

Appendix Aleph Session 2

BUILDING AN ACTIVIST TOOLBOX

1. Talking points from “The Story of Change”

link for video: <https://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-change/>

Quote from “The Story of Change”	Jewish frame/application
The solutions we really need are not for sale at the supermarket.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concept of <i>Bal Tashchit</i> - do no waste/only take what you need • the Golden Calf - building something shiny and bowing down to it • Shabbat and <i>Shmittah</i> - letting the systems of production take a rest, letting the land rest, challenging overconsumption and capitalism
Real change happens when citizens come together to demand rules that work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gates of Justice song on Youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUiLSBFaWpc - we as Jews get to demand justice, it’s part of our tradition - by Chana Rothman from #3songsforjustice • Daughters of Zelaphehad - challenge Moses about rules of inheritance, that females should also get inheritance
<p>Equation for social change:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BIG IDEA to make things better for everyone (not just a few people) + WE WILL WORK TOGETHER until the problem is solved + <u>ACTION</u> = REAL CHANGE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Im Tirtzu</i> - Herzl’s idea of “If you will it, it is not a dream” • Kibbutz movement in Israel • Song: Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZbjR4q5Hx4 - all the ways we can make collective change by pursuing justice - by Isaac Zones from #3songsforjustice
Making real change takes all kinds of citizens, not just protesters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moses appointed judges because he couldn’t do it all himself. • Collective change as suggested by the author’s 8 year old, Izzy - “Martin Luther King - he couldn’t make all those changes by himself!” • Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg spent a lifetime flourishing in the face of

	<p>adversity before being appointed a Supreme Court justice, where she successfully fought against gender discrimination and unified the liberal block of the court.</p>
<p>Ask yourself: What kind of change-maker am I? (Investigators, Communicators, Builders, Resisters, Nurturers, Networkers)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building the Mishkan - the portable sanctuary in the wilderness - Moses is commanded to build Mishkan, constructing communal home - V'asu li Mikdash - all people are asked to give what they were capable of giving, ie goods and skills and gifts - B'tzalel - give as your heart moves you
<p>Faith is taking the first step even though you don't see the whole staircase" - Dr Martin Luther King Jr.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lo Alecha Hamlacha Ligmor</i> from Pirke Avot - You don't have to finish the work, but you have to face it and you can't run away or ignore it • Nachshon stepped into the sea, trusting that it would part, when everyone else stood there afraid • Song: Towards Justice https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltEGwRbKAjs asking for strength to bend the arc of the universe towards justice - by Eliana Light from #3songsforjustice
<p>THIS IS BLANK FOR YOU TO FILL OUT!</p>	

2. Source: <https://nfty.org/take-action/>

Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)'s North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY)

Five A's of Social Action

NFTY is steeped in a rich history of social activism. We are commanded by our faith and urged by tradition to continuously seek to improve our world. The values of *Tikkun Olam* are some of the

fundamental pillars of our organization. The great Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stressed the extraordinary power that a group of passionate people possess; NFTY is a group of thousands of passionate young leaders. Together, with our brimming enthusiasm and staunch resolve, we can accomplish incredible things.

When embarking on a social action program, keep in mind the Five A's of Social Action:

AWARENESS

Awareness is the cornerstone of change. In order to ever change the world, you must know what's going on in it. Yet awareness goes beyond just looking at the world...awareness means understanding the world. Don't simply accept what other people tell you should be done – it is better to examine the root causes of issues and the facts surrounding them so you can draw your own conclusions. If you want answers, the best way is to question. Question everything. If I, or others, don't make sense, call us on it. Be a rebel – but have a cause. Engage in discussion. Discussion is one of the most important parts of social action, as an examination of all sides of an issue is often the only way to reach the truth.

ASSESSMENT

So you find yourself to be an expert on a particular social action issue, now what? Assessment is twofold: first look within your communities and find aspects of the issue that apply to them directly. When teens focus on fixing problems in their communities - whether through their TYG (Temple Youth Group)s, their schools, or other groups – they have the greatest potential to generate real and positive change. It is also important to assess any project after its inception to learn what changes need to be made for improvement.

ACTION

It just isn't social action without the "action." Action is what you do with your newfound awareness of an issue, and it can take any number of forms. The action component of any social action project or program should ensure some immediate change or impact. Often we think of action solely as hands-on charity work. While this is a vital component of it, action can also include doing things that create changes within NFTY and the lives and attitudes of NFTYites as well.

