

## Love Your Fellow as Yourself / Walk in Hashem's Ways:

### A - The Two Mitzvos:

1. Vayikra 19,18: לֹא־תִקֵּם וְלֹא־תִטּוֹר אֶת־בְּנֵי עִמּוֹךָ וְאֶהְבֶּתָ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה: You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. ***Love your fellow as yourself.*** I am the LORD.
2. Devarim 28,9: יְקִימְךָ יְהוָה לֹוּ לְעַם קְדוֹשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע־לְךָ כִּי תִשְׁמֹר: The LORD will establish you as His holy people, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God ***and walk in His ways.***
3. Sefer Hachinuch 243: The commandment of love of Israel: To love [with] love of the soul each one of Israel - meaning to say that ***we have compassion for an Israelite and for his money, [just] like a person has compassion for himself and for his [own] money***; as it stated (Leviticus 19:18), "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." And they, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 31a), "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow." And they said in Sifra, Kedoshim, Chapter 4:12, "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.*** And the laws of this commandment are included in the commandment, as the general principle of everything is that ***a man behave with his fellow in the way that a man behaves [with] himself - to guard his money and to distance all injury from him.*** And if he recounts things about him, he recounts them for praise, and he relate to his honor; and he does not become honored through his disgrace - and as they, may their memory be blessed, said (Talmud Yerushalmi Chagigah 2:1), "One who is honored by the disgrace of his fellow has no share in the world to come, but one who treats his fellow with love, peace and neighborliness, seeks their benefit and is happy about their good, the verse states about him, 'Israel, about you will I be glorified' (Isaiah 49:3)." - i.e. ***feeling love in our hearts, which we express by refraining from doing anything to hurt our fellow man, and by making efforts to protect him from monetary loss, anguish and any affronts to his dignity.***
4. Sefer Hachinuch 611: The commandment to walk in - and make oneself similar through - the ways of God, may He be blessed: That we were commanded to perform all our actions in the way of straightness and goodness with all our strength and to incline all our affairs that are

between ourselves and others ***towards the way of kindness and mercy***; as we have known from our holy Torah that this is the way of God, and this is God's desire for His creatures so that they merit God's goodness - as He desires kindness. And about this is it stated (Deuteronomy 28:9), "and you shall walk in His ways." And this commandment was further repeated in another place, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 10:12, 11:22), "to walk in all His ways." And they, may their memory be blessed, said (Sifrei Devarim 49), in explanation of this commandment, "Just like the Holy One, blessed be He, is called merciful, so too you be merciful; just like the Holy One, blessed be He, is called compassionate, so too you be compassionate; just like the Holy One, blessed be He, is called righteous, so too you be righteous; just like the Holy One, blessed be He, is called holy, so too you be holy." And the whole matter is to say that ***we should teach ourselves to follow good actions like these and glorious traits through which He, may He be blessed, is described by way of analogy*** - to say that He acts with these good traits towards His creatures. i.e. - ***emulating the creator by performing positive acts of kindness, just as Hashem acts with kindness towards His creations.***

5. Second opinion - in addition to the obligation to feel love in one's heart, the mitzvah of 'Ve'ahavta' also includes doing acts of chesed, while the mitzvah of 'vehalachta' refers to the obligation to cleave to Hashem through refining our Midos (which is commonly achieved by doing acts of chesed repeatedly.)
6. Accordingly, even if you feel powerful love in your heart for the other person, you have not fulfilled the mitzvah of 've'ahavta' until you do an actual act of chesed for him.
7. At the same time, if you did tremendous act of chesed for the person but did it in cold, apathetic way, without being moved to increase your love for him, you may not have fulfilled the mitzvah of 'vehalachta.'

### **B - Educating Children:**

1. Children should be trained in this Mitzvah, and should be reminded that when they are kind to others, they are imitating the ways of Hashem, Who is so kind to us.
2. It is important to involve children in helping at home, even if it would be easier to get the work done without their "assistance." We should not be sticklers for perfect results.

