



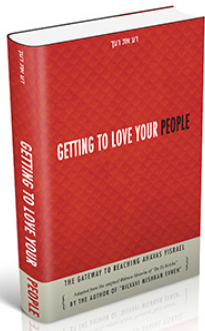
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בלבבי משכן אבנה



IN BOOKSTORES SOON

ספר בעל שם טוב התחבב לדורות, אלא, שמאמריו בעוד שהם עמוקים הם גם תמציתיים, מצב הגורם קושי להבינם ולהשיגם. הרב מגלה רבות מהעמקות שיש בעשרים ושישה מאמרים ראשונים של פרשת בראשית. בספר להב אש, סידר הרב וביאר את מאמרים אלו על פי סדר הנושאים, כולל: תורה, תפילה, אהבת ה', אהבת ישראל, אכילה בקדושה, אמונה, אמת, בחירה חופשית, בטחון בה', וקדושה



IN BOOKSTORES NOW

GETTING TO LOVE YOUR PEOPLE The author shows us the way towards developing our powers of ahavas Yisrael and the emotion of loving another human being in general. By learning this sefer, we can heal ourselves and heal our relationships with others, as we grow in the process of what it means to love another Jew. An additional chapter explains the necessity to hate evil and several chapters explain how to repair unwarranted hatred, so that our ahavas Yisrael will be pure, genuine, and aligned with the will of the Creator.

NASO ABSTINENCE TODAY

Nazir: Abstaining from the Physical Parshas Naso discusses the laws of the *nazir* (the “Nazirite”), who is commanded to avoid contamination with a corpse, to abstain from consuming wine and grapes as well as to let his hair grow long.

Yosef was given a blessing by his father Yaakov that he shall be “like a Nazirite to his brothers”.¹ The *Gemara*² states that ever since he was separated from his brothers, he abstained from wine, just as a *nazir* does. The *Maharsha*³ debates whether or not he became an actual *nazir* or if he was merely abstaining from wine. The other brothers also did not drink wine ever since they sold Yosef. The *Maharsha* states that this was just to practice the behavior of a *nazir*, not that they were actually becoming *nazirites*. As for Yosef, the simple understanding is that he became a *nazir*.

Rashi translates the word *nazir* with the term “*perishus*”, “abstinence”, for when Yosef became a “*nazir*” from his brothers, it meant that he separated himself from them. The *Targum Onkelos* adds that a *nazir* is designated “for Hashem”, in separating himself from contamination, wine, and from cutting his hair.

Thus, the essence of being a *nazir* is the trait of *perishus*/abstinence. First the *nazir* practices *perishus*, which then leads him towards a higher level – *kedushah* (sanctity). That is what is meant by becoming a *nazir* “to Hashem”; the *Gemara* says that

the word *nazir* is also from the word “*nezer*”, “crown”, for he is crowned and designated specially for Hashem.⁴ But the main trait behind practicing *nezirus* is the trait of *perishus*/abstinence, in that a *nazir* practices *perishus*/abstinence by separating himself from materialism.

The *perishus* practiced by a *nazir* is the classic example of the entire concept of *perishus*. But it is also one of the rungs of the spiritual ladder of growth stated by Rabbi Pinchos ben Yair, which is explained in the *sefer Mesillas Yesharim*. The basis of spiritual growth is Torah, and this leads in ascending order, to: *zebirus* (watchfulness), *zerizus* (alacrity), *nekiyus* (cleanliness), and *perishus* (abstinence).⁵

The trait of *perishus* is epitomized in the practice of *nezirus*. A *nazir* practices the total and absolute level of *perishus*, but a person must also practice *perishus* on a partial level, as part of his service to the Creator in his personal spiritual growth. “*Nezirus*” Is Still Applicable To All Most of the Sages did not become *nazirites*. There were only a few. We already mentioned Yosef *HaTzaddik* as being one example who, according to some, did become an actual *nazir*. The Sages state that Avshalom⁶ was a *nazir*. This is derived from the fact that his long hair entangled him in a

4 Nazir 5a

5 [The levels after that are taharah\purity, chassidus\piety, anavah\humility, yiras cheit\fear of sin, and kedushah\sanctity]

6 son of Dovid HaMelech eventually rebelled against his father and tried to kill him, who was punished & killed for his sins

1 Beraishis 49:26

2 Shabbos 139a

3 ibid

NASO ABSTINENCE TODAY

tree and caused his death.⁷ According to one opinion of the Sages, Shmuel HaNavi was also a *nazir*. The most famous *nazir* in history was Shimshon HaGibor.⁸

