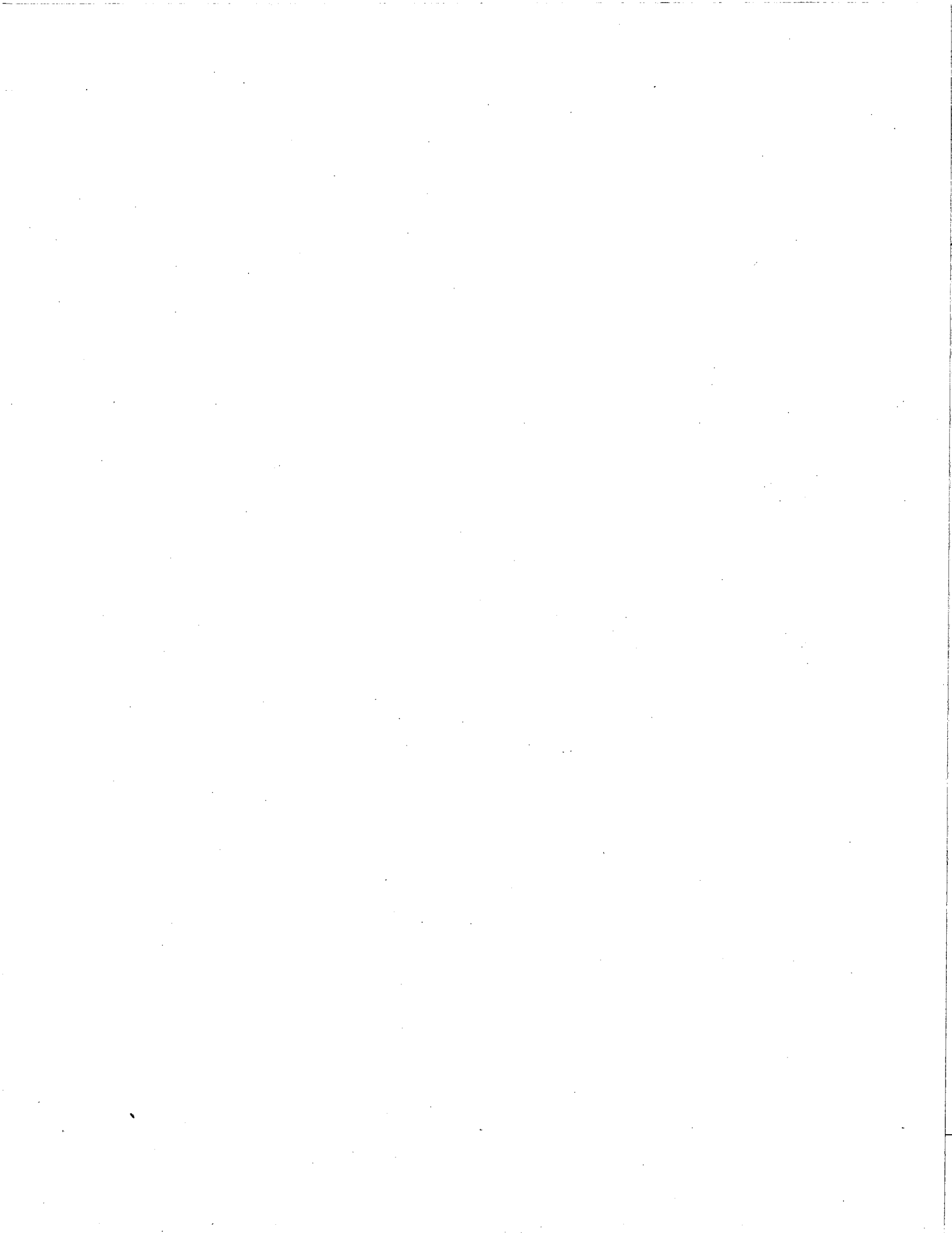


**Beit Midrash I**  
**Monday, February 12, 2007**  
**24 Shevat 5767**

**Ernesto Cortes, Jr.**  
**Rabbi Lavey Derby**



# Panim El Panim

Face to Face

Rabbi Lavey Derby

## A. The Call to Relationship

Exodus 3:4-5

הַסֵּנֶה: 4 וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי סָר לְרֵאֲוֹת וַיִּקְרָא  
אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה  
מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִי: 5 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־תִּקְרַב  
הָלֶם שֶׁל־נַעֲלֶיךָ מֵעַל רַגְלֶיךָ כִּי הַמָּקוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עומד עָלָיו אֲדַמְתִּי־קֹדֶשׁ הוּא:

When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy."

