

Panim el Panim: teaching one-to-one conversations

Prepared by Rabbi Jill Jacobs, Jewish Funds for Justice

Core concept: This text study introduces participants to the concept of one-to-one meetings, a fundamental practice of organizing. Participants will learn Jewish perspectives on one-to-one encounters, and will also gain the skills to do a one-to-one conversation.

You will need:

- Copies of the text sheets (pages 7-12) and one-to-one worksheets (pages 4-6) for all participants
- A whiteboard or butcher paper and markers

This workshop has four parts:

1. Introduction (10 minutes)
2. Text study (30-60 minutes)
3. One-to-one conversations (30-45 minutes)
4. Closing

Part I: Introduction (10 minutes)

1. Ask participants to think about one experience, in their own lives, in which they have been transformed by an encounter with another person. Give participants 30 seconds to think of an example.
2. In a small group (fewer than 15 people), go around the room and ask participants to share a sentence or two about this experience. In a larger group, break participants down into groups of 3-4 and have members of each group share their experiences.
3. If you have divided the group, bring participants back together. Ask participants to identify common elements in the stories that they have heard. (For example: "several of us talked about a person with a very different life experience" or "many of us talked about a family member" etc.) Write these on the board.
4. Tell participants that you are going to spend the next two hours (or so) exploring some of the ways in which one-to-one encounters can be transformative for individuals and for a community. You are going to explore some Jewish texts about one-to-one encounters and are also going to learn to do "one-to-one conversations," which are a first step in community organizing.

Part II: Text study (30-60 minutes)

Background:

The texts included in this section range from biblical texts to contemporary philosophy and are divided into three sections, which focus on the encounter between humanity and God, the encounter between individual human beings, and the ways in which the human-divine encounter can be a model for the human-human encounter. Background on the individual texts is included on the text sheets.

There are a few ways to do this text study:

1. Have the group split into pairs (*chavrutot*) or small groups, and have each group study some or all of the texts and respond to the discussion questions included on the sheets. (Depending on the amount of time that you have, you may want to select only a few of the texts for study.)
2. Have participants read the texts aloud as a group, stopping periodically to discuss what they have read. After the allotted time, bring participants back together to talk, as a group, about what they have learned.
3. Divide the group into three, and have each group study one of the three included sections. After the allotted study time, the full group will come together, and members of each small group will offer a summary of one of the three sections. Participants can then talk, as a group, about the relationship among the three sections. (In education speak, this is called a “jigsaw”

Some of the major points that people should draw out of the text study are:

- One-to-one encounters require each person to drop assumptions and to be fully open to the experiences, needs, and assumptions of the other.
- One-to-one encounters require each person to be somewhat (though not fully) vulnerable to the other.
- One-to-one encounters demand that each person encounter the other as a manifestation of the divine presence.
- One-to-one encounters should increase each person’s sense of dignity, as well as each person’s commitment to the dignity of the other.
- One-to-one encounters impose commitments on each party.

You should summarize some of these points (as well as other important points that participants raise) at the end of the discussion. During the discussion, you should also ask participants to reflect on the ways in which the texts reflect the experiences of powerful encounter that the participants discussed in the introductory section

Part III One-to-one conversations (45 minutes)

1. Introduce participants to the concept of “one-to-one” conversations. These conversations, which are the building blocks of an organizing campaign, allow people to learn about the passions and commitments of other members of their communities. (You should summarize the information included on page 4)
2. Divide participants into pairs. Give each pair twenty minutes to have a one-to-one conversation focused on “one issue about which you are passionate.” Per the discussion of one-to-ones on page 4, you should encourage participants to probe to find the experiences and commitments that underlie this passion.
3. Bring participants back together to reflect on this experience. How did participants feel about the experience? What was difficult? What was rewarding? What did they learn? How would they feel about doing more of these one-to-one conversations?
4. Reiterate the ways in which one-to-one conversations are used for organizing. In particular, you should mention that one-to-one conversations:
 - Identify the interests and passions of community members.
 - Discover areas of alignment and difference among community members.
 - Build community within a congregation.
 - Help congregations to take on projects that reflect the passions of members of the community.

