

הלכות תשובה • פרק עשירי

Complete Word-for-Word Interlinear • Navy & Gold Edition

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this final chapter of Hilchos Teshuvah, the Rambam brings us to the very pinnacle of our avodah: serving Hashem out of pure love, ahavas Hashem. We learn the profound difference between serving out of fear of punishment or desire for reward—which is the level of children and beginners—and serving Hashem simply because He is the Master and His Torah is truth.

The Rambam paints a breathtaking picture of what true love of Hashem looks like, comparing it to a deep, constant lovesickness where a person's mind is never diverted from his beloved. We will see how this ultimate level is reached, how we must guide simple people and children toward it gradually, and how our love for Hashem is entirely dependent on our knowledge and understanding of Him.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

הלי א

עבודת השם מאהבה ולא מיראה

Halacha 1 • Serving Hashem Out of Love Rather Than Fear of Punishment or Desire for Reward

אֵל יֹאמֶר אָדָם הֲרִינִי עוֹשֶׂה מִצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה וְעוֹסֵק בְּחִכְמָתָהּ
 in its wisdom and occupying myself the Torah the mitzvos of performing behold I am a person say Do not
 כִּדִּי שְׂאֵקָל כָּל הַפְּרָכּוֹת הַכְּתוּבוֹת בָּהּ אוֹ כִּדִּי שְׂאֵזָכָה לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם
 the world the life of that I will merit in order or in it that are written the blessings all that I will receive in order
 הִבָּא, וְאַפְרֹשׁ מִן הָעֲבֵרוֹת שֶׁהִזְהִירָה תּוֹרָה מֵהֶן כִּדִּי שְׂאֵנָצֵל
 that I will be saved in order against them the Torah that warned the transgressions from and I will separate to come
 מִן הַקְּלָלוֹת הַכְּתוּבוֹת בַּתּוֹרָה אוֹ כִּדִּי שְׁלֵא אֶפְרֵת מִחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם
 the world from the life of I will be cut off that not in order or in the Torah that are written the curses from
 הִבָּא. אֵין רְאוּי לַעֲבֹד אֶת ה' עַל הַדֶּרֶךְ הַזֶּה, שֶׁהָעוֹבֵד עַל דֶּרֶךְ זֶה
 this the way in for one who serves this the way in Hashem — to serve fitting It is not to come
 הוּא עוֹבֵד מִירָאָה וְאֵינָהּ מַעֲלֵת הַנְּבִיאִים וְלֹא מַעֲלֵת הַחֲכָמִים. וְאֵין
 and do not the wise the level of and not the prophets the level of and it is not from fear serves he
 עוֹבְדִים ה' עַל דֶּרֶךְ זֶה אֶלָּא עַמִּי הָאָרֶץ וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַקְטָנִים שֶׁמִּתְנַכְּיִן
 whom we train and the minors and the women people common except this the way in Hashem serve
 אוֹתָן לַעֲבֹד מִירָאָה עַד שֶׁתִּרְבֶּה דַּעְתָּן וְיַעֲבֹדוּ מֵאַהֲבָה:
 from love and they will serve their knowledge that will increase until from fear to serve them

The Rambam explains that serving Hashem solely to receive reward or avoid punishment is a lower level of service, characteristic of minors and the unlearned, whereas the ultimate goal is to serve Him out of pure love.

