



Community Study Booklet



WELCOME

On Shavuot we celebrate receiving the Torah. Some people stay up late or even all night engaging in Jewish learning in honour of this. Like an all-night JE lesson!

This year, we can't be together as a community to learn in person so we thought we would compile a booklet of sources which you can learn independently or with your family.

We chose the theme of "Community" as this is something that is important to us at JCoSS. We asked a number of teachers and some of our Rabbis, colleagues and friends from across the UK Jewish community to contribute their favourite Jewish text or teaching on the theme of "Community" along with a question or two for you to think about or discuss in relation to the text or teaching.

These will hopefully enhance your learning experience.

Chag Shavuot sameach and happy learning!
JCoSS IJE team

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This booklet is for you to use and learn from in whatever way suits you best. The sources are organised into 4 sections and ordered in each section either chronologically or alphabetically.

Some of the sources are more straightforward than others. After each source there are questions for you to think about and / or discuss with others. We hope that this will enhance your learning experience.

We have not listed who contributed which source but there were some sources which were contributed by more than one person.

SECTION 1 – BIBLICAL SOURCES

Genesis 2:18

God said, "It is not good for Adam to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him."

- ➔ What would your life be like if you didn't have other people to help you?
- ➔ Are humans interconnected or individual?

Genesis 28:11-12

(11) He came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night, for the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of that place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. (12) He had a dream; a stairway was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and angels of God were going up and down on it.

Genesis 28:17-18

(17) Shaken, he said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven."
(18) Early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on the top of it.

בראשית כ"ח:י"א-י"ב

(יא) וַיָּפֹגַע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם כִּי־בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
וַיִּקַּח מֵאֲבָנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיִּשֶׁם מִרְאשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּשְׁכַּב
בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא: (יב) וַיַּחְלֵם וְהִנֵּה סֹלֶם מֻצָּב
אֶרֶצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מֵגִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְהַנִּהל מִלְאָכֵי
אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ:

בראשית כ"ח:י"ז-י"ח

(יז) וַיִּירָא וַיֹּאמֶר מִה־נִּזְרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֵין
זֶה כִּי אִם־בֵּית אֱלֹהִים וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם:
(יח) וַיִּשְׁכֶם יַעֲקֹב בְּבֹקֶר וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֶבֶן
אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם מִרְאשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּשֶׁם אֹתָהּ מִצְבֵּה
וַיִּצֹק שָׁמֶן עַל־רֹאשָׁהּ:

Chullin 91b

The Gemara cites another exposition of Rabbi Yitzhak to explain an apparent contradiction between two verses pertaining to this incident. **It is written: "And he took of the stones of the place,** and placed them under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep" (Genesis 28:11). **And it is written:** "And Jacob rose up early in the morning, **and he took the stone** that he had placed under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it" (Genesis 28:18). The first verse indicates that Jacob took several stones, whereas the latter verse indicates that he took only one stone. **Rabbi Yitzhak says:** This teaches that all those stones gathered to one place and each one said: Let this righteous man place his head upon me. And it was taught: **And all of them were absorbed into one large rock.**

- ➔ What changed with the stones in the story?
- ➔ What is the lesson we learn from the change of the stones?
- ➔ What lesson can we learn from the stones in terms of community and being a team?
- ➔ How did the change in the stones help in stopping the stones fighting? How did the transformation in the stones resolve the original problem of them quarrelling?

Exodus 18:14-22

(14) But when Moses' father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" (15) Moses replied to his father-in-law, "It is because the people come to me to inquire of God. (16) When they have a dispute, it comes before me, and I decide between one person and another, and I make known the laws and teachings of God." (17) But Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing you are doing is not right; (18) you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. (19) Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You represent the people before God: you bring the disputes before God, (20) and enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow. (21) You shall also seek out from among all the people capable men who fear God, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain. Set these over them as chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, (22) and let them judge the people at all times. Have them bring every major dispute to you, but let them decide every minor dispute themselves. Make it easier for yourself by letting them share the burden with you.

- ➔ What advice would you give to a leader at this time? (Your choice of what defines a leader)
- ➔ What advice has been most useful to you when you have been in a leadership position?

