

The sacred art of LOVINGKINDNESS - preparing to practice
by Rabbi Rami Shapiro, foreword by Marcia Ford.
Skylight paths Publishing 2006.

This gentle book is a combination of self-help guide, life enhancement programme, and spiritual autobiography. Rabbi Rami Shapiro, who has, through many other books and some inspiring prayers that have found their way into many modern Jewish prayerbooks contributed greatly to Jewish spiritual awareness, seeks in the sacred heart of LOVINGKINDNESS to elucidate a principal that may become a life-enhancing practice.

In the Jewish tradition *chesed*, the Hebrew for lovingkindness, is an emotion that is typified by the biblical covenant relationship between God and the Israelites. It is a very special love, a covenant based love, in which the love is not unconditional and which carries with it profound responsibilities and awareness of the other.

This book is about cultivating a state of mind, and Shapiro draws on teachings from all the world's major religions in pursuit of this goal, but it does not promote selfishness or self-absorption, indeed at its profoundest level it is all about the achieving of true human inter-action. There are some wonderful ideas in this book, as well as some fine prayers, notably those for havdallah (p.46f.), and yet again Rami Shapiro demonstrates his ability to touch the heart with simplicity, beauty and sincerity.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh