



Hikhot De'Ot

Laws of Moral Disposition and Ethical Conduct

Chapter 1:1-7

1 Every human being is characterized by numerous moral dispositions which differ from each other and are exceedingly divergent. One man is choleric, always irascible; another sedate, never angry, or, if he should be angry, is only slightly and very rarely so. One man is haughty to excess; another humble in the extreme. One is a sensualist whose lusts are never sufficiently gratified; another is so pure in soul that he does not even long for the few things that our physical nature needs. One is so greedy that all the money in the world would not satisfy him, as it is said, "He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver" (Eccles. 5:9). Another so curbs his desires that he is contented with very little, even with that which is insufficient, and does not bestir himself to obtain that which he really needs. One will suffer extreme hunger for the sake of saving and does not spend the smallest coin without a pang, while another deliberately and wantonly squanders all his property. In the same way, men differ in other traits. There are, for example, the hilarious and the melancholy, the stingy and the generous, the cruel and the merciful, the timid and the stout-hearted, and so forth.

2 Between any moral disposition and its extreme opposite, there are intermediate dispositions more or less removed from each other. Of all the various dispositions, some belong to a man from the beginning of his existence and correspond to his physical constitution. Others are such that a particular individual's nature is favorable predisposed to them and prone to acquire them more rapidly than other traits. Others again are not innate, but have been either learned from other, or are self-originated, as the result of an idea that has entered the mind or because, having heard that a disposition is good for him, and should be cultivated by him, one trained himself in it till it became part of his nature.

3 To cultivate either extreme in any class of dispositions is not the right course nor is it proper for any person to follow or learn it. If a man finds that his nature tends or is disposed to one of these extremes, or if one has acquired and become habituated to it, he should turn back and improve, so as to walk in the way of good people, which is the right way.

4 The right way is the mean in each group of dispositions common to humanity; namely, that disposition which is equally distant from the two extremes in its class, not being nearer to the one than to the other. Hence, our ancient sages exhorted us that a person should always evaluate his dispositions and so adjust them that they shall be at the mean between the extremes, and this will secure his physical health. Thus a man should not be choleric, easily moved to anger, nor be like the dead without feeling; but should aim at the happy medium; be angry only for a grave cause that rightly calls for indignation, so

that the like shall not be done again. He will only desire that which the body absolutely needs and cannot do without, as it is said. “The righteous eats, to satisfy himself” (Prov. 13:25). He will only labor at his occupation to obtain what is necessary for his sustenance, as it is said, “A little that a righteous man has is better [than the riches of many wicked]” (Ps. 37:16). He will not be neither frivolous and given to jesting, nor mournful and melancholy, but will rejoice all his days tranquilly and cheerfully. And so will he comport himself with regard to all his other dispositions. This is the way of the wise. Whoever observes in his dispositions the mean is termed wise.

5 Whoever is particularly scrupulous and deviates somewhat from the exact mean in disposition, in one direction or the other, is called a saint (*hasid*).* For example, if one avoids haughtiness to the utmost extent and is exceedingly humble, he is termed a saint, and this is the standard of saintliness. If one only departs from haughtiness as far as the mean, and is humble, he is called wise, and this is the standard of wisdom. And so with all other dispositions. The ancient saints trained their dispositions away from the exact mean toward the extremes; in regard to one disposition in one direction; in regard to another in the opposite direction. This was supererogation. We are bidden to walk in the middle paths which are the right and proper ways, as it is said, “and you shall walk in His ways” (Deut. 28:9).

6 In explanation of the text just quoted, the sages taught, “Even as God is called gracious, so be you gracious; even as He is called merciful, so be you merciful; even as He is called holy, so be you holy.” Thus too the prophets described the Almighty by all the various attributes “long-suffering and abounding in kindness, righteous and upright, perfect, mighty and powerful,” and so forth, to teach us that these qualities are good and right and that a human being should cultivate them, and thus imitate God, as far as he can.

7 How shall a man train himself in these dispositions, so that they become ingrained? Let him practice again and again the actions prompted by those dispositions which are the mean between the extremes, and repeat them continually till they become easy and are no longer irksome to him, and so the corresponding dispositions will become a fixed part of his character. And as the Creator is called by these attributes, which constitute the middle path in which we are to walk, this path is called the Way of God and this is what the patriarch Abraham taught his children, as it is said “For I love him, because he will charge his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord” (Gen. 18:19). Whoever walks in this way secures for himself happiness and blessing, as the text continues, “In order that the Lord might bring upon Abraham that which he spoke concerning him” (*ibid.* 18:19).