Exodus 35:4-21

(4) Moses said further to the whole community of Israelites: This is what the LORD has commanded: (5) Take from among you gifts to the LORD; everyone whose heart so moves him shall bring them—gifts for the LORD: gold, silver, and copper; (6) blue, purple, and crimson yarns, fine linen, and goats' hair; (7) tanned ram skins, dolphin skins, and acacia wood; (8) oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the aromatic incense; (9) lapis lazuli and other stones for setting, for the ephod and the breastpiece. (10) And let all among you who are skilled come and make all that the LORD has commanded: (11) the Tabernacle, its tent and its covering, its clasps and its planks, its bars, its posts, and its sockets; (12) the ark and its poles, the cover, and the curtain for the screen; (13) the table, and its poles and all its utensils; and the bread of display; (14) the lampstand for lighting, its furnishings and its lamps, and the oil for lighting; (15) the altar of incense and its poles; the anointing oil and the aromatic incense; and the entrance screen for the entrance of the Tabernacle; (16) the altar of burnt offering, its copper grating, its poles, and all its furnishings; the laver and its stand; (17) the hangings of the enclosure, its posts and its sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court; (18) the pegs for the Tabernacle, the pegs for the enclosure, and their cords; (19) the service vestments for officiating in the sanctuary, the sacral vestments of Aaron the priest and the vestments of his sons for priestly service. (20) So the whole community of the Israelites left Moses' presence. (21) And everyone who excelled in ability and everyone whose spirit moved him came, bringing to the LORD his offering for the work of the Tent of Meeting and for all its service and for the sacral vestments.

- ➔ How does Moshe's call to the people to build the Mishkan together help build community?

SECTION 2A – MISHNAIC SOURCES

The following sources come from a section of the Mishna called Pirkei Avot – Ethics of the Fathers. It includes various statements and advice from the Rabbis. Some of it is about how to be a mensch.

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 הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אִם אֵין אֲנִי לִי, מִי לִי.
וְכִשְׁאֲנִי לְעַצְמִי, מָה אֲנִי. וְאִם לֹא עַכְשָׁיו,
אִמָּתַי:

- ➔ How could this teaching impact us and our role in the community?
- ➔ Are there any times when it is good for us to be selfish?
- ➔ What things could wait to change and what things need to change now in our community?

Pirkei Avot 2:2

(2) Rabban Gamaliel the son of Rabbi Judah Hanasi said: excellent is the study of the Torah when combined with a worldly occupation, for toil in them both keeps sin out of one's mind; But [study of the] Torah which is not combined with a worldly occupation, in the end comes to be neglected and becomes the cause of sin. And all who labor with the community, should labor with them for the sake Heaven, for the merit of their forefathers sustains them (the community), and their (the forefather's) righteousness endures for ever; And as for you, [God in such case says] I credit you with a rich reward, as if you [yourselves] had [actually] accomplished [it all].

משנה אבות ב' ב'

(ב) רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בֶּןוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הַנָּשִׂיא
אוֹמֵר, יָפָה תַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה עִם דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ.
שִׁיגִיעַת שְׁנֵיהֶם מְשַׁכַּח עוֹן. וְכָל תּוֹרָה
שֶׁאֵין עִמָּה מְלָאכָה, סוּפָה בְטָלָה וְגוֹרֶרֶת
עוֹן. וְכָל הַעֲמָלִים עִם הַצָּבוּר, יֵהְיוּ עֲמָלִים
עִמָּהֶם לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, שְׂזוֹכוֹת אֲבוֹתֶם מְסִיעֶתָן
וְצִדְקָתָם עוֹמֶדֶת לְעַד. וְאַתֶּם, מַעֲלָה אֲנִי
עֲלֵיכֶם שְׂכָר הָרַבָּה כְּאֵלוֹ עָשִׂיתֶם:

- ➔ How does the first part of the Mishna fit with the second?
- ➔ What motivations do people have for working in the community?
- ➔ Why are we being encouraged to be selective in how we are motivated - surely anyone who does work for the community has good motivations and intentions?
- ➔ What would you most like to contribute to your community and why?

Pirkei Avot 2:4

(4) He used to say: do His will as though it were your will, so that He will do your will as though it were His. Set aside your will in the face of His will, so that he may set aside the will of others for the sake of your will. Hillel said: do not separate yourself from the community, Do not trust in yourself until the day of your death, Do not judge not your fellow man until you have reached his place. Do not say something that cannot be understood [trusting] that in the end it will be understood. Say not: 'when I shall have leisure I shall study;' perhaps you will not have leisure.

