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Introduction

In the blessing in *Shemoneh Esrei* of ולמלשינים, we say, וכל אויבי עמך מהרה יכרתו, “And may all the enemies of Your people be cut off.” The opposite of the word *oiyev*, “enemy”, is *oihev*, “loved one.” In order to understand what we are saying here in *Shemoneh Esrei*, that Hashem should cut off our enemies, we need to understand the opposite concept of “enemy”, which is the concept of love.

The Three Kinds of Love We Must Acquire

There are three primary kinds of love which we must acquire: love for Hashem, love for the Torah, and love for the Jewish people. There is also the love that we must have for Eretz Yisrael, but the love for Eretz Yisrael is not a goal unto itself; it is rather the tool that holds together the three primary kinds of love. Without love for Hashem or love for the Torah or for the Jewish nation, our love for Eretz Yisrael is incomplete.

Hashem's Love For Us, and Our Love For Him

Hashem created this world so He could bestow His good upon Creation. This is true with regards to all of Creation, but with regards to the Jewish people, Hashem has a special love. He has a loving father-son relationship with us, and this is contained in the expression, “*He Who chooses His nation, Yisrael, with love.*”

Since Hashem has a father-son relationship with us, we all have in our souls a love for Him deep down, but it usually remains hidden and concealed inside us. We therefore have an *avodah* called *Ahavas Hashem*, to love Hashem – that we need to reveal forth our love for Hashem.

Besides for the fact that we must fear Hashem and be in awe of Him, we also have a relationship of love with Him. Hashem already love us; it is we who have to reciprocate the love. The love for Hashem we have is hidden deep down, in our essence, and we need to reveal it.

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Using Love As A Tool To Reach Love For Hashem

In our life, we are familiar with what it means to love. The inner reason why Hashem made such a thing as love in the world is so that we should become opened up to the concept of love, and to find the deepest kind of love that exists – love for Hashem.

Thus, all love that we know of is there only as a **tool** for us to reach love for Hashem. Without loving Hashem – the root power of love in Creation – the main point is missing. When someone reveals his love for Hashem, upon that he is able to come to love the Torah, the Jewish people, and Eretz Yisrael.

A Loving Childhood Can Be An Obstacle To Ahavas Hashem

However, this is only “one side of the coin” [that we need to channel our various loves in life towards loving Hashem]. We must be aware of the following point as well.

Each of us, as children, grew up with a certain love from our parents. When we were children, our parents caressed us and poured love upon us. At first, a child feels a love for his mother, and then he begins to love his father. The child feels that he is being cherished and loved by his parents. When the child gets older and matures, and he hears about the concept of how we need to ‘acquire a love for Hashem’, he might think that it’s the same kind of love he was used to since he was a child.

However,, love for Hashem is a whole different kind of feeling of love than we know of since our childhood. The love which we experienced as children was only superficial! It was a love that was experienced through our *nefesh habehaimis* – the lower, “animalistic” part of our soul. It is not at all the kind of love that is *Ahavas Hashem*.

In fact, the more and more a child felt loved by his parents and family, the harder it will be for him to uncover any *Ahavas Hashem*! This is because ever since he was a child, he has only received love from his family, and he never knew what it means to feel loved by Hashem. He got all his emotional needs from his parents. This, itself, is what can prevent him from developing a love for Hashem.

The Endless Search For Love

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Even more so, there are people who were very loved as children, but later in life, they begin to search for more love in their life. The search for love can go on their whole life; they are looking to be loved in the way that their parents used to love them as children. People will seek to be loved in all kinds of ways, in any way they can get it – and the kind of love they are searching for is really a love experienced by our *nefesh habehaimis*.

This really comes from a lack of *ahavas Hashem* in one’s life. Without *ahavas Hashem*, a person only knows of the superficial kind of love that he fondly remembers of since his childhood, and the kind of love he will seek is that very same kind of superficial love he remembers.

If someone never thinks and reflects, he will end up searching his entire life for love, and he seeks to be loved in the same way that his parents loved him. He wants to be loved again no less than when he was as a child. He is unaware that such love is coming from the lower, animalistic level of his soul.

Those Who Became Hardened

Then there are other people who develop a completely different problem: They were loved as children, but at some point, their relationship with their parents became a bit stiff, and the love lost its zenith. As we know, children can do things that get their parents very upset and the parents will lose some of their love for the children. Or, the child runs into opposition from his parents, and there is tension between the child and the parents.

In any of these cases, the parents don't love their grown up child anymore with the same love they had for him when he was a little child.

A child grows up and he might get into various fights with his parents as he's getting older, and he might develop the feeling that his parents don't love him so much as they used to.

