

## Biblical Sources

1 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדֹמוֹתֵינוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בְדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל

הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל הָאָרֶץ

Genesis 1:26

And God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.'

2 וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֱלֹהִים נָא אֵת כָּבֹדְךָ

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֲעֲבִיר כָּל טוֹבִי עַל פְּנֵיךָ וְקִרְאתִי בְשֵׁם יְקֹנֶךָ לְפָנֶיךָ וְחַנּוּתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר אָחִין וְרַחֲמֹתַי אֵת אֲשֶׁר

אֲרַחֵם

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאֹת אֵת פְּנֵי כִּי לֹא יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחַי

וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹנֶךָ הִנֵּה מְקוֹם אֲתִי וְנִצַּבְתָּ עַל הַצּוּר

וְהִיָּה בְּעֵבֶר רֶכֶב דֵּי וְשִׁמְתִיךָ בְּנִקְרַת הַצּוּר וְשֹׁכֵף תִּי כְּפִי עָלֶיךָ עַד עֶבְרִי

וְהִסַּרְתִּי אֵת כְּפִי וְקִרְאתִי אֵת אָחִי וְפָנִי לֹא יִרְאוּ

## Exodus 33:18-23

18 And he said: 'Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory.'

19 And He said: 'I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.'

20 And He said: 'Thou canst not see My face, for man shall not see Me and live.'

21 And the LORD said: 'Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon the rock.

22 And it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand until I have passed by.

23 And I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see My back; but My face shall not be seen.'

### 3 תלמוד בבלי, יט:

תא שמע: גדול כבוד הבריות שדוחה [את] לא תעשה שבתורה.

Babylonian Talmud, Brakhot 19b

Come and learn: Human dignity is so important that it supercedes even a biblical prohibition.

### 4 תלמוד בבלי הגיגה ה.

"כי את כל מעשה האלהים יבא במשפט על כל נעלם" (קהלת יב:יד) אמרי דבי רבי ינאי זה הנותן צדקה לעני בפרהסיא כי הא דרבי ינאי חזייה לההוא גברא דקא יהיב זוזא לעני בפרהסיא אמר ליה מוטב דלא יהבת ליה מהשתא דיהבת ליה וכספתייה

Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah 5a

"God will call every creature to account for everything unknown" (Kohelet 12:14). Rabbi Yannai said, "This [verse refers to] one who gives tzedakah to a poor person in public." Similarly, once Rabbi Yannai saw a man giving a dinar to a poor man in public. He said to him, "It would have been better had you not given him anything, because your giving shamed him."

### 5 משנה, פרקי אבות ב:י

רבי אליעזר אומר יהי כבוד חברך חביב עליך כשלך.

Mishnah, Pirkei Avot (Chapters of the Fathers) 2:10

Rabbi Eliezer said, "Other people's dignity should be as precious to you as your own."

## 6 ילקוט שמעוני תתצז

אמרו עליו על הלל הזקן שלקה לעני בן טובים אחד סוס לרכוב עליו ועבד לרוץ לפניו, פעם אחת לא מצא עבד לרוץ לפניו ורוץ הוא לפניו שלשה מילין

Yalkut Shimoni (authorship uncertain; early 13<sup>th</sup> c.)

They said of Hillel the Elder, that he bought a horse for a poor person of rich parentage to ride upon, and a slave to run in front of him. One time he could not find a slave to run before him, so he himself ran before him for three miles.

