TORAS AVIGDOR
AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE
RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

PARSHAS BESHALACH
WITH
RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L
BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

LOVING HIS PEOPLE

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Part I. Hashem's Beloved Nation

The Finish Line

In his section called Shaar Ahavas Hashem, where the Chovos Halevovos deals with the subject of loving Hakadosh Baruch Hu, he tells us this is the most difficult of the *madreigos* that a person can achieve; that to truly love Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't come easy. You can't just sit down and say "Ok, I'm ready now. I'll do it" and think it's going to happen. That's not a bad beginning, by the way, but it's only a beginning.

Actually there are all types of ways that a person must utilize and each one is a subject that requires a discussion for itself. And then in addition to study it requires training; practice. It's a job, a real *avodah.* But it's worth it because that's the summit of achievement. That's why it's the last chapter in the Chovos Halevavos — because it's the highest, the grand finale: to be in love with Hashem.

A Strange Obstacle

Now, when we look in that chapter, we're surprised by one of his statements. Because when he enumerates the *mafsidei ha'ahavah*, the impediments to the achievement of this great form of perfection, one of them strikes us as not in place. He says that one of the obstacles that stands in the way of one who seeks *ahavas Hashem* is the dislike towards one of the *avdei Hashem.* If you have an animosity towards even one *frum* Jew, it's going to be an impediment as you try to come close to love Hashem. Now that's something strange to us because we understand how important the mitzvah of loving a fellow Jew is, but where does it come into *ahavas Hashem*? To us, they seem to be two separate areas of Torah.

And so we'll attempt to explain that, and we'll begin by studying a *possuk* from this week's *sedrah.* When Hakadosh Baruch Hu split the Yam Suf and He caused the Egyptians to be drowned in the Yam Suf, so the Bnei Yisroel sang a song to Hashem. And among the words they said was as follows: "וּבְרֹב גְּאוֹנְךָ תַּהֲרֹס קָמֶיךָ – *In Your Great Majesty, You overthrew those who rose up against You*" (Shemos 15:7). And it means, of course, Pharaoh and his army. Hakadosh Baruch Hu destroyed them on that day.

It's Only Anti-Semitism

But the Mechilta — it's a Medrash on Shemos — asks a question on this word קָמֶיךָ, *the ones who rose*

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up against You: Who says Pharaoh rose up against Hashem? He had yielded to Hashem finally. He had sent forth the Bnei Yisroel. And now he only wanted to take revenge on them; he's going only against the Am Yisroel, not against Hashem. So why is it called *kamecha*, those who rise up against You?

And the Mechilta answers a very important *yesod*, a principle. The Mechilta says that it's one and the same: מִי הֵם שֶׁקָּמוּ נֶגְדְּךָ? הֵם שֶׁקָּמוּ נֶגֶד בָּנֶיךָ – Anyone who rises up against the Am Yisroel, who is an enemy of the Am Yisroel, is an enemy of Hashem.

Now, that has to be understood — because why should it be so? This enemy, he's not thinking about Hashem at all — he has nothing against Him. It's just these Jews that he doesn't like. Hashem? I have nothing against Him at all.

It's Anti-Hashemism

And the answer is that there is a unique relationship between Hakadosh Baruch Hu and the Am Yisroel, something that binds us together as one. Pay attention. At the beginning of the Torah, we read that וְרוּחַ אֱלֹקִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם – *the spirit of Hashem was hovering* (Bereishis 1:2); it means He had no place to rest and was looking for a place where He could rest. And He didn't come to rest until there was an Am Yisroel. וְשָׁכַנְתִּי – *Where will I rest?* בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *By the Am Yisroel.*

It means that the Bnei Yisroel are the people on which the *Shechinah* rests in this world. Not the Polish, not the Americans, not the English. וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם and nowhere else. In the entire universe if you wish to find the address, אַיֵּה מְקוֹם כְּבוֹדוֹ, it's right here on the Bnei Yisroel.

That's what we say in *emes v'emunah* after Kriyas Shema. אֱמֶת וֶאֱמוּנָה כָּל זֹאת וְקַיָּם עָלֵינוּ – We declare that as a result of all that we said just now, Kriyas Shema and *yetzias Mitzrayim*, so what's the result?

