

ואהבת לרעך כמוך
Be Loving to Your Neighbor as You Would Yourself

ויקרא יט
טז לא-תלך רכיל בעמך לא תעמוד על-דם רעך אני יהוה:
יז לא-תשנא את-אחך בלבבך הוכח הוכיח את-עמיתך ולא-תשנא עליו
חטא:
יח לא-תקם ולא-תטור את-בני עמך ואהבת לרעך כמוך אני יהוה:

LEVITICUS 19:16-18

16 You are not to traffic in slander among your kinspeople.

You are not to stand by the blood of your neighbor,

I am **YHWH!**

17 You are not to hate your brother in your heart;

rebuke, yes, rebuke your fellow,

that you not bear sin because of him!

18 You are not to take-vengeance, you are not to retain-anger against the sons of your kinspeople—

but be-loving to your neighbor (as one) like yourself,

I am **YHWH!**

YOUR TORAH NAVIGATOR

1. This translator, is translating verse 18 in a literal way. Usually, we translate it as "Love your neighbor" by saying "Be loving to your neighbor" does the meaning change at all?
2. If the verses that precede the last line "be-loving to your neighbor..." come to define what being loving is, what would be the Torah's definition of "loving". Is this compatible with your understanding of being loving?
3. According to your understanding of what being loving is, do you think it is possible to fulfill this commandment?

We are now going to look at two medieval commentators who grapple with this verse. Maimonides (popularly known by the acronym RaMBaM) and Nachmanides (also known by his acronym RaMBaN) are two of the most renowned medieval commentators. They also have two very different worldviews. Maimonides is considered by most to be a rationalist while Nachmanides is a Kabbalist, one who engages in mystical speculation. Often, Nachmanides openly disputes Maimonides' explanations in the Torah. Now, read these two commentaries carefully and see how they understand what the verse means? How does it differ with what we have understood until now? Do they differ from each other? If so, how?

רמב"ם הלכות דעות

ג מצוה על כל אדם לאהוב את כל אחד ואחד מישראל כגופו שנאמר ואהבת לרעך כמוך, לפיכך צריך לספר בשבחו ולחוס על ממונו כאשר הוא חס על ממונו עצמו ורוצה בכבוד עצמו, והמתכבד בקלון חבירו אין לו חלק לעולם הבא.

MAIMONIDES HILCHOT DEOT: LAWS OF COUNSEL

It is a mitzvah for every human to love each and everyone from Israel as he loves his own body. As it is written, "be-loving to your neighbor (as one) like yourself", therefore one must sing his praises, and show concern for his financial well-being, as he would for his own well-being and as he would for his own honor. Anyone who aggrandizes himself at the expense of another person has no portion in the world to come.

רמב"ן

וטעם ואהבת לרעך כמוך. הפלגה, כי לא יקבל לב האדם שיאהוב את חבירו כאהבתו את נפשו, ועוד שכבר בא רבי עקיבא ולמד חייך קודמין לחיי חבירך (ב"מ סב.) :

אלא מצות התורה שיאהב חבירו בכל ענין כאשר יאהב את נפשו בכל הטוב. ויתכן בעבור שלא אמר "ואהבת את רעך כמוך", והשוה אותם במלת "לרעך", וכן ואהבת לו כמוך (פסוק לד) דגר, שיהיה פירוש להשוות אהבת שניהם בדעתו, כי פעמים שיאהב אדם את רעהו בדברים ידועים להטיבו בעושר ולא בחכמה וכיוצא בזה, ואם יהיה אוהבו בכל יחפוץ שיוכה רעהו האהוב לו בעושר ובנכסים וכבוד וברעת ובחכמה, ולא שישווה אליו אבל יהיה חפץ בלבו לעולם שיהיה הוא יותר ממנו בכל טובה, ויצוה הכתוב שלא תהיה פחיתות הקנאה הזאת בלבו, אבל יאהב ברבות הטובה לחבירו כאשר אדם עושה לנפשו ולא יתן שיעורין באהבה. ועל כן אמר ביהונתן (ש"א כ יז) כי אהבת נפשו אהבו, בעבור שהסיר מדת הקנאה מלבו ואמר (שם כג יז) ואתה תמלוך על ישראל וגו':

