

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.
Baruch atah Adonai, ohev amo Yisrael.

Praised are You, Adonai, who loves your people Israel.



Jewish Sources on Relationships

That which is hateful to you do not do to your neighbor. That is the entire Torah, and all else is commentary. Go and study it. - Shabbat 31

Joshua ben Perachyah said, "Get yourself a teacher, find someone to study with, and judge everyone favorably." Avot 1:6

Whether a person really loves God can be determined by the love that person shares with others. - Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

In the siddur which he issued, R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi states: "Before prayer, it is proper to say "I hereby am accepting upon myself the commandment of loving your neighbor as yourself." The commandment to love one's fellow Jews is the gateway to coming before God in prayers."

When a person encounters another person in total immediacy, he or she may also experience a glimpse of God. - Martin Buber

Extended, the lines of relationships intersect in the eternal You. - Martin Buber

Hillel said, "Be one of Aaron's students, loving peace and pursuing it, loving people and bringing them to the Torah." Avot 1:12

If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am for myself alone, then what am I? And, if not now, when? - Avot 1:14

The material needs of my neighbor become my spiritual needs. - Rabbi Israel Salanter

One man was walking in a forest, lost for many days. He couldn't find the right path- each time he thought he was getting somewhere, he found himself even more lost. This went on for days and days, wandering in the thick woods. Eventually, this man ran into another just like him - someone else who had been wandering lost in the forest. "Now that I have found you, you can show me the way out," he said. "I don't know the way out either," said the second. "But I do know this, do not go the way I have been going, for that way is not the way. Now let us walk on together and find the light."

Rabbi Elazar ben Shammua would say: Let the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own. Let the honor of your associate be equal to the respect due to your teacher. Let the respect due to your teacher be equivalent to the reverence due to heaven. Avot 4:12

Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffman taught the word Kodesh is spelled KDSH without the vowel letter vav, whenever the reference is to human beings. When the reference is to God, the spelling includes the vav, God's holiness being complete. - Rabbi Abraham Ezra Millgram
Jewish Worship

Once when Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai was leaving Jeruslaem, Rabbi Joshua was walking behind him and saw the Temple in ruins. Rabbi Joshua said, "Woe is us that this has been destroyed, the place where atonement was made for the sins of Israel." Rabbi Yohanan replied, "No, my son, do you not know that we have a means of making atonement that is like the Temple? And what is it? It is deeds of love, as it is said, "For I desire kindness and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6) Avot d'Rabbi Natan 4:21

Once the Gerer Rebbe decided to question one of his disciples: "How is Moshe Yaakov doing?" The disciple didn't know. "What!" shouted the Rebbe, "You don't know? You pray under the same roof, you study the same texts, you serve the same God, you sing the same songs, and yet you dare tell me that you don't know whether Moshe Yaakov is in good health, whether he needs held, advice or comforting?"

Exodus 25:8 Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. It says among them and not among it, to teach you that each person must build the Sanctuary in his own heart, then God will dwell among them. - R. Menahem Mendl of Kotzk

When in the presence of the Other, I say "Here I am!" This "Here I am" is the place through

which the Infinite enters into language, but without giving it to be seen ... I will say that the subject who says "here I am!" testifies to the Infinite. It is through this testimony ... that the revelation of the Infinite occurs. It is through this testimony that the very glory of the Infinite glorifies itself. – Levinas

From Martin Buber's "I and Thou"

Buber's philosophy of dialogue views the human existence in two fundamentally different kinds of relations: I-It relations and I-Thou relations. An I-It relation is the normal everyday relation of a human being toward his or her surroundings. A person can also view another person as an It, and often does so by viewing others from a distance. In the I-Thou relation the individual enters into the relationship with another human with his or her entire being. This relationship becomes an intimate meeting, a real dialogue between both partners. Buber saw this as a reflection of the encounter between the human being and God. The I-Thou relationship allows for dialogue between the human being and God.

I contemplate a tree.

I can accept it as a picture: a rigid pillar in a flood of light, or splashes of green traversed by the gentleness of the blue silver ground.

I can feel it as movement: the flowing veins around the sturdy, striving core, the sucking of the roots, the breathing of the leaves, the infinite commerce with earth and air—and the growing itself in its darkness.

I can assign it to a species and observe it as an instance, with an eye to its construction and its way of life.

I can overcome its uniqueness and form so rigorously that I recognize it only as an expression of the law—those laws according to which a constant opposition of forces is continually adjusted, or those laws according to which the elements mix and separate.

I can dissolve it into a number, into a pure relation between numbers, and eternalize it.

Throughout all of this the tree remains my object and has its place and its time span, its kind and condition.

But it can also happen, if will and grace are joined, that as I contemplate the tree I am drawn into a relation, and the tree ceases to be an It. The power of exclusiveness has seized me.

