YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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*Avodat Hashem*

Foundations of Divine Service

**By Harav Baruch Gigi**

**Shiur #26: Loving God (XVI): You Shall Not Hate Your Brother**

**Introduction**

To complete the picture in the topic of loving Israel, we must turn our attention to the inverse of love – hatred. We will now deal with the topic of hatred of Israel, examining the two opposite commandments associated with it: the prohibition of “You shall not hate your brother in your heart” (*Vayikra* 19:17) and the command derived from the verse, “I hate those who hate You” (*Tehillim* 139:21).

**The Prohibition: You Shall Not Hate Your Brother in Your Heart**

We read in the Torah: “You shall not hate your brother in your heart. Reprove your kinsman, but incur no guilt because of him” (*Vayikra* 19:17). Rambam writes in *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*:

This [*mitzva*] is that we are forbidden from hating one another. As it says, “You shall not hate your brother in your heart.” In the words of *Sifra*, “I have only spoken [in this verse] about hatred, which is in the heart. But if you reveal to him this hatred and he realizes that you hate him, you do not transgress this prohibition. But you do transgress the prohibitions, ‘You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge’ (*Vayikra* 19:18) and a positive commandment, namely, ‘Love your fellow as yourself.’” However, the sin of hatred in one’s heart is most serious of them all.[[1]](#footnote-1) (*Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*, Negative Commandment 302)

According to Rambam, the prohibition of hatred refers to hatred in one’s heart, not hatred that is displayed to others outwardly.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In contrast, according to one interpretation that Ramban suggests, there is also a prohibition to demonstrate hatred outwardly. According to Ramban, the verse only mentioned hatred in one’s heart because this is the “way of the world”: “Because it is the way of those who hate to cover up their hatred in their hearts… Scripture speaks of the usual events” (Ramban, *Vayikra* 19:17).

But in Ramban’s second interpretation, which he states is the primary one, he connects the prohibition of hatred to the mitzva of reproving one’s kinsman:

The expression “Reprove [your kinsman]” is similar to the verse, “Then Avraham reproached 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?” and you will not incur guilt because of him by covering up your hatred of him in your heart and not telling him, for when you will reprove him, he will justify himself before you, or he will regret his action and admit his sin, and you will forgive him.

According to this position, the purpose of the prohibition against hatred in one’s heart is to encourage one to reprove his kinsman and to enable one to repair the relationship between him and his friend.

Nevertheless, it seems that Ramban views the prohibition of hatred as a double prohibition:

1. **The general prohibition of hatred**: It is prohibited to hate your fellow Jew, whether outwardly or in your heart.
2. **The prohibition of hatred in one’s heart**: If a person sins toward you, you are obligated to reprove him so that you can clear the air, sorting things out and not allowing the hatred to remain simmering within your heart.

It seems that even Rambam would agree regarding the second prohibition of hatred, as he writes in *Hilkhot De’ot*:

When one person wrongs another, the latter should not remain silent and despise him, as it states concerning the wicked: “Avshalom didn’t utter a word to Amnon, good or bad; but Avshalom hated Amnon” (*Shmuel* II 13:22). Rather, he is commanded to make the matter known and ask him: “Why did you do this to me?”; “Why did you wrong me regarding that matter?” as it states: “Reprove your kinsman.” If afterward he asks him to forgive him, he must do so. A person should not be cruel when forgiving, as it says: “Avraham then prayed to God” (*Bereishit* 20:17). (*Hilkhot De’ot* 6:6)

*Yere’im* even adds that if one reproves another person and it turns out that the person indeed acted inappropriately toward him and does not beg forgiveness after being reproved, one is permitted to hate this person.

**I Hate Those Who Hate You**

There are two places in rabbinic literature where we find permission – or even a mitzva – to hate. The first source is in *Sifrei Devarim*, regarding the **inciter**:

“Do not love (*toveh*)him” (*Devarim* 13:9): Because of what is said elsewhere, “Love your fellow as yourself,” you might think you must love this one, too; hence the verse says, “Do not love him or give heed to him.” Because of what is said elsewhere, “You must nevertheless raise it with him” (*Shemot* 23:5), you might think that you may help him release his beast; hence the verse says “or give heed to him.”

