

### JCI CURRICULUM: *UNIT 1: CHAPTER 1 – CALL TO ACTION* LESSON 4: THE JEWISH VALUES MATRIX

#### LESSON 4: THE JEWISH VALUES MATRIX

**Time:** 40 minutes (can be expanded to 60+ or shortened to 30)

For a shorter lesson:

Skip step E of the main activity

Do the shorter versions of the opening and closing activities

For a longer lesson:

Do the optional extension of the introduction

Do the optional extension of the closing activity

Do the second option for step B of the main activity

#### Goals:

For students to:

- Examine the Jewish Values Matrix and become familiar with the terms
- Appreciate that the values are based in classical Jewish texts
- Apply values to contemporary public policy situations
- Rank the values according to their individual preferences

#### Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Handouts:
  - Values Matrix
  - Biblical and Rabbinic Quote sheets
  - Public Policy sheet

#### Procedure

##### 1) Framing exercise (5 mins)

In advance: Write “*My Favorite Jewish Value is...*” on the board.

As the students walk into the room, have each student add at least one value to the board. Tell them not to worry about getting the terms right, just write down whatever they can think of.

Leave this on the board throughout the lesson.

OPTIONAL:

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- A) When the whole group is convened, add to the list. Elicit as many values as your group can identify.
- B) Break the kids into 3-4 small groups to brainstorm additional Jewish values. Give a set amount of time to brainstorm, then share the lists. Allocate points to each group for any values that no other group had on their list. Candy prizes are a nice touch here.

#### 2) Main Activity (30-45 mins)

- a) Working in pairs, hand out the entire values matrix.  
OPTIONAL: cut each value into its own slip of paper.
- b) Ask the students individually to determine their “top five.” (*Record these for later use when planning a service project!*)
- c) Instruct the students to sort the values into two categories: general (applies to all humanity) or specific (applies to Jews only).?

OR:

Instruct the students to sort the values into categories, but do not define the categories for the students. Tell them they need to identify the categories themselves.

- d) Give the students the Biblical & Rabbinic Quotations sheet. Ask them to go through the list (remaining in chavruta pairs) and identify the value that supports each quotation.
- e) Have the groups share (if you have a larger class, you may wish to have two or three groups share with each other, rather than with the whole class). Debate placement of values where opinions differ.
- f) Repeat ‘D’ and ‘E’ with the Public Policy sheet.  
(Optional: Switch chavruta pairs here.)

#### 3) Conclusion (5-10 mins)

- a) Ask each student to go back and look at the “top 5” they chose at the start of class. Which policy statements are connected to their values? What action (service) flows from those values/statements?

OPTIONAL:

Have the students each choose one value/service on which to focus . Working in pairs (with the same value if possible), have the students answer the following questions regarding that value:

- What problems in the world are related to this value?
- What problems in your community (however you define community) are related to this value?
- How does this value impact your daily life?
- *What action does this value suggest – related to the problems you listed as occurring in your community?*unclear question

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- What type of service/action results from this value?
- What agencies do you know of that work on the basis of this value?

OR: Have the class pick one value and work through these questions as a group.

Handout 1

## JEWISH VALUES MATRIX

- **Adam Yachid** – אָדָם יָחִיד – a single human being – The rabbinic concept that one human being was created originally so that no one can say, ‘my father was greater than your father.’ In other words, every human being is unique and inherently precious (*Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5*).
- **Ahavat Ger** – אַהַבַּת גֵּר – love of “the stranger in your midst” – A series of laws insisting on compassionate behaviour towards strangers, empathy with foreigners, and their inclusion in every aspect of society (*Exodus 22:20; 23:9; Deuteronomy 16:14; Tractate on Strangers, Minor Tractates of Talmud*).
- **Ahavat Ha-Beriot** – אַהַבַּת הַבְּרִיּוֹת – love of all of God’s creations – A principle that encourages appreciation for the world and all of its inhabitants (*Leviticus 19:18; Avot of Rabbi Nathan 16*).
- **Anei Ircha Kodmin** = עֲנֵי עִירְךָ קֹדְמִין = “the local poor are the priority”/ The concept that your primary *tzedakah* responsibility is to those closest to you (your family, then the poor of your city, then the poor of other cities). (*Bava Metzia 71a*)
- **Arevut** – אֶרֶבּוּת – the concept that Jews have a special obligation to other Jews – A series of ideas and laws encouraging commitments of mutual aid and devotion among Jews (*Sanhedrin 27b; Shevuot 39a*).
- **Bakesh Shalom V’Rodfehu** – בִּקֵּשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְרוֹדְפֵהוּ – seek peace and pursue it – The obligation to actively reduce conflicts. A series of laws and ethical teachings advocating peace, conflict resolution methodologies, and prohibiting violence against the innocent (*Psalms 34:15; Chapter on Peace, Minor Tractates of the Talmud*).
- **Bechirah Chafshit** – בְּחִירָה חַפְּשִׁית – freedom of choice – The Jewish philosophical assumption that all human beings have the ability to freely choose actions, and are responsible for those choices (*Deuteronomy 30:19; M. Avot 3:19; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 5:4*).
- **Chesed, Rachamim** – חֶסֶד, רַחֲמִים – compassion, especially for those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable (*Zechariah 7:9; Hosea 2:21; Sabbath 151b; Bezah 32b; Sotah 14a*).
- **Chillul Ha-Shem** – חִלּוּל הַשֵּׁם – the desecration of the Divine Name – Discouragement of actions that may bring shame to the reputation of the Jewish people (*M. Avot 4:4,6; Yoma 86a; Moed Katan 17a; Berachot 19b; Yevamot 79a*).
- **Dan L’Kaf Zechut** – דַּן לְכַף זְכוּת – the presumption of innocence – We should never initially believe someone has acted wrongly, even if it may be difficult to find merit in their actions (*M. Avot 1:6*).