Two *limudim*, two conclusions, we come to; the two most important principles that we have to live with all the time. First, כִּי הוּא ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ וְאֵין זוּלָתוֹ – *that Hashem is our G-d and nothing else is important in this world.* That's the number one Torah principle. And the second, right on its heels, is וַאֲנַחְנוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ – *that we are His people.*

The Chosen Nation Chose

It means that it's of the utmost necessity to understand the place of the Am Yisroel in the world plan. We won't be exaggerating if we'll say the world was created only because of the Am Hashem. Now, it could have been an Am Yishmael. It could have been the *am* of Malkitzedek Melech Shalem. Hakadosh Baruch Hu was waiting. It was open — anybody who wishes can choose to be that nation. Finally Avraham chose, and from then on the door was slammed shut — it's only the Am Yisroel now.

We are the Am Hashem; we are the purpose of the world. The world could have been made for anybody if they would have chosen, but we're the ones that chose, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "For you the world is made. You're My people. You're My purpose in the world and My interest, My love, is only for you."

And that's why when Pharaoh, or anyone else, any enemy, raises up his hand against the Am Yisroel, it's not only against Yisroel — it's a hand against Hashem! You can obfuscate and protest and say it has nothing to do with Hashem, but it won't matter a bit. Because it's one and the same — we're tied up with Him, and He considers any affront against His beloved people as an affront against Him.

His Only Love

We are His true love in this world. That's what He declares in the Torah (Devarim 10:15). הֵן – *Hein* means 'Behold'. It means "Pay attention! I'm going to be saying something very important now!" לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ הַשָּׁמַיִם וּשְׁמֵי הַשָּׁמָיִם – *To Me belong the heavens and the heavens above the heavens.* It means the worlds in space and far beyond what we can see in the remoteness of the vastness of the distance, all those worlds and everything, everyone, in them, belong to Hashem. And הָאָרֶץ – this *earth*, וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בָּהּ – *and everything and everyone in it, it's all Mine.* All the

peoples; the Italians and the Hottentots and the French and the English. Everything belongs to Him.

רַק בַּאֲבֹתֶיךָ חָשַׁק ה׳ לְאַהֲבָה אוֹתָם – *But only in your fathers did Hashem delight, and He loved them.* What does Hashem love out of the great vast space full of millions of worlds or this earth full of millions of people? Whom does He love? *Rak!* Only your forefathers did Hashem delight to love them.

But not only Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov. Not only the *Imahos.* וַיִּבְחַר בְּזַרְעָם אַחֲרֵיהֶם – *He chose their children after them.* Who are their children? Maybe it means the *Shivtei Kah*? Maybe Moshe Rabbeinu and the *yotzei* Mitzrayim? Maybe it means Rabi Akiva and Rav Ashi? So the *possuk* says כַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה – *as of this day.* Of course He loves all these *tzaddikim*, all of our great ancestors; the *Nevi'im* and the *Tana'im* and *Amoraim.* But "as of this day" means any day that you'll read this *possuk*, this verse applies to you.

Whenever the Torah will be read, it means all of you people listening. כַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה – Today in America, in Brooklyn, in Lakewood, in Yerushalayim, in Australia, wherever there are Bnei Yisroel, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is choosing you now. He's choosing you to love you more than anything in the entire universe.

The NYT Won't Be Happy

Now don't tell this to the reporters in the newspapers but between ourselves that's the fundamental truth of the Torah. These are not *guzmaos*; they're not exaggerations. Unfortunately, we're the ones who fell all the way down and we stopped thinking about it, or maybe we never began. And so get busy thinking!

It's difficult even for us, for the *frummeh*, to start thinking that way because our minds are saturated with the outside world. Our thoughts are saturated with *kefirah*, with atheism. People think like the world thinks. But we have to start thinking that there is a Torah and the Torah is given to us for a purpose. What's the purpose of Torah? Torah is what Hashem thinks and we have to start learning to think like Hashem thinks. אָנֹכִי ה׳ אֱלֹקֶיךָ means, "Think like I think. Love what I love."