This does not require me to forego any of the modes of contemplation. There is nothing that I must not see in order to see, and there is no knowledge that I must forget. Rather is everything, picture and movement, species and instance, law and number included and inseparably fused.

Whatever belongs to the tree is included: its form and its mechanics, its colors and its chemistry, its conversation with the elements and its conversation with the stars—all this in its entirety.

The tree is no impression, no play of my imagination, no aspect of a mood; it confronts me bodily and has to deal with me as I must deal with it—only differently.

One should not try to dilute the meaning of the relation: relation is reciprocity.

Does the tree then have consciousness, similar to our own? I have no experience of that. But thinking that you have brought this off in your own case, must you again divide the indivisible? What I encounter is neither the soul of a tree nor a dryad, but the tree itself.

Key Quotes and Concepts in “I and Thou”

The world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude.

This statement is the basic foundation on which Buber's entire project is built. His aim is to get his readers to recognize the two modes available to man for engaging the world. Modern society, he claims, only recognizes one of these modes, the mode of experience, through which man treats the world (including his fellow men) as an object to be analyzed and utilized. Modern man ignores the second mode, the mode of encounter, through which man enters into relation with the world, engaging as active participant rather than as objective observer. It

is only by opening ourselves up to this second mode of engaging the world, Buber thinks, that we can escape the ills of the modern human condition.

Nothing can doom man but the belief in doom, for this prevents the movement of return.

In this claim, Buber sums up his diagnosis of modern man's ills. **The reason that modern man feels alienated from the world, that life is meaningless, and that he is oppressed by inescapable laws of nature, is because modern man no longer recognizes the second mode of engaging the world, the mode of encounter. Modern man believes that the It-world, the world of strict causal laws, of using and being used, is all that exists. It is only this belief that dooms him to feel alienated. If he could only open himself up to the possibility of encounter, he would find salvation.**

Extended, the lines of relationship intersect in the eternal You.

Until Buber opens the third part of the book with his statement, his work looks like a more of a theory of psychology and sociology than of religion. In this claim, however, Buber ties his psychological and sociological observations to the notion of God. Most encounters, he tells us, are fleeting; they last for only a moment and then fade, leaving us unfulfilled. In these fleeting encounters, and in the sense of disappointment that we suffer as they fade, we glimpse the fact that there is a higher sort of encounter, one that will not be fleeting, and will fulfill our inner yearning for relation. This is the absolute relation, the encounter with the eternal You, or God. **Every encounter then, leads us toward encounter with God, because every encounter shows us that there is something higher for which we are yearning.**

The encounter with God does not come to man in order that he may henceforth attend to God, but in order that he may prove its meaning in action in the world.

Just as every encounter with nature and with man leads us to the encounter with God, Buber here tells us that **the purpose of our encounter with God is to lead us back to encounter with all the world.** The man who has encountered God does not go on to spend all his time contemplating the mysteries of divinity like some monk or holy hermit. Rather, the holy man, the man who has encountered God, lives out that encounter by loving the entire world, and feeling a responsibility for everyone and everything in the world. The holy man is a man of action and is fully engaged in the world.

What has to be given up is not the I but that false drive for self-affirmation, which impels man to flee from the unreliable, unsolid, unlasting, unpredictable, dangerous world of relation into the having of things.

In this statement, Buber argues against critics of religion who claim that religious experience is nothing but a crutch for the weak. **Buber asserts that opening oneself up to encounter is an act of incredible bravery. It requires us to leave behind the realm of experience, which is the realm we can understand and predict and master. To enter the realm of encounter is to enter an unknowable, unpredictable world that we cannot manipulate.** In order to do this, we must give up our inner drive for self-protection and our greed for power and possessions. We must not, however, give up our entire selves, as some mystics advise, because there is no possibility of relationship if there is no self there to do the relating.

From “The Little Prince”

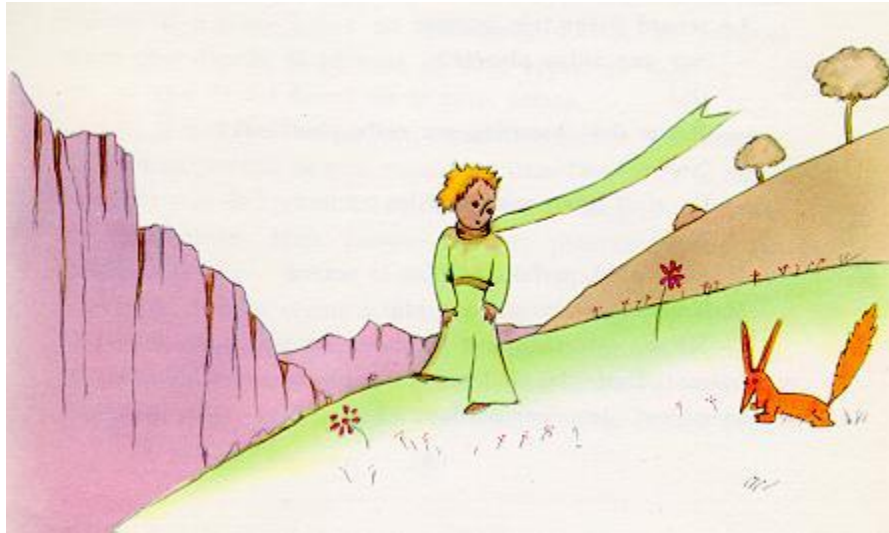
"My life is very monotonous," the fox said. "I hunt chickens; men hunt me. All the chickens are just alike, and all the men are just alike. And, in consequence, I am a little bored. But if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look: you see the grain-fields down yonder? I do not eat bread. Wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me. And that is sad. But you have hair that is the color of gold. Think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me! The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat . . ."

