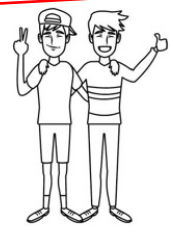


Interpersonal Relationships



- "**Friendship** is born at that moment when one person says to another, 'What! You too? I thought I was the only one.'"
 – C.S. Lewis
- "True **friendship** comes when the silence between two people is comfortable."
 – David Tyson
- "**Friendship** is the hardest thing in the world to explain. It's not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of **friendship**, you really haven't learned anything."
 – Muhammad Ali
- "The best time to make **friends** is before you need them."
 – Ethel Barrymore
- "There is nothing on this earth more to be prized than true **friendship**."
 – Thomas Aquinas
- "If you go looking for a **friend**, you're going to find they're very scarce. If you go out to be a **friend**, you'll find them everywhere."
 – Zig Ziglar
- "The best mirror is an old **friend**."
 – George Herbert

By way of introduction to the topic of interpersonal relationships, let's analyze a statement from the Talmudic Sages from **Ethics of Our Fathers** (a collection of Rabbinic teachings and saying compiled around the year 200 CE):



עֲשֵׂה לְךָ רֵב, וּקְנֵה לְךָ חֵבֵר
 Create for yourself a teacher and acquire for yourself a friend

 What does it mean to create a teacher? To acquire a friend? What's the difference? What does that difference teach us?

Let's explore one explanation of this concept that focuses on the investments that we make in our friends:

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachiah does not tell us simply to "have" a friend, but to "acquire" a friend. This also implies that true friendship does not necessarily come naturally. Something must be done to secure it. Indeed, in the simplest sense, "acquiring" implies paying the price, i.e. giving up something (including giving up something of oneself) to establish the bond of friendship... The difference between friends we eventually lose touch with and one we keep for life is typically the amount we invest in the friendship. Lifelong friends feel the bond even if they move to opposite sides of the world and speak only a couple of times a year because they invested in each other so profoundly they see themselves reflected in the other. The friend becomes a mirror of their own life and self.

Yaakov Astor, Aish.com, "Crossing the Narrow Bridge, Ethics of The Fathers 1:6"

Can you relate to this concept?
Which friend comes to mind when you think of this caliber of friendship?



It gets more dramatic than this...
Exactly how central is the importance of our interpersonal relationships in Judaism?

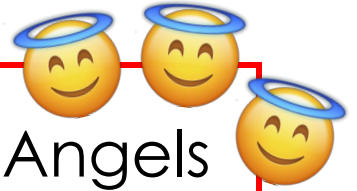
Let's look at the **10 commandments**, the first set of Jewish laws which were given to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai.

Do you notice a theme of the laws on the right side? On the left side?

הדיברות	עשרת
Do not murder 6. לא תרצח	1. אני ה' אלהיך I am the Lord your God
Do not commit adultery 7. לא תנאף	2. לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים על פני You shall have no other gods before me
Do not steal 8. לא תגנב	3. לא תשא את שם ה' אלהיך לשוא Do not take the name of your Lord your God in vain
9. לא תענה ברעך עד שקר Do not lie, especially about your neighbour	4. זכור את יום השבת לקדשו Remember the Shabbat day, to keep it holy
Do not be jealous 10. לא תחמד	5. כבד את אביך ואת אמך Honor your father and mother



Look at how much more writing there is on the right side than on the left! What do you think that teaches us?



A Case Study

Abraham, Lot and the Angels

After Abraham and his family settle in the Land of C'naan (which later became Israel), he parts ways with his nephew, Lot. Abraham settles in the plains of Mamre and Lot goes to Sodom, a city famous for its corrupt and perverse morals. Abraham performs a circumcision on himself at the age of 99, and, on the third day – known as the most painful day of recovery – Abraham is sitting at the entrance of his tent, waiting to welcome in some guests. G-d Himself comes to visit Abraham, and during this visit, Abraham spots three men in the distance, approaching his tent. **The Torah tells us:**

Genesis 18:1-2

א וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאַלְנֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח-הָאֵהָל בְּחֹם הַיּוֹם:
ב וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיָּרָץ לְקִרְאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֲרָצָה:

- 1 G-d appeared to him (Abraham) in the plains of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of his tent as the day grew hot.
- 2 Looking up, he saw three men walking towards him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and bowed to the ground.

However, when Lot greets them at the beginning of the next chapter, they are named differently:

Genesis 19:1

א וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים סָדְמָה בְּעֶרְבַּ וְלוֹט יֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר-סָדָם וַיֵּרָא-לוֹט וַיִּקָּם לְקִרְאתָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַפָּיִם אֲרָצָה:

- 1 The two angels arrived in Sodom in the evening, as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to greet them and bowed with his face to the ground.



If there are the same individuals, why does the Torah use a different word? What can this difference teach us about the way that Avraham and Lot related to the people around them?

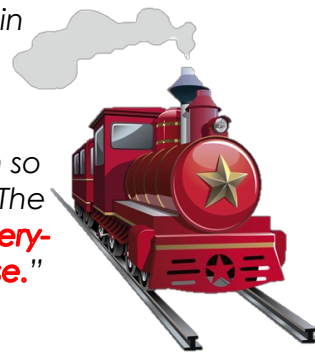
וַיִּבְרָא אֱ-לֹקִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצַלְמֵ אֱ-לֹקִים בָּרָא
אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם: בראשית א:כז
And G-d created man in His image – He created him in
 the image of G-d, male and female He created them.

What does it mean that we are created **"in the image of G-d"**?



A pious, well-known but poorly dressed Hasidic rebbe took a lengthy train ride to a town far away. He was subject to insult and verbal abuse from a base fellow in his train car. When the train finally came to a halt, the rebbe came off the platform to thousands of excited disciples who waited for his arrival.

The fellow in his car looked mortified as he stood beside the rebbe. "I'm so ashamed. I had no idea who you were. Please accept my apologies." The rebbe turned to him and said, **"Don't apologize to me. Apologize to everyone else. When you insulted me, you did so because I was everyone else."**



MyJewishLearning.com, Erica Brown, "In God's Image: B'tselem Elohim"

This concept transforms every social interaction in a fundamental way. Do we value people because of **what they do**, or simply because **they are**?

Your new challenge is to begin to acknowledge someone who you see daily, but don't normally notice.