Part IV Closing

1. Ask participants to reflect on what they have learned about one-to-one encounters? What were the similarities among the experiences they identified in the opening activity, the texts, and the experience of doing a one-to-one conversation?
2. If your congregation is about to embark on a one-to-one campaign: ask participants to commit to doing a certain number of one-to-one conversations over a certain amount of time. (You should adjust the follow-up expectations to the needs of your own community)
3. Ask participants to evaluate the workshop. You can do this through a “plus/delta” system (ask participants to shout out what they liked about the workshop and what they would change for next time, and write these on the board) or can ask participants to submit written evaluations.
4. Give participants copies of the one-to-one explanation and worksheet forms.

One-to-one conversations

(adapted from Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, *Panim el Panim: Our Story*)

Individual Meetings and Relationship Building:

A strong community is built through individual relational meetings. Community organizing gives us a rare opportunity to develop relationships with interesting people who care about the same things that we do. Within an institution, the individual meeting offers an opportunity to deepen the soul of the organization by bringing people into contact in a way that makes people feel valued. One-to-one conversations help to develop relationships among community members, uncover an understanding of individuals' motivations, and identify new leadership.

WHAT A ONE-TO-ONE CONVERSATION IS:

- A 30-45 minute scheduled encounter in which one begins to uncover another person's motivations for public action and social justice.
- An opportunity to listen to the stories that make a person tick and to learn about the values that underlie his or her actions.
- A chance to *listen* to another person. This is not a social visit, nor a plea for participation in a group, nor a bid for someone to do something. Rather, this is a way to learn from and to connect with the individual whom you are meeting.
- A chance to build a relationship. The questions we ask during these conversations get to the "why" and "how". A one-to-one conversation gets behind the facts of what a person does, to the motivation for doing this. What is this person passionate about? Why? What is his/her personal connection to the issue? We should ask questions that probe, but do not pry. Examples of questions that probe:
 - What was your first experience with social injustice? How has this experience affected your life?
 - What are the social justice issues that you feel passionately about?
 - What is it in your own background that causes you to feel so strongly about this?
 - How does Judaism inform your social justice work?

WHAT A ONE-TO-ONE CONVERSATION IS *NOT*:

- selling a package
- an opportunity to pry into another's life
- an interview
- a chance for you to lay out your agenda
- a social visit

HOW TO DO A ONE-TO-ONE MEETING:

I. INITIAL CONTACT: (usually by phone or in person)

- **Give your name and credentials.** Know that the person whom you are calling probably does not know about this community initiative. Briefly discuss the big picture and explain why this person's input is important.

Example: "My name is Sarah Goldberg. I am calling on behalf of the new social justice initiative at (NAME OF CONGREGATION). We recently began an exciting grassroots initiative to learn about what social justice issues are important to members of our community. I would like to meet with you for 30 minutes to learn from you what issues you feel strongly about." (If you have met this person in another context, you might mention this. For example—"I know that my daughter and your son are in Hebrew School together, but you and I have never really gotten a chance to talk.")

- State what you want: (30 minutes to meet and talk)
- Set the time and place (reiterate that it is not a group meeting)
- Don't get into a long discussion over the phone.
- Don't do the conversation over the phone

II. MEETING: (In person)

- Restate your credentials and the context and purpose of the meeting
- Focus on the other person
- Probe, question, and know when to be silent...this is an opportunity to LISTEN. Do not make judgments or critical comments about the person's words.
- Encourage reflection
- End on time
- Ask, "Do you have any questions for me"
- End the meeting by thanking the person for his or her time, letting him/her know that this is a community wide process, and inviting him/her to other relevant upcoming events.

III. EVALUATION (after the meeting)

- **Make notes after you have left the meeting (fill out the reflection sheet and send it in!)**
The conversation as a whole is not intended to be confidential. We are keeping track of the issues that people care about in order that we can identify what the major concerns of the congregation are. However, you may hear things in the course of the conversation that should be kept confidential. If there are any questions in your mind about whether something you hear should be held in confidence, specifically clarify this with the person with whom you are talking.
- **Ask yourself:** Does this person have interest, energy, passion? What are this person's motivations? What can this person bring to the collective? Does this individual have leadership potential?
- **Evaluate yourself:** Did I probe enough? Did I identify a leader? To whom should this person speak next?

One-to-One Reflection Sheet

Date of Conversation:

Your Name:

Name of person with whom you talked:

Phone:

Email:

How long has s/he been involved with this congregation?

