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UNITY TALKS

**Stopping Sinas Chinam &
Developing Ahavas Yisrael**

**Collection of Drashas from the
author of Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh**

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Editor's Preface

During the Three Weeks and the Nine Days, *Klal Yisrael* mourns the loss of *Beis HaMikdash*. It is the time in which we contemplate how we are in exile, how much we are missing in our life because we don't have the *Beis HaMikdash* – and how we yearn for the redemption, in which we will return to the Holy Land, redeemed at last, with the coming of Moshiach. It is a time in which we yearn for the redemption, for a better world than the one we see now. It is a time in which we seek to inspire ourselves, to improve, to better our character, and to feel more unity with our brethren.

We all know why we lost the *Beis HaMikdash*, and why we haven't seen its rebuilding yet. It is because of *sinas chinam* – baseless hatred, which still “dances among us” (*Talmud Bavli, Yoma 9b*). The Chofetz Chaim zt”l, in the introduction to his famed *sefer Chofetz Chaim* on the laws of speech, also adds on that the sin of speaking *lashon hora* (evil gossip) is also a cause for exile, and it is linked directly with *sinas chinam*.

Sinas chinam has been going on already for generations. That is why we haven't yet been redeemed. The question arises: Is there any for hope for us, then, to rid ourselves of *sinas chinam*, it is still hasn't yet been uprooted yet? Are we able to get rid of this terrible *middah*, when it has been around for so long? In this collection, the reader will see how that, yes, it is possible.

This is not a collection of *derashos* that offer mere inspiration, which goes away soon after we have heard it. It is a *sefer* which contains a deep approach in how we can reach into ourselves and reveal our true Jewish essence, which can help us uproot our *sinas chinam* once and for all. You probably will not find another *sefer* that is like it. It can help the reader change – on condition that the reader is willing to go deep into his\her soul and internalize the truth that rings forth from the words of the author.

Part One is adapted from the Hebrew audio classes of the series *Da Es Amcha* (“Getting To Know Your People”). These are five classes that each build upon each other, opening up the reader to the general concepts of *Ahavas Yisrael* which, although being so basic and essential, are often forgotten from the heart.

Part Two is a collection of various *derashos* pertaining to *Ahavas Yisrael* which offer some more additional points that are poignant and penetrating.

Part Three consists of two addendums which make for a fitting conclusion.

May we all be *zoche* to uproot *sinas chinam*, reveal our *Ahavas Yisrael* for other Jews, and to merit the redemption – when we will be unified at last. Amen.

1

AHAVAS YISRAEL

Getting To Know Your People

<http://www.bilvavi.net/sugya/daes.amcha>

1.1 | *The Three Steps Toward Ahavas Yisroel*

Three Kinds of Love

The holy *Zohar* states that there are three kinds of love that are all intertwined with each other: love for Hashem, love for the Jewish people, and love for the Torah. All of these are intertwined with each other – you can't have one of them if you don't have the others.

Simply put, in order to love Hashem, we must also love the Jewish people as well as to love the Torah. In order to love the Jewish people, we must also love Hashem and love the Torah. And in order to love the Torah, we must love Hashem as well as love the Jewish people.

The deeper explanation, however, is that these are all **paths** to get to the other. The **path** to love Hashem is through loving the Jewish people and loving the Torah, the **path** to get to love of the Jewish people is through loving Hashem and loving the Torah, and the **path** to loving the Torah is through loving Hashem and loving the Jewish people.

There is a discussion amongst our Sages (in *Talmud Yerushalmi*) about which love has to come first, but everyone agrees that the purpose of all these three kinds of love is to **love Hashem**. Thus, love of the Torah and love for the Jewish people are but the **garments** of the true love – love of Hashem. Our love for Hashem is thus clothed in our love for Torah and in our love for the Jewish people.

Our *Avodah* here is to understand how all these three kinds of love are essentially one and the same – love for Hashem.

Two Steps to Ahavas Yisroel – “Remove Yourself From Evil” and “Do good”

In *Tehillim* it is written, “*Remove yourself from evil and do good.*” There are always two steps in any *avodah* we do – first we must remove ourselves from evil, and only then may we attempt at doing good. Before we learn how to “do good” in our *Avodah* here, we must first remove the evil if we are to get to any good.

Thus, we have two steps in *Ahavas Yisroel*. The first step is to “remove yourself from evil”. The second step is to “do good.”

The *Mishna* in *Avos* states, “What is hated to you, do not to do your friend.” This is our first step in *Ahavas Yisroel*, loving other Jews. We must stay away from committing evil to other people, like being inconsiderate to another Jew. Only after we succeed in fulfilling this first step can we proceed to the actual mitzvah of *Ahavas Yisroel* – “And you shall love your fellow like yourself.”

The first step we need to do is not do wrong things to others, but it is not yet *Ahavas Yisroel*. In order to achieve *Ahavas Yisroel*, in order to do good for others, first we should not do inconsiderate things to other people. Only by being considerate to others in the first place can a person come to doing good for others out of love.

On a deeper note, to “do” good doesn’t necessarily have to mean doing physical acts of kindness for another person. A person can “do” good with one’s very heart. This we can see by the following phenomenon.

Let’s say two people who never met each other in their life are suddenly informed that they are long-lost brothers. Suddenly, these two strangers will be filled with an enormous love for each other. What can we learn from this?

It shows us that the love present in the Jewish people is a real, existing force within us that can always be accessed – if we choose to.

Although we are speaking about increasing our *Achdus* to each other – our sense of unity with one another -- our *Avodah* here is not to “become” one with each other. All of us **already** are one! Every Jewish soul, all of us, have the same root; we are all essentially one unit. So what it is that we have to do? All we need to do is **remove** the obstacles holding us back from our natural love toward each other, thus **revealing** the already present love.

“What is Hated to You, Do Not Do Unto Others”

The *Gemara* states, “Rabbi Akiva said, “What is hated to you, do not do unto others, for it is written, “And you shall love your fellow like yourself.”

What is Rabbi Akiva saying? That a person shouldn’t kill or steal? That we shouldn’t cause others pain? Although it is definitely true that we shouldn’t cause others pain, this cannot be what Rabbi Akiva was coming to say. A person shouldn’t cause pain to others regardless, even if he doesn’t mind if someone else would do it to him. What doesn’t bother one person may still bother another person, and one may not do something to another that is bothersome even if he himself isn’t bothered by it. So what does it mean that you shouldn’t do to others what you yourself do not want done to you? What does it have to do with you?

Rabbi Akiva is coming to tell us an entirely new idea. Simple human decency requires that we shouldn’t cause pain to others; that is not new to us.

What Rabbi Akiva came to tell us is that a person shouldn’t only worry about himself; he should worry about others. A person wouldn’t want that the other should only worry about himself and not about him. This is what means to not do to others what you yourself wouldn’t want done to you; just like you don’t like it when another person only cares about himself and he doesn’t care or worry about you, so should you be the same and not only worry about yourself.

Remove Your Ego

Elsewhere in the Talmud, Rabbi Akiva says, “And you shall love your fellow like yourself – this is the entire Torah. The rest is commentary.” Loving other Jews is the entire Torah! Why? How can this be the entire Torah?!

The meaning of this statement is because loving the Jewish people doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t act cruel. We don’t need our Sages to tell us that. Loving the Jewish people means to remove the barriers between ourselves and other Jews. And what is that barrier? The selfish **ego**, the “I” in a person, which allows a person to only care for himself. Our job is to **nullify** that ego, and then we will naturally come to love others.

To Love Others Like Yourself

There is a discussion in the *Rishonim* if the commandment of the Torah to love others “like yourself” is literal or not. The Ramban says that it is impossible to love others as much as you love yourself. Instead, he interprets that to love others “like” yourself means that a person should treat others the same way he would want to be treated. Others seem to disagree and interpret the Torah’s commandment literally – that you must love another Jew just as much as you love yourself.

From a superficial perspective, it would seem that these two opinions contradict each other. One is saying that it is impossible to love others with the same love you have for yourself, and the other seems to be saying that it is indeed possible.

However, from a deeper, inner perspective, there is no contradiction; both opinions can be possible. How?

We are saying that if you only love yourself, you cannot love others.

To love only yourself is essentially to not love others. But if you remove your selfish love of yourself, you can love others. Thus, the *Ramban* is only addressing the first kind of love – in which a person only loves himself. With such a love, it is impossible to love others just as much as one loves himself. But the other *Rishonim* are speaking of a higher level of love: when a person removes his ego, he comes to love others – and he can love others just as much as he loves himself.

Our Avodah is to Reveal our Hidden Selfless Love for Others

Thus, our *Avodah* is to reveal from within ourselves that hidden, selfless love for other Jews. We are not “looking” to “find” anything new over here – we already have it within us! We are searching for our long-lost power to love others. We are looking for our true self, which is to be selfless and love others.

Loving the Jewish people is a deep, internal concept. It is not superficial “love” that we think. The problem is that our ego, the selfish “I” in us, is holding us back from loving anyone other than ourselves. We need to remove that “I”, and the more we nullify our “I”, the more love we will uncover toward others.

Until now, we only addressed the first step, which is to “stay away from evil.” We have explained that we stay away from evil from not doing evil to others, and this can only be achieved by nullifying our ego. This paves the way for the second step, to “do good” – which is the actual *Abavas Yisroel* that we are trying to reach. We will now speak of this second step. The second step of “Doing good” is combined of two steps -- for a total of three, and they are to do good and to achieve unity, as we will explain.

Our Goal: Unity

How do we come to reveal our love for other people?

The *Sefer HaChinuch* writes that that “The heart is pulled after the actions.” Doing mere acts for other people can awaken the love in our hearts.

On a superficial level, this means that we should be kind to others even though we don’t feel any love to them, and by doing acts of kindness for others, that will cause us to love others. That is true, but there is more depth to this matter.

There is an inner mission here. It’s not enough that a person should feel that he loves the other. What we are trying to achieve is *achdus* - **unity** with others, a sense of oneness with the other. This means that I am **actually one** with the other – that another Jew and I are really **one**.

Our intention should therefore be to **do** things for other people because we want to **achieve** that sense of unity with the other – that is our goal, and that is *Abavas Yisroel*.

To summarize, there are three steps toward *Abavas Yisroel*:

Step 1 -- “Stay away from evil.” This is to not be inconsiderate to others. (This is the lowest level, and it is the level that is treated generally in all of the *Mussar* works.)

Step 2 -- “Do good.” This means to not only worry about yourself, but to worry about others. (This is the middle level, and it is the level described in most works of *Chassidus*).

Step 3 – Unity. This is to realize that I am him are essentially one; he is a part of me. (This is the highest level, and it is the level treated in the works of *Chabad Chassidus (sefer Tanya)*).

1.2 | *Unconditional Love*

Four Kinds of Relationships

There are four different kinds of relationships that we experience.

1. **Hatred.** As a rule, “Esav hates Yaakov”. The non-Jews hate us totally. Our relationship with non-Jews is that of total hatred.

2. **Neutral.** These are people who walk by us on the street. We don’t hate them, nor do we love them. How do we feel towards them? Neutral.

3. **Conditional love.** This is to love someone based on a reason.

4. **Unconditional love.** This is to love someone not based on any reason.

We will mainly be discussing the last two kinds of relationships, conditional love and unconditional love. First we will speak a little about hatred.

Hating Evil

What is hatred?

Hatred is whatever love isn’t. Why does hatred exist? What is its purpose in Creation? Simply put, hatred was created to counter the holiness of love. For everything holy in Creation, something else was created in equal power which is evil. This is in order to allow free will in the world. Since love is a holy creation, hatred had to be created in order to counteract its holiness.

On a superficial level, hatred is evil. But on a deeper level even hatred can be good. How? When we hate evil – to hate something that should not be loved.

It is permitted to hate the wicked (*Pesachim* 113b). What does that mean? Not to hate the sinner himself, but to hate the evil **within** him.

What is the difference if I hate the sinner or the just the sin itself? Why is it permitted to hate the sins he does but not the sinner himself?

If I hate the person himself, then we are in essence apart from each other, and that is the entire idea of hatred – him and I are apart. Such a hatred is evil and is not allowed. But if I only hate the evil that he does, not the person himself, then the entire hatred is between me and the evil, not between me and the other.

Neutral Relationships

If I feel neutral to another person, the problem is that I am too superficial and I need to become a more internal kind of a person. This will help me view the other person as someone I should love, not as a neutral person in my life.

Conditional Love

The third kind of relationship is conditional love. What is wrong with this kind of love? Because I only love him for a reason, I don't really love him for who he is – I love the thing about him that makes him loveable. This is like *shelo lishmah* – to have ulterior motives.

But as we know, it is permitted to have ulterior motives in order to arrive at pure motives. This is the purpose of conditional love – to utilize it with the intention of arriving at unconditional, pure love for the other person, not dependent on any reason. If I love him for a reason because I am trying to achieve a pure love for him that isn't for a reason, then there is a purpose to conditional love.

Two Examples of Conditional Love

There are many examples of conditional love. To love someone for any reason is to love him based on that condition, and thus it not a love for the person, but for the things about him that make him loveable. As soon as that reason goes away, the love goes away, because it was only conditional.

If I love someone because he gives to me, it is conditional. I only love him as long as I receive from him. As soon as he stops giving to me, I won't love him anymore. This is a clear example of conditional love.

Let's say I love someone because I like his personality – I find him to be very entertaining. This is also conditional love, because I am still receiving from him – I am receiving a certain pleasure being around him, and this is also a kind of receiving. I don't really love him for who he is – I love him because I receive a good feeling from him; if he would change his personality, I would no longer love him.

Seeing Others' Qualities

The holy *sefarim* tell us that the way to achieve *Ahavas Yisrael* is through being *dan l'chaf zechus* – judging him favorably. When a person sees faults in another person, it is hard to love him, because he is disgusted at what he sees in the other. But if a person focuses on the other's qualities, he will

love him, because he will naturally be drawn to other person's good qualities and become bound up with the good in that person.

Yet there is a point that must be made over here. A lot of people confuse love with admiration. If I admire and respect someone -- I value him for his qualities -- it is not yet love. It is certainly the *way* toward love, but it is not yet love.

Love -- *ahavah* -- has the same numerical value as the word *echad*, which is one; meaning, love is only achieved when I become unified with the other. Only when I am bound up with the good in the other's soul am I one with him, which is love. But if I merely respect him and value his worth, it is not yet love.

However, we are not on the level today to reach *Ahavas Yisrael* just by seeing their qualities. Why? Everyone has their taste. If I like a certain kind of a person because I consider a certain quality to be worthy of having, then that automatically makes me dislike others who don't have that quality. Thus, even I love everyone in the world who has a certain quality that I really admire, it will not help me love everyone else who do not have those qualities.

Although there is not one Jew in the world who does not possess a worthy trait, none of us are on the level to find qualities in every Jew. The only person who will be able to do that is Moshiach, who will find the qualities of every Jewish soul. Thus, we need to find a different solution if we are to love every Jew, which is *Ahavas Yisrael*. Finding the good qualities in a person will only help us overlook his faults, but it will not help us in achieving *Ahavas Yisrael* to all Jews.

The truth is that all *Ahavas Yisrael* is really conditional. We only love our fellow Jews because of a reason -- they are Jews and not non-Jews! If all our love of the Jewish people is conditional, how can we come to have true love?

It must be that we have to uncover from within ourselves an unconditional love.

Unconditional Love

Where can we find in ourselves an unconditional love for others? How do we reveal it?

Every Jew has good in his soul; thus, it seems that if I just love every Jew because they are intrinsically good in their essence, not for any other reason, such love is unconditional, because there is no reason not to love any Jew -- every Jew has good within him.

However, it is still conditional, because I only love a Jew because he is a Jew and not a non-Jew, and we are back to our question.

There is an unconditional love within us that we can uncover to all Jews. This is known as *Achdus* (unity). With unity, I don't love him for any reason -- I simply love him because I love him.

How can I love someone without any reason??

It is as follows. If a person loves only himself, it's clearly a very negative trait – he is being selfish and egotistical. What should a person do if he realizes he is selfish, and he wants to stop being selfish? A superficial response would be that he should learn how to uproot his egoism.

But this isn't true. There is a purpose to why we love ourselves, and it is just that we have to utilize it for what Hashem meant it for.

A person can use his self-love for others! How? Just like you love yourself for no reason, you can understand that you are able to love others for no reason.

Where do we find this kind of love for another person? Is it possible to love someone else with the same kind of love you have for yourself?

A Rebbi loves his student, and vice versa. This is a very great love, but it is still a love that depends on something. They only love each other if they are receiving from each other, thus it is not unconditional love.

But a father loves his son for no reason. Although it is true that a father loves his son because he raised him, thus he feels good from this and receives from his son – we find many cases in which a person was informed after many years that he has a son. Even without ever fathering the child, the father is instantly filled with a love toward him, although he hasn't received at all from the son. Thus, the father loves his child unconditionally – he loves him simply because he loves him. There is no reason.

There is an ability in a Jew to love others unconditionally. That very same love can be used to love others – just like I love myself or my child for no reason, I can also love others for no reason.

The holy sefarim write that *Ahavas Yisrael* is one of the most difficult areas in our Avodas Hashem. Why? Because true *Ahavas Yisrael* is only reached through unconditional love, which is very hard to reach. We all have this power within us to love unconditionally, but we have to dig very deep into our souls to reach it, and it is not easy.

This natural love for others comes from the deepest part in one's soul, and in order to reach it, one has to reveal his soul – the true “I” in oneself. Upon revealing one's true self, one can love himself for no reason, and from that very same love one can extend himself to others and love them with the true love of *Ahavas Yisrael*.

We all have it within ourselves to love others unconditionally, not for any reason. We are using it every day, but we are not using it properly – we are only using it to love ourselves. Our *Avodah* is to use that natural love that we have toward ourselves and extend it to others. The same way we love ourselves for no reason, so can we can love others for no reason...

1.3 | *The Necessity To Hate Evil*

Hatred Tells Us A Lot About Love

The Torah writes, “Do not hate your brother in your heart, and you must love your fellow like yourself.” Love can be used either positively or negatively, and so can hatred be used positively or negatively.

The holy *sefarim* write that all opposites share the same root. Thus, love and hatred have the same root. In order to understand what loving another is, we also need to understand what hatred is.

Hating a Sinner

The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 113b) says that it is permitted to hate a wicked person, depending on certain conditions. The question is: How can it be that we may hate another Jew??

Even more so, we know that the general purpose of Creation is to come to have complete *Achdus* with everyone. If we are allowed hate sinners, how can we ever have complete *Achdus*?! Furthermore, *Ahavas Yisrael* is the “great rule of the Torah”, as Rebbi Akiva says, and it means to love everyone, with no exceptions. If we hate the wicked, then we don’t love everyone in *Klal Yisroel*! So how are we allowed to hate the wicked??

The *sefer Tanya* says that even when we hate the wicked, we are not allowed to hate the sinner himself. We must still love the sinner himself; we must rather hate the *evil* within him that he is committing.

This approach helps us a bit, but it is still hard to understand how hating the wicked will not negatively affect our *Ahavas Yisrael*.

In order to understand this, we first need to know why it is permitted to hate evil. Normally, when a person hates another person, it is because the other person is bothering him or antagonizing him. There are many reasons why a person hates someone, but they are all the same: the other person is being a nuisance and bothersome.

That is by an average situation of hatred. Such hatred comes from our *nefesh habehamis*, the animalistic layer in the soul, which is only the external part of the soul. Such hatred is petty, unjustified hatred.

But when one hates the evil that a sinner does, this is a different kind of hatred. It is a hatred that doesn’t come from pettiness, but from the *Nefesh Elokus* in us, the G-dly soul in a person. The only

reason why one hates evil is because there is a part in his soul that hates evil, and this is his G-dly soul. When hatred comes from this pure place in the soul, it is not evil.

How does a person get rid of his petty hatred for someone else? Through *Eemunah*. A person realizes that no one else can harm him unless Hashem willed him to do so – “A person cannot lift his finger below unless it was announced above.” Through *Eemunah*, one realizes that it is not really the other person who is bothering him, because everything comes from Hashem.

The solution for petty hatred towards others is the same reason why the deeper kind of hatred is permitted. When a person hates evil, he isn't hating the other person for bothering him or hurting him personally. He hates the evil because he fears Hashem, and it is not a personal matter at all. It is about Hashem.

We will give an example to explain this. If someone has a dirty house and it bothers him, he doesn't hate his house – he hates the dirt in his house. The same is true for hating the evil acts of a sinner. I don't hate him -- I hate the thing he does which is evil.

Hating the evil is part of Ahavas Yisrael

There is another reason why hating evil doesn't contradict *Ahavas Yisrael*. The holy *Ohr Hachaim* says that by hating the evil in a sinner, one can uplift the sinner to a higher level in spirituality. Since one still loves the sinner himself and only hates his evil, he helps the sinner become connected to *Klal Yisrael*.

It is thus clear that hating evil not only doesn't contradict *Ahavas Yisrael*, but it is actually a branch of *Ahavas Yisrael*. The way we have *Ahavas Yisrael* to the wicked is by hating their evil but still loving them as people.

The Dangers of Kiruv

There is a terrible mistake that many people who are involved in *Kiruv* make, though. A person who does *Kiruv*, out of his great love for another Jew, might come to love the sinner without any boundaries – loving him entirely, even the evil he commits.

This is misguided love. The true *Ahavas Yisrael* is to love the sinner, but not entirely. One must hate the evil he does, and he must not feel “accepting” towards how the sinner acts. A person must love every Jew, even sinners; but to love even what he **does** is the downfall of those whose *Ahavas Yisrael* goes too far.

The Arizal said that *Ahavas Yisrael* can bring the person to the greatest spiritual heights, yet it can also be the source of a person's downfall. This is because *Ahavas Yisrael* has a danger to it. Those who

are involved with sinners in trying to draw them close must be careful to treat them with love, but the evil that they do must be despised. Only this kind of *Ahavas Yisrael* can be effective *Kiruv*.

If a person loves a sinner and also the sins he commits, he is bringing in a wicked person into *Klal Yisrael*. It is like bringing a man with dirty clothing into the King's palace. Only when we hate the evil that the sinner does do we remove the "dirt" that is on him, and then we can bring him into the palace of the King.

Why can't we love a sinner totally? This is because *Ahavas Yisrael* isn't a purpose unto itself. If it would be a purpose unto itself, we would be allowed to love everything about a sinner, even the things he does. But *Ahavas Yisrael* has a root – loving Hashem, and loving the Torah. If we have *Ahavas Yisrael* but we are missing love for Hashem and love for the Torah, then we are missing true *Ahavas Yisrael*.

Some raise a point that if the whole purpose of *Ahavas Yisrael* is all about *Achdus* – being one with another Jew – then we must have complete *Achdus* even with the wicked, and thus we should be accepting of their evil acts. This is wrong! Although the purpose of *Ahavas Yisrael* is to have *Achdus*, we must understand that *Ahavas Yisrael* is a way of serving Hashem. *Ahavas Yisrael* has to have a solid, firm plan, and it must be built properly, according to the guidelines of our Torah. Only with loving Hashem and loving His Torah's *mitzvos*, can our love for other Jews be considered to be true *Ahavas Yisrael*.

1.4 | *Loving A Convert: Achieving Universal Love*

The Mitzvah To Love A Convert

The *Rambam*¹ writes that there is a *mitzvah* to love a *ger* (a convert), and that this is included in the *mitzvah* of *Ahavas Yisrael* as well.

Loving a *ger* is a novel concept to *Ahavas Yisrael*. A *ger* doesn't come from Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov, yet there is still a *mitzvah* to love him. This expands our *mitzvah* of *ahavas Yisrael*. We would assume that *ahavas Yisrael* is only to those who descended from the *Avos*, yet the *mitzvah* applies to even those who annex themselves onto the Jewish people, who were not originally descendant from the *Avos*.

A *ger* has certain laws of a non-Jew. When he converts, he has no *yichus* (lineage to his past). The *Gemara*² says that Biblically, a non-Jew does not inherit his father, but the Rabbis enacted that he should inherit. Yet, in spite of this, we are still commanded to love him. This needs understanding.

“Ahavas Yisrael” Isn't Everything

The *sefer Toldos* writes that everything can either purify the impure, or it can contaminate that which was previously pure, like the law of *parah adumah*. (The red heifer, its blood and ashes is sprinkled onto a person contaminated from a corpse in order for him to become purified). The *parah adumah* purifies the impure that it is sprinkled upon, but it contaminates the *Kohen* who sprinkles it, who had been previously pure. It is a *chok* (law) of the Torah that cannot be understood logically.

When someone is “above” a certain matter, because he is on a higher spiritual plane, than if he descends from his level, it is impurity, on his level. If someone is “below” a certain level, to connect to the level above himself is what purifies him. Any spiritual descent is a degree of spiritual impurity. Thus, the *parah adumah* purifies those who are impure, because they are below a certain spiritual level due to their contamination, while those who use the *parah adumah* to purify others are contaminated through it, for they were previously above it, and they lowered their spiritual level in involving themselves with it.

This concept has applications to all areas of *Avodas Hashem* as well, according to *sefer Toldos*³. So it can also apply to *Ahavas Yisrael*. Someone who previously did not love can achieve love, through

¹ *Mishneh Torah: Mada: Hilchos De'os 6:3*

² *Kiddushin 17a*

³ *Sefer Toldos written by the talmid of the Baal Shem Tov*

gaining *Ahavas Yisrael*. When there is an absence of love for other Jews (or even worse, when there is actual hatred for another Jew), this is like a spiritual impurity, for it is disparity. *Ahavas Yisrael* creates unity, which takes the impure out of their situation of disparity, and purifies them.

That is one side of the coin - that *Ahavas Yisrael* “purifies the impure”. But there is also another side of the coin, as the *Toldos* writes, that it can also “contaminate the pure”.

Ahavas Yisrael is not just about “purifying the impure” – it is not just about revealing love to other Jews when there was previously no love. If a person thinks that this all there is to *Ahavas Yisrael*, he is too wrapped up in his *Ahavas Yisrael*, and he will become misguided in all his *Ahavas Yisrael* and come to act improperly. He needs to go a little “above” it, or else he will always be “below” the point of *Ahavas Yisrael*, and his *Ahavas Yisrael* will have too much of a hold him and cause him to act properly; and because he can’t go above *Ahavas Yisrael*, he will always remain “below” it, and thus he will never really acquire it at all.

Therefore, a person has to see how it can purify him, by revealing more *Ahavas Yisrael*; and how it can also contaminate him [when he is limited to just *Ahavas Yisrael*, as we will explain].

This is the outline of the concept, and now will make this concept more practical.

Ahavas Yisrael and Achdus

Ahavas Yisrael can actually prevent *achdus* (unity). If there would only be Jews in the world, there would be nothing wrong with only having *Ahavas Yisrael*. It would be wonderful. But the fact is that there are non-Jews in the world as well. In the future, the entire world – all of Creation - will declare Hashem’s Name as one, thus, there will be a universal unity.