Chapter 2:1-7

1 To those who are sick in body, the bitter tastes as if it were sweet, and the sweet as if it were bitter. Among sick folk, some long and yearn for things unfit for food, such as earth and charcoal, and have an aversion to wholesome foods like bread and meat, the perversity depending on the severity of the illness. Similarly, human beings whose souls are sick and love evil dispositions, hate the way that is good and are too indolent to walk therein finding it exceedingly irksome because of their sickness. And so Isaiah says of such people, “O, they that say of evil that it is good, and of good that it is evil, that turn darkness into light and light into darkness, who take bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Is. 5:20). And of such it is also said, “Who forsake the paths of integrity to walk in the ways of darkness” (Pro. 2:13). What is the corrective for those who are sick in soul? They should go to the wise who are physicians of the soul and they will heal their maladies by instructing them in the dispositions which they should acquire till they are restored to the right path. Of those who realize that their dispositions are bad and nevertheless do not resort to the wise to be cured, Solomon says, “Wisdom and Discipline, fools, despise” (Prov. 1:7).

2 What is the method of affecting their cure? If one is irascible, he is directed so to govern himself that even if he is assaulted or reviled, he should not feel affronted. And in this course he is to persevere for a long time till the choleric temperament has been eradicated. If one is arrogant, he should accustom himself to endure much contumely, sit below everyone, and wear old and ragged garments that bring the wearer into contempt, and so forth, till arrogance is eradicated from his heart and he has regained the middle path, which is the right way. And when he has returned to this path, he should walk in it the rest of his days. On similar lines, he should treat all his dispositions. If, in any of them, he is at one extreme, he should move to the opposite extreme, and keep to it for a long time till he has regained the right path which is the normal mean in every class of dispositions.

3 There are some dispositions in regard to which it is forbidden merely to keep to the middle path. They must be shunned to the extreme. Such a disposition is pride. The right way in this regard is not to be merely meek, but to be humble-minded and lowly of spirit to the utmost. And therefore was it said of Moses that he was “exceedingly meek,” (Num. 12:3), not merely that he was “meek.” Hence, our sages exhorted us, “Be exceedingly, exceedingly lowly of spirit” (Ethics of the Father 4:4). They also said that anyone who permits his heart to swell with haughtiness has denied the essential principle of our religion, as it is said, “And your heart will be proud, and you will forget the Lord your God” (Deut. 8:14). Again have they said, “Under a ban be he who is proud, even in the smallest degree.” Anger, too, is an exceedingly bad passion, and one should avoid it to the last extreme. One should train oneself not to be angry even for something that would justify anger. If one wishes to arouse fear in his children and household, or in the members of a community of which he is the head, and desires to exhibit anger, so that they may amend their ways, he should make a show of anger before them, so as to correct them, but in reality, his mind should be composed like that of a man who simulates anger and does not really feel it. The ancient sages said, “He who is angry—it

is the same as if he worshipped idols.” They also said, “One who yields to anger—if he is a sage, his wisdom departs from him; if he is a prophet, his prophetic gift departs from him.” Those of an irate disposition—their life is not worth living. The sages therefore, charged us that anger should be avoided to such a degree that one should train oneself to be unmoved even by things that naturally would provoke anger; and this is the good way. The practice of the righteous is to suffer contumely and not inflict it; to hear themselves reproached, not retort; to be impelled in what they do by love, and to rejoice in suffering. Of them Scripture says, “And they that love Him are like the going forth of the sun in his strength” (Judges 5:31).

4 One should always cultivate the habit of silence and only converse on topics of wisdom or on matter of moment to one’s existence. Of Rav, disciple of our sainted teacher (R. Judah the Prince) it was said that throughout his life he never indulged in idle conversation. Of which most people’s talk consists. And even of our material needs, we should not speak much. In this connection, our wise men charged, “He who multiples words causes sin” (Ethics of the Fathers 1:17). They further said, “I have found nothing of better service to the body than silence” (*ibid.*). So too, in discussing Torah and wisdom, a man’s words should be few but full of meaning. This, the sages express in their recommendation: “A man should always teach his disciples tersely.” But where words are many and their meaning is small—that is folly, of which it is said, “For the dream comes with much discussion, and a fool’s voice with an abundance of words” (Eccles. 5:2).

