

# ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshios Acharei Mos & Kedoshim

### All You Need Is Love

**By Shlomo Katz**

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Mr. Jack Mehlman  
on the yahrzeit of his father  
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Today's Learning:  
Nach: Tehilim 19-20  
Mishnah: Ohalot 12:1-2  
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Ketubot 89  
Halachah: Mishnah Berurah 576:11-13

One of the most famous phrases in this week's Torah reading is (Vayikra 19:18), "You shall love your fellow as yourself." R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (Ramban; Spain and Eretz Yisrael; 1194-1270) writes about this mitzvah:

What the Torah is expressing is the ideal, but a person's heart is not capable of loving another person as it loves itself. Moreover, Rabbi Akiva taught (Bava Metzia 62a) that saving one's own life takes precedence over saving another person's life. [Rabbi Akiva spoke of two people traveling in a desert, one of whom has water and the other doesn't. If there is only enough water for one to survive, he is not permitted to share, which would not be the case if he had to love the other as much as he loves himself].

Rather, Ramban writes, the mitzvah is to desire your friend's success as you desire your own. Typically, a person desires his friend's success in one area, but not in another. And, if one does desire that his friend have everything that he has himself, he still wishes to have more than his friend has. This mitzvah, however, requires a person to not be jealous and not compare his success to his friend's success. This is what the prophet means when he says about the love of Yehonatan, son of King Shaul, for the future King David (Shmuel I 20:17): "He loved him as he loved himself." [Yehonatan knew that only one of them--Yehonatan or David--could succeed Shaul as king, but that did not lessen his love for David.] (Please below for more about this mitzvah.)

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"You shall observe My decrees and My laws, which man shall carry out and by which he shall live . . ." (18:5)

Onkelos translates: "By which he shall live - in the World-to-Come."

R' Yisrael Meir Kagan z"l (the Chafetz Chaim; died 1933) explains: All created things need sustenance from Hashem in order to exist. This is true of spiritual beings just as it is true of physical beings. Of course, the sustenance of spiritual beings is not like our sustenance; it is spiritual, the "food" of angels.

Like other creations, the neshamah / soul needs sustenance. As long as the neshamah is hosted in a person's body, Hashem enables it to be sustained by the physical food that sustains the body. When the neshamah leaves the human body and moves on to the spiritual world (i.e., when a person passes away), it still needs sustenance, but it no longer can be sustained by physical food. Firstly, how would the neshamah take in physical food? Also, physical food can sustain only for a limited time, whereas the neshamah lives forever in the World-to-Come and needs sustenance that will sustain it forever. Therefore, writes the Chafetz Chaim, Hashem, in His great compassion, created something that can sustain the neshamah in the World-to-Come. That sustenance is Hashem's decrees and His laws, "which man shall carry out and by which he shall live - in the World-to-Come." Indeed, only through observing Hashem's decrees and laws can a person live forever. (Mishnah Berurah: Introduction)

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"You shall love your fellow as yourself." (Vayikra 19:18)

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (1914-2005; a leading teacher of mussar in Eretz Yisrael) observes: Ramban z"l writes that it is nearly impossible for a person to love another as much as he loves himself. Even if a person gives another more of something than he keeps for himself, deep down, he wishes it was the other way around. Since it is inconceivable that the Torah commanded something that is impossible, Ramban had to explain that the mitzvah merely requires us not to be jealous of others (see front page).

