

Project Likkutei Sichos  
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# Ahavas Yisrael

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"Love your neighbor as yourself," in Parshas Kedoshim it is written,  
What bothers Rashi to compel him to give an explanation?  
"Rabbi Akiva says, it is a great principle of the Torah," says Rashi,  
To quote the author, why is it necessary?

Why doesn't Rashi quote Hillel, who says this idea a bit differently?  
Since he came before Rabbi Akiva in history.  
"What is hateful to you to your friend do not do,  
This is the entire Torah, the rest is commentary," for me and you.

To explain the simple meaning of the verse is Rashi's task,  
He is answering a basic question that a five year old student would ask.  
Once the Torah commands us to love every Jew, why is it necessary,  
For the Torah to state prohibitions, like robbery and taking revenge, separately?

Ahavas Yisrael is an encompassing teaching, Rashi does state,  
It has many details spread out all over the Torah because it is a principle so great.  
This answer is also the key,  
To answer another question that is as puzzling as can be.

How can one be commanded to love another exactly,  
In the same way that he loves himself or his family?  
From Rashi we learn that Ahavas Yisrael is a general principle that is carried out,  
By performing many detailed acts that reflect love without a doubt.

This also explains why the warning of "You shall fear your G-d," is not included,  
Because in other Mitzvos that require feelings, it is already stated.  
All the Mitzvos between man and man are connected,  
We can apply things from Mitzvos that are related.

All is said and good,  
But the literal explanation of אהבה must be understood.  
"Your life takes precedence," is Rabbi Akiva's opinion,  
Therefore it is necessary to include his name in the explanation.

How about 99% of the time, when no one's life is at stake, is it true,  
That like myself, I can love another Jew?  
Rabbi Akiva's name reminds us of another statement that he did share,  
"Cherished are the Jewish people because they are all Hashem's children," so dear.

When we don't judge a book by its cover,  
And the Neshama of a Yid we uncover,  
The preciousness of every Jew we discover,  
We can love every Jew because every Jew is our brother!

Another question comes to mind,  
Why is it that in Parshas Kedoshim for the first time we find,  
The Mitzvah of Ahavas Yisrael written in the Torah,  
The answer is found in another teaching of Rabbi Akiva.

"At Sinai, Hashem did relate,  
The principles and the details of the Torah so great,"  
Although here for the first time this Mitzvah we are seeing,  
It was already discussed in the tent of meeting!

Rashi's words are so precise,  
He doesn't mention the author just to be nice.  
We learned three reasons for why Rabbi Akiva's name, Rashi does use,  
And 3 reasons for why the words "Torah is a great principle," Rashi does choose.

From the wine of Torah's view,  
Both the words of Hillel and of Rabbi Akiva are true.  
In order to understand how this is so,  
To another teaching of Hillel we will go.

"Be of the disciples of Aharon, loving peace.." says the Mishna,  
"Loving created beings and drawing them close to the Torah."  
When you love a Jew you help them both spiritually and physically,  
So why does the Mishna connect the love to Torah only?

A person might think that in order to have Ahavas Yisrael it might be wise,  
For the Torah to compromise,  
Therefore the Mishna is clear, and tells us to beware,  
To the Torah we must bring people near.

This leads to a different interpretation,  
Perhaps Ahavas Yisrael has an ulterior motivation.  
We should display thick cords of love,  
In order to get a Yid to serve the One above.

But Ahavas Yisrael doesn't have an ulterior motive or goal,  
A Jew is loved because he possesses a Jewish soul.  
If we love Jews unconditionally,  
Then why is Ahavas Yisrael associated with Torah study?

Yidden are superior to Torah, our sages explain,  
At their source they are united in the heavenly plane.  
At this level the love is expressed to all Jews equally,  
And encompasses all their needs, both spiritually and physically.

The opposite perspective the Zohar does share,  
He looks at the soul once it descends down here.  
The Zohar says that the Yidden connect themselves to the Torah so true,  
And then the Torah connects them to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Hillel looks through the sages lens,  
Above Torah our bond with Hashem transcends,  
When we realize the great quality of ourselves and every Jew,  
To transform ourselves and others is what we want to do!

The purpose of the Torah is to reveal that which is hidden,  
The Mitzvah of Ahavas Yisrael reveals the preciousness of the Yidden.  
Hillel says, "Ahavas Yisrael is the entire Torah and the rest is commentary,  
Because from his perspective the Yidden precede Torah and are the priority.

Rabbi Akiva shares the Zohar's perspective, Torah is the key,  
When we follow its guidelines it connects us to Hashem so strongly.  
Therefore, he calls Ahavas Yisrael a great principle of the Torah,  
Because we are limited to doing only what is permissible according to Halacha.

