



SECTION 7

Hindu Resources for the Children's Sabbath

The following resources are offered to support Hindu participation in the Children's Sabbaths weekend and movement:

- Hindu Perspective
- Reflection
- Children's Activities

Please utilize these resources as appropriate for your community as you continue your work to nurture and protect all children.

Hindu Perspective on the 2009 Children's Sabbaths Theme: Compassion (dayaa), Charity (daan), and Service (sevaa)

Prepared by Dr. Vidya Bhushan Gupta

The goal of the multi-faith National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® weekend this year is to make our congregations aware of the plight of children in the United States living in poverty and without health insurance. A nation's children, rich or poor, are its most precious possession and its hopes and aspirations. The most important oblation in a Hindu religious service is offered to God *prajapati*, protector of progeny, to pray for healthy children who are givers of joy. [Rig-Veda X, 41–42] Making this wish for everyone in the society, the mantra uses first person plural “us” instead of first person singular “me.” Let us offer this oblation to almighty God *prajapati* on this weekend for all our children, those who are born in riches and those who are born in poverty, that every one of them may have all the opportunities to achieve the potential that God has endowed them with. Let us affirm our commitment to those who are born in poverty by vowing that we will contribute to their welfare in whatever way we can (*yatha-sambhav*), either in cash by donating money for the schools, orphanages, and other programs that serve them or in kind through advocacy to create opportunities for them to get a better education and health care, and to help their families move out of poverty.

Salvation or God realization in Hinduism depends upon performance of good deeds (*karma*), altruistic, for the benefit of the world at large (*shrauta karma*), and egoistic, for the well-being of oneself and one's family (*smaarta karma*). Deeds done for the poor and not-so-fortunate can be considered both *shrauta* and *smaarta*, depending upon the philosophical perspective (*darshan*) from which we conceptualize God and His children as a universal spirit pervading everything in this world (*Isha vasya idam sarvum, yat kinchit jagatyam jagat*) (*Ishwar sarva butanaam hrideshu tishatathi Arjuna*), a universal ocean in which we exist temporarily as waves, part and yet separate for a finite time (monism), or as a divine father or mother of every one of us (*sarveshaam amritsya putrah*). Each of these concepts unites us in a way that helping one another in times of difficulty is not an act of sympathy, empathy, or altruism, but an act of self-help and preservation, because

in essence we are the same. Therefore, to a Hindu the act of helping the poor is not an act of pity but a sacred duty.

At the ethical level, Rig-Veda reminds us that, “It is expected of every rich man to satisfy the poor implorer. Let the rich have foresight that the rich of today may not remain rich tomorrow because remember that riches revolve from person to person like the spokes of a wheel.” The same hymn warns us that the riches of one who gives liberally do not waste away while the one who does not give does not find anyone to console him. A person who has ample food in his store and hardens his heart against the needy person who comes in a miserable shape begging for bread to eat, will find no one to console him. It declares that bounteous is he who gives food to the needy and helps a person in need, to him there is ample recompense, and success awaits him in battle because he makes a friend of him in future troubles. [Rig-Veda X 117] In Hindu codes of ethics (*dharm*a), service (*seva*) and compassion (*daya*) are considered cardinal virtues. Satya Sai Baba, a Hindu monk, calls the service of the poor or *dridra narayana* the highest form of spiritual practice. Swamii Dayananda, a social reformer, made the welfare of everyone in the society an article of faith of his organization.

So, I urge all Hindus to reflect upon their duty to the poor and unfortunate in the society and do whatever they can to help them. In the future of our children lies the future of humankind. Service and love make us dear to the lord, as Krishna says in Gita, “The One who is not envious (*advesta sarva-bhutanam*) but who is a kind friend to all living beings (*maitrah karuna eva ca*), who does not think himself a proprietor (*nirmamo*), who is free from false ego (*nirahankarah*) and...whose mind and intelligence are in agreement with Me (*mayy arpita-mano-buddhir*), he is very dear to Me (*yo mad-bhaktah sa me priyah*).”

The following resources can be used to engage children and adults in your temple in the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* celebration. This year's activities should focus on children who are poor, lack health insurance, and are incarcerated or at risk of incarceration in their lifetime.

Reflections

Compassion (*dayaa*)

Daya dharma kaa mool hai, paap mool abhimaan

Compassion is the root of religion while arrogance is a sin.

Bada hua to kyaa hua jese ped khajoor, punchhi ko chaayaa nahin phal laage ati dur.

What is the idea of being tall like a date palm tree which does not give shelter to the birds and carries fruit too high to be accessible?

Bhunjate te twagham paapaah ye pachanty aatmakaarnaat

Those sinful ones who cook food only for their own verily eat sin. (Gita 3-13)

Piniyaadinna adha maanaay tavyaan draaghiyaasam anu pasyeta panthaam

O hi vartante rathyeva chakranyam-anyam upa tish thant raayah

It is expected of every rich man to satisfy the poor implorer, let the rich have foresight (for the rich of today may not remain rich tomorrow). Remember that riches revolve from person to person like the spokes of a wheel. (Rig-Veda X.117.5)

Charity (*daana*)

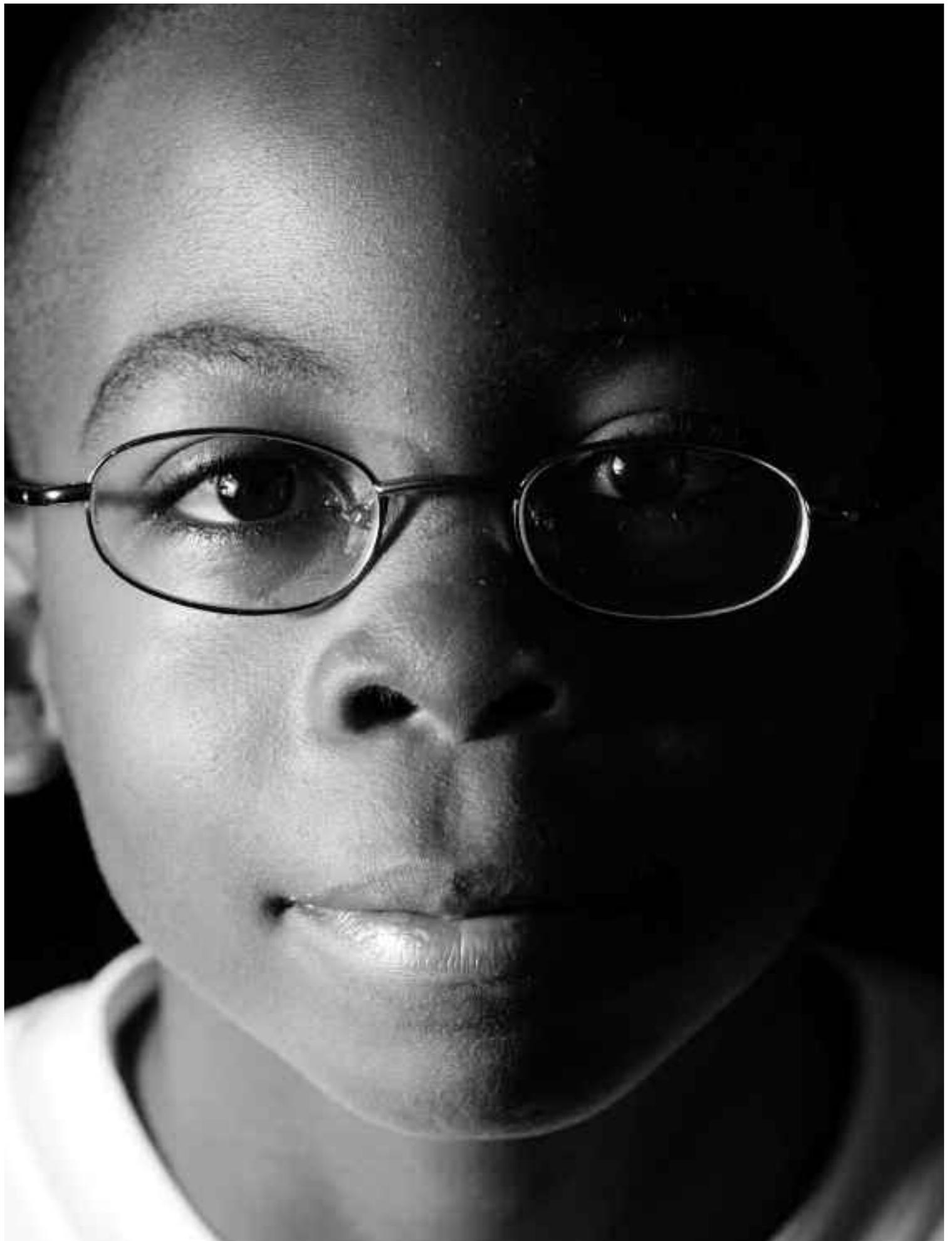
Charity is considered to be a cardinal duty of a Hindu. A Hindu is supposed to perform an *athithi* and *balivaisvadeva* sacrifice every day. The former consists of feeding a guest or a poor person and the latter feeding and taking care of livestock. Special occasions have been earmarked for charity, such as birth and marriage of a child, death of the parents, eclipses, and two seasons of *sraavana* (July–August) and *maarghshira* (November–December) both these times nature is vibrant and crops are ready. *Daana* can be given as food (*anna*), knowledge (*vidya*), land (*bhu*) for temples, clothes (*vastra*), ornaments (*svarna*), grains (*dhaanya*) and water (*jala*). Charitable acts should be done without any ulterior motive such as fame or for return of a favor.

