

What does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? (10:12)

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, views *ahavas Hashem*, love for Hashem, as the *yesod*, foundation, of the entire Torah. To love Hashem is not a *mitzvas aseï*, positive commandment; rather, it is the principle upon which hinges all of the *mitzvos* of the Torah. Every *mitzvah* is just another aspect of our love for Hashem; *mitzvos* are our expression of love. When we carry out a *mitzvah*, we are demonstrating our unabiding love for the Almighty. This love is reciprocal, because we understand and acknowledge Hashem's love for us. A Jew's commitment to Judaism -- the very same commitment that impelled him to declare, "O *Yehudai O' tzlav*; "Either I am a Jew or I am prepared to die" -- is derived from his total connection, his overriding *dveikus*, clinging to Hashem, all of which is founded in love.

As a result of this connection founded in love for Hashem, we understand the idea behind the *pasuk* (*Yehoshua* 1:8), *V'heegeesa bo yomam valaylah*; "Rather, you should contemplate it day and night." If one takes a "break" from learning, he severs the connection. *Rav Yeruchem* explains that one's connection with Torah should be like a magnet that does not break its pull on the metal. One who learns Torah on an "on and off...whenever" basis is not learning Torah. Those individuals to whom Torah-study is total immersion, feel nothing, sense nothing, are aware of nothing outside of the Torah which they learn. The reason for this, explains the *Mashgiach*, is because we do not learn Torah for the purpose of knowing Torah. Veritably, *yedias haTorah*, knowing Torah, is important, but that is not why we learn. We study Torah out of love! It is our expression of love for Hashem. When we study Hashem's Torah, He speaks to us. When we *daven*, we speak to Him.

The love is reciprocal. We know that Hashem chose us from all of the nations, as a result of His love for us. When one knows that he is loved, he returns the love. One who does not express his love for Hashem does not really perceive the love Hashem has for him. Otherwise, his own love for the Almighty would be more forthcoming.

Hashem has granted us certain *mitzvos* to (sort of) wrap ourselves in them as a sign of His love. They include the *mitzvos* of *Tzitzis*, *Tallis*, *Krias Shema*, *Succah*, *Mezuzah*, *Tefillin* and *Tefillah*. We wrap ourselves in the *Tallis*; the *Tefillin* are on our body. The *Mezuzah* protects our home, and the *Succah* surrounds us, protecting us from the elements. We speak to Hashem in prayer and accept upon ourselves the Heavenly yoke of observance when we recite *Krias Shema*. Indeed, the underlying motif of the *mitzvos* that were given to us at *Har Sinai* is to maintain our relationship with Hashem, that no instance goes by during which we do not maintain our connection with Hashem. From the moment we arise, when we recite *Modeh Ani* in gratitude to Hashem, until the moment that we retire and recite *Krias Shema* – our day is all filled with expressions of love to Hashem via the *mitzvos* which He gave us out of love. When we become *mitzvah*-selective, picking and choosing which *mitzvos* are more convenient and which are too costly, we demonstrate that we are not acting out of love, but out of compulsion and constraint. We may not always immediately see the reward for our love, but it is there - guaranteed.

The following story is one of many which underscore the meaning of the love we must manifest for Hashem. It was winter 2015, and the northeast was blanketed with snow. Roads were impassable, the city streets snow-covered, the weather outside with the added wind-chill was below zero. Many people called in sick to work, since it was physically impossible to negotiate the walk from their homes to the subway. Much of life in the big city was at a standstill. Chaim Goldman (fictitious name) had left his *Tallis* and *Tefillin* in *shul* the night before (as usual). He was now confronted with the stark reality that he lived a mile from *shul*, and it was impossible to get there – either by car or by foot. What would he do? Did he have to do anything?

As all *frum* Jews should, he contacted his *rav* and asked him flat out if he had to make an attempt to retrieve his *Tefillin* from *shul*. The *Rav* suggested calling the city to inquire if a snow plow could get him through to the *shul*. He called and spoke to the harried foreman in charge of snow removal. Yes, they could provide a snow plow for an emergency. The price tag: \$10,000 for approximately three hours of work. (The truck would have to be brought over and returned, plus overtime; and, after all, it was a large metropolitan city in the east coast.)

Chaim was floored by the price. He attempted to negotiate, but it was useless. Apparently, he was not the only one who claimed that he had an emergency. This was the going price. Chaim called his *rav* and asked him what he should do. The *rav* asked him if he had the money. Chaim replied in the affirmative. “If this is the case,” the *rav* replied, “you should do what you think is right.”

Chaim began to mull over the question seriously. The Torah exhorts us to love Hashem with all our heart, all our soul, and all our material possessions. Here was a simple case of demonstrating his love for Hashem to the tune of \$10,000. If he really loved Hashem, the money should not be a factor. How could a day pass during which he did not put on *Tefillin*? He called the city, paid the fee and went to *shul*. That was his most meaningful *davening*, because he knew that he had acted out of love for Hashem.

Far be it for me to wonder how many of us would lay out \$10,000 to put on *Tefillin*. Truthfully, I am almost afraid to wonder. Having said that, we may wonder why, although putting on *Tefillin* daily and attending *Shacharis* cost nothing but our time, many people still cannot find the time to carry out this *mitzvah*. Perhaps we might ask ourselves: If Hashem responded to our petition in the same manner and attitude that we attend *shul* – would we be pleased? Perhaps it might be proper to consider that what goes around comes around