

## Insights from the Meshech Chochma

רב מאיר שמחה הכהן מדווינסק זצ"ל

פרשת קדשים תשפ"ב

Shulie Plawes

...וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה' (פרק יט' יח)

*You shall love your fellow as yourself-I am Hashem.*

Rav Meir Simcha's interest is piqued by the juxtaposition of the phrases וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ and אֲנִי ה'—what message is the Torah conveying with this association?

He offers several explanations. His second one begins with an enigmatic Midrash Rabba on the verse in 'תהילים צב' *The righteous bloom like a palm, they thrive like a cedar in Lebanon.* חז"ל expound that "just as palm and cedar trees have desires, so too have the righteous. What are the desires of the Tzadik? HKBH, as we read in 'תהילים מ' *My hopes are with Hashem.*" To this end R' Tanchum relates that "a barren palm tree in the town of Chamsan was noticed by a passing palm-gardener who had a branch of a palm tree from the distant town of Jericho which he said he would graft to it. Upon doing so, it bore fruit." Clearly a Midrash that requires further elaboration which Rav Meir Simcha provides us as follows: In סוטה ח. Rava tells us a rule that the Yetzer Hara controls only that which a person's eyes see. Corporeal תאוות/lusts are connected to what we can visualize. The spiritual craving of a Tzadik i.e., the desire to attain closeness with Hashem, is metaphysical and can sprout only after he makes his physical being capitulate to his intellect and agree that Hashem is the Omnipotent and Almighty Creator. And there is absolutely no connection to the visual sense, as Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu, "כִּי לֹא יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם" *for no human can see My face and live.*" This is exactly the message of our Midrash, connecting the "desires" of the palm and cedar trees with the Tzadik's. The "תאוה" for the trees to procreate is not based on a visual/sensual reflex, for one tree can be in one corner of the world and the other tree in another, but an innate need to propagate the species. So too the Tzadik, whose relationship with Hashem is built around His Torah. His yearning is not physical but to connect to the *unable-to-be-seen* perfection and intelligence of HKBH. וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה' is a formula then for how to love a friend. It is telling us that the feeling should not stem from a shared physical and intellectual reaction to friendship but should be akin to the relationship of the Tzadik with Hashem i.e., intellect *transforming* our physical being. The love *to your friend* would therefore be based on the internalization that Hashem created *all His people* from the same mold, and we all have within us a holy neshama—as Rav Meir Simcha puts it, "...hewn from the

same Rock". These are qualities that cannot be seen. Hashem wants us to love our fellow Jew just as we love Him. לְרַעַךְ therefore includes any Jew, even ones that we have never "seen". A tall order but possible.

His third explanation begins with a reference to the "Philosophers' understanding of love". On one level, it can stem from an *inequality* between the אוהב and the נאהב/beloved. This type of love flows because the נאהב provides the אוהב with something he/she is missing. The אוהב's love in fact reflects a love for *himself*, with the נאהב filling an important void. ל point this out in Midrash Bereishis Rabba where they tell us that a skilled worker hates another member of his craft. With nothing to offer him, there is no room to become an אוהב and the competition opens the door for animosity.

Continues Rav Meir Simcha: There is a deeper love that is based on commonality as opposed to disparity and reciprocity. The love object *is* in fact the נאהב and *not* the אוהב. Sifrei in Devorim asks, "Why did the Torah have to tell us, וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה... עַל לְבַבְךָ/And these matters... shall be upon your heart?" It answers that "from ה' אֵת ה' וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ אֹתוֹ/You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart... I do not know how I can come to love Him; it is therefore written עַל לְבַבְךָ הָאֵלֶּה... i.e., in this way i.e., by keeping His Mitzvos you will come to recognize HKBH and cleave to His ways." As Rav Meir Simcha explains, loving Hashem for what He does for us is the inferior אוהב/נאהב relationship. And this will not promote Hashem's love for us, for there is nothing we can reciprocate with, since He lacks nothing. Emulating Hashem, adopting His traits, as enumerated by Rami bar Chama in סוטה יד, "Just as He clothes the naked, so too, should you... Just as He visits the sick, so too, should you... Just as He consoles mourners, so too, should you... Just as He buries the dead, so too, should you," develops the commonality that will forge a deeper relationship with Him, for what we share allows us to love Hashem for what He is, not for what he does for us. (He compares this to the dual love and admiration that we see among Torah scholars, קנאת סופרים. Their love comes from what they share, not from their differences, nor from anything that one gets from the other. The loved one is loved for what he is, not for what he provides.) Rav Meir Simcha feels that this is also the message of אֲנִי ה'. We should not love our fellow Jew because of a void that he fills, or because he will honor us for our help. The love should be as we should love Hashem i.e., finding in our friend those admirable qualities-and these can always be found-that we appreciate so that we develop camaraderie as opposed to misdirected competition!

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ישראל מנחם בן ר' שלום ז"ל  
לזכר נשמת אמי מורת רחל בת ר' אלחנן אביגדור ע"ה  
לזכר נשמת חמי מורי יעקב נתן בן ר' ישראל שלמה ז"ל  
ולזכר נשמת הרב יהודה בן ר' אברהם שמחה קופרמן זצ"ל  
מחבר הגהות על ספר משך חכמה