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{ וְאַהֲבָת }

Ve'ahavta



וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ -
רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אָמַר,
זֶה כָּלֹל גָּדוֹל בַּתּוֹרָה

Rabbi Akiva says that,
“To love your fellow as
yourself,” is a great basic
principle of the Torah.

(VAYIKRA 19:18, MIDRASH)

Keeping the Torah is a beautiful thing and makes our *neshama* very happy. But it's not enough for us to keep it ourselves. The Torah wants us to think about other Yidden also!

A Vital Rule

The tenth *posuk* of the *Yud-Beis Pesukim* is the *posuk Ve'ahavta*.

The words come from a *Medrash* (*Sifra*, also called *Toras Kohanim*) that explains a *posuk* in *Parshas Kedoshim*, “*Ve'ahavta Le'reiacha Kamocho*,” “you should love your friend like you love yourself.”

The *Medrash* says on this *posuk*, that Rabbi Akiva calls this *posuk* a “*klal gadol*” of the Torah!

What is a “*Klal Gadol*”?

It means a rule that is so important, that if you miss it, you missed the whole thing!

Imagine if someone tells you that he made a big Chanukah party for all of his friends. There were donuts, and latkes, and chocolate gelt. “And what kind of Menorah did you light?” you ask. “Oh, we didn’t light the menorah at all. We had lots of other Chanukah things.” Oy vey, you’ll be thinking. He missed the whole point! How can you have Chanukah without a menorah?

The Torah is so beautiful and so precious! It helps us all the time, in everything we do. But if we don’t have *Ahavas Yisroel*, if we don’t care about another Yid, and just keep the Torah for ourselves, we don’t have Torah at all! Rabbi Akiva tells us that you can’t have Torah without having *Ahavas Yisroel*!

With All the Details

The tenth *posuk* of the *Yud-Beis Pesukim* is the *posuk Ve'ahavta*.

The words mean:

Ve'ahavta Le'reiacha Kamocha — Love your friend like you love yourself.

Rabbi Akiva Omer — Rabbi Akiva says about this *posuk*

Zeh Klal Gadol BaTorah — That it is a very important *Klal* in the Torah!

What is a *Klal*?

A *Klal* means something general, a big idea that can have many parts. The opposite of *Klal* is *Prat*, a detail.

One of the things that Rabbi Akiva is telling us is that *Ve'ahavta Le'reiacha Kamocha* is a *Klal* — a general *mitzvah*. But it has many details also, which the Torah also teaches us!

In many places in the Torah, it tells us how to be nice to other people, to have *Ahavas Yisroel*. For example, in the same *posuk* that tells us this, we first learn about not taking revenge on other people. That is also one part of having *Ahavas Yisroel*!

Rabbi Akiva is telling us that the *mitzvah* of *Ahavas Yisroel* is a *Klal*, so we will know HOW to keep this *mitzvah*! We do it by keeping all of the details which are included in it, all of the *mitzvos* of the Torah that show us how to treat other people.

See sicha chelek Yud-Zayin parshas Kedoshim, explaining Rashi on this posuk

The Rambam's Ruling

The tenth *posuk* in the *Yud-Beis Pesukim* is the *posuk* of *Ve'ahavta*.

Ve'ahavta Lereiacha Kamocha — You should love your friend like yourself!

Rabbi Akiva Omer — Rabbi Akiva says about this

Zeh Klal Gadol BaTorah — That it is a very important rule in the Torah!

This *posuk* speaks about the very special *mitzvah* of *Ahavas Yisroel*!

The Rambam tells us that there are two main ways we keep this *mitzvah*: We should be as careful with our friend's *kavod* as we are with our own *kavod*, and we should be as careful with our friend's money as we are with our own money!

A person's *kavod* is very important to them. We don't like being embarrassed in front of other people, or when other people make us feel silly or left out. Part of the *mitzvah* of *Ahavas Yisroel* is to be careful about other people's *kavod* too! We should be careful not to embarrass other people or make them feel left out.

A person's money is also important to them. We don't like if people ruin our things, or make us spend money that we worked hard to earn for no reason. Part of *Ahavas Yisroel* is being careful with other people's money too! We should be careful with their toys and their books, and not make them spend money when they don't want to.

Even though, as we learned before, this *mitzvah* includes all of the *mitzvos Bein Adam Lechaveiro*, the Rambam and *Shulchan Aruch* bring these two specific things which we learn from this *mitzvah* itself.

When we do that, we are following one of the lessons of this *posuk*!

Sharing Our Excitement

The tenth *posuk* of the *Yud-Beis Pesukim* starts with the word “*Ve’ahavta*.”

Ve’ahavta Lereiacha Kamocha — You should love your friend like yourself!

Rabbi Akiva Omer — Rabbi Akiva says about this

Zeh Klal Gadol BaTorah — That it is a very important rule in the Torah!

In rallies, the Rebbe would mention this *posuk*. The *posuk* tells us that we should love our friends like we love ourselves — *Ve’ahavta Lereiacha Kamocha*! We should make sure to share the good things we want for ourselves with our friends too.

Many times when we are learning Torah or at a *farbrengen*, we get excited about a *mitzvah* or a *minhag* we should do. The Rebbe tells us not to just do it ourselves, but share what we learned or heard with other kids, so they can be excited and keep it too!

Being the First One

*Sometimes two people get into an argument. They both think that they are right, and that it’s the other person’s fault! When they try to talk about it, they just get angrier at each other. How will *Ve’ahavta Lereiacha Kamocha* help?*

A *chossid* once wrote to the Rebbe with a list of important questions. One of the things he wrote was about a fight with another person.

In the answer, the Rebbe reminded him about what the Torah promises us: “*Kamayim Hapanim Lepanim, Kein Leiv Ha’adam L’adam*.” Just like when you stand next to a lake or a river, you can see your face reflected in it like a mirror, one person’s heart also reflects the other person’s! So our

hearts can be like a mirror to each other — if I love you, your heart will start loving me back.

So even if two people are angry at each other, if one of them starts to love the other person and act nice to him, then the other person will change his mind too and start to love him back!

It doesn't really matter who does it first. As long as one person starts loving and being friendly to the other person, in the end they will BOTH start liking each other again.

But, the Rebbe says, whoever does it first is doing something very special! They are the ones who are making sure to keep the *mitzvah* of *Ve'ahavta Lere'acha Kamocha*, which, as Rabbi Akiva says is a “*Klal Gadol BaTorah*” — a VERY important rule for the whole Torah!

See Igros Kodesh, letter #5131