**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**midrash on the *Parasha*:**

**Dr. Tziporah Lifshitz**

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

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לע"נ

יהודה פנחס בן הרב שרגא פייוועל

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***Parashat Vaetchanan:***

**“And You Shall Love the Lord Your God”**

**The Commandment “And You Shall Love the Lord Your God” in the *Sifrei***

The Book of *Devarim* offers guidance to the Jewish people, allowing them to fully realize the ideal of living as God's nation in the Promised Land.

As part of this destiny, there appear throughout the book commandments which shape the complex relationship between the people of Israel and their God:

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (*Devarim* 10:12)

To love the Lord your God, to hearken to His voice, and to cleave to Him; for that is your life, and the length of your days; that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya’akov, to give them. (*Devarim* 30:20)[[1]](#footnote-1)

One who reads the first paragraph of *Shema (Devarim* 6:4-9*)* within the sequence of *Parashat Va’etchanan* understands it as being directed to the entire nation.[[2]](#footnote-2) The singular form dominates this passage: "And **you** shall love;” “with all **your** heart;” “and **you** shall teach them;” “when **you** walk," are all in the second-person singular. This is understood by the Oral Law as indicating an obligation falling upon each and every individual member of Israel to accept upon himself or herself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In this *shiur*, we will examine the words of the Tannaim in the *Sifrei* on *Va'etchanan* (32, 5), expounding the verse which immediately follows the creed of *Shema,* “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one”): "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength" (*Devarim* 6:5). The goal of this *shiur* is to acquire a broad appreciation of these *derashot*, while trying to understand the direction they indicate. We will not dwell upon the many important matters included in them. You are invited to investigate these issues on your own.

There are three parts to the *Sifrei's* comments on this verse: the *derashot* of the Tannaim on each of the words in the verse; an expansion on the matter of afflictions; and Rabbi Meir's *derasha* on the verse as a whole.

### Part I:

### THe *Derashot* of the Tannaim on the words of the verse

"And you shall love the Lord your God" (*Devarim* 6:5).

Act [i.e., serve] out of love.

There is a difference between acting out of love and acting out of fear.

If one acts out of love, the reward is doubled.

It is written: "The Lord your God shall you fear, and Him shall you serve" (*Devarim* 10:20).

One may fear another, but if he annoys him, he may leave him.

But you, act out of [absolute] love.

For there is no [absolute] love in the place of [i.e., co-existing with absolute] fear, and no [absolute] fear in the place of [absolute] love except vis-à-vis God [so that if one loves Him absolutely, it follows that one fears him absolutely, and one’s reward is doubled].

Another explanation: "And you shall love the Lord your God."

Cause Him to be beloved by all people, as [did] our father Avraham.

As it is stated: "And the souls that they [Avraham and Sara] had made in Charan" (*Bereishit* 12:5).

Now if all of mankind were gathered together to make a mosquito, and to introduce a soul into it, they could not do so.

Rather, this teaches that Avraham converted them [from idol worship] and brought them under the wings of the *Shekhina*.

"With all your heart" — with both of your inclinations, the good inclination and the evil one.

Another explanation: "With all your heart (*levavekha*)" — with all of the heart in you (*lev bekha*).

Let your heart not be divided over Him.

"And with all your soul" — even if He takes your soul.

And similarly it is stated: "But for Your sake are we killed all the day; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (*Tehillim* 44:23).

Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya says: Can a person be killed all the day?

Rather, the Holy One, blessed be He, accredits the righteous as if they were being killed all the day.

Shimon ben Azai says: "With all your soul" — Love Him until the extraction of your soul.

Rabbi Eliezer says: If it is stated: "with all your soul," why need it be stated: "with all your strength"?

And if it is stated: "with all your strength," why need it be stated: "with all your soul"?

Some people hold their bodies more precious than their wealth; therefore, it is written: "with all your soul."

Other people hold their wealth more precious than their bodies; therefore, it is written: "with all your strength" [i.e., with all your wealth].