“Show him no pity”: Because of what is said elsewhere, “Do not profit by the blood of your fellow” (*Vayikra* 19:16), you might think that you are not permitted to profit by the blood of this one; hence the verse says, “Show him no pity.” (*Sifrei*, *Re’eh* 9:9)

Rambam enumerates this mitzva in *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*:

This [mitzva] is that we are forbidden to love the inciter or listen to his words. As it says, “Do not love him.” In the words of *Sifrei*, “Because of what is said elsewhere, ‘Love your fellow as yourself,’ you might think you must love this one, too; hence the verse says, ‘Do not love him.’” (*Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*, Negative Commandment 17)

However, Ramban, in his glosses to *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot* (Negative Commandment 28), rejects Rambam’s position on this matter. In Ramban’s commentary on *Devarim*, he explains that the word *toveh* in *Devarim* 13:9 does not refer to loving the inciter, but rather to assenting to him. Thus, this verse is completely unrelated to the mitzva of hatred:

“*Lo toveh lo*” – “You shall not long for him, nor shall you love him. Because it is said, ‘Love your fellow as yourself,’ [it is necessary to caution that] this one you shall not love.” This is Rashi’s language quoting *Sifrei*. But in the *gemara*, [the Rabbis] said: “But [if the one who was incited] wanted (*ava*) and consented [to the words of the inciter, although he actually did not worship the idols, the inciter] is guilty” (*Sanhedrin* 61b). And this is correct, for *ava* is an expression of desire. (Ramban, *Devarim* 13:9)

Based on this, Ramban rejected Rambam’s position, concluding in his glosses to *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot* that “we will adopt the *gemara*’s interpretation.” According to Ramban, then, the Torah does not prohibit loving the inciter.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The second discussion is found in the Talmudic passage that addresses the question of whether one may hate a Jew who transgresses a prohibition. The question derives from a verse that relates to the requirement to help one’s fellow Jew unload and reload his animal: “When you see the ass of your enemy lying under its burden… you must raise it with him” (*Shemot* 23:5). The *gemara* explains:

But is it permitted to hate him? Surely it is written, “You shall not hate your brother in your heart”? Again, if there are witnesses that he had committed wrong, then all indeed hate him! Hence it must surely apply to such a case where he had seen something indecent in him. R. Nachman bar Yitzchak said: It is a duty to hate him, as it is said: “To fear the Lord is to hate evil” (*Mishlei* 8:13). (*Pesachim* 113b)

It can be inferred from this passage that there is a mitzva to hate a person who transgresses a prohibition. If the person did so before witnesses, it is a mitzva for every person to hate him. However, if one saw him transgressing alone, it is a mitzva only for him to hate the transgressor; there is no obligation to spread word of the incident.

Thus, according to Rambam’s position, there is a Torah prohibition to love the inciter, while Ramban disagrees with this point. However, according to all views, there is a mitzva to hate those who transgress prohibitions. This can be inferred from the verse in *Mishlei* cited by the *gemara*: “To fear the Lord is to hate evil.” This notion is expressed explicitly in *Tehillim* as well: “O Lord, You know I hate those who hate You, and loathe Your adversaries. I feel a perfect hatred toward them; I count them my enemies” (*Tehillim* 139:21).

*Yere’im* derived this same concept from the language of the verse describing the prohibition of hatred: “From where do we know that the Torah did not warn against [hating] an indecent person? As it says: ‘You shall not hate your **brother’** – and *mitzvot* require kinship”[[4]](#footnote-4) (*Yere’im* 198).

