

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 103

Acharei Mot - Kedoshim | Attaining True Ahavat Israel



MESILLOT

Pathways to the Soul

illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parashat Acharei-Mot - Kedoshim

How Did He So Such A Thing?

Hysterical knocks were heard at the door of the rabbi's room. His assistant quickly opened the door. A distraught Jew entered the room.

"Rabbi!" he shouted in a panic, "I saw the *shochet* eat on Yom Kippur!"

The rabbi gave him a stern look, "You saw him? With your own eyes?"

"Truthfully," he stammered, "I personally didn't see him, but Moshe, the locksmith, did! He's the one that told me."

"Okay," said the rabbi, "Bring Moshe here."

Moshe arrived, and the rabbi asked him, "Did you see the *shochet* eating on Yom Kippur?"

"Truthfully," he cleared his throat, "it wasn't on Yom Kippur, it was on Tisha B'Av."

The rabbi gave him a stern look, "You saw him? With your own eyes?"

"Truthfully," Moshe apologized, "I personally didn't see him, but Yossi, the shoemaker, did! He's the one that told me."

"Okay," said the rabbi, "Bring Yossi here."

Yossi arrived and stood before the rabbi. "Yossi! Did you see the *shochet* eating on Tisha B'Av?" asked the rabbi.

"On Tisha B'Av?!" Yossi shouted, "*Chas v'shalom!* It was on the fast of Gedaliah."

The rabbi gave him a stern look, "You saw him? With your own eyes?"

"Truthfully," Yossi stuttered, "I personally didn't see him, but Itzchak the wagon driver did! He's the one that told me."

The rabbi sighed and said, "Bring Itzchak here."

Itzchak arrived. "Itzchak! Did you see the *shochet* eating on the fast of Gedaliah?"

"No, it was during the fast of ב"הב (Behab – a series of fasts after the holidays)."

The rabbi gave him a stern look, "You saw him? With your own eyes?"

"Truthfully, said Itzchak, "I personally didn't see him, but Shlomi, the storekeeper did! He's the one that told me."

"What's the deal with you guys!? Bring Shlomi here."

Shlomi arrived. "Shlomi! Did you see the *shochet* eating during the fast of Behab?"

"No, it was a few days ago. I saw him eating before shacharit!"

The rabbi gave him a stern look, "You saw him? With your own eyes?"

"No rabbi, but I saw him laughing before prayer. And let's be serious rabbi, who can laugh before they eat..."

Truthfully, even when you see with your own eyes, you have to understand what you're seeing...

See the Truth

We have no words to describe the greatness of the holy tzaddik, Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin zt"l.

He was a descendant of the royal house of David and conducted himself like royalty. His house was as magnificent as a royal palace, and his chariot was studded with gold and drawn by knightly horses.

All the tzaddikim of his generation accepted his authority, and even the *Gedolei HaDor* of his generation stood in awe before him. Rebbe Chaim of Sanz and the Chiddushei HaRim of Gur zt"l once traveled to visit him, saying, "We're entering the Holy of Holies."

The Rebbe of Ruzhin conducted himself with royal

splendor, and after he passed away, his holy sons continued in his path. But then the storm arose...

People argued that the father is greater than his sons. What was allowed for the father, isn't allowed for the sons. They claimed that this was a dangerous road and that it was only a temporary measure. It was a novel path and shouldn't be imitated. "The path entrusted to us by our ancestors is that of simplicity and humility, of Torah and *avodah*, and nothing else."

As usual, wherever it's said, "And the sons of Elokim came to attend before Hashem" (Iyov 1:6), it's also said, "and the *satan* also came among them" (ibid.). People began slandering and spreading rumors...

They said that in Sadigura, the home of the Rebbe of Ruzhin's son, Rebbe Avraham Yaakov, the women ride horses and go to Paris to keep up with the latest fashions... They said that the chassidim of Sadigura curl their *peyot* in front of the mirror... The *machloket* (disagreement) was for the sake of heaven...

The ravaging fire spread as far as Shinova to the residing place of the tzaddik, Rebbe Yechezkel Shraga Halberstam zt"l, the eldest son of the Divrei Chaim of Sanz. The masses gathered in the Beit Midrash to discuss the matter. It was hard to remain calm in the face of things. Not taking a stand was also interpreted as consent. Moreover, the Shinover Rebbe was known as a fearless, zealous warrior in Hashem's battles.

But before considering his stance, he wanted to verify the rumors. He summoned three faithful chassidim to his room and charged them with a secret mission... To travel covertly to Sadigura, conduct a preliminary reconnaissance, and report back.

The messengers, or more precisely, the spies, arrived in Sadigura in the very early hours of the morning, in the month of Elul, during *selichot*. After their long journey, they rented a room in an inn and instantly fell asleep.

When they woke up, the sun had already risen. The trio arose perplexed, "When do they recite

selichot here? After midnight, as is customary in some places, or before dawn? If so, we missed it. But maybe they delay saying *selichot* here due to their preparations and intentions? But we can't ask the chassidim, for they might discover that we're strangers who've come on reconnaissance!"

The three decided to take their tallit and tefillin bag and go to the Rebbe's Beit Midrash. But the same fear struck them again, "Maybe we'll show up at the Beit Midrash after they've already finished praying! And maybe it's still too early! Either way, they'll know we were sent from the opponent's side!"

With an anxious heart, they decided to go around the back of the Beit Midrash and look through the windows. If they see that the Beit Midrash is empty, it's a sign that they've already finished praying. If the chassidim are sitting and studying, they haven't yet said *selichot*. If they're walking around, immersed in their thoughts and with a tallit on their shoulders,

they're preparing for prayer. If they're praying without a tallit, they're currently saying *selichot*. If they're wearing a tallit and tefillin, they're in the middle of shacharit...

They walked slowly, trembling, lest they be caught. They reached the back of the Beit Midrash, stood on their toes, looked inside, and were horrified. Dozens of gentile rural girls stood in the center of the Beit Midrash, holding hands and dancing in a big circle!

