

LampLighter

7 Iyar
Acharei-Kedoshim

876

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portions are Acharei and Kedoshim. The portion of Kedoshim contains a famous commandment: "Love your neighbour as yourself." To the average person, this has overtones of a pious sermon utterly detached from reality. This gives rise to an obvious question. How can one be expected to love a person despite his obvious shortcomings?

A non-Jew once approached the famous Hillel and expressed his desire to convert to Judaism. "Teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot," he demanded. The wise Hillel replied: "Don't do to others what is hateful to yourself. This is the whole Torah, the rest is commentary. Now go and study!"

Hillel chose to express the precept of brotherly love in the negative form: "Don't do to others what is hateful to yourself." Why did he not teach him this command in the simple positive form as it is stated in the Torah, "Love your neighbour as yourself?"

Hillel, in his profound wisdom, chose to express this command in a way which would explain and clarify the precept:

It is widely accepted that "Love is blind," and the blindest of all love is self-love. Every man is well aware of the faults of his character. He knows of his own shortcomings better than another person, yet so strong is his self-love that it smothers this awareness and does not let him feel the extent of his deficiencies in character. He is thereby able to find excuses for all his improper actions.

What is our most common reaction when someone else notices our faults and brings them to our attention? We are angered, not because his observation is untrue (we know all too well that he has noticed a real and true defect), but because we perceive that this fault has made an unfavourable impression upon him, and he does not lightly dismiss the shortcoming. In other words, he has removed the blindfold of our self-affection, forcing us to be aware of the full extent of our shortcomings, a result which we find truly hateful.

Says Hillel, "If you find this removal of the blindfold of self-love hateful when it is done to you, then don't do it to others!" Let your love extend to your fellow too. When you observe his faults, dismiss them lightly and "make nothing" of them, just as you do your own.

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Love Yourself

By Yanki Tauber

Ok, here's the problem: I'm supposed to love my fellow man. This means that I need to accept my fellow human beings as they are. (That's what love means, right?) But can I, indeed should I, accept my fellow human beings as they are?

Should I accept a malnourished child as she is? Should I accept a drug-addicted teenager, a suicidal spouse or a bigoted friend as he is? If someone I love lacks something (whether food, money, knowledge, health, moral integrity or peace of mind) and regardless of whether they want to be helped or not, then shouldn't I do everything in my power to fill that lack?

Love is an oxymoron. To truly love someone I have to do two contradictory things: I have to respect him and I have to care for him. If I do not accept him as he is it means that I do not respect him. It means that I love only what *I* wish him to be. But in addition, to love someone also means that I care for him and desire the best for him. Since very, very few people are the best that they can be, caring for someone means *not* accepting him as he is, but believing in his potential to be better and doing everything I can to reveal that potential.

I can respect someone. I can care for someone. I can accept a person as s/he is. I can not accept a person as s/he is. But I can't do both at the same time. Love sounds great in principle. In practice it's impossible.

What about me loving myself? I'm not unaware of my deficiencies; indeed, in a certain sense, I am more aware of them than anyone else. I want to improve myself, but I don't think less of myself because I haven't yet done so. I respect myself and I care for myself; I accept myself as I am, while incessantly striving to make myself better than I am. I love myself truly and fully in every sense of the word.

The fact that such love is a logical paradox is irrelevant. It may be impossible to do two opposite things at the same time, but billions of people, myself included, do exactly that. I love myself regardless of whether this love makes sense, regardless of the inherent contradiction it embodies.

That's why the Torah tells us to "Love your fellow as yourself". If you find it impossible to love your fellow; to both respect him, care for him, to be deeply concerned about his faults and be completely unmindful of them at the same time, then think for a minute about how you love yourself.

How about loving your fellow as you love yourself now?



A Jew is A Jew

by Chana Weisberg

Almost thirty years ago, my father was asked to lecture to a group of Jewish and non-Jewish students in a city that neighbored Buffalo, New York. Although he was reluctant to accept, he was urged to do so by the Lubavitcher Rebbe who directed him to focus his lecture on charity, as charity is a universal responsibility of both Jews and gentiles.

He began his lecture by telling the following story:

During the time of the Tosfot Yom Tov [Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller, Chief Rabbi of Prague and Cracow during the 17th century and author of a commentary on the Mishna], there lived a wealthy individual who ostensibly never contributed to charity. After this miser died, the Chevra Kadisha [Jewish burial society] felt that he was unworthy of being interred next to any upright and respectable individual. They buried him in an area of the cemetery called hekdesch, where society's outcasts were buried.

