



Authentic Jew, Authentic Global Citizen:
The Meaning of Jewish Philanthropy in 2016

“Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice which make philanthropy necessary.”

– Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (1963)

Rabbi David Ellenson, Universalism and Particularism: Jewish Teachings on Jewish Obligation

The Peoplehood Papers, Volume 12

It is instructive to note that within Judaism there have always been Universalistic and Particularistic dimensions, and this dual approach to the world finds expression in the concept of covenant (brit) that appears at the very beginning of the Bible. This notion maintains that God stands in relationship with all people. To be sure, the Bible tells of the unique covenant God made with Abraham and the Jewish people in Genesis 15. There the Torah states that God established the “brit bein ha-betarim – the covenant between the pieces” with Abraham and his descendants. This particularistic covenant was carried forth over the generations and confirmed by the Jewish people as a whole at Sinai. This covenant assigns the people Israel a special relationship with God.

However, in Genesis 9 the concept of covenant appears in relation to Noah and his progeny. There the Torah states that God established a covenant with Noah and his descendants after the Flood and designated the rainbow as the sign of that eternal brit. Noah, of course, was not Jewish. Thus, in Sanhedrin 56 the rabbis teach that God established a universal covenant with all humanity through Noah even before a covenant was instituted with the people Israel! ***The notion of a dual covenant – a covenant between God and all humanity as well as a covenant between God and the Jewish people – serves as a cardinal foundation for Jewish religious beliefs and values.***

1) Genesis 1:27

God created Man in His image, in the image of God they were created, male and female He created them.

בראשית פרק א פסוק כז
וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצַלְמֵי אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

Questions for reflection:

- 1) What is the significance of the fact that humans are created in the image of God?
- 2) What does this tell you about the importance of the human?

2) Babylonian Talmud Tractate Gittin 61a

Our rabbis taught: We support the poor non- Jews with the poor Jews, and we visit the sick non-Jews with the sick Jews, and we bury the dead of the non-Jews with the Jewish dead because of the paths of peace.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת גיטין סא.
ת"ר: מפרנסים עניי נכרים עם עניי ישראל ומבקרים חולי נכרים עם חולי ישראל, וקוברין מתי נכרים עם מתי ישראל, מפני דרכי שלום.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) What do we learn here about how we treat the non-Jew? What reason does this source give?

3) Maimonides, Laws of Kings 10:12

The sages commanded us to visit the non-Jewish sick, and bury their dead with the Jewish dead, and to support their poor with all of the Jewish poor, because of the ways of peace.

As it says, “God is good to all, and shows mercy to all of His creations,” and it says, “Her (the Torah) ways are the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

רמב"ם הלכות מלכים י"ב
אפילו העכו"ם צוו חכמים לבקר חוליהם, ולקבור מתייהם עם מתי ישראל, ולפרנס ענייהם בכלל עניי ישראל, מפני דרכי שלום. הרי נאמר טוב ה' לכל ורחמיו על כל מעשיו, ונאמר דרכיה דרכי נועם וכל נתיבותיה שלום.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) What new information does Maimonides add here that we did not see in source #2?
- 2) Is this source universalistic or particularistic? Why?



<p>4) Mishna Tractate Avot (Fathers) 2:5 He would say: A boor (unrefined person) cannot fear sin. An ignorant person cannot be pious. A person prone to being ashamed cannot learn. An impatient person cannot teach. Not all who frequently engage in business become wise. In a place where there are not people, strive to be a person.</p>	<p>משנה אבות ב:ה הוא היה אומר: אין בור ירא חטא ולא עם הארץ חסיד ולא הביישן למד ולא הקפדן מלמד ולא כל המרבה בסחורה, מחכים. ובמקום שאין אנשים, השתדל להיות איש.</p>
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Questions for reflection:

- 1) What do we learn here about the responsibility of the individual?
- 2) Why do you think this issue of personal responsibility is placed in this particular group of people?

