

Hashem Loves Us

Part 1 – Sources and How It Is Expressed

It is well known that my *Rebbe* and *Rosh HaYeshiva*, Rav Noach Weinberg, *zt"l*, put a great emphasis on the *Sheish Mitzvot Temidiot* (The Six Constant Mitzvot). Among those mitzvot is *Ahavat Hashem* — to love Hashem. As true as that is, he ultimately spoke much more about the importance of us knowing that *Hashem loved us* than *our obligation* to love Hashem.

In fact, Rav Noach even had a proof that Hashem loved us. He explained that a creation of something *from* nothing is inherently a creation of something *for* nothing. Before we were created, we didn't deserve to exist. Since we didn't exist, then by definition, we couldn't have deserved anything. Therefore, our creation must have been a completely undeserved gift. What could explain that Hashem gave us existence, our most valuable possession, as a pure act of giving? It must be that He loves us. We need to appreciate why it is so essential to realize and remember that Hashem loves us.

The third *perek* of *Pirkei Avot*¹ tells us:

Chavivin Yisrael, she'nik're'u banim la'Makom. Chibah yeteirah noda'at lahem she'nik're'u banim la'Makom, she'ne'emar, "Banim atem la'Hashem Elokeichem" (Yisrael is precious, since they are called children of Hashem. A greater [sign of] endearment [is that] it was made known to them that they are called children of Hashem.)

What does it mean that we, the Jewish people, are called *banim la'Makom* (children of Hashem)? Obviously, that Hashem loves us.

It is fascinating that the Mishnah says — even greater than being *banim la'Makom* (children of Hashem), a greater sign of our endearment to Hashem is that we were told we are *banim la'Makom*. What does that tell us? If it is greater to be told something than for that thing to be true, that thing must not be so obvious! The Mishnah is, therefore, telling us something remarkable — it is not so simple to know that Hashem loves us. Apparently, we need to constantly be reminded, which is what Rav Noach understood so well.

We find the love of Hashem all throughout *possukim* (the verses in the Torah)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks discusses this in an essay he wrote on *Parshat Eikev*:

Something implicit in the Torah from the very beginning becomes explicit in the book of *Devarim*. G-d is the G-d of love. More than we love Him, He loves us.

Here, for instance, in the beginning of *Parshat Eikev*:

If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then G-d your L-rd will keep His *covenant of love* [*et ha-brit ve-et ha-chessed*] with you, as He swore to your ancestors. He will *love* you and bless you and increase your numbers.²

¹ *Pirkei Avot* 3:14

² *Devarim* 7:12–13

Again, in *Eikev* we read:

To G-d your L-rd belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet G-d *set His affection* on your ancestors and *loved* them, and He chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today.³

And in a verse from *V'etchanan*:

Because He *loved* your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, He brought you out of Egypt by His Presence and His great strength.⁴

[Rabbi Sacks points out that] the book of *Devarim* is saturated with the language of love. The root (אהב) appears twice in *Shemot*, twice in *Vayikra* (both in chapter 19), and not at all in *Bamidbar*. In *Sefer Devarim* it appears 23 times.

[He also emphasizes that] nothing could be more misleading and invidious than the Christian contrast between Christianity as a religion of love and forgiveness and Judaism as a religion of law and retribution... When the New Testament speaks of love, it does so by *direct quotation* from *Vayikra* ("You shall love your neighbor as yourself") and *Devarim* ("You shall love G-d your L-rd with all your heart, all your soul and all of your might").

What is radical about this idea is that the Torah insists, against virtually the whole of the ancient world, that the elements that constitute reality are neither hostile nor indifferent to humankind. We are here because Someone (i.e., Hashem) wanted us to be — One Who cares about us, watches over us and seeks our wellbeing.

We also find the love of Hashem all throughout the davening (Prayers)

Not only do we see this idea of Hashem loving us in many different *possukim*, we also find it all throughout the davening.

In *Birkat Kriat Shema* every morning, we say:

Ahavah rabah ahavtanu ([With a] great love You have loved us)... *chemlah gedolah viseirah chamalta aleinu* (with overwhelming compassion have You had compassion on us)... *u'vanu vacharta mikol am v'lashon* (and You chose us from every nation and language), *v'keiravtanu l'shimcha hagadol* (and You brought us close to Your great Name)... *Boruch atah Hashem habocheh b'amo Yisrael b'ahavah* (Blessed are You Hashem, Who chooses His nation Yisrael with love)."

And in *Birkat Kriat Shema* every evening:

Ahavat olam beit Yisrael amcha ahavta ([With an] eternal love for Your nation, the house of Yisrael, have You loved us)... *v'ahavt'cha al tasir mimenu l'olamim* (and don't ever remove Your love from us). *Boruch atah Hashem ohev amo Yisrael* (Blessed are You Hashem, Who loves His nation Yisrael).

The language of these *brachot* is based on *possukim* in *Yirmiyahu* (31:2), *Malachi* (3:17) and *Yeshaya* (63:9).

In the beginning of the fourth *bracha* of the *Yom Tov Amidah*, we say:

³ *Devarim* 10:14–15

⁴ *Devarim* 4:37

Atah v'chartanu mikol ha'amim, ahavta otanu, v'ratzita banu, v'romamtanu mikol ha'leshonot, v'kidashtanu b'mitzvotcha, v'keiravtanu Malkeinu la'avodatecha, v'shimcha hagadol v'hakadosh aleinu karata.

“You chose us from every nation, loved us and were pleased with us, [You] elevated us from every language, and sanctified us with Your *mitzvot*, and, our King, [You] brought us close to Your service, and Your great and Holy Name is called upon us.”

The *Maharal m'Prague* in his *Siddur (I'Chol v'Shabbat)* discusses the *bracha* of *Oheiv Amo Yisrael* in *birkat Kriat Shema* of *Maariv*:

Although love is [generally] between *shavim v'domim* (equals and those that are similar), love is still possible for Hashem, may He be blessed, since Yisrael are called *banim l'Makom* (children to Hashem). It is known that a father loves his child because his child comes from him, and whatever comes from a person is very connected to him. Yisrael were created from Hashem. And, although everything that was created was [obviously] from Hashem, there was still nothing [else] which came from His essence and from the beginning like Yisrael... Therefore, Yisrael was the creation which came from Hashem, and since Yisrael was “*maaseh Yadav* (the work of His hands),” there is a complete connection...

