

In giving Laws about how to be kadosh, the Torah teaches:

לֹא־תִקֹּם וְלֹא־תִטַּר אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמֹדֵד אֲנִי ה' :

“Do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge against the members of your nation; And you shall love to your fellow like yourself. I am HaShem” (Vayikra 19:18).

This passuk is part of a parsha of pesukim, (a block of pesukim between breaks), where the Torah is giving laws based on the Aseres HaDibros. What is the connection between not bearing a grudge and taking revenge, and loving your fellow? What is the difference between “son of your nation” and “fellow?” Is not taking revenge or bearing a grudge a precursor or prerequisite to loving your fellow?

Possibly the two most well-known Gemaras involve our passuk. First, Gemara Yerushalmi Nedarim 9:4, *Rabbi Akiva says, “love your fellow like yourself” is the greatest precept of the Torah.*

Second, Shabbos 31a, *a gentile came to Hillel and wanted to convert if the Torah can be taught while standing on one foot. Hillel responded, paraphrasing our passuk of “love your fellow like yourself” – that which is hateful to you do not do to others. That is the entire Torah. The remainder is commentary.*

Gemara Avos D’Rav Nasson 16:4 says *do not love scholars but hate the common folk. Love everyone equally. However, you may hate the intentional sinners who do not repent.* Avos D’Rav Nasson 26:4 says further, *Rabbi Akiva said that anyone who intentionally marries a woman that is not fit for him violates “do not hate your brother in your heart” (Vayikra 19:17), “do not take vengeance, do not bear a grudge, and love your fellow like yourself.” (Ibid 19:18). He also violates “let your brother live with you.” (Ibid 25:36). This is because he will come to hate and resent his wife, not have children with her, and there will be less children on the world because of it.* Gemara Kedushin 41a teaches similarly, *only marry a woman you have seen so that she does not become repugnant to you and you will violate this passuk.*

Gemara Bava Kama 51a and Sanhedrin 45a say, *Rav Nachman says, ‘you shall be compassionate, even to prisoners. You shall even give those that are liable for death a swift painless death. Because it says, “love your fellow like yourself.”’* There is a similar teaching in Gemara

Yerushalmi Sotah 1:5 and Sanhedrin 6:4 in regards to the dress of a man when being stoned. Give compassion even when meting out the death penalty.

Gemara Sanhedrin 84b, learns from “love your fellow like yourself” permissive conduct. *Rav Mattana clarified before the Chachomim that a person is allowed to wound their parent if it is part of the healing process. “Love your fellow like yourself.” Just as one would want to be wounded if it meant healing, so too, a parent would want that. When the Torah says “one who strikes his father or mother shall be surely put to death.” (Shemos 21:15) it means for pain. However, for healing, it is allowed. Rav Dimi learns this same permission from the juxtaposition between striking a parent and an animal. If doing so with the animal for healing purposes is allowed, so too, with a parent.*

Gemara Yoma 23a clarifies the parameters of our passuk and says, *this passuk is talking only about monetary matters. However, one who attacks the Torah or Torah scholars may be hated and begrudged.*

Kli Yakar explains the Gemara with Hillel (Shabbos 31a) and says, *this was an authentic convert. He was not jesting and really wanted to know the Torah. How can one precept be the entire Torah? There are two types of mitzvoos. First, man-HaShem, and having faith in HaShem is a fundamental foundation to them all. Second is man-man, and the foundation is our passuk. It ends off, “I am HaShem” teaching about faith, too. Thus, the entire Torah is found in this passuk.*

Ibin Ezra learns the “to” lamed in “your fellow” is literal. One should show love to the fellow. What is good for him should be loved as if it was good for oneself.

