

SHABBATON MAY 19TH



We are delighted to announce that we will have our next Shabbaton on Shabbat, May 19th. In cooperation with Chabad of Rego Park, we have been fortunate in arranging for a very special and dynamic speaker for that occasion. **Mrs. Esther Crispe**, a well known lecturer, will speak at lunch and at other times during the day. Please make your reservations early as we hope this will be a very special event. The Shabbaton is being sponsored by a generous contribution of Ms. Marjorie Perkal.

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JOIN THE COMMUNITY IN CELEBRATING YOM YERUSHALAYIM ON THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION AND RE-UNIFICATION OF JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, MAY 15TH AT 7 PM (28 IYAR)

A FASCINATING AND EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CHAPTERS IN MODERN JEWISH HISTORY
SPEAKER: RABBI MEIR HVAZELET, PROFESSOR, YESHIVA UNIVERSITY "**THE STATE OF THE UNDERGROUND AND THE HAGANA DURING THE WAR FOR JERUSALEM 1948**". PLACE: HAVURAT HOUSE, 108-11 69TH ROAD. REFRESHMENTS, ISRAELI MUSIC AFTER MA'ARIV

LOVING OURSELVES

By Rabbi David Algaze

"You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge against the members of your people; you shall love your fellow man as yourself—I am Hashem." (Vayikra 19:18)

One may well ask how can one suppress a feeling, especially one that is so natural? When someone hurt you, belittled you or refused to help when you needed it, it is entirely normal to feel towards that person anger and resentment. The desire that the perpetrator of a crime be punished is actually an extension of the natural inclination to take revenge. Even if one were to recoil from the desire to take revenge, would it be so unnatural to feel anger towards that person?

In general, we wonder how can the Torah demand from us something that appears to be impossible to fulfill?

The Ibn Ezra asks that question with regard to the commandment against envying your neighbor's wife. How could an instinctive emotion be blotted from our mind? He responds that if one considers that another's wife is as unreachable to him as a princess is unreachable to a peasant, then the envy would simply vanish. The point is that emotions can be controlled when we apply some thought to our feelings. Perhaps we can apply a similar principle to our question.

When one is tempted to feel resentment or to plan some vengeance it is because these actions appear to bring us some consolation and an alleviation of the pain inflicted on us by the perpetrator. However, when we consider that resentment is a feeling that occurs within us and that in no way or a very minimal way affects the other person, we would immediately realize that resentment is a pain inflicted on ourselves. Instead of alleviating the pain, it only adds more pain, it keeps the wound open, it makes us unable to heal, to move on. Resentment and hatred are not weapons directed against the enemy; it ultimately they are directed at our hearts. When we feel resentment, we are the ones who suffer. When we plot some vengeance against our enemy, the venom lies within us and it eats away at our happiness and mental health.

This explains why this verse includes the famous phrase, "Veahavta lere'acha kamocho" –(Love your neighbor as yourself). What is the connection between not feeling resentment and loving our neighbor? In fact, it appears as a *non sequitur*--a statement that is out of place. We could understand that we should avoid resentment towards the other, but do we have to love him too? It seems that the emphasis of the pasuk is not on "love your neighbor." It may be that the emphasis should be on "as you love yourself". The main reason not to keep a grudge inside your heart is that it is **not good for you**. Someone who is angry with himself will drive recklessly, boycott his own success, invite conflict and harm into his life. If you love yourself you will avoid dangerous foods, hazardous places and seek to protect yourself. Maimonides says that only a sick person will eat foods that are harmful to himself. Similarly, when we truly love ourselves we will avoid feelings that will hurt us. By not keeping grudges, we give our hearts more peace, we allow our wounds to heal and we can keep on living in a healthy manner. Only he who has reached the level of self-love can master his heart to avoid negative emotions that harm him.

Now we can understand how the Torah can demand from us these difficult mitzvot. It is not impossible to avoid resentment and hatred, and indeed all negative feelings, when we begin to love ourselves.