

Jewish Values

The Jewish Women's Giving Foundation of Baltimore was founded in 2003 by a forward-thinking group of women who believed in the transformative power of collective philanthropy. Since our inception, we have given through both a Jewish and gender lens and our work has honored the tradition of *tzedekah* (philanthropic giving) and *tikkun olam* (improving the world). These Jewish values and those listed below provide the foundation for our work.

<p>Acts of Loving Kindness</p>	<p>גמילות חסדים <i>Gmilut Hasadim</i></p>	<p>Our tradition teaches us that the world is founded upon three principles: Torah, Worship, and Acts of Loving Kindness. <i>Gemilut Hasadim</i> literally means 'the giving of loving-kindness' and applies to all types of charitable works. It is a mitzvah (commandment) that an individual completes <i>Gemilut Hasadim</i> without expecting anything in return.</p>
<p>And you Shall Teach your Children</p>	<p>ושננתם לבניך <i>V'shinantam L'Vanecha</i></p>	<p>This comes from the first paragraph of the <i>Sh'ma</i> and commands us to teach subsequent generations (not only your literal children) to love G-d, with all that that entails.</p>
<p>Compassion</p>	<p>רחמים <i>Rachamim</i></p>	<p>Compassion, especially for those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable. In our liturgy, <i>Rachamim</i> is often translated as mercy. We ask for G-d's mercy in a key memorial prayer, <i>El Maleh Rachamim</i>, as well as in our High Holiday prayers. The root word for <i>rachamim</i> is also the same word for womb, <i>rechem</i>.</p>
<p>Courage</p>	<p>אומץ לב <i>Ometz Lev</i></p>	<p><i>Ometz Lev</i> literally means courage of the heart. The Bible is filled with powerful examples of courage, such as Moses asking Pharaoh to let his people go or Abraham arguing with G-d to attempt to save Sodom and Gomorrah.</p>
<p>Do not be Passive in the Face of Violence</p>	<p>לא תעמוד על דם רעך <i>Lo Ta'amod Al Dam Re'echa</i></p>	<p>Literally, this phrase means do not stand idly by while your neighbor bleeds (from Leviticus 19:16). Jewish tradition is filled with examples of our obligation to help our fellow human being and to resist passivity. The Talmud goes further to indicate that this verse teaches that we are obligated to save lives.</p>
<p>Friendship</p>	<p>ידידות <i>Yedidut</i></p>	<p>Jewish tradition emphasizes the value of friendship. When we study, we always study with a partner, in <i>chavruta</i>, and the same word for your study partner is the word for friend. Judaism values friendship as a core aspect of community.</p>
<p>Honor, Respect</p>	<p>כבוד <i>K'vod</i></p>	<p>A set of values and laws designed to encourage dignity and respect for all human beings. In Hebrew, <i>Kavod</i> means honor. It is the same word used in the 10 commandments for honoring one's parents. The root of the word means to be heavy; having weight implies depth and respect.</p>

