



Our Parsha introduces us to the well-known maxim that, "You should love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18). R' Akiva held that this is the fundamental rule of the Torah, a guiding lantern showing us the way we should behave in this world. Ben Azai added that this overriding decree was, ZEH SEFER TOLDOT ADAM - 'This is the Book of the Generations of Adam' (Sifrei).

According to Midrash Rabba, the observance of the Mitzvot by all of Israel as a collective is what causes us to merit Kedusha - holiness - in this world. Indeed, our Sages teach us that the entire Parsha of Kedoshim - the central theme of which is Kedusha, and the various means to obtain it - was given over to the people as a whole (Hakhel), as if to teach us, following R' Akiva, that every Mitzva we undertake should be done on behalf of K'lal Yisrael.

In today's parlance, we would say that we should love every Jew unconditionally, a corollary of which is that we should nullify our own will for the good of the whole. Ben Azai accepted this line but added that when observing Mitzvot, an individual should identify himself with all the preceding, current, and future generations of Israel, since all these

souls derived from the original soul of Adam (Tanchuma). Does that not bind us all and make us each responsible for one another?

We should remember that this unconditional love does not follow current libertarian thinking that accepts everyone for who or what they are. Our love and concern for each other is predicated on the last words of the ruling: ANI HASHEM - 'I am G-d' - because by following this pivotal dictum every Jew brings Kedusha into the world and because loving our neighbor is what Hashem has charged us to do.

(Inspired by the S'fat Emet). **MP**