

# Building a Sacred Boardroom: A Resource of Jewish Textual Traditions to Enrich the Board Experience

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# TRANSLITERATION KEY

The transliteration scheme for Hebrew is given below.

## CONSONANTS

	א	י	ל	l
quiescent	א	not transliterated	מ	m
	ב	b	נ	n
	ב	v	ס	s
	ג,ג	g	ע	‘
	ד,ד	d	פ	p
	ה	h	פ	f
	ו	v (where not a vowel)	צ	§
	ז	z	ק	q
	ח	h	ר	r
	ט	t	שׁ	sh
	י	y	שׂ	s
	כ	k	ת,ת	t
	כ	kh		

## VOWELS

	א	א	ע
	א	א	י
	א, א	א	ע
	א, א	א	ע
short	א	א	א
	א	א	א

vocal *sheva*-e

silent *sheva*-not transliterated

The transliteration scheme for Yiddish follows. Hebrew words in Yiddish are to be transliterated according to standard Yiddish pronunciation, e.g., (word should be in Hebrew “Torah”) *toyre*.

א	not transliterated	יי	ey
א	a	יי	ay
א	o	כ	k
ב	b	כ,ך	kh
ב	v	ל	l
ג	g	מ,ם	m
ד	d	נ,ן	n
ה	h	ס	s
ו,וו	u	ע	e
וו	v	פ	p
יו	oy	פ,ף	f
ז	z	צ,ץ	ts
זש	zh	ק	k
ח	kh	ר	r
ט	t	ש	sh
טש	tsh	ש	s
י	(consonant) y	ת	t
	(vowel) i	ת	s
י	i		

These standards are adapted from the Association for Jewish Studies style sheet.

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## Introduction

Jewish professionals work tirelessly to meet congregants where they each find their Jewish identity. Take away ritual responsibilities and pastoral counseling and what you have left is the extensive pursuit of bringing Jewish sources and experiences to the individual congregants in the ways they desire to interact with the congregation. The congregant has made a commitment to be a part of the community, and the community needs to make a similar commitment to be invested in the experience of the congregant. Time spent at the congregation is an opportunity to engage meaningfully.

Jewish professionals appreciate all members who make up their community, with a special acknowledgement of dedicated and loyal congregants who pour their hearts and souls into the institution and community. These people are often the board members. There is a dilemma in this regard. Outside of a two minute *d'var Torah* at the beginning of the meeting and maybe some decent *nosh*, there is often a void of other ways to make the boardroom a Jewish experience. The boardroom of a congregation needs to feel different from the boardroom of a school or a hospital. Board meetings are an opportunity to frame and engage with the guidance of the Jewish tradition in their work steering the congregation. Board members spend a significant amount of time at the institution, some even weekly. However the time is not necessarily spent Jewishly enriched. This is highly problematic as it blatantly shows a lapse in the primary focus of Jewish communities; providing an authentic Jewish experience for the congregants. In this guide, we are going to aim to remedy this issue.

Included in this project is the following segments.

1. Four Text Studies based on most common board positions:
  - a. President
  - b. Membership
  - c. Education
  - d. Finance
2. Bonus Text Studies
3. Ethical prompts for the Board of Trustees, all of whom serve in the position of leadership.

Regarding the text studies based on the position. There are many other board positions not listed here. The ones listed are present in almost all boards across the country. I have also included in this project a single example of a couple other key positions that most (but not all) boards include. These positions are: Building and Grounds, and Tikkun Olam/ Social Action. The idea is to show the potential ways to include the tradition into the Boardroom. There are also topics that are crucially important, however are not included in this first installment of this project. Issues such as congregants in the hospital, congregants in college, political divisions within the congregation and more. The last segment of the project is a series of ethical prompts for the board members to challenge their understanding of their leadership. These focus on the larger scope responsibilities of being a member of the board.

It is worth noting that I switch between the words: congregation, community, and institution. This is done very intentionally so that these studies are understood to work in congregational board settings as well as many Jewish non-profit board situations. Similarly I vary in the amount of Hebrew I offer within the text studies. This was also done intentionally so that there was a variety of different levels of intimidation. For the board member who doesn't feel incredibly comfortable with Hebrew (even though I also included translations) I wanted to make sure there were some sheets that spoke to different kinds of learners.

To better contextual the experience of the board members, here are some of the general responsibilities of a board member worth mentioning:

General Board Responsibilities can include but are not limited to:

- Serve as voting member of Board of Directors
- Act as leader and advisor to assigned committees
- Support and defend policies and programs adopted by the Board of Directors
- Responsible for the fiscal responsibility of the institution
- Providing successful transition with successor
- Perform other duties assigned by the President and/or Board
- Report on the successes and challenges of specific committee to Board of Directors
- Monthly board meetings and committee meetings
- Project budget needs for following fiscal year
- Provide a warm and welcoming space for all members of the organization

## Section 1: President in the Jewish Tradition

Responsibilities of the President may include but are not limited to: Presiding at Congregational & Board gatherings, and sign all legal instruments on behalf of the Congregation pursuant to appropriate resolutions of the Congregation and/or the Board. They are to co-sign with the Treasurer all disbursements above a fixed amount, to be set by the Board after the budget for the following year is approved by the Board, prior to each Annual General Meeting. The president is to be responsible for overseeing the general management and oversee the affairs of the Congregation. Lastly, they are to be a representative of the congregation in the Community.

### Text Studies: President of the Board

1. **Limitations of Leadership:** *Often the President is expected to be Superhuman. Remembering that there are limitations to their abilities allows for a more realistic expectation from the community and the individual. This text study aims to recognize this and set the president up for greater success.*
2. **Leader and Representative:** *The role of president both requires leading and representing the community. This can be tricky with the type of situations they often find themselves apart of. This text study aims to look at the different ways this plays out.*
3. **Management in the Monarchy:** *The president is often singled out as the person who is solely responsible for what happens at the institution. Though they are ultimately the one to take on the weight of the situation, remembering how to manage effectively will increase success. This text study helps to identify ways the tradition sees management.*
4. **Respecting the lives of your employees:** *Especially in regards to employing Jewish professionals, there is a crucial need to remember to treat them fairly as employees and as your clergy and teachers. This text study aims to help contextualize this awkward situation.*

### Rabbinic Values:

1. Leadership: הנהגה *Hanhagah*
2. Honor: כבוד *Kavod*
3. Humility: ענווה *Anavah*



## Text Study 1: Limitations of Leadership

### Proverbs 24:16-17

כִּי שֶׁבַע יִפֹּל צַדִּיק וְגַם אֲרָשָׁעִים יִפְשְׁלוּ בָרָעָה:

Seven times the righteous man falls and gets up, While the wicked are tripped by one misfortune.

### I Chronicles 28:3

וַהֲאֱלֹהִים אָמַר לִי לֹא־תִבְנֶה בַּיִת לְשְׁמִי כִּי אִישׁ מִלְחָמוֹת  
אַתָּה וְדָמִים שָׁפַכְתָּ:

But God said to me, 'You will not build a house for My name, for you are a man of battles and have shed blood.'

He is required to have a pleasant voice and appearance, to be married, to have a beard, to be fully familiar with the liturgy, to be of blameless character, and to be acceptable in all other respects to the members of the community.

- *Shulchan Aruch* [16th c.], *Orach Chayim* 53:4

The sages asked: Whom shall we appoint to succeed Rabban Gamliel [as the head of the Academy]? ... Let us appoint Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, for he is wise, and he is wealthy, and he is a tenth-generation descendant of Ezra the Scribe.... So they came and said to him: Will it please the master to become the head of the Academy? He said to them: I will go and consult with my family. And he went and consulted with his wife. She said to him: But perhaps they will depose you as well! He said to her: If a person uses a valuable goblet one day, it may well break the next. She said to him: But you have no gray hair! And that day, a miracle occurred and eighteen rows of his hair turned gray.... On the day they appointed Rabbi Elazar, they removed the guard from the study hall and allowed anyone who wished to enter. When Rabban Gamliel was in charge, he used to say: Anyone whose inside does not match his outside may not enter this study hall!

-*Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot 27b-28a*

### Questions for Discussion:

1. This Shulchan Aruch text was written in regards to a rabbi. However there are many parallels here for the qualifications of President or other senior lay leadership positions. What does it say about the needs of a community that their leadership hold qualities like these?
2. King David was flat out rejected from building the Temple due to his concentrated career as a warrior. What can this teach about moderation in leadership?
3. The story of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah illustrates recognition of limitations: The fragility of the position and the need for wisdom. With these points understood radical change was possible. Is radical change sustainable without recognition of these limitations?
4. How can you as a community leader embrace and celebrate taking risks that may lead to failure?

## Text Study 2: Leader and Representative

### Pirkei Avot 2:4

הלל אומר, אל תפרש מן הצבור, ואל תאמין בעצמך עד יום מותך, ואל תדין את חברך עד שתגיע למקומו, ואל תאמר דבר שאי אפשר לשמע, שסופו להשמע. ואל תאמר לכשאפנה אשנה, שמא לא תפנה:

Hillel says: Do not separate yourself from the community. Do not believe in yourself until the day of your death. Do not judge your fellow until you come to his place. Do not say something that cannot be heard, for in the end it will be heard. Do not say, "When I will be available I will study [Torah]," lest you never become available.

### Arachin 17a

(תהלים כד, ו) זה דור דורשיו מבקשי פניך יעקב סלה פליגי בה רבי יהודה נשיאה ורבנן חד אמר דור לפי פרנס וחד אמר פרנס לפי דורו.