## 7 Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995)

““The God who passed by” is not a model for an image of a face. To be “in God’s image” does not mean to be an icon of God, but to be found in God’s trace. The revealed God of our Judeo-Christian spirituality maintains all the infinity associated with his absence... God is demonstrated only by the trace, as is written in Exodus 33. To go towards God is not to follow this trace which leaves no sign, but to go toward the others who stand in God’s trace”

” “Meaning and Sense” Translation adapted from *En découvrant l’existence avec Husserl et Heidegger* p.202

## 8 Saul Berman, "Labor on the Bima," a Publication of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. (contemporary modern orthodox rabbi)

The rabbis are here teaching us a profound lesson. The most demeaning form of oppression of a laborer is to assign to him meaningless work. The most ruthless form of abuse of a laborer is to have him engage in an activity which serves no productive purpose and, therefore, prevents him from having any pride in his achievement. The measure of proper treatment of labor is not simply the physical rigors to which the employee is exposed. The employer has a responsibility to preserve the dignity of the employee through assuring that he or she can achieve a sense of meaning in the labor which she performs. There is an apocryphal tale told about Rabbi Israel Salanter, the founder of Judaism’s Mussar [ethics] movement. Every year before Pesach, Rabbi Salanter would inspect matzah bakeries to check their kashrut. One confident owner couldn’t wait to show off how efficient his matzah production had become. When Rabbi Salanter finished the inspection, though, he declared that the bakery was in violation of the halakhic prohibition against blood in food. “Your sense of efficiency, together with the unacceptable demands placed upon your workers, shows that their blood is mixed into the food

produced in this bakery,” he said. Even though the blood was purely metaphoric, Rabbi Salanter would not certify the kashrut of the matzah.

How does Rabbi Salanter’s behavior preserve human dignity? What examples do we see in the business world which would be improved by his approach? What examples already reflect this view? Why is the workplace an essential locus for the preservation of human dignity?

## 9 שולחן ערוך יורה דעה רמח:א-ב

כל אדם חייב ליתן צדקה, אפילו עני המתפרנס מן הצדקה חייב ליתן ממה שיתנו לו. ומי שנותן פחות ממה שראוי ליתן, בית דין היו כופין אותו ומכין אותו מכת מרדות עד שיתן מה שאמדהו ליתן, ויורדים לנכסיו בפניו ולוקחין ממנו מה שראוי לו ליתן. ממשכנים על הצדקה, אפילו בערב שבת.

Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh Deah 248:1-2 (Rabbi Yosef Karo, 16<sup>th</sup> c.)

Every person is required to give tzedakah (charity). Even the poor who are supported from tzedakah are required to give from what is given to them. One who gives less than they should would be compelled by the authorities and whipped until they gave what was estimated as their means. The authorities could even seize their property before their very eyes, and take from them what they should have given.

The authorities can seize real estate for the tzedakah payment, even on Sabbath eve.

What is the significance of the assertion that everyone, including the poor, is obligated to give? How do you interpret the force of the obligation to give tzedakah overwhelming the protections of private property? Whose dignity is protected here?

## 10 איכה Chapter 5 Lamentations

זכור יהוה מה-היה לנו, הביט וראה את-הרפתנו

1 Remember, O LORD, what is come upon us; behold, and see our reproach.

נתלתנו נהפכה לזרים בתינו לנכרים

2 Our inheritance is turned unto strangers, our houses unto aliens.

יתומים היינו אין אב. אמ' תינו כאלמנות

3 We are become orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows.

מימינו בכסף שתינו עצינו במחיר יב' או

4 We have drunk our water for money; our wood cometh to us for price.

על צנארנו נרדפנו נגענו לא הונח לנו

5 To our very necks we are pursued; we

labour, and have no rest.

מִצָּרִים נָתַנּוּ יָד אֲשׁוּר לְשֹׁבֵעַ לֶחֶם

**6** We have given the hand to Egypt, and to Assyria, to have bread enough;

אָבֹתֵינוּ חָטְאוּ אִינָם אֲנַחְנוּ עַוְנֵי תִּיהֶם סָבְלָנוּ

**7** Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities.

עֲבָדִים מְשָׁלוּ בָנוּ פֶּרֶק אֵין מִיָּדָם

**8** Servants rule over us; there is none to deliver us out of their hand.

בְּנַפְשֵׁנוּ נָבִיא לְחַמְנוּ, מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב הַמִּדְבָּר