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- **Darchei Shalom** – דְּרָכֵי שְׁלוֹם – **ways of peace** – Talmudic rulings intent on preserving societal peace and maintaining positive inter-ethnic relations; includes directives to feed the poor of the gentiles and care for their vital needs (*M. Shevi'it 4:3; Gittin 61a*).
- **Derech Eretz** – דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ – **proper behaviour** – We must behave in a respectful, socially acceptable manner when interacting with others, including family members (*Shabbat 114a; Yoma 4b; T.B. Hullin 84a*).
- **Dina D'Malchuta Dina** – דִּינָא דְּמַלְכוּתָא דִּינָא – **The law of the land is the law** – Jewish law asserts that, so long as they do not require us to violate Jewish law, local civil laws must be followed (*T.B. Gitten 10a; Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 369:8*).
- **G'zelah** – גְּזֵלָה – **the prohibition against unlawfully seizing other people's property, particularly the poor and vulnerable** (*Exodus 20:13, Leviticus 19:13, Jeremiah 20:12; Proverbs 22:22; Job 24:9; T.B. Sanhedrin 108a*).
- **Hakarat HaTov** – הַפְּרַת הַטוֹב – **[recognition of good]; gratitude** – Much of Judaism is based upon the principle of gratitude and thanksgiving (*Comments of Rasbi on Exodus 7:19 and 10:12*).
- **Hakaim Takim Imo** – הָקִים תְּקִים עִמּוֹ – **you shall surely lift up with him** – A law designed to encourage aid to one in distress, even one's enemy (*Exodus 23:4; T.B. Baba Metzia 32a*).
- **Halbanat Panim** – הַלְּבַנַּת פָּנִים – **avoidance of humiliating someone in public** – The loss of personal dignity at the hands of others is considered one of the gravest wrongs in Judaism, akin to murder (*T.B. Moed Katan 9b; T.B. Baba Mezia 58bff.; Tractate Kallah, Minor Tractates of the Talmud*).
- **Halva'at Chen** – הַלְוֵאת חֵן – **loan of grace** – basis for the establishment of an interest-free loan society of the medieval Jewish community (*Leviticus 25:35-36; Exodus Rabbah 31*).
- **Hochai'ach Tochee'ach** – הוֹכִיחַ תּוֹכִיחַ – **you shall rebuke** – The obligation to be a social critic when you see that society or individuals are making terrible mistakes. Such criticism is viewed as an expression of care for others (*Leviticus 19:17; Genesis Rabbah 54*).
- **K'doshim Tihyu** – קְדוּשִׁים תִּהְיֶינָה – **you shall live a holy life** – Specifically, you should remove yourself from sexually provocative situations, but this principle is extended to include avoidance of inappropriate, albeit permissible, actions (*Leviticus 19:2; Leviticus Rabbah 24:6; Commentary of Nachmanides (Ramban) and Rasbi on Leviticus 19:2*).
- **K'vod Ha-B'riot** – כְּבוֹד הַבְּרִיּוֹת – **honor for all human beings** – A set of values and laws designed to encourage dignity and respect for all human beings (*M. Avot 2:10; 4:1; 4:3*).
- **K'vod Nashim** – כְּבוֹד נָשִׁים – **the honor of women** – A rabbinic value and law designed to encourage the dignity and honor of women (*T.B. Baba Metzia 59a; T.B. Yevamot 62b*).
- **Kashrut** – כִּשְׁרוּת – The specific dietary restrictions for Jews which apply to the eating of meat, fowl, fish and insects; the prohibition against mixing milk and meat together; the commandment to eat meat and fowl properly slaughtered and deveined. The stated purpose of these laws is to make the Jewish people a holy nation (*Leviticus, ch. 11; Exodus 23:19; Exodus 34; 26; Deuteronomy 14:21; T.B. Hullin, chapters 1,7 & 8; Shulchan Aruch - Yoreh Deah, Section 1*).
- **Kibbud Av va'Em** – כְּבוֹד אָב וְאֵם – **honor your father and mother** – The Biblical obligation to honor, revere, respect, and heed your parents. Only under specific conditions, when violation of other Jewish laws is at issue, may this value be overridden (*Exodus 20:12; Kiddushin 30b; Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Laws of Mamrim; chapter 6*).
- **Kupah** – קֶפֶה (תְּמַחוּי, פְּלֶאטְעוֹן) – **community fund for the needy** – It is the obligation of every Jewish community to establish a communal agency to collect resources and distribute them to the needy (*M. Avot 2:7*).

