

## TEXT 2 • Have Mercy, Brother!

In this passage, Maimonides expresses the value of Jewish peoplehood and our special responsibilities toward other Jews.

משנה תורה להרמב"ם הלכות מתנות עניים פרק יד:  
כל-ישראל והנלווה עליהם כאחים הם, שנאמר: בנים אתם ליי אלהיכם  
(דברים יד, א). ואם לא ירחם האח על האח - מי ירחם עליו?

All Israel and those who join with it [i.e. converts] are like brothers as it states: "You are children of the Lord, your God." (Deuteronomy 14:1) And if one brother will not show mercy towards another brother, who will?

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*—Laws of Gifts to the Poor, 10:4

### What the Text Means

- ▼ In this context, what does it mean to be a "brother?"
- ▼ What is Maimonides suggesting about the "mercy" that someone would show towards a "brother" as opposed to anyone else?
- ▼ Why do you think Maimonides is suggesting that we should behave differently to a Jew in need than to anyone else in need?
- ▼ How do you think Maimonides would answer the question: Shouldn't I just love everyone else as myself and treat everyone else equally?

### What the Text Means to Me

- ▲ With the world getting smaller through travel and telecommunications, with pollutants and illness from one region being transported to other regions, and with a growing awareness of shared vulnerability, do you think this value of parochialism and of tribalism still makes sense?
- ▲ Can you believe in the sacred destiny of the Jewish people, and celebrate particularism in a way that does not seem exclusive?
- ▲ Do you think it is possible to be a good person, help others around the world, and still give preference to your own people with your time, affection and resources?