

THE BOYMELGREEN EDITION

לקוטי אמרים תניא

עם פירוש חסידות מבוארת באנגלית

Likutei Amarim

Tanya

Chapter 32: Sections 1–2

WITH COMPREHENSIVE COMMENTARY
BY CHASSIDUS MEVU'ERES



DEDICATED TO OUR ESTEEMED AND GENEROUS FRIENDS

Mr. and Mrs. Shaya and Sarah Boymelgreen

IN HONOR OF THE MARRIAGE OF

Elchonon & Nomi Elisheva

CELEBRATED BY THE BOYMELGREEN & KOZLOVSKY FAMILIES
ON THE 28TH OF ADAR II 5782

Chassidus Mevu'eres in English

Under the visionary leadership of Rabbi Yaakov Leib Altein שליט"א, the Hebrew volumes of *Chassidus Mevu'eres* on *Tanya* have been received with great enthusiasm and wide acclaim. Clear and flowing explanations, together with deeply researched insights, have opened the gates of Chassidus even to the uninitiated, and provided seasoned scholars with an encyclopedic window into the depth and breadth that lies behind each word penned by the *Tanya's* author, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi.

The immense success of the Hebrew edition has inspired an ever-growing demand for the very same material to be made accessible in English. It is therefore with great joy and excitement that we present the first step in this monumental new project. We hope to bring the sweet teachings of Chabad Chassidus, in their full depth and breadth, to all English readers who seek illumination for the mind and inspiration for the heart.

Chassidus Mevu'eres in English follows the basic template of the Hebrew edition. A line-by-line commentary lucidly explains and clarifies the simple meaning of the text. Alongside the main commentary, deeply researched notes delve into additional questions and dimensions, yielding more profound insights. Even with all the many rich details, we never lose sight of the larger picture. The *Tanya* is a systematic work, and each element is in harmony with the whole.

Notably, this is not simply a translation of the Hebrew edition. We are very aware that the English readership is a distinct and unique audience, and a great deal of thought has been given to presenting the material anew. In order to take it to the next level we need to hear from you, the reader:

What you are holding in your hand is not just a sample. It's a prototype that we want to improve. Please study it and let us know what you think of it. What worked? What didn't work? What can we do better? Send your comments to: chmtenglish@gmail.com.

This publication represents the beginning of a new era in the dissemination of the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, as explained and illuminated by Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the founder of Chabad. We hope our efforts will hasten the coming of Moshiach and the fulfillment of the promise: "No longer shall one person teach their friend... saying, 'Know Hashem.' Because they will all know Me" (*Yirmiyahu* 31:33).

Heichel Menachem

כ"ח אדר ב' תשפ"ב

Chapter 32

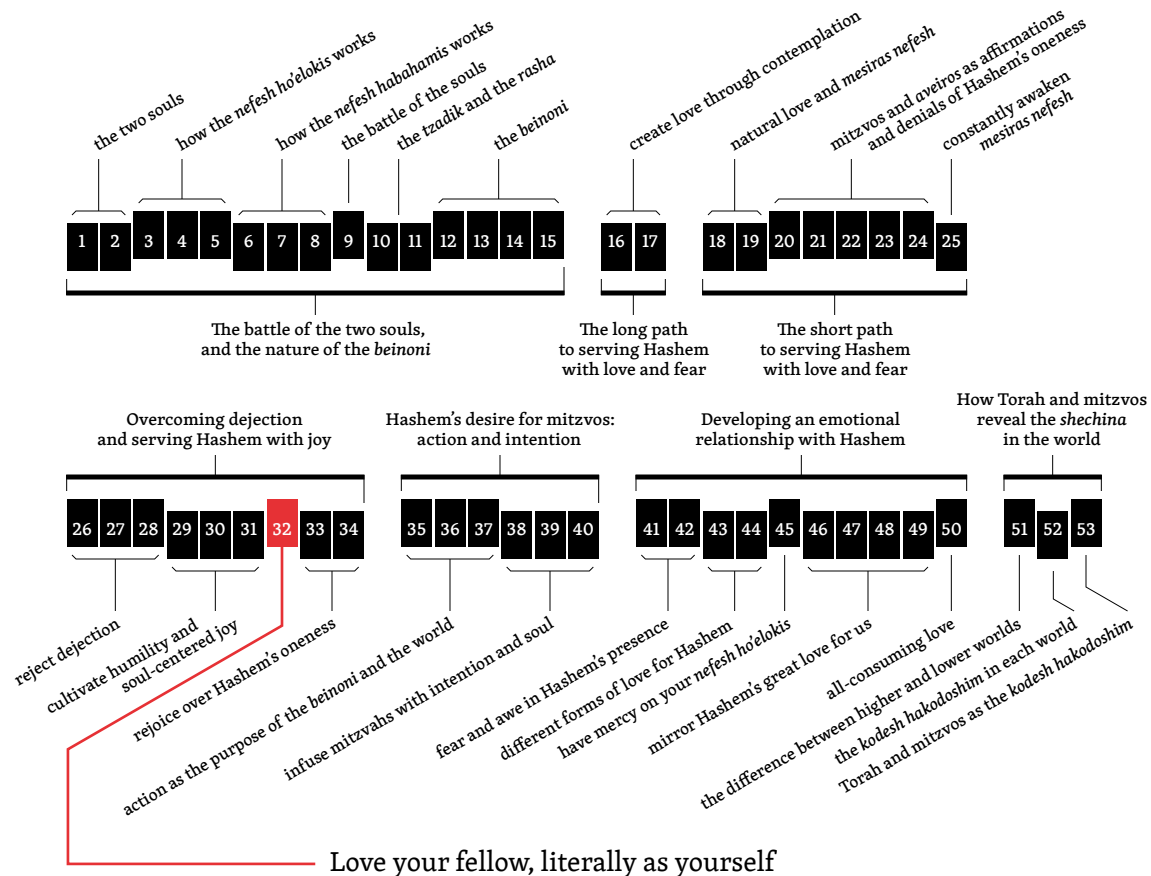
*Love your fellow,
literally as yourself*

The big picture

¹ *Yerushalmi, Nedorim 9:4.*
² *Shabbos 31a.*

This chapter flows from the broader discussion of how to overcome dejection and serve Hashem with joy, which began in Chapter 26. The previous chapter explained how Torah study and mitzvah observance rescues the soul from bodily imprisonment to be one with Hashem, and that contemplating this inspires great happiness. In this chapter, we learn how this happiness provides “a direct and easy path” through which you can fulfill the mitzvah to “love your fellow as yourself” (*Vayikra 19:18*).

This deepens our understanding of the central importance of joy in our service of Hashem. In addition to being significant in its own right, such joy also enables us to achieve true ahavas yisroel, which is “a great principle of the Torah,”¹ and indeed “all the Torah in its entirety.”²



Love your fellow, literally as yourself

SECTION 1: A direct and easy path to true ahavas yisroel
 SECTION 2: Ahavas yisroel is all the Torah in its entirety
 SECTION 3: It's a mitzvah to love wrongdoers too
 SECTION 4: What about heretics?

³ See *Sefer Kitzurim Vehe'oros Letanya*, pp. 118ff, and *Igrot Kodesh Harayatz*, vol. 17, pp. 74f.

⁴ Also, it is specifically in your **heart** that you fulfill the mitzvah to “love your fellow as yourself” (*He'oros Letanya* here).

⁵ See *He'oros Letanya* here, and *Sefer Hamamarim Melukot*, vol. 4, p. 231; *Sichos Kodesh 5738*, vol. 2, p. 546; *Toras Menachem 5747*, vol. 2, p. 75.

⁶ *Sefer Hamamarim 5700*, p. 105. Also see *Toras Menachem 5711*, vol. 1, p. 210.

The *Tanya* was composed with great attention to detail. Even the division and sequence of its chapters are precise.³ Indeed, the chapter devoted to ahavas yisroel is Chapter 32 (לב), which spells the word *lev* in Loshon Hakodesh, meaning “heart.”⁴

The heart is the central organ of the human body, and all the other organs and limbs depend on it for their vitality. Similarly, ahavas yisroel is the “heart” and the foundation upon which the entirety of the Torah depends.⁵

Therefore, love towards another Jew provides a yardstick to measure our love for Hashem, and our connection with Hashem. As the Rebbe Rayatz of Lubavitch said: “Love of your fellow Jew, love of the Torah, and love of Hashem are all bound up and united with one another.”⁶

In this chapter, the *Tanya* will explain:

1. How we can achieve ahavas yisroel in the truest sense — to love your fellow literally to the same degree that you love yourself.
2. How and why ahavas yisroel encompasses “all the Torah in its entirety.”
3. That we are required to love all Jews, even if they have sinned.
4. What our attitude should be to people who deliberately incite heresy and rebel against Hashem.

