

Part 3 – The Nature and Implications of the Love of Hashem for Yisrael

What deepens and facilitates Hashem’s love for us?

Many *Acharonim* discuss the *possuk* “*Hashem ohev Tzadikim*”¹:

Even if they are drawn after the desires of *Olam Hazeh*, and even if they stumble and fall; even so, if they are still *craving to be close to Hashem* and to do His will, and they are not overwhelmed or weakened from how much the *yeitzer*, which burns within them, overwhelmed them, they will be considered to be *tzadikim*, and Hashem loves them for that.

[After all,] they battle their desires and don’t simply give up. They continue to appreciate every small victory with doing *ratzon Hashem* (G-d’s will), even after their desires overpowered them.

Even if they have no intrinsic strength, and even if they have no *zechut* (merit) from their ancestors that they could rely on...even so, *hitnadvu v’ahavu et Hakadosh Baruch Hu* (they willingly love Hashem)...

This language of “willingly loving Hashem” is very precise, according to what the *Sefat Emet* writes² — “*ohavaim nedava* — [Hashem] will love us willingly.” Rashi explains, “[Although they] are not fitting, [Hashem] willingly loves them. This is a *davar peleh* (wondrous matter) — how is *nedava* relevant with *ahavah*? However, there is also *mishpat* (justice) with this, and *midah b’midah* (measure for measure). One who brings himself close, even though he doesn’t know how, but simply *yearns to return to Hashem*, and willingly gives himself, even though he doesn’t know how to come close, similarly Hashem willingly loves Him. This is the [meaning of] “*hitnadvu v’ahavu et Hakadosh Baruch Hu* (you willingly love Hashem).” Therefore, the *possuk* says — “Hashem loves *tzadikim*,” that is, that Hashem loves them even if they are not fitting. In any case, Hashem willingly loves them, *midah k’neged midah* (measure for measure).

They [themselves] believe that Hashem still considers them to be *tzadikim*, and they never lost the status of *tzadik* rooted in their souls. They believe that the love of Hashem towards His children transcends all human grasp and understanding. This very merit is what awakens the love of Hashem towards them...

We need to know that every word, every thought, *every yearning to do ratzon Hashem* properly arouse a deep and wondrous love upon us from above. This is even while we are being drawn to the emptiness of *Olam Ha’zeh* (this world)... And it draws much deep *rachamim* (mercy) from the Source of *rachamim*, may He be blessed, to the soul of every Jew in this world of action who strives to give Hashem *nachat ruach* (satisfaction).

And finally, even after all of the stumbling and falling, even so, Hashem values and appreciates them, and refers to them as *tzadikim*. And in the *zechut* (merit) of that recognition, Hashem loves them, because they trust in the love of Hashem towards them. And they believe that this love of Hashem towards them is elevated above all of the boundaries of the world.³

The *Medrash Tanchuma*⁴ takes a different approach:

[The *possuk* says,] “Hashem did not desire you because you were more numerous than the nations.”

¹ *Tehillim* 146:8

² *Shabbat Shuva*, 634 — about *Hoshea* 14:5, from the *haftarah* of *Shabbat Shuva*

³ *Eretz Tzvi – Parshat Tazria* #687-143, *Mei Shiloach* 2:90 — *Naso*, *Medrash Socheir Tov al Tehillim*, *Mizmor* 146:8, *Pri Tzadik – Parshat Kedoshim* #12

⁴ *Parshat Eikev*, *Siman Gimmel*

And not because you did more *mitzvot* than them — since the nations [sometimes] do *mitzvot* they are not commanded in more than you...
[The *possuk* continues,] “*Ki aтем ham’at* — because you are few” — meaning, in the *zechut* (merit) that you *minimize yourselves*.

The *Gemara*⁵ says similarly:

Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to Yisrael, “I desire you, because even while I am granting you greatness, you *minimize yourselves*.”