Then he goes to Yeshiva, and he meets other friends who also feel the same way; that they don't feel like their parents love them. There are even friends he comes across who not only feel unloved by their parents, but they feel that their parents have a very cold relationship towards them, and in some cases, they feel that their parents truly hate them. He hears about what's going on in other people's lives and how they grew up in broken homes, and his own sense of detachment from his parents now intensifies, for now he feels validated that others too are describing what he has been feeling.

What will happen? The grown-up child begins to detach from the emotion that is called love. He has gone through disappointments in his own life with regards to feeling loved, and when he meets how other people are unloved too, his bitterness is validated and it intensifies. He slowly begins to give up on ever being loved. He closes himself off from his own emotions, and now he cannot love others as a result.

He might be able to get married and have children, but his emotions are suppressed inside him, because he has detached from the world of love, and now he has a very hard time expressing love to his wife and children.

This can also happen to a person if he encountered a severed relationship with family members or with a close friend.

When something like this happens, his emotion of love has taken a hit, and he becomes detached from love. Either one of two things will happen.

1) He gives up on ever being loved again, and as a result, he is closed off from anything to do with "love". He won't be able to develop *Ahavas Hashem* either or have any feelings for Hashem, because his feelings have become deadened a long time ago.

2) Or, he might search for love from others. But, sadly, he won't find it, and at some point, he will totally give up on love, and become completely detached from being loved and from loving others.

Even if the emotionally hardened person goes on to live a *frum* life, in which he learns Torah, does mitzvos, and even if he does *chessed*, he is closed up inside himself. His heart is gone; he does everything that he has to do of course, but he has no feelings anymore. He lost his feelings a long time ago already.

In Summary

Thus, we have seen how being very loved as a child can actually hamper a person from having any feelings for Hashem, because since he was used to his parents' love as a child, later in life he will

seek a similar kind of love, and he will be met with disappointment.

The other possibility is that his relationship with his parents gets a bit cold and stiff; or, if he suffered setbacks in his relationships with others whom he was close to, he will also become hardened.

As a result, he has become closed off from his own emotions, giving up on love. He won't be able to develop *Ahavas Hashem* either.

(There are even people who own a dog in their house for this very reason – they have given up on being loved by people, so instead they turn to animals in the hope of receiving love from them.)

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Why Does This Happen?

Hashem purposely designed our life in a way that we start out in life feeling very loved by our parents, family and friends, so that we can become opened up to the concept of love, and expand that love to become the true, deep kind of love – *Ahavas Hashem*. That is the life lesson we are supposed to learn from all this “love” that we experience. It is meant to open us and lead us on the journey towards having feelings for Hashem.

But, it's just an opener. If we don't expand our love further than the love we know of since we were young, then the only love we know of is coming from our *nefesh habehaimis*.[\[1\]](#)

If You Were Very Loved As A Child\Teenager\Adolescent

Therefore, if a person was *zoche* in his life to be very loved by his parents, family and friends, he has to look back at this and reflect: This was only meant to *open* me up, so that I will be able to love Hashem one day.

We cannot feel emotionally fulfilled in life just from the fact that we are loved by family and friends. Even if someone merited to have a close friendship with another that resembles the love between Dovid and Yehonasan, this will not either bring enough emotional fulfillment to a person. All of the love in our life exists so that it will reveal in us a yearning for *Ahavas Hashem*.

If You Felt Unloved As A Child\Teenager\Adolescent

However, if a person feels unloved, or if he has been “hit hard” from his parents, family, friends, or teachers – what should he do?

If he hasn't given up on love yet, this is what he should think: Don't feel upset at Hashem for this. Instead, use all the pain you went through from this as a way to search for the truer and deeper kind of love. One can realize that the reason why he went through disappointments in his relationships was really a blessing in disguise, because his pain can spur him on to seek the real kind of love to have in life. It can help a person seek the real love – love for Hashem, and to feel loved by Him in return.

A World Where There Is Not Much Love

This perspective can give a person a massive overhaul on how he views life. It changes his perspective on life entirely.

The truth is: there is very little real love to be found on this world.[\[2\]](#)

If a person thinks only superficially, then he will disagree with these words and find them to be strange. But if a person seeks to live a more internal kind of life, he can know how true this is.

How You Can Feel A Love for Hashem

How indeed can a person feel that Hashem loves him?

We started out by saying that Hashem created this world so He could bestow good upon His Creation. His love for us is contained in the entire Creation – it can be felt anywhere. Hashem’s love for us is calling out through the entire Creation!

The sun, for example, is a message of His love for us. When we feel the sun shining on our face on a beautiful day, we can feel Hashem’s love for us; through the sun, Hashem is sending us an illumination of His light.[\[3\]](#)

But, we have to be aware, that the sun is only one of the tools that Hashem uses to reveal His love to us. If a person enjoys the sun’s rays and feels, “The sun loves me”, this is bordering on idol worship. Instead, enjoy the sun and appreciate all of the beauty in Creation, but realize that it is **Hashem** who is behind it, and He lets you enjoy it because He wants you to feel His love for him.

