

When our dynamic world is in flux, it is easy to allow challenges to overwhelm us, causing us to turn away from finding solutions. Starting to understand who you feel responsible for, is the first part to finding a solution.

A universe of obligation are the individuals and/or groups for whom you feel responsible and whose rights you want to protect by acting in their favor.

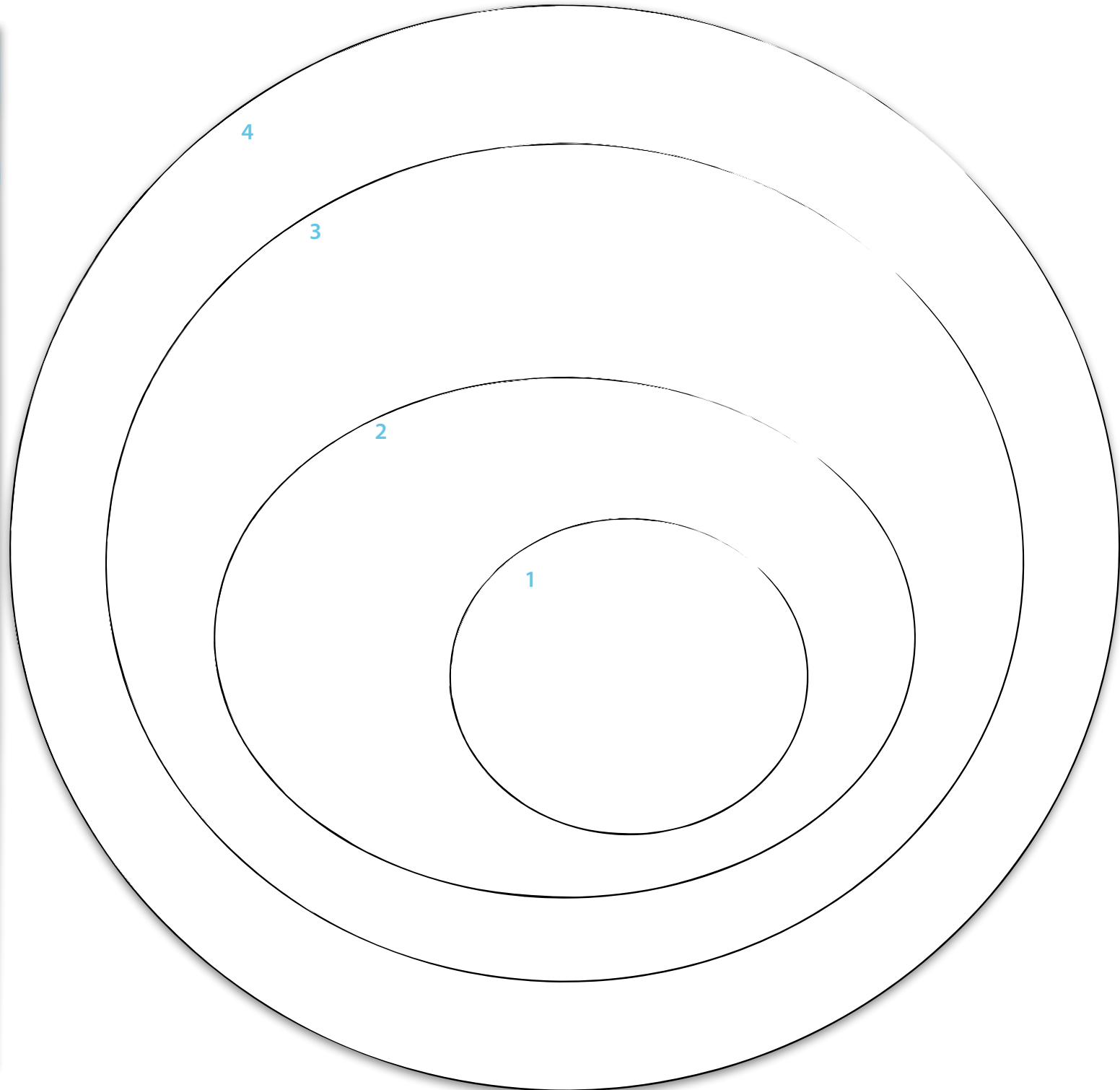
We each have our own circle of responsibility. One person's circle may be incredibly wide, while another person's may be much smaller.

So let's map out our circles to see who is within our locus of responsibility.

Once you have completed filling in your chart take a look at the two texts below to see how the rabbinic imagination grapples with the question around the universe of obligation.

### Instructions

- On each concentric circle, write the names of people that you feel responsible .
- The innermost circle should include those people or groups of people for whom you feel a strong responsibility.



### Reflect:

- ? How did it feel to write down who and what you are responsible for?
- ? Are you surprised by your starting point?
- ? How do you show responsibility for the people that you wrote in the circles?
- ? How does your behavior differ from the people in the innermost circle to the people on the outermost?
- ? When is a time that your starting point was different from someone else's and what kind of tension did this create?

1

#### **Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 71a**

R. Yosef expounded on the verse: "If you lend money to any of my people that are poor with you..." (Exodus 22:24): [This teaches, that if the choice lies between] a Jew and a non-Jew, the Jew has preference; the poor or the rich the poor takes precedence; your poor [i.e. your relatives] and the [general] poor of your town, your poor come first; the poor of your city and the poor of another town the poor of your own town have prior rights.

דתני רב יוסף אם כסף תלוה את עמי את העני עמך (שמות כב:כד)  
עמי ונכרי עמי קודם עני ועשיר עני קודם ענייך ועניי עירך ענייך  
קודמין עניי עירך ועניי עיר אחרת עניי עירך קודמין.

2

#### **Babylonian Talmud Gittin 61a**

Our Rabbis taught: We sustain the non-Jewish poor with the Jewish poor, visit the non-Jewish sick with the Jewish sick, and bury the non-Jewish dead with the Jewish dead, for the sake of peace.

ת"ר מפרנסים עניי נכרים עם עניי ישראל ומבקרין חולי נכרים עם  
חולי ישראל וקוברין מתי נכרים עם מתי ישראל מפני דרכי שלום.

- ? How does each text define or shape the universe of obligation?
- ? In the second text, what might "for the sake of peace" mean?
- ? How can the two texts be reconciled if at all?