The first part of the *derasha* is composed of four units of *derasha*: the first two *derashot* relate to the words "and you shall love," whereas the last two *derashot* relate to the words "with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength." The first *derasha* contrasts love with fear, which is inferior to it: "One may fear another, but if he annoys him, he may leave him. But you, act out of [absolute] love" — for one who loves another will not leave the beloved even if everything does not work out as planned. This *derasha* is based on *Devarim* 10:12-11:1:

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul; to keep for your good the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command you this day?…

You shall fear the Lord your God; Him shall you serve; and to Him shall you cleave, and by His name shall you swear. He is your glory, and He is your God, that has done for you these great and tremendous things, which your eyes have seen…

Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, and His statutes, and His ordinances, and His commandments, always.

Love and fear appear together in the opening verse of this passage, with fear preceding love. Over the course of the passage both appear a second time, fear once again preceding love. It may be suggested that this *derasha* makes this sequence a value judgment: namely, that love is superior to fear. Fear is something that is built in to the nation's (or the individual's) relationship to God; this being the case, love does not require its cancellation. Rather, a basic level of fear or awe enables and advances the relationship towards a more penetrating and mature bond of love and affection.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The second *derasha* is a Midrashic reading of the command, "And you shall love," relating not to the inner being of a person in one’s relationship to God, but to the believer's obligation to take action in order to cause God to be beloved by all.[[5]](#footnote-5)

As mentioned above, the last two units explore the second half of the verse: "with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength." The third *derasha* unit relates to the struggle inherent in the ability to love God, whether the struggle is within the heart of the individual, or with an external factor that takes the lives of those members of Israel who cling to their faith. The fourth unit refers to the depth of love for God that is created in the deep recesses of the human soul.

### Part II:

### On Suffering

The second part of the *derashot* brought in the *Sifrei* on the verse, "And you shall love," focuses on the issue of suffering. In the framework of this *shiur,* we will take note of only a few elements in the great wealth lying in the words of the Sages:

Rabbi Akiva says:

If it is stated: "with all your soul," all the more so, "with all your strength." What then is the meaning of "with all your strength (*me'odekha*)"?

For every measure (*mida*) that he metes out to you, whether for good or for ill, [thank Him].

And similarly David says: I lift up the cup of salvation, and I call upon the name of the Lord" (*Tehillim* 116:13).

"I found trouble and sorrow. And I call upon the name of the Lord" (*Tehillim* 116:3-4).

And similarly Iyov says: "The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (*Iyov* 1:21).

[Bless him] for the measure of good, and all the more so for the measure of ill.

What does his wife say to him?

"Do you still hold fast your integrity? Blaspheme God, and die" (*Iyov* 2:9).

And what does he say to her?

"You speak as one of the impious women speaks. What, shall we accept good at the hand of God, and shall we not accept bad?" (*Iyov* 2:10)

The people of the Generation of the Flood were unaccepting for the good [bestowed upon them], and when ill came upon them, they consented to it perforce.

Surely, there is an *a fortiori* argument.

If those who were unaccepting for good, were accepting for ill,

We, who are accepting for good, all the more so should we be accepting for ill!

This is what he [Iyov] said to her [his wife]: "You speak as one of the impious women speaks."

And, what is more, one should rejoice more in affliction than in good. For if one lives in [the midst of] good through all of one’s life, one’s transgression is not forgiven.

And by what is it forgiven? By afflictions.

Rabbi Eliezer ben Ya’akov said: It is stated: "Whom the Lord loves, He chastises, as a father is reconciled with his son" (*Mishlei* 3:12).

What causes a father to be reconciled with his son? Afflictions.

Rabbi Meir says:

It is stated: "And you shall consider in your heart, that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you" (*Devarim* 8:5).

You and your heart know what you have done and that the afflictions that I have brought upon you are disproportionate [in leniency] to the [severity of the] sins that you have committed.

Rabbi Yosei be-Rabbi Yehuda said:

Precious are afflictions,

For the name of the Lord reposes upon the afflicted one,

As it is stated: "So the Lord your God chastens you."

Rabbi Natan be-Rabbi Yoseif said: Just as a covenant is made with the land, so a covenant is made with afflictions,

As it is stated: "The Lord your God chastens you."

