

## Part 2 – The Love of Hashem for Yisrael is Unconditional and Eternal

Many sources say that the love of Hashem for Yisrael is unconditional and eternal

Various *Medrashim* tell us:

Hashem declares, "It [is written] that I love them for ever and ever... As it says,<sup>1</sup> 'Ahavat olam ahavtich — I have loved you with an eternal love.'"<sup>2</sup>

*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* swore an oath that He would never forsake Yisrael.<sup>3</sup>

[Hashem says —] Even if I destroyed My universe, I wouldn't abandon Yisrael.<sup>4</sup>

And why did [Hashem] choose them? [Simply] because He loved them, as it says, "ohavem nedava — [Hashem] loves us willingly." And it is written,<sup>5</sup> "Because of G-d's love for you."<sup>6</sup>

The *Sefat Emet*<sup>7</sup> explains that Bilam's mistake was that he thought Hashem loved Yisrael because of their fulfillment of Torah and Mitzvot. Therefore, he mentioned their future transgression with the women of Peor in order to give them a curse. Hashem, however, transformed the *klalah* into a *bracha* [simply] because — "G-d your L-rd loves you."<sup>8</sup> He also explains that Hashem's love for *B'nei Yisrael* is not dependent on anything. Rather, it is intrinsic. On the contrary, it is because of this love, that Hashem gave us Torah and Mitzvot... Therefore, even mentioning the future transgression [only] strengthens the love. It is actually explained in the *Medrash*<sup>9</sup> on the *possuk*<sup>10</sup> — "I will heal their rebellions as a generous love" — that My soul gives them love even though they are not proper.

The *Sefat Emet*<sup>11</sup> says further:

With G-d's help, we will be inspired by this, to strengthen our *avodah* of gratitude to Hashem, and to be happy with the constant love that Hashem has for us. Similarly, Hashem guards all of the Jewish souls, with every aspect of sanctity within them. This is even when it appears to a person that he is one of the souls that is moving towards a different target. In any case, we need to remember that in whatever situation there is, Hashem guards him and every aspect of his soul, that it will never be destroyed. But rather, He will guard it in every single place, because in the future all of them will clarify, elevate, return, and cling to *kedusha* (holiness).

The *Pri Tzadik*<sup>12</sup> explains:

Hashem's love for us is *b'lo taam* (without any reason or condition), simply because that is *retzono yitbarach* (His will, may He be blessed). It is like the love [of Yitzchak]

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<sup>1</sup> *Yirmeyahu* 31:2

<sup>2</sup> *Otzar HaMedrashim — Eisenstein* 97:18

<sup>3</sup> *Devarim Rabba* 3:2

<sup>4</sup> *Shemot Rabba* 4:5

<sup>5</sup> *Devarim* 7:8

<sup>6</sup> *Medrash Tanchuma, Bamidbar* #17

<sup>7</sup> *Balak — "V'yasham"*

<sup>8</sup> *Devarim* 23:6

<sup>9</sup> *Tanchuma, Eikev* 4

<sup>10</sup> *Hoshea* 14:5

<sup>11</sup> *Shavuot* #649

<sup>12</sup> *L'Chag HaPesach* 34

for both Yaakov and Eisav, even though their actions were so different, an *ahavah b'lo taam*. The *Gemara*<sup>13</sup> tells us, “Although Yisrael transgresses... even if his *aveirot* grow until the heavens, as the *Gemara* says about Achan — he never lost his name (identity) of Yisrael.”

The *Mahara*<sup>14</sup> writes:

Yisrael has hope and trust in *galut* since it is impossible that the love [from Hashem] will ever be nullified. The love which Hashem has for Yisrael is not dependent on anything at all, and since it depends on nothing, it can never be nullified... Hashem chose Avraham and his offspring themselves and not because of any [specific] thing, where we could say — once it is nullified, the love is also nullified.

The *Mahara* continues:

Just like a child has an inherent connection to the parent that he came from, it is similar with Hashem.<sup>15</sup> There is no split or separation from Hashem to Yisrael because of the deep connection of Yisrael with Hashem, since they are considered like children...<sup>16</sup> It is known that a parent and a child are fundamentally related...since the parent and the child are joined... It is impossible to nullify this relationship, because there would be no child without the parent. Therefore, this relationship and connection can never be nullified.<sup>17</sup>

The *Mahara*<sup>18</sup> adds that Hashem chose Yisrael intrinsically, not because of their good deeds. [Therefore,] we should not say that He is choosing them *only* when they are doing His will, but not when they are *not* doing His will.