5 “A fence to wisdom is silence” (Ethics of the Fathers 3:17). Hence, a man should not be hasty in reply, nor talk much. He should teach his pupils gently and calmly, not shouting, and avoiding prolixity. Solomon said, “The words of the wise, spoken quietly, are heard” (Eccles. 9:17).

6 It is forbidden to accustom oneself to smooth speech and flatteries. One must not say one thing and mean another. Inward and outward self should correspond; only what we have in mind, should we utter with the mouth. We must deceive no one, not even an idolater. A man, for example, must not sell to an idolater flesh from a beast that has died naturally, as if it were meat of an animal ritually slaughtered. Nor should one sell a shoe, the leather of which came from the hide of a beast that met with a natural death, allowing it to be believed that the leather had come from the hide of a ritually slaughtered animal. One must not urge another to join one at a meal, when one is aware that the invitation will not be accepted. Nor should one press upon another any marks of friendship which one knows will be declined. So too, casks of wine, which must be opened for sale, should not be broached in such a way as to deceive a guest and make him believe that they had been opened in his honor, and so forth. Even a single word of flattery or deception is forbidden. A person should always cherish truthful speech, an upright spirit, and a pure heart free from all forwardness and perversity.

7 One should not indulge in jesting and mockery nor be melancholy and mournful, but one should be cheerful. So our sages said, “Jesting and levity lead a man on to lewdness” {Ethics of the Fathers 3:17}. They further charged that a man should not give way to immoderate laughter nor yet be sad and mournful, but should receive everyone with a

cheerful countenance. One should also not cherish large desires—hurrying to get rich—nor be melancholy and idle, but should be contented, engage a little in secular occupation and devote oneself to the study of the Torah, and rejoice in the little one has as his portion. One should not be quarrelsome, jealous, or sensual; nor run after honor. Thus our wise men said, “Envy, lust, and ambition take a man from the world” (*ibid.* 4:2). In fine, in every class of dispositions, a man should choose the mean so that all one’s dispositions shall occupy the exact middle between the extremes. This is what Solomon expressed in the text, “Balance the course of your steps, so that all your ways may be right” (Prov. 4:26).

Chapter 3: 1 & 3

1 Possibly a person may say: “Since envy, cupidity, and ambition are evil qualities to cultivate and lead to a man’s ruin, I will avoid them to the uttermost, and seek their contraries.” A person following this principle, will not eat meat, or drink wine, or marry, or dwell in a decent home, or wear comely apparel, but will clothe himself in sackcloth and coarse wool like the idolaters’ priests. This too, is the wrong way, not to be followed. Whoever persists in such a course is termed a sinner. Of the Nazirite, it is said, “He (the priest) shall make atonement for him, for the sin that he committed against the soul” (Num. 6:11). On this text, the sages comment, “If the Nazarite who only abstained from wine stand in need of an atonement, how much more so one who deprives himself of all legitimate enjoyments.” The sages accordingly enjoined us that we should only refrain from that which the Torah has expressly withdrawn from our use. And no one should, by vows and oaths, inhibit to himself the use of things permitted. “Do not the prohibitions of the Torah,” say our sages, “suffice you, that you add others for yourself?” In this condemnation, those are included, who make a practice of fasting; they too are not walking in the right way; our wise men prohibited self mortification by fasting. And concerning this and similar excesses Solomon exhorts us, “Be not over righteous, nor excessively wise. Wherefore should you be desolate?” (Eccles. 7:16).*

3 He who regulates his life in accordance with the laws of hygiene, with the sole motive of maintaining a sound and vigorous physique and begetting children to do his work and labor for his benefit, is not following the right course. A man should aim to maintain physical health and vigor, in order that his soul may be upright, in a condition to know God, For it is impossible for one to understand sciences and meditate upon them when he is hungry or sic, or when any of his limbs is aching. And in cohabitation, one should set one’s heart on having a son who may become a sage and a great man in Israel. Whoever throughout his life follows this course will be continually serving God, even while engaged in business and even during cohabitation, because his purpose in all that he does will be to satisfy his needs so as to have a sound body with which to serve God. Even when he sleeps and seeks repose, to calm his mind and rest his body, so as not to fall sick and be incapacitated from serving God, his sleep is service of the Almighty. In this sense, our wise men charges us, “Let all your deeds be for the sake of God” (Ethics of the Fathers 2:17). And Solomon, in his wisdom, said, “In all your ways know Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:6).

