



Jewish Reconstructionist Federation – <http://www.jrf.org>

2008 Omer Study - Week Seven – Tikkun Across the Congregational System: From Schools to Shuls

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Jewish Texts

Kabbalistic Text on Tikkun detailing how the work of serving God and having a healthy balance in one's life and in the world comes from inter-relationship, not isolated energies or actions. This parallels the mystical cosmological narrative about why the first attempt at creation failed and the second, which had relationship between Divine energies or attributes stabilized and evolved (Rabbi S. Zevit)

We have two orders of *Sefirot* – *Tohu* and *Tikkun*. *Tohu* refers to the state of the original *sefirot*- unformed and unordered points (*nikkudim*). *Tikkun* refers to the state of *Sefirot* rearranged, mended and reformed as *Partuzifm* (related "faces" or in relationship patterns- face to face, back to back, side to side, etc.). *Tohu*...has no mutual inclusion, each on its own, without relating to its partner, fully separated and non-relational, and precipitate *Shevirat hekelim* (shattering of the vessels). The *sefirot* of *tikkun* build on one another, permit the mitigating influence of Divine Flow, and are therefore able to inter-relate.

- *Likutei amirim (Tanya)*, R. Shneur Zalman of Llyady, Chapter 9.

Belief in God, therefore, has to do... with human nature, with the way individual men and women act, with their attitudes, their ideas of what is good and what is bad, with their ideals... When we believe in God, we cannot be discouraged because we believe that all the misery in the world is due, not to the fact that misery must be there, that it is a necessary part of life, but to the fact that we have not yet discovered how to do away with that misery.

- *Rabbi Ira Eisenstein (adapted)*, *From the Shabbat Vehagim, the Reconstructionist Shabbat and Festival prayer book*, ReconstructionistPress

"According to the teaching of the Torah and the Prophets, the People of Israel was expecting to demonstrate its loyalty to God not merely by worshiping God, but mainly by practicing justice and righteousness. These are called 'the way of the Lord' (Genesis 18:19). Unrighteousness is the offspring of pride, which takes the form of rebellion against God, or playing the god. Translated into universal terms, that teaching implies that the religion of a people has to find expression principally in the practice of righteousness in its political, economic, and social affairs. That is the divine law for every people."

- *The Greater Judaism in the Making*, Mordecai M. Kaplan, p. 477

What of prayer and Social Justice?

By Rabbi Shawn Zevit

Written for the Jewish Funds for Justice, Feb 2008

"For with you is the source of all life....

Extend your justice to those honest in their hearts" (Psalm 36)

- Liturgy in preparation for putting on the tallit (prayer shawl) in morning services

"For the sake of the union of the blessed Holy One with the Shechinah, I stand here, ready in body and mind, to take upon myself the mitzvah, "You shall love your fellow human being as yourself (Lev. 19)," and by this merit may I open my mouth."

- kavannah introduced by the Kabbalists of Sfat, to be said before formal prayer

What of prayer and social justice? I experience the contemplative or prayerful moments and practices of our tradition as cut from the same cloth as taking action or advocating for social justice in our world. This is what the Jewish path asks of me in my understanding. Before the term tikkun olam emerged in the 1960's from the larger Jewish spiritual understanding of tikkun, coming to mean social justice or repair of the world, tikkun was understood as tikkun hanefesh (the individual soul or atzmi- myself) and tikkun olam (the rebalancing or repairing of the world at large).

Prayer is the key way for me to live this holistic and integrated approach to life. So many concepts of justice, compassion, loving each other, loving myself, equity, wisdom, restoring fairness and right leadership, and many more, are what are expressed repeatedly in our Divine dialogue of prayer. When I pray I feel challenged to connect with and assess how I am living the values I espouse and say I hold dear. Am I?

When I help organize communities, synagogues or organizations to do the work of tikkun, I see my work as prayerful actions in the world, even making sure to offer a reflection, pause to center my thoughts, breathe into any anxiety or undue urgency that might be counter productive to the action I am about to take. The integrated approach to tikkun invites me to ask- what are my motivations, my own brokenness that is playing out in my attempts to "repair the world" and how am I going about this with attention to physical, emotional, mindful and spiritual states. Am I causing harm in relationships, seeing people as expendable on the road to a just cause? Am I ruining my own health and well-being in the way I am pursuing tikkun, thus reducing my effectiveness and longevity in doing the work of tikkun.

The content and process of prayer (in Hebrew, t'fillah" from the ancient Hebrew "to judge or discern within and beyond oneself), whether it is in formal liturgy, meditation, chant, yoga, or opening up with gratitude to being alive, is an act of tikkun in the world. Without prayer I can start to believe that I alone am the source and judge of what is a right course of action. Who is my guide? What are the set of ultimate values that are directing and helping me to prioritize my actions. As our tradition suggests, am I pursuing justice justly or unjustly? Prayer holds me to the ground of my own being and does not let me escape the noise of my own soul and I find, opens my heart more to my work in the world with others and the planet.

