



פרשת ויצא

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

To Love One Jew

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Part I. Loving Hashem

Dedicated Fathers

We know that our forefathers were men who were dedicated to Hakadosh Baruch Hu with all their hearts. The Torah states **וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ**, that you should love Hashem with all your heart, and that's what they did. It's an axiom among the Jewish people that love of Hashem was always in the minds of our Avos and the Imahos and we understand all of their deeds in the light of that axiom.

When Avraham Avinu was raising cattle, it was with *ahavas Hashem*. When he went out to battle against the kings, he was loving Hashem with all of his heart. If we read that Yitzchok was walking in the fields *lasuach basadeh*, we understand immediately that he was expressing his *ahavas Hashem*; but even when he was digging wells, it was the same thing. When Yaakov was *yosheiv ohalim* and whatever other things he was doing, it was always with that in mind; everything

they did was with love of Hashem. There was no other love in the hearts of these great men.

And therefore, a problem now confronts us. The Torah states that **וַיֶּאֱהַב יַעֲקֹב אֶת רְחֵל**, that Yaakov loved Rochel (Vayeitzei 29:18, 29:30). And how much did he love her? Not superficially. He loved her intensely. It's an open statement in the Torah that he was willing to work seven years for Rochel. And then when he didn't get her, he was willing to work seven more years if Lavan would consent to give him Rochel.

Fourteen years working for Rochel! Now if that isn't a sign of intense love, what is? Show me a *chosson* who will take upon himself to serve even seven years for his *kallah*. He'll turn on his heels and look someplace else.

Lovesick Fathers

It needs an explanation. It's a question that's always being asked because we're talking about an *oheiv Hashem* here, someone who loved Hashem with all of his heart. And for a real lover of Hashem

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it's not just words. It means that the heart is filled with intense love and affection for Hashem and there's no room for anything else.

You know what it looks like? The Rambam describes it as follows: **וְנִמְצָא שׁוֹגֵה בְּהַתְמִיד בְּאֵלוֹ חוֹלָה – הִלְלֵי הָאֱהָבָה** – He is immersed in the love of Hashem at all times as if he was sick with love, **שְׂאִין דַּעְתּוֹ פְּנוּיָה מֵאֲהָבַת אוֹתָהּ אִשָּׁה וְהוּא שׁוֹגֵה בְּהַתְמִיד בֵּין בְּשִׁבְתּוֹ בֵּין בְּפְנוּיָה מֵאֲהָבַת אוֹתָהּ אִשָּׁה – בְּקוֹמוֹ בֵּין בְּשִׁעָה שְׂהוּא אוֹכֵל וְשׁוֹתָה** – he can't keep his mind off Hashem; whether he's sitting in his house or walking in the street, when he's eating or drinking, he's always immersed in thoughts of Hashem (ibid.)

There were people, even in our times, who lived like that. R' Yisroel Salanter, *zichrono l'vrachah* was once arrested for that. He lived in Kenningsberg and he used to walk on the outskirts of the town and he used to make motions talking to Hashem; and he was brought to the police station because of that. Then those who knew him came and explained to the police that this man is engrossed in a very great emotion; he can't help himself. So they wrote in his passport – in that place you had to carry around your papers with you all the time to show the police – so they wrote there: *Immer ferzunken in philosophische gedanken* – it means he is always immersed in philosophical thoughts. That's what the police wrote in his passport so they shouldn't bother him next time.

Now, Rav Yisroel was unique; he was a *yachid b'doro*, but he was nothing like Yaakov Avinu. We shouldn't make the mistake of comparing even our greatest men to our Avos. Yaakov was lovesick about Hashem many times over. And so it's a legitimate question: What's this idea of loving a wife, a human being? There's no room for such things in the heart of a *tzaddik*. He already found his true love.