They quickly averted their eyes from the sacrilege spectacle. They looked at each other and nodded in agreement, "We've finished our mission! What more is there to investigate after what we saw?!"

They immediately slipped away and returned to the inn, shocked. They prayed quickly, alone, for would it be permissible to add a Sadigura chassid to a minyan...? They then hastened to return to Shinova to appear before their Rebbe and give him a faithful testimony, "We did what you requested of us. The terrible suspicions are in fact true!"

The Rebbe listened to their words seriously. He didn't doubt the credibility of the witnesses. He only asked of them, "Don't tell anyone anything for three days." The chassidim promised, and wondered, "What's hidden behind the Rebbe's request? What's the Rebbe going to do in the next three days?"

Three days later, the three witnesses were called to the Rebbe. They saw two weary chassidim wearing dusty clothes standing in his room. The Rebbe then turned to the two chassidim and said to them, "Let's hear what you have to say."

The two then told, "We went to Sadigura, as our Rebbe commanded. We investigated and found that they say *selichot* at dawn. We went before dawn and found the magnificent Beit Midrash engulfed in a multitude of lights emanating from the candles in the chandeliers. It was crowded with many chassidim saying *selichot* together. We made our way to the *mizrach* but didn't see the Rebbe. He said *selichot* in a side room. Only when they said

"*Anneinu*" did the Rebbe come out of his room with calculated steps and majesty. His face was pale. He approached the platform and began to say "*Anneinu*" word for word. Everyone present began crying, their hearts melted!

They finished saying *selichot*. The Rebbe returned to his room, and the large crowd dispersed. We asked why they were leaving the Beit Midrash, and they told us that the Rebbe was now beginning his holy preparations for prayer, and everyone would pray with him later.

Because the polished wooden floor of the Beit Midrash got dirty from the multitude of muddy boots, and since they're meticulous about cleanliness and royalty in Sadigura, the Beit Midrash had to be cleaned.

We also left with the chassidim, and while they were preparing for prayer, we went around the back of the Beit Midrash and looked in through the window. We saw several dozen maids moving aside the benches, cleaning the dust and mud, and waxing the floor. Then they had to scrub and polish the

wood until it had a shine. But since the Beit Midrash was large and time was pressing, they wrapped their feet in cloths, made a large circle, and started stomping the floor with their feet until it shined...”

The Rebbe interrupted the two men and turned to the three stunned chassidim, “Yes, that was the “sacrilege spectacle” you saw ! It’s not enough to see, you have to also understand what you see !”¹

The Hideout

The Gemara says² that after the destruction of the Second Temple, there was a Beit Midrash in the city of Yavne, where the sages sat in rows like a vineyard, and therefore, it was called “The Vineyard in Yavne.”

One day, a question was asked before the sages sitting there, Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai, Rabbi Elazar bar Rabbi Yossi, and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

The three sages answered differently. The first who was given the right to speak was Rabbi Yehuda. The Gemara says that this was because Rabbi Yehuda bar Rabbi Ilai was the head of the speakers in every place.

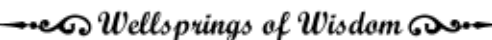
In order for us to understand why he was the head of the speakers, the Gemara tells us the following story...

Following the Romans’ war against the Jews, the Land of Israel was completely destroyed.

After several years, during the time of the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius, the Romans decided it was time to restore the ruins of Eretz Israel.

Eretz Israel finally began to be settled once again... One day, the sages sat and talked among themselves about the actions of the Romans.

Rabbi Yehuda opened and said, “How pleasant are the



1. Maayan HaShavua (Vayikra, p. 310).

2. Shabbat 33b.

actions of this nation (the Romans) as they established marketplaces, bridges, and bathhouses.”

Rabbi Yossi, on the other hand, remained silent.

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai answered and said, “You’re praising them? These wicked people?! They destroyed Eretz Israel by means of cruelty for their own personal pleasure! The same is true for what they did now, it’s all for their own purposes.

They established marketplaces to place harlots in them. Bathhouses to pamper themselves. Bridges to collect tolls. One whose actions derive only from personal interest is a beast, *a jungle animal*!

Yehuda ben Gerim (who was there at the time) went and told his family about the discussion that took place...

The sages’ words rolled like thunder on a clear day. They crossed mountains and cities until they reached the ears of Antoninus Pius, the Roman emperor...

His ears trembled with rage. His shrieks erupted from under

his red nose and shook the four walls of the palace... “Shimon, who condemned, shall be killed!!!”

His servant approached him and said quietly, “My lord, the king. There were also those who spoke well of us...”

“**Oh**, right, I didn’t pay attention. Well, then this is how I rule... Yehuda, who elevated the Roman regime, shall be elevated and appointed as head of the Sages, the head of the speakers in every place! Yossi who kept quiet, shall be exiled to the city of Tzippori. Shimon who condemned the Roman regime, shall be killed.”

The decree was written and signed. One of the horsemen set off on a white horse... In the meantime, Rabbi Shimon learned of the decree. He turned to his wife and said, “I’m being pursued. I’m fleeing to the Beit Midrash.”

His son, Rabbi Elazar, yelled, “I’m coming with you!”

Rabbi Shimon’s wife would go to the Beit Midrash every day and bring them bread and water.

The Roman's search failed... A letter then arrived at the palace and was handed to Antoninus Pius... "Our lord, the king. We didn't find him!"

Antoninus Pius was shaking with anger, "I'm still offended by his words, for he revealed to everyone that I'm selfish and egotistical. I want him dead!"

The search for Rabbi Shimon intensified!

Rabbi Shimon turned to his son and said, "The search for us has intensified. I'm afraid they'll put pressure on your mother, and she won't be able to withstand it and thus reveal our location. Let's get out of here..."

They went and hid in a cave. Hashem then performed a miracle for them, creating a carob tree and a spring of water next to the cave.

