

Rabbi Tarfon and some elders were reclining in an upper chamber in the house of Nitza in Lod when this question came up: Which is greater, study or action? Rabbi Tarfon spoke up and said: Action is greater. Rabbi Akiva spoke up and said: Study is greater. The others then spoke up and said: Study is greater because it leads to action. **Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 40b**

Which do you see as more important, study or action? • What does "action" mean in the text? What does action mean for you? • How do we ensure that our study leads to action?

[God] upholds the cause of the orphan and the widow, and befriends the stranger, providing him/her with food and clothing. -- You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. **Deuteronomy 10:18-19**

What are specific examples of ways we can act as God does in this text? • What does the text tell us about our responsibilities to other people? • This text reminds the reader of Israelite slavery. How is our history of slavery connected to our commitment to pursuing justice and loving the stranger?

On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father's house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for just such a crisis.

**Esther 4:14**

In this text, Mordachai speaks to Esther. To what crisis is he referring? • Does Esther remain silent? • When have you raised your voice for justice? • What resources do you have to advocate for justice?

I look forward to privilege of being present at meeting tomorrow. Likelihood exists that Negro problem will be like the weather. Everybody talks about it but nobody does anything about it. Please demand of religious leaders personal involvement not just solemn declaration. We forfeit the right to worship God as long as we continue to humiliate Negroes. Church synagogue have failed. They must repent. Ask of religious leaders to call for national repentance and personal sacrifice. Let religious leaders donate one month's salary toward fund for Negro housing and education. I propose that you Mr. President declare state of moral emergency. A Marshall plan for aid to Negroes is becoming a necessity. The hour calls for moral grandeur and spiritual audacity. **Abraham Joshua Heschel, Telegram to President John F. Kennedy, June 16, 1963**

What does it mean to have high moral grandeur and spiritual audacity? • In what ways has our society improved since this text? • Are there issues as pressing to you as this issue was to Heschel? • Heschel wrote to the President about this issue. How will you advocate for the issues that you find pressing today?

If a person of learning participates in public affairs and serves as judge or arbiter, he gives stability to the land... But if he sits in his home and says to himself, "What have the affairs of society to do with me?... Why should I trouble myself with the people's voices of protest? Let my soul dwell in peace!"—if he does this, he overthrows the world. **Midrash Tanhuma, Mishpatim 2** • In what ways do those involved in public affairs give "stability to the land"? What does it mean to "overthrow the world"?