"This is the generation of them that seek him that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah" (Psalms 24:16). R. Yehudah HaNasi and the Rabbis disagreed on how to interpret this verse. One says: 'A generation parallels that of its leader.' And one says: 'A leader parallels that of his generation'

*Hineni* , "Here I am," the response of both Abraham and Moses to God, suggests humility as well as zeal, according to Rav Kook. He teaches: "Humility strengthens the memory....It is impossible to achieve any clear perception except through humility." Rav Kook continues: "At times it is not necessary to be afraid of greatness, which inspires a person to do great things. All humility is based on such holy greatness. One is called on to invest much effort in clinging to humility. When a thought of pride or a feeling of self-exaltation arises in the person, it is for him to apply the good aspect of these sensibilities to reinforce the will to holiness." Humility, we learn from Rav Kook, is essential to greatness as well as to holiness. Humility makes sincere and genuine leadership possible. God clearly understood and valued Moses' personal humility. Thus the *alef* in *Vayikra* is hardly noticeable.<sup>1</sup>

### Questions for Discussion:

1. Where should a leader position themselves to make themselves most effective?
2. What kind of actions are required for positive leadership?
3. Rabbi Yehudah Ha'Nasi and the "rabbis" disagree about the direction of influence between the correlation of leader and community. Which do you see as a more effective presumption for your leadership?
4. What is Rav Kook saying about not being afraid of greatness? Can embracing greatness cause one to stray from humility?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://reformjudaism.org/humility-essential-trait-leadership>

### Text Study 3: Management in the Monarchy

#### Pirkei Avot 6:6

שְׂחוֹק, בְּאַרְךָ אַפִּים, בָּלֵב טוֹב, בְּאַמוּנַת חֲכָמִים,  
וּבְקִבְלַת הַיְסוּרִין, הַמְּכִיר אֶת מְקוֹמוֹ, וְהַשְׁמִיחַ  
בְּחִלְקוֹ, וְהָעוֹשֶׂה סִיג לְדִבְרָיו, וְאֵינוֹ מַחְזִיק טוֹבָה  
לְעַצְמוֹ,

laughter, patience, generosity, trust of the  
sages, acceptance of afflictions, knowing  
one's place, gladness in one's portion, erection  
of a fence to one's words, lack of self-  
aggrandizement.

#### Exodus 18:13-16

(יג) וַיְהִי מִמָּחָרֶת וַיֵּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה לְשִׁפְט אֶת-הָעָם  
וַיַּעֲמֵד הָעָם עַל-מֹשֶׁה מִן-הַבֹּקֶר עַד-  
הָעֶרֶב: (יד) וַיֵּרָא חִתָּן מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-הוּא  
עוֹשֶׂה לָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר מֹה־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹשֶׂה  
לָעָם מִדּוֹעַ אַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב לְבִדּוֹ וְכָל-הָעָם נֹאֲב עֲלֶיךָ  
מִן-בֹּקֶר עַד-עֶרֶב: (טו) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְחִתָּנוֹ כִּי-  
יָבֹא אֵלַי הָעָם לְדָרֹשׁ אֲלַיִם: (טז) כִּי-יִהְיֶה לָהֶם  
דָּבָר בָּא אֵלַי וְשִׁפְטָתִי בֵּין אִישׁ וּבֵין רֵעֵהוּ  
וְהוֹדַעְתִּי אֶת-חֲקֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶת-תּוֹרָתִי: וַיֹּאמֶר  
חִתָּן מֹשֶׁה אֵלָיו לֹא-טוֹב הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה  
עוֹשֶׂה: נָכַל תִּבְלֶה גַם-אַתָּה גַם-הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר עִמָּךְ  
כִּי-כִבֵּד מְמֹךְ הַדָּבָר לֹא-תוֹכַל עֲשֹׂהוּ לְבִדּוֹ:

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses  
sat to judge the people; and the people stood  
about Moses from the morning unto the  
evening. Moses' father-in-law saw all that he  
did to the people, he said: 'What is this thing  
that you do to the people? why sit by yourself  
, and all the people stand about you from  
morning unto even?' Moses said unto his  
father-in-law: 'Because the people come to me  
to inquire of God; when they have a matter,  
they come to me; and I judge between a man  
and his neighbor, and I make them know the  
laws of God. Moses' father-in-law said to him,  
"The thing you are doing is not right; you will  
surely wear yourself out, and these people as  
well. For the task is too heavy for you; you  
cannot do it alone.

Leadership means believing in the people you lead. The rabbis gave a remarkable interpretation of the passage in which Moses says about the Israelites, "They will not believe in me." God said to Moses: "They are believers the children of believers, but in the end you will not believe." They also said that the sign God gave Moses when his hand became leprous (Ex. 4:6) was a punishment for casting doubt on the Israelites. A leader must have faith in the people he or she leads.<sup>2</sup>

– Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

#### Questions for Discussion:

1. What does the text with Moses and his father-in-law say about the limitations of leadership and the necessity for a strong board?
2. What does the piece of the Pirkei Avot text tell us about the well-balanced personal qualities necessary for management in a setting where the President is seen as making most of the decisions (regardless of the accuracy of this viewpoint)?
3. What would happen if a leader doesn't have faith in the people? Would change and growth be possible?

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.jpost.com/Magazine/Opinion/Seven-principles-of-Jewish-leadership>

## Text Study 4: Respecting the Lives of Employees

### Leviticus 19:13

לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂק אֶת־רֵעֶךָ וְלֹא תִגְזֹל לֹא־תִלִּין פַּעֲלַת שָׂכִיר אֶתְךָ עַד־בֹּקֶר

You shall not defraud your fellow. You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning.

### Deuteronomy 24:14-15

לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂק שָׂכִיר עֲנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן מֵאַחֶיךָ אוֹ מִגֵּרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בָּאֶרֶץ בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ. בְּיוֹמוֹ תִּתֵּן שָׂכָרוֹ וְלֹא־תָבוֹא עָלָיו הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כִּי עֲנִי הוּא וְאֵלָיו הוּא נִשְׂא אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ וְלֹא־יִקְרָא עֲלֶיךָ אֱלֹהֵיהוּהָ וְהָיָה בְּךָ חַטָּא (ס)

You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer, whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities of your land. You must pay him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is needy and urgently depends on it; else he will cry to Adonai against you and you will incur guilt.

### Talmud Bavli Bava Metzia 112a

Why does he climb a ladder or hang from a tree or risk death? Is it not for his wages? Another interpretation—‘His life depends on them’ indicates that anyone who denies a hired laborer his wages, it is as though he takes his life from him.

*The Talmudic ideal of work stood in sharp contrast to other views prevailing in the ancient world at the time that Jewish oral religious law was codified. Both the ancient Greeks and ancient Romans looked down on labor, and freedom from work was considered a right of rank and privilege. According to Aristotle, “Labor stupefies both mind and body and deprives man of his natural dignity .... The title of citizen belongs only to those who need not work to live.”<sup>3</sup> In reaction, Jewish scholars of the day countered: “Love labor and hate mastery and seek not acquaintance with the ruling power.”<sup>4</sup>*

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What are the basic requirements for the ethical treatment of employees? How might this be even more complex in regards to employing your clergy, someone who may have married your child, or buried your loved one now is sitting across the table at a contract negotiation?
2. The Jewish tradition champions hard work. How can we embrace this while making sure not to exploit the time and dedication of employees?
3. Often in contract negotiations, the business savvy often outweighs providing a fair quality of life to the individual. What are some ways that this can be avoided? How can the relationship between the clergy and the Board be honored in these moments?

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<sup>3</sup> Weisfeld, Israel. *Labor Legislation in the Bible and Talmud*, Yeshiva University, New York, 1974, p. 53; from Aristotle. *Politics*, Parts 6, 8, 10, 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Avot* 1:10. Cited in Danby, Herbert. *The Mishnah*, Oxford University Press, London, 1954. This text is the source of all quotes from the *Mishnah*.

## Section 2: Membership in the Jewish Tradition

Responsibilities of the Membership Vice President may include but are not limited to the following: Encouraging unaffiliated individuals to join the congregation and develop programs for the recruitment, orientation, integration and retention of all Temple members. They are to promote a broader understanding of the Temple among prospective members, current members and the community-at-large. They work to ensure that all members feel welcome and oversee the greeters for the congregation.

### Text Studies:

1. **Is God a member of the community:** *The notion of God is a controversial one in liberal Jewish settings today. Rather than insist that everyone understand God in a similar way, it has become to norm to tiptoe around even the idea of God. This text study explores why this approach may not be helpful and why embracing God may give a stronger voice to the plethora of different thoughts about God.*
2. **Quality & Quantity: The importance of a strong community:** *Diversity weaves a stronger web. This has been proven in team sports, writing teams, and more. This text study takes a look at what diversity can really do for Judaism today.*
3. **Welcoming Committee:** *Greeters are a classic part of the congregational model, however it must be asked, are they effective? This text explores the importance of being truly welcoming, and that happens way before people show up for services.*
4. **Keeping record of membership?** *Often we look at record keeping as monotonous and dull. Regardless, our textual tradition places a high value on keeping records. This text will explore part of the value in keeping records, and encourage the reader to find the holiness in what appears to be very mundane.*

### Rabbinic Values:

1. Friendship: יְדִידוּת *Yedidut*
2. Hospitality: הַכְנָסַת אֹרְחִים *Hachnasat Orchim*
3. Loving One's Neighbor: וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֵךְ *V'ahavta L're'acha*

## Text Study 1: Is God a member of the Community?

### Exodus 25:8

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם:

And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.

