

BILVAVI

**ACCESSING
YOUR PREVIOUS
LIFETIME**

BILVAVI MISHKAN EVNEH

THE RAV'S SHIURIM ARE FEATURED ON KOL HALASHON

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Introduction: The Five Sources of Love In The Soul

With the help of Hashem, we shall now study the different sources of love which we have in our soul [which we can use to love Hashem]. Let us discuss 5 different sources of love that we have in our souls, from the lowest level to the highest level.

(1) The lowest level of love is the love which we have received from outside of ourselves, from external sources. (2) The second level of love is the love which we have acquired throughout previous lifetimes (*gilgulim*). (3) The third level of love is the love we inherited from the *Avos* (forefathers)¹. (4) The fourth level of love is the love that comes from being a *cheilek eloka mimaal*, a “portion of G-d above”. (5) The fifth and deepest level of love is the love that comes from the oneness that exists between Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people.²

I – Divesting Ourselves From Material Desires

Let us start by discussing the lowest level, then working our way upwards towards the higher levels, of love. The first level of love is any love that we have acquired from outside of ourselves. This is an external, superficial kind of love.

This kind of love, from the time we are born, is in a fallen, unspiritual state. Our *neshamah* (soul) is clothed by a *guf* (body) and a *nefesh habehaimis* (animal level of the soul), and therefore when we are born, naturally, our power to love usually becomes focused on that which is materialistic, worldly, and transient. In the process, our love for Hashem becomes covered and hidden, almost entirely. In the absence of loving Hashem, our power of love is channeled elsewhere, and we end up loving other things. The Torah says “Love Hashem with all your heart with all your soul”,³ but it becomes very difficult to love Hashem with all your heart when there are other things that we love very much.

¹ Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov

² “Hashem, the Torah and Yisrael are all one” – Zohar Achrei Mos 73a

³ Devarim 4:29

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Chazal explain that part of loving Hashem is to nullify any extraneous “loves” that one has on this world. Practically speaking, a person needs to become aware of all the different things that he loves on this world, and then he should try to go about slowly uprooting them. Generally speaking, the *sefarim hakedoshim* explain two different ways to do this: either by directly revealing love for Hashem, which will make the other loves fall away, or by slowly disconnecting from the other things we love, so that our soul becomes opened more to love for Hashem.

We can awaken love for Hashem using any of the levels that were explained in the previous chapters: Awakening a love for Hashem through actions, thoughts, emotions, speech, etc. Our main work is to uproot the other loves, thus, part of loving Hashem is to learn how to disconnect from other loves that deter us from love for Hashem.

But we need to understand that there are two reasons why we should uproot other loves: To disconnect from the physical world and connect more to the spiritual world, and to reveal more love for Hashem. Here we not dealing with the first reason (connecting to the spiritual), because that is not the main discussion here. Here we are dealing with the second reason: Because uprooting other loves that we have will expose us to more love for Hashem, the *mitzvah* of *ahavas Hashem*. Thus, we need to gain more love for Hashem by uprooting our other loves and revealing more love for Him, and mainly by uprooting our other loves.

Example of Nullifying Love Acquired From The Outside

In order to accomplish this practically, we can use the advice of Reb Yeruchem Levovitz, that a person should practice for three times a day going against his will. One should do this at the level he is capable of, with conscious awareness that one is trying to get rid of the worldly desire and because he wants to love Hashem more. If a person just does it robotically and without any conscious thought and without knowing what he is trying to accomplish with this, he will fail and it will only cause his body to rebel and his physical urges will increase even more.

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As an example, when eating, one should try to leave over some food he desires to eat, and he should do so with the awareness that he is separating from this desire, because he loves Hashem more than the food.

Many people don't succeed when they try to do this, because they just practice it mechanically as if it is some obligation upon them, without the conscious awareness that they are trying to gain love of Hashem. It is not enough to just leave over some food on the plate with no thought or awareness. One needs to be conscious of the fact that he is (1) Ridding himself of the physical desire to eat the remaining food, and (2) One is giving up this desire out of love for Hashem, because one loves Hashem more than the food.

With the more one does this, one gradually can reach a place in the soul where he is disgusted with the worldly desire and he becomes divested of his external loves. To the degree that one removes his material desires and loves, one reveals the inner, spiritual love behind it, which is the soul's love for Hashem. The first step in acquiring love for Hashem, then, is to divest our material loves.