Notes on his/her story (and what this story tells you about who s/he is):

What social justice issues does s/he care about?

What does this person want to change in his/her life or family's life?

What does this person like about our community? What does s/he want to change?

What are your reflections on this conversation?

Follow up?

Panim el panim

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I *Bein adam l'makom: the human-divine encounter*

1) **Genesis 32:31**

(לא) ויקרא יעקב שם המקום פניאל כי ראיתי אלהים פנים אל פנים ותנצל נפשי :

Jacob called the place "Peniel" (the face of God) saying, "I have seen God face to face," and yet my life has been preserved.

2) **Exodus 33:11**

יא ודבר יהוה אל־משה פנים אל־פנים כאשר ידבר איש אל־רעהו ושב אל המחנה ומשרת ויהושע בן נון נער לא ימיש מתוך האהל :

God would speak to Moses face to face, as one person speaks to another. And Moses would then return to the camp; but his attendant, Joshua son of Nun, a youth, would not stir out of the tent.

3) **Ezekiel 20:35**

(לה) והבאתי אתכם אל מדבר העמים ונשפטתי אתכם שם פנים אל פנים :

And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples; and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.

4) **Radak** (Rabbi David Kimḥi, Provence 1160-1235) **on Ezekiel 20:35**

ונשפטתי אתכם שם פנים אל פנים כלומר ביני וביניכם בייחוד בלא אמצעי וכן ודבר יי אל משה פנים אל פנים בלא אמצעי

"I will enter into judgment with you face to face." That is to say—between me and you, alone, without an intercessor. This is similar to "God spoke to Moses face to face" without an intercessor.

5) **R. Menachem Recanati** (Italy 1250-1310) **on Numbers 22:2**

[שמות לג, יג] הודיעני נא את דרכיך ואדעך, שלא אמר הכתוב [דברים לד, י] אשר ידע את יי פנים אל פנים, אבל אמר אשר ידעו, כי ידבר על ביאור הנבואה, יאמר כי למשה רבינו ע"ה תהיה מבוארת כמדבר אל חברו פנים בפנים, שמודיעו דבריו וכוונתו עד שיכיר בפניו שהבין דבריו וכוונתו

"Show me your ways that I should know you." For Deuteronomy 34:10 does not say, "who *knew* God face to face" but "to whom God was known," for the text refers to the clarity of the prophecy; that is to say that for Moses, the prophecy was as clear as when one speaks to a friend face to face, for God made God's words and intentions known, such that Moses would know God's face, for he understood God's words and intentions

What is the significance of specifying that in the episodes mentioned here, God meets certain people or groups of people "face to face"? What are the elements of this encounter? How might you respond to such an encounter?

II *Bein adam l'chavero: the human-human encounter*

1) **Ruth, Chapters 1:1-19; 2:1-14**

א) ויהי בימי שפט השפטים ויהי רעב בארץ וילך איש מבית לחם יהודה לגור בשדי מואב הוא ואשתו ושני בניו (ב) ושם האיש אלימלך ושם אשתו נעמי ושם שני בניו מחלון וכליון אפרתים מבית לחם יהודה ויבאו שדי מואב ויהיו שם (ג) וימת אלימלך איש נעמי ותשאר היא ושני בניה: (ד) וישאו להם נשים מאביות שם האחת ערפה ושם השנית רות וישבו שם כעשר שנים: (ה) וימותו גם שניהם מחלון וכליון ותשאר האשה משני ילדיה ומאשה: (ו) ותקם היא וכלתיה ותשב משדי מואב כי שמעה בשדה מואב כי פקד ידוד את עמו לתת להם לחם: (ז) ותצא מן המקום אשר היתה שמה ושתי כלתיה עמה ותלכנה בדרך לשוב אל ארץ יהודה: (ח) ותאמר נעמי לשתי כלתיה לכנה שבנה אשה לבית אמה יעשה יעש ידוד עמכם חסד כאשר עשיתם עם המתים ועמדי: (ט) יתן ידוד לכם ומצאן מנוחה אשה בית אישה ותשק להן ותשאנה קולן ותבכינה: (י) ותאמרנה לה כי אתך נשוב לעמד: (יא) ותאמר נעמי שבנה בנתי למה תלכנה עמי העוד לי בנים במעי והיו לכם לאנשים: (יב) שבנה בנתי לכן כי זקנתי מהיות לאיש כי אמרתי יש לי תקוה גם הייתי הלילה לאיש וגם ילדתי בנים: (יג) הלהן תשברנה עד אשר יגדלו הלהן תעגנה לבלתי היות לאיש אל בנתי כי מר לי מאד מכם כי יצאה בי יד ידוד: (יד) ותשנה קולן ותבכינה עוד ותשק ערפה לחמותה ורות דבקה בה: (טו) ותאמר הנה שבה יבמתך אל עמה ואל אלהיה שובי אחרי יבמתך: (טז) ותאמר רות אל תפגעני בי לעובד לשוב מאחריך כי אל אשר תלכי אלך ובאשר תליני אלין עמך עמי ואלהיך אלהי: (יז) באשר תמותי אמות ושם אקבר כה יעשה ידוד לי וכה יסיף כי המות יפריד ביני ובינך: (יח) ותרא כי מתאמצת היא ללכת אתה ותחדל לדבר אליה: (יט) ותלכנה שתיהם עד באנה בית לחם