The *Mahara*⁶ asks:

What is the concept of *bechira* (being chosen by Hashem)? It is not possible for the *seichel* (intelligence) of a person to [*understand* having] a *chibur* (connection) with Hashem, which is elevated above the grasp of a person...It appears that when it says that Hashem chose Yisrael, the meaning is to teach about the *chibur* and clinging between *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and Yisrael. Choice [always] teaches about a special *chibur* between the chooser and the one that was chosen. And the *seichel* of a person is unable to grasp the [factors] that could [possibly] lead to a *chibur* like this...This special *chibur* between *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and Yisrael depended on the *bechira* (choice) of Yisrael from among the nations, because the *chibur* with Hashem flows from their *bechira*, and therefore the understanding of this *chibur* is elevated above the human *seichel*.

There are many significant implications of Hashem loving us

The *Zohar*⁷ writes:

Yisrael is fortunate because *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* wants to honor them above the rest of the people in the world.

Initially He said to them, “*V’atem ti’heyu li mamlechet kohanim* — And you will be to Me a kingdom of priests.”⁸

He didn’t remove His great love from them until He called them greater than this — “*v’goy kadosh* — and a holy nation.”⁹

He still didn’t remove His love from them until He called them — “*Ki am kadosh atah* — Because you are a holy nation.”¹⁰

And finally, He didn’t remove His love from them until He called them — “*v’anshei kodesh* — and holy people.”¹¹ I.e., they themselves were *kodesh* — which is greater than everything.

The *Medrash*¹² tells us:

Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Yisrael, “I am *Elokei* (a power/L-rd over) everyone in the world, but I didn’t designate My *Shechina* except on you. I am, therefore, not called *Elokei HaUmos*, (the power/L-rd of the nation) but rather *Elokei Yisrael* (the power/L-rd of Yisrael).

⁵ *Chulin* 89a

⁶ *Derech HaChaim, Hakdamah* — Rav Hartman footnotes, Note 12, p. 5

⁷ 2:121a

⁸ *Shemot* 19:6

⁹ *Shemot* 19:6

¹⁰ *Devarim* 7:6

¹¹ *Shemot* 22:30

¹² *Shemot Rabba* 29:4

The *Zohar*¹³ explains:

Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave all the other nations of the world over to the appointed [Heavenly] princes to have control over them. But *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* holds Yisrael within His boundaries and His portion, in order to really grasp them. He gave them the holy Torah, in order to hold them in His Name, as it says, “*V’atem hadeveikim ba’Hashem* (And you who are clinging to Hashem),”¹⁴ and not [clinging to] any other appointed [being], like the rest of the nations.

The *Avodat Yisrael*¹⁵ writes:

“Hashem said, ‘I love you.’ And you answered, ‘In what way do You love us?’”
(*Malachi* 1:2)

And this itself is love. That You chose us from every nation and commanded us to stand in front of you and to serve You. And if a person merits this, to serve Him and to consider that he is actually standing in front of Him, and saying “*Baruch atah* — Blessed are You” opposite Hashem, truly face to face, like a person talks to his friend, behold there is nothing sweeter than this... This is a great *chessed* (kindness), if a person merits to say “*Atah* (You)” in front of Him, face to face...If one considers with his mind that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* (the Holy One, Blessed be He), Who fills the entire universe, is standing opposite him, [it would have seemed logical that] he would have needed to bow his head and be subservient before Him, blessed be He.

The *Medrash*¹⁶ declares:

[Hashem] changed the order of the universe because of the preciousness of Yisrael.

Another *Medrash*¹⁷ says similarly:

[Furthermore,] *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* didn’t choose from any of them, except for Yisrael...and they (the Jewish people) are happier/more fortunate than all of the nations.

The *sefer Kuntres Tiferet Banim Avotam*¹⁸ expands on this:

We have a *mitzvah* – *Hayidbach b’midotav* — to cling to the *midot* of Hashem. [For example,] just like He is *rachum* (merciful) you should also be merciful. The *sefer Avodat Yisrael* asks a [fascinating] question on this — how is the *midah* of *yirah* (fear) relevant to Hashem?

