



1. The American Declaration of Independence, 1776

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

2. *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, (Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen), 1789

Les hommes naissent et demeurent libres et égaux en droits

Men are born and remain free and equal in rights

All Are Created Equal

3. Talmud, Kiddushin 72a

וארו חיוא אחרי תנינא דמיה לדוב תני רב יוסף אלו פרסיים שאוכלין ושותין כדוב ומסורבלין כדוב ומגדלין שער כדוב ואין להם מנוחה כדוב.
"And a second beast, like a bear. (Daniel 7:5)" Rav Yosef taught: These are the Persians, who eat and drink like a bear, who are fleshy like a bear, who are hairy like a bear, and who are restless like a bear.

4. Bereishit 1:27

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם

And Gd created Man in His image, in the image created by Gd He created him, male and female He created them.

5. Rabbi Shimon Sofer (19th century Hungary), Hitorirut Teshuvah 1:175

ופשיטא לי, מהא דאמר חז"ל ד"גדול כבוד הבריות שדוחה לא תעשה שבתורה" נקט סתם לשון "בריות" דגם גוי בכלל. ומסתברא דטעם לכבדו הוא משום "כי בצלם אלקים עשה את האדם", וזה נאמר גם על גוי דהוא סיפא דקרא "שופך דם האדם" שנאמר לבני נח שהוא משבע מצות "כי בצלם אלקים עשה את האדם". ועיין רש"י סוף פ' יתרו. יש להביא ראיה מרמב"ם הל' סנהדרין דקאמר שאין לדיין לבנות העם גדול כבוד הבריות, ולא עוד אלא שהם בני אברהם יצחק ויעקב - משמע מדקאמר "ולא עוד" ד"גדול כבוד הבריות" קאי על כל הגוים
And it is obvious to me, from that which our sages said, that "The dignity of creatures is great, overriding a biblical prohibition," using the general "creatures", including non-Jews as well. Logically, the reason to honour him is because of "for with the Divine image He created man," which is said about non-Jews as well, for that is the end of the verse, "One who sheds human blood" which was stated for Noah's descendants, as one of their seven mitzvot, "for with the Divine image He created man." And see Rashi at the end of Parshat Yitro. One may bring proof from Rambam (Laws of Sanhedrin 24:10), where he said that a judge may not degrade the population, for the honour of creatures is great, and further, they are descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov – indicating by saying "and further" that "the dignity of creatures is great" refers to all nations.

6. R' Ahron Soloveichik (20th c. USA), *Civil Rights and the Dignity of Man*, Logic of the Heart, Logic of the Mind

From the standpoint of the Torah, there can be no distinction between one human being and another on the basis of race or color. Any discrimination shown to a human being on account of the color of his or her skin constitutes loathsome barbarity...

The Torah says in Genesis, "In the image of Gd He created Man" (1:27). This metaphysical idea leads to the *halachic* principle of *k'vod habriyos*, the dignity of Man....

The concept of "dignity of Man" is not only a metaphysical concept but it also has a legal counterpart, whose scope is broad enough to include all human beings since all were created in the image of Gd. This idea is contained in the saying of ben Azzai, "Despise not any man" (*Avos* 4:3). The expression "any man" implies, as the commentaries say, that even pagans must be treated with respect, and it is a sin to despise them....

7. Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5 (37a)

לפיכך נברא אדם יחידי... ומפני שלום הבריות שלא יאמר אדם לחבירו "אבא גדול מאביך".

Therefore man was created as an individual... And for the sake of peace among [Gd's] creations, that no one should say to another, "My ancestor is greater than your ancestor."

8. R' Dr. Shlomo Carmy, *Is Contemporary Orthodox Judaism Racist? Some Informal Remarks*, Tradition 50:4 (2018)
<https://traditiononline.org/is-contemporary-orthodox-judaism-racist-some-informal-remarks/>

9. Rabbi J. David Bleich, *Black Jews: A Halakhic Perspective*, Tradition 15 (1972)

In 1864 Rabbi Ezriel Hildesheimer, a prominent rabbinic spokesman, issued a call for action in order to counteract missionary activity among the Falashas. This was followed by a fact-finding mission undertaken in 1867 by the noted orientalist and Semitic scholar, Joseph Halévy.

10. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (20th century USA), Published Letter

And I was very pained to hear that there are such people in Israel who refrain from drawing near [the Ethiopians] in spiritual matters, causing them – Gd forbid – to be lost from Judaism. It appears to me that they do this only because their skin is black. It is obvious that one must draw them close, not only because they are no worse than other Jews and there is no legal distinction due to their blackness...