Considerateness (from chapter 58 of Tirukkural by Tiruvalluvar translated by V.V.S. Aiyar)

574 – What is the use of eyes that merely show in the face, if they show not consideration for others according to their measure?

576 – Behold the men who have eyes, but which show not consideration towards others; verily they are no better than trees fixed in the earth.

577 – Verily they are blind, those who show not consideration towards others: and there are none that truly see but are indulgent to others' faults.



Children's Activities

Activities for Preschoolers

Offering to Help Someone

(Source: Boys' Town of America workbook)

1. Notice when someone is having a bad time.
2. Look at the person.
3. Ask if you can help.
Reason: Others will offer to help you when you are in trouble.

Sharing Things with Others

(Source: Boys' Town of America workbook)

1. Don't get upset if you are asked to share.
2. Let the other person use the item first.
3. Ask if you can use it later.
4. When you get to use it, offer it back to the other person after you have used it.
5. Take turns and play fair.
6. If a person thanks you, say, "You're welcome."

Reason: People are more likely to share something that they have with you and you will be seen as a nice person.

Practice: Ask children to write or tell about a time when they shared something with others.

Role play: Your teacher asks you to share a book, grandma asks you to share your bed, mom asks you to share a Nintendo game or TV remote control.

Showing That You Care

(Source: Boys' Town of America workbook)

1. Look at the person.
2. Say something nice.
3. Help the person if you can.

Story: The Power of Friendship (Panch Tantra)

Long ago, people in Asia used to say that an elephant and a dog cannot be friends. Elephants simply did not like dogs, and dogs were afraid of elephants. When dogs are frightened by those who are bigger than they are, they often bark very loudly to cover up their fear. When dogs barked at the elephants, the elephants got annoyed and chased them. Elephants had no patience at all when it came to dogs. Even if a dog were quiet and still, any nearby elephant would automatically attack him. This is why

everybody agreed that elephants and dogs were "natural enemies," just like lions and tigers, or cats and mice.

Once upon a time, there was a royal bull elephant who was very well fed and cared for. In the neighborhood of the elephant shed, there was a scrawny, poorly fed, stray dog. He was attracted by the smell of the rich sweet rice being fed to the royal elephant. So he began sneaking into the shed and eating the wonderful rice that fell from the elephant's mouth. He liked it so much, that soon he would eat nowhere else. While enjoying his food, the big mighty elephant did not notice the tiny shy stray dog. By eating such rich food, the once underfed dog gradually got bigger and stronger, and became very handsome looking. The good-natured elephant began to notice him. Since the dog had gotten used to being around the elephant, he had lost his fear. So he did not bark at him. Because he was not annoyed by the friendly dog, the elephant gradually got used to him. Slowly they became friendlier and friendlier with each other. Before long, neither would eat without the other, and they enjoyed spending their time together.

When they played, the dog would grab the elephant's heavy trunk, and the elephant would swing him forward and backward, from side to side, up and down, and even in circles! So it was that they became "best friends," and wanted never to be separated.

Then one day a man from a remote village, who was visiting the city, passed by the elephant shed. He saw the frisky dog, who had become strong and beautiful. He bought him from the mahout, even though he didn't really own him. He took him back to his home village, without anyone knowing where that was. Of course, the royal bull elephant became very sad, since he missed his best friend, the dog. He became so sad that he didn't want to do anything, not even eat or drink or bathe. So the mahout had to report this to the king, although he said nothing about selling the friendly dog. It just so happened that the king had an intelligent minister who was known for his understanding of animals. So he told him to go and find out the reason for the elephant's condition.

The wise minister went to the elephant shed. He saw at once that the royal bull elephant was very sad. He thought, "This once happy elephant does not appear to be sick in any way. But I have seen this condition before, in

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men and animals alike. This elephant is grief-stricken, probably due to the loss of a very dear friend." Then he said to the guards and attendants, "I find no sickness. He seems to be grief-stricken due to the loss of a friend. Do you know if this elephant had a very close friendship with anyone?"

They told him how the royal elephant and the stray dog were best friends. "What happened to this stray dog?" asked the minister. "He was taken by an unknown man," they replied, "and we do not know where he is now." The minister returned to the king and said, "Your majesty, I am happy to say your elephant is not sick. As strange as it may sound, he became best friends with a stray dog! Since the dog has been taken away, the elephant is grief-stricken and does not feel like eating or drinking or bathing. This is my opinion."

The king said, "Friendship is one of life's most wonderful things. My minister, how can we bring back my elephant's friend and make him happy again?" "My lord," replied the minister, "I suggest you make an official announcement, that whoever has the dog who used to live at the royal elephant shed, will be fined." This was done, and when the

villager heard of it, he released the dog from his house. He was filled with great happiness and ran as fast as he could, straight back to his best friend, the royal bull elephant. The elephant was so overjoyed, that he picked up his friend with his trunk and sat him on top of his head. The happy dog wagged his tail, while the elephant's eyes sparkled with delight. They both lived happily ever after. Meanwhile, the king was very pleased by his elephant's full recovery. He was amazed that his minister seemed to be able to read the mind of an elephant. So he rewarded him appropriately.

Moral: Even "natural enemies" can become "best friends."

Activities for Elementary School Students

Values Game

(From Vedic heritage teaching program – children's workbook, part 1, Sunita and Sunder Ramaswami, Sri Gangadhareshwar Trust, Rishikesh, India)

Match the words in column A that disrobe Rama with their opposites in column B.

Column A

1. Helpful
2. Humble
3. Loving
4. Peaceful
5. Kind
6. Cheerful
7. Clean
8. Gentle
9. Wise
10. Compassionate

Column B

- grouchy
- hateful
- rough
- restless
- dirty
- untruthful
- cruel
- proud
- unhelping
- selfish

What Could We Do to Act on These Values?

For example, we could collect food and used clothing for those who are poor. What else could we do?

Story: Krishna and Sudaamaa

Krishna and Sudaamaa studied in the same class at the school of Sandeepun Rishi. Although Krishna was the son of a village chief and Sudaamaa was the son of a poor priest, they became good friends. Krishna learned about weapons to become a warrior while Sudaamaa learned about religion to become a priest. After graduation they went to their homes and they lost track of each other.

After many years Krishna became the king of Dwarka while Sudaamaa became a village priest. Krishna lived in a big palace with his wife, but Sudaamaa lived in a hut with his wife and son. Sudaamaa was poor and he could not afford to buy good food or clothes for his family. One day his wife said, "You always bragged about your classmate and friend Krishna. I have heard that he has become the king of Dwarka. Why don't you go to him to ask for a job that will pay enough money for us to eat and live better?"

Sudaamaa said, "I wonder if Krishna will remember me. He is now a famous king and I am a poor priest."

"Don't be embarrassed by poverty," his wife said. "If he is as good as you say he is, he will remember you and treat you well."

Sudaamaa agreed and got ready to go. When he was about to leave his wife gave him a bag of puffed rice to give to Krishna as a gift. "One does not go empty handed to a friend's house, but I have nothing better to give" she said.

When Sudaamaa reached the palace of Krishna, the guards stopped him at the gate. When he told them to tell Krishna that his old friend Sudaamaa has come to see him, they laughed at him, "How can you, a poor priest, be friend of the great king Krishna? Go away before we arrest you."

When Krishna heard about the noise at the palace gate, he sent a servant to ask what was going on. When the servant told Krishna that a poor priest, Sudaamaa, was claiming to be his childhood friend from the school of Rishi Sandeepun, he came down and greeted Sudaamaa.

"Never treat any guest, rich or poor, badly," he scolded the guards for mistreating Sudaamaa.

Krishna took Sudaamaa to his living room where his wife offered him water and towel to wash his face and hands. Then she brought fruits, snack and milk for him. After

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Sudaama had finished eating and the two friends were talking about the old times, Krishna noticed that Sudaama was trying to hide a brown bag from him. He asked Sudaama what was in the bag. Sudaama offered the bag to Krishna hesitatingly, "Your bhabhi has sent this small gift for you."

Krishna took the bag and opened it to find puffed rice in it. He happily ate them and thanked his friend commenting that they were delicious, "Thank my bhabhi for such a delicious treat."

"Brother, it does not matter what gift you brought, what matters is that you brought it with love," he said.