הלי ב

הַעֲבוֹד מֵאַהֲבָה עוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה וּבְמִצְוֹת וְהוֹלֵךְ בְּנִתְיבוֹת הַחֲכָמָה לֹא
 not wisdom in the paths of and walks and in the mitzvot in the Torah occupies himself out of love One who serves
 מִפְּנֵי דָבָר בְּעוֹלָם וְלֹא מִפְּנֵי יִרְאַת הָרָעָה וְלֹא כְּדֵי לִירֵשׁ הַטּוֹבָה
 the good to inherit in order and not the evil fear of because of and not in the world any thing because of
 אֲלֹא עוֹשֶׂה הָאֱמֶת מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא אֱמֶת וְסוֹף הַטּוֹבָה לָבוֹא בְּגִלְלָהּ. וּמַעֲלָה
 And level because of it will come the good and ultimately truth that it is because the truth he does rather
 זֶה הִיא מַעֲלָה גְדוֹלָה מְאֹד וְאֵין כָּל חָכָם זוֹכֶה לָּהּ. וְהִיא מַעֲלֵת אֲבִרָהם
 Avraham is the level of and it it merits wise man every and not very great is a level it this
 אֲבִינוּ שֶׁקָּרְאוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אוֹהֵבוֹ לְפִי שֶׁלֹּא עָבַד אֲלֹא מֵאַהֲבָה.
 out of love except he served that not because His lover is He Blessed the Holy One whom called him our father
 וְהִיא הַמַּעֲלָה שֶׁצִּוְּנוּ בָּהּ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר
 as it is said Moshe the hand of by is He Blessed the Holy One in it that commanded us is the level And it
 דְּבָרִים וְה' "וְאַהֲבַת אֶת ה'" אֱלֹהֶיךָ. וּבְזִמְנֵי שֶׁיֵּאָהֵב אָדָם אֶת ה'
 Hashem — a person that loves And at the time your God Hashem — And you shall love 5 6 Devarim
 אֲהֲבָה הָרְאוּיָה מִיד יַעֲשֶׂה כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת מֵאַהֲבָה:
 out of love the mitzvot all of he will perform immediately that is proper with a love

This halacha defines the supreme level of serving Hashem purely out of love for the truth, rather than out of fear of punishment or desire for reward.

ה'יג

וְכִיצַד הִיא הָאֲהֲבָה הָרְאוּיָה. הוּא שֶׁיֵּאָהֵב אֶת ה' אֲהֲבָה גְדוֹלָה יִתְרָה
 exceeding great a love Hashem — that he should love it is that is proper the love is And how
 עֲזָה מְאֹד עַד שֶׁתִּהְיֶה נִפְשׁוֹ קְשׁוּרָה בְּאַהֲבַת ה' וְנִמְצָא שׁוֹגָה בָּהּ תָּמִיד
 always with it obsessed and he is found Hashem in the love of bound up his soul that will be until very strong
 כְּאִלּוּ חוֹלָה חֲלִי הָאֲהֲבָה שֶׁאֵין דַּעְתּוֹ פְּנוּיָה מֵאַהֲבַת אוֹתָהּ אִשָּׁה וְהוּא
 and he woman that from the love of is free his mind that not love the sickness of sick with as if
 שׁוֹגָה בָּהּ תָּמִיד בֵּין בְּשִׁבְתּוֹ בֵּין בְּקוּמוֹ בֵּין בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁהוּא אוֹכֵל
 eats that he at the time whether in his rising whether in his sitting whether always with her is obsessed
 וְשׁוֹתָהּ. יִתֵּר מִזֶּה תִּהְיֶה אֲהֲבַת ה' בְּלֵב אוֹהֲבָיו שׁוֹגִים בָּהּ
 with it obsessed those who love Him in the heart of Hashem the love of shall be than this more and drinks
 תָּמִיד כְּמוֹ שֶׁצִּוְּנוּ כָּכָל לִבְכָּהּ וּבְכָל נִפְשָׁהּ. וְהוּא שֶׁשְׁלֹמֹה אָמַר
 said is what Shlomo and this your soul and with all your heart with all He commanded us just as always
 דֶּרֶךְ מִשַּׁל שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים ב' ה' "כִּי חוֹלָת אֲהֲבָה אֲנִי". וְכָל שִׁיר
 Shir and all of am I love sick with for five two HaShirim Shir parable by way of

הַשִּׁירִים מִשָּׁל הוּא לְעִנְיָן זֶה:

this for the matter of it is a parable HaShirim

The Rambam defines the ultimate love of Hashem as a constant, consuming passion, comparing it to a lovesick person whose thoughts never wander from their beloved.

הליד

עבֹדֶת הַשֵּׁם מֵאַהֲבָה וְשִׁלָּא עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס Halacha 4 · Serving Hashem Out of Love and Not for the Sake of Receiving Reward

אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים הָרִאשׁוֹנִים שָׁמָּה תֹאמַר הֲרִינִי לָמַד תּוֹרָה בְּשִׁבִּיל שְׂאֵהֶיָּה

that I will be for the sake Torah learning behold I am you will say lest the first the Sages said

עֲשִׂיר בְּשִׁבִּיל שְׂאֵקְרָא רַבִּי בְּשִׁבִּיל שְׂאֵקְבִיל שְׂכָר בְּעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

the coming in the world reward that I will receive for the sake Rabbi that I will be called for the sake rich