The Gemara describes their life in the cave as follows...

They removed their clothes so they wouldn't wear out quickly, dug two holes, and sat covered in sand up to their necks so that they

could learn Torah, for it's forbidden to learn Torah in lack of modesty.

They learned Torah all day in that manner, and only when it was time to pray would they get out of the sand, get dressed, and pray, and after the prayer, they would remove their clothes again so that they wouldn't wither.

The sand of the cave then began to eat their flesh...

Thus, twelve years passed!

Then, after twelve long years, in the year 3923 from the creation of the world, Antoninus Pius died, and his decree was annulled.

Eliyahu HaNavi came and told them, "He's dead! You can come out!"

Rabbi Shimon and his son got up, shook themselves off, got dressed, and left. Warm yellow sun rays and a clear blue sky greeted them...

They started to walk towards their house, when suddenly, before their eyes, stood a group of laborers working the soil...

They were shocked, “What ? ! How do they have time to work ? Abandoning eternal life (learning Torah) and engaging in temporal life (acquiring a livelihood) ? !”

As a result of their stern gaze, a fierce firestorm suddenly began to rage in the field...

A Divine Voice then emerged and said, “Did you leave the cave to destroy My world ? ! Return to your cave !”

They turned around, went back to the cave, removed their clothes, and covered themselves with sand...

They sat in the cave for another twelve months. Then they said to themselves, “The suffering of staying in this cave is the same suffering of *gehinom* ! The judgment of the wicked in *gehinom* lasts for twelve months, and we were also in *gehinom* for twelve months. Surely the sin we committed has been atoned...”

A Divine Voice called out, saying, “Emerge from your cave !”

They left... On their way home, they again encountered a group of

laborers working the soil...

Everything Rabbi Elazar looked at sternly, would be immediately burned. But this time, his father, Rabbi Shimon, would repair the damages, and with the power of his gaze, he would restore the situation to its former state.

Rabbi Shimon turned to his son and said, “My son, it suffices for the entire world that you and I engage in Torah study alone. Let the rest of humanity be. Let them engage in their livelihood as well...”

There’s a continuation to this story, but we’ll stop here...

Let’s summarize...

The reason that the Gemara calls Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai the head of the speakers in every place is because that’s what Antoninus Pius, the Roman emperor, decreed...

But surely, the Jewish sages didn’t consider his impure words. However, they knew that this was truly the will of Hashem. But why ?

Before we answer, we’ll have to go back to the beginning...

Twelve Sons – Twelve Powers

When Yaakov Avinu was 84 years old, he married Rachel and Leah, and later also Bilha and Zilpa. Within seven years, he had eleven sons and an only daughter, Dina. His eleventh son, Yosef, was born to him at the age of 91, and his twelfth son, Binyamin, was born after that at the age of 98.

Every child is a world unto themselves. Every child has their own strengths and inclinations. Every child hears and absorbs according to their ability.

However, regarding the sons of Yaakov Avinu, the difference was much more prominent. Each of them was so incredibly unique, to an extent that, today, we simply cannot grasp!

We found a short description of them by Rabbi Gershon

Ashkenazi zt”l (1618-1693), who wrote as follows...³

All of Yaakov’s sons possessed immense perfection, however, each one had an individual *avodah*, according to their supernal source.

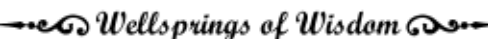
Reuven’s power was the power of sight. Shimon, the power of hearing. Levi, purity of thought and mind. His thoughts were constantly bonded with the greatness and exaltation of Hashem. (The secret of the Leviim is perpetual attachment to Hashem). Yehuda, sanctity of speech.

Dan, innocence. Naftali, trust in Hashem. Gad, compassion for others. Asher, joyfully giving in abundance. Issachar, the power of persistence. Zevulun, love for the Torah. Binyamin, giving over one’s heart to Hashem. Yosef, sanctity of the *brit* to its perfection.

Yosef – A Hidden Tzaddik

Yaakov Avinu was blessed with holy children. His holy sons walked in his holy

ways and served their Creator progressively and properly. Their *avodah* was methodical, and



3. Avodat HaGershoni (Parashat Shemot).

their righteousness was evident in all their actions – their inner and outer selves elevated simultaneously.

However, Yaakov Avinu had one son who walked a different path. The path of concealing one's righteousness under a disguise...

Yosef lived in two different dimensions at the same time. His inner dimension was a world full of yearning and longing for Hashem, laden with immense holiness and purity. As for his external dimension, it appeared to be the opposite. Yosef wore lavish clothes, and would comb his hair to beautify himself.

Yosef HaTzaddik possessed rare powers. The Torah reveals to us that one of the powers he possessed was the power of concealment. Therefore, he managed to work as a hidden tzaddik, to hide from them in such a way that they wouldn't recognize his righteousness and holiness...

His holy brothers, despite their greatness, couldn't seem to understand him. They would sometimes see him in complete *d'vekut*, his face blazing like an intense fire, and yet, sometimes, they would see him standing in front of the mirror fixing his eyebrows...

After long deliberation, they decided that he was a hypocrite and that his inner self and outer self weren't equivalent, and all his "righteousness" was just a deception...

They told him, "On our level, with the spiritual powers that Hashem has blessed us with, we realize that you have to do teshuva and correct your inner self..."

Yosef listened to their words, nodded, and continued on his way...

But because they saw that he refused to change, they began to hate him in their hearts, as it says, "They hated him, and they couldn't speak peaceably to him!" (Bereshit 37:4)...⁴

Learn from The Best

The concept “*Yeridat HaDorot*” (the decline of the generations) is well known. The difference between the generations is enormous, and all the more so between our generation and the earlier generations. Their inner world was something else entirely. A world of tangible faith, of revelations of feelings of holiness, true joy, peace of mind, *d'vekut*...

