

## **"Do not take revenge, and do not bear a grudge against the members of your nation. Love you neighbor as yourself." (19:18)**

The *Talmud* in *Shabbos 31a* relates the famous incident of the gentile who came to Hillel with the intention of converting to Judaism, if he only could be taught the whole *Torah* while "standing on one foot". Hillel's response was the classic dictum of "*What is hateful to you; do not do to your fellow. This is the entire Torah: the rest is commentary. Go and study it.*"

The *Mahrsha* explains the gentile's request and Hillel's response in the following manner: The gentile was searching for a unique statement of faith which encompasses the foundation of the entire *Torah*. Hillel's response was actually the converse of the *pasuk* in our *parsha* of "*Love you friend as yourself.*" Why did Hillel not simply relate this *pasuk*, which presents a more positive approach to our interrelationship with our fellow man? The *Mahrsha* responds that the *Torah* does not demand that we literally love every single Jew as ourselves. Rather, this mandate refers back to the beginning of the *pasuk*. The first half of the *pasuk* states that one should neither seek revenge or bear a grudge. Instead, he should love his fellow man and wish him no harm for any discomfort he has caused. Thus, Hillel stated to the gentile his understanding of the basic intent of this *mitzvah* in the context of the whole *pasuk*.

We may suggest a different approach to resolving this question. We are exhorted by Dovid *Hamelech* in *Tehilim (34:15)* to "*turn from evil, and do good.*" The path to self-improvement is a gradual one. One is first commanded to turn away from his evil-doing, for evil contrasts Hashem's will. Upon successful accomplishment of this phase, he may now proceed to phase two: doing good by striving to fulfill the will of Hashem. This approach applies to the *mitzvah* of loving one's neighbor. One should seek to love and admire every redeeming quality of his fellow Jew, while simultaneously overlooking his faults. One should joyously share in his friend's successes, as well as his pain and sorrow during moments of failure and misfortune. One should express his love for his fellow Jew in positive action, by seeking to improve his friend's situation. An initial step, however, must precede all of this. One must first avoid doing to others that which he personally abhors. Hillel's response to the gentile represented the fundamental step towards fulfilling this *mitzvah*. First one must turn from evil; only then can he proceed to the performance of good deeds.