

אהבת עצמו

Love of Self

It is part of human nature as designed by the Creator that a person should love himself. An individual identifies with himself and loves himself more than the entire world or any thing in the world. He will give everything that he has to save his own life. However, there is an evil sickness, the exploit of the evil inclination, which seizes the eyes of the person and makes a man as one who is sick or intoxicated, who cannot distinguish between his right and left hand. This causes damage unto himself; it destroys his body and soul, even more than his own worst enemy could do! This is tremendous folly! In truth, our Sages said (Sota 3a), "A person does not sin unless a spirit of foolishness enters him." A fool's folly will sometimes cause him to commit suicide, Heaven

forbid. Someone who has a brain in his head will realize that it is proper for a person to love himself, his body and soul. He will earn a choice reward by his efforts, so that his soul will delight in abundance and his body will rest in security.

Reasonably speaking, it is fitting for a man to love himself more than his money. Better is parched bread in peace and serenity than a vast fortune which increases anxiety and toil. If G-d has expanded his estate, he should allow his money to afford him physical comfort and he should not labor in this world merely for the sake of greater profit. If he has the financial means, he should amply provide for his bodily needs and consider it as "one who bestows goodness upon himself, is also a man of kindness". However, this is on condition that he not be among those who indulge in wine and meat, devour delicacies, take lengthy vacations, and are excessively intimate with their wives. All of these things destroy body and soul as will be explained later. More than these one needs to be careful regarding anger, for it says (Kohelet 11:10), "Remove anger from your heart, and remove evil from your flesh."

Someone who is not watchful regarding anything which may harm his body is like an enemy unto himself, as one who seeks his own demise, and will have to face judgment for this in the future. If someone who injures another is considered an evil-doer how much more so one who injures himself – one who sullies his flesh is, in fact, cruel. All the more so does one need to be cautious in a place where there is even the slightest doubt of danger to life. If a person places himself at risk for monetary benefit, he demonstrates that he cherishes money more than his life! If he is saved by a miracle, then it will be deducted from his merits. Consequently, he has sold his merits and the great reward awaiting

him in the World to Come, the reward of his mitzvot, for mere monetary gain which is temporal and lost. He will surely be punished and is worthy of forfeiting his life, for he has violated the Torah's admonition: "Be very careful and safeguard your life very well..." (Devarim 4:9), and "You shall protect your lives very much..." (Devarim 4:15). Therefore, a person should not stand in a hazardous place, for example, on dangerous roads or in oceans and rivers, unless it is absolutely necessary for his livelihood. He should be escorted by armed guards in order to minimize the risk to the extent physically possible. If he is able to travel by land, he should not go by oceans and rivers, which are inherently more perilous. In accord with the degree of the danger there will be a diminishing of his merits if a miracle is performed on his behalf. As such, to the extent that he can minimize the danger through money or extra effort, he gains from his industriousness. His "real" profit is greater than his expense. The fulfillment of the mitzva of "You shall protect your lives very much..." is sufficient to protect and save him from any trouble and to bestow a blessing upon his home. He will be whole in his body and money (we will write more about this in the entry **שמירה**).

The primary motivation for his love of self, body and soul, must emanate from the love of his Creator. Just as a man loves his possessions and is careful that they should not be soiled or broken because he loves himself and wants them available for his use, so too, he should be ultra-careful regarding his body and soul that they not be sullied or broken, for they are the tools for serving the Master. This should be his total intention in the guarding of his body and soul, and he should balance his matters with justice. G-d will help him and be his strength.