



יואל ווערצבערגער,  
נשיא מכון

# THE Zera Emes זרע אמת PROJECT

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IN HONOR OF אסתר בן צפורה שרגא FOR A SPEEDY RECOVERY

The Zera Emes Project by Rabbi Moshe Hubner was created to honor and share the Torah of over 250 Gedolim who weren't zocheh to descendants of their own. Their legacy lives on through their words of Torah and emunah that continue to inspire and touch countless lives. By bringing their timeless divrei Torah and wisdom to life, we create a powerful connection to the past to help inspire today's generation. For sponsorship opportunities or to sign up to the weekly newsletter, email [weekly@zeraemes.com](mailto:weekly@zeraemes.com) or visit [www.zeraemes.com](http://www.zeraemes.com)

The Zera Emes thanks R' Eliezer Cohn for informing us about this sefer and this particular idea.

## ואהבת לרעך כמוך

The Torah commands: “You shall not take revenge; you shall not bear a grudge against your fellow; you shall love your fellow as yourself” (*Vayikra* 19:18).

Targum Onkelos and Targum Yonasan interpret the final clause differently. Targum Onkelos renders it literally: “you shall love your fellow as yourself;” presenting it as a positive command, meaning how we should act towards another. Targum

Yonasan, however, translates: “You shall love your fellow—what is hateful to you, do not do to him,” framing it in the negative, meaning on how we should *not* act towards another.

## דעלך סני להברך לא תעביד

This latter formulation echoes the teaching of Hillel the Elder. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 31a) recounts that a prospective convert asked Hillel to teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel replied:

“What is hateful to you, do not do to another—that is the entire Torah; the rest is its explanation. Go and study.”

The sefer *Shem Olam* notes that Hillel was the teacher of Yonasan ben Uziel (*Sukkah* 28a), which explains why Targum Yonasan reflects this formulation. Still, this does not clarify why Hillel chose a negative framing rather than the seemingly straightforward positive command of the verse.

The Maharsha explains that the verse

## ספר שם עולם

The sefer *Shem Olam* on *Chumash Vayikra* was published in Warsaw, 1877, by R' Moshe Friedman, a relative of the author, R' Eliezer Lipman ben Shlomo Lichtenstein who passed away unexpectedly — without leaving descendants. R' Eliezer was a *talmid muvhak* of R' Aryeh Leib Tzintz (1768-1863).

R' Eliezer was a grandson of R' Kalonymus Kalman, AB”D of Bialystok, who’s brother, R' Avraham Yekusiel Zalman Lichtenstein, authored the two volumes entitled *Zera Avraham*, (1811 and 1820).

There are several *haskamos*, including from R' Eliyahu Chaim Meisels, R' Yisrael Yeshuah of Kutna, and R' Chaim Eliezer Wachs. A particularly significant *haskamah* was written by R' Shraga Feivel, the Rav of R' Eliezer’s hometown, who had known him personally. R' Shraga Feivel attests to R' Eliezer’s deep erudition and broad familiarity with the works of the Rambam, Ibn Ezra, and Ramban. He further noted that although R' Eliezer earned a livelihood through secular work, he dedicated the majority of his time to the composition of this work, viewing it as a spiritual legacy in lieu of biological progeny.

R' Shraga Feivel writes that offering a *haskamah* to the work constituted an act of *chesed* (kindness) both to the departed scholar and to his living widow. In the publisher’s preface, R' Moshe Friedman also notes the contribution of R. Eliezer’s wife, Chavah, herself from a rabbinic lineage,

In the *Beis HaLevi’s* *haskamah* he writes how unusual and praiseworthy it was in that era to produce a detailed halakhic commentary related to *Kodshim*, the central subject of *Vayikra*. “In truth, it is rare in our generation to find someone who truly manages to balance both worlds. Even one burdened with the daily struggle to earn a livelihood can still produce double handfuls of the wisdom of Seder *Kodshim* — brought forth through toil, with sincere devotion to Heaven. In this regard the brilliant author is exemplary.”

The sefer cites the *Malbim* (first printed in 1860) and *Haksav Vahakkabalah* (1839). R' Eliezer sought to engage with each *passuk* by carefully analyzing the classical commentaries—especially Ramban and Ibn Ezra—then tracing the interpretive development through relevant passages in the *Gemara*. He aimed to clarify the *halachic* discussions of the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim*, followed by an examination of the Rambam’s rulings on these issues. Attention is also given to matters of *dikduk* and linguistic principles, enhancing the work’s relevance for those studying the *sugyos* pertaining to *tumah* and *taharah*.

