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Vital Importance

∞ 1.1 ∞

Although loving your fellow (Jew) and not hating your brother are two of the most important *mitzvos* in the Torah, their halachic applications have not been clearly defined, and their ethical parameters remain equally obscure.

∞ 1.2 ∞

The Torah commands, “*Love your fellow (Jew) like yourself.*”¹ Rabbi Akiva stresses the centrality of this mitzvah, calling it the great principle of the Torah.² The Vilna Gaon writes that the entire Torah is dependent on this mitzvah.³ Even so, exactly what is meant by “love,” and who is included in “your fellow,” are subjects of much halachic debate.

Second Beis HaMikdash

∞ 1.3 ∞

The Torah also commands: “*Do not hate your brother in your*

1. *Vayikra* 19:18.

2. *Yerushalmi Nedarim* 9: 4.

3. *Siddur HaGra* (*Teki'as Shofar*).

heart.”⁴ The Gemara⁵ says that the second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *Sinas Chinom*—unwarranted hatred that the people harbored toward one another.⁶ The Arizal’s disciple, Rav Chaim Vital z”l, writes⁷ that if you hate your fellow Jew it is as though you hate Hashem Who created him.⁸ Clearly, this is a very important mitzvah, yet we are still left with the following questions: What is the meaning of “hate,” what is the meaning of “in your heart,” and who is “your brother.”

∞ 1.4 ∞

The Gemara mentioned above states that the fact that the Beis HaMikdash is not yet rebuilt is proof that we are still being punished for that sin. This means that we have still not corrected the problem. The Chafetz Chaim writes:⁹ “We must strengthen ourselves with all our might to get away from this sin, and to remove the hatred that is hidden within our hearts. In our many sins, this sin has increased in all sides and in every corner, in the large cities and in the small towns.” He adds, “If we do not look into correcting this matter, we will, Heaven forbid, decay in exile, and we will also be summoned for the honor of Heaven that was disgraced by us throughout this bitter exile.”

The Chafetz Chaim wrote this about one hundred years ago. Rav Yonason Eibishitz wrote very similar words about two hundred years earlier.¹⁰ A lot has transpired since then,

4. *Vayikra* 19:17.

5. *Yoma* 9b.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Sha’ar HaKedushah, Sha’ar* 2.

8. In *Sefer Chareidim* it states that if you hate a Jew, you serve as a chariot for all the categories of impurity.

9. *Kuntras Abavas Yisrael*, ch. 2.

10. *Ya’aros Devash*.

but the problem remains. Recent years have seen an awakening in the studying of the laws of *lashon ha-ra*. This is an important development, but while there is less relatively harmless *avak lashon ha-ra*¹¹ spoken, we long to see a more dramatic decrease in the slanderous, sinister and damaging *lashon ha-ra*.

Since the urge to speak the destructive *lashon ha-ra* lies in character traits such as arrogance, hatred, and jealousy, the only effective way to stop talking that kind of *lashon ha-ra* is to address the source of the problem. When the Gemara (*Yoma* 9b) says that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of *lashon ha-ra*, it is not referring to the innocuous type, (like casually remarking that the food was too salty, or had a burnt taste), but to the injurious remarks that stem from these and other negative character traits.

Rabbi Akiva's Disciples

∞ 1.5 ∞

Annually, we faithfully commemorate the death of Rabbi Akiva's twenty-four thousand disciples who perished during the weeks of *sefirah*—between Pesach and Shavuot, and we religiously observe the various laws of mourning that apply to those days. Many lectures are delivered concerning the reason for that great tragedy, all speakers focusing and expounding on the reason for the disaster as mentioned in the *Talmud*:¹² They did not treat one another with due respect, or as the *Midrash*¹³

11. Literally, the dust of *lashon ha-ra*. This refers to saying things that are not necessarily negative or harmful, but that have the potential to be used or interpreted in a negative or harmful way.

12. *Yevamos* 62b.

13. *Bereishis Rabbah* 1:3. See *Tashbetz*, vol. I, ch. 178—the Gemara did not explain what form of disregard they had for one another.

more clearly defines: They were stingy with the Torah of one another (i.e. they were unhappy from their friends' achievements in Torah).

