



לזכות
שלוחי כ"ק אדמו"ר בכל אתר ואתר
שיצליחו בגשמיות וברוחניות,
וימלאו שליחותם בפועל, לקבל פני
משיח צדקינו' באופן של 'ופרצת',
ובאופן ד'ואתם תלוקטו לאחד אחד',
עדי נזכה לגאולה שלימה
ונשיא דורנו בראשינו
נדפס ע"י
בית חב"ד מעקוואן, ויסקנסין



Ahavas Yisroel

The Foundation of Chassidus

...כידוע מרבוה"ק נשיאינו הק' צוקללה"ה
נבג"מ זי"ע, עד כמה מסרו נפשם להשריש בלב
החסידים המקושרים השייכים ואפילו בתוך
סתם בני"י, העניין דאהבת ישראל...

It is well know how much our holy Rabbeim, our
nesi'im, went on *mesirus nefesh* in order implant
ahavas Yisroel amongst their chassidim, their
mekusharim, the ones who are connected to
them; and even amongst all of b'nei Yisroel...

(Igros Kodesh vol. 5 p. 180)

A Question for the Rebbe

There was once a chassidische farbrengen during the lifetime of the Alter Rebbe, the Frieddiker Rebbe relates.

One of the chassidim present raised his glass for a l'chaim, and wished himself, "may Hashem bless me with true *ahavas Hashem*." The Mittlerer Rebbe, who was also present, raised his glass and said, "may Hashem bless me with true *ahavas Yisroel*..."

A discussion ensued: some chassidim maintained that *ahavas Hashem* is greater than *ahavas Yisroel*, while others argued that *ahavas Yisroel* is in fact the greatest mitzvah, standing even higher than *ahavas Hashem*.



CHAIM BHALBERSTAM via JEM101704

THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES THE KUNTRES HEICHALTZU, 21 MAR-CHESHVAN 5748.

The debate carried on for a number of weeks, until it was decided that the issue would be brought to the Alter Rebbe for clarification.

The Alter Rebbe replied, in his classic concise form, and with his usual tune:

“*Ahavas Hashem* and *ahavas Yisroel* must be both equally engraved in the soul of every Jew. For Hashem says He loves His people. Thus, *ahavas Yisroel* is certainly greater, for if you love Hashem you must certainly love whom He loves—אוהב מזה שאהוב—אוהב.”¹

Klal Gadol

The mitzvah of *ahavas Yisroel* is one of the foundations of Yiddishkeit. As Rabbi Akiva famously put it, “זה כלל גדול בתורה—This mitzvah is a great principle of the Torah.”

As with every other area in Torah, *toras haChassidus* illuminates the mitzvah greatly and placed the spotlight on its importance.

Ahavas Yisroel is considered one of the founding principles of Chassidus as taught by the Baal Shem Tov.² Countless entries in *Hayom Yom* attest to this fact.³

The basis and rationale for the mitzvah are explained in Tanya perek Lamed-Beis, which spells “לב”—heart. As the Rebbe explained, this perek acts as the “heart” of all of Chassidus.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that we must love the most simple Jews even more than the scholarly ones. Much like *tefillin shel-yad* (the hand representing action and good deeds) are donned before *tefillin shel-rosh* (the head representing scholars and learned people).

The Mezricher Maagid took this a step further: Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk was once summoned by

the Maagid who told him, “You hear, Meilach, what they say in the heavenly yeshivah? The true meaning of *ahavas Yisroel* is to love a *rasha gamur* just the same as a *tzaddik gamur*!”

The Alter Rebbe took it even further: *ahavas Yisroel*, says the Alter Rebbe, is for each and every Jew without distinction; from the greatest to the smallest. The love of *ahavas Yisroel* is beyond logic; an *ahava atzmis*—an innate love, much as the love one has for himself. For we are all brothers—אחים ממש—in the literal sense.⁴

DRY OF LIFE

The Rebbe Rashab once told his son, the Frierdiker Rebbe:

When you wake up in the morning and you learn Torah and daven, you’ve accomplished something. But if you did not have the opportunity to do a favor for another Jew, your day is completely “dry” (i.e. lifeless). You need to daven to Hashem that He should present you with the opportunity to do a favor for another...

(Sefer Hasichos 5699 p. 339)

“Heichaltzu”

In each generation, our Rabbeim did all they could and beyond to strengthen *ahavas Yisroel*, to the point of *mesirus nefesh*.

The Frierdiker Rebbe relates that once on a trip home from Mezhrich, the Alter Rebbe stopped in a city called Smargon. Inhabitants of the city were then in the midst of a great dispute; the local scholarly elite wouldn’t allow anyone to hold the position of *rav*. The Alter Rebbe recited a *maamar* that would later serve as the basis for the *maamar Heichaltzu*, eventually printed in Likuttei Torah. The *maamar* talks about the war against Midyan, which represents מדין ומריבה—strife and struggle. This is the *klipah* of *sinaas chinam* which must be eradicated.

Generations later, the Rebbe Rashab recited a *maamar* on this *possuk* as well. He details the travesty of *yeshus* and its inevitable result in *sinaas chinam*, and offers guidance and advice on how to avoid them.

