

(1)

ואהבת לרעך כמוך, אם רעך.
אם טוב [הוא], אבל לא אם הוא רשע, כדכתיב 'יראת ה'
שנאת רע (משלי ח יג)¹⁵.

Rushbam לך'י
19:18

(2)

Each man is commanded to love each and every one of Israel as himself as [Leviticus 19:18] states:
"Love your neighbor as yourself."

Therefore, one should speak the praises of [others] and show concern for their money just as he is concerned with his own money and seeks his own honor. Hilchot De'ot 6:3

The phrase "love thy neighbour as thyself" is not meant literally, since man cannot be expected to love his neighbour as his own soul. Rabbi Akiva himself ruled the contrary, that "your life takes precedence over your fellowman's". The Torah here implied that we should wish our neighbour to enjoy the same wellbeing that we wish ourselves. Perhaps this is the reason for the dative instead of the accusative form of the verb phrase. It does not state, "Love thy-neighbour", but, "Love / for (le) -thy-neighbour, / as thyself".² Sometimes a person will be interested in his neighbour's welfare in certain respects only; he may wish him wealth, but not scholarly attainments and the like. But even if he wishes him well, in everything, in wealth, honour, learning and wisdom, he will still not want him to be absolutely equal with him. He will still want to be superior to him in some respect. It was this form of selfishness that the Torah condemned. But a man should wish his fellow well *in all things*, just as he wishes his own self and have no reservations. The text referred to such love in the case of Jonathan and David, when it stated that Jonathan loved him "as his own soul". This implied that he had removed all jealousy from his heart and was able to say: "For thou shalt rule over Israel".

(3)

Ramban
לך'י
19:18

(4)

It is a positive commandment of Rabbinic origin to visit the sick, comfort mourners, to prepare for a funeral, prepare a bride, accompany guests, attend to all the needs of a burial, carry a corpse on one's shoulders, walk before the bier, mourn, dig a grave, and bury the dead, and also to bring joy to a bride and groom and help them in all their needs. These are deeds of kindness that one carries out with his person that have no limit.

Although all these mitzvot are of Rabbinic origin, they are included in the Scriptural commandment Leviticus 19:18: "Love your neighbor as yourself." That charge implies that whatever you would like other people to do for you, you should do for your comrade in the Torah and mitzvot. Hilchot Avel 14:1

On another occasion it happened that a certain non-Jew came before Shammai and said to him, "Convert me, on condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot." Shammai pushed him off with the builder's cubit that was in his hand. When [the non-Jew] came before Hillel, he converted him. [Hillel] said to him, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah, and the rest is commentary; go and learn it." (Talmud Bavli Shabbat 31a)

(5)

If the text means that man must love his fellow as himself, it is hardly conceivable that the Almighty should command something which is beyond

human capacity. Moreover feelings such as hate and love are hardly the objects of commands, since they are not under human control. To fulfil such a command to the letter, man would have to grieve for his fellow's sorrows just as he grieves for his own. This would be intolerable, since scarcely a moment passes without hearing of someone's misfortune. Hillel therefore correctly interpreted this passage in a negative manner. At least do nothing to your neighbour which you would not like to be done to yourself. It is obvious that we must never insult or cause hurt to any man whether wicked or righteous, except through the proper judicial procedure or by way of loving admonition in order to correct his behaviour. Just as the Torah ordained the death penalty for the shedder of the blood of any man, saint or sinner, scholar or simpleton, so does the command to respect our neighbour's feelings and interests apply to every human being without distinction. Hillel merely narrowed the character of the command.

"Rabbi Akiva said, 'This is a great principle in the Torah' - meaning to say that many commandments are dependent upon it. As one that loves his fellow like himself will not steal his money, have adultery with his wife, cheat his money from him nor hurt him from any angle. And so [too,] are there several other commandments dependent on this - the thing is well-known [revealed] to all who have intellect.... The root of the commandment is well-known - as in the way that he acts to his fellow, so will his fellow act to him. And there will be peace among the creatures with this.

Sefer Hachinuch 243

The word *kamokha* is not usually used adverbially, but rather adjectivally, meaning, "similar to you" (cf.: Genesis 44, 18). Love thy neighbour who is as thyself. Every man was created in the image of God. Love him therefore because he is as thyself. The text therefore offers us no advice on how far to go, in loving our neighbour. It merely tells us to love our neighbour who is a human being, "just like you". The Hebrew phrase for loving a person as one's self, is indeed employed elsewhere, in the case of David and Jonathan where it states that the latter loved David "as his own soul" (*ke-nafsho*).
(Biur)

That you should not say, since I am despised let my neighbour be similarly despised, since I am cursed, let my neighbour be similarly cursed. Said R. Tanhuma: If you act thus, know whom you are despising, "in the likeness of God made He him" (Genesis 5, 1).

(Bereshit Rabbah)

When one person wrongs another, the latter should not remain silent and despise him as [II Samuel 13:22] states concerning the wicked: "And Avshalom did not speak to Amnon neither good, nor bad for Avshalom hated Amnon."

Rather, he is commanded to make the matter known and ask him: "Why did you do this to me?", "Why did you wrong me regarding that matter?" as [Leviticus 19:17] states: "You shall surely admonish your colleague."

If, afterwards, [the person who committed the wrong] asks [his colleague] to forgive him, he must do so. A person should not be cruel when forgiving [as implied by Genesis 20:17]: "And Abraham prayed to God...". Hilchot De'ot 6:6

What is impressive about the Torah is that it *both* articulates the highest of ideals, *and* at the same time speaks to us as human beings. If we were angels it would be easy to love one another. But we are not. An ethic that commands us to love our enemies, without any hint as to how we are to achieve this, is unliveable. Instead, the Torah sets out a realistic programme. By being honest with one another, talking things through, we may be able to achieve reconciliation - not always, to be sure, but often. How much distress and even bloodshed might be spared if humanity heeded this simple command.

Rabbi Sacks
Covenant & Conversation
p5306

(12)

R. Hizkiyah interpreted the verse "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Mishlei 17:17) as follows: "A friend" is the Holy One, of whom it is written, "Your own friend and your father's friend, forsake not" (ibid. 27:10).... Indeed, you must worship Him, cleave to Him, keep His commandments, and distance yourself from your evil inclination that it should not become your master. Banish it from your house, namely from the holy soul with which your Friend has endowed you. The true worship of the Holy One, blessed be He, consists in loving Him above all and in all, as it is written, "Love the Almighty your God (Devarim 6:5). (Zohar, Shmot 55b)

(13)

What is the proper [degree] of love? That a person should love God with a very great and exceeding love until his soul is bound up in the love of God. Thus, he will always be obsessed with this love as if he is lovesick.

[A lovesick person's] thoughts are never diverted from the love of that woman. He is always obsessed with her; when he sits down, when he gets up, when he eats and drinks. With an even greater [love], the love for God should be [implanted] in the hearts of those who love Him and are obsessed with Him at all times as we are commanded [Deuteronomy 6:5: "Love God...] with all your heart and with all soul."

This concept was implied by Solomon [Song of Songs 2:5] when he stated, as a metaphor: "I am lovesick." [Indeed,] the totality of the Song of Songs is a parable describing [this love]. Hilchot Teshuva 10:3

(14)

שמח תשמח ריעים האהובים, כשמחך יצירך בגן עדן מקדם. ברוך אתה ה',
משמח חתן וכלה.

May You bring great joy to the loving companions, as You brought joy to Your creation in the Garden of Eden long ago. Blessed are You, Eternal God, Who makes bridegroom and bride rejoice. (Talmud Bavli Ketubot 8a)
