

## Part II – How to Relate to Non-Observant Jews

### Positive Attitude Toward Secular Jews

As seriously as the Torah views those who violate the fundamentals of Judaism and the most central *mitzvot*, at the same time, it has always maintained a tremendous respect and love towards every Jew.

Jews are called the children of Hashem, as it says<sup>1</sup> – “*Banim atem l’Hashem Elokeichem.*”

And even when Jews are not following the will of Hashem, they are still called children to Hashem<sup>2</sup>.

*Rebbe Meir* says, based on four different verses – *Bein kach u’bein kach* (i.e., whether they are [acting like proper children] or not) *atem kruyim banim* (you are [still] called children).” And even if they are worshipping idols, they are still called full-fledged children<sup>3</sup>.

In addition, *Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel*, *Rebbe Shimon*, *Rebbe Yishmael*, and *Rebbe Akiva* all hold – *Kol Yisrael b’nei melachim heim* – All of *Yisrael* are the children of Kings<sup>4</sup>.

The *Ramcha*<sup>5</sup> explains –

Since there is a sanctity within *K’nesset Yisrael* (the Jewish people), which encompasses the entire nation, and is what makes them *Yisrael*, this includes the evildoers. As the Rabbis<sup>6</sup> tell us — ‘Although [a Jew] transgresses, he is always [called] *Yisrael*.’”

Similarly, the *Ramak*, in *Tomer Devorah*, taught about the mitzvah of love towards the *resha’im* (wicked) –

One should accustom himself to bring the love of people into his heart, even the *resha’im*, as if he is his brother, and even more than this, until he has established the love of all people within his heart... And he should say – “If only they were *tzadikim* (righteous), returning in *teshuva*, and all of them great and pleasing to Hashem.”... What will he love [about them]? He will think about the good in them, cover up their blemishes, not focus on their negatives, but rather their positive qualities. He should say in his heart... “Why should I hate the one that Hashem loves?” In this way, his heart will turn towards the good and he will accustom himself to think about all of their positive qualities.”

### Mitzvah to Hate the Evil – But with Love and Limitations

While the *Tomer Devorah* writes – “One should accustom himself to bring the *love* of people into his heart, even the *resha’im* (wicked), as if he is his brother,” the *Gemara*<sup>7</sup> seems to say the exact opposite – that it is a mitzvah to *hate* the *resha’im* when they have clearly done transgressions! And the *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>8</sup> also says this –

One who does a transgression, and doesn’t return even after being warned, it is a mitzvah to hate him until he does *teshuva* and returns from his wickedness!

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<sup>1</sup> *Devarim* 14:1

<sup>2</sup> *Maharsha* on *Kiddushin* 36a and in his *Chidushei Agadot* on *Baba Batra* 10a

<sup>3</sup> *Kiddushin* 10a, *Rashbah* 1:194

<sup>4</sup> *Shabbat* 128a

<sup>5</sup> *Daat Tevunot* §160 pg. 191

<sup>6</sup> *Sanhedrin* 44a

<sup>7</sup> *Pesachim* 113b

<sup>8</sup> *Choshen Mishpat* 272:11

*Tosfot*, on this *Gemara* in *Pesachim*, points out that, although there is a mitzvah to hate the *resha'im*, we still need to control our *yetzer* (negative inclination) to prevent a vicious cycle of this causing them to hate us, and eventually lead us to a *sinah gemurah* (complete hatred), which *would* end up being a violation of the Torah.

The *Kovetz Shiurim* explains that, according to *Tosfot*, it is only permissible to hate the transgressor because of the transgression that he did. Any other aspect of hatred towards him would be a violation of “*lo tisnah* – don’t hate.” *Tosfot*, therefore, holds that someone who does a transgression is included within the category of “*achicha* – your brother” where the prohibition of “*lo tisnah*” would still be relevant. However, “*lo tisnah*,” like many other interpersonal prohibitions, refers only to hatred without a meaningful purpose, what we would call “*sinat chinam* – pointless hatred.” But, for example, showing the transgressor that his transgression is unacceptable, or in order not to become morally insensitive to his actions, we would be allowed to hate him. If, however, we have any other motivation for the hatred besides the transgression, we would then be transgressing “*lo tisnah*.”

