



Freedom

EXPLORING FREEDOM IN CONFINED TIMES

SOURCE SHEET BY MOLLIE ANDRON & ZACH TRUBOFF

1 *Pirkei Avot 6:2*

And it says (Exodus 32:16): "And the tablets are the work of God, and the writing is God's writing, engraved on the tablets"; read not "engraved" (*charut*) but "liberty" (*chairut*)---for there is no free individual, except for he who occupies himself with the study of Torah.

- ? The word Torah means to guide or to teach. How does guiding or teaching help you feel free?
- ? Can you think of a time when you felt free by serving others?

2 *Babylonian Talmud, Bercahot 5b*

A prisoner cannot free themselves from imprisonment (and depends on others to release him from his shackles).

- ? How have you relied on others to help you gain/maintain your freedom?
- ? Who in your own life may be a prisoner right now and in need of help?
- ? When is it morally responsible to limit someone's freedom? Who has the right to do so?

3 *Audre Lorde, From Homophobia & Education*

(New York: Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1983)

I cannot afford the luxury of fighting one form of oppression only. I cannot afford to believe that freedom from intolerance is the right of only one particular group. And I cannot afford to choose between the fronts upon which I must battle these forces of discrimination, wherever they appear to destroy me. And when they appear to destroy me, it will not be long before they appear to destroy you.

- ? When is a time that you have felt that your freedom was linked with others?
- ? Why do you think some people find it difficult to recognize the oppression of others?

4 **Rabbi Ephraim Oshry, Responsa From the Holocaust**

Question: We Jews of the ghetto of Kovno in Lithuania were enslaved by the Germans; were worked to the bone night and day without rest; were starved and were paid nothing. The German enemy decreed our total annihilation. We were completely dispensable. Most would die.

One morning during prayer, Reb Avraham Yosef, who was leading the congregation in the morning service, reached the blessing, “Blessed are you God who has not made me a slave,” and shouted bitterly to the Master of masters, “How can I recite the blessing thanking God for making me a free man? How can a hungry slave constantly abused and demeaned, praise his Creator by uttering “Who has not made me a slave?”

Response: One of the earliest commentators on the prayers point out that this blessing was not formulated in order to praise G-d for our physical liberty but rather for our spiritual liberty. I therefore ruled that we might not skip or alter this blessing under and circumstances. On the contrary, despite our physical captivity, we were more obligated than ever to recite the blessing to show our enemies that as a people we were spiritually free.

- ? In your opinion, what does it mean to be spiritually free?
- ? Can you think of a time when you were not physically free but felt spiritually free?

5 **Adrienne Rich, A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far**

Freedom. It isn't once, to walk out
under the Milky Way, feeling the rivers
of light, the fields of dark—
freedom is daily, prose-bound, routine
remembering. Putting together, inch by inch
the starry worlds. From all the lost collections.

- ? How are you experiencing freedom right now in your daily life?