

COMMENTARIES OF THE DUBNO MAGGID

SHABBOS PARASHAS VAESCHANAN

In this week's *parashah*, in the first paragraph of the *Shema*, the Torah commands (Devarim 6:5): "And you shall love Hashem your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." The Torah then continues (ibid. 6:6): "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart." The Midrash remarks (*Yalkut Shimoni, Torah 839*): "One might say, 'I don't know how to love Hashem.' The Torah therefore says, *And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart*. Put these words on your heart, and through this you will come to know the One who spoke and brought the world into being, and you will cleave to His ways." The Maggid sets out to explain this Midrash. A similar discussion appears in *Sefer HaMiddos, Shaar HaAhavah*, Chapter 11 [[link](#)], and in Maggid's commentary on Shir HaShirim 3:11 in *Kol Yaakov*.

Suppose you are expecting distinguished guests. You will then clear out from your house all the trashy items. Similarly, in order to infuse love of Hashem in your heart, you must first clear out from your heart all the feelings of love implanted within it for worldly pleasures and pursuits. Once you do so, the rest will come automatically. We can bring out the point with a simple analogy. Suppose you trapped a bird and put it in a cage, and then you decide to restore it to its home. You do not have to carry it back there. All you need to do is open the cage, and the bird will then fly back home on its own. Similarly, once you break free of attachments to worldly things, you will naturally become filled with love of Hashem.

Yeshayah declares (verse 55:7, in the *haftarah* for the afternoon of public fast days): "Let the wicked one abandon his path and the iniquitous man his thoughts, let him return to Hashem וִירָחֵמֵנו" The standard rendering of וִירָחֵמֵנו is *and He [Hashem] will have compassion for him [the person]*. But we can render the word homiletically as meaning *and he [the person] will come to love Him [Hashem]*. This rendering is along the lines of the standard rendering of the word אֲרַחֵמְךָ in Tehillim 18:2, which says *I shall love you, Hashem, my Strength*. [In Aramaic, the usual term for love is רַחַם; thus, for example, in *Targum Onkelos's* translation of the verse from the *parashah* that we quoted at the outset, the word וְאַהַבְתָּ (and you shall love) is rendered as וְתַרְחַם.] The soul by its nature loves Hashem and yearns to cleave to Him. It is prevented from doing so only because it is gripped, like a bird in a cage, by the body and its myriad drives. A person must render himself bare as a newborn and divest himself of worldly desires. Once he does so, he will automatically return to Hashem; he will be able quickly to fill his heart with love of Hashem, fear of Hashem, and all the noble character traits.

Let us recall an analogy we presented in our commentary on Shir HaShirim 3:11. We will put it in the form of a parable. A villager went to the city on a market day in the wintertime, and he saw a store with fine clothes. He went in and asked the owner: "Do you, perhaps, have a suit that will fit me?" The owner had a trained eye, and when someone came into his store, he could quickly tell what suit would fit him. He took a suit off the rack and told the villager: "Here is a suit for you, exactly your size." The villager tried to put the suit on but was unable to do so, because he was already wearing several layers of peasant-style clothes, including a rough cloak. The villager got angry at the storeowner and cried out: "What fault did you see in me that led you to mock me?" The storeowner replied: "Far be it from me to mock anyone. What I told you was true - this suit is a perfect fit. But who would put on such a fine suit on top of a slew of peasant clothes? Take off your peasant clothes first and then put on the suit. You will see that it really is a perfect fit."

We can liken the mitzvos of the holy Torah to a fine suit. Hashem measured us and made this suit for us to wear - the 248 positive mitzvos in parallel to the 248 limbs and organs of the body, and the 365 negative mitzvos in parallel with its sinews. Sometimes a person will try to don this fine suit and find that it doesn't fit him well. The Midrash we quoted above tells us how to avoid this problem. The Torah tells us to love Hashem. We might think that we do not know how to love Hashem and it seems far beyond us to attain such love. The Torah therefore continues: "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart." We need to place the Torah's words directly on our hearts without any interpositions. To do so, we must first divest ourselves of vain worldly desires and pursuits. Once we purify our hearts in this way and place the Torah's words on a pure heart, we will come to recognize the Creator and know how to love Him. In this vein, the Midrash teaches: "Before you pray for the Torah's words to enter your innards, plead for vanities to exit your innards." [This Midrash appears in variant forms in *Yalkut Shimoni, Torah 391* and *830*, and in a quote in *Tosefos on Kesuvos 104a*, s.v. לָא.]