Hashem’s love for us is not hidden away in some corner. It is everywhere in Creation, and we can feel it anywhere.

If someone doesn’t live an inner kind of life, he does not feel Hashem’s love calling out to him from Creation. He lives in this “world of action” alone. He might even do all the *mitzvos* too, but when it comes to feeling Hashem’s love, he has to open up a sefer ‘*Orchos Tzaddikim*’ and learn “*Shaar Ahavah*” in order to get himself to love Hashem...or he learns *Chovos HaLevovos* (*Shaar Ahavas Hashem*)...but he doesn’t actually see it in the Creation in front of him.

Expressing Our Innermost Feelings To Hashem

In order to feel a love for Hashem (and in return, to feel Hashem’s love for us), we need to do as the *Mesillas Yesharim* says, that when a person talks to Hashem, he can talk to Him “as one talks to a friend”. So we need to talk to Hashem and express our feelings to Him more.

The point of talking to Hashem is not *tefillah* or about asking Him for things! The point is to simply develop a bond with Him!

We can do it by speaking out all our feelings with Him. Tell Hashem your innermost feelings – your deep feelings of love for Him that are really in you deep down.

Talk to Hashem and repeat to yourself, with feeling: “Hashem, I love you. Hashem, I love you. Hashem, I love you!!”

Talk to Hashem and repeat to yourself, with feeling: "Hashem, I love you. Hashem, I love you. Hashem, I love you!!"

We need to verbally express our feelings of love for Hashem that are really deep down in us. Otherwise, our feelings for Hashem lay hidden deep down in us, where they are not felt. We need to feel those feelings that we really have for Hashem - and the way to do it is by verbally expressing our love for Hashem when we talk to Hashem.

Why is it that people often have a hard time expressing their deep feelings? It is because their inner world is very hidden away in themselves, and thus they find it very difficult to express their deepest feelings.

(However, the other extreme is bad too, and that is if a person is always expressing his innermost feelings of love for other people. This is also unhealthy).

We need to speak with Hashem and express to Him our feelings of love for Him, resembling the loving relationship that is described in sefer *Shir HaShirim* (Song of Songs). When we verbally express our feelings of love for Hashem as we talk to Him, we will then be able to feel our love for Him - in the same way that a child naturally loves his father.

Ahavas Hashem Can Spread To Ahavas Yisrael As Well

If a person does this - if he develops *Ahavas Hashem* like this - then his love for Hashem will then spread into loving other Jews, and he will come to truly love other Jews. This is the true meaning of *Ahavas Yisrael*. He will feel the essence of the Jewish people in his heart.

Besides for the fact that we must work to love each Jew individually, we also have a mission to love the entire collective unit of the Jewish people, and we can feel this love in our heart, with the more *Ahavas Hashem* we develop.

If a person does not develop a strong love for Hashem, this will reflect itself in his love for other Jews as well; something will be sorely missing from his *Ahavas Yisrael*. His love hasn't properly been developed yet, because he is missing *Ahavas Hashem*, and therefore, the rest of his love won't be able to thrive properly, so he won't be able to really love others.

A Simple Way To Try It

You can do this mentally as well; it is not limited to verbally expressing yourself. When you're walking in the street, or when you're on your way to *shul* in the morning, take the opportunity to just think a bit and reflect about your love for Hashem.

One should mentally review in his mind: "Hashem, I love you." There is a concept brought in the *sefarim hakedoshim* that in your mind as well, you can speak with Hashem.

In Conclusion

This is called living a life with Hashem. It is a life full of true yearnings for Hashem; as we sing in *Yedid Nefesh* on Shabbos, "*My soul is sick with love for you.*"

The more a person develops his love for Hashem, the more his love will spread to love for the Jewish people, love for the Torah, and love for Eretz Yisrael. It can then be said of us, "*He Who chooses His nation, Yisrael, with love.*" [\[4\]](#)

[1] See also **Tefillah #0133 - Sanctuary**.

[2] Refer to "**Getting To Know Your Self**", Part 1\4: "**Gaining A Positive Self-Image From The Soul**", in particular, **pages 89-92**. See also **Fixing Your Water #018 - The Desire To Be Loved**.

[3] Editor's Note: This is based on the words of the **Rambam** in **Hilchos De'os**, that love for Hashem is attained through reflecting deeply into the beauty and wonders of Creation.

[4] For further related material to this *shiur*, besides for all of the above quoted sources, refers also to the *shiurim* of **Mesillas Yesharim - Searching For Love** and **Mesillas Yesharim - Hashem Is Your True Companion**.

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