Practice What We Preach

You should try it once. Walk into a *beis hakenesses* or a yeshiva or here — look at the people sitting here right now; these people are more important than anything in the universe! Suppose you had here, *lehavdil*, a collection of United States senators, or all the governors. Oh, it's an important place, you will say, No! It's nothing at all. Nothing at all. *Lo klum.* Let's say a collection of the presidents and kings of all the nations of the world were to come here for a certain reason. Absolutely nothing at all! It's something. I can't say nothing. But compared to what Hakadosh Baruch Hu thinks of the people here, it's absolutely nothing. And that's a *yesod ha'emunah.*

And therefore when you pass by the Mirrer Yeshivah or Slabodka Yeshivah or you look at any *kehillah* of *frum* Jews anywhere in the world and you see Jews who are *shomrei mitzvos*, then you have to know Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves them intensely! In every generation, the Am Hashem, the *shomrei mitzvos*, they are the ones whom Hashem is thinking about intensely all the time.

Who Is A Jew?

Now, I can't pass over that important point — *shomrei mitzvos.* When we are talking of Am Yisroel, we mean what Hakadosh Baruch Hu recognizes as the people of Yisroel. What does that mean? It's someone who believes in Hashem Elokei Yisroel and His Torah. And if a Jew doesn't believe that, then he doesn't belong to the Am Yisroel. Now whether you can stomach that or not makes no difference. Learn how to stomach it. If a Jew doesn't believe, then he's not included — he doesn't belong to the Am Yisroel.

And let that thunder into your American ears. It makes no difference to me what you think. I'm not going to get paid less because of what your reaction is. And even if you'll pay me more, I'd say the same thing — could be I'd say it a little stronger, but whatever it is, I wouldn't budge from telling you the truth. We're talking tonight about the real Jew; if a Jew believes in Hashem and he believes that Hashem is Hashem Elokei Yisroel — that He's our G-d, that

He gave us the Torah, and that we have to keep the Torah — that Jew is tied up with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And even though he might be a pretty poor example of Torah living, but once he believes that Hashem is the Elokei Yisroel then it's our job to learn how to love him.

And if you don't have that attitude, you must labor in order to gain at least part of it. Of course to gain it completely is beyond our ability, but we must understand there's a job waiting for us.

Now I don't say that you should run over and embrace every Jew. We're not such hypocrites. We're not fake liberals. But you should learn to have a certain feeling that all Jews are exactly your brothers – they're exactly as if they had been born from one mother. That's very important. And it's so important that if you think otherwise, you're rising up against Hashem. That's what the Mechilta is telling us; that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is so tied up with the Bnei Yisroel that we have to love His people in order to be tied up with Him. Any lack of love, it's not merely a lack of patriotism, or even merely a lack of *ahavas Yisroel*. It's a lack of *ahavas Hashem*, an affront to Him.

Part II. Loving the Beloved

The Big Job

What we're seeing now is that one of the first prefaces to love Hashem is to become an אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל because anything less than that will be an obstacle to the great perfection of *ahavas Hashem*. We have to love His people! And not just love — we have to learn how to love our nation with an *intense* and *fiery* love.

Now, I won't mislead you and tell you it's easy. It's a job, a big job. And you won't do it by just coming here and listening to me drone on about it. A little bit it'll help — it helps me when I speak about it, no question. I'll tell you something, a secret. When I speak to you, I wouldn't waste my time just for you alone. It's in the hope that I'm hearing it as well. *Agav urcha*, I'm letting you listen in, but I'm listening too, and hopefully something rubs off on me. But this is too important of a subject to rely on something rubbing off. We have to know that it is a function that we're *mechuyav* to work on.

Love Jewish History

So, first of all, you have to learn how to love your people. Do you love your history? Do you love the old generations? After all, Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves them. רַק בַּאֲבֹתֶיךָ חָשַׁק ה׳ לְאַהֲבָה אוֹתָם – *He loves your fathers with an eternal love!* And so even for those who departed already, they're still *Amo Yisroel*, and you should keep in mind that you love them. You should have a love for Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. You should love the *Imahos*. You should love the *Shevatim*. You can love Moshe Rabbeinu too. Did you ever think of loving Moshe Rabbeinu? Love all the great men of our nation's history.