Original Tanya text

ליקוטי אמרים מא

העלאה זו באריכות איך שהיא תכלית בריאת העולם] וא"כ איפוא זאת אעשה וזאת תהיה כל מגמתי כל ימי חלדי לכל בהן חי רוחי ונפשי וכמ"ש אליך ה' נפשי אשא דהיינו לקשר מחשבתי ודבורי במחשבתו ודבורו ית' והן הן גופי הלכות הערוכו' לפנינו וכן מעשה במעשה המצות שלכן נקראת התורה משיבת נפש פי' למקורה ושרשה וע"ז נאמ' פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב: **פרק לב והנה ע"י קיום הדברי' הנ"ל להיות גופו נבזה ונמאס בעיניו רק שמחתו** תהיה שמחת הנפש לבדה הרי זו דרך ישרה וקלה לבא לידי קיום מצות ואהבת לרעך כמוך לכל נפש מישראל למגרול ועד קטן. כי מאחר שגופו נמאס ומתועב אצלו והנפש והרוח מי יודע גדולתן ומעלתן בשרשן ומקורן באלקי' חיים. בשגם שכולן מתאימות ואב א' לכולנה ולכן נקראו כל ישראל אחים ממש מצד שורש נפשם בה' אחד רק שהגופים מחולקי'. ולכן העושי' גופם עיקר ונפשם מפלה אי אפשר להיות אהבה ואחיה אמיתית ביניהם אלא התלויה בדבר לבדה. וי"ש הלל הזקן על קיום מצוה זו זהו כל התורה כולה ואיך פירושה הוא כו'. כי יסוד ושורש כל התורה הוא להגביה ולהעלות הנפש על הגוף מעלה מעלה עד עיקרא ושרשא דכל עלמין וגם להמשיך אור א"ס ב"ה בכנסת ישראל כמ"ש לקמן דהיינו במקור נשמות כל ישראל למהוי אחד באחד דוקא ולא כשיש פירוד ח"ו בנשמות דקב"ה לא שריא באתר פגים וכמ"ש ברכנו אבינו כולנו כאחד באור פניך וכמ"ש במ"א באריכות: ומ"ש בגמ' שמי שרואה בחבירו שחטא מצוה לשנאותו וגם לומר לרבו שישנאהו

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(23 ADAR I)

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10 ADAR
(26 ADAR I)

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האסורים ומנוול באשפה ויצא לחפשי אל בית אביו המלך ואף שהגוף עומד בשיקוצו ותיעובו וכמ"ש בזהר דנקרא משכא דחויא כי מהותה ועצמותה של הנפש הבהמית לא נהפך לטוב ליכלל בקדושה מ"מ תיקר נפשו בעיניו לשמוח בשמחתה יותר מהגוף הנבזה שלא לערבב ולבלבל שמחת הנפש בעצבון הגוף. והנה בחי' זו היא בחי' יציאת מצרים שנאמר בה כי ברח העם דלכאור' הוא תמוה למה היתה כזאת וכי אילו אמרו לפרעה לשלחם חפשי לעולם לא היה מוכרח לשלחם אלא מפני שהרע שבנפשות ישראל עדיין היה בתקפו בחלל השמאלי כי לא פסקה זוהמתם עד מתן תורה רק מגמתם וחפצם היתה לצאת נפשם האלהית מגלות הס"א היא טומאת מצרים ולדבקה בו ית' וכדכתיב ה' עוזי ומעוזי ומנוסי ביום צרה וגו' משגבי ומנוסי וגו' והוא מנוס לי וגו' ולכן לעתיד כשיעביר ה' רוח הטומאה מן הארץ כתיב ובמנוסה לא תלכון כי הולך לפניכם ה' וגו'. ולהיות בחי' תשובה זו ביתר שאת ויתר עז מעומקא דלבא וגם שמחת הנפש תהיה בתוספת אורה ושמחה כאשר ישיב אל לבו דעת ותבונה לנחמו מעצבונו ויגונו לאמר כנ"ל הן אמת כו' אך אני לא עשיתי את עצמי. ולמה עשה ה' כזאת להוריד חלק מאורו ית' הממלא וסובב כל עלמין וכולא קמי' כלא חשיב והלבישו במשכא דחויא וטפה סרוחה אין זה כי אם ירידה זו היא צורך עליה להעלות לה' כל נפש החיונית הבהמית שמקליפת נוגה וכל לבושיה הן בחי' מחשבה דבור ומעשה שלה ע"י התלבשותן במעשה דבור ומחשבת התורה [וכמ"ש לקמן ענין העלאה

מב ליקוטי אמרים

ממש כמו שהיה לבדו קודם ששת ימי בראשית וגם במקום הוזה שנברא בו עולם הוזה השמים והארץ וכל צבאם היה הוא לבדו ממלא המקום הוזה וגם עתה כן הוא לבדו בלי שום שינוי כלל מפני שכל הנבראים במילים אצלו במציאות ממש כביטול אותיות הדבור והמחשבה במקורן ושרשן הוא מהות הנפש ועצמותה שהן עשר בחינותיה חכמה בינה ודעת כו' שאין בהם בחי' אותיות עדיין קודם שמתלבשות בלבוש המחשבה [כמ"ש בפ' כ' וכ"א באריכות ע"ש] וכמ"ש ג"כ במ"א משל גשמי לזה מענין ביטול זיו ואור השמש במקורו הוא גוף כדור השמש שברקיע שגם שם מאיר ומתפשט ודאי זיוו ואורו וביתר שאת מהתפשטותו והארתו בחלל העולם אלא ששם הוא במל במציאות במקורו וכאילו אינו במציאות כלל: וככה ממש דרך משל הוא ביטול העולם ומלואו במציאות לגבי מקורו שהוא אור א"ס ב"ה וכמ"ש באריכו'. והנה כשיעמיק בזה הרבה ישמח לבו ותגל נפשו אף גילת ורנן בכל לב ונפש ומאד באמונה זו כי רבה היא כי היא קרבת אלהים ממש וזה כל האדם ותכלית בריאתו ובריאות כל העולמות עליונים ותחתונים להיות לו דירה זו בתחתונים כמ"ש לקמן באריכות. והנה כמה גדולה שמחת הדיוט ושפ"ל אנשים בהתקרבותו למלך בשר ודם המתאכסן ודר אתו עמו בביתו וק"ו לאין קץ לקרבת ודירת ממ"ה הקב"ה וכדכתיב כי מי הוא זה אשר ערב לבו לגשת אלי נאם ה': ועל זה תיקנו ליתן שבח והודיה לשמו ית' בכל בקר ולומר אשרינו מה טוב חלקנו וכו' ומה יפה ירושתנו כלומר כמו שהאדם שש ושמח

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שישנאהו. היינו בחבירו בתורה ומצות וכבר קיים בו מצות הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך עם שאתך בתורה ובמצות ואעפ"כ לא שב מחטאו כמ"ש בס' חרדים • אבל מי שאינו חבירו ואינו מקורב אצלו הנה ע"ז אמר הלל הזקן הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן אוהב שלום וכו' אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה. לומר שאף הרחוקים מתורת ה' ועבודתו ולכן נקראי' בשם בריות בעלמא צריך למשכן בחבלי עבותו' אהבה וכולי האי ואולי יוכל לקרבן לתורה ועבודת ה' והן לא לא הפסיד שכר מצות אהבת ריעים וגם המקורבים אליו והוכיחם ולא שבו מעונותיהם שמצוה לשנאותם מצוה לאהבם ג"כ ושתייהן הן אמת שנאה מצד הרע שבהם ואהבה מצד בחי' הטוב הגנוז שבהם שהוא ניצוץ אלקות שבתוכם המחיה נפשם האלקית וגם לעורר רחמים בלבו עליה כי היא בבחי' גלות בתוך הרע מס"א הגובר עליה ברשעי' והרחמנות מבטלת השנאה ומעוררת האהבה כגודע ממ"ש ליעקב אשר פדה את אברהם [ולא אמר דה"ע תכלית שנאה שנאתים וגו' אלא על המינים והאפיקורסים שאין להם חלק באלהי ישראל כדאיתא בגמרא ר"פ ט"ז דשבת]:

פרק לג עוד זאת תהיה שמחת הנפש האמיתי' ובפרט כשרואה בנפשו בעתים מזומנים שצריך לזככה ולהאירה בשמחת לבב אזי יעמיק מחשבתו ויציר בשכלו ובינתו ענין יחודו ית' האמיתי איך הוא ממלא כל עלמין עליונים ותחתונים ואפי' מלא כל הארץ הלזו הוא כבודו ית' וכולא קמיה כלא חשיב ממש והוא לבדו הוא בעליונים ותחתונים ממש

(27 ADAR I)

(28 ADAR I)

Section 1

A direct and easy path to true ahavas yisroel

9 ADAR
(23 ADAR 1)

וְהִנֵּה, עַל יְדֵי קִיּוּם הַדְּבָרִים הַנִּזְכָּרִים לְעֵיל —
לְהִיּוֹת גּוֹפוֹ נְבֻזָה וְנִמְאָס בְּעֵינָיו, רַק שְׂמֻחַתוֹ תְּהִיָּה
שְׂמֻחַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ לְבִדָּה —

Through achieving the things described above (chapters 29-31) — to view the body with scorn and contempt,¹ and find joy only in the joy of the soul alone (we can ultimately fulfill the mitzvah of ahavas yisroel in its truest sense, as will be explained below.) —

¹ Elsewhere, the *Tanya* speaks extremely highly of the very precious regard we must have for our bodies; only when our souls are vested in a physical body can we fulfill Hashem's commandments, thereby uniting ourselves with Hashem's will and wisdom. As is explained later on, in Chapter 37, the entire purpose of creation and the descent of the divine soul (*nefesh ho'elokis*) into the world is only in order to perfect the body and the mundane soul that gives it life (the *nefesh hachiyunis*). (Also see *Likutei Torah, Vayikra 2b* and *42b*, and *Hayom Yom, Elul 29*.)

This part of *Tanya*, however, is not speaking of the ultimate value of the body that is revealed through Torah and mitzvos. The focus here is on the body as it is still caught in the fallacies of the world, and as it stands in opposition to the revelation of the *nefesh ho'elokis*. To the extent that the body seeks the

In the previous chapters, the *Tanya* explained what to contemplate in order to become more soul-centered. Here are the main points to recall:

1. Since the body stands as an obstacle to our service of Hashem, it is worthy of contempt. This realization deflates the body's arrogant spirit and leads to humility.
2. This realization will also inspire us to devote ourselves entirely to Torah study and mitzvah observance, rescuing the divine soul from the body's limitations and reuniting it with Hashem.
3. The rescue of the soul and its return to Hashem's embrace is a source of profound and constant joy. Such joyfulness can be achieved **only** when we regard the body with contempt, because this joy is a celebration of the soul's rescue from bodily imprisonment.

In short, disassociating ourselves from the lowliness and self-centeredness of the body enables us to embrace the joy of the soul.

gratification of its own worldly desires — and to the extent it stands as an obstacle to the gratification of Hashem's will — it is certainly worthy of great scorn and contempt. In this chapter, the *Tanya* explains that this recognition can help us not only to embrace our own souls, but also to achieve true ahavas yisroel.

