



DIVREI TORAH BULLETIN

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GUEST RABBI:

RABBI EVAN SHORE

YOUNG ISRAEL OF SYRACUSE, NY

Also available at: www.youngisraelrabbis.org.il

PARASHAT VA'ETCHANAN

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DAF YOMI: GITIN 36

768 Days of Captivity for Israeli MIA Gilad Shalit

Twice a day we mention in the Krias Shema "...and you shall love the L-rd your G-d..." What exactly does *Ahavas HaShem* mean? Rashi points out that we should perform all the *mitzvos* of HaShem with love. Additionally, there is no comparison between a person who does a *mitzvah* out of love versus one who does a *mitzvah* out of fear. We should approach our *Avodas HaShem* as a relationship where we as human beings are willing partners with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

The Baal Haturim tells us that we should look to the *Avos* (Patriarchs) as role models in our desire to serve HaShem with love. The letters that form the Hebrew word for "and you shall love": *vov, alef, hey, vet and tof* can also form the word *Ha-avos*: the Patriarchs. As *Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov*

served HaShem with complete and pure love, so should we today. It is very possible this may be an example of "the actions of the fathers should be a sign to the children."

The Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuva* 10:2 writes: "One who serves G-d out of love occupies himself in Torah and the *mitzvos* and walks in the ways of wisdom without an ulterior motive, nor does he do it to acquire a reward. Rather one does what he does because it is the *emes* and ultimately good will come from it." Here, I think, the meaning of *Ahavas HaShem* is very clear. Love of HaShem is not solely a state of mind. Rather love of HaShem is when the *mitzvah* itself is performed in a state of love and perceived by others as an act of love as well.

Peleh Yo'etz says that the *mitzvah* of *Ahavas HaShem*

is quite unique in the fact that it presents itself to us every moment of the day. As a result, we should strive to love HaShem through our thoughts and actions with a great and intense love. The *Sefer HaChinuch* quoting the *Sifrei* asks, "How do we understand this *mitzvah* of loving HaShem?" Through the study of Torah we will come to recognize that He is the Creator of everything. As a result He is deserving of our unconditional love.

This mindset is very important, especially in how we deal with others. I think that when we fulfill the *mitzvos* of HaShem out of love they in fact become easier to do! This is why whenever I hear the phrase, "It is tough to be a Jew," I cringe. When a husband is asked by his wife to do something, I hope the answer would be: "I would love to, no

problem.” Why should our response be any different between a *basar v'dom and Hakadosh Baruch Hu*? If He asks us to do something, our response to HaShem should be, “with love and pleasure will I do Your will.” When asked to offer his only son, Avrohom’s response was quick, clear and unequivocal: “*Hineini*: I am here, ready and willing to follow Your every command.”

So when we say it is tough to be a Jew, we are in fact affecting others with a negative connotation of HaShem and His *mitzvos*! I once saw an article by Rabbi Kalman Packouz on Aish.com who quoted Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, zt'l. Reb Moshe once remarked that perhaps the biggest factor in the deterioration of Jewish life in the United States was the complaint

by immigrant parents in front of their children that “It’s tough to be a Jew.” What child wants to be a part of something difficult and depressing?

However, if we possess a different mindset and exhibit *Ahavas HaShem* in all that we do, Gemara Yoma 86a asks: How do we understand, “and you shall love the L-rd Your G-d?” The answer is, through our actions the Name of HaShem should be beloved in the eyes of others. Our actions should motivate others to say, ‘Fortunate is his teacher who taught him Torah.’ What greater glory of HaShem’s name can occur when a bystander sees how a Jew conducts himself or herself with love of HaShem that the bystander is moved to make a comment such as this?

Now we can better understand the Sforno on our *passuk* that tells us: “We should be happy to do what is good in G-d’s eyes.” Once we have that realization, we will know there is no greater goal! This Sforno is quite timely, this morning being *Shabbos Nachamu*. What greater *nechama* can there be for our Avinu She’bashamayim than for there to be love, not only expressed to HaShem, but between all of *Klal Yisrael*.

May we all fulfill the will of HaShem with great *Ahava*. In addition, may there be an abundance of *ahavas chinam*, boundless, true love among *Klal Yisrael*.

Shabbat Shalom.