



## ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM

"I JEW. YOU JEW. I LOVE YOU."

*Learning to Love Even the Difficult Relatives*

# PARSHAH OVERVIEW

## *Acharei Mot*

Following the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, G-d warns against unauthorized entry “into the Holy.” Only one person, the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest), once a year on Yom Kippur, may enter the innermost chamber in the Sanctuary to offer the sacred *ketoret* to G-d.

Another feature of the Day of Atonement

service is the casting of lots over two goats, to determine which should be offered to G-d and which should be dispatched to carry off the sins of Israel to the wilderness.

The *parshah* of *Acharei Mot* also warns against bringing *korbanot* (animal or meal offerings) anywhere but in the Holy Temple,

forbids the consumption of blood, and details the laws prohibiting incest and other forbidden sexual relations.

# PARSHAH OVERVIEW

## *Kedoshim*

The *parshah* of *Kedoshim* begins with the statement: "You shall be holy, for I, the L-rd your G-d, am holy." This is followed by dozens of *mitzvot* (Divine commandments) through which the Jew sanctifies themselves and relates to the holiness of G-d.

These include the prohibition against

idolatry; the *mitzvah* of charity; the principle of equality before the law; and the laws regarding Shabbat, sexual morality, honesty in business, honor and awe of one's parents, and the sacredness of life.

Also in *Kedoshim* is the dictum, "Love your fellow as yourself," which the great sage Rabbi Akiva called "a central

principle of Torah," and about which Hillel said, "This is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary."

## RASHI RULES

1. Rashi is not a moral and ethical guide for life. His sole focus is understanding the plain meaning of the text.
2. Rashi only quotes a teaching's author when their identity sheds light on the text.

## QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

What does “love your neighbor” mean? Can you possibly truly love your neighbor?





The Torah's call to be a  
“holy people” refers to our  
relationships with both G-d  
and fellow humans.

# TEXT 1

*Leviticus 19:18*

לֹא תִקֹּם וְלֹא תִטַּר אֶת בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ, וְאֶהְבֶּךָ.  
לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ, אֲנִי ה'.

Don't take revenge from, or bear a grudge against, the members of your people. Love your neighbor as yourself. I am G-d.

## TEXT 2

*Rashi, ad loc.*

### THE RASHI

"וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ." אָמַר רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא:  
זֶה כָּלֵל גָּדוֹל בַּתּוֹרָה.

"Love your neighbor as yourself." Rabbi Akiva says, "This is a great principle of the Torah."



## TEXT 3

*Rabbi Shabetai ben  
Yoseph Bass, Sifte  
Chachamim, Ibid.*

רוצה לומר: במצוה זו נכלל כל התורה, כמו  
שאמר הלל הזקן: "מאי דסני לך, לחברך  
לא תעביד".

As if to say that all of the Torah is included in this *mitzvah*. This is similar to Hillel's statement, "Don't do to others what you wouldn't want done to yourself."

*Ahavat Yisrael* is so  
fundamental that it  
is equated to the  
entire Torah.



# TEXT 4

*Talmud, Shabbat 31a*

שוב, מעשה בגוי אחד שבא לפני שמאי. אמר לו: גיירני על מנת שתלמדני כל התורה כולה כשאני עומד על רגל אחת! דחפו באמת הבגין שבידו. בא לפני הלל, גייריה. אמר לו: דעלך סני לחברך לא תעבד — זו היא כל התורה כולה, ואיך פירושיה הוא, זיל גמור.

There was an incident involving one gentile who came before Shamai and said, "Convert me on condition that you teach me the entire Torah while standing on one foot."

Shamai pushed him away with the builder's cubit in his hand.

The same gentile came before Hillel. Hillel converted him and taught, "That which is hateful to you do not do to another. That is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary. Go study."

## QUESTIONS ON RASHI

1. What difficulty in the verse does Rabbi Akiva's teaching clarify?
2. Even if we accept that Rabbi Akiva's statement is necessary for clarifying the *peshat*, why is it important to mention his name?