So the goal does not end with *Ahavas Yisrael*. The purpose is *achdus*, and *ahavas Yisrael* is rather the tool to achieve this. If a person remains with just *ahavas Yisrael*, he has actually created more disparity, because he never reached the goal, which is to unify with the world. There is an even deeper goal of the *avodah*, which is to unify with all of Creation – even plants and rocks. And finally, the deepest level of the *avodah* is to unify with the Creator, after all of this has been achieved.

In our current 6000 year era, our focus has always been on *Ahavas Yisrael*, and this is actually what caused *sinas chinam*, which destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*. But in the future, there will be unity with the world.

The third *Beis HaMikdash* will be on a higher level than the first two temples. Even in the first two temples, non-Jews were allowed to donate *korbonos*, so we see that there is already a concept of universal unity even within the current 6000 year era. In the future, all non-Jews will be allowed to ascend the Temple Mount, because they will have a connection with the *Beis HaMikdash*.

A Long History of Disparity In Creation

If not for the sin with the Golden Calf, we would have had the final *Beis HaMikdash*.

When Hashem gave us the Torah, the Sages said that it was at that moment that the non-Jews began to hate us. When Hashem gave us the Torah, it is written, “*I am Hashem your G-d, Who took you out of Egypt.*” The giving of the Torah made the Jewish people unique, and that caused the non-Jews to hate us. There was unity in the Jewish people when we stood at Sinai, but at the same time, there was disparity between the Jewish people and the nations. There was *Ahavas Yisrael*, for each Jew stood at Har Sinai “with one heart”, unified with each other, but there was not yet *achdus* in Creation, for now there was a separation between Jews and non-Jews.

The disparity between Jews and the other nations really started way before this; it merely became intensified at *Har Sinai* when we received the Torah and were officially deemed apart from the other nations.

The disparity really began as soon as Avraham *Avinu* asked Hashem for a sign that his descendants will be protected by Hashem. The Ramban says that because he questioned Hashem, he was punished for lacking total *emunah* in Hashem, and now, history would become altered. Now he his descendants would have to endure a 400 year exile in Egypt before they would go out of it. This already created a separation between Jews and non-Jews, because after Avraham’s request for a sign, Hashem told him that now that he had said this, only Yitzchok is the real offspring of Avraham, while Yishmael was disregarded. This was the first disparity that started among Avraham’s descendants, in which Yitzchok and Yishmael were given different status.

Just as a person loves himself, so did all souls love each other, when we are contained in Adam’s soul at the start of Creation. In our original state, we all loved each other, but this was not *ahavas Yisrael* – it was a complete unity, *achdus*. It was the state in which all souls, Jew and non-Jew alike, were unified into one piece. The concept of *ahavas Yisrael* did not yet exist. *Ahavas Yisrael* only started with Avraham *Avinu*, whom Hashem chose his descendants to become the chosen people. This disparity was even more magnified with Yaakov *Avinu*, whose descendants are entirely the Jewish people.

The Head and the Rest of the Body

The Jewish people are called *raishis*, the beginning. Hashem created the world having in mind that they would become the chosen people; they were His “first thoughts.” They were always considered the most prominent. They are like the head on a body, which is the most prominent part of the body. But in a body, there are also feet and hands. The other nations are the like feet and hands of the body, while the Jewish people are like the head.

Imagine a body with a head, but with feet and hands that are severed from each other. While we can definitely say that the main part of the body is here, still, it’s incomplete. The body can survive

with just the head and with the other parts of the body being severed from each other, but, it's not complete. The ideal kind of body is a body in which all the parts of the body are connected together.

The lesson is, *ahavas Yisrael* alone is not the complete unity. Only when there is complete unity between all parts is there a complete unity. Of course, the head is the head; it is the most prominent. But it's just not the same when the body is missing the other parts.

Thus, to focus on *ahavas Yisrael* alone, without knowing the greater goal of it, is a superficial perspective towards Creation. The *Leshem*⁴ writes that the inner perspective towards Creation is not *ahavas Yisrael* love of Jews, but *echad*, oneness – the universal unity that will be achieved in the future.

The Torah forbids intermarrying with the nations, of course. Now there is indeed disparity, and it must be that way, for now. That is the depth of exile. But in the future, all will be unified, and it will be revealed a love for the entire Creation – Jew and non-Jew will be unified.

In the future, it will be revealed that the entire body is connected with the head.

The Connection Between Converts and Moshiach

This is the secret behind converts.

In the future, *Moshiach* will head the world, and he comes from Dovid *HaMelech*, who was considered lowly. The lowly will be considered uplifted and prominent. This is a deep fundamental. Converts are not just annexed onto the Jewish people. *Moshiach* comes from converts! He comes from Lot, who lived in Sodom! The whole way that his ancestors conceive him was an embarrassing story (Lot's daughters had relations with their father, and had *Moav* from him, who is the ancestor of *Rus* and Dovid *HaMelech* – the ancestors of *Moshiach*).

Avraham separated from Lot, which started disparity. Lot was deemed lowly. That disparity continues until *Moshiach* comes. The redemption will return the "relationship" between Avraham and Lot, because it will reveal that although Lot was lowly, greatness can still come the lowliest beginnings, which we see from the fact that *Moshiach* descends from lowly beginnings.

Exile – Disparity Between Jews and Non-Jews

In exile, the idea is always separation. Sarah expelled Yishmael from the home, and Hashem told Avraham to listen to her. This is because the disparity in Creation, which is the concept behind our whole exile, is ultimately the will of Hashem during the current 6000 year era. The sons of Keturah

⁴ *A influential Kabbalistic sefer written by Shlomo Elyashiv- the grandfather of Rav Yosef Sholom Eliashiv*

received powers of impurity, which furthered the disparity. There was more disparity with the separation between Yaakov and Esav.

Esav wanted to wage war with Yaakov, but they met each other and left in peace. This shows us something deep. On the outside, “Esav hates Yaakov”, but on the inside, they are “brothers”. In the future, we will enter the dimension of *Atzilus*,⁵ when Yaakov and Esav will be “brothers” again. Esav kissed Yaakov “with all his heart”, and this hints to their inner unity. In the future, the inner perspective of unity between them will be revealed, and it will end the separation between Jew and non-Jew that began with Avraham and Yitzchok.

Ultimately, Jew and non-Jew must be returned to their *raishis*, to the beginning state of Creation in which they were unified together, even though they had gone their separate ways during the 6000 year era.

The Connecting Point

How indeed can we all return to our *raishis*, to our universal beginning?

There is always a middle point that connects two opposite points. For example, a husband and wife are opposites, but they can be connected together through a middle point that bridges the gap, the *Shechinah*.

At our beginning, we were all in Adam’s soul. There was disparity created by Avraham’s question and with Yitzchok’s children, and the disparity was magnified by Har Sinai, when Anti-Semitism began. But eventually, we must all return to the unity, Jew and non-Jew alike. How? Through a connecting point. What is that connecting point? A convert. The convert serves to connect the Jews and non-Jews.

At our root, we are all one, for all souls were once unified in Adam’s soul; every Jew and non-Jew were one piece. The *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed by *sinas chinam*, but as we are nearing the end of the 6000 year era, we are currently in a time in which we can return to the original *achdus* that we used to have at the beginning of Creation.

We were exiled for this very reason: so that we can achieve *achdus* with the nations. Exile made us surrounded by the nations; there is a purpose to this. It is because we are supposed to unify with the non-Jews so that we can come to our ultimate goal of *achdus* with Creation.

Of course, this presents a danger, because we can be influenced by them. In Egypt, they didn’t change their names or clothing or language, but in Persia, however, the Jews enjoyed the party of Achashveriosh and therefore felt very connected to him. They forget their Jewish identity and the entire generation was deserving of destruction.

5 literally "the World of Emanation", is the highest of four worlds kabalistic terminology - the realm of pure divinity.

We must separate from their behaviors, but we must ultimately unify with them, now that we are amongst them.

How do we unify them? Chazal say that we went into exile so that we can gain converts. In other words - a convert is the bridge that connects Jew and non-Jew, and that is how we will achieve unity with them.

The Convert: The Paradoxical Existence of Jew and Non-Jew At Once

There are three groups of people. The Jewish nation comes from Avraham *Avinu*, and all of their souls stood at Har Sinai; it is possible for a Jew to cut himself off, however. And there are non-Jews, who can convert into our people, all except for Amalek (according to the Rambam). And there is a third group of people, who serve to connect Jew and non-Jew together. These are souls born into non-Jewish families who choose on their accord to convert to the Jewish people.

The convert is the bridge that connects the Jew and non-Jew. He is born a non-Jew, and he chooses to come into the Jewish people, willing to accept all the *mitzvos*, even after he is told about how hard it will be. He undergoes a lot of hardship to enter the Jewish people, and thus he manifests greatly his free will in doing so.

But he is not totally part of the Jewish people. Chazal say that for ten generations after he converts, he still retains his genes, so he is still connected with his past, and can easily fall back to his old behaviors that he has inherited from his non-Jewish ancestors. A convert is not just missing some Jewish holiness – he still has an aspect of totally non-Jewish status in himself.

Loving A Convert: The Key To Achieving Unity With The World

We need to achieve *achdus* with the world - how? The first part is to work on our own *ahavas Yisrael*. First we need to unify with other Jews. If we don't unify within our own ranks, how will we connect to the rest of the world on the outside? The inside must first be secure, and then we can build upon that and connect outward to the rest of the world. Until now [in the last three chapters], we addressed the first stage, *ahavas Yisrael*. The second step is *achdus*, to unify with the outside. How? It is through the converts. The convert is the connecting point, the bridge, between Jew and non-Jew.

The *Gemara*⁶ says that Biblically, a non-Jew does not inherit his father, but the Rabbis enacted that he should inherit. The depth of this is that he is still connected with his past, therefore he can inherit his father, according to the Sages. Sometimes the Rabbis revealed aspects that the written Torah did not reveal, and this is one of them: the convert has lineage with his parents. There are

⁶ *Kiddushin 17a*

additional ramifications of this concept that he is still connected to his past, but we won't get into this here.

We mentioned before the concept of how two points are always connected together through a third point in the middle that serves as the bridge between them and connects them. The Vilna Gaon explains that this “bridging point” is always *above* the two points that it connects. For example, a man and woman are connected to the *Shechinah*, which is above them. So the connecting point is always above the two points it connects. The “bridging point” is therefore the *root* of the two points that are being connected.

Based on this concept, converts, who connect Jew and non-Jew, are really the *root* point of both Jews and non-Jews. Therefore, when we are connected with the rest of the world through connecting to a converts, we are not just mixed with them through the connecting point. That would be harmful to us and merely mix us up with them. Rather, we are connected to the other side through a bridge, in a way that doesn't mix us up with the other side but instead lets us be unified and connected.

This is also the depth of why *Moshiach* comes from converts. He will connect the whole world together, because he will be above the rest of the world, for the connecting point is always above the two points that it is connecting together. *Moshiach* will return the world to its unity, the state of all souls when they were originally in Adam's soul, when there was no differentiation between Jew and non-Jew.

This is the secret of the concept that **Adam** stands for “**Adam, Dovid, Moshiach**” - it is because all were inside Adam. Dovid is the root of *Moshiach*, who connects everyone back to the original point of Adam, in which the entire world was one.

Ahavas Yisrael is thus only a step in the process. The goal, after reaching *Ahavas Yisrael*, is to love the whole world. To love the whole world can only happen through converts.

The Future – A New Perspective

One of our 13 basic beliefs is, “The Torah will never be exchanged.” Chazal say that *mitzvos* will be “erased” in the future⁷, however, which seems to contradict this basic belief that Torah will never change. The *Rishonim* answer that the *mitzvos* will not simply get “erased.” Rather, new depth will be revealed to the *mitzvos*, and in that sense, the original perception towards the *mitzvos* will disappear.

Thus, the Torah is *achdus* in its essence, and the garments on top of it are many, but in the future, the essence of the Torah will be revealed, which is *achdus*. This perspective of *achdus* in the Torah will give new depth to all of the *mitzvos* and “erase” the previous meaning of them.

⁷ *Niddah 60b*

At Har Sinai, hatred entered the nations for the Jewish people. That is on the external dimension. The inner dimension of Creation, is, that our root, we are all one, Jew and non-Jew.

Therefore, we need to reveal an inner love for the entire Creation.

Chazal say that the souls of converts stood by *Har Sinai*. All converts today are really souls who stood at *Har Sinai*. The depth of this is that at *Har Sinai*, there was already *achdus* between Jew and non-Jew, even though there was hatred on the surface of things.

Loving A Convert: Remember Your Own Beginnings

The Torah tells us to love converts “*because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*” All Jews, originally, felt like strangers, in Egypt. Because we all knew what it felt like to be a stranger in a strange land, the Torah wants us to be sensitive to converts, who feel like strangers to the Jewish people when they come in. The convert is born anew, but he feels like a stranger. *Ger* means “convert”, and it also means “stranger”. Hashem says in the Torah that you should love the convert because you were once a stranger in Egypt, thus, we are all like converts. The four exiles – and we are currently in the exile of Yishmael – were all rooted in Egypt. The purpose of exile is to gain converts, and Egypt, the root of all exiles, is when we were like strangers/converts.

Non-Jews’ Connection To Torah

The *Ramchal* writes that when a person asks about something, it shows that he has some connection to it, or else it wouldn’t interest him.

When Hashem asked the nations if they want the Torah, they refused when they heard about what it entails, but Hashem still offered it to them. This shows that the non-Jews do have some connection to the Torah, and the reason for this is because the Torah is the root of all nations. The Torah can be explained in 70 languages, because each of the 70 nations can connect to it.

“Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world.” A non-Jew was created from the Torah as well. At Har Sinai, when Hashem gave the Torah to the Jewish people, He also offered it to all of the nations, because in essence, the nations have a connection with Torah. This concept has the following ramification. If the unity in the world will only be achieved in the future, what do we have to do with this now? But the light of the future is already here, just it is hidden.

The Inner Perspective Towards A Convert

The convert is the way to unify with the other nations. We tend to think that converts are lowly, such as that we see that there are certain *halachos* of a non-Jew that apply to a convert, such as the

fact that he doesn't inherit (Biblically). We have a superficial perspective towards converts, when we analyze it from a purely *halachic* perspective. But if we look at the depth into the matter, converts are the root of *Moshiach* who comes from converts.

There is an argument amongst Chazal if Yisro converted either before or after the giving of the Torah. The depth of this is that are two perspectives towards converts. The view that he converted after the giving of the Torah shows us the inner perspective towards converts, which is that a convert stood at Har Sinai, because he serves to connect Jew and non-Jew together.

Why The Beis HaMikdash Is On Har HaMoriah and not Har Sinai

The *Beis HaMikdash* was built on *Har HaMoriah*. There is a question why it wasn't built on Har Sinai instead. There are many answers to this question, but here will present the following deep answer.

Har HaMoriah is for all Creations, while *Har Sinai* is only for Jews. The future *Beis HaMikdash* will serve to unify all of Creations together, thus it has to be on *Har HaMoriah*. By contrast, *Har Sinai* is where hatred entered the nations for the Jews.

By the *akeidas Yitzchak* (the binding of Yitzchok on the altar), which was on Har HaMoriah, what was taking place?

The *akeidah* represents a possibility to return Yitzchok back to his root state of universal unity, to end the unique status of the chosen people, which represents how all of Creation will return to Avraham. Yitzchok and Yishmael were divided from each other, but this is regarding the perspective of the current 6000 year era. In the future, when Creation will return to its root, there will be no more disparity between Yitzchok and Yishmael.

Thus, the *akeidah* represents the return of the entire Creation to its original unity. When Avraham was afraid of the *akeidah*, it was not simply because he had fatherly compassion on his son.

The depth of his test was because it represented the return to a connection between Yitzchok and Yishmael, which he did not think was appropriate, for he had been told by Hashem that only Yitzchok is the chosen offspring, not Yishmael; and the *akeidah* represented a return of Yishmael being the only son, which would mean that Yitzchok and Yishmael are being returned to their root of being one.

Thus, Har Sinai does not represent *achdus* (although there was some *achdus* revealed there), while *Har HaMoriah* represents *achdus*, for it was there that the *achdus* between all of Creation was reignited. For this reason, *Har HaMoriah* is the site of the future *Beis HaMikdash*, where even non-Jews will come to, because Creation will be unified again.

The Third Beis HaMikdash Is For Everyone

The second *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of *sinas chinam*. Our avodah now is not to rebuild the second *Beis HaMikdash*, but rather the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which is different than the previous two temples. When Jews first began to return to *Eretz Yisrael* [in the 1700s], there was a big controversy about building a *mizbeiach* and bringing *korbonos*. Reb Akiva Eiger and others held that it was able to be done, while other *Acharonim* said no. We won't get into this discussion now.

Chazal say that the third *Beis HaMikdash* will not be built by human hands, and that it will descend from Heaven. Because it will come from Heaven, it will be for everyone.

In Conclusion

Thus, *ahavas Yisrael* is only a path to get to a more inner goal, which is to achieve unity with the entire Creation, *Achdus HaBeriah*.

It is unfeasible for us in our current situation to connect with non-Jews without getting influenced by them, and in addition, their hatred for us doesn't allow it. The converts, however, are the connecting point between Jew and non-Jew, for he retains both aspects of Jew and non-Jew at once.

By loving a convert, we have the bridge that connects us to non-Jews without getting harmed by the connection. And from that point onward, we are able to reach the deepest kind of unity, which is to unify with the Creator.

1.5 | *How To Hate Evil & Aspire For Unity*

When Hatred Is Permissible

The *mitzvah* of *Ahavas Yisrael* applies only to love all Jews. It is written, “*And you shall love your friend like yourself.*” The *mitzvah* is to love – who? “*Your friend.*” How much? “*Like yourself.*” The *posuk* says that *mitzvah* is to love “*your friend*”, thus the *mitzvah* is only to love another Jew, who is called your friend, while the other nations, who are not called “*your friend*”, are not included in the *mitzvah*.

There is also a prohibition “*you shall not hate your brother in your heart.*” What does hatred “in the heart” mean? The Rambam says that hatred is only when it’s in the heart, and not when it is outwardly shown through actions.

Hatred is only prohibited towards “*your brother*”, a fellow Jew. As for a non-Jew, the *Gemara*⁸ says that it’s permitted to hate a non-Jew, because he is not your brother. It’s a *middas chassidus* (righteous level, and not obligatory) not to hate him, but it is not prohibited to hate him.

Why is there is a *mitzvah* to love only a Jew and why is there no prohibition to hate a non-Jew? This needs understanding. Simply, it is because your brother has precedence to those who aren’t your relatives.

But there is a deeper reason.

Hating A Sinner Is Not Allowed When It Becomes Personal

The above-quoted *Gemara* says that certain Jews we are allowed to hate, such as seeing someone who sins intentionally. Why are we allowed to hate a sinner?

Elsewhere, the *Gemara* says that if one sees his friend unloading his donkey, and he also sees his enemy unloading his donkey, he must help his enemy first in order to overcome his evil inclination not to help the enemy. There are different opinions what type of “enemy” are we talking about: Some *Rishonim*⁹ say that it is an enemy whom he is not permitted to hate, such as a person who mistreated him. Therefore, he must overcome his evil inclination of hatred towards him and help him unload.

⁸ *Pesachim* 113a

⁹ *Tosafos in Bava Metzia* 31a

Others¹⁰ however answer that it is referring to an enemy whom it is a *mitzvah* to hate, but now the hatred has become personal, because the person knows that the other one hates him, for “*Just as water reflects a face to a face, so does the heart of man reflect one to the other*”, and therefore he will reciprocate the hatred.

This is perplexing! What is the difference if he hates me or not? If we are speaking of a case in which there is no prohibition to hate him, because he is a sinner, then why must I overcome my evil inclination and help him?

Another fact we must clarify is, let’s say I am allowed to hate a sinner. What does it mean that I can hate him? Do I hate him for any personal reason? If it’s a *mitzvah* to hate him, then even if I hate him for a personal reason, it’s understandable that I need to overcome my evil inclination and help him unload.

But from the words of *Tosafos*, we see that hating a sinner is not about hating him on a personal level. When the *Gemara* says that it’s a *mitzvah* to hate a sinner, it is because one who loves Hashem hates evil. This means that I have to hate the evil that is present here, but I am not allowed to hate any traces of good that are in this situation. Therefore, if I feel any personal hatred to him, I am hating him already beyond the evil he does, and I am hating his essence. This is not permitted, and that is why I must overcome my evil inclination and help him unload, if I feel any personal hatred to him.

Defining Love and Hate

Let us understand this further. Why indeed must one hate evil? And why is there a *mitzvah* to love only a Jew and not a non-Jew?

In order to know this, we need to know what love is and what hatred is.

Love is essentially to realize that another person exists, and to want his existence. Hatred is the absence of this feeling. It is when a person wishes that the other person wouldn’t exist. Hatred means, I want to negate his existence. Hatred is not simply that “I hate him”. It means that I don’t want him to exist.

How do we know this is true? Take a look at the opposite of hatred, which is love. When I love someone, I want him to exist. When husband and wife love each other, when parent and child love each other, they each want the other to exist. If one of them would die *chas v’shalom*, they would be bereft without the other.

So love is that I want the other person to exist. The more I want him to exist, the more I will love him. The more I hate a person, the less I want him to exist.

¹⁰ *Tosafos in Pesachim 113b*

Hatred is *sinah*, which is from the word *shoneh*, “different.” When someone is different than me – in other words, when I look at him as “different” – then I don’t want him to exist. If he stops existing, I’ll feel more at ease. So hatred is: “I don’t want him to exist”. Thus, hatred is not that I believe that the other person exists and I am simply bothered by what he does, that I feel an emotion of “hatred” towards him. A feeling of hatred towards another is rather a result of an even deeper negative feeling: that I do not want him to exist.

We see this apparent from the fact that when someone hates somebody, he doesn’t talk to him (for at least three days, as the *Gemara* says), because in his mind, the other person doesn’t exist. If he talks to him and tells him he hates him, the Rambam says that it’s not hatred, because hatred is only when it is kept in the heart and not revealed outward. Why? It is because verbalizing the hatred is at least acknowledging the other’s existence [Soon we will bring other opinions in the *Rishonim* who disagree with this]. Hatred is to ignore the person and act like the other doesn’t exist.

Baseless Hatred Cannot Allow For The Beis HaMikdash

The *Midrash* recounts that when Moshe *Rabbeinu* met Dasan and Aviram fighting, he immediately realized why the nation wasn’t worthy of redemption: because he saw a “disagreement” between them. He realized that because there was disparity among the nation, the nation could not yet be redeemed; the depth of this is that when people disagree, they don’t want the other to exist. This is the whole idea behind *sinas chinam* (baseless hatred). Redemption can only happen to a nation in which each person wants the other to exist - or else there is no “nation” to redeem, for they are not unified.

The *Gemara*¹¹ says that *sinas chinam* destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*, and “it still dances among us.” What is the connection between *sinas chinam* and the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*? Why is it that the *Beis HaMikdash* cannot exist if there is *sinas chinam*? The *Beis HaMikdash* is called the *makom* (place) of this world that Hashem wants His *Shechinah* to dwell in. If one Jewish soul doesn’t want another Jew’s soul to exist, he doesn’t want the other person to have a “place” on this world. The *Beis HaMikdash* cannot either have a “place” on this world if that is the situation among us.

Sinas chinam, which destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*, was therefore not a “punishment”. It created a reality in which people are apart from each other, and this cannot allow for a concept of a *Beis HaMikdash*.

“Kamoicha” – To Love Another Jew “Like Yourself”

Sinas chinam means, I don’t recognize the other’s existence, and even if I am aware that the other exists, I don’t want him to exist.

11 *Yoma 9b*

Hillel told the convert that love for Jews is the entire Torah, to love another Jew *kamoicha*, “like your friend”. Love for others Jews has to be *kamoicha*, to love another Jew “like yourself”, and the depth of this it this to realize that the essence of Creation is the existence of the Jewish people, every Jewish soul.

Whenever we feel hatred, the emotion of hatred that we feel toward others isn't the hatred itself! The hatred we feel is just a **resulting feeling** of some other deep evil force. The hatred **itself** is the fact that **we don't want another to exist!** That is hatred. Everything else is its *result*, and that is what we know and recognize as “hatred”.

Ahavas Yisrael, then, which is the opposite of *sinas chinam*, is to realize that another Jew exists! When we contemplate the fact that another Jew exists, there will be love.

Thus, *ahavas Yisrael* is only on “your friend”, your fellow Jew, because the Jewish people is necessary for Creation to exist, while the other nations are not needed for Creation to survive [from the perspective of the current 6000 year era, that is. Later, we will see that there is a higher perspective which will be revealed in the future]. It is to become aware of reality, the reality that the Jewish people is the essence of Creation – and to want that reality.

Therefore, we do not have an *avodah* to actually love the other nations [in our current era]. We had to wipe out the seven nations who were dwelling in *Eretz Yisrael* in order to conquer it from them, and we have a *mitzvah* to wipe out Amalek. Only the Jewish people are necessary for the world to survive and uphold existence. There is only a *mitzvah* to love that which is necessary to hold up the universe, thus, the concept of love is only towards Jews.

What do we need to be aware of? We need to realize that the entire essence of Creation is the Jewish people. To love another Jew is essentially to realize **who** he is - that another Jew is the essence of creation. Our **awareness** to that is, essentially, the meaning of “*Ahavas Yisrael*”.

The emotion of “love” that we feel to others is thus only the external layer of love, and it is the only superficial layer of the love. The **essence** of the love, the inner dimension of the love itself, is **to realize another's existence**. Just like I want myself to exist, so must I want the other to exist. That is love. *Ahavah* has the same numerical value of *echad*, to be one with another. So “*kamoicha*” is not just about how much to love another, but is rather the entire essence of the *mitzvah*. If I realize how necessary it is for another Jew to exist, by default there will be love to him. “*Kamoicha*” is to love another in the same way that you love yourself.

Hatred Does Not Exist In Our Inner Dimension

Hatred is only hatred when it is in one's heart and not openly revealed or verbalized, or else it is not hatred, according to the Rambam. However, other *Rishonim* argue on the view of the Rambam and are of the opinion that a person is not allowed to hate another in his heart even if he takes no

action against the person. According to this opinion, why does the Torah say that you are not allowed another “in your heart”, if it is not dependent on the heart?

It is because really, it is not possible to hate another Jew. In reality, the entire Jewish people are all one, and there is only love. We are “one” nation; we all stood with “one” heart by Har Sinai. From the perspective of the *Yechidah* in our soul – our essence - we are all unified with other Jews.

How then are we able to hate someone? If it is not really possible in essence to hate another Jew, why then does the Torah forbid hatred towards another Jew? The answer is: hatred is only possible in the external layer of Creation. On the surface of things, which is the superficial layer on reality, we are able to hate another, but in our essence, in the inner dimension of reality, it is not possible for a Jew to hate another Jew.

