



CANDLE LIGHTING 7:47 PM | 25 AV | AUGUST 8, 2026 | HAVDALA 8:49 PM

שבת פרשת ראה SHABBAT PARSHAT RE'EH

Haftorah is Isaiah 54:11-55:5 (עניה סוערה). We bless the month of Elul. We do not say אב הרחמים. Pirkei Avot Ch. 5.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA	6:26 PM
EARLIEST CANDLES	6:37 PM
SHKIA	8:05 PM
TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM	8:45 PM

SHABBAT

HASHKAMA	7:45 AM
SHACHARIT - MAIN	9:00 AM
POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR	~ 9:30 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA	9:31 AM
FUNDAMENTALS SHIUR	HIATUS
PRE-MINCHA SHIUR	6:55 PM
MINCHA	7:35 PM
SHKIA	8:04 PM
MAARIV	8:49 PM

החדש הזה לכם

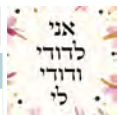
Molad for Elul is this Thursday, August 13, at 8:15 AM (exactly). ראש חדש אלול יהיה ביום חמישי ויום שישי הבא עלינו ועל כל ישראל לטובה

AUGUST BIRTHDAY/ ANNIVERSARY KIDDUSH

Kiddush is sponsored to celebrate our August birthdays and anniversaries!



Happy birthday to Rebecca Berger, Shilat Cohen Sonnenblick, Anna Czinn, Evi Dworkis, Boris Mihailevsky, Naomi Mihailevsky, Samuel Rozenfeld, Avi Sonnenblick, Baby Boy Sonnenblick, Ezra Sonnenblick, and Adira Shestack



Happy anniversary to Benji & Erica Cooper

YOMIM NORAIM 5787

If you wish to be in your Shabbat seats for the Yomim Noraim, we will endeavor to do so for reservations received no later than Tuesday, September 1. You may register online here: [Yomim Noraim Seats](#). There will be age-appropriate professionally led groups for children ages 2-12. Register by Tuesday, September 1, by clicking here: [Childcare](#). Any Misheberach requests for 5787 must be submitted anew by emailing Marty at thegabbai@aol.com.

MAZEL TOV



Mazal tov to Beth & Steve Wechsler on their son Ben's engagement to Lucy Schneider.

יעלה הזיווג יפה ויבנו בית נאמן בישראל

May the beautiful couple be elevated in the building of a faithful house of Israel.

MAZEL TOV

Mazel Tov to Betsy & Marty Sonnenblick on the birth of a grandson to Samara & Elie!



יגדלוהו לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים ויכניסוהו לבריתו בזמנו ובעתו

May they raise him to Torah, chuppah and good deeds, and may he be entered into the covenant of Abraham.

ROSH HASHANAH SCROLL/ YIZKOR MEMORIAL BOOKLET

To partake in our cherished tradition of extending a "Shanah Tova" to your fellow shul members by listing your name by Sept. 1 in the Rosh Hashanah scroll, click here: [Rosh Hashanah Scroll](#). For listings in the Yizkor Memorial booklet by Sept. 1, click here: [Yizkor](#).

ORTHODOX UNION תורה ומצוות Enhancing Jewish Life	SUNDAY 8/9	MONDAY 8/10	TUESDAY 8/11	WEDNESDAY 8/12	THURSDAY 8/13	FRIDAY 8/14
WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM						
SHACHARIT	8:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:00 AM	6:00 AM
2ND SHACHARIT MINYON - YISHTABACH AT 7:40 AM		7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:10 AM	7:10 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV	7:51 PM	7:49 PM	7:48 PM	7:47 PM	7:45 PM	7:30 PM
ZMANIM						
Earliest Talit	4:57 AM	4:58 AM	5:00 AM	5:01 AM	5:02 AM	5:03 AM
Gedolah	1:37 PM	1:36 PM	1:36 PM	1:36 PM	1:36 PM	1:35 PM
Shkia	8:03 PM	8:01 PM	8:00 PM	7:59 PM	7:57 PM	
Tzait	8:43 PM	8:41 PM	8:40 PM	8:39 PM	8:37 PM	

Rabbi Ely Shestack

President Jay Herman

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 4 - Camp Shabbat Friday Night Outdoor Dinner, with a musical davening. RSVP here : [CAMP](#).