And as you go further back, these words lose their meaning... We have no words, not only in speech or writing but even in thought, to define the difference between the inner world of the early generations and our

hollow, empty world (relative to them).

And certainly, we lack the ability to understand the actions of the twelve holy tribes, the origin of all the souls of Am Israel!

Nevertheless, our Torah urges us to try and learn from the greats and bring those teachings into our own inner world.

If, in our own world, we reach such a situation of “They hated him, and they couldn’t speak peaceably to him” (Bereshit 37:4), we must know that we didn’t properly learn the verse in this week’s parasha, parashat Kedoshim...

Ahavat Israel

This week we’ll read two parashot from the Torah. Parashat Acharei Mot and parashat Kedoshim.

There are 80 verses in parashat Acharei Mot, in which we were commanded regarding 28 mitzvot, two positive mitzvot, and 26 mitzvot negative mitzvot.

Parashat Kedoshim has 64 verses in which we were commanded regarding 51 mitzvot, 13 positive mitzvot, and 38 negative mitzvot.

One of the positive mitzvot written in parashat Kedoshim is the mitzvah of *Ahavat Israel* (the 243rd mitzvah of the 613

mitzvot).⁵ Thus Hashem commanded us, “You shall love

your fellow as yourself, I am Hashem” (Vayikra 19:18).

—*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*—

5. The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 243) writes...

The commandment of *Ahavat Israel*: To truly love every Jew, that is, to have compassion for every Jew as well as for their money, just as a person has compassion for themselves as well as for their money, as it says, “You shall love your fellow as yourself” (Vayikra 19:18). And chazal say (Shabbat 31a), “That which is hateful to you, don’t do to another,” and it is said in the Sifra (Kedoshim 4:12): Rabbi Akiva said, “This is a great principal in the Torah” – that is, many mitzvot are dependent upon it. One who loves another Jew as themselves won’t steal from them, won’t commit adultery, won’t deceive them, nor will they harm them in any way. And many more mitzvot are dependent on this, as is known to all who contemplate the matter.

On the topic of having compassion and caring for every Jew, it’s told...

The Rabbi of Meknes, Morocco, Rabbi Raphael Baruch Toledano zt”l, lay ill in bed, burning with fever. The cold weather was having a detrimental effect on his health. The local physician came to examine him and prescribed bed rest, forbidding him to travel on his planned trip...

In the 1950s, the winds of change and secularism affected Morocco’s

Jewish youth, causing grave concern among the rabbis and Rabbi Raphael Baruch Toledano in particular. The “Alliance” schools began in France and extended their tentacles, trapping many of Moroccan Jewry’s youth in their “enlightened” anti-Torah heretical views.

Rabbi Toledano fought an uphill battle against secularism, yet his efforts yielded few results. He decided that the best way to counter the “Alliance” would be to open Talmud Torahs in every community. The G-d-fearing parents would indeed enroll their children in those Torah schools.

Starting in Meknes, he discovered much opposition to his plans. The community leaders were not interested in investing in building new Talmud Torahs.

Dressed in his majestic Dayan robe, Rabbi Toledano went to the community leader’s home. He bent down to the ground and kissed both of his feet. He stood up and sobbed heavily. He pleaded with the shocked community leader, “If you agree to open the Talmud Torah, I will give you half of my portion in the World to Come!” Talmud Torah Em HaBanim was founded in this manner, saving generations of children from being swept up by the winds of secularism.

One day, word arrived that the “Alliance” had opened a school in Oujda, Morocco, near the Algerian border. If

Hate ? Never !

The Gemara says⁶ that Shammai was sitting in his Beit Midrash and

learning Torah when suddenly, a shadow darkened his table.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

only a local Talmud Torah existed, many parents would enroll their children.

Rabbi Toledano promptly contacted the community leaders of Oujda and requested an emergency community meeting. The Rabbi asked his secretary to schedule the long overnight train ride from Meknes to Oujda for Motzaei Shabbat.

However, Rabbi Toledano fell ill that Shabbat, and his physician forbade him from traveling. Ignoring the doctor's orders, the Rabbi weakly asked to be carried to the train. He embarked on a journey of self-sacrifice for the sake of the future of the Jewish youth.

The next challenge then presented itself... The train was packed, and the only place left was on the steps. Not deterred, Rabbi Toledano shivered on the cold stairs until a seat became available.

In the morning, he arrived at his destination. The community leader greeted him and brought him to the emergency meeting. Full of energy, as if he wasn't sick, the Rabbi made a heartfelt plea to open a Talmud Torah. Although the Rabbi's passionate plea had an impression on them, they couldn't agree. Firstly, the Jewish community of Oujda had just suffered from the Anti-Jewish riot of 1948.

Opening a new Talmud Torah was fraught with the danger of being accused of patronage and espionage for Israel.

Secondly, their efforts were focused on helping people make aliyah to the fledgling state of Israel, and it wasn't logical to start building new infrastructures.

The prolonged meeting was paused for breakfast. A generous spread of gourmet food was served. Offering the Rabbi breakfast, he firmly refused by explaining, "I cannot rest or eat until you agree to establish a Talmud Torah." The discussions continued. The community leaders were adamant that there was no chance for a Talmud Torah to be founded. The Rabbi, listening to their refusal, burst into uncontrollable tears.

"Rabbi Toledano, why are you weeping?" they asked. He answered, "Our sages teach us that the words of a G-d-fearing person are accepted by those listening. I realize my fear of Heaven must be lacking. Should I not cry?"

Those in attendance were visibly shaken by the Rabbi's sincerity, and their opposition instantly vanished. They held a vote, and there was a nearly unanimous decision to build the Talmud Torah...

Shammai raised his eyes and saw a gentile standing in front of him, waiting. Shammai asked him, “What do you need?”

“**Rabbi**, I really want to convert, but I don’t have the patience to spend so many years studying. I want to convert on the condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one leg!”

Shammai pointed him to the door...

