

**Positive Judaism Study Guide #4:
Justice, Justice, You Shall Pursue: The Journey to Freedom**

Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught, “human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.” The Jewish value of justice, *tzedek*, is the path to creating righteousness and equality for everyone as Dr. King taught.

“All religions try to benefit people, with the same basic message of the need for love and compassion, for justice and honesty, for contentment,” teaches the Dalai Lama, suggesting that supporting people with the same rights is fair and just.

Lastly, the former Chief Rabbi of England, Lord Jonathan Sacks said, “true freedom requires the rule of law and justice, and a judicial system in which the rights of some are not secured by the denial of rights to others.” This session explores the role that pursuing justice has in the process of adding positive value to our lives, our communities, and to a broken world.

Justice/Tzedek	Civic strengths that support connections to community: teamwork, fairness, leadership
Teamwork/Avodat Tzevet	Able to participate and be loyal to a group. Being socially responsible and being a good citizen.
Fairness/Yosher	Without bias, able to treat and support people the same and to give everyone an equal chance.
Leadership/ Manhigut	Supporting a group to accomplish tasks all the while maintaining good relations with and among the group members.

1. Justice

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes that “Judaism was and remains the world’s great religions of protest. The heroes of faith did not accept they protested. They were willing to confront God. Abraham said, ‘Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?’ (Gen 18:25). Moses said, “Why have You done evil to this people?” (Ex 5:22). Jeremiah said, “Why are the wicked at ease?” Jer 12:1). This is how God wants us to respond. Judaism is God’s call to human responsibility.

2. Teamwork/*avodat tzevet*

Moses convened the whole community of Israel and said to them . . . the seventh day shall be a day of complete rest. Further he said, bring from among you gifts to the Lord, everyone whose heart so moves him shall bring gifts.” (Ex 35:1-5). Out of their deep desire to create something together, they eventually brought too much and Moses needed to cease the voluntary donations “so the people stopped bringing. Their efforts had been more than enough for all the tasks to be done.”

3. Fairness/*yosher*

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, King of Israel;

To know wisdom and instruction;

To comprehend the words of understanding;

To receive the discipline of wisdom, Justice, and right, and equity;

To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion;

That the wise man may hear, and increase in learning, And the man of understanding may attain unto wise counsel. -Proverbs 1:1-5

4. Leadership/*manhigut*

Without a vision the people will perish. -*Proverbs 29:18*

“Do you think that I am offering you authority,” said Rabban Gamliel to two of his colleagues who declined invitations to take on leadership roles, “I am offering you the chance to serve.”

- *Tractate Horayot 10a-b*

Leaders need to work with others. When Yitro sees Moses leading alone he says, “*lo tov*, what you are doing is not good.”- *Exodus 18:17*.

*** Optional Discussion Questions**

1. It would appear that the pursuit of “justice” is a key pillar of many Western religions. Why do you think this is so and to what purpose does it serve?
2. The Torah teaches “justice and only justice you shall pursue (Deut 16:20).” What examples can you share of people who dedicated their lives to justice and what drove their purpose?
3. What is servant leadership and how does Rabbi Gamliel’s statement above support the value that leadership is service?
4. What is the relationship between the sabbath and the bringing of gifts by the Israelites to build the tabernacle in Exodus chapter 35?