Sept. 19 - Kohelet Round Robin. Click here to sign up to discuss a chapter: [KOHELET](#).

IN OUR FUTURE - KIDDUSH, SEUDAH SHLISHIT, & ETC.



Aug. 15 - Kiddush is sponsored by Seymour Wigod in honor of Tali & Neal Wigod, Moshe, Shua and Shy, to wish them bracha, hatzlacha & yishuv tov on moving to Israel.

Aug. 22 - Kiddush is sponsored by Chana & Rabbi Shestak in celebration of Adira Nechama's Bat Mitzvah.

Sept. 5 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by the Agress family to commemorate the Yahrzeit of Amy's father, הרב ישראל יהודה, and by the Greene family to commemorate the Yahrzeit of Elliot's father, Harold Greene (Tzvi Hersch ben Shimon).

Sept. 19 - Birthday & Anniversary Kiddush

Oct. 24 - Kiddush is sponsored by Lori & David Garfunkel celebrating Uri's Auf Ruf and upcoming wedding to Abby Elson.

BIRTHDAY & ANNIVERSARY KIDDUSH



To add a birthday/anniversary to upcoming lists (next Kiddush on Shabbat, Sept. 19), click here: [SIMCHA](#). Listings/sponsorships are \$36 per family per month. RSVP for the Sept. birthday/anniversary Kiddush by Sun. night, Sept. 13.

BOARD MEETINGS - 8:30 PM

- August 25**
- Sept. 22, Oct. 27, Nov. 24, Dec. 29, Jan. 26, Feb. 23, Mar. 30, May 11, June 29**

SHIURIM



- PESHAT OF THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM, click here: [Parsha](#).
- TORAH FOR YOUR COMMUTE, via Whatsapp, with 3-minute daily Halacha insights. To join email Rabbi Shestak at rabbishestack@gmail.com.
- POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR, analyzing Mishlei (Proverbs).
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Kiddush.
- SHABBAT SHIUR, **SANHEDRIN CH. 1**, 40 minutes prior to mincha.
- TZURBA M'RABANAN w/ Zack Doberman, Wednesdays at 8:30 PM. In-person at the shul and via Zoom.
- SEDER ON THE SIDDUR, at Seudah Shlishit.
- BEGINNER CLASS ON HOW TO READ HEBREW, Monday nights, 8:45 PM, at the shul. To sign up, click here: [Hebrew](#).



OU INITIATIVES

As a means of helping single parent families, if you have a child (or know of a child) who won't have someone to sit with them during davening and you'd like the OU to arrange someone, please click here: [Makom Kevuah](#).

INTRODUCING...

Makom Kavuah

BECAUSE EVERY CHILD SHOULD HAVE A PLACE IN SHUL.

Are you a single parent unable to sit with your child on the other side of the mechitza?

Would you like a *Shul Mentor*, a caring, responsible shul member to sit with your child in shul?

SHUL MENTORS ARE:

✔ Handpicked
 ✔ Trained
 ✔ Professionally supported

Have someone in mind who'd be a great fit for your child? Let your shul coordinator know.

To find out more, contact your shul coordinator:
Steven Plotnick
seplotnick@gmail.com



A project of Kol Echad,
an initiative of the OU




GITA COOPERWASSER Youth EVENTS

Aug. 8 - Perek in the Park, 4:15 PM.

Sept. 5 - Pre-RH program/dinner, 3:30-5:30 PM

Sept. 13 - Youth playground meet up at 3:45 PM, followed by Tashlich for families with young children.