# TEXT 5

*Leviticus 19:9–17*

ט. וּבִקְצֹרְכֶם אֶת קְצִיר אֲרֻצְכֶם,  
לֹא תִכְלֶה פֶּאֶת שְׂדֵךְ לַקָּצֵר,  
וְלִקֹּט קְצִירְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט.

י. וְכִרְמֶךָ לֹא תַעֲזֹלֵל וּפְרֹט  
כִּרְמֶךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט, לְעַנִּי וְלִגֵּר  
תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם, אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

יא. לֹא תִגְנוּבוּ וְלֹא תִכְחָשׁוּ וְלֹא  
תִשְׁקְרוּ אִישׁ בְּעַמִּיתוֹ.

יב. וְלֹא תִשָּׁבְעוּ בִשְׁמִי לַשָּׁקֶר,  
וְחָלַלְתָּ אֶת שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ, אֲנִי ה'.

יג. לֹא תַעֲשֹׁק אֶת רֵעֶךָ וְלֹא  
תִגְזֹל, לֹא תִלִּין פְּעֻלַּת שָׂכִיר  
אֹתָךְ עַד בֹּקֶר.

9. When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not fully reap the corner of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.

10. You shall not glean your vineyard, and the fallen grapes of your vineyard you shall not gather. For the poor and the proselyte you shall leave them. I am G-d.

11. You shall not steal. You shall not deny [a rightful claim] and each one of you shall not lie to each other.

12. You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your G-d, I am G-d.

13. You shall not withhold the wages of your fellow, and you shall not rob. It shall not remain overnight, the wage of a day laborer, keeping it in your possession until morning.

# TEXT 5

*Leviticus 19:9–17*

יד. לא תקלל חרש ולפני עור  
לא תתן מכשל, ויראת  
מאלקיך, אני ה'.

טו. לא תעשו עול במשפט, לא  
תשא פני דל ולא תהדר פני  
גדול, בצדק תשפט עמיתך.

טז. לא תלך רכיל בעמך, לא  
תעמד על דם רעך, אני ה'.

יז. לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך,  
הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך ולא  
תשא עליו חטא.

14. You shall not curse a deaf person, and before a blind person you shall not place a stumbling block; you shall fear your G-d. I am G-d.

15. You shall not commit injustice in judgment, you shall not favor a poor person, and you shall not show honor to a powerful person. With righteousness shall you judge your fellow.

16. Do not be a talebearer among your people. You shall not stand idly by [when] the blood (life) of your fellow [is in danger]. I am G-d.

17. You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall certainly rebuke your friend, [but] you shall not bear a sin on his account.

## QUESTION

If we are already commanded to love one another, why are all these additional commandments about interpersonal conduct necessary?

## ANSWER

Rashi explains that “Love your fellow as yourself” is not just another *mitzvah*; **it is a principle.**

# TEXT 6

*Exodus 20:8–11*

ח. זְכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ.

ט. שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלָאכָתְךָ.

י. וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל מְלָאכָה, אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ עַבְדְּךָ וְאַמְתֶּךָ וּבְהֶמְתֶּךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ.

יא. כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ אֶת הַיָּם וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּם וַיָּנַח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, עַל כֵּן בֵּרַךְ ה' אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ.

