

Handout: **What you missed while you were talking about COVID**

Review the texts below and choose 1-2 to discuss as a group, using the prompt questions to share your perspectives. Consider whether these texts inform your personal or communal motivation for engaging in world issues.

Text 1

Maimonides famously listed eight levels of charity for Jewish social action, the first of which is below. While the levels are directed toward charity for fellow Jews, many Jews today interpret this more as a call to act for the wider world, including to assist non-Jewish beneficiaries. Tzedek's work aligns with this approach, prioritising partnership, empowerment, and capacity building for our non-Jewish partner communities overseas, while simultaneously working within the UK Jewish community as well.

"The greatest level, above which there is no greater, is to support a fellow Jew by endowing him with a gift or loan, or entering into a partnership with him, or finding employment for him, in order to strengthen his hand so that he will not need to be dependent upon others . . ."
(Laws of Charity, 10:7-14, the Mishnah)

- Do you interpret this to extend beyond the Jewish community?
- How does this inform your sense of Jewish social action?

Text 2

When discussing the monumental task of studying Torah, Rabbi Tarfon suggests that the fulfilment of this obligation is through sustained effort, rather than completion. Many Jews perceive this to be an encouraged approach to tackling any large task, including important social causes.

"It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it"
(Pirkei Avot 2:16, the Mishnah)

- In a world that is driven by crisis headlines, what does this quote mean for how we engage with complex, ongoing issues?
- How do we as individuals fit into the global response to such big challenges?

Text 3

Jews have been strangers throughout history, suffering from persecution as seen through pogroms, the Holocaust, the Inquisition, and the Jewish expulsion from Arab nations, to name only a few. For many Jews today, these shared experiences inform their commitment to supporting refugees and those fleeing oppression. This tradition goes back to Jewish texts as well, two of which are below.

"You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:20). This is later repeated as **"you know the mind of a stranger"** (Exodus 23:9)

"And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt." (Deuteronomy 10:19)

- How does Jewish history affect your personal relationship with social justice?