A few days after the funeral, there was a tumult in Prague. Two prominent members of the community, the butcher and the baker, who had previously been extremely charitable and generous, suddenly stopped distributing their funds.

The poor people of the city, who had always relied on the benevolent pair for their sustenance, were in an uproar. Emotions ran so deep that the matter was finally brought before the Tosfot Yom Tov.

The Tosfot Yom Tov asked the butcher and baker why they had suddenly stopped their acts of charity. In reply they informed the Tosfot Yom Tov that they were not personally wealthy.

"We were only able to give so much charity because the 'miser' who died just a few days ago constantly supplied us with funds for charity. He strictly warned us, however, not to disclose from whence the money had originated, since he wanted the great merit of performing the mitzva anonymously. Now that he is gone, we no longer receive the funds, and are, unfortunately, unable to continue with this worthy work."

The Tosfot Yom Tov was so impressed by the modest behaviour of this unassuming "miser" that in his own will he requested to be buried next to this humble man.

When my father completed his lecture, a participant from the audience, a priest, approached him and asked him to repeat the story. My father, about to return to his hotel, arranged a time to meet with the priest the following day. Thinking that the matter would be forgotten, my father was surprised when the priest actually arrived.

My father repeated the story for the priest but was astounded when, after concluding the story a second time, the priest seemed terribly disturbed and begged him to repeat it yet a third time.

Finally, the priest divulged the reason for his agitation. "Rabbi Schochet, that charitable man in the story was my ancestor."

Sceptically, my father calmed the young man saying that there was no connection between him and the story, which took place over 100 years ago. "Furthermore," he told him, "you are a gentile, while this man was a Jew."

The priest looked intently at my father and whispered, "Rabbi, now I have a story to tell you!"

He began by describing his background. He had grown up in the state of Tennessee. His father was a major in the U.S. Army during the Second World War. In Europe, his father had met a Jewish girl and brought her back home as his war bride, and no one knew of her Jewish background. A short time after their marriage, the couple was blessed with a child, who they devoutly raised in

the Catholic Church. The child grew up and attended a seminary where he eventually trained to become a priest. In his early adulthood, the priest's mother died. On her deathbed, she disclosed her secret to her astonished son.

After reciting the Shema prayer, she confessed, "I want you to know that you are Jewish." She informed him of his heritage and told him that his great-grandfather was buried next to the well-known sage called the Tosfot Yom Tov. She then recounted, almost verbatim, the story that my father had told in his lecture.

At the time, the priest, who was unaware of this information, imagined that his mother was delirious. Although he felt uneasy about his mother's parting words, it was only a temporary, fleeting emotion. As he got on with his life, he soon forgot the entire episode.

"Rabbi," cried the priest, in a state of utter emotional turmoil, you have just repeated this story, detail for detail! You have just reminded me of my mother's parting words, and I realize now that the story must be true, or it wouldn't be so well known. Yet, what am I to do? I am a reputable priest with a large congregation of devoted followers."

My father offered to assist him in any way. He emphasized to him, however, that according to Jewish law, he was indeed Jewish. He encouraged him to explore his heritage, and he put him in contact with people in his city who could guide him. With that the newly-found Jew departed. My father then understood why the Rebbe had suggested the topic matter.

He had no further interaction with the man, and did not hear from him again. Several years ago, when my father was on a visit to Israel a Jew with a beard and kipa approached him at the Western Wall and wished him "Shalom Aleichem [Peace unto you]!" My father didn't recognize the individual and was completely taken aback when the man exclaimed, "Don't you recognize me, Rabbi Schochet? I am the former priest whom you met in Buffalo."

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



Keeping Kosher

15th of Tammuz, 5746 (1986)

... The connection between medicine and Jewish law is found in Torah itself, as our Sages, of blessed memory, declare: "Torah brings healing to the world".

This in no way implies that Torah [which itself brings healing] negates medicine in any way; on the contrary, the Torah establishes that in matters of health, one should consult a doctor and obey his instructions.

Understandably, at the same time [that a person uses the services of a doctor,] the person is to remember that G-d is the true Healer and the doctor is no more than an agent of G-d, the "Healer of all flesh and Performer of wonders."

There are two fundamental approaches to medicine: a) healing through finding a cure; b) preventive medicine.

The first approach involves active intervention when a health problem is brought to the attention of a doctor, while the second approach - and this has become increasingly prevalent in modern times - strives to achieve the maximum degree of public health by seeking to prevent ailments through inoculations, proper public and private hygiene, a nutritional diet, and by other ways and measures.

It goes without saying that while there is no escaping the need to be healed when one is already ill, preventive medicine is the ideal. This form of medicine is surely the most desirable in many aspects including cost and prevention of illness and suffering, may G-d protect us.