Men With Big Hearts

And the question is bigger because it's not an isolated phenomenon; it's not just Yaakov Avinu. The Torah stresses a similar attitude by many of

our great men. **וַתְּהִי לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיֵּאָהֶבָהּ** – And Rivkah became Yitzchok's wife and he loved her (Chayei Sara 24:67). Not 'he got along with her'; not 'there was *shalom bayis* in the tent of Yitzchok'. *Vayehaveha!* He loved her! It doesn't mean romance but it's love, a love that grows with time; the love of a very close and near relative that develops and ripens with the years.

A similar thing we find also, two men, two *tzaddikim*, who loved each other so dearly, even more than a man loves a very gifted wife; I'm talking about Dovid and Yehonoson. They loved each other, it says, more than the love of a man for his wife (Shmuel II 1:26). And that's saying a lot as we're going to see yet.

Where did Dovid find room for such strong love for a person of flesh and blood? Dovid, we must know, wasn't just a pious man. Dovid was a man whose life was dedicated to the great ideal of *ahavas Hashem*. If you don't understand that, you know nothing about Dovid and you never will know anything about him. Dovid was the consummate *ohev Hashem*.

A Heart Full of Love

All of his waking hours he was thinking about his one true love, Hakadosh Baruch Hu. As a boy, he lay in the fields while he was tending the sheep and he was thinking about one thing all the days, about the Creator. Even when he awoke at night, before he fell to sleep again, his mind reverted to the most fond of all matters, his love to Hashem; but especially when he was lying alone in the fields with his harp. He sang songs to Hashem, songs of love that are so overpowering in their emotion that to this day when we repeat them, we are inspired by them. Of course, not like Dovid himself but many people have gained greatness by singing his songs and attempting to experience at least a modicum of the great emotions that were stirring in his heart.

But Dovid himself, when he was alive, there's no question what was doing in his heart! We

understand from all Dovid's words and his subsequent actions that Dovid loved Hakadosh Baruch Hu with an intense and overpowering emotion. It's difficult for us to understand that because we know that a person can be devout, that he has a high and noble soul, a *tzaddik*, but to be head over heels in love with Hakadosh Baruch Hu? It sounds queer to us. But that's what Dovid was – he felt actually a strong affection in his heart, an overpowering emotion of love that he lived with by day and night all his years.

And Yehonoson – he was a great man too, a sage and a *tzaddik* – he loved Dovid just as much (Shmuel I 18:1). It was a mutual bond of powerful love between two *tzaddikim*. Not friendship, not even affection; *love*. So much so that the Torah makes a point of stressing it.

A System of Love

And so the question arises: How could there be a place in such a heart, in such a mind, for love of a human being? Where did such great men like Yaakov and Yitzchok and Dovid and Yehonasan – and there are many more examples in the *kisvei hakodesh* – find room in their hearts for such things?

Now it may not bother us much but that's because we don't have hearts filled with love of Hashem. But these great men did; and in a heart like that there should be no room left over for the love of flesh and blood.

And it's a phenomenon we can't ignore because if the Torah goes out of its way to stress this attitude, this emotion, of these great men, so we see that it's not a weakness to which they yielded. We're talking about noble people with noble emotions who lived with thought, with *seichel*; they had a devised *derech Hashem* according to which they lived. And therefore we'll have to say that not only is it not a contradiction to the thesis that a man must love Hashem with all of his heart, but it's consistent and compatible with it – it's included in *ahavas Hashem*.

The Source of Our Love

Now we'll begin step by step to understand, at least according to our weak ability, some explanation of this mode of behavior.

Number one, the most important idea and the one that has to be forefront in our attitude when it comes to loving others: To love a fellow Jew is the service of Hashem. It's not patriotism or nationalism; it's not the love of a Chinaman for his fellow Chinaman or of an Inuit, an Eskimo, for his fellow Inuit. We have to get that into our heads; it has nothing to do with that – it's *avodas Hashem*; it's one of the *taryag mitzvos*. But it's not only one of the *taryag mitzvos*; it's a *klal gadol baTorah*. It's one of the great generalizations of obeying Hashem, to love a fellow Jew (Bereishis Rabbah 24:7).