8. Remember the Shabbat day, to keep it holy.

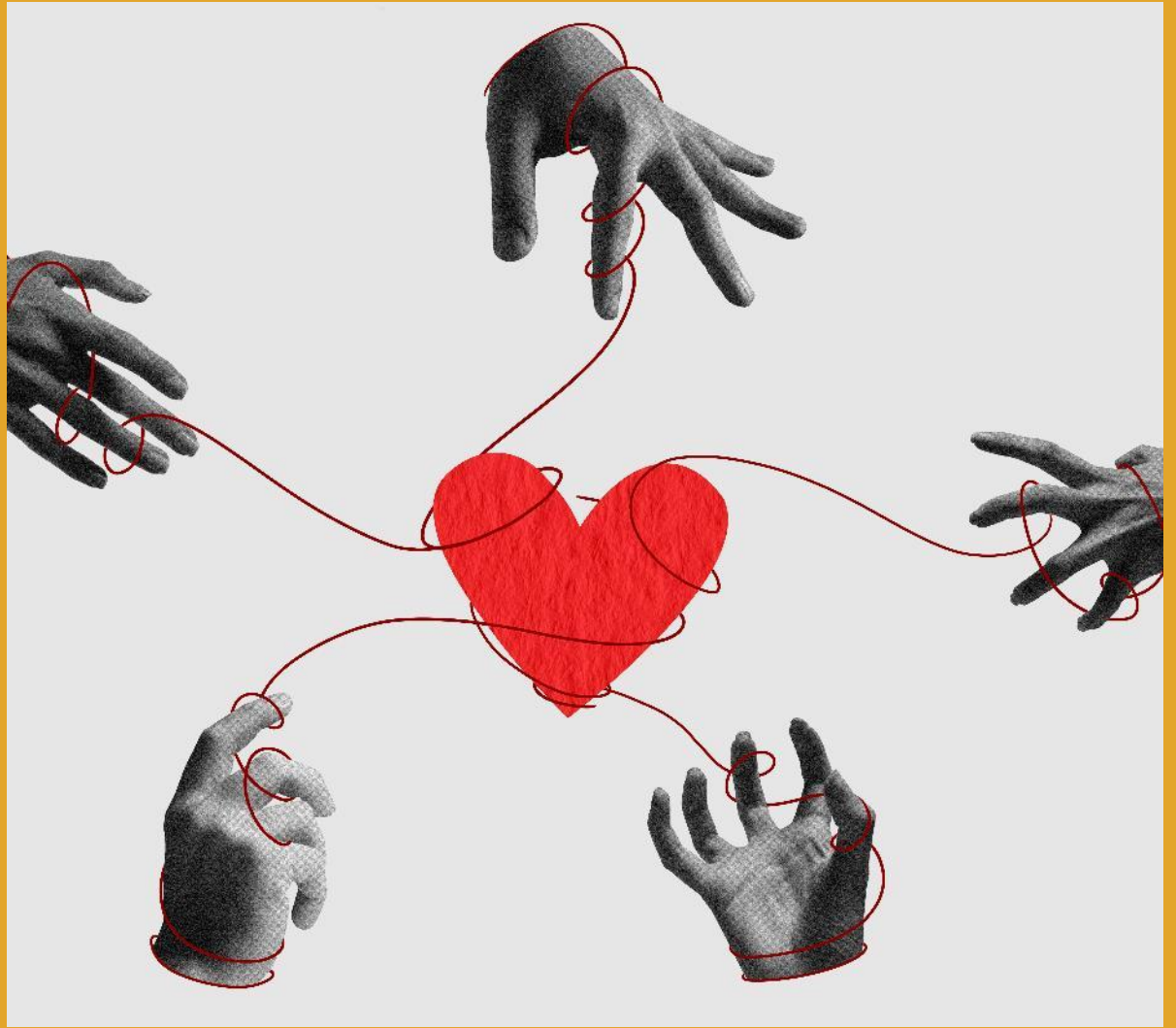
9. Six days you should labor and do all your work.

10. But the seventh day is a Shabbat to G-d. On it you should not do any work—you, your son, your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor the stranger that is within your gates.

11. For in six days G-d made Heaven and Earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore G-d blessed the Shabbat day, and made it holy.



Just as “rest” defines Shabbat and gives shape to its laws, “love” defines our moral obligations and serves as the basis for all interpersonal *mitzvot*.



