

Human dignity in Judaism: selected texts
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Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Article One: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Genesis 1:26: בְּצִלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ

Psalm 8:5: 'You have crowned him (man) with glory and majesty (*kavod v'hadar t'atreihu*).'

'All that God created in His world He created exclusively for His *kavod*' (Mishnah Avot 6:11)

BT Ketubot 16b-17a:

One recites praise of **the bride as she is**, emphasizing her good qualities. **And Beit Hillel say: One recites: A fair and attractive bride. Beit Shammai said to Beit Hillel: In a case where the bride was lame or blind, does one say with regard to her: A fair and attractive bride? But the Torah states: "Keep you from a false matter" (Exodus 23:7). Beit Hillel said to Beit Shammai: According to your statement, with regard to one who acquired an inferior acquisition from the market, should another praise it and enhance its value in his eyes or condemn it and diminish its value in his eyes? You must say that he should praise it and enhance its value in his eyes and refrain from causing him anguish. From here the Sages said: A person's disposition should always be empathetic with mankind**, and treat everyone courteously. In this case too, once the groom has married his bride, one praises her as being fair and attractive.

Mishnah Baba Kamma 8:6

(And) there was an incident of someone uncovering the head of a woman in the street. She came before Rabbi Akiva, and he required him to give her four hundred *zuz*. He said to him, "Rabbi, give me time." So he gave him time. [The man] watched her stand at the entrance of her courtyard, broke a pitcher in front of her, and in it was *issar* [eight *prutot*] of oil. She uncovered her head and scooped [the oil], and rubbed her hands on her head. He placed witnesses against her and he came before Rabbi Akiva. He said to him, "Rabbi, to her I gave four hundred *zuz*!?" He replied, "You haven't said anything." One who injures himself, even though he is not permitted, he is exempt. Others who wound him are liable. And one who

cuts his own shoots, even though he is not permitted, he is exempt. Others who cut his shoots are liable.

'God pays attention to the *kavod* (dignity) of Israel' (Midrash Numbers Rabbah 9:33)

Everyone is included in the counting of seven, even a woman, even a child, but women may not read because of the honor of the congregation, *kavod hatzibur*. (TB Megillah 23a)

So great is the dignity of creatures (*k'vod ha briot*) that it displaces a prohibition of the Torah (TB Berachot 19b)

He who sheds blood is regarded as though he had impaired the likeness (*dmut*) of God. Why? Gen 9:6: For He made man in the image of God (Bereshit Rabbah 34.14, Theodor-Albeck, 326)

'Precious is *adam* (man) for he was created in the image [of God]. Precious is Israel who are called children of the Omnipresent.' (Mishnah Avot 3:14) *chaviv adam shebara b'tselem... chavivin Yisrael shenikrau banim lamakom*

State of Israel's Basic Laws: *kavod ha'adam v'heruto*