In terms of people, a parent loves the child, while the love of the child towards the parent is not as great. Since the child came from the parent, flesh from his flesh, this love is possible. But since the parent didn't come from the child, the love [of the child] is not as great towards the parent.⁵

The *Ramban* explains:

Because we say in [the first *parsha* of] *Kriat Shema* — “And you should love G-d your L-rd” and [in the second *parsha*] “to love G-d your L-rd,” the Rabbis established the *bracha* of *Ahavah Rabah* [and *Ahavat Olam*] before [the *Shema*] in *Shacharit* and *Arvit*. That is to say, just like we [are commanded to] love *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, [we need to remember that] He also loves us. As it says — “I love you,” says Hashem.”⁶ And it also says — “Because Hashem loved you.”⁷

It was not because we were greater than the nations that Hashem desired us and chose us, but [simply] from His love for us. And that is [the meaning of] “*HaBocher b'amo Yisrael b'ahavah* — The One Who chooses His nation Yisrael with.”⁸

We find the love of Hashem for Yisrael expressed in many statements of *Chazal* (our Rabbis of blessed memory)

The *Medrash*⁹ explains the *possuk* in *Kohelet*¹⁰ — “*Eit le'ehov* — [There is] a time to love,” according to the *possuk*¹¹ where Hashem says, “I love you.”

Another *Medrash*¹² declares:

⁵ *Netivot Olam* — *Netiv Ahavat Hashem* 5:1

⁶ *Malachi* 1:2

⁷ *Devarim* 7:8

⁸ *Tefillah l'Moshe* — *Otzar Peirushei HaRishonim al HaTefillot*

⁹ *Kohelet Rabba* 3:8

¹⁰ *Kohelet* 3:8

¹¹ *Malachi* 1:2

¹² *Mechilta d'Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai, Shemot*

Come and see just how much mercy and merit *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* has for Yisrael.

The *Radak*¹³ explains the *possuk* of “Hashem loves *tzadikim*” to mean that Hashem loves Yisrael, who are the *tzadikim* among the nations.

And finally, we see in the *Medrash*¹⁴ that [Yisrael is] called *Ach v'Rei'ah* (brother and friend), *Ahuv* (beloved), *Ben* (child), and *Eved* (servant).

How is the love of Hashem expressed?

The *Medrash*¹⁵ writes: *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is concerned for the difficulties of Yisrael.

Just like a father is obligated to redeem his son and teach him Torah, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* also redeemed Yisrael and teaches Yisrael.¹⁶

The *Medrash*¹⁷ tells us that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is [even] concerned for the money of Yisrael.

And finally, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* called Yisrael “*Kallah*” (a term of affection) in ten places.¹⁸

Hashem has a special love for Yisrael

The *Torat Avot (Slonim)*¹⁹ writes:

The love of Hashem toward us is *temima* (complete), with no *p'gam* (blemish) at all. And all of the [other] loves in this world are *k'eyin u'k'effes* (virtually nonexistent) compared to this love... Every single Jew [therefore] needs to feel this love.

Yisrael is more precious to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* than the *Malachei HaShareis* (the Ministering Angels).²⁰

Hashem loves *mishpat* (justice) and He also loves Yisrael. However, the love that He has for Yisrael is greater than the love He has for *mishpat*.²¹

The *Tanna D'vei Eliyahu*²² tells us:

[Hashem says:] There are two things in the world which I love with [all] My heart, a complete love. They are Torah and Yisrael, but [it is difficult to know] which of them comes first. The way of people is to say the Torah is first. But I say that Yisrael is first... If not for Yisrael, the world would not have been created, and it would have [even] been destroyed.

¹³ *Tehillim Mizmor* 146:8

¹⁴ *Medrash Zutah, Shir HaShirim, Mehadurat Buber, Parsha Aleph*

¹⁵ *Sifri u'Pesikta Zutrata, Parshat Re'eh* 16:13

¹⁶ *Medrash Bamidbar Rabba* 17a, *Medrash Tanchuma, Shelach* #14

¹⁷ *Vayikra Rabba* 8:4 and see *Gemara Yoma* 39a

¹⁸ *Medrash Devarim Rabba* 2:37

¹⁹ P. 233

²⁰ *Gemara Chulin* 91b

²¹ *Likutei Maharam* 115

²² *Rabba, Perek* 14

[Hashem] only placed His Name on Yisrael exclusively, *k'vi'achol* (so to speak).²³

Hakadosh Baruch Hu and *K'nesset Yisrael* are called "*echad*." This without this is not called "*echad*."²⁴

There were four *kinyanim* (acquisitions) that [Hashem] acquired in His world, and Yisrael was one *kinyan*.²⁵

The *Tikunei haZohar*²⁶ explains the *possuk* in *Shir HaShirim*²⁷ — "A love as fierce as death":

The separation of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and His Divine Presence from Yisrael is as difficult as the separation of the *neschama*, the *ruach*, and the *nefesh* from the body!

Medrashim tell us:

Every term of endearment that there is for *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, Yisrael is [also] called by it. Yisrael is called — *Elokim, Chacham, Dodi, Bachurim, Chasid, Kadosh*.²⁸

All of the nations are called *nochrin* (foreigners) before *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and Yisrael are called *kerovim* (relatives).²⁹

Hakadosh Baruch Hu is a relative to us. This is an explicit *possuk* — "*Banim atem la'Hashem Elokeichem*." So how could *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* judge Yisrael? Necessarily, we have to say that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will need to distance Himself from us... However, Yisrael understands that this *richuk* (distancing) is for the sake of the *kiruv* (closeness). And afterwards, this will cause an even greater *ahavah u'devikut* (love and connection).³⁰

The difference between the creation of Yisrael and the creation of the nations is... that everything was created for the sake of Yisrael, while Yisrael was created for its own sake... Ultimately, everything returns to the *possuk* — "*Banim atem la'Hashem Elokeichem*."³¹

The *Ikar hakavod* (essential honor) for Yisrael is that they are called *banim* (children). And it is [specifically] through the Torah that Yisrael are called *banim*.³²

Yisrael is called *banim la'Makom*, and [furthermore, due to] the love which He loved them, He called them — "*B'ni Bechori Yisrael* (My son, My firstborn, Yisrael)."³³

Since [Yisrael] is the first of all the creations, and only they [truly] know Hashem, that is why they are called "*Bechori* (My firstborn)."³⁴ Hashem knew

²³ *Medrash Bereshit Rabba* 18:5

²⁴ *Zohar, Chelek Gimmel* 93b

²⁵ *Gemara Pesachim* 87b, *Pirkei Avot*, end of *Perek Vav*

²⁶ *Tikun Aleph* 18a

²⁷ 8:6

²⁸ *Medrash Tanchuma, Parshat Kedoshim* 5

²⁹ *Medrash Esther Rabba* 7:13

³⁰ *Sheim m'Shmuel, Moadim, Rosh Hashanah*

³¹ *Gur Aryeh, Devarim* 14:1–2, Note #167

³² *Imrei Emet, Bamidbar, Shavuot*

³³ *Gemara Shabbat* 31a, *Shemot* 4:22

Yisrael first, and then all the other nations. That is why they are the “firstborn.”³⁵

The *Gur Aryeh*³⁶ explains the *possuk* — “Hashem says, ‘*B’ni Bechori Yisrael* — My firstborn son is Yisrael’”:³⁷

Yisrael precedes the other nations just like the first-born precedes the other brothers.