Chapter 4:1; 20; 23

1 Since by keeping the body in health and vigor one walks in the ways of God—it being impossible during sickness to have any understanding or knowledge of the Creator—it is a man’s duty to avoid what ever is injurious to the body, and cultivate habits conducive to health and vigor.

20 Whoever lives in accordance with the directions I have set forth has my assurance that he will never sick until he grows old and dies; he will not be in need of a physician, and will enjoy normal health as long as he live . .

23 No scholar may live in a city that does not have the following ten officials and institutions: a physician, a surgeon, a bathhouse, a lavatory, a source of water supply such as a stream or spring, a synagogue, a schoolteacher, a scribe, a treasurer of charity funds for the poor, a court that has authority to punish with flogging and imprisonment

Chapter 5:1; 12; 13

1 Even as a sage is recognized by his wisdom and moral principles which distinguish him from the rest of the people. So ought he to be recognized in all his activities, in his food and drink, in the fulfillment of his marital obligations, in attention to excretory functions, in his talk, walk, dress, management of his affairs and business transactions. All these activities should bear the mark of exceeding refinement and orderliness. For example, a scholar will not be a glutton but will eat food conducive to health; and of such food he will not eat to excess. He will not be eager to fill his stomach, like those who gorge themselves with food and drink till the body swells. Concerning such people, Scripture says, "I will spread dung on your faces" (Mal. 2:3). This text, our wise men say, refers to those who eat and drink and spend all their days as if they were holidays. They are the people who exclaim, "Eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (Is. 22:13). This is how the wicked eat. They are reprobated in the verse, "For all tables are full of filthy vomit, and no place is clean" (Is. 28:8). The wise man, on the contrary, will only partake of one or two courses, of which he will consume as much as he needs to sustain him. Thus Solomon said, "The righteous eats to satisfy himself" (Prov. 13:25).

12 A person is forbidden to declare all his property derelict or devote it to the sanctuary and thus become a public charge

13 The scholar conducts his business affairs honestly and in good faith. His nay is nay; his yea, yea. In his accounts, he is strict (in meeting his obligations). At the same time, when buying, he is liberal and does not drive a hard bargain. He pays promptly for his purchases. He declines to act as a surety or trustee; nor will he accept a power of attorney. In commercial matters, he acknowledges liability even where the law would not hold him liable; his principle being to keep his word and not change it. If others have been adjudged liable to him, he is considerate, and even forgives them the amount due. He grants benevolent (interest-free) loans and does favors. He will not encroach on another man's business, and throughout his life will not vex a human being. In short, he belongs to the class of those who are persecuted but do not persecute, who are reviled but do not revile. A man who acts thus is commended in the Scriptural text, "And He said to, you are My servant, Israel, in whom I glory" (Is. 49:3).

Chapter 6:1-10

1 It is natural to be influenced, in sentiments and conduct, by one's neighbors and associates, and observe the customs of one's fellow citizens. Hence, a person ought constantly to associate with the righteous and frequent the company of the wise, so as to learn from their practices, and shun the wicked who are benighted, so as not to be corrupted by their example. So Solomon said, "He that walks with the wise, shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall smart for it" (Prov. 13:20). And it is also said, "Happy is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the wicked" (Ps. 1:1). So too, if one lives in a country where the customs are pernicious and the inhabitants do not go in the right way, he should leave for a place where the people are righteous and follow the ways of the good. If all the countries of which he has personal knowledge, or concerning which he hears reports, follow a course that is not right—as is the case in our times—or if military campaigns or sickness debar him from leaving for a country with good customs, he should live by himself in seclusion, as it is said, "Let him sit alone and keep silence" (Lam. 3:28). And if the inhabitants are wicked reprobates who will not let him stay in the country unless he mixes with them and adopts their evil practices, let him withdraw to caves, thickets, or deserts, and not habituate himself to the ways of sinners, as it is said "O that I were in the wilderness, in a lodging place of wayfaring men" (Jer. 9:1).

