

Love, Rebuke, and Accountability: Loving Other Jews in 2024

Sources inspired by Rabbis Aryeh Bernstein, Sharon Brous, and Marc Margolius

Leviticus 19:16-18

לֹא־תִלְךָ רֵכִיל בְּעַמֶּיךָ לֹא תֵעָמֵד עַל־דַּם רֵעֶךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה:

Do not slander members of your people. Do not stand upon [profit by] by the blood of your fellow [Israelite]: I am יהוה.

לֹא־תִשְׁנָא אֶת־אָחִיךָ בְּלִבְבְּךָ הוֹכֵחַ תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת־עַמִּיתְךָ וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֲטָא:

You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Rebuke your kin but incur no guilt on their account.

לֹא־תִקֶּם וְלֹא־תִטֹּר אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה:

You shall not take vengeance or maintain a grudge against members of your people. Love your fellow [Israelite] as yourself: I am יהוה.

Ahavat Yisrael – What are the Parameters?

Maimonides, *Sefer HaMitzvot*, Positive Commandments #206

<p>That is that [God] commanded us to love each other as we love ourselves, and that one's love and compassion for one's sibling be like the love and compassion for oneself with regard to one's money, one's body, and everything that is in one's possession. If they want it, I want it; and everything that I want for myself, I want accordingly for them. And that is [God's] exalted saying, "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18)</p>	<p>היא שצונו לאהוב קצתנו את קצתנו כאשר נאהב עצמנו ושתהיה אהבתו וחמלתו לאחיו כאהבתו וחמלתו לעצמו בממונו ובגופו וכל מה שיהיה ברשותו. אם ירצה אותו ארצה אני אותו וכל מה שארצה לעצמי ארצה לו כמוהו. והוא אמרו יתעלה "וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ."</p>
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Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson z"l (Lubavicher Rebbe)

Brotherly love and harmony begin with the "great axiom of the Torah," namely, "Love your neighbor as yourself." As my father-in-law, the Rebbe would say: Love of a fellow Jew should even extend to a Jew on the other side of the world - even to someone you have never seen.

And when you have an opportunity to do a favor — materially or spiritually — for this Jew, you should do it freely and with a joyful heart.... When there is harmony amongst Jews (in addition to the harmony of a Jewish home — and preceding that, a Jew's inward harmony — between

his two inclinations), then there is peace and harmony in the entire world — especially, "peace in the land" — the Land of Israel.

Avot deRabbi Natan, Version 1, Chapter 16 (translation, Rabbi David Kasher)

<p><i>Hatred of [Human Beings]</i>. How so? This teaches that a person should not say: Love the sages, but hate the scholars; or: Love the scholars, but hate the common people. Rather, love all of them, but hate the heretics, the enticers, the bad influences, and the traitors...But it also says (Leviticus 19:18), "You shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Eternal." [What is the reason? Because I] created him. So if he behaves as your people you should love him. And if not, you should not love him...</p>	<p>ושנאת הבריות כיצד מלמד שלא יכוין אדם לומר אהוב את החכמים ושנוא את התלמידים אהוב את התלמידים ושנוא את עמי הארץ [אלא אהוב את כולם] ושנוא את האפיקורסין והמסיתים ומדיחין וכן המסורות...הלא הוא אומר (ויקרא י"ט:י"ח) ואהבת לרעך כמוך אני ה' [מה טעם? כי אני] בראתי. ואם עושה מעשה עמך אתה אוהבו ואם לאו אי אתה אוהבו...</p>
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Rashbam, commenting on VaYikra 19:18

Rav Shmuel ben Meir, c. 1085-c. 1158, Troyes, France

<p>"Love your neighbor as yourself": They are your neighbor if they are good, but not if they are evil, as it is written, "fear of YHWH is the hatred of evil" (Proverbs 8:13).</p>	<p>וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ: רעך הוא אם טוב [הוא], אבל לא אם הוא רשע כדכתיב: "יִרְאַת יְהוָה שְׂנֵאת רָע" (משלי ח:יג).</p>
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An excerpt from *Judaism Is About Love*, by Rabbi Shai Held

The refusal to hide or look away is a manifestation of deep love. Faced with a world on fire we will not grow calloused or indifferent, we will continue to care even when it hurts. And so the Jew is called simultaneously, "grateful for a world saturated with so much beauty," and "indignant at a world infused with so much suffering and injustice."