Krishna showed him the palace and introduced him to his ministers. Seven days passed but Sudaama felt too embarrassed to ask Krishna for help. He bid Krishna farewell and left for his village. He was worried and sad on the way because he did not ask Krishna for a job or help and was as poor as before. When he reached his village he was surprised to see a big mansion where his hut used to be. He cautiously knocked at the door. He was overjoyed to see his wife, surrounded by his children open the door for him. They were all dressed in new clothes. Seeing him so surprised his wife told him that his friend Krishna had sent his workers with money and clothes and they worked round the clock to make the house. She told him the Krishna had also made a school in the village and offered Sudaama the job of head priest/teacher of the school. They all lived happily ever after.

MORAL: Treat every person, poor or rich, equally.

(After reading this story, students may wish to act it out as a skit.)



Activities for Teenagers

Story: Munna (Dr. Vidya Bhushan Gupta)

One summer morning during my last vacation to India, I was reading the Hindustan Times newspaper and sipping the *masala* tea on the porch of my sister's house when I heard a knock on the door. A scrawny swarthy youngster dressed in a light blue t-shirt and khaki trousers stood at the door with hands folded in *namaste*.

"*Namaste* sir! Is Bibiji home?"

"Who is it?" my sister called from the kitchen.

"Bibiji, I am Munna. Do you remember me?" the boy spoke loudly before I could reply.

"Munna who, I don't remember," my sister came to the door saying this.

The young man bent down and touched her feet.

"Bibiji, I am Munna. My mother, Shanti, used to work at your house." Immediately my mind raced back 20 years and visualized a young child sitting on the floor with his chin cupped in his hands watching me curiously as I opened my suitcases from America. Didi also remembered him when he mentioned his mother's name.

He used to accompany Shanti to my sister's and other houses she went for cleaning and dishwashing. He sat on his haunches in the courtyard while his mother washed the dishes and clothes, trying to do what she did, but his heart used to be in the TV that Deepak, my sister's seven-year-old son, watched after he returned from school. Sometimes he would sneak into Deepak's bedroom to get a glimpse of the TV. He sat on the floor close to the door with eyes glued to the TV but ready to sprint if my brother-in-law, whom he called *bade bauji*, saw him. Bade bauji didn't like any servant to go to the bedrooms unless they had to for cleaning the floors or bringing tea or snacks. If he caught him watching TV, he yelled, "*ullu kaa pathaa, maarunga saale ko ek thapad*" (son of an owl, I will give you a slap), and Munna ran back to his mother. When Deepak did his homework, Munna hung around looking at the books and pencils. He couldn't read and sometimes held Deepak's books upside down. Deepak didn't mind because he could order him around whenever his pencil fell on the floor or he needed water or some other supply.

Bibiji, my sister, was usually busy in the kitchen and didn't care if Munna watched TV. She was kind. Once, seeing him wearing a torn shirt, she gave him Deepak's old shirt to wear. She often gave him whatever she cooked for Deepak. Once she asked Shanti why she didn't send him to the school. At every Diwali she gave 50 rupees to him to buy toys and firecrackers. At *Holi*, too, she gave him some money for *gulaal* (powdered dye). Whenever there was *pooja* in the house or a *jaagran*, my sister gave him a few rupees. He bought marbles, tops and kites and ate *aam paaper* and *chaat* whenever he got the money.

Munna liked my sister. He always greeted her with *namaste* as soon as he came with his mother. He sprinted like a gazelle whenever he saw her carrying a tray or any other thing, took it from her hands, and gave it to whomever she wanted it to be given to.

My sister often complained about Munna's predicament to my younger sister.

"I feel bad for Munna. He is of the same age as my Deepu but doesn't go the school. Look at the mind of the poor. His parents want him to work instead of going to the school. Whenever I ask his mother to send him to school, she replies, "Bibiji! What will we, the poor, eat if we send our children to the school? I am just waiting for him to grow a little older so that he can begin working at a *dhaba*."

"Didi, why do you worry about them? They have always lived like this and always will. Moreover, if everyone goes to school, no one will be left to work in our houses and restaurants? It is the rule of nature, some are haves and some, have nots," my younger sister would say.

My brother-in-law often scolded my sister, "You are spoiling him. Treat a servant like a servant otherwise he will get on your head."

One day Munna didn't eat anything my sister gave to him, held his head and wanted to lie down. He said that his head hurt. Shanti asked him to sit quietly by her side. When my sister saw him sitting quietly next to Shanti instead of by Deepu's room, she asked Shanti, "Shanti, Munna doesn't look well. What's the matter?"

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"Bibiji, he hasn't eaten much since morning and feels warm." After touching his forehead Didi confirmed that he had fever.

She took out a few rupees from her pocketbook and said, "Shanty, here are 50 rupees. Take him to Dr. Saluja."

"Bibiji, may God be good to you. You are a goddess," Shanti said as she took the money. Tears of gratitude rolled down her cheeks. Didi, too, was overwhelmed by this expression of gratitude by Shanti. She cleaned the corner of her eyes with her sari.

Munna did not come for the next five days. In the meanwhile Didi made a resolution. When Munna returned, Didi told Shanti, "Shanti, I shall raise your monthly salary by 50 rupees if you send Munna to the school."

"Bibiji, what're you saying. His father will not agree. He says that the schools aren't good for the children of the poor. They remain good for nothing. Neither do they perform well in the school, nor do they get jobs after they finish and nor do they want to work as servants or laborers as their parents did."

But Didi was firm. She said that he would have to go the school if Shanti wanted the raise. And if she did not send him to the school, she said she would stop giving him the gratuity at Diwali and Holi because they wasted it on trifles.

"Bibiji, how shall we pay the fees and buy school uniforms?" Shanti asked.

"Municipality schools are free and I will see if I have any old uniforms of Deepak's. If I have them, I shall give them for Munna," Didi replied.

Shanti had no choice. She spoke to her husband that night.

"These monied people always talk like that. They don't know that our children need to work to eat food and keep their bodies covered. Moreover, Munna is still very young," Bhura replied.

"But she will stop giving us the Holi and Diwali gratuities if we don't send him to the school. She has assured me that she will give old clothes for a uniform also," shanty told him.

"Moreover, he is too young to work now. We can always take him out when he is ready to work," she continued.

Munna stopped coming with Shanti from the next week.

Didi asked him to sit in the drawing room, offered him tea, and asked about his mother and his life. It had been 20 years since that fateful day when he stopped accompanying his mother to the houses where she worked.

"Bibiji, I work as a postal clerk at the post office in Naraina. My mother doesn't work anymore. My father passed away of tuberculosis. I have come to invite you to my marriage. Please do come. It is because of you that I became what I am today. But for you I would have been working at a *dhaba*. My mother wants to see you. She couldn't come because she has arthritis of the knees from sitting on the floor for too many years."

Tears rolled down my sister's eyes.

"Yes, I will come," she assured him.

Moral: Give the poor tools and opportunities to lift themselves out of poverty. "Don't give me fish but teach me how to fish," goes an old saying.

Suggested Activities:

- Present statistics on children living in poverty in the United States and India.
- Present children's Bill of Rights from the United Nations.
- Research whether there are national or international poverty reduction programs that follow the moral of the above story.



SECTION 8

Jewish Resources for Children's Shabbat

Following you will find a range of Jewish resources for your Children's Shabbat:

- Suggestions for the services
- Passages from traditional Jewish sources related to children, poverty, health care, and keeping young people on paths of promise
- Readings, reflections, and prayers for the services
- Suggested music for the services
- Sermon notes on B'reishit, the Torah portion for October 17, 2009
- A discussion guide for use with adults, in a sisterhood meeting, men's club, or other gathering convened especially for the Children's Shabbat is found on pages 34–35 and is designed to be used in conjunction with the Children's Concerns Primer in Section 2.
- Educational materials for use in religious school classes and youth groups will be available for download at www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths

Suggestions for the Services

Services on the Children's Shabbat are an excellent opportunity to help focus the congregation on the links between Torah readings, Jewish tradition, and creating change for children today to bring hope and a better tomorrow. Children's Shabbat services also serve as a time to affirm the work of your congregation on behalf of children and to challenge members to continue and expand their responses to the needs of children locally and nationally.

The following suggestions may assist you in planning your own unique Children's Shabbat service or supplementing your congregation's weekly prayer and discussion.

