

Why Judaism Really Matters

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- The answer to “why” is “when”.
- Judaism matters because it has the potential to heal (*tikkun*) the world.
- Judaism *really* matters *when* it works for that healing:
 - Now YHVH said to Abram, “*Lech lecha* to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your enhance your reputation so that you will be a blessing. Those who bless you will be blessed, and the one who curses you will be cursed; and you shall be a blessing to all the families of the earth.” (Genesis 12:1-3)

Judaism Really Matters When

- Jews strive to be a blessing to all the families of the earth;
- Our mitzvot serve our mission to be a blessing.
- We make of Judaism not an end unto itself, but a means to an end that benefits all the world.

Judaism really matters when

- Our vision is of a fearless world without war (Micah 4:3–4) where people eat simply, drink moderately, work joyously, and love freely (Ecclesiastes 2:24; 4:8–12);
- Our mission is to be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3);
- Our texts, teachings, and traditions are filtered through Hillel’s Golden Rule: “What is hateful to you do not do to another. That is the entire Torah. Everything else is commentary. Now go study it” (Shabbat 31a); that is when they are tools for living a life of compassion.

Judaism really matters when

- Our pedagogy is *eilu v'eilu* (Eruvin 13b) and *machlochet l'shem shamayyim* (Avot 5:17): honoring argument, doubt and critical thinking in service to Hillel's Judaism of compassion.
- Our *mitzvot* are *Shabbat*, liberating all beings from *Mitzrayim*, the narrow places of enslavement, and helping them reclaim their innate divinity (Deuteronomy 5:15; Exodus 20:8-10); *kashrut*, elevating manufacturing and consuming to the highest ethical and environmental standards; *tzedakah*, the just use of money and capital; *chesed*, practicing lovingkindness; *shmirat halashon*, cleansing our speech of gossip, slander, falsehood, and distortion; *b'rachot*, expressing gratitude for life's gifts and wonders; *limmud*, studying our ancient texts in search of timeless wisdom; and *tefillah*, exploring the nature of self and other to reveal *Ehyeh*, the singular divine *I* manifesting all existence.

Judaism really matters when

- Our values are the Thirteen Attributes of Compassion (Exodus 34:6-7):
 - 1) Seeing God as Self;
 - 2) Seeing God as Other;
 - 3) Creativity; 4) Compassion; 5) Grace; 6) Patience; 7) Kindness; 8) Honesty;
 - 9) Remembering kindness rather than nursing grudges;
 - 10) Forgiving deliberate harm; 11) inadvertent harm; 12) accidental harm; and
 - 13) Cleansing oneself of ignorance, delusion, and addictive desire.

Judaism really matters when

- We strive to be not just good Jews, but *Lamed Vavniks*.
- Rabbi Abaye taught: There are always 36 (*lamed-vav*) people attune to *Shekhinah* (the Presence of God in, with, and as all reality) and being a blessing to all the families of the earth (Sanhedrin 97b).
- Thirty-Six Lessons for becoming a Lamed-Vav.