## ANSWER 1

Rashi brings Rabbi Akiva's teaching to clarify why there are so many *mitzvot* regarding interpersonal relationships. These *mitzvot* are not redundant at all; rather, they are the practical applications of the grand Torah principle of *Ahavat Yisrael*.

## QUESTION

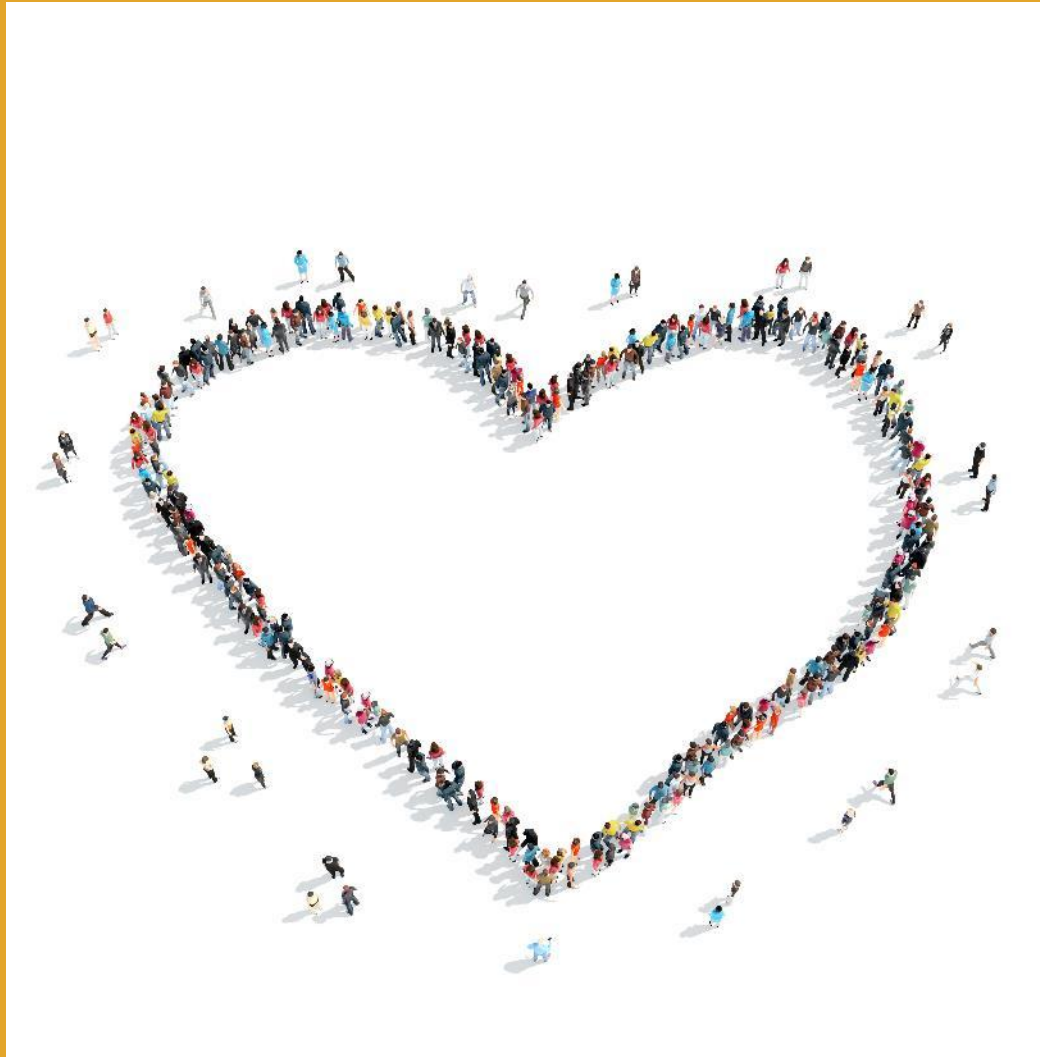
Why does the Torah choose to frame all interpersonal *mitzvot* as details of the larger principle of *Ahavat Yisrael*?

