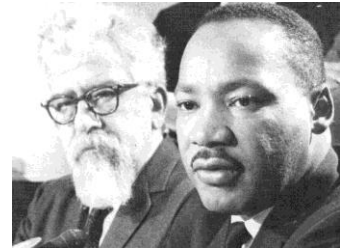




A Text Study in Honor of
Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.
and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel



B'tzelem Elohim, Created in God's Image

As you read these texts, consider:

- What does it mean to be created B'tzelem Elohim?
- How might the big idea that we are created B'tzelem Elohim influence your words and your actions?

Genesis 1:27

And God created humankind in God's image, in the image of God, God created God made it, male and female God made them. [Translation by Rabbi Steve Greenberg. Edited for gender neutrality]

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצִלְמוֹ, בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים
בָּרָא אֹתוֹ: זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה, בָּרָא אֹתָם.

Mishna, Pirkei Avot 4:3

He [Ben Azzai] would also say: Do not scorn any person, and do not discount any thing. For there is no one who has not their hour, and no thing that has not its place. [Translation by chabad.org. Edited for gender neutrality]

הוא היה אומר אל תהי בז לכל אדם ואל תהי
מפליג לכל דבר שאין לך אדם שאין לו שעה
ואין לך דבר שאין לו מקום:

Mishna, Pirkei Avot 2:4

Do not judge your neighbor until you stand in his place. [Translation by Rabbi Steve Greenberg]

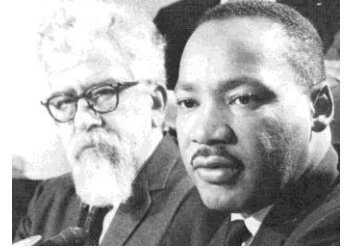
ואל תדין את חברך עד שתגיע למקומו

Texts were sourced from <http://www.on1foot.org>

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Responsibility to Others

As you read these texts, consider:

- What is a community? Who do you think is included in a community? Who is left out?
- What do the texts say about the role of the bystander?
- What is the responsibility of the upstander?

Pirkei Avot 2:4

Hillel says; do not separate yourself from the community.

הלל אומר אל תפרוש מן הצבור

Babylonian Talmud, *Ta'anit* 11a

At a time when the community is suffering, no one should say, "I will go home, eat, drink, and be at peace with myself."
[AJWS Translation]

בזמן שהצבור שרוי בצער אל יאמר אדם: אלך
לביתי ואוכל ואשתה, ושלום עליך, נפשי,

Babylonian Talmud, *Shavuot* 39a

All Israel is responsible for one another.

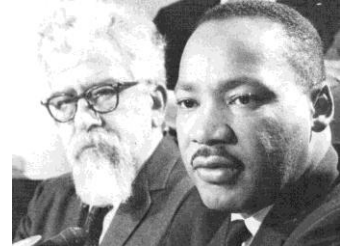
כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה

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Tikkun Olam, Repairing the World

As you read these texts, consider:

- What does the word *justice* mean?
- What might motivate you to “do good”?
- Do you agree with Rabbi Tarfon or Rabbi Akiba? Why?

Isaiah 1:17

Learn to do good. Devote yourselves to justice; aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan; defend the cause of the widow.
[JPS translation]

לְמַדּוּ הַיָּטִב דְּרָשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט אֲשֶׁר־יִחְמוֹץ נַפְשׁוֹ
יִתּוּם רִיבוֹ אֶלְמָנָה:

Deuteronomy 16:20

“Justice, justice you shall pursue.” (Deut 16:20)

צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדָּף

Babylonian Talmud, *Kiddushin* 40b

Rabbi Tarfon and some elders were reclining in an upper chamber in the house of Nitza in Lod when this question came up: Which is greater, study or action? Rabbi Tarfon spoke up and said: Action is greater. Rabbi Akiva spoke up and said: Study is greater. The others then spoke up and said: Study is greater because it leads to action. [Soncino translation]

וכבר היה רבי טרפון וזקנים מסובין בעלית בית
נתזה בלוד, נשאלה שאילה זו בפניהם: תלמוד
גדול או מעשה גדול? נענה רבי טרפון ואמר:
מעשה גדול, נענה ר"ע ואמר: תלמוד גדול, נענו
כולם ואמרו: תלמוד גדול, שהתלמוד מביא לידי
מעשה.

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