

DO NOT STAND OVER YOUR BROTHER'S BLOOD PART 4

by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen

In the previous weeks we have examined the details of the Mitzva of: "Do not stand over your brother's blood." We have discussed in the past that the Mitzvot are not simply laws that ensure the efficient running of society. Rather they teach us essential principles about how to live our life. This Mitzva is an excellent example of this idea.

No comparable law is found in the secular world that obligates us to help our fellow. Secular law is predominantly focused on preventing people harming others which primarily aim at maintaining and order.

In contrast the Torah teaches us a vital lesson about our relationship with our fellow man. The Torah views refraining from helping others as little better than actively harming them. This Mitzva teaches us a vital principle - that standing by when someone is suffering is considered a sin. We are obligated to do whatever we can to save our friends in need. This principle even applies to our attitudes towards animals: The Talmud discusses the source for the prohibition to harm animals. It concludes that the source is the Mitzva to help unload a donkey that is suffering under a heavy burden. From here it concludes that refraining from helping an animal is considered causing it pain.

We learn from here that Judaism sees that neglecting to help an animal in pain is akin to harming it. Neutrality is not an acceptable stance with regard to our treatment of animals. This is all the more so the case with regard to our fellow man..

We have seen in the past few weeks how a person must strive to help a person in need. In the coming weeks we will see the lengths to which extend the obligation that we must make an effort to help others through the Mitzva of returning lost objects; this teaches us that we must also strive to return lost items of other people. We should all merit to help our friends in every way possible.

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