YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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

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

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**Shiur #14: “*Lo Tisna*”**

**The Prohibition of Hatred**

In the last two lessons we discussed the lofty ideal of being forbearing to those who have wronged you. But what are we to do when faced with those who mistreat us? Is silence really always the way to go? Are we supposed to develop the personality of a dead fish? Are we never to feel pain? If not, then what is the proper approach? Under what circumstances is it respectable to be silent in the wake of personal attack?

A life of holiness requires a response to these abusive individuals. The natural reaction to mistreatment is sometimes to distance oneself from the aggressor, to feel dislike and to hold a grudge or take revenge. On the other hand, at times one may be tempted to keep this individual’s friendship due to the attacker’s popularity, wealth or influence. Aggressors may overpower the natural distaste of their victims, buying their friends through favors. Is it tenable to do so ethically, flattering the attacker and overlooking the misdeeds for a side benefit? Lastly, despite the victim’s likely aversion, there is the option of overcoming one’s natural emotions and loving the person nonetheless. The Torah, completely aware of this dilemma, provides the answers, and its message is surprising and fascinating.

Do not hate (*Lo tisna*) your brother in your heart. You shall certainly rebuke your comrade, and you shall not bear sin on his account. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen, and you shall love your fellow as yourself. I am God. (*Vayikra* 19:17-18)

**The Holiness of Interpersonal Responses**

Rav Hirsch (*ad loc.*) notes that the verses in this section of the Torah require man to be "mindful of God's presence" in his interaction with others, expressing the qualities expected of God's people. In this context, this verse deals with the challenging situation of dealing with difficult people.

Having presented the fundamentals of a social life sanctified by Torah, Scripture now adds the complement of these laws, to teach us how to relate to those of our brothers who, we might have thought, have forfeited their right to dignity and love. To rule out such thought, the sanctified and sanctifying word of God declares: "Do not hate your brother in your heart."

Rav Hirsch continues that the Torah assumes that one will naturally feel resentment towards those who have wronged him or even to others who seem to be getting ahead of him.

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.

**The Basic Questions**

A number of questions now arise. Firstly, is this mitzva meant to govern our emotional mindset? Is that really controllable?

Secondly, the context of the commandment is in a verse requiring one to rebuke a fellow Jew who has transgressed some commandment. Is there any relationship between the various subjects of the verse?

Thirdly, what is the meaning of "in your heart"? Seemingly, if hating is forbidden, it shouldn't be limited to the heart. Is expressing one's hatred also prohibited?

Lastly, the object of this feeling is rather interestingly described. Throughout the chapter there are various words used to refer to a fellow Jew, but only in this verse, the term “your brother” is used. What is the significance?

**Obligating an Emotional Response**

The Torah here seems to be dealing with emotional directives, dictating how a person is supposed to feel about his colleagues, eliminating hatred and developing love.

The simple understanding of this verse prohibits the emotional feeling of hatred towards a fellow Jew. This puts the mitzva in the company of other commandments which seem to dictate the mindset of a Jew, such as loving one's fellow and not coveting another's possessions. We have dealt with this issue in relation to the former (see Year 1, Lesson 28) and have seen that some commentators feel that the simple understanding is justified, while others feel the need to reinterpret the verse.

Similarly, regarding this prohibition of hatred, we find a difference of opinion among the commentators regarding the nature of the prohibition: to what degree is the Torah mandating our physical response, and to what degree is it guiding us regarding the proper emotions?

For this reason, some commentators, as we shall see, may indicate that this verse is in fact prohibiting actions to another out of hatred. An interesting approach is that of Rav Yaakov Ettlinger (*Binyan Tziyon* *Ha-chadashot* 75) who differentiates between two forms of hatred. “Hatred of the heart” is a controlled reaction towards an individual who has injured or offended one. It is controllable and therefore prohibited. "Hatred of the soul," on the other hand, is instinctual and often impossible to hold back. The latter type of hatred is not included in the prohibition.

Others understand that the Torah actually requires people to be in control of their emotions. Regarding this approach, in general, there is a difference of opinion: some commentators understand that the Torah does openly dictate proper emotions and feelings to some degree. For instance, the Ibn Ezra (*Shemot* 20:14) understands that the prohibition of coveting another's possessions is commandable because it requires one to take the proper outlook on another's possessions so that covetous thoughts will be precluded. The Chinnukh, on the other hand, makes clear that man can in fact control his emotions.

