

CHAPTER 3

SHIMON VIOLATED FOUR ADDITIONAL TORAH COMMANDMENTS

This chapter explores the second consequence of violating the Torah prohibition against hatred: it is the violation of four additional Torah prohibitions:

- (i) *B'Tzedek Tishpot Amitecha*, “With righteousness shall you judge your fellow;”
- (ii) *Lo Titor Et Bnei Amecha*, “You shall not bear a grudge against the members of your people”;
- (iii) *Vehalachta Bidrachav*, “You shall walk in His ways;”
- (iv) *VeAhavta LeReecha Kamocha*, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The analysis of each commandment has two sections, the first explains the Commandment itself, and the second describes its application to the “Tzitzit incident.”

JUDGING ONE’S FELLOW JEW FAVORABLY

Understanding the Commandment

The Torah commandment *B’tzedek Tishpot Amitecha*, “With righteousness shall you judge your fellow” (Vayikra 19:15) requires that we judge a fellow Jew justly or fairly when the person being judged is not wicked (a “*rasha*”), and what they said could be interpreted positively.

The *Sefer Hachinuch*¹ points out that this commandment applies to everyone, not only to judges: “every man is obligated to judge his fellow favorably, toward the side of merit....in this lies a reason for peace and friendship among people. Thus, we find that the main point of the purposes of this precept is to provide benefit for the settled communal life of human beings by the upright honesty of the law, and to spread peace among them by the removal of one man’s suspicion of another.”

¹ Mitzvah 245

Rav Chaim Kanievsky writes:² “In the first chapter of Pirkei Avot, the Mishnah tells us: Judge every person favorably (“*Hevei dan et kol adam lekaf zechut*,” Avot 1:6). Likewise, the Gemara explains that the commandment “With righteousness you shall judge your fellow” (Vayikra 19:15) means that a person should judge his fellow man favorably (Shevuot 30a). This implies that judging another favorably is a Biblical commandment [as opposed to a Rabbinic obligation]. The Gemara also states the following regarding this commandment:

- There are six mitzvot that when a person fulfills them, he enjoys their fruits in this world, but the principal remains intact for him to enjoy in the World to Come ...One of them is judging one’s fellow man favorably (Shabbat 127a).
- One who judges his fellow man favorably is himself judged favorably by Hashem (ibid.).”
- One who suspects innocent people of misdeeds is punished by being stricken in his body (Shabbat 97a).”

Rav Kanievsky concludes: “If we would all be careful to judge others favorably, we would avoid a great deal of disagreement and quarrels, as Rashi (Shabbat 127b) states: Judging one’s fellow favorably is included in the mitzvah of bringing about peace. Once a person judges his friend in a favorable light and says to himself: ‘My friend did not wrong me in this matter; it was beyond his control,’ or ‘Perhaps he had good intentions’—then there will be peace between them. Fortunate is the one who is conscientious about this always!”

Rabbi Zelig Pliskin provides two relevant statements:

- (i) We are obligated to give a pious, G-d-fearing person the benefit of the doubt. This is true not only when the chance of *zechut* (a favorable judgment) and *chov* (an unfavorable judgment) seem equal, but even when it appears most likely that his action was improper (citing Chofetz Chaim, ch. 3 and Guard Your Tongue, pp. 49-50).
- (ii) Even when the possibility of *chov* [guilt] appears more likely, it is meritorious for you to give an average person the benefit of the doubt. When Shimon commented on David’s tzizit, David s

² Rav Chaim Kanievsky, *Orchos Yosher* (Messorah Publications, Ltd, Brooklyn, 2019), 47.

Pirkei Avot states “Judge all people according to the benefit of the doubt.”³

“When you see a Jew doing something questionable and you are not sure whether it is good or bad, you should give them the benefit of the doubt. Adopting this mindset will make you into a happier person who tries to see the best in everyone. Consequently, this mindset can bring you closer to G-d, as you see the beauty of His creations and are more easily able to love every Jew.”⁴

Application to Shimon

This commandment applies to you, Shimon, because the person you judged, David, is not a “*rasha*.” He is a respected teacher as well as your neighbor. In addition, what David said to you could be interpreted positively as a friendly warning to protect you from tripping inadvertently and falling. For these reasons, this commandment expected you to give him the benefit of the doubt and assume a priori that he had good intentions. Unfortunately, your reaction shows that in the “court of your mind” you considered David guilty. If you had suspended your judgement and spoken to him, you would have learned that his family owns a tzitzit factory in Kfar Adumim which explains why he commented on your *tzitzit*. But instead of engaging David, you ignored him.

