

Last week we observed the 50<sup>th</sup> *yarzheit* of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, and this weekend, we will celebrate and consider the meaning and the legacy of Rabbi Heschel's dear friend, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Together, Rabbi Heschel and Dr. King were passionate advocates for equality, dignity, and freedom. It seems appropriate, then, that this Shabbat we begin reading the book of Shemot, Exodus. This second book of the Torah tells the foundational story of our people; the Israelites' journey from oppression to freedom. And this week, as we reflect on the legacy of Dr. King, I am thinking about an essential Jewish value found in Exodus chapter 12. After commanding us to retell the story of leaving Egypt each year at the Passover Seder, the section ends with a powerful statement about equality under law. Exodus 12:49 states: "there shall be one law for the citizen and for the stranger who dwells among you." In our Humash commentary, Rabbi Harold Kushner writes about this verse: "this may be taken as a major statement of the innate worth of all human beings and their right to equal treatment under the law."

This demand for equality is of course one of the great legacies of Martin Luther King. He expressed this idea many times but perhaps most famously when he wrote: "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." And then again when he said: "every human life is a reflection of divinity, and... every act of injustice mars and defaces the image of God in man."

King's work, and the work of fulfilling this verse from Torah, is still in process. There are many in our community, our country, and our world who are still not treated equally, and even more, those who are in need of our support and help. Beginning the book of Exodus on Martin Luther King weekend challenges us to think about what we can do to make sure that our society lives up to our ideals and our values. But even more, our thoughts must then lead to action. As a TBS community that is exactly what we will do as we look forward to our TBS Mitzvah Day this Sunday from 10am-1pm. A special thank you to our Social Action Chair, **Naomi Mirowitz**, and to our Mitzvah Day Chair, **Jeannie Teller**, for their tireless effort putting together a day of service that will bring hundreds in our TBS community together to work hand-in-hand on dozens of projects and initiatives that will bring support, dignity, and love to many throughout our South Jersey community. I hope you will join us.

On March 7, 1965, Rabbi Heschel joined Dr. King on his famous march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. They walked together arm in arm. Later, reflecting on the experience, Rabbi Heschel wrote: "Even without words, our march was worship. I felt my legs were praying... I felt a sense of the Holy in what I was doing." *As we come together for Mitzvah Day, may we too experience a sense of holiness as we pray together through deed and as we realize that we are indeed "caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."*

Shabbat Shalom.