2 – Divesting Ourselves From Love Acquired From A Previous Lifetime

The second step in acquiring love for Hashem is to divest ourselves of the loves which we have acquired in our previous lifetimes.

[The following is an introduction as to how we can divest ourselves from loves that were acquired from a previous lifetime.]

Almost all souls have come to this world a few times already. There are very few “new” souls. Almost all souls on our world, without exception, are in another lifetime. Our previous lifetimes are hidden deep under our consciousness. Everything that we have gone through and acquired from our previous lifetimes is stored in our souls, but we are not consciously aware of our memories from previous lifetimes.

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But our soul is able to have a sense of what we have went through in previous lifetimes. The Gemara says, “Even though he didn’t see, his *mazal* sees.”⁴ In the depths of our heart, everything we have acquired from previous lifetimes is contained there, and part of our *avodah* on this world is to use that which we have gained from previous lifetimes. Everyone, subconsciously, will make use of some aspects of his character which he has gained from previous lifetimes.

However, since a person is not consciously aware of anything he has acquired from previous lifetimes, those gains have little effect on him, because he isn’t accessing it. The more aware a person becomes of what he has gained from previous lifetimes, the more he will be able to gain from them in the present.

Certainly, not every person can do this on the same level, because if a person has committed a lot of sins and spiritual damage in his previous lifetime, it is detrimental to become aware of one’s previous lifetime, since it will bring back the evil from a previous lifetime into one’s current lifetime, and this can be another negative influence in his life. It is only the good points from a previous lifetime that we should become in touch with.

Becoming Aware of Your Previous Lifetime

Practically speaking, how does one become consciously aware of the good which he has gained from a previous lifetime?

As mentioned, the experiences from a previous lifetime are hidden deep under one’s consciousness, but there is a way to bring them to the fore. We cannot keep beginning our life again from scratch each time that we come here. Instead, we need to keep building upon our past. We are at the end of a very long exile (and we don’t know when it will end), we have been coming back to this world for thousands of years already. Although there is a concept of renewing ourselves and beginning from a place of renewal, our main work is to build upon our previous lifetimes. How can we reach this point in our soul where we can become aware of previous lifetimes?

⁴ Talmud Bavli Megillah 3a

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Our connection to this world causes our soul to forget its previous journey to this world. The Gemara says that when a baby is born, an angel strikes him and he forgets where he came from. In the same vein, our life on this world has also caused us to forget our previous lives. Our current lifetime and all that we are connected to in this lifetime is really a barrier that prevents us from connecting to our previous lifetime.

In simple language, every person has a father and mother whom he has received love from, and later in life when one does some reflection and he thinks about his past, he can become aware of his lifetime before he developed his ability of conscious awareness. The most that he will become aware of is his early childhood, and he will view his early childhood as his beginning point, and that his current stage of adulthood is merely continuing where he left off in childhood. But a person has an ability to develop a deeper kind of awareness than this.

Although a person is connected to his father and mother on this world, Avraham Avinu was told to leave his father behind forever, and go to another land. So, too, each person has an *avodah* (inner task) to divest himself from his current life and from all his connections and relationships that he feels in his life on this world, and to be like a stranger on the world, like when Avraham Avinu said, “*I am a stranger in the land.*”⁵

Certainly a person has his mother and father and his current life, but one must know that his human experience is not limited to his current lifetime. He has had other lifetimes, and the current lifetime is not all there is to his existence. He can become aware of previous lifetimes.

One is mainly able to become aware of it on an emotional level, but if one refines his senses, he can become aware of his previous lifetimes even on an intellectual level. There are people on this world who are able to remember their previous lifetimes, and this is because they dwell in solitude and they are cut off from the world (on varying levels), even from their families, and because they are cut off from their own lives on this world, they have greater access to what their previous life looked like. (On a

⁵ Tehillim 119:19

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subtler level, this is an ability that depends on one's particular soul root, and some soul roots are more attuned to this ability.) We can learn from this that as long as a person disconnects from his connection to this world, he can become aware of previous lifetimes.

This doesn't mean that one can remember his previous lifetime in great detail. That would be a very high level of perception. We are describing here a more basic ability of discovering a more inner dimension to one's existence, which goes further than one's current lifetime. A person doesn't have to put in a lot of mental effort to know it. Instead, it will just come into his conscious awareness with the more that a person disconnects from his connection to This World.