2 It is an affirmative precept to attach oneself to sages and their disciples, so as to learn from their example; as it is said, "And unto Him shall you cleave" (Deut. 10:20). But can a human being cleave to the *Shekhinah*? Our wise men explained this text thus: "Attach yourself to sages and their disciples." A man should, accordingly, strive to win a scholar's daughter for a wife, and should give his daughter in marriage to a scholar. He should eat and drink in the company of scholars, give them opportunities to do business, and cultivate their society in every relation, as it is said, "And to cleave unto Him" (*ibid.* 11:22). So too, our sages exhorted us, "Sit in the dust of their feet, and drink their words thirstily" (ethics of the Fathers 1:4).

3 It is incumbent on every one to love each individual Israelite as himself, as it is said "You shall love your neighbor, as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). Hence, a person ought to speak in praise of his neighbor and be careful of his neighbor's property as he is careful of his own property and solicitous about his own honor. Whoever glorifies himself by humiliating another person, will have no portion in the world to come.

4 To love the proselyte who comes to take refuge beneath the wings of the *Shekhinah* is the fulfillment of two affirmative precepts. First, because he is included among neighbors (whom we are commanded to love). And secondly, because he is a stranger, and the Torah said, "Love you therefore the stranger" (Deut. 10:19). God charged (us) concerning the love of the stranger, even as He charged us concerning love of Himself, as it is said, "You shall love the Lord your God" (*ibid.* 6:5). The Holy One, blessed be He, loves strangers, as it is said, "And He loves the stranger" (*ibid.* 10:18).

5 Whoever entertains in his heart hatred of any Israelite, transgresses a prohibition, as it is said, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart" (Lev. 19:17). The violation of this

precept is, however, not punished with flogging, as no overt act is involved. The Torah, in this text, only warned against hatred in the heart. But any one who smites or reviles his neighbor, although he is not permitted to do so, is not infringing the precept, “Your shall not hate your brother.”

6 When a man sins against another, the injured party should not hate the offender and keep silent, as it is said concerning the wicked, “And Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor evil, for Absalom hated Amnon” (II Sam. 13:22). But it is his duty to inform the offender and say to him “Why did you do this to me? Why did you sin against me in this matter?” And thus it is said, “You shall surely rebuke your neighbor” (Lev. 19:17). If the offender repents and pleads for forgiveness, he should be forgiven. The forgiver should not be obdurate, as it is said, “And Abraham prayed unto God (for Abimelech)” (Gen. 20:17).

7 If one observes that a person committed a sin or walks in a way that is not good, it is a duty to bring the erring man back to the right path and point out to him that he is wronging himself by his evil courses, as it is said, “You shall surely rebuke your neighbor” (Lev. 19:17). He who rebukes another, whether for offenses against the rebuker himself or for sins against God, should administer the rebuke in private, speak to the offender gently and tenderly, and point out that he is speaking for the wrongdoer’s own good, to secure for him life in the world to come. If the latter accepts the rebuke, well and good. If not, he should be rebuked a second, and a third time, And so one is bound to continue the admonitions, till the sinner assaults the admonisher and says to him “I refuse to listen.” Whoever is in a position to prevent wrongdoing and does not do so is responsible for the iniquity of all the wrongdoers whom he might have restrained.

8 He who rebukes another must not at first speak to the offender harshly so as to put him to shame, as it is said, “And you shall not suffer sin because of him” (Lev. 19:17). Our rabbis explained this text as follows: “Since it might have been supposed that you are to rebuke the sinner till he changes color, therefore it is said ‘And you shall not bear sin because of him.’” Hence, the inference that it is forbidden to put an Israelite to shame, especially in public. Although one who puts another to shame is not punished with flogging, still it is a grave offense. And thus the sages said, “He who shames another in public has no portion in the world to come.: One ought, therefore, to beware of publicly shaming anyone, whether he be young or old. One should not call a person by a name of which he feels ashamed, nor relate anything in his presence which humiliates him. This applies to matters between man and man. But in regard to duties to God, if an individual, after having been privately rebuked, does not repent, he should be shamed in public; his sin should be openly declared; he is to be reviled, affronted, and cursed till he returns to the right course. This was the method followed by all the prophets of Israel.

9 If one who has been wronged by another does not wish to rebuke or speak to the offended because the latter is a very common person or mentally defective, and if he has sincerely forgiven him, and neither bears him ill-will nor rebukes him—he acts according to the standard of saints. All that the Torah objects to is harboring ill-will.