The *Tanya* now explains that when we follow this path, placing the soul at the center of our sense of self:

הַרִי זוֹ דֶּרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְקָלָה לְבֹא לְיַדֵי קִיּוּם
מִצְוֹת “וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ” לְכֹל נֶפֶשׁ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל,

this is a direct and easy path to fulfill the commandment to “love your fellow as yourself” toward every Jewish soul,

² Indeed, the Ramban writes that “a person's heart cannot accept that its love for another person should be the same as its love for the person's own self” (*Pirush Haramban, Vayikra 19:18*). Some commentaries therefore interpret this mitzvah in a non-literal manner, as requiring only loving **behavior** (*Semag, Mitzvos Aseh 9*).

However, a careful reading of the Rambam's words (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchos De'os 6:3*) implies that the commandment is indeed “**to love**,” and “therefore” — as a result of the **feeling** of love — you should behave in a loving manner. Elsewhere (*Sefer Hamitzvos, Mitzvos Aseh 206*), he similarly interprets this mitzvah as requiring “that your compassion and love for your fellow should be like your compassion and love for yourself.” The Ramak similarly indicates that this love should be felt “in your heart” (*Tomer Devorah, ch. 3*).

³ Furthermore, self-love is innate. By contrast, love for another person is usually inspired by recognition of some special quality that makes them lovable (see below, fn. 5).

In other words, self-love is inherent and unconditional, and therefore also unlimited and eternal. Love of others, however, will always be limited in accord with our recognition of their lovable qualities. It is even possible that if a person we love changes, or if our perception of them changes, our love for that person will disappear as well. (See *He'oros Al Hatanya* here.) For more on this point, see below, fn. 20.

This mitzvah might seem to be very difficult. Love means more than just being nice, more than simply behaving in a kind and friendly way. Love is a sincere feeling in the heart. But what if you don't feel a stirring of heartfelt love towards your fellow? After all, a genuine feeling can't simply be switched on or off.

Yet, the Torah not only commands us to “love your fellow,” but even requires us to love other people just as we love ourselves — “love your fellow **as yourself**.” This would seem to be an impossible demand. By nature, we love ourselves more than we love anyone else.² That's why we easily overlook our own flaws and weaknesses, while being bothered by the very same flaws and weaknesses in others.³

So how can we love others just as we love ourselves?

The *Tanya* answers that becoming a soul-centered person actually makes it “easy” to fulfill the command to “love your fellow” **literally** “as yourself.”⁴

However, we are not commanded merely to love people whom we know and whose special qualities we recognize. Instead, as the *Tanya* emphasizes here, we are commanded to love “every Jewish soul” (see *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos De'os 6:3*), which includes even those whom we have never met.

⁴ To be clear, when the *Tanya* writes that this is an “easy path” to fulfill the mitzvah of ahavas yisroel, it doesn't mean this can be achieved effortlessly. On the contrary, only after we have invested great effort in the spiritual transformation described in the previous chapters will it be “easy” to fulfill the mitzvah of ahavas yisroel. This entails the hard work of becoming soul-centered, viewing the body with contempt, and finding joy “only in the joy of the soul.” As will be explained below, once we have achieved this, it will be easy to awaken the true love for others that is innate to our souls.

Moreover, a soul-centered person can even extend this love to every Jew:

לְמַגְדוֹל וְעַד קָטָן.

whether great or small, without distinction.

5 Both superficial qualities (like wealth or physical appearance) and more spiritual or refined qualities (like musical talent, humor, intelligence, and good character) are factors in whether we find a person to be lovable or not.

6 *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos De'os 6:3.*

7 Section 3 of this chapter also clarifies that we are commanded to love even sinners.

Since every person has different qualities and different flaws, it might seem reasonable that love towards other people should vary from one individual to the next. Some people may appear more lovable than others. Some may even seem utterly unworthy of love.⁵ Yet the Rambam states that this commandment applies **equally** to **“every single Jew.”**⁶ Below, the *Tanya* will explain why there is no difference between one who is “great” and one who is “small.”⁷

All the questions we might have about how it is possible to fulfill such a demanding mitzvah stem from a set of false assumptions that come from the body rather than from the soul. We assume that each person is a separate entity. I am me, and you are you. We are individuals, utterly distinct from one another.

But this is not correct.

In the next few lines, the *Tanya* will take us through several conceptual steps, ultimately explaining that **we are all one**.

All Jewish souls are one single unit, like different limbs of one body. You can easily love your fellow **as yourself** so long as you truly realize that your fellow **is** yourself. From this standpoint, love for your fellow Jew is innate, just as love for yourself is innate.

The fact that all Jews are essentially one is obscured by our bodies, which divide our single collective soul into a diverse community of distinct individuals. From the body’s standpoint, it is indeed impossible to love your fellow as yourself. As the *Tanya* continues to explain, that’s why it is possible to achieve true ahavas yisroel only when we have disassociated ourselves from the body and instead identify primarily with the soul:

כִּי מֵאַחַר שֶׁגּוֹפּוֹ נִמָּאֵס וּמִתּוֹעֵב אֶצְלוֹ

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Because once we view the body as contemptible and despised ... we will no longer look at other people from the perspective of the body, but rather from the perspective of the soul.

8 Above, Chapters 7–8, it was explained that such materialistic and superficial distractions include not only sinful activity, or the selfish pursuit of status and wealth, but anything that isn’t focused on bringing ourselves closer to Hashem, including even selfish enjoyment of food and drink, or similar forms of emotional, intellectual, or spiritual pleasure.

9 This can even prevent us from loving people whose worth and qualities are obvious. Instead, we might become jealous, fearing that they will earn

admiration that would otherwise be directed towards ourselves.

The chief obstacle to loving your fellow **“as yourself”** is the body, which represents all the materialistic and superficial aspects of life.⁸ If we primarily see ourselves from the perspective of the body, we will also relate to other people on a purely materialistic or superficial basis. We will be able to love others only to the extent that we recognize their good qualities.⁹ In that case, it will certainly be impossible to love another Jew literally “as yourself.” Instead, we will see each individual as a distinct and separate entity, and will love each only according to the particular qualities we see as lovable.

On the other hand, if we overcome the superficial perspective of the body and instead embrace the perspective of the soul, these external divisions will be less of an obstacle to ahavas yisroel.

Having set aside the perspective of the body, the *Tanya* now gives us three things to consider from the soul’s standpoint:

וְהִנָּפֵשׁ וְהָרוּחַ מִי יוֹדֵעַ גְּדוּלָתוֹ וּמַעֲלָתוֹ בְּשָׂרָוֹ
וּמְקוֹרוֹ בְּאַלְקִים חַיִּים?

1] **And as to the soul and spirit, the first thing to ask ourselves is: who knows how great and lofty they may be in their source in Hashem (Elokim chayim)?**¹⁰

10 Hashem is referred to as *Elokim chayim* in *Devorim 5:23*. Ibn Ezra explains that this means Hashem alone has autonomous life, whereas the heavenly beings do not have any life of their own. Ramban explains that Hashem is the source of all life, and that when we become aware of this we will attach ourselves to Hashem rather than to physical manifestations of life. For the reason why this term, specifically, is used here, see below, fn. 13.

11 Going even deeper, it is not only **possible**

When it comes to the soul, materialistic or superficial merits or faults are irrelevant. For example, neither wealth nor poverty, neither genius nor simplicity, tell us anything about the worth of a person’s soul. Even a person’s most significant **spiritual** qualities or failings (such as diligent Torah scholarship or righteous fear of heaven, contrasted with boorish ignorance or corrupt wickedness) do not reveal the **true** worth of a person’s soul.

As the *Tanya* explained above, in Chapter 2, there are thousands of levels of souls. Some souls are rooted in the highest of divine heights. Others emerge only from the lower rungs of the hierarchy of spiritual worlds. But we can’t tell how special a person’s soul is based on external behavior or superficial qualities. It is quite possible for a person to have a great and lofty soul and yet be overcome, to one degree or another, by their body and by their animal soul. Deep down, even a Jew who is morally corrupt may have an extremely lofty soul.¹¹

So if we have trained ourselves to view our souls as our real

that the other person's soul is loftier than our own. Rather, it is *certain* that every individual soul actually has some advantage over other souls. This is because the different souls actually relate to each other like the different limbs of a single body (*Yerushalmi, Nedorim* 9:4; for further discussion, see below, fn. 16). Elsewhere (*Likutei Torah, Vayikra* 44a), the author of the *Tanya* explains that the different parts of the body each possess a special quality that others don't have: "Though the feet are inferior and lower, and the head is higher and loftier, nevertheless there is one respect in which the feet are loftier and more advantageous, for we need them in order to walk, and they also hold up the

selves and the external body as secondary, we will be able to set aside superficial impressions. We will realize that there's no way to assess the greatness of anyone's "soul and spirit." This will make it easier for us to love all Jews, whether or not their lovable qualities are evident. Some people might *seem* unlovable. But, "as to the soul and spirit, who knows how great and lofty they may be in their source in Hashem?"

body and the head... Accordingly, without the feet the head is incomplete." When we realize that another person is actually like another limb that is part of the same body as ourselves, we will relate to them in a very different way. Even if we cannot see any good qualities in a particular individual, there is no doubt that in the root and source of their soul above there is some special quality that other souls do not have.

Now the *Tanya* presents a second point to ponder as we reconsider our attitude towards other people from the perspective of the soul:

בְּשָׂגִים שְׂפוּלָן מִתְאִימוֹת,

2] Moreover, they are all equal,¹²

¹² The translation of the Hebrew word מִתְאִימוֹת as "equal" is based on *Metzudas Dovid to Shir Hashirim* 4:2.

¹³ The distinction between these two points (we can't know "how great and lofty" a person's soul is / the souls "are all equal") will be better understood if we pay attention to the specific language the *Tanya* uses with such great precision.

This distinction relates to two different names that the Torah uses to refer to Hashem:

The first name of Hashem that appears in the Torah is *Elokim*. Grammatically, this name has a plural form, indicating that Hashem gives life to all the diverse forces of creation. (See *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 5:1.)