*Or Ha-Chayim*, in his commentary on the Torah, wrote similarly:

It specifically said “your brother,” “your countrymen,” to say that the *mitzva* [prohibiting hatred] only refers to people who act in the manner of your countrymen. But it is prohibited to love those who hate God, such as apostates and heretics. On the contrary, one must hate them, as it says, “You know I hate those who hate You.” (*Or Ha-Chayim*, *Vayikra* 19:17)

**Hatred of Wickedness – Not of the Wicked**

Even after having made these points, it is important to emphasize the words of *Tosafot*, commenting on the passage in *Pesachim*:

You may contend that in [the second chapter of *Bava Metzi’a*] we say, “If a friend requires unloading, and an enemy loading, one’s [first] obligation is toward his enemy, in order to subdue his evil inclinations” (*Bava Metzi’a* 32b) – and subduing one’s evil inclinations is not relevant here, as it is a *mitzva* to hate him! We may answer that since one hates him, his friend hates him as well, as it is written, “As face answers to face in water, so does one man’s heart to another” (*Mishlei* 27:19). Through this, they will attain complete hatred, and thus subduing one’s evil inclinations is relevant. (*Tosafot*, *Pesachim* 113b, s.v. *she-ra’a*)

*Tosafot* establish that even when it is a *mitzva* to hate a certain person, one must still take care not to hate him excessively, so that this does not lead to complete hatred. The main point that *Tosafot* is conveying seems to be that there is an obligation to hate the wickedness, but not the wicked. This is similar to what Beruria said to her husband, R. Meir: “[It is written,] ‘May *chata’im* (interpreted as “sins”) disappear’ (*Tehillim* 104:35), and not *chot’im* (‘sinners’)” (*Berakhot* 10a).

A more reasonable approach was suggested by R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi (Ba’al Ha-Tanya):

As for the Talmudic statement to the effect that one who sees his friend sinning should hate him and should tell his teacher to hate him also, this applies to a companion in Torah and *mitzvot*, having already applied to him the injunction, “Reprove your kinsman(*amitekha*),” meaning, “one (*am*, lit. “a nation”)who is with you (*itekha*)in Torah and *mitzvot*,” and who, nevertheless, has not repented of his sin, as stated in *Sefer Charedim*….

Even with regard to those who are close to him and whom he has rebuked, **yet they had not repented of their sins, when he is enjoined to hate them, there still remains the duty to love them also, and both are right: hatred, because of the wickedness in them; and love, on account of the aspect of the hidden good in them, which is the divine spark in them, which animates their divine soul.** He should also awaken pity in his heart for [the divine soul], for she is held captive, as it were, in the evil of the *sitra achra* that triumphs over her in wicked people. Compassion destroys hatred and awakens love, as is known from the [interpretation of the] text, “To [the House of] Ya’akov, Who redeemed Avraham.” (*Tanya*, *Likkutei Amarim* 32)

According to Ba’al Ha-Tanya, there is indeed a *mitzva* to hate sinners once they have been rebuked and have not heeded this rebuke. However, this *mitzva* does not supplant the *mitzva* of loving one’s fellow Jew, which stems from the root of every individual Jew’s soul, as we explained above at length.

The purpose of hatred is to hate wickedness and to distance it from one’s heart, so that one can understand and internalize within his consciousness the reality of evil and allow himself to avoid it. However, we must be sure to view this hatred as the left hand that pushes away, while the right hand draws near. While one hates, he must also arouse the love within himself and focus it on the element of goodness within the root of the sinner’s soul, so that he is not permanently alienated.

Thus, there is hope that the sinner will return from his sin when he recognizes one’s love for him. He will hopefully become stronger and will muster his internal foundations of goodness to banish the evil and darkness from within him.

We read in the Talmud:

It was taught in a *beraita*: R. Tarfon said: I wonder whether there is anyone in this generation who accepts reproof, for if one says to him, “Remove the mote from between your eyes,” he would answer, “Remove the beam from between your eyes!” R. Elazar ben Azaria said: I wonder if there is anyone in this generation who knows how to reprove! (*Arakhin* 16b)

Since there is no one today who can fulfill the *mitzva* of reproving one’s kinsman, *Chafetz Chayim* wrote that there is no place for hatred, even toward sinners, since hatred is only permitted once one fulfills the *mitzva* of reproof, as we established.

This notion – that one may not hate until after reproving the sinner[[5]](#footnote-5) – fits with the implication of the verses in *Parashat Kedoshim*, as well as with Ba’al Ha-Tanya’s interpretation cited above.