Chazal say, “A Jew who sins, is still a Jew”, because a Jew is always inherently good. Thus, when I hate a sinner, I have to hate his sin, and not the person himself, because he is good in his essence.

When I hate someone, I don’t want him to exist. I am only allowed to hate the sin that a Jew commits, and not the Jew himself, because it is the *sin* which I shouldn’t want to exist. I wish he wouldn’t sin; but I want him, as a person, to exist. If I don’t want him to exist, then I can’t exist either, for we are all one at our root, and if I deny this oneness, I’m really negating my own existence.

Thus, hatred is only “in the heart”, even according to the opinion that the prohibition of hatred to another Jew extends beyond hatred in the heart. It is because hatred cannot reach deeper than the heart itself, for deep in our heart is our soul’s essence, where hatred cannot penetrate. The [external layer of the] heart can hate, but my actual soul [the inner point of the heart] cannot hate another Jew, *chas v’shalom*.

Hating The Evil, Not the Person

Thus, the way to understand the *mitzvah* to hate evil is that by hating evil, I don’t want it to exist. The fact that I hate a sin means that I don’t want it to exist and that is how I nullify it. We are obligated to hate idol worship, meaning, we should wish that it wouldn’t exist. The more we hate evil, the more we nullify it and destroy it. But we have to be careful to wish that the evil acts a person does should be destroyed, and not wish to destroy another Jew’s existence, *chas v’shalom*.

The Maharal explains that sin in a Jew is *mikreh*, happenstance, and not *etzem* – not a part of his actual essence. The depth in implementing the Maharal’s words is, if I hate another Jew’s evil as being a part of him, then I consider his *etzem*/essence to be evil, and this is denying the intrinsically good essence of a Jew. Rather, you should hate the *mikreh* aspect of his sin, and instead reveal the *etzem* aspect of his sin, which is to remind yourself of his *etzem*, that his soul is always pure.

There is another way how you can look at it. The permission to hate the wicked, and the *mitzvah* to hate them, is hatred, which is *sinah*, from the word *Sheini*, “two”. You can only hate the evil he

does, not the person himself, in other words, you need to reveal that the evil he does is *sheini*, a “second force” apart from his essence, and not the person himself. It is not part of his essence.

(There is another way to understand it as well. In the word *Beraishis*, we find the letter *beis*, which represents the number two, and the word *raishis*, which means beginning. Every Jewish soul, has a *raishis*/beginning, which is intrinsically pure. Look at his *raishis*, his beginning point, his essence, and not at the “*beis*” in his *Bereishis*....)

The Depth of Ahavas Yisrael

Thus, the *mitzvah* to love another Jew “like yourself”, *kamoicha*, is to realize the reality, that every Jewish soul is necessary for existence. It was called the *klal gadol* (great rule) of the Torah, according to Rabbi Akiva. Why? There are many explanations, but the deep answer is as follows.

It is the *klal gadol* of the Torah, meaning, the world can't survive without Torah, as the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes; and the world cannot survive without Yisrael. Both Torah and Yisrael are called *raishis*, because without the *raishis*, the universe cannot exist. Chazal state that Torah was created 2000 years before Yisrael, and this is a deep matter. If Torah was created before Yisrael, then how why is Yisrael called *raishis*? The answer is, that *raishis* doesn't mean the “first” with regards to chronological order. *Raishis* really means something which, if it is taken away, nothing can exist.

As proof, the other nations were around before the inception of the Jewish nation, so there can be definitely be nations that existed before the Jewish people became a nation. So what does it mean that the Jewish people are the *raishis* of Creation?

Without Torah, there is no world. Without Yisrael, there is no world. That is why the Jewish people are called *raishis*. Without Yisrael, everything would cease, just as everything would cease if there would be no more Torah.

Thus, love of other Jews is called the *klal gadol* of the Torah. Superficially, to love another Jew like yourself is to simply “feel love” for another Jew. But the deeper meaning is: to realize that without another Jew's existence, nothing can exist. Thus, it is the *klal gadol* of the Torah, because the Torah cannot exist without the Jewish people, without all 600,000 souls that accepted it.

Hashem is called “your friend”, whom you must not “abandon”.¹² Loving Hashem is not just to “love” the Creator in the way we think we understand, but rather to realize that if I don't recognize the reality of Hashem, I can't exist.

The convert wanted Hillel to teach him the entire Torah on one foot, and Hillel told him, “Do not do unto your friend what you do not want done to yourself.” The depth of this was, the convert wanted that the entire Torah should be taught to him in one fact alone. Hillel was telling him, there is one thing you need. If you love other Jews like yourself, you recognize that reality depends on the

¹² *Shabbos 31a*

existence of other Jews, and then you will have everything; and if you don't have this fact straight, you have nothing.

So loving other Jews “*kamoicha*”, to love another like yourself, is not just simply “*ahavah*.” It is to realize that I need other Jews to exist, for the Jewish people is necessary for the survival of Creation.

Returning To The Perfected State of Mankind

In the future, there will be unity between Jews and non-Jews. Why do we need the non-Jews, if the universe depends on Jews, and not on non-Jews?

The answer is, the goal of *Ahavas Yisrael* is to reach love for the Torah and for the Creator, whom we all depend on for our existence. We were all once part of Adam's soul. Adam, originally, was the embodiment of the entire Creation, contained into one man. All of Creation was included in man in his initial state, which was called *adam kadmon*, and *sefer Nefesh HaChaim* discusses this at length. In the ideal state of man, man is all-inclusive; all of Creation is part of him. This is the perfected state of man. Nothing was created for no purpose; because everything is necessary for man's existence.

Thus, our goal in *ahavas Yisrael* is not simply to arrive at a “love” for all of Creation. It is to grasp that ultimately, we need all the details in Creation in order to exist, because that is the ideal state of mankind, *Adam Kadmon*.

In our current 6000 year era, we cannot reach the state of *Adam Kadmon*, but we can gather together some of our parts, by reaching *ahavas Yisrael*. Ultimately, we need to reach *Adam Kadmon*, which will be in the future. Therefore, we need to want others' existence, although we cannot actually reach this perfected state right now. So we need to realize that we need other Jews in order to exist, and along with this, we should also wish that all of Creation should also exist. In recognizing that everything in Creation is necessary for us to exist – everything, including every non-Jew, even animals, plants, and rocks. It's all necessary and it's all a part of our existence.

In the current 6000 year era, we are after the sin of Adam, and we cannot reach true love with Creation. There are wars in the world all the time. All we can reach is a degree of perfection. *Ahavas Yisrael* alone is a part of the perfection process, thus, it is not complete perfection. But the will of Hashem is that all of the world will become unified. We need to at least yearn for such a thing. If we reveal this wish in our soul, then we can reach love for all of Creation, and then upon that, we can become closer to the Creator.

In the future, it will be revealed that all of Creation is part of man, for all of Creation was created in Hashem's image. Man will then become a perfect container for the *Shechinah* to dwell upon. In our current era, our love for other Jews is not complete, because our *ahavas Yisrael* cannot be true *ahavas Yisrael* when it lacks the unity with the rest of Creation. Therefore, we cannot reach complete love for Hashem.

But in the future, may it come speedily, it will be revealed the complete form of mankind, in which we all recognize that we need all of Creation in order to exist, and only then, can we become totally attached with the Creator.

2

IMPROVING OUR RELATIONSHIPS

2.1 | *Developing Our Relationships*¹³

The Necessity To Connect With Other People

The sixth of the emotions in our animalistic layer of the soul, which is the last emotion we will examine, is *hiskashrus* – the ability to connect to others and have relationships with them.

Hashem created the world with many different types of people. No one was created for himself; each person is a piece of one collective essence – to be able to connect with others. It is essential for human beings to have relationships with others. People are not meant to be separate and alone, but to become unified. The eventual purpose of this unity is to universally recognize Hashem's existence in the future. Thus, relationships with others are necessary as part of the plan in Creation.

We are not discussing physical relationships in this chapter. We are discussing the ability to have a spiritual connection with another person – to have a soul connection with others.

We will now study this emotion of *hiskashrus* – how it is utilized in a healthy way, and how it can also be detrimental.

Modern Day Relationships Are Inconsistent

Most people only experience connection to others only from time to time. We have relationships with our family, parents, or close friends, but in our daily life, we don't really get to utilize our ability to connect to others.

For example, no one feels any connection whatsoever to a cashier or bank teller. Although we have interactions with people all day, we don't view them as relationships; they are no more than impersonal transactions.

We spend part of our time on our own and part of our time connected, but we are never *constantly* connected to others. Constraints of daily life prevent us from really utilizing our power to connect with others.

In the World to Come, our connection will be constantly activated. This is the way it was supposed to be, and we will return to that state. In our current circumstances, however, we cannot always be connected to others, and there isn't much we can do to change that.

The truth is that, for the time being, it's better this way. We live in a world full of despicable evil, and if we would be constantly connected to everyone in the world, we would find ourselves enmeshed with all the evil that exists today. When the day comes when we can experience that universal connection, the world will be only good and we won't be harmed by our connections. In

¹³ <http://bilvavi.net/english/getting-know-your-feelings-016-developing-our-relationships>

today's world, it would actually be forbidden to be connected to everyone. We have 365 negative commandments, and the message of our Torah is clear: Stay away from all the evil in this world.

Limiting Our Connections With the World

Some people have weak relationships with others. They aren't close to others, and sometimes not even to their own families. Disconnection from others has its negative side, but it also has, as most things do, an affirmative aspect to it at times. This is because not every connection is good for us.

In this world, there is much wickedness. The more disconnected we are from that evil the more holiness we can draw to ourselves.

When a person is very attached to this world, it causes problems – he connects to evil by misusing his innate potential to forge connections.

Where do we find the source of all evil connection? The Sages¹⁴ tell us that the Snake wanted to kill Adam so it could marry Chava which was of course a desire to have an unsavory connection to her.

Although the source of all connections exists in the healthy part of the soul, they can still be used for evil. It is therefore necessary to create boundaries for the connections one makes; we cannot always connect with others.

For example: A person has the ability to be compassionate toward others, which is a very worthy trait, but compassion needs limitations. The Sages¹⁵ say that if a person is merciful toward the cruel, he will end up being cruel towards those who are innocent. Generally, a person should be as compassionate as he is able, but he must occasionally withhold it as the situation dictates.

It is more complicated to address the issue of forging negative connections. The opportunity to connect to evil stands before us every second of the day. All day we are confronted with things that we should not be connected to.

An obvious solution to the problem would be to become a loner and escape to a place of solitude, cutting off all our connections, but this is not what Hashem wants from us.

We are charged with living among people and dealing with them all the time, but we have to be restrained in where we place our trust. Most of our connections should be limited; only a fragment of our power to connect should be engaged when we deal with the world.

These precautions will automatically limit our connections to evil.

¹⁴ *Yalkut Shimeoni, Shmuel 121*

¹⁵ *Moreh Nevuchim Part 3, Chapter 39*

Dependency

There is another kind of negative connection which gets its source from the *nefesh habeheimis*, the animalistic layer of the soul. In this case, the problem is not because of whom we are connecting to, but because of the very nature of the connection.

What is the difference between a positive and negative connection with someone else?

Positive connection results in true *achdus* (unity). In a healthy relationship, there exists an unspoken “treaty” between the two to become unified; this is the optimal connection that we should strive for. Negative connection is when, instead of depending on Hashem for everything, the person transfers that dependence to another person, feeling that if he doesn’t “have” the other he sees no reason to exist. The relationship then becomes based on dependency.

Healthy connection is to truly be connected to another – to love your friend “like yourself”, as the Torah commands. In a healthy relationship, a person recognizes that even if all his friendships would be severed, he still exists, because the root of our existence is dependent on our connection with our Creator [which always exists].

To illustrate the concept, there is a well-known story of one of the great *tzaddikim* who lost his only child. Upon the child’s death, this *tzaddik* said, “Hashem, until now, while my child lived, I had to split my love between You and this child. Now that my child is gone, all of my love is only for You.” This is the epitome of true connection. While the child lived, his father loved him with all his heart. The moment the child died, the father’s connection returned to Hashem. Since the father was not dependent on the relationship he had with his child, he was able to immediately connect to Hashem, in spite of the great love he felt for his child.

Negative connection is just the opposite, since one places all of his love and connection onto another person, instead of channeling this intense dependency for Hashem.

The classic example of dependency is a baby. A baby cannot connect with Hashem at all; he is completely dependent on his mother, via his *nefesh habeheimis*. His *nefesh haElokis* is entirely undeveloped. Our aim here is not to discuss the dependency of a baby, though, who has no *da’as*. There are even fully grown adults – people who are fully mature and capable of *da’as* – who are still dependent on their mothers for everything. Such a person is emotionally unhealthy, because he has no identity of his own.

The consequence of emotional dependency on another is that the person will feel a loss of identity. He will feel like he needs the other person in order to exist.

The Pain Of A Severed Relationship

In this world, all of us are connected to many things, and while we optimistically form friendships, these connections are often tenuous. We are not living in the state of Adam *Harishon* before the sin, where he basked in the exclusive relationship he had with Hashem.

The question is: How come our relationships with others do not last? What happens to a relationship that causes it to end? This discussion is relevant to all of us, every day of our lives.

Imagine a person who has gone through many disappointments in his life relating to others. He enjoyed many pleasant friendships with others, until eventually, his friends “move on” in life, going their separate ways, and some of these friendships, either as a natural course of events or as a deliberate act, come to an end. When a person finds himself on the short end of broken connections two, three and four times, it gets so frustrating that he is likely to conclude, “That’s it. I’ve had enough of relationships. It’s not worth it to be friends with anyone.”

For example: Reuven is friends with Shimon, and suddenly Shimon wants nothing to do with him. Sometimes this is because Shimon is too busy and has no time for the friendship anymore, and Reuven can judge Shimon favorably that there are no hard feelings between them.

In the worst case scenario, Shimon lets Reuven know – “in a nice way” – that he feels wronged by something Reuven did to him, and therefore doesn’t want to be friends with him anymore.

When Reuven hears the news, he’s devastated. Instead of making new friends, he feels so broken by the severed friendship that he doesn’t ever want to have a connection with another person again.

There is a different way Reuven might react to the news, and it is also detrimental. If Reuven is the kind of person who would rather avoid coming to this unpleasant conclusion, he might try to make a new friend, Levi, imposing on him the same royal treatment he gave Shimon. Because they don’t know each other that well, Reuven’s attempt to compensate for Shimon’s rejection will appear overbearing to Levi. It’s like dressing up a child with his father’s clothing – such a relationship will not work, because Levi will not be interested in the kind of friendship Reuven wants to have.

This is because Reuven doesn’t want to accept that his connection to Shimon has been severed. He cannot find a friend to replace Shimon, because anyone that Reuven attempts to be friends with will feel uncomfortable by the lavish attention they receive from Reuven. Reuven is exhausting his efforts in his friendships and no one has the strength to deal with the kind of friendship that Reuven wants to have, because it is way above what they are capable of handling emotionally. Such friendships do not last, because just like Reuven is doing something that is beyond his capabilities, so does everyone else feel that it’s not in their ability to be in such an overbearing friendship. Eventually, his soul will come crashing down around him.

After a relationship is severed, if a person is lucky enough to find someone else on whom to lavish his attention, he will find that his ability to form friendships has remained intact, but he would be the exception to the rule. Most people who have suffered the pain of a severed relationship lose faith in their ability to connect, until it is ultimately destroyed.

All of us can relate to the pain of a severed relationship. Even the strongest relationships – husband and wife, parents and children – are not bound together forever.

Everyone dies eventually, and the relationship dies with them.

There are some friendships that last a little longer than others, but no friendship lasts forever, because no one is eternal. So, all of us at some point have to deal with a close relationship that has, for whatever reason, come to an end.

So what happens when we experience the end of a relationship? We feel like there's no one else left for us to have such a friendship with. As the Sages say, "Either a friend or death."¹⁶ It's like man who has a plant in his house that he waters every day. After a while, he stops watering it, and the plant shrivels up and dies. Similarly, it's not only the relationship that dies when it is painfully severed; the desire for any relationships at all dies with it.

Superficial Friendships Don't Last

A person only suffers from a severed relationship when there was a deep connection to begin with.

Some people rarely attain that level. Most of their relationships are superficial at best, and they don't have an issue ending the friendship and seeking new friends. This isn't a lofty concept, it is just a fact. Children also play with each other one minute and then forget about each other the next minute, because they never formed a friendship with their playmate to begin with.

Many adults as well have friends who aren't really friends, just a give-and-take relationship. They have no problem disconnecting from each other, because there was never a deep connection between them.

There are people who have been working at the same job for twenty years, yet as soon as they find a better job they get up and leave with no problem at all. They have been sitting there all those years, having conversations with everyone there, being together with them and eating meals with them – yet never once forged a close relationship with anyone.

Such "friendships" were really little more than acquaintances; they were never friendships to begin with, and it is very easy to leave them behind, if you are this type of person.

Someone who forms genuine, meaningful friendships with others, however, truly suffers when he such a relationship is severed, so our discussion will be geared towards this type of person.

The Outer And Inner Layers Of The Relationship

As a result of a severed relationship some people will decide that it's not worth it to form relationships with others at all. They do not understand the damage they will be causing themselves

16 *Taanis 23a*

by destroying a basic force in the soul, the ability to connect. This is detrimental to the soul, and we must therefore learn how to recover our ability to reconnect after having gone through such a thing.

Of course, there are certain situations where a person must sever the relationship, as we spoke of in the beginning of this chapter, but since the reality is that we are involved with people all the time, we still have to learn how to expose our ability to connect, even when we are vulnerable.

How do we get over a severed relationship?

When a person connects to another, there are two layers to the connection. The inner layer is the connection itself, and the outer layer is the relationship we experience. Thus, the relationship is only a “garment” of the connection.

To illustrate what we mean, in a marriage, a wife is bound up emotionally with her husband. The wife feels dependent on her husband, as Chavah was told, “*And to your husband you shall desire.*” When a man dies, the *Gemara* says¹⁷ that his wife suffers the most from his death, because her entire being was dependent on him. This is a powerful connection. Can anything be deeper than this?

The answer is: yes. There exists in our souls an even deeper connection – the bond between us and our Creator. The quality of how we will connect to others will be influenced to the degree of our relationship with Hashem.

When we are in a relationship, our ability to connect to another person is the garment of the relationship. When the relationship is severed, all we need to do is remove the garment from the one we placed it on, and return it to Hashem. Our relationship with Hashem remains constant and never wavers, no matter how many friendships we form.

Healing Yourself Of A Broken Friendship

Let’s say Reuven has three friends – Shimon, Levi, and Yehudah. Reuven is very good friends with Shimon. Reuven is a little less friendly with Levi, but they are still friends. Reuven is also friends with Yehudah, but his friendship with him has weakened over time.

When his friendship with Yehudah weakens, Reuven may be bothered by it but it doesn’t break him. He continues to maintain his friendships with Shimon and Levi. If Levi now stops being friends with Reuven, it will bother him, more than when Yehudah stopped being friends with him. But he is still fine, because he is still friends with Shimon.

If Shimon now ends his friendship with Reuven, Reuven is broken. The one lasting friendship that he had, the main friend in his life, is no more. The pain is tremendous.

If the only connection a person knows of is his friendships with people – and not with Hashem – then such a severed friendship shakes up a person so much that he doesn’t want to make connections

¹⁷ *Sanhedrin 22b*

anymore. Reuven never knew of anything deeper than his friendship with Shimon, and now that the friendship is over, he loses belief in the whole concept of connection and basically gives up.

But if a person has a deep relationship with the Creator, and that is the deepest connection that he knows of, then even if he experiences a severed relationship with a friend, the root of the relationship – his actual ability in the soul to connect – remains intact. The outer “layer” of his connection has been hit hard, but the foundation – his connection to Hashem – is unharmed.

This is a staggering insight into our relationships: all our relationships thrive on the quality of our connection with Hashem!

If a person loves his wife and children more than he loves Hashem, his ability to connect is really in danger, because the love he has towards his family isn't rooted in his relationship with Hashem. If such a person has a very close and loving relationship with his children and then one day, one of his children strays from *Yiddishkeit*, he will be totally devastated. He will mourn his child, and it will go on for a long time.

Of course, when a child goes off the *derech*, the father has every right to be in great pain, but why should he become totally broken? If the deepest connection he knows of is with this child, then the severed contact will destroy him. However, if his connection to Hashem is even stronger than the connection he had toward his child, he can always reconnect to Hashem and be comforted.

This reconnection will not ease all of the pain, as we will see, but at least he is still using his power to connect. He hasn't given up on it, like the father who suffered the death of his child, who can now love Hashem even more than when his child was alive. Only the outer layer has been severed by the death of his child, but the inner root remains. He can still have connections.

Lasting Relationships

We are saying that the relationship two people enjoy with each other is only the external garment of the connection itself, but we must clarify a point here.

Just because this is true, one should not tell his friend, “Since our entire friendship is only an external garment, you can stop being friends with me whenever you want and I'll just go find some other friend.” If a person does this, he's endangering the friendship! Even if he doesn't say this to his friend, if he doesn't value their relationship at all, viewing it as only a garment, then the entire relationship is in any case sorely lacking.

We need to clarify what it means that a relationship between two people is only a “garment” of their connection.

Let's say Reuven loves Shimon. What is the nature of this love?

Chazal state that there are two kinds of love: love that is dependent on something, which doesn't last, and love that is not dependent on anything, which will be a love that endures forever.¹⁸ If Reuven loves Shimon because Shimon has a certain kind of personality or circumstance that makes him loveable, it is a love that is dependent on something. But if Reuven loves Shimon simply because he loves him, it is a love that is not dependent on anything. On a more subtle note, love that is dependent on something is the garment or outer layer of love, and love that is not dependent on anything is the inner essence of love.

The difference between these two kinds of love becomes apparent if Shimon decides to stop being friends with Reuven. If Reuven only loved Shimon because of a certain reason (fill in whatever reason you want), all of the "love" he had for him will instantly disappear. But if Reuven loved Shimon with a love that doesn't depend on anything, then Reuven will still love Shimon even after Shimon has ended their friendship.

How can we tell that love that is dependent on something is only a garment of love, and not actual love? In such a relationship, Reuven only loved Shimon because of some admirable trait he possessed. If Shimon were to change his personality, the relationship would immediately lose its excitement and then dissolve, because the entire basis for the relationship depended on a certain condition. The love in this relationship wasn't love in its essence, but rather a garment on top of something that is no longer there. Once the garment is removed, there is no more love.

This is a deep perspective that can be applied to all of our relationships.

We are not on such a high level that we can have a relationship that is entirely pure in its motivations, such as the friendship between David and Yehonasan.¹⁹ In our relationships, there are both ulterior motives and pure motives. If a person cannot identify what his ulterior motives are in the relationship, he will find it very difficult to identify his pure motives as well. But once a person discovers what his ulterior motives are for the relationship, he can choose to be connected to the other through his pure motives as well. This way, even if the ulterior motives fall away, the pure motives within him can continue the love.²⁰

This is a way to have a successful relationship with another, sparing us the grief when the other severs the relationship. Even though the "relationship" is over, the power of connection can still exist. The other might have severed the friendship with you, but because you have decided that you are going to love him no matter what, the connection is still there.

¹⁸ *Avos 5:19*

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ *See Part Two Chapter Seven*

If Reuven loves Shimon because he admires and loves Shimon's personality, and that is the depth to their whole relationship, then as soon as Shimon changes his personality, Reuven will stop loving him.

But if Reuven only began the friendship with Shimon based on his liking toward Shimon's personality, and after that Reuven decides that he will love Shimon unconditionally – this is fulfilling what our Sages said, "*M'toch shelo lishma ba lishma*", Motives that are not for the sake of Heaven will lead to motives that are for the sake of Heaven. In this type of love, Reuven loves *Shimon himself*, and not the reasons that make Shimon loveable. Such a love never ceases. The relationship might be over, but the love is still there. The connection remains.

This solution, of course, doesn't take away all of the pain that a person experiences from a severed relationship. But it is much better than being left totally broken-hearted. This way, a person can console himself that there is still a bond between them, even if it exists only in his soul.

One time I met an old friend who I hadn't seen in a long time. We had parted ways many years before. When we finally met after being apart for so many years, he said to me, "*Baruch Hashem*, we have renewed our friendship." I said to him, "No. We were always friends, and we always will be."

Maybe we aren't on as friendly terms as we used to be, and we don't keep up like we used to, but only the external layer of our friendship is gone. The inner essence of our friendship still remains – it did and it always will.

This will only be true, however, when one has reached unconditional love towards the other.

Children That Say Their Parents Don't Love Them

Now we can understand more the power of connection that is found in the *nefesh habeheimis*, which is to love another based on a reason.

We see this all the time in the most extreme example of this kind of love: Many times, when a child doesn't get something he wants from his parents, he will remark bitterly, "My parents don't love me." How does the child come to such a harsh conclusion?

A child only knows of a love that is dependent on something else. Thus, as soon as his parents don't give him what he wants, the entire love falls away, because the child only knows about the "garments" of love. To a child, the garment of love is the essence of love, so he needs a reason to want to love. As soon as the "garment" falls away, the child thinks his parents don't love him. This is because the child doesn't really know what love is.

Children do not know of the deeper kind of love, and thus it is possible for them to feel that they were unloved by their parents.

This type of love is the only kind that the *nefesh habeheimis* has to offer. As soon as we stop having a reason to love the other, the love falls away, for it was only a garment, and not the essence of love. The sad result is severed relationships.

For example, Reuven and Shimon were neighbors for ten years and they enjoyed a close and warm relationship. Shimon soon realizes that his family has grown and it's time to move into a bigger house. He puts up a sign that his house is for sale. He sells his house and moves. Reuven's reaction is to be insulted and hurt: "Shimon moves away and leaves me here all alone..." and they stop being friends.

All of the love that was between them was dependent on the fact that they were neighbors and kept each other company. As soon as Shimon leaves, Reuven feels lonely, but if Reuven would love Shimon regardless of whether Shimon leaves him or not, then the connection between them is still there, although they are no longer enjoying their previous relationship.

Loving Those Who Hurt You

With this kind of love, it is possible even to love others who hurt you!

If a person only knows how to love others when he has a reason to love them, then as soon as he experiences a problem in the friendship, he will never want to reconcile with the friend who wronged him. However, if a person works on himself to abandon his ulterior motivations in the friendship and focus only on pure motivations, then even if he experiences a setback in the relationship, it won't be so painful. He will even be able to be kind to someone who has hurt him because when he has pure motives, he loves the person himself, not something about the person, whether for good or for bad.

True Ahavas Yisrael

This is what it means to have true *ahavas Yisrael* (love of Jews). At first, we need to find some reason to love another Jew, but at some point, we need to deepen the love by loving him unconditionally.²¹ With such a love, a person can continue to always love the other, even if the other wrongs him.