You have to know the past, however. Do you know anything about Dovid Hamelech? Anything about Shlomo Hamelech? Do you know anything about Chizkiyah Hamelech or about Yoshiyah Hamelech? You have to know things about them. You can't love something you don't know, the Rambam says. You love according to what you know.

That's why everyone should be ambitious to know Tanach. Without knowing Tanach, you're missing one of the fundamentals of Torah perfection; you don't know about your people.

Tannaim and Amoraim

Not only Tanach; you should be ambitious to know all of our great men. Do you know who Rav Huna is? Many Jews you'll ask them so they look befuddled. "Rav Huna?" He's scratching his head. He doesn't know. "Is he a *rav* in my neighborhood?"

How can he be a candidate to be an *oheiv Yisroel*? You have to know the whole Klal Yisroel in order to begin loving them.

Learn to love the *Tana'im*. You have to know their names and love them. Not only to know their greatness. Not only to be proud of them but to love

them intensely. When you learn, let's say, a *machlokes* Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua, love these great men. You immerse yourself in their words. You think of their arguments. Ah! You can argue with them on this side. You can argue with them on this side. You agree with both of them. And even if the Gemara makes the *maskanah* it doesn't mean that one is rejected. We follow one, but we love both of them intensely.

Learn to love Rava and Abaye. Oh, these great people. My people! Rav Ashi! You have to love Rav Ashi!

I once asked a young yeshiva man, eighteen years old. I said, "Who came first – Hillel or Rav Ashi?"

He couldn't answer.

A Comic Book Head

You know why he couldn't answer? I saw him standing on the street corner with a friend looking in a comic book. So his mind is filled with imaginary super-people. And then in the *mesivta* he's reading, let's say, a book of American history. What's American history? The whole thing is nothing but a comedy of errors. So you have to read it for the Regents, but it's nothing.

Instead of reading garbage books — some people read novels, romances — a Jew should read what helps him fall in love with his people. How can you love your people if you never read the Book of Yeshayah? That great, glorious *Navi* who speaks of the nobility of our people, and how Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves us, and His love is eternal. The greatness of the Am Yisroel is reflected in the words of Yeshayah Hanavi, and all the other *Nevi'im* too.

Loving Gemara

And so, all of our emotions of love have to go back into our great history. Think about the days of the Talmud Bavli! Ah, what a glorious people we were then! If you know what the Talmud Bavli is you begin to love your people. You know, without studying the Gemara, you don't begin to realize what greatness there lies in the Jewish people. Of course you have to cover ground in Shas if you're going to get an understanding of our people in the days of the Talmud Bavli. Up until recently in the *yeshivos* they used to learn a big part of the *mesichta* — they used to cover sometimes an entire mesichta, sometimes half of the *mesichta*.

Today however, it's a problem because there is a competition for who can cover *less* ground.

A boy says, "In my yeshiva we covered only six *blatt* in Kesuvos this last year."

So the other boy says, "That's nothing! My yeshiva only covered four *blatt*!"

It's a doubtful accomplishment. And it's especially doubtful because you won't see the entire panorama of our history. When you learn the Talmud Bavli, you begin to see it's about a great nation, a big populace in Bavel. They lived a thousand years in Bavel, and there are many, many stories there; incidents without end.

When you read Gemara, you begin to understand the holiness of our nation. The people spoke *divrei Torah*; even women spoke *divrei Torah*. Many times, things are quoted from women in the Gemara. The entire nation was immersed, soaking in Torah. You have no idea of the *kedusha* of the ancient times. And you won't understand who we are unless you learn Gemara. At least you get a faint idea of what our ancestors were as reflected in the glorious pages of the Talmud and you can begin to love them.

Loving the Rishonim

And we have to love those on the side of the page too. Do we think of loving Rashi? What did Rashi do for us? Rashi opened the eyes of the Jewish people. Once when I was a boy I had a *chaver*, a Hungarian boy, in Europe. The Hungarian boy used to say "the *heileger* Rashi". That's how people used to say — they said "the *heileger* Rashi" whenever they said Rashi. That's a beautiful thing to say! We love Rashi!

