

## Sicha Summary, Likkutei Sichos Vol. 21, Shemos 3

"Yisroel is my son, my firstborn" - referring to greatness (4:22 cf, Rashi): "For Yisroel is a child and I love him" - Bnei Yisroel are small children. Siyum Trate Berachot. (5742)

The first time the Jewish people are referred to as "G-d's children" is in the Torah portion of Shmos, where the verse states: "Israel is My son, My firstborn." The term "firstborn," as Rashi explains, denotes maturity. In many other instances, however, we find that Jews are considered G-d's children because of their extreme youthfulness. Thus we find the verse, "For Israel is but a lad and therefore I love him." This is further explained by our Sages, who offer the parable of a king who had many children, but loved the youngest most of all. Since the love for a young child is more palpable than the love for an older one, why does the verse in Shmos imply that Jews are older children?

What, exactly, causes a parent to manifest a greater degree of love for a young child than for an older one? An older child, who has already matured intellectually and emotionally, will not always be loved by his parents merely because he is their child. The parents may also come to love the older child because of his wisdom or fine character. This kind of love is grounded in logic. The love of a parent for a very young child, however, is an elemental love - one that transcends reason - since an extremely young child does not display any particular qualities for which he should be loved; the love that emanates from parents to young children derives entirely from the fact that the parents and the child are essentially one.

The love for a grown child, although also an essential love, is intermingled with feelings that have a basis in logic. This logical foundation conceals the elemental love between parent and child. Just as this is so regarding the love of human parents, so too with regard to G-d's love for His children, the Jewish people. Here too, there exist two manners and degrees: When Jews serve G-d and thus reveal their sterling qualities, His ever-present love for us is mingled with a love dictated by logic - similar to the love felt by parents for an older child. However, G-d also shows His elemental love for the Jewish people - a love that springs from the fact that every Jew is "truly a part of G-d above." This love - similar to that felt by parents for a very small child - does not depend at all on the quality of the Jews' spiritual service.

This elemental love is revealed when Jews serve G-d in the manner of a small child; when they feel small and humble in G-d's presence, and obey Him as a small child obeys his parents - out of a sense of inherent loyalty, even when they fail to understand G-d's reasoning. This, however, does not mean to imply that when Jews serve G-d intellectually and emotionally His intrinsic love for them is not revealed, for a Jew's intellectual and spiritual state is intricately connected to his degree of self-nullification. A Jew realizes the necessity of intellectual toil to understand Torah, and that his emotions must be permeated with enjoyment of Torah and

mitzvos. This realization is a direct result of the fact that such enjoyment is G-d's desire. The reason the verse states "Israel is My son, My firstborn" will be understood accordingly: When seeking to indicate G-d's essential love for the Jewish people in and of itself, the metaphor used is that of a very small child, for in that instance the elemental love is felt naturally. When, however, one seeks to convey the essential qualities of the Jewish people, then the term "Israel is My son, My firstborn" is used, for it indicates that the Jews' essentially childlike nature permeates even their intellect and emotions.

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