

Section 12

Interpersonal Conduct

Adderet Eliyahu expounds on the laws of interpersonal conduct. These include conduct towards oneself as well as towards one's fellows, parents, children, elders, and teachers.

The topics I will cover in this section are:

1. Conduct towards Oneself
2. Conduct towards One's Fellow Jews
3. Conduct towards One's Parents
4. Conduct towards One's Children
5. Conduct towards One's Elders and Teachers
6. Excommunication

"It is not fitting for a wise man to forego the honor that is due to him and this is for the sake of respecting wisdom itself" -*Adderet Eliyahu's* Inyan Tefila Pt. 2 Chapter 5

§12.1 Conduct towards Oneself

How one treats one's body affects the well-being of one's mind. The Torah forbids the consumption of different species of land animals, fowl, and fish (Leviticus 11) because they can have a negative effect on both mind and body.

The Torah further forbids excessive consumption of permitted food. The parents of a rebellious son (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) would accuse their child with the statement "he is a glutton and a drunkard" (Deuteronomy 21:20). Consistent with the Sages belief that this accusation refers to *halakhically* forbidden behaviors, Scripture later states "do not be an excessive consumer of wine, nor a gluttonous eater of meat" (Proverbs 23:21).

Gluttony is punishable by death because its prohibition is derived from the passage of the rebellious son who was liable for execution (Deuteronomy 21:21). However, a glutton is first given a chance to correct his ways just as the rebellious son is only punished when he has repeatedly not responded to reprimand: "and though they chasten him, he will not hearken onto them" (Deuteronomy 21:18). Furthermore, one is not considered a glutton if he occasionally indulges himself. The term glutton applies only to one who repeatedly over-consumes food or drink.

§12.2 Conduct towards One's Fellow Jews

§12.2a You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

The commandment "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18) is a general principle that incorporates a plethora of more specific commands. Some of these derivative commands are found explicitly in Scripture and others are derived through *hekeish*. The derivative commands found in Scripture include the injunctions: "do not hate your brother in your heart" (Leviticus 19:17), "you shall

not go about as a rumor-bearer among your people” (Leviticus 19:16), and “you will not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the children of your people” (Leviticus 19:18). Some of the principles derived from the command “you shall love your neighbor as yourself”, whether by Scripture or by *hekeish*, are expounded in the sections below.

§12.2a Reprimand

One should respectfully reprimand his erring fellow. Among other reasons, this is so that his erring fellow will not come to be hated for his wrongful behavior. Should one’s fellow request forgiveness for the error of his ways it is fitting to forgive him. This is what is meant by “you will not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the children of your people” (Leviticus 19:18).

One should not reprimand his fellow in public whether regarding an interpersonal issue or a *halakhic* transgression. One may reprimand his fellow publicly if others begin to follow in the sinner’s ways or if he should repeatedly fail to respond to private criticism. Even then one should critique only with gentle language, keeping in mind that the reprimand is for the good of the sinner. If time and again the sinner does not respond to reprimand, one may use harsher language and shame him publically. If he still does not respond it is fitting to excommunicate him until he repents (§12.6).

§12.2b Rumors and Gossip

Spreading false rumors is forbidden, as it is written: “you shall not go about as a rumor-bearer among your people” (Leviticus 19:16). Gossiping about matters that actually did happen is also forbidden. The Psalmist hints at this additional prohibition: “May *Hashem* cut out all flattering lips all tongues that speak proudly” (Psalms 12:4). It is also forbidden even to listen to gossip as it is written “happy is the man...who has not sat in the dwelling place of the scornful” (Psalms 1:1).

§12.2c Redemption of Captives

We are obligated to help redeem Jewish hostages. We must be willing to pay up to one and one-sixth the value of a captive. We should not pay more than this, however, so that thugs do not prefer to capture Jews over non-Jews. Rav Bashyatzi records that the limit of one and one-sixth the worth of a captive is based on the market price for captives at the time of his writing.

§12.2d Tzedaka

One is obligated to help the poor by giving *tzedaka*. This is clear from the verse: “you shall not shut thy hand for your needy brother” (Deuteronomy 15:7). One should first help the poor closest to them because Scripture states “open your hand to **your** brother, **your** poor, and **your** needy that are in **your** land” (Deuteronomy 7:11).

§12.3 Conduct towards One’s Parents

The Torah commands us to both honor (Exodus 20:12) and fear (Leviticus 19:3) one’s parents. Because it does not offer specifics, it is clear that Scripture intends for us to do this in every way possible both with

words and through deeds. Thus one should provide for one's parents financially. One should also honor them after death by giving them an appropriate burial and by mourning for them. One must also carry out their will just as King Solomon carried out the dying wishes of his father King David (1 Kings 2).