ALLIANCE

Once you've mastered the previous A's, alliance is a way to take any social action project to the next level by sharing your commitment to social justice with like-minded people. Partnerships between youth groups, organizations, and clubs may be difficult logistically, but the reward is an exponential increase in the power to change the world!

ADVOCACY

Advocacy is not so much the follow-through, but a vital component of social action. While direct action can address topical symptoms of an issue, advocacy is that which is designed to ensure lasting change and better target a problem's root causes. Advocacy includes lobbying the government, changing TYG/ Temple policy on an issue, or writing letters to companies and newspapers.

3. Aleinu: A Call to Divine Service

This prayer calls on us to discover where the brokenness of the world overlaps with our particular human gifts.

BY RABBI TIFERET BERENBAUM

Aleinu is a prayer recited at the end of services, as we are about to depart from sacred community. It is like a pep-rally to get us motivated and ready to go back out into the world to serve. The prayer is composed of two stanzas, which are well illustrated by the Venn diagram below.



The first stanza can be controversial, but it doesn't have to be. One of the problematic lines thanks God *she-lo assanu k'goyei ha'aratzot* — “who has not made us like the nations of the world.” This is a declaration that we stand for the mission of Judaism, which is essentially to be a “God wrestler” (one possible translation of the word Israel).

As Jews, we struggle to understand what God is and what God desires for our world. This struggle is what gives meaning to our lives. This is not to say that other religions or groups are not also God wrestlers, but Jews wrestle in a unique way. We wrestle in Hebrew, on Shabbat, on our holidays. We wrestle through Torah and our rabbis. We wrestle in a different way with the State of Israel. And we are grateful for this, because it gives us a unique place in the world and a unique worldview, not to the detriment of others.

A second controversial line reads: *She-lo sam chel'keinu ka-hem* — “who has not placed our portion like theirs.” Each and every one of us has a set of talents, experiences and blessings that are uniquely ours. Our task is to figure out how we use the tools that we are given. Aleinu allows us to connect our unique being back to the very nature of creation, as it says in the prayer’s opening line, *Aleinu le-shabei-ach la-adon ha-kol, la-tet gedulah l'yotzer bereshit*— “It is our obligation to praise the Master of it all, to ascribe greatness to the author of creation.” For all of these skills and talents that we possess, we are obligated to praise. But how?

The second stanza answers that question. All that we have to do is *le-taken olam b'malchut shaddai* — to repair the world (tikkun olam) through malchut shaddai (we’ll translate this later). Many people believe that tikkun olam is simply about fixing the world and doing good. But it is tied to a kabbalistic view of creation that imagines the creator pouring itself into the world. Along the way, the earthly vessels were unable to contain the all-ness of the divine and they shattered and spread throughout our world.

These shards can be found in all places, even places that appear at first glance to be dank and devoid of holiness. In these places, we are called on to search out those shards of the original divine vessel which held the all-ness of the One and lift up the sparks, the residue of holiness left from that original break.

So when we consider what most breaks our hearts in the world, we can think about the places where the sparks are most hidden. When we use our unique talents and blessings to effect change where we see a great need, we are truly praising God. Aleinu reminds us of our abilities, empowers us to step into difficult places and to find God there. The prayer tells us that by acting with godly purpose in those places, we are doing tikkun olam, strengthening the world to hold more divinity.

What about malchut shaddai? Most simply, it is translated as the kingdom of God. But the essence of malchut shaddai is the interconnectedness of all life. It’s the flow that exists between all things, where each element in creation both provides for and takes from the whole. So we are charged with doing tikkun olam through our unique gifts because we are given these gifts for no other reason than to do tikkun olam. We have what someone else lacks. We need what someone else can give us. We are all connected, so we owe it to the author of creation to reinvest in the system, to manifest the plan.

Aleinu concludes with a vision of sacred unity, taken from [Zecharia 14:9](#): *Bayom ha-hu yih-yeh Adonai echad u'shemo echad* — “On that day, God will be one and His name will be one.” This vision sees a world where we all come to prioritize the connections between us, to serve in a way that benefits the greater good and others even if it does not appear to immediately benefit us.

On that day, God’s name will be one. The service of all religions, all who wrestle with God, will then be complete and all will come to know that we’ve truly been serving the same purpose. We will then all be able to call God by the true name, which we will discover on that day. But to bring us to that day, we must first each discover where we are being called into service.

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