Additionally, preventive medicine does not require the kind of resources needed to perform extreme measures such as surgery, which is sometimes necessary, unfortunately, when healing someone with an existing condition.

In order for preventive medicine to be most beneficial it requires that one commence prevention at the earliest possible age, beginning with vaccinations, brushing one's teeth to prevent cavities, a balanced diet, and so on.

With regard to Jewish children, preventive medicine also includes scrupulous observance of the laws of kosher food and drink, as it is known how this matter affects the Jewish child's spiritual and physical development. ...

21 Kislev, 5719 (1958)

Freely translated

I am replying to your letter of the 18th of Kislev in which you describe the health of your children, and you conclude with a question regarding whether the children should be fed food whose kashrus is somewhat in doubt, in order to enhance their appetite.

Scrupulous observance of kashrus (as explained in many places) is important not only for the proper observance of the commandment to keep kosher, but also because each and every morsel of food that a person eats is transformed into his flesh and blood, which binds the soul and the body.

The kashrus and refinement of foods have an effect on the character and moral fibre of the person who eats them. Thus every enhancement in the degree of a food's kashrus, refinement and purity, must also be recognized as adding enhancement to the quality, calibre and refinement of the individual's character and moral fibre.

If this is so regarding adults, how much more so with regard to children whose characters are in the process of being formed. The direction one takes in their formative process is thus of utmost importance.

In light of the above, my opinion [and reply to your question] is obvious:

Since we are not dealing with a life-threatening situation, G-d forbid, and it is only a matter of increasing your children's appetite and strengthening them, you should not diminish the level of kashrus of their food.

Surely other means and methods can be found to improve their appetite and make them healthier, which would not detract from the proper observance of kashrus.

A MITZVA A DAY

Positive Commandment 180: Punishing False Witnesses
If witnesses are found to be testifying falsely they must be punished. We are commanded to impose the same penalty on false witnesses as the one which would have been given to the person on trial, had their testimony been true. This is learned out from the Torah's words, "You shall do to him as he had thought to have done to his brother" (Deuteronomy 19:19).

A WORD from the Director

Reb Zalman Aharon, the elder son of the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Rebbe Maharash, once asked his uncle if he recited his prayers "b'tzibbur", with the community (with a minyan of ten Jewish men). The uncle answered in the affirmative.

The next day Reb Zalman Aharon noticed that his uncle was praying at great length, taking much more time than any member of the community.

Reb Zalman Aharon approached his uncle later and asked, "Didn't you tell me you prayed b'tzibbur?"

"I do," his uncle replied. "B'tzibbur means 'with the collective'. After I unify the seven emotional and three intellectual aspects of my soul, I pray!"

How can we accomplish this internal unity? How can one bring the divergent aspects of his/her personality into harmony?

We achieve this by using our individual talents and gifts for the purpose of bringing G-dliness into the world and uniting with G-d.

Far from being an impossible task, this job of utilising our talents in the service of G-d is intrinsic to every Jew, for each soul - as explained at length in Chasidic philosophy - is an actual part of G-d.

Thus, uniting the diverse aspects of one's personality through devotion to G-d is intrinsic and the essential part of the existence of every Jew.

When we begin working on personal unity and harmony, we find that it is much easier to foster unity and harmony amongst the Jewish people as a whole.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

In order for there to have been the great revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai there had to be an exile in Egypt of 210 years. Similarly, in order that there should be the great revelation of the inner teachings of the Torah in the ultimate Redemption, this exile has had to be so long. (Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch)

J.I. Gutnick

It Happened Once...



As Reb Zusha of Anipoli sat in his home immersed in his Torah learning, the sound of music caused him to glance out the open window. Passing in front of his house was a wedding procession leading the bride and groom on their way. Reb Zusha immediately went out into the street where, without constraint he danced with limitless joy. He circled the young couple and the other celebrants for a few minutes and then returned to his home and his study.

His family members watched his actions with great interest. They suggested to him that his dancing before a wedding procession was unbefitting a person of his stature in the community.

To their comment he replied, "Let me tell you a story. When I was young I studied under the famous Maggid of Zlotchov, Reb Yechiel Michel. One day I did something against his wishes and he rebuked me severely. I was terribly hurt by his reaction, and he, sensing anguish, came over to me and apologized for the harshness of his response, saying, 'Reb Zusha, please forgive me for my angry words'.

"I was very comforted by his apology and replied, 'Of course I forgive you, Rebbe'.

"The same night before I went to sleep, he again came to me and asked my forgiveness. I was surprised, and repeated that I forgave him totally.