**9** We get our bread with the peril of our lives because of the sword of the wilderness.

עוֹרֵנוּ כְּתַנּוּר נִכְמְרוּ מִפְּנֵי זִלְעָפוֹת רָעֵב

**10** Our skin is hot like an oven because of the burning heat of famine.

בְּתַלְתֵּי בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה נְשִׁים בְּצִיּוֹן עָנּוּ

**11** They have ravished the women in Zion, the maidens in the cities of Judah.

פְּנֵי זְקֵנִים לֹא נִהְדָּרוּ שָׂרִים בְּיָדָם נִתְּלוּ

**12** Princes are hanged up by their hand; the faces of elders are not honoured.

בַּחֹרִים טָחוּן נְשָׂאוֹ וּנְעָרִים בָּעֵץ כָּשְׁלוּ

**13** The young men have borne the mill, and the children have stumbled under the wood.

זְקֵנִים מִשְׁעַר שָׁבְתוּ, בַּחֹרִים מִנְּגִינָתָם

**14** The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music.

שָׁבַת מְשׁוּשׁ לְבָנוּ, נִהְפָּךְ לְאֵבֶל מִחַ לְנוּ

**15** The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning.

What social ill does this passage from Lamentations reflect on? How do homelessness and displacement undermine human dignity? What is the impact of being placeless? In the case of Lamentations, the displacement is a punishment. Does that change the discussion in some way?

## 11 קיצור שולחן ערוך, קצג:א, יב

כשחלה האדם מצוה על כל אדם לבקרו, שכן מצינו בהקדוש ברוך הוא שמבקר חולים, כמו שדרשו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה בפסוק וירא אליו ה' באלוני ממרא, מלמד שבא אליו לבקר החולה. הקרובים והחברים שרגילים ליכנס לביתו תמיד, המה הולכים לבקרו מיד כששמעו שהוא חולה, אבל הרחוקים שאינם רגילים בביתו לא יכנסו מיד כי היכי דלא ליתרע מזליה להטיל עליו שם חולה, ואינם נכנסים עד לאחר שלשה ימים, ואם קפץ עליו החולי גם הרחוקים נכנסים מיד, אפילו הגדול ילך לבקר את הקטן ואפילו כמה פעמים ביום, וכל המוסיף הרי זה משובח, ובלבד שלא יהיה לטורח על החולה. השונא לא יבקר שונאו החולה ולא ינחמו כשהוא אבל, שלא יחשוב ששמח לאידו אבל מותר ללותו, וליכא למיחש שיאמרו כי הוא שמח לאידו, באשר זהו סוף כל אדם...מבקרין חולה אינו יהודי מפני דרכי שלום.

Kitzur Shulhan Arukh 193:1, 12 (Shlomo Ganzfried, 19<sup>th</sup> c.)

When a person becomes sick, it is the duty of every man to visit him; for we find that the Holy Blessed One visits the sick. As our Rabbis, of blessed memory, explained the verse: “And the Lord appeared unto him in the planes of Mamre” (Genesis 18:1), from this is inferred that God came to visit Abraham because he was sick. Relatives and friends who are accustomed to visit his house often should visit him as soon as they hear of his sickness. But acquaintances who do not visit regularly should not call immediately, but should wait until three days have elapsed, in order not to spoil his chance of recovery by casting upon him the designation of an invalid. If, however, one became suddenly ill, even acquaintances should visit him immediately. Even a great man should visit a less important person, even many times during the day. He who visits the sick frequently is praiseworthy, providing he should not become troublesome to the invalid. A person should not visit his enemy who is sick and should not comfort him in mourning, for he may think that he rejoices at his calamity. He may, however, attend his funeral and should not apprehend that people would think that he rejoices at his downfall, since this is the end of every mortal...The non-Jew should be visited during his illness for the sake of peace.

What makes visiting a sick person so important? What power dynamics are at play? What social justice themes emerge from this text? Are there broader health care implications that go beyond *bikkur holim* (visiting the sick)?

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