### Genesis 32: 25-31

וַיֵּתֶר יַעֲקֹב לִבְדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֶק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלֹת הַשָּׁחַר: וַיֵּרָא כִּי לֹא יָכֹל לוֹ וַיִּגַּע בְּכַף־יָרְכוֹ וַתִּקַּע כַּף־יָרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב בְּהֶאָבֶקוֹ עִמּוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחְנִי כִּי עֲלֶה הַשָּׁחַר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁלְּחֶךָ כִּי אִם־בִּרְכָּתִי: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מַה־שְּׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב: וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֵאמָר עוֹד־שְׁמֶךָ כִּי אִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־שָׂרִית עִם־אֱלֹהִים וְעִם־אֲנָשִׁים וַתִּוָּכַל: וַיִּשְׁאַל יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִגִּידָהָנָא שְׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶה תִּשְׁאַל לְשִׁמִּי וַיַּבְרָךְ אֹתוֹ שָׁם: וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם פְּנִיֵאל כִּי־רָאִיתִי אֱלֹהִים פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים וַתִּנָּצַל נַפְשִׁי:

Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he wrenched Jacob's hip at its socket, so that the socket of his hip was strained as he wrestled

with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for dawn is breaking." But he answered, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." Said the other, "What is your name?" He replied, "Jacob." Said he, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with beings divine and human, and have prevailed." Jacob asked, "Pray tell me your name." But he said, "You must not ask my name!" And he took leave of him there. So Jacob named the place Peniel, meaning, "I have seen a divine being face to face, yet my life has been preserved."

'For the essence or substance of that other soul is divine spirit, a truth vouched for by Moses especially, who in his story of the creation says that God breathed a breath of life upon the first man, the founder of our race, into the lordliest part of his body, the face, where the senses are stationed like bodyguards to the great king, the mind. And clearly what was then thus breathed was ethereal spirit, even an effulgence of the blessed, thrice blessed nature of the Godhead.'<sup>5</sup>

– Philo, 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What does it mean for God to be present? Does one have to believe in an existence of God that can be present in a space? Can God be a member if the community isn't sure what they believe about God?
2. How does it affect our demeanor and intentionality if God is to be in our midst? Does that force a more intentioned and meaningful experience? Can we let our guard down if God is "present"?
3. How does this change the idea that we should wrestle with God? If the soul is a piece of God, does that make internal struggles simply another means of wrestling with God and faith?

<sup>5</sup> *De Specialibus Legibus*, IV, 24, Eng. trans. F. H. Coulson and G. H. Whitaker (Loeb Classical Library), p. 85. For Philo's views on the nature of the soul, cf. H. A. Wolfson: *Philo*, i (Harvard University Press, 1948), pp. 589-95.

## Text Study 2: Welcoming Committee

It is easy to acquire an enemy, difficult to acquire a friend. (*Midrash, Yalkut Va-et'hannan* 845)

The Hebrew word for friend is חֵבֵר “*chaver*”. The root of that word חָב “*chav*” means “obligation”. The idea is to foster relationships by doing things for people. When you do good things for others, they will feel more obligated to do good things for you as well. It’s a *virtuous cycle* that serves both individuals well.<sup>6</sup> – Jason Cabler

### Genesis 18:2-4

וַיֵּשָׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא  
וַיֵּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֲרָצָה: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי  
אִם-נָא מַצָּאתִי חַן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲלֵ-נָא תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדְּךָ: יִקַּח  
נָא מִעֹט-מַיִם וְרָחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ: וְאָקִיָּה  
פֶּתַח-לֶחֶם וְסַעֲדוּ לְבָבְכֶם אַחֵר תַּעֲבְרוּ:

Looking up, he [Abraham] saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them,

he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground, he said, “My lords, if it please you, do not go on past your servant. Let a little water be brought; bathe your feet and recline under the tree. And let me fetch a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves;

### Talmud Bavli Shabbat 127a

מפני האורחין וכו': א"ר יוחנן גדולה הכנסת אורחין  
כהשכמת בית המדרש דקתני מפני האורחין ומפני בטול  
בית המדרש ורב דימי מנהרדעא אמר יותר מהשכמת בית  
המדרש דקתני מפני האורחין והדר ומפני בטול בית  
המדרש

We learned in the mishna: One may move produce **due to the guests** and in order to prevent the suspension of Torah study in the study hall. **Rabbi Yohanan said: Hospitality toward guests is as great as**

**rising early to go to the study hall, as the mishna equates them and teaches: Due to the guests and due to suspension of Torah study in the study hall. And Rav Dimi from Neharde'a says: Hospitality toward guests is greater than rising early to the study hall, as it teaches: Due to the guests, and only afterward: And due to suspension of Torah study in the study hall.**

### Questions for Discussion:

1. There is a priority placed in the Jewish tradition in making the teaching of Torah accessible. How do these texts illustrate ways to do just that?
2. There are many who understand the term “chosen people” to refer to the role of transmitting Torah in this world. How can this influence the role of a welcoming committee, and greeters at services, etc?
3. The midrash reminds us of a timeless lesson. We are quick to judge and can establish what bothers us about a person quickly. What would it look like if we very intentionally encouraged members of the committee to actively stay away from speaking ill about others? Could attempting to find the most positive features about a person adjust the overall wellbeing of a community?

<sup>6</sup> Jason Cabler, Ten Commandments For Making Money- Learn From the Jewish People About Money & Business. 2017 <https://www.cfinancialfreedom.com/making-money-learn-jewish-money-business/>

### Text Study 3: Keeping Record of Membership

#### Exodus 30:11

כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְקֻדֵיהֶם וְנָתַנוּ אִישׁ כְּפָר  
וּפְשֹׁ לַיהוָה בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה בָהֶם נֶגֶף בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם:

When you take a census of the Israelite people according to their enrollment, each

shall pay the LORD a ransom for himself on being enrolled, that no plague may come upon them through their being enrolled.

We are told that the census has been done just eight chapters after we are told to take a census. It was done a second time. Rashi comments that God needs the people counted often “because they were dear to Adonai, and Adonai counts them all the time—when they went out of Egypt, Adonai counted them; when many of them fell for having worshipped the golden calf, God counted them to ascertain how many were left, when the *Shechina* (divine presence) was about to dwell among them, God again took their census, for on the first day of Nisan the Tabernacle was erected, and shortly afterward, on the first day of Iyar, Adonai counted them.”

#### Numbers 1:2-3

שָׂאוּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ כָּל־עֵדֻת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפַּחֹתָם לְבֵית  
אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפָּר שְׁמוֹת כָּל־זָכָר לְגִלְגָּלָתָם: מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה  
וְעַלֶּה כָּל־יֵצֵא צֶבָא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל תִּפְקְדוּ אֹתָם לְצִבְאוֹתָם אֹתָהּ  
וְאַהֲרֹן:

Take a census of the whole Israelite community by the clans of its ancestral houses, listing the names, every male, head by head. You and Aaron shall record them by their groups, from the age of twenty years up, all those in Israel who are able to bear arms.

When counting for a *minyan*, it is customary to use a Torah verse that contains ten words instead of using numbers.<sup>16</sup> The verse usually used is: "*Hoshiah et amecha u'varech et nachalatecha ur'em venas'em ad ha'olam.*" "Save Your people and bless Your inheritance, and tend them and elevate them forever."<sup>7</sup> Another common method is to say: "*Not one, not two, etc.*"

#### Questions for Discussion:

1. The Torah's census taking seems to be for both taxation and military purposes. How can we take these examples of a census and apply it to the tasks of membership? Is there a parallel between accurately knowing the demographics of your community and God knowing and loving the Israelites in the text?
2. Why when counting for a minyan are we not to use numbers? Using another way to count doesn't change the fact that we are counting. If this is the case, why do we not use numbers? What does this choice symbolize?
3. Keeping record of those in our circle is directly attached to the ability to say certain prayers. What does this say about the importance not only of community but of knowing there is a critical mass of your community with you.
4. How can Rashi's interpretation that God constantly counts the people out of love influence the congregation's prioritization as to how and when members are being engaged both in programming and in record keeping?

<sup>7</sup> The Rebbe points out that since this verse is actually a prayer for the ultimate redemption, we see that the first thing Jews pray for when they gather in a group is for the redemption (*Sha'arei Halacha Uminhag* vol. 1, p. 137).



## Text Study 4: Quality & Quantity: The Importance of a Strong Community

Some have referred to this new reality as the “religious marketplace,” where individuals go “shopping” for the faith or denomination that fits them best—or, more likely, the various pieces of different faiths or denominations that they then cobble together into their own individualized religious practice, often with little regard for the traditions or denominations in which they were raised.<sup>8</sup>

- Michael Kress, *The New Rabbi: The changing role of the pulpit rabbi in America*.

### Talmud Sanhedrin 17b

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:

**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.**

### Numbers 11:16-17

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֶסְפֶּה־לִּי שְׁבָעִים אִישׁ מִזִּקְנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִדְעָתָּ כִּי־הֵם זִקְנֵי הָעָם וְשֹׁטְרָיו וְלִקְחָתָּ אִתָּם  
אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהִתְיַצְּבוּ שָׁם עִמָּדִי וְנִדְבָתִי וְדִבַּרְתִּי עִמָּדֶךָ  
שָׁם וְאֶצְלָתִי מִן־הָרוּחַ אֲשֶׁר עָלֶיךָ וְשָׁמַתִּי עֲלֵיהֶם וְנִשְׁאָו  
אִתָּךְ בְּמַשָּׁא הָעָם וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא אֹתָהּ לְבַדְּךָ:

Then Adonai said to Moses, “Gather for Me seventy of Israel’s elders of whom you have

experience as elders and officers of the people, and bring them to the Tent of Meeting and let them take their place there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will draw upon the spirit that is on you and put it upon them; they shall share the burden of the people with you, and you shall not bear it alone.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. The text describes prerequisites for a community in order to have a meaningful experience in the Jewish tradition. What are the basic requirements of our Jewish community today?
2. How does the current trend of “religious marketplace” redirect the way in which Jewish communities conduct themselves? Do you think there is a shift from obligation to join to a more service/activity model? How can institutions adjust with the times?
3. The elders of Israel are brought together so they could all experience something unbelievable. Once they had this in common, did their diversity also strengthen this experience? Can this also be related to differing skillsets?