Tractate *Nazir* discusses three kinds of *nezirus*: 1) a *stam nazir*, who becomes a *nazir* for 30 days; 2) a *nazir olam*, who must practice *nezirus* his entire life from the time he accepts *nezirus* upon himself, and 3) *nezirus Shimshon*, who is a *nazir* from birth and for the rest of his life. The *Gemara* asks: What is the difference between *nazir olam* and *nezirus Shimshon*, who are both observing *nezirus* their entire life? The *Gemara* explains that a *nazir olam* may cut his hair when it feels it too heavy upon him, whereas one practicing *nezirus Shimshon* may not.

These are the three different levels of *nezirus*. This kind of abstinence was only practiced by rare individuals throughout the generations. But most of our *tzaddikim* and Sages did not practice *nezirus*, certainly not in the active sense. However, they definitely were connected to the core of the behavior that lies behind *nezirus*.

Nezirus is not meant to be practiced by most [of *Klal Yisrael*], but the trait of *perishus*/abstinence, which is the very essence of *nezirus*, is certainly part of one's *avodah*. This is laid out in the *beraisa* of Rabbi Pinchos ben Yair as explained in the *sefer Mesillas Yesharim*. The trait of *perishus*/abstinence is one of the rungs of the ladder of growth which leads to *kedushah*, *ruach hakodesh*, and *tehiyas hameisim*.

So although *nezirus* is not meant to be practiced by most people, as it is not of practical relevance, the very idea behind it, *perishus* (abstinence), is definitely a part of our personal *avodah*. **Abstaining from the Forbidden** What defines *perishus*? When one commits any of the 365 prohibitions of the Torah or any of the Rabbinic prohibitions, this is worse than a lack of *perishus* since it is a violation of that which the Torah and the Sages have forbidden. So where does *per-*

ishus come in? *Perishus* is about keeping a distance from that which is forbidden. The Sages forbade the *nazir* from eating grapes, so that he will stay away from wine. Only wine is forbidden by the Torah to a *nazir*, but by keeping a distance from grapes, he further avoids the wine.

There are two examples of *perishus*. One example is when a person keeps a distance from the “forbidden”, and another example is where a person keeps a distance from materialism.

The first kind of *perishus* is to keep a distance from the forbidden. The Sages forbade certain actions so that one will not come to violate that which is already forbidden. That is the first kind of *perishus*: making something forbidden in order to avoid doing the forbidden.

The second kind of *perishus* is to avoid materialism. What is the idea of this kind of *perishus*? It is because man is comprised of a body and a soul. His main task is to lessen the physical body's hold on him and to increase the power of the soul. By connecting to materialism, the physicality of the body is given further expression, which increases the hold of the body upon the person. In order to avoid awakening the body's physicality and to increase the soul's power, one needs to abstain from materialism, even if the materialism in question is totally permitted, in order that he shouldn't awaken the physicality of the body.

This was practiced by the “*kat perushim*”, the “group of abstainers”, mentioned in *Chazal*.⁹ These were people who separated themselves from material matters. Those who became *nazirites* practiced this on the absolute level, but there were also those who did not take upon themselves *nezirus*, yet they still practiced abstinence from materialism on some level. **Abstinence from Society** There were two types of this kind of abstinence that was practiced. One way in which this was practiced was, by separating oneself from society. This is written about in *Sefer HaMaspik L'Oivdei Hashem*, written by Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam, who

explained that our *Avos* chose to be shepherds because they preferred to be away from society. That is one kind of *perishus* – separating from society and civilization, by going into seclusion, such as by taking to the deserts and fields.

This was also accomplished by those who would fulfill the teaching of *Chazal*, “Become exiled to a place of Torah.” If a person leaves his environment in order to go to a place of Torah, it is like going into exile and it is a form of *perishus*.

However, in our generation, this matter is not so simple. There was a well-known discussion between the Chazon Ish and the Satmar Rav, centering around the words of the Rambam, that if a person lives in an environment which is spiritually harmful, he should go and live in the desert.¹⁰ The issue was: According to these words of the Rambam, why don't we go and live in the desert today, since the environment around us today is impure? The Chazon Ish responded to this that in today's times, going to a “place of Torah” [the yeshivos] is considered like leaving civilization and going into the desert.