The *Maharal* doesn’t mean that Yisrael actually *came to the world* before the other nations. On the contrary, Yisrael was actually the final nation to come to the world. Rather, the intention here is to the *machshava rishona* (initial thought).

It is written in *Netzach Yisrael*:³⁸

No other nation is called “*ben* — child” to Hashem more than Yisrael. But even so, the name “*ben*” is not such an enhancement for them, since a person could have two children. Therefore, Yisrael is called “*b’ni bechori* — My first-born son” since it is impossible for one to have two different first-born children. And from this we can understand that it would be impossible for there to be another nation that would be called “*banim* — children.” Hashem is intrinsically one, and since a child is from His true essence, His son must necessarily also be one.

The *Netzach Yisrael*³⁹ asks:

What does it mean that Yisrael are called “*Banim la’Hashem*”? There is no doubt that all of existence is nourished from Hashem, but not everything is comparable. Some [elements of creation] are drawn from His true essence and are close to Him, while others are not, due to their distance. Since this nation of Yisrael is drawn from His true essence, in this way, there is more of a joining and connection to Hashem. They are, therefore, called “*banim* (children).” We can understand from this that it would be impossible for any other nation to [also] be called “*banim*”... This is just like there can only be one nation which is “*reishit* (first),” and created first from Hashem.

Hashem also loves non-Jews

The *Rinat Dodim*⁴⁰ explains –

Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves Yisrael more than all the nations of the world, even though they are [also] *chavivim* (precious) to Him. As the Rabbis tell us, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* rebuked the Angels [when the Egyptians were drowning in the *Yam Suf*] — “The work of My hands is drowning in the sea and you want to sing *Shirah* (a song of celebration)?” In any case, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* loves Yisrael [more] than all the nations. And there is no difficulty in those words that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* loves the nations... We never said that He loves them in general, except that there are some among them who fulfill the seven [Noachide] *mitzvot*, which is all that they are commanded, and a few who fear Hashem.

³⁴ *Shemot* 4:22

³⁵ *Gur Aryeh, Shemot* 4:16

³⁶ *Devarim* 14:1-2, note #165

³⁷ *Shemot* 4:22

³⁸ Ch. 11, p. 65a

³⁹ Ch. 11, *Samech Hei, Be’er HaGolah, Be’er HaShlishi* 42b

⁴⁰ Rav Eliyahu Luntz, a *mekubal* who lived in Germany (1564–1636), *Shir HaShirim* 3:9

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,⁴¹ ‘*Ahavat olam ahavtich* — I have loved you with an eternal love.’”⁴²

Hakadosh Baruch Hu swore an oath that He would never forsake Yisrael.⁴³

[Hashem says —] Even if I destroyed My universe, I wouldn’t abandon Yisrael.⁴⁴

And why did [Hashem] choose them? [Simply] because He loved them, as it says, “*ohavem nedava* — [Hashem] loves us willingly.” And it is written,⁴⁵ “Because of G-d’s love for you.”⁴⁶

The *Sefat Emet*⁴⁷ 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.”⁴⁸

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*⁴⁹ on the *possuk*⁵⁰ — “I will heal their rebellions as a generous love” — that My soul gives them love even though they are not proper.

The *Sefat Emet*⁵¹ 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*⁵² explains:

⁴¹ *Yirmeyahu* 31:2

⁴² *Otzar HaMedrashim* — *Eisenstein* 97:18

⁴³ *Devarim Rabba* 3:2

⁴⁴ *Shemot Rabba* 4:5

⁴⁵ *Devarim* 7:8

⁴⁶ *Medrash Tanchuma, Bamidbar* #17

⁴⁷ *Balak* — “*V’yasham*”

⁴⁸ *Devarim* 23:6

⁴⁹ *Tanchuma, Eikev* 4

⁵⁰ *Hoshea* 14:5

⁵¹ *Shavuot* #649

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] for both Yaakov and Eisav, even though their actions were so different, an *ahavah b'lo taam*. The *Gemara*⁵³ 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*⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵ 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...⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷

The *Mahara*⁵⁸ 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*⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰ 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*⁶¹ 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]

⁵² *L'Chag HaPesach* 34

⁵³ *Sanhedrin* 44a

⁵⁴ *Derech Chaim* 5:17, "V'Yeish Lomar"

⁵⁵ *Be'er HaGolah, Be'er Revi'i* #551b

⁵⁶ *Ner Mitzvah* 37b

⁵⁷ *Gur Aryeh, Bereshit*, chapter 49, #24, 427b

⁵⁸ *Netzach Yisrael, Perek Yud Aleph*

⁵⁹ *Derech Chaim, Avot* 5:17

⁶⁰ *Pirkei Avot* 5:17

⁶¹ *Bereshis* 12:1

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.

The *Bikurei Aviv*⁶² says similarly:

Hashem loves Yisrael, and because of that love, He says, “*Dai* — It is sufficient.”⁶³

[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*⁶⁴ writes:

Knesset Yisrael says, “Kiss me with the kisses of your mouth.”⁶⁵ 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.”⁶⁶ 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

⁶² *Vayikra*

⁶³ This is based on a teaching from *Rebbe Levi m’Berdichev* on *Parshas Shemos*

⁶⁴ 2:124b

⁶⁵ *Shir HaShirim* 1:2

⁶⁶ *Shir HaShirim* 8:7

The *Rinat Dodim*⁶⁷ 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 transgressions. That is to say, even when the generation is entirely obligated (i.e., liable).

The *Chafetz Chaim*⁶⁸ 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*⁶⁹ 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,⁷⁰ "*Lo hibit aven b'Yaakov* (He sees no iniquity in the Jewish people)."

