

"Rebbetzen's Corner"



"Compassion & Benevolence"

In the last issue, I spoke about learning to love yourself and "acting lovingly toward your neighbor." The warm, loving feelings that you feel towards others is, in my opinion, compassion. Compassion (in Hebrew, rahamanut) comes from the Hebrew root word "reham" which means "womb" and denotes, perhaps, the feelings of tenderness and sometimes pity that a mother has for

her child. Compassion is said to be one of the "shining virtues" — one that comes rather easily to most people. It is more natural for most of us to try to understand why someone else has made a mistake if we will only open our hearts to the compassion that lies deep within us. After all, have each of us not made a mistake at one time or another. I know that I make mistakes everyday, but I try to keep a "perfect heart" (a "well meaning heart"), and then the mistakes are not malicious or vicious ones, but "honest ones."

Compassion is an important ideal for us to affirm. As Jews, we are mandated to have compassion not only towards our fellow human beings, but all of G-d's creatures as well. After all, how can we expect forgiveness and compassion from G-d if we ourselves are not forgiving and compassionate...Jewish moralists tell us that all devout Jews, before going to sleep at night should say aloud that they bear no grudge against anyone, and that they forgive anyone who has wronged them during the day. Wouldn't this world be a wonderful place to live if we could each try to hold that attitude of compassion and forgiveness in our hearts?

There is an interesting Midrash about the Hebrew Slaves at the Red Sea. It seems that when the Hebrews were saved and the Egyptians drowned, the Angels on high began to sing the praises of G-d, but He protested, saying: "My creatures, the work of My hand are drowning, and you dare to sing My praises! How can you rejoice when your fellow humans are suffering and dying?"

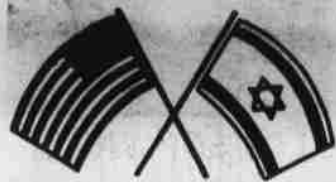
Compassion is one of the most natural virtues to extol, but it's not always easy to be a compassionate individual — it takes effort and some determination.

Something a little more difficult is benevolence (in Hebrew gemilut hasadim) bestowing loving-kindness. Benevolence is the natural outgrowth of the "attitude of compassion." In other words, compassion is the feeling and benevolence is the action — the "good deed" — the bestowing of a

lovingkindness or a "true kindness." There are many acts of benevolence that we as Jews are enjoined to perform, for example one of the most prominent is "bikur choleem," the visiting of the sick. There is an entire section of the Shulhan Arukh dedicated to the rules for visiting of the sick, for instance, one should not visit so often or for so long that he or she tires the patient, and one should not visit at a time that is inconvenient to the patient or family, or visit when someone has an embarrassing illness, etc...Another very important act of lovingkindness for us to perform is to attend a funeral and the comforting of mourners. It is also an act of benevolence to bring a gift of food or wine to a family who is in mourning. But the Rabbis say that one of the "true" acts of lovingkindness is the act of lovingkindness that is bestowed upon the dead. The Rabbis tell us about Joseph's promise to his father, Jacob to take him out of the land of Egypt after his death and bury him with his fathers (Genesis 47:29 & 30) This promise speaks to us of "true kindness" a promise or kindness shown to the dead. When we do a mitzvah for the living, there is always a question that we may secretly hope that one day they will repay the kindness; but when we are kind to the dead, we know that they will never be able to repay us. In that case, we can be certain that our kindly act is in no way tainted by any ulterior motive.

Giving tzedakah (charity) can also be an act of benevolence, and it certainly is a most important mitzvah. The interesting fact is that tzedakah cannot be given to everyone, for example, one cannot give charity in the form of money to a wealthy person who already has all he or she needs; however there is some act of lovingkindness that is appropriate for each and every human being. It is our challenge to try to think of acts of benevolence that we could bestow upon others. Anyone can perform an act of lovingkindness — you don't have to have lots of money, all you have to have is a loving heart and a willing spirit. You are capable of performing an act of benevolence today! WHY NOT GIVE IT A TRY... Shalom,

Micki D. Hecht
Rebbetzen, Temple Beth Am



Mama Mia's Pizzeria

ORIGINALLY FROM BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

2470 E. Tropicana Ave.
Corner of Tropicana & Eastern
Tropicana East Shopping Centre

FREE DELIVERY
458-6276
Call and ask about our Daily Specials
HOURS
Mon.-Thurs. 11 a.m.-11 p.m.
Fri.-Sat. 11 a.m.-12 a.m.
Sunday 2 p.m.-10 p.m.

WORLD TRAVEL CENTER, INC.
A full service Travel Agency completely automated to take advantage of the BEST up to the minute discounts.
Maryland Square
3661 So. Maryland Pkwy., Ste. N 7
Las Vegas, Nevada 89109
(702) 731-0705 1-800-245-0028

Jewish Introductions International
Nevada's local, innovative & personalized
Jewish Introduction Service
Age 21-101
Let us find that special someone
In Nevada call:
1/800/442-9050
40 Centers across the United States & Canada

Unique Chanukah Gift Chashmonean Prutah
OVER 2,000 YEARS OLD - SECOND TEMPLE ERA
Minted by the Chasmonean Dynasty
Two types of Jewish Coins available
Anchor or Cornucopia/please specify
One for \$30 — Both for \$49 (Postpaid)
Please send check or money order to:
A&Y SOFREI STAM
47 Essex St., N.Y., N.Y. 10002, (212) 254-1400/01
We also buy, sell and repair Torahs, Tephilin, Mezuzas and all kinds of religious articles
All Coins Are Guaranteed Authentic
Coin enlarged

FLETCHER JONES
IMPORTS
MERCEDES-BENZ

Las Vegas' only exclusive Mercedes-Benz Dealership

190E
300E
560SL
420SEL
560SEL

"EXTRAORDINARY CARS...FOR EXCEPTIONAL PEOPLE"
3100 South Rancho
364-2700