

Greek Philosophy and the Mishnah: On the History of Love that Does Not Depend on a Thing*

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In the fifth chapter of *Avot* we read:

כל אהבה שהיא תלויה בדבר—בטל דבר, בטלה אהבה; ושאינה תלויה בדבר — אינה בטילה לעולם. איזו היא אהבה שהיא תלויה בדבר, זו אהבת אמנון ותמר; ושאינה תלויה בדבר, זו אהבת דויד ויהונתן

Any love that is dependent on a thing – **when the thing is gone, the love is gone**; but a love that is not dependent on a thing will never dissolve. What is a love that is dependent on a thing? This is the love of Amnon and Tamar. And one that is not dependent on a thing? This is the love of David and Jonathan.¹ (*Mish. Avot* 5.16)

Anyone familiar with Greek philosophical reflections on love and friendship will immediately sense a resemblance. The distinction between love based on sexual pleasure and higher forms of love is found in both Plato and Aristotle. In Plato's *Symposium* we find the following:

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¹ All translations are my own.

πονηρός δ' ἐστὶν ἐκεῖνος ὁ ἐραστής ὁ πάνδημος, ὁ τοῦ σώματος μάλλον ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐρώων· καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲ μόνιμός ἐστιν, ἅτε οὐδὲ μόνιμου ἐρώων πράγματος. ἅμα γὰρ τῷ τοῦ σώματος ἄνθει λήγοντι, οὐπερ ἦρα, οἴχεται ἀποπτάμενος, πολλοὺς λόγους καὶ ὑποσχέσεις κατασχύνας· ὁ δὲ τοῦ ἡθους χρηστοῦ ὄντος ἐραστής διὰ βίου μένει, ἅτε μόνιμῳ συντακεῖς.

The common kind of lover is debased, the one who loves the body rather than the soul. And he is not abiding, since he does not love an abiding quality. Once the flower of youth fades, which is what he loved, he flutters off and is gone, dishonoring his many words and promises. The lover of a soul which is worthy, on the other hand, remains throughout a lifetime, since he becomes attached to that which abides.² (183d-e)

This idea is expressed with greater clarity and abstraction by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Believing that everything, including friendship, has a cause, Aristotle divided love or friendship into three kinds based on three inherently lovable qualities: utility, pleasure and goodness or virtue. Aristotle favored friendships based on goodness, of course, and offered a variety of arguments to demonstrate its superiority. Most relevant to the Mishnah is his argument that friendships based on utility and pleasure are transitory. Since these factors are extraneous to the beloved, and therefore do not necessarily remain with him, any friendship based on them is transitory as well:

οἷτε δὴ διὰ τὸ χρήσιμον φιλοῦντες διὰ τὸ αὐτοῖς ἀγαθὸν στέργουσι, καὶ οἱ δι' ἡδονὴν διὰ τὸ αὐτοῖς ἡδύ, καὶ οὐχ ἢ ὁ φιλούμενός ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἢ χρησίμος ἢ ἡδύς. κατὰ συμβεβηκός τε δὴ αἱ φιλίαι αὐταὶ εἰσιν· οὐ γὰρ ἢ ἐστὶν ὅσπερ ἐστὶν ὁ φιλούμενος, ταύτη φιλεῖται, ἀλλ' ἢ πορίζουσιν οἱ μὲν ἀγαθόν τι οἱ δ' ἡδονήν. εὐδιάλυτοι δὴ αἱ τοιαῦταί εἰσι, μὴ διαμενόντων αὐτῶν ὁμοίων· ἐὰν γὰρ μηκέτι ἡδεῖς ἢ χρησιμοὶ ᾧσι, παύονται φιλοῦντες. τὸ δὲ χρήσιμον οὐ διαμένει, ἀλλ' ἄλλοτε ἄλλο γίνεται. **ἀπολυθέντος οὖν δι' ὃ φίλοι ἦσαν, διαλύεται καὶ ἡ φιλία**, ὡς οὐσης τῆς φιλίας πρὸς ἐκεῖνα.

Those who are friends because of utility love [one another] because of what is good for themselves, and those who are friends because of pleasure love because of what is pleasurable for themselves, and not insofar as the beloved is, but insofar as he is useful or pleasant. These friendships are based on coincidence. For the beloved is loved not insofar as he is who he is, but insofar as they provide something good or pleasure. Such friendships are readily dissolved, as soon as the friends do not remain similar. For if they are no longer pleasant or useful they stop loving. And utility does not endure, but differs at different times. **And when the thing for which they were friends dissolves, the friendship dissolves as well**, since the friendship was for that. (NE 8.3.2-3: 1156a14-24)

² The sentiment is expressed by Pausanias who seeks admiration for his long-term relationship with his beloved, Agathon. A similar idea appears also in Xen. *Mem.* 4.1, *Sym.* 8.21.

Not only is the idea similar, but the Hebrew phrase, בטל דבר, בטלה אהבה, is almost a translation of the Greek, ἀπολυθέντος οὖν δι' ὃ φίλοι ἦσαν, διαλύεται καὶ ἡ φιλία.³

The similarities between the Mishnah and these Greek sources are palpable. All these sources assume that there are distinct varieties of love, that these varieties differ by the objects they pursue, that by virtue of the differences between the objects of love the kinds of love are better or worse, and that a chief sign of their being better or worse is their lastingness. All view love that is based on pleasure as among the lower and less lasting forms. Of course, these similarities may simply reflect a common human insight into the nature of love.⁴ And even if there is some dependence here, it is not clear that the Mishnah agrees with the Greek theories. On the surface at least, the Mishnah seems to affirm the existence of a form of love that is, in direct conflict with both Plato and Aristotle, not dependent on anything whatsoever.

If there is some dependence it is not easy to say which if either of these Greek writers bears greater responsibility. The Mishnah shares with Aristotle an abstract formulation, speaking of love rather than lovers, and speaking of its dependence on a *davar* rather than on the body. On the other hand, it agrees with Plato in offering only one example of an inferior form of love, one based on pleasure, while Aristotle contrasts both pleasure-based and utility-based relationships with the superior form of friendship.⁵

The apparent divergence from Aristotle may be more apparent than real, however. The fact that the *Tanna* speaks of two kinds of love does not necessarily show either a lack of familiarity with or a rejection of the Aristotelian

³ Considered as a translation, the Hebrew phrase is superior to a more literal translation since it puts the idea into a succinct and idiomatic Hebrew form.

⁴ This possibility would be more likely, however, if we had good evidence that similar concepts of friendship and comparisons between them developed among peoples who had no contact with Hellenism.

⁵ This resolution into two categories is reflected also in *Toldot Yitzhak*, the Biblical commentary of Rabbi Isaac KARO (born 1458) on Gen. 25:28 where the love of Isaac for Esau is described as love that is dependent on something:

ויהב יצחק את עשו כי ציד בפיו. היא אהבה תלויה בדבר, אהבת הערב. **ורבקה אוהבת את יעקוב.** אהבת הטוב.

And Isaac loved Esau because quarry was in his mouth. This is love that is dependent on something, love of the pleasant. **But Rebecca loves Jacob.** Love of the good.

Here again we have the distinction between the love of pleasure and the love of virtue without mention of the category of utility. Rabbi Isaiah HOROWITZ adds an interesting observation on this passage in his composition *Shnei Luchot HaBrit (Torah Shebikhtav, Parashat Toldot, M'kor HaB'rachot)*. He notes that the word love appears in the past tense when describing Jacob's love of Esau, indicating that this kind of love may end, but appears in the present tense when describing Rebecca's love for Jacob, indicating its eternity.

doctrine, since the lower form of love may be meant to include relationships based on utility as well.⁶ The fact that the *Tanna* does not use a term for the body or for pleasure in describing the relationship of Amnon and Tamar, but uses instead the term *davar*, suggests an awareness of a broader range of possible objects of desire, as in Aristotle. There are many ways to explain the fact that the *Tanna* offers no example of utility-relationships, even if he had them in mind. He may have preferred a simple contrast between good and bad forms of relationships over a more complex tripartite contrast for didactic or literary reasons. He may not have found as good a Biblical example of a relationship based on utility.⁷ The story of Amnon and Tamar places great emphasis on the temporary nature of the relationship, and this may have made it seem ideally suited to the Mishnah's purpose.