The second name that appears in the Torah is the unpronounceable four-letter name, referred to in Chassidus as *Havayah*. The *Shulchan Aruch* (*ibid.*) explains that this name signifies Hashem's transcendence of the boundaries and distinctions of time; Hashem is simultaneously "past, present, and

This second point goes a step further than the first: Above, the *Tanya* simply noted that it is impossible to know which soul is higher and which soul is lower in its "root and source." Here, the *Tanya* adds that, in their deeper root, all souls are *equally lofty and identically holy*.¹³

If we are soul-centered rather than self-centered, this recognition will help us love other people literally as ourselves. We will realize that someone who seems superficially lowly is worthy of love to the very same degree as the most righteous individual. Since all souls are equal, no specific merit or fault can raise or lower the intrinsic stature of any soul. Therefore, we should certainly love every Jew to the very same degree that we love ourselves.

future" (*hayah hoveh veyihyeh*).

Above, when the *Tanya* spoke of the differences between one soul and the other, reference was made to "their root and source in *Elokim*." This refers to the way Hashem gives life to all the different dimensions of reality, including many different levels of souls. In this context, the *Tanya* says that even though there are indeed many different levels, and some souls have higher roots than other souls, we should realize that it is nevertheless impossible to know "how great and lofty" a person's soul is.

But here, when the *Tanya* says that all the souls are equal, reference is made to "the source of their

souls in *Havayah*." This refers to the way Hashem transcends all limitations and all differentiation. It is also emphasized that *Havayah* is "one" (*echod*), which does not simply mean that there is only "one" Hashem, but rather that Hashem is singular and indivisible. As the Rambam writes, Hashem's oneness is not "like a body that is divided into many different parts... but singular [in such a manner] that there is no other singularity like it in the world" (*Mishneh Torah, Yesodei Hatorah* 1:7).

By virtue of the source of the souls in *Elokim*, it is impossible to know which soul is loftier and which soul is lower. But when we consider their source in *Havayah*, we come to the realization that ultimately all of the souls are equal, because they all share a singular and indivisible root that transcends all differences. (See *He'oros Al Hatanya* and *Likutei Levi Yitzchok* here.)

For further explanation of the distinction and union between *Elokim* and *Havayah*, see *Tanya, Shaar Hayichud Veho'emunah*, Chapters 4-7.

The *Tanya* now adds a third point that goes even further:

וְאָב אֶחָד לְכוֹלָנָהּ, וְלִכֵּן נִקְרְאוּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל "אֲחִים"
מִמָּשׁ, מִצֵּד שׁוֹרֵשׁ נִפְשָׁם בְּה' אֶחָד.

3] And all the souls have one Father, and therefore, all Jews are literally called brothers¹⁴ by virtue of the root of their souls in Hashem who is one (*Havayah echod*).

¹⁴ For examples in which the Jewish people are referred to as brothers, see *Devorim* 22:2 and *Yechezkel* 18:18. Also see *Tehillim* 133:1 — "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers also to dwell together!" — where Rashi comments, "all Jews are brothers."

¹⁵ See *Bereishis* 29:14, where Lovon tells his blood relative Yaakov, "You are my bone and my flesh."

¹⁶ The utter oneness of all the Jewish souls is vividly illustrated in the *Yerushalmi* (*Nedorim* 9:4) with a parable: If a person "was cutting meat and injured his hand with the knife, will he then retaliate and injure his other hand in revenge?" Similarly, when one person takes revenge against another, it is as if a single individual is using one hand to strike the other. The Arizal (*Taamei Hamitzvos, Kedoshim*) likewise taught: "All of the Jewish people are one body... and each individual Jew is like a particular limb."

While brothers are ultimately *separate individuals*,

We have already noted that all souls are fundamentally equal. The additional point here is that all souls are inextricably bound together, like brothers. What's the difference between equality and brotherhood? Equals do not necessarily have any inherent relationship. But brothers are inherently bound together in an essential way that can never be undone; they share "one father."

One brother loves another not simply because he is impressed by his behavior or exemplary character. Instead, brothers love each other innately. Since they share a single root — "one father" — they are actually of the same flesh,¹⁵ and will always remain intrinsically one.

Similarly, all the souls share a single root in "one Father," i.e., Hashem. Therefore, their bond is essential and inseparable.¹⁶ Even once the souls have descended from their single root in Hashem, they remain intrinsically one, "literally... brothers." This kind of relationship cannot be changed by any superficial merits

rather than a single individual, the souls of the Jewish people are literally one entity. From the perspective of the soul, all Jews are likened to different limbs of a *single individual*.

Yet, by explaining that the souls share "one Father," the *Tanya* is hinting that their oneness is actually even greater than the unity between the different limbs of a single body. How so? The different limbs of the body, with their individual forms, capacities, and roles,

begin to develop in the mother's womb. But at an even earlier stage, the child is encompassed in a single drop of semen, and even the particular forms of the different limbs of the body have not begun to emerge.

Similarly, in their

highest root, the souls are all encompassed as a single entity within the ultimate oneness of Hashem, and therefore are utterly indivisible. (The *Tanya* uses this analogy above, in Chapter 2.)

While the limbs of a single body can still be distinguished from one another, the souls of the Jewish people are *literally a single entity*.

17 As explained in the previous note, all Jewish souls are one single entity, like different limbs of one body. Why then does the *Tanya* emphasize that they are like brothers, who (despite being rooted in one father) are ultimately separate individuals?

The reason is that the *Tanya's* purpose is not merely to explain that the souls are united in their source above. The intention is rather to emphasize that even after the souls have descended into separate bodies, they remain essentially one. Although in their lofty root all the souls are a single entity (like one body), we might think this unity is lost once

or faults, whether spiritual or material. Nothing can diminish this oneness in any way. **17**

By internalizing this soul-centered perspective, you can indeed bring yourself to “love your fellow” to the very same extent that you love “yourself.” As has already been explained, the key is to set aside the superficial perspective of the body, instead seeing ourselves and others through the prism of the soul.

the souls descend through the different spiritual realms and into different bodies. Thereby they become separate individuals, endowed with different qualities and flaws. Since it seems that they are no longer encompassed in their single source in Hashem, hasn't their equality and oneness been diminished or even lost?

To answer this question, the *Tanya* specifically uses the example of brotherly love. Since brothers inhabit separate bodies, they are comparable to souls that have descended into this world. Their essential oneness is hidden by the fact that they each inhabit different bodies, but it remains indelibly intact. Like brothers, the embodied souls share “one Father.” However different they may be from one another, and however far they may be estranged, they nevertheless remain essentially and indelibly bound together as one. (See *Sefer Hamamarim* 5672–5676, p. 50, and *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 31, pp. 72ff.)

When we look at people through a soul-centric prism, we will realize three things:

1. It is impossible to know how lofty any individual soul is in its source.
2. In their root, all souls are actually equal.
3. They share a single source in Hashem and are literally like brothers.

From this perspective, we should really regard every other Jew as intrinsically one with our own selves, and not as separate individuals at all.

Why then might one Jew relate to another as if they are distinct individuals or even strangers?

רק שְׁהַגּוֹפִים מְחוּלָּקִים.

Only because the bodies are distinct from each other.

18 In fact, the reality of the separation between our bodies is recognized even by the Torah itself. Although we are commanded “Love your

Although the souls of all Jews are ultimately a single entity, their bodies are indeed separate from one another. **18** If we see ourselves and others from the perspective of the body rather than that of the soul, it will accordingly be impossible for us to relate to others in a way that is soul-centered rather than self-centered.

fellow as yourself,” Torah law also tells us that “your life comes first” (*Bava Metzia* 62a). For a discussion of

how these two principles can be reconciled see *Sefer Hasichos* 5750, vol. 2, p. 639.

וְלָכֵן, הָעוֹשִׂים גּוֹפִים עֵיקָר וְנִפְשָׁם טְפֵלָה,
אֵי אֶפְשָׁר לְהִיּוֹת אֶהְבָּה וְאַחֲוָה אֶמִּיתִית בֵּינֵיהֶם,
אֶלָּא הַתְּלוּיָהּ בְּדָבָר לְבַדָּה.

And therefore, those who regard their bodies as primary and their souls as secondary can't possibly share true love and friendship, but only the sort of superficial love that depends on something external.

19 *Pirkei Avos* 5:16.

20 Above, in Chapter 13, the *Tanya* explained that the definition of truth is something that lasts eternally without any change. Perhaps this explains his emphasis here that “there can be no *true* love and friendship between those who regard their bodies as primary and their souls as secondary.” In addition to the fact that “love that depends on something” is *superficial*, because it does not ultimately relate to the essence of the beloved, it is also emphasized that such love is not *true* and eternal, because when the superficial cause of the love disappears the love will disappear as well.

21 A person might question whether this is really possible for an ordinary person to achieve: Surely only a *tzadik* is on such a lofty spiritual level that their soul is primary and their body secondary? Is this really relevant for ordinary people like ourselves, for the *beinonim*, whom the *Tanya* is addressing?

But the truth is that all of this is relevant

The Mishnah teaches that any “love that depends on something” will not last. **19** When the cause of the love disappears, the love will disappear as well.

On a simple level, “love that depends on something” means a love based on some benefit received from the beloved. You don't really love them; you love the benefit you get from them. In such a case, as soon as those benefits are no longer available, love towards that person will evaporate automatically.

On a deeper level, however, “love that depends on something” also includes love based on recognizing another person's good qualities. Ultimately, such love will be limited in accord with the special qualities that make a person lovable. If the person we love loses their lovable qualities, or if we no longer perceive their qualities as admirable, our love is likely to disappear entirely.

Here, the *Tanya* explains that so long as we see the body as primary and the soul as secondary, we will see other Jews as individuals who are distinct and separate from ourselves, because “the bodies are distinct from each other.” Unless we are soul-centered, we will be unable to inspire ourselves to love others without first recognizing their lovable qualities. In that case, our love for others will be superficial and conditional rather than *true* and lasting. **20**

If, by contrast, we make the soul primary and the body secondary, we will see all Jews as a single entity. From this soul-centered viewpoint, it will be easy to love all other Jews with “true love and friendship,” with essential and lasting love. In other words, you will be able to “love your fellow” literally “as yourself.” **21**

specifically to ordinary people like us. As the *Tanya* explained above, in Chapter 29, the difference between a *tzadik* and a *beinoni* is that the *tzadik* identifies entirely with the divine soul, the *nefesh*

ho'elokis, to the point that the *nefesh ho'elokis* is synonymous with the very self of the *tzadik*. From the *tzadik's* perspective the primacy of the soul is obvious, and no special path of spiritual work is required for the *tzadik* to relate to other people in a way that is completely soul-centric. If the *Tanya* was addressing *tzadikim*, this whole discussion would be utterly unnecessary.