## TEXT 7

*Nachmanides,  
Leviticus 19:18*

וטעם "ואהבת לרעך כמוך" הפלגה, כי לא יקבל  
לב האדם שיאהוב את חבירו כאהבתו את נפשו.

This is an expression by way of overstatement,  
for a human heart is not able to accept a  
command to love one's neighbor as oneself.



## QUESTION

How can the Torah  
command us to feel  
love for every Jew?

## TEXT 8

*Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi  
Mecklenburg, Haketav  
Vehakabbalah 19:18*

רוצה לומר: כל אופני הטוב והחסד שאדם  
מסכים בדעתו וגומר בלבו שראוי לו לקבל  
מאהובו, יעשה לרעהו שהוא כל אדם.

What the verse means is this: Whatever goodness and kindness you think you deserve from those who love you—do that to others.

HOW TO FEEL LOVE FOR EVERY JEW:

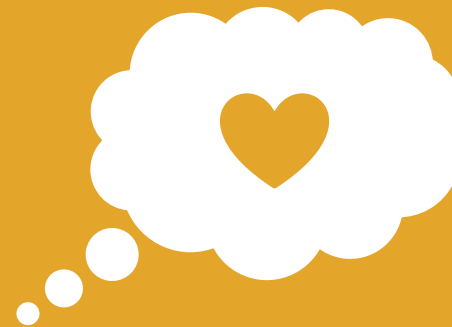
### FIRST APPROACH: ACTS OF LOVE

The Torah asks us to perform acts of love and treat others the way we would want to be treated.



### SECOND APPROACH: AN ATTITUDE OF LOVE

The Torah asks us to maintain a mindset of goodwill and genuine concern for the well-being of others.



## TEXT 9

*Nachmanides,  
Leviticus 19:18*

אלא מצות התורה שיאהב חבירו בכל  
ענין, כאשר יאהב את נפשו בכל הטוב.

The Torah's commandment means that one is to love another in all matters, as one loves all good for themselves.



## TEXT 10

*Rabbi Avraham ibn  
Ezra, Leviticus 19:18*

שיאהב הטוב לחבירו כאשר יאהב  
לנפשו.

It means that you should love  
whatever's good for your friend as you  
do for yourself.

HOW TO FEEL LOVE FOR EVERY JEW:

### RASHI'S APPROACH

The Torah expects us to attain a genuine, heartfelt love for one's fellow Jew. This is achieved through action: By actively engaging in all of these interpersonal *mitzvot*, a person will attain true love.



# TEXT 11

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 19, p. 208*

אט די שאלות פארענטפערט רש"י מיט זיין פירוש אז "ואהבת לרעך כמוך" איז א כלל (פון פרטים): . . .

זייענדיק א כלל - איז פארשטאנדיק אז דער קיום בפועל איז דורך קיום הפרטים, אנהייבנדיק פון די ערשט גערעכנטע לפני זה: לא תלך רכיל גו' לא תשנא גו' לא תקום גו' און – נאך פאר דעם פון לא תגנובו גו' אן.

Rashi answers these questions with his explanation that “Love another as yourself” is a general principle that encompasses many details. . . .

Since it is a general principle, it’s understood that its practical fulfillment happens through observing the individual details. And that starts with the commandments listed immediately before it: “Don’t be a gossipmonger. . . . Don’t hate your fellow. . . . Don’t take revenge. . . .” And even before that, with commands like “Don’t steal.”

Observing the individual *mitzvot* brings one to *Ahavat Yisrael*, and *Ahavat Yisrael* gives each *mitzvah* a deeper meaning and purpose.