In the Davenning Leaders' Training Institute that I co-direct with Rabbi Marcia Prager at Camp Isabella Freedman Jewish retreat Center, we work tirelessly for 4 weeks over two years to understand and engage with the deep structure of our liturgy and the meaning and function of prayer in our lives. At the same time we base this on building a prayerful community out of which prayer arises, not words that are to be memorized separate from caring relationships and issues of sustainability and justice around and between us. The stronger the bonds of community informed by core Jewish values and conscious compassionate behavior between participants in relationship to the environment we are part of, the deeper and more meaningful the prayers become.

Without taking our prayers out of the sanctuary into the streets we risk seeking comfort and escape from the cries around us. Sometimes I need a rest from all the suffering and pain I see and interact with daily on the road to trying to help alleviate that very suffering. But staying too long in the internal world can also be an escape. That is why ultimately as all worship ends in Aleynu- it is upon us "li'takeyn olam b'malchut Shaddai". To repair the world for God's presence, however we experience that Presence, to permeate everywhere. A spiritual discipline and regular prayer life aims to inspire and ignite within us the very sense of communal responsibility so that our prayers become activist stances- connecting us to our own hearts and values, to all life around us. To live this integrative approach is my prayer for all of us- with our hearts and our feet marching together for the repair of all the worlds.

Reflection as an Activist Practice

by Rabbi David Rosenn

<http://jrf.org/showres&rid=16>

Prepared for JRF Tikkun Olam Conference 2002

1. Reflection is not simply a tool for augmenting social justice work and community building efforts. In many ways, **the practice of reflection is itself a move towards positive social change and stronger community ties.**

2. When you think about how to structure reflection sessions, remember that **there are many different forms of reflection.** Don't get stuck thinking about reflection in just one way: journal writing, group discussions, etc. Sometimes the best reflection comes from a pointed question asked at the beginning of a service project or a planning meeting, such as: "What will have changed as a result of our work and what will remain unchanged?"

A corollary: Just as people have different learning styles and styles of expression, **people have different styles of reflection.** Try multiple methods for reflection such as journal writing, structured discussion, art projects, dramatic performance, debates, letters to the editor, video production, and presentations to outside groups.

3. It's hard to teach what you don't know. **The best facilitators of reflection are people who regularly practice reflection themselves.**

4. **The best reflection is a mix of "processing", sharing, and critical assessment.** While the first two tend to make participants feel more settled and comfortable, the third – critical assessment – can often raise feelings of frustration and unease. That's perfect. Reflection should make us aware of things that need to change, and change is frightening.

On the practical level, it's important to remember that it's not necessarily a bad reflection session if people leave feeling unsettled.

5. **Celebrations after a program or project are an excellent opportunity to reflect on what's been accomplished,** while also rewarding participants and having good fun. Not all reflections is calm and deliberate!

Suggested Ingredients for Synagogue Social Justice Initiatives

By Boston JCRC

<http://jrf.org/showres&rid=234>

The list below is obviously based on ideals. It is a standard to strive for, rather than a list of expected outcomes for every social justice engagement. Nonetheless, reviewing these questions before and after engaging in a social justice activity may stimulate some helpful reflection on what was achieved, as well as a way to plan thoughtfully for the future.

Planning: Laying the groundwork and vision.

- The Social Action Committee has a *strong infrastructure*, including:
 - Clear roles
 - Financial resources
 - Representation on synagogue board
 - Staff support as needed.
- *Communication* about social justice programs and coordination among programs is a high priority.
- The synagogue *mission* statement reflects its commitment to social justice work and is *effectively publicized* to the congregation.
- The project planners and/or the Social Action Committee have *developed goals* and a *plan for accomplishing them*.
- Social justice programming includes time for *planning, education, action, reflection, and evaluation*.
- An individual or group has responsibility for *publicity (collecting and sharing knowledge)* about social justice initiatives throughout the congregation.
- *Appropriate training* is provided to all volunteers.
- Internal *feedback and evaluation* mechanisms are present.

Leadership: Getting the right people involved.

- The *rabbi, synagogue staff, and board* provide leadership and support as needed.
- *Responsibility* for project oversight is *shared* among different people.
- More than one person plays a *central* leadership role.
- Several people play *supporting* roles.
- *Future leaders* are actively *cultivated*.
- Leaders representing *different constituencies* (religious school, Sisterhood, etc.) within the congregation *are engaged* to support social justice initiatives.
- *Leadership strives towards the long-term sustainability of initiatives*.

Congregational Involvement: Involving the different parts of the congregation.

- There are a *significant number* of volunteers and *clear strategies* for recruiting new volunteers.
- People are provided with a *range of ways to volunteer*, recognizing *availability and interests*, including both one-shot and ongoing projects.
- There is *coordination* among youth group, sisterhood, brotherhood, preschool, Religious School, senior citizen groups, adult education, and others.
- Opportunities are geared toward *various populations*, including youth, adults, seniors and families.
- *Families* are provided with opportunities to engage in social justice work together.
- The congregation sees the social action committee as the nexus of social justice activity in the congregation.

Partnership: Working with others.

- Social justice work is done with a *partner agency* (usually non-profit and community based) that is experienced with the problem and/or population the synagogue is intending to work with.
- The team (synagogue and partner) has developed a *shared understanding* about their *joint work plan* and each other's roles.
- Regular *communication* between the partners occurs about their respective needs and resources.
- *Training* is provided for leaders on building strong partnerships.
- Partners are *large* and *diverse* enough to meet your need.
- Partners have *experience working with volunteers* and are willing and interested in developing new projects.

