



## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

# The Golden-er Rule

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GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

WE ALL KNOW THE GOLDEN RULE. I WOULD LIKE to discuss one that is even more golden. We'll start with two classic questions. We are taught that Rabbi Akiva's *talmidim* died because they were, "lo nahagu kavod zeh la'zeh," (they did not honor each other) (Yevamos 62b). What does this mean? It can't be that they were insulting and embarrassing each other; these were the greatest *tzaddikim* in the world! If so, what exactly were they or weren't they doing that was deemed as a lack of *kavod*? Additionally, how is it that the students of Rabbi Akiva the very person that established that "V'ahavta", that one should love another as himself, is a "Klal Gadol Ba'Torah," (an important rule of the Torah) didn't listen to his most famous teaching?

Perhaps we can answer as follows.

"V'ahavta l'reiyacha" is echoed with nuanced differences in this week's chapter of *Pirkei Avos* (2:15), "Yehi kevod chaveircha chaviv alecha k'shelach" love and respect others as much as you love and respect yourself. The problem is, that there is another *mishna* in *Avos* that seems to say it a bit differently. In the fourth chapter, the *mishna* states, "Yehi... kevod chaveircha k'mora rabach," the honor of your friend should be as great as the reverence you have for a *rebbe*. Which one is it? Should we treat friends as equals or on a higher level? How do we resolve this apparent contradiction?

The Rambam (*Avos* 1:6), on the words "U'kneh lecha chaver" (acquire for yourself a friend), writes that there are two potential levels of love expressed in a friendship. One is a "ahava toeles" (beneficial love), like that of two business partners. The second he calls both an "ahava maaleh" (elevated love) and an "ahava bitachon" (reliable love). This ahava is an expression of true friendship, a friendship that each friend is a better person from and that they can fully rely upon each other. It is this higher level of friendship that we are encouraged to "acquire" proactively. In the words of Rabbeinu Yonah (*Avos* 1:6), a true friend possesses three qualities, the ability to 1) inspire to connect to Torah, 2) inspire to connect to *mitzvos*, and 3) give counsel and advice. THAT is the definition of a true and elevated friendship, not one merely out of convenience.

Based on this Rambam, we can suggest that there is in fact no contradiction. The two *mishnayos* in *Avos* are referring to these two levels of friendship. Every Jew is our friend, "Chaveirim kol Yisroel," and every Jew deserves to be loved and respected at least "kamocha" (as one would want for himself). However, the relatively small cadre of friends with whom you share an elevated "ahava bitachon" friendship should be respected on a higher level. They should be given *kavod* כמורה רבך (like your *rebbe*), because in a way...they are your *rabbeim*. They inspire you to Torah and *mitzvos* and give you sound advice.

We can now suggest the following to answer our two questions about Rabbi Akiva's *talmidim*. They did fulfill "Va'ahavta," but only "kamocha"—as themselves. They certainly treated their friends with ahava and

## THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

Daniel was a shuttle driver, who also volunteered for *Hatzalah* (Jewish EMT service). When an emergency call would come in, he would drop whatever he was doing to rush to the scene of the emergency. This occurrence would repeat itself often, and eventually his employer wanted to let Daniel go because it would often interfere with his job. However, the employer was hesitant to fire him because he was concerned that Daniel would leave *Hatzalah*, and not continue saving people if it costs him his job.

Q Does the employer have the right to fire Daniel?

— CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE —>

*kavod*, but only with the standards of a basic level friendship, when they should have been "nahagu kavod" on the higher plane of "K'mora Rabach." In a yeshiva environment or with any circle of friends, the friendships should be of a higher caliber and extra *kavod* should be given in recognition of the elevated and deep friendship they share.

The Golden Rule: See all Jews as your friends and always treat them with the love and respect you would want for yourself. The Golden-er Rule: Seek out another group of friends that will inspire and elevate you, and then cherish these friendships and treat these friends with an extra dose of respect.

May we all merit to surround ourselves with good friends.

(P.S. To Our Dear Friends in Cincinnati. We miss you and hope you are all doing well. Have a Good Shabbos! Yaakov and Atara Robinson and Family) 🕊

### A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

What law applies to 2, but not to 3?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 🕊

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## A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

**A** We find in many places that our Sages relaxed certain restrictions and looked to benefit those going save others so they wouldn't abstain from saving (see *M.B.* 306:24; *Eiruv* 44a; *Sanhedrin* 74a; *Y.D.* 336).

I asked this question to my father-in-law, Rav Elyashiv, who answered that before Daniel's contract is up, the employer should not fire him. Just as Daniel is obligated to save someone in danger, so too is everyone else, including the employer. The employer then, may not fire Daniel for doing his (as well as everyone else's) obligation of saving someone.

However, when the contract is up, the employer need not renew the contract. The Sages who sought the benefit of those going to save others did so in an instance where there is an obligation to save someone, and they were concerned that they might not go and save if they had some restrictions. When the contract is up, there isn't necessarily a sick person requiring help then; hence, the employer need not benefit Daniel by renewing the contract. 🕊

## GLIMPSSES OF THE KOLLEL

## SUNDAY MORNING CLASS

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## IT HAD TO BE HASHEM

MRS. LEAH TRENK FLAGGED DOWN A TAXI IN Brooklyn, and upon entering found a strange thing. There was a tome of the Talmud sitting behind the seat, under the rear window. Seeing that the taxi driver did not seem to be someone who would be using it, she took it home with her to do her best in locating the owner. Her husband, Rabbi Dovid Trenk, was a *rebbe* in the Yeshiva of *Mir* in the Flatbush section of New York. She asked her husband if the tractate she found, *Yevamos*, was what they were studying currently in his yeshiva. When he answered

in the negative, she began calling yeshivos and synagogues throughout Brooklyn to find out if there were any classes being given on tractate *Yevamos*. When her efforts did not bear fruit, she gave up of finding the proper owner. Several months later, Rabbi Trenk was approached by a friend of his to inquire if he knew of anyone who would be interested in having an afternoon learning session. "I think I know of someone," said Rabbi Trenk, "but what do you want to learn?" "*Yevamos*," was the reply. "Did you happen to forget your book of *Yevamos* in a taxi?" "I did, but how did you know?" "I have your *Yevamos*," replied Rabbi Trenk, "my wife found it!" 🕊



## BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

### THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

One of the original Torah scholars of America was Rabbi Avraham Ashe, who settled on the Lower East Side of New York in 1848. He served in several rabbinic capacities such as teaching Talmud, performing *gittin*, and overseeing *shechitah*, before accepting the pulpit for the Beis Midrash Hagadol synagogue that he helped found in New York in 1860. Rabbi Ashe also ran a business and intermittently took time off from his pulpit to tend to business interests. At points, the synagogue wanted to find a different rabbi so that they would not have to share their rabbi's time with his business. One rabbi the synagogue courted for the position was Rabbi Meir Loeb Malbim, author of an important commentary on the *Tanach*, who died before he could come to America. In the end, though, no one was found to replace Rabbi Ashe and he served until his death in 1887. It was Rabbi Ashe's death that caused even European Torah leaders to realize that someone was needed to take his place, which led to the one and only attempt to have a Chief Rabbi of the city of New York. 🕊

SOURCES: Schwartz, Rabbi Gedalia. "Shaarei Gedulah." PP 171. Chicago Rabbinical Council. 2007. Rakeffet-Rothkoff, Aaron. "The Silver Era." PP 20. Feldheim. 1981.

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