Unfortunately, however, the sin that brought about the Beis HaMikdash's destruction remains uncorrected, and the Beis HaMikdash still lies in ruins. We must internalize the messages of our mourning so that we will not need to listen to lectures on the topic again. The closer we are to redemption, the more difficult it will be and the more urgent it will be to correct this flaw. We have tenaciously clung to the Torah and retained our identity throughout this long and bitter exile, with mighty spirit and great sacrifice, so let us utilize our strengths to overcome the hatred, dissent, and division in our ranks.

The Problem

☞ 1.6 ☞

We must, therefore, thoroughly learn what are our obligations—until we understand these two *mitzvos*, their halachos and dynamics, we will not fulfill them properly.

Besides the halachic disputes surrounding even the simple translation of these *mitzvos*, they are subject to much gross misinformation. Furthermore, common misperceptions cause confusion as they clash with our instinctive responses to the daily events that dominate our lives. This often leads to behavior and decisions based on emotions rather than the Halachah.

Common Dilemmas

☞ 1.7 ☞

We are plagued with daily dilemmas and doubts. If your neighbor's excessive noise always keeps you up at night, how do you have to feel toward him? If he allows his children to litter

your lawn? Often takes your parking space? Steals a piece of your common garden and builds without a permit? Looks down on you because he is rich and you are not? Pushes his way to the head of the line at the supermarket or post office? Are you obliged to love him as you love yourself?

Is it acceptable not to invite a needy family over for a Shabbos meal because their children always run wild in your house and make a big mess? Is your refusal sinful?

If someone's corruption or falsehood angers and upsets you, is that permissible?¹⁴ If you do react, your reaction will likely be stronger if you are the victim, and the extra anger is a personal one. Is that halachically acceptable?

Does Hashem want and expect you to be insensitive to insult and abuse? Are you commanded to love people who are selfish or snobbish? Are you supposed to love the troublemakers who create dissent and division in the community?

There must be some kind of guidelines and parameters for these *mitzvos*, and you cannot be expected to love contemptible and nasty individuals. Who is included and who is not?

We tend to deal inconsistently with these and similar issues, and act on the basis of will, conscience, vanity, emotions, folklore, and halachah, all together. That is why everybody has a different idea as to what you should and should not do. In truth, however, all these issues are halachic questions, and must

14. Quick answer: A *tzaddik* abhors a wrongdoing even if all the participants are total strangers to him. See *Seforno, Bereisbis* 29, when Yaakov Avinu was upset when he thought that the shepherds were not honestly completing their day's work.

Being indifferent or "tolerant" to the vice and dishonesty of others when you are not the victim, is only a small step away from being actively corrupt. If witnessing someone embarrass, assault, or cheat another person does not invoke your dislike, it is a sign of spiritual illness.

be treated as such. These are not issues to be influenced by one's personal emotions.

Undefined Halachos and Contradictions

∞ 1.8 ∞

While very basic questions confront us daily, the Halachos are difficult to determine. They are sparse, ambiguous, often seem contradictory, and there are no markers to define and identify what is Halachah, what is righteous character, what is extremely righteous behavior, and what is foolish behavior. Neither your responsibilities nor your rights are clearly defined, and the average person has no idea what they are.

In addition to the Halachic and ethical dimensions, proper handling of interpersonal relationships requires a generous measure of common sense. That is a tall order that can further complicate matters.

Harmony with Oneself

∞ 1.9 ∞

The key to finding a harmonious balance regarding your feelings and behavior toward others, requires a harmonious balance regarding your feelings about yourself. Here, too, we find mixed messages that seem contradictory at a superficial level, and can only be resolved through a deeper level of understanding.

For example, on one hand, we are taught to be humble and not to respond to insults and embarrassment. On the other hand, we are taught that if one is insensitive to his own insult and abuse, he is usually insensitive to the insult and abuse of others. Similarly, someone indifferent to injustice committed against his own interests will probably be indifferent to injustice committed against the interests of others. Not many people

care about others more than they care about themselves.

Furthermore, aside from acting with humbleness, we are taught to be sensitive to our own dignity and feelings of self-worth. By eating in the street, you are invalidating your status as a kosher witness, because we fear you may also lack the self-respect necessary to reject a bribe, and thus deliver false testimony. The Torah does not consider your eating in the street as humbleness, but as a perversion of character, and demands that you preserve a proper measure of honor and dignity.¹⁵ Where do you draw the line?

