YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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***Bein Adam Le-chavero:* Ethics of Interpersonal Conduct**

**By Rav Binyamin Zimmerman**

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Dedicated in memory of   
Joseph Y. Nadler, z”l, Yosef ben Yechezkel Tzvi

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**Shiur #15: Permitted and Forbidden Hatred**

**Introduction**

In last week's lesson we discussed the nature of the prohibition “Do not hate (*Lo tisna*) your brother in your heart.” Despite the severity of “*Lo tisna*,” some sources indicate that under specific circumstances, this prohibition may be waived. Is there ever really permission to hate a fellow Jew, and if so, under what circumstances and for what purpose?

An analysis of the Torah's terminology is necessary in order to understand the scope of the prohibition.

***Reiakha* and *Achikha,* Love and Hate**

The question of who is included in the prohibition of hatred parallels the question regarding who is included in the mitzva of loving one's fellow Jew. The two are found next to each other in *Vayikra* 19:17-18, the former speaking of “*reiakha*” (your fellow) and the latter of “*achikha*” (your brother). What is the connotation of each?

The Rambam, in a number of places, indicates that the obligation of love extends to all Jews. In *Hilkhot De'ot* (6:3), he unequivocally extends the obligation to all Jews, without limitation:

There is a mitzvafalling upon everyone to love each individual Jew as himself, as it is stated: "You shall love your fellow as yourself."

The Talmud may provide a source to back up this assertion. *Sanhedrin* 45a expounds this verse to give a criminal sentenced to capital punishment a proper (i.e., humane) death, clearly implying that the obligation of loving one's fellow applies to every Jew, even condemned criminals.

Logic would dictate that the same should apply to the inverse, the prohibition of hatred. If one must love every Jew, then one must be enjoined from hating any Jew. However, this may not be true. The Talmud notes that despite the prohibition of hating one's brother, another verse in the Torah makes explicit reference to one’s foe, an individual whom one hates.

If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you must certainly bring it back to him. If you see your foe’s donkey lying under its load and you refrain from helping him, you must certainly help him. (*Shemot* 23:4-5)

The Talmud (*Pesachim* 113b) discusses the law applying to an individual whose unseemly behavior has been witnessed by only one person, and it resolves the contradiction between the two verses, the prohibition to hate another Jew and the obligation to help a hated Jew:

Rabbi Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak: “It is permissible to hate him, as it is said. ‘If you see your foe’s donkey lying under its load.'” Now which foe is meant? Shall we say a non-Jewish foe? It was taught: “The foe of whom they spoke is a Jewish foe, not a non-Jewish foe.” Hence, it obviously means a Jewish foe. But is it permitted to hate him? Surely it is written, “Do not hate your brother in your heart”! Again, if there are witnesses that any Jew transgressed, all agree that he should be hated! Why is this particular person singled out? Hence it must surely apply to such a case where he has seen something indecent in him. Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: “It is a duty to hate him, as it is written (*Mishlei* 8:13), ‘God's commandment is to hate wickedness.’”

This Talmud implies that there are situations in which it is permissible and perhaps even obligatory to hate a fellow Jew, if the other Jew has violated a commandment. Even if “*reiakha*” includes all Jews in the obligation of love, “*achikha”* may exclude certain people, namely those who engage in blatant violations of commandments. In other words, the implication is that one is obligated to hate an evildoer.

This Talmudic passage requires analysis. While the Talmud does resolve the contradiction between the two verses via its distinction between evildoers and others, the nature of this law is unclear. Why does one who performs evil lose the status of “*achikha”*?What is to be accomplished through this hatred? If it is in fact true that one must love all Jews, including evildoers, how can one simultaneously love and hate?

Even if we accept that one can lose the status of “*achikha*,” we must define the point at which this happens. The simple understanding of the passage is that one who performs a sin, even once, may be hated. Is this really sufficient?

**Reasons for Hate**

In order to better understand this issue, we must identify different forms of "hate". In truth, the word "hate" is a very strong word. However, there is a logical reason why one would want to limit one’s love for an individual whose behavior is detrimental. Sometimes, despite our love for another, we must distance ourselves from a friend who is liable to have a harmful influence.