Now, why is that so? Why is it so important? Pay attention now because this is the foundation of everything we'll speak about tonight. It's because when you're loving a fellow Jew, you're loving somebody whom Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves. *Oheiv amo yisroel* – Hashem loves His people, Yisroel. "If Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves them, I'm going to love them too just because of that." Oh, that's already a different story! I'm not just a patriot for my people. I'm loving Hashem by loving those whom He loves.

The Greatness of Our Love

And it makes a big difference also because now the obligation is so much bigger. Because we're not talking about *our* love, about a feeble and pathetic love. We have to lift ourselves up and try, as much as is humanly possible, to love our fellow Jews according to *His* love of them.

How much does He love them? He loves His children more than we could ever imagine. If you ever will love anybody in your life, it's nothing like how much Hashem loves them. Whatever love you've ever experienced in your life it's nothing compared to how much Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves you. And you and you and you. Who's you?

The most foolish fellow. The fellow with all faults. He's ugly. He's rude sometimes. He gets on your nerves. If he's a *frum* Jew then Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves him with an intense and fiery love.

Loving By Hashem's Standards

And if that's the case, then when we love a fellow Jew it's an entirely different mitzvah. A Jew is obligated to love a fellow Jew the way Hashem does which means it's a tremendous obligation. I say 'tremendous; but that's an understatement. We have to realize that Torah opens up our minds, opens up our eyes, to vistas, to far off horizons, what's expected of the love for a fellow Jew.

Now, I'm far away from that myself. I'm saying this not for you; I'm listening to it myself as I'm saying it. Maybe a little bit of it will stick to us; but we have to learn it. We are expected to realize that because of the greatness of the Am Yisroel, because of Hashem's great love for them, then if we love a fellow Jew we are acquiring a *zechus*, a tremendous merit. Even if you love him only a little bit, it's a merit that will give you reward and happiness in Olam Haba forever and ever; because that itself is love of Hashem, to love those whom Hashem loves!

Part II. Loving Jews

Stop 'Loving' Everyone

Now I understand that today, because we live among the nations of the world we've become acclimated to their attitudes, to the empty ideal of 'love of a fellowman' of the street, and so we have a long road ahead of us if we're going to love our fellow Jews the way the Torah wants. Even *frum* Jews have been influenced by non-Jewish attitudes of loving our fellowman – at best it's a certain allegiance, a patriotism – and therefore it's a mitzvah that is not being fulfilled.

After all, how is it that liberals love everyone? Liberals talk the talk; they love everybody because when it comes to *dovrei sheker*, to people who

speaking falsehoods, there's no limit to the falsehood. It's not love; it's just words and so they can love criminals and the homeless and the sinners. They can even love murderers and rapists. Talk is cheap so why not love everyone already?

And the *frum* Jews follow that attitude. If it's just a declaration, if it's just a matter of signing on the dotted line, so we can love everyone too. We can love our *mechalelei Shabbos* Jews and *apikorsim* Jews and the *toevah* Jews and Reform Jews too, because it's nothing at all. We understand that if you love everyone then you love no one. You can't just say, "I love everybody." Everything is nothing! It's *sheker*.

A Practical Eitzah

But we're talking the *emes* here and the *emes* is we do not love people. We have maybe some potential for loving them, but to actually do it – to serve Hashem by actually loving the Am Yisroel with a genuine affection – nobody's doing that unless they work on it.

But the question is how? How do we do it? So I'll tell you an *eitzah* I heard from an *adam gadol*. Fifty years ago he told this to me and that's how I started loving Jews. "Forget right now about loving everybody," he said, "Start with one Jew. Pick one Jew and make up your mind that with this one, you're going to fulfill the command of loving him."