The fox gazed at the little prince, for a long time.

"Please--tame me!" he said.

"I want to, very much," the little prince replied. "But I have not much time. I have friends to discover, and a great many things to understand."

"One only understands the things that one tames," said the fox. "Men have no more time to understand anything. They buy things all ready made at the shops. But there is no shop anywhere where one can buy friendship, and so men have no friends any more. If you want a friend, tame me . . ."



"What must I do, to tame you?" asked the little prince.

"You must be very patient," replied the fox. "First you will sit down at a little distance from me--like that--in the grass. I shall look at you out of the corner of my eye, and you will say nothing. Words are the source of misunderstandings. But you will sit a little closer to me, every day . . ."

The next day the little prince came back.

"It would have been better to come back at the same hour," said the fox. "If, for example, you come at four o'clock in the afternoon, then at three o'clock I shall begin to be happy. I shall feel happier and happier as the hour advances. At four o'clock, I shall already be worrying and jumping about. I shall show you how happy I am! But if you come at just any time, I shall never know at what hour my heart is to be ready to greet you . . . One must observe the proper rites . . ."

"What is a rite?" asked the little prince.

"Those also are actions too often neglected," said the fox. "They are what make one day different from other days, one hour from other hours. There is a rite, for example, among my hunters. Every Thursday they dance with the village girls. So Thursday is a wonderful day for me! I can take a walk as far as the vineyards. But if the hunters danced at just any time, every day would be like every other day, and I should never have any vacation at all."

So the little prince tamed the fox. And when the hour of his departure drew near--

"Ah," said the fox, "I shall cry."

"It is your own fault," said the little prince. "I never wished you any sort of harm; but you wanted me to tame you ."

Yes, that is so," said the fox.

"But now you are going to cry!" said the little prince.

"Yes, that is so," said the fox.

"Then it has done you no good at all!"

"It has done me good," said the fox, "because of the color of the wheat fields." And then he added:

"Go and look again at the roses. You will understand now that yours is unique in all the world. Then come back to say goodbye to me, and I will make you a present of a secret."

The little prince went away, to look again at the roses.

"You are not at all like my rose," he said. "As yet you are nothing. No one has tamed you, and you have tamed no one. You are like my fox when I first knew him. He was only a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But I have made him my friend, and now he is unique in all the world."

And the roses were very much embarrassed.

"You are beautiful, but you are empty," he went on. "One could not die for you. To be sure, an ordinary passerby would think that my rose looked just like you--the rose that belongs to me. But in herself alone she is more important than all the hundreds of you other roses: because it is she that I have watered; because it is she that I have put under the glass globe; because it is she that I have sheltered behind the screen; because it is for her that I have killed the caterpillars (except the two or three that we saved to become butterflies); because it is she that I have listened to, when she grumbled, or boasted, or ever sometimes when she said nothing. Because she is *my* rose.

And he went back to meet the fox.

"Goodbye," he said.

"Goodbye," said the fox. "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

"What is essential is invisible to the eye," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.

"It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important."

"It is the time I have wasted for my rose--" said the little prince, so that he would be sure to remember.

"Men have forgotten this truth," said the fox. "But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose . . ."

"I am responsible for my rose," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.

Tourists by Yehuda Amichai

Visits of condolence is all we get from them.
They squat at the Holocaust Memorial,
They put on grave faces at the Wailing Wall
And they laugh behind heavy curtains
In their hotels.
They have their pictures taken
Together with our famous dead
At Rachel's Tomb and Herzl's Tomb
And on Ammunition Hill.
They weep over our sweet boys
And lust after our tough girls
And hang up their underwear
To dry quickly
In cool, blue bathrooms.

Once I sat on the steps by agate at David's Tower,
I placed my two heavy baskets at my side. A group of tourists
was standing around their guide and I became their target marker.
"You see
that man with the baskets? Just right of his head there's an arch
from the Roman period. Just right of his head." "But he's moving,
he's moving!"
I said to myself: redemption will come only if their guide tells them,
"You see that arch from the Roman period? It's not important: but
next to it,
left and down a bit, there sits a man who's bought fruit and
vegetables for his family."