- **There are several options for the services:**
 - 1) Use or adapt the service readings provided in this section;
 - 2) Develop your own Children's Shabbat that reflects the theme of children, justice, and the need for action; or
 - 3) Use readings from the prayer books that include a social action theme.
- **Determine ways in which the children of your congregation can participate in the various services on this Shabbat.** Involve children attending religious school, members of youth groups, and children who attend the day school. For example, religious school classes and youth groups could read prayers or Torah and Haftarah readings, lead songs or responsive readings, greet people as they arrive, or design and print the bulletin. Keep in mind, however, that this is a family event and should not be "given over" to children as "performers."
- **Focus the sermon, D'var Torah, or Torah discussion on children.** Emphasize creating change for children in poverty, without health care, and swept up in the pipeline to prison crisis so that together we can bring hope and a better tomorrow for all children.
- **Invite a professional from the congregation or the community who works with or on behalf of children to give the sermon.** For example, this might be a health care professional, someone working with young people in the juvenile justice system or in a program that strives to keep young people on paths of promise, or staff from an organization or agency serving low-income families.
- **Bless the children.** On Friday night, incorporate the parental blessing for children into the service. Alternatively, incorporate the need to bless all children into the Shabbat morning blessing of Bar/Bat Mitzvah children.
- **Honor congregation members who are working to nurture and protect children.** This year, invite people who are working to improve the lives of children in poverty, without health coverage, or at risk of incarceration. Ask them to lead certain prayers or give them Aliyot during the Torah reading.
- **Collect Tzedakah in religious school to benefit a program serving children,** such as a community health clinic, Head Start program, mentoring or tutoring program, shelter for homeless families, or after-school program.
- **Distribute or insert the bulletin inserts,** which can be found beginning on page 55.
- **With the help of your Cantor, prepare some new music to be sung by the children at the service.**
- **Encourage families to invite grandparents and other relatives to join them for the service.** If you wish, plan a special recognition of grandparents during the service.
- **Arrange for a special kiddush/oneg Shabbat/luncheon/se'udah shlishit in honor of the occasion.** As a resource, see "Planning a Shabbat or Holiday Family Meal" and "A Family Shabbaton," both from the Youth/School Liaison Department of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism.
- **Continue the celebration of Children's Shabbat with a M'laveh Malkah during the Saturday evening or the Sunday morning minyan/religious school sessions.**

Passages from Traditional Jewish Sources

Related to Poverty, Health and Health Care, and Keeping Young People on Paths of Promise

Poverty

Although the giving of charity is a sacred obligation, the ultimate aim of tzedakah is to abolish poverty and to enable the poor to help themselves.

(Talmud, Shabbat 63a)

If a community lacked a synagogue and a shelter for the poor, it was first obligated to build a shelter for the poor.

(Sefer Chasidim)

There is nothing in the world more grievous than poverty—the most terrible of sufferings. Our teachers said: All the troubles of the world are assembled on one side and poverty is on the other.

(Midrash Rabbah Exodus 31:12)

The highest form of charity is to help prevent a person from becoming poor. This includes offering a loan or employment, investing in a business, or any other form of assistance that will avoid poverty. This basis for this principle is the commandment in our passage: You shall strengthen the poor.

(Maimonides' commentary to Leviticus 25:35–38)

Do not neglect the children of the poor, for from them will go forth the law.

(Nedarim 81a)

Defend the poor and the orphan; do justice to the afflicted and needy.

(Midrash Tehillim 82:3)

Speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and the needy.

(Proverbs 31:9)

You shall not subvert the rights of the stranger or the fatherless; you shall not take a widow's garment in pawn. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and that the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I enjoin you to observe this commandment...when you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick it over again; that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

(Deuteronomy 24:17–18, 21)

Rabbi Abba said in the name of Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish: "He who lends money [to a poor person] is greater than he who gives charity; and he who throws money into a common purpose [to form a partnership with the poor person] is greater than either."

(Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 63b)

A small bit of bread may be life to the poor; one who deprives them of it sheds blood.

(Ben Sira 34:21)

Anyone who withholds what is due to the poor blasphemes against the Maker of all, but one who is gracious unto the needy honors God.

(Proverbs 14:31)

Health and Health Care

Neither shall you stand idly by the blood of your neighbor.

(Leviticus 19:16)

If one person is able to save another and does not save him, he transgresses the commandment, "Neither shall you stand idly by the blood of your neighbor." (*Leviticus 19:16*) Similarly, if one person sees another drowning in the sea, or being attacked by bandits, or being attacked by wild animals, and, although able to rescue him either alone or by hiring others, does not rescue him; or if one hears heathens or informers plotting evil against another or laying a trap for him and does not call it to the other's attention and let him know; or if one knows that a heathen or violent person is going to attack another and although able to appease him on behalf of the other and make him change his mind, he does not do so; or if one acts in any similar way—he transgresses in each case the injunction "Neither shall you stand idly by the blood of your neighbor."

(Maimonides, Code, "Laws Concerning Murder and the Preservation of Life," Chapter 1, Sections 14 and 16)

Therefore, man was created singularly to teach you that a) whoever destroys a single soul of Israel, is considered as if he destroys an entire world, and one who saves one soul of Israel, it is considered as if he saves an entire world; b) no one could say to their fellow that my father is better

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than your father; c) none of the heretics could say “There are many powers in Heaven”; d) again, to declare the greatness of the Holy One of Blessing, for man stamps out many coins with one die, and they are all alike. But the Ruler of all Rulers, the Holy One of Blessing, stamped each person with the seal of Adam, and not one of them is like his fellow. Therefore, each and every one is obliged to say, “For my sake the world was created.”

(Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5)

Keeping Young People on Paths of Promise

[Why was there violence in Gilead?] Because they made what is primary secondary and what is secondary primary. How so? Because they loved their possessions more than their own children.

(Midrash Tanhuma, Mattot)

My chosen ones shall outlive the work of their hands. They shall not toil to no purpose; they shall not bear children for terror, but they shall be a people blessed by the Lord, and their offspring shall remain with them.

(Isaiah 65:22–23)

Whoever teaches a neighbor's child Torah earns a seat in the Academy on High.

(Metzia 85a)

One who teaches a child Torah is considered to have taught that child and that child's children and grandchildren, to the end of the generations.

(Kiddushin 30a)

Rav once came to a certain town and ordered the people to fast and pray in order to bring down rain. But no rain fell.

The Reader of the congregation then went before the Ark and recited the words from the prayer book, “God who causes the wind to blow,” and immediately the wind began to blow. He then recited, “God who causes the rain to fall,” and rain began to fall.

Rav asked him, “What special deed have you done to merit such reward?”

The Reader answered, “I teach young children, those of the poor as well as those of the rich. I take no fees from anyone who cannot afford to pay. Also, I have a fish pond, and if a child does not want to study, I give him some fishes to keep and win him over in that way so that soon he becomes eager to learn. In his day, if one had a learned father, the father would teach, and if not, one did not learn. Then they instituted a publicly funded school in Jerusalem. But those without still did not learn. They then set up a school in each district, and the children were to enter at 16 or 17, but when the teachers tried to discipline them, they rebelled and left. They then instituted publicly funded schools for any child six or older. And if there was a long way, or a bridge to cross, they could compel the town to build another school.”

(BT Baba Batra 21a)

Rabbi Hamnuna said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because the children did not attend school, and loitered in the streets.

(Pesikta Rabbati 29b)

“They that are planted in the house of the Lord...” (Psalm 92:13). Rabbi Hanan ben Pazzi taught: “While they are yet saplings, they are in the house of the Lord; these are the children who are in school.”

(BT Baba Batra 21a)

And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the result of righteousness shall be quietness and confidence forever.

(Isaiah 32:17)

Readings, Reflections, and Prayers for the Services

The following readings, reflections, and prayers may be incorporated into your services to focus attention on the Eternal's call to justice and care for children. Choose as many or as few as is appropriate for your congregation. Each reading suggests a particular point in the service for which it may be especially appropriate (in some instances, several options are offered), but there are, of course, many ways to incorporate these resources and you should do what works best for your service.

Sample Opening

When God created the world, God made everything a little bit incomplete. Instead of making bread grow out of the earth, God made wheat grow so that we might bake it into bread. Instead of making the earth of bricks, God made it of clay so that we might bake the clay into bricks. Why? So that we could become God's partner in the task of completing the work of creation.

Tonight, as congregations across our nation join in a special Children's Shabbat to "create change for children today to bring hope and a better tomorrow," we remember that each of us is God's partner in the task of completing the work of creation. Each of us has work to do so that every child has health care, every child is lifted from the deprivations of poverty, and every child is set on a path of promise.

There is much to be done, but God has given us all that we need to accomplish it. And so we give thanks this night for all of those gathered here and those who gather across our nation whose hearts burn with compassion for children in need, whose hands are ready to work for change, and whose voices are ready to speak out for justice to bring about a better tomorrow for all children.

Sample Opening

Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Chanina: The students of the wise increase peace in the world, as it says, "And all your children (banayich) will be taught of the Eternal and great shall be the peace of your children (banayich). Do not read banayich (your children) but Bonayich (your builders)."

Our children may be the builders of the world but we are entrusted to be the builders of our children. We are not alone. There are friends and family; teachers and mentors; health care providers and child advocates; all of whom join us in raising our children. Children reflect the lessons they learn from each of us.

Tonight we give thanks to all those who dedicate themselves to creating change for children to bring hope and a better tomorrow. They are the bonim (builders) of our banim (children). As we are grateful for the work they do, so too, we promise to work toward a day when all children shall have all they need to grow as happy, healthy children who know they are beloved by God and valued by us.

Welcome¹

There are days when we seek things for ourselves and measure failure by what we do not gain.

On Shabbat, we seek not to acquire but to share.

There are days when we exploit nature as if it were a horn of plenty that can never be exhausted.

On Shabbat, we stand in wonder before the mystery of creation.

There are days when we act as if we cared nothing for the rights of others.

On Shabbat, we remember that justice is our duty and a better world our goal.

