

## FROM THE EDITOR

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I recently heard Rabbi Moshe Kurtstag tell over the following chassidische vort:

*There's a time and place for everything in the world. Hard as it may be to imagine, even the denial of Hashem's very existence, what the Talmud refers to as a person being a kofer b'ikur, has a time and place. When is this the case? When we see another person who is in need of something, that's the precise time when we need to act like kofrim (deniers of G-d's existence). Not that we must ever stop believing in Hashem, chas v'shalom (G-d forbid), only that we must behave like someone who doesn't believe in Him. In other words, when we come across a person who finds himself in a situation of need – be it in need of a job, or money, or food, or shelter, or whatever the case may be – that's not the time for us to lecture him about matters of emunah and bitachon (faith and trust), or to encourage him to double and triple his own efforts, or to pontificate with seemingly comforting statements like: "Hashem will provide", etc. Instead, it's a time for us to behave as if we don't believe in Hashem at all, a time for us to see ourselves as, quite literally, this person's only hope and salvation – his lifeline – and to do everything in our power to provide for whatever it is that he is lacking or, alternatively, if we cannot personally help him, to reach out to others on his behalf and not rest until we have actually succeeded in getting him what he needs. We must do everything to provide for him – to the best of our ability, straight away, and without any delay – and not continue about our day as though everything is simply business as usual, leaving it to Hashem, or to other people, to sort things out for him.*

Come across someone out of a job? It's not enough to just refer the person to an organisation that does job placement. Instead, we need to see it as our personal responsibility to do whatever we can – networking, contacting people, forwarding on a CV, even looking to create entirely new positions in our businesses, etc. – to assist him. And this includes turning to any of the many wonderful Jewish communal services that are often available to assist with such matters. Institutions are important and some situations, especially chronic, on-going, and long-term ones, require well-organised and structured approaches. We must remember, however, that our obligation to care for others is a personal one, not a communal or an institutional one. The creation of institutions to care for people, although sometimes necessary and even praiseworthy, does not absolve any of us from our obligation to personally care for people who are in need or enable us to "pass the buck" to someone else to deal with it.

This is, at least part of, what is meant when the Torah commands us to love each other as we love ourselves.<sup>1</sup> It's not a commandment rooted in narcissism or one which requires us to work on our self-esteem, nor should we attempt to understand it in terms of modern day pop-psychology – i.e., it's not necessary for a person to first "love himself" in order for him to be able to "love" another person. In Torah terms, loving another person as we love ourselves actually means<sup>2</sup> that we must be as concerned about someone else's money, and indeed all of his property, as we are for our own belongings. This means ensuring that another person's property doesn't become, for example, damaged, lost, or destroyed. Just as we would never want to suffer a financial loss, so too we are required to be concerned that others do not suffer any such losses. Regardless of how a person feels about himself and his level of self-esteem, self-worth, and self-love, everyone has concern for his own property and is pained when he suffers a loss. We need to apply these feelings to the belongings of others. Moreover, our Sages teach that if someone loves another as much as he loves himself, then he will not be able to: (1) steal from that person, (2) commit adultery against him, (3) cheat him, (4) oppress him with words, (5) move the person's property boundary (so as to steal his land), or (6) harm him in any way whatsoever.

In short, the result of having and showing such a love for others and their belongings is that we ultimately make Hashem's world a better and more peaceful place in which to live.

**ROBERT SUSSMAN,**  
EDITOR

<sup>1</sup>See Vayikra 19:18

<sup>2</sup>See Sefer HaChinuch on this mitzvah



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