PROHIBITION AGAINST BEARING A GRUDGE

Understanding the Commandment

The Torah prohibition reads: “*Lo Titor Et Bnei Amecha*, “You shall not bear a grudge against the members of your people”;⁵ Rabbi Feldman⁶ explains that, in order to illustrate this commandment, the gemara chose the apparently trivial subject of neighbors lending or refusing to lend property to each other.” These are “occurrences of everyday life, events in the annals of interpersonal relationships that arouse annoyance and irritation.” For more serious matters such as physical harm or destruction of property, the Torah has specific laws that assign responsibility and order restitution. Therefore, this commandment addresses trivial

³ Perek 1, Mishna 6

⁴ Alden Tabac & Ben Spilg, *Conquer Yourself to Change the World* (Shikey Press, Cambridge, 2022), 22-23.

⁵ *Vayikra* 19:18

⁶ Daniel Z Feldman, *The Right and the Good: Halacha and Human Relations* (Yashar Books, Inc Brooklyn, NY, 2005), 100.

matters of everyday life because in everyday life, if a minor incident is taken to heart, it will “evolve into a full-blown feud” with disastrous consequences on harmonious coexistence. Thus, this commandment serves “to alleviate the malevolent tensions that too often rise from the most banal of daily disagreements.”

Rambam first provides a rationale based on the danger of keeping a grudge: “one should erase the matter from his heart and not remember it, for as long as he bears a grudge, he may come to avenge; therefore, the Torah was concerned about *netirah* (grudge), until it is erased from the heart and not remembered at all.”⁷

Then Rambam shares his view that, in the final analysis, these types of insults are truly insignificant. Therefore, the overall goal is “to prevent society’s descent into a state of constant petty squabbling.”⁸ Rambam’s view serves as a foundation for the understanding given above that this commandment addresses trivial matters of everyday life which can evolve in dangerous directions.

According to Sefer Hachinuch,⁹ “we are forbidden to keep in our heart any ill-feeling over the harm that any Jew did to us. Even if we should resolve not to repay him in kind for his deeds, the mere remembrance of his sin in the heart was forbidden to us; hence it was stated, *nor shall you bear a grudge.*”

Rav Chaim Kanievsky writes:¹⁰ “Even taking actions that may ultimately lead to vengeance¹¹ or bearing a grudge are forbidden.....One should always do acts of kindness—even for someone who wronged him, and one should not take revenge¹² or bear a grudge. This is the way of the holy Jewish people; but the people of the other nations, who are cruel and insensitive, do take

⁷ Hilchot Deot 7:8

⁸ Rabbi Daniel Z Feldman, *Ibid.*, 104

⁹ Mitzvah 242. Note that for Rabbeinu Yonah, the prohibition against bearing a grudge applies only to money matters such as having one’s request to borrow an item denied.

¹⁰ Rav Chaim Kanievsky *Orchos Yosher* (Messorah Publications, Ltd, Brooklyn, 2019), 283-284.

¹¹ The distinction between *netirah* (grudge) and *nekimah* (vengeance) is that a person can violate *netirah* mentally (by harboring a grudge) while *nekimah* requires an action.

¹² I do not know whether your decision to avoid David qualifies as taking revenge, but your actions of trying to avoid him qualify as bearing a grudge since you keep the memory alive at all times.

revenge and harbor grudges, and they harbor their anger forever.”...”If someone harms you, do not say to yourself, ‘I must take revenge, so that people will be afraid to harm me in the future.’ Do not say this for the fact that your friend has sinned does not permit you also to sin in response. “

Rav Kanievsky,¹³ recommends that instead of bearing a grudge, “one should erase the matter from his heart, and not allow it to remain there—for as long as a person keeps the thought of his friend’s offense in his mind, and he still remembers it, there is the risk that he will one day take revenge. This is why the Torah is so particular to forbid bearing a grudge and requires one to erase the other person’s wrongdoing from his mind until he does not remember it at all. This is the virtuous attitude one should strive for, which will make it possible for people to live together in the land and do business with one another (in harmony).” Rav Kanievsky’s rationale is also consistent with the above understanding.

