



Holiness as Justice

[Leviticus 19:16](#)

You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbour, I am Adonai.

[ויקרא י"ט:ט"ז](#)

לֹא תַעֲמֹד עַל-דַּם רֵעֶךָ אֲנִי ה' :

[Leviticus 19:17](#)

You shall not hate your brother in your heart; You shall certainly rebuke your compatriot; but do not bear a sin on his account.

[ויקרא י"ט:י"ז](#)

לֹא-תִשְׂנֵא אֶת-אָחִיךָ בְּלִבְבְּךָ הוֹכֵחַ תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת-עַמִּיתְךָ וְלֹא-תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חַטָּא :

[Leviticus 19:34](#)

The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Adonai your God.

[ויקרא י"ט:ל"ד](#)

כַּאֲזַרְחַ מִמֶּם יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הַגֵּר וְהַגֵּר אֶתְכֶם וְאַהֲבַתְּ לּוֹ כְּמוֹד כִּי-גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :

The Requirement to Help Those in Need

[Sanhedrin 73a:7-8](#)

From where is it derived that one who sees another drowning in a river, or being dragged away by a wild animal, or being attacked by bandits, is obligated to save that person? As the Torah teaches: "You shall not stand idly by the blood of another." (Lev. 19:16)

[סנהדרין ע"ג א:ז-ח](#)

מניין לרואה את חברו שהוא טובע בנהר או חיה גוררתו או לסטין באין עליו שהוא חייב להצילו ת"ל לא תעמוד על דם רעך

And from where is it derived that one must help someone who might die or suffer bodily harm? As the Torah teaches "And you shall restore it [*vahashevato*] to him [*lo*]" (Deut. 22:2), which can also be read as: "And you shall restore him [*vahashevato*] to himself" (i.e. save his body).

נפקא אבדת גופו מניין ת"ל והשבותו לו

Mishneh Torah, Gifts to the Poor 7:7-8

We provide sustenance and clothing for the poor of the gentiles together with the poor of the Jewish people for the sake of peace.

It is forbidden to turn away a poor person who asks for charity empty-handed. Even giving him one fig is sufficient, as it says: "Let not the dejected turn away in shame." (Ps. 74:21)

When a poor person travels from place to place, we do not give him less than a loaf of bread that is sold for a *punidyon* (the equivalent of two meals).

If he stays overnight, we give him a mattress to sleep on, a pillow to place under his head, oil and beans.

If he stays for the Sabbath, we give him food for three meals, oil, beans, fish, and vegetables. If we are familiar with him, we give him according to his honor.

Taanit 11a:6

When the community is immersed in suffering, a person may not say: "I will go to my home and I will eat and drink, and peace be upon you, my soul."

Rather, a person should be distressed together with the community. As we found with Moses our teacher, that he was distressed together with the community, as it is stated (during the war with Amalek): "But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat upon it" (Ex. 17:12).

But didn't Moses have one pillow or one cushion to sit upon; why was he forced to sit on a rock? Rather, Moses said as follows: Since the Jewish people are immersed in suffering, I too will be with them in suffering.

And anyone who is distressed together with the community will merit seeing the consolation of the community.

משנה תורה, הלכות מתנות עניים ז'ז-ח'

מְפָרְנְסִין וּמְכַסִּין עֲנִי עִבּוּ"ם עִם עֲנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִפְּנֵי דְרָכֵי שְׁלוֹם.

וְאָסוּר לְהַחֲזִיר אֶת הָעֲנִי שֶׁשָּׂאֵל רִיקָם וְאִפְלוּ אֶתְּהָ נוֹתֵן לוֹ גְרוּגְרָת אַחַת שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (תהילים עד כא) "אֵל יֵשֶׁב דָּד נְכָלִים":

אִין פּוֹחֲתִין לְעֲנֵי הָעוֹבֵר מִמְּקוֹם לְמְקוֹם מִכְּפָר אֶחָד הַנִּמְכָּר בְּפוּנִידִין

וְאִם לָן נוֹתְנִין לוֹ מִצָּע לִישׁוֹן עָלָיו וְכֶסֶת לְתוֹן תַּחַת מְרֵאשׁוּתָיו. וְשִׁמּוֹן וְקִטְנִית.

