



**RABBI SHALOM**

**ROSNER**

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Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org  
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

# Love Your Neighbor?

In this week's parsha we find one of the most famous commandments, “*v'ahavta l'reacha kamocho*”, to love your neighbor as you love yourself. This is quite a difficult task. We can understand being obligated to respect someone else, but how can one be forced to love someone else? How are we to understand this obligation? We will offer a few explanations:

**Rav Levi Yitzhak M'Bardichiv** – highlights that the imperative is to love another like you love **yourself**. Each of us is aware of our shortfalls. Even though we are not perfect, we are able to overlook our faults in order to be satisfied with ourselves. Similarly, we must strive to overlook the imperfections of others and to accept them.

**Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch** – focuses on the use of the term “*l'reacha*” to explain the imperative. It is interesting to note that the *pasuk* does not state “*v'ahavta et reacha*” – which would be translated as love your neighbor. Rather the Torah uses the term “*l'reacha* (with the letter *lamud*). Perhaps this is to underscore that one is not obligated to love their neighbor, but to act in a **loving manner towards** their neighbor. Emotions cannot be forced upon us, but *actions* can be. As the *chinuch* states in

several places, we are obligated to act in a certain manner as our actions eventually affect our emotions. Whether or not we like another, we are required to treat them in a respectful manner and eventually that would lead to deeper feelings of affection.

If I may add, we sometimes state that we need to avoid *sinat chinam* (translated as hatred for no reason) and replace it with *ahavat chinam* (love for no reason). Truthfully, we should avoid *ahavat chinam* as well. Love someone for no reason? We should be able to find even something small to love about another. If we cannot find a reason to appreciate another, then we have a problem.

**Rav Elchanan Wasserman** – offers an alternative explanation. If I am alive, it is due to the will of God. There is a purpose for my existence, and I am to fulfill a certain *shlichut* (task). If that is true with respect to ourselves it is true with respect to others as well. Therefore, I must take care in how I treat others, because they were placed on this earth by God to fulfill a purpose as well.

Rav Elchanan's explanation resolves another related question. There is a well-known story in the Talmud (Shabbat 31), whereby a convert asks Hillel to teach him all of the Torah in an abbreviated manner. Hillel responds with the statement “do not treat others in a way in which you would despise being treated by others”, essentially a statement that is very similar to our

pasuk of *v'ahavta l'reacha kamocha*. From Hillel's response, one could potentially derive mitzvot *ben adam l'chavero* – how to act to one another, but how could one deduce the mitzvot *ben adam l'makom* – commandments between man and God?

Based on Rav Elchanan's explanation we can comprehend Hillel's intention. If I understand that I am to respect others because God placed them in this world and they each serve a purpose, I am testifying as to God's dominion over the world and his *hashgacha pratit*.

Another way of understanding Hillel's statement as being inclusive of mitzvot *ben adam l'chavero* is as follows. Once we appreciate others and perform acts of *chesed* for each other, we come to understand that there is someone who is performing amazing acts of *chesed* on our behalf. Someone who created the world and provides us with all our needs. Avraham and Ruth were both tremendous *ba'ale chesed* through which they each came to recognize God. Through mitzvot *ben adam l'chavero*, they achieved an appreciation of mitzvot *ben adam l'makom*.

May we be able to overlook the faults of others, appreciate their attributes and through our acts of loving kindness be worthy of a *geula shlema bimhera b'yamenu*. ■

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