The understanding of *Tosfot*, in light of the *Kovetz Shiurim*, is that there is no allowance to hate the *rasha* himself. Even a Jew who transgressed is still called *Yisrael* and “*achicha*.” And, therefore, even with a transgressor, we are prohibited with the prohibition of “*Lo tisnah et achicha bilvavecha* – don’t hate your brother in your heart.” And, just like he is “*achicha*” with the prohibition of *sinah*, he is also “*rei’acha* – your neighbor” with “*v’ahavtah l’rei’acaha kamocho* – and you should love your neighbor like yourself.” Therefore, when the *Gemara Pesachim* says – “if you see someone do a transgression, it is a mitzvah to hate him,” that must be specifically with regard to the prohibition violated, not about the Jew himself.

Rav Yechezkel Levinstein<sup>9</sup> and *Rabeinu Yona*<sup>10</sup> also say this – our hatred needs to be for the actions of the wicked, not for the wicked ones themselves.

We see this attitude with *Moshe Rabbeinu* (our teacher) defending the Jewish People despite their various transgressions in the desert.

The Rambam<sup>11</sup> holds that even when there is a mitzvah to hate a *rasha*, in other words, in a case where “he has still not done teshuva” – if one finds him struggling with a burden [i.e., on either him or his animal] – it is still a mitzvah to [help him to] load and unload... The Torah is concerned about [all] Jews, whether they are wicked or righteous, since they are [all] attached to Hashem, and they believe in the *Ikar HaDat* (main principles of the religion). This is clearly stated in the *possuk*<sup>12</sup> – “G-d says, as I live, [I don’t] desire the death of the wicked, but rather that the *rasha* should return from his evil path, and live.””

In his commentary on the *Mishnah*, the Rambam spells this point out –

We are obligated to love every Jew who believes in the fundamentals of Judaism, whatever his other transgressions may be.

The Rambam, along with others<sup>13</sup>, learn that the obligation to help, and even to give precedence, to our “enemy” with loading and unloading is talking about an adversary we are actually supposed to hate, because of a transgression which he did. It is remarkable how far the Torah goes to temper even this justified hatred we need to have towards evildoers.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ohr Yechekel – Chelek Daled – Middot – Sinat Resha v’lo Sinat HaReshaim – Kuf Mem Gimmel*

<sup>10</sup> *Pirkei Avot* 4:19

<sup>11</sup> *Hilchot Rotzeach uShmirat HaNefesh* 13:14

<sup>12</sup> *Yechezkel* 33:11

<sup>13</sup> *Tosfot* in *Bava Metzia*, the *Semag* and Rav Yosef Karo

The *Rema*, however, sides with the other *Rishonim* (early authorities) who say that we are not required to give precedence [i.e., to help with his loading or unloading before anyone else] to a transgressor whom we should hate. Rather the “enemy” we need to help with loading and unloading is someone we are *not* supposed to hate, but someone we feel a *personal* animosity towards. Most of the *Acharonim* (later authorities) adopt this position of the *Rema*.

In any case, we see the tremendous emphasis on how important it is to limit even the proper hatred we have towards transgressors, whether or not we need to actually go out of our way to give them precedence with the loading and unloading of their burdens.

The *Tanya* explains that one should hate the evil in the person while simultaneously loving the good within him. The Torah mandates a complex set of feelings we are supposed to feel, because people are capable of feeling such different emotions in their hearts simultaneously.

The *Abarbanel* says that we should love the transgressor, period, but hate his evil actions. Even though he transgressed, it is wrong to hate him in your heart. Rather you should hate his actions and reprove him.

Rav Asher Weiss suggests that *Tosfot* is telling us we may hate the transgressor, but only to a limited degree. Prioritizing loading the animal of the evildoer will ensure that the intensity of our hatred does not become too great. There should be no personal animosity towards him, simply anger and bitterness that he has transgressed Hashem’s will.

