

FOOD is POWER

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I am not interested in power for power's sake, but I'm interested in power that is moral, that is right and that is good.¹

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum:

1. The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.
2. Assured ability to acquire foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies).²

Food sovereignty The right of peoples – especially farmers – to define their own agricultural and food systems. Food sovereignty demands that the policies and mechanisms involved in production, distribution, and consumption of food focus on creating ecologically sustainable systems and healthy lives for people, rather than profits for corporations.³

Discussion Questions

- What is the difference between these two definitions? Which resonates with you more?
- What are times where food security should be the goal? What are times that food sovereignty should be the goal?
- What do you want to change or add to these definitions?
- Who has the power in these definitions? How does the power in the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. quote relate to each definition?

¹ | As quoted in *The Civil Sphere* (2006) by Jeffrey C. Alexander, p. 388

² | USDA via the *Journal of Nutrition*, 1990

³ | Adapted from the [2007 Nyeleni Declaration of Food Sovereignty](#).

Respect for other nations

אֲמוֹת הָעוֹלָם | *Umot ha-Olam*

The following two quotes are taken from the Babylonian Talmud, a book of Jewish laws and anecdotes compiled around the 6th century in Babylonia.

The section Brachot focuses on laws and practices concerning prayer.

Babylonian Talmud, Brachot 17a

I am God's creature and my fellow is God's creature. My work is in the city and their work is in the field. I rise early for my work and they rise early for their work. Just as they do not specialize my work, so I do not specialize in their work.

Will you say, I do much and they do little? We have a tradition: One may do much or one may do little; it is all the same, provided one directs one's heart to heaven.

אני בריה וחברי בריה אני מלאכתי בעיר
והוא מלאכתו בשדה אני משכים
למלאכתי והוא משכים למלאכתו כשם
שהוא אינו מתגדר במלאכתי כך אני איני
מתגדר במלאכתי

ושמא תאמר אני מרבה והוא ממעיט שנינו
אחד המרבה ואחד הממעט ובלבד שיכוין
לבו לשמים

Babylonian Talmud, Brachot 19b

Come and learn: Human dignity is so important that it supersedes even a biblical prohibition.

תא שמע: גדול כבוד הבריות שדוחה
[את] לא תעשה שבתורה

Discussion Questions

- How do these texts relate to the definitions of food security and food sovereignty? Do you prefer one over the other?
- How does the Jewish value of Umot ha-Olam, respect for the nations of the world, connect to preserving and respecting cultural identity?
- How can we use volunteering to work towards food sovereignty? How can our volunteering align with Dr. King's message and the values expressed in the Talmud?