

## AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps Torah Portion – Va-Yechi

### CREATING WORLDS

COMMENTARY: This week's Torah portion, *Va-Yechi*, is the last portion in the book of Genesis, and the final chapter in the epic story of Abraham and Sarah's immediate family. In Exodus, the focus shifts from particular righteous individuals (*tzadikim*) to a story about an entire people who are the descendants of those people.

Before we leave off talking about the role of individuals and begin thinking about the fate of an entire nation, here are two teachings on the power of individuals:

אמר רבא: אי בעו צדיקי ברו עלמא, שנאמר: כי עוונותיכם היו מבדלים ביניכם לבין אלהיכם.

1. Rava said: If they wanted to, the *tzadikim* could create worlds... (*Sanhedrin* 65b)

כך אמר הקב"ה לצדיקים, הרי אתם כיוצא בי, שמא יותר ממני אתם מבקשים, שנאמר: "אם תשוב ואשיבך לפני תעמוד ואם תוציא יקר מזולל כפי תהיה" (ירמיה טו יט).  
מה אני בורא עולמות ומחיה מתים אף אתם כן.

2. This is what God said to the *tzadikim*: You are My equals, can you ask more of Me? It says, *If you return, then I will take you back, and you will stand before Me. If you bring forth something precious from what is considered worthless, you will be My spokesperson.* (Jeremiah 15:19). [And this implies,] just as I create worlds and bring the dead back to life, you do the very same things.  
(*Midrash Tehillim* 116:8)

**QUESTIONS:** The word *tzaddik* (righteous person/good person) comes from the root *tzadek*, which means "justice." The *tzaddik* is someone whose life is about promoting the good, the right, and the just. Text #1 claims that *tzadikim* could create worlds if they wanted to? How would they do that?

Text #2 puts the *tzadikim* on par with God and specifies that what makes them similar is the power to create worlds and revive the dead. What do you think of this as a job description for those who seek justice in the world?