The *Mahara*<sup>19</sup> elaborates on this:

All love that is dependent on a cause; when the cause will cease, the love will cease. But love that is not dependent on a cause will never cease.<sup>20</sup> This message — “*einah beteilah l’olam* — it will never cease” comes to give hope and trust to Yisrael in *galut*... Since the love of Hashem for Yisrael depends on nothing at all, it will never cease.

We see this in the *possuk*<sup>21</sup> where Hashem told Avram — “*Lech lecha* — leave your land...” The Ramban asks why the *possuk* never told us about the many special qualities of Avram which caused Hashem to speak to him...

[The *Mahara*] explains that if it *would* have initially written about Avram’s righteousness, we could have thought that it was only because of his righteousness that he and his offspring after him were chosen. And then this love [of Hashem to Yisrael] would have been an *ahavah hataluyah b’davar* (a love which is dependent on a cause) — in other words, his righteousness. And now that his descendants are not so righteous, the love could [G-d forbid] be nullified. However, now that [the Torah] did *not* initially tell us about the righteousness of Avraham, and therefore did not choose Avraham and his descendants because of this, but rather chose them for themselves, there was nothing that could [possibly] be nullified which could then nullify the love.

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<sup>13</sup> *Sanhedrin* 44a

<sup>14</sup> *Derech Chaim* 5:17, “*V’Yeish Lomar*”

<sup>15</sup> *Be’er HaGolah, Be’er Rev’i* #551b

<sup>16</sup> *Ner Mitzvah* 37b

<sup>17</sup> *Gur Aryeh, Bereshit*, chapter 49, #24, 427b

<sup>18</sup> *Netzach Yisrael, Perek Yud Aleph*

<sup>19</sup> *Derech Chaim, Avot* 5:17

<sup>20</sup> *Pirkei Avot* 5:17

<sup>21</sup> *Bereshit* 12:1

The *Bikurei Aviv*<sup>22</sup> says similarly:

Hashem loves Yisrael, and because of that love, He says, “*Dai* — It is sufficient.”<sup>23</sup> [In other words,] whatever [Yisrael] does, even a bit, is sufficient... This is like a parent who loves his child, even if he is only partially on a good path. Even so, he loves him... [Hashem] is merciful and gracious, and loves us, and knows how great the *yetzer hara* is.

And finally, the *Zohar*<sup>24</sup> writes:

*Knesset Yisrael* says, “Kiss me with the kisses of your mouth.”<sup>25</sup> Rebbe Yitzchak [asks]: What is the reason [the *possuk* says] “kiss me”? It [seemingly] should have said “love me”! Rather, this is the explanation. What is a kiss? A clinging of the *ruach* (spirit) with the *ruach*. That is why a kiss is with the mouth, since the mouth is the place and the source of the *ruach*. Therefore, a kissing of the mouth with affection is a clinging of the *ruach* with the *ruach*, which will never separate one from another.

The *sefer Tzeidah l’Derech* discusses five different types of love:

There is a natural (*tivit*) love, like a parent to a child and a child to a parent, and relatives to each other.

There is a beneficial (*to’elet*) love, like the love of partners.

There is a pleasurable (*hana’ah*) love, like the love of [a man and a] woman, and also the love of trust (*bitachon*) — when one finds a friend whom he trusts, he will tell him his secrets...

But the most elevated love is the love of the Sages one to another... since it is a love which is not dependent on anything which is external to them. This is what the *Chazal* say — “All love which depends on something [which could be nullified, like something physical], if that thing is nullified, then the love [itself] is nullified. But if it does *not* depend on what could be nullified [like the love of David and Yehonatan, and is permanent (*kayam*)], like true knowledge, which will definitely exist as long as the two people are in the world, it will *not* be nullified.

The love of Hashem is a love which could never be nullified, but will rather exist eternally. This is both His love towards those He loves, and their love towards Him... Hashem has a true love only towards those who love Him, know His Name, and go in His ways. This is the complete good and love, with eternal spiritual pleasure. *Shlomo HaMelech* says about this, “Much water is not able to extinguish this love.”<sup>26</sup> This is not the case with other pleasures and benefits which are physical, and which finish in a short time...