The *Gra*⁷¹ 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,"⁷² 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 Levovitz⁷³ quotes the *Ramchal*:⁷⁴

⁶⁷ *Shir HaShirim, Aleph-Aleph*

⁶⁸ *Shmirat HaLashon, Shaar HaZechirah, Perek Beit*

⁶⁹ *Yirmeyahu* 31:19

⁷⁰ *Bamidbar* 23:21

⁷¹ *Mishlei* 3:12

⁷² *Devarim* 31:17

⁷³ *Mamarei HaMashgiach Rabbeniu Yerucham HaLevi, Elul*, vol. I, p. 459

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!”

The *Mishnah*⁷⁵ 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*⁷⁶ 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.”⁷⁷ 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

⁷⁴ *Da'at Tevunot, siman 160*

⁷⁵ *Sanhedrin 6:5*

⁷⁶ 3:37

⁷⁷ *Devarim 7:7*

and established with no deviation, as the *possuk*⁷⁸ says, “*V’ahavat olam ahavtich* — I have loved you with an eternal love.”

In the *Likutei Halachot*⁷⁹ 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.”

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

The *Gemara*⁸⁰ 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*⁸¹ 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*⁸² says — “*Banim sechalim heima* — They are foolish children.”

And a second *possuk*⁸³ says, “*Banim lo eimun bam* — Children with no loyalty.”

A third *possuk*⁸⁴ says, “*Zera m’rei’im, banim mashchitim* — Evil offspring, corrupt children.”

And, finally, a fourth *possuk*⁸⁵ 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*?

⁷⁸ *Yirmeyahu* 31:2

⁷⁹ *Orach Chaim, Hilchot Shabbat*, 3:10, bottom of page 15 (Rav Nachman m’Breslav)

⁸⁰ *Kiddushin* 36a

⁸¹ Quoted in the *Metivta* edition of the *gemara*

⁸² *Yirmeyahu* 4:22

⁸³ *Devarim* 32:20

⁸⁴ *Yeshaya* 1:4

⁸⁵ *Hoshea* 2:1

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*,⁸⁶ 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.

And, interestingly, we see this same point from the *possuk*⁸⁷ — “*Shuvu banim shovavim* — Return wayward sons.” The *Gemara*⁸⁸ 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*⁸⁹ 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*⁹⁰ tells us:

“*Yerushalayim* transgressed and, therefore, [became] a *niddah* (forbidden woman).”⁹¹

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.

⁸⁶ In his *Teshuvot* — 1:242

⁸⁷ *Yirmeyahu* 3:14

⁸⁸ *Chagiga* 15a

⁸⁹ *Baba Batra* 99a and *Gemara Yuma* 54a

⁹⁰ Rav Yosef Ṭaiṭazaḳ, a *mekubal* who was the rebbe of Rav Moshe Alshich and Rav Shlomo Alkabetz

⁹¹ *Eichah* 1:8

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*”⁹²:

Even if they are drawn after the desires of *Olam Haze*, 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* writes⁹³ — “*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.⁹⁴

⁹² *Tehillim* 146:8

⁹³ *Shabbat Shuva*, 634 — about *Hoshea* 14:5, from the *haftarah* of *Shabbat Shuva*

⁹⁴ *Eretz Tzvi – Parshat Tazria* #687-143, *Mei Shiloach* 2:90 — *Naso, Medrash Socheir Tov al Tehillim, Mizmor* 146:8, *Pri Tzadik – Parshat Kedoshim* #12

The *Medrash Tanchuma*⁹⁵ takes a different approach:

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

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 atem ham’at* — because you are few” — meaning, in the *zechut* (merit) that you *minimize yourselves*.

The *Gemara*⁹⁶ says similarly:

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

The *Mahara*⁹⁷ 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*⁹⁸ 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.”⁹⁹

He didn’t remove His great love from them until He called them greater than this — “*v’goy kadosh* — and a holy nation.”¹⁰⁰

He still didn’t remove His love from them until He called them — “*Ki am kadosh atah* — Because you are a holy nation.”¹⁰¹

And finally, He didn’t remove His love from them until He called them — “*v’anshei kodesh* — and holy people.”¹⁰² I.e., they themselves were *kodesh* — which is greater than everything.

The *Medrash*¹⁰³ 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

⁹⁵ *Parshat Eikev, Siman Gimmel*

⁹⁶ *Chulin* 89a

⁹⁷ *Derech HaChaim, Hakdamah* — Rav Hartman footnotes, Note 12, p. 5

⁹⁸ 2:121a

⁹⁹ *Shemot* 19:6

¹⁰⁰ *Shemot* 19:6

¹⁰¹ *Devarim* 7:6

¹⁰² *Shemot* 22:30

¹⁰³ *Shemot Rabba* 29:4

am, therefore, not called *Elokei HaUmos*, (the power/L-rd of the nation) but rather *Elokei Yisrael* (the power/L-rd of Yisrael).

The *Zohar*¹⁰⁴ 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),”¹⁰⁵ and not [clinging to] any other appointed [being], like the rest of the nations.

The *Avodat Yisrael*¹⁰⁶ 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*¹⁰⁷ declares:

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

Another *Medrash*¹⁰⁸ 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*¹⁰⁹ 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

¹⁰⁴ *Chelek Gimmel* 260b

¹⁰⁵ *Devarim* 4:4

¹⁰⁶ *Yakar miPaz* — *Haftarah Toldot*

¹⁰⁷ *Bamidbar Rabba* 4:5

¹⁰⁸ *Bamidbar Rabba* 14:10

¹⁰⁹ *Toldot*

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*¹¹⁰ continues:

[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*¹¹¹ 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...

¹¹⁰ *Pekudei*

¹¹¹ *Shabbat Shuva* 5690 — Depth of the Love from Hashem. This is from the author of the *Aish Kodesh*.

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*¹¹² 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, as it says¹¹³ — “Hashem says, ‘I love you.’” And it also says¹¹⁴ — “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*¹¹⁵ 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*.¹¹⁶ 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*.¹¹⁷

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*¹¹⁸ 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.

¹¹² *Ahavat Yisrael, Perek Daled*

¹¹³ *Malachi* 1:2

¹¹⁴ *Devarim* 7:8

¹¹⁵ *Shmirat HaLashon, Chelek Aleph, Shaar HaTevuna, Perek Hei*

¹¹⁶ *Sanhedrin* 46

¹¹⁷ Chapter 28

¹¹⁸ *Shabbat* 89a

The *Zohar*¹¹⁹ 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*¹²⁰ says as well:

“*Mayim rabim lo yuchlu livkot et ha’ahavah* (Many waters are not able to extinguish this love).”¹²¹

“*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

¹¹⁹ *Chelek Aleph* 182b, according to the *Sulam*

¹²⁰ *Shemot Rabba* 49a, and see *Medrash Tehillim m’hamedurat Buber* #15

¹²¹ *Shir HaShirim* 8:7

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*.