The *beinoni*, by contrast, identifies with the *nefesh hachiyunis* and with the body, to the point that “the life giving soul that vitalizes the body... is the person himself” (ibid.). Without a special path of transformative spiritual work, it would in fact be impossible for ordinary people to have “true love and friendship,” because we would naturally relate both to ourselves and to other people in a way that gives primacy to the body and not to the soul. It is specifically with us ordinary people in mind that Chapter 32 of the *Tanya* was written, explaining that if we put in the effort to embrace “the joy of the soul” — as described in the previous chapters — we will then also have “a direct and easy path to attain the fulfillment of the commandment to love your fellow as yourself.” (See *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 11, p. 71, fn. 51.)

Moreover, the *Tanya* is careful to say that only those “who regard their bodies as primary and their souls as secondary” will not be able to achieve “true love and friendship.” This indicates that the opposite is also true: Those who regard their souls as primary and their bodies as secondary *will* be able to achieve true love and friendship. This means that you do not need to transform yourself into a *tzadik*, and identify **completely** with the *nefesh ho'elokis*, in order to fulfill the mitzvah of ahavas yisroel in its truest sense. For ordinary people like us, the body will always be a natural part of our sense of self, and we are not expected to change that. But in this chapter the *Tanya* teaches that if you simply shift your perspective to

The fundamental point can be illustrated with the following story:

A student once complained to the great *mashpia* Reb Chanoch Hendel that he struggled to fulfill the mitzvah of ahavas yisroel. Reb Chanoch Hendel responded: “An antisemite naturally hates a Jew. But a Jew naturally loves a Jew. So, get rid of the antisemite inside you, and awaken the Jew inside you, and you will automatically have ahavas yisroel.”²²

Ahavas yisroel does not need to be “created” within the Jewish heart. It is naturally there, because the soul, the Jew inside each one of us, is one with all other Jews. Just as you love yourself without trying, you likewise really love every Jew. But to actually feel this in our hearts, we first need to get rid of the inner antisemite. We need to disentangle ourselves from the body and *nefesh hachiyunis*, and instead align ourselves with the Jew inside, the *nefesh ho'elokis*.

the point that your soul is **primary**, and your body is relegated to second place, it is certainly possible — and indeed “easy” — to “love your fellow,” **literally** “as yourself.” (See *Toras Menachem - Hisvaaduyos 5727*, vol. 2, p. 405, and *Sefer Hasichos 5736*, vol. 2, p. 729.)

It is also important to emphasize that the essence of every Jew, including ordinary people like us, is really the *nefesh ho'elokis*. As explained above in Chapter 18, for this reason “every single Jew... is ready to give up their life in order to sanctify Hashem’s name.” Ultimately, in other words, a Jew’s **real** being is one with Hashem, and it is only the superficial impositions of the body and the *nefesh hachiyunis* that cause us to become detached from our real selves. This being the case, it is always within our capacity to overcome those external impositions and reassert the essential primacy of the *nefesh ho'elokis*, which in turn empowers us to fulfill the mitzvah of ahavas yisroel in its truest sense. (*Likutei Sichos* ibid.)

²² Rabbi Chanoch Hendel Kugel (Kurnitzer) arrived in Lubavitch during the era of the Tzemach Tzedek. When the yeshiva Tomchei Temimim was founded in 1897, the Rebbe Rashab appointed him as a *mashpia*. He passed away in 1899. (See *Hatamim*, vol. 1, pp. 79 f.) The Rebbe Rayatz would later describe his ahavas yisroel with special affection and admiration. (See the sources collected in *Lubavitch Vechayoleha*, pp. 127ff.)

Summary

If we follow the contemplative steps described in the previous chapters, training ourselves to rejoice in the soul’s redemption from bodily imprisonment through Torah and mitzvos, then we will primarily identify with the soul rather than with the body. This is a direct and easy path to love every Jew as yourself. If we see our own souls as primary, then we can view others through the same soul-centered prism.

Consider that 1) we have no idea which soul is loftier in its source, 2) all souls are actually equal in their root, and 3) they share a single source in Hashem. This means that another Jew really is intrinsically one with your own self, and not a separate individual at all. When you realize this, it will be easy to love every Jew exactly as you love yourself.

Only our different bodies create the impression that one person is distinct from another. Therefore, if we primarily identify with the body, we can only ever experience superficial love, which is limited in accord with what we perceive to be lovable in the other person. By contrast, if we primarily identify with the soul, it will indeed be easy to love others as we love ourselves.

Section 2

Ahavas yisroel is all the Torah in its entirety

In the previous section, the *Tanya* explained what to contemplate in order to achieve true ahavas yisroel. The key is to identify primarily with the soul rather than the body. Based on this the *Tanya* continues:

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וְזֶהוּ שְׂאֵמַר הַלֵּל הַזֶּקֶן עַל קְיוֹם מְצָוָה
זוּ – זֶהוּ כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוֹלָהּ, וְאֵיךְ פִּירוּשָׁא הוּא כּוּ.

And this is the meaning of Hillel the Elder’s statement about fulfilling this mitzvah — “this is all the Torah in its entirety, and the rest is its explanation, etc.”¹

¹ *Shabbos* 31a.

² Ibid. The Maharsho explains that the statement “What is hateful to you, do not do to your friend” is synonymous with the Torah’s commandment “Love your fellow as yourself” (*Vayikra* 19:18). See the following note for an alternative interpretation of Hillel’s statement.

Maharsho also points out that Hillel rephrased the mitzvah of ahavas yisroel in negative terms, implying that the mitzvah requires us only not to do hateful things, and does not require us to do good for others. However, the Tzemach Tzedek explains that Hillel’s reformulation does not restrict the obligation of ahavas yisroel, but rather hints at a more profound implication of “love your fellow of yourself”:

We all know our own shortcomings better than anyone else, but self-love allows us to excuse ourselves and overlook them. By contrast, when someone else points out our shortcomings, we will usually

The Talmud relates that a non-Jew came to Hillel and said, “Convert me on condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot.” Hillel converted him and said, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your friend. That is all the Torah in its entirety, and the rest is its explanation. Go and study.”²

Hillel’s statement is difficult to understand. After all, the Torah includes two general kinds of mitzvos: those that govern relationships “between one person and another” (*bein odom lachaveiro*), and those that govern the relationship “between a person and Hashem” (*bein odom lamokom*). It’s easy to understand mitzvos of the first kind as expressions, or “explanations,” of ahavas yisroel. The commandment not to steal, for example, can be seen as one aspect of this general mitzvah; if you truly love someone, you certainly won’t steal from them. But what about mitzvos *bein odom lamokom*? For example: What’s the connection between the mitzvah to put a mezuzah on your doorpost and ahavas yisroel?

become extremely upset. We feel deeply exposed and hurt by the revelation of our faults. This is what Hillel meant when he said, “What is hateful to you, do not do to another.” Our love for others should run so deep that we overlook their shortcomings. We shouldn’t expose their failures in a manner that will hurt them, nor allow their faults to upset us, just as self-love enables us to excuse our own flaws and failings. (See *Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Ahavas Yisroel*.)

³ Rashi initially explains that Hillel wasn’t referring to ahavas yisroel at all. Rather, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your friend” refers

to Hashem, meaning that just as we find it hateful when someone doesn’t do as we say, so should we not do anything that is hateful to Hashem, and make sure to keep all the mitzvos. In this light, Hillel’s statement, “This is all the Torah in its entirety,” is easily understood. But this explanation relies on an interpretation of the word “friend” that is far removed from its simple and intuitive meaning.

Rashi’s second explanation is that “your friend” is indeed meant in the literal sense. However, “all the Torah in its entirety” is not meant literally, and refers only to “the majority of the mitzvos.” This is especially difficult given that Hillel did not merely say “all the

So what did Hillel mean when he said that this mitzvah “is all the Torah in its entirety, and the rest is its explanation”?³

The answer will emerge once we appreciate the deeper nature of ahavas yisroel specifically, and of all mitzvos generally.

Torah (*kol hatorah*),” but emphatically added “in its entirety (*kula*).”

Both of these explanations require that we ignore the intuitive meaning of one part of Hillel’s statement. The *Tanya*’s explanation, by contrast, introduces a deeper understanding that keeps the simple meaning of Hillel’s words: The mitzvah of ahavas yisroel truly encompasses “all the Torah in its entirety.”

For further discussion of Rashi’s explanations see Maharal’s *Nesivos Olam, Ahavas Re’a*, ch. 1, and *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 17, pp. 219ff.

It was already explained that true ahavas yisroel is attainable only when we prioritize the soul’s perspective over that of the body. Based on this, the *Tanya* now explains that all mitzvos are encompassed in ahavas yisroel:

כִּי יְסוּד וְשׁוֹרֵשׁ כָּל הַתּוֹרָה הוּא לְהַגְבִּיחַ
וּלְהַעֲלוֹת הַנֶּפֶשׁ עַל הַגּוּף

Because the foundation and root of the entire Torah is to raise and elevate the soul above the body

⁴ This expression is drawn from *Iyov* 31:2. Many important authorities, from the Ramak and the Arizal to the Maharsho and the Netziv, use this language (*chelek eloka*) to refer to the special quality of the Jewish soul. For detailed discussion and explanation see above, Chapter 2, and esp. *Chassidus Mevu’eres Lahak* there.

⁵ See *Devorim* 4:35–39. The simple meaning of these pesukim is that there are no other gods aside from Hashem. But

The underlying purpose of all the Torah’s mitzvos is to raise the soul over the body. How so?

The soul is “a part of Hashem above,”⁴ meaning it recognizes that nothing truly exists other than Hashem alone (*ein od milvado*).⁵ This recognition fills the soul with the sense that it exists only as an expression of Hashem, and only to serve Hashem. In the language of Chassidus, this is called *bittul*.

The holy soul resides within us and is the authentic self of every Jew. Yet, most of the time, we feel very distant from the inherent *bittul* of the soul. We are much more aware of the physical world and our material concerns than we are of Hashem. This is because the body conceals the soul and asserts a sense of autonomy, as if it exists as an entity independent of Hashem. The body prioritizes its own desires, its own opinions, and so on. In the language of Chassidus, this is called *yeshus*.

The more the body asserts itself, the more the holy soul fades

the *Tanya* explains that Hashem is the only true existence, and “even the physical earth, which seems to everyone’s eyes as if it absolutely exists, is insignificant and utterly naught relative to Hashem” (*Tanya*, Part 2, Chapter 6). Although this isn’t the place to explain this in-depth, this doesn’t actually mean that the world doesn’t exist; rather, it exists only as an expression of Hashem. For detailed discussion and explanation see *Chassidus Mevu’eres Lahak* to *Tanya* Chapter 20, Section 2.

6 How exactly does this transform our fulfillment of mitzvot, and even our fundamental sense of self?

We generally assume that we exist as individuals, complete with specific limbs and faculties, irrespective of whether or not there are mitzvot to be fulfilled. From this perspective, what we choose to do with our bodies is incidental rather than essential. For example, we can use our hands to write, toss a ball, or hit someone. Alternatively, we can use our hands to give tzedaka, or to hold the lulav and esrog on Sukkos. But the existence of the hand, and of our whole selves, doesn’t depend on any of these usages. **This is the perspective of the body.**

When we fulfill mitzvot with this attitude, we are certainly subjecting ourselves to Hashem’s will, but only to a superficial degree. Putting personal inclination aside, we may diligently dedicate ourselves to Torah study and mitzvah observance in every area of life. Nevertheless, we will feel that all of this is incidental to the fundamental fact that we exist. Our essential sense of self will remain detached from the fact that we live and act according to Hashem’s will, rather than according to our independent instincts and inclinations.

Chassidus, however, teaches us to nurture a completely different attitude: We should recognize and feel that, in truth, a person has no independent

into the background. Sometimes we almost forget our souls entirely. The work of raising the soul’s *bittul* over the body’s *yeshus* is synonymous with the work of fulfilling the mitzvot. Indeed, this is “the foundation and root of the entire Torah.” Rather than allowing the body to assert its selfishness, by doing a mitzvah we are bringing the soul to the fore.

This requires some more explanation:

The all-encompassing nature of Torah and mitzvot means that there is no part of an individual, and no part of life, that exists independently. Rather, every limb of a person’s body exists only to fulfill mitzvot. For example, our hands exist to give tzedaka, and our mouths exist to eat matzah. Every mitzvah we do should deepen our sense that we exist only to do Hashem’s will. Each mitzvah is another opportunity to overcome the body’s *yeshus* and bring the soul’s *bittul* to the fore.

If our mitzvot are missing the effort “to raise and elevate the soul over the body,” they are missing their *point* — in the *Tanya*’s language, their very “**foundation and root.**” This means that fulfilling mitzvot should directly impact our sense of *identity* — how we see ourselves. If we fulfill mitzvot with truth and integrity we will increasingly see ourselves in a soul-centered way, rather than through the body’s self-centered prism. We will increasingly realize that we exist only as vehicles for the fulfillment of Hashem’s will.⁶

With the above in mind, the explanation of Hillel’s statement becomes clear:

The effort “to raise and elevate the soul over the body” is certainly “the foundation and root” of *all* mitzvot. Yet, it is more integral to ahavas yisroel than to any other mitzvah. Without first

identity at all. In truth, nothing exists other than Hashem. Everything else is only an expression of Hashem’s will and wisdom. Our existence, and the existence of all our limbs and faculties, is nothing more and nothing less than a vehicle through which Hashem’s will and wisdom should be fulfilled and revealed. **This is the perspective of the soul.**

From this perspective, when we use our hands to give tzedaka, we are fulfilling the essential purpose of the hand. This isn’t something additional to the basic fact that the hand exists. Rather, it is a realization of the ultimate purpose that brought it into existence to begin with. Similarly, each of our limbs and faculties is another vehicle for the fulfillment of Hashem’s will: Since Hashem commanded Jews to give tzedaka, therefore we have hands. Since Hashem commanded Jews to study Torah, therefore we have minds, etc. Torah and mitzvot don’t simply provide a lifestyle. Rather, Torah and mitzvot are life itself. (See *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 24, p. 181.)

7 Above, Section 1. In this regard, ahavas yisroel is unique. This mitzvah alone cannot be fulfilled without first raising the soul over the body. This is the underlying purpose of all other mitzvot as well, but it isn’t *integral* to them. For example, we can properly fulfill mitzvot like giving tzedaka or eating matzah even if we haven’t raised the soul over the body.

Therefore, Hillel specifically described ahavas yisroel as encompassing “all the Torah in its entirety.” Other mitzvot are “its explanation,” further expressing and cultivating the fundamental ideal that is integrally embodied in the mitzvah to love your fellow as yourself.

The fact that raising the soul over the body is uniquely *integral* to ahavas yisroel has another important implication: The *Sefer Hachinuch* (mitzvah 16) famously writes that “actions draw the hearts” — acting a certain way helps us to feel that way as well. Therefore, even if we haven’t yet managed to raise the soul over the body to the point that we truly love others as ourselves, we can cultivate and nourish a growing sense of real love simply by acting in the spirit of ahavas yisroel. Attaining such love is synonymous with raising the soul over the body, which is the ultimate purpose of the entire Torah. It follows that simply doing someone a favor

raising the soul over the body, we can’t attain true ahavas yisroel at all. As the *Tanya* explained above, “those who regard their bodies as primary and their souls as secondary can’t possibly share true love and friendship.”⁷

The inner significance of all the other mitzvot, whether *bein odom lachaveiro* or *bein odom lamokom*, is indeed to further ingrain and express the essence of ahavas yisroel; to cultivate soul-centeredness and overcome self-centeredness. Ahavas yisroel is therefore synonymous with “the foundation and root of the entire Torah.” In Hillel’s words, ahavas yisroel is “all the Torah in its entirety, and the rest is its explanation.”⁸

(even without feeling true love) smooths our path to attaining the ultimate purpose of all other mitzvot as well.

For more about how and why ahavas yisroel uniquely paves the way for the rest of the Torah to be revealed, received, and realized, see *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 2, pp. 299ff, and vol. 3, p. 1001, fn. 23.

8 A similar explanation of Hillel’s teaching is found in Maharal’s *Nesivos Olam, Ahavas Re’a*, ch. 1: “It is fitting to love your friend, because your friend was created in Hashem’s form and image (see *Bereishis* 1:26-27)... From this perspective, you and your friend are one entity, because you share a single image... Therefore you love your friend as yourself... And this is the ultimate purpose of the Torah, that a person should acquire this lofty ideal of Hashem’s image. Therefore it was rightly said ‘and the rest is its explanation.’ For the entire Torah is all an explanation of how you can reach this ideal and become completely transparent to Hashem’s image.”

The *Tanya* continues to explain that “the foundation and root” of the Torah is not simply to raise the soul over the body, but to further elevate the soul

מַעֲלָה מֵעֲלָה עַד עֵיקָרָא וְשִׁרְשָׁא דְכָל עַלְמִין,

higher and higher, till the core and root of all the worlds,

What is the difference between “raising the soul over the body” and elevating the soul “till the core and root of all the worlds”?

In the previous section we explained that all the souls share a single source in Hashem. When they descend into this world, they feel as if they are separate individuals “only because the bodies are distinct from each other.” Of course there is a vast distance

9 The fact that embodied souls are like brothers, rather than utterly one, is reflected in the particular mission given to each soul, which it alone can properly fulfill. For a general example of this idea see *Tanya, Igeres Hakodesh 5*: “The Arizal taught that there are two sorts of souls amongst the Jewish people: the souls of Torah scholars who study Torah all their lives, and the souls of mitzvah activists who are busy with tzedaka and *gemilus chasodim*...”

10 For more on the analogy of the different limbs of a single body, see above, Section 1, fn. 16.

11 Here we have mentioned only three general levels of oneness: (1) like brothers, (2) like limbs of a single body, (3) singular and indivisible oneness. *Likutei Levi Yitzchak* here points out that the *Tanya* actually enumerates six levels of oneness, each higher than the next: “raise (1) and elevate (2) the soul above the body, higher (3) and higher (4), till the core (5) and root (6) of all the worlds.” See there for the kabbalistic levels they each represent.

12 With this in mind, the distinction between “raising the soul over the body” and elevating the soul “till the core and root of all the worlds” can be further elaborated:

By its nature, the body values only worldly and materialistic things. With great effort, however, we can successfully raise the soul over the body, setting spiritual values as our primary interest and delight. Rather than seeking to satisfy the desires of the body, we will now seek to satisfy the desires of the soul. We will seek to be ever closer to Hashem, immersing ourselves in Torah and mitzvot. Yet, even having successfully raised the soul over the body, our fundamental sense of having an **individual** self will remain just as robust as it was before. We will still have **personal** desires and ambitions, but now they are shaped by spiritual values rather than materialistic ones.

between the bodily feeling of separation and the utter oneness of the souls in their highest source. Between these extremes there are many different levels of closeness and unity.

The first step is simply to “raise the soul over the body.” This means overcoming the basic sense of bodily separation and bringing the soul’s inherent brotherly love to the fore. Yet brothers too are ultimately separate individuals, even if they have one father and are of one flesh.⁹ A higher form of oneness is to feel like two limbs of the same body, parts of a single individual.¹⁰ Even higher than this is to dissolve any sense of difference between one person and another in the singular oneness of Hashem, Who is “the core and root of all the worlds.” There, all the souls are completely and indivisibly one.¹¹

The ultimate purpose of Torah and mitzvot is that the very deepest form of *bittul* should penetrate even the embodied soul, in this physical world. When we feel that we exist only as transparent expressions of Hashem, our identity will dissolve into the single collective source of everything — “the core and root of all the worlds.”¹²

This gives us a deeper understanding of Hillel’s teaching. Loving your fellow **truly** “as yourself” — to the point that you feel **no distinction at all** between yourself and another — depends on raising the soul “till its core and root,” where it is utterly one with Hashem. Since attaining this *bittul* is “the foundation and root” of all mitzvot, Hillel accurately characterized ahavas yisroel as “all the Torah in its entirety.” All other mitzvot are “its explanation.”¹³

But the ultimate purpose of Torah and mitzvot is to transcend any sense of self whatsoever. In the words of the *Tanya* here, it is not enough “to raise the soul over the body.” Rather, we should strive to elevate the soul “higher and higher, till the core and root of all the worlds.” Meaning that we should strive to feel the way the soul feels in its highest source, where it has no independent existence — no sense of “self” — at all. From this perspective, we are entirely transparent to Hashem, merely tools through which Hashem’s wisdom and will can be revealed and realized.