Therefore, Ba’al Ha-Tanya added that when the sinner is not one’s kinsman, and thus one may not reprove him, not only is one prohibited from hating him, but one must even strive to love him and draw close to him. This idea is based on a teaching of Hillel the Elder in *Masekhet Avot*: “Hillel would say: Be like the students of Aharon. Love peace and pursue peace, love humanity, and bring them close to the Torah” (*Avot* 1:12). Rashbatz, commenting on this statement, explains:

That is to say, learn from the actions of Aharon. This was already expressed in *Malakhi*, saying: “He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin” (*Malakhi* 2:6). He would do two things. The first was to love peace and the second was to turn many from sin. It was explained in *Avot De-Rabbi Natan* (12:3)….

And how would he turn many from sin? When he knew that a person would commit a transgression at night, he would go to him and show him a bright face, and that person would be ashamed of himself and would say: “If this righteous man were to know about my wicked deeds, he would distance himself from me.” Through this, he would develop thoughts of repentance. This is what Hillel said – that Aharon would love peace and also pursue peace, as it says, “Seek peace and pursue it” (*Tehillim* 34:15). (*Magen Avot*, *Avot* 1:12)

Despite what might be inferred from this passage, it seems that this love that Aharon showered even upon sinners was completely altruistic. Sometimes, this love would indeed cause sinners to turn away from their sin, but sometimes Aharon’s tactic would not succeed in drawing them closer to the proper path. In any case, even in cases in which he was unsuccessful, he did not change his attitude or his love toward them.

As Ba’al Ha-Tanya wrote:

But as for the person who is not one’s friend and is not on intimate terms with him, Hillel the Elder said, “Be like the students of Aharon. Love peace and pursue peace, love humanity and bring them close to the Torah.” This means that even in the case of those who are removed from God’s Torah and His service, and are therefore classified simply as “humanity,” one must attract them with strong cords of love; perchance one might succeed in drawing them close to the Torah and divine service. **Even if one fails, one has not forfeited the merit of the *mitzva* of neighborly love.** (*Tanya*, *Likkutei Amarim* 32)

R. Tzvi Yehuda Kook advanced a similar idea based on an inference from the language of the *mishna*. The *mishna* does not say that Aharon would love humanity **in order****to** bring them close to the Torah, but that he would love humanity **and**bring them close to the Torah.

According to this approach, the foundation of all that we have discussed is that one’s love of Israel must center on the root of every Jew’s unified soul. One must strive to attain this love even toward those who are removed from the Torah.

The permission to hate such people in certain circumstances only applies to a person whom one can reprove and, by doing so, bring closer by awakening within him the awareness of the severity of his actions. Even in the case of such a person, one may only hate the wicked element within him; one must still love the element of goodness within the root of his soul.

**Hatred of *Minim* and Heretics Today**

In a Talmudic passage in *Masekhet Shabbat*, in the course of a discussion of the prohibition of saving the literature of *minim* (heretical sectarians) and heretics from a fire on Shabbat, the *gemara* states that one must burn such books even if they contain God’s names within them:

R. Yishmael said: [One can reason] a *kal va-chomer*: If in order to make peace between man and wife the Torah decreed: Let My name, written in sanctity, be blotted out in water, **these, who stir up jealousy, enmity, and wrath between Israel and their Father in Heaven, how much more so? And of them David said, “O Lord, You know I hate those who hate You, and loathe Your adversaries. I feel a perfect hatred toward them; I count them my enemies.”** (*Shabbat* 116a)

Thus, it is allowed – and even a *mitzva* – to hate the *minim* and heretics who have no part in the God of Israel with a “perfect hatred.”

It is regarding these *minim* that the Talmud establishes the law of “They may be cast in, and need not be brought up” (*Avoda Zara* 26b). The meaning of this law is that there is a *mitzva* to cast such people into a pit, killing them there. If such people fell into a pit, one is permitted to remove the ladder, so that they will not be able to climb out. The reason for this is that by being *minim*, they denied the existence of the God of Israel; they once again disconnected themselves from their root in the soul of Israel.

