



JUDAISM FOR LIVING SERIES

REBUILDING THE TEMPLE THROUGH LOVE

SOURCE AND DISCUSSION SHEET



The commandment to build the Temple is phrased in the Torah as **"Make for me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them"** – understood by the Rabbis as meaning more than just a physical dwelling for God, but rather a presence within the hearts of the Jewish People! The Temple was a place that embodied the loving, caring relationship of the Jewish People with God. When the relationship became damaged the Temple was destroyed. It was the barometer of our connection to Him. Senseless hatred (literally "free hatred") amongst the Jewish People destroyed our 2nd Temple and only "free love" will rebuild it. The famous directive, **"Love your neighbor like yourself,"** is the lynchpin both to our relationship with God and with one another.

A. LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF – WHAT IS THE MITZVAH/COMMANDMENT?

SOURCE 1: VAYIKRA (LEVITICUS), 19:18 – LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR LIKE YOURSELF

Do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge against the members of your people, and **you shall love your neighbor like yourself**; I am God.

לֹא-תִקֵּם וְלֹא-תִטּוֹר אֶת-בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ
וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה' :

Question: Why is "love your neighbor" included in the same verse as "bearing a grudge and taking revenge," two injunctions which have categorically opposite intents?

Question: What does the word k'mocha - "like yourself" - add to the intent of the mitzvah? It seems superfluous.

Let's try answering these questions by first exploring the thought process that underlies revenge? As we read the next source, consider how its message gives new meaning to k'mocha -- like yourself.

SOURCE 2: GREAT BOOK OF MITZVOS (SM'G), POS. # 9 – A MORE ENCOMPASSING CONCEPT FOR K'MOCHA/ LIKE YOURSELF

Mitzvah of loving your neighbor like yourself: The general principle is that what is hateful to you don't do to your friend. (Shabbat 31) Therefore, imagine a person sitting and cutting a piece of meat, who accidentally cuts his other hand with the knife. Would it be logical for the other hand to **cut the hand which is holding the knife in revenge?**

מצוה ואהבת לרעך כמוך: כללו של דבר
דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד כדאיתא
(במסכת שבת בפרק שני - ל"א)
ובירושלמי דנדרים (פ"ט ה"ד) גרסינן
מי שיושב ומחתך בשר והכה ידו בסכין
וכי תחזור ידו ותכה ידו להנקם?

Question: Why is taking revenge in this case ridiculous? What is the underlying conclusion we can draw from this observation?

The basis for “not taking revenge” and loving people is to understand that we are all one. That is why we don’t take revenge on our kids and also the reason that the Torah stresses k’mocha – “Like Yourself” in the verse. We need to regard people that way to love them. Recognizing that we are one is the antidote to hate and a precondition for love.

Question: Our verse in source 1 above ends with the phrase, “I am God.”
What does this add to the mitzvah? Weren’t all the mitzvos given by God ?

SOURCE 3: SMALL BOOK OF MITZVOS (SM’K), POS. #8 – BRINGING IT BACK TO THE SOURCE/LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR LIKE YOURSELF

Included in this mitzvah is the engendering of peace between a person and his friend. Rabbi Akiva called it the central principle of the Torah. Ben Azzai expressed it even more strongly than Rabbi Akiva by saying “**For man was created in the image of God,**” meaning that even if a person is not particular about his own honor, he should be particular about the honor of his friend.

לאהוב את חבירו דכתיב (ויקרא י"ט) ואהבת לרעך כמוך, ובכלל זה הבא' שלום שבין אדם לחבירו ומכריעו לכף זכות. לאהוב את חבירו אמר רבי עקיבא כלל גדול בתורה ואהבת לרעך כמוך. הוסיף בן עזאי ואמר גדול הימנו שנאמר כי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם. פי' אף על פי שאינו מקפיד על כבוד עצמו יש לו להקפיד על כבוד חבירו

This source suggests that being created in God’s image is at the root of this commandment.

Question: How does knowing we are created in the image of God help us generate the feelings of love and unity that this mitzvah requires?

Unity emanates from the understanding that what makes us one is that we all have a **Godly soul - in that truth we are all One**. If we see the Godliness within ourselves and identify with our souls, then we will automatically see and connect to the Godly soul in others, engendering love in feeling and in deed.

There is another important reason why “I am God - Ani Hashem” is connected to the mitzvah of “loving your neighbor like yourself.” Let’s explore this idea by considering the famous commentator Rashi’s comments on this phrase from another verse in this chapter of the Torah:

SOURCE 4: VAYIKRA (LEVITICUS) 19:16 IN RASHI “I AM GOD (HASHEM)”

Do not gossip among your people, do not stand by while the blood of your brother is being shed,
I am (God) Hashem.

RASHI:

‘אני ה' - I Am **(God)** Hashem: (The One) who is faithful in paying reward and (The One) who is faithful to punish.

Some of the commandments that God requires are difficult for us - sometimes physically, emotionally, or financially. Fulfilling commandments like “not standing idly by when our brother’s blood is being shed” (Source 4 above), and “loving your neighbor like yourself”(Source 1), may at times, be contrary to our perceived self-interest.

By adding “I am God” to the verse, God is telling us that He has our back. We won’t lose out by doing the right thing, even though it might not appear so right now. However, the check has already been deposited in the bank!

Question: What areas of your life do you have resistance to doing the right thing, or the best thing at the time? Maybe in business or in interpersonal relationships?

Question: Would knowing that God has your back change anything?

Another important thing to keep in mind is that since God runs the world, you can never really lose out. There are always ways for Him to even the scorecard and give you what you need and what you deserve! This is the level of trust in God that we must work towards in life.

Now that we understand some key aspects of the mitzvah, what is required of us to do?

