

RAMBAM MISHNEH TORAH Hilchot De'ot Chapter Six Translated by Eliyahu Touger
By Rabbi Saul Berman

Halacha 5 Whoever hates a [fellow] Jew in his heart transgresses a Torah prohibition as [Leviticus 19:17] states: "Do not hate your brother in your heart." One is not [liable for] lashes for violating this prohibition because no deed is involved. The Torah only warns [us] against hating in [our] hearts. However, a person who beats a colleague or insults him, although he is not permitted to do so, does not violate [the prohibition,] "you shall not hate."

Halacha 6 When one person wrongs another, the latter should not remain silent and despise him as [II Samuel 13:22] states concerning the wicked: "And Avshalom did not speak to Amnon neither good, nor bad for Avshalom hated Amnon." Rather, he is commanded to make the matter known and ask him: "Why did you do this to me?", "Why did you wrong me regarding that matter?" as [Leviticus 19:17] states: "You shall surely admonish your colleague." If, afterwards, [the person who committed the wrong] asks [his colleague] to forgive him, he must do so. A person should not be cruel when forgiving [as implied by Genesis 20:17]: "And Abraham prayed to God..."

Halacha 7 It is a mitzvah for a person who sees that his fellow Jew has sinned or is following an improper path [to attempt] to correct his behavior and to inform him that he is causing himself a loss by his evil deeds as [Leviticus 19:17] states: "You shall surely admonish your colleague." A person who rebukes a colleague -whether because of a [wrong committed] against him or because of a matter between his colleague and God -should rebuke him privately. He should speak to him patiently and gently, informing him that he is only making these statements for his colleague's own welfare, to allow him to merit the life of the world to come. If he accepts [the rebuke], it is good; if not, he should rebuke him a second and third time. Indeed, one is obligated to rebuke a colleague who does wrong until the latter strikes him and tells him: "I will not listen." Whoever has the possibility of rebuking [sinners] and fails to do so is considered responsible for that sin, for he had the opportunity to rebuke the [sinners].

Halacha 8 At first, a person who admonishes a colleague should not speak to him harshly until he becomes embarrassed as [Leviticus 19:17] states: "[You should]... not bear a sin because of him." This is what our Sages said: Should you rebuke him to the point that his face changes [color]? The Torah states: "[You should] ... not bear a sin because of him." From this, [we learn that] it is forbidden for a person to embarrass a [fellow] Jew. How much more so [is it forbidden to embarrass him] in public. Even though a person who embarrasses a colleague is not [liable for] lashes on account of him, it is a great sin. Our Sages said: "A person who embarrasses a colleague in public does not have a share in the world to come." Therefore, a person should be careful not to embarrass a colleague -whether of great or lesser stature -in public, and not to call him a name which embarrasses him or to relate a matter that brings him shame in his presence.

When does the above apply? In regard to matters between one man and another. However, in regard to spiritual matters, if [a transgressor] does not repent [after being admonished] in private, he may be put to shame in public and his sin may be publicized. He may be subjected to abuse, scorn, and curses until he repents, as was the practice of all the prophets of Israel.

Talmud, Tractate Arakhin, 16b.

Our Rabbis taught: Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart. One might have believed one may only not smite him, slap him, curse him, therefore the text states: 'In thy heart'; Scripture speaks of 'hatred in the heart'.

Whence do we know that if a man sees something unseemly in his neighbour, he is obliged to reprove him? Because it is said: Thou shalt surely rebuke. (Lev. 19:17). If he rebuked him and he did not accept it, whence do we know that he must rebuke him again? The text states: 'surely rebuke' all ways. One might assume [this to be obligatory] even though his face blanched, therefore the text states: 'Thou shalt not bear sin because of him'.

It was taught [in a Baraita]: R. Tarfon said, I wonder whether there is anyone in this generation who accepts reproof, for if one says to him: Remove the mote from between your eyes, he would answer: Remove the beam from between your eyes! R. Eleazar b. Azariah said: I wonder if there is one in this generation who knows how to reprove! R. Johanan b. Nuri said: I call heaven and earth to witness for myself that often was Akiba punished through me because I used to complain against him before our Rabban, Gamaliel Beribbi, and all the more he showered love upon me, to make true what has been said: Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; reprove a wise man and he will love thee. (Proverbs 9:8).

R. Judah son of R. Simeon b. Pazzi asked of R. Simeon b. Pazzi: What is preferable: reproof with honest purpose or false modesty?-He answered: Won't you agree that true modesty is better, for a Master said: Modesty is the greatest of them all? Thus also is false modesty preferable. For Rab Judah said in the name of Rab: By all means let a man engage in the study of the Torah and in good deeds, even if not for their own sake, because through the work for an ulterior purpose he will arrive at the stage of doing [good] for its own sake.

What is honest reproof and what is false modesty? -For instance the case of R. Huna and Hiyya b. Rab who were sitting before Samuel, when Hiyya b. Rab said: Sir, look how he is vexing me greatly. He [R. Huna] undertook not to vex him any more. After he [the former] left, he [R. Huna] said: He did this and that [unseemly] thing. Whereupon Samuel said: Why did you not tell him that to his face? He replied: Forbid that the seed of Rab should be put to shame through me!

How far shall reproof be administered? Rab said: Until he [the reprover] be beaten. Samuel said: Until he be cursed. R. Johanan said: Until he be rebuked. This is a point at issue between Tannaim. R. Eliezer said: Until he be beaten. R. Joshua said: Until he be cursed. Ben 'Azzai said: Until he be rebuked. Said R. Nahman b. Isaac: All the three expounded one Scriptural verse; [It is written:] Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan and he said unto him: Thou son of perverse rebellion, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own shame, and unto the shame of thy mother's nakedness? And it is written: And Saul cast his spear at him to smite him.