Do you think about that? To love Rashi? He thinks it's a silly thing. It's not silly at all. Love the Rambam!

Love the Rif! Did you ever think of loving the Mesillas Yesharim? He's benefactor number one. The Chovos Halevavos! As you study their words, learn to love them. Not merely that you're doing them a favor and reading their words. You're loving them. You have to think about that.

Loving Plain Jews

But not only the Torah leaders. You have to learn how to love *the people* who lived in the time of Rashi. Rashi's people were such noble people; they sacrificed their lives when the Pilgrims and the Crusaders came to them in Shpira, that's Speyer, in Magentza (Mainz) and Vermeisa (Worms). And they tried to force the Jews to accept the cross. What did the Jews do? The Jews took their knives from their kitchens and slaughtered all of their little children. And *chossonim* slaughtered their *kallahs* and husbands slaughtered their wives and then they killed themselves. And when the Crusaders finally broke through and entered the homes, they saw only a mass of dead people who refused to bend their knees to *avodah zarah* because of their great love to Hashem.

Do you love the European Jews from a hundred years ago, when almost everybody kept everything? And two hundred years ago, even more? And three hundred years ago, in the days of the Rema, when everybody studied Torah? Every *beis haknesses* was packed with learners, and even children babbled Torah when they played in the streets. Do you love them?

That's included in loving Hashem because you're loving those whom He loves. וַיִּבְחַר בְּזַרְעָם אַחֲרֵיהֶם – Hashem chooses to love all the descendants of the Avos, and therefore you're partnering with Hashem.

A Nation of Scholars

Do you know what we were in Europe before World War I? After World War I, there was a very great descent, but what we were before World War I was glorious. And further back what we were? You couldn't find a Jew who couldn't read *siddur*. Among the gentiles the only ones who could read were the priests. That's why the office people are called clerks today; from the word clergy. The clergyman was the one who could read and write. But among our nation, the majority could read. Very few Jews couldn't read *siddur*. And writing, almost every Jew could write. There were some women who couldn't write, it's true, but among the gentiles nobody could write. If a gentile could write, the government gave him a job. He became the town clerk.

We're an educated people, an entire nation of people who study. When I was in Europe, I went to a small town in the synagogue. I climbed up with a ladder into the loft of the old synagogue, and I saw *seforim*. They weren't used anymore, unfortunately. It was after World War I. But I saw *seforim*, old *seforim*; Abarbanel, Malbim, Alshich. And I asked an old *melamed* who still survived from the olden days, I asked him about it. And he said that he remembers in the olden days the place was so packed Thursday night, that you couldn't get a seat in the *shul*.

The Working Boy

And I pointed out to him — I saw a *Teshuvos Rabi Akiva Eiger* and the pages were so worn out, it was almost loose leaf. I asked him who learned *Rabi Akiva Eiger* so much that the pages are loose leaf already?

He said he remembers there was a working boy who came home every night from work and he studied *Rabi Akiva Eiger* every night, and he was the one who worked out that *sefer* until the pages were all loose. It's a remarkable thing! Go into a yeshiva and pick up a *Rabi Akiva Eiger*. Are the pages loose? These were all worn loose! That's how it was in the olden days. We're the *am hasefer*. You know the Quran calls us 'the people of the book'. We're the *am hasefer*. That's what we were.

Even as recently as when I was a boy, I went to a synagogue on the East Side of Baltimore, and it was all European Jews there. They were sitting at separate tables. This is about sixty five years ago, more than that. There was a table for Shas, Gemara. There was a table for Ein Yaakov, a table for

Chumash-Rashi, a table for Shulchan Aruch; they learned Shulchan Aruch. Tables and tables all over the place. Everybody was studying. Before and after *Ma'ariv*. You have to love those people!

Go Back in Time

Now we have to work on that! It's not enough for us to nod our heads, "Yes, I also agree with that." No! We have to put it into our hearts; it should become part of our personalities. And without studying the subject, without thinking, you'll never become an *oheiv amo Yisroel*. You must learn who we once were in order to love your nation — in order to understand what the Jewish nation is, you must know our history.