[His answer is,] since the Creator desires *chessed*, He wants to bestow all goodness to *Am Yisrael*. Through this, the aspect of *yirah* is, therefore, relevant to Hashem. That is, He is afraid of someone transgressing, *chas v’shalom*, and thereby being unable to receive the *hashpa’ot tovot* (positive influences).

When a person contemplates this with his mind, how can he not appreciate and speak more and more about the greatness and strength of the love of Hashem for every single Jew. It is [only] the greatness of His love for a Jew that allows the aspect of *yirah* to be relevant to Hashem. How great, therefore, must *our* fear and trepidation be to do anything, small or large, which is, *chas v’shalom*, against the will of Hashem, the King of the Universe, Who has such a great love towards us!

The *Kuntres Tiferet Banim Avotam*¹⁹ continues:

¹³ *Chelek Gimmel* 260b

¹⁴ *Devarim* 4:4

¹⁵ *Yakar miPaz* — *Haftarah Toldot*

¹⁶ *Bamidbar Rabba* 4:5

¹⁷ *Bamidbar Rabba* 14:10

¹⁸ *Toldot*

¹⁹ *Pekudei*

[A similar idea can be applied directly to us:] A person should contemplate the greatness of the *rachmanut* (compassion) and *ahavah* of Hashem towards him... The highest level of *yirah* comes from the aspect of *chessed*. One should realize that the main pleasure and desire of the Creator is exclusively giving benefit to Yisrael. The main creation of the universe was for this — that His kindness and goodness will be recognized in the world. Transgression causes, *chas v'shalom*, a blockage of the kindness and the pleasure from the Creator. How much do we need to be filled with fear and trepidation, that we don't cause, *chas v'shalom*, a blockage of this pleasure from Hashem. That is the essence of *yirah*. And when a person comes to this, he will necessarily be afraid to do anything against His will.

The *Derech haMelech*²⁰ says similarly:

There is [a type of] *yirah mitoch ahavah* (fear from love) [with Hashem]. Hashem is afraid [so to speak] that a person may transgress and then He won't be able to love him or He may need to punish him, *chas v'shalom*. This is *yirah mitoch ahavah* (fear from love). Since Hashem loves a person, He is afraid [so to speak] that this person may transgress...

There is a [fundamental] difference between a father who loves his son, and a person who loves one who is not his son. [While] one may really love the non-relative, if that person distances himself from him, and he is no longer able to love him, it doesn't [deeply] hurt him that he is no longer able to love him.

This is different from a father loving his son, where besides the love, there is also a *ratzon* (will). He *wants* to love his son. Therefore, if the son distances himself from him, and does things to damage the love of his father towards him, it hurts the father that he is unable to love him, because that is his will and desire...

And [therefore,] it says — "I love you [*lashon rabim* — in the plural language], says Hashem." And to every Jew [*lashon yachid* — in the singular language], Hashem calls out, "Behold, I love you, and I want to take pleasure in your love towards Me. Why then do you not allow Me to love you? And why do you cause Me pain, so to speak, with My being unable to love you?"

And, therefore, there should be *yirat Shamayim* (the fear of Heaven) upon you... since Hashem loves us and is pained when that love is damaged. Furthermore, we should be afraid to damage His love, and to cause Him pain, so to speak, *chas v'shalom*. We are also able to come to this fear through *yirat ha'onesh* (a fear of punishment)...

And when one contemplates this matter, and realizes that *yirat ha'onesh* (fear of punishment), which includes *yissurim* (painful difficulties), is also from the love of Hashem, then one's picture of *yirat ha'onesh* will [be transformed]. One will then recognize the pain above of [Hashem Who is punishing us], so to speak, and how it hurts His love towards us. And additionally, it will arouse a *yirah* within us of the love of Hashem towards us...