In our first solution, where a person recovers from a severed relationship by deepening his love of Hashem, he alleviates his pain, but he doesn't expand his *ahavas Yisrael*.

The second solution is deeper, because it involves *ahavas Yisrael*. Even when my relationship with the other is severed, that is only the outer layer of the friendship, and although it pains me, I still love the other, because my love to him isn't dependent on anything.

This chapter is geared towards one who considers his relationships very meaningful, and is therefore very pained when he has developed strong friendships with others and they are severed. The words in this chapter can literally save a person's life, because many people find themselves

²¹ See Part Two Chapter Seven

devastated by a severed friendship, and this has shattered their emotional well-being so much to the point that they are in need of professional help. The beneficial solutions given here can give healing to those deep wounds, revitalizing the person to give him a new lead on life – he will feel like he has undergone a personal *tehiyas hameisim* (resurrection of the dead)!

2.2 | *Understanding The Power of Love*²²

Feeling On The Outside, Da'as On The Inside

Although there are many emotions in the soul, they are all branches of one single root: love.

What is love? Our Sages say:²³ “The prayers of the righteous turn the *da'as* of Hashem from cruelty to mercy.” Hashem doesn't just transform His cruelty to mercy; He also transforms His “*da'as*, because the root of everything is *da'as*. Hashem sometimes uses *da'as* for “good,” such as when He exhibits mercy, or He can sometimes use His *da'as* for when He has to be “cruel.” *Da'as* is the root of everything, the essence of the soul, as we explained before.

We may think that cruelty and mercy are just emotions, but our Sages say that they are more than that: emotions are really *da'as*. The Rambam classifies emotions as “*hilchos da'as*,” because our emotions and our *da'as* are really one entity. The inner layer of emotions is *da'as*, and the outer layer is comprised of the feelings that emotions engender. Looking at emotions as only feelings and nothing else is a superficial approach, since the focus is only looking at the garment of the emotions, and not at the essence.

Once we have internalized this concept, it becomes clear that love has two layers to it as well. Love has *da'as* within it, as well as the feeling of love we are familiar with. The *da'as* of love is its essence, and the feeling of love we know of is only the outer layer of the love.

What, indeed, is the essence of love? What is the “*da'as*” of love?

Conditional Love And Unconditional Love

The words of the Sages²⁴ are well-known: “Any love that is dependent on a reason, the love goes away when the reason goes away; any love that is not dependent on a reason, the love never goes away, even when the reason goes away.”

What are these two kinds of love, and what is their root?

A love that is dependent on something is a superficial emotion of love, and doesn't involve *da'as*. A love that isn't dependent on anything is a love that stems from one's *da'as*.

When love is unconditional, the feeling of love that the person experiences is only the garment of the love, while the essence of the love is his *da'as*.

²² <http://bilvavi.net/english/getting-know-your-feelings-007-understanding-power-love>

²³ *Sukkah* 14a

²⁴ *Avos* 5:19

The numerical value in Hebrew of the word *ahavah* (love) is the same as *echad* (one). True love, which is unconditional love, is reached when we want to become one with another. When we view another as being one with us and then we feel love for the person, we are utilizing the *da'as* of love. The accompanying feeling of love we experience is only its outer layer, but the love itself is the *da'as* – the **oneness**, which we have with another.

The source of conditional love is what we identify as the “emotion” of love. It is not the kind of love that connects people; it is just a feeling, and nothing more. These feelings of “love” toward another can come in numerous ways: either from “loving” him for his money, or for the honor the person gives us, or simply because of our personality tastes.

The love that one is feeling in these cases derive its strength from any of these superficial reasons, but as soon as any of these reasons go away, the feeling of love disappears with it.

Unconditional love is thus when one uses *da'as*, to foster a sense of unity with another. When a person is at one with another, he can love him. After this process is completed, the feeling of love he then experiences is a garment of the love, resulting from his *da'as* behind the love, but it is not the love itself. The actual love is the *da'as* behind it, which in this case is the desire to truly unify with the other.

Every feeling has its source. The root of conditional love comes from a superficial source, dependent on something external that causes the love; there is no sense of oneness with another here, and no *da'as*. Whatever it depends on is subject to change, so the love goes away when that factor changes. Unconditional love comes from tapping into the power of our *da'as* – to desire unity with another; it lasts forever, because oneness doesn't change.

Unconditional love is the true and deep kind of love, while conditional love depends on liking something about the other person's personality, which is subject to change, and thus can never be considered true love.

Natural Love

Now we can understand that there are two sources from which we draw forth our power to love.

Every person is born with a natural love for himself, and we can love ourselves in two ways. One of these ways is a superficial way to love others, while the other way is the true source of love that we have within ourselves.

The primary source of our natural self-love is the love that a person has for himself and his very existence. This is evident from the fact that every person wants to remain alive; a person loves himself for just existing. A second source of self-love we have in ourselves is the superficial kind of self-love, which is to love ourselves for our personality and good *middos* and qualities.

A person loves himself and his children unconditionally. Even if a person's child would be evil, and even if the child would be as evil as *Amalek*, Heaven forbid, the father would still love his child. Why?

It is because he sees the child as a part of himself. He loves his child just as much as he loves himself, and sees him as an extension of his own existence. This love doesn't come from admiring his child for any specific qualities; it comes from just loving one's very existence which is a deeper kind of love.

Just like a person loves himself even if he wouldn't be able to find anything admirable about his personality, so does a parent love his child unconditionally, and not because he admires anything in particular about his child.

These two kinds of natural love – unconditional love for ourselves, as well as conditional love for ourselves – exist within every person. A person can love himself simply because he exists – or for a variety of different reasons, most of which are superficial.

People who love themselves with the second kind of love only love themselves partially, depending on how positive they are toward themselves.

With this kind of love, a person born with a more positive kind of personality will be able to love himself, but a person born with a tendency toward negativity will love himself less.

But when a person loves himself unconditionally – simply because he exists – he loves himself totally no matter what.

Every person needs to recognize these two kinds of love within himself. Most people who need others to admire them for their qualities are usually unaware of how to truly love themselves. People don't know how to truly love themselves. They think that they should love themselves by finding their good *middos*. If one has a positive self-image, he may be able to generate feelings of self-love, but if he's negatively inclined toward himself, he will not feel loved, and he'll look for love from others, instead of being able to give it to himself. Either way, he has no inner source of love, whereas a person who loves himself unconditionally experiences a constant flow of love *for* himself, and *from* himself.

People who feel they don't really love themselves believe that this is because of their low spiritual level. They have no idea about the true love for themselves they could be having.

When a person loves himself conditionally, he will often feel down about himself and he will feel unloved, when his reasons to love himself fall away. But when a person loves himself unconditionally, such love is consistent, and it rarely fluctuates. This is an ability that exists within every person, whether it has already been revealed, or whether it remains dormant in the person. His own unconditional love provides a constant inner flow of love from within himself that doesn't depend on anything external.

It is impossible to find unconditional love from an outside source. Unconditional love comes from one's inner world; it is not a feeling of love *towards* oneself, but it is rather a pure kind of love that comes from one's power of *da'as*.

This inner flow of love that a person has within himself comes from one's *very existence*.

It is the pure kind of love that comes from one's *da'as*, and it extends to become a pure feeling. A person can only love himself unconditionally if he loves his very existence; any other type of love can only be conditional.

Revealing True Love Towards Others

However, when it comes to loving others, there has to be both conditional and unconditional love present. For a person to really love others, he has to love them both because of their qualities and because of their very existence. We will explain why.

When a person feels a love toward another person, he must be able to recognize the source of that love: Is it an extension of the unconditional love he has for himself, or does it depend on external factors? We will explain the difference.

If a person only loves himself conditionally, his love for others will be the same kind of love he has for himself. He will love Reuven...but not Shimon. This is why people have a hard time loving others. A husband and wife might only love each other based on certain factors, and thus the love between them is only conditional. A child who loves his father solely because he knows that his father gives him things only loves his father because he gives him things. This kind of love is shaky and impermanent.

When a person loves himself unconditionally, he will have no problem loving others the same way. His love for others won't depend on anything.

All of us are able to love unconditionally, but our conditional love can hold back the unconditional love if we don't access it within ourselves. But once the unconditional love pushes itself to the forefront, even if we find a reason to love another, the unconditional love will remain unchanged, and we will be able to experience both types of love simultaneously.

This was the great love that existed between David and Yehonasan.²⁵ Although they had reasons why they loved each other, they still loved each other unconditionally, because they had recognized unconditional love within themselves and allowed it to be revealed.

Let us review this again: We all have within us two abilities, the power to love conditionally and to love unconditionally. Unconditional love is to love yourself simply because you exist, while conditional love is to love yourself based on a reason. These are not two *separate* powers, but rather two *layers* of the same power. The inner layer of love is unconditional love, while its outer layer is conditional love.

²⁵ Avos 5:19

One who only loves himself conditionally, however, will not be able to love others unconditionally, even if he tries to.

Let us ask: if a person has unconditional love toward himself, why doesn't he automatically love all others equally? The answer is because he also has conditional love for himself, which prevents him from loving everyone equally. He is incapable of loving others who don't appeal to him. His conditional love prevents his unconditional love from being truly revealed.

How, then, can we access our unconditional love for others? Won't the fact that we love others conditionally get in the way? Conditional love doesn't totally prevent²⁶ us from loving the other, because at least a little bit of love for the other has been revealed.

After all, at least we have uncovered a conditional love toward the other, which is already a step. Once we reveal at least a conditional love for the other, we will then be able to reveal even an unconditional love for the other, reminiscent of the love between David and Yehonasan.²⁷

Eternal Love

Let us return to the *Mishnah* in *Avos*:²⁸ “Any love that is dependent on a reason, the love goes away when the reason goes away; any love that is not dependent on a reason, the love never goes away, even when the reason goes away.”

This is difficult to understand. It is clear that if the love was dependent on a reason, then the love stops as soon as the reason goes away. But unconditional love cannot go away because it doesn't depend on anything. Why does the *Mishnah* point this out?

Unconditional love can be hidden by the conditional love, so the *Mishnah* is teaching as follows: When a person loves another unconditionally, then even when his conditional love for the other falls away, he will still love the other, because unconditional love will always remain.

The lesson of the *Mishnah* is that even when the conditions for the love fall away, the person will still be left with unconditional love toward the other. Once there is unconditional love, there will always be love, even when the reasons for the love are no longer there.

Hatred Is Only Possible When The Love Was Conditional

26 Editor's Note: The author previously stated that love will not last if it is based on conditional love. Here the author explains that conditional love is still essential in the process of reaching true love and to the contrary, we need to begin with conditional love which eventually will reveal unconditional love but only if that is the underlying motivation.

27 Avos 5:19

28 Pirkei Avos 5:19

Now that we have explained love, we can understand hatred, the opposite of love. Hatred is whatever love isn't, and love is whatever hatred isn't.

Only conditional love has an opposite emotion of hatred; unconditional love, though, has no opposite.

There is no such thing as unconditional hatred, because something that has no conditions to it cannot, by definition, have an opposite.

Hatred is only possible when a person only knows of conditional love.

Once a person reveals his unconditional love, he cannot hate.

Unconditional Love Is Love Based On Da'as, Conditional Love is Love Based On A Feeling

Now we can understand the opening words of this chapter, that the inner kind of love is love that comes from *da'as*.

What is the difference between a feeling coming from *da'as*, to a feeling that isn't coming from *da'as*?

Da'as is the awareness of reality as it is.

A feeling without *da'as*, though, is just a "feeling" to us and nothing more.

Unconditional love is an awareness of reality (even if one might also love himself for other reasons).

A person can love himself either due to his *da'as*, which translates into unconditional love towards himself; or from a mere feeling of love for himself, which translates into conditional love towards himself.

Recognizing Another's Existence

Before a person is able to love another, he has to first acknowledge their existence based on more than his physical senses.

Most people, though, evaluate others based on externalities, even by something as superficial as seeing or hearing them.

Reb Yeruchem Levovitz *zt"l* once stated that "A person cannot murder another person." If so, he asked, how was Kayin able to kill Hevel? It was because he wasn't aware that Hevel existed. He was cruel; he had no mercy. Only a merciful person is aware that another person exists. Anyone who is cruel enough to kill could only come to such behavior because he is not aware of others.

This can be applied similarly to the idea of loving others. We have a *mitzvah* to love other Jews on the same level that we love ourselves;²⁹ “*And you shall love your friend like yourself.*”

We must love every Jew – absolutely! But there is something that comes **before** this! If we really want to love others, we need to first be truly aware of the other’s existence, in the same way that we know that we see ourselves as existing. Just as one senses his own existence – in a very real way – so can he sense others’ existence in a very real way.

But if a person never thought about his own existence and doesn’t love himself unconditionally, then his awareness of himself is hidden, and he only experiences his awareness of others in a superficial manner.

Because his love for himself is dependent on a reason, he recognizes the existence of others in the same way.

True love is revealed when one utilizes *da’as*. Only by realizing the reality of your own existence will you be able to truly love yourself for who you are – and only then will you be able come to love others, simply because they exist.

29 *Vayikra 19:18, Talmud Yerushalmi, Nedarim Perek 9*

2.3 | *Stopping Hatred 30*

Senses and Emotions

The Vilna Gaon writes³¹ that there are seventy forces in the soul, and ten of these forces are our emotions. One of these forces, he writes, is the power to “feel.” It is made up of ten different kinds of feelings.³²

Five of them are the senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. The root of all the senses is the mind, which also has in it five senses (such as imagination and thought), adding up to a total of ten senses.

There are two kinds of feelings: those of the soul, and those of the body. When a person is cold or hot, that is a physical “body” feeling, while happiness or sadness are feelings of the soul.

We mentioned before that love is the root of all feelings, but that is only referring to the soul’s feelings. The ten senses the Vilna Gaon writes about are physical, and their root is the mind.

The soul’s feelings are the seven primary emotions – love, fear (or hatred), pride, victory, admission, connection, and lowliness. But the senses – sight, hearing, etc. are physical feelings.

Physical senses cease after a person dies, but the soul’s feelings continue on even after death; the soul continues to exist even after a person dies. These are the two kinds of feelings we have: the body’s senses, and the emotions of the soul.

Senses Are In The Mind; Feelings Are In The Heart

The root of emotions is in the heart. When a person is insulted, he doesn’t feel it in his leg; that is simple to understand. The roots of the body’s senses, though, are in the brain. It has been proven medically that the chords which stem from the brain are the source of depression and anxiety in the body.

The brain and heart are in two different places in the body, and they are two different sources of pain in us. When a person has physical pain, it affects his brain. When a person feels emotional anxiety, it affects his heart.

³⁰ *דע את הרגשותיך 008 הרגשות הגוף והנפש*

³¹ *Gra to Yeshayahu 11:1 The author devoted an entire series explaining these seventy forces. Refer to the Rav’s audio shiurim entitled “Da Es Kochatecha.”*

The body and the soul are two different studies. The emotions come from the soul, and they are rooted in the heart. The senses come from the body, and they are rooted in the brain. That is the difference between the emotions and the senses.

The Power Of The Mind

The last chapter dealt with the soul's emotions. This chapter deals with the body's feelings (the senses), and soon we will deal with integrating the feelings of the body and soul.

The root of the soul's emotions is love. The inner layer of love is *da'as*, and the outer layer is the feeling of love. The body's senses also have two layers: the physical senses are the outer layer of the senses, and the mind is the inner layer. The senses we experience are really an extension of the mind.

If a person hears of a tragedy, he is naturally sad. Such news causes a negative feeling, and within this negative information comes two reactions: sadness, which is a negative feeling that comes from the heart, and pain, which is rooted in the mind.

The physical senses are able to open up the mind, or they can do the opposite, by putting a hold on it.

It is written,³³ "*Good news fattens the bones;*" good news has good effects on the body's health, and in turn, bad news also has actual negative effects on the body.

A person may experience difficulty learning Torah properly in the midst of hearing bad news. He feels like his mind isn't working properly, and he would be correct, because the bad news itself affects the body!

There are people who look at a natural phenomenon such as the ocean and are mystified by its beauty. When a person sees the ocean and his mind opens up, not only do his feelings become more opened, but his mind becomes opened as well.

Thoughts Can Control The Senses

Since the body's senses are rooted in the brain, a person has the power to use his thoughts to change his very feelings.

Without this ability, we wouldn't be able to alleviate negative feelings. When we hear bad news, the only thing we would be able to do is close our ears with our fingers. If we would be verbally attacked, we wouldn't be able to respond. We wouldn't be solving the issues – we would just be avoiding them. There is nothing we can do to totally shield ourselves from hearing bad news or insults.

33 *Mishlei 15:30*

Chazal tell us³⁴ that our eyes, ears and nose are not in our control. So what is the real solution to avoiding emotional pain?

There is a story brought in the *Gemara*:³⁵ Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues were walking among the ruins of the Temple. They saw a fox come out of the ruins, and everyone wept, except for Rabbi Akiva, who laughed. He saw that the prophecy of the future Redemption was already taking place. How did he see this? He didn't see the Redemption, so how did he know? He didn't see it with his eyes. He saw it with his thoughts.

Here we see that one's thoughts can dictate what he senses or feels. This ability comes from the mind, the root of the senses, and not from the senses themselves. As we cannot tune out the information we receive from our senses, the only way to control them is through the mind, by using our power of thought.

Thoughts Control The Emotions

In the previous chapter, we said that the root of all emotions is love, and the inner layer of love is *da'as*. We know that our mind can control our body's senses, but how do we control our emotions? There are three general ways how it can be done: through using our heart; or through doing actions that will affect our heart; or through using *da'as* to affect our heart.

We know that the Torah forbids us to hate another Jew, as it is written,³⁶ "You shall not hate your brother in your heart." What should a person do if he feels hatred toward another Jew? How do we uproot hatred?

There are two methods to develop love for someone we hate: through the heart, or through the mind. The second method also has two ways it can be used: using actions to affect the mind, and using *da'as*.

Both the heart and the mind can feel. The heart feels emotions, but emotions are really based on the mind. For example, when a person has a stroke, many of his illnesses go away afterward. His soul doesn't know about the pain and, as a result, any physical pain he felt before the stroke disappears. Physical pain stresses the soul, causing the body to feel even more pain. If a person's mind is unaware of the pain, it won't affect his body.

Therefore, senses and emotions are intertwined. This is one of the ways that the body and the soul are interconnected. The body's senses affect the emotions in the soul, and vice versa.

34 *Nedarim* 32b

35 *Makkos* 24b

36 *Vayikra* 19:17

Part of the mourning on Tisha B'Av is fasting. If sadness only affected the emotions, then why do we express mourning through the body by fasting? It is because physical hunger causes the soul to mourn. It is clear that the body affects the soul, and the soul affects the body.

There are thus two ways to deal with negative emotions: either through repairing the emotion itself, or through the using the senses (either by way of physical actions, or through using *da'as* of the mind). If we can deal with the senses through the mind, then we can also deal with emotions through the mind.

Our Sages state, “The mind controls the heart.”³⁷ The simple meaning of this statement refers to how the *yetzer tov* (good inclination) can control the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination). It is also referring to how the mind can control the emotions.

For example, let's say a person is fasting to atone for his sins. He'll be sad that he is fasting, but if he thinks that the fast is good for him, he will be very happy, because the mind can control the emotions.

Removing Hatred And Revealing Love

Hatred can also be stopped through the power of thought.

The *Ibn Ezra* asks: How can the Torah command us not to hate another, if it is impossible to control our feelings? He answers that a person must act in a way that will cause the hatred to be removed.

This method, doing actions that foster love, involves the body. “The heart is pulled after actions”,³⁸ because the actions of the body affect the soul.

When it comes to eliminating hatred for another, the mind can gain control of the emotions. We can use our *da'as* of the mind to be aware that in reality, all Jews are all *echad* (one), and since we are all one unit, there is no place for hatred.

As we stated previously, the essence of love is really *da'as* – the unifying power to make others one with us. This awareness is something only the soul can know since the body cannot comprehend it. The body only cares for itself, and it cannot love, but the mind has *da'as*, which is aware of our power to unify with others and realize that we are all one.

This is how the *da'as* in the mind affects the *da'as* in the heart, which in turn affects the emotions of the heart.

³⁷ *Zohar III 224a*

³⁸ *Sefer HaChinuch (15); Mesillas Yescharim chapter 2*

The Mind And The Heart

The mind and the heart are two different components. We explained that the emotion of love has two layers to it: the inner layer, *da'as*, and the outer layer, which is the feeling of love we experience. A separate factor is the mind, which is the root of the physical senses.

Our mind cannot *feel* love, but it *knows* there is such a thing as unifying with others. What is the difference?

The mind is the root of the inner layer of the soul, which is *da'as*. The heart is the root of both the inner layer (*da'as*) and the outer layer (emotions) of the soul. Both the mind and the heart can comprehend the power to unify with others, but they are two different forms of comprehension.

Our mind can know all the facts, but it can't internalize facts.

What we **know** in our mind must be **internalized** in the heart. The mind **knows** that all Jews are one and that we all have one root. When this fact is **internalized** by the heart, it will then be **felt** in the heart. That is how we use our mind to affect our heart, which in turn will affect our emotional responses to situations.

To summarize: The *da'as* of the emotions is rooted in the mind, but the emotions themselves must be internalized in the heart in order for the heart to feel it.

That is only true for the emotions; the mind works differently. The mind doesn't affect the emotions directly; it doesn't develop the emotions. Emotions are built through *da'as*, which begins in the mind, and must be internalized in the heart.

(The mind does affect the physical senses. However, the senses do not pass through the *da'as* of the heart since they do not depend on heart feeling.)

Applying Da'as To Our Acts Of Giving

Emotions are affected by physical action, but it must be done in a way that affects our *da'as*, rather than just affect our emotions.

Rav Dessler *zt"l* wrote that giving to others awakens our love for them. For example, when a father has many children, he does not love them all at once as if they were each his only child. However, when he gives to a certain child, he will feel a love toward that child as if it was his only child. He always had this love deep down, but the act of giving awakens that love.

But, if a person just gives to others, but he doesn't do so out of *da'as* (the awareness that he wants to attain unity with another), then he is only giving because he wants to have a feeling of love. If his intention is only to have a love feeling, then the giving will not awaken love.

This is a very common problem. Although there is a rule that “The heart is pulled after the actions,”³⁹ we can see that there are people who give all the time to others, yet it doesn’t create a feeling of love. Neighbors may give and give to each other for many years, yet they do not feel any love toward each other. Why not? Why don’t the acts of giving affect our heart as they should? Why doesn’t it always work?

The answer to this mystery is because we need to know what giving really is. Giving has the power to awaken the *da’as* that we all have – the power to unify with others. If a person gives to another because he wants to create a sense of unity with him, then there will be love, but if he gives because he wants to feel love – but not necessarily become one with another – such giving doesn’t create any love. The act of giving can awaken our *da’as*, and our *da’as* can affect our feelings, but actions without using our *da’as* cannot have an effect on our feelings. Only by combining the proper thought (the desire to unify with the other) together with the good deeds we do for another can we foster love through our acts of giving.

Take a look at the world today. Everyone knows and believes the words of our Rabbis that “The heart is pulled after the actions,” yet often we all give and give and we still don’t feel love towards the person. It is because we often lack *da’as* in our giving, and we are only acting mechanically, and maybe it’s because we have been trained to “give” since we were young. We can perform countless acts of giving towards others, but it doesn’t affect our heart to feel love towards the person whom we are giving to, and it is because we are not giving with the underlying wish of becoming more unified.

It is impossible to see any progress from acting superficially; it is also impossible to see any progress from just waiting to see if our actions will cause us to feel something. The only way to see any results is by using putting *da’as* in what we do. Actions alone, or feelings alone, will not get us to love anyone. Only by combining *da’as* with our actions will there be any resulting feelings towards the person.

Our Outside and Inside Must Work Together In Order To Foster Love

Every person needs to learn how to properly balance action with feeling. Everyone is different when it comes to this. However, there is one fact that can be applied to any situation: the “outside” actions we perform can definitely affect how we feel on the inside and cause us to have an internal change, and the same is true for the opposite – our inside can affect our outside and improve it. We need both the external and internal factors if we are to change how we feel toward others.

To illustrate this concept, we have to learn Torah and do the *mitzvos*. The Torah represents our internal layer, while the *mitzvos* we do represents our external layer. Our Torah learning affects how

³⁹ as stated in *Sefer HaChinuch* (15), and in *Mesillas Yesharim* (chapter 2)

⁴⁰ *ibid*

we perform the *mitzvos*, and the way we perform the *mitzvos* will have an effect on our Torah learning. We need both, and we cannot have one without the other. That is clear. Our inner layer influences our outer layer, and our outer layer also affects our inner layer, because they are interconnected.

To apply this to our subject, the study of our feelings – there are two ways to reveal love for others (which is the root of all our emotions): the inner way, which is by internalizing in the heart the knowledge that we are all one; and the outer way, which is by doing actions (like giving) with the intention that it should affect how we feel in our heart towards the other. Only when we do *both* – acts of giving, together with *da'as* (when we are giving towards another, because we want to come to reveal a sense of unity with the other) will we come to develop true feelings of love towards the one whom we are giving to.

This is the way toward true friendship. To truly love others and be friends with others, our body and soul must ultimately work together; in other words, our mind (the root of the body's physical actions) and our heart (the root of our *da'as*) must be present together.

A friend is called *yedid* in Hebrew, which means to “combine”, alluding to how we need to combine both our mind and heart in order to attain closeness with others. Only through realizing that we must become one with others, together with doing things for them, will we be able to truly love others.

2.4 | *Eliminating Hatred*⁴¹

Introduction

Another trait which comes from our element of earth in the soul is the *middah* of hatred (*sinah*). It is forbidden by the Torah to hate another Jew: “*And you shall not hate your brother in your heart.*”⁴² In addition, besides for how we must not hate another Jew, we have a commandment to love every Jew: “*And you shall love your friend like yourself.*”

Hatred is only when it is dormant in one’s heart. If one verbalizes his hatred to another or he takes action against the person he hates, he does not violate the Torah prohibition of hating another Jew.⁴³ [He is doing something else wrong, of course, by hurting someone, but the point is that it’s not considered by the Torah to be called hatred].

When are we allowed to hate someone? The *Gemara* brings a few scenarios.⁴⁴ If a person sees another person deliberately committing a sin even after the person was warned, the sinner is considered to be a wicked person, and one is allowed to hate the wicked person. Another example is that if someone could have testified for a friend to prove him innocent in court, yet he did not go testify for him; there is an argument in the *Gemara* if we may hate such a person.

The *Gemara* says, however, that if we see this “hated” person in need help to unload his donkey, we must stop to help him, so that we should overcome our hatred towards him.

The *Gemara* also says that it permissible to hate someone who is brazenly admits that he sins and he does not repent⁴⁵; this is the same concept as the above quoted *Gemara*, in which it is permitted to hate the wicked.