By the same token, the obligation to prevent hatred, if understood as an emotional directive, seemingly requires one either to control emotions, as the Chinnukh believes possible, or to develop the outlook that will prevent one from coming to hate another. Similarly, as with all emotional responsibilities, part of the mitzva is studying the relevant information to develop a worldview and outlook which will make it easier to develop a love of others and refrain from hating them. Often it is developing the ability to analyze things and individuals from a frame of reference other than one’s own that enables one to change the emotional responses to others.

**Defining Hatred**

Defining hatred is also significant in this discussion. There are many people that one may dislike or even harbor strong feelings against, but at what point does it actually become defined and prohibited as "hatred"?

In a different context, the Mishna (*Sanhedrin* 27a) defines a hater, an individual who may be forbidden to testify against one whom he dislikes, as one who doesn't speak to his fellow for a three-day period due to animosity. This would certainly be prohibited universally; however, is any lesser form of hatred also excluded? Similarly, there is discussion surrounding the Mishnaic statement (*Nedarim* 65b) which assumes that one violates this prohibition by making certain views. The commentators discuss in what way a vow violates this prohibition.

A powerful explanation is offered by the Or Ha-chayim, *ad loc*. He is bothered by the structure in the verse and explains that the verse is trying to define the type of enmity which is forbidden.

I believe that the message is that a person should not think that the Torah only forbids the kind of hatred which is the forerunner of acts of vengeance or violence. However, it does not forbid harboring ill feelings towards someone in one's heart. By mentioning the object of one's hatred immediately next to the prohibition of hate, the Torah makes it clear that even the kind of hatred which is not related to acts of retaliation is forbidden. As soon as one distances himself mentally and emotionally from his fellow Jew, he begins to violate the prohibition of hatred as defined by the Torah in this verse.

The next issue is the phrase “in your heart.” The various commentators struggle with this, especially as the same verse then goes on to lay down the obligation of rebuke. Their explanations provide diverse understandings of the prohibition while at the same time enlightening us with some very keen observations of human nature.

**The Ramban's Understanding**

The Ramban (*ad loc.*) provides two possible readings of the verse; in both, he assumes that it is utterly impossible to understand that expressing hatred is permitted. According to the Ramban's initial explanation, there is no connection between the various parts of the verse; according to his second explanation, there is.

“Do not hate your brother in your heart” — it is normal for those who hate to conceal their hatred within their hearts, as it says "With his lips an enemy will conceal himself" (*Mishlei* 26:24). Therefore, the verse mentions the most common scenario.

According to this first understanding of the Ramban, all forms of hatred are in fact forbidden. The specific mention of "in your heart" refers to the common form of hatred, in which a person hides hatred verbally, using friendly speech while concealing his or her true feelings for another.

The Ramban continues by explaining the ramifications of this understanding for the next part of the verse, regarding the obligation to reproach one who has sinned. After this initial explanation, the Ramban adds a second one which he prefers, which unifies the three clauses of the verse to create a holistic approach to dealing with those who have wronged us.

It seems to me that the correct interpretation of the expression "You shall certainly rebuke" is similar to "And Avraham rebuked Avimelekh" (*Bereishit* 21:25). The verse here is thus stating: do not hate your brother in your heart when he does something to you against your will, but instead you are to reprove him, saying: "Why did you do thus to me?" Hence, you will not bear sin because of him by covering up your hatred of him in your heart and not telling him, for when you will reprove him, either he will vindicate himself before you or he will regret his action and admit his sin, and you will forgive him.

This understanding of the Ramban divides the verse into three parts: do not hate your brother who has wronged you in your heart, rather give him gentle, constructive criticism and reprove him privately. By doing so, you will not be responsible for his sin, because he will not continue without knowing he has wronged you, and therefore he will be able to either explain himself or improve his behavior.

The Rashbam has a similar understanding, seeing this entire verse, as well as the following one, as a single unit, expressing how one should deal with another who has wronged him or her. He adds that the next verse forbids one to bear a grudge or take revenge against the abuser, though we might have thought that in fact the Torah only prohibits private, concealed hatred in the heart which doesn't give the perpetrator a chance to change.

“Do not hate your brother in your heart” — if someone acts towards you in an evil way, don't appear to him as one who loves him while inwardly plotting against him. This is an improper way to act. Don't hate him in your heart; rather, reprove him for what he has done. Through this you will bring about peace, “and you shall not bear sin on his account” by keeping your hatred in your heart.