### **C - Unconditional Love:**

1. Our acts should in no way be tied to expectations of gaining anything in return from the other person.

2. The Torah begins with Chesed - Hashem's clothing of Adam and Chava - and concludes with Chesed - Hashem's burying Moshe.
3. Definition of "Gemilas Chesed."
4. Hashem created the world with selfless love, which we are commanded to emulate.
5. True love is the ability to give purely for the sake of benefiting the other person - not geared toward bringing pleasure to ourselves.
6. We should be willing to relinquish our comfort and pleasure so that the object of our love will benefit.

#### **D - Your Life, Physical & Spiritual Needs Come First:**

1. **Vayikra 25, 36:** וְיָרַד אִתְּךָ עִמָּךְ Let him live by your side as your kinsman.
2. Your life takes precedence over your friend's life. (e.g. limited water)
3. Your personal livelihood takes precedence over someone else's livelihood. We are not obligated to give Tzedakah to support others unless we have enough money for our own basic needs.
4. We are not required to help others if it will lead to damage to ourselves. (e.g. taking off time from our own work and suffer a monetary loss to help someone with his work.)
5. We are not expected to invest time and effort to do work for another individual instead of taking care of the same matter for ourselves.
6. In a case where we would not have done that act for ourselves at all, we certainly would not be obligated to do the same act for others. (e.g. an honourable person who would not carry his own bags)
7. Exception - "A husband should love his wife exactly as he loves himself, and honor her even more than he honors himself." A man is obligated to exert himself for his wife's sake, even in acts that he would not perform for his own needs.
8. A person may not give time to another when he needs that time to fulfill his own halachik requirements.
9. A person cannot put the Torah learning of others before his own Torah learning.
10. However, some time should be dedicated to helping others in their Torah study. (1/10 or 1/5th of one's spare time)
11. We are required to protect ourselves from poverty and financial loss.
12. The same rule would apply in any case where performing a mitzvah for someone else would cause us monetary loss or would cause us to neglect our job.
13. e.g. Your own lost object takes precedence over others' lost objects.
14. However, it is meritorious to go beyond the letter of the law and not be overly particular about giving our own property priority when the loss is not a certainty but is only possibility. One should not use the above exceptions to never do Chesed with others.

15. When there is a Mitzvah that can not be delegated to another (even if others are just too lazy to do it) or is incumbent on the person himself to fulfill, he must interrupt his Torah learning in order to do it. After the Mitzvah is completed he should return to his learning as soon as possible.

### **E - Relatives & Others Who Take Precedence:**

1. Relatives take precedence over others in all Mitzvos of Chesed.
2. Generally speaking, we are obligated to care for our parents' needs before tending to the needs of our children, our children's needs before those of our siblings, and so on.
3. Chesed with family comes before Chesed outside the family. (unless the children benefit from helping you with that chesed.)
4. The needs of our community take precedence over those of another community.

### **F - To Whom & How, Do These Mitzvos Apply ?**

1. We are obligated to love and do chesed for all Jews - poor and rich, men and women, children, people of unsound mind and even people who are no longer alive.
2. Acts of kindness to the deceased are of particular value, because we perform them without any expectation of reward.
3. Included in this Mitzvah is offering free lending arrangements of utensils, books, money, and any other services that are needed.
4. Included in this Mitzvah is giving good advice and counsel to others.
5. Generally speaking, there is no Mitzvah to love non-Jews, or those in the various categories of extreme sinners, etc.
6. We must be especially careful regarding loving converts, widows, and orphans. The same would apply to a stranger to his surroundings.

### **G - The Common Denominator:**

1. These Mitzvahs are closely related to almost every Mitzvah between man and his fellow man. Performing or violating any of these mitzvos would apply to these mitzvos as well.
2. **Rambam:** It is a rabbinic positive precept to 1) visit the sick, 2) comfort the mourners, escort the dead, 3) dower the bride, 4) accompany the [departing] guests — — as well as to cheer the bride and the groom, and to assist them in whatever they need. These are acts of chesed that one personally exerts oneself to perform and that have no set maximum measure. Even though all these precepts are of rabbinic origin, they are implied in the biblical verse: "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 precepts.