תִּלְמוּד לֹוֹמֵר דְּבָרִים יָא יג "לְאַהֲבָה אֶת ה'". כָּל מֶה שְׂאֵתֶם עוֹשִׂים לֹא

not do which you that all Hashem — to love 13 11 Deuteronomy says the teaching

תַּעֲשׂוּ אֲלֵא מֵאַהֲבָה. וְעוֹד אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים בְּמִצְוֹתָיו חֲפֵץ מְאֹד וְלֹא

and not greatly he desires in His mitzvot the Sages said and further from love except shall you do

בְּשִׁכָר מִצְוֹתָיו. וְכֵן הָיוּ גְדוֹלֵי הַחֲכָמִים מְצוִיִּים לְנִבּוֹנֵי

to the understanding of commanding the Sages the great of were and so His mitzvot in the reward of

תִּלְמִידֵיהֶם וּמִשְׁפִּילֵיהֶם בְּיָחִיד אֵל תִּהְיוּ פְּעֻבָּדִים הַמְשִׁמְשִׁים אֶת הָרַב

the Master — who serve like servants be do not in private and their wise ones their students

וְכו' אֲלֵא מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא הָרַב רָאוּי לְשִׁמְשׁוֹ כְּלוֹמֵר עֲבָדוֹ מֵאַהֲבָה:

from love serve meaning to say to serve Him it is fitting the Master that He is because rather etc.

The Sages taught that Torah study and mitzvah observance must be motivated by love for Hashem rather than a desire for wealth, honor, or reward in the World to Come.

הליה

לְמוֹד הַתּוֹרָה לְשִׁמְהָ וְשִׁלָּא לְשִׁמְהָ

Halacha 5 · Learning Torah for Its Own Sake and Not for Its Own Sake

כָּל הָעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה כְּדִי לְקַבֵּל שְׂכָר אוֹ כְּדִי שִׁלָּא תִגִּיעַ עָלָיו

upon him will come that not in order or reward to receive in order with the Torah who occupies himself Anyone

פְּרָעָנוֹת הָרִי זֶה עוֹסֵק שִׁלָּא לְשִׁמְהָ. וְכָל הָעוֹסֵק בָּהּ לֹא

not with it who occupies himself and anyone for its sake not one is occupying this behold retribution himself

לִירְאָה וְלֹא לְקַבֵּל שְׂכָר אֲלֵא מִפְּנֵי אֲהֶבֶת אֲדוֹן כָּל הָאָרֶץ שִׁצְוָה

Who commanded the earth all the Master of the love of because of but reward to receive and not out of fear

כֹּה הָרִי זֶה עוֹסֵק בָּהּ לְשִׁמְהָ. וְאָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים לְעוֹלָם

always the Sages And they said for its sake with it one is occupying this behold it himself

יַעֲסֹק אָדָם בַּתּוֹרָה וְאִפְלוּ שִׁלָּא לְשִׁמְהָ שְׂמִתּוֹךְ שִׁלָּא לְשִׁמְהָ

for its sake not for from within for its sake not and even with the Torah a person should occupy himself

בָּא לְשִׁמְהָ. לְפִיכָּהּ כְּשֶׁמְלַמְּדִין אֶת הַקִּטְנִים וְאֶת הַנָּשִׁים וְכָלֵל
and the generality of the women and — the children — when we teach Therefore to its sake he comes
עֲמִי הָאָרֶץ אֵין מְלַמְּדִין אוֹתוֹ אֶלָּא לְעֵבֶד מִירָאָה וְכִדִּי לְקַבֵּל
reward to receive and in order out of fear to serve except them teach we do not the common people
שָׂכָר, עַד שֶׁתִּרְכָּה וְדַעְתָּן וְיִתְחַכְּמוּ חֲכָמָה יִתְרָה מִגְלִים לָהֶם
secret to them we reveal extra with wisdom and they will grow wise their knowledge will increase until
רַז זֶה מְעַט מְעַט וּמִרְגִּילִין אוֹתוֹ לְעֵנֶין זֶה בְּנִתָּה עַד שֶׁיִּשְׁיִיגוּהוּ
and they know it they grasp it until gently this to matter them and we accustom by little little this
וְיִדְעוּהוּ וְיַעֲבֹדוּהוּ מֵאַהֲבָה:
— out of love and they serve Him

The Rambam explains the transition from serving God out of fear and for reward to serving Him purely out of love.

