

## "Love your neighbor as yourself, I am Hashem." (19:18)

**Horav Yosef Leib Bloch, zl**, comments that the last two words of this *pasuk*, 's hbt, "*I am Hashem*," represent more than the conclusion of the *pasuk*. They actually define the essence of one's obligation to be sensitive to his friend's needs. He cites the *Talmud* in *Sukah 53a* which quotes Hillel *Ha'Zakein's* famous exclamation during the *Simchas Bais Ha'Shoeivah*. "itf hbt ot itf kfv," "If I am here, then everyone is here." This statement contradicts everything we have been taught regarding Hillel's character. He was known to be the paradigm of humility. How could he make such a statement?

*Horav Bloch* explains that Hillel was referring to a completely different "*ani*." He first questioned the need for the two words, "*Ani Hashem*," to be placed at the end of the *mitzvah* which defines our obligation to our fellow man. He said that the *Torah* was teaching us that love for our fellow man was to be predicated upon the "*Ani Hashem*." The Almighty determines what is love, whom to love, and the extent of this obligation. If the basic principles of the "*V'ohavta*" are founded upon the "*Ani Hashem*," they will be pure and not tainted by ulterior motives and politics. "*V'ohavta*" will reflect true love for a human being created by Hashem.

Similarly, upon noticing the joy and gaiety displayed during the *Simchas Bais Ha'Shoeivah*, Hillel commented, "*Im Ani kaan*," if the '*Ani*' referring to the '*Ani Hashem*' is here, if Hashem's Presence permeates the proceedings, then "*hakol kaan*," then, and only then, are we ensured that everyone is included in this *simchah*. Only when the foundation of a given endeavor is rooted in *Torah*, if the underlying principles are guided by the word of Hashem, will it grow and thrive spiritually. Consequently, the joy experienced in his project will be pure.