Now, it doesn't mean we're going to forget what our goal is. We want to love all of the Am Yisroel. If he's a *shomer mitzvos*, if he tries to keep the *mitzvos*, then even though he doesn't do everything the way you do it, he's still worthy of your love. Who cares what kind of *yarmulke* he wears; if he wears a knitted *yarmulke* or if he wears something else? A person who eats kosher, he sends his children to yeshiva and not public school, he's a *shomer Shabbos*, he has *mezuzos* on his doors, you're *mechuyav* to love him. And don't make any mistake about it! Even though he follows a different *rebbe*, or a different set of political objectives, nevertheless, don't lose sight of the

fact that Hashem loves him and that therefore you're obligated to think well of him and to love him too.

Tough Love

I'll tell you something else that people get snagged on. Even if someone harmed you in some way, no difference; your love for him has to continue undiminished. You have a right to tell him what wrong he did. You have a right even to call him to *din Torah*. But the fact that he wronged you and you're upset at him does not make him *possul* and unworthy of the mitzvah of the love of his fellow Jew – even if you're that fellow Jew. Because Hakadosh Baruch Hu is our yardstick for loving, not our pithy emotions.

Now I understand that it's not an easy thing to do, but that's the *chok haTorah!* It's expected of us *al pi din Torah*. If it's a person who keeps the Torah, then it makes no difference what he did to you. You are *mechuyev* to love him because Hashem loves him. Even the biggest pain in the neck – he's rude and he never smiles at you and he takes your seat in the synagogue and his children walk on your lawn all the time and he blocks your driveway with his car – you're obligated to love him.

But that's too much of a test to start with. You're going to start by choosing someone whom it's difficult to love? No, that's not the way. It's your goal, yes – and if we start today, maybe we'll arrive there one day – but to start this program of loving one Jew at a time it's not necessary to pick out somebody whom it's difficult to love. You have to begin *min hakal el hakoved*.

Easy Love

So this *adam gadol* told me that we start with an easier person, somebody who won't be too much of a trial, someone who will be easier to love. Instead of picking a nasty fellow, a nasty *frum* Jew who ignores you and doesn't have good manners, choose someone who's polite and friendly to you, a person who likes you and he

does you favors too. Certainly, that's the one to choose; it makes it so much easier.

It's also a bigger obligation. That's a Torah principle, whatever comes easy is more of an obligation to fulfill. The Gemara (Menachos 43b) says *קָשָׁה עֲנִשׁוֹ שֶׁל לָבָן מֵעֲנִשׁוֹ שֶׁל תְּכֵלֶת* – the punishment you get for neglecting the white threads will be greater than the punishment for neglecting the blue threads. In *tzitzis*, they used to have *techeiles* threads and of course *lavan*, white threads, like we have. But the *techeiles* threads are expensive, much more than plain white threads, and so a person who neglected to put in *lavan* threads, he's punished much more because it's so easy and accessible, so available. So that's the principle; whatever comes easier, the obligation is bigger. And so with the easier Jew it's a bigger obligation and therefore that's the one to begin with.

Now who should you start on? I'll tell you soon who I say should be the first one – you might be surprised – but you can start on, let's say, your parents. Absolutely you must learn to love your father and your mother. And they're the easiest to love because they do so much for you.

Cultivating Unnatural Love

Now, to most people this may seem superfluous because there's a certain animalistic attachment which automatically causes a certain affection for a parent. But that's not enough because Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves your father and your mother not like a son loves his parents. He loves them with a tremendous love reserved for the Am Yisroel and you have to love them like that. Of course, it's difficult but at least in the case of your parents it's easier to do – the natural attachment makes it easier.

But it's not enough to have that natural attachment. You have to invest effort. You have to think thoughts that will inflame your heart at least as a semblance of how Hashem loves them. He's the prototype, the consummate *אֲוִיבָה עִמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל*,

and you're trying to love them as much as you can in order to reflect at least a little bit the love of Hashem.

It pays to dedicate one minute a day to that program. For one minute now I'm going to start loving my mother. A mother, she's very easy to love. The father, sometimes he had to hit you so it's a little bit harder but a mother; who can't love their mother?

