

CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT

A Jewish Perspective on Intentional Communities

Compiled by Aharon Ariel Lavi (arilavi@gmail.com)

Community

1. God created man in his own image. In God's image he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27-28

2. The Lord God said: "It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him a helper suitable for him ... The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on the man, and he slept, and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place; He made the rib, which The Lord God had taken from the man, into a woman, and brought her to the man; The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She will be called 'woman', because she was taken out of Man".

Genesis 2:18-25

3. But Man was created a second time. He fell into his sleep as a lonely man, and waking up found Eve next to him. God wanted Man to exist in loneliness and feel it. He also wanted Man to break his loneliness, come closer to the "Thou" and share the existential experience with her ... in order to fulfill itself Man has to be alone, but at the same time he has to be a member of a community.

Rabbi Soloveitchik, 'The Community'

4. The partners who wished to create a partition (*Mechitza*) in the courtyard [shall] build [it] in the middle. A place where it is customary to build of *Gevil* (Unpolished rock), *Gazith* (Polished rock), *Keffissin* (Tiles), *Levenin* (Bricks) – they build everything according to the custom of the country.

Bava Batra 2a

5. Does the holy one, Blessed be he, cares whether someone slaughters from the neck or from the *Oref* (Decapitates)? You should say: The *Mitzvot* were only given in order to *Letzoref* (Refine/combine) the creatures.

Bereshit Raba 44

6. Where both giver and receiver are together, there is an additional influence of divine abundance and enlightenment from heaven from a very lofty place that is greater than the two qualities of giver and receiver.

The Alter Rebbe, *Torah Ohr*, 82, 4

Covenant

7. A person should put all his interest in [the community] and never say: what difference does it make for me if the houses and institutions and businesses of the *Ada* (community, public) shall flourish and prosper very much or not, as I myself do not gain from it any benefit ... for there is no greater enemy to the community and public needs as standing aside, cold spirit and envy.

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch, *Horeb*,
Ma'arechet HaMitzvot 25.

8. Rabbi Shimon Ben Elazar says: for two evil deeds do ignorant people (*Am Ha'Aretz*) die. For calling The Holy Ark "*Arna*" (A Closet), and for

calling the Synagogue *Beit Ha'Am* (Community center).

Shabbat 32a

9. The Synagogue is not a demographic location. It is not a place where Jews gather one to another and become a people. A people is an important thing, but yet it is a concept of more than demography. The synagogue is a gathering place for ideas, for Jewish history, for Jewish future. The synagogue extends far beyond its own walls. In my opinion, a Jewish community is not *Beit Ha'Am* either. The community center cannot preserve the Jewish existence; This requires a synagogue, a *Beit Midrash* (Place of learning), or a community that will function as a place through which every Jew can connect to Judaism and not just gather under roof and walls.

Rabbi Eliyahu Birrenboym, "Renewal of communities in the renewing State of Israel".

10. Once the "I" becomes aware of its responsibility for the welfare of the "Thou" there rises a new community: The community of prayer. This means a community of shared agony ... *Knesset Israel* is a community of prayer, where each individual experiences not only his own pain but the pain of endless others as well ... the magnificent tradition of charity in our nation, throughout the generations, derives from us being a praying and mutually compassionate community ... it is not enough to feel the agony of many and not enough to pray for them, if these things do not lead to benevolent action.

Rabbi Soloveitchik, 'The Community'

Intention

11. What is the content of the Sinai covenant? A special way of life directing human life to fulfill one intention lying beyond Man's, the man of fate, capabilities and this is: Resembling man to his creator through self-elevation. The productive activity filling the Intentional Covenant derives from a completely different source, from the rebellion of Man against factual life as it is and from the outstanding aspiration in him for higher and more exalted forms of existence ... In Sinai the holy One, Blessed be he, elevated the Fate Covenant, made with an assembly coercively lonely which is kind to the other out of its inevitable isolation, into an Intentional Covenant of an assembly that has aim and will.

Rabbi Soloveitchik, "In the secret of individualism and togetherness"

Mission

12. Each and every one must say: 'for me was the world created' (Sanhedrin 37a) - therefore I must see and contemplate at all times on *Tikkun Olam* (Rectifying the world) and fulfill what is missing in the world and pray for them.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, *Likutey Moharan* 5

13. Rabbi Dov Ber Schneorsson said: A *Hassid* creates and environment. And in case he doesn't, he must carefully examine his instruments, [asking] what is his personal condition. And this fact by itself, that he does not create an environment, should break his spirit like a splinter and he must ask himself: what am I doing in this world at all?

Luach HaYom-Yom, 30th Adar A