



קוּמָרָה

בִּיָּם דַּרְכֶּךָ

B'YAM DARKECHA

Ahavas Yisroel

Loving Our Fellow Jew

בס"ד



קונטרס

ב'י'ם ד'ר'כ'ך

B'YAM DARKECHA



דרכי עבודה למעשה

AHAVAS YISROEL
LOVING OUR FELLOW JEW

Published B'siyatta Dishmaya
by Machon B'yam Darkecha
in partnership with
Machon Hodu Lashem



לעילוי נשמת

בלה נחמה בת יצחק מאיר ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.



We welcome your feedback as we work, with Hashem's help,
to bring all of B'yam Darkecha to the English reader.
We are looking for sponsors so that we can publish and
distribute more B'yam Darkecha publications in english.
Please reach out to us below to support this holy initiative.

USA 347-628-1923

Eretz Yisroel +972-50-416-8599

היטיבה ה' לטובים ולישרים

מהדורה זו נתרמה ע"י ידידינו עוז, העומד לימין המכון בכל
עת ועונה, רודף צדקה וחסד בכל מאודו, מבקש אמת בכל
לבו

הר"ר **בנימין מאיר וואלפסון שליט"א**

הוא הגבר אשר המריץ אותנו לקחת על עצמינו את העול
הכבד לתרגם 'ספרי בים דרכך' לשפת האנגלית

יעזור השי"ת שיעמוד לו ולבני ביתו זכות הפצת פנימיות
התורה ודרכי העובדה, שיזכו לרוב נחת דקדושה מכל
יוצאי חלציהם, מתוך בריות גופא ונהורא מעליא, והברכה
ישרה תמיד במעוניהם, אך טוב וחסד ירדפכם כל ימי
חייכם, ויזכו להרבות עוד ועוד חיילים בהפצת מעיינות
פנימיות התורה והעבודה.

מאחלים

מכון בים דרכך

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Introduction	7
--------------	---

Chapter One

How To Merit To Love Every Jew	8
---------------------------------------	----------

Every Yid is a Portion of the Divine Presence | Practical
Strategies | Unity Through Dveikus

Chapter Two

Overcoming Obstacles to Ahavas Yisroel	14
---	-----------

Love That Is Not Dependent on Anything / When Your
Friend Causes You Pain / When You See a Yid Who Isn't
Observing Mitzvos Properly / Being Respectful of Other
People's Pathway in Avodas Hashem

Glossary of Hebrew Terms	23
---------------------------------	-----------

INTRODUCTION



We all wish we had a genuine love for every single Yid, to truly fulfill the mitzvah that our Father in Heaven gave us, *V'ahavta L'reiacha Kamocha*, love your fellow like yourself.

It doesn't seem easy to love every Jew. How can you love someone you don't even know? It can be hard enough to feel a true, inner love even to those we do know, especially when we see their flaws. And what about people who cause us pain or damage? How can we get to a place where we love them?

But Hashem gave us, human beings with all of our shortcomings, the mitzvah to love every Jew, and every mitzvah that Hashem gives us is attainable. There must be a way to reach a level of Ahavas Yisroel that burns so strongly that any time we see another Yid our heart will fill with joy out of the deep love we have for them.

CHAPTER 1

HOW TO MERIT TO LOVE EVERY JEW



Every Yid is a Portion of the Divine Presence

The difficulty in loving our fellow Jew happens when we focus on the externalities of the other person. When we do this, we get caught up in our differences and notice behaviors that separate us from one another.

The way to develop Ahavas Yisroel is to look deeper, beneath the surface, of our fellow Jew. When you see another Jew, focus on his inner dimension, his *neshama*, which is a *Chelek Elokai Memal Mamish*, an actual part of Hashem. Contemplate the fact that this Jew is a child of the King, a vessel to reveal the light of Hashem. The goal is to connect with, and love, the portion of the *Shechina*, the Godly essence, that resides in every Jew.