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- **Lashon Harah, Rechilut** – לָשׁוֹן הָרָע, רְכִילוֹת – **tale bearing** – *Rechilut* prohibits statements which are not true, whereas *lashon harah* expands this prohibition to include even factually truthful speech if it might possibly malign an individual or ruin a reputation. The gravity of the offence results from the fact that it is nearly impossible to retract these types of statements (*T.B. Erchin 15b; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of De'ot, chapter 7*).
- **Leket, Shichechah, Pe'ah** – לֶקֶת, שְׂכַחָה, פְּאֵה – **agricultural provisions for the poor** – A series of ancient agricultural laws designed to guarantee that a portion of agriculturally produced products were left untouched in the fields for the poor to gather (*Leviticus 19:9; 23:22*).
- **Lifnei Iver Lo Titen Michshol** – לִפְנֵי עִוֵּר לֹא תִתֵּן מִכְשׁוֹל – **do not place a stumbling block before a blind man** – Applied to the sin of keeping someone in ignorance from information that will protect him/her, or to the sin of making it easier for someone else to commit crimes (*Leviticus 19:14; Maimonides, Book of Commandments, neg. 299*).
- **Lo Ta'amod Al Dam Rei'echa** – לֹא תֵעָמֹד עַל דַּם רֵעֶךָ – **do not stand by the blood of your neighbour** – The prohibition against passivity in the face of violence to others (*Leviticus 19:16; T.B. Sanhedrin 73a*).
- **M'sirah** – מְסִרָה – [the prohibition] **against delivering fellow Jews into the hands of unsympathetic and/or unlawful non-Jewish authorities** (*Gitten 7a; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Batterers and Damagers {Chovel u'Mazik} 8:9*).
- **Ma'akeha L'Gagechah** – מִעֲקֵהָ לְגַגְךָ – **erect a railing for your roof** – The obligation to ensure that your own home does not prove dangerous and, more generally, to provide safe living conditions for others (*Deuteronomy 22:8*).
- **Ma'aser** – מַעֲשֵׂר – **tithes** – A series of taxes levied to support the Levite priests, who were originally designated as a landless tribe, and the poor, underscoring the community's obligation to provide the basic necessities of life (*Deuteronomy 26:12*).
- **Milchemet Chovah** – מִלְחֶמֶת חֻבָּה – **obligatory war** – Laws that insist on war as a last resort in order to defend oneself (*T.B. Sotah 44b*).
- **Milchemet Reshut** – מִלְחֶמֶת רְשׁוּת – **discretionary war** – Laws that allow war to be fought for purposes of expansion or increased power or property (*Mishnah Sandhedrin 1:15*).
- **Mishpat, Din** – מִשְׁפָּט, דִּין – **justice, law** – A foundational set of rabbinic assumptions about the need for good government and a just legal system (*Zechariah 8:26; M. Avot 1:18; 3:2; Deuteronomy Rabbah 5; Sanhedrin 7a, 8a*).
- **Mitzvah Haba'ah B'aveirah** – מִצְוָה הַבְּאֵה בְּעֵבְרִיהָ – **a good deed made possible from a wrongful act** – The Talmudic version of stealing from the rich to feed the poor; the resulting *mitzvah* is voided (*T.B. Sukah 30a*).
- **Ona'at D'varim** – אִוְנָאת דְּבָרִים – **verbal humiliation** – Laws aimed at preventing people from verbally abusing one another (*Leviticus 25:14; Leviticus 25:20; T.B. Baba Metzia 58b*).
- **Pidyon Sh'vuyim** – פְּדִיוֹן שְׂבוּיִים – **the redemption of captives** – The obligation to do everything in one's power to help release people who are trapped and suffering in some way (*Isaiah 58:6; 61:1; Baba Bathra 8a; Talmud Yerushalmi Gittin 4:4; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Gifts to the Poor 8:10*).
- **Pikuach Nefesh** – פְּקוּחַ נַפְשׁ – **the saving of life** – The highest Jewish obligation that overrides almost every other law (*Yoma 85b; Sanhedrin 4:5; Baba Mezia 62b*).
- **R'tsichah** – רְצִיחָה – **the prohibition against murder** (*Exodus 20:13; M. Avot 5:9*).
- **Ribit** – רִבִּית – **interest** – Prohibition against charging interest that instead, encourages interest-free loans, especially for people in need, to help enable them to get back on their feet (*Leviticus 25:35-36; Exodus Rabbah 31*).