Take some time. Go back as far as you can! Go back to your great-grandfathers! Go back to the Baal Shem Tov and the Vilna Gaon! Go back! Go back! Oh yes, go back to them. Go back to the Pnei Yehoshua! Go back to Rashi! Go back to the Rashba! Go back! Go back to the Rambam! To Rabi Yehuda Hachassid! Go back to the Chovos Halevovos! Go back to Rav Ashi! Go back to Rava and Abaye! Go back to Rabi Yehuda and Rav Huna! Go back to Rabi Yishmael! Go back to Rabbeinu Hakadosh! Go back to Rabi Meir and Rabi Yehoshua and Rabi Shimon! Go back to Rabi Akiva! Go back to Rabi Yochanan ben Zakkai! Go back!

Go back to all of the generations of 'plain' holy Jews, generations and generations of *ovdei Hashem*, and love them. If I could humbly recommend my own history books to read. I don't say they're the only ones — you can take better ones — but three volumes on history, Behold a People, Torah Nation and Exalted People. It's something at least, and something you have to do. You have to study your people if you're going to love them. And that's how you'll live successfully according to Hashem's model of loving His people.

Part III. Loving Each Beloved

The Next Step

Now, what we said until this point is in a certain sense not too difficult. It requires thinking, yes, but in a sense it's quite easy because the Jews of our history don't get on our nerves. Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov are easy to love. Moshe Rabbeinu is easy to love. Rashi is easy to love. Rashi doesn't bother you after all. Even our great-great-grandparents in Europe, it's not so difficult.

But the rub is, the big problem is that to love the Am Yisroel doesn't mean only the Am Yisroel of our history. You have to love the Am Yisroel of today, the *frummeh* community of today. And if you don't love the present Am Yisroel, all the frum *kehillos*, that man cannot really love Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And if he feels a certain feeling of looking down on any of them, then you have to know this man cannot be *oheiv Hashem* because Hakadosh Baruch Hu and His people Yisroel are really one — we cannot separate them. And anyone who is *poresh min hatzibbur*, if he separates from the Jewish community, if he doesn't participate in the interests and holds himself aloof, he cannot really become an *oheiv Hashem*.

The Love Project

And therefore, we should always try to work on this project of learning to love those whom Hashem loves. He loves the Jews who live in Crown Heights. He loves the Jews who live in Monsey. And so, when you walk in the *frum* streets, streets in Boro Park and Williamsburg, some Flatbush streets too, and you see on every house a big *mezuzah* on the outside and you know that inside they're very *frum* — the apartments are full of *frum* children, *frum* husbands and wives — so you have to practice loving them.

We're talking about the plain people of the Am Hashem! Their *middos tovos*, their kindliness, and their loyalty! They give *tzedakah*. They *daven*. They learn. They're Hashem's beloved people. Hashem loves them very very much.

There's a great deal of poison in our system that has seeped in from the outside world, and it can only be removed by applying ourselves to this great function. We should practice loving those *frum* blocks because Hashem loves them. With great *derech eretz* you walk in the Boro Park streets. The *Shechinah* hovers over them. Hashem is looking at them and loving them more than anything in the universe.

Of course He loves Lakewood Jews and Los Angeles Jews too. He loves Syrian Jews. He loves Yerushalmi Jews. He loves Bnei Brak Jews. If you can help them out when they come to America to marry off their children and give them some money, certainly you should do so. Or send money to them. That's a good way to love them.

City Bus Love

And so when you see a Jew who demonstrates that he loves Hashem — now it might be externalities; it could be he's only putting on a show, but at least he's putting on a show. If somebody marches through the streets, let's say, carrying the American flag, waving it, it may be that he's a patriot. It could be he's not. But at least he's showing the flag. Suppose somebody marched in waving a communist flag, the hammer and the sickle or the black liberation flag, you know he's not a friend of America.

So if a Jew looks like a Jew and he walks in the street like a Jew, it could be that it's superficialities, but at least this man is showing on whose side he is. The Jew who looks like a Jew deserves our true affection, our real love, and therefore we should go out of our way to show that we like him, we respect him.