The Ramban's unwillingness to set down any limitation on the prohibition of hating leads to two alternative understandings forbidding all forms of hatred: either the Torah is speaking of standard hatred, which is concealed, or specifically prohibiting concealed hatred which doesn't give the transgressor an opportunity to explain himself or herself or to turn over a new leaf. In his second, preferred understanding, the Ramban sees the verse as a guide on how to deal with aggressors in a way that will benefit society.

This understanding is expressed by the She’iltot as well, who states that the Torah forbids both privately concealed and outwardly expressed hatred. The verse specifically mentions hatred in the heart to inform one that all forms of hatred are unacceptable.

**The Me’iri**

Rav Asher Weiss (*Minchat Asher,* *Vayikra* 42) notes that the Me’iri has an alternative understanding of the verse. The Me’iri (*Yoma* 75a) writes:

One should ensure that his hatred of another does not prevent him from doing good to another in any way that he can do good, as it says "Do not hate your brother in your heart."

The Me’iri would seem to understand that hatred alone is not the focus of the prohibition; rather, a physical expression of this emotional feeling is forbidden. According to this understanding, the Me’iri would seem to maintain that the Torah, in fact, does not forbid internal feelings; rather, it prohibits treating a person differently because of these feelings.

Rav Asher Weiss points to other evidence that would support this assertion that the nature of the prohibition is not the emotional response, but rather concretizing it through actions of hate.

**The Rambam**

The understanding that this verse only prohibits hatred in the heart is explicitly stated by the Rambam. This understanding is mentioned both in *Sefer Ha-mitzvot* and *Mishneh Torah*.

We have been warned not to hate each other, as it says: “Do not hate your brother in your heart." The expression used by the *Sifra* (*Kedoshim* 2:4) is: "I have only mentioned hatred in the heart." However, if one displays his hatred openly and notifies the other individual that he hates him, one has not transgressed the prohibition of hatred: though he does transgress three other prohibitions; taking revenge, bearing a grudge and the positive commandment to love one's fellow. However, hatred concealed in the heart is a greater transgression than any other. (*Sefer Ha-mitzvot,* Negative 320)

The Rambam explains that while in no way is it permitted to hate another openly, this in not included in the technical prohibition of “*Lo tisna*.” This prohibition is unique to hidden hatred, which he views as the worst of all.

Anyone who hates another Jew in his heart transgresses a prohibition, “Do not hate your brother….” The Torah only prohibits hatred in the heart, but one who hits his fellow or insults him does not transgress the prohibition of "Do not hate," even though this behavior is not permitted for other reasons. (*Hilkhot De'ot* 6:5)

In the next paragraph, he expresses his understanding of the verses, while explaining that the Torah is telling one how to act when hurt by another:

When a man sins against another, the injured party should not hate the offender and keep silent, as it is said concerning the wicked: "And Avshalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor evil, for Avshalom hated Amnon" (II *Shemuel* 13:22). Rather, it is his duty to inform the offender and say to him: "Why did you do this to me? Why did you sin against me in this matter?" Thus, it says: "You shall certainly rebuke your neighbor.” (*Ibid.* 6:6)

There is a difference of opinion as to whether the Rambam would even exclude someone who hits another out of feelings of enmity and hatred from the prohibition. The Kesef Mishneh (5) understands that anyone who acts out of hatred is certainly included in the prohibition. However, the Minchat Ani (7:2:3) notes that it is clear in the source quoted by the Rambam that any form of expressed hatred is excluded from the prohibition, even hitting another out of hatred. Therefore, the Rambam should be taken literally: only hatred in the heart is subsumed under the prohibition; expressed hatred of all forms, no matter how severe, is excluded.

This understanding highlights the originality of the Rambam's opinion. What could be so severe about hidden hatred that makes it more destructive than expressed emotions?

This question is of utmost significance because the Magen Avraham (*OC* 156:2) and Mishna Berura (*OC* 156:4) both codify the Rambam's understanding of the prohibition as halakhically normative, specifically prohibiting concealed hatred.

This would mean that one who is overcome by hatred of another who has done him or her wrong is obligated either to eradicate fully all inklings of dislike for the individual or confront the individual. But what is so bad about dealing with one's hatred inside and concealing it, possibly even out of the desire to maintain peace?

