



Love Your Brother as You Love Yourself

Parshas Acharei Mos – Kdoshim

The prosecutor stood at the entrance to the district court in Nazareth. She tensed as she saw me enter, calling towards me: "Rabbi Grossman, if you've come to testify to the defendant's character, you're wasting your time".

She was a jurist held in high esteem, serving as the prosecutor in this case. She knew the severity of the case and assumed the judge would convict. "This time nothing will help you", she added.

My heart was beating rapidly: Maybe I was wasting my time. One should do his outmost to help his fellow Jew, and thus I entered the court room, motivated by a desire to be of assistance. I would do my best, and G-d would help us.

As I left home that morning I was on the way to Jerusalem. I remembered I had to be in court to testify on behalf of the defendant, but had a very rigid schedule that day; I was scheduled to speak at a national convention for Rabbis.

The convention was held in the great synagogue, attended by former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and I was asked to represent and say a few words on behalf of the chief Rabbinate. I didn't think I could pass on the invitation, not at the last minute. I appointed two of my close confidants to go to the trial and give the testimony on my behalf.

On the way, I was preparing my speech which was based on the verse from our weekly Parsha: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord".¹ I began to delve into the deeper meanings of the verse. Our sages have taught us that the words "I am the Lord" denote to the fact that G-d repays those who fulfill his commandments. Why is this stated here, I asked myself? The answer is that in many cases when one helps his fellow, he does so covertly. One

gives of himself, and no one knows it, no one recognizes his efforts or repays him. Therefore, the Torah states this promise here. The world may not know how much someone gave of himself to help his brother, but G-d who does know of these actions, will repay those who do deeds of kindness and love.

As I was writing down these thoughts I was startled. Where am I? How can I talk or preach about "loving ones neighbor as yourself" when I myself am not doing so. My eyes rested on the words "Like yourself". If you do so, you will be able to teach this concept to others. "You shall love your neighbor - as yourself". First you should act upon this concept yourself, and then others will follow suit.

I told the driver to turn around and drive to Nazareth. "What happened?" the driver inquired. Instead of preparing a speech I in fact prepared a character testimony, I told him, smiling.

I sat in court. The prosecutor's words were pounding in my head. Maybe I shouldn't have declined to address the distinguished assembly in Jerusalem? "This time nothing will help you", her words echoed in my head. Maybe this is too big a case for me? I immediately removed that thought from my head. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself". I did my part. I hope G-d will help me.

The judge looked around and noticed me. "Rabbi Grossman, why are you here?" the judge inquired. I told him I came to the court to testify on behalf of the defendant. "Please do so", the judge stated, adding that I didn't have to approach the bench to do so. The prosecutor's face froze. She knew she had lost the battle. She tried to refute my testimony time and again, but the judge replied: "This time nothing will help you". Familiar words, said to me just minutes ago.

G-d, who repays those who follow his commandments, has paid me readily for fulfilling his commandment "You shall love your neighbor as yourself", which I did with much effort.

¹ Vayikra, 19, 18.