

Who Do You Deal With in Life?

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

Avraham is regarded as the founder of Monotheism. What makes him so remarkable is that his religious commitment did not lead him to withdraw into his own private world, but he interacted with everyone he came into contact with. He was literally a man of the world. One might think that he was the equivalent of the New Age belief that love conquers all and if you accept all human beings as good everyone will love you.

Abraham clearly distinguishes between people you can deal with and those you cannot. He lives in an era of tribal warfare and climatic disasters. A famine forces him down to Egypt for food and he enters into a treaty with Pharaoh. His wife is the diplomatic pawn and when Pharaoh discovers it they are "bought off" and leave. Back in Canaan he encounters Malchizedek, a priest. He recognizes him as a good man and gives him tithes. He gets caught up in a fight between the kings of Sodom and Amora and invading kings. He succeeds in fighting off the aggressors and rescuing his nephew Lot. But he refuses any money from them, recognizing they are corrupt even though he did accept money from Pharaoh. He will not touch tainted money. But he will deal with Avimelech King of the Philistines. There are some people you can deal with. Others you must avoid.