

“DO NOT LISTEN TO THAT PROPHET ... HASHEM YOUR G-D IS TESTING YOU TO KNOW IF YOU LOVE [HIM]...” (DEVARIM 13:4,6)

**Some people start to believe his message**

A CHARISMATIC INDIVIDUAL CLAIMS that Hashem has sent him to be His prophet and instructs the Jewish people, “Hashem now wants us to worship idolatry!” To convince the many skeptics, he invites everyone to a gathering where, lo and behold, he performs several miraculous wonders to verify his claim. Stunned by the amazing spectacle, some people start to believe his message.

The Torah warns us not to be fooled. As the *pasuk* states, it is merely a test from Hashem, to see if we love Him. The Ramban (13:2) explains that the Torah then mentions the Exodus from Egypt to provide the reason why we should not be impressed by the signs and wonders: We know from the Exodus, which was a real event, not a vision or dream, that Hashem is the Master of the universe, is unlimited in His ability to do whatever He wants, and that there is no other like Him. We also know from our experience at Sinai that Hashem spoke to us face to face and commanded us to serve Him and worship no other deity.

The Ramban elaborated on this concept earlier (*ibid.* 4:9), where Hashem warns us – as a nation – to never forget what we saw and experienced when we stood at Sinai: If the Torah was only a prophecy transmitted from Hashem through Moshe, we could eventually be fooled by a new “prophet” who contradicts the Torah and brings “miraculous” proofs to his blasphemy. However, now that we saw with our eyes and heard with our ears Hashem speaking directly to us, we will pay no heed to any new signs because we will know it is false.

**Love for Hashem is a critical emotional factor**

There seems to be a contradiction here. On one hand, the *pasuk* tells us that the signs and wonders are a test of our love for Hashem. By definition, a test for a certain quality means you need that ingredient to pass. This means that love for Hashem is a critical emotional factor in disproving the false prophet. On the other hand, the Ramban tells us it’s a basic intellectual exercise – we know, from our first-hand experiences in Egypt and at Sinai, that Hashem is the only true G-d. We can easily reject any false prophet. If so, why do we need love of Hashem? How does it indicate any love for Hashem if we can simply disprove this charlatan using the stronger proofs of experiential knowledge?

**What should be simple and clear, is now clouded**

We must answer that despite our superior knowledge and even with our fear of Heaven, we would fail, were it not for our love for Hashem that saves us. When a person is confronted with an impressive display of supernatural power, it astonishes him and disrupts his thinking processes. What should be simple and clear, is now clouded by the emotional reaction that upsets his intellectual equilibrium. One who is permeated with *ahavas Hashem*, however, has the additional motivation to look deeper and think calmly and rationally, until he realizes that there really is no question – the “prophet” is obviously an impostor.

If we work on cultivating love of Hashem, by thinking about the boundless kindness we constantly receive from Him, it will be a potent force to help us pass the tests we face each day. We struggle against powerful temptations, desires and rationalizations that often confuse our intellectual sense of right and wrong. If we are fortified with *ahavas Hashem*, it will be a source of extra motivation to see through the *yetzer hara’s* smoke and mirrors and to realize the truth: following the Torah’s recipe for success and happiness is truly the best choice for us, both in this world and the world-to-come.