Why are we allowed to hate a wicked person? The *Gemara* says that it is because he is not called “*your bother.*” The *posuk* says that we are not allowed to hate our fellow, brother Jew, but a person who is wicked is not considered to be our brother. According to another opinion in the *Gemara*, not only is it permitted to hate a wicked person, but it is even a *mitzvah* to hate him.

This is a brief, general description of the discussion in the *Gemara* about when it is permitted to hate. Now we will delve into this, with the help of Hashem, and we will try to understand what exactly hatred is, and where it comes from; how hatred can be used either for good or evil.

41 <http://bilvavi.net/english/understanding-your-middos-10-eliminating-hatred>

42 Vayikra 19:17

43 Sifrei; brought in Rambam Hilchos De’os 6:5, and in Sefer HaChinuch

44 Pesachim 113a

45 Taanis 7b

Three Kinds of Hatred

We said earlier that hatred is rooted in the element of earth. We can see this from Adam. Adam was cursed with “*And to earth you shall return.*” In addition to this, he was cursed with “*And I shall place a hatred between your and between its (the Snake’s) offspring.*” Hatred is thus associated with the element of earth.

Earth is the root of the trait of hatred. However, the reasons that cause hatred don’t always come from our element of earth. Hatred can be caused by the other three elements as well – either from water, wind, or fire.

First we will study the three different causes for hatred – hatred that either comes from fire, wind or water - and then we will examine the root kind of hatred, which comes from our earth.

Hatred Stemming From Fire: Hating Another For Being Of Higher Status

One cause for hatred is coming from our element of fire. Rav Chaim Vital wrote that that hatred is a branch of arrogance, which is rooted in fire. With this kind of hatred, a person hates another person because he feels that that another is of higher status than him, and he resembles a fire, which seeks to go higher. When a person feels that another is on a “higher” level and thus he views the other as being “better” than him, he can come to hate him, because he feels lowered by the other person’s high status.

This is actually the same kind of hatred which is behind the phenomenon of Anti-Semitism. The Sages say that when Hashem gave our nation the Torah, the non-Jews began to hate us.⁴⁶ This is because when we received the Torah, we had officially become elevated over the rest of the world, and now the other nations saw how we were higher and better than them, causing them to feel low about themselves. Such hatred is a hatred that comes from the element of fire in the soul; soon, we will explain this a bit more.

Hatred Stemming From Water: Hating The Opposite Of What You Like

Another kind of hatred is caused by our element of water. The *sefer Tanya* writes that that the more a person loves something, the more he hates its opposite. For example, the more a person loves Hashem, the more he hates evil; Dovid *HaMelech* said, “*Those who hate You, Hashem, I hate; those who fight You, I will fight*”⁴⁷. Evil is the opposite of Hashem’s will, and when a person loves Hashem very much, he will naturally fight evil. When a person loves something, he hates whatever it isn’t.

⁴⁶ *Shabbos 89a*

⁴⁷ *Tehillim 139:21-22*

The word “love” is *ahavah* in Hebrew, which has the same numerical value in Hebrew as the word *echad*, “one”. The word “hatred” is *sinah*, which has the same root letters as the word *sheini*, two. This alludes to how when two people love each other, they feel like they are one, and when they hate each other, they feel apart from each other, as two separate entities.

Such hatred is caused by water in our soul. This is when a person hates others who aren't to his liking or taste. The more a person likes something, the more he will hate its opposite.

Hatred Stemming From Wind in the Soul: Oppositions

A third kind of hatred is caused by our element of wind in the soul. First, let us understand something about wind. Wind is unique among the elements in that it has four different forms. Fire, water and earth are always the same, but wind has four different directions – east, west, north and south.

When wind is moving in one direction and it encounters wind from an opposite direction, an opposition takes place. Each of the four winds are constantly moving in different directions, because of each of the winds serves a unique purpose. This also reflects the concept of hatred stemming from differences, which we discussed above, when two people see each other as being two separate entities that are apart, allowing for hatred. Winds also have different directions they go in, so wind can also be a cause for differences, thus, hatred can also stem from wind in the soul.

We can see the soul's wind as a cause for hatred between people, as follows. When a person meets another who opposes him, he feels challenged, and this causes him to hate the other. Such hatred comes from the wind in one's soul. Even when a person meets another who is “different” from him – a person who has a different kind of life than he does – it creates a possibility of hatred toward the other, because people can have a hatred for those who are simply “different” than them. People feel challenged by others who live and think differently than they do.

This kind of hatred is very common in our generation. Unfortunately, different kinds of Jews can have a hatred for others kinds of Jew who belong to a different group (whether the other is Chasidic, non-*Chasidic*, a different *Chassidus* than mine, *Sephardic*, etc.), simply because the other lives and thinks differently than he does. It is not because they see faults in the other; it is an entirely different kind of hatred: the person feels, “I hate him, because he is so *different* from me!”

All in all, these are three causes for hatred: fire, water and wind. The root of all hatred is earth, though, which we haven't yet explained. Now we will explain it.

The Definition of Hatred: Being Apart

The definition of hatred is essentially to be apart from the other. Either we are required to be apart from the other (like when we are supposed to hate the wicked), or we are apart from another

for no reason – baseless hatred. Either way, the concept of hatred is to when we are separate from one another. By contrast, love is to be at one with another.

The reasons that cause us to feel separate from others are many, either as a result of our elements of fire, wind or water. But hatred, which is *sinah* in Hebrew, comes from the word *sheini* (two). When a person has hatred, he sees the other as a “second” person, as a result of not feeling one with him. When a person doesn’t feel one with another, he feels like there are two separate people here – the entire idea of hatred.

As we brought before from the words of our Sages, the Torah prohibition of hatred is only transgressed when it remains in one’s **heart** towards another, *without being actualized*. If a person verbally attacks someone, it is not considered hatred! [It is a different prohibition though – the prohibition of hurtful speech]. Only when a person keeps the hatred privately in his heart do the Sages consider it to be hatred which is not allowed by the Torah. What is the depth behind this?

It is as we are saying: Since hatred is to feel apart from one another, hatred can only be when it is dormant in one’s heart. Hatred is basically an outlook that the person has – an outlook which says that “I am apart from the other”. When a person verbally attacks someone, he is acting mean of course, but it’s not because he has an outlook of hatred towards the person. Only when a person hates someone in his heart and doesn’t show it to the person does he really hate the other, because hatred is an outlook inside the person, that the person adapts the attitude of feeling apart from another. Such an outlook is only felt in one’s **heart**. Once a person acts upon the hatred, it is no longer an outlook of hatred that resides in his heart, and it instead becomes an action of disparity towards the other person, but it is has left his heart and instead it has become an aggressive action upon another.

[Thus, hatred is only hatred as long as it’s kept in the heart. When it is released outward, it is a different issue, which is also a problem that needs to be dealt with but the point is that it’s not “hatred” anymore.]

The Element of Earth Actualizes One’s Hatred

We have defined hatred. Now let us explain why verbally offending someone else is not hatred. In order to understand this, we need more understanding about the element of earth.

The Sages say that there are three people whom Hashem hates: A liar, one who doesn’t testify for his friend, and one who testifies alone for an illicit relationship.⁴⁸ Why does Hashem hate these three specifically?

⁴⁸ *Pesachim 113b*

We will explain why, but let us first understand something else in order to answer this. From all of the elements, only earth is a non-active element. Wind, water and fire are active forces. But earth contains no power of its own. All it can do is bring the other three elements to their potential.

When the element of earth is used for a constructive reason, it brings the other three elements to their completion. But if it is used for evil purposes, it uses the elements and utilizes their potential in an incomplete way, which will have detrimental effects. Having understood this, we can now understand why Hashem hates these three kinds of people specifically.

One kind of person whom Hashem hates is a liar. A liar doesn't tell what it's in his heart. A liar essentially is misusing his element of earth, because he isn't utilizing his speech properly. He has failed to properly use his element of earth, because he didn't say the truth. What he says is different than from what is really going on in his heart –and therefore, he is hated by Hashem. To be “different” means *shinuy* in Hebrew, which comes from the word *sinah* (hatred).

Since a liar is acting different than how he should – by saying something that is not in line with the truth he knows in his heart - he is hated by Hashem, because now that he has made himself different from what he really is on the inside, he becomes hated.

This also helps us understand why someone who verbally attacks another isn't transgressing the sin of hatred: it is because this person is not acting differently than what is in his heart. The real problem of being different is not when one is different from someone else, but when he is “different” within his own self. A liar is different from within his own self, because he isn't telling the truth, and so he is hated by Hashem. The same can be said of a person who hates another in his heart but doesn't show it – this is true hatred, because he is acting different within his own self.

It is only when one keeps hatred in his heart that it is considered hatred, because he is acting different from what he really feels. But when one verbally insults another, he isn't being different from what he really feels, so this cannot be called hatred.

The second kind of person whom Hashem hates is one who doesn't testify for his friend when he is able to. His problem is that he isn't verbalizing what he knows in his heart. This is different than a liar, whose words are not in line with his heart.

But this person is also transgressing the sin of hated, because he is also acting “different” than what he knows deep down.

The third kind of person whom Hashem hates is one who testifies alone about another's illicit relations. Such a person is misusing his element of earth in a different way: his actions do not produce results. The testimony of one person about someone else's illicit relationships is not accepted, so his actions have failed to result in anything.

He is also hated by Hashem, because he has misused his element of earth; he is also a kind of liar.

The First Step in Fixing Hatred: Hating Evil

Until now we have spoken about the definition of hatred: Hatred is when one is apart from someone else, as a result from feeling “different” than others, considering others as “another”, which is a lack of oneness with another. We have explained that this is when one uses the element of earth in an evil way.

Now we will speak of solutions to hatred.

The sin of hatred is that a person essentially feels that he is **apart** from another; he sees the other as a separate entity from himself, as someone “else” whom he is apart from, and this itself is the root of the hatred. The way to rectify hatred, then, is through becoming “apart” from the **evil** that is in the person – *rather* than feeling apart from the **person** himself who commits the evil.

The Sages say that it is permissible to hate the wicked (and according to one opinion, it is even a *mitzvah* to hate them). This is actually a part of fixing our evil hatred. We need to distance ourselves from evil, but what does it mean to hate a wicked person? The *sefer Tanya* explains that this doesn’t mean to hate the sinner himself – G-d forbid such a thing. Rather, it means that we must love him as a person, but at the same time to hate the evil that he is doing. We need to both love him and hate him at once! In our actual behavior, we must keep a distance from him and not be involved with him.

Before we explain how to erase our hatred for another, the first step we need in fixing hatred is that we must know when to use it properly: we are required to hate evil and wicked people, as the Sages say. We must feel that wicked people are our worst enemies, and we are required to take action against them. We must hate them with utter hatred, as *Dovid HaMelech* says. If we do this, we rectify our own sin of hatred, by using hatred in the proper time when it is supposed to be utilized.

But the hatred that we need to uproot from ourselves is the evil kind of hatred, and this is when we hate others for the wrong reasons. We will now go through how we can uproot these kinds of evil hatred.

Fixing Hatred that comes from Fire

How do we get rid of our improper hatred toward others? It depends on where in our soul the hatred comes from.

If someone hates another because he feels that the other is “better” than him for being on at a higher and more successful level than him, such hatred comes from the element of fire in his soul. The depth behind this kind of hatred is because when one feels that another is “better” than him, he feels that the other is very *apart* from him. How can this hatred be fixed?

To stop hating him, the person needs to realize that he is mistaken in his thinking. He thinks the other who is “better” than him has taken his rightful place, and therefore he feels that the other

person is putting him into a wrong place. But if the person realizes that he is in his right place – for he is supposed to be wherever he is supposed to be – by the same token, he can realize that the other person is also in his rightful place. Of him it can be applied the statement of Chazal, “Who is wise? The one who recognizes his place.”

With this change of attitude, the person will no longer feel that he is “lower” than the other, because he understands that they are both in their rightful places; they are both where they need to be. With this mentality, he will not feel that the other is apart from him, because he has uprooted the source of his grievances against the other person.

Compare this to a ten-story building. If a person who lives on the first floor, does he feel “lower” than the one who lives on the tenth floor? Certainly not. Each person feels that he is living in his rightful place. (In fact, the person who lives on the first floor probably enjoys his floor much more than if he would live on the highest floor, because he doesn’t have to walk up so many stairs.)

So a person needs to adopt an attitude that there is no such as thing as being “lower” than another person’s place in life, since we are all in our rightful place that we are each meant to be in. This will eliminate hatred to others whom we feel have it “better” than us in life.

Fixing Hatred that comes from Water

Another kind of hatred comes from the element of water in the soul. This is when one hates whatever he doesn’t like. Here we come to the following subtle point.

The Maharal brings two different philosophical viewpoints if a person likes what is similar to him and he naturally dislikes what is different from him, or if it is really the opposite: that a person likes what is different from him, and dislikes what is similar to him. On a deep understanding, however, they are not really two different opinions, because both are really true; we will explain.

If a person *only* likes something that is similar to him, he will not be able to fix his hatred for others. But if a person is able to get himself to like even something that is different than him, than he will be able to love even those whom he previously hated.

When a person only loves someone or something that is similar to him, he hates what is different than him. (This is the idea we mentioned earlier, that *sinah*, hatred, comes from the word *shoneh*, “different”). But if a person learns how to love something that is different than his normal tastes, he will begin to find that he won’t hate others who are different from him.

The *sefer Tanya* wrote that a person hates whatever is the opposite of what he doesn’t like, but that is only for one who only likes what is similar to him. If one likes things that are different from him, he doesn’t hate that which is different than him. He becomes more flexible.

On a more subtle note, really we all have two different kinds of love for others⁴⁹. We can love what is different than us and love what is similar to us. If a person has only revealed from within himself a love for what is similar to him, he hates anything that is different from him. But when a person reveals from within himself a love for what is different from him, he won't hate that which is different from him; instead, he learns how to get used to something that is different from him, and he will actually come to love those differences.

How can a person uproot his hatred for what is different than him? He can realize that he doesn't have to hate everything that is different from him. He can become more flexible, getting used to things that are different from his initial tastes, and **learn how enjoy different things** from what he's used to.

If a person wants to work on this idea practically, he can do the following. He knows that there are some things he's not that fond of, but he also doesn't hate those things so much either. A person should get used to enjoying those things that are a *little* different from what he's used to enjoying, and with time, he will discover that his hatred for things that are different to his taste have lessened. He will learn how to like things that are very different from him.

A person should not try getting himself to like things which he doesn't like at all, though; this is impractical. Instead, a person should try getting used to things he doesn't like that much, which also doesn't bother him that much either.

Just like something different from a person's tastes can be a cause for his hatred, so can it be a cause for him to love it! By getting used to enjoying things that are a little different from you, you become more flexible, and then you will find that not only has your hatred gone down for the things you never enjoyed, but that you can even enjoy those things you used to hate.

This doesn't mean that a person has to try to overcome his *Yetzer Hora* totally and force himself to love things he hates. We just mean that something different can also become a cause for why the person loves it. We mean that a person should get used to liking things that he doesn't hate so much in the first place, and this gets him used to enjoying something different than what he's used to. The point is to get used to enjoying something different.

Overcoming Hatred For An Enemy

We can see this concept from the following *halacha* brought in the *Gemara*⁵⁰: If a person sees two people unloading packages, and one of them is his friend and the other is his enemy (who is a wicked person, whom one is required to hate) – there is a special *mitzvah* to help one's enemy unload, “in order to overcome his evil inclination.”

⁴⁹ Refer also to *Getting To Know Your Home*, Chapters 1-2 and Chapters 6-7.

⁵⁰ *Bava Metziah* 32b

Why is one required to overcome his evil inclination toward a sinner, if we are required to hate him? *Tosafos*⁵¹ answers that since the onlooker hates him, the other one will naturally hate him too, for it is written, “*Just as water reflects a face to another face, so does the heart of a man reflect to another.*” Therefore, the onlooker comes to hate him personally, because now he knows that other hates him; the hatred now becomes personal. Thus, it is his evil inclination telling him now to help the other, and so he must overcome his evil inclination and help him instead.

From here we learn that there are two kinds of hatred: One kind of hatred is to hate another person for being evil, and a second of hatred is to hate the other because one feels, “He hates me, therefore I hate him as well.” What is the difference between the two kinds of hatred?

When a person hates a sinner for being wicked, it is still possible for him to love him at the same time. (This we explained before: to hate the evil he does, but to love him as a person). But when the hatred becomes personal – “I hate him, because I know that he hates me for hating him” – such hatred creates a separation and distance between them, and such hatred is the kind that one must try to overcome.

If a person does succeed in overcoming his evil inclination not to help his enemy, he will find that he both loves him and hates him at the same time. He hates the evil in the sinner – but it won’t be personal. It is like what Chazal say of Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Dovid *HaMelech* had enemies, but they did not hate any of their enemies on a personal level.⁵²

This is how we fix the kind of hatred that comes from our element of water – by revealing love towards the one we hate.

Fixing Hatred that comes from Wind

The third kind of hatred a person can have comes from the element of wind in the soul. We explained that this kind of hatred is when a person hates another person who is different from him, because he feels challenged by another person’s different way of life. How can a person fix such hatred?

The *sefer Tanya*⁵³ says that the way to uproot such hatred is by being **compassionate** to the other person. We will explain how this solution.

The *Gemara*⁵⁴ says that a father cannot hate his child. Why doesn’t a father ever hate his child? The simple answer one would say is that because a father loves his child, he cannot hate him, because love and hatred cannot co-exist.

51 *In Pesachim 113b*

52 *Sotah 9a*

53 *Tanya: 32*

But there is more depth to this. It is written, “*Like a father has compassion on his son.*”⁵⁵ A father doesn’t hate his child, not just because he loves him, but because as soon as he thinks of a possibility of hating him, his fatherly compassion is immediately aroused. Once his compassion is aroused, he cannot hate his child.

This doesn’t mean that a father cannot have a reason to hate his child. It is very possible that there is good reason for the father to hate the child, such as when the child is acting very improper, to the point that he can get his father to feel hatred to the child. But *as soon as the father thinks of hating his child, he feels compassion toward him.*

Why does compassion on another person take away our hatred for him?

The entire idea of love is to be one with another. By contrast, hatred is to be apart and separate from another. When a person hates another person, how can he become one with him? Obviously, he has to try to love the person, but how? How can a person become one with someone whom he is apart from?

The answer is that really, it isn’t possible at this point to love the other person. You cannot love someone whom you feel apart from. But what you can do is to *feel sorry* for him, in spite of the fact that you do not love him. And if you *feel sorry* for him, your hatred towards him will be eliminated.

Although it is only a father has true compassion on his son, we all have the ability to have compassion on others, just like Hashem “*has mercy on all His creations.*” Compassion on another is possible even when one doesn’t love the other!

Even if a person hates another because the other “turns him off”, the very fact that the other person acts so differently can be a catalyst to awaken one’s compassion on him. The trait of compassion, which is called *rachamim*, is called the “middle line” that runs between the point of love and hatred. Compassion\ *rachamim* serves as a bridge between love and hatred, so it can connect them.

The *holy sefarim* indeed describe compassion (*rachamim*) as the “middle line” - love is the called the “right line”, while hatred is on the “left line”, as they are the two extremes, and compassion is the bridging point between them.

The opposite of hatred is either love, or it can be compassion, without love. How do we see this?

The *Gemara*⁵⁶ says that “Anyone who doesn’t speak to his friend out of enmity for three days is his enemy.” Why three days? The Maharal writes that we always find that the number “three” is associated with connection. Chazal say that a person has compassion on his descendants – for up to three generations. This is how we see that compassion erases one’s hatred for another. When there is

54 *Sanhedrin 105a*

55 *Tehillim 103:13*

56 *Sanhedrin 27b*

compassion on another person, his hatred goes away; even if the person feels a hatred towards the person, his compassion will immediately awaken and overcome the hatred.

Being compassionate on another can only be a solution for the kind of hatred that comes from wind, which is to hate someone who is different than you. It cannot work for hatred that comes from fire, which is when one hates someone whom he feels is better than him.

Sinas Chinam: Baseless Hatred

Finally, there is a fourth kind of hatred, and it is rooted in the element of earth in the soul. It is called “*sinas chinam*” – “baseless hatred”. What is baseless hatred?

Rashi⁵⁷ says that this is to hate someone even though the other has committed no sin.

What we can learn from his words is that even if a person acts improperly and one feels a complaint toward him, still, it is unjustified to hate the other person, because the other person did not commit any sin which makes him deserving of being hated. When a person hates another and there is no *mitzvah* to hate him, this is called baseless hatred, even if the other person is acting improper!

But there is even more depth to this matter: Baseless hatred is to hate someone for no reason at all.

Until now we mentioned three different causes for hatred: either because the other is of higher status than me (fire), or because he isn't to my taste (water), or because he is different from me (wind). But the fourth kind of hatred, baseless hatred, which is rooted in the element of earth, is the total kind of hatred. It is an illogical kind of hatred.

Just like a person is able to love another without having a reason – like when the other person finds favor in his eyes (“*chinam*” comes from the word “*chein*”, which means finding favor⁵⁸), so is a person able to hate another for no reason.

Why do people hate others for no reason? The person with *sinas chinam* thinks: “I am not him, and he is not me.” That is his only “reason” to hate him. A person with a tendency towards egotism is likely to hate anyone, simply because no one else is him. This is the depth behind *sinas chinam*. The person with *sinas chinam* feels that anyone who isn't “him” is apart from himself, so he can come to hate anyone.

This is actually the same kind of hatred as Anti-Semitism. The Sages said that when Hashem gave us the Torah, “a hatred descended upon the world on the non-Jews” toward us.⁵⁹ What is the root

⁵⁷ *Shabbos 32b*

⁵⁸ *A quote from the Vilna Gaon.*

⁵⁹ *Shemos Rabbah 2:4*

of their Anti-Semitism, and why did they begin to hate us only after Hashem gave us the Torah? It is because they now realized that we are “apart” from them: We are a “*nation that dwells in solitude, and with the nations we do not think.*” The fact that they see us as apart from them is the reason for their hatred.

Another example of baseless hatred is the hatred that ignorant people have for Torah scholars: “The hatred that the ignorant have for Torah scholars is greater than the hatred that the other nations have for the Jewish people, and the wives of ignorant people hate them even more.”⁶⁰

An ignorant person’s hatred for a Torah scholar makes no sense. An ignorant person hates a Torah scholar simply because they are not the same; because he sees the Torah scholar as his opposite. That is true; a Torah scholar and an ignorant person are exact opposites. An ignorant person is materialistic, while a Torah scholar is totally intellectual and non-materialistic. The wives of ignorant people hate Torah scholars even more, because a woman is more materialistic than a man. They are the perfect opposite of everything that a Torah scholar represents, which is total non-materialism. Their hatred for Torah scholars is thus total – and it is baseless.

To have baseless hatred for someone else is to simply feel apart from the other, even though when there is no logical reason to hate the person.

Fixing Baseless Hatred

Baseless hatred requires a lot of work to fix. It requires us to reach very deep into ourselves, if we want to uproot it.

We know that the Second *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of baseless hatred.⁶¹ Why did baseless hatred destroy the *Beis HaMikdash*?

The *Beis HaMikdash* was a structure made up of many stones unified into one piece. The idea of baseless hatred is the opposite of the *Beis HaMikdash* – it is all about feeling separate from others, the opposite of unity. Thus, baseless hatred and the *Beis Hamikdash* could not co-exist.

So how do we fix *sinas chinam* baseless hatred? Through *ahavas chinam*, baseless love – to love the other without a reason!

The pure kind of love we need to have for others is to love others even when there is no reason to love the other person! It is to love another because a person recognizes that we are all one unit. Just like you don’t get angry at your hand if it accidentally bangs into your other hand - because both of your hands are part of one unit, yourself - so are we supposed to look at others as those whom we are

60 *Pesachim 49b*

61 *Yoma 9b*

“one” with. We have no logical “reason” that we need to unify with others – rather, it is because in essence, we were all originally one unit.

Of a man who gets married, it is written, “*Therefore a man shall abandon his father and mother and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*” What is the depth behind the unity of a husband and wife? It is because they were all always one unit. If it would be that man and woman would be previously separated and now they have to unite, then they would have to need a reason to unify with each other. But because they were always one to begin with, they don’t need any other reason to unite as one.

To hate others for no reason is essentially when one forgets his roots. He forgets that we, the Jewish people, are all really one unit; he thinks that we are just a bunch of branches without a root. But when one loves others for no reason, it is because he realizes that we all have one root, and that we are not all just random branches.

To hate another person is to feel apart from him. A person feels apart from another either because of the elements of fire, water or wind in his soul. These are all reasons that make a person feel apart from another, and thus these are only being affected by the *branches* of hatred. But when a person has baseless hatred, it is *hatred itself!* Such hatred comes from the element of earth in one’s soul, because earth tends to be separate and be on its own; this we can see from earth, in that each seed planted in the earth has nothing to do with the seed next to it.

When a person reaches an inner place in his soul and he and realizes that every soul of the Jewish people has one root – and on a more subtle note, all of Creation is really also one root – he reaches his ability to love other Jews *for no personal reason*. Just like a person has no reason why he loves himself – he just simply loves himself - so can he love others for no reason at all. He can just love others in the same way that he loves himself.

This is the depth of fixing baseless hatred: leaving our feelings of being apart and separate from others, and instead realizing that we all are one, because at our root, we are all *echad* – “one”.

2.5 | *The Purpose of Our Exile: Accepting Others*⁶²

Exile – An Opportunity To Gain From The Good Of The Other Nations

We daven in *Shemoneh Esrei*, וקבצינו יחד מארבע כנפות הארץ – “*And gather us, together, from all four corners of the earth.*” We emphasize that Hashem should gather us from all the ends of the earth.

When we went into exile, we were scattered all over the world. The Sages state that “The Jewish people did not go down into exile except for the purpose of having more converts annexed onto them.” Simply speaking, the exile has caused Jews to meet other non-Jews, and a non-Jew can become inspired by the Jewish people that he converts. For this reason alone, the Sages state that it’s worth it for us to endure exile.

But the deeper meaning is that it’s not referring to converts from the other nations. It is referring to how we can learn positive attributes from the other nations, and “convert” certain ideas of the non-Jewish world into the Jewish people and sanctify some of the ideas that they have to offer. In this way, we can gain from the world and turn certain non-Jewish ideas into holiness, so that by the time we all return to the land of *Eretz Yisrael* in the future, we will have gained from the other nations during our experience of exile.

Thus, when we all return to the *Eretz Yisrael*, it will not just be a gathering of the dispersed from all four corners of the earth in the physical sense, but it will be a return to our land after having gained certain lessons from the other nations during our stay in exile.

We find this concept in a few places. In the times of the *Gemara*, we find that there were certain Sages who had non-Jewish names, since they lived amongst non-Jewish countries. For example: “Rav Yochanan, Ish Socho” (Rav Yochanan, the man who comes from “Socho”, a non-Jewish place. This is peculiar, because we know that the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt due to the merit of not adapting non-Jewish names.

