

Global Jewish Responsibility

Source Sheet by Joshua Mikutis

1. Pirkei Avot 1:14

(14) He [also] used to say: If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am for my own self [only], what am I? And if not now, when?

משנה אבות א' י"ד

(יד) הוא הִזָּה אֹמֵר, אִם אֵין אָנִי לִי, מִי לִי. וְכִשְׁאָנִי לְעַצְמִי, מָה אָנִי. וְאִם לֹא עַכְשָׁיו, אֵימָתִי:

2. What Is Our Global Jewish Responsibility? Rabbi Peter Rubinstein

The first: What is our universalistic responsibility as Jews on a global level to communities who are not of our faith or background, such as Haitians after an earthquake, or Kosovo refugees, or in India or Japan after a tsunami? Why should Jews who globally number only 0.2 percent, or one out of every five hundred people in the world, use their resources, as limited as they are, and why should we believe we are responsible to ameliorate the extraordinary, terrifying, horrific results of human misery?

The second framing of the question is about our more particularistic responsibility as Jews to other Jews around the world. Why should we care about and care for Jews in small communities in faraway places, and what is our responsibility to them?

3. Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

(1) Look at God's work - for who can straighten what He has twisted? (Ecclesiastes 7:13). When the Blessed Holy One created the first human, He took him and led him round all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said to him: "Look at My works, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are! And all that I have created, it was for you that I created it. Pay attention that you do not

קוהלת רבה ז' י"ג

(א) רָאָה אֶת מַעֲשֵׂה הַאֱלֹהִים כִּי מִי יוּכַל לְתַקֵּן אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָוְתוּ, בְּשַׁעַת שִׁבְרָא הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אָדָם הַרְאִשׁוֹן, נִטְלוֹ וְהִחְזִירוֹ עַל כָּל אֵילָנֵי גֶן עֵדֶן, וְאָמַר לוֹ, רָאָה מַעֲשֵׂי כַּמָּה נְאִים וּמִשְׁבָּחֵינוּ הוּא, וְכָל מַה שִׁבְרָתִי בְּשִׁבְלִי בְּרָאתִי, תֵּן דַּעְתְּךָ שְׁלֵא תִקְלַקֵּל וְתִחְרִיב

corrupt and destroy My world: if you corrupt it, there is no one to repair it after you.

את עולמי, שאם קלקלת אין מי שיטקן
אתך.

4. Shevuot 39a

The Gemara asks: **And** with regard to **all of the other transgressions in the Torah**, is punishment **not** exacted **from the entire world? But isn't it written: "And they shall stumble one upon another"** (Leviticus 26:37)? This verse is homiletically interpreted to mean that they shall stumble spiritually, **one due to the iniquity of another**, which **teaches that the entire Jewish people are considered guarantors for one another**. Apparently, any transgression makes the entire world liable to be punished.

שבועות ל"ט א

וכל עבירות שבתורה מכל העולם לא
והכתיב (ויקרא כו, לז) וכשלו איש
באחיו איש בעון אחיו מלמד שכל
ישראל ערבים זה בזה

5. Mishneh Torah, Gifts to the Poor 7:13-14

(13) A poor person who is a relative takes precedence over anyone else. The poor of one's household take precedence over the poor of one's city. The poor of one's city take precedence over the poor of another city, as it is said, (Deut. 15:11) *Open your hand to the poor and needy kinsman in your land*. A new principle becomes present here. As opposed to giving agricultural produce, which was on a strict "first-come, first-serve" basis, family and community relationships now dictate the giving of *tzedakah*.

(14) If one engages in trade [and travels between cities] and the authorities of a city exact *tzedakah* from him when he traveled through [for the needs of the city], then this [money] should be given to the poor of that city.

משנה תורה, הלכות מתנות עניים

זי"ג-י"ד

(ג) עניי עיר קודמין לעניי עירו. עניי עיר
קודמין לעניי עיר אחרת. ונאמר
(דברים טו יא) "לאחיה לעניי וילאכינה
בארצה":
(ד) מי שהלך בסחורה ופסקו עליו
אנשי העיר שהלך שם צדקה הרי זה
נותן לעניי אותה העיר.

6. Chullin 7a

חולין ז' א

It is based on the incident where **Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir was going to engage in the redemption of captives, and he encountered the Ginai River. He said to the river: Ginai, part your water for me and I will pass through you.** The river said to him: **You are going to perform the will of your Maker and I am going to perform the will of my Maker,** to flow in my path. With regard to you, it is **uncertain** whether you will **perform** His will successfully, and it is **uncertain** whether you will **not perform** His will successfully. **I will certainly perform** His will successfully. Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir said to the river: **If you do not part, I will decree upon you that water will never flow through you.** The river parted for him. There was a certain man who was carrying wheat for the preparation of *matza* for **Passover**. Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir said to the river: **Part your waters for that person too, as he is engaged in the performance of a mitzva.** The river parted for him. There was a certain Arab [*taya'a*] who was accompanying them. Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir said to the river: **Part your waters for that person too, so that he will not say: Is that what one does to a person who accompanies him?** The river parted for him.

דרכי פנחס בן יאיר הוה קאזיל לפדיון
שבויין פגע ביה בגינאי נהרא אמר ליה
גינאי חלוק לי מימך ואעבור בך אמר
ליה אתה הולך לעשות רצון קונך ואני
הולך לעשות רצון קוני אתה ספק עושה
ספק אי אתה עושה אני ודאי עושה
אמר ליה אם אי אתה חולק גוזרני עליך
שלא יעברו בך מים לעולם חלק ליה
הוה ההוא גברא דהוה דארי חיטי
לפיסחא אמר ליה חלוק ליה נמי להאי
דבמצוה עסיק חלק ליה הוה ההוא
טייעא דלווה בהדייהו אמר ליה חלוק
ליה נמי להאי דלא לימא כך עושים
לבני לוויה חלק ליה