In terms of this love, Yisrael was chosen from all of mankind, just as people were chosen from all living things.

## We see this love from Hashem to Yisrael even when they are behaving negatively

The *Rinat Dodim*<sup>27</sup> writes:

[Hashem] will never forget us. He is waiting and anticipating [*k’vi’achol* (so to speak)] until the time when He will come and... redeem Yisrael from all of their

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<sup>22</sup> *Vayikra*

<sup>23</sup> This is based on a teaching from *Rebbe Levi m’Berdichev* on *Parshas Shemos*

<sup>24</sup> 2:124b

<sup>25</sup> *Shir HaShirim* 1:2

<sup>26</sup> *Shir HaShirim* 8:7

<sup>27</sup> *Shir HaShirim, Aleph-Aleph*

transgressions. That is to say, even when the generation is entirely obligated (i.e., liable).

The *Chafetz Chaim*<sup>28</sup> says similarly:

It is known that *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* loves His nation Yisrael greatly. And they are considered like a favorite child that Hashem delights in, as the *possuk*<sup>29</sup> describes... And when a parent has a child like this, and sees him behaving improperly, even so, he covers it over for him from the greatness of his love for him. And even if he sometimes disciplines him, it comes with much grace and compassion... From the great love that *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* has for Yisrael, although He Himself knows whatever they did in secret and openly... even so, He will not arouse Himself to do anything bad to them. As it is written,<sup>30</sup> “*Lo hibit aven b’Yaakov* (He sees no iniquity in the Jewish people).”

The *Gra*<sup>31</sup> also discusses this — “Hashem gives *tochacha* to the one that He loves.”

*Tochacha* is given only to the one we love, the one where our heart is concerned with his evil. If we see that he is going in a path which is not good, that is who we give *tochacha* to. Similarly, it is obvious that when *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* gives you *tochacha*, He certainly loves you.

The *possuk* continues — “like a father [towards] the son he favors” — *tochacha* is *really* given only by a parent to a child. However, even one who loves [a non-relative], if the person [with the bad behavior] won’t listen to his *tochacha*, [the one who is trying to correct him] will [then] leave him to follow the [negative] path he desires. But with a parent and a child, if [the child] won’t listen to his correction, even so, [the parent] won’t leave him. Rather, he will rebuke him with *yissurim* (painful difficulties) until he abandons his evil path. That is, because of his love, which is greater than anything else, and also his heart which is pained by his evil and wants him to be righteous, he therefore chastises him for his own good. And the proof that this is because of his love, is that, afterwards when he has removed his rod [of chastisement] from him, he desires to fulfill what the child wants, and he speaks supplications to him to appease his mind. And that is why [the previous *possuk* said about *yissurim*,] “*al timas* — don’t disparage it.” Because when [Hashem or a parent] afflicts you with *yissurim*, it is obvious that you are precious, like a child.

Based on the *possuk* where Hashem says, “And I will hide My face from them,”<sup>32</sup> when the Jewish people are behaving badly, the *Chizkuni* explains:

This is like a man whose son transgressed against him and he says to strike him [specifically] *out* of his presence, because of his love for him.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz<sup>33</sup> quotes the *Ramchal*:<sup>34</sup>

Even if you transgress a lot, my son, don’t despair, since you are among the descendants of Yisrael, and Hashem will make you successful. The [following] is the *tefillah* of one of the *Rishonim* (early commentaries) — “Many times I rebelled, was negligent, and regretted it, since I am among the descendants of Yisrael... and Hashem’s love does not depend on anything. Rather He loves us and benefits us. Yisrael is [certainly] fortunate!”

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<sup>28</sup> *Shmirat HaLashon, Shaar HaZechirah, Perek Beit*

<sup>29</sup> *Yirmeyahu* 31:19

<sup>30</sup> *Bamidbar* 23:21

<sup>31</sup> *Mishlei* 3:12

<sup>32</sup> *Devarim* 31:17

<sup>33</sup> *Mamarei HaMashgiach Rabbeniu Yerucham HaLevi, Elul*, vol. I, p. 459

<sup>34</sup> *Da’at Tevunot, siman* 160

The *Mishnah*<sup>35</sup> tells us:

When a person is in anguish [for his transgressions], what does the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) say? [*K'vi'achol* (As if to say),] “My head feels heavy, My arm feels heavy.”