So we embrace Shabbat: Day of rest, day of wonder, day of peace.

Reflection Before the Candle Lighting

This Shabbat let us light candles of hope for all of our children, wherever they may live. Let us light them especially for children in the shadow of poverty, lack of health care, and despair of a positive future. May each one of them feel cared for, safe, and loved and know that we are working for a better tomorrow. As we enter this sacred time of Shabbat, may each child feel the light of your justice, peace, and love.

¹ *Mishkan T'filah: The Siddur for Reform Jewish Prayer*, Central Conference of American Rabbis.

Reflection Before the Candle Lighting

As the great doors of night are opening we come into the clean, quiet room of Shabbat.

Let us be thankful as we light these candles like eyes of holiness on this moment of peace.

Let us savor the fruit of the vine, the blood of the earth that quickens us.

Let us be thankful for the grain, fruit of grasses that feed the cow, the gazelle, and us.

Let us be grateful for the children and the work of the week that are our own fruitfulness.

Let us as we eat never forget that food comes from the earth. We must cherish and heal through labor, we must respect and reward.

(By Marge Piercy. Used by permission of Wallace Literary Agency, Inc.)

A Rebbi's Proverb (from the Yiddish)

If you always assume that the person sitting next to you is the messiah just waiting for some simple human kindness— You will soon come to weigh your words and watch your hands and attend to your responsibilities— And, if he so chooses not to reveal himself in your time— It will not matter.

The Wonder of Life²

Sing a new song to God,
Give thanks for the wonders God has performed.
When we are trapped in narrow places,
Yet find strength to move forward
With confidence and trust;
When we could look the other way,
Yet take a chance to reach out to one another
With openness and compassion;
When we experience great pain or sorrow,
Yet find light in the midst of darkness;
When we recognize the Wonder of Life,
Ordinary moments become sacred.

Introduction to the Lecha Dodi

Traditionally during the last verse of “Lecha Dodi,” the congregation turns around and faces the door to welcome the Shabbat spirit into the room. Tonight, as we join with congregations throughout the nation in the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* celebration, let us also turn and symbolically welcome all of those who work to create change for children so that we may usher in hope and a better tomorrow.

Responsive Reading (before the Bar'chu)

Leader: We come before the Eternal in a nation that is fractured by income, age, race, ethnicity, religion, and gender.

Congregation: **Praise the One who heals divisions and binds us together.**

Leader: We come before the Eternal with hearts broken by the wounds of children and families we advocate for and serve.

Congregation: **Praise the One who binds up the broken-hearted.**

Leader: We come before the Eternal with visions of justice that have been shattered, carrying in our hearts children whose hopes have been broken.

Congregation: **Praise the One who restores our hopes and dreams.**

Leader: Come, let us celebrate the Eternal's gift of children, and renew our commitment to cherish and protect them as we rise to be summoned and respond.
(Shannon Daley-Harris)

Reflection (following the Maariv Aravim)³

God of the generations, God of new beginnings, children are Your promise of tomorrow made in Your image, a reflection of Your divine love. Teach us to raise our children worthy of this sacred trust of life. Sustain us and our children in health and love. We are thankful for the beauty of our lives and the ability to bring new life. We are thankful to all those who help us to raise our children in love.

² Mark Frydenberg, “The Wonder of Life,” in *Siddur Chaveirim Kol Yisrael*, Ktav Publishing House, New Jersey, 2000, pg. 6 (www.chav.net/siddur). Used with permission of the author.

³ Adapted from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association *Rabbi's Manual*.

Reflection (following the Ahavat Olam)

When justice burns within us like a flaming fire, when love evokes willing sacrifice from us, when, to the last full measure of selfless devotion, we demonstrate our belief in the ultimate triumph of truth and righteousness, then Your goodness enters our lives and we can begin to change the world; and then you live within our hearts, and we through righteousness behold your presence.

(Gates of Prayer)

Reflection (following the Ahavat Olam)

Leader: When Israel was about to receive the Torah, the Holy One said to them, "I am about to give you my Torah. Bring me worthy guarantors to ensure that you will uphold it, and I will give it to you."

Congregation: They said, "Let our ancestors be our guarantors."

Leader: The Holy One replied, "I find many faults in your ancestors. Bring me better guarantors, and I will give it to you."

Congregation: They said, "Ruler of the Universe! Our prophets will be our guarantors."

Leader: Said the Holy One, "With you prophets I also find many faults. Bring me better guarantors, and I will give you My Torah."

Congregation: They said, "Our children will be our guarantors."

Leader: The Holy One replied, "Truly they are good guarantors. For their sake I will give you the Torah."

Congregation: Therefore, parents are required to introduce their child to the study of Torah and to provide good grounding in the ways of the House of Israel in order that the child may live long and well in the world.

(Shir HaShirim Rabbah, Midrashic Commentary on Song of Songs)

Reflection (following the Ahavat Olam)

Let us affirm our faith in Torah, our people's legacy of learning and faith.

There are no words more challenging than "You shall be holy!"

No command more basic than "You shall love!"

There is no insight so fundamental as "In the beginning, God,"

No words so enhancing as "You shall rest!"

No cry is more compelling than "Let My people go!"

No consolation more comforting than "I am with you in your distress."

There is no vision more hopeful than "They shall beat their swords into plowshares,"

And no summons more demanding than "Justice, justice shall you pursue!"

These words have outlived monuments and empires; We want them to live through us, for all time.

We owe it to our ancestors to keep Torah alive; They struggled and suffered to preserve our way of life, Knowing this to be their most precious gift to us.

We owe it to our children to keep Torah alive; Why should they be spiritually impoverished When they can inherit the riches of this heritage?

We owe it to the world to keep Torah alive; This is a message which the world needs to hear. For Judaism gave mankind its first civil rights program. It was expressed in the Sh'ma, the watchword of the Jewish faith: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One."

As God is one, humankind is one, for each is created equally in the image of God.

(Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath)

Reflection on the Sh'ma

Reader 1: You shall love the Eternal your God with all your mind, with all your strength, with all your being.

Reader 2: The path to the love of God is through the love of others; we do not love God until we love our neighbors as ourselves.

Reader 1: Set these words, which I command you this day, upon your heart.

Reader 3: Faith unites mind and heart. Even as our minds seek to understand life's meaning, so may our lives show love for all created things.

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Reader 1: Teach them faithfully to your children;
speak of them in your home and on your
way, when you lie down and when you
rise up.

Reader 4: We do not teach our children by words
alone: May we make our lives and actions
into good teachings.

Reader 1: Bind them as a sign upon your hand; let
them be a symbol before your eyes;
inscribe them on the doorposts of your
house and on your gates.

Reader 5: Let our homes glow with the beauty of
our faith in God. Let our doors be opened
wide to wisdom and righteousness.

Reader 1: Be mindful of all My Mitzvot and do
them: So shall you consecrate yourselves
to Your God.

Reader 6: Each righteous act of loving kindness is a
way to holiness. Righteous acts elevate
our humanity. Let us learn to use them to
magnify the divine in ourselves and in
the world.

(Adapted from *Gates of Prayer*)

Reflection after the V'a-havta

Love God with all the power of your heart,
With its yearnings and passions.
Love God with all you hold dear in life,
And with the fullness of whatever the world offers you,
Both joy and sorrow.

Teach children to cope,
To dream and to stretch,
To become their purpose,
To live holy lives.

Wrap these words around every deed,
A garment of holy expression.
Let these words shape your home,
A dwelling of peace.

Wherever you go,
Scatter the words as seeds,
Or as drops of water into the thirsty earth.
Nurture trees of life in your garden.

Seal these words upon your heart;
Let them course through
And cleave soul to body
That the sacred permeates all your being.

(*Mishnah T'filah*, p. 45)

After the V'a-havta

Loving life and its mysterious source
With all our heart and all our spirit,
All our sense and strength,
We take upon ourselves and into ourselves
these promises:
to care for the earth
and those who live upon it,
to pursue justice and peace,
to love kindness and compassion.
We will teach this to our children
Throughout the passage of the day—
As we dwell in our homes
And as we go on our journeys,
From the time we rise until we fall asleep.
And may our actions be faithful to our words
That our children's children
May live to know:
Truth and kindness have embraced,
Peace and justice have kissed
And are one.

(*Mishnah T'filah*, p. 157)

Geulah⁴

Leader: Those who raise children in their home
are considered by Scripture as the ones
who gave birth to them.

Congregation: In loving and protecting them, those who
raise them, bless them with the shelter of
their deeds and their name. Call their
name beloved, for they are our inheritors.

Leader: The ones who teach children Torah are
considered as the ones who gave birth to
them.

Congregation: Call their name beloved, for they are our
inheritors. By them we have been blessed
and upon their lives we have laid our
blessing.

⁴ From the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association's *Rabbi's Manual*.

Geulah/Redemption

Happy is the one whose trust is in God, who draws hope from hope's own Source.

God keeps faith forever: God will do justice for the oppressed, and give bread to the hungry.

God will set the captive free, and open the blind eye,
God will lift up the fallen, and take care of the stranger.