The gentile didn’t give up. He went to Hillel’s Beit Midrash. He approached Hillel and said, “Rabbi, I want to convert on the condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one leg!”

Hillel responded, “Okay, stand on one leg.”

The gentile lifted one of his legs, and Hillel said to him, “That which is hateful to you, don’t do to another. That’s the entire

Torah. The rest of the Torah is to teach you what things are hateful. Go study so that you’ll know how to fulfill everything.”

In other words, a person must make a genuine effort to avoid causing harm to others, and by the very fact of doing so, it is considered as if they fulfilled the entire Torah.

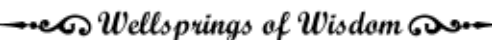
That’s Hillel’s approach.

However, we found more opinions...⁷

“**You** shall love your fellow as yourself” (Vayikra 19:18). Rabbi Akiva says that this is a great principle in the Torah.

Ben Azzai says that “This is the book of the generations of man” (Bereshit 5:1) is a greater principle!

Rabbi Akiva’s opinion is a higher level than that of Hillel’s. Not only is it incumbent upon a person to avoid causing harm to others, but they’re also obligated to truly strive to strengthen their



6. Shabbat 31a.

7. Yerushalmi (Nedarim 9:4).

love for the other and to bestow as much good on them as possible.

Ben Azzai's opinion is a higher level than that of Rabbi Akiva's. If we were to learn the obligation to love from the verse, "You shall love your fellow as yourself," we would think that only when a person is "in the mood," when they love themselves, then they must love their fellow. For thus, the verse says, "You shall love your fellow – as yourself," love your fellow precisely the way you love yourself.

Therefore, at times when a person feels "self-hatred" (that is, when they hate themselves even for a few moments, such as after sinning, *chas v'shalom*, which comes from the side of the *kelipah*), they are exempt from *Ahavat Israel*.

Thus Ben Azzai comes and adds, "This is the book of the generations of man. On the day Elokim created man, He made him

in the likeness of Elokim!" Even during those dark times when a person hates themselves, they must still love their fellow, just as they must still love Hashem!

Even when a person can't fulfill the verse, "You shall love your fellow – as yourself," because the reality of "as yourself" doesn't exist, for their full of bitterness, depression, sadness, and *mochin dekatnut*, nevertheless, they must arouse in their heart love for their fellow!

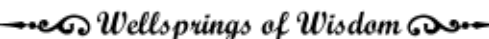
For thus, it says, "This is the book of the generations of man. On the day Elokim created man, He made him in the likeness of Elokim!" Your fellow was created "in the likeness of Elokim," and just as you must always love Him, so too, you must always love your fellow, and in every situation!

And part of loving every Jew is to overlook their shortcomings...

Love Every Jew

Rebbe Yerachmiel Yisrael Yitzchak of Alexander zt"l writes,⁸

"I heard in the name of Rebbe Yosef of Torchin zt"l (the son of the



8. Me'oran Shel Israel (Parashat Kedoshim, Ch. 2).

Chozeh of Lublin), who interpreted the verse, ‘You shall love your fellow as yourself, I am Hashem’ (Vayikra 19:18) as follows...

It’s human nature that when one sees shortcomings in their friend, it’s difficult for them to love them. This is not so regarding Hashem. Even when He sees all the shortcomings of a person, He still loves them !

Hashem wants us to love every Jew just as He loves us.

This is what the Torah commands, “You shall love your fellow.” Love every Jew, truly, and overlook their shortcomings, for “as yourself, I am Hashem.” Just as I, Hashem, love you, even though I see in you far more shortcomings than you see in your friend, nevertheless I love you, so too, you shall love every Jew !⁹

There’s a level of *Ahavat Israel* about which it is said, “A Jew must love the completely wicked just as he loves the completely righteous.”

...*Wellsprings of Wisdom*...

9. As much as Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, the Chafetz Chaim, loved every Jew, his love for the Jewish boys, known as the cantonists, who were forcibly conscripted into the Russian army between the ages of twelve and twenty-five knew no bounds...

They were raised by wicked gentiles who saved no effort in trying to eradicate their connection to Judaism, *chas v’shalom*. The Chafetz Chaim wrote a book called *Machane Israel* for the Jewish soldiers, inspiring and educating them to observe the Torah under the most trying circumstances.

Once, when the Chafetz Chaim was traveling to sell his books, he frequented an inn in Vilna. A coarse Jew was sitting in the dining area, who impatiently

demanded that the waiter quickly fetch roasted duck and a glass of whiskey. When the innkeeper saw the Chafetz Chaim approaching the Jew to rebuke him, he warned, “We know this customer. He’s a regular. What a poor soul. He’s a cantonist who never had a Jewish education. He’s as coarse as they come. Don’t waste your time, he won’t listen to you.”

The Chafetz Chaim nonetheless approached the cantonist full of fatherly love. He smiled and greeted him with a warm “*Shalom Aleichem*” and a firm handshake.

“Is it true that you were conscripted to the Russian army at the young age of twelve ? You were raised amongst the gentiles who terrorized you for being Jewish ! You

However, this level isn't *Ahavat Israel* at its perfection, for there's still a division between the two people, two levels, one righteous and the other the opposite, only that you must love them too. But the Baal Shem Tov taught that *Ahavat Israel* at its perfection is "self-love," exactly "as yourself!" No divisions, no levels, and no calculations.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe once said...¹⁰

Love for every Jew, from the greatest to the smallest, like true siblings, is self-love. It's completely innate and beyond reason (when you don't find any virtues in them) and calculations (not even the calculation

that maybe you'll be able to bring them closer to the Torah and to serve Hashem). This is the meaning of "You shall love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18), exactly as yourself. Just as you love yourself without making any calculations or needing any reasons, which is self-love, and feels completely natural, thus you shall love every Jew.

