

Some traditional Jewish texts and questions for us to think about in relation to Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue week this week at JCoSS

1. Let's start at the very beginning:

בראשית א': כ"ז

(כז) וַיְבָרֵא אֱלֹהִים | אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

Genesis 1:27
 (27) And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

➔ What can this text teach us about how we view other people in this world?

2. One of the most repeated commandments in the Torah is to “love the stranger”. This is one example:

ויקרא י"ט: ל"ג-ל"ד

(לג) וְכִי-יָגִוֵר אִתְּךָ גֵר בְּאֶרֶצְכֶם לֹא תוֹנֶנּוּ אֹתוֹ: (לד) כַּאֲזַרְחָה מִכֶּם יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הַגֵּר | הַגֵּר אִתְּכֶם וְאַהֲבַתְּ לּוֹ כְּמֹדֶךָ כִּי-גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם אֲנִי יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

Leviticus 19:33-34
 (33) When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. (34) The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the LORD am your God.

➔ How can reading this text impact how we treat others?

3. In various places in the Talmud it talks about ‘darchei shalom’, ways of peace:

גיטין ס"א א

אין ממחין ביד עניי נכרים בלקט בשכחה ובפאה מפני דרכי שלום: ת"ר מפרנסים עניי נכרים עם עניי ישראל ומבקרין חולי נכרים עם חולי ישראל וקוברין מתי נכרים עם מתי ישראל מפני דרכי שלום:

Gittin 61a
 § The mishna teaches: **One does not protest against poor gentiles** who come to take gleanings, forgotten sheaves, and the produce in the corner of the field, which is given to the poor [*pe'a*], although they are meant exclusively for the Jewish poor, **on account of the ways of peace**. Similarly, the Sages taught in a *baraita* (*Tosefta* 5:4): **One sustains poor gentiles along with poor Jews, and one visits sick gentiles along with sick Jews, and one buries dead gentiles along with dead Jews**. All this is done **on account of the ways of peace**, to foster peaceful relations between Jews and gentiles.

➔ What can we do, practically, nowadays, on account of the ways of peace to make the world a more kind and just one for all its inhabitants?