



Ayeka? Where Are You?

How you show up for your friends, family, classmates, and co-workers says a lot about who you are and the diverse roles you play in your relationships. After Adam and Eve eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis, Chapter 3) they recognized their nakedness and hid from God among the trees of the Garden of Eden. “Ayeka?” calls God to Adam. Not merely a question of location, God is asking “Where do you stand?” “Who are you and how are you showing up before me?” This is the question we must ask in all of our communities. How are we showing up? What are the many different roles we play?

This text study is designed to get us thinking about these questions and to help us answer the question “Ayeka?” with the prophetic response, “Hinei” – Here I Am.

Find a chevruta (study partner). Select from among the texts below. For the text you select, ask three questions:

1. What does the text say? (State the simple meaning of the text as written)
2. What does the text mean? (Uncover the author’s intent)
3. What does the text mean to me? (Explore how this text asks you to show up for your colleagues)

Most of life is showing up. You do the best you can, which varies from day to day.
(Regina Brett, journalist, The Cleveland Jewish News)

Rabbi Eliezar said, “Your friend’s honor should be as precious to you as your own.”
(Pirkei Avot 2:9)¹

"As human beings, our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is, that each of us has something that no one else has--or ever will have--something inside that is unique to all time. It's our job to encourage each other to discover that uniqueness and to provide ways of developing its expression."
(The World According to Mister Rogers)

Hillel says, “Do not separate yourself from the community.”
(Pirkei Avot 2:4)

“He who [is occupied with Torah] for its own sake is called beloved friend; he loves God, he loves mankind; he is a joy to God and a joy to mankind.”
(Pirke Avot 6:1)

Vulnerability is about showing up and being seen. It's tough to do that when we're terrified about what people might see or think.
(Brene Brown, research professor)

¹ Pirke Avot, “Ethics of the Fathers,” is a compilation of ethical and moral teachings and aphorisms that claim to be handed down from Moses to the Rabbis to the next generations)

[Rabbi Tarfon] used to say, "You are not expected to complete the work and yet you are not free to desist from it."

(Pirke Avot 2:16)

Shimon the Righteous...used to say, "The world is based on three principles: on the Torah, on avoda, and on gemilut chasadim."

(Pirke Avot 1:2)

Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work: you don't give up.

(Anne Lamott)

Hillel says, "Be the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving your fellow men, and drawing them near to the Torah."

(Pirkei Avot 1:12)

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.

(Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 17b)