

HATE IS WORSE; EMUNAH CURES ENVY

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: CD #943 – Oy! They Shaved My Payos! Good Shabbos!

Better To Be Cheap Than Hateful

This week's parsha (Vayikra 19:18) contains the Biblical prohibition of taking revenge or bearing a grudge against our fellow man. Rashi (based on the *Toras Kohanim*) cites the definition of the prohibition of taking revenge (*Lo Sikom*): "If one says to his friend, 'Lend me your sickle' and the friend responds 'No' and the next day the second person (who refused to lend the sickle) asks the first friend to lend him his hatchet and the first friend responds 'I am not lending you my hatchet just as you did not lend me your sickle' – this is taking revenge."

The Chizkuni asks a simple question. In this situation, who is the worse fellow – the person who did not lend the sickle in the first place or the person who in retribution decides he will not lend this stingy fellow his hatchet? It would seem to us that the first fellow is the more "evil" person. The second fellow at least is motivated not to lend. He can justifiably argue, "He was not a nice neighbor to me, so why should I be a nice neighbor to him?" So why is it, asks the Chizkuni, that the second fellow is charged with violating a Biblical prohibition of "*Lo Sikom*" [Do not take revenge] while the first fellow apparently is not in violation of a specific negative prohibition? Where is the justice here?

The Chizkuni gives an interesting explanation. The first person is merely stingy, but the second person violates the prohibition of hating a fellow Jew. The first person has nothing against the second fellow personally. Perhaps he is just overly protective of his personal property. However, the second fellow is perfectly comfortable lending out his property. He refuses to lend to the first fellow, because he has a resentment and even a hatred of him. This is the far bigger character fault. Being cheap is not a Biblical prohibition; hating one's neighbor is.

Did Hillel Give The Convert "Only Half A Loaf"?

The above-mentioned *pasuk* ends with the famous phrase: "And you shall love your fellow as yourself – I am Hashem." This is the positive Biblical command of *Ahavas Yisrael* [loving a fellow Jew]. The Ramban shares a startling insight on this commandment: "This expression (loving your friend LIKE YOURSELF) is an exaggeration!" The Ramban posits that it is simply impossible to expect anyone to love someone else as much as he loves himself. If anything, perhaps it could be said that we love our spouses and our children as much as we love ourselves, but to expect that one might

love his neighbor as much as he loves himself is very unrealistic. It is simply beyond man's capacity to achieve that level of altruism. So how does the Ramban understand this mitzvah?

The Ramban suggests that the essence of the commandment is that a person should want his friend to have things as good as he himself has them. The Ramban says there are many times when people want good for their friends and they are generous of spirit but just not EVERYTHING. "I can live with the fact that you have as much money as me, but I cannot live with the fact that you are smarter than me!" or "I can live with the fact that you have as much money as me and that you are smarter than me, but I can't live with the fact that your children are better than mine!" "In at least some area, I want to be better than you!" This, says the Ramban, is what the Torah is teaching us here. We are commanded to suppress any such resentfulness of spirit and should in no way nurture such selfish egotism in our hearts.

This is a very significant Ramban. The focus here is on overcoming the attribute of jealousy. Fundamentally this mitzvah commands us to rid ourselves of the attribute of envy. At the end of the day the reason I cannot live with the fact that you are "just as good as me" is because I am jealous of you. The mitzvah is telling us that we should want for our friend just as much as we have, and not be in any way resentful of him if he has everything we have, and perhaps even a bit more.

This is summarized by a very famous Gemara (Shabbos 31a): "There was once an incident of a certain Gentile who came before Shammai and said to him 'Convert me on the condition that you can teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot'. Shammai pushed him away with the building plank that he had in his hand. The Gentile then came before Hillel who converted him. Hillel told him 'That which is hateful to you do not do to your friend. This is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary – go study it.'"

However, this Talmudic passage is very difficult. How could have Hillel said that "this constitutes the entire Torah"? At best this principle might encapsulate the laws between man and his fellow man. But what does this have to do with the laws between man and G-d? What about the prohibitions of *Shatnez* [forbidden mixtures], *chazer* [pig consumption] and *Avodah Zarah* [idolatry]. What about *Emunah* [belief in G-d], *Succah*, *Pessach*, *Matzah* and *Chometz*? Where are all these alluded to? It seems that Hillel gave the Gentile only "half a loaf", so to speak. What is the meaning of this Gemara?

The Ramban asks: How does one reach this level that he wants for his friend as much as he has for himself? The Ramban answers that he must remove the unseemly attribute of jealousy from his heart. Of course not being jealous is easier said than done. One of the most basic of all human feelings is envy. So what is this "easy formula" that the Ramban is offering? Getting rid of envy is a great idea but how do I accomplish that?

In my humble opinion, there is only one way to rid oneself of the natural tendency to be envious and that is to become a believer – to become a "*ma'amin*" -- a believer in the concept of *Hashgocha Pratis* [personal Divine Providence]. We need to internalize the belief that the *Ribono shel Olam* gives

each and every single one of us exactly what we need to function in this world in order to fulfill our mission in this world. What we don't have, we don't need!

Therefore, I have no problem if my friend drives a better car than I do. I don't need that car. I have no problem if my friend makes a lot more money than I do. I don't need that much money. I believe with a complete belief (*Ani ma'amin b'Emunah shleimah...*) that everything I have in this world is what I need – nothing less and nothing more. This is how a person removes jealousy from his heart.

Admittedly, coming to this level is not so simple. But, that is the approach one must take in order to move in that direction. It is the only approach. We need to fully believe that the Almighty is keenly aware of who I am and what I need and He has given me everything that I do need and that I do not need anything else. Therefore, I am completely content if somebody else lives in a much nicer house than I do. I do not need that house. G-d knows what is good for me. This is how one rids himself of the attribute of envy.

So this concept of wanting for your friend exactly what you have and not harming your friend and treating him like you would want to be treated is inextricably bound up with the mitzvah of *Emunah*. *Emunah* is in fact *kol haTorah kulah* [the entirety of Torah]. This is why Hillel can make the statement to the potential convert: This is the essence of the entire Torah! The attitude of "that which is hateful to you, do not do to your friend" is based on a belief in *Hashgocha Pratis* and a belief that the Almighty has given me all that I need.

When one wishes to crystallize Torah to its most basic concept, it is *Emunah*. This corresponds with what the Talmud states [Makkos 24a]: "(The prophet) Chabakuk came and reduced the essence of Torah to a single principle: The righteous one lives by his faith" (*Tzadik b'Emunaso yichyeh* [Chabakuk 2:4]) That is how Hillel can make the statement "This is the entire Torah". He did not leave out the other half of the loaf!

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