And our soul may [even] hear the voice of Hashem calling to us, "I love you and I want your love. Why do you damage My love and also damage, *chas v'shalom*, My will?"

The *Chafetz Chaim*²¹ discusses this in terms of our relationship with other Jews:

We need to explain how much a person needs to think deeply to remove hatred [for another Jew] from his heart. A regular Jew believes in the thirteen fundamentals of the religion. He is certainly a part of the nation of Hashem and beloved to Hashem,

²⁰ *Shabbat Shuva* 5690 — Depth of the Love from Hashem. This is from the author of the *Aish Kodesh*.

²¹ *Ahavat Yisrael, Perek Daled*

as it says²² — “Hashem says, ‘I love you.’” And it also says²³ — “Because of G-d’s love for you.” And furthermore, it says — “*Banim atem la’Hashem Elokeichem.*” And [there are] many more *possukim* that teach the greatness of G-d’s love for *Am Yisrael*.

And, if so, how is it possible for a person to fashion within his soul to hate one that is beloved to Hashem? *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will certainly have complaints against that person because of this [hatred]. For example, it is the nature of every parent to love their child with an intense love, and all of their toil is specifically for the benefit of their children that will follow them. And when [the parent] will find anyone that hates their children, they will have great complaints against that person. That is also how it is in our matter [with Hashem]. Whoever has hatred towards his friend (i.e., another Jew), Hashem will certainly have complaints against him. And who is the fool that wants to carry the complaints of Hashem against him? Just as it is difficult to carry the complaints of people, all the more so the complaints of *Melech Malchei HaMelachim, Hakadosh Baruch Hu* (the King, the King of Kings, the Holy One blessed be He) where we are much more required to be careful of this.

The *Chafetz Chaim*²⁴ continues:

Hashem relates to [Yisrael] as *banim* (children), as it says, “*Banim atem la’Hashem Elokeichem.*” He is happy with their good and pained with their difficulties and disgraces, as we see in the *Gemara*.²⁵ Therefore, for one to go in front of the eyes of the Parent who fills the world with His glory, and disparage His son in front of people for no [positive] purpose [i.e., to say *lashon hara*], what benefit would he have from this?...

This is the language of the *Tanna d’vei Eliyahu*:²⁶

Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to Yisrael, “My beloved child, I am missing nothing which I need to ask from you. So, what am I requesting from you? Only that you love one another and honor one another, and that you be afraid of (i.e., have respect for) one another, and there should not be found among you any transgression, stealing, or disgusting behavior, so that you will never be ruined.”

This Even Seems to Impact Anti-Semitism

The *Gemara*²⁷ tells us that [the mountain where Hashem established His relationship with the Jewish people was called] *Har* (Mount) *Sinai* — [because] [it was] the mountain where hatred (*sinah*) came down to the nations of the world.

The *Zohar*²⁸ says similarly:

Come and see — because of the love *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* had for Yisrael, and that He drew them close to Him, all of the other nations hated Yisrael; since they were distanced from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and Yisrael was close to Him.

And the *Medrash*²⁹ says as well:

²² *Malachi* 1:2

²³ *Devarim* 7:8

²⁴ *Shmirat HaLashon, Chelek Aleph, Shaar HaTevuna, Perek Hei*

²⁵ *Sanhedrin* 46

²⁶ Chapter 28

²⁷ *Shabbat* 89a

²⁸ *Chelek Aleph* 182b, according to the *Sulam*

²⁹ *Shemot Rabba* 49a, and see *Medrash Tehillim m’hamedurat Buber* #15

“*Mayim rabim lo yuchlu livkot et ha’ahavah* (Many waters are not able to extinguish this love).”³⁰

“*Mayim rabim*” — these are the nations of the world...and if all of the nations gather together to nullify the love between *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and Yisrael, they will not be able [to do it]. That is [the meaning of] “*Mayim rabim lo yuchlu livkot et ha’ahavah* (many waters are not able to extinguish this love).”