Am Israel is one body. Although the body has many organs, each one with a different role, they're all still organs of the same body. Since each Jew is part of one body, love for another Jew is love for oneself... And such love doesn't require reasons or calculations. It's

— *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~* —

had no Jewish education? You went through every possible horror. They tried convincing you to give up your faith, they forced you to eat non-kosher foods, and you still proudly identify as a Jew! How I wish my lot in the World to Come would be as meritorious as yours. Your place will be right next to the greatest tzaddikim of all time. Your self-sacrifice for Judaism is no trivial matter..."

The gruff cantonist was moved to tears. He was shaken by the sincere love of the Chafetz Chaim. His fountain of

tears came from a wellspring of purity, awakening his tired soul to repent.

He embraced the Chafetz Chaim, who continued, "A person such as yourself is like the Holy of Holies. Why don't you accept upon yourself to live the rest of your life like a faithful Jew? There will be no happier person in the world!"

Sure enough, he didn't part from the Chafetz Chaim until he became a complete *baal teshuva*.

10. Shaarei Ahavat Israel (p. 324).

self-love! A Jew need not create love for another Jew. The love for another Jew is an intrinsic characteristic of one's soul due to its root in One G-d, and there, all the children of Israel are one reality! It is as natural as love for oneself.

The meaning of true love is true respect. Love doesn't mean suffocating someone with things you think are good for them. Love means cherishing the soul of the one standing in front of you. Love requires supreme sensitivity towards every person, starting with your family and continuing to the whole world. It means rising above our narrow field of vision and learning to love everyone regardless of their background, regardless of education, personality, or temperament...

Filling The Gap

Although the commandment "You shall love your fellow as yourself" seems to imply that the primary aspect of the mitzvah is the feeling of love in one's heart for the

This is the true idea of love...

To appreciate every person no matter who they are, and to help them be the best person they can be. As our sages said,¹¹ "Let sins cease, not sinners." It's not hard to love a person because of something good they did for you. Rather, one must genuinely love every Jew without any conditions!

You don't have to accept another person's opinions or make the same choices as them, and you don't have to raise your children according to their values, but you must, however, accept the person themselves. Even if you reject the philosophy of a certain group of people, don't reject the people...

However, one mustn't be content with only loving...

other, even without doing anything that displays that love, we don't find any *poskim* who ruled that one fulfills their obligation of *Ahavat Israel* just by feeling love alone.

The reason for this is that Hashem's main will from His children, Am Israel, is that they help each other and provide what the other lacks.

It is known that all the souls descended to this world lacking something. There's a person who lacks sustenance, a person who lacks happiness, a person who lacks children, *chas v'shalom*, and another person who lacks health, *chas v'shalom*. Every soul thus walks this world lacking something, whether physical, spiritual, or both...

And it is the will of Hashem, Who commanded us with the mitzvah of "You shall love your fellow," to fulfill the lack of every Jew, whatever that may be, granting them joy and bringing them to their complete *tikkun*.

And like every spiritual matter, there are endless levels of *Ahavat Israel*...

But since we at least need a starting point, we'll bring the

words of Rabbi Pinchas Eliyahu of Vilna zt"l, who listed a few ways in which one needs to fulfill *Ahavat Israel*...¹²

1. To genuinely love the other and not fake it.

2. To always treat the other with respect, for thus it should be, as *chazal* say,¹³ "The honor of your fellow should be to you like the awe of your rabbi."

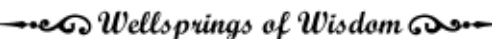
3. To constantly inquire about the well-being of the other, for it is proper for true friends always to be at peace and to inquire of each other's well-being.

4. To share in the other's sorrow as well as in their joy.

5. To receive the other warmly when they visit one's home.

6. To judge the other favorably in all situations.

7. To volunteer and exert oneself to help others, especially in things that don't involve much work.



12. Sefer HaBrit (Maamar 13).

13. Pirkei Avot 4:12.

8. To stand by the other's side when needed, such as when one needs a small loan or any kind of assistance, not to ignore them, for "It is good for a person to be gracious and lend [money to the needy]" (Tehillim 112:5).

9. To not feel superiority over the other in one's heart.

After fulfilling the above, one can then continue climbing...

Now, after we've learned a little about the mitzvah of *Ahavat Israel* and that we mustn't focus on the shortcomings of others, let's return to the holy brothers of the twelve tribes...

Selling Yosef

Yosef HaTzaddik concealed his righteousness from his brothers, which caused them to hate him, and thus it was considered a sin for Yosef.

In addition to that sin, he also spoke *lashon hara* about his brothers, as it says, "Yosef brought back bad reports about them to their father" (Bereshit 37:2).

These two sins caused him to be separated from the tribes.

When Yosef was seventeen, his brothers went out to graze their father's sheep in Shechem and delayed returning. Yaakov

was concerned, so he told Yosef, "Come, and I will send you to them" (Bereshit 37:13). Even though Yosef knew that his brothers hated him, he wanted to fulfill the mitzvah of honoring his father. Thus, he set out...

Finally, after a long search, he saw them from afar and started walking towards them...

His brother, Shimon, saw him approaching. He went to his brothers and said to them, "Here comes the dreamer. Now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits!" (Bereshit 37:19-20).¹⁴

...**Wellsprings of Wisdom**...

14. The Zohar (Acharei Mot 62b) says that the reason that Yosef decide to take

Shimon and not one of his other brothers is that Yosef said to himself,

The holy brothers immediately established a *Beit Din* and sentenced him to death!

Shimon sinned by causing the formation of the *Beit Din*.

Reuven then turned to his brothers and said, “True, Yosef is liable for death, but we shouldn’t kill him with our hands. Instead, let’s throw him alive into a pit, and he’ll die there.”

Ultimately though, Yehuda, who was the leader, said, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let us not put our hands upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh; and his brothers heeded” (Bereshit 37:26-27). The brothers took Yosef out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites...

Yehuda sinned by not saving Yosef entirely.