NACHMANIDES ON "BE LOVING TO YOUR NEIGHBOR"

The reason behind, "be-loving to your neighbor (as one) like yourself" is in fact an exaggeration for no human's heart can accept loving one's fellow as one loves one's own soul, and furthermore Rabbi Akiva already learned that "your life comes before the life of your friend."

It means that it is a mitzvah to love one's friend through all the good things that he loves himself, and it is possible that since the verse says "to your neighbor" (instead of merely stating "loving one's neighbor like yourself") The verse is comparing this love to the commandment to love the sojourner (Leviticus 19:34 where it says that you should be-loving to him as yourself) i.e. to make the love of both comparable in his mind. For sometimes one loves his neighbor with the things that are known to enhance his material happiness, but not with wisdom, and qualities that are similar to it. If, however, he loves him and wishes him well with everything he desires. And that his beloved friend should be blessed with happiness, property, honor, knowledge and wisdom, while not comparing himself to his friend, by wishing in his heart that he himself should be more than his friend in all that is good. For there should not be this kind of petty jealousy, as the verse commands, "like one does for one's self", and thus he should not make limits to his love. Thus it says of Jonathan (regarding David) "He loved him as he loved his soul." (I Samuel 20:17) How? Because he had removed the

attribute of jealousy from his heart, and thus the following verse promises , "And you will rule over Israel."

EXTRA INTENSITY, FOR THOSE WHO HAVE TIME.....

SECTION II: LOVING PEOPLE AS A MODEL FOR LOVING GOD; GOD THE PARENT OR GOD THE FRIEND?

YOUR TALMUD NAVIGATOR

The following source is one that may be well known to many of you. It's usually quoted to approve of Hillel's indulgence of the gentile and the wisdom of this approach. For a moment, however, let us take Hillel's words seriously and try to understand what he means.

תלמוד בבלי מס' שבת לאא

מעשה בנכרי אחד שבא לפני שמאי, אמר לו: גיירני על מנת שתלמדני כל התורה כולה כשאני עומד על רגל אחת. דחפו באמת הבנין שבידו. בא לפני הלל, גייריה. אמר לו: דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד - זו היא כל התורה כולה, ואידך - פירושה הוא, זיל גמור.

Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat 31a*

Once there was a gentile who came before Shammai, and said to him: Convert me on the condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot. Shammai pushed him aside with the measuring stick he was holding. The same fellow came before Hillel, and Hillel converted him, saying: That which is despicable to you, do not do to your fellow, this is the whole Torah, and the rest is commentary, go and learn it."

YOUR TALMUD NAVIGATOR

1. What does Hillel mean that the whole Torah is: "That which is despicable to you, do not do to your fellow..."? Isn't there more to the Torah than that?
2. Why does he phrase his statement in the negative, why not say, Whatever you like, do unto others?

Now that you have pondered these questions, take a look at Rashi, the premiere medieval commentator on the Talmud. Rashi quotes a verse from the Biblical book of Proverbs to prove that the word "fellow" can also refer to God.

פירוש רש"י על אחר

דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד - ריעך וריע אביך אל תעזוב (משלי כז) - זה הקדוש צרוך הוא, אל תעזוב על דבריו שהרי עליך שגאוי שיעזוב חבירך על דברך, לשון אחר: חבירך ממש, כגון גזלה גנבה ניאוף ורוצ המלות. אידך - שאר דברי תורה. פירושה - דהא מילתא הוא, לדעת איזה דבר שגאוי זיל גמור ותדע.