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-new-rabbi/>

## Section 3: Education in the Jewish Tradition

Responsibilities of the Education Vice President include but are not limited to: Work with the educator in planning, coordinating and overseeing the implementation of formal and informal Jewish education programs for adults as well as all Temple members.

### Text Study Topics

1. **It is not a B'nai Mitzvah Factory:** *Introduction to the importance of this text study. The ceremony, which is of fairly recent origin, does not make one a bar/bat mitzvah; it merely marks the time when one becomes a “son/daughter of commandment.” The real meaning of the phrase is not “son or daughter of the commandments” but “one of the commandments”*
2. **Who is the Synagogue's Target Learner:** *Often congregations think first and foremost about the education of the children. An obviously important endeavor, children are the future. However, working towards the future begs the question: Once the future is committed how does the synagogue serve the invested congregants? What groups should be targeted for further educational opportunities?*
3. **Why teach Jewish?** *Big Question- first, WHY BE JEWISH? Is it about the calendar of celebration? Is it the community? What is it about Judaism that is worth enriching our lives?*
4. **Making learning accessible:** *Lets start with the bottom line... Education is an act of love. All deserve to experience that love.*

### Rabbinic Values:

1. Education: חֲנוּכָּה *Chinuch*
2. Commitment: הִתְחַבְּוּת *Hitchaivut*
3. Good Manners: דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ *Derech Eretz*

## Text Study 1: It's Not a B'nai Mitzvah Factory

The history of the bar mitzvah dates back to a fifth-century rabbinic text referencing a blessing recited by the father thanking God for freeing him from responsibility for the deeds of his child, who is now accountable for his own actions. A 14th-century text mentions a father reciting this blessing in a synagogue when his son has his first Aliyah.<sup>9</sup>

Although the term occurs in the Talmud for one who is subject to the law (BM 96a), its usage to denote the occasion of assuming religious and legal obligations does not appear before the 15<sup>th</sup> century (*Sefer Ziyoni* of R. Menahem Ziyoni to Gen. 1:5)<sup>10</sup>

### Maim. Yad, Ishut 10

הבן משולד עד שיהיה בן י"ג שנה נקרא קטן ונקרא  
תינוק ואפילו הביא כמה שערות בתוך הזמן הזה אינו  
סימן אלא שומא. הביא שתי שערות למטה במקומות  
הידועות לשער. והוא מבן י"ג שנה ויום אחד ומעלה  
נקרא גדול ונקרא איש:

Even if several [pubic] hairs grow [on his body] during this time, they are [not significant according to Jewish law] and are considered to be merely hairs growing from a mole. If, however, two hairs grow in the pubic area after he attains the age of thirteen years and one day, [his status changes, and] he is considered a *gadol* (adult male) and/or an *ish*(man).

A male, from birth until the age of thirteen, is called a *katan* (minor) and/or a *tinok* (baby).

### Pirkei Avot 5:21

הוא ה"ה אומר, בן חמש שנים למקרא, בן עשר למשנה,  
בן שלש עשרה למצות, בן חמש עשרה לתלמוד, בן  
שמונה עשרה לחפה, בן עשרים לרדף, בן שלשים לפח,  
בן ארבעים לבניה, בן חמשים לעצה, בן ששים לזקנה,  
בן שבעים לשיבה, בן שמונים לגבירה, בן תשעים לשוח,  
בן מאה פאלו מת ועבר ובטל מן העולם:

study of] Talmud, **Eighteen [is the age] for the [wedding] canopy, Twenty [is the age] for pursuit, Thirty [is the age] for [full] strength, Forty [is the age] for understanding, Fifty [is the age] for [giving] counsel, Sixty [is the age] for mature age, Seventy [is the age] for a hoary head, Eighty [is the age] for [superadded] strength, Ninety [is the age] for [a] bending [stature], One hundred, is [the age at which one is] as if dead, passed away, and ceased from the world.**

He [Yehudah ben Teima] used to say: Five years [is the age] for [the study of] Scripture, Ten [is the age] for [the study of] Mishnah, **Thirteen [is the age] for [observing] commandments**, Fifteen [is the age] for [the

Question:

1. If the rabbis thought that bar mitzvah meant adulthood, why do the rabbis separate this age from other adult milestones? Obviously there are issues with the metrics used by the rabbis to determine coming of age. Does 13 still work? Why or why not?
2. What is the purpose of this milestone if not to be a hardline on adulthood?
3. The original idea of releasing the parent from their obligations towards the child refers today to their independence as a Jew of the community. How can we help facilitate this intention in our communities today?

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/bar-and-bat-mitzvah-101/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/bar-bat-mitzvah>

## Text Study 2: Target Learner

### Talmud Brachot 28a

On that day that they removed Rabban Gamliel from his position and appointed Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya in his place, there was also a fundamental change in the general approach of the study hall as they dismissed the guard at the door and permission was granted to the students to enter. Instead of Rabban Gamliel's selective approach that asserted that the students must be screened before accepting them into the study hall, the new approach asserted that anyone who seeks to study should be given opportunity to do so.

### Pirkei Avot 5:14

אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּהוֹלְכֵי לְבֵית הַמִּדְרָשׁ. הוֹלֵךְ וְאֵינוֹ עוֹשֶׂה,  
שׂוֹכֵר הֶלִיקָה בְּיָדוֹ. עוֹשֶׂה וְאֵינוֹ הוֹלֵךְ, שׂוֹכֵר מַעֲשֶׂה בְּיָדוֹ.  
הוֹלֵךְ וְעוֹשֶׂה, חֲסִיד. לֹא הוֹלֵךְ וְלֹא עוֹשֶׂה, רָשָׁע:

There are four temperaments among those who go to the House of Study: [One who] goes but does not do obtains the reward for going, does but does not go obtains reward for doing, goes and does is a pious person, and the one who neither goes nor does is a wicked person.

### Avot de-Rabbi Natan, Avot 1:4

The beginning of Rabbi Akiva? They say that he was 40 years old and had not learned a thing. One time, he was standing at the mouth of the well and said, "Who carved this rock?" They said to him, "The water that consistently falls on it every day." They said to him, "Akiva, did you not read water wears away stones (Job 14:19)?" Immediately Rabbi Akiva ruled... : Just as the soft sculpts the hard, words of Torah, which are as hard as iron, will all the more so carve my heart/mind, which is but flesh and blood! Immediately he returned to learn Torah.<sup>11</sup>

### Pirkei Avot 4:13

רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר, הוּא זֶהִיר בַּתְלֻמוֹד, שֶׁשֶּׁגַּגַּת תִּלְמוֹד  
עוֹלָה זְדוֹן. רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן אוֹמֵר, שְׁלֹשָׁה כְּתָרִים הֵם, כְּתָר  
תּוֹרָה וְכְתָר כְּהֵנָּה וְכְתָר מַלְכוּת, וְכְתָר שֶׁם טוֹב עוֹלָה עַל  
גְּבוּהָן.

Rabbi Yehuda said: Be careful when teaching, for your errors in teaching are considered as intentional transgression. Rabbi Shimon said: There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood and the crown of the monarchy - but the crown of a good name outweighs them all.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. The Talmud tells of the day that learning Torah was open to everyone, regardless of their lineage or status. What does this tell us about the priority of diversity and openness? Who was Gamliel's target learner? Who is Azarya's?
2. What can we learn about the different types of learners that may be in the room at the same time? Can we apply this same understanding to the different ways of processing information? Can we be sure that all members have an avenue in which to engage if they desire?
3. The text about the seriousness of teaching wrong information sets the responsibility level very high for anyone who teaches. Do you think this is fair? Have you had the experience in your Jewish learning where you had to re-learn something because you discovered it wasn't exactly true? How did that make you feel?

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<sup>11</sup> translated by Rabbi Kelilah Miller

## Text Study 3: Why teach Jewish

### Avot 3:21

רבי אלעזר בן עזריה אומר, אם אין תורה, אין דרך ארץ.  
אם אין דרך ארץ, אין תורה. אם אין חכמה, אין יראה.  
אם אין יראה, אין חכמה. אם אין בינה, אין דעת. אם אין  
דעת, אין בינה. אם אין קמת, אין תורה. אם אין תורה,  
אין קמת.

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria: Without Torah there is no social order; without social order there is no Torah. Without wisdom, there is no conscience; without conscience, there is no wisdom. Without knowledge, there is no understanding; without understanding there is no knowledge. Without sustenance, there is no Torah; without Torah there is no sustenance.

### V'Ahavta (Deuteronomy 6:5-9)

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-  
מְאֹדְךָ: וְהָיָה דְבָרֶיךָ הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם עַל-  
לִבְּךָ: וְשָׁנַנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבִלְכֻתְךָ  
בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ: וְקָשַׁרְתָּם לְאָזְנוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ  
לְטָטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ: וְקָתַבְתָּם עַל-מְזוּזַת בֵּיתְךָ וּבִשְׁעֶיךָ:

You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Take to heart these instructions with

which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

### Talmud Bavli Ta'anit 7a

אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק למה נמשלו דברי תורה כעץ  
(שנאמר) **משלי ג, יח** (עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה לומר  
לך מה עץ קטן מדליק את הגדול אף תלמידי חכמים  
קטנים מחדדים את הגדולים והיינו דאמר ר' חנינא הרבה  
למדתי מרבותי ומחבירי יותר מרבותי ומתלמידי יותר  
מכולן).

Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: Why are Torah matters compared to a tree, as it is

stated: "It is a tree of life to those who cling to it" (Prov. 3:18)? This comes to tell you that just as a small [piece of] wood can ignite a large piece, so too, minor Torah scholars can sharpen great [Torah scholars]. This is why Rabbi Hanina said: "I have learned much from my teachers and even more from my friends than from my teachers, but from my students, more than all of them."