Moreover, it is possible to interpret the example of David and Jonathan as containing an implicit reference to utilitarian forms of friendship. This example is valuable because it seems to say something not only about what a good friendship is but also about what it is not. The relationship between David and Jonathan is evidently free from whatever characterizes a bad relationship. It would not be an excellent example of a relationship free from any element of pleasure, however, since David laments that Jonathan was pleasant to him (2 Samuel 1:26). If the *Tanna* wanted a clear example of a lasting relationship not based on pleasure, he might have chosen the relationship between Naomi and Ruth, for example, in which no suggestion of pleasure is found, and in which one of the friends even develops a romantic relationship with someone else. Why then did the *Tanna* choose the example of David and Jonathan and not that of Naomi and Ruth? The obvious answer is that whereas Ruth can be said to have benefited from her relationship with Naomi, by her marriage with Naomi's relative Boaz, Jonathan's love for David is marked by his willingness to sacrifice his personal interest, his claim to the throne, because of his love for David.⁸

⁶ Rabbi Joseph ALASHKAR (expelled from Spain in 1492) in his commentary *Merkevet HaMishneh* on *Avot* clearly took this view. He understood the Mishnah as assuming the Aristotelian tripartite division of friendship:

והנה האהבה היא נחלקת לשלשה חלקים, אהבת הערב, ואהבת המועיל, ואהבת הטוב במה שהוא טוב.
Love is divided into three parts, love of the pleasant, love of the useful, and love of the good for its being good.

He describes this last form as a love that is not dependent on a *davar*, implying that the former two are in the other category. See also Don Isaac Abarbanel, discussed below.

⁷ *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, parasha 26, offers the friendship of Balaam and Balak as such an example. (Final redaction of this composition is believed to have been in the tenth century, but an apparent reference to an oral version is found in *Bab. Ket.* 106a). One might also adduce the relationship of Jacob and Laban.

⁸ See also the comments of Rabbeinu Yonah GERONDI [2005] in his commentary on *Avot*:

Whatever the circumstances in which the relationship was formed, the example is chosen because it exemplifies a relationship that continues despite the loss of utility or advantage. It is thus an example of a relationship whose excellence is manifest in the fact that it is not based on interest or utility. By choosing this as the example of the good relationship, the *Tanna* has contrived to refer implicitly to the second form of the lower Aristotelian friendship, that based on utility.⁹ He has referred to three kinds of friendship by offering examples of two.

It is more difficult, however, at first sight, to reconcile the description of the higher form of friendship in the Mishnah with either Plato's or Aristotle's theory. For both Plato and Aristotle, longer-lasting friendships are possible only for those who are virtuous or good and whose motive for friendship is love of the good. Here is what Aristotle has to say:

τελεία δ' ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν φιλία καὶ κατ' ἀρετὴν ὁμοίων· οὗτοι γὰρ τὰγαθὰ ὁμοίως βούλονται ἀλλήλοις ἢ ἀγαθοί, ἀγαθοὶ δ' εἰσὶ καθ' αὐτούς, οἱ δὲ βουλόμενοι τὰγαθὰ τοῖς φίλοις ἐκείνων ἔνεκα μάλιστα φίλοι· δι' αὐτούς γὰρ οὕτως ἔχουσι, καὶ οὐ κατὰ συμβεβηκός· **διαμένει οὖν ἡ τούτων φιλία ἕως ἂν ἀγαθοὶ ᾦσιν, ἢ δ' ἀρετὴ μόνιμον.**

Perfect (or: chosen for its own sake) is the friendship of the good and those similar in virtue. For these wish the good things for each other in similar ways insofar as they are good; and they are good in themselves. And those who wish the good things for their friends for their

האהבה שאין לה הפסק הוא אף אל פי שישער האדם שיגיע לו קצת היזק וקלן דוגמת דוד ויהונתן שא"ע פ שהיה ראוי לעמוד במקום אביו ודוד היה עתיד להסיר אותו מהמלכות עם כל זה היתה אהבתו עמו בקשר אמ"ץ.

The love that does not end is when it endures even when a person estimates that he will suffer some harm and shame, as in the case of David and Jonathan. Even though he was qualified to be king after his father, and David was destined to remove him from the kingship, nevertheless his love for him was a tight bond.

This view of Jonathan's relation with David is found also in Magen Avot of Rabbi Simeon ben Zemach Duran [2000] ad loc., in Sefer Halkkarim 3.35 of Rabbi Yosef Albo [1930], and in Abarbanel [2004] ad loc.

⁹ It is interesting to note that Aristotle himself reduces his tripartite theory to a two-part one at one point in his discussion, arguing that the useful is not a separate category, since everything that is useful contributes either to the good or to the pleasant:

δοκεῖ γὰρ οὐ πᾶν φιλεῖσθαι ἀλλὰ τὸ φιλητόν, τούτο δ' εἶναι ἀγαθὸν ἢ ἡδὺ ἢ χρήσιμον· δόξειε δ' ἂν χρήσιμον εἶναι δι' οὗ γίνεται ἀγαθὸν τι ἢ ἡδονή, ὥστε φιλητὰ ἂν εἴη τὰγαθὸν τε καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ ὡς τέλη.

It seems that not everything is loved, but only the lovable, and this is either good or pleasurable or useful. And the useful would seem to be that through which something good or pleasure is obtained, so that only the good and the pleasurable are lovable as ends. (NE 8.2: 1155b18-21)

One doubts, however, that this argument, which Aristotle ignores in the rest of his discussion, provides the explanation for our Mishnah. Rabbi Moses Almosnino in his commentary on Avot argued that the *Tanna* reduced the Aristotelian categories to two on the grounds that the category of utility is subsumed by the category of pleasure since the useful is only pursued to the extent that it pleases. This is an original explanation, not found in Aristotle, but based on a good understanding of Aristotelian psychology.

own sakes are especially friends. For they are disposed in this way for their own sakes and not by coincidence. **Their friendship lasts as long as they are good, and virtue is abiding.** (NE 8.3.6: 1156b7-12)

While Aristotle speaks of virtue and goodness as the source of a long-lasting bond, the Mishnah speaks of a relationship that depends on no qualities at all. Taken literally, the Mishnah contradicts the most basic assumption common to Plato and Aristotle: that there must be some motivating factor for any affection.

But while it is possible to interpret the Mishnah in this manner, it is equally possible to interpret it as agreeing with the philosophers. The question is how to interpret the term *davar*. Does it refer to anything at all, even a quality of soul, or does it refer only to some kinds of things, such as those that provide utility or pleasure? The term *davar* in Mishnaic Hebrew means a word or a thing. It can refer to such nebulous things as events or subjects (...למה הדבר דומה...). But I have not found a case in which it is used to refer to a quality or a quality of soul.¹⁰ If *davar* does not refer here to spiritual qualities, but only to things, a friendship that is not dependent on a *davar* may still be dependent on the spiritual qualities of the beloved, as is the case for Aristotle's higher form of friendship. Indeed, many commentators have sensed that in speaking of a love that is not dependent on a *davar*, the Mishnah only means to exclude certain kinds of things.¹¹

The example of David and Jonathan also sheds some light on this question. Is this an example of a friendship that is based on no good quality whatsoever, or is it an example of a friendship based on love of virtue? The answer to this depends to some extent on whose love is being considered primarily, the love of David for Jonathan or the love of Jonathan for David. The Biblical story of Jonathan and David is full of references to Jonathan's love for David, not the reverse (1 Sam. 18:1; 19:1; 20:17). Even in David's lament for Jonathan the emphasis is on the love that Jonathan felt towards him:

נפְּלֹאֲתָה אֶהְבֶּתְךָ לִי מֵאֲהַבַת נָשִׁים

¹⁰ An anonymous reader suggests 1 Kings 14:13 as an example of *davar* being used of a spiritual quality. However, the reference there can be understood as referring to good deeds, as indeed the Talmud does (*Bab. M. K.* 28b).

¹¹ Maimonides calls it a דבר בטל (see below). Rabbi Mattathias HAYIZHARI in his commentary on *Avot* written about 1400 in Spain, calls it a דבר שבין האהוב לאהוב as opposed to a דבר יותר כולל. Rabbi Isaiah HOROWITZ (*Sha'ar HaOtiyot s.v. pirayon*) suggests that the *davar* is flattery.

(2 Sam. 1:26).¹² If the subject is Jonathan's love for David,¹³ who had many good qualities, it seems likely that the Mishnah is bringing it as an example of a love that is based on a good quality of the beloved.¹⁴ This supports the view that the Mishnah does not mean to consider the possibility of a love based on nothing, but rather a love that is aroused by something more elevated than pleasure or utility, possibly some admirable virtue as Aristotle said. This is not necessarily the only way to read the Biblical story, but a *Tanna* familiar with the Greek concept may have chosen this story because he read it in this way.

There is one other seeming divergence of the Mishnah from the Platonic and Aristotelian theories. While Aristotle speaks of the better form of love as *monimos*, long-lasting, the Mishnah uses a term that might suggest that it is ever-lasting (לעולם). However, it would be a mistake to draw such a conclusion. Mishnaic Hebrew is not a philosophically precise language which would contain a term for eternity in the philosophical sense. And I have not found a word in Mishnaic Hebrew that would represent the Greek *monimos* any better than לעולם. Indeed, the term עולם is regularly used in both the Bible and the Mishnah to refer to an extended period of time, not necessarily to "forever" in the precise sense.¹⁵ This meaning is obviously what is intended in our context, where the subject is the friendship of David and Jonathan.