(Nowadays, however, it is very hard to define what a true “place of Torah” is. In any case, most of our leaders did not actually practice *perishus* through physical seclusion – rather, they dwelled within society and civilization.) ... **In Conclusion** May Hashem help us all separate, as much as we can, from materialism and from This World. We cannot become loners from society, who live apart from civilization (may Heaven help them), but even as we are within society, we can abstain from the world, each of us on our own level, until the time of the redemption, when the world will be improved and we will be able to fully live in it. In the time being, while This World is still here and it remains the way it is, each person can still find his own internal world, where one can connect oneself to his own soul, to the Torah, and to the Creator.

[from BILVAVI ON THE PARSHAH]

7 Tosafos to Zevachim 117b, citing the Tosefta

8 As described in Sefer Shoftim

9 Sotah 22b

10 Rambam Hilchos De'os 6:1

LOVING ANOTHER AS YOURSELF

The Ramban's View On Ahavas Yisrael The view of the Ramban is that it is human nature that one will always love oneself more than another. The Torah does not require one to do something that is not within one's natural capabilities. Rather, loving another Jew "kamocha" means we should try to love him in the same way we love ourselves and strive to love him almost as much as oneself.¹ Let us now explore some practical examples of this concept of loving another Jew kamocha.

The Ramban's View On Ahavas Yisrael The Sages taught in Derech Eretz Zuta and in the Sifrei, "If you want to love your friend, be involved with doing good things for him, and this will bring you to love him."

Practically speaking, the very first thing to do in order to develop the most basic level of ahavas Yisrael is that there should not be a day that goes by in which you don't do something for another person. One should also try to say a kind word to another Jew. Another thing to strive for is to think daily about what you can do for another Jew. At the very least, we should strive to not go to sleep before you have done something good for another person.

Every day, make sure that you have either: (1) Done something for another person or given something to another person (action). (2) Said a kind word that made someone feel good, or smiled at someone, or davened for someone (speech). (3) Thought about what you could do for another person (thought).

Just like a day shouldn't go by where you didn't learn any Torah and you made sure to daven all three tefillos that day, so one should not let a day go by where you have not done some form of chessed for another Jew.²

This is only a recommended minimum. If this is one's personal avodah, one can do even more chessed than this, as long as this doesn't interfere with the balance in areas of avodas Hashem and as long as increasing one's acts of chessed is something aligned with your soul root³.

Practicing Ahavas Yisrael Every Day – The Internal Aspect All of the above that we have discussed concerns the external aspect. However, it is important to note that since ahavas

Yisrael is a heart-dependent mitzvah, it cannot simply be just about actions. Rather, while doing these acts of ahavas Yisrael for others, you also need to put your heart and mind into it.

For instance, when you do chessed for another person, it should be something that the other person really needs. Before doing something nice for another person or giving something, think: "What would the person like? What does he really need?"

Sometimes, people give things to others because it is something that they have no use for. However, it is possible that the other person doesn't need it. Or, a person might give to others that which he would like to receive himself. There are also people who do chessed because they want to receive zechusim (merits) for themselves or they will daven for others because Chazal say that if one wants his prayers to be answered, he should daven for someone else. In such cases, the chessed is being done for themselves, not for others. One can do chessed even when it is shelo lishmah (for ulterior motivations) and it is certainly better than not doing chessed at all. But the ideal situation is to do chessed for the sake of benefitting the other person, by giving them what they truly need.

To summarize, one should try to do an act of kindness at least once a day for another person, and in order to do so properly, one should think about what the other person truly needs.

The Subtle Balance We should point out that there is a delicate balance regarding what and how much a person should give. On the one hand, if a person only gives a limited amount that does not extend beyond his comfort zone, he may not actually be giving enough of what the other person needs. However, one cannot give beyond one's emotional capacity, because this would upset the balance in one's soul. Therefore, we must strive to give what the other person truly needs, but only according to the limits of our own emotional capacity.

Graduating From External Chessed To Internal Ahavas Yisrael When one thinks about another's needs, and assesses what he is capable of giving to help the other person - physically, emotionally or spiritually - this enables him to become closer to the inner world of another person. Just by thinking about the needs of others, one is entering into love for another Jew.

However, as noted, doing good things for others is only the external layer of chessed. The internal way to do chessed involves not simply thinking of the best way to do something for others, but rather by thinking about what another person really needs. This should be done sensibly and with sensitivity, without being intrusive to the other party.