משנה אבות ב'ד'

(ד) הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, עֲשֵׂה רְצוֹנוֹ כְּרְצוֹנְךָ, כְּדִי שְׂיַעֲשֶׂה רְצוֹנְךָ כְּרְצוֹנוֹ. בָּטַל רְצוֹנְךָ מִפְּנֵי רְצוֹנוֹ, כְּדִי שְׂיִבְטַל רְצוֹן אֲחֵרִים מִפְּנֵי רְצוֹנְךָ. הִלֵּל אוֹמֵר, אַל תִּפְרֹשׁ מִן הַצִּבּוֹר, וְאַל תֵּאֱמִין בְּעַצְמְךָ עַד יוֹם מוֹתְךָ, וְאַל תִּדְּוֹן אֶת חֲבֵרְךָ עַד שֶׁתִּגִּיעַ לְמָקוֹמוֹ, וְאַל תֹּאמַר דְּבַר שְׂאִי אֶפְשָׁר לִשְׁמַע, שְׂסוּפוֹ לְהִשְׁמַע. וְאַל תֹּאמַר לְכַשְׁאֲפָנָה אֲשֶׁנָּה, שְׂמָא לֹא תִפְנֶה:

- ➔ What does this idea of not separating ourselves from the community mean to you in your live nowadays, all these years after it was written?
- ➔ Is the community here just the Jewish community or a wider one?
- ➔ Why should we stick so closely to our community?
- ➔ Who are the people in your community who support your spirituality?
- ➔ How can we constructively criticise our community to make it better? How do we express this clearly and compassionately?

SECTION 2B – TALMUDIC SOURCES

Tosefta Sotah 7:11

A person might think: 'since the Academy of Shammai declares unclean that which the Academy of Hillel declares clean, one prohibits that which the other permits, how, then, can I learn Torah?' This is way Torah repeats: "words...the words...these are the words..." All of the words have been given by a single Shepherd, one God fashioned them, one Provider gave them, Source of all deeds, blessed be God, has spoken them. So make for yourself a heart with many rooms, and bring into it the words of the Academy of Shammai and the words of the Academy of Hillel, the words of who declare unclean and those that declare clean.

Chagigah 3b

So too you, the student, make your ears like a funnel and acquire for yourself an understanding heart to hear both the statements of those who render objects ritually impure and the statements of those who render them pure; the statements of those who prohibit actions and the statements of those who permit them; the statements of those who deem items invalid and the statements of those who deem them valid. When Rabbi Yehoshua heard these interpretations, **he said to them in these words: No generation is considered orphaned, i.e. without a leader, if Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya dwells among it.**

- ➔ What does the text say about how we should handle disagreement in our communities?
- ➔ What does it mean to make for ourselves a 'heart of many rooms'?
- ➔ What does the text from Chagigah suggest is central to coping with disagreement in community?

Bava Metzia 85b

§ The Gemara continues discussing the greatness of the Sages. **Reish Lakish was demarcating burial caves of the Sages. When he arrived at the cave of Rabbi Ḥiyya, the precise location of his grave eluded him. Reish Lakish became distressed, as he was apparently unworthy of finding the grave. He said: Master of the Universe! Did I not analyze the Torah like Rabbi Ḥiyya? A Divine Voice emerged and said to him: You did analyze the Torah like him, but you did not disseminate Torah like him.** The Gemara relates: **When Rabbi Ḥanina and Rabbi Ḥiyya would debate matters of Torah, Rabbi Ḥanina would say to Rabbi Ḥiyya: Do you think you can debate with me? Heaven forbid! If the Torah were forgotten from the Jewish people, I could restore it with my powers of analysis and intellectual acumen. Rabbi Ḥiyya said to Rabbi Ḥanina: Do you think you can debate with me? You cannot compare yourself to me, as I am acting to ensure that the Torah will not be forgotten by the Jewish people.** Rabbi Ḥiyya elaborated: **What do I do to this end? I go and sow flax seeds and twine nets with the flax, and then I hunt deer and feed their meat to orphans. Next I prepare parchment from their hides and I write the five books of the Torah on them. I go to a city and teach five children the five books, one book per child, and I teach six other children the six orders of the Mishna, and I say to them: Until I return and come here, read each other the Torah and teach each other the Mishna. This is how I act to ensure that the Torah will not be forgotten by the Jewish people.**

- Why do you think this section of Talmud opens with the question of marking out graves?
- What is the difference between the style of learning and teaching of Reish Lakish, Rabbi Ḥanina and Rabbi Ḥiyya?
- What is your place in ensuring Torah is not forgotten from the Jewish people?
- Which of the rabbis mentioned in this section would you choose to lead your community and why?

