

Among Judaism's core convictions is one that was (don't be put off by the word) revolutionary at its origins and, without question, remains so in our time as well. Specifically, I am referring to the infinite and sacred value attached to every human being, for that is the essence of what it means to suggest that every person is created in/with "the image of God."

Indeed, our lifelong career, no matter what we do to earn a living, is to let that image show and grow, as well to recognize that every encounter with another, no matter their community of origin, is a chance both to demonstrate that reality in us and to acknowledge that awareness about the other.

It takes no great insight to recognize that there is still much work to be done to transform a wonderful conviction into a present tense reality. For that foundation principle is under assault in so many quarters, so much so that good people too often may give up the struggle to bring this sacred commitment to a clear and greater fruition.

And while we – none of us – can do everything, we can do something, some things, which brings us to the upcoming Labor Day holiday and to applaud the many congregations which will mark the occasion with something called "Labor in the Pulpit/on the Bimah/in the Mimbar."

In fact we note the instructive circumstance that the Hebrew word for work (Avodah) also means worship, even divine worship, for the point of our gatherings at houses of worship over the upcoming holiday is not only to embrace the sacred value attached to all but also, at this unique time, especially those who work, who serve on behalf of all of us.

With that in mind, I am delighted to point out the extraordinary work of Arise Chicago, a 28 year old interfaith organization whose mission includes teaching at risk workers their rights, building leadership skills and advocating for public policy changes – all of which not only transform lives and communities but also enhance the sacred dimension in work and workers. This weekend, then, in partnership with the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL), Arise Chicago is present in over 100 services this Labor Day Weekend, no doubt, will lift up the sacred link between workers and our communities of faith.

Even as we applaud that effort, may we never forget that connection, and may our dedication to it only increase.

Rabbi Michael Zedek
Senior Advisor Central Conference of American Rabbis
Arise Chicago Board Member