Love Your Mother

So do it! Once and for all do it! Look at the clock: "For one minute on the clock, I'm going to love my mother." First thing you think is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves her. He loves her with a powerful and undying love. אֶהְבֶּת עוֹלָם אֶהְבֶּתִּיךָ – I love you with an everlasting love. "And if He loves her with a fiery love then I'm going to try and raise myself up to that."

Also, you can think about a good quality your mother has. She has many but that's not the way to think; just to say 'many' that's not the way. Think of a specific idea, something that you can love about your mother. She's always worrying about you, always thinking about you; there's so much to love about her. "I'm fulfilling now the mitzvah of loving my fellow Jew because I'm loving my mother, trying to love her the way Hashem loves her."

Try that for a week; one minute a day for a week. I guarantee you'll be a different person. Everyone else is talking about *ahavas Yisroel* but you're really doing it.

Love Your Brother

If you want a change of pace, after the first week you can spend a week loving your father. One minute a day for a week! Seven minutes! It's not enough, it's nothing yet, but at least you're starting, you're training yourself.

Next week you can love brothers and sisters. Not all of them at once. One at a time.

Now that seems a little queer. You'll go home tonight and they'll say, "What did you hear from him tonight?"

"He told us to love our brothers."

"Heh, heh, heh! Hu hu hu! You don't know that? You need Rabbi Miller for that?!"

But who does it? Who thinks about it? If he loves, he loves; if not, not. A little bit, not much. Whatever it is, he never thought about it.

No, no, *lo zu haderech* – that's not the way. We have to get busy on this because we are derelict in this duty. It takes work but at least one minute a day it deserves.

From Deer to Deer

And we must understand that even though we sometimes have friction with our siblings, we have to know הִנֵּה מָה טוֹב וְיָמָה נָעִים; there's nothing as beautiful in the eyes of Hashem as נְשֻׁבֵי אֶחָיו גַּם יָחַד, when the brothers are together. You know why? Because it's easiest to love your brother.

Now once you get the hang of it there's no stopping. There's a whole nation to love; neighbors and friends and cousins and uncles. And so you'll decide that with this one person, I'm not going to just react like an animal. A deer might also react pleasantly to a fellow deer who is nice to him. He might love his fellow deer, why not. Practice loving him because he's a Jew. "Look at him!" you say to yourself; "a descendant of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. He's from the *am kadosh*, the nation that Hashem loves."

Climb That Ladder

Of course, while you're doing that you're trying to find out what good things could motivate this love. Sometimes it's just because Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves them. But if you can discover some good qualities that cause it to be easier, absolutely you should look for things to grab onto! Find things that will help you climb that ladder of *ahavas Yisroel*.

You see your *chaver* in the yeshivah, he puts his Gemara back where he took it from; you see he takes a *sefer* off the shelf, when he's finished, he puts it back on the right place? Love him just for that. In other words, find excuses to love people! Think about his good traits and ingrain them into your mind. Use them as a ladder to climb up to the love that Hashem wants from us.

Now, I'm not saying it's simple. It's not. It's one of the most difficult things because people are interested only in themselves and to train yourself to think of somebody else in terms of affection is a very difficult matter. It's far away from their minds, that's the plain truth; but it's possible. Start with one person and little by little you'll be surprised. You'll get good results. If you never try, you'll never move. You'll never budge. All your life you'll stand still and never do this mitzvah at all.

Part III. Loving Family

Mitzvahs in Marriage

Now when it comes to choosing someone to love, of all the people you can choose the best one is your wife, your spouse. That's one of the reasons the Torah tells us that Yaakov loved Rochel (ibid. 29:30) and Yitzchok loved Rivkah (Chayei Sara 24:67). Because there's a special command that a Jew should love his wife. It states openly in the Gemara, אֹהֵב אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ כְּגוּפוֹ (Yevamos 62b, Rambam Hilchos Ishus 15:19). If you never heard that before, then it's worth coming here for that. *A man has to love his wife like his own body, like himself.*

So you'll ask me, but doesn't that apply to every fellow Jew, not only your wife? It's true, but to love someone like yourself doesn't really seem possible. To actually love someone as much as you love yourself? So you must say that it's an ideal. We should strive towards that as an ideal, but actually when will it happen that you love your fellow man like yourself? It's very difficult. But when it comes to a wife, it's not an ideal. *That's what it has to be!*

The truth is that when it comes to the mitzvah of *ahavas Yisroel*, is there any opportunity presented to a man to repeat again and again this mitzvah as in marriage? There's nothing like the opportunities in a home between one spouse and another because it's so often.