And it is stated [soon after]: "For the Lord your God brings you into a good land" (*Devarim* 8:7).

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai said:

Precious are afflictions.

Three good gifts given to Israel are coveted by the nations of the world.

And they were given to them only by way of afflictions:

Torah, the Land of Israel and the World to Come.

Torah, from where [do we know this]?

"To know wisdom and chastening" (*Mishlei* 1:2).

And it is stated: "Happy is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach out of Your law" (*Tehillim* 94:12).

The Land of Israel, from where [do we know this]?

"So the Lord chastens you… For the Lord your God brings you into a good land."

The World to Come, from where [do we know this]?

"For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and chastisements of chastening are the way of life" (*Mishlei* 6:23).

What is the way that leads a person to the World to Come? Afflictions.

Rabbi Nechemya said:

Precious are afflictions, for just as sacrifices make amends (*meratzim*), so too afflictions make amends.

Regarding sacrifices, it is stated: "And it shall make amends (*venirtza*)for him to atone for him" (*Vayikra* 1:4).

Regarding afflictions, it is stated: "And they shall make amends (*yirtzu*)for their iniquity" (*Vayikra* 26:43).

And, what is more, afflictions make amends more than sacrifices,

For the latter is a function [only] of their wealth; the former, of their bodies.

And thus it is stated: "Skin for skin, all that a man has will he give for his soul" (*Iyov* 2:4).

Once, Rabbi Eliezer was ill,

And there came to visit him Rabbi Tarfon, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya and Rabbi Akiva.

Rabbi Tarfon said:

My master, you are more precious by Israel than the sun.

For the sun gives light only in this world, and you give light both in this world and in the World to Come.

Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: You are more precious by Israel than the rains.

For the rains give life only in this world, and you give life in this world and in the World to Come.

Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya: My master, you are more precious by Israel than father and mother.

For father and mother bring a person to this world, and you bring us to this world and to the World to Come.

Rabbi Akiva said to him:

My master, precious are afflictions.

Whereupon R. Eliezer said to his disciples: Help me up.

Rabbi Eliezer sat up and said: Say on, Akiva.

He said to him:

It is written: "Menashe was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for fifty-five years in Jerusalem" (II *Divrei Ha-yamim* 33:1). And it is stated: "These, too, are the proverbs of Shelomo, which were copied down by the servants of King Chizkiyahu of Yehuda" (*Mishlei* 25:1). Now would it enter your mind that Chizkiyahu taught Torah to all of Israel but not to Menashe his son?

Rather, of all the Torah he taught him and all the toil he invested in him nothing availed him but afflictions.

As it is stated: "And the Lord spoke to Menashe and his people, but they did not listen. And the Lord brought against them the officers of the king of Ashur's army. And they caught Menashe with hunting hooks, and bound him in chains and led him to Bavel. And in his suffering he besought the Lord his God, and he humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And he prayed to Him, and He was entreated of Him, and He heard his supplication, and He returned him to Jerusalem to his kingdom" (II *Divrei Ha-yamim* 33:10-13) — whence we derive that afflictions are precious.[[6]](#footnote-6)

In this part there are seven *derashot* on the subject of afflictions based on verses, and one incident involving the Sages. The opening *derasha*, that of Rabbi Akiva, relates to the words "with all your strength" in the verse being expounded, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength." The rest of the *derashot* relate not to this verse, but to the issue of afflictions. Rabbi Akiva's *derasha*, then, serves as a link connecting the *derashot* on the verse in the first part of the *Sifrei* to the *derashot* about afflictions in the second part.

In contrast to Rabbi Eliezer, who expounds the word *me'odekha* as money, Rabbi Akiva expounds it in the sense of measure (*mida*) and meting out (*medida*): "For every measure that he metes out to you, whether for good or for ill, [thank Him]." God measures out precisely the blessings and struggles which He brings upon each and every person, and every person is commanded to accept his or her lot with love.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Rabbi Akiva brings three proofs for his position from Tanakh. The first proof is a *derasha* relating to verses in *Tehillim* 116, in which we find three instances of calling upon the name of the Lord:

I love that the Lord hears my voice and my supplications.

