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מסילת ישרים ח"א. הקדמת הרב המחבר. עמ' קלג - קלו

The **Mesillas Yesharim** writes: **“Man must establish a firm love in his heart for the Blessed One, to the point that he awakens his soul to give Him satisfaction, just as one wishes to satisfy his father and mother, and just as he feels pain when his parents are lacking in any way - either due to his part or due to others’ lack of respect - and he should become zealous and full of great joy over being able to do so.”**

Here the Ramchal is telling us that when we love for Hashem, it has to be coming from our will to please those whom we love, such as our parents and our spouse. We want to give our loved ones a *nachas ruach*, a satisfactory feeling, and thus we do what they want. In the same way, when a person purifies himself, he awakens in his heart a yearning to give a *nachas ruach* to his Creator.

Why does a person wish to give a *nachas ruach* to another? It is because he loves him. A person wants the best for himself. That is human nature - people want to do what is good for themselves, and they want that everything should go good for them. When a person loves another person, he wants to give over to that other person the very same satisfactory feeling that he wishes for himself.

In other words, it is not that a person strives to give a *nachas ruach* to others by revealing love for them. Rather, it is that a person already wants a *nachas ruach* for himself, and this is true even before a person reveals a [healthy] self-love for himself. When we reveal love for others, we broaden our life and bring others into our circle of *nachas ruach*; and we then wish that others should have the same feeling of *nachas ruach* that we have for ourselves.

How does this work? How do we extend our own *nachas ruach* to others?

Simply speaking, a person can work on himself to increase his love for another, and that will in turn motivate him to give a *nachas ruach* to that person. But this is still just being superficial. The depth of it is as follows. Rav Shimon Shkop wrote [in *sefer Shaarei Yosher*] that it is not man’s job to create a love for others. Rather, a person naturally loves himself and worries for himself. It is his job to expand his “I”, his love for himself, outwardly towards others. When one learns how to expand beyond his ego, there will automatically be love for others and a wish that others should have it good.

Thus, our avodah is not to get ourselves to love others! Our avodah is rather to reveal outward the love that we already have towards ourselves, and extend that self-love to others. It is to understand that I and another are really one; that just as I love myself, so can I love another Jew. And just as I

want the best for myself, so can I want the best for another Jew.

It is written, *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”* This possuk reveals to us what the essence of love is. Love is to reveal that we are one with another Jew; when we reveal that oneness, there will be ensuing love. It is our nature to love ourselves – we love whatever is a part of us. Thus, if we see others as being a part of us, as being one with us, then we will naturally love others and want the best for them, just like we naturally want the best for ourselves. You must really come to **feel** that another Jew is a part of you.

Usually, a person has the tendency to **seek** love from others, and there are very few people who are looking to **give** love to others. The more a person becomes spiritually purified, however, the more and more he will wish to bestow love upon others, rather than seek to be loved.

The truth is that you can't “give” love to others if you haven't yet attained a healthy self-love for yourself. In order to include others in your self-love, there must already be a healthy self-love that you have for yourself. To give love to others, you need to expand beyond yourself – and this is not about expanding your **self**, but it is rather about including your relatives and friends in your self-love.

But when a person is seeking to receive love from others, he isn't really seeking to connect with them and become more unified with them. He is rather concerned for his own ego, and he will remain apart from others, as he “seeks love” from others.

Therefore, someone who is searching to be loved by others will, sadly, never find it on this world. The only thing a person can receive from others are mere sparks of love, like an act of kindness or nice words which express love, but a person seeking love can never receive actual love from others. Why? It is because love is reciprocal. Since the person is seeking love from others, he is not yet giving love to others, and therefore, others will reciprocate in kind. They will not love him back in the way he wants to be loved, because they do not that they are being loved by the person who is seeking love from them. This is based on the possuk (Mishlei 27:19): *“As water reflects a face to a face, so does the heart of man reflect on to another.”*

A person might still feel, “Okay, so I won't be like that. I'll do something else: I'll seek love from others, because this way, I'll be able to love them back in return.” But this doesn't either work. As long as a person is concerned about **receiving** love from others, he will never find anyone who will give it to him.

But if a person is willing to leave his own self-absorption and begin to feel others, that others are a part of him too, then love will follow. How will this work? Just as a person loves himself very much, so can he love others in the same way, if he sees others as a part of himself. So the only way for a person to “get” love is when he expands beyond his ego. As long as a person remains in his ego and he wishes to receive love from others, it will never happen.

The **Mesillas Yesharim** here has told us that first, a person must make sure he loves his parents very much. We naturally love our parents. After that, a person can expand beyond that and love others as well, and he can keep expanding his love until he loves all of *Klal Yisrael*.

How is it possible to love **all** of *Klal Yisrael*?!

It is because Klal Yisrael is called *“one nation on the earth.”* We are all “one” nation, and thus we are not a bunch of separated souls, but rather, we are all part of one collective unit. If we each see ourselves as one, we can love every member in the Jewish people. If we would all be considered as

separate entities, like the other nations of the world, then it would indeed be impossible to love every Jew. But because we are all “one”, a Jew is able to love the entire Jewish people.

“Love” for another Jew, *Ahavas Yisrael*, is not the regular kind of emotion of love that we are familiar with. It is not a superficial kind of love. It is a deep power in our soul to be able to love another Jew, and it comes from a Jew’s ability to be able to see another Jew as one with himself.

The Torah commands us to “*love your friend like yourself.*” How can a person love another Jew just as much as he loves himself? It is because in reality, we are all one, and therefore, just as we love ourselves, so can we love other Jews, because other Jews are really one with us.

Why doesn’t the Torah just say simply, “Love your friend?” Why did the Torah add on the words, “love your friend *like yourself*”?

The simple answer is that the Torah is telling us that you shouldn’t just love other Jews, and that instead, you should love others in the same way that you love yourself. But according to the approach we have said here, the meaning is as follows: You should love others *for the same reason* that you love yourself!

How is this possible? How can I love another Jew for the same reason that I love myself? If “I” am not him and he is not me, then how is it possible for me to love another Jew for the same reason that I love myself?? But the answer is: You need to reveal how you are “one” with another Jew. When you feel that another Jew is one with you, then you will discover that you love another Jew just as much as you love yourself – “like yourself.”

Maybe a person is wondering: “So that means that loving other Jews is all about *ourselves*? That’s *shelo lishmah* (ulterior motives)! How can it be that our entire love for other Jews is all about *shelo lishmah*?!”

But the answer to this is that it depends on how you define love for others. If you reflect, you can see that this really isn’t a valid question. There is nothing wrong, in essence, with our ego, with our “I”. If we include others in our “I”, then there is nothing wrong with having our ego. The ego is only evil when we use it solely to love ourselves and be only worried for ourselves. If we include others in our ego – meaning, if we love others because we see others as a part of our own ego – then there is nothing wrong with our ego at all.

We have in us a *neshamah*, a G-dly soul, which is called “a piece of Heaven from Above.” When we are self-absorbed, then all we care about is our own *neshamah*, and not another’s *neshamah*. This is selfish and egotistical. This is the evil use of our ego. But if we see our ego as part of the collective whole of the Jewish people, then our “I” graduates from being a private, self-absorbed existence to becoming part of a greater whole. This is the way we can use our “I” in a healthy, good way.

Thus, the depth behind *Ahavas Yisrael* is to feel that other Jews are really a part of us, that others are “one” with us, and this in turn reveals our true, inner love of the soul for others.

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