This is a harsh and very significant message, but along with this message we must emphasize what two of the greatest Jewish scholars of recent generations have written on the matter. First, *Chazon Ish* wrote in his commentary on *Yoreh De’ah*:

It seems that the law of “They may be cast in” only applies at a time when God’s providence is revealed, such as when there were frequent miracles, heavenly voices, and the righteous people of the generation under the personal divine providence that all could see. At that time, the heretics acted with a special perversion by bending their inclination toward lust and licentiousness. At that time, the eradication of the wicked was a means of mending the world, since everyone knew that the alienation of the generation [from God] brings calamity to the world, and brings pestilence, sword, and famine to the world.

**But in the time of concealment, when faith has been excised from the weak members of the nation, the act of “casting in” does not mend the breach, but adds to the breach**, since this act would be perceived in their eyes as an act of destruction and violence, God forbid. And since the whole purpose [of the law] is to improve [the world], the law does not apply at a time when there would be no improvement. And we must help them return through cords of love, and bathe them in a ray of light as far as our arms can reach. (*Chazon Ish*, *Yoreh De’ah* 2:16)

According to *Chazon Ish*, the purpose of this law is to “mend the breach” that is caused by heresy. Therefore, in a situation in which this kind of act would serve to make the breach even worse instead of mending it, it is a *mitzva* to bring these heretics closer through cords of love.

R. Avraham Yitzchak Kook believed that nowadays, true heresy does not exist. As he wrote in one of his *Iggerot*:

You should know that even though it is utterly prohibited and diseased for one to doubt and wonder about matters of perfect faith, we do not find sages applying the law of heresy [in such a case], but only in the case of a [true] heretic, that is, one who definitely affirms the opposite. **And absolute belief in the opposite can be found in Israel only among those who are inherently wicked and deliberate liars, because even the greatest evil [influence] can only cast a doubt in weak-minded persons. Therefore, someone who dares to say that he is unequivocally a heretic is completely wicked and is fit to be judged according to all the explicit laws, since there is no justification to the argument that he was compelled to think thusly.** And if the heretical idea in our generation were genuine, it would always claim uncertainty and its doubts could easily be clarified; but it lies deliberately and claims certainty at a time when even the most weak-minded are at most doubtful [of the existence of God]. The heretical idea is in brazen pursuit of malice, and is thus liable to all the laws in the hands of man and heaven in accordance with the harm it does. Clarification of the details of this law would, of course, require many lengthy books. This is clear – that whoever reaches the understanding that any denial of faith, in relation to Judaism, is nothing but a feeble argument of doubt, a combination of a lack of actual knowledge, a lack of feeling and a shortcoming in virtue, will immediately become totally true to his faith and God-fearing. And the more he attaches himself to Torah scholars, true seekers of God, the more he will be exalted and filled with an immoveable faith of wisdom and knowledge: “No weapon formed against you shall succeed, and every tongue that contends with you at law you shall defeat. Such is the lot of the servants of the Lord, such their triumph through Me – declares the Lord” (*Yeshayahu* 54:17). (*Iggerot Ha-Re’iyah* 20)

**Conclusion**

It is said in the name of Ba’al Ha-Tanya that the proof of love between one person and another is when one loves what the other person loves. Therefore, since God loves Israel – “I have shown you love, said the Lord” (*Malakhi* 1:2) – loving one’s fellow Jew is proof that one loves God. Based on this idea, “Love your fellow as yourself” is a means of fulfilling “You shall love the Lord your God.”

We can add to this notion by suggesting an explanation of the root of Hillel’s statement to the non-Jew who approached him in order to convert – “What is hateful to you, do not do to your friend” (*Shabbat* 31a). The passive act of not harming one’s friend that Hillel described serves as a stepping stone to love of others, which leads, in turn, to the love of God.

Translated by Daniel Landman

1. See the sixth chapter of *Hilkhot De’ot*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. However, when one expresses his hatred, he transgresses the prohibition of “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge.” In addition, he does not fulfill the positive commandment to love one’s fellow Jew. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See below. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. According to *Yere’im*, the Torah does not prohibit hating sinners, but the verses in *Mishlei* and *Tehillim* indicate that there is a *mitzva* to hate those who hate God. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See the approach cited above in the name of *Yere’im*. This approach can only be valid according to the positions that connect the prohibition of hatred to the *mitzva* of reproof. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)