The *Chovot HaLevavot*, in *Shaar HaBitachon* (Gate of Trust), discusses many ramifications of knowing that Hashem loves us

The most important trait of all in the service of Hashem is *bitachon* — trust in Him in all matters. It has many great benefits, both in terms of Torah observance and worldly areas. It will help with Torah observance, for example, with *menuchah hanefesh* (serenity).

One who trusts Hashem is able to turn his heart from [many] worldly concerns, and devote himself to Divine service.

One who trusts Hashem has a strong trust that Hashem will sustain him willingly, and when and where He would like, just like He sustains the fetus in the womb, the chick in its egg... the bird in the air, the fish in the sea and [even] the tiny, weak ant.

The worldly advantages to be had from trust in Hashem include: tranquility, quiet, and security.

Finally, he has *simcha* with everything, even with what goes against his nature. Because he trusts that Hashem would only do what is best for him with every matter, like a loving mother who takes care of every need of a child, even against his will.

The essence of trust is tranquility (i.e., a feeling of security) — when one’s heart is relying on the one that he trusts to only do what is good and necessary for him, to the best of his ability and knowledge.

There are seven criteria for trusting another person: First, he must [have the qualities of] being merciful, compassionate, and loving. For you would only trust someone and feel safe about his involvement in your matters if he has compassion and mercy for you.

Second, you must know that, in his love for you, he would never abandon you or be slow to fulfil your wishes. Furthermore, you must be sure that he would make every effort to do it, and that he would do it willingly... If he shows much compassion for you, and personally deals with all of your matters, then you should certainly trust him.

Fifth, you must be under his care from birth, through infancy, childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age... And if it is clear that you have been, then you must have confidence in him and depend on him, seeing that he has already done so much for you, and continues to do so all the time, which has you trust him even more so.

And seventh, he must be extraordinarily, constantly and endlessly generous and kind to you, *whether you deserve it or not*.

³⁰ *Shir HaShirim* 8:7

Someone with such traits, as well as the ones already mentioned, meets all the criteria for trust. If you know that to be so of someone, then you are obliged to trust him and to feel confident in him both outwardly and inwardly, in your heart and with your limbs. You are to subjugate (abnegate) yourself to him, accept his decrees and judge all his decisions and deeds favorably.

When we examine these seven criteria [we realize that] they are found in *no* person, but they are *all* found in the Creator. He has compassion for His creations...and He never neglects us, as it is written, "*Hinei lo yanum v'lo yishan, shomer Yisrael* — Behold, the Guardian of Yisrael neither sleeps nor slumbers."³¹

He alone cares for man at birth and throughout his life, as it is said, Is "He not your father Who has acquired you, Has He not made you and established you?"³²

You will only trust Hashem, give yourself over to Him, leave yourself in His care, have no questions about His judgments and *not grow angry at His decisions* when all of this becomes clear to you, and you come to recognize how truly kind Hashem is.

You must be aware of Hashem's great generosity to you. He very kindly and generously created you, *though you did not deserve to be created* and He had no need to create you. And He did so with generosity, goodness and kindness.

One who trusts Hashem is settled, and his heart is tranquil [even] in *difficult times*, because he knows the Creator does only good things for him in this world and beyond.

But one who does *not trust Hashem* is *always burdened, worried, mournful, and grieved*, regardless of whether things go well for him or not. When things go well, he is dissatisfied with his lot and wants more, as well as the chance to increase his possessions. And when things go badly, he becomes depressed, because his situation does not agree with him and conflicts with his personality.

One who does not understand how the Creator exhibits mercy, guidance, providence and control over His created beings...could never be satisfied with nor rely on Him.

The principle in trust is this: *the more you know about Hashem* and the more you trust that He guides you and provides for you so well, and to your advantage, the more you will trust Him.

³¹ *Tehillim* 121:4

³² *Devarim* 32:6