¹² See the comments of the Ralbag (GERSONIDES [2001]) on the Biblical passage:

נפלאהא אהבתך לי מאהבת נשים. רוצה לומר, שיותר חזקה ויותר נפלאה היתה אהבת יהונתן לדוד מאהבת הנשים לאהוביהן, שהיא אהבה חזקה מאד, עד שכבר יכה ויקללה, ולא תפיל מפני זה מאהבתה לו דבור.

Your love was more wondrous than the love of women. In other words, the love of Jonathan for David was stronger and more wondrous than the love of women for their lovers, which is a very strong love, so much so that even if he hits her and curses her she will not love him any the less for it.

¹³ Some early manuscripts reverse the order of the names as an indication that Jonathan's love for David is the subject. See SHARVIT 2005, 201 and 2006, 117. We find in the commentary of Rabbi Shlomo ADANI the following:

אח"כ מצאתי מוגה ג"כ כך [בדבר בטל" במקום "בדבר"] במשנתו של הר"ר יהוסף אשכנזי ז"ל וכתב עוד דגרסינן ברוב ספרים זו אהבת יהונתן ודוד וכן נ"ל עיקר כי יהונתן היה עיקר האהבה, וכן הזכיר ג"כ למעלה אמנון ואח"כ תמר וכן למטה גבי מחלוקת שמאי והלל גרסינן ברוב הספרים שמאי ברישה.

Afterwards I found it printed in this way ["an ephemeral thing" rather than "a thing"; see below, p. 34] in the Mishnah of R. Yehosef Ashkenazi of blessed memory. And he also wrote that we find in most of the editions: "This is the love of Jonathan and David." And that seems to me preferable, since the main love was Jonathan's. And similarly in an earlier passage [the Mishnah] mentioned Amnon [first] and afterwards Tamar. And later, with regard to the dispute between Shamai and Hillel, we find in most editions Shamai first.

¹⁴ As an anonymous reader points out, the Biblical story of the love of Jonathan for David can be explained equally well as depending on nothing: וְנָפֶשׁ יְהוֹנָתָן נִקְשְׁרָה בְּנֶפֶשׁ דָּוִד וַיְאַהֲבֵהוּ יְהוֹנָתָן כְּנֶפֶשׁוֹ: (1 Sam. 18:1).

¹⁵ Maimonides is responsible for initiating a trend of interpreting the term as meaning forever. Jacob Anatoli, who was clearly familiar with Aristotle's thought, saw the right way to interpret it. See below, pp. 39-42.

On all these points, the Mishnah offers a reasonably accurate reflection of the Platonic or Aristotelian teaching, suggesting some kind of influence. The suspicion of some influence is heightened by the fact that the saying is presented anonymously: it was not attributable to any particular rabbinic source. It is difficult however to identify a path by which a Platonic or Aristotelian doctrine would appear in the Mishnah.¹⁶ Paradoxically enough, it would have been more likely to have been incorporated into the Mishnah at a time when Greek philosophy was not well-known in rabbinic circles, since it is doubtful that a saying would be included in the Mishnah if it were easily identifiable as foreign. But given widespread ignorance of Greek ethical writings, the saying could have appeared to ancient readers as a traditional Jewish sentiment, just as it appears to many people today.¹⁷ This impression would be reinforced by the Biblical examples that are offered. As S. Lieberman once opined, the Rabbis loved to make use of popular sayings in order to illustrate Biblical themes.¹⁸

THE HISTORY OF A LOVE THAT HAS NO CAUSE

In the second part of this paper, I will consider the ways in which later Jewish thinkers and commentators reacted to the Mishnah and its apparent Aristotelian pedigree.¹⁹ The majority of commentators were familiar with Aristotle's ethical writings²⁰ and sensed a connection with the Mishnah, even if

¹⁶ The question of the availability and popularity of Aristotelian texts in the Hellenistic period is a subject of continuing debate. See recently NIELSEN 2012 and GILL 2012. Important earlier treatments include KENNY 1978 and SANDBACH 1985. Even if the *NE* was not available prior to the first century BC, it may nevertheless have influenced the Mishnah, which was not composed until around 220 CE and may have been put into writing only much later.

¹⁷ The ability of the Rabbis to adopt this teaching as their own shows the extent to which Greek thinking was indistinguishable from traditional Jewish thinking at this time, at least insofar as concepts of friendship are concerned.

¹⁸ LIEBERMAN 1950, 144 n. 99.

¹⁹ I cannot consider all the innumerable interpretations of this passage that have been offered by Jewish commentators, or even all the more interesting ones. I will however note that some novel interpretations have been offered even recently. For example, in his commentary on *Avot* the late Lubavitcher Rebbe discovered a temporal aspect of the *Mishnah* (SCHNEERSON 1990). The *Noam Elimelech* (WEISBLUM [1978]) took the term *davar* literally to mean a word, and argued that if a friendship can end because of a misspoken word, this shows that it was not a solid relationship (*Parashat Ki Tetzei* s.v. *O Yomar*). This creative interpretation actually has a resonance in Aristotle, who argues that the friendship of the good is proof against calumny (*NE* 8.4.3: 1157a20-25). Clearly not all such resonances reflect actual knowledge of Aristotle.

²⁰ Aristotle's ethical thought was available in one form or another both to Arabic readers and to Latin readers. The *Summa Alexandrinorum* is a Latin translation of an Arabic paraphrase of the *Ethics* that was made in the late 10th century (see MARCHESI 1904; FOWLER 1982). A complete literal

they sometimes took liberties in interpreting both the Mishnah and Aristotle. From an Aristotelian point of view, the central difficulty in the Mishnah is the apparent claim that there can be a love which has no cause at all. While many commentators assumed that the higher form of love is, as in Aristotle, dependent on some superior quality, others took seriously the possibility that the Mishnah is endorsing a love that has no cause at all. Some thought that the subject of the Mishnah was love and friendship among human beings, as indeed is clearly suggested by the examples adduced, while others interpreted it as referring to love for God or Torah, or to God's love for Israel.

NON-ARISTOTELIAN VIEWS

Before we consider this range of views, we should recall the Biblical background to a non-Aristotelian view of the Mishnah. In general, the Bible holds forth punishment for wrongdoers and rewards for those who fulfill their obligations, thus implying that God's love is dependent on Israel's behavior. However there are places where the Bible uses phrases that suggest the idea of a divine love that is not dependent on any quality, spiritual or otherwise, of the beloved. The comparison of God to a good shepherd, as at Isa. 40:10-11, seems to suggest a positive care-taking that has the interest of the flock at heart regardless of its qualities or behavior. In some places the Bible makes it clear that the good things that God grants to Israel are not based on Israel's merits: "It is not because of your virtues and rectitude that you will be able to occupy their country, but because of the wickedness of those nations the Lord your God is dispossessing them before you, and in order to fulfill the oath that the Lord made to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Deut. 9:5) Similarly, the idea that God's love for Israel is eternal and inextinguishable (see Jer. 31:2) may have suggested that it is not dependent on Israel's virtue and behavior. Given this background, it is understandable that Jewish commentators would interpret the Mishnah as referring to completely undeserved affection, along the lines of the Greek *agape* or the Hebrew *chesed*. Similarly, the concept of groundless hatred, familiar from Talmudic literature (e.g. *Bab. Yoma* 9b), would have suggested to some readers the possibility of interpreting the Mishnah literally as

translation into Arabic going back to the 9th or 10th centuries has been edited and published recently (AKASOY & FIDORA 2005), but it is not clear that the Jewish commentators we will consider had access to it. Alfarabi wrote a now-lost commentary or paraphrase of the *Ethics* to which Maimonides and others refer. In the 1240s, Robert Grosseteste made a Latin translation of the *Ethics*. Leonardo Bruni produced another in the early 1400s. Don Meir Alguadez translated Boethius' older Latin version of Aristotle's *Ethics* into Hebrew in the early 1400s.

referring to a love that has no basis at all. This line of interpretation seems to have been particularly attractive as a response to Christian replacement theology, which argued that Israel's God no longer loved Israel.

Despite this, there are actually very few commentators who took this line of interpretation. *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* (*parsha* 26) offers the love of Abraham for his son, grandson and their descendants as an example of love that is not based on a *davar*. Although there may be family sentiment involved, it seems obvious that love for unknown descendants cannot be based on any particular qualities they possess. The MEIRI takes a similar view:

כל אהבה שהיא תלויה בדבר בטל דבר כו'. כלומר דאחר דאהבתו אינה אלא לסיבה, בסור הסיבה יסור המסובב, אבל כשאינה תלויה בדבר אלא שהיא אהבה מעולה, אינה בטלה לעולם. ופירש בה איזוהי אהבה שהיא תלויה בדבר, זו אהבת אמנון ותמר, שהיה אוהבה להנאת גופו להתעלל בה וכשעברה הנאתו ונסתלקה תשוקתו נתחדשה לו שנאה עליה כמו דמפורש בקרא. ושאינה תלויה בדבר כגון אהבת דוד ויהונתן שלא היתה בה שום סיבה אלא אהבה מעולה לגמרי.