The common denominator of these approaches is that, although it is a mitzvah to hate wickedness, this hatred must be very limited. Therefore, one is still obligated in the mitzvah of “*v’ahavta l’rei’acha kamocho* – and you should love your neighbor like yourself” towards such a person. We may redeem him if he is captured. We are required to save his life and to return his lost objects. It is forbidden to take interest from him. And some commentators say that we are even obligated to sustain him and to give him *tzedaka* (charity).

The *Sefer HaTanya* notes that often Jews who seemed to have left Torah and *mitzvot* entirely were nevertheless willing to give up their lives when commanded to publicly denounce Judaism. For the same reason, Rav Dessler writes that there never was and never will be a true heretic. Deep down, at the bottom of his heart, every Jew knows the truth.

However we understand this simultaneous loving and hating, the key is that we want the transgressor to do teshuvah, and not to be punished. It is the transgression we want destroyed, not the transgressor. In fact, the verse in *Gemara Pesachim* speaks specifically of hating the evil, not the transgressor.

The *Gemara*<sup>14</sup> tells us that Rebbe Meir once prayed that some wicked people in his neighborhood should die. His wife, Bruriah, pointed out that, based on a verse, we want the end of transgressions, not the end of transgressors. She, therefore, encouraged him to pray for them to do teshuva. He prayed for this and they did end up doing teshuva.

Furthermore, even this hatred that we are allowed to have towards a *rasha* in terms of the transgressions he violated, is permissible only after we have fulfilled the *mitzvot* of *tochacha* and *kiruv* (trying to bring them close). In other words, we have done whatever we could to speak to him positively and show him our love to get him to abandon his evil path and return to the good. Only if he, G-d forbid, continues transgressing after all of this, is it then

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<sup>14</sup> *Brachot* 10a

permissible for us to hate him, but still exclusively in terms of the transgressions in his hand. Some even say that this limited hatred we should have towards a transgressor is merely an external expression as a part of our *tochacha*, to help him to improve his ways.

Remarkably, this obligation with *tochacha* and *kiruv* (regarding transgressors), is incumbent upon us not only once, but “*harbei p’amim* – many times,” as the *Sefer HaChinuch* teaches<sup>15</sup>

— This prohibition [against hatred] applies in all places and times, to men and women. One who transgresses, and establishes hatred in his heart towards any *proper Jew*, violates this prohibition. There are no lashes, [however,] since this involves no physical act.

But there is no prohibition of hatred toward the *wicked*. It is actually a mitzvah to hate them *after we have given them tochacha* for their transgressions *harbei p’amim*, and *they still don’t want to return* from them.

The *Sefer HaChinuch* is teaching us that even though we are obligated to hate a *rasha*, this is only once we have fulfilled the requirement of *tochacha* and *kiruv*, rebuked him for his evil, and sufficiently tried to bring him back to the good, as he says – “*harbei p’amim*.”

The *Sefer HaChinuch*<sup>16</sup> adds that –

It is permissible, and also a mitzvah, to hate *resha’im*... once we see that they have destroyed and perverted their actions, *until there is no more hope in them*, and they no longer listen to their teachers, they disparage their words and ignore their teachings.”

In other words, we may only hate the wicked “once we see that... *there is no more hope in them*.”

The *Pele Yo’etz*<sup>17</sup> also says this –

We are only permitted to hate a *rasha* once we have given him *tochacha kama paamim* (many times), and he is still continuing his rebellion, angering *Avinu sh’b’Shamayim* (our Father in Heaven), and causing pain in *Shamayim*. It is forbidden to hate anyone else.

This tells us that hatred towards the wicked is allowed only once they have ignored all of the efforts of those reaching out to them. Since they disparage those trying to help them, they no longer have any hope.

The Rambam<sup>18</sup> and the *Smag* both say similarly – The mitzvah to hate someone who transgressed is only once he was warned and did not do teshuva. The Rambam adds – “There is now a mitzvah to hate him until he does teshuva and returns from his evil.”