Ramban learns, *it is not possible to be commanded to literally love someone. Yourself and your fellow cannot be equal, for if there is a life on the line, or even one piece of cake, a person’s own life takes precedence. Giving the last piece to the fellow is loving the fellow more than yourself. Also, the ‘to’ lamed teaches that the love should be complete. What your fellow loves you should love about him. Not just what you like best. E.g. a person that is into material things should not just love his fellow’s money. But if his fellow is more intellectual then he should love that about the fellow, too.*

Chizkuni learns the same way, *the lamed is really superfluous. However, the Torah could not say it without the lamed because that would make the fellow equal, which is impossible. Instead, it is 'like' oneself and the love should be for all things that are part of the fellow. Do favors for him like you would to yourself.*

Sforno says, *in relations with others, use the same yardstick to judge and give concern to them as you give to yourself.*

Rashbam qualifies this, *if he is evil then you need not love him, as even HaShem hates sinners. (Tehillim 8:13).*

Loving a fellow like oneself is more than predicated on not hating your fellow and not bearing a grudge. If that is all it was, the Torah would not add on the mitzvah to love a fellow. The pesukim in this parsha are all derived from the Aseres Hadibros. Many of them come from the first passuk, "I am HaShem, your Lord, who took you out of the Land of Mitzrayim, from the house of bondage." (Shemos 20:2). Many commentators say that just as HaShem created all mankind, so too, each individual person should take that into consideration in their dealings with others. The fellow is also a *tzelem elokim*, in the Lord's image. However, the Aseres HaDibros doesn't talk about the Creation. It talks about the Redemption. Foremost, a person should remember that he was a slave and toiled in the house of bondage. To a slave, there are no possessions or rights. There is no time to hate another or bear a grudge. There is no power to do anything about it, regardless.

The Torah is teaching the important lesson that one cannot hate outwardly, as everything belongs to HaShem. HaShem redeemed the Bnei Yisroel so everything they own is really their master's, HaShem's. That is why the Torah talks about hating in the *heart*. Even bearing a grudge in one's heart is not allowed. One cannot hate or begrudge another if he realizes that the other is also a slave, equal in having nothing without HaShem. Whatever that other has is given from the same source: Hashem.

Do not take revenge because *he didn't do it to you, HaShem did*, unless it is about protecting spiritual purity and the veracity of the Torah. Do not bear a grudge – a grudge can only be held in one's heart. Do not act as such, for that fellow is a slave like you are.

As you are now free because you are redeemed, so too, the fellow is redeemed. Instead, love your fellow like yourself. You shall love *to your* fellow. How is love attained? A person must create it with the act of giving. If a person gives to another, shows another kindness, consideration, and concern, that is the love the Torah wants.

That is why the Torah said, ‘do not hat your *brother* in your heart.’ (Vayikra 19:17). Since he is your brother, you know you cannot outwardly hate him. Do not hate him silently in your heart. Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against a *member of your nation*. You are all one nation. You are the nation that HaShem redeemed. You cannot own anything and nothing can be done to you without the ultimate Master knowing and consenting. Therefore, do not misdirect your grudge or revenge. Love to your *fellow* like yourself. He is your fellow because he is really your friend. Friendship is based on mutual benefit, but also favors done for another without expectation of reciprocation.

It would be impossible to do favors for everyone like one would do to oneself. He’s be running around the neighborhood picking up trash, bringing in newspapers, and protecting packages from porch pirates. The Torah is, instead, teaching that it is not enough to be a nation and a people. Love must be given to others like they are friends.

Give love to your fellow like yourself. Give of yourself, give things you like, share consideration. When possible, if one sees a situation—e.g. a collar is up or a zipper unzipped—that one would want to be ameliorated, then give aid. This love is just to create a connection. When something happens or in dealing with others, start with spreading loving.

*I am HaShem*. It is more than just giving consideration to those on death penalty or in prison. Not to just the most vulnerable. However, that is a good example because everyone should be looked at as if they are vulnerable. It may seem that your fellow has a better life than you. If that was your friend, you would be happy for him and still show love. Look at your fellow as if there is something missing there, because the reality is, there probably is.