Because He inclines His ear to me, therefore I call upon Him all my days.

The cords of death compass me, and the straits of the netherworld grab me; I find trouble and sorrow.

And I call upon the name of the Lord: I beseech you, O Lord, deliver my soul.

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is compassionate.

The Lord preserves the simple; I am brought low, and He saves me.

Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord deals bountifully with you.

For You deliver my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling.

I walk before the Lord in the lands of the living.

I trust even when I speak: I am greatly distressed.

I say in my haste: All men are liars.

How can I repay to the Lord all His bountiful dealings toward me?

I lift up the cup of salvation, and I call upon the name of the Lord.

I pay my vows to the Lord, yea, in the presence of all His people.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

I beseech You, O Lord, for I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid; You loosen my bands.

I offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and I call upon the name of the Lord.

I pay my vows to the Lord, yea, in the presence of all His people.

In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem — Halleluyah.

Rabbi Akiva’s first citation, "I found trouble and sorrow. And I call upon the name of the Lord," is not a single verse in *Tanakh*. Rabbi Akiva creates it by joining the first instance of the words "I call upon the name of the Lord" to the end of the previous verse. The new "verse" expresses persistent calling upon the name of God, even in a time of Divine concealment. The second instance of calling upon the name of the Lord in this psalm is in the verse "I lift up the cup of salvation, and I call upon the name of the Lord,” which refers to calling upon the name of the Lord in good times. By combining the two in the *derasha*, Rabbi Akiva teaches that one must love God in every situation in which one finds oneself.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The two additional proofs that Rabbi Akiva brings are taken from the biblical narrative. The first is from the figure of Iyov, who rebukes his wife for her suggestion that he curse God because of the affliction that He has brought upon him. The second is by way of an *a fortiori* argument from the Generation of the Flood, who despite the ungrateful nature of their actions when they live in peace before the Flood, are capable of accepting the decree of the Flood upon themselves, even if only by compulsion.[[9]](#footnote-9)

The last part of Rabbi Akiva's words, "And, what is more, one should rejoice more in affliction than in good. For if one lives in [the midst of] good all of one’s life, one’s transgression is not forgiven. And by what is it forgiven? By affliction," shifts the discussion from the need for symmetry in a person's faith in God, regardless of the situation in which one finds oneself in the present, to a preference for afflictions over good – i.e., the period in a person's life when one is at peace. Thus, these words serve as a link to the *derashot* appearing afterwards, relating to the issue of afflictions. Rabbi Akiva's *derasha*, then, deals with connections, in form and in substance: On the formal level, it connects the first part of the *derashot* about loving God to the second part dealing with afflictions; and on the substantive level, it connects man to God every moment of his life.

The six *derashot* that follow Rabbi Akiva's *derasha* deal with the phenomenon of human suffering in a theological context. The first two *derashot* are derived from verses that relate to afflictions using the image of parent-child relations: Rabbi Eliezer ben Ya’akov notes the closeness created between man and God, that a person become reconciled with and loved by God. Rabbi Meir notes the consciousness that must accompany the afflictions which come upon a person: that they are given with mercy and do not correspond to the severity of the person’s actions.[[10]](#footnote-10) The last four *derashot* note the deepening of the relationship between man and God by way of suffering.

The authors of these *derashot* are Tannaim of the fourth generation, disciples of Rabbi Akiva.[[11]](#footnote-11) "Precious are afflictions" appears four times over the entire unit: in the words of Rabbi Yosei be-Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rabbi Nechemya; and in the end, in the words of Rabbi Akiva. The figure of Rabbi Akiva opens and closes the entire unit.[[12]](#footnote-12)

### Part III:

### Rabbi Meir's *derasha* Of the verse

The final *derasha* on “And you shall love” is that of Rabbi Meir:

Rabbi Meir says: It is stated: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart."

Love him with all your heart, like Avraham our father,

As it is stated: "But you, Israel, My servant, Ya’akov whom I have chosen, the seed of Avraham who loved Me (*ohavi*)" (*Yeshayahu* 41:8).