The story is told that the Rebbe Rashab witnessed how one chossid rinsed out a cup before using it, cleaning it after another chossid’s use. The Rebbe

Rashab was very displeased by this act, and it prompted him to recite this *maamar* about *ahavas Yisroel*.⁵

“It is of utmost importance to study the *maamarim* of *Heichaltzu*...” the Frierdiker Rebbe says. “There one will read about the issues of *sinaas chinam* and *pirud halevavos*, traits which have unfortunately become a ‘commodity’ amongst chassidim, who can’t be bothered to try and fix these issues...”⁶

Throughout the years, the Rebbe often encouraged that Chassidim should study the *maamar Heichaltzu* diligently, especially in times of dispute.⁷

In honor of Chof Cheshvan 5748—the birthday of the Rebbe Rashab—the Rebbe personally distributed “*Kuntres Heichaltzu*,” a special printing of the *maamar* to all males above the age of 12 and females above the age of 11. To each and every one, the Rebbe wished “א הצלחה דייקן לערנען—a successful study.”

HOW TO GET THERE

I once asked the Rebbe in yechidus how to bring myself to have *ahavas Yisroel*. The Rebbe responded:

You should learn this mitzvah [*ahavas Yisroel*] as it is explained in *Derech Mitzvosecha*, and if you wish, learn also the *maamar Heichaltzu* in Likuttei Torah, where these matters are discussed, until you know the content by heart. Think it over from time to time, and this will help you to absorb these concepts sooner...”

(Rabbi Bentzion Stein—Teshura Slonim-Stein 5768)

Inseparable Love

When the Rebbe accepted the *nesius* on Yud Shevat 5711, he made what he referred to as a “statement”:

The three *ahavos*: *ahavas Hashem*, *ahavas haTorah*, and *ahavas Yisroel* are all one. Part of one inseparable essence.

Later that night, in the inaugural *maamar* of *Basi L’Gani*, the Rebbe famously related a story of each of the Rabbeim, demonstrating their immense *ahavas Yisroel*, and concluded:

“There are also many stories about the Rebbe, my father-in-law, how he worked to assist even one single Jew, whether with material or spiritual help. He put

himself on the side and disregarded not only his own *gashmiyus*, but even his own *ruchniyus*. And he did this even for a person who was completely below his league...”

THE KEY TO GEULAH



“זה מכמה-וכמה חדשים שמרעישים ויותר מכאן על-
דבר ההכרח באחדות ישראל (ובהקדמת אהבת ישראל)
ושלילת מחלוקת וכו', ושהו ביטול סיבת הגלות, ובמילא
נוגע ישירות - להשים קץ לגלות ולהביא את הגאולה, וכל
השתדלות האפשרית בזה מקדימה קץ הגלות, ובכל זה
חובת כאו"א הרוצה ומצפה לגאולה להשתדל (ולהזהר
מהפכו)...”

“It’s been quite a few months now that we’ve been **clamoring**, and **more**, about the **need** for *achdus Yisroel* (prefaced by *ahavas Yisroel*), and avoiding *machlokes*, etc. For this would remove the cause of this *galus*, thus it would **directly** result in an end to *galus* and bring the *geulah*. Any effort possible in this regard will hasten the end of *galus*, and it is the **duty** of each and every individual who wants and awaits the *geulah* to act [accordingly], (and to refrain from the opposite [of *ahavas Yisroel*])...”

Indeed, from that point on, the Rebbe’s every campaign was imbued, and in fact based on *ahavas Yisroel*.

The last of the ten *mitvtzoim* introduced by the Rebbe was *Mivtza Ahavas Yisroel*, on Chai Elul, 5736.

But from then on, whenever mentioning the ten *mitvtzoim*, the Rebbe always began with this *mitvza*, because it serves as the basis and the springboard for all of the other *mitvtzoim*. In the Rebbe’s words:

“We are currently standing on the birthday of the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe, and soon we’ll mark the birthday of the Tzemach Tzedek. They, together with the *nesi'im* who preceded and succeeded them, all went on *mesirus nefesh* for *ahavas Yisroel*... Let us go out, declare and elucidate, until we can affect upon each and every Jew that the *mitzvah* of *ואהבת לרעך כמוך* is true about each and every *Yid* individually... By explaining this to another with true *ahavas Yisroel*, your words will certainly resonate and have the desired effect...” (For further clarification see *Dvar Malchus* on page 4).

And when we are as one with true *ahavas Yisroel*, nothing can stand in our way. As the Rebbe concluded the *farbrengen* of Yud Shevat 5711:

“כי בשמחה תצאו ובשלום תובלון...”

“When we’ll have joy, we’ll have peace. When all the *mekusharim* of the Rebbe will be *bachdus*, then even the mountains and hills, will not be an obstacle—on the contrary: they’ll help us in our mission...” ①

1. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRaYyATZ vol. 3 p. 424.
2. Sichas Yud-Tes Kislev 5720; Toras Menachem vol. 27 p. 183.
3. See for example: 3 Adar I, 28 Nissan, 5 Iyar, 8 Menachem-Av, and many more.
4. Sichas Shavuot 5713; Toras Menachem vol. 8 p. 207.
5. Sefer Hasichos 5697 p. 250.
6. Sefer Hasichos 5691 p. 258.
7. See for example: Igros Kodesh vol. 25 p. 140; vol. 13 p. 19.



AHAVAS YISROEL IS THE BASIS AND FOUNDATION OF ALL OF THE OTHER MITVTZOIM.

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