11. Rabbi J. David Bleich (20th-21st century USA), *Black Jews: A Halakhic Perspective*, Tradition 15 (1972)

Judaism is color blind; skin pigmentation is unknown as a halakhic concept. The problem of determining the status of the various communities of Black Jews is totally unrelated to color. The sole issue is that of Jewish identity.

12. Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, *Neither Thy Honey Nor Thy Sting*, 1969 sermon

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gDvsxQAPLNHm54RtbgVTXJtOmol9IYyx/view>

I deeply regret that in the past those who were immersed in Judaism have largely failed to reach outward to other peoples, and those Jews who have reached outwards have usually had no real link with Judaism. As a result, for many people Civil Rights became a religion in itself. The help to the Black community became a substitute for Judaism, when it should have been an expression and function of Judaism.

Remaining Equal?

13. R' Ahron Soloveichik (20th c. USA), *Civil Rights and the Dignity of Man*, Logic of the Heart, Logic of the Mind

It must be conceded that the Torah recognizes a distinction between a Jew and a non-Jew. This distinction, however, is not based upon race, origin, or color, but rather upon *k'dushah*, the holiness endowed by having been given and having accepted the Torah. Furthermore, the distinction between Jew and non-Jew does not involve any concept of inferiority but is based primarily upon the unique and special burdens that are incumbent upon the Jews.

14. Bereishit 9:25

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱרֹר כְּנָעַן עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים יִהְיֶה לְאַחֲיוֹ:

And he said: Cursed is Canaan! A slave of slaves, he shall be to his brethren.

15. Bereishit 24:3-4

וְאֶשְׁבִיעֶנָּה בְּד' אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִקַּח אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי מִבְּנוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּקִרְבּוֹ: כִּי אֶל אֶרֶצִי וְאֶל מוֹלַדְתִּי תֵלֵךְ וְלִקְחֶתָּ אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי לְיִצְחָק:

And I demand you swear by Hashem, Gd of the Heavens and Gd of the land, that you will not take a wife for my son from the Canaanite daughters among whom I live. For to my land and to my birthplace you shall go, and you shall take a wife for my son, for Yitzchak.

16. Audio sessions: "No Canaanites Allowed": Was Avraham Racist?

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/937461/> <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/938146/>

17. Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky (20th century Canada, USA), Emet l'Yaakov to Genesis 9:25

הנה ישנן משונאינו מאומות העולם הטוענים שכלל ישראל היא אומה גזענית, שהרי התורה אומרת שכנען ארור והוא יהיה עבד עבדים לאחיו, הרי שהשפילה התורה את גזע כנען למדרגת עבד. אבל האמת ודאי היא לא כן, דהא זה ברור שדעת התורה היא כנגד גזענות וכבר הוכחתי זה בחידושי לעיל וכו' מלשון המשנה בסנהדרין דף ל"ז ע"א מפני מה נברא האדם יחידי שלא יאמר אדם להבירו אבא גדול מאביך הרי שבדוקא שינה הקב"ה במין האדם משאר המינים וברא רק אדם יחידי כדי שלא יבואו בני האדם לידי מדה מגונה זו אלא שלפ"ז צריכים

לבאר את פעולתו של נח במה שהוריד את כנען למדרגת עבד והשפילו משאר מין האדם והרי זה לכאורה פעולה גזענית טהורה. אבל באמת אין לזה שום שייכות עם גזענות, דגזענות פירושה שגזע אחד מתנשא מעל גזע אחר בגלל מוצאו ויחוסו וכאילו שהוא נוצר "מחומר" עילאי וטוב יותר וכדומה, אבל כאן הטעם שחילק ביניהם נח היה משום מדותיו המושחתות של חם ובנו כנען, ומדות אלו הנחיל הוא לבניו אחריו, וכמו שאמרו חז"ל (פסחים קיג:): "חמשה דברים צוה כנען את בניו וכו'..."