1. In what ways have you experienced "the call" to relationship? In what ways do you initiate relationships?
2. Does relationship require special "space"? What makes the space, or the relationship holy?

## B. Midrash Rabbah, SH'MOT 3:1

. אָמַר ר' יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַכֹּהֵן בֶּר נַחֲמִיָּה: בְּשַׁעַת שְׁנוּלָה הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא  
עַל מֹשֶׁה טִירוֹן הָיָה מֹשֶׁה לְגַבּוּאָה, אָמַר הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: אִם נִגְלָה אֲנִי עָלָיו  
בְּקוֹל גְּדוֹל אֲנִי מְבַעֲתוֹ, בְּקוֹל נְמוּךְ – בּוֹסֵר הוּא עַל הַגְּבּוּאָה; יָמָה עָשָׂה, נִגְלָה  
עָלָיו בְּקוֹלוֹ שֶׁל אָבִיו, אָמַר מֹשֶׁה: 'הֲנִי', מָה אָבָא מְבַקֵּשׁ? אָמַר הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ  
הוּא: אֲנִי אָבִיךָ אֵלָּא אֵלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ, בְּפִתּוּי בְּאֵתִי עָלֶיךָ כְּדִי שְׂלֵא תַתְּיָרָא –

R. Joshua the Priest bar Nehemiah said: When God revealed Himself to Moses, Moses was but a novice in prophecy. The Holy One said: If I reveal

Myself to him in a thunderous voice, I will terrify him; if in a whisper, he will take little note of prophecy. What did God do? He revealed Himself in the voice of Moses' father, whereupon Moses answered, "Here am I. What does my father wish?" God said, "I am not your father. I am the God of your father. In My need to win you over, I addressed you in a familiar voice so that you would not be afraid."

1. What is the rabbis' imaginative reading of the encounter with God?
2. What does this suggest about relationships in general and organizing in particular?

### C. Face to Face in the Thornbush

Exodus 3:6, 11, 13, 4:1, 13-14

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם  
אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּסְתֵּר מֹשֶׁה  
פָּנָיו כִּי יָרָא מִהִבֵּיט אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים:

"I am," He said, "the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִי אֲנֹכִי כִי  
אֵלֶּךָ אֶל־פְּרַעֲזָה וְכִי אוּצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם:

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?"

13 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה אֲנֹכִי  
 בֹּא אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי  
 אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם וְאָמְרוּ־לִי מִה  
 שְׁמוֹ מַה אֹמַר אֲלֵהֶם :

Moses said to God, "When I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"

ד וַיַּעַן מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר וְהֵן לֹא־יִאֱמִינּוּ  
 לִי וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי כִּי יֹאמְרוּ לֹא־נִרְאָה  
 אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה :

But Moses spoke up and said, "What if they do not believe me and do not listen to me, but say: The LORD did not appear to you?"

13 וַיֹּאמֶר בְּנֵי אֲדֹנָי  
 שְׁלַח־נָא בְּיַד־תְּשַׁלַּח : 14 וַיַּחַר־אַף יְהוָה  
 בְּמֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא אֶהְיֶה אִתְּךָ הַלְוִי  
 יִדְעָתִי כִּי־דַבֵּר יְדַבֵּר הוּא וְגַם הַזֶּה־הוּא  
 יֵצֵא לְקִרְאָתְךָ וְרָאֶה וְשָׂמַח בְּלִבּוֹ :

But he said, "Please, O Lord, make someone else Your agent." The LORD became and angry with Moses, and He said, "There is your brother Aaron the Levite. He, I know, speaks readily. Even now he is setting out to meet you, and he will be happy to see you.

1. Moses has five different responses to the encounter with God. What are his responses? Why do you think he responds in these ways?
2. The conversation between Moses and God does not go smoothly. Is it a lack of reverence for Moses to argue with God?
3. God finally loses patience and becomes angry, another indication that the relational meeting is not easy. Is God's anger helpful to the relationship, and if so, how?
4. When is it important to God, and to Moses to include Aaron in the relationship?