Sept. 20 - Sukkah decoration event, 10 AM.

Sept. 28 - Youth Sukkah Hop, with dinner at the last stop, 4:15 PM.

Oct. 3 - Simchat Torah Farewell to Sukkah & Kinderkafot.

Nov. 14 - Parent/Child Learning.

Dec. 5 - Chanukah program with children's seudah shlishit, followed by musical havdalah.

Dec. 19 - Parent/Child Learning.

Jan. 2 - Parent/Child Learning.

GITA COOPERWASSER Shabbat Youth Info



- **SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS:**
3RD-5TH: RIHANNA & SOPHIA
K-2ND: ALICIA & LETIZIA
3 YRS-PRE-K: ZOE & ISABELLA
- Youth groups for 3rd through 5th Graders starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on left on entering the social hall.
- Youth group for children 4 years old through 1st Grade starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall.
- Parent & Me, 9:00 AM in the Beit Midrash.
- Rabbi Meet & Greet, Friday night, kids can come over to the Rabbi after davening to receive a cup of grape juice and a ticket!
- Children earn tickets for coming to minyan (Friday night and/or Shabbat day), asking the rabbi questions or attending parent-child learning programs! Tickets can be redeemed for prizes.
- **HIATUS UNTIL FALL** - Children's corner at Seudah Shlishit, 1st to 5th graders will get 10 Torah questions in 10 minutes from Rabbi Shestak, with special snacks, tickets and more.



NAME	HEBREW DATE	CANDLE EVENING OF	DEDICATOR	RELATIONSHIP
Albert Kor	11	August 23	Hazkiel Kor	Father
David Schwitzer	14	August 26	Nate Schwitzer	Father
Frederick Shia Frankel	21	September 2	Elyce Smedresman	Grandfather



DAVID SCHWITZER ^{ה"ר} SOCIAL HALL

Contact Lori at garfmom@gmail.com to book the David Schwitzer ^{ה"ר} Social Hall for an event or occasion. \$250 (members), \$325 (Associates), or \$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of clean up (and a \$150 refundable security/cleaning deposit). Private caterers must be approved by the Rabbi.

CHESED TEAM

If you or someone you know needs assistance, email us at chesed@ahavatachim.org.

Yahrzeit Plaques

Memorialize a loved one with a plaque, \$300 for members/\$450 for nonmembers. We will strive to send you written notice of upcoming yahrzeit and announce name during public Yizkor. Email Amy at yahrzeit@ahavatachim.org to arrange.

DONATE A SEFER, ETC.

Donate Siddurim & Machzorim (\$40), and Chumashim (\$60). Contact David at dmgarfunkel@gmail.com for details.

MISHEBAYRACH

For a Mishebayerach pledge to give Tzedakah on behalf of those for whom you asked Hashem's blessing, when you send a check please indicate in the memo section what it is for.

HONORARIA

The available Honoraria list will be provided upon request by contacting Steven Plotnick at seplotnick@gmail.com.

SINGLES SHIDDUCH GROUP

Reach out to Rabbi Shestack or Sara Levine (saralevine06@gmail.com) if interested.

SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorships opportunities for Yahrzeits, Refuahs, and Hodahs (thanks), are available for regular shiurim, youth events and similar activities (but not for established honorariums or sponsorship funded events). Cost of sponsorship (shiur or youth event) is \$100 per sponsor. Multiple sponsors for an event will be accepted. Sponsorships will be listed in the bulletin and announced at the event (and, if possible, a placard with the sponsorship will be prepared and displayed at the event).

Sponsorships do not include any extra amenities (such as food). Please contact Steve Plotnick for questions or clarifications.

MEN'S CLUB

Email MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org to join the Men's Club.