### Questions for Discussion:

1. Judaism has a long standing tradition that learning is a two directional process. As Rabbi Hanina said in the text: teacher <friend <student. What values does this basic concept of where knowledge comes from say about learning Jewishly?
2. Do you agree that Torah and social order go hand and hand? What about sustenance (read tangibles) and Torah? How can your congregation better present Torah in this way?
3. The prayer *V'ahavta* is a citation from the book of Deuteronomy. What we pray aloud is actually a moderately straight forward set of instructions about teaching Jewish. Do you feel as a congregation you follow these instructions? If not, how can you improve this? Can you list three ways to try?

## Text Study 4: Making Learning Accessible

*Blessing upon seeing a differently-formed person: "Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, Creator of a variety of creations!" (Based on Babylonian Talmud, Brachot 58b)*

### Leviticus 19:14

לֹא-תִקְלַל חֵרֶשׁ וְלֹפְנֵי עוֹר לֹא תִתֵּן מְכֻשָּׁל וְנִרְאֵת מְאֻלְהָיָה  
אֲנִי יְהוָה:

You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind; you shall be in awe of your God: I am Adonai.

A gem in the mouths of the Rabbis of Yavneh: I am God's creature and my fellow is God's creature. My work is in the city and their work is in the field. I rise early for my work and they rise early for their work. Just as they do not presume to do my work, so I do not presume to do their work. Will you say, I do (learn) much and they do (learn) little? We have a tradition: One may do much or one may do little; it is all the same, provided one directs one's heart to heaven.

-- Babylonian Talmud, *Brachot* 17a

### Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5

...שֶׁכֹּל הַמַּאַבֵּד נֶפֶשׁ אַחַת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, מַעֲלָה עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב  
כְּאֵלֹו אֶבֶד עוֹלָם מָלָא. וְכָל הַמְּקַיֵּם נֶפֶשׁ אַחַת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל,  
מַעֲלָה עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב כְּאֵלֹו קַיָּים עוֹלָם מָלָא. וּמִכְּנִי שְׁלוֹם  
הַבְּרִיּוֹת, שְׁלֹא יֵאמָר אָדָם לְחֻבְרוֹ אֲבָא גְדוֹל מֵאֲבִיךָ.

...Anyone who destroys a life is considered by Scripture to have destroyed an entire world; and anyone who saves a life is as if he saved an entire world." And also, to promote peace among the creations, that no man would say to his friend, "My ancestors are greater than yours."

"Every member of the People of Israel is obligated to study Torah—whether one is rich or poor, physically able or with physical disability."

-Maimonides, *Mishne Torah*, Hilchot Talmud Torah, Ch. 10

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What does it say about diversity that our tradition believes each and every soul is worth an entire world of souls? How can we use this to strengthen the commitment that all students deserve to learn about Judaism regardless of their ability level? How can we best make this the standard?
2. The idea that intention supersedes the result of the work goes against our society's valuation of worth as it stands. How can we make learning as a community a safe space from that kind of pressure of evaluation?
3. It seems obvious that you would not put a stumbling block in front of the blind. However, are there stumbling blocks all around us that may not seem as obvious? If we require reading for a course does that discourage auditory learners or dyslexic learners? How can we as a community set out to identify the stumbling blocks surrounding u

## Section 4: Finance in the Jewish Tradition

The responsibilities of the Finance Vice President may include but are not limited to: To oversee the preparation of the annual budget which is then presented to the full board. To manage and monitor the congregation's financials, disburse funds upon presentation of appropriate representation of each expenditure and oversee the balancing of receipts and expenditures monthly. They are to present a detailed financial statement for each meeting of the Board of Directors. Attend and participate in Finance Committee meetings, and maintains all monthly financial statements including expenditures, as a permanent record. They are responsible to coordinate receipts and expenditures with other Chairs, as needed.

### Text Studies:

1. **The power of financial oversight:** *The phrase “follow the money” has been proven time and time again. Knowing that, caring for the congregation’s finances can be a means of connecting spiritually to our tradition.*
2. **Scholarships:** *Requesting financial assistance is often an embarrassing process for members. Here the text will focus on how to alleviate the discomfort for the individual and reevaluate the process to reflect our desire to maintain the dignity of the person in these financial agreements.*
3. **Budget:** *Making reasonable projections about the Budget has real impact on the community. Remembering that the wellbeing of the community is tied to the level of honesty used in dealing with the financial realities takes approving the budget to a whole new level.*
4. **Gathering Donations and Dues:**

### Rabbinic Values:

1. Business Ethics: מוסר *Mussar*
2. Compassion: רחמים *Rachamin*

## Text Study 1: The Power of Financial Oversight

*"Jewish tradition insists that man can, and should, have a powerful impact on the material world."*<sup>12</sup>

- Joseph Lifshitz

**Pirkei Avot 2:12** Rabbi Yosi says: The money of your friend should be as dear to you as your own. Prepare yourself to study Torah, for it is not an inheritance for you. All of your actions should be for the sake of Heaven.

### Deuteronomy 6:19

כִּי־תִצֹר אֶל־עִיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֵם עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְשָׁהּ לֹא־  
תִשְׁחִית אֶת־עֵצֶיהָ לְנֹדַח עָלֶיהָ גִּרְזָן כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכַל וְאִתּוֹ לֹא  
תִכְרֹת כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה לֵבָא מִפְּנֵיהָ בַּמָּצוֹר:

When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city?

### Leviticus 25:14

וְכִי־תִמְכְּרוּ מִמִּכְרֵי לַעֲמִיתְכֶּם אוֹ קִנְיָה מִיַּד עַמִּיתְכֶּם אֶל־תֹּנֶה  
אִישׁ אֶת־אֶחָיו:

When you sell property to your neighbor, or buy any from your neighbor, you shall not wrong one another.

*In Kol ben Levi, the author writes, "There are two trials before the individual: the test of wealth and the test of poverty... Both are difficult... but the test of wealth is greater than (the test of) poverty."*

### Questions for Discussion:

1. How does comparing a friend's money to the study of Torah align? What can be read here about the need for financial responsibility as a value that flows into other segments of one's life?
2. Is being reasonable, or even thrifty, equivalent to avoiding being wasteful? How can we learn as a community today from this text about leaving precious resources? Do Green Initiatives at the congregational level connect to financial responsibility?
3. The text is clear about being transparent in transactions. How can we best model this when it comes to the process of collecting dues and other charges as a congregation?
4. What reasons would the Jewish tradition have for holding some value to the test of wealth? Can money be seen merely as a means and not as a goal? What about in context of the congregation?

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<sup>12</sup> Kravitz, Leonard S.; Olitzky, Kerry M. (2002). *Mishlei: a modern commentary on Proverbs*. URJ Books and Music. p. 104.



## Text Study 2: Scholarship

### Leviticus 25:35-37

וְכִי־יָמוּךְ אֲחִיךָ וּמָטָה יָדוֹ עִמָּךְ וְהִחְזַקְתָּ בּוֹ גֵר  
וְתוֹשֵׁב וְחִי עִמָּךְ: אֶל־תִּקַּח מֵאִתּוֹ גֶּנֶשׁ וְתִרְבִּית  
וְנִרְאֵת מֵאֻלְהֵיךָ וְחִי אֲחִיךָ עִמָּךְ: אֶת־כֶּסֶףךָ לֹא־  
תִתֵּן לוֹ בְּגֶנֶשׁ וּבִמְרִבִּית לֹא־תִתֵּן אֶכְלֶךָ:

If your kinsman, being in straits, comes under your authority, and you hold him as though a resident alien, let him live by your side: do not exact from him advance or accrued interest, but fear your God. Let him live by your side as your kinsman. Do not lend him your money at advance interest, or give him your food at accrued interest.

### Mishneh Torah, Gifts to the Poor 10:7

שְׁמוֹנֶה מַעֲלוֹת יֵשׁ בְּצַדִּיקָה זוֹ לְמַעַלָּה מִזֹּו. מַעַלָּה  
גְּדוֹלָה שָׂאִין לְמַעַלָּה מִמֶּנָּה זֶה הַמַּחְזִיק בְּיָד  
יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׂמָךְ וְנוֹתֵן לוֹ מַתָּנָה אוֹ הֶלְוָה אוֹ עוֹשֶׂה  
עִמּוֹ שְׁתַּפּוֹת אוֹ מַמְצִיא לוֹ מְלָאכָה כְּדִי לְחַזֵּק אֶת  
יָדוֹ עַד שֶׁלֹּא יִצְטָרֵךְ לְבָרִיּוֹת לְשָׂאֵל. וְעַל זֶה נֶאֱמַר  
(וַיִּקְרָא כה-לה) "וְהִחְזַקְתָּ בּוֹ גֵר וְתוֹשֵׁב וְחִי עִמָּךְ"  
כְּלוֹמַר הַחֲזִיק בּוֹ עַד שֶׁלֹּא יִפֹּל וַיִּצְטָרֵךְ:

**nothing above it is to strengthen the hand of a Jew** who has become poor and give him a gift or loan or create a partnership with him or find a job for him, so as to strengthen his hand until he does not [any longer] need to ask others [for help]. And about this it is said (Leviticus 25:35), "and you shall strengthen the hand of a stranger and a resident and he shall live with you;" meaning, strengthen him until he no [longer] falls and becomes needy.

There are eight levels of charity, one above the other. **The greatest level that has**

### Exodus 22:24

אִם־בֶּכֶסֶף תַּלְוֶה אֶת־עַמִּי אֶת־הָעֲנִי עִמָּךְ לֹא־תִהְיֶה לוֹ  
כְּנִשָּׁה לֹא־תִשְׁיָמוּן עָלָיו גֶּנֶשׁ:

If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, do not act toward them as a creditor; exact no interest from them.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. How does our tradition guide us regarding minimizing financial hurdles for those looking to be a part of the community?
2. Does the notion of “strengthening the hand” of another speak to you regarding scholarship?
3. Why do you think interest is something the text is so adamantly against? Is there anything wrong with making money on generosity? What does this say about the concept of tzedakah? Does it relate here?
4. Does the board currently handle scholarships and financial assistance in a way that honors these texts? If not, what are some adjustments that can be made to better align the process with the tradition?