וְאִם שַׁבַּת נוֹתְנִין לוֹ מִזֶּוֹן שְׁלֹשׁ קָעֵדוֹת וְשִׁמּוֹן וְקִטְנִית וְדָג וְנֶרֶק. וְאִם הָיוּ מִפְּרִין אוֹתוֹ נוֹתְנִין לוֹ לְפִי כְבוֹדוֹ:

תענית י"א א:ו'

בְּזֶמַן שֶׁהַצָּבוּר שְׂרוּי בְּצָעַר, אֵל יֵאמַר אָדָם: אֵלֶּךָ לְבֵיתִי, וְאוֹכֵל וְאַשְׁתָּה, וְשְׁלוֹם עָלֶיךָ נְפֹשִׁי.

אֵלָּא, יִצָּעַר אָדָם עִם הַצָּבוּר, שֶׁכֵּן מְצִינּוּ בְּמִשְׁהָ רַבִּינוּ שֶׁצִּיעַר עֲצָמוֹ עִם הַצָּבוּר, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיְדִי מִשְׁהָ כְּבָדִים וַיִּקְחוּ אֹבֹן וַיִּשְׂימוּ תַּחְתָּיו וַיֵּשֶׁב עָלֶיהָ",

וְכִי לֹא הָיָה לוֹ לְמִשְׁהָ כָּר אֶחָד אוֹ קָסֶת אַחַת לִישֵׁב עָלֶיהָ? אֵלָּא כָּד אֶמַר מִשְׁהָ: הוֹאִיל וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל שְׂרוּיִין בְּצָעַר – אֵף אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה עִמָּהֶם בְּצָעַר.

וְכָל הַמִּצָּעַר עֲצָמוֹ עִם הַצָּבוּר – זֹכֶה וְרוֹאֶה בְּנִחְמַת צָבוּר.

The Obligation to Protest Against Injustice

[Rosh Hashanah 19a:5-6](#)

On the twenty-eighth of Adar...the wicked kingdom issued a decree against Israel that they should not occupy themselves with Torah study, and that they should not circumcise their sons, and that they should desecrate Shabbat.

What did Yehuda ben Shammua and his colleagues do? They went and took advice from a certain matron whom all the prominent men of Rome would visit regularly, thinking that she would know how to annul the decree. She said to them as follows: Come and cry out at night in the streets and markets.

They went and cried out at night, saying: O Heavens! Are we Jews not your brothers; are we not children of one father; are we not children of one mother? How are we different from every other nation and tongue that you issue such harsh decrees against us?

And indeed the decrees were annulled, and the Sages made that day a festive day.

[Shabbat 54b:20-21](#)

Rav, Rabbi Ḥanina, Rabbi Yoḥanan, and Rav Ḥaviva taught: Anyone who had the capability to effectively protest the sinful conduct of the members of their household but did not protest, they are apprehended for being complicit in the sins of the people in their household.

If one is in a position to protest the sinful conduct of the people of their town, yet fails to do so, that person is apprehended for being complicit in the sins of the people of his town.

If one is in a position to protest the sinful conduct of the entire world, yet fails to do so, that person is apprehended for being complicit in the sins of the entire world.

[ראש השנה י"ט א:ה-ו'](#)

בְּעֶשְׂרִים וּתְמִנָּה בַּיּוֹם... גְּזָרָה מְלָכוֹת
הָרְשָׁעָה גְּזָרָה שְׁלֵא יַעֲסֻקוּ בַתּוֹרָה,
וְשְׁלֵא יְמוּלוּ אֶת בְּנֵיהֶם, וְשִׁחֲלוּ
שַׁבָּתוֹת.

מָה עָשָׂה יְהוּדָה בֶּן שְׁמוּעַ וְחַבְּרִיּוֹ?
הֵלְכוּ וְנָטְלוּ עֵצָה מִמַּטְרוֹנֵי תַּא אַחַת
שֶׁפֶל גְּדוּלֵי רוֹמִי מְצוּיִן אֶצְלָה.
אָמְרָה לָהֶם: בּוֹאוּ וְהִפְגִּינוּ בַּלַּיְלָה.

