

Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



K'DOSHEM

No Hate in the Heart

The book of Vayikra changes dramatically this week. The first 17 chapters of this volume are about the sanctity of the national cultic center, the Kohanim and the offerings, but starting in chapter 18 we discuss the sanctity of humanity, especially the Jewish people, God's precious possession. Most famously, chapter 19 begins: Be Holy!

One of the major components of achieving this human holiness is described in verse 13: Do not hate your brethren in your heart. Reprove your kindred but incur no guilt on their account.

On the most basic level this means: Instead of getting upset when your family member or friend does something wrong, let them know what you believe they have done wrong. But be very careful when chastising them. Don't hurt them or embarrass them.

We must feel responsible for the moral behavior of other Jews. If we see them do something wrong or prohibited, it is incumbent upon me to inform them of their moral lapse.

Before looking more deeply into this

Mitzva, I must add an important list of caveats. Many commentaries point out myriad exceptions to this rule. The Kli Yakar lists three types of individuals whom we should exclude from this endeavor: the mocker (Mishlei 9:8), the fool (Mishlei 23:9) and the wicked (Mishlei 9:7). He concludes that these individuals hate rebuke; there is no sense in attempting to chastise.

Rebbe Nachman adds that many people are not fit to offer moral guidance. He quotes Rabi Akiva, 'I doubt if there is anyone in this generation who is capable of giving reproof (Arachin 16b). And if Rabi Akiva said this in his era, then it is all the more so now, in this current time period.

The Toldot Ya'akov Yosef quotes his grandfather, the Ba'al Shem Tov, when he informs us that whoever feels worthy to chastise (scholars, leaders) must do so out of love. Like God, 'For whom God loves, He corrects' (Mishlei 3:12).

There is much to ponder in this Mitzva. It is more than just another act to be performed when the circumstances arise. This is an activity which requires the involvement of one's KISHKES, innermost self. The Ohr HaChayim discusses the dangers of bottling up resentments towards a fellow Jew. He emphasizes the use of the 'heart' in this Mitzva. The Ohr

HaChayim explains that we're not just discussing feelings which may some day emerge in acts of violence or revenge. We're talking about the terrible nature of ill feelings towards another in one's heart.

But it's Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch who I believe really gets the point of this Mitzva. I'm finding it fascinating that Rav Hirsch is emerging for me as the commentary most attuned to the spiritual implications in the book of Vayikra. This volume which often seems the least interesting of the Five Books of the Torah, is by far the longest of Rav Hirsch's commentary on Torah. He really gets the subtleties of this tome.

He introduces this Mitzva, and this section of Vayikra, by informing us that this material discusses: our conduct toward our fellow human beings, and teaches how we must not allow self-interest, indifference, or even malicious pleasure to exert any influence on our speech and actions. Rather, in constant awareness of God's presence, we are to measure all that we do and refrain from doing by standards of truthfulness, conscientiousness, and brotherliness.

He avers that this entire section presents the fundamental principles of a holy social life. Remember: The Torah Jew does not live in a vacuum, but within the context of family and society. So, we must think long and

hard about how to behave and how to relate to the 'others' in our life.

Rav Hirsch brings up the issue of competition in our social settings. He must have been aware of Social Darwinism and the inherent competitions in our lives. He is quite blunt in his observation about how one might view a competitor in their community or even family: This alone is enough for them to see in their 'fellow' (ACHECHA) a hindrance to their welfare, an object worthy of hatred, whose removal, even destruction, they desire.

He compares the hatred (SIN'A) to the 'thorn and sting' of the thornbush (S'NEH), and feels the pun is appropriate and powerful. My competitor is indeed a 'thorn' in my side, which one must remove.

Rav Hirsch sees in this a very natural outgrowth of life in the jungle. He explains: regarding him as an obstacle to our own well-being, and wishing for his removal is natural to the heart when not refined by divine law. We must never allow these feelings to arise within us.

Why must we eschew this competition, this natural 'law of the jungle'? Because: He remains our brother. Through the shared thread of divine origin, he remains bound to us, united with us. We remain brothers nonetheless, children of one Father. And for

the sake of this shared Father, hatred must not arise within us.

In other words, this type of hatred is very common and, almost, normal. But we must recognize the great danger lurking within it. We must refrain from the competitive, primitive urge residing within us all.

This 'natural hatred' is really what we call SIN'AT CHINAM (causeless hatred), which is 'causeless' because we're all children of the same Parent in Heaven. We should naturally look out for each other. However, in the real world this hatred is so prevalent that our Sages attribute the destruction of the Second Beit HaMikdash to its ugly influence (Yoma 9b).

So, we must 'love our colleague'. The alternative is too dire to contemplate.