That's why if you're sitting on a bus, a bus full of *goyim*, hard-faced, hardhearted *goyim*, and a Jew gets on, a Jew with a beard, and immediately you see that there is an atmosphere of hostility towards him on the whole bus. What do you do? You get up — you never saw him before but you walk over and you give him a big *shalom aleichem*. He's your brother! In the presence of all the *sonei Yisroel*, you are greeting a fellow man who displays the same flag that you display. That's what we should do. We should love those who at least show that they love Hashem.

Love in Bensonhurst

It's a big mitzvah by the way. If you're walking in Bensonhurst and there's a *meshulach*. It's a hot day and he's walking with his portfolio; he's trying to find at least one house where they'll open the door to him. There are a lot of doors that are Italian doors and he's looking for a door with a *mezuzah* — and even then it doesn't mean all the doors with a *mezuzah* will open up for him.

And here you see him on the street. Don't pass him by. Go over to him and give him a hand and say "*Vus macht a Yid*? How are things?" or something like that. You want to give him a dollar too? No harm. No harm at all. And you can be sure it will be a kosher dollar. It will be spent on twelve children that he has back home in Yerushalayim. A dollar divided twelve ways doesn't amount to much, by the way. But even if you won't give him anything, you've already given him something precious. You have demonstrated to Hakadosh Baruch Hu where your heart belongs by means of that one Jew.

And you're giving yourself something precious! Instead of grumbling, thinking, "Why is he doing it this way or that way, collecting?", instead of finding things to criticize, no; you have to unload any feelings like that and start all over. You have to love him!

Hashem Loves Every Yid

Yes! One Jew! You know, we could think that only a case like Pharaoh who was an enemy of the whole Am Yisroel, only then is disliking the Jewish people an obstacle to loving Hashem. But actually it's not so. The Chovos Halevavos tells us that if there's a dislike to even one Yisroel, it's going to be an obstruction in your path as you try to come close to love Hashem. It's actually a *mechitzah*, a barricade between you and Hashem when you have a certain dislike to even one of the Am Yisroel.

Oh, that's a big order. It makes it very difficult. Because when a man claims that he loves Hakadosh Baruch Hu, that is easy to say. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is in heaven. He doesn't live next door to you. His children don't run out on your lawn and His cat doesn't climb into your backyard and make noise at night. It's easy to get along with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Same thing with the *frum* kehillos in other places. With Reb Moshe Feinstein, also. He's somewhere on the Lower East Side. You don't see him, you don't know him, it's easy to love him. But the test is what about the Jew who lives next door to you? Oh, that's not as easy.

The Butcher at the Beach

And so you have to begin training yourself; it should be done with a program. I did it once. Years ago when I was in Europe and I used to work on *mussar*, I did this. I was staying in the country with a certain family. It was a butcher's family, plain ordinary people and I made it my business to fall in love with the family. Every day as I walked behind the dunes on the beach, I was thinking of ways how I could love the husband, how I could love the children, how I could love everybody in the family. I was thinking about them.

And then when I came back in the evening to the house, I said certain words to make them feel good, to make them happy. I spent a lot of time going through the *middah* of loving them. That was in the olden days when I still had a *shaychus* to the *mussar* of Slabodka.

An Individualized Program

And so you should start out with a system because to love all people all of a sudden is not easy. Pick one Jew and make up your mind you'll specialize on him. That Jew whom you see on the street from time to time, he's a *frum* Jew. He's a *shomer mitzvos*. He doesn't have any especial love for you, but you ignore that. You're worried about yourself now, so try to think about him in terms of the Torah.

Think, "After all Hashem loves him. He's a *shomer mitzvos*. That's what I love. I love a Jew who keeps Hashem's *mitzvos*. He's a man who keeps Shabbos. He has a family, he has children. His children love him, I suppose. He has a wife. He's making a living, he's paying tuition, he gives *ma'aser* maybe too. So I love him for all these things."