How do we reconcile the importance of maintaining our self-dignity, with the dictates and demands to remain placidly indifferent to any blow to our self-dignity? And while we are taught the virtue of not responding to insult and embarrassment, we are also taught by many Poskim that it is impossible not to react. Therefore, according to the vast majority of Poskim, you are permitted to bear a grudge and take revenge on someone who insults and embarrasses you. How is one to resolve such apparent contradictions?

15. At the end of the *Shemoneh Esrei* we say, וְנַפְשִׁי כַעֲפֹר לְכֹל תְּהִיָּה—“And my soul should be like dirt to all.” This does not mean that everyone should tread upon us like upon the dirt of the ground. It means that we should yield to others when we are supposed to, like the dust of the ground. It also means that we should be saved from the sins of revenge, bearing a grudge, and hatred. (Some commentaries explain that just as no one is mindful of the ground on which they walk, so too, should man be unmindful of his good deeds, lest their recognition lead him to haughtiness.) *Iyun Tefillah, Siddur Otzar HaTefillos*. This is also the meaning of the Gemara (*Eruvin* 54a): Like a furrow that everyone steps on. *Rashi* explains that one should not be arrogant. We ask Hashem not to subject us to the test of honor and recognition.

Accusing the Victim

∞ 1.10 ∞

When describing the legal and judicial system of Sodom, the Midrash says that in Sodom, if a man threw a rock at someone, inflicting him with a bloody wound, the victim was obliged to pay him for bloodletting. People see the judicial process of Sodom as ridiculous and laughable. Actually, the Midrash is saying that in Sodom, the rights of the aggressor were protected at the expense of his victims. It seems that nowadays, many “progressive” and “enlightened” societies are mimicking Sodom’s judicial system. In countries civilized enough to recognize human rights, the rights of the evil aggressor often surpass those of his innocent victim. There are organizations dedicated to the rights of the most satanic creatures—at the expense of decent people.

This global perversion of thought and corruption of values affects all of us to one degree or another. Instead of emphatically accusing the selfish and inconsiderate aggressor, we often focus more on the response of his victim.

Although the Torah forbids bearing a grudge, it does not want unscrupulous and aggressive people to add insult to injury and accuse their victims of bearing a grudge, or to slander them for protecting themselves. The Torah does not want someone to deceive, cheat and steal from others, only to find refuge in a corrupt or impotent *beis din*, knowing that if his victim turns to the other courts of law, he will be ostracized by the community. These are some of the major problems that create untold hatred and dissent. The Halachic parameters of all these scenarios require urgent clarification.

Confusing Stories

☞ 1.11 ☞

Inspiring stories about *tzaddikim* often add to the confusion. For example, there are stories about *tzaddikim* who forgave thieves who ran off with their possessions, in order to save them from the embarrassment of getting caught. There are also miraculous stories of how they caught or punished thieves and other criminals by employing their great mystical powers. There is no dearth of stories, but do they reflect true Torah values? Should you act the same way? Which story's message should you integrate into your behavior? Often, these stories do not concur with the stories of *Chazal*.

Sensational stories are a lot more entertaining than studying Halachah, and can sometimes have a serious influence on the reader. Some of the inconsistencies in our behavior can clearly be traced to these utterly confusing stories.

☞ 1.12 ☞

The following story is related in the Gemara, which illustrates an absolute Halachic approach:¹⁶

Two men had joint ownership of a well, and took turns using the water on alternate days. One day, one of them caught the other drawing water from the well out of turn. He reminded his friend that it was not his day to draw water, but the latter chose to ignore him. In response, the man hit the thief with the handle of a spade. Upon hearing of this, Rav Nachman declared, "He should have hit him with the handle of the spade one hundred times." Rashi explains: "Because he was stealing his water."

16. *Bava Kama* 27b.

Rav Nachman did not say that he was wrong for hitting him, and he did not accuse him of not acting like a *ben Torah*. He did not suggest that he should have been *mevatter*, conceded. He simply stated the Halachah, which is also the dictate of common sense, that you may protect yourself and your belongings from thieves.

☞ 1.13 ☞

Another story is related in the Gemara:¹⁷

Four hundred barrels of Rav Huna's wine turned sour. His colleagues told him that they believed this happened to him because he withheld his sharecropper's share of the branches that were pruned from the vines. Rav Huna replied, "Don't you realize that the sharecropper steals much more than his share is worth?" To this they responded: "One who steals from a thief also tastes the flavor of theft."

Rav Huna was not prepared to let his sharecropper be rewarded for robbing him, and the only criticism was that for somebody so great in Torah and so pious as Rav Huna, this unilateral action was deemed inappropriate.

