

You shall love your fellow as yourself – I am Hashem. (19:18)

Rabbi Akiva teaches (*Yerushalmi Nedarim* 30b), *V'ahavta l'reiacha kamocho – Zeh klal gadol baTorah*; "Love your fellow as yourself. This is the all-encompassing principle of Torah." In other words, an unbreakable bond exists between *ahavas Yisrael*, love of Jews, and *ahavas Hashem*, love of the Almighty. A general principle is one which contains all the detailed principles within it. Thus, *ahavas Yisrael* is the rubric under which all *mitzvos* fall. Loving a fellow Jew is an integral component of every *mitzvah*. Thus, when I shake the *lulav*, observe *Shabbos*, put on *Tefillin*, I am/should be enhancing my *ahavas Yisrael*. If we perform a *mitzvah* – yet our *ahavas Yisrael* seems lacking, we have a problem with our own observance. What is the connection between loving one's fellow and the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos* observance, or any other *mitzvah* for that matter?

The *Tzemach Tzedek* cites the *Arizal* (*Taamei Ha'Mitzvos, Parashas Kedoshim*) who explains that all *Klal Yisrael* comprises one entity, which is the *neshamah*, soul, of Adam *HaRishon*. Every Jew constitutes a limb of Adam's soul. This is the basis of the *arvus*, mutual responsibility of our people, and the idea that one Jew is accountable for his fellow, if he sins. [This is why the *Arizal* would recite *Viduy*, Confessional, despite that he personally had not sinned.]

The *Baal HaTanya* teaches that to love another person means to find something in that other person which is similar to something in himself. Our individuality separates us from others, but one thing, one common bond, unites us. We, as Torah Jews, must focus upon this commonality. Our common thread is the Hashem component, the *neshamah*, which is a part of Hashem, within us. It has nothing to do with how observant one is, what his religious leanings are, or whether he is a good person or not. We all have that Hashem component within us that unites us. This is what we should love. We love the Hashem within all of us. How we view others depends upon how we view ourselves. If we focus on the human condition, then we are different from one another, which impedes our ability to truly love. If we concentrate, however, on the spiritual dimension which we all have, we will have no problem. Our greatest issue is that we are too preoccupied with self-love to transform it and direct this love towards others. Rather than focus on what divides us, we should concentrate on what unites us: our *neshamos*.

Horav Yisrael Abuchatzera, zl, the *Baba Sali*, was a *tzaddik*, holy and righteous, Torah leader, who loved all Jews. The *Baba Sali's* neighbor in Netivot was very sickly in his youth. He was stricken with excruciating leg pain. The various therapies and medications did nothing for him. When the *Baba Sali* heard of his neighbor's pain, he asked his aide to call the young man to his house. When the neighbor arrived, the *Baba Sali* asked to see the afflicted leg. He then went on to touch the painful area of the leg. Despite his gentle prodding, the young man screamed in pain. The *Baba Sali* blessed him that in the merit of his (the *Baba Sali*) ancestors, he should be granted a *refuah sheleima*, full recovery. Within the space of a few days, the young man was miraculously cured.

The next day, the *Baba Sali's* aide noticed a wound on his *Rebbe's* leg at about the same place where, only a few days earlier, the boy had been suffering from his affliction. The aide was certain

that his saintly *Rebbe* was in extreme pain, and it was the result of his blessing of the boy. He asked for an explanation. The *Baba Sali* explained that when he saw the pain the boy was experiencing, he immediately wanted to pray on his behalf. How could he pray appropriately, if he himself were not suffering pain? "I asked Hashem to give me the pain, so that I could experience it sufficiently to pray."

A similar incident occurred during the Entebbe hostage crisis when terrorists took the passengers, some of whom were Jewish, hostage. The *Baba Sali* commented, "Heaven will attest that my personal pain over this crisis was greater than that experienced by the hostages."

As he lay on his death bed, the *Baba Sali* prayed that his death should serve as an atonement for *Klal Yisrael*. *Yehi zichro baruch*. May his name serve as a blessing.