

Who is my Neighbor or Fellow?

By Yochanan Zaqantov

As we look at the relationships we need to have in galut, should we treat our neighbors with disdain. Should we mistreat them? What does the Torah state in regards to those who live amongst us? Should we treat our non-jewish neighbors differently in our dealings with our brothers? If so how should we treat them.

Today we will examine who is our neighbor or fellow and see what is the most appropriate way to treat them. First let's look at the Hebrew word translated as kin.

Kin 5971 Am (Ayin-Mem), Which is found on page 944 in the NEHC and pages 776 and 796 in the BDB. It is People.

Bereshit/Genesis 34:15

15 Only on this condition will we agree with you; that you will **become like us** (**kha'omnu** כְּמוֹנוּ) in that every male among you is circumcised.

Here we see that become like us is to join them. Thus, a kin to them would be to intermarry with you and your kin.. The word though is “am” or people.

Bereshit/Genesis 49:29, 33

29 Then he instructed them, saying to them, “I am about to be **gathered to my kin** (**el ami** אֶל-עַמִּי). Bury me with my fathers in the cave which is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

Here we see that my people or ami is how Yaaqov refers to his ancestors.

33 When Jacob finished his instructions to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and, breathing his last, he was gathered **to his people** (**el amayv** אֶל-עַמָּיו).

Again we see that he was added to his people.

Shemot/Exodus 22:25(24)

24 If you lend money to **My people** (**et ami** אֶת-עַמִּי), to the poor among you, do not act toward them as a creditor; exact no interest from them. 25 If you take your neighbor's garment in pledge, you must return it to him before the sun sets;

Even Yehovah though not kin relation to the Israelite denoted a kind of ownership in his use of ami.

Shemot/Exodus 23:11

10 Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; 11 but in the seventh you shall let it rest and lie fallow. Let the needy among **your people** (amekha עַמְּךָ) eat of it, and what they leave let the wild beasts eat. You shall do the same with your vineyards and your olive groves.

Yet, Yehovah also refers to the people as being one of a group related to Moshe and Aharon, which is true from a kin perspective as well as a grouping perspective.

Vayiqra/Leviticus 19:16, 18

16 Do not deal basely **with your countrymen** (ba'ameykha בְּעַמֵּיךָ). Do not profit by the blood of **your fellow/neighbor** (re'ekha רֵעֶךָ 7453): I am Yehovah. 17 You shall not hate **your kinsfolk** (achiykha/brother 251 אָחִיךָ) in your heart. Reprove **your kinsman** (et amiytekha אֶת־עַמִּיתְךָ) but incur no guilt because of him.

18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against **your countrymen** (et beni amekha אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ). Love [to] **your fellow/neighbor** (l're'akha לְרֵעֶךָ 7453) as yourself: I am Yehovah.

Vayiqra 19 is an important chapter in that all the words we need to study today seem to occur here. This chapter shows a family or relations context. We will look at many of these later.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 7:6-7

6 For you are **a people** (am עַם) consecrated to Yehovah Eloheykha: of all **the peoples** (ha'amiym הָעַמִּים) on earth the LORD your God chose you **to be** His treasured **people** (l'am לְעַם). 7 It is not because you are the most numerous of **peoples** (ha'amiym הָעַמִּים) that Yehovah set His heart on you and chose you—indeed, you are the smallest of **peoples** (ha'amiym הָעַמִּים)

It shows that people refer to Israel but also the nations too.

Heir 5220 Nekhed (Nun-Kaf-Dalet), which is found on page 814 in the NEHC and page 645 in the BDB. One who is an heir.

Bereshit/Genesis 21:23

23 Therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me **or with my kith/sons** (ul'nini 5209 וְלִנְיָי) **and kin/heirs** (ul'nekh'diy וְלִנְכְדֵי), but will deal with me and with the land in which you have sojourned as loyally as I have dealt with you.”

Here we see that ulnini ulnekh'diy which is stated a little differently later but appears to be a idiom for all my decendants.

Iyov/Job 18:19

19 He has no seed or **breed among his people** (velonekhed ba'amo וְלֹא-נֶכֶד בְּעַמּוֹ), No survivor where he once lived.

A heritage is not left for him.

Yeshayahu/Isaiah 14:22

22 I will rise up against them—declares Yehovah of Hosts—and will wipe out from Babylon name and remnant, **kith and kin** (v'nin vanekhed וְנִין וְנֶכֶד)—declares Yehovah—

Again the v'nin vanekhed is saying all my decendants.

We see that indeed a similar usages as was for am with people in that they refer to a group of people related.