One must similarly honor one's grandparents, great grandparents, and so forth. This is because the honor that is due to one's parents is a consequence of their having been raised by their parents. One must also honor one's older siblings albeit to a lesser extent.

§12.4 Conduct towards One's Children

One is obligated to provide financially for one's children and to teach them to provide for themselves. One must also teach them morals and Torah as it is written "and you will teach them to your children" (Deuteronomy 11:19). Rav Yefet notes that one may appoint an intermediary to teach his children Torah but that one who does so directly is worthy of more respect. In general, one must treat their children well so that they do not become a rebellious child, liable for execution (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

§12.5 Conduct towards One's Elders and Teachers

Regarding the verse "you shall rise before the hoary head and honor the face of the elder" (Leviticus 19:32), the sages differed. Some said that "hoary head" ("seiva") and "elder" ("zaken") both refer to one advanced in years. Others said that an "elder" is one more advanced in years than a "hoary head". These sages argued that this is consistent with the fact that one is simply required to rise before the "hoary head", but must "honor" the elder. Still others said that an "elder" refers to one who is knowledgeable as with the 70 elders who aided Moshe in instructing the people or as in the verse "I understand more than elders" (Psalms 119:100). By contrast, a "hoary head" refers to one advanced in years. The Adderet agrees with this position and from here derives the requirement to honor one's teachers.

According to *Adderet Eliyahu*, honoring the wise takes precedence over honoring the aged, because the aged are honored since they generally possess advanced knowledge. Honoring one who keeps the mitzvot also takes precedence over honoring the aged.

Adderet Eliyahu lists many specifics as to how one must respect the aged and the sages. Among them is physically rising to greet them in accordance with the literal reading of "you shall rise before the hoary head". Because the biblical command continues by stating "and you will fear Hashem your god", one must show respect to the aged even if their senses have become dull and they would be unaware as to whether they were receiving respect.

The sages differed on whether a sage can willingly forego his due respect. Some say that he may do so. Others, however, argued that it is forbidden. This is because a sage is not honored for his own sake but in order to instill a respect of wisdom in others. Furthermore, if one could choose to forego one's respect the Torah would not have commanded the death of a rebellious son. Surely any parents would want to spare their rebellious son but the Torah nevertheless requires their death. Finally, Moshe did not forego his respect when Aharon spoke respectfully to Moshe saying "please my lord" (Numbers

12:11) or “let not my lords anger be kindled” (Exodus 32:22). This is despite the fact that Moshe was the most modest man on earth (Numbers 12:3) and that Aharon was Moshe’s elder.

A sage must not only accept respect, but also behave in a way that commands respect. This is to instill in others a respect for wisdom and for Torah.

Notes on §12.5:

In addition to the summary provided here, the reader may find a direct translation of the *Adderet’s* discussion on respecting one’s teachers in Prof. Leon Nemoy’s *Karaite Anthology*.

Disagreeing with One’s Teacher

The *Adderet* states that one should not “contradict one’s teacher’s words”. This does not of course mean that one must accept all his teacher’s opinions unconditionally. The *Adderet* records without critique countless examples of sages disagreeing. Most tellingly, it records that Rav Yeshua developed a different approach to the laws of incest than his teacher Rav Yosef and Rav Yosef himself developed a different approach than all the sages preceding him. Of all these positions the *Adderet* adopts the latest one, that of Rav Yeshua. Thus it would seem that consistent with the theme of this section, the *Adderet* forbids only disrespectfully contradicting one’s teacher as opposed to respectfully disagreeing with them. Forbidden behavior might include attempting to publicly win an argument with one’s teacher for personal glory or stating bluntly that one’s teacher is wrong. Even if one is right regarding a particular point he should not belittle a sage or callously undermine his knowledge or authority. This is so as to promote a general respect for wisdom. Rather, one should disagree modestly and respectfully with that sage.

§12.6 Excommunication

In the Exile, a *beit din* may excommunicate individuals who do not respect the sages or are found guilty and will not accept the *beit din’s* punishment. According to Rav Binyamin Nahawandi, we are to act towards one who is excommunicated as if he were dead. Thus, one may not stand near him, nor listen to him, nor accept gifts from him. Indeed, one must avoid him in every respect. This generally applies until the individual returns to the *beit din* to accept his punishment; at which point the *beit din* lifts the ban of excommunication.

" Adderet Eliyahu Inyan Tefilah Ch. 11: “velo yistor et devarav”