

## “TWO KINDS OF MITZVOT”

Judaism divides mitzvot into two categories, Bein Adam L'makom and Be'in Adam L'havero -- between the human being and God, and between one person and another. The categories are not absolutely fixed. Tzedakah is between people, but implicates God in the actions of human beings. Prayer is directed toward the divine, but we gather in community for prayer whenever possible.

Nonetheless it is wise to keep in mind that both human beings and God are the focus of faith. When people tell me they are “spiritual but not religious” I always want to ask how much they give to Tzedakah. Too often “spiritual but not religious” is a code word for not interested in others. Keeping one's eye fixed only at God, however defined, is crippling; after four years of looking up to paint the Sistine chapel, Michelangelo's neck was permanently strained.

It is incumbent upon us to pay attention to one another, to human need. But just as it is unwise to serve only God, to live in a world of human requirements alone is spiritually stunted. Judaism teaches that some mitzvot are for God because we can transcend our temporality, our connection to earth, and soar. Other mitzvot are for us, because human need, and human healing, is urgent and ever present.