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- **Rodef** – רודף – pursuer – The obligation to actively intervene to prevent the murder or injury of innocent victims, even to the point of killing the aggressor (*Leviticus 19:16; T.B. Sanhedrin 73a*).
- **Rov** – רוב – the majority – A foundation of the Jewish legislative and judicial system which establishes that the majority opinion is followed (*Exodus 23:12; T.B. Hullin 11a*).
- **Sameach B'Chelko** – שִׂמְחָה בְּחֵלְקוֹ – one is rich if satisfied with what he/she has in life– Underscoring that happiness stems primarily from one's attitude rather than from material and spiritual possessions (*M. Avot 4:1*).
- **Shalom Bayit** – שְׁלוֹם בַּיִת – for the sake of peace in the house – 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 (*Sanhedrin 76b; Yevamot 62b*).
- **Sheker** – שֶׁקֶר – falsehood – A set of laws and values designed to discourage falsehood, duplicity or hypocrisy (*Exodus 23:7; Leviticus 19:11*).
- **Shoftim** – שׁוֹפְטִים – Judges – The only positive *mitzvah* of the seven Noachide laws; the universal obligation to set up a system of justice. This requires any human society to guarantee equal treatment before the law for all people (*T.B. Sanhedrin 56-60*).
- **T'shuvah** – תְּשׁוּבָה – repentance – The obligation to provide individuals with the opportunity to repent for wrongful behavior. Jewish tradition provides means for a person to “cleanse his/her soul” of illicit behavior towards both God and man (*Maimonides, Laws of T'shuvah, chapters 1-10*).
- **Tza'ar Ba'alei Chayyim** – צַעַר בַּעֲלֵי-חַיִּים – the pain of living creatures – A set of laws prohibiting cruelty to animals and obligating acts of compassion and proper treatment of animals used to perform labor (*Shabbat 117b; Deuteronomy 22:9*).
- **Tzedakah** – צְדָקָה – righteousness; charity – One of the best known aspects of Jewish communal and religious life, encompassing a wide range of Biblical, Rabbinic and medieval institutions of Judaism (*T.B. Bava Batra 8b*).
- **Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof** – צְדָקָה צְדָקָה תִּרְדּוּף – justice, justice, you must pursue – The obligation to actively promote justice (*Leviticus 19:36; Deuteronomy 16:20; Zechariah 8.16-17; M. Avot 1.18*).
- **Tzelem Elohim** – צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים – image of God – The foundational principle of Jewish ethics that every human being is created in the image of God and must be treated accordingly (*Genesis 1:27; Genesis Rabbah 24*).
- **Tzniut** – צְנִיעוּת – modesty – Laws requiring people to conduct themselves, in dress and attitude, in a non-ostentatious manner, designed to limit the power of the ego (*Micah 6:8; Numbers 24:5 - see commentary of Rashi*).
- **Umot ha-Olam** – אומות העולם – other nations of the world – A set of principles recommending care and respect for gentiles, especially those who are vulnerable or in need (*Kiddushin 33a; Pesachim 113b; Berachot 17a*).
- **Ush'martem Et Nafshotaichem** – וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת נַפְשׁוֹתַיְכֶם – and you shall protect your health – The obligation to protect the general health of oneself and one's society (*Deuteronomy 4.15; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Book of Knowledge, Laws of De'ot, chapter 4*).
- **V'Shinantam L'Vanecha** – וּשְׁנַנְתָּם לְבְנֶיךָ – and you shall teach your children – The mandate to teach and transmit the Torah to one's own children, one of the most important tasks of any Jewish parent (*Deuteronomy 6:7; Maimonides - Laws of Talmud Torah*).
- **Yatom, Almanah** – יָתוֹם, אַלְמָנָה – orphan, widow – Series of laws obligating special care for orphans and widows (*Deuteronomy 24:17; Isaiah 1:17; T.B. Ketubot 50a; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Book of Knowledge, Laws of De'ot, 6:10*).