The moment we can understand and ‘live’ this truth, we can start to connect with the essence of what every Yid really is, a pure and holy *neshama*. **It is natural and easy to love a pure and holy *neshama*, a piece of Hashem Himself!**¹

1. The more you develop a close relationship with Hashem, the easier it becomes

If we can see our fellow Jew in this way, and focus on loving their *neshama*, we will find it much easier to find favor in their external differences and behaviors, because “*al kol peshah'im techase ahava*, true love conceals all flaws.”²

Practical Strategies

The first step is *hishtokekus*,³ to truly yearn for Ahavas

to love every Yid because the moment you see another Yid, you see their *Chelek Elohai Memal*, the part of Hashem within them, and you love Hashem so much!

On a deeper level, if you can contemplate that *your own* essence is nothing but the light of the *Shechina* that resides and radiates within *you*, it becomes easier to notice the same in another Jew; the presence of Hashem radiating within them. **You start to realize that you and him are one and the same**, one *neshama*, which has been split up into different parts. But our core essence is that each Jew is another limb of the same collective body.

The difficulty in loving another person stems from the fact that we tend to perceive ourselves as independent entities from one another. If “I am I and he is he,” then I feel separated from him. Then the things that he does that are different from what I do make me feel more distant from him. This is even more so with the things he does that bother me or get in my way. But if we can, instead, see ourselves as being one and the same, it becomes a lot easier to focus on, and to love, what we really have in common, our holy *neshama*, the part of Hashem within us. This makes it easy and natural to overlook our external and behavioral differences.

2. *Mishlei 10:12.*

3. *Hishtokekus*, a deep spiritual yearning, is not just a passive, subconscious feeling of “deep down, a part of me wants to have Ahavas Yisroel.” *Hishtokekus* is an *avodah*, it is the proactive work of bringing such feelings to the surface, to spend time developing and then expressing a deep yearning. Engaging in the work of *hishtokekus* can be experienced as an almost overwhelming feeling, a desperate and consuming longing for a new level of closeness with Hashem.

The tzaddikim teach us that *hishtokekus* is the key and gateway to unlocking any spiritual level. When a Yid demonstrates to Hashem that a particular area of

Yisroel, and to daven to Hashem and ask Him to help you. Learn from *seforim* that talk about Ahavas Yisroel, and then take some time to contemplate what you learned to help you internalize it.

Dedicate a set time⁴ to just think about the fact that the Yidden in your environment, those whom you regularly interact with,⁵ are holy neshamos, *Chelek Elokai Memal Mamish*.

When you actually meet your fellow Jew, take a moment to focus on their spiritual essence, to see their pure and precious *neshama*. Think to yourself “This Yid is a child of the King!” “This Yid is a *Chelek Elokai Memal*,” “a limb of the holy *Shechina*,” “he and I are one and the same!”⁶

Avodas Hashem is profoundly important to him, and he really, really wants to reach this new spiritual height, Hashem opens the gates to help him get there.

4. The best time for this is before *davening Shacharis*, which is when the Arizal established that one should accept upon himself the Mitzvah of loving your fellow Jew. (הריני מקבל על עצמי מצוות עשה של ואהבת לרעך כמוך). I hereby accept upon myself the Mitzvah to love your fellow as yourself).

5. Of course, the mitzvah to love your fellow Jew is not limited to loving the Yidden you regularly interact with. Nevertheless, the place to proactively work on Ahavas Yisroel is when you interact with your family, friends, and people in your community. This is where we are most likely to stumble in Ahavas Yisroel, and this is the best place to work on it.

While working on Ahavas Yisroel with those you regularly interact with, and being careful not to cause them pain or distress, the intention should be “Hashem, really, I want to express my Ahavas Yisroel towards every Jew in the world, but realistically that is not possible, since I don't know or interact with most of them. Therefore, I am working on my Ahavas Yisroel towards those around me, with the intention that they should represent all of Klal Yisroel and it should be in Your eyes as if I am expressing my Ahavas Yisroel towards every Jew in the world!”