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."¹²²

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?"¹²³

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.

¹²² *Tehillim* 121:4

¹²³ *Devarim* 32:6

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.

Part 4 – The Critical Importance of Knowing that Hashem Loves Us

My Rosh HaYeshiva, Rav Noach Weinberg, zt"l, discussed this in a series of talks he gave during Elul

Here we are, in the beginning of the month of Elul. The letters are *Alef Lamed Vav Lamed*. In Hebrew it's Elul. And for the Jewish people, in Jewish consciousness, the name of the month states its opportunity. In Judaism, we say the Almighty is our Father in heaven. Whatever He gave us is instructions for living, opportunities for the major breakthroughs that we're all looking for. *Alef Lamed Vav Lamed*, which corresponds to *Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li* — I am for my Beloved and my Beloved is for me. That's what Elul is about — the time for courtship. An opportunity for the achievement of our ultimate longing.

And in Jewish consciousness, the first of Elul was a time for preparing to meet our beloved. At the same time, the first day of Elul, we blow the shofar. You heard the shofar? It strikes a stab of pain, of fear. It's a warning cry. Fire! Danger! King, judgment, who will live and who will die? That's what the shofar is about. That's what it calls in us. And the Rabbis tell us, it's to wake us up — "*Uru yesheinim mishenatchem* — Sleepers, wake up. "*Nirdamim* — you who are drowsy, *hakitzu mitardematchem*." Drowsy people, straighten out.

A time of courtship, of pleasure. And wake up, sharp, alarm. Is it a contradiction or is it the same?

Even an atheist will admit that if I can come close to an Almighty, if He was there, and I can be with Him, that would be it. That's all I would want out of life.

And perhaps we remember the last Yom Kippur and how we felt on Yom Kippur, and how close we were to our Father. And perhaps on Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Awe, maybe we felt it. You remember? Of course you would remember.

But the problem is that we were asleep the rest of the year. Is that right? So, the shofar says, alarm. Alarm. And you went back to sleep. How'd you go back to sleep? You took so much trouble. You got so far. You made such resolutions. You saw so clearly where you were off. You struggled to change. You knew where you were going. You knew what you accomplished. And now what happened?

So, the *Mesillat Yesharim* tells us in the beginning of his book, he says, look my friends, I didn't come to teach you anything new. I didn't come to teach human beings anything that they don't already know, only to remind them of what they know and is absolutely *mefursam*, widespread knowledge. But inasmuch as it is true, we forget it. Because our nature is to forget. The nature of a human being is to forget, and we know it so well. We can see something so clearly, 100% that it's true.

Mind-boggling. This is our nature, yeah. We were there — Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur. We knew once, and we forgot. Does that chill your bones?

I mean, are we going to climb this hill and keep doing this, like that myth, you know, the guy who rolls the ball up and it comes down, and then he rolls it up again? Is that what it's about?

No, thank God, we have changed. You know you have changed. We've become aware of things. But is this what it has to be? You roll up, you get up to the King and the Father and you fly, you reach there and then, zing, it's gone?

Is that what we are doomed to do? To constantly climb this hill and fall down to the bottom and start all over again? Maybe on a higher level? Maybe with a better appreciation. What's going on?

So, the Rabbis say that the Almighty, Creator of this universe, doesn't want you to go up and down the hill.

The Rabbis tell us that the Almighty says to all human beings — *p'tach li k'petach shel machat* — open up to Me, My loved ones. Open up to me just a little bit of a hole, like the eye of a needle, just a little bit of a hole, and I will open up to you like the *pitcho shel ulam*. I will open up the *Beit HaMikdash*, the widest door of all. Hey, that's not so bad. Just a little bit of an opening — a little bit, right?

But the *Baalei Mussar* and the *Chasidim* say, you know, an eye of a needle means it's got to be a hole, straight through. It's a little hole, but it's got to be a hole. It's not a dent of the needle. But if you make a through and through hole, like the eye of a needle, the Almighty says, I'll do the rest.

Now, what do we do about it? How do we make a hole of a needle for the Almighty? I mean, He doesn't want you to bring Him a needle, right? Where do you make the hole? In the nose, in the head, in the heart, how do you do it? So, I'll tell you how you do it. I'll tell you very simple, very simple how you do it.

You see, focus your attention that even an atheist will say, if God can create this universe with all the stars and with all the beauty and the genius, if God Almighty would talk to any human being and give us instructions for living, and I would hear those instructions, we could not possibly fail.

The atheist says, if the Almighty gives you instructions how to put a world together, even an imbecile will be able to put the world together, right? If the Almighty tells you how to have pleasure, wow!

And there are quite a few of our young people who have been here for a while, who believe that God spoke to man. And we read His instructions every day? And I don't see any supermen around here! What's going wrong?

So, I would suggest that it is very obvious, that somehow, we are closing ourselves off with a curtain.

So, *p'tach li k'petach shel machat*. The Almighty says, open up like a little eye of a needle, just a little bit. One thing that I said that you know is true, consider it 100% true. That's all. One thing.

G-d loves you. Is that true? We Jews believe that. Our Father. "*Ahavah rabah ahavtanu* — with a great love You have loved us." If you believe in Torah, that's the basic message of Torah. Our Father. He loves us more than your parents love you. G-d loves you. Do you believe it? Do you accept it?

Hear it. Open that opening, just a wee little bit. G-d loves you. He loves you. Just leave it open. What do you say? Is it true, 100% clear to the other end? Did you hear?

That's the whole basic message of Judaism, the Torah, everything you're learning. He loves you.

Ah, come on, let me sleep. The shofar — ooo, ooo, ooo, ooo. Courtship time. God loves you. Hear him. He loves you. Can you open it up? Can you let it through? Just that one little thing?

It's not so easy? To open up the eye of a needle? Well, I suggest, you see, that Rosh Hashanah is coming. The day of judgment. Who will live and who will die? Who will be paralyzed? And who will be rich? Who will be poor? Who by fire? It's coming. You're going to come to the Day of Judgment. Are you going to be able to tell the Almighty, "I know You love me"? When you come after you die, and you stand in front of God, are you going to be able to say, "I knew that You loved me"? "I heard it." Or are you going to tell the Almighty, "Well, I couldn't focus, I was learning Your Torah, I wanted to do the right thing. I really believed in You, but somehow, I heard that You need my sacrifices. Or somebody told me that You wanted my praise, and I — I didn't feel up to it." Is that what you're going to tell the Almighty?