Also see above, fn. 6.

13 Through illuminating Hillel’s puzzling teaching, the *Tanya*’s explanation also sheds additional light on the central importance of serving Hashem with joy. As explained in Section 1, embracing the joy of the soul makes it easy to achieve true ahavas yisroel. By extension, we now understand that soul-centered joy makes it easy to fulfill a mitzvah that encompasses the entire Torah. (*He’oros Al Hatanya*)

14 See *Likutei Torah, Vayikra 45c*, and *Hayom Yom*, Cheshvan 8.

15 See *Likutei Torah, Devorim 28a-b*. For an explanation of why both *aliyah* and *hamshacha* are necessary see *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 15, pp. 194ff.

16 It’s important to note that the terms “above” and “below” are being used only in a figurative sense. As explained below, in Chapters 36 and 48, the physical dimensions of space obviously don’t apply to spiritual entities, and certainly not to Hashem. *Aliyah* means to “raise” our awareness beyond what we perceive with physical eyes, increasing our awareness of the concealed transcendence of Hashem in which we are encompassed. *Hamshacha* means that the physical world itself doesn’t obscure Hashem’s transcendence as much, and it “flows” more openly into this lowly realm. For a related point, see below, fn. 18.

The *Tanya*’s penetrating explanation of the essence of ahavas yisroel also illuminates the significance of all other mitzvot. As is explained elsewhere, the word mitzvah doesn’t mean only “commandment,” but is related to the Aramaic word *tzavso*, meaning “connection.”¹⁴ A mitzvah is a way for you to reveal and deepen your connection with Hashem, to the point that your whole identity dissolves in the singular oneness of Hashem.

More specifically, mitzvot facilitate two complementary forms of connection between us and Hashem: upward ascent (*aliyah*), and downward flow (*hamshacha*).¹⁵

- *Aliyah* refers to the work of each individual. To ascend, we must raise ourselves above self-centeredness, above our sense of autonomy and *yeshus*. This requires a rigorous effort to overcome the natural boorishness of the body, and to internalize the truth already recognized by the soul. *Aliyah* (upward ascent) is the movement we make from *yeshus* towards *bittul*, increasingly dissolving ourselves into Hashem above.
- *Hamshacha* refers to the revelation of Hashem that is gifted from above. This gift is not a direct product of our effort to refine ourselves. Instead, Hashem’s transcendent revelation flows downward and illuminates the world. This has a transformative impact: The physical world and the self-centered body no longer obscure the truth; instead they become transparent to the flow of Hashem’s illumination. *Hamshacha* (downward flow) is the movement of Hashem’s revelation from beyond the world (“above”) into the world (“below”).¹⁶

Up to this point the *Tanya* explained that the purpose of all mitzvot, and especially ahavas yisroel, is *aliyah*: “to raise and elevate the soul above the body, higher and higher, till the core and root of all the worlds.” We will now continue to explain that the purpose of all mitzvot, and especially ahavas yisroel, is also *hamshacha*:

וְגַם לְהַמְשִׁיךְ אֹרֶךְ אֵין סוֹף בְּרוּךְ הוּא

בְּכַנְסוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל, כְּמוֹ שֶׁיִּתְבָּאֵר לְקַמּוֹן, דְּהֵיִינוּ בְּמִקּוֹר

נְשִׁמוֹת כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל,

and also to draw down or ein sof (the infinite revelation of Hashem) **into knesses yisroel** (the spiritual “gathering” of all Jews in the supernal worlds), **as will be explained later on** (chapter 37 and onward), **meaning into the source of all Jewish souls,**

17 See *Zohar* III, 225a. For a fuller explanation, see *Chassidus Mevu'eres — Moadim*, p. 110 fn. 34, and pp. 394ff. Also see below, Chapter 41.

18 See below, Chapter 48: “*Or ein sof* is described as encompassing it [the earth] even though it is literally within it, because its flow is not revealed within it, but flows within it only in a hidden and concealed way... [and] it [i.e., *sovev kol almin*] is the life of the entire diameter of the globe, and [enacts] its creation from nothing to something.”

19 Also see the related discussion of *Havayah* and *Elokim* above, Section 1, fn. 13.

20 *Tanya*, Chapter 52. See also the fuller context of this passage, beginning in Chapter 51.

21 *Ibid.* In truth, the souls of the Jewish people are rooted in the very essence of Hashem, which is even loftier than *sovev* (as stated in *Likutei Torah, Vayikra* 4c and elsewhere). Here, however, the *Tanya* is speaking specifically of the source of the embodied souls, which flow down into individual bodies in this physical world. This process is specifically related to *memalei*, rather than to *sovev*. For further explanation, see *Tanya, Igeres Hakodesh* 31, and the discussion of the term *shechina* in fn. 24 below.

22 See *Midrash Tanchuma, Noso* 16: “When *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* created the world, He desired for Himself a home in the lower realms (*dira betachtonim*).” As

Here, the *Tanya* uses two kabbalistic terms — *or ein sof* and *knesses yisroel* — to explain how mitzvos facilitate a downward flow of connection from Hashem to us. To understand the meaning of these two terms, and their significance here, we will first explain that Hashem both “encompasses all worlds” (*sovev kol almin*) and “fills all worlds” (*memalei kol almin*).¹⁷

- *Sovev kol almin* refers to the infinite revelation of Hashem that encompasses everything. It completely transcends all limitations and “encompasses” every element of existence — including the physical world — with complete equality. But, being infinite, it remains beyond the grasp of any finite entity. Because it is infinite and all-encompassing, it is referred to as *or ein sof*.¹⁸
- *Memalei kol almin* refers to the finite revelation of Hashem that fills everything. It flows into each particular dimension of existence and gives it a measured form. This revelation is tailored to the individual characteristics of each and every element that exists. Thereby, it allows us to tangibly “feel” Hashem’s presence within ourselves and within the world, each person according to their level.¹⁹

As mentioned before, the soul of a Jew is a “part of Hashem above.” Yet it descends through the spiritual realms and ultimately into a physical body. This provides a perfect example of how *memalei kol almin* works. As the *Tanya* explains later, each soul receives “the specific light and vitality that is fitting for it.”²⁰

While *sovev kol almin* corresponds to *or ein sof*, *memalei kol almin* corresponds to the collective source of all Jewish souls, which is called *knesses yisroel*.²¹

By nature, the physical world obscures the *or ein sof* that pervades it. Hashem’s infinite revelation is everywhere, but we are usually oblivious to its presence. Yet, the ultimate purpose of creation is that *or ein sof* should *openly* flow into the world, so that Hashem’s infinite and all-encompassing presence will no longer be obscured. In other words, *sovev kol almin* will flow into *memalei kol almin*.²²

How can this be achieved? How can the finite world become transparent to Hashem’s infinite revelation?

The answer is that mitzvos have a remarkable quality: Mitzvos are Hashem’s infinite will and desire. They are synonymous with Hashem’s infinite revelation, with *or ein sof*, and they transcend all the worlds and any limitation. Nevertheless, mitzvos can be fulfilled only by embodied souls in this physical world. As explained above (Chapters 23 and 25): “When you do Hashem’s will,” *or ein sof* is “openly revealed upon your soul with tremendous radiance and without any concealment at all.”²³

explained below, Chapter 36, this means that the ultimate purpose of creation is that *or ein sof* should be openly revealed in this physical world.

23 For similar statements see below, Chapters 35, 37, and 38.

24 This idea is spelled out more clearly below, in Chapter 41: “Through uniting and encompassing your *nefesh ho’elokis* in the light of Hashem vested in Torah and mitzvos... [thereby] the source of the Torah and mitzvos, which is *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*, is united with the source of your *nefesh ho’elokis* which is called *shechina*. They [*Hakodosh Boruch Hu* and *shechina*, respectively] are [synonyms for] *sovev kol almin* and *memalei kol almin*.”

Sovev is called *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* because the word *kodosh* (“holy”) means “set apart” or “distinguished,” indicating that it transcends the bounds of creation. *Memalei* is called *shechina*, from the same root as *mishkan* (“dwelling” or “home”), because it refers to the way Hashem’s limited revelation descends to “dwell” within the bounds of creation.

25 The Arizal taught that before fulfilling a mitzvah

Mitzvos are *sovev kol almin*. Your soul is an expression of *memalei kol almin*. So when you do a mitzvah, *sovev kol almin* is united with *memalei kol almin*.²⁴ This is the meaning of the *Tanya*’s statement here: “The foundation and root of the entire Torah is... also to draw down *or ein sof* into *knesses yisroel*... the source of all Jewish souls.” As a result, *or ein sof* is openly revealed in this physical world as well.²⁵

one should declare: “[This is] for the sake of uniting *Kudsha Brich Hu* and His *shechina*.” (Some have the custom to say this at the start of davening rather than before each mitzvah.) As indicated above, fn. 24, this is synonymous with uniting *sovev* and *memalei*. Usually, this union is understood to happen in the spiritual realms, with Hashem’s infinite revelation (*or ein sof*) flowing into the lofty source of all Jewish souls (*knesses yisroel*). But earlier on, in Chapter 10, the *Tanya* made it clear that through Torah and mitzvos you achieve “union of *Kudsha Brich Hu* and the *shechina* in the lower worlds (*betachtonim*)” as well. When mitzvos are fulfilled by embodied souls in this physical world, the souls become channels through which *or ein sof* flows even into this lowest realm. For a detailed explanation as to how the infinite radiance of *sovev* can be revealed via the finite channels of *memalei*, see *Sefer Hamamorim* 5659 (*Ranat*), pp. 104ff.