The Lord's spirit is in us, the Eternal has called us,

To bring hope to the oppressed, to bring healing to the broken, to proclaim liberty to the enslaved, freedom to those in shackles.

When Israel saw your might displayed in Egypt, they put their faith in You, and in Moses Your servant. Now let all be free, and let them sing as Israel did at the shore of freedom's sea.

(Gates of Prayer)

A Prayer⁵

O God, we give thanks to You for the gift of our child, who has entered into the Covenant of Abraham. Keep this child from harm, and grant that our child will be a source of joy to us and all who love him/her. Be with us and give us health and length of days. Teach us so to raise our child with care and affection, with wisdom and understanding, to be a faithful child of our people and a blessing to the world. We give thanks to You, O God, the Source of life.

After V'shamru

O God of Israel
May our worship on this day help us to grow
In loyalty to our covenant with you
And to the way of life it demands:
The way of gentleness and justice,
The path of truth and of peace.

(Mishnah T'filah, p. 53)

G'vurot

Eternal God, the power of Your spirit pervades all creation. When we open our hearts to You, we are filled with Your strength: the strength to bear our afflictions, the strength to refuse them victory, the strength to overcome them.

And then our will is renewed: to lift up the fallen, to set free the captive, to heal the sick, to bring light to all who dwell in darkness. Add your strength to ours, O God, so that when death casts its shadow, we shall yet be able to say:
O source of blessing, You are with us in death as in life!

(Gates of Prayer, p. 356)

Reflection⁶

One Yom Kippur, the great Hasidic master Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev announced that at the conclusion of the fast day he would reveal the secret phrase that would finally usher in the messianic age. With the end of the service, the congregation was enthusiastic as the Rabbi mounted the rostrum. But just as he was about to begin, a child cried out in hunger. So it was that Levi Yitzhak declared, "Feed the child. The Messiah can wait. A hungry child can't wait."

Avodah

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end war;
For we know that You have made the world in a way
So that all of us must find our own path to peace,
Within ourselves and with our neighbors.

*We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end hunger;
For you have already given us the resources
With which to feed the entire world,
If we would only use them wisely.*

We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To root out our prejudice;
For You have already given us eyes
With which to see the good in all people,
If we would only use them rightly.

*We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end despair;
For You have already given us the power
To clear away slums and to give hope,
If we would only use our power justly.*

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end disease;
For You have already given us great minds
With which to search out cures and healing,
If we could only use them constructively.

⁵ From *Rabbi's Manual*, Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1988, p. 40.

⁶ From Children's Shabbat sermon by Rabbi Emeritus Michael Zedek, Temple B'nai Jehudah, St. Louis, Missouri.

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*Therefore, we pray to You instead, O God,
For strength, determination, and courage,
To do instead of just to pray,
To become instead of merely to wish.*

Praised are You, O God,
You bless our people of Israel,
And all peoples, with peace.

(Adapted from Rabbi Jack Riemer)

Reflection (following the Shalom Rav)

Shabbat Bereshit: A Reflection on Creation

When God created the world, God made everything a little bit incomplete. Instead of making bread grow out of the earth, God made wheat grow so that we might bake it into bread. Instead of making the earth of bricks, God made it of clay so that we might bake the clay into bricks. Why? So that we could become God's partner in the task of completing the work of creation.

Reflection (following the Shalom Rav)⁷

True, we are often too weak to stop injustices; but the least we can do is protest against them.

True, we are too poor to eliminate hunger; but in feeding one child, we protest against hunger.

True, we are too timid and powerless to take on all the guards of all the political prisons in the world; but in offering our solidarity to one prisoner, we denounce all the tormentors.

True, we are powerless against death; but as long as we help one man, one woman, one child live one hour longer in safety and dignity, we affirm a human's right to live.

Merger Poem⁸

And then all that has divided us will merge
And then compassion will be wedded to power
And then softness will come to a world that is harsh
and unkind
And then both men and women will be gentle
And then both women and men will be strong

And then no person will be subject to another's will
And then all will be rich and free and varied
*And then the greed of some will give way to the needs
of many*
And then all will share equally in the Earth's abundance
And then all will care for the sick and the weak and the old
And then all will nourish the young
And then all will cherish life's creatures
And then all will live in harmony with each other and
the Earth
And then everywhere will be called Eden once again.

Reflection

God, please forgive and transform our powerful nation where toddlers and school children die from guns sold quite legally.

God, please forgive and transform our rich nation that lets children be the poorest group of citizens quite legally.

God, please forgive and transform our rich nation that lets the rich continue to get more at the expense of the poor quite legally.

God, please forgive and transform our rich nation that thinks security rests in missiles rather than in mothers, and in bombs rather than in babies.

God, please help us never to confuse what is quite legal with what is just and right in your sight.

Help us to do what is just and right in Your sight for all the children of America and the world so that peace with justice will prevail and no child is left behind.

(Marian Wright Edelman, president of the
Children's Defense Fund)

⁷ *Sages and Dreamers: Biblical, Talmudic, and Hasidic Portraits and Legends* by Elie Wiesel. Copyright © 1991 by Elirion Associates, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Georges Borchardt, Inc., on behalf of the author.

⁸ Judy Chicago, 1979, Merger Poem, www.JudyChicago.com.

Reflection Before the Kaddish

Eternal God, the generations come and go before You. Brief is their time. Passing, they leave many of their tasks unfinished, their plans unfulfilled, their dreams unrealized. It would be more than we could bear, but for the faith that our little day finds its permanence in your eternity, and our work its completing in the unfolding of Your purpose for humanity.

At this sacred moment we turn our thoughts to those we love who have gone from life. We recall the joy of their companionship. We feel a pang, the echo of that intenser grief when first their death lay before our stricken eyes. Now we know that they will never vanish, so long as heart and thought remain within us. By love are they remembered and in memory they live.

O God, grant that their memory may bring strength and blessing. May the nobility in their lives and the high ideals they cherished endure in our thoughts and live on in our deeds. And may we, carrying on their work, help to redeem Your promise that life shall prevail.

(Gates of Prayer)

Blessing of the Children

(Children and child advocates or those who work for children may be called up to the bimah.)

As we reach out to bless the children in our midst, let us also reach out with our hearts to bless the children we cannot see and do not know but whom the Eternal knows and loves, as they wait and long for care, protection, and guidance.

May you live to see your world fulfilled,
May your destiny be for worlds still to come,
And may you trust in generations past and yet to be.
May your heart be filled with intuition
And may your words be filled with insights.
May songs of praise ever be on your tongue,
And may your wisdom be on a straight path before you.
May your eyes shine with the light of holy words
And your face reflect the brightness of the heavens.
May your lips ever speak wisdom
And your fulfillment be in righteousness even as you yearn
To hear the words of the Holy Ancient One of Old.

(Berachot 17a)

Final Blessing

May we go forth to celebrate the gifts of each child.
May we go forth to heal the hurts of each child.
May we go forth to seek justice for each child.
This we ask as ones who are claimed as God's children.
Amen.

(Shannon Daley-Harris)

Suggested Music for the Services

The following pieces of music are suggested by the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism for incorporation into social action-focused services because of their social justice themes. Several are based on liturgical or other Jewish texts. Many of the songs are available in *Gates of Song* or *The Complete Shireinu*, both available from Transcontinental Music (www.etranscon.com). They also have included music from new, well-known and less well-known Jewish songwriters and have given information about how to acquire their music directly from the composer.