You're going to have more contact with your mate, more interactions, than with anyone else you'll ever meet and so it's like meeting thousands of fellow Jews. If you meet a thousand fellow Jews and you get along with nine hundred of them, you are a success. If you get along with nine hundred and ninety, a bigger success. And therefore, because your contacts with your husband or your wife will be a thousand contacts – it will be more than a thousand contacts; if you live together for fifty, sixty, seventy years, there are hundreds of thousands of contacts – if you are able to make most of them successful, then you are successful.

Successful or Cranky?

And therefore you must make it a principle that this is going to be your big test in life; to learn how to love your spouse, to love your husband or wife the way Hashem loves them. It's easy to love your great-uncle who lives in Cleveland. You never see him anyhow and it's easy to get along with someone like that. But that's not *ahavas Yisroel*. If you want to be an *oheiv Yisroel*, it starts at home.

But not only because your spouse is the most contacts. It's also because Hashem encourages it; He made it easy to love a wife. Who's easier to love than a wife? It's more attainable, it's more approachable because a wife has those endowments that Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave her by nature and made it easier. And we're obligated to utilize those natural feelings as a ladder to climb up to the love that Hashem wants from us.

Of course, if you're a non-thinking person, or worse, if you're a person who looks for faults, if you're a native crank, then you won't understand this right away. But if you're interested in being a successful spouse then you'll understand that

nature has made it so that a spouse is the easiest to love.

Loving the Kallah

And therefore that's what Yaakov did. Yaakov Avinu was a great thinker – I'll call him a philosopher because he had his own *chochmah* and he understood the *darkei Hashem*. And he knew that it was the will of Hashem that he should love his wife. He knew that included in his love of Hashem was to love Rochel; and therefore when he saw this girl whom he knew would be his wife, he made use of even his natural emotions to love her.

He took all the stimuli that are provided by the sight of a beautiful bride – his heart certainly was filled with joy at the prospect – and he utilized them beyond what others would do. He utilized them as a ladder to come closer and closer to what Hakadosh Baruch Hu thinks of Rochel. אָהַבְתָּ אֶתְּרוֹמָהּ עוֹלָם – *I loved you with an endless love*, Hashem said. And in order to gain a semblance of that, Yaakov utilized his natural love for Rochel.

Now had it been the sordid 'love' of a crude fellow, then it would have lasted for a little while, but sooner or later the romance would fly out through the window as it usually does with people of that kind. But with Yaakov Avinu, on the contrary! The longer he was together with Rochel, the more and more his love increased because he was looking for opportunities and reasons and excuses to love her and he knew that's the *ratzon Hashem!*

Infinite Love

Now I want to add one more idea before we take questions from the floor. There's something else, another element that every person should add to his thoughts when he's training himself in this mitzvah of loving a fellow Jew and especially a wife or a husband.

We said earlier that we love the Am Yisroel because Hashem loves them and there's a special mitzvah to emulate Hashem. But there's an additional layer and that is Hashem loves

tzaddikim; ה' אוֹהֵב צְדִיקִים (Tehillim 146:8). That's an axiom in the Torah that He loves the righteous.

How much does He love the righteous? It's impossible for us to measure because Hashem loves every Jew with an immense and fiery love. But if we're told that Hashem is *ohev tzaddikim* then we understand that it's something above and beyond that. It's an enormous, an endless, an infinite love that Hakadosh Baruch Hu has for *tzaddikim*. And that is important to know because we are talking here about loving those whom Hashem loves.