"And with all your soul," like Yitzchak, who offered himself to be bound upon the altar.

As it is stated: "And Avraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife" (*Bereishit* 22:10).

"And with all your strength (*me’odekha*)."

Thank him like Ya’akov your father.

As it is stated: "I am not worthy of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two camps" (*Bereishit* 32:11).

The command to love God is not a "new" command for the Jew, who must follow in the ways of the Patriarchs, each of whom loved God in his own unique way. Rabbi Meir uses the image of the three Patriarchs as a typology: Avraham symbolizes following God in all of the trials, in the good and the bad, and in acting on behalf of God; Yitzchak symbolizes readiness to give up everything; Ya’akov attributes to God all of the abundance that he has received at all times.

Does Rabbi Meir want to teach us that the essence of a Jew's love for God may be in accordance with one of these models, or that a Jew’s love may or even must include something of all three models?

Is it possible to understand Rabbi Meir's *derasha* as suggesting that there is no one way of fulfilling the *mitzva* to love God, the expressions of which are as varied as those who love Him?[[13]](#footnote-13)

### Conclusion

Do the three parts of the *Sifrei* join to form one whole? It seems that by weaving the three of them together we can point to a meaningful conceptual process.

In terms of looking at the expounded verse, "And you shall love the Lord your God,” the first part (with the addition of Rabbi Akiva's *derasha* of "every measure") should be read as a clarification of the totality of love, which demands man's absolute devotion to God, with all that this involves. In contrast, the third part (the *derasha* of Rabbi Meir) offers a different perspective, one that is softer and more accessible to each member of Israel, and that connects to their common DNA. Loving God is not only dying for the sanctification of God's name, "until the extraction of your soul."

However, the harsh and demanding position occupies a larger place. Thus, the second part, which deals with the issue of suffering, constitutes an expansion of the first part, as a well-developed conceptual passage of the Tannaim, whose aim is to inculcate the importance and necessity of afflictions in the world of the believer. In a generation of persecution, when the issue of national suffering is a reality of life, their discussion focuses on the individual, on each individual’s personal suffering, and not on the nation.[[14]](#footnote-14)

### Historical-theological perspective

The classical Jewish consciousness of the love of God, from the school of the Rambam, focuses on understanding God's wisdom as it expresses itself in the Torah. Thus we read in *Sefer Ha-chinnukh* (418):

That we were commanded to love God, blessed be He, as it is stated: "And you shall love the Lord your God." The substance of the commandmentis that we should think about and consider His commands and actions until we can comprehend Him as best we can. And we should greatly relish comprehending Him, this being the obligatory love. As the *Sifrei* states here: "It is stated: 'And you shall love…’ but I do not know how man is to love God: therefore it is stated: 'And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart'… for through them you come to know Him who spoke and the world came into being." That is to say, through contemplation of the Torah, love will of necessity settle in the heart.

The source cited by the author of *Sefer Ha-chinnukh* is the *derasha* appearing in the *Sifrei* on *Va'etchanan* (33, 6), immediately after the *derashot* discussed here:

“And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart” (*Devarim* 6:6).

Rabbi said: Why is this stated? It is stated: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,” but I do not know how man is to love God, therefore it is stated: “And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart” — put these words on your heart, for through them you come to know Him who spoke and the world came into being, and adhere to His ways.

The Tannaim who expound "And you shall love" relate to love not only in the framework of the Torah; rather, they address love in private and experiential life too, on its own terms.

We are witnesses to marvelous progress for the people of Israel in recent decades. It seems that the love of God on the existential-personal level is revealing itself in the hearts of many of our people. May we merit increasing the light within us, within our people and in the whole world.

*Shabbat shalom*!

