

Jewish Solidarity and Responsibility

ספרא ויקרא כ"ו

כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה

Sifra Vayikra 26

All the Jewish people are connected or are guarantors for each other

Discussion Questions:

- How does the phrase, "Kol Yisrael Areivim Ze L'Ze" (All Jews are responsible for each other) relate to your life and resonate with you?
- Do you think that Jews should help and be responsible for each other? In what practical ways can we do that?

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Address at Marble Arch Synagogue

"Community is society with a human face, the place where we know we are not alone."

Discussion Questions:

- What elements of community do you think give society "a human face"?
- How does being part of a community let us know that we are not alone?

סנהדרין י"ז ב'

ותניא כל עיר שאין בה עשרה דברים הללו אין תלמיד חכם רשאי לדור בתוכה: בית דין מכין ועונשין וקופה של צדקה נגבית בשנים ומתחלקת בשלשה ובית הכנסת ובית המרחץ וביהכ"ס רופא ואומן ולבלר (וטבח) ומלמד תינוקות. משום ר' עקיבא אמרו אף מיני פירא מפני שמיני פירא מאירין את העינים.

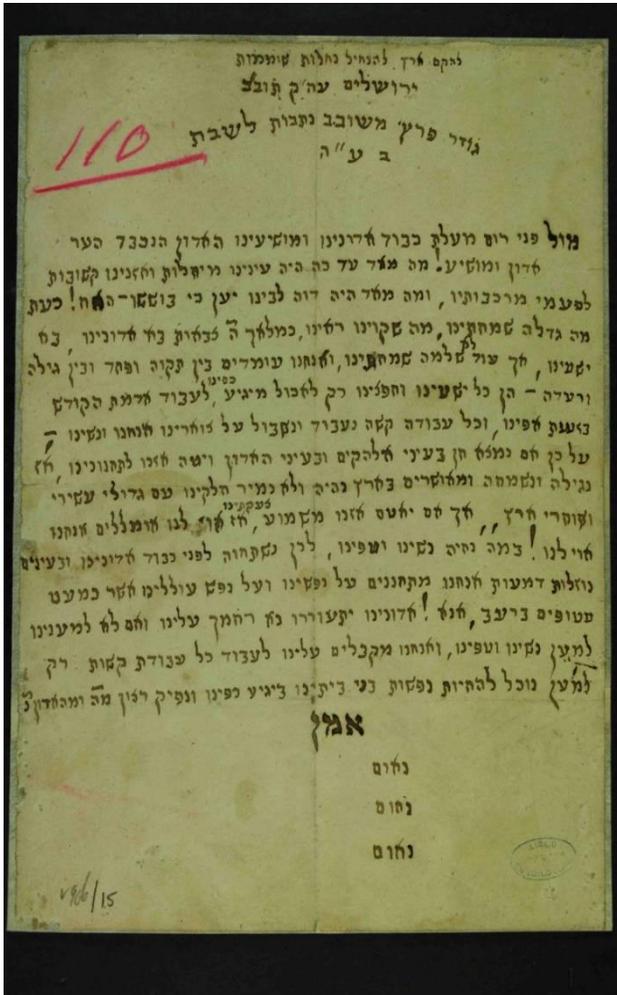
Sanhedrin 17b:10

And it is taught in a *baraita*: **A Torah scholar is not permitted to reside in any city that does not have these ten things: A court that** has the authority to **flog and punish** transgressors; **and a charity fund** for which monies **are collected by two people and distributed by three**, as required by *halakha*. This leads to a requirement for another three people in the city. **And a synagogue; and a bathhouse; and a public bathroom; a doctor; and a bloodletter; and a scribe [velavlar]** to write sacred scrolls and necessary documents; **and a ritual slaughterer; and a teacher of young children**. With these additional requirements, there are a minimum of 120 men who must be residents of the city. **They said in the name of Rabbi Akiva:** The city must **also have varieties of fruit, because varieties of fruit illuminate the eyes**.

