



Torah of Activism: Taking Judaism Beyond the Sanctuary and Into the World

Bradley Artson

*This source sheet was prepared for **A Day of Learning for Our Hostages** on September 30, 2024, a day of learning together as a community to honor the shloshim of the six hostages murdered in August, show solidarity with the hostages still in captivity, and call on the Israeli government and the international community to prioritize their return.*

Rabbi Dr. Bradley Shavit Artson holds the Abner and Roslyn Goldstine Dean's Chair of the [Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies](#) and is Vice President of American Jewish University. Rabbi Artson has long been a passionate advocate for social justice, human dignity, diversity and inclusion. He wrote a book on Jewish teachings on war, peace and nuclear annihilation in the late 80s, became a leading voice advocating for LGBTQ+ marriage and ordination in the 90s, and has published and spoken widely on environmental ethics, special needs inclusion, racial and economic justice, cultural and religious dialogue and cooperation, and working for a just and secure peace for Israel and the Middle East. A member of the Philosophy Department, he is particularly interested in theology, ethics, and the integration of science and religion. He mentors Camp Ramah in California in Ojai and Ramah of Northern California in the Bay Area. He is also dean of the Zacharias Frankel College in Potsdam, Germany, ordaining Conservative rabbis for Europe. A frequent contributor for the Huffington Post and for the Times of Israel, and a public figure Facebook page with over 53,000 likes, he is the author of 12 books and over 250 articles, most recently *Renewing the Process of Creation: A Jewish Integration of Science and Spirit*.

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Shalom Hartman Institute of North America
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1450
New York, NY 10115
212-268-0300
info@shalomhartman.org | www.shalomhartman.org



1. Deuteronomy 22:3

לא תוכל להתעלם

You must not remain indifferent.

2. Deuteronomy 10: 12 - 19

וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה יי אֱלֹהֶיךָ שְׂאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ כִּי אִם-לִירְאָה אֶת-יי אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְלַכֵּת בְּכָל-דְּרָכָיו וְלֹא-אֲהַבָּה אֹתוֹ וְלִעֲבֹד אֶת-יי אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ: "לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת-מִצְוֹת יי וְאֶת-חֻקֹּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מֵצִוְךָ הַיּוֹם לְטוֹב לָךְ: " הֵן ליי אֱלֹהֶיךָ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְשְׁמֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם הָאָרֶץ וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-בָּהּ: ¹³ רַק בְּאַבְתְּיֶיךָ חֶשֶׁק יי לֹא-אֲהַבָּה אוֹתָם וַיִּבְחַר בְּזֶרְעָם אַחֲרֵיהֶם בְּכֵם מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים כִּי-זֶה: ¹⁴ וּמַלְּתֶם אֶת עַרְלֹת לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַרְפְּכֶם לֹא תִקְשׁוּ עוֹד: " כִּי יי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֲדֹנֵי הָאֲדֹנִים הָאֵל הַגָּדֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִשָּׂא פָנִים וְלֹא יִקַּח שֹׁחַד: ¹⁵ עֲשֵׂה מִשְׁפָּט יְתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה וְאֲהַב גֵּר לְתַת לוֹ לֶחֶם וְשִׁמְלָה: ¹⁶ וְאַהֲבַתֶּם אֶת-הַגֵּר כִּי-גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

And now, Israel, what does ADONAI your God require of you, but to fear ADONAI your God, to walk in all God's ways, and to love God, and to serve ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ To keep the commandments of ADONAI, and God's statutes, which I command you this day for your good? ¹⁴ Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is ADONAI'S your God, the earth also, with all that is in it. ¹⁵ Only ADONAI took delight in your ancestors to love them, and God chose their seed after them, you above all people, as it is this day. ¹⁶ Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. ¹⁷ For ADONAI your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, mighty and awesome, which favors no person, nor takes bribes; ¹⁸ God executes the judgment of the orphan and widow, and loves the stranger, giving them food and garment. ¹⁹ Love you therefore the stranger; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.



3. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 98a

רבי יהושע בן לוי אשכח לאליהו, דהוי קיימי אפיתחא דמערתא דרבי שמעון בן יוחאי,
 אמר ליה: אתינא לעלמא דאתי? אמר ליה: אם ירצה אדון הזה. אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי:
 שנים ראיתי וקול שלשה שמעתי. אמר ליה: אימת אתי משיח? אמר ליה: זיל שייליה
 לדידיה. והיכא יתיב? אפיתחא דרומי. ומאי סימניה? יתיב ביני עניי סובלי חלאים, וכולן
 שרו ואסירי בחד זימנא, איהו שרי חד ואסיר חד. אמר: דילמא מבעינא, דלא איעכב. אזל
 לגביה, אמר ליה: שלום עליך רבי ומודי! אמר ליה שלום עליך בר ליואי. אמר ליה: לאימת
 אתי מד? אמר ליה: היום. אתא לגבי אליהו. אמר ליה: מאי אמר לך? אמר ליה: שלום עליך
 בר ליואי. אמר ליה: אבטחך לך ולאבוך לעלמא דאתי. אמר ליה: שקודי קא שקד בי,
 דאמר לי היום אתינא, ולא אתא! אמר ליה: הכי אמר לך (תהלים צ"ה) היום אם בקלו
 תשמעו.

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi met Elijah standing by the entrance of Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai's tomb. He asked Elijah: 'Have I a portion in the world to come?' Elijah replied, 'If the Master desires it.' Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said, 'I saw two, but heard the voice of a third.' He then asked him, 'When will the messiah come?' 'Go and ask the messiah directly,' was his reply. 'Where is the messiah sitting?' 'At the entrance.' "By what sign may I recognize the messiah?" 'Sitting among the poor lepers: all of them untie all at once, and re-bandage them together, whereas the messiah unties and rebandages each separately, [before treating the next], thinking, should I be wanted, I must not be delayed.' So Rabbi Joshua ben Levi went to the Messiah and offered greeting, saying, 'Peace to you, Master and Teacher.' 'Peace to you, son of Levi,' the Messiah replied. 'When will you arrive, Master?' asked the Rabbi, 'Today', was the answer. On returning to Elijah, the prophet asked, 'What did the messiah say to you?' 'Peace to you, son of Levi,' the Rabbi answered. Thereupon Elijah observed, 'The messiah thereby assured you and your parents of the world to come.' 'The messiah spoke falsely to me,' Rabbi Joshua rejoined, 'stating that the arrival would be today, but it has not.' Elijah answered him, 'This is what the messiah said to you, *Today, if you will heed my voice (Psalm 95:7).*