Wake up. You've got to break through. For yourself, for all of us, for humanity, for the meaning of our existence. We've got to be real. We can't go on sleeping. Wake up. Whatever it'll be, God loves you.

God loves you. Do you agree with that? Get it through to the other end. So, at least when you come upstairs, you can say, "One thing I heard. And I saw that God opened up the doors of the Temple," because He will.

We are now one week closer to the Day of Judgment. We spoke about fear being necessary to make you real. It's not the *reason* we do things. We want to be real. But when we look at the consequences, when we see the consequences, that you wasted, and you made a mistake, it's forever.

Ani l'dodi v'dodi li. Whatever we prepare, we'll have. If we get closer to the Almighty, then the Almighty will be with us. That's what it means. *Ani l'dodi*, if I am for my Beloved, my Beloved is with me. The Almighty is always ready. He's always ready for you. The Almighty loves you.

But unless you're willing to come to Him, you will never see it. People can live a whole life with the Almighty loving them and still have nothing. A whole life. Meaningless, nothing.

So, we said, *p'tach li k'petach shel machat*. Be real. Does the Almighty love you? That's why you're here! Is that what He gave us in the Torah? Are we doing God a favor? Come. He created us for pleasure.

So, when you're davening, who are you serving? Who are you helping? If you are close to the Almighty, it's your pleasure. Putting on *tefillin* — it's your pleasure. You love your fellow man — it's your pleasure. You're happy — it's your pleasure.

But if you don't know it, then fear, the blowing of the shofar, that will get you there. That makes you real. The consequences.

If you don't live in reality, you've wasted a life. If you wasted a year, you've wasted forever. A year is a piece of life. Have we used it?

But at the same time, we know that fear makes us real.

But we can forget like this. You walk out the door, even if you heard me. You agree with me. You made a decision it's true.

You should hear. If you mean that the Almighty loves you, if you know that there is no way you're doing God a favor, all that He did was to have a beautiful world created for your pleasure, and all He wants from you and all your obligation is to have that pleasure.

You heard it, made a decision, and you walk out the door and we turn into zombies. We forget about it. We forget that it's real. Somehow, we're back, square one. If our society was there, we'd all be there. But we're battling that insanity. Nobody's there. How can it be true? You know it's true. You made the decision.

So, the Almighty gave us 40 days until Yom Kippur. These 40 days are an *eis ratzon* (time of favor). It's a time of teshuva. That's what it's for. Teshuva.

Why teshuva? There's no other way. You have to come home. What's teshuva? Remember, not repent. Don't go into that insanity. Teshuva is coming home. Your father loves you. Where are you, my son? Your bed is ready. The meal is prepared. Come home.

Ani l'dodi v'dodi li. All that you have to know is that you love Me. Come home. Then you will know that I love you. Teshuva means to return. Return to what?

The Almighty, a powerful creator Who created a world for our pleasure, Who gave us instructions to teach us how to have pleasure, how to have self-respect, how to be tough, how to change the world, which is all your pleasure. How to understand what the world is about, which is your pleasure.

So, what are you going to do tomorrow morning? Are you going to say, there I go, I have to daven again, I have to get up again? I have to have pleasure again?

That's what it'll be. Tomorrow morning, you're going to have the same struggle. Tomorrow afternoon, the same struggle. You'll open up a Gemara, the same struggle. There you are again, fighting for the Almighty Lord. He needs your fight? Bringing him sacrifices. He needs your sacrifice? Crazy.

Is there any way out? Teshuva. Come home. Once you're home, you're home. You know who your Father is. You know that He loves you. You know that you love him. So, how do we do teshuva? We know how. But you've got to remember to do it.

Regret the insanity, the loss. Why in the world should you have spent the year struggling? How crazy can you be? A year struggling when it could have been a year of pleasure.

A year struggling to serve God, to help Him, to do His will, to support Him, to bring Him ice cubes. A year struggling for the Almighty. Does He appreciate it?

He gave you a beautiful world. He gave you eyes for your pleasure. That's all that you can do for Him. Regret the insanity, the waste. The aggravation over nothing.

The insanity, the waste. And be ashamed of the stupidity. How stupid can you get? The only reason you're here is because you heard it. Because you know it's true.

How stupid can you get? Buy the Brooklyn Bridge. Fine. Okay. Bought the Brooklyn Bridge. 365 days a year, you're going to buy the Brooklyn Bridge? So, 365 days of the year you should say again, yes, the Almighty loves me. This is a world He created for my pleasure. That's right. Yeah, I know that.

Oh, is this a pain in the neck. What's with me? So, where the heck is the root of this insanity? For goodness sake, I know it's true. I want the pleasure. I know that's what He wants me to have. I know I've got to accomplish it. I know it makes sense, but somehow there's something in me that keeps knocking me off.

First of all, just say it out loud in front of the Almighty, *Chatati, aviti, poshati*. Say it out loud, knowing I have made a mistake. *Boshti v'nichlamti b'maasai*. I am ashamed and I regret what I have done. That I don't really live with the Almighty loving me. I don't really focus on having the pleasure. It's crazy. I'm ashamed. Then be ashamed. It will help.

But the *Chovot HaLevavot* says that in order to really say it and mean it, you have to know what the bribe is. Why is it that you bought the Brooklyn Bridge again and again and again? What is your bribe? What is your desire? Track it down. What's making you blind? What do you imagine that you're getting by saying, no. He loves us, but... But what? What is it that you're getting out of this insanity, again and again and again? He doesn't need your ritual, He doesn't need you to read His book, He doesn't need you to go through the Talmud. He doesn't need you to suffer to give you all the beauties of existence. He doesn't need it.

What is it that we're always telling ourselves that constantly brings us back to square one where we're suffering, instead of focusing on how to have the pleasure? What are you buying? You're helping God? Isn't that the way we like to think? God needs our help. We've got to do it all ourselves. I am the struggling servant. I am the servant of this unreasonable God. Is that what you get? That I don't really need God, God needs me!

Is that it? Then I am God. *Gaiva* (arrogance). That's what you're buying. You don't really need God. I am self-sufficient. I don't need anyone else. The Almighty needs me. I can do without God. That's the painful core of it all. That's the bribe. That we're self-sufficient without God.