If so, Hashem is pained by the spilled blood of the wicked [i.e., in *Beit Din*], all the more so, the blood of the *tzadikim* (in other words, the death of the *tzadikim* in any situation).

The *Sefer Halkarim*<sup>36</sup> asks:

How is it possible for Hashem to love people when the distance between them has no limit?

[He answers —] The love of Hashem for people is certainly not in the category of a love between two equal entities. It is rather a natural love, like the love between a parent and his child... or like the love of a craftsman for the work of his hands...whether [we are] fitting or whether we are not fitting.

However, when we look into this more deeply, we find that this is really a borrowed concept. After all, neither the form nor the material [of a person] could [actually be] a part of Hashem, like a child from a parent. In addition, since the creation was made with a *maamar* (statement from Hashem) alone, with no difficulty, we can't say that Hashem is [really] concerned with the work of His hands. Rather, Hashem rules the entire universe just like a [regular] king and a parent complete the needs of the nation and the child. And they require nothing from the receiver except to honor [and appreciate] them. And even this is not for the sake of the Creator, Who is *Melech HaKavod* (i.e., an intrinsically honored King), but rather for themselves. If they engage in *kavod* properly, they will then be able to connect to the Divine influence and the special Supervision.

The *possukim* also express the love of Hashem to Yisrael like the love of a husband to his wife. Just like the husband is required to take care of all the needs of his wife, it is similarly appropriate for Hashem to complete all the needs of Yisrael, since they are the nation that Hashem chose as His inheritance from all of the nations on the earth. It is, therefore, appropriate for them to honor and fear Him, and to guard all His mitzvot, and not to love any other entity. We should also teach that the love of Hashem to Yisrael comes from a choice and will (*bechira v'ratzon*) from above, because “Hashem desired you and chose you.”<sup>37</sup> The term “*cheishek* — desire” expresses an outpouring of love *b'li taam* — with no conditions, like the love of a particular woman even if one finds another more beautiful. The entire *Shir HaShirim* is built on this desired love with no specific condition. That is why we are called a *segulah* (treasure), and therefore it says — “not because of your righteousness...because you are a stiff-necked nation”... [This] love is logical and established with no deviation, as the *possuk*<sup>38</sup> says, “*V'ahavat olam ahavtich* — I have loved you with an eternal love.”

In the *Likutei Halachot*<sup>39</sup> it is written –

With every person who is resting on the very bottom level, it is revealed to them that Hashem is with them...even with the ultimate hiddenness, hiddenness within hiddenness, that is also where He is. [As the *possuk* (*Devarim* 31:18) says – “*V'Anochi hasteir astir panai* – And I will certainly hide My face.”] Hashem, may He be blessed, is also found there, because He fills the entire world.”

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<sup>35</sup> *Sanhedrin* 6:5

<sup>36</sup> 3:37

<sup>37</sup> *Devarim* 7:7

<sup>38</sup> *Yirmeyahu* 31:2

<sup>39</sup> *Orach Chaim, Hilchot Shabbat*, 3:10, bottom of page 15 (Rav Nachman m'Breslav)

There is actually an argument whether or not Hashem's love is conditional on our behavior. The final conclusion seems to be that it *not* conditional

The *Gemara*<sup>40</sup> quotes the *possuk* — “*Banim atem la'Hashem Elokeichem*” and explains:  
*B'zman she'atem nohagim minhag banim* (when you [the Jewish people] are behaving like [proper] children (i.e., serving Hashem) — *atem k'ru'im banim* (you are called children), *ein atem nohagim minhag banim* (when you [the Jewish people] are not behaving like [proper] children) — *ein atem k'ru'im banim* (you are not called children) — *divrei Rebbe Yehuda*.  
*Rebbe Meir amar* — *bein kach u'bein kach* (i.e., whether you are behaving properly or not) — *atem k'ruyim banim* (you are called children).