Brother 251 ach (Aleph-Chet), which is found on page 37 in the NEHC and on page 26 in the BDB. I bet your thinking why cover this, it just brother but in the direct since yes it is literally brother but in a group sense it can reflect more.

Bereshit/Genesis 4:8-9

8 Cain said to **his brother** (achiyv אָחִיו) Abel ... and when they were in the field, Cain set upon **his brother** (achiyv אָחִיו) Abel and killed him. 9 Yehovah said to

Cain, “Where is **your brother** (achiykha אָחִיכְחָא) Abel?” And he said, “I do not know. Am I **my brother’s** (achi אָחִי) keeper?”

Here we see the literal use of Ach as brother.

Bereshit/Genesis 27:11, 23

11 Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, “But **my brother** (achi אָחִי) Esau is a hairy man and I am smooth-skinned.

23 He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like those of **his brother** (achiyv אָחִיִּי) Esau; and so he blessed him.

Again the use of these is literally for a brother.

Bereshit/Genesis 31:23, 46, 54

23 So he took **his kinsmen/brothers** (echayv אָחָיו) with him and pursued him a distance of seven days, catching up with him in the hill country of Gilead.

46 And Jacob said **to his kinsmen** (l’echayv אָחָיו), “Gather stones.” So they took stones and made a mound; and they partook of a meal there by the mound.

54 Jacob then offered up a sacrifice on the Height, and invited **his kinsmen** (l’echayv אָחָיו) to partake of the meal. After the meal, they spent the night on the Height.

Here we see brother extended to those of our family who are our relations.

Vayiqra/Leviticus 10:4,6

4 Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, "Come forward and carry **your kinsmen** (acheykhem אָחֵיכֶם) away from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp." 5 They came forward and carried them out of the camp by their tunics, as Moses had ordered. 6 And Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not bare your heads and do not rend your clothes, lest you die and anger strike the whole community. **But your kinsmen , all the house of Israel** (va’acheykhem kal beyt Yisrael וְאָחֵיכֶם כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל), shall bewail the burning that Yehovah has wrought.

We see here that these are cousins for the two who did and yet they are referred to as brothers also. See this tells us that brother can also be used to denote a family relationship.

Vayiqra/Leviticus 25:14

14 When you sell property **to your neighbor** (la'amiytekha לְעֵמִיתְךָ), or buy any from **your neighbor** (amiytekha עֵמִיתְךָ), you shall not wrong **one another** (ish et achivv אִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיו). 15 In buying from **your neighbor** (amiytekha עֵמִיתְךָ), you shall deduct only for the number of years since the jubilee; and in selling to you, he shall charge you only for the remaining crop years:

Here we see that in context amiyt is related to ish et Achivv or Man his brother. Thus, in this case this referring to relations.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 1:16, 28

16 I charged your magistrates at that time as follows, “Hear out **your fellow men** (achiychem אַחֵיכֶם), and decide justly between any man and **a fellow Israelite** (achivv אָחִיו) or a stranger.

Here again it is dealing with those related to the judge here. In this case any of the children of Yisrael which would also include those joined to them.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 15:2,3,7,8,11,12

15:1 Every seventh year you shall practice **remission of debts** (shemittah שְׁמִטָּה).  
2 This shall be the nature of **the remission** (hashemittah הַשְּׁמִטָּה): every creditor shall remit the due that he claims **from his fellow** (bare'ehu בָּרַעְיָהוּ 7453); he shall not dun **his fellow or kinsman** (et re'ehu v'et achivv וְאֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וְאֶת־אָחִיו), for the remission proclaimed is of Yehovah. 3 You may dun the foreigner; but you must remit whatever is due you from **your kinsmen** (et achivkha אֶת־אָחִיכָּה).

You are not to hold to the debt the brother but a nekhar you may hold to their debt on the shemittah year. The fellow here is a brother again in context.

7 If, however, there is a needy person among you, one of **your kinsmen** (acheykha אָחֵיכָּה) in any of your settlements in the land that Yehovah Eloheykha is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand **against your needy kinsman** (me'achiykha

לְאַחִיךָ). 8 Rather, you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs.

11 For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land, which is why I command you: open your hand **to the poor and needy kinsman in your land** (l'achiykha la'aneyekha ul'eveyokha ba'ar'tzekha לְאַחִיךָ לְעֵנְיֶךָ וּלְאֶבְיֹנְךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ).

There is your brother, your humbled and your needy relations in the land. Are these all one person or all different states you brother may be.

12 If a **fellow Hebrew, man or woman** (achiykha haivriy ov haivriyah לְאַחִיךָ הָעִבְרִי אוֹ הָעִבְרִיָּה), is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall set him free.

