

FOUNDATIONS



Foundations for a Thoughtful Judaism Practice

SOURCES



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CLASS 1 CARING FOR OTHERS

Source 1

 Exodus (Shemot) 20:13-14

יג לא תרצח לא תנאף לא תגנב לא תענה ברעך עד שקר.

- 13 You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

יד לא תחמד בית רעך לא תחמד אשת רעך ועבדו ועבדו וְשורו וְחמרו וְכל אשר לרעך.

- 14 You shall not covet your neighbor's house: you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or his ass, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

Source 2

 Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Mourning 14:1

מצות עשה של דבריהם לבקר חולים. ולנחם אבלים. ולהוציא המת. ולהכניס הפלה. וללוות האורחים. ולהתעסק בכל צרכי הקבורה. לשאת על הפתח. ולילך לפניו ולספד ולחפור ולקבר. וכן לשמח הפלה והחתן. ולסעדם בכל צרכיהם. ואלו הן גמילות חסדים שבגופו שאין להם שעור. אף על פי שכל מצות אלו מדבריהם הרי הן בכלל (ויקרא יט יח) "ואהבת לרעך כמוך." כל הדברים שאתה רוצה שיעשו אותם לך אחרים. עשה אתה אותן לאחיי בתורה ובמצות:

It is a positive commandment in rabbinic law to visit the sick, comfort the mourners, escort the dead, dower the bride, accompany the [departing] guests, and to involve oneself in all burial needs: to carry the dead, to walk before the dead and to eulogize, dig and bury. And likewise, to bring cheer to the bride and the groom, and to assist them in whatever they need. And these are the acts of kindness that one does with one's body, and these have no quantified limit. Even though all these precepts are of rabbinic origin, they are implied by the biblical verse: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (LEVITICUS 19:18): whatever you would want others to do for you, you should do for your brother/sister in Torah and precepts.



Source 3



Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings and Wars 10:12

אפילו הגויים--ציוו חכמים לבקר חוליהם, ולקבור מתיהם עם מתי ישראל, ולפרנס ענייהם בכלל עניי ישראל, מפני דרכי שלום: הרי נאמר "טוב ה', לכול; ורחמיו, על כל מעשיו" (תהילים קמה, ט) ונאמר "דרכיה, דרכי נועם; וכל נתיבותיה, שלום" (משלי ג, יז)

Even for those who are not Jewish: the rabbis commanded to visit their sick, to bury their dead with the dead of Israel, and to sustain their poor along with the poor of Israel for the sake of the ways of peace. Behold it is said: "God is good to all and God's mercy is upon all of God's handiwork (PSALMS 145:9)," and it is said, "Its paths are paths of pleasantness and all its ways are peace (PROVERBS 3:17)".

Source 4



Robert M. Cover, "Obligation: A Jewish Jurisprudence of the Social Order"

...because it is a legal tradition, Judaism has its own categories for expressing through law the worth and dignity of each human being. And the categories are not closely analogous to "human rights." The principal word in Jewish law, which occupies a place equivalent in evocative force to the American legal system's "rights," is the word *mitzvah*, which literally means "commandment" but has a general meaning closer to "incumbent obligation."

... The jurisprudence of rights has proved singularly weak in providing for the material guarantees of life and dignity flowing from the community to the individual. While we may talk of the right to medical care, the right to subsistence, the right to an education, we are constantly met by the realization that such rhetorical tropes are empty in a way that the right to freedom of expression or the right to due process are not. When the issue is restraint upon power, it is intelligible to simply state the principle of restraint. Of course, whether the restraint will be effective depends on many things, not least of which is the good faith of those restrained. However, the intelligibility of the principle remains because it is always clear who is being addressed — whoever it is that acts to threaten the right in question. However, the "right to an education" is not even an intelligible principle unless we know to whom it is addressed. Taken alone it only speaks to a need. A distributional premise is missing that can only be supplied through a principle of "obligation." In a system of *mitzvot* this problem does not arise.