This might be better understood based on the context of the Torah's directive regarding hate. The Torah links the prohibition of hatred to the positive commandment of providing rebuke and constructive criticism to one who has sinned. In last week's lesson, we noted that numerous commentators understood the verse as one continuum. One must not hate an individual who has wronged him or her internally, concealing his true emotions; rather, one must speak constructively and positively to the offender.

The whole gist of the prohibition of hatred is to be productive. Instead of hating, a Jew is supposed to react positively to a misdeed. Sometimes showing hatred, a lack of approval of the other’s actions, may accomplish just that. This idea finds expression in the comments of the Semak (17), who writes:

The Torah cautions us regarding someone whom we are allowed to hate — for example, one who has committed a transgression. Despite this, it is prohibited to hate this individual privately in one's heart while publicly expressing love; rather one is obligated to display his hatred.

This also appears to be the opinion of Rashi (*Arakhin* 16b): the verse is referring to a transgressor; the victim is forbidden to hate in his or her heart. Instead, the victim must rebuke and improve the other’s behavior.

In truth, the terminology used by the verse mandating love of one’s fellow Jew differs from that used in the prohibition of hatred, and this distinction between “*reiakha*” and “*achikha*” may tell us something. A "fellow" would include a varied degree of individuals, including acquaintances and even people who are very different. A "brother", on the other hand, can refer to one of two types of people: either a blood brother or someone whose closeness can be expressed in terms of a fraternal relationship. These two meanings may combine to explain why it is more limited. A brotherly relationship may persist despite bad behavior; however, the metaphorical closeness requires a backdrop of shared values and actions. One whose behavior distances himself from his metaphorical brethren would cease to be their kith and kin*.*

**Always a Brother?**

Ostensibly one may lose the status of “*achikha*,” but Rav S.R. Hirsch points out that, to a certain degree, the opposite is true. Though many commentators explain the prohibition of hatred as dealing with one who has wronged another, in which case resentment is only natural, Rav Hirsch (*ad loc.*) points out that the language of the verse is meant to remind us of the bigger picture. At its root, “*achikha*” reminds us of the verb “*acha*”, to mend or sew.

The assumption in this prohibition is that our brother's misbehavior toward us is liable to provoke hatred in our hearts… Such feelings are only natural in a heart not sensitized by the Torah, but they must not arise in our hearts. Even if our brother has done us many wrongs… he always remains our brother. After all, we are all God's children, and we are all sewn together, joined in brotherhood to each other through God. We are brothers, the children of one Father, and for the sake of this one Father, Who still calls him His son and reserves for him a place in His house and in His heart, hatred must not arise in our hearts…

Again, there is nothing as effective for removing hate from the heart as the idea implicit in the word *achikha.* Every man is a brother in God's house; in our Father's house, there is no place for hate arising out of jealousy.

In a similar way, even when dealing with one who hasn't wronged us personally but has wronged God, though his actions require a response on our part, we mustn't forget the bigger picture. Jews are family, and we must prevent a breakup.

On a homiletic level, the proper way to treat one who has sinned in light of the status of "*achikha*" may be dependent on the difference of opinion regarding whether Jews remain children of the Almighty if they are no longer dutiful offspring. The Talmud (*Kiddushin* 36a) records:

“‘You are children to Lord your God’ (Devarim 14:2) — when you act like children you are called children; if you do not act like children, you are not called children” — these are the words of Rabbi Yehuda. Rabbi Meir says: “One way or the other you are called children.”

Rabbi Meir then goes on to cite many verses in which the Jews are rebuked for their misbehavior but still referred to as God’s children. If all Jews are brothers because we are all children of God, then whether estranged Jews are included in the category of “*achikha”* may depend on whether estranged Jews remain children of God. If we endorses Rabbi Meir’s view, in the same way in which they remain God's children, they would also retain the status of brothers.