And all the brothers sinned five sins in general...¹⁵

1. Baseless hatred, as it says, “They hated him, and they couldn’t speak peaceably to him” (Bereshit 37:4).

2. Yosef came to inquire about their well-being, and they wanted to kill him, as it says, “They conspired to kill him” (Bereshit 37:18).

3. They threw him into the pit.

4. They sold him into slavery, him and all his descendants after him.

5. They also shamed him by selling him for twenty shekels.

Following the sale, Yosef disappeared, and his whereabouts were unknown...

And since all the participants in the incident sinned, they had to pay...

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

“Shimon is the opening to judgment, and at that time when I left my father to go visit my brothers, Shimon was the first to open

the judgment.” That’s what’s said, “Here comes the dreamer. Now, let us kill him.”

15. Abarbanel on the Torah (Bereshit 15:12).

Finish the Job

The holy brothers were required to come back in a *gilgul* (reincarnation), as the Zohar says,¹⁶ “The ten elders executed by the [Roman] Empire were the sons of Yaakov. That “accuser” in heaven stood and recited the following verse to Hashem, “One who kidnaps a person and sells them...” (Shemot 22:16). Hashem placed ten bodies [on earth] and inserted the souls [of the sons of Yaakov] within them, and punished them for selling Yosef.”

What exactly happened?

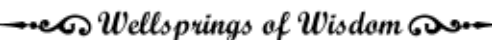
Rabbi Ishmael HaKohen HaGadol reveals in his book...¹⁷

That day was the fifth day of the week when the terrible decree came from Rome ordering, “Seize four great men of Israel... Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha, Rabbi Elazar ben Dama, and Rabbi Yehuda ben Baba. And eighty thousand Torah scholars from

Jerusalem shall be their ransom.”

When Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakana became aware of the decree, he lowered me to the *Merkava* (Divine Chariot), and I questioned (do not say the name of the angel aloud) *Suriel Sar HaPnim* (Minister of Interior). He said to me, “The Beit Din in heaven has decreed for ten men to be handed over to the wicked *samech-mem*, the ministering angel of Esav. They said to him: Go and execute the great men of Israel in order to finish the job and fulfill the verse, “One who kidnaps a person and sells them, if they are found in his hand, they shall be put to death.”

But vengeance is reserved for him (for the *samech-mem*) until “It shall be on that day, that Hashem will punish the heavenly legions on high, and [then] the kings of the land on earth” (Yeshayahu 24:21), for he shall be slaughtered and left lying, he and all the ministers of the kingdoms on high, as goats and lambs on Yom Kippur.”



16. Zohar Chadash (Midrash Rut 109a).

17. Hechalot Rabbati 5:4.

By means of their executions at the hands of the wicked Romans,

the sin of the sale of Yosef was atoned for them, except for three...

The Continuation of The Story...

When Rebbe Yitzchak Meir, the Chiddushei HaRim of Gur zt”l, was studying the incident mentioned in the Gemara about the sages who sat and discussed the sincerity of the deeds of the Romans, he took his quill and wrote...¹⁸

Yehuda was the one that actually saved Yosef from being killed.

Yehuda came back as Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai.

Yosef came back as Rabbi Yossi.

Shimon came back as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

Those sages lived in the generation after the execution of the ten martyrs. Hashem, in His mercy, revealed to me that although the holy brothers received their *tikkun* through the executions of the ten martyrs, the three brothers who were the main participants in the incident of the sale had to return to this world again.

We’ll explain...

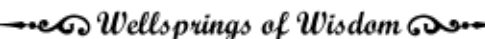
Yehuda had the ability to save Yosef even from being sold since he was the leader among his brothers. But he didn’t save him. That’s why he suffered greatly. His brothers lowered him from his position of greatness, his father Yaakov was angry with him, and his wife and children died...

As mentioned, the three main participants in the sale were, Yosef, Yehuda, and Shimon.

And after his long, arduous “journey,” his soul returned, and he was killed by the wicked Romans...

Yosef caused the sale, Shimon initiated the judgment, and

Now the time had come for him to receive his reward for his



18. Sefer HaZechut (Likutim – Tikkunei HaZohar).

good speech, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?” (Bereshit 37:26). In the merit of this speech, Yosef remained alive!

Thus, Hashem decreed that he would be the head of the speakers in every place! And our holy sages, who knew about the whole chain of events, fulfilled the will of Hashem.

Now, we’ll move on to Yosef...

We’ve already mentioned that Yosef committed two sins. He caused strife between himself and his brothers and spoke *lashon hara* about them. Thus he returned to this world as Rabbi Yossi.

In order to atone for his *lashon hara*, Rabbi Yossi had to be exiled to the city of Tzipori for a *tzippor* (bird) atones for *lashon hara*.¹⁹

And in order to atone for causing strife, Rabbi Yossi accepted upon himself to do whatever his colleagues tell him, as Rabbi Yossi says²⁰ in the Gemara, “I have never transgressed the words of my colleagues. I know I’m not a Kohen, yet, if my colleagues would tell me, ‘Go up to the platform [with the Kohanim],’ I would go up...”

But regarding Shimon, the *tikkun* took longer...

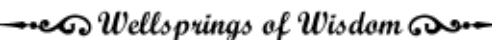
Ahavat Israel At Its Perfection

We mentioned earlier in a footnote that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (Rashbi) said that “Shimon was the opening to judgment,” that is, he was the root of *gevura*, which caused him to sell Yosef.

Now, Shimon bar Yaakov returned as Rabbi Shimon bar

Yochai, and he had to sweeten the *gevura* and draw down kindness and mercy to every Jew.

Since Shimon said to his brothers, “Now, let us kill him,” the Romans sentenced Rashbi to death.



19. Vayikra Rabbah 16:7.

20. Shabbat 118b.

Since Shimon also said, “and throw him into one of the pits,” Rashbi had to bury himself in a pit.

And since, as a result of the sale, Yosef spent twelve years in prison following the plot of Potiphar’s wife, Rashbi had to hide in a cave for twelve years.