Another example is with regards to certain songs that originated from non-Jewish composers. There were certain *tzaddikim* who would hear a non-Jew singing a tune, which the *tzaddik* sensed as something that belongs to holiness. The *tzaddik* would listen to the song and thereby sanctify the song, whereupon the song became “converted” to holiness. Some of the holiest songs we have really originated from the other nations of the world, and they were sanctified by the a righteous and holy Rebbe who converted these songs to the Jewish people.

The above two examples show us that there is such a concept of gaining certain things from the nations of the world, sanctifying the concept, and bringing it into the Jewish people, whereupon it is “converted” to become part of the Jewish nation.

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There are both pros and cons that result from being exiled among the nations of the world. Some of what they have can be converted to holiness, as we explained, and on the other side of the coin, learning from the nations can have negative influences on us. However, it's definitely a spark of the redemption, because Chazal do say that the purpose of exile is so that we will benefit from these "converted" ideas that originate from the nations. It brings us closer to redemption.

This is a lengthy topic: the mixture of good and evil going on in the nations of the world, "*taaruvos hagoyim.*"

Although we haven't yet merited the redemption, we still have an *avodah* to sift out all the good from the evil that we are surrounded with. Therefore, we need to gain the proper perspective on how to view this world, which is a mixture of good and evil – how to gain from what the world has to offer, while at the same time avoiding all negative influences.

The Giant 'Melting Pot' That Has Become Eretz Yisrael

In today's era, in *Eretz Yisrael*, there are members from nations all over the world that are here. This is not the redemption which our forefathers prayed for; it is not a "gathering of the exiles" which we hope for. The fact that many nations have come to *Eretz Yisrael* to live here has added a whole new dimension to our exile.

When *Moshiach* comes, there will be peace in the world, but in today's era that we live in, the reality is that there is no peace going on. The fact that many nations have gathered here together in *Eretz Yisrael* does **not** create unity between Jews and the other nations – it has only caused more strife here. We are left with nothing except a mix of many nations, and this "gathering of exiles" only serves to create more and more strife in the land. It has not caused the Jewish people to be more at peace with the other nations of the world.

How We View Other 'Types' of Jews

When a person lives only superficially, he naturally lives and thinks like his particular sect\community of Judaism that he grew up with. Other kinds of Jews, who are not of his type, seem strange to him - and he will tend to look down on them.

This is a bad *middah*, and it comes from our *nefesh habehaimis* – the lower, animalistic part of our soul. It is a nature in a person to simply despise others who are different than him, simply for being different.

Chazal say that in the era preceding *Moshiach* [our current era], truth will vanish from the world.⁶³ This manifests as follows. Often, a Jew who lives a certain way will look down at another

63 *Sotah 49a*

Jew simply for living a different kind of life than he does, and this is true even if the other person keeps the entire Torah and *mitzvos*. He has different *minhagim* (customs), or he has a different way of learning *Gemara*, etc. These can all be factors that cause a Jew to look down upon another Jew – simply for being different than him.

Accepting Other Types of Jews

How do we put a stop to this?

The superficial answer is, “We need to have more *Ahavas Yisrael*” (love for Jews).

But the truth is, that the lack of unity going on amongst different kinds of Jews really has to do with the whole reason we are in exile. The exile is meant for us to open ourselves and expand ourselves, and to learn how to gain from others we come across. Just like we mentioned earlier that there is a concept of gaining from the other nations of the world, so must we learn how to gain from other kinds of Jews who are different from us. The reason we are in this exile is so that each of us can pick up different good points from other people.

Each of us is very different from one another. This is not by coincidence. The whole reason why we are in exile is to receive all the good that we can pick up from other people we come across. If we wouldn't be different, and each person would be the same, we would have nothing to learn from other people. But because we are each so vastly different from each other, we all what to learn from one another. There is much good that we can gain from other Jews who are different than us.

The whole point of exile is for us to sift out all the good from evil going on in the world. I need to figure out what my best points are, and I also need to learn from other people and complete myself.

When a person doesn't have this approach in life, he looks down on others, and he looks at others merely with conceit and hatred. These are base emotions that stem from our *nefesh habehaimis* when we don't develop ourselves.⁶⁴

We are in exile precisely because we have to rectify our *nefesh habehaimis* – the “animal” level of the soul within us, which is the source of our base, negative emotions. We need to recognize the hatred and the conceit that we feel initially towards others. We need to ask ourselves: “Why do I feel that I am ‘better’ than a Jew who lives differently than I do...?”

Of course, it is also true that we need to improve our *Ahavas Yisrael*, but the deeper part of our *avodah* is that we need to reflect deeply into how we view life and come to change our entire superficial perspective that we start out having in life.

⁶⁴ Refer to the book *Getting To Know Your Feelings*.

The Sages say [concerning all the arguments amongst our Sages]: “Their words, and their words, are the words of the living G-d.”⁶⁵ The reason why there are so many different kinds of Jews is exactly the purpose of our exile. We are in exile due to our very differences, and the purpose of the exile is so that we can come to understand why we have differences: it is so that we can each learn from each other and pick the good that can be gained from each Jew we come across.

We need to reveal our *emunah* in this more and reflect about what the truth is, and then we will be able to understand that the whole point of being in exile is so that we can learn how to gain from each other in spite of our differences, because each person has good points that we can gain from. Our avodah in exile is to learn how to gain the perspective on other kinds of Jews, and we must never feel conceit or hatred for another Jew, which are base emotions.

This is the depth behind the statement of the Sages, “The Jewish people did not go into exile except for the purpose of having converts annexed onto them.” This statement hints to how we must complete ourselves by gaining from others, who each have good points that we do not have.

When we stood at Har Sinai, we each stood as “*one man, with one heart*”. We were all unified with each other. As each day passes, the further we are from Har Sinai, and the less unity we have. In the current times, the disparity amongst Jews is at its zenith. A Jew these days can hate another Jew just for having a different kind of face he’s not used to, or for dressing a certain way, and all other kinds of silly reasons. Without knowing how to another Jew in the proper way, we will be divided from other Jews, by default.

The Other Extreme: Being Too Accepting

Every Jew contains good points. We each have our own unique avodah. If such a perspective causes us to feel closer and more loving towards other Jews, it’s wonderful. But, if such an open attitude towards others is causing us to doubt the way of avodah that we are brought up with, then it’s detrimental.

It’s a fine balance. We need to be accepting of other kinds of *frum* Jews, and we must understand that each sect of Jewry has its own unique form of avodah. But this does not mean that I have to stop my own avodah and change over into another’s way of serving Hashem. Just because I understand how another thinks differently does not mean that I have to actually change how I think and go about my life; I can understand others, but it doesn’t have to confuse me and doubt the way I serve Hashem.

We each have our own way of serving Hashem, and we must not let others’ way of living get in our way and negate what we do. Maybe Moshiach will be able to come and unify all the ways of serving Hashem together into one unit, but nobody else knows how to do that. Each person has a

⁶⁵ *Gittin 6b*

certain way of serving Hashem, and it must be not be combined with others' ways, or else it leads to confusion and being misguided.

To our chagrin, most people are either one way or the other people. Either people are very rigid and they cannot accept how other frum Jews live and think differently than they do, and they simply hate other Jews who are different. Or, he goes in the opposite direction: he loves other Jews so much that he goes extreme with his *kiruv*, and he ends up connecting with all the evil he comes across. He confuses himself. There are even people involved in *kiruv* who wish to connect with souls who come from "Erev Rav".⁶⁶

So we must live with a paradox. On one hand, we need to understand that each Jew has his own avodah. But at the same time, each of must be firm and continue our way of serving Hashem, without becoming confused with the many ways of serving Hashem that we see in others. I must understand other Jews and how they serve Hashem, but I must not get confused in the process and mix myself up in my own Avodas Hashem!

(How does one figure out the unique way in how he must serve Hashem? This is a different matter, and it too is a lengthy matter, beyond the scope of this current discussion).⁶⁷

66 See the classes of Tefillah #085: Erev Rav Today and Chanukah #047: Greek Influence Today.

67 In Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh Vol. V, in the section of Guidance In Serving Hashem, in the section entitled "Your Individual Role", the Rav writes as follows: "Just like each person has his own individual path in learning Torah, so does each person have a different path in Avodas Hashem. Some people are mainly meant to work on the area of love for Hashem, while others are meant to work more on the area of fear of Hashem. There are some people who mainly have to become more thinking people, while there are others whose main task is to work at breaking their desires. There are even those who are meant to only work on exerting themselves in learning Torah, and nothing more than this is required for such people. The point is that each person is different, and there is no one way for everybody.

"No one can decide on his own what his unique role is and excuse himself from the other areas; this requires intense inner clarification. This cannot be accomplished by sitting and thinking about it for a long time. It can take months and even years to figure out what you are supposed to work on and which areas are meant for you specially to work on, what is meant for your soul. (This needs a lot of caution, because many times a person imagines that a certain area in Avodas Hashem is more for his soul to work on, and he feels a pull toward it, but it can really come from laziness not to work on other areas.)

"Most people are not able to improve themselves just by learning Torah alone, and they need other spiritual remedies, such as either Mussar or Chassidus. Each person must therefore pour out his heart to Hashem and cry to Him many tears until he merits the way how he can figure out what his unique role is on this world, and what he is meant to work on."

Conclusion

When Moshiach comes, we will all be unified, and we will each see all of our good points. We will see how all the differences do not split us apart, but rather, that they all come together in harmony and serve to unify us.

The inner point of each our ways in serving Hashem is always one and the same: to do the will of Hashem. This is the inner, pure point which can bind us all together – when we are aware that we are all serving Hashem because ultimately, ***we all want to do the will of Hashem.***

Each of the 12 *shevatim* (tribes) had his specific way of serving Hashem, and none of the 12 tribes negates each other's way of *Avodas Hashem*.

A *Kohen* did the Avodah in the *Beis HaMikdash*, while a Levi did Avodah with singing the *shirah*. The Levi need not be jealous of the Kohen, because he has his own Avodah: he sings *shirah*. While he understands that the Kohen has a special Avodah in the *Beis HaMikdash* and thus he reveres him, that does not mean that he should disdain his own Avodah of being a Levi. If he does the Avodah of the Kohen, he is liable to the death penalty.

May Hashem help each of us succeed in their unique way of serving Hashem, together with feeling love and unity with other Jews who serve Hashem differently. When we each do our own respective avodah - together with recognizing that other Jews also have their own special role in Avodas Hashem - we will all merit to reach again the unity that we felt by Har Sinai – *“Like one man, with one heart.”*

2.6 | *Initiating Love Towards Others*⁶⁸

The Difference Between “Chessed” and “Gomel Chessed”

"גומל חסדים טובים."

We daven in Shemoneh Esrei, “*Gomel Chassadim Tovim*.” What is *chassadim*, and what is *chassadim tovim*? If Hashem is kind, why do we also say that He does kindnesses that are “good”? Are there any kindnesses that aren’t good?

The answer to this lies in the following.

The *Gemara* says that the Jewish people contain three good *middos* – compassion, shame, and loving kindness (*gomlei chassadim*). It is understandable that compassion and shame are called *middos*, but how is kindness a *middah*? Kindness are acts that we do, but how is it a *middah*? Yet, the Sages say that kindness is a *middah*, not merely an act.

What does it mean to be “*gomel*” *chessed*? There is *chessed*, and then there is “*gomel*” *chessed*. *Chessed* implies when we simply do an act of kindness. But to be *gomel chessed* is to use the *middah* of one’s soul of *chessed*. When a person is *gomel chessed*, it is a deeper *chessed* – it is to do something for another person with the understanding that “Whatever is mine, is also his.”

A person must know that whatever he has is not only here for himself to use. Rav Chaim Volozhiner writes (in the introduction to *sefer Nefesh HaChaim*) that “A person was not created for himself, but only in order to help others.” This is to be “*gomel*” *chessed* – to realize what life is about, that life is about helping others.

The *chessed* that Hashem does for us is *gemillas chessed*, not just *chessed*. This is because whatever Hashem does for us, He has no intention of receiving anything in return. He is kind to us unconditionally. That is the meaning of

Living for others

In our own soul, there is a power to have *gemillas chassadim* – to realize that whatever a person has must be used to help others.

Some people think that the depth of *chessed* \ kindness is love, *ahavah*. Such people think that a person can only give to others if he loves them. This is true, but there is more depth to kindness.

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The depth of kindness goes even further than love. It is for a person to feel that “What’s mine isn’t mine”, and therefore, it is only natural that I must be kind to others.

Hashem does *gemillas chassadim* because all He does is do kindness for others. He doesn’t exist for himself. That is the meaning of being “*gomel*” *chessed*. Since our avodah is to resemble Hashem, when we are *gomel chessed*, it should be with the intention that we exist for others, and it is from that motivation that we should do *chessed*.

If a person lives only for himself, he is very far from holiness. But a person who has revealed his soul is able to be *gomel chessed* to others.

If a person is immersed in his own world, even if he learns Torah all day – but he is self-absorbed and he doesn’t care about others - then he has nothing to do with being a *gomel chessed*! We aren’t speaking about such a person. A *gomel chessed* is someone who is bothered by others’ pain and he wants to help them and bestow good upon them.

Why people don’t reciprocate

Yet, even a person who is *gomel chessed* can’t always give to others. Why?

It is written in Mishlei, “*Just as water reflects a face to a face, so does the heart of man reflect one to another.*” The way a person feels about someone else is the way the other person feels toward him; if a person likes another person, the other will like him back, and if he dislikes the person, the person feels it and dislikes him in return. But this is only true when there is a true reflection – and only clear water can give a reflection. If a person’s water is black and dirty, he cannot reflect back the feelings of another person. Even if I smile and love him, he will not necessarily love me back, because his materialism and bad *middos* prevent his natural reflection. I can love him as much as I can, but such a person will not reciprocate the positive feelings. He cannot reflect anything back at me, just like dirty water cannot have a reflection.

Many times a person can smile at someone, and the other person simply turns to his side. The person isn’t even interested in receiving my smile that I want to give him.

Sometimes there are people who don’t give to others and don’t feel like smiling at another person, simply because they are more materialistic and wrapped up in their physicality of the body. That is one way how people don’t give to others. But a person can very well wish to give to others, yet others aren’t able to receive his kindnesses.

Why does this happen?

This is because the other person is too materialistic and unable to receive the goodness from other people. His materialism holds him back from receiving another’s light. I can be prepared to connect to him totally, but he doesn’t have the strength to want to connect with me.

Any person with even a little sensitivity sees this going on every day; a person can smile at others, yet he doesn't get a smile back. It is because other people, who are wrapped up in their physicality, don't want to receive the connection that we wish to have with them!

This is why the rule of "*Kimayim hapanim el panim*" (As water reflects a face to a face, so does the heart of a man reflect one to another) doesn't take place anymore nowadays. The natural rule is that people reciprocate what you feel about them, but in today's times, this often does not happen. People today don't have a "heart" to reciprocate your feelings! It is like black and dirty water, which has no reflection.

This is not because the giver doesn't really want to be kind to the other. The giver wants to bestow good upon the other, but the receiver doesn't have the spiritual strength to receive what the giver is trying to give.

If a person learns Torah all day and is immersed in his own holiness, the words here do not pain him at all. But that itself is painful – more than anything. The fact that it doesn't bother a person shows that something is really missing in himself.

If a person is *zoche* to have a true friend who reciprocates the warm feelings back – he is very fortunate. Many times, though, it is not a true feeling between them, but just in one's imagination. People imagine that others are really their friends, and it can be just in one's imagination – not a true friendship.

This pain – the pain of not seeing others reciprocate to us when we want to like them – is a true pain of our very soul. It is the pain of the *Shechinah* in exile – and it is the pain of our soul. This kind of pain only bothers one who lives an internal kind of life.

A longing for others' he'aras panim

Some people long for others to smile at them and give them some *he'aras panim* (a radiant countenance) – they are waiting for someone to come tell them, "Good morning." If people want others to tell them "Good morning" because they are depressed or because they need recognition from others, this is not the kind of pain we are discussing. Such anxiety comes from a need to feel recognition; it has nothing to do with what we are talking about.

We are talking about a different kind of pain: when a person has pain because no one tells him "Good Morning", because he wants to feel connections with others. He wants to be connected to the power of *he'aras panim* in a person, a force in our soul – and not because he wants to **get** a "Good Morning" from others. He doesn't want to live in a cold world where each person only cares for himself. When a person has pain from others' coldness, it is a true longing and desire of the soul – a longing for the kind of life that is in the World to Come.

If a person is waiting for others to smile at him and greet him, it is not a way to live. We cannot wait for others to come greet us. Rather, we should wait to receive the *he'aras panim* of Hashem; that is a realistic expectation we can all have.

We daven in *Shemoneh Esrei*, “For in the light of Your Face, which You gave us.” If we receive *he'aras panim* from Hashem – we can then pass it on to others.

When a person feels Hashem’s *he'aras panim* toward him – when he feels Hashem smiling at him and greeting him, so to speak – he lives in a world of closeness to Hashem, in which everything is “face to face” with Hashem – the deepest relationship possible. One who doesn’t have this longing for the *he'aras panim* of Hashem lives in a very cold kind of world, like the Mishnah in Avos describes, “A life of pain.”

But if a person has a palpable sense of Hashem in his life, he can receive *he'aras panim* from Hashem, and not only that – he will find within himself that he is able to give *he'aras panim* to others, even to those who don’t smile or greet him. (Of course, some will smile at you more than others, but each person on his own level will be able to give you some *he'aras panim* back, if you are giving him *he'aras panim* which you received from your closeness to Hashem.)

The Sages said that “A person who shows the white of his teeth to his friend is greater than giving him milk.” When a person smiles and greets others, he longs to live in a world which is entirely *he'aras panim* – not because he wants others to smile back at him or because he needs recognition, but because he wants to live in such a world of *he'aras panim* and doesn’t want to live in a cold, unfriendly world.

We should be *zoche* to receive the *he'aras panim* of Hashem – and from this, we will be able to give true, perfect *he'aras panim* to others.

2.7 | *Inner Love*⁶⁹

The Abilities of Compassion and Love

In the first blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei*, we say, "גומל חסדים טובים"82 .

Previously, we have explained what it means to be “*gomer*” *chessed* – to want to be kind to others, because what’s ours is not really meant to be ours; all that we have is meant for us to use it to benefit others. But what is the meaning of the word “*chassadim*”, “kindnesses”?

It means to have compassion on others. The Sages say that *chessed* can be done either with the poor or with the wealthy. How can one do *chessed* with the wealthy, if he doesn’t need our kindness? The simple answer would be that even though we can’t give physical benefits to a wealthy man, we can still give him spiritual kindness – to benefit him in a spiritual way.

But on a deeper note, even *chessed* is toward the wealthy, because Hashem created the entire world only in order to benefit everyone, including the wealthy. Even if there wouldn’t be people on the world, Hashem would still have a desire to bestow His kindness. So really, we should be kind not because others *need* us, but because that is the way the world is supposed to be – *we are supposed to be looking* to benefit others.

When we are kind to the poor, we have compassion on them and give them what they need. But when we are kind to the wealthy, it is a deeper recognition of kindness: because we want to be givers; that we have an inner longing to do good for others.

From where does this human ability come from? Why do people have a longing to benefit others? This comes from the power of *lev tov* in a person – to have a “good heart.” Also, it can be because a person has compassion on others, and this awakens in a person a longing to do good for others.

Most of the kindness we find in the world today is toward the poor. This is kindness that comes from our compassion on others. It can also be a pure form of kindness – a kindness that is *lishmah*. But there is another kind of kindness – a desire to be good to others, to have a *lev tov* toward them. This is the inner ability in a person to love others.

What is the difference between compassion (*rachamim*) and love (*ahavah*)?

With compassion, sometimes a person feels sorry for others and sometimes not. But when a person loves others, the love is always there – it doesn’t need a reason. Why? Because this love is part of one’s intrinsic existence. (Although it can take hard work to reveal this power, once it is revealed, it is always there.) By contrast, compassion needs to be aroused. Compassion is sometimes revealed on this world. But love isn’t so revealed on this world; only a few people have revealed it.

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Compassion and love are actually two opposing forces. Love doesn't need a reason, while compassion needs a reason.

Inner Love – The Root Power of A Jew's Soul

The inner love for others is not present in the kind of “people-lovers” that are in the world, and it is not either “to have good *middos*.” There are people who by nature are very good-hearted, but this is not the inner kind of love we are talking about. We are talking about the inner essence of the soul – which is a pure, total love. It is not one of the *middos*, nor is it a trait of the soul. It is the very *root* of the soul.

We can find non-Jews as well who are good-natured and have a love for people, but this is not the inner kind of love that a Jew's soul has. A Jew's soul has an inner kind of love that comes from Avraham *Avinu* – which the non-Jews did not get. This love, the root of the soul, is also the root of all good *middos*.

Revealing The Inner Love

How can one reveal his inner love for others?

The Jewish people are called *raishis*, the “beginning” of the world [See *Rashi to Beraishis 1:1*]. The fact that we are endeared to Hashem as the beginning of the nations is not just a fact of history, but it shows us that we have a power in our soul called *raishis* -- the “beginning”. When a person reveals his “beginning” – in other words, when he reveals the root of his soul – then he reveals his love for others.

Anything else other than this kind of love is a superficial love which comes from one's body. When a person thinks of himself as only a body, he looks at love like any of the other *middos*. Maybe he learns Torah and works on his *middos*, and he even helps others work on their *middos*, but his entire love is from his body's viewpoint. He doesn't yet have the inner love.

But if a Jew has developed even minimal feelings for holiness, he can understand that there is such a thing as Torah learning and good *middos* which only come from the body, and that there is a deeper level of Torah learning and good *middos*, which come from the soul.

The *chassidah* (stork) is a bird which does kindness to its friends, but its kindness is superficial, because it only acts kind to its friends. [For this reason, the Torah says it is a non-kosher bird, even though it has the good trait of acting kind, because it is only kind with its own type, and not to other birds]. There are people who are very nice to their friends – but only to their friends, and no one else. Such kindness comes from the body.

We have been influenced by our body since we were born and thus we naturally act based on our body's viewpoint. But at some point, we need to open up our heart more, and instead reveal a new source for doing kindness with others, a kindness that comes from our soul.

In order to reveal true love and kindness for others, we need to receive it as a gift from Hashem; we need to *daven* for this - "*Open up my heart to Your Torah.*"

When People Live Superficially

If a person's heart isn't opened yet to uncovering more depth to his *middos*, then he views even Torah, *middos* and matters of *Avodas Hashem* only from his body's understanding, which is superficial. We need to uncover the inner essence behind everything – we need to adapt a totally new attitude, just like a convert who is like a child born anew.

There are people who can learn a lot of Torah and *mussar*, and they have even written many *sefarim* – but their understanding is still very superficial! They haven't yet uncovered more depth to their souls, and all of their understanding comes from their *nefesh habehamis*, the lowest part of the soul. They don't really know anything about life; all of their learning is just copying others.

We can find two people having a conversation, yet their words are kind of dead. They aren't talking from their essence – they are missing the life that is supposed to be found even in ordinary conversation. They are lacking "*The words of G-d are life*" and "*The Torah of kindness on her lips*" in their conversations.

Only when a person reaches his inner essence can he really teach Torah to others, and of him it can be said, "*The Torah of kindness on her lips.*"

To be a *gomel chassadim tovim* means that one is kind to others because he has an inner love for them – he loves others *without any reason*. He reveals an unconditional love for others.

In this world that we live in, we are living in a very cold world! There is no true, inner love to be found.

There are all sorts of wonderful thoughts and ideas found in the Torah, but this is not enough to help us understand what life is about. We have to reveal the inner essence of our soul. We need to reveal our power of inner love for other souls, which is in each and every Jewish soul.

We should be *zoche* to remove ourselves from our bodies and come to reveal the true source of love that is found within us.

2.8 | *Becoming Connected* 70

Chessed Should Be A Tool To Build Relationships

"גומל חסדים טובים."

What is the meaning *chassadim* "tovim"? Is there such a thing as *chessed* that isn't good?!

It is written, "It is not good for man to be alone." Only when a person connects with others can there be any "good".

This is the meaning of *chassadim tovim* – that when Hashem does kindness to us, He does not merely act kind with us, but His kindness to us is always out of a relationship with us.

There are many *gemachim* (*chessed* organizations). Do these people who run any of these *gemachim* feel a connection with those whom they help out? Usually not. There is a lot of *chessed* going on in the world – a lot. But often, it is only "Gemillas" *chessed* – it is not yet "chassadim *Tovim*". It is not *chessed* which causes us to build connections with others. Many people do wonderful acts of kindness for others, but their hearts are missing. They will "do" acts of kindness for others, but they're not doing it with the motivation to build a connection with others.

Why is it that people can do so much *chessed* all day for others and still not feel a love for others? Isn't there a rule that "the heart get pulled after the actions"⁷¹?

The reason for this is because it depends on what a person's motivation is. Only if a person is motivated by a desire to *expand his heart* toward others, will he love others when he does kindness for them.

Superficial "Chessed"

When a person does *chessed* – why is he doing it? Is it because he wants a favor in return – or because he wants to bring a love between him and the other?

There are different kinds of *chessed* that that people do which are really superficial *chessed*. One kind of superficial *chessed* is when people act kind because that is what they were trained to do since they were young. *Chessed* was ingrained in them since they were children, yet, they never discovered the real reason why we must engage in *chessed*.

70 תפילה 022

71 *Sefer HaChinuch*, 15.

Another kind of superficial *chessed* is when a person does *chessed* because he wants more *zechusim* (merits). He's kind to others, but only because it's good for him to do so.

Real Chessed: Give In Order To Love

But the real kind of *chessed* is based on love for others.

Our body's viewpoint is that love is a reason why we give, and therefore, the purpose of love is to **give**. But our soul has a totally different view: the purpose of giving is to form a **love** between the giver and the recipient.

If a person does *chessed* just for the sake of *chessed* alone – and not because he wants to connect to others – his *chessed* is only superficial. The inner essence of *chessed* is to realize that *chessed* is only a tool – it is a tool to reach our inner love for others.

The *Gemara* says that “One who gives a gift to his friend must inform him about it.” Rashi explains that this is in order that his friend should be loved. If a person is kind to others but isn't interested in loving the other, it's like a body without a soul. He has the “body” of *chessed*, but he doesn't have the “soul” of *chessed*.

When a person borrows something from another person, what is he left with after he returns it? If a person asks someone to borrow something because he wants to have a relationship with the person, their connection will remain forever, long after he returns the item.

When a person does *chessed* superficially, at best this is because he wants that “the other should have it good.” But the inner kind of *chessed* is to form a love through acting kind to another. The favors one does for another are to be viewed as a tool to bring about this love.

Life Is About Connecting

Let us make this point even stronger.

