

# THE Chabad WEEKLY

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One of the most well known statements of Rabbi Akiva concerns a verse in our Torah reading: 'Love your neighbour as yourself' [Lev. 19:18]. The concept of love of one's fellow is of tremendous importance. However, like everything in the world, it needs to be applied in a careful and balanced way. This point is brought out when we consider the history of Rabbi Akiva himself as a great teacher of Torah. His life divides into several periods. Till the age of forty he was an ignorant shepherd. Then, encouraged by his wife Rachel, he studied Torah assiduously till he became a leading scholar.

During the next stage he taught thousands of pupils. However, the Talmud tells us they did not behave respectfully to each other and they all passed away in a terrible plague. This took place at this time of year, after Pesach. The Jewish world was desolate: that is the reason for the semi-mourning atmosphere at this time, when weddings cannot be celebrated. The plague stopped on the 33rd day of the Omer (next Friday) which is therefore a day of rejoicing.

Rabbi Akiva, now an old man, entered a further stage of life and began teaching a new generation of pupils. These were to become the leading scholars of the Jewish people. Finally he became closely involved in the Bar Kochba revolt. When Torah teaching was banned by the Romans he refused to succumb to their pressure and eventually was arrested by them and was tortured to death. This was a horrific tragedy. Yet the Talmud tells us that he declared that all his life he had yearned to be able to die for the sanctification of G-d's Name. Indeed, the Torah that he taught survives and is the basis of living Judaism today.

Considering this story of Rabbi Akiva, the Lubavitcher Rebbe asks the obvious question. How could the early students of Rabbi Akiva be guilty of behaving disrespectfully to each other? If their teacher taught that love of one's fellow is a central principle, how could they so fragrantly disobey? To explain this, the Rebbe points out that one also has to consider another aspect of Rabbi Akiva's teaching: his yearning for self-sacrifice. This means a tremendous spiritual intensity. In the case of Rabbi Akiva himself, this was carefully balanced. Unfortunately this was not the case for the early students.

It is perfectly natural for different people to have varied approaches to life and to religious teaching. The problem was that in the case of Rabbi Akiva's early students they had such strong, overpowering and intense concern for their fellow that each one was determined to show him the true path: mine! Further, they were not hypocrites: if they did not agree with you, they would show it. This unbalanced intensity resulted in the lack of respect. This is not the path. The teaching given to Rabbi Akiva's later students emphasised not only the intense power driving one forward, but also the need to accommodate those who have a different opinion from oneself.

The discussions among Rabbi Akiva's later students are the basis of the Mishnah and the Talmud. There are differing views, there is heated argument - but there is also self-restraint and the giving of room to another person. It is a more advanced form of loving one's fellow as oneself. [By Dr. Tali Loewenthal, Director of Chabad Research Unit, London - ChabadOnline.com]

**You shall be holy (19:2)** Sanctify yourself also regarding that which is permissible to you. (Talmud, Yevamot 20a)

The meaning of this is that since the Torah has warned against forbidden sexual relations and forbidden foods, while permitting relations with one's wife and eating meat and wine, the lustful person can find a place to wallow in fornication with his wife or wives and be of "the guzzlers of wine and the gluttons of meat", and converse at will of all licentious things (since no prohibition against this is specified in the Torah). He can be a hedonist with the Torah's permission. Therefore, after enumerating the things which it forbids entirely, the Torah says: "Be holy." Constrain yourself also in that which is permitted. (Nachmanides)

**You shall not go about as a talebearer amongst your people; you shall not stand by your fellow's blood (19:16)** Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov once instructed several of his disciples to embark on a journey. The Chassidic leader did not tell them where to go, nor did they ask; they allowed divine providence to direct their wagon where it may, confident that the destination and purpose of their trip would be revealed in due time.

After traveling for several hours, they stopped at a wayside inn to eat and rest. Now the Baal Shem Tov's disciples were pious Jews who insisted on the highest standards of kashrut; when they learned that their host planned to serve them meat in their meal, they asked to see the shochet (ritual slaughterer) of the house, interrogated him as to his knowledge and piety and examined his knife for any possible blemishes. Their discussion of the kashrut standard of the food continued throughout the meal, as they inquired after the source of every ingredient in each dish set before them.

As they spoke and ate, a voice emerged from behind the oven, where an old beggar was resting amidst his bundles. "Dear Jews," it called out, "are you as careful with what comes out of your mouth as you are with what enters into it?"

The party of Chassidim concluded their meal in silence, climbed onto their wagon and turned it back toward Mezhibuzh. They now understood the purpose for which their Rebbe had dispatched them on their journey that morning.

**Rebuke, rebuke your fellow (19:17)** Our sages have said: "Words that come from the heart, enter the heart." It therefore follows that if you seek to correct a failing of your fellow and are unsuccessful, the fault lies not with him, but with yourself. Had you truly been sincere, your words would certainly have had an effect. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Your fellow is your mirror. If your own face is clean, the image you perceive will also be flawless. But should you look upon your fellow man and see a blemish, it is your own imperfection that you are encountering—you are being shown what it is that you must correct within yourself. (Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov)

**Love your fellow as yourself (19:18)** The three loves--love of G-d, love of Torah and love of one's fellow--are one. One cannot differentiate between them, for they are of a single essence. And since they are of a single essence, each one embodies all three. So if you see a person who has a love of G-d but lacks a love of Torah and a love of his fellow, you must tell him that his love of G-d is incomplete. And if you see a person who has only a love for his fellow, you must strive to bring him to a love of Torah and a love of G-d--that his love toward his fellows should not only be expressed in providing bread for the hungry and water for the thirsty, but also to bring them close to Torah and to G-d. When we will have the three loves together, we will achieve the Redemption. For just as this last Exile was caused by a lack of brotherly love, so shall the final and immediate Redemption be achieved by love for one's fellow. (From the words spoken by the Lubavitcher Rebbe immediately following his formal acceptance of the leadership of Chabad-Lubavitch in 1951)

The Torah commands to "Love your fellow as yourself." Why only as much as yourself? Indeed, Chassidim have always maintained that the meaning of the verse is the very opposite of how it is commonly understood. Despite all that you know about yourself, the Torah is saying, you should try to love yourself as much as you love your fellow... (Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch) - chabadonline.com

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE CORRECT READINGS IN THE SIDUR:  
MENU MA'AMAR WITH A KAMATZ VOWEL. K'YOM...NE'EMAR, WITH A PATACH. ("TO OUR SUPPLICATION...AND THERE IT IS SAID:" PAGE 62). ZACHUR (KI AFAR ZNACHNU) WITH A M'LUPAM VOWEL. ("HE IS MINDFUL THAT WE ARE BUT DUST...". PAGE 68). UN'TAL'TANI WITH THE VOWELS PATACH, SH'VA, PATACH. ("AND A WIND LIFTED ME..."; PAGE 72). VE'AHAVATECHA LO TASSUR, NOT AL TASSIR. ("MAY YOUR LOVE NEVER DEPART..."; PAGE 107). (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM IYAR 12)

Pesach Sheni teaches that service to G-d must be in manner of "leaping" (pesach) - and not just to suffice with one "leap" (first Pesach), but to "leap" further (Pesach Sheni - the second Pesach). And, because G-d asks only what we are capable of, we have the ability to perform our service in such manner. - The Rebbe