## Text Study 3: Building the Budget!

### Eruvin 65b:2

Rabbi Elai said: In three matters a person's true character is ascertained; in his cup, i.e., his behavior when he drinks; in his pocket, i.e., his conduct in his **financial** dealings with other people; and in his anger. And some say: A person also reveals his real nature in his laughter.

### Kiddushin 29:b

ר' יהודה סבר מלוה דכתיב בתורה ככתובה בשטר דמיא  
בהני חמש פריק לבריה ואזיל כהן וטרף ליה לחמש  
משועבדים לדידיה

And the reasoning behind the dispute is as follows: **Rabbi Yehuda maintains that a loan that is written in the Torah, i.e., any financial obligation that applies by Torah law, is considered as though it is written in a document,** and therefore it can be collected

from lien property, like any loan recorded in a document. This means that the lien property worth five *sela* is available for one's own redemption, but not for that of his son, as the sale of the property occurred before the birth of his firstborn. Consequently, **with these five sela** upon which there is no lien **he redeems his son, and the priest goes and repossesses** the land worth **five sela** that is **liened** property **for his** own redemption. In this manner one can fulfill both mitzvot.

*"It is forbidden for a person to renounce possession of or sanctify his property (to the Temple or sacred causes) and make himself a burden on society (lit., 'trouble the people'). He should not sell his field and buy a house, nor a house and buy movable property, nor do business with the worth of his house (i.e., with the proceeds from selling his house). Rather, he should sell his movable property and buy a field. The rule of the matter is that a person should make it his aim that his property be profitable (lit., 'to be successful with his property') -- not to appear a little well-off for a short time or benefit a little and lose much."*<sup>13</sup> The Rambam's simple business advice this week is readily understandable. A person should look towards long-term solvency and stability, holding on to his most secure assets. Under ordinary circumstances, he must not trade in any such of his belongings for short-term profit -- such as his field for a house or his house for movable goods. And certainly, he must not just dispense with his goods so as not to be bothered with them. We must treat all that God has blessed us with responsibly, making the best use of whatever we have, all in order to enable us to serve God properly.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. How does this text view the importance of how money plays into communal interaction?
2. How does the Rambam's notion of financial responsibility of the individual translate to the financial responsibility of the institution? What can we learn about the responsible way to build a budget? Do you see fiduciary obligations to the community to be in close proximity to interacting with God?
3. The quote from *Kiddushin* seems at first glance to go off on a tangent. However if you read it carefully does the text imply that when we make financial dealings and exchanges, that we may be held accountable in the most personal of ways? Can you relate this to the congregation's budget?

<sup>13</sup> <https://torah.org/learning/mlife-chapter5-12/?print-posts=pdf>

## Text Study 4: Gathering Donations

### Exodus 30:13

זֶה ׀ יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הַעֹבְרִים עַל־הַפְּקָדִים מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל  
בַּשֶּׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ עֶשְׂרִים גֵּרָה הַשֶּׁקֶל מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל  
תְּרוּמָה לַיהוָה:

This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a **shekel** after the **shekel** of the sanctuary—the **shekel** is twenty gerahs—half a **shekel** for an offering to Adonai.

### Exodus 30:15

הָעֲשִׂיר לֹא־יִרְבֶּה וְהַדֵּל לֹא יִמְעֹט מִמִּחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל  
לִתְּת אֶת־תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה לְכַפֵּר עַל־נַפְשֵׁיכֶם:

the rich shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less than half a **shekel** when giving Adonai's offering as expiation for your persons.

*This gets complicated when it comes to congregational life.*

### Mishnah Torah: Gifts to the Poor 7:5

בָּא הָעֲנִי וְשָׂאֵל דֵּי מַחְסוּרוֹ וְאִין יָד הַנּוֹתֵן מִשְׁנֵת נּוֹתֵן  
לוֹ כְּפִי הַשְּׂנֵת יָדוֹ וְכַמָּה עַד חֲמִישִׁית נְכֹסָיו מִצְוָה מִן  
הַמִּבְחָר. וְאֶחָד מֵעֲשָׂרָה בְּנִכְסָיו בִּיגוּנִי. פְּחוֹת מִכָּאן  
עַיִן רָעָה. וְלַעוֹלָם לֹא יִמְנַע עֲצָמוֹ מִשְׁלִישִׁית הַשֶּׁקֶל  
בְּשָׁנָה. וְכָל הַנּוֹתֵן פְּחוֹת מִזֶּה לֹא קָיָם מִצְוָה. וְאִפְלוּ  
עַנֵּי הַמִּתְפָּרְגִּים מִן הַצְדָּקָה חַיִּב לָתֵן צְדָקָה לְאַחֵר:

When a poor person comes and asks for his needs to be met and the giver does not have the financial capacity, he should give him

according to his financial capacity. How much? The most desirable way of performing the mitzvah is to give one fifth of one's financial resources. Giving one tenth is an ordinary measure. Giving less [than that] parsimony. A person should refrain from giving less than a third of a shekel a year. A person who gives less than this has not fulfilled the mitzvah. Even a poor person who derives his livelihood from charity is obligated to give charity to another person.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. How do we value the worth of a donation? Does the text push back on generalizations about the value of a donation?
2. In Exodus 30:15 we read about equal giving, however there are text that discuss giving at the means one can (they are referring to different givings). In today's society which one is more important?
3. Regarding the notion that over giving is forbidden, what responsibility does the community's fundraising / development leadership have to ensure this doesn't happen?

## Section 5: Tikkun Olam/ Social Action Vice President

This position has grown in importance over the last few decades. Congregations pride themselves on their charitable work. The thing to remember is that this isn't just a good deed, it shouldn't just make members feel good to be a part of the work... it is commanded of us to be doing the work.

Responsibilities for the Social Action Vice President may include but are not limited to the following: Organizing the different tzedakah drives for the congregation. Networking and engaging with non-profits around the community to make partnerships. Create and organize Social action projects, transportation and such for political rallies (if it applies), Keeping members aware of the causes, striving to raise the social conscience of our group, oversee the publications and communications that make sure the issues are presented so everyone can relate and keep issues relevant and the information up to date.

### Rabbinic Value:

1. Kindness חֶסֶד *chesed*
2. Advocacy עֲוֹרָכּוֹת דִּין *Orchoot Din*

## Text Study: Helping the Less fortunate

### Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5

לפיכך נברא אדם יחיד, ללמדך, שכל המאבד נפש אחת מישראל, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו אבד עולם מלא. וכל המקים נפש אחת מישראל, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו קים עולם מלא.

Therefore only one person was created to teach you that whosoever kills a single soul the Bible considers to have killed a complete world. And whosoever sustains and saves a single soul, it is as if that person sustained a whole world.

### Isaiah 58:7-8, 10-11

הלא פרס לרעב לחמך ועניים מרודים תביא בית כ"י תראה ערם וכסיתו ומבשרך לא תתעלם. אז יבקע כשחר אורך וארכתך מהרה תצמח והלך לפניך צדקך כבוד יהיה יאספך.

ותפק לרעב נפשך ונפש נענה תשביע וזרח בחשך אורך ואפלתך כזהרים. ונחך יהיה תמיד והשביע בצחצחות נפשך ועצמתך יחליץ והיית כגן רוה וכמוצא מים אשר לא ייכזבו מימיו.

shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily, your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Eternal shall be your rear guard. If you shall pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And the eternal will guide you continually, and satisfy your desire with good things, and make your bones strong, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then

### Gittin 61a

אין ממחין ביד עניי נכרים בלקט בשכחה ובפאה מפני דרכי שלום: ת"ר מפרנסים עניי נכרים עם עניי ישראל ומבקרים חולי נכרים עם חולי ישראל וקוברין מתי נכרים עם מתי ישראל מפני דרכי שלום:

Our Rabbis taught, "Give sustenance to the poor of the non-Jews along with the poor of Israel. Visit the sick of the non-Jews along with the sick of Israel. Bury the dead of the non-Jews along with the dead of Israel. [Do all these things] because of the ways of peace."

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What is at stake in the world of Tikkun Olam? Is it as simple as a food bank drive?
2. How does the tradition see the valuation of each individual who is helped?
3. Often in congregational life we focus exclusively on giving tzedakah to Jewish organizations. What does the text say about this approach? Could recalibrating this outlook affect the relationship the congregation has with the larger community?

## Section 6: Building & Grounds Vice President

The responsibilities of Building and Grounds Vice President may include but are not limited to: Operation and development; care and upkeep of all institutions physical facilities. Researches, identifies, and assesses campus-wide capital renewal and deferred maintenance needs. In a time of building it can include planning, design and construction. The Building and Grounds Vice President receives reports from staff on issues, provides counsel and advice relating to the building mission, and makes recommendations to the Board concerning policies relating to the congregation's facilities and grounds. Often they will work with permits and other legal issues. They also often are tasked with making sure the intention of the space is not in opposition with the use of the building.

### **Rabbinic Values:**

1. Creating יצירה *Yitzirah*
2. Establishing Permanence קביעה *Kevi'yah*

## Text Study: Physical space with intention

### Deuteronomy 22:8

כי תבנה בית חדש ועשית מעקה לגגך ולא־תשים דמים  
בביתך כִּי־יפל הנפל ממנו .

When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you do not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone should fall from it.

### Hanging a Mezuzah:

The custom of affixing a *mezuzah* to the doorpost fulfills the biblical commandment: “You shall write them upon the doorposts of thy house and upon thy gates” (Deuteronomy 6:9).