If a person lives based on his body's viewpoint, he looks at everything through his body's lens. When it comes to *chessed*, he looks at *chessed* as “actions” and no more. But a person who lives through his soul's viewpoint sees everything through his soul. He sees that “*Mitzvos* were not created except to connect all people.” The person who sees things through his soul sees that the purpose of interpersonal *mitzvos* is to have connections with others.

What is the purpose of Creation? A child will say that it is Torah and *mitzvos*, but this is of course a shallow answer. There is more to it. The depth of Torah and *mitzvos* is to **connect** all of Creation with Hashem.

A person who lives only through his body sees *chesed* as kind actions, and “what has to be done.” He looks at everything through his *seichel* (intellect) alone – with no feelings involved.

But a person who lives through his soul sees how everything enables connections. He sees that he has to connect with his friends, his neighbors, his family, and everyone else – and unify them all with Hashem.

Every person in the world loves his family. But is a person using this love as a way to further connection, to unify them all with Hashem? Why is it that a person only loves his family, but not the members of his Koleh...?

People can *daven* a lot, but aren't connected to their *davening*.

People are living with their friends all the time, but they don't really connect to them.

Why are people often not connected to what they do and experience? It is because many people don't realize how life is about connecting to the Creation. People will often do *chessed* only because they “have to do *chessed*”, but not out of a deep desire to connect with others.

Hashem is a “*Gomel Chassadim Tovim*” – He is good to us because He wants us to connect to Him. He does kindness with us out of a desire to have a connection with us.

A person who doesn't see how life is all about connection sees this life as a constant struggle that bears no results. He will forever try to “concentrate on his *davening*” and try to make his learning “feel more alive and have more *chiyus* vitality in it”, but he will fail and get frustrated, because he is still being superficial.

But when one realizes that life is all about connecting with Creation – because Hashem wants us to connect with Creation, and that is why He gave us the Torah and *mitzvos* - then of him it will be applied the statement of the Sages, “Words that come from the heart enter the heart.” Such a person does *chesed* because he wants to connect with others, and he is connected in all his thoughts to what he does.

Even if someone learns Torah all day, it's possible that he isn't connected to his learning! He is just “reading” the *Gemara* or “thinking” in learning – but he isn't **connected** yet to the Torah he learns. He needs to realize that he must come to feel an inward connection to the Torah.

A person who realizes how life is all about connecting to the Creation will feel like a person who has redeemed himself from exile! He will also feel that he is able to connect with the pain of the *Shechinah*, which is in pain over the current situation we are in.

The *Gemara* says that “A person was not created except to have companionship.” This is not just a statement of our Sages – it must become a living reality to us!

2.9 | *When You Feel Unloved*⁷²

The Root Love In Creation: Love for Hashem

In the blessing in *Shemoneh Esrei* of ולמלשינים, we say, וכל אויבי עמך מהרה יכרתו, “*And may all the enemies of Your people be cut off.*” The opposite of the word *oyev*, “enemy”, is *oihev*, “loved one.” In order to understand what we are saying here in *Shemoneh Esrei*, that Hashem should cut off our enemies, we need to understand the opposite concept of “enemy”, which is the concept of love.

There are three primary kinds of love which we must acquire: love for Hashem, love for the Torah, and love for the Jewish people. There is also the love that we must have for Eretz Yisrael, but the love for Eretz Yisrael is not a goal unto itself; it is rather the tool that holds together the three primary kinds of love. Without love for Hashem or love for the Torah or for the Jewish nation, our love for Eretz Yisrael is incomplete.

Hashem created this world so He could bestow His good upon Creation. This is true with regards to all of Creation, but with regards to the Jewish people, Hashem has a special love. He has a loving father-son relationship with us, and this is contained in the expression, “He Who chooses His nation, Yisrael, with love.”

Since Hashem has a father-son relationship with us, we all have in our souls a love for Him deep down, but it usually remains hidden and concealed inside us. We therefore have an avodah called *Ahavas Hashem*, to love Hashem – that we need to reveal forth our love for Hashem. Besides for the fact that we must fear Hashem and be in awe of Him, we also have a relationship of love with Him. Hashem already love us; it is we who have to reciprocate the love. The love for Hashem we have is hidden deep down, in our essence, and we need to reveal it.

In our life, we are familiar with what it means to love. The inner reason why Hashem made such a thing as love in the world is so that we should become opened up to the concept of love, and to find the deepest kind of love that exists – love for Hashem. All love that we know of is there only as a **tool** for us to reach love for Hashem. Without loving Hashem – the root power of love in Creation – the main point is missing. When someone reveals his love for Hashem, upon that he is able to come to love for Torah, the Jewish people, and for *Eretz Yisrael*.

Becoming Mature In Our Love

However, this is only “one side of the coin” [that we need to channel our various loves in life towards loving Hashem]. We must be aware of the following point as well.

תפילה 0102 – וכל אויבי עמך 72

Each of us, as children, grew up with a certain love from our parents. When we were children, our parents caressed us and poured love upon us. At first, a child feels a love for his mother, and then he begins to love his father. The child feels that he is being cherished and loved by his parents. When the child gets older and matures, and he hears about the concept of how we need to acquire a love for Hashem, he might think that it's the same kind of love he was used to since he was a child.

But, love for Hashem is a whole different kind of feeling of love than we know of since our childhood. The love which we experienced as children was only superficial! It was a love that was experienced through our *nefesh habehaimis* – the lower, “animalistic” part of our soul. It is not at all the kind of love that is *Ahavas Hashem*. In fact, the more and more a child felt loved by his parents and family, the harder it will be for him to develop *Ahavas Hashem*, because ever since he was a child, he has only received love from his family, and this itself prevents him from developing *Ahavas Hashem*.

Even more so, there are people who were very loved as children, but later in life, they begin to search for more love in their life. The search for love can go on their whole life; they are looking to be loved in the way that their parents used to love them as children. People will seek to be loved in all kinds of ways, in any way they can get it – and the kind of love they are searching for is really a love experienced by our *nefesh habehaimis*. This is all comes from a lack of *ahavas Hashem* in one's life. Without *ahavas Hashem*, a person only knows of the superficial kind of love that he fondly remembers of since his childhood, and the kind of love he will seek is that very same kind of superficial love he remembers.

If someone never thinks and reflects, he will end up searching his entire life for love, and he seeks to be loved in the same way that his parents loved him. He wants to be loved again no less than when he was as a child. He is unaware that such love is coming from the lower, animalistic level of his soul.

Then there are other people who have a different problem. They were loved as children, but at some point, their relationship with their parents became a bit stiff, and the love lost its zenith. Children can do things that get their parents very upset and the parents will lose some of their love for the children. Or, the child runs into opposition from his parents, and there is tension between the child and the parents. In any of these cases, the parents don't love their grown up child anymore with the same love they had for him when he was a little child.

A child grows up and can get into various fights with his parents, and he feels that his parents don't love him so much as they used to. Then he goes to Yeshiva and he meets other friends who also feel the same way; that they don't feel like their parents love them. There are even friends he comes across who not only feel unloved by their parents, but they feel that their parents have a very cold relationship towards them, and in some cases, they feel that their parents truly hate them.

What happens? The grown-up child begins to detach from the emotion of love. He has gone through disappointments in his own life with regards to feeling loved, and when he meets how other people are unloved too, he slowly begins to give up on ever being loved. He closes himself off from

his own emotions, and now he cannot love others as a result. He gets married and has children, but his emotions are suppressed inside him, because he has detached from the world of love, and now he has a very hard time expressing love to his wife and children.

This can also happen to a person if he encountered a severed relationship with family members or with a close friend. When something like this happens, his emotion of love has taken a hit, and he becomes detached from love. Either one of two things will happen.

1) He gives up on ever being loved again, and as a result, he is closed off from anything to do with “love”. He won’t be able to develop *Ahavas Hashem* either or have any feelings for Hashem, because his feelings have become deadened a long time ago.

2) Or, he might search for love from others. But, sadly, he won’t find it, and at some point, he will totally give up on love, and become completely detached from being loved and from loving others.

Even if the emotionally hardened person goes on to live a *frum* life, in which he learns Torah, does mitzvos, and even if he does *chessed*, he is closed up inside himself. His heart is gone; he does everything that he has to do of course, but he has no feelings anymore. He lost his feelings a long time ago already.

Thus, being very loved as a child can actually hamper a person from having any feelings for Hashem, because since he was used to his parents’ love as a child, later in life he will seek a similar kind of love, and he will be met with disappointment.

Or, his relationship with his parents gets a bit cold and stiff, or he has suffered setbacks in his relationships with others whom he was close to, and as a result he has become closed off from his own emotions, giving up on love. He won’t be able to develop *Ahavas Hashem* either.

[There are even people who own a dog in their house for this very reason – they have given up on being loved by people, so instead they turn to animals in the hope of receiving love from them.]

Hashem designed our life in a way that we start out in life feeling very loved by our parents, family and friends, so that we can become opened up to the concept of love, and expand that love to become the true, deep kind of love – *Ahavas Hashem*.

That is the life lesson we are supposed to learn from all this “love” that we experience. It is meant to open us and lead us on the journey towards having feelings for Hashem. But it’s just an opener. If we don’t expand our love further than the love we know of since we were young, then the only love we know of is coming from our *nefesh habehaimis*.

Reflecting

Therefore, if a person was *zoche* in his life to be very loved by his parents, family and friends, he has to look back at this and reflect: This was only meant to *open* me up, so that I will be able to love

Hashem one day. We cannot feel emotionally fulfilled in life just from the fact that we are loved by family and friends. Even if someone merited to have a close friendship with another that resembles the love between Dovid and Yehonasan, this will not either bring enough emotional fulfillment to a person. All of the love in our life exists so that it will reveal in us a yearning for *Abavas Hashem*.

If a person feels unloved, or if he has been “hit hard” from his parents, family, friends, or teachers – what he should he do? If he hasn’t given up on love yet, this is what he should think: He can use all his pain from this as a way to search for the truer and deeper kind of love. He can realize that the reason why he went through disappointments in his relationships was a blessing in disguise, because his pain will spur him on to seek the real kind of love to have in life. It can help a person seek love for Hashem.

This perspective can give a person a massive overhaul on how he views life. It changes his perspective on life entirely.

The truth is: there is very little real love to be found on this world.

If a person thinks superficially, then he will disagree with these words and find them to be strange. But if a person seeks to live a more internal kind of life, he can know how true this is.

How You Can Feel A Love for Hashem

How indeed can a person feel that Hashem loves him? We started out by saying that Hashem created this world so He could bestow good upon His Creation. His love for us is contained in the entire Creation – it can be felt anywhere. Hashem’s love for us is calling out through the entire Creation! The sun, for example, is a message of His love for us. When we feel the sun shining on our face on a beautiful day, we can feel Hashem’s love for us; through the sun, Hashem is sending us an illumination of His light.

But, we have to be aware, that the sun is only one of the tools that Hashem uses to reveal His love to us. If a person enjoys the sun’s rays and feels, “The sun loves me”, this is bordering on idol worship. Instead, enjoy the sun and appreciate all of the beauty in Creation, but realize that it is **Hashem** who is behind it, and He lets you enjoy it because He wants you to feel His love for him.

Hashem’s love for us is not hidden away in some corner. It is everywhere in Creation, and we can feel it anywhere.

If someone doesn’t live an inner kind of life, he does not feel Hashem’s love calling out to him from Creation. He lives in this “world of action” alone, and he does all the *mitzvos*, but when it comes to feeling Hashem’s love, he has to open up a *sefer Orchos Tzaddikim* and learn “*Shaar Ahavah*” in order to get himself to love Hashem...or he learns *Chovos HaLevovos (Shaar Abavas Hashem)*...but he doesn’t see it in Creation.

Expressing Our Innermost Feelings To Hashem

In order to feel a love for Hashem (and in return, to feel Hashem's love for us), we need to do as the *Mesillas Yescharim* says, that when a person talks to Hashem, he can talk to Him as if he's a friend. So we need to talk to Hashem and express our feelings to Him more. The point of talking to Hashem is not *tefillah* or asking Him for things! The point is to simply develop a bond with Him!

We can do it by speaking out all our feelings with Him. Tell him your innermost feelings – your deep feelings of love for Him that are really in you deep down. Talk to Hashem and repeat to yourself, with feeling: “Hashem, I love you. Hashem, I love you. Hashem, I love you!!”

We need to verbally express our feelings of love for Hashem that are really deep down in us. Otherwise, our feelings for Hashem lay hidden deep down in us, where they are not felt. We need to feel those feelings that we really have for Hashem, and the way to do it is by verbally expressing our love for Hashem when we talk to Hashem.

Why is it that people often have a hard time expressing their deep feelings? It is because their inner world is very hidden away in themselves, and thus they find it very difficult to express their deepest, innermost feelings (However, the other extreme is bad too, and that is if a person is always expressing his innermost feelings of love for other people. This is also unhealthy).

We need to speak with Hashem and express to Him our feelings of love for Him, resembling the loving relationship that is described in *sefer Shir HaShirim* (Song of Songs). When we verbally express our feelings of love for Hashem as we talk to Him, we will then be able to feel our love for Him – in the same way that a child naturally loves his father.

If a person does this – if he develops *Ahavas Hashem* – his love for Hashem will then spread into loving other Jews, and he will come to truly love other Jews. This is the true meaning of *Ahavas Yisrael*. He will feel the essence of the Jewish people in his heart. Besides for the fact that we must work to love each Jew individually, we also have a mission to love the entire collective unit of the Jewish people, and we can feel this love in our heart, with the more *Ahavas Hashem* we develop.

If a person does not develop a strong love for Hashem, this will reflect itself in his love for other Jews as well; something will be sorely missing from his *Ahavas Yisrael*. His love hasn't properly been developed yet, because he is missing *Ahavas Hashem*, and therefore, the rest of his love won't be able to thrive properly, so he won't be able to really love others.

When a person walks in the street, or if he's on his way to shul in the morning, he should think and reflect about his love for Hashem. He should mentally review in his mind, “Hashem, I love you.” In your mind as well, you can speak with Hashem. This is living a life with Hashem. It is a life full of true yearnings for Hashem; as we sing in *Yedid Nefesh* on Shabbos, “*My soul is sick with love for you.*”

The more a person develops his love for Hashem, the more his love will spread to love for the Jewish people, love for the Torah, and love for *Eretz Yisrael*. It can then be said of us, “He Who chooses His nation, *Yisrael*, with love.”

2.10 | *Searching For Love*⁷³

The *Mesillas Yescharim* writes: “Man must establish a firm love in his heart for the Blessed One, to the point that he awakens his soul to give Him satisfaction, just as one wishes to satisfy his father and mother, and just as he feels pain when his parents are lacking in any way – either due to his part or due to others’ lack of respect – and he should become zealous and full of great joy over being able to do so.”

Here the Ramchal is telling us that when we love for Hashem, it has to be coming from our will to please those whom we love, such as our parents and our spouse. We want to give our loved ones a *nachas ruach*, a satisfactory feeling, and thus we do what they want. In the same way, when a person purifies himself, he awakens in his heart a yearning to give a *nachas ruach* to his Creator.

Why does a person wish to give a *nachas ruach* to another? It is because he loves him. A person wants the best for himself. That is human nature – people want to do what is good for themselves, and they want that everything should go good for them. When a person loves another person, he wants to give over to that other person the very same satisfactory feeling that he wishes for himself.

In other words, it is not that a person strives to give a *nachas ruach* to others by revealing love for them. Rather, it is that a person already wants a *nachas ruach* for himself, and this is true even before a person reveals a [healthy] self-love for himself. When we reveal love for others, we broaden our life and bring others into our circle of *nachas ruach*; and we then wish that others should have the same feeling of *nachas ruach* that we have for ourselves.

How does this work? How do we extend our own *nachas ruach* to others?

Simply speaking, a person can work on himself to increase his love for another, and that will in turn motivate him to give a *nachas ruach* to that person. But this is still just being superficial. The depth of it is as follows. Rav Shimon Shkop wrote [in *sefer Shaarei Yosher*] that it is not man’s job to create a love for others. Rather, a person naturally loves himself and worries for himself. It is his job to expand his “I”, his love for himself, outwardly towards others. When one learns how to expand beyond his ego, there will automatically be love for others and a wish that others should have it good.

Thus, our *avodah* is not to get ourselves to love others! Our *avodah* is rather to reveal outward the love that we already have towards ourselves, and extend that self-love to others. It is to understand that I and another are really one; that just as I love myself, so can I love another Jew. And just as I want the best for myself, so can I want the best for another Jew.

⁷³ מסילת ישרים ח"א. הקדמת הרב המחבר. עמ' קלג - קלד

It is written, *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”* This *possuk* reveals to us what the essence of love is. Love is to reveal that we are one with another Jew; when we reveal that oneness, there will be ensuing love. It is our nature to love ourselves – we love whatever is a part of us. Thus, if we see others as being a part of us, as being one with us, then we will naturally love others and want the best for them, just like we naturally want the best for ourselves. You must really come to **feel** that another Jew is a part of you.

Usually, a person has the tendency to **seek** love from others, and there are very few people who are looking to **give** love to others. The more a person becomes spiritually purified, however, the more and more he will wish to bestow love upon others, rather than seek to be loved.

The truth is that you can’t “give” love to others if you haven’t yet attained a healthy self-love for yourself. In order to include others in your self-love, there must already be a healthy self-love that you have for yourself. To give love to others, you need to expand beyond yourself – and this is not about expanding your *self*, but it is rather about including your relatives and friends in your self-love.

But when a person is seeking to receive love from others, he isn’t really seeking to connect with them and become more unified with them. He is rather concerned for his own ego, and he will remain apart from others, as he “seeks love” from others.

Therefore, someone who is searching to be loved by others will, sadly, never find it on this world. The only thing a person can receive from others are mere sparks of love, like an act of kindness or nice words which express love, but a person seeking love can never receive actual love from others. Why? It is because love is reciprocal. Since the person is seeking love from others, he is not yet giving love to others, and therefore, others will reciprocate in kind. They will not love him back in the way he wants to be loved, because they do not that they are being loved by the person who is seeking love from them. This is based on the *possuk* (*Mishlei* 27:19): *“As water reflects a face to a face, so does the heart of man reflect on to another.”*

A person might still feel, “Okay, so I won’t be like that. I’ll do something else: I’ll seek love from others, because this way, I’ll be able to love them back in return.” But this doesn’t either work. As long as a person is concerned about **receiving** love from others, he will never find anyone who will give it to him.

But if a person is willing to leave his own self-absorption and begin to feel others, that others are a part of him too, then love will follow. How will this work? Just as a person loves himself very much, so can he love others in the same way, if he sees others as a part of himself. So the only way for a person to “get” love is when he expands beyond his ego. As long as a person remains in his ego and he wishes to receive love from others, it will never happen.

The *Mesillas Yesharim* here has told us that first, a person must make sure he loves his parents very much. We naturally love our parents. After that, a person can expand beyond that and love others as well, and he can keep expanding his love until he loves all of *Klal Yisrael*.

How is it possible to love **all** of *Klal Yisrael*!?

It is because *Klal Yisrael* is called “*one nation on the earth*.” We are all “one” nation, and thus we are not a bunch of separated souls, but rather, we are all part of one collective unit. If we each see ourselves as one, we can love every member in the Jewish people. If we would all be considered as separate entities, like the other nations of the world, then it would indeed be impossible to love every Jew. But because we are all “one”, a Jew is able to love the entire Jewish people.

“Love” for another Jew, *Ahavas Yisrael*, is not the regular kind of emotion of love that we are familiar with. It is not a superficial kind of love. It is a deep power in our soul to be able to love another Jew, and it comes from a Jew’s ability to be able to see another Jew as one with himself.

The Torah commands us to “*love your friend like yourself*.” How can a person love another Jew just as much as he loves himself? It is because in reality, we are all one, and therefore, just as we love ourselves, so can we love other Jews, because other Jews are really one with us.

Why doesn’t the Torah just say simply, “Love your friend?” Why did the Torah add on the words, “love your friend *like yourself*”?

The simple answer is that the Torah is telling us that you shouldn’t just love other Jews, and that instead, you should love others in the same way that you love yourself. But according to the approach we have said here, the meaning is as follows: You should love others *for the same reason* that you love yourself!

How is this possible? How can I love another Jew for the same reason that I love myself? If “I” am not him and he is not me, then how is it possible for me to love another Jew for the same reason that I love myself?? But the answer is: You need to reveal how you are “one” with another Jew. When you feel that another Jew is one with you, then you will discover that you love another Jew just as much as you love yourself – “like yourself.”

Maybe a person is wondering: “So that means that loving other Jews is all about *ourselves*? That’s *shelo lishmah* (ulterior motives)! How can it be that our entire love for other Jews is all about *shelo lishmah*?!?”

But the answer to this is that it depends on how you define love for others. If you reflect, you can see that this really isn’t a valid question. There is nothing wrong, in essence, with our ego, with our “I”. If we include others in our “I”, then there is nothing wrong with having our ego. The ego is only evil when we use it solely to love ourselves and be only worried for ourselves. If we include others in our ego – meaning, if we love others because we see others as a part of our own ego – then there is nothing wrong with our ego at all.

We have in us a *neshamah*, a G-dly soul, which is called “a piece of Heaven from Above.” When we are self-absorbed, then all we care about is our own *neshamah*, and not another’s *neshamah*. This is selfish and egotistical. This is the evil use of our ego. But if we see our ego as part of the collective whole of the Jewish people, then our “I” graduates from being a private, self-absorbed existence to becoming part of a greater whole. This is the way we can use our “I” in a healthy, good way.

Thus, the depth behind *Ahavas Yisrael* is to feel that other Jews are really a part of us, that others are “one” with us, and this in turn reveals our true, inner love of the soul for others.

3

PEACE IN THE WORLD

3.1 | *Peace and Truth Together*⁷⁴

A Prayer For Unity

We *daven* in *Shemoneh Esrei*, וקבצינו יחד, “*And gather us together.*” We are asking Hashem not only that we should all become gathered together again, bit by bit, but rather, that we should all come back יחד, “together”, in unison.

Let us try to understand what this concept is - that the gathering of our dispersed must happen only if we can all come back together and in unison.

The Abilities of Truth and Peace

We find two great people who led our nation.⁷⁵ One leader was Moshe *Rabbeinu*. “*Moshe is true, and His Torah is true.*” Moshe represents the trait of *emes*, the absolute truth. We also find that Aharon at one point led the nation; this was when Moshe was temporarily absent. Aharon is called the “*pursuer of peace and lover of peace.*”

What was the difference between the way that Moshe led the nation, with the way Aharon led the nation? When Aharon led the nation, the people pressured him to allow the Golden Calf, and he listened to them. He was mainly concerned that there should be peace among the nation, so he listened to their requests; the people were able to sway him and get him to listen to their demands. But Moshe would not budge under any pressure, and he only followed absolute truth. For example, when he saw the people sinning with the Calf, he immediately shattered the *Luchos*.

Both Moshe and Aharon possessed their own unique traits, and Chazal learn from this that there are two ways how to lead the nation. One way is through truth, and the other way is through peace. In actuality, both abilities are needed, for it is written, “*Truth and peace together.*” We need both the abilities of truth and peace, together, or else we will be sorely mistaken.

We are not, *chas v'shalom*, speaking disparagingly about the approaches of either Moshe (the emphasis on truth) or Aharon (the emphasis on peace). We are speaking about *ourselves* - that it is *we* who have to use both the abilities of truth and peace, or else we will be imbalanced and wreak havoc upon the world and upon ourselves.

When Truth Is Without Peace

⁷⁴ תפילה 089 - יחד 74

⁷⁵ *Sanhedrin 16a*

If only truth reigns and there is never consideration to make peace with others' differences, then the world would be a very harsh place. Truth cannot stand anything that isn't the total truth; it would cause disparity in the world. If all we would do is emphasize the truth, we would come to hate people who do not live a life of truth. We would come to hate people who don't keep *mitzvos*, and we would hate all the other nations of the world, in our pursuit of truth. This is not the will of Hashem.

So although we need to pursue the truth, the truth also needs to be balanced out with some "peace", or else the truth would destroy everything that doesn't meet up to its standards.

Thus, although we must pursue the truth – the *middah* of Moshe Rabbeinu, which is *emes* – that does not mean that we should only emphasize *emes*. We need to have *shalom* also in our life, besides for *emes*. Chazal say that a person has to get along with people; one should be "*daato me'ureves im habriyos*." We need to be at peace with others, even if they do improper things and don't live their life the right way. If we only pursue *emes* and we never pursue *shalom*, we are missing *Ahavas Yisrael*.

We all need to utilize **both** the traits of Moshe and Aharon together, because truth without peace would create both disparity within our own ranks and towards the other nations of the world.

When Peace Is Without Truth

On the other hand, if peace would be everything, and there would be no emphasis on truth, a person would constantly be in spiritual danger, because he would become susceptible to all kinds of evil influences, since he connects with everyone without any restrictions. He would go too far with his love and embrace everyone in the world, and he would end up becoming attached to the evil that other people commit, all in the name of having peace with others.

Thus, truth without peace is one kind of evil imbalance. We need to be at peace with others and love others. But the other extreme is also bad – if we only seek peace and love with others, and we don't pursue the truth, then our spirituality is in danger. We need a proper balance between our abilities of peace and truth.

In previous generations, there were those who fought entirely for the truth, but their *Ahavas Yisrael* was missing. On the other side of the coin, there were those who had tremendous *Ahavas Yisrael*, and they were not balanced out with pursuing the truth; as a result, they bonded with evil, with those who did not go in the way of Torah, and their spiritual level declined.

We need a balance of both the abilities of Moshe\truth and Aharon\peace. One without the other presents a danger.

The "Peace" Going On In Our Generation

In our generation, it is hard to find someone who is very extreme when it comes to *emes*. You can have a person who is so removed from this physical world that he lives a completely spiritual kind of life, but this is very rare to find these days. We can't find too many people who are burning so much with truth that they totally disconnect from the world.

But, what *is* very common nowadays, is that there are people who are natural peace-lovers, and by nature they are loving and friendly towards others. When people go extreme with their peaceful nature, they will connect with anyone they come across – and their spirituality suffers a decline, because they end up connecting with evil as well. They connect and feel with others' impure actions and thoughts, all in the name of peace and love. A person like this will connect even to the most wicked people in the generation, which connects him to the 50th level of impurity, (*rachmana litzlan*)!

When a person has a very peaceful nature, he needs to balance himself out with some truth as well. He needs to develop the trait of *emes*, to pursue truth. If he develops his *emes*, he will be able to connect with others and not be affected by them. Moshe *Rabbeinu* was connected to the entire Jewish people in his heart, without being harmed by any evil actions going on, because he had already perfected his *emes*. With *emes*, a person can connect with others and have *shalom* with them without suffering a decline in his spirituality. But without developing a firm ability of *emes*, a person is in danger when he connects with other people.

