

Parshas Kedoshim

Rabbi Avi Metchik

In this weeks parsha we find a very interesting commandment. Not only are we commanded in this parsha to love our brother like ourselves, we find an additional prohibition. The Torah tells us (Vayikra 19:17) "Do not hate your brother in your heart; rebuke your friend and do not bear a sin because of him". What is the meaning behind this prohibition, and is there a connection to the positive commandment to love our fellow Jew as we love ourselves?

Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt"l gives a fascinating insight into this commandment. He explains that oftentimes one person may feel hurt by the actions of a second person, whether physical or emotional. The Torah is telling us you are not allowed to bottle up that resentment. Rather you are obligated to approach the offender and give him either an opportunity to explain his actions or to ask you forgiveness. Failing to do so is wrong on three accounts. First of all, you may be the one in the wrong and misunderstood what happened. Secondly the offender may not even realize his wrongdoing and is liable to do it again to someone else. Finally, if you do not approach him he will not have the opportunity to ask forgiveness and may suffer punishment in the next world for this sin.

Rav Wolbe continues that of course it is very hard to approach the one who wronged you and start a conversation leading to a discussion about exactly what had transpired. It is much easier to remain silent and continue to bear resentment and ill will to that person for their actions towards you. However, if you do that, you will not be loving him as you love yourself. Therefore, the Torah commands you to approach him and clear the air, thereby allowing you to fulfill the positive commandment of loving your fellow Jew.

I would like to share the true story of young man who we will call Brian. Brian grew up in a traditional Jewish home and his parents were very connected to the local temple, although they were not fully observant. As soon as Brian turned twelve the plans for his bar mitzva began. The family decided on an intimate family weekend celebration with a larger Sunday morning service and luncheon for the greater community.

Brian led services on Sunday and he did an impeccable job. At the conclusion of the service the Rabbi walked up to the podium. He lauded Brian and his family and then called up Brian to present him with the customary gift to the bar mitzvah boy. This temple had the custom to present each bar and bat mitzvah with a beautiful silver

told his parents he couldn't find it, and his parents never thought about it again.

However, for Brian this was a turning point in his life. How could a rabbi do such a dastardly thing? It was beyond his comprehension. From that day on he wanted nothing to do with the rabbi, the Temple or Judaism at all. If this was what Judaism professed, he wanted none of it. His parents went to shul on Shabbos and the Holidays but they could never get Brian to come and as much as they tried he would never divulge the reason. For the next ten years Brian shunned anything to do with Judaism.

When Brian was twenty three he got engaged to a girl from the next town, and his father informed him that as their fam-

*“Do not hate your
brother in your heart”*

Kiddush cup and plate worth several hundred dollars. The president of the congregation then invited everyone to lunch and the service concluded.

When the party was wrapping up Brian suddenly realized he did not know what had happened to the Kiddush cup. He asked his family and they told him they had no idea where it could be, they too had rushed off to the luncheon. He went to search for it but to no avail. He spoke to the secretary who assured them that no staff had entered the sanctuary since the completion of the service.

Suddenly it hit Brian like a ton of bricks. He remembered that the rabbi had never actually handed him the Kiddush cup at all, rather he had held onto it as Brian ran off to sit with his friends by the luncheon. In his thirteen-year-old mind Brian came to the only possible conclusion; the rabbi had stolen his Kiddush cup! He went back and

ily rabbi, the rabbi of the Temple would be officiating at the wedding. He also informed Brian that he must meet with the Rabbi at least once before the wedding.

Brian showed up for the meeting despite vehemently protesting and the rabbi started talking. He began to say the bedrock of marriage is trust and honesty. At that point Brian could no longer control himself. "Honesty???" he thundered at the rabbi. "How dare you lecture me about honesty when you stole my Kiddush cup at my bar mitzvah!"

The rabbi looked across the table and said "My dear Brian, this is what you've held against me all of these years. Why didn't you say something? I just didn't want the cup to get lost so I put it in a place where you would be sure to find it. I put it in your tefillin bag."

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Good Shabbos!