Education (Jewish and Issue-Based): Learning about the context of the work.

- Social action projects are a *manifestation of the synagogue's Jewish values* and reflect the ruach (spirit) of a covenantal community committed to justice and Tikkun Olam. Congregants publicly articulate this perspective.
- *Volunteers lead and participate* in Jewish learning as an ongoing component of their work.
- Volunteers have opportunities to *deepen their understanding of root causes* of the issues on which they are working.
- Volunteers have had opportunities to develop an *understanding of the community* in which they are volunteering.
- Educational opportunities are varied (lectures, articles, etc.).

Action: Making change happen.

- Volunteers meet *actual needs* that are known and can be articulated.
- The work of volunteers has some *impact* on the larger social issues that could be measured.
- Volunteers have opportunities to provide a *service* for others. The service is empowering (taught a valuable skill, promoted self sufficiency, etc.).
- Volunteers have opportunities to engage in *advocacy efforts* to change public policy.
- Synagogue members have the opportunity to join in a *community organizing* campaign, where the purpose is to work alongside others and build power (such as the civil rights movement or affordable housing coalitions).
- Opportunities for *grass roots, hands-on* work exists in the greater community.
- Volunteers have the opportunity to *develop a relationship with someone different* than her/himself (socio-economically, racially, ethnically, etc.)

Reflection: Looking inward.

- Time is allotted for reflection activities.
- Reflection activities are designed to help the participant make connections between the education they received about the issue, the Jewish learning they did, and the action they took.
- Reflection activities challenge participants to think in new ways, explore issues deeply, but within a "safe" environment.
- Reflection activities are continuous - before, during, and after taking action.
- Reflection activities are varied: individual and in groups; structured and free form; with peers, coordinators, and the community organizations; using various skills and interests (art, writing, photos, prayer, etc.).

Adat Shalom – An example of creating “Year-at-a-Glance” Tikkun Olam Programming with multiple windows into participation

Existing Activities	Projects & Descriptions	Contact Person(s)
Food	Can Jam – Contribute, pack and/or deliver non-perishable food for those in need -- on the second Shabbat each month.	
	Manna Food Center -- Pack food boxes for needy families on the third Tuesday evening of every month. Good family activity.	
	1) Kars for Kol Nidre and 2) Passover & Rosh Hashanah Food Projects -- Bring a grocery bag of canned goods to Kol Nidre services; deliver food at holiday times to needy Jewish families, often elderly immigrants.	
Shelter	Christmas at Shepherd’s Table - - Provide meals (and company) to homeless men, women and families at this shelter in Silver Spring on Christmas eve and/or day).	
	CBS Shelter – Serve dinner at shelter in Rockville during an evening during a designated week in late August/ early September.	
	Sukkot in April -- Help repair or improve the home of someone in need. Good for children over 14 years of age, as well as adults.	

Environment	Environmental Education/Action -- Get involved with environmental issues and service activities, both within Adat Shalom and in the larger community.	
	Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) – help bring locally grown, organic vegetables to Adat Shalom. Work on related educational efforts.	
Interfaith	Friends in Action -- Adat Shalom will sponsor a team, through Interfaith Works (formerly Community Ministry of Montgomery County) that will mentor and provide logistical support for a family emerging from poverty.	
	Muslim-Christian-Jewish Friendship Activities -- Join with local religious and community groups on interfaith activities, including dialog, study, and service projects.	
Political Action/ Advocacy	Advocacy Subcommittee -- receive, explore, vet, and recommend to the SAC ideas for advocacy under the Tikkun Olam Guidelines, and to guide any proposals through the process described in the Procedures for Adopting Congregational Positions document.	
International	Darfur Genocide -- Plan and participate in activism designed to stop the current genocide in the Darfur Region of Sudan.	
Youth, Families, and Lifestyle	Kids' Care -- <i>Tikkun olam</i> projects for families with children 6 and under (siblings welcome!). A joint project with the Community Life Committee.	
	"Lunch Bunch" tutoring -- Adults from our community tutor students in a local public elementary school.	

Menschlekeit Matters

A conversation with Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben

<http://www.kehillatisrael.org/education.php?id=36>

Parent: Why did you decide to start the Menschlekeit Matters program?

Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben: The Menschlekeit Matters program grew out of conversations I had with Michael Josephson - who created the Josephson Institute of Ethics - about the impact of religious school education on the individual behavior of children who go through KI's educational program. Every few years the Josephson Institute puts out a "Report Card on America's Youth," a survey that reflects some specific categories of ethical behavior the Institute feels can be measured. They ask kids questions such as, "How often do you lie to teachers or parents," or "How often do you steal from stores, cheat on tests, solve conflict with violence," and the like. These categories usually relate to concrete, obvious ethical challenges and behaviors that kids tend to do.