**Limitations on Hatred**

Despite the lifting of the prohibition of hatred regarding certain classes of evildoers, the Torah goes out of its way to indicate that under certain conditions, these individuals are actually treated with preference. Let us return to the verses cited earlier. Regarding returning lost objects the Torah states:

If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you must certainly bring it back to him.

Regarding an animal that collapsed under its load, the Torah states:

If you see your foe’s donkey lying under its load and you refrain from helping him, you must certainly help him.

Even though one is allowed to hate a sinner, the Torah also requires one to return the lost object.

In fact, some commentators understood the verse differently, explaining that “your foe”should not be understood as “one whom you hate” but rather “one who hates you.”

The Ibn Ezra explains that “your foe” refers to “one who is hostile to you.” Likewise, Rav A. Astruc (*Midreshei Ha-Torah*, cited by Nechama Leibowitz) explains:

This means that if you see the donkey of he who hates you lying under its burden, and he will not ask you for your help because of his hatred for you… you nevertheless must not refrain from assisting him now that he needs you, though you do not need him. The Torah teaches you to ignore such conduct and behave in a noble-minded and magnanimous manner, offering him your help.

However, most commentators accept the Talmud's explanation that the verse refers to helping an individual whom one despises, though it is permitted to hate this individual for his or her sins. As the Semag (Positive 80-81) writes:

It refers to a case in which one sees his fellow behave sinfully, which allows him to hate his fellow if he warns him but his fellow does not repent… Nevertheless the Torah cautions to be sympathetic and help him in his need.

The Torah doesn't want a rift to develop between Jews; distancing a sinner by refusing to help him is counterproductive. Though there is no absolute prohibition to hate another Jew, there is a comprehensive mandate to love, cherish and take care of one’s fellow Jew, even though the same closeness may no longer exist.

This idea is furthered by a number of sources that clearly indicate that we should hate wickedness but not the wicked. The passage in *Berakhot* 10a states:

There were once some thugs in the neighborhood of Rabbi Meir who caused him a great deal of trouble. Rabbi Meir therefore prayed that they should die. His wife Beruria said to him: “What do you think? Because it is written: Let sinners cease? Is it indeed written ‘sinners’? It is written ‘sins’ (*Tehillim* 104:35)! Further, look at the end of the verse: ‘And then the wicked will be no more.’ Once the sins cease, then the wicked will be no more! Rather pray for them that they should repent, and the wicked will be no more.” He did pray for them, and they repented.

Similarly, Rav Tzvi Yehuda Ha-Kohen Kook (*Li-ntivot Yisrael* 2) remarks on this, expounding the High Holiday liturgy:

In every place where we find references to hatred, we understand clearly that the intent is only to oppose the phenomenon of evil and to fight the impurity of evil; it is not directed against people, as we say, "All wickedness will vanish like smoke."

His father, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Kohen Kook (*Siddur, Olat Re’iya* II 412:56), even advises to follow the opinion of the Vilna Gaon regarding the daily prayers, emending the twelfth blessing of the *Amida*: instead of "May all of the blasphemers be instantly destroyed," the proper text should be "May all wickedness be instantly destroyed."

The Meshekh Chokhma provides a penetrating insight into the permissibility of actually hating an evildoer. He notes the variations between the descriptions in *Shemot* (23:5) and *Devarim* (22:4) describing the mitzva to assist one who is hauling a load on his donkey. Only in *Shemot* is the individual referred to as “your foe,”while in *Devarim,* the term is “your brother,”the antonym, referring to the one in need in fraternal, rather than adversarial, terms. He explains:

This was said prior to the Sin of the Golden Calf, when all of Israel was “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (*Shemot* 19:6); at that point, it was permitted to hate a person who had committed a blatant sin. However, this did not remain true after Israel's repeated sinful acts. From that point onward, whenever encountering a sinner, we must examine our own conduct, which is not free of faults; one may fall short in this area, another in that area. It is, therefore, forbidden for anyone whose conduct is not free of all blemishes to hate another Jew. But there are very few individuals who fit that bill, as the Talmud states (*Sukka* 45b): "I have seen eminent men, but they are few."