Rashi's Commentary on this Talmudic passage

That which is despicable to you: "Your fellow and your fathers fellow you should not abandon" (Proverbs 27:10) The verse in Proverbs as well as this statement of Hillel is referring to the Holy One, so do not abandon His words, for you find it despicable when your friend abandons your words. Or another explanation is that it is referring specifically to your friend and Hillel enjoins him not to rob, steal, commit adultery and other mitzvot that are similar."

YOUR RASHI NAVIGATOR

1. Why does Rashi feel the need to show that “fellow” can mean God? What’s bothering him?
2. Usually, when two explanations are offered, it means there is something unsatisfactory about both of them, why does Rashi offer two explanations here?
3. Is Rashi assuming that Hillel is referring to the commandment, “Be loving to your fellow...”?

A LATER COMMENTATOR USES THE PREVIOUS PASSAGES TO SHOW HOW LOVING GOD AND LOVING EACH OTHER ARE RELATED.

The following commentator’s work appeared several hundred years after Maimonides and Nacmanides. Rabbi Horowitz was a renowned Kabbalist and his most prominent work the *Covenant’s Two Scrolls* wielded tremendous influence over Jewish law and Jewish thought. In the following excerpt, he comments on “being loving to one’s neighbor...” and equates it with loving God. He uses an interpretive device which is akin to *gematria* (numerology which equates Hebrew words that have the same numerical equivalent). Here, he finds it significant that the Ten Commandments contain six hundred and twenty letters. He then notes that the hebrew word for crown also contains the numerical equivalent of 620...

של"ה

כתיב (דברים ו, ה) : ואהבת את ה' אלהיך, וכתיב (ויקרא יט, יח) : ואהבת לרעך כמוך, הנה מחוברים אלו שתי אהבות ומתייחדים על ידי אחדותו יתברך, כי כן אנו מסיימין הבוחר בעמו ישראל באהבה ואוהב עמו ישראל, ואומרים פסוק היחוד ואחר כך אהבת השם יתברך ואהבת את ה' אלהיך, גם עשרת הדברות מסיימין אשר לרעך. והנה כתבו המחברים בעשרת הדברות יש תר"ך אותיות כמנין כת"ר תורה, ותרי"ג אותיות הם רומזות לתרי"ג מצות, בכל אות מצוה אחת, ובז' אותיות הנשארות מה הן משמשות דברו מזה הקדמונים, יש אומרים שהן נגד ז' מצות דרבנן, ויש אומרים ענינים אחרים. אמנם המחזור שבכולם הוא מה שהבנתי מדברי הציוני, שאומר, מה הם הז' אותיות שנשארו, הם 'אשר לרעך', הוא הרגל שעליו עומד כל התורה דהיינו תרי"ג. כהוא דפרק במה מדליקין (שבת לא, א) דלימד הילל את הגר כל התורה על רגל אחד, דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד זוהי כל התורה כולה, ואידך פירושא הוא זיל גמור. פירש רש"י: דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד, רעך וריע אביך אל תעזוב זה הקדוש ב"ה, אל תעבור על דבריו, שהרי עליך שנוי שיעבור חבירך על דברך. לישנא אחרינא: חבירך ממש, כגון גזילה גניבה ניאוף ורוב המצות, עכ"ל. ובאמת כי דייקת תמצא רובא דמצות הם תלויים באהבת חבירו כמוהו, כל מצות צדקה ולקט שכחה ופיאה תרומות ומעשרות ומשא ומתן באמונה ואיסור ריבית והרבה כיוצא בהם. אחר כך כמעט כל המדות הרחמים והחנינה וארץ אפים ורב חסד ולדונו לכף זכות ושלא לעמוד על דם רעך והרחקת רכילות ולשון הרע והוצאות דיבה וליצנות וקנאה ושנאה ונטירה, וענין כעס ורצון ורדיפות הכבוד ומדות אלפי אלפים כיוצא בהן, שיקיים רוב מצות עשה ולא יעבור על רוב לא תעשה ויהיה שלם בכל המדות כשיאהב לחבירו כמוהו. ואף מה שלא שייך בין אדם לחבירו, כמו מאכלים אסורים וחמץ בפסח וכיוצא בהם, יקיימם בקל וחומר אם יאהב לחבירו כעצמו, קל וחומר להקדוש

ב"ה העושה חסד חנם עמו, חסד של אמת, והוא אדון העולם ובידו הכל יתברך שמו. הרי ואהבת לרעך כמוך. הוא הרגל שהעולם עומד עליו, הרי ואהבת לרעך כמוך הוא הגורם ואהבת את ה' אלהיך.