- 1) And the Youth Shall See Visions – Friedman, *Shireinu* p. 20
- 2) *Ani v'Atah* – Arik Einstein and Miki Gavriellov, *Shireinu* p. 28
- 3) *Bayom Habu* – Lisa Silverstein Tzur, Shir p. 32, Barry Kanarek, *Shireinu* p. 33
- 4) Blessing for Social Justice: *Lirdof Tzedek* – Jeff Klepper, sheet music in pdf available for download at <http://www.totshabbat.com/kleppersocialjustice.pdf>
- 5) *B'makom* – Michael Isaacson, *Shireinu* p. 39
- 6) Down by the Riverside – spiritual, *Shireinu* p. 56
- 7) Dreamer – Lorre Wyatt, *Shireinu* p. 57
- 8) *Hinei Mah Tov* – folksong, *Shireinu* p. 89, Steve and Marni Dropkin, *Shireinu* p. 89, M. Jacobson-Drozi, *Shireinu* p. 90, folksong, *Shireinu* p. 91
- 9) Hold Fast to Dreams – music by Jeff Klepper, lyrics by A.B. Yehoshua, Langston Hughes, *Shireinu* p. 99
- 10) If I Had a Hammer – Lee Hays and Pete Seeger
- 11) *Im Ein Ani Li Mi Li* – folksong, arr. Davidson, *Gates of Song* #146, Debbie Friedman, *Shireinu* p. 106
- 12) *Khillah Kedoshah* – Dan Nichols, from his CD, *My Heart is in the East*, sound clip and ordering information available at www.jewishrock.com
- 13) Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream – Ed McCurdy
- 14) Laugh at All My Dreams – Friedman, M. Samuels on Sachki, *Shireinu* p. 122
- 15) Let Peace Shine – Lynn Metrik, available for purchase by contacting the composer at lrmetrik@yahoo.com
- 16) *Lo Alecha* – Klepper and Frelander, *Shireinu* p. 135
- 17) *Lo Yarei'u/V'chit'u* – William Sharlin and Ezri Gabbai, *Shireinu* p. 136
- 18) *Lo Yisa Goi* – folksong, arr. Davidson, *Gates of Song* #149, folksong *Shireinu* p. 137, Shalom Altman, *Shireinu* p. 138
- 19) Make Those Waters Part – Doug Mishkin, *Shireinu* p. 144
- 20) *Nefesh Achat* – Jon Gold, Natalie Hutner, Leslie Kane, Alicia Katzman, *Shireinu* p. 154
- 21) One People – Debbie Friedman, sheet music available for purchase at www.debbiefriedman.com
- 22) Open Your Hand – Karen Daniel, sound clip and ordering information available at <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/karendaniel>
- 23) Peace & Love & Understanding – Lynn Metrik, available for purchase by contacting the composer at lrmetrik@yahoo.com
- 24) *Pit'chu Li* – Shlomo Carlebach, *Gates of Song* #156 or *Shireinu* p. 166, Steve Dropkin, *Shireinu* p. 167
- 25) Joe Black on his CD *Leave a Little Bit Undone*, sound clip and ordering information available at www.rabbijoeblack.com
- 26) The Prophet You – Julie Silver, *Shireinu* p. 168
- 27) *Shir LaShalom* – music by Yair Rosenblum, lyrics by Ya'akov Rotblitt, *Shireinu* p. 183
- 28) *V'yashvu Ish* – Jeff Klepper and Dan Frelander, *Shireinu* p. 213
- 29) *Yad b'Yad* – Craig Taubman, *Shireinu* p. 216
- 30) *Yib'yeh Shalom* – Rick Recht, *Shireinu* p. 222
- 31) We Choose Peace – Tracy Friend, available for purchase by contacting the composer at tracy.friend@acnielsen.com

Sermon Notes

Following are two sets of sermon notes for the Torah portion B'reishit, which are useful resources from which to draw as you prepare your sermon for the 2009 Children's Shabbat on October 17. The first set of sermon notes was prepared by Rabbi Jack Moline, co-chair of the Social Action Committee of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism for the 2006 Children's Shabbat, and has been adapted to this year's theme and to incorporate updated data. The second set was prepared by Marc Katz with a focus on the health coverage portion of this year's theme, but could readily be expanded to include the focus on our nation's 13.3 million children living in poverty and the countless children, especially poor, Black, and Latino boys, in the pipeline to prison.

Sermon Notes for Children's Shabbat

Prepared by Rabbi Jack Moline, Co-Chair, Social Action Committee, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Every congregation has its own context and personality, so the message a rabbi presents must be tailored to those who listen to the teaching. Here are three different ways to approach this year's theme, "Create Change for Children Today: Bring Hope and a Better Tomorrow."

The sermons are for you to adapt to your own style without attribution. Please share your efforts with us so that we might adapt your message for others next year.

1. The Lesson of Creation

With all of the debate over the scientific implications of the first chapter of Genesis, we may have lost our focus on the moral implications. I suspect there is greater consensus on the latter.

When the work of creating a world was almost complete, God created the Earthling—perhaps the best understanding of the word "adam," meaning "from the earth." God charges this new creature, pinnacle of creation, with the responsibility to produce generations and maintain a world for their benefit. And then, in surveying the totality of six days of effort, God increases the rating of the previous days from "good" (*tov*) to "very good" (*tov m'od*). And what makes the world that much better? By rearranging the letters of "very"—*mem, aleph, daled*—you find "adam"—*aleph, daled, mem*. Like the little girl with the little curl in the middle of her forehead, when we are good, we are very, very good. Without this single human being, the world is just okay.

Perhaps the most familiar lesson of this story from the Talmud comes from Tractate Sanhedrin: "Whoever preserves a single life, it is as if he has preserved an entire world. Whoever destroys a single life, it is as if he has destroyed

an entire world." It may be sufficient to quote this much of the teaching to justify the need to extend basic life-preserving resources—health care—to the nine million American children who are without it. Let me repeat that number: nine million. And let me repeat nine million who: children. The number is even greater when we consider children living in poverty in our rich nation: 13.3 million children are poor. And countless children are in a pipeline to prison. Like the newborn Earthling plopped in the middle of a bountiful world, children are without the resources to provide for themselves. Preserving their lives means providing for them. Withholding health care resources damages or destroys nine million worlds. Leaving 13.3 million children in poverty diminishes more than 13 million worlds. Leaving countless children trapped in the pipeline to prison abandons thousands of worlds. The world each of us preserves with our lives cannot be "very good" if the way we treat the worlds around us, like the little girl with the little curl, is sometimes horrid.

You may ask, "Why is this my concern, my responsibility? I work hard to provide some very expensive health care resources for myself and my own children. I work hard to earn an income that provides my children with what they need. My children are on a path to success, not prison. Why must I also provide for others?" The very same Talmudic teaching continues to frame a worldview that prohibits us from smug satisfaction in our hard-earned blessings. "Why was all of humanity descended from a single Earthling? So that no one can say to another: My father was greater than yours." There is no such thing as a disqualification from the collective concern of society on the basis of income or pedigree. If your standard is, "I provide for my family," then my answer is, "Your family includes nine million children in America who lack health coverage, more than 13 million children in America living in poverty, and thousands of children in the pipeline to prison."

Jewish Resources for the Children's Sabbath

The story of creation we read this week depicts a pristine world that needs neither hope nor improvement. Promise is realized and the world is whole, because every child—the only child—is without need and without despair. As a congregation, we stand for a world that is once again so very good, a world in which every child is healthy and lifted out of poverty and put on a path of promise and therefore every life preserved. As a congregation, we must create change for children today to bring hope and a better tomorrow so that the promise will be realized again and the world once more made whole.

2. Redeeming Cain

Fratricide may seem a strange place to begin a discussion of health care in America, but Torah contains lessons for us wherever we look. This week we read of an almost unimaginable crime—Cain the farmer kills his brother Abel the shepherd in what appears to be a fit of jealousy. What can the story teach us about the nine million children in this country who live without the health care resources that most of us take for granted?

You are all familiar enough with the story to know that Cain's response to God's question, "Where is your brother Abel?" has become a classic indictment of human selfishness. When Cain answers, "Am I my brother's keeper?" we are conditioned to think, "Of course you are, you moron!" But I wish to plead with you for a moment to give Cain a break. However self-centered his question may be, it is asked in innocence. He and his brother were the first children born into a new world, a world that knew neither altruism nor death. It was a world in which "love" and "betrayal" lacked even a vocabulary.

By the time Cain asks this question, he has already violated its answer out of ignorance and self-centeredness. We don't look kindly on those human qualities, but I use them non-judgmentally. In fact, they are the native human condition. We are not born wise and we are not born out-going. We learn by experience, which is just a euphemism for our mistakes—unless we are very lucky. Cain wasn't so lucky. But he was a fast learner.

When God howled in reply, "What have you done? The blood of your brother cries out to Me from the ground!" Cain was crushed. He realized immediately that he had done something terribly wrong, though he may not have even figured out what exactly it was. Instead of being angry with Cain, I am always provoked to great sadness

for his two losses—the loss of his companion Abel and the loss of his innocence.

So if I suggest to you that as Jews and Americans there is a little bit of Cain within us, I hope you will understand that my words come not as a judgment, but as a recognition that not so much has changed since creation. We are still natively ignorant and self-centered. But I like to believe that we are fast learners. If God were to shout at us right now, "the blood of your brothers and sisters cries out to Me," we would be immediately ashamed and contrite, though we might not immediately know exactly why.

Though we all fear catastrophic illness, our response to it is usually quite direct: We call our doctors. They are the health care professionals who have helped to keep us in life and sustain us through inoculations and infections and indigestions and the occasional incapacities. Though we work hard for the benefits, we accept that access to them is a default position. It is easy to remain ignorant of those unable to access an antihistamine or a flu shot because, well, I got mine.

But nine million children in this country are without the resources to keep them in life and sustain them and enable them to reach a healthy adulthood. And in their voice, God calls to us today and asks us to be ashamed. But unlike Cain, we can act to redeem ourselves by joining with others to demand that this great and good country care for those least able to care for themselves.

Cain bore the mark of his lesson all his life. It illustrated not his crime, but God's compassion in helping him to deal with the harsh lesson he learned. It inspired him and those around him to overcome ignorance and self-centeredness and consider the other person and his or her needs.

Each time you fill a prescription, each time you get an injection, each time you make your co-pay, consider the other person—one of the nine million children who call out to you. You can redeem Cain if you join with those who are creating change for children today to bring hope and a better tomorrow.

