was little, her mother washed her hands every morning when she woke up. When she became a little older, her mother would wake her up by saying cheerfully, “Good morning! Time to get up and wash נעיל וואסער.” Chaviva is used to washing נעיל וואסער as soon as she wakes up.

Teacher writes 'Chaviva washing נעיל וואסער' in the 'Conquered Territory' section on the board.

Example: Tzipi's family, her neighbors, and her classmates are מקפיד to only eat dairy foods that are חלב ישראלי. Ilana's distant cousin came from Virginia to visit Ilana's family, and she offered a bar of חלב סתם (OU-D) chocolate to Ilana. Ilana thanked her cousin politely, but did not eat the chocolate.

Teacher writes 'Tzipi eating only חלב ישראלי' in the 'Conquered Territory' section on the board.

- The kind of family and community we are part of often defines the standards we get accustomed to.

Example: Chana was brought up in a Torah'dik environment, amongst people who strive to do רצון ה'. One day, Chana was out shopping with her friends, and they became very hungry. “Let's go buy some sandwiches from that grocery

store,” Chana suggested. Her friends agreed. They entered the store, and Chana chose a כשר sandwich from the fridge section.

Did Chana use her בחירה in the above scenario?

No, because she was brought up amongst people who trained her to eat only כשר food. Therefore, she eats כשר without struggling to do so. Eating כשר is in the area of the “battlefield” which is Chana’s “conquered territory.”

Teacher writes 'Chana eating only כשר in the 'Conquered Territory' section on the board.

Example: Katie grew up in Middletown, Alabama, and attends public high school. Although her family is far from religious, Katie’s parents are proud to be Jewish. Katie has heard her parents say that Jews shouldn’t eat pork, although her family is not always so careful about avoiding pork when they eat in restaurants. One afternoon, Katie and her friends go out to McDonald’s for lunch. All of Katie’s friends are ordering the special of the day, which is lo mein with pork. Katie stands and watches as they walk towards the table with their steaming trays of the forbidden food. It smells very tempting to Katie. Will she have the courage to be different?

Will Katie have to draw upon her בחירה in the above scenario?

Yes, because she was brought up in a family and community where people eat pork. Therefore, she will have to struggle to choose not to eat pork. Avoiding pork is in the area of the “battlefield” which is not in Katie’s “conquered territory.”

Teacher writes 'Katie not eating pork in the 'Battlefield' section on the board.

- Sometimes, there is a *halacha* that a person was never even taught. Therefore, that *halacha* is not part of their “conquered territory” or their “battlefield.” Because of their nurture, that *halacha* is in the area that is “not yet conquered.”

Example: Katie and her friends have just finished finals, and discuss how to enjoy their first day of summer vacation together. They decide to go out to Papa John’s Pizzeria and enjoy a gala pizza party, replete with salad, fries and drinks. Katie did not think twice as she entered the non-kosher pizzeria.

Did Katie use her בחירה in the above scenario?

No, because she does not understand that it is wrong to eat non-kosher food. She was raised in a non-religious environment and was not taught to keep כשר, so כשרות is in the area of the “battlefield” which Katie has “not yet conquered.”

Teacher writes "Katie eating כשר in the 'Not Yet Conquered' section on the board.

DISCUSS: Different Nurture, Different Struggles.

How can a difference in nurture cause two people to have vastly different areas of *bechira*?

How can the same action be in one person’s ‘Conquered Territory’, and not in another’s, due to their different

your yetzer harah when he is trying to stop you from reaching your goal. You want to push off learning until next week, when the challenge will disappear. Real accomplishment comes only when presented with challenge. Don't wait until the challenge disappears to learn Torah! The trick is to learn now, when you have to face the 'goalie'!"

"Y-yes, you're right. But..."

"Don't break the rules of the game," encouraged R' Shalom. "Set your goal on the beis medrash now, and feel the thrill of overcoming the forces that oppose you!"

R' Shalom gave the boy a warm handshake and went on his way. Sure enough, the boy showed up to the shiur the next day. When R' Shalom saw the boy entering the room, he stood up in honor of the youngster who had overcome his yetzer harah.

(Based on Voice of Truth, printed by Artscroll)



DISCUSS: The Procrastination Pitfall

Why didn't R' Shalom want the boy to wait until the championship games were over to return to his learning?

Real accomplishment comes only when presented with challenge, such as learning while an exciting game is going on. The whole point is to win over the יצר הרע at the time when he is trying to stop you from reaching your goal.



DISCUSS: Combatting The Procrastination Pitfall

Sometimes we are tempted to say, "Today I'll do what I feel like doing, and tomorrow, when I'm in a better mood, I'll do the right thing." In such a situation, what can we think to strengthen ourselves in combatting this attitude?

ONE STEP AT A TIME

Hashem does not expect us to become perfect. There are things which we are not aware are wrong to do. There are things which may still be too hard for us to accomplish, such as having כונה by every word in davening, or *never* getting angry when something is done in a way which we dislike. Aiming for such goals is like trying to throw a basketball into a hoop which stands nine hundred feet above the ground; we can't reach that far! Such goals are currently beyond our נקודת הבחירה - the point in which we are capable of choosing right over wrong. Hashem does not expect us to "shoot a basket into a hoop that's too high to reach"; He does not want us to try to accomplish things that are way beyond our reach. Such things we cannot realistically accomplish yet. Hashem wants us to struggle to push our limits just a tiny bit, one "baby step" at a time. In this way, we continuously use our בחירה to become better and better.

Let's apply this concept practically, using the following examples:



DISCUSS: A Journey Starts with a Single Step

How does this poem connect to the idea of 'conquering territory' using *bechira*?

We cannot expect to improve and become perfect in any area in a very short amount of time. Progressing steadily, step by step, with every seemingly "small" choice, helps us to attain greatness.

CLOSURE

[Take it to Heart]

A STEP FORWARD

What is one specific area in my life where I can focus on using my power of *bechira* to choose correctly? (Choose from the 'battlefield' section on your board, or think of your own.)

Which small step can I take toward reaching this goal?

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