Thus, the first level of kamocha, doing constructive actions

1 As mentioned in previous lessons, there are higher levels of ahavas Yisrael than this. According to the Mesillas Yesharim, ahavas Yisrael is to love another Jew "kamocha mamash" - as much as you love yourself. This will be explained in Chapters 9-10. And there is also a higher level of ahavas Yisrael: to love another Jew more than you love yourself, which is the level of mesirus nefesh. This will be explained more in Chapter 11.

2 Editor's Note: The Mishnah teaches that the three pillars of the world are Torah, avodah (korbonos, which is prayer nowadays), and chessed. Just like we understand that Torah and tefillah are pillars of our avodas Hashem and that a day cannot go by in which we didn't learn and daven, so should we make sure that a day has not gone by in which we didn't do chessed for someone.

3 Meaning that increasing your chessed is only an avodah for one whose soul root is ahavah/love, whose primary good trait is to reveal love to others

LOVING ANOTHER AS YOURSELF

for another Jew, includes two levels: an external level and an internal level. The external part is to do good things, to say kind words, and to think about doing good things, for another Jew. The inner part is to do chessed in a way that is specifically attuned and tailor made to others' needs, whether their needs are physical, emotional or spiritual. Giving in this internal way is giving from the heart as well as from the soul.

Compassion/Rachamim vs. Love/Ahavah and Kindness/Chessed
Most people give to others not from love, but out of rachamim, a sense of compassion. For instance, people usually give to another person when the other is lacking something, such as if the other needs money or some form of charity. However, though giving from compassion is also good, as it emulates one of Hashem's traits of being merciful, if we want to reach ahavas Yisrael we need to give to others from love, not just from compassion. There is a big difference.

Though rachamim/compassion contains a spark of love, it is not love itself. Love itself is when we give to others even when they are not lacking. Avraham was the embodiment of chessed (kindness) to others. This stemmed from his love for all of Hashem's creations - not just because he felt sorry for others. He loved giving to others even if they didn't need anything. He gave to them for the sake of giving and loving them.

Usually, when a person first starts to do chessed, it is mixed with rachamim. He may give tzedakah to poor people because he feels guilty about their plight. This is rachamim, not chessed, because he is taking pity on others. Chessed can also be given to wealthy people, or people who are not necessarily in obvious dire straits but who can still benefit from a kindness in some way. Rachamim is when one gives because there is reason to give to the other, while chessed is when one gives to another even when there is no reason, other than a yearning to give.

Giving From A Sense Of Love Giving to others needs to come from a love. However, in order to genuinely love others, you first need to love yourself. This does not mean an unhealthy, egoistic self-love. Rather, it means a genuine, healthy self-love - that is, to love your very havayah, your innermost existence, the intrinsically pure part of oneself. Loving your

very havayah means that you feel a deep, inner pleasure in your very existence.

After one can identify with that, one's avodah is to come out of one's inner world and enter into the lives of others, by giving to them. Then one will be able to give to others from a healthy place and will have a greater capacity to love. When we reveal our inner self, our havayah, we are able to love others on a much deeper level. Our genuine self-love can flow into others. It can be compared to a river flooding its banks, which nourishes the ground for miles once the water level is high enough to flow over.

If a person hasn't yet reached genuine self-love, his avodah is still to give from a place of as much love as possible. Loving another from a pure, complete place is the ideal state, but if one is not there yet, one can still love others at his or her current level, however limited. This can suffice for the time being, until one develops a genuine self-love.

We are all able to give love to others on some level, however limited we may be and even if we haven't yet reached genuine, healthy self-love. Since we are all descendants of Avraham Avinu, we all inherited the trait of love from him. Every Jew is able to feel at least some degree of love towards others. In addition, every Jewish soul has three natural traits - we are naturally bashful, compassionate, as well as naturally kind.⁴ This kindness is linked with love, because kindness is really the outcome of love.

In Summary The first level of ahavas Yisrael, which is called kamocho, is practically achieved when we give to others every day, either by means of kind deeds, kind words, thinking about others or all three. We can also help by thinking about what exactly would be the helpful thing to do for others in each situation whether it is a physical or an emotional need.

Ideally, we should give to others from a place of genuine self-love for ourselves, which can then flow onto others. However, if one is not yet at that level, one can still give to others from any small degree of love that he experiences. One should then bring that spark to the fore, and increase these acts of giving, so that the spark of love increases.

[from GETTING TO LOVE YOUR PEOPLE]

4 Talmud Bavli Yevamos 79a



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