Tochecha

Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 54b

<p>Rav, Rabbi Hanina, Rabbi Yohanan, and Rav Haviva taught: Anyone who has the ability to protest against the people of their house, but did not protest, is apprehended for the people of their house; against the people of their city -- they are apprehended for the people of their city; against the whole, entire world -- they are apprehended for the whole, entire world.</p>	<p>רב ורבי חנינא ור' יוחנן ורב חביבא... כל מי שאפשר למחות לאנשי ביתו ולא מיחה, נתפס על אנשי ביתו; באנשי עירו, נתפס על אנשי עירו; בכל העולם כולו, נתפס על כל העולם כולו.</p>
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Rashi on the meaning of “rebuke” (commentary on Leviticus 19:17)

Through rebuking him you shall not expose him to shame (lit., make his face grow pale) in public, in which case you will bear sin on account of him (cf. Sifra, Kedoshim, Chapter 4 8; Arakhin 16b).

Talmud Bavli, Yevamot 65b

<p>Rabbi Il’a said in the name of Rabbi El’azar, son of Rabbi Shim’on: Just as it is a mitzvah for a person to say that which will be heeded, so is it a mitzvah for a person <i>not</i> to say that which will <i>not</i> be heeded. Rabbi Abba says: [Refraining from speaking in that situation] is a legal obligation, as it is said: “Do not rebuke a scorner lest they hate you; rebuke a wise person and they will love you” (Proverbs 9:8).</p>	<p>אמר רבי אילעא משום ר' אלעזר בר' שמעון: כשם שמצוה על אדם לומר דבר הנשמע כך מצוה על אדם שלא לומר דבר שאינו נשמע. רבי אבא אומר חובה, שנאמר "אל תוכח לץ פן ישנאך הוכח לחכם ויאהבך" (משלי ט:ח).</p>
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Talmud Bavli, Arakhin 16b

<p>It was taught: R. Tarfon said, “I’d be shocked if there’s anyone in our generation who can receive rebuke! If someone says, ‘take that twig out from between your teeth’, that person will say back, ‘take the beam out from between your eyes!’” R. El’azar ben Azariah said, “I’d be shocked if there’s anyone in our generation who knows how to rebuke!”</p>	<p>תניא: א"ר טרפון: (תמיהני) אני אם יש בדור הזה שמקבל תוכחה. אם אמר לו, 'טול קיסם מבין שיניך' אמר לו, 'טול קורה מבין עיניך'. אמר רבי אלעזר בן עזריה: תמיהני אם יש בדור הזה שידע להוכיח.</p>
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Letters Between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt

Gershom Scholem, 1946 letter to Hannah Arendt

"I am a nationalist and am entirely unfazed by ostensibly 'progressive' denunciations of a position that people repeatedly, even in my earliest youth, wrote off as obsolete..."

Hannah Arendt, 1946 response to Gershom Scholem

"How is it possible that someone can spend his life in the serious study of philosophy and theology and ... can present himself as a believer in an 'ism'?"

Scholem, 1963 letter to Arendt:

"There is something in the Jewish language that is completely indefinable, yet fully concrete--what Jews call ahavath Israel, or love for the Jewish people. With you, my dear Hannah, as with so many intellectuals coming from the German left, there is no trace of it."

Arendt, response to Scholem:

"How right you are that I have no such love...I have never in my life 'loved' some nation or collective...The greatness of this people was once that it believed in God, and believed in Him in such a way that its trust and love toward him was greater than its fear. And now this people believes only in itself? What good can come out of that?"