6. You can take this a step further by taking a moment to think of a virtue that your friend has that is unique and special, that other people you know may not

Cherish every moment you are able to think thoughts like these! When you do merit to think in this way, and when you feel a flash of true love in your heart towards your fellow Jew, take a moment to recognize the significance of what you just did! Every small step, every fleeting thought of love towards another Jew, is a tremendous accomplishment. The more you train yourself to think these kinds of thoughts, the more you will develop and internalize Ahavas Yisroel.⁷

As you work on this more and more, over time, you will see a shift in the way you view other Yidden. With Hashem's help, you will reach a level where He gives you the strength

have. Hashem sent every Yid down to our world with a unique mission, with their own way that they are tasked with revealing the Kingship of Hashem, and with precisely the tools and talents that they need to fulfill their mission. There is no such thing as a Yid who is 'extra,' not now and not in any previous generation!

When you contemplate your friend's unique strengths, and all the more so when you express these thoughts to him and compliment him, besides strengthening your Ahavas Yisroel, you invigorate his *neshama* in its mission, and this is something every Yid really needs! Chazal teach us that in the next world we will be asked "*Himlachta es chaverecha alecha – Did you make your fellow a king over You?*" This can also be understood as "Did you notice and strengthen the point in which your friend is a King?" – the area through which he spreads the Kingship of Hashem in the unique mission that he was charged with and for which he was sent down to this world.

7. In every area of Avodas Hashem, we should get into the habit of using the four capabilities that Hashem gave us: **Thought, feelings, speech, and actions.** We should use all of these in the mitzvah of Ahavas Yisroel as well. We should **think good thoughts** about another Yid, about how worthy and precious they are, and that they are a child of Hashem. We should then **speak this out loud**, and not merely allow it to remain in our mind, and **act on it** by doing acts of kindness towards him and to honor him. "The heart is drawn after the actions," and acting with love towards your friend will lead you to **feel** that love towards him.

and focus to be able to see your fellow Jew through this deeper lens, to immediately see their precious *neshama*, the presence of Hashem standing before you, and you will naturally be filled with love towards them.⁸

Unity Through Dveikus

In the physical world Hashem put us in, we naturally view every person as being separate and independent entities. This kind of perspective leads us to focus on our differences and makes it difficult for us to connect with and love our fellow Jew.

Therefore, the starting place for developing authentic Ahavas Yisroel is to first think about Hashem. Try to fill yourself with a feeling of *dveikus*, to really attach yourself to Hashem with your heart and soul. Focus on Hashem's

8. As you develop Ahavas Yisroel, you will find yourself being truly happy for the good things your friend has, whether it is his spiritual accomplishments in Torah and Mitzvos, or in the material blessing that he has, and you'll want him to only have more and more!

When we feel that we are all on the same team, "*k'ish echad b'lev echad*, as one person with one heart," there is no room for jealousy. We will start to feel like business partners - where one partner's gain is of direct and equal benefit to the other partner. We are all one *neshama*, and we all have one goal, to bring joy to Hashem through serving Him.

Since we are all one *neshama*, part of Ahavas Yisroel is to feel the pain of another Yid, to care about their spirituality, and to daven for them. We should be pained by a *neshama* that is trapped in the *klippas*, the "peel/shell" of evil forces that cover over Hashem's Presence. We should daven to Hashem that our fellow Jews' *neshama* should be able to free itself from any feelings that it is a separate entity from Hashem and should be able to fully attach itself and cling to Hashem.

absolute Oneness, how the entirety of existence is filled with nothing other than the Presence of Hashem.

Once you feel a sense of *dveikus* and have an elevated sense of *Ein Od Milvado*, the absolute Oneness of Hashem, then turn your attention back to the physical world around you and think about your fellow Jew. You will see how much easier it is now to feel that every Yid is a portion of Hashem, a place where Hashem's light is revealed.