26 For the sources of this custom, see *Siddur Rabbeinu Hazokein Im Tziyunim Vehe’oros*, pp. 296–7, fn. 38.

However, this downward flow of *or ein sof* into the Jewish souls occurs only when they are united as a single entity. The *Tanya* makes this point through quoting the words of the holy *Zohar*, which many say every Friday night at the onset of Shabbos:²⁶

“The One Hashem (*Kudsha Brich Hu*) above does not rest on the throne of glory (which represents *knesses yisroel*) until it has been fashioned into the secret of one, just like Hashem,

לְמַהוּי אֶחָד בְּאַחַד דְּוִקָא,

“so that Hashem who is **One** shall be resting upon the **one** throne (i.e., a united *knesses yisroel*)”²⁷ specifically,

27 *Zohar* II, 135a.

28 See above, fn. 24.

29 This is how the *Zohar*’s words are explained by the *Tanya*’s author in *Siddur Im Dach*, 169a.

In this passage, Hashem is called *Kudsha Brich Hu*, a name indicating that Hashem is “holy” and transcendent.²⁸ This means that we aren’t speaking about the finite revelation of Hashem, *memalei kol almin*, which flows into each particular dimension of existence and gives it a measured form. Instead, we are talking about the infinite revelation of Hashem, *sovev kol almin*, which completely transcends all limitations and all distinctions between one thing and another. As the *Zohar* emphasizes at the outset, Hashem is “one” and “above.”²⁹

When the Jewish souls (*memalei kol almin*) bring their intrinsic oneness to the fore, they form a fitting “throne” upon which Hashem’s transcendent oneness (*sovev kol almin*) can rest.

וְלֹא כְּשֵׁי שֶׁפִּירוּד חֵס וְשְׁלוֹם בְּנִשְׁמוֹת, דְּקוּדְשָׁא
בְּרִיךְ הוּא לֹא שְׂרִיא בְּאַתֵּר פְּגִים.

and not when there is division between the souls, for Hashem does not rest in an imperfect place.³⁰

³⁰ See *Zohar* III, 90b.

³¹ In the previous line, the *Tanya* focused on the special quality of oneness. (When the Jewish people are one, they become a fitting resting place for the revelation of Hashem’s oneness.) Here, a second point is added: If there is division between the Jewish people, not only are they lacking the quality of oneness and unity, they also have the deficiency and blemish of being incomplete.

The Tzemach Tzedek likens this to the laws requiring animals brought as sacrifices in the *beis hamikdash* to be “perfect,” without any blemish. The spiritual significance of this is reflected in the centrality of ahavas yisroel to all the Torah’s mitzvos:

To be a fitting receptacle for the downward flow of Hashem’s revelation, we need to be whole and complete. As explained in the previous section (esp. fn. 11), the Jewish souls are likened to different limbs

of a single body. Each limb has a merit and advantage that the other limbs do not have, and therefore if one limb is missing all the limbs are compromised and incomplete. Similarly, if one Jew hates another, it is as if a limb of the hater’s own body has been detached, rendering them blemished and unfit to receive Hashem’s revelation. (*Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Ahavas Yisroel*. Also see *Tanya, Igeres Hakodesh* 31.)

Unity between all the Jewish souls makes them a fitting channel for the open revelation of Hashem’s transcendent oneness and infinitude. If they are divided, they are not only missing the characteristic of oneness, but also have the “blemish” of being incomplete and imperfect. The truth is that all the Jewish souls are a single entity, like a single body composed of different limbs. So if we divide ourselves from a fellow Jew, it is as if we have cut ourselves off from one of our own limbs. As a result, we will not be able to receive the downward flow of Hashem’s revelation, just as a glass with a hole cannot contain the wine poured into it. Through their unity, however, the souls complete and perfect one another. Together we form a fitting receptacle for Hashem’s revelation.³¹

Before moving on to the conclusion of this section, let’s recap the central points:

“The foundation and root of the entire Torah” is that mitzvos connect us to Hashem in two ways, *aliyah* (upward ascent) and *hamshacha* (downward flow). This gives us a more profound understanding of Hillel’s teaching that all mitzvos are an “explanation” of ahavas yisroel:

Earlier in this section, the *Tanya* explained that the purpose of all mitzvos is “to raise and elevate the soul above the body, higher and higher, till the core and root of all the worlds.” Since it is only

³² This also explains why before doing mitzvos we don’t simply declare “[This is] for the sake of uniting *Kudsha Brich Hu* and *His shechina*” (see above, fn. 25), but we also add that this declaration is made “in the name of the entire Jewish people.” This union, which is synonymous with the *hamshacha* of *or ein sof* into *knesses yisroel*, can be achieved only when one feels absolutely and inseparably one with

the entire community of Jewish souls. For further discussion of this declaration, see below, Chapter 41, and *Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Ahavas Yisroel*.

³³ The Tzemach Tzedek further explains that every mitzvah is simply a further expression of the union of *sovev* and *memalei* that is achieved primarily through ahavas yisroel. Just as you express love to your friend in a variety of different ways, sometimes using words

there that all the souls are united in complete and utter oneness, *aliyah* is the only way to attain true ahavas yisroel.³²

Now we have added that the purpose of all mitzvos is also “to draw down *or ein sof* into *knesses yisroel*... the source of all Jewish souls.” We cannot achieve this unless we feel ourselves and all the other souls to be a single entity. In other words, *hamshacha* depends on first attaining true ahavas yisroel.

By developing a sense of oneness with all our fellow Jews, we can each make ourselves a fitting channel for the downward flow of Hashem’s infinite revelation (*or ein sof*). Only then can our mitzvos draw *sovev kol almin* into *memalei kol almin*. Only then can our mitzvos fill the world with an open revelation of Hashem’s all-encompassing transcendence.³³

that express love, sometimes acting lovingly, and so on, so there are six hundred and thirteen mitzvos. Each further expresses — or, in Hillel’s terms, “explains” — the loving union between *or ein sof* and *knesses yisroel*, which is most fundamentally achieved through ahavas yisroel. (See *Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Ahavas Yisroel*.)

וְכִמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, בְּרַכְנוּ אֲבִינוּ כּוֹלְנוּ כְּאֶחָד בְּאוֹר פְּנֵיהֶ,
וְכִמוֹ שֶׁנֶּתְבָּאֵר בְּמִקּוֹם אַחֵר בְּאַרְיכוֹת.

And likewise, we say in the *amidah*, “Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, with the radiance of Your face,” and as is explained elsewhere at length.³⁴

³⁴ It isn’t clear what source the *Tanya* is referring to here, but see the following note.

³⁵ Elsewhere, commenting on the same passage from the *amidah*, the author of the *Tanya* writes: “This revelation is specifically when ‘all of us’ are ‘as one,’ for there is no revelation of *or ein sof* — who is the true oneness — except in a place of oneness and inclusion.” (*Torah Or* 97d ff)

³⁶ Elsewhere, the author of the *Tanya* notes that the word *bracha*

Now that we understand the connection between ahavas yisroel and *hamshacha*, the deeper meaning of this request becomes clear:

As explained in the previous section, the bond between all Jews is like the bond of brothers who share a single father. When we bring this soul-centered feeling of oneness to the fore, recognizing that Hashem is our shared father (“bless us, our Father”), we merit that the *or ein sof* (“the radiance of Your face”) should shine openly, and without any concealment at all.³⁵ When “all of us” are “as one,” we become fit to receive the *hamshacha* of Hashem’s blessings.³⁶

A story told by the Rebbe Rayatz of Lubavitch illustrates the central idea elaborated in this section:

There was a certain tzadik whose child became ill. The tzadik cried profusely, pouring his heart out to Hashem. Later, the tzadik

(“blessing”) means *hamshacha* (“downward flow”). For an example, see *Torah Or* 37c.

37 *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 2, p. 436.

expressed sorrow that he was more deeply distressed by the illness of his own child than by the illnesses of other people’s children. For someone else’s child, he realized, he wouldn’t have cried with such intensity.

But the tzadik went even further: “This shows,” he said, “that I am still only at the beginning of the path to serving Hashem properly. If I really served Hashem properly, Torah and mitzvos would already have revealed the essence of my soul, where all Jews are one.” The tzadik understood that *ahavas yisroel* is not just one mitzvah among many. Rather, it represents the very “root and foundation” of the entire Torah.³⁷

Summary

Hillel taught that ahavas yisroel is “all the Torah in its entirety, and the rest is its explanation.” How so?

This mitzvah requires the following two elements: 1) That we identify primarily with the soul rather than with the body. 2) That we feel that the entire Jewish people are literally a single entity.

The “root and foundation of the entire Torah” includes the same two elements: 1) Upward ascent (aliyah), raising the soul over the body, and increasingly dissolving ourselves into our root in Hashem above. 2) Downward flow (hamshacha), drawing Hashem’s infinite and transcendent revelation into the collective source of all Jewish souls (knesses yisroel). Thereby, the world is filled with the open revelation of or ein sof. This depends on overcoming differences between ourselves and other Jews, and feeling that all the souls are one, just as Hashem is one.

True ahavas yisroel depends on aliyah, and hamshacha depends on true ahavas yisroel. Accordingly, the inner significance of all mitzvos is to deepen and further express the essence of ahavas yisroel; overcoming self-centeredness and cultivating a soul-centered feeling of oneness with all Jewish souls.

לע"נ

הרה"ח ר' מרדכי דוד ב"ר לוי יצחק ע"ה
נלב"ע ה' כסלו ה'תשע"ו

ולע"נ אשתו

מרת חנה פרדיל בת ר' ישעיה שלמה ע"ה
נלב"ע ג' ניסן ה'תשפ"ב*

בוימלגרין

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Acknowledgements

We thank the following individuals for their valuable contributions: Rabbis Michael Gourarie, Moshe Gourarie, Akiva Miller, Aron Moss, Eli Rubin, Naftali Silberberg and others who participated in the process of content creation and provided editorial feedback or oversight. Baruch Gorkin crafted the bespoke visual design and layout. Rabbi Yisroel Stern directed the project.



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