

AVOIDING HATRED BETWEEN JEWS

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you should reprove your fellow and do not bear a sin because of him (Vayikra 19:17)

Question: Why does the Torah combine in one pasuk the prohibition of hating another Jew with the command to reprove him?

Discussion: There are two basic approaches in the interpretation of the verse cited above. Some commentators[1] explain the verse as relating to matters which are *bein adam l'Makom*, between man and Hashem. If a Jew observes another Jew transgressing any one of the *mitzvos*, it is incumbent upon the observer to reprove the sinner in regard to his sin. Failure to do so will ultimately result in hating the sinner, since it is permitted —under certain circumstances[2] —to hate a Jew who purposefully and deliberately disregards the commands of the Torah. Rebuke, therefore, is the means through which hatred of another Jew can be avoided, since rebuke may be the impetus for the potential transgressor to change his ways. [The halachos concerning the proper method of rebuke are intricate[3] and not the subject of this Discussion.]

Many other commentators, however, suggest a different approach in explaining this verse[4]. The command to "reprove your fellow" is written in regard to matters which are *bein adam l'chaveiro*, matters which concern the relationship between man and his fellowman. The Torah, which prohibits a Jew from hating another Jew, is teaching us why hatred may develop and how to avoid it. Often, ill will is a result of miscommunication or misunderstanding. When not resolved immediately and in a straightforward manner, minor run-ins or disagreements can grow into major conflicts, leading to friction and hostility among Jews. To prevent this from happening, the Torah commands, "You should reprove your fellow," meaning, you should approach the person whom you feel has wronged you and question him as to why he did so, whether he can justify his actions, etc.

Most of the time, the questioning will yield one of the following outcomes:

- The alleged incident never took place; it was either completely fabricated or greatly exaggerated.
- The incident did happen but it was not the intention or fault of the accused.
- The offender will sincerely apologize for his misdeed, the incident will be forgotten, and peace will be restored.
- The offender will justify his actions to the satisfaction of the injured party.

Any of the above outcomes will usually resolve the dispute and relieve the tension. Thus by questioning and reproving the person who—in your opinion—hurt you, one can allay much of the hatred that is unfortunately prevalent among some Jews.

The notion of avoiding hatred by reproving one's friend is not merely a "nice idea" based upon an explanation of a pasuk in the Torah. It is a halachic obligation agreed upon by all of the poskim, from the Rambam[5] down to the Mishnah Berurah[6].

Of course, one who can bring himself to forgive his fellowman without rebuking him may do so. [The Rambam refers to this conduct as middas chasidus[7], exemplary behavior]. The requirement to confront the offender applies only when otherwise, hatred will result between the parties.

When rebuking a fellow Jew, the rebuke must be delivered in a gentle, conciliatory manner and in private[8].

If, after properly rebuking the offender, the latter remains antagonistic and unapologetic, it is then permitted for the injured party to despise the person who did him harm[9].

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1. See commentary of Tosafos (Hadar Z'keirim), Tur, and Chezuni (second opinion). This is also the simple explanation of the Talmud (Arachin 16b).
 2. See Beur Halachah 1:1, s.v. v'lo; Ahavas Chesed (Margenisa Tavah #17); Dibros Moshe, Bava Metzia, pg. 356.
 3. See O.C. 608:2.
 4. See commentary of Rashbam, Ramban and Chezuni (first opinion), Ohr ha-Chayim and Rav S.R. Hirsch.
 5. Hilchos Dei'os 6:6. See Lechem Mishneh who quotes the Talmudic source, and Kiryas Melech who quotes a source from the Midrash.
 6. 156:4, quoting the Sefer ha-Mitzvos. This halachah is also quoted by the Magen Avraham and Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav, ibid.
 7. Although the Rambam mentions such conduct only in regard to an offender who is unable to repent, many other poskim do not differentiate and allow one to act with middas chasidus towards any offender. They argue that since the Torah's main concern is the possibility of hatred developing, if the offended person will forgive the offender wholeheartedly, no rebuke is necessary; see Lechem Mishneh, Hilchos Dei'os 6:6 and Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav, O.C. 156:4. See also Rav S. R. Hirsch commentary to this pasuk.
 8. Mishnah Berurah 156:4.

9. Kehilos Yaakov 10:54 and Birchas Peretz (Kedoshim), based on the opinion of the Yereyim. See Bein Adam l'Chaveiro (Machon Toras ha-Adam l'Adam) for a complete elaboration of this subject.

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Rabbi Neustadt is the Yoshev Rosh of the Vaad Harabbonim of Detroit and the Av Beis Din of the Beis Din Tzedek of Detroit. He could be reached at dneustadt@cordetroit.com