

## **Va'etchanan**

by Benjamin Gee - Tuesday, August 13, 2019

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### **Loving Hashem isn't meant to be simple...**

Is it fair to insist that a person should love someone or something?

I guess your instinctive reply will be absolutely not. But isn't that the important mitzvah which we have in parashat Va'etchanan, which we are all familiar with? 'V'ahav-ta et Hashem Elokecha B'chol l'vav'cha uv'chol nafsh'cha uv'chol m'odecha- You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might!

We don't have a love button that we can press as a result of which we begin loving God. So as important as it is to love the Almighty - surely it's unfair of him to insist that we do so? There are those who explain that love is the culmination of knowledge and experience. I come to either love something or someone, or not, as a result of what I know about them, and also the experiences that I have had with them - and as a result I either have that sensation or feeling of love, or I don't.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to know Hashem, to study everything we can about Him, and also to purposefully have spiritually uplifting experiences through which we will come to love Him. So, as opposed to some mitzvot which can take just a few minutes to perform and then you've done it - loving Hashem is a lifelong aspiration.

The Rambam was perhaps sensitive to the question we are asking. That is why in his 'Sefer Ha'mitzvot' when he codifies the mitzvah of loving Hashem - he actually declares that there is no such precept to love God. He explains 'v'ahavta' to be in the causative. Not 'you must love', but rather you must cause God 'to be loved' - with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might.

The Rambam essentially is telling us that we are all the ambassadors of Hashem. Wherever we go and through whatever we do - people don't judge us and notice what we are doing, but through our deeds, they are judging our faith, our religion, our people and most of all Ha'Kadosh Baruch Hu. Therefore it is appropriate that we should always strive to be 'makedesh shem shamayim' - to sanctify the name of God, and never to desecrate it.

Therefore, in our fulfillment of this all-important mitzvah, let us continually strive to gain knowledge of Hashem, and through our experiences of Him, grow to deeply appreciate his kindness, his benevolence, his greatness so that we will love him with all our hearts, with all our soul and with all our might - and at the same time, let us always guarantee that we will be able and responsible representatives of the Almighty on earth.

Shabbat Shalom

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