ELUL

ADAPTED FROM THE EZRAS TORAH LUACH

We blow תשר"ת every day at the conclusion of the morning service from the second day of Rosh Chodesh through the day before Erev Rosh HaShanah. We recite לדוד אורי after Maariv & Shachrit through Shemini Atzeret.

The essential purpose of Shofar Blowing is to arouse into a heightened awareness of the need to repent. It is the nature of a horn's blast to produce a level of concern, as the Prophet Amos stated (Amos 3:6) "Shall a Shofar be blown in a city and the people not tremble?" Therefore, it is imperative that a person begin to prepare himself with genuine repentance, prayer, and Tzedakah at least thirty days before Rosh HaShanah.

"And our Sages, of blessed memory, provide us with the following insight: The first letters of each of the following words – אני לדודי ודודי לי – I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine (Song of Songs: 6:3), spell out the word אלול.

Therefore, in the month of Elul one must intensify one's efforts at repentance, prayer, and charitable acts. Our Sages, of blessed memory, provided us with an additional insight: The first letters of each word of the phrase איש לרעהו – ומתנות לאביונים (shall send portions) as well as gifts to the needy (Esther: 9:22), again spell out אלול. This serves as an allusion to the fact that in the month of Elul we must increase our gifts to the poor [Chayei Adam, Siman 138]."

AHAVAT ACHIM MEMBERSHIP/ HOSPITALITY

Email Sara at membership@ahavatachim.org for membership details or Shabbat hospitality.

PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Various life cycle events related to members are announced in the bulletin (e.g., births and weddings of children/grandchildren, bar/bat mitzvahs of children, deaths requiring shiva observance, as well as travel to/from Israel to study). Other personal announcements are not appropriate except as part of the bulletin's dedication (\$36 cost - \$54 with photo).

NUMBERS & INFO

ERUV: To subscribe for updates, email fairlawneruv@groups.io. Check status at <https://groups.io/g/fairlawneruv> or call 201-254-9190.

MIKVAH: 201-796-0350. At Shomrei Torah. Go to <http://www.fairlawnmikvah.org/> for online booking.

TWITTER: AhavatAchimFL

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091322384429

INSTAGRAM: www.instagram.com/ahavatachim/

FLICKR: flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums

BULLETIN DEDICATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHUL CALENDAR

Email seplotnick@gmail.com for an announcement of a simcha, refuah or life cycle event in the bulletin or to dedicate a bulletin for \$36 (\$54 w/Photo).

COMMUNITY SECURITY SERVICE

To become part of our community security service, email Margo at security@ahavatachim.org.



מִתְּחִיל אָדָם יִרְחִיב לֹו וְלִפְנֵי גְדֻלִּים יִנְחֶנּוּ: "צִדִּיק הִרְאָשׁוֹן בְּרִיבּוֹ וּבֵא (כְּתִיב יֵבֵא) – רָעָהוּ וְחִקְרוּ: "מִדִּינִים יִשְׁפִּית הַגּוֹרֵל וְכִין עֲצוּמִים יִפְרִיד: "אֵלֶּה נִפְשָׁע מִקְרִית-עֵז וּמִדִּינִים (כְּתִיב וּמְדוּנִים) בְּכָרִיחַ אֶרְמֹון: "מִפְּרִי פִי-אִישׁ תִּשְׁבַּע בְּטָגוֹ תְּבוּאָת שְׁפָתָיו יִשְׁבַּע: "אֱמוּנָת וְחַיִּים בְּיַד-לִשְׁוֹן וְאֶהְיֶה יֶאֱכֹל פְּרִיָּה: "בְּמֵצָא אִשָּׁה מֵצָא טוֹב וְנִיָּקָה רָצוֹן מִי-ה-ג-ה: "בִּיתְחֻנּוּגִים יִדְבַּר-רֶגֶשׁ וְעֵשִׂיר יַעֲנֶה עֲזוֹת: "כִּי-אִישׁ רָעִים לִהְיוֹתָעֵצ וְנִשׁ אֱהָב דְּבַק מֵאָח: –