Discussion Questions:

- Why might these ten things be important?
- In what ways do the organizations in your community provide services and support community members?
- Why do you think Rabbi Akiva spoke of the importance of fruit as well, even though it does not seem like a necessity? What is the equivalent of that in your community?
- In addition to routine services provided by institutions in the community, when did you feel like you had the opportunity to help as an individual?

Letter to Moses Montefiore from Jerusalem Residents



Translation

To establish a land, to endow the abandoned legacy of Jerusalem, the holy city, that should be planned and built

....

With the help of God

To his Excellency, our master, savior, the honorable master and savior! Until now, our eyes have been longing and our ears attentive to the bells of his carriage, and our hearts have been anguished because it did not arrive. Behold! Our joy is so great at this time, since what we hoped for finally happened. As the Angel of God, our master came, our savior arrived, but our joy is still incomplete, and we stand between hope and fear, between happiness and fright, for our only wish and salvation will be to eat from the fruit of our toil, to work the holy land with the sweat of our brow, and all this hard work, we will do and suffer, we and our women. Therefore, if we find favor in the eyes of our Lord, and in the eyes of our master, and he listens to our pleas, so we will be joyous and happy in the land, we will be present and will not wish to exchange our part with the great rich men and businessmen of the land, but if his ear does not hear our cries, so we will be miserable, oh, how we will be! On what will we live, our wives and our children, therefore, we bow before the honorable master, with tear-filled eyes, we beg for our lives and our poor souls, which are almost entirely consumed by hunger, Please! Our master, let your mercy upon us be awakened, and if not for us, for our wives and children and we take it upon ourselves to work hard so we can keep our families alive with our hard work and gain favor from the Lord and our master.

Amen

Discussion Questions:

- Why did the community in Jerusalem reach out to Montefiore for help?
- Why do you think he would want to help?
- This letter was written in the 19th century, around 100 years before the establishment of the state of Israel. How has the connection between Jewish communities around the world and with Israel changed since then?

דברים ט"ז:

כִּי־יְהִי־בְךָ אֶבְיוֹן מֵאֶחָיִךְ בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ לֹא תִאֲמָץ אֶת־לִבְּךָ וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת־יְדֶיךָ מֵאֶחָיִךְ הָאֶבְיוֹן: כִּי־פָתַחְתָּ אֶת־יְדֶיךָ לּוֹ וְהַעֲבַטְתָּ עַל־סוּמָם דֵּי מַחְסְרוֹ אֲשֶׁר־יִחְסַר לוֹ:

Deuteronomy 15:7

If there is a needy person among you, one of your community in any of your settlements in the land that the Hashem your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy. Open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think the Torah needs to command us not to harden our heart in the face of the needy?
- What are the ways in which your community gives charity? Is it just limited to giving money or are there other ways to fulfil this commandment?

Rosh Hashanah Care Parcel Advertisement, 1958

Discussion Questions:

- Have you ever provided products or help to people in need of support?
- Who were they or what were the causes?
- How did you help?
- This advertisement reflects the connection between Israel and the other Jewish communities around the world. What is the connection between Jews in Israel and Jews around the world today?

**Make it a
 Happy New Year
 for someone in
 ISRAEL**
**Send through
 UNITED HIAS SERVICE**
**a Rosh Hashanah CARE
 Kosher food parcel**

- Non-Profit
- Kosher
- Government Approved
- Ration and Tax Free

\$10.00
 and
\$18.25

Contains:
 Meats, Sugar, Shortening,
 Cocoa, Chocolate,
 Assorted Dried Fruits
*For delivery by Rosh Hashanah
 place your order now with*
 HIAS — Hebrew — Immigrant
 Aid Society
**130 N. Wells
 Chicago 6, Ill.**

Women Working in a JDC Factory in Bulgaria, 1940's



Discussion Questions:

- In order to assist the Jews of Bulgaria after the war, the Joint Distribution Committee* could have given each person money. Why do you think they chose to open a factory and employ those who needed assistance?
- What Jewish values are expressed when Jews in one country help Jews in another?