In the days when the judges judged, there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and his two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion—Ephratites of Bethlehem in Judah. They came to the country of Moab and remained there.

Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth, and they lived about ten years. Then those two—Mahlon and Chilion—also died; so the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

She started out with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for in the country of Moab, she had heard that God had taken note of God's people and given them food. Accompanied by her daughters-in-law, she left the place where she had been living, and set out on the road back to the land of Judah.

But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Turn back, each of you, to her mother's house. May God deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. May God grant that each of you find security in the house of a husband!" And she kissed them farewell. They broke into weeping and said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people."

But Naomi replied, "Turn back, my daughters! Why should you go with me? Have I any more sons in my body who might be husbands for you? Turn back, my daughters, for I am too old to be married. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I were married tonight and I also bore sons, should you wait for them to grow up? Should you on their account debar yourselves from marriage? Oh no, my daughters! My lot is far more bitter than yours, for the hand of God has struck out against me."

They broke out into weeping again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law farewell. But Ruth clung to her. So she said, "See your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods. Go follow your sister-in-law." But Ruth replied, "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your

God my God, Where you die, I die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may God do to me if anything but death parts me from you." When Naomi saw how determined she was to go with her, she ceased to argue with her, and the two went on until they reached Bethlehem.

Describe the relationship between Naomi and Ruth. In what ways are they able to understand and to respond to each other's needs?

Chapter 2:1-14

(א) ולנעמי מידע מודע לאישה איש גבור חיל ממשפחת אלימלך ושמו בעז: (ב) ותאמר רות המואביה אל נעמי אלכה נא השדה ואלקטה בשבלים אחר אשר אמצא חן בעיניו ותאמר לה לכי בתי: (ג) ותלך ותבוא ותלקט בשדה אחרי הקוצרים ויקר מקרה חלקת השדה לבעז אשר ממשפחת אלימלך: (ד) והנה בעז בא מבית לחם ויאמר לקוצרים ידוד עמכם ויאמרו לו יברכך ידוד: (ה) ויאמר בעז לנערו הנצב על הקוצרים למי הנערה הזאת: (ו) ויען הנער הנצב על הקוצרים ויאמר נערה מואביה היא השבה עם נעמי משדה מואב: (ז) ותאמר אלקטה נא ואספתי בעמרים אחרי הקוצרים ותבוא ותעמוד מאז הבקר ועד עתה זה שבתה הבית מעט: (ח) ויאמר בעז אל רות הלוא שמעת בתי אל תלכי ללקט בשדה אחר וגם לא תעבורי מזה וכה תדבקין עם נערת: (ט) עיניך בשדה אשר יקצרון והלכת אחריהן הלוא צויתי את הנערים לבלתי נגעך וצמת והלכת אל הכלים ושתית מאשר ישאבון הנערים: (י) ותפל על פניה ותשתחו ארצה ותאמר אליו מדוע מצאתי חן בעיניך להכירני ואנכי נכריה: (יא) ויען בעז ויאמר לה הגד לי כל אשר עשית את חמותך אחרי מות אישך ותעזבי אביך ואמך וארץ מולדתך ותלכי אל עם אשר לא ידעת תמול שלשום: (יב) ישלם ידוד פעלך ותהי משכרתך שלמה מעם ידוד אלהי ישראל אשר באת לחסות תחת כנפיו: (יג) ותאמר אמצא חן בעיניך אדני כי נחמתני וכי דברת על לב שפחתך ואנכי לא אהיה כאחת שפחתך: (יד) ויאמר לה בעז לעת האכל גשי הלם ואכלת מן הלחם וטבלת פתך בחמץ ותשב מצד הקוצרים ויצבט לה קלי ותאכל ותשבע ותתר

Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a man of substance, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "I would like to go to the fields and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone who may show me kindness." "Yes, daughter, go," she replied, and off she went. She came in gleaned in a field, behind the reapers and, as luck would have it, it was the piece of land belonging to Boaz, who was of Elimelech's family.

Presently, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem. He greeted the reapers, "May God be with you!" And they responded, "God bless you." Boaz said to the servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose girl is that!" The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is a Moabite girl who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.' She has been on her feet ever since she came this morning. She has rested but little in the hut.

Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen to me, my daughter, Don't go to glean in another field. Don't go elsewhere, but stay here close to my girls. Keep your eyes on the field they are reaping and follow them. I have ordered the men not to bother you. And when you are thirsty, go to the jars and drink some of the water that the men have drawn."

She prostrated herself with her face to the ground and said to him, "Why are you so kind as to single me out when I am a foreigner?"

Gleaning: Leviticus 19:9-10 commands:

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard, you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger. I, Adonai, am your God."

The story of Ruth is an example of the practice of this law.

Boaz said in reply, "I have been told of all that you did for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband, how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth and came to a people you had not known before. May God reward you for your deeds. May you have a full recompense from Adonai, the God of Israel under whose wings you have sought refuge."

She answered, "You are most kind, my lord, to comfort me and to speak gently to your maidservant—though I am not so much as one of your maidservants."

At mealtime, Boaz said to her, "Come over here and partake of the meal, and dip your bread in vinegar." So she sat down beside the reapers. He handed her roasted grain, and she ate her fill and had some left over. When she got up again to glean, Boaz gave orders to his workers, "You are not only to let her glean among the sheaves, without interference, but you must also pull some stalks out of the heaps and leave them for her to glean and not scold her."

What new information do we learn here about the relationship between Ruth and Naomi? Describe the relationships between Boaz and his workers and between Boaz and Ruth. Are there any consistencies in these relationships? How would you describe each character's way of approaching others?

2) **Ruth Rabbah 1:9**

למה נענש אלימלך ע"י שהפיל לבן של ישראל עליהם, לבוליטין שהיה שרוי במדינה והיו בני המדינה סבורין עליו ואומרים שאם יבואו שני בצורת והוא יכול לספק את המדינה עשר שנים מזון, כיון שבאת שנת בצורת יצתה לה שפחתו מעילת בסידקי וקופתה בידה, והיו בני המדינה אומרים זהו שהיינו בטוחים עליו שאם תבא בצורת הוא יכול לפרנס אותנו עשר שנים, והרי שפחתו עומדת בסידקי וקופתה בידה, כך אלימלך היה מגדולי המדינה ומפרנסי הדור, וכשבאו שני רעבון אמר עכשיו כל ישראל מסבבין פתחי, זה בקופתו וזה בקופתו, עמד וברח לו מפניהם, הה"ד וילך איש מבית לחם יהודה.

Ruth Rabbah is a collection of *Midrashim* (Rabbinic expansions/explanations of the biblical text) possibly compiled in the fifth or sixth century CE. Some of the major themes of Ruth Rabbah are the rewards of lovingkindness, modesty, and care for the poor.

Why was Elimelekh punished? Because he struck despair into the hearts of Israel. . . He was one of the notables of his place and one of the leaders of his generation. But when the famine came, he said, "Now all Israel will come knocking at my door, each one with a basket [looking for food donations]." He therefore arose and fled from them. This is the meaning of the verse, "And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went."

3) **Ruth Rabbah 2:14**

יד יעשה ה' עמכם חסד, ר' חנינא בר אדא אמר יעשה כתיב כאשר עשיתם עם המתים שנטפלתם בתכריכיהון ועמדי שויתרו לה כתובותיהן, אייר זעירא מגלה זו אין בה לא טומאה ולא טהרה ולא איסור ולא היתר ולמה נכתבה ללמדך כמה שכר טוב לגומלי חסדים.

