

7 Jewish Values for Social Action

Our values compel us to take action!

B'Tzelem Elohim / In The Divine Image

בצלם אלהים

The Torah teaches that each human is created “b'Tzelem Elohim” (Bereishit 1:26), in the Divine image. This is a simple yet profound idea that should guide our interactions with all people. LGBTQ+ people are sacred, and therefore deserve to be heard, witnessed, and advocated for. True belonging, inclusion, and justice are built on this foundation.

Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof / Pursue Justice

צדק צדק תרדף

The Torah speaks passionately about an obligation to build a society that is just. The call to actively pursue justice, “tzedek, tzedek tirdof” (Devarim 16:20) is presented as a central and fundamental component of Jewish life. Our tradition is clear: Jews must work for a world in which LGBTQ+ people — and all people — can live in dignity.

Lo Taamod al Dam Reiecha / Do Not Stand By

לא תעמד על-דם רעך

The Torah demands of us: “you must not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor” (Vayikra 19:16). This text is traditionally understood as a call to action when the safety of another is threatened. Against a backdrop of legislation that endangers the safety and wellbeing of millions of LGBTQ+ people, each of us has an obligation to act.

Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh BaZeh / Mutual Responsibility

כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה

There is a rabbinic principle that “all of Israel is responsible for / intertwined with one another” (Shavuot 39a). This statement of mutual accountability and interdependence reminds us that what impacts one member of our community impacts us all. Jews are not a monolith: we are every race, class, ability, sexual orientation, gender, and more. Jewish communities cannot separate themselves from the needs and safety of our LGBTQ+ members; all of us are called upon to protect one another.

Ezrachut / Civic Engagement

אזרחות

It is a Jewish imperative to make our voices heard in civic matters. A Midrash teaches, “if a person sits in their home and says to themselves, ‘What have the affairs of society to do with me?’... they [destroy] the world.” (Midrash Tanchuma Mishpatim 2:1). We are called to take action regardless of whether or not we are personally impacted by harm.

Lo Libatel / Persistence

לא לבטל

Sometimes it seems that the systems of LGBTQ+ oppression are too deeply rooted and enormous to ever dismantle. Yet every action we take makes a difference, even when the path towards progress is not linear. Rabbi Tarfon used to teach “it is not [entirely] on you to complete the work, yet you are not free to desist from it” (Pirkei Avot 2:16). We take this teaching to heart, understanding that our contribution is imperfect, but that each individual action moves us toward the greater good.

Chutzpah / Audacity

חוצפה

The Jewish tradition is full of figures who show up with audacity in their calls for justice, challenging authority figures, systems of injustice, and even the Divine. Our forefather Abraham famously critiques even God, saying “How dare you!? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?” (Bereishit 18:25). As Jews, we are a people whose chutzpah and audacity has fueled our resilience and capacity to survive persecution over two millennia. Today, we continue to fight against discrimination and hatred towards Jews and all people. We carry on the legacy of our ancestors by questioning authority and resisting oppression in our own times.