

Religion, Woman and Family

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There are two principles which I would like to delineate that will help me to develop the topic of Religion, Woman and Family

The first principle comes from the Talmud expression

The essence of values does not lie in education, but in behavior. That is to say knowledge, wisdom, learning, is not the grand purpose God has for mankind, but it lies better in behavior. If all the wisdom of the world leads us to a behavior that is detrimental to mankind then the knowledge is valueless. Great scientific developments enabled us to bomb Hiroshima at the cost of 100,000 lives, and to develop cyclone B gas that inexpensively snuffed out the lives of millions in Auschwitz.

The Talmudic expression tells us that we should judge ourselves not by what we think, not by what we believe, and not by what we know, but only by what we do. The ultimate improvement of the world will be determined by our actions.

Second principle No one can tell us what to feel. The Bible does not dictate emotions. For instance, when the Bible says love thy neighbor as thy self, or, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, it does not mean that we should emotionally feel love for God or neighbor. Let me give you an example of what I mean: I may live next door to someone whose actions irritate me to no end. I do not feel kindly toward him. I can not love him. But the Torah says, love thy neighbor as thy self. I therefore interpret this to mean that when that

neighbor has reason to need me, my behavior towards him must be the same as if I love him. The dictates of Torah is not how I must feel but how I must behave toward him.

I would like to share with you a Talmudic expression. We know that if a person has a large deposit in the bank it accumulate interest, which a person may withdraw, but, if a person withdraws the principal he will no longer receive interest, the return on his money is diminished. Our sages tell us that there are principles which we can deposit in our lifetime, and continue to withdraw these principles and still the aggregate value of our deposit will never be diminished. Here is the quote, "There are behavioral ways in which a human conducts himself and no matter how much value accrues to him in his lifetime, no matter what rewards he receives from his action, these principles will be rewarded in the world to come." Among these listed are: kindness to others, behavior to a stranger, visiting the sick, comforting those who have suffered a loss, helping a poor bride accumulate a dowery so she can marry, and creating peace and harmony between husband and wife. In these instances there is not difference between male and female, our obligation is equal in all instances. The Talmud here again tells us that a value that is of eternal quality is to create a happy and harmonious family. The family unit is a microcosm of community. That is why we put a mezuzah on the door post of our homes. The mezuzah has the words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Since I interpret love not as an emotion but rather my action, I mean therefore to recognize that as I leave my peaceful family life I carry that obligation to inculcate that peace and harmony in the community I greet each day upon leaving my home. It follows also that when I enter my home, the mezuzah reminds me that my

behavior to my family shall be in consonance with God's will, which is a behavior of harmony and love.

Religion requires us to face each human being as the Bible says, "male and female created He them, in the image of God created He them". What a biblical obligation we have, to see the image of God in each person, and to teach our children the Godly value of every human being.