You brother Hebrew male or female is what is being said here.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 23:7 (8), 19(20), 20(21)

8 You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is **your kinsman** (achiykha לְאַחִיךָ). You shall not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land.

20 You shall not deduct interest from loans **to your countrymen** (l'achiykha לְאַחִיךָ), whether in money or food or anything else that can be deducted as interest; 21 but you may deduct interest from loans to foreigners. Do not deduct interest from loans **to your countrymen** (ul'achiykha וּלְאַחִיךָ), so that Yehovah Eloheykha may bless you in all your undertakings in the land that you are about to enter and possess.

Because he is you brother you cannot pay nor take interest from them.

Associate/Neighbor 5997 amiyt (Ayin-Mem-Yod-Tav), which is found on page 960 in the NEHC and in the BDB on page 765. Mostly used in Vayiqra. In relationship to some of the other words we have studied it appears to be like fellow but in the sense of a relation.

Vayiqra/Leviticus 18:20

20 Do not have carnal relations with **your neighbor's** (amiykha עִמִּיתְךָ) wife and defile yourself with her.

In the context of the verses around this we know this have to do with relations also as the start of the chapter it says.

Vayiqra 18:6

6 None of you shall come near anyone of his own flesh to uncover nakedness: I am Yehovah.

You own flesh would designate one of your kin.

Vayiqra/Leviticus 19:11, 15, 17

11 You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another (ba'amiyto **בְּעֵמִיתוֹ**).

13 You shall not defraud **your fellow** (re'akha 7453 **רֵעֶךָ**). You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning. 14 You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear Eloheykha: I am Yehovah. 15 You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge **your kinsman** (amiytekha **עֵמִיתְךָ**) fairly. 16 Do not deal basely **with your countrymen** (ba'ameykha **בְּעַמְיֵךְ**). Do not profit by the blood of **your fellow/neighbor** (re'ekha 7453 **רֵעֶךָ**): I am Yehovah. 17 You shall not hate **your kinsfolk** (achiykha/brother 251 **אָחִיךָ**) in your heart. Reprove **your kinsman** (et amiytekha **אֶת־עֵמִיתְךָ**) but incur no guilt because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against **your countrymen** (et beni amekha **אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמְךָ**). Love [to] **your fellow/neighbor** (l're'akha 7453 **לְרֵעֶךָ**) as yourself: I am Yehovah.

Here in verses 16, 17, and 18 it uses Am, Ach which we have seen denote a relationship with the person thus we also see Beni Amekha or sons of your people denoting even a relationship to the offspring of your relations. So the more general terms which don't necessarily denote a kin but with the context we see here it does related that to our kin.

Vayiqra/Leviticus 24:19

19 If anyone maims **his fellow** (ba'amiyto **בְּעֵמִיתוֹ**), as he has done so shall it be done to him: 20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The injury he inflicted on another shall be inflicted on him.

Here in context amiyt is a general term and in context with this surrounding verse we can see it covering those who live near us. Not necessarily our kin.

Vayiqra/Leviticus 25:14, 15, 17

14 When you sell property to **your neighbor** (la'amiytekha לְעֵמִיתְךָ), or buy any from **your neighbor** (amiytekha עֵמִיתְךָ), you shall not wrong **one another** (ish et achiyv אִישׁ אֶת-אָחִיו). 15 In buying from **your neighbor** (amiytekha עֵמִיתְךָ), you shall deduct only for the number of years since the jubilee; and in selling to you, he shall charge you only for the remaining crop years: 16 the more such years, the higher the price you pay; the fewer such years, the lower the price; for what he is selling you is a number of harvests. 17 Do not wrong one **another** (ish et amiyto אִישׁ אֶת-עֵמִיתוֹ), but fear Eloheykha; for I am Yehovah Eloheykhem.

We again see in this context that amity is related Ach as we know is brother in the sense of a relation and so the buying and selling of property here is dealing with our brother. Another indication is that the land holding here were the ezrach (citizen) or Beni Yisrael (children of Yisrael) because the land was to be returned at the end of the Jubilee.

Neighbor 7453 re'a (resh-ayin), which is found on page 1181 in the NEHC and on page 945 in the BDB.

Shemot/Exodus 11:2

2 Tell the people to borrow, each man from **his/our neighbor** (re'ahu רֵעֵהוּ) and each woman from hers, objects of silver and gold.”

Here we see that re'a/re'ahu is referring the Egyptians/Mitzrayim and so in this cause the neighbor is not a relation.