Hope	תקווה <i>Tikvah</i>	A sense of hope and optimism motivates us to continue to do our work in the face of a growing set of challenges. The word <i>Tikvah</i> shows up in later biblical books of the Prophets and Writings. <i>Tikvah</i> means hope and the famous poem HaTikvah is the Israeli national anthem.
Hospitality	הכנסת אורחים <i>Hachnasat Orchim</i>	In the <i>Torah</i> , Abraham and Sarah receive three messengers of G-d in their tent, providing them with food and water and demonstrating for generations to come the value of extending hospitality. We are taught to welcome strangers not only when it is convenient, but also when it is ill-timed.
In the Image of G-d	בצלם אלוהים <i>B'Tzelem Elohim</i>	This foundational principle of Jewish ethics comes from the book of Genesis. In the story of creation, every human being is created in the image of G-d with the potential for infinite value, dignity, equality and uniqueness and must be treated accordingly. We should not lose sight of this even in cases when we are dealing with those who perhaps seem less worthy of our compassion and understanding.
Justice and Mercy	צדק ורחמים <i>Tzedek V'Rachamim</i>	Judaism teaches that judgement or justice goes hand in hand with mercy. Jewish law calls us to integrate justice and mercy in our world. One without the other leads to chaos. The challenge in life is to find a balance between justice and mercy.
Love your Neighbor as Yourself	ואהבת לרעך כמוך <i>V'ahavta L're'acha Kamocha</i>	Rabbi Akiva argues in the Talmud that this is the most important principle in the Torah. The challenge to this pronouncement is that it assumes that you love yourself. Unlike other precepts in the Torah, this one requires a specific attitude rather than a particular action.
Peace in the Home	שלום בית <i>Shalom Bayit</i>	The need to ensure that there are peaceful relations in one's home and family. This can also be extended to one's synagogue, workplace, or community. In Genesis, G-d changes Sarah's words to protect Abraham's feelings. In the Talmud, Hillel argued against Shammai that you should tell a bride that she is beautiful even if she is not. Shalom Bayit teaches us to put the feelings and the respect of our family members highest.
Proper Behavior	דרך ארץ <i>Derech Eretz</i>	<i>Derech Eretz</i> literally means "the way of the land." There are rules and ideas within Judaism that teach and emphasize common decency and manners. <i>Derech Eretz</i> is the ethical and responsible way to live.
Redemption of Captives	פדיון שבויים <i>Pidyon Sh'vuyim</i>	The obligation to do everything in one's power to help release people who are trapped or suffering. People can be imprisoned by war, poverty, health challenges, drug abuse, sex slavery, etc.
Repairing the World	תיקון עולם <i>Tikkun Olam</i>	The Jewish commitment to perfect the world in accordance with G-d's will through our own behavior, attitude, and action. <i>Tikkun olam</i> is ultimately the beautiful idea that we – as human beings – are a critical part of the unfolding of G-d's creation and will. When we align and apply our internal spiritual clarity to how we relate and treat others and the world, we can help to affect and heal brokenness.

<p>Saving a Life</p>	<p>פקוח נפש <i>Pikuach Nefesh</i></p>	<p>The highest Jewish obligation that overrides almost every other law. The laws of Sabbath and other holidays are to be broken if necessary to save a life. The Talmud passage from Sanhedrin 37a is often quoted to remind us of this obligation: "Whoever destroys a single soul it is as though he has destroyed a complete world, and whoever preserves a single soul it is as though he has preserved an entire world."</p>
<p>Seek Peace</p>	<p>בקש שלום ורודפיהו <i>Bakesh Shalom V'Rodfehu</i></p>	<p>A series of laws and ethical teachings advocating peace, conflict resolution and prohibiting violence against the innocent. This value is reflected in this phrase from Psalm 34:14: "Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." The word <i>Rodef</i> literally means to run after it; thus, we are instructed to be active pursuers of peace and not just to request or seek it.</p>
<p>Support of Other Jewish People</p>	<p>עריבות <i>Arevut</i></p>	<p>A series of laws encouraging commitments of mutual aid and devotion among Jews. This is the core of what binds Jews to one another and is the basis of the value of Jewish peoplehood.</p>
<p>Taking Care of your Body</p>	<p>שמירת הגוף <i>Sh'mirat HaGuf</i></p>	<p>This is closely related to <i>B'tzelem Elohim</i>. The human body is sacred because we are all created by G-d.</p>
<p>Tolerance</p>	<p>סבלנות <i>Sovlanut</i></p>	<p>In modern Hebrew, this word means patience; however, in rabbinic tradition it is understood also as tolerance. Avot de Rabbai Natan said: "When a person does something wrong to you, let it be little in your eyes; when you wrong another, let it be great in your eyes." This obligation comes from the book of Genesis in the story of creation. Every human being is created in the image of G-d and we are therefore challenged to not lose sight of this even in cases when we are dealing with those who perhaps seem unworthy of our compassion.</p>
<p>Uniqueness of Every Human Being</p>	<p>אדם יחיד <i>Adam Yachid</i></p>	<p>Judaism teaches that every person is different and unique and inherently precious.</p>
<p>Visiting the Sick</p>	<p>בקר חולים <i>Bikkur Cholim</i></p>	<p>The importance of caring for and visiting those who are ill is a mitzvah or a religious commandment that falls under <i>Gemilut Chasadim</i> (acts of loving kindness). When Rav Dimi came from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia, he said: "Anyone who visits the ill causes that he will live, and anyone who does not visit the ill causes that he will die."</p>