**The Danger and Severity of Hidden Hatred**

If we, in fact, are to limit the prohibition to concealed hatred, we must understand the rationale. The Rashbam and Ramban focus on the lack of knowledge on the part of the individual who is unable to improve his or her ways or correct misunderstandings. The Chafetz Chayim (*Sefer Chafetz Chayim*, Introduction, Negative Commandment 7, *Be’er Mayim Chayim*) seconds this idea and adds:

When hatred is concealed and has not been expressed through action, the hated party has no method of self-defense, and therefore more serious damage may be done to this individual. Therefore, the Torah explicitly prohibits this form of hatred.

The Chinnukh (238) focuses on what the unexpressed enmity does to the hater, pointing out that one who despises another secretly will end up violating numerous other commandments:

The root of the prohibition is known. Hatred in the heart causes great evils among people, so that each man’s sword is constantly at his brother and at his fellow. This is the reason that people inform on each other. It is the basest trait, the vilest to the greatest extreme for every sensible person. The details of this commandment and the numerous prohibitions set down by the Sages serve to keep our souls from growing accustomed to this evil trait, as explained in the Talmud and various Midrashic sources.

If one cannot express feelings openly, one will need to speak behind the other’s back and raise tensions through forbidden speech and informing.

There is another explanation which displays a broad outlook on the nature of concealed hatred, focusing on the dreadfulness that is the lot of the haters, not only due to the other commandments which they will violate, but specifically with regards to the intensity of the hatred. The Yad Ha-ketana (De'ot 7:2:4) explains:

When one does not make known or display one's hatred at all, this is the classic concealed hatred, which one hides and buries in the heart. This is referred to by the Torah as *sitma,* loathing, and it is a poisonous root which grows to threatening proportions, for this is the nature of *sitma.* It cannot be extinguished in one’s heart at all, and it burns like a fire within one. The heart constantly renews itself to cultivate evil against the other, further distancing their hearts from one another. The hatred can grow so intense that one may attempt to take the other’s life.

He continues that the term of *sitma* is found even among brothers when, due to disagreements or misunderstandings which calcify into hard feelings, secretive hidden hatred is left to grow and develop into terrifying animosity and a desire to kill. For instance, we find:

And Esav loathed Yaakov… and Esav said in his heart, “When the days of mourning my father grow close, I will kill my brother Yaakov.” (*Bereishit* 27:41)

For this reason, the Yad Ha-ketana explains that hidden hatred is far more dreadful than upfront hatred, as the former is outwardly invisible, but inside it continues to grow to horrifying proportions. Any act of hatred, including hitting another in disgust, may violate other prohibitions, but not this one; the action itself will prevent the forbidden hatred from fully taking root. The Torah is specifically concerned with harboring unexpressed feelings of resentment which can develop into the most severe forms of hatred.

**The Dual Nature of Concealed Resentment**

In truth, both approaches to the depravity of unexpressed hatred seem to be correct. At the same time that hidden hatred prevents any possibilities of reconciliation and leads to more violations, it also grows to untold proportions. It usually will lead to speaking behind the back of the "enemy,” as one lacks the ability to confront the other who has wronged him or her. This compounds one’s violations and simultaneously intensifies the severity of one’s feelings.

Ultimately, concealing hatred may lead to an explosion. The hater may suddenly unleash a torrent of fury, berating another for years of supposed abuse, made all the worse by the fact that it has been veiled by apparent love for a long time. The hated party may not even be aware of the “crimes,” mutated beyond recognition through the driving force of hatred stoked beneath a pleasant facade.

This clearly explains the severity of this prohibition; as the Rambam indicates, “*Lo tisna*” is a far greater transgression than expressing hatred.

Many times, individuals develop a hatred which, for whatever reasons, they feel they are unable to mention publicly. They have been hurt, but they do not wish to make a big deal out of it. While one might at first view this position as noble, the Torah is unequivocally telling us that silent hatred is not an act of piety, but a dangerous course. The wronged individuals must either completely erase any hard feelings or state that they have been hurt and would like redress.

**Permitted Hatred?**

While this verse states unequivocally that one is not permitted to hate a fellow Jew, the issue is more complicated. Firstly, the term used in the verse, “your brother,” must be understood fully. To what degree does it include all Jews, and to what degree is it restricted? Secondly, elsewhere in the Torah, we find individuals who are described as hated in a permitted context.

In next week's lesson we will discuss the meaning of “your brother” and its implications for dealing with sinners.