B. HOW DO WE FULFILL THE MITZVAH/COMMANDMENT?

SOURCE 5: BOOK OF MITZVOS – MAIMONIDES, MITZVAH 243 WHAT TO BELIEVE AND FEEL

My mercy and love for my brother should be exactly like the mercy and love I have for myself; [specifically in regard to] his money, physical welfare, and everything that will ever be in his possession or he will want. And everything that I wish for myself, I should desire for him. [Conversely,] anything that I would hate for myself or for anyone who associates with me, I should find hateful to him in the exact same fashion. This is what the Torah stated: "...and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

היא שצונו לאהוב קצתנו את קצתנו כאשר נאהב עצמנו ושתהיה אהבתו וחמלתו לאחיו כאהבתו וחמלתו לעצמו בממונו ובגופו וכל מה שיהיה ברשותו אם ירצה אותו ארצה אני אותו וכל מה שארצה לעצמי ארצה לו כמוהו. והוא אמר יתעלה ואהבת לרעך כמוך. (קדושים תהי, מדע הלכות דעות פ"ז)

Question: How do we fulfill the mitzvah of loving fellow Jews according to Maimonides?

In short everything I want for myself I should want for others. We mentioned above that the starting point is realizing that we are all one, part of the same family. Recent events have brought Jews together and instilled within us the real truth of this concept.

Question: How can we maintain the feeling that we are part of one family, even after the pressure from our enemies subsides?

TWO PRACTICAL PATHWAYS TO LOVING OTHER JEWS:

- A Path to Love is to See and Focus Upon Virtue as explained in the following source:

SOURCE 6: HOW TO LOVE OTHERS

RABBI NOACH WEINBERG

Love is the emotional pleasure a person feels when they see good in another human being and associates them with that virtue. Focus on the virtue and you will feel a natural connection and love for the person. People say that you can't command a person to love others. That's not true. If we **commit ourselves** to focusing upon the good in others (and not their negative qualities) we will automatically be drawn closer to them and love them.

Exercise for Loving Others: It is easy for us to love certain people. We naturally see their good qualities. Focus upon two people, one that you are neutral towards and one that you dislike and try to identify and focus upon their good qualities. (If you look hard enough you will be able to find them. 😊) Slowly but surely you will learn to love them and all others as you become more accustomed to seeing the good in people.

• A Second Path to Love is Achieved through Giving

SOURCE 7: STRIVE FOR TRUTH. RABBI ELIAHU DESSLER- ESSAY ON KINDNESS.

If I **give to him**; I have a share in his being. **You shall love your neighbor as "yourself" ... By giving to him of yourself, you will find in your soul that you and he are indeed one**; you will feel in the clearest possible way that he really is you, "as yourself."

Question: Do you see why giving leads to love? Does this ring true in your own life?

Rabbi Dessler says that the surest way to promote the feeling of love for someone is to "invest yourself in them" by giving to them. Parents would probably be the best example of this concept.

Giving also bypasses the natural self-absorption that can often lead to jealousy and hate for others- the opposite of our mitzvah!

Question: We have been focusing on learning to love other Jews in this module. Is it enough just to love them to fulfill the mitzvah of "loving your neighbor as yourself"? What about actions?

SOURCE 8: MISHNEH TORAH – MAIMONIDES LAWS OF MOURNING 14:1 HOW TO ACT.

It is a rabbinic positive precept to visit the sick, comfort the mourners, escort the dead, support the bride, escorting the [departing] guests on the road - as well as to cheer the bride and the groom, and to assist them in whatever they need. Even though all these precepts are of rabbinic origin, they are included in the biblical mitzvah: **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself"** (Leviticus 19:18); **that is, whatever you would have others do to you, do to your brothers in Torah and mitzvos.**

צוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁל דְּבָרֵיהֶם לְבַקֵּר חוֹלִים. וּלְנַחֵם אֲבֵלִים. וּלְהוֹצִיא הַמֵּת. וּלְהַכְנִיס הַכֵּלָּה. וּלְלוּוֹת הָאוֹרְחִים. וּלְהַתְעַסֵּק בְּכָל צָרָתִי הַקְּבוּרָה. לְשֵׂאת עַל הַכֶּתֶף. וְלִילֵךְ לִפְנֵי וּלְסָפֵד וּלְחַפֵּר וּלְקַבֵּר. וְכֵן לְשִׂמְחַת הַכֵּלָּה וְהַחֲתָן. וּלְסַעֲדֵם בְּכָל צָרָתָם. וְאֵלוֹ הֵן גְּמִילוּת חֶסֶדִים שֶׁבְּגוּפוֹ שָׁאִין לָהֶם שְׁעוֹר. אִף עַל פִּי שֶׁכָּל מִצְוֹת אֱלֹהֵי מִדְּבָרֵיהֶם הֵרִי הֵן בְּכָלל **"וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ"** (ויקרא י"ט, י"ח) כָּל הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁאַתָּה רוֹצֶה שְׂיַעֲשׂוּ אוֹתָם לָךְ אַחֲרֵים. עֲשֵׂה אֶתָּה אוֹתָן לְאַחֶיךָ בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמִצְוֹת.

As we see from our final source, this is a two-step mitzvah. Our love for other Jews first needs to take root in our hearts, where we truly want for them all the good that we want for ourselves. (And protection from all the bad.) This love, which is found and nurtured within us must then find expression in acts of kindness that are detailed throughout the Torah, including giving charity, jobs, visiting the sick, offering loans for those who need them, food, clothing, and many other forms of assistance.

Of course, we must act upon our inner feelings. Yet, the road to proper actions depends first upon seeing all Jews as part of the same family, loving them for who they "really are" and giving to them whenever possible.

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