*Shem Olam* might not be well known but is a must learn for anyone studying *Chumash Vayikra* (the *Sharei Aharon* quotes him many times).



must be read as a unit. Since the obligation to love one's fellow follows the prohibitions against taking revenge and bearing a grudge, the concluding phrase is meant as a continuation of those prohibitions: "love your fellow" is expressed by refraining from harmful behavior. In this view, the emphasis is less on cultivating positive treatment of another (a positive mitzvah) and more on avoiding mistreatment (a prohibition).

The Shem Olam notes that the Maharshah's approach addresses the famous questions of the Ramban. How can the Torah command each person to love another as much as himself—something seemingly beyond human capacity? And how does this align with the principle of *chayecha kodmin* (חייך קודמין – one's own life takes precedence)? According to the Maharsha, the Torah does not demand equal emotional love or self-sacrifice; rather, it prohibits treating others in ways one would find objectionable.

However, this interpretation requires further clarification. A similar command appears regarding loving a convert: "you shall love him as yourself" (*Vayikra* 19:34 – ואהבת לו כמוך). There too, Targum Onkelos and Targum Yonasan maintain their respective approaches. Yet in that context, the verse is not directly preceded by the same cluster of prohibitions (though it does say, "do not oppress him" a *passuk* before).

Additionally, the Rambam (*De'os* 6:3; *Avel* 14:1) clearly codifies loving one's fellow as a positive mitzvah. This seems to suggest that the Rambam is in disagreement with Hillel and his greatest student, Yonasan ben Uziel. (*Sukka* 28a)

## ON ONE FOOT

The Shem Olam resolves this by explaining that Hillel's formulation was situational. The convert's condition—to learn the entire Torah in the time it takes to stand on one foot—necessitated brevity. Had Hillel presented the mitzvah in its full positive sense, it would have invited the very

difficulties raised by the Ramban, prolonging the exchange. The negative formulation allowed Hillel to convey the essence concisely. In truth, Hillel – and Yonasan ben Uziel who quotes his rebbi verbatim – agree that the mitzvah is fundamentally a positive mitzvah, as understood by the Rambam.

## CONVERTS

The *Shoel Umeishiv* (*Terumah, Mahadura Revii*) quotes that he heard from the *chabura* of *chasidei* Kotzk and specifically in the name of Hagaon R' Yitzchak Meir (the Chidushei Harim).

Hillel recognized that a non-Jew might not fully grasp the depth of loving another as oneself. Therefore, he presented a more accessible formulation – the mirror explanation. After conversion, the individual would be capable of appreciating the mitzvah in its fuller, positive sense.

The *Shoel Umeishiv* further notes that Jewish communal life fosters a unique sense of interdependence. Many mitzvos require the presence of others—for example, a minyan of ten is necessary for certain prayers, and *Chazal* teach that the Shechina rests among them (*Sanhedrin* 39a). This structure cultivates a deep awareness of mutual reliance, strengthening bonds between individuals.

The message that emerges is both practical and aspirational. At a minimum, we must avoid harming others in ways we ourselves would resent. At a higher level, we are called to actively cultivate genuine love and concern for our fellow. By internalizing this dual perspective, we can promote greater peace and unity—values that, in Jewish thought, are essential foundations for redemption.

The *Shoel Umeishiv* in this *parashah* offers a couple of other explanations.

## שואל ומשיב

Rav Yosef Shaul Halevi Nathanson (1808–27 Adar I, 1875) was from a wealthy family in Brezhan, Galicia. His father was a *talmid chacham*. His great-uncle was the wealthy and learned R' Yudel Nathanson. His grandfather was a leader in Brody. He also learned with his maternal grandfather, R' Dov Berish Heilperin, in Berzhan.

At 17 he married into the wealthy Ettinga family from Lemberg. His father-in-law, Rav Yitzchak Ahron (1827-1891), was the son-in-law of R' Mordechai Orenstein, the Rav of Lemberg (Lvov), who was succeeded by his son R' Yaakov, the Yeshuos Yaakov.

The Shoel Umeishiv learned with his brother-in-law R' Mordechai Ettinga (1804-1863). Together they published five sefarim and corresponded with the giants of the generation, such as R' Akiva Eiger, the Nesivos, R' Mordechai Banet, and the Chasam Sofer.

In 1857, he was appointed Rav in Lvov, a position that had been left empty since the passing of the Yeshuos Yaakov, his wife's uncle. On 26<sup>th</sup> Sivan of the same year, his Rebbetzin passed away. A year later, on 12 Adar, he married Rebbetzin Shifra Buna, and with her money he refused a wage from the community. The Shoel Umeishiv is one of the greatest *poskim* of his time, and the author of over 3000 *teshuvahs* on all subjects, besides works of Torah and Agadah.