We don't need God. Do you see that that's it? *Gaiva*. Me. Don't see it? So let me focus your attention, my friends. If you thought, if you had the illusion that you were doing the right thing, if you were one of the Viet Cong, then you would be fighting and you'd be dying and you'd be the cause. It's an illusion. But you'd be thrilled. We're on the march. We're fighting for truth, for justice, for God. Because then you don't believe in God, so you can do it all for God. Is that true? You know that if you had the cause, any old cause — ban the nuclear bomb, any old cause — if it hit you, you'd be fighting and you'd be excited and you would never think of the sacrifices. Is that right? Because then you would take the real cause out of the picture and you would be the cause. Do you see that that's the bribe?

If you got it, do teshuva on that. So stupid to waste your life, to buy that again and again. Again and again, you're going to buy that nonsense that you're God? That you don't need Him? That you don't need meaning? That you are meaning sufficient unto yourself? That somehow your success is sufficient? That God needs you? Because

we believe in God, we can't do away with him. So, God needs you? So now you are the center of it all? Be ashamed. Regret it and realize that what you're getting is insanity, is quitting, is death. Is the opposite of reality, of existence.

We have *the cause!* And here we are, slogging all on our own. What is the cause? The cause is you've got to have pleasure. Huh? Is that something to fight for? Is that something that we should really bleed for? To have pleasure, the ultimate pleasure, the transcendental pleasure? And what are they fighting for? What are they bleeding for? The illusion of having the pleasure.

When we have the reality, there are no illusions anymore. Just the reality of the ultimate pleasure. Can we enjoy it? *Ani l'dodi v'dodi li.* That's all that there is to enjoy. Get rid of your illusions. You're going to waste your life.

In Judaism, we say that the Almighty is our Father in heaven. If He gave us commandments, He's giving us instructions for living. He wants us to have pleasure. If He gave us holidays, He gave us opportunities for living. He created the seasons. There's a season. And Elul is a season. It's a time to hear *Ani l'dodi v'dodi li.* It's a time that you can hear that if I am for my Lover, my Lover is for me. It's a time that you can realize your ultimate longing. If you know that you love God, you know God loves you. If you think that God is your enemy, then you feel Him to be your enemy.

This is what you have to accomplish. That's what teshuva is about. Teshuva is return; it's not repent. It's not that you're guilty and you're evil. It's to know what you really want, what you were created for, who you are. You're longing for the transcendent. Elul is a time for us to know that He loves us.

We who believe in God, who see the creation, who see the beauties of our hands and our feet and the very life-giving force that He has made — why can't we accept that the Almighty loves us? For goodness sake, accept it! He loves us. He loves us. We want to hear it. It's a pleasure. Why can't we live with it? Why do we forget it? And I told you that the *Chovot HaLevavot* says that you have to see the bribe. There is something that's making us blind. The Torah says, *ha'shochad ye'aver einei chachamim* — when you have a bribe, even the wisest of men becomes blind. He can't see. You're bribed, you got something, you'll buy it. You're bribed by your society, you're bribed by some flattery, you're bribed, you've got something, you get a payoff. You can't be objective anymore. Why do we have to suffer every moment that we're trying to do the will of God? He loves us. Let's accept it. And we explained last week, the bribe is *gaiva*. I am God. If I have to accept that all my work is to know that He loves me, just to hear that, then what do I have to do? If all that there is, is pleasure, then who am I? What am I accomplishing?

Okay, so what can we do about it? How do we change? Do teshuva. We, who know that there is a Creator of this universe Who made your hands, Who gave you eyes, Whose power is unlimited, Who has carried you all of the time that you denied Him and brought you as far as He has brought you, with loving kindness and patience — we who know this, we who have accepted it, we who live with it, we who will try to fulfill His will, there's one thing that He asks of you: realize you're not doing Me any favors. Realize what you knew before you came here. God doesn't need your sacrifices. He doesn't need your good deeds. He doesn't need your ritual. He came to give. He came to give you life. He came to give you pleasure. He came to teach you how to make it. Just that one thing.

You've done so much, you've gone so far with the help of the Almighty. You've left so much nonsense behind you, one more thing. Realize what you knew before you even started. God doesn't need any sacrifice. God doesn't need us to do His will. He

doesn't need us to keep kosher. Isn't that what you knew before you started? You remember that? Even an atheist knows that. If there is a God, he doesn't need your reassurance. He doesn't need you to fulfill His commandments. Well, then what is it about? Instructions for living, for pleasure. And one thing it's certainly about is *Ani l'dodi v'dodi li*.

All that I want is meaning, is pleasure, is love, is beauty. That's all that you can do for the Almighty. Know that He's helping you. Know that that's what the mitzvot are about. You knew it before you came.

Come home to the Almighty. *Ani l'dodi v'dodi li*. I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me. The Almighty loves us. *Ahavah rabbah ahavtanu*. A great love have You loved us. We say it every day before we say the *Shema*. Before we accept *ol malchut shamayim*, the kingdom of the Almighty, the oneness of God, we have to remind ourselves — the Almighty loves us. He created man, He loves man, we are His children. The greatest pleasure of human beings are their children. The Almighty loves us.

I am for my Beloved, my Beloved is for me. He's always for you. But unless you know that you love Him, you do not know that He loves you. If I am for my beloved, then I understand the Almighty loves me. If you love Him, you know that He loves you. The Day of Judgment is coming. They're going to ask you on the Day of Judgment, how did you do? Were you having pleasure? Did you know He loves you? Or were you suffering for Him? Were you sticking it out? Were you struggling with your obligations? Trying to remember what you have to do? Trying to change, what a pain in the neck. Is that what you were doing? Or were you having pleasure? Did you know that the Almighty loves you? Did it get through to you?

On Rosh Hashanah, the day of judgment, it's an opportunity for *Melech*, for the majesty of God. The day of awe, the shofar blows. We're asking for judgment. We know His power, His might. He is King, majesty. Don't be a Westerner. The majesty doesn't mean that He needs His servants. He doesn't need you to bring Him His coffee. He doesn't need you to praise Him so that He feels great. It's a Jewish king. Look up *Hilchos Melachim*. Look up the Jewish concept of king. He is *our* servant. The King, Almighty God, the King — He serves us. Nothing you can do for Him. Nothing that you can do for Him. Nothing. He doesn't need you to protect Him. He protects you. He doesn't need you to feed Him. He feeds you. Then what is His majesty? What is the service we have to do for God?

