

“You Shall Not Hate in your Heart:” Biblical Israel and the Jewish Tradition

Leviticus 19:¹⁷ “You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. ¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.”

Exodus 23:⁴ “When you come upon your enemy’s ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back. ⁵ When you see the donkey of one who hates you struggling under its burden and you would hold back from setting it free, you must help to set it free.”

Proverbs 24:¹⁷ Do not rejoice when your enemies fall, and do not let your heart be glad when they stumble, ¹⁸ lest the LORD see it and be displeased and turn away his anger from them. ²⁹ Do not say, “I will do to others as they have done to me; I will pay them back for what they have done.”

Proverbs 25:²¹ If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat, and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink, ²² for you will heap coals of fire on their heads, and the LORD will reward you.

Deuteronomy 23:⁷ “You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin. You shall not abhor any of the Egyptians, because you were an alien residing in their land. ⁸ The children of the third generation that are born to them may come into the assembly of the LORD.”

Maimonides, *Hilchot Deot 7:8*: You shall blot [any offences against you] out of your 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 therefore emphatically warns us not to bear a grudge, so that the impression of the wrong should be completely obliterated and no longer remembered. This is the right principle. It alone makes civilized life and social interaction possible.

Avot de-Rabbi Natan, 23: “Who then is a hero? One who turns an enemy into a friend.”

Genesis 27:⁴¹ Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”

Genesis 37:² Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father’s wives, and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children because he was the son of his old age, and he made him an ornamented robe.^[a] ⁴ But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him. ⁵ Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, “Listen to this dream that I dreamed. ⁷ There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf.” ⁸ His brothers said to him, “Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?” So they hated him even more because of his dreams and his words.

Psalm 41: ¹¹ By this I know that you are pleased with me: because my enemy has not triumphed over me. ¹² But you have upheld me because of my integrity and set me in your presence forever.

Psalm 18: ⁶ In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears. ¹⁷ He delivered me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me. ³⁷ I pursued my enemies and overtook them and did not turn back until they were consumed. ³⁸ I struck them down so that they were unable to rise; they fell under my feet. ³⁹ For you girded me with strength for the battle; you made my assailants sink under me. ⁴⁰ You made my enemies turn their backs to me, and those who hated me I destroyed.

1 Samuel 18: ²⁸ But when Saul realized that the LORD was with David and that Saul's daughter Michal loved him, ²⁹ Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul was David's enemy from that time forward.

1 Samuel 24: ²⁴ When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the wilderness of En-gedi." ² Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to look for David and his men in the direction of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. ³ He came to the sheepfolds beside the road, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave. ⁴ The men of David said to him, "Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.'" Then David went and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's cloak. ⁵ Afterward David was stricken to the heart because he had cut off a corner of Saul's cloak. ⁶ He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to raise my hand against him, for he is the LORD's anointed." ⁷ So David rebuked his men severely and did not permit them to attack Saul. Then Saul got up and left the cave and went on his way. ⁸ Afterward David also rose up and went out of the cave and called after Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance. ⁹ David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of those who say, 'David seeks to do you harm'?" ¹⁰ This very day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you into my hand in the cave, and some urged me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, 'I will not raise my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.' ¹¹ See, my father, see the corner of your cloak in my hand, for by the fact that I cut off the corner of your cloak and did not kill you, you may know for certain that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you are hunting me to take my life. ¹² May the LORD judge between me and you! May the LORD avenge me on you, but my hand shall not be against you. ¹³ As the ancient proverb says, 'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness,' but my hand shall not be against you. ¹⁴ Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A single flea? ¹⁵ May the LORD, therefore, be judge and give sentence between me and you. May he see to it and plead my cause and vindicate me against you." ¹⁶ When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" Saul lifted up his voice and wept. ¹⁷ He said to David, "You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. ¹⁸ Today you have explained how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the LORD put me into your hands. ¹⁹ For who has ever found an enemy and sent the enemy safely away? So may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day.