## TEXT 12A

*Talmud, Bava Batra  
10a*

וְזוֹ שְׂאֵלָה שָׂאֵל טוֹרְנוּסְרוּפּוּס הָרָשָׁע אֶת רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא . . . אֶמְשׁוֹל לָךְ  
מִשָּׁל, לְמָה הַדָּבָר דּוּמָה? לְמַלְךְ בָּשָׂר וָדָם שֶׁכָּעַס עַל עֶבְדּוֹ, וַחֲבָשׁוֹ  
בְּבֵית הָאֲסוּרִין, וְצָנָה עָלָיו שֶׁלֹּא לְהַאֲכִילוֹ וְשֶׁלֹּא לְהַשְׁקוֹתוֹ, וְהֵלֵךְ אָדָם  
אַחַד וְהַאֲכִילוֹ וְהַשְׁקָהוּ. כִּשְׁשָׁמַע הַמֶּלֶךְ, לֹא כּוֹעֵס עָלָיו?

Turnus Rufus said to Rabbi Akiva . . . , "I will illustrate this to you with a parable. To what is this matter comparable? It is comparable to a king of flesh and blood who was angry with his slave and put him in prison and ordered that he should not be fed or given to drink. Then, one person went ahead and fed him and gave him something to drink. If the king heard about this, would he not be angry with that person?"

## TEXT 12B

*Talmud, ibid.*

אמר לו רבי עקיבא, אמשול לך משל: למה הדבר דומה? למלך בשר ודם שפגע על בנו וחבשו בבית האסורין, וצנה עליו שלא להאכילו ושלל להשקותו. והלך אדם אחד והאכילו והשקהו.

כששמע המלך, לא דורון משגר לו? ואנן קרוין בנים, דכתיב: "בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם!"

Rabbi Akiva said to Turnus Rufus, "I will illustrate the opposite to you with a different parable. To what is this matter comparable? To a king of flesh and blood who was angry with his son and put him in prison and ordered that he should not be fed or given to drink. Then, one person went ahead and fed him and gave him a drink.

"If the king heard about this once his anger abated, would he not react by sending that person a gift? Consider that we are called children, as it is written, 'You are children of G-d'" (Deuteronomy 14:1).



Rabbi Akiva  
viewed every Jew  
as a child of G-d.

## TEXT 13

*Mishnah, Avot 3:14*

רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אָמַר . . . תְּבִיבִין יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנִקְרְאוּ בָנִים  
לְמָקוֹם. חֲכָה יִתְרָה נֹדַעַת לָהֶם שְׁנִקְרְאוּ בָנִים לְמָקוֹם,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה" (דְּבָרִים יד, א).

Rabbi Akiva said: The Jewish people are G-d's beloved children. This love is amplified by the fact that G-d publicized our relationship, as the verse states, "You are children to the L-rd your G-d" (Deuteronomy 14:1).



## ANSWER 2

Rashi mentions Rabbi Akiva by name to further show us how to cultivate *Ahavat Yisrael*. Rabbi Akiva saw all Jews as G-d's children, teaching us to view every Jew as family. This is the key to achieving true love and unity.

HOW TO FEEL LOVE FOR EVERY JEW:

## RASHI'S APPROACH

1. One must have a guiding principle of love, rooted in the understanding that every Jew is family.
2. One must engage in concrete actions—fulfilling positive *mitzvot* and avoiding prohibitions—to bring this love to life.



## KEY POINTS

1. The *mitzvah* to love your fellow Jew isn't just one of many *mitzvot*—it's a guiding principle that informs and unifies all interpersonal *mitzvot*.
2. Rashi quotes Rabbi Akiva here to answer why so many interpersonal *mitzvot* are listed if we already have a single command to love one another: They're not separate; they are practical expressions of that love.
3. Rabbi Akiva emphasizes that Jews are not merely coreligionists—we are all G-d's children, part of one family. Recognizing this helps us genuinely care for others.
4. The Torah shows us that true love is achieved not by waiting for feelings to emerge but by consistently performing acts of kindness. The actions nurture the emotions.
5. When we stop gossiping, help another Jew, or resist revenge out of the awareness that this person is family, it shifts not just behavior but the heart itself.