Essentially, the Meshekh Chokhma limits the license to hate to those of supreme perfection, which he sees in the verses’ change in terminology as almost nonexistent after the Sin of the Golden Calf. The term "*achikha*" essentially returns the prohibition to its original force, as all Jews are brethren in their flawed nature.

**The Parameters of Hatred**

The above-cited sources would indicate that there is a difference of opinion on whether it is actually permitted to hate another Jew who is a sinner. However, even if hating is permitted, its parameters must be defined. As Tosafot (*Pesachim,* *ad loc.)* point out, evidently even when one is permitted to hate certain individuals, the license is limited.

Tosafot (s.v. *She-raa*) are bothered by the fact that the Talmud elsewhere (*Bava Metzia* 32b) says that one should first help his "foe" to load his donkey before he assists his friend to unload his donkey "in order that one limit his desire to hate." If “your foe”refers to a sinner, then why must one be helpful to this individual, if the desire to hate is positive? Tosafot answer:

Since he hates the sinning individual, the sinner will hate him as well, as it says (*Mishlei* 27:19) "As a face opposite water reflects another face, so do people reflect each other's hearts,” and this will lead to complete hatred. Therefore, limiting one's inclination to hate is called for.

Tosafot distinguish between permitted, limited hatred and forbidden, absolute hatred. However, they do not fully explain the distinction.

The Machatzit Ha-shekel (*OC* 156:2) explains that the fear is that one will continue to hate even after the transgressor has repented, when it is no longer permitted. Rav Tzvi Yehuda Ha-kohen Kook, however, explains this a little differently.

Tosafot give us a deep psychological insight. The verse in the book of *Mishlei* says, “As a face opposite water reflects another face, so do people reflect each other's hearts.” If the religious fail to behave with love toward the irreligious, the latter feel hated and rejected. They sense that religious people only have love for other religious people and that they look upon the irreligious with condemnation. This situation arises from reverence for God, but the irreligious person is left dejected. This causes conflict, and the situation continues and worsens until it reaches total hatred, may God save us. The origin point is a valid response to spiritual failing. The initial hatred isn't complete, but it grows until it becomes utter abhorrence, and this is something truly awful.

Hating a sinner is a necessary evil, but at the same time it is a terrible reality which may get out of control. The Torah seeks to remind us that even when hating others is necessary, one’s strong negative feelings must be limited. Otherwise, these feelings may be shorn of their constructive aim, namely not learning from the errors of others.

This is expressed by the Rambam at the end of *Hilkhot Rotzeiach* (13:14), where he writes:

The foe mentioned in the Torah is not a non-Jew, but rather a Jew. One might ask: how is it possible for one Jew to hate another? Is it not written (*Vayikra* 19:17): "Do not hate your brother in your heart"? Our Sages explain that this is referring to a person who while alone sees a colleague violate a transgression and rebukes him, but the colleague does not cease transgressing. In such an instance, it is a mitzva to hate the person until he repents and abandons his wickedness. Even if he has not repented yet, if one sees him in panic because of his cargo, it is a mitzva to unload and reload with him, instead of leaving him inclined toward death, lest he tarry because of his money and be brought to danger. For the Torah shows concern for the lives of the Jewish people, both the wicked and the righteous, for they are attached to God and believe in the fundamentals of our faith.

The Torah's care about the estranged Jew is reflected in this balance: it is permissible to hate, but the need to show care is overwhelming.

**Applicability in Our Day**

The various sources quoted above refer to a license to hate under certain circumstances. One might wonder if in our current reality, or even in the reality of the past hundred years, factors might not have contributed to a reevaluation based on the Torah's description of the preconditions for permitting hatred. A number of commentators speak of a connection between hatred and rebuke. Both the Rambam and the Chinnukh require it. The latter (Mitzva 238) states:

Regarding hatred of wicked people, there is no prohibition. Rather, it is a mitzva to hate them after we have reproved them many times about their transgressions and they have refused to desist, for it is stated, "For indeed those who hate you, God, I hate them, and I argue with those who rise up against You" (*Tehillim* 139:21).

