

And Hashem loves the ger/convert to give him bread and garment...you shall love the ger for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (10:18,19)

The *Torah* repeats the mitzvah of *Ahavas Ha'Ger*, loving the convert, no less than thirty-six times! One would assume that the *Torah* would reiterate *mitzvos* such as *Shabbos*, the prohibitions against idol worship and murder, emphasizing their obvious importance. Indeed, the *Torah* does not repeat these critical mitzvos. The *Torah* is very careful with its words; every word has its own specific message. Yet, the *Torah* has no qualms about reminding us numerous times of our obligation to the *ger*. Why?

We can derive a profound lesson from this *pasuk* regarding human nature. Man's natural instinct is to denigrate those that are different in race, color, even status and position. Regardless of a person's humanistic values, the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, prompts him to view with disdain those who are different. The *Torah* specifically reminds us to love the *ger*, imbuing us with the tools to overcome the challenge of the *yetzer hora*.

What are the tools? What prescription does the *Torah* provide for us so that we will treat the *ger* with the dignity he deserves? The *Torah* enjoins us to remember the Egyptian bondage, "*And you know the soul of the convert, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*" (10:22) *Rashi* comments, "Consider how painful it is when he is persecuted." Feel the pain that the *ger* feels. Experience his humiliation. Taste his degradation. After all, in Egypt it was your lot. You should recall the time in your life when you were a *ger*, a stranger in a strange society.

Many people, however, cannot accept this type of logic. Indeed, reflecting on the ordeals of the past can have a negative effect. For some, it literally backfires, compelling them to act out their anxieties on those who are presently going through the same ordeal that they themselves had experienced. Their ears become deaf to the pleas of the downtrodden. They relive too many bad memories. Perhaps they think that by acting in an inconsiderate manner, they might erase the hurt and deprivation which they themselves endured.

We approach that person in a specific way. We remind him that he is no different than the hapless *ger*. He was once a stranger - in Egypt. Who does he think he is? How can he denigrate the immigrant when he himself was once an immigrant? It is ironic that so many of us become "citizens", quickly forgetting how we ourselves were recently immigrants.

Regardless of the approach, the *Torah* finds it necessary to reiterate the importance of being sensitive to the needs of he who is not "like us." One does not have to be extremely different; as long as he is not like us, we consider him to be different. The *Torah* senses the gravity of this malady and prescribes the ingredients for effecting its cure.