Lessons from Stories

☞ 1.14 ☞

The more recent stories of the piety of *tzaddikim* should be used as a source of inspiration for self-improvement. A touching story has an immensely powerful effect on a person's soul, and such stories should be used as tools of inspiration. They should not be perverted in order to intimidate the victims and

17. *Berachos* 5b.

accuse them of not acting "like the Chafetz Chaim," or "like a *ben Torah*," in response to an injustice. Studying the Halachos creates an awareness of one's obligations to interpersonal relationships, and will hopefully lead to their proper fulfillment.

Although there is no shortage of authentic inspirational stories about both *gedolei Yisrael* and "simple" Jews, there are also many fabricated stories about *gedolim* that are designed to entertain the reader. These stories describe the inner thoughts and emotions of the *gadol* very dramatically, and offer an exact description of everything from the characters, to the scenery, to a highly detailed weather report. Even if the base of the story is true, the reader will never know what is real and what is not. Such stories are useless in determining the Halachah, as they are basically the products of the author's imagination. Halachah must be extracted from the Gemara, *Rishonim*, and *Acharonim*. The Gemara itself says that you may not learn Halachah even from stories in the Gemara,¹⁸ unless they were recorded with the integrity of Halachic standards, and properly understood.¹⁹ In that case, they are a most reliable source of Halachah.²⁰ We

18. See *Bava Basra* 130b; *Yerushalmi Pe'ah* 2:6; *Yerushalmi Chagigah* 1:8.

19. The Maharal (*Be'er HaGolah*) explains that you cannot learn a Halachah from a *midrash* or from a *mishnah*, because Halachah can only be determined through the didactic process of questions and answers and thorough analysis, to ascertain that there is no deviation from the absolute truth.

20. See *Shabbos* 21a; *Bava Basra* 130b, *Rashbam*. There are instances where Halachos have been derived from *midrashim* when they do not contradict a Halachah in the Gemara. We ourselves are unequipped to do that. If the *midrash* is in the Gemara we often learn Halachos from it.

Some examples are: *Rosh*—*Nedarim* 9:2 learns from a *midrash* about Yosef and Pharaoh that you can annul a vow even when the one to whom you vowed is not present. From a story in *Pesachim* 56a, we learn that you say *ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד* in *Shema*. We learn that a woman can twist the threads of *tzitzis* from a story in *Bava Basra* 74a.

do not learn Halachos out of *midrashim*,²¹ and certainly not from commercial storytellers.

Alleged stories like the one reported about a certain *rebbe* who lamented that he is not a *tzaddik* because he loves his son more than he loves other Jews, misconstrue the entire issue.²² Such stories are the antithesis of Halachah. The Satmar Rav ז"ל deprecated untrue "tzaddikim stories" that were fabricated in order to teach morals and values, or in order to create halos around certain figures. He was adamant that morals and values were unattainable through falsehood.²³

Tosafos, Avodah Zarah 18b learns that one may take his own life in order to prevent his (non-Jewish) captors from making him sin, from a story in *Gittin* 57b.

21. See *Yerushalmi, Pe'ah* 2:6; *Tosafos Yom Tov, Berachos* 5:4. Many Poskim say this even when they do not contradict anything in the Gemara. These include the *Noda BiYehudah, Yoreh Deah*, ch. 161—*Rav Yashaya Pik*. See *Chavos Yair*, ch. 224 who rules that tithing your money is a custom, but not an actual obligation because it is not mentioned anywhere in Gemara. Also see *Teshuvos Chasam Sofer, Orach Chaim*, ch. 32 with regard to causing part of a shul to be destroyed.

Rabbeinu Tam in *Sefer HaYashar* ch. 45 mentions that many Halachos are not found in the Gemara, and they are still Halachos. [For example: The orphan's *Kaddish* (found in *Midrash*), blowing shofar in Elul (found in *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*), fasting on Erev Rosh HaShanah (found in *Midrash Parashas Emor*), the chair for Eliyahu at a *bris*, checking the lung of an animal to ascertain that it is not a *treifah*, taking a haircut on *Lag BaOmer* etc.] However, even if it does not contradict a Gemara, you cannot learn out a Halachah from a story if it contradicts the rules of logic. (*Shevus Yaakov*, vol. II, ch. 178.)

