

# LOVE THY NEIGHBOR PART 4

*by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen*

A key to fulfilling the command of 'Love Thy Neighbor' is to turn our attention to the people around us. We all have a natural tendency to think about ourselves more than other people and; consequently, we may sometimes be unaware of the needs of others. To love one's neighbor properly it is necessary to make genuine attempts to be sensitive to their needs.

In Judaism the wisest people are also the most righteous - there are numerous examples of how leading Rabbis demonstrated their care for others. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein was the leading Rabbi in USA for many decades; on one occasion he was being taken in a car by a student. As Rabbi Feinstein entered the car the student inadvertently closed the door onto his fingers, yet he remained completely silent as if nothing had happened. A bewildered onlooker asked him why he did not cry out, he answered that the student would feel incredible embarrassment about having caused him pain and therefore he controlled himself and kept quiet.

Another example of great selflessness involves Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer, one of the leading Rabbis in Israel for the first part of the 20th century. His son-in-law, Rabbi Aharon Kotler and his grandson Shneur went to Rabbi Meltzer to say goodbye shortly before leaving Eretz Yisroel for Shneur's chasunah. Rabbi Meltzer stopped in the middle of the stairs on the way down rather than escorting them all the way to the street. They asked him about it and he explained, "Many of the people who live around here have grandchildren who were murdered by the Nazis. How could I go down to the street and embrace my grandchild, flaunting my joy publicly, when these people can't do the same?!"

These superhuman demonstrations of selflessness can be an inspiration to us. There are numerous examples where we can overcome our own self-absorption and show an awareness of the needs of those around us. A number of commandments encourage the development of the trait of selflessness. For example, if a person finds a lost object such as a wallet lying in the street he is obligated (under certain circumstances) to pick it up, look after it and announce it in the local vicinity in an attempt to locate its owner. This command requires us to take a moment out of our own busy schedules and devote some time and effort into helping our fellow man. By striving to observe these commandments we can all become kinder people.

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