

# Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

## ACHAREI-K'DOSHIM

*You shall not hate your brother in your heart: (instead) you should reprove (him)... You must not take revenge or bear a grudge... you must love your neighbour as yourself (19:17-18).*

Rabbi Akiva says that loving one's neighbour is a great principle of the Torah (Midrash Torat Kohanim 4:12). So why is the commandment of loving one's neighbour placed at the end, rather than at the beginning of the above list? Surely a person who genuinely loves someone as himself will not violate the previous mitzvot?

One possible approach is to look at the effects of hatred on the hater. As is well-known, there are individuals who go round with hefty files of people they "don't talk to". Others, given the slightest opportunity, will show you how they are "burnt up" with what so-and-so did to them, even many years after that person died. Another type specializes in "getting even" - what can I do to get my own back on the person who, for example, didn't invite me to the wedding, or who squeaked past me in the race for promotion at work.

These people have the following in common: they are damaging themselves at the same time as they plan

to hurt others. They are prisoners of their own hatred. They don't count their blessings: thanking the Almighty for all the things they do have - for example their health, home, family, and job. They don't even find out why they weren't invited or didn't get the pay rise. Instead they often become self-centered bundles of grumbles, incensed that the world is not devoted to advancing their needs and wants.

Such people have a basic personality problem. They are pre-occupied with their petty (and sometimes not so petty) grievances. They suffer sleepless nights, and cannot enjoy "small" everyday pleasures, such as the beauty of a sunset or the genuine smile of a small child. Many end up with stomach ulcers and high blood pressure. Such people are in fact hating their very selves! They cannot reasonably be expected to love others as themselves if they actively abuse their own lives to such a degree.

Therefore the Torah requires the individual to love himself or herself first. In the long run this will not be achieved by buying the latest car or by wearing the latest fashions. The Torah requires the individual to remove anger from your heart (Kohelet 11:12) - which includes hatred and the desire to get even. This is done by observing those "previous mitzvot": you should reprove: where

possible correct the situation assertively while allowing the individual to maintain his self-respect (see Rashi ad loc). And if unfortunately that person is of such evil character and behavior that he cannot come of the heading of 'your neighbour' (Rashbam), then keep out of his or her way. At any rate if nothing can be done, write off the loss - see it as water under the bridge. Don't throw away your health, wealth, and reputation on the high cost of getting even: namely planning revenge or bearing a grudge.

Only then one really loves oneself!  
Only by loving oneself can one aspire to love others as oneself! 🏠