¹⁷The first to plead his case seems righteous, until the other party comes and cross-examines. ¹⁸[Casting] a lot causes quarrels to cease, separating powerful disputants. ¹⁹An alienated brother is more inaccessible than a fortified city, and their quarrels are like the bar of a fortress. ²⁰A man's belly is filled with the fruit of his mouth, and with the produce of his lips he is satisfied. ²¹Death and life are within the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit. ²²One who has found a wife has found goodness, and has won favor from the Lord. ²³A poor man speaks seeking mercy, but a rich man replies harshly. ²⁴A man acquires many friends with whom he keeps company, but there is a devoted friend who cling closer than a brother.¹

A. As we conclude chapter 18, we begin with some universal (perhaps obvious) truths regarding disputes, disputants and judges.

- V. 17 → The first to plead his case seems righteous, until the other party comes and cross-examines.
 - o Straightforward peshat. If you only hear one party's story, from that party's perspective, that party will seem in the right. Once you hear both sides, your opinion may well differ.
 - o The Vilna Gaon sees this from more of a metaphysical perspective, *i.e.*, the yetzer hara always influences first, and the yetzer tov comes along later to combat it.
- V. 18 → [Casting] a lot causes quarrels to cease, separating powerful disputants.
 - o Again, a relatively straightforward peshat. In a battle of wills, a victory will often be a Pyrrhic one. Casting a lot (in modern parlance, "flipping a coin") will lower the temperature of the disputants. Recall that at Mishlei 16:33, Shlomo made it clear that a lot put the decision in Hashem's hand, and that it was not just random.
 - o At Mishlei 1:14, it was noted that among criminals, the lot was understood as a means to avoid quarrels before they started, by dividing stolen goods by lot.
 - o The Bnei Shlomo has an alternative understanding of the pasuk. If the quarrel is over a minor matter, lots can settle them completely. If the dispute is over a significant matter, this will "separate" the disputants, but the quarrel will remain.
- V. 19 → An alienated brother is more inaccessible than a fortified city, and their quarrels are like the bar of a fortress.
 - o In modern times, similar observations are made generally about disputes among family members being particularly hostile.²
 - o Malbim connects the prior verse to this one, suggesting that before a family dispute goes public, one should agree to privately to settle the argument via a lot.

B. We return to the power (for good or for bad) of speech.

- V. 20 → A man's belly is filled with the fruit of his mouth, and with the produce of his lips he is satisfied.

¹ Mishlei Chapter 18.

² Consider some of the observations of Sigmund Freud in this regard.

- At Mishlei 12:14, we were first introduced to the metaphor of the “fruit” of a man’s “mouth”, as follows: “A man is satisfied by the fruit of his mouth, and he will be repaid in kind for his handiwork.”
- Vilna Gaon sees the reference to “fruit of the mouth” as referring to one’s own original works that grew from oneself (like fruit from a tree), that fill one’s belly. “Produce of his lips”, on the other hand, he sees as Torah study with a chavruta, which satisfies after the effort of making the produce come forth.
- V. 21 → Death and life are within the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.
 - After we are reminded that the fruit of one’s mouth can fill a man’s belly, this pasuk alerts us that this is not automatically a good thing, as that depends on how the power of the tongue is wielded, which will determine if the fruit is for death or for life.
 - At Arachin 15b, a discussion highlights two possible interpretations of this pasuk. One assumes that this life or death refers to the potential consequences to others, while the other assumes the consequences are to the speaker.
- V. 23 → A poor man speaks seeking mercy, but a rich man replies harshly.
 - Commentators are split as to whom this pasuk is speaking to. Rav Hirsch, for example, sees this as speaking to both, describing a bad cycle to be broken whereby the contrition of the poor man only increases the arrogance of the rich man, which cycle needs to be broken.
 - Rashi and Malbim see this pasuk as only speaking to the poor man, who should remain contrite, as appeasement will work better than confrontation with the arrogant rich man.