D. Face to Face in the Mirror  
Midrash Tanhuma, Pekudei 9

אמר רבי שמעון בר חיימה כתיב  
 היו בנות ישראל עושות יודות לשאוב מים מן הניאר והקב"ה היה מומין להם דנים קמניס  
 בתוך בדיהן והן מוכרות ומבשלות מהן ולקחות מהן יין והולכות לשדה ומאבילות את  
 בעליהן שם שניא (ממוס ט) בכל עבודה בשדה. ששהיו אוכלין ושוחין נוטלות המראות  
 ומביטות בהן עם בעליהן ואת אומרת אני נאה ממך וזה אומר אני נאה ממך ומתוך כך  
 היו מרגילין עצמן לירי תאוה ופריין ורביין והקב"ה טוקחן לאלתר.

"These are the records (pikudei) of the Tabernacle": You find that when Israel were in harsh labor in Egypt, Pharaoh decreed (*gazar*) against them that they should not sleep at home nor have relations with their wives. Said Rabbi Shimeon bar Chalafta, What did the daughters of Israel do? They would go down to draw water from the river and God would prepare for them little fish in their buckets, and they would sell some of them, and cook some of them, and buy wine with the proceeds, and go to the field and feed their husbands, as it is said, "In all the labor in the field." (1:14) And when they had eaten and drunk, the women would take the mirrors and look into them with their husbands, and she would say, "I am more comely than you," and he would say, "I am more comely than you." And as a result, they would accustom themselves to desire, and they were fruitful and multiplied, and God took note of them and redeemed them immediately.

1. What does the playful use of mirrors and reflection in this Midrash add to our understanding of relationships?
2. Why do the women tease their husbands by saying "I am more beautiful than you?" What do they hope to achieve?
3. The Midrash says this mirror play was redemptive. In what way is it redemptive?

E. Face to Face in the Tent of Meeting  
Exodus 25:17-22

שני 17 ועשית כפרת זהב טהור אמתים וחצי  
 ארפה ואמה וחצי רחבה: 18 ועשית  
 שנים כרבים זהב מקשה תעשה אתם

מִשְׁנֵי קְצוֹת הַכַּפֹּרֶת: 19 וְעָשָׂה כְרוֹב אֶחָד  
 מִקְצֵה מִזֵּה וּכְרוֹב־אֶחָד מִקְצֵה מִזֵּה  
 מִן־הַכַּפֹּרֶת תַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִים עַל־שְׁנֵי  
 קְצוֹתָיו: 20 וְהָיוּ הַכְּרֻבִים פְּרָשֵׁי כְנָפַיִם  
 לְמַעַלָּה סֹכְכִים בְּכַנְפֵיהֶם עַל־הַכַּפֹּרֶת  
 וּפְנֵיהֶם אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו אֶל־הַכַּפֹּרֶת יִהְיוּ  
 פְּנֵי הַכְּרֻבִים: 21 וְנָתַתָּ אֶת־הַכַּפֹּרֶת עַל־  
 הָאָרֶן מִלְּמַעַלָּה וְאֶל־הָאָרֶן תִּתֵּן אֶת־  
 הָעֵדוּת אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְנָה אֵלֶיךָ: 22 וְנוֹעַדְתִּי  
 לָךְ שָׁם וְדִבַּרְתִּי אֵתְךָ מֵעַל הַכַּפֹּרֶת  
 מִבֵּין שְׁנֵי הַכְּרֻבִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־אָרֶן הָעֵדוּת  
 אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶה אוֹתְךָ אֶל־בְּנֵי  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ

You shall make a cover of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. Make two cherubim of gold—make them of hammered work—at the two ends of the cover.

Make one cherub at one end and the other cherub at the other end; of one piece with the cover shall you make the cherubim at its two ends. The cherubim shall have their wings spread out above, shielding the cover with their wings. They shall confront each other, the faces of the cherubim being turned toward the cover.

Place the cover on top of the Ark, after depositing inside the Ark the Pact that I will give you. There I will meet with you, and I will impart to you—from above the cover, from between the two cherubim that are on top of the Ark of the Pact—all that I will command you concerning the Israelite people.

1. Why do you think the Torah mandates human figures face to face in Holy of Holies?
2. What does it mean to be face to face?