Then, twelve years later, Rashbi left the cave, and when he saw a group of people working, he couldn’t accept them. Thus he burned them.

Then a Divine Voice emerged and said, “Did you leave the cave in order to destroy My world? !
Return to your cave !”

Rashbi returned to the cave, where he worked on himself for a whole year to sweeten the *gevura* and to accept others. Then he said, “Truthfully, I shouldn’t

have been in the cave this year, for I only caused Yosef to be in prison for twelve years. But since I failed in sweetening the *gevura*, I was judged in heaven as wicked, and the judgment of the wicked in *gehinom* lasts for twelve months... But now, after an entire year, I have merited sweetening the *gevura* and including myself within *Klal Israel*. Thus, I can leave !

He then received permission to exit !

At that moment, Rashbi merited perfection in his *Ahavat Israel* and found merit in every Jew, whoever they may be... Thus he said,²¹ “I am able to absolve the entire world from judgment.” Therefore, the entire nation of Am Israel is incredibly drawn to his burial site...

Shabbat Shalom !



~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

The Pathway...

1. This week we'll read two parashot from the Torah. Parashat Acharei Mot and parashat Kedoshim. There are 80 verses in parashat Acharei Mot, in which we were commanded regarding 28 mitzvot, two positive mitzvot, and 26 mitzvot negative mitzvot. Parashat Kedoshim has 64 verses in which we were commanded regarding 51 mitzvot, 13 positive mitzvot, and 38 negative mitzvot. One of the positive mitzvot written in parashat Kedoshim is the mitzvah of *Ahavat Israel* (the 243rd mitzvah of the 613 mitzvot). Thus, Hashem commanded us, "You shall love your fellow as yourself, I am Hashem" (Vayikra 19:18).

2. Rebbe Yerachmiel Yisrael Yitzchak of Alexander zt"l writes that Rebbe Yosef of Torchin zt"l interpreted the verse, 'You shall love your fellow as yourself, I am Hashem' (Vayikra 19:18) as follows... It's human nature that when one sees shortcomings in their friend, it's difficult for them to love them. This is not so regarding Hashem. Even when He sees all the shortcomings of a person, He still loves them !

3. Hashem wants us to love every Jew just as He loves us. This is what the Torah commands, "You shall love your fellow." Love every Jew, truly, and overlook their shortcomings, for "as yourself, I am

Hashem." Just as I, Hashem, love you, even though I see in you far more shortcomings than you see in your friend, nevertheless I love you, so too, you shall love every Jew !

4. There's a level of *Ahavat Israel* about which it's said, "A Jew must love the completely wicked just as he loves the completely righteous." However, this level isn't *Ahavat Israel* at its perfection, for there's still a division between the two people, two levels, one righteous and the other the opposite, only that you must love them too. But the Baal Shem Tov taught that *Ahavat Israel* at its perfection is "self-love," exactly "as yourself !" No divisions, no levels, and no calculations.

5. Love for every Jew, from the greatest to the smallest, like true siblings, is self-love. It's completely innate and beyond reason (when you don't find any virtues in them) and calculations (not even the calculation that maybe you'll be able to bring them closer to the Torah and to serve Hashem). This is the meaning of "You shall love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18), exactly as yourself. Just as you love yourself without making any calculations or needing any reasons, which is self-love, and feels completely natural, thus you shall love every Jew.

6. Am Israel is one body. Although the body has many organs, each one

The Pathway...

with a different role, they're all still organs of the same body. Since each Jew is part of one body, love for another Jew is love for oneself... And such love doesn't require reasons or calculations. It's self-love! A Jew need not create love for another Jew. The love for another Jew is an intrinsic characteristic of one's soul due to its root in One G-d, and there, all the children of Israel are one reality! It is as natural as love for oneself.

7. The meaning of true love is true respect. Love doesn't mean suffocating someone with things you think are good for them. Love means cherishing the soul of the one standing in front of you. Love requires supreme sensitivity towards every person, starting with your family and continuing to the whole world. It means rising above our narrow

field of vision and learning to love everyone regardless of their background, regardless of education, personality, or temperament...

8. This is the true idea of love. To appreciate every person no matter who they are, and to help them be the best person they can be. As our sages said, "Let sins cease, not sinners." It's not hard to love a person because of something good they did for you. Rather, one must genuinely love every Jew without any conditions! You don't have to accept another person's opinions or make the same choices as them, and you don't have to raise your children according to their values, but you must, however, accept the person themselves. Even if you reject the philosophy of a certain group of people, don't reject the people...





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8th of Iyar, 5783



| City | Candle Lighting | Shabbat Ends | Rabbeinu Tam |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| New York | 7:23 pm | 8:26 pm | 8:55 pm |
| Miami | 7:28 pm | 8:23 pm | 9:00 pm |
| Los Angeles | 7:10 pm | 8:09 pm | 8:42 pm |
| Montreal | 7:30 pm | 8:38 pm | 9:02 pm |
| Toronto | 7:50 pm | 8:56 pm | 9:22 pm |
| London | 7:51 pm | 9:04 pm | 9:21 pm |
| Jerusalem | 7:01 pm | 7:52 pm | 8:43 pm |
| Tel Aviv | 6:59 pm | 7:49 pm | 8:40 pm |
| Haifa | 6:59 pm | 7:50 pm | 8:40 pm |
| Be'er Sheva | 6:57 pm | 7:48 pm | 8:38 pm |

Pathways to the Heart

*From the Words of
HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l*

There are times when all the candies are kosher, and they can eat them, and there are times when they're told, "That isn't for you. Throw them away, and I'll compensate you later." When you tell your children such a thing, their whole life, wherever Hashem puts them, in China, in Japan, anywhere in the world, they won't mess with non-kosher food. They'll eat a banana or another fruit, but they won't get near anything not kosher. That's why it's important to instill this within your children. It will protect them from much worse things in the end.



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