'Every love that is dependent on a *davar*, when the *davar* is gone etc....' In other words, since the love exists only because of a cause, when the cause is gone so is that which is caused. But when it is not dependent on a *davar*, but is rather superior (or virtuous) love, it is never dissolved. And he explained which is a love that is dependent on a *davar*, the love of Amnon and Tamar, since he loved her for his body's pleasure, to take advantage of her, and when he no longer took pleasure in her and his passion had gone he developed hatred for her, as is clear in the Bible. And a love that is not dependent on a *davar* is like the love of David and Jonathan, which had no cause, but was only superior (or virtuous) love. (Commentary on Avot ad loc.)

Here the Meiri states clearly that the love of Jonathan and David has no cause whatsoever, but he does not explain what he means by calling it superior (or virtuous) love.

This approach appears in theological contexts where it concerns the mystery of God's love for Israel. The MAHARAL adopted this approach to the question of Israel's election in chapter 11 of *Netzach Yisrael*. Contrasting Noah and Abraham, he argues that the fact that no virtues are attributed to Abraham prior to God's speaking to him shows that God did not choose Abraham for his traits as an individual. Rather he chose him for the sake of the nation of Israel as a whole. Such a choice, he argues, cannot be dependent on a particular action or merit, since actions and merits are attributes of individuals, while a nation is a collective. Thus God chose Israel for its essence, and not for any qualities it possesses. The choice of Israel therefore reflects a love that is not dependent on any merit whatsoever, and for this very reason it is everlasting. Here we see the use of the concept of unmotivated love in a theological-political context: it not only concerns divine favor, it also responds to Christian replacement theology which sees the choice of Israel as retractable.

Similar arguments were offered to explain Israel's love for the land of Israel and for the Torah. In the *Vavei HaAmudim*, Rabbi Shabbetai Horowitz points out that in the times of the Temple there were many reasons for the Jewish people to love the land of Israel, and therefore it was a love that is dependent on a *davar*.²¹ The author seems to imply that today, after the destruction of the Temple, Israel's love for the land is a higher form of love, since it has less of a cause. The *Sefat Emet*²² argues that while love for the commandments can be extinguished when one commits a transgression, love of the Torah is not dependent on anything and therefore cannot ever be extinguished. Similarly, he explains the passage *ואהב את יעקב ואת עשו שנאתי* (I loved Jacob, but Esau I hated: Mal. 1:2-3) as expressing God's inextinguishable and unconditional love for Israel.

The idea that love should not be dependent on any traits whatsoever was applied to marriage by Rabbi Menashe Klein (1923-2011) in a responsum. He argued that it is a mistake to marry a woman on the basis of any discernible attribute, aside possibly from piety, since this would contradict the proper intention in marrying, which is the service of God. He therefore recommended that the bride and groom not see each other prior to the wedding. Basing himself on rabbinic interpretations of the danger of marrying a beautiful woman captured from among the non-Jewish nations in war (Deut. 21:10-14), he argues that one should also avoid marrying a Jewish woman on the grounds of beauty or other similar qualities:

החומד דבר משום יפיו או למעלה אחרת שמצא בהדבר, בטל דבר בטלה אהבה, ולכן סופו לשנאתה וסופו להוליד ממנה בן סורר ומורה דכבר אמרו "וברותי מכם המורדים והפושעים אלו בני שנואה." על כל פנים, הנושא אשה ומסתכל בה שיהי' לו חשק וחמדה ללקחה לשום יופי וכיוצא בו, סופו בא לידי גירושין... אבל הנושא אשה לשם שמים הרי הוא אהבה שאינה תלויה בדבר...²³

He who desires something because of its beauty or other good quality that he found in it, when the thing is gone, so is the love, and therefore he will come in the end to hate her and to beget from her a rebellious son as [the Sages] have said, "and I will cleanse from you the rebellious and the transgressors (Ez. 20:38), these are the children of the hated wife." (*Bab. Ned.* 20b) In any case, he who marries a woman and looks at her so that he will have a desire to take her for her beauty and so forth, in the end will divorce her.... But he who marries a woman for the sake of heaven, this is love that is not dependent on a *davar*. (KLEIN vol. 7 chap. 235).

²¹ S. HOROWITZ, *Amud Hashalom*, chapter 25.

²² ALTER [2001], *Parashat Shekalim*.

²³ See also *Bab. Ta'an.*, 26b in which unattractive women are said to urge this attitude. One may compare Rabbi Klein's view with Socrates' advice to visit ugly women in order to avoid any excessive infatuation (see e.g. Xen. *Mem.* 1.3.14). Both seem opposed to erotic infatuation, but whereas Socrates gave this advice in order to reduce men's distracting attachment to women, the *Mishne Halochoh* ostensibly aims at producing long-lasting dispassionate relationships with them.

ARISTOTELIAN VIEWS

Most commentators, however, followed Maimonides in interpreting the Mishnah within the context of Aristotelian thought. This generally meant assuming that the higher form of love is dependent on some trait in the beloved despite the simple meaning of the words of the Mishnah. Maimonides made this clear by qualifying the kind of *davar* that the lower form of love depends on:

כל אהבה שהיא תלויה בדבר בטל, בטל דבר בטלה אהבה. ושאינה תלויה בדבר בטל, אינה בטלה לעולם.

Any love that is dependent on something ephemeral, when the thing is gone, the love is gone. But a love that is not dependent on something ephemeral, never passes away. (*Commentary on Avot 5.15*)

By adding the word בטל (“ephemeral”) to the word דבר Maimonides made it clear that every form of love is based on something. The lower form of love is transitory because it is based on something בטל, something that is not eternal. The higher form of love is not based on something בטל but it is still based on something. Maimonides explains what that something is:

ואתה יודע שכל אלו הגורמים הגופיים כולם בטלים ועוברים, ויתחייב בטול המתהווה בבטול גורמיו, ולפיכך אם היה גורם האהבה דבר אלהי והוא המדע האמת, הרי אותה האהבה לא יתכן בטולה לעולם, כיון שהגורם לה תמידי המציאות.

And you know that all these material causes are ephemeral and passing, and with the elimination of the causes is necessitated the elimination of the thing caused, and therefore if the cause of the love was a divine thing, that is true knowledge, then that love cannot be eliminated ever, since its cause is of eternal existence. (*ibid.*)

Although Aristotelian in its basic assumptions, this theory represents a serious departure from Aristotle’s theory. Aristotle spoke of the higher form of friendship as a human relationship based on the love of virtue. A virtuous friend is a good thing for a lover of virtue, among other reasons because he or she provides an example of virtue that can be easily contemplated (*NE 9.9.5: 1169b28-1170a6*). Since virtue is relatively long-lasting, such a friendship is long-lasting (*monimos*), but of course it is not eternal, both because virtue may decline and because people are mortal. By transforming the higher form of friendship into an eternal friendship, Maimonides also implicitly alters the object of the love. It can no longer be, as in Aristotle, love of a person who is perishable, but rather of something eternal, something divine. It must be love of the unchanging truth or divine knowledge.²⁴

²⁴ This extreme approach did not convince all later Jewish commentators. Rabbi Obadiah of

This development not only represents a divergence from Aristotle, it also represents a divergence from the Mishnah on this same point. By adducing Jonathan's love for David as an example of the higher love, the Mishnah clearly shows it has a human relationship in mind, not the love of wisdom or knowledge. Thus the Mishnah is more closely in accord with Aristotle on this point than is Maimonides, the famous student of Aristotelian philosophy.

Maimonides was of course familiar with Aristotle's theory of friendship. Although he probably did not see Aristotle's *Ethics* prior to composing the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, he may have seen a summary or paraphrase, such as the *Summa Alexandrinorum* or Alfarabi's commentary on the *Ethics*.²⁵ In his comments on another passage in *Avot* (1.6: קנה לך חבר) he discusses in some detail the three categories of friendship that appear in Aristotle's work:

והחברים שלושה סוגים, חבר לתועלת, וחבר הנאה, וחבר לדבר נעלה. החבר לתועלת הוא כגון חברות שני השותפים וכחברות המלך וצבאו. אבל חבר הנאה הוא שני סוגים: חבר תענוג וחבר בטחון. חבר תענוג הוא כחברות הזכרים לנקבות בנישואים וכיוצא בזה. וחבר בטחון, הוא שיהיה לאדם חבר שדעתו סומכת עליו שאינו נשמר ממנו לא במעשה ולא בדיבור, ומגלה לו כל עיניו הטוב מהם והרע בלי שיחוש ממנו שיבואהו בכך בזיון לא אצלו ולא אצל זולתו. הרי כאשר יהיה לנפש בטחון באיזה אדם עד כדי כך יהיה לה נחת רב מאד בשיחתו וידידותו. וחבר לדבר נעלה, הוא שתהיה כמיהת שניהם ומטרתם לענין אחד והוא עשית הטוב, וירצה כל אחד מהם להעזר בחברו כדי להשיג אותו הטוב לשניהם יחד, וזהו החבר שצוה בקנייתו, והוא כגון חברות הרב לתלמיד והתלמיד לרב.

