

Kinder Torah®

Parashas Korach

בס"ד

Hashem Loves Us

"Hashem loves us, Avi."

"You have taught me that many times, Abba."

"True, Avi. Now I will teach you the second blessing before *Kriyas Shema*, *Ahavah Rabba*, which describes this love in detail. Whom does the Creator love? Those people who receive His Torah as naturally as a mirror receives light. Their observance of the mitzvos helps them reach a high *madrayga* (spiritual level). This makes them worthy of *hashgacha pratis* (personal supervision) above and beyond the laws of nature. This special relationship with the Creator is called love."

"We are so fortunate that we have it, Abba!"

"Indeed, Avi. The *bracha* speaks about how our forefathers trusted Hashem. This continued down to the generation that left Mitzrayim, as the verse states, 'I (Hashem) recall for you (Klal Yisrael) the kindness of your youth, the love of a newlywed – your following Me into the wilderness, into an unown land' (Yirmiyahu 2:2).² Hashem responded to this dedication on our part with His great love – *Ahavah Rabba*."

"This inspires me to love Hashem, Abba."

"That is precisely the point, Avi. The first paragraph of *Kriyas Shema* commands us to love Hashem. *Ahavah Rabba* prepares us to fulfill that mitzvah. The *bracha* goes on to relate the Almighty taught our fathers Torah as a reward for their trust in Him. We then beseech Him to also teach us Torah."

"Abba, what is the connection between the previous *bracha* that speaks about light, and this *bracha* that speaks about Torah?"

"Avi, the Abudarhom answers your thoughtful question. He cites the Baal HaMinhagos who enlightens us with a brilliant insight. The Torah shines brighter than all other lights. The sun only lights up the day, while the Torah shines day and night. It illuminates our hearts and souls with its spiritual glow, as the verse states, 'The Torah of Hashem is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of Hashem is trustworthy, making the simple one wise; the orders of Hashem are upright, gladdening the heart; the command of Hashem is clear, enlightening the eyes; the fear of Hashem is pure, enduring forever; the judgments of Hashem are true, altogether righteous. They are more desirable than gold, than even much fine gold; and sweeter than honey dripping from the combs. Also, when Your servant is scrupulous in observing them, there is great reward' (Tehillim 19:8-12). We see that the Torah is the most precious, desirable thing in the entire creation. It is nec-

essary to make known the paramount importance of the Torah because we are about to read the King's proclamation, *Kriyas Shema*, whose subject is fulfilling the commandments of this Torah. Therefore we beseech the Almighty to act with mercy and infuse our hearts with Torah. 'Our Father, merciful Father, Who acts with compassion; have compassion upon us and instill in our hearts (comprehension) to understand and elucidate, to listen, learn, teach, safeguard, perform, and fulfill all the words of Your Torah's teaching with love.'"

"Have you ever heard so many expressions of compassion, Abba? 'Our **Father**' – no one has mercy on a child like a father. '**Merciful Father**' – not just any Father, but an especially merciful Father! 'Who acts with **compassion**; have **compassion** upon us!'"

"Indeed, Avi. The author of the *bracha* wants us to realize how much *Siyata DiShmaya* (Heavenly assistance) we need to learn Torah. Were it not for Hashem's constant assistance, not a word of Torah would go into our hearts. Our lives would be spiritually empty. Therefore we entreat Him with five expressions of mercy, to help us instill His Holy Torah into our hearts. Now I have a question for you, Avi. How much Torah do we want to learn and fulfill?"

"The whole, entire Torah, Abba!"

"Precisely, Avi. We have very, very big ambitions. We will not settle for anything less than the absolute best – 'to understand and elucidate, to listen, learn, teach, safeguard, perform, and fulfill all the words of Your Torah's teaching with love.' The Abudarhom cites a verse as the source for every word in this request. We then ask that our eyes be enlightened with Torah and our hearts cleave to its mitzvos so that they guide every aspect of our lives; and we shall never feel shame for steadfastly adhering to them."

"That is so important, Abba. Shame can ruin a person's entire motivation."

"Yes, Avi. And so, we finish the *bracha* with a heartfelt plea for the Moshiach. 'Because we have trusted in Your great and awesome holy Name, may we exult and rejoice in Your salvation.' We reiterate that Hashem chose us from among all the nations because of His great love for us. He gave us the special mission of praising Him and declaring His Oneness with love. That is what we are about to

do by proclaiming, 'Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad!'"

Kinderlach . . .

Does Hashem love you? Absolutely! Beyond the shadow of any doubt. He began by loving our holy forefathers, who loved Him and trusted in Him. They were prepared to sacrifice their lives for Him time and time again. In return for this He watched over them and their offspring with an intense love which endures in us, their descendants, to this very day. They had a mission in life – to unify the Name of the Creator in this world, to love Him with all their hearts, and to learn His Torah. They had big ambitions and so do we, who are privileged to carry on this mission in our lives. However, we need the tools to succeed. Therefore we beseech Him to instill **all the words of Torah** into our hearts, along with a steadfast desire for mitzvos. May we never be embarrassed, and may we be privileged to see the ultimate redemption speedily in our days!

The Punishment Fits the Crime

The Medrash Rabba on Parashas Korach

illustrates the severity of the crime of perpetrating *machlokes* (disputes). Rebbe Berechia says, "How severe is (the crime of) *machlokes*. For the Heavenly *Beis Din* (Court) only punishes offenders over the age of twenty. And the *Beis Din* (Rabbinical Court) in this world only punishes criminals over the age of thirteen. However, in the *machlokes* of Korach, the earth swallowed up one-day-old infants. As the verse states, 'their women, children and babies' (Bamidbar 16:27). 'They and all that was theirs descended alive to the pit' (ibid. 16:33)."

Kinderlach . . .

You see how severe the punishment for *machlokes* is. Even little babies were punished. We must stay far, far away from any *machlokes*. When a fire is burning, we all keep far away, because a fire will burn and destroy anything that gets in its way. We must flee from a *machlokes* like we flee from a fire. Keep your distance. Don't get burned.

¹ Kuzari as cited by Metsuda Siddur

² Abudarhom