Sometimes when people experience it, they feel like they have been granted some kind of gift from Heaven. But it is not a high level or a gift from Heaven (although everything is certainly a gift from Heaven), it is an ability that is contained in his soul, which has been covered over until now, and all a person needs to do is to remove the trappings on his soul. One doesn't need to start a new beginning in order to feel that he has been born anew – rather, one only needs to divest his connection to This World and to his current lifetime, and it will become exposed from within him, on its own.

Previously we explained the stage of removing from ourselves any loves that we have towards This World, as a way of exposing our inner love for Hashem. The next step in revealing our inner love for Hashem, which we are explaining here, is further than this. It is not just to get rid of materialistic desires that we love, it is to erase the love that we have for our very lifetime that we have on this world! It is to remove our entire connection that we feel with our current lifetime, by realizing that there is more to our existence and experiences than our current lifetime.

Without this, a person is trying to begin his life over again from the start, for each time he is coming down onto This World. This is really too difficult for a person. Instead, a person can learn to awaken the good points and spiritual attainments from his previous lifetime and then continue his current work, from there. Of course, if a

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person has an immature perspective and he doesn't search for truth, he will not be willing to accept this or work on this, but the more a person searches for truth, he matures and he is willing to work on this concept.

Examples of Disconnecting From Your Current Lifetime

Here are some examples, briefly, to relate better to this idea.

One has parents, and he certainly loves them, and he has received love from them as well. However, the truth is that one's parents are only in this current lifetime. In a previous life, one had different parents entirely! This can shake a person up when he realizes that he once had different parents, because he might not want to accept this reality. And, what's more, the parents from one's previous lifetime were preceded by totally different parents from the lifetime before that!

The same goes for the relationship that one has his children. A person naturally views his children as his own, and he feels like he "owns" them to some extent. It is true, they are certainly his children, at least on this world. However, the truth is that the souls of one's children were only given to him by Hashem so that he can raise them, in order to achieve a certain *tikkun* (soul repair), but in reality, the children and the parents may have very distant soul roots from each other. When they all return to Heaven, they may not feel any connection to each other at all. It is also possible that in a previous lifetime, one's child was his father, or vice versa [and there is also a possibility that they were enemies in a previous lifetime]. There are all kinds of possibilities.

This is a simple truth, and we need to be able to accept it. This is not a farfetched concept, it is truth. The world of souls is very different from the world that we live on, and they are not always aligned. People that live together on this world can be very far from each other in the world of souls. Sometimes, parents and children do share the same root, but many times, they don't. When one becomes aware of this concept, he is able to divest himself from the entire connection he has with his current lifetime, and all of the relationships that he has on this world.

Avraham Avinu was told to leave his birthplace and his father behind, because he had to realize that his relationship with his idol-worshipping father Terach was only a physical relationship on This World, which is transient. Physically, Avraham was the son of Terach, but spiritually, his soul root was so distant from Terach's that he was not Terach's child at all. Avraham was told to realize this reality even now on this world. It is not only Avraham who had to sever his connection to his current lifetime. Everyone, on some level, needs to adapt this kind of thinking.

The Mishnah teaches, "Know from where you come..."⁶ One's past did not begin in the house he grew up in and the family he grew up with, but with his spiritual source above, before he came down to this world. The house that one grew up in, and one's parents, siblings, friends and the rest of one's surroundings, are nothing but a "garment" upon his soul, like clothing worn by the person, an outside factor that he is not intrinsically connected with, just as a person can remove his clothing.

People think that their past begins from their childhood memories, but as we are explaining here, their past actually extends way beyond their childhood. The memories that one can gain from a previous lifetime are more powerful than one's childhood, and they have made a more profound imprint on the soul than the memories that come from one's childhood.

One needs to be able to divest his existence from his current lifetime and realize that he has had previous lifetimes, where he had a totally different life, with different relationships than the ones he has now. He had different parents than the ones he has now!

Certainly, one always needs to honor his parents, even if he had different parents in a previous lifetime, and this is because one's parents are still a part of him (to some extent). However, although one is connected with his parents, they are not all there is to one's existence. And, even more importantly, one is obligated to honor his parents on this world because the Torah says so. In the Next World, in the world of truth, one can be divested of his parents, but on This World, one cannot be divested of them.