There are three kinds of friend, a friend for utility, a friend for pleasure and a friend for something superior. A friend for utility is like the friendship of two partners and like the friendship of a king and his army. A friend for pleasure is of two kinds: a friend for physical enjoyment and a trusted friend. A friend for physical enjoyment is like the friendship of men for women in marriage and such things. A trusted friend is when someone has a friend that his mind relies on and he does not hide anything from him in deed or in word, but reveals all the good and bad things to him without fearing that he will be humiliated by him or by others. When someone trusts another person to this extent he will have great enjoyment from his conversation and companionship. And a friend for a superior matter is when their desire and goal is for the same thing, namely doing good, and each one wishes to be helped by the other in order to achieve that good for both of them. And this is the friend that the author commanded to acquire, and it is like the friendship of a teacher for his student and a student for his teacher.

BERTINORO, basing himself in part on MAIMONIDES' commentary, also speaks of the lower form of friendship as based on a בטל. However, he contrasts this not with love of divine knowledge but with love of the righteous and the wise, thus drawing closer to Aristotle's theory in which the higher friendship is between virtuous people.

²⁵ Although Maimonides quotes a short passage from the *Ethics*, this does not show that he read the *Ethics*, since this quotation was available from other sources. On the knowledge of Aristotle's *Ethics* in Jewish and Arabic philosophical circles, see HARVEY 1998 and 2007; DUNLOP 2005. Although Dunlop considers numerous fragmentary references to Arabic translations, he does not consider the passages I discuss in this paper.

The relationship between these comments and Aristotle's discussion of friendship is obvious, and here Maimonides acknowledges that there is a form of human friendship that is based on love of the good. It was not a failure to understand Aristotle's theory of friendship that led him to interpret the previous Mishnah as he did, nor was it a failure to draw a connection between the Mishnah and Aristotle. Why then did he not interpret our Mishnah in more accurate Aristotelian terms?

Possibly Maimonides simply saw no way to reconcile the language of the Mishnah, which speaks literally of a love that lasts forever, with the theory of Aristotle. This formulation may have suggested to him something beyond the Aristotelian doctrine of love of virtue, which is only long-lasting and not eternal. But this is an unlikely explanation. By the time he wrote the *Guide*, Maimonides was aware that the term 'olam does not mean eternity:

You know that the word 'olam does not signify eternity *a parte post* unless it is conjoined with the word 'ad, which may come either after it... or before it.... (MAIMONIDES, *Guide* 2.28)

While it is possible that Maimonides was not yet aware of this when he composed the *Commentary*, there are better ways to explain his interpretation.

In general, Maimonides much prefers to conceive of love in divine rather than human terms. He entitles one book of the *Mishneh Torah Sefer HaHavah*, and devotes it entirely to the service of God. He speaks in dramatic terms about the love of God in the *Guide* (3.51) and the *Mishneh Torah (Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 2.1-3, 4.12)*. In his introduction to *Avot* he interprets the obligation to know God in all one's ways as an obligation to direct all one's actions towards achieving closeness to God (chapter five). This preference for love of the divine leads necessarily to a devaluation of human friendships. Given the firm, singular imperative to love of God, friendship between human beings can only have a secondary, instrumental, importance. Since the term לעולם in the Mishnah lends itself to interpretation in terms of love of God, and since this is the most important form of love for Maimonides, it makes sense that he would interpret it in these terms, despite the fact that the example of David and Jonathan is rather inconvenient.

Even in the passage we have just quoted, where Maimonides offers a brief summary of Aristotle's theory of friendship, there are important deviations from Aristotle's theory. The division of friendship based on pleasure into two kinds, one based on physical enjoyment and the other on trust, is not found in Aristotle. More importantly, there is a serious change in the description of the highest form of friendship. Whereas Aristotle argued that the good friendship is based on the mutual love of virtue, Maimonides de-

scribes it as a kind of partnership in pursuit of the good, and exemplifies it with the example of the student and the teacher. He seems to think of good friends as partners in the search for wisdom and knowledge. But surprisingly enough, this conception of friendship, to which Aristotle ought to subscribe wholeheartedly, is not to be found in his discussion of friendship.²⁶ Even in his discussion of the philosophical way of life, he minimizes the role of friends:

ὁ δὲ σοφὸς καὶ καθ' αὐτὸν ὦν δύναται θεωρεῖν, καὶ ὅσῳ ἂν σοφώτερος ᾖ, μᾶλλον βέλτιον δ' ἴσως συνεργοῦς ἔχων, ἀλλ' ὅμως αὐταρκέστατος.

The wise man is able to contemplate even on his own, and to the extent that he is wiser all the more so. Perhaps he would do so better having co-workers, but nevertheless, he is most self-sufficient. (*NE* 10.7.4: 1177a34-5)

For the vast majority of his discussion of friendship, Aristotle treats the higher form of friendship as based on the mutual love of moral goodness, not intellectual goodness. Why then does Maimonides describe friendship in these intellectual terms?

As we have noted, Maimonides did not base his account of Aristotle on the actual text of the *Ethics*. The changes we have noted may well have appeared already in the source on which Maimonides is relying. Neither the concept of the trusted friend nor the friendship of philosophical seekers is found in the Latin or Hebrew translations of the *Summum Alexandrinorum* or in the recently published Arabic translation of the *Ethics*.²⁷ Quite possibly Maimonides found them in Alfarabi's lost commentary/paraphrase of the *Ethics*. In any case, these changes are certainly congenial to Maimonides' views. Like his source, Maimonides would have had difficulty reconciling Aristotle's denigration of pleasure, with which he wholeheartedly agreed (*Guide* 3.36), with his apparent acceptance of a category of friendship based on pleasure, and therefore would have had good reason to introduce an additional kind of friendship within this category. Similarly, the omission of friendship based on the appreciation of moral virtue and its replacement with philosophical friendship, reflects a widespread post-Aristotelian view of virtue to which Maimonides subscribed.

²⁶ The closest he gets is mentioning the possibility that some friends would enjoy philosophizing together: *NE* 9.12.2: 1172a5 (a phrase that is omitted from the full Arabic translation of the *Ethics*: p. 524). See also *NE* 9.1.7: 1164b2-3.

²⁷ There is however an interesting passage in the *Summa* which could have suggested the latter concept. Aristotle speaks of two friends as being νοῆσαι καὶ πράξει δυνατότεροι (*NE* 8.1.2: 1155a16). In this context, the term νοῆσαι means to plan or deliberate. The *Summa* uses a noun, *intellectum*, presumably reflecting the Arabic 'aql or intellect. This may have suggested to a commentator such as Alfarabi or to Maimonides himself that a friend is useful for intellectual development and not merely for advice.

Despite his lengthy discussion of moral virtue and friendship as ends in themselves, Aristotle concludes the *Ethics* by placing intellectual contemplation on a higher level (*NE* 10.7: 1177a12-1178a8). Medieval thinkers like Maimonides accepted this conclusion and used it to modify the earlier account of moral virtues as ends in themselves. Instead of ends in themselves, Maimonides describes the moral virtues as healthy states of the soul necessary for achieving intellectual contemplation (see the introduction to the *Introduction to the Commentary on Avot*, known as the *Eight Chapters*). For Maimonides, the contemplation of the divine is much more highly valued than the contemplation of the moral virtue of one's companion could ever be.

Given his essential lack of sympathy for Aristotle's conception of friendship of the good, one has to wonder whether Maimonides would have ever mentioned the subject of friendship if it were not mentioned in the Mishnah. Indeed, even in the *Guide* his discussions of friendship are brief (e.g. 3.46) and have nothing to do with the mutual pursuit of knowledge he alludes to in the *Commentary on the Mishnah*. When he speaks of love in the *MT*, it is love of God, not human friendship, that is his chief concern (See *Hilchot Yesodei Ha-Torah* 2.1-3, 4.12). This form of love is based, as one might expect, purely on intellectual apprehension, the degree of love being proportional to the degree of knowledge one attains. In the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Maimonides is to a greater degree at the mercy of the text on which he is commenting, which is why it is in some ways more interesting than Maimonides' other writings. Since the Mishnah spoke highly of friendship, Maimonides was forced to do so as well. He found a simple solution, emphasizing a form of friendship that is more consistent with Aristotle's conclusions than Aristotle's own discussion of friendship, and also one that is consistent with Jewish devotion to learning.