F. "In Your Face!"

*Zera Kodesh*, Naftali Tsvi Horowitz of Ropczyce [1760-1827]

**במדדש** "אָנְכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ" (שְׁמוֹת כ"ב) הוּא הוּא דְכַתִּיב "פְּנִים בְּפָנִים דְּפָר יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם  
 בְּיַד מְחוּךְ יְהֵאשׁ" (דְּבָרִים ה' ד')

We read in *Midrash Exodus Rabba* 29:2: "I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. (Exodus 20:2) It is written, THE LORD SPOKE WITH YOU FACE TO FACE (Deuteronomy 5:4)

ונראה לי אל הדרך ששמעתי מן פי אדוני מורי ורבי מרימנאב [1745-1815] מהר"מ [מנדל] זכרונו לברכה על פסוק "אחת דבר אלהים שמים-וה שמעתי... (תהלים סב' יב) שאפשר שלא שמענו מפי הקב"ה רק אות א' דאנכי "דברתי פי חכם חן" (שקמת י' יב) ולהבין דבריו הקדושים דברי אלקים חיים שדבריו "הלא כה דברי פאש נאם יהוה וקפטיש יפצץ סלע" (דמיה ס' סז)

It seems to me that this can be understood according to something I once heard from the mouth of my revered master and teacher, Rabbi Mendl of Rymanov, [1745-1815] his memory is a blessing. He explained the verse in Psalms 62:12, ONE THING GOD HAS SPOKEN BUT TWO THINGS I HAVE HEARD...It is possible, he taught, that at Sinai we heard nothing from the mouth of God other than the letter aleph of the first utterance, "I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. (Exodus 20:2) [The first letter of the first word I, *anochi*, is *aleph*.]

1. In the moment of covenant, all the people heard was... silence. How does the silence of the Aleph contribute to relationship? To organizing?
2. The Aleph is shaped out of two yods and a vav connecting them. According to Rebh Naftali, the Aleph represents two eyes (i.e. two yods) and a nose in the middle (the vav). The Aleph therefore represents both silence and a human face.

## G. Studying Torah with A Partner

### About Chevruta Study

*Chevruta* study is the traditional practice of learning with a partner, taking turns reading a text aloud and discussing the material together. While usually thought of as working in pairs, *chevruta* learning can also be done in small groups. Studying in *chevruta* is a time-honored, traditional Jewish model of learning. Rabbi Chalafta taught, "If two sit together and are engaged in the study of the Torah, the presence of God comes to rest between them." Studying in *chevruta*, with regular or rotating partners from session to session, can help the team deepen intimacy and trust. Studying Torah together facilitates shared Jewish spiritual experiences between team members.

### The Goals of *Chevruta*: "The Juxtaposition of Text and Person"

Rachel Adler

The *chaverim* (study partners) do not simply study Bible...The very structure of their relationship and the nature of its boundaries present a Jewish model for the relation between self and other. In this relationship, people experience each other as whole, rather than as fragmented, beings...

Self and other are not sharply separate here. To be *chaverim* is to be neither fused nor counterposed, but to be juxtaposed. The root CH-B-R means to join together at the boundaries. The curtains of the tabernacle, for instance, are *chevrot isha el ahotah*, "joined one to another"...

Some boundaries are barricades - chain link fences guarded by [watch dogs]. Others are not primarily barricades but loci of interaction. A cell membrane, for example, is part of the living substance of the cell. It is the perimeter at which the cell conducts its interchanges with other cells - the contacts, the flowings in and out, which maintain its life within its environment. The boundary between self and other [in study partner relationship] resembles this living, permeable boundary...

I would like to argue that as Jews we have available to us a different way to define the relation between self and other: to reconstitute the objectified other as a subject, and to understand a subject as a self with permeable boundaries contiguous with the boundaries of neighbor-selves. This Torah of self and other, which we [see reflected in the study partner model], grounds

not only our capacity to be *chaverim* but our capacity to create *tzedeck*, justice-as-righteousness. *Tzedeck* is a justice far richer and more particularized than the abstracted, objective fairness of Western liberalism. Its goal is to embody the Torah of self and other in a social matrix that allows all human beings to flourish.

1. Does Adler's description of what happens in chevruta study resonate with your life experiences?
2. How might the "Torah of self and others" that Adler imagines "ground our capacity to create justice"?