We have to build these buildings. We have to make these streets. We have to, so that what? That you can enjoy living in them. That's the work you're doing for God. He'll help you. But you have to build your home. The work of majesty, of the King, for the Jewish people is *hakaras hatov*. Recognize your debt of gratitude. Recognize how much pleasure you have. Recognize that fulfilling an obligation, doing the right thing, trying to understand the instructions is for your benefit. Thank you, God. What a pleasure. You're building a home to live in. The highest mark of ingratitude is when a mighty king gives you a present for your pleasure because he loves you. He gives you a Rubik's Cube for your pleasure. Gold-plated. And you say, "Damn it, now I've got to work at this."

He gave it for your pleasure! This world is your pleasure! How ungrateful can you be? You're going to come to the Almighty and say, "How hard I worked for you..."? It's your pleasure! *Oh, that's such a tough job you've got to undertake to do... There's no end to His demands...* You've got to have pleasure! *Wow. What an unfair Almighty...* How are we going to break through this?

So, special for today, the surest instrument and the easiest to do. The surest and easiest way to finally understand the Almighty is: King — that He serves us, that He's our father, and that His pleasure is that we have pleasure. The *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avot* says, "*Al shlosha devarim olam omed* — the world stands on three things. *Al haTorah, ve'al ha'avodah, ve'al gemilut chassadim.*" The world cannot exist without some instructions for living, the world cannot exist without a relationship to the Almighty, and on the concept of helping your fellow man, of kindness, of giving people pleasure.

The world cannot stand without you giving people pleasure. Do you understand that [through giving people pleasure, you will end up being] like G-d? Make it your business. Give your friends pleasure. Give them a compliment, help them out. Do them a favor. You will then be like God. God has pleasure in giving you pleasure. Learn that it's your pleasure. If you do it, then you know what will happen? You'll understand *Ani l'dodi v'dodi li*. You'll understand. You'll understand that the Almighty loves you. You'll understand that yeah, the Almighty created me to give me pleasure. It is pleasurable to give human beings pleasure. It will dawn on you.

Get out of yourself, understand that your pleasure is to give another human being pleasure, and you'll appreciate that everything that the Almighty gave us is for our pleasure. That's the whole point of existence. The pleasure of giving other people pleasure.

Now, if you're smart, and you heard what I said, and you heard what the Almighty said, undertake it with pleasure. To have the pleasure of giving a beautiful human being some pleasure. And then you will understand that we have a Father, a King, Who loves us, Who created a world just for you. Just for what? For your pleasure. And we'll be *zocheh* (we will merit) on *Yom HaDin*, on the day of judgment, to *chaim*, to real awareness, rather than being a bunch of zombies walking through the paces. We'll have the pleasure of understanding what our purpose in creation is and who our mighty Father, the King is.

Why do we often have a difficult time appreciating that Hashem loves us?

After the *Medrash*¹²⁴ tells us not to abandon our relationship with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, it then says — "*v'im azavtah, ten daatecha* (and if one does abandon, place your mind to it)."

The *Derech HaMelech*¹²⁵ explains:

The *Medrash* is not giving advice about what to do if one *does* abandon, *chas v'shalom, Hakadosh Baruch Hu* Who truly loves Yisrael. It simply says — *v'im azavtah, ten daatecha* — that if one *does* abandon, place your mind to it.

This is simple, because how would it even be *possible* for a Jew to distance [himself] from Hashem? [After all,] Hashem is so close to us and loves us until He calls us *achim v'rei'im* (brothers and friends). And this is not a new love but rather from ancient days and from the generations, stretching [back] all of the way from Avraham. So why would this person not feel it, and his soul not be burning with this great eternal love for Hashem? [It must be that] he has simply abandoned it...

He has not intentionally distanced himself but simply forgotten and abandoned it.

¹²⁴ *Tanchuma, Yitro*

¹²⁵ *Shekalim* 5690

And even one who has descended so low, *chas v'shalom*, that he is actually transgressing, the beginning of his fall was also when he began to forget and abandon. The abandonment was in terms of the entire person... Perhaps from the complications of the world, one is mixed up initially, or [even] the permissible desires may confuse him. His thoughts are mixed up and he is scatterbrained, without thinking, then bit by bit he abandons Hashem and distances himself from Him. Until he no longer feels the love and the connection, and he is able to fall into a life of transgression, even willfully, *Rachmana litzlan* (G-d should save us).

And, therefore, the *Medrash* says...“*al ta'azov* (don't abandon).” *V'im azavtah, ten daatecha* (and if one does abandon, place your mind to it).

If one merely puts their mind to it, not to forget and not to become scattered and disconnected, and not to be mired in nonsense and emptiness, then it will be impossible for the soul not to feel the love of [Hashem]...

The *Medrash* says — “*ten daatach* (place your mind).” Don't only think with your mind, rather *place* your mind — an actual placing. A person thinks many thoughts in passing. Here, one needs to place one's entire mind and invest one's complete essence in this.

Moshe said to the Jews:¹²⁶

“And you complained in your tents and said, ‘*B'sinat Hashem otanu* (Because Hashem hated us) He brought us out of *eretz Mitzrayim* (the land of Egypt), to give us into the hands of the Emorites to destroy us.’”

Rashi explains, “He [really] loved you, but you hated Him. As the simple *mashal* (parable) says, ‘What you have in your heart towards your friend, [you imagine] is in his heart towards you.’”

Perhaps the most significant implication of Hashem loving us is our ability to accept difficult and painful *yissurim* (hardships and challenges) in our lives.

The *possuk*¹²⁷ says, “*Banim atem la'Hashem Elokeichem, lo titgod'du, v'lo tasimu karcha bein eineichem l'meit* — You are children to G-d your L-rd, don't cut yourself, and don't make a bald spot on your head between your eyes for one who died.”

The *Ibn Ezra* points out a powerful insight on this comparison of Hashem to a parent — Once you know that you are *banim La'Hashem* (children to G-d), and He loves you more than a parent to a child, therefore *al titgod'du* (don't gash yourselves) over anything that happens, because whatever occurs is for the good. [And that is just as true, even] if you don't understand [what happened]. Just like young children who don't [always] understand the actions of their parents, but they simply rely on them [even so], you should also do this. After all, you are a holy nation.

The *sefer Chachma u'Mussar*¹²⁸ says similarly:

The *possuk* “*Banim atem la'Hashem Elokeichem*” is very clear. [Once you are children to G-d your L-rd, then] you should not be [overly] pained by whatever Hashem does; it is certainly for your benefit.

¹²⁶ *Devarim* 1:27

¹²⁷ *Devarim* 14:1–2

¹²⁸ 1:122