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Four Kinds of Relationships

There are four different kinds of relationships that we experience: hatred, neutral, conditional love, and unconditional love.

1) **Hatred**. As a rule, “Esav hates Yaakov”. The gentile nations contain in themselves a deep hatred for Jews, an absolute hatred, which they inherited from Esav, ever since Yaakov Avinu received the blessings from Yitzchok, whereupon Esav resented his brother for taking the blessings. The relationship we have with gentiles is a relationship of hostility and enmity.

2) **Neutral**. When people walk by us on the street and we don’t feel anything towards them, we do not hate them, nor do we feel a love for them. How do we feel towards them? Neutral.

3) **Conditional love**. When we love someone based on a reason, this is called conditional love.

4) **Unconditional love**. When we love someone and it is not dependent on any reason, this is called unconditional love.

Our discussion here will mainly focus on the last two kinds of love mentioned, conditional love and unconditional love. First we will speak a little about our *avodah* when it comes to understanding hatred and neutral relationships, and then we will focus the discussion on conditional and unconditional love.

Hating Evil

What is hatred? Hatred is whatever love isn’t. Why does hatred exist? What is its purpose in Creation?

From a superficial understanding, hatred is evil, and love is holy. Hatred was created to counter the holiness of love. For everything holy in Creation, something else was created in equal power which is evil. This is in order to allow free will in the world. Since love is a holy creation, hatred had to be created in order to counteract its holiness. On a simple level, hatred is evil.

But when we analyze it from a deeper level, we can see that even hatred can be good. How? When we hate evil – when we hate something that should not be loved.

The *Gemara* says, “It is permitted to hate the wicked”.^[1] What does that mean? It does not mean to hate the sinner himself, but to hate the evil within him.^[2]

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

If I hate the person himself, then we are in essence apart from each other, and that is the entire idea of hatred – to feel that him and I are apart. Such a hatred is evil, and it is not permitted. But if I only hate the evil that he does, not the person himself, then the entire hatred is between me and the evil – not between me and the other. [In the later chapters we will speak more about this].

Neutral Relationships

If one feels neutral to another person, the problem is that he is living life superficially, and he will need to work on becoming a more internal kind of a person. He sees other Jews walking on the street and doesn't feel anything toward them, not love and not hatred. So he is living his life in a superficial, external manner. By becoming a more internal kind of person, he will be able to view the other person as someone who should be loved, as opposed to just seeing him as some 'neutral' person in his life.

Conditional Love

A third kind of relationship with others is when we feel a love to others, but only conditionally. What is missing from this kind of love?

If I love a person only because of a certain reason, I don't really love him for who he is. I love something about him that makes him loveable, but I do not actually love *him*, as a person.

This is a kind of love that is *shelo lishmah* (to have ulterior motives). But as we know, "it is permitted to have ulterior motives, in order to arrive at pure motives".^[3] This is the purpose of conditional love – to utilize it with the intention of arriving at unconditional, pure love for the other person, not dependent on any reason. If I love a person for a reason *because* I am ultimately trying to achieve a pure love for him that will have no reason, then there is a purpose to conditional love.

Two Examples of Conditional Love

There are many examples of conditional love.

We explained that conditional level is to love someone for any reason. The love for the other person will be based on a certain condition, thus it not a true love for the "person" himself, rather for the aspects about him that make him loveable. As soon as that reason goes away, the love goes away, because it was only conditional.

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

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

Seeing Others' Qualities

Our holy *sefarim* explain that that the way to achieve *ahavas Yisrael* is through being "*dan l'chaf zechus*" – judging another favorably. This is because when a person sees faults in another person, it is

hard to love him, because he is disgusted at what he sees in the other. But if a person focuses on the other's qualities, he will love him, because he will naturally be drawn to other person's good qualities, and he will become bound with the good in that person.

However, there is a point that must be understood about this. A lot of people confuse "love" (*ahavah*) with esteem or admiration for others (*harachah*). If I admire and respect someone, if I value him for his qualities, it is not yet love. It is certainly the *way* toward love, but it is not yet love. Love - *ahavah* - has the same numerical value as the word "*echad*", which is "one"; meaning, love is only achieved when I become unified with the other. Only when I am bound up with the good in the other's soul am I "one" with him, which is love. But if I merely respect him because I value his qualities, it is not yet love.

We are also not on the level today to reach *ahavas Yisrael* just by seeing the qualities of others. Why not? It is because everyone has their different tastes; if I like a certain kind of a person because I consider a certain quality to be worthy of having, then that automatically makes me dislike others who don't have that quality. Thus, even I love everyone in the world who has a certain quality that I really admire, it will not help me love everyone else who do not have those qualities.

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

The truth is that all *ahavas Yisrael* is really conditional. We only love our fellow Jews because of a reason - they are all Jews, and not non-Jews, so ultimately all of our *ahavas Yisrael* is somewhat conditional. If all our love of the Jewish people is conditional, how then can we come to have true love for other Jews? We will have to uncover from within ourselves a deeper kind of love than conditional level: the power to have *unconditional love* towards others.

Unconditional Love

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

Every Jew has good in his soul; thus, it seems that if I just love every Jew because they are intrinsically good in their essence, and not for any other reason, such love is unconditional; for there is no reason not to love any Jew - every Jew has good within him. However, this is still loving him only conditionally, because I only love a Jew because he is a Jew and that he is not a non-Jew. So we are back to our question: if true love can only be unconditional love, and our love for Jews is only conditional because we only love Jews for being Jews, then how are we able to have genuine *ahavas Yisrael* to the Jewish people?

The answer to this is that there is an aspect of unconditional love within us which we can uncover, and use that power of unconditional love as well toward all other Jews. This is known as *achdus* (unity). With unity, I don't love a person for any reason other than that I simply love him, *because I love him*.

How can I love someone without any reason? It is as follows. If a person loves only himself, it's clearly a very negative trait - he is being selfish and egotistical. What should a person do if he realizes he is selfish, and he wants to stop being selfish? A superficial response would be that he should learn how to uproot his egoism. But this isn't true. There is a purpose to why we love ourselves, and it is just that we have to utilize it for what Hashem meant it for. A person can use his self-love for others! How?

Just like you love yourself for no reason, you can understand that you are able to love others for no reason.

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

A Rebbi loves his student, and vice versa. This is a very great love, but it is still a love that depends on something. They only love each other if they are receiving from each other, thus it is not unconditional love. But a father loves his son for no reason. Although it is true that a father loves his son because he raised him, thus he feels good from this and receives from his son – we find many cases in which a person was informed after many years that he has a son. Even without ever fathering the child, the father is instantly filled with a love toward him, although he hasn't received at all from the son. Thus, the father loves his child unconditionally – he loves him simply because he loves him. There is no reason.

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

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

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

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

[1] Pesachim 113b

[2] As explained in sefer Tanya

[3] Pesachim 50b

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