R' Wolbe adds: There was only one person in the Torah who saw someone have more than he had, but he was not jealous. That person was Aharon. Moshe Rabbeinu was reluctant to accept the mantle of leadership for fear that his older brother, Aharon, would be jealous. No, said Hashem (Shmot 4:14), "When he sees you he will rejoice in his heart." That is why Aharon merited wearing the Choshen / Breastplate over his heart. Why was he able to do this? Because he was the ultimate man of chessed / kindness, always giving to others, as midrashim describe. (Shiurei Chumash: Bereishit 37:11)

R' Samson Raphael Hirsch z"l (Germany; 1808-1888) writes similarly: Although there is a mitzvah to help a person load his animal, one may demand to be paid for his labor. Likewise, while there is mitzvah to care for and return a lost object, only an unemployed person is expected to make that his priority. A working person does not have to perform this mitzvah when it means losing income. The Torah does not view "self-forgetting" sacrifice as being a normal principle of life, R' Hirsch explains. Rather, the Torah grants one's care for his own existence the fullest importance, while simultaneously demanding, alongside that ideal, participation in the upkeep of the property, and furthering of the undertakings, of one's fellow men.

Moreover, adds R' Hirsch, one's care for his own needs should not be motivated by selfishness, but only by the knowledge that it is one's religious duty to care for himself. With that attitude, one will be able to fulfill the commandment to love one's fellow as oneself. (Commentary to Devarim 22:4)

R' Yehuda Ashlag z"l (1885-1954; Poland and Eretz Yisrael; one of the leading kabbalists of the 20th century) writes that it would be possible to love one's friend as oneself in its truest sense--giving and never taking--if everyone did it. The only reason a person can't give unendingly is because he must care for himself. But, if he could be confident that the rest of society would care for him, he could devote himself fully to caring for them. In practice, R' Ashlag suggests, this mitzvah can be practiced to its fullest extent in small groups of like-minded people. (Matan Torah)

Rashi writes about this mitzvah: "This is a major principle of the Torah."

We read in Tehilim (139:21), "For indeed, those who hate You, Hashem, I hate them." R' Zvi Yehuda

Kook z"l (1891-1982; rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav in Yerushalayim) observes that, unlike the quoted verse from our parashah, the foregoing verse from Tehilim is never cited in Rambam's legal code or in the Shulchan Aruch as the source for any halachah. Nevertheless, he observes, there are many observant Jews who choose to be meticulous in their "practice" of the verse in Tehilim at the expense of practicing the verse in the Torah. Placing a verse from Psalms ahead of a mitzvah in the Torah indicates confused priorities, suggests R' Kook.

Furthermore, R' Kook notes, King David stated many other "nice" things in Tehilim, for example (63:2), "My soul thirsts for You." Are we as meticulous in observing this expression of King David's world-view as we are in hating those whom we believe hate Hashem? (Sichot Harav Zvi Yehuda: Moadim p.53)

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## Shemittah

The laws of shemittah apply only within the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael / the halachic Land of Israel, which are not identical to the borders of the State of Israel. Some parts of Eretz Yisrael are not in Israel, and vice versa. This week we present some of the rulings of R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (1910-1995), as quoted by his nephew, R' Simcha Bunim Lazerson shlita.

- Eilat is not considered part of Eretz Yisrael for purposes of any of the Torah's agricultural laws.
- In our times, when the mitzvah of shemittah has only rabbinic force [because the Torah mitzvah of shemittah applies only when the majority of Jews live in Eretz Yisrael], one may be lenient and treat the entire Aravah [the valley between the Negev and Jordan] as being outside of Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, vegetables that were planted and fruits that grew during shemittah, even in the northern Aravah, do not have shemittah sanctity and are permitted to be eaten like produce of the diaspora. However, some rule stringently regarding the northern Aravah.
- The laws of shemittah apply to all places that were captured when the Jewish People first entered Eretz Yisrael after the Exodus, even if they were not recaptured by the generation that returned from Babylon at the beginning of the Second Temple period.
- There are some who hold that the laws of shemittah do not apply in Bet She'an and Ashkelon, but one should be stringent.
- One cannot rely on place name similarities and scholarly guesses to establish the halachic boundaries of Eretz Yisrael.
- If properties are within the boundaries that were captured by the first generation that entered Eretz Yisrael, but they were in the hands of gentiles for many generations until they were recaptured in Israel's War of Independence, it is questionable whether their produce has shemittah sanctity [as they may be considered gentile-owned land].

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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