22. It is a Halachah that you love your son more than you love others, and *Yaakov Avinu* even loved one son more than his other sons (and one wife more than the other). To say that someone is not a *tzaddik* because he loves his son more than he loves other Jews is not in agreement with Halachah.

23. One might comment on this from the Gemara in *Bava Basra* 16b where one opinion states that *Iyov* was a fictitious character, and the whole story is only a parable. That would seem to support the creation of stories in order to teach a moral lesson. The Vilna Gaon has a different interpretation

Furthermore, honesty in the teachings we impart to our children is one of the vital elements in the preservation of our most fundamental religious convictions. It is written in the Torah:²⁴ "Only take heed for yourself and greatly take heed for your soul, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen and lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life, and make them known to your children and your grandchildren. The day you stood before Hashem, your God, at Chorev... I shall let them hear My words, so that they will learn... and they will teach their children."

Ramban explains:

The benefit of this mitzvah is very great. If the words of the Torah had come to us only through the words of Moshe... if someone would come... a doubt may enter the hearts of people, but since the Torah has reached our ears from the Mouth of Might (Hashem), and our eyes have beheld without any intermediary, we will refute any dissenter or doubter and prove him false... For when we convey this to our children, too, they will know that the matter was true without doubt, as if every generation saw it, since we would not testify falsely to our children, or bequeath them words of vanity that are of no avail, and they will not doubt the testimony that we attest for them, but they will believe with certainty all that we have seen with our eyes and all that we told them.

in that Gemara, which would refute this proof. However, it is said in the name of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l, that one may make up stories to teach a moral lesson. It is possible that he was referring to anonymous stories, without names of real people, such as the story about Iyov, according to those who maintain that it was only a parable. Even so, it is in partial contrast with the opinion of the Satmar Rav z"l. It is difficult to verify the opinions of these Gedolim, because they come to us from stories.

24. *Devarim* 4:9–10. (See *Ramban*.)

Since this trust in our testimony to our progeny is so vital to our beliefs, it is imperative that we do not violate this trust, and we do not concoct a world of fairy tales in order to teach them “how to be good Jews.” Everything we transmit to our children and throughout the generations must be the absolute truth.

In *Chazal*, and in many undramatized stories about *gedolei Torah*, we find many examples of the true meaning of loving your fellow (Jew) like yourself, in line with the Halachah. It is from such stories that you should derive your inspiration. There is no shortage of true stories about our *gedolim*, who were imbued with a true love for their fellow Jews and with a true fear of, and love for, Hashem.

Standards of *Chazal*

∞1.15 ∞

Our Sages demanded of themselves extremely strict standards of behavior in regard to their dealings with others. *Chazal* relate:²⁵

When Rabbi Yishmael the Kohen Gadol and Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, the Nasi, were being taken out for execution by the Romans, Rabbi Shimon said to Rabbi Yishmael, “My heart goes out because I do not know why I am being killed.”

Rabbi Yishmael answered, “Maybe somebody once came to you for judgment or to ask a question (in Halachah) and you made him wait until you had finished your cup of drink, or put on your shoes, or wrapped yourself in your tallis (or when you were in the middle of eating or when you were sleeping²⁶), and the

25. *Mecilta, Mishpatim, Parashah 18; Maseches Semachos, ch. 8.*

26. Version in *Maseches Semachos, ch. 8.* For this reason, the *Maharsham* instructed his household to awaken him if someone came to ask him a

Torah forbids a judge to cause unnecessary affliction, be it a lot or a little."

Rabbi Shimon responded, "Rabbi! You have consoled me."

While many of us are incapable of seeing anything wrong with such behavior, the possible occurrence of one such incident was enough to satisfy Rabbi Shimon, as a valid reason for his brutal execution by the Romans.

Highest Level of Achievement

☞ 1,16 ☞

The Chazon Ish was asked to describe the highest spiritual level a person can attain in this world. He replied, "Going through life without ever hurting another Jew." Some of our Sages never slighted the honor of another Jew, as illustrated in the following story.²⁷

question in Halachah. See *Teshuvos Maharsham*, vol. 2, ch. 210. However, this was only a measure of extreme piety, but not a Halachic obligation. Halachically speaking, your interests have priority to the interests of someone else, like Rabbi Akiva said: חייך קודמים—"Your life has priority." Also, continues *Maharsham*, the needs of a *talmid chacham* have priority to the needs of one who is not a *talmid chacham*. He concludes that this conduct was only in line with the great piety of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, or else, perhaps he held like *Ben Peturah* who disagrees with Rabbi Akiva in *Bava Metzia* 62a, and holds that you must treat your fellow exactly as yourself and you have no priority over him. The Halachah is like Rabbi Akiva.