**The Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), also known as Joint, is a Jewish relief organization based in New York City. Since 1914 the organization has supported Jewish people living in Israel and throughout the world.*

משנה אבות א'י"ד

הוא [הלל] הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אִם אֵין אֲנִי לִי, מִי לִי וּבִשְׁאֵנִי לְעַצְמִי, מֶה אֲנִי. וְאִם לֹא עֲבָשִׁיו, אֵימָתִי?

Pirkei Avot 1:14

He [Hillel] used to say: If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am for my own self [only], what am I? And if not now, when?

Discussion Questions:

- How does Hillel's statement from the Mishna resonate with you?
- R' Abraham Joshua Heschel said that people achieve fullness of being in fellowship, in care for others. Have you ever felt this way?
- What can help people achieve that "fullness"?

Seder Without Fear, 1956



Discussion Questions:

- A shelter houses people who are refugees or homeless. The Jews' Temporary Shelter of London (as seen in this photograph) was established in the 1880s and operated for over 100 years. Why did the Jews of Britain create these houses?
- How does the Jewish community respond to similar situations today? Share some examples from your community.

בבא מציעא ע"א א:ג'

דתני רב יוסף: אם כסף תלוה את עמי את העני עמך (שמות כ"ב), עמי ונברי - עמי קודם, עני ועשיר - עני קודם, עניך ועניי עירך - עניך קודמין, עניי עירך ועניי עיר אחרת - עניי עירך קודמין.

Bava Metzia 71a:3

R. Joseph learnt: "If you lend money to any of my people that are poor with you" [this teaches, if the choice lies between] a Jew and a non-Jew, a Jew has preference; the poor or the rich the poor takes precedence; your poor [i.e. your relatives] and the [general] poor of your town, your poor come first; the poor of your city and the poor of another town the poor of your own town have prior rights. [Soncino translation]

The New Colossus by Emma Lazarus

"Give me your tired, your poor,
 Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
 The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
 Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Discussion Questions:

- What causes us to attend to the needs of some over the needs of others?
- How do we both acknowledge that we prioritize our giving and at the same time, work to end all hardship?
- Our natural tendency is to help those closest to us. In what situations do we motivate ourselves or feel like we can look beyond our immediate circles?

Appeal to American Jews Following the Kishinev Pogrom, 1903

Open Letter

To our Jewish brothers, citizens of the United States.



Our brothers' blood cries out to us from the Land of Russia, the land of Bessarabia, the miserable city of Kishinev, the voice of tens of thousands of our exhausted brothers who saw with their own eyes the murder of their brothers by murderers for no fault of their own. With their own eyes they saw the terrible atrocities that did not occur even in the Middle Ages.... But the lives of the slain is better than those who survived to live in starvation, lives of scorn and contempt...

To these miserable ones we will reach out from far, with all the efforts of our strength we will try to send them, each and every one of us, as much as we can afford so that they will not starve. You are our saviors who have enjoyed success and you have arrived in the land of freedom that provides life, light, and freedom that does not differentiate between nation and nation, between belief and belief. You, who have had the privilege of finding shelter under the flag of the Stars and Stripes and living a quiet and safe life, you must also revive and redeem your brothers, the people of your nation who are starving and drowning in a sea of tears and blood. Mercy must arise in the hearts of our merciful brothers, must awaken them so that they will not stand away from their dying brothers in this evil and terrible tragedy. Find your senses and help those who need help.

One of the exiled who is making haste to assist in his nation's tragedy,
 Zvi Hirsch Masliansky

Discussion Questions:

- What did you feel when you read this article?
- How does your community support groups or individuals in need?

Scan and share
 your letter/ drawing



Throughout all of Israel's wars, children have written to soldiers and friends on the home front - and NLI has preserved them for posterity.

Today, we invite you to share a letter or drawing that we will send to Israeli soldiers/citizens/kids to raise their spirits! Your contribution will be added to the NLI collections.