One of the results from a past study was that there appeared to be NO significant difference in behavior between kids who go to public schools and kids who go to parochial schools (studies done largely in Catholic schools.) Michael Josephson is a KI member and his girls go to religious school here. Michael challenged me asking, "Shouldn't it matter? If a kid goes to KI, goes through the religious school and learns Jewish values, shouldn't it make a difference in his or her behavior?" His question, directed specifically to me as the Rabbi at Kehillat Israel was, "Shouldn't I, as the rabbi, be able to predict or assume that a child who goes through KI's full religious school experience would tend to be more ethical in their behavior than someone who has no religious education?" More to the point, "Shouldn't I desire this to be the case, or is religious education simply a matter of how to say prayers, how to speak Hebrew, how to do the rituals of Jewish life?"

The answer could have been, "No, that is not what we're about." We could just be teaching kids to get through bar/bat mitzvahs, learn to read the prayers, know what blessings go with what, be able to recite the Four Questions at a Passover Seder, and develop an historical sense of the Jewish people and where we came from.

But, the answer that inspired me was Yes. I do want the educational experience here to matter in the daily lives and ethical values of our families. One of the biggest challenges of Jewish education is that, with 3000-4000 years of Jewish civilization, we are trying get across a lot of information in a very limited time frame. Certainly we want to teach children how to do all those things needed to live a Jewish life. But, I decided, it was also true that we are a values-based and religious-centered civilization. To me, what matters is the kind of person you become. That's why I believe that we at Kehillat Israel should be willing to take on the challenge of imparting an ethical education to our youth and adults. If not us, who will?

I have spent a lot of time in my own past studying ethics, character and values education, (I have a Masters Degree in Education and a Ph.D. in Religion) and have come to understand that everyone goes through stages of moral development and kids will be kids. They tend to act out

and push limits whether or not they are in a religious setting. But it ought to be that the religious education at KI from preschool through adulthood should reinforce the values that will help make our children the kind of people who will bring godliness into the world. Judaism is a values grounded religious civilization. We understand God as the ultimate role model of compassion, justice, caring, love - the values we want to emulate in our lives.

So, we partnered with the Josephson Institute, which is known for creating the Character Counts program with its 6 pillars of character - Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, Citizenship. The Josephson Institute has been doing something similar with other religious traditions, such as the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles which has 100,000 students (we have 600.) I realized that we have the opportunity to create a Jewish version of Character Counts which could then be replicated in other liberal and progressive synagogues across the country or the world. We have already started the process.

Menschlekeit Matters is a teacher-training challenge where we have taken the model of the 6 pillars of character from Character Counts and transliterated them into Hebrew values. We do use terms that relate to the Character Counts 6 pillars (Emunah-trustworthiness, Kavod-respect, Ahariyut-responsibility, Tzedek-fairness, Hesed-caring, Klal Israel-citizenship) but, very importantly, we have added a seventh, Kedushah, or Holiness. In Jewish civilization everything is based on Holiness, which is not one of the pillars in the Character Counts but is specifically a Jewish value.

Parent: That touches on the next question. Other than using Jewish names for the pillars, what are the differences between the Menschlekeit Matters program and Character Counts?

Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben: One of the profound differences is that Character Counts is a secular program aiming to be as universal as possible. We, in Menschlekeit Matters, are discussing authentically Jewish values using Jewish tradition, history and writings as material. There is overlap with Character Counts in terms of general ethics in the community but Menschlekeit Matters grows out of thousands of years of Jewish tradition. The fact that Western civilization has, in many ways, adopted Jewish values is something to be proud of but should not overshadow the importance that these values are authentically from Jewish tradition.

Menschlekeit Matters values can be visualized as a menorah. The candlesticks are like the different pillars but the seventh value, Kedushah, holiness, is the entire base. In Jewish life and thought everything is grounded on holiness. In Jewish thought, the goal of life is not happiness, but holiness, of bringing a sense of holiness into the world.

Parent: How will Menschlekeit Matters affect the Religious School curriculum?

Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben: This is not just about the Religious School, but will affect all of Kehillat Israel. We want to transform the entire curriculum of the Religious School over the next two years so that it is reinvigorated into a values-centered curriculum. Students will continue to learn Jewish life skills, Torah, history and the Torah stories of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Rachel, Leah, Moses and so forth. They will learn about holidays and life cycle events. But the Menschlekeit Matters component will connect our history to those inspiring values that help the children and adults of today become the best they can be and it does this in a specifically Jewish context.

We hope the Religious School students will learn to associate Torah stories with particular values. For example, when Abraham was hospitable to strangers, the association might be with the Jewish value of Kavod, respect, one of the 'pillar' values of how to treat other human beings. We hope to create a matrix of values that relates to every aspect of Jewish life.

Our far-ranging goal is that the Menschlekeit Matters program will infuse the entire community of KI. This is not just about teachers and students. It is also about supporting parents in the often intimidating position of being a role model. We are expanding the family education activities of KI (a Parenting Series, parallel adult education and other activities) so that ultimately parents and kids are interacting together within a framework that we are helping to create.

Ultimately, kids learn their values at home and the reality is that the Religious School is only a part time adventure in Jewish learning. Children learn primary values from primary role models, their parents, and they are learning 100% of the time. You don't get to decide if you are a role model, you just are, as a parent.

We want parents to feel comfortable, feel grounded in Jewish traditions and values, to feel empowered as role models. Often, parents tell me it is scary to be a parent - you realize you have this tremendous impact on your kids when they are growing up. You think about your own failures, lacks, not feeling so competent, but all you can do is the best you can do. And KI, with the entire scope of the Menschlekeit Matters, is growing in its potential to be an even more active support system.