C. At Mishlei 17:17, we were taught that: “A friend’s love is constant, but a brother is born to share [in your] afflictions.” At Mishlei 18:19, above, we discussed a feud between brothers, and how intractable that dispute may be. In verse 24 Shlomo perhaps closes the circle.

- V. 24 → A man acquires many friends with whom he keeps company, but there is a devoted friend who cling closer than a brother.
 - You may think that a brother would naturally be your closest ally, and that perhaps is how it should be, but it is not always the case.
 - Perhaps Shlomo came to this revelation from seeing his father’s relationship with Yonatan, and compared it to that of his brothers. The Haftarah when Shabbat is Erev Rosh Chodesh reminds us of the relationship between Yonatan and Dovid, “[f]or we have sworn, both of us, in the name of Hashem, saying: Hashem shall be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants, forever.”³ On the other hand, Dovid writes: “I became estranged from my brothers, and a stranger to my mother’s sons.”⁴

D. At Mishlei 12:4, we were given a preview of the “woman of valor”,⁵ who we were told was her husband’s “crown”. At Mishlei 19:14, we are told that if one has a discerning wife, that wife came from Hashem. Here we are taught that finding a wife is finding goodness, and Hashem looks favorably on it.

- V. 22 → One who has found a wife has found goodness, and has won favor from the Lord.
 - Mazel tov to Scott Boxer who, IY”H, will be marrying Aliza Oppenheim tomorrow, and thereby finding both true goodness and favor from Hashem. May they be blessed to build בית נאמן בישראל.

³ Shmuel I 20:42.

⁴ Tehillim 69:9.

⁵ To be expanded on significantly at Mishlei 31:10-31.



AHAVAT ACHIM

קהלת אהבת אחים

THE FAMILY SHUL

August

Simcha Kiddush Honorees

Birthdays

Rebecca Berger

Shilat Cohen Sonnenblick

Anna Czinn

Evi Dworkis

Boris Mihailevsky

Naomi Mihailevsky

Samuel Rozenfeld

Avi Sonnenblick

Baby Boy Sonnenblick

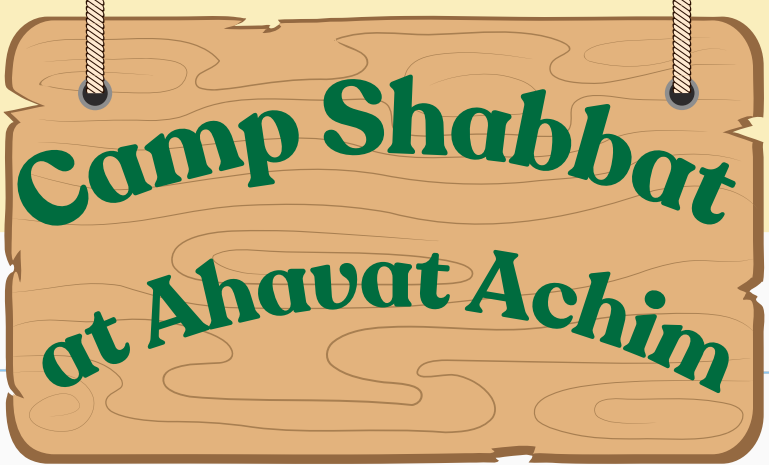
Ezra Sonnenblick

Adira Shestack

Anniversaries

Benji & Erica Cooper





Camp Shabbat at Ahavat Achim



AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL

Ahavat Achim is bringing that
"camp feeling" to shul on

Friday, Sept 4 & Saturday, Sept 5!

From Shabbat-A-Grams, musical Kabbalat Shabbat (which will be outside, weather dependent!), a community Shabbat dinner (with zemirot, ruach, and the traditional "Kool-Aid"), to Shabbat shacharit with kid participation, and a singing seudah shlishit, we are bringing that "camp feeling" to Fair Lawn!