Do You Love Tzaddikim?

So suppose you hear there's a *tzaddik* someplace in Crown Heights or a *tzaddik* in Williamsburg or a *tzaddik* in Meah Shearim or a *tzaddik* in Bnei Brak or in Boro Park, you must immediately think, "I must love that man, sight unseen." You have to know the time will come when Hakadosh Baruch Hu will take us to task. There'll be a *yom hadin*; "Did you love *tzaddikim*? Did you think about them at all?"

"It didn't even enter my mind. I'm right here in Flatbush. It's my business that there are *tzaddikim* over there in Williamsburg? So they're *tzaddikim*. It's their good luck but it's none of my business." That's absolutely an upside down attitude, a non-Torah attitude. The Torah says you have to train yourself to love, with all your heart, the *tzaddikim*.

Do You Love Your Spouse?

Now, when the Gemara says אוֹהֵב אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ כְּגוֹפּוֹ, that you should love your wife like yourself, like your own body, it's not talking about a *tzaddeikes*. She just keeps what she has to keep and that's all. Could be she's bothersome too; she nags you to no end. That's the one the Torah is talking about – Hashem wants you to love her like yourself; it's an obligation.

But let's say your wife happens to be a *tzaddeikes* too. Ooh ah! Then your obligation is multiplied many times over because Hashem is

ohev tzaddikim. And don't think she has to have at least a thousand *chassidim* to be a *tzaddik*. First of all, if she was willing to marry you she's already a righteous woman; that itself is enough. But it's much more than that.

Certainly, a man has to learn to appreciate his wife. She does so many good things for you. The fact that she opens her mouth once in a while and scolds you, what about it? Doesn't she put out fresh laundry for you from time to time? It takes a long time to wash laundry. If you're wearing clean underwear today, it's probably because of your wife. She's keeping the house in order more or less, a Jewish house. And she's raising your children!

Your Husband's Chopped Liver?

You know there was a great man, Rabbi Chiya, who had a difficult wife. What she did is not important now but the Gemara (Yevamos 63a) says that **קָא מַצְעָרָא לָהּ**, she made trouble for him. And Rabbi Chiya, out of love for his wife, he was always buying small things for her in the market. Anytime he saw something she might like he brought it home for her. So his *talmid*, Rav, asked him about his behavior. Now listen to what Rabbi Chiya said: **רַיְנו שְׁמַגְרָלוֹת בְּנֵינוּ וּמַצְיָלוֹת אוֹתָנוּ מִן הַחֵטָא** – *just the fact that she's raising my children and she saves me from sin that already is enough*.

Just for that a husband is expected to love his wife and show his appreciation. It's only if you don't think about these things so all your life you remain oblivious to them. And if you're oblivious, it's hard to love.

Now at the risk of sounding too even-handed, I'll tell you it applies to the husband too. He's also not chopped liver. After all, he's not a loafer. He brings home some money. He helps out a little in the house. He goes out to *daven*; he learns a little bit too. Whatever you can think of, whatever can motivate you to fulfill the mitzvah, make use of it.

To a certain extent, he's also a *tzaddik*. At least some things of righteousness he does and Hashem

loves him for that. **כִּי צְדִיק ה' צְדָקוֹת אָהֵב** – Hashem, because He's a *tzaddik*, He loves righteous things (ibid. 11:7).

The Dream Ladder

Now if that's an axiomatic attitude, then we understand another rung of the ladder that Yaakov climbed when it came to this mitzvah of *ahavas Yisroel*. You have to know that Rochel and Leah were remarkable personalities; they weren't ordinary girls. In those days it wasn't easy; they didn't have a Bais Yaakov. They didn't grow up in the house of Rivkah and Yitzchok. They were self-made girls.

Now how it happened has to be investigated but these two were remarkable personalities of pure characters. They were both remarkably innocent, generous, kindly and intelligent personalities who were dedicated with their hearts and souls to the most important function of a Jewish mother, to the function of building the Beis Yisroel. And so there's no question that Yaakov made use of that too.

