

118 Hate wickedness, but not the wicked man. Only where a wicked man has so identified himself with wickedness that he is to you the very source of wickedness, where it is difficult to separate the wicked man from the wickedness, him you may hate, for you hate only the wickedness in him. Such a one is the criminal whom you regard as beyond redemption, as one who does evil consciously and deliberately, of whose incorrigibility and premeditation you have convinced yourself through repeated and fruitless warning and admonition. Worst of all is the seducer, who is not only wicked himself but sows the seed of wickedness in others and brings it to maturity, who sets himself to kill morality and godliness in the soul of even one man, nay, who makes this his only object. Such a one has the all-loving God Himself excluded from the love and the pity of the human heart. Such a one you may not love, for in him you love sin itself, the agent of which he has made himself.<sup>1</sup>

16

LOVE

אהבה

*Bear love to thy neighbour as to thyself: I am the Lord.*

LEVIT. XIX, 18.

119 Love all that I have placed by your side, feel that its existence is necessary for your existence, its welfare for your welfare; feel even that your existence, your welfare, your vocation is completed only by its existence. Let your soul be linked with its being; I am the Lord, Who loves all, and calls upon you, man, to be the instrument of this love. With this injunction your God breaks open the seal of your heart, and bids you make a covenant of love with everything which bears the stamp of its Divine origin and has not itself given the lie to it (see para. 118). He bids you embrace all the children of God with a loving heart.

120 To see in your fellow-man something else than merely your rival for the acquisition of the good things of the earth, not to look upon his good as an encroachment on yours, to let your neighbour have the spot of earth on which God has set him—as He has set you on yours—and even to let him prosper on it—all this amounts merely to not hating him, not yet to loving him. To love your neighbour means to see in him the one condition of your own existence, of your own welfare, of

<sup>1</sup> Sifri on Deut. xiii, 9.

Love

your fulfilling your mission as man and Israelite, and so, in the desire for your own being and living, to include the desire for your neighbour's also.

The indispensable condition of your being, your welfare and your mission—who could be so dull as not to feel this? Imagine for a moment that all your fellow-men whom God has placed at your side have disappeared, and that you are alone on the desolate earth. What would be your existence, what pleasure could you have—still more, what would become of your mission, if you were not able to love and do kindnesses? You have been created to be a blessing—and you would have no one who would receive your blessing. You have been born to do kindnesses; you are meant to support, to sustain, to comfort, to instruct, to nourish, to make happy, to revive, and you would have no one for whom you could do all this. And do you not see that it is only in association with mankind as a whole that God endows your work with permanence? Mankind takes up the work of each individual and, itself undying, becomes the heir to it. Without it, your work would be but a dream.

But we can go still higher. I, the Lord, the personification of love, am Father of all beings around you, have called them all, like you, to life and well-being. If you love Me, and because you love Me, love My children; rejoice in their well-being, see in each My work, My child; in his welfare the prospering of My work and My child, in his woe the decay of My work, the suffering of My child. Love therefore the master in the work, the father in the child.

Finally, I am the Lord, the personification of love, Who has chosen man to be the instrument of this love. Do you, man, not see how this love is the finest flower of this mission? How do you raise yourself above the stone and the plant and the animal? Is it not through devoting yourself of your own free will to the welfare of the world around you? And this is just what love effects. Your whole activity belongs to God's world; first, then, belong to it with the source of your activity, with your heart. Carry in it love for God's world, above all for your fellow-man, the first and worthiest recipient of your beneficent activity. Carry love in your heart; it is this which makes you a man and an Israelite.

This love in you, if it is genuine, expresses itself in deeds with which, to the best of your ability, you promote the progress of the world around you to that state of welfare in which your love requires that you should desire to behold it. The rules that should guide you in the practice of this love, so that you should not do mischief under the

mistaken impression that you are promoting welfare, are revealed in the whole of the Torah. In respect of your fellow-men this is the rule of 'love your neighbour as yourself,' which consequently, as a positive commandment, belongs to the *mitzvot* (see chap. 91).

17

COMPASSION

רחמים

*Harden not thy heart . . . against thy needy brother.* DEUT. XV, 7.

- 125 Compassion is the feeling of sympathy which the pain of one being of itself awakens in another; and the higher and more human the beings are, the more keenly attuned are they to re-echo the note of suffering which, like a voice from heaven, penetrates the heart, bringing to all creatures a proof of their kinship in the universal God. And as for man, whose function it is to show respect and love for God's universe and all its creatures, his heart has been created so tender that it feels with the whole organic world, bestowing sympathy even on beings devoid of feeling, mourning even for fading flowers, so that, if nothing else, the very nature of his heart must teach him that he is required above everything to feel himself the brother of all beings, and to recognize the claim of all beings to his love and his beneficence.
- 126 Do not suppress this compassion, this sympathy, especially with the sufferings of your fellow-man. It is the warning voice of duty, which points out to you your brother in every sufferer, and your own sufferings in his, and awakens the love which tells you that you belong to him and his sufferings with all the powers that you have. Do not suppress it! If you thrust it back too often, it will no more well up of itself, and you will have cut yourself off from the company of all your fellow-creatures, you yourself will have destroyed the first proof of your mission as man and Israelite. Your heart becomes a stone, and there no longer sounds in it the voice of God, reminding you of your mission.
- 127 Do not suppress it either as the disturber of your own comfort. Rather see in it the admonition of God that you are to have no joy so long as a brother suffers by your side. Do not suppress it because you feel it

Compassion

calling on you to share your possessions. Rather let it be a sign to you that your property does not belong to you, but that God has given everyone in need a claim on it. Do not suppress it out of shame for an unbecoming weakness, out of shame for that which God has given to you yourself as the warranty for your noble mission as man and Israelite. When the sigh of suffering humanity elicits a kindred sigh from you, when its sorrow makes your countenance also sad, and the tear of sympathy comes into your eye—then you are ennobled; that is what proves to you that you are man and Israelite.

Yet be on your guard against letting sympathy degenerate into a hypersensitivity which identifies itself with the sufferers to such an extent that it retains no composure or power or strength to help. Such excess is fatal to the performance of the duty to which sympathy calls you. Rather accustom yourself at an early age to give practical help to suffering of every kind (Y.D. 247). 128