The *mezuzah* distinguishes a Jewish home and is a visible sign and symbol to all those who enter that a sense of Jewish identity and commitment exists in that household. The mezuzah reminds us that our homes are holy places and that we should act accordingly—when we enter them and when we leave them to go out into the world.<sup>14</sup> Other traditional interpretation is that by hanging the Mezuzah and doing this holy work that the space is more protected.

### Rashi on Leviticus 25:15

אל תוננו. זו אונאת ממון:

**Do not cheat** — this refers to cheating in monetary matters.

In a co-authored article that was published last year by the *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Mizrahi wrote that because of their exemption from the ACA, religious institutions “have little obligation to serve or hire people with disabilities”: “Unfortunately, this ‘pass’ has hindered the implementation of simple accommodations such as accessible doors and ramps to enable people with physical disabilities to participate in religious services and programs. While these institutions are legally exempt, the same does not hold true for moral or religious obligations.”<sup>15</sup>

### Questions for Discussion:

1. Is there a difference between the legal and ethical requirements when it comes to the physical space of a congregation?
2. What does the treatment and maintenance of the Congregation’s building reflect about the intended purpose of the space? Does “cutting corners” reflect the congregation’s commitment to the words found in the Mezuzah?
3. In maintaining space for a nonprofit, where is the line between fiduciary responsibility and saving money through cheap or subpar craftsmanship?

<sup>14</sup> <https://reformjudaism.org/practice/lifecycle-and-rituals/what-mezuzah-why-and-how-do-we-use-it>

<sup>15</sup> <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2015/02/09/religious-institutions-exempt-from-ada-but-encouraged-to-comply/>

## **Ethical Prompts for the Entire Board**

The following are individual exercises for the Board of Trustees to work on the problem solving aspect of their jobs. In addition to their individual roles on the board, they will be called upon to make decisions about issues facing the congregation. Discovering how to be informed through the Jewish tradition will create a Jewishly rooted decision making process. The segment is titled: Ethical Issues in Jewish Text. The worksheets do not have any interpretations or guidance on how to read the text; this is part of the challenge, using the text to guide your decisions. The responsibility is to make sure you aren't abusing the text. You should be making the text fit your thoughts, rather allow your thoughts to be affected by the text.





# Ethical Prompts in the Text

## “Member Under the Influence”

Prompt: A member has been coming to events for the past decade. Over the past year and a half they have been coming to services intoxicated. What should the congregation do, both in regards to interaction with the community as well as the person's well-being?

### Sources in the text:

#### Ecclesiastes 7:20:

כִּי אָדָם אֵין צַדִּיק בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה-טוֹב וְלֹא יִחַטָּא:

*Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.*

#### Maimonides on Evil Inclination:

...Therefore, let one prepare their own mind and request from God that anything that should ever happen to them in this world, whether of the things that are by God's providence good, or of the things that are by God evil, that the reason [for their occurrence] is so that he might attain true happiness. Now this was stated with regard to the Good Inclination in a person and with regard to their Evil Inclination, that is to say, that they might lay to their heart the love of God and their [continued] faith in God, even at an hour of rebellion or of wrath or of displeasure, seeing that all of this revolves around one's evil inclination, just as they have said:

'In all your ways acknowledge Him' (Prov. 3:6), meaning, even in a matter involving transgression.

#### Genesis 4:7:

הֲלוֹא אִם-תִּיטִיב שְׂאֵת וְאִם לֹא תִיטִיב לִפְתָּח חַטָּאת רֹבֵץ וְאֵלֶיךָ תִּשְׁוֹקָתוֹ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁל-בּוֹ:

*If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."*

#### Genesis 6:5:

וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רָבָה רָעַת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ וְכָל-יִצְרָל מַחֲשַׁבֶּת לִבּוֹ רָק רָע כָּל-הַיּוֹם:

*And Adonai saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

#### Genesis 8:21:

וַיִּרַח יְהוָה אֶת-רִיחַ הַנִּיחֹחַ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-לִבּוֹ לֹא-אֶסָּף לְקַלֵּל עוֹד אֶת-הָאָדָמָה בְּעִבּוֹר הָאָדָם כִּי יֵצֵר לֵב הָאָדָם רָע מִנְעֻרָיו וְלֹא-אֶסָּף עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת-כָּל-חַי בָּאָשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי:

*And when Adonai smelled the pleasing aroma, Adonai said in the heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.*

### **Babylonian Talmud (Berakhot 32a)**

*The rabbis write about "evil inclination" in poignant terms, making a comparison to what it is like: "To what is it like, the evil inclination in man? It is like a father who takes his small son, bathes him, douses him with perfume, combs his hair, dresses him up in his finest accoutrements, feeds him, gives him drink, places a bag of money around his neck, and then goes off and puts his son at the front door of a brothel. What can the boy do that he not sin?"*

### **Babylonian Talmud (Niddah 16b)**

*"All is given into the hands of heaven, except one's fear of heaven," meaning, everything in one's life is pre-determined by God - excepting their choice to be either good or bad; righteous or wicked. In this matter alone, one must decide for themselves whether they will choose good or bad, or what is often classified as a human's freewill. Traditionally, a person's indulgence of either the good or evil impulse is seen as a matter of free choice.*

*With the story of Adam and Eve we find the origin of Addiction. Jewish mystics insist that the "Tree of Life" in the famous biblical story of the Garden of Eden is really a supernal version of the Torah. When Adam and Eve feed their curiosity, that coupled with not taking ownership of their actions, creates the basis for addiction.*

The great Hasidic master Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav taught that cravings and addictions destroy our awareness of God, and destroy the awe of God that every Jew has deep within his or her heart.. the way to rectify our cravings is to bring our knowledge of God into our hearts. Our goal is to create constant awareness of God. This spiritual awareness is incompatible with addictive thinking and behavior. Addiction says, I need, I want, I can't cope with this. Recover and spirituality say, I am in God's presence, I am here to do God's will. Anything I can't handle, God will.

**Addiction Recovery through Torah and Judaism:** The harnessing of the power of the Torah, especially it's mystical side has begun to take root, even amongst addiction recovery groups. There are many rabbis and spiritual guides who use the many mystical traditions held within the Torah, from Kabbalah to Chassidut to give hope and inspiration to the recovering addict. Despite these varied approaches they all share a vision of strengthening an addict's simple faith in the Infinite and giving encouragement to do acts that spread loving kindness in the world. The result of which is a life of harmony, both inside and out.



# *Ethical Prompts in the Text*

## **“The Once Gentle Gentile”**

Prompt: A member of another faith loves coming to text study but over time has begun to make comments which has started making members uncomfortable.

### **Sources in the text:**

Ex. 12:48 If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to Adonai, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you.”

Lev. 16:29 “And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you.

Lev. 19:33 “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Adonai your God.

Lev. 25:35 “If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you.

Num. 15:26 And all the congregation of the people of Israel shall be forgiven, and the stranger who sojourns among them, because the whole population was involved in the mistake.

Num. 15:29 You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them.

Deut. 25:5 “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her.

Deut. 32:16 They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods;  
with abominations they provoked him to anger.

Job 19:15 The guests in my house and my maidservants count me as a stranger;  
I have become a foreigner in their eyes.

Prov. 6:1 My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor,  
have given your pledge for a stranger,

Prov. 11:15 Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer harm,  
but he who hates striking hands in pledge is secure.

Prov. 14:10 The heart knows its own bitterness,  
and no stranger shares its joy.

Prov. 27:2 Let another praise you, and not your own mouth;  
a stranger, and not your own lips.

Eccl. 6:2 a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity; it is a grievous evil.

Is. 61:5 Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks;  
foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers;

### **The Seven Laws of Noah**

According to traditional Judaism, God gave Noah and his family seven commandments to observe when he saved them from the flood. These commandments, referred to as the Noahic or Noahide commandments, are inferred from Genesis Ch. 9, and are as follows: 1) to establish courts of justice; 2) not to commit blasphemy; 3) not to commit idolatry; 4) not to commit incest and adultery; 5) not to commit bloodshed; 6) not to commit robbery; and 7) not to eat flesh cut from a living animal. These commandments are fairly simple and straightforward, and most of them are recognized by most of the world as sound moral principles. Any non-Jew who follows these laws has a place in the world to come.

The duty to save a life supersedes all other obligations, but some have pointed out the possibility that the rabbis interpreted this to apply to Jews only. According to the Talmud, "Gentiles are neither to be lifted [out of a well] nor hauled down [into it]" (**Tractate Avodah Zarah, 26b**).

Maimonides writes: "As for Gentiles with whom we are not at war...their death must not be caused, but it is forbidden to save them if they are at the point of death; if, for example, one of them is seen falling into the sea, he should not be rescued, for it is written: 'neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy fellow'—but [a Gentile] is not thy fellow" (**Mishneh Torah, Laws of Murder 4:11**).

A quote regarding the treatment of non-jews in Jewish text "Jewish texts exist that can be—and are—understood to be vehemently xenophobic. These texts must be openly and honestly grappled with, explained, and if necessary, repudiated" - [myjewishlearning.com](http://myjewishlearning.com)



## *Ethical Prompts in the Text*

### **“The Source of Donation”**

Prompt: One of the congregants runs a sweatshop and owns several low-income apartment buildings that have been cited for code violations. They have recently come under public scrutiny for their business dealings, and has decided to donate a substantial sum of money to your congregation. Do you take the donation? What do you say to the donor?