From the classrooms to celebrations, leadership opportunities, the Board, or committees, through all interactions at KI, all these activities should reflect Jewish values. I want KI to be a spiritual values life laboratory that helps and provides a place where kids and adults, parents and families together can experience what it is to live a life that is infused with these values.

Parent: This is quite an undertaking.

Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben: You are your character. Habitual decisions makes the person. You can have all the best thoughts in the world, but you are what you do, how you act is how people experience you in the world. The quality of your life is directly the result of the quality of your choices. Our goal is to help people be able to make the right kind of choices in life, and help kids make the right choices, and to know that life is filled with constant opportunities. There are challenges to making choices; choosing to do the right thing, or to do the easy thing, or to even know the difference.

Parent: Are you hoping to stimulate family discussions or are you imposing values on people?

Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben: No, we are not imposing this on anyone. We are trying to clarify for people what we consider to be authentic Jewish values. We hope to illuminate how these values already function in families' lives and that there are already many teachable moments, many opportunities to reflect the values we feel underlie Jewish life. These are authentic Jewish values that we are not imposing, but that we think are necessary. The Jewish tradition, for thousands of years has asked and tried to answer, "How do you build a society that is just,

compassionate, loving and caring in which you can take care of those most vulnerable and can also celebrate the successes of life?"

For example, Kavod - to honor or respect. The 10 Commandments begin with Kavod, as in Honor your Mother and Father. What does this mean to a child? Well first, they watch how you act and speak to your own parents.

Citizenship - Klal Yisrael - what does it mean to be part of a society, to be a friend? When they watch how you treat and speak about your friends, they are modeling and learning about the value of friendship.

Another example is the value of Emunah- trustworthiness, integrity. I don't think anyone is arguing that this is an imposed, external value - to be trustworthy. People should believe our word is our word. How do parents do this with children? The simple way is that when you tell them you will be home at 10:00 pm, be home at 10:00 pm. Otherwise how can you expect them to do the same thing when they have a curfew as teenagers, if they have not experienced trustworthiness from you?

Sometimes people are uncomfortable about talking on the subject of God, but in Jewish life, these are the qualities always associated with God, the ultimate role model. This is predicate theology. How do you bring godliness into your family, into the world? By your actions, by being trustworthy, having faith, showing responsibility and acting upon other values considered important that make the world work and improve the world. There are an endless number of values. We could have picked 30 other values but it is easier and more effective to create a powerful program based on Character Counts and the 6 pillars (plus Holiness) that already exists.

Parent: Then, how were these particular values, pillars, originally chosen by Character Counts and the Josephson Institute?

Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben: The Josephson Institute started with a think tank. I wasn't part of the process but I understand that over several days, they brought together a variety of thinkers from different disciplines and backgrounds from across the country. They wrestled with the question of identifying fundamental values, choosing what values to teach. These six pillars were chosen because they resonated with people as universal; that is they are not specific to a particular religion, the whole community can understand and relate to them and they are actionable - something that can be acted out in society and that kids can learn and experience as concrete behavior choices. Children could know that when they behave in a certain way (trustworthiness, respect, etc) or make certain decisions, they would be demonstrating good character. That is how Character Counts chose its pillars.

But, here is an example of how Menschlekeit Matters would develop one of those pillars, the value of citizenship, through a specifically Jewish lens. What does it mean to be a good citizen in the classroom, or in civic life? We have this notion in Judaism called Israel, which means the Jewish community, the Jewish people. We understand that one of the most important values is Hebrew phrase, "Kol Yisrael aravim zeh le'zeh", that all the Jewish people are responsible for each other. This speaks to responsibility and also refers to spiritual citizenship. It means to feel a sense of obligation, responsibility and the need to participate in the lives of other people.

Judaism has a notion that there is no such thing as an innocent bystander because if you are standing by while something is happening to someone else, you are not innocent.

We can't sit by and watch what is going on in Darfur, namely, another genocide. Since the Holocaust, we Jews have been the ones saying, "Never again, never again,." It means more than never again to just us. It means "Never again" to anyone, as in "Remember what it was like to be a stranger, remember what it was like to be a slave," which is the single most often expressed commandment in the entire Torah. Every time we celebrate Passover and remember the Exodus, we are asserting a Jewish value of communal responsibility.

Parent: I can understand ethics from a religious standpoint, especially when I agree to a 'social contract' by being involved in a religion. The Josephson Institute believes the Six Pillars of Character are "consensus ethical values," universalities. Can universal ethical values actually be defined by any person or group?

Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben: Maybe some people don't adhere to consensus ethics, but I am a man of faith. I have faith. I believe you have to start somewhere. I believe, ultimately, there is more good in the world than bad, that there are universal values and ethics and that Judaism certainly teaches them. The reason the Torah starts with God creating the world and not with God's relationship with Abraham, (who is specifically Jewish), is to teach that when we talk about God, we talk about the God of everyone. We are not discussing just our own personal God and our own personal values. And the God, theoretically, who gave the Jews the Torah, 10 Commandments and all the mitzvot, this is the God of everyone. Therefore universal values exist and we happen to express them in our uniquely Jewish way.