הֵלְכוּ וְהִפְגִּינוּ בַּלַּיְלָה, אָמְרוּ: אֵי
שָׁמַיִם! לֹא אַחֲיֵכֶם אֲנַחְנוּ, וְלֹא בְּנֵי
אָב אֶחָד אֲנַחְנוּ, וְלֹא בְּנֵי אִם אַחַת
אֲנַחְנוּ? מָה נִשְׁתַּנְּנוּ מִכָּל אוֹמָה
וְלָשׁוֹן שֶׁאַתֶּם גּוֹזְרִין עָלֵינוּ גְּזֵירוֹת
קָשׁוֹת?

וּבֵיטְלוּם. וְאוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם עֲשְׂאוּהוּ יוֹם
טוֹב.

[שבת נ"ד ב:כ-כ"א](#)

רַב וְרַבִּי חֲנִינָא וְרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן
וְרַב חַבִּיבָא מְתֵנוּ: כָּל מִי
שֶׁאִפְשָׁר לְמַחֲוֹת לְאַנְשֵׁי
בֵּיתוֹ וְלֹא מִיחָה – נִתְפָּס
עַל אֲנִשֵׁי בֵּיתוֹ.

בְּאַנְשֵׁי עִירוֹ – נִתְפָּס עַל
אַנְשֵׁי עִירוֹ.

בְּכָל הָעוֹלָם כּוֹלּוֹ – נִתְפָּס
עַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם כּוֹלּוֹ.

Jews in the Women's Suffrage Movement

The Jewish League for Woman Suffrage

JLWS was the only Jewish organisation in England—and the world—devoted exclusively to obtaining both national and Jewish suffrage for women. Founded on November 3, 1912, the League proclaimed twin goals: “to demand the Parliamentary Franchise for women on the same line as it is, or may be, granted to men, and to unite Jewish Suffragists of all shades of opinion for religious and educational activities ... [It will also] strive to further the improvement of the status of women in the [Jewish] Community and the State”

Non-militant and not affiliated with any political party, the JLWS was open to both men and women, and by 1913 it had over 300 members. Among its notable members were Ruth Franklin, Lily Montagu, Inez Bensusan, Rev. Dr J. Hochman, Hannah Hyam, Helena Auerbach, Israel Zangwill, Henrietta Franklin, Nina Salaman, Henrietta Lowy, and Rev. A.A. Green.

Henrietta Franklin

President of the British National Union of Women Suffrage Societies in 1916 and 1917, the year before women over 30 were given the right to vote in the UK.

Eleanor Marx

Although not a JLWS member, Eleanor Marx has been called “the mother of socialist feminism”. A supporter of women's suffrage, she also thought it a bourgeois movement, and pressed for the rights of working-class women. Unsurprising— her father was Karl Marx.

Edith Zangwill

In 1912, she helped form the JLWS, which was open to both male and female members.

Ernestine Louise Rose

Born in Warsaw in 1810, Rose was a suffragist, abolitionist, and freethinker who has been called the “first Jewish feminist.” Her career spanned from the 1830s to the 1870s, making her a contemporary to the more famous suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Largely forgotten in contemporary discussions of the American women's rights movement, she was one of its major intellectual forces in nineteenth-century America. The quote, “women's rights are human rights,” was believed to be first coined by her. Her relationship with Judaism is a debated motivation for her advocacy. As a rabbi's daughter, Ernestine had received more education than other women her age.

Around 1830, she moved to England where she married before moving to the United States. In New York City, she owned and operated a perfume shop, but dedicated most of her energy fighting for the abolition of slavery and suffrage of women, gaining prominence among other elites in these fields.

In 1869, she and her husband moved back to London and a few years later she began advocating for women's suffrage in England, even attending the Conference of the Woman's Suffrage Movement in London and speaking in Edinburgh at a large public meeting in favour of woman's suffrage. She died in Brighton, England, in 1892 and was buried at Highgate Cemetery.

Jews in the Workers' Rights Movement

Rose Schneiderman

Born in Chelm in 1882, Schneiderman was an American labour organiser and feminist, and one of the most prominent female labour union leaders. As a member of the New York Women's Trade Union League, she drew attention to unsafe workplace conditions, following the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911, and as a suffragist she helped to pass the New York state referendum of 1917 that gave women the right to vote. Schneiderman was also a founding member of the American Civil Liberties Union and served on the National Recovery Administration's Labor Advisory Board under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. She is credited with coining the phrase "Bread and Roses," to indicate a worker's right to something higher than subsistence living.