Application To Shimon

1. According to the interpretations given by Rambam, Sefer Hachinuch, and Rav Chaim Kanievsky, your decision to avoid David made you violate the prohibition against keeping a grudge. You can see that this additional violation is unwarranted because, in truth, what David said to you is trivial.

2. This is one more instance where science is barely catching up to the knowledge and wisdom of Chazal who expect you, Shimon, to erase the memory of David’s comment from your mind. We learned in Chapter 1 that *“an important characteristic of the primitive mind is that it is fixated on the past. The primitive mind “turns up our memory mechanism so every detail of the threatening situation is etched deeply in our mind.”¹⁴ As a result, a hater always remembers the triggering incident with all its details, including every misspoken word.*

POSITIVE COMMANDMENT “AND YOU SHALL GO IN HIS WAYS.”

¹³ Rav Chaim Kanievsky, *Orchos Yosher* (Messorah Publications, Ltd, Brooklyn, 2019), 282.

¹⁴ Rush W Dozier Jr *Why we hate* (Contemporary Books, 2002), 234.

Understanding the Commandment

The commandment *Vehalachta Bidrachav* (Devarim 28:9) is used by Rambam (*Hilchot Deot* 1:5; 1:6) and Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 611) as a basis for our obligation to rectify our character traits (called *Tikkun Hamiddot*) by emulating the Middot that Hashem uses in His behavior toward us.

Rambam explains this commandment as follows: “Just as He is called “Gracious” (“*Chanun*”) you shall be gracious; “Just as He is called “Merciful” (“*Rachum*”) you shall be merciful. etc.. It means that we must work to develop in ourselves these qualities of Hashem.

In one of his comments on *Mishlei* 4:13, the Vilna Gaon expounds by saying that “a person’s purpose in this world is to perfect his *middot*.”

Rabbi Kestenbaum warns¹⁵ “that tikkun hamiddot is not simply a nice or pious thing to do, but rather something fundamental, something on which a person must always focus....it follows that if our purpose in this world is to perfect our character, then character perfection is an essential aspect of achieving connection to HaShem...since HaShem is the Source of all perfection, connection with Him necessitates similar perfection.”

In her book entitled “Middos,” Rebbetzin Feldbrand writes:¹⁶ “Man is born with the potential to resemble Hashem. Developing good character actualizes this potential.Since there is so much good attained when we refine our character, it is proper to devote our lives to imitating the attributes of our Creator-specifically the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy.”

Application

Shimon, as soon as your hatred erupted, it unleashed a combination of negative middot such as anger, disgust, contempt, resentment, animosity, or hostility. Most importantly, hatred switched off your innate compassionate empathy which destroyed your basic *rachmanut* (compassion) toward David. You became an insensitive person, capable of cruelty (*achzrariyut*). Therefore, instead of rectifying bad middot, you increased them which puts you in violation of the commandment *Vehalachta Bidrachav*, namely, to be gracious and merciful toward David.

¹⁵ Rabbi MD Kestenbaum *Olam HaMiddos* (Art Scroll Mesorah Publications, Ltd Rahway NJ, 2021), 139.

¹⁶ Rebbetzin S. Feldbrand “Middos” (Lishmoa Lilmod U’Lelamed, Israel Bookshop Publications, Lakewood, NJ, 2022),1.

According to Rabbi M.D.Y. Landau¹⁷ “A man who does not try to emulate his Creator is a glorified animal. To be an “Adam,” he must rein in his destructive tendencies.”

In Hilchot Tshuva, Rambam states:¹⁸ “Don’t say that teshuvah is only relevant to sins that were performed through actions, like immorality, robbery, and stealing. This is incorrect; rather, just like one needs to do teshuvah for those aveiros that have an action, so too does one need to search and find the bad middos within himself and to do teshuvah for anger, hatred, jealousyThese attitudes of poor character are worse than the aveiros that have an action, as when one is steeped in bad middos, it is very difficult for him to separate from them.”

