

To Know HIM is to Love HIM

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There was a number one hit song in 1958 (by *Phil Spector - not Sprecher - and the Teddy Bears - ed. note*) called "To know HIM is to love HIM... and I do!" Was this song about G-d? Because Sh'ma Yisrael, which we recite twice a day states "You shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart and soul." (D'varim 6:5)

This verse that commands us to love G-d raises a complicated question. Is it possible to command someone to love someone else? It would be as if someone commanded someone else that you must love this specific person. How can we control the way we feel? We can control our acts but not our emotions.

Rambam answers this question in two different places, with two different answers.

In his Mishna Torah, Rambam writes "What is the path to love G-d? When a person examines G-d's great and wondrous deeds, (for example the spectacular blood moon last Friday night) and sees G-d's incredible and infinite wisdom of creation, he immediately loves, praises, glorifies and has a great desire to know HIM and to love HIM, as David said, 'My soul is thirsty for You, the living G-d.'" (Yesodei HaTorah 2)

The Rambam continues, that when a person looks at all of these remarkable creations down to the multitude of species and sees the profound wisdom of

the Creator of the billions of galaxies and all creatures, his love and yearning for G-d increases. (Yesodei HaTorah 4)

In Sefer Hamitzvot, in which Rambam counts and explains all the 613 Mitzvot in the Torah, he writes about a different path to loving G-d. "The third Mitzva is that we are commanded to love G-d, to meditate on and closely examine His Mitzvot, in order to understand Him, and through this understanding to achieve a feeling of ecstasy. This is the goal of the Mitzva to love G-d" (Sefer Hamitzvot 3).

If we closely examine these comments we see that the two paths of loving G-d that the Rambam writes about are actually one. The only possibility that can lead us to loving someone is by constantly thinking of and examining his virtues. As regards the Creator, we have 2 ways of examining and comprehending some of G-d's virtues, as they appear to us. In the words of Yishayahu of the Haftora of Shabbat Nachamu "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who created all of these wondrous heavenly bodies. He calls them all by name..."

The other way to love G-d is by studying the incredible wisdom of the Torah and examining the goodness and the beauty of the Mitzvot.

Then we can appreciate the goodness of G-d who gave us such a wonderful world to enjoy. 🌺