Karl Marx

Born in Trier in 1818 to Heinrich Marx and Henriette Pressburg, Marx's family was originally non-religious Jewish but had converted formally to Christianity before his birth. His maternal grandfather was a Dutch rabbi, while his paternal line had supplied Trier's rabbis since 1723, a role taken by his grandfather Meier Halevi Marx. His father, as a child known as Herschel, was the first in the line to receive a secular education. He became a lawyer with a comfortably upper middle class income and the family owned a number of Moselle vineyards, in addition to his income as an attorney. Prior to his son's birth and after the abrogation of Jewish emancipation in the Rhineland, Herschel converted from Judaism to join the state Evangelical Church of Prussia, taking on the German forename Heinrich over the Yiddish Herschel.

Jews in the Civil Rights Movement

Stanley Levison

Born into a Jewish family in New York City in 1912, Levison was an American businessman and lawyer who became a lifelong activist in socialist causes. He is best known as an advisor to and close friend of Martin Luther King Jr., for whom he helped write speeches, raise funds, and organise events.

Levison was instrumental in all the activities of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the organisation established by Dr. King and other Southern black preachers to further the cause of civil rights. He professionalised the fundraising of the organisation and took on many of the publicity tasks. In addition to serving as Dr. King's literary agent, he was also a close adviser to and a ghostwriter for him. Levison co-wrote with Clarence Benjamin Jones one of the drafts for Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech presented at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963.

Coretta Scott King said, "Stanley Levison was more than one of my husband's most loyal and supportive friends. He was [a] trusted and dedicated adviser."

Igal Roodenko

Roodenko was born in New York city in 1917. His parents, Morris (Moishe) and Ida (Ita) (nee Gorodetsky) were from Kiev. Having fled persecution under the Russian Tsar, they emigrated to Palestine in 1914, leaving there soon after to escape the Turks drafting Roodenko's father into WWI.

In April 1947, he was one of 16 men (8 white, 8 black) to participate in a 2-week interstate bus trip from Washington, D.C. into the upper South called The Journey of Reconciliation, the first of what would become known as the Freedom Rides.

Sitting Black and white side-by-side, they sought to test the new Supreme Court decision, which ruled that segregation on interstate travel was unconstitutional. Four of the riders, including Roodenko, were arrested in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. At their trial, Roodenko and the group's leader, Bayard Rustin, were both convicted.

During the sentencing, the presiding judge said to Roodenko, "Now, Mr. Rodenky (sic), I presume you're Jewish." "Yes, I am," Roodenko replied. "Well, it's about time you Jews from New York learned that you can't come down bringing your nigras with you to upset the customs of the South. Just to teach you a lesson," the judge sentenced him to 90 days on a chain gang - three times the length of Rustin's sentence.

Jews in the Women's Liberation Movement

Betty Friedan

Friedan was born Bettye Naomi Goldstein in 1921 in Peoria, Illinois, to Harry and Miriam (Horwitz) Goldstein. A leading figure in the women's movement in the United States, her 1963 book "The Feminine Mystique" is often credited with sparking the second wave of American feminism in the 20th century. In 1966, Friedan co-founded and was elected the first president of the National Organization for Women (NOW), which aimed to bring women "into the mainstream of American society now [in] fully equal partnership with men."

As a young girl, Friedan was active in both Marxist and Jewish circles; she later wrote how she felt isolated from the latter community at times, and felt her "passion against injustice ... originated from my feelings of the injustice of anti-Semitism"

Gloria Steinem

Born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1934, Steinem is the daughter of Ruth (née Nuneviller) and Leo Steinem. While her mother was Presbyterian, her father was the Jewish son of immigrants from Germany and Poland. Her paternal grandmother, Pauline Perlmutter Steinem, was a leader of the National Woman Suffrage Association and a delegate to the 1908 International Council of Women.

In 1963, Steinem gained widespread popularity among feminists after a diary she authored while working undercover as a Playboy Bunny waitress at the Playboy Club was published as a two-part feature in the May and June issues of *Show*. In 1969, Steinem published an article, "After Black Power, Women's Liberation," which brought her national attention and positioned her as a feminist leader. In 1971, she co-founded Ms. magazine, as a way to increase the reach of the feminist movement.