The world will work if everyone expresses and lives these values in their lives, regardless of their particular religious (or even lack of religious) label. We are doing a Jewish version of Character Counts because we believe the Character Counts values are in line with, and grow out of, Jewish values. We hope to be empowering our students, parents and adults with the intellectual, emotional and spiritual tools that will allow them to live their lives in an ethical and moral way, and with an understanding of the authentic Jewish underpinnings to the process.

Menschlekeit Matters - What is it?

<http://www.kehillatisrael.org/>

To be a *mensch* in our tradition is to be a good person, a whole person, a person worthy of merit. Adapting the nationally recognized program, CHARACTER COUNTS, Kehillat Israel is developing a Jewish program called Menschlekeit Matters, which is the foundation for our values-based education programs.

SHISHAH AMUDIM: THE SIX PILLARS OF CHARACTER (MIDDOT) PLUS KEDUSHAH

1. EMUNAH: Trustworthiness

Be honest • Don't deceive, cheat or steal • Be reliable — do what you say you'll do • Have the courage to do the right thing • Build a good reputation • Be loyal — stand by your family, friends and country

Do not bear false witness against your neighbor. (Exodus/Shemot 20:17)

2. KAVOD: Respect

Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule • Be tolerant of differences • Use good manners, not bad language • Be considerate of the feelings of others • Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone • Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements

Honor your father and mother that you may long endure on the land that Adonai, your God has assigned to you. (Exodus/Shemot 20:12)

3. AHARAYUT: Responsibility

Do what you are supposed to do • Persevere: • Use self-control • Be self-disciplined • Think before you act — consider the consequences • Be accountable for your choices

If I am not for myself, who will be for me. If I am only for myself, what am I. If not now, when. (Hillel, Pirkei Avot)

4. TZEDEK: Fairness

Play by the rules • Take turns and share • Be open-minded; listen to others • Don't take advantage of others • Don't blame others carelessly

Justice, justice, you shall pursue. (Deuteronomy/Devorim 16:20)

5. HESED: Caring

Be kind • Be compassionate and show you care • Express gratitude • Forgive others • Help people in need

Love your neighbor as yourself. (Leviticus/Vayikra 19:18)

6. KEHILLAH: Citizenship

Do your share to make your school and community better • Cooperate • Get involved in community affairs • Stay informed; vote • Be a good neighbor • Obey laws and rules • Respect authority • Protect the environment.

Do not separate yourself from the community. (Mishnah, Sanhedrin 2:5)''

OVERARCHING MIDDAH: KEDUSHAH: Holiness

We are God's partner in creating holiness. Within a Jewish framework, all of the pillars support a holy structure within which we can lead our lives.

You shall be holy, for I your God am holy. (Leviticus/Vayikra 19:1)
Kol Yisrael Aravim Zeh L'zeh - All Israel is responsible for one another.

Menschlekeit Matters: Monthly Amudim List
Forty-Nine Value Based Lessons: July 25, 2007

Month	<i>Amud/Pillar</i>	<i>Middah/Value</i>	Associated Holiday
September	<i>Emunah</i> Trustworthiness	Partners with God in Creation	High Holy Days
October	<i>Hesed</i> Caring	<i>Hahnasat Orhim</i> Welcome Guests	Sukkot
November	<i>Kedushah</i> Holiness <i>Hesed</i> Caring	<i>Hiddur HaMitzvah</i> Beautifying a Mitzvah/Creating Sacred Space <i>Hoda'ah</i> Gratitude	Shabbat Thanksgiving
December	<i>Kavod</i> Respect	<i>Sever Panim Yafot</i> Show Your Best Side	<u>H</u> anukah
January	<i>Aharayut</i> Responsibility	<i>Ba'al Tashhit</i> Do Not Destroy our Natural Resources	Tu Bishevat
February	<i>Tzedek</i> Fairness	<i>Shem Tov</i> Earn a Good Name	President's Day/ Leadership
March	<i>Aharayut</i> Responsibility	Ometz Lev Courage to do the Right Thing	Purim
April	<i>Tzedek</i> Fairness	Shmiat Ha'Ozen Be a Good Listener (<i>Ve-Higadetah</i> <i>Le-vanehah</i>) Tell your children...	Passover
May	<i>Kehillah</i> Community	<i>Tikkun Olam</i> Repair the World	Mitzvah Day
** June / No RS	<i>Kedushah</i> Holiness	<i>Talmud Torah</i> Study is Sacred	Shavuot

MENSCHLEKEIT MATTERS ALERT!

Thank you so much for your participation as teachers in the pilot Menschlekeit Matters Program at Kehillat Israel this year. If you were not at the training session on Sunday, September 11, we will be arranging for a make-up training with you in the near future. For those of you who were there, this bulleting is one of the ways that we will implement the TEAM approach in the Religious School. We are striving for a consistent and continuous message about values to permeate the halls and our classrooms.