May we see salvation and consolation,

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(Translated by David Strauss)

1. There are also many references in the Book of *Devarim* to individuals within the nation. For example:

	* When your child asks you in time to come, saying: What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the ordinance, which the Lord our God has commanded you? (*Devarim* 6:20)
	* In the passage dealing with a city guilty of idol worship: "If your brother, the son of your mother; or your son; or your daughter; or the wife of your bosom; or your friend that is as your own soul entice you secretly, saying: Let us go and serve other gods…" (13:7)
	* In the covenant in *Parashat Nitzavim*: "Your little ones, your wives, and your stranger that is in the midst of your camp, from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water… Lest there be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God…" (29:10, 17)See also *Shemot* 13:1-16, in which the parent-child dialogue takes place “when the Lord brings you to the land of the Canaanites.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This manner of addressing Israel (also in the second-person singular) appears three times in this *parasha*; see *Devarim* 4:1; 5:1; 6:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The verses that follow the first two citations in the previous note are formulated in the plural, in contrast to the first passage of *Shema*, which, as stated, is in the singular. It would be interesting to examine the verses in the Book of *Devarim* that are directed to the nation as a whole and appear in the singular as opposed to those appearing in the plural, and the manner in which these verses are expounded by *Chazal*. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In this *parasha* in the Book of *Devarim,* there are allusions to the transition from the historical period of the Patriarchs, through the bondage in Egypt, and until the end of the Generation of the Wilderness. Thus, the transition from fear to love parallels the evolving consciousness of the people. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This is the source of the famous *derasha* regarding Avraham and Sara's activity as "making" souls to believe in one God. It should be noted that the *derasha* appears here unattributed, whereas in *Bereishit Rabba* 84, 1, this *derasha* is brought in the name of Rabbi Yosei ben Zimra, one of the last Tannaim. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Regarding this story about Rabbi Eliezer and his disciples around his sickbed, see BT *Sanhedrin* 101a; 68a. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Compare this source to Mishna *Berakhot* (9:5), where we find some of the *derashot* in the first part of the *Sifrei* here:

It is incumbent on man to bless [God] for the bad in the same way as for the good, as it says: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength” — “with all your heart” means with your two inclinations, the evil inclination as well as the good inclination; “with all your soul” means, even though He takes your soul [life]; “with all your strength” means, with all your money. Another explanation of “with all your strength” (*me'odekha*) is that whatever treatment He metes out to you, thank Him very greatly (*bi-mod me’od).*

We may see an echo of Rabbi Akiva's exposition in the *derasha* of his disciple Rabbi Meir (Tosefta *Berakhot* 6:1):

Rabbi Meir said: From where do we know that just as one blesses [God] for the good, so he must bless Him for the bad? The verse states: “Which He has given you” (*Devarim* 8:10) — whatever the Lord your God gives to you, your judge in every case that He judges you, whether for good or for ill. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Tehillim* 116 opens with: "I love," and it describes the believer who calls upon the name of the Lord because of difficulty, salvation or the bringing of a sacrifice to the Temple. Rabbi Akiva's *derasha* illuminates the parallelism between it and the verse being expounded: "And you shall love the Lord you God, with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength." [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Compare *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael, Yitro, Ba-chodesh*, 10. Rabbi Akiva points to the ability to receive afflictions with love as a unique feature of the faith of Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Rabbi Meir's *derasha* is related to the *derasha* of his teacher Rabbi Akiva which relates "with all your strength" to the dimension of proportionality, but in a different way. His words contain a justification of God's judgment of man, which is not absolute justice, but justice mixed with mercy. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. As for Rabbi Natan be-Rabbi Yoseif, I have not found a Tanna with this name. In the parallel in the *Mekhilta* (see note 9), this *derasha* is brought in the name of Rabbi Yonatan, who is also a fourth-generation Tanna and a disciple of Rabbi Akiva. This Tanna appears also as "Rabbi Yonatan bei Rabbi Yosei" (see JT *Ma’asrot* 5:2). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See the conceptual development of "Precious are afflictions" in the aggadic literature of the Amoraim in *Shir Ha-shirim Rabba* 2, 2; BT *Berakhot* 5a. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See “*Bet Be-tokh*" of Rav A.Y. Kook, *Musar Avikha* (Jerusalem: 5776), pp. 30-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. It seems that focusing on personal experience in such a period gives additional meaning to their words. It is true that the depth of faith of each individual strengthens the entire nation, but this is not the purpose of the words of *Chazal* here. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)