#### **Sources in the text:**

##### Genesis 20:16

וַיֹּשְׁרָה אֱמֶר הַנָּה נָתַתִּי אֵלַי כֶּסֶף לְאַחִיךָ הַנָּה הוּא־לְךָ כְּסוּת עֵינַיִם לְכָל אֲשֶׁר אִתָּךְ וְאַתָּה כָּל וְנִכְחַת:

*To Sarah he said, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated.”*

##### Exodus 30:16

וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת־כֶּסֶף הַכִּפָּרִים מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנָתַתָּ אֹתוֹ עַל־עֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהָיָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְזִכְרוֹן לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְכַפֵּר  
עַל־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם:

*You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before Adonai, so as to make atonement for your lives.”*

##### Isaiah 43:24

לֹא־קָנִיתִי לִי בְכֶסֶף קָנָה וְחֵלֶב זִבְחֶיךָ לֹא הָרִיתִנִּי אֶף הַעֲבַדְתִּנִּי בַחֲטָאוֹתֶיךָ הוֹגַעְתִּנִּי בַעֲוֹנוֹתֶיךָ:

You have not bought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices.  
But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities.

##### Isaiah 61:8

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲהַב מִשְׁפָּט שֹׂנֵא גִזְל בַּעוֹלָה וְנָתַתִּי פְעֻלָּתָם בְּאַמֻּת וּבְרִית עוֹלָם אֶכְרוֹת לָהֶם:

For I Adonai love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Lev 19:33-34

וְכִי־יָגוּר אִתָּךְ גֵּר בְּאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תוֹנוּ אֹתוֹ: כְּאֹזֶרֶחַ מִמֶּם יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הַגֵּר | הִגֵּר אִתְּכֶם וְאַהֲבַת לֹו כְּמֹדֶה כִּי־גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם  
בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt:

Jeremiah 22:13,17

הוֹי בְנֵה בֵיתוֹ בְּלֹא־צֶדֶק וְעֲלִיּוֹתָיו בְּלֹא מִשְׁפָּט בְּרֹעֵהוּ יַעֲבֹד חֲנָם וּפְעָלוֹ לֹא יִתֶּן־לוֹ: ... כִּי אֵין עֵינֶיךָ וְלִבְךָ כִּי אִם־עַל־  
בִּצְעֶךָ

"Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages. ... But your eyes and your heart are only on your profit"

Ex 30:15

הָעֹשִׂיר לֹא־יִרְבֶּה וְהַדֹּל לֹא יִמְעֹט מִמַּחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל לַתֹּת אֶת־תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה לְכַפֵּר עַל־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם:

The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when you give Adonai's offering to make atonement for your lives.

Numb 24:13

אִם־יִתֶּן־לִי בָלָק מָלֵא בֵיתוֹ כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב לֹא אוּכַל לַעֲבֹר אֶת־פִּי יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת טוֹבָה אוֹ רָעָה מִלְּבִי אֲשֶׁר־יִדְבַּר יְהוָה אִתִּי  
אֲדַבֵּר:

If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of Adonai, to do either good or bad of my own will. What Adonai speaks, that will I speak'?

Maimonides in the Mishneh Torah:

the highest level of tzedakah is giving charity that will allow the poor to break out of the poverty cycle and become independent and productive members of society.

**Business Ethics Quotes:**

"Whoever conducts his business dealings honestly is liked by humankind and it is considered as though he observed the entire Torah." (Mechilta, Exodus 15:26)

"The first question an individual is asked in the afterlife at the final judgment is: 'Were you honest in your business dealings?'" (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbos 31a)

"One who wishes to become pious must be scrupulous in observing the laws dealing with damages and torts." (Rabbi Yehuda, Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kama 30a)

"G-d, Who may sojourn in Your tent? Who may dwell upon Your holy mountain? One who walks in total integrity, does what is right, and speaks truth from his heart. One who has no slander on his tongue, who has done his fellow human no evil nor cast disgrace upon his close one... Whoever does these things shall never falter." (Psalm 15)

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I only care for myself, what am I?" (Hillel, Babylonian Talmud, Avot 1:14)

"'What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow human,' that is the whole Torah, the rest is commentary." (Hillel, Babylonian Talmud, Shabbos 31a)

"The world endures on three principles: truth, justice, and peace." (Rabbi Shimon b. Gamliel, Babylonian Talmud, Avot 1:18)

'Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it's in your power to help them. If you can help your neighbor now, don't say, "Come back tomorrow, and then I'll help you.'"



# Ethical Prompts in the Text

## “Protocol for protecting the pets”

Prompt: A congregant has been overheard talking about his dogs. It becomes clear that the way in which he treats his animals is not “kosher”. There are times that he locks them up for a day at a time, doesn't feed them if they are “bad”, and exhibits other clear signs of negligent animal care. What does the board do? Do they get involved or not, because this doesn't happen at congregation ?

Sources in the text:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב | זֶרַע זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ פְּרִי-עֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ: וְלִכְלִיתֶינָהּ הָאָרֶץ וְלִכְלִיעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלִכֹּל | רוֹמֵשׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֶת-כָּל-יֶרֶק עֹשֶׂב לְאֹכְלָהּ וַיְהִי-כֵן:

Gen. 1:29 And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא-חַי לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ כָּכֹר עֹשֶׂב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל: אֲדָם-בָּשָׂר בְּנִפְשׁוֹ דָּמוֹ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ: Gen. 9:3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. 4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

כִּי-יִרְחִיב יְהוָה אֶת-גְּבוּלְךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּר-לְךָ וְאִמְרַתְּ אֹכְלָהּ בָּשָׂר כִּי-תִאָּנֶה נִפְשׁוֹ לְאָכֹל בָּשָׂר בְּכָל-אַנְתּוֹ נִפְשׁוֹ תֹאכֹל בָּשָׂר: Deut. 12:20 “When Adonai your God enlarges your territory, as he has promised you, and you say, ‘I will eat meat,’ because you crave meat, you may eat meat whenever you desire.

וַיֹּם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת | לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כָל-מְלָאכָה אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ-וּבִתֶּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ-וַאֲמָתֶךָ וְשׁוֹרְךָ וַחֲמֹרְךָ וְכָל-בְּהֶמְתֶּךָ וְגִרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ לְמַעַן יָנוּחַ עַבְדְּךָ וַאֲמָתֶךָ כַּמּוֹד:

Ex. 20:10/ Deut. 5:14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Adonai your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.

לֹא-תִחָסֵם שׁוֹר בְּדִישׁוֹ:

Deut. 25:4 “You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.

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שׁוֹר אוֹ-בָשָׂב אוֹ-עֵז כִּי יוֹלֵד וְהָיָה שֹׁבַעַת יָמִים תַּחַת אִמּוֹ וּמִזִּים הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָלָא יִרְצֶה לְקַרְבָּן אִשָּׁה לִיהוָה: וְשׁוֹר אוֹ-שֶׂה אֶתוֹ וְאֶת-בָּנָיו לֹא תִשְׁחָטוּ בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד:



Lev. 22:27 “When an ox or sheep or goat is born, it shall remain seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day on it shall be acceptable as a food offering to Adonai . 28 But you shall not kill an ox or a sheep and her young in one day.

וְהִיְתָה שִׁבְתַּת הָאָרֶץ לָכֶם לֶאֱכֹלָה לָהּ וּלְעֶבְדָּהּ וּלְאֻמָּתָהּ וּלְשֹׁכְרֶיהָ וּלְתוֹשֵׁבָהּ הַגֵּרִים עִמָּהּ: וּלְבִהֶמְתָּהּ וּלְתִיָּהּ אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶצָּהּ תִּהְיֶה כָּל־תְּבוּאָתָהּ לֶאֱכֹל:

Lev 25: 6 The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired worker and the sojourner who lives with you, 7 and for your cattle and for the wild animals that are in your land: all its yield shall be for food.

כִּי־תִרְאֶה חֲמֹר שֶׁנֶּאֱדָה רֹבֵץ תַּחַת מִשְׁאֹו וְחִדְלָתָהּ מִעֲנֹב לֹו עֲנֹב תַּעֲזֹב עִמּוֹ:

Ex. 23:5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.

מִחֲזִיק בְּאָזְנוֹי־כָּלֵב עֹבֵר מִתַּעֲבֹר עַל־רֵיב לֹא־לֹו:

Prov. 26:17 Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears.

לֹא תִשָּׂא שִׁמְעָה שְׁוֹא אֶל־תִּשְׁתַּיֵּד יָדָהּ עִם־רִשָּׁע לְהִיתַּעַד חֲמָס: (ס) לֹא־תִהְיֶה אַחֲרֵי־רֵבִים לְרַעַת וּלֹא־תִשְׁעֶנָּה עַל־רֵיב לְנֹטֵת אַחֲרֵי רֵבִים לְהִטֹּת: וְדָל לֹא תִהְדָּר בְּרִיבֹו:

Ex. 23:1 “You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. 2 You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, 3 nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.

בְּאִפְסַ עֲצִים תִּכְבֶּה־אֵשׁ וּבְאִין לָרָגֹו יִשְׁתַּקֵּם מִדּוֹן: פָּחַם לְגִחְלִים וְעֲצִים לֹאֵשׁ וְאִישׁ מְדוּנִים [מְדִינִים] לְחִרְחֹר־רֵיב:

Prov 26:20 For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.

21 As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.

Animal Cruelty חַיִּים בְּעָלֵי חַיִּים "pain of living things". Moral and legal rules concerning the treatment of animals are based on the principle that animals are part of God's creation toward which man bears responsibility.

## **Conclusion**

Being on the board of a Jewish institution includes a vast array of different obligations. The opportunity is a mixed blessing. It is a tremendous responsibility and an incredible opportunity to grow closer to your Jewish identity and give back to your community. These text studies and ethical prompts do not cover all aspects of the board experience. They merely seek to give context to part of the endeavor. The Jewish tradition is an incredibly vast and rich body of text that is so large that one is unlikely to ever discover everything that it has to offer. The goal of this resource guide is to shift the way one looks at their role as a board member. The goal of this project is to begin the ongoing process of making the boardroom a sacred space. Not only will that enrich the experience for the board and for the clergy, it will have a clear effect on the overall community.