הל"ו

אהבת השם התלויה בידעת והשגה

Halacha 6 · The Love of Hashem Depends on Knowledge and Comprehension

דָּבָר יָדוּעַ וּבָרוּר שָׁאִין אֶהְבֵּת הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא נִקְשָׁרֶת בְּלִבּוֹ שֶׁל
of in the heart is bound is He Blessed the Holy One the love of that not and clear known A matter
אָדָם עַד שֶׁיִּשְׁשָׁגָה בָּהּ תָּמִיד כְּרָאוּי וְיַעֲזֹב כָּל מָה שֶׁכָּעוֹלָם חוּץ מִמֶּנָּה.
from it except is in the world that all and abandons as is fitting constantly with it he is obsessed until a person
כְּמוֹ שֶׁצִּוָּה וְאָמַר בְּכָל לִבְּכָהּ וּבְכָל נַפְשָׁהּ. אֵינוֹ אוֹהֵב הַקָּדוֹשׁ
the Holy One love one does not your soul and with all your heart with all and said He commanded just as
בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶלָּא בְּדַעַת שֶׁיִּדְעָהּ. וְעַל פִּי הַיָּדְעָה תִּהְיֶה
will be the knowledge and according to that he knows Him with the knowledge except is He Blessed
הָאֱהָבָה אִם מְעַט מְעַט וְאִם הַרְבֵּה הַרְבֵּה. לְפִיכָּהּ צָרִיךְ הָאָדָם לִיַּחַד עֲצָמוֹ
himself to dedicate the person needs therefore much much and if little little if the love
לְהִבִּין וּלְהַשְׁפִּיל בְּחֻכְמוֹת וּתְבוּנוֹת הַמוֹדִיעִים לוֹ אֶת קוֹנוֹ
his Creator — to him that make known and understandings in wisdoms and to comprehend to understand
כְּפִי כַח שִׁישׁ בְּאָדָם לְהִבִּין וּלְהַשִּׁיג כְּמוֹ שֶׁבְּאַרְנוֹ בְּהִלְכוֹת
in the Laws of we explained just as and to grasp to understand in a person that there is the capacity according to
יְסוּדֵי הַתּוֹרָה:
the Torah the Foundations of

The Rambam explains that true love of Hashem requires constant devotion and is directly proportional to one's intellectual comprehension of the Creator.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Rambam begins by explaining that serving Hashem for the sake of receiving blessings, meriting Olam Haba, or escaping punishment is considered serving out of fear, which is only appropriate as a training stage for women, children, and common people. The true path, exemplified by Avraham Avinu, is serving out of love—doing what is true simply because it is true. This love must be so intense that one's soul is constantly bound up in it, as described metaphorically in Shir HaShirim. While the

Sages emphasize that one should always engage in Torah and mitzvos even shelo lishmah (not for His sake) because it eventually leads to lishmah, the ultimate goal is to serve solely out of love for the Creator. Finally, the Rambam rules that this love can only take root in the heart in proportion to one's knowledge of Hashem, meaning a person must dedicate himself to understanding and contemplating the wisdom of his Creator.

למעשה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

My dear talmid, it is so easy to fall into the habit of keeping mitzvos like a business transaction. We do the ratzon of Hashem because we want the brachos, or because we are afraid of what will happen if we do not. But the Rambam is opening our eyes to a breathtaking truth: the ultimate goal of our avodah is to serve Hashem out of pure, burning love, simply because He is our Creator and His truth is the ultimate truth. This is the level of Avraham Avinu, a love so deep that it is compared to being lovesick, where a person's mind is constantly bound up with Hashem in everything they do.

How do we reach such a high level? The Rambam gives us the key: love is the child of knowledge. You cannot truly love someone you do not know. The more you dedicate yourself to understanding Hashem's wisdom, looking at His creation, and learning His Torah, the more your heart will naturally catch fire with love for Him. It is a gradual process, a 'secret' we integrate bit by bit, moving from serving for reward to serving for the sake of the Beloved.

Today, when you perform a mitzvah or sit down to learn, pause for just ten seconds before you begin. Instead of doing it out of habit or for a personal benefit, say to yourself: 'I am doing this purely because I love Hashem and want to connect to His truth.'