



Sermon Spark

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Sermon Spark Kedoshim:

The Modern State of Israel is the best opportunity we've had in 2000 years to fulfill the Torah's call to create a just and ethical society. Right now, there are many exciting groups in Israel that are trying to do just that.

Framing

The Torah, as articulated in Parashat Kedoshim, envisions a just, ethical society. The State of Israel, in its declaration of independence, declared that: "The State of Israel will... be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel. There is a deep connection between these prophetic values and the work that is currently happening in Israel.

Key Texts and Modern Connection

Leviticus 19:14 - "Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD."

The "Nalaga'at" Center creates workplaces for the deaf, blind and deaf-blind, and allows its employees to make a living while expressing themselves artistically. The "Nalaga'at" Center is a place where deaf, blind, deaf-blind, hearing and seeing people, work together and share the belief that through an active stand and a constant search for new means of communication - they can and must change reality. "Nalaga'at" brings deaf, blind and deaf-blind people together with hearing and seeing people from Israel and throughout the world on a cultural and artistic basis, through a unique experience. <http://www.nalagaat.org.il>

Leviticus 19:15 - "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly."

Government of Israel and Supreme Court:

The purpose of the Code of Ethics for Judges of the Supreme Court of the State of Israel is to guide the conduct of the judges of Israel along their path, and to serve them as an aid, by which they can be assisted and from which they can learn. The code includes rules of various types: fundamental rules which stem from the judge's status, and express fundamental values, which are the basis for judicature; rules regarding the act of adjudication itself; rules regarding the personal conduct of judges; and specific norms dealing with practical issues that arise in daily life

<http://elyon1.court.gov.il/eng/home/index.html>

Leviticus 19:13 - "Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight."

Bema'aglei Tzedek's Tav Chevrati is a seal of approval granted free of charge to restaurants and other businesses that respect the legally-mandated rights of their employees and are accessible to people with disabilities. This initiative encourages Israeli consumers to selectively patronize those businesses which have been awarded the Tav Chevrati, with the ultimate goal to encourage exponentially more businesses to uphold ethical and equitable business practices, while teaching consumers that they have the power to impact society. http://www.mtzedek.org.il/english/default_en.asp

Leviticus 19:9-10 - "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God."

Leket Israel, Israel's National Food Bank, works hard to address the problem of nutritional insecurity in the country. Leket Israel:

- Rescues over 110 tons of food a week that would otherwise be destroyed from hundreds of food producers.
- Coordinates the largest food purchasing cooperative for non-profit organizations in the country.
- Provides professional guidance to non-profit organizations in nutrition and food safety.
- Supplies over 5,000 volunteer prepared sandwiches a day to school children from dysfunctional homes in 24 cities. <http://www.leket.org/english/>

Leviticus 19:33-34 - "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

The Hotline for Migrant Workers, established in 1998, is a non-partisan, not for profit organization, dedicated to (a) promoting the rights of undocumented migrant workers and refugees and (b) eliminating trafficking in persons in Israel. We aim to build a more just, equitable and democratic society where the human rights of all those residing within its borders are paramount civic and political values. <http://www.hotline.org.il/english/index.htm>