

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Yes we can love each other!

Hillel teaches Judaism on one foot – What is hateful to you, do not do to another. The rest is commentary. We are instructed to love our fellow Jew.

What is more natural than to emotionally react when we feel attacked or betrayed or violated or wronged or hurt? And yet this is a clear mitzvah of the Torah.

– Code of Jewish Conduct page 32 it says

"While nekimah is prohibited, the child is permitted to protect himself and should be taught to do so when he is being abused by other children. However he should also be taught that he may strike out or speak up only to protect himself from further blows in the midst of conflict, but not in order to get back at the other fellow.

– Code of Jewish Conduct page 38

"The two issurim do not apply at the time when the offense is being committed. If a bully starts hitting us, we are permitted to hit back - not only to protect ourselves, but even right after it stops, as long as we are still all worked up or, as the passuk defines it "hot hearted". This is true not only in a case of physical abuse but also when we have been insulted or shamed."..The Torah recognizes human nature; a person cannot be expected to stand by while someone is assailing him with hurtful words."

– Code of Jewish Conduct page 36

"The Chofetz Chaim opinion says that even in a case where we are emotionally abused or physically hurt, the issurim of nekima and netira still apply. According to this view, we have to keep in mind that whatever the nature of the pain inflicted, nothing in this world is important enough to warrant our taking revenge. In any case, though an individual may have been in the direct trigger of our pain, the true cause is our aveiros; the other fellow is not a cause but merely the tool to bring about what we needed to experience. "

How do we reconcile these three paragraphs from the chapter "Do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge" from Code of Jewish Conduct

– There is one more paragraph to keep in mind, which is the goal of the mitzvahs

– Code of Jewish Conduct page 31

"The two mitzvot of lo sikom "Do not take revenge," and lo sitor, "Do not bear a grudge" are twin mitzvot that are elementary to creating and maintaining a peaceful, unified society. ...when revenge and grudges are taken out of the social picture, then arguments and machlokes within the Jewish community are greatly reduced. Love, peace and a feeling of brotherhood prevail, and we can really be unified "as on man" – as Hashem wants us to be (Mishpetei Hashalom 3:1)

This goal, of love, peace and a feeling of brotherhood, is not just a goal. It represents the outcome of living with consciousness in harmony with Hashem's Will. Perhaps in comprehending this, we can integrate all of the above distinctions.

We are created to love and serve Hashem. The factor that is crucial to success with loving and serving Hashem is comprehending that our life force, our soul, our intelligence, our gifts, our personalities and everything that courses through our mind and emotions is AT ALL TIMES connected and known to the Divine mind. Hashem gives us a tiny aspect of the Divine Image that continues to be connected to Him. There is no private thought, private emotion or private act. The physical container of our body is merely an inanimate object without the soul that He is constantly enlivening us with, may it be for 120 years.

If someone gave you \$10 million dollars and said, here is this money but please don't use it to buy non-kosher food or illicit or immoral pleasures, we would understand what the money is for. Instead, Hashem gives us a precious soul and tells us to do no damage and to love and serve Him with it. How then can we take any time to apply the consciousness that He gives us and spend thought or emotion or action in a manner that is distasteful to Him?

When we comprehend deeply that our consciousness is to be in harmony with Hashem, we comprehend the purpose of a human being. With that consciousness, we take what is natural to a person and uproot it in order to fulfill Hashem's vision of a being that chooses to be divine. The angels are holy, without body. Animals are beastly, and cannot be divine. A human is a combination – with the purpose of declaring love for Hashem by choosing to grow toward holiness and bringing out the aspect of the divine within us.

Code of Jewish Conduct p. 37

"Sometimes when someone has been badly hurt by another person, he may be so enraged that he is tempted to turn to Din Shamayim – to demand that Heavenly justice be visited upon the perpetrator. But just as a father is displeased when one child comes to demand that his brother be punished, so does Hashem frown upon this practice among His children. Similarly, we should not pray that Hashem punish the person who wronged us....Chazal say that someone who refers his case to din Shamayim is punished even before the offender is punished."

Until a person is fully rooted in comprehending that consciousness belongs to Hashem and is given to us temporarily so that we can improve our condition from beastly to holy, and that we ARE our consciousness not just in this world but for eternity, the details of when or not we can defend ourselves is moot. Without the cornerstone of loving Hashem and comprehension of what consciousness is for, we may not have enough of a mental awareness nor proper context to lovingly apply to our fellow Jew– from first a place of loving Hashem – the mitzvahs of love your fellow Jew, do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge.

Instead of speaking poorly about each other to Hashem, let us take a few moments before Shemona Esrai to tell Hashem how wonderful His children are, how rich in mitzvahs, Torah learning, bikur cholim, chesed, tzedaka and more, and let us mean it, for we are speaking to our Father with Whom we are connected as well as with Whom every other Jew is connected, in consciousness. May our conscious effort to see the good in each other help us unite in our own eyes our consciousness with each other as well as within the Divine mind.

May we then think twice before inflicting harm or pain upon any Jew, intentionally or in the heat of hot heartedness, and may we be zocheh quickly to see the Moshiach Tzidkeinu