And we are expected to emulate that. Of course we want to love all of our nation, every single one of them. But we're not going to settle for empty words, for platitudes that mean nothing. We understand that it's a ladder we have to climb in this world and a wife, a husband, parents and children and close friends, those are the rungs we should begin climbing on the ladder of genuine *ahavas Yisroel*. That's the ladder that Yaakov Avinu was shown in his dream. **וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אֶרֶצָה וְרֵאשׁוֹ מִגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה** – *A ladder standing on the ground with its top reaching into the sky, up to Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

Gaining Hashem's Love

What's the purpose of a ladder? To go from a low place to a higher place. But why a ladder? Who needs a ladder? Let's have wings and we'll fly up. We'll just start loving everyone right now, this second! No, we don't fly; we have to climb up step by step. If you want to love the Am Yisroel you

have to take one rung at a time. Your wife and your children and your siblings and your friends and your neighbors and your *rebbe*, and you keep climbing higher and higher.

And as you climb each rung Hashem loves you more and more because you're doing it because of Him; you love Him and you want to love those that He loves. אין הקדוש ברוך הוא אוהב אלא למי שאוהב את ישראל – Hashem loves only those who love the Am Yisroel (*Mesillas Yesharim – Perek 19*). Because you're doing what He does. You're walking in His ways. וכל מה שאדם מגדיל אהבתו לישראל הקדוש ברוך הוא מגדיל עליו – And that's why the more you love Jews, the more Hashem loves you (*ibid.*)

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

One Person, One Minute

In our parshah we learn about the love Yaakov had for Rochel. There is a certain love that is an outgrowth of loving Hashem. This week I will *bli neder* start a program of *ahavas Yisroel* by choosing one Jew to love. I will choose someone that is easy to love and I will spend one minute a day loving that person. The first half minute I will train myself to begin actually loving him/her just because Hashem does by thinking about the tremendous love Hashem has for that person. For the next thirty seconds I will try to focus on one or more good traits, habits or behaviors that this person has and practice loving him/her because of that.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

R-5 - Loving the Righteous | 132 - Love His People
389 - Perfection in Marriage | 499 - In The Way You Wish to Go
675 - Learning to Love Hashem | 928 - Love Your Fellow

Listen: 718.289.0899 Press 1 for English and 2 for Thursday Night Lectures



Are we supposed to think of the Conservative and Reform Jews as non-Jews or as not from Jews?



The question is, what do you mean by that? Certainly they're not *frum* Jews. But they certainly are Jews. As soon as a Conservative Jew or Reform Jew does *teshuvah*, he's a Jew; he doesn't have to go through any ceremony of conversion. So therefore, they certainly are Jews.

But there are 'Jews', and then there are Jews. In one sense, they're Jews. In a technical sense they are Jews because they were born from Jewish mothers. But the love that we have to feel towards our fellow Jews does not extend to Reform Jews. Because in the sense of sharing in the privileges of being part of the Jewish nation, no, they certainly have no share in those privileges.

Now, some people don't like to hear that, but I'm talking the truth. It's hard to love your fellow Jew. It takes work. Some people bandy the word 'love' around, they love 'everybody' they say. But the truth is that they don't even love their own brothers and sisters. That's the plain truth, they don't get along with their siblings and now they're willing to love everybody?!

The answer is that it's a phony. It's all a bluff. You know, it's hard to love a fellow Jew. It's very difficult. And now you want to go and extend it to everybody? Don't be ridiculous! In order to love somebody like you love yourself, he has to be like yourself. And if he doesn't have your ideals, then you can't love him like yourself. Certainly, you should try to help them. Certainly.

You have to help *goyim* too. And a fellow Jew who is not observant, if you can lead him back to Judaism, that's a very big mitzvah. Of course we have pity on him and we care about him and so we'll try to bring him back. But to say that you have to love him like you love yourself? No, that's out of the question.

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