3. Thorns and Thistles

When Adam and Eve were created, God gave them a simple task—be fruitful and multiply. They had an abundance of comforts and an almost magical relationship with the land: Whatever they planted for food would grow, supplementing the bounty of the fruit-bearing trees.

Shortly after this idyllic existence began, Adam and Eve sinned before God and were expelled from the Garden of Eden. The Torah reports the consequences to that first couple. Eve will have pain in childbirth, and Adam will contend with thorns and thistles as he tries to grow food.

Perhaps some other time we can talk about the justice or injustice of the expulsion. I accept it for the moment as fact. It is the consequence that interests me at the moment: the pain of childbirth and the difficulty of growing food.

The French have a saying that translates to mean, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." We may have pushed back the physical pain of childbirth with breathing techniques and drugs, but it is replaced with the myriad issues that swirl around fertility and reproduction. How, when, and whether to be pregnant is now as much a political statement as an expression of love. It is increasingly as reliant on medical miracles as it is on the miracle of biology. But this much has not changed at all: The pain of childbirth does not end when a woman delivers a baby. As you all know, what our tradition calls *tzar giddul banim*, the pain of child-rearing, has only begun with that first cry. The consequence of Eve's expulsion is not the pain of delivering a child. It is the pain of providing for a child. There is no Eden to provide a perpetual playground of plenty. Children need instruction, they need watching-over, they need the care that only adults can provide.

Likewise, Adam tilling the soil is nothing new. Before he is chased from paradise, he must already till the soil for crops. But if he decided otherwise, it would be apples and peaches for dinner instead of carrots and Brussels sprouts. But the consequence of Adam's expulsion is the competition he faces for the land he must till. Thorns and thistles seek to take over his crops, and it is hard work to eke out the bounty that he once took for granted. If Adam and his family are not to go hungry, he has to work for them.

I would never argue that God is not angry and disappointed with Adam and Eve. But neither is God punitive beyond exile. God provides instruction for the woman and the man about how to survive in a world that is not perfect while they fulfill their original mandate to be fruitful and multiply: Work hard and provide for your offspring. It won't be easy, but it will be necessary.

In the thousands of years of civilization since that story was first remembered, we have managed to juggle the roles and circumstances of the human family hundreds of

times. While men do not yet bear children, it has been a long time since every child was the offspring of a nuclear family. And certainly as we discovered more and more ways to till the soil and found the metaphoric thorns and thistles in every field of endeavor, women took their place alongside men to contribute the sweat of their brows. But this much has not changed: We are not in Eden. And while we have managed as a human family and as an American society to fulfill our role of fruitfulness and multiplication, we sometimes forget that our land of plenty still requires that we provide for the youngest among us. America is no perpetual playground of plenty. Children need food, they need education, and they need shelter. While we don't always provide for them well, we at least try to provide.

But more than 13 million children living in poverty in our nation know the pain of life in the thorns and thistles outside of Eden. The nine million uninsured children do without adequate protection from the dangers that lurk among the thorns and thistles of life in the world outside of Eden. The children in the pipeline to prison know the pain and despair of life in the thorns and thistles outside of Eden. There is no excuse for an American child to contract tuberculosis, to lose hearing to a strep infection, to lose a measure of vision to measles or mumps. If your son or daughter, your nephew or niece, or your grandchild were to contract, God forbid, a serious illness, you would move heaven and earth to get them the right health care and restore them to the full life they were promised with their first cry. There is no excuse for a child in America to suffer hunger, homelessness, and the other deprivations of poverty in our land. If your child turned to you with a stomach twisted in the tight grip of hunger, you would do whatever it took to feed them even as they knew the nourishing warm milk of infancy. You recognize it as *tzar giddul banim*, the very necessary pain of child rearing. Should the parents, the relatives, the grandparents of a child without health care access or living in poverty wish to do no less?

Good news, my friends. I am not asking you to move heaven and earth. I am just asking this congregation to join other congregations to create change for children today to bring hope and a better tomorrow for the nine million children without health coverage and the more than 13 million children living in poverty all across this land. I am asking you just to do what God told you was necessary to survive. I am asking you just to clear the thorns and thistles and let these precious flowers bloom.

“Create Change for Children Today: Bring Hope and a Better Tomorrow”

Prepared by Marc Katz, Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism, Washington, D.C.

In the Image of God

In Genesis we read that God created the human being “in his image.” The idea of *b'tzelem elohim* is a very powerful concept in Judaism. According to this concept, all of humanity is created in the image of God. Because of this, we all are endowed with an echo of divinity and a divine spark. If we take this lesson to heart, then it is immoral (or even blasphemous) to treat anyone with less than the utmost care. To let even one of our nine million uninsured children go a day further without access to quality affordable health care is to forget this important precept of humanity.

However, we are not doing a good job with realizing this. Large numbers of people in all racial/ethnic groups are uninsured, but minorities suffer the most. One in 13 White children is uninsured, one in eight Black children is uninsured, and one in five Hispanic children is uninsured.

We are taught in Genesis that God's spark does not follow racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic lines; why should health coverage?

Saving a Life

We read in Genesis, chapter 2, that God created Adam alone. Our Rabbis use this idea to teach the sanctity of life:

Therefore only one person was created to teach you that whosoever kills a single soul the Bible considers to have killed a complete world. And whosoever sustains and saves a single soul, it is as if that person sustained a whole world.

(Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5)

Later Jewish law takes this idea and elaborates on it. Not only are we obligated to save a soul if we see this person in peril, but we are commanded to provide them with medical care to safeguard their health. We read in the 16th century law code, the Shulchan Aruch:

“The Torah grants physicians permission to heal. Healing is, in fact, a religious duty that falls under the rules for saving a life. If a physician withholds treatment when he is able to give it, he is regarded as a murderer, even if here is someone else who can heal a patient, because it may be, in

this case, it is the special merit of this physician to provide the healing for this patient.”

(Shulchan Aruch, chapter 336, sec. 1)

However, we know that often saving a life is not enough. We know that health insurance alone is not enough. We know that having access to hospital emergency rooms alone is not enough. We know that we need a health care system that children can access for regular check-ups and timely care when they are sick. We need a system that does not leave families with sick children struggling to pay large medical bills or, worse, delaying care for their children because they can't afford it. We learn that not only are we commanded to save a life but also to safeguard it and provide the means for that life to remain healthy.

Partners in Creation

In Genesis 2:15 we read that God placed the human on the earth “to till and tend it.” However, while it is important to take care of the earth, this verse can be interpreted metaphorically. We are partners in creation; although Judaism views God as a healer, we are also obligated to heal our world and the people in it. The following Midrash conveys this idea:

The man strolling with the two rabbis turned to them and said, “Who made this man sick?” “The Holy Blessed One,” they replied. “And you presume to interfere in an area that is not yours?” the man remarked. “God has afflicted and you heal?” “What is your occupation?” they asked the man. “I'm a tiller of the soil,” he answered, “as you can see from the sickle I carry.” “Who created the land and the vineyard?” “The Holy Blessed One.” “And you dare to move into an area that is not yours? God created these and you eat their fruit?” “Don't you see the sickle in my hand?” the man asked. “If I did not go out and plow the field, water it, fertilize it, weed it, no food would grow!” “Fool,” the rabbis said, “the body is like a tree—the medicine is the fertilizer and the doctor is the farmer.”

(Midrash Shmuel 4)

Maimonides elaborated on this idea, writing that God endows humanity with wisdom to help all those in need; however, we must just find the will and way to get these resources to all Americans regardless of age, race, or class:

“God created food and water; we must use them in starving off hunger and thirst. God created drugs and com-

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pounds and gave us the intelligence necessary to discover their medicinal properties; we must use them in warding off illness and disease.”

(Moses Maimonides Commentary on Mishnah Pesachim 4:9)

Out of Chaos

In Midrash Rabbah (Gen. Rab. 1.5) the Rabbis debated whether God created the world *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, or whether God used the chaos described in Gen. 1:1 as raw materials for the universe. Today a similar debate is raging in the policy world. Our health care system today represents the chaos of the primordial earth. Nine million children—that's one in nine—have no health insurance. A child is born uninsured every 39 seconds. And about 800,000 pregnant women are uninsured, while each year, approximately 28,000 infants die in America before they reach their first birthday. Moreover, rising health care costs affect everyone—even families with insurance because fewer businesses can afford coverage for their employees, and families that kept their employer-sponsored or private coverage are seeing increases in costs and reductions in

benefits. The result is that millions of children are underinsured and may delay or forgo preventive care and treatment due to cost or other barriers. However, should we adapt the old system to address today's challenges or scrap this system and start anew? What are the implications and challenges of each approach?

My Brother's Keeper

After Cain murders his brother, God asks him about the whereabouts of his brother Abel. In response, Cain asks the question “Am I my brother's keeper?” While this question is never answered, the implication is that yes, Cain is indeed responsible for the whereabouts and well-being of his brother. From this we learn that we all are responsible for the well-being of our “brothers and sisters.” This means that we should support programs that provide health care and health insurance for all children. Furthermore we should lobby for legislation that ensures all children have access to nutritious food and exercise programs that will keep them healthy in the future.