And start thinking about that and little by little keep that man in mind every day, every day. And as you're saying Shemoneh Esrei and you're saying בָּרֵךְ עָלֵינוּ, so some people think "Bless us" means *me*. Why does it say "us"? So he thinks it's a majestic plural. Like you say, "We, the King of England." No, it doesn't mean that. "Bentch *us* with *parnassah*" means all of the Jews.

Now, are you thinking of all the Jews? No. Even if you're thinking something at all you're not thinking of all the Jews. So at least think of this one Jew across the street. Think about him. "Hashem should give him a raise." Think about him in terms of affection and little by little, you're *machnis ahavah* in your heart to that one Jew.

The Great Success

And so it's a principle that a person should start with one. תְּפַסְתָּ מְרֻבֶּה לֹא תְפַסְתָּ – If you take hold of too much at one time you can't do it. So pick one Jew and work on him. And little by little, it'll begin to spread. It's contagious. Once you learn to love one Jew intensely, after a while maybe the other one also. Why not? It's a great career that you can begin now and it will last you a lifetime.

And that's the big success of life, this career of being in love with the Am Yisroel. We love the Jewish nation. We love our people! But not merely in a patriotic way. We love our nation because Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves us! And because He loves us more than anything else in the universe we love our nation more than anything else.

And when you embark on such a career, you have to know that you're embarking on the career of perfection, of *shleimus*. By loving your fellow Jews, it's כָּמוֹךָ – you're doing the very biggest favor to

yourself. The biggest success is not what you do for other people, but what you achieve in the perfection of your own character; you're gaining such greatness that you become tied up to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. You're a partner with Him — just like He loves, you are standing at His side and together with Him, you're loving the Am Yisroel.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

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Let's Get Practical

Loving What Hashem Loves

In this week's parsha, after Krias Yam Suf, we learn that those who rise up against Am Yisroel are described as rising up against Hashem Himself, because Hashem and His people are inseparably bound together. From this Chazal teach that loving Hashem cannot exist without loving the people He loves, and that even a lack of warmth toward one Jew becomes an obstacle to ahavas Hashem.

This week, bli neder, once each day I will choose one Jew I encounter — in shul, on the street, or even in passing — and consciously remind myself that this is someone Hashem loves intensely. I will try to think one positive thought about him, show a small sign of respect, or speak to him kindly. In this way, I will practice aligning my heart with Hashem's love, turning ahavas Yisroel into a pathway toward ahavas Hashem.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:
204 – Loving His People | **750 –** Approach to Ahavas Hashem | **928 –** Love Your Fellow | **E-178 –** Loving the Beloved | **E-225 –** I Love Your People Yisroel

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QUESTION

If someone was harmed by a fellow Jew in some way, how much of a *chiyuv* is there to love him?

ANSWER

If someone was harmed by a fellow Jew, their love for him has to continue undiminished. Because Hakadosh Baruch Hu's love for him is our yardstick for loving — not our subjective emotions.

You have a right to call him to *din Torah*. You have a right even to tell him what wrong he did but לֹא תִשְׂנָא אֶת אָחִיךָ בִּלְבָבֶךָ. You must continue to love him as before. And therefore, the fact that somebody wronged you does not make him *possul* and unworthy of the mitzvah of loving your fellow Jew.

Now I understand that these are not easy things to do, but that's the *chok haTorah*! And it's expected of us *al pi din Torah*.

Only when someone is no longer *re'acha b'mitzvos*, then there's no mitzvah of loving him anymore. But if it is a person who believes in Hashem and he keeps the Torah in general, then it makes no difference what he did to you. You are *mechuyev* to love him.

Q:

But what about someone who doesn't keep the Torah because he's a *tinok shenishba*?

A:

Now that's a question I don't want to discuss because *tinok shenishba* is not a clear cut concept. There are many people who could have become loyal Jews, but they chose not to. But to know exactly who yes and who not, I'm not capable of telling you.

We know the general rule however. If a person is a *tinok shenishba* and he is an *apikores*, so we follow Reb Chaim Brisker, *zichrono livracha*, and he says, "*Nebach an apikores is fort an apikores*." If he doesn't believe in Hashem, then he doesn't belong to us *at all*.

If he believes in Hashem only he doesn't know exactly what to do, that's something else.

August 1993