Menschlekeit Matters: TEAM Approach
Adapted from the October Religious School Newsletter
Dr. Cheryl Weiner, Rabbinic Intern

How are we teachers going to make menschlekeit matter? We are going to use the Character Counts! TEAM approach to teaching values. (www.charactercounts.org)

- Teach. We will provide learning experiences and examples from our sacred stories, prayers, holidays, life cycle events and history that embody these values.
- Enforce. We will reinforce our teachings by positively reinforcing behaviors that express our values. We want students to know we are serious about these values.
- Advocate. We will continuously encourage each child to be a mensch in their thoughts, feelings, and actions. We will be clear and consistent about demanding that students engage in Menschlekeit, in good behavior.
- Model. Each of us in the religious school will be modeling what it means to be a mensch. In the Jewish tradition, we learn from watching how our teachers tie their shoelaces.

Join with us in being a TEAM player. Teach, enforce, advocate, and model Menschlekeit in your classroom. By coaching our kids consistently, we can win the ultimate game --- raising children of character. Menschlekeit Matters!

MENSCHLEKEIT MATTERS: A CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Invited article for Torah at the Center, an educational newsletter of the URJ (Submitted)
By Dr. Cheryl Weiner, Rabbinic Intern and Program Coordinator, Jewish Learning Institute,
Kehillat Israel, Pacific Palisades, CA

Abraham rushes out to meet the visitors, the messengers that have been sent to announce that he and Sarah will have a child together in their old age. This is the story that is associated with the Jewish value of *Hahnasat Orhim*, welcoming visitors. Yet when we teach this story, we often don't remember that we are teaching a central Jewish value or *middah*. Abraham doesn't just greet these visitors, he rushes to greet them. He offers them water, and asks to wash their feet, and sits them under a shade tree. Then, he hastens to find Sarah to prepare food for them to eat and runs to kill a calf. If you listen closely, the language alerts you to the breathlessness, the urgency to welcome these guests.

Nowhere is it indicated that these visitors looked like important people, yet look at the commotion they stirred up. Moreover, only after Abraham and Sarah have demonstrated their hospitality does it mention the covenantal message that they will have a son. As educators, we are compelled to teach this story as a foundational myth, a story that guides our behavior as Jews and is relevant to our lives today.

When Hurricane Katrina hit, Kehillat Israel in Pacific Palisades, CA, like many others, immediately moved into action to support people during and after this natural disaster. As soon as KI learned that evacuees would be coming to Los Angeles, we launched a campaign to welcome them. The entire congregation was mobilized ---a pure example of

hahnasat orhim. We don't know what great gifts will result from these actions; we just acted like Jews.

Judaism is a religion of action. Thus, our role as teachers is to operationalize our *middot*, our values, in a way that manifests in behavior. The *middah* of *hahnasat orhim* fits under the overarching value of *hesed*, caring for the other, acting with loving-kindness. If we focus on the meta-concept of *hesed*, we can instill a consistent message about the core value of *hesed* and we can reinforce all of the behaviors that fit under this category.

At Kehillat Israel this year, under the direction of our Rabbi, Steven Carr Reuben, a major figure in Jewish moral education, we are launching a values-based framework that we have entitled, Menschlekeit Matters. It is the Jewish adaptation of a nationally recognized character development program called Character Counts! (www.charactercounts.org). Our goal is to integrate what children are learning in their secular educations with what they are learning in religious school.

Thus, we have developed parallel language to categorize values. Our *shishah amudim of middot* correspond to their six pillars of character: *emunah* (trustworthiness), *kavod* (respect) *aharayut* (responsibility), *tzedek* (fairness), *hesed* (caring) and *klal yisrael* (citizenship). In addition, we have an overarching value, *kedushah* (holiness), which expresses our

mandate to bring holiness into the world through our right actions.

The essence of the program is that every child should be a *mensch*, a person of character, and should exercise *menschlekeit*, behavior that expresses goodness. This is fundamental to being a Jew. To teach *menschlekeit*, we start with a framework of teaching values that can be overlaid over any curriculum, set of lesson plans, or materials. Teachers consistently use the same terminology to reinforce concepts and to train students to exemplify values through their behaviors. Our eventual goal is to create a comprehensive curriculum based on this framework, incorporating materials already developed by other publishers and developing our own.

Within the traditional discussion of *middot*, we can find at least a hundred terms. This is far more than any child can assimilate. However, by dividing up the *middot* into our *shishah amudim*, we can build models of behavior that students can assimilate and internalize.

Think of a synagogue building. It has a foundation that is laid in *kedushah*, the establishment of sacred space and community. Each room houses one of the *shishah amudim*. Within each room, we can include numerous *middot* that fit into it like furniture. Every time children come into the room, they experience a different chair or a different couch; They experience a different *middah* that exemplifies the concept of each pillar. When they graduate from religious school, they will have learned a compendium of values that can withstand the test of time. They will have internalized what it means to create sacred space and community.

The framework is based on what we already do in our classrooms. For example, when we are studying texts, such as Abraham and Sarah greeting the visitors, we relate the language and the narrative to the value embodied in the story. When we are studying the *middah*, we cite the text, reinforcing our students' ability to concretize the value through the characters and plots. Every week, we check-in with students to see how they enacted the *middah* of *hesed*. If they say that they welcomed their grandparents, we identify this as *hahasat orhim*. Then, by classifying this *middah* as *hesed*, we also give them a wider framework to use in understanding the concept of caring in their behavior.