Rabbi Levin comments that most of us think erroneously that teshuva is only relevant to sins performed through actions. As an example, when someone comes from an observant home and improves his character deficiencies, we somehow don’t call him “*baal teshuvah*.” We need to get rid of that mistaken notion. He adds that Rambam tells us that it is not sufficient to do teshuvah for obviously imperfect middot. One must search beneath the surface and try to discover which defective middot he has within himself. In addition, “When Hashem sees that a person sincerely wants to improve his character, He will help uproot the negative inborn middot from their roots and replace them with good middot.”¹⁹

MITZVAH OF AFFECTION FOR A FELLOW JEW/ESS

Understanding the Commandment

Rambam teaches that “each man is commanded to love each and every one of Israel as himself as Vayikra 19:18 states: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Therefore, one should speak the praises of [others] and show concern for their money just as he is concerned with his own money and seeks his own honor. Whoever gains honor through the degradation of a colleague does not have a share in the world to come.”²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Rambam, Hilchot Tshuva 7:3 from Rabbi A Levin, Knocking on the Gates of Teshuvah (Mosaica Press, 2022), 150.

¹⁹ Ibid., 152.

²⁰ Rambam Mishne Torah Hilchot Deot chap 6 Mishna 6 (Moznaim Publishing Corp, Brooklyn NY 1989), 120-122.

According to Sefer Hachinuch,²¹ the commandment means “to love every Israelite with a profound affection, which is to say that we are to be concerned about an Israelite and his property as a man is concerned about himself and his property—for it is stated, you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18), and the Sages of blessed memory explained: what is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow-man. Then in the Midrash Sifra it was taught: Said R. Akiva: This is a great principle in the Torah.”

On a spiritual level, Harav Baruch Gigi explains that all Jews have one Father – “therefore, all Israelites are called real brothers by virtue of the source of their souls in the one God; only the bodies are separated.”²² He cites Malakhi 2:10: “We all have one father... one God created us.” “The souls of the community of Israel are all one unit, a notion that is expressed by several mitzvot;” for example, the mitzva of *arevut* (mutual responsibility: “All Jews are responsible for one another” in Sanhedrin 27b).....” the principle of *arevut* took on a binding, halakhic nature, obligating every member of the people of Israel to demonstrate concern for his fellow Jew’s spiritual endeavors and to aid him in fulfilling mitzvot.” According to the Yerushalmi, the entire nation of Israel is considered one body, and all the people within that body serve as limbs. All of Israel is viewed as one singular organism.

Application

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch²³ teaches that even if it can be established that David insulted you with his comment about your *tzitzit*, he did not forfeit his basic right to dignity and love, yet you deprived him of that right. Since the commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” applies even to a wicked man awaiting execution, it certainly applies to David. In any case, with regard to established sinners, one must love them as people and hate their actions.

CONCLUSION

²¹ Mitzvah 243

²² Harav Baruch Gigi Loving One’s Fellow: Not Quite as Oneself @ <https://www.etzion.org.il/en/philosophy/issues-jewish-thought/topical-issues-thought/loving-god-xiii-loving-israel-and-loving>

²³ Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch on Vayikra 19:18

The above analysis provides factual information to readers who, like Shimon, ignored their hatred feelings and shows them that they violated not only the Torah prohibition but four additional Torah commandments:

- (a) *B'Tzedek Tishpot Amitecha*, "With righteousness shall you judge your fellow;"
- (b) *Lo Titor Et Bnei Amecha*, "You shall not bear a grudge against the members of your people";
- (c) *Vehalachta Bidrachav*, "You shall walk in His ways;"
- (d) *VeAhavta LeReecha Kamocha*, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Rabbi Kestenbaum explains how this finding affects their relationship with HaShem: "When a person flagrantly violates *halachah*, then no matter how lofty his intentions, he cannot truly be seeking a relationship with HaShem. How can someone claim he is acting for the sake of closeness to Hashem while disobeying Him at the same time?"²⁴

²⁴ Rabbi M D Kestenbaum, *Olam HaAvodah* (Mesorah Publications, Ltd, Rahway, NJ, 2021), 48-49.