In light of all this, the *Chazon Ish*<sup>19</sup> says remarkably –

According to the words of the Rabbis, all that we can do today is to love them and bring them close in order to [try to] bring them back to the good... It is [therefore] forbidden for us to hate a *rasha* until he has received *tochacha* and been brought close to the good properly.

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<sup>15</sup> *Mitzvah Reish-Lammed-Chet* – *Shelo Lisno Achim* (Not to hate your brothers)

<sup>16</sup> *Taf-Samech-Aleph* – Not to refrain from speaking negatively about a missionary

<sup>17</sup> *Ahavat Re’im*

<sup>18</sup> *Hilchot Rotzeach* and *Shmirat HaNefesh* 13:14

<sup>19</sup> *Yoreh Deah* – *siman beit*

What Hashem really desires, of course, is not to hate the *rasha*, but rather to return him from his negative path and guide him to the positive straight path, so that he will merit to life in *Olam Haba*. As *Yechezke*<sup>20</sup> says –

G-d says, as I live, [I don't] desire the death of the wicked, but rather that the *rasha* should return from his evil path, and live.

### Hating *Apikorsim* (Heretics)

All that we have said so far applies to a *mumar l'tei'avon* but not to the more serious categories of transgressors and deniers, like a *mumar l'hach'is*, *min*, *kofer*, or an *apikores*. In these cases, the restraints on our hatred do not apply, and we are exempt from *v'ahavta l'rei'acha kamocha* towards such transgressors. There is also no mitzvah of *tochacha* towards them. Despite this, we are encouraged to pray for every transgressor to do teshuvah. The *Ya'arot Devash* even tells us to include them in the *brachah* of *Refa'einu* (healing).

As the *sefer Magen Avot*<sup>21</sup> explains, based on the *Avot d'Rebbe Natan* –

The only allowance of hatred is for those who hate Hashem, as it says<sup>22</sup> – “Behold, those who hate Hashem, I hate.”

However, even with *apikorsim* and those that disparage the religion, the *Chafetz Chaim*<sup>23</sup> taught, that we need to *initially* relate to them with shalom –

If one is in a place with *apikorsim* and those who attack the Torah, and he wants to institute some guidelines for the community... and he had tried to [initially] *address them with peace* but they didn't listen to his words, the *Beit Yosef* [who spoke about the importance of being modest in one's behavior] was not talking about a case like this at all. Rather, it is [now] a mitzvah to hate them and to fight with them, and to nullify their advice as much as one can.

The Rambam<sup>24</sup> writes about how severely we should relate to *apikorsim* –

The Jewish *apikorsim* are not like *Yisrael* in any way at all, and we should never accept them [back] in teshuva... The *apikorsim* are those who follow after nonsensical ideas until they end up violating the essentials of the Torah brazenly and arrogantly, thinking that there is nothing wrong with this. It is forbidden to speak with them and to respond to them at all.

The *Ramach*, quoted by the *Beit Yosef*, is amazed by the words of the Rambam –

This is puzzling, since the *gemara* says explicitly that we should accept them. Who is able to say that we should not accept any *baal teshuva*? And the *meforshim* (commentaries) on the Rambam have already struggled to reconcile the words of the Rambam.

The *Kesef Mishnah* points to the Rambam in the third *perek* of *Hilchot Teshuva*, where he says –

All of the *reshaim*, the *mumarim*, and similar cases that return in teshuva, whether openly or privately, we accept them.

Independently of how to reconcile the words of the Rambam, we certainly see how harshly we need to relate to those with heretical beliefs. But while we are required to distance ourselves from the *apikorsim* and those similar to them, in any case, even they [should] have

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<sup>20</sup> 33:11

<sup>21</sup> Chapter 2

<sup>22</sup> Tehillim 139:21

<sup>23</sup> *Biur Halacha*, *siman aleph*

<sup>24</sup> *Hilchot Avodat Kochavim* 2:5

hope to [be able to] return to the good and be accepted. This seems to be why the *Chafetz Chaim* taught to initially relate to them with shalom.