At the end of the day, we don't want students to just know that Abraham and Sarah welcomed visitors; we want students themselves to welcome visitors. We also want them to know that this is not an isolated example of a particular value, but that it is a representative value within a value system. Even more than this, we want them to understand that enacting this value is not a choice, it is an obligation of Judaism, a *mitzvah*, an expression of what it means to be Jewish. Being a *mensch* means enacting these values on a daily basis. Through this framework, we learn that Menschlekeit Matters!

Tikkun Olam Jewish Education Resources

Foundation for Jewish Camping Resource Bank -

http://www.jewishcamps.org/fjc/resourcebank/resourcebank_search.asp?cat=2

JCUA – “Judaism and Urban Poverty” Curriculum –

<http://www.jewishjustice.org/download/section71/teachersguide.pdf>

Jewish Funds for Justice – “The Tzedek Partner Program: Learning, Giving and Organizing for Social Justice” - <http://www.jewishjustice.org/download/section71/povertycurriculum.pdf>

NFTY Social Action Program Bank –

<http://www.nfty.org/resources/programbank/>

Madrichim.org - <http://www.madrichim.org/>

Mazon – “Hunger No More” Curriculum -

http://www.mazon.org/What_You_Should_Know/Hunger_No_More_Curriculum/

Morim.org - <http://en.morim.org/>

Ziv Tzedakah Fund Curriculum - http://www.ziv.org/ziv_curriculum1.html

“Tzedakah in Action – Getting Teens into Tzedakah” Curriculum –

http://www.socialaction.com/education_resources/curriculum/tzedakah.shtml

USY Online Program Bank -

<http://www.usy.org/yourusy/pbank/search2.asp>

Class Activity: Hebrew Slaves And Israeli Foreign Workers - By Rabbi Amy Klein -

<http://www.jrf.org/showres&rid=109>

Class Activity: Israeli Women's Social Change Organizations - By Rabbi Amy Klein -

<http://www.jrf.org/showres&rid=92>

Class Activity: Laws Protecting Women's Rights - By Rabbi Amy Klein -

<http://www.jrf.org/showres&rid=93>

Class Activity: Plant Trees And Protect Wildlife - By Rabbi Amy Klein -

<http://www.jrf.org/showres&rid=89>

Class Activity: Useful Art Projects Using Recycled Materials - By Rabbi Amy Klein -

<http://www.jrf.org/showres&rid=90>

Additional Tikkun Olam Resources

JRF – Tikkun Olam - <http://www.jrf.org/to>; <http://jrf.org/omer>;
<http://www.jrf.org/tikkun-olam-issues> and PEARL teleconference call - audio and pdf packets:
<http://www.jrf.org/PEARL-resources>

JRF – Congregation Resource Library - <http://jrf.org/resources-library> (Tikkun Olam sections)

JRF – Education Department - <http://www.jrf.org/education>

JRF – Divrei Torah <http://jrf.org/recon-dt> and www.jrf.org/green-call

"The Spiritual Dimension of Justice" - text and songs collected by Rabbi Shawn Zevit
<http://jrf.org/showres&rid=481>

"Heart, Mind and Spirit" audio program on social action, by Rabbi Brian Walt and Rabbi Shawn Zevit -
<http://jrf.org/showres&rid=137>

"Integrating Spirituality and Social Justice," by Melanie Schneider, in *Reconstructionism Today*, Volume 3, Number 3, Spring 1996 - <http://jrf.org/showrt&rid=673>

"Let's Not Follow Noah's Example: A Call to Action", By Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman -
<http://jrf.org/showres&rid=18>

Rabbis and the God of Transformation, by Rabbi Brian Walt - <http://jrf.org/showrt&rid=695>

"Tikkun Olam: Theory and Practice," in *The Reconstructionist*, Volume 68, Number 1, Fall 2003 -
<http://www.therra.org/Reconstructionist/Fall2003.pdf>

"Toward Healing and Justice," in *The Reconstructionist*, Volume 61, Number 1, Spring 1996 -
<http://www.therra.org/Reconstructionist/Spring1996.pdf>

"Caring and Healing," in *The Reconstructionist*, Volume 63, Number 2, Spring 1999 -
<http://www.therra.org/Reconstructionist/Spring1999.pdf>

"Gearing Up for the Age Wave: A Guide for Synagogues", a publication by Hiddur: The Center for Aging and Judaism -
http://www.rrc.edu/site/c.iqLPIWOEKrf/b.2485811/k.AF5C/Gearing_Up_for_the_Age_Wave_A_Guide_for_Synagogues.htm

Kolot: Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies -
<http://www.kolot.org/site/c.dnKIISNrEkG/b.1868725/>

Center for Jewish Ethics -
http://www.rrc.edu/site/c.iqLPIWOEKrf/b.1509837/k.80BD/About_the_Center.htm

Publications -

<http://www.rrc.edu/site/apps/ka/ec/category.asp?c=iqLPIWOEKrf&b=1480969&en=hiKJKVOGLiLNKWOJcJOLcPUIkKLYOMLIJSK6OGLbIWIjI>

Academic Coalition for Jewish Bioethics - <http://www.rrc.edu/site/c.iqLPIWOEKrf/b.1509857/>