Maimonides' failure to grant an important place to human love and friendship has important consequences for his account of the commandment to love one's neighbor. Truth to tell, this commandment would be difficult to explain on Aristotelian grounds even if Maimonides did recognize the value of human friendship. Since Aristotelian friendship is based primarily on the good qualities of the beloved, it would be difficult to love one's neighbor unless he or she possessed such qualities. Moreover, since love is a natural reaction to the qualities of the beloved, there is little room for commanding it. As we will see, later thinkers, such as Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the founder of Chabad hasidism, were able to overcome these problems by offering a Neoplatonic understanding of the soul which attributes to every soul qualities worthy of love. But since Maimonides generally adopts an Aristotelian conception of the soul, in which the soul is a mere potentiality and only becomes perfected by means of acquired characteristics, no such egalitarian solution is possible. Instead,

Maimonides follows rabbinic tradition in explaining love of one's neighbor in a metaphorical sense as a commandment that is fulfilled solely within the realm of action:²⁸

מצוה על כל אדם לאהוב את כל אחד ואחד מישראל כגופו, שנאמר "ואהבת לריעך כמוך" (ויקרא יט,ח). לפיכך צריך שיספר בשבח ולחוס על ממונו, כמו שהוא חס על ממון עצמו ורוצה בכבוד עצמו. והמתכבד בקלון חברו, אין לו חלק לעולם הבא.

It is an obligation for everyone to love each Jewish person as himself, as is said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). Therefore one must speak in his praise and show concern for his property, just as he shows concern for his own property and desires his own honor. He who achieves honor through his neighbor's disgrace has no portion in the world to come. (*MT, Hilchot Deot* 6.4)

RABBI JACOB ANATOLI

In his book *Malmad HaTalmidim*, written in the early thirteenth century, Jacob ANATOLI offered a fuller discussion of the Aristotelian theory of love than what we find in Maimonides, acknowledging its relevance to things other than God. He had clearly read Aristotle's *Ethics* or a detailed translation/paraphrase of it in Arabic. Like Maimonides, he presents the full tripartite theory, but he offers more detail, some of it very close to Aristotle's own discussion. In one way he even offers a better account of Aristotle's theory than Aristotle himself. Although Aristotle divides love into three categories, in practice he discusses forms of love which do not fit into any of these categories, such as love of parents for children, love of relatives and fellow townsmen, and above all love of self.²⁹ Anatoli places most of these (love of family members, relatives and of self) in a single category which he calls natural love (אהבה טבעית או קורבה) and sets them aside to discuss the three other categories.³⁰ As we will

²⁸ On the rabbinic and philosophical views of the commandment to love see HARVEY 1987.

²⁹ Love of children: *NE* 8.8.3: 1159a27-33; 8.12: 1161b11-1162a33; see also: 8.1.3: 1155a16-22; 8.7.1-2: 1158b11-28; 8.11.2: 1161a15-20; 8.14.4: 1163b15-28; love of relatives: *NE* 8.10.5-6: 1160b32-1161a9; 8.11.4-5: 1161a22-30; 8.12: 1161b11-1162a33; 8.14.4: 1163b15-28; 9.2.7-10: 1165a16-35; love of fellow townsmen: *NE* 8.1.4: 1155a22-28; see 8.9.3-6: 1160a2-1160a30; 9.6: 1167a22-1167b16; and above all love of self: *NE* 8.12.3: 1161b27-33; 9.4: 1166a1-1166b29; 9.8: 1168a28-1169b2. Aristotle does say that love of self is possible even for those who are not good, on condition that they think themselves good (*NE* 9.4.7: 1166b2-6), suggesting that even in these relationships the three categories hold in some way. But he makes no such argument about the other kinds, and he certainly does not explain the relationship between these kinds and the three categories of lovable objects. In any case, since Aristotle seems to acknowledge a bond with children and relatives because of their being children and relatives his tripartite classification is inadequate.

³⁰ He does not however equate this with the love that is not dependent on a *davar*.

see below, this category of natural love seems to be derived from an earlier post-Aristotelian source. In contrast with natural love, he argues that genuine love is dependent on acquired characteristics, a proposition which seems to be an extrapolation from Aristotle: Aristotle did not explicitly limit the lower forms of love to acquired characteristics.

Anatoli presents his account of friendship in the form of an explanation of the relations between Isaac and Rebecca and their two sons, Esau and Jacob. The Bible says that Isaac loved Jacob because of *tzayid*, quarry that he brought home from the wilds (Gen. 25:28). This is therefore a connection based on utility or pleasure. Anatoli is bothered, however, by the idea that Isaac, whom he considers to have achieved prophetic perfection, would have allowed such considerations to warp his judgment and prefer Esau to Jacob, who had a much better character. His explanation is of interest because it may reflect a detailed knowledge of Aristotle's chapters on friendship. Anatoli argues that Isaac recognized Jacob's superiority and preferred him, but he felt that he had a debt to Esau for the quarry that he provided him, and an obligation to repay him in kind. Hence he intended to offer him a blessing that was primarily concerned with material prosperity.

This explanation recalls Aristotle's discussion of the difficulty of balancing debts that arise on different grounds. His initial argument resembles that of Anatoli:

καὶ τὰς μὲν εὐεργεσίας ἀνταποδοτέον ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἢ χαριστέον ἑταίροις, ὥσπερ καὶ δάνειον ᾧ ὀφείλει ἀποδοτέον μᾶλλον ἢ ἑταίρῳ δοτέον.

And one must repay services, as a general rule, rather than do favors to one's companions, just as one must pay back a loan to a lender rather than make a gift to a companion. (*NE* 9.2.3: 1164b31-3)

Here Aristotle considers the question of whether a debt takes precedence over other kinds of reasons for making a gift, and he goes on to consider higher obligations such as the obligation to one's father. Although Aristotle ultimately argues that in some circumstances these other obligations take precedence over debts, Anatoli may have seen in this discussion a potential explanation of Isaac's behavior.

Anatoli departs from Aristotle in describing the second kind of friendship. He describes this as *אהבת מנוחה*, רצוני לומר נחת רוח והשקט הנפש ("love of relaxation, that is, enjoyment and spiritual rest") rather than as pleasure. He follows Maimonides, or the source on which Maimonides is relying, in subdividing this category into love of pleasure, such as the love of women, and trusted friendship:

אהבת בטחון, והוא כשימצא אדם חבר טוב שתבטח נפשו בו להודיעו סודותיו מטוב ועד רע.

Trusted friendship, which is when someone finds a good friend in whom he can trust to reveal the secrets in his heart, both good and bad. (ANATOLI [1886], *Toldot*)

This passage is clearly based either on Maimonides or on Maimonides' source for this concept.

Anatoli's knowledge of Aristotle seems to have contributed to his understanding of the duration of the higher form of love described in the Mishnah:

האהבה העליונה, והיא אהבת המעלה, מתמדת לעולם כל זמן שאותן האישים נמצאים לפי שאינה תלויה בדבר שהוא חוץ להם.

The superior love, which is love of virtue, endures for the long-term, as long as the people exist, because it is not dependent on anything outside of them. (*ibid.*)

Here Anatoli shows that he recognizes that the term *'olam* does not mean eternity, and he interprets it reasonably as referring to the period during which the individuals exist.

In the description of this form of love we find further evidence of a close reading of Aristotle, or reliance on a source which had read Aristotle closely. Like Maimonides, Anatoli sees this highest form of friendship as friendship of the wise, not the morally virtuous. But he shows more awareness of what makes this a long-lasting friendship:

אהבת החכמים זה את זה למעלתו בבחינת עצמו לא בדבר חוץ מעצמו.

The love through which one wise man loves another for the virtue he possesses in himself, not in something outside of him. (*ibid.*)

Here Anatoli describes clearly the sense in which a good Aristotelian friend is an object of desire in and of himself. It is the fact that the essential characteristics of the friend, the moral or in this case intellectual virtues, are the objects of desire that accounts for the long-lasting nature of the friendship (see quotation above p. 22).

Anatoli makes further comments that seem to reflect awareness of Aristotle's discussion of friendship:

פעמים תמצאנה השלוש מעלות בשני אישים יחד, באהבת תלמיד לרב. ופעמים שתים מהם באהבת חתן וכלה. ופעמים אחת מהן לבדה.