Shemot/Exodus 2:13

13 When he went out the next day, he found two Hebrews fighting; so he said to the offender, “Why do you strike **your fellow** (re'ekha רֵעֶךָ)?”

Here we see that the two Hebrews would be a relation to Moshe and so him referring to as re'a is showing us that re'a can refer as both a relation and non-relation as a neighbor.

Shemot/Exodus 18:16

16 When they have a dispute, it comes before me, and I decide between one person and **another/our neighbor (re'ehu רֵעֵהוּ)**, and I make known the laws and teachings of Elohim.”

Now we know that Moshe was judging the Beni Yisrael but also the mixed multitude that cam out with them. So this reference actually refers to both.

Shemot/Exodus 21:14, 18, 35

14 When a man schemes against **another (re'ehu רֵעֵהוּ)** and kills him treacherously, you shall take him from My very altar to be put to death.

18 When men quarrel and one strikes **the other (re'ehu רֵעֵהוּ)** with stone or fist, and he does not die but has to take to his bed

35 When a man's ox injures **his neighbor's (re'ehu רֵעֵהוּ)** ox and it dies, they shall sell the live ox and divide its price; they shall also divide the dead animal.

While this was to be addressed to Beni Yisrael we know that in the land that there was mixed groups with them. Thus, these could also be applied to the sojourner, laborer, and citizen.

Shemot/Exodus 22:7-11 (6-10), 14(13), 26(25)

6 When a man gives money or goods to **another (re'ehu רֵעֵהוּ)** for safekeeping, and they are stolen from the man's house—if the thief is caught, he shall pay double; 7 if the thief is not caught, the owner of the house shall depose before Elohim that he has not laid hands on the other's property. 8 In all charges of misappropriation—pertaining to an ox, an ass, a sheep, a garment, or any other loss, whereof one party alleges, “This is it”—the case of both parties shall come before Elohim: he whom Elohim declares guilty shall pay double to the other. 9 When a man gives to **another (re'ehu רֵעֵהוּ)** an ass, an ox, a sheep or any other animal to guard, and it dies or is injured or is carried off, with no witness about, 10 an oath before Yehovah shall decide between the two of them that the one has not laid hands on the property of the **other (re'ehu רֵעֵהוּ)**; the owner must acquiesce, and no restitution shall be made. 11 But if [the animal] was stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner.

Again here this could be applied to both Yisraelim and Non-Yisraelim living next to eat other as we understand who was in the land with them. There would have been dealings that they would have had with each other.

13 When a man borrows [an animal] from **another** (re'ehu רֵעוּהוּ) and it dies or is injured, its owner not being with it, he must make restitution.

25 If you take **your neighbor's** (re'ekha רֵעֶךָ) garment in pledge, you must return it to him before the sun sets;

As in the previous references we see that these could also refer to both Yisraelim and Non-Yisraelim.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 5:20 (17), 21 (18)

17 You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against **your neighbor** (bare'akha בְּרֵעֶךָ). 18 You shall not covet **your neighbor's** (re'ekha רֵעֶךָ) wife. You shall not crave **your neighbor's** (re'ekha רֵעֶךָ) house, or his field, or his male or female slave, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is **your neighbor's** (l're'ekha לְרֵעֶךָ).

While this is a restatement of Exodus 20 and while this was spoken originally in the to them the mixed multitude that went out with them would have heard it also. Thus, those referred to here was not just dealing with their brothers alone but also those who lived among them. Who would that today? Those we live amongst us also.

Iyov/Job 2:11

11 When Job's three **friends** (re'ey רֵעֵי) heard about all these calamities that had befallen him, each came from his home—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They met together to go and console and comfort him.

Here we see the same Hebrew word used for those who lived along with Iyov. Showing again that this word is not exclusive to Yisraelim.

Mishlei/Proverbs 3:29

29 Do not devise harm against **your fellow** (re'akha רֵעֶךָ) Who lives trustfully with you.

Here we can see that it is important not to harm or do bad to our neighbor whether it is our brother or not.

Mishlei/Proverbs 24:28

28 Do not be a witness against **your fellow** (bare'ekha בְּרֵעֲךָ) without good cause;  
Would you mislead with your speech? 29 Do not say, "I will do to him what he did to  
me; I will pay the man what he deserves.

Here we see we are not to false witness our Neighbor whether Yisraelim or Non-  
Yisraelim. We are also not to take revenge.

So what we have seen here today is while the English translation might say Neighbor in  
several places it is important that we rely on the Hebrew to tell us meaning. We also see  
that our neighbor in the galut is those who live amongst us whether they are our brothers  
or not. So we have an obligation to treat fairly and honestly with those who are among us  
whether in the land or outside the land.