Some of our enemies among the nations of the world claim that the nation of Israel is a racist nation, for the Torah says that Canaan is cursed and will be a slave of slaves to his brethren. The Torah lowered the race of Canaan to the stature of slaves. But the truth is certainly not so, for it is clear that the Torah's view is against racism, as I have already proved earlier from the language of Sanhedrin 37a, "Why was humanity created as an individual? Lest one say to another, 'My ancestor was greater than your ancestor.'" We see that Gd specifically altered the human species from other species, creating only a single male, so that people would not come to this ugly trait! But because of this [apparent racism], we must explain Noach's action, in degrading Canaan to the level of a slave and lowering him from the status of the rest of humanity. This seems to be an act of pure racism! But in truth, this has no relationship with racism, for racism means that one race elevates itself over another race because of its origin and lineage, as though it were formed of higher and better "material" and the like. But here, the reason Noach distinguished them was because of the corrupt traits of Cham, and his son Canaan, traits which he taught to his descendants after him, as our Sages said (Pesachim 113b), "Canaan instructed his children five items, etc."...

18. Talmud, Yevamot 79a

"ויאמרו לו הגבעונים אין לנו כסף וזהב עם שאול ועם ביתו ואין לנו איש וגו' יותן לנו שבעה אנשים מבניו והוקענום לד' וגו'." מפייה ולא פייסיהו. אמר, שלשה סימנים יש באומה זו: הרחמנים, והביישנים, וגומלי חסדים; רחמנים, דכתיב... כל שיש בו שלשה סימנים הללו ראוי להדבק באומה זו.

"And the Givonim said to him: We have neither silver nor gold with Shaul and with his household, and we have no man [to kill in Israel]... Let seven men of his children be given to us, and we will hang them before Gd." (Shemuel II 21:4-6) King David tried to appease them, and they would not be appeased. He said, "There are three signs for this nation: Merciful, bashful, and generous... One who has these three signs is suited to cleave to this nation."

19. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (11th century Spain) to Bereishit 9:18

"וחם הוא אבי כנען" ללמד ששניהם רעים, וכמעשה אבות יעשו בנים.

"And Cham is the father of Canaan" teaches that both were bad, and as the ancestors do, so the children will do.

Rosh HaShanah Answers

20. Mishnah Rosh HaShanah 1:2

בראש השנה כל באי העולם עוברין לפניו כבני מרון...

On Rosh HaShanah, all who have entered the world pass before Him, like *bonei maron*...

21. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:4

צריך כל אדם שיראה עצמו כל השנה כולה כאילו חציו זכאי וחציו חייב, וכן כל העולם חציו זכאי וחציו חייב, חטא חטא אחד הרי הכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם כולו לכף חובה וגרם לו השחתה, עשה מצוה אחת הרי הכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם כולו לכף זכות וגרם לו ולהם תשועה והצלה שנאמר וצדיק יסוד עולם זה שצדק הכריע את כל העולם לזכות והצילו, ומפני ענין זה נהגו כל בית ישראל להרבות בצדקה ובמעשים טובים ולעסוק במצות מראש השנה ועד יום הכפורים יתר מכל השנה, ונהגו כולם לקום בלילה בעשרה ימים אלו ולהתפלל בבתי כנסיות בדברי תחנונים ובכיבושין עד שיאור היום.

One must see himself, all year, as though he were half meritorious and half guilty, and as though the entire world were half meritorious and half guilty, such that committing one sin would weigh down himself and the entire world for guilt and cause his destruction, and committing one mitzvah would weigh down himself and the entire world for merit and cause his and their salvation and rescue, as Proverbs 10:25 says, "A righteous person is the foundation of the world." This refers to someone who weighted the whole world for merit, and saved it. And because of this, all Israel is accustomed to increase tzedakah and good deeds and to be involved in mitzvot from Rosh HaShanah to Yom Kippur, beyond the rest of the year, and all of them customarily rise at night during these ten days to pray in the synagogues, pleading and self-humbling until the dawn of the day.

23. Yirmiyahu 31:17-18

שְׁמוֹעַ שְׁמֵעֵתִי אֶפְרַיִם מִתְנוּדָד יִסְרַתְנִי וְאֹסֵר כְּעֶגְלָל לֹא לָמַד הִשִּׁיבֵנִי וְאֲשׁוּבָה כִּי אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵי: כִּי אֶחְרִי שׁוּבִי נִחַמְתִּי וְאַחֲרֵי הַנִּדְעֵי סִפְקֵתִי עַל יָרֵךְ בִּשְׁתִּי וְגַם נִכְלַמְתִּי כִּי נִשְׂאֵתִי חֶרְפַת נְעוּרָי:

I have heard Ephraim moaning: You have rebuked me and I was rebuked, like an untrained calf. Bring me back and I will return, for You are Hashem, my Gd. For after I repented, I regretted, and after I was educated I slapped my thigh. I am embarrassed as well as humiliated, for I have borne the shame of my youth.