Sometimes the three qualities are found together in two people, as in the love of a student for a teacher, and sometimes two of them [are found together in two people] as in the love of a groom and a bride, and sometimes one of them alone [is found]. (*ibid.*)

These comments recall two different topics in Aristotle. On the one hand, Aristotle argues that the good man is also pleasant and useful (*NE* 8.3.6-7: 1156b7-24). This seems to be reflected in the example of the student's love for a teacher: the teacher, as the good man, offers all three benefits to the student. This is why this relationship is described by Anatoli as a one-sided relationship: he only speaks of the love of the student for the teacher, not of any reciprocal love. This seeming imbalance is explained by Aristotle on the grounds that the greater affection of the recipient balances the greater benefits he receives (*NE* 8.7.2: 1158b20-28; 8.8.5: 1159b1-10).

On the other hand, Aristotle discusses at length the possibility of mixed relations, where pleasure, for example, is offered in return for utility (*NE* 8.4.1-2: 1156b33-1157a20). The example of a bride and groom may reflect the kind of relationship in which pleasure is offered in exchange for useful financial support (*NE* 8.4.2: 1157a12-20). By speaking of a mutual love between groom and bride, Anatoli seems to imply that each of the partners has something to offer the other, unlike the case of the teacher, in which the love is one-sided.

The third case, in which only one good is transferred, may refer to Aristotle's conception of friendships in which a single good is exchanged between the two parties. But Anatoli seems to depart from Aristotle here, since the order in which he presents the three cases implies that this is a lower form of relationship than that of groom and bride, whereas Aristotle clearly rates it higher (*NE* 8.4.1: 1156b33-1157a12).

RABBI JOSHUA IBN SHU'AYB

Another perceptive student of Aristotle was Rabbi Joshua ibn Shu'ayb (1280-1340, Spain). He was a student of Rabbi Solomon ben Aderet (the Rashba, born 1235) and is thus associated with anti-philosophic polemics. Nevertheless, he studied Aristotle's thought and offered a brief summary of the Aristotelian theory of friendship, dividing it into three categories which reflect Aristotle's discussion better than Aristotle's own division into three. His account is similar to that of Anatoli, but with some important changes. According to ibn Shu'ayb, there are three kinds of love: natural love, physical love and spiritual love. Physical love includes both sexual love (which he refers to by the ambiguous phrase "love of women") and economic partnerships, combined here just as I have argued they are in the Mishnah. Spiritual love is love of excellence (*ma'alah*) such as the love between a teacher and a student. Although he omits the moral virtues as objects of love, restricting the highest form of love to intellectual objects, this summary accurately reflects the three

categories of friendship in Aristotle's theory, reconciling Aristotle with the Mishnah by combining the two lower forms of Aristotelian friendship into a single category which he calls physical love.

We are already familiar from Anatoli with the category of natural love. Ibn Shu'ayb expands on Anatoli's description by adding two additional categories, both of which can be found in Aristotle's wide-ranging discussion of friendship. He describes this natural love as the love of a father to his son, the love of relatives, love of oneself, love of one's neighbors more than members of another town, and also any love that has no clear cause. He explains this last category in the following way:

כי יראה אדם שני אנשים שלא ראה אותן מעולם ונלחמים זה עם זה, או משחקים בקוביא או באיזה שחוק ויאהב לאחד יותר מהאחד וירצה שינצח או ירויח. וזה מכח התולדות לא ידעו טבה אלא אמרו יש טבע אוהב טבע אחר, וכמו שאמרו חכמים ז"ל תרויהו בני חד מזלא נינהו.

Because a person may see two people whom he has never seen before fighting with each other or playing dice or another game, and he loves one of them more than the other and wants him to win or profit. And this comes from causes whose explanation is unknown. It is said that "one nature loves another nature". As the Sages have said, the two of them are destined for each other. (*Parashat V'eleh Toldot*, s.v. *Ahavti etchem*)

This comment seems to reflect the following comments in Aristotle's discussion of goodwill:

ἀλλ' οὐδὲ φίλησις ἐστίν. οὐ γὰρ ἔχει διάτασιν οὐδ' ὄρεξιν, τῇ φιλήσει δὲ ταῦτ' ἀκολουθεῖ· καὶ ἡ μὲν φίλησις μετὰ συνηθείας, ἡ δ' εὐνοία καὶ ἐκ προσπαίου, οἷον καὶ περὶ τοὺς ἀγωνιστὰς συμβαίνει. εὐνοίαι γὰρ αὐτοῖς γίνονται καὶ συνθέλουσιν, συμπράξαιεν δ' ἂν οὐδέν.

[Favor] is not affection. For it does not have intensity or desire, but these both are connected with affection. And affection comes with acquaintance over time, while favor can occur instantaneously, as happens with competing athletes. For people favor them and wish them well, but they wouldn't work together with them on anything. (*NE 9.5.2: 1167a28-b4*)

ὅλως δ' εὐνοία δι' ἀρετὴν καὶ ἐπιεικειάν τινα γίνεται, ὅταν τῷ φανῇ καλὸς τις ἢ ἀνδρεῖος ἢ τι τοιοῦτον, καθάπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀγωνιστῶν εἴπομεν.

In general, favor occurs because of virtue and some kind of goodness, when someone appears beautiful or brave or some such thing to someone else, just as we said concerning competing athletes. (*NE 9.5.4: 1167a19-21*)

Ibn Shu'ayb's source may have understood "instantaneously" (ἐκ προσπαίου) as lacking in a clear cause. The idea that favor, an incipient form of friendship (*NE 9.5.3: 1167a3*), can be aroused by observing competing athletes is too unusual to be found in both of these texts by coincidence. But where did Ibn Shu'ayb get the example of dice-players? This too may derive ultimately from

Aristotle. At the very end of the discussion of friendship Aristotle mentions this occupation:

καὶ ὅ ποτ' ἐστὶν ἑκάστοις τὸ εἶναι ἢ οὐ χάριν αἰροῦνται τὸ ζῆν, ἐν τούτῳ μετὰ τῶν φίλων βούλονται διάγειν· διόπερ οἱ μὲν συμπίνουσιν, οἱ δὲ συγκυβεύουσιν, ἄλλοι δὲ συγγυμνάζονται καὶ συγκυνηγοῦσιν ἢ συμφιλοσοφοῦσιν, ἕκαστοι ἐν τούτῳ συνημερεῦοντες ὅ τι περὶ μάλιστ' ἀγαπῶσι τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ· συζῆν γὰρ βουλόμενοι μετὰ τῶν φίλων, ταῦτα ποιοῦσι καὶ τούτων κοινωνοῦσιν οἷς οἴονται συζῆν.

And whatever existence means for each one, whatever it is for the sake of which they choose to live, they wish to occupy themselves with that together with friends. So some drink together, some play dice together, others exercise and hunt together, or philosophize together, each of them spending their time in what they love most in life. For since they wish to live together with their friends they do so and share in those things which they think are living together. (NE 9.12.2: 1172a2-8)

Although here Aristotle is speaking of ways in which friends pass the time, not about admiration of competing athletes, the example of dice-players may have caught ibn Shu'ayb's eye.

But although some of these ideas derive ultimately from Aristotle's text, Maimonides, Anatoli and Ibn Shu'ayb belong to a common tradition that is not based purely on the text of Aristotle's *Ethics*. Maimonides shares with Anatoli the concept of the trusted friend, and Anatoli shares with Ibn Shu'ayb the category of natural love, but neither of these appear in the *Ethics* or in the extant Arabic translations/paraphrases of the *Ethics*. It is impossible to say that Maimonides, the earliest of these sources, was the sole source for Anatoli and Ibn Shu'ayb, since the latter sources share elements that are absent from Maimonides. The most probable conclusion is that all three relied on an unknown Arabic source which offered a summary of Aristotle's theory of friendship, possibly Alfarabi's lost commentary/paraphrase of the *Ethics*.

DON ISAAC ABARBANEL

Don Isaac Abarbanel (1437–1508) clearly understood and accepted the basic premises of Aristotle's theory of friendship, and interpreted the Mishnah as reflecting these conceptions. In his commentary on *Avot* (ad loc.) he brings the Mishnah into line with Aristotle by arguing that the sages divided the three kinds of friendship into two parts:

האמנם חכמינו הקדושים לא עשו באהבה כי אם שני חלקים בלבד לפי שראו שפעולות האנשים כפי הרכבתם יתחלקו לשני מינים. הא' אשר ימשך אל צורתם והם הדברים אשר יפנו בהם אל התכלית האמתית הטובה. והמין השני הוא אשר ימשך אל חומרם ובזה יוכלו הערב והמועיל.

However, our holy sages divided love into only two parts, since they considered that the actions of men are divided into two parts in accordance with man's composite nature. The first is what is consequent on their form, and these are the things that enable them to pursue their true and good end. The second kind is consequent on their matter, and in this are included the pleasurable and the useful.

Thus in his view the author of our Mishnah conflated the two lower forms of Aristotelian love into a single form, that which is dependent on a *davar*. By *davar*, the *Tanna* means something other than the person who is the nominal object of the love:

כי האהבה התלויה בדבר היא המכוונת לדבר אחר כאילו האהבה היא כלי להשיג את הערב או המועיל ההוא.

