

"You shall love the ger/convert because you were geirim (strangers) in the land of Egypt." (10:19)

Although the convert is included in the *mitzvah* to love all Jews, the *Torah*, nevertheless, stresses this *mitzvah*. The *Sefer Ha'Chinuch* infers that the extra warning adjuring us to love the *ger* applies in all areas of human relationship. The *ger* symbolizes the Jew who has no "protection," no family pedigree, and probably very few friends. It is regrettably much easier to mistreat the *ger* than an ordinary Jew. Having cut himself off from his roots, he feels isolated in his quest for genuine acceptance and friendship. The *Sefer Ha'Chinuch* states that this *mitzvah* is broadened to include all strangers, everyone who is not part of the "in" clique. This applies to a newcomer to the community/*shul* or to anyone who feels alienated because he is an outsider.

The *Torah* gives a good reason for this commandment, "*Because you were once strangers in the land of Egypt.*" We are, therefore, commanded to show love, understanding and compassion to others who suffer from this plight. Every human being is Hashem's creation. This makes him an "insider" in the world community. To mistreat someone is tantamount to disgracing Hashem.

The *Maharal* goes so far as to say that loving people is in effect the same as loving Hashem. When one loves another person, he loves all of his friends' handiwork. Similarly, one who truly loves Hashem loves all of His children. Tolerance of others should be something real to us. After all, we were once "different," living as strangers and outcasts in a strange and antagonistic environment. One would think that our past has sensitized us to be more accepting of those who are not exactly like us.