Damage control on hatred – What is Love?

13th of Cheshvan, 5771

Last week we explained that the Torah commands us to 'love' our fellow men as we love ourselves. 'Love' means to take care of others when they need and advocate for them in our mind when they make a mistake.

The Torah also warns us against a serious issue, the other side of the coin of 'love': Hatred. lo tisna et achikha bilbabekha… 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart'. This Mitzvah does not refer only to a baseless hatred (sinat chinam) but even when somebody had offended us, the Torah forbids us to harbor hate in our hearts.

But how can God expect us to control an emotion? The feelings of our heart?

Maimonides explains in Mishne Torah (deot 6,6) that 'hatred' could be controlled:

"When somebody wrongs to you, you shouldn't keep your resentment quietly inside.
Because that is a symptom of 'hatred' (Maimonides quotes the case of Abshalom and the silent treatment he gave to Amnon for years… Shemuel II, 13). Instead, you are required by a the Torah to approach the offender and respectfully ask him:
Do you realize what you did to me? Why did you do this to me? And if the offender regrets his offense and ask your forgiveness, you should forgive him."

The silent treatment is defined by Maimonides as minhag hareshaim. 'A habit of the wicked ones'.

Communicating our feelings, directly to those who offended us,

mitigates the hatred in the heart of the victim and constitutes the best first step toward a healthy reconciliation.

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