<p>5) Maimonides, Commentary on Mishna Avot 2:5 <i>Strive- Wrestle with yourself and draw yourself towards acquiring the necessary traits. As there are no Sages there to teach you, you must teach yourself. And the Targum (Aramaic translation) of Genesis 32:25¹ – “And a man wrestled” is a man strived with him.</i></p>	<p>רמב"ם על משנה מסכת אבות ב:ה וענין השתדל - האבק עם נפשך ומושכה לקניית המעלות. הואיל ואין שם חכמים שילמדוך - היה אתה מלמד נפשך. ותרגום "ויאבק איש" + בראשית לב כה+ - ואשתדל גברא עימיה.</p>
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Questions for reflection:

- 1) What do we learn here about taking personal responsibility? Is it an innate desire?
- 2) How far must one go to take responsibility?

<p>6) Babylonian Talmud Tractate Taanit 11a It was also taught: When the community is in trouble let not a person say, ‘I will go to my house and I will eat and drink and all will be well with me’... But rather a person should share in the distress of the community, for so we find that Moses, our teacher, shared in the distress of the community, as it is said, “But Moses’ hands were heavy; and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it.” (Exodus 17:12). Surely Moses had a pillow or a cushion to sit on! Rather, Moses said [to himself], “Since the people of Israel is in distress, I will be with them in their distress.” Whoever shares in the distress of the community will merit to behold its consolation’.</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי תענית יא. תניא אידך בזמן שהצבור שרוי בצער אל יאמר אדם אלך לביתי ואוכל ואשתה ושלום עליך נפשי אלא יצער אדם עם הצבור שכן מצינו במשה רבינו שציער עצמו עם הצבור שנאמר (שמות יז, יב) וידי משה כבדים ויקחו אבן וישימו תחתיו וישב עליה וכי לא היה לו למשה כר אחת או כסת אחת לישב עליה? אלא כך אמר משה הואיל וישראל שרויין בצער אף אני אהיה עמהם בצער וכל המצער עצמו עם הצבור זוכה ורואה בנחת צבור</p>
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Questions for reflection:

- 1) What does this source teach me about community and the individual?
- 2) What do we learn here about emotional responsibility?

<p>7) Babylonian Talmud Tractate Sotah 14a Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina said: Why is it written, “Walk after the Lord your God”?² Is it possible for a person to walk after the Divine Presence? Furthermore - do we not already have a verse that teaches us that “The Lord your God is a consuming fire”?! Rather, it means to walk after the ways of the Lord. Just as he clothes the naked, as it is written: “And the Lord God made clothes of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them,” so</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה יד. ואמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא, מאי דכתיב: "אחרי ה' אלהיכם תלכו?" וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה? והלא כבר נאמר: "כי ה' אלהיך אש אוכלת הוא!" אלא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקב"ה, מה הוא מלביש ערומים, דכתיב: "ויעש ה' אלהים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם", אף אתה הלבש ערומים;</p>
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¹ "Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. When this personage saw that he had not prevailed against Jacob, he wrenched Jacob's hip at the socket" (Genesis 32:25)

² Follow none but the Lord your God, and revere none but Him; observe His commandments alone, and heed only His orders; worship none but Him, and hold fast to Him. – Deuteronomy 13:5



you too should clothe the naked.

God visits the sick, as it is written: "And the Lord appeared to him (Abraham) in Alonei Mamre", so you too should visit the sick. God comforts the mourners, as it is written: "After the death of Abraham God blessed his son Isaac," so too you should comfort the mourner. God buries the dead, as it is written "And He buried him in the valley," so you too should bury the dead.

הקב"ה ביקר חולים, דכתיב: "וירא אליו ה'
באלוני ממרא" אף אתה בקר חולים;
הקב"ה ניחם אבלים, דכתיב: "ויהי אחרי מות
אברהם ויברך אלהים את יצחק בנו", אף
אתה נחם אבלים; הקב"ה קבר מתים דכתיב
(דברים לד, ו) ויקבר אותו בגיא אף אתה
קבור מתים:

Questions for reflection:

- 1) What do we learn here about a person's responsibility? What kind of responsibility is to be taken here?