"I lay in bed for a while thinking about the incident, when my Rebbe's father, Reb Yitzhak of Drohovitch, appeared to me from the Next World. He said to me, 'I had the merit to leave behind me in the world below my only son, and you want to destroy him because he insulted you?'

"I replied, 'Please, Rebbe, don't say such a thing! I don't want to hurt him and I have certainly forgiven him completely and wholeheartedly! What more can I do than I have already done?'

"Reb Yitzhak answered me, 'What you have done is still not complete forgiveness. Follow me and I will show you the real meaning of complete forgiveness'.

"I got out of my bed and followed him until we reached the local mikva. Reb Yitzhak told me to immerse myself 3 times, each time saying and feeling that I forgave his son. I obeyed his wishes and immersed 3 times, each time with the intention of forgiving my Rebbe.

"When I emerged from the mikva I looked at Reb Yitzhak and saw that his face was so radiant that I was unable to gaze upon it. I asked him where the light came from and he replied, 'All my life I have carefully observed three things to which the Sage Rabbi Nechunya ben HaKana attributed his long life: he never sought honour at the expense of the degradation of his fellow, he never went to sleep without forgiving anyone who might have offended or injured him that day, and he was always generous with his money. Reb Yitzhak then told me that the very same level which can be achieved through these things can also be reached through joy.

"That is why when I saw the wedding procession passing in front of our house, I ran outside to partake of the festivities and add to the simcha of the bride and groom".

Once Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg came to his Rebbe, Reb Dov Ber of Mezerich, with an inquiry: "How is it possible to fulfil the teaching of our rabbis that one is obligated to say a blessing on bad news just as one would on good news?"

The Maggid answered him by instructing him to go to the shul. "When you get there find Reb Zusha of Hanipoli and ask him to explain that dictum to you."

Reb Shmelke did as his Rebbe told him, and when he found Reb Zusha he asked him the question. Reb Zusha was a man who had endured great hardship throughout his entire life. He replied to Reb Shmelke as follows: "I am very surprised that my Rebbe sent you to me, of all people. A question like yours should be addressed to a person who has, G-d forbid, actually experienced something terrible in life. Whereas I, thank G-d, know nothing about those frightful things. You see, I have experienced nothing but good all my life. I'm sorry, but I cannot answer your question since I know nothing about evil occurrences."

Reb Shmelke returned to the Maggid with his question answered. He now understood the meaning of the teaching that one is obliged to bless the evil that occurs in life as well as the good, for when man accepts a Divine edict with complete faith and trust, there is no longer a perception of evil inherent in the experiences.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

And you shall love your neighbour as yourself; I am G-d (Lev. 19:18)

This verse may also be read: "And you shall love your neighbour" - "as you are yourself." G-d holds us to the same standards by which we judge other people. If we show love for our fellow Jews, G-d will show the same love for us. (*Otzar Hachaim*)

Because the Jewish people were exiled from their land on account of their causeless hatred for one another, the antidote which will bring the Redemption is an overabundance of brotherly love and harmony. As we find ourselves on the very threshold of the Messianic Era, when the greatest love between all Jews will be felt, the time has come for a new phase in our relations with one another. We must strive to "taste" beforehand, while still in exile, the wonderful atmosphere which will reign then. This in itself will hasten Moshiach's arrival. (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe*)

Speak to all the congregation of the Children of Israel and say: You shall be holy (Lev. 19:2)

Rashi, the great Torah commentator, notes that this portion was said at a time when all the Jews were assembled together. During the last century, the proponents of the Enlightenment originated the phrase, "Be a Jew at home and a person in the street." Rashi's comment, however, teaches that a Jew must never be ashamed of his Jewishness nor try to conceal it, for at all times we are proud members of the holy Jewish nation and must conduct ourselves according to G-d's instructions.

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHASACHAREI-KEDOSHIM

8 IYAR • 2 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:16 PM
	MINCHA:	5:25 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:50 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	MINCHA:	5:15 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:13 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN - FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:15 PM
	MAARIV:	6:05 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 1 MAY 2009



BEGINS		ENDS
5:16	MELBOURNE	6:13
5:16	ADELAIDE	6:12
4:59	BRISBANE	5:52
6:16	DARWIN	7:06
4:56	GOLD COAST	5:53
5:22	PERTH	6:16
4:58	SYDNEY	5:53
5:01	LAUNCESTON	6:01
5:19	AUCKLAND	6:15
5:11	WELLINGTON	6:10

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

יצוקללה"ה נבג"מ ז"ע

May he succeed in imploring the Almighty to redeem His people speedily in our days.