Rav Yehonatan Voliner (in *Marganita Tava*, printed by the Chafetz Chayim as an addendum to *Ahavat Chesed*, 17) explains the practical ramifications of the understanding that links the permissibility of hatred to the need for proper rebuke:

Even concerning wicked people, the Maharam of Lublin explains that we are prohibited to hate them unless we have reproved them for their actions. However, there is no one in this generation who knows how to reprove effectively (as the Talmud, *Arakhin* 16b, states), and perhaps if this sinners were to be reproved properly, they would listen and repent. Furthermore, perhaps their natural tendency towards evil has caused them to behave this way, as it is written, “Do not judge your fellow until you have been in a similar position” (*Avot* 2:4). It is definitely prohibited to curse them. Rather, we should seek compassion on their behalf that God may help him to repent.

Rav Voliner transforms the permitted behavior of hating a sinner into an obligation of care and concern for their welfare. The practical ramifications of this understanding would be a complete abrogation of the right to hate those involved in sin.

In fact, this would be the understanding of the Chazon Ish, who points out (*YD* 2:28) that a precondition for being able to treat sinners as apostatesis that they receive adequate rebuke; otherwise, they are considered to be acting under compulsion and incapable of acting differently. After quoting a number of sources, including those we have quoted, he concludes that one cannot treat sinners as apostates, which would preclude our hating them.

The Tzitz Eliezer offers a more minimalistic understanding of when it is forbidden to hate a sinner, one that opens the door for a more concrete outlook. He is bothered by the fact that the Chafetz Chayim seems to be inconsistent: if one may not hate evildoers in generations in which there is no effective rebuke, how can he write elsewhere of individuals who are to be treated harshly on account of their severe transgressions? He offers an interesting distinction as a possibility for explaining the Chafetz Chayim's position:

It is possible that the Chafetz Chayim differentiates between one who sins privately and one whose wickedness also serves as a stumbling-block for others. One must hate evildoers like the latter, even in our day and age… for they rise up against the Torah and attempt to enact laws that will sway people away from God; they are a stumbling block for the community and, therefore, one would be obligated to hate them…

The Tzitz Eliezer provides a logical outlook upon the whole question of hating the wicked. In truth, one who loves God's creations — all the more so one who recognizes the inherent holiness of the Jewish people — will be able to distinguish between the actions of a Jew and that individual’s inner spiritual purity. At the same time, continuing to love a Jew who is deeply involved in sin is dangerous, as one is liable to be swayed by this model of behavior. For this reason one may hate an individual whose actions are sinful if one has effectively reproved this individual but the latter shows no intent of changing. Again, this hatred serves to distance oneself from a bad influence. However, in our times, in which rebuke can no longer be done effectively, we must focus our energies on compassion for sinners, realizing that we don't know how to aid them effectively.

Nonetheless, when we are dealing with individuals who go beyond sinning against the Torah by actively plotting against Jewish causes and spiritual necessities, the proper response remains hatred. Here the hatred is necessary not only to prevent oneself from learning from others’ actions; to effectively combat their attempts, we have to be steadfast in our commitment to the Torah and our understanding that their unacceptable behavior requires a swift response on our part. However, deep inside, we realize that they cannot be held culpable for their actions, and we continue to pray that their evil may be removed and that these individuals may return to being our brothers.

**Returning to the Status of “Brother”**

In *Devarim* 25:1-3, the Torah uses two terms to refer to an individual sentenced to corporal punishment: first, "*rasha*” (wicked) and then, "*achikha*."

The Talmud (*Makkot* 23a) explains:

“And your brother may be degraded” — initially he is called wicked, but only up until the time he is flogged; once he has been flogged, the Torah calls him "brother."

One should not view a sinning brother as eternally doomed; instead, one must be constantly mindful of how to help. Despite the various sources allowing hatred in certain circumstances, it certainly is not always permitted. There is a specific form of hatred, called baseless hatred, which is so detrimental that the Talmud points to it as the cause of the destruction of the Second Temple (*Yoma* 9b). In our next lesson, we will try to understand this forbidden form of hatred and to arrive at a conclusion as to how to look upon one's fellow Jew.