10 A man ought to be especially heedful of his endeavor toward widows and orphans, for their souls are exceedingly depressed and their spirits low. Even if they are wealthy, even if they are the widow and orphans of a king, we are specifically enjoined concerning them, as it is said, “You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child” (Ex. 22:21). How are we to conduct ourselves toward them? One must not speak to them otherwise than tenderly. One must show them unvarying courtesy; not hurt them physically with hard toil, or wound their feelings with harsh speech. One must take greater care of their property than of one’s own. Whoever irritates them, provokes them to anger, pains them, tyrannizes over them, or causes them loss of money, is guilty of a transgression, and still more so if one beats them or curses them. Though no flogging is inflicted for this transgression, its punishment is explicitly set forth in the Torah (in the following terms): “My wrath shall wax hot, and I will slay you with the sword” (*ibid.* 22:23) This only applies to cases where a person afflicts them for his own ends. But if a teacher punishes orphan children in order to teach them Torah or a trade or lead them in the right way—this is permissible. And yet he should not treat them like others, but make a distinction in their favor. He should guide them gently, with the utmost tenderness and courtesy, whether they are bereft of a father or mother, as it is said, “For the Lord will plead their cause” (Prov. 22:23). To what age are they to be regarded in these respects as orphans? Till they reach the age when they no longer need an adult on whom they depend to train them and care for them, and when each of them can provide for all his wants, like other grown-up persons.

Chapter 7:1 & 5-8

1 Whoever tells tales about another person violates a prohibition, as it is said, “You shall not go up and down as a tale-bearer among your people” (Lev. 19:16). And although no flogging is inflicted, it is a grave offense, and leads to the death of many souls in Israel. Hence, this precept is followed immediately by the sentence, “Neither shall you stand idly by the blood of your neighbor” (*ibid.* 19:16). For an example of the tragic consequence of this transgression, read what happened after Doeg’s report concerning the priests of Nob (I Sam. 22:6-19).

5 If one indulges in evil speech about a person, whether in his presence or in his absence, or makes statement which, if repeated, would tend to hurt him physically or injure him financially, distress or alarm him—all this is evil speech. If a statement of this character has been made in the presence of three persons, the subject matter is regarded as public and generally known, and if one of the three repeats it, he is not guilty of evil speech, provided he had no intention to give the story wider currency.

6 All such persons are scandal-mongers in whose neighborhood it is forbidden to reside; and still more it is forbidden to cultivate their society and listen to them. The sentence passed upon our forefathers in the wilderness was confirmed only because they were guilty of the sin of the evil tongue.

7 He who takes revenge violates a prohibition, as it is said, “You shall not take vengeance” (Lev. 19:18). And although he is not punished with flogging, still such conduct indicates an exceedingly bad disposition. One should rather practice forbearance in all secular matters. For the intelligent realize that these are vain things and not worth taking vengeance for. What is “taking vengeance”? The following is a case. A neighbor says to one, “Lend me your axe.” He replies, “I will not lend it to you” The next day, the latter needs a similar favor from the neighbor and says to him., “Lend me your axe,” and received the reply, “I will not lend it to you, for you did not lend me your axe when I asked it of you.” Any one who acts in this way is “taking vengeance.” But when he comes to borrow aught, one should give what is asked cheerfully, and not repay discourtesy with discourtesy. And so in similar case. Thus David, expressing his excellent sentiments, said “If I have requited him that did evil to me, or despoiled mine adversary . . . “ (Ps. 7:5).*

8 So too, one who bears a grudge against a fellow Israelite violates a prohibition, as it is said, “Nor bear a grudge against the children of your people” (Lev. 19:18). What is “bearing a grudge?” A said to B, “Rent this house to me, or let me borrow this ox.” B refuses. After a time, B comes to A to borrow or hire something. A replies, “Here it is. I lend it to you. I am not like you. I will not treat you as you treated me.” One who acts thus, transgresses the commandment “You shall not bear a grudge.” One should blot the thing out of his mind and not bear a grudge. For as long as one nurses a grievance and keeps it in mind, one may come to take vengeance. The Torah, accordingly, emphatically warns us not to bear a grudge, so that the impression of the wrong shall be quite

obliterated and be no longer remembered. This is the right principle. It alone makes civilized life and social intercourse possible.

