

CONVERSATION #1: YES, YOU

As the Jews were being crushed by Egyptian slavery, G-d said to Moses, “Now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me; moreover, I have seen how the Egyptians oppress them. Come, therefore, I will send you to Pharaoh, and you shall free My people, the Israelites, from Egypt.” But Moses said to G-d, “**Who am I** that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?”

Exodus 3: 9-11

Jewish sages might respond to Moses: If you can stop your household from committing a sin, but do not, **you** are held responsible for the sins of your household. If you can stop the people of your city from sinning, but do not, **you** are held responsible for the sins of the city. If you can stop the whole world from sinning, and do not, **you** are held responsible for the sins of the whole world.

Shabbat 54b

*As would Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who said: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are **you** doing for others?’”*

Discussion Questions:

- What might be some reasons for being reluctant to step up and take action when you see a wrong that needs righting? If you were the person suffering, what might you think and how might you respond to those reasons to try to convince someone to help you? Take the roles and play it out.
- In a globally connected society where the number of issues that call for attention seems to be infinite, what does it mean to be held personally responsible for it all? How do we make peace with the reality that some urgent issues will not get our attention at all?

CONVERSATION #2: A MIRROR OR A LENS?

*On April 25, 1963, Rabbi Pinchas Teitz of Elizabeth, NJ, said this to encourage participation in the March on Washington, “As we stand before the Almighty and this great assemblage, let it be declared without any reservations that racial discrimination of any kind constitutes not only a social misbehavior or a civic crime, but a sin – a great sin, a sin for which, someday, we will be called upon to give an accounting to our Creator. Believing as we do that man was created in the image of G-d, it follows that **he who judges his fellow man by the color of his skin debases the divine image of his own face.**”*

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., famously said this in Washington, DC, on August 28, 1963: “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that **all men are created equal.**”*

*In Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5 it is said: Adam, the first human was created alone... This was done due to the importance of maintaining **peace among people**, so that one person will not say to another: My father is greater than your father.*

Discussion Questions:

- Do you agree that acknowledging that all people are created equal, created in the image of G-d, would promote peace? Why or why not?
- Using this thought as a lens to look at what you did over the past days, what might have you done differently?

CONVERSATION #3: THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW, (MAYBE LATER)

*On April 3, 1968, the day before he was assassinated, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered these words in a speech in support of the striking sanitation workers in Memphis, TN: Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live – a long life; longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do G-d's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And **I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you.** But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. So, I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man.*

Moses went up ... to Mount Nebo... and the Lord showed him the whole land... And the Lord said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, 'I will assign it to your offspring.' **I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you shall not cross there.**"

Deuteronomy 34: 1-4

Rabbi Tarfon used to say: It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it.

Pirkei Avot 2:16

Discussion Questions:

- How do you balance what you know you can do with the reality that you cannot do it all?
- Knowing that you may not "finish the work," how do you identify and recruit others who will continue your work, and how do you prepare them to take up where you leave off?