



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

Love Isn't Just Emotion

In *Parshas Va'eschanan* we encounter the famous *pasuk* that we recite daily – ***Vea'havta es Hashem Elokecha*** – the imperative to love God with all our heart and soul. How can Hashem demand that we “love” Him? One can force another to act in a certain manner, but cannot demand one to experience an emotion that is detached from one’s volition or will. How then, can the love of God be included as a positive commandment?

Rav Baruch Halevi Epstein in *Tosefes Bracha* offers an explanation based on a gemara in *Yoma 86a*. Perhaps for this very reason that one cannot force an emotional response, the gemara interprets this mitzva as requiring action. The gemara derives

from this *pasuk* that we are to act in a way that would make Hashem **beloved** in the eyes of others על שמים שם שיתאהב שם דברים עשה דברים שיתאהב שם שמים על ידך. If one conducts himself in an honest and straightforward manner, others will recognize that such a pious person is acting in accordance with the precepts of the Torah and it will increase their respect for, and admiration of, Hashem.

In a similar manner, we are instructed to respect and fear our parents כבוד את אביך rather than to merely love our parents. The command is formulated so as to instruct us how to *act, provide with food, don't sit in their seat*, rather than how to *feel*.

Perhaps that is why Hillel interprets the *pasuk* of “love your neighbor” ואהבת כמון, as don't **act** towards others in a way that you would despise others acting towards you.

מה ששנוא עליך אל תעשה לחברך. When the simple formulation in the Torah relates to an emotion, it is often ‘converted’ into

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actions that are to be taken.

Rabbi Norman Lamm offers an alternative explanation in his sefer *Drashot L'Dorot*. Citing the Sefas Emes, Rabbi Lamm posits that if the Torah commands one to “love” God – then there must be ingrained in every Jewish heart a deep and abiding love for God and for Torah. Sometimes that emotion needs a spark to ignite it, but it is present, albeit dormant at times.

A story is told of the famous sculptor Michelangelo, who created a statue of Moses. A bystander amazed at the work of art, commented on how amazing it was that he created an image of Moses from a solid piece of stone. Michelangelo replied that his task was simple. He saw the image of Moses beneath the stone and all he did was chip away at the stone to disclose the figure. Similarly, at times, we need to spark or uncover our inner feelings and emotions. Today psychologists adopt a similar technique. Rather than force an idea on a child, they encourage educators to empower the child to arrive at the conclusion from within.

As we celebrate *Shabbos Nachamu*, being comforted after mourning the destruction of our *Beis Hamikdash*, may we internalize these messages. First, to always conduct ourselves in a manner that is *mekadesh shem shamayim*, and to be able for ourselves and others to uncover the inner emotion of love of our Creator! ■

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