For the love that is dependent on a *davar* is that which is aimed at something else, as if the relationship is a means to obtain that pleasurable or useful thing. According to this we would expect that the higher form of love is directed at something intrinsic to the person who is the nominal object of love. But Abarbanel surprises us by arguing that the higher form of love is

מדובקת בטבע השלימות והמדע האמתי וזה דבר בלתי משתנה ולכן האהבה ההיא אינה בטלה לעולם כי הדברים השכליים הם קיימים בעצמם ובלתי משתנים.

Attached to the nature of perfection and truth and this is something unchanging, and therefore that relationship is never dissolved since the intellectual objects exist in themselves and are unchanging.

It is not easy to see how this is love that is not dependent on something other than the friend, unless we are to identify the friend with the object of intellectual contemplation. Like Maimonides, Abarbanel assumes that the higher form of love must be caused by something, and also like Maimonides he seems to depart from Aristotle and the Mishnah by positing that the highest form of friendship is love of the intellect, rather than love of a person.

In his commentary on the Torah, Abarbanel offers a different perspective. Here it seems that he understood the Mishnah as speaking literally of a love that is not dependent on anything, or at least not on any of the three factors mentioned by Aristotle. In fact he equates the love that is not dependent on anything with the kind that Anatoli called "natural":

וישראל אהב את יוסף וגו' עד וילכו אחיו לרעות. בא הכתוב הזה להודיע שהיתה אהבת יעקב ליוסף מפני חכמתו ושלמותו לא מפני שהוא בנו. לפי שאהבה אשר היא מהאב לבנים היא מפאת הדמיון ולכן תמצא בבעלי חיים שאין להם שכל. ואם היתה אהבת יעקב אל יוסף מהצד שהוא בנו היה ראוי שיאהב את שאר בניו יותר ממנו כי האהבה היא כפי הדבר האהוב. ולכן בהכרח לאהוב י"א בנים מלאהוב בן אחד לבדו. אבל הוא ע"ה אהב את יוסף מכל בניו וזה מורה שהיתה אהבתו

אותו אהבה אמיתית, אהבה שהיא תלויה בדבר שלמות חכמה והשכל, והיא אהבת הטוב במה שהוא טוב.

And Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons ... and his brothers went to herd. This verse comes to inform us that Jacob loved Joseph because of his (Joseph's) intelligence and perfection, not because he was his son. For a father's love for his sons derives from their similarity, and therefore is found in animals which have no intelligence. And if Jacob had loved Joseph because he was his son, then he ought to have loved the other sons more than him, because love is in accordance with the thing that is loved. Therefore it would follow of necessity to love eleven sons more than only one. But Jacob loved Joseph more than all his sons, and this shows that his love for him was genuine love, love that is dependent on the *davar* of the perfection of his intelligence and his mind, and this is love of the good because of its being good. (ABARBANEL [1964] on Gen. 37:3)

The term *davar* here is superfluous and seems to be introduced only in order to make the point that the higher form of love, love for the perfection of wisdom and knowledge, also belongs in the category of love that is dependent on a *davar*. This contradicts his own commentary on *Avot*, in which he described the love of perfection and knowledge as a love which is not dependent on a *davar*. The result is that in the commentary on the Torah, love that is dependent on a *davar* is a higher form of love than that which is not, since it depends on perfection, while love that is not dependent on a *davar* is reduced to the category of family affection, similar to the category of "natural" love that we recall from Anatoli. How can we explain this divergence?

In both cases, Abarbanel offers an interpretation consistent with Aristotelian philosophy. I suggest that in his commentary on *Avot*, he felt constrained to offer an interpretation more consistent with the language and spirit of the Mishnah. He could not accept that there is such a thing as love that is not dependent on anything, but he interpreted that phrase as referring to a higher form of love, the love of the intellect, since the Mishnah evidently regards this form of love as the higher one. In the commentary on the Torah, however, he was not constrained to offer an interpretation that accords with the spirit of the Mishnah. Here he interprets the Mishnah literally in one sense: he understands love that is not dependent on a *davar* in a literal non-Aristotelian sense. But he reverses the judgement of the Mishnah, placing this category of love below the kind of love that is dependent on a *davar*. In other words, here he contrasts the three forms of Aristotelian love, all of which are in some sense dependent on a *davar*, with the non-Aristotelian form that is praised more highly by the Mishnah, and places the Aristotelian forms ahead of the non-Aristotelian form praised by the Mishnah. Although this seems like a clear deviation from the spirit of the Mishnah, he could point out in his defense that the Mishnah did not explicitly rank the two forms of love, but only said that the love that is not based on a *davar* is longer-lasting. Abarbanel could agree that this natural,

parental form of love is more long-lasting than love based on virtue and still rank it below a love that is based on some good quality.

RABBI SCHNEUR ZALMAN

Aside from the “natural” form of love, Aristotelian friendship is highly non-egalitarian: love based on any of the lovable qualities is restricted to those who have them. It implies that there will be proportionally greater love for those who have more lovable qualities, and less for those lacking in them. This is true not only in the case of the lower qualities, such as pleasure and utility, but also for love based on virtue. It therefore creates a conflict with some aspects of Jewish belief, especially those that stress group solidarity and egalitarianism. Thus, as we have seen, it is difficult to explain the commandment to love one’s neighbor within an Aristotelian context. Aside from the difficulty of commanding the emotions, how can one possibly love any given neighbor if any given neighbor may lack lovable qualities?

This question was considered by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi in his *Likutei Amarim (Tanya)*. In chapter 32 he discusses the commandment of loving one’s neighbor as oneself, arguing that it is possible to fulfill this commandment only by placing the soul before the body. Since the body demands material comforts that exist in limited quantities, anyone who values the body will naturally come into conflict with others for the provision of those comforts. If they have affection for each other, it is only because of some physical benefit they hope to gain, and this he interprets as love that is dependent on a *davar*:

ולכן העושים גופם עיקר ונפשם טפלה אי אפשר להיות אהבה ואחווה אמיתית ביניהם אלא התלויה בדבר בלבד

So those who make their bodies primary and their souls secondary can never have true love and togetherness, but only the kind that is dependent on a *davar*.

On the other hand those who value the soul over the body are capable of a higher form of love, one that is not dependent on a *davar*. But while this may help to a certain extent, it does not at first sight offer a complete solution. Qualities of soul are no less varied than qualities of body, and good qualities are no less rare in the spirit than in the body. Indeed, since most people can be useful in one way or another, while virtuous people are rare, Aristotle’s higher form of love is a rarity (*NE* 8.3: 1156b24). Why then does Rabbi Schneur Zalman consider that a higher form of love, a love of the soul, is capable of motivating love for one’s neighbor?

In contrast to Aristotelianism, which sees the soul as a mere potentiality, Neoplatonic thought sees the soul as stemming from a higher realm of existence. In line with this, Rabbi Schneur Zalman is able to answer this question by placing emphasis not on the virtues that a man cultivates, but rather on the inherent quality of the soul itself. He explains that one is able to love one's neighbor when one perceives,

הטוב הגנוז שבהם שהוא ניצוץ אלקות שבתוכם המחיה נפשם האלוקית

The good that is hidden in them, which is a spark of divinity inside them which sustains their divine soul.

Despite the non-Aristotelian orientation of this idea, Rabbi Schneur Zalman shares with Aristotle the belief that love can only be aroused by the presence of some good quality. When this belief is combined with the command to love one's neighbor no explanation is possible other than positing the existence of something inherently good in the soul of every human being. Thus Neoplatonism provided a more plausible philosophical explanation of the commandment to love one's neighbor, and one capable of inspiring a more popular movement.

CONCLUSION

Whether it influenced the Mishnah or not, the Aristotelian theory of friendship had a great impact on Jewish thinkers and commentators, even when they do not remain faithful to the letter or spirit of Aristotelian thought. Most influential was the idea that, aside from some forms of "natural" love, all love has to be directed towards a particular quality. For Aristotle, the highest form of friendship is based on the love of moral virtue. This idea is almost completely absent from the Jewish commentators, who tend to interpret the highest form of friendship in intellectual or theological terms. Surprisingly enough, the Mishnah, with its example of David and Jonathan, comes closest to reflecting this aspect of Aristotle's theory. The explanation for this may lie, paradoxically, in the fact that the author of the Mishnah was less deeply involved in Aristotelian philosophy than some of the later commentators. An awareness of the intellectualizing tendencies found in other parts of Aristotle's corpus, which had such influence on medieval religious sentiment, is ultimately responsible for the later commentators' intellectualizing understanding of love. The author of the Mishnah reflects a common-sense understanding of friendship, which in this case happens to be closest to that of Aristotle.

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