Most of the “*shalom*” that people are seeking nowadays is imbalanced. When a Jew is all-loving and all-embracing, this is not the true *middah* of *shalom* that comes from a Jew's *neshamah*, but it is rather a base kind of “peace” that stems from our *nefesh hebeheimis*, the lower and animalistic part of our soul. Although we can call it “peace”, this doesn't make it “*shalom*”; it is not true *shalom*, because it is not aligned with the Torah's values. *Shalom* is only considered to be true *shalom* if it is not causing a person to overstep the Torah's boundaries.

In fact, even if someone does contain the true kind of *shalom* which comes from the *neshamah* of a Jew, he is still in spiritual danger, if he allows himself to connect to every single person he comes across.

Most people, though, haven't revealed their higher power of *shalom* that comes from the *neshamah*, and they only know of the superficial kind of *shalom*, which stems from our *nefesh hebeheimis*. This is not “*shalom*”, even though it looks like it. The world calls it *shalom* \peace or *ahavah* \love, but that doesn't make it to be the true kind of *shalom*.

If a person does not seek to develop his power of *emes* – if he doesn't feel the truth burning in him every day, if he doesn't feel it getting sharper and stronger every day, then if he seeks *shalom* with others, his entire spiritual situation is in danger. His pursuit of *shalom* resembles the kind of *shalom* that Esav made with Yaakov; it was only superficial.

In our current generation, there is more danger to our spirituality than ever, much more than the previous generations. When *Moshiach* comes, there will be truth revealed upon the world, and there will be peace too – but it will be a kind of peace that is truthful. And that will be the universal peace

that comes to the world – a peace that is connected with truth. It will be a whole different kind of “*shalom*” than the kind of “*shalom*” that we see going on in the world today.

This is the depth behind what we ask for in *Shemoneh Esrei*, וּקְבַצֵנוּ יְיָ - that we be gathered “together”, in an inner way – in a way that both truth and peace are connected together.

In our generation, it has become so easy to connect with others. Technology has made it possible to connect to another in the blink of an eye. It’s not a coincidence that in our current generation, connection with others has become so easy. What is the reason for this? (Everything has good and evil contained in it; we won’t get it here into how technology is good and how it is bad. That’s not the point. Rather, we will focus on the root of this matter.)

It appears that technology makes it possible for us to make so many “friends” with everyone. On the surface, it seems that through technology, it has become so much easier to form connections with others. But the truth is: It only causes more distance between people!

This is the entire idea of exile: we are amidst disparity with each other. The more people mix with each other, the more we it seems like we are constantly making “peace” with others, the more we grow apart from each other. The strife amongst us gets worse and worse through all of these attempts to be make connections with each other, and the truth is, that the closer we are to *Moshiach’s* arrival, the more disparity goes on in the world. Because we can “connect” so easily with others in a flash, the more opportunities there are for strife and arguing amongst people!

The falsity of the world keeps increasing, with the more and more that exile goes on. The closer we are to *Moshiach*, the falsity intensifies. The depth of the falsity going on in the world is that things that are really false appear to be truth. That is the depth of falsity – it makes people that a lie is really the truth. This is the meaning of the statement of our Sages that in the era preceding *Moshiach*, “Truth will be concealed.”

In today’s era, people appear to be making friends so quickly and forming so many connections, but it’s all disparity in a disguise. It looks like it’s really peace, but it’s really falsity. All of these “connections” with others are really fake; in our generation, there is a tremendous *kelipah* (evil “husk”) of strife that has entered the world, and this works together with the *kelipah* of falsity that is also going on in our current era.

We can see this apparent from what goes on between countries. The more that the nations of the world seek to have “*shalom*” with each other – the more they get into strife with each other.

Technological advances, which seems to have increased *shalom* amongst people, are actually responsible for the greatest causes of strife and bitter arguments amongst people.

If we really want peace in the world, we need to seek *emes* along with it, and then the peace will be a real peace – it will be a truthful kind of peace.

Checking Ourselves

In this generation especially, we need to make a self-introspection and see if we have an imbalance in our ability of peace or in our ability of truth. We need to make sure that our *emes* isn't overpowering our *shalom*, and we also need to make sure that our *shalom* isn't overpowering our *emes*. If a person sees that one of these abilities is getting more dominant, then either his *emes* is lacking *shalom*, or his *shalom* is lacking *emes* to it, and he needs to balance himself out with the other ability he's missing.

It is only when the truth burns in one's heart and strengthens each day that a person can come to have the real and true *shalom* with others.

3.2 | *The Future Unity*⁷⁶

In our current generation, the highest level of love we can reach toward others is *Ahavas Yisrael* (to love other Jews). However, in the future, it will be revealed how “*Esav is a brother to Yaakov.*” It will be revealed that Yaakov (the Jews) and Esav (the non-Jews) really love each other!

It is written, “*I love Yaakov, and Esav I hate.*” This is only referring to the current generation, in which there is a disparity between Yaakov and Esav. But at the root, Esav is really Yaakov’s brother, and thus there will eventually be love between Yaakov and Esav.

“There is a *halacha*: It is well-known that Esav hates Yaakov.” This is only true regarding our current times. But in the future, Chazal say that all the mitzvos will disappear [which does not simply mean it will disappear, because we know that the Torah can never change; rather, it means that there will be a more inner revelation of the Torah, and in that sense, there will be a *bittul* nullification to the current level of Torah], and therefore this “*halachah*” will also disappear. It will be revealed that Yaakov and Esav are really one.

And since this is so, the same goes for Yitzchok and Yishmael – it will be revealed that they are both one.

In the future, all of the nations will serve Hashem. This does not simply mean that they will all randomly serve Hashem and remain apart from us. Rather, it means that because the entire world will be one – all of the nations unified – they will all be able to join together in unison and serve Hashem. It will be revealed that the nations of the world are really one with the Jewish people.

This concept is contained in understanding what went on before the sin of Adam, and what happened afterwards due to the sin. Before Adam sinned, there was no separation between the Jewish people and the other nations. (Although there were still different soul levels, this is a deep matter that is beyond the current scope of this discussion). After Adam sinned, there became a need for a chosen nation in Creation. This chosen nation would become the Jewish people, and it began with Avraham *Avinu*. This still continues until today.

But in the future, when the sin of Adam is completely fixed, all of the souls will go back to Adam’s soul and become integrated in one unit. The *sefer* “*Leshem*” speaks about this topic at length, where he writes that all of the disparity and hatred which we see going on today within the Jewish people are all a result of Adam’s sin. In the ideal state of Creation, there is no such thing as hatred.

⁷⁶ מסילת ישרים – הקדמה – עמ' קלו - קלט

When the hatred and disparity is removed from within the Jewish people in the future, it will not only disappear from the Jewish people, but it will disappear entirely from the world. This will allow the Jewish people and the other nations to return to being one again with each other. There will be nothing but universal love, and it will be the total level of unity.

People hear about this concept, and they find it hard to accept. Usually, the more a person has *Ahavas Yisrael*, the more he hates the nations of the world. If such a person hears that it says in our *sefarim hakedoshim* that there will be a universal unity with the other nations in the future, he's not prepared to accept such a thing. How can it be that the other nations of the world - who have done so many bad things to us for all this time – how can it be that they will become unified with us?!

But, the purpose of Creation is to reveal how Hashem is One. In order for this to happen, His creations must become a receptacle to contain His Oneness, and therefore, all the Creations of the world must become one. Upon that, the Oneness of Hashem will settle upon them, and the purpose of Creation will be fulfilled.

Thus, if there is any hatred among the Jewish people *chas v'shalom*, Hashem cannot settle upon us.

Hashem destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash* because of our *sinas chinam* (baseless hatred). The question is: Why did the *Beis HaMikdash* have to get destroyed because of this? Why is it that the sin of baseless hatred cannot co-exist at the same time that there is a *Beis HaMikdash*?

The answer is very simple. In order for Hashem to let His Presence be on this world, there must be unity already here on this world. When there is disparity amongst our ranks, the oneness is gone, and then Hashem cannot allow His presence to be here. When there is no presence of Hashem, naturally, the *Beis HaMikdash* gets destroyed.

Although Hashem still is present in the Jewish people, it is an incomplete level of unity, because the Jewish people and other nations are separated, for now. This disparity affects our own unity as well. But in the future, when there will be only oneness in the world – when both the Jewish people and the other nations will be united – will there be a total Presence of Hashem on us. Then, it will be revealed Who the true “One” of the world is, as we say in the Shema: “*Hear, Yisrael, Hashem Our G-d, Hashem is One.*”

3.3 | *Tamuz – Seeing The Good*⁷⁷

Tamuz – Inner Sight

Tamuz and Av are the two most tragic months from the whole year. Chazal state that five tragedies took place during the month of Tamuz. These months require a lot of thought, and we need to find how Hashem is here with us even in these trying months. It seems as if nothing good can be said of these two months, which are full of sad events.

The power of the month of Tamuz, (according to some opinions of the *sefarim hakedoshim*), is “sight”. There is physical sight, and there is an inner power of sight – this is also identified as *einei haseichel*, “eyes of the intellect”.⁷⁸ Just like our physical eyes can see both good and bad, so can our inner sight see both good and bad. Our *Avodah* is to learn how to see the good.

From the time Chavah set her eyes upon the *eitz hadaas*, which was a mixture of good and evil, all things which we see are a mixture of good and evil. Nothing we see is totally good, and nothing we see is totally good. It is always a mix.

There are people who were naturally born with a very positive nature and focus on the good in everything, while others are negative toward everything and only see the bad in something. Chazal state that those who have a “good eye” are the students of Avraham *Avinu*, while those who have a “bad eye” are students of Bilaam, so we must strive to have a “good eye”.

Ever since the sin of Adam, everything has become a mixture of good and bad. If we look at the good, we are being students of Avraham, but if we only see the bad in something, we are being negative, students of the wicked Bilaam. We can't see only good or only bad, though, because in the current state of affairs, there is no such thing. Everything is a mix. Therefore, we need to see the good – and bad – in everything, and then what we need to do is connect to the good in it.

We will try to explain, with the help of Hashem, how we can come to think about only the good in things.

The First Step – Take Apart Everything

Since everything is a mixture, we need to learn how to see what each thing we come across is made up of. We need to see how much good is in something, and how much bad is in it. Everything has some good in it and some bad in it, and we need to get used to thinking into the good parts and

⁷⁷ ראש חודש. עבודה. תמוז. 77

⁷⁸ A term used by Chovos HaLevovos.

the bad parts in something. Take something apart, and think: What is the good here, and what is the bad here? Take a piece of paper and make two rows, one row labeled “Good” on the right side and the other row labeled “Bad” on the left side. Write down all the good things you can find in a situation, and all the bad things you see, and line them against each other.

You will discover as you get used to this that there are things which you thought were totally good that have really have some bad in them also, and there are things which you thought were totally bad that actually has something good in them.

The Danger

Now comes a danger which you should watch out for, though. When you realize that a situation is mostly bad, you know that you should keep away from it. But the tricky part is when you discover something good in something which also has bad in it, and you might be tempted to connect to it, because you see good in it. But although you see good in something bad, this doesn't mean you should connect to it.

There are some situations which we cannot choose otherwise, so there is nothing we can do to get out of them, even if there is bad in them. But there are situations in life which we can choose to connect to or not. It is these situations where we view them as good, or not?

What we need to do is to somehow connect to the good in every situation. The question is, how? If there is mostly bad in a situation, even if you have found some good in it, how can you connect yourself to it and feel that it is somehow good, when you know quite well that there is bad here also?

When You Can't Find Anything Good

This is the hard part. There are difficult times we go through in which we can't seem to find anything good in the situation. When we go through a difficult time, we must bear in mind that our difficult times are just like everything else in life that is made up of both good and bad. If there is more bad than good, how do we get by a situation? How do we deal with situations that are mostly bad? True, there is some good to everything, even situations that are mostly bad. But if it is mostly bad, how indeed do we get by these situations?

What one has to do in such a situation is to find the strongest good point in this situation, and that will shed an entirely new approach to the situation. Let us give some more background to how this works.

Everything in creation has in it a root and its branches. There is always one root good point in every situation possible, and although there are many branches that stem from it which are bad, the root is always good. There are actually 287 branches which can stem from one single root, so a person can find 287 negative things to say about any situation! But if a person finds the root of a

situation – if he finds the root good point – then all the “branches” lose their vitality, because they have no bad root with which to feed on.

Thus, if you want to see how any situation is good, no matter how bad it is, you need to find the root of the situation. The root is always good, and this knocks away all the negative things you see in the situation.

We will try to explain how we can put this into practice. These are really very deep matters, but they are the root of how to live a true, inner kind of life.

What It Means To “See Good”

There are two approaches in *Avodas Hashem* in how a person can become more positive. One way is to think positive thoughts all the time, and when you think positive, your good thoughts turn the situation to always be good.

Another way is to find the good contained in every situation. This doesn't simply mean, however, for a person to try to find the one good point in any situation; that alone will not be enough, because there are many other bad points in the situation which would just cancel it out. If that is the person's thinking, then one is still saying that there is some bad here, and he is just admitting that there is some good here also. This is not the depth of the matter. The real definition of it is to find how the root of this situation is good, and that this root good point makes the entire situation good.

An Example From Chazal

How do we know this is true? We can give a very good example. The destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, as we know, was a very great tragedy, a truly sad situation. On one hand, we must mourn the destruction and all the tragedies it caused, but on the other hand, Chazal also brought words of comfort for us. How did Chazal find comfort over the destruction?

There is a statement of Chazal that Hashem was so angry with the Jewish people that He really wanted to destroy them, but instead He unleashed His anger on the stones and wood of the *Beis Hamikdash*. In this, however, Chazal did not find comfort. This fact alone wasn't enough for Chazal to find solace. There is a different fact about the destruction, however, in which Chazal found comfort in. Chazal state that on the day of the destruction, *Moshiach* was born. This was how Chazal found the positive in the tragedy of the destruction.

The fact that Hashem took out His anger on stones and wood doesn't bring out the comfort in the situation, because this doesn't show how the destruction was a good thing. It just shows us some good amongst the bad. But the fact that the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* heralded the birth of *Moshiach* is something that shows us how the entire tragedy, at its root, was good, because now we saw that the destruction was a cause to begin the final redemption.

From here we can see that when Chazal wanted to find how even the worst situation can be good, they didn't find comfort in the fact that there was one good point to say about the situation. That alone was not a comfort. What Chazal found positive about the situation was that the root of the entire sad situation was good, and that was what is able to comfort us.

Working On Seeing The Good

To work on seeing how every situation is really good its root, a person still needs *siyata d'shamaya* (Heavenly assistance), *tefillos* (prayer), and *hisbonenus* (reflection) to be able to see how every situation is really good. Anyone can split up every matter into how it is good and bad, and then he can see how the root of it is always good. Then he can connect himself to the root good point of any situation.

Applying This To Current Events

The words here are not only true on a general basis, but they apply as well on a more specific level.

As we speak now, *Eretz Yisrael* is going through trying times. Three young boys have been kidnapped by terrorists, and we have not yet merited to see them return home. The entire country is worried for them, and this appears to be such a bad situation that it doesn't seem that any good can be said about it.⁷⁹

Yet, if you think about it, there is some good in this situation. This situation has revealed so much *Ahavas Yisrael* amongst Jews from all walks of life. All Jews are united together in prayer for the boys, and everyone has put aside all their differences. Another good point is the *chessed* that this situation has caused people to increase in.

These are some good points about the situation, yet one can still argue that the bad of this situation far outweighs the good. For this, we can find the root of the situation, which is good, and that will show us how this entire "bad" situation is really good.

That root good point is that the kidnapping shows us about our own situation – we are also "kidnapped" amongst the seventy non-Jewish nations of the world. We are Hashem's children, and we are kidnapped by the nations. This situation can show us how much we long to be rescued by Hashem from the nations who want to destroy us.

79 Editor's Note: This shiur was given the day before the sad news of their tragic deaths. Yet, the lesson remains true, the author has stated that every situation is good, and it can still be said that this episode caused much unity amongst Jews.

The situation shows us the depth of our exile, and how much we should want to come out of it. It can show us that we shouldn't only *daven* for the children who were captured – we should *daven* for the entire *Klal Yisrael*, who live in darkness, surrounded by people who wish to destroy all the Jews and who have no value whatsoever for a Jew's life. It is unfortunate that we have to use the three captured boys as a *moshol* (parable) to our own situation, but we need to use it as a way to get us to *daven* for all of *Klal Yisrael*, who are kidnapped in this exile. We are kidnapped from our spirituality, because of the effect that the non-Jews have had on us throughout this dark exile.

May the boys return home, and may all of us merit the redemption. That is how this situation is good, at its root – it can stir up in us a realization to *daven* for *Klal Yisrael*, that He take us out of this dark exile – speedily, in our days, Amen.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

QUESTION: *What exactly is the “root” of all good that we must find? Isn't Hashem the root of everything, who is always good?*

ANSWER: Very good question. Yes, it is true that Hashem is the root of all good, but the question is, what is that root that Hashem is trying to show us in every situation? We need to find that good root of every situation. We know that Hashem is the source of everything, and that is clear. But we need to see in our own personal life how we see how the root of every possible situation is somehow good.

QUESTION: *If I see bad in a situation, how do I focus on the good? Do I have to get myself to see a situation how others see it?*

ANSWER: Good question. It depends why something is bothering you and not other people. Sometimes there is something that bothers you that really shouldn't, and you are just overreacting. This kind of problem stems from simply being negative, which is a problem that stems from our *nefesh habehamis* (lower, animal layer of our soul). But if it's a problem that not only bothers you but it bothers other as well, it can be because the negative far outweighs the positive.

QUESTION: *What is the source for how there are 287 negative things to say about every situation?*

ANSWER: The source is from the Arizal in *Parshas Beraishis*, who says that the word “*merachefes*” (blowing) has in it the letters *reish*, *pei*, and *ches*, which altogether has the numerical value of 288. If a person has the root, then these three letters become the word “*perach*”, which means “flower.” If he

doesn't find the root, then the letters become "*chafar*", which means "dug under", a reference to being underneath the tree.

QUESTION: *If someone is in a difficult marriage, how can he/she work on seeing the positive in this situation? Should he just focus on the nachas he/she has from the children?*

ANSWER: Take apart all the factors going on in your marriage, and see everything that's going on. This can take a few months. You will then discover much good in your marriage, and then, you should daven to Hashem that he help you find the root good point in your marriage.

QUESTION: *How do you know what the "root" of the situation is, and what the "branch" of the situation is?*

ANSWER: If you know your soul well, you can identify better what the root is.

QUESTION: *If a person doesn't see anything negative about a situation, is he supposed to think about the negative? For example, if a person doesn't feel pain at a situation going on in Klal Yisrael that he is supposed to feel pain about, is he supposed to feel that pain, as part of the process of seeing the bad and good?*

ANSWER: It's hard to answer this question, because it depends on each person and what his situation is in life. There are some people are very stressed out in their life, and it will be detrimental to them to work on seeing what's bad in our situations, because this will only add to their stress. Only a person who is capable of doing this emotionally should work on it.

QUESTION: *The Rov said that a person should write down the good points on one side and the bad points on the other side. What can person do if he doesn't like to write, and it's not practical?*

ANSWER: Type it on a computer. Or, sit with a close friend and do it, and you will find it much easier to write it down.

QUESTION: *How do we tell this to people who are secular? How do we explain this concept to them?*

ANSWER: Even *frum* people who keep Torah and *mitzvos* have to work on this. In today's generation, although we keep the *mitzvos*, most people aren't connected to their *pnimiyus*. Although every Jew is good in general, and there are some people today who are amazingly connected to their *pnimiyus*, most Jews today, even *frum* Jews, are weak in their *emunah*, and they have to work on this.

QUESTION: *But what we can tell secular people, who aren't asking on how they can improve themselves?*

ANSWER: The class here was for people who keep Torah and mitzvos, who want to work on themselves. If a person doesn't ask how he can work on himself, then he doesn't have our questions, and he doesn't seek answers. The material here is thus not for people who aren't seeking to improve themselves, because my answers here are only for those who are asking on how they work on themselves.

QUESTION: *What practical point can the Rov suggest we work on every day from now on, in order to improve ourselves?*

ANSWER: Every day, seek to become a more truthful person.

3.4 | *Re-building World*⁸⁰

Binah\Binyan – The Power To ‘Build’ Through Our Understandings

ומלמד לאנוש בינה – Hashem teaches “*binah*”, intuition, to us.

The word *binah* is related to the word *binyan*, to build. Torah scholars are called “builders” – they are blessed with the power of *binah*. When a person exerts himself in learning Torah, he is really building the world.

How can we reveal our power of *binah* to build the world – and to be more specific, to rebuild the *Beis HaMikdash*?

Sinas Chinam – A Viewpoint of Disparity

Chazal tell us that the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of *sinas chinam* (baseless hatred). What is the root of *sinas chinam*? From where does this negative emotion come from? Simply, it comes from being egotistical. When a person only cares about himself, he couldn’t care less about others, so he will hate others for no reason.

But the deeper understanding is as follows. When we build a structure, a brick is placed on top of another. Hashem created many details in Creation; we are all like many bricks that need to get added together, and form the complete structure of Creation. All details in Creation are many parts of one whole which will ultimately have to come together. When we see the world – inanimate objects, as well as people – from a superficial perspective, we do not see how all these connect. But this superficial perspective is actually the understanding that brought about the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. We are supposed to see how all the details in Creation are really meant to come together and form a structure. Therefore, the many details going on in Creation are not just a bunch of random details. They are many parts of one whole, which need to come together in a structure. The purpose of everything is always one and the same – to come together, to become unified, and form one structure.

When a person is young, he doesn’t connect outward beyond himself. When he gets a little older, he begins to realize that there is a Creator, and he wants to connect with the Creator, but he does not necessarily see connection with others as part of his connection with the Creator. If a person gets a little wiser, he realizes that his connection with the Creator really depends on how he connects with others.

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When a person views Creation through a lens of disparity, this was the perspective which enabled destruction to come to the world. This is the depth behind *sinas chinam*.

Sinas Chinam – To Be Inwardly Apart From Other Jews

Even more so, *sinas chinam* means “I can live on my own; I don’t need other Jews in order to exist.” What about the mitzvah to do *chessed*? The person rationalizes, “*Chessed* is like any other mitzvah that is outside of myself, like shaking a *lulav*. I don’t need *chessed* to exist.” When a person views Creation with disparity, that is *sinas chinam* – this perspective is what destroyed the Beis HaMikdash.

What was the *Beis HaMikdash*? The place that contained the *Shechinah*. But what is the *Shechinah* about? It is about Hashem’s Presence dwelling in *Klal Yisrael*, when we are in unison. When we are not unified and we are instead apart from each other in our hearts, there is no point of having the *Shechinah*. “The king is called the heart of the nation”; Hashem is our heart. But if our hearts are full of disparity towards each other, and we each feel like we can survive without other Jews, then our damaged heart will not allow Hashem to be the heart of the nation, and thus the *Shechinah* will not dwell among us.

Sinas chinam has two layers to it. The outer layer of it is to show signs of hatred, simply speaking. The essence of *sinas chinam*, though, is that a person feels himself apart from other Jews, that he feels fine without other Jews, that he feels like he can live without other Jews. *Sinas chinam*, at its core, is to have a perspective of disparity towards Creation, a lack of awareness that Creation is supposed to become unified.

Moving In The Opposite Direction of Sinas Chinam

How do we go in the opposite direction, then, and get *ahavas chinam* (‘baseless love’)? We know that we have a *mitzvah* to love other Jews like ourselves but, how do we actually get it?

Simply speaking, we need to get rid of *sinas chinam* and reveal our deep *ahavah* for other Jews that we have really deep down. True, but there is more to it. *Ahavas chinam* is when we realize, “I cannot exist without another Jew’s existence, for we are all part and parcel with one another.” There is no individual Jew who can live without another Jew’s existence; when we internalize this understanding, we reveal *ahavas chinam*. Thus, hatred can only exist when a Jew thinks he can exist fine without another Jew.

This perspective of *ahavas chinam* is the power that can rebuild the *Beis HaMikdash*, as well as the world as a whole.

Learning Torah To Build The World

When a person learns Torah, does he realize he is building the world? Or is he learning it all for himself...? Learning Torah is what unifies the details of the world together. When a person learns Torah, he must be aware that his learning causes unity in Creation, for Torah is the root of all souls. But if a person is learning Torah and he has no love for other Jews, he's learning Torah all for himself, and such Torah does not build the world.

Uprooting Hatred, and Getting To The Root of Love

The Rambam describes our *middos* as “*daas*”. The essence of all our *middos* and emotions is *daas*. The depth of *ahavas chinam*, and removing *sinas chinam*, is thus not by working with our emotions. Our emotions of love or hatred can only be the **result** of what perspective we have deep down. If we reveal *daas* – and we come to actually sense it – then we can reveal love.

We know that doing things for other people can bring love, for “the heart is pulled after the actions”, but at the same time we must realize that we need *daas*. When we do actions for others, we need to reveal *daas* with it – to realize that we must unify with others.

To uproot *sinas chinam*, and to develop *ahavas chinam*, we need to **do good actions** for others and help others, but along with this, we also need to **reveal our *daas*** – to realize that we need to unify with others. It is a perspective which we need to gain on how we view others. This is the way to access the real emotion of love for other Jews.

Destruction comes when we are missing this perspective.

Love For Other Is Not A Novelty

What does it mean to love? It is not simply to shower love upon others. Love is when we reach our *daas*, when we connect with others, by realizing that all of Creation needs to become unified.

When a person gets married, he believes this is his *bashert* (soul-mate). He believes the words of Chazal that finding a wife is like finding his lost object. He does not view the love towards his wife as something new; he realizes that he is revealing a reality which is already there, for Chazal say that husband and wife were already destined to be bound together in love.

In the same way, we should view other Jews in Creation – our love for other Jews must not be some novel concept to us. When you meet another Jew, don't think to yourself that *Ahavas Yisrael* is some new concept that you have to work on. Rather, it is the reality, and you need to align your way of thinking with that reality. This is because we are all one at our root. The only reason why we don't feel that unity is because we are currently living in a world of darkness, which blurs us from

seeing the true reality. Therefore, we feel apart from each other, but it's only because we are not in touch with reality.

What We Cry About on Tisha B'Av

We cry on *Tisha B'Av* over the ruins of Jerusalem, which lies in disgrace. We are living in a time of *hester panim* (concealment of Hashem's revelation). But even more than so, we should cry about an even more painful situation: that Jews today are in all sorts of pain. Jews today have both physical pain, as well as suffering of the soul.

We cannot really cry over the destruction of Jerusalem if we do not feel unity with other Jews. Are we crying over the fact that we can't bring our own *Korbonos* for ourselves, or because we don't have the *Korbonos* that atone for the entire congregation...?

"Whoever mourns Jerusalem, will merit to see it in its rebuilding." Even if we do not merit the actual rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash*, we have a part in its rebuilding when we build the world through the deeper of understanding our *daas*.

May we all merit to unify with other Jews, as one piece, and come together into one structure, in which Hashem will be One and His Name will be one.