The *yetzer hara* will try to prevent this approach. When he sees a Yid trying to enter a state of *dveikus*, he tries to throw him off track and encourages him to skip this step and go directly to trying to feel Ahavas Yisroel. But the starting place for true Ahavas Yisroel needs to be through thoughts of attachment to Hashem that are then directed to thinking about our fellow Jews. When you think about how the entire world is filled with the presence of Hashem, and there is nothing else other than Him, and then think about your fellow Jews, you will feel a deep and internal Ahavas Yisroel, which comes from seeing the G-dliness in every Jew. The *yetzer hara* doesn't want this and encourages you to leave Hashem out of the picture, which leads to a very surface level form of Ahavas Yisroel, which is short-lived and easily lost.



CHAPTER 2

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO AHAVAS YISROEL



Love That Is Not Dependent on Anything

The ultimate level of Ahavas Yisroel is to feel that you and your fellow Jew are one entity. All Yidden are made up of one *neshama*, and just like a person wants and values every part of his body, even if one of his limbs are hurting,⁹ we should strive to love even the parts of our *neshama* that might 'hurt' us. The goal is to feel an authentic, inner connection with another Yid that is not dependent on what they do or how it feels to spend time with them. Even if you don't enjoy their company you can still love them, because Ahavas Yisroel is an intrinsic love towards the essence of who they are, a holy and pure *neshama*, a part of Hashem and a part of the collective soul of the Jewish people.

9. For example, you'll never see someone who injured their finger holding their finger up in front of them and yelling at it for hurting them! Because his finger is part of him, he will care for it and try to heal it, rather than being upset at it.

If we lose our love for our fellow Jew every time they do something we don't like, that demonstrates that the love was never an intrinsic love, but rather was an external love to make a good impression, to receive something from the person that we lack, or some other externally motivated 'love.'

True Ahavas Yisroel is not dependent on the actions of the other Yidden and is not affected by people doing things that bother us. **We can be bothered by their actions and still love them deeply.**

Nevertheless, at the end of the day, we tend to get bothered by people's actions and have a hard time loving them when they do things that bother us or cause us pain. It is therefore important to find new perspectives to help us navigate common obstacles to Ahavas Yisroel, as we will see in the following sections.

When Your Friend Causes You Pain

When your friend causes you any form of pain, the way to maintain your love towards them is to look deeper and understand what is really happening beneath the surface.

Hashem's Presence fills and surrounds all of the world; there is nothing besides his Presence and in every single movement and action, there is the Ruler of the world.

Nothing in the world can harm you in any way if it is not the will of Hashem. If another person causes you pain, he is nothing more than a messenger to carry out the will of

Hashem. As Chazal teach us “A person will not even injure a finger in this world unless it was decreed in Heaven that his finger should be injured.”¹⁰

The biggest obstacle to Ahavas Yisroel is getting caught up in the externals. If we see things only as they seem on the surface, then we won't be able to love a Yid who causes us pain. If someone pains you, ask Hashem to give you the strength to overcome this challenge! Ask Hashem to strengthen your *emunah* to see that nothing can harm you in this world if it is not His will. Ask Hashem to help you continue to love that person and to see him as nothing more than His messenger.

The more pain your friend causes, and the harder the test is, the deeper we must contemplate this truth. Think this through! Think about how thoroughly Hashem runs every aspect of the world, paying attention to even the tiniest detail, that there is nothing beyond His control and that no harm can come your way unless it is decreed in Heaven. Look past the surface and see how your friend was merely a messenger to deliver a difficult message from Hashem.

As we get into the habit of seeing this deeper truth when we are bothered by other people, we will live with tranquility because we will see the guiding hand of Hashem in everything that happens to us. Instead of blaming our friend as the root cause of that discomfort, we will remember that this has nothing to do with him.

