



## **Sicha Summary**

Chelek 17 | Kedoshim | Sichah 2

### **The Verse:**

“You shall love your fellow as yourself.”

### **The Rashi:**

*You shall love your fellow as yourself* — Rabbi Akiva says: This is a fundamental principle of the Torah.

### **The Question:**

What difficulty in the plain meaning of the verse does Rashi address by quoting Rabbi Akiva’s statement?

### **The Explanation:**

Upon reading the command to love your fellow as yourself, a person may wonder why the Torah found it necessary to specify so many commands about interpersonal relationships. If a person was to simply love his fellow as himself, surely he would have fulfilled those dozens of interpersonal *mitzvos* de facto!

Rashi thus explains that this *mitzvah* is a “fundamental principle of the Torah,” meaning, it is an all-inclusive principle of Torah that includes within it numerous details. Because it is standard practice for the Torah to record both a general principle and its details, therefore, this all-inclusive principle was commanded as well.

### **The Fundamental Question:**

A more fundamental question that Rashi must address is: How can the Torah command a person to have a certain emotional response — love — toward someone else? And not just generic love, but love “as yourself”!

By explaining that this *mitzvah* is a fundamental principle that includes many details, Rashi clarifies that this *mitzvah* is fulfilled by performing the action-oriented details. The “love” commanded by the verse is one that can be expressed through specific actions — the details inherent in the general principle.

Furthermore, by citing the author of the statement — Rabbi Akiva — Rashi alludes to another position maintained by Rabbi Akiva that enables a person to love every Jew like himself: “The Jewish people are cherished, for they are called ‘children of G-d.’” (*Avos* 3:14) If a person meditates on the fact that every Jew is his brother or sister, a fellow child of G-d, then it will be possible to truly love every Jew.

### **The Deeper Dimension:**

Hillel famously said that the *mitzvah* of loving your fellow as yourself “is the entire Torah.” (*Shabbos* 31a) How can we reconcile these two statements? Is this *mitzvah* merely a “fundamental principle” as Rabbi Akiva said, or is it “the entire Torah?”

The soul of a Jew is primordially connected to G-d, without any intermediary. In its essential state, the Jew and G-d are one. But once the soul is vested in a body and dwells in this created world, the dynamics shift. G-d’s Torah becomes the medium for the soul’s essential bond with G-d to be revealed. The soul can only fully express its fundamental oneness with G-d by fusing itself with the Torah’s wisdom and commands. However, because the soul is innately one with G-d, and the way this oneness is expressed in this world is through Torah, therefore, it is axiomatic that every soul will, eventually, connect to Torah and *mitzvos*, revealing its essential, irrevocable bond with God.

This distinction has implications for how a person is to view a fellow Jew. When we look at another Jew from the perspective of his essential state, every Jew must be loved without reservation, regardless of his attachment to Torah. But viewed through the lens of the created reality, love of another

Jew is somewhat contingent on his attachment to Torah — for that is how his soul will fully express its connection with G-d and his fellow Jews.

Hillel speaks from the perspective of the essential root of the soul, whereby it is connected to G-d directly, unmediated even by Torah. Loving a Jew is, therefore, “the entire Torah,” there is nothing in Torah that can intervene in this love, for the Jewish soul and G-d are one. Rabbi Akiva speaks from the perspective of the embodied soul. From this perspective, love of another Jew is indeed a fundamental principle, but it does not supersede the limitations of Torah itself. This love must conform to the Torah’s commands, because by encouraging the soul to fulfill *mitzvos*, the Jew’s essential bond with G-d will be revealed, even within this world.

Even Hillel alludes to this in another of his statements: “Love the creatures and draw them close to Torah.” (*Avos* 1:12) Loving a fellow Jew in this world means not compromising on the Torah, but rather, drawing the person close to Torah. Doing so is the greatest act of love, for it allows the soul to reveal its true identity — its unity with G-d.