Rabbi Zeira said, "This book contains neither laws of taboos or of permitted things, and neither prohibitions or permissions. Why was it written? To teach the extent of the reward for those who do acts of lovingkindness."

Why does the midrash condemn Elimelech? What does he do wrong? To whom do you think that the midrash refers when it praises "those who do acts of lovingkindness"? What acts of lovingkindness have you seen in the text of Ruth?

III The human-divine encounter as a model for the human-human encounter

1) **Abraham Joshua Heschel, "No Religion is an Island" in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*** ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996) 238-239

To meet a human being is a major challenge to mind and heart. I must recall what I normally forget. A person is not just a specimen of the species called *Homo sapiens*. He is all humanity in one, and whenever one man is hurt, we are all injured. The human is a disclosure of the divine, and all men are one in God's care for man. Many things on earth are precious, some are holy, humanity is holy of holies.

To meet a human being is an opportunity to sense the image of God, the *presence* of God. According to a rabbinical interpretation, the Lord said to Moses: "Wherever you see the trace of man there I stand before you. . ."

2) **The Window and the Curtain** in Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* (New York: Schocken, 1947) 177

When young Rabbi Eleazar of Koznitz, Rabbi Moshe's son, was a guest in the house of Rabbi Naftali of Roptchitz, he once cast a surprised glance at the window, where the curtains had been drawn. When his host asked him the cause of his surprise, he said: "If you want people to look in, then why the curtains? And if you do not want them to, why the window?"

"And what explanation have you found for this?" asked Rabbi Naftali.

"When you want someone you love to look in," said the young rabbi, "you draw aside the curtain."

Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972) was one of the most important theologians of the 20th century. Born and educated in Berlin, Heschel left Nazi Germany in 1938 to go first to England and then to America. He was a professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary and an active participant in the civil rights movement. Central to Heschel's thought is an emphasis on the experience of God, rather than on the intellectual knowledge of God. For Heschel, this experience of God also demanded an ethical response within the human sphere.

Rabbi Eleazar of Koznitz was a nineteenth century Hasidic rabbi and the grandson of the Maggid of Koznitz, one of the first Hasidic leaders in central Poland. The Hasidic movement emphasized emotional expression and personal connection to God, and also elevated certain rabbis to the status of "*tzaddik*" (literally "righteous person." The *tzaddik* was understood to have a special relationship with God and therefore to be able to bring his community into a closer relationship with God. These unorthodox beliefs and practices created conflict between the Hasidim and the defenders of traditional Judaism (called the "*mitnagdim*" or "opposers")

- 3) **Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*** Trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 1969) pp. 74, 196, 200

Levinas is notoriously difficult to read, so don't think that you're alone if you have difficulty with this text. His major assertion here is that the encounter with "the face"—the most vulnerable part of another person—imposes infinite obligations on the one who opens him/herself to the encounter.

The gaze that supplicates and demands, that can supplicate only because it demands, deprived of everything because entitled to everything, and which one recognizes in giving. . . this face is precisely the epiphany of the face as a face. The nakedness of the face is destituteness. To recognize the Other is to recognize a hunger. To recognize the Other is to give. But it is to give to the master, to the lord, to him whom one approaches as You [Vous] in a dimension of height. . .

[p. 200] To manifest oneself as a face is to *impose oneself* above and beyond the manifested and purely phenomenal form, to present oneself in a mode irreducible to manifestation, the very straightforwardness of the face to face, without the intermediary of any image, in one's nudity, that is, in one's destitution and hunger. . . The being that expresses itself imposes itself, but does so precisely by appealing to me with its destitution and nudity—its hunger—without my being able to be deaf to that appeal. Thus in expression the being that imposes itself does not limit but promotes my freedom, by arousing my goodness.

According to these texts, what are some potential ways in which people can encounter one another? Can you think of times in your life when you have encountered another person in one or more of these ways? How did this feel?

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) was a prominent Lithuanian-born French philosopher who wrote for both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. His works focus on a rejection of traditional metaphysics, which emphasizes knowledge above all else, and an emphasis on ethics as preceding knowledge. In addition to his purely philosophical works, Levinas also published a book of Talmudic readings and a series of essays on Judaism,