

This connection is the whole purpose of the creation of the world — because chesed comes from ahava. You might say we are doing chesed for Hashem — but Hashem does not need our chesed. The point is that He wants us connected to Him, and the way the world is built, that connection comes through chesed. And how can a person do chesed for another person if he has no piece of love inside himself — no love for Hashem to begin with? He just lives inside his own box, and nothing moves, nothing happens. That is why Avraham Avinu, who was all about ahava, was given every-

thing: he was fulfilling the very goal for which the world was made.

So let us take this to heart. Let us work on expressing our love for the Ribono shel Olam by focusing on what we are doing and not tearing ourselves away every second for something else. There is no way to be connected to Hashem if we keep disconnecting. Use the very fight with the yetzer hara as a chizuk for our love to Hashem. The love is in galus — and it is in our hands to bring it home. Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh bekarov beyomeinu!

MEKOROS

1. Devarim 6:5

קונטרס

The Ways of My Heart

נתיבות לבי

Adapted from the shiurim of
R' Dovid Steiman shlit"a
Real Love & Its Power

Ahava · Shabbos Nachamu

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THE WAYS OF MY HEART · WEEKLY SERIES

נתיבות לבי — The Ways of My Heart

A WEEKLY MAAMAR · ADAPTED FROM THE SHIURIM OF R' DOVID STEIMAN
SHLIT" A

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Nesivos Libi — *The Ways of My Heart* is a weekly maamar on emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem, adapted from the shiurim of R' Dovid Steiman shlit" a in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

R' Dovid Steiman shlit" a teaches emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*, and for nearly two decades has shared his Torah — in English and Russian — with talmidim and readers around the world. He taught at Ohr Somayach and today teaches at Yeshiva Toras Dovid, both in Monsey, New York. He is the author of the sefer *The Ways of My Heart* / נתיבות לבי.



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..... Loving Hashem with both yetzarim

Everyone speaks about dveikus, dveikus — cleaving to Hashem — so how does a person actually do it? This is how we connect ourselves to Hashem: by focusing on what you are doing purely for Hashem, and pushing everything else off to the side. The *Nesivos Shalom* brings the Rambam on what real love is: a person should love Hashem so strongly that he is bound up in it, always thinking about it — like a person who is lovesick, who cannot stop thinking about the one he loves while he eats, while he drinks, while he walks. So too the ahava for Hashem: it has to be expressed, and it has to be in the heart always.

But here is the hard part. The yetzer is right here, and the

yetzer hara will always pull us to think about something else. And the answer is not to fight the pull head-on — it is to *use* it. This is what we say in Krias Shema every day: 'ואהבת את ה' — ¹אלקיך בכל לבבך — and you shall love Hashem with all your heart. Chazal read *b'choi levavcha* as "with both your yetzarim," with the yetzer tov and the yetzer hara together. The very pull that the yetzer hara uses to drag you somewhere else — you take that same force, turn it around, and use it as ahava for Hashem. Say it to yourself: *Hashem, the yetzer hara is pulling me away from You — and that itself is a sign that I am getting closer to You.* That is the only way it works.

..... Why the whole world was made for it

there is nothing. Quick, let's get back before they see us and we are finished.

And as they walked back, Moshi began to cry. Yossi turned to him and said: *Listen. There is nothing I can give you. I have no food, I have nothing. But one thing I can give you — a hug.* And he hugged him, and he said: *Remember, I will never leave you. Believe me, we will walk out of this place together. The one thing I can give you is my love — I feel your pain, and I am with you.* And that was all.

Years passed. The war ended. Both of them survived, both married, both had children and grandchildren, and both came to Eretz Yisrael. And then one day Yossi passed away. Moshi, by now an old man, came to the shiva, and

he told the children something they had never heard — the two had never spoken about the war. *I want you to know that your father saved my life.* And he told them how. *We were starving,* he said, *and not only for food. We were starving for warmth. And your father gave it to me. From the moment he gave it to me, I was never empty again.*

The family sat and listened. A few hours went by, and they said to him, *you haven't eaten anything — may we bring you some food?* And he answered: *I don't need food. I am not hungry. I think that since that hug, I have never been hungry again.* That is how far real love reaches — spiritual love can lift a person up, physically, from the very place he is standing.

Real Love & Its Power

Real ahava is the trait everything stands on — how we measure ours, and how far its power can reach

I want to speak about one middah that everything else depends on: the middah of *ahava*, of love. Without *ahava* we cannot serve Hashem at all. When Hashem gives a person a lot of love, that love has to be used for good — it has to be used in *ruchnius*. And where do we usually get it from? From our parents. Our parents love us, and out of that love we learn to love everything around us,

and to love Hashem. But what happens when it did not work out with the parents — which happens plenty? Look at Avraham Avinu. We don't know what kind of home he came from; we only know he stood up against all the *avoda zara* of his own father. And yet he had so much *ahava*, so much love for Hashem. Where it came from we cannot say — but without it there is nowhere to go.

..... The love that is in galus

Here is something I can say very clearly and very loud: the love is in *galus*. People have at-

tached the word "love" to something else entirely, so far from what love really is, that

we can barely connect to spiritual love at all — up to a point a person can no longer even

..... **Do you enjoy Shabbos?**

So where do we see our ahava? Ask yourself honestly: do you enjoy Shabbos? Do you enjoy Yom Tov? Do you enjoy sitting and learning half the day? Do you enjoy doing mitzvos? That is where a person sees his love — where it is, how it expresses itself, and how strong it is. Do I have the patience to sit and learn for an hour, or after a few minutes do I need to get up, check the emails, check the WhatsApp, check the news, see what is going on? That is the measure. That is where we measure our love for Hashem.

Because when we stand and try to dive into Hashem, our thoughts fly away somewhere else. That is the yetzer, who is

picture it. The love itself is in exile.

here to steal our love for Hashem and Hashem's priority. It comes in and gets you *fardreyt* — spun around like a dreidel, all mixed up, your head spinning off in ten directions while you are still standing in the middle of davening, trying to take care of everything at once. And it is the same at the Shabbos table: one person begins to sing the zemiros, and the others start talking. We don't sing zemiros because we *must* sing; we sing them from the pleasure of Shabbos. And even if we don't enjoy Shabbos, we still need to sing, because we need to restructure ourselves into what we need to be. But you cannot enjoy the singing if

your head is somewhere else. You cannot enjoy a shiur unless you are fully focused on what is being said. You cannot enjoy davening when your head is multitasking. You cannot enjoy learning when you are being pulled away from learning every few minutes. It

..... **The only thing I can give you**

How far can the power of that love reach? I read a story about two cousins, Yossi and Moshi, who lost their families when the war began. Both were twelve years old. From Auschwitz they were sent to a labor camp — somehow they looked older than they were, and they were taken to work, which at least meant a chance to stay alive.

One night Yossi went out to search the garbage for food; he was a twelve-year-old boy and was starving. As he searched,

is a fight, that is true — but you are fighting to focus so you can enjoy it, and that enjoyment is real ahava. That is the spiritual love between us and Hashem — and we cannot live without it, which is why we have to fight for it.

quietly, he suddenly felt someone standing behind him. He turned around — and he was sure this was the end, a guard, and it was over. But it was his cousin Moshi, standing there. *Moshi, what are you doing here? What do you mean — I am searching for food, like you. I am so hungry, I can't take it anymore.* The war had crushed the childhood out of them, suppressed every feeling a boy is supposed to have. Yossi told him: *I already went through the whole garbage,*