The *Ben Yehodaya*<sup>41</sup> explains:

Rebbe Yehuda learns that the meaning of the verse is — *only* when [the Jewish people] are doing the will of Hashem are they called *banim* (children). If they would always have been considered *banim*, then the verse *should* have said — “*Atem banim la'Hashem Elokeichem*.” And since the verse actually writes — “*Banim atem la'Hashem Elokeichem*,” the meaning is that they called *banim* only when they are “*la'Hashem Elokeichem*” — in other words, relating to Him, serving Him, and connecting to Him.

Rebbe Meir, however, learns that even when they are *not* doing the will of Hashem, they are still called *banim*, as the *possuk*<sup>42</sup> says — “*Banim sechalim heima* — They are foolish children.”

And a second *possuk*<sup>43</sup> says, “*Banim lo eimun bam* — Children with no loyalty.”

A third *possuk*<sup>44</sup> says, “*Zera m'rei'im, banim mashchitim* — Evil offspring, corrupt children.”

And, finally, a fourth *possuk*<sup>45</sup> says, “*V'haya bimkom asher yei'ameir lahem – Lo ami atem, yei'ameir lahem – b'nei keil chai'* – And instead of what was said to them – ‘You are not My nation’, it will be said to them – ‘[you are] children of the living G-d.’”

In all of these verses, we see that they are called “children” even though they are transgressing.

The *Gemara* asks — “*Mai 'V'omer*” — why did Rebbe Meir need to prove his point from so many different *possukim*?

The answer is, we see that they are still called children — even when they are foolish,

even when they are wicked with no loyalty,

and even when they are evil and corrupt, worshipping *avoda zara*.

And despite all of this, they can still become *b'nei ma'alya* (elevated [ideal] children).

The *Ben Yehodaya* quotes from the *Rashba*,<sup>46</sup> that when Rebbe Meir argues with Rebbe Yehuda, the halacha is generally like Rebbe Yehuda, but here the halacha is like Rebbe Meir. This is because the *mashma'ut hapesukim* (simple meaning of the verses) is according to his words, that *B'nei Yisrael* are called *banim* even when they are not doing the will of Hashem.

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<sup>40</sup> *Kiddushin* 36a

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in the *Metivta* edition of the *gemara*

<sup>42</sup> *Yirmeyahu* 4:22

<sup>43</sup> *Devarim* 32:20

<sup>44</sup> *Yeshaya* 1:4

<sup>45</sup> *Hoshea* 2:1

<sup>46</sup> In his *Teshuvot* — 1:242

And, interestingly, we see this same point from the *possuk*<sup>47</sup> — “*Shuvu banim shovavim* — Return wayward sons.” The *Gemara*<sup>48</sup> explains that the only exception to this [*possuk* about being able to return] is *Acheir* (*Elisha ben Avuya*), the once great sage who later became an apostate. Since the *Gemara* needed to tell us that the only exception to this *possuk* is *Acheir*, we see that even though he may not have been able to return, he was still called a “*ben* — child.”

Some sources *do*, however, seem to say that Hashem’s love varies according to our deeds

The *Rashbam*<sup>49</sup> writes:

At the time when Yisrael is doing *retzono shel Makom* (the will of Hashem), the *keruvim* turn their faces one to another, as a *siman* (sign) that Hashem loves Yisrael. Initially the faces were towards the faces in order that the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) would rest in Yisrael, and Yisrael would do *retzono shel Makom*. But when Yisrael was not doing *retzono shel Makom* (the will of Hashem), the faces miraculously turned to the *bayit*.

And the *Lechem Starim*<sup>50</sup> tells us:

“*Yerushalayim* transgressed and, therefore, [became] a *niddah* (forbidden woman).”<sup>51</sup> It is known that there is no love like the love of a man for his wife, to become one flesh...Before *Yerushalayim* transgressed, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* had a great love for it, so to speak, like the love of a man for a woman. But after she transgressed, she was actually like a *niddah*. And when all types of transgressions increased, every aspect of love that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* had for her diminished, since He saw her disgrace, meaning that He saw all of her service of idolatry.

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<sup>47</sup> *Yirmeyahu* 3:14

<sup>48</sup> *Chagiga* 15a

<sup>49</sup> *Baba Batra* 99a and *Gemara Yuma* 54a

<sup>50</sup> Rav Yosef Ṭaitāzaq, a *mekubal* who was the rebbe of Rav Moshe Alshich and Rav Shlomo Alkabetz

<sup>51</sup> *Eichah* 1:8