A similar story is recorded about Rav Yisrael Salanter ז"ל, who while living in Ashkenaz (Germany), was extremely busy furnishing people with letters of recommendation for various worthy causes. Once, someone came to his home requesting a letter of recommendation. However, Rav Yisrael was sleeping, so Rav Herman, his close friend, sent the man away. When Rav Yisrael woke up and heard about this, he was very upset with Rav Herman for not having awoken him. He refused to see Rav Herman, until he had found the visitor and brought him back.

27. *Yerushalmi, D'mai* 1:3.

Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair was the father-in-law of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Once, on his way to study, Rabbi Pinchas encountered a teeming river which could not be crossed. Rabbi Pinchas called out to the river, "Shall you prevent me from going to study?" Immediately the river parted, enabling him to reach the other side.

When his students asked if they could cross the river too, he replied: "Only if you are certain that you never slighted another Jew."

Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair's students were illustrious Torah scholars and men of exceptional piety. Yet all their Torah knowledge and worthy deeds could not safeguard them from the river's teeming waters, if they had hurt another Jew even once in their lives. Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair himself was certain that he had never done so.

Menoras HaMaor writes that one who manages to be careful his entire life and not to hurt another Jew, will be saved by Hashem from all troubles, and will have proper children, like Tamar—who merited having kings and prophets among her descendants.²⁸

Standards of Later Times

❧ 1.17 ❧

The severe punishments for hurting the feelings of others or for embarrassing them are not reserved for people whose motives are wicked, nor are they restricted to the ancient times of *Chazal*. There is an astounding story that took place in the year 1829, which illustrates how careful you must be not to cause someone anguish and embarrassment.

28. *Menoras HaMaor*, ch. 58.

The great gaon Rav Mordechai Banet zt"l, was the Rabbi of Nikolsberg. He passed away on 13 Av 5589 (1829) while on a visit to the therapeutic springs of Carlsbad, and was buried in the nearby town of Lichtenstadt. When Nikolsberg's Jews learned of the tragic passing of their revered rav, they demanded that he be reburied in their city. However, the Jews of Lichtenstadt refused to release the body of the great sage they had merited to bury.

In the end, the leaders of both cities agreed to present the case to the Chasam Sofer, who ruled in Nikolsberg's favor. The night before the Chasam Sofer dispatched his response, Rav Mordechai appeared to him in a dream. In that dream, Rav Mordechai revealed that Heaven had doomed him to be buried in Lichtenstadt for half a year because he had once supported the decision of a bridegroom to cancel his engagement. "Although my counsel was justified," Rav Mordechai told the Chasam Sofer, "it caused the bride and her family much anguish and embarrassment. Since affronting a fellow Jew is so serious a sin, Heaven was very exacting with me in this instance."

To validate the dream, Rav Mordechai told the Chasam Sofer that he had been buried next to the rejected bride. When the Chasam Sofer awoke, he sent a messenger to the cemetery to ascertain that point and discovered that it was indeed true.

True Greatness

The great gaon, Rav Akiva Eiger zt"l, spent a Shabbos in Nikolsberg, and was honored with delivering a drashah, Torah lecture, in shul. In the middle of his drashah, Rav Mordechai Banet challenged him with a difficult question. Rav Akiva Eiger admitted that Rav Mordechai was right, and he concluded his drashah.

Rav Mordechai felt terrible that he had embarrassed Rav Akiva Eiger, and went to visit him to ask his forgiveness. To his utter amazement, Rav Akiva Eiger proved to him that it was

Rabbi Akiva Eiger who was really right, and he corrected Rav Mordechai's mistake. Perplexed, Rav Mordechai asked him, "Why did you pretend that I was right?" To this Rav Akiva responded, "You are the rav of this city and I am just a passing guest. It is preferable for me that you should win and I should lose, in order that your honor be increased in the city."

In response, Rav Mordechai called the community together and announced, "Rav Akiva Eiger was really right, and he only pretended to be wrong in order to increase my honor in the community."

This is what the Rambam means when he writes that loving your fellow like yourself includes that your concern for the honor of your friend should be the same as your concern for your own honor.