Shema Israel, word by word

And you shall love, HaShem your God, with all your heart… (Debarim 6:5)

Loving, in the Hebrew mind, is voluntary. Otherwise, it would not have been mandatory (*You "shall" love…*). Love is not the spontaneous feeling of affection that is there or disappears at the will of cupid or a magic potion, but the product of a series of elective actions and thoughts. "Loving someone" at the most basic level means "thinking about someone". This thought is then translated into "Taking care of…", "Looking out for…", "Doing for…" etc. We know we love a person when we have that person in our mind. If we are indifferent to that person, chances are that we might **like** or even **need** that person, but we might not love him or her.

When we really love someone with passion (our spouse, our children) **we can't stop thinking about them**. The best proof we love ourselves so much (and so passionately) is that we are constantly thinking about ourselves!

Loving God means, bringing ourselves to think about God. Reminding ourselves of Him, of His presence, of His kindness, of His constant care for us. **The more we bring God to our mind, the more we love God, and vice versa**.

This is how Maimonides (H. Teshuba, 10:5) explains our verse: Loving God with all our heart means loving Him with passion (*ahaba 'aza 'ad me-od*). Ideally, a Jew should be **in-love** with God, which means, thinking about Him constantly (*veshoge bah tamid*).

Maimonides also explains there that we should not serve God for a reward (that would be another way of loving "ourselves") and not even for *yir-a* or fear of a punishment (that will be a way of "looking out" for ourselves) but for pure love of Him.

Excellent presentation on Lashon haRa!!!