Rabbi Isaiah Halevy Horowitz known as the SHeLaH (the acronym for his book, *Shnei Luchot Habrit, The Covenant's Two Tablets*) on "Be loving to your neighbor"

It is written, "And you shall love the Lord your God" and it is also written, "be-loving to your neighbor (as one) like yourself". See how these two loves are connected and are united by His own unity, may He be blessed. Similarly, we finish the morning prayer preceding the shema with, "He who chooses His people Israel with love, and in the evening prayer, "He who loves His people Israel." And then we say the shema, the statement of God's oneness, and immediately following it is, "And you shall love the Lord your God. The ten commandments also end with the Hebrew words, אשר לרעך (*Asher lereyecha*) or "that is your neighbors".

See that others have already noted that the ten commandments contains 620 letters which is the numerical equivalent of the word כתר *keter* the crown of Torah, Six hundred and thirteen of the letters symbolize the 613 commandments in the Torah, for each letter embodies one of the commandments...The commentator and author of the *Tzionii* has rendered the clearest explanation for the seven remaining letters. He says they are the last seven letters of the ten commandments **A-SHeR LeReyE-CHa**. This is the leg upon which the whole Torah stands i.e. the six hundred and thirteen commandments. Just as the Talmudic passage in the tractate of Shabbat says that Hillel taught the proselyte the whole Torah on one leg which was, "That which is despicable to you, do not do to your fellow, this is the whole Torah, and the rest is commentary, go and learn it."

Rashi explains the passage: That which is despicable to you, do not do to your fellow, "Your fellow and your fathers fellow you should not abandon" (Proverbs 27:10) The verse in Proverbs as well as this statement of Hillel is referring to the Holy One, so do not abandon His words, for you find it despicable when your friend abandons your words. Or another explanation is that it is referring specifically to your friend and Hillel enjoins him not to rob, steal, commit adultery and other mitzvot that are similar."

This is Rashi's explanation.

In truth one who reads carefully will find that most of the commandments depend on loving one's friend as one's self. The Mitzvahs of Tzedaka, tithing, leaving the gleanings of the field, good faith in business, the prohibition against taking interest, and many others.

Similarly, all the qualities of mercy, forgiveness, forbearance, compassion, giving one the benefit of the doubt, not standing idly by the blood of your kinsman, distancing one's self from gossip and slander, distancing one's self from frivolous clowning, jealousy, hatred, or, checking ones anger, and not seeking honors as well as thousands of other qualities all hinge on whether a person truly is loving of ones friend as himself.

Even that which has nothing to do with his friend like the prohibitions against eating forbidden foods, leavened bread on Passover, anyone who loved his neighbor would fulfill these commandments even moreso. For if he loves his friend as he loves himself how much more would he love the Holy One who is compassionate without expectation, a true compassion for He is the Master of the world and everything is in His hand, may He be blessed. See, "Being loving

to your neighbor" is what causes "Being loving to God..."

YOUR SHELAH NAVIGATOR

1. The first thing the Shelah does is equate loving God with being loving to one's fellow. What's the basis for this?
2. According to the Shelah, what is the one foot upon which the whole Torah stands , and where is this found in the Ten Commandments?
3. How does the Shelah understand what Rashi said about Hillel?
4. Often the Talmud refers to God as father and king, according to Rashi and the Shelah shouldn't the model be friend and partner?
5. How would a "friendship" model of God differ from a parental relationship? How could this influence the way we pray?