Come for it all or choose your favorite
activity!

RSVP by 8/25!

tinyurl.com/AACampShabbat

Volunteer to help!



INTRODUCING...

Makom Kavuah

**BECAUSE EVERY CHILD
SHOULD HAVE A PLACE IN SHUL.**

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your child on the other side of the mechitza?

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Steven Plotnick

seplotnick@gmail.com



AHAVAT ACHIM

קהלת אהבת אחים

YOUR FAMILY SHUL

A project of Kol Echad,
an initiative of the OU





Covenant & Conversation

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

RE'EH • ראה

FROM THE TEACHINGS AND WRITINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS זצ"ל

With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. "I have loved the Torah of R' Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah. An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives." — Rabbi Sacks

This year's series of essays were originally written and recorded by Rabbi Sacks זצ"ל in 5773 (2012–2013). These timeless messages are accompanied by a new [Family Edition](#) created to inspire intergenerational learning on the Parsha.

Judaism's Social Vision

If you seek to understand Judaism's social vision, look at its anti-poverty legislation:

If there be a poor person among your kinsfolk in any of your towns in the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not harden your heart or close your hand toward your brother in need. ***Open your hand generously and freely lend him enough to answer all his needs, in all that he lacks.*** Be vigilant: let your heart not whisper a depraved thought: 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is close,' making you miserly toward your brother in need, giving him nothing. He will cry out to the Lord about you, and you will be held guilty. Give to him generously, and do not let your heart begrudge it, for by merit of this the Lord your God will grant you blessing in all your work and all your hands' endeavours. There will never cease to be poor people in the land. And so I command you: open your hand.

Deut 15:7-11

Ostensibly the passage is about the cancellation of debts in the seventh year (*Shmittah*, the year of "release"). The Oral Tradition, however, extended it to the laws of *tzedakah* – the word usually translated as "charity", but which also means "distributive justice, equity". The rabbis interpreted the phrase "*freely lend him enough to answer all his needs*" to mean the basic requirements of existence: food, clothing, shelter and so on. "*In all that he lacks*" was understood as referring to a person who was previously wealthy but has now become impoverished. He too must be helped to recover his dignity:

It is related that Hillel the Elder helped a certain poor man who was from a wealthy family. He bought a horse for him to ride on, and hired a servant to run before him. When on one occasion he could not find a servant to run before the man, he [Hillel] himself ran before him.

Ketubot 67b

The force of this passage lies in the fact that Hillel himself was notoriously poor, yet he gave of his money and time to help a rich man who had lost his money regain his self-respect. This double aspect is evident throughout the laws of *tzedakah*. On the one hand, the laws are directed to the brute fact of poverty. No one must be deprived of basic physical necessities. On the other, they address with astonishing sensitivity the psychology of poverty. It demeans, embarrasses, humiliates, shames. *Tzedakah*, ruled the rabbis, must be given in such a way as to minimise these feelings:

When Rabbi Yannai saw a certain man giving a coin to a poor person in front of everyone, he said: It would have been better not to have given it to him than to have given it and put him to shame.

Hagigah 5a

In a famous passage, Maimonides describes the eight levels of charity:

There are eight degrees of charity, one higher than the other.

The highest degree, exceeded by none, is that of one who assists a poor person by providing him with a gift or a loan or by accepting him into a business partnership or by helping him find employment – in a word by putting him in a situation where he can dispense with other people's aid. With reference to such aid it is said, 'You shall strengthen him, be he a stranger or a settler, he shall live with you' (Lev. 25:35), which

means: strengthen him in such a manner that his falling into want is prevented.