סנהדרין י"ז ב

ותניא כל עיר שאין בה עשרה דברים הללו אין תלמיד חכם רשאי לדור בתוכה בית דין מכין ועונשין וקופה של צדקה נגבית בשנים ומתחלקת בשלשה ובית הכנסת ובית המרחץ וביהכ"ס רופא ואומן ולבלר (וטבח) ומלמד תינוקות משום ר' עקיבא אמרו אף מיני פירא מפני שמיני פירא מאירין את העינים:

Sanhedrin 17b

And it is taught in a *baraita*: A Torah scholar is not permitted to reside in any city that does not have these ten things: A court that has the authority to flog and punish transgressors; and a charity fund for which monies are collected by two people and distributed by three, as required by *halakha*. This leads to a requirement for another three people in the city. And a synagogue; and a bathhouse; and a public bathroom; a doctor; and a bloodletter; and a scribe [*velavlar*] to write sacred scrolls and necessary documents; and a ritual slaughterer; and a teacher of young children. With these additional requirements there are a minimum of 120 men who must be residents of the city. They said in the name of Rabbi Akiva: The city must also have varieties of fruit, because varieties of fruit illuminate the eyes.

- What do we need to build a community?
- Do different things matter more nowadays?

SECTION 3 – OTHER SOURCES

Ahad Ha'am (poet and philosopher)

"More than Jews have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews."

- ➔ How much of our communal lives revolves around Shabbat and festivals?
- ➔ What other things hold us together as a community?

Am Yisrael Chai (the people of Israel lives)
– Traditional Jewish song

- ➔ Does this text have to be specifically about Israel as a country?
- ➔ What other interpretations might people glean from reading this sentence?
- ➔ Why might it be important for people **not** to view it as solely about the country?

Blu Greenberg

"Perhaps the expanded laws of leket [fallen stalks] speak more to our generation than to any other, as the sense of global interdependence, along with the advent of the rapid-information highway, make us aware of the poor and the stranger far beyond our own "fields." Jews now have the means to be responsible for those less fortunate, even if they do not seek us out for gleanings directly, or don't ever cross our line of vision... Shavuot teaches us how to act responsibly in the wider world—to follow the Torah's instructions to lead ethical lives by extending our definition of community to include the poor, the stranger and all others in need."

- ➔ Does having easy access to information and knowledge about global issues make people act?
- ➔ What does it mean to be part of a global community?
- ➔ What do you see as your 'fields' of responsibility?

Kol Dodi Dofek, Encampment and Congregation 1-2 by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

(1) In order to explain the difference between a People of Fate and a Nation of Destiny it is appropriate to deal with a different contrast — that between an Encampment and a Congregation. The Torah used both of these concepts with respect to Israel. "Make for yourself two silver trumpets of hammered work; and they shall be to summon the *congregation* and for causing the *encampments* to set forth" (Numbers 10:2, emphasis added).

(2) Encampment and Congregation constitute two different sociological experiences, two separate groups that have nothing in common and do not support one another. An Encampment is created out of a desire for self-defense and thrives on fear. Congregation is fashioned out of longing for the realization of an exalted moral idea and thrives on love. In the Encampment, fate's rule is unlimited, whereas destiny rules the Congregation. The Encampment represents a phase in the development of the nation's history. The continued survival of a people is identified with the existence of the Congregation.

- ➔ Which communities do we exist in which are encampments? And which are congregations?
- ➔ When building communities, what can we do to ensure we build congregations rather than encampments?

Rabbi Isaiah Di Trani Ben Mali (The Elder)

The wise philosopher responded: "Who sees further a dwarf or a giant? Surely a giant for his eyes are situated at a higher level than those of the dwarf. But if the dwarf is placed on the shoulders of the giant who sees further? ... So too we are dwarfs astride the shoulders of giants. We master their wisdom and move beyond it. Due to their wisdom we grow wise and are able to say all that we say, but not because we are greater than they."

- ➔ Why is it important to stand on the shoulders of giants?
- ➔ In our day to day lives, who could be our giants?
- ➔ How can we be giants to others?

CLOSING WORDS

We hope that you have enjoyed learning part or all of this booklet either independently or with your friends and/ or family.

Hopefully, in the not too distant future we will be back together, in person, as a community.

This booklet was contributed by people from across the community and we hope that it will be a resource for plenty of learning and conversation in years to come.

