

Parshat Kedoshim
Judging Others Favorably
Melton at Shearith Israel, April 30, 2012
JSI at Akiba Academy, April 31, 2012

- A) Introduction – Rabbis Without Borders
- 1) Overview
 - 2) Positive Psychology
 - a) Optimistic Thinking
 - 3) Connection to this week's Torah portion – judging other's favorably
- B) Overview
- 1) Two portions this week
 - 2) Behind the cycle as it is in Israel
- C) Leviticus chapter 19, verses 9 – 18
- 1) Clearly this is a unit of ethical commandments
 - 2) But there does not seem to be here any mention of judging others favorably
- D) Verse 15 **לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ עֵינַי בְּמִשְׁפַּחַת לֹא תִשָּׂא פָנַי דָּל וְלֹא תִהְדָּר פָּנַי גְּדוֹל בְּצַדִּיק תִּשְׁפֹּט עִמִּיתְךָ**
- 1) The verse is clearly set in the context of the courtroom and is talking to the judge
 - a) It does not fit well into the context of the verses which surround it
 - b) The last phrase – three words – appears to be superfluous
 - c) **עִמִּיתְךָ** – kinsman, usually means someone like you, a colleague, whereas that seems not to be the case
 - 2) The rabbis therefore understood that the final three words are teaching something new and different, something that does fit into the context, and something that has to do with the relationship between people of equal social status
 - a) Rashi on this verse, explains that there are two ways to read these final three words of the verse: as they appear, or meaning that one should always judge others favorably.
 - (I) How does the Talmud in Tractate Shavout, which Rashi is quoting, come to the conclusion that these words teach us to judge favorably?
 - The Torah is written without vowels such that the four letters **בצדק** may be read as *btzedaka*, or *btzadeek* or *btzeduck*
 - 3) Benefits of judging favorably
 - a) Rashi – It creates peace between people
 - b) Rabanu haMeiri – It allows us to learn from other people's teachings and admonishments
 - c) Sefer haMitzvot haKatan – It is an impetus to self judgment and self improvement
 - d) Story of Paradise – it engenders personal happiness
 - e) Mei haShiloach – it can completely change the world; the only difference between today and the messianic era is that then we will be able to see the good in all that happens
 - 4) Six techniques for judging favorably
 - a) Rashi – the other person just did not do the bad deed, or the deed was not bad
 - (I) Episode of Patty Duke
 - (II) Yosef the Holy Miser
 - b) Rashi – the person did the deed but under duress
 - (I) Rear end collision at a red light
 - (II) Lateness because of a traffic accident
 - c) Rashi and Rabbi Yehudah haHasid – the person's intentions were good
 - (I) Birthday party my wife made for me
 - d) Rebbanu haMeiri – the person momentarily succumbed to temptation, and under similar circumstances (especially of political power) you yourself might have succumbed
 - (I) Bill Clinton
 - e) Rabbi Yonah – the person is sorry and has repented
 - f) Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib – the person has other redeeming character traits or deeds