A step below this is the one who gives alms to the needy in such a way that the giver does not know to whom he gives and the recipient does not know from whom he takes. This exemplifies doing a good deed for its own sake. One example was the Hall of Secrecy in the Temple, where the righteous would place their gift clandestinely and where poor people from noble families could come and secretly help themselves to aid. Close to this is dropping money in a charity box...

One step lower is where the giver knows to whom he gives, but the poor person does not know from whom he receives. Thus the great Sages would go and secretly put money into poor people's doorways...

A step lower is the case where the poor person knows from whom he is taking, but the giver does not know to whom he is giving. Thus the great Sages would tie coins in their scarves, which they would fling over their shoulders, so that the poor could help themselves without suffering shame.

Lower than this, is where someone gives the poor person a gift before he asks.

Lower still is one who gives only after the poor person asks.

Lower than this is one who gives less than is fitting, but does so with a friendly countenance.

The lowest level is one who gives ungraciously.

Mattenot Ani'im 10:7-14

This exquisitely calibrated ethic is shot through with psychological insight. What matters is not only how *much* you give, but also *how* you do so. Anonymity in the giving of aid is essential to dignity. The poor must not be embarrassed. The rich must not be allowed to feel superior. We give, not to take pride in our generosity, still less to emphasise the dependency of others, but because we belong to a covenant of human solidarity, and because that is what God wants us to do, honouring the trust through which he has temporarily lent us wealth in the first place.

Especially noteworthy is Maimonides' insistence that giving somebody a job, or the means to start a business, is the highest charity of all. What is humiliating about poverty is dependence itself: the feeling of being beholden to others. One of the sharpest expressions of this is to be found in the Grace after Meals, when we say, "We beseech You, God our Lord, let us not be in need of the gifts of men or of their loans, but only of Your helping hand ... so that we may not be put to shame nor humiliated for ever and ever."

The greatest act of *tzedakah* is one that allows the individual to become self-sufficient. The highest form of charity is one that enables the individual to dispense with charity. From the point of view of the giver, this is one of the least financially demanding forms of giving. It may not cost him anything at all. But from the point of view of the recipient, it is the most

dignifying, because it removes the shame of receiving. Humanitarian relief is essential in the short-term, but in the long-run, job creation and economic policies that promote full employment are more important.

One detail of Jewish law is particularly noteworthy: even a person dependent on *tzedakah* must himself or herself give *tzedakah*. On the face of it, the rule is absurd. Why give X enough money so that he can give to Y? Giving to Y directly is more logical and efficient. What the rabbis understood, however, is that *giving is an essential part of human dignity*. The rabbinic insistence that the community provide the poor with enough money so that they themselves can give is a profound insight into the human condition.

Jewry has had many distinguished economists, from David Ricardo (whom Keynes called the greatest mind that ever addressed itself to economics), to John von Neumann (a physicist who, in his spare time, invented Game Theory), to Paul Samuelson, Milton Friedman, and Alan Greenspan. They have won an astonishing 38% of Nobel prizes in the field. Why should this have been so? Perhaps because Jews have long known that economics is one of the fundamental determinants of a society; that economic systems are not written into the structure of the universe, but are constructed by human beings and can be changed by human beings; and thus that poverty is not a fact of nature but can be alleviated, minimised, reduced. Economics is not a religious discipline. It is a secular art and science. Yet, deeply underlying the Jewish

passion for economics is a religious imperative:

There will never cease to be poor people in the land. And so I command you: open your hand generously to your kinsmen, your poor and needy, who share your land.

Deut. 15:11



Around the Shabbat Table

1. What is the difference between giving someone a gift and giving someone an opportunity?
2. What are your thoughts on Maimonides' list of eight levels of giving? Would you want to add any levels, or re-order it? Why/why not?
3. Why might it matter how help is given, not just whether it is given in the first place?

● These questions come from this week's **Family Edition** to Rabbi Sacks' Covenant & Conversation. For an interactive, multi-generational study, check out the full edition at <https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/reeh/judaisms-social-vision/>