10. Chullin 7b.

When it seems like the friend is choosing to harm us, it is very hard to see any good in the experience. But once we bring Hashem into the picture, the pain itself can be greatly reduced, as we work to internalize that everything Hashem does is for our absolute best.¹¹

By sending another person to harm us, Hashem is challenging us to muster the strength to respond with *emunah*, to see beneath the surface and look Heavenward, understanding that everything that happens to us is from Hashem and only from Hashem, and is purely for our good. This is the way to maintain Ahavas Yisroel even towards someone who causes you pain.

11. Of course, fully internalizing that everything that Hashem does is for our good is not a level we will fully achieve overnight, but it is a level we can work towards, one step at a time. The way to proactively work on this is that whenever your friend causes you any kind of pain, whether intentionally or unintentionally, take a moment to remember, and even better – to say out loud: *“Everything is from Hashem and for my own good.”* *“What happened here has nothing to do with my friend, it is entirely from Hashem.”*

Slowly, over time, you will see how your perspective changes, and how your ‘*emunah* response’ becomes your natural reaction to things that happen to you. Every time you proactively work on bringing Hashem into the picture and remember that your friend was nothing more than a messenger, it gets easier and easier to do it again the next time.

On an even deeper level, you can get to a place where you are not only refraining from blaming your friend for something bad that happened to you, but because he is a messenger of Hashem and Hashem only does things that are for your own good, you can feel that what your friend did to you was actually a great thing! When you internalize that Hashem sent this to you because it is good for you, your perspective flips and you can start to see your friend as a messenger for good.

When You See a Yid Who Isn't Observing Mitzvos Properly

Another obstacle to Ahavas Yisroel is when a Yid who loves Hashem and is dedicated to Yiddishkeit sees another Jew who does not observe Mitzvos properly. This often brings feelings of distance between them.

One must be careful not to become influenced by a Yid who doesn't observe Mitzvos properly, but that does not mean you cannot fully love that Yid! A *Chaver Ra*, a bad friend, that one must keep away from is not defined by 'how many *aveiros* he did' but rather by whether there is a possibility that his behavior will influence you and lead you away from Torah and Mitzvos. If, for whatever reason, there is a possibility that you will learn from his negative behavior, you are required to keep a distance from him so as not to risk his influence leading you away from your Yiddishkeit.

But even if that is the case, and you must keep a distance from him,¹² that is only on the *chitzoneus*, a very surface and technical level, so as not to be influenced negatively. But

12. There are some circumstances where Halacha requires one to stand up for the honor of Hashem and protest against sin when he sees it. When required to do so, one should not avoid this responsibility because of a concern that it may diminish *achdus*. *Achdus* comes from the presence of Hashem resting on the Jewish people and *aveiros* chase away the Divine presence! Therefore, protesting sin to help prevent it can actually lead to more *Shechina*, and more *Achdus*, not less.

If one is required to protest, he needs to be exceedingly careful not to allow it to lead to disputes or hatred. A protest is a very technical exercise that expresses that you are not sitting in quiet agreement with certain *aveiros* that are taking place, but rather you are standing up for the honor of Hashem.

in your heart, you should love and feel connected to every single Yid!

If your loved one becomes sick, G-d forbid, you would do everything you can to take care of them. If their sickness is contagious and the doctor orders you to keep a distance, would you stop loving and caring for them? Of course not! You keep a physical distance so as not to become sick, and you continue to love and care for them in every way you can!

The same idea applies here. If another Yid's negative behavior is likely to influence us, Hashem wants us to keep a distance, but we undoubtedly must continue to love and care for them in every way we can!

We can develop and express our love to such a Yid by thinking good thoughts about them and by putting in the effort to judge them favorably and to always give them the benefit of the doubt. We are all in a difficult *galus* and there are so many things a Yid can be going through that could lead to their spiritual shortcomings. We have no idea what our fellow Yid is dealing with in the recesses of his heart and what kind of challenges he has.

If we truly knew what our fellow Yid was going through, instead of focusing on their spiritual shortcomings we would be impressed by their strength, how they continue to work hard on connecting to Hashem, despite great challenges and circumstances that make it so difficult for them. If we occasionally see them making a mistake, it is not, G-d forbid, intentional, but rather it came from the confusion and trickery of the *yetzer hara* or from a lack of knowledge.

Think about how much **you** seek closeness with Hashem with your heart and soul and realize that this Yid certainly does too! If that inner desire doesn't seem to be reflected by their actions, that just means their true essence is being concealed, but not that it isn't there. In the end, this Yid will certainly do Teshuva, and when they do, every *aveirah* will be transformed into a Mitzvah and they will reach unbelievable spiritual levels!

The underlying message here is that we should look at every Jew with a good eye and understand that even if his actions are bad, he is not bad. **We can hate the bad actions while loving the pure *neshama* of every Yid, understanding that every *neshama* seeks nothing other than closeness with Hashem.**

Being Respectful of Other People's Pathway in Avodas Hashem

If we can love our fellow Jew and look at them with a good eye even if they are doing *aveiros*, all the more so we should do the same for another Jew who isn't sinning but is simply serving Hashem in a different way. We should put effort to honor and respect them and remember that “*eilu v'eilu divrei elokim chaim*, both this way and that way are the words of the living G-d.”

Even if you are certain that his pathway is not the correct one, it is important to love and respect him, and G-d forbid,

not to shame or humiliate him,¹³ because he is certainly following his path with good intentions to serve Hashem in the right way.

Although we should always follow the correct path of Avodas Hashem, as we received from our teachers and Tzadikim, we must be careful not to feel separated from another Jew to whom Hashem gave another pathway.

Every Yid is a part of one collective soul and everyone just wants to fulfill their unique role of being a vessel to reveal the light of Hashem in this world.

13. Although we know how terrible *machlokes* is, the *yetzer hara* tries to convince us that we need to argue and fight against people who have a different pathway of Avodas Hashem and that this is considered a *machlokes l'shem shamayim*, a dispute for the sake of Heaven.

A *machlokes l'shem shamayim* is a dispute that does not lead to hatred or disrespect for the other person. An example of this was the disputes between Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel. But if the dispute leads to feelings of distance from one another, that is not considered a *machlokes l'shem shamayim*. Therefore, a true *machlokes l'shem shamayim* can only take place from a place of peace and calmness and not out of anger and emotion.

As long as the other Yid's way of Avodas Hashem follows the path of Torah and Mitzvos, we must respect their pathway, even if we think it is mistaken. We certainly must not speak negatively about their way of Avodas Hashem or, G-d forbid, consider them a heretic who is trying to intentionally defy the word of Hashem. They must be considered to be motivated by good intentions in following the pathway that they know to serve Hashem and by a desire to serve Hashem properly!

Glossary of Hebrew Terms

Only terms that are not immediately translated in the book are listed here.

Achdus – Jewish unity

Ahavas Yisroel – Love for our fellow Jew

Arizal – The name of a great Kabbalist

Aveirah (pl. Aveiros) – Sin / sins

Chazal – Our early sages of blessed memory

Chelek Elokal Mimaal Mamash – A part of Hashem Himself

Deveikus – A sense of attachment to Hashem

Ein Od Milvado – There is none other than Hashem

Emunah – Faith

Galus – Exile

Halacha – Jewish law

Hashem – God

Klal Yisroel – The Jewish people

Machlokes – Dispute

Mitzvah – Commandment

Neshama – The soul of a Jew

Seforim – Torah books

Shechina – Divine Presence

Tzadik (pl. Tzadikim) – Righteous one(s); usually a reference to a great Torah scholar

Yid / Yidden – Jew / Jews

Yiddishkeit – Judaism

Yetzer Hara – Evil inclination



לעילוי נשמת

יוסף משה בן פינחס הלוי ז"ל
שמואל בנימין בן פינחס הלוי ז"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