⁶ Avos 3:1

Yet, in spite of this, we must also have the proper perspective towards our close relationships on This World, realizing that they are only temporary and they are not all there is to our existence. One can become aware, intellectually and then he feels it, that he had other lifetimes and he is connected with them.

Connecting To Tzaddikim of Previous Times

One needs to connect to his previous roots. Avraham was our first father and our most previous root that we need to become connected to. We should connect not only to Avraham, but to all of the Torah teachers who taught us, who were like our father, for the Sages taught that “One who teaches Torah to one’s child, it is as if he gave birth to him.” One’s *rebbe* is like his father. One should connect to the Torah teachers of his previous lifetimes. We find that there is a concept of doing something “on the *daas* of his previous Rebbi”. It is an example of how one connects his soul to the souls of previous generations.

If someone just says it verbally or thinks about it superficially, it does nothing for him. We are speaking here of an actual soul connection, a way to connect your soul to the soul of a previous lifetime. This awakens the highest root of the soul, and in this way one uncovers the soul’s love for Hashem. Since our first root was Avraham, by awakening the highest root of our soul we are awakening Avraham’s power of love, the love he had for Hashem.

One can connect to the seven shepherds and draw their light onto him. However, the sefarim taught that since Avraham is very far away from our generation, the soul doesn’t connect as easily to Avraham directly, and therefore the soul needs to get there by first being connected with *tzaddikim* who lived after him, who were closer to our times. One can connect himself to the souls of *tzaddikim* of previous generations. People don’t feel connected to *tzaddikim* from a long time ago but to *tzaddikim* from a previous generation. People name their children Avraham or Yitzchok or Yaakov not because they feel connected to the *Avos*, but because they knew *tzaddikim* or others who had this name and they want to name after those people. They don’t get inspired

from the *Avos*, because the *Avos* were so long ago, but they are inspired by recent *tzaddikim* who lived closer to their generation.

But the more a person attains a disconnection from the world, he can connect to previous lifetimes or to previous *tzaddikim* and previous Torah teachers he had, all the way to the highest root of the soul, Avraham. The power of love is called the Avraham Avinu within the soul. The more a person connects to Avraham, he becomes connected to the soul's love and he can utilize the soul's love for Hashem.

The Soul – A Portion of G-d From Above

So far, the levels that were described here take a lot of work. But, going further, loving Hashem is deepened when we reveal how our soul is a “portion of G-d from above”. The more one recognizes that his true nature is that he is part of Hashem (as it were), he awakens his soul's nature, and naturally, he will long for his root.

In this way, without working on love for Hashem directly, one can work on awakening his soul root, by revealing how his soul is a portion from above. One can do it either by internalizing how his soul is connected with the Torah, or in other ways. When one penetrates to the light of his *neshamah*, he uncovers the soul's love for Hashem. You find what's hidden there when you reveal it from its potential state.

Loving Hashem can either be revealed through uncovering one's identity as a soul which is a portion of G-d from above, or, as a student of the *Rasha* writes, one comes to love Hashem by loving His nation, the Jewish people. Through uncovering the soul, one begins from Hashem's love for the person and that awakens the soul's love for Hashem. This is an indirect way of gaining love for Hashem without working on loving Hashem directly.

It is also *lishmah*. Whereas a person can think of how much Hashem loves him and that awakens his love for Hashem – which is *shelo lishmah*, because it is self-focused – the higher level is where a person uncovers a love for Hashem that is *lishmah*, in which

he uncovers the soul's very nature to love Hashem on its own [upon becoming aware that his soul is a portion from G-d above].

The Highest Level - One With Hashem

Finally, we shall mention a higher level, in order to complete the discussion. Above this level is the purpose of Creation: to reveal how we are really “one” with Hashem. “Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael are one” - as an intrinsic unit that doesn't depend on anything. When one uncovers love for Hashem from this highest source, it is a love that never ceases.



[בלבבי. מערכות באהבת השם_013_שרשי אהבה בקומת האדם]

Bilvavi “Maarachot B’Ahavas Hashem